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American Indian Oral Traditions and their Relation to the Paleo-SETI Community

Abstract

Paleo-SETI is a social discourse which has seen rapidly increasing popularity since its conception in the late 1800's. Its main focus is identifying evidence of intelligent extraterrestrial occupation of Earth in its distant past. The Paleo-SETI community commonly draws upon ancient oral and religious traditions, reinterpreting them as containing evidence of alien visitors. Commonalities such as 'the flood' and 'cyclical time' are also identified. Paleo-SETI thought also incorporates evidence of Supra human knowledge, anomalous archeological sites and seemingly unexplainable advanced technology. This paper examined six American Indian Oral traditions and their relation to the evolving discourses in the Paleo-SETI community. An attempt is made to determine if ancient Oral Traditions do, in fact, lend themselves to an 'alien' reinterpretation. Common themes among the movement are discussed in terms of these six traditions. Also included is an examination of these key themes in Paleo-SETI thought on a global scale. The final section includes a brief investigation of possible psychological, spiritual and philosophical motivations driving the popular Ancient Astronaut Theory.

Faculty mentor: Sean Daley

What follows is an examination of six American Indian traditions and how they relate to the evolving discourses in the Paleo-SETI community. A brief history of the amorphous characteristics of the Paleo-SETI community will be provided as a backdrop through which to scrutinize possible commonalities to actual indigenous traditions. A comparison of common themes within the oral traditions will also be provided, after which these themes will be discussed in a broader context of related global phenomena. The final section will briefly touch on the psychological relevance of the discourse.

The Paleo-SETI Community

SETI is a reference to the scientific program Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. The prefix Paleo means “in the past”. Therefore Paleo-SETI is a search for extraterrestrial contact, which occurred, in the early development of mankind. The Paleo-SETI community of today has expounded on many of the theories first published by men such as Charles Hoy Fort and Robert Charroux (Grunshlub 2007:4). The Paleo-SETI community makes its claims through examining artifacts and archeological sites by using modern technology and unorthodox scientific investigation. A hope exists among these individuals that someday, undeniable proof will be found that extraterrestrials visited earth in the distant past. Aside from finding and explaining cultural and geological anomalies through science the Paleo-SETI community explores ancient mythologies and religions, as well as indigenous oral traditions, as imaginative accounts of contact with extraterrestrials (Pakhomov 11/7/2013). The discourse attempts to gain a holistic perspective, drawing from the fields of religion, mythology, linguistics, anthropology, and astronomy. The form of the extraterrestrial visits, as well as the origin and motives of these galactic visitors vary. This variation spans such a length as to proclaim humankind as nothing

but a genetic experiment by a cold calculating alien race, to aliens are our benevolent protectors, who wish to bestow civilization and order (and everything in between).

To many in the Paleo-SETI community, the theories surrounding alien visitations grows increasingly complex, transcending historical theory and venturing into the world of philosophy, theosophy, and spirituality. The individuals in the Paleo-SETI community vary as to which particular interpretation they subscribe. Some see themselves as purely scientific researchers looking for provable facts and data. Others lie more in the realm of the spiritual or philosophical, notably more “fringe.” Suffice it to say, the binding glue of the community at large is the belief that by reexamining artifacts, architectural sites, and religious/mythological evidence we can find proof of these historical events and garner knowledge about what may lie in store for us in the future (Richter 2012).

The beginnings of Paleo-SETI and Ancient Astronaut Theory lie in the late 1800s. The first modern mention of extraterrestrial life in prehistoric times was Garret Serviss’s *Edison’s Conquest of Mars*, a purely fictitious book published in 1898. Serviss put forward the idea that the Egyptian pyramids were built by Martians. Although not the first to speculate on the possible extraterrestrial nature of the pyramids, he was the first to publish on this topic. He popularized this notion, which is now ubiquitously associated with pyramids. He opened the door for reevaluating ancient relics as possible evidence for alien influence (Richter 2012:224). Also notable at this time, in 1897, Kurd Lasswitz published the first novel expressing the idea that ancient aliens could have been interpreted as Gods because of their superior technology (Richter 2012:225).

The *Book of the Damned*, published in 1919 by Charles Hoy Fort gave voice to structures and ideologies that shape today’s Paleo-SETI community. This was the first modern Western

claim by a scholar in a completely nonfiction sense that aliens visited the earth in the distant past and are responsible for various religious and demonic events (Richter 2012: 225). In the *Book of the Damned*, as well as his later three works, Fort examines strange events and data, which had been largely ignored by the scientific community. He wrote prolifically of the dogmatic approach of the scientific community, likening it to an organized religion which sought to propagate theories which gave credence to the already agreed upon status-quo (Gunshlub 2007:4). The impact of this cannot be overstated, as some members of the Paleo-SETI community see themselves as amateur, but “pure” scientists, willing to follow the evidence and not adhere strictly to obtuse traditional theories. Over the last century, other notable authors have continued in the traditions of Charles Hoy Fort, including HP Lovecraft, Robert Charroux, Eric Von Daniken, and Zacharia Sitchin (Gunshlub 2007:5).

