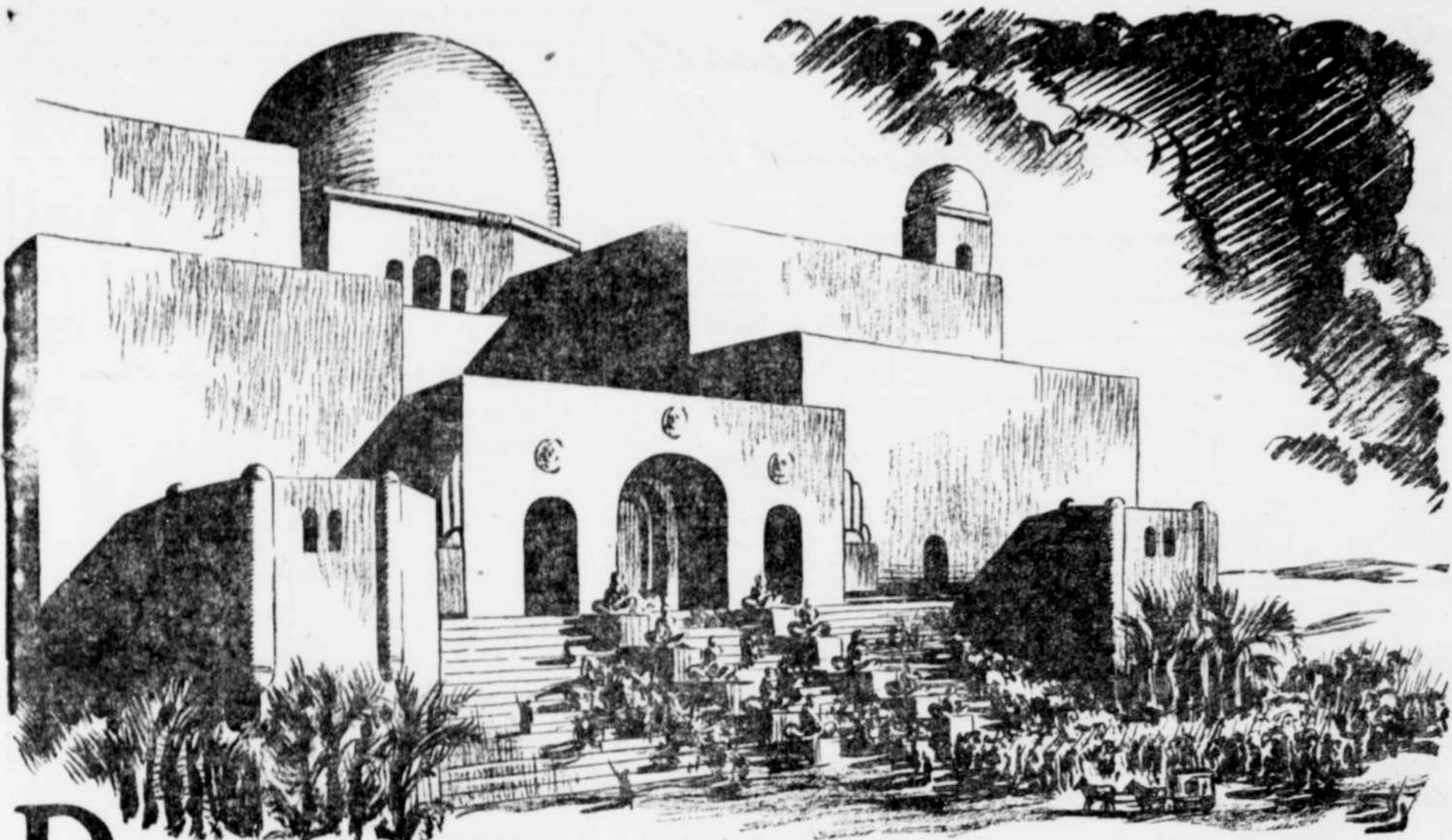




"Ophir sent not only gold to Solomon, but peacocks and sandalwood as well..."

DID NEGROES supply SOLOMON'S GOLD?

