

MARTIANS, ATLANTEANS, AND "LOST TRIBES": PSEUDO-ARCHAEOLOGY AND ITS IMPACT ON NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES



OCTOBER 30, 2020

Pseudo-archaeology (also known as alternate, fringe, or cult archaeology) is a study that has drawn in not only professionals, but also the American public. Tying in concepts together such as aliens, giants, and Atlanteans with the most visible archaeological sites around the world, its romantic fantasy holds a wider appeal than the boring truth. Yet often, the ideas behind pseudo-archaeology hold racist and even dangerous ideas. This year's roundtable brings together scholars who study this phenomenon to help explain not only the motivations behind these theories, but also why they are so attractive to us.

SECRETS
REVEALED WITHIN

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LEARN...*



THE INSTITUTE FOR
AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES
museum & research center



SCHEDULE

1100 AM

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Kenneth Feder

1130 AM

ANCIENT ALIENS AS A CONSPIRACY THEORY

Dr. Michelle Turner and Dr. Derek Turner

1200 PM*

“WHITE TRIBISM” AND PSEUDOHISTORY

Dr. Douglas Hunter

1230 PM

“THE NEWARK “HOLY STONES”: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF AN ENDURING SCIENTIFIC FORGERY

Dr. Brad Leper and Jeff Gill

1 00 PM*

“HERE, THEY MADE THEIR MAGIC.” HOW A CULT FOUND EGYPTIAN AND FIRST NATIONS MAGIC IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Stephanie Halmhofer

1 30 PM

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

*APPROXIMATE START TIME ALLOWING FOR A SHORT BREAK



ABSTRACTS

ANCIENT ALIENS AS A CONSPIRACY THEORY

Dr. Michelle Turner and Dr. Derek Turner

What exactly is a conspiracy theory, and can we draw clear lines between conspiracy ideas and scientific hypotheses? In this paper, we draw on both philosophy of science and archaeology to offer an analysis and diagnosis of “ancient aliens” theory. First, we present a philosophical analysis of how conspiracy theories function, and how ancient aliens fit within that model. Second, we argue that ancient aliens theory differs from other familiar conspiracy theories because it does distinctive (and distinctively problematic) ideological work. Next, we argue that ancient aliens theory is a form of non-contextualized inquiry that sacrifices the very thing that makes archaeological research successful, and does so for the sake of popular accessibility. Rather than merely dismissing ancient aliens as “pseudoarchaeology” on demarcationist grounds, we offer a more complicated account of how the theory works and the ideological work it does.

“WHITE TRIBISM” AND PSEUDOHISTORY

Dr. Douglas Hunter

Lying at the root of many pseudohistorical notions about the early history of the Americas is a phenomenon Douglas Hunter has identified as “White tribism.” Virtually from the moment of the arrival of Europeans in the Americas, European formed theories about the origins and nature of Indigenous peoples. It did not take long for theorists to begin proposing that some Indigenous people were European in origin. As Whiteness came to be defined as a superior category of race, some sort of White origin or influence became a common basis for “explaining” any Indigenous attributes that defied expectations of the primitive. In current pseudohistorical theorizing, White Tribism has served to erase an Indigenous past, by denying Indigenous peoples an existence in their own history. Archaeological evidence ranging from petroglyphs to mound complexes to grave goods has been co-opted as proof of a pre-Contact presence in the Americas of Whites, or White-aligned “Old World” peoples.



ABSTRACTS

“THE NEWARK "HOLY STONES": THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF AN ENDURING SCIENTIFIC FORGERY

Dr. Brad Leper and Jeff Gill

The Newark "Holy Stones" are one of the most infamous frauds in Ohio archaeology. Long dismissed by professional archaeologists simply as a crude effort to support the ethnocentric notion that the so-called "Lost Tribes of Israel" built the mounds and earthworks of eastern North America, when examined in their social context, they actually shed light on an historically significant debate in 19th century anthropology. The champions of polygenesis believed African Blacks and American Indians were separate species and legitimately could be displaced from their homelands and enslaved. Supporters of monogenesis argued that all humans were descended from Adam and Eve and human slavery was a moral and spiritual outrage. When viewed in this context, the "Holy Stones" appear to be scientific forgeries designed to refute arguments for polygenesis and to undermine the scientific support for slavery promulgated by the "American School" of Physical Anthropology. With the outbreak of the American Civil War, which ultimately would end slavery in the United States, and the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, the monogenesis vs. polygenesis debate became irrelevant and the "Holy Stones" dropped out of mainstream anthropological discussions.

