

Search for UFOs and Aliens: Modern Evidence and Ancient Traditions

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Abstract

An important priority for the coming decades will be to face up to the possibility that as an intelligent life-form on Earth capable of wreaking untold damage to our biosphere, we may not be alone. The possible presence of intelligent alien life in our cosmic vicinity should be faced with honesty, fortitude, as well as creativity. Recent testimony presented at a US Congressional hearing will be all too easy to dismiss as delusions or inventions, but caution needs to be exercised before such action is taken.

1. Introduction

The recent US Congress hearing on UFO reports (1) laid wide open a long-standing debate relating to such sightings (including sightings of UAP's - unidentified aerial phenomena). Three former high-ranking military officials gave evidence under oath to Congress asserting that they believe the US government knows much more about UFO's than it has already revealed. There was also astounding testimony concerning both UFO/UAP sightings and a declaration the US government is in possession of "nonhuman" biological matter. We have watched these proceedings with interest although we cannot contribute in any factual sense to the issues that have been raised including claims the US Federal government is concealing key UFO-related data from the general public. Our aim in this note is to attempt to place such claims in a wider historical and scientific context.

Although the very recent US congress inquiry into UFOs concluded with an amazingly positive result, earlier official inquiries into similar reports of sightings involved aspects of an institutional cover-up that are hard to ignore. The famous Roswell incident (2) is an iconic case in point. In July 1947 a mysterious craft evidently crashed into a site near Roswell, New Mexico,

dispersing fragments of the craft material, as well as, most controversially, alleged evidence of alien bodies. The US government declared the crashed item to be a weather balloon and all the other associated evidence was discounted. We find it hard to believe those items were simply thrown in the trash. Now that the phenomenon is proven to be there, there is no longer justification for *all* governments to not release their secret files and evidence.

In diverse cultures throughout the world the idea of aliens in the sky as well as episodes of reported contact between aliens and humans are widespread. In ancient India, where the most fundamental concepts in mathematics are firmly based, including our modern number system, the concept of zero and the concept of infinity, we also find the clearest descriptions of aliens. The Vedic texts that date back at least to the 2nd millennium BCE clearly describe flying craft, alien beings and interactions between humans and aliens throughout the Vedic era. Sri Lankan mythology is also replete with similar accounts of flying machines - Ravana's Mechanical Flying Peacock. These phenomena are not considered to be feats of human engineering but imports from outer space, derived from aliens that were believed to inhabit the many worlds that are described in ancient texts, including well known Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist texts. The vivid descriptions to be found in the *Drona Parva*, which is the Seventh book of the Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhahārata*, have long been famous for describing aerial warfare by advanced aircraft or space ships called *vimānas*. This text is at least 2000 years old, though there is no precise date for the origin of the accounts themselves. Alleged space journeys also figure heavily in Sumerian and Babylonian legends of a much greater level of antiquity, but all these are generally dismissed as religious hyperbole or figments of the fertile imagination of primitive people. The Bible also contains strange tales of Moses, Elijah, and Enoch being taken away from Earth in strange vehicles and transported to 'divine' regions of brilliant light. The mythologies of many cultures around the world contain such tales, which are a recurring theme throughout human societies in antiquity. It has been common to regard them all as fantasies. But why are there so many of these accounts, all insisting on the same things? There are too many of them. What if they are attempts by people of earlier times to describe real phenomena as best they could, in the absence of technological knowledge by the ancient authors?

2. Unexplained discoveries

There are sacred traditions still prevailing in the Dogon tribe and discussed at length by Robert Temple, which point uncannily to an alien connection (4). The modern Dogon are tucked away in a remote region of West Africa, a few

hundred miles south of Timbuktu in the Republic of Mali. In 1976, Robert Temple published a book, *The Sirius Mystery*, in which he reported the Dogon claim that the Earth was once populated, a few thousand years ago, by amphibious beings from an alien planet around a star that they identified as a “companion” of the star Sirius. This claim was based on an investigation carried out by two French anthropologists, Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen who, nearly a century ago, had studied both the ancient mythology and current beliefs associated with the Dogon tribe. Temple’s book was issued in a second edition, expanded by a further 50%, in 1998, after one of the Dogon assertions was unexpectedly confirmed by astrophysicists, as explained in the book; earlier editions of the book became obsolete subsequent to 1998.

