

DICK IBARRA GRASSO

THE RUINS  
OF  
TIATUANAÑO



EDITORIAL «ATLANTIC» — COCHABAMBA-BOLIVIA

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English version by Noemi Acuña and Annie Karin Häseling  
**DICK IBARRA GRASSO**

## FOREWORD

FIRST REMARKS

The present situation of the ruins of the legendary city of Potosí, which visitors can visit, is a sad one. The ruins of the city are in a state of complete ruin. At the same time, the following pages what we have seen in the past are at present in a state of complete ruin. day by day, no effective measures having been taken for their preservation and restoration; that is why it is difficult for the visitor to envisage in a clear impression, what the remains that appear before his eyes have been in the past, as most of them look at first sight but shapeless heaps of stones, isolated columns or foundations which reveal nothing about the whole.

Our project may seem daring, and no doubt, it will have critics, but we believe that years of study devoted to Bolivian archaeology authorize us to carry out this effort, and display sufficiently clear sketch of the whole.

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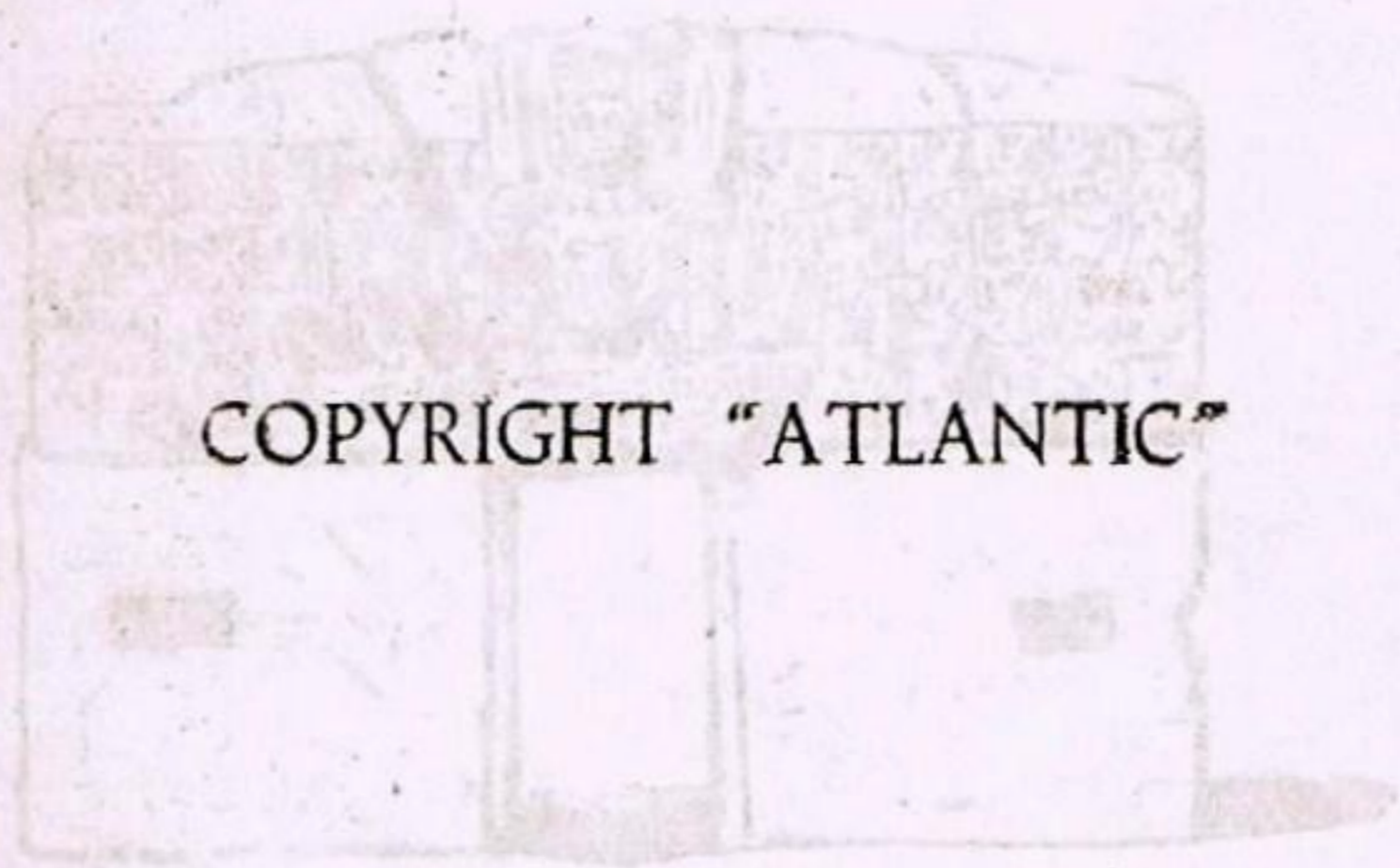
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Cochabamba - Bolivia

1959



# FOREWORD

## FIRST REMARK

The present writing is designed to furnish the visitors - tourists especially - with a guide, whenever they plan to visit the ruins of the legendary city of Tiahuanaco.

At the same time, we wish to point out in the following pages what we have seen in these ruins. The latter are at present in a really deplorable state of havoc, which increases day by day, no effective measures having been taken for their preservation and restoration; that is why it is difficult for the visitor to envisage in a clear impression, what the remains that appear before his eyes have been in the past, as most of them look at first sight but shapeless heaps of stones, isolated columns or foundations which reveal nothing about the whole.

Our project may seem daring, and no doubt, it will have errors, but we believe that years of study devoted to Bolivian Archaeology authorize us to carry out this effort, and display a sufficiently clear sketch of the whole.



## INTRODUCING TIAHUANACO

The city ruins we are dealing with lie some four leagues from the south bank of Titicaca Lake, and on the railway line stretching to the port of Guaqui, where one stops to board a ship to cross the lake in order to get to the port of Puno, in Peru. There is a permanent service of rail-cars from La Paz to Guaqui which may be used to advantage for a visit to the ruins, although very little time can be spared for their study.

At present, Tiahuanaco consists of two things: firstly, a contemporary village population which in to-day's denomination could be described as a half-breed, typical of the Plateau, with little activity except on feast and market days, when the indigenous inhabitants of the region arrive in the village in great numbers, not only for the sake of the spirit of community life, but also to do their shopping. Economically, the village lives on the latter. Secondly, it consists of the ruins above mentioned, the main ones lying some five hundred metres from the present village square.

It is to be noted that the same contemporary village has been built on past ruins and that often, carved stones and monoliths (statues), are found whenever diggings are conducted, as foundations of new houses. Moreover, there are many buildings in the village which, in their fronts, doors and foundations, show carved stones removed from the ruins.

The village church, of a really monumental size, is totally built of stones which were removed from the ruins, and pieces of mouldings can be seen on it. The number of stones used for this building is such, that they easily represent a similar quantity, if not greater, compared to the rest still lying in the ruins. If to this we add the other stones used for the construction of the village houses, the ones used in



the railway line and bridges, those taken to the city of La Paz, for the several public buildings, especially for the Cathedral, etc., we can well imagine that at least two thirds of the stones which originally existed at the time of the Conquest, have disappeared from the site.

## TIAHUANACO AT THE TIME OF THE CONQUEST

The remains of a large settlement, prior to the Incas, did not pass unnoticed to the first Spaniards that set foot in the lands which are now Bolivian. Many are the travellers and chroniclers who tell us of the admiration they felt at what they were contemplating, or, sometimes, at what they were being told; and with no exception, the data they hand down to us, correspond to a period that goes far beyond the origin of Inca Civilization.

Cieza de León, Garcilaso, Lizárraga, Cobo and others are among the first to leave on print the admiration which these ruins aroused in them. At the same time, in the lines they devote to these, and in the extensive reference of P.B. Cobo which is worthy of notice, we can realize that even in those times, the antique monuments were in a better state than today's. It is to be noted also, that these first visitors agreed in the existence of two large "heights" or "hand-made tumuli", i. e. the accumulation of huge quantities of earth.

Most of the authors in later periods did not realize what the above mentioned reference meant. To all of them, these «hand-made tumuli» were simply, natural formations, mere hillocks; thus minimizing the importance of the ruins.

Another point about which the old chroniclers agree is that in their own times, a wall was still standing, which corresponds to the present building called "Kalasasaya", whose existence a great number of authors have also denied. We shall presently deal with this at length.



## TIAHUANACO AND THE RECENT INVESTIGATIONS

After the old chroniclers, the ruins of Tiahuanaco only deserve the fleeting attention of some travellers, among whom one counts some scholars or some curious people. As a result, and added to the older data, actually a legend is born about these monuments.

The fundamental interpretation was that the building known as the Kalasasaya, consisting of a series of columns or pillars which surround a great quadrangular space, formed a sort of "cromlech", similar to those of Europe and especially to that of Stonehenge in England. The "heights" as such, disappear in these descriptions, or else they are referred to as a natural hillock, somewhat reformed to serve as a defensive fortress.

Later on come the scientific researchers. Their vision, generally speaking, did not encompass more than what we have already mentioned. Plans of the ruins - all incomplete - were drawn up, photographs were taken, some excavations were made, more harmful than useful, and phrases such as "megalithic ruins", "millenary city" ran often, but no really serious studies were carried out.

Scientific investigation fared better concerning the study of this civilization, outside the area of the above mentioned city; long ago, it was easy to identify the characteristics of the ceramics belonging to the Tiahuanaco civilization. Later on, the same was traced from Cochabamba to the Peruvian Coast, including the North of Lima, and all the North of Chile. It was obvious that we were before a great cultural expansion, which had taken place before the Incas, and whose scope was about half a million square kilometers.



## THE CULTURAL PERIODS OF TIAHUANACO

Through the study of the ceramics, which offers better results than the incomplete study carried out up to now on the ruins, it has been possible to divide the culture of Tiahuanaco in three great periods of development. Similar writings, based on the remains of the buildings have not met the approval of the investigators, and we can say that they have failed to prove convincing.

The three above mentioned periods, can be distinguished as follows, according to the ceramics:

### a) OLD TIAHUANACO

Its characteristic feature is a painted and polychrome type of ceramics, with little polish; its main forms are: some kind of demijohn, a perfumer with a feline head and another sort of demijohn or small, long-necked, wide-mouthed pitcher. There are no statues or monoliths which can with certainty be ascribed to this period, but we include, as belonging to it, the ones found to the South, in Jesus de Machaca or Huancané, and the small monolith found by Wendell Bennett in the small Kalasasaya, whose adornments are very different from the ones that are found later. Posnansky ascribes the two small idols, which are seen to-day in front of the village church, to this period, something which we view with scepticism. Our assumptions are based on the fact that adornments similar to those found on the monoliths at Huancané can be seen in some of the ceramics previously mentioned.

### b) CLASSICAL TIAHUANACO

Belonging to this period we have a very fine type of polychrome ceramics, with careful polish and the greatest thinness in the sides of the vases. There are innumerable forms. The ruins ascribed to this period seem to be practically all the Tiahuanaco ruins, and the Sun Gate also, and the monoliths with geometrical figures, etc. Both this period



and the previous one had little geographical expansion, and therefore their remains can be found only in the south region of the Lake and in some of its islands. Therefore, local cultures achieved in art what they could not achieve in expansion.

### c) EXPANSIVE TIAHUANACO

Its ceramics continues, at the beginning of the previous period, but already without artistic creation; it declines in every way later on. There is not, in Tiahuanaco itself, any architectural remain or monolith that could safely be ascribed to this period, even though many tombs show ceramics of the Expansive Period. This is the period that spreads out over the already mentioned regions, from Cochabamba to the North of Lima and to the North of Chile. We do not know of one monolith coming from these expansion sites. This period, towards its close, transforms itself in the historic Colla Kingdom, conquered by the Incas under Pachacutec.

### TIAHUANACO AND THE FANCIFUL ESTIMATE OF ITS ANTIQUITY

The issue of the antiquity of the Thiahuanaco Civilization is something that was raised by the first chroniclers who visited its ruins, and there was one who asserted that these were the oldest in the continent. In its original sense, this statement meant only that the ruins were older than the Inca's, but the idea of an exaggerated antiquity successfully caught fire.

