



# ANCIENT SKIES

*"Come Search With Us!"*

## Official Logbook of the Ancient Astronaut Society

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VOLUME 10, NUMBER 5 1921 ST. JOHNS AVE., HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS 60035 USA NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1983

### THE IRRATIONAL RESPONSE OF SCIENTISTS TO THE ANCIENT ASTRONAUT HYPOTHESIS

BY DR. PASQUAL S. SCHIEVELLA\*

That extraterrestrial intelligences visited Earth in antiquity and altered the course of human history is an old hypothesis, offered anew by Erich von Daniken. Although I am sympathetic to this thesis, the main thrust of this article is a criticism of the behavior of critics, particularly scientists, in the broadest sense of that term. As a historical hypothesis, the merits of the ancient astronaut hypothesis should be weighed against the available evidence with rigorous scientific scrutiny.

Unfortunately, this has not occurred. Instead, the scientific community has attacked both the hypothesis and von Daniken with outrage and abuse. His evidence has been dismissed with ridicule. The hypothesis is assailed with fallacious reasoning and an appeal to authority. Equally disturbing is the stony silence of "experts" regarding the evidence of the hypothesis. This silence, and the attacks of critics, clearly show that a scientific evaluation is not forthcoming, at least in the United States.

It should be noted at the outset that this examination of such irrationality on the part of many scientists is in no way to be interpreted as my having a lack of faith in science. I am, rather, an ardent proponent of science. That is why I become so disturbed by dogmatic scientists who destroy the credibility of science by claiming for it more than it can deliver and by refusing to give the ancient astronaut hypothesis the scientific consideration it deserves.

It is common knowledge that it is both possible and probable that intelligent beings exist elsewhere in the universe. Even critics of the ancient astronaut hypothesis admit this. To assume otherwise is to regress to the middle ages, when it was believed that the Earth was the center of the universe and man the supreme creation.

Historian Will Durant, in his Story of Civilization

\*This article is based upon the author's presentation at the Tenth Anniversary World Conference of the Ancient Astronaut Society held in August, 1983 in Chicago. Dr. Schievella was educated in philosophy at Columbia University, earning the BS, MA and PhD degrees. He is founder and president of the National Council for Critical Analysis and the editor of The Journal of Critical Analysis and The Journal of Pre-College Philosophy. Former Chairman of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Jersey City State College, Dr. Schievella, now retired, continues to teach as an adjunct professor at New York Institute of Technology and Suffolk County Community College. His address is: P. O. Box 137, Port Jefferson, NY 11777 USA.

tion, suggests that we are not necessarily the descendants of the primitive cultures to which archaeologists and anthropologists like to attribute our ancestry. His thesis, and the mysteries that science has not explained, suggest the possibility that ancient space travelers visited Earth. No argument based on such data as problems of intergalactic travel and the vastness of space has yet proved that superior intelligence could not accomplish what we, with our few centuries of limited scientific technology and theory, believe to be impossible.

It is both possible and probable that ancient astronauts did visit Earth. This cannot be denied unless one holds that evolution is impossible, or that there is no evolution and God created only us (a point that raises questions on which no evidence could be brought to bear), or that such evolution as there has been took place only on Earth, or that except for us there are no astronauts or other intelligences in the universe, or that the evidence is all in as to our origin, or that we have absolute knowledge about these things, and the like. Surely no enlightened person could hold such medieval ideas.

Unless we deny the possibility of evolution elsewhere in the universe or pretend to an absolute knowledge regarding our past, we must recognize at least the possibility that technologically advanced civilizations may have arisen elsewhere and that they may have visited us in the remote past.

The ancient astronaut hypothesis, then, is at least possible. As to proof of von Daniken's theories, it must be noted that the ancient astronaut hypothesis cannot be expected to follow the rigid rules and standards of proof set for natural sciences. Its modes of proof are primarily like those in the social sciences, such as psychology, sociology and anthropology. To expect formal rigidity in such informal disciplines is to demand what cannot be. Nevertheless, one would expect scientists to permit von Daniken to extrapolate from his data, since they themselves accept extrapolation as a kind of evidence permitting further advances in science.

Von Daniken's thesis explains hitherto inexplicable mysteries none of which has received any elucidation from academic minds fettered by prejudices and preconceptions. It is not fatal to the hypothesis that critics find errors. Taken as a whole, von Daniken's findings point convincingly to extraterrestrial interference in mankind's distant past.

