History of architecture global cultures

Design, Architecture

HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE GLOBAL CULTURES Located in southern England on Salisbury Plain, the Stonehenge is a renowned megalithicstone monument. The famous monument comprises of 150 huge stones arranged intentionally in a circular pattern. The main part of the Stonehenge is estimated to have been built during 2000 BC. The monument’s outer circle has 17 colossal upright stones made of hard sandstone referred to as sarsen. Some of the paired upright stones have a lintel at the top. The Stonehenge circle has a diameter of approximately 30 meters and a height of 5 meters. Built within this large circle are five additional paired sarsen stones with lintels over their tops. These are known as trilithons, and are estimated to weight 50 to 60 tonnes, with the tallest being 7 meters high. Still within the inner circle are few smaller bluestones arranged in a horseshoe pattern. Finally, a huge block of sandstone of Welsh origin forms the monument’s center. The Stonehenge has, over the years, been the primary subject of mythical, legendary, archaeological and scientific controversy. This paper examines two conflicting theories that have been proposed over time, in an attempt to explain the famous monument’s purpose. The Stonehenge is famed not only for its architectural and design details, such as its orientation relative to the sun’s position, but also its archaeological significance. The monument has remained an enigma, puzzling and dividing experts in different fields for decades. One of the two prevalent theories, attempting to debunk the purpose of the Stonehenge, suggests that it served as a prehistoric astronomical observation tower. On the contrary, another principal group of British researchers, examining the Stonehenge site believes that, it served as an ancient spa or Lourdes. In regard to the

Stonehenge being an astronomical observatory, researchers supporting this theory have drawn the conclusion that this megalithic shrine was constructed to draw attention to the solstices1. This theory is supported by the observation that the stones are crafted and shaped differently throughout the circle. The stones are also aligned in a manner that accentuates the sun’s rays as it rises or sets. Scholars supporting this theory take note of the fact that, stones first observed when going towards the Stonehenge from the north-eastern side had their brown surfaces removed entirely. This left a grey-white exterior that would sparkle as the sun set during the year’s shortest day and at dawn on the longest day, as the sun rose. Proponents of this theory also indicate that other prehistoric structures close to the monument also adopt a similar solar alignment, offering additional support for the construal of the monuments as an astronomical observatory. However, this theory does not offer explanation for the discovered remains and artifacts in the area. Further, it does not seem credible to have such a monumental structure for observation of two events only per year. Referring to it as an astronomical lookout is also farfetched, since the evidence only supports sun observation and not any other celestial body2. Research by Professors Darvill and Wainwright who are two of the most well-informed people in terms of Stonehenge specialty, depicted that the Preseli Hills were used as ceremonial centre and busrai grounds in antediluvian times. They also believe that Stonehenge was originally built to be a principal healing centre, which is the ancient equivalent of Santiago de Compostela or Lourdes. Their re-assessment of Stonehenge's initial rationale showed that the Stonehenge was associated with water sources that were

traditionally instilled with healing elements. This is because in prehistoric, medieval, as well as, even later times, it was observed that continental springs in Europe were always identified to posses healing properties. Nevertheless, the only water connection that can be seen between the Stonehenge and the spring waters was that the monument is linked to River Avon. The professors inferences proposes that the reason why the Stonehenge builders had to go for the stones from several miles away was because there were nearer sources that could provide stones that had such elements. Their belief was attached to the fact that if the stones originated from such a place, then they would possess the same kind of for qualities as the waters from the spring3. Additionally, there is also an arguments possessed by the two suggesting that the Stonehenge's healing aspects were in line with the old long gone folklore. Arthurian legend, which was recorded by the chivalric writer known as Geoffrey of Monmouth, states that the Stonehenge was without a doubt a healing centre and that the stones had been imported by Merlin the wizard because they possessed healing properties. The professors further study into the prehistoric human skeletons that were found buried the region around Stonehenge suggests that those people were suffering from predominantly bad health issues4. Therefore, this leads to their conclusion that Stonehenge must have been used as a primordial healing centre and that it attracted huge numbers of sick Bronze and Neolithic age pilgrims from continental Europe and also Britain. All these divergence on conclusions and views seem to suggest that people are as far, from comprehending the Stonehenge purpose like never before. Conversely, people should not place so much emphasis on lack of knowledge about this

great monument. As an alternative it is imperative to identify the monument’s significance to the English Heritage despite the fact that its purpose is not explicit. Therefore, preservation of this monument for the future generations is irrefutable. Notes Dan, Falk. “ Did ancient astronomers build Stonehenge”. Astronomy 36, no. 7(2008): 52 – 57. Timothy, Darvill and Geoffrey, Wainwright. “ Stonehenge excavations 2008”. The Antiquaries Journal 89, (2009): 1-19. Bibliography Darvill, Timothy and Wainwright, Geoffrey. “ Stonehenge excavations 2008”. The Antiquaries Journal 89, (2009): 1-19. Falk, Dan. “ Did ancient astronomers build Stonehenge”. Astronomy 36, no. 7(2008): 52 – 57.