

## ANCIENT PROMISSORY NOTE REVEALS SEVERE USURY

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An ancient Egyptian promissory note, accompanied by its literal translation, was recently added to the exhibits in Hall J (archaeology of Egypt). The specimen, which dates from 109-108 B.C., is not very well preserved, but in spite of this difficulty Dr. Nathaniel J. Reich, of Philadelphia, has been able to decipher most of the hieroglyphics. Quite startling is the usurious rate of interest, 100 per cent. The harsh terms of the note make their own commentary on the social conditions of the time. A brief interpretation of the note follows:

"I, the peasant-slave Ensnakhonneu, belonging to the Zemi cemetery, have borrowed from the woman Nekhutes 22½ artabas of wheat. I promise to repay this loan with 100 per cent interest, making the total due 45 artabas of wheat. Further, I promise to repay this loan with good, unadulterated, chaffless seed-wheat, measured by the same standard as was used in making me this loan; and I further promise to deliver the said wheat to the house of the woman Nekhutes in the Zemi cemetery without transportation charges, by the last day of the ninth month of the year 9 with no extensions of time to be granted. Further, whatever I do not repay in wheat by the aforesaid date I will repay within the following month at the rate of 60 pieces of silver per artaba. Further, as long as this note is in Nekhutes' possession I cannot claim, unless I can show a receipt, to have made full or partial payment. Further, everything that I now possess or shall acquire is herewith pledged to Nekhutes until I shall have discharged my debt in full. Further, if Nekhutes brings suit against me for failing to meet my obligation, I admit additional liability for any damages. Further, the agent of Nekhutes is hereby authorized to deal with me and I promise to follow his instructions at all times promptly and unreservedly."

## A UNIQUE BOOK ON ETHIOPIA BY OSGOOD AND FUERTES

Under the title *Artist and Naturalist in Ethiopia*, a new book has just appeared from the press of Doubleday Doran and Company. The authors are Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Curator of Zoology at Field Museum, and the late Louis A. Fuertes, noted artist. The book gives a "day-by-day record of actual experiences" during the Field Museum-Chicago Daily News Ethiopian Expedition of 1926-27. As stated in the preface it is a "unique type of book in which the same journey is seen through two different pairs of eyes," and its intention is "to present a view of the life of the traveling naturalist as seen by himself and spontaneously recorded on the spot, not as colored and selectively presented *ex post facto* under the influence of prospective excitement of a reader's wonder and admiration." Besides vivid accounts of hunting and collecting, it details various meetings with Haile Selassie, ruler of the country, and chiefs of outlying provinces, giving an intimate view of life in the ancient feudal kingdom as it existed before the recent war with Italy. The book is in rather sumptuous form, in small quarto size, and illustrated with sixteen large plates beautifully lithographed in full color from paintings by Fuertes. It is obtainable at Field Museum; price \$5 plus postage.

## EXHIBIT SHOWS THE VESTIGIAL HIND LIMBS OF WHALES

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Mammals that have taken to life in the water have undergone greater alteration than those living in any other type of environment. This is particularly true of whales, which are more completely aquatic than any other existing mammals. They spend their whole lives in the water, and are completely helpless on land. Although often assumed to be fishes, they are really highly modified mammals. Their fish-like appearance is a part of their adaptation to life in the sea.

