

ANCIENT SKIES

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FORGING THE PHARAOH'S NAME

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Forgery as a means to fame and fortune is not uncommon in commerce and the arts, in science and antiquities. When exposed, it may cause loss and shame. When sustained, it may change the records of history.

This, I believe, has happened to the Great Pyramid of Giza and its presumed builder, the Pharaoh named Khufu (whom Greek historians called Cheops). The result has a direct bearing on the issue of Ancient Astronauts.

With one exception, which we will expose as a probable forgery, the only claim that Khufu built the Great Pyramid is reported by Herodotus (and, based on his writings, by a Roman historian). Herodotus described Khufu as a ruler who enslaved his people for thirty years to build the causeway and the pyramid. Yet by every other account, Khufu reigned for only twenty-three years!

Whether Khufu had really built the Great Pyramid was a question that began to perplex serious Egyptologists more than a century and a quarter ago, when the only object mentioning Khufu and connecting him with the pyramid was discovered. Puzzlingly, it affirmed that Khufu did not build the pyramid - it already existed when he reigned! In evidence, we call upon Khufu himself.

The damning evidence is a limestone stela which was discovered by August Mariette in the 1850s in the ruins of the temple of Isis, near the Great Pyramid. Its inscription identifies it as a self-laudatory monument by Khufu, erected to commemorate the restoration by him of the temple of Isis and of images and emblems of the gods which Khufu found inside the crumbling temple. The opening verses unmistakably identify Khufu by his cartouche. The common opening, invoking Horus and proclaiming long life for the king, then packs explosive statements: He founded the House of Isis, Mistress of the Pyramid, beside the House of the Sphinx. Thus, according to the inscription on this stela (which is in the Cairo Museum), the Great Pyramid was already standing when Khufu arrived on the scene, as was the Sphinx, whose position is accurately pinpointed by the inscription.

Khufu continues to state in his inscription that he built a pyramid for the Princess Henutsen "beside the temple of the goddess." Archaeologists have found independent evidence that the southernmost of the

three small pyramids flanking the Great Pyramid, the small pyramid nearest the temple of Isis, was in fact dedicated to Henutsen, a wife of Khufu. Everything in the inscription thus matches the known facts; but the only pyramid-building claim made by Khufu is that he built the small pyramid for the princess.

This "Inventory Stela," as it came to be called, bears all the marks of authenticity. Yet scholars at the time of its discovery (and many ever since) have been unable to reconcile themselves to its unavoidable conclusions. Unwilling to upset the whole structure of Pyramidology, they proclaimed the Inventory Stela itself a forgery.

The Inventory Stela was condemned as a forgery because only a decade or so earlier the identification of Khufu as the builder of the Great Pyramid appeared to have been undisputably established. The seemingly conclusive evidence was markings in red paint, discovered in sealed chambers above the King's Chamber, which could be interpreted as masons' markings made in the eighteenth year of the reign of Khufu. Since the chambers were not entered until discovered in 1837, the markings must have been authentic; and if the Inventory Stela offered contradictory information, the Stela must have been a forgery.

But as we probe the circumstances of the red-paint markings, and ascertain who the discoverers were - an inquiry somehow never undertaken before - the conclusion that emerges is this: if a forgery had taken place, it occurred not in ancient times but in the year A.D. 1837; and the forgers were two (or three) unscrupulous Englishmen.

The story begins with the arrival in Egypt on December 29, 1835 of Colonel Richard Howard Vyse, a "black sheep" of an aristocratic English family. Vyse was caught by the fever of daily discoveries by scholars and laymen alike, and within days, he offered to provide the funds for Giovanni Cavaglia, who had been searching for a hidden chamber inside the Great Pyramid, if he were accepted as a co-discoverer. Cavaglia rejected the offer outright; and the offended Vyse sailed off to Beirut to visit Syria and Asia Minor.

But the long trip did not cure the craving that had aroused him. He returned to Egypt in October 1836. On his earlier visit, he had befriended a crafty go-between by the name of J.R. Hill, then a copper mill superintendent. Now he was introduced to a "Mr. Sloane," who whispered that there were ways to get a Firman - a concession decree - from the Egyptian government to sole excavation rights at Giza. Thus guided, Vyse went to the British Consul, Col. Campbell, for the necessary documentation. To his great shock, the Firman named Campbell and Sloane as co-permittees, and designated Cavaglia as the works' supervisor. On November 2, 1836, the disappointed Vyse paid over to Cavaglia "my first subscription of 200 dollars" and left in disgust on a sightseeing trip to Upper Egypt.

