



ANCIENT SKIES

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Official Logbook of the Ancient Astronaut Society

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VOLUME 13, NUMBER 5, 1921 ST. JOHNS AVE., HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS 60035-3105 USA NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1986

ADVANCED SCIENCE IN ANTIQUITY

BY ANDREW TOMAS*

The cluster of remarkable historical facts which are presented in this article demonstrates the presence of a theoretical science at the dawn of history which, strictly speaking, should not have existed in remote antiquity, because it lacked a slow and gradual development that our science has had.

One of these odd things in ancient times was a concept of the atom. The polarity of atoms with their protons and electrons seems to have been known to Chinese philosophers who called the positive principle Yang and the negative, Yin. Ku-Kan wrote this sentence a thousand years ago: "When we speak of Yin and Yang, we mean ether diffused in infinite space...."

To symbolize the Yin-Yang, China has used a circle divided by the letter S with two dots in the two empty spaces. It may well have been an ideographic representation of the atom. This symbol, placed within an octagon of the I Ching (Yih Jing) which is composed of trigrams of whole and broken lines, is attributed to the legendary Emperor Fu Hsi (2953-2838 BC).

This Yin-Yang figure, painted on mirrors, was displayed over almost every outside shop door in China before the Mao Revolution. It represents the positive and negative forces in the universe. Incidentally, this ancient emblem is incorporated in the flag of South Korea.

Uluka, a sage of ancient India (c.500 BC) proposed a theory whereby all matter was made up of tiny "anu" or seeds. He was nicknamed "the swallower of grains", or Kanada. The Vaisesika, the materialistic school of early India, assigned the origin of the world to atoms which they considered to be eternal. Remarkably the simple atom of hydrogen with one electron and one proton is regarded by modern nuclear science as being everlasting as well.

In addition, the Vasishtha, another ancient source of India, states that "there are worlds within the hollows of each atom (anu)." These Sanskrit scriptures plainly allude not only to the "anu", or the atom, but also to the "param-anu", or subatomic particles. The nuclear pioneers of India declared that homogeneous atoms produce different elements by var-

ying combinations, and that they exist everywhere in the universe. It is clear that the early pundits of India anticipated our scientific discoveries made only during the past few hundred years.

Let us stop here for a moment to assess the meaning of these quotations. The people who lived at the dawn of civilization dealt with the most important matters of survival - such as hunting, agriculture and cattle-raising. They had no incentive or time to dabble in things that were too small to be visible. Who or what gave early man the idea that all matter is composed of imperceptible atoms?

Almost 2400 years ago the Greek philosopher Democritus made a categorical statement: "In reality there is nothing but atoms and space." The Roman writer Lucretius (1st Century BC) dealt with the atomic structure of matter in his On Nature: "Atoms are rushing everlastingly through all space." He explained that it was impossible to see the atoms because of their minute size. What induced this materialistic thinker of Rome to believe in invisible atoms?

Perhaps the greatest enigma of Hindu scientific tradition is its peculiar division of time. The Surya Siddhanta (Burgess, NY 1860), which is one of the oldest astronomical treatises in the world, as well as the Brihath Sathaka and other untranslated Sanskrit texts which I studied with a pundit in India twenty years ago, present tables with an archaic division of time in India.

The day was divided into 60 "kalas", or hours equal to 24 minutes. The kala was subdivided into 60 "vikalas", each containing 24 seconds. The vikalas was divided into 60 "paras", each containing 0.4 of a second. The para was subdivided into 60 "tatparas" which in its turn consisted of 60 "vitatparas". One vitatpara was composed of 60 "imas". This ima was made up of 60 "kashtas". In this sexagesimal fragmentation of time a kashta was equal to one 300-millionth of a second (3×10^{-8}). Nothing that tiny can be encountered in human life, particularly in slow-going India, past or present.

The Brahmins are unable to account for the presence of this mysterious subdivision of time in ancient India. All they say is that the Brahmin priests have been obliged to preserve this ancient tradition, which was undoubtedly meaningful in India thousands of years ago, but its significance has been lost in the course of long centuries.

Upon my arrival in Paris from India in 1966, I took a stroll down the magnificent Champs Elysees and then visited the Museum of Science in one of the side streets. I examined a large diagram on the wall showing the life-spans of atomic particles. I was surprised to see that the life-spans of certain mesons and hyperons were of the order of the kashta, one 300-millionth of a second! India could not have had atomic reactors about 1500 BC when the Surya

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Siddhanta was first compiled but did it have theoretical nuclear physics which the caste of Brahmins has zealously preserved till this age of science?