There have been many writers who have ascribed fabulous dates to these ruins, most of the figures ranging up to 12.000 years B. C., a magic figure associated with the date of the alleged sinking of the assumed Atlantis and which exerts its influence on many present living human beings.



In Bolivia, especially, Engineer Arthur Posnansky devoted many years of his life to finding mythical interpretations to alleged astronomic calculus obtained measuring the ruins; his inferences were that the Tiahuanaco Civilization was some 12.000 or 15.000 years old (Classical Period), and that the same had been the original center of world civilization.

These interpretations have not been accepted by any serious investigator, neither in Bolivia nor in the rest of the world. Furthermore, similar interpretations have been made about other remains of old civilizations, not only of other places in America but also in the Old World. They are the product of an infantile state in scientific investigation, where personal research work is not yet controlled by adequate self-criticism and where the criticism of other investigators is unknown or deliberately ignored.

### THE REAL ANTIQUITY OF TIAHUANACO

In a short time it is expected to arrive at exact dates about the antiquity of Tiahuanaco, in each of the above mentioned periods. These will be the result of the latest procedure known as "14 Carbon Dating", through which it is possible to fix the date in which any organic remain ceased living. In Tiahuanaco itself, samples for this analysis have already been obtained.

While awaiting the results of this test, it is right to state that, according to up-to-date knowledge, the antiquity of the ruins of Tiahuanaco, in its Classical Period, is not earlier than the Christian Era; the Old Period is generally and likewise located within that Era, but some investigators date it some few centuries earlier.

The investigation carried out in this field has encompassed the events that took place in the Peruvian area where the Tiahuanaco Civilization spread during the third period, in a



higher proportion than the study conducted in Bolivia itself. The pioneer was Professor Max Uhle, who first set down the correlations and the chronological dates. The same were followed and modified «after being controlled» by several investigators, among which we can observe differences ranging up to centuries but most of the times not surpassing them much.

We can state, in global terms, that what is accepted today about the antiquity of Tiahuanaco is as follows:

Old Tiahuanaco is placed in the first centuries of the Era, and it must have prolonged itself more or less until the year 500 A. D., the Peruvian investigator Julio C. Tello is the only important scholar who has accepted an antiquity that could go up to a similar date before the Christian Era.

Classical Tiahuanaco might have developed between 500 and 800 A. D. and some investigators have even stated 1.000 A. D.

Expansive Tiahuanaco could have begun towards 900 or 1.000 A.D. having lasted, in global figures, up to 1.200 A.D.

At this date - which marks an obvious decadence-might have started the cultural transformation which produced the historical Colla Kingdom, conquered by the Incas in 1.400. This said cultural transformation is noticed above all in the ceramics, which after the total decadence of the forms of vases and their decorations, takes up new leads and starts a weak renaissance already different to what Tiahuanaco had been.

Even so, the historical Colla Kingdom would be a political continuation of the Tiahuanaco Empire of the Expansive Period, for it comprised all the present territories of La Paz, Cochabamba, Northern Chile, and Puno and Arequipa in Perú.



## THE ORIGIN OF THE CIVILIZATION OF TIAHUANACO

As to the origin of the Tiahuanaco Civilization, the solution of the several issues is slowly taking place, above all through the comparison with the rest of the indigenous civilizations, and with the whole of the population of the continent.

The native population of America originally derives from two great and distinct migration pathways originated in the Old World. The first, very likely no less than 50,000 years old, is the result of an Asiatic migration, better said Siberian, which arrived here through the Behring Straits, at the beginning of the last Ice Age.

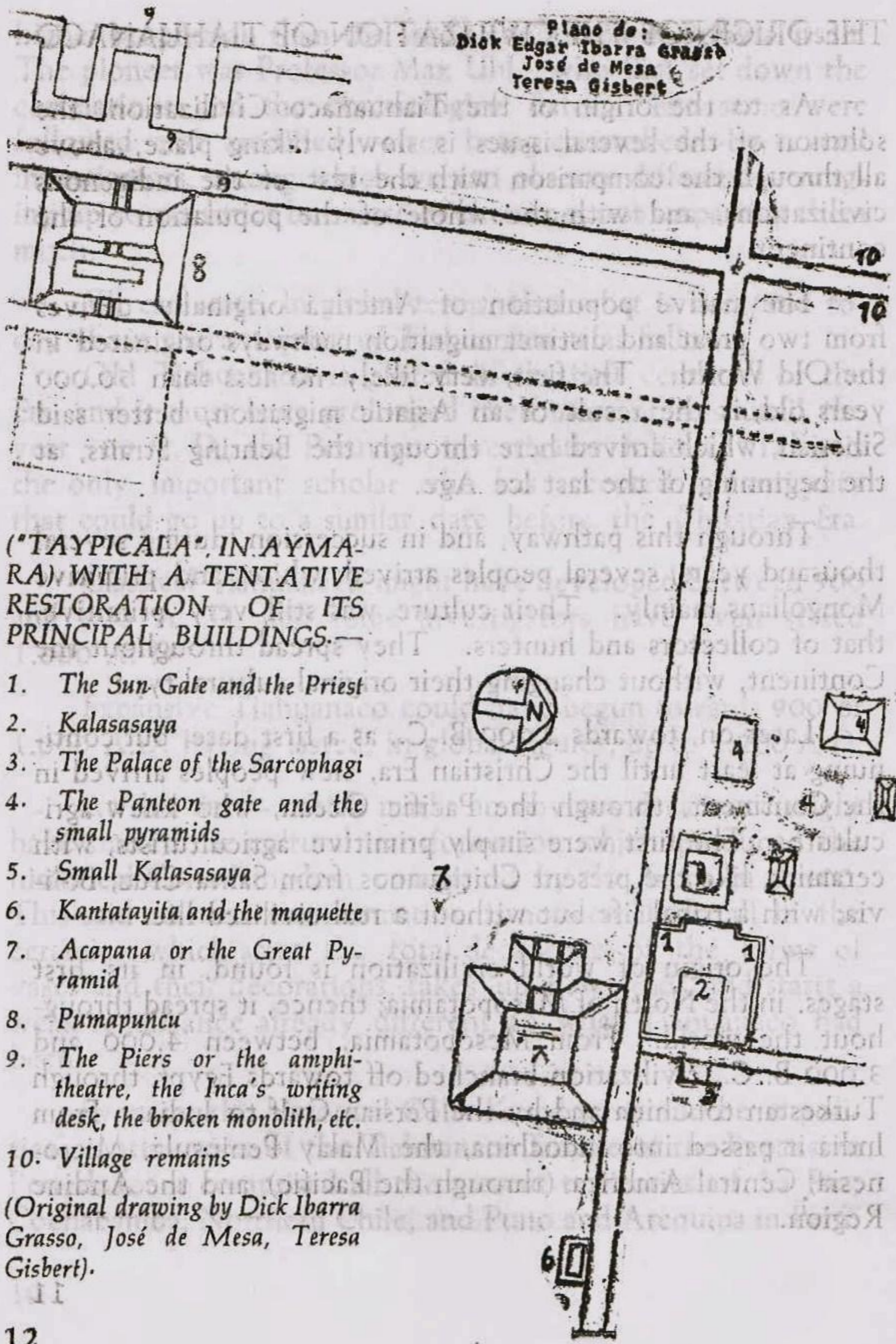
Through this pathway, and in succession, during several thousand years, several peoples arrived: whites and primitive Mongolians mainly. Their culture was still very primitive, that of collectors and hunters. They spread throughout the Continent, without changing their original cultural type.

Later on, towards 2,000 B. C., as a first date, but continuing at least until the Christian Era, new peoples arrived in the Continent, through the Pacific Ocean, who knew agriculture. The first were simply primitive agriculturists, with ceramics, like the present Chiriguanos from Santa Cruz, Bolivia; with a tribal life but without a real civilized life.

The origin of world civilization is found, in its first stages, in the North of Mesopotamia; thence, it spread throughout the world. From Mesopotamia, between 4,000 and 3,000 B. C., civilization branched off towards Egypt, through Turkestan to China and by the Persian Gulf to India. From India it passed into Indochina, the Malay Peninsula, Micronesia, Central America (through the Pacific) and the Andine Region.



Plano de:  
 Dick Edgar Ibarra Grasso  
 José de Mesa  
 Teresa Gisbert



**("TAYPICALA" IN AYMA-  
 RA) WITH A TENTATIVE  
 RESTORATION OF ITS  
 PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS.—**

1. The Sun Gate and the Priest
2. Kalasasaya
3. The Palace of the Sarcophagi
4. The Panteon gate and the small pyramids
5. Small Kalasasaya
6. Kantatayita and the maquette
7. Acapana or the Great Pyramid
8. Pumapuncu
9. The Piers or the amphitheatre, the Inca's writing desk, the broken monolith, etc.
10. Village remains

(Original drawing by Dick Ibarra Grasso, José de Mesa, Teresa Gisbert).



The civilization is made up of an urban life and a social organization of castes, with hierarchy and a theocratic king. This State Culture originated the Tiahuanaco Civilization.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE SEVERAL CULTURAL PERIODS OF TIAHUANACO

Even before the event of the Tiahuanaco Civilization, several agricultural peoples with knowledge of ceramics and copper arrived in the Andine Region of Bolivia, across the Andes mountain range. These, however, did not know about the polychrome painting in ceramics, and it was these peoples who went into the Argentine Northwest.

The First Period of Tiahuanaco already displays painted ceramics, with clear evidence of a more developed culture; its style in painting is associated above all with the Recuay style, from the Huayllas Passage in Peru. The Second Period, termed Classical, has fine ceramics, beautifully painted, with the typical features of several Peruvian cultures appearing on it, Nazca particularly; its birthplace lies to the South of Lima on the Peruvian Coast.

The Expansive Period is a derivative, perhaps of a provincial style of the Classical Culture of Tiahuanaco. We partly find the explanation for its decadence in the fact that the military interests, necessarily the outcome of the expansion, predominated over the artistic. Evidently, the Tiahuanaco culture of the Classical and Expansive Periods corresponds to the Aymara peoples.

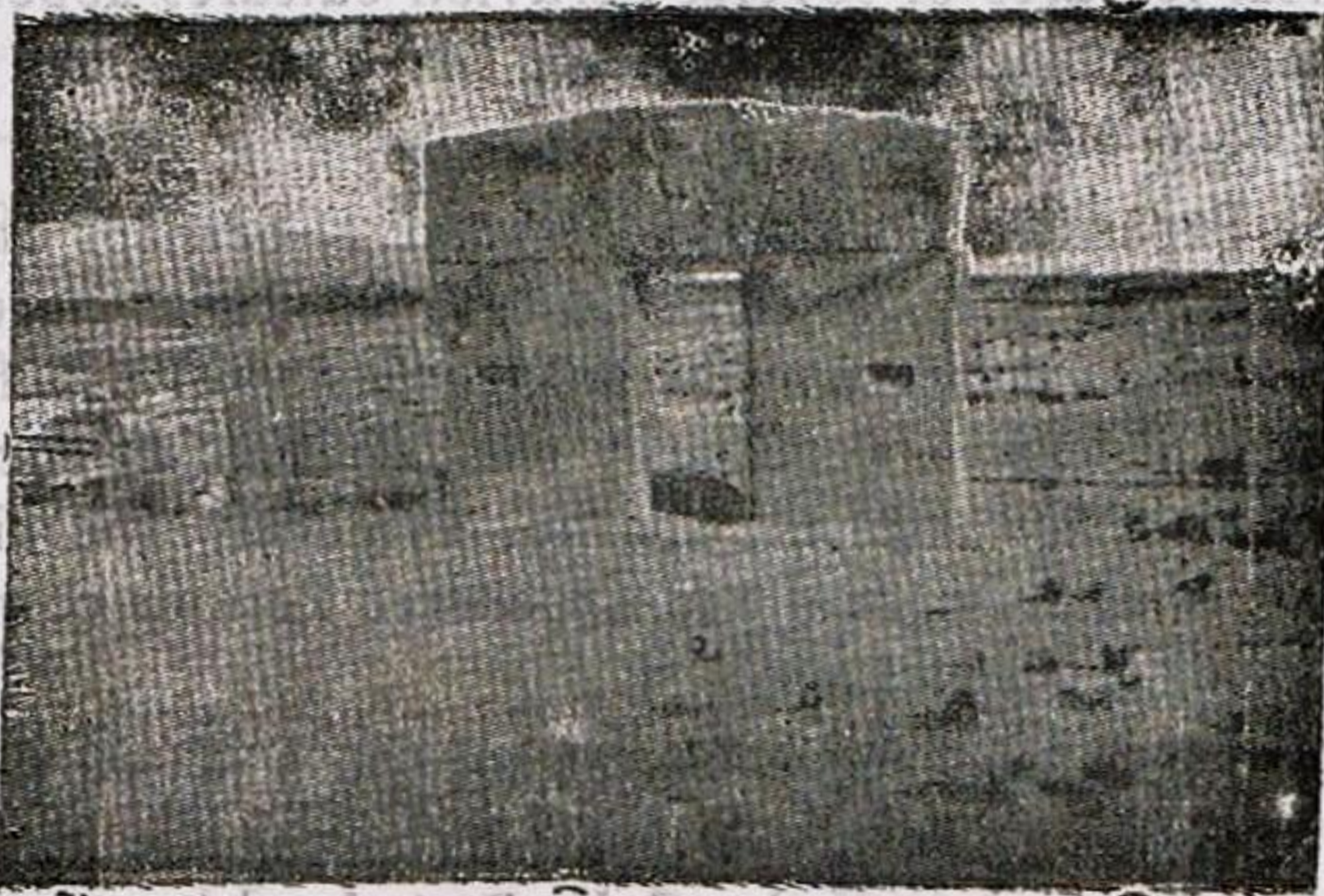
The Inca Civilization, most likely, is a marginal product of the Expansive Tiahuanaco Civilization. Its ceramics is largely linked to that of the Colla Period, although in some details it has features of the Chincha Civilization, of Central Peru, which was also influenced by the Collas.



