

# UNIVERSITY MUSEUM BULLETIN

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## THE AMERICAN COLLECTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

## THE ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS OF MIDDLE AMERICA

by

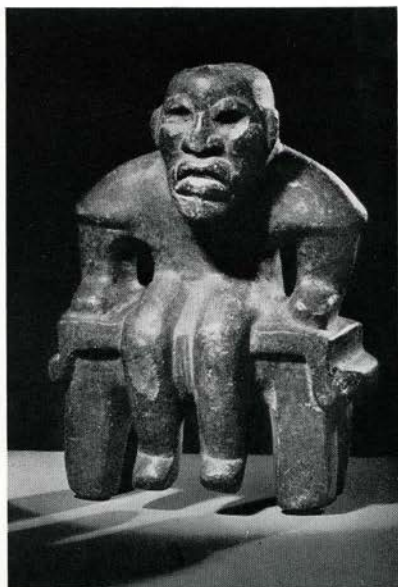
J. ALDEN MASON



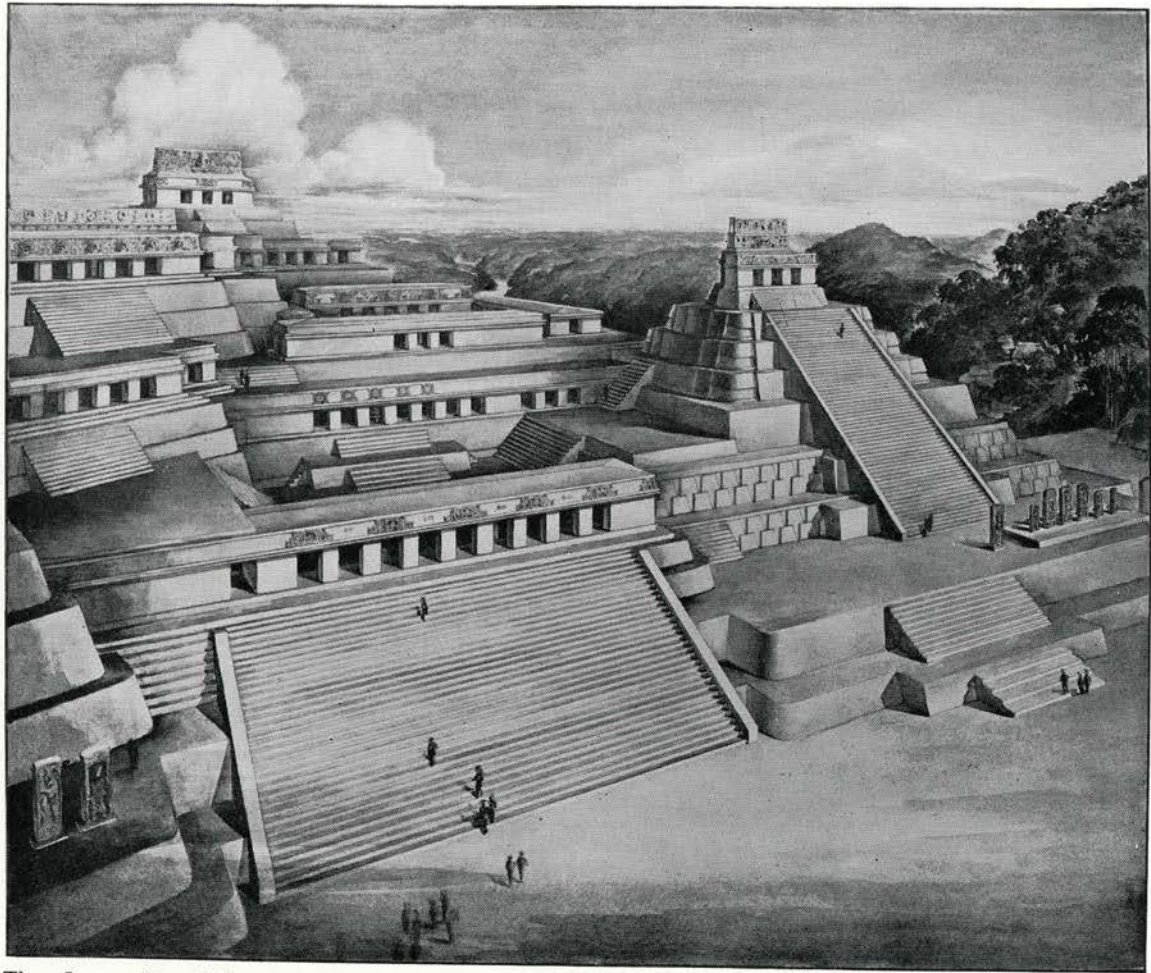
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THE designs on the cover were taken from the drum illustrated on page 20; they were drawn by Miss Marie Strobel, as was the map on page 6. The restoration of Piedras Negras which serves as the frontispiece is the work of Miss Tatiana Proskouriakoff, the artist of the Piedras Negras Expedition.

The restored stucco head on page 1 was excavated at Piedras Negras. The illustration on page 3 is the interior of a pottery bowl from Nicaragua, copied by Miss M. Louise Baker.



Seated figure of black stone  
Guatemalan highlands



The Acropolis of the ruined Maya City of Piedras Negras, Guatemala, excavated by expeditions from The University Museum. Restoration drawing from evidence of the excavations

## P R E F A C E

THE Middle American Halls of The University Museum contain one of the world's best collections of objects produced by the ancient Maya civilization in Guatemala and adjacent regions, and by some of the other advanced cultures of Middle America. The finest of these art objects are shown and described in this publication. Naturally, only a few of the outstanding examples are on exhibition; the rest are preserved in storage and are always available to qualified students. Especially noteworthy, and of international fame, are the collection of Maya ceramics and the great Maya stone sculptures from Piedras Negras in Guatemala. The gold and pottery collections from Panama, both from Coclé and from Chiriquí, are among the largest known. The Coclé specimens, and a large part of the Maya material from Guatemala, were obtained by expeditions of The University Museum; most of the other objects have been secured at various times since the founding of the Museum, by gift, purchase, exchange or loan.

This publication is prepared with a view to meeting an apparent popular need for a very brief sketch of the ancient civilizations of Mexico and Central America. It should give the average reader in a short time a picture of these early cultures, and thereby vitalize the objects now in the collections of The University Museum by portraying the background of the peoples by whom they were made. The illustrations used are all selected from objects now in the Museum's collections. The familiar standard pictures of buildings and of certain outstanding examples of art and handicraft found in other more complete publications are consequently absent in this work, but can be found in many other books, both popular and scientific, devoted to the early cultures of this region.

Frequent reference to the map on page 6 and to the chart on page 24 is suggested.



Map of Middle America showing the locations of the principal peoples, cultures and archaeological sites