

ANCIENT SKIES

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DECIPHERMENT OF THE QUENCA SCRIPT - REVISITED

BY PROF. DR. DILEEP KUMAR KANJILAL*

In Ancient Skies 2:6 (Jan.-Feb. 1976) we identified the script of the gold-stele found in the Crespi Museum, Quenca, Ecuador as a specimen of the earliest form of Brahmi, belonging probably to the 7th Century BC and the contents were read as that of a prayer in archaic Sanskrit addressed to some divinity.

Now, a new dimension seems to have been added to this interpretation with the publication in 1980 of Saga America (1) by Dr. Barry Fell, a Professor of Biology at Harvard University, in which the author takes great pains to identify the gold-stele as a zodiac! According to Dr. Fell, the stele "is derived from Cyprus, probably copied in Central America from a Cypriot original, sometime before c300 BC." (italics mine). Further he states that the stele "is lettered in the Paphian script of Cyprus, carelessly executed, the language is close to Minoan-Hittite." (2) (italics mine).

I wrote to Dr. Fell in 1980 drawing his attention to the identification published in Ancient Skies, and he referred the matter to a referee, the relevant portions of whose remarks are cited herewith:

"I have examined the letters of Dr. Dileep Kumar Kanjilal and his decipherment of the Quenca text published in Ancient Skies. While I cannot comment about Sanskrit per se I do not think his version should be published in the Occasional Publications of the Epigraphic Society. Since 12 of the 13 signs are obviously the signs of the Zodiac in correct order, the plate must be a zodiac. It stands to reason that each sign is named in the text so that there can hardly be 13 times 4 feet. On this basis alone your decipherment seems highly plausible and Dr. Kanjilal's in error." (italics mine without prejudice). (3)

Before publication of the decipherment in Ancient Skies, our findings were placed before a group of eminent epigraphists in the Indian Museum, Calcutta on 3/7/76 who, after detailed examination of all sides, including the possibility of Minoan-Hittite, accepted its identification as a prayer in archaic Sanskrit laid down in the oldest form of Brahmi script. (4)

Dr. Fell's referee admitted his lack of acquaintance with Sanskrit (ipso facto with archaic Sans-

krit) and it will be shown in the following discussion that he depended on only 12 out of 56 signs without entering into the basic problem of Brahmi-vis-a-vis-Minoan-Hittite and also there was an oversight on his part in counting 13 times for 14 times of the metrical form. Since opinion on one and the same object varies greatly in two parts of the globe, we would like to place all aspects of the problem before the readers for impartial judgment.

We have examined three photographs of the Quenca stele. One occurs in Erich von Daniken's In Search of Ancient Gods at page 228, another, and an excellent reproduction, occurs in Ulrich Dopatka's Lexicon der Pra-Astronautik after page 160 and a third which was supplied by Mr. Carlos Benedetto of Buenos Aires, Argentina. In all the photos, I noticed that there is a small hole bored through the plate in the center at one end, which indicates that it was used to hang the plate in that position. In all fairness the hole indicates the top of the plate; yet, Dr. Fell presents the script upside down! (Dr. Fell states that he worked with a photograph sent to him by Prof. Paul Chessman.) (5)

Further, there are susceptible differences between Dr. Fell's reproduction of the signs and ours, which we have indicated on his with an "x". Also, he has noticed only 54 signs, while we have 56.

Prior to our decipherment we considered if the appearance of the stele bears likeness to any one of the hieroglyphic, analytic, pictographic, geometric or purely alphabetic varieties. Comparison with the old world scripts, namely the Hittite, Minoan, Papyri and the Semitic, showed that the stele represented an advance pattern akin to the alphabetic. The design similarity being partly established phonetic values of Hittite and Minoan numbering about 74 were applied, but with the result in the negative. The features of both Minoan and Hittite which are partly geometric and partly alphabetic were compared but no consistent meaning came out. Both Hittite and Minoan cover a strata from 1500 BC to 500 BC. Independent comparison of the stele revealed that the signs abound in strokes, circles, semi-circles, loops at the bottom, side-appendages, cross signs, bow-string, fish-hook and other marks which bring the stele closer to a form of Brahmi which was known in India in the 4th Century BC. Comparison with the next strata of old-world basic and derivative languages brought in astonishing similarities with some Phoenician letters too. Application of approximate phonetic values yielded a somewhat consistent meaning in Brahmi. Prof. A. Weber was the first to point out that quite a large number of Brahmi letters may be derived from a North-Semitic (Phoenician) archaic-type. (6) Dr. G. Buhler strongly believed that the Brahmi had been derived from the Aramaic; but since the extant records of Brahmi were not available prior to the 3rd Century BC, a neo-semitic or proto-Aramaic variety

