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TWO RECENT CERAMIC FINDS AT UAXACTUN

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With five plates and nine text-figures

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TWO RECENT CERAMIC FINDS AT UAXACTUN

The following paper records, in preliminary form, two groups of ceramic materials discovered in 1931 at the ruins of the Old Empire Maya city of Uaxactun, in the northern part of the Department of El Peten, Guatemala.¹ Definitive publications upon the archaeology of Uaxactun must await the conclusion of excavations still in progress. The vessels and sherds here illustrated and briefly described constitute, however, a concrete body of data which may profitably be made available at the present time.

Research upon Maya pottery has been severely hampered by paucity of specimens, and particularly by rarity of specimens whose exact provenience and stratigraphic relationships are known. Furthermore, the ceramic industry of the Old Empire had advanced to a stage in which there was sharp distinction between common household utensils and finer vessels for special, presumably ceremonial, uses. Everyday pottery was turned out in large quantities by, so to speak, mass manufacture; it apparently changed slowly; it was, for the most part, undecorated, or only simply and conventionally ornamented; and identification of the products of various cities and of different periods depends upon subtle technological qualities which, especially in the matter of vessel-shape, are difficult to determine from fragmentary material. The finer wares, on the other hand, expressed, to some extent at least, the individuality of their makers; they varied, it would seem, more significantly from area to area and from period to period than did the utilitarian pottery; and they therefore provide a more reliable criterion for preliminary regional and chronological classifications. But such pieces are naturally very uncommon. Hence the present specimens, which undoubtedly belong to the category of fine wares, should possess relatively great archaeological importance. They also have much esthetic interest; and certain of them promise to provide valuable information as to the details of ceremonial practice.

The technical descriptions of the pottery presented in the captions of the illustrations have been prepared by Edith B. Ricketson. The pen drawings are by Señor Antonio Tejeda Hijo of Guatemala City; the plates are from watercolors by Miss M. Louise Baker of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. Carnegie Institution of Washington is under great obligations to Mr. Horace H. F. Jayne, director of the Museum, for allowing Miss Baker to make the paintings and for permission to reproduce them in the present publication. The vessels themselves have been turned over to the Government of Guatemala, in accordance with the contract under which the Carnegie Institution is operating at Uaxactun, and have been deposited in the National Museum at Guatemala City.

Pyramid A-I, in which the two finds of pottery were made, forms part of Group A, the so-called "Acropolis," the largest of the seven clusters of buildings at Uaxactun; and, in view of its lack of early types of pottery and figurines, presumably one of the latest. Pyramid A-I was chosen for excavation because of its dominant position in the group. It stands on a low platform on the southern margin of the main plaza, facing north across the plaza toward a graded causeway connecting Group A with Group B. In addition to its commanding situation, the pyramid has more stelae in direct association with it than any other single structure at Uaxactun, there being seven on its north and two on its south side. The excavation was carried out under direction of Mr. R. E. Smith.

Upon investigation, Pyramid A-I (fig. 1, *a*) was found to have been built over an earlier pyramid (fig. 1, *b*), which in turn enclosed a pyramid of still older construction (fig. 1, *c*). Three periods of building are thus manifest, and there are certain indications that a fourth still awaits discovery (fig. 1, *f*). During the last, or tertiary, period the pyramid faced north, its one stairway rising from the main plaza. At this time it had been crowned by a temple, of which only the south wall now remains. Nothing was found in the uppermost construction, but about 3 feet (90 cm.) below the floor of the temple there came to light a lower floor, belonging to an earlier phase of the same building period,

¹ Brief reports upon the six field-seasons at Uaxactun are contained in the Year Books of Carnegie Institution of Washington, Nos. 25 to 30 inclusive.

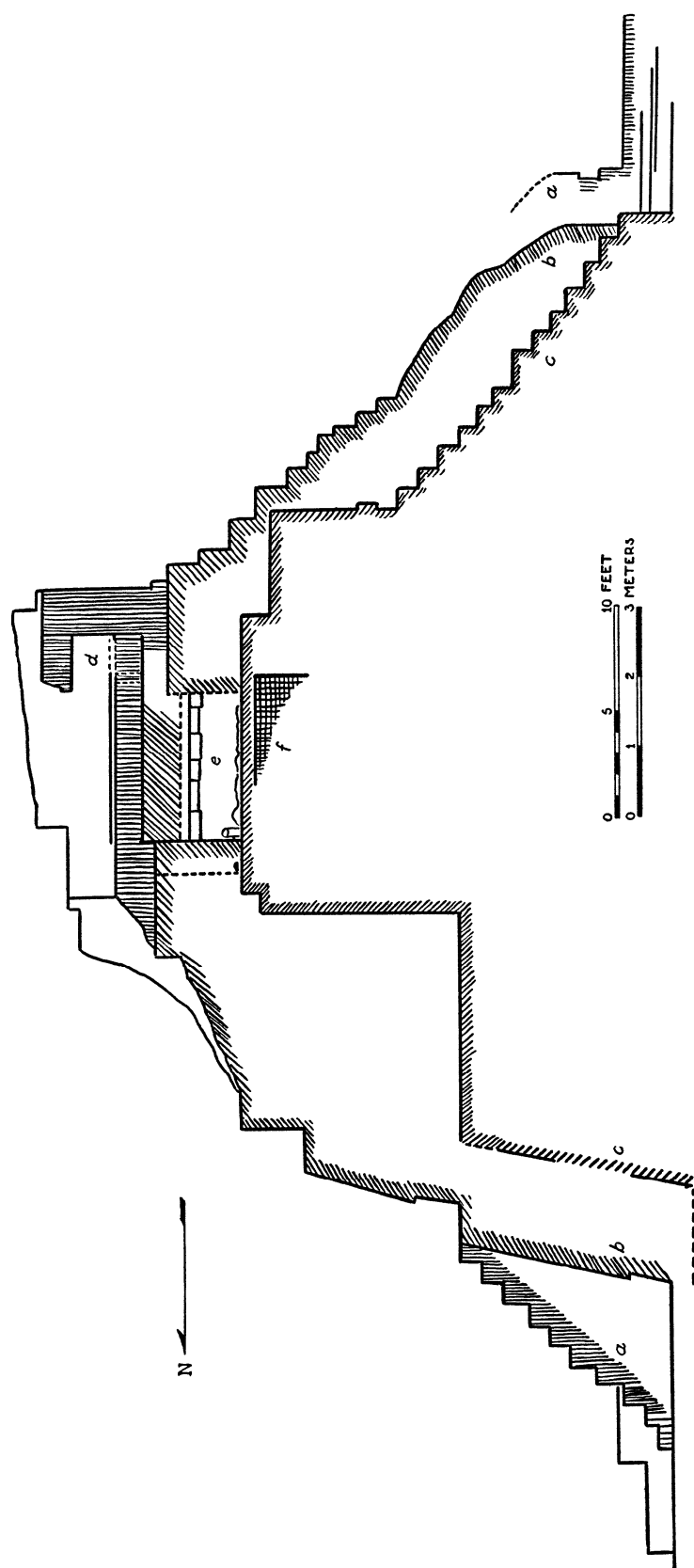


FIG. 1—Median north-south cross-section of pyramid A-I. *a*, Latest or tertiary pyramid. *b*, Secondary pyramid. *c*, Primary pyramid. *d*, Sanctuary where potsherds were found. *e*, Mortuary vault, as yet unexcavated, possibly indicating a building earlier than *c*.

and connected with a small chamber backed against the center of the south wall, its doorway facing north (figs. 1, *d*; Plate 1, *a, b*). The inside measurements of this sanctuary, which had stood within the temple, were 4 feet 3 inches (1.29 meters) long, 2 feet (61 cm.) wide, and 2 feet (61 cm.) high. It had apparently lost its importance, for it had been filled with fire-blackened potsherds, charcoal and dirt, and had been covered by the above-mentioned later floor of the superstructure.

