

**Frederick Starr** (1859-1933) was an American anthropologist who made frequent trips to Mexico from the 1890s through the 1920s. The following selection is a week of entries taken from the fieldnotes he wrote during an 1899 trip to the Mixteca. The main purpose of this expedition was research in "physical anthropology" -- Starr made plaster casts of people's heads (the "busts" he refers to) and took body measurements as well as front-and-side view photographs (see Figures 3, 4, 6, and 7, below). Starr's traveling companions included photographer **Charles B. Lang** (from Bluff City, Utah), plaster-worker **Don Anselmo Pacheco** (from Puebla, Mexico), general assistant **Manuel Gonzales**, and porter (*mozo*) **Mariano** (a Mixtec from outside of Huachillo).

We have included this selection from Starr's fieldnotes for a number of reasons. These entries provide detailed descriptions of the physical environment of the Mixteca and of the material culture of the Mixtecs at the turn of the century. They also provide a rather candid exposé of the attitudes and methods of a nineteenth century anthropologist (as well as of the subtle ways in which Starr's so-called "specimens" resisted his often imperious demands). Finally, the notes provide a background for the photographs Starr took on his travels, a selection of which we have re-inserted into these fieldnotes.

The interested reader may wish to look into Starr's published accounts of his travels in the Mixteca. These can be found in [The Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album](#) (Chicago: 1899), [Notes on the Ethnography of Southern Mexico](#) (Davenport, Iowa: Putnam Memorial Publication Fund, 1900), and [In Indian Mexico](#) (Chicago: Forbes and Company, 1908).

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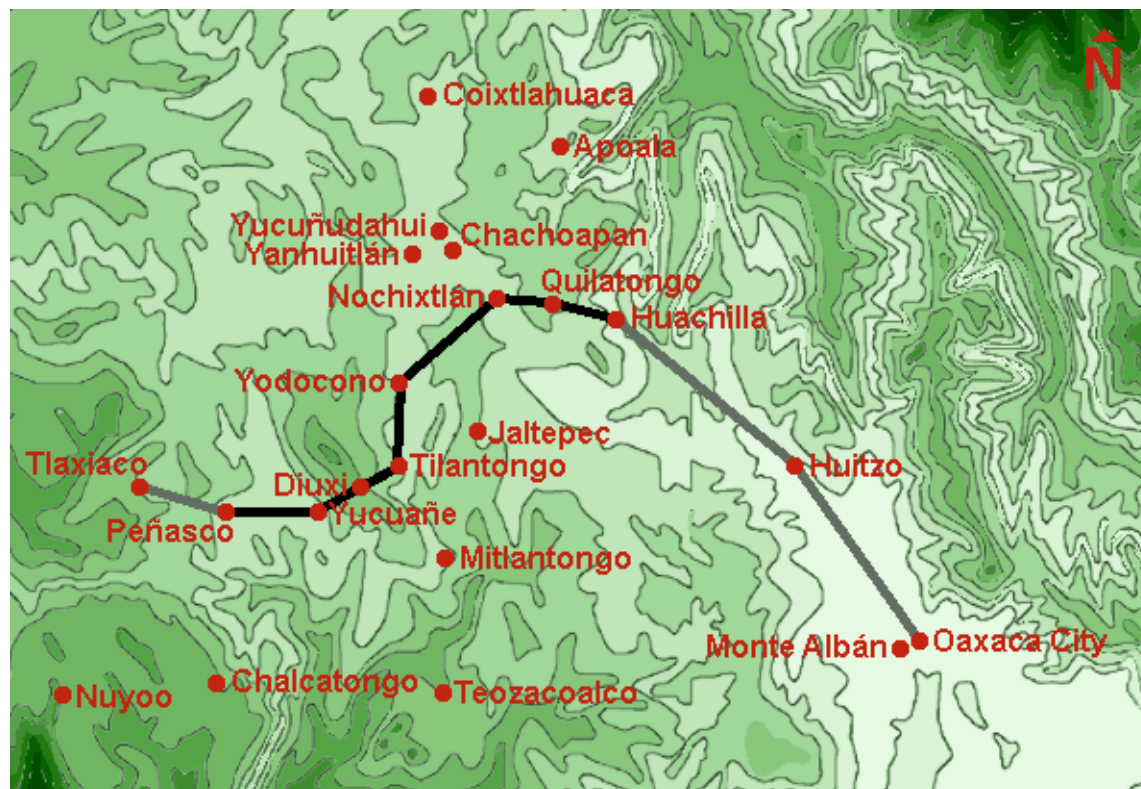
From: Starr, Frederick. 1889 Fieldnotes, Starr Papers, Box 20, Notebooks 21 and 22 (of 23), Department of Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.

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## Frederick Starr

# Fieldnotes 1899

These journal entries begin in the town of Huacilla, a three days journey to the west of Oaxaca City (see **Map 1** for an itinerary of Starr's travels).



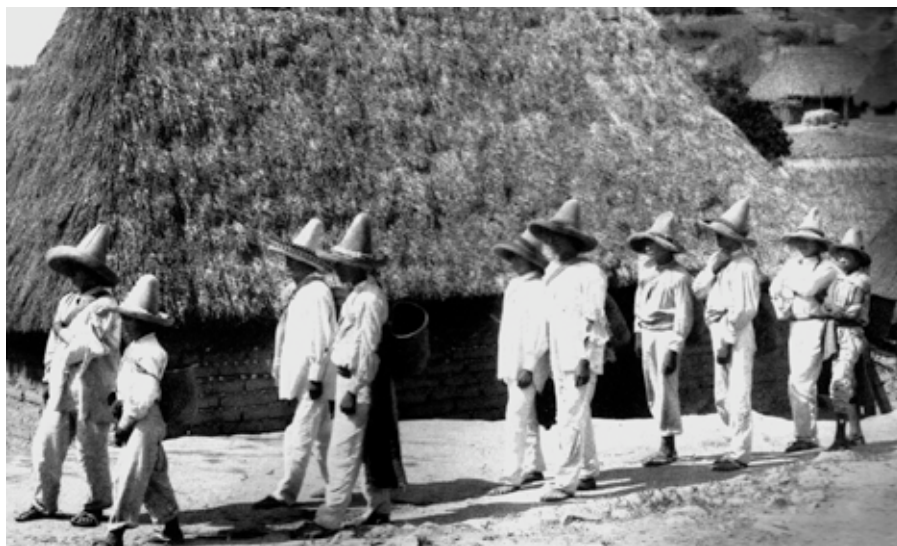
**MAP 1.** Frederick Starr's January 1899 itinerary through the Mixteca. Black lines indicate those sections of his trip covered in the journal entries below. Some communities are known by

