

The Guadeloupe Skeletons — Some Further Comments

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Cooper (this volume) has dealt in some detail with a number of points in both Wise and Tyler's papers. I will therefore not repeat what he has said, but would like to make a few further observations.

WISE'S EXPLANATION

I have already pointed out that none of Cooper's critics has provided a sequence of events that would explain how the skeletons came to be in their present situation. However, Wise has now given a brief explanation and we will examine this to see if it contains any errors of fact or simple logic.

(1) "*The Arawak Indians probably found the sand unsuitable for agriculture but perfect for burial.*"

From this he presumes that the ground must have been **above** the high tide level for it to have been unsuitable for planting. He also claims that the bodies were buried comparatively recently in geological terms. If this is so, then between their burial and the discovery of the skeletons 150 years ago, the site must have been lowered **very** rapidly, for they were found **below** the high water level of the sea.

No such rapid falling of the land levels of that magnitude has been recorded by anyone in this area. Indeed, at the top of the beach are **raised** reefs, clearly indicating that the current land surface has been uplifted rather than lowered. It should be noted that even the lowest of Clerc's excavations were **above** the sea level.

Therefore, the question is — how did these skeletons get from above the high water level to below it?

(2) "*The sea later encroached on the cemetery, perhaps breaking down the protecting raised reefs in a storm or series of storms*".

Wise appears to suggest that the land in which

the skeletons were buried was actually below the high water level of the sea, as they were in a lagoon behind raised reefs which were later broken down. He has not given a clear description, but if this is his suggestion, it is untenable. Any lagoon will fill with sea or land water until it is level with the sea. Furthermore, does he seriously suggest that a raised coral reef is actually **watertight**, which when breached only then allows the sea water into the lagoon?

I would suggest that his theory is contrary to a number of facts and simply does not bear close examination.

DECEPTIVE REPORTING

Wise suggests that I intimate that he and Tyler are attempting to deceive the readers. In no way am I suggesting this. I am merely pointing out that whilst it is perfectly acceptable to produce evidence that supports alternative views, it is also incumbent upon anyone who does so to also answer the questions that are raised against such views. Both Wise and Tyler have failed to answer several important objections that have been raised. To ignore them and simply produce further evidence that at times confuses the picture even more is to fail to seal the breaches that exist in their case. This is a subject that I will return to at the end of the article.

Wise also says that I accuse others of being deceitful. Let me explain how the public can be misled, sometimes unintentionally.

I, like Wise, also believe that descriptions given by experts in any field are accurate and truthful. What I do question however, is the information that is occasionally **omitted**. This may be excused as being unimportant (as Wise excuses Spencer's treatment of the Anthropolite beds), but frequently it can be crucial in establishing the correctness or otherwise of an alternative (creationist?) interpretation of the facts. It is therefore legitimate to ask why vital information is omitted, or misleading

information concerning another site is inserted into reports. When this is done so frequently, one cannot but wonder why this should be so.

Let us examine the cases he refers to:

(a) Lyell

Wise himself admits that he adopted devious tactics. I have exposed his tactics and those of others in both the "ape-men missing link" field¹ and amongst those involved in the history of the rise of evolution.²

(b) The British Museum

Presumably Wise is referring to the incorrect statement by Cooper that the skeletons had been hidden from the public. As Cooper has pointed out, this information was provided by a responsible member of the Museum staff, and he reported it in good faith.

If the skeleton **was** on display, I would be interested to know during what period, in which part of the Musuem, and what the comment was on the display case.

