

TALKING TO THE GUY ON THE AIRPLANE

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There's a popular meme that my archaeology friends have been circulating on social media lately: a picture of Giorgio Tsoukalos, a producer of the popular History Channel show *Ancient Aliens*, overlaid with the caption "I'm not saying it was aliens, but it was aliens." The caption is a play on Tsoukalos's and others' claims that the archaeological and historical record contains ample evidence for alien visits to earth in antiquity. To wit, past episodes of the show have suggested that Kachinas, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and indigenous rock art depict aliens; that much of the monumental art and architecture of ancient Mesoamerica, South America, Near East, Easter Island (of course), Malta, and elsewhere represents the genius of extraterrestrial visitors; that Mayan kings were not really people but alien overlords; that extraterrestrials were responsible for the demise of many civilizations—if not the dinosaurs, too—and so on. My archaeologist friends post the meme because they think it is hilarious, but sometimes I wonder whether we are the only ones laughing. A lot more people seem to be listening, and even nodding in agreement.

Ancient Aliens first aired on the History Channel in 2010. Over 80 episodes have appeared since then, and the show is currently in its seventh season (History Channel 2015). The show has been such a success that a spinoff, *In Search of Ancient Aliens*, now also airs on the History Channel. *Ancient Aliens* cracked the top 100 TV shows on cable (among 25–54 year olds) eight times in 2013, with an average of over a million viewers per showing (Zap2it 2014). While not Monday Night Football, on some nights about as many people watched it as they did the Comedy Channel's *The*

Daily Show, ESPN's *Pardon the Interruption*, and HGTV's *House Hunters International*. They represent far more people than will ever take an archaeology class. It is worth noting that the History Channel also produces *American Unearthed*, a largely hyperdiffusionist take on North American antiquity, and *Search for the Lost Giants*, which (yep!) examines "evidence" for giants in antiquity. And this is just the History Channel. Check out this generation's TV (the Internet) if you dare.

If Amazon.com's best-seller list is any indication (Amazon 2014), people are even *reading* (yes, reading) books about ancient aliens, giants, and pseudoarchaeology. Peruse Amazon and you will see that most of the best-selling books in the genre of what we may call "genuine" archaeology tend to be textbooks. The great bulk of these fall somewhere between the 90,000 and 400,000 mark on their best-selling book list. On a positive note, we could conclude that sales of these books are probably better than the rankings suggest because the list does not aggregate different editions of the same book. On the other hand, when weighing popularity, we must concede the sad fact that nearly all of these sales are coerced—that students are buying them for class, and then likely not reading them. I doubt, however, that many faculty members are assigning *The Ancient Giants of North America* (Dewhurst 2014) for classroom use, and yet it ranked 4,500 on Amazon's best-seller book list and #4 in the category of archaeology books in Politics and Social Sciences in the Spring of 2014. Nor do I suspect that *The Ancient Alien Question* (Coppens 2012) is required reading for many archaeology courses, but it ranked about 38,000 on the Amazon best-seller list in the Spring of 2014.

It had also been rated some 239 times, with 81 percent of readers giving the book four or five stars. And then consider that the current #1 best-seller in Amazon's Prehistory category is *Fingerprints of the Gods* (Hancock 1995), with *Before Atlantis* (Joseph 2013) not far behind at #7. For comparison, two excellent books that critically examine pseudoarchaeology claims, *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries* (Feder 2014) and *Archaeological Fantasies* (Fagan, ed. 2006), ranked about 365,000 and 1,100,000, respectively. With this in mind, should we really be surprised that the content of pseudoarchaeology programs and books has crept into the popular consciousness?

When I present popular misconceptions regarding evolution, the archaeological record, the age of the earth, dinosaurs, race, and so forth in my classes I often invoke a semi-fictitious character I call "the guy on the airplane." I met the inspiration for him years ago on a flight to an anthropology conference; he was sitting next to me reading a dog-eared copy of the aforementioned *Fingerprints of the Gods*. But I've encountered him (or her) plenty of times since then: in my classes, at drinking establishments, and even in the halls of academia. It seems that I am running into him now more than ever. At a party just last winter, he asked me what I knew about the lost race of people that had mined silver in Appalachia. And then in the spring semester he came up to me after class to remind me that the ancient Egyptians had light bulbs. For those few of you who have not yet met the type, you should know that "the guy on the airplane" is rarely belligerent or obstinate (see also Anderson et al. 2013). In fact, he is often friendly. If anything, he tends to be undecided about alternative archaeological explanations. And therein lies our opportunity.

Anthropologists and archaeologists have been advocating for some time that we need to write books for the public. Some of this may reflect a nostalgia for an age when the works of Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Ashley Montagu, and V. Gordon Childe were read by common folk; jealousy that our work has often been more successfully synthesized by others rather than our own; and an ethical obligation to make our work—which is often funded by tax-dollars and dependent on an indigenous record—accessible and meaningful to the broader public and descendant

communities. But perhaps we need to not only write *for* the public, but listen to them and address their interests and questions too. This was essentially the take-away point of a session on pseudoarchaeology organized by David Anderson, Jeb Card, and Ken Feder at the SAA meetings in Memphis in 2012: that we devote some time in our introductory courses to address pseudoarchaeology and seize the opportunity of "teaching moments" outside of the classroom to inform and educate the public (Anderson et al. 2013). Certainly, given the popular state of knowledge of archaeology, it is clear that donning noise-cancelling headphones and peering out the window is not working (Anderson et al. 2013; Feder 2006:95). It's time we talk to the guy sitting next to us on the airplane.

Some say that by merely engaging with pseudoarchaeology we legitimize it by creating the appearance of a debate (Anderson et al. 2013), and I agree, but would offer that ignoring pseudoarchaeology has a similar effect, as one of the main assertions of pseudoarchaeologists is that there is an establishment conspiracy to bury their work (see Fagan 2006). Thus, no matter what we do, we give them ammunition. But the reviews that follow are not for them. As Ken Feder's (2006) research has shown, a surprising number of college students are what he calls "fence sitters." They do not completely dismiss the claims of pseudoarchaeology, but nor are they true believers. I suspect that the vast majority of the people we encounter in bars and on planes can be characterized the same way. Accordingly, the main intent of these reviews is to offer the silent and curious majority that is interested in these works a professional perspective on them, and for those archaeologists who are unfamiliar with them, a primer on pseudoarchaeology today.

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Fingerprints of the Gods: The Evidence of Earth's Lost Civilization. GRAHAM HANCOCK. 1995. Three Rivers Press, New York. 592 pp. \$19.95 (paperback), ISBN: 978-0-517-88729-5.

Reviewed by Kenneth L. Feder, Central Connecticut State University.

Do me a favor. Go over to a window and look outside. I'll wait. Okay, are you looking? See anything extraordinary? Yup, it is pigs flying. So many pigs. That should explain how a Graham Hancock book is being reviewed in *American Antiquity*. And it is about time. Since its publication in 1995, the book is estimated to have sold more than three million copies and has been published in 27 languages. As archaeologists, we ignore such a phenomenon at our peril.

In *Fingerprints of the Gods*, author and journalist Graham Hancock proposes the following:

(1) At some point in the proverbial dim mists of antiquity, and certainly no later than 15,000 years ago, an amazingly advanced maritime civilization had developed, greatly sophisticated in its architecture, engineering, mathematics, astronomy, calendar, and agriculture. Some of the technology developed by this civilization may have involved advanced machinery.

(2) This advanced culture plied the world's oceans and encountered the native people of, among other places, Egypt, India, Mexico, and Peru.

(3) During such encounters, these advanced people shared certain elements of their culture with the benighted natives, schooling them in, among other things, agriculture, architecture, mathematics, and astronomy.

