



Maya Pottery Vase From Guatemala

The goddess stands with one foot slightly advanced, as she might do the moment after alighting. Her right arm must have been raised perhaps to hold a spear, and her left arm, to judge from the very small piece preserved, was extended outward. She is clad in a single garment with deep overfold, tied in at the waist with a girdle; its folds are blown out behind her in the wind, from the motion of her coming, and must have extended originally much further than at present, for dowel-holes show that a separate piece of marble was attached to represent the end of her drapery. The artist has succeeded admirably in giving to the rounded folds beneath the arm the feeling of heaviness. The smaller wrinkles and ripples of the garment are rendered by crinkly lines.

The statue was purchased in Constantinople and was reported to have been found at Cyrene. This bears out the stylistic evidence that the workmanship is Roman, but the prototype from which the statue is derived may well go back to the end of the fifth century, B.C.

E. H. D.

## A MAYA POTTERY VASE

THE Maya Indians developed pottery-making into a considerable art. No other people of pre-Columbian America attained the same skill in decorating pottery vessels with carved and painted pictures of men, animals and strange mythological creatures. Their bizarre devotional scenes in gay polychrome, such as that on the famous Vase of Chamá and the "Bat-God" vase, and amusing pictures like the hawk-beaked Maya chief proceeding haughtily through the jungle in an uncomfortable basket-litter, are familiar to visitors to the University Museum.

The specimen shown in Plate I has had a far wider audience. Found near Quiché in the highlands of Guatemala, and presented to the Museum by Charles H. Cramp, it was exhibited at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 as well as at the contemporary celebration in Madrid.

Vases of this stamped red-orange ware are rare among Maya ceramics. The design was cut in intaglio on two stamps and then impressed upon the wet clay of the vase to form a raised relief within a sunken panel. It may be seen, even in the reproduction, that the stamps overlapped slightly. Before firing, the vase was dried in the sun, and

colored. It emerged from the kiln with the soft red it bears today.

The principal figures are two men dressed as birds. Their cloaks take the form of wings; they wear feather hats, from each of which rises a bird's head. That on the right seems to be a vulture, the other possibly the rare quetzal. Each bird-man, holding out his hands to a conventionalized snake-head, sits on a grotesque head; from where its nose should be, come shooting flames.

The scene has no close parallels. It is an example of the religious symbolism that marks Maya art. We may explain it as a picture of two priests arrayed as bird-gods to conduct their ceremonies. Or we can interpret it as an artist's conception of two divinities with their attributes: power over death, the cunning of the snake, the keen sight of the bird. However, it is not yet possible to speak with authority on Maya religion.

The scene is repeated on the reverse side. The height of the whole vase is about seven inches. Within its small panels the design is finely executed. On stylistic grounds it has been tentatively assigned to the first millennium after Christ.

M. B.

## THE LATIN-AMERICAN INSTITUTE

ACTIVE in the advisory council of the newly-formed Latin-American Institute are E. R. Fenimore Johnson, Percy C. Madeira, Jr., J. Alden Mason, Vincenzo Petruzzo, and Linton Satterthwaite, Jr., of the Museum, as well as Professors Frank G. Speck, A. I. Hallowell and D. S. Davidson of the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania.

The Institute has been formed, as announced recently in the press, in recognition of the need for organization and coordination of research, and the dissemination of information, in the entire field of Middle and South American ethnology, archaeology, physical anthropology and linguistics.

The development of the Institute's program will be related in the *Memorandum*, of which two initial numbers have appeared. Copies may be obtained gratis from the Secretary of the Institute at the University Museum. Membership involves no dues or other obligations.