## VISITING THE RUINS

### ARRIVAL AT TIAHUANACO

We will not furnish information here concerning the means to get to the ruins, for the only organized system consists of some rail-cars, of little practical value owing to their time table. The traveller can also arrive there by car or by one of the trucks which daily journey to the port of Guaqui, leaving from Buenos Aires Avenue in La Paz.



*The Sun Gate: in the Northwest corner of the Kalasasaya*



The railway station stands in a place that is almost midway between the two principal groups of ruins, that of the Kalasasaya-Acapana and the Pumapuncu. The main road from La Paz runs a few metres to the north side of the Kalasasaya and goes on to the village.

We believe that the traveller wants to see the Sun Gate first of all; it can easily be seen by those that come from the main road and also by those coming from the station. We will therefore start our description with it.

Having the map in mind (Page 8) it will be easy to relate the series of numbers attached to it, to our writing. These numbers will also serve to indicate the places we visited.



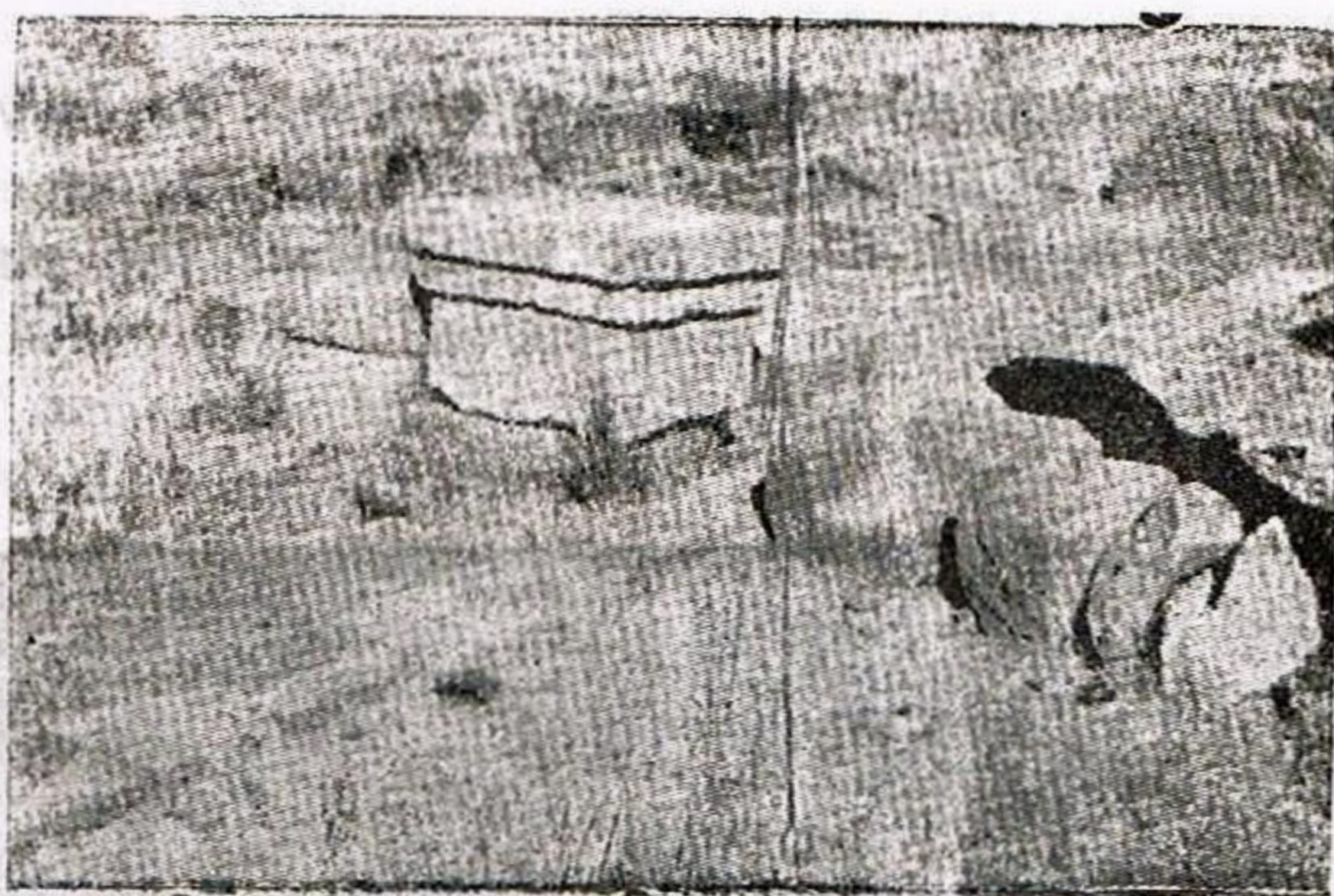
*The Sun Gate: detail of its top, showing the bas-relief*



1.- *The sun gate and the priest*

We are now before the famous Sun Gate, a monolithic block, carved in the hard volcanic stone called andesite, whose frontispiece is covered with a fine texture of bas-reliefs of an enigmatic import.

It lies to-day on the northwest corner of the Kalasasaya. It is only natural that the visitor does not concern himself with the endless rows of the Kalasasaya pillars; he busies himself with the Sun Gate at first, leaving the study of these pillars for later.



*Monolithic pilaster, terminal part of a column to support the roof, lying by the Sun Gate.*

The present location of the Sun Gate is not the original one; it has been moved many times, and in 1904 was moved for the last time; nothing is known about its primitive location. Considering its proportions as a whole, we cannot say it is another think of it as a whole carved stone. It is then that its monumental characteristic stands out in full. The opening in the door is rather narrow and is not very high, for some persons of high stature have to stoop if they want to cross it.



We provide a detail which the visitor will not find in other writings: in the lower part of the opening which at present is covered with some cement; this breakage clearly shows that the Gate has had a threshold, made in the same block of stone and that irreverent hands broke it a long time ago.



*Monolith called the Priest, Standing Southwest of the Kalasasaya.*

The reliefs in the above mentioned frieze are the most noteworthy; they totally cover the frontispiece of the Sun Gate. As a whole, they consist of a central figure, with a human shape, whose face stands out and is crowned with rays. It is seated on a kind of throne, which prolongs itself downwards and sideways in a series of lines forming a sort of Grecian fret, with outstanding condor heads and suns



or moons?) in-between their fissures. On both sides of the central figure and above the fret already mentioned, there are three rows of human figures lying as if they were a procession towards the central one. Those at the top and the bottom have human faces, whereas the middle ones show a condor head which is probably a mask. All these figures wield a rod or sceptre; the central figure has two, one in each hand, and in analysing details one can see that it is a sort of fagot of javelins or throwing spears, and an «estolica» or propeller, i. e. the predecessor of the bow, which was used in order to have greater violence.

What does this group of figures mean? There are many interpretations concerning it and none of them has been sufficiently substantial to convince the investigators. To some, it is a monarch and his principal subjects, to others, a military monument; there has been someone who has said that it is a monument to agriculture, commemorating the struggle with an insect plague. The majority have insisted on the idea of a calendar, but their interpretations have been diverse: either it was a lunar calendar similar to that of Mesopotamia, or a Mayan calendar, with months of twenty days, or a calendar very much like ours, with twelve months of thirty days each. Professor Arthur Posnansky's theory, consisting of the latter, is the most organized as far as we know, although we do not mean by this that it is true or that we personally accept it. According to this interpretation the central figure represents the month of September, with which the indigenous year starts, and the suns of the lower part of the frieze, up to the human figure holding a horn, the following eleven months.



The issue concerning what this Gate has been is inseparable from the one about its original place. Such a thing is not known and there are various interpretations. We believe that it could not have been an outside door, in the open air, such as it stands at present, but the inner door of a building, something like the entrance to the holy of holies in the principal temple. In this case it is likely that it must have stood on top of the pyramid of Acapana, as we shall later on see.



*Row of pillars of the Kalasasaya, on the North Side*

There is a Mayan building, in Palenque, which has a gate similar to this although it is not monolithic; and it stands precisely for what we have mentioned before, the entrance to the holy of holies, the "TABLERO DE LA CRUZ".

On the occasion of dealing with the other gates which still stand in Tiahuanaco, all of them monolithic, we will be able to furnish other comments about this particular gate and venture one about its original location.

From the Sun Gate, in a direct line to the South, until the farthest extreme, Southwest of the Kalasasaya, it is possible to distinguish a railing inside which an important monolith stands.



It is The Priest, termed thus on account of a mistaken translation of an indigenous word which meant «Father Stone» (Piedra Padre). At present it is very deteriorated, almost broken in two, and held together with an iron ring. It is one of the most typical monoliths of the Classical Period, according to its shape and reliefs, among which the most outstanding are those of the belt, crab-shaped. Its hands hold objects not altogether identifiable.

This monolith or statue, does not stand either in its original place; it has been moved and nobody knows where it was when first found.

## 2.- *The Kalasasaya.*

Once inside this building, we notice that it is surrounded by quadrangular columns or pillars, whatever denomination one may choose. Its name means, as a matter of fact, and in Aymara language, «Stones standing in a row».

It makes an immense precinct, 120 metres long and 118 metres wide, stretching East to West. All along its sides the above said pillars stand, like sentries keeping the secrets of the past.

To the East side, in the direction of the sunrise, almost in the middle between the pillars, one finds a big stone perron, which has often been called «monolithic», but this is wrong, for it is made of several big stones. It is some six metres long and on account of the destructive work of time, the stairs are already irregularly shaped.

From this position in the perron, and as one mounts it and looks towards the whole of the Kalasasaya building, one can re-create it as it was originally, and also appreciate its difference with whatever one could see at first sight.



From the above mentioned position, a sort of courtyard can be seen, which stretches from the end of the perron and goes a little further beyond half the building; to the furthest end, and on both sides stand several mounds, as if forming small hills which hide most of the pillars. They form a sort of U surrounding the courtyard, reaching the flanks of the pillars.

Very few have noticed the existence of the mounds and their importance, and yet it is these which provide the original form of the Kalasasaya, as we will later see.

There is no such thing as pillars or columns; they are pedestals supporting a continuous wall which has been mentioned by several chroniclers and which stood in part until 1620; there are some remnants of this wall, under the earth, as can be seen in the North side, slightly eastwards from where the Sun Gate stands. This wall in its time reached the height of the bigger pillars and surrounded all the building; the terreplein which at present is found dissembled inside the Kalasasaya was a real platform. This platform, from the outside reached the height of the wall, which in its stead was simply a retaining wall.

