



# ANCIENT SKIES

*"Come Search With Us!"*

## Official Logbook of the Ancient Astronaut Society

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### PIONEERS OF THE ANCIENT ASTRONAUT THESIS IN RUSSIA

BY ANDREW TOMAS\*

It would be far from the truth to say that the ancient astronaut theory lacks a scientific standing in view of the fact that three Russian scientists pioneered it at the opening of this century. Their names are Constantine Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935), Nicholas Rynin (1877-1942) and Jacob Perelman, who lived slightly later than Rynin.

By profession, Tsiolkovsky was a teacher in a provincial town. One of his scientific papers was approved by the Imperial Physical and Chemical Society in 1881. Two years later his work, Free Space, was published. In it he speculated on conditions in space free from gravity.

In a manner of speaking Constantine Tsiolkovsky was a prophet of science. "This planet is the cradle of the human mind but one cannot spend a whole life in a cradle," he said.

Tsiolkovsky was greatly revered by an engineer who was twenty years younger than he. His name was Nicholas Rynin, who graduated from the Imperial Institute of Communications of St. Petersburg in 1901 which was a university specializing in the technological means of communication such as railroads, steamships, aviation, telegraph, telephone and eventually radio.

After the Revolution, Rynin became a professor of that academic institution and later wrote a work, well ahead of his time, entitled Interplanetary Contacts (1928-1932) in three volumes, in which he analyzed a large number of old legends regarding air and space ships in past civilizations such as ancient China, Peru, Mexico, Egypt, India and other cultures.

The third scientist of this group was an astronomer who was famous in old Russia for his books on popular astronomy. His name was Jacob Perelman and he was the first scholar to have produced a scientific text on space travel under the title Interplanetary Voyages, incorporating Tsiolkovsky's ideas about space rockets and, in fact, everything that was available about space in the world of science in the year 1915.

During the Czarist era these pioneers encountered no obstruction from the Imperial Academy of Science concerning interplanetary travel theories but it was cautious only about accepting ideas that were

on the edge of science fiction.

In 1895 Constantine Tsiolkovsky's book, Dreams About the Earth, was published in which he imagined inhabitants of other worlds. Then in 1903 he wrote an article for a scientific magazine with a stunning title - Exploration of Space by Jet-propulsion Rockets.

Nicholas Rynin perused the novel of Jules Verne, From the Earth to the Moon (1865), and subjected it to a scientific critique finding the author's concepts infeasible. The work of the French astronomer Camille Flammarion, The Multitude of Inhabited Worlds (1875), had a special fascination for Rynin. Before the 1917 Revolution he collected a substantial library mostly in French, German and English which dealt with mythology and tales of air flights from the Greek legend of Icarus to the Hindu epic of the Mahabharata. He also had books about Leonardo da Vinci's "flying machines" and the works of Johannes Kepler, who drew imaginary sketches of the Earth as seen from the Moon and wrote about "celestial ships" which would soar in space one day.

After the October Socialist Revolution (1917) these men of science received encouragement in their research as Russia needed new aircraft and rockets. In the 1920s and early 1930s the young Soviet regime did not mind some speculation coming from these scientists.

The views of Tsiolkovsky, Rynin and Perelman concerning landings on Earth of stellar voyagers are worth quoting. In his Will of the Universe (1928) Constantine Tsiolkovsky, the father of the multi-stage rocket and of the word "astronaut" has a remarkable passage showing his deep insight:

"It is difficult for us to imagine a being superior to earthman. This narrow-minded view prevents us from picturing an intrusion of extraterrestrial entities in terrestrial affairs. Yet a great number of events still remains unexplained because of this attitude. Many curious happenings are recorded in history and literature."

Then he alludes to the advent of "gods" and "angels" from the heavens who are still included in sacred books, epics and legends implying that the divine skybeings could have been visitors from other worlds.

In an article published by the Messenger of Knowledge (Moscow, 1930, Nos.5-6) Tsiolkovsky makes the following deduction:

"If the vehicles of the dwellers of other worlds have not come to earth, it does not follow that they have not visited other planets. To judge the fact of the non-visitation of earth we have at our disposal but a few thousand years of the conscious life of mankind. How about prehistoric epochs and future history?"