(4) People all over the world have passed down stories of their encounters with the advanced civiliza-

tion by way of myth, legend, and religion. We should take as literal history, therefore, ancient stories told by Mesopotamians, Mayas, Inkas, Egyptians, and others of "gods" bestowing on them the characteristics of civilization. The "gods" in these myths, legends, and religions were not supernatural beings or extraterrestrial aliens, but, instead, people bearing an anomalously advanced technology.

(5) At about 12,400 years ago, a worldwide cataclysm, primarily a great flood, destroyed the advanced civilization. Its proximate cause was Late Pleistocene deglaciation, which was virtually instantaneous and catastrophic. The ultimate cause likely was "crustal displacement" where entire continents shifted their locations virtually overnight. Antarctica moved from a location in the temperate zone to where it now sits at the South Pole.

(6) As the home territory of the lost civilization has not been found on any of the other continents, Hancock proposes that it might have been located, in fact, on Antarctica. Crustal displacement, rather obviously, rendered the home territory of the lost civilization uninhabitable and largely destroyed its population.

(7) Wherever you find traditional stories of great catastrophes, these are thinly veiled eyewitness accounts, filtered through the lens of myth, of actual events related to end-of-Pleistocene crustal displacement.

(8) Much of the splendid art, architecture, and scientific knowledge reflected in the archaeological record of the recognized civilizations of the Old and New Worlds is attributable to the lost civilization. Pyramids and the rest were not the product of indigenous, in situ developments but represent, instead, "fingerprints" (get it?) left by the lost civilization and,

as that society was destroyed 12,400 years ago, are far older than conventional archaeology or history supposes. Hancock either ignores or denies the existence of archaeological evidence of the evolutionary development of advanced technologies. Agriculture. Pyramids. The Maya calendar. Bam. They just appear without any developmental sequence, gifts from the denizens of the lost civilization.

(9) Many of the great and monumental structures built all over the world by the lost civilization, especially in Egypt, are, effectively, messages in a physical and mathematical cipher intended to communicate to us in the present. These coded messages, subtly “written” in a language of alignments and geometry, especially as seen in the pyramids of Giza and the Great Sphinx, can be interpreted as a warning to us in the present that the same agency of destruction that put the “lost” in the lost civilization, will inevitably be visited upon us. Hancock does not clarify why, if the denizens of the lost civilization knew the end was coming and had the presence of mind, the where-withal, and the time to leave monumental bread-crumbs leading future societies to their sad story, they did not invest their energies more sensibly in an effort to save themselves.

(10) Oh, and the great, sophisticated, magnificent, and ancient civilization that was the source of all human technological and intellectual development in the ancient world was, wait for it: white. Yup, they were white people. With beards. In this, Hancock takes at face value historical narratives written by Europeans who asserted that the aboriginal and dark-skinned people of the world had white gods and white culture heroes, ignoring the context of such stories as elements of colonial oppression.

Hancock manages to make these incredible assertions, all the while assiduously avoiding the dreaded “A” word: Atlantis. Nevertheless, the general theme of *Fingerprints of the Gods* also underlies Ignatius Donnelly’s 1882 opus, *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*.

After the publication of *Fingerprints of the Gods*, Hancock explained that he views himself not as a historian, archaeologist, or geologist, but as a lawyer whose goal is not to reveal historical or scientific truths, but to gain legal vindication for his “client”:

A parallel for what I do is to be found in the work of an attorney defending a client in a court of law. My ‘client’ is a lost civilisation and it is my responsibility to persuade the jury—the public—that this civilisation did exist. (<http://www.grahamhancock.com/features/trenches-p3.htm>)

Any effort on the part of a scientist to point out the deep problems in a legalistic approach to an archaeo-

logical hypothesis, with its attendant reliance on cherry-picked data (much of it from pre-twentieth-century publications), is necessarily problematic. Again, in Hancock’s own words:

So it is certainly true, as many of my critics have pointed out, that I am selective with the evidence I present. Of course I’m selective! It isn’t my job to show my client in a bad light! (<http://www.grahamhancock.com/features/trenches-p3.htm>)

Fingerprints of the Gods reads like a Victorian travelogue. Hancock, the world traveler unencumbered by training in or credentials related to archaeology, encounters non-white people in poor nations. He believes that their ancestors were intellectually ordinary. For example, he denigrates the Maya, asserting that, other than their calendar, “there was precious little else that these jungle-dwelling Indians did which suggested they might have had the capacity (or the need) to conceive of really long periods of time” (p. 162). So, their calendar must be ascribed to someone else. Mound builder myth, anyone?

Hancock is largely a synthesizer of the work of other writers. For most of the mathematical and astronomical details of *Fingerprints*, Hancock relies on a group of fringe thinkers including, among others: Charles Hapgood (earth-crust displacement), Arthur Posnasky (who dates Tiwanaku to before 17,000 years ago), Robert Bauval (who claims that the Giza pyramids are a representation of the three stars in the constellation Orion’s belt as it was aligned 12,400 years ago), Anthony West (the Great Sphinx is much older than Egyptologists say), and Rand and Rose Flem-Ath (who propose that the homeland of the great lost civilization is the continent of Antarctica). Put them together in a blender, and you have *Fingerprints of the Gods*, a concoction that is very hard to swallow, indeed.

It has been nearly 15 years since the publication of *Fingerprints of the Gods* and while Hancock has revised some of the specific lyrics—he no longer believes the Giza pyramids are more than 12,400 years old; maybe Plato’s story of Atlantis is related to the great lost civilization—the song remains the same; there was a great, now lost civilization existing more than 12,400 years ago whose fingerprints can be found in the archaeological record. A new book is apparently forthcoming and no doubt the defense attorney for the lost civilization will get yet another day in court. And maybe even a cable show.

The Ancient Alien Question: A New Inquiry into the Existence, Evidence, and Influence of Ancient Visitors. PHILIP COPPENS. 2012. New Page Books,

Pompton Plains, NJ. 320 pp. \$19.95 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-60163-198-5.

Reviewed by Jeb Card, Miami University of Ohio.

The television program *Ancient Aliens* at its height had one to three million viewers a week. I do not know what these viewers think about archaeology, but frequent *Ancient Aliens* cast member Philip Coppens (who died in 2012) and his book *The Ancient Alien Question* laid out the core mission of the ancient aliens hypothesis (AAH) and other forms of pseudoarchaeology: resistance to the modernity that strips away spiritual authority and limits access to intellectual authority to professional science and academia.

Coppens synthesizes the AAH, the notion that advanced nonhuman entities influenced human development and were remembered in mythology. The AAH seems to fit the Space Age moment when Erich von Däniken sold millions of copies of *Chariots of the Gods?* in which the “gods” delivered 1960s-era rocketships and jet runways to ancient humanity. Yet by synthesizing the broader AAH, Coppens excavates its true origins in Victorian mysticism. Pseudoarchaeological obsessions with race, hyperdiffusion, and evolution (Darwinism is critiqued on pp. 225–226 for “having invaded all sciences”) have clear Victorian provenance and were bundled in Theosophy, a counter-cultural movement that paralleled early anthropology’s cross-cultural interest in religion and included some anthropologists (for example, linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf). Theosophists blended hermetic magic, spiritualism, Western curiosity about Eastern religion, colonial racism, and misconceptions of evolution into a worldview of root races, lost continents, and ascended masters who originated on Venus or other worlds. Theosophy laid the foundations of various esoteric communities that in turn produced early flying saucer “contactees.” It also influenced science fiction writers like H. P. Lovecraft, who inspired AAH proponents found in Coppens’s volume such as Terrence McKenna, who pioneered the AAH notion of drug-induced contact with extra-dimensional intelligences and helped create the 2012 Maya Apocalypse. For more on the tie between pulp fiction and the AAH, see Colavito (*The Cult of Alien Gods*, 2005), and the website jasoncolavito.com for a valuable reference on pseudoarchaeology.

