

# Bulletin of The Detroit Institute of Arts

Of the City of Detroit

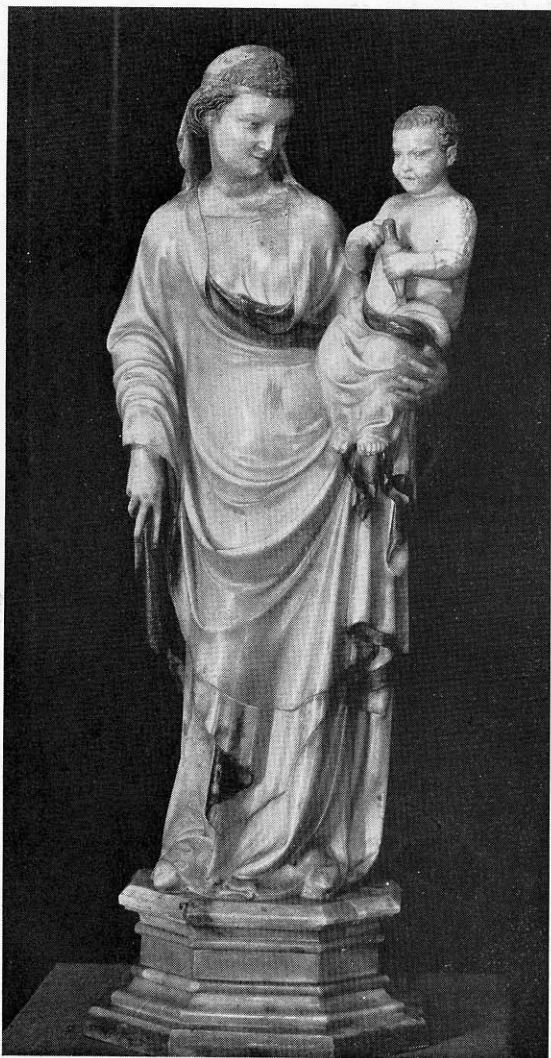
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Vol. VIII

MARCH, 1927

No. 6

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MADONNA AND CHILD  
NINO PISANO  
PISA AND FLORENCE. ca. 1315-1368

## A MADONNA AND CHILD BY NINO PISANO

The Madonna and Child by Nino Pisano, the generous gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edsel B. Ford, is undoubtedly one of the most fortunate acquisitions the Museum has ever been able to make. This masterpiece, which until now was hidden in a Paris private collection, will certainly be included in all works of art history dealing with the sculpture of the Italian Middle Ages, helping materially in giving the name of our collection a world-wide reputation; for, to anticipate a later remark, it shows the master, of whose authorship there can be no doubt, reaching heights to which he was hardly able to attain in any of his other works.

Nino Pisano was the son of the Pisan goldsmith and sculptor, Andrea Pisano, whom the Florentines, in the twenties of the fourteenth century, called to their city to make the celebrated southern bronze door of the Baptistry, and in whom they found their first great genius of sculpture. Nino must have been born about 1315, when his father still lived in Pisa. Whether he followed Andrea to Florence when a boy, or spent his first years of study as the apprentice of a Pisan goldsmith, as has been supposed, is uncertain. It is sure, however, that he, like his father, carried on the trade of goldsmith in addition to his sculpture, for we have documentary evidence that in 1358 and 1359 he received commissions from the city of Pisa for working in precious metals. It is known further that the artist must have been in Florence in the thirties, as from this period comes the first authenticated work by his hand, the Madonna from the Cavalcanti monument in Santa Maria Novella. But soon he seems to have moved back to Pisa, where we find him from the early forties until his death in or shortly before 1368. For a short time he was active (about 1349) as head-master on the Cathedral of Orvieto.

Among his other authenticated works may be mentioned the tomb of the Archbishop Saltarelli (died 1342) in Santa

Caterina at Pisa; the figures of the Virgin, St. Peter and St. John, and the wonderful half-figure of the Madonna nursing the Child, in the small Pisan church of Santa



Maria della Spina; the marble statuette of the Virgin (about 1349) in the Museum of the Cathedral of Orvieto; and finally the figures of the Virgin, St. Peter, St. Paul, and two angels carrying candlesticks, on the monument of the Doge Marco Cornaro, in the Church of San Giovanni e Paolo at Venice, which as Dr. Valentiner recently established<sup>1</sup>, bear Nino's signature and were probably executed in Pisa on a commission during the last years of the artist, after 1365. Other works attributed to the master with more or less certitude are Madonnas and groups of the Annunciation in the museums at Pisa, Berlin, and Budapest.

Nino belongs to the few outstanding masters of his century. His art grew essentially out of that of his father Andrea and yet is strongly different from his. Andrea had united in a most fortunate synthesis the elements of plastic modelling brought from the school of Giovanni Pisano, with the clear principles of composition of the great Florentine painter Giotto, creating thus the style, beautiful in lines as well as strong in expression, which we admire in his reliefs on the door of the Baptistry and on the Florentine campanile. His talent best reveals itself in dramatic narration, in the pictorial groups of those scenes where, placing the figures with great taste and skillful simplicity into the given field, he succeeds excellently in displaying the illustratively essential. The same style, applied to the more or less inactive standing figures in the round,—like those in the upper niches of the campanile and in the Museum of the Florence Cathedral which are attributed to the master,—mostly appears somewhat clumsy and compact. Nino received from his father the elements of sculptural formation, but he is lyric while Andrea was dramatic. Some critics have tried to deduce from this more tender conception of Nino's, the influence of the Sienese School. This might be partly right, but the deciding factor, apart from the difference of temperament, was more probably that change from the severe, manly and strong, to the soft, refined and courtly, which characterizes



not only the art but even the poetry (Dante as compared to Petrarch) of the whole of Europe in the course of the fourteenth century.

Nino likes the quietly standing figure with gentle movement in the head and arms only. The melody of richly flowing garments is more important to him than the expressive force of tense gestures. Even in what we know of his reliefs, where more freedom of movement would have been possible, he is always calm and restrained. He is most successful in his Madonnas, those realizations of a female ideal as it was created in literature by the French poetry of the period. We have here no more the grandiose Queen of Heaven and Mother of God, as shown by Giotto, and to a certain degree by Giovanni Pisano, but a gentle, courtly lady, who with lovely smile and motherly tenderness turns to a fine and well-behaved child who, on his part, has given up all the divine consciousness and hieratic dignity of those earlier times. Our Virgin, which is the most nearly related to the one in Orvieto of 1349, and was therefore presumably executed about the same time, is one of the most beautiful, perhaps even *the* most beautiful, created by Nino, one of those entirely fortunate and, one might say "timeless" works of art which, though showing all the characteristics of their special epoch, yet display in some way a beauty which speaks to all people and for all ages.

W. H.

<sup>1</sup>*Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst*, Vol. 60, p. 242.



LADY WITH A WHITE LACE CAP  
GIOVANNI BATTISTA TROCCHI

## A PORTRAIT BY GIOVANNI BATTISTA TROCCHI

In the important exhibitions of American painting, such as those at the National Academy of Design, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, or the big International Exhibition of the Carnegie Institute, one generally finds a quiet but compelling picture from the brush of Giovanni Battista Troccoli, and when such a picture is discovered amid its more blatant and riotous brethren, it is apt to take possession of the beholder in such a way that he will always remember it.

Such a picture by Mr. Troccoli, the

"Lady with a White Lace Cap," has just been presented to the permanent collection by Mr. and Mrs. Richard H. Webber. It shows an old lady in a black silk dress seated beside a table on which is a small bouquet of flowers, and as one contemplates this picture he finds it a most pleasing interpretation of old age. There is so much character in this gentle woman who is quietly resting and dreaming of other days as the artist skillfully perpetuates her likeness on the canvas. The modelling of head and hands, with the play of light and shadow upon the flesh

tones, is admirably carried out with a sureness and a sensitiveness that bespeaks the able and convincing artist, and yet the delineation stops at a point that leaves it pregnant with mobility and suggestion. This finesse is an individual trait of Mr. Troccoli and is a characteristic to be found in many of his works. The sheen of the black silk gown with its high lights dexterously brushed in, adds emphasis and attractiveness to the theme.

Mr. Troccoli writes that it is, in fact, a portrait of Mrs. Troccoli's mother, the wife of the artist E. G. Champney of Boston, one of the first instructors at the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. That Mr. Troccoli found her a sympathetic sitter is indicated in the fact that he has painted six portraits of her, of which this is number five.

As his name suggests, Mr. Troccoli was born in Italy, October 15, 1882. To Denman Ross and to the Julian Academy in Paris he owes that sound training and completeness that is apparent in all his works and which has won him recognition in some of the more significant competitive exhibitions in America, bringing him such awards as Honorable Mention at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, in 1911, the Harris Silver Medal at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1913, the Gold Medal at the Panama Exposition in 1915, and the Thomas R. Proctor Prize at the National Academy of Design in 1922. In his own city of Boston his painting is held in high esteem and he is numbered among the members of the Copley Society and the Guild of Boston Artists.

C. H. B.

## AN EARLY INDIAN BUDDHA HEAD

A detached head recently acquired by gift from Mr. Henry G. Stevens, is a characteristic work of the Mathura school, in the usual mottled red sandstone of Sikri or Rup Bas. Two well-established conventions, the short curling hair and the ear without an earring, show that the head must be that of a Buddha or a Jaina Tirthankara; in the absence of more definite evidence, it may be called a Buddha. As regards the hair, according to the legend,<sup>1</sup> when the Buddha, or rather, the Bodhisattva, as he then was (previous to the Great Enlightenment) cut off his long locks on the occasion of adopting the religious life, the remaining ends of hair curled tightly to the right, and so remained to the end of his life. In the early Kushan types, dating near to the beginning of the reign of Kaniska (probably A. D. 120) this seems to have been understood to mean that all the ends of hair drawn together above the head, and cut off with a sword (as the scene is represented, for example, at Borobudur) assumed the form of a single short spiral lock; and this is how the hair is represented in the earliest

Buddha and Jina figures. There, the short spiral lock conceals or takes the place of the cranial protuberance, which came to be regarded, perhaps through a misunderstanding of the old description "having a head like a turban" (*usnisa*), as a distinguishing mark of Buddhas and Jinas. Very soon, however, the single coiled lock on the top of the head was replaced by smaller regularly distributed curls evenly covering the whole of the head, cranial protuberance (*usnisa*) included. This would have been a natural interpretation of the same legend, if it were supposed that the head had been originally shaved as in the case of ordinary *parivrajakas* (wandering friars, such as those of the Buddha's following). These two interpretations of a common idea seem to me sufficient explanation of the two ways in which the hair is dressed in Buddha figures. However this may be, the second method, illustrated in the head under consideration, came into use toward the middle of the Kushan period, and established a type thereafter to be invariably followed in the Gupta period in

<sup>1</sup>Midanakatha (Rhys David, *Buddhist Birth Stories*, p. 86): "Taking his sword on his right hand, and holding the plaited tresses, together with the diadem on them, with his left he cut them off. So his hair was thus reduced to two inches in length, and curling from the right, lay close to his head. It remained that length as long as he lived, and the beard the same. There was no need at all to shave either hair or beard any more."



HEAD OF BUDDHA  
EARLY GUPTA DYNASTY (MATHURA SCHOOL)  
ca. 320-340 A. D.

India and throughout the Far East, Farther India, and Indonesia. In our head, as was very commonly the case, the *usnisa* seems to have been broken away. Another peculiarity of the Superman, often represented in Buddha figures, was the *urna*, a sort of mole or tuft of hair between the brows; it cannot be traced in the present example. As regards the ears, these represent, of course, the natural elongation of the lobe by the weight of heavy earrings, removed on adopting the religious life. The well-marked lines of the neck ("like a conch") are a traditional mark of beauty.

Stylistically, the sculpture belongs to the purely Indian type of the Mathura school, where the Buddha figures perhaps

originated; at any rate the source of the ultimately predominant type. Buddha figures were exported from Mathura to other sacred sites all over northern India long before the Gupta period and thus in widely separated areas disseminated the type. This type stylistically still retains the mass and volume of early Indian art, though now with greater refinement and formality. The head is midway between Kushan and Gupta types, and closer, perhaps, to the latter; the smile, and the slight suggestion of movement give to it a somewhat unusual air of vivacity and individuality. I am inclined to suggest a date quite early in the fourth century A. D.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Keeper of Indian and Mohammedan Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

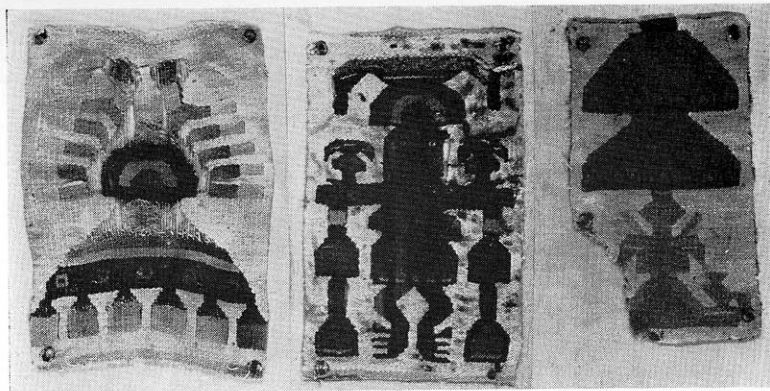


FIG. 1

## PERUVIAN TEXTILES

Weaving is one of the most ancient of the great arts; it appears at the very dawn of man's history and is inseparable from true culture. It has been aptly called "the nurse of civilization." Peruvian textiles have only recently been discovered and because of their great artistic beauty, which is more perfect even than that of their pottery vessels, have immediately attracted general attention. The diversity of material and technique vies with the splendor of the colors, and the strange conventionalized animal figures give an added delight to the eye and the mind.

Of the four great textile fibers, silk, wool, cotton, linen, the Peruvians used three, a fact that proves a high standard of civilization, and also a far greater independence from outside influences than we are inclined to credit them with. For if they had depended upon foreign culture, they might have imported raw silk or silk worms from China. As it is known, there was communication among the Pacific island groups in prehistoric times, and Chinese traders might have ventured to the Peruvian coast. The fibers used by the Peruvians were cotton, both white and reddish brown; wool from the alpaca, vicuna and llama; hemp, derived from *Agave americana* or maguey; and very long and rather coarse human hair for narrow black outlines.

Their hemp or bast fiber is inferior to the true flax of ancient Egypt and mostly used for twines and in making nets and bags, of which our collection has no specimen.

Both cotton and wool were used with great craft. Almost all their yarns are two or more ply, thus insuring a greater evenness and strength. Both the cottons are wiry and inferior to the exceedingly fine cotton threads of ancient India; the white variety is better, but the brown seems to have been preferred, perhaps for some superstitious reason. It is interesting to find it referred to in old literature as having been reserved for the rulers—a parallel of the royal purple and scarlet of Asia and Europe.

All their wool comes from animals belonging to the camel family; that of the vicuna is the finest, the llama's the coarsest.

The spinning is better than the best machine spinning of today, and the Peruvians, like the weavers of the Dacca muslins and Cashmere shawls of old India, seem to have applied certain principles that are unknown to us. Yet their means were of the simplest: spindles consisting of a single stick of palm wood, pointed at both ends and ornamented with a pottery band in the center which both strengthened and helped to balance the spindle. Sometimes, when a longer spindle was

desired, two pieces of pointed palm wood were stuck in the ends of a piece of hollow cane. Fig. 1 (right) shows a conventionalized picture of a lady with very elaborate headdress, spinning; the spindle rests in a bowl which also contains the water to moisten the fiber. For the sake of symmetry the spindle and the rocket which she holds over the shoulder are repeated.

Some Peruvian textiles show traces of tinsel yarn, obtained by twisting a thin band of silver about a finished yarn, the softer silver covering the entire surface. We have no specimen of this practice.

Balls of yarn about the size of an orange, tightly wound about some hard object like a corncob, have been found and are supposed to have served as a form of currency.

The textile development of pre-Inca Peru is unique, a perfect record of the technical and artistic development of a single people. The mechanical and even the artistic resemblance to some Asiatic fabrics can perhaps be sufficiently explained by the fact that in Asia and Peru cotton became the principal fiber. Similar material leads to similar technique. Cotton is almost always used as a warp in woolen weaves. The ancient Peruvians had attained a very high perfection in the development of diverse weaving techniques; that of tapestry and embroidery being carried to supreme height. Brocade and bobbin-weave are closely allied to embroidery, but of a later and higher development. Gauze and double cloth are technically even more advanced. A curious and sometimes misleading characteristic of Peruvian webs is the passing in the same fabric from one technique to another. Plain weave, tapestry, and embroidery often appear in the same fragment, and it is yet another proof of their skill at the loom. Quite commonly we find tapestry borders which appear to be sewed on to a plain fabric, but upon inspection we find the warp running through.

By far the finest and most numerous fragments discovered are the tapestries.

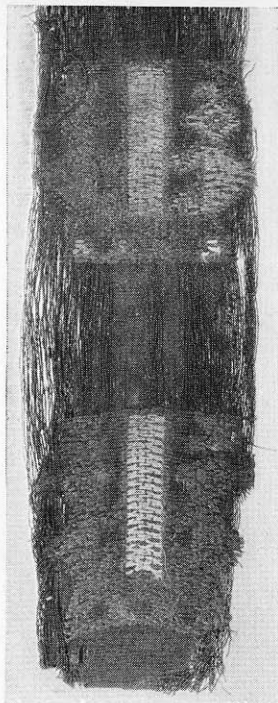


FIG. 2

The kelim technique of a loom with a mechanical contrivance for lifting the warp threads, may go back to Llapchillulli, the companion of Naimlap, a legendary "maker of clothes and feather garments." No Persian kelims were ever woven finer than some Peruvian tapestries, and they will bear a comparison with Coptic and Alexandrian workmanship and with the silk tapestry of China. The slits where the different colors meet are either left open, as in the true kelim technique, or are joined by web locking, warp locking or eccentric weft, all three practices much more elaborate than the simple sewing up of the slits on the wrong side, which is commonly done in European tapestry. Our collection shows examples of almost all degrees of fineness; as a rule we can assign the coarser samples to a later period, even to the last, that of the Inca.

Brocading is the addition of an extra



ornamental weft, inserted during the actual weaving of the fabric. Many specimens of true brocading are so exquisite that they were at first supposed to be embroidered. Fig. 2 shows a gauze-like ground with brocaded mythological figures or priests in jaguar robes officiating at an altar. Although gauze has always been supposed to be a peculiar Asiatic technique, the old weavers of Pachacamac used it with absolute freedom and brought it to a remarkable degree of complexity. They even formed designs in the ground, or embroidered the fabric with that very ancient form of needlework which we find still practised among Italian peasants, the buratto.



FIG. 3

Bobbin-weaving resembles modern Jacquard figuring because the weft crosses through irregular sheds and over arbitrary groups of warp, to produce the design. Contrary to tapestry weaving, each color of the weft makes the complete traverse of the entire warp. There are two distinct types of bobbin-weaving; in the simpler method the weft produces the design on the surface only, the reverse being a jumble of loose threads; the other method makes a practically double-faced cloth, of which both sides are equally finished, the design appearing in reversed colors. Fig. 3 shows a very important

fragment in which we find both types represented. The reverse side of the material is shown at the lower end of the illustration: we see the wider stripe having the loose hanging threads, the narrower the double-faced design.

Double cloth, or two-beam weaving with two sets of warps and two sets of wefts which are combined into a single fabric on the loom, is often found in Peru. The weaving is done on both sides of the loom and at intervals the separate fabrics are locked into a single web by the crossing of the two sets of yarn. It is just short of miraculous how the Peruvian weaver with her simple contrivances could produce these elaborately calculated and technically finished fabrics.

The Peruvians were expert dyers, the colors being in most cases absolutely fresh. Printed fabrics have been found, also fragments of tied dyes.

It is difficult, almost impossible, to assert the exact place of production of most of these pre-conquest fabrics. At the time of the conquest (1532) Peru comprised not only the present-day area, but also the greater part of Ecuador and Bolivia, and extended southwards far into Chile, so that its entire area was about half the size of the United States. There is a strong family resemblance between the textiles from the different centers of population of old Peru. The oldest cities, high up in the Andes, Cuzco and the great Tiahuanaco on Lake Titicaca, were not quite as advanced in textile skill as were the ancient centers of civilization adjacent to the modern city of Lima. Most of the finest pieces are found in the ruins of Ancon and Pachacamac. These coast places reflected the influence of Tiahuanaco. In the Inca period the wonderful simplicity of geometric and highly conventionalized art, typical of the best work of the ancients, is replaced by grotesque realism and a general lack of design balance. The Spanish conquest upset even these last attempts at a national craft, and although the Peruvian Indian in the Andes region is still weaving good practical fabrics and heavy blankets, the art of the textile craftsman came to an end



FIG. 4

even before the Inca conquest, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Peruvian textiles, above and beyond their technical qualities, have a great artistic appeal. To our sophisticated modern taste the simple geometrical patterns are perhaps most congenial, but the strange-looking conventionalized animals and human beings give it its distinctive character. The subjects treated can be summed up under three heads:

1) Geometric figures: scrolls, frets, meanders, lozenges and others, most of which show their evolution from primitive basket work, and are common property to many peoples and races.

2) Symbolism: figures which probably have a religious and totemistic significance.

3) Conventionalism: animals and parts of animals, in which the degeneration has not been carried to such an extreme as to make the identification impossible.

A fourth division, realism, the would-be realistic representation of objects and scenes, belongs to the degenerate period after the thirteenth century.

The geometrical designs serve as connecting links to the conventionalized animal figures, often they are part of them. They are also used separately or to balance a design.

The symbolic designs occur on the great

carved walls at Tiahuanaco (Fig. 61) which are, like the glazed tiles of Assyrian art, a reproduction in stone of woven materials,—the petrefaction of wall hangings. We know about the Babylonian tapestries which were probably kelims with figural designs and were highly esteemed by Roman collectors of the time of Pliny. We also know that in the European middle ages the walls of living rooms were covered with paintings *al fresco*, or with tapestries, these latter having the advantage of giving an appearance of warmth and they could be rolled up for transportation. It is quite possible that the early rulers of Peru had their summer palaces high up in the mountains, at Cuzco or near beautiful Lake Titicaca, and that they moved down to the coast when the cold weather set in. In this case they would have wanted to be surrounded by their most highly valued properties at all times.

The Peruvian of old had no domesticated animals, except the llama, and it was used only as a beast of burden. While there have been found numbers of representations of llamas both in pottery and silver—votive offerings most probably—they do not occur on the textiles. The chief animals represented here are fish, birds and cats.

<sup>1</sup>Walter Lehmann, *The Art of Old Peru*.

The fish motive occurs far more frequently than any other, quite naturally so, for fish was the staple food for a large part of the inhabitants of Peru. For mechanical reasons the pattern very often consists of two fish, turned in opposite directions, thus making an "interlocked" design. The head is triangular, seen from the side, with one eye; the rest of the body suggests the outline of a fish as seen from above.

The bird has suffered far less in the course of being conventionalized; it is generally quite clearly featured (Fig. 4, left); sometimes however only parts of a bird protrude from a zigzag line, or two interlocked heads have the beak in common.

The three great cats occurring in Peruvian fauna are found represented in textiles, the puma, the jaguar and the titi or wild mountain cat. On Fig. 6 the belt of the god consists of two pumas with interlocked bodies and protruding heads. Two typical borders, one with fringe attached, show rows of cats walking with arched backs and high tails, turning their heads in full view to the beholder. The puma seems to have been kept in captivity, probably for purposes of the hunt, for we often find representations of it with a ring through the nose.

Man and mythological beings are found wherever the influence of the great cultural center, Tiahuanaco, reached. Our collection includes several specimens of great interest, technically and from the point of view of the anthropologist. Fig. 5 shows the finest of all, a fragment of exceedingly fine kelim fabric, of which the groundwefts have almost completely disappeared, making the well preserved design stand out as from a background of lace. Four anthropomorphic deities with arge headdresses are flanked on either side by a figure of a priest offering sacrifice and, still smaller in scale, by worshippers. Fig. 4, right, shows the fish-god, a basket with fish on the head, a fish in either hand, and surrounded by fish. Fig. 1 (center) gives another representation of the same

