



# DIGGING THE WEANS

A Story by ROBERT NATHAN

*Drawings by N. M. Bodecker*

THE inscription on the north wall of the temple at Pound-Laundry on the east coast of the Great West Continent has finally been deciphered by the team led by Sr. B'Han Bollek. This work brings us certain assurance of the theory expressed by Bes Nef, Hanh Shui, and Nat Obelgerst-Levy that a people of considerable numbers and power formerly inhabited this salt and desolate land. It is a triumph for those archaeologists who have been working ever since the fortunate discovery of an ivory cross and string of beads at the northeast, or "Bosstin" tumulus, along with a rusted iron wheel which seems to have been designed to run along some kind of track or trolley. These artifacts, as everyone knows, are now in the museum at Kenya.

What we have been unable to discover, is the fate of these ancient people. That they perished in some sort of upheaval many thousands of years ago is clear from the inscription itself, which Sr. B'Han Bollek translates as follows: "nor [for north?] rain nor hail nor snow . . ." there are some hieroglyphics missing, and the inscription ends with the phrase . . . "their appointed rounds."

However, it must be remembered that the *r* and the *w* are readily interchangeable, both in Hittite and in ancient Hivite, and Bes Nef prefers the reading: "their pointed wounds." This naturally suggests a catastrophe, possibly an invasion from the east, a belief, I may add, greatly encouraged by the findings in the Valley of the

Sun, which will be discussed later. On the other hand, if, as some believe, including B'Han Bollek, that the phrase should be read: "their appointed rounds," the meaning of the full inscription might well be as follows: "The north rain, the hail and the snow [also from the north] have accomplished their appointed 'rounds' [or tasks]" . . . namely, have annihilated the inhabitants.

So much, then, we do know; but very little else is known of these ancient people. Professor Shui believes that they may have been Brythons, and related to the still older, Druidic culture whose stones are still to be seen in the East Island. Professor Shui bases this theory upon a certain similarity in the two glyphs, the Brythonic "bathe" and the Wean "bath"; but his theory necessarily comes to grief when one examines the glyph for "that which rises"—the Brythonic "lift" and the Wean "elevator" having obviously no common root.

I have called these people the Weans, because certain archaeological findings incline us to the belief that they called their land the We, or the Us; actually, in the southern part of the continent, the word Weuns (or Weans) does appear, as well as the glyph for Wealls, and the word Theyuns.

To return for a moment to the theory of catastrophe, and the "pointed wounds" of Bes Nef. In the Valley of the Sun there have been unearthed many bronze, and tin, and even stone figures of what would seem to be a kind of huge praying mantis. There are many groups of such figures, usually including male and female, and sometimes with young; it is curious that in every case the male figure is larger and more powerful than the female, which we know



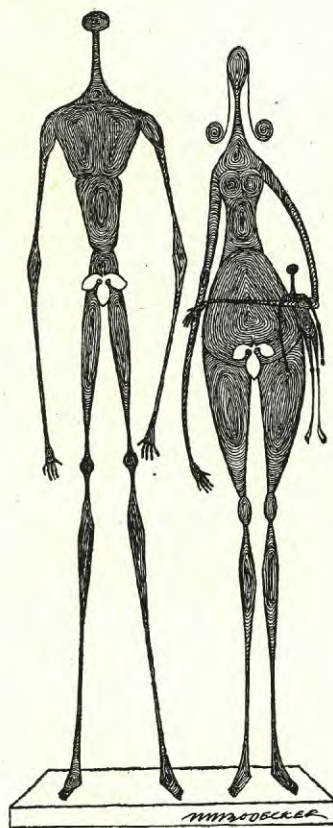
to be untrue in the case of the actual praying mantis. These figures nevertheless have the small, cruel head, the long savage arms, the spindly legs, and the attenuated bodies of the mantis. Is it possible that a civilization of men and women, more or less like ourselves, might have been overwhelmed by an invasion of mantis-like insects? Where could they have come from? and where did they go? The conjecture is, of course, fascinating; but no mantis skeletons or remains of any kind have been found, except the above-mentioned statues.

Pound-Laundry is in itself the richest of the diggings. It is believed that at one time this city (for recent excavations indicate "the laundry," as we call it, to have been a city of considerable culture) may at one time have been, in fact, the capital of We, or at least to have had some political or historic importance. Obelgerst-Levy translates the first word of the name as "washing"; the second is obviously the sign for "weight." It is not known what—if anything—was washed there.

In the middle mound, or Cha'ago, near the Lakes, there have been unearthed several paintings; badly discolored, they yet show enough to prove that the inhabitants of Cha'ago were not entirely without visual art. However, they show almost nothing else. They portray squares, lines, lozenges, and mathematical figures; perhaps they were used in some way by the astrologers of the period. One finds no recognizable human face or figure. We cannot be sure what the Weans of Cha'ago looked like.