I am not of course charging the Museum with any malpractice, but one can understand their reluctance to provide the creationist cause with any ammunition. I have elsewhere highlighted the secretive way in which, in earlier years, the Musuem staff kept the fraudulent Piltdown fossils virtually inaccessible even to experts of the day^{1 33 45}

(c) Spencer

For about a century, this skeleton site had been of great interest and controversy, yet when this eminent geologist visits it, he only devotes a few lines to it. Wise is correct when he says that Spencer's comment that the layers that "were not studied" by him were the alluvium and clay layers. But this hardly exonerates him. If he **did** examine the "Anthropolite" layers, as Wise contends, why did he not describe them fully? Spencer neatly skirts around the problem by referring to Duchassaing's comments, **and he adds no opinions of his own!**

Wise cannot have it both ways. Either Spencer **did** examine the skeleton strata and failed to describe them, or he omitted to examine them at all. In any event, his treatment of the area is unacceptable for an expert geologist. In any other occupation where personal responsibilities are shouldered, such conduct would leave him open to a charge of professional negligence.

(d) Saint-Michel

As I mentioned in my earlier paper, when I first read Saint-Michel's report of the beds that were said to contain the skeletons, I suspected that he was dealing with two quite different locations. His descriptions of the "chaotic flagstones" contrasted with the seemingly normal material in which the graves were found. He gave no reference to Clerc's paper, and therefore it was with some difficulty that Cooper eventually obtained a copy,³ kindly forwarding a copy of the English translation⁴ to me. Cooper has referred to the quite different description that Clerc gives to this site and it is this aspect that I will examine in detail.

Clerc notes that the site he excavated at Morel was "...along a river, is swept by the wind, **is protected from high seas by a madreporic reef**, and is close to tranquil bay", and that the lowest excavation was 15 cms **above** the sea level. From this, it is perfectly obvious that this is **not** the site at which the two skeletons were discovered, for all agree that they were **on** the beach and just below high water level.

There **is** an area named Morel about 1 km east of the centre of Moule, just behind the beach and which is fairly close to a river. It is clearly around here that Clerc excavated, but once again, like so many other workers in this area, he failed to locate the site or give a section.

The question must then be asked, **why did Saint-Michel write about a nearby burial site that did not apply to the skeleton site?**

It is totally unacceptable to say that he simply failed to notice Clerc's description of the location, for he was a professional geologist and had summarised much of the paper quite competently. One is therefore driven to the reluctant conclusion that his omission could only have been deliberate. If this is the case, then the implications are serious. Presumably he wished to obscure the fact that controversial skeletons had been found in a limestone that he would normally have dated as Miocene. He therefore seems to have ignored any reference to these and completely clouds the issue by describing the excavations of a comparatively recent burial ground that had been carried out nearby. Reading his report one is clearly led to assume that these burial sites **were** on the beach for they immediately follow the description of the "flagstones", and they appear under a section headed "Beach Sands". He must have known of the existence of the skeletons, and in the section in which they should have been referred to, he misleadingly quotes Clerc's irrelevant paper instead.

In view of what seems to be the most likely conclusion, I would suggest that not only does this