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In the same magazine Professor Rynin writes this passage supporting Tsiolkovsky:

"The statement that inhabitants of other worlds have not visited our planet is indeed corroborated by the accepted history of all countries. However, if we turn to the tales and legends of hoary antiquity we shall notice a strange concurrence in the legends of lands separated by oceans and deserts. This concurrence is contained in the fact that many legends speak of the visitation of earth by the inhabitants of other worlds in time immemorial. Why not admit that a grain of truth lies at the bottom of these legends?"

The astronomer Perelman also participated in the magazine forum allotted to the possible sojourns of extraterrestrials to our planet and contributed these opinions to the discussion:

"To reckon that interplanetary voyages are impossible because no one of the supposed dwellers of other worlds has visited us is very naive. In science arguments to the effect that someone somewhere could have invented something but did not, have no meaning at all. Such arguments are absurd confronted with the fact that the possibility of astronavigation has already been proven."

This positive approach to the theme of interplanetary communication was followed by an unexpected setback during one of Joseph Stalin's purges a few years later. An NKVD State Police officer came to Professor Rynin's apartment in Leningrad with a warrant to inspect his priceless library, containing a large number of books in Western European languages, mainly on the subjects of astronomy, history and mythology in which he had found evidence of ancient astronauts and which he had collected diligently in the Czarist era for almost two decades. After taking a casual look at the books the officer said to his subordinate: "Foreign junk! Burn it!"

And so the Red Inquisition took the precious volumes downstairs and started a bonfire in the backyard as frightened residents of the apartment building watched it from their windows. This is the story I heard in Leningrad in 1967. It was reluctantly confirmed to me by a Communist Party member. The State Public Library of the city admitted having only a list of the Professor's collection but denied all knowledge of the whereabouts of Rynin's books.

That the three pioneers, especially Tsiolkovsky, were true men of science, recognized beyond the borders of Russia, can be seen from a letter written in the early 1930s to Tsiolkovsky by Dr. Hermann Oberth, the German rocket scientist and tutor of Wernher von Braun of NASA fame: "You have ignited a fire and we will not let it be extinguished and will try to realize the greatest dream of mankind - astronavigation."

In 1966 I called upon Dr. Oberth at his mansion near Nurnberg. In our conversation he unequivocally expressed his belief that intelligent life exists on many planets in the universe. Dr. Oberth was certain that the more advanced civilizations had starships. He theorized that the "Vikings of Space" have regularly visited our planet on trips of exploration and might even have been doing it in the course of modern history. He welcomed all research in this field when I told him of a book I was then researching and planning to have published in Europe.

In 1970 I submitted my work, We Are Not the First, to a foremost expert on the History of Science. He found nothing wrong with my facts. So far as my interpretations were concerned, he made this remark: "You are at liberty to give your own interpretation of these enigmas of science because we in academic circles have no explanation for them."

I think this is sufficient evidence for considering the theory of space voyagers' landings on Earth as a perfectly legitimate scientific speculation.

AS A PROGRAM MANAGER OF THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH FOUNDATION, a non-profit affiliate of the UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, I attempted to obtain official funding for some studies on the possibility of past extraterrestrial operations. Two proposals were submitted to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). I was named as principal investigator in the proposals, and it was intended that the research effort in the Second Proposal should have some support from one or more undergraduate students.

A. The First Proposal was entitled "Search for Evidence of Habitation on Venus", and was submitted in October 1989 with a view to participating in NASA's Magellan Guest Investigator Program. In essence we proposed to:

1. Prepare and submit a background review for consideration by the Magellan teams on the justification for the search for evidence of past habitation on Venus.
2. Study Venus radar mapping results as they became available.
3. Study available data from the teams on the geologic history of the planet with special reference to surface changes, and particularly the history of volcanism.
4. Study available data from the teams on the occurrence and disappearance of oceans (if any), and on the history of the planet's atmosphere.

Attempts would be made to interpret such data in the context of the possibility of past habitation. It was recognized that the effort was necessarily somewhat exploratory in nature, and that the form of the research might be expected to evolve as results from the Magellan mission investigators became available.