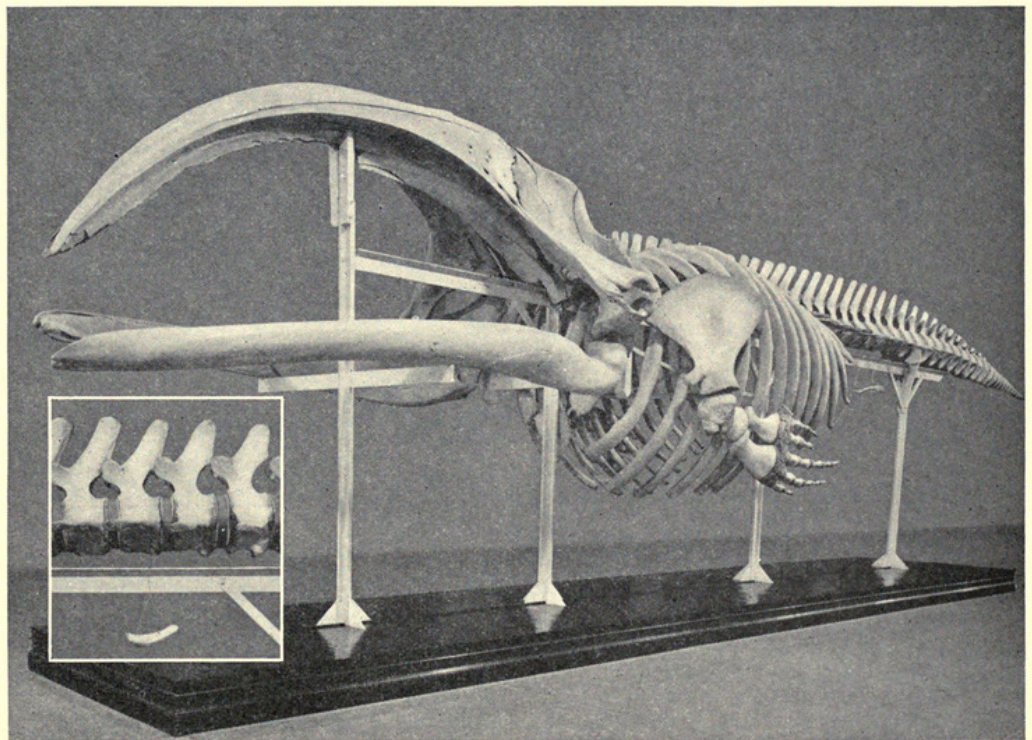
The right whale, which is one of the largest and best known of whales, illustrates the extent of these adaptations very well. Its ancestors were four-footed beasts that walked on land, although one of the most notable features of the external appearance of modern whales is the complete absence of hind limbs. The combined effect of the

of the right whale. The adults are hairless and devoid of teeth, but both hair and teeth are present for a time before birth.

There has been a great deal of argument and speculation among anatomists as to just which of the three pairs of pelvic bones is represented in whales. This question probably never will be answered satisfactorily, since the remaining bones are so reduced that all clues by which they might have been identified have vanished.

There may be some question as to why the pelvis has not disappeared completely, instead of leaving these fragments. In answer to this, it has recently been pointed out that some of the muscles of the rectum still attach to them. These important muscles demand some point of attachment, and the pelvic vestiges have persisted to provide that anchorage.

Hind limbs are absent in many other animals, notably in snakes. Many fish, a



Skeleton of Right Whale

Inset at left shows one of the small bones which lie below the vertebrae in the animal's flesh, entirely disconnected from skeleton in the modern animals. These represent the vestiges of hind legs which ancient ancestors of the whale once possessed. They still serve as a point of attachment for certain muscles.

streamlining of the body and the development of a powerful tail have made hind limbs useless, or even detrimental, and consequently they have disappeared. In the meantime the fore limbs have developed into powerful paddles, which aid the fish-like tail in propelling the body through the water.

Buried deeply in the muscles of the body, however, is a pair of small bones, less than a foot long. These relatively insignificant bones are not connected with the rest of the skeleton, but "float" unattached in the softer tissues of the body. They are all that is left of the hind legs that formerly were present, for the muscles that once attached to the pelvis and legs have long since disappeared. These pelvic remnants are thus excellent examples of what are known as "vestigial structures"—the last useless remnants of organs that once were well developed and functional. Other similar vestiges are present in the embryo

salamander (*Siren*), the curious burrowing caecilians, and certain limbless lizards also lack them.

The 45-foot right whale skeleton in Hall 19 was exhibited for many years without these interesting vestiges of the hind limbs. These have recently been added, however, and may now be seen in the position they occupied in life, below the backbone near the base of the tail.

Interesting for comparison with modern evergreens is a collection of fossil cones and branches of extinct South American evergreen trees in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38).

Rare and elaborately decorated textiles woven by tribes of Madagascar from banana fiber, the inner bark of trees, raffia, hemp, cotton, and the silk of wild silkworms, are on exhibition in Hall E.





Davis, D. Dwight. 1936. "Exhibit Shows the Vestigial Hind Limbs of Whales."  
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