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was considered highly probable before the 6th Century BC. Traditional archaeologists, as rightly put by Josef F. Blumrich (7), have an obsession for the Middle-East, which stands in the way of impartial assessment. Paucity of facts and records regarding a proto-Aramaic Brahmi archetype and an unconscious obsession for Middle-East prevented Dr. Fell from exploring other possibilities of reading the stele.

Much has been left unexplained by the words "close to Minoan-Hittite", because the Hittite has two forms - hieroglyphic and cuneiform. Cuneiform Hittite developed until 1200 BC when it was continued to be written and the hieroglyphic Hittite arose sometime about 1500 BC and continued until 600 BC. The Minoan is conceived to have had nine stages beginning with the Early Middle and Late Minoan, each being divided into three more stages, Minoan I, II and III. Generally speaking, Minoan II was partly ideographic and partly phonetic. Minoan III was more regular. The Middle Minoan A and B varieties both read from left to right. Hittite writing begins at the top right-hand side irrespective of the surface used, with occasional variations. Most of the Hittite inscriptions were carved in stone, while Minoan was laid down on a variety of materials, but rarely in gold. The Paphian script too, is not far removed from the Minoan Linear A and B and reads from left to right with occasional variations. Brahmi has isomorphic affinity with about 13 Hittite, Minoan and the Linear B variety and the Cypriot scripts. All the 56 signs of the Quenca stele can be traced among the regular and irregular varieties of Brahmi found in the inscriptions of Asoka. (8)

Dr. Fell's reading of the Quenca stele from right to left, beginning in the lower right-hand corner violates the normal principles of reading the Hittite, Minoan, Paphian and Brahmi usually followed by the epigraphists. The portions quoted from Dr. Fell and his referee which I have italicized above show that much of their opinion is highly conjectural, while we have tried to be specific in our approach.

Archaeologists still do not believe in the existence of any independent language and corresponding script among the old-Americans in the pre-Maya civilization of the 1st Century AD and in the pre-Inca civilization of the 6th Century AD. Yet, Dr. Fell suggests that the stele was copied in Central America from a Papyri original brought from Cyprus. He also suggests that the types of artifacts found in the Crespi Museum were a special product of the Phoenician factories and were intended for sale to the Carthaginians who sold them to the Amerindians on arrival at the landing ports in Panama, or the Caribbean coast of Colombia and Venezuela for gold, which was in plenty in America. The copies were hammered into figures on gold plates. This all sounds fine, but how could the barbarians who had no sense of writing impress small letters and signs on gold plates? What interest would they have for letters? They might have some interest in figurines of the so-called deities, or even of animals, but certainly an unintelligible thing like a zodiac with letters would have no attraction for them.

In *Saga America* Dr. Fell interprets 54 of the 56 letters; 12 signs embodying 13 letters he explains as zodiac signs and the remaining 43 letters he explains as expressions of ox, ram, divine friends, cat, crab, virgin daughter of Zove, claws, venomous tailed beast, goat, libation bowl and whale. Thus the majority of the signs are taken to represent a motley of diverse objects unrelated to the zodiac symbols. It is clear then that he has brought in more than one maxim to evolve a rather strained interpretation. Zodiac symbols usually follow a pattern from right to left which ought to have been maintained had the engraver really intended to depict a zodiac. Here though, a zig-zag course has been followed intervened by diverse symbols for