**[Wednesday, January 11, 1899: Huacilla to Yodocono]**

11th We slept pretty well -- that is I did -- (Mr. Lang had stomach troubles): at advice of Don Anselmo, based upon opinion and knowledge of Mariano we concluded not to eat at Huachillo, but to wait until San Pedrito, "only a little way along." Were away at 6.45 and rode quite steadily upward for a long time. We passed a good deal of wheat but were soon in a beautiful mountain forest. The prevailing growth was oak but of several species, notably different in foliage. Many of them were heavily loaded with air plants, chiefly bromelias, both of the stout, erect, and the slender pendent[?] forms. We rode for a long time through this but finally came out onto more open country planted largely to wheat and oats with some maguey (1). After a discouragingly long ride we finally reached precious San Pedrito where we halted at 9.30. The pueblo is rather a wretched one. Considerable pulque (2) is made and drunk. Many of the houses are thatched with pencas (3) of maguey. One place near the tienda (4) is rather unusually picturesque: the buildings in the little rail enclosure are all thatched with pencas and the dwelling-house has a peculiar and interesting thatched shelter in front, which slopes from the ridge pole of the house itself to the supporting poles.

We noticed that the [woven palm] matting at the tienda had black patterns woven in. The splints of palm are blackened in the smoke of burning pine.

The carrying straps and little baskets are universally used here for carrying grain, &c.



**FIGURE 1.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album](#). Plate LIX (a) Mixtec men and boys returning from carrying grain. Notice the empty *tenates* on their backs, and the carrying bands by which they are borne.

From here on the road is a glaring, white one over soft rock. The whole country is cleared and fields of grain abound. We left at 10.30 feeling that we had certainly wasted an hour. We passed a number of little bits of shelters built in the fields. They are of three shapes, dome, conical, ridged, and have hardly room enough for one person to crawl into. They are watch houses for guarding the newly sown fields. We went down hill quite steadily until we reached Nochixtlan. This turned out to be quite a town, fairly built and lying on a slope at the base of which was the Plaza with the Jefetura (5) at one side. We went directly there and I told him my desires. He wrote us letters at once to Yodocono and Tilantongo and sent orders to the *autoridades* (6). He also agreed to attend to the plaster promptly. Three men who were in the office from Tidaa agreed to accompany us to Yodocono to show us the road. We rested from 12 to 2.15 when we were again in the saddle. We rode through a rolling country, adapted to farming and fairly cultivated. There are many little pueblos most of them at the summits of hills or ridges. The last part of the road was distinctly up to Yodocono, which had long been in sight. It is on the border of a pretty little lake. We got there just about 6 near sunset and rode at once to the house of Don Marcario Espinosa.



**FIGURE 2.** Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album. Plate LIV Mixtec town: Yodocono. The little Lake on which the town is located is of recent formation.

The penca shelters [for guarding fields] after Nochixtlan gave way to rectangular tents of zacaton [grass] set high above the ground on poles.

We had a letter from the Jefe to don Marcario and orders to the Presidente. We found Espinosa a nice fellow, living well and ready to anything for us. He is plainly the man of influence in the place. He set us down to a fine supper after having first made me take a great glass of vinu Catalan!! (7) He sent the orden to the Presidente with a list of the subjects he thought we ought to handle. He showed us several antiquities from the neighborhood. Among them a curious hollow figure was the finest. Adjourning to "the room" we found it well lighted and had a pleasant time talking and visiting until 10 o/c. We had music and singing by the older daughter and by Lang and Don Anselmo. Wrote a letter to Mother, &c.

Slept well on good beds made upon chairs.

**[Thursday, January 12, 1899: Yodocono]**

12th Went out quite early, perhaps too early to make a general view of the town and Lake. Took a little walk around the place with Don Marcario. After a good breakfast finished preparations for work.

Don Marcario had made out a list, unfortunately of all the old men and women of the town. They came in, in charge of a Mayor and submitted with good grace to the ordeal.. The oldest man was remarkably well preserved at 99. The work of measuring them we then went through so as not to appear ungrateful though of course they are useless for my series.





**FIGURE 3.** [In Indian Mexico](#) p. 136 (a) At work; Measuring.

I picked out a young fellow from among the by-standers for the first case of bust-making. When we had worked pretty steadily at a log of unneeded cases I managed to add a few more that were usable on my own account. We had been unable to make photographs to any advantage in the morning so we had arranged for the coming of such subjects as we wished at 3 p.m. Between times we took two or three views around town. Don Marcario had asked us to take a "group" picture for hire which we did altho to our horror the group included thirty persons.

We got our second bust subject underway a little before 4. Finally when the day was done we had accomplished something of a day's work. Had made a few sets of measures: taken views and six portraits: and made two busts.



**FIGURE 4.** [In Indian Mexico](#) p. 136 (b) At work; Bust Making.

We had a lot of music to go through with before our late supper and then Mr. Lang and the boy went to work at developing [photos] until nearly twelve o'clock.

**[Friday, January 13, 1899: Yodocono to Tilantongo]**

13th We got away at 9.55 and had a three hours' rather uninteresting ride to Tilantongo. We passed at one side of Tidaa and saw the view of the pueblo going to work in their fields in little groups of six to a dozen persons.

We had a good deal of uphill riding although we had been assured that the road was over a

country as level as a floor. The town of Tilantongo, with 2,266 persons is located at the further slope of a hill and but few houses show until we are actually upon it.