As chronicled by Vyse in his Operations Carried on at the Pyramids of Gizeh in 1837, he returned to Giza on January 24, 1837, "extremely anxious to see

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*This article is based upon a chapter in the author's new book The Stairway to Heaven published in hardcover by and available from St. Martin's Press, New York (toll-free 800-221-7945). Mr. Sitchin acquired a profound knowledge of modern and ancient Hebrew, other Semitic and European languages, the Old Testament, and the history and archaeology of the Near East, which enabled him to produce his best-selling first book, The Twelfth Planet. His address is 310 W. 86th St., New York, NY 10024 USA.

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what progress had been made." Caviglia was more than ever convinced that there were secret chambers above the "King's Chamber." One such compartment, reachable via a crawlway, was discovered by Nathaniel Davison in 1765. But instead of searching for the hidden chamber, Caviglia and Campbell were busy digging up mummies from tombs around the pyramids.

Determined to run his own show, Vyse moved from Cairo to the site of the pyramids. In the following weeks, the rift with Caviglia widened as Vyse hurled at him various accusations. On February 11, the two had a violent argument. On the twelfth, Caviglia made major discoveries in Campbell's Tomb; a sarcophagus inscribed with hieroglyphs and masons' red-paint markings on the stone walls of the tomb. On the thirteenth, Vyse summarily discharged Caviglia and ordered him away from the site. Was the row a genuine disagreement, or did Vyse artificially bring matters to a head to get Caviglia off the site?

As it turned out, Vyse secretly entered the Great Pyramid on the night of February 12, accompanied by one John Perring - an engineer with the Egyptian Public Works Department and a dabbler in Egyptology - whom Vyse met through the resourceful Mr. Hill. The two examined an intriguing crevice that had developed in a granite block above Davison's Chamber; when a reed was pushed in, it went through unobstructed; there was obviously some space beyond. In his journal, Vyse confided: "I am determined to carry on the excavations above the roof of (Davison's) Chamber, where I expect to find a sepulchral apartment." As Vyse threw more men and money behind this search, royalty and other dignitaries came to inspect the finds at Campbell's Tomb; there was little news that Vyse could show them inside the pyramid. In frustration, Vyse ordered his men to bore into the shoulder of the Sphinx, hoping to find its masons' markings. Unsuccessful, he refocused his attention on the Hidden Chamber.

By mid-March, Vyse faced a new problem: other projects were luring away his workmen. He doubled their pay, if only they would work day and night: time, he realized, was running out. In desperation, Vyse threw caution to the winds, and ordered the use of explosives to blast his way through the stones that blocked his progress.

By March 27, the workmen managed to cut a small hole through the granite slabs. On the following day, Vyse wrote, "I inserted a candle at the end of a rod through a small hole that had been made in the chamber above Davison's, and I had the mortification of finding that it was a chamber of construction like that below it." He had found the Hidden Chamber!

Using gunpowder to enlarge the hole, Vyse entered the newly discovered chamber on March 30 - accompanied by Mr. Hill. They examined it thoroughly. It was hermetically sealed, with no opening whatsoever. Its floor consisted of the rough side of the large granite slabs that formed the ceiling of Davison's Chamber below. "A black sediment was equally distributed all over the floor, showing each footstep." (The nature of this black powder, which was "accumulated to some depth," has never been ascertained.) "The ceiling was beautifully polished and had the finest joints." The chamber, it was clear, had never been entered before; yet it contained neither sarcophagus nor treasure. It was bare - completely empty.

Vyse ordered the hole enlarged, and sent a message to the British Consul announcing that he had named the new compartment "Wellington's Chamber." In the evening, "Mr. Perring and Mr. Mash having arrived, we went into Wellington's Chamber and took various measurements, and in doing so we found the quarry marks." What a sudden stroke of luck!

