

ETHNOLOGY

Strange Easter Island Writing May Be Notes of Orators

Text Cannot Be Translated With Coherent Meaning, Is Conclusion of Anthropologists Making Study

AN ATTEMPT to read the mysterious inscribed tablets of the vanished people of Easter Island in the Southern Pacific is reported by the Royal Anthropological Institute in London. These wooden tablets, inscribed with rows of strange characters, have long been a puzzle to anthropologists. Easter Island is also noted for its gigantic stone statues with remarkable head-dresses, which are as much of a puzzle as the writings.

It is reported that the characters do not form a properly translatable text with a coherent meaning. The tablet studied seems to be a collection of more or less symbolic reminders of objects, which would serve a native orator as notes of a discourse or history, a prayer, or even an inventory.

Some five years ago the late E. Tor-day, accomplished linguist in primitive tongues, obtained photographs of two of the wooden tablets from Easter Island which are preserved in a museum at Braine-le-Comte, Belgium. Mr. Tor-day also obtained an extract from a manuscript by Bishop Tefiano Jaussen, which was reputed to be a version of one of the tablets in the Rapanui language of Easter Island.

A committee was appointed by the Royal Anthropological Institute to examine the writing in the light of this information. S. H. Ray, authority on Pacific languages, as chairman of the committee, has now reported the results.

22 Lines Studied

The tablet, says Mr. Ray, contains twenty-two inscribed lines, of which ten are on the front and twelve on the back. The first line begins at the bottom left hand corner and runs from left to right. The tablet must then be turned upside down, and again read from left to right, and so on, reversing at the end of each line.

The Rapanui text of Bishop Jaussen is divided into portions each corresponding to a line of the tablet. The signs inscribed on the tablet are mostly human figures, though some may be birds, much

conventionalized and in different positions to represent different meanings. Most of them represent complete phrases rather than words. One sign for example is translated "He rejoices in Heaven," another "The father is on his seat."

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Life Without Parasites Forecast By Rat Experiments

A TIME when human beings can be protected against unpleasant and harmful invasions by large parasites as well as disease germs is foreseen as the result of experiments at Washington University, St. Louis.

Immunization of human beings against bacterial diseases, such as typhoid, and scarlet fever, has been practiced successfully in medicine, but there has been no immunization possible against the larger parasites that af-

flict the human body. Two years ago Dr. H. M. Miller, Jr. of Washington University showed that the rat can be artificially immunized against infection by a tapeworm by injections of worm material. These experiments have now been carried further. Eventually there is hope of developing the same protection for human beings.

That complete protection against tapeworm infestation is given rats by means of a serum from infected rats, has been reported by Dr. Miller and Dr. Margaret L. Gardiner, his associate, to the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine.

Serum from artificially immunized rats gave a high degree of protection against the worms. The investigators are now working to determine the least amount of immune serum necessary to give protection, and the length of time the protection lasts.

While these studies have been conducted only on rats, tapeworms also infest human beings, who may get them from eating infested food. Tapeworm infestation of fish in and around the Great Lakes has recently been found the cause of many human cases in that region. The eggs of the worms make their way from the digestive tract to the tissues, where they form small cyst-like masses. If meat containing these masses is eaten, adult worms will develop from them in the digestive tract of the new host.

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ENGINEERING-METEOROLOGY

Only Half of Lightning Flash Is Seen by Observers

NOT MANY YEARS ago a thunderstorm often meant that the supply of electricity would be interrupted. But now lightning does not cause power line failures nearly so frequently as it used to; it has been tamed by engineers.

Laboratory artificial power lines duplicating actual conditions in the field and huge generators with which to give them lightning-like charges have been an important tool in the conquest of lightning. Scientists have learned that when lightning strikes a line it produces two separate discharges. The first is a flash-over which endures only a few millionths of a second and makes a path

for the escape of power to the ground.

The power flashover endures from one-fifth to one-half of a second before the relays and circuit breakers clear the line, according to H. W. Tenney of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company. Consequently this is what the eye sees.

A photograph of a discharge across a string of insulators reveals the first flash as an escape of electricity resembling the dripping of a white, pasty substance over the insulators. The second discharge appears more powerful and elaborate and can be blown into striking designs such as the one on the front cover.

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See Front Cover