In *The Ancient Alien Question* Coppens begins with the materialist sci-fi AAH vision. Coppens was a member of the *Ancient Aliens* cast, typically overplaying “anomalies” at Tiwanaku or Inka sites such as the “massive” Gateway of the Sun (about three meters tall) and unworkable andesite that Jean Pierre Protzen

found to actually be around 5.5 on the Moh’s scale, comparable to tooth enamel routinely worked by pre-columbian artisans. Coppens then guides the reader to a worldview informed by belief and personal revelation in which life descends from the heavens (via DNA panspermia) and civilization is delivered by extra-dimensional gods/aliens summoned by ancient shaman kings and modern psychics.

Coppens explicitly urges rejection of professional archaeology and modern science, as they have stripped the modern age of a philosophy rightfully based in mythology and religion. He “sincerely hope[s] that the Ancient Alien Question is dangerous to the educational system, as well as science” (p. 41). The foreword by von Däniken suggests that academia should have fields of study such as “New-Age Philology” to rewrite ancient texts to include space-ships rather than heaven, or “Chronology of the gods” to orderly sort all the “unspeakably complicated information about the gods from antiquity” (p. 13). Even in clearly wrong cases, the AAH is praised for supposedly inspiring scientists to ask new questions. According to Coppens, *Chariots of the Gods?* prompted Mayanists to a better understanding of Pakal’s sarcophagus (pp. 184–185), not the contemporary decipherment of Maya writing. He invokes the destruction of the Library of Alexandria and other book burnings as suppression of ancient truth without recognizing his own call for the destruction of the scientific order, replacing scientific investigation with a new history of mysticism and myth.

This new history informs *The Ancient Alien Question* to the point of being difficult to process without a background in UFOs, metaphysics, and other esoteric topics. Key sections are influenced by Graham Hancock’s *Fingerprints of the Gods*, which worked with second- and third-hand sources. For example, the “Maya” city of Teotihuacan is supposedly a microcosm of both Orion’s belt and the Solar System (pp. 140–142). This is sourced to Hancock’s *Fingerprints*, which itself cites other non-mainstream sources, including one that freely blends vigesimal Mesoamerican numbers with a non-existing “suppressed” Maya decimal system.

Mainstream academic research is presented if it seems “mysterious” or “anomalous.” A discussion (pp. 120–126) of recent research on precolumbian geoengineering of the Amazon basin and highly productive “slash-and-char” *terra preta* is not extraterrestrial, but Coppens includes it because it sounds like the science fiction concept of terraforming, and presumably because it is likely unknown to his audience. Is this professional scientific research part of the old evidence-and-not-myth-based order that needs to be swept away, that presents “history as a closed book”

when in reality “history is not as simple as what we read in standard reference works” (p. 175–176)? Not when Coppens presents it. He stresses that the AAH exists because professional archaeologists will not incorporate Western esoteric traditions as true knowledge (p. 25, 257) and because the concept of *god* has become unpopular (p. 55). In one chapter, Coppens reproduces the argument of *The Stargate Conspiracy* (Picknett and Prince 2001) a book he collaborated on about an extra-dimensional-influenced elite conspiracy to enslave humanity. On the back of that book, two phrases stand out in bold color: “Question everything. Especially authority.”

Göbekli Tepe: Genesis of the Gods: The Temple of the Watchers and the Discovery of Eden. ANDREW COLLINS. 2014. Bear & Company, Rochester, Vermont. 142 pp. \$24.00 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-59143-142-8.

Reviewed by Eric H. Cline, The George Washington University.

This might be the first pseudoarchaeology book to come out on Göbekli Tepe, the intriguing Neolithic site in Anatolia (ancient Turkey) excavated by the late Klaus Schmidt that has massive carved stones dating to approximately 11,000 years ago, but it will almost certainly not be the last. The stage is set already by pages 3–4, during the Introduction written by Graham Hancock, when he dates the Great Sphinx at Giza not to the Fourth Dynasty, as is accepted by conventional Egyptologists, but to “a much earlier epoch of humankind,” perhaps “between the eleventh millennium B.C. and the ninth millennium B.C.” This makes the Sphinx contemporary with Göbekli Tepe, which Hancock finds full of meaning, including wondering whether there could be “a real connection between these two distant places.”

Hancock proceeds to cite previous works written by himself in which he says that he made the case for “a global civilization, possessing immense technical sophistication ... that thrived in an age before a terrible cataclysm brought the world to its knees soon after the end of the last ice age” (p. 4-5). He writes: “It seems certain, now, that the cause of this worldwide catastrophe was a large comet that fragmented into thousands of pieces as it entered the upper atmosphere” and then rained down on Earth, triggering the Younger Dryas mini ice age, causing the extinction of Pleistocene megafauna and devastating the world’s human population. He links all this to the current book by noting that “Andrew [Collins], in this groundbreaking book, proposes that Göbekli Tepe

was built as a response to the aftermath of this global cataclysm” (p. 5).

Hancock concludes that this book is “a masterpiece, for it is the culmination of nearly twenty years of Andrew’s original research into the origins of the Neolithic revolution and its relationship to Hebrew traditions concerning the location of the Garden of Eden and the human truth behind the Watchers of the book of Enoch” (p. 7). He notes further that “Andrew was one of the first writers to realize the greater significance of Göbekli Tepe, bringing it to the attention of the mysteries community as early as 2004,” and he assures the reader that “there is no one better suited to reveal Göbekli Tepe’s place in history today” (p. 8).

Collins is a decent writer, who uses a breezy first-person narrative that makes the reader feel they already know him at the start of the book. However, he commits the standard sin of pseudoarchaeologists immediately, within the first five pages, by linking known archaeological facts, such as the Neolithic revolution, the domestication of plants and animals, and the first metalworking and smelting, with pure speculation. In his case, it is musings about the book of Enoch (which is not included in most versions of the Bible, though there are fragments found in the Dead Sea Scrolls), the so-called “Watchers” (the angels who supposedly fathered the Nephilim), and the Nephilim themselves (most recently seen in the Hollywood movie *Noah*, starring Russell Crowe) with which he is concerned. Thus, already on p. 13, Collins asks, “Is it possible that some memory of the prime movers or driving elite behind this great transition in technology and innovation is recalled in the stories of the Watchers providing mortal kind with the rudiments of civilization? Is this what these human angels are—instigators of the Neolithic revolution?”

Herein lies the problem with much pseudoarchaeology and pseudoarchaeologists: they cannot accept the fact that mere humans might have come up with great innovations such as the domestication of plants and animals or built great architectural masterpieces such as the Sphinx all on their own; rather, they frequently seek or invoke divine, or even alien, assistance to explain how these came to be. And so, after the brief introduction, Collins takes the reader on a voyage of discovery “in order to determine who built Göbekli Tepe, and why” (p. 15). This journey takes up the rest of the book, including a substantial portion devoted to the Garden of Eden.

The narrative is sufficiently meandering; in fact, it is beyond the patience of this reviewer to relate and discuss it in detail, despite the best of intentions. Instead, I will say only that, in my opinion, Collins’s account is a jumble of facts and fancy. It makes no sense whatsoever, at least from the viewpoint of

archaeology. This is perhaps not surprising, for Collins also notes at the outset that this volume is really “an intellectual adventure that will culminate not only in the discovery of Eden but also in the realization that the true meaning behind humanity’s fall from grace, in the wake of the Neolithic revolution, is integrally bound up with the secret writings of Seth, the son of Adam” (p. 15). Despite Hancock’s initial promise that Collins will reveal Göbekli Tepe’s “place in history,” he does no such thing in this book.