Dr. Frederick Soddy, an Oxford scientist who won a Nobel prize in 1921 for his discovery of the isotopes, had a theory about the source of this ancient science: "It may be an echo from one of the many previous epochs of the unrecorded history of the world, of an age of men which have trod before the road we are treading today." (The Interpretation of Radium, London, 1909). Seventy-seven years ago Soddy wrote that this forgotten race of men "could have explored the outer realms of space."

We have briefly discussed the puzzling awareness by the ancients of the microcosm. An equally interesting enigma exists in India of its knowledge of the macrocosm. At this point it should not be overlooked that in Western Europe, only some 300 or 400 years ago, the earth was considered to be the immobile center of the universe.

The cosmology of different cultures can be separated into two broad categories - an ideology which believes in a sudden creation of the world by a personal God and in its eventual end (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), and a viewpoint whereby the cosmos has always existed in some form and will never vanish even though parts of it may be changed. This concept is best exemplified by the Hinduistic Days and Nights of Brahma. Buddhism and Taoism concur in this belief. Modern cosmology postulates the end of entropy and of the expansion of the universe. It also envisages a possible contraction of all matter into a cosmic "black-hole" which may be followed by another rebirth of the universe, after a certain pause.

With this introduction to cosmology, let us give ear to the cosmic systems of the peoples in ancient epochs. The ancient Greeks, for instance, did not believe that the gods created the universe. It was, they said, the other way about - the universe created the gods who were really idealized humans or "supermen" doing a great deal of traveling in starry space. Hermes, for example, came to the earth from the sky to act as a culture bearer to primitive mankind. Then, the myths say, he returned to his celestial home.

The Huai Nan Tzu of China (c.120 BC) described the formation of worlds in space from primary matter by "whirlpools" which suggests the vortexes that generate solar systems and galaxies, as modern astronomy demonstrates.

To the Chinese mind creation and destruction have always been part of "Tao", the Universal Essence. Yin Fu King, a commentator on the I Ching, wrote: "When Yin and Yang alternate with each other, the pulsation of the universe manifest in an evenly measured rhythm." In Chinese cosmology it is indicated that a critical point in the cyclical flux of the universe was passed some 100 million years ago. The legends of China mention Pan Ku, the patriarch of earth, who lived in 96,962,219 BC. Although these dates may not correspond to the fact, they are important to show that for thousands of years the ancient Chinese thought of creation in terms of millions of years, whereas as recently as 1654 AD the Protestant Archbishop James Usher of Northern Ireland calculated that the day of creation occurred one morning in 4004 BC.

The ancient Egyptians' first calendrical date is 4241 BC recorded 237 years before the year of creation fixed by Archbishop Usher. Unlike Protestant England the land of the Nile had profound thinkers in its temples whose mental horizons were cosmic. The Book of the Dead (E.A. Wallis Budge, NY 1967, p251) contains these lines: "Millions of years have gone over the world. I cannot tell the number of them. Thou, Re, travelst through untold spaces of millions and hundreds of thousands of years."

One Mayan inscription in Central America refers to a time more than a million years ago and a stela at Tikal shows an enigmatic date of 400 million years in the past. Vatican Codex A-3738 is a record of Mayan time cycles which begin at a distant date of 18,612 BC. It is a well-known fact that astronomically the Mayan calendar was more precise than ours. Consequently, the date of 400 million years before our time cannot be easily dismissed as an error.

No civilization of antiquity ever surpassed the farsighted Brahmins of India in cosmic speculation. According to Sanskrit texts of India the Kalpa, or the Day of Brahma, lasted 4,320 million years, and the full diurnal cycle of the day and night of Brahma was equal to 8,640 million years. It is significant to note that the age of our planet is 4,600 million years and that of the sun some 5,000 million years. It is apparent that the chronology of ancient India approaches the astronomical findings of modern science. Undoubtedly, it is strange to discover that ancient astronomer-priests of the Land of the Ganges calculated cosmic cycles in billions of years, like the astronomy of this 20th Century.

The Surya Siddhanta contains the dimensions of the "Brahma's Egg" in yohanas (or yojanas). One yohana is estimated to be at least four miles. The circumference of Brahma's Cosmic Sphere is stated to be 18,712,080,864,000,000 yohanas. To the best of my knowledge, this quadrillion figure has never been converted into light years which is the astronomical yardstick. Without a calculator or computer at my disposal, the rough figure I obtained for the diameter of this vast sphere was 4,000 light years. The yohana is supposed by some Hindu scholars to be seven miles. In that case the size of "Brahma's Egg" in light years would be almost double my calculation.

