

Concert

The six protrusions were made of solid polytetrafluoroethylene – a material that is commonly used to coat fry pans – this much was indisputable about them. Almost everything else was subject to academic and public controversy. Their existence seemed sufficiently improbable as to be deemed a genuine affront to nature.

The ashen-faced protrusions became known to science in 2018, when they were discovered by geologists associated with the University of Mumbai. Locals from the nearby village of **** had interacted with them for far longer and there were millennia old legends about strange stones in circulation. The impossibly old minimal age was suspected because the stones were the subject of sculptures at a nearby temple that with near certainty date to the reign of **** that lasted until 443 BC.

The protrusions were arranged in a zigzag pattern dispersed over a range of 600 by 250 meters:

Dimensions and coordinates

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One group that primarily consisted of anthropologists and religious scholars firmly believed the pattern represented a pack of serpents, symbolizing a local deity. It is true that the protrusions had played this role in local folklore but it was less clear if their cultural uptake was any clue to the origins of the artefacts. Another group insisted the formation was originally intended as some kind of religious calendar or time-keeping device, possibly connected to the extant stories, but no one seemed capable of confirming what it was tracking.

Other researchers suggested it was a flawed representation of the five stars of Cassiopeia, although this theory did not explain the sixth protrusion, situated 142.3 meters to the

northwest of the purported representation of Epsilon. Some proposed that there may have been an ancient nova there, no longer visible on the night sky.

The conspiracy theorists invoked aliens, although the hypothesis that they were man-made, the result of some practical joke or artistic experiment based on pouring copious amounts of plastic into the ground, seemed almost as improbable. The protrusions were only the top of larger veins buried in the earth like six overlarge earthworms, fossilized in the shape of plastic pegmatite veins. X-ray scans that were later confirmed by excavations around the body of the third protrusion showed that the intruding part continued past 45 meters where it entered the bedrock. One seismographic measurement suggested that the cavities in the surrounding rock snaked their way as deep as the boundary of the Mohorovičić continuity between the crust and the upper mantle, locally at 34.3 kilometres. If the seismographic study was accurate, and the intrusions penetrated to the bottom of the lithosphere, the lower regions of the polytetrafluoroethylene (melting point 327°C) bodies would have melted and possibly seeped into the asthenosphere, facing instant vaporization.

Strange stories surrounded the protrusions. These were stories about song and dance at intervals of once in a human lifespan. One villager from ****, now living in Delhi, insisted that there were sounds coming from the area one night in his teenage years, but he had not dared look for their source. Another villager swore her mother had seen the stones twist and turn like cobras, luring her toward them. Each had never been able to forget their respective encounters, and had expressed a sense of inexplicable loss whenever they thought about the matter. Perhaps both accounts could have been dismissed forthwith were it not for an audio recording from August of 1955 corroborating that something may, indeed, have happened. A professor of ornithology had arrived to **** to record the song of a rare bird that had been trapped by hunters. On his way back from his research he had heard a strange song from the woods and felt compelled to turn on his recorder. In a letter he described the music as ‘torturous’, adding that it was ‘beautiful *and* disgusting, like ink-marks that could not decide whether they were stars or boils’.

Unfortunately, the ornithologist had passed away only a few years afterward and it was impossible to determine the source of the sounds based on his recording. The record, scratched and aged, was found with one of his relatives but the recording turned out to be degraded and difficult to reconstruct with fidelity. One researcher described the result of their

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efforts as forlorn, reminiscent of a story about two destined lovers who were bound to never meet. She was unable to connect it to any known composer or tradition.