

John Anthony West Is Producing the Kind of Hard Evidence for 'Atlantis' that Scientists Find Difficult to Ignore

GETTING ANSWERS FROM THE SPHINX

First, they'll ignore you," observed John Anthony West, paraphrasing one of his favorite 19th century scholars, "then they'll laugh at you, then they'll say that everyone has known it all along. We're past the 'ignoring' stage. The NBC special saw to that."

West, an old-fashioned scholar/explorer in the tradition of Champollion or Heinrich Schliemann, is also a notorious thorn-in-the-side of what he calls the "church of progress—the essential dogma of which is that, via a sort of inexorable Darwinian process, we're the most advanced beings to have ever existed on the face of this planet..." He was reflecting on the progress of his own revolutionary theory on the origins of the great and mysterious Sphinx (at least 3,000 years older, and probably much more, than the 'experts' have claimed) and the uproar which his views have generated within the hallowed halls of academe.

When NBC aired "The Mystery of the Sphinx"—an hour-long documentary, narrated by Charleton Heston, which favorably reviewed the research and theories of West and Boston University geologist Dr. Robert Schoch—millions of viewers learned for the first time the details of what is developing into the hottest archeological controversy since Schliemann confounded the 'experts' by discovering Troy over a century ago. The show earned an Emmy for West for research, and a nomination for best documentary. Not surprisingly, the Egyptological establishment has been at considerable pains to dispose of this very annoying matter. A lengthy cover article by West's chief antagonist, Dr. Zahi Hawass, in the September/October issue of *Archeology* struggles vainly to 'debunk' the West/Schoch arguments. At stake is the carefully woven fabric of theories and assumptions upon which rests the academic authority of today's reigning

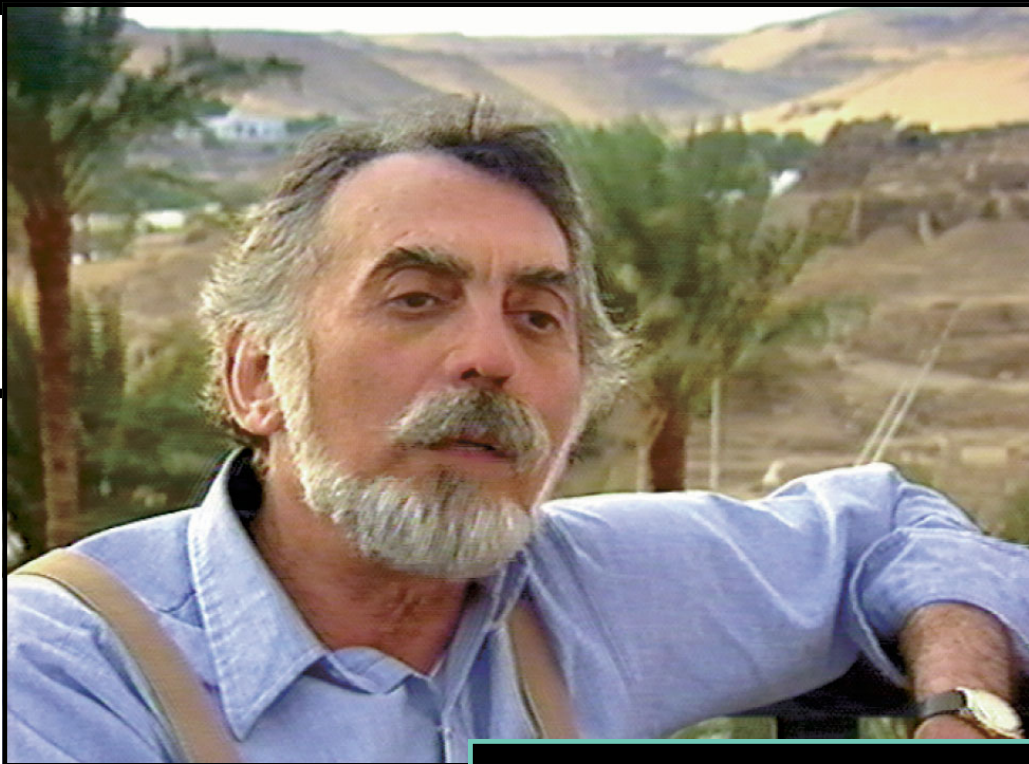
school of thought. Establishment scholars assert that there was NO ancient civilization before dynastic Egypt, certainly not one capable of the kind of construction apparent in the Sphinx and its associated temples. If West is right—that there WAS a high but forgotten civilization which came long before what we now call ancient Egypt—then a very great deal that we have been taught is wrong and the implications may eventually be felt in every corner of civilized life, in much the same way that thought in Galileo's time was revolutionized by his notion of a sun-centered planetary system—an idea which helped usher in the Renaissance.