B. The Second Proposal was entitled "Search for Evidence of Extraterrestrial Knowledge (SEEK)" and was submitted in June 1991 with a view to participating in NASA's Innovative Research Program. In essence we proposed to:

1. Examine texts on Mayan codices, and other sources as appropriate, to compile data on:
  - a. Intervals of visibility and invisibility of Venus.
  - b. Descriptions of the Mayan Sacred Calendar of 260 days.
2. Set out interpretations in regard to:
  - a. Changes in surface and atmospheric conditions on Venus in recent geologic times.
  - b. The prior existence of a larger planet as a source of material for the Asteroid Belt.
3. Compile and correlate data on Colombian gold artifacts suggestive of winged landing craft.

For the Second Proposal it was proposed to limit source investigations to the Western Hemisphere. As with NASA's Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Program (SETI), the proposal recognized that the effort outlined was somewhat risky with respect to the final outcome of the research.

Each proposal was evaluated by NASA by means of a peer review procedure in a competitive environment in that there were more submissions than could be funded. Both proposals referenced the Ancient Astronaut Society and its publication Ancient Skies. The First Proposal included the complete paper on my presentation to the Society's 16th Anniversary World Conference as an Appendix. For the ancient astronaut hypothesis to attract professional support I feel that its proponents should continue to be seen to be competing for research funding in the open marketplace.

The subsequent outcome of both proposals was, unfortunately, unfavorable. However, as one NASA reviewer said to me: "Don't give up".

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# TULUM

BY GENE M. PHILLIPS\*

Early in the sixteenth century the Spanish conquistador, Juan de Grijalva, sailed the Caribbean Sea along the eastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula and was amazed to see large stone structures on the mainland. From Grijalva's description of the site, particularly the principal building perched at the top of a high cliff on the seashore (now called the "Castillo"), archaeologists have concluded that he must have sailed past the Mayan center of Tulum.

Tulum covers only 16 acres within a high limestone wall enclosure on three of its rectangular sides, with its eastern side protected by the high cliff which runs the entire length of the city (1500 feet) at water's edge. The cliff is broken only in one place where a small, sandy beach affords access to the sea. It has been estimated that approximately 600 people lived within the walled city at the time of Grijalva's sighting, an insignificant number compared to large sites such as Tikal, in northern Guatemala, with over 50,000 inhabitants in an area covering over 200 square miles.

Located in the Mexican State of Quintana Roo, Tulum is just 75 miles south of Cancun, one of Mexico's newest and busiest seaside resorts. A favorite tourist attraction, Tulum is the closest principal Mayan site to Cancun and to Cozumel Island, which is a popular port-of-call for Caribbean cruise ships. Only a one and one-half hour's drive from Cancun, Tulum's small, compact area enables the typical tourist to "do" the ruins in about half a day.

Although Tulum was occupied in Preclassic times (before 300 AD) the buildings now at the site are assigned to the Mayan Late Post-classical era (1400 AD to 1500 AD). Tulum has none of the grandiose layouts and enormous structures found at other major Yucatan sites, such as Chichén-Itzá, Cobá, and Uxmal. However, it does offer some unique and interesting features. One first notices the small scale of all the structures - more like doll houses, with only four foot high doorways. Also, all of the buildings have a very strange architectural design - they are "top-heavy", and most have two parallel decorative moldings running around the roof. The top-heaviness is caused by the fact that the walls slant inwards at the bottom, so that the top of the building is noticeably larger than the bottom. The shape and the use of the parallel moldings is found in most of the small Mayan ruins which dot the Quintana Roo coastline.

Another unusual aspect is that almost every building has its own figure of a "descending, or diving, god," set into a niche near the top of the structure. It has also been called a "bee god," for some strange reason. To refer to the figure as a "god" at all seems to stretch the imagination, but is typical of the archaeologists' bent for relating all ancient structures and figures to religion. It seems simpler just to say that the figure represents a person who came down from the sky, possibly an astronaut, who landed in the area and perhaps became revered, either as a "god" or as a great personage. You can see from the detail shown in Figure 2 that the "god" appears to be fully clothed with boots and a helmet. Unfortunately the facial features have been damaged and repaired so that it is impossible to determine what type of person it represented.

When John Lloyd Stephens visited Tulum in 1842, it was completely deserted and the jungle had overgrown

all the structures. Stephens's party cleared away much of the undergrowth from many of the buildings, at least enough for his artist-companion, Frederick Catherwood, to make detailed drawings of some of the buildings.