There was another wall inside, of a more modest size, surrounding the courtyard already mentioned; there are very few remains of this wall, hardly sufficient to notice its existence. Thus we see that the Kalasasaya was made of: a big terreplein, some four metres high, with an external retaining wall and a smaller one inside which overlooked a courtyard. The access to the latter was made possible by a big perron. We provide the reconstruction with the corresponding drawing.

The inside courtyard must have had a series of steps, possibly five, which were used to climb to the higher platform, and on it, on its West side, it seems that there must have been a series of square turrets.



In the site called Kantatayita, which we will consider in section 6, there is a big carved stone which is, precisely, the maquette of a Tiahuanaco building. Posnansky believed it was the Palace of the Sarcophagi, but W. Bennett and ourselves have identified it with the Kalasasaya already considered before. With our description, particularly with the vision we get from the perron, the central courtyard and the U formed by the terreplein, it is possible to realize the complete identity of our view with the maquette.

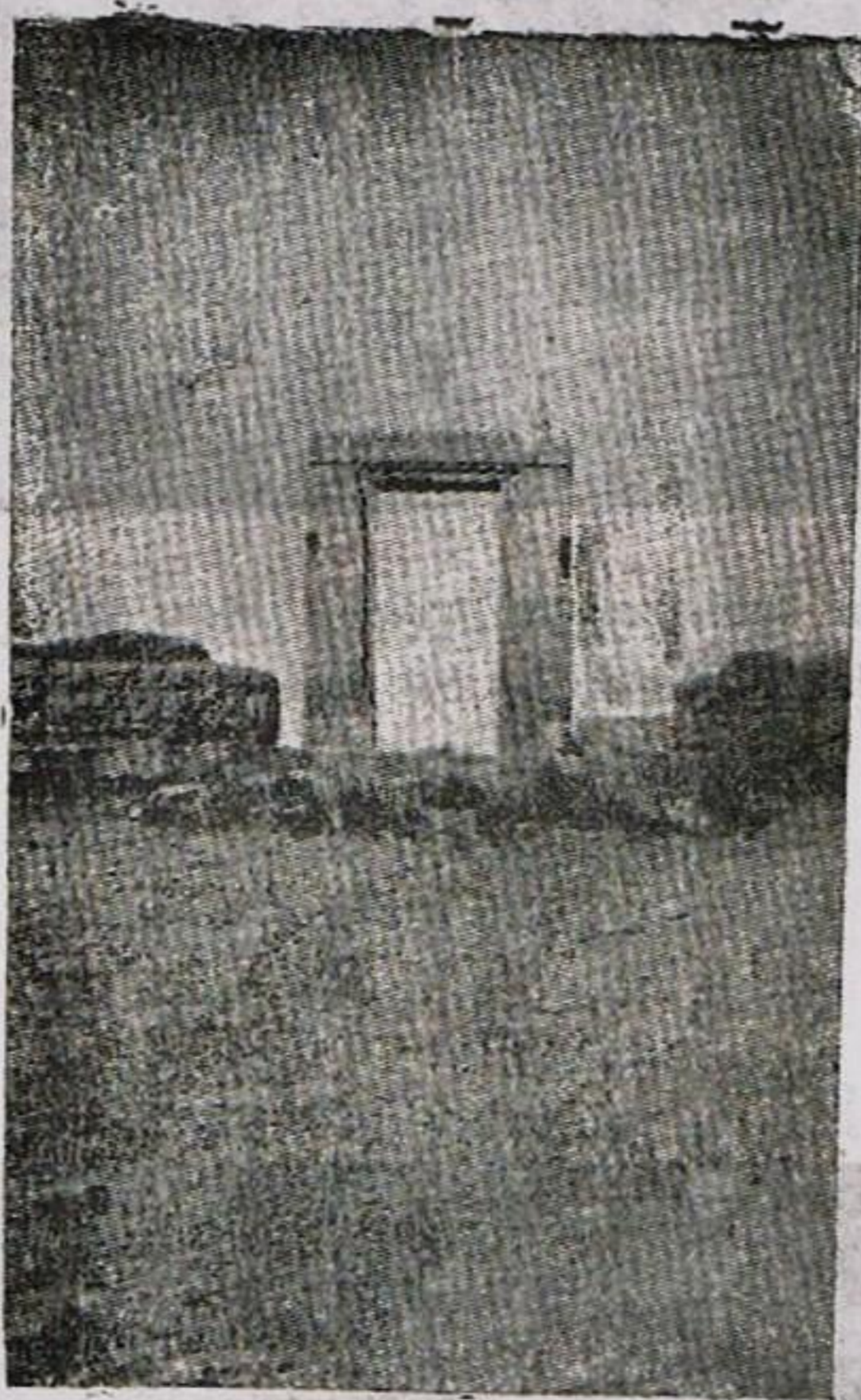
There are still some missing data about the Kalasasaya. To its North and East sides, at the foot of the pillars, a three metre talus can be seen still, with retention groundwork. There must be something similar on the other sides but everything is covered with the earth accumulated through the years. That is to say, that all the construction of the Kalasasaya is built on a small pyramidal base and pedestal.

To the West, the pillars form something like a projection over the above mentioned quadrangular set, and besides, they are bigger and of a harder stone. Some investigators have assumed that it is a latter aggregate, but this version has not been sufficiently cleared.

### 3.- *The palace of the Sarcophagi.*

West of the Kalasasaya, a few metres from the end of the pillars, there are the basements of another building, at present greatly deteriorated, which used to be called the PALACE OF THE SARCOPHAGI, according to the investigators who discovered it in 1903, on account of having found some sort of stone cases which they interpreted as such.

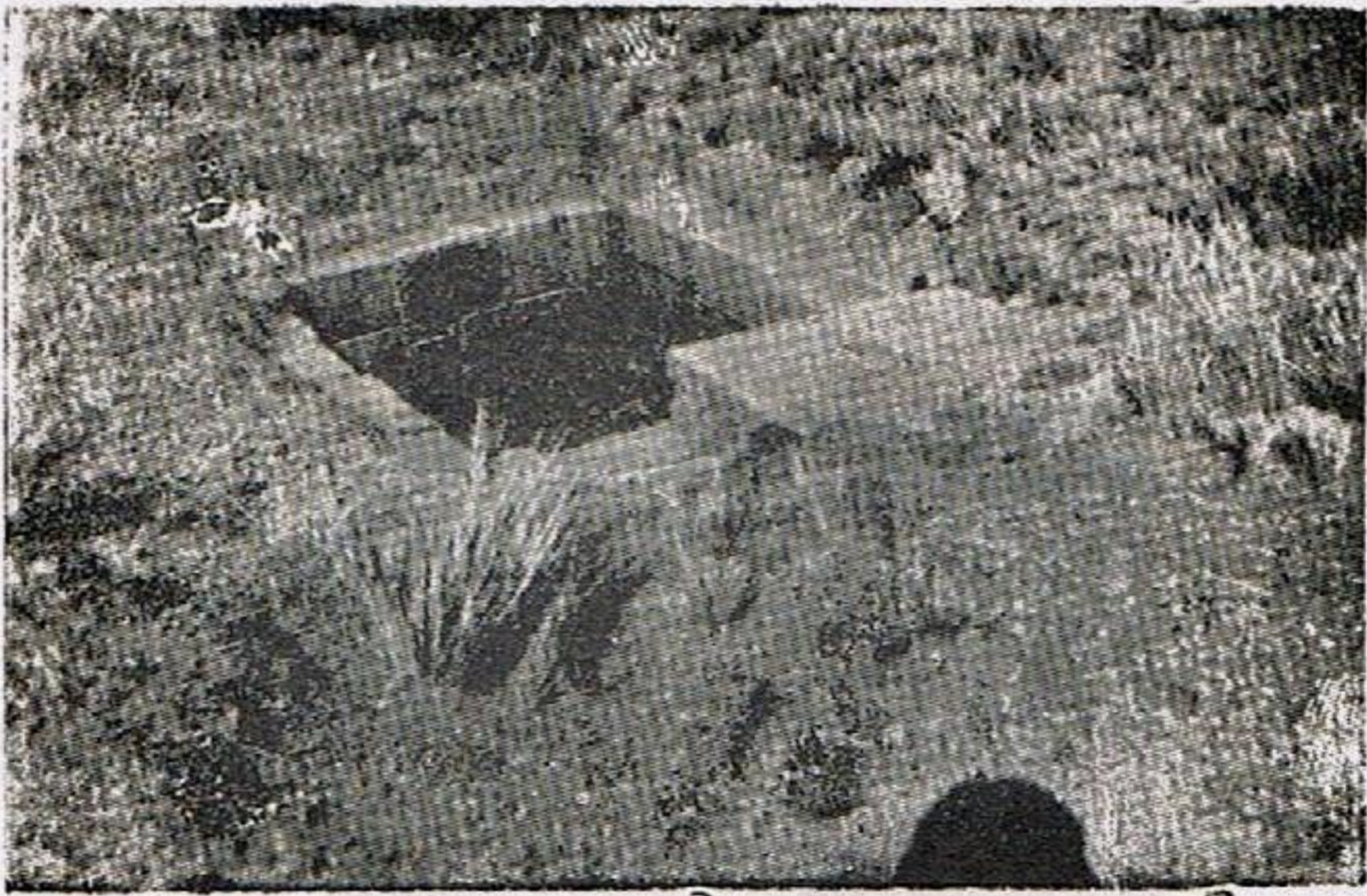




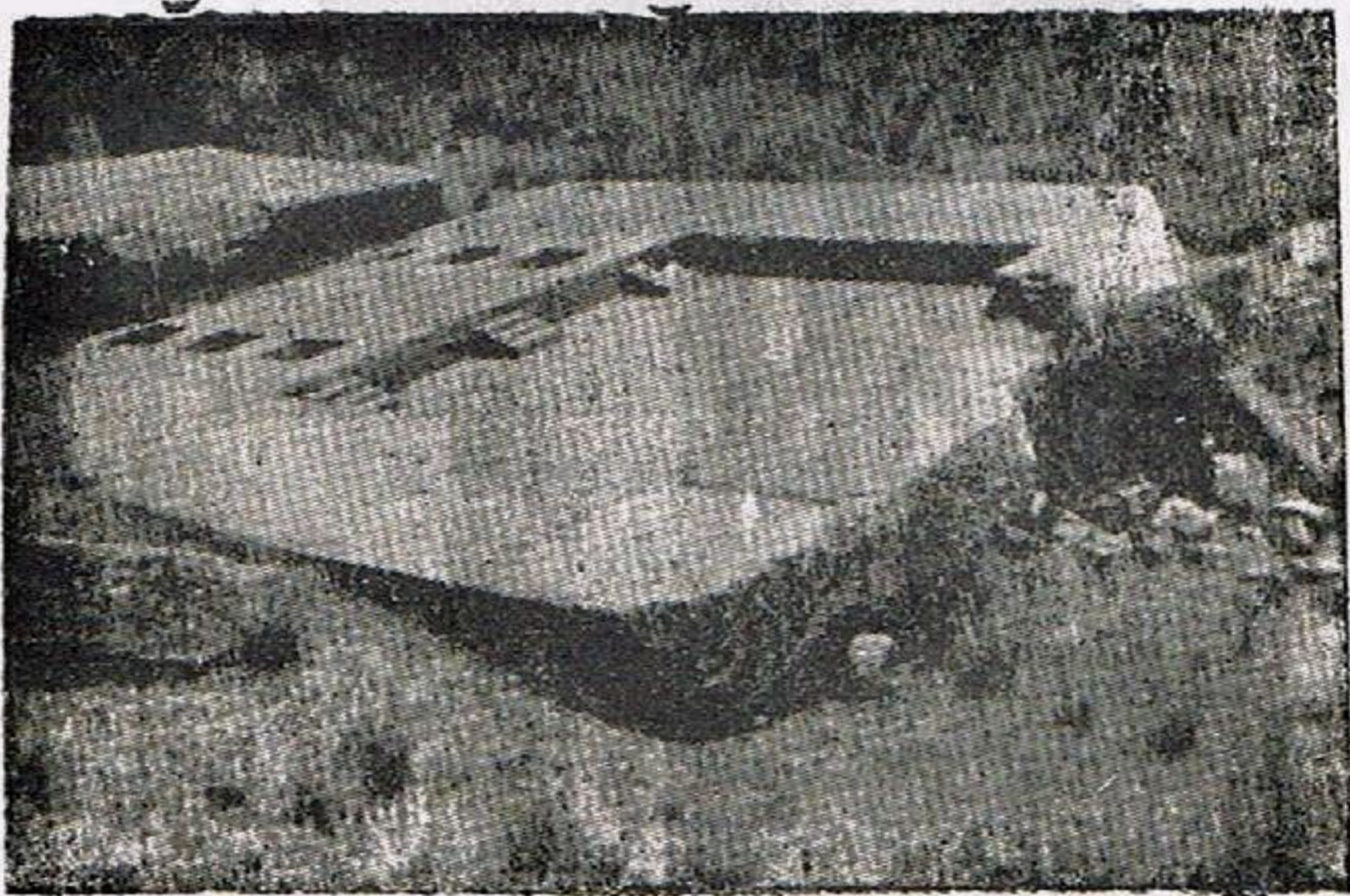
*The Pantheon or Moon Gate standing  
at present on a small pyramid.*

The remains of the Kanakavita, which exactly reproduces  
the original shape of the Kanakavita.





