

appears, as the Hebrew traced the history of God's relationship to man.

Not long ago, scholars were tracing portions of Hebrew writings back to "origins" in Babylonian antiquity. Now, such discoveries as the Tepe Gawra seal apparently push origins back into much earlier times.

How the Babylonians got their particular story of a man, woman, and snake may never be revealed. But it is clear today that at Tepe Gawra, somewhat to the north of Babylonia, a story along these lines existed, long before the rise of the Babylonians. And what is surprising is that the damaged little seal presents its dramatic tableau with such clear pantomime.

Dr. Speiser describes the group on the Tepe Gawra seal this way: "There are two of them, a bearded nude male in front, followed by an unclad woman, whose outstretched arm rests on the back of her companion. They are pictured as walking, with bodies bent; the whole composition gives the impression of weariness and dejection. Behind them and overhead rises the figure of a serpent."

The Tepe Gawra seal proves that the man-woman-serpent drama is as old as the Stone Age.

The seal lay buried in the layer of ruins which Dr. Speiser counts the eighth town on the site, counting down from the top through deeper and older layers of the ruins. The eighth-from-the-top Tepe Gawra contains no metal of bronze or iron. The people were still in the Neolithic or New Stone Age. This layer of ruins is the one which dates back to 3700 B. C., and which gives the site its distinction of being the oldest city ever discovered.

Amazing City

Tepe Gawra Eight, as the archaeologists call it, is beyond doubt one of the most amazing cities that archaeologists have ever discovered. A city so early as this might well be a bungling experiment. But not Tepe Gawra.

Here, in the oldest city known, is to be seen intelligent city planning, so executed that the charm of its order and comfort still makes itself felt.

Describing the plan, Dr. Speiser says that the heart of the settlement was an imposing forum. To the north were two shrines, connected by such buildings as storage room and bath houses. A citadel was built near the center of town. The southern section of the town was a residential development. Streets were well laid out, one being set

apart as the bazaar or market street.

The planners considered emergencies. They provided a generous-sized reservoir almost 100 feet deep for a water supply in the event of siege.

If the discoverers of Tepe Gawra Eight were surprised to find good city planning in 3700 B. C., they were impressed still more deeply to discover the building skill that the Gawrians had.

This city of 3700 B. C. is a priceless museum of architectural features that modern architects have thought of as later developments in building art. Tepe Gawra's homes boasted such features as windows, niches, recessed walls. The builders knew the secret of construct-

ing the true arch, and used their knowledge to erect houses with vaulted antechambers. In Tepe Gawra, therefore, may be seen the oldest examples of the true arch in the world.

To their technical skill, the gifted builders of this city added the grace of good taste. Dr. Speiser speaks admiringly of the "restraint with which they checked their enthusiasm for elaborate ornament." And he sums up his praise in the high compliment: "Planning as well as construction shows faultless taste and astounding architectural ability."

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GEOGRAPHY

Death Valley Becomes National Monument

DEATH VALLEY, famous in California history for the desperate hardships endured by pioneer trains crossing its arid, blindingly salt-crusted waste, will soon become a Mecca for modern travellers bent on recreation and scientific study. By presidential proclamation on Feb. 11, it was given the status of a national monument.

A national monument is a site or area similar to a national park, but not administered as such, either because of difficulty of access, lack of funds for full national park administration, or other reasons. Some of the present-day national parks were at first national monuments, and Death Valley may eventually be promoted to this status.

The area set aside by President Hoover is 1,601,800 acres in extent, and takes in about two-thirds of the total land in the valley. It includes particularly the land below sea level, which is the lowest point in the Western Hemisphere. Within the area are such notable natural features as Telescope Peak, Furnace Creek, the Ubehebe Crater, etc. Within it also is the famous Death Valley Scotty's Place, a fantastic rococo palace built by a "character" who seems to have money to burn and chose to spend it on interminable building.

A bill now before Congress will if passed permit Scotty to purchase 1,420 acres on which he now has an indefinite squatter's claim, at \$1.25 an acre, his intention being eventually to turn his

place over to the government for public use. The same bill provides that old-time prospectors may continue their activities in Death Valley, permitting them to trudge its desert trails with their picturesque burros, and to keep any gold they may find. It is intended, in a way, as legislation to preserve the natural wild life of the area, the prospector and his burro being as much a part of the landscape there as bears are in Yosemite and elk in the Yellowstone. Since permits to prospect will be issuable only under authority of the Secretary of the Interior, it is not anticipated that abuses will arise.

Death Valley is so terrifically arid that mineral salts of several varieties form thick crusts on the surface of the soil. At least one of these natural deposits was exploited in past days, the famous "twenty-mule team" wagons that brought out the borax figuring in advertising pictures long after modern means of freighting had been brought into use. The borax industry, however, has now migrated elsewhere.

In spite of its aridity, however, Death Valley is by no means as barren as its name implies. A number of animal species exist there, and over 500 kinds of plants. Furnace Creek, in spite of its fiery name, makes a considerable area of rich green, and even spreads out to mock the surrounding desert with the lush vegetation of swamps.

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