Stephens noted that all the structures at Tulum face westward and he could only surmise that the purpose was to admit as much sunlight and heat as possible into the buildings. Stephens and Catherwood spent their first night at Tulum in the Castillo, a limestone building perched atop the precipitous cliff by the sea. Stephens bemoaned the fact that the structure was built with its back to the sea, with no windows or openings in the stone wall. During the night, however, a hurricane force wind blew out of the Caribbean and he was glad to have the protection of the solid wall at their backs.

Near the center of the walled city is a small, two-story building called (by the archaeologists) the Temple of the Frescoes, because of the colorful murals which are painted on the inner walls of the lower level. The building also sports its diving god, parallel moldings and top-heavy style. See Figure 3. But the most striking feature of the Temple of the Frescoes is the treatment at the two corners of the west facade. On each outside corner at the top of the ground floor a human head has been fashioned in stucco in deep relief. The figures wrap around the corners so that they can be clearly seen both from the front and from the sides. The roof treatment consists of the two decorative, parallel moldings running around the building, one about a foot above the other. The lower molding bisects the face, with the lips and the chin below the molding and the nose, eyes and forehead between the two moldings.

While it is not uncommon to find strange exterior treatments on the corners of Mayan buildings, Tulum is unique in displaying a human face in such a fashion. But the most startling aspect of the faces is that the features are not Mayan at all! Not Indian of any type, but rather the obvious features of a white caucasian. Why did the Mayans of Tulum carve two likenesses of a white man (?) on the corners of one of their buildings? And why do it in such a fashion to clearly reveal the exact nature of the face? And, perhaps most baffling of all, who was the model, or models?

Although a stickler for detail, Stephens does not mention the faces. While his book contains Catherwood's drawing of the facade of the Temple of the Frescoes, the drawing is not as distinctive as is normal for Catherwood, who usually shows every detail of a building or a stela. This one however, seems to be more of a sketch, and while something is shown in the drawing at the two corners, they cannot be recognized as faces.

About thirty years ago a young Frenchman, Michel Peissel, walked the entire length of Quintana Roo from its northern tip along the coast to Belize. Even at that late date, Cancun was still only a dream of the Department of Tourism in Mexico City and the area was wild, overgrown, and dangerous. When Peissel arrived at Tulum it was much the same as when Stephens visited the site 120 years earlier. But Peissel did not mention the faces on the corners of the Temple of the Frescoes. In fact, I have searched the literature and the only mention I have found of the faces is in Hunter's Guide where he states the following with no explanatory comment: "an unusual architectural decoration on the corners of the Temple of the Frescoes is a stucco sculpture of a face mask that sweeps around the ends of the facade." (p.312, Emphasis Added.)

It is interesting that Hunter describes the figure as a face mask, which implies that it covers the real face to disguise what would presumably be a Mayan one. However, even a cursory glance at the figure shows that it is not a mask, which would be somewhat obvious and would have holes for the eyes and mouth. No, this figure is not a mask. It is a  
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\*Mr. Phillips is the founder of the Ancient Astronaut Society. This article is based upon his firsthand observations at Tulum during the Society's Member Expedition to the Yucatan Peninsula in the Spring of 1990. All photos used in this article were taken by the author. His address is 1921 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035-3105 USA.

(Continued from previous page)  
 three-dimensional representation of a real person.  
 A person not indigenous to the region. So the my-  
 stery remains!

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Fig. 1. Temple of the Descending God, Tulum. Note "top-heavy" construction. Castillo is in right background.



Fig. 2. Detail of Descending God on Temple of the same name at Tulum.

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Fig. 3. Temple of the Frescoes, Tulum. Note the two faces at the corners of the facade on the lower level just below the first roof molding.



Fig. 4. Detail of face sculpted on right corner of Temple facade.



Fig. 5. Detail of face sculpted on left corner of Temple facade. Lower roof molding bisects the face. Note the chin strap. And, see the cigarette (?) stub in the left corner of the mouth. Could this have been the first "Marlboro Man" billboard in the New World? The eye treatment could represent goggles. The Tulum faces are very similar to two helmeted figures with goggles found at Chichén-Itzá in northern Yucatan. See Ancient Skies 15:3.