*A view of the subterranean «room», more likely a tomb,  
to the North of the Kalasasaya.*



*The maquette of the Kantatayita, which exactly reproduces  
the original shape of the Kalasasaya.*



It is a building which has been forty metres wide. Its remains show us a double row of foundations surrounding a central courtyard; to the East side there are some other carved stones, totally displaced so that at present one cannot appreciate its original disposition; nevertheless it was there that stood an entrance and a flight of steps, with a tiled courtyard of which remain only some few photographs.

The double row of foundations gives us clearly the shape of the building. Evidently, these foundations correspond to a construction composed of a series of rooms or halls facing the central courtyard. The stones of the inner foundations give evidence of big portals, according to the distance between them.

The space between the external and internal walls is a little more than eight metres. Such a width, to have a roof, evidently required something to support it. Our interpretation is that there must have been a level roof formed of big slabs, which in the middle were supported by stone columns in the form of pilasters.

Excavations would be needed in order to confirm the above, but instead, the pilasters exist. On both sides of the Sun Gate two of them can be clearly seen, beautifully carved. They are square and end in two enlargements made on the same stone. Other similar pilasters are found in the present-day church, in the village, which in number of eleven have been used to support the row of arches of the courtyard at the entrance. There are some three or four in the houses of the village, serving as seats.

On the West part, within the walls of the respective hall, there is an entrance to a subterranean gallery which likely is a drainage works.



#### 4.- *The Moon Gate and the small pyramids*

From where we were standing, on the West side of the Palace of the Sarcophagi, we could walk a little further towards the Northwest. Is is there where at first sight one sees four small tumuli. On one of them, the biggest and called the "Phanteon of the variolous" - thus denominated on account of the many interments which were carried out there on the occasion of an epidemy - there is another monolithic door.

Before dealing with this other door, we will start by stating that these four small tumuli have all been small pyramids. To-day they are very deteriorated and their shape cannot be appreciated, but the biggest still keeps its pyramidal for, somewhat quadrangular and with a top platform that is quite plane.

To the South of these remains of pyramids, and to the west of the Palace of the Sarcophagi, there are some few foundations which show that there must have stood in that place another quadrangular building, some sixty-two metres long and thirty metres wide. We cannot add further information concerning the latter, on account of its utter deteriorated state.

What we have called the Moon Gate is so called by some authors; others, Posnansky among them, keep this name for another gate that stands in the Pumapuncu unit, with which we will deal later.

It is a much simpler gate than the Sun Gate, smaller and with thinner walls. Its frontal part shows on the top a carved frieze, whose designs correspond in their pattern with those of the base frieze of the Sun Gate, although it has fishes heads instead of condor heads.



We also believe that it must have been an inside gate in a much bigger building. Naturally, it does not stand in its primitive place.

Coming to the Kalasasaya, to its north side, a bit to the North East of the place where the Sun Gate stands, there can be noticed the aperture of a small subterranean room, all in carved stone which had also a stone roof. According to Posnansky, this was one of the "rooms" where the personages of Tiahuanaco used to live. Personally, we believe that they would have preferred to live in the Palace of the Sarcophagi, and that this was a tomb, or perhaps, the entrance or atrium of the real tomb, which might be below. There are three or four other similar rooms, but they are all covered.

5.- *The small Kalasasaya or semi-subterranean temple.*

We are now turning towards the East. We pass by the pillars of the Kalasasaya already described, and in front of its perron, are found the remains of another building, a kalasasaya of smaller size, or semi-subterranean Temple as Posnansky called it.

It is in a deplorable state; old photographs show that it was a construction with walls supported by pillars, very much like the big Kalasasaya already dealt with, but in a more modest size. Very little remains of these walls.

According to Posnansky it was a building of the First Tiahuanaco; according to Bennett, of the Third Period. We believe that it corresponded, like all Tiahuanaco, to the Classical Period.



On the walls of this construction, by now disappeared, there was a series of human heads crudely carved, of a naturalistic style; part of the same are kept at the National Museum in La Paz. These heads were the cause of all the arguments about the epoch of this building. According to their style, they are not classical, and therefore to Posnansky they corresponded to the First Period and to Bennett, to the last. Our interpretation is based on the assumption that they correspond to a culture before Tiahuanaco, these might have been found by the population of that time and used as adornments.

It is fit to make clear that the shape of this Kalasasaya has nothing to do with the shape of the above mentioned. The name of Kalasasaya is used only in respect of the existence of the standing stones, arranged in their present state. The building must have been something like a courtyard surrounded by walls; Posnansky assumed that the courtyard was below the level of the outside ground. This has not been proved, although it could be far from being impossible.

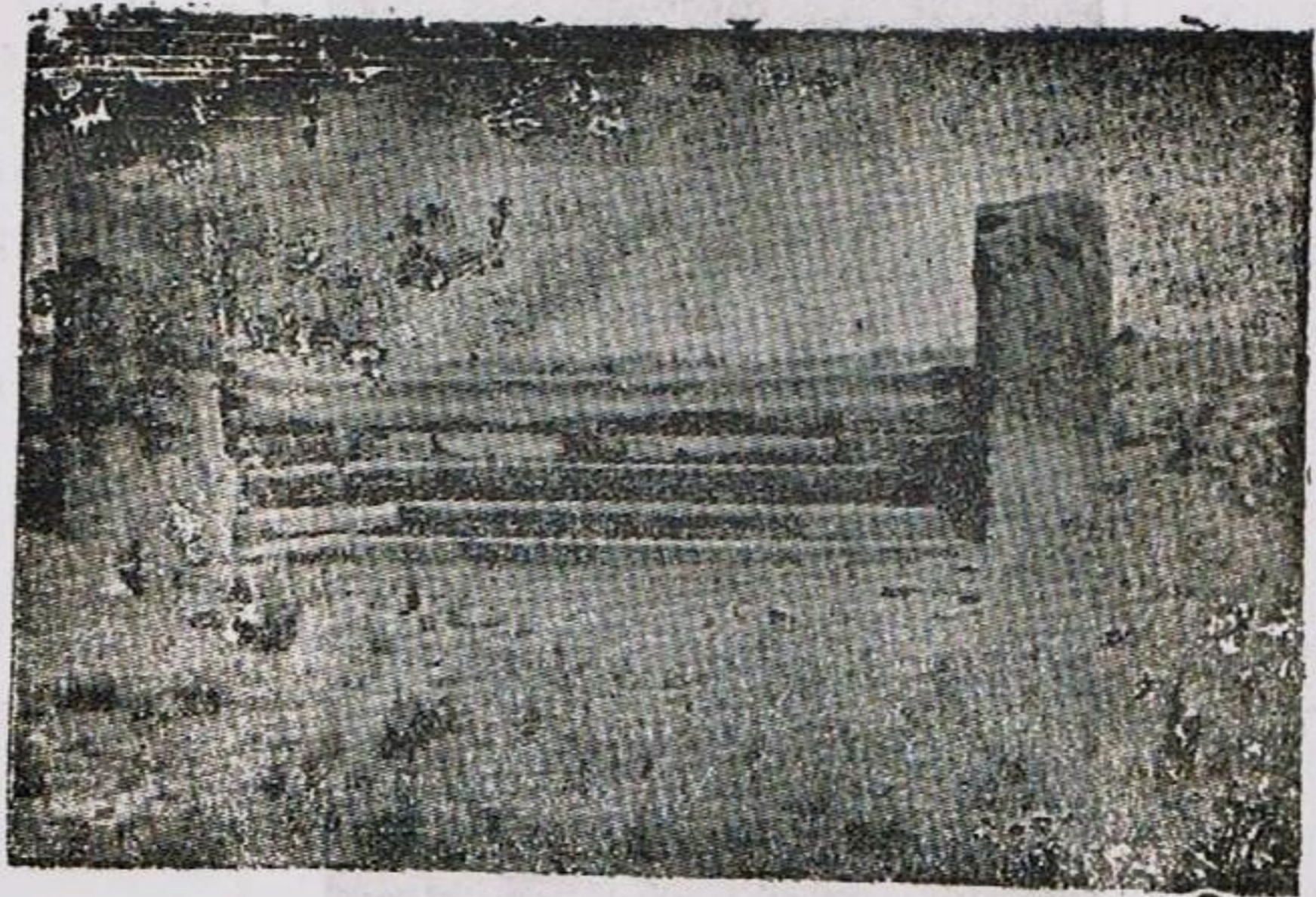
Inside the building, two monoliths were found, one of them still there and the other, called "The Bennett Monolith", in homage to its discoverer, has been taken to La Paz. It is the biggest of all the monoliths found in Tiahuanaco up till now, and it is covered with bas-reliefs, in the classical style.

Posnansky, in one of his rare valuable studies, has demonstrated the resemblance and relationship of these bas-reliefs with those of the Sun Gate.



The monument standing in the street is of  
granite and very primitive. It is a simple  
block with a few steps leading to the top and which  
has not the general appearance of the other monuments.  
There is a high altar on the top of the monument  
on the west side. It is a small square and is  
not very high.

