

ARCHAEOLOGY

Ball Courts Give Long-Sought Ancient Monte Alban Date

By Tracing Evolution of Ball Game, Archaeologists Find That Mountain-Top City Was Occupied 1000 Years Ago

WILL AMERICA'S football stadiums and baseball diamonds become important aids to understanding our civilization a thousand years or so from now?

This comes to mind with the news that archaeologists in Mexico have placed the age of a seemingly ageless city by taking note of its ball games.

The city is the famous Monte Alban, today a maze of buried ruins perched on a mountain ridge. Monte Alban gained its widest modern fame when Mexican archaeologists entered a tomb there and found a group of dignitaries buried in shining golden regalia.

But to the archaeologists, whose first question about a place is "How old is it?" Monte Alban remained a mystery. The treasure tomb discovery added to the enigma, for it was "foreign" cache belonging to another culture deposited there for some reason not yet discovered. Dated tombs are being found in Monte Alban. But archaeologists can not yet read Zapotec Indian hieroglyphs, as they can Aztec and Mayan ones. Excavations of three seasons seemed to throw the dead city further and further back in time without a definite clue as to when it was a living metropolis. Now there is a clue. This is a tlachtli, or ball court.

Tlachtli was a widespread Indian game played apparently for both sport and religion. Frans Blom, archaeologist of Tulane University, has found ball courts in Mayan cities dating from early centuries of the Christian era in Chiapas and Guatemala. The game changed somewhat in the course of ten or fifteen centuries, to judge by the courts in Northern Yucatan known to date from a few centuries before the discovery of America.

All courts have an H-shaped space to play in. Very old ones of the south had several round altars in the center, and the side walls enclosing the field sloped. Northern courts lost their altars as centuries went by, their side walls became vertical, and big stone rings

were placed in them for the ball to go through. The Monte Alban court seems to fall between these types, as its walls still slope and are without a stone ring, although it had already lost all but one of its central altars. It is therefore likely that Monte Alban was occupied a thousand years ago.

When it ceased to be inhabited or when it began to be is not known, although Dr. Alfonso Caso, chief of the Mexican government archaeologists excavating there, believes Monte Alban may be contemporaneous with early Mayan cities of Chiapas in southern Mexico and Guatemala, and probably inspired by them.

Mayan culture in that region was full-fledged at the time of Christ. It had a complicated calendar, astronomical science, and mathematics, at that stage, for the evolution of which Dr. Caso believes that at least another thousand years had been necessary. Dr. Caso is inclined to think that the brilliant Mayas, during their long period of growth as well as at their height, inspired all the other cultures about them, far and near. He believes that the Monte Alban ball courts are evidence of the northern spread of this civilization, for the Maya land lies to the south and east of Monte Alban.

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EDUCATION

Geology, Economics, Politics Covered by School Train

A UNIQUE educational train tour in Canada, during which geology, economics, and politics students from Princeton University and perhaps other American colleges will study problems common to Canada and to the United States will be made this August.

The trip has been arranged jointly by the Princeton Summer School of Geology and Natural Resources and the School of Public and International Affairs. In past years the department of geology has organized annually summer

transcontinental trips through the United States and Canada for purposes of scientific investigation at first hand. This year students of politics and economics will join the excursion, because "geology is closely bound up with the general problems of economics and politics."

Prof. Richard M. Field of the department of geology of Princeton University and director of the summer geology expeditions of recent years, will be in charge of the party. Assisting him will be Dr. Leslie T. Fournier of the Princeton Department of Economics, a native of Canada, who has made a special study of rail and water transportation in the United States, and Dr. Erling Dorff of the Princeton department of geology.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Nine Die in Pittsburgh From Parrot Fever

NINE deaths from parrot fever and twenty-five cases of the disease have caused the U. S. Public Health Service to send Dr. L. F. Badger of the U. S. National Institute of Health to Pittsburgh to investigate the outbreak there. Dr. Badger has been sent at the request of Pittsburgh health authorities.

The outbreak, said to be one of the most severe that has occurred in some time, originated in a Pittsburgh department store which sold birds. One of the birds from the store was sent to the federal health authorities in Washington and on examination was found to have suffered from parrot fever or psittacosis.

A severe outbreak of parrot fever in many parts of the country occurred in 1930. In order to fight the disease, which was till then little known, the importation into this country of love birds and parrots, which transmit it, was forbidden temporarily. The disease subsequently affected birds in aviaries in southern California and a number of cases were reported from that source. The disease has now become rather a commonplace instead of being a novelty, and outbreaks of two or three cases are reported to the U. S. Public Health Service every few months. The outbreak in Pittsburgh seems to be much more severe.

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Seeds from some leguminous plants are so closely uniform that they are used as standards of weight in the Orient.