

TRANSCRIPT FOR ANCIENT APOCALYPSE season one

Ancient Apocalypse is a Netflix series where the British writer Graham Hancock presents his pseudoarchaeological theory that there was an advanced civilization during the last ice age and that it was destroyed as a result of meteor impacts around 12,000 years ago. (Wikipedia)



Graham Hancock

Transcript from:
<https://tvshowtranscripts.ourboard.org/viewforum.php?f=1598>
Designed by Mark Wong
Typeset in Times New Roman, Arial

INDEX

07
17
29
39
49
59
71
81

S01E01

S01E02

S01E03

S01E04

S01E05

S01E06

S01E07

S01E08

Once There Was a Flood
Survivor in a Time of Chaos
Sirius Rising
Ghosts of a Drowned World
Legacy of the Sages
America's Lost Civilization
A Fatal Winter
Cataclysm and Rebirth

S01E01:
ONCE THERE WAS A FLOOD

man 1
man 2
man 1

Happy?
Yep.
All right, here we go. And take one.

*

interviewer

How would you describe yourself?

(*chuckles*) How would I describe myself?

interviewer

You've been described as a pseudo-archaeologist.

I have.

interviewer

Someone who cherry-picks your data.
Your books are read by millions, but dismissed by academics.
Did you know that you were picking a fight with academia?

*

Joe Rogan

Because a lot of people don't want to hear this.
You have been at the front of the line for decades and you exposed me to a lot of these controversial ideas that have now been substantiated.

Well, I'm Graham Hancock.

I don't claim to be an archaeologist or a scientist. I am a journalist, and the subject that I'm investigating is human prehistory.

My suspicion is humans are a species with amnesia. We have forgotten something incredibly important in our own past. *And I think that that incredibly important forgotten thing is a lost, advanced civilization of the Ice Age.*

I've spent decades searching for proof of this lost civilization at sites around the globe. Now my aim is to piece together these clues and that seems extremely strange to show you evidence that challenges the traditional view of human history. It pushes back these dates, far, far back.

Ancient structures built with surprising sophistication...

reporter

It's the most amazing archeoastronomy site in North America.

...revealing the fingerprints of an advanced prehistoric civilization.

Dr. Sweatman

This pillar is like our Rosetta Stone.

The possibility of civilization emerging earlier than we think gets stronger.

Randall Carlson

It's going to absolutely demand a rewrite of history as we know it.

Yeah.

*

Of course, this idea is upsetting to the so-called experts who insist

that the only humans who existed during the Ice Age were simple hunter-gatherers That automatically makes me enemy number one to archaeologists.

Joe Rogan

Why not say, “We don’t know. This is a spectacular mystery,” and leave it at that.

It’s my job to offer an alternative point of view.

Perhaps there’s been a forgotten episode in human history. But perhaps the extremely defensive, arrogant and patronizing attitude of mainstream academia is stopping us from considering that possibility.

I’m trying to overthrow... the paradigm of history.

*

For 30 years, I’ve been looking for something I was told couldn’t possibly exist. An advanced human civilization, much older than our own, lost to history.

The mainstream version of history, says that after the end of the Ice Age... on their own initiative, our hunter-gatherer ancestors suddenly began farming and raising livestock, creating settlements and eventually cities, until the first civilizations emerged around 6,000 years ago.

But new discoveries keep on pushing that horizon back. One such discovery has been made here in Indonesia. On the most populated island, Java, about four hours south of Jakarta, near the village of Karyamukti. I’ve come here to investigate one of the most remarkable and controversial archaeological discoveries of our time.

The initial evidence has utterly confounded mainstream archaeologists because it calls into question everything they’ve taught us about the prehistory of humanity.

It’s a site that raises a disturbing question. What if an advanced civilization flourished here in Indonesia during the Ice Age? A civilization that was lost to history until now.

This is Gunung Padang. The name means “mountain of light” or “mountain of enlightenment” in the local Sundanese dialect. Local people speak with awe of its mysterious atmosphere... and pilgrims come from far and wide to honor the spirit of the mountain. They purify themselves at an ancient spring at the base... before heading up the hill... three hundred and sixty feet.

The climb up it is steep and hard work. But worth it once you reach the top Because Gunung Padang is like no place else on Earth.

For a long while, archaeologists thought it was just another hill in the jungle But there was a problem with that view. You get to the summit and you see these blocks scattered across the landscape. Oddly hexagonal stone slabs strewn about everywhere. Thousands of them. It’s quite a spectacle. But not out of place in Indonesia’s volcanic landscape where blocks like these are naturally formed. They’re called columnar jointing and are created when volcanic rock, in this case, basalt, cools and cracks into

distinctive shapes. At first sight, this open terrace could be mistaken for a natural formation of volcanic rock, which is why archaeologists were so slow to investigate it.

But take a closer look, and it becomes obvious that these rocks have been cut, repurposed as building materials and placed by human hands.

Among the jumbled masses of fallen stone, traces of structures show up all over this hill. Mounds, rectangular rooms, and long walls on carefully laid out terraces, all clearly man-made. When archaeologist **Ali Akbar** and his team began working here in 2012, they assumed that any structures on this hill would prove to be less than 2,500 years old.

(thunder rumbles)

Ali Akbar

We don't know about the absolute dating in this site. This site was abandoned for so long and perhaps forgotten.

The team also assumed that the ancient builders of Gunung Padang had found the blocks of columnar jointing naturally present at the site. But then they discovered something strange.

Ali Akbar

The columnar joint is imported from another region, from another location.

That means that every one of these blocks, up to 50,000 of them, and each weighing up to a third of a ton, were carried up this hill. When Dr. Akbar's team first surveyed the site, they quickly found evidence that humans had been present, in what's called a cultural layer, but not where they expected.

Ali Akbar

We are very surprised that this site consists of two cultural layers. The first layer on the surface, it's from 500 BC. But at four meters depth, we found another cultural layer. It is from 5,200 BC. It is very surprising.

We are very shocked. It is very old.

Seven thousand years ago, far from being builders on such an epic scale, there's no evidence that the people of this region were anything other than simple hunter-gatherers. What could have motivated them to make the immense effort of bringing all these blocks here?

Ali Akbar

I'm not really sure about the function of this site. However, we've still not found a skeleton or human bone, so this is not a burial site. Perhaps it is for ceremonies or rituals.

We're dealing with truly a mystery here. A mystery that needs to be explained.

It wasn't until another investigation looked even deeper into the site that an extraordinary new possibility began to force itself on the researchers. That they might be confronted by the work of a civilization lost to history. **Dr. Danny Hilman Natawidjaja** studied at Caltech, but now works for Indonesia's Geotechnology Research Center. As a geologist, Dr. Natawidjaja knew there was something very strange about Gunung

Padang. Exploring the site, he found that the columnar basalt blocks don't just blanket the top of the hill. They also wrap around its terraced slopes covering an area of at least 37 acres. This exposed section between two of the terraces appears to be some sort of retaining wall.

There are some archaeologists who are convinced this is entirely natural. I know this is natural rock, but they're suggesting the whole layout of the thing is natural as well.

Dr. Natawidjaja

They are natural, but the position now is not in the natural position.

And normally vertical.

Dr. Natawidjaja

*Vertical, yes.
That's right.*

Here it's laid on its side.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Also, it's not cut like this.

Yeah.

Here, all is cut into one or one-and-a-half meters.

Right. There's some thing else unusual that Dr. Natawidjaja noticed between the blocks.

Dr. Natawidjaja

The natural position, there is no ground mass in between. It will be very tight together. But here, in between these columnar rocks, there is a mortar that holds them together, like cement.

Yeah.

Dr. Natawidjaja

The thickness is, like, five centimeters, and it's very consistent.

Right, so they're kind of leveling out the construction blocks with the mortar between them. Put there deliberately by human beings as part of a construction process.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Yes. Yeah.

So Danny began to investigate this, and this is where the surprises began to appear.

What Dr. Natawidjaja started to realize as he put together all his data, was that Gunung Padang is much more than just a hill. This is the ancient site of Gunung Padang. The north side features a stairway climbing more than 300 feet, until it reaches the first of five terraces. Over an area about 490 feet long by 130 feet wide. The entire hill is ringed by retaining walls of columnar basalt. Using an estimated 50,000 blocks, it's a massive terraforming project that remodeled a volcanic hill into what can best be described as a step pyramid.

So this is all man-made terraces here.

Yeah.

Dr. Natawidjaja

It's not the same shape of pyramids like Mayan or Giza pyramids.

No. It's a similar idea that it rises in terraces to a pyramid-shape, yeah.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Yeah. But it has circular features.

Indeed. There's a question of definitions here. How do we define a

pyramid? But if we define it as a structure that rises in a series of terraces to a summit, that's what we're looking at at Gunung Padang.

And the fact that such an ancient pyramid exists here at all could radically alter what we know about the capabilities of our ancestors. Archaeologists currently believe the oldest pyramid in the world dates to around 4,700 years ago. And it's not in Egypt, but in Peru. But Dr. Natawidjaja has found evidence that Gunung Padang could be even older. So how old is it really? Who built it? And why? Dr. Natawidjaja and his team turn to technology usually deployed in geological surveys to look for answers deep inside the structure.

Dr. Natawidjaja

*So, we have three methods here.
The GPR.*

Yeah, that's ground-penetrating radar.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Ground-penetrating radar, yes.

Yeah.

Dr. Natawidjaja

And resistivity tomography.

Yeah.

Dr. Natawidjaja

And also the seismic tomography.

Previously, archaeologists had dug down into the site only a few meters and in a few isolated trenches. This new technology covers much more ground...

Dr. Natawidjaja

Thirty meters, yeah.

Thirty meters and goes far deeper.

Dr. Natawidjaja

*We're going to do the ground-penetration radar,
the GPR surveys.*

Ground-penetrating radar emits pulses of radio waves into the ground. When they hit something, they bounce back, and that data is recorded and analyzed.

Dr. Natawidjaja

*We chose the frequency of 40 megahertz to
penetrate down to 30 meters.*

Okay. Let's go.

The more Dr. Natawidjaja and his team learn from their scans of the interior, the more mysterious it's become. The nature of the structures underground became more and more complex. Although the columnar basalt is always there, always used as a construction material.

Seismic tomography, in particular, has uncovered an intriguing spot deep inside the hill.

Dr. Natawidjaja

*It has a seismic velocity of about 200 meters per
second.*

Right. Which in layman's terms means what exactly?

Dr. Natawidjaja

That's a void.

A void. An empty space.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Empty.

And you can get a sense of the shape of that empty space?

Dr. Natawidjaja

Yes, as you see here, it's rectangular.

It's a rectangle.

Yes.

Dr. Natawidjaja

And the spot is just right...

Yeah.

Dr. Natawidjaja

...because in the center of this site...

Right.

Dr. Natawidjaja

...beneath the Terrace One, there is also a chamber...

Yes.

Dr. Natawidjaja

...connecting to this chamber beneath the second terrace.

What Dr. Natawidjaja and his team have discovered are at least three large rectangular chambers. One around ten meters down, perhaps an entrance hall of some kind, it seems to have an access tunnel leading to a larger main chamber. And another passage connecting to a third chamber, between 20 to 30 meters deep. All three located right along the central axis of the site.

I'm very intrigued by all these chambers. I so much wish you could get the archaeologists to actually excavate this site.

Dr. Natawidjaja

When we see these chambers, it's just like, we were amazed.

You know you've found something significant at that point.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Sure.

Yeah, it's unmistakable.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Yeah.

But to historians and the archaeologists who first excavated this site, Dr. Natawidjaja's discovery just doesn't make sense. The accepted timeline of human history tells us that the tribe of hunter-gatherers living atop the hill around 7,000 years ago wouldn't have been capable of building a structure of this colossal size and complexity. And yet, here it is. A mystery crying out for investigation. To put a date on this hill that's not a hill, Dr. Natawidjaja and his team turned to another geological tool, core drilling. As expected, samples of the top two layers dated from 3,000 years ago... back to around 8,000 years ago. But when they drilled to 15 meters, around 50 feet or so, they found something completely unexpected. Those sections had been laid out around 11,600 years ago... pushing the origins of this site back to the end of the last Ice Age. And Dr. Natawidjaja's discoveries didn't stop there. Going further down, around 100 feet or so, he hit the earliest layer of construction.

Let's try and put dates on when this was shaped.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Okay. Layer four could be before 20,000.

Could be before 20,000.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Very old.

Those drill cores were pulling up datable materials that dated way back as far as 24,000 years ago. Organic materials clearly associated with structural elements now deeply buried. And this convinced Danny, and I must say it convinces me, that Gunung Padang goes back to a remotely

ancient origin. Danny's findings are utterly extraordinary and bewildering.

Hitherto, archaeologists had regarded it as a long established fact that no large-scale structures were built anywhere in Southeast Asia until around 4,000 years ago.

Your datings of this structure put it right back to the Ice Age.

Dr. Natawidjaja

So for me, this raises a sense of enormous excitement.

I can't help wondering whether those chambers contain some evidence or information that might have a bearing on my search for a lost civilization.

I think we know little about our history.

Dr. Natawidjaja

Right.

I think we miss a big thing here.

This is an idea mainstream archaeology finds very hard to accept. The notion that it's a man-made structure is no longer seriously disputed by anybody. But what archaeology finds very hard to swallow and very hard to accept is that the origins of this structure could date back as much as 24,000 years. To the depths of the last Ice Age.

What the scholars seem reluctant to get to grips with is that the Ice Age was a very special time when the world was very different. You see, back then, 20,000 years ago, Earth didn't look the same as it does now.

The island of Java wasn't an island. It was the southernmost part of a vast Southeast Asian continent. A continent that geologists call Sundaland. During the last Ice Age, sea levels were about 120 meters, 400 feet, lower than they are today. So what is now the Java Sea was actually an enormous landmass extending out from the mainland of Asia. Sundaland covered an area around 695,000 square miles, about the size of the western United States. It was an entire subcontinent. We know that tribes of hunter-gatherers thrived on Sundaland's abundant wildlife, as far back as 45,000 years ago, and probably much further back than that. Why shouldn't another more technologically advanced culture have been present here as well?

In a cold and forbidding world, this huge Southeast Asian landmass would have been amongst several warm and inviting locations where early humans might have had a real stab at developing an advanced and sophisticated civilization.

I think that whoever built Gunung Padang shared our planet with the hunter-gatherers, who we know were also widely present at that time. It's not such a wild idea. Even today, the technologically advanced nations of the world coexist with hunter-gatherer societies, like the San in Namibia, or the Lacandón in Mexico, or the Kazakhs in western Mongolia. Different cultures at different levels of development, have always lived alongside one another.

Gunung Padang suggests that some culture was around in the area of the Sunda Shelf, which was capable of creating a gigantic megalithic structure.

One that specialized in building with blocks of columnar basalt. It's

a style of construction I've seen before in this part of the world on the tiny Pacific island of Pohnpei, at a site known as Nan Madol. It too was constructed using volcanic basalt blocks laid out one atop the other, just as at Gunung Padang. Archaeologists believe most of the construction visible at Nan Madol today dates to around 900 years ago, when the blocks were quarried at a neighboring island. But during my explorations on previous visits, I found several of its megalithic pillars extending out below the water line, suggesting that earlier versions may have been constructed when sea levels were lower, during the last Ice Age. Could Gunung Padang's architects have made it across the South Pacific to Micronesia? And if so, what happened to them? Well, I believe it has something to do with what happened around 12,800 years ago, when the Ice Age suddenly and quite dramatically shifted gears.

Things had gradually been getting warmer for quite a long period of time. And then suddenly, two things happen at once.

First, global temperatures plunge to the level that they were at the peak of the Ice Age, and they do so almost literally overnight. And secondly, there's a sudden and inexplicable rise in sea level.

Now, normally, in an Ice Age, when you enter an episode of freezing, you do not expect to see a large amount of water dumped in the world ocean because that water has been turned into ice.

What happened was a literal great flood. Between 12,800 and 11,600 years ago, the oceans of the world rose dramatically in a series of immense deluges one after another. Eventually, the great continent of Sundaland was engulfed by the sea, a lost world. It prompts the obvious question. Could there be more temples and structures out there in the Java Sea still waiting to be discovered?

Goodness knows what was lost to the rising sea levels.

*

(tribal music playing)

(man singing in Javanese language)

This epoch of immense floods would have traumatized all of humanity. And indeed there's testimony that it did.

(speaking in Javanese language)

Nearly every ancient culture preserved traditions of a great flood that swallowed up the Earth. Here in Indonesia, the Batak people have their own version of this global flood myth.

(speaking in Javanese language)

Once, long ago, the Earth grew old and dirty. So the creator god, Debata, sent a great flood to cleanse the Earth of every living thing. The last human pair had taken refuge on the highest mountain. But just as the waters were about to drown them, the god repented from ending humankind. He conjured a clod of earth into being, laid it on the rising flood forming the islands of Indonesia, and thus the pair were saved. And the

pair had children together to repopulate the Earth, becoming the ancestors of the Batak people. It's a story of an ancient apocalypse that one finds again and again in traditions from all over the world, passed down for thousands of years. Of course, there's the account of Noah in the Bible. But Indian folklore also tells of a fisherman, Manu, who survived a great flood after being warned by a god. From the Sumerians to the Babylonians, the ancient Greeks to the Chinese, all have similar versions of the same tale.

