GREENCASTLE HILL, ANTIGUA:

A POSSIBLE MEgalithic Monument of a Prehistoric Civilization

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One of the most beautiful sights to be seen in Antigua, West Indies, is from the top of Greencastle Hill. The hill is the remains of an isolated extinct volcano with several lengthy spurs. From there can be seen a range of volcanic hills with low lines forming the background, an extensive alluvial plain profuse in canefields, and the ocean from three directions.

Greencastle Hill (Fig. 1) is situated about latitude 17.3° north, longitude 61.5° west. The north portion of the hill is about 400 feet high as far as the middle where it slopes upward toward the highest point at 596 feet in the extreme south and then descends into the valley below at a high angle. During the commencement of the Oligocene period 28 million years ago when the subsidence of the whole island took place, ancient volcanoes in the proximity of present Greencastle Hill were truncated and greatly reduced in girth by wave action which explains the occurrence of vertical cliffs on most of them.

The discovery of the megaliths was made by Mr. W.R. Forrest early in 1930 and the information was communicated to Mr. Lewis Spence, the author of "The Problem of Atlantis", and the late Professor Elliot Smith who stated that the archaeological evidence submitted by Mr. Forrest confirmed his opinion that the direction of civilization round the world was from west [the Americas] to east [Mesopotamia, Egypt, China].

The surface of the imposing plateau (Greencastle Hill), on which evidently were centered the scenes of former ceremonies and phallic worship, is strewn with the remains of locations of circles of various diameters, altars, sacrificial slabs, and columns. Some are rounded, others squared, polygonal and irregular or in the rough, some isolated and others in circles or in alignment. Many groups are partly intact and in all stages of abandon, particularly on the steep inclines. These remains are not only confined to the plateau surface but are also found on the steep sides of the same, as well as on the slopes of the background, and are most abundant on sites with south-southwest or west exposures.

A slight elevation of the ground divides the plateau into north and south sections and extends from the middle of the west side, 270 feet in a southeasterly direction towards the highest point, increasing in height as it nears the latter. The north and south sections slope in a series of circular terraces, towards their respective margins, where the minimum height is about 215 feet. The sides of the plateau are steep with evidence on the west and south of having been stopped with horizontal rows of rounded boulders, averaging 18-24 inches high, and the gentler slopes with their contours lined in similar manner are suggestive of a pyramid. An alternative practical view is that the rows of boulders were intended to prevent erosion of the soil on the slopes.

Observation Post

The dominant feature of the whole plateau is situated near the west end of the central elevation and might be termed the "Observation Post." Apparently every important group of megaliths, even the distant ones in the valley below and concealed from the line of vision,
have bearings direct or indirect from this central post. This site has evidently been surrounded by an outer circle of boulders, 24 inches high, which is fairly intact on the north side at a lower level. The circle is separated by 20 feet from an inner circle of massive monoliths. The central and tallest rounded column (Fig. 2) is 5 feet high and 20 feet from the latter circle. From this point one sees in all directions the tops only of the large monoliths or columns appearing above the lines of the various terraces on the plateau, each having a specific bearing or indicating the direction of some distant section.

The observatory proper is 31 feet southeast of the central column with four megaliths in alignment on the north side and one unit of three pieces on the south side. The latter is an altar and consists of three massive megaliths one inside the other. The upper surface is projected into a cone shape rounded point forming a sloping exposure with a slight hollow towards the southwest. The north side of this altar is parallel with the four megaliths in alignment separated by a space of 6-9 feet. Through this space is visible a monolith on the skyline of the east background hill, bearing 90° distance about 350 yards. The bearings of the alignment of the four megaliths on the distant east horizon are 70° to 75° and may have been intended for some fallen column or landmark.

Slightly west of the observatory is a broad vertical monolith with the top margin notched, like the backsight of a rifle (Fig. 3). Its function so far cannot be explained. On the north side of the altar group, are various shaped massive slabs, possibly for sacrificial purposes.

About 100 feet to the southwest there are two squared parallel columns with a narrow space through which the bearings are 270° (Fig. 4).

It is difficult to separate the sun myth from phallic worship, the two are so closely inter-related. Festivals are almost always in honour of the sun as a fertilizing agent; when they are joyous events, it is because he has triumphed over the powers of darkness (night or winter) which sought to deprive him of his virility. This is the symbolic explanation of the various fests in honour of the sun's resurrection at spring-time, no matter under what name or under whose auspices.

Greencastle Hill in Antigua is literally strewn with all sizes of phalli lying in various stages of abandonment. The tall massive monolith, the "Sun God", 10 feet high and 5 feet at the base tapering gently towards the top and surrounded by a large circle of boulders is carved from andesite and depicts a phallus in its purest form. It is situated at a lower level north west of the "Moon Goddess" which was evidently the dominant deity.