The sherds from the sanctuary were of both the common utilitarian types of pottery and the finer, presumably ceremonial, sort; only the latter will be considered in this paper. In every case but one these have a porous gray paste, the exception being a fragment of a straight-sided bowl of hard, finely kneaded, gray clay (fig. 5, *c*). The vessels are all slipped both inside and out with white and orange; the orange slip usually being on the interior. The most common shape is a straight-sided bowl (figs. 3; 4, *c-e*); there are also bowls with slightly flaring rims, an olla (fig. 5, *b*), a tripod dish, a dish with a flat base and without legs, a simple silhouette bowl (fig. 4, *a*) and a bowl with a flat base and incurved rim (fig. 4, *b*).

There is one undecorated bowl (fig. 4, *b*). The decoration of all the others is either two-color or polychrome. The most common color scheme is black on a white slip; others are red on a white slip, brown on an orange slip, and a combination of red and brown on an orange slip. The designs in most cases are geometric. Four specimens bear non-geometric decorations: an olla sherd (fig. 5, *b*) has a combination bird and glyph design in red on a white slip; a fragment of a straight-sided bowl (fig. 5, *c*) has a glyph design in red, red-brown, orange and black on a white slip; and two straight-sided bowls (figs. 3, *a*; 4, *c*), bear what appears to be an insect in black on a white slip.

After the investigation of the remains of the tertiary period (temple and sanctuary), the floor was removed and there was examined an earlier, but still tertiary, floor 3 inches (7.6 cm.) below it, upon which the sanctuary had originally been built. Fifteen inches (38 cm.) farther down there came to light still another floor. When this had been cleared, a pit was sunk through it, disclosing, at a depth of about 2 feet (60 cm.), the capstones of a burial vault (fig. 1, *e*).

Further excavation revealed a second vault to the east of it (fig. 2). Of the two, Vault I was the better constructed. It measured 7 feet 6 inches (2.28 meters) long, 21 inches (53 cm.) wide, 24 inches (60 cm.) high. The walls were of roughly cut stones; the covering consisted of six large limestone slabs laid flat across the side walls. It contained the skeleton of an adult male lying at full length on the back with head to the north, hands upon right shoulder. The lower part of the vertebral column was curiously curved, but whether or not as result of a pathological condition can only be ascertained by further examination of the bones. As the skeleton lay, it measured 67½ inches (1.71 meters) from the heel-bones to the top of the cranium.

The grave furniture consisted of a cylindrical polychrome vase containing the bones of shrews (fig. 2, No. 1; see also fig. 9 and Plates 4 and 5), a jade bead, sea shells, a carved bone necklace, a sting-ray tail in the region of the pelvis, a deer antler and a turtle bone.

Vault II (fig. 2) to the east was about 6 feet (1.80 meters) long, 17 inches (43 cm.) wide and 2 feet (61 cm.) high, its long axis, like that of Vault I, being north and south. This vault was very crudely made and the capstones were smaller and rougher. At its northern extremity a fragment of a human skull was found and a nest of four polychrome vessels (fig. 2, Nos. 8, 9, 10, 11; see Plate 2 and figs. 5, *a*; 6, *a, c*). At the southern end were the leg bones of a skeleton lying east and west. To the west was a skull with three polychrome bowls (fig. 2, Nos. 2, 3, 4; see Plate 3 and fig. 6, *b, d*) near it.

Between the walls of the two vaults was a space about 15 inches (40 cm.) wide filled with dirt in which were two more polychrome bowls (fig. 2, Nos. 6, 7; see fig. 7, *a, b*) and a plain black bowl (fig. 2, No. 5). These vessels seem to have accompanied a.¹ The dirt throughout this whole section was discolored by iron oxide, a few pieces of which were recovered.

Some of the vessels from the mortuary vaults were intact; others were broken, but all pieces were found. All were of fine ware, no utilitarian pottery being present. Of the eleven vessels, nine were polychrome, one was two-color and one was plain black. The paste of all but two was porous

¹ Conditions in and about the vaults were somewhat obscure; they will be described more fully in the final archaeological report.