The notion that all of this is just a coincidence, just invented independently by individual cultures doesn't make sense.

Joe Rogan

All these things are probably tales of stories that people passed down from generation to generation that survived this time.

Yeah. Truly global cataclysmic events involving rapid rises in sea level did occur, and suddenly, the worldwide tradition of a global flood stops being just a myth and starts being a memory. An account of real events.

I'm fascinated by Indonesia's ancient history, and the secrets it's beginning to reveal to us at Gunung Padang. But the way archaeology works, there is going to continue to be huge resistance to new evidence, and that's really problematic because science should be open to new evidence and it should be willing to change its mind when new evidence suggests that a change of mind is needed.

What sort of reaction have you had from the archaeological profession?

Dr. Natawidjaja

They are still not accepting it. I regret because archaeologists, or any other researchers, just stop researching.

That's very sad, because at the very least there's an intriguing mystery here, which archaeology should be paying attention to.

Dr. Natawidjaja

If we could prove clearly, and accept there is advanced human cultures before 11,000 BC, that will be a big step.

(thunder rumbling)

I've been arguing that there was a massive global cataclysm about 12,500 years ago that wiped out almost all traces. We're left with these haunting memories... which we try to dismiss and say, "No, they're not memories.

"They're just folklore. They're just a myth, just tradition."

I think they're memories. I think they're real memories of something terrible that happened to our ancestors at the end of the last Ice Age.

Preserved in legends, in art and in stone. And they don't just talk of a great flood. They also reference survivors of the cataclysm, wise travelers who sowed the seeds of humanity's rebirth. It's a tradition that's particularly strong in the same ancient culture that created the largest man-made pyramid on Earth. It's where I'm headed next, and it's not Egypt.

S01E02:
SURVIVOR IN A TIME OF CHAOS

Are we a species with amnesia? Could we have forgotten a vital part of our own story? I'm Graham Hancock, and many archaeologists hate me for trying to find out. The notion of a lost advanced civilization of the Ice Age is extremely threatening to mainstream archaeology because it rips the ground out from under that entire discipline. It removes the foundation.

I don't care about that. There's people that come along and because of their impact, it changes the way people look at things.

Joe Rogan

Graham Hancock is a man who, despite all of the insults, and all of the people disparaging his work he has trekked on and on and on.

What I care about is learning the lessons of the past in order to clear away that fog that surrounds prehistory. And it's a fog because there's no documents. We have to build our picture of the past from fragmentary evidence.

Folk stories, legends, myths. These for me are all important evidence.

And one of the most mysterious and revealing mythologies in prehistory comes down to us through the ancient cultures of Mexico.

In my search for a lost civilization, I've come to a land of fertile valleys and simmering volcanoes. This is the Puebla region, east of Mexico City. The site of this country's oldest continuously inhabited city, Cholula. Today, a modern metropolis of over 100,000 people, it holds an ancient secret at its heart. History is written by the victors. That's especially true in Mexico. When the Spanish conquistadors arrived in Cholula in 1519, they massacred its inhabitants, obliterating not only their culture, but also almost all traces of the more ancient cultures that had preceded them.

But the invaders couldn't erase everything. The conquistadors had first assumed this hill was just that, a hill, and they built a church on top of it. But this hill isn't the natural feature it's often mistaken for. In fact, it's the most massive monument ever built anywhere in the world. And yet, chances are you've never heard of it. This is the Great Pyramid of Cholula. After centuries of neglect and pillaging, it's impossible to understand the sheer enormity of what once stood here. But we do have some idea of what it must have looked like in its prime.

It's estimated that the Great Pyramid of Cholula rose to at least 213 feet, 65 meters. Evidence suggests it was originally dedicated to the ancient Mexican god of rain and floods, whom the Aztecs knew by the name of Tlaloc. Built mostly with mud and straw adobe bricks, it wasn't as tall as Egypt's Great Pyramid of Giza, but it was larger with nearly three times the footprint, measuring 400 by 400 meters at its base, roughly 30 football fields, making this the largest monument ever constructed by any civilization anywhere. Archaeologists quickly established that work on the pyramid was completed around eight centuries ago, 1200 AD or thereabouts. But when they began cutting tunnels through the body of the structure, they were stunned by what they discovered inside. It's a surreal feeling descending into the largest pyramid on Earth. Within are beautiful murals depicting mythological scenes and creatures... and tantalizing glimpses of many

layers of construction. Do they offer clues to this site's biggest mystery? Could it be part of a global legacy left behind by an ancient, advanced civilization of prehistory? I'm joined by one of the world's leading experts on the Great Pyramid of Cholula, University of Calgary anthropologist and archaeologist, **Geoff McCafferty**.

*

We're in the heart of the most massive monument ever built anywhere in the ancient world.

McCafferty

You get almost the same sense as when you go into a church. You know, there is a tangible sense of an aura of that power. These tunnels were excavated by Mexican archaeologists. There are a total of eight kilometers of tunnels.

That's extraordinary. Eight kilometers?

Yeah.

Using these tunnels, archaeologists made an astounding discovery. The Pyramid of Cholula is simply the latest in a whole series of more ancient pyramids hidden beneath. Inside is an even older pyramid, dating back to 800 AD or so, and beneath that, another one dating at least 200 to 500 years earlier. Until like a series of Russian nesting dolls, we get to what's thought to be the first and oldest pyramid built here, still an impressive 120 meters square and 17 meters or 56 feet high.

When did construction first begin here?

McCafferty

So, the earliest evidence of construction of the ceremonial zone dates to about 500 BC. It was a good size pyramid. Then, over time, it was expanded, sort of larger construction over the top of the other.

Graham: So this pyramid-building project must have been carried out by multiple generations over a span of 1,700 years, and possibly longer, a fact now acknowledged by archaeologists. Yet modern scholarship knows next to nothing about the original architects or why they chose to build a pyramid here. Precisely the mysteries that most interest me.

Do you get the sense that something may be missing from the archaeological and historical story of ancient Mexico?

McCafferty

Well, not to be overly dramatic, but I think that a better understanding of Cholula would fundamentally change the perception of Mesoamerican history. It is a black hole. It is a black hole in Mexican history.

Do you think there was something here before that first pyramid was built?

McCafferty

The pyramid was built over an important spring.

Yeah.

McCafferty

The spring represents a passageway into the underworld so it was clearly an important sacred space as well as a ceremonial focus.

The fact that the pyramid was the structure that was chosen to be built upon that site is not accidental. On the contrary, I believe it's a critical clue to understanding the motivations of the original builders, because that repeats a theme that we find all around the world.

We've already uncovered evidence of a similar terraced pyramid in Indonesia at Gunung Padang that also has a sacred spring at its heart. It's a pattern found not just in Mexico or Indonesia.

That's the case with the subterranean chamber beneath the Great Pyramid of Giza. In my view, that is the first sacred place on the Giza plateau, and the pyramids are later built on top of it to honor it.

The Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacán sits on top of a natural cavern. They modified it somewhat and then, they built a pyramid on top of it. But the first thing was the place itself, the sacred place, and the pyramids mark this.

You start off with a place that for one reason or another is regarded as sacred, that had a special magnetism that people could sense that made it important and that made it matter.

The Great Pyramid of Cholula shares another key feature with ancient pyramids all around the world. Hints of hidden chambers. Not long after the Spanish conquest of Mexico, a reliable eyewitness, Father Bernardino de Sahagún, reported that the Great Pyramid of Cholula was full of mines and caves within. Today, modern investigators have confirmed that observation.

McCafferty

One of the former archaeologists found, somewhere inside the pyramid, an open room. And there were tunnels leading into it. It's never been published. I don't know what the current situation is.

That's a very tantalizing hint.

McCafferty

You think so?

Has that room ever been excavated? Has it ever been revisited?

McCafferty

Not that I know of.

Why hasn't this inner chamber ever been revisited? What secrets could it hold about the intentions of the original builders? Regardless, the fact that the Great Pyramid of Cholula has a hidden inner chamber at all, like its cousins in Gunung Padang and Giza, is yet another striking feature shared by these structures. And there's more.

So it's pretty well established that the structure is oriented to the setting sun on the summer solstice.

McCafferty

That's correct. The sun is setting between the two volcanoes to the west, so it's very much a solstice-related orientation. We know that the indigenous Mesoamericans were very clued

into astronomical cycles.

As were the ancient Egyptians, who built their Great Pyramid of Giza to align precisely to true astronomical north. The fact that these ancient pyramids, whose builders supposedly had no contact with one another, have so much in common is a mystery. Is it just coincidence? I don't think so.

The general view that archaeology puts forward, is that pyramids were built in the form that they have 'cause that's the easiest way to make a high building. The problem is that these structures are universally associated with very specific spiritual ideas.

What happens to us after death? This is always connected with pyramid structures, and that's the case whether you find them in Mexico or whether you find them in ancient Egypt or whether you find them in Cambodia or whether you find them in India.

It's a detail that defies the accepted mainstream view that various human civilizations around the world, independently invented pyramids. What it suggests to me is that something else was going on behind the scenes.

Could we be witnessing the unfolding of some extraordinary master plan? A shared legacy from a lost global civilization that provided the seeds and the spark of inspiration from which many later civilizations grew. It's a possibility that leads me to ask whether the pyramid-building project at Cholula could have much older origins than most archaeologists want to believe. What about the dating of the structure?

Are there carbon dates from the earliest phases?

McCafferty

No. We've had ceramics that are similar to ceramics from the basin of Mexico dating to, like, 1000 BC.

Does that give us enough to be confident about the whole story?

McCafferty

No. No, I would say absolutely not. And there's a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done throughout the prehistory of Mexico.

Yeah.

*

I'm not disputing the archaeological evidence that dates the first monumental construction on the site of the Great Pyramid of Cholula to around 2,300 years ago, but there are older pyramids in Mexico. And what really interests me are the ideas that underpin them all.

By 1519, when the Spanish conquistadors arrived, Cholula's Great Pyramid had fallen into disrepair. But when they realized it was much more than just a hill, and asked who built it, the locals regaled them with a fascinating legend.

According to myth, the Great Pyramid of Cholula was the work of a race of giants. Once upon a time, there were giants in ancient Mexico, until the

rain god Tlaloc grew angry and sent a great flood to destroy them. Only seven survived the cataclysm. Fearing that a second deluge might follow, the giant Xelhua, known as the architect, went to Cholula, and with the help of its people built a massive artificial mountain out of bricks, a pyramid, and dedicated it to the worship of Tlaloc, the rain god.

Archaeologists regard this as just a fanciful tale, but I think that by ignoring it completely, we're in danger of missing some important clues to the origins of this incredible place.

Perhaps that architect who appeared in Cholula after a great flood, wasn't a physical giant, but one of the intellectual giants of an advanced civilization lost to history. We shouldn't expect the evidence to be easy to find, precisely because, as at Cholula, ancient monuments are often located directly on top of still older constructions, obscuring their origins. About a two-hour drive to the northwest, another remarkable site offers me my next clue. Perched atop this uniquely-shaped hill is an ancient Aztec complex known as Texcotzingo.

Here at Texcotzingo, we encounter a pyramid again, this time a creation of the Earth herself. It's easy to understand why this place could have exerted a powerful magnetism on the ancients.

Pyramids clearly mattered in ancient Mexico.

Here, in the 15th century, the Aztecs built a remarkable network of garden terraces and pools fed by cleverly constructed aqueducts that carried water down from a reservoir at the mountain's top. It's like the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Mesoamerican style. But intriguingly, from my investigations, all of it was dedicated to the same ancient god associated with the earliest pyramid at Cholula... Tlaloc, the god of rains and floods, whose cult long predated the Aztecs.

Archaeologists believe that the Aztecs were the first to pay attention to Texcotzingo, but could this incredible site be much older?

The Spanish conquistadors took it for granted that Texcotzingo was entirely the work of the Aztecs, and that is what most archaeologists will tell you too. But what if the Aztecs simply renovated and added to a site originally created by a much older civilization? Author **Marco Vigato** believes the evidence suggests that's exactly what happened.

Vigato

This site was clearly reworked over a very long period of time. The rock was a very hard type of porphyry stone. If you look around at the site here, you see that some of the stone surfaces are very heavily weathered. Some parts of the site that clearly show evidence of erosion must have continued for thousands of years, taking into account this is an extremely hard type of stone.

Right. So in your view, the Aztecs, well, we know they were latecomers, but they found this site at least partially worked already and they took it over and developed it further.

Vigato

Right.

It's a radical thought. Could a much older culture have carved out some of the more unusual features on the side of the hill? Like these deeply-weathered megaliths strewn on the ground. And this chamber carved out of the bedrock.

Vigato

This was almost certainly a pre-Aztec site. It was simply reoccupied and reused.

It's a conclusion archaeologists would dispute, but there's some relevant evidence to consider.

*

Not far away, in a dried-up riverbed at the foot of a mountain, a huge statue of the rain god Tlaloc was uncovered. The largest single cut stone in the entire Americas. Archaeologists have dated it to around 700 AD, long before the Aztecs dominated these lands. It's proof that Tlaloc, the rain god, had already been worshipped in this area by earlier cultures, perhaps under several different names, for nearly a thousand years, and maybe longer. In fact, Tlaloc, as a mythological character, goes back all the way to the earliest known cultures of prehistoric Mexico. And he's not alone.

The global floods sent by the rain god sets the stage for the appearance of the most intriguing character in Mexican mythology... Quetzalcoatl.

After the Great Flood, a stranger from the east landed on Mexico's shores riding on a boat with no paddles, said to be carried by serpents. His name was Quetzalcoatl, meaning, "the feathered serpent." He and his followers taught the locals how to grow crops and domesticate animals. He gave them laws and instructed them in the ways of architecture, astronomy and the arts. They worshipped him as a deity. But after being violently ousted by the followers of a Mexican war god, Quetzalcoatl sailed away towards the east, promising one day to return.

(drums beating)

(native music playing)

The legend of Quetzalcoatl has been told for generations, even down to today.

(man singing in Nahuatl language)

We get a description of a heavily bearded individual. He sounds a bit like a foreigner from across the ocean, and he brings the gifts of civilization.

(man continues singing)

What I find so astonishing is how often we've heard this story from cultures that supposedly had no connection with ancient Mexico.

(blowing conch shell)

The setting is always the same. There has been a giant cataclysm. The world has been plunged into darkness, floods, chaos everywhere.

Society is collapsing.

(thunder rumbling)

And then out of the darkness appears a figure who has knowledge of what is necessary to make a civilization. And that figure teaches the

demoralized survivors of the cataclysm how to start civilization again.

In ancient Greek mythology, it's the Titan Prometheus who, after a great flood, shares with humans the secret of fire. In the South American Andes, pre-Inca civilizations describe a robed, bearded figure named Viracocha, who emerged from a great lake and taught the local people how to create amazing works of masonry that still exist today. Even in the Pacific, Polynesian legends talk of Maui, who created their islands by pulling them up from the ocean floor, and then taught the islanders to work with stone tools and to cook their food.

Archaeologists say that these civilizing heroes are just inventions of the ancients' elaborate fictions, but I find the similarities hard to ignore. What if these accounts describe the survivors of an advanced civilization that was lost in the great cataclysms of flood and fire that we know occurred near the end of the last Ice Age?

*

The myths of Mexico and the story of Quetzalcoatl in particular, are tied to just such an apocalyptic moment. And Marco believes there's a record of it just a few hours' drive south of Mexico City, amongst the ancient temples of Xochicalco. Like Cholula, this city was originally built by an indigenous culture we know little about in the 7th century AD. Here, you'll find the remains of two large pyramids. One dedicated to the rain god, and the other dedicated to Mexico's civilizing hero, Quetzalcoatl. I've come here to learn more about these so-called mythical characters.

For archaeologists, myths are fanciful and fragmentary. They ignore them completely in their attempts to reconstruct the past. But here at Xochicalco, some researchers see an attempt to create a permanent record of one of the most important myths in ancient Mexico. A record they believe that preserves a forgotten episode in prehistory.

Wrapped around the four sides of Quetzalcoatl's temple are intricate carvings of this deity in his manifestation as the feathered serpent. Clearly, he was an important figure even back in 700 AD. But Marco believes these glyphs carved in stone may reveal missing details from his origin story.

What's special about this temple?

Vigato

So what you have on the lower tier of the pyramid is really a representation of the arrival of Quetzalcoatl that unfolds on the three sides of the pyramid until we get here to the first significant glyph, here. And what you see there is a flaming temple. You have these scrolls of smoke or fire.

As though it's on fire.

Vigato

Right. Exactly.

What about the coils of the serpent around it? How do you read those in this context?

Vigato

Right, well, this is the tail of the serpent. So, it

wraps around this flaming temple. It almost looks like a wave hitting...

