HIEROGLYPHICS IN ARIZONA

Interesting Traces of the Civilization of Prehistoric Races.

Well-defined and Constantly Recurring Symbols That Indicate a Written Language—Picture Writing Used by a Later Race.

Arizona is a field for the archaeologist to work in which has been examined but little, writes a Tombstone correspondent of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. On every side there are a great number of mounds and ruins of large buildings, many of which covers acres in extent, and which have never had a shovelful of earth turned over in them. The hardy prospector, as he climbs the steep rocks bounding the canyons, in his search for gold or silver ledges, sees, far up the sides of inaccessible bluffs, the openings to which are built the ancient cliff dwellers' houses, and which have never been examined by white men. No one can tell what discoveries might be made could access be had to them.

Hieroglyphics marked upon rocks or other lasting substances have been used by nearly all ancient races to perpetuate the history of certain events among them. Especially true is this of the ancient people who lived in Arizona. The remarkable picture rocks and bowlders, with strange symbols upon them, left by the prehistoric races of Arizona, have been the cause of much discussion among those who have seen them as to who these ancient hieroglyphic makers were. These records may be divided into three different kinds, which, it is thought, were made by two different races. The first, or very ancient race, left records on rocks, in some instances of symbols only, and in other instances of pictures and symbols combined. The later race, which came after the first race had vanished, made only crude representations of animals, birds or reptiles, not using symbols or combinations of lines.

The age of the most ancient pictographs and hieroglyphics can only be conjectured, but all give certain indications that they are many centuries old, and the difference between the ancient and the later race leads the observer to believe that the older hieroglyphics were made by a people far superior to those who came after them, and who left no record in symbols, as we have said, with the exception of crude representations of animals and reptiles.

In many instances it is quite evident that the same rock or cliff has been used by the two different races to put their markings upon, the later or inferior race often making their pictographs over or across the hieroglyphic writings of the first race. Of the superiority of the first people who left their writings on the rocks or bowlders found in the ancient mounds, ruins and graves there can be no doubt, for their writings show order and a well defined design in symbols which were evidently intended to convey their history to others, and it is quite probable that those who made the great mounds, houses and canals were the authors of these writings. It may be truthfully asserted that the cliff dwellers of the rock houses in the deep canyons of the mountains were of the same race as the mound builders of the valleys, for exactly the same class of hieroglyphics found on bowlders from the ancient ruins of the valleys are found on the rocks near the houses of the cliff dwellers.

If this superior race was so distinctive from all other ancient races of Arizona in their work—being so far advanced as to solve what would be called, even at the present day, difficult engineering problems; to dig great canals many miles in length, the remains of which can be seen at the present time, and to bring them to such perfection for irrigating purposes; to build such great houses and to live in cities—may it not have been, as many who have studied this subject now contend, that this superior race were white people instead of a copper-colored race, as has generally been supposed?

The hieroglyphics of the more ancient race are often found on sheltered rocks on the slopes of the mountains leading up from the valleys. Generally protected from the elements by overhanging cliffs, the dry climate has kept the writings from wearing away, and being in most instances picked into rocks which have a black, glistening surface, but of a lighter color underneath, the contrast is very noticeable, and when in prominent places these hieroglyphics can be seen several hundred feet away.

As no metal tools have ever been found in the mounds, ruins or cliff dwellings, the hieroglyphics were probably picked into the rock with a sharp-pointed stone much harder than the rock upon which the work was done. It is a singular fact that, although iron, copper, gold and silver abound in the mountains throughout Arizona, yet so far, no [illegible] of these metals are found in the mounds or ruins. Yet [illegible] of ancient origin have been found which appear to have been used for reducing ores, and [illegible] which can be found great quantities of an unknown kind of [illegible].

In many instances the hieroglyphic bowlders have been found in great heaps of several hundred in number, as if many different persons had contributed a piece of this strange writing to the collection. These [illegible] bowlders have been found buried in the ground with urns containing the charred bones of human beings, and could the writings on the bowlders be deciphered we would undoubtedly learn of the virtues of the prehistoric deceased, just as we do of a person who dies in the present day when we read the epitaph on a headstone of the one who is buried beneath it.

In opening some of the mounds the investigator finds they are many of the fallen walls of great stone buildings, and as he digs deeper he finds rooms of various dimensions, and which in many instances have remained walls and floors. In one instance there were found the impressions of a baby's feet and hands, where, presumably, its mother had drawn it over the newly laid mud cement. In another mound the cemented walls of a room were found covered with hieroglyphics [illegible] drawings, which were thought to represent stellar constellations.

To a certain extent some of the pictured rocks left by the superior race tell us of parts of the daily life of this ancient people, for in a number of instances the pictures picked into the rocks, although rudely formed, are self-explanatory, and the ancient artist tells plainly by his work what is meant. On the edge of a little valley in the Superstition Mountains there was found a great rock on which had been etched many small animals, apparently representing sheep, and at one side was the figure of a man, as if watching them. It may be the ancient herder himself, sitting in the shadow of the great rock while his sheep were grazing in the valley below, had passed away the time in making this rock picture. The hardy wild sheep still found in the mountains of Arizona may be the remnants of great bands formerly domesticated by this people.

The carvings of the prehistoric man dug from beneath the stalagmites in the cave of Madeleine, France, and which set all the scientific men of the world talking and thinking, gives proof of no greater age than many of the skeletons, bones or relics of some of these ancient mound and canal builders.

The incident illustrating the great antiquity of prehistoric man in Arizona is the following: In digging a well on the desert south of Phoenix, at the depth of 115 feet from the surface a stone mortar, such as the ancients used, was found standing upright, and in it was a stone pestle, showing the mortar had not been carried there by any underground current of water, and that it had not been disturbed from the position in which its ancient owner had left it with the pestle in it. There is only one way to account for the position of this mortar and pestle. They had originally been left on what at that time was the surface of the ground, and the slow wash from the mountains had gradually, during unknown ages, raised the surface for miles on every side to the depth of 115 feet.

The question is then asked: Will this hieroglyphic writing ever be deciphered? As has been asserted, the authors of the most ancient hieroglyphic writings or markings seem to have had well defined forms of marks which were in common use for this class of writing. Is it not most reasonable to suppose that a race of people so far advanced in other ways would have perfected a method of transmitting by marks of some kind their records to those who might come after them? Again where so much system is shown in the use of symbols it may be presumed that the same mark, whatever used in one same position, carries with it a fixed meaning, alike at all times.

Having such a limited system of marks there must be a key to the thoughts expressed in the writing, and quite likely the key for deciphering these hieroglyphic writings will some time be found on one of the yet unrecovered hieroglyphic rocks in the high mountains or in one of the mounds not yet examined. On the other hand, there can be no key to the infantile class of pictographs made by the people who came after the mound, canal and city builders had disappeared, for the crudely marked forms of reptiles, animals or similar things had a meaning, if any, varying with each individual maker.

Who were these people who formed a great nation here in the mountains of the remote past? Were they the ancient Phoenicians, who were not only a maritime but a commercial nation, and who, in their well-manned ships, might have found their way to the Western coast of America ages ago, and from there journeyed east? Or were they some of the followers of Votan or Zamna who had wandered north and founded a colony of the Aztecs? Whatever these people were and whatever way they came from, the evidences of the great works they left behind them gave ample proof that they were superior and different from other races around them, and these particular people may have been the bearded white men whom the Indians had traditions of when Coronado's followers first came through the Gila and Salt River valleys in 1540.

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