УДК 930.1:001.98

PSEUDOHISTORY OR PSEUDOSCIENCE AND APPROPRIATING HISTORY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE DANGERS, THE MEANINGS, THE INFLUENCE AND THE COMMUNICATION OF HISTORY

Christensen C.S.

One of the most important developments in the production of history in the early 21st century has been the capacity of pseudoscience to have a large impact on the public sphere. Pseudohistory and pseudoscience mimic professional history in the way that it presents itself to the public, but the proposed arguments defy any reasonable assessment of the evidence. In this article we examine the phenomenon of pseudohistory or pseudoscience through a consideration of its origins in a traveller's tale "1421 – the year China discovered the World" by Gavin Menzies; through a description about ancient astronauts and their influence on antique technologies and on building of pyramids in "Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved mysteries of the past" by the Swiss Erich von Däniken and Holocaust denials and anti-Semitic pseudohistory / history falsification in the book "Hitler's War" by David Irving. One can eventually attribute pseudohistorians popular success to their capacity to appeal to both democratic principles and nationalism, and to make effective use of new media, especially the Internet.

Keywords: pseudohistory, pseudoscience, Erich von Däniken, Gavin Menzies, David Irving, scepticism, history falsification, admiral Zheng He, China, Ming Dynasty, Holocaust denial, ancient astronauts, creationism, science, Internet, democracy.

ПСЕВДОИСТОРИЯ ИЛИ ПСЕВДОНАУКА И ПРИСВОЕНИЕ ИСТОРИИ В XXI В.: ОПАСНОСТИ, СМЫСЛЫ, ВЛИЯНИЕ И СВЯЗЬ ИСТОРИИ

Христенсен К.С.

Одним из наиболее важных факторов в формировании представления об истории в начале XXI в. стала способность псевдонауки оказывать большое

влияние на общество. Псевдоистория и псевдонаука имитируют профессиональную историю в том виде, в каком она предстает перед публикой, а предлагаемые аргументы бросают вызов любой разумной оценке доказательств. В данной статье мы исследуем феномен псевдоистории или псевдонауки через рассмотрение его истоков в книге Гевина Мензиса «1421 год, когда Китай открыл мир»; через описание древних астронавтов, их влияния на античные технологии и на строительство пирамид в произведении «Колесницы богов: Неразгаданные тайны прошлого» швейцарца Эриха фон Дэникена; а также через отрицание Холокоста и антисемитскую псевдоисторию / фальсификацию истории в книге Дэвида Ирвинга «Война Гитлера». В конечном счете, популярность псевдоисториков можно объяснить их способностью апеллировать как к демократическим принципам, так и к национализму, а также эффективным использованием новых средств массовой информации, особенно Интернет.

Ключевые слова: псевдоистория, псевдонаука, Эрих фон Дэникен, Гевин Мензис, Дэвид Ирвинг, скептицизм, фальсификация истории, адмирал Чжэн Хэ, Китай, династия Мин, отрицание Холокоста, древние астронавты, креационизм, наука, Интернет, демократия.

A definition of a scientific thinking and method

Scepticism is a vital part of modern science, which could be defined as a set of methods designed to describe and interpret observed or inferred phenomena, past or present and aimed at building a testable body of knowledge open to rejection or confirmation. The American historian of science Michael Shermer (b. 1954) states that scepticism is healthy in the researching process. You could, therefore, argue that science is a specific way of analysing information with the goal of testing different claims. In this context, the keyword here is scientific method. However, although there exists a sizable literature on the scientific method, there is a little consensus among scientific researchers. Just like defining a scientific method causes problems

in academic circles. Meanwhile, this does not mean that scientific research is science is coincidence and disorganized research [16, p. 15].

The British Nobel laureate for discovery of acquired immunological tolerance and philosopher of science, Peter Brian Medawar (1915-1987), elaborated on it as follows: "Ask a scientist what he conceives the scientific method to be and he will adopt an expression that is at once solemn and shifty-eyed: solemn, because he feels he ought to declare an opinion; shifty-eyed because he is wondering how to conceal the fact that he has no opinion to declare" [12, p. 11].

However, scientists agree that some elements are obligatory in thinking scientifically:

An induction – forming a hypothesis by drawing general conclusions.

A deduction – making specific predictions based on the hypotheses.

An observation – gathering data, driven by a hypothesis.

A verification – that is to test the predictions against further observations to confirm or falsify the initial hypotheses [16, p. 19].