For the sake of simplicity, let us assume that the radius of Brahma's Sphere is about 2,000 light years and compare it with the distances to some bright but distant stars: Deneb in Cygnus=1,500 light years, Rigel in Orion=650 light years and Canopus in Carina =540 light years. And of course, the diameter of our Milky Way Galaxy is 100,000 light years.

Is Brahma's Egg a huge star cluster in our galaxy? Whatever it is, the fact remains that astronomer-priests of India were able to think in cosmic terms in view of the infinitely large figures employed by them in calculating space within our Milky Way Galaxy. The ancient book Surya Siddhanta is a witness to the skills of these archaic stargazers, yet it does not explain what compelled early Hindu astronomers to take a look at a portion of our galaxy with its billions of stars. This riddle is not resolved.

The Coptic Manuscript preserved in the Borgia Collection in Naples has this remarkable sentence:

"When the Father had finished creating the 12 universes that some of the angels knew, then He created 7 other universes. Outside of these 7 He created 5 universes more. Then exterior to the 5 He created 3 more worlds. These 27 universes are all outside this heaven and this earth."

This Gnostic text is at least 2,000 years old. Does it not speak of stellar systems beyond our planetary world? From whom did the Gnostics receive this tradition - the Egyptian and Babylonian priests-astronomers, or the seers of the Essene Brotherhood?

One more scientific subject should be dealt with, and it concerns a possible concept of evolution in the remote past. The so-called incarnations of Vishnu are listed in Hindu scriptures in this order: Matsya or fish, Kurma or tortoise, Varaha - a boar and Narasimba, a man-lion. Modern science teaches that primeval life began in the oceans, then reptiles appeared to be followed by mammals and eventually by man. The early manifestations of Vishnu allegorize these slow stages of evolution.

Tibetan Buddhism has a curious belief in the descent of man from ape which is a general conclusion

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of modern Darwinism. A text by Sonam Gyantschen, entitled the Mirror of the Royal Genealogy of Tibet was issued in Lhasa in 1388 AD. It states that the Tibetan race is descended from the union of a macaque monkey and an ogress. In the course of time their offspring lost their tails and learned to speak, turning into human beings. It is easy to see that Tibetan Buddhism concurs with modern science.

Manu, the legendary lawgiver of India, wrote in the Book of Manu: "The first germ of life was developed by water and heat." This was said before 1200 BC.

Anaximander of Greece (early 6th Century BC) proposed one of the earliest versions of evolution claiming that all animal life came from a simple common stock. The Roman Lucretius wrote about the "survival of the fittest" nineteen centuries before Darwin.

In light of these findings concerning the atomic theory, division of time to a fraction of a microsecond, a scientifically correct view of the cosmos, advanced astronomical knowledge and a notion of evolution in the distant past, an inescapable conclusion comes to mind that this archaic science could have been a legacy from an outside source.

This enigma was examined by the Soviet science and science fiction writer, Alexander Kazantsev, years ago. Commenting on the riddles of ancient astronomy he stated in one of his books published in 1963:

"Thousands of years before Copernicus and Galileo the Egyptians knew that the earth is a globe which revolves around the sun. It is inconceivable how the ancients knew of the earth's elliptical orbit around the sun. In ancient India the custodians of science, the priests, had long ago deduced that the universe was infinite and filled with a multitude of worlds. The ancients were somehow in possession of the results of calculations rather than of the methods and equipment of precision instruments."

A theory backed by a number of reputable men of science suggests that this enigma of "science before the age of science" can be accounted for by a possible legacy from an advanced galactic civilization which may have been observing the evolution of this planet for millions of years.

Hermann Oberth of Germany, a pioneer in space technology, stated in Denmark in 1958: "I believe that out in space there are living beings who have been watching our mankind for ages. I consider these 'Uranides' (inhabitants of the stars) to be most intelligent."

Thus if a superior culture in another solar system has sent spaceships to our planet in the course of untold periods of time, it is only logical to admit that legends of "gods" coming from the sky as benefactors could refer to "ancient astronauts".

Decades before Oberth, the Russian spaceship pioneer, Tsiolkovsky, declared that the myths of celestial visitors landing on earth which most old civilizations have, could be interpreted as sojourns of space travelers from other distant worlds.

If these two eminent men of space science are correct, then the possibility of cosmic guests leaving earthmen a scientific legacy thousands of years ago is well within the bounds of serious scientific speculation.

