

A Personal Account of My Experiences in the Temple of the Four Elephants

by Hansel Grünwelt¹

I was first attracted to archaeology by the joy of discovering. The unearthing of something that hasn't been seen in thousands of years is one of most immense pleasures one can experience, and although there is often much tedious work involved in the process, in the end it is justified. To gain a little insight into the lives of an ancient people, to understand their traditions, and for a moment to be able to sympathize with an older consciousness brings one to the root of one's own self.

My interests in archaeology often tend toward the study of ancient religious customs and beliefs. Additionally, I find the relationship between a culture's religion and the physical structures which are meaningful to its religion to be a fascinating subject. At the time of my experience, I was occupied with the examination of the religion and ritual mound-building of the Mississippian cultures of the southeastern United States. Previous to this, I had done some work in South America studying the Incas, and the year before returned from an extended stay in England investigating Neolithic sites. Therefore, when I found out about the discovery of a mysterious stone structure only two hours north of Emory University, where I was a visiting lecturer in the Fall of 2012, my interest was piqued.

The first unusual thing about this structure was conveyed by a group of researchers from a college in the area who had been enlisted to give a preliminary

¹ Hansel Grünwelt (b. 1956, Bonn) is an archaeologist and anthropologist.

evaluation. This group, composed of faculty and doctoral students in archaeology and anthropology, had investigated the site and determined that the building resembled nothing else in the region. Additionally, they found it difficult to determine its age; whether it had been recently built or was very ancient proved impossible to establish with certainty. There was a large stone "door" that no one was able to open, so any evidence that might have been sealed away inside was inaccessible.

The second unusual fact was that it had only recently appeared on the property. Two children had stumbled upon it while playing in the woods and mentioned it to their father, who was quite surprised by it. The neighbors didn't seem to be aware of it and had heard no sounds of construction. From what I ascertained, the brickwork was very odd as well, looking nothing like modern masonry, and the property owner was a writer for the local newspaper and therefore entirely ignorant of this kind of craft.

At first, it seemed obvious to me that this was some kind of hoax. I had come across such invented accounts before -- one often saw the appearance of pottery, weapons, and other artifacts supposedly belonging to an older civilization, only to be later verified as recently constructed using modern tools, producing what were at best crude imitations of the original. Still, despite knowing this, I felt an intense urge to see the site for myself. There was no rational explanation for my feelings; the impulse to visit the site originated from somewhere beyond my understanding. Ultimately, scientific reasoning was inadequate to deal with what I discovered.

Through my urging, Emory elected to send a small group of researchers for a preliminary investigation, not really expecting to find anything notable. This team

included myself, appointed as the leader of the investigation; Dr. Mary Thomas, an expert in indigenous American peoples and shamanism; Dr. Robert Hiram, a knowledgeable mineralogist and chemist; and Henry Pollock, who was to document whatever we might find through sketches and photography. The following is my best attempt to clearly and briefly articulate the results of this investigation. I trust the readers, people who I know very well and in whom I have the utmost faith, will not write me off as having completely lost my mind. This is an experience that still perplexes me, and that I would have difficulty believing myself if not for the corroborating reports of my teammates and the painstaking and consistent notes that I took throughout. Hopefully, one day I will have the self-confidence to publish these notes in their complete form, but for now this small document will have to suffice.

The Structure

We arrived on the site on September 15, 2012. The building itself was perched on a hill in a sort of clearing, several hundred feet into the cool Appalachian forest. It wasn't very big, only about 10x10x10 ft. The construction was indeed peculiar, resembling to me the tightly-fitted, mortarless stonework of Inca masonry². Every side was uniform and considerably smooth, except for one side, bearing a "door" (about 5x8 ft), protruding from the wall by 1/2 ft. Although we were all quite suspicious, the property owner who had led us there seemed as confused and alarmed by the presence of this building as we. We bid him farewell as we set about our studies.

² For a lovely and informative photographic work on the subject, see John Hemming and Edward Ranney, *Monuments of the Incas* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2010).

About an hour later, the stone door mysteriously fell out of place and onto the ground. No one had been tampering with it, and it made a resounding thump, startling all of us. With great curiosity, we shuffled around to peer into the newly created doorway, hoping for some new information as to the building's purpose. However, behind it we saw not a small room, but a stairway, disappearing down into the darkness. Surprised and with hearts pounding, we grabbed our tools and flashlights and decided to descend.