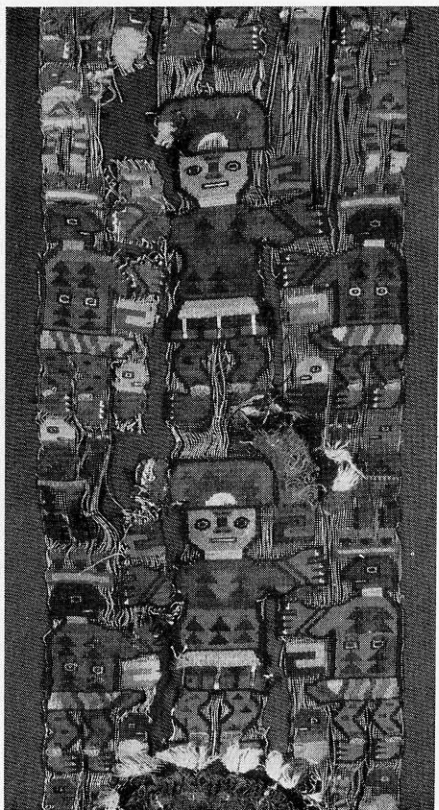


FIG. 5

deity—he is a lunar god, while the cat god from the wall carving of Tiahuanaco (Fig. 6) is a solar god.

Valuable textiles have at all times and in all places been favorites for votive gifts. Partly as such, but mostly owing to the loving care of the dead, we owe our knowledge of their great art and craftsmanship. We have good cause to be grateful to their firm belief in a life after death which caused them to fill the tombs of their beloved with all they might have held dear in life, in order to make them feel comfortable in the strange new surroundings.

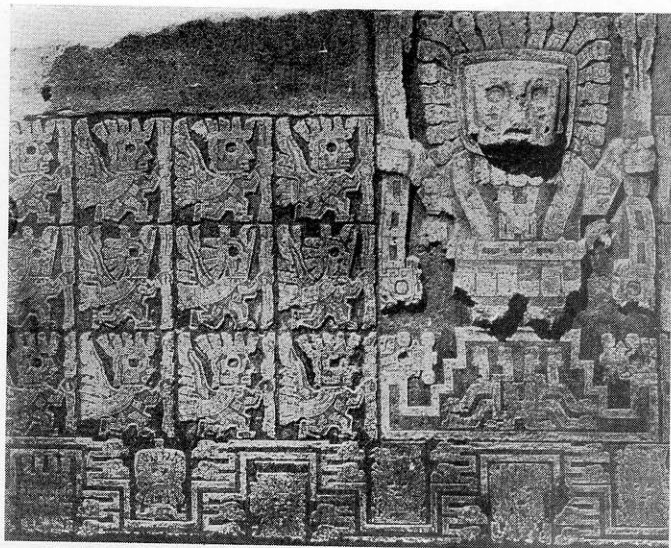


FIG. 6

Bibliography: American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers, M. D. C. Crawford, *Peruvian Textiles*, Vol. XII, Part 3 and Part 4; C. W. Mead, *Conventionalized Figures in Ancient Peruvian Art*, Vol. XII, Part 5. Garcilasso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Yncas*, Hakuyt Society, London, 1869-1871 (first published in Lisbon, 1609). Walter Lehmann, *The Art of Old Peru*, London, 1924. Max Schmidt; *Allperuanische Gewebe*, Berlin, 1911.

## MARCH AND APRIL LECTURES

March 6—3:30 p. m., Three Great Venetians Combine to Paint a Portrait. Miss Harvey.

March 13—3:30 p. m., Frans Hals, A Great Dutch Portrait Painter. Miss Harvey.

March 15—8:15 p. m., Bernini and the Decorative Art of the Seventeenth Century. Mr. Henry Burchell.

March 20—3:30 p. m., An English Lady as Hogarth Saw Her. Miss Harvey.

March 27—3:30 p. m., Monet Paints Landscapes in a New Way. Miss Harvey.

April 3—3:30 p. m., Antiquities from Ancient Peru. Mrs. Weibel.

April 10—3:30 p. m., "The Passing of Venus," a Merton Abbey Tapestry from a Cartoon by Burne-Jones. Mrs. Weibel.

April 17—3:30 p. m., Easter Musical Program presented by The Chamber Music Society of Detroit.

April 23—3:30 p. m., Musical Program by the Detroit Symphony Quartet. Presented by The Chamber Music Society of Detroit through the courtesy of The J. L. Hudson Company and Berry Brothers.