**FIGURE 5.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album](#). Plate LV Mixtec town: Tilantongo.

Notice the way in which the houses are set on little terraces or platforms cut out of the slope. The public buildings are on a little open space in the centre of which is a pretty little sun-dial. The school-house occupies one side of the space, the town house with jail the rear. The slope on which the town is built is somewhat horseshoe shaped and the church is situated in a retired little spot at one of the ends of the horseshoe. In the midst of the horseshoe valley rises a neat little elliptical mound almost as regular as if made by man. On its summit is a single house and two or three other houses are at its flanks all of which are cultivated. Opposite this mound in the right hand bank is a curious corresponding excavation like a great natural amphitheatre. The Houses are all of them on the inner slopes and crest of the horseshoe ridge.

other houses are on its flanks all of which are cultivated. Opposite this mound in the right hand bank is a curious corresponding excavation like a great natural amphitheatre. The houses of the village are all of them on the inner slopes and crest of the horseshoe ridge. ——— We rode up to the Municipal House and gave our order to the Presidente: arranged to have dinner, fodder &c. We saw some sacks of palm, which sent us off to find where we could have some made. We went to a house and gave an order. The palm is of a different species from that used in house thatching and has to be cut some three or four leagues away. The bags are called do-o: the carry straps yu-tu. The combined word do-o-yu-tu means the two considered as one thing.

**FIGURE 6.** Sketch map of Tilantongo "horseshoe" from Starr's field notes.

We rode up to the municipal house and gave our order to the Presidente: arranged to have dinner, fodder, &c. We saw some sacks of palm, which sent us off to find where we could have some made. We went to a house and gave an order. The palm is of a different species from that used in house thatching and has to be cut some three or four leagues away. The bags are called do-o: the carry straps yu-tu. The combined word do-o-yu-tu means the two considered as one thing.



**FIGURE 7.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album.](#)  
Plate LX (b) Weavers of mats and *tenates*, Tilantongo. Notice the mode of work,  
the samples of *tenates*, and the bundle of material -- split palm -- lying near.

We lost all the afternoon waiting for the Cura (8) and fodder for our animals. As for ourselves we fared much better than we had any reason to expect.

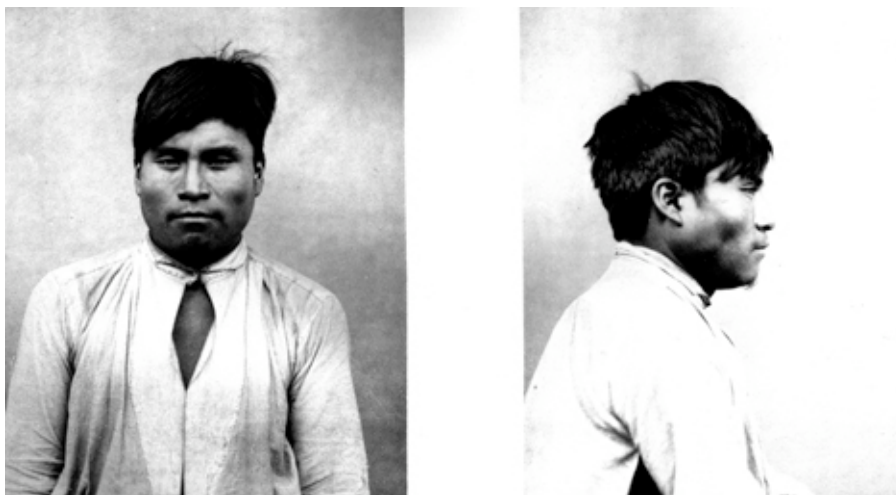
In the morning I bought of Don Marcario a little figure of stone from [blank space]. It is an illustration of the way prices are going up here. He had a common, plain, tripod, a string of beads &c, a pitcher of plain black ware and this figure. For these they gave \$6-. I gave \$3 for the figure. At Nochixtlan in a *tienda* I saw a fairly good animal head of stone for which they paid 14 reales and a sombrero as they wished to make a gift to a friend: "formerly" [?] said the girl: "we could buy such for a quantilla or a medio."

At night when we were ready for bed the night watch came in in a body to visit us and stayed some time. With them I began making my Mixteco vocabulary, taking down eight or nine words. Mr. Lang and Dn. Anselmo slept on the teacher's table. Manuel and I upon the two long benches drawn up side by side: Mariano on the floor. We had five petates (9) brought in, but it was a hard and cheerless night. The cold was *intense* and we all suffered greatly. I slept very little. Every now and then in the later night and earliest morning we heard singing of several voices. We later were assured that it was bands of drunken men in the mountains!!

**[Saturday, January 14, 1899: Tilantongo]**

14th We met some of our guard of last night and others at our door the first thing in the morning and before we went to breakfast I had three-fourths of my vocabulary written out.

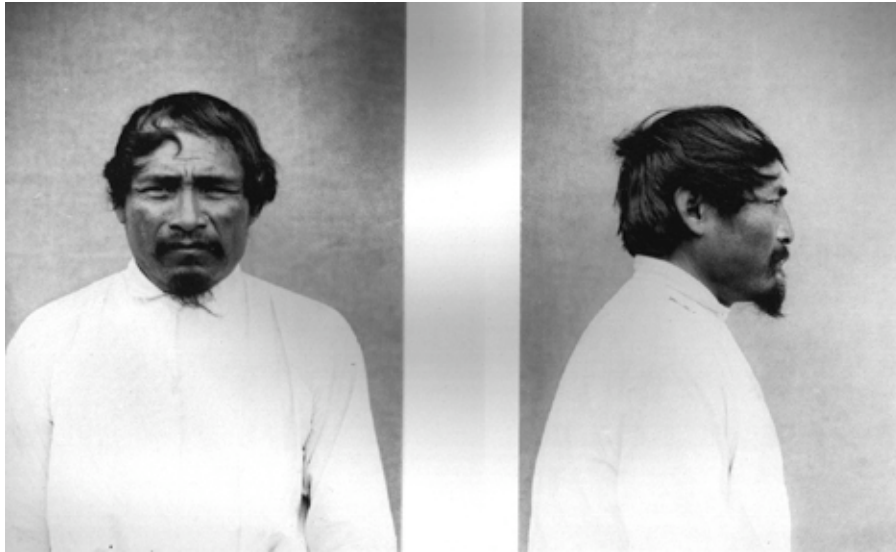
On returning I concluded we could not wait longer for the influence of the Cura and told the Presidente our work. He bade us go ahead and for some time we were measuring pretty rapidly. We also photographed a few persons and secured one specimen for a bust. (See Figures 8 and 9).