“HERE, THEY MADE THEIR MAGIC.” HOW A CULT FOUND EGYPTIAN AND FIRST NATIONS MAGIC IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Stephanie Halmhofer

On October 22th, 1924, Edward Arthur Wilson received a vision in his bedroom in France revealing he was a reincarnated Egyptian deity. In 1926 Wilson, who was now known as Brother XII, published his manifesto, *A Message from the Masters of the Wisdom*. In it he explained that he would be responsible for founding the sixth sub-race described by famous occultist Helena Blavatsky, and that this was to happen in southwestern British Columbia. And in 1927 Brother XII moved to BC and founded the Aquarian Society. The society built three settlements in BC, but it was the first settlement at Cedar-by-the-Sea on Vancouver Island, that would become the most important to Brother XII's disciples. For it was this settlement which had been built on top of a large shell midden site belonging to the Snuneymuxw First Nation. And it was the magic they believed came from Snuneymuxw's history of the land that gave Brother XII's disciples the strength they needed to challenge Brother XII's powerful Egyptian magic in the Supreme Court of British Columbia.



DR. MICHELLE TURNER

Michelle I. Turner is a postdoctoral scholar at Crow Canyon Archaeological Center. She is an archaeologist who works in the American Southwest, studying ceramics, architecture and other material culture to examine Chaco Canyon and its outlier sites. She received her PhD from Binghamton University. Her dissertation project involved a small excavation at a Chacoan great house in Aztec Ruins National Monument in New Mexico, and her current research focuses on another great house in southwestern Colorado. She is also a former intern and lab assistant at the Institute for American Indian Studies.

DR. DEREK TURNER

Derek Turner is Class of 1943 Professor of Philosophy at Connecticut College in New London, CT. He is the author of three books that explore philosophical issues in historical reconstruction: *Making Prehistory: Historical Science and the Scientific Realism Debate* (2007), *Paleontology: A Philosophical Introduction* (2011), and *Paleoaesthetics and the Practice of Paleontology* (2019). He regularly teaches courses at Connecticut College on philosophy of science, philosophy of biology, and environmental philosophy.

DR. DOUGLAS HUNTER

Douglas Hunter is an independent researcher, writer, and artist based in Port McNicoll, Ontario. He defended his PhD in History at York University in Toronto in 2015, and was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Waterloo. His dissertation, "Stone of Power," was awarded the 2016 Canadian Association of Graduate Studies prize for the best dissertation in Social Sciences, the Humanities, and Art History. A revised version with new research was published as *The Place of Stone* by the University of North Carolina Press in 2017. He is also the author of *Beardmore: The Viking Hoax That Rewrote History* (McGill-Queen's Press, 2018). He is currently completing a book on the landscape painter A.Y. Jackson and his experiences as a soldier and war artist in World War I. You can learn more at douglasshunter.ca.