It should be added here that the process of this research is in constant interaction of making observations, drawing conclusions, making predictions, and checking them against evidence. Furthermore, it should be added that data-gathering normally not made in a vacuum.

Scientists are generally agreeing that observation is the supreme court of appeal for the truth of the conclusions of science. With the upset about scientific thinking and with the premises for research, one can therefore set up the following generalizing elements:

Hypothesis: a testable statement accounting for a set of observations.

Theory: a well-supported and well-tested hypothesis or set of hypotheses.

Fact: a conclusion confirmed to such an extent that it would be reasonable to offer provisional agreement [16, p. 19].

Through these scientific terms, researchers aim for objectivity, basing conclusions on external validation. And hereby avoid mysticism and assumptions, basing conclusions on personal insights that elude external validation. In other words,

intuitive ideas and mystical insights do not become objective until they are externally validated.

However, scientifically, there is nothing wrong with personal insight as a starting point for a research project. As the American psychologist Richard Hardison explained, mystical insights do not become objective until they are externally validated:

“Mystical "truths" by their nature must be solely personal, and they can have no possible external validation. Each has equal claim to truth… The mystic is in a paradoxical position. When he seeks external support for his views he must turn to external arguments, and he denies mysticism in the process. External validation is, by definition, impossible for mystic” [9, p. 259-260].

Rationalism is the main goal of science. That is conclusions based on logic and evidence. The main enemy of rationalism is dogmatism because dogmatic conclusions are normally not invalid. Dogmatism is based on authority rather than logic and evidence.

Pseudohistory or pseudoscience – an introduction

Also pseudohistory as pseudoscience is a part of pseudo-scholarship. Where pseudo-scholarship is a term used to define publications or works that is presented as, but is not, the product of rigorous and objective study or research or the pretended learning upon which it is based. Teachers and researchers, it seems, know the pitfalls of pseudohistory and pseudoscience. Other examples of pseudo-scholarship are pseudoarchaeology, pseudophilosophy, pseudolinguistics and pseudomathematics. For instance, themes like parapsychology, astrology, new age healing, creationism, UFOs and more. Furthermore, teachers and researchers seem to endeavour to teach the nature of science. Hereby, students will not succumb to the illegitimacy of pseudohistory or pseudoscience. While defined variously, pseudoscience essentially tries to claim scientific authority where there is no science [1, p. 179].

However, it also important to recognize the fallibility of science and the abovementioned attempt to identify a scientific method. Self-correction is the greatest strength of this fallibility. Whether a mistake or a fraud in a research project is made

with purpose or not, in time it will be so to say flushed out of the system by lack of external verification. The theory of cold fusion, a hypothesized type of nuclear reaction that would occur at or near room temperature, and its failure in the laboratory is a classic example of such a flush out. Other fallacies in scientific methods range from inadequate mathematical notation to wishful thinking.

However, rationalism as the main goal of science is still the most reliable way of researching. And this self-correcting feature or as physicist and Nobel laureate Richard Feynman (1918-1988) call it "a principle of scientific thought that corresponds to a kind of utter honesty – a kind of learning over backwards". He further adds that is very important that scientists, therefore, report everything that he or she might think would invalid the project, to explain the results as good as possible. Otherwise credulity could dominate the conclusions of the research work. Credulity here understood as a person's willingness or ability to believe that a statement is true, especially on minimal or uncertain evidence [7, p. 247].

History has shown examples of famous scientists that have been in this twilight zone of doubt between scepticism and credulity. Here one of the most famous cases is the English naturalist and biologist Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and his evolution theory "On the origin of species" from 1859. To avoid scientific charges of credulity and dogmatism, he included a chapter in his book named "Difficulties on theory", just like he was constantly questioning confident enough to recognize his own fallibility. However, the doctrine of animal genetics and individuals less suited to the environment are less likely to survive and less likely to reproduce; individuals more suited to the environment are more likely to survive and more likely to reproduce – natural selection are more or less a fact. But the missing link has never been found. Still, many of the results of his research should certainly not be underestimated, and his theory of evolutionary biology is also worth a further scientific look.

Tensions in dealing with difficult scientific observations to be explained or so-called weird things to be exposed are therefore also a kind of fallibility. Balancing in this twilight zone is a kind of art. Answering a few questions during the research project could be very helpful. "What is the quality of evidence for the claim? Does

the thing work as claimed?" and what are the background and credentials of the person making the claims?