**FIGURE 8.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album.](#) Plate LXV Mixtec: Tilantongo.



Pedro Santiago. The eyes are semi-oblique; the face has a heavy expression; the lower face is broad; the beard is quite characteristic.



**FIGURE 9.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album.](#)  
Plate LXVII Mixtec. Tilantongo. Joaquin Miguel.

He went to get his hair cut and when he came back we went to dinner. On our return we found an order from the Cura, who had passed a little before noon to remove our horses, which had been sent up to the Curato (10) the night before by the officials as the only suitable place for them. I went at once up there to see him and deliver my letters. He was in the confessional but I waited until he finished the man he was dealing with and then presented myself. I left the letters with him and told him I wanted to leave the horses for a few days to which, of course, he agreed. On my return I found the subject prepared and the bust making begun. It distracted attention and otherwise interest in my measuring abated. Some did not care to be measured, others wanted pay. It was clearly time for a grand-stand play. So after considerable general talk about my dissatisfaction I sent orders for the Presidente to appear. When he came I told him, without apparent warmth but considerable firmness, that I wanted a mozo to carry an informe (11) to the Jefepolitico (12). That the municipality in spite of my orden (13) from the Jefe had done nothing officially to help me in my work: that I was tired of asking persons to be measured as that was not my business, &c, &c. He very humbly replied that persons should be supplied as soon as they could be brought in. I said here are two persons now who have refused to be measured: why wait for others to be brought in? The two were marched up in no good humor but took their medicine. They whispered to me that the Presidente himself had not been measured and begged that he be made to be. They were vastly delighted when I said to him "Now, it will be a good example for you to be measured next." He stepped up and the work was done. From then there was no lack of material. I was kept steadily at work until I could no longer see and cried a halt. There were then two waiting!

In the morning two fine cases came in from another pueblo with jicaras (14) for sale. Thought they made a pretty good picture and so we took them.



**FIGURE 10.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album](#). Plate LX (a) Scene in the Plaza at Tilantongo. Two natives of the hot country are displaying their stock of *jicaras* (gourd cups).

The night started in very cold and we went dubiously to bed after developing [photographs] up to date. When we were all asleep but myself came a rap at the door. A messenger from the Cura begging me to come to the Curato where we would be more comfortable. I sent back thanks but said I would come for tomorrow night as we were now all in bed and most of us asleep.

The night turned out really less bad than the preceding.

**[Sunday, January 15, 1899: Tilantongo]**

15th When the Cura came home yesterday a party of a dozen or more of the villagers turned out to bid him welcome. They went in a body to the Curato. One carried a bouquet, another a spray of flowers: the rest carried bowls and vessels of various food supplies.

After we were in bed the band, which had been up to the evening service, came back in a procession playing.

The morning mass was accompanied by a great outburst of rockets and music. This probably came about 4.30 or 5 in the morning.

We had been promised plenty of cases after mass and as there was naught to be accomplished first and as the effect of non-attendance might be disadvantageous we concluded to attend. So we toiled up the hill with a troublesome mixed blood named Tiburcio Valencia: we have been eating at his brother's house. Mr. Paclicco and I were given seats back with the musicians. These were out in full force and at the back of the church. The church is in a bad condition at present. A part of it is torn out and some repairs and changes have been in progress for some years past. There was a fair attendance of the people though less than I had expected. They were kneeling of course on the bare floor. The service was very long and not particularly interesting. Where we were sitting we could only see the faces of the musicians and while interesting at first they soon ceased to be so.

At the more important parts of the service there were explosions of guns, &c.

We hurried away as soon as the body of mass was over to the Plaza to be ready for work. Our first victims were a lot of women, who were on their way home and who were corralled like so many sheep. After them we were kept supplied with subjects as rapidly as we could use them. About noon Cura Pedro Perez Salazar called and sat some time watching my work. He used his influence once in our favor with one or two who had hesitated to be measured. We showed him what we were trying to do.

About 1 o/c, he proposed we should adjourn to dinner, which we all did but the boy, who was playing with Mariano. We had an elaborate dinner with fine sherry. When we were through the Cura took us into the adjoining schoolroom which he had had filled up for us as a sleeping room with three beds in descending grades of excellence for our use. We thanked him heartily for his arrangements and then went back to work. We got within fifteen of our required number before we stopped on account of the darkness. I went up to the Curato, where Lang shortly appeared and told me that Anselmo was very drunk and noisy: We sat talking with the Padre and reading



until about 8 hoping that our companion had decided to stay down town for the night. Just then however he appeared, escorted by the town officials, as helpers and guard. He was in a horrible state of intoxication: forced himself into the room, addressed the Padre loudly and familiarly, insisted on bringing in the rest and informing the Padre of his love for them. I tried to get him out into the corridor and to the room but he was not to be so led. He informed me that I was insulting him by thinking him drunk: on the contrary he was "muy cabal" (15) and so was the cura. Caballeros never got drunk. They might get tipsy but they knew their position and drunk -- no. He was bound to return to the Padre (16) and at his suggestion I permitted it. He sat down and the Padre kept writing and gradually he subsided. After a time merely to see how things were going I walked by the door (for I had withdrawn to our room). He caught sight of me and coming out walked to my room with me. There he began a long complaint: he compared the boy and himself in their service of me. He narrated a long story of Manuel's failures and his own services. He repeatedly told me that I must make my choice. One or the other must go home. Finally we went to supper and there again he became loud with the Padre telling him they were "muy cabal." That he would of longer call him Sr. Cura, but Sr. Salazar. This he did quite consistently the rest of the evening. He told him he should be the judge and placed the matter of himself and the kid plainly as to me. Which should I choose? One or the other must go home. The Cura said it was best to wait until the morrow about deciding. At the same time he kindly but quite squarely gave the boy a lot of good advice that was really needed.