de sa T. III. III. 37	U pha T. II. I. 27	al ca T. II. III. 13	o ma T. II. VI. 32
u ha T. III. VII. 38	ra ma T. II. VIII. 32	ya ya T. II. XIII. 33	u ha T. II. II. 26
du du T. III. IX. 23	u pa T. II. IX. 28	o tha T. II. IX. 24	o va STEIN COLL.
du du T. III. IX. 23	o pa Vedic	u pla T. II. X. 43	o vi T. II. XIV. 36
o thi ASOKAN INSCR.	o su T. II. I. 39	o da T. II. VI. 25	o sa T. II. I. 37
o ni ASOKAN INSCR.	o x T. II. I. 39	o te (irregular) T. II. IX. 23	o ka T. II. XIII. 25
o om T. II. II. 9	o kha T. II. II. 10	o dha T. II. VI. 31	o na T. II. VI. 27
o juva (?) T. II. II. 9	o ta T. II. XII. XVII. 23	o xhu T. II. VI. 23	o ma T. II. IX. 32
o ga T. II. II. 9	o dhi T. II. II. 21	o ma T. II. I. 32	o ni T. II. X. VII. 32
o ka T. II. II. 26	o ni T. II. VII. 28	o ka T. II. I. 31	o da T. II. VII. 20
o ta T. II. VII. 23	o te T. II. V. 35	o da T. II. I. 31	o ka T. II. VII. 28
o sa T. II. II. 38	o ma T. II. VIII. 32	o ghā T. II. II. 12	o ?
o ti T. II. III. 23	o va T. II. I. 31	o na T. III. IX. 20	o ghā T. II. II. 12

QUENCA SCRIPT AS PRESENTED BY DR. KANJILAL

which no scientific explanation has been advanced. It is intriguing as to why the sign for "divine friends" comes after the sign of Gemini!

In view of the foregoing, it is hard to accept Dr. Fell's identification of the stele as a Zodiac. Even a superficial examination shows that the letters in the stele are set up as straight as possible, with few exceptions they are of equal height, and most of the letters consist of vertical lines with appendages mostly to the foot. These peculiarities serve to identify the script as Brahmi. As regards the finding of a stele carved in Brahmi in the distant land of Ecuador, we can offer this historical explanation. There was a long-standing tradition in India that religious precepts or important business transactions were inscribed on gold plates, because gold had enduring value. Buddhist Jataka story No. 276 specifically refers to an incident when envoys from distant lands came to India for instruction on the religious precepts of Buddha and having learnt the same from eleven teachers, had them inscribed on gold plates and carried the plates to their homeland. (9) Two other Jataka stories refer to the inscribing of Buddha's gospels on gold plates for carrying to distant lands. (10) Another story refers to the practice of writing down family assets on gold plates which were carried by the traders to distant countries during maritime enterprises. (11) Still more important is the fact that the King of Benara carved the picture of a golden peacock on a gold plate and buried it with-

(Continued on next page)

☉ 56	♉ 55	♋ 54	♌ 53
♍ 49	♎ 58	♏ 57	♐ 52
Pisces		Aquarius	
♑ 48	♒ 47	♓ 46	♈ 45
♉ 48	♊ 42	♋ 45	♌ 44
		Sagittarius	
♍ 40	♎ 39	♏ 38	♐ 37
♑ 33	♒ 34	♓ 35	♈ 36
		Scorpio	
♉ 32	♊ 31	♋ 30	♌ 29
		Libra	
♍ 25	♎ 28	♏ 27	♐ 28
♑ 24	♒ 23	♓ 22	♈ 21
		Virgo	
♍ 20	♎ 19	♏ 18	♐ 17
		Canes	
♑ 13	♒ 14	♓ 15	♈ 16
♉ 12	♊ 11	♋ 10	♌ 9
		Gemini	
♍ 5	♎ 6	♏ 7	♐ 8
		Taurus	
♑ 4	♒ 3	♓ 2	♈ 1
		Aries	

QUENCA SCRIPT AS PRESENTED BY DR. FELL

in a pond which was dug out later by his successors. (12) Maritime intercourse with a distant land Babheru, which scholars seek to identify alternately as Babylon or modern Peru, has also been referred to in the Jataka stories of the 3rd Century BC. (13) These facts help us to establish that the contact between old-America and ancient India as borne out by the gold stela of Quenca is within the limits of historical probability. In his book, Dr. Fell mentions that he has discovered Sanskrit (Brahmi) numerals 9074 in America and also a ceramic Buddhist artifact. (14)

To conclude, we submit that the curious reader may discover a few zodiac signs, a libation bowl, and animal signs in other inscriptions, such as the Girnar Rock Inscription of Asoka dated 3rd Century BC, when read upside down.

We are confident that the decipherment of the Quenca gold-stela as published in Ancient Skies 2:6 will stand the test of time.

