ARCHAEOLOGY

Find Fossil Bones

See Front Cover

➤ FRESH EVIDENCE that ancient Mexicans lived near Mexico City some 11,000 years ago and hunted elephants now long extinct has been unearthed at the "reservoir of elephants" about 22 miles northeast of Mexico City.

The fossilized bones of a second mammoth, together with the stone weapons that probably felled the beast, were discovered in the dry lake Texcoco by Luis Aveleyra, director of prehistoric archaeology of the Mexican National Museum, and Dr. Manuel Maldonado, paleontologist. The new find was made at the same site where another mammoth was found in 1952, together with obsidian weapons. (See SNL, March 29, 1952, p. 194.)

The site is close to where Mexico's ancient man, 11,000-year-old Tepexpan Man, was found in 1947.

Further link of the extinct mammoth with man was found in the new discovery. Some of the fossil bones showed signs of having been worked on with stone tools. This fact, together with the position of the bones and stone weapons led Mr. Aveleyra to state that "results obtained in the excavations of the Santa Isabel Iztapan mammoths confirm once and for all the existence of man as a hunter of these animals in the Tepexpan region."

The weapons found with the new mammoth discovery were three projectile points known to scientists as "atlatls." One such find is shown on the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER.

Somewhat larger than arrow heads, these points were released from a shaft and shot into an animal's ribs. Modern tests with a similar device have shown that a man with sufficient strength and ability can put the atlatl through one and a half inches of wood at approximately 45 yards.

The discoverers of the mammoth bones believe that the atlatl points might not have been adequate to kill such a huge animal immediately. However, the cries of the hunters might have driven the wounded animal into the waters of what was then a shallow lake. The human hunters then had only to wait until the animal had died in the water.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1954

ARCHAEOLOGY

Study Bible Scrolls

➤ FRESH LIGHT on the original meaning of Old Testament text is expected from a minute study of the very ancient manuscripts found in caves along the Dead Sea and known to archaeologists as the Dead Sea scrolls. (See SNL, April 19, 1952, p. 243.). Some of these scrolls date back to 100 B.C.

The Very Reverend Monsignor Patrick W. Skehan, professor of Semitic and Egyptian languages at the Catholic University of America and expert on the Bible languages, has just arrived in Jerusalem to make such a study.

Although many of the ancient manuscripts have been found, others are still being located in the region. Deciphering them is a delicate problem for experts in the field.

First task is the difficult one of unrolling the scrolls. Most of them are written on papyrus and leather, but some are on tightly rolled sheets of bronze. When they have been softened and unrolled, then they must be cleaned and the language identified. If they are in small fragments, the pieces must be painstakingly put together.

When it comes to identifying the language, and reading and translating the ancient text, Msgr. Skehan's talents will be put to good use. In addition to his knowledge of ancient Biblical texts, he is familiar not only with Greek and Latin, but with Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Akkadian and Arabic.

In his study of the scrolls, Msgr. Skehan will be working under the direction of Prof. C. Lankester Harding, director of antiquities for the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan. He will work at the Palestine Archaeological Museum.

Msgr. Skehan has already completed a study of one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the famous scroll of Isaias. When this manuscript was found in 1947, it was judged to be 1,000 years older than any other Old Testament manuscript known, dating back to the first century B.C.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1954

RADIO ASTRONOMY

Biggest Radio Telescope Is Now Being Completed

➤ THE BIGGEST radio telescope in the world will start to survey the sky for new radio "stars" about mid-August.

This radio telescope consists of pairs of TV-like antennas, known as dipoles, strung in a straight line for 2,000 feet. They make a gigantic X in a 90-acre field near Seneca, Md.

Two poles 25 feet apart and 15 feet high, linked together by taut wire, form each dipole, and all the dipoles are connected to the recording point by coaxial cable.

The largest radio telescope is being built by the Carnegie Institution of Washington to survey radio noise in the 20 megacycle range received on earth from space. With it, scientists will check how much of this noise is due to radio "stars" or discrete sources, how much comes from ionized hydrogen gas and how much from outside our own Milky Way galaxy.

Dr. F. G. Smith of Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge University, England, now a visiting scientist at Carnegie Institution, is supervising the radio telescope's construction. Since radio signals bounced off the ionosphere from earth could interfere with celestial radio noise, Dr. Smith hopes the present quiet long-distance radio reception conditions will continue.

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