The ancient astronaut hypothesis is little different from most of recorded history. The hypothesis requires only "validation" of the reported data through correlation of those data with the unexplained and wondrous technical artifacts of the distant past. The proofs of the ancient astronaut hypothesis can be found in logic of both possible and probable events, in the historical, even though

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predominantly religious, documents that are held in such esteem throughout the world, and in the ancient artifacts that cannot be explained in terms of the supposed knowledge and capabilities of antiquity. All these, studied as a body of coherently describable data, point to extraterrestrial intervention. Further, the descriptions in ancient documents, when coupled with empirical data, considerably weaken the argument that terrestrials are responsible for those artifacts, which obviously were beyond their linguistic, conceptual and technical abilities.

It seems, then, as von Daniken reiterates, that it is time to bring to bear upon these fascinating mysteries, and on the descriptions of them in the languages of antiquity, new perspectives and viable hypotheses made possible by the more sophisticated language and knowledge of our day.

If scientific and religious institutions would allow it, and if governments or foundations would finance it, researchers could feed data from all over the world into computers to determine the comparative similarities among empirical descriptions of "Gods from space" and to determine whether these descriptions are, as the critics prefer to believe, nothing more than the creations of insane minds or over-fertile imaginations. Supplemented by computers, experts in comparative linguistics, translation, ancient cultures, and ancient languages should be able to determine whether the technical data, concepts and achievements found in museums, existing at archaeological sites, and described in historical and religious documents could have originated with a pre-scientific people who spoke only non-technical and unsophisticated language.

As it stands now, the ancient astronaut hypothesis is primarily a historical hypothesis and peripherally a scientific one. It is founded on documentary and circumstantial evidence and, in some cases, on hard evidence that may not be denied except by stretching the facts beyond reason and probability.

Much of the negative criticism of Erich von Daniken and the ancient astronaut hypothesis emanates from a small number of scientists, who claim that there is not a "smidgen of evidence" to support the hypothesis. The claim is that they prove their theories, whereas the ancient astronaut theorists do not. I wish to remind them that there are many kinds of proof. That proof can be not only empirical, observational, experimental, or inductive, but also theoretical, logical, mathematical, hypothetical, deductive, statistical, probable, and documentary. These various forms account for much critical and fundamental examination within the sciences themselves. The ancient astronaut theorists' use of many of these kinds of proof is no less valid than the scientists' use of them. Of course, they must be directly or indirectly verifiable and compatible with a comprehensive body of relevant facts, theories, generalizations, and hypotheses. To the degree to which these elements fit coherently without contradiction, to that degree we can make legitimate claims to having evidence, proof, or knowledge.

A deliberate ignoring of these different kinds of proof is the modus operandi of those scientists who are guilty of dogmatism and prejudice. Are von Daniken's scientific critics suggesting that there is no truth or knowledge except for that found in the natural sciences? Would they claim that there is not a "smidgen of evidence" that President Lincoln was shot at Ford Theater in Washington, or that the history of the United States occurred substantially as recorded, on the ground that no one alive was there to see it happen? Would they question the documents that record Fleming's discovery of penicillin, or Caesar's having ruled Rome? Such knowledge cannot be verified by the techniques of the natural sciences, by experimentation, or by unfalsifiable data.

Of course science must conduct its search for the truth objectively. But science is not scientists.

The latter are far from being infallible and often far from being objective; a few are even dishonest, prone to authoritarianism and dreams of scientific infallibility even when they admit that they are speculating. They forget that the present achievements of science constitute little more than an embryonic development in the continuing search for truth. In elevating themselves to the throne of infallibility, they imply that they alone have the key to the mysteries of the universe. They display the worst kind of parochialism in failing to see that there are problems of a kind that cannot be solved by a study of subatomic constructs or of molecular structures. To make matters worse, the technical achievements of science are often conflated with scientific certainty, misleading the layman into believing that the products of technology - such as television, nuclear weaponry, and space travel - are ample proof that what scientists say is ipso facto true.

Although von Daniken is no stranger to science, he has never pretended to be a scientist. His critics ignore this, however, and argue against their own assumption that von Daniken thinks he is a scientist. They then proceed to show what he himself admits - that he is not. This straw-man approach is typical of much of their criticism. Indeed, it is to our benefit that von Daniken is not a scientist. The ideas von Daniken expresses have been posed, as he says, thousands of times in the past. No one before, however, was sufficiently daring or provocative to raise to world-wide awareness the possibility and the probability of extraterrestrial intelligence.