References:

- (1) Times Books, New York 10016.
- (2) Saga America, pp 68, 69 and 70.
- (3) Letter from Dr. Fell dated June 25, 1980.
- (4) Report of the Seminar on the identification the stela published in the Statesman, Calcutta, 3/7/76.
- (5) Saga America, pp 82 and 83.
- (6) ZDMG Band X p 389.
- (7) Kaskaara und die Sieben Welten, pp 194, 195.
- (8) Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie Tafel I-IX, 1896.

- (9) Buddhist Jataka Stories, translated by W. T. Rhys Davids, Vol II, 276.
- (10) Ibid Vol V Nos. 511 & 512
- (11) Ibid Vol IV No. 492
- (12) Ibid Vol II No. 159
- (13) Ibid Vol III No. 339
- (14) Saga America, pp 287 and 327

EIGHTH WORLD CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 12-13, 1982

Speakers for the Ancient Astronaut Society's Eighth World Conference to be held in Vienna, Austria on November 12 and 13, 1982 will include:

- Prof. Dr. Vladimir Avinski, USSR
- Baron Johannes von Buttlar, West Germany
- Prof. Dr. Javier Cabrera, Peru
- Dr. Erich Von Daniken, Switzerland
- Ulrich Dopatka, Switzerland
- Gerd von Hassler, West Germany
- Prof. Dr. Dileep Kumar Kanjilal, India
- Peter Krassa, Austria
- Reinhard Habeck, Austria
- Dr. Khalil Messiha, Egypt
- Dr. Christine Pellech, Austria
- Gene M. Phillips, USA
- Prof. Dr. Harry O. Ruppe, West Germany
- George Sassoon, England
- Zecharia Sitchin, USA

Members who wish to attend the Conference at the Vienna Hilton Hotel should make reservations as soon as possible. Members in the US, Canada and Mexico should contact the Society headquarters office. All others should contact AAS, Baselstrasse 10, 4532 Feldbrunnen/SO, Switzerland.

FINAL CALL FOR MEMBER EXPEDITION - NOVEMBER 1982

Members who wish to participate in the Society's Member Expedition to Vienna, Jordan, Petra, Jerusalem, Cairo, Kenya and Malta should contact the Society headquarters office immediately. The group will depart from Chicago on November 7, 1982 for Vienna, Austria to attend the Eighth World Conference, then proceed to Amman, Jordan to begin the field expedition.

NEW BOOKS:

W. RAYMOND DRAKE's latest work Titans in Antiquity has been published in Italian under the title TITANI NELL'ANTICHITA by Armenia Editore, Viale Ca'Granda 2, 20162 Milano, ITALY. The book is not yet available in English.

JOHANNES FIEBAG's first book entitled Rätsel der Menschheit (Mysteries of Mankind) has been published in German by Verlag 2000, 23 rue des Genets, LUXEMBOURG.

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TENTH PLANET SOON TO BE REDISCOVERED?

In a press release issued June 17, 1982, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that two Pioneer spacecraft may soon detect a tenth planet in our solar system out beyond Neptune and Pluto, or perhaps a dark star companion to the Sun at perhaps 50 billion miles beyond Pluto.

"The Pioneers have unique advantages for such a search," the release continued, "and persistent irregularities in the orbits of Uranus and Neptune strongly suggest that some kind of mystery object is really there - far beyond the outermost planet. (Because Pluto's orbit is greatly elongated, Pluto and Neptune take turns being the outermost planet with Pluto currently inside Neptune's orbit for the next 17 years.)

"Pioneer 10 is now between the orbits of Uranus and Neptune, and will be beyond all the planets in July of next year (1983). Pioneer 11 is between the orbits of Saturn and Uranus. The Pioneers are managed by NASA's Ames Research Center, California.

"The discovery in 1978 by Christy and Harrington of a satellite of Pluto (since named Charon) reduces the calculated mass of the Pluto-Charon system to only one-fifth the mass of the Earth's moon, and gives Pluto a diameter of 2400 km (1440 mi). This is far too little mass to account for the unexplained tiny but regular shifts in the orbits of Neptune and Uranus. These orbital changes had been attributed to Pluto's gravitational pull on the two planets.

"A large dark-star type object (perhaps the size of the Sun) and perhaps 50 billion miles beyond the outermost planet could produce the orbit shifts measured for Neptune and Uranus. This distance from the Sun is a common one for dark stellar companions of visible stars. A black hole, perhaps ten times the Sun's mass and twice as far out (100 billion miles beyond Neptune) could also account for the measured orbit shifts. Either of these two types of object would produce a general tidal effect in the solar system (an equal gravitational pull) on all the outer planets.