Okay.

Vigato

...the temple from the side. You could almost see that as a representation of an island.

So, we have a temple which is on fire and waves are washing over it in your reading?

Vigato

Exactly.

Vigato

Yeah.

Give me your interpretation of this scene, Marco.

Vigato

Well, you have this clearly powerful sitting figure who looks like on a raft of snakes that's almost heading away from the direction of this flaming temple.

What you're seeing here is the depiction of a cataclysm which occurs in a certain place, which Quetzalcoatl then is a survivor of.

Vigato

You have this idea of the god coming from a land that was destroyed. And what you have is the arrival of the god Quetzalcoatl here in Mexico as a founder of Mesoamerican civilization. It's a chronicle that goes back to a very remote past.

Marco's reading of the temple's glyphs as a depiction of an ancient apocalypse flies in the face of all archaeological opinion. But that doesn't necessarily mean he's wrong.

The Temple of The Feathered Serpent is about 1,300 years old, and archaeologists are right to say that there was no global cataclysm in that epoch that could have inspired the Quetzalcoatl myth.

This misses the point. The tradition is certainly much older than the temple. How much older? No one knows. But there's one period of prehistory that fits the bill perfectly.

Geologists have confirmed that there was an ancient apocalypse of some kind. A period of great cataclysms and floods that had as big an impact here as it did nearly everywhere else in the world... sometime at the end of the last Ice Age, around 12,800 years ago. Could the story of Quetzalcoatl's arrival date back as far as that?

Vigato

I do not question the age of the structure itself. What you have here is just the telling of a story that is in fact much older.

So, perhaps what's sadly lacking in archaeology is an archaeology of ideas. Perhaps they focus too much on the dates of a particular construction and don't consider the ideas that it's expressing.

Vigato

Right.

If we're willing to look back beyond the artificial horizons that archeology sets, then the myth at once begins to make sense, not as a fanciful account of imagined events, but as a true record of a lost and forgotten past. Archaeologists reject any such suggestion, but I find it impossible to ignore

how widespread these tales of civilizing heroes are. Sometimes speaking of gods, sometimes of humans, who come in a time of chaos after the great cataclysm. Teaching the skills of agriculture, architecture, engineering and astronomy to the survivors. In these traditions, I believe the fingerprints of a lost civilization are to be found.

So, where was this lost civilization based before the cataclysm that destroyed it? There are many possibilities that have never been properly considered. Because, as we've seen, at the height of the last Ice Age, the planet looked very different. But further clues await us a quarter of the way around the world. There, just as in Cholula, dozens of immense temples were believed to have been built by an ancient race of giants, on islands that once weren't islands, in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea. And that's where my journey takes me next, to a gigantic riddle in stone. **The mysterious megaliths of Malta.**

S01E03:
SERIOUS RISING

One of the problems I have with the mainstream view of the development of civilization is the notion that our own civilization in the 21st century is the apex and the pinnacle of human achievement.

This makes us very conceited, it makes us very big-headed. We look back on the past, as though our ancestors were always simpler than us, had less knowledge than us, had less ability than us. It hasn't just been a straight-line evolutionary progress from primitive cavemen to anatomically modern humans. It just hasn't been like that.

In the story of civilizations, maybe there are ups and downs, civilization rises and falls again, and it is possible to lose entire civilizations. It's happened before, here in the Mediterranean in Malta.

Malta, this stunning Mediterranean archipelago, has long fascinated me. Because I suspect almost everything archaeologists have told us about its past is wrong. And because the truth, if it's allowed to come out, could offer crucial evidence in my search for a lost civilization of prehistory. Malta's two main islands are barely a speck in the Mediterranean. Strategically located between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, for centuries, it's had an outsized impact on the story of civilization.

According to Malta's official timeline, the first people settled here around 7,900 years ago. They were simple Stone Age farmers who crossed the sea from Italy in wooden rafts.

Stroud

They came probably from Sicily, and they brought with them the first domesticated animals, the first domesticated plants. And as people settled here, they developed their own culture.

According to the official timeline, around 5,600 years ago, they then woke up one morning and built this. It's called Ġgantija and it certainly is a giant of a megalithic structure. For decades, it was thought to be the oldest freestanding monumental structure on Earth.

As I walk around Ġgantija, I feel cut down to size, a dwarf in the presence of the work of giants. The construction of these walls required the lifting of hundreds of massive megaliths. Some weighing up to 50 tons. And what we see today is only roughly half of the temple's original height.

(thunder rumbling)

In its prime, Ġgantija was truly gigantic. As tall as a three-story house. The outer walls were constructed from huge stones stacked atop one another. Two connected temples with oval-shaped chambers, their walls painted red. And a series of altars, where charred remains of animal bones were found, suggesting ritual sacrifices or feasting. There are no written sources telling us when Ġgantija was built, and no reliable carbon dates. So how old is this giant temple, really? And does it provide evidence for the lost civilization that I'm convinced flourished long before any kind of civilization is supposed to have begun? The sole reason that archaeologists claim Ġgantija was built around 5,600 years ago is that some artifacts found in the area match those of other much simpler sites dated to that period, but that doesn't mean that the structure itself is the same age. The artifacts

may have simply been left there at a later date.

The truth is that none of the prehistory of Malta stacks up. Think about it. Could those farmers, who archaeologists tell us never built anything bigger than a shack, really have achieved all this?

When you look at a structure like Ġgantija, you would expect to see evidence of the build-up of skills necessary to create that structure.

A culture doesn't just know how to move 20 or 30 ton megaliths. It has to learn how to do it. I see no evidence of the development of those techniques.

And here's the thing, Ġgantija isn't Malta's only megalithic temple. Across Malta's two main islands, archaeologists have uncovered 19 such ancient structures, all on a land mass half the size of Chicago, with the oldest, so we are told, being Ġgantija itself. For such tiny islands, that's a lot of temples requiring a lot of man power. Too much. Which forces me to question who really built Ġgantija and when?

Does it make sense that those people with a very simple material culture could have been responsible for creating the largest, most magnificent, most complex structure on Malta?

I think the truth is more complicated and far more explosive. We've already seen in Indonesia and Mexico that ancient myths and legends have something important to teach us. These stories, passed down through generations, shouldn't be overlooked by archaeologists. And if we turn to the ancient lore of Malta, it has a story to tell about who was responsible for building Ġgantija.

*

There's an intriguing ancient legend here concerning a giantess called Sansuna. It's said that the giantess had intercourse with one of the men of this land and gave birth to a hybrid child. Afterwards, to commemorate the event, she built this massive temple in a single day and night, carrying the child on her shoulder.

I'm fascinated by this legend, of course, it could just be a legend. I certainly don't believe literal giants ever roamed the Earth. But what if she's a human being who has enormous and incredible capacities and skills that could lead her to build a temple such as this?

This legend is eerily similar to the story of the so-called giants who built the Great Pyramid of Cholula in Mexico, a story connected to a great flood in prehistory. Could these legends of giant builders encode memories of some other more advanced and more ancient culture? What if the timeline of Malta's prehistory is wrong?

When those farmers arrived by raft from Sicily, what if Ġgantija and the other megalithic temples were already here? What if these extraordinary structures had been built by someone else?

A far more advanced society that arrived on Malta long before. It's not only possible... but likely. And I don't think they sailed here. I think they

walked here. You see, Malta wasn't always an island. At the height of the last Ice Age, the level of the world's oceans was about 120 meters, 400 feet, lower than it is today. And The Maltese islands used to be hilltops, part of a single continuous landmass that connected Malta all the way to present-day Sicily and from there to the southern end of Italy and the European mainland. Back then, Europe wasn't a great place to live. Cold, dry, and inhospitable. We know Ice Age animals migrated across that ancient land bridge to the warmer, more abundant lands of Malta and flourished here. Wouldn't humans have followed them? Archaeologists have found traces of early humans on Sicily from back then. So why would their migration southwards have stopped there?

To me, the mystery of the sudden appearance out of nowhere of the Maltese temples 5,000 or 6,000 years ago, goes away when we accept that actually, there was a time long before that, during the Ice Age, 12,000, 14,000 years ago, when Malta was part of the mainland.

The problem is archaeologists claim there's simply no evidence of any species of humans on Malta from that long ago. But that isn't entirely true. And the proof is in this cave. This is Ghar Dalam, near the southeast coast of the main island of Malta. A geological time machine that offers a glimpse back into Malta's prehistory. Here, a series of floods left behind animal bones and fossils dating back thousands of years. **Dr. Anton Mifsud**, president of the Prehistoric Society of Malta, has studied this site for decades.

Misfud

It's really large.

His independent findings here have caused great controversy.

Ghar Dalam cave is a kind of record in stone of the prehistory of Malta, and I understand that this stalagmite is particularly important in your work.

Misfud

Well, starting, well, from where the light brown... That's called the cultural layer. That actually people lived here.

Yeah. The last 8,000 years.

Misfud

The last 8,000 years. Correct. And there, at the bottom of it, is something called a Pleistocene sheet. Once we get below that sheet...

Yes.

Misfud

...we're into an area that is Ice Age...

There was... it contains the remains of Ice Age animals...

Misfud

Yes.

...but they don't call it a cultural layer because they're convinced there were no human beings here.

Misfud

Exactly, yes.

Anything found at this depth is at least 11,600 years old. If the official account of Malta's history is correct, no human remains should have been discovered once they dug into it. But over a century ago, archaeologists did find something. Something no one expected.

Misfud

In 1917, two Maltese excavators discovered two

special teeth.

Right.

Misfud

They had a fossilized color, they had no roots. The roots were absorbed into the body of the tooth.

Yeah. And so these are classic Neanderthal teeth?

Yes.

And where were these two teeth found?

Misfud

They were found there, at the bottom of the stalagmites, here.

Misfud

Right at the bottom.

Misfud

Exactly.

Experts involved in the dig were convinced they'd found evidence that would rewrite the story of humans on Malta. Here was proof that Neanderthals did walk across that Ice Age land bridge. But sometimes archaeologists dig up things that other people want to bury.

Misfud

In 1952, there were relative dating tests carried out.

Yeah. What results were produced from those tests?

Misfud

Well, the results were not published. For some reason, the results were not divulged.

What we do know is that in the years that followed, the authenticity of the teeth was officially downplayed. And to this day, the history books continue to insist that no human species ever reached Malta until around 7,900 years ago.

Why is archaeology so opposed to the notion of earlier humans?

Changing a paradigm is no easy business. When a particular mindset has become the preoccupation of a group of scholars in a particular field, they are so reluctant to let go of it, they become existentially attached to it, and an attack on the paradigm becomes an attack on them, and they vigorously defend it.

Curious to mount his own investigation, in 2016, Dr. Mifsud paid for his own state-of-the-art analysis of the teeth.

Misfud

They've been examined by three top-notch physical anthropologists for me and they confirmed they were Neanderthal teeth.

Right.

Misfud

This is evidence of human activity during the Ice Age.

What does this do to the whole story of Malta?

Misfud

It pushes back these dates, way back. Far, far back.

Yeah.

Misfud

Another chapter has to be reintroduced.

Yeah.

If our cousins, the Neanderthals, reached Malta, it proves that the land bridge was used by ancient humans and it's possible that another Ice Age

culture could have left their mark here too. In my view, the evidence for a far older civilization here on Malta is compelling and it doesn't just hinge on a couple of teeth.

I want to show you something that I saw quarter of a century ago when I first visited Malta, etched into the bedrock of the island itself.

It's a phenomenon found all over these islands. Parallel grooved channels carved deep into the ancient limestone. There are nearly 35 kilometers of these ruts, often crossing one another like train tracks. Mainstream archaeologists presume them to be not much more than about 2,600 years old, but they've never been seriously studied. They don't show signs of obvious tool marks and they also aren't the result of any known natural process. They're definitely man-made. Though it's not entirely certain what function they serve. They're usually presumed to be some kind of ancient transportation route. Hence, their popular name "cart ruts." But here's what intrigues me. These ruts don't just appear on land. Some of them carry right on into the sea.

Here's a pair of them hidden beneath the modern road, but disappearing on my right beneath the waters of the harbor. Clearly made before rising sea levels covered them.

Over the years, I have found and followed more of these man-made grooves underwater, filming them up to a kilometer offshore and at depths of up to 25 meters. Whoever created them must have done so when that part of the sea floor was above water, more than 12,000 years ago, during the last Ice Age.

It makes me wonder how much more of Maltese prehistory lies hidden beneath the waves? How many other man-made structures, maybe even megalithic temples, still await discovery?

The reason I believe that a deeper ancient intelligence lies behind these temples on Malta is that they're far more complex than they first appear. Beneath a canopy that protects it from the elements, lies one of Malta's most spectacular temples, Mnajdra. Its futuristic, modern covering cuts it off from the sky, which is a shame, because whoever built Mnajdra had an extraordinarily advanced understanding of the cosmos, a fact that Malta's archaeologists don't dispute.

Stroud

We know that they observed the rising of the sun, and the position of certain stars. And they have incorporated some of those observations within the architecture.

Mnajdra's builders devised an ingenious way of tracking the heavens. On the spring and fall equinoxes, respectively 21st March and 21st September, the rays of the rising sun exactly bisect the temple entrance, flooding the deepest recesses of the inner shrine with light.

On these occasions, the interior of the temple would have glowed and sprung magically to life. And that's not all. At sunrise on the summer and winter solstices, the longest and shortest days of the year, a different distinctive projection of light precisely illuminates the edges of the megaliths

to the left and right of the doorway. This phenomenon is far from unique in ancient constructions. In fact, the Great Pyramid of Cholula and the pyramids beneath it, all directly face the setting sun on the summer solstice. And other megalithic sites around the world boast similar alignments. Like Stonehenge, or Egypt's Temple of Karnak.

Here at Mnajdra, the ancients created these enormous structures to celebrate the marriage of Heaven and Earth.

In fact, Mnajdra and the other temples may be part of a much larger ancient astronomical project. One that, if proven to be true, would rewrite the accepted timeline of Malta's prehistory. Dutch researcher and author, **Lenie Reedijk**, has explored every one of Malta's megalithic temples and made a close study of their alignments. To her great surprise, none of Malta's other temples line up with any equinoxes or solstices. But they also don't face any particular geographical feature in their area. In fact, none of them even face the same direction.

Reedijk

No two orientations are the same. That's quite extraordinary in itself. That is very, very curious. You would expect temple culture, like the church or a mosque, to have a preference.

Why would Mnajdra be the only temple oriented to the solstices? Were Malta's other temples also built to aim towards something in the heavens? If so, what?

Reedijk

You have to look for a principle. So you need to know a little bit of archaeoastronomy.

Mmm-hmm.

Reedijk

That means the astronomy of the ancients. There is a fascinating and little-known movement in the sky which has a name, and that is precession.

Contrary to what most of us think, the Earth isn't a perfect sphere. It's actually bulging slightly at the equator.

The result? Because of the gravitational pull of the Sun and the Moon, the Earth wobbles just slightly as it spins on its axis. This precession alters our view of the night sky over the years, making distant constellations appear to shift position in a systematic way.

Reedijk

The whole sky makes this movement, which is very slight. It is only one degree difference in the rising or setting position of any given star in 72 years.

So if you were building these temples to point at a single specific star, over the centuries, the alignments of those temples would shift, just as we see on Malta. But there's a problem. The official timeline claims that all Malta's temples were built between around 5,600 and 4,500 years ago. And in looking at the positions of the brightest stars visible in the sky during that time frame, none were a likely possibility.

Reedijk

There was a sort of a strong dislike to consider anything outside conventional theory.

To go back before the temples are supposed to have been built.

Reedijk

Exactly.

But using state-of-the-art software that tracks the movement of stars over thousands of years, Lenie was able to rewind the night sky like a clock, looking for a single visible star that aligned with all the temples. And not just during the time frame when they were supposedly built, but from any point in the past.

Reedijk

I have been working to check and check, and then all of a sudden, it appeared. The temples were orientated to one star.

That one star was Sirius, often called the Dog Star.

Reedijk

It passes all the entrances at some point in time. All the temples fit it. Every single one.

And Sirius, of course, is a particularly magnificent star. If I'm correct, it's the brightest star in the sky.

Reedijk

The brightest, by far. It is two times as bright as the next brightest.

Lenie's theory would also explain why these early astronomers built so many temples. As Sirius shifted position over time, it fell out of each temple's line of sight, forcing the architects to build a new one with a slightly different orientation. Because of precession, Sirius hadn't been visible from Malta for thousands of years, until the Earth's wobble brought it spectacularly back into view, around 11,000 years ago. And the temple lined up with that spectacular appearance after a long absence is a simple one called Hagar Qim North.

It is also one of the smallest temples.

Reedijk

They started very small, and as the millennia passed they ended up with the largest of all the temples. You could say, the cathedral, which is Ġgantija.

