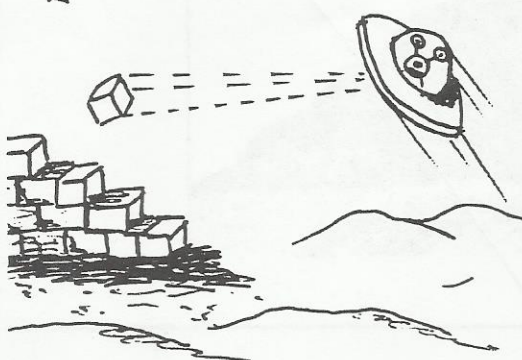


# Mysteries, and Visitors from Outer Space



## The mystery of the Egyptian pyramids

Erich von Daniken wrote a book called *Chariots of the Gods?* (Corgi, London, 1971). In it he argued that in the earth's remote past the planet was visited by beings from outer space.

He claims early space travellers visited earth and used sophisticated machinery to build the giant perfectly constructed pyramids of Egypt. In this passage he rejects archaeologists' traditional explanations.

Read von Daniken's argument and then the reply by G. Garner, Director of the Australian Institute of Archaeology. Then decide which account you accept, and why.

Von Daniken

SOURCE A

I shall be told that the stone blocks used for building the temple were moved on rollers. In other words, wooden rollers! But the Egyptians would scarcely have felled and turned into rollers the few trees, mainly palms, that then (as now) grew in Egypt, because the dates from the palms were urgently needed for food and the trunks and fronds were the only things giving shade to the dried up ground.

But they must have been wooden rollers, otherwise there would not be even the feeblest technical explanation of the building of the pyramids. Did the Egyptians import wood? In order to import wood there must have been a sizeable fleet, and even after it had been landed in Alexandria the wood would have had to be transported up the Nile to Cairo. Since the Egyptians did not have horses and carts at the time of the building of the Great Pyramid, there was no other possibility.

SOURCE B

Garner's reply

It is hard to deal briefly with his [von Daniken's] imaginary reconstructions relating to pyramid building.

As most stone was quarried nearby, distance was not a major problem, whilst the better Tufa limestone and the granite blocks were floated on rafts to within a few hundred yards of the pyramid site during the flood season.

The ramp technique for raising stone to the required height is well illustrated from at least four sites. The wooden rollers, which von Daniken questions, did not exist, but wooden sledges and scaffolding did. One Egyptian relief shows a 60 ton statue being dragged on its sledge by 172 men.<sup>2</sup> So, whilst there are areas where uncertainty as to methods employed exists, a reasonable picture of quarrying and building can be reconstructed.

As for numbers of men and time these are well within ancient Egypt's capacity. As Petrie has shown eight men could move a normal block of two and a half tons, and with 100,000 men each gang would have to move and place in position ten blocks every twelve weeks to complete the pyramid in twenty years. Far from an impossible task!

G. Garner, *Chariots of the Gods?—A Critical Review*, Australian Institute of Archaeology, Melbourne, 1972, p. 14-15