(In this relation, it is interesting to note that among the artifacts unearthed at Cha'ago were some unbroken jars and other ceramic objects; also statues of what appear to be eggs, and certain nightmare shapes in stone, iron, and bronze. One is allowed to wonder if there was not some correspondence between these art objects and the praying mantises who may have taken over the country. It is also believed that the Weans had music, but so far at least only a few brass instruments and some drums and cymbals have been found; no sounds have come down to us from those faraway people except a high rasping cry from a slender horn-like object found in Oleens.)

**T**O RETURN again to the matter of what the Weans may have looked like; no human bones have been found. Although we have turned up many artifacts of the period, we have nothing for the anthropologists to work



*Praying mantises with young*

on. It is probable that the bones of these people were brittle, and turned to chalk soon after interment.

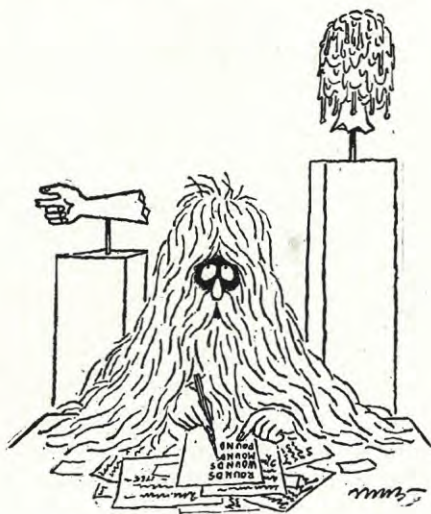
The greatest difficulty in reconstructing the life of the Weans has not been the deciphering of the inscriptions and the scrolls—due to the brilliant work of Professors Bollek and Shui—but the fact that the Weans, unlike the true ancients, used little gold, preferring to build everything of steel or other metal, and of some curious substance which Bes Nef translates as "gastric," or "plastric." As a result, little is left for the archaeologist. Stone was used mainly for monuments, as was bronze, but those which have been uncovered are too heavily encrusted with bird-droppings to be easily recognizable. One theory is that the Weans collected guano; but it is not known what they did with it.

It is here, for the first time, that I must take issue with my esteemed colleague, Professor Kowly of the Institute for Ancient Arts and Letters, who has discovered in one of the scrolls at Pound-Laundry a glyph of what he believes to be a bird-man. Professor Kowly sees in this some correspondence to the djinn of the even



more ancient civilizations of Akad and Sumer. While agreeing in the translation of the glyph, I must dispute its meaning: I believe it to have a purely domestic significance, and not religious at all. For one thing, it is often found along with the glyph of a woman, and the sign of a host, or hosts; there seems to be another letter between the final *t* and the *s*, possibly an *a* or an *e*, which would make it *hostas* or *hostes*. I cannot help but see this as a picture of an ordinary family, the man in winged splendor, as befits a husband, the woman merely one of a number, or host (or hostes).

In this relation, it is interesting to note that the Hittite plural, in the feminine gender, often adds the *e*. I am not one of those who hold that these unknown Weans were actually Hittites, although I admit to some strange correspondences. In any case, a Sumerian djinn would never be found accompanied by a woman, unless she were a sorceress. There is no suggestion that the woman-hostes was in fact a witch or sorceress,



*Professor Bollek at work*

which I believe effectively disposes of Kowly's untenable hypothesis.

Apropos of the mounds or tumuli of the Weans, each one of which appears to contain and cover the ruins of a city or congregation of habitations, an expedition under Hulay-Beneker has been for several seasons in the field in search of a mound thought to cover the most extensive congregation of all. The name of this lost city, or congregation, which is believed to have been more influential in Wean affairs than Pound-Laundry itself, was—as deciphered by both

Eretebbe and Bes Nef—Mil Town. So far no trace of it has been found.

All that we have been able to learn of Wean manners and customs we have been obliged to decipher from the copper and silver tablets found in the mounds, and in the Valley of the Sun in the southwestern part of the country. As a matter of fact, it would appear that a considerable civilization flourished in the southwest, not in any way inferior to the middle mound at Cha'ago, or to the eastern tumuli such as n.yok. Here, in transcription, is Bes Nef's account of a religious occasion, translated from scrolls found in the Valley:

"[for that] he did cause them . . . [by] rock and roll . . . to [give out] cries and screams . . . loudly . . . and . . . in the corridors<sup>1</sup> . . . in syncope<sup>2</sup> . . ."