But if Lenie is right, it means that Malta's megalithic project began thousands of years before those Stone Age farmers from Sicily arrived on the island... and must have been the work of a culture with advanced knowledge of astronomy, and advanced architectural skills. As for why they chose to honor Sirius this way... it might be simply because it was the brightest star in the night sky at the time. But there might be more to it. The star, Sirius, also plays a prominent role in the legends of another great culture of antiquity, ancient Egypt, where it was associated with the annual flooding of the Nile and the new year and was a symbol of their great goddess, Isis. And this is not the only curious connection between ancient Egypt and ancient Malta. Maltese fishing boats are traditionally decorated with a prominent symbol borrowed from Egyptian mythology The Eye of Horus. The fishermen believe it provides them with good health, prosperity and above all, protection.

The exact same symbol played the exact same role in ancient Egypt. Intriguingly, this tradition connects Malta to Egypt's most famous myth, the story of the parents of that god, Horus... Osiris and Isis. In ancient times,

the wise God Osiris descended to Egypt to rule alongside his sister Isis, but the people were uncivilized and lawless. So Osiris brought them culture, established the rule of law, and taught them agriculture. Then he left Isis to rule Egypt while he traveled the Earth, teaching people of other nations the same skills. This myth of a traveling, civilizing hero is something I recognize from my own travels. The story of Osiris is similar to that of Quetzalcoatl in Mexico, and other civilizing heroes from ancient lore. Wise teachers who arrive after an immense cataclysm, sharing the gifts of civilization, showing humanity how to build great works in stone, bringing them agriculture and a knowledge of the stars.

Is it possible that such myths so similar in so many different cultures might even be traced back to a single source?

If these bearded robed figures from the near East, to the Americas, to the Mediterranean, originate from the same ancient culture, it means that while our hunter-gatherer ancestors were busy surviving the Ice Age, someone else was circumnavigating the globe, passing on their advanced skills to others. And I believe there's proof of that on another island, that, like Malta, was nearly drowned at the end of the last Ice Age, a world away in the blue waters of the Caribbean.

If an advanced civilization was swallowed up by the sea 11,600 years ago, then perhaps evidence for its existence can still be found underwater.

Let's talk about Atlantis.

S01E04:
GHOSTS OF A DROWNED WORLD

If you look me up on Wikipedia, you'll find that I am described as a pseudoarchaeologist or a pseudoscientist. I find this frankly absurd. I'm no more a pseudoscientist than a dolphin is a pseudo-fish. I'm an investigative reporter. My job is to investigate the official story.

What is there in the past that the existing model of prehistory doesn't explain?

Anomalies and paradoxes are of great interest. That's what's brought me here to the Bahamas. I'm fascinated by parts of the world that haven't been looked at properly yet.

That's why I spend years scuba diving on continental shelves 'cause there's ten million square miles of land that was above water during the Ice Age that's underwater today.

Including here, in the Bahamas. These are the Bimini Islands. Just under 60 miles off the coast of Miami, Bimini is separated from the mainland of America by a deepwater channel known as the Straits of Florida.

You might think this is an unlikely place to search for clues to a lost civilization, but something incredible has been discovered beneath the waves here. Just half a mile off the shoreline, not far from the Gulf Stream current, is a massive structure of carefully laid giant stones... with every appearance of being a megalithic roadway or paved terrace... which is how it earned its nickname, the "Bimini Road." The formation was first discovered in 1968 by a group of divers who'd been looking for the fabled lost city of Atlantis beneath the waves of the Bahamas. In their excitement, they announced to the world that they had found the road to Atlantis itself.

reporter

This state of Atlantis is supposed to have existed in 8000 BC, and supposed to have attacked Athens. Greeks didn't exist in 8000 BC. This is all simply absurd. I'm afraid there is no history in this story whatsoever.

Predictably, all this talk of Atlantis caused archaeologists to discount what seemed to be an underwater megalithic structure as no more than breathless hype. To this day, archaeologists insist that this underwater formation is just a stretch of fractured beach rock probably formed around 3,000 years ago by natural processes. Unwilling to risk their reputations, few scholars have seriously investigated it. I have no such reservations. Because whether or not the Bimini structure is part of some underwater city, it would be reckless to ignore it completely. Which is why I've come here with some state-of-the-art technology and a team of experts to reopen this cold case. My dive buddy is **Dr. Michael Haley**...

Dr. Haley

Hand me the mask.

...a marine biologist who's been exploring the waters of the Caribbean for over 40 years.

Dr. Haley

Graham, let's swim over here.

The so-called Bimini Road lies just 18 feet, five-and-a-half meters, below the surface. An easy dive. While Mike and I head for the mysterious structure, up above, another member of our team, **Kyle Dufault**, is

preparing to scan the area using his sonar array. Kyle's a marine investigator with years of experience hunting the world's seabeds for wrecks and anomalies.

Dufault

Good to go.

His sonar should reveal the road like an X-ray, giving us a much clearer view of how these blocks may originally have been laid out.

Dufault

I'm hoping to show something that has never been seen before. If this is in fact a man made object, I'd like to see precise lines because usually 90-degree angles do not occur in nature. It's very rare.

All right, what I would like to do is just go right down the middle.

Dr. Haley

Graham, look at this.

Below, Mike and I close in on the line of massive blocks on the otherwise empty seabed. Recent storms have stirred up sediment, reducing visibility. Even so, it's easy to spot the well-organized rows of megaliths.

Dr. Haley

They are laid out perfectly symmetrically. I can swim along the side of the row and I can see absolute level and precision. It's a very impressive sight. The slabs are remarkably straight-edged and parallel. These very large blocks are really enormous. They're about 15 feet on one dimension, and about 12 feet on the other dimension. This isn't the top of any larger buried structure. Most of the blocks are laid out directly on the ocean floor. What's so unusual is that some of the undisturbed sections of the structure appear to be level, despite the massive size of the megaliths. And when Mike and I take a closer look, we discover why. There's something underneath them.

Come over here, Graham. Look at this.

A series of smaller stones are wedged beneath these huge slabs, keeping them level above the sea floor.

Dr. Haley

You can see these foundation stones very clearly.

There's no way those stones could have gotten under these slabs, some of which weigh up to ten tons, unless they were put there intentionally.

Dr. Haley

There's no doubt about it, in my view. Nature just cannot explain the regularity, the organization, the planning and the precision of this structure. It's clear that we're looking at a man-made structure. Huge efforts were made to create a leveled-off megalithic platform on a sloping land form. And in order to level that platform,

they used foundation blocks underneath the large megaliths.

Up close, it was difficult to make out what the overall intended shape of the formation might have been. But Kyle's sonar scans should give us further perspective.

Dufault

So, now you're starting to see the blocks of the main section of the road.

Okay.

Dufault

And you can definitively see the cracks and the uniform shape of the road.

Definition is amazing.

Dufault

Most of the rocks are very uniform.

Yeah.

Dufault

They're usually about ten to twelve foot long, by ten to twelve foot wide.

So, really substantial pieces.

Dufault

Absolutely.

Look at this straight edge here.

Dufault

Right, absolutely. Yeah, you can definitively see the lines between the blocks like they were actually made and then laid into a road pattern.

Almost a perfect square.

Dufault

Like I said, you can definitively see that they're blocks.

Yes.

Dufault

I've scanned both sides on either side of the road and there's nothing like that anywhere around.

If this formation was simply the product of natural tidal forces, as geologists insisted when it was first discovered, why would the shorter section of the road lie at an angle to the main one? Wouldn't they be parallel? And why don't we see other such formations nearby?

I mean, not only the weathering or just the uniformity of them all, but nothing around it looking like this... Somebody put it there.

Dufault

Yes. So my personal opinion is that it is man-made. So, Mike, what do you make of it? What have we been looking at?

Dr. Haley

Well, I've dived all over the world and it's the only structure I've ever seen like that. Anyway, it's completely unique.

When I listen to the arguments of those who think it is a natural structure, they argue that it's beach rock. Oftentimes a shelf of beach rock will fracture into pieces while still maintaining its overall shape. But the blocks at Bimini are clearly distinct from one another and uniformly pillow-shaped.

It's very hard for me to see how nature could have made it.

Dr. Haley

I've never seen beach rock fracture in that way.

Have you?

Me neither.

And it speaks to me loudly of human workmanship.

Dufault

Looks like it very well could be a man-made structure.

If I'm right, it must have been made at a time when this part of the Bahamas was above water. And extrapolating from all the available data, we can get a good idea of what it might originally have looked like when it lay atop the coastline. The hook-shaped formation runs roughly northeast to southwest, about 1,600 feet long. Nearly four-and-a-half football fields. The biggest blocks are anywhere from ten to thirteen feet long and seven to ten feet wide. And on both terraces, there appear to be intentional gaps. But there's no way to know if there was any wooden superstructure built on top. All that remains are the blocks. But the very existence of such a massive man-made structure here has extraordinary implications. Because this part of the Bahamas has been under water for thousands of years. In fact, most of the islands making up what we now call the Great Bahama Bank, were connected during the Ice Age in places rising 100 meters above sea level. Part of a vast rectangular Bahama Island, just off the mainland of what today is Florida, an island that existed here for more than 100,000 years.

Sea levels rose 400 feet at the end of the last Ice Age and in the process, swallowed up millions of square miles of some of the best land on Earth. And if we're trying to tell the human story while not taking account of those submerged continental shelves and what was happening on them, then we could be missing a great deal of important information.

The new data we've gathered on the Bimini Road strongly suggest to me an ancient date for this now underwater structure. And yet, archaeologists have been slow to take up the challenge of looking for evidence of older civilizations here in the Bahamas. They refuse to consider the possibility.

Shermer

If there was an advanced civilization that lived, say, 30,000 years ago, which is what Graham thinks, okay, where is their trash? Where are the homes? You know, where are their stone tools or metal tools? Where's their writing?

There could be such evidence of an advanced civilization of the Ice Age waiting to be found beneath the waves on land later flooded. But you're not going to find it if you don't bother to look.

Dr. Haley

You're not talking about a civilization on Bimini.

You're talking about civilization on the entire bank, which is huge. The research has simply never been done.

Dr. Haley

Yeah.

Because archaeology doesn't feel there's any point in doing that research. Because archaeology feels that the timeline of human civilization is already sorted out. So, there's no reason to

investigate that.

*

The Bimini Road does overlook the deepwater channel that once ran between the Ice Age Bahama Island and North America. A channel through which the Gulf Stream flows, making it a hugely important landmark for any ships heading northward out of the Gulf of Mexico toward the Atlantic. Like the legendary boat with no paddles of Quetzalcoatl. The stone slabs could have been part of some larger monument or place marker. A legacy of a seafaring culture that witnessed the rising waters at the end of the last Ice Age. A culture that may actually have mapped this important spot.

I've asked Mike to join me on shore to look over replicas of some of the oldest surviving world maps. He may be a seasoned navigator, but I'm betting he's never used maps like these.

The story of these maps is quite complicated. These maps were typically drawn in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries of our era. But the mapmakers admitted freely that they were copying from older source maps and compiling it together with new information from the Age of Discovery.

Let's start with this one, which is a very famous map. This is the Piri Reis map drawn by a Turkish admiral in 1513. He tells us in his own handwriting on the map that he based it on 20 older source maps.

In addition to those ancient sources, Piri Reis also referred to charts from recent voyages to the Americas by Christopher Columbus and others. The end result was a world map, but today, only the western third of it survives.

Dr. Haley

This is really interesting, Graham, because you got this coastline showing the rivers in South America quite accurately.

Yeah. Very good, really, representation of the coast of South America. But what stands out for me as a huge anomaly, is this very large island shown off the southeast coast of North America.

Parked off the coast of a truncated Florida, is a large, vertically-oriented, rectangular island. It doesn't look like anything Columbus should have encountered or drawn.

Efforts have been made to explain it as a badly drawn map of Cuba. And that just doesn't fly for me because you can't get it wrong.

Dr. Haley

Well, it's long and thin and oriented on a different axis.

And oriented east-west. Whereas this is oriented north-south. There is no such island and it didn't exist in 1513 either. But an island of exactly that size and shape did exist during the last Ice Age. The large part of the Grand Bahama Banks that were above water. And if you take a closer look at what Piri Reis drew along the island's spine, it's a series of blocks lined up in a row. Remind you of something?

This row looks to me very much like the rows of megaliths on the Bimini

Road. That would not be uncharacteristic of maps of this period because they took what they saw as a characteristic feature of that area. Like we see this elephant in West Africa, curious animals here in South America.

And this feature here, which is not mountains. It's not how Piri Reis shows mountains. It's something else. I think it's the Bimini Road.

*

I don't care whether the Bimini Road is natural or man-made.

My claim about the Bimini Road is it's really fucking weird that it appears on a map above water.

Joe Rogan

Yes.

A map that was drawn in 1513 based on older source maps.

*

This strange appearance of an Ice Age island isn't the only unusual feature on Piri Reis' extraordinary map.

Dr. Haley

As you move to the south, you've got this large landmass here. And that seems extremely strange.

You're putting your finger on one of the most controversial aspects of the Piri Reis map.

It's a coastline extending out from South America along the southern edge of the Atlantic. No one should have known about it in 1513. Take a look at this other world map. The Pinkerton map, published in 1812. It's impressively accurate except for one thing. No Antarctica. Because our civilization didn't discover Antarctica until 1820. This is why historians refuse to acknowledge the possibility that it might appear on a map drawn in 1513.

Imber

The area of the map which people say might be Antarctica, well, it just isn't Antarctica. It's South America. All that happened is that Piri Reis was drawing the coastline, the paper ran out, so he changed the direction.

Barber

He just did a doodle. And I think we've been taken in by the doodle into thinking it's something more.

That might make sense, if the Piri Reis map was the only example. But Antarctica shows up in other 16th century maps, as well. Here it's clearly detailed and even labeled on the Orontius Finaeus map drawn in 1531. Once again, based on ancient sources, before any modern explorer had ever laid eyes on it. But if that is Antarctica on the Piri Reis map, why is it so oddly oriented and connected to South America? Have a look at Antarctica's coastline, not as it is today, but as geologists think it was when sea levels were lower and the southern ice cap extended north during the last Ice Age. If you trace out Antarctica's Ice Age coastline, it looks a lot like the one on the Piri Reis map.

Antarctica, its appearance rather accurately, and much as it looked

during the Ice Age on ancient maps, is a real paradox and a problem which needs to be explained. And to me, the obvious answer to that problem isn't coincidence, it isn't fantasy on the part of the mapmakers. It's those source maps they were drawing from. I think these maps suggest a major forgotten episode in human history.

In Indonesia, in Mexico, and on Malta, we've seen advanced megalithic structures associated with civilizing heroes who arrived by boat, teaching the locals about agriculture, laws and engineering. Now, these maps suggest that long before Magellan's famous expedition, an advanced culture did circumnavigate that Ice Age world.

This is all evidence that we shouldn't dismiss the possibility that our ancestors had achieved a level of technology where they could explore and map the world's oceans. Shouldn't be dismissed.

Joe Rogan

Is there anything else compelling in the immediate area that seems to indicate there was a man-made structure?

There is another unexplained man-made wonder here. Hidden deep inside Bimini's dense mangrove forest, an area accessible only by boat. Rising ten feet out of the swamp is a series of mounds set off by empty stretches of sand, creating a curious 500-foot long shape. Like the famed Nazca Lines in Peru, it's a phenomenon best viewed from the air. The unmistakable shape of one of Bimini's most famous ancient residents. This effigy of a shark, carved into the mangrove swamp, has been here as long as anyone remembers. Though, archaeologists have never seriously studied it since they cannot confirm its origins. And yet it's a predator that any ancient seafaring culture, including the lost civilization I've been looking for, would certainly have feared and respected. So, who were these ancient navigators? Well, at the risk of yet again incurring the wrath of those in mainstream academia...

Let's talk about Atlantis.

I don't believe Bimini is the site of Atlantis, or that Atlantis lies anywhere near the Bahamas. But the legend of the drowned city is intriguing, precisely because it offers us the most detailed description of something I believe really existed. A lost advanced civilization of the Ice Age.

The Greek philosopher Plato is the oldest surviving source for the story of Atlantis. Which he describes quite vividly. Atlantis was a precocious civilization. Boasting beautiful architecture, advanced technology, and city planning on a monumental scale. It also commanded a vast fleet capable of navigating the world, projecting its power near and far across oceans. Until the city was struck by a series of massive earthquakes and floods, a truly cataclysmic event, and sank beneath the waves.

Plato tells us that the story of Atlantis reached him through his ancestor, Solon. That Solon visited Egypt. And we know the date of that visit. It was 600 BC. And during that visit, he visited a temple and the priests spoke of a

lost advanced civilization which they called Atlantis, which was destroyed in a flood 9,000 years before the time of Solon's visit.

So we have a date for the destruction of Atlantis, 9600 BC. That's exactly the same time as an episode of global cataclysm and catastrophic sea level rise that occurred at the end of the Ice Age. Coincidence? Maybe.

But for the tale of Atlantis to accord so precisely with the latest scientific evidence on the end of the Ice Age, should give even the harshest of skeptics pause for thought.

reporter

Isn't it much more likely it is just some sort of allegory?

