

# WHO DISCOVERED AMERICA FIRST



**New evidence is increasingly coming to light proving that Columbus was a relative late-comer to the New World. Others reached the shores of the Americas thousands of years before Columbus was born. Who were they? Here is the intriguing story.**

*by William F. Dankenbring*

**D**r. Alexander von Wuthenau, a white-haired patriarch with a redoubtable intellect, resides in Mexico City. After living in Latin America for 36 years, von Wuthenau has devoted his life to studying the mysteries of pre-Columbian art and is without peer in his field.

I interviewed the learned professor for many hours in his home recently, and we discussed some of the most controversial and astonishing archaeological findings in recent decades.

According to Dr. von Wuthenau, there is significant evidence of Mediterranean and African influences on the "new continent" at a very early time!

Several years ago Dr. von Wuthenau observed a "Star of David" design engraved on a six-foot stela in the national museum of Mexico. The same Mayan figure has a hat which is very similar to the papyrus craft Thor Heyerdahl piloted across the Atlantic, patterned after the reed boats of ancient Egypt. Intrigued, von Wuthenau investigated reproductions of rock drawings in the Jewish necropolis of Beit-Shearim. Here he was surprised to find a very similar drawing, with an interlaced six-pointed "Star of David" and an authentic ancient reed boat.

Even more remarkable, a phylactery — a cord wound on a Hebrew youth's weakest arm at the time of his Bar Mitzvah — has been found etched on the right arm of an eight-foot figure in Veracruz, Mexico, the Tapatlaxco Stela. This evidence strongly suggested that the "isolationist" school of thought which assumes that the cultures of the Americas evolved independently from the Old World is in need of total rethinking.

This, however, was just the beginning. With the advent of America's bicentennial year, the whole question of who discovered America has been thrown up in the air for a completely new evaluation.

#### **The Paraiba Stone**

In 1966, Jules Piccus, professor of Romance languages at the Univer-

sity of Massachusetts, bought an old scrapbook containing a transcription of mysterious stone markings found in 1872 by a slave in the tropical rain forest of Paraiba state, Brazil. Intrigued, Dr. Piccus brought the material to the attention of Professor Cyrus H. Gordon of the Department of Mediterranean Studies at Brandeis University, Massachusetts. Dr. Gordon, a scholar of the first rank and author of some thirteen books, is an expert in ancient Semitic languages.

I talked to Dr. Gordon in his home in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts about two years ago. He related how he compared the Paraiba inscription with the latest work on Phoenician writings: "I noticed that the peculiarities of this text found in Brazil and written in a language very closely related to Hebrew and Phoenician referred to events between 534 and 531 B.C.," Dr. Gordon related. "I realized this had to be genuine because it contained words, grammatical forms and expressions that were not known in the 19th century, but were only authenticated in the 20th century. This is important, because if one of these inscriptions turned up in 1973, there would be no way of knowing if it were genuine or fake. The reason is a forger can know everything I do, or anyone else. But a forger cannot know what's going to be discovered in the next century."

Gordon translated the script as follows: "We are Sidonian Canaanites from the city of the Mercantile King. We were cast up on this distant shore, a land of mountains. We sacrificed a youth to the celestial gods and goddesses in the nineteenth year of our mighty King Hiram and embarked from Eziongeber into the Red Sea. We voyaged with ten ships and were at sea to-

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**ABOVE:** Head of a girl (Egyptian style), discovered by Alexander von Wuthenau in Xochipala, Guerrero, Mexico, dating from the early pre-classic period (1500 to 1000 B.C.).  
**BELOW:** Negroid head discovered near Veracruz, Mexico, in the Classic period (300 to 900 A.D.).

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gether for two years around Africa. Then we were separated by the hand of Baal and were no longer with our companions. So we have come here, twelve men and three women, into New Shore. Am I, the Admiral, a man who would flee? Nay! May the celestial gods and goddesses favor us well!"

#### The Bat Creek Stone

In 1885 Smithsonian Institution archaeologists found an inscribed stone tablet in an undisturbed tomb near Bat Creek, Tennessee. The finders believed it was a Cherokee tablet, and in 1894 published it — upside down. Until 1970, the stone was ignored, lying unnoticed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Joseph Mahan happened to see a photograph of the stone and became interested. He copied the inscription and sent it to Cyrus Gordon. To Gordon, the message on the stone was immediately clear. He related, "It turned out to be straight Hebrew, of the Roman period, roughly 100 A.D." Five letters on the stone, says Gordon, clearly mean "for Judah."

The stone is about four and one half inches long and two inches wide, and composed of brownish ironstone with beautifully carved letters. The tomb from which it came was 28 feet across and held nine skeletons. Says Gordon, "Neither I, nor anyone else, can say that it was possibly a forgery."

In addition to the Bat Creek stone, more recently coins of the Bar Kokhba rebellion in Judea (A.D. 132-135) were found by farmers near Louisville, Hopkinsville, and Clay City, Kentucky.