The passage was quite long, extending at least 100 ft at about a 20 degree incline. After much walking and a widening of the passageway, we came to a large rectangular room with a high ceiling. The same stonework as outside and in the passageway could be found here. Apart from the entrance, there were six doorways, two on each wall, with those directly across from us separated by a large and prominent engraving. The room itself was curiously free of rubble, something completely unheard of in older structures. The impression of all this was overwhelming for all of us, and I felt a curious mix of extreme joy and complete confusion. What was this and from where did it originate? If the homeowner had built such a tremendous subterranean structure, it would have taken years of work. But, who built it if not him? And when was it built, if it had indeed only recently come to his attention?

After a long period of muddled speculation, I decided to investigate the engraving. When I approached it, I could make out four unusual symbols (Figure 1). I had never seen such marks before, and beckoned to Mary to take a look as well. Although they seemed similar to magical sigils I remembered from my studies in



Figure 1 - detail of the engraving, the Four Symbols; from left to right:
 Urtografikatz, Zochanibralok, Tortinzalugit, and Vurfmoprinoka
 (drawn by H. Pollock)

Western occultism³, I couldn't place their exact meaning. Mary insightfully noted their similarity to characters of the Cherokee syllabary⁴. However, neither of us could with any certainty interpret them.

After some deliberation, we decided that contacting the University would be the best mode of action. With excitement and trembling in my voice, I communicated the extent of this discovery to the chair of the anthropology department at Emory. I was told to hold any further exploration for today, and that he himself would personally look into the site tomorrow. We drove back to Atlanta for the night, although none of us got much sleep.

When he arrived the next day, the site had seemingly disappeared. The coordinates given to him, which were the same as those given to us, yielded nothing, only an empty patch of forest. It seemed the property owner had trouble finding the structure as well. I received a flustered phone call from him around noon informing us of this development. After some investigation into this over the next few days, I

³ For more examples of such symbols, see Joseph H. Peterson, Joseph H, ed., *The Lesser Key of Solomon: Lemegeton Clavicula Salomonis* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 2001).

⁴ Willard Walker and James Sarbaugh, "The Early History of the Cherokee Syllabary," *Ethnohistory* 40, no. 1 (Winter, 1993): 70-94.

received a second call from him. With noticeable annoyance in his voice, he interrogated me, wanting to know our reasons for fabricating such an account. I insisted that we had indeed seen what we described and that I couldn't understand how such a thing could simply vanish. It felt as though our days were numbered as he hung up angrily. Before the week was over, the four of us were released from our positions at the University. They had washed their hands of the matter, believing it to be some kind of stupid joke and declining to mention it again.

However, the four of us still had questions. Under the pretext of investigating the disappearance, we convinced the property owner to allow us back onto the site. We found the structure there, just as it had been before. The question of why the property owner and the chair of the anthropology department hadn't been able to find it weighed on our minds, for we could all see it very clearly. Having ruled out the possibility of it being a hoax, and freed from any responsibility to the University, we decided to continue our investigation.

First Chambers

On September 23, we again descended into the chamber. Henry set about measuring the dimensions of the room and drafting a floor plan (Figure 2). As Robert began examining the stonework, Mary and I decided to explore a bit further into the complex, starting with the center doors, with me taking the one to the right of the engraving.

I was led upward at a slight incline comparable to that of the entrance passageway, and initially thought I would find myself back outside. However, after

