

## ARCHAEOLOGY

# Mayan Art Discovered

**Burial mound yields centuries-old work of craftsmen who lived before Columbus. Finest piece of Mayan jade yet found was uncovered.**

► ART WORK, produced centuries ago by Mayan craftsmen, has been dug out of a burial mound in Guatemala in the latest discovery of American archaeologists probing the ruins left by a people who prospered in northern Central America and southern Mexico hundreds of years before Columbus.

Works in jade and pottery, some of the finest Mayan pieces ever found, have been uncovered in the tombs near the village of Nebaj in northern Guatemala by Carnegie Institution of Washington scientists. The find was made in the same region where Carnegie Institution archaeologists and the United Fruit Company expedition have reported the discovery of many Mayan temples in recent months. The temples were located in the southern frontier region of the Mexican state, Chiapas, north of the little-known Guatemalan highlands.

One of the prize finds in the mound was a plaque or breastplate described as the finest example of Mayan jade yet discovered. The piece is a highly polished plate, one inch thick, four inches wide and six inches long. On it are carved a priest or ruler seated on a dais decorated with a human face and astronomical symbols. Faces of Mayan gods are carved around the border of the apple-green and white piece of jade.

Estimated age of the plate is a thousand years. Art uncovered in excavating the single mound is believed to cover some seven to eight centuries.

Excavation of the mound was directed by A. Ledyard Smith of the Carnegie Institution. While the scientists dug out the tombs, descendants of the ancient Mayas, Indians who still live in the region, continued to worship at the mounds, including the one under excavation.

At the ancient village, Nebaj, 20 mounds have been discovered, but the one probed recently was only the second to be excavated by archaeologists. In ancient times, shrines or temples crowned the mounds, but they were built of wood and have long since disappeared.

The rainy season has ended the present work on the Mayan site, but new excavations are expected to be made

later. Postwar revival of interest in the most brilliant pre-Columbian Americans is giving important new knowledge about the life and achievements of the ancient Mayas.

*Science News Letter, June 21, 1947*

## CHEMISTRY

## Black Uranium Brick Born in Archery Shed

► A BLACK BRICK was proudly displayed by Chairman David E. Lilienthal of the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission to editors attending the Inland Daily Press Association meeting in Chicago.

He explained that the brick was made of uranium and that the first successful production of uranium metal for nuclear fission was accomplished in the Midwest, at Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa. But Mr. Lilienthal did not tell the editors about a long wooden shed where coeds used to practice archery in physical education classes.

Maybe Mr. Lilienthal doesn't know

about the shed that jumped out of Robin Hood into the atomic age.

The historic shed is hidden among imposing college buildings on the east side of the large campus of Iowa State College. Before Pearl Harbor, bales of hay were piled at one end of the shed with a target for college girls to shoot arrows at.

Then one day in 1942, the hay and target were taken out and coeds left the shed. Workmen constructed partitions inside, while armed guards stood watch 24 hours a day.

In the shed and in a carefully-guarded section of the college's chemistry building, scientists were working on purifying uranium. Under the direction of Dr. F. H. Spedding of the college chemistry faculty, they developed a process for making uranium pure enough to be used in nuclear fission. Uranium went from the former archery range to Chicago's Stagg Field for the first chain reacting pile.

The process developed in the wooden shed at Iowa State College was used to produce uranium for the chain reacting piles from which came the stuff of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan.

Mr. Lilienthal's black brick was born in the shed where coeds used to shoot arrows.

*Science News Letter, June 21, 1947*



**JADE PIECE**—This breastplate is the finest piece of Mayan jade ever found. It shows a priest talking to a man, apparently attempting to show the insignificance of the man by making him so small.