

Michigan Relics: Are they Frauds?

by Rudolph Etzenhouser 1910

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During the 1850s, early residents of Michigan stumbled across many hundreds of prehistoric earthen structures. Plundering them for suspected treasure, they found instead ritual burials of slate, clay and copper tablets illustrated with curious scenes (often apparently biblical) and covered with an indecipherable written language.

Other strange items were recovered, including numerous copper tools, crowns, weapons, chains, mirrors, instruments and other, less identifiable objects. Sometimes, the artifacts were dug out under well-documented circumstances, the finders affirming the authenticity of their excavations before notary republics. Before the Century was over, literally thousands of inscribed slates and metal items were retrieved from the ancient mounds.

*But conventional scholars, who abhorred any suggestion of pre-Columbian visitors to America, condemned all the Michigan finds out of hand, and succeeded in consigning all general knowledge of them to oblivion. Not until the publication of Henriette Mertz's *The Mystic Symbol*, in 1986, and more recent issues of *Ancient American* was the controversy again brought before the public.*

Eighty years ago, during the height of the academic feeding-frenzy to discredit the Michigan artifacts, Rudolf Etzenhouser, a Missouri bishop in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, saved a large collection of tablets and associated objects. These he displayed in the building of a former Detroit-area town hall. Tragically, his collection was completely destroyed in a fire which razed the wood-frame structure. Before this terrible loss, he made a few photographs of his most outstanding pieces.

Etzenhouser actually engaged in the excavation of many untypical artifacts from the Michigan mounds, and he lived when such discoveries were being savaged by virtually the entire academic community, during the years prior to World War One. As such, he was a valuable eye-witness to and participant in the events which surrounded the controversy.

*We are fortunate then to be able to reproduce his manuscript, published here for the first time. It came to us from Kenneth Moore, a researcher of the Michigan artifacts, a few of which he owned, before he passed away last year. Moore was known to *Ancient American* readers familiar his article, "Michigan's Mysterious Tablets," in our ninth issue (1994). Although undated, the unpublished Etzenhouser manuscript appears to have been written in 1911.*

Editor

The shock some experience because these finds were not made earlier in Michigan by certified archaeologists, does not matter; more shocks await them.

Many discoveries have caused wonderment that the discovery was not made before. The discovery is the important thing; when made is not material. Steam might have been discovered and applied long before, so also electricity, and a thousand other things. The discovery of America, if made a thousand years earlier, would not have been more real. Coal, so useful a fuel, lay long undisturbed and undiscovered. Aluminum is a metal of late production. Other discoveries elsewhere in territory much longer known than Michigan, yet involving similar issues and problems, rebuke such critics as have denounced the Michigan relics, and refute the fallacious assumptions in numerous points involved.

Mistakes are mistakes the world over. When made from the supposed superior viewpoint of scientific knowledge, however, they are to be all the more regretted. Half a century ago, in medical science, alcoholic stimulants and remedies held prominent, if not first place. Today, according to some eminent authorities, their use does not exceed 25%. Much else in medical practice, including foods for patients under treatment, have undergone similar changes.

In the numerous and extensive fields where scientists have entered, many of their deductions turned out to be incorrect after all. To assume something, and pass it on as a fact, is one lame practice often indulged, unfortunately, in scientific circles. The fullest appreciation should be accorded scientists where they have rescued us from error, but the gravest caution should also be exercised, lest mere assumption pass as demonstrated fact.

In official agitation over Michigan relics, whether genuine or fraudulent, certain would-be scientific decisions have been rendered, and perhaps generally accepted as decisive. Up to the present time, almost every person advocating the genuineness of these finds has also afforded opportunities for testing to satisfy anyone with contrary views, thereby demonstrating, at least, the sincerity of their belief in the authenticity of the discoveries.

Of those so accommodated recently, Dr. Frederick Starr of the University of Chicago, in his first report says, "And let it be said for the men I have seen, that, with all their enthusiasm, they court the fullest investigation." We could want for no better warrant for honesty on their part. These very proponents of the Michigan objects were themselves at first skeptical. To make the would-be scientific condemnation of the artifacts complete, it became necessary for those doing the denouncing to adjudge these unquestionably honest men for defrauding the public. While assuming such deception occurred, it was in no sense or degree detected.

Deception might take place in one or more instances in the presence of these honest men intent on thorough investigation, but for it to continue for a long term of years (from circa 1858 to 1911), is quite improbable and unreasonable. It also leaves wholly unexplained the

recent finds by contractor and builder, Mr. George A. Smith, while excavating for a cellar on lot 51, Labelle Street, Detroit, Michigan. Also, in several other cases, while plowing in old fields, charcoal deposits came into view. Deeper excavation was rewarded by relics; this occurred during May, August, October and November of this year, six miles north of Detroit, on the Frank Macy and adjoining farm by Mr. Henry Rupp and others.