Pseudoscience and pseudohistory

The term of pseudoscience has been used since 1796, where it first was mentioned by the British historian James Pettit Andrews (1737-1797) about alchemy and its process. And also used later by the French physiologist Francois Magendie (1783-1855) about phrenology, the measurement of bumps on the skull to predict mental traits. In modern time the influence of pseudoscience has become more remarkable in society. Pseudoscience consists of statements, beliefs, or practices that claim to be both scientific and factual but in fact are incompatible with the scientific method. This kind of science is also often characterized by contradictory, exaggerated or unfalsifiable claims, reliance on confirmation bias rather than rigorous attempts at refutation. Furthermore, lack of openness to evaluation by other experts and absence of systematic practices when developing hypotheses [13, p. 1484].

In the scientific community, pseudoscience is a term used to describe something that is reported to be a product of science but, has no connection to proper scientific methodology and cannot be realistically proven. So-called evidence that has been produced to support the existence of Bigfoot, for example, would be considered pseudoscience because it is not based on empirical evidence. It can often be difficult to differentiate between pseudoscience and legitimate science because one of the hallmarks of pseudoscience is that it looks an awful lot like actual science. For example, astrology is the practice of studying planets and star patterns with the belief that they have a powerful influence on human behaviour and future outcomes.

Although astrology uses seemingly scientific language and borrows here and there from the study of astronomy, it is not actually based on any real scientific knowledge but is instead based on archaic beliefs. Similarly, in recent years theories about ancient astronauts have been gaining popularity, thanks in part to television and the Internet. According to believers, the ancient astronaut theory suggests that extra-terrestrial beings visited earth thousands of years ago and provided ancient civilizations with knowledge and technology that allowed for, among other things,

the building of the pyramids. Like for instance Erich von Däniken. There are an incredible number of things that fall into the category of pseudoscience, like psychics or belief in horoscopes, but they all tend to have in common the fact that they are unverifiable. In the simplest terms, if it sounds like science fiction and you cannot find any legitimate evidence, then it is probably pseudoscience [13, p. 1485].

There can be no doubt that pseudo historians regard what they are doing is writing a true story, a true story that corrects the errors of mainstream professional historians who are trapped by the limitations of their profession. By pseudohistory means the interaction of two related things: firstly, an appeal to evidence that is conjectural, impossible to verify and based on documents that are dubious. The second is speculative approach to this evidence that allows arguments and narratives to be constructed that would seem to defy what would best be described a reliable interpretation of data or evidence. The issues surrounding pseudo history are not to be confused with any discussion regarding whether history is a form of fiction. The question of pseudohistory raises the issue of what it is that is central to the "normal" study of both history and archaeology. How do we distinguish between a new and revolutionary historical interpretation that might be vindicated by evidence and one that is simply pseudo?

A successful work of pseudohistory cannot be just any story; it must be a good tale. Like for instance pre-Columbian trans-oceanic contact theories, like Gavin Menzies theory about the Chinese finding America in the 1420s. Another set of questions relates to why it is that certain attempts at pseudohistory succeed and others do not. There are facts and arguments, primary sources and literature reviews. Pseudohistory inevitably takes on the role of subverting established truths. Its authors, who generally come from outside the history profession but often possess some other form of professional training, seek to attack the conventional wisdom of the professionals and to demonstrate its folly.

Pseudohistory also depends upon two other factors. One of these factors might be described as the zeitgeist. Stories about the past speak to modern concerns. These concerns can include national identity, fears of global catastrophes or perhaps a desire

that the world should be a more wondrous and magical place than it is, such as fuels science fiction and fantasy. The second factor is the tendency of pseudohistory to reflect the preoccupations and concerns of specific political cultures. Modern readers expect at least the appearance of scholarship to establish that the story rests on good authority. Successful pseudo history mimics the work of professional historians. They move to use their expertise to establish a new, allegedly superior explanation, usually founded on highly speculative, and invariably unreliable, interpretations of evidence. Consequently, pseudo history also raises the issue of the role and responsibilities of the professional historian in a democratic public and its relation to counter knowledge [1, p. 180-181].