The modern UFO phenomena in all its myriad forms could be said to have begun in 1947 with a famous sighting on Mt. Rainier, and an explosion of sightings following the media hype of this event. Early contactees described alien encounters as pleasant, and noted that the extraterrestrials seemed concerned about earthly spiritual progress and peace (Richter 2012:226). The next notable developments came with the publication of Eric Von Daniken’s book *Chariots of the Gods* in 1968, and the founding of the Ancient Astronaut Society in 1973 by an American lawyer, Gene Phillips. The AAS produced the journal publication, *Ancient Skies*, which receives minimal public support (Richter 2012:228).

The 1980s were a slow time in UFO and alien discourse, but with the 1990s came a resurgence of interest. The Ancient Astronaut Society was refounded as Archaeology, Astronautics and SETI Research Association in 1998 (Richter 2012:228). Today, the mission of the AASRA is a reflection of self identification of the PALEO-SETI movement, stating

“The AASRA is determined to prove using scientific research methods, but in Layman’s terms as to whether or not extraterrestrials visited Earth in the remote past. If the visitors-from-space; or Paleo-SETI hypothesis will be Eventually proven an accepted by the larger scientific community, we will not only have assisted in bringing this research to the general public but will continue to help incorporate it into our daily lives “ (Richter 2012:230).

American Indian Oral Traditions

One important facet of the Paleo-SETI discourse is the identification of “alien” themes in indigenous oral traditions and ancient religions. Two common indigenous culture areas utilized by the Paleo-SETI community are North American Indian and African Dogon beliefs (Gunshlob 2007:10). The Paleo-SETI view on these indigenous stories and belief systems involves a reimagining of sorts. Indigenous traditions are viewed as a complex symbology cataloging the influence technologically advanced alien visitors had on early human societies. This technologically superior race stuns the inhabitants of the ancient world. Often these space travelers are viewed as God-like, and even deified over time, or gain exceptional appearances and abilities through the power of mythology. Here I will examine six American Indian oral traditions and, like the Paleo-SETI community, examine the symbolism contained within these legends for contextual evidence of interaction with extraterrestrials. Each of these selections is from the book *American Indian Myths and Legends* compiled by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz (1984).

The White Dawn of the Hopi: Hopi

Two Huring Wuhti goddesses created the first land. Before this the world was covered by water. One Wuhti belonged to the east and one Wuhti belonged to the west. After creating land they created a bird from clay. When the Wuhti goddesses discovered nothing else lived on earth, they created other birds and animals and finally a pair of humans. Another deity, Spider

Women, began also to create people in pairs of different languages. The people she created were “rough mannered” and quarreled with each other. The people of Spider Women and the people of the two Huring Wuhtis were all nomadic and sometimes would fight over game and food when they met. The two Wuhtis were displeased as the world grew quarrelsome and they went to live in the east and west oceans. (1984:115-116).

Children of the Sun: Osage

The people of the Osage lived in space. They were told by the sun that they were his children and by the moon that she was their mother. The moon told them they must go live on earth. They arrived on earth with all the animals only to find it was covered with water. The Elk was brave and lead the winds into the water, which uncovered dry land. His fur that had touched the earth grew into crops and plants for the people and other animals to eat (1984: 119).

People Brought In a Basket: Modoc

Kumush, the “Old Man of the Ancients” descended into the lower spirit world to gather the bones of spirits. His intention was to bring them to the surface world where they would become tribes of men. He selected the ones he would bring, and began to climb to the upper world. He dropped the basket of bones twice, and each time the bones turned to spirits and ran off laughing. Each time he returned to the underworld to again gather the bones and on the third attempt he threw the bones ahead of him, into the upper world. He made different bones different tribes and gave them their languages and customs. He also created the animals and fish (1984:109-110)

The Voice, The Flood, and the Turtle: Caddo

The wife of a chief became pregnant and gave birth to four small monsters. Many people wanted to kill the monsters, but the chief’s wife insisted that they would grow into men someday.

As the monsters grew bigger they began to cause lots of trouble. A wise man warned the chief's wife to kill the monsters or they would someday kill her. She again refused. One day the monsters began to kill and eat people. Now they had grown too big and powerful to be killed and all four of their backs fused together forming one huge creature with four heads. Their heads grew as high as the sky and their arms were miles wide. They ate almost all of the people.

The wise man heard a voice, which told him to plant a reed into the earth. It grew and grew until it was also huge, and it too reached the sky. The voice told the man he would send a flood to rid the world of the bad things. He instructed the man to get in the reed with his wife, both of them naked. The voice told them to bring two of all the good animals into the reed with them to save them from the incoming flood. When they saw the sign, the man and his wife entered the reed with the animals. The rain came and the whole world filled with water. The voice instructed the man and women that he would send a turtle to put an end to the bad things. A huge turtle swam beneath the monsters feet. The turtle was so big and so strange it caused them to lose their footing and break apart. The four monsters fell into the water and drowned. One fell to the east, one to the west, one to the north, and one to the south. They became the four directions.

The earth became dry and the man and animals come out onto an empty earth. They fell asleep and the next morning herbs had grown all around them. Upon waking after the second night, they found bushes and trees. The third morning brought grass and animals. After the fourth night's sleep, the fifth day found the man and woman to have awoken in a grass hut. The world was fully created, and outside corn was growing. The voice told them the corn was for them and their children to eat. Then it told the woman, "If you should plant corn, and something

other than corn comes up, then know that the world will come to its end". Then the voice disappeared for good (1984:120-122).

