

A MODERN GOAT TRACED TO ANCIENT KISH

The discovery that domesticated goats, presumed to be entirely unknown until recent times, actually were familiar approximately 5,000 years ago to inhabitants of Mesopotamia, has been made through the joint researches of archaeologists and zoologists. Material recovered from the site of the ancient city of Kish by the Field Museum-Oxford University Joint Expedition to Mesopotamia played a vital part in the pursuit of these researches, which are reported upon in a paper by Dr. Wolfgang Amschler, a professor at the College of Agriculture, Vienna. A summary of the paper by Dr. Amschler, who is noted as a specialist in the identification of domesticated animal bones, follows:

BY WOLFGANG AMSCHLER

The excavation of the ancient royal cemetery at Ur of the Chaldees, under the direction of Sir Leonard Woolley on behalf of the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania, revealed a striking allegorical sculpture of the afterworld—the so-called ram, now famous throughout the archaeological world, found in the grave of Queen Shubad. The queen had been interred with her entire household—ministers and court ladies, as well as with great riches.

This superb sculpture is of a "ram" reared upon its hind legs, the forelegs bound by a costly chain to a little golden tree. Woolley has already indicated that in this motif there is a forerunner of the portrayal of the Biblical "ram caught in a thicket by his horns" (Genesis xxii, 13). From the classical form of the horns the animal represented was considered to be a mythical creature, the invention of some Sumerian craftsman's imagination. Careful investigation, however, indicates that the animal represented is a goat and not a ram. In the sculpture there is a pronounced beard, and sheep never possess beards. Furthermore, the horns are directed diagonally upward and are sharply twisted. This is in direct contrast to sheep's horns, which have flat or rounded frontal portions, with an outward to downward directed spiral axis.

Even if the sculpture could be proved conclusively to be that of a goat belonging to the species *Capra prisca*, one would be unable to cite for comparison any even vaguely similar variants from the many forms of domesticated or wild goats hitherto known. This apparent inconsistency caused the writer to search for similar forms in the cultures of Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Indus Valley.

In the standard of Ur this same *Capra* is represented both in a naturalistic pose, and as forming part of a tribute which included an ox and two sheep. The repeated portrayal of one type of goat suggested that it might well represent a species of *Capra* which lived in ancient Mesopotamia.

A search among representations of large animals from ancient Egypt revealed this same goat in the period about 2000 B.C. Further investigations revealed that it was kept in herds as late as the seventeenth century A.D. on the Bodensee and in Vorarlberg.

The work of Professor Magliano of Messina brought a further surprise. In 1930 he published a paper upon a goat, with curious spiral-shaped horns, occurring at Girgenti in Sicily. Magliano named it *Capra girgentana*. We see in this description the same type of goat, still living in herds in Sicily, that was shown in the sculpture found in Queen Shubad's grave.

In 1935 the question of identification of the Kish fauna, at Field Museum, led to

studies by the writer. Among the bones were thirteen fragments which when joined together formed a horn 17 centimeters in length. This horn belonged to a goat, *Capra girgentana*. Furthermore, when the Kish horn is compared to that portrayed in the Ur sculpture there remains no doubt regarding the identity of the two animals. Thus we have actual proof of *Capra girgentana* living between 3000–2530 B.C. at Kish and reproduced in sculpture by a contemporaneous craftsman at Ur of the Chaldees. Woolley's "ram caught in a thicket" was not a flight of fancy on the part of a Sumerian artist, but an actual representation of a then living *Capra girgentana*.

METEORITE OF RARE TYPE PRESENTED TO MUSEUM

BY HENRY W. NICHOLS

Chief Curator, Department of Geology

A highly valuable meteorite specimen, of special interest both because it represents a rare type and because it fell closer to Chicago than any other known meteorite, has been received at Field Museum from the estate of the late William Rumely, of Chicago and LaPorte, Indiana. Mr. Richard L. Rumely,



Iron Mass from the Sky

Chief Curator Henry W. Nichols (left) examining meteorite of rare type, presented to the Museum by the estate of the late William Rumely, represented by Richard L. Rumely (right), son of the original owner.

of Chicago, son of the original owner, acted on behalf of the estate in presenting it.