These unexpected, accidental finds by disinterested parties, in no way connected with the parties to the controversy, silences the exception theory.

The assumption that Scotford's son and son-in-law only find relics is untrue, as proven by these other finds. (*Around the turn of the 19th Century, a Dr. James E. Talmadge, from Salt Lake City Utah, accused James G. Scotford and his son-in-law, Soby, of faking all the Michigan tablets and copper artifacts, because, Talmadge insisted, the two men participated in the excavation of every prehistoric mound throughout the state.*

His accusation is transparently ludicrous, because many of the controversial objects and most of the Michigan mounds were excavated before Scotford or his son-in-law were born! Admittedly, they may have been guilty of manufacturing perhaps 200 reproductions, but even this top estimate pales before the estimated 10,000 tablets and copper items removed by hundreds of different persons from twenty seven counties all over Michigan. The very magnitude of the discovery exonerates the Scotfords from fabricating a hoax on so grand a scale. Editor.)

The assumption that the finds are made only by "pre-arranged digging" is likewise false. The experiences of disinterested persons making unexpected finds during cellar excavations or farmers accidentally turning up artifacts in their fields vitiates such assumptions. Marshaling the names of several denouncers of the relics, the editor of *The Detroit Journal* for August 11, 1911, gravely states, "these men have nevertheless put the relics out of court, so far as scientific students are concerned." If assumption against known and established facts puts things "out of scientific court," it is well that we know it, so that we may take our cases elsewhere. When *The Detroit Journal* shall open its columns wisely for a defense of the relics, as it has for the denouncement of them, it may be better informed as to the merits of the case. Before courts there are two sides to cases, and both are to be impartially heard.

But the press of Detroit and elsewhere have very largely decided the case on the one-sided presentation of, to them, "scientific authorities" competent for decision making. When it is shown, however, as in the foregoing, that such decision is based on assumption contrary to the facts in the case, the press should bend all its energies for the fullest and final solution on the ground by exploration, even if it involved years to complete the test. The several objections urged in the denunciations of the relics when considered in relation to other cases and other localities of both this continent and the Orient are in as unfortunate a position as assumptions already herein examined and denied by the facts in the case.

The unexpected has been found elsewhere among the rest, a strange script on the island of Crete (*Minoan Linear A and B, the latter translated more than forty years later. Editor*). Ecuador yields much recently, as difficult to explain as the relics of Michigan (*The early 20th Century discovery of Mochica ruins and pottery [now an important, recognized level of South American archaeology], suggesting a highly civilized people centuries before the Incas. Editor*)

Something is not necessarily invalidated because our generation of scientists cannot understand it. Dr. Starr (William Starr, Professor of History, University of Michigan, Detroit) spent but one day on the problem of the Michigan relics, and rendered decisions straight-way. The case justly considered and properly passed upon, admits of no such hasty disposal. Let us consider the main criticisms enumerated in Dr. Starr's first report:

"I have serious doubts regarding the authenticity of these objects. If offered in the market for sale, they would undoubtedly be stamped as fraudulent. It is perfectly evident to me, however, that the gentlemen in whose possession these collections remain are acting in complete good faith. No one can question Dean Savage's honesty and enthusiasm.

(Dean Savage, the Catholic Bishop of Detroit, was the most important religious authority in Michigan, and instrumental in collecting and preserving as many Michigan artifacts as possible. Editor) No one can doubt the conviction of Mr. Soper that the things are genuine (*Daniel E. Soper, Michigan Secretary of State, like Bishop Savage, engaged in assembling and preserving his state's ancient heritage. Editor*).

"A motive for fraud seems absolutely lacking. And in the excavating done before me, there was no evidence of collusion, fraud, or 'planting.' If there is fraud, it is being perpetrated on a large scale with the purpose of victimizing the collectors mentioned. If there is 'planting', it is done broadly over a wide area and the months before the mounds, themselves, are opened. Let it be said for the men that I have seen, that, with all their enthusiasm, they court the fullest investigation."

Suppose the relics were "stamped fraudulent in market," that would not make them so. Dr. Starr accords honesty to the men he met and says "a motive for fraud seems absolutely lacking." These "collectors" then, stand for the plan which, if continued, would detect the fraud if it existed. Why have scientists refused to join them and work out these problems on some common ground?

Dr. Starr continues, "I find that these (the recovered artifacts) differ so completely from all the usual types of Indian relics, as to raise serious question in regard to their origin and authenticity. No archeologist would, at first sight, accept these tablets as genuine. It will need strong evidence to carry conviction to any doubting mind.

"Many of the slate tablets look so fresh and clean, one naturally doubts their age. In fact, they are so fresh and clean, so unstained, so unworn, that they might have been made but yesterday. It seems impossible that even in sandy soil they could be preserved so freshly. Again, the impression given by most of them is hopelessly confused.