To be fair, this book by Collins fits into his apparent worldview. He is a known proponent of the theory that there were ancient civilizations present on the earth before those that we know, describing himself as having written “more than a dozen books that challenge the way we perceive the past” (p. 421). In his first book, published in 1996, he claimed that the Watchers of the book of Enoch and the Anunnaki of the Sumerian texts are “the memory of a shamanic elite that catalyzed the Neolithic revolution” (p. 421). He has also apparently successfully determined that Atlantis is located in Cuba and the Bahamian archipelago (2000); found out the truth behind the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb (2002); and revealed the existence of a cave complex located beneath the pyramids of Giza (2009).

The blurbs for this book (one on the back cover and three on the Amazon webpage) are enthusiastic, but they are by like-minded authors. The reviews posted by Amazon readers are similarly enthusiastic, but uninformed members of the general public have written them all. Indeed, it should give professional archaeologists pause to find that pseudoarchaeological books such as this not only appeal to a certain fringe element of the general public (i.e., the “mysteries community” referred to by Hancock), but are also apparently read by an additional segment that one might usually consider less prone to believing such nonsense.

As with his previous books, no doubt Collins is laughing all the way to the bank with this one. Whether he actually believes any of what he has written is something perhaps best kept to himself.

Black Genesis: The Prehistoric Origins of Ancient Egypt. ROBERT BAUVAL and THOMAS BROPHY. 2011. Bear & Company, Rochester, Vermont. 356 pp. \$20.00 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-59143-114-5.

Reviewed by Ethan Watrall, Michigan State University.

I do not think that anyone would argue with me if I were to say that Egypt has been both the target of and

inspiration for a diverse and spectacular array of pseudoarchaeological narratives. Secret knowledge encoded in monumental architecture? Egypt has it. Vast stores of subterranean Atlantean knowledge? Check! Egypt has that as well. Extraterrestrial involvement (in every way imaginable)? Oh, double check! Egypt definitely has that. Indeed, I could fill all of the space I have been allotted for this review (and much more) with a staggering list of all the permutations and combinations of pseudoarchaeological, pseudoscientific, and pseudohistorical ideas that are somehow related to ancient Egypt.

Black Genesis: The Prehistoric Origins of Ancient Egypt fits nicely within this assemblage. The basic premise of the book is that the roots of the ancient Egyptian state are “black African” (a term which the authors use to distinguish between Sub-Saharan Africa and North/Mediterranean Africa). In this regard, the authors are inspired by the work of Afrocentric scholars such as Martin Bernal and Cheikh Anta Diop. The authors argue that the Dynastic Egyptians are direct descendants of the Neolithic peoples who occupied Nabta Playa, who are in turn direct descendants of Early Holocene populations in the Gilf Kebir and Jebel Uweinat regions of southwestern Egypt. The authors also suggest that these early Holocene peoples were descendants of earlier populations from modern-day central Chad. A good deal of their discussion about the earliest populations revolves around early Saharan petroglyphs—sites such as the Cave of Swimmers and the Cave of Beasts (both in the Gilf Kebir region), Niola Doa (in the Ennedi region of Chad), and Jebel Uweinat (in southwestern Egypt). It is worth noting that, as a graduate student, I had the privilege of working with Fred Wendorf at Nabata Playa for a season, so I know a little something about what they talk about.

The connective tissue that binds their wacky string of pearls together is archaeoastronomy (well, pseudoarchaeoastronomy). A significant portion of the book is dedicated to revealing the hidden astronomical alignments at Nabta Playa, and connecting them to later Dynastic Egyptian astronomical symbolism, alignments, and knowledge (again, revealed by the authors). For good measure, the authors introduce a totally unexpected biblical connection—Ham, son of Noah (because nothing says “rigorous archaeological scholarship” like using the Bible as primary source data). Ultimately, the author’s core argument is that later Dynastic Egyptians and early Holocene Sub-Saharan peoples clearly shared the same astronomical-ideological beliefs—which means they (of course) were directly related. This, in the eyes of the authors, means that the origins of the ancient Egyptian state are “black African.” The obsession with revealing

hidden astronomical alignments is no great surprise given that Bauval, a “professional” pseudoarchaeologist, is the father of the popular Orion/Giza-Orion correlation “theory.”

Unfortunately, the authors engineer the “simple truth” of their argument by totally neglecting to discuss current research in the Neolithic and Predynastic of the Nile Valley (and immediately surrounding area). They also completely neglect to discuss any of the research carried out by the Combined Prehistoric Expedition on other sites in the region, such as the Middle Paleolithic site of Bir Tarfawi, the Upper Paleolithic site of Wadi Kubbania, or the wealth of Neolithic sites in the Bir Kiseiba and Bir Abu Hussein regions, all of which would complicate the tottering house of cards they have constructed.

The rhetoric of the volume draws heavily from the standard pseudoarchaeological playbook. The authors lean heavily on the well-worn conspiratorial trope of “mainstream” archaeologists purposefully hiding the truth from the public. Quite a bit of the discussion of Nabta Playa is peppered with insinuations of academic misconduct by members of the Combined Prehistoric Expedition. The authors also wrap their arguments in the cloak of the physical sciences, as if the mere presence of a chapter replete with astronomical observations, calculations, and assertions proves them right. The scientific background of the co-author (Brophy) and his connections with NASA and JPL are often subtly played up, as if to say “hey, this guy is a SCIENTIST, all of this stuff must be true.” A simple Google search reveals that Brophy teaches on “the non-calculable and immeasurable aspects of the universe” at the California Institute for Human Science, an educational institution that offers classes (and degrees) in the integration of science and religion, energy medicine, and the systematization of scientific and objective meditative practices (just to name a few).

While the book is filled with spectacular logical fallacies, ignorant and misinformed interpretations of regional archaeological data, and an insidious rhetoric about researchers hiding “the truth,” we need to consider the wellspring from whence the author’s core ideas flow. In their argument that the roots of the ancient Egyptian state lie in Sub-Saharan Africa, the authors are leveraging a critical issue in Egyptian archaeology. Historically, Egypt has always been oriented by scholars towards the Eastern Mediterranean, the Near East, and Western Asia. Egypt’s interactions with Africa have always been understudied, under-rated, and often totally (and purposefully) neglected. The reasons are colonialist, racist, and ethnocentric. Many scholars simply did not want Egypt to be a part of Africa. Egypt was civilized, Africa was barbaric,

primitive, and backward. It is only recently that Egyptian archaeology and Egyptology have begun to think about Egypt in its greater African context. The problem for us is that the scholarly neglect that Africa has been shown is the underlying fuel that pushes Bauval and Brophy’s argument. In their vaguely rambling and disjointed set of arguments, the authors enthusiastically prey upon this neglect like a pack of hyenas.

As I plowed through the book, it is this that I struggled with the most. It was not the convoluted reasoning that would probably have killed my undergrad Jesuit logic professor. It was not the calculated exclusion of well-accepted regional archaeological knowledge. It was not the subtle (and often not so subtle) implications that archaeologists are purposefully obscuring “the truth.” Instead it was how best to separate the illogical, unsubstantiated, and often downright crazy assertions from some of these more thorny (and valid) underlying disciplinary issues without ascribing any measure of genuine authority or expertise to the authors, because, let me tell you, they sure do not deserve any.

Star Shrines and Earthworks of the Desert Southwest. GARY A. DAVID. 2012. Adventures Unlimited Publications, Kempton, Illinois. 384 pp. \$19.95 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-935487-84-5.

Reviewed by Stephen H. Lekson, University of Colorado, Boulder.