They were similar to the red-painted quarry marks found in tombs outside the pyramid. Somehow, Vyse and Hill missed them entirely when they thoroughly inspected the chamber by themselves. But joined by Mr. Perring and by Mr. Mash - a civil engineer who was present at Perring's invitation - there were four

witnesses to the unique discovery.

The fact that Wellington's Chamber was almost identical to Davison's led Vyse to suspect that there was yet another chamber above it. With liberal use of gunpowder, the compartment above Wellington's (Vyse named it after Lord Nelson) was broken into April 25. It was as empty as the others, its floor also covered with the mysterious black dust. Vyse reported that he found "several quarry marks inscribed in red upon the blocks, particularly on the west side." All along, Mr. Hill was going in and out of the newly found chambers, ostensibly to inscribe in them (how?) the names of Wellington and Nelson. On the twenty-seventh Mr. Hill, not Perring or Mash, copied the quarry marks.

On May 7, the way was blasted through into one more chamber above Nelson's, which Vyse named temporarily after Lady Arbuthnot. The journal entry makes no mention of any quarry marks, although they were later on found there in profusion. What was striking about the new markings was that they included cartouches - which could only mean royal names - in profusion. Has Vyse come upon the actual written name of the Pharaoh who built the pyramid?

On May 18, a Dr. Waini "applied for copies of the characters found in the Great Pyramid, in order to send them to Mr. Rosellini," an Egyptologist who had specialized in the decipherment of royal names. Vyse turned the request down outrightly.

The next day, in the company of Lord Arbuthnot, a Mr. Brethel and a Mr. Raven, Vyse entered Lady Arbuthnot's Chamber and the four "compared Mr. Hill's drawings with the quarry marks in the Great Pyramid; and we afterward signed an attestation to their accuracy." Soon thereafter, the final vaulted chamber was broken into, and more markings - including a royal cartouche - were found. Vyse then proceeded to Cairo and submitted the authenticated copies of the writings on the stones to the British Embassy, for official forwarding to the British Museum in London.

His work was done: he found hitherto unknown chambers, and he proved the identity of the builder of the Great Pyramid; for within the cartouches was written the royal name of Kh-u-f-u. To this discovery, every textbook has been attesting to this day.

* * *

When the facsimiles made by Mr. Hill reached the Museum, and when exactly their analysis reached Vyse, is not clear; but he made the Museum's opinion (by the hand of its hieroglyphics expert Samuel Birch) part of his chronicle of May 27, 1837. On the face of it, the long analysis confirmed Vyse's expectations: the names in the cartouches could be read as Khufu or variations thereof: just as Herodotus had written, Cheops was the builder of the Great Pyramid.

But in the excitement which understandably followed, little attention was paid to the many if's and but's in the Museum's opinion. It also contained the clue that tipped us off to the forgery: the forger's clumsy mistake.

To begin with, Mr. Birch was uneasy about the orthography and script of the many markings. "The symbols or hieroglyphs traced in red by the sculptor, or mason, upon the stones in the chambers of the Great Pyramid are apparently quarry marks," he observed in his opening paragraph; the qualification at once followed: "Although not very legible, owing to their having been written in semi-hieratic or linear-hieroglyphic characters, they possess points of considerable interest...."

What puzzled Mr. Birch was that markings presumably from the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty were made in a script that started to appear only centuries later. Originating as pictographs - "written pictures" - the writing of hieroglyphic symbols required great skill and long training; so, in time, in commercial transactions, a more quickly written and simpler, more linear script referred to as hieratic came into use. The hieroglyphic symbols discovered by Vyse thus belonged to another period. They were also very indistinct and Mr. Birch had great difficulty in reading them. Some of the symbols were very unusual, never

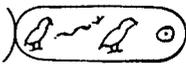
seen in any other inscription in Egypt: "The cartouche of Suphis" (Cheops), he wrote, "is followed by a hieroglyphic to which it would be difficult to find a parallel." Other symbols were equally difficult to solve.

Mr. Birch was also puzzled by "a curious sequence of symbols" in the upper-most, vaulted chamber (named by Vyse "Campbell's Chamber"). There, the hieroglyphic symbol for "good, gracious" was used as a numeral, a usage never discovered before or since. Those unusually written numerals were assumed to mean "eighteenth year" (of Khufu's reign).

