

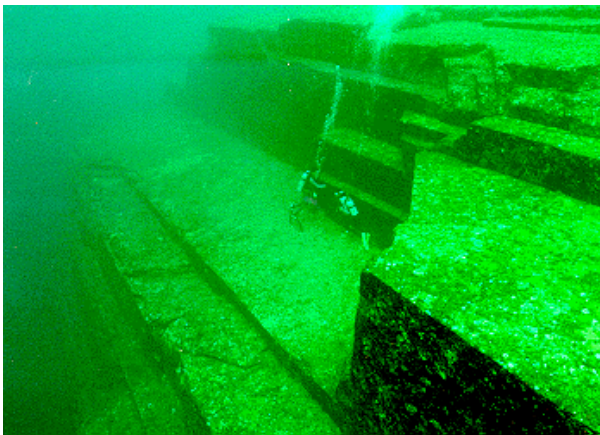
What Sunk the Japanese Pyramids?

Japan's Mysterious Submerged Stone Structures: New evidence suggests they may have been used by Man

by Laura Lee. Taken from: <http://www.lauralee.com/japan.htm>

YONAGUNI: The ancient underwater pyramid structure off the coast of Yonaguni-jima, Japan

Man-made, made by Nature, or did humankind finish what Nature started? These enigmatic, sunken stone structures off Okinawa, Japan, located 60 to 100 feet beneath the ocean surface, have the Japanese wondering if their homeland was once part of the lost continent of Mu.



Stone terraces, right angled block and walls, and stone circles encompassing hexagonal columns look intriguingly, if not conclusively, man made. A few more clues: an encircling road, what might be post holes supported long-gone wooden structures, what look like cut steps, and castles with similar architecture located nearby and still on land.

The two sites that are getting the most attention: near the city of Naha is Okinawa is what looks like a wall, with a coral encrusted right angled block. Another, just off the southern end of the tiny island of Yonaguni, the southernmost island of Japan, is an extensive site, with five irregular layers that look like ceremonial, terraced platforms. There are eight anomalous, underwater sites found to date.

Prof. Masaaki Kimura, a marine geologist with the University of the Ryukyus in Okinawa has spent several years studying all eight sites, especially Yonaguni, which was found 13 years ago, in 1985.

Kimura believes these are monuments made by man, left by an unknown civilization, perhaps from the Asian mainland, home of our oldest civilizations. He reasons that if the five layers on the Yonaguni site had been carved by nature, you would find debris from the erosion to have collected around the site, but no rock fragments have yet been found. **He adds that there is what look like a road encircling the site as further indication it was used by man.** He believes building this monument necessitated a high degree of technology, and some sort of machinery.

How to date these sites? A few possible scenarios have been suggested. The sites may have been submerged when sea levels rose at the end of the last Ice Age as the continental ice sheets melted. Or, as Japan sits on the Ring of Fire, tectonic activity might have caused subsidence of the land. Or perhaps a combination of subsidence and inundation from rising sea levels, or some catastrophic event, dropped it, intact and upright, into the ocean. Teruaki Ishii, a professor of geology at Tokyo University, believes the site is partly man-made, partly natural, and suggests a date of 8,000 B.C., contemporary to the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley. Others have suggested a date of 12,000 years.

The preliminary reports from the first Americans to dive the sites:

Just back (May 1998) from diving two of the eight known sites are Mike Arbuthnot, an amateur underwater archeologist adventurer, and Boris Said, Executive Producer of the NBC documentary, "Mystery of the Sphinx." Both are experienced divers. Arbuthnot explored a three-mast schooner wrecked off Grand Cayman Island, and Said has been diving for 40 years.

It was treacherous terrain even for experienced divers. "The Yonaguni site is fairly near the shore, so there was heavy surge (the up and down motion of waves) as well as swift currents, and sharks," says Arbuthnot. "One the up side, the area has the third clearest water in the world, with visibility to 200 feet. And the corals were gorgeous."