"The old clay tablets frequently presented three different kinds of characters, conformable with Egyptian hieroglyphics, Assyrian cuneiform, and a third quite peculiar unknown writing. The rosetta stone of Egypt was trilingual; the three languages upon it, however, were in use at one time and place.

"Here we have three totally different steps, distinct in time and place. There is no reason why Egyptian hieroglyphics, Assyrian cuneiform and this unknown script should not co-exist. We find the same strange mingling of pictures. The temples are plainly Egyptian with Egyptian symbols. The winged bulls or lions are Assyrian, but the pictures, generally, are those of unlettered Europe.

"There is nothing uniform or characteristic in the art representations, yet in all archeological times of authentic character, we find a unit. Not only do we have brought together on these tablets widely separated things of the old continent, but we repeatedly encounter suggestions of Mexico. The Zodiac and calendar divided into tablets, each with a picture, are distinctly Mexican. So is a system of numeration by dots and bars. "For these different reasons, every archeologist would look upon these tablets with suspicion."

Perhaps not, but why? If because they are so unusual, why not subject them to the fullest investigation? Just because they are not officially accepted does not make them fraudulent. Dr. Starr's characterization of the tablets are too "fresh," "unstained," "unworn," could apply to many similar objects buried soon after being made, no matter how long ago, if interred in earth that would not stain or color them.

In fact, those objects worn by use, after being made or before being buried, (and these are not a few) in fact show such aging processes which an alleged counterfeiter could scarcely be expected to duplicate. The oxidation or corrosion of the copper is in keeping with great age. Starr's objection of "newness" is futile.

The trilingual inscriptions are paralleled among the Aztecs and Incas. True, the Rosetta stone is trilingual, with the three languages in use at one time and place. American Indian languages were more than three and at one time and place. A "trilingual," then, could easily have been here, too! Dr. Starr notes apparent Egyptian, Assyrian, etc. among the pictured tablets. But many investigators report Egyptian and Oriental themes throughout Central American temple art. The Michigan relics, therefore, are certainly not anomalous on that score.

Dr. Starr is as much appalled by the Michigan calendars' resemblance to the Mexican Calendar stone, yet why is he unwilling to consider cultural connections between North and Middle America, certainly a far less objectionable possibility than the transatlantic voyage of prehistoric visitors to North America from the Old World?

Dr. Starr was joined recently in attempting to discredit all claims of authenticity on behalf of the discoveries by J. O. Kinnaman and the earlier mentioned Dr. James Talmadge in an article for the September *American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal* entitled, "The Michigan Archeological Question Settled!"

They say in part, "Others have affirmed that the finds were frauds,

but did absolutely nothing to prove it. It became the somewhat unpleasant duty of the writers to produce incontestable proof and settle the question for all time. The specimens themselves, tablets and other objects of clay, slate and copper are plainly recent objects manufactured to deceive. A cursory examination is all that one familiar with archaeological material needs for demonstrating the facts."

He frankly says that the two mounds opened in his very presence were not prepared for his coming. They nevertheless both yielded relics, whereas but one in eight or ten are usually prolific. That, he thought, was "too successful!" One can only imagine his reaction if *nothing* had been found. Somehow, he speculates with conviction, a magic trick was perpetrated against him and his skeptical colleagues without their knowledge.

The artifacts simply "couldn't" be there, so they were not, at least originally. Hence, the objects must have been surreptitiously placed in the freshly opened mound by hoaxsters even during Starr's visit, under his nose and those of his put upon colleagues. The five artifacts taken out of the mound in their presence they adjudged "not old," and as having been "introduced as we looked on. One would not need to be a skilled sleight of hand man to do it. I believe that Father Savage and others have been deceived."

Thus, the archaeological know-it-alls exposed themselves as closed-minded bigots harboring opinions of absolutely no worth. For all their accredited degrees from this school or that, they have foregone any claim to scientific objectivity. It has been most disagreeable for me to reach the conclusion here given, but such are inescapable. Even if, *in extremis*, Dr. Starr had seen the five artifacts actually "introduced," they would have been more than offset by literally thousands of other finds made by the "honest men," as he himself referred to them, of which Scotford had no part whatever, to say nothing of the accidental finds by other, entirely disinterested parties.

Although Dr. Starr did not really see anyone slip the five objects into the mound excavation, he nonetheless has the gall to defame as "deceivers" the men who were good enough to trouble themselves for his judgement. Interestingly, some of the artifacts that he insists must have been slipped past him are large and bulky, far too large for all but the greatest magician since Merlin to have gotten passed Starr and his no less easily fooled colleagues.

Dr. Starr was seconded by Professor J. G. Kinnaman, of Benton Harbor, Michigan, who laughed cavalierly, "I was most beautifully, if not scientifically, taken in." According to a reporter in the August 2 edition of *The Detroit News*, "Thus frankly, almost joyously, does he admit that he let his enthusiasm run away with him when he came to Detroit to look over the relics of a prehistoric people.

