The Azores Islands: (Portuguese Colony).

The Azores islands are located roughly in the centre of the Atlantic ocean. They were formed by the tectonic activity along the centre of the Ocean floor. There are nine islands in total, which first appear on Genoese Portellano's c. 1350. For a long time, reports circulated about the presence of ancient structures and artefacts on the islands. Although these have been consistently refuted, a new report has confirmed the rumors to have been of substance. The pertinent question now is no longer *if*, but *who* exactly were these prehistoric visitors to the islands.

Article (Aug 2012): Portuguese American Journal. *'Prehistoric Rock Art found in Azores*'.

'*The president of the Portuguese Association of Archaeological Research (APIA), Nuno Ribeiro, revealed Monday having found rock art on the island of Terceira, supporting his belief that human occupation of the Azores predates the arrival of the Portuguese by many thousands of years*'.(Link to Article)

'When were the Azores first Populated'

The recent report by the President of the APIA has opened the floodgates to the perception of prehistoric activity on the islands. With archaeological discoveries having been made on most of the nine islands, there is now no doubt that they were occupied in the past. Similarities to Greek and Carthaginian remains are of particular interest as coins from the same period had been previously discovered on the island of Corvo.(2)

The Cyrenaic and Carthaginian Coins of Corvo

'The 'Corvo Coins' refers to a hoard of coins dating to approximately 200 BCE that were reportedly left in the Azores by Carthaginians and discovered in 1749 on the island of Corvo. The only source of information about the find is a report published in 1778 in the Publications of the Royal Society of Sciences and Letters in Gothenburg, by Johan Frans Podolyn, a Portuguese-born Swede. According to Podolyn, in 1761 he met in Madrid the historian and numismatist Enrique Flï¿½rez who gave him 9 coins from Carthage (2 gold and 5 bronze) and 2 from Cyrene (bronze), which Flores said were from a hoard discovered in 1749 in a black pot or vase after being washed out of the foundations of a building by a storm.'(3)

The Statue of a Horseman

In the year 1567, Damien de Goes, biographer of the sixteenth-century Portuguese kings, reported that a stone statue of a bareheaded man clothed in a Moorish cape and seated on a horse had been found at Corvo. His left arm rested on the horse's mane, while his right arm stretched straight out with the index finger pointing to the west. King Emmanuel of Portugal (1495-1521) sent for the statue, but those in charge of the project carelessly broke it. Nonetheless, the heads of the man and horse, and the right arm with the pointed finger are said to have been brought to the king's palace for display. De Goes added that in 1529 it was noted

that the base on which the statue had stood was inscribed. Wax impressions of the inscriptions were made but could not be read as the letters were very worn and "almost without form."

In 1628, Manoel de Faria y Sousa, another Portuguese historian, repeated de Goes's tale. It might well have died there, but in 1778 Johan Podolyn added to this account a description of the statue of Corvo, citing Faria y Sousa as his source, and discussed the possibility that Carthaginian sailors discovered Corvo, settled there, erected the statue, and left the coins. He then ventured the opinion that these colonists undertook an expedition "to the west," the statue indicating with its pointed finger where they had gone.

Ibn Khordadbey (mid-ninth century) said that at the outermost end of the world, off the Spanish coast, there was a warning monument: a bronze horseman who, with his outstretched arm, indicates that beyond here there is no clear way, and anyone who ventures farther will be swallowed up. The myth of a warning statue found its way from Arab geographers to medieval European cartographers, and in 1367 made its clearest appearance on a map created by the Italian Pizigano brothers. At the edge of their map, just about where the Azores actually are, is a figure with an outstretched arm, and, next to it, a medallion with an inscription on it. The inscription is in part unintelligible, but the message is clear: there is a statue here and navigation beyond it is impossible.(7)

The local stories of ancient discoveries such as the mysterious equestrian statue, the Carthaginian coins, or the strange inscriptions found along the coast of Quatro Ribeiras (on Terceira) have all remained unsubstantiated until now.

Columbus and the Azores

It was famously recorded that Columbus and his wife moved to the island of Santo Maria. Here he learned that strange items had been washed upon the shore of local beaches including carved pieces of wood unlike any in Europe. There were huge hollowed out carved pine-tree trunks, which he would later discover were made by Indians and called “canoes.” Most significant, two bodies of dead men washed up on shore. Their features differed from those of the known races, the known world of Columbus’s day extending on the north to Iceland and Scandinavia, south to a cape 100 miles south of the Equator, to the east as far as China and Japan, and to the west as far as the Azores.(4) According to Bartolomo de las Casas, the two dead bodies that looked like those of Indians were found on the Portuguese Flores Island in the Azores. He said he found that fact in Columbus' notes, and it was one reason why Columbus presumed that India was on the other side of the ocean.(5) *The event was recounted by Alexander Von Humboldt in 1803, below.*

"Whilst the art of navigation was yet in its infancy, the Gulf-stream suggested to the mind of Christopher Columbus certain indications of the existence of western regions. Two corpses, the features of which indicated a race of unknown men, were cast ashore on the Azores, towards the end of the 15th century. Nearly at the same period, the brother-in-law of Columbus, Peter Correa, governor of Porto Santo, found on the strand of that island pieces of bamboo of extraordinary size, brought thither by the western currents. The dead bodies and the bamboos attracted the attention of the Genoese navigator, who conjectured that both came from a continent situated towards the west. We now know that in the torrid zone the trade-winds and the current of the tropics are in opposition to every motion of the waves in the direction of the earth's rotation."

