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The Merrykins: Their Educational System

Background

This is a continuation of the preliminary draft of the Master Report evaluating the archeological findings of a previous civilization which inhabited the area known to us as Province III, upon planet Earth. The Earth term for this geographic area was *Nor Thameri*, as nearly as we can decipher their terminology. (It is worth repeating here that Language Section has not as yet mastered the inchoate and inconsistent dialect of the Nor Thamerikins. In fact, Language Section wonders whether or not communication upon Earth was ever very precise.) This civilization seems to have endured until approximately A.D. 2000 (earth calendar).

Mericans or Merrykins

Language Section has not decided which one of these terms translates more truly from Nor Thameri dialects. In this Preliminary Report, the writers have chosen "Merrykins," and will use this term consistently when referring to the past inhabitants of Nor Thameri. (It is felt that this word constitutes a sort of bilingual, trans-galaxy pun describing these people. Indeed, they merrily pursued pleasure and the material life even as their civilization was disintegrating.)

SECTION E

The Educational System

Let us begin this section with the complimentary statement that these primitive beings had an inkling of the tremendous importance of a quality public educational system. They made a start in this direction, but little more; they never committed as much as 5% of their total national product to public education (as contrasted, for example, with our 25%). Even the slight amount of Nor Thameri educational literature which we have discovered abounds with statements concerning various materials and programs which "the schools could not afford." Nowhere have we found emphasis for the obvious truth that a people cannot afford *not* to educate its young in the best possible manner.

(NOTE: With regard to the literature, in general, of the Merrykins, it should be recorded that evidently they did write widely, upon many topics. However, some extremely voracious bacterium — possibly introduced as a weapon of warfare — destroyed most books and papers. Furthermore, a trend developed in the late 1900's to commit all printed matter onto *microflam* — an unsophisticated photographic process. Virtually no *microflam* has survived in a legible condition. Thus the amount of printed matter — educational literature included — which we have to work with is not extensive. Moreover, Language Section has not yet been able to understand most Earth dialects thoroughly. The Nor Thameri dialect especially seems phonetically inconsistent, flippantly idiomatic, and filled with many usages of the same word. In fact, the Nor Thameri language, when introduced into the P17-Baa Wide Range Language Interpreter, continually “blows” the fuses of this, our most advanced computer.)

The Merrykins spent more of their wealth (*munny*) upon *sigerets* (q.v.), for example, than they spent upon education. The curious habit which these people had of inhaling and exhaling the smoke from small smoldering cylinders of crushed grass has been described in another Section of the Master Report. Earthlings are the only beings we have encountered, alive or archeologically, who indulged in this puzzling activity. Indeed the most common single artifact of Nor Thameri civilization which we have uncovered (widely scattered) is a small dish or saucer with recesses about its perimeter. This was the *astray*, used to hold, temporarily, the burning *sigerets*, and the solid-state residue therefrom. We earlier thought that these *astrays* were some type of chalk-holder used in the schools.

School Buildings

The simple beings in Nor Thameri erected large, sturdy buildings to house their educational efforts. Our General Archaeology Section classifies these buildings in the “chambered cairn group” with the “Orkneys” of “Scotland,” a much older civilization upon the same planet. Remnants of the outer foundations and the inner partition walls of Merrykin school buildings have been found. They indicate for the most part plain buildings, unimaginative but substantial. Ruins of the inner walls indicate generally rectangular *classrooms*, all of roughly the same size and arrangement. Merrykin children apparently were remarkably similar to each other in personality and capacity.

Probably the most enigmatic conclusion regarding the school buildings of Nor Thameri is this: all evidence indicates that these structures were in use only during the daylight hours of half the days of the year. These facilities normally were not utilized for evening educational work, for hobby development, for physical exercise programs, for community meetings or recreation. The buildings were virtually deserted during weekends, and not widely utilized during warm weather periods. It is puzzling

why the Merrykins, having expended large sums of public *munny* constructing school buildings, did not put these buildings into wide general usage. Other activities, particularly physical exercise programs and community recreation, were greatly needed by the natives of Nor Thameri, especially when they gained a large amount of leisure time (q.v.), which they knew not how to employ.

A curious fact has come to light from our routine but quite precise physical examination of school building ruins. In each teaching station (*clashroom*), the floor is worn down more deeply in the front area than in the remainder of the room. This situation is to be studied further, perhaps when more has been learned about the methodology of Merrykin teachers.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

The Princey-Pal

One of the administrative officers of the Merrykin school was the *Princey-Pal*. In their native dialect, this term might indicate a sort of combination ruler and friend. This officer seems to have been the activist among school administrators. His duties evidently lay within these categories:

a. Totaling days in attendance and days of absence for all pupils. (Merrykin school administrators seem to have been more concerned with the number of days a pupil attended school than with what happened to him while in school.)

b. Accounting for small *munnys* expended by pupils for milk, lunch, and writing paper. (Spent hours in "munny banks" — q.v. — with bags and rolls of "coins," i.e., metal *munny*.)

c. Purchasing pencil sharpeners, window shades, and other small articles.

d. Disciplining or "punishing" pupils who broke the rules in various *clashrooms* in his school. (NOTE: Our language contains no exact synonym for "punish." Their infinitive "to punish" encompasses our terms "to explain," "to correct," and "to disapprove," but "to punish" seems to mean more than these.)

