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## The Discoverers of Platinum Metallurgy

The early use of platinum as a jewellery material, and the methods by which it was fabricated by South American Indians has been considered here previously (*Platinum Metals Rev.*, 1980, **24**, (4), 147-157). These Indians occupied a coastal lowland area near the present-day cities of Tumaco and Esmeraldas, and examples of their work in platinum and gold were first recovered from burial mounds and cemeteries in the mid-19th century.

The dating of these objects has been difficult, but it has been suggested that by the early

centuries of the Christian era the necessary platinum technology had been worked out. In a recent publication Warwick Bray recounts some of the archaeological discoveries made in this region of Colombia and Ecuador (*Américas*, 1988, **40**, (6), 44-49). Among the artefacts recovered from new excavations made by a French-Ecuadorian team at La Tolita was a scrap of sintered gold-platinum alloy sheet, and as a result of their discoveries the history of platinum metallurgy has been pushed back to the second century B.C., or perhaps earlier.