"Professor Kinnaman is a noted scientist and is editor of *The American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal*. When he said the relics dug up by James G. Scotford and his son, and described by Dan E. Soper, former Secretary of State, were positive proof that a great people lived in the vicinity of Detroit before the Indians came to exterminate them via the Mohawk route, he created worldwide attention in the fields of science.

"The professor now regrets that he ever pictured a race of people lingering on the shores of the Detroit River long before Noah built his now

famous houseboat. In a signed statement issued in Chicago, the Professor exonerates the lost tribes of Israel from any blame in connection with the Highland Park mounds and their contents.

"He says: 'I have spent the afternoon with Dr. Frederick Starr of the University of Chicago, and we have been comparing notes. We have come to the same conclusion, even if I am a trifle late in reaching it. But if I am to tell the story in my own way, I must go back a bit. It is little more than twenty years ago that I first saw the specimens of Michigan archeology which have been accredited to Caucasian civilization, to the lost tribes of Israel, and perhaps to other antecedents.

"They were owned by a citizen of Mount Calm County, Michigan, an enthusiastic collector of Indian relics, and he had paid for the specimens (I'm sorry I cannot say to whom) prices running as high as \$85.00. Then years later, in 1901, I spoke of them to Professor Starr, but there was no special waking at that time. Then came the famous denunciation of Professor Kelsey, who declared the specimens the grossest of fakes.

"In 1908, Professor Kelsey wrote an article in *The Nation* which subsequently he sent to me. I used it in the *Antiquarian* last spring, together with an article written by Dean Savage of Detroit, defending the discoveries. In June of the present year, I went on invitation to Detroit to inspect the mounds at Highland Park where Professor Starr subsequently investigated. At the time four or five pieces were taken out of two mounds. One of which, a slate tablet, I have here in my pocket.

"Yes, I was badly fooled, and for that matter, so were the gentlemen with me, Dr. Orr and Dr. James of Toronto, and Dr. James E. Talmadge of Deseret Museum, Salt Lake City. Everything seemed so square and so straight forward and honest. No, Scotford was not present at the diggings. Our entertainers were Dean Savage and Mr. Soper. The digging was accomplished by Allen, one of the diggers for Professor Starr last week."

"Who selected the mound for the crucial test?," asked *The Detroit News* reporter.

"That I believe was done by Mr. Soper," Kinnaman said. "It was worked, presumably by planting. Though, Professor Starr is convinced that sleight of hand has played its part in the business. Of course, the planting was accomplished years ago. For instance, the mound we excavated was overgrown with brush and Allen had to cut away a small tree before he could begin to dig. This is one of the times when patience had its perfect work. It takes enthusiastic science to plant a crop of relics and then wait years for the crop."

It certainly does not say much for Professor Kinnaman's sense of discernment that twenty years needed to pass before he realized that he had been "most beautifully, if not scientifically taken in." With his own hands, he lifted a tablet from one of the mounds, as described in an affidavit he composed and signed himself in Greenfield Township, Wayne County, on June 13, 1911.

"We, the undersigned, were present when the above tablet was taken from the mound this day. The tablet was eighteen inches from top of mound in absolutely undisturbed soil, in which there was

absolutely no opportunity for fraud. The tablet was moved from its bed by Professor J. O. Kinnaman, editor of *The American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal*.

J. O. Kinnaman
James Savage
Daniel E. Soper
Rudolf Etzenhouser
James Allen
Clyde Gault

Subscribed and sworn to this thirteenth day of June 1911, by
J. A. Russell, Notary Public, Wayne County, Michigan. My commission expires January 17, 1915."

"According to the evidence I have been able to gather," Dr. Kinnaman told *The Detroit News*, practically all the discoveries of relics thus far revealed have been by James Scotford of Detroit, or by his son-in-law, Scoby, or by parties, who like myself, have been operating under the guidance of the men named, now, were these relics actually of ancient burial and as generally distributed as reports of the finds would indicate, there would surely be some discovered by accident.

"It is reasonable to believe that relics would have been dug up in the extensive clearing of the woodlands, in the excavations incident to building operations, and in the breaking up land for agricultural purposes. As a matter of fact, however, discovery of these relics seems to be unknown except as made by parties who go into the field for the purpose, usually with witnesses at hand, ready to swear to the condition of the finds.

"The conditions of burial seem to preclude the possibility of internment centuries ago. The objects are generally found within a foot or two of the surface, and I have heard of no credible or well attested instance of accidental uncovering whereby any object has been exposed through nature's weathering, except such discoveries as have been made by interested parties already known to be skilled in making these finds.

"Nevertheless, did these objects exist by the hundreds in these little mounds within so short a distance of the surface, it passes belief that they should never be uncovered except by prearranged digging. Moreover, there is absolutely no evidence that appeals to me as indicating that these little mounds are graves. It has been assumed that these relics were buried with the dead and the area within which they are found has been referred to as a great necropolis. Yet, not even a single tooth has been found in any one of these mounds to indicate the presence of a buried body."