When Grizzlies Walked Upright: Modoc

The sky spirit grew weary of his home above, which was full of ice and cold. He poked a hole in the sky and pushed the ice down it. A large mountain of ice was created. The sky spirit stepped down onto the ice mountain and as he walked down it, where he touched the earth, trees and plants grew. From his staff animals and fish were created. He enjoyed this newly created terrestrial environment so much he decided to live here in the mountain with his family.

One day the wind blew so hard it blew his youngest daughter away. The red haired girl spirit was found and raised by a family of grizzlies. When she became grown she married the oldest grizzly son and they had many children together, who were not exactly like their mother, not exactly like their father. One day the Grizzly mother sent for the sky spirit to reclaim his daughter. When he came down from the mountain he became very angry when he realized a new race had been created without his consent. He took his daughter back up the mountain, and they never returned to the forest again. Before he left he cursed the grizzlies so that they lost the power of speech and could never walk upright again. The new race which had been created was humans and these first Indians scattered across the land and became the Indian Tribes of today (1984:85-87).

Wakinyan Tanka, The Great Thunderbird: Brule Sioux

For a very long time the high mountain in the Black Hills was home to the Wakinyan Tanka, the Great Thunderbird, and his children. Whether the thunderbirds still live there is not known. There are four large old thunderbirds, one for each direction. The thunderbird of the West is the biggest and said to be hidden in the clouds. He has no true form but he has huge

wings and sharp claws. Although he has no face he does have a sharp beak filled with jagged teeth. No man has ever seen a Thunderbird, only bits and pieces have been revealed to humans over time. Although the Wakinyan sometimes frighten people, they are good spirits and have been known to help humanity. You may feel their presence without seeing them because “they are wrapped in robes of dark clouds.”

At one time there were water monsters known as Unktehi. They decided they did not like humans and would kill all the Indians. The Great Unktehi caused the Missouri River to overflow, and the smaller Unktehis caused the smaller rivers and lakes to overflow. There was a Great Flood that covered all the land and killed almost all the humans. The Wakinyan were troubled because they liked the humans as they showed respect to the Wakinyan and prayed to them. The Wakinyan also believed that “Grandfather” had created humans and “put them on earth for some purpose”. The Wakinyan fought the Unktehi for many years, while the flood raged on. Finally all the Thunderbirds rose into the air and shot thunderbolts at the Unktehi. These thunderbolts killed the Unktehi and dried the earth. This was the age of the Rock, the first of the Great Four Ages (1984:218-222).

Commonalities Among American Indian Oral Traditions

I will be exploring four commonalities present in these American Indian oral traditions and their relationship to the Paleo-SETI discourse. First I will examine these narratives for the possible existence of supra-human knowledge. Supra-human knowledge is that which is considered very advanced for a specific culture or time period. The Paleo-SETI community perceive supra-human knowledge as evidence of contact between early humans and extraterrestrials. Supra-human knowledge plays an important role in the overall Paleo-SETI

discourse. Using Paleo-SETI methodology, knowledge of the directions and the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans suggest an understanding of the world when viewed from above, as well as a rudimentary understanding of the magnetic fields of the earth. Also common in many indigenous traditions is the natural process of evolution, for example a world covered in water, proceeded by the formation of land, growth of plants, and later the evolution of animals, with the development of humans coming last. These two examples of supra-human knowledge account for only a small percentage of a much larger body of evidence used by the Paleo-SETI community to suggest that information and concepts were passed to early cultures through contact with extraterrestrials. The discourse also holds that this knowledge would have been revered as sacred and would likely have been illustrated through metaphors in origin tales and other sacred narratives.

When looking for evidence of supra-human knowledge I will first point to references to the directions and oceans as an understanding of global geography. In *White Dawn of the Hopi*, the Huruing Wuhti Goddesses each represent a different direction; one of the East and one of the West. Also in this story is reference to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, as the Wuhti Goddesses, disappointed in the progress of life on each go to live in the East and West Oceans. In *The Voice, The Flood, and the Turtle* the chief's wife gives birth to four monsters which become the four directions in death, during the rebirth of the earth. Lastly, we can find mention of the directions in *Wakinyan Tanka, The Great Thunderbird*, as the four most powerful Thunderbirds coincide with the four directions. In this story the most powerful Thunderbird is the Thunderbird of the West.

The next variation of supra-human knowledge I will address is knowledge of the natural procession of Earth's history. In *White Dawn of the Hopi* the world is described as covered with

water. Then follows the emergence of land, animals, and lastly people. This evolutionarily accurate depiction (albeit much simplified) is also used in *The Voice, the Flood, and the Turtle*. Although in this scenario it is technically the rebirth of the world after the flood. Here the world is recreated over the course of four nights, with the world of humans again coming after plants and animals. *When Grizzlies Walked Upright* also utilizes this theme with the creation of land in the form of “ice mountain”. After the sky spirits descent to Earth, he creates plants first, then animals. Man comes much later, but man here is portrayed as an accident, not as part of the original design.

The next commonality among these Native American narratives is that of “the flood”. The flood is a theme ubiquitously present in the world’s ancient traditions. It symbolizes rebirth and new beginnings. Conceptions of the flood are also tied to indigenous perceptions of time as being cyclical as opposed to linear. This cyclical time is often marked with floods or other catastrophes, which nearly annihilate all life present, and are often referred to as epochs. From a Paleo-SETI perspective, these floods could have been caused by extraterrestrials in an attempt to cleanse the earth of a species that they deemed problematic. There are also veins of thought in the Paleo-SETI community suggesting a flood of natural origin, to which extraterrestrials provide assistance to ensure the survival of the human race.

