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Copilco—Ancient Burying Ground

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Copilco—

ANCIENT BURYING GROUND

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ONE of the earliest known cemeteries on the American continent is located under a thirty-foot lava cap on one edge of the Valley of Mexico. The site is known as Copilco, and the culture of the people is referred to as the "Archaic." That the dead were actually interred at Copilco and not accidentally killed by the lava flow is evidenced by the fact that the remains are not only covered by the lava cap but also by a layer of earth baked black and red by the glowing lava.

The people who buried their dead



THE LAVA CAP AND ENTRANCES TO THE ARCHAIC BURIALS AT COPILCO, MEXICO.

at Copilco were agriculturists, for we find their grinding stones and pottery containers. An abundance of figurines suggests the worship of some divinity or divinities associated with fertility or agriculture. Indications of clothing on the figurines and numerous spindle whorls attest a knowledge of spinning and weaving. In all, the picture is one of a culturally advancing people.

Archeology dates the Copilco culture about two or three hundred years before Christ. Recent geological methods may give a more accurate dating of these early people. When the lava flow cooled, the atomic structure of the lava was orientated in accord with what was then magnetic north. By measuring the deviation between magnetic north when the lava flow cooled and present-day magnetic north, geologists hope to tell us in terms of years when the lava flow cooled and when the archaic people were forced to abandon this part of the Valley of Mexico.



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