False history or historical falsification

Pseudohistory conveys false ideas about the historical process of science and the nature of scientific knowledge, even if based on acknowledged facts. Fragmentary accounts of real historical events that omit context can mislead, even while purporting to show how science works. For example, a romanticized tale of discovery may overemphasize the contributions of one individual, minimize the role of accident or errors, simplify the investigative process, disguise less than noble motivations, and hide the effect of personal or cultural values. However, false history or historical falsification is maybe another topic, with other purposes as pseudoscience or pseudohistory, even though it is also referred to as anti-Semitic pseudohistory [8, p. 100].

Holocaust denial and genocide denial in general are widely categorized as pseudohistory, but the truth is rather that is false history or a historical falsification with a political purpose. It also applies major proponents of Holocaust denial, such as David Irving, and others, who argue that the Holocaust, Holodomor, Armenian genocide, and other genocides did not occur, or were exaggerated greatly. False history misportrays as well the process of science as its content, whereas Pseudohistory misportrays the process of science rather than its content [17, p. 11].

We shall now look at two examples of pseudohistory, one about the pre-Columbian trans-oceanic theories and the Chinese, and one about ancient astronauts

from Switzerland, that seem to embrace a heady mix of wild hypothesis, historical fabrication, and scientific innovation. The additional element in the false history or historical falsification about Holocaust denial by David Irving accounts described next is the important role of nationalism for those seeking to fabricate history in a globalizing world.

Gavin Menzies and the Chinese's discovery of America and other continents

Gavin Menzies (1937-2020) was a British submarine lieutenant-commander who especially authored books about Chinese explorers who found America and other continents and hidden land areas before Christopher Columbus and Portuguese explorers in the 1400s. Gavin Menzies is a British retired naval officer with no professional training and no professional historical background. However, he has become a famous writer whose works have attracted the ire of professional historians. Gavin Menzies has written two books, both about the Ming Chinese admiral Zheng He (1371-1435) and the voyages that the fleet under his command made in the early fifteenth century. Whereas the available evidence indicates that the fleet sailed around the Indian Ocean, Menzies argues that it not only discovered America and circumnavigated the world but also sailed to Cairo and into the Mediterranean where an unspecified Chinese ambassador met the Pope in Florence. There are two bestseller books written by him – "*1421: the year China discovered the World*" [14] and "*1434: the year a magnificent Chinese fleet sailed to Italy and ignited the Renaissance*" [15].

In "*1421, the year China discovered World*" Gavin Menzies writes informally, as a series of vignettes of his own travels around the world examining what he claims is evidence of his so-called 1421-hypothesis. These notes and writings are interspersed with speculation regarding the achievements of Admiral Zheng He's Chinese fleet. His main thesis and main problem definition are to answer a question about old maps. On European some maps before 1400, it appears that a people or explorers had charted and surveyed lands supposedly unknown to Europeans, at that time. Who could have charted and surveyed this "unknown" landmarks – the

Chinese. Not only a historically flimsy formulation for a history book, but also a theoretically reading of the maps [13, p. 1489].

In "*1421, the year China discovered World*" Gavin Menzies concludes that the only superpower on earth that had such power was China. In his book, Menzies concludes that China had the time, the manpower, the leadership, the money and not least the technique to send such expeditions and to visit and to map lands unknown in either China, Oceania, America, Africa and Europe. The author claims in "*1421, the year China discovered World*", that from 1421 to 1423 the Chinese during the Ming dynasty – the Yongle Emperor (1360-1424) – the fleet of admiral Zheng He by different captains discovered Antarctica, Australia, New Zealand, America. Furthermore, the fleet discovered the Northeast Passage, circumnavigated Greenland, and surrounding islands and tried to find and reach the North Pole. Of other magnificent of this Chinese fleet, events may be mentioned sailing around the world (100 years before Ferdinand Magellan) and furthermore trying to find the South Pole, too [13, p. 1490].

Although the book contains many footnotes, references and acknowledgments, critics point out that it lacks supporting references for Chinese voyages beyond East Africa, the location acknowledged by professional historians as the limit of the fleet's travels. Gavin Menzies bases his main theory on original interpretations and extrapolations of academic studies of minority population DNA, archaeological finds, and ancient maps. Many of these extrapolations draw on his personal nautical background without supporting evidence. Menzies claims that knowledge of Zheng He's discoveries was subsequently lost because the mandarin bureaucrats of the Ming imperial court feared that the costs of further voyages would ruin the Chinese economy. It could be pure guesswork. With no primary Chinese sources, it is difficult to research and to get the thesis verified at all. He conjectures that when the Yongle Emperor died in 1424 and the new Hongxi Emperor forbade further expeditions, the mandarins hid or destroyed the records of previous exploration to discourage further voyages, also not verified in scientific literature [13, p. 1491].