A writer and independent Egyptologist, John Anthony West has been studying and writing about ancient Egypt for nearly thirty years. His best-known book *Serpent in the Sky* (first published in 1978) studied the work of Alsatian philosopher R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz who in the 1930s and '40s made an exhaustive effort to retrieve the lost wisdom of ancient Egypt. West was particularly struck by Schwaller's observation that the Sphinx had been weathered by WATER, not wind and sand—a very important point, considering that there has been no significant rainfall in the area for at least 10,000 years. Realizing that here was something—unlike many, more subjective, propositions—which could be tested with hard science, he set out to prove the point. After recruiting Schoch and other experts, an expedition was mounted in 1992 to carry out on the Great Sphinx the extensive scientific and geological studies which were called for. After months of hot and dusty observation and study about the ancient structures of the Giza plateau, the result was a very compelling, albeit shocking, case—subsequently presented in the NBC documentary and in a forthcoming BBC production scheduled to air before press time.

Recently, West, in an interlude be-

tween cable TV production discussions and another trip to Egypt, spent some time sharing views on the 'church of progress', the media, various pyramid theories and assorted other subjects. Throughout, the sometimes razor-tongued West never hesitated to speak his mind. Drawing him out was not the problem. The real challenge was keeping up with a virtual flood of rapid-fire, far-ranging and often surprising observations. The point was illustrated when a listener wanted to know if the Sphinx was the last great artifact of Atlantis.

"*Archeology Review* says, 'West believes the Sphinx was built by Atlanteans who came from Mars,'" he chuckled. "I believe no such thing. I am however more and more convinced by a growing body of evidence of a vanished high civilization. Some of the best evidence was gathered around the turn of the century, when scholarship was really scholarship and it wasn't a kind of mutual admiration society by a bunch of ignorant Ph.D.s. There's a tremendous amount of evidence—including the legends and mythologies of the world that talk about vanished civilizations. I use 'Atlantis' simply because it's the best known of those theories. I'm sort of sorry that I talked about Egypt as a legacy of Atlantis in *Serpent in the Sky*, because I've had this thrown back at me, even though I'm very careful to use 'Atlantis' in inverted quotes, as, let's say, a name applied to some lost civilization. Whether in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean or the



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north pole or the south pole or whatever is immaterial. In other words, while I'm not saying the Sphinx is a relic of Atlantis as such, I am saying that the Sphinx was built by a prior high civilization, and I would not say that it's the ONLY artifact. It's the only sort of OBVIOUS artifact."

West is not surprised when opponents misrepresent his views. "Very often in breakthrough ideas the opposition is busy concocting disinformation and misinformation—often deliberately

misinterpreting data in order to rebut a theory and preserve the status quo. And very often that policy works, because if you can confuse the issue sufficiently, you've absolutely baffled the layman who just gives up in despair and says it's too complicated for me. And it throws off the academics who are not immediately directly involved in the argument."