No less puzzling to him were the symbols which followed the royal cartouche and which were "in the same linear hand as the cartouche." He assumed that they spelled out a royal title, such as "Mighty in Upper and Lower Egypt." The only similarity that he could find to this row of symbols was that of "a title that appears on the coffin of the queen of Amasis" of the Saitic period. He saw no need to stress that the Pharaoh Amasis had reigned in the sixth century B.C. - more than 2,000 years after Khufu!

Whoever daubed the red-paint markings reported by Vyse had thus employed a writing method (linear), scripts (semi-hieratic and hieratic) and titles from various periods - but none from the time of Khufu, and all from later periods. Their writer was also not too literate: many of his hieroglyphs were either unclear, incomplete, out of place, erroneously employed or completely unknown.

Turning to the main issue on which he was requested to give an opinion - the identity of the Pharaoh named in the inscriptions - Birch threw a bombshell: there were two, and not just one, royal names within the pyramid! One (a) spelled Kh-u-f-u; the other (b) spelled out Khnum-Khuf:



(a)



(b)

Was it possible that two kings had built the same pyramid? That one Pharaoh might have completed a pyramid begun by his predecessor has been a theory accepted by Egyptologists. Could not this account for two royal names within the same pyramid? Perhaps - but certainly not in our case.

The impossibility in the case of the Great Pyramid stems from the location of the various cartouches. The cartouche that is presumed to have belonged in the pyramid, that of Cheops/Khufu, was found only in the uppermost, vaulted chamber, the one named Campbell's Chamber. The several cartouches which spelled out the second name (nowadays read Khnum-khuf) appeared in Wellington's Chamber and in Lady Arbuthnot's Chamber (no cartouches were inscribed in Nelson's Chamber). In other words, the lower chambers bore the name of a Pharaoh who lived and reigned after Cheops. As there was no way to build the pyramid except from its base upward, the location of the cartouches meant that Cheops, who reigned before Chephren, completed a pyramid begun by a Pharaoh who succeeded him. That, of course, was not possible.

But a solution, I believe, can be offered - if we stop attributing the inscriptions to ancient masons, and begin to look at the facts.

The pyramids of Giza are unique, among other things, for the complete absence of any decoration or inscription within them - with the outstanding exception of the inscriptions found by Vyse. Why the exception? If the masons felt no qualms about daubing in red paint inscriptions upon the blocks of stones hidden away in the compartments above the "King's Chamber," why were there absolutely no such inscriptions found in the first compartment, the one discovered by Davison in 1765, but only in the compartments found by Vyse?

In addition to the inscriptions reported by Vyse, there have been found in the various compartments true masons' markings - positioning lines and arrows.

They are all drawn as one would expect, with the right side up; for when they were drawn, the compartment in which the masons worked was not yet roofed; they could stand up, move about and draw the markings without encumbrance. But all the inscriptions drawn over and around the masons' markings are either upside down or vertical, as though whoever drew them had to bend or crouch in the low compartments.

With the exception of a few markings on a corner of the eastern wall in Wellington's Chamber, no inscriptions were found on the eastern walls of any other chamber; nor were there any other symbols (other than the original masons' markings) found on any of these other eastern walls, except for a few meaningless lines and a partial outline of a bird on the vaulted eastern end of Campbell's Chamber.

This is odd, especially if one realizes that it was from the eastern side that Vyse had tunneled to and broken into these compartments. Did the ancient masons anticipate that Vyse would break in through the eastern walls, and obliged by not putting inscriptions on them? Or does the absence of such inscriptions suggest that whoever daubed them preferred to write on the intact walls to the north, south and west, rather than on the damaged east walls? In other words: cannot all the puzzles be solved if we assume that the inscriptions were not made in antiquity, when the pyramid was being built, but only after Vyse had blasted his way into the compartments?

We know from Vyse's chronicles that, by day, he had sent in Mr. Hill to inscribe the chambers with the names of the Duke of Wellington and Admiral Nelson, heroes of the victories over Napoleon. By night, we suspect, Mr. Hill also entered the chambers - to "christen" the pyramid with the cartouches of its presumed ancient builder.