I might think that if it wasn't for the fact that the Plato story is echoed all around the world by people who had no contact with Plato. And what I suspect is that they are all drawing on a common source, a common memory of a real event.

When Plato tells us the story of Atlantis, he also tells us why Atlantis went down. It wasn't just because of a cataclysm. It was because of the arrogance, the hubris, the pride that had grown up within Atlantis. This is why Atlantis was destroyed. Because it had fallen out of harmony with the universe. And I think that our civilization today is in a very similar predicament. We have fallen out of harmony with the universe. Our conceit at our own achievements, our willingness to impose our power around the world on other less powerful peoples.

All of these things in mythological terms would suggest that our civilization is in very great danger.

(explosion)

When I published **Fingerprints of the Gods** in 1995, I thought that there was nothing more for me to say about the possibility of a lost civilization. I became aware of an enormous and really quite astonishing newly-discovered megalithic site in Turkey. One that proved that our Ice Age ancestors were capable of far more than historians ever dreamed.

To me, it very strongly speaks of a lost civilization that archaeology hasn't got to grips with. It's a site now thought to be the oldest surviving megalithic structure in the world. One that also may have left us a warning encoded in stone, that the ancient apocalypse of the last Ice Age that nearly destroyed humanity...

(thunder rumbling)

Could return. **So, Turkey is where I'm heading next.**

S01E05:
LEGACY OF THE SAGES

Electricity works wonders for us. Humans have become a 24/7 species. But our canopy of lights cuts us off from one of the most magnificent aspects of living on this planet... the night sky. To the ancients, stargazing would have been the greatest show on Earth, the most entertaining way to pass their long, dark nights. They'd have known every turn of the Milky Way, every bright star cluster, every comet blazing across the sky. It might explain why everywhere we look in the ancient world, we find massive structures pointing our attention to the heavens. But what if it's more than that?

Ancient pyramids and temples all around the world connect sky to ground with precise alignments to the Sun, Moon, and stars. Why did the builders take such care, and on such a massive scale? Could they have been trying to tell us something? Warn us, even, that we must, at all costs, pay close attention to the heavens.

*

I'm in Turkey, heading for an isolated hilltop about 26 miles from the border with Syria. Today, this is a troubled part of the world, but it's been hugely significant to the story of humanity. In southeastern Turkey, near modern-day Sanliurfa, something remarkable happened around the end of the last Ice Age. Our Stone Age hunter-gatherer ancestors suddenly discovered farming and began creating settlements. This happened throughout what would later be called the Fertile Crescent, extending south to the Persian Gulf. Around 6,000 years ago, the area known as Mesopotamia would give birth to what has long been assumed to be the world's first civilization, the Sumerians. But that view of history now cries out to be rewritten. In 1994, while investigating a farmer's field, archaeologists spotted strange carved stones protruding from the ground. Some of gigantic size. Subsequent excavations have led to a series of stunning discoveries.

This recently excavated archaeological site requires us to abandon all our prejudices about our Stone Age ancestors. Far from being technological primitives, their accomplishments here prove that they possessed hitherto unsuspected abilities rivaling those of much later and supposedly much more advanced civilizations.

Beneath the modern canopy built to protect it from the elements, this is Göbekli Tepe. And based on everything we've been taught about prehistory, it shouldn't exist. Archaeologists accept that it dates back to around 11,600 years ago, making this the oldest acknowledged monumental structure on Earth.

It's a highly sophisticated, highly advanced megalithic site that's about 7,000 years older than Stonehenge and about 7,000 years older than the Giza Pyramids. And suddenly the notion that there was no culture in the world that was capable of doing such things 12,000 years ago is blown out of the water.

It's older even than the invention of the wheel or the domestication of

horses. Built at a time when the Earth was just emerging from the last Ice Age, when the locals were still supposedly unsophisticated hunter-gatherers living in mud huts. But if they weren't advanced enough to design and build this megalithic wonder, who did and why? What is this place?

At first glance, what confronts us here can seem bewildering. If we look closer, however, and piece together all the clues, we can get a good idea of how ambitious and imposing it must have been in its prime.

Perched on the side of a hill with few traces of any human settlements nearby are four circular enclosures, all with a similar layout. At the center of each, stands a pair of massive T-shaped megaliths weighing up to ten tons set into a polished stone floor. Twin giant figures, some with arms and hands carved into the rock, and tilted heads. They're encircled by smaller T-shaped pillars, many intricately carved and decorated, and all connected by ringed walls of stone and passageways. How these massive blocks were lifted and set in place... nobody knows.

What really mystifies all who come here, including the archaeologists who excavated the site, are the astonishing carvings. Symbols of animals are to be found everywhere at Göbekli Tepe. It's like a Noah's Ark in stone.

The creatures depicted at Göbekli Tepe are curiously arranged and stylized as though their purpose is more symbolic than realistic. And there's something else unusual about these megalithic structures. When archaeologists carbon dated them, it became clear that these four enclosures weren't built at the same time. Enclosure D dates back to around 11,600 years ago but the youngest, Enclosure A, was built around 10,500 years ago. Instead of updating the building they already had, the people here kept building new enclosures over the course of some 1,100 years, slightly rotating the alignment each time. What's even more intriguing is that the oldest original enclosure, Enclosure D, also happens to be the largest and the most intricately decorated of the group.

It's not something that you're a hunter-gatherer and you wake up one morning and think, "I'm going to build the largest megalithic site that will ever be seen in the world."

Usually, the more we practice something, the better we get at it. Like these modern-day quarrymen still cutting stone at the site in the hills around Göbekli Tepe today, we assume that ancient cultures must have worked the same way, improving their skills over time. But Göbekli Tepe, and in particular Enclosure D, seem to turn this assumption upside down. How did a community of Stone Age hunter-gatherers succeed so brilliantly in building with megaliths at their very first attempt?

Isn't it time to consider the possibility that the great megalithic enclosures weren't some miraculous overnight invention of hunter-gatherers, but were a legacy from a precociously advanced lost civilization of prehistory?

This is a notion which mainstream archaeologists find almost offensive. Academic scholars have got locked in to a particular framework, that during the Ice Age, the entire human population of the Earth was at the

hunter-gatherer stage. And yet, it turns out the builders of Göbekli Tepe were far more ambitious than your average hunter-gatherers. In 2003, a geophysical survey using ground-penetrating radar detected up to 20 other stone enclosures inside the hill and more than 200 pillars. Most remain unexcavated. A huge megalithic complex spread out across nine hectares, more than 12 soccer pitches.

It's an enormous site. You can't just wake up one morning with no prior skills, no prior knowledge, no background in working with stone, and create something like Göbekli Tepe. There has to be a long history behind it and that history is completely missing. And to me, it very strongly speaks of a lost civilization. Transferring their technology, their skills, their knowledge to hunter-gatherers.

Göbekli Tepe isn't the only complex dating back to the end of the last Ice Age that's recently been discovered here. In 2019, Turkish archaeologists began excavations at another site, about an hour's drive east, called Karahan Tepe... and uncovered something unexpected. The Turkish authorities have never allowed outside camera crews to film here until now. Lead archaeologist, **Professor Necmi Karul**, believes that this site is around the same age as Göbekli Tepe and could be even older. But it's quite different. The main chamber does feature T-shaped pillars and megaliths, but one edge is carved out of the bedrock and it's large enough to hold dozens of people.

What do you think happened in this building? Do you have any ideas at all?

Karul

We can interpret it as a podium for a sitting area and people coming together, because it's a big building.

Yeah.

Karahan Tepe seems to be some sort of ritual gathering space. The carvings on the walls aren't as well-executed as those at Göbekli Tepe. But we do see robed figures. Could they represent the site's true architects?

Lead the way, Professor.

Karul

Yeah, okay.

Professor Karul leads me into a curious side chamber, eight meters by six meters and two meters deep. Ten pillars resembling phalluses have been purposefully and skillfully carved directly out of the bedrock. With an 11th free-standing pillar in pride of place. A snaking channel has also been cut out of the rock to allow some form of liquid to pour into this chamber, water or possibly blood. And it's dominated by an imposing and mysterious sculpted head.

There's something serpent-like about that neck of that figure, as it pushes out of the rock and overlooks these pillars standing there in the enclosure. It's something sinuous, and I would add, something slightly sinister about it too.

It's a very powerful face.

Karul

It's a human head carved from the bedrock...

Carved out of bedrock.

Karul

...and it looks to the entrance.

Yes, the eyes are turned that way.

Quite imposing.

Karul

It looks like a snake's head.

Yeah.

Karul

It behaves like a snake, I would say.

Yes.

A human-headed snake.

Karul

Yeah, maybe.

It's a kind of unique discovery.

Karul

Yeah, it's fantastic.

There's a feeling of fear or of terror that comes with that enclosure. I know this is not science.

(chuckles)

It's just my emotional reaction to what I was seeing.

But I can't help wondering if fear and terror were involved in the creation of it as well. If it's expressing something that we need to know about our past. That it's fearful for a reason.

The professor confirms that as with Göbekli Tepe, they found no evidence of farming. The people who built this complex were definitely still hunter-gatherers. The notion used to be that agriculture came first, and then it allowed people to settle and create places like this.

But if I understand you correctly, you're saying that settlement came first.

Karul

Settlements came first. They are hunter-gatherers. And then they started to produce a different life. They changed the buildings, they changed the technology, et cetera.

Yeah.

A kind of revolution in ideas.

Karul

We can call it a revolution.

So this is something which is casting new light on human history.

So far, only two chambers have been excavated at Karahan Tepe. But ground-penetrating radar has revealed at least 20 more chambers that have yet to be explored. Just as at Göbekli Tepe, both sites built at the end of the last Ice Age, just before humans living here started farming and raising cattle.

There was no agriculture at Göbekli Tepe when it was built, but strangely, at exactly the time that it was being created 11,600 years ago, agriculture appears all around it.

For me, what the evidence speaks to is pretty clear. It's a transfer of technology.

People who already knew how to create megaliths and build a big megalithic site came to Göbekli Tepe. They already had knowledge of

agriculture, and they used that site to mobilize a local community, to organize them and to introduce them to agriculture.

*

According to the lore of ancient Mesopotamia, that's exactly what happened. Amongst the many flood and cataclysm myths of antiquity, the Mesopotamian deluge tradition is of particular interest here.

It speaks of a small band of wise ancients, the Apkallu, who taught the people here the skills of civilization. In the beginning, before recorded history, humanity was created by the gods to be stewards of the land and animals. But the first humans were too lazy and too unruly to do the job, and their numbers grew unchecked. So the gods sent a great deluge...

(thunder rumbling)

...to wipe the slate clean and start humanity over again. And they also sent seven sages, the Apkallu, traditionally depicted as bearded figures in flowing robes, to instruct the survivors. Their leader was Oannes, said to have come from the sea, usually depicted as a half-man, half-fish. He walked among the people teaching agriculture, architecture, and knowledge of the stars.

That's a list I can't help thinking that includes many of the advances supposedly invented at Göbekli Tepe. Oannes is yet another example of a civilizing hero. A teacher who suddenly arrives, usually by sea, after a time of great cataclysm, like Quetzalcoatl in Mexico, or like Osiris, who legend says traveled by boat to teach humanity the ways of civilization. And it's not just their stories that are similar across ancient cultures. Their depictions in ancient art are remarkably similar too, down to their robes and distinctive handbags.

I think that these are real accounts of real events. In some cases, they may be overlaid with symbolisms and storylines that distract us, but fundamentally, I think we need to trust the myths.

Göbekli Tepe's circular stone wall enclosures open to the sky also remind me a bit of Ġgantija and Malta's other temples. Is it possible they share a common inspiration? On Malta, Lenie Reedijk showed me how the changing alignments of the ancient megalithic temples track the changing rising points of a single star, Sirius, across thousands of years. Remarkably, we find the same phenomenon at Göbekli Tepe. The central pillars of the three oldest enclosures also seem to have targeted Sirius. At around the end of the Ice Age, their differing orientations tracking the star's differing rising points across time. This shared focus on Sirius is, for me, another hint that the ancient builders in both Malta and Turkey had access to a pool of shared knowledge concerning astronomy and megalithic construction. Is it possible that the great building projects in both places were directed by the survivors of a more advanced culture who traveled the world at the end of the last Ice Age, perhaps represented by those stone pillar giants or Karahan Tepe's hooded figures? People who arrived here in the Fertile

Crescent after a great flood. If so, what were they trying to say? Could all those animal carvings actually be telling us something?

On these recent investigations, I've learned new information about Göbekli Tepe, which further adds to the intriguing picture. I've come to meet **Dr. Sweatman**, at the nearby Sanliurfa Museum, home to a stunning recreation of Göbekli Tepe's largest enclosure. A trained scientist with an interest in archaeoastronomy, much of his research has focused on Pillar 43, also known as the Vulture Stone.

What's the significance of this for you, Martin?

It's probably one of the most important artifacts in the whole world, you know?

Dr. Sweatman

It's just incredible. Essentially, this pillar is like our Rosetta Stone.

Right.

Dr. Sweatman believes that the symbols on the stone might represent asterisms, figures meant to depict bright star clusters in the night sky.

We see directly that there is a scorpion. So we can take that perhaps to be Scorpius.

It's very tempting to conclude it's Scorpius, yeah.

Dr. Sweatman

Absolutely.

Different cultures have given different names and different figures to the constellations of the zodiac. So it's a bonus to see one asterism we recognize on Pillar 43.

Dr. Sweatman

Then above, we would expect to find Sagittarius, and we know Sagittarius as the archer with a bow and arrow. And so we see the vulture with the wings and they're spread in just the right angle to represent the bow and arrow. And then we can see that there are other animal symbols which correspond to more constellations, representing almost like a map in the night sky.

This is a map of the most visible stars in the area around what's today known as Scorpius. Once we line up Scorpius with the Scorpion on Pillar 43, the other nearby asterisms seem to match some of the other figures depicted on the pillar. So it kind of all fits together.

Dr. Sweatman

Absolutely.

But Dr. Sweatman's real breakthrough came when he considered the suggestion that the central circle could represent the Sun.

Dr. Sweatman

So what would you be trying to say if you have an image of the Sun in a particular position relative to the constellations? One thing that you might be trying to indicate is a date. And a clue to that is the fact that there are three other animal symbols at the top of the pillar that re-cemented this idea that this was a date, a date stamp essentially.

Dr. Sweatman believes that the three small animals carved atop Pillar

43 appear next to symbolic representations of three sunsets. Taken with the Sun disc in the middle of the stone, they could depict four key moments in the solar year, the summer solstice, the winter solstice, and the spring and fall equinoxes. The carvings would represent asterisms that appeared in the night sky behind or around the setting Sun on each of those key dates in the calendar year.

So, suddenly we have a lock of all four key moments of the year, with the moment they really want us to focus on dominating the pillar.

Dr. Sweatman

Exactly.

It's a brilliant and compelling idea. A date inscribed in stone in the universal language of astronomy. So what date is the pillar referring to? By using computer software designed to track changes in the night sky over thousands of years, we can find a precise 100-year window that perfectly fits Martin's theory.

Dr. Sweatman

Eventually, I found that actually we could work out it's around about 10,900 to 10,800 BC.

Graham: But that's more than a thousand years before construction began at Göbekli Tepe.

Why should that date have been important?

Dr. Sweatman

Well, we know quite a lot about that specific time in history. Almost exactly within that time period, that short span of around 100 years, there was a dramatic climate event, which is known as the Younger Dryas.

It completely changes their world.

(thunder rumbling)

We've been referring to this as the Ancient Apocalypse, but scientists call it the Younger Dryas.

It began 12,800 years ago with a cataclysm, and it ended 11,600 years ago, the exact date of the construction of Göbekli Tepe.

The world suffered through some kind of tremendous geological upheaval, including immense floods, followed by more than 1,000 years of freezing temperatures. Life on Earth fundamentally changed. The saber-toothed tigers and mammoths went extinct. But humanity survived. And around 11,600 years ago, the freeze ended with another final immense flood that raised sea levels around the world. It was then, only after the Earth was calm again, that the work on Göbekli Tepe began. And I believe the timing was no coincidence.

That's ultimately what I came to see Göbekli Tepe as, as a reboot of civilization from a time when there had been an earlier civilization that was destroyed in a great cataclysm. It's nice to see Pillar 43 from here, and it's amazingly well-preserved, considering it's 11,600 years old.

It's quite amazing.

What if this mysterious complex wasn't just a place of rituals, but also a memorial to commemorate a world-changing event? It would make sense.

Some of our grandest buildings today are memorials too. The Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC or the Taj Mahal in India. But could Göbekli Tepe be even more than that? What if its architects sought to leave behind a message of the greatest importance, a message for later generations to decode? Because when archaeologists determined the age of the rubble covering up the site, they got another surprise. Sometime around 10,000 years ago, all the structures were buried rapidly and quite deliberately at the same time.

An enormous effort was put into burying Göbekli Tepe. I mean, not just burying it, but actually putting a man-made hill over the top of it. We must envisage teams of hundreds of people carrying baskets of rubble and pouring it into the enclosures. But then the question arises, why did they do that? It wasn't abandoned. It wasn't destroyed or looted. It was carefully buried, hidden away and preserved. And there it remained, safe for thousands of years until its recent rediscovery.

