

ARCHAEOLOGY

Painted Roman Shields Show Amazons Through Eastern Eyes

THREE PAINTED wooden shields, carried by Roman soldiers stationed at the outpost of Dura on the Euphrates, have been unearthed at the ruined city, to become new and important evidence in the history of early Bible art.

Prof. Clark Hopkins, field director of the Yale expedition which is in its eighth season of digging at Dura, announced the discovery to the University.

The soldiers' wooden shields are painted with a scene of battle between Greeks and Amazon warriors, the Trojan horse episode, the sack of Troy by the Greeks and other warlike pictures. It is the art style, however, rather than the subjects, which impresses Prof. Hopkins.

The familiar subjects of the classics are painted with strong Eastern influence. The fronting of the human figures, the pose of the horses in a Parthian gallop, even the fashions of the clothes, are all Eastern.

Not Confined To Religion

This warlike and secular art on the shields of unknown Roman soldiers helps explain a puzzling feature of third century Christian art and Jewish religious art, which was a major discovery at Dura in previous expeditions. The Bible scenes painted on walls of a Christian chapel and a Jewish synagogue, at Dura, revealed this same Eastern atmosphere.

"But in neither building," said Prof. Hopkins, "was it clear whether this was an addition made at Dura, or whether this element was inherent in the eastern artistic tradition of the Old and New Testament. With the shields before us, it seems much more probable that we should subtract, at least in part, this Eastern influence from purely Christian and Jewish tradition."

Excavations at the Jewish synagogue, dating from 244 A.D., have been continued, Prof. Hopkins stated, and a smaller, older synagogue has been found beneath its foundation.

"Beneath the chief room, an earlier room was disclosed, smaller but similar in shape and arrangement," Prof. Hopkins reported. "It was oriented as the later building, possessing two entrances, the middle one for the men, the smaller one for women. It was furnished with a bench around the walls and contained

apparently a niche, (the Torah shrine) in the middle of the west wall. A new feature was the small antechamber in front of the women's entrance.

"Portions of the mural decorations remained, geometric designs in bright colors. Fragments of fallen plaster showed that the walls of this early synagogue bore only geometric designs, that the ceiling was decorated with circles and octagons in which were set gilded rosettes and that the antechamber had been adorned with representations of fruit and flowers.

"Obviously, therefore, the early building contained no human or animal figures, perhaps because the smaller community could not afford more elaborate decorations, more probably because at this period, regulations against human and animal images were more strict. More interesting also was the fact that the early synagogue with antechamber and court formed only one part of a larger complex which followed very closely the plan of a private house. It will be recalled that the Christian church had also the general form of a private house, possibly for the purpose of concealment."

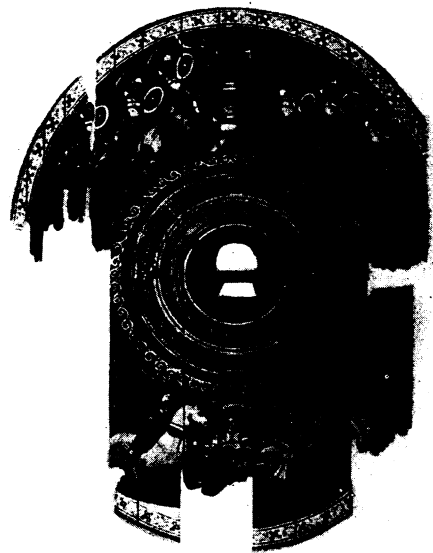
Science News Letter, June 29, 1935

ENTOMOLOGY

Chinch Bug Threat Reduced By Rain and Cool Weather

CHINCH bugs have taken "an awful licking" from the weather this spring, summarized reports from the major grain-raising areas indicate. They thrived on the drought and heat of the past few summers; until last fall they were regarded by Bureau of Entomology scientists as the greatest single danger to this year's crops, among insect enemies. But persistent rain and cool weather have immobilized them, and have even reduced their numbers appreciably in parts of the Grain Belt.

Wheat, oats and other small grains are now safely out of their way, and in some sections it appears highly probable that the chemical-warfare control methods for which farmers and official agencies have been preparing will not need to be used after all for the protection of the corn crop.



SIEGE OF TROY—EASTERN STYLE

The wooden horse trick, which got the Greeks inside the walls of Troy, and the sack of the city which followed are painted on this Roman shield in an unusual art style. An Eastern artist, third century A. D., must have painted the classic scenes, judging by details such as Near Eastern costumes, and the facing of the bodies to the front. Courtesy Gallery of Fine Arts, Yale University.

The last great spread of chinch bugs occurred about forty years ago, during the great drought of the early nineties. When normal moisture and temperature conditions returned, the bugs retreated. It is expected that if the present more nearly normal weather continues, the experience of that earlier generation will be repeated, and that the central, northern and eastern grain-raising regions will again be free of chinch bugs.

Science News Letter, June 29, 1935

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photo-Mural Depicts Science and Engineering

See Front Cover

THE interesting view of a bridge appearing on the front cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER is from one panel of a series of photo-murals recently displayed at the Science Fair of the American Institute. This panel is entitled "Engineering."

The entire work on the photo-murals, from negative to final panel was done by members of the Experimenters' Club of DeWitt Clinton High School, New York City.

Science News Letter, June 29, 1935

Leprosy reached the United States from both Europe and Africa.