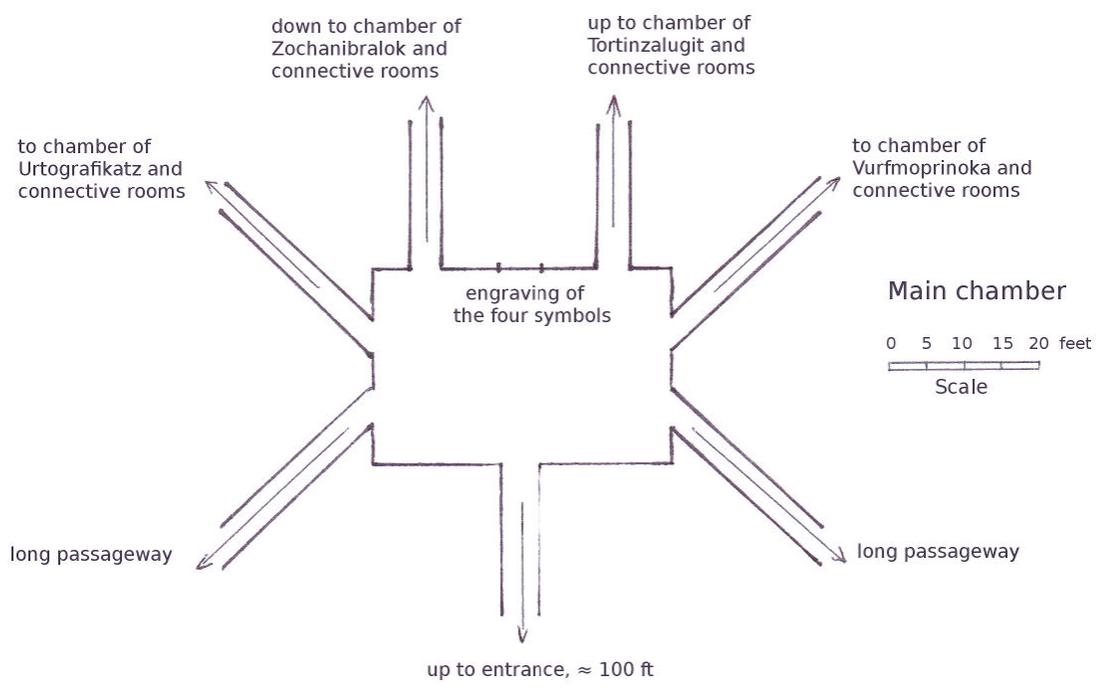
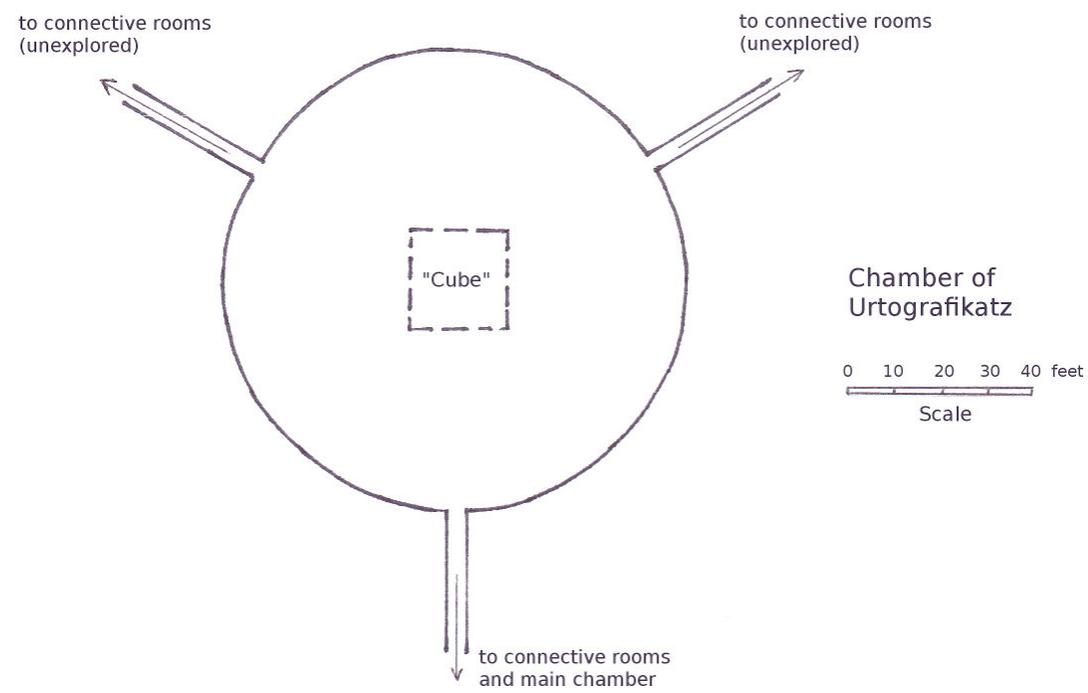


Figure 2 - Map of the main chamber and the chamber of Urtografikatz
(drawn and edited by H. Pollock)

about 50 ft, I came to a small chamber of 10x10 ft. Like every other space in this complex, it was immaculately kept, with no debris in sight. Across from the entrance was another doorway, leading off into the darkness. In the center of the room was a smooth stone pedestal, coming up to a little below the waist, and on top of the pedestal was a small figurine of an elephant. I hurriedly approached it and bent down to examine it at eye-level.

