

THINGS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

The Queerest of Boats

Many odd types of watercraft have come to notice as a result of the war—"invasion barges" whose lines are often reminiscent of very ancient vessels, the controversial "sea otter" boats whose design is at great variance from conventional modern ideas of marine architecture, and various kinds of collapsible round and oval rubber boats and rafts carried by aviators as life saving equipment. Every army has been impressed with the necessity of carrying equipment for hurried crossing of rivers and canals which may lie as obstacles in its path, and there are even amphibian tanks.

None of the new types of craft is more peculiar than the coracle. Field Museum has on exhibition in its Hall of Chinese and Tibetan Ethnology (Hall 32) a Tibetan boat of the coracle type. Clumsily designed boats have immemorially been sneered at as "old tubs," and the coracle is actually and purposely tub-like in design. The Tibetan coracle displayed in the Museum is built on a frame constructed merely of bent willow twigs. Cattle played an inordinately prominent part in its construction, for it is "planked" with the skins of yaks, fastened with rawhide thongs, and when in use it was even caulked against leakage with a bovine product—*butter*! Such boats are said to be the only type made and used by the Tibetans.

Coracles, however, are not confined to Tibet. The name for these skin boats comes from the Welsh word "corwgl," meaning both "carcass" and "boat." Once coracles were widely used over much of the northern hemisphere. In their day they



BOAT MADE OF SKINS AND TWIGS

The "three men in a tub" would have been quite at home navigating in this Tibetan coracle. It was used for ferrying passengers and cargoes across rivers. Exhibited in Hall 32.

were even improvised for use as war craft, just as almost anything which will float is playing its part in the war of today. Coracles were used by Alexander the Great on his expedition of conquest in the Orient. At the time of the Roman invasion, they were used in Britain. Western Asia and many parts of India found them useful, while even in America the Mandan Indians of the

upper Missouri River constructed in similar fashion so-called "bull boats." As a matter of fact, fishermen on the Severn and other Welsh rivers still use coracles.

The Tibetan coracle exhibited at the Museum is about five and one-half feet in diameter, and three feet high. The hides composing the sides of this semi-globular vessel are sewed together with rawhide, and this requires a great number of holes, which in turn necessitate the use of the butter caulking. Kneeling on the bottom, the boatman directs the coracle to the opposite shore by means of a short paddle. The downstream drift of the current causes complications for the navigator. Surprisingly enough, these crude boats are capable of carrying three or four men, or two men and about 200 pounds of goods. At ferry stations in Tibet there are generally only two or three of these boats, and it often takes an entire day to transport a large caravan across a river.

Part of Field Museum's Tibetan collection was transported in the very coracle now exhibited here. It was used several times by the late Dr. Berthold Laufer, former Curator of Anthropology, while leading an expedition to Tibet. When he no longer needed it for practical use, he purchased it for exhibition, since few such boats are available for inspection in museums.

GUATEMALA EXPLORER REPORTS PROGRESS IN COLLECTING

Dr. Julian A. Steyermark, Assistant Curator of the Herbarium, reports continued success in his botanical exploration of Guatemala. Recently he spent three weeks with his volunteer assistant, Mr. Albert Vatter, and Indian paddlers in a thirty-foot dugout canoe on the rivers of southern Petén, a region sparsely inhabited and almost wholly unknown scientifically. The party camped along the stream banks, and was fortunate in having fine weather for collecting. While the vegetation of this lowland area is poor in species of plants as compared with the near-by mountains of Guatemala, an interesting collection was made that probably contains some additions to the previously known flora of the country.

Collecting is now being carried on by Dr. Steyermark from a *finca* on the Pacific slope of Guatemala, where there is a large commercial plantation of cinchona for quinine production. Although the trees are not yet ready for exploitation, this planting, with others in the same region, marks the beginning of a new Central American industry which, it is hoped, may in time free the United States from its dependence upon the East Indies for a supply of this most essential drug.

—P.C.S.

Striking similarities to our modern architecture are found in the model of a Zapotecan palace at Mitla, exhibited in Hall 8.

ACTING DIRECTOR ORR GOODSON TAKES CHARGE OF MUSEUM

Mr. Orr Goodson, appointed Acting Director of Field Museum by action of the Board of Trustees at a meeting held on May 25, assumed executive control of the institution on June 1. Mr. Goodson joined



ORR GOODSON

the staff as Assistant to the Director on July 1, 1941. He is to serve as Acting Director until the return from war service of the Director, Lieutenant Colonel Clifford C. Gregg, recently transferred out of the Chicago area by the U. S. Army.

Prior to coming to Field Museum, Mr. Goodson had been an executive of a large Chicago loop office building. Previous to that he had served in administrative capacities in a number of business organizations in California and other parts of the country.

Mr. Goodson was born in Parnell, Missouri. He attended the University of Nebraska and George Washington University, Washington, D.C., at both of which, in addition to his scholastic activities, he became a star basketball player and captain of teams. His present residence is in Glencoe, Illinois, where he takes an active part in community activities and in the village's civilian defense program. One of his first undertakings at the Museum was the organization and training of selected members of the staff for the protection of the Museum building and its contents in the event that Chicago should be subjected to enemy attack.

Magnesium Under Chicago

A great body of a potential ore of the strategic metal magnesium lies under Chicago. This city is built upon a bed of dolomite (the carbonate of lime and magnesia) which is from 200 to 450 feet thick. Although this rock is mined elsewhere as a source of magnesium, such use of it here is unlikely, because large deposits are available in regions where land values are much lower. Too few analyses of the Chicago bed rock have been reported to determine its average value, but five analyses made on rock from our local quarries all show a content of magnesium metal between twelve and thirteen per cent, nearly the theoretical maximum for ore of this kind.—H.W.N.

A most effective panorama in James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Hall (Hall 4), shows the life of the Sauk and Fox Indians of Tama, Iowa. A close study of this group reveals their way of life.



1942. "Acting Director Goodson Takes Charge of Museum." *Field Museum news* 13(7), 5-5.

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