To my mind, what we're looking at here only makes sense as a time capsule. And like all time capsules, its purpose was to transmit a message to the future.

At Göbekli Tepe and Karahan Tepe too, serpents dominate the imagery. There's something about the way their winding, descending shapes are depicted, as if the builders were obsessed with them, as if these serpents were the one message they wanted us to take away from both sites. But are they serpents or could they represent something else?

It seems that everywhere we find traces of a forgotten episode in human history, we also find snakes. In Mexico, Quetzalcoatl himself is a serpent. In Malta, one crosses into Ġgantija's inner sanctum by stepping over a snake. I think I know what those serpents mean, and the best example isn't here in Turkey.

It's halfway around the world in the middle of America, in Ohio, where ancient sages crafted an earthen serpent on a gigantic scale to serve both as a memorial and perhaps as a warning.

S01E06:
AMERICA'S LOST CIVILIZATION

When did humans first reach the Americas? If you were at school any time between roughly 1960 and 2010, chances are you were taught this story. That during the last Ice Age, bands of hunter-gatherers passed over a land bridge connecting Asia to North America, where the Bering Strait is now. And that somewhere around 13,000 years ago as the ice melted, they migrated south into the American Heartland.

Archaeology was convinced that the Americas were not inhabited by human beings until about 13,000 years ago. This was a dominant paradigm in the study of ancient America. But it was wrong.

The old notion has been completely overturned by the discovery of much older archaeological remains. Fossilized human footprints have been found in the New Mexican desert that date to 22,000 years ago, the height of the last Ice Age. And though still contested, evidence for an even earlier human presence dating back as much as 130,000 years has recently begun to emerge.

It's high time to reconsider the whole timeline of the human story in the Americas.

(audience applause)

Very little is left of the ancient North American monuments. More than 90% of the structures that were documented in the 19th century are now completely gone, and of the less than 10% that remain, the majority have been vandalized and destroyed.

(birds chirping)

It's disturbing to imagine what precious secrets of the ancients were lost in colonial land grabs, and in the systematic crushing of indigenous beliefs, traditions, and monuments that followed.

The few sites that survive may be critical in establishing the possibility of a lost civilization. Sites like this one, known as Poverty Point. It gets its somewhat unusual name from the plantation that used to be on this spot, just 15 miles west of the Mississippi River in northeastern Louisiana. For a long time, this was thought to be just a scenic hill rising up out of the farmland. But this isn't just a hill. Archaeologists no longer dispute that it's an immense man-made earthen structure, today known simply as Mound A. And when the surrounding area was found to be littered with clay artifacts and human figures... archaeologists realized that Mound A is part of a much larger ancient complex.

Climbing Mound A is really worth the effort. You get a perspective up here that you don't get down at ground level. What I notice immediately is how flat this land is.

If you remove the trees, and I believe the ancients did that, you have a perfectly flat horizon in 360 degrees all around you. But this is not some kind of defensive structure. So what is it?

Even from above, it's hard to get the full picture. But we have a good idea of the original layout of the site. And it's like nothing else from the ancient world. Mound A likely originally stood as high as 100 feet, anchoring a 43-acre plaza. With six concentric ridges, each perhaps as tall as six

feet and leveled off at the top creating a half circle with a diameter of three quarters of a mile, broken up by a series of aisles, like some kind of amphitheater. And scattered nearby are no less than six massive man-made mounds labeled by archaeologists, simply “A” through “F”. Poverty Point is one of the largest and most complex ancient sites in North America. Its oldest sections date back to 3,700 years ago... long before its builders farmed the land or kept livestock. And the ancient Americans of Poverty Point then spent the next 600 years continuously developing and improving the site.

Why? No documents or traditions have survived to tell us what Poverty Point’s purpose was. So archaeologists are left guessing.

Site manager and historian, **Mark Brink Jr.**, is the first to admit that mainstream archaeology hasn’t been able to confirm much about this mysterious site.

Tell me everything you know about this site.

Brink Jr.

So Mound A is massive, the largest mound constructed in the Western Hemisphere at the time, which shows you that Poverty Point was the center of something truly big.

It suggests, then, a strong motive behind it. Do you have any thoughts on what that motive could be?

Brink Jr.

We really don’t know. It was a ceremonial center for some reason, but we don’t know yet. Can we add the “yet”?

Yeah.

We do have an idea as to why it was built here and not someplace else, and it has to do with an even more ancient site about two miles to the south.

Brink Jr.

As we go south from Poverty Point we come to a place called Lower Jackson Mound. And the three principal mounds of Poverty Point are lined up precisely north-south with Lower Jackson Mound. And Lower Jackson Mound is much older than Poverty Point. It dates to 3500 BC, 5,500 years old. And yet, the makers of Poverty Point were not only aware of it, but they used it as the anchor of their whole site.

Clearly the ancient builders understood geography and how to orient structures to true north. But there’s something else going on here at Poverty Point that archaeologists don’t like to acknowledge encoded in its unique geometry.

You see, the flat horizon all around allows you to observe the rising and the setting of the Sun and the Moon and the stars. This is a place for astronomers. Most of us are not aware of this today. Why should we be? We live in light-polluted cities.

We can hardly see the skies at all, but if you were the ancients and you studied the skies, you would notice this phenomenon. The Sun has its

stopping points on the horizon. We call them the solstices. The Sun stops still on the summer solstice, stays roughly in the same place for two or three days, and then starts to move back like a pendulum swing along the horizon. Same on the winter solstice.

Archaeoastronomer William Romain discovered that these important dates, the solstices, respectively the longest and shortest days of the year, were actually marked at Poverty Point by a skillfully designed system of alignments. If you stand at the eastern edge of the oval space at the heart of the plaza, the summer solstice sunset falls directly in line with Mound B, the oldest mound. And from the same vantage point, the winter solstice sunset falls directly behind Mound E. Move over to the western edge of that same inner oval, and you'll find that the summer solstice Sun rises directly over Mound C, while the winter solstice Sun rises directly over Mound D. And if you gaze directly west through the center of the plaza on either the spring or fall equinox, the Sun appears to roll down the northern edge of Mound A before sinking below the horizon.

Poverty Point may have more intriguing structures designed to track changes in the sky. In one corner of the site, archaeologists found a large circle of holes marked today by restored white posts. We don't know how tall the original posts in those holes would have been, but in its overall conception and design, it reminds me of the prehistoric Woodhenge excavated near Stonehenge in England. What's unique about Poverty Point is how many woodhenges it boasts.

These circles, how many of them are there here?

Dr. Sweatman

Scale?

Well, there's probably at least 40 of them.

Dr. Sweatman

So, some of them are pretty small, maybe 60 feet in diameter; some are larger, 200 or more feet in diameter, but the dates on these vary wildly.

They were created over the course of hundreds of years, spanning generations of ancient Americans, who kept tweaking their position and size over time. I'm reminded of Malta where the megalith builders kept changing the orientation of their temples to face the star Sirius, culminating with Ġgantija. And of Göbekli Tepe in Turkey where the ancients built a series of temples over a period of about a thousand years, also, I believe, to track the movement of the stars. These are all massive projects, featuring structures repeatedly rebuilt and shifted in their orientation over generations. Could the multiple post circles of Poverty Point also have been designed to track something in the heavens?

Sophisticated knowledge, true science is evidenced by the geometry and the astronomy of the site. Yet mainstream archaeologists are reluctant to recognize astronomy of any kind in Poverty Point's wood circles.

Dr. Sweatman

Here, I don't think they make sense. Why should the people who lived here and created this place, why should they not have been interested in the sky? I'm not saying they weren't.

No.

Dr. Sweatman

I bet they were.

Okay. So what do you think the circles were used for?

Dr. Sweatman

We don't know. We don't know yet if they were used for astronomy purposes or not.

Yeah.

*

Ancient cultures were very fixated upon the sky. That notion isn't in itself disputed, but archaeology tends to regard it as irrelevant. I think that the reason is, in part, because most archaeologists just don't understand astronomy at all. It's not what they've been taught to do, and secondly, they regard it as an intrusion into their domain by outsiders.

I'm not claiming that Poverty Point was created by the lost advanced civilization I'm looking for. But I'm interested in the origins of the sophisticated astronomy and geometry that were deployed here. There's evidence that advanced architectural, Earth-measuring and astronomical knowledge was inherited from earlier times, but inherited from whom and how much earlier?

I'm not saying the ancient Americans living here weren't capable of discovering and incorporating these astronomical observations into their sites by themselves. On the contrary. I think we've passed the point where we should regard the Native American cultures as simply hunter-gatherers. They were much more complicated than that and much more sophisticated.

And their vision of Earth's place in the cosmos expressed by the alignments at Poverty Point is essentially the same vision that we've seen in other ancient sites around the world, sharing the same focus on the sacred connection between Earth and sky. Poverty Point is just one of 800 Mound Builder sites surviving across the state of Louisiana. While in North America as a whole, out of an original estimated total of one million mounds, around 100,000 still remain. Amongst these, the most spectacular example of a mound expressing the sacred connection between Earth and sky, lies about 600 miles to the northeast of Poverty Point in Ohio, a site that may just hold the key to understanding what happened to the lost civilization I've been searching for. Perched atop a densely forested ridge lies a stunning example of an effigy mound. A gigantic earthwork shaped into the form of a living creature. In this case, a 400-meter-long snake. It's called Serpent Mound. Starting from its coiled tail, seven bends in its body wind their way to the head, where gaping jaws appear about to engulf a separate oval earthwork.

Even from the air, it's hard to make out all the detail. But by taking into account new discoveries about its original construction and stripping away the trees, we can reveal what the effigy would have looked like in its prime. Serpent Mound extends more than quarter of a mile from its jaws in the northwest to its tail on the southwestern corner of the hilltop. Originally,

there was a circle of standing stones by the head, function unknown. And just behind the head, two decorative extensions, function, likewise, unknown.

Serpent Mound is a remarkable, graceful structure, one that instills wonder in those who visit. It's clearly an ancient and mysterious place. But who built the huge effigy, and why?

The sign of the site will tell you it was built around 1000 AD by an indigenous people referred to as the Fort Ancient Culture. But the sign, like so many of these historical markers, is wrong. Truth is that nobody really knows how old Serpent Mound is. That date of 1000 AD was based on just two of the organic samples taken from parts of the mound that may have been later reconstructed, because another archaeological survey found samples from the serpent's base dating back to 321 BC.

The evidence that Serpent Mound was the subject of a restoration is very clear. I suggest that these restorations go back deep into the past.

*

There's just one problem with investigating my theory. The administrators of Serpent Mound have decided to ban me. We've made repeated efforts to get permission to film here, but they denied us that permission. On what I regard as ideological and indeed rather personal grounds, let me read from their email.

Serpent Mound email

“Our role is to ensure that Serpent Mound’s integrity and preservation, both physically and in its historical interpretation, are maintained.”
“Because the presenter of this series, Graham Hancock, proposes a theory and story that do not align with what we know to be true about Serpent Mound, your request is declined.”

A correct word for this so-called mission to protect the interpretation of the site is, of course, censorship. And what more effective way for archaeologists to censor and restrain and crush opposing views than to deny access to archaeological sites?

It's by no means the first time this has happened. This unfortunately is systematic and consistent behavior amongst archaeologists. They do practice censorship. They practice censorship by ridiculing and insulting alternative ideas.

So what exactly is it in this theory of mine that's deemed so objectionable? Quite simply, it's because I dare to suggest that the idea behind the design of Serpent Mound goes back to a time much earlier than 300 BC, more than 10,000 years earlier to the end of the last Ice Age. And for me, the proof of this lies in one of its most stunning attributes, one that mainstream archaeologists don't like to acknowledge. Because again,

it involves the sky. If you overfly Serpent Mound on the summer solstice around June 21st, you'll immediately notice that the jaws of the serpent are aligned almost directly to the point where the Sun sets.

So this is what happens at sunset on the summer solstice. You see the head of the serpent, it seems to be seeking out the Sun, and then as the Sun begins to go down, you get it more clearly, this beautiful alignment between Earth and sky, then the majesty of the site just overwhelms you.

It's obvious to anybody today that that is what the head of the great serpent is pointing at. But that idea was ignored and rejected by archaeology for a very long time. The organization, which runs the site, has allowed an enormous number of trees to grow up around the head of the serpent. I think they believe it provides shade to tourists. But what it does is it limits that massive impact of seeing the head of the serpent pointing directly at the setting Sun.

Jeff Wilson, who owns much of the property next to the ancient effigy, is the president of an independent group called The Friends of Serpent Mound, dedicated to preserving and promoting this and other Native American sites.

Clearly Serpent Mound is very important to you.

Wilson

Yes, it's very personal to me. It's one of the most spiritual places I've ever visited. It's a sacred place. When you encounter it, you walk away feeling changed by the experience when you come here. It's the most amazing archaeoastronomy site in North America, bar none.

Yes.

What makes it so is the recent confirmation that the Mound Builders cleverly incorporated a whole series of sky ground alignments into Serpent Mound's design. The center of the second bend behind the head points eastward to where the Sun rises on the summer solstice, and the center of the following bend targets the sunrise on the spring and fall equinoxes when night and day are of equal length. While the center of the final bend is aimed where the Sun rises on the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. As for that intricately coiled tail, if you draw a straight line from its exact center through the hinge of the serpent's jaws, you'll find it's precisely oriented to true astronomical north.

Wilson

To construct it and to figure out where all these astronomical alignments that are incorporated into its design is just an amazing sheer work of genius...

It's a work of genius, yeah.

Wilson

...from the prehistoric Native Americans. Yeah. And that genius is easily overlooked, actually.

Is archaeology taking the astronomy of this site seriously? Are enough archaeologists taking it seriously?

Wilson

I don't think so, no. There's very few people that

even pay attention to it or consider it.

It's as though mainstream archaeologists want us to believe that all these astronomical alignments happen by accident.

I think it's fair to say that there were people in ancient Native America with advanced surveying, geometrical and astronomical skills, and they put those skills to work in the creation of enormous monuments, most of which have tragically been swept away.

These precise solar alignments manifested on such a gigantic scale represent an extraordinary achievement for hunter-gatherers living in the 3rd century BC. But there's evidence suggesting that the ridge where Serpent Mound sits was considered sacred for thousands of years before that.

Wilson

Every single culture that ever existed here, dating back to the last Ice Age, left cultural remains at Serpent Mound.

What it says to me, this continuous human presence here, it kind of suggests to me that the site's been sacred for a very long time.

Wilson

Right.

It seems to me that should be taken into account in the archaeological narrative.

It should be part of the story of Serpent Mound.

Wilson

Yes.

Archaeologists have been wrong before and they could be wrong again. All in all, it's obvious that the origins of Serpent Mound are complicated. What if 321 BC doesn't mark the year of Serpent Mound's construction, but one of its many reconstructions? Let's not forget we're dealing with a serpent here, and that serpents are creatures renowned for their ability to change their skin.

It's a possibility actually suggested by Serpent Mound's unique alignment. You see, it isn't quite perfect. Today the summer solstice Sun, as viewed from Serpent Mound, actually sets about two degrees off the exact center of the jaws. Seems close enough to the naked eye. But it's hard to believe that the people who conceived of and created this sophisticated effigy mound, tracking all those calendar moments, would go to all this trouble and not get it exactly right. I think they did get it right. It all has to do with the way the Earth shifts on its axis over the millennia. In a phenomenon long known to astronomers who refer to it as the obliquity of the ecliptic.

To put it in simple terms, the Earth, as we know, is tilted on its axis, but that tilt is not fixed and constant. It changes over a 41,000-year cycle. It changes roughly two-and-a-half degrees over that cycle. It nods back and forward, and that affects the rising position of the Sun on the summer solstice.

Instead of asking why the serpent's jaws aren't perfectly aligned to the summer solstice sunset, what if we asked a different question? When, if one takes into account this obliquity of the ecliptic, did the gaping jaws and the setting Sun line up perfectly? Turns out it wasn't a thousand years ago, or

even 2,300 years ago, when archaeologists insist Serpent Mound was first constructed. The serpent's mouth was exactly centered on the Sun around 12,800 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age, when the ridge on which the serpent was built itself occupied an extraordinarily significant spot. At the very peak of the Ice Age, around 20,000 years ago, much of North America was covered by an immense ice cap over a mile deep.

Today, Ohio's Serpent Mound Valley is a forest-covered wilderness, but let's not look at it as it is now. Let's look at it as it was during the last Ice Age. This very valley, where the great serpent was constructed, actually marks the furthest south that the North American ice sheet reached. The giant ice cliffs rising just by this ridge would have looked like something out of a fantasy novel.

To the people who lived through this period, it must have seemed that some benign magical power was at work. But any celebration of the halt of the ice would have been short-lived, because sometime around 12,800 years ago, when the serpent was perfectly aligned with the summer solstice, something huge was happening all over the planet.

