

Alphabet Traced—Continued

which attacked the camp where the officer lived, and where the raiders expected to find a rich booty. Ram, who was evidently interested in the gang, organized a celebration in which his people or clan, took part. The inscription may have been written by order of Ram himself."

The great inspiration of the inscription carvers, however, was Hathor, the Lady of Turquoise. All of the tablets found in the pile of rocks at the entrance to the mine deal with Hathor, or as she was sometimes called, Baalat, the Lady.

A typical inscription near her shrine has been translated by Prof. Butin:

"O, Baalat, kindly answer (me in) my sleep in the shelters in which people spend the night."

This plea for an answer from the goddess means that the person who set up the tablet went to the temple to sleep, hoping that in the sacred place he would get a dream message.

This idea, that religious dreams come in holy places, was a prevailing one during the time, the archæologist states. Among the ruins to the temple of Hathor near the turquoise mines, are a number of small box-like rooms, and these are believed to be sleepers' quarters reserved for the ceremony of dreaming religious dreams.

Jacob, perhaps a contemporary of the Sinai miners, had a religious dream vision of angels when he slept in the open, and he set up a stone pillar afterward to mark the site as holy. In Greece, somewhat later, the sick went to dream in the shrine of the god of healing, Asklepios, hoping to learn what treatments they ought to take.

The miners of Sinai dreamed at the temple chiefly in the hope of getting aid in the mining quest and to ask protection from robbers. And judging from the number of compartments and rock shelters in front of the temple, dreaming was an important part of their religious ceremonies.

Among all the Sinai inscriptions, the one that has had most fame is one that now turns out to be commonplace. Four years ago, a German scholar, Prof. H. Grimme, studied a photograph of this inscription and declared that it was written by Moses, the leader of the Israelites. Moses, Prof. Grimme announced, was identified in the inscription as the superintendent of the miners and caretaker of the temple of Hathor,

which was also the temple of the Jewish Jehovah. According to the professor's translation, Moses set up the tablet to give thanks to Pharaoh's daughter Hatshepsut for rescuing him as a child from the Nile River and for the positions of power she had bestowed upon him.

Most scientists were frankly incredulous at this interpretation. Now, after seeing the original tablet, which has been brought to the Cairo Museum, Prof. Butin reports that many of the marks that Prof. Grimme took for alphabet signs in the photograph of the tablet are really scratches and cracks from the long exposure of the red sandstone to the weather. Prof. Grimme has been in Cairo recently and is preparing a new translation.

Prof. Butin's translation from the same badly worn tablet is that it is a petition addressed to the goddess Hathor by one of her devotees. Part that can be read in spite of the worn surface says: "This libation altar Mash, head of the stele setters, erected. Arise, now, O Baalat—"

The great interest of this inscription, he says, is the fact that the name of the head stone worker is given here, and it might be Moses. There are no vowels in the Phoenician writing, just as there were none in the Egyptian. The name is simply carved M-SH, which might be Mash or Mosheh. But, in any event, the mine official of the Sinai wilderness lived long before the struggle of the Children of Israel in Egypt, and he had nothing in common, except his name, with the great lawgiver of Israel.

One small clue indicates that Sinai's mines have more to reveal about the alphabet. It is a puzzling coincidence, says Prof. Butin, that so many memorial tablets should be found tossed among the stone heaps before a mine entrance. Apparently, this was a workshop where the "writers" carved out their inscriptions. But why were those particular inscriptions never set up in their proper places beside the altar or structure for which they were designed? Were they defective, or was there some earthquake, plague, attack by robbers, or some other disaster that prevented the tablets being formally set up? And, most important of all, surely there were not merely fourteen tablets to Hathor in this camp of her devoted followers. Are there many others buried under the rock-strewn soil that could be uncovered by the spade of the archæologist? (Turn the page)

Rescues Indian Language

Anthropology

Rescuing a dying language is a task which Dr. F. G. Speck, professor of anthropology of the University of Pennsylvania, has set himself. Dr. Speck recently returned from a hurried expedition to the Catawba Indian reservation in South Carolina, where he collected legends, medicine practices, and formulas, many of them in the Catawba tongue.

Languages of some Indian tribes are spoken by thousands of living Indians, but the remarkable Catawba language has faded from use until it is now spoken by only two Indian women, Mrs. Samson Owl and Sally Brown. Dr. Speck was appointed by the Committee of Research in American Indian Languages to make records of what these old people remember about their language and their unique customs.

This southern tribe is descended from the famous Ohio mound builders, Dr. Speck explains. In early times the Catawbias inhabited the Appalachian Mountains from Virginia southward. They were numerous and powerful and they spread over a large area. Their language and their blood were passed on to the great Sioux and plains nations.

"The Catawbias spoke a language made up of monosyllables," Dr. Speck says. "It was a much simpler language than the Indian languages in other parts of the south.

"The passing of a great and prominent human language from the earth must have happened many times in the history of races having no written language. But science will not stand by now and see this unhappy drama enacted without making some effort to save some record of a dying tongue."

The mighty Catawbias have dwindled fast since the white man's coming. A little over a century ago they were credited with 1,700 warriors, which would mean a population of about five times that number. At present the tribe has 30 warriors, and altogether 170 people.

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Ground squirrels are nicknamed flickertails because of their habit of flicking their short tails up and down when uttering their call notes.

A German automobile club has offered court judges in Hamburg free driving lessons so that they may better understand automobile traffic problems.