

ANTIQUITY OF MAN IN AMERICA¹

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The vanity of man is of equal antiquity with his origin. The most ancient evidence of man's existence is indicated by some monumental structure; something that can be ascertained by vision. All primitive men were mound builders, not only for the purpose of convenient and protective habitations, but also for the specific purpose of perpetuating the fact of having existed. It is difficult to determine whether the controlling factor, which produced the mound or high places associated with prehistoric man, was convenience and protection, or the innate disposition to create history by the erection of a mound which succeeding people would be compelled to observe. The use of such materials as the culture at that period would permit, furnishes definite comparative chronology.

Ancient man erected his historical monument on earth, because he had neither implements with which to work nor had he reached the cultural stage, though surrounded with inexhaustible supplies of stone, to attempt to utilize stone for monumental or historical purposes; he used dirt, the most indestructible material.

Exploration has developed that the political and religious concept was a potent factor in mound construction, but does not destroy the historical or permanent evidence of the previous existence concept. Power, authority and control, with prehistoric man, is always evidenced by some object indicating supremacy by exercise of force. A structure of great extent carried with it the thought of great power and authority, and was conducive to more abject submission. Cahoika and Etowah, when observed by prehistoric man, induced in them ideas of more complete control, authority and power than did the observance of small mounds in the Mississippi Valley. The observation today of the capitol building at Washington, a glance at the Washington monument, the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington, impresses one with the existence of greater power, authority and control than is indicated by observing a log courthouse on the head-waters of Obed River in the Tennessee Mountains.

Prehistoric man was controlled by what he saw, and not by analytical deductions; he knew what he saw, and he knew his successors would know what they saw.

This is the origin of the mound, known in every part of the world and admittedly the first method used by man to preserve evidence of his existence. His ability to handle earth was measured by the implements which his intelligence had developed. The extent of the structure was controlled by the time required for its construction and the number of

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persons employed in the construction. The original mound, as had been demonstrated by exploration, has been utilized by succeeding peoples even to the present time. Original locations are used by succeeding men all over the world. Exploration of Boiling Springs Mound, in Williamson County, Tennessee, developed three separate and distinct occupancies and cultures by different people. The cities of Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee, are located on the sites of prehistoric mounds. This has been found true in numerous places scattered all over the world, notably at the site of Carthage in Africa, where six separate and distinct superimposed cultures have been discovered. The most ancient of these Carthage mounds and the one at the greatest depth, discloses artifacts that are practically the same as those found in the stone graves in Tennessee.

While it is true that all prehistoric mounds were constructed in part for economic, political, religious and burial purposes, I earnestly insist that the monumental concept entered into their construction. This monument is the most potent evidence of the culture, because it demonstrates that, when man left the cavern as a place of abode, the concept dawned of perpetuating evidence of his existence. Cavern exploration indicates that the concept of perpetuating history was present. This is shown by the illustrations on the cavern walls. But there is no distinct evidence of the monument associated with cave man.

All existence has been maintained to a controlling degree, by earth. Prehistoric man realized this from the beginning. What more fitting material could have been utilized for preserving the dead, preparing them for future existence and reminding future man of the existence of his predecessors. Before man had reached the degree of culture which enabled him to perpetuate evidence of his existence by stone structures, he utilized earth; before man constructed in the valley of the Nile, stone pyramids and like structures, prehistoric man prepared on the American continent more durable monuments of earth. Before man built in Central America the marvelous stone structure which Dr. John Merriam and the Carnegie Foundation is now showing to the world; before man built the great stone pyramids and like structures in Mexico; before man built on the west coast of South America highways displaying great engineering skill, and public and other buildings utilizing enormous quantities of gold and silver, prehistoric man in the Mississippi Valley erected structures displaying a concept of the use of such material as would effect permanency and durability.

I realize the criticism this statement may cause, and am aware that I am in the minority in the judgment of the scientists of the world today. However, my best judgment, based on published data and actual exploration justifies this assertion.

There is no part in the world in which there exists so many prehistoric earth mounds as in America. Majestic, awe- and reverence-inspiring evidences of man's supreme endeavor to remind us that he was, exist in the great Serpent Mound (or Fort Ancient) in Ohio and the Old Stone Fort at Manchester, Tennessee. No one can look at these monuments without realizing that the makers of these structures

had the concept of perpetuating evidence of their existence. If man had reached that degree of culture which enabled him to work stone, undoubtedly he would have utilized it in these and like structures.

My conclusion may be assailed on the theory that the maker of the American mound was of low culture and had not advanced to the age of stone working, and yet his era was modern. The answer is, prehistoric man the world over, used earth mounds.