*

(thunderclap)

Something apocalyptic called the Younger Dryas. It was a period of radical climate change and rising sea levels. Humanity survived, but barely. I find it intriguing, by means of its alignment to the summer solstice sunset, that Serpent Mound serves as a signpost, a date stamp, drawing our attention to the skies of 12,800 years ago, a time when we know there was a global cataclysm big enough to have destroyed an advanced civilization.

Again, I'm reminded of Göbekli Tepe, where figures of creatures carved into one of the most spectacular pillars seem to depict the position of the stars at the summer solstice during the time of the Younger Dryas. It's no accident in my view that the serpent's solstitial alignment also speaks to that same cataclysmic epoch. But why a serpent?

Of the greatest relevance, I think, are numerous Native American myths and traditions in which giant serpents are directly associated with cataclysmic Earth changes. There's an ancient legend of the Iroquois whose domain at the height of their power extended deep into Ohio. The villain of the legend is a giant horned serpent.

Long ago, a village was plagued by a great serpent who dwelt in a nearby lake. So the great spirit in the sky sent down a hero to defeat him. In a vicious battle, bolts of lightning struck the serpent, the sound shook the Earth, and the flashes were so bright that the people shielded their eyes, covered their ears, and hid in fear. The very constellations were dislodged from the night sky and came crashing to Earth with a ferocious blast and scorching heat. One star fell into the lake, wounding the horned serpent. As the great serpent thrashed its tail in pain, it sent 100-foot waves crashing through the valleys in a series of colossal floods. Most of the tribe didn't

survive, but the serpent was driven away. We've already seen such serpent imagery in ancient monuments all over the world. On the temples in Mexico, dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent, carved into the temple of Ġgantija on Malta, and raining down from the skies on the pillars of Göbekli Tepe. It's a powerful symbol found at sites that invite us to look to the heavens. Why? I think this Iroquois legend has more than a kernel of truth to it. Perhaps the stars, or something resembling stars, did fall to Earth. Perhaps there was great flooding afterwards, part of those earthshaking cataclysms of the Younger Dryas. If the original version of Serpent Mound was designed sometime around the end of the last Ice Age, as I believe, then perhaps it was intended to carry a message to the future, a warning even, as to what caused that apocalyptic series of events around 12,800 years ago, a warning to look to the heavens for stars falling from the sky.

A quarter of the way around the Earth, there's evidence that other ancient peoples also lived in terror of just such a threat from above, and took steps to protect themselves deep in the heart of Cappadocia in modern-day Turkey, which is where I'm heading next.

S01E07:
A FATAL WINTER

What I'm suggesting is that something that we would recognize as an advanced civilization existed during the Ice Age. I'm not saying that they flew to the moon. But what I'm saying is that they were far, far, far more advanced in terms of scientific knowledge. Knowledge of the Earth, knowledge of the universe, than we're taught. And capable of astounding feats of engineering, like the site I'm heading to in Turkey's Cappadocia region.

There's an ancient survival bunker deep underground. Built not just to shelter a few people, but to shelter thousands.

Mainstream historians have long debated its purpose, but I believe it might just explain how this lost ancient civilization I've been looking for became lost. This is the story of Derinkuyu. I've come to a region of Turkey known as Cappadocia. About 240 miles northwest of those mysterious enclosures of Göbekli Tepe... that were intentionally buried, memorializing a time of great cataclysms at the end of the Ice Age. Millions of years ago, this region's landscape was transformed by a series of volcanic eruptions, leaving layer upon layer of ash, which compressed over millennia into a soft stone called tuff. A stone easily shaped by the elements, creating what locals call "fairy chimneys." But a stone that also allowed the construction of one of the most remarkable large-scale projects humanity has ever embarked upon deep beneath this soft rock.

Just a few miles from where I stand, the mysterious hidden city created thousands of years ago has been revealed. It's the work of an as-yet unidentified civilization that was clearly motivated by fear.

The big question therefore is, fear of what?

The closest town, Derinkuyu, seems unremarkable. But in 1963, developers renovating a house here knocked through a floor, only to discover a deep tunnel, one that led to a forgotten world.

It's hard to believe, as you walk the dusty streets of this small town, that carved out of the living bedrock right beneath my feet is an ancient, immense and mysterious subterranean complex.

If you're claustrophobic, consider yourself warned. We're headed underground. This is the underground city of Derinkuyu. A series of stone tunnels and chambers plunging as deep as 85 meters below the surface... creating 18 levels of rooms and tunnels. The entire complex was hacked out of the rock with hand axes. A disorientating warren that occasionally widens into large open spaces. From inside, it's virtually impossible to get a sense of the scale of the place. But most of this underground city has been mapped, and if we take away the rock between the spaces, we can see a cross section of the city, and it's utterly astounding. It's an ant farm built human size, with subterranean caves and tunnels extending over an area of four square kilometers. To keep it well-ventilated, Derinkuyu has upwards of 15,000 air ducts connecting the upper levels to the surface and more than 50 vertical shafts, some stretching all the way down to the water table 85 meters below the surface giving the complex its name. Derinkuyu means, "deep well."

Stunning in its ingenuity and architectural complexity, it's calculated that Derinkuyu could shelter up to 20,000 people. But questions remain. Which people, when and why?

It's hard to know precisely, because Derinkuyu is like a crime scene that's been trampled on for generations. Many cultures have passed through this part of Turkey. For centuries, Cappadocia occupied a place of strategic importance, along the legendary Silk Road that connected Asia to Europe, going back to the time of Alexander the Great. Turkish scholar, **Sevim Tunçdemir**, is an expert on the Derinkuyu tunnels and their various occupants.

Tunçdemir

(in Turkish) This region has been home to many civilizations. If we count them starting from the beginning, there were the Hittites, then there were the Phrygians, then the Persians, the Cappadocian kingdom, the Roman Empire. All the people who passed through used them. They were even in use up until the Ottoman period.

When the tunnels were first discovered, archaeologists found artifacts left by early Christians, and in the deepest levels, secret meeting rooms carved out with vaulted ceilings like churches. So the original theory, which many historians still cling to today, was that the tunnels beneath Derinkuyu were carved out by Christians in the 7th century AD, trying to hide from Arab raiding parties. It's a tale that appeals to Western tourists. Also, it's totally wrong. Later excavations found evidence of people using this underground city as early as the 8th century BC, hundreds of years before the Christians were here.

We encounter this again and again on archaeological sites around the world. There's a big notice based on the received wisdom of archaeologists, and again and again that notice is wrong. Factually wrong. Proved to be wrong by later excavations and yet not changed. Don't trust the noticeboards. Do the legwork yourself. Don't rely on the so-called experts.

There were many cultures who used these tunnels over centuries, but what I want to know is who began this remarkable project. How far back does it go? Historian **Hüsam Süleymangil** has been investigating this site for decades, trying to unlock its mysterious origins.

So, when I look at Derinkuyu and the complexity of it, I am mystified. When do you think that this project started?

Süleymangil

There are several different theories about it and none of them is really proven by science.

Right.

Süleymangil

They couldn't find any written information. They couldn't find any organic material to use to carbon date.

Are there any carbon dates at all?

Süleymangil

As far as I know, there is no carbon dating.

That's extraordinary.

Süleymangil

So, the date is still a big mystery.

I have my own theories, but Hüsam proposes a date based on the oldest known culture to use these caves.

Süleymangil

Most plausible theory, according to my mind, is actually about the 8th century BC.

At that time, this part of the world was inhabited by a people known as the Phrygians, who were under threat from another empire, the Assyrians.

Süleymangil

We know that there was a big Assyrian army coming from southeast.

The Phrygians would've viewed the invading army with sheer terror. The Assyrians were notorious for skinning prisoners, impaling them and burning children alive. According to later accounts, when the Assyrian invaders marched against the people in this valley, they were surprised by the defenders' innovative tactics.

Süleymangil

The Phrygians were fighting against the Assyrian army in the guerilla type of warfare, attacking the army in sort of unexpected places. When the army start to chase them, they would come and use these as hideout places.

It's a time-honored strategy in guerrilla warfare. Similar tunnels were dug out by the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. And Afghan rebels did the same to hide from superior Soviet and then American invading forces. This official position, that the Phrygians dug out these tunnels as a secret military base, seems to be supported by one of the complex's more clever features... massive stone discs that can be rolled into place, sealing up the passageways. These rolling doors have a diameter of up to five feet and can weigh up to half a ton. On the inside surface, the disc has a hole. Insert a smaller locking stone as a handle and you can roll the door shut, creating a smooth, formidable barrier for anyone on the other side. But did the Phrygians really make these ingenious doors, or were they already here? They're carved from the same compressed ash that made the fairy chimneys. The same soft rock that allowed someone to dig all this out in the first place.

They're certainly sealable doors, separating the levels from each other, requiring sophisticated engineering to fit in place. But the stone is soft and determined attackers armed with sledgehammers and chisels could easily have broken through, rendering all the effort to make these megaliths completely useless. I'm beginning to wonder if they were designed to deter human attackers at all.

To me, these look less like defensive fortifications and more like a clever way to allow privacy between sections, or to prevent fires from spreading. Even if this place was originally built as a military installation, why dig it out here? There was nothing here to defend.

Tunçdemir

(in Turkish) *There were no settlements above ground in Derinkuyu until 1830.*

The notion that these are places where people went to hide from invading armies makes very little sense to me. When an invading army comes into a territory, they come to take, possess and occupy that territory. All they have to do is block the entrances and wait till you die of starvation. So that idea just doesn't make any sense at all.

See, in my opinion, I think scholarship is going too far to say this was the 8th century BC because those are the earliest dates that we find people using it.

Süleymangil

(in English) *Right.*

But that we don't necessarily know that they made it then. Maybe it was already made.

Tunçdemir

(in Turkish) *Quite possible, as it's still a mystery. It's just the most plausible theory not the only correct theory.*

The dating of this underground city is about as insecure as it's possible for archaeological dating to be. All the proposed dates derive from use of the structure at different periods. The fact that I live in a house today doesn't mean it was built immediately before I moved in.

It's a notion that leads me to question the official dating of these tunnels. Could they be older, much older, than the accepted theory says? And was the reason for their construction not to hide from an invading army but to hide from something else? In the most ancient levels, the ones closest to the surface, the chambers seem not to be designed for defense but for everyday living.

Tunçdemir

(in Turkish) *The underground cities were organized to cater for human living. In other words, for daily life. And for this, all the resources were available. Starting with the kitchen, to the pantry, to the living spaces.*

Süleymangil

(in English) *There are sections we know that they would use as cooking and we know that they created small chimneys. At the entrance floors, there are some rooms that's named as stables. Animals would be the most valuable belongings of those people.*

One area has even been identified as an ancient winery where grapes were crushed. Indeed, the tunnels would make a great wine cellar. The temperature stays quite comfortable, no matter how hot or cold it gets on the surface. Food would've stayed fresh longer down here. It's clear that Derinkuyu was created to be used by a substantial population. An underground bunker. Think about all the modern examples where humans have created vast underground living spaces. The Cheyenne Mountain Complex in Colorado. The Dixia Cheng network of tunnels dug out beneath Beijing. The Presidential Emergency Operations Center under the White

House. None of these were built to defend against invading armies. They were built as places of refuge, to preserve life in the event of some kind of threat from above. I think that's exactly what's going on... at Derinkuyu. But I also believe this bunker was created much longer ago than archaeologists are willing to consider.

*

There is evidence that suggests that Derinkuyu may go back as far as the last Ice Age. It concerns those telltale marks left by hand axes on the walls of Derinkuyu. Just a mile outside Derinkuyu, Turkish archaeologists exploring an ancient riverbed found several hand axes and stone tools dating back to around 9500 BC, the end of the last Ice Age. The same sort of tools that shaped Derinkuyu's shallowest and oldest chambers. Think about the semi-subterranean chamber at Karahan Tepe, less than 300 miles from here, with its columns that closely resemble the natural fairy chimney formations of Cappadocia. Since no one disputes that this chamber was carved out at the end of the last Ice Age, there's no reason why Derinkuyu couldn't have been made at around the same time.

As Derinkuyu reveals its depth and complexity, what's hard to ignore is the vast scale of the enterprise and the enormous effort involved in tunneling it out in the first place.

What makes this feat of engineering even more remarkable is that this isn't the only underground city in Cappadocia. In 2013, construction workers stumbled across another series of tunnels at Nevşehir, 17 miles away. What they found was an underground city that's even larger than Derinkuyu. Since then, more underground cities have been discovered. The stunning truth is here in Cappadocia, archaeologists have identified 36 such underground cities. And if we count the ones with just two levels, that number balloons to 200. One of these underground cities, just five miles away from Derinkuyu, holds an incredible secret. The tunnels at Kaymakli run eight stories deep over an area wider than Derinkuyu. Based on the number of storage chambers carved into the walls, archaeologists think this bunker could've supported up to 3,500 people. But Kaymakli's most mind-blowing feature can be found here on the third level down. An underground tunnel that runs far into the distance.

It's impassable today, but this blocked tunnel is claimed by some to connect Kaymakli to Derinkuyu. A straight-line distance of about five miles. In fact, archaeologists have confirmed that at least six other underground complexes in Cappadocia are connected to one another by similar underground passages. To my thinking, this changes everything.

These underground labyrinths aren't just isolated, individual bunkers. They're part of a massive and widespread project involving dozens of similar sites scattered across the region. Only a highly motivated culture would have undertaken such a task. What kind of threat would have been so devastating that it could compel an entire people, possibly hundreds of

thousands of them, to carve out a new life underground?

There has to be another explanation for why these places were made which makes better sense than hiding from invading armies. The answer might lie in one of the region's very oldest myths, one that dates back thousands of years to the Zoroastrians.

*

(folk music playing)

These are some of Cappadocia's famous whirling dervishes. Devout followers of a religion called Sufism. One of the few remnants of the ancient culture of Zoroastrianism. The ancient Persian prophet, Zoroaster, founded what's claimed by some to be the world's oldest continuously practiced religion. Its sacred texts refer to an underground city just like Derinkuyu, telling us exactly why it was made and by whom.

Zoroaster spoke of the first king and founder of civilization, a man named Yima. One day, as Yima was beside a river, the great god Ahura Mazda appeared to him with an ominous warning. Not of a flood, but of a fatal winter. And he told Yima to build a vara, an immense underground shelter. Into it, he must bring the best of men and women, and animals, two of every kind. Yima must store seeds of every tree and fruit, creating an inexhaustible supply until the fatal winter had passed. Oh, and the sacred texts also tell us that the onset of this fatal winter would be heralded by a serpent in the sky. The supposedly mythical vara sounds a lot like the underground cities we find here in Cappadocia. But mainstream historians refuse to see the connection.

The Yima myth is just another one of those myths that archaeology assumes don't mean anything, and yet it speaks of a terrible freezing winter descending.

(wind howling)

And just as geologists have confirmed that there was a period of great floods during the Younger Dryas, much resembling those described in myths, they've also noted that afterward, temperatures around the planet plummeted. A fatal winter indeed. And then there's that detail linking the onset of the fatal winter to the arrival of a great snake out of the sky, just like the snakes we've encountered in the myths of the ancient Aztecs, or of the Iroquois. Serpents always associated with cataclysms. I'm also reminded of those pillars at Göbekli Tepe covered in carved depictions of snakes seemingly raining down from the sky. Or of the snake etched into Malta's great temple of Ġgantija. Or of Serpent Mound in North America. Of course, archaeologists don't connect these ancient symbols and traditions from opposite sides of the planet to one another at all, let alone to a singular event. But we've now seen how different and supposedly unrelated structures all around the world seem to have benefitted from a legacy of very ancient knowledge. A shared legacy of unknown origin. The stunning implication is that during the Ice Age, an advanced civilization, whose

influence spanned the globe, coexisted with the hunter-gatherers who we know were also present at that time. A civilization that was destroyed in the mysterious cataclysms of the Younger Dryas. Could all these references to serpents also be part of that legacy? A warning left behind by survivors.

What it comes down to, for me, is that we humans are a species with amnesia. So badly knocked on the head by the cataclysms that occurred at the end of the last Ice Age, that we've forgotten an important chapter of our own story. And that can be a big problem because as with so many of these myths, a later story about Yima ends with a clear warning from the gods that one day, a similar catastrophe would return.

(thunderclap)

Could it? For a long time, it remained a mystery as to what triggered the floods, fires and plunging temperatures of the Younger Dryas, but new geological evidence has suggested a terrible possibility. Evidence still visible today in the scarred landscape of prehistoric America, where I'm headed next.

I'm quite persuaded that the origin of serpent symbolism has to do precisely with those serpents in the sky that we call comets.

S01E08:
CATACLYSM AND REBIRTH

At sites all around the globe, we've seen what I believe are the fingerprints of a lost civilization dating back to the last Ice Age. The last great mystery is what happened to this advanced civilization?