"The two sites are very different, though both are at a comparable depth, 60 to 100 feet beneath the ocean's surface. The Yonaguni site might be ceremonial platforms, and the Okinawa site seems similar to a castle wall, a conjecture that is supported by nearby castles on the island with a similar architectural style," says Arbuthnot.



Arbuthnot says that when he came up after the first dive, at Yonaguni, he found little to suggest that it was man made. It was only after diving the Okinawa site, and interviewing Prof. Kimura for two days, that he began to entertain the notion. The conversations with Prof. Kimura were all the more productive and in-depth, with the translating skills of Corina Tettinger, who speaks fluent Japanese. "The case for the sites being artificial, or modified by man, requires supporting evidence," he says, and "we found very precise rectilinear stone features that seem to be indicative of either artificial tooling, or modifying the natural geology." **A particularly intriguing find: holes in the rock platforms. Could these be post holes to**

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support a wooden structure? The terraces are massive, by human standards. But we can imagine naturally terraced platforms easily utilized for ceremonial purposes with the addition of wooden structures built atop them. You'd simply need to insert the supporting beams into the rock, by drilling a few holes.

"What we were able to observe was fascinating and warrants additional research," he says. "There is some false information on the sites out there. We want to bring clarity to the situation, and intend to mount a full-scale scientific expedition to do further investigation."
We'll report new developments on this project as they happen.

Geologist Robert Schoch and Egyptologist John Anthony West (both featured in the NBC documentary "The Mystery of the Sphinx") dove many months ago at Yonaguni, also without arriving at any conclusions, only more questions. Schoch focused on determining what geological forces might have been at work here. While he notes that the strong currents might have cut the terraces out of the layered sediments, he has not ruled out human modification. Schoch says he very much wants to go back to dive again before arriving at any conclusions. "I have not seen the other sites," he says, "and, not having previous diving experience, I spent much of my time underwater just staying alive."

We thank Shun Daichi for his help in preparing our report. We thank Shun and Kenichi Shindo, for use of their photos.

My friend Shun Daichi sent these photos along with a video of the extensive coverage given these mystery structures by Japanese TV. The first group of six photos was taken by Mr. Kenichi Shindo. Shun writes, "There are six places they found structures in the Okinawa area. One is located in Taiwan. All of them are under the sea. All the geologists agree that the underwater structures are at least 12,000 years old."

Among the first Americans to dive the multi-terraced site of the tiny island of Yonaguni were John Anthony West and Geologist Robert Schoch (who in "Mystery of the Sphinx" persuasively argue that The Sphinx must have been carved from a solid outcropping of sandstone at least 8-10,000 years ago, because that's how long ago it was that the Sahara Desert last received torrential rainfall, and that is the only explanation for the deep vertical weathering on the flanks and enclosure of the Sphinx). In their preliminary examination of just one site, they found a possible geological explanation: it is the natural erosion of the layered sedimentary rock. The strong ocean currents shear it away, "like large chunks of layer cake," leaving what looks like perfectly parallel and finely cut channels and terraces.

At a similar site, the rock below the surface shows similar layering, while the same rock above the surface does not, suggesting it is the wave and water action cutting the rock. Schoch notes that the corrals covering the rock makes it look smoother than it is close up. On the other hand, there are smaller, above surface tombs that are definitely manmade, and look as though their design is derived from the mystery structures, which were above sea level, on the shore, 8 to 10,000 years ago, before inundation by the rising sea levels (some 300 feet) at the end of the last Ice Age, as the glaciers melted. And Schoch says he cannot rule out that these sites were not used or modified by man, and he is eager for further examination.

Shun Daichi, in an Oct 18, 1997 fax, writes: "In Japan Prof. Kimura of Ryukyu University is quite certain that the monument is manmade. Prof. Ishii of Tokyo University, a geologist, feels the under water structure could be manmade. Media in Japan generally show two views but is inclined to the manmade view."

John West tells me that while this may or may not be evidence of a Lost Civilization he feels certain existed, the Pacific Rim and the Mediterranean, just along the continental shelf, are the places to be looking.