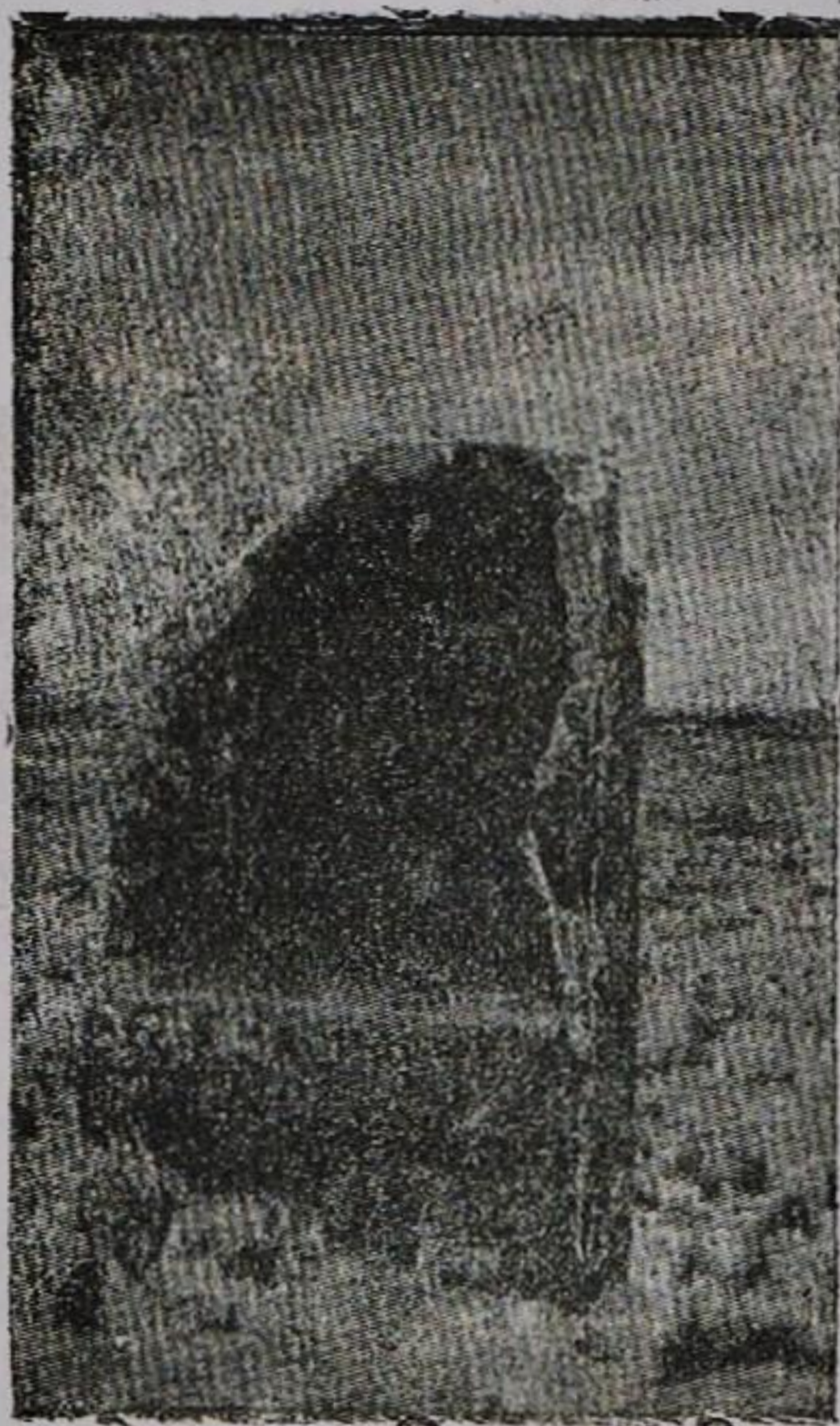
Our interpretation of the hieroglyphs on  
the first column is as follows: The  
name of the monument is 'The Great Perron of the  
Kalasasaya'.



*The Great Perron of the Kalasasaya.*

On our way to the Kalasasaya we reached  
the Kalasasaya and the Kalasasaya is a large  
square of about 100 feet on each side. It is  
situated on the North side of the house which  
is a large building. No traces of the avenue  
are left, except the space between  
the Kalasasaya and Acapulco. Dr. C. G. ...  
states that it was more than three miles wide.





*A big andesite pillar of the South  
Wall of the Kalasasaya.*



The monolith still standing in the small Kalasasaya, is of another style, and very primitive. It is a crude pillar, quadrangular in shape with carved figures in bas-relief, and which have not the geometry and beauty of the classical specimens. There is a human shape, with some felines at its feet, serpents on its sides, etc. It is of red grindstone which is soft and easy for carving.

Our interpretation is that this monolith corresponds to the First Period of Tiahuanaco, the Old Tiahuanaco. The same thing we said in the case of the naturalistic heads applies here, i. e. that this might have been found by the Tiahuanaco people of the classical period and they in turn used it as adornment, or as an idol or god in their building. Similar monoliths are found in Santiago de Huata, on the lake coast, and in Jesús de Machaca, four leagues to the South of Tiahuanaco.

#### 6.- *Kantatayita or Kantataita.*

The Indians we have addressed or listened to, pronounce this name according to the first spelling, but there are some writers who employ the second.

They are the ruins of another palace, to the East of what we have just described, and a little to the South.

On our map can be seen a great avenue, which reaches the Kalasasaya and the Palace of the Sarcophagi; in front of it, to the South, stands Acapana. The same avenue reaches the North side of the building which we are dealing with. No traces of this avenue are left, except the space between the Kalasasaya and Acapana, but P. Cobo describes it in detail, stating that it was more than fifteen metres wide.



The Kantatayita has been a building similar to the Palace of the Sarcophagi, forty metres long and thirty metres wide, but it is far more deteriorated, only in some places can be seen the remains of the double row of foundations, which formed the rooms or halls.

The most extraordinary thing about this building is that on its west central side can be found the monumental maquette previously mentioned. It is a gigantic slab, little more than four metres long, four metres wide and thirty centimetres high. It is damaged in some places, especially where the perron which served as entrance to the courtyard should have been, but the details mentioned before can be observed quite clearly, that is, an entrance place, a large courtyard, five small perrons leading to a platform and in its rear part, six holes, symmetrically quadrangular which seem to have served to fit stones in the shape of small turrets.

This is the best and most complete maquette that has been left to us of all the indigenous Pre-Columbian America.

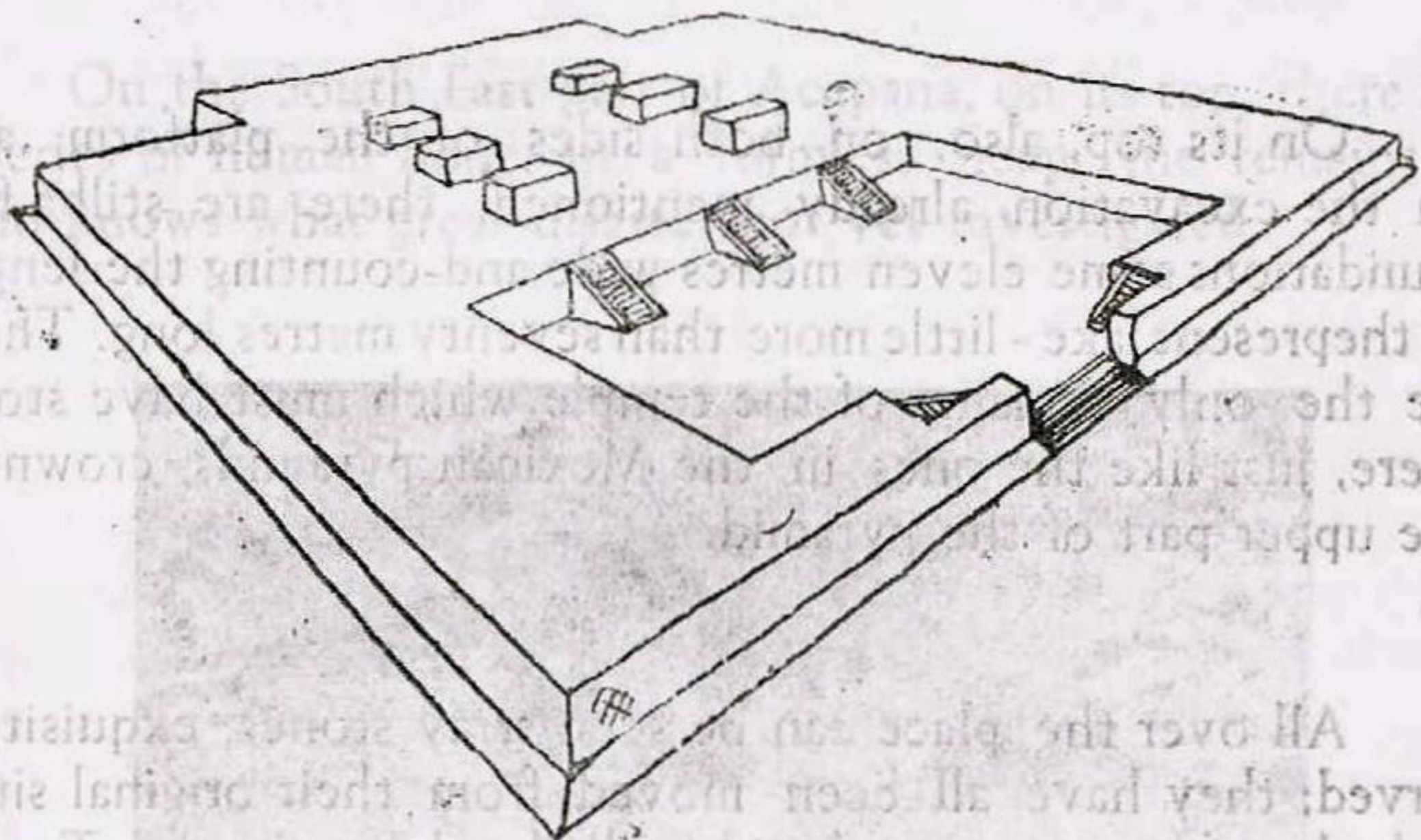
The inhabitants of the place, following an old interpretation of some hasty traveller, believe that this maquette has been a stone for sacrifices, where the blood of the victims used to flow until it covered the above mentioned courtyard, and that the small perrons were used to measure the quantity of the sacrificed blood. We heard this story the first time we visited the site and it is very likely that most of the people in the place still believe it.

#### 7.- *Acapana or the Great Pyramid.*

From Kantatayita we can go directly toward the West, leading to a huge mound which stands above the panorama. It is Acapana, the monumental construction overlooking all Tiahuanaco. It is one hundred and eight metres long, one hundred and forty metres wide and some fifteen metres high.



-x9 This building has deserved quite a lot of speculation. Most of the modern authors have assumed that it was a natural hillock which man exploited with the idea of building up a fortress. Posnansky held the same argument. Fortunately, in 1953, the Bolivian investigator, José de Mesa, was able to reconstruct its real individuality.



*Reconstruction of the Kalasasaya of Tiahuanaco, in view of the remains and of its maquette, the Kantatayita stone. The pillars have served as support to the stones of the outside retaining wall. (According to D. E. Ibarra Grasso, José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert).*

It is a huge pyramid, very much like the Mexican ones, made of earth and with retaining walls in its base. On its West side it shows an additional structure, where the perron giving access to its upper platform must have stood.

At present, this pyramid is totally deformed on account of the excavations carried out in search of treasures and its supporting stones to make buildings for the villagers; but still, on some of its sides, especially toward the East, it shows fragments of its base retaining walls.



A small lake has formed on its top, the result of an excavation made in 1600 by a local commissioner looking for treasures; the earth drawn from this excavation has been piled on the East side of the pyramid, and there it forms a projection which disfigures the plant and makes it lose the aspect of pyramid to the less attentive observer.

On its top, also, on both sides of the platform, and on the excavation already mentioned, there are still a few foundations some eleven metres wide and-counting the length of the present lake - little more than seventy metres long. These are the only remains of the temple which must have stood there, just like the ones in the Mexican pyramids, crowning the upper part of the pyramid.

All over the place can be seen stray stones, exquisitely carved; they have all been moved from their original sites, and therefore we can say but little about them. To the South, from the small lake to the border, there are remains of a big covered canal, which must have served as a drain for the platform and the ceiling of the temple.

All the surface of this pyramid is covered with small green pebbles, which seem to have come from the coast of Guaqui Lake. We find the same small pebbles on the surface of the Kalasasaya terreplein, in the small pyramids, especially where the Moon Gate stands, in Pumapuncu - which we will deal with presently - and in Huayla Pucaca, another pyramid which stands a kilometre to the South and totally destroyed.



These small pebbles prove to us the existence of a covering on the pyramidal constructions, for they are found only in Tiahuanaco. It must have been a sort of cover, tamped on mud, which would provide a colouring and a more brilliant aspect to the higher constructions.

On the South East part of Acapana, on its top, there are a series of human bones in a formless heap; the remains of who knows what great disaster not yet investigated.



*Small monolithic gate, South of Acapana, near the railway line*

To the South of Acapana, near the railway line, there is another small monolithic gate. It has no carving and it is half interred. A small distance from it, passing the lines, one can see three monoliths, which have been erected there and which show great damage. They still show pieces of beautiful bas-reliefs, but are but ruins.



## 8.- Pumapuncu

What we have said up to now covers the first unit of the Tiahuanaco ruins. We have now to direct our attention to another unit, something which is separate but of an extraordinary importance on account of the remains there found.

We can reach that place by two different ways. The first is by starting from the place where we were last, going through the station and then through a series of houses and grounds full of boulders (there is no direct road); or else, going to the village and taking the easiest and most direct way which passes before the present cemetery.