Indeed, von Daniken's persistence and his provocative and accusatory style of writing have not endeared him to the world's scientists, nor to its religious leaders. However, if his questions are not proper, it should be easy for his critics to demonstrate that fact. Scientists certainly have not shown von Daniken's characterization of them to be wrong, and what is worse, their unscientific responses support his contentions. Nor have devastating proofs against his hypothesis been demonstrated. Certainly character assassination and weak claims will not do.

The attacks and negative responses from religious institutions are easily understandable, in view of their special interest. One would expect, however, a more sympathetic attitude from the vocal members of the scientific community. Their approach thus far smacks entirely of dogmatic authoritarianism. Obviously science cannot be expected to preoccupy itself with claims that can be shown to be filled with internal contradictions, ambiguities and meaningless terms. But such is not the case with the ancient astronaut hypothesis.

If science sees its moral character and scientific ethic as including the responsibility to warn the world of what is and is not rational, then it must do so with a non-discriminating approach. If it attacks von Daniken, then it must attack all the high priests of irrationalism - religious, political and scientific, across the world. As a humanistic community, science should attack ideas, not proponents of ideas. It should resort to the scientific method not to the tyrannical voice of dogma and authoritarianism. Scientists would do well, therefore, to admit that ancient astronaut theorists have a right to use the same kinds of proof that science itself uses. They would do well to examine the evidence and data with the objectivity they claim to use in the "hard" sciences. They should not occupy themselves with denouncing, but rather with investigating. They would do well to lend their interest, their methods, their techniques, and their moral and financial support in a serious search for historical knowledge relating to the ancient astronaut hypothesis.

## VENUS - OUR HOME PLANET?

BY DR. STUART W. GREENWOOD\*

The following thoughts have been developing in my mind for some time. They constitute a line of reasoning that seems logical and coherent to me in our present state of knowledge, granted that certain premises are considered acceptable and that speculation based on such premises is worth pursuing until confirmation or rejection becomes evident. The premises are as follows:

1. The human species cannot be fitted into the evolutionary pattern used as a convenient framework by anthropologists and others.
2. Ancient literature and traditions show that our species arrived on Earth from elsewhere, or alternatively was influenced in its development by biological interaction with extraterrestrial species.
3. The source of the extraterrestrial life form was the planet Venus.

Some support for the above may be found in the following:

A. Studies by the present writer indicate apparent evidence that flight operations were conducted within the Solar System on an energy-efficient basis (with departures toward the East to take advantage of the Earth's rotation).

B. Our planet of origin necessarily resembled our own - significantly Venus is often described as Earth's "twin." Gravitational pull at the surface is similar on the two planets. Venus is the closest planet to Earth.

An outstanding difficulty presented by the above considerations is that Venus is observed to possess atmospheric conditions that can only be described as appalling. The atmosphere is almost all carbon dioxide, with clouds containing sulfuric acid. The pressure at the surface is almost a hundred times that at the surface of our own planet, and temperatures at the surface are hot enough to melt lead. As Carl Sagan has said, "Venus is Hell". Does this completely rule out the evidence compiled by so many scholars regarding our planet of origin, or are the facts available capable of being reconciled?

The issue hinges on whether or not conditions on Venus have been substantially unchanged since before humankind first appeared on Earth. Should that prove to have been the case, then the matter is resolved in regard to the origin of our species, though it could leave open the possibility of extraterrestrials from Venus influencing the development of our cultures. However, it is known from the investigations conducted with our space probes that Venus is a dynamic planet, with changes and volcanic action occurring on the planet. Let us then engage in speculation to reconcile the evidence of mythology and tradition with the observed conditions on Venus today.

In the past, our ancestors, or those who came to Earth to interact with our predecessors biologically lived on Venus in an atmospheric environment that was not too different from that on Earth. Volcanic and other surface outgassing began to develop problems that forced the development of space flight. For obvious reasons, Earth was the only planet presenting an acceptable alternative habitat. Those who could do so escaped to Earth, and the rest perished as Venus deteriorated to the state it is in today.

This scenario would explain a great deal that at present baffles and confuses us, and the only question to be answered is whether or not it stands up to the data we accumulate through our space exploration efforts. Of course, it is precisely because Venus is regarded by astronomers and other scien-

tists as Earth's "twin" that the planet is the target of so many planetary missions. The Soviet Union in particular has made the planet its priority target. It may be recalled that the first Soviet interplanetary probe was launched toward Venus, not Mars, and they have made exceptional efforts to develop landers that can survive descent through the severe atmosphere and operate on the hot surface. Soviet scientists have shown, on the whole, that they are capable of adopting a far more mature approach to the ancient astronaut hypothesis than is so far evident among the majority of our own scientists. The emphasis on Venus in the Soviet program may well be influenced by such studies.

