



TDT'S COLLEGE OF USELESS KNOWLEDGE

WEQ-401

Geologist Douglas Houghton may have brought the world to Northern Michigan's Copper Country to mine its rich copper deposits that he discovered in the 1840's, but he may have been thousands of years late to the party on bringing Michigan's copper to the world. Some historians theorize that Michigan might have provided the fuel that ignited Europe's Bronze Age, setting the table for the Iron Age & later the Industrial Revolution which changed the planet.

Though it's undisputed that Europe had a Bronze Age, most archaeologists accept that vastly more copper was used than what they can attribute to European mine sources. So where did an extremely large part of the Bronze Age copper come from? The answer, as bizarre as it may sound, could be America, specifically the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It's known that during the European Bronze Age, vast quantities of copper were mined in North America. However, no one is able to answer as to what became of the copper that was mined there. If we were to add the two problems together, do we have a solution to both? Of course, the answer for the mainstream scientific community is "NFW", as it argues that there were no transoceanic contacts until well after the Bronze Age, hence copper could not have been traded from the new to the old worlds. But perhaps there is sufficient evidence available that will alter the assumptions of the nay saying scientists.



For some 1,800 years, beginning abruptly around 3,000 BC, some unknown & industrious people mined raw ore equivalent to 500,000 tons of pure copper from Michigan's Isle Royale & Keweenaw Peninsula. One a 54 mile long by 9 mile wide island wilderness in northwestern Lake Superior & the other extending about 100 miles out into the big lake they call Gitchee Gumee along Michigan's Upper Peninsula's northern

shore. That 500,000 tons of copper removed from the ground translates into many times that amount of dirt & stone that had to be excavated to yield that enormous amount of copper ore. It's estimated that it would have taken 1,000 years of 10,000 men, working with the primitive hand tools known to be available at that time, to mine the amount of copper that's unaccounted for. And this, as we learned in WEQ-101 (you're committing facts like these to memory aren't you) at this point in Michigan history there were no developed cultures living in the region capable of that kind of a monumental endeavor. Only a few nomadic bands of Indians randomly roamed thru the entire Northern Michigan area until the settling of the Odawa's near Harbor Springs in the 1740's.

Who were these mysterious miners, & what happened to those thousands of tons of copper ore? And where was the ore smelted, since there is no archeological evidence of any smelting operations at or near the two Michigan mine sites? About all the unidentified miners left behind are some of the crude stone hand tools they used to pound chunks of ore from

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Hammerstones

their pit mines. Now, we're not talking a handful of mines here, there are over 5,000 of these ancient pit mines identified to date on Isle Royale alone, not including hundreds & possibly thousands more on the upper peninsula. Outside of some cairns & slab rock ruins, there is little to help pin



down these miners. Mainstream archeologists attribute all these immense labors to a North American "Copper Culture", certainly not to copper hungry visitors from foreign shores. Admittedly, many copper artifacts have been dug up from North American mounds, but only a tiny fraction of the vast amounts of the metal that the Michigan mines have yielded. The combined total of all bronze implements discovered to date wouldn't even have required a single ton of copper, much less half a million.

Curiously, North American Indian mounds have contained copper sheets called reels that were made in the shape of an animal hide, their function, if any, is unknown. The reels do however resemble oddly shaped copper ingots common in European Bronze Age commerce. Their peculiar shape earned these European ingots the name oxhydes. They have been found in Bronze Age shipwrecks & are even portrayed in wall paintings in Egyptian tombs. The standardized hide-like shape, with its four convenient handles, was useful in handling, carrying & stacking the heavy ingots. Could the reels from the North American mounds have been copied from the European oxhydes? It's tempting to speculate that the Copper Culture miners were actually Europeans, or perhaps Native Americans employed or enslaved by those Europeans, possibly the precursor of future, more devastating invasions.



This whole preposterous sounding hypothesis has come about since the discovery of a cryptic tablet (no record of whether it was an iPad or Surface) discovered north of the town of Newberry in the eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The tablet was discovered in 1896 by a couple of woodsmen while clearing land for farming. The unsuspecting duo uprooted a tree to find three statues & a clay tablet underneath.

The Smithsonian & University of Michigan were both contacted concerning the find, especially the 19 x 26 inch tablet, which had 140 squares, each displaying a unique unknown character. Both groups received photographs but

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they had never seen those kinds of characters before, & neither were able to translate the mysterious tablet, so the tablet was eventually forgotten for the time being.

Fast-forward to 1905, when archeologists discovered remnants of a previously unknown empire in modern day Turkey. One of the secrets of the Hittite Empire, as it would be called, was an ancient script known as Cypriot Minoan Syllabary. Just take a guess where those Hittite symbols also turned up. You are correct sir, on that clay tablet from the UP, eh?