The depths at which these finds are made is immaterial, because conventional excavation continues to discover material at shallow depths, even on the surface. Accidental finds abundant to answer Dr. Talmadge and all others have occurred and are still continuing.

Arguments against the authenticity of the Michigan articles because of the depths at which they were found are totally facetious. So

too the relatively small size of the mounds in which they were recovered, as though only a large earthwork could contain anything of value.

No bones or teeth being found arouses the Doctor's suspicion. The value of that criticism is wholly contingent on the time deposited. Could the Doctor have shown conclusively the deposit was too brief for all bones and teeth to have decayed, he would have scored a point; but since he, and all others, have only an assumption on this, as on all other points, no case is made by him or them.

Dr. Kinnaman goes on, "The freshness, amounting to practical newness of, the exhumed objects examined is entirely inconsistent with any claim of great antiquity. Some of the slate tablets I have seen and handled are so fresh as to suggest that they left the maker's hands as late as yesterday. The lines made by the engraving tools were examined microscopically, show fresh fractures.

"The copper pieces, while generally green verdigris have evidently been corroded by rapid chemical treatment, and not by the slow processes of time. The green oxidized layer on every piece I have seen is thin and non-adherent, rapidly wearing off, even with the most careful handling, leaving a surface clean and smooth except for the slight roughness produced by chemical action.

"The copper of which these articles are fashioned is ordinary commercial copper smelted from sulfur-bearing and arsenical ores. It is not the native copper such as the copper objects taken from genuinely ancient mounds in this country are known to be. This conclusion as to the character of the copper is based on chemical analysis made here and elsewhere and on conductivity determinations made at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.."

Contrary to Dr. Kinnaman's statements, corrosion in all cases is not surface only: on some pieces it is deep and quite irregular. Excavation of mounds in Ohio yielded some copper samples that were corroded and others that were not.

Dr. Kinnaman continues, "The way in which the pieces of slate and copper have been fashioned, indicates their origin. On the edge of the copper battle ax unearthed by myself, the equidistant and regular markings of a modern file are revealed by the lens. On the edges of the black slate tablet, referred to as found by myself, the markings of a modern saw are still in tact."

Dr. Starr concurred, "one of the finest tablets found a week before our visit has the lower edge still plainly cut by a slate saw. The inscriber polished down only three margins!"

Several saws were among the items found in the mounds. At present, it takes a file to produce a saw; evidently it did then, too, so both saw and file marks are very properly provided for. The compass and the chisel were also found. Scientists are perhaps too much guided by the "universal stone age."

They would have us believe the extensive and magnificent stone structures of Mexico, Central America, and Peru, with all their adornments, carving and sculpture work was accomplished with stone imple-

ments. The artisans of today must have the best implements (steel) to do such work. To credit the ancient artisan with work of such character done by crude stone tools, is to place him far in advance of the artisan of today.

Those marvelous works of the distant past could not have been accomplished without the necessary implements for such work now. The claimed universal Stone Age culture will yet have to be readjusted.

In any case, Dr. Kinnaman seemed to think the Michigan relic controversy was by "incontestable proof settled for all times." Dr. Starr stated its more than 10,000 items were "manufactured to deceive." Dr. Talmadge condemned them as components of a "deliberate scheme of deception and fraud." But in a letter of October 23, 1911, Dr. Kinnaman wrote to me saying, "I am always open to conviction." Good.

Some remarkable discoveries just made near Giessen, Germany, indicate that the Dark Ages, that period in European history from about 475 to 1200 A.D. were not as dark as historians have hitherto believed. Some ancient graves dating back to 500 A.D., which were opened by archeologists within the past few weeks, have brought to light a number of articles which demonstrate that the Germans of that time must have attained a high state of civilization. They were not the barbarians hitherto been regarded. (*American Magazine*, section of *The Los Angeles Examiner*, January 1, 1911.)

The historic island of Crete affords another revelation of about 1500 B.C. The island of Crete, lying midway between Greece, Asia Minor, and the northern coast of Africa, occupies a unique position, not only geographically, but also historically. To the student of Greek history, it forms a shadowy background to peoples, things, and events. One is conscious that there were on this mysterious island great men and great occurrences, but he is given no definite information as to them and gradually comes to regard the island and its people as more than half mythical. So it was, with even the wisest, until a few years ago.

The partial removal of the power of the Turkish Sultan made it possible for archeologists to visit Crete, and during the decade just past, they have worked with such success as seldom crowns the labors of the spade. Englishmen, Italians, and Americans have toiled in friendly rivalry at Cnossos and Phaestos, and on the eastern end of the island.

The scholarly world owes much to each and all of them, but most to the distinguished archeologist, Arthur Evans. Together, they have brought to light the remains of a marvelous prehistoric civilization surpassing any that had yet blossomed in the Aegean and far more advanced than any that Greece was to know for hundreds of years to come.