#### The Metcalf Stone

In 1968 at the U.S. military reservation at Fort Benning, Georgia,

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**THREE EXAMPLES** of Caucasian-style clay sculptures found in Ecuador. ABOVE: Pacific coast of Ecuador, preclassisic. MIDDLE: Fragment of head (Narigon), late preclassisic. BELOW: Head of white man, Ecuador, late preclassisic. (All from the collection of A. von Wuthenau).

Manfred Metcalf was looking for slabs to build a barbecue pit. Several strange-looking flat stones caught his eye. Metcalf picked up a large flat piece of sandstone about nine inches long and while brushing it off noticed odd markings. He gave the stone to Joseph B. Mahan, Jr., Director of Education and Research at the nearby Columbus Museum of Arts and Crafts at Columbus, Georgia.

Dr. Mahan is an expert on American Indian ethnology and archaeology. He is a specialist on the Yuchis, a tribe that once inhabited the area and had been resettled in Oklahoma in 1836.

Interestingly, Mahan had noticed that one of the Yuchi agricultural festivals had too many resemblances to the Hebrew Feast of Booths or Tabernacles described in the biblical book of Leviticus to be merely "accidental" or sheer coincidence. For examples, the Yuchis celebrate (1) an eight-day festival (2) that starts on the fifteenth day or full moon of the holy harvest month (3) and live in "booths" throughout the festival (4) at the religious center for the tribe (5) and nurture a sacred fire.

To this very day, some Jews observe the first three of these same features, although they have given up the fourth and fifth points since their dispersal from Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when the Temple was destroyed by the armies of Titus.

Neither Mahan nor Gordon believe the Yuchis to be one of the so-called lost ten tribes of Israel. However, they both believe that the evidence shows that both the Yuchis and Hebrews share certain cultural features rooted in the ancient East and Mediterranean of the Bronze Age.

Mahan sent a copy of the stone discovered by Metcalf to Cyrus Gordon in May 1968. Gordon published an article on the stone in *Manuscripts*, a quarterly of the Manuscript Society, in the summer of 1969. Gordon reported: "After studying the inscription, it was apparent to me that the affinities of the

script were with the Aegean syllabary, whose two best known forms are Minoan Linear A and Mycenaean Linear B. The double-axe in the lower left corner is, of course, reminiscent of Minoan civilization...."

Concludes Gordon, "We therefore have American inscriptional contacts with the Aegean of the Bronze Age, near the south, west, and north shores of the Gulf of Mexico. This can hardly be accidental; ancient Aegean writing near three different sectors of the Gulf reflects Bronze Age transatlantic communication between the Mediterranean and the New World around the middle of the second millennium B.C." (*Manuscripts*, summer 1969).

In fact, Gordon offers the intriguing suggestion that "the Aegean analogues to Mayan writing, to the Aztec glyphs, and to the Metcalf Stone inspire the hope that the deciphered scripts of the Mediterranean may provide keys for unlocking the forgotten systems of writing in the New World. A generation capable of landing men on the moon may also be able to place pre-Columbian America within the framework of world history" (*ibid.*, p. 166).

#### Earliest Americans NOT Indians?

The conclusion that peoples from the Mediterranean reached the New World during the middle of the second millennium before Christ (or about 3,000 years before Columbus) is shocking enough — and not all scholars are prepared to accept it — but even more startling discoveries are upsetting a number of cherished theories about the early history of the New World. More and more, those who believe the inhabitants of the New World developed their cultures in virtual isolation, cut off from the developing societies of the Middle East, are having to face new evidence which is weakening their theory.

In excavations throughout Central and South America, Dr. von Wuthenau has found hundreds of thousands of sculptures often show-

ing human types, most of them of clay. Naturally, a person would assume that such clay objects would show distinctive "Indian" features — that is, the objects would look like the typical Aztec, Maya or other similar Indian type. In his book *The Art of Terra Cotta Pottery in Pre-Columbian Central and South America*, von Wuthenau published scores of photographs of these art objects. He relates his astonishment when he observed that of the early human figures in the early, lower levels of each excavation, not a single "Indian" head was to be found. Instead he encountered heads with Mongolian, Chinese and Japanese features, as well as those of Tartars, Negroes and "all kinds of white people, especially semitic types with and without beards."

Asserts von Wuthenau, "I personally have not been able to discover among these distinguished personages a single 'real Indian.'" A terra cotta head from Guerro, Mexico, was remarkably similar to the Egyptian god Bes, and similar images of this peculiar deity are found at almost all Phoenician excavation sites around the Mediterranean. In the Guerro district terra cotta heads of *Urweisse* or "ancient Whites" have also been discovered. Around Acapulco von Wuthenau found evidence that Mediterranean peoples dwelt together in considerable numbers. Female figurines from the area are markedly Caucasian, with delicate eyebrows, small mouths, opulent coiffures, etc.

In the region of Mexico City, von Wuthenau found art objects with narrow faces and long curved noses and beards (the Indians had no beards). The female objects had delicate profiles, fine straight noses, sometimes with a slight upturn common in the White race. The first true Indian types appear in significant numbers about A.D. 300, declares Cyrus Gordon, who has studied von Wuthenau's discoveries.