Some artefacts dating to pre-industrial revolution times were also discovered in caves used by the Dogon, including one depicting a winged human like figure **Fig.2** (Temple(1)).



Fig.2: A Three or four hundred year-old iron statue depicting a winged “alien” found in a Dogon tribe cave (1).

Some aspects of the Dogon story are similar to traditions that prevailed in ancient Egypt that included a strong focus on the star Sirius. One impressive aspect of the Dogon story is the assertion that there existed a companion star to the brightest star Sirius A - Sirius B - that was not seen or discovered until powerful telescopes were deployed in modern times. Griaule and Dieterlen also claimed that the Dogon believed that the Earth and other planetary bodies rotate on their axes and, also, that they orbit the Sun. There is also another remarkable claim that they knew that Jupiter has four moons, and that Saturn has a ring surrounding it. The Dogon also knew the difference between stars and planets, and that celestial orbits tended to be elliptical rather than circular, something which took a great deal of trouble for Johannes Kepler to discover. How did the Dogon know all of these things? They even describe the companion star to Sirius, known as Sirius B by astronomers, as being tiny, too small to see (and admit they could never see but knew it was there anyway), and that it was made of a special heavy material which does not exist on Earth. They themselves claim this information came to their ancestors in the distant past (who did not live in Mali but another land far away to the northeast) from alien visitors from a planet orbiting a third star in the Sirius system. So how did they know the difference between planets and stars? What, indeed, is the answer to what is appropriately called “the Sirius Mystery”?

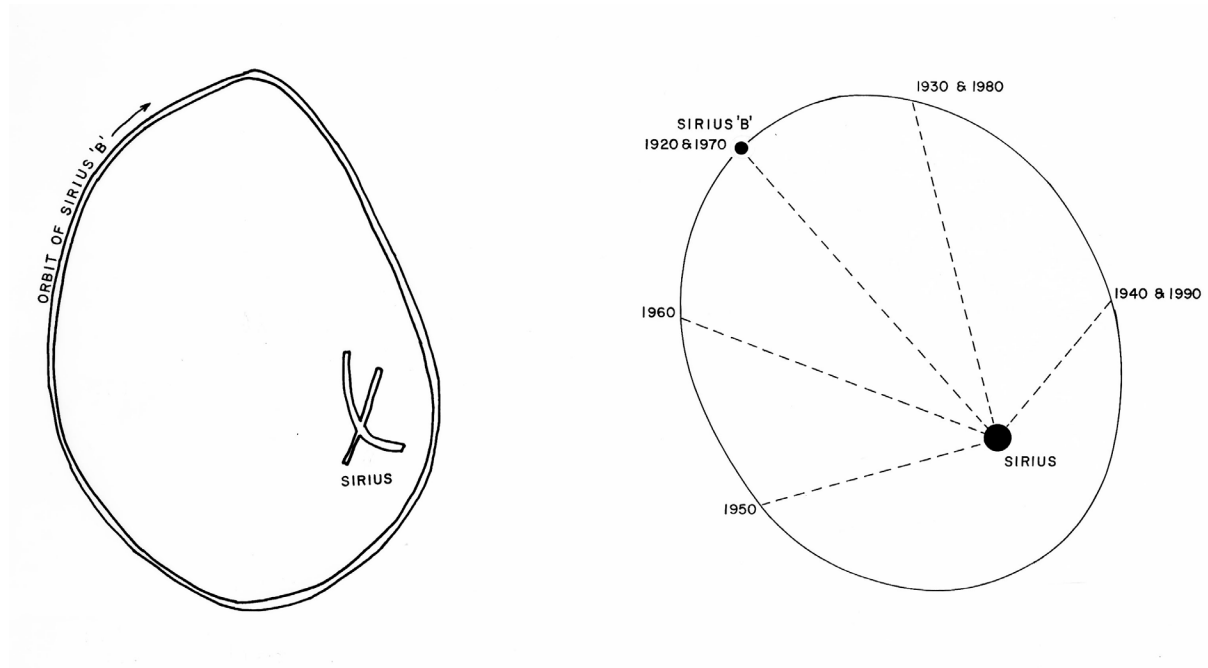


Figure 3. Left, the Dogon sand drawing of Sirius B orbiting round Sirius A. Right, the modern astronomical drawing of the same thing. How did the Dogon know about all this?