One can also see pairs of V-shaped stones, pointed at the top, starkly columnar and resembling the female generative organ. In most cases a third stone can be seen lying tilted or flat in the background of these V-stones (Fig. 5). Many of them with an accompanying "circle" of stones, some to 15 feet in diameter and other circles as large as 100 feet in diameter.

Dr. Fred Olsen of Mill Reef who has interested himself in the pre-Columbia cultures of the West Indies has observed that a feature of interest is "the lack of alignment" of the upper stone, that is the massive 10 feet megalithic sun god, with its base. "It is obvious" the learned gentleman continues, "that human ingenuity had been involved in placing the top stones (perhaps a couple of tons in weight) on its base, with several discontinuities between the vertical lines of the upper and lower stones of the megalith".
About the Moon Goddess, Dr. Olsen said, "The Moon Goddess is the stone which has attracted more local interest than any of the others. It is one of the largest of the megaliths and is located on the highest point of the plateau. The upper stone of the Moon Goddess is curved at the top showing what are described as the 'horns of the moon'."

The discoverer of the prehistoric site, the late Dr. Forrest has drawn attention to the fact that "the ancient Akkadians [North Babylonians] used these same symbols; they have been found in their temples. The "Sun God" was called Tammuz; the "Moon Goddess," Ishtar. They had a legend that Ishtar wedded Tammuz; on the latter descending into the lower regions, Ishtar went in search of him." This legend may perhaps explain the orientation of the "Sun God" to the "Moon Goddess" on Greencastle Hill.

According to the late Charlesworth Ross, "it is worth to note that a miniature replica of the 'Moon Goddess' on the plateau group was found in a kitchen-midden west of Elliot's Estate about ten to twelve miles away from Greencastle Hill. It was made of hard limestone and was exactly to scale in three dimensions of the craftsmen's measurers of prehistoric times." Another symbol of the "Moon Goddess" was found on Yepton's Estate. It is a perfect work of art made to prehistoric measure, from dark volcanic rock, perhaps andesite.

Dr. Forrest said "As regards objects of a commercial nature or those which have been made for service in some ritual, I would recall the fact that measures have been sacred from time immemorial. This is brought out emphatically in the Bible." The prehistoric measures referred to are a discovery of the late Ludovic Mann, once eminent chairman of the Glasgow Archaeological Society.

The question arises: Were these megaliths the work of human origin, or are they natural outcrops of rock? Dr. Forrest answers, "On the occasion of my first contact with the site, I exposed the foundations of several megaliths on the steep slopes, in order to ascertain this point and found that they were resting on or 'packed' with small flat fragments of a different type of rock." There are numerous instances of several types of rock occurring in the group of megaliths. "Worked" megaliths (shaped and smoothed) can be readily distinguished. Their function as landmarks is very apparent. Some are perfectly rounded and tapering, others cylindrical. Minor "worked" megaliths have their terminals varying from acutely pointed to an almost mushroom shape.

The less spectacular but unmistakeable handiwork of man exemplified in the elaborate terracing of the extensive east slopes must not be forgotten. Fortunately, there is further evidence on the site of the actual presence of man in kitchen midden remains found on the surface of the south slopes. "These remains comprise of pottery fragments, worked flints, two small animal bones, a small perforated marine spiral shell and a number of shell fragments of various species of Modusca, Lucina, Turbon, Chiton" Dr. Forrest concludes.

In 1930 photo prints and a sketch plan of Greencastle megaliths were sent to Mr. Ludovic Mann, a former eminent chairman of the Glasgow Archaeological Society, by the Dr. Forrest. After having studied the compass bearings of the various groups on the Greencastle plateau and east hill (including the fallen groups on the plateau) Mr. Ludovic Mann gave the following reply, dated October 1, 1930: "I am unable to present to devote intensive study to your excellent and highly scientific account of this scientific find... Meantime I may draw your attention to a striking feature... the close resemblance of the group of sites on your map to the principle stars in the constellation Sagittarius. These stars com-
prise of that section of the Zodiac which culminates at midnight of February 19 between
the years 8600 B.C. Thus you see the megalithic monument in Antigua may be dated
about the middle of the Neolithic (period) as indeed somewhat similar in this country may
be similarly dated. I venture the suggestion that the megalithic monument, like many
others, was almost exclusively concerned with the time reckoning. You have a splendid
opportunity of giving to science a body of data with the aid of which we could now throw a
world of light upon early civilization in the West Indies."

For a comprehensive study of the sites a ground plan and an aerial view of the mega-
liths are essential. Excavation ought to be fruitful in bringing to light remains of this
ancient civilization which may prove invaluable!