#### Evidence From the Old World

As remarkable as the unfolding story of the early Western Hemisphere may be, there is a corre-

sponding line of hard evidence in the Eastern Hemisphere. The evidence has been read time and time again by scholars and students of classical literature, but it has never been fully comprehended.

Scholars for many years have been aware of cultural parallels between Central America and the Middle East. The Mixtec Indians squeezed royal purple dye out of the snail *Purpura patula* of the Pacific Ocean; the Phoenicians performed the same feat with the snails *Murex truncatus* and *Murex brandaris* found in the Mediterranean. Reed rafts were used by the ancient Egyptians; "Indians" used similar ones from the Pacific coast of California to Chile.

Like the peoples of the Middle East, the early peoples of the Americas worshipped the sun, built giant stone statues, wrote in hieroglyphs, performed cranial surgery, and mummified the dead. Were all these traits developed independently and in isolation?

"There are a number of cultural elements so strikingly alike in the two hemispheres that the possibility of their transoceanic spread to America must be seriously considered" (Steward and Faron, *Native Peoples of South America*, p. 41).

But aside from the cultural similarities, what are we to do with statements in ancient literature?

In the fourth century B.C., a Greek writer named Theopompus mentioned an enormous "continent" outside the Old World, inhabited by peoples with strange lifestyles.

Diodorus of Sicily, who lived in the first century B.C., wrote: "For there lies out in the deep off Libya [Africa] an island of considerable size, and situated as it is in the ocean it is distant from Libya a voyage of a number of days to the west. Its land is fruitful, much of it being mountainous and not a little being a level plain of surpassing beauty. Through it flow navigable rivers..." (5. 19 1-5). There is no island with these attributes unless Diodorus was referring to the West Indies or the Western Hemisphere!

In Book 20, Diodorus explained, "In ancient times this island remained undiscovered because of its distance from the entire inhabited world." He then describes Phoenician voyages beyond the Pillars of Hercules (the straits of Gibraltar) and how they "were driven by strong winds a great distance out into the ocean. And after being storm-tossed for many days they were carried ashore on the island we mentioned above..." (20. 1-4).

This historical note is remarkable in view of the fact that Phoenician inscriptions have been found in Brazil.

Similar noteworthy statements were made by Plato, who lived about 400 B.C. In *Timaeus*, Plato wrote of an earlier time: "In those days the Atlantic was navigable; and there was an island situated in front of the straits which you call the columns of Hercules; the island was larger than Libya and Asia put together, and was the way to other islands, and from the islands you might pass to the whole of the OPPOSITE CONTINENT which surrounded the true ocean..."

Further evidence of early voyages is found in the book of Chronicles in the Hebrew Old Testament. Hiram, king of Tyre, and Solomon, king of Israel, sent a joint navy on lengthy voyages that required three years to complete. These trips began at Ezion-geber on the shore of the Red Sea. It is interesting that these voyages required three years. (The hardly more advanced sixteenth-century sailing vessels also took three years to circumnavigate the world.)

In light of the excavations in the New World and the incredible cultural similarities which existed, these enigmatic classical statements take on much more meaning to modern scholars.

Quetzalcoatl, god of the Mayas, for instance, is depicted in Mayapan myths as being unusually blonde. The Spanish *conquistadores* commented on Montezuma's unusually light skin.

It is significant that the pre-Inca tradition for the creation of the

world and of the primitive happy state of men, their corruption by sin, the destruction of the earth, and its regeneration is "a distinct analogy to the Mosaic chronicle of the earliest epoch of the history of the human race" (Riverox and von Tschudi, *Peruvian Antiquities*, p. 149).

#### Ancient Maps

Perhaps the most remarkable evidence of all is found in the ancient maps of the world. Recent studies of the *Piri Re'is* map of A.D. 1513 strongly indicate that the original mapmaker must have found the correct relative longitude across Africa and the Atlantic to Brazil, for this map gives an amazingly accurate profile of the coast of South America to the Amazon and provides an accurate profile of the Yucatan Peninsula. Incredibly, this map shows a section of the coast of Antarctica, although that continent was supposedly not discovered until 1818.

The Reinel Chart of 1510, a Portuguese map of the Indian Ocean, seems to show the coast of Australia, as well as some of the Caroline Islands of the Pacific. The evidence indicates that ancient seafarers must have journeyed over these parts of the world and constructed reliable maps, of which fragments and copies survived into the Middle Ages and were copied again, although their significance had been long lost to most scholars.

The growing mountain of evidence — ranging from the Paraíba stone, the Bat Creek stone, the Metcalf stone, ancient Indian rituals, and pre-Columbian terra cotta pottery, to the cultural parallels, the literature of the classical world, and ancient maps — points convincingly to the conclusion that ancient mariners of the Middle East and the Orient navigated the oceans many times, establishing contact with the New World millennia before Christopher Columbus did so in 1492. Indeed, who in the face of the amazing new evidence coming to light can deny that in actual fact Columbus was a relative late-comer to the New World? □