Humans seem to have wrestled with the possibility of alien life from time immemorial. Each ancient culture on record had its own particular take on what form such life might take, but they invariably converge on one aspect - aliens travelling through the skies and through space.

3. Other evidence

Besides the many astronomical sand drawings (meticulously reproduced and published by French anthropologists) associated with the Dogon tribe depicting stars and planets, other extant ancient artefacts that are attributed in popular culture to a possible alien connection include the construction of the Egyptian pyramids, and the alignments of the three Giza pyramids on the ground (5). One of us (RT) disputes the assertion that the layout of the three main Giza pyramids represents the constellation of Orion, which he believes to be demonstrably false. Then there are also the Nazca lines (6) in Peru that are visible only from the skies; and the alignments associated with some megalithic structures such as Stonehenge (7) in Southern England.

There are other examples of unsolved mysteries that have taunted scientists for a long time. Some of these, like the claimed artefacts from the “Roswell Incident” may be of dubious authenticity. We are aware of reports of alien Peruvian mummies recently revealed to the media in Mexico and we take

the point of view that it is too early for them to be critically evaluated scientifically with research on the materials and we are deeply sceptical of these mummies.

A discovery reported in 2008 involves a strange artefact embedded in sandstone at a depth of 900 metres in a coal mine in Donetsk in the Ukraine. The item that was embedded in sandstone could not be removed intact from the fragile matrix in which it was embedded. This discovery, particularly as it is located in war-torn Ukraine, has an inescapable irony, but the evidence itself looks secure enough as far as we can tell from the sketchy reports available.

Ironically, a rather similar discovery was reported by a resident of Vladivostok in far-eastern Russia (Ukraine's warring adversary) within a lump of ordinary coal that was destined to burn in a household fire. A shiny metal object was noticed protruding from a piece of friable black rock. The protrusion looked unquestionably manmade so it was brought to the attention of local scientists. The embedded object turned out to be a shiny metal bar with teeth, similar to teeth in a gear plate built so as to mesh with the teeth of a wheeled gear. The puzzle lies in the fact that the coal was formed from trees that were buried during the carboniferous era 350–300 million years ago. Occasional findings of strange objects in coal mines have been reported from time to time for more than two hundred years. These findings have tended to be dismissed out of hand, and evidence concerning them is scarce. Often these reports have only appeared as curious items in obscure local newspapers (in Germany and America), which no one chose to follow up because they were clearly "impossible". We shall never know any further details of such odd cases.

4. The Roswell Incident

Although the very recent US congressional inquiry concluded with an amazingly positive result concerning the reality of the UFO/AIP phenomenon, earlier official inquiries into similar sightings involved aspects of institutional cover-up that are hard to ignore. The now famous Roswell incident is an iconic case in point. In July 1947 a mysterious craft evidently crashed into a site near Roswell, New Mexico, dispersing fragments of the craft material, as well as, most controversially, alleged evidence of alien bodies. After many changes to this narrative coming from the relevant authorities, it was finally declared that the crashed item was a human construct – weather balloon or defence

experiment either of which was well understood, and all the other associated evidence was discounted. So, the UFO phenomenon fell into serious disrepute in later years.

One of us (CW) had the good fortune of talking to Jesse Marcel Jr at a conference in the 1990's and remember the earnestness he displayed in recalling his reactions to his father's discovery of the amazing Roswell artefacts. Such reactions often tell a story that is more authentic than the record that one finds in journals and newspapers of the day.

5. Unanswered Questions

After three centuries or more of empirical science following the Enlightenment in Europe, we are still looking for answers to the question, "Are we alone as living creatures here on Earth?". Are there aliens inhabiting other planets – habitable planets that we now know certainly exist in their billions in our galaxy alone. What would intelligent aliens look like? Where should we seek to find them? One of us (RT) believes that many will be found to be octopoid, and was told by Arthur C. Clarke that it was his opinion that the majority of planet-based intelligent life forms would resemble highly intelligent octopuses.