In his works, especially in "*1421, the year China discovered World*" Gavin Menzies is kind of promoting a fantastic traveller's tale about the Chinese fleet, a kind of modern equivalent of the extraordinary stories that appear in the works of the Greek historian Herodotus (484-425 BC). Other Greek historians like Thucydides (460-400 BC) accused him of making up stories of entertainment. He was criticized for his inclusion of all kind of legends and plenty fanciful accounts in his different works. His major achievement is to make his account of the admiral Zheng He voyages appear to be not only plausible but also to cover it with a veneer of scholarly respectability. He has several techniques that allow him to attain that goal. The most important thing to note is that Gavin Menzies has considerable freedom because much of the written evidence regarding Admiral Zheng He has been destroyed during history [14, p. 200].

This means that he is free to speculate using a range of other evidence, especially maps and a variety of physical and scientific evidence, especially that relating to DNA. In the absence of other forms of documentary evidence maps and other forms of pictorial evidence become the crucial form of written evidence for Menzies. In "*1421, the year China discovered World*", the author made use of a map made in 1424 that he claims contains some islands in the Caribbean. From this initial claim he moved to the idea that someone had to have been there before the Spanish and the only possible contenders are the Chinese.

In the West Gavin Menzies can evoke a globalised, post-nationalist paradigm where the hero of the story is a hitherto despised other whose achievements deserve to be restored to the centre stage of history. In his most recent work 1434, where he makes claims regarding the Chinese origin of much European technology, at one level Menzies is doing little more than popularising quite reasonable arguments in this matter that have been already made by professionals academics such as Jack Goody. Where he goes astray is in his argument that such technology transfer was the consequence of a single, imaginary visit. At the same time Menzies can appeal to Chinese nationalism and its desire for recognition. Menzies emphasises his early years in China, this appeal to nationalism resonates with the Chinese government.

Even Chinese president Hu Jintao told the Australian parliament in 2003 about how the Chinese had visited Australia in the 1420s [13, p. 1491].

"*1421: The year China discovered the World*" is a work of sheer fiction presented as revisionist history. Not a single document or artifact has been found to support his new claims on the supposed Ming naval expeditions beyond Africa. Menzies' numerous claims and the hundreds of pieces of "evidence" he has assembled have been thoroughly and entirely discredited by historians, maritime experts and oceanographers from China, the U.S., Europe and elsewhere.

Erich von Däniken and the ancient astronauts

Erich von Däniken (b. 1935) is a Swiss author of numerous books about extra-terrestrial influences on earlier human cultures. Von Däniken is one of the main figures responsible for popularising and explaining the ancient astronauts' thesis. Erich von Däniken is the best-known representative of the pseudoscientific branch of pre-astronautics in the world. In his 1977 book "*According to the evidence*" [3] he claimed, long ago extra-terrestrials had occasionally visited Earth and refined the great apes. Human intelligence was not formed through evolution, but through frequent sexual intercourse that the astronauts who had travelled from foreign planets had with the female great apes of the earth until beings were created that could be made familiar with social customs [3, p. 18].

With the breeding of the people living in caves things finally improved, because the spacemen killed all freaks. With these claims Erich von Däniken distances himself from the findings of the theory of evolution, which explain the origin of man through mutation and selection and refers to the arguments of Christian creationists such as Arthur Ernest Wilder-Smith. Furthermore, Erich von Däniken uses extra-terrestrial genetic engineers in the place of God, which is why the sociologist Ingbert Jüdt describes his position as technological creationism [4, p. 22].

Basically, Erich von Däniken gives unusual explanations to certain characteristics of archaeological pieces, whose origin, according to him, would not be sufficiently documented by academic archaeology. These explanations are based on premises not proven by science, such as the existence of intelligent extra-terrestrial

life (hypothesis accepted by science), which could at some point in the past have travelled through space to our planet (hypothesis not accepted as it did not exist no credible evidence). By not following any scientific method supported by real evidence verifiable by other people, he cannot be considered a scientist [18, p. 145].

