

The Comalcalco “2012” Date — an Academic / Media Rerun

John Major Jenkins. © November 29, 2011

“Mexican archaeologists have announced that they have found another date referring to 2012. That’s pretty scary.”

The above quote is from a nationally syndicated radio host. What is *really* scary about the statement above is that “2012” seems to be treated as a synonym for something that should evoke fear, something that is scary. The back-story is that the host who said this is one who I interviewed with when my book *The 2012 Story* came out in November 2009, and as always I explained that: 1) The ancient Maya did not associate 2012 with doomsday, but rather with transformation & renewal; and 2) the scary doomsday interpretation of 2012 is something that our own nihilistic culture, and the “if it bleeds it leads” media, *projects onto 2012*. And it wasn’t there to begin with. I’ve been saying variations of that for fifteen years — in print, online, and in internationally broadcast documentaries.

The radio host was reporting an Associated Press story released in November 2011, regarding a purportedly *new* discovery of a 2012 date at the site of Comalcalco (see link and full story below). Beyond the doomsday hype, which apparently will never go away, what is the real import of the AP story? Is there any truth to it and what does it mean for the 2012 discussion? Luckily, I know about and have indeed been part of the back story to this so-called “discovery.”

The first announcement of the story, by INAH archaeologists, occurred in **July of 2010!** The story was available online and became the subject of a discussion on the Aztlán email list, beginning here: <http://famsi.org/pipermail/aztlan/2010-July/007445.html>. One Aztlán contributor confused this possible 2012 date from Comalcalco with the already known date from Tortuguero Monument 6. In fact, it was Maya scholar Erik Boot who first noted, in December of 2009, the possible “4 Ajaw 3 Kankin” date-combo on a Comalcalco incised brick. A drawing of it was first published in 1984, but its potential significance was unrecognized. Erik had circulated an email in December of 2009 with his observation. One of the INAH archaeologists was also cc’d, and I noted that he was cited in the INAH press release of July 2010, but there was no mention of Boot. This seemed unfair to me, so I then sent a clarifying email to Aztlán regarding the true source of this discovery:

<http://famsi.org/pipermail/aztlan/2010-July/007526.html> (July 9, 2010). I included in my post a link to a line drawing of the Comalcalco incised brick: <http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/comalcalco-brick.jpg>.

Quickly, Marc Zender replied with his own reading of the glyphs, asserting that it wasn’t a “kankin” glyph. (You can track the thread from the above link.) Erik Boot and others assumed I was letting a cat out of the bag, since Boot had not officially published his argument yet. But I was only trying to correctly credit Boot for the discovery rather than let INAH take credit for it. The INAH archaeologist, privy to Boot’s email, is the one who did the cat-releasing. I sent an email to Boot explaining that the story was already

out and I was only trying to defend his prior discovery. Thus followed on Aztlan, on July 23, a clarifying response from Erik Book, which can be found by following the thread above or here: <http://famsi.org/pipermail/aztlan/2010-July/007576.html>.

Given Boot's response with additional considerations, it's clear that the question remains open. And even more additional context should be considered, as I've written in various places. Comalcalco is suspected as being a successor, in some way, to Tortuguero. Lord Jaguar, who commissioned the 2012 monument at Tortuguero, defeated Comalcalco in a war campaign in 649 AD. Lord Jaguar's name is found on a text fragment from Comalcalco. As Boot notes in his post, "Comalcalco was also a part of the Baakal (Baakel) kingdom and from that kingdom comes Tortuguero Monument 6." A tradition regarding Lord Jaguar's special astronomical relationship with the 2012 date (the astronomy, see: <http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/Astronomy-in-TRT-SAA.pdf>) may have been preserved somewhat later at Comalcalco. The importance of the tzolkin-haab combo 4 Ajaw 3 Kankin could very well be a shorthand reference to the 2012 date. Indeed, Long Count dates were very often referred to only by their tzolkin-haab position.

So, the recent announcement by INAH is merely a rerun of events that unfolded in July of 2010. One consequence of the latest announcement is that epigrapher David Stuart was asked his opinion, and he refers to the Tortuguero Monument 6 date reference to 2012. It's odd that the AP piece suggests Stuart believes the Tortuguero text utilizes a *future tense*, since he maintains on his recent blog post that it doesn't (see link below). He, like Stephen Houston, believes it *does not* reference a future event. This conjecture derives from an *incomplete assessment of the text*, as Barb MacLeod points out on David Stuart's blog: <http://decipherment.wordpress.com/2011/10/04/more-on-tortugueros-monument-6-and-the-prophecy-that-wasnt/>. (The glyph fragment that Stuart ignores is clearly viewable in my close-up photos of the Monument 6 inscription, available since June 2011 and announced on Aztlan, in my report here:

<http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/T6Monument.pdf>.)

With Stuart's suggestion that 2012 is "the prophecy that wasn't" we can sense an irrationally motivated need to deny any importance to the time indicated by the 2012 date. And for some reason he insists on referring to it as a "prophecy." First of all, the use of this term is misleading; MacLeod and Gronemeyer simply observe that a period-ending ceremony involving Bolon Yokte was expected to occur. That's not a prophecy; that's a dinner date, and totally consistent with how the Maