



JADE ORNAMENTS FROM PIEDRAS NEGRAS, GUATEMALA

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'Turning from pre-Roman Italy to Roman, the first exhibits to arrest attention are a number of heads of the Republican period. First in interest is a head from Minturnæ which has the harsh linear quality of native Italic art, this rigidity being due, perhaps, to death-mask influence.'

The piece therefore belongs to the early first century B. C., a date when Roman sculpture was still feeling its way, and when portraiture was based largely on the ancestral death-masks retained by every noble family. Small wonder that its realism should awe its new owners.

The portrait is of a man well past middle age, a strong, shrewd, ruthless individual, as shown by the hard line of the mouth, the deep-set eyes, the heavy lines of care in the cheeks and forehead. The identification is not yet clear. The period coincides well with the years of contest between Marius and Sulla, and few other names so prominent come to mind. Lacking other well-attested portraits of Marius and Sulla with which to compare this, we are forced to hope for the discovery of the dedicatory inscription which accompanied the statue from which came the head. Marius, as the readers of Plutarch's life of him know, sought shelter at the city in his flight from Sulla in 88 B. C.; perhaps it is he, or perhaps it is one of a score of unsung local heroes of Minturnæ. J. J.

*Jade Ornaments from
Piedras Negras*

JADE was the material most highly prized by the ancient peoples of Mexico and Central America who regarded it as even more precious than gold (See 'Native American Jades,' *Museum Journal*, March, 1927). Although the source of the Mexican jade has never been determined, there is no question that it is native, as it is mineralogically distinct from Asiatic jade, and jade ornaments were demanded in tribute by the Aztecs from certain regions in southern Mexico. Jade is a generic term that

includes two chemically distinct species, jadeite and nephrite. Ornaments made of both of these stones are found in America, but the Mexican jade is jadeite. It was almost certainly a product of the highlands.

The Mayas of the Early Empire were ignorant of gold but apparently prized jade most highly and carved it in ornaments showing their characteristic art. This was a stupendous task for a people who possessed no metal, for jade is harder than steel. An important man's jade ornaments were buried with him, generally placed in the mouth like a Grecian obolus; for this reason many Mayan jades have been excavated.

A large number of jade ornaments have been found by the Eldridge R. Johnson Expedition at the Early Maya city of Piedras Negras in Guatemala, generally in ceremonial caches in pottery bowls under the floors of temples, but these are uniformly of jade of a poor quality. However, last season, a burial vault containing the remains of a young man who must have been of high rank was found, and with him were buried about thirty ornaments of the most beautiful, translucent, apple-green jade, in addition to a large number of beads. Half of these, in accord with the terms of the contract with the Guatemalan Government, were sent to Guatemala; most of the other half is shown in Plate XI. Fortunately, most of the ornaments occurred in pairs, so that a nearly equal division was made; only the best three objects were unique, a jaguar head pendant retained by the University Museum, a human figurine pendant sent to Guatemala, and a large scalloped ring in this Museum.

The human figurine was probably originally a pendant, but the position in which it was found indicated that it may have been placed in the mouth, in accord with Maya mortuary custom. The jaguar head was found face-down under the body and was probably a back ornament. It is in profile and rather high relief. The rear side is perfectly flat and smooth and contains seven blocks

of incised hieroglyphs, the purport of which inscription is unintelligible at present. It is one of very few known inscriptions on jade. On the breast were found the scalloped ring, which is badly broken and has not yet been restored, and two long rectangular beads; the one shown in the plate is four inches in length and is drilled throughout its length.

On either side of the skull was a large quasi-circular ornament with a short tenon at the back which was probably inserted in the lobe of the ear to serve as an ear-ornament; this is shown in the plate from the rear side. Around the forehead were twenty small ornaments of the finest jade, nine of which are shown in the plate. Although presumably attached together and used as a fillet, they are of the shape of ornaments presumed to have been employed as ear-plugs, and the fact that they consist of ten pairs of slightly different shapes indicates that they were originally ear-ornaments later used as a headband.

J. A. M.

*Three Carvings
from Cook Inlet,
Alaska*

THREE interesting representations of human heads were secured in 1932 from a site in Kachemak Bay, Cook Inlet, Alaska, of the same prehistoric Eskimo culture that produced the lamp with the human figure in the bowl, described in the last number of the *Bulletin*. The Eskimo of southwestern Alaska, both of the remote past and of recent days, carved small ivory figures, some exhibiting such life-like features and expressions that we might almost call them examples of portraiture. Such a realistic ivory head from Kachemak Bay was illustrated in the *Bulletin* for December, 1931. These ivory figures may have been dolls—for dolls are a common and characteristic element of Eskimo culture—some are said to have been used as amulets by childless women to secure offspring, and others again were used by the shamans as puppets in their magical performances.