There may be clues in the origin myths of ancient cultures, because many of them tell the same basic story. According to these legends, once upon a time, humanity shared the Earth with a more advanced society, whether Atlanteans, or giants, or gods on Earth. Until a horrific global cataclysm occurred, a great flood, only a chosen few were spared to repopulate the Earth. Who were later visited by other survivors, mysterious great teachers, usually arriving by sea, to help them lay the foundations for the rebirth of humanity and civilization as we know it today.

(thunderclap)

Science now confirms that just such a series of apocalyptic events did occur at the end of the last Ice Age, around 12,800 years ago... an epoch known to geologists as the Younger Dryas. Only in its aftermath, did our ancestors suddenly begin farming and raising livestock, creating societies and building massive megalithic structures, often aligned to the stars. Why then? It's a mystery mainstream archeologists have no real explanation for, other than "that's just what happened." But I have a radically different proposal.

We need to ask ourselves was that really the dawn of history? Or was it long before that?

It's possible that all traces of the lost advanced civilization I'm looking for were swept away in the cataclysms of the Younger Dryas. But surely the geological evidence of that apocalyptic moment should still exist. And I believe it does. Here, in the northwest corner of America, in a part of eastern Washington state known as the Channeled Scablands. It's a unique apocalyptic landscape, a spectacular area covering 2,000 square miles. These landscapes speak to an enormous, almost unspeakable, cataclysm.

It's an area that's long fascinated geologists, with giant scars in the rock, massive potholes, and epic waterfalls. All of it conspires to look, well, unearthly. Not of this world.

This immense fossilized waterfall, appropriately named Dry Falls, ranks high amongst the natural wonders of the Channeled Scablands, and indeed of the world. It's so enormous that it's almost impossible to comprehend its scale. The Falls are just one section of a monstrous ravine gouged out of the earth, hundreds of feet deep, 50 miles long, and almost three miles wide, called Grand Coulee. Geologists believe that all these dramatic formations were created by flooding that took place sometime during the last Ice Age.

*

Precisely when and how this deluge occurred, however, remains a mystery, one that has sparked controversy amongst geologists for decades. What really happened here? And could it be related to what happened to

that lost advanced civilization of the Ice Age? To help wrap my head around it all, amateur geologist and author **Randall Carlson**, who's been exploring the Scablands for decades, joins me in an area of the Grand Coulee known as Lenore Lake.

Whatever the cause, there's no question in anyone's mind that this is the result of catastrophic flooding on a scale that's almost inconceivable.

My first impression, looking even at the map, is that this is an area that's been ripped and torn and scarred. What's the story of this incredible landscape?

Carlson

Right now, most of the conventional models go the source of this water here that created the Scablands, was Lake Missoula.

During the last Ice Age, massive ice sheets covered the northern half of North America, from coast to coast. Millions of square miles of ice, locking in enough water to fill an ocean. And at the southern edge of the ice sheets, huge fresh water lakes formed. One glacial lake, Missoula, contained as much water as modern lakes Erie and Ontario combined, covering much of what is today northwestern Montana. The current theory is that Lake Missoula was blocked up by some sort of natural ice dam that burst.

Carlson

You remove the ice dam, all the water's going to be flowing out here to the west like this.

And to account for all this damage to the landscape, geologists theorized that the ice dam re-formed and burst again and again, causing dozens of floods over a period of several thousand years, gradually shaping the Scablands into what we see today.

Carlson

So it all came out of Lake Missoula, and because one emptying of Lake Missoula wouldn't be enough, they postulate up to 80 or 90 emptyings of it. That certainly helps.

It's a curiously contrived explanation for such a wild landscape. There's a strong what is called "uniformitarian trend" in geology. Modern geologists don't like cataclysms very much. They prefer long, slow, gradual explanations of things, and they prefer the view that, as things are today, so they have always been in the past, even though it seems to me that that view is completely absurd.

Randall believes the geological evidence here speaks not to centuries of gradual floods, but to a single massively violent deluge that lasted just a few weeks.

It's not just water, is it?

Carlson

Oh, no.

Pretty much as far as the eye could see, it's going to be a roiling, boiling, turbulent scene. Moving water choked with thousands of icebergs. All the stuff in between these cliffs was ripped out.

Yeah.

Carlson

A tremendously unimaginably violent event. To

give you an idea, if you took every single river on Earth from every continent, add that together, you'd still have to times that by at least ten to get the volume of water flowing through here.

Wow! That really puts it in perspective.

It's a truly awe-inspiring forbidding landscape, that speaks to me of an ancient apocalypse. An apocalypse on a scale that's almost impossible to imagine today.

During the Ice Age, this would have been an area of softly rolling grassland, speckled with roaming herds of antelope and mastodons, until the violence arrived. The floodwaters gouged out an immense waterfall that would've been the size of ten Niagara Falls, two-and-a-half times taller, seven times wider, and 3,000 times more powerful.

How quickly do you think that occurred?

Carlson

I think it happened very, very quickly.

Could it have been created in weeks?

Carlson

Yes.

The clearest evidence is right here, at a place called Wallula Gap, where the floodwaters carved out a massive canyon 1,200 feet deep, leaving behind these immense basalt outcroppings... known as the Twin Sisters. Proof of the speed and ferocity of what was likely the biggest flash flood in human history. Randall's research shows that the formation simply couldn't be the work of millennia of gradual erosion, as geologists claim. And when this great deluge was over, the receding waters didn't just leave behind isolated towers of harder rock. Nearby, in a spot known as the Camas Prairie, are giant ripples in the landscape.

They're so uniform and so perfectly formed, anybody who goes to the beach and sees the tide going out will see that that receding tide leaves a series of ripples in the sand, and those ripples may be half an inch high and a few feet long. What we have on the Camas Prairie is current ripples that are 30 to 50 feet high and 300 feet long. They're the same phenomenon caused by the recession of waters. But the ripples on the landscape speak of a huge event, an enormous amount of water that ran over that landscape and then withdrew.

Truly apocalyptic.

Carlson

Apocalyptic, yes. If somebody did survive here or there by luck of the draw, they could emerge in the aftermath thinking that the entire world had been destroyed.

The Scablands show all the signs of a massive, devastating flood of very short duration, much like the ones described in myths around the world. And it's unlikely all that water came from Lake Missoula, as geologists claim.

Carlson

You remove the ice dam, all the water is going to be flowing out here to the west like this, yet we find along the south wall, right in here, we find massive gravel deposits. This water's flowing

south.

And that's exactly where you diverge from the mainstream. You see the source of the flooding on the ice cap, not this lake.

Carlson

Right. It's now being admitted and recognized that, oh, well, maybe there were other lakes up here. And what we are going to really have to do is look to the north.

To look to the ice cap itself.

Carlson

Yes.

To come back to the mainstream theory, they put those floods in a specific time frame, in the 18,000 to 15,500-year-old window.

Carlson

Yes. I think we need to take a hard look at some of those dates. 'Cause I can't think of anything in that period which would have provided the massive energy needed to release this amount of water. What needs to happen now is putting the puzzle pieces together to get the grand view, the coherent big picture.

That bigger picture that Randall is looking for could be emerging. Instead of the Scablands continuing to be framed as a puzzlingly isolated regional phenomenon with no obvious external cause, Randall's argument sets this devastated landscape in context of the much wider, indeed global, devastation that occurred near the end of the last Ice Age.

Not 18,000, or 15,500 years ago... but around 12,800 years ago at the onset of the Younger Dryas. Could the destruction so evident in the Scablands have been part of that larger ancient apocalypse that I suspect erased an entire advanced civilization? Another scarred landscape of ancient America might hold the final clue. Twelve hundred miles south, in the scrub-covered desert along the US-Mexico border, at a site called Murray Springs. Allen West is a member of an interdisciplinary research group that stunned the scientific community in 2007, publishing a paper about an extraordinary discovery here, in an area of exposed earth that contains what's known as a "black mat."

Carlson

This black mat layer that you see through here represents the extinction layer. Below that, there are mammoth bones, there are American horse bones, American camel, the dire wolves, and saber-toothed cats. And so far, not a single one of those has been found in place above that layer.

In addition to the extinctions of the megafauna, there was also an extinction of human beings.

Carlson

We think that probably 50 to 60% of the people across the northern hemisphere died at this time.

Right. That's a very dramatic figure.

Carlson

So we knew something had happened, we didn't know what.

So in a sense, you were confronted by a mystery...

Carlson

Yes, yeah, yep.

...that you wanted to explore.

When the black mat was first discovered and analyzed in the 1960s, scientists carbon-dated it to around 12,800 years ago, the exact moment of the onset of the Younger Dryas. Which is why I'm here. The black mat might help solve not only the mystery of what kicked off that cataclysmic epoch in the first place, but also specifically what might have released the immense flood... that created the Scablands. As part of their research, Allen's group conducted a thorough chemical analysis of the black mat.

So you came here and you began to investigate the mat.

Carlson

What we found is melted glass spherules. So this is our first clue that some high-temperature event had happened. But we didn't know what it was.

So a temperature sufficient to melt earth basically, is that what you're saying?

Carlson

Hot enough to melt a car into a molten puddle of metal in the parking lot.

Wow. Right.

What else do you find here?

Carlson

Well, there was a peak in platinum and in iridium.

Were you expecting to find platinum and iridium here?

Carlson

No, no, we were not. That's something you just don't see on this planet very often. Then we knew that there's only one thing on Earth that can do that, and that's some kind of cosmic impact.

Something, an asteroid or fragments of a comet coming in through the atmosphere and either bursting in the air or smacking directly into the ground?

Carlson

That's right, yep.

A comet, a species killer. Would that explain the apocalyptic cataclysms that took place at the end of the Younger Dryas? It's happened before to the dinosaurs. Nobody disputes that it was a cosmic impact, an asteroid or a comet, that caused the demise of the dinosaurs 66 million years ago. That event left a distinct layer in the earth, which is still visible in certain places today, and a very similar layer is found at Murray Springs.

Once Allen's research group realized the implications of the black mat layer at Murray Springs, they launched a painstaking, long-term investigation to see if it showed up anywhere else. And it did, all over the world. To date, black mat sites have been found across North America, from California to Michigan to New Jersey, and from Belgium in northern Europe to Syria in the Middle East. That's a lot of potential impact sites, all dated to around the same time, roughly 12,800 years ago.

Carlson

We began to realize this had to have been some kind of huge event. The total picture got clearer to us that something catastrophic had happened.

But if there was a comet strike, where's the impact crater? I think we saw the answer to that... up in the Scablands. If the primary impacts at the beginning of the Younger Dryas were on ice caps, when the ice melts away, there's no crater left to see. It would support Randall's theory that the sudden catastrophic flooding responsible for the Scablands came not from that lake, but from the ice cap itself.

Carlson

It's going to absolutely demand a rewrite of history as we know it.

Yeah.

Still, one impact alone couldn't have created all the black mat sites mapped out by Allen's research team.

Their discoveries led to a startling idea. Perhaps it wasn't one cosmic impact that left all these traces around the world, but many. A brief intense storm of cosmic debris that the Earth ran into. They called it the Younger Dryas impact hypothesis.

Carlson

Don't think Earth was actually hit by the comet itself, but rather hit by tens of thousands of fragments. Think that 12,800 years ago, Earth wandered into the debris trail of a giant comet.

It would have been like thousands of atomic bombs going off. In just a few hours, a truly Earth-shaking event, releasing water vapor and clouds of dust that would have shrouded the skies, causing temperatures to plunge.

Carlson

Imagine living in Miami and you're enjoying the beach, and suddenly the climate changes to Anchorage, Alaska.

Just, overnight, really. Yeah.

Carlson

Yeah, in a matter of probably months.

When Allen and his colleagues from what was now called the Comet Research Group, first published their findings, predictably they were met with scorn and derision.

Carlson

Scientists unfortunately are taught to be cynical about things. Skepticism is healthy, cynicism is not.

What's even more unsettling about their discovery is the likely origin of that cometary debris. The Taurid meteor stream, a patch of sky which the Earth passes through twice a year in late June and late October. It's estimated there are probably 200 objects with diameters of at least a kilometer, whirling around in the Taurid meteor stream.

The evidence brought forward by the scientists of the Comet Research Group amounts to nothing less than an immense global cataclysm around 12,800 years ago, an apocalypse big enough to have obliterated almost all traces of an advanced civilization of the Ice Age, and to explain at a stroke all the mysteries I've spent the last 30 years investigating.

It might be why the ancient civilizations that emerged afterward were so scientifically focused on the skies. This is an area we really need to pay attention to because there's something dangerous up there and it can end

civilization.

At Göbekli Tepe in Turkey, we've already seen how the ancients may have memorialized this apocalypse in stone. By recording the constellations in the sky at the time on Pillar 43. But the pillars may contain another coded message that **Dr. Martin Sweatman** was keen to show me, something that he believes is a record of precisely when and from where the meteor shower came.

Dr. Sweatman

What you've got here, you've got snakes emanating from the body and the legs of the fox. And if we go on to the other side of the pillar, and again we have the snakes kind of emanating from these birds.

Ancient cultures did see comets as sky serpents. There's really no serious dispute about that.

Dr. Sweatman

We can interpret this as meteors radiating from specific constellations tall bending birds probably representing Pisces.

Right.

Dr. Sweatman

And here we have the constellation Aquarius, we think that's what the fox represents. At the time Göbekli Tepe was built, these were the constellations from which the Taurid meteor stream radiated. They're essentially saying that the Taurid meteor stream radiates from Aquarius and then from Pisces, and it makes that change over the course of a few weeks.

A record of a storm of comet fragments that lasted weeks. That's a timeframe that fits all the evidence of the global cataclysm that hit Earth 12,800 years ago, including the violent flooding that tore up the Washington Scablands. And there might be more to that specific configuration of Sun and constellations featured on Pillar 43. It occurs at a solstice, only twice in a cycle of just under 26,000 years, each return lasting barely a century. I therefore find it eerie as archaeoastronomer Paul Burley first noted, that the exact same configuration seen at the summer solstice around 12,800 years ago has returned to our skies today, at the winter solstice. Could the imagery of Pillar 43 be a message contrived by the master astronomers of a lost civilization? A warning to the future, to us, that what goes around comes around? That when the Sun and stars next take up this configuration at the solstice, an apocalypse of sky serpents could return? So take heed. The notion should give us pause for thought.

I don't want to be a prophet of gloom and doom, but are we in danger from the Taurid meteor stream today? It was danger to our ancestors. It caused a cataclysm on Earth 12,800 years ago. Can that happen again?

Dr. Sweatman

We absolutely are in danger. In fact, the calculations of the astronomers are that we're in a danger window right now where the thicker part

of the Taurids could be impacting Earth.

More and more scientists are now embracing the Younger Dryas impact hypothesis... and this accelerating interest is no longer confined to scientists.

*

Joe Rogan

If something did hit Earth somewhere around 12,000 years ago, and reset civilization, it's an interesting theory. But I think it's a theory that's worth discussing. I just feel like there's so much emotion tied up into your theories, and so much emotion in the resistance. How does mainstream archaeology dismiss these things? Like, what's the common arguments?

The common argument is, "We are archeologists and we know best." It's an argument from authority, "You must accept our dating system." "We've done all the work and this is how it is."

Joe Rogan

It's so strange that people will only accept and talk about one narrative. The narrative that they established a long time ago...

Yeah.

Joe Rogan

...and they won't let it be debated.

Maybe part of the reason is it threatens the notion that we are the apex and pinnacle of the whole human story. Maybe the notion of a lost civilization in the past raises the uncomfortable question that we might be a lost civilization of the future.

*

If we were to confront a massive global cataclysm of the kind that took place, that we now know took place at the end of the last Ice Age, I think our civilization would actually be very unlikely to survive it.

So it's not hard to imagine that an earlier advanced civilization might have been wiped out, erased from memory during this ancient apocalypse 12,800 years ago. After those cosmic impacts on the ice caps, sea levels rose, swallowing up all the low-lying coastal lands that would have likely been settled by an advanced culture. Places like Sundaland... the Maltese peninsula, or the Grand Bahama Banks. Perhaps in Indonesia the survivors retreated to the hills, leaving behind tantalizing clues to their sophisticated architecture. Some survivors in Turkey may have decided to carve out refuges underground in case more meteors struck. In the Mediterranean, on Malta, the survivors might have built temples aligned to the brightest new star in their night sky, perhaps fearing that it might herald the next comet to strike.

They traversed the seas, passing down their geographic knowledge to

others. Their appearances recorded in ancient traditions, even etched in stone. They directed less advanced cultures to memorialize what happened with huge monuments incorporating specific, dateable alignments, and megalithic memorials recording those dates, buried as time capsules. And these ancients helped reboot humanity in a scarred and devastated landscape.

In my travels and adventures over the decades, I've learned to respect the wisdom and, yes, the science of the ancients. They understood the threat from the skies, and kept their attention focused very closely on the cosmos, and on its sometimes deadly interactions with the Earth below.

Their myths and their monumental structures, so carefully aligned to the stars and to the Sun, bear witness to this obsession, and memorialize the terrible events at the end of the Ice Age that changed the human story forever, and gave birth to the modern world.

Perhaps our own advanced civilization should heed their warnings, lest our own story end the same way.