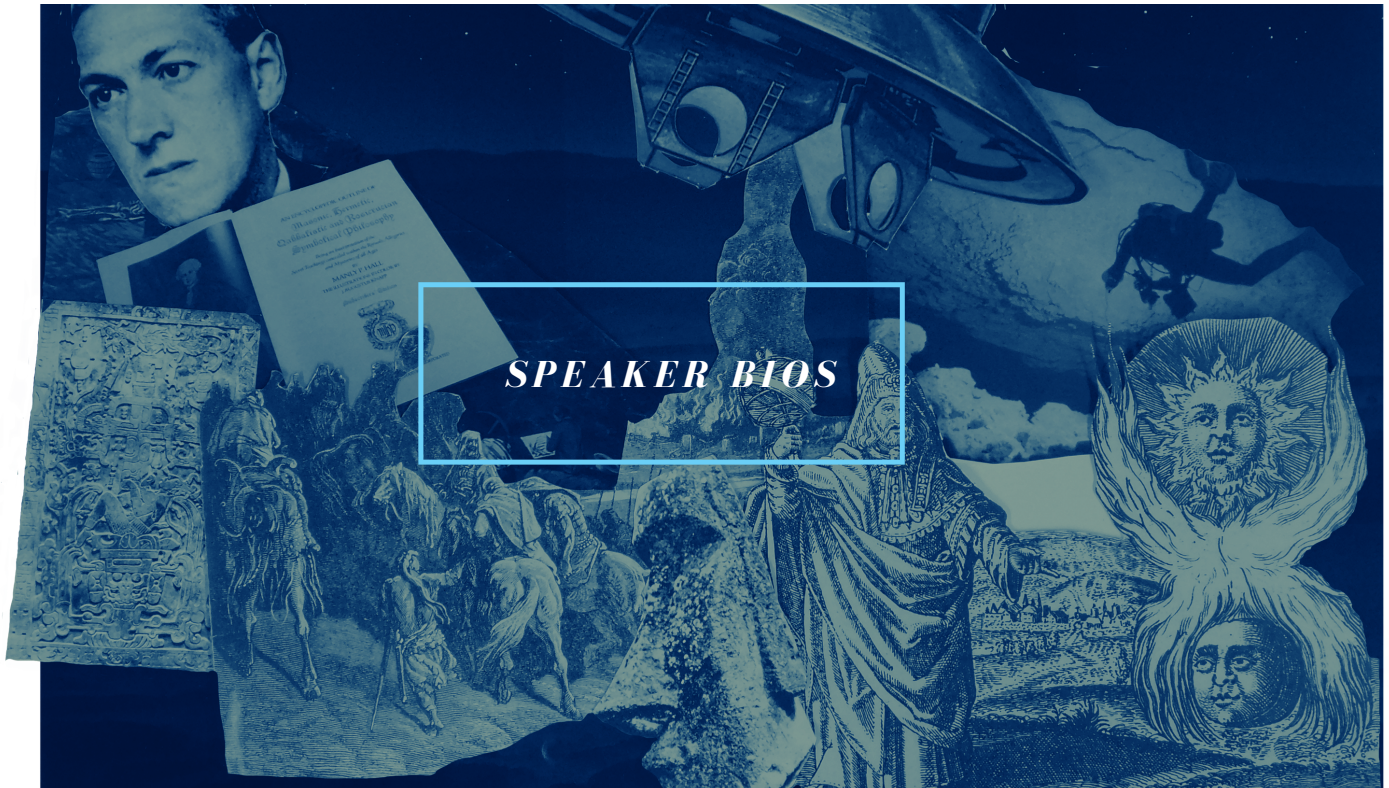


DR. BRAD LEPPER

Brad Lepper is the Senior Curator of Archaeology for the Ohio History Connection in Columbus, Ohio. In addition, he has taught the occasional class at Denison University in Granville and at the Ohio State University's Newark Campus. He earned his PhD from the Ohio State University and has worked on archaeological projects from Montana to Maine, though most of his career has been spent working in Ohio. He has published numerous scholarly papers as well as articles intended for a general audience on topics ranging from the peopling of the New World to the age of Serpent Mound. He writes a regular column on archaeology for the Columbus Dispatch and is the author of *Ohio Archaeology: an illustrated chronicle of Ohio's ancient American Indian cultures*, published in 2005 by Orange Frazer Press, Wilmington, Ohio. This book received the Society for American Archaeology's Public Audience Book Award in 2007. Lepper never intended to become an authority on the Newark Holy Stones, but felt compelled to do so because of all the inquiries he received about them when he was the Curator for the Newark Earthworks and Flint Ridge State Memorials.

JEFF GILL

Jeff Gill is a writer, storyteller, and avocational archaeologist in Licking County, Ohio. His undergraduate work was in anthropology at Purdue University, and when he took Hebrew in seminary had no idea that course would end up intersecting with North American archaeology. Moving to the Newark area in 1989, he got involved in local archaeological and historic preservation work; as a writer for local newspapers and periodicals he had helped to tell the story of 12,000 years of human interaction with the local landscape, from helping with the excavation of the Burning Tree Mastodon and analysis of the skeletal remains, to sharing in the site report of the Munson Springs Site which suggested a Paleoindian base camp overlaid with Archaic and Hopewell cultural period occupations. He has written and presented for professional and public programs over the last thirty years around the Midwest, on prehistoric Native American Indian architecture and early historic settlement activities by the first Euro-American residents of the Ohio River Valley. Early on he came in contact with Brad Lepper of the Ohio History Connection, and they have among other projects found themselves deeply involved in the question of the Newark Holy Stones. While the preservation and interpretation of the Newark Earthworks is their primary shared interest, the Holy Stones keep coming up in questions from visitors, so they have continued to investigate the socio-political roots of this still provocative hoax.



STEPHANIE HALMHOFER

Stephanie Halmhofer is a PhD student in the department of Anthropology and the Institute of Prairie and Indigenous Archaeology at the University of Alberta. Her research is focused on the ways cults in North America use archaeology and pseudoarchaeology to build and support their mythical origins, and how that impacts the First Nations histories of the lands these cults reside on.

DR. KENNETH FEDER

Feder is professor emeritus (Anthropology) at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Connecticut. His primary research interests include the archaeology of the native peoples of New England and the analysis of public perceptions about the human past. He is the author of several books including: *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology* (Oxford University Press, 2020, 10th edition); *The Past in Perspective: An Introduction to Human Prehistory* (Oxford University Press, 2020, 8th edition); *Ancient America: Fifty Archaeological Sites to See for Yourself* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); and *Archaeological Oddities: A Field Guide to Forty Claims of Lost Civilizations, Ancient Visitors, and Other Strange Sites in North America* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019). He has served as a talking head on numerous television documentaries about the human. On the topic of human antiquity, one producer described him as being “a beacon of sanity in a sea of madness,” which actually is a very scary thought.



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Other Writings

<https://womenwriteaboutcomics.com/2019/09/the-harmful-pseudoarchaeology-of-mythological-atlantis/>

<https://womenwriteaboutcomics.com/2020/06/the-osiris-path-searches-for-the-history-of-humanity-in-space/>

DR. KENNETH FEDER

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Publications:

Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology, 10th edition Oxford University Press

Ancient America: Fifty Archaeological Sites to See for Yourself, Rowman & Littlefield

Archaeological Oddities: A Field Guide to Forty Claims of Lost Civilizations, Ancient Visitors, and Other Strange Sites in North America