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17. A Note on Megalithic Monuments

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Nowadays No. 2 is generally used to call in the people from their gardens, say, for example, on the arrival of European or other strangers, or, again, half-a-dozen long blasts may convey the news that a Government party or Europeans are approaching.

W. N. BEAVER.

Palestine: Archæology.

Lewis.

A Note on Megalithic Monuments. By A. L. Lewis.

17

The questions raised by Mr. Peet and Professor Elliot Smith respecting megalithic monuments are so important that I should like to be allowed to state the conclusions to which I have been led by a study of the monuments, and of the literature concerning them, extending over fifty years. They are:—

- (1) *The origin of building with large stones need not have been, and probably was not, confined to one centre.*
- (2) *The vast extent of the countries in which building with large stones, whether worked or unworked, was practised, and the different ways in which it was applied, show that it was a local or tribal rather than a racial custom.*

(1) Such inventions as those of the mariner's compass, gunpowder, and the steam engine (the latter specially cited by Professor Elliot Smith) seem to have been in process of evolution in different places, though perhaps only brought to perfection in one of them. But was the commencement of megalithic construction an invention in the same sense as either of those? The first inhabitants, however uncivilised, of any stony country might surely begin to pile stones together to form dwellings, enclosures of any kind, and perhaps tombs; and they would, in the absence of mortar or cement, soon find that the larger were the stones, the better buildings they made, and, when they had overcome the difficulty of handling them, they would often use the largest they could get. This is surely a thing that might have occurred anywhere and many-where. When an efficient cementing material was introduced the use of small stones became much easier, though that of large stones in various forms was, and still is, retained. It might be safer to argue that the epoch-making discovery or invention made only in one centre was that of mortar or cement.

(2) Mr. Peet seems to construe the term megalithic rather strangely, but it is very difficult to draw a distinction, based only upon the size of the stones, between monuments of a similar appearance, and I therefore prefer the term "rude stone monuments," even though some of them are more or less worked. In my view it is building without mortar, with large or small stones, or a mixture of both, that is the distinctive phase of culture of which the special characters insisted upon by Mr. Peet are but local or tribal variations. Rude stone monuments are found in many and various parts of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, and in Australia and the Pacific Islands—altogether too much ground to be covered by any one pre-historic race or by the influence, direct or indirect, of any such race. But, although rude stone monuments are found in so many different places, their characters differ and are often much localised. The great circles, the primary purpose of which was not sepulchral, are practically confined to the British Isles; there is nothing elsewhere that can be compared with Avebury, Arborlow, Stanton Drew, Stonehenge, Brogar, or with many of our smaller circles. If we turn to monuments which were unquestionably sepulchral, we find dolmens of various sorts by the hundred in Ireland, France, Algeria, India, &c., many in Wales, but practically none in the eastern half of England, except in one corner of Kent, where there are some

monuments of a Teutonic type, nor in Scotland, where circles take their place as sepulchres. But in the sepulchral circles there are also great local differences; those round Aberdeen are of one special type found nowhere else, except perhaps in one instance in Co. Cork; those round Inverness are of another special and quite different type, although they are so near; there are also numerous circles of what I may call the ordinary burial type in Scotland. (For details see my paper on "The Stone Circles of Scotland," in the *Journal* of the Anthropological Institute, Vol. 30, 1900.) In Yorkshire, again, there are no large non-sepulchral circles, but there have been many of the little barrow circles, and these are also found in parts of Siberia, where, however, they seem to be of a later date, as they contain articles of iron. All these differences seem to indicate that the inhabitants of each locality used large stones in different ways and for different purposes; in Scandinavia, for instance, circles, we are told, were used for fighting duels in, while in India small circles were places for sacrifices. Alignments were dealt with pretty fully from this point of view in my paper on "Megalithic Remains in the Neighbourhood of Autun, &c," printed in the *Journal* of our Institute, Vol. 38, 1908; and I will here only mention the stone rows, so numerous on Dartmoor and practically non-existent elsewhere, as another local and probably tribal variety. The construction of a cist to put a corpse in is a thing that might occur to anyone in any place where stone was available, and larger chambers might easily be a development of the same idea. Dolmens, however, were discussed with regard to local differences at some length in my paper on "Some Dolmens of Peculiar Types in France and Elsewhere," printed in our *Journal*, Vol 40, 1910, to which, and to the other papers mentioned, I must refer readers for details, in view of the limits of space in MAN.

Colonel Forbes Leslie, sixty years or so ago, showed that there were many customs and beliefs common to the "Celtic Fringes" of our islands and to India, and that they were sometimes associated with the rude stone monuments; but is it certain that the people practising such customs are the descendants of those who reared the monuments, or that they did not, at one end of the line or the other, find the monuments already there, and take them over from an earlier population?

A. L. LEWIS.

Ægean Archæology.

Elliot Smith.

The Invention of Copper-making. By G. Elliot Smith.

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My attention has just been called to a remarkable statement in Mr. H. R. Hall's *Ægean Archæology* with reference to Professor Reisner's view, "which gives to the Egyptians the credit for the invention of copper tools and weapons." The consideration that the true interpretation of the known facts is a matter of fundamental importance in reading aright the history of civilization is my excuse for returning to the discussion of evidence to which I have repeatedly called attention during the last five years.

From Mr. Hall's book (page 44) I make the following quotations:—

"But the source from which the early Egyptians obtained their copper can only have been—since the Black Sea coast seems too far away—besides the Sinaitic peninsula, Cyprus and the neighbouring coast of Syria. And the practical absence from the island of stone tools seems to show that the Cyprians used copper from the beginning, whereas the Egyptians passed through the Neolithic period before adopting copper. It is a natural conclusion that the Cyprians communicated the knowledge both to Egypt and to the Ægean, rather than that Egypt communicated it to both. The matter is arguable, but this seems the more probable theory of the two. The earliest Egyptian copper weapons are of the type characteristic of Cyprus."