It was made of what appeared to be emerald, and was quite intricately fashioned. The subtle details of its construction were minutely fine, and it was flecked with filings of some sort of metal. I couldn't identify its origin, although the nobility of its figure gave me the impression of the Assyrian lamassu⁵. The elephant was virtually unknown among the indigenous Americans, and I found myself perplexed as to the origin of this figurine and presence in the complex.

I called Robert in to analyze it further, and proceeded through the other doorway. After a shorter connective passage, I came to another room, this one slightly larger (15x15 ft), and sporting three more doors, one on each wall. Like before, this room had its own pedestal and its own figurine. This elephant stood upright on its hind legs, and seemed to be made of aluminum studded with an orange stone -- possibly topaz. This struck me as an exceedingly strange combination of materials. This particular

⁵ A mythological being with the body of a lion, wings of an eagle, and a human head. Scholars believe that the so-called "cherubim" of the Hebrew bible, such as the ones in Solomon's temple, probably resembled these creatures. See Alice Wood, *Of Wings and Wheels: a Synthetic Study of the Biblical Cherubim*, (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) for a very thorough and interesting examination of this subject.

one made me think more of the anthropomorphic images of the god Ganesha⁶ in Hinduism.

As I explored further, mapping as I went, I came across scores of such rooms, in seemingly endless profusion. These rooms all had between two and four doorways, so the number of the rooms increased exponentially. Each one had slightly different dimensions, ranging from 5 feet squared to 30 feet squared, and each had its own pedestal. Elephant figurines of all shapes and styles could be found, although some pedestals were conspicuously empty. Under normal circumstances I would assume these had been plundered, but this situation was so overwhelmingly odd that I felt the absence of these figurines must have some kind of intentional purpose.

Much time was spent mapping this complex of rooms. In the first chamber, four of the six doorways led to such branching series of rooms. Two of the doorways led to long winding passageways. These sometimes became very tight -- as little as two feet wide -- generating an intense claustrophobia. Additionally, they seemed to continue forever; we ventured several hundred feet into each of them without finding any evidence of them opening up into some new space.

⁶ Elephant-headed god, associated with business ventures, wisdom, and writing. In these latter aspects, he relates to the Egyptian Thoth/Seshat. For a brief discussion of Ganesha, see Sumanta Sanyal, "Ganesha," *Encyclopedia Mythica Online*. 26 August, 1997. <<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/g/ganesha.html>> (29 April, 2014). For more on Thoth and Seshat, Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003).

The Four Chambers

It was Robert who made the next big discovery. Following the chain of small rooms from the right doorway farthest from the entrance in the main room, he eventually came upon a much larger chamber different from the rest. It was 100ft in diameter and had a very high domed ceiling. Around the wall were two other doorways leading off into the darkness, spaced equidistantly from each other. In the very center was a giant "cube", about 40 ft in all directions. This particular cube was verified by him as being made of lead. The room itself gave off a very strange feeling, and the cube appeared to emit a low rumbling sound when one pressed one's ear against it. It seemed to be machine-made, with very sharp edges and smooth surfaces.

Later the rest of us found three other such chambers. It seemed for each, the number of smaller rooms one had to traverse was different for each large chamber, with the network of passages Mary had chosen to explore -- the one left of the engraving -- having the largest number. Each room had the same dimensions and a similar cube, although upon close inspection, the cubes were all crafted of a different metal and made a slightly different sound. The feeling each room gave was also different, and we could detect a different color sensation in each as well.