By HEBE JANNATH

HERE WAS OPHIR—the renowned source of King Solomon's gold supply? That is the question that still puzzles the archaeologist and Bible student. Where was this land of fabulous wealth, three years away by travel (I Kings, x, 22), from which came the purest gold of all the world? Gold that was used to fill the coffers of the mightiest king of Israel and to adorn the interior of the great temple must of course be of the purest and finest. Theodore Bent and Rider Haggard (who wrote a novel about it) were sure that the location of Ophir was southeast Africa. Now, Professor Leo Frobenius, noted student of African culture, is to visit southern Rhodesia, Southeast Africa, to definitely find the answer to this puzzling question.

Three times already Zimbabwe, the ancient ruined city of Mashonaland, has stirred the imagination of the western world. And with explorations again on the way it brooks well to rival in interest and importance the ruins of Carthage, of Ingkor-Vat and of Paphos.

MYSTERIOUS CITY

What does history say of Zimbabwe? Only a few paltry pebbles of knowledge have escaped to us from the ever-flowing obliterating sands of the ages. Zimbabwe is as mysterious today as it was four hundred years ago when Europe first became aware of its existence.

Our facts are these: In 1498, six years after the discovery of America by the Spaniards under Columbus, the Portuguese discovered S. E. Africa. At this time Portugal and Spain were the great seafaring nations of the West. They were as important in their day as England and America are today. Fired by the stories of Prester John, who had visited Ethiopia, (the modern Abyssinia), King Henry of Portugal sent his sailors south through the Red Sea. Although this route had

been well known to the Ancient world, to both the Arabians and Phoenicians during their powerful epochs, it was a region of fabulous darkness, the literal end of the world, to Europe of the Middle Ages. Only a few daring souls like Columbus and King Henry could imagine that the world was round and not flat, and that sailors setting out upon unknown seas would not fall over the "Edge of the Earth" into "Misty Abysses," but would eventually, by circling the globe, return to home port. Humanity, it seems, does not continually progress upward in a straight line but rather advances in the form of a spiral, base ignorance often succeeding periods of great enlightenment. Aristotle and the scholars and navigators of the Greek Empire three hundred years before Christ knew that the world was round, long before this is probable that the Arabians knew it, but Europe martyred its scholars for saying so fifteen hundred years later. Zimbabwe likewise proves that man often "walks backwards" in his progress!

PORTUGUESE VISITED ZIMBABWE

In 1560 when Father Silveira pushed his way inland from Goa, the new Portuguese settlement on the South East African coast, Zimbabwe was a great and flourishing city, the capital of Monomotapa. Silveira describes this "Black Empire" glowingly in a letter to the pope of Rome. From his descriptions it is a land of vast wealth lying between the Zambezi river on the North and the Limpopo river on the south, and might even extend to the Cape of Good Hope. Anyway, we gather that this Empire of the Blacks was larger than European France is today, larger, perhaps, than our state of Texas and literally dotted with inexhaustible gold mines. A country indeed to whet the commercial greed of the Portuguese!

At first, it appears, the Great Black King of Monomotapa receives the

Christian emissary with pleasure and hospitality. His courtesy for the stranger extends even to allowing himself to be christened "Sebastian" by him and giving him a house to set up his Holy Cross in. The Pagan monarchs were always famed for their liberality in matters of the soul; one or two new gods never did any harm to their already ever-flowing Pantheon. It took but a little while, however, for the Monarch to discover that Silveira's visit was not entirely for the purpose of conversion. As usual the flag was trying to follow the cross. A Mohammedan at the court (for the Mohammedans had known Zimbabwe long before the Christians), perhaps jealous of his rival's religious success with the Monarch, aided Silveira's downfall by calling him a wizard. If we are to believe the miraculous tales solemnly recorded to the Vatican about Silveira speaking with wild beasts and being succored by them, he was a wizard and deserved to lose his head as a dangerous subject.

WHITES CAPTURED CITY

The next we hear of Zimbabwe the Portuguese are marching, (the regular soldiers reinforced by enemy tribes of Monomotapa), fifteen thousand strong against the Empire of the Blacks. At Mocapa the Portuguese, having superior firearms rout the Black Monarch and march to Zimbabwe, the capital. Here, Manura, uncle of the defeated monarch is crowned Christian King of Monomotapa. This, however, was only an empty gesture on the part of the Portuguese who had no real power in Africa at this time. This is proved by the fact that the Portuguese retired to their coast settlement shortly afterwards and left Monomotapa again in the hands of the natives. It is also proved by the fact that the ten missionaries who later set out to teach the Holy Scriptures to the people of the New Christian Monarch were never heard of again.