We see the ancient Cretens (or *Minoans*, as scholars now call them, in honor of their great King Minos) in their shops and markets, in their sports, and in their palaces and humbler dwellings. They were a wonderfully modern people, pursuing the arts of peace in large unfortified towns, secure in the consciousness of their mastery of the sea, much like the people of another famous island in our own day.

The traces that still remain of the attainments of Minoan artisan, architect and artist alike excite our interest and admiration. The palace at

Cnossos was a town in itself, with quarters for guests and servants and craftsmen of all kinds. It was fitted out with sanitary plumbing such as the world was not to see again until the Nineteenth Century.

Their walls were decorated with paintings and mosaics that tell us much of the life of the time. The dress of Minoan ladies was modern, close fitting about tight laced waists, with low necks and puffed sleeves, and with flounces about the skirts. We feel strangely at home among these people. But there haunts us all the time a feeling of uncertainty, a questioning as to who these moderns of the ancient world really were; of what origin, race, and language.

Written records are not lacking, for Evans and his co-workers have brought to light thousands of tablets and seals evidently recording the commercial and official life of the Minoans. They are written in a strange and unknown script, however, consisting of pictures or characters evidently derived from pictures. Like the Sphinx of old, these have challenged the wonder and the ingenuity of scholars ever since Evans began to publish them at the turning of the century. He is now engaged upon a definitive treatment of all the inscriptions, and has already published the first volume of his most important work, *Scripta Minoa*. It was a copy of this that fell into my hands at the close of the college year and stimulated my curiosity to such an extent that I temporarily postponed the completion of my reports on Venetic and Etruscan in my desire to outfit the Cretan Sphinx.


I was attracted, chiefly, by the Phaestos Disk, which is written in characters differing from those employed in all the other Minoan writings. This unique monument of ancient civilization was brought to life two years ago by Dr. Pernier of the Mission. He discovered it in a part of the palace at Phaestos, under conditions that lead scholars to agree in dating it not later than 1500 B.C. It is a disk of refined clay, about three quarters of an inch thick and six and a half inches in diameter.

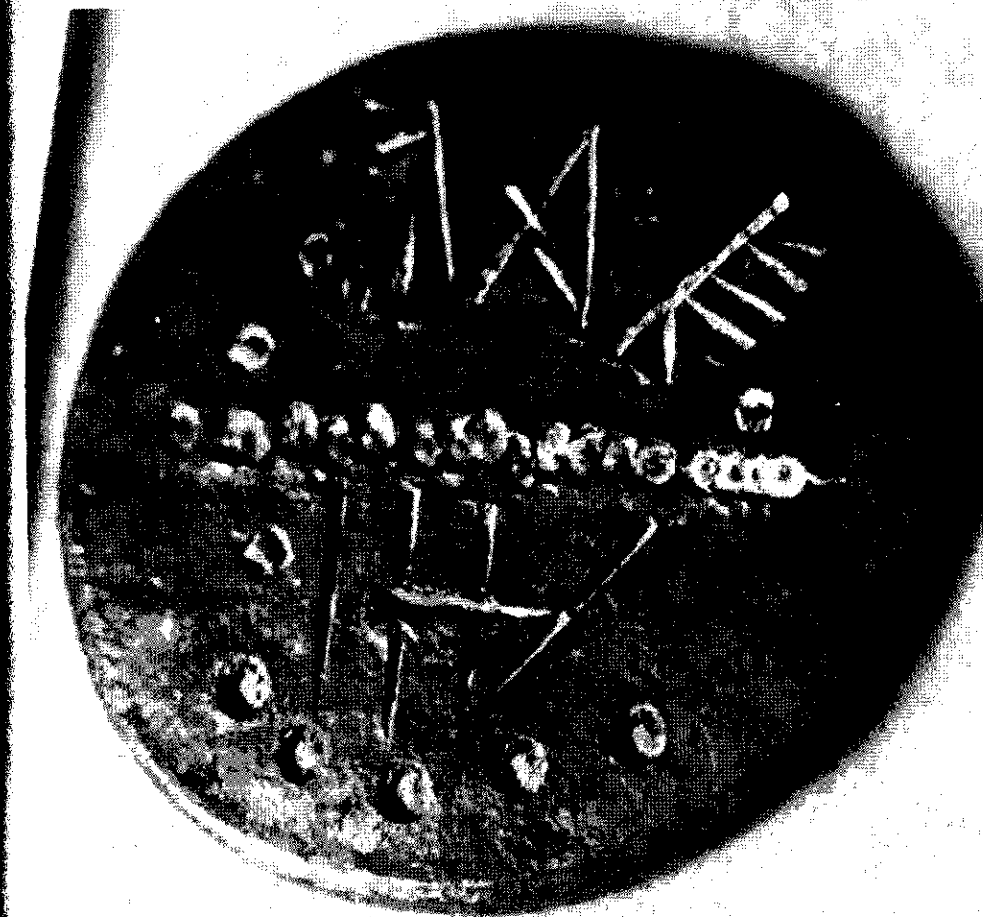
It is not inscribed; but when the clay was still soft, characters were impressed upon it by means of engraved stamps, not unlike our rubber stamps. Each individual character or picture was thus made with one stamp and is consequently always exactly the same. We have here, in fact, a remarkable anticipation of the sort of printing that is done today in stores and shops when signs and placards are produced by the use of rubber stamps containing a single letter on each. (*Evans found evidence of both Minoan Linear A and B. While the former is still untranslatable, the latter was deciphered by another Englishman, cryptographer Michael Ventris, in the early 1950s. He proved that Linear B was a pre-Classical form of Greek. Linear A is the older of the two "Scripta Minoa."*)