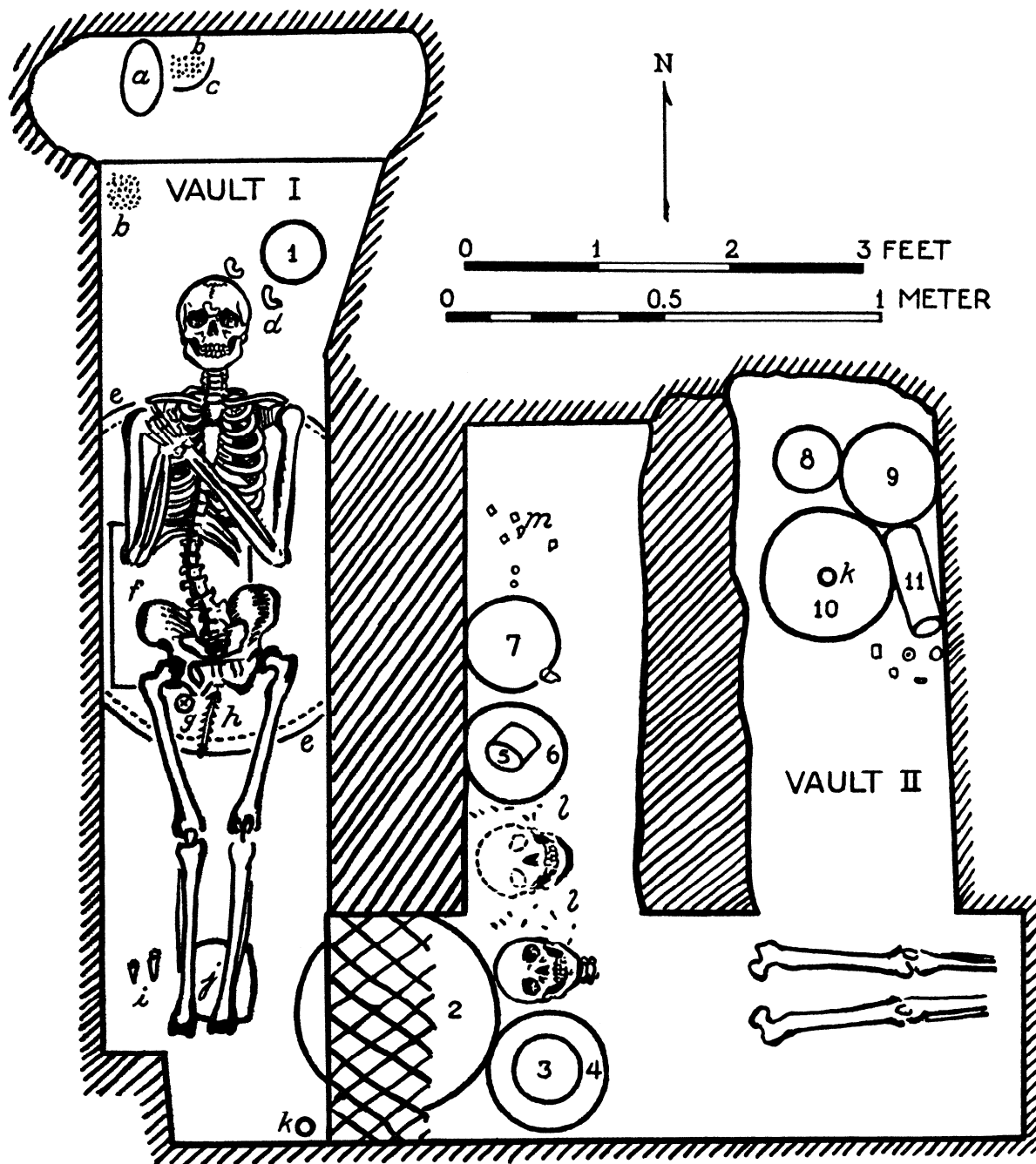


FIG. 2—Burial vaults in secondary pyramid. *a*, Fragmentary skull of large mammal. *b, b*, Carved pieces of bone pierced for use in a necklace. *c*, Fragment of pottery vessel. *d*, Sea shells. *e, e*, Area of charred wood underlying skeleton. *f*, Hole below charred wood area. *g*, Large jade head. *h*, Tail of stingray. *i*, Deer antler. *j*, Large rectangular bone (turtle?). *k, k*, Jade beads. *l, l*, Human teeth. *m*, Iron oxide. *n-n*, Pottery vessels.

gray, the exceptions being a bowl (fig. 2, No. 10, see Plate 2) with pinkish orange paste and one (fig. 2, No. 1, see Plates 4 and 5) which had a finely kneaded creamy-white paste. The shapes are bowls, plates with round bases, plates with three cascabel (rattle) legs and cylindrical vases. The bowls have the same colored slip on the interior and exterior, either orange or buff. The two cylindrical vases are also slipped on the interior and exterior; the plates have a polished orange slip on the interior, and no slip on the exterior. The plates are decorated on the interior, the bowls and cylindrical vases on the exterior.

Although the designs of these vessels can not be discussed in this publication, there are a few points which should be noted. The three-legged plate with the dancing figure in its center (Plate 2) was "killed" by having a small hole pierced through its middle. The cylindrical vase with the human figures (Plates 4 and 5) bears representations of certain objects found in the Uaxactun excavations: the seated jaguar holds two dishes bound lip-to-lip. Dishes of similar shape and in similar juxtaposition were discovered in Group E under the floors of temples, each pair containing human skulls. One of the human figures is holding in his right hand what appears to be a flint of eccentric shape almost identical with one found in a cache in one of the mounds of Group E.

After the mortuary vaults had been removed, a floor was uncovered under them. This proved to be the top of a third pyramid (fig. 1, *c*) called, in the field-notes, the primary pyramid. Its upper surface was pierced, and about 9 inches (23 cm.) below another floor was encountered (fig. 1, *f*). This was traced south for a short distance to where it turned vertically downward. Unfortunately at this time there were only a few days left before the close of the season's work and further excavation had to be postponed until 1932, when the possibility that there is another pyramid under what is now called A-I primary will be investigated.