Pumapuncu is composed of many things, but the ruins thus directly called are the following:

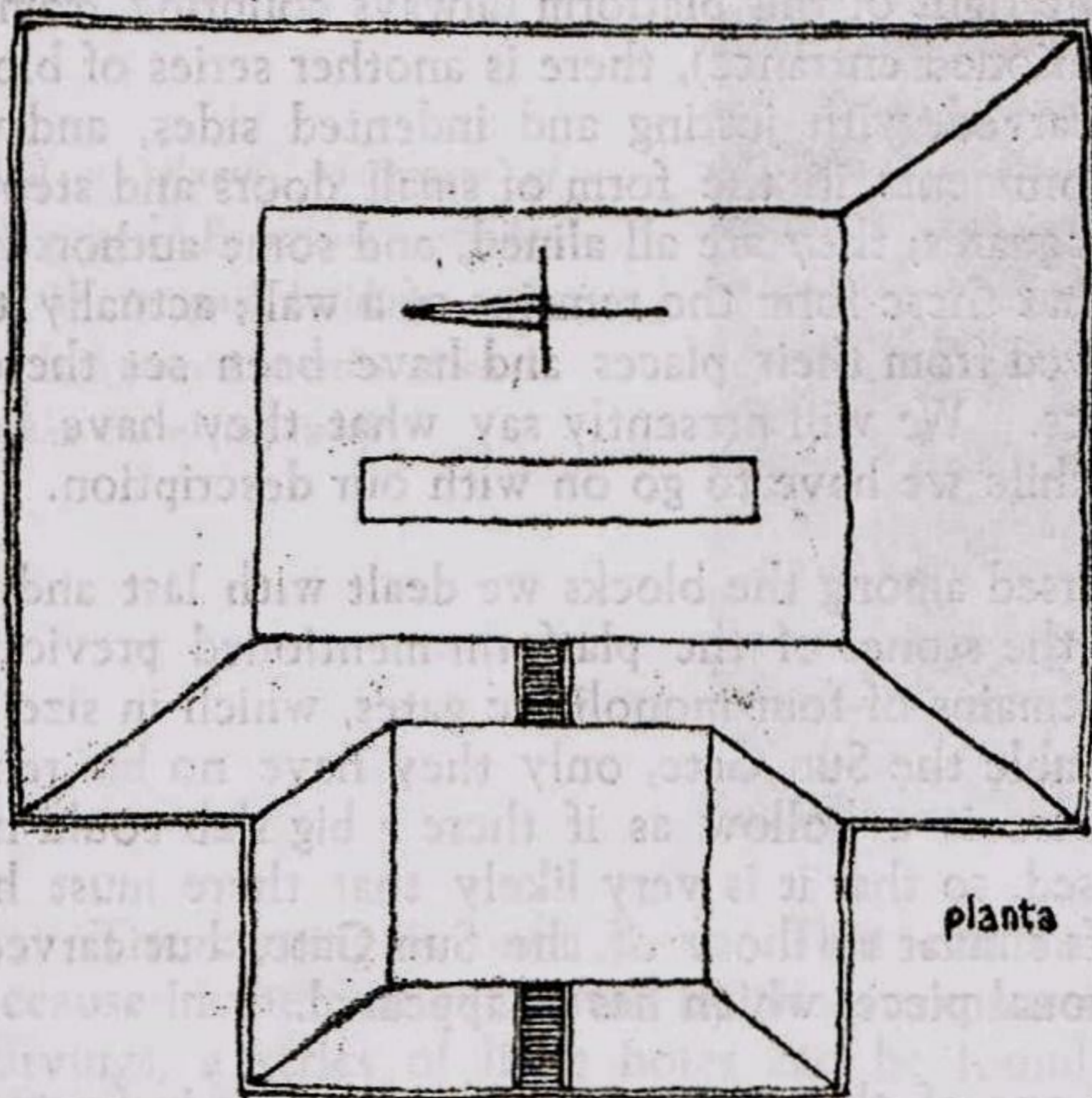
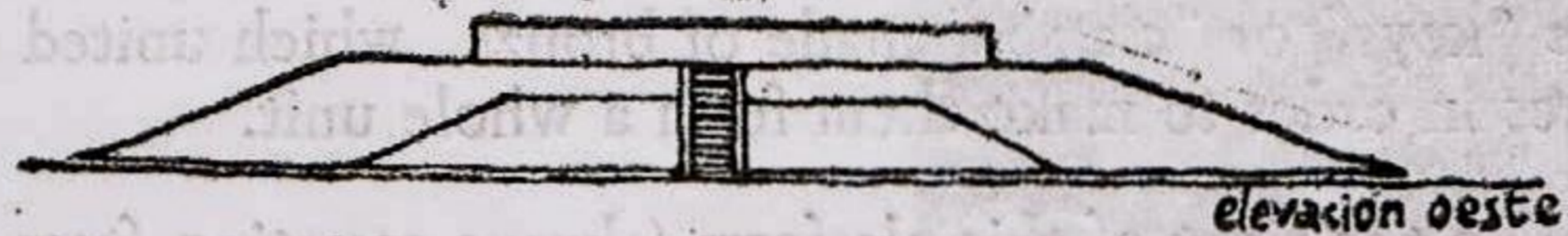
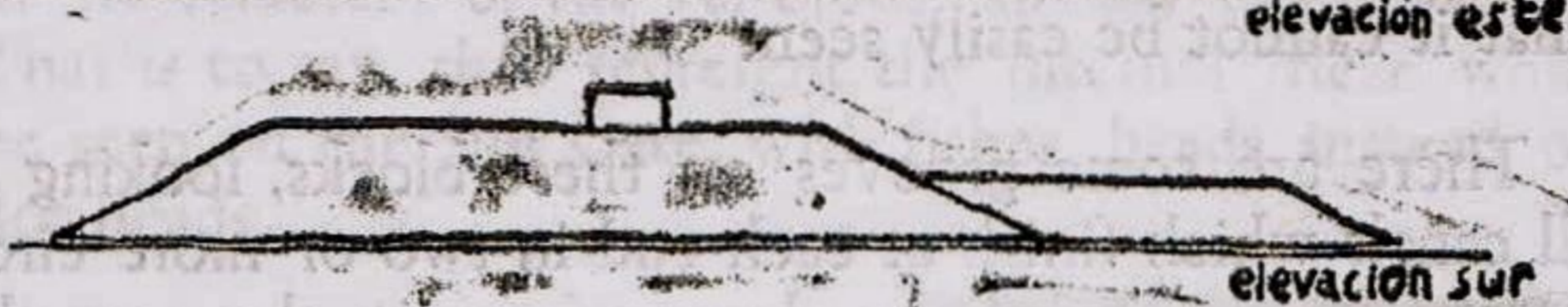
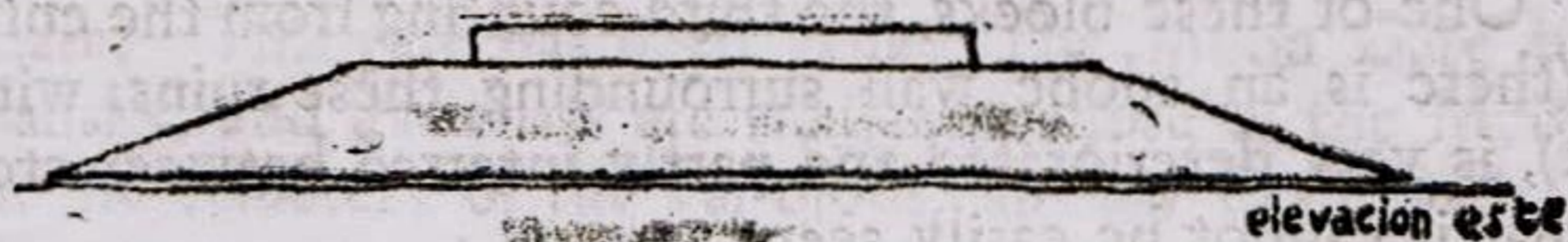
A terreplein, quadrangular in shape, one hundred and sixty metres long, one hundred and forty metres wide, six metres high; its Eastern central part has been excavated in a way similar to that practised in the small lake at Acapana. There are no carved stones serving as retaining walls in its basement, but the chroniclers affirm that they existed, and it is they who also say that this building, together with that of Acapana, were "hand-made hillocks".

To the East of this building, on its lower part, there is an enormous set of carved stones, which make something like a platform some eight metres wide and forty metres long. According to some people, the blocks found here must weigh about three hundred tons.

The main part of the platform is composed of four series of blocks, one after another, each of them formed of two or more blocks of a really colossal size.

On one of their sides, in each of these series of blocks, there is a relief which is carved forming a sort of «seat» and the authors have interpreted these as such. We will presently deal with this belief.





Reconstrucción in various planes of the great Acapana pyramid; of the building in the upper part, only some foundations remain whereas of the retaining walls big blocks remain, above all to the East (According to Jose de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert.)



One of these blocks, the third counting from the entrance (there is an adobe wall surrounding these ruins, with a gate), is very deteriorated and partly interred between stones so that it cannot be easily seen.

There are some grooves on these blocks, looking like small canals which finish at each end in two or more circles; these are the remains of the places where in the past there were "keys" or "clamps" made of bronze, which united the stones in order to make them form a whole unit.

To the right of this platform (always counting from the above mentioned entrance), there is another series of blocks, strangely carved, with jutting and indented sides, and with carved adornments in the form of small doors and stepping cruciform squares; they are all alined, and some authors have believed that these form the remains of a wall; actually they are all moved from their places and have been set there in recent times. We will presently say what they have been, but meanwhile we have to go on with our description.

Dispersed among the blocks we dealt with last and partly amidst the stones of the platform mentioned previously, there are remains of four monolithic gates, which in size and shape resemble the Sun Gate, only they have no bas-reliefs; instead, there is a hollow as if there a big slab could have been encased, so that it is very likely that there must have been reliefs similar to those of the Sun Gate, but carved in that additional piece, which has disappeared.

Only one of these gates, which although in fragments can be pieced together (lately there has been an attempt to reconstruct it and unite it with cement), has bas-reliefs on the same piece, but they are much simpler than those on the Sun



Gate. This gate has been called The Moon Gate by Posnansky, and its reliefs are similar to those of the Moon Gate in the cemetery of the variolous, already dealt with before. That is to say, they represent the internal frieze which can be seen on the Sun Gate, with fishes' heads instead of condor heads.

*Half a column, adornment of the gates of Pumapuncu, similar to the Mayan buildings. In the background, a series of blocks of the crumbling wall*



The carving is unfinished. That can be seen clearly because in the part excavated by the workman who made the carvings, a series of little holes can be found; these little holes were the mark made by the chief artists of the work to indicate to the manual worker, the area to be scraped on the stone. All lovers of fantasy have interpreted those little holes as being filled with golden nails, a most arbitrary idea.



All these gates have a threshold; such as we have seen about the Sun Gate; full proof of it is found in the fact that half of one of them which is found to the right near the entrance, still has a piece of this threshold, jutting out some seven centimetres.

There is another small monolithic gate, which is believed to have served as entrance for the "sacred pumas" (?) to the temple, and it is called The Puma Gate.

By the above mentioned gate with the piece of threshold there are three considerably important fragments of stones. The biggest, of a little more than half a metre, shows us a "demi-column", put on a backing and ending in a square block; the other two pieces are broken demi-columns. These are the only remains of circular columns to be found in Tiahuanaco, and according to their form, must have served as adornments to the sides of the temple gates, such as is the case in the Mayan buildings.

Also toward the entrance, in front of the corner of the platform, there are two important monoliths, about a metre in size; they represent beings with human body and puma head, with an ax in the hand, outlined on their sides. They are called «Chachapumas» (puma men).

And now, let us return to the platform. Beside it there are a series of slabs, some four metres long and twenty centimetres thick. We assume they are roof covers.

Let us look at the edges of the platform. On its top side, toward the left of the entrance, there is a sort of "edge" excavated in the stone. Its width coincides exactly with that of the slabs we have just dealt with.

And now, to the other edge of the platform, the right one. There is another "edge", all carved; then a sort of step and then the stone ends in an irregular form, uncarved.



