

ANCIENT CARVING FROM PILTDOWN.¹

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THE Dolmen goddess, who is represented in somewhat varying forms on the statue-menhirs of France, is of doubtful origin. M. Salomon Reinach suggests the western world: M. Déchelette, in his *Manuel d'Archéologie*, favours the eastern, and says that as the cult becomes more sporadic the farther it spreads from the regions of the Mediterranean, so should its origin be sought in a region neighbouring the Aegean littoral, or at least further south than France; he refers to finds of Sir Arthur Evans in Crete, and Dr. Schliemann at Hissarlik. M. Louis Siret would persuade us that the earliest and less distinct figures on the stones represent but primitive symbols of the deified elements.

Whatever may have been the origin of this cult, it seems fairly clear that when the neolithic people introduced it into southern Gaul, the sculptures had become anthropomorphic; in many of the illustrations the mammæ are represented, and some bear the triangle, with the point generally downwards, which was a genital symbol at a much earlier date in Egypt, as evidenced by some little Egyptian statuettes of ivory found at Saoniyeh, and said to be of the second dynasty.

The spread of the cult was through the departments of Hérault, Gard, Aveyron, and Tarn, thence on to the valleys of the Marne, Seine, and Oise. With one exception in the Plateau de Ger (Gascony), where a dolmen was discovered of the Hallstatt period, the cult appears to have been of comparatively short duration in southern Gaul, as not a trace of it is to be

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found there of late Bronze Age, Hallstatt, or La Tène periods. It is found in Liguria in Italy and in south Brittany.

This goddess was guardian of the dead. The carving is always at the entrance to the covered grave, and in a



great number of dolmens a hearth below the figure denotes some ceremonial. Déchelette says the idol was the personification of maternity and the prototype of the mother-goddesses so popular in all the ancient world; and although the primitive pantheon comprised more than one such divinity, it was without doubt to the feminine idol that preference was given for the protection of the sepulchre.

The carvings or incisions on the early stones are almost restricted to two curved eyebrows joining, and two eyes; this *motif* formed the decoration on many pieces of continental pottery, and on one relic only in England (a chalk drum, fig. 86 in the *Bronze Age Guide*, British Museum). Later carvings in quite low relief showed eyebrows, eyes, nose, mouth, hands, and sometimes feet with five digits each, occasionally a cord round the waist, always following the same prototype. The cult lasted into the Christian era, a date which is not inconsistent with the style of the Sussex carving. The most remarkable of all the statue-menhirs is that of St. Martin's, Guernsey. M. Déchelette expressed surprise that although these objects are to be traced from Asia Minor to the British Isles, yet this divinity is wanting in England, a region abounding in other megaliths. Had this great scholar, whose memory we all revere, been spared till to-day he would have learned that England had a goddess, here illustrated.

This carved stone was found in a peat bog, about 11 ft. below the surface, near Piltdown, Sussex; it is a fine-grained sand stone apparently from a local quarry. It belongs to Mrs. Anderson, late of Horsted Keynes, who kindly drew my attention to it. It is 18 ins. in height and about 22 ins. in width: the carved face occupies nearly the whole height of the stone. The mouth is rather more than 4 ins. long, and the eye about $1\frac{1}{2}$ ins. in diameter, these measurements being almost identical with those of the figure on the second capstone of the dolmen of Déhus, Guernsey; the face perhaps resembles that of the statue-menhir at St. Martin's, Guernsey, more than any other, and of this it is almost a counterpart.

M. Reinach considers the carving Celtic or Romano-British; but Col. T. W. M. de Guérin prefers the period of La Tène and says that the cult of the divinity represented by these sculptured figures lasted for long ages; he refers to the one at St. Mary du Castel, Guernsey, which was found buried below the pavement

of the chancel of the church. In his opinion it must have been still an object of worship on the introduction of Christianity into Guernsey in the sixth century, when it was evidently thrown down and buried beneath the sanctuary of the new faith, erected undoubtedly on the site of the old heathen place of worship. These ideas are corroborated by M. Ulysse Dumas, who describes crosses at Uzès, Gard, carved on these statue-menhirs, and suggests they were added by Christians; crosses are also found on stones at Collorgues, Castelnau Valence, and Foissac. There is room for conjecture that these people believed in immortality, as the inner stones of these dolmens sometimes have holes bored through them, presumably for the escape of the soul.

The Sussex carving seemed worth putting on record even if its period and history are obscure. I am indebted to Mr. Reginald Smith and Mr. T. D. Kendrick of the British Museum for assistance and references.