SETI has been ongoing, albeit with changing fortunes, for over 6 decades, with no definite result. As we have recently pointed out, the presumption that our intelligent aliens would use electromagnetic signals to transmit messages to us may be an error. It is perhaps more likely that the option of microbial SETI – looking for coded messages in the silent DNA of infalling microorganisms - which is far more promising, has been overlooked (8). As we have mentioned elsewhere, our ideas of eternal cosmic life in an eternal universe, as opposed to spontaneous generation of life on our planet, leaves wide open the possibility of alien life everywhere in the galaxy and beyond.

In an eternal universe, life, itself, must also be eternal. On the other hand, if life started on Earth as a one-off against supraastronomical odds, because everything was all of a sudden created at once, in less than an instant, the universe just popped into being from nowhere, and has a size and lifespan, we might be hopelessly alone.

As the James Webb space telescope has eliminated a possible age of the universe of 13.8 Gy, nullifying the Big Bang and Dark Energy/Dark Matter models of the universe, and some have just decided to double the age to 27+ Gy, either way, on the cosmic picture, we cannot expect to be at the top of

the intelligence scale of life in the Universe – on the contrary we may be close to the bottom and our methods of searching for our intelligent alien neighbours might well be fundamentally flawed. In an eternal universe, we would certainly be at the bottom of the intelligence scale. Most of us on this planet don't even have toilets, sewage treatment or basic surgery, yet.

Over nearly half a century all inquiries into the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence begin by pondering the question posed by Fermi's paradox: The universe is vast and old. Therefore, we expect advanced civilizations to have developed enough by now to send their emissaries to Earth. So why have we not seen any? Fermi speculated that either such space travel was not feasible, or that our alien neighbours knew of our existence but did not consider visiting Earth was a worthwhile project. But there was another logical possibility – aliens simply did not exist, as we would understand if life developed as a miracle by spontaneous generation on Earth. Miracles don't repeat themselves!

The correct answer to, "Are there aliens?", may have been with us for decades – nay, centuries, and we were not smart enough to recognise them. Perhaps the UFO phenomenon that is currently being discussed may hold a clue.

There is another alternative. One of us (RT) has raised the suggestion many years ago that the Earth may be under a cosmic quarantine, due to the innate violence of the human species, and the inescapable fact that we are dangerous creatures to visit.

More recently, one of us (RT) has also raised the suggestion that the human species may be under sustained and continuous observation as an experiment. Humans are an amazingly creative species, but we also have a large proportion of psychopaths. The experiment may be to see whether we can 'make it'. The thin line between genius and madness could be called The Human Condition. It is possible that there is intense galactic interest in whether we can get our violence under control or whether we will destroy ourselves, so that the Human Experiment fails. It is possible that we may be one of the most interesting experiments taking place at the moment for the galactic anthropologists.

6. Outstanding scientific issues

If the accounts in the media of the recovery of biological material (non-human) is accepted as true, the question as to whether the alien biology is similar to

terrestrial life in a broader sense needs to be urgently resolved. If this biology shares the same basic biochemistry as terrestrial life, then it is a startling confirmation of the ideas of panspermia and cosmic life that we have discussed in earlier papers. It may turn out to be important for medical science to analyse the details of any differences from human biology in the hope for finding remedies and cures for the many diseases that plague humanity, and the danger of any, as yet, unknown pathogens. Native Americans can sadly attest to the effects of new pathogens from other human populations, and we know pathogens jump from species to species on Earth. Could the risk of our Earthly pathogens be keeping our visitors from contacting us directly? Or, perhaps, our warlike ways...? And if we are a cosmic experiment, direct intervention in our affairs would terminate that experiment, thereby destroying the entire point of why we are interesting. It is suggested therefore that we try to continue to be interesting, if only to ensure our prolonged survival. And the best way to do that is to make civilisation work, prevent so many psychopaths rising to positions of power, and put far more effort into music, art, literature, poetry, and all the pursuits of beauty which are what we really have to offer if we are to be respected by alien civilisations.

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