While I realize that the site of the origin of man has been located in the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris, known to be a fertile country abounding in natural resources for the sustenance of life, I am also aware that all existence has always sought the site of least resistance. Climate and nature's food attracted man. Such conditions have attracted and made possible the existence of the animal kingdom. No more fertile valleys of equal extent exist in the world than those of the Mississippi and the Amazon, the greater portions of which appear to have been unaffected by those extremes in climate which prevented production of great quantities of animal and vegetable food. The highlands and mountains of the great Mississippi Valley were the homes of the troglodytes, battling with the animal for protection of their homes. Under the shelving rocks and roofs of caverns, prehistoric man moved, lived, died and was there buried in tombs specially constructed from foreign materials. The remains were then placed in beds of ashes and left as a historic monument together with rude flint and bone implements.

Areas of a much as an acre have been found in caverns in the foot hills of the Cumberland Mountains covered to a depth of eight to ten feet with wood ashes in which are found the bones of turkey, bear, opossum, deer, bison, wolf, numerous birds, great quantities of cracked bones, shells and bone beads broken into two pieces; small fragments of pottery, rude stone axes and crude flint implements designed for the chase as distinguished from agricultural flint implements. There is no evidence of the use of metals or of mural paintings or drawings. The tombs were constructed of different materials: (1) at the surface red burned clay to an average depth of eight inches, (2) yellow and blue burned clay to a depth of ten inches, (3) fragments of stone artificially broken to average five inches in width, (4) ashes, light in color, with the consistency of cement to a depth of eight inches, (5) skeletons, in all instances flexed and lying on their right side with their faces generally fronting westward. There is here a marked similarity between American and European prehistoric burials.

The discovered evidence of so-called progressive civilization has indicated a spread from East to West. The spade of the archaeologist on the Western coast of South America, in Central America, in the Mississippi Valley and in Mexico, is compelling the world to seriously consider the question of whether human culture is of equal antiquity on the American continent with that of other parts of the earth. Exploration has been most abundant and intensive in the Ancient East. The historic infancy of the American continent has prevented intensive exploration and research of its prehistory.

EXTINCT ANIMALS

In no part of the world has so much evidence been procured establishing the existence of the Mammoth, Mastodon, and other extinct animals as on the American continent. Within twelve miles of Nashville, Tennessee, the Mastodon and Mammoth browsed in the jungles.

The Smithsonian Institution discovered on the east coast of Florida within the last two years, remains of some of these extinct animals in immediate contact with the remains of man.

At the site of New Orleans, Louisiana, a human skeleton and burnt wood were found at the depth of eighteen feet, buried under the roots of a cypress tree. At the present rate of deposition—estimated at five inches a century—Dr. Bennett Dowler has computed that the time required for this deposit to form was 57,600 years²

In 1853 Professor Louis Agassiz described in a lecture at Mobile, Alabama, human remains discovered on Lake Monroe, Florida, and fixed the age of the remains at that time at ten thousand years.

In 1863 Sir Charles Lyell in describing the Natchez, Mississippi, discovery of human remains along with those of the mastodon and other extinct animals, says:

“If I was right in calculating that the present delta of the Mississippi has required, as a minimum of time, more than one hundred thousand years for its growth, it would follow, if the claims of the Natchez man to have co-existed with the mastodon are admitted, that North America was peopled more than a thousand centuries ago by the human race³.”

EGYPT AND THE EAST

The remains of Egypt speak of high natural talent, much acquired knowledge, ages of training, vast aggregations of labor, wealth, time and ingenuity. There are structures that only great empires could erect. The rudest of their monuments are works too serious for the infancy of civilization, their writing is a perfect system and their implements are of hardened copper. There is no stone age in its archaeology. We see relative maturity, there is no youth or infancy. As with Egypt so are the conditions with Assyria, Chaldea, Babylonia, India and China. History's earliest listings gives us only the names of perished empires in the East which everywhere bear the stamp of maturity rather than youth.

Europe's cavern explorations disclose not only the remains of some of the extinct animals that have been found in America, but also paintings of such animals upon the walls of the caverns. From this fact it has been deducted that man's existence is coeval with that of such extinct animals. The antiquity credited to man in Europe is based on cavern finds, mural paintings in such caverns, and the association of human remains with those of extinct animals. The only difference between European discoveries and American discoveries is: (1) the absence of mural paintings in America, (2) the depth and material in which re-

²Nott and Gliddens, *Types of Mankind*.

³Lyell, Charles, 1863, *Antiquity of man*, page 204.

remains of man and extinct animals are found. The bone and flint implements are practically the same, both in Europe and America. A comparison of bone implements found in caverns in Tennessee with like implements found in caverns in Europe compels the conclusion that the makers utilized the same materials and adopted practically the same form.