In both *The White Dawn of the Hopi* and *Children of the Osage*, the world is described as being covered in water at one point. Although this is not a direct reference to a flood, a water world could be considered a different symbolic depiction of the same general theme. The clearest representation of the flood is found in *The Voice, the Flood, and the Turtle*. In this narrative it is an aspect of creation gone awry (the monsters) that bring about the necessity of a flood. The floodwaters act to cleanse the Earth, destroying all of the “bad things.” A man and

his wife are offered salvation from the incoming deluge, by being instructed to enter into a reed with two of all of the good animals. Afterwards order is restored and creation begins anew. *Wakinyan Tanka, the Great Thunderbird* provides a clear reference to a flood as well. This narrative describes the flood as being caused by the evil Unktehi in an effort to rid the world of man. The rivers and lakes overflow and a great storm rages. The Thunderbirds kill the Unktehi and dry the world, ridding the world of this evil and allowing for the rebirth and continuation of life.

The idea of the flood as one which offers a cleansing of the earth, followed by the renewal or rebirth of life, is related to another common theme in indigenous oral traditions: that of the epoch. In the Paleo-SETI discourse, the idea of epochs and cyclical time take many divergent forms. Drawing on narratives such as these American Indian oral traditions, the existence of great technologically advanced civilizations of past epochs are postulated. The most famous of these lost civilizations include Mu and Atlantis. Existent within the discourse are theories that envision epochs as different ages of progressive genetic experimentation by extraterrestrials. In this way of thinking, the catastrophes that are often associated with new epochs are conceived of as the annihilation of a substandard breed of humans.

Although *People Brought in a Basket* does not make explicit reference to cycles of destruction and rebirth, this narrative does contain evidence of three epochs. Kumush, who is described as “old man of the ancients,” journeys to the underworld to bring bones forth unto the upper world. Once in the upper world, the bones become human. Kumush must make three attempts to bring the bones to the upper world and successfully create the human race. Following the Paleo-SETI approach, symbolically the bones could represent genetic material, and the three attempts at carrying them up the ladder could represent three epochs of man. The

first two of these epochs never made it up the ladder so to speak, or were unsuccessful in the attempt to reach the desired genetic model. Only on the third and final attempt was the desired affect achieved and the human race was brought into existence.

Although *The Voice, the Flood, and the Turtle* does not explicitly reference epochs it certainly contains the theme of cyclical periods of creation and destruction. After the birth of the “bad things,” or monster born to the wife of the chief, a mysterious disembodied voice sent a flood to cleanse the world. Annihilation of most of the existing life occurred, and following this cleansing came rebirth. After the flood and renewal of life on Earth, the voice warns that should any unnatural things be born again, the world will again meet its destruction. A direct reference to epochs is found in *Wakinyan Tanka, the Great Thunderbird* where the flood and the destruction of the Unktehi is said to have taken place in “the age of the rock, the first of the Great Four Ages.” This notion of mankind being demarcated into four distinct ages is the most common expression of the notion of epochs and is found throughout the narrative traditions of the world (Goitiizolo 2010).

The last section of discussion on commonalities within these selected American Indian traditions focuses on the essential argument of the Paleo-SETI discourse; that of the creation or preservation of the human race by extraterrestrial forces. The divergent symbolism within these narratives is also characteristic of the delineated claims within the discourse. The fundamental conception of human and extraterrestrial action takes on multifarious forms. Some elements within the discourse imagine extraterrestrials as our benevolent creators, come to disseminate the gift of consciousness throughout the cosmos. Other facets conceive of extraterrestrials as cold and exacting scientists who created the human race through genetic engineering or interbreeding with *Homo erectus*. In some versions of the discourse aliens are imagined not as our creators at

all, but simply as beings like ourselves who are curious about humanity, and aspire to help our race endure. Within each of these sacred narratives can be found a symbolic interpretation representing the differing conceptions of human-alien relations.

In *White Dawn of the Hopi*, three separate deities create the human race, the Huruing Wuhti Goddess of the East and that of the West, and Spider Woman. The Wuhti were disappointed with their creations and they left Earth to retreat into the oceans. This story illustrates creation as an act performed by a sentient being who wishes to impart order and culture unto humanity. So, too, is humanity created by a sentient being, seeking to give us language and tradition, in *People Brought in a Basket*. This narrative described Kumush creating mankind from bones in the underworld. In a slightly different interpretation of this theme, *Children of the Sun* speaks of humans as having originated from outer space, the children of the sun and the moon. These solar children receive guidance from their solar parents and mankind is lead safely to earth.

The Voice, the Flood, and the Turtle is not an origin narrative but it does speak of a supra-human force as the preserver of the human race. In this tale, the “four monsters” are considered abominations of creation, and are destroyed by the mysterious voice. The voice possesses great power and it sends a flood to cleanse and restore order to the world. Indigenous traditions speaking of great catastrophes caused by a mysterious being or voice are often used in the Paleo-SETI community as evidence of advanced civilizations who possess and have utilized technology capable of mass destruction.