But what a humiliation in the whole matter! When Mr. Lang and I stepped outside before going to bed two men came staggering hideously up the hill and went into the Curato. It is quite plain that the father must keep his hand in fair practice in dealing with the type.

#### [Monday, January 16, 1899: Tilantongo]

16th We went down to finish our measuring in the morning and did so with no delays except those due to the general state of intoxication in the town. Don Anselmo was in a sombre and inattentive frame of mind. He and Mariano ran a bust with the plaster left. The boy I kept pretty steadily with us. We made several photographs also. A little before noon the very drunken band leader declared that it was their desire to honor their distinguished guests with music.



**FIGURE 11.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album.](#)  
Plate LIX (b) The Tilantongo band.

We had brought letters from the President and from the Archbishop and in our honor they would fain play us some little pieces. So the assembling of the band took place and a number of pieces we[re] ground out. They told us also that it was their intention to accompany us to dinner and play while we ate. I took them out and gave each a copita (17). Then the procession began. The band in front. Lang and I were seized by a helplessly drunken and loquacious individual. We three, he in the middle followed; Don Anselmo, Manuel and the ? brought up the rear. In this magnificent state we mounted to the Curato. While we ate the tattered band of musicians played. We have been half battered to death by the drunken importunity of the two Valencia brothers. Both want photographs. Manuel it seems is a "compadre" of Don Marcario's and he was here yesterday. What before was simply a natural enough desire was now an uncontrollable wish. We must photograph them. Finally, on condition of receiving certain expenses over which we had haggled I agreed to take them the afternoon. Tiburcio was the drunkest and most troublesome. He insisted on accompanying us to the Curato and serving us while we ate, which he did. When through eating a capital dinner (though the Padre had gone away at 9 and would not return before 5) I made a speech to the musicians, received their reply, and dismissed them.

We then went to the further end of the village, took some views, &c, and got our tenates or carrysacks.

When we got back we found all our drunken friends even worse than before and had a hard time with them. We took the two promised groups and bought some specimens from a woman from Diusi. We had a task getting away from drunken would-be helpers and instructors. Don Tiburcio insisted on carrying my stuff to my room and an equally drunken comrade, who insisted on my taking down long masses of the idioma (18) accompanied us up the hill. I dismissed them when there.

The Padre returned at about 6. Mariano was drunk and had neglected the horses. So I went down and rounded him up in a hurry. The Padre brought a musical instrument back with him and we had considerable music before supper. Finally, something past 8, poor Lang was able to go to his developing down at the schoolhouse. We arranged also some details of work. The priest has to go tomorrow to Yodocono. Anselmo goes with him. Mariano carries over the bust and tenate of stuff. They dispatch everything from Yodocono to Nochixtlan. Then we leave from here for Tlaxiacho on Wednesday a.m.

While this town reports a population of 2.266 I doubt whether many more than 500 really live in the village itself. Even this is straggled over its horseshoe shaped hill. But scattered houses for perhaps a league or two around belong to it and are counted with it. I really am surprised that we had so little trouble getting our 100 men here.

The men present little if any peculiarity of costume.



**FIGURE 12.** Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album.  
Plate XIX (b) Mixtec man, Tilantongo.

The women, of the more conservative, wear a black enagua (19) full and somewhat folded into heavy front pleats: these are chiefly made at a little neighboring pueblo (20) called Madgalena de las Comales.



**FIGURE 13.** [In Indian Mexico p.124](#) (a) Mixtec Woman's Costume, Tilantongo.

They cost from 6 pesos up. A few are made elsewhere and some even here. They are woven in the old fashioned simple way. This is belted with a red girdle, plain but long, usually bought in Oaxaca. The camisa [\(21\)](#) is usually short and very wide sleeve slitted and rather short neck slitted. Usually plain it is sometimes decorated at the neck with a fairly conventionalized decoration in red or rose or green wool. Over the head is worn a strip of white cloth sometimes though not often with a little color decoration at the ends or sides. Women rarely wear anything on their feet, while men are usually sandaled. Women wear a good many necklaces -- generally of coral, or metal-appearing beads. Some wear earrings.

Women carry water in large, long-necked, oblong-bodied, two-eared (at sides of body) black pottery flasks. To fill these they usually use jicaras. The flask is carried on the back by the head band. The jicara is usually carried in the hand. A woman in native dress, with white head-cloth, carrystrap, flask and jicara makes a picturesque subject.





**FIGURE 14.** [In Indian Mexico p.124\(b\)](#) Mixtec Woman Carrying Water; Tilantongo.

Everyone uses the carrystrap and tenate. Little boys and girls trot around with a load of corn or what not in tenate on back.



**FIGURE 15.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album](#). Plate LXI (a) Mixtec boy carrying a tenate: Tilantongo. This little fellow's name happens to be Porfirio Diaz.

At Yodocono is an old woman who weaves beautiful and durable silk girdles, in the old fashion. The two colors I have seen are a rich crimson or red and a fine saffron yellow: the red is dyed with purchased dye: the other is native. It is [blank space].

The most striking houses here are those built of large sundried bricks of a deep red brown color. These are laid in straight layers with lines of small stones set inbetween. They have a ridge pole and are palm-thatched: the ends of the stalks project slightly and they intersect[?] in a queer saw edge producing fashion.



**FIGURE 16.** Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album. Plate LVI Mixtec house: Tilantongo. The houses are large, rectangular in form and built of sun-dried bricks; they are thatched with palm, laid in over-lapping lines; the upper lines are so laid that the stalks project above the roof crest, giving a pretty serrated effect.

There are no windows. The single door is at the middle of one side. These houses are large and handsomely built. A second style has the side walls of upright posts, or slabs. These houses are thatched like the others. The corncribs here are made of timbers cut and fitting as in our own loghuts. They are palm thatched and square. When of some height they have a ladder and a small door.



**FIGURE 17.** In Indian Mexico p.122 Mixtec Houses; Tilantongo.

Without the same regularity in the three house arrangement as in Tlaxcala there is more or less of it here. Very common is the arrangement of two of the fine large houses fronting on a yard or space between them.



