

## PETROGLYPH AND ROCK-CUT BASINS AT DAUPHIN, ST. LUCIA

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As the theme of this Congress is the petroglyphs and stone artifacts of the Lesser Antilles, I suggested to our programme chairman that the petroglyph (Fig. 1) at Dauphin, St. Lucia, should be a MUST. He agreed, but expressed doubts about the road to Dauphin which is very difficult. Hence, he had a slide made of the petroglyph and asked me to talk about it. That talk I am going to give you--but I've been warned to be brief. Which I hope to be! In reality, I shall largely reproduce some notes which I made nearly 20 years ago, that were published in American Antiquity in October, 1952 (vol. 18). The slide in question is reproduced from the same source.

The name "Dauphin", of course, is a relic of the old French days: it was given to a district and townlet on the northeastern coast of St. Lucia about 200 years ago by the French Governor of the island in honour of the heir to the French throne. However, long before French colonists settled at Dauphin, the Amerindians did some stonework there. In proof of which we have the petroglyph in question and some rock-cut basins nearby.

A small stream runs into the sea at Dauphin. It is to the south of this stream, roughly at the spot where it enters the bay, that the petroglyph and basins are found. They lie, more or less, in a line parallel to the stream. The petroglyph is farthest to the west. The rocks into which the petroglyph and basins have been cut seem to be an igneous formation--perhaps basalt. There is a great quantity of fairly rectangular blocks of the same stone nearby.

The petroglyph appears to be on one of these blocks, sunk maybe 4 feet in the earth, with its top about 3 feet above soil (Fig. 1). It is 20 or so inches wide and about 9 inches thick. The stone is slightly inclined to the east, and the side with the pictograph faces west. The markings, as one would expect, are worn and weathered: they were chalked for the taking of the picture. Opposite the petroglyph, still more to west, is a block of rock that may have been used as a seat.

To explain the significance of this petroglyph is beyond my competence. Rightly or wrongly, I have assumed that the petroglyphs of the Amerindians (Caribs, Arawaks, or Pre-Arawaks), were connected with their religious cults. The Dauphin petroglyph does show certain design similarities with those found at Petit Bordel on St. Vincent to the south and at Trois Riviere on Martinique to the north. These similarities are extremely important.

Some remarks on the circular basins found near the petroglyph at Dauphin may be welcome. The basins possibly form part of an "ensemble" -- cultural or otherwise. However, a few inches to the east of the petroglyph, in fact just behind it, on the upper surface of an irregular block of stone is a worked depression that takes in most of the upper surface of the stone. The depression is rather shallow. A few feet to the east again is another worked depression much on the same lines. In the path that runs alongside the stream, still more to the east, are two worked depressions: they are on the surface of one of the big rectangular blocks already referred to. Other worked depressions or basins occur in two full-sized blocks of stone still more to the east. One block lies aslant of the path and stream, the other lies practically parallel to them. In both these blocks

the basins are regularly spaced out, well-fashioned, showing no trace of having been used in the fabrication of implements. On one of the blocks some basins are round, some are oval; on the other, all are round and in a straight line (Fig. 2).

What purpose did these worked depressions or basins serve? Here, again, I leave the field to the experts. Perhaps I could suggest that the worn, shallow depressions might be compared with the Venezuelan basins which Professor Cruxent (and others I believe) have called "Workshops." But I venture to suggest that the well-cut, regular, patterned basins in the two big blocks most eastward seem to demand another explanation. Could they have served in some cult connected with the petroglyph? I pass the puzzle to you!

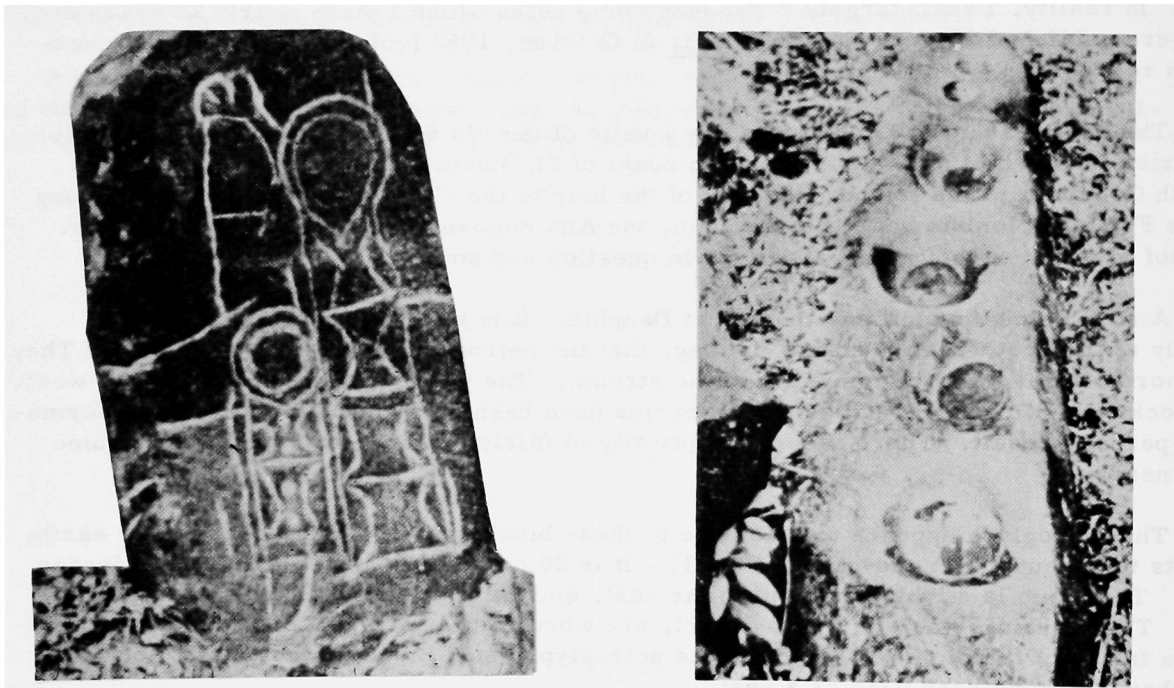


Fig. 1. Petroglyph and rock basins at Dauphin, St. Lucia.

#### Reference Cited

Jesse, C.

1952 Rock-cut basins on Saint Lucia. American Antiquity, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 166-69. Salt Lake City.