

archaeology. This is perhaps not surprising, for Collins also notes at the outset that this volume is really “an intellectual adventure that will culminate not only in the discovery of Eden but also in the realization that the true meaning behind humanity’s fall from grace, in the wake of the Neolithic revolution, is integrally bound up with the secret writings of Seth, the son of Adam” (p. 15). Despite Hancock’s initial promise that Collins will reveal Göbekli Tepe’s “place in history,” he does no such thing in this book.

To be fair, this book by Collins fits into his apparent worldview. He is a known proponent of the theory that there were ancient civilizations present on the earth before those that we know, describing himself as having written “more than a dozen books that challenge the way we perceive the past” (p. 421). In his first book, published in 1996, he claimed that the Watchers of the book of Enoch and the Anunnaki of the Sumerian texts are “the memory of a shamanic elite that catalyzed the Neolithic revolution” (p. 421). He has also apparently successfully determined that Atlantis is located in Cuba and the Bahamian archipelago (2000); found out the truth behind the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb (2002); and revealed the existence of a cave complex located beneath the pyramids of Giza (2009).

The blurbs for this book (one on the back cover and three on the Amazon webpage) are enthusiastic, but they are by like-minded authors. The reviews posted by Amazon readers are similarly enthusiastic, but uninformed members of the general public have written them all. Indeed, it should give professional archaeologists pause to find that pseudoarchaeological books such as this not only appeal to a certain fringe element of the general public (i.e., the “mysteries community” referred to by Hancock), but are also apparently read by an additional segment that one might usually consider less prone to believing such nonsense.

As with his previous books, no doubt Collins is laughing all the way to the bank with this one. Whether he actually believes any of what he has written is something perhaps best kept to himself.

*Black Genesis: The Prehistoric Origins of Ancient Egypt.* ROBERT BAUVAL and THOMAS BROPHY. 2011. Bear & Company, Rochester, Vermont. 356 pp. \$20.00 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-59143-114-5.

*Reviewed by* Ethan Watrall, Michigan State University.

I do not think that anyone would argue with me if I were to say that Egypt has been both the target of and

inspiration for a diverse and spectacular array of pseudoarchaeological narratives. Secret knowledge encoded in monumental architecture? Egypt has it. Vast stores of subterranean Atlantean knowledge? Check! Egypt has that as well. Extraterrestrial involvement (in every way imaginable)? Oh, double check! Egypt definitely has that. Indeed, I could fill all of the space I have been allotted for this review (and much more) with a staggering list of all the permutations and combinations of pseudoarchaeological, pseudoscientific, and pseudohistorical ideas that are somehow related to ancient Egypt.

*Black Genesis: The Prehistoric Origins of Ancient Egypt* fits nicely within this assemblage. The basic premise of the book is that the roots of the ancient Egyptian state are “black African” (a term which the authors use to distinguish between Sub-Saharan Africa and North/Mediterranean Africa). In this regard, the authors are inspired by the work of Afrocentric scholars such as Martin Bernal and Cheikh Anta Diop. The authors argue that the Dynastic Egyptians are direct descendants of the Neolithic peoples who occupied Nabta Playa, who are in turn direct descendants of Early Holocene populations in the Gilf Kebir and Jebel Uweinat regions of southwestern Egypt. The authors also suggest that these early Holocene peoples were descendants of earlier populations from modern-day central Chad. A good deal of their discussion about the earliest populations revolves around early Saharan petroglyphs—sites such as the Cave of Swimmers and the Cave of Beasts (both in the Gilf Kebir region), Niola Doa (in the Ennedi region of Chad), and Jebel Uweinat (in southwestern Egypt). It is worth noting that, as a graduate student, I had the privilege of working with Fred Wendorf at Nabata Playa for a season, so I know a little something about what they talk about.

The connective tissue that binds their wacky string of pearls together is archaeoastronomy (well, pseudoarchaeoastronomy). A significant portion of the book is dedicated to revealing the hidden astronomical alignments at Nabta Playa, and connecting them to later Dynastic Egyptian astronomical symbolism, alignments, and knowledge (again, revealed by the authors). For good measure, the authors introduce a totally unexpected biblical connection—Ham, son of Noah (because nothing says “rigorous archaeological scholarship” like using the Bible as primary source data). Ultimately, the author’s core argument is that later Dynastic Egyptians and early Holocene Sub-Saharan peoples clearly shared the same astronomical-ideological beliefs—which means they (of course) were directly related. This, in the eyes of the authors, means that the origins of the ancient Egyptian state are “black African.” The obsession with revealing

hidden astronomical alignments is no great surprise given that Bauval, a “professional” pseudoarchaeologist, is the father of the popular Orion/Giza-Orion correlation “theory.”