The Pharaoh's artisans surely knew the correct name of their king. But in the 1830s Egyptology was still in its infancy; and no one could yet tell for sure which was the correct hieroglyphic design of the king whom Herodotus called "Cheops." And so it was, as I suspect, that Mr Hill - probably alone, certainly at night when all others were gone - had entered the newly discovered chambers. Using the imperative red paint, by torchlight, crouching and bending in the low compartments, he strained to copy hieroglyphic symbols from some source; and he drew on the walls that were intact what seemed to him appropriate markings. He ended up inscribing, in Wellington's Chamber as in Lady Arbuthnot's, the wrong name!

Unschooling in hieroglyphic writing, Hill must have taken with him into the pyramid some source book from which to copy the intricate symbols. The one and only book repeatedly mentioned in Vyse's chronicles is (Sir) John Gardner Wilkinson's *Materia Hieroglyphica*, a standard book for English Egyptologists.

Birch had stated in his British Museum report, "a cartouche, similar to that which first occurs in Wellington's Chamber, had been published by Mr. Wilkinson *Mater. Hieroglyph.*" We thus have a clear indication of the probable source of the cartouche inscribed by Hill in the very first chamber found by Vyse.

We can sympathize with Vyse and Hill for Wilkinson's text and presentation are disorganized and the plates reproducing cartouches are small, ill-copied and badly printed. Wilkinson appears to have been uncertain not only regarding the reading of royal names but also regarding the correct manner by which hieroglyphs carved or sculpted on stone should be transcribed in linear writing. The problem was most acute concerning the disk sign, which on such monuments appeared as either a solid disk or as a void sphere, and in linear writing as a circle with a dot in its center. In his works, he transcribed the royal cartouches in question in some instances as a solid disk and in others as a circle with a dot in its center.

Hill had followed Wilkinson's guidance, but all the cartouches up to May 7 were of the "ram" variety. Then on May 27, when Campbell's Chamber was broken into, the vital and conclusive cartouche spell-

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ing Kh-u-f-u appeared. How did the miracle happen?

A clue is hidden in a suspicious segment in Vyse's chronicles, in an entry devoted to the fact that the casing stones "did not show the slightest trace of inscription or of sculpture, nor, indeed, was any to be found upon any stone belonging to the pyramid, or near it (with the exception of the quarry-marks already described)." Vyse noted that there was one other exception: "part of a cartouche of Suphis, engraved on a brown stone, six inches long by four broad. This fragment was dug out of the mound at the northern side on June 2."

How did Vyse know - even before the communication from the British Museum - that this was "part of a cartouche of Suphis?" Vyse would like us to believe it was because a week earlier (on May 27) he had found the complete cartouche in Campbell's Chamber.

But here is the suspicious aspect. Vyse claims in the above-quoted entry that the stone with the partial Khufu cartouche was found on June 2. Yet his entry is dated May 9! Vyse's manipulation of dates would have us believe that the partial cartouche found outside the pyramid corroborated the earlier find of the complete cartouche inside the pyramid. But the dates suggest that it was the other way around: Vyse had already realized on May 9 - a full eighteen days before the discovery of Campbell's Chamber - what the crucial cartouche had to look like. Somehow, on May 9, Vyse and Hill realized that they had missed out on the correct name of Cheops.

This realization could explain the frantic, daily commuting by Vyse and Hill to Cairo right after the discovery of Lady Arbutnot's Chamber. Why they had left when so badly needed at the pyramids, the Chronicles do not state. We believe that the "bombshell" that hit them was yet another, new work by Wilkinson, the three-volume Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians. Published in London earlier than year (1837), it must have reached Cairo right during those dramatic and tense days. And, neatly and clearly printed for a change, it reproduced in a chapter on early sculptures both the ram cartouche which Vyse-Hill had already copied - and a new cartouche, one which Wilkinson read "Shufu or Suphis." (Cheops).

Wilkinson's new presentation must have shocked Vyse and Hill, because he appeared to have changed his mind regarding the ram cartouche. He now read it "Numba-khufu or Chembes" rather than "Sen-Suphis." These names, he wrote, were found inscribed in tombs in the vicinity of the Great Pyramid; and it was in the cartouche that "we perceive Suphis, or, as the hieroglyphics wrote it, Shufu or Khufu, a name easily converted into Suphis or Cheops." So that was the correct name that had to be inscribed!