We came to realize shortly after this discovery that the entire complex shed a very subtle light. Once we turned off our flashlights, our eyes adjusted and we were able to work without them. It was only after we extinguished these that we began to hear a sea of mysterious sounds. It was difficult to locate the source of these sounds, and their nature and location was different for each of us. After some period of time listening very

closely to them, we came to realize that they were akin to spoken speech, which we tried our best to faithfully transcribe.

The results of this yielded a series of mysterious words associated with each large chamber (and the preceding smaller chambers). The character of these words was otherworldly and belonged to no language we were familiar with, but as we spent time meditating on them, a meaning began to surface. We started to understand that these words were names of four beings that symbolically inhabited each of the cubes. The symbols in the first chamber corresponded to each of these beings, and relating to profusion of elephant figurines, we came to understand them to be elephants themselves. These beings spoke not with normal speech, but with a language of ideas so it seemed, and the only way to truly understand them was to be receptive to an inner speech resonating inside of us. This principally emanated from the cubes, but was present throughout the complex, for those open to hearing it.

After coming to this realization, a great inundation of ideas began, and we became quite solitary, each of us obsessed with our own particular elephant, chamber, and cube. I personally found myself having visions of the entity Tortinzalugit, which were vast and cosmic in nature, and not a little bit "supernatural" if you will. I would prefer not to completely disclose these experiences here.⁷

⁷ A few short excerpts from Grünwelt's notes recounting this experience can be found later in this document on page 17.

After a period of what turned out to be over a year⁸, we met up again in the main chamber, all at once, as if by some spiritual agent. It was felt by each of us to be both an incalculably long period time and a few short moments since we had last met. It was almost as if we had witnessed the passing of several lifetimes, only to awake and find it to be a long, complicated dream. We all had taken very thorough notes, and our experiences, although the particulars differed, had much in common.

Afterward, we left the complex, never to return. We felt as if we had understood all there was to understand from this experience, for the time. We knew we had unlocked an infinitude of insight from our communion with the elephants, and that the complete record of that knowledge lie in our notes, ready for decoding.

Interpretation

When I had reintegrated back into so-called normal reality, I began the immense task of interpreting the wealth of information I had received. I don't consider myself to be remotely close to the fullest understanding of this material, but the basic concepts are well-established for me.

First, I consider the four elephants to be essentially gods, cosmic forces that can be seen as offspring of a super-rational consciousness. The origin of these gods is known only as *KZC* (pronounced *KIZ-zik*), a word and concept exceedingly difficult to render into common speech. The closest analogue I can conceive of is the Kabbalistic idea of *Ein-*

⁸ During this period, none of us had eaten or drunk anything. I simply cannot explain this, except to say that we must have been nourished by the cubes.

*Sof*⁹, or perhaps the Gnostic and Neoplatonic idea of the *Monad* or the *One*¹⁰. It acts as a boundless and impersonal force from which all created things and ideas emanate, and is itself undifferentiated and infinitely multifaceted. I believe the Four to be intelligible manifestations of this force. Another way of looking at them would be forces of nature, or personality. Along these lines they can be compared to the classical concept of the four elements or humors, or to Jungian archetypes¹¹.

Indeed, each elephant seems to have a certain domain of influence and can be described symbolically. After some intense study of everyone's notes, I have come to an admittedly incomplete but still quite helpful chart of "correspondences", comparable to similar charts one finds in occult writings (Figure 3)¹². I have related each entity by means of both its "mystical" and English name, with its general aspects, color, metal, element, planetary association, number and tarot suit. Additionally, I have included some information concerning the associated rooms within the complex, the frequency relationships of the cubes, and the team members associated with each entity. I cannot

⁹ According to Gershom Scholem in his scholarly work *Kabbalah*, Ein-Sof can be defined as "the Infinite" (88). Elsewhere: "Ein-Sof is the absolute perfection in which there are no distinctions and no differentiations, and according to some even no volition. It does not reveal itself in a way that makes knowledge of its nature possible, and it is not accessible even to the innermost thought (*hirhur ha-lev*) or the contemplative. Only through the finite nature of every existing thing, through the actual existence of creation itself, is it possible to deduce the existence of Ein-Sof as the first infinite cause." (89) For an alternate view of Ein-Sof, from the perspective of Western Occultism, see Israel Regardie, *The Tree of Life: A Study in Magic* (New York: S. Weiser, 1969).