Gary A. David’s *Star Shrines and Earthworks of the Desert Southwest* (hereafter, “Star Shines”) is an enthusiastic, starry-eyed exploration of ancient times in the American Southwest. David has read widely in Southwestern archaeology and ethnology (and carefully footnotes his sources), and he has chatted up more than a few Indians. He scrupulously positions himself as a non-Native, non-archaeologist. I position myself as an elder Southwesterner and a recovering scientist; my remarks and generalizations reflect my province and provenance.

David is a readable writer—he holds a Master’s in creative writing from the prestigious University of Colorado, Boulder. His prose is energetic but not hysterical. And he churns it out: since 2007, a 300-plus-page book every 18 months, on average. He also publishes poetry and plays guitar in a band (good things, both). A Cleveland native, he moved in 1994 to Arizona and became fascinated by Hopi and the landscape—interests shared, of course, by many Southwestern archaeologists—and by Orion Correlation Theory.

The Orion Correlation Theory (OCT) was popularized by Robert Bauval in the 1980s; Bauval asserted that the monuments of the Giza Plateau were sited to create a scale model of the constellation Orion, with the three great pyramids representing the three stars of Orion's belt (my reference here is Wikipedia, entirely appropriate, I think). David, inspired by Bauval, applied OCT to the Hopi villages and—voilà!—a star was born. Above and below the belt, David discovered that “the Hopi constructed a similar pattern of villages that mirrors *all* the major stars in the constellation” (from his website: <http://www.theorionzone.com/index.htm>).

His first book, *Orion Zone*, came in 2007, followed by three more expanding on his theme, with *Star Shrines* appearing in 2014. All were published by Adventure Unlimited Publications, an imprint specializing in this sort of thing. His latest, *Mirrors of Orion* (published 2014 on Amazon's CreateSpace self-publishing) broadens his canvas, finding Orion's footprint in ancient monumental landscapes across the globe.

Alternative archaeology—and *Star Shrines* is surely that—has a large audience. Robert Bauval, Michael Cremo, and Graham Hancock sell more books than we: by “we” I mean every archaeologist whose name is not Brian Fagan. Search Amazon for best-sellers in “Ancient Civilizations > Prehistory.” As I write, the top three titles are by alternative authors (#4, a happy hiccup in Amazon's algorithm, is Gary Larson's “Beyond the Far Side”). The alternative readership, I think, is broad if not deep: New Age's oldsters, aging Aquarians. As a Boomer sub-demographic, they are legion—if your town still has a newspaper, does it run an astrology column? Q.E.D.

It is easy to dismiss out of hand alternative archaeology and *Star Shrines*, but we should not and I'll tell you why: first, ancient people actually did things like this; and second, alternative archaeology is more interesting than the stuff we write.

First things first: ancient people did big, esoteric things. In the Southwest, archaeoastronomy was a hiss and a byword in the last age's scientific rigor. Like ritual, it was fluff and a misdirection of resources. Postprocessualism and NAGPRA rewrote our rules, and ritual and astronomy came to the fore. Now it is all about ritual and—more relevant here, ethno-astronomy and geomancy. We have come to accept that ancient people (even “simple” Southwestern peoples) did things like OCT, if not OCT proper. They studied the heavens, consulted their astrologers, and acted accordingly. We accept this now. Alignments-R-Us: we have become a mare's nest of connected dots. How do we vet this stuff—wheat from chaff, stars from satellites, comets from cupidity? I'll return to this conundrum (#1) below.

Second things second: alternative archaeology—if well written—is more interesting than the products we produce. More interesting to more people, that is. An Indian once remarked, simply stating a fact, “you archaeologists only write for each other.” It's true: we write mostly for our citation circles or for our lead agencies. Over the many years, a few of us (I can say with battered pride) directed some portion of our output for broader publics; but it is only in the past decade or so that the charge became general. Many now write for the public. Most write very, very carefully. We transpose sciency aesthetics from our day jobs—that is, boring is better—to our public offerings. If it is interesting, for heaven's sake tone it down. Much of what we write to engage the public is (sorry to say) boring. A harsh, snarky assertion, yes—but you and I both know it is true. I'll return to this second conundrum (#2) below.

“Nothing shocks me; I'm a scientist,” said Indiana Jones. I have not his sangfroid: I was shocked or at least disturbed when taking up the task of this review and reading *Star Shrines* immediately after (like, the next day) completing a second edition of *Chaco Meridian*. The first edition, published 15 years ago, was a moderately successful crossover book (a scholarly book accessible to lay readers) framed by a simple alignment of three sites and north. Turns out that the alignment was longer and deeper, geographically and chronologically—but that is as may be. I was hit by those two conundrums: (#1) what makes my work more worthy than David's? And (#2) why should my audience find my work—or your work—more interesting than David's?

Conundrum #1: vetting the accounts. Both David and I go beyond the data. Any archaeological statement more expansive than a posthole's measurement or the number of sherds in a bag goes beyond the data (Dr. Binford told us this 50 years ago; Dr. Hodder told us again 30 years ago; and it is still true). How far beyond? We would like to think not very far. Stay close to the data! But sticking too close to the data—a fragmentary, miniscule sample of ancient life—systematically, relentlessly misrepresents the ancients. There was more to ancient life than corn, beans, squash, and babies; but that is what the data, closely stuck, tell us. So we all step beyond the data. How do we judge those excursions, those traveler's tales? At some level, it is ad hominem or credentialing. I have a Ph.D. in archaeology; David does not. But one need not be a rocket scientist to get a Ph.D., and a Ph.D. is no guarantee that its bearer is not a nut case. The key difference is this: my credentials and career put me inside the envelope, pushing out. David scribbles on the outside of an envelope sealed to him (I'll ignore peer review, because I have had awkward

moments with my putative peers; and—whose peers?—David’s peers think highly of his work, with back-cover blurbs from the King of Alt, Graham Hancock).

Conundrum #2: being interesting. Style and/or content! Good writing style can make the mundane interesting; it takes terrible writing to obscure or destroy a really meaty story, with good content. Style first: David has a loose journalistic style—he is trying to communicate broadly, and to that end he writes well. There are some very good Southwestern writers, but they did not pick up writer’s chops in graduate school. We are not trained to write readably; in fact, just the reverse. Archaeological prose is famously, notoriously boring. And too often willfully difficult: theory cliques glory in obscurantism, jargon, and turgid syntax (sit through TAG, if you can). So one way or the other, we are not going to hook ‘em with style.

OK, if we cannot do it with form or style, let us go with content. David’s content is fantastic, it is phenomenal, it is flabbergasting, it is ... a farrago. A mish-mash of Mu, the Chaco Meridian(!), Easter Island, “a Lost Egyptian Cave in Grand Canyon, Ant People and the Hopi underworld, shamanistic roads in Chaco Canyon, Egyptian Orion as psychedelic barley god, a Pre-Columbian counterculture in the Southwest, [and] epic sea voyages of the ancestral Hopi” (again, from his webpage). For the credulous, far more interesting and exciting than corn-beans-squash-babies-and-then-they-invented-neck-banded-pottery.

Our story could use some work. There was more to the ancient Southwest than corn-beans-etc., but when we pen popular accounts, that is too often what we write. First in *Chaco Meridian* (1999) and a decade later in *A History of the Ancient Southwest* (2009), I tried to write prehistory that read like history—not high drama or blockbuster spectacle, but a narrative with a non-soporific, anti-somnolent storyline. I submit that my histories are closer to the truth than other accounts on offer; but to get there, I had to move a couple energy-shells further away from the nucleus of data than my colleagues might like—the outer shell is where valence happens!

We may want falsification and scientific certainty—even when we know that is impossible. But we must train ourselves to be comfortable with levels of certainty and preponderance of evidence—even, as Thomas Bayes insisted, our biases are worn on our sleeves. We can still weed out *Star Shrines* and its ilk, but we may (and should) admit a few accounts that make us squirm, things that would have been scoffed off the court under the old rules. And that is a good thing.