With this unsettling news, what were Vyse and Hill to do? Wilkinson's narrative gave them a lead, which they hurried to follow. The two names, he wrote on, "occur again at Mount Sinai." Somewhat inaccurately, a fault common in his work, Wilkinson was referring to hieroglyphic inscriptions found not actually at Mount Sinai, but in the Sinai's area of the turquoise mines. The inscriptions became known in those years due to the magnificently illustrated Voyage de l'Arabie Petree, by Leon de Laborde et Linat, published in 1832. Its drawings included the two cartouches of which Wilkinson wrote.

Vyse and Hill should have had little difficulty in locating a copy of de Laborde's Voyage in French-speaking Cairo. The particular drawing seemed to answer Wilkinson's doubt; the same Pharaoh appeared to have two names, one with the ram symbol and the other that spelt out Kh-u-f-u. Thus, by May 9, Vyse-Hill-Perring had learned that one more cartouche was needed, and what it had to look like.

When Campbell's Chamber was broken into on May 27, the three must have asked themselves: what are we waiting for? And so it was that the final conclusive cartouche appeared on the uppermost wall. Fame, if not fortune, was assured for Vyse. Little did the three know what is now known, that the Sinai hiero-

glyphs were by two Pharaohs, not one....

How sure can we be of our accusations, a century and a half after the event? Sure enough, for, as most forgers, Mr. Hill made, on top of all the other embarrassments, one grave mistake: a mistake that no ancient scribe could have possibly committed.

As it turned out, both source books by which Vyse-Hill were guided (Wilkinson's Materia Hieroglyphica and then de Laborde's Voyage) contained spelling errors; the unsuspecting team embodied the errors in the pyramid inscriptions!

Samuel Birch himself pointed out in his report that the hieroglyph for Kh (the first consonant in the name Kh-u-f-u), which is a circle with lines drawn through it (representing pictorially a sieve), "appears in Mr. Wilkinson's work without distinction from the solar disk." The Kh hieroglyph had to be employed in all the cartouches (spelling Khnem-Kh-u-f) which were inscribed in the two lower chambers. But the correct sieve symbol was not employed even once. Instead, the consonant Kh was represented by the symbol for the Solar Disk; whoever inscribed these cartouches made the same error as Wilkinson had made....

When Vyse and Hill got hold of de Laborde's book, its sketch only deepened the error. The rock carvings depicted by him included the cartouche Kh-u-f-u on the right, and Khnum-kh-u-f on the left. The Kh symbol was correctly spelled (as a circle with a sieve) in the rock carvings, as has been verified by all scholarly authorities. But in both instances, de Laborde - who admitted ignorance of hieroglyphics and who make no attempt to read the symbols, rendered the Kh sign as a void circle. In following de Laborde, the inscriber (Hill?) had employed the hieroglyphic symbol and phonetic sound for RA, the supreme god of Egypt. He had unwittingly spelled out not Khnem-Khuf, but Khnem-Rauf; not Khufu, but Raufu. He had used the name of the great god incorrectly and in vain.

It was an error inconceivable for an Egyptian scribe of the times of the Pharaohs. As monument after monument and inscription after inscription make clear, the symbol for Ra, a circle with a dot in the center ☉, and the symbol for Kh, a circle with lines as a sieve ☉, were always correctly used.

The substitution of Ra for Kh was an error that could not have been committed in the time of Khufu, nor of any other ancient Pharaoh. Only a stranger to hieroglyphics, a stranger to Khufu, and a stranger to the overpowering worship of Ra, could have committed such a grave error. Added to all the other puzzling or inexplicable aspects of the discovery reported by Vyse, this final mistake establishes conclusively, I believe, that Vyse and his aides, not the original builders of the Great Pyramid, caused the red-painted markings to be inscribed.

If the proof of the construction of the Giza pyramids by the presumed Pharaohs stands shattered, there is no longer reason to suspect the authenticity of the Inventory Stela, which stated that the pyramids and the Sphinx were already there when Khufu came to pay homage to Isis and Osiris.

And so we are back to the original question: Who had the know-how and technology, millennia before Cheops, to build the Great Pyramid and its companions? As the balance of the evidence in The Stairway to Heaven shows, it were astronauts who had come to Earth from the "Twelfth Planet."

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