¹⁰ Iamblichus, and Robin Waterfield, trans., *The Theology of Arithmetic: On the Mystical, Mathematical and Cosmological Symbolism of the First Ten Numbers* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Phanes Press, 1988).

¹¹ A good introduction to archetypes can be found in Carl G. Jung, and Marie-Louise von Franz, *Man and His Symbols* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1964).

¹² For a well-known extended example of such a table, see Aleister Crowley, and Israel Regardie, *777 and Other Qabalistic Writings of Aleister Crowley* (York Beach, Me: S. Weiser, 1986).

Elephant	Symbol	Mystical name	Postive aspects	Negative Aspects	Team Member
Sheet		Urtografikatz	Stability, nurturance	Superstition, apathy	Robert Hiram
Blood		Vurfmoprinoka	Passion, creativity	Violence, lust	Henry Pollock
Grease		Tortinzalugit	Cleverness, reason	Pride, greed	Hansel Grünwelt
Night		Zochanibralok	Magic, intuition	Mental instability	Mary Thomas

Elephant	Metal	Planet	Color	Element	Tarot Suit	Number	# of Rooms	Freq. Order
Sheet	Lead	Saturn	Green	Earth	Pentacles	3	9	1
Blood	Iron	Mars	Red	Fire	Wands	5	25	2
Grease	Aluminum	Mercury	Yellow	Air	Swords	8	64	3
Night	Silver	Moon	Purple	Water	Cups	9	81	4

Figure 3 - Table of correspondences for the Four Elephants

overstate that the associations in this chart should not be taken too literally, and that it is only an attempt by a finite mind to articulate mysteries which lie far beyond it.

As mentioned above, the cubes found in the Four Chambers each generated sounds, different from one another. These sounds were often uneven, and gave a very different impression to each of us. In retrospect, the sounds generated by the cubes that we each most associated with sounded the most even in nature and pleasant to us, whereas the "opposites" (as deduced by an analysis of the above chart) seemed the most raucous and disconcerting. For me, Tortinzalugit's cube emitted a quite pleasant, relatively high-pitched band of noise containing an infinitude of lovely variants of which I never tired of hearing, whereas the cube of Urtografikatz was a low unpleasant rumbling that made me feel physically ill. Although we lacked any sort of equipment to record and measure the precise nature of these sounds, we were able to determine that the pitch areas were related to each other in a sort of hierarchical relationship, as can be seen in the above chart. This hierarchy is very interesting to me and recalls the

Neoplatonic concept of the "harmony of the spheres"¹³. The biggest difference here is obviously the noisy quality of the sounds, quite different from pure tones in an ideal whole-number relationship. Perhaps the "discord of the cubes" would be a better designation?

I should also mention the quality of the "speech" we all heard. Similar to the sounds of the cubes, the speech -- if it can be called that -- sounded different to each of us. We differed slightly on the spelling and pronunciation of the names of the Four, although we ultimately agreed as to the general nature of these words. Beyond these basic terms, the meaning of the speech was substantially different, and I can only testify to what I understood from Tortinzalugit. The nature of this speech was closer to music in a way, articulating not rational ideas, but more intuitive ones. It would be a mistake to imply that this communication lacked specificity; one might describe them as being more specific and superior to common speech. This greatly complicates their transcription into intelligible English, and perhaps they would be best translated as musical compositions or paintings. I myself lack in both of these departments, and therefore feel inadequate to express them in this way. However, if one is interested in at least a visual interpretation of this speech, Henry's notes contain a number of fascinating and bizarre sketches from his time in the complex. It seems though, that like myself he has no intention of releasing this very personal material to the public in the foreseeable future.

¹³ See Joscelyn Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth: Mysticism in Music from Antiquity to the Avant Garde* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1995).

Conclusion

As I said before, I have no plan of returning to the complex to gather more information - for instance, audio recordings of the sounds of the cubes. Frankly, I'm not even sure if the complex is still there, or if it has mysteriously vanished for us as it had for the others who had previously seen it. I do feel, very strongly, that the spirit of Tortinzalugit is now an indispensable part of my consciousness and that the rest of my life will be spent dealing with the insights it bestowed upon me. I can say with certainty that in my career as an archaeologist and scholar, I will come across some manifestation of *KZC* again. I believe this force manifests in the most surprising of ways, but only when it is necessary for it to do so. There seems to be a mysterious purpose in the machinery of the universe, and I will trust that I am an essential element of that purpose, as are we all. My job is to continue my research, despite any slander and opprobrium I may receive from my more "rational" colleagues, and bring increasing knowledge of this force to light.