Neither script appears on the famous Phaistos Disc, which is composed of hieroglyphs that have so far defied interpretation. It was probably one of many similarly mass-produced discs, which were used as astrological almanacs. Editor)

Time honored theories have oft been crushed by the increase of knowledge. The supposed impossible has come to light. Error long enthroned as right has been rebuked, set aside and the truth established.

As seen, Germany and Crete, long occupied, furnished surprises of the most novel kind and involves similar problems to the Michigan relics. Much of the modern-like from long ago was not yet not discovered until very recently. Finds in Germany and Crete parallel discoveries in our own country. The features so unallowable, the strange characters, visual links to overseas civilizations in the Old World, etc., are offset by things no less marvelous in other parts of the world.

In the domain of science there is much yet to be discovered. No section of it is destined to yield richer results than that of archeology. The most disputed relics of Michigan are destined to be the cause, as well as the source of much information, when their inscriptions are deciphered, as they inevitably shall. A strange script or scripts in Michigan is not more strange than such discoveries in Crete. The modern-like in Michigan, though of ages past, is not more surprising than similar discoveries in Germany and Crete. 

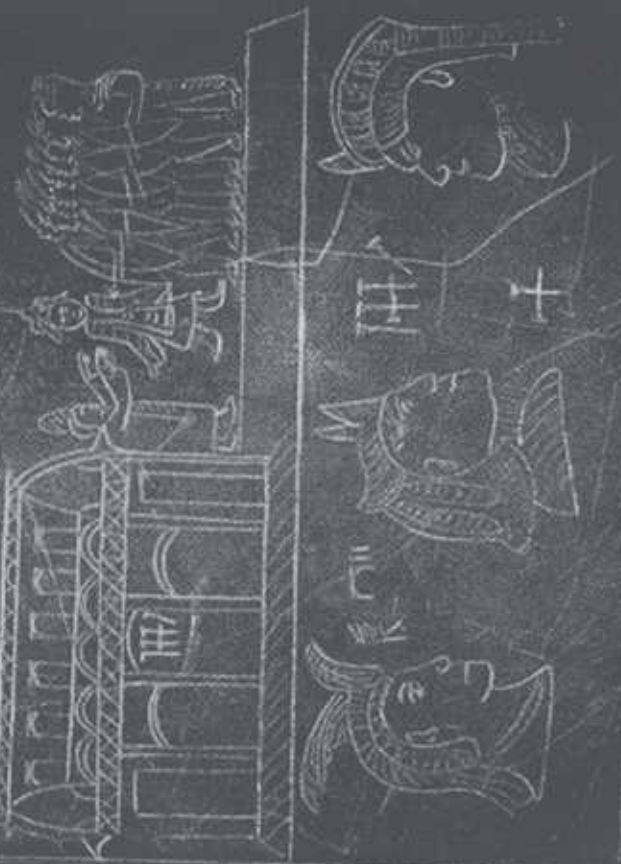
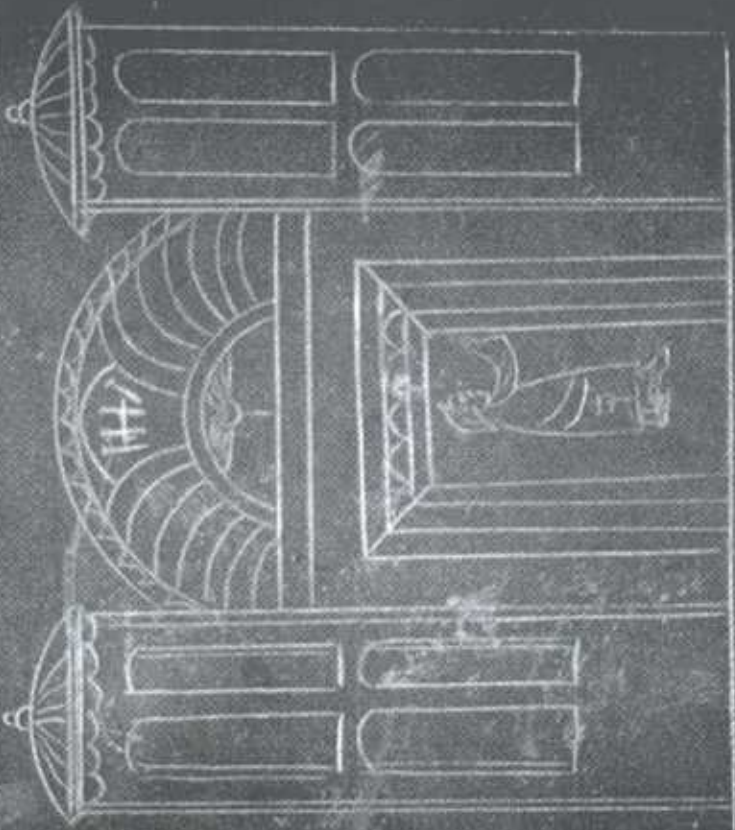