The Super-Intentions

Another administrative officer in Merrykin schools was the *Super-Intentions*. This office was higher than that of the *Princey-Pal*. The *Super-Intentions* apparently administered several school buildings, or a fixed group of educational units. May have possessed extra eyes, as he seems to have kept an eye upon every operational detail. Evidently he had not developed the ability to delegate responsibility. A recurring phrase

in the literature of educational administration translates ‘keeps a finger on every detail.’ We have interpreted this as idiomatic rather than literal.

The position of *Super-Intentions* is not understood clearly at this writing; it is hoped that we will learn more about this office as we continue our study.

Mechanical Equipment: The Valley of the Dials

As limited as the Merrykins were in their knowledge of mechanical engineering, nonetheless it was in their machines and gadgets that they most widely surpassed the peoples of other areas of planet Earth. The point has been made elsewhere in this Report that despite their dismal poverty — by our standards — the Merrykins actually were much more affluent (materially) than were other groups of Earth inhabitants.

The schools of Nor Thameri featured such gadgets as *flam projectors*, *recording devices*, and (especially) *teaching machines*. The utilization of teaching machines (various arrays of boxes and gears) was based upon the work of an early investigator who was able to teach pigeons (an extinct Earth bird) to dance. It is not known whether or not the Merrykin school children learned to dance. The term “pigeon-toed” does occur now and then describing persons; the possible derivative relationship here is obvious.

The fact that the Merrykins implemented this pedagogical rationale implies that they considered rote learning more important than understanding. The role of the *clashroom* teacher in the midst of these gadgets is not yet clear to us. Probably their program was deeply influenced by machines; the cover (only) of a book entitled *Developing the Motor Skills of Children* has been found, along with many references to a book apparently entitled *The Valley of the Dials*.

Special Category: The Zonate Amphitheater

There is one particular ruin, often found in association with Merrykin school residuum, which we are unable to understand or classify. This we have termed the “*Zonate Amphitheater*.” This intriguing ruin is generally found in connection with the village “high school” (q.v.), either physically contiguous or bearing the same markings or emblems (such as a tiger, eagle, or etc.).

The “*Zonate Amphitheater*” in physical description is a rectangular plot of grounds always precisely 100 yards (Earth linear measurement) by 53 1/3 yards. This is absolute. At either end, past the sacrosanct 100 yards, there is some variety in markings. But the 100 x 53 1/3 measurement never varies.

Within this plot, looking lengthwise, there are transverse lines every five or ten yards. Many attempts have been made to interpret these grid-like demarcations: one cannot "tell time," determine moon phases, or predict temperature by these lines. They do not correspond to prevailing wind currents, to lines of longitude or latitude, or the like. Indeed, in various geographic areas, these lines have nothing in common, except their placement (5 or 10 yards apart and at right angles to the sideline perimeters). It was originally concluded by our investigators that these lined plots were some type of single-plane, uni-dimensional "henge" (as "Stonehenge" and other older Earth relics).

While the "henge" theory is questionable, surely these "zonate amphitheaters" must have held religious significance in the temperate-climate area of Nor Thameri. The lined plots generally were surrounded by seating arrangements, often quite numerous and always quite uncomfortable. These seats often were constructed of a type of synthesized stoneware, with which these primitives were surprisingly proficient.

Of course, this concrete evidence can tell us only a limited amount. It was natural to attempt to associate these "zonate amphitheaters" with the earlier "Roaming-Christian" (q.v.) practice of sacrificing human victims to wild animals, while large crowds looked on. It has not been possible to substantiate such a connection. Apparently, Nor Thameri crowds never witnessed the sacrificing of victims to lions (except, possibly, in the area of the large lake village of *Detrot*). Moreover, this line of thought still leaves in question the function of those ubiquitous lines upon the fields.

The presence of large seating facilities is consistent with the penchant of the Earthlings for spectating. They were, in fact, such confirmed spectators that we are bewildered by the planet's disastrously high birth rate (q.v.). The fact that pure spectators could maintain such a reproductive tempo caused us to conclude originally that these beings reproduced in some quiet, intellectual, mono-sexual, egg-laying manner. This theory has been destroyed by what we have been able to read from their literature, advertising signs, and so forth. Actually, these poor beings were obsessed with *sax* (q.v.).

The Krikulum

The next portion of Section E will attempt to describe the educational programs of the Merrykins, known as the *Krikulum*. This portion of the Report is now in preparation.