However, Erich Von Däniken assumes that these astronauts were considered gods by primitive humans because of their high technical superiority. Against the background of this assumption he interprets the most diverse legacies (buildings, legends, etc.) of ancient cultures as evidence for extra-terrestrial visitors. For example, he is of the opinion that people of the distant past could not have been able to achieve cultural achievements such as the building of the pyramids of Giza, Pumapunku, monoliths on Easter Island, Stonehenge or the map of the Piri Reis without outside help. He considers some of the gods handed down in religions and mythologies to be extra-terrestrials. However, he has no evidence and it can be regarded as pure conjecture [18, p. 184].

"*Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved mysteries of the past*" published in 1968 [4] involves the hypothesis that the technologies and religions of many ancient civilizations were given to them by ancient astronauts who were welcomed as gods.

The main thesis of "*Chariots of the Gods*" is that extra-terrestrial beings influenced ancient technology. Erich von Däniken suggests that some ancient structures and artefacts appear to reflect more sophisticated technological knowledge than is known or presumed to have existed at the times they were manufactured. Erich von Däniken maintains that these artefacts were produced either by extra-terrestrial visitors or by humans who learned the necessary knowledge from aliens. Many of those theories have now been debunked.

Such artefacts include the Egyptian pyramids, Stonehenge and the Moai of Easter Island. Further examples include an early world map known as the Piri Reis map, which Erich von Däniken describes as showing Earth as it is seen from space, and the Nazca Lines in Peru, which he suggests may have been constructed by humans as crude replicas of previous alien structures, as a way to call the aliens back to Earth. Furthermore, he uses this same explanation to argue that cart ruts in Malta

may have had extra-terrestrial purposes along with similar lines in Australia, Saudi Arabia and the Aral Sea [18, p. 100].

The book also suggests that ancient artwork throughout the world can be interpreted as depicting astronauts, air and space vehicles, extra-terrestrials and complex technology. Erich von Däniken describes elements that he believes are similar in the art of unrelated cultures. Among the artwork he describes are ancient Japanese Dogū figurines (which he believes to resemble astronauts in spacesuits) and 3,000 year old carvings in an Egyptian New Kingdom Temple that appear to depict helicopter-like machines.

The book further suggests that the origins of many religions, including interpretations of the Bible Old Testament are reactions to contact with an alien race. According to von Däniken, humans considered the technology of the aliens to be supernatural and the aliens themselves to be gods. Von Däniken asks if the oral and literal traditions of most religions contain references to visitors from stars and vehicles traveling through air and space. These, he says, should be interpreted as literal descriptions which have changed during the passage of time and become more obscure.

Examples include Ezekiel's vision of the angels and the wheels which Von Däniken interprets as a description of a spacecraft; the Ark of the Covenant, which is explained as a device intended for communication with an alien race; and the destruction of Sodom by fire and brimstone, which is interpreted as a nuclear explosion. Erich von Däniken attempts to draw an analogy with the "cargo cults" that formed during and after World War II, when once-isolated tribes in the South Pacific mistook the advanced American and Japanese soldiers for gods.

Erich von Däniken also spends around one-third of the book discussing the possibility that humans could theoretically offer primitive civilizations on interstellar worlds advanced technology by the year 2100. This would, he writes, mimic the ancient extra-terrestrial contact von Däniken believes to have occurred on Earth. Erich von Däniken's studies have been classified as pseudoscience or pseudohistory and received a large number of criticisms from the serious sectors of science and

archaeology, presenting as mysteries attributable to extra-terrestrial visitors numerous archaeological remains from around the world, giving their explanation without have evidence of any kind.

David Irving and "Hitler's War"

David Irving (b. 1938) is a British author and declared Holocaust denier. He has no professional training in history research. David Irving has written on the military and political history of World War II, especially, with focus on Nazi Germany (1933-1945). Among critics regarded as one of the most sophisticated deniers ever. That because he has mastered the primary documents of the major Nazi figures. A factor that could contribute David Irving's move into Holocaust denial is that he learns his livings by lecturing and selling books. And the more he revises the Holocaust the more books he sells and the more invitations of lectures he receives from far right-wing groups [10, p. 7-8]

David Irving's book "*Hitler's War*" [10], the first published instalment of his two-part biography of Hitler had originally been published in German as "*Hitler und seine Feldherren*" (Hitler and his Gener*als*) in 1975. Irving's intention in "*Hitler's War*" was to clean away the years of grime and discoloration from the facade of a silent and forbidding monument to reveal the "real Hitler", whose reputation Irving claimed had been slandered by historians. However, in "*Hitler's War*" David Irving more or less tried to view the situation as far as possible through Hitler's eyes, from behind his desk and from his point of view. He portrayed Hitler as a rational, intelligent politician, whose only goal was to increase Germany's prosperity and influence on the continent, and who was constantly let down by incompetent and/or treasonous subordinates [10, p. 200; 11, p.178].

