

necessary before any of these motives could be finally condemned. The head of Bacchus rings true and gives an excellent idea of a type used not only in mosaic but also in painting in the first half of the third century A. D.

E. H. D.

AN ANCIENT PARACAS MANTA

NO greater masters of the textile arts probably ever plied their craft in the Western Hemisphere than the early dwellers on the Paracas peninsula that juts into the Pacific from the southern coast of Peru. Before the rise and decline of the great Tiahuanaco culture in the highlands, when the gifted tribe, which was to found the Inca empire, were growing potatoes and pasturing their llamas in the mountain valleys of central Peru, the people of Paracas wove their fine cloths and adorned them with multicolored embroidery replete with meaning. Most impressive of these fabrics, because of their great size and the amount of work involved, are the so-called mantas which are found in the deep graves, enveloping the dead or folded within the wrappings of the mummy-bundle.

The University Museum is happy in having recently acquired by exchange such a manta. It measures ten feet in length by five in breadth, the broad central field being woven in a single piece, which was probably embroidered as the weaving progressed. Wide borders solidly embroidered in polychrome are sewed to the long sides, and the borders are themselves edged with a narrow fringe which turned the corners and partly edged the ends of the cloth. It is characteristic of these large mantas that the central section of each end is seemingly always left free from border, a fact which raises the question of their original purpose. They are too large for use as garments of the living; as rich grave-gifts



PLATE VII.

Manta from Paracas, Peru.

for the notable dead, their peculiarity is equally inexplicable; their shape does not suggest door or wall hangings. Possibly they were intended for canopies of state, the plain ends in a horizontal position being obscured by the supports, while the fringed or bordered portions hung vertically or slantingly.

The cloth of the Museum's newly acquired manta is a fine plain weave, 32 warp- and 38 weft-threads to the square inch, and upon its yellow-brown surface thirty-nine large fish-like figures were embroidered in spaced arrangement. No ordinary fish is here represented, but the Father of all fishes, Master of the Sea and Arbiter of the lives of fisher folk. He has been identified by Eugenio Yacovleff as *Orca gladiator*, the terrible killer whale. On the pottery of the region he is usually shown in profile, often grasping a knife or a trophy head in a hand springing from a modified fin. On the manta it is the dorsal aspect of the head and body which appears with special emphasis on the vertebral column; a three-fingered hand holds a trophy head with dangling hair. The ancient cult of the Sea Beast came down into Inca times, and the Inca historian, Garcilaso de la Vega thus refers to it: "They adored the whale for its bigness and monstrosity. Besides this adoration which was common to the whole coast, in various provinces and regions they adored the fishes which were killed in the greatest abundance in that region because, they said, that the first fish which was in the world above (so they called the sky) from whom proceeded all other fishes of that species upon which they lived, took care to send them in his time an abundance of his children for the sustenance of the nation."

Like most nature gods, this lord of the sea indiscriminately nourished and slaughtered his devotees. Hence he appears in their art armed with the sacrificial obsidian knife, or grasping a severed human head. There is abundant evidence from ancient textiles and pottery that the Nazca and Paracas peoples practiced head-hunting and the shrinking of the trophies, a custom which still survives among the Jivaro Indians of Ecuador.



Left: Corner of Manta showing school of whales.



Right: Orca sea-god with trophy head.

The Sea Beast, with his trophy, forms the pattern of the sewed-on border, presenting a continuous band, nose to nose and tail to tail with smaller units occupying the angles. In this manta the border extends only to the ends of the cloth, and, in order to give the effect of finishing the ends of the main strip, a square of similar width and design was embroidered on each corner of the cloth. Near one of these occurs the textile artist's only error in design: a unit of the ocean deity is laterally reversed. The beauty of texture and the liveliness of the figures noticeable in the embroidered border is produced by the simplest of embroidery stitches, sometimes called the stem-stitch; a slanting stitch produced by a backstitch half the length of the previous forward turn. Laid close together in rows, curving to the lines of the figure, they seem to flow with it. It is perhaps not unintentional that the effect is that of a smooth rather than a scaly surface.

Another technique, that known as needle knitting, was used to produce the narrow heading to the fringe along one side, but the motive remains the same, tiny fish-like creatures.

In many important fabrics of the Nazca-Paracas district there occurs a regular sequence of color arrangement known as the "six unit design," in accordance with which, beneath a seeming great variety, definite color combinations recur in sequences of six. Such a sequence is evident in this manta, both as applied to the units of the principal field and to the main figures of the border. Deep red, rose, gold, pale yellow, olive, jade green, navy and light blue appear in definite combinations.

The period to which this interesting fabric belongs, as reckoned in textile styles, differs from that of the two large Paracas mantas obtained in 1922 by Dr. Farabee of the University Museum Expedition. The bird textile and the cat textile are both characterized by nested designs, the units fitting one within another, though the border designs of all three show that avoidance of unfilled spaces typical of primitive art.

Practically nothing is known of the Paracas people save what can be learned from the contents of their huacas, as the ancient Peruvian graves

are commonly called. They were probably closely related to the gifted Nazca of the neighboring territory. That they were earlier is indicated by the fact that their pottery is comparatively simple and plain, while that of the Nazca reproduced in its richly painted designs figures of the deities in style and color as they appear upon Paracas textiles, and yet the Nazca textiles are more stylized. The manta is undoubtedly Early Paracas and may be assigned to a date close to the beginning of our era.

H. N. W.

THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM—1938-1939

THE past year witnessed the Museum's steady progress with only a few alterations in its usual course of activities. Expeditions were maintained, jointly with other institutions or under the Museum's sole auspices, at Persepolis in Iran, Lake Van in Armenia, Curium in Cyprus and Piedras Negras in Guatemala. The Board of Managers has adopted a policy of bringing to a logical conclusion all its main field undertakings and therefore the close of the year marked the termination of work of the Expeditions at Persepolis and at Piedras Negras; work of the personnel of these Expeditions will, for the immediate future, be concentrated on preparing the results for publication. In view of unsettled conditions abroad it was not felt wise to continue to have the Museum share in the sponsorship of the Lake Van Expedition, and this project therefore went forward without the Museum taking part or responsibility in its activities. With the generous aid and under the supervision of Mr. George H. McFadden excellent progress was made on the excavations at Curium where new horizons of occupation and many interesting objects came to light.