Cart-ruts on the Azores

The presence of cart-ruts on the Azores is one of the most unexpected facts to present itself in the search for the first settlers on the Azores. These enigmatic features are found in large numbers around the Mediterranean basin, in Italy, Portugal, France, and most famously on Malta. The Portuguese cart-ruts are pre-Christian, as are those on Malta. As we have no record of their being made since the 'official' discovery of the Azores, we must assume that these were made by a people prior to the Portuguese. There are three physical explanations for the existence of cart-ruts. They are…

1). They were carved into the rock to facilitate the passing of some form of vehicles.
2). They were worn naturally by the passing of numerous vehicles over a long period of time.
3). They were made by the passing of a single vehicle over a soft substrate which has since solidified.

All of these possibilities pose problems in the case of the Azores: The first alternative requires a large supply of manpower, lots of time and a considerable motivation. The second requires considerably more time and an immense amount of traffic (in order to carve such deep tracks into rock). The third option is entirely refuted by geologists. As we have no record of such practices by the Carthaginians or Greeks, we probably need to look elsewhere to find the origin of these most peculiar geological features. The Maltese cart-ruts have now shown to have an association with the temple building period c. 3,000 BC. Not only are the stones used to build the temples the same dimensions as the 'gauge' of the tracks, but they are found close to the temples themselves. Again, none of these facts appear to be relevant on the Azores so for now, at least, the very existence of what is essentially a 'prehistoric' feature is one of the islands most fascinating mysteries.

Hypogea

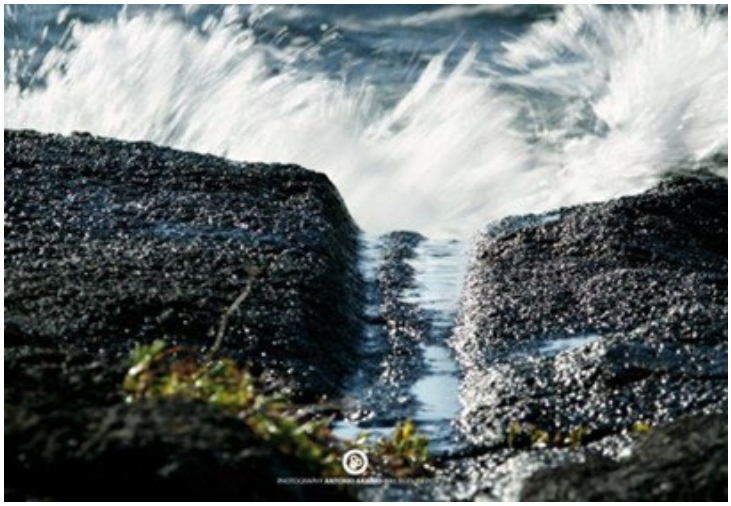
The presence of '*Dozens of Hypogea*'(1) on Terceira and Corvo, along with indications of '*Additional Hypogea sites on the island of Flores*' is a strong indication that the islands were home to a considerable population of people, more than one would expect from a single, random encounter with the island. The wide distribution and presence on more than one island combined with their frequency supports the idea that the islands were peopled by a deliberate act of extensive population. The Hypogea are said to be pre-Christian, and according to the APIA president: '*These kinds of monuments have parallels in the Mediterranean world, and the Greek and Carthaginian cultures.'*(1)

'Archaeologists from the Portuguese Association of Archaeological Research (APIA) believe to have found in the Azores a significant number of Carthaginian temples from the fourth century BC, dedicated to the goddess Tanit' … 'More than five hypogea type monuments and at least three 'sanctuaries' were found' … 'The temples carved inside the hypogea structures are large and very well preserved and were drawn almost in a triangular shape' … 'There are chairs carved into the rock, a ceremonial tank,, sinks linked to conduits to collect fresh water associated with ritual libations, probably for sacrificial purposes'. (2)

The implications of a deliberate emigration of people to the centre of the Atlantic ocean in prehistoric times is probably the very reason why the idea has been rejected for so long. Such acts of population are not simple leaps of faith, they have to be planned and executed witha great presence of mind.

References

1). http://portuguese-american-journal.com/archeology-prehistoric-rock-art-found-in-caves-on-terceira-island-azores/
2). http://portuguese-american-journal.com/carthaginian-temples-found-azores/
3). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthaginian_coins_of_Corvo
4). http://www.josephsmithacademy.org/wiki/christopher-columbus/
5). Pagden, Anthony. *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indias*. 1999. New York: Penguin Books.
6). http://frontiers-of-anthropology.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/archeology-prehistoric-rock-art-found.html
7). http://nautarch.tamu.edu/shiplab/acores-geral01-fenicios.htm

And Terceira Island as a Megalithic Station By Antioneta Costa. 2012.

Azores Images