Excerpts from the personal journals of Hansel Grünwelt

"Days after entering the vast labyrinthine complex, and having found myself completely lost and separated from my colleagues, I stumbled upon a large, circular room with a ceiling so high I couldn't make it out in the darkness. Deciding to camp for the night (or was it day? ...I had lost track of the hour by this point), I set up a portable lantern and began to set about making some dinner. In the newly kindled light, I noticed something in the middle of the room: a large cube, quite similar to the one found earlier by Robert. It seemed to be maybe 20 feet high and wide and had a metallic luster. Upon approaching it, I discerned that it was crafted of what appeared to be aluminum and was completely smooth, without a mark at all. I wondered how old such a cube must be, given its unblemished and seemingly machine-made texture (the age of the temple itself was a mystery to me, as it seemed to exist outside of time). The room was completely silent, but when I pressed my ear against the cube's surface, I could hear a very faint humming sound, a light whirring, highly subtle and quite pleasant to listen to. Excited by this strange new discovery, I abandoned my meal, and went to find my notebook. I began to observe and jot down anything and everything I could.

...

I spent the night next to the Cube. Its looming presence gave me some comfort in the wide open space of the cavern, and I nestled up against it to sleep. My dreams began wild and unfocused, whirling around from image to image. I felt as if I was traveling down a churning river of images, and struggled to maintain control of my boat. These

rapids leveled out into an immense lake of grease, surrounded by sort of a gray "negative space". From the center of the lake, out of the yellow bubbling oil emerged the shape of an elephant. It was gaunt and haggard, and its eyes peered out from under its deep brow like two pieces of charcoal. Its jaundiced skin was tattered and stretched and its trunk appeared like a thick robe, knotted many times along its length. Although by all reasoning (after the fact) it seemed very still, the outlines of its image scintillated with a highly irregular vibration, with prismatic colors cascading from around it like a soap bubble. I awoke at this point, with the pitch darkness of the cavern greeting me. Reality returned, but the dream still lingered palpably. Pressing my ear up against the cube beside my sleeping bag, I could hear its hum...

...

It has been probably weeks at this point. Despite a feeling I should be keeping track of the day in my notes, time begins to blur in a way that confuses my perceptions. Really, all I can think about is the Cube and the marvelous evolution I have been going through. I haven't left the room since that first night, and much to my surprise and wonder, have had no need to eat or drink anything since then. It seems as though the Cube itself is giving me nourishment. I've been sleeping a lot as well, waking up just to take notes only to fall back deeply into dreams once again. "Dreams" seems like too mild a word to describe them... perhaps visions? They are so vivid and luminous at this point, they seem truer than waking reality, which amounts only to a heavy darkness. I have explored a series of rivers and lakes (all of crackling, yellow grease), thoroughly enough

to map them. I feel the mysterious lines and twisted curves traced by these streams have some significance.

Every dream bottoms out at the same place, the large lake with the "grease elephant" rising from its depths. I understand more about its essence each time it appears, and it has begun to speak to me, not with a voice, but with a sort of symbolic language. It consists of sounds (or maybe ideas) that resonate in my skull with a clarity far surpassing that of ordinary speech. The richness of these sounds is impossible to put into ordinary language. They possess a cosmic beauty and complexity that defies and transcends all rationality. From this symbolic tongue, I have come to understand that it goes by many names, but the name most resonant with my consciousness is "Tortinzalugit". I also understand that my only role is that of the messenger. I have accepted my fate.

...

I understand from Tortinzalugit's communion today that I have completely mapped the complex and am no longer needed. When I ask what I'm to do, it motions with its trunk to the surrounding lake. I am to submerge myself. Although many questions rage through my mind, I consent and ready myself, diving into the crackling grease. I surprisingly don't feel any pain under its surface and my eyes close within its infinite ochre expanse."