**FIGURE 18.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album](#). Plate LVII Mixtec house; Tilantongo, showing three-part arrangement. The god-house is like the one just described; the cooking-house is made of slabs or posts set upright and daubed with mud; the granary is of logs set in cobwork. Notice also the light scaffold of poles on which squashes etc., are laid to ripen.

In this may or may not be a corncrib. When present it is usually at the rear edge. In it also is often a little scaffolding upon which are spread out calabashes and squashes for ripening. Sometimes an elevated scaffold for husks is found. While the two houses may be alike and both clay, more frequently the second one is of vertical slabs. This is generally the cooking house. When no corn crib occurs the corn is usually stored in part of the god house. Sometimes squashes and husks are put up in a tree. Rarely is the space occupied by houses enclosed. Sometimes a slim line of cactus may mask part of the side: sometimes -- rarely -- a pole or rail fence is present. Sometimes all three houses are present but arranged simply in one line. Usually the house space is simply marked out by an artificially leveled area cut out in the gentle slope.

Temescals ([22](#)) are not uncommon but are usually very simple.

Sometimes in one house group there may be six or seven houses: evidence of accumulated wealth or of increasing kinship.

The people generally are dark: perhaps as dark a brown as any I have ever worked at in Mexico. A dark browned coffee would describe many. Eyes are rarely noticeably oblique. Hair is usually abundant and strong: foreheads are high: this tends to increase sometimes by forward baldness. Among some women fine head down is remarkably persistent. The nose appears the most characteristic feature: while aquiline in outline it is often flat and low: the tip is very flat and wide: yet it is rarely depressed at the root: usually it is high and of a medium width there. The ears are remarkably uniform: the upper part of the helix is thin and infolded, the second part flat and open, either thick or thin. The general shape of the ear is good: it rarely projects. The lobe is long but not detached: in old persons it notably large.

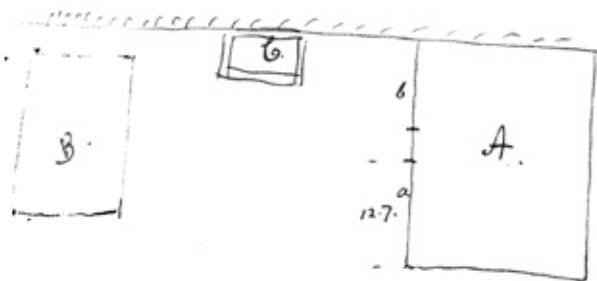
Roof construction: four heavy round timbers are laid on the top and outer edge of the wall. At each end is a series of four poles, whose lower ends rest against the inside of these timbers and whose upper ends meet, alternating from the two sides. These are lashed together at the top and are lashed to the lower timbers below. A single cross timber is lashed across one pair of these midway: the four meeting uprights are alternately at one side and the other of the ridge-pole: four or six divergent poles meeting above form balance of framework of the ends: A series of nearly parallel slant poles lashed to the ridge pole and outside the heavy timbers completes the heavy framework. These are spaced about a foot apart. Across them are lashed bamboos horizontally at about 4 inches separation: The palms so override these so that each second one is exposed within, while the alternates are covered by the overriding palms: the ends of the final palms laid alternately project as already mentioned.

#### **[Tuesday, January 17, 1899: Tilantongo]**

17th The party got off at 5 o/c or thereabouts and we three lay abed until nearly seven. After breakfast I wrote up my notes and at 10 o/c Mr. L[ang], Manuel and I went to the schoolhouse. We went first to Don Manuel's to photograph his god-house and corncrib and to measure it for reproduction



For Miniature Reproduction Place in a little rectangular space cleared out in a slight slope and with a quite abrupt descent at the rear & a slight abrupt rise in front.



A. w.  $14^{\circ}.2'$

l. front  $12^{\circ}.7'$

door  $3^{\circ}.8\frac{1}{2}'$

front  $12^{\circ}.6'$

wall th.  $1^{\circ}.3'$

door ht.  $6.2$

+ sill  $4.$

wall ht.  $8\text{ft.}$

roof. slope.  $16\text{ft. } 6'$

width at lower part.  $31.7'$

slope:  $13\text{ft.}$

width  $31.7 - 19^{\circ}.6'$

bricks  $1^{\circ}.3'$

$1^{\circ}.10'$

$4'$  thick.

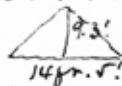
C. Length top in front. orig. vary:  $10\text{ft. } 7'$

side " "  $16\text{ft. } 10'$

ht. to match.  $6\text{ft. } 4.$

opening central in match.  $2\text{ft. } 6' \times 1\text{ft. } 10.$

Match considered symmetrical.



Dist. between B. & C.  $9\text{ft. } 6.$  make dist.

between B. & C. slightly larger

make B. throughout slightly smaller than A. & front of it.

**FIGURE 19.** Building measurements from Starr's fieldnotes.

They were very cordial with us and pleased to have us interested. They gave us some fine chirimoyas (23) and gifted me with two handsome tenates with much black pattern work. We wanted several other pictures but had the hardest of luck. Sat around in the square most all day and saw hardly anyone. Presidente in Nochixtlan and no one else to take his place. The town was quiet and asleep after its Sunday and Monday "drunk." The Padre and Don Anselmo got home at 20/c after we had eaten. We were to have taken a great picture of him entering town and the band, officials, &c meeting him. No enthusiasm however was kindled and we gave up the idea.

The band started to gather but found out that there had been a death and promised to come after the funeral. It was then 30/c. The muerto (24) was an old woman named Hilaria (Cruz?). I think we measured her two days ago. She was found dead on her petate this morning. They took an open stretcher to bear her. The house was down in a side valley. We could hear the music come up at times where we were. The father came to see why we had not appeared to photograph him and we explained. He was irritated

clearly. Meantime the funeral procession came up the hill. The band was in front playing lugubriously. Next came the bearers two at least were drunk. There was no coffin and the old woman was dressed in her daily garments. Her body sagged down through the gaps in the stretcher. Behind followed a motley crowd of mourners chiefly women some with babies in their arms. One man with the band held an open book in his hand and appeared to be reading a service as they slowly marched along.