The process by which old ideas are replaced with new ones West sees as essentially political. Drawing from Ma-

chiavelli's observation on why it is difficult to initiate reform, he points out, "the opposition is united against the new idea, while those who believe in it are, for the most part, lukewarm and not willing to stick their necks out for it. It's only if the reformers have power on their side that they can actually see their ideas brought to fruition. Our power actually stems from the media. Without that we would have been stonewalled into total oblivion for decades or generations. Or maybe forever."

The media, West feels, has been quite responsible in its presentation of his theories: "For the most part, they've printed what we've had to say and they printed what the opposition had to say and left the matter for the readers to judge." Yet while recognizing the value of making an end run around the establishment through the press, West sees the course as not without risks: "courting the media is a bit like trying to satisfy a tiger by hand-feeding it steaks. You never know if you're going to get your arm chewed off...it's fortunate for us, that we had the geologists behind us."

Though West is far from happy over the current state of civilization, he does discern a hopeful paradox. "We're in a peculiar position today," he muses. "Quite frankly, I think what I call the 'church of progress'—the reigning materialistic so-called rationalistic philosophy that rules the Western world and now, by extension, the rest of the world, is probably the biggest catastrophe to hit the human race since monogamy. Absolute disaster. However, within that disaster there is—for want of a better word—the miracle of mass communication and a tremendous amount of both scientific and scholarly inquiry that now makes it possible for the first time to actually retrieve the lost knowledge of the ancients."

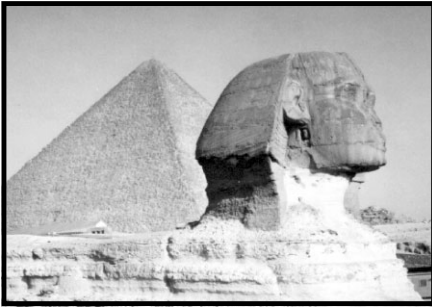
The desirability of such a recovery, says West, was an article of faith for centuries, and even though poo-hooed by modern academia, the idea has had great appeal to many of the most scientific minds of the last four or five hundred years. Kepler and Newton were among those who believed there was such an ancient knowledge, though they had no idea how to recover it. West believes that now, thanks to the work of Schwaller de Lubicz and others in modern scholarship and science, "it now becomes possible to understand what those ancient civilizations were all about."

And not a moment too soon. "I'm

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personally convinced," he says, "that for human beings to survive on this earth we need both individually and collectively a spiritual philosophy that allows us to do what Schwaller de Lubicz called "return to the source." We're born carnal and we have the possibility of becoming spiritual. And this is what all the religions—I don't care how horrific they now appear in their institutionalized form—have buried within their doctrines and their

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rules telling you what to eat and what to do with your body and who to marry and all the rest of the horrible stuff that they perpetrate. Within their doctrines there's always an esoteric core which is a return to the source." After a pause, he continues, "The religions we have today are in fact quite decadent and simple-minded versions of a much higher doctrine that existed not only in deep antiquity in terms of Egypt, India and China but that preexisted in still earlier civilizations. If we can look and see that we didn't go from dumb old cavemen to smart old us with our hydrogen bombs and our striped toothpaste and our traffic jams, but that we learned from civilizations already in place who knew, even from a technological standpoint, more than we knew, then that knowledge could be crucial in paving the way to something that resembles a real civilization. But if you asked me to delineate the practical step-by-step process by which this might manifest, I couldn't do it."

Though he says the idea of reincarnation "is not part of his personal experience," West is willing to consider that the past is accessible from within us individually. "There's too much evidence out there, as far as I'm concerned—and good concrete evidence—that says there's something to it. I tend to have a kind of rule of thumb, that if an idea is sufficiently old—which is to say pre-Aristotle—there's probably

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something to it. Reincarnation has a long history—but it's a little bit dangerous to use it for an explanation for anything that you don't understand. Like if you start saying that all of the Jews that were killed in the holocaust are reincarnated souls who used to be anti-semites, you can pretty much excuse any horrific acts that human beings commit upon each other. However, that we contain the past within us, yeah, I think so." West sees further indications of the proposition in his own position vis a vis the academic establishment. "We seem to be dealing with reincarnations of the astronomers who refused to look through Galileo's telescope."