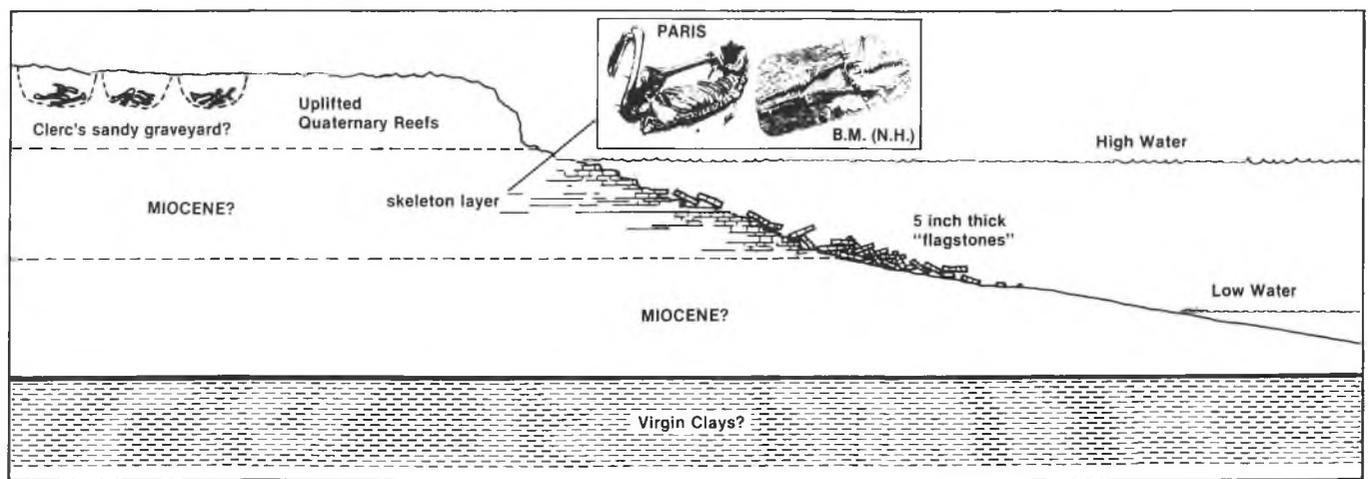


Fig. 1. Possible section of beach

completely eliminate all references to Clerc's excavations as being of any relevance whatsoever to the skeleton site, but even further, it throws serious doubts on Saint-Michel's reliability where accuracy of reporting "discordant" facts are concerned.

There are even further ramifications. Tyler also quotes Clerc's excavations, but he has obviously read only the summary in Saint-Michel's report and has been misled into accepting it as an accurate description of the skeleton site. Such is not the case with Wise, for he quotes two papers by Clerc, and gives a full description, yet he also omits the vital information that shows that Clerc's site is **not** the skeleton site. Why did he fail to do so? Such an omission requires some explanations.

Wise claims that I "...accuse a number of others of outright deceit. . .". Whether the omission of vital information could be classed as a deception would be difficult to assess, and I leave my readers to make their own judgement.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Cooper and I have tried to answer all the criticisms that have been made in the various papers. We in turn have challenged the critics to answer a number of questions that are raised if they insist on a recent burial. Except for Wise's quite inadequate scenario above, and his lengthy and admirably comprehensive explanation of the present knowledge of the formation of beach rock, virtually all the other questions we have raised have been ignored. Instead, numerous additional papers have been referred to that have sometimes only succeeded in confusing the picture even further. May I therefore ask that in any further replies the following questions should receive an adequate answer before any more side-issues are raised?

1. How do they explain the fact that the skeletons were found **below** the high water line, as no culture buries their dead in such a location?
2. How do they explain the strange crushing of the bones which are nevertheless virtually articulate?
3. The "flagstones" described by Saint-Michel at the skeleton location are very much more like the Lower-Middle Quaternary "consolidated and stratified limestone sand" found well inland **and on the beaches of Guadeloupe**, as he described elsewhere in his report. Is it not more likely that these are the same rocks that entombed the skeletons?
4. As not a single expert who has visited the site has ventured (dared?) to give a cross-section, we provided one in order to clarify the situation.⁵ In the light of Clerc's paper, a revised section is now shown in Figure 1. I challenge any of the critics to produce their own version of the site section that will not conflict in one or more ways with the confusion of statements made in the very papers that they quote as authoritative. They will find the task daunting.

One final thought. The skeleton that began all this correspondence lies in the vaults of the British Museum of Natural History. When Cooper's first paper appeared, a rejoinder was made by Dr Stringer, the Head of the Anthropology Department. Since then nothing further has appeared in answer to the criticism of his paper, and no word has been received from the Geological Department who would surely be able to make some authoritative statement on the type of rock around the skeleton. In view of the additional evidence discussed above, it is unfortunate that they have remained silent as their views would have been of interest.

REFERENCES

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3. Clerc, E., 1970. Archeological research in Guadeloupe. **L'Archeologie Precolombienne aux Antilles Francaise, Paralleles, 36/37:89-97.**
4. English translation of (3) by Jeanne Lodeon, **ibid:** 68-88.
5. Bowden, M., 1984. The Guadeloupe skeleton — some comments. **EN Tech. J., 1:44-51**