

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
February 9, 1932

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed February 2, 1932

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

MOUNTAIN RAIN GODS

In her recent book "The Geography of the Mediterranean Region; its Relation to Ancient History," Dr. Ellen Churchill Semple points out that the gods of all the ancient peoples around the Mediterranean were prominently identified with the giving and withholding of rain, except in Egypt, where crops were watered by the Nile and not by the sky above. She says further:

"The original seats of these divine rain-givers - their first rude earthen altars, their shrines and temples - were located on hilltops, mountain summits, lofty peaks, the 'high places of the earth.'" Such were Sinai, Zion, Hermon, Ida, Olympus and the countless altar-crowned and templed hills of the Mediterranean lands. The reason for placing the gods and their shrines in such places is thus explained:

"Below in the treeless plains a glare of light from cloudless skies, a merciless sun beating down on shriveled crops and vineyards, meadows parched and sere, the soil baked and cracked with the heat, water-courses dried up made a whole world at thirst. Above on the heights clouds rested and gathered at times for local storms, creating islands of moisture in a vast sea of aridity. There, under a gray canopy, refreshed by showery afternoons and dewy nights, grew forests of oak and tamarisk, of chestnut and ash and cedar - handiwork of the Rain-giver and evidence of his presence. From these tree-grown slopes perennial springs sent their gift of water down to the irrigation ditches in the plains below. Even in summer those misty summits held out promise of rain, elusive though it might be. Towards the end of the dry season their gathering clouds and the increasing play of lightning were harbingers of the autumn showers."

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C.