As the procession came to where we were the Padre halted them, told the bearers to carry the corpse to one side and hastily arranged the little company into a group for taking [a photograph]. It was already late but we hastily made the Exposure after which the procession re-formed and proceeded as if nothing had happened



**FIGURE 20.** [In Indian Mexico](#) p. 126 The people receiving their Padre; Tilantongo.

Burials always take place in the campo santo [\(25\)](#) but it is rare that the Padre is notified or takes part. Coffins are rarely used as the priest claims that he has introduced the beginning of the custom. The grave is somewhat deep and oblong in form. Two men go down into the grave to receive the body which is let down with lassos. A [piece of matting] is placed over the face to protect it from the earth which is then shoveled in. A cross is marked, at the spot where the body is laid, in lime. It is common to place a vessel of water in the grave and some money for the use of the dead. At times other things may be added.

We spent some time at the table chatting and had some music afterward. The father refused to receive anything from us for our entertainment. I gave some little sums to the house servants all through.

At [Diusi](#) there is a [bruja](#) [\(26\)](#) : it is a "[viejicito](#)" [\(27\)](#). The father narrated one instance of his operations. [large half page blank space]

**[Wednesday, January 18, 1899: Tilantongo to San Bartolo to Magdalena de las Comallis]**

18th. We got up and away on time. It was just six as we left the little plaza. We first went down into the valley past where the dead woman had lived. We noticed the beauty of the peach trees in bloom. After going down a long and deep valley we began a climb. It was more or less interrupted but was practically one steady ascent. We passed a pretty gorge on our left between two mountain masses where the bed of the gorge had all the appearance of a great stairway. We got up higher and higher leaving Lake Juan Diusi on our right. The tops of the highest mountains were gray clouded and the cloud line came very neatly to our level. A cold wind began to blow which sent the gray cloud mass whirling and spreading. We were very glad when we began to descend and got a little shelter from the wind and less danger of a wetting from the clouds. On a second ascent we found ourselves in a clear district where the only trees on the high summit, almost, were palms. These bore little round dates, with round seeds which were quite sweet and tasted "datey," when they were really ripe. There were several little ranches in this part of the valley. Making another descent and then an ascent we found ourselves in a magnificent forest of gnarled gray oaks covered with spangles of air plants and with orchids. Three species at least of [these](#) were in bloom and we picked two lovely plants. When this descent came we found it over one of these fearful limestone roads, with sharp peaks, rain channeled and little bits of torturous paths followed with difficulty by the horses. Slippery too at points. From this slope however we could see our goal -- San Bartolo and the way was not long. We arrived very close to 11 o'clock, the distance being called five leagues.

We stopped here for a noon rest and did not start again until 3 o'clock. We made pretty nearly a steady rise and much of the way over fearful limestone roads. At one point we had a little stretch nearly level of yellow grassy ground. When this ended it did so abruptly against a perfectly defined transverse strip of the limestone, the area presenting a perfect mass of irregular pieces of the limestone rock. To rise to Santo Domingo we had a stiff stretch of the limestone. On this my horse stumbled and then slipped. Had I had nothing to carry all would have been well: I could have reined him up. As it was I let him fall and only tried to save the [glass-plate photographic] negatives I was carrying. I succeeded in this but scraped the skin and one wrist and cut a mean little gash at the back of my hand. Santo Domingo is a mean little town, with houses much like those of Tilantongo but light gray in color, perched on top of a prominent ridge. From it we plunged downward, were well in sight of San Augustin, but turned up a side gorge,

which became a true rock walled cañon (28) far above which we followed our rock cut trail. Just before leaving this cañon we saw a pretty fall in the brook: the rock masses were piled magnificently in the brook and the whole made a romantic and attractive view. It was far to late to think of taking [a photograph of] it however.

Earlier (back of Santo Domingo and just before making its rise) we passed a fine brook. It had fine cypresses along its banks. Their delicate foliage, rough and buttressed trunks, twisted spreading and knee-ed roots made a beautiful scene. Rock masses were caught in the massive roots and added to their attractiveness. Since the trees have grown the stream has cut nearly six or seven feet below the former level and the gravel walls, held and protected by the roots, stand almost vertically. The stream is clear and fresh and of some depth. A little foot-bridge consists of two squared logs which are set so that the meeting ends are supported by a great ancient cypress. Up stream a little way is a pretty cascade. The whole would be ideal for photographic work, but the light was such as to make no contrasts.

We had night at our hand, scarcely had we got out of our cañon, and by moonlight we wound slowly along a brookside in a hopelessly endless road apparently. We however finally found the town and after some floundering and wandering got to the dilapidated old church and the municipal house. Here we took possession of the school and thoroughly tired began to rest.

With San Bartolo we were thoroughly surprised and delighted. To begin with it is a large town strung out along one or two long streets. It is full of fruit: each yard contained some chirimoyas, naranjas, limas, granadas de china, and ahuacates occur (29). Vegetable beds are not rare and spinach, lettuce, and savory appear the commonest of these. The houses are mostly of poles set upright with the usual palm thatch. Beehives occur at many houses and in great numbers



**FIGURE 21.** *In Indian Mexico* p. 128: Mixtec Houses in San Bartolo.

Everyone almost is pure Indian and Mixtec is the usual tongue. Men wear sashes of local make and almost every woman is in native dress. We were more and more delighted at each step. We rode to the little Casa Municipal almost at the further end of the village and were never better treated anywhere. A good dinner of tortillas, eggs, fresh meat, was served. We feasted on limas and chirimoyas. We were very hungry for we had eaten nothing before. The two doorways of the municipal house were decorated with flowers and stars made of palm sheaths [see **FIGURE 24**]. So was the little cross out in front.

With the official I went to look up a beestand for photographing. At the first place there was a fine one but the light was bad. The hives are simple cylinders of matting and sticks with a small space left as an entrance in one end. They were arranged hanging and resting in two lines on each side of a little thatch shelter.





**FIGURE 22.** Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album. Plate LVIII (a) Mixtec house, Yodocono. Notice the neat chinking of the lines between the adobe bricks with bits of stone; also the special ridge of thatching which caps the roof crest. To the front of the house hang nine beehives, consisting of a framework of sticks wrapped in matting.



**FIGURE 23.** Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album. Plate LVIII (b) Beehives under a shelter of thatch.