The word "roll" or "rolls" suggests a feast, possibly a feast of communion on a grand scale. So far no one has been able to explain the presence of the word "rock."

However, it is apparent that the people came together, and were seized by an ecstasy of some sort in which they lost reason and decorum. This belief is further strengthened by another scroll found in the same tumulus, in which the scribe reports: "and the spirit came down."

So the evidence points to the fact that the Weans were a religious people. There is additional witness in a silver coin dug up in one of the smaller mounds, which carries the inscription "In God We Trust"—or "Trusted." The translation is by the Bantu scholar, Eretebbe; the tense of the verb "to trust" is obscure.

Neither Eretebbe nor any other member of the Academy has as yet been able to discover what god was meant. It is extremely unlikely that these ancient people had only one; inscriptions found among the ruins of Pound-Laundry suggest, in fact, a number of religious differences among them. There are definite traces of Hebrew culture in the ruins of n.yok; and although nothing has so far been found at Pound-Laundry to suggest Babylonian or early Egyptian influences, there are hints here and there of the Cyprian cult of Antinous, particularly among the arts.

It is probable, too, that the Weans worshiped, among others, a sort of horse-god or centaur. Professor Rass points out that the fragment un-

<sup>1</sup> "Columns"—Bollek. "Aisles"—Obelgerst-Levy.

<sup>2</sup> "Syncope"—Obelgerst-Levy. But this makes no sense, apparently.



earthed at s.nita, and known as the Rass fragment, contains the unmistakable glyph for "horse," and the simple statement: "Schwaps [schnaps?] was first." Yet another glyph, found not far from s.nita, is that of a bearded god; it, too, states that "Schwepps [schwaps?] was first."

In this regard, it is interesting to note that in a fragment unearthed at Oleens, and known as the Oleens fragment, the word "schnaps" is written: "cocacola," which was the name of an Aztec root-deity.

**I**N POLITICS, we are on surer ground. It is possible to say with absolute certainty, from scrolls unearthed at Pound-Laundry, and also from the ancient city of Boxton, or Bosstin, known to archaeologists as mound x-5, that the Weans were divided into hegemonies or states, each ruled by a theocrat or autocrat, and all loosely joined in a confederacy under one ruler (who, however, was not a theocrat) whose duty it was to retire after an interval varying in length from four to twelve years, and to issue warnings and oracles. These groups, or states, were in turn divided into counties, which were in turn divided into wards. As for the system of government itself, it appears to have been conducted by means of barter, each county or state getting what it could for itself in exchange for helping its neighbor to do the same.

Public servants, we know, were paid little; they were expected to enrich themselves as best they could in private. When this enrichment, which was illegal, was discovered, they were beheaded. This curious fact did not keep the majority of Weans from seeking public office; but one is forced to conclude, from inscriptions found at Nassaw, that the most admired citizens lived in actual poverty, and rarely spoke at all, except in musical sounds or mathematical formulae. As we have already seen, no musical sounds have come down to us, which is unfortunate.

It is true that two scrolls, bound each in oblong form, were found by the team of Haph-Bukong and Sumer, digging one winter among the ruins of what may once have been some sort of library. That it may have been a repository of many such scrolls—or as we should say "books"—is suggested by the remains of metal shelves which may have held the scrolls (or else jellies, but informed opinion veers toward the scrolls).

Unfortunately, both scrolls, though easily legible, due to the brilliant work of the scholars

Bes Nef and Obelgerst-Levy, are unintelligible; that is to say, the words, although translatable, make no sense when put together. One of these scrolls appears to be an account of a god or hero named Finigan, or Finnegan; the size of the scroll and its rare state of preservation attest to its importance as a religious or historical document, but it is impossible to make out what happens to him. The second scroll is in what appears to be a metrical, or verse form; nothing can be gathered from it at all.

A tablet unearthed at n.yok gives us a welcome glimpse into business transactions in We. "[Having] borrowed a million," it reads in the transcription of B'Han Bollek, "[I acquired] thereby credit to twice that amount." This suggests an economy not unlike our own: one thinks of the motto of our Treasury Department: "To the Borrower, All." Throughout history there has never been anything more useful than credit, to establish credit. Without a debt, there is nothing.



"Schwepps [schwaps?] was first."

As for the history of these interesting and almost unknown ancestors<sup>1</sup> of ours, no more is known than is known of the Romans, and later the Brythons: they established themselves in the land by killing off the native tribes already there, and built their empire by the sword; when the sword rusted, they perished, along with Egypt, Babylon, and Greece, leaving behind them only these curious mounds, some scrolls, monuments, and glyphs, a few statues of eggs and mantises, and no music.

<sup>1</sup> Nat Obelgerst-Levy denies that the Weans were ancestors of ours.