



## 1,000 YEARS . . .

before Columbus "discovered" America, there flourished a civilization in this country whose artistic, social, and religious standards far surpassed any European peoples up to that time. Many archaeologists not only compare the art and architecture of the Mayans and Aztecs favorably with that of ancient Egypt, but in many respects prefer their achievements in art importance. THESE were the FIRST Americans. We don't know just when they came, or from where, but we do know that their cultures were quite well established by the time of Christ.

It is well established that the nucleus of American Indian tribes spread from the Great Southwest region. Those that stayed there were the Pueblos; others wandered in all directions according to their likings and interest. Those who went south came to be known as the Mayans and Aztecs. Our particular interest is in this group for it is they who have given to the world some of its richest art treasures. Their fine creations are coveted by the leading Art Museums throughout the world.

The "golden age" of Mayan Art, in which they developed their pantheon, built their temples, perfected their Arts, social structure and government, occupied the first few centuries after Christ. Pyramids and temples unearthed at Chichen and Copan, Yucatan, reveal a grandeur in architecture and wood and stone carving unsurpassed by any ancient people.

The Great Temple, built to the War Diety, was a tradition running through the entire life of the Aztecs, being completed in 1487, just before the Spanish invasion. The temple compound covered almost a quarter square mile, comprising seventy-eight buildings—a most stupendous achievement and a monument to architectural beauty.

The most widely known of the Mayan and Aztec arts are the numerous hieroglyphs. They were used profusely on buildings, altars, monuments, and other such places, not only for embellishment, but for the recording of information. The decorations on the stairway of Copan alone were composed of over 2,500 different glyphs. Freehand methods prevailed entirely over any mechanical, and ever present was the sacred Plumed Serpent—likened to the Thunder Bird of our later Indians. As they recorded history, or sang songs, or worshiped their Gods, these symbols were gems of carefully planned, beautiful designs. Their art was their only written language.

Pottery always evidenced every strata of culture. Fragments of pottery have been found where all other records have been destroyed, even in pre-historic times. Throughout the long history of all Indian tribes pottery has been the universal art. The pottery of the ancient Southwestern Indians challenges comparison in color, form and mastery of line with that of the Greeks and Orientals. The universality of clay, the life that is evident in the plasticity of clay, and the ease with which it conforms to the slightest will, have been contributing factors in making pottery the "personal craft."

These two cultures embody the greatest achievements in Indian Art, and cover about 15 centuries of development. Their influence was dominant throughout the Southwest Indian country, from New Mexico and Colorado to the plateaus of Guatemala and Yucatan.

It is through the inspiration of this wealth of beauty that FRANKOMA has created its new Mayan-Aztec line of tableware.