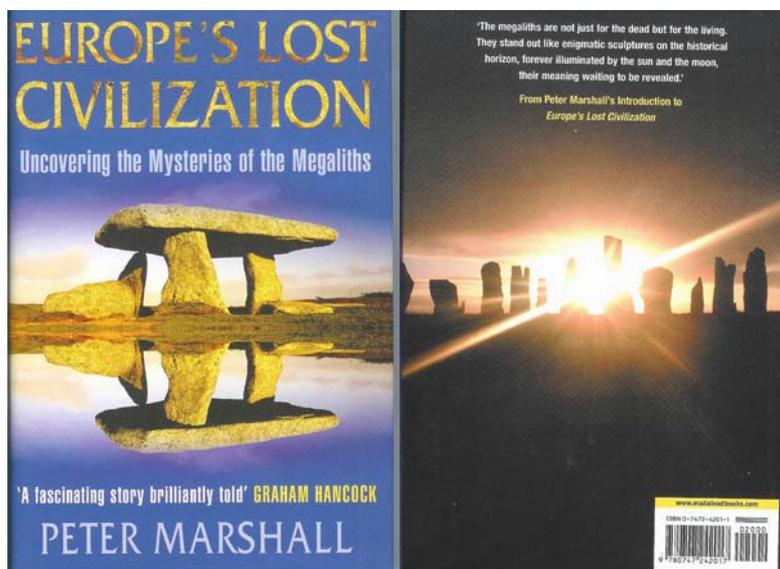


Marshall, P. 2004. Europe's lost civilization. Uncovering the mysteries of the megaliths. – London, Headline Book Publishing

Book review by J. Warmerdam.



In 'Europe's lost civilisation. Uncovering the mysteries of the megaliths' Peter Marshall takes us on a journey to a long forgotten time thousands of years ago: the era of the megalith builders. It appeared that stone monuments of Egypt and Mesopotamia or for example tombs of Mycenae and Minoan Crete were less old than megaliths build in Western Europe. Therefore Marshall dares to say that not 'Ex Oriente Lux' but this megalith building culture colonised Europe, coming from the west.

To prove that it was possible for old cultures to be connected by sea, Marshall attempted a journey by sailing-boat, starting in the extreme north of Scotland, following the shores of Great Britain and France, around the Iberian Peninsula and finally arriving in Malta. On this exploration he examined any megalithic structure he could find in order to get a large perspective on these ancient cultures.

Peter Marshall commences his journey on one of the Orkney Islands. He discusses the Neolithic settlement Skara Brae, its town planning, customs and rituals of the prehistoric inhabitants in a way that is very captivating and, as one will find out later, continues to be very fascinating. Marshall has written the story in a very enthusiastic way. By telling the story in such a vivid way, he succeeds in making history come to life. However, a great shortage is the lack of illustrations which support the technical and sometimes complex descriptions of the megaliths. This is a real miss, for it is very hard to visualise the matter, for example the alignment from a structure to the equinox sunset, without seeing the actual structure.

On his voyage Peter Marshall stops at the famous sites of Stonehenge and Avebury. The strongest point about that part of the story is that Marshall is able to show how big the influence of megaliths still is on today's society. For a lot of readers though, this will be a lot of twaddle about energies, ley lines and other spiritual matters. This is a remark that applies not only to this particular part of the book. Aside from the fact that the author approaches the subject in a very down to earth way, he also pays a lot of attention on religious matters and this is certainly more vague. In these parts Marshall uses a lot of philosophical statements instead of scientific ones.

As the journey continues, the image completes. Based on other people's research and on his own experiences he draws his own conclusions, of which some seem to make more sense than others. It is good that someone comes up with fresh ideas and I believe that those conflicting ideas are necessary for healthy debate. People who are already familiar with the matter will not easily take his new thoughts for granted. But not all readers will follow his footsteps and believe in this spiritual and peace-loving society to which he seems to be longing to. Nevertheless, these new ideas may provoke new insight in the subject.

Does Peter Marshall succeed in making his point? I think he does. Based on a number of resources, specialists, his own findings and imagination, he comes up with a story that seems logical and believable. Of great importance is the fact that he believes it himself. Although his ideas might be described as wild, he knows how to carefully support them. Above all, the story is well-written and although sometimes a bit too spiritual or controversial I think he wrote a qualitative good book. By telling his story, Peter Marshall makes a piece of

history accessible for a broad public and also knows to bring the importance of our world heritage to our notice. Well done.

Marshall, P. 2004. Europe's lost civilization. Uncovering the mysteries of the megaliths. – London, Headline Book Publishing, London. 338 pp. ISBN 0 7472 4201 1. Price GB £ 20 (hardback).