My own feeling is that developments in the Venus exploration programs should be watched closely by all who search for evidence of ancient space flight. The main thing to look for in the early stages is evidence of major changes in the planet's atmosphere in geologically recent times.

### Selected Background Reading:

1. Max H. Flindt and Otto O. Binder, "Mankind-Child of the Stars", Fawcett, 1974.
2. Jean Sendy, "Those Gods who made Heaven and Earth", Berkley, 1972.
3. Robert Charroux, "One Hundred Thousand Years of Man's Unknown History", Berkley, 1970.
4. W. Raymond Drake, "Gods and Spacemen Throughout History", Regnery, 1975.
5. Carl Sagan, "The Cosmic Connection", Doubleday, 1973.

\*Dr. Greenwood is Operations Manager of the University Research Foundation, a non-profit affiliate of the University of Maryland. His address is: 5004 Laguna Road, College Park, MD 20740 USA.

## MORE EVIDENCE OF NUCLEAR WARFARE IN ANCIENT TIMES

BY YONG CHECK YOON\*

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence of nuclear warfare in ancient times can be found in Greek mythology. Cephalus, King of Athens, sought the assistance of his old friend and ally, Aeacus, King of the Island of Aegina, in a war against Minos, King of Crete. It was then when Aeacus told Cephalus about a plague, sent by Juno, the wife of Jupiter and queen of the gods. The plague devastated the land and people were turned to dust and ashes. No known remedies could cure the afflicted and death took its toll.

"At the beginning the sky seemed to settle down upon the earth, and thick clouds shut in the heated air," Aeacus told Cephalus. Wells and springs became poisoned, which Aeacus described as "thousands of snakes shedding their venom in the fountains."

The mysterious disease first affected small species of animals, then people. Wool fell from the bleating sheep; dead bodies were everywhere. The symptoms of the disease were flushed cheeks, difficulty in breathing, rough and swollen tongue, dry mouth, and extremely high fever. Even the city's physicians died ingloriously. People crowded around every available source of water, but the water did not quench their thirst. The mysterious plague lasted for more than four months.

As we examine the symptoms - loss of hair, dehydration, extremely high fever, physical weakness - we realize that Aeacus was, in fact, describing a radioactive fallout, rather than a plague sent by the goddess Juno. We know now that the "mysterious" disease is radiation sickness.

Eventually a prevailing wind from the south began to clear the atmosphere above the island of the tropospheric fallout.

The ancient Greek physicians had no knowledge of radiation sickness and they could not attribute the disease to any natural causes known to them.

\*Mr. Yoon is a research analyst. His address is: 401, Chulia St., Penang, WEST MALAYSIA.

## THE SKY PEOPLE

In his book The Sky People\*, the English author Brinsley Le Poer Trench (now the Earl of Clancarty) postulates two creations of man as described in the Biblical Genesis. The first, Galactic Man, created by the Elohim (the gods) and the later animal chemical man, created by the Jehovah. He states that "pure Galactic Man does not have an animal-type body... A Galactic Man has a physical body, but not made of the same chemicals as earth man." Galactic Man, according to Trench, has "physical form" but the "chemical make-up is different." Galactic men "appear solid to each other but can load themselves up with earth chemicals if required to do so, when their business takes them this way."

The author then discusses an imaginary space visitor from Mars who can provide himself with sufficient new chemicals to enable him to survive on earth undetected.

Far fetched? Perhaps so in 1960 when Trench was writing. But let us examine the concept with today's advanced technology.

The U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) proposes to launch a manned expedition to the planet Mars by the year 2000. However, NASA has released data which shows that the human body eliminates calcium during periods of weightlessness, such as is experienced in space travel. After only two weeks in space, an analysis of the astronauts' body wastes showed that calcium had already begun to leave their bodies. During the 84 day mission of Skylab IV, one astronaut lost 7% of the bone-building chemical. Based upon the evidence available, NASA estimates that during the one and one-half year round trip to Mars, a human body would lose 40% of its calcium content, thus severely weakening the bone density to a point where fractures would occur with the slightest effort.

The conclusion that we reach from this data is that the body sloughs off unneeded materials. In a completely weightless state, there is no need for the skeletal structure required for life on Earth.

Could the converse be true? That a human body after travelling from deep space can absorb the chemicals necessary for it to exist on Earth? If so, then Trench's apparent fantasy could be reality. Gene M. Phillips. \*The Sky People was published in 1960 by Neville Spearman, Ltd., London and in 1970 in paperback by Award Books, New York.