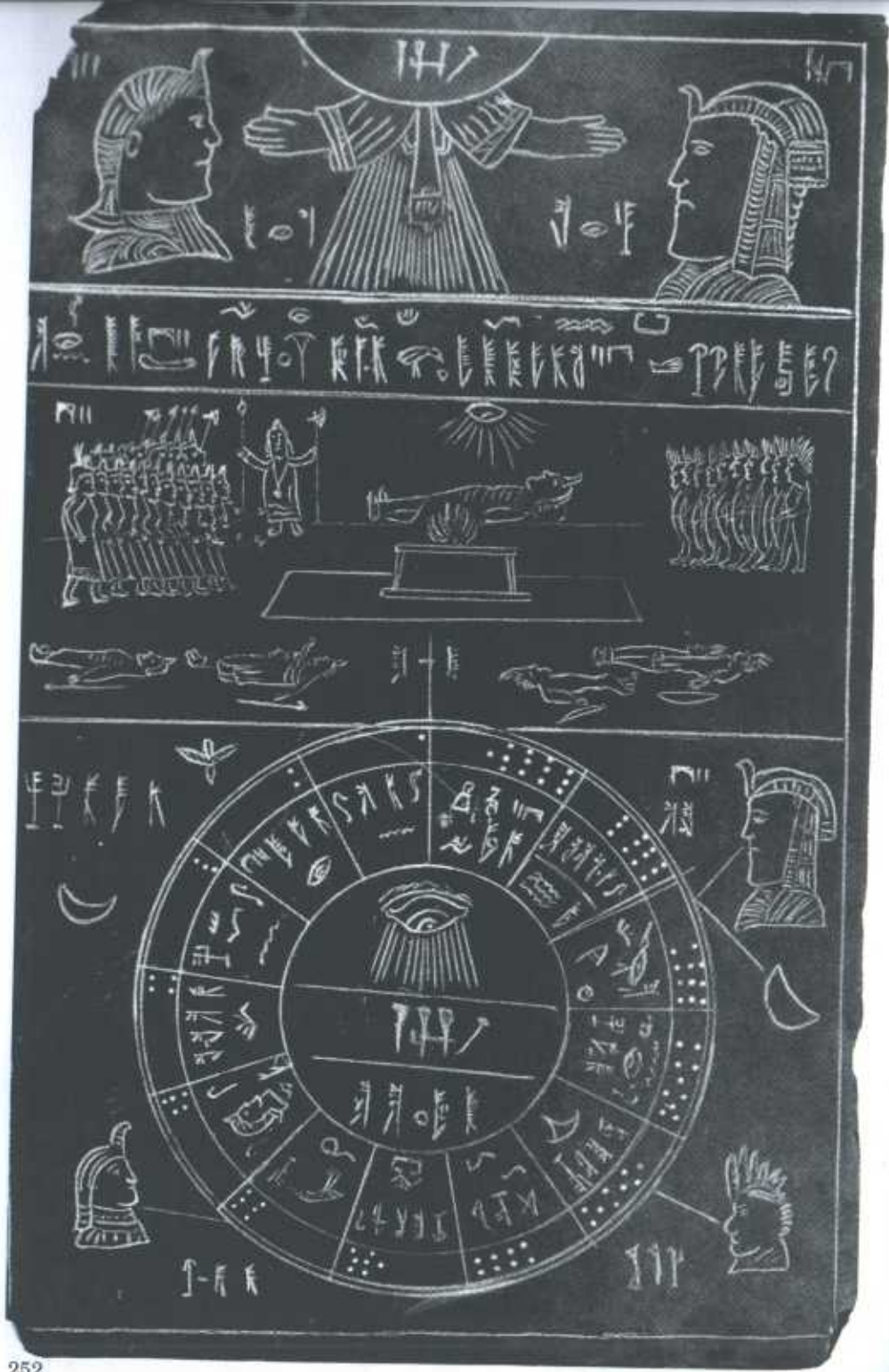


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Hieroglyphic text arranged in a vertical column and several horizontal rows. The symbols include various birds, eyes, and abstract shapes.