An old woman here had a queer frame of sticks before her. It was some seven or eight feet long, somewhat canoe or shoe shaped, with upright sticks projecting some inches above the upper of two horizontal lines of poles. Where poles came together they were cemented with a black gum. had I been given the specimen without a label I could not have named it. It is however a frame for reeling (?) cotton on as I saw.

They use much cotton here: it is brought from the coast and is spun and woven here. Cotton belts are woven for the men. They are often wide -- say eight inches: and long. They are loosely an firmly woven in narrow stripes of color: combinations as red and white, red and black, red blue and white, are common. The threads are worked with a good deal of care at the ends into triangular meshes and tufts of rainbow colored worsted are tied on. These cost from \$3 -\$6.

The women wear cotton belts. Most of these are from Oaxaca and are simple red belts. Others however come from San Mateo Penasco and have designs woven in some other color. The women wear their belts in such a way as to give the same effect as that of the Tarascans. It is produced however in an entirely different way. The Tarascans wear one belt over another, selecting different colors and widths until they produce a thick and solid band around the waist. Here the lower part of the band is made of a thick band of plaited palm which goes something more than once around the waist. To the end of this the end of the belt is sewed and then the rest is wrapped around. The dresses are mostly made at Magdalena de las Comallis. They cost from \$6 up. They are folded into rather broad pleats -- chiefly in front which mass somewhat as the Tarascan women's dress does.

The most striking article however is the huipilli (30): This is made of cotton.



**FIGURE 24.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album](#). Plate LXIV Mixtec women and girls, San Bartolo. The black woolen *enaguas* are made at Magdalena de los Comallis; the belts are bought at various places; the upper garments or *huipillis* are of local manufacture and are often elaborately decorated.

There are different grades and varieties of the foundation material. The neck slit is bordered with silk which may be plain or decorated with colored patterns. The mass of colored decoration however is at the shoulders and about the neck slit. It is composed of wools chiefly red worked in in the weaving. Two chief styles appear to prevail. (see specimens). In one there is a heavier massing of the colors than in the other. The huipilli is long and is caught together at the lower corners so it eases to be a simple slit-blanket. It is generally caught up at the waist by the girdle.

At the same house was a great raincoat made of palm fibre -- neat and serviceable.

The town is great on palm weaving. In the municipal house was a lot of slit palm and three different articles in process of making: hat, petate, tenate. I got a pretty little tortilla holder in black and white. Met a kid on the street wearing a little tenate as he walked.

At the second house we found hives to suit us and here we made not only a picture of it but also of a wee little thing clad only in a ragged huipilli.



**FIGURE 25.** [Indians of Southern Mexico: An Ethnographic Album.](#)  
Plate LXI (b) Mixtec child: San Bartolo.

Going back to the town house we had a group of women posed for us near one of the decorated doors (so as to show the decoration)[see FIGURE 22] and then opened up a market. This lasted so long that we hardly got away at 3, with all our purchases wrapped up in the great rain-coat.

#### **[Travel to Magdalena de las Comallís]**

The town was considerably flurried over our arrival and certainly did its best for us. They first cared for our horses. Later on they brought us all the food they could which was only some eggs and chili. It took three hours for them to get this ready. The whole municipality stood by while we ate and we talked over the industries of the pueblo. The black dresses are woven only by men. I bought a specimen for \$6.

They weave only wool here: only cotton in San Bartolo. They weave blankets too.

The town has its name comallís [\(31\)](#) from the comallís made there. These are of good grade and the material is local. A dozen or fifteen persons make these: as many more make other wares the most characteristic of which is a polished but not glazed red ware: this is made especially in candlesticks, censers and toys.

The other industry of the town is hat weaving from palms. They do a very decent grade of work. They make no petates and no tenates. [End of day's entry for January 18]

#### **NOTES**

1. The **maguey** is a highland Mesoamerican plant, genus *Agave*, with many pointed, fleshy leaves radiating from a central heart.
2. **Pulque** is a sweet, milky white alcoholic drink made from the fermented sap of the maguey plant.
3. **Pencas** are the pointed leaves of the maguey plant.
4. **tienda** (Spanish) store.
5. **Jefetura** (Spanish) headquarters, from *jefe*, "boss, leader."
6. **autoridades** (Spanish) literally "authorities," local leaders.
7. **vino Catalan** (Spanish) "Catalan wine"



8. **Cura** (Spanish) priest.
9. **Petates** are woven palm leaf mats.
10. **Curato** (Spanish) priest's house.
11. **informe** (Spanish) report.
12. **Jefepolitico** (Spanish) "political leader," here referring to a government official in Nochixtlan.
13. **orden** (Spanish) order.
14. **Jicaras** are bowls made from dried gourds.
15. **muy cabal** (Spanish) "very fine/upright"; a *caballero* is a "gentleman."
16. **Padre** (Spanish) Father, here referring to the Cura (priest).
17. **copita** (Spanish) small coin.
18. **idioma** (Spanish) language, here referring to Mixtec.
19. **enagua** (Spanish) skirt.
20. **pueblo** (Spanish) town.
21. **camisa** (Spanish) shirt.
22. A **temescal** (also temezcal, steambath, or sweatbath) is the Mesoamerican equivalent of the sauna or sweatlodge, an enclosed structure in which water is splashed on heated rocks to generate steam for cleansing and medicinal purposes.
23. The **chirimoya** (or custard apple) is a tropical tree (genus *Annona*) with tasty, apple-sized, warty-skinned fruits.
24. **muerto** (Spanish) dead person.
25. **campo santo** (Spanish) "holy field," cemetery.
26. **bruja** (Spanish) witch.
27. **viejicito** (Spanish) "little old person."
28. **cañon** (Spanish) canyon.
29. **chirimoyas, naranjas, limas, granadas de china,** and **ahuacates** (Spanish) chirimoyas (see note 23), oranges, limes, pomegranates, and avocados.
30. A **huipilli** (or huipil) is a Mesoamerican woman's dress, rectangular in shape with slitted openings for arms and head.
31. A **comalli** (or comal) is a flat ceramic griddle, most commonly used for cooking tortillas.

