



Decoding the Heavens: A 2,000-Year-Old Computer--and the Century-Long Search to Discover Its Secrets

By Jo Marchant

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The bronze fragments of an ancient Greek device have puzzled scholars for more than a century after they were recovered from the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea, where they had lain since about 80 BC. Now, using advanced imaging technology, scientists have solved the mystery of its intricate workings.

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In *Decoding the Heavens*, Jo Marchant details for the first time the hundred-year quest to decode this ancient computer. Along the way she unearths a diverse cast of remarkable characters—ranging from Archimedes to Jacques Cousteau—and explores the deep roots of modern technology, not only in ancient Greece, but in the Islamic world and medieval Europe. At its heart, this is an epic adventure story, a book that challenges our assumptions about technology development through the ages while giving us fresh insights into history itself.

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Decoding the Heavens: A 2,000-Year-Old Computer--and the Century-Long Search to Discover Its Secrets By Jo Marchant Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Marchant, editor of *New Science*, relates the century-long struggle of competing amateurs and scientists to understand the secrets of a 2000-year-old clock-like mechanism found in 1901 by Greek divers off the coast of Antikythera, a small island near Tunisia. With new research and interviews, Marchant goes behind the scenes of the National Museum in Athens, which zealously guarded the treasure while overlooking its importance; examines the significant contributions of a London Science Museum assistant curator who spent more than 30 years building models of the device; and the 2006 discoveries made by a group of modern researchers using state-of-the-art X-ray. Beneath its ancient, calcified surfaces they found "delicate cogwheels of all sizes" with perfectly formed triangular teeth, astronomical inscriptions "crammed onto every surviving surface," and a 223-tooth manually-operated turntable that guides the device. Various described as a calendar computer, a planetarium and an eclipse predictor, Marchant gives clear explanations of the questions and topics involved, including Greek astronomy and clockwork mechanisms. For all they've learned, however, the Antikythera mechanism still retains secrets that may reveal unknown connections between modern and ancient technology; this globe-trotting, era-spanning mystery should absorb armchair scientists of all kinds.

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From [Booklist](#)

Discovered a century ago in an ancient Mediterranean shipwreck, the Antikythera mechanism instantly attracted scientific interest. It had gears, which was and remains unique among artifacts from Greco-Roman civilization. So begins Marchant's mystery about the object, a tale that ends in triumph but not before inveigling individuals who not only puzzled over the device but also became obsessively devoted to figuring it out. Tantalized by the Antikythera mechanism, scholar Derek de Solla Price felt it was the clue with which he could rewrite the history of technology. Price's conclusions, however, were challenged by a museum curator of Industrial Revolution technologies; he was Michael Wright, who emerges here as the David among academic Goliaths who, by the early 2000s, were closing in on a conclusive interpretation of the Antikythera mechanism. By then, archaeological evidence dated the ship on which it sank to between 70 and 60 BCE and suggested its connection to the astronomer Hipparchus. Science readers will be entranced by Marchant's vibrant depiction of the characters in this remarkable story of ancient technology. --Gilbert Taylor

Review

Nature , 10/16/08

"[A] gripping and varied account...Fascinating final chapter."

Users Review

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Micheal Clothier:

Reading a book tends to be new life style in this era globalization. With studying you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. With book everyone in this world can certainly share their idea. Textbooks can also inspire a lot of people. Plenty of author can inspire their reader with their story

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Georgia Hernandez:

The reason why? Because this Decoding the Heavens: A 2,000-Year-Old Computer--and the Century-Long Search to Discover Its Secrets is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap it but latter it will zap you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who write the book in such awesome way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning thoroughly. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of gains than the other book get such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hesitate having that book? If I were being you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

Virginia Comer:

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