"On the other hand, the pull of an undiscovered planet-sized object at perhaps five billion miles beyond Pluto and Neptune would also be consistent with orbit discrepancies for Neptune and Uranus. But these would be "local effects", and gravitational pull would vary markedly with planetary positions.

"Since Pioneers 10 and 11 are on opposite sides of the solar system, one spacecraft would feel the pull of a "small and close" planet-sized object far more than the other would. A larger, more distant body would pull on both spacecraft almost equally. Therefore, measurements of the solar system escape trajectories of the two spacecraft over periods of several months could be used to find out whether the Pioneers were being attracted by a relatively close planet versus a more distant dark star or black hole. Further observations would allow estimates of size and distance of such a planet and its direction.

"While almost any dark celestial object is a possibility, Dr. John Anderson, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pioneer celestial mechanics experimenter, suggests that perhaps a dark stellar companion to the Sun might be the most likely explanation. A tenth planet should be at least five billion miles beyond Neptune, unless it was completely out of the pattern of spacing (distances from the Sun) for the other solar system planets (Bode's law). At this distance to produce the measured effects on Uranus and Neptune, it would have to be another giant planet, as large as Uranus (diameter-29,400 miles) or Neptune (diameter-26,800 miles). If a tenth planet were still farther out, it would have to be even larger, on the scale of enormous Jupiter. Such a large body should be easily visible by telescope, and would have been discovered already. However, if the surface of such a giant planet (of either size) were very dark (unreflective) or far out of the plane containing the

other planets, it might be hard to detect visually, and still be undiscovered.

"Dr. Anderson said, 'there is a whole class of objects ranging between a planet and a dark star. It could be any of these, and we are keeping an open mind. We know there is a source of systematic variations in the orbits of the two outer planets.'"

Responding to the press release, Zecharia Sitchin, author of The Twelfth Planet and The Stairway to Heaven, wrote to Dr. John Anderson on July 8, 1982 as follows:

"I have read with great interest your announcement on June 17, 1982 concerning the mysterious celestial body, and your speculation that it could be one more planet beyond Pluto (or alternatively a vastly distant star companion to the Sun).

"In my book The Twelfth Planet (published more than five years ago) I concluded that the ancient Sumerians described the Solar System as made up of twelve members (Sun, Moon and 10 planets), depicted this Solar System pictorially (with the Sun, not Earth, in the center), and traced the origin and vast elliptical orbit of the tenth planet. All this was brought out, for the first time, in my book.

"According to the depiction on cylinder seal VA/243 (Figs 99-101 in my book), this planet - whom the Sumerians called Nibiru and the Babylonians Marduk - its size is somewhat larger than that of Uranus or Neptune. The ancient astronomical texts indicate that its orbit is clockwise, and its effect on Pluto (formerly according to these texts, a satellite of Saturn) indicates an orbital plane somewhat inclined to the common planetary plane.

"Texts dealing with its observation when it came closest to Earth (some published in my book as well as unpublished ones) trace Marduk's appearance from the southeastern skies (see Figs 111 and 114).

"The Sumerians stated that this and other astonishing scientific knowledge was imparted to them by astronauts who had come to Earth from Marduk. Though many prefer to treat these statements as 'myth', the fact remains that if there is indeed one more planet in our Solar System, its existence was known in ancient times."

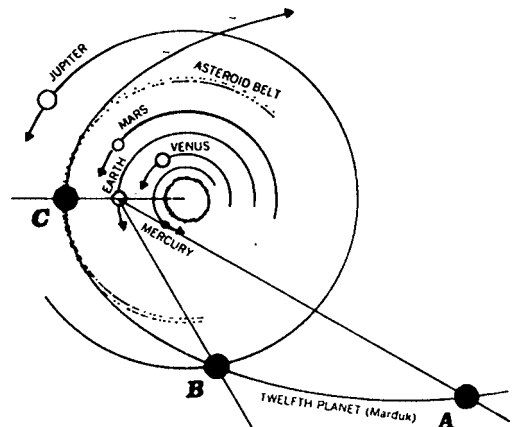


Fig. 114 from Zecharia Sitchin's book The Twelfth Planet.

Mr. Sitchin's books are available in paperback from Avon Books, New York.