The Lost Colonies of Ancient America: A Comprehensive Guide to the Pre-Columbian Visitors Who Really Discovered America. FRANK JOSEPH. 2014. New Page Books, Pompton Plains, NJ. 319 pp. \$16.99 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-60163-278-4.

Reviewed by Larry J. Zimmerman, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

Were you to believe everything Frank Joseph writes in *The Lost Colonies of Ancient America*, your only reasonable conclusions would be that the Indians of the Americas were not particularly intelligent and inventive, or that they were profoundly lazy. Apparently, just about everything artistically, linguistically, technologically, and architecturally important came to them from elsewhere, brought by explorers, clerics, traders, and colonizers traveling to the Americas from every other settled continent, including at least one that sank. As kindred hyper-diffusionist David Goudward asks in his blurb for the book cover, “Who didn’t discover America?” Joseph’s 14 chapters name those who did: Sumerians, Egyptians, Minoans, Phoenicians, Romans, Celts, Hebrews, Africans, Japanese, Chinese, South East Asians, Norse, Knights Templar, and Christians. Honestly, except for writing this review, I probably would not have even bothered opening this book. With enough experience reading the transoceanic contacts genre, you really can read a book by its cover. Unfortunately, however, even admitting that supports Joseph’s contentions about why archaeologists so quickly discount most claims of transoceanic contacts, anachronistic artifacts, and aberrant dates. Frankly, this and its implications are the only parts of the book I recommend taking very seriously.

Joseph asks why information about transoceanic precolumbian voyages never appears in U.S. history books. He writes that the “answer lies in the conditioning of modern, accredited archaeologists, who cannot deviate from an academic party line without jeopardizing their professional careers” (p. 15). He continues: “Tragically, this shockingly unscientific mindset is not confined to a few fringe theorists or dotty professors, but characterizes most U.S. archaeologists, who recognize only those facts that support mainstream opinion. Worse still, these are the people writing the textbooks and telling us what to think based more on their academic authority than fact” (p. 16). As he assures readers, of course, his book has no such preconceived notions and allows for available evidence to lead where it will. Thus—and this is repeated in many pseudoarchaeology books and videos—there is in essence a conspiracy to hide data

and to reject or even ridicule hypotheses that challenge the academic status quo.

The reality is that even though a few, unfortunately, may act this way, most archaeologists I know do not reject outright the possibility of transoceanic contacts. Instead, they require clear and abundant information. In other words, extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence. For example, in the 1960s it took eight excavation seasons by the Ingstads before archaeologists finally accepted the idea that the Norse had settled briefly at L'Anse aux Meadows about a millennium ago. Similarly controversial, the Solutrean hypothesis has Upper Paleolithic European voyagers coming to North America and bringing pre-Clovis technology, thereby challenging long-held ideas about the early peopling of the continent. Raised first in 1998, strong opinions still abound, debate has not been squelched, new evidence has not been suppressed, and the reputations of the archaeologists who proposed it have actually been enhanced. What writers like Frank Joseph do not understand is that the demand for solid evidence and for peer review make archaeology—and all sciences—conservative to the extreme. Speculation has its place in the generation of hypotheses but in itself cannot be used to demonstrate validity. Claiming conspiracy actually just serves as a tactic to avoid the use of standard archaeological sources and interpretations, as well as to claim that speculation should be considered the equal of, or even superior to, an academic archaeology that is so obviously biased. What may be more serious is Joseph's claim that archaeologists argue from their own authority, but his view of what that means is flawed.

Argument from authority, when applied correctly, requests judgment or input from a qualified source and can be essential and valid in an argument. This is foundational to blind peer review in scholarship. It becomes a logical fallacy only when it requests judgment not in the authority's area of expertise or if the authority is biased. Appeal to authority can happen in academia, which is what Joseph accuses archaeology of doing, but what he does not understand is that peer review helps to protect archaeology from bias. It is not foolproof. Bias, poor judgment, "cooking" data, and outright hoaxes can and have occurred in archaeology (think Piltdown Man here) but eventually are exposed by new data, new technologies, further hypothesis testing, and peer review. Eventually disciplines challenge every hypothesis and reject or refine them, and they catch up with weak or bad science. Of course individual archaeologists are invested in their

ideas, and it is humbling when peers tell you that you have screwed up. More often, however, they tell you how to improve your thinking or methods. This just does not happen much in pseudoarchaeology, and the reasons for bias (money and perhaps notoriety) seem clearer but occasionally may be less obvious and more damaging.

As for the rest of the book, Joseph dutifully concatenates his arguments, many of them derived from his earlier works and from speculations of other hyper-diffusionists published in trade or self-published books and in magazines such as *Ancient American* that are not peer reviewed. These references abound in Joseph's bibliography and notes. As usual in such works, Joseph selects bits of material culture or language from one place that sort of look or sound like something from someplace else. He compares mostly form, rarely function or meaning within complicated cultural contexts. He sometimes discounts substantial temporal differences. He consistently attributes similarities to diffusion, never to independent invention. There is no real point to nitpicking the book's 300 pages here, but I refer readers to the work of Jason Colavito, whose blog and several e-books debunk in some detail the facts and reasoning about a wide range of diffusionist claims, including Joseph's (see <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/>).

Finally, if you have studied the history of American archaeology, especially early European efforts to explain the origins of Indians, you will realize that what Joseph proposes is not particularly new, nor is much of his evidence. Mostly Joseph just echoes half a millennium of speculation geared toward inventing a deep Old World history in the Americas, thereby challenging the primacy of American Indians in the hemisphere, or at least implying their inferiority, their poor stewardship of the land, and the need to civilize them, all in the service of Manifest Destiny and justification for taking their land. American archaeology derives in part from its debunking of the Moundbuilder myth, a cornerstone of that invented history, but, unfortunately, the racist social processes at its foundation remain strong and still rationalize injustice to American Indians. This is no small matter, meriting continued vigilance and serious challenge by American archaeologists. As off-putting as their goals and attitudes might be, and although it may seem to be a waste of valuable time, archaeologists must occasionally engage with pseudoarchaeologists to protect both our discipline and our publics.

Asiatic Echoes: The Identification of Ancient Chinese Pictograms in Pre-Columbian North American Rock Writing. Second edition. JOHN A. RUSKAMP, JR. 2013. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, Charleston, SC. vii + 171 pp. \$34.33 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1491042205.

Reviewed by Angus R. Quinlan, Nevada Rock Art Foundation.

“Initially, I did not set out to purposely find the glyphs analyzed [here]. It was while hiking ... As my eyes were transfixed upon one of the most spectacular examples of pre-Columbian writing in all of North America, the Nine Mile Canyon Zhou pictogram, I exclaimed, ‘I know what this means. That is, I can read it!’” (p. vii). Thus begins Ruskamp’s contemporary contribution to the “mad orgy of speculation” on the cultural affiliation and purpose of select North American rock art designs so cogently critiqued 80 years ago by Julian Steward (*Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution* 3405:405–425). Any critical review of *Asiatic Echoes* and its attempt to infer ancient Chinese authorship for certain North American rock art designs could simply reproduce Steward’s criticisms: that if ancient Chinese explorers had visited America then surely some archaeological remains of these visits would have been found, and that any resemblance between ancient Chinese script characters and some North American rock art is “fortuitous” due to the wide morphological variability of the latter. Steward, doubtless, would have regarded Ruskamp’s book as another illustration of deductive thinking at its worst.

Asiatic Echoes provides a selective history of archaeological approaches to North American rock art (pp. 1–8), a history of the evolution of Chinese writing (pp. 11–14), a self-declared “Robust Rubric for Interpreting Rock Writing” (pp. 15–21), a brief chapter on boat depictions in rock art imagery (pp. 23–26), analysis comparing ancient Chinese pictograms to a small sample of North American rock art imagery (pp. 27–84), a conclusion (pp. 85–90), and appendices documenting the “robust rubric” of analysis employed.