Furthermore, David Irving's book faulted the Allied leaders most notably the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill for the eventual escalation of war and claimed that the Nazis invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 was a precautionary measure forced on Hitler to avert an alleged impending Soviet attack. He also claimed that Hitler had no knowledge of the Holocaust. While not outright denying its occurrence David Irving claimed that, especially, Reichsführer of the Schutzstafel

Heinrich Himmler and his assistant Deputy Protector of Bohemia and Moravia Reinhard Heydrich were its originators and architects. David Irving made much of the lack of any written order from Hitler ordering the Holocaust and for decades afterwards has offered to pay 1000 pound to anyone who could find such an order. In addition, David Irving claimed and tried to argue that Britain was primarily responsible for the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 [5, p. 166].

David Irving in his first edition of "*Hitler's War*" in 1977 argued that Führer was against the killings of Jews. He claimed that Hitler even ordered a stop to the extermination of Jews in 1941. On 30 November 1941 Heinrich Himmler went to the Wolf's Lair for a private conference with Hitler and during it the fate of some Berlin Jews was mentioned. At 1.30 pm Himmler was instructed to tell Reinhard Heydrich that the Jews were not to be liquidated. Himmler telephoned SS General Oswald Pohl, the overall chief of the concentration camp system, with the order: Jews are to stay where they are. David Irving argued that "No liquidation" was incontrovertible evidence that Hitler ordered that no Jews were to be killed. However, although the telephone log is genuine, it provides no evidence that Hitler was involved at all, only that Himmler contacted Heydrich and there is no evidence that Hitler and Himmler were in contact before the phone call. This is an example of Irving's manipulation of documents since there was no general order to stop the killing of Jews [q.v.: 6].

In a note from Hitler's War, Irving introduced the thesis later popularized in the 1980s by Ernst Nolte that a letter written by Chaim Weizmann to Neville Chamberlain on 3 September 1939, pledging the support of the Jewish Agency to the war effort of the Allies constituted a "declaration of Jewish war" against Germany, thus justifying the "internment" of the Jews of Europe. In 1975 when without Irving's permission the Ullstein Verlag firm deleted passages claiming Hitler had no knowledge of the Holocaust from the German edition of "*Hitler's War*", Irving sued them. Despite his much-vaunted disdain of many historians (accused by Irving of defamation of Hitler), Irving attended a historians' conference in Aschaffenburg in July 1978 dealing with "Hitler today – problems and aspects of Hitler research". Irving spent his time at the conference attacking historians in attendance for "alleged

sloppy research into Hitler", and touting his work as "the only good book ever written on the Führer" [2, p. 72-74].

David Irving in his 1991 revised edition of "*Hitler's War*" removed all mentions of gas chambers and the word Holocaust. Critical reception of "*Hitler's War*" was mostly negative. Various historians wrote either articles or books rebutting what they considered to be erroneous information in "*Hitler's War*". However, still David Irving testified for the defence of his arguments and hypothesis in Ernst Zündel's free speech trial in 1985 after which various governments brought criminal charges against him. He has been deported rom or denied entry into many countries and his books have been removed from some stores and some stores that carry them have been vandalized. David Irving is a first-rate documentarian and narrative historian, but he is not a good theoretician and does a lot of selective quoting to support his own biases. And lies are unfortunately involved in his argumentation. For instance, when he in 1992 told a German audience, that gas chambers in Auschwitz were constructed in the years after the end of the war [16, p. 194-197].

Conclusion

People have always been interested in the fantastic and the exotic. In contemporary popular culture the desire for the fantastic is met in several ways including stories about alien abductions or the belief that the descendants of Jesus still walk among us. Professional history of the past 200 years has sought to distinguish what it sees as sensible interpretation based on evidence from fanciful stories, no matter how good the stories may seem. That would seem to be a crucial aspect of the historian's role as a "good citizen" in a modern democracy. The public, however, still loves good stories and want to have history that fits their identities. There the abovementioned three books are all bestsellers and a part of the readers' perception of reality. They can also find professional histories to be somewhat stodgy and dull, and its practitioners to be more interested in their professional status than in communicating their stories to the wider public.