Similarly *Wakinyan Tanka, The Great Thunderbird*, is also a story of the preservation of mankind by mysterious forces who possess great power. In this story the Thunderbirds are said to be “hidden in clouds” where “no man has ever seen a Thunderbird, only bits and pieces have

been revealed . . . over time.” This narrative explicitly states that the Thunderbirds did not create the human race, but rather “Grandfather” did, and he “put them on earth for some purpose.” Using the Paleo-SETI approach, this narrative could be said to represent extraterrestrials, not as our creators, but as curious beings wielding great power and their desire to keep us from harm. At the end of this narrative the Unktehis are destroyed and the earth is dried through the use of the Thunderbird’s “lightning,” which again points to the use of advanced weaponry.

The last interpretation of the extraterrestrial agenda can be found in *When Grizzlies Walked Upright*. The sky spirit is said to descend and create the earth, which he makes the home of himself and his family. In this scenario humans are created by accident, the result of the interbreeding between a God and an animal. Although in this scenario, the animal is the Grizzly and not some other hominid, this story offers symbolic evidence of humans as the result of “Gods” or people from the sky interbreeding with terrestrial animals.

Utilizing the commonalities identified in the above American Indian narratives, a pattern can be divined from a variety of different global phenomena. The Paleo-SETI method will be utilized to examine evidence of supra-human knowledge, stories of the flood, and cyclical time, for a possible relation to the existence of extraterrestrials. The first theme to be addressed is that of supra-human knowledge, and controversial accounts of ancient technological advancement.

Finding a Global Paradigm

Supra-human Knowledge

Presented herein are accounts of artifacts and “know-how” from the ancient world which do not lend themselves to easy explanation. The Paleo-SETI discourse uses examples such as these to make the argument that human-alien interaction *did* occur, and that knowledge and

culture was transferred through such interactions. The discourse uses these artifacts displaying technical prowess as evidence for the existence of an ancient, highly advanced, global civilization - the discovery of which continues to elude mainstream archeologists.

To start this brief recanting of global evidence, first I will address accounts from the Americas, with a brief mention of the worldwide megalithic monuments. Among South American sites of interest are the Nazca plains, often referenced because of their enormity and mysterious nature. In the Palpa Valley of Peru lies a thirty-seven mile long stretch of ornamentation created using vast geometric patterns. Although their exact purpose remains unknown, mathematical measurements strongly suggest that the patterns were created to reflect specific astronomical phenomena (Daniken 1968:33).

The Great Idol is an enormous carving at Tiahuanaco made from one single block of sandstone, its surface covered with symbols containing astronomical data. Some of the calculations are thought to represent a spherical earth. Also, calculations found on the Great Idol involving rotation speed and a shorter year of 288 days are thought to be a record of sky conditions 27,000 years ago (Daniken 1968:36). However, Tiahuanaco itself remains a mystery, as the dates of its use are very controversial. Bolivian archeologist Arturo Posnasky believes it was inhabited from 1600 BCE until 1200 AD. Other archeologists such as Hans Schindler-Bellamy believe it could have been inhabited as long as 12,000 years ago (Eden 10/13/13).

Megalithic monuments also pose questions which mainstream archeology has yet to provide adequate answers for. Many of these monuments are so large, and put together with such precision, it is hard to fathom exactly how this could have been accomplished thousands of years ago. The most mind-boggling example is that of Baalbek, Lebanon. Here, slabs of rock weighing as much as a hundred thousand tons have been found cut out of a quarry and

transported across land. Even by today's standards this would be a technological marvel (Martell 2011).

Europe is also the home of unexplainable accounts and artifacts. The Antikythera Mechanism (dated to the first century BCE) was discovered off the coast of Antikythera, Greece by sponge divers in 1908. It has been described as a hand held planetarium and is so highly mechanized it is "more complicated than a Swiss watch". It is a device with dual purposes, as it offered both accurate astronomical and detailed astronomical predictions. Also in Europe, certain Renaissance artwork contains strange phenomena. In a Yugoslavian fresco dated to 1539 AD, several "strange aerial phenomena being piloted by humans" are depicted. The objects in the air appear to be streaking across the sky with a trail of fumes or flame behind them. Clearly, these are not depictions of angels, as angels are also represented in this fresco. Oddly enough, the angels are portrayed turning their gaze upwards at the unexplained objects in the sky. St Giovanni painted a portrait of Madonna and child, which contains a glowing cylindrical object in the sky over her left shoulder. A man in the background is painted staring up at the object in awe. (Martell 2011)

Also noted here are anomalies in Hebrew texts identified by the Paleo-SETI community as accounts of interest. These Biblical accounts contain certain passages that could hold depictions of air or spacecraft, which should have been unknown in the ancient world. Recovered from the Dead Sea, the Apocryphal Book of Abraham describes a scene where, "behind the being I saw a chariot which had wheels of fire, and every wheel was full of eyes all around, and on the wheels was a throne and this was covered with fire that flowed around it" (Daniken 1968:88). In the Tanakh, Ezekiel described an instance where "a whirlwind came out of the North, a great cloud, and a fire unfolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of

the midst there of as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of this midst there came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man". The tale continues as Ezekiel goes on to describe the strange beings who take him aboard something which has the likeness of an aircraft and instruct him to bring order to a disordered land (Daniken 1968: 57). Ancient references to something resembling a flying machine also exist prolifically in Vedic scripture. In the Mahabharata, for example, Arjuna takes counsel with the sky God Indra and his wife Sachi. They meet him in a flying chariot, a Vimana, and together they take a journey across the sky (Daniken 1968: 78).