Monomotapa, as far as Europe is concerned, ceases to exist. Two and a half centuries later, in 1871, Zimbabwe again flashes across the horizon of Europe. Herr Mauch, a German explorer, brings it again into the limelight. But what a different Zimbabwe! No longer is it the great capital of a great empire. Now, it is a mute array of crumbling stone buildings! Time again has triumphed over man. Wild beasts silently prowl through the vast chambers that once rang with the laughter of men. Monkeys gambol over the altars of the dead Gods of Zimbabwe. And the towers along the great stone wall that is thirteen feet thick at the top and twenty at the base, and more than thirty feet high, are filled with nesting birds. Zimbabwe, like ancient

Tyre and Babylon, sleeps—and does not talk in its sleep.

TAKEN BY ZULUS?

What happened to Zimbabwe? The savants of Europe in 1891 conclude that Zimbabwe was taken by the neighboring Zulus and gradually fell into decay. It is more probable that terrible wars aided by an earthquake were its downfall. The ruins bespeak the hand of nature rather than that of man in the final destruction, for stones seemed to have been hurled from great heights.

But before savants asked what happened to Zimbabwe and tried to answer it, they asked who built Zimbabwe and tried to answer that.

Rider Haggard and Theodore Bent and others concluded that it must have been originally built by Phoenician traders more than a thousand years before Christ. That it must have been the original Ophir of King Solomon's days. The basis of their reasoning was that the city was very ancient and evidently built by people who were in a high stage of civilization. This city, built on a great hill surrounded on three sides by granite cliffs which gave it a natural protection, and on the only accessible side was provided with a wall of massive proportions and cunning workmanship—the wall was so constructed that one man at a time only could enter the gates of the city—must have been the creation of whites from the civilized world surrounding the Mediterranean. And they say, since the Phoenicians were the greatest travelers of antiquity, it must have been founded by them.

PHOENICIANS NEVER MENTIONED IT

But if this is so, why didn't the Phoenicians speak of it? Why didn't it become famous like Carthage and Tyre and Paphos, the other great cities founded by the Phoenicians? Why were they silent only about this one? This one which produced, according to these same authorities, almost unlimited gold. Surely so rich a city could not have supplied gold to the Mediterranean countries for a thousand years and never been mentioned or its location given.

They also base their reasoning upon the similarity of the religious images unearthed at Zimbabwe and those found on other Phoenician sites. Images that are phallic in design and bespeak a worship of the generative powers, and of the sun. But it is now known, with the modern excavations at Pompeii, and in Persia, Egypt and Mexico and Central America, that worship of the sun and the generative powers was not the exclusive product of one people. Monoliths, little different from those found at Zimbabwe, are scattered all over the world wherever man had trod.

Moreover, Zimbabwe is an inland city, far from the coast. Phoenicians have never been known to erect a city off the coast. The city is too solidly built and fortified to have been a mere gold station on the way to the coast. Its workmanship is such that it bespeaks a great knowledge of architecture and refinement of taste. It is built on a foundation of granite which it would have taken an army of workers through long years of labor to lay. And the buildings are made of small blocks of stone, slightly larger than a brick, so fitted together that mortar was not necessary. The walls of the temple and the monoliths are profusely carved with the images of birds. The Phoenicians would scarcely have gone to all of this trouble for a mere gold station which they never thought enough of to mention. And the vessels of gold, unearthed there are carved with the delicacy and ingenuity of the best modern goldsmiths.

NOT ANCIENT OPHIR

No, Zimbabwe is not the ancient Ophir. Ophir sent not only gold to Solomon, but peacocks and sandalwood as well, and there are no peacocks or sandalwood in Africa. Ophir was probably some port on the Malabar coast in India, the home of peafowl and sandalwood, which also produced gold.

The modern explorer with more knowledge of the past, and of the habits of man than was at the disposal of the savants of the 70's and 80's, and with better facilities for unearthing and comparing the ruins of a dead city, will probably not depend so much upon the scant references in the Bible for solving this mystery.

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