A preliminary study of the specimen indicates that the meteorite is one of the rare group known as hexahedrites. This type has a unique composition and structural form, found in only about one out of twelve iron meteorites. The specimen received weighs thirty-two pounds, and is about the size of an average man's head. It fell near LaPorte, where it was found and removed from the ground by a farmer living in the vicinity about the year 1900. The finder brought it to the farmers' supply store at that time operated in LaPorte by William Rumely. Mr. Rumely recognized the interest and value of the specimen, and kept it among his most cherished possessions.

The time of the meteorite's fall is unknown, but a guess, based on the excellent state of preservation, would indicate that it could not have been in the ground more than ten or fifteen years before it was discovered, and it is possible that it was found only a short time after it fell.

As the Museum's collection of iron meteorites is temporarily withdrawn from exhibition while undergoing rearrangement and reinstallation, it will be a month or more before this new specimen can be exhibited.

FIELD MUSEUM "DRAMAS" TO GO ON RADIO

The work of Field Museum—its expeditions, its research, the preparation of its great exhibits—will be presented in dramatized form in a series of thirteen radio programs beginning some time in May. These programs will be broadcast from coast to coast over the Mutual Broadcasting Company's network, with station WGN as the Chicago outlet. At the time this issue of FIELD MUSEUM NEWS goes to press, definite details as to what evening each week, and what hour, the Museum programs will be given are not available. They will be announced, however, on the radio pages of the daily newspapers.

The broadcasts will be presented jointly by the Museum and the University Broadcasting Council, the latter an organization noted for some of the most successful series of educational programs on the air. The Museum programs will be presented in dramatic fashion, similar to that which has made the well-known "March of Time" broadcasts so interesting and popular. The listener will be taken into the field with expeditions, to trail rare animals in jungles, mountains, and deserts, and to the sites of ancient civilizations to dig for archaeological material. He will accompany other expeditions to excavate the fossils of prehistoric animals, or to seek rare plants along the remote headwaters of tropical rivers.

These dramatizations have been planned to give the public a broader view and more intimate knowledge of the aims and methods of the Museum, and an insight into the many problems and difficulties encountered in the building up of important exhibits.

CELLULOSE-ACETATE TAXIDERMY APPLIED ON OSTRICH

A new African ostrich exhibit has been installed in the systematic series of birds in Hall 21. It is another example of the new method of preparation, invented and developed in the Museum by Staff Taxidermist Leon L. Walters, which has in the last few years been applied to an increasing number and variety of zoological specimens.

Unlike the reptiles, and the hippopotamus and white rhinoceros exhibits in which this method has been used in the past to reproduce the entire original specimen, the ostrich exhibit is only "semi-synthetic." The natural feathers, plumes, and skin of the original bird are used, in combination with skillfully made reproductions in cellulose-acetate of the head, neck, legs and feet. The lifelike reproduced parts are made by the careful application of layer upon layer of cellulose material, blended with the proper pigments. This is done in plaster molds of the corresponding original parts of the bird, thus assuring complete fidelity to details of form. After the removal of the plaster, and assembly of the reproduced parts with the salvaged portions of the original ostrich, the resulting final exhibit is found to be more lifelike and accurate than could be obtained from merely mounting the complete actual bird. The original specimen, captured in Somaliland, was for some years a resident of the Lincoln Park Zoo, which presented it to the Museum upon its death. Mr. Walters was aided in preparation of the ostrich by Assistant Taxidermist Edgar G. Laybourne.

During 1936 more than 62,000 sheets of plants representing many regions of the earth were added to the Museum Herbarium.



Amschler, J. Wolfg. 1937. "A Modern Goat Traced to Ancient Kish." *Field Museum news* 8(5), 3-3.

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