West certainly respects the view that the planet's history is replete with catastrophic episodes. "There's a lot of physical evidence for this sort of stuff. Whatever caused the mammoth mammal extinction toward the poles in Siberia and equivalently in the southern hemisphere had to have been something of earth-shattering consequence. Just now we've seen that comet explode and blow into Jupiter, and any one of those pieces would have completely destroyed the earth. Catastrophism is a perfectly respectable scientific theory among the scientific elite, except when it is applied to relatively recent pre-history. I think catastrophism is a commanding idea and the scenario is simply that following such an event there weren't many people around to be the storytellers and the bards."

West believes the Great Pyramid itself was probably built by the pharaoh Cheops as most establishment Egyptologists claim, but he believes it may have been built over a preexisting structure of undetermined scale and antiquity. A Belgian engineer named Robert Bauval has impressed West with astronomical evidence indicating that while passages in the pyramid are apparently aligned with the constellation Orion in around 2450 BC.—when the structure is purported to have been built—the arrangement of the three pyramids and the Sphinx on the Giza plateau appears to represent a configuration of stars that would have been present around 10,500 B.C. or even much earlier. West, however, does not believe the great pyramid was built as a tomb, and he cites a complete lack of evidence that they were ever used as such. "They're a total departure from the way Egyptian tombs were built both before and after. I think they may have had many purposes—among them that they served an initiatic (or ceremo-

nial) purpose. They were placed where specific ceremonies were conducted for good reasons—very deep shamanic reasons—which correspond to the Egyptian metaphysical and spiritual philosophy. And they also may well have had specific astronomical purposes. And there was no such thing as astronomy in the ancient world without astrology." West hopes to have more to say on various mysteries associated with the pyramids on future television documentaries.

Most who saw the NBC documentary on the Sphinx project will remember intriguing questions raised by some of the research, most notably the seismic evidence of a possible chamber beneath the paws of the Sphinx. Would excavating such a chamber fulfill a prophecy by the famous clairvoyant Edgar Cayce? The answers to that and other questions such as: "What will a complete isotopic analysis reveal about the true age of the Sphinx?" await a future expedition. At the moment, plans for any such expedition are on hold. The authorities, say West, vehemently oppose any return by him and Schoch. One of the bitterest opponents, Zahi Hawass, holds a deciding vote on any proposals regarding the Sphinx and the Giza plateau. "If he were in a position of political power," says West, "I would never go near Egypt. He'd see to it that I was in a jail and never got out." Nevertheless, both West and Schoch believe that ultimately a way will be found to return. With pressure from the media building, especially after the BBC show, it will become increasingly difficult, they believe, to put the matter to rest, without a definitive and impartial analysis.

For the moment, West is content that he has launched a process which promises to fulfill a lifelong ambition. "Nowadays it's common for teenagers and just about everyone else to recognize that we live in a lunatic society," he says. "I take considerable credit for having recognized it at about the age of 11 or 12. By the time I was 19, I had set my goal. I thought I was going to devote my life to writing, but my real aim was to upset, in one way or another, the lunatic asylum. I never dreamed that it was going to take me into scholarship or Egypt—it wasn't even a particular subject of mine. But my aim always was to undermine the 'church of progress'. And funnily enough it looks as though, though it looked wildly ambitious when I was 19, we are sure producing some cracks in the facade. All of which pleases me enormously."

Anyone wishing more information on the work of John Anthony West or the Sphinx Project should write to: Sphinx, P.O. Box 2249, Livonia, MI 48151, or call: 1-800-508-0558. ■