Menzies', Irving's and Von Däniken's studies have all been classified as pseudoscience or pseudohistory and received a large number of criticisms from the

serious sectors of science and archaeology, presenting as mysteries attributable to extra-terrestrial visitors numerous archaeological remains from around the world, giving their explanation without have evidence of any kind. In the age of the history documentary and the Internet there is a much greater imperative for historians both to present their findings in a lively and attractive fashion and to involve the public in the exciting process of historical discovery. They all seem to have an instinctive appreciation of the contemporary cultural environment. They can tap into the popular consciousness by simultaneously appearing to be experts while also standing in opposition to the historical establishment.

Furthermore, especially about the book of Erich von Däniken, many scientists and historians have rejected his ideas, claiming that the book's conclusions were based on faulty, pseudoscientific evidence, some of which was later demonstrated to be fraudulent or fabricated, and under illogical premises.

Most importantly, they can exploit the democratic potential of the new electronic media and to involve a wider audience in what looks like ground-breaking research. At the same time, the work of both David Irving and Gavin Menzies appeals to the nationalism of countries that would like the world to have a much higher opinion of their roles in shaping world history. The national pride of the present demands a past worthy of that pride and in different ways David Irving and Gavin Menzies provide a worthy past. Professional historians might find pseudo history horrifying, but they will not get very far by attacking it on points of detail. Pseudohistory cannot be refuted that way. The professionals should be prepared to live with it as a constant irritant, and to devise techniques for making their own stories more attractive to the public. In a democracy it is necessary to practice the art of persuasion. The coming of the Internet has made it even easier for frauds to find a home. If it is a tool of democracy, then it is also a haven for the ratbag. Like everyone else historians must live with that reality and learn the techniques that are necessary to win what is often as much a battle of rhetoric as one about facts. It is the task of professional historians to ensure that pseudohistory does not prevail.

Bibliography:

1. Allchin D. Pseudohistory and Pseudoscience // Science and Education. 2004. Vol. 13. No 3. P. 175-195.

2. Craig G.A.. The Germans. New York: Putnam, 1982. 360 p.

3. Däniken E. According to the evidence. London: Souvenir Press, 1977. X, 348 p.

4. Däniken E. Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved mysteries of the past. London: World Books, 1968. 208 p.

5. Evans R.J. In Hitler's shadow: West German historians and the attempt to escape from the Nazi past. New York: Pantheon Books, 1989. X, 196 p.

6. Evans R.J. Lying about Hitler: history, Holocaust, and the David Irving trial. New York: Basic Books, 2001. XIV, 318 p.

7. Feynman R.P. "What do you care what other people think?": further adventures of a curious character. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988. 258 p.

8. Fritze R.H. Invented knowledge: false history, fake science and pseudo-religions. London: Reaktion, 304 p.

9. Hardison R.C. Upon the shoulders of giants: the shaping of the modern mind. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988. 460 p.

10. Irving D. Hitler's War. New York: The Viking Press, 1977. 1032 p.

11. Lukacs J. The Hitler of history. New York: Knopf, 1997. XIV, 279 p.

12. Medawar P.B. Induction and intuition in scientific thought Philadelphia: Philadelphia American Philosophical Society, 1969. IX, 62 p.

13. Melleuish G., Sheiko K., Brown S. Pseudo History/Weird History: Nationalism and the Internet // History Compass. 2009. Vol. 7. No 6. P. 1484-1495.

14. Menzies G. 1421: the year China discovered the world. London: Bantam Books, 2003. 649, [32] p.

15. Menzies G. 1434: the year a magnificent Chinese fleet sailed to Italy and ignited the Renaissance. New York: Harper Perennial, 2009. XVI, 368, 32, [24] p.

16. Shermer M. Why people believe weird things: pseudoscience, superstition, and other confusions of our time. New York: W.H. Freeman, 1997. XXVI, 306 p.

17. Shermer M., Grobman A. Denying history: who says the Holocaust never happened and why do they say it? Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2009. XVIII, 334 p.

18. Story R. The space-gods revealed: a close look at the theories of Erich von Däniken. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. 139 p.

Data about the author:

Christensen Carsten Sander – Doctor of History (PhD), curator of Billund Museum (Billund, Denmark).

Сведения об авторе:

Христенсен Карстен Сандер – доктор истории (PhD), куратор Музея Биллунда (Биллунд, Дания).

E-mail: csc@billund.dk.