
Atlantis as the Bahamas

On 19 December 1933, America's 'sleeping prophet', Edgar Cayce, gave a psychic reading to a patient in which he spoke of three locations where 'records' pertaining to the arts and sciences of the Atlantean civilisation were hidden prior to the destruction of the island continent. He revealed that one of them would be found: ... in the sunken portion of Atlantis, or Poseidia, where a portion of the temples may yet be discovered, under the slime of ages of sea water - near what is known as Bimini, off the coast of Florida'.

Then in 1940 Cayce delivered what is arguably his most important prophecy on Atlantis' imminent re-emergence. Although Bimini was not named directly, he stated that 'Poseidia [i.e. the sunken lands off the islands of the Bahamas and Caribbean] will be among the first portions of Atlantis to rise again. Expect it', he said, 'in sixty-eight and sixty-nine; not so far away!'

It is unnecessary to debate the historical relevance or authenticity of such prophecies. All we need to know is that from the 1930s onwards, followers of the 'sleeping prophet' investigated the immense Great Bahama Bank, the former Bahaman landmass on which Bimini is situated, looking for evidence of possible archaeological features. Then in 1968, the all important first year of discovery alluded to in Cayce's prophecy, two commercial pilots, Capt. Robert Brush and his co-pilot Trigg Adams, sighted a curious rectangular feature in the shallow blue waters off Andros, the largest island in the Bahamas group.

On their return to Miami, Brush and Adams reported the discovery to two friends, who, like themselves, were already followers of Edgar Cayce. They were J. Manson Valentine, a zoologist and research associate of Honolulu's Bishop Museum, as well as the Honorary Curator of the Museum of Science at Miami, and Dimitri Rebikoff, a noted French oceanographer and underwater surveyor. Having listened to their story, plans were made to locate the site both from the air and in the water.

It was subsequently determined that the rectangular structure was approximately 34 by 20 metres and had an east-west orientation. It was marked out by a layer of sea-grass, under which were said to be perfectly laid limestone blocks about a metre thick. The structure was also divided by a further 'wall' at its eastern end.

In a press release issued at the end of August 1968, Valentine and Rebikoff announced to the world that the discovery constituted evidence of an Atlantean 'temple', a statement which created an international

furor in the news-media. Unfortunately their announcement was a little premature, for it was later reported that the structure was little more than a sponge pen built as late as the 1930s. There is, however, good reason to be cautious about this claim, especially as sponge pens are not generally rectangular and do not align east-west. Moreover, since the 'temple' feature lies in no more than a metre or so of water, it would make it difficult for local fishermen to approach it, even in the smallest of fishing vessels.

A few days after the location of the Andros 'temple' site came another discovery in the Bahaman waters. On 2 September 1968, Valentine, in the company of various diving colleagues, was taken out to see a curious causeway-like structure at a location some 800 metres out from Paradise Point on Bimini's North Island.

This enigmatic feature, over 638 metres in length and in just five metres of water, is composed of a double line of enormous regular-shaped blocks, many up to four metres square. They have smooth upper surfaces, like pillows or loaves of bread. Beyond this is a mosaic of much smaller rectangular stones up to two metres square, which curve gracefully to make a 90-degree turn in the direction of the nearby beach. Their placement gives the whole structure the likeness of a letter J. After this point, the causeway continues in a broken line for another 110 metres before it peters out and becomes lost beneath the shifting sands. The thickness of the blocks in the parallel row vary, although for the most part they have a depth of between 60 and 90 centimetres. Some blocks are placed on top of others, but the majority rest on the bedrock.

Although geologists have repeatedly argued that the Bimini Road is simply a formation of local beachrock, created by the actions of the sea over many thousands of years, local researchers have proposed a number of reasons why the feature appears to be artificial in construction. Moreover, evidence of other structures have come to light in the immediate vicinity of the Road, including a three-metre ring of large stones, found by Bahaman historian Donnie Fields, and various alleged fallen monoliths. In addition to this, various worked stones, which do not appear to be simply disgorged ship's ballast, have also been found in the same area.

Since 1968 a large number of possible archaeological features have been pinpointed in the shallow waters of the Bahamas, although very little scholarly work has been done to verify these claims. By the time of his death on 2 September 1994, Manson Valentine had accumulated a dossier containing details of no less than 60 alleged sites that warranted further investigation on the Great Bahama Bank. Moreover, divers and explorers have found evidence of human occupation in the waters of its sister submarine platform, the Little Bahama Bank, and also on Cay Sal Bank, which lies beyond the south-western corner of the Bahamas chain.

Yet again we have a perfect candidate for Plato's sunken kingdom, and there is little question that some of the features discovered in these waters are worthy of further investigation. However, Plato in the Critias describes Atlantis as possessing 'mountain ranges' which protected its great plain from cold northerly winds. Nowhere on the Bahamas are there mountains, and neither would there have been when the

waters were 70 metres lower some 11,000 years ago. Furthermore, mountains do not disappear during 'earthquakes and floods' of the type described by Plato in his Atlantis account. Geologists believe that the Great Bahama Bank sank very gradually following the steady rise in sea-level caused by ice meltwater after the last Ice Age, sometime between 8000 and 3000 BC. In their opinion, this carbonate platform, and others like it, could not possibly have been drowned suddenly. This would mean that even if there were sites of archaeological interest in the shallow waters of the Bahamas, they could be as late as 3000 BC, and conceivably even later as there were subsequent fluctuations in sea-level at various times afterwards through to around 600 BC.

Even if the former Bahaman landmass did play some role in the construction of the Atlantis legend, it was clearly not the island described so graphically by Plato in the Critias. For this we would have to look elsewhere.

Reading List

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