From “millions of glyphs” (p. 2), Ruskamp selects only 53 prehistoric rock art motifs from North America to compare to ancient Chinese characters. He forewarns that the “statistically verifiable substantial similarity of each of this study’s pictogram-glyph comparison provides the reader with the salient message ... this is recognizable and readable ancient pre-Columbian Chinese script, which in some cases, can only be credited to ancient Chinese authorship” (p. vii).

Ruskamp analyzes the line stroke features of ancient Chinese script characters and 53 North American rock art motifs from sites scattered from California, the Great Basin, the Southwest, and the Northeast. Using the “established legal construct of ‘substantial similarity’” (p. 3, 16) and Jaccard’s Index of Similarity (pp. 3, 16–21), Ruskamp analyzes the strength of attribute similarities between the two datasets (pp. 27–84, 92–160). He believes his analysis is “demonstrable proof for the trans-Pacific transfer of Asiatic script to North America in pre-Columbian times” (p. 86) and evidence of ancient Chinese visits to North America. No plausible method of indirect information transfer is suggested and the author does not cite any archaeological evidence of ancient Chinese-Native American direct cultural exchanges (perhaps because there is none). Accordingly, Ruskamp finds similarity between these two arbitrarily selected datasets because, for any finite family, some common element can always be identified.

Ruskamp only “proves” that ancient Chinese pictograms and the sample North American rock art designs are related by the use of lines of varying length and curvature to form complex signs (pp. 92–160). Both functioned as signifiers, one to represent language (ancient Chinese characters) and the other to represent symbolic thought (North American rock art). Ruskamp inadvertently refutes his own enterprise by asserting that in the evolution of writing “only a few complex images, such as the swastika ... are known to have been independently invented by unrelated populations. The likelihood that all fifty-three of the study’s symbols were created as ancient Chinese written symbols, solely by chance and separate from knowledge of Chinese script, is nil” (p. 86). Yet, using Ruskamp’s example of the swastika, illustrated by a New Mexico petroglyph, a Pueblo ceramic, and an ancient Persian figurine (Figures 112–114), these three unrelated objects would all pass the “substantial similarity” test that Ruskamp has devised.

Ruskamp makes the common amateur mistake that translation is the object of studying prehistoric rock art (p. 7) as “[f]or the first time we can now read the stone diaries of these Asiatic authors” (p. 89). He asserts that ancient Chinese explorers visited North America and marked the landscape with isolated pictograms signifying, for example, “boat,” “tree,” and “pond,” or “sentences” such as “after a long voyage in a boat, a fruit tree was associated with an agricultural field” (p. 79). Ruskamp ignores various rock art designs placed in between these putative pictograms that convey such ancient Chinese “sentences” (e.g., Figure 104, p. 80). He is unable to recognize temporal differences in petroglyph designs that he combines to

identify ancient Chinese pictograms. At Nine Mile Canyon, for example, a large curvilinear design (Figure 39) that encloses an anthropomorphic figure “wearing a very curious wide-brimmed hat” (possibly a cowboy figure) and three nested wavy lines “identical” to the Chinese pictogram for water “confirms its [this design’s] identity as a boat” (p. 42); but the wavy lines are clearly not contemporaneous with either the curvilinear design or the anthropomorph (the wavy lines are visibly lighter in surface patination and slightly superimpose the former)—and one could add that nested wavy lines are pretty universal in prehistoric rock art.

Prehistoric rock art’s enigmatic properties (the difficulties in classifying its imagery and establishing its chronology) have made this archaeological monument particularly prone to amateur speculation that avoids the complexity of explaining a complex symbolic system that in its original contexts of use would have borne many “meanings” and “readings.” *Asiatic Echoes* continues an amateur tradition of reducing the study of rock art to its subjective translation into a foreign language or alien cultural text. At best, this produces research of trivial value and, at worst, “research” that is ethnocentric and disrespectful of the Native American cultures that used rock art in their sociocultural routines.

Iron Age America before Columbus. WILLIAM D. CONNER. 2009. Coachwhip Publications, Landisville, Pennsylvania. 291 pp. \$24.95 (paperback), ISBN: 1-930585-93-4.

Reviewed by H. Kory Cooper, Purdue University.

I recently got into an argument on Facebook with an old high school acquaintance who, after watching an episode of *America Unearthed*, was convinced that ancient Minoans mined copper in Michigan. When I tried to explain why this was an unlikely scenario, I was advised to “keep an open mind” because I “might learn something.” I have three degrees in Anthropology, have been doing archaeology for over two decades, teach about North American anthropology and archaeology, and one of my main research interests is the ancient use of native copper, albeit in far northwest North America. There is, of course, a great deal I do not know about North American prehistory, but I should know more about this general topic than someone whose only background is watching a bad one-hour television documentary.

In light of this incident, reviewing this book made perfect sense. As Anderson et al. (*The SAA Archaeological Record* 13(2):24-28, 2013) encour-

aged, we must speak up and speak out on pseudoarchaeology. Reviewing this book, I thought, would provide a valuable service to my fellow archaeologists, and, though I was still grinding my teeth over “keep an open mind,” I vowed to do just that. Thus, brimming with optimism, fortified with the importance of the undertaking, and secure in my ability to be an objective reviewer, I picked up the book and began to read ... and was soon cursing Don Holly, *American Antiquity*’s book review editor, who had asked me to write this review.

Although very little archaeological evidence of anything can be found in this book, it provides more dubious claims than can be unpacked in only 1,000 words, and therein lies the challenge of dealing with pseudoarchaeology. Building on *Lost America* by Arlington H. Mallery (1951), the author claims to provide evidence for precolumbian iron smelting by Old World people in Ohio. This rambling narrative is divided into equal parts: history of a provocative idea lacking evidence, diatribe against professional archaeology, rehashing of various de-bunked precolumbian odds and ends, and confession of the willful and wanton destruction of what are, or might have been, interesting historic cultural resources.

The author has no training or qualifications as an archaeologist, and this book proves that, no matter how casually people on television like to throw the term around, it takes more than a shovel and an interest in the past to be an archaeologist. Conner is also neither a metallurgist nor an archaeometallurgist, but he has read a book on ancient iron smelting. Conner first met Mallery in 1949 in Chillicothe, Ohio, and received his journalism degree from Ohio University in 1963. That same year, Conner began writing for the *Columbus Dispatch* and working with Mallery, then over 80 years old, providing transportation to, and labor at, supposed Norse iron furnace sites. Conner says he was initially skeptical but was won over by Mallery’s scientific approach. Conner throws the word “science” around quite a bit, and we are told repeatedly that he once wrote a science column for the *Springfield Daily News*. Unless you are already a precolumbian enthusiast you will likely be unimpressed with Conner’s understanding of how science works. But I do not doubt this book is an honest expression of Conner’s obsession, which makes it even more disturbing.