## ABOUT BOOKS AND AUTHORS:

ORVILLE L. HOPE has privately published his first book, 6000 Years of Seafaring. The book is available from the author at 425 E. Davidson Avenue, Gastonia, NC 28052 USA.

In a departure from the ancient astronaut theme, ANDREW TOMAS' latest book entitled Mirage of the Ages is a critique of Christianity and the Bible. The hardcover book is available from Exposition Press, Inc., P.O. Box 2120, Smithtown, NY 11787 USA.

ERICH VON DANIKEN's latest book will be published early in 1984 in Germany. The English title: The Day the Gods Arrived: August 13, 3314 BC.

Wayne Serven, 3339 West 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60629 has advised that Lobsang Rampa, author of the controversial book The Third Eye died in Canada in 1981. Mr. Serven learned this from correspondence with the author's widow.

Many of the books in the ancient astronaut field are out-of-print and unavailable in bookstores. We have learned of a source for new and used books and periodicals on ancient astronauts, UFOs and the occult. For a free catalog, write to Mr. Robert Girard, Arcturus Book Service, 263 N. Ballston Avenue, Scotia, NY 12302 USA.

## ON TIAHUANACO AND THE NAZCA LINES

Before his death in December 1982, the Austrian archaeologist, Prof. Dr. Hans Schindler Bellamy wrote the following observations of his first-hand experiences at Tiahuanaco in Bolivia and Nazca in Peru:

"The general appearance of Tiahuanaco is somewhat disappointing to most visitors, because its position in a wide plain is rather dull, and its most interesting aspects are discernible only after some time at the site. For example, Tiahuanaco, at an elevation of over 13,000 ft. was a harbour city, as is proved by the strandlines of the sea of that time, which are very distinct on the sides of the hills bordering the valley of the Desaguadero River to the south of the ruins. When followed up, these strandlines prove that Tiahuanaco at the time of its floruit was not situated on the shore of a larger Lake Titicaca, as is postulated by many archaeologists, but was near the head of a great long gulf of a sea which was the proto-Pacific Ocean.

"Perhaps the most important monument at Tiahuanaco is the Gate of the Sun, a huge, 15-ton monolithic slab with a sculpture in bas-relief which appears to be incomprehensible at first sight, but a detail analysis of which reveals a logical mathematical description of the oldest calendar in the world.

"The Tiahuanaco ruins were chaotic until only two decades ago when a thorough exploration and excavation campaign began and two principal walled enclosures were reconstructed - the larger Temple of Kalasasaya and the adjoining sunken "Old Temple", with its peculiar stone heads placed in the walls looking toward the center of the enclosure. The 'Great Idol of Tiahuanaco' was found buried in the alluvial soil of the Old Temple. The Idol is now on display in the Open Air Museum of American Man in LaPaz, Bolivia. The Idol that stands erect in the Kalasasaya enclosure at the site is a copy of the original.

"I cannot tell you anything definite about the Nazca 'psammoglyphs' (figures scraped into the desert surface.) On the other hand, nobody else can enlighten you as to why, when, by whom and how the peculiar huge figures were made.

"Neither does anyone know anything about the lines on the desert floor, some of which extend for up to five miles in a perfectly straight line.

"How the very large figures were traced on the desert is inconceivable. Enlargement from a small tracing on a grid, as has been suggested, is not likely. The result can never have been seen by the makers themselves, and the outlines of the figures are very exact and were never 'corrected.'

"The best time to see and photograph the Nazca markings is soon after sunrise or shortly before sunset to take advantage of the shadows which make the markings distinct. Otherwise, they can hardly be made out in the direct sunlight of midday.

"The best height for viewing is between 500 and 1,000 feet; of course, in a low-flying aircraft.

"Practically everyone who has seen the mysterious figures and lines of the Nazca Desert has been tempted to make an attempt at an explanation or solution. Up till now all such attempts have been futile. (I myself have never yet dared to get my 'Nazca' manuscript printed.) Still, each is free to make his own attempt and if fantasy is curbed, a really new idea may emerge. I regret that my visits to Nazca were over 25 years ago, before Erich von Daniken's books 'opened my eyes.' Maybe his ideas allow new explanations which have a good element of possibility."

ANCIENT SKIES is published bi-monthly by the ANCIENT ASTRONAUT SOCIETY, 1921 St. Johns Ave., Highland Park, Illinois 60035 USA, for distribution to its members. Telephone (312) 432-6230. The Ancient Astronaut Society, founded in 1973, is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit corporation organized exclusively for scientific, literary and educational purposes.