

The Issues with Ancient Apocalypse

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Throughout my life I have been fascinated by mysteries, looking for secret passageways in my house, and trying to crack ciphers and codes. One of the most interesting mysteries I have ever found is a theory about an ancient global civilization. I came across this while reading through a book a friend suggested to me when I first became interested in archaeology. This book was by the incredibly popular, Graham Hancock. This theory seemed so strange, yet so simple, that I almost believed it. It was only when I found the truth, the actual history, the dangers of these theories and even worse, their terrible origins. Hancock is the main attributer of this theory, and in “The Dangers of Ancient Apocalypse’s Pseudoscience”, Flint Dibble (2022) writes his “full-throated defense” for the archaeological community. He writes about how Hancock’s theories are dangerous to the overall community, pointing out that he makes himself out to be the “savior” of the true history, that pseudoscience and pseudoarcheology have had terrible consequences for the world, as well as discusses the murky origins of the theories. I agree, especially on the point that his theories came from incorrect and racist beginnings. To begin with, the theories that the indigenous accomplishments were taught to them turns them into primitive savages that were saved, be it by Atlanteans, aliens or white men. There were no aliens involved, Quetzalcoatl was not a white man, and the Olmec were not of African descent. Throughout these theories lie terrible, yet attractive things and here they shall be uncovered. The world of pseudoarcheology is one that takes the truth from the past and twists it into a conspiratorial lie. This must stop, for the good of humanity and the preservation of the truth.

Hancock’s main theory is not new, as Dibble (2022) discusses that “Scholars and journalists have pointed out that Hancock’s ideas recycle the long since discredited conclusions drawn by U.S. Congressman Ignatius Donnelly in his book *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*,

published in 1882.” Throughout Donnelly’s entire chapter on Central America, he does not consider the possibility that these great accomplishments were created by the indigenous peoples. He instead points out coincidental “connections” to the native cultures and the ever-mythical Atlantis, and the “Old World” civilizations. In *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*, Ignatius Donnelly (1882) writes that, “The Toltecs possessed a pure and simple religion, like that of Atlantis, as described by Plato, [...], they were farmers, [...]; they cut and engraved precious stones; among carvings have been found representations of the elephant and lion, [...].” (p 350). The patronizing tone in which Donnelly describes the “simple religion” and how he goes on to list the fact that the people of Mesoamerica could farm as evidence that Atlantis helped them is so clearly an example of racism it is hard to give leniency for. While I acknowledge that this was the standard thought at the time, it is no longer, and yet, Hancock is preaching practically the same theory. Because of this, we cannot accept their theories based on the bias they show. When someone uses such a blatantly racist theory for the basis of their own, how can we believe them? The bias for the original theory is so clear when one reads it that it cannot be ignored. When Hancock uses this as his theory's basis, the original bias is still there. Because of this, it transforms the people who did these things into savages when compared to the “civilized” (yet still mythical) Atlanteans. This way of thinking occurs in other similar theories about many indigenous groups.

A common theme in the theories of pseudoarcheology, including those of Hancock, is the idea that a foreign people appeared to teach the “savages”. This is believed, not only about Atlanteans but also, aliens. Dibble (2022) writes about how many of these are “stripping Indigenous people of their rich heritage and instead giving credit to aliens or White People.” Most of the theories based around aliens creating the great structures etc. attributed to ancient

peoples usually involves the things depicted in their art. One of the major examples of this is the sarcophagus lid of Pacal. In “Ancient Aliens Evidence Examined”, Chris White (2013) writes, “Mayan scholars however have little doubt as to what is being depicted on this lid—it shows the descent of Pacal into the underworld on top of the sun monster. [...] This is a very common depiction of the world tree, with branches that were believed to stretch into the heavens, while the roots reached down into the underworld, [...]” This brief understanding of Maya iconography alone gives enough information to be able to discard this as evidence of alien contact. However, this information is difficult to find and thus, people like Hancock can make people believe their theories first. This has the terrible consequence of even the living Maya of today, believing that their ancestors did nothing of consequence and it was instead aliens, or in the case of Hancock’s main theory, a global civilization.

Dibble (2022) writes, “While skin color is not brought up in *Ancient Apocalypse*, the repetition of the story of a ‘bearded’ Quetzalcoatl (an ancient Mexican deity) parrots both Donnelly’s and Hancock’s own summary of a White and bearded Quetzalcoatl teaching Native people knowledge from this ‘lost civilization.’” Quetzalcoatl has been considered a white man for quite a while; however, this is a misunderstanding of one of his main attributes. In *What was the Symbolism of the Four Directions?* Julia Flood (n.d.) briefly mentions in a list of the four directions and their corresponding deities that Quetzalcoatl was the patron of the West, with the corresponding color of white. This would have been why he was related to white. When the Aztec (Mixtec) spoke to the Spanish about a “white god” they would have been speaking about his title rather than a physical description. It is the difference between calling him “the Lord of White” and “the White Lord”. One shows what his domain and authority is connected to, while the other sounds more like a description. I completely understand the confusion considering how

hard this information is to find, but this is the reality. When one investigates the reality of why Quetzalcoatl was connected to the color white it becomes much clearer that the original beliefs had nothing to do with a “white man”.

Another theory about foreign people coming to the Americas that is both mentioned by Graham Hancock and Donnelly is that of supposed Africans in Indigenous American art. Dibble (2022) writes, “Like Donnelly, Hancock finds depictions of ‘Caucasoids’ and ‘Negroids’ in Indigenous art” this is a rather complicated point because many Olmec sculptures have rather African features. In (*Olmec Colossal Head Stock Photo*, 2014) one can easily see the similarities; however, this doesn’t mean that they were African. If there were Africans in the Americas, they would have appeared in the genetics. However, in a genetic study *Ancient DNA Studies in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica*, Xavier Roca-Rada et al. (2020) found “The indigenous haplogroups found in present-day non-Arctic populations [...]. All of them descend from a founding population [...] from Northern Eurasian lineages.” What this means is described in *What are Haplogroups? Living DNA Explained*, where Lavanya Rishishwar and I. King Jordan (2020) write “a haplogroup is a genetic population group of people who share a common ancestor on either their paternal or maternal line.” What this means is that there was no genetic evidence of Africans being in the ancient Mesoamerica in the study. I do understand, however, the thought about them looking vaguely African. The similarity is noticeable and when the African and African American community’s history has been overwritten so much this possibility becomes an attractive thought. However, this does not make this line of reasoning right. Taking credit from any culture and giving it to another because of such evidence is incorrect as well as wrong, no matter which culture it is.

Figure 1

Olmec Colossal Head stock photo



While this doesn't discuss the dangers in many of Hancock's theories, they become obviously hurtful at close examination. They take away from the amazing accomplishments of the Indigenous peoples

he discusses. There were no Atlanteans or aliens that brought culture to the Maya, Quetzalcoatl was not a white man, and there was no African genetics in the ancient peoples of Mesoamerica. Through writing this I have learned how crucial it is to make sure that true information is easily accessible. Graham Hancock's theories were suggested to me from the moment I became interested in archaeology. However, while I listened to the theories, I found inconsistencies: lack of evidence, defunctive wording, and facts that were simply wrong. I also found that the truth was incredibly difficult to find. To combat the spread of pseudoscience those doing the actual work should make sure that they can be reliably found. They not only need to make it easy to find but easy to understand as well. It took me longer to find the true information than it did to find pseudoscience, this is a harsh reality and I believe it should be remedied as soon as possible. While mysteries and conspiracies are fun and interesting to talk about, the reality is much more complex than the tales spun around them. There are a reason people say, "Truth is stranger than fiction."

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