It is surprising how frequently Conner cites evidence undermining his own argument. For example, and there are many, the one radiocarbon date in the book believed to be associated with one of these furnace features corresponds to the Historic period. Additionally, Conner admits that Mallery was a lousy excavator and “destroyed evidence that might have shed considerable light on the origin of these mysteri-

ous structures” (p. 34). From what I saw in the book, Conner’s field methods were no better. Probably the most unintentionally telling revelation comes in chapter 5. It begins with Conner taking Ralph Solecki to task over his mistreatment of Mallery in 1949. Solecki (then with the Smithsonian Institution) went to Ohio for a survey project and apparently took great pains to avoid meeting Mallery, who was in the area. Solecki did visit Mallery’s iron furnace sites but dismissed them as pits used to burn lime. Conner disagrees, claiming that the nearest lime-bearing rock is 20 miles away, but then, referring to his own work, he states that “we found that the furnace bowl seemed to have been coated with *clay mixed with lime* [emphasis his] ... We also found that limestone rocks and pebbles occur ... around the iron furnace in sufficient quantity for the production of small amounts of lime” (p. 60). Earlier, Conner describes handling artifacts from one of these supposed iron furnace sites and noted that they were “mildly caustic” and made his “fingers tingle” (p. 55). Lime is caustic and contact with skin can cause burning or tingling sensations, and, according to Conner (p. 61), Ohio farmers made lime, which would have been used to counteract the acidity of recently deforested land before farming. Mystery solved? No. Conner dismisses any suggestion the features are Historic largely because of the lack of written evidence available to explain these features. Would farmers have kept written records of lime burning pits?

Some passages in the book are repeated so frequently that it creates the impression of constantly reading the same page over. At one point, I panicked and began to wonder if this tale of pseudoarchaeology martyrdom would go on and on forever. In that sense, one could say I got lost in the book. Although I cannot recommend this book, I did appreciate its upbeat tone, as evidenced by the many exclamation marks scattered throughout! Appendix B, an inventory of 35 supposed iron furnace sites, is the closest thing you will find in this book resembling something an archaeologist would actually do, that is, provide a list of sites presumed to be related to one another in time and space. There are 18 appendices, some of which appear to have little to do with the topic! Some have their own bibliography, which is a nice addition given that the bibliography for the main text is illuminating in its brevity. In all seriousness, and although I am loathe to contribute to sales of this book, it does provide an excellent case study in the development of a pseudoarchaeology obsession and insight into how precolumbian enthusiasts think! Furthermore, because the book is a veritable catalog of logical fallacies, it would make a useful reference for an Introduction to Logic course!

The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up. RICHARD J. DEWHURST. 2013. Bear and Company, Rochester, Vermont. 357 pp. \$20.00 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1591431718.

Reviewed by Benjamin M. Auerbach, University of Tennessee

When I first started doing professional research in North American and European museums 15 years ago, then as a research fellow, various people I encountered in my travels asked whether I had seen evidence for really short people and really tall people among the skeletons curated in these institutions. The questions always seemed peculiar, as if the inquirers had an unspoken agenda. Questions asked to me about giants have recurred over the years, perhaps unintentionally invited because I have worked on stature estimation from Native American human remains and wrote a chapter in 2010 titled “Giants Among Us?” concerning human groups living on the Northern Plains. Despite that chapter title, I never have observed skeletons from any exceptionally tall humans among the thousands I have measured; I have no evidence that any were purposefully lost or hidden. (Being a very unexceptional 171 centimeters in stature myself, plenty of the individuals whose remains I measured would have loomed over me, but by far most were under 182 centimeters, or approximately six feet tall; none I observed were estimated to be over 190 centimeters tall in North America.) Even though I have long known of some Native American myths that spoke of giants (for example, the Kiwa’kws of Passamaquoddy mythology), I never thought that anyone believed these stories—or at least the existence of groups of very tall humans—to be based on fact.

Richard Dewhurst, author of *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America*, clearly states in his opening (p. 1) and concluding (p. 343) pages that he *does* think these myths are based on fact. He is like those individuals who inquired about evidence of giants over the years. Unlike many of those people, however, who sincerely asked me about scientific evidence (i.e., direct observation), Dewhurst turns to popular journalism and the occasional descriptive archaeological excavation report for his support. In fact, his book is predominantly comprised of reprinted newspaper articles reporting “exceptional” (and many fraudulent) archaeological finds, mostly dating between the late nineteenth century and the 1940s. From these second-hand, non-scientific, and not peer-reviewed sources, the author constructs an argument that giant humans of European descent were responsible for a major lost

civilization that predated (and was ultimately driven out by) Native Americans.

To state that the author makes an argument, however, is being charitable. Newspaper articles are presented as full reprints, often without much commentary or discussion of the most salient points toward his thesis. As the author has no archaeological or historical scholarly training, the book largely relies on a premise that the reader will reach definitive conclusions through the presentation of this journalistic evidence.

We should not overlook the explicit biases stated in the opening chapter, wherein we find a series of dubious premises that require more investigation and discussion than the 500 remaining words of this review allow. The central premise of these is the argument that the Smithsonian Institution has levied a vast conspiracy to suppress the “real” precolumbian history of the Americas. What is disturbing is that this is presented as if the last century of archaeology and scientific inquiry has not happened (despite citations of modern excavations and radiocarbon dates in later chapters), instead using the Powell Doctrine and hypotheses of Aleö Hrdlicka as fundamental sources for the work’s proposition. Alongside this idea, the author openly discounts evolutionary theory, strongly supports catastrophism, pronounces Asian origins (or at least Beringian migration) for indigenous Americans to be absurd, and accuses archaeologists of systematically destroying precolumbian sites toward some unspecified, nefarious intent. All of this is presented in the first 12 pages of the book, and it is upon this foundation that the author offers the multitude of newspaper excerpts and reprints.

Given these opening pages, it was difficult to read this book without prejudice. In writing this review, I could bring up empirical evidence to counter most of the claims made in the book. For example, Chapter 10 is devoted to evidence of mummified remains of giant red-haired individuals buried in Nevada and in Florida. This chapter discusses remains uncovered from Spirit Cave, Grimes Point, Lovelock Cave, Warm Mineral Springs, and Windover Pond, all of which are factually mishandled to varying degrees. I

have had the good fortune to study all of these skeletons first-hand, most of which are older than 7,000 years B.P. Only one (Spirit Cave) was truly (partially) mummified, and none had red hair or had statures over six feet; I in fact report stature estimates for most of these skeletons in a 2012 *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* paper. The book never cites any recent scientific literature, most likely given the belief that it is all biased by the aforementioned Smithsonian conspiracy. Yet, if the author had consulted these sources, he would have seen Glen Doran’s extensive monograph on Windover Pond (and numerous peer-reviewed papers), the special 1997 issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* on Spirit Cave, and other publications that provide full archaeological context and evidence that would have refuted or attenuated the book’s claims.

Ultimately, this book reads like a collection of selectively presented evidence to support a disquieting narrative. The work claims to present the unfettered truth of North American prehistory, but any evidence that fails to support a notion of what that history should be is discounted or ignored. This idea, furthermore, is a continuation of a much older set of modern myths (see Stephen Williams’s *Fantastic Archaeology*, 1991) that together claim the existence of European descendant populations in the Americas long before the Norse ventured to North America and assert that these “White Indians” were responsible for all of the major earthworks, artwork, and metal mining that occurred in North America. In short, this book is making similar arguments to those claimed by John Powell and other individuals in the 1870s to support European policies against Native Americans.

I cannot recommend this book for individuals seeking any understanding of North American prehistory. However, all students looking to become professional archaeologists should be aware of the positions taken in this book and the history of these anti-scientific, conspiratorial perspectives. By being exposed to these viewpoints, they will be better prepared to meaningfully address inquiries like those I encountered about evidence of giants among the ancient peoples of the Americas.

PICTURE

Cave

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERIES OF THE
MISSISSIPPIAN COSMOS



EDITED BY
Carol Diaz-Granados, James R. Duncan, and F. Kent Reilly III

Illustrations by Peter G. Berman
University of Texas at Austin

NATIVE AMERICAN
STUDIES

Picture Cave

*Unraveling the Mysteries of the
Mississippian Cosmos*

EDITED BY CAROL DIAZ-GRANADOS,
JAMES R. DUNCAN, AND
F. KENT REILLY III

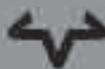
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