We still have to consider one detail. In many places the earth has slid and lets us see a little underneath the blocks forming the «platform»; the same, are completely smooth, well polished.

slabs in their upper part; whereas they should be lower, uncarved part; the "brass keys", which should be fully justified instead in a wall

fall.  
must have been of the same  
has a large quadrangular hall,  
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*Pumapuncu: the idol called*

*«Chachapuma»*



existing on the height of Acapa-  
ly a little bigger and possibly  
rich explains why it got more  
nce of doors similar to the Sun  
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originally must also have been the door of a temple, some-

With what we have just described, we believe we have enough material for our interpretation. Cobo, speaking about these ruins, tells us that the "platform" must have been the temple or "principal wall of it"; actually, it is so.

It is a colossal wall, whose foundations have failed to support it, falling in a block. The part that remained, that to the right, has been its basement and that of the left the upper part, supporting the roof. "The seats" are no such thing, but mouldings serving as adornment to the inside upper part of the temple.



We cannot otherwise explain the above mentioned details, i. e., the fact that the lower part of the blocks is polished, the above said edges coinciding with the width of the slabs in their upper part; whereas they are unpolished in their lower, uncarved part; the "bronze keys", which should be useless in a platform would be fully justified instead in a wall threatened with an imminent fall.

This temple, in its shape, must have been of the same style as those of the Mayas, that is, a large quadrangular hall, with a series of doors toward its front, with a flat roof. In its upper part, a series of carved cornices forming a big frieze, remains of which are the stones carved in angles, and with adornments in the shape of doors previously commented on. Later on, speaking about the "Inca's writing desk", we will see this more clearly. Concerning the "demi-columns" they are clearly explained on account of the place corresponding to them, and thus emphasizing the likelihood with the Mayan buildings.

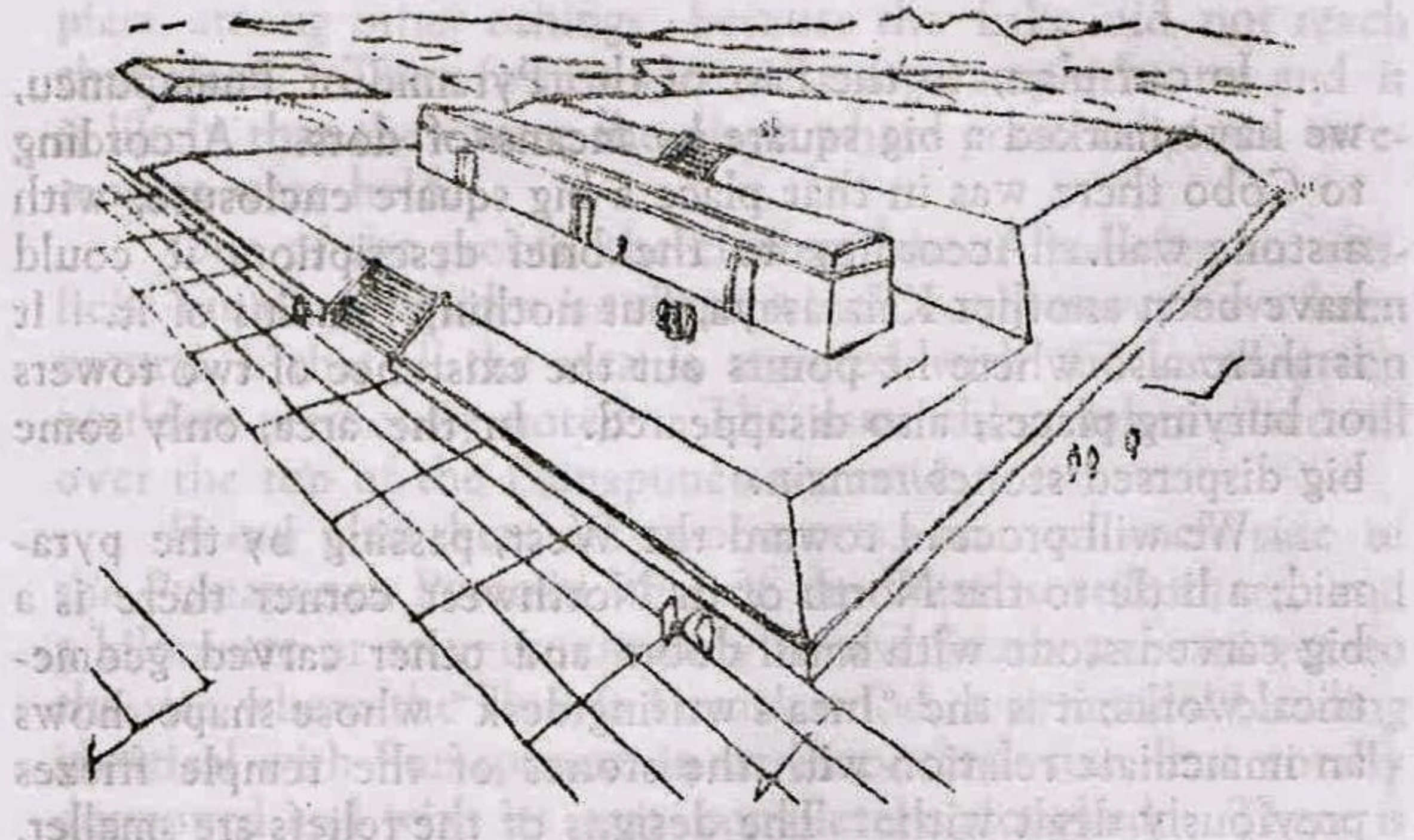
Very likely, the temple existing on the height of Acapana, was similar to this one, only a little bigger and possibly formed of smaller stones, which explains why it got more easily destroyed. The existence of doors similar to the Sun Gate, in the temple we dealt with, indicates that that door originally must also have been the door of a temple, something which undoubtedly does not exist in the Kalasasaya.

We do not deal with many other carved stones standing in this place for they have all been moved and cannot be well located as concerns their function. But we will comment on a minor curiosity. On the North edge of the pyramid, to the Northwest of the above mentioned temple, there are two broken slabs, carved with lines and small circles on one edge. Some distance away, to the North East, there is another similar stone, only much bigger. There is an historical explanation for them: Garcilaso tells us that the



...of the stone in the place, and an  
...with slabs, but all the  
...they "combed" the  
...to be made of stone. This  
...we have dealt with widely

...has not been well explained  
...to give a better idea of the



Reconstruction in perspective of the Pumapunku pyramid. The temple on the top has been reconstructed in the form of a block, without the details of its external decoration; the shape of the building runs according to the front wall, which although fallen, remains almost complete (According to D. E. Ibarra Grasso, José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert).

...to make any  
...we  
...of an undulated  
...of local



Incas, taking advantage of the stones in the place, had an edifice built there and roofed it with slabs, but, as all the Inca buildings always had straw roofs, they "combed" the stones so that the roof appeared to be made of straw. That is exactly what the stones we have dealt with were.

#### 9.- *Pumapuncu Environs*

In our plan, to the East of the Pyramid of Pumapuncu, we have marked a big square by means of dots. According to Cobo there was in that place a big square enclosure, with a stone wall. According to the brief description, it could have been another Kalasasaya, but nothing remains of it. It is there also where he points out the existence of two towers or burying places, also disappeared. In the area, only some big dispersed stones remain.

We will proceed toward the West, passing by the pyramid; a little to the North of its Northwest corner there is a big carved stone with small doors and other carved geometrical works; it is the "Inca's writing desk" whose shape shows an immediate relation with the stones of the temple friezes previously dealt with. The designs of the reliefs are smaller, but identical to the above mentioned stones; this stone shows us the shape of all the unit of the frieze, and it is a real model to try some day the reconstruction of the temple frieze.

From here a little to the South, in front of the temple, we find a big cleft monolith, of style similar to that of The Priest; it has been badly neglected and its reliefs are almost effaced, but there are enough still to realize that the work has been most valuable. The other half has been used in the building of a railway bridge. We prefer not to make any remarks about this . . . .

From here we can walk a little toward the West; we soon get to the peculiar edge of an undulated ravine, built



after the manner of the terrepleins of the pyramids; there are two big entrances and three juttings much like points, and on the whole, quite high. Some have believed that they were "piers", that the Lake reached their feet, and that they were built to have the "totora" crafts approach it.

Actually, their real function has not been well explained, and the only reliable thing to state is that they were never piers, among other things, because the Lake did not reach that place. They form a sort of strange amphitheatre and it is likely that they were the place where great religious ceremonies were held.

One of the proofs, the clearest, about its being an artificial building, besides its shape which could never have been natural, is that all the area is covered with the small green boulders previously noted. The same thing takes place all over the top of the Pumapuncu pyramid.

In our plan there are two streets, one on each side of the Pumapuncu Pyramid; that of the West is still there, and a kilometre or so approximately to the South we can get to the site where the Huayla Pucara stood, a pyramidal building identical with Pumapuncu, in its shape and size, but totally destroyed and with its area completely ploughed. There is still part of its shape, enough to recognize its pyramidal structure, and its surface is covered with the small green boulders, which show the previous existence of pyramidal buildings.

Some two kilometres further South there are still other remains, heaps of stones moved from their places which little tell us, although it is likely that a thorough excavation would reveal quite a lot. It is in this region where three beautiful monoliths were found, which were taken to La Paz, by Professor Maks Portugal.

These last places have little to show, and therefore we will return to the village, taking directly the street we spoke about and which leads to the church.



10. *Monoliths and other remains in the present village*

Walking along the village streets we take note that in all the houses there are stones taken from the ruins, some of them showing beautiful geometrical designs, mainly on the doors. In the square, in front of the church, protected by fences, there are two monoliths in seating position, which are allegedly man and wife but which show no indication of their respective sexes.



*Beautiful carved stones which originally from the ruins have been used at present on both sides of the cemetery gate.*

The church is all built with stones taken from the ruins, but we will refer only to those making the pilasters which support the courtyard's arcades, and which we have referred to before; it is easy to see that this is not Spanish work, and that they have not been carved for the present building.



In the middle of the square there is a small recreation kiosk; built as usual with the same stones; there are many with sculptures, and there is one especially, a beautiful slab with a bas-relief representing a head of the classical style. A little further, on the other side of the square, at the front of a private house, there are two other capitals used as seats. Finally, almost all the houses looking on the square have their doors with sides and lintels made of carved stones, showing engravings in the shape of small doors and stepping crosses.

*Tiahuanaco idol which stands at present on the side of the church door of the Tiahuanaco village.*

*The capitals can be seen at its back, the same as in picture four.*



In the church neighbourhood, turning to the North, there is a calamine gate looking on the courtyard. In that courtyard the owners have erected one of the most beautiful and well-kept monoliths of the classical period, full of reliefs and in gray stone.



## CONCLUSIONS

We have made a rapid visit to the ruins of the capital of the most important indigenous civilization of the Andine region. In this visit we have not been satisfied with gazing at what exists at present, for on account of its deteriorated state there is little to be seen at first view. Our work has been that of trying to see what each of the edifices, whose remains we have observed, have been in the past.

We also furnish a map and various drawings, done in collaboration with Architect José de Mesa and Mrs. Teresa Gisbert, which will give a clearer idea of everything.

Our map is the first complete one, of all the set of ruins, although it is small. One can see the outline of what must have been a great city, and its streets give us a better view of its main particularities, the great avenue running East to West, following the course of the sun, must have been the main artery, the road of the religious processions.

The reconstruction must be perforce schematic, but nevertheless it makes the vision of the unit more clear to our eyes, and this is completed with the presentation of the reconstruction of the main buildings.

Concerning the illustrations, they come from photographs taken by the author in recent years, so that they wholly give the actual image of the ruins.

With this work we hope to have contributed not only to a better knowledge of this great civilization, but also, at least to clear up, in a way, the many fantasies which accompany it, in general furnished by those who are not specialists in these studies.





Reconstruction of all the buildings of Tiahuanaco which can be studied according to their foundations. This is the view from the East. In the foreground can be seen the Acapana and Kalasasaya units; and in the background the Pumapuncu and its Kalasasaya (According to D. E. Ibarra Grasso, José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert).



IMPRESO EN TALLERES

«ATLANTIC»

Cochabamba-Gral. Achá 165