GEOLOGICAL HISTORY

Mr. Allen L. Benson, in his lately prepared *Story of Geology*, has concluded that the experiment that resulted in man began not less than 16,000,000 years ago. Mr. Benson does not undertake to assert that man, as he is, is 16,000,000 years old, but means to say that it was 16,000,000 years ago that the fore-runner of man branched off from the other Mammalian stock. Various and sundry branches were put forth and from one of these branches, man and the anthropoid ape evolved. Man was never an ape and the ape was never a man, but locked up in the bones, tissues and constitution of each is overwhelming proof that they had a common origin.

The island of Java has furnished the first type of man of which we have knowledge, estimated by Mr. Benson, on the basis of the age of the rocks in which the bones were found, to have lived about 500,000 years ago. Science has reached the conclusion that the Java man was 5 feet, 7 inches in height, had a low flat forehead, beetling brows and a brain one-third smaller than the average human brain of today. He was a human being in every respect save the brain.

The Heidelberg Man, was the next in point of time, the rock formations in which the remains were found indicating that he lived about 300,000 years ago. His remains were found 73 feet below the surface of the earth near Heidelberg, together with the first crude flint implements.

Next came the Neanderthal Man found near Dusseldorf. He is thought to have lived about 250,000 years ago. He possessed a big brain, big jaws, great ridges over his eyes, was short, loose-limbed and had a slouching gait. With him were found the first evidences of the use of fire. The burial of the dead and the outstanding characteristics of burying with the dead such articles as they might need on a long journey, forces the conclusion that he had some idea of a life beyond the grave. It is thought that he disappeared from the earth about the close of the fourth ice age.

The next man, in point of time, was the Piltdown Man, found in Sussex, England. He had a large brain, high forehead, and none of the ape-like beetling eyebrows of the earlier types.

Following him was the "Cave Man" or "Men of the Old Stone Age," who lived between the third and fourth ice age. This last ice age ended about 25,000 years ago and is thought to have lasted 100,000 years. From which fact, Mr. Benson deduces the statement that "these ancestors of ours must have begun to exist something more than 125,000 years ago. It is thought that these men had something to do with bring-

ing the Neanderthal race to an end. The men of the Old Stone Age had elaborate burial customs, indicating a belief in the hereafter, and demonstrated a great facility in the use of the hands in the manufacture of stone implements. They are known as the Cro-Magnon race. Evidences of this race are found in caverns in Europe.

It is concluded that it was only 75,000 years ago when man learned how to make fire, at which time the Java Man, who looked a great deal more like a man than an ape, had been extinct 500,000 years, so man waited approximately 425,000 years after the disappearance of the Java Man before the first of his posterity learned how to make a spark and fan it into a flame, and to this day no other animal can do so much.

Mr. Benson brings out a beautiful thought in the statement that the fact that man's thumb is set in opposition to his fingers almost explains why a man is what he is, and this fact considered in connection with his curiosity and his imagination, does explain it. He gives this explanation: "Man's thumb has enabled him to be both a tool-maker and a tool-user. In the material world, in which the stake is the conquest of material things and natural forces, an animal that can neither make nor use tools, is tied to a post. If a humming bird or an elephant had the brain of an Aristotle it could not set a telephone pole or shingle a house. The humming bird, while poised in the air, might warble more wisdom and more facts than are contained in all the books in the Congressional Library and the elephant might trumpet all of them to the four winds but neither could give effect to a bit of it."

Mr. Benson has concluded that about this time in man's existence he first took notice of death and because he could not understand it, he treated it with great respect. The dead were carefully treated and buried. The subjects which the dead loved when alive were buried with them, for very early man realized that it was not death, but a sleeping which would be followed by an awakening. By the side of the sleeper were buried certain things which he might want when he awakened. This custom, which began with Neanderthal man 250,000 years ago, prevailed with mankind all over America.

Primitive man was first a wanderer and then a cave dweller. Like most other animals, he was always hungry and therefore a hunter and fighter. Clothing and the use of fire widened the range of his activities. Not being entirely satisfied with meat, he began to use as food wild grains and later stored them in his cave. The desire to provide sustenance for the dead on the long journey may have prompted primitive man to have deposited some of the grains thus gathered with the dead. It may be that this seed, thus deposited in the earth, germinated and thus may have been the beginning of agriculture.

"Regarded from one angle man is an accident. He happened to be descended from a stock that had curiosity, got out of the trees, walked erect, had a thumb that enabled him to make and handle tools and imagination with which to use them. How little he had to start with is indicated by the fact that it has taken him sixteen million years to get where he is.

"Another view is that the Infinite Mind created him and chose to take sixteen million years to bring him, along a crooked route and a hard path, to the place where he stands. To require so long a time to do exactly what he knew, at the beginning, he wanted to do may not seem much like Infinite Mind, but how competent are we to pass judgment upon such matters? Utterly incompetent. We should not let our small achievement in material matters blind us to the fact that our understanding is very limited."

The American continent is in its infancy with respect to research in archeology. Further research doubtless will furnish positive evidence of equal or greater antiquity for man on the American continent than in any other part of the world.