Unfortunately, the authors engineer the “simple truth” of their argument by totally neglecting to discuss current research in the Neolithic and Predynastic of the Nile Valley (and immediately surrounding area). They also completely neglect to discuss any of the research carried out by the Combined Prehistoric Expedition on other sites in the region, such as the Middle Paleolithic site of Bir Tarfawi, the Upper Paleolithic site of Wadi Kubbania, or the wealth of Neolithic sites in the Bir Kiseiba and Bir Abu Hussein regions, all of which would complicate the tottering house of cards they have constructed.

The rhetoric of the volume draws heavily from the standard pseudoarchaeological playbook. The authors lean heavily on the well-worn conspiratorial trope of “mainstream” archaeologists purposefully hiding the truth from the public. Quite a bit of the discussion of Nabta Playa is peppered with insinuations of academic misconduct by members of the Combined Prehistoric Expedition. The authors also wrap their arguments in the cloak of the physical sciences, as if the mere presence of a chapter replete with astronomical observations, calculations, and assertions proves them right. The scientific background of the co-author (Brophy) and his connections with NASA and JPL are often subtly played up, as if to say “hey, this guy is a SCIENTIST, all of this stuff must be true.” A simple Google search reveals that Brophy teaches on “the non-calculable and immeasurable aspects of the universe” at the California Institute for Human Science, an educational institution that offers classes (and degrees) in the integration of science and religion, energy medicine, and the systematization of scientific and objective meditative practices (just to name a few).

While the book is filled with spectacular logical fallacies, ignorant and misinformed interpretations of regional archaeological data, and an insidious rhetoric about researchers hiding “the truth,” we need to consider the wellspring from whence the author’s core ideas flow. In their argument that the roots of the ancient Egyptian state lie in Sub-Saharan Africa, the authors are leveraging a critical issue in Egyptian archaeology. Historically, Egypt has always been oriented by scholars towards the Eastern Mediterranean, the Near East, and Western Asia. Egypt’s interactions with Africa have always been understudied, underrated, and often totally (and purposefully) neglected. The reasons are colonialist, racist, and ethnocentric. Many scholars simply did not want Egypt to be a part of Africa. Egypt was civilized, Africa was barbaric,

primitive, and backward. It is only recently that Egyptian archaeology and Egyptology have begun to think about Egypt in its greater African context. The problem for us is that the scholarly neglect that Africa has been shown is the underlying fuel that pushes Bauval and Brophy’s argument. In their vaguely rambling and disjointed set of arguments, the authors enthusiastically prey upon this neglect like a pack of hyenas.

As I plowed through the book, it is this that I struggled with the most. It was not the convoluted reasoning that would probably have killed my undergrad Jesuit logic professor. It was not the calculated exclusion of well-accepted regional archaeological knowledge. It was not the subtle (and often not so subtle) implications that archaeologists are purposefully obscuring “the truth.” Instead it was how best to separate the illogical, unsubstantiated, and often downright crazy assertions from some of these more thorny (and valid) underlying disciplinary issues without ascribing any measure of genuine authority or expertise to the authors, because, let me tell you, they sure do not deserve any.

*Star Shrines and Earthworks of the Desert Southwest.* GARY A. DAVID. 2012. Adventures Unlimited Publications, Kempton, Illinois. 384 pp. \$19.95 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-935487-84-5.

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Gary A. David’s *Star Shrines and Earthworks of the Desert Southwest* (hereafter, “Star Shines”) is an enthusiastic, starry-eyed exploration of ancient times in the American Southwest. David has read widely in Southwestern archaeology and ethnology (and carefully footnotes his sources), and he has chatted up more than a few Indians. He scrupulously positions himself as a non-Native, non-archaeologist. I position myself as an elder Southwesterner and a recovering scientist; my remarks and generalizations reflect my province and provenance.

David is a readable writer—he holds a Master’s in creative writing from the prestigious University of Colorado, Boulder. His prose is energetic but not hysterical. And he churns it out: since 2007, a 300-plus-page book every 18 months, on average. He also publishes poetry and plays guitar in a band (good things, both). A Cleveland native, he moved in 1994 to Arizona and became fascinated by Hopi and the landscape—interests shared, of course, by many Southwestern archaeologists—and by Orion Correlation Theory.