

Erich von Daniken
a man who dares to question

by doug munson

Were the gods of antiquity really extraterrestrial astronauts? This is a question that a forty-two-year-old man from Switzerland has had the world puzzling over since he released his book CHARIOTS OF THE GODS? in 1970.

I don't propose to answer this question one way or the other in this article. Erich von Däniken has been working full time for more than ten years to answer it, and it's still up in the air. All I intend to do is pose the question to you and tell you that this man just made his first visit to New Hampshire on February 22nd and spoke at the University of New Hampshire.

Seven hundred fifty people

filled the Granite State Room looking for a unique experience, and we were not disappointed. At about eight o'clock in the evening a man in a white turtleneck stepped to the podium and asked in a heavy Swiss accent, "Were the gods of antiquity really extraterrestrial astronauts?"

The lights in the room dimmed and the lecture/slide show began. Von Däniken cited the Old Testament as a jumping-off point for his answer to his opening question. He quoted from Ezekiel, Chapter One and stated that the vision the prophet recorded was a detailed account of the landing of a spaceship and his contact with its inhabitants.

This passage has been used



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over and over again by UFO buffs for years. Von Däniken is by no means the first to explore it. He presented, as illustrations, a one hundred fifty year-old painting of the vision, and then a drawing done by NASA engineers from Huntsville, Alabama. The painting was absolutely literal and made no sense at all. The NASA drawing looked like a UFO with four helicopter rotors. I thought that was kind of stretching it. The difference between the two interpretations was staggering and I feel that the passage is still very much open to speculation.

One thing that I didn't expect to hear when I entered the lecture hall that night was a four thousand year old Japanese folk tale. Von Däniken's intent was to use the tale as an example of time dilatation, and on this point he was "right on." It is a classic. Time dilatation is simply the stretching of time beyond normal dimensions, and was a concept dealt with by Einstein in his theories of relativity. Anyway, the story was so captivating it made a deep impression on me and I have to pass it on to you.

One day a handsome young man named Island Child took his boat far out to sea to go fishing. He didn't catch a single fish, and soon fell asleep. Suddenly he awoke for all around him there was light. In his boat was a beautiful maiden. Island Child was very frightened and he

asked the young maiden, "Where do you come from?"

She answered, "I have come from the air. Look there. That tiny pearl is my boat. But let us not talk here. Come, follow me to my boat. You are so handsome that I want to love you forever."

As the maiden herself was of extraordinary beauty, Island Child followed her call, left his boat, and climbed into the shiny pearl. Everything there was strange, and so bright that he had to close his eyes. In a short while they reached a faraway god planet. The soil there was completely different from the soil we know. There were strange colors and the sky was not like ours.

Island Child was very happy and he loved the beautiful maiden for three years. But then he grew homesick and wanted to see his parents and his old friends again. The beautiful maiden saw the sorrow on his face and asked him, "Island Child, what is worrying you?"

He answered, "I want to go home to see my parents and my friends again. I promise that I shall gladly return to you."

The maid from the stars advised against such a journey, but Island Child wouldn't give up. Finally, she found that she could no longer refuse his appeal and they both boarded the shining pearl. In the twinkling of an eye Island Child was

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home again.

To his bewilderment, Island Child found that his home village had completely disappeared. There were still some of the old streets and fountains. He recognized a small stream and the surrounding hills. All of the houses, however, were different and strange people lived in them. Feeling more and more confused, Island Child wandered up and down the street where he once lived. He recognized no one and people laughed at him as if he were a stranger. This made him very sad, and quietly weeping, he walked out of the village. He then met an old man who asked him why he wept.

Island Child told his story and the old man became very excited, clapped his hands over his head, and



shouted, "What you tell me is impossible! My great-grandfather told me a story of a handsome young man who went out to sea in his boat and never returned. His name was also Island Child, but this was more than three hundred and fifty years ago!"

Makes you wonder, doesn't it? We never did find out what happened to Island Child, in the end. Hopefully he learned his lesson and returned to his foxy maiden from the stars.

The next hour of von Däniken's lecture was basically a rehashing of what appeared in his books CHARIOTS OF THE GODS? and GOLD OF THE GODS, his two TV specials and his movie.

Slides periodically flashed as the speaker

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gave his accounts . . . everything flowed along routinely. A very familiar picture appeared on the screen. It was the plateau in South America where a controversial "landing site" was located. At the base of the plateau was a river which had recently dried up. Buried in the mud of the river bed were discovered several thousand rocks with strange drawings on them. Local inhabitants and several archaeologists unearthed them and cleaned them up.

Von Däniken focused on a certain series of these rocks which contained drawings of a primitive style but were highly detailed. The first rock in the series appeared to be a sacrifice of some kind. Two men stood over a bare-chested, reclining figure on a table. One of the men held a strange looking knife. The next rock showed the knife piercing the figure's chest. A gasp swept through the audience as the next frame a closeup, flashed on the screen. Pictured was an intricately detailed drawing of a human heart being held by the two men. Everyone sat on the edge of their chairs during the course of the following slides for

it could be seen *clearly* that what was taking place was not a sacrifice at all . . . it was a heart transplant!

After this exciting climax, the Swiss explorer and extraterrestrial researcher gave a brief outline of his plans for the future. They included the founding of the Ancient Astronaut Society, and a trip to South America this coming summer.

Accompanying this article is a reproduction of a handout we were given as we left the Granite State Room. You may do with it what you will. If you're curious, check it out.

This coming July Erich von Däniken and, perhaps, Neil Armstrong, the first man to step on the moon, will be heading for South America. They plan to trek up the Amazon via helicopter to check out a claim by the local Indian inhabitants. The Indians say that they know of a crypt which houses bodies in a state of suspended animation. They call them "the living dead." Also, these Indians claim there are "fantastic instruments" which they do not understand and that these instruments have been preserved for thousands of years by their priesthood. It will be

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After the lecture was a lively question and answer session.



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interesting to see what develops.

Maybe someday we will know the answer to the questions Erich von Däniken raises. Perhaps that someday will be sooner than we think.



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