The last compilation of supra-human knowledge presented here will be from the Middle East and Egypt. Credited as the first civilization, Sumeria existed in what is present day Iran and Iraq. The Sumerians reached great heights of achievement in science, mathematics, and civil planning. A hill in Kuyunjik bears a Sumerian inscription containing a number with fifteen digits; Greek mathematicians were never known to use numbers beyond five digits (Daniken 1968:41). They were also the first to divide the heavens into twelve parts in an astrological calendar. They used many other models twelve of which we still use today, for example: twelve inches in a foot, twelve hours in day, twelve months in a year, twelve objects in a dozen. Tablets have been found with recorded astronomical events that unfolded over the course of thousands of years. The Sumerians were known to be able to predict Lunar Eclipses decades into the future. Even the writing system was advanced, as Cuneiform contains over 400 characters (Martell 2011).

In Egypt there is evidence of a rudimentary electric system. In Dendera, glyphs exist in tombs and crypts deep underground. No carbon or ash has been discovered in these underground vaults which would suggest lighting by torch. This, coupled with the Baghdad

battery, suggest Egyptians might have been using something like a light bulb for a variety of purposes. The Baghdad Battery is essentially a four thousand year old clay jar with copper lining and iron, which can produce several volts of charge when a weak acidic substance is added. There are also carvings depicting a man holding something that very much resembles a large light bulb (Martell 2011).

Another mystery is presented by the existence of the Piri Reis map, compiled by a Turkish Admiral in 1513. Many portions of the map are believed to be much older as they were copied from preexisting maps. This map portrays topographic details unknown to the world at the time of its creation. The Andes are accurately depicted, along with mountain ranges in Antarctica. These peaks are buried under a sheet of ice so thick they had not been “known” to exist until they were discovered by SONAR in 1952 (Daniken 1968:31).

Cyclical Time and the Flood

Another commonality in Native American literature was that of the Flood, or an illusion to different epochs or ages. It can be seen in the following information that a belief in cyclical time occurs manifold in world history. This conception of time stands directly opposed to the linear model adopted by Western culture. Cyclical time often has smaller cycles within larger cycles, and the end of major cycles is typically marked by the occurrence of a cataclysm. The most common form of cataclysm described for ending an age, is that of a great deluge. Stories of a great flood are found in a myriad of forms, all the world over. Most of the references to a great flood will be used here in connection with cyclical time, or its cousin “the myth of return” (Goitozolo 2010).

First, an examination of Vedic literature and Brahmanical conceptions of cyclical time: The Bhagavata Purana describes the four ages of man that together make up the total human cycle of 4,320,000 years. We are said to be living in the Kali-yuga, or the “dark era”. This era corresponds to one tenth of the total human cycle, lasting a breadth of 432,000 years. Goitzolo suggests in *The Wheel of Time; A Study in the Doctrine of Cosmic Cycles* that these staggering figures are symbolic, and that the true length of the human cycle can be found in the concept of Manvantara. The concept of Manvantara decrees that the length of the whole human cycle is equal to two full periods of procession of the equinoxes (a wobble in the Earth’s rotation “discovered” by Hipparchus in 139 BC but used by both Vedic and Egyptian culture before him). Two cycles of the equinox procession amount to 51,840 years. The whole human cycle is further delineated into four ages of man, which follow a 4,3,2,1 ratio. Using this calculation, the current dark era or Kali-Yuga would last a duration 5,184 years. The Kali-Yuga is depicted as “extremely rich in historical events and great material achievement but which unfortunately...would appear to be leading us towards disaster” (Goitzolo 2010).

Zoroastrian scripture, namely the Avesta, refers to seven different world ages. Each of the seven ages were said to end with “signs, wonders and a great chaos all over the world”. Latin Scholar Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BCE) claimed the Etruscan Annals contained ancient knowledge of seven epochs of man, the end of each being announced to humanity “by diverse celestial prodigies”. The theme of seven ages appears again in the Buddhist text Visuddhi-Magga. Here also, seven epochs are separated by catastrophes of water, fire and wind. The text goes on to exclaim that after the seventh epoch, a fundamental change in the sun will result in the world ending in a “burst of fire” (Goitzolo 2010).

Peoples of Middle and South America also conceived of time as cyclical, and delineated into ages, each preceded by a great cataclysm. The Olmecs identified four epochs which were denoted as the four “suns”. The first race was that of giants. The Jaguar, sometimes referred to as the God of Night, destroyed this first race. The second race of hominids were decimated by hurricanes, the third by fire. The fourth race of hominids met its end in a universal flood. This Olmec tradition was appropriated by the Teotihuacans and Aztecs (Goizolo 2010). The Tiahuanaco version of this religious tradition, as far as what is known, seems to involve a cult of the sky God Viracocha. Viracocha created the world, and it was he who descended after the last great flood to replenish the earth with plants, animals and people. Alongside the ancient city of Tiahuanaco, ruins have recently been discovered at the bottom of Lake Titicana. Archeologists believe it possible that a civilization existed there before the lake was formed. The lake has no apparent source and is believed to have formed by a great flood (Eden 10/13/13).