However, the tablet connection was not made immediately. In 1947 an unknown researcher who'd heard about the stone took up the trail to see if he could decipher the code. Unfortunately, the tablet had been stored in a shed on the property where it was found 50 years prior, & had never been properly preserved so it had crumbled over time & was lost. With the tablet no longer intact, he contacted the Smithsonian to see if he could get his hands on the photographs sent there 50 years earlier. The museum, for whatever reason, did not cooperate, as they claimed alternately that they'd lost the photos & that the stone never even existed. Seemingly at a standstill, the trail went cold yet again.

The photographs would not let this mystery remain unsolved as they resurfaced again in 1988 in the U of M Archives. Dr. Berry Fell, the President of the Epigraphic Society took up the task of deciphering the tablet & was able to compare it to the Phaistos Disk that was found on the island of Crete. The message had to be read both vertically & horizontally, but it was discovered to be instructions for obtaining favorable omens from the Hittite gods.

So one mystery was solved, but a bigger question remained. What was a tablet from the island of Crete doing in Yooper country, thousands of years before any developed civilizations lived there? It may have to do with having to meet the huge demands for copper that accompanied the Bronze Age in Europe since bronze can only be made by combining copper & tin.

The Minoan people, who just happened to inhabit Crete from 3,000 BC to 1,200 BC, had a monopoly, historians believe, on the eastern Mediterranean copper trade as remnants of their civilization have been found throughout this region wherever copper was traded. Although there were copper reserves on Crete, the volume of copper that has been found throughout Europe from this time period far exceeds what could have been produced from Europe's meager copper reserves & had to have major contributions from other sources.

If the Newberry Tablet is actually an artifact of Minoan society, this would support the theory that the Atlantic Ocean was not a boundary for ancient people, but rather a intercontinental commerce highway. Believing that almost 5,000 years ago people sailed across the Atlantic Ocean may need some more evidence to sound convincing though.

The ancient mines of the Lake Superior region have been carbon dated to be much older than expected. Ten dates show mine production to have occurred between 2,470 BC & 1,050 BC. No developed, or even nomadic, cultures were present in the region at that time to use the copper. not to mention the vast amount of copper that is missing from the archeological

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record. There have been Native American copper artifacts found that were traceable back to these specific Michigan mines, but not in any quantity approaching the volume mined.

It is clear that with a vast workforce, possibly as many as 10,000 people, some must have died. It is also likely that at least some laborers came with families. In short, there must have been a number of dead people, but where are the burials? The answer; nowhere. Where the dead were taken is another good question, as there is no evidence of cremation or burial near any of the sites or in the Upper Peninsula in general. The only thing that was left behind, were their tools – millions of tools. And this suggests that the workforce, though not necessarily from Europe, was most likely not local either.

That it could very well be Europe, was given a boost when in 1922, William A. Ferguson discovered a harbor on the north coast of Isle Royale. Ships could load & unload, aided by a pier that measured 500 meters in length. This suggests that the type of ships that anchored here, were large ships & that there were many. The most likely explanation as to the purpose of this harbor was that they formed the point where the copper was loaded to be transported to other regions. The presence of the harbor further shows that the people working the mines were not local, as the local Indians only used small canoes.

It's likely the mines were only worked during the spring, summer & fall, with the workforce moving south during the brutally cold UP winters, or returning home across the ocean. This could explain the lack of archeological evidence of buildings. People living there in the winter would need substantial structures in order to survive, but that's not necessarily so during the summer months where temporary, portable & quickly biodegradable housing would leave behind little evidence after just a few short decades. As there are no such buildings, it suggests no one lived there permanently. Equally important is the fact that there are no signs of copper smelting facilities required to extract the pure metal from the raw ore. This means that the ore was processed elsewhere before being combined with tin to form bronze.

Could we find out where they went in the winter months? Though Europe is a possibility, it's also unlikely. Their most likely habitat was probably Aztalan & Rock Lake, in present day Wisconsin, where some years ago, evidence of ancient buildings & a triangular temple were discovered just below the water surface. These sites are a mere fifty kilometers south of the snow line, which makes them ideal places to hunker down for the winter. Their winter



residence & summer work site were actually connected with each other via rivers making for easy commuting when the seasons changed. It is also around Rock Lake that many graves have been discovered. No less than



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70 funerary hills containing the remains of thousands of individuals have been discovered there. One of the better preserved graves contains the body of a man with a hammer, a similar hammer to those discovered at Isle Royale.

The Newberry Tablet & Minoan theory have received their fair share of criticism & hoax claims over the years. The whole idea of an ancient Cross-Atlantic trade, 1,500 years before old Chris sailed the ocean blue, may in fact just be a whole set of coincidences or have simpler explanations. But if the theory is actually true, wow! Talk about your global village, thousands of years before most inhabitants of planet earth even conceded that it was globally shaped.