Our space rockets owe their reality to men like Tsiolkovsky and Oberth. Their conviction that older planetary civilizations may have surpassed us in space engineering shows their awareness of the magnitude of our galaxy containing some 400 thousand million suns. In our island universe somewhere in the very distant past interstellar flight became fact. After all, the world of galaxies is from 20 to 15 billion years old - that is three or four times older than our sun. Consequently, there was plenty of time for other galactic systems to achieve a very high technological level about which we can only dream.

A MESSAGE TO MY READERS

By ERICH VON DANIKEN

In 1965 I completed the manuscript of my first book, Chariots of the Gods?, and during the following two years, I offered it to a total of 25 German language publishing houses and quickly accustomed myself to the odious appearance in my mail box of my manuscript with the inevitable form letter - "We are very sorry to inform you...", or "...not suited for our program..." As a last resort, I scratched together all my money and took off in my rickety Volkswagen for Hamburg, Germany, where I hoped to convince Dr. Thomas von Randow to publish at least a part of my book. Dr. von Randow, then science editor of the weekly "Die Zeit", kindly offered to introduce me by telephone to Erwin Barth von Wehrenalp of Econ Publishing House in Dusseldorf. A few days later, I sat across von Wehrenalp's oversized writing desk and after he looked at me skeptically, he said: "Well, we could try a small edition; let's say 3000 copies." In February, 1968 Chariots of the Gods? was launched.

With the help of the late Dr. Rolf Bigler, then Editor-in-Chief of the Swiss weekly newspaper "Die Weltwoche," and Jurg Ramspeck, now managing editor, the paper published my book in serial form, and an avalanche was set loose. In Switzerland alone, 20,000 copies of my book were sold in no time. The success spread across the borders into Germany and Austria and in March 1970, Econ printed the 30th edition of Chariots to bring the total number of copies to 600,000. With book club and paperback editions the total number of German language copies alone reached 2.1 million. The book was translated into 28 languages and sold in 36 countries. A motion picture entitled "Chariots of the Gods?", based upon the book, was produced and the film, after being aired on television in the United States, gave birth in that country to "Danikenism", according to Time magazine. My theme, Did our ancestors receive visitors from the cosmos?, became a conversation piece.

Following in the wake of my success came the critics. Professor Ernst von Khuon brought together contributions from 17 scientists in the book "Waren die Gotter Astronauten?" (Were the Gods Astronauts?) They were partly absolute rejections of my ideas and partly gently benevolent to them. Since that time, "counter books" have sprouted up in literally every corner of the world as if a warm rain had misted down and encouraged these newcomers to come creeping up the lattice of my success. Some of these publications were rather shady fabrications. In televised discussions, which were and still are placed reasonably enough in the "science" category, the discussions did not always remain so "scientific." As Norman Mailer once said, "With some critics, one has the feeling that they confuse the typewriter with the electric chair." However, I managed to survive their electrocution.

Was I wrong in certain decisive points in my first book?

As is the right of every beginner, I was completely taken with my theme and wrote in an unaffected way and by far not as self-critically as I would later, after recognizing these weaknesses myself. Of course, the army of critics themselves never ceased from pounding it into my head. Often my enthusiasm ran away with me and I accepted only too easily information which I felt served my purpose, only to learn upon later verification that I had sometimes received a bad surprise. Or, I would accept the work of serious scientific authors only later to learn that the opinions of these highly-praised gentlemen had long been refuted. As I made my way down this road of experience, it was cried out at times that I was "refuted" and there I was left hanging on this wobbly hook. Some examples:

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In Chariots of the Gods?, I wrote that on the map of the Turkish Admiral Piri Reis, which can be seen today in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, "the North and South American coasts are precisely drawn." This statement was refuted. Actually, the contours of North and South America appear in the Piri Reis map only in rudimentary fashion. However, this accepted correction in no way changes the sensational nature of the Piri Reis map which accurately depicts the coast line of the Antarctic Continent, today still buried under snow and ice. It remains an unanswered question as to how the cartographers of the time of Christopher Columbus knew this.

I also accepted at that time the then new report that part of a belt made out of aluminum had been found at a grave near Chou-Chou in China. I was informed later from China that this find was in fact made out of a specially hardened silver alloy. In the same way the report out of Delhi, India was proved to be wrong - that a newly discovered ancient iron pillar was impermeable to weather conditions and did not corrode. Since then it has started to rust in spots - I have seen it myself.

I also speculated whether the "Sun-Gate" referred to in the Sumerian Gilgamesh Epoch could be connected with the famous "Gate of the Sun" in Tiahuanaco in the Bolivian Altiplano in South America. This could be proof that our ancestors could bridge the great distances between the continents. It became clear to me, however, that this was nonsense because modern archaeologists gave the name to the Bolivian monolith and no one can say what it was called thousands of years ago.