A later version of cyclical time appeared in the Mayan tradition. This version was adapted so that the four cataclysms now corresponded to the four elements. The Incan empire also believed in cyclical time. The cataclysm, which ended each age, was referred to as the time of “Pachacuti”-or the time of great distress. Each of the Incan epochs lasted 3,600 years, a duration of time, which has been used by the Paleo-SETI community in connection with the theory of Nibiru (Goizolo 2010).

In Greece, we also see the notion of the Four Ages of Mankind, popularized by the poet Hesiod. The Golden Age of man was said to be a time of eternal spring, during which the Gods lived on the Earth. The Silver Age was that of agriculture and matrilineal society. The Bronze Age signified the beginning of civilization, and the Iron Age symbolized material excess, ambition, fear, war and pain (Goizolo 2010).

Another variation of cyclical time is the aforementioned “myth of return”. In *The Wheel of Time* Goitizolo describes this theme as being

“where irrespective of the number of ages-there stands out the universal most ancient belief in the “fall” of man, a tradition that evokes the decline and alienation of mankind from a golden, paradisiacal condition to one of total degradation-usually ending in a catastrophic deluge-a most familial and characteristic version of which can be read in the first pages of the Bible, from the “fall” of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from paradise to the events that lead to the flood” (2010)

Concerning the Biblical Flood, a little known reference to Noah and the Ark is found in the Dead Sea scroll of Lamech. Here, a man named Lamech is surprised when his wife gives birth to a son which does not appear to be his but who appears to be “more like a son of heaven than of a man”. This causes strife in the family, and eventually the boys’ grandfather, Methuselah, journeyed to visit a wise Enoch. The Enoch foretold of a universal judgment that would come and bring death to all living things. The Enoch said the strange boy who was “more like a son of heaven than a man” had been chosen to lead a group of survivors through the great judgment. The Enoch instructed Methuselah to accept the boy and to name him Noah (Daniken 1968:60). However, accounts of the Flood, Noah, and the Ark, are believed to have been inspired by the oldest known account of a great flood-the Epic of Gilgamesh. Here too, Gilgamesh is said described as “two-thirds god, one-third man”. Gilgamesh journeys to meet the God Utnapishtim, who lives “beyond the sea” and is responsible for the creation of mankind. When Gilgamesh arrives Utnapishtim relates a first handed account of a chosen one who will ensure the continuity of life after the great flood. Many details are the same, such as the olive branch and dove (Daniken 1968:65).

So what is the connection between cyclical time, advanced human knowledge, descriptions of Gods walking the Earth, giants, floods and the many other curious artifacts and

events described above? The keystone, so to speak, is the existence of intelligent extra-terrestrial life. Although the Paleo-SETI discourse does contain a wide variance, what follows is an attempt at a coherent whole divined out of the many fragmented parts commonly presented within the discourse. Beliefs about possible origins and motives will be explored, as well as the question “Can we expect to see them again?”

The Extraterrestrial connection

Little Grey Men: this image has become synonymous with alien visitation over the last few decades. However, the people of the ancient world left us a different picture of their supernatural visitors. The ancient world is full of symbolic renderings of beings that had the ability to fly. When Cuneiform artifacts were first uncovered, archeologists dubbed the winged humans who so often appeared as “bird men”. We now know them by another name, the Anunnaki. Translated Anunnaki means “Those who from heaven come to earth”. Another depiction of flying Gods was that of the winged disk. The winged disk, a symbol of divinity was also seen in Assyrian and Egyptian culture (Martell 2011). Actually the association of divinity, with the power of flight occurs extensively on a global reference. Inuit legend speaks of Gods with brazen wings bringing the first tribes to North America (Daniken 1968:75) In indigenous traditions of the America’s exist the winged Kukulcan, Quetzalcoatl, Awanyu among many others (Martell 2011). So why flight? Why not the power to become invisible, like nature’s power of camouflage? Why not the power to breath under water and swim at great speeds, to explore the oceans and rivers with limitless ability? Why not the power of regeneration, hibernation or any other of nature’s mysterious and wonderful tricks? Variations of the Birdman sacred narrative and the presence of Supernatural Beings who walked among us appear from our

earliest recorded history to modern times, with accounts such as the moth man. These depictions seem to point to symbolic representations of beings that possessed the power of flight.

Did ancient aliens like the Anunnaki create us; if so for what purpose? If aliens created us, who created the aliens? The Sumerian creation narrative, *Atrahasis*, exists inscribed on seven stone tablets. Those stone tablets contain a detailed account of the creation of our solar system, planet, and the arrival of the first Annunaki. The Annunaki were said to have arrived here on the seventh planet (so named because it is the seventh planet counting inwards from their home-planet deep in outer-space) to mine precious metals from the African continent. They must have liked something about Earth because they decided to hang around, and they thought they could use some help. The *Atrahasis* account depicts the creation of the first race of men known as “Lulu Amelu”. This primitive race of workers did not possess the ability to procreate and was destroyed. Versions within the discourse vary, but the next attempt at creation which produced today’s race of mankind involved interbreeding with *Homo neanderthalensis*, *Homo erectus* or some other early hominid species (Martell 2011).

