

LATE BURIAL MOUND ERA CULTURE ILLUSTRATED

By GEORGE I. QUIMBY
CURATOR OF EXHIBITS, ANTHROPOLOGY

A new exhibit recently installed in the Museum's hall of American archaeology (Hall B) deals with the late Burial Mound period in the southern United States. This period lasted from perhaps A.D. 900 to 1300 or even 1400.

During the late Burial Mound period there seems to have been a climax of Indian civilization. This climax was manifested by evidence of widespread trade and commerce, the construction of large and elaborate burial mounds, and the manufacture of fine tools, weapons, utensils, and ornaments, probably made especially for burial with the dead.

Burial mounds were dome-shaped heaps of earth erected over especially prepared funeral areas and graves. Although burial mounds had appeared earlier in the southern United States, the largest and most elaborate were built during the late Burial Mound period. In Louisiana, for example, a burial mound of the Marksville Indians was 90 feet in diameter, 21 feet high, and contained more than a thousand skeletons. Accompanying the skeletons were tools, weapons, utensils, and ornaments, probably made especially for burial purposes.

In this mound there were many examples of fine pottery with carefully made, incised and stamped designs; plain and effigy platform pipes of fired clay; figurines of clay or stone; beads of copper and galena; copper bracelets; ornaments of coal; and copper ear spools.

Sources of galena, copper, and coal do not occur in Louisiana; therefore the raw materials or the finished products made of these materials must have been imported from elsewhere. Chemical and physical analyses of the copper ornaments showed that the copper came from deposits in northern Michigan. Probably the beads, ear spools, and bracelets were actually manufactured in the north, Ohio or Illinois for instance, and reached Louisiana by means of trade. Copper, or objects made of copper, was only one of the many classes of objects traded over the eastern United States during the Burial Mound period. Other raw materials bartered about at this time were galena, coal, obsidian, rare flints, fossil sharks' teeth; Gulf Coast and Florida marine shells, mica, alligator teeth, quartz crystals, and fish jaws.

In addition to the Marksville culture of Louisiana, the following cultural groups are representative of the Burial Mound period in the southern United States: the Copena culture of Alabama, the Crystal River culture of Florida, and the Swift Creek culture of Georgia, to mention only a few.

The new exhibit attempts to capture the essence of the late Burial Mound period

rather than to show the details of any one culture belonging to the period. Toward that end, the new exhibit illustrates the type of stone projectile points, pottery, stone knives, stone axes, tobacco pipes, stone ornaments, and shell dippers as well as the mound building activities of some of the Indians of the late Burial Mound period. The new exhibit is the work of Artist Gustaf Dalstrom assisted by the writer.

FISHES OF BERMUDA GIVEN TO MUSEUM

While plans were being laid for the Bermuda Deep Sea Expedition, Mr. Loren P. Woods, Curator of Fishes, suggested a long-range project for renewed study of the Bermuda shore fishes, especially with the idea of making use of such times of rough weather as might prevent deep sea operations by the *Caryn*, expedition ship. Mr. Woods' studies on the Bikini collections at the United States National Museum have convinced him of the necessity for using the new techniques of coral reef collecting, and of the fruitful and sound results obtainable from study of collections so made.

The enthusiastic interest of the Museum party now in Bermuda has led Mr. Louis Mowbray, Jr., Director of the Bermuda Aquarium, to present his father's collection of Bermudian and other fishes to the Museum. The Mowbray collection, made over a period of forty-odd years, is rich in the rare forms that even a scientific fisherman may require luck to get. It thus forms a most desirable nucleus for the renewed collecting by Mr. Woods.

One of the principal activities of Curator Woods, Associate Marion Grey, and Preparator Ronald Lambert during their first weeks in Bermuda has been the packing for transmittal to the Museum of this collection. This large job, together with preliminary shore collecting, was carried on while the Museum group was waiting for the *Caryn*, which had been delayed at Woods Hole for essential refitting. First hauls of dredge and trawl will be made under the direction of Mr. William C. Schroeder, of the Oceanographic Institution at Woods Hole.

NEW MEMBERS

The following persons became Museum Members between June 16 and July 15:

Contributors

Mrs. Charles V. Riley*

Associate Members

Harrison B. Barnard, Master J. Patrick Hieber, Mrs. M. K. MacIntyre.

Sustaining Members

William G. Caples

Annual Members

Maxwell Abbell, John Albert Appleton, E. T. Baroody, Ray F. Basten, John Sprague Bauman, Walter J. Bauman, Earl

Books

(All books reviewed in the BULLETIN are available in The Book Shop of the Museum. Mail orders accompanied by remittance are promptly filled—The Book Shop pays the postage on shipments.)

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION. By H. Frankfort. Columbia University Press, New York, 1948. 172 pages. 16 full-page illustrations. Price \$3.

The things that to most of us mean ancient Egypt were the physical manifestations of the Egyptian's response to his religion. The great stone monuments still standing in Egypt were temples of worship or homes for the dead; the objects in museum halls of Egyptology were offerings propitiatory to the gods, accoutrements of the dead, or they are the dead themselves.

The Egyptian religion concerns itself with perhaps a hundred gods, all seemingly inextricably mixed in fancy. To think like an ancient Egyptian is an impossibility for us. Yet without an understanding of the beliefs that colored the Egyptian's mind, we are bewildered by the maze of gods and unable to see clearly the culture that was Egypt.

Professor Frankfort, through his special interests and years of study, is well equipped to make his way through the maze and arrive at the basic underlying concepts. Approaching Egyptian beliefs from five different aspects, he interprets for us the apparently conglomerate theological doctrines and arrives at what he considers to be the fundamental Egyptian conviction: that only the changeless is ultimately significant. He believes that this concept of a static universe was the oar that steered Egypt for three thousand years.

Of greatest interest for the average reader is perhaps the chapter devoted to a discussion of divine kingship and the Egyptian state. The entire book is a scholarly contribution to the study of religious philosophies.

RICHARD A. MARTIN, *Curator*

J. Brady, David S. Brown, Albert R. Brunker, Joseph Z. Burgee, Miss O. M. Clark, Allen G. Corliss, W. DeO. Davis, Jr., DeWitt Emery, Frank J. Foley, Louis L. Ga Mache, Theodore S. Gary, Dr. Edmund M. Glavin, Moulton B. Goff, William Haddow, Harold L. Hoefman, M. J. Keller, E. E. Krogh, Sten J. Lundgren, Miss Blanche Martin, H. T. McAnly, J. O. McClintock, William E. Mell, Fred Nemer, Dr. Fredus N. Peters, M. Hudson Rathburn, John M. Rau, Morris Rauh, Charles M. Rhodes, F. W. Ryder, John Schmidt, Walter S. Shafer, T. A. Smith, J. C. Starbuck, Gustave Treffeisen, Raymond F. Thiel, Ivan L. Willis, Allen B. Wilson, Mrs. Frederick O. Windchy.

*Deceased



Quimby, George Irving. 1948. "Late Burial Mound Era Culture Illustrated." *Bulletin* 19(8), 8-8.

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