During my first trip to Egypt in 1954, my school friend, Mahmud Grand, whose home was in Cairo, told me that the small island in the Nile River called "Elephantine" was so named because it has the outline of an elephant when viewed from the air. This story cemented itself into my nineteen-year-old gray matter mainly because, even at that early time, it fit so well in my later picture of the world. Now I know that Egyptian expeditions passed this southern border fortress on their way to Nubia - with elephants.

These are some examples of my mistakes and more like them can be found in my first "child of a book." I have now answered for them, but the cornerstone of my theories and system of thinking has not been overturned. Moreover, I asked questions in those days in an unsowed field and I believe I was very honest because I followed each statement in my book with a question mark - there were 323 questions in all. Even the title of the book contains a question mark. This was all overlooked by my otherwise so particular critics.

Since my first book, I have made it my principle, so far as absolutely possible, to report only on things which I have seen, handled and photographed. This method is not used by all experts, as I have since found out.

Strangely enough, scientists and technicians have produced books which confirm my theories and postulates. They have not liked it, but they have done it! The story of NASA engineer Josef F. Blumrich shows how a Saul can be converted into a Paul.

At the time of his "conversion", Blumrich was the manager of the Project Construction Division at NASA in Huntsville, Alabama. At the urging of his son, Christoph, Blumrich ordered a copy of Erinnerungen an die Zukunft (Chariots of the Gods?) from Germany. He was not too enthused about reading the book even after it arrived some six or seven weeks later, because as an engineer who began in 1934 in the airplane construction business, and for the previous eleven years had been building rockets and satellites for NASA, he was sure that a book about extraterrestrial beings visiting earth in the remote past was all nonsense. As it turned out, Blumrich's wife, Hilde, read the book first and then insisted that

Blumrich read it. When he read the chapter on Ezekiel he became excited because as an engineer he believed that he could prove von Daniken to be wrong. He consulted his Bible and began to compare the biblical text with von Daniken's technical explanations and it became clear that Ezekiel was describing actual events, just as he saw them, but speaking in terms of clouds, living beings and faces - the only way he could express himself, not having any technical knowledge. Blumrich then proceeded to make a careful analysis of the biblical account as told by Ezekiel and concluded that Ezekiel had described in precise detail some sort of helicopter-like space craft. The rest is history, Blumrich having presented his entire analysis in his book, The Spaceships of Ezekiel.

Even though some 46 million copies of my books have been sold world-wide, my last three books have yet to be translated into English, because the publishers, both in England and in the United States, feel that there is insufficient interest in my subject. Recently, I wrote to the United States members of the Ancient Astronaut Society requesting them to write to Bantam Books, in New York, one of my early publishers, to urge them to publish my new books. I was extremely gratified when over 400 members responded with letters to Bantam. Unfortunately, Bantam still insists that they have no interest in von Daniken's works.

Whether the lack of interest on the part of English language publishing houses stems from a sincere belief that the public is no longer interested in the theme of extraterrestrial visitations to earth, or whether they have succumbed to pressures exerted by certain members of the "scientific community" remains to be seen. In the meantime, I shall continue my efforts to secure a publisher in the United States.

ERICH VON DANIKEN'S BOOKS - In order of publication
(English titles in parentheses)

- Erinnerungen an die Zukunft (Chariots of the Gods?)
- Zurück zu den Sternen (Gods from Outer Space - in England, Return to the Stars)
- Aussaat und Kosmos (The Gold of the Gods)
- Meine Welt in Bildern (In Search of Ancient Gods)
- Erscheinungen (Miracles of the Gods)
- Besucher aus dem Kosmos (no translation)
- Beweise (Von Daniken's Proof - in England, According to the Evidence)
- Erich von Daniken im Kreuzverhör (no translation)
- Prophet der Vergangenheit (Signs of the Gods?)
- Reise nach Kiribati (Pathways to the Gods - in England, The Stones of Kiribati)
- Strategie der Gotter (The Gods and Their Grand Design)
- Ich liebe die ganze Welt (no translation)
- Der Tag an dem die Gotter kamen (no translation)
- Habe ich mich geirrt? (no translation)

ANCIENT SKIES is published bi-monthly by the ANCIENT ASTRONAUT SOCIETY, 1921 St. Johns Ave., Highland Park, Illinois 60035-3105 USA, for distribution to its members. Tel. (312) 295-8899.

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