Accounts of our divine lineage and sexual contact between deities and terrestrial species found within the ancient world’s sacred narratives are by no means a fanciful creation by the Paleo-SETI community. Even one of Western cultures’ most beloved pieces of literature explicitly alludes to sexual lust, fornication, and reproduction between deities and earth women. In Genesis 6:1-2, “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the Earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose” (Daniken 1968:51); and again in Genesis 6:4 “There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bore children to them, the same became mighty men

which were old men of renown” (Daniken 1968:52). In Hebrew, these sons of God were known as the bene elohim. Again in Genesis 1:26, another mysterious translation of Hebrew could raise some curious questions as it reads “And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness,” (Daniken 1968:51).

The creation of the multiple versions of the human race and their subsequent destruction is presented from two distinct angles within the Paleo-SETI discourse. On the one hand the existence of different ages of man is seen as experimentation by extraterrestrials in creating the perfect human race. Previous generations were eradicated because of substandard genetics or social progress (Daniken 1968). The other explanation for different epochs of man involves the planet Nibiru, the Sumerian name for the home planet of the Annunaki (Martell 2011).

Sumerians describe Nibiru as the twelfth planet of our solar system. Nibiru, also called the Planet of the Crossing, was depicted in Cuneiform reliefs as a glowing cross in the sky. The Atrahasis describes Nibiru as a planet which exists deep in outer-space but at times is “attracted to the inner part of our solar system”, namely the gravitational pull of the Sun. Nibiru is said to have a bluish tint and be four to eight times the size of our Earth. It passes into the inner part of our solar system during its 3,600-year orbit around the sun. Nibiru is thought to also orbit another failed sun that exists in the extremity of our solar system. This idea is not without some scientific merit, as Dr. Richard Muller from Berkley postulated that our solar system was actually part of a binary system. The failed red or brown dwarf thought to exist beyond the Oort cloud was termed Nemesis. Nibiru is described as having a highly elongated orbit. The existence of such a planet has gone in and out of favor with astronomers over the past decade. Notable names such as Dr. Robert Harrington, lead astronomer of the Navel observatory, and Dr.

Takashi Mukai from Kobe University have released models, which contain an “intruder planet” with a highly elliptical orbit (Martell 2011).

As Nibiru approaches the inner part of our solar system, it is thought to create great disturbances, resulting in the terrestrial cataclysms so often predicted in ancient literature. Icy Planetesimals from the Oort cloud impact earth, causing substantial damage to the ecosystem. It is also thought that tidal forces from the gravity of such a large foreign body could cause drastic changes in the sea level, hence the origin of global flood mythos. Cuneiform inscriptions describe the appearance of a Sumerian God who warns of Nibiru’s approach and the impending flood, and a man is then chosen to build a large boat and ensure the continuation of the human race (Martell 2011).

A considerable portion of the Paleo-SETI discourse relies on the assumption that not only could this intervention and salvation from the ensuing flood happen in Sumeria but also all across the world, destroying the once advanced civilization that existed around the globe (Martell 2011). To give merit to these claims Paleo-SETI uses multitudinous sacred scriptures, which do seem to point to such an occurrence. Like many of the sacred traditions already discussed, the Hopi creation narrative evokes the existence of seven “worlds” of man. We currently live in the fourth (or fifth, depending on the translation), and, not surprisingly, the previous world was brought to an end by a great flood. Interestingly enough this narrative foretells that our current world will “be consummated when the Earth stumbles on its own axis as a great blue star, referred to as “Sasquasohum”, precipitates upon it.” (Goitizolo 2010). This description does lend itself to be symbolically reminiscent of a large planet passing into our solar system. Compounded with this, is the Hopi tradition of the Pahana, or lost white brother of the Hopi. Pahana was said to have left on a journey to the East at the onset of the fourth world. The Hopi

await his return, believing it to be the catalyst for a new age of peace and prosperity. Similarities to the Pahana of the Hopi can be found in Central America with the Aztec deity of Quetzalcoatl and Mayan counterpart Kukulcan (James 2000:910-916 and Kaiser 1990:65-71).

Making Sense of It All

The validity of many of these claims is widely disputed, but as the Paleo-SETI community so often points out, our notions about our world have a long history of being subject to change. What is the chance that you or I will see the coming of Nibiru or Sasquosohum in our lifetime? Are we on the precipice of recreating the golden age of peaceful civilization with our alien creators? These are questions that I most certainly cannot answer. In some sense, the historical truth of the Paleo-SETI argument is irrelevant as the validation of the discourse lies in its psychological relevance. Those who ascribe to the Paleo-SETI beliefs are essentially focusing on a creation model that is very similar to intelligent design. The obvious difference between the two models being that, in this case it was extraterrestrials not God, who did the creating. This conception of intelligent design is a significant development because it refutes the seemingly cold indifference of nature and the evolutionary process for the kinder reality that we were created for some purpose. It is reoccurring need to believe that someone out there in the big blue cares about us as a species (Richter 2012:233).

But one thing I will say, just in case you were wondering about those Little Grey Men: it was Sumerian belief that the Anunnaki had helpers that assisted them with various tasks that needed completion. Unlike depictions of the Annanuki-which had a comprehensibly human appearance-the Igigi were short, squat creatures with small delicate arms. The faces of the Igigi

held only one distinguishable feature, enormous almond shaped eyes (Martell 2011). Perhaps someday the Annunaki will return. Perhaps the Igigi are still here.

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