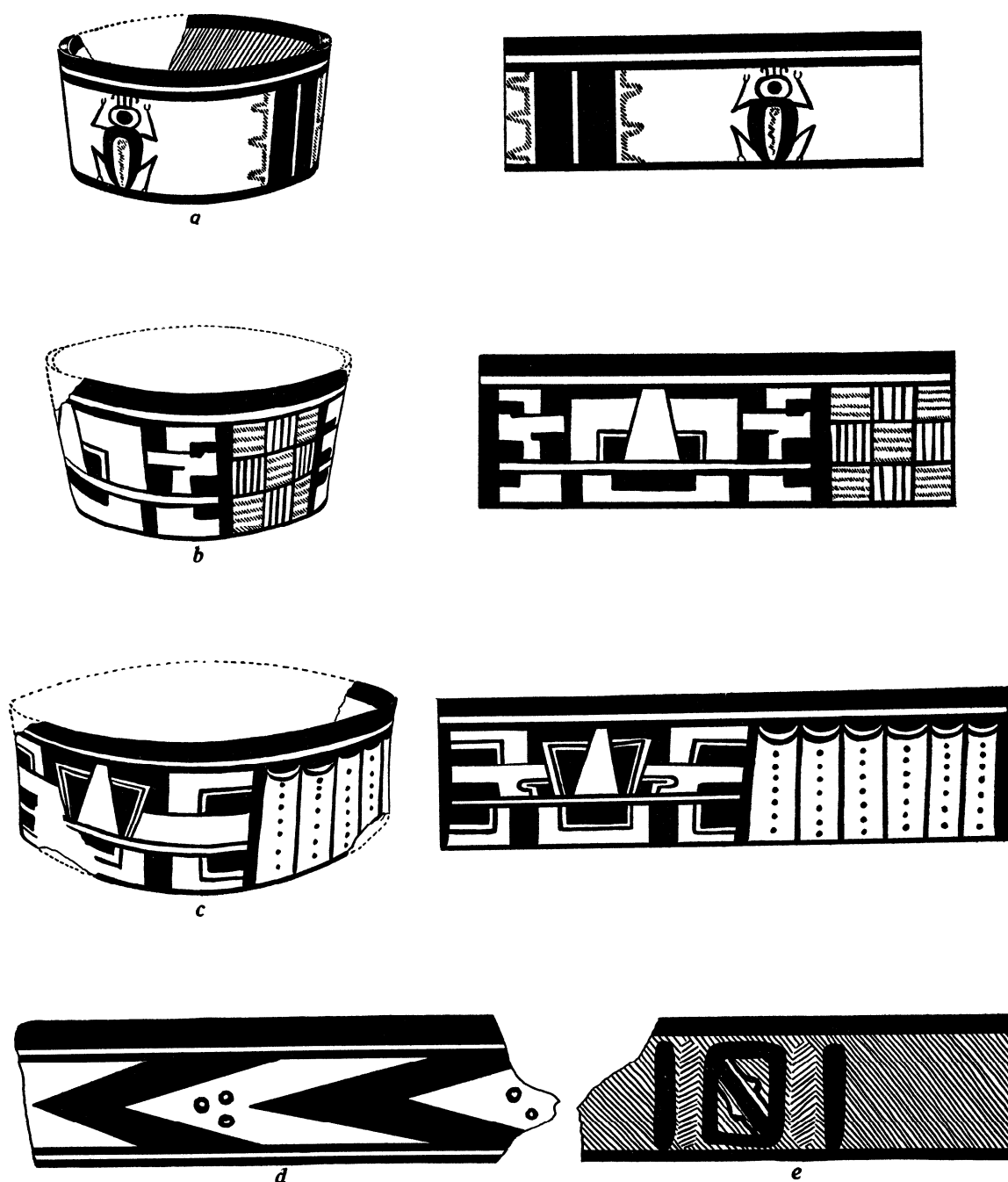


FIG. 3—Fragmentary bowls from the sanctuary. *a*, Straight-sided bowl (No. 942), diam. 4 1/2 inches (11.4 cm.); exterior: dull white slip; “insect” design in black and red (shown in dextral hachure); interior: polished orange-brown slip (shown in sinistral hachure), black band below rim. Paste porous gray. *b*, Straight-sided bowl (No. 940), diam. 5 inches (12.7 cm.); exterior: slightly polished white slip, geometric design in black and red (shown in hachure), interior slip polished brown. Paste porous gray. *c*, Straight-sided bowl (No. 941), diam. 6 1/4 inches (15.9 cm.); exterior: polished orange slip, geometric design in black; interior slip: polished orange. Paste porous gray. *d*, Fragment of a dish (No. 943), length 8 3/4 inches (22.2 cm.); exterior: geometric design in black on a white slip discolored to gray; interior: double slip, orange over white. Paste porous gray. *e*, Fragment of tripod dish, length of part reproduced 7 inches (27.8 cm.); exterior: polished orange slip; design in black and red (shown in sinistral hachure); interior: polished orange slip; traces of decoration. Paste porous gray.



FIG. 4—Fragmentary bowls from the sanctuary, *a*, Straight-sided bowl (No. 950, *a*), diam. 6 1/2 inches (16.5 cm.); exterior: white slip; geometric decoration in black; interior slip white. Paste porous gray. *b*, Bowl with incurved rim and flat base (No. 955); diam. 7 1/4 inches (18.4 cm.); undecorated; exterior slip a highly polished thin orange wash which extends into the interior as far as the incurve of the rim; interior unslipped. Paste porous gray. *c*, Straight-sided bowl (No. 946), diam. 6 1/2 inches (16.5 cm.); exterior: white slip discolored to gray, "insect" decoration in black; interior slip polished orange. Paste porous gray. *d*, Straight-sided bowl (No. 948), diameter probably about 6 1/4 inches (15.9 cm.); exterior: white slip geometric decoration in black; interior slip brown. Paste porous gray. *e*, Straight-sided bowl (No. 949), diam. probably about 7 1/2 inches (19 cm.); exterior: orange-red slip; a secondary coating of black with reserved areas which are decorated in red (shown in hachure) and black; interior slip polished red. Paste porous gray. *f*, Simple silhouette bowl (No. 952), diam. 7 inches (17.8 cm.); exterior: dull white slip discolored to gray; decoration in red (shown in hachure) and black; interior: polished orange-red slip. Paste porous gray.

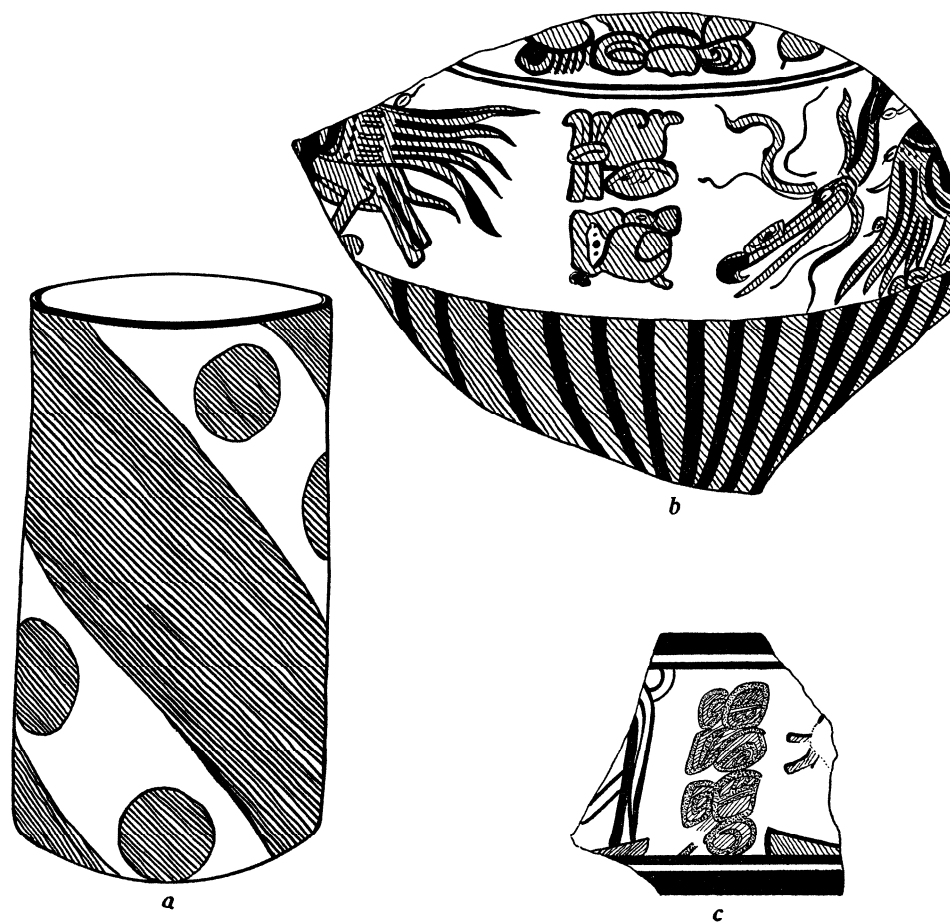


FIG. 5—Vessel from mortuary vault and sherds from the sanctuary. *a*, Cylindrical vase (vessel 11, No. 978), height 8 inches (20.3 cm.); exterior: lightly polished buff slip bands and dots in brown (shown in hachure); interior slip same as exterior. Paste porous gray. *b*, Fragment of a large olla (No. 953), length 9 inches (22.9 cm.); exterior: upper part slipped with white and decorated with bird figures and conventional glyphs in orange-red (shown in black) and orange (shown in hachure), lower part thinly slipped with orange and striped vertically with orange-red; interior unslipped. Paste porous gray. *c*, Fragment of straight-sided bowl (No. 939), height 3 3/4 inches (9.5 cm.); exterior: white slip discolored to gray; decoration in orange (sinistral hachure), red (dextral hachure), red brown (dots) and black; interior slip polished orange. Finely kneaded, hard gray paste.

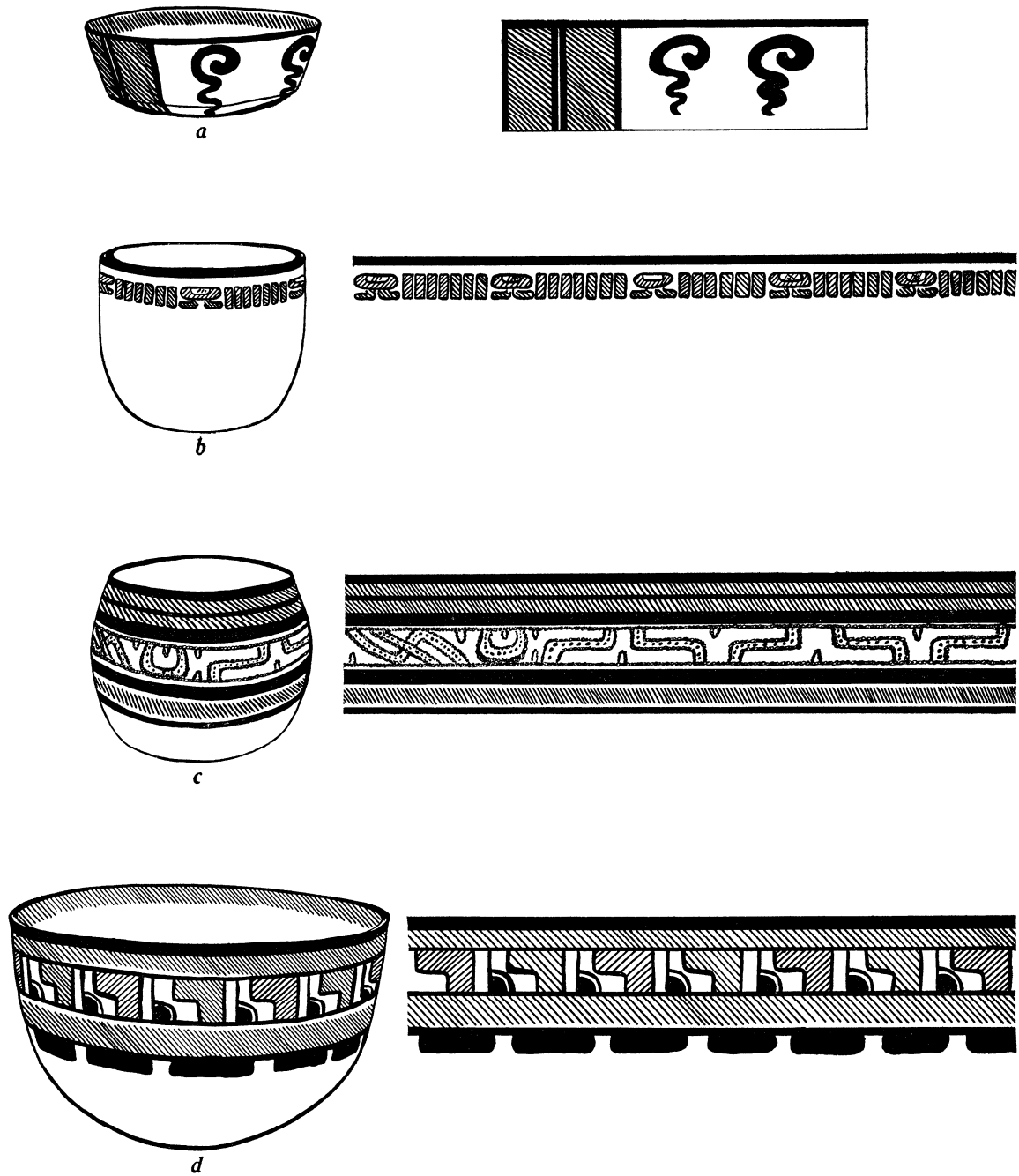


FIG. 6—Simple silhouette bowls from the mortuary vaults. *a*, Diam. 7 1/2 inches (19 cm.), polished orange slip; exterior design: black scrolls and vertical red bars (shown in hachure) outlined with black; horizontal red band on interior below the black-painted rim. Paste porous gray. *b*, Diam. 6 5/8 inches (16.8 cm.), lightly polished orange slip; exterior design: conventional glyphs in gray (sinistral hachure) and red (dextral hachure) outlined with black; rim painted black. Paste porous gray. *c*, Diam. 7 1/8 inches (18.1 cm.), polished buff slip; exterior design: horizontal bands of red (shown in hachure) and black enclosing median band decoration in red-brown; rim painted black. Paste porous gray. *d*, diam. 6 1/8 inches (15.6 cm.), polished orange slip; exterior design in black, brown (sinistral hachure) and red (dextral hachure); interior bears a horizontal red band below black-painted rim.

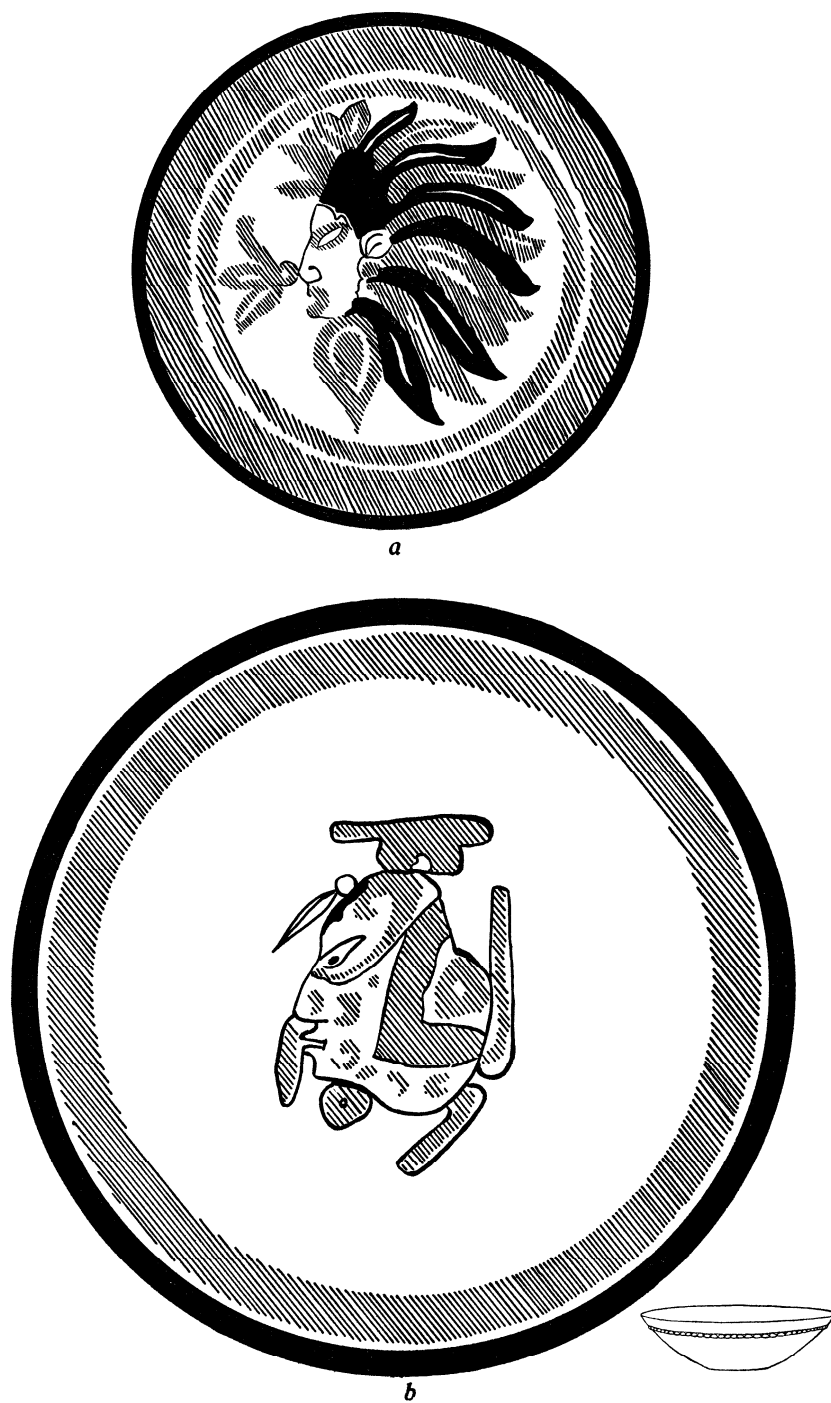


FIG. 7—Polychrome vessels from the mortuary vaults. *a*, Small tripod dish, legs missing (vessel 7, No. 984); diameter 7 1/4 inches (18.4 cm.); interior: orange slip; decoration in red (shown in hachure) and black; exterior unslipped. Paste porous gray. *b*, Shallow bowl (vessel 6, fig. 2, No. 982); diam. 11 1/8 inches (28.3 cm.); interior: orange slip; decoration in red (shown in hachure) and black; exterior unslipped; scalloped fillet encircles bowl below rim.



FIG. 8—Polychrome vessel from mortuary vault. Flat dish with three cascabel (rattle) legs (vessel 2, fig. 2; No. 975), diameter 17 inches (43.2 cm.); exterior, reddish wash. Paste porous gray. For colors see Plate 3.

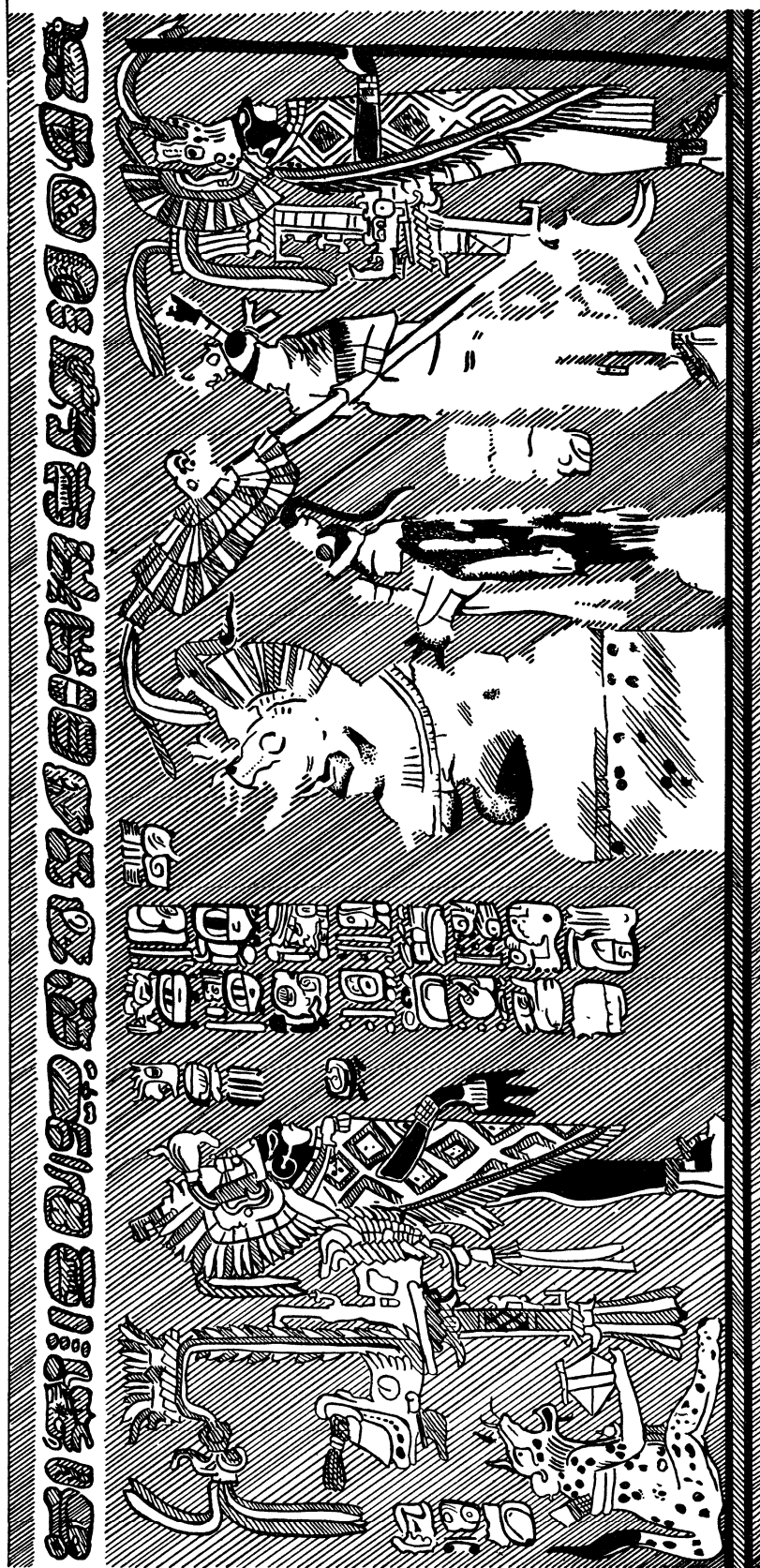


FIG. 9—Design from cylindrical vase from mortuary vault (vessel 1, fig. 2; No. 974); height 9 inches (22.9 cm.). Interior and base of exterior covered with cream-colored slip. Paste finely kneaded cream-white. For colors see Plates 4 and 5.

NOTES ON THE HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTION OF THE POLYCHROME
CYLINDRICAL VASE SHOWN IN PLATES 4 AND 5

By SYLVANUS G. MORLEY

The superb cylindrical polychrome vase shown in Plates 4 and 5, epigraphically considered, is the most important example of ancient Maya ceramics yet brought to light, figure 6*b* for example.*

As used on pottery the Maya hieroglyphs frequently seem to have degenerated into purely decorative elements, selected perhaps more for their fancied esthetic value than for their symbolism and meaning. Two glyphs may appear in alternating sequence around the rim of a vase or bowl, their significance as thus used almost certainly being subordinated to their availability as decorative motives.

The polychrome vase here under consideration, however, has a far greater importance than that deriving from its esthetic superexcellence. It presents no less than the first complete Initial Series ever found on a piece of Maya pottery, and save for a fragmentary Initial Series on a potsherd in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania¹ it is the only one thus far discovered.

The chronologically significant part of this text consists of the double column of sixteen glyphs—eight in each column—between the seated human figure facing to the observer's left, on the right, and the standing human figure painted black and facing to the observer's right, on the left (Plate 5). The importance of this glyph-panel is emphasized by the centrality of its position on the vase, all six of the figures, the five human ones and the seated jaguar, facing it.²

The inscription opens with an Initial Series introducing glyph at A1, the first sign in the left column. The variable central element seems to have for its center an arched element not unlike that corresponding to the month Kankin.³

The next five glyphs, B1—B5, record the Initial Series number, all the coefficients being represented by perfectly clear bar and dot numerals. The first sign in the second column, B1, records 7 baktuns, the coefficient being composed of 1 bar and 2 dots and the period glyph being represented by the corresponding normal form.

The next glyph, A2, records 5 katuns with equal clearness, the coefficient being composed of 1 bar and the period glyph represented by the corresponding normal form.

The next three glyphs, B2, A3 and B3, record 0 tuns, 0 uinals and 0 kins, respectively, the coefficient in each case being the familiar form for zero, the tuns being represented by the corresponding normal form for that period and the uinals and kins by their corresponding head variants. This Initial Series number should reach the terminal date 13 Ahau 3 Tzec, viz, 7.5.0.0.0 13 Ahau 3 Tzec.

Unfortunately an examination of our text (Plates 4 and 5) shows that this is not the case. The terminal date of this Initial Series is recorded in the seventh and eighth positions, A4 and B4, and reads either 8 Ahau 13 Kankin or much less preferably 13 Ahau 13 Kankin. In short, the Initial Series number recorded at B1—B3 will not reach the terminal date recorded at A4B4, and consequently there must be an error somewhere in the original.

Before suggesting any corrections, however, let us examine more closely A4, the day of the Initial Series terminal date, since this is the only sign of the entire Initial Series the coefficient of which is

* Mesoweb editor's note: The reference to figure 6*b* would appear to relate to the second paragraph, not the first.

¹ Brinton, *Primer of Mayan hieroglyphics*, pp. 139, 140, and fig. 84.

² The drawings in the design in figure 9 show the left figure printed black, transferred to the right of the drawing, a misleading arrangement.

³ Beyer, *Mayan hieroglyphs; the variable element of the introducing glyphs as month indicators*, *Anthropos* XXVI, 1931, pp. 105, 108 and plate III, Kankin.

not certain from inspection alone.

Miss Baker, who painted the reproductions of this vase from the original in the National Museum at Guatemala City, very clearly shows the coefficient of the day sign as 8, *i.e.* 1 bar and 3 dots in both her copies, though less clearly in her painting of the vase (Plate 4) than in her painting of the developed design (Plate 5).

The writer has not seen the original, but from an examination of photographs he believes the day-sign coefficient at A₄ may possibly be 13, *i.e.* 2 bars and 3 dots, instead of 8, *i.e.* 1 bar and 3 dots. At least a thin band of the darker background color divides the thick, lighter colored bar into two very thin bars in the photograph. It is only fair to state, however, that in the opinion of those who have seen the original, the coefficient in A₄ is more likely to be 8 than 13.

Returning now to the text as recorded, *i.e.* 7.5.0.0.0 8, or possibly 13 Ahau 13 Kankin, if the Initial Series number is correct, which is perhaps the most plausible assumption *a priori*, then in order to reach the corresponding terminal date 13 Ahau 3 Tzec, it is necessary to add another bar to the coefficient of 8 in A₄ and to eliminate the two bars of the coefficient of the month sign in B₄, making that coefficient 3 instead of the 13 actually recorded and finally changing the month sign in B₄ from Kankin as recorded to Tzec. These corrections, especially the last, substituting Tzec for Kankin, involve such drastic changes in the original that, in view of the practically certain identification of B₄ as 13 Kankin, it is highly doubtful whether they are permissible.

If these changes are not made in the terminal date in A₄B₄ so that it will agree with the Initial Series number as recorded, it is necessary to make a change in the Initial Series number itself.

The earliest monument positively dated yet found in the Maya area is Stela 9, also here at Uaxactun, the Initial Series on which surely records the date 8.14.10.13.15 8 Men 8 Kayab,¹ nearly six centuries later than 7.5.0.0.0 13 Ahau 3 Tzec. Three other earlier and possibly historical Initial Series, however, are known, 8.5.18.4.0 7 Ahau 3 Kankin on Stela 25 at Naranjo,² 8.6.2.4.17 8 Caban 0 Kankin on the Tuxtla Statuette³ and 8.14.3.1.12 1 Eb 0 Yaxkin⁴ on the Leyden Plate, but even the earliest of these is still more than four centuries later than the Initial Series of this vase as it stands. In fact, so far as the writer is aware, there is no Initial Series known dating from Baktun 7.

The positive evidence afforded by these three early (Baktun 8) Initial Series, as well as by the absence of any other Baktun 7 Initial Series, tends to indicate, the writer believes, that the Initial Series number recorded here is incorrect, and that in order to reach any plausible reading for this date one or more of the coefficients of its five period glyphs must be corrected.

From his first acquaintance with this text, the writer has felt that the month record, 13 Kankin, in B₄ is probably correct. In Maya bar and dot notation an error of 5 in a numerical coefficient is an easy and natural mistake. The omission of a bar in the number 13 makes it 8 and vice-versa, the addition of a bar to 8 makes it 13. But that the ancient artist should have painted the month-sign Kankin when he intended to record some other month-sign, as for example Tzec demanded by the reading 7.5.0.0.0, involves a much greater degree of error—one indeed which the writer is loath to concede.

Furthermore insofar as the variable central element of the Initial Series introducing glyph is concerned, it looks more like the form corresponding to the month Kankin than that for any other month-sign, thus tending to confirm the identification of the month-sign in B₄ as Kankin.

In the reading suggested below, the writer identifies the month-part of this Initial Series, *i.e.* B₄, as 13 Kankin, much the best decipherment of B₄ by inspection.

The question arises, then, what are the fewest changes in the original necessary to correct this incorrectly recorded Initial Series, assuming that its month part is properly recorded as 13 Kankin?

By referring to Goodman's Tables it will be found that if we assume an error of 1 (*i.e.* 1 dot) in the baktun coefficient at B₁, we will reach the month-part 13 Kankin as recorded with no other change

¹ Carnegie Inst. Wash. Year Book No. 15, 1916, pp. 340, 341, and fig. 3.

² Carnegie Inst. Wash. Year Book No. 20, 1921, pp. 364, 365, fig. 1a.

³ Morley, *2 The inscriptions at Copan*, p. 403, fig. 63.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 411, fig. 65.

in the Initial Series number itself, *viz.* 8.5.0.0.0 12 Ahau 13 Kankin. Furthermore no other Katun 5 of any baktun for thousands of years, either before or after 8.5.0.0.0, ended on the month position 13 Kankin. Indeed, the writer believes it may be accepted as practically certain that if the month-part of this Initial Series is 13 Kankin, *i.e.* the best reading of B₄, and if the end of some Katun 5 is recorded here, *i.e.* the best reading of A₂-B₃, then the baktun coefficient in B₁ can only have been 8, and the error in the original occurs in this very glyph, 7, *i.e.* 2 dots and 1 bar, being recorded for 8, *i.e.* 3 dots and 1 bar.

Referring to Goodman's Tables it will be found that the three Katun 5 endings immediately preceding and following 8.5.0.0.0 fall on other month positions:

5.5.0.0.0	2 Ahau	8 Zotz
6.5.0.0.0	1 Ahau	18 Mac
7.5.0.0.0	13 Ahau	3 Tzec
9.5.0.0.0	11 Ahau	18 Tzec
10.5.0.0.0	10 Ahau	8 Muan
11.5.0.0.0	9 Ahau	13 Xul

In fact before a Katun 5 could again end on the month position 13 Kankin either before or after 8.5.0.0.0 12 Ahau 13 Kankin, some 28,780 years must have elapsed.

It is therefore practically certain that under our two postulates—(1) That the end of some Katun 5 is recorded here and (2) that the month-part of this Initial Series is 13 Kankin—the only possible reading of this Initial Series is 8.5.0.0.0 12 Ahau 13 Kankin.

The greatest difficulty with this reading is the day coefficient in A₄, which as recorded is surely either 8 or 13. If the former, there is one dot too many and one bar too few; if the latter, there is one dot too many, the bars being correct.

If this Initial Series is recorded as 7.5.0.0.0 13 Ahau 13 Kankin, as the writer is strongly inclined to believe, then by shifting the superfluous dot in the day coefficient at A₄ (*i.e.* making it 12 instead of 13) to the baktun coefficient at B₁ (*i.e.* making it 8 instead of 7) *viz.* 8.5.0.0.0 12 Ahau 13 Kankin, this Initial Series then becomes not only mathematically possible but also historically possible.

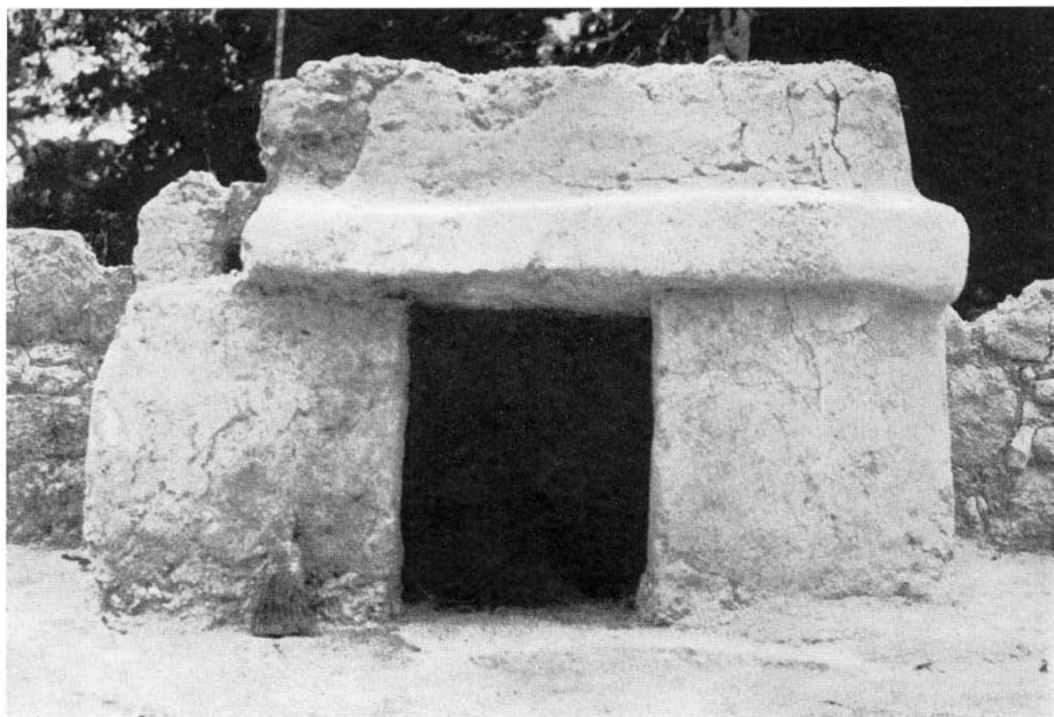
Unfortunately the first four glyphs of the Supplementary Series, *i.e.* A₅-B₆, recording Glyphs G, F, D and C, respectively, give little help in the decipherment of this Initial Series. Glyph D at A₆ has a coefficient of 3, indicating a corresponding moon age of 3 days, and Glyph C at B₆, also a coefficient of 3, indicating that 3 lunar months had elapsed since the last lunar base, whereas the true moon age corresponding to 8.5.0.0.0 was 27 days, *i.e.* an error one way of 24 days, or the other way of 5 days. If A₆ may be read as Glyph E instead of Glyph D, then the moon age recorded would be 23 days or within 4 days of the true moon age for this date. The variant of the moon-sign recorded at A₆ is surely that found in Glyph D, though owing to the apparent interchangeability of Glyphs D and E both at Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan, it is barely possible that Glyph E may be intended here. If so, the moon age is 23 days, *i.e.* within 4 days of the correct moon age for the Initial Series 8.5.0.0.0 as just noted.

Even though 8.5.0.0.0 12 Ahau 13 Kankin should be accepted as the Initial Series which the ancient artist intended to record, as the writer believes, the stylistic criteria of this vase indicate that it could not possibly have been executed at such an extremely early date.

Thompson believes the beautiful polychrome pottery (Holmul V) of the later Old Empire hardly made its appearance before 9.15.0.0.0, with which Vaillant agrees, *i.e.* about six centuries later than

the corrected reading here suggested for this Initial Series. It is obvious, therefore, that whether this Initial Series records a date in Baktun 7 or as the writer believes in Baktun 8, such a date was in the *remote past*, *i.e.* it referred to an event of the remote past even at the time the vase itself was made; in other words, it can not, on stylistic grounds, indicate the date of execution.

From the epigraphic point of view this vase is of outstanding if not indeed unique importance for two reasons: First because it presents the only complete Initial Series ever found on any medium other than stone or stucco and second because this Initial Series is the earliest yet found in the historic period.



a



b

a, Sanctuary. *b*, Northeast corner of pyramid.



POLYCHROME VESSEL FROM MORTUARY VAULT

Shallow bowl with three cascabel (rattle) legs. (Vessel 10, fig. 2; No. 981); diam. 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches (35.8 cm.) Exterior unslipped. Paste pinkish orang. Note "kill" hole in middle.



POLYCHROME VESSEL FROM MORTUARY VAULT
Diam. 17 inches (43 cm.) (See fig. 8)



CYLINDRICAL VASE FROM MORTUARY VAULT
(For description see fig. 9)



M. LOUISE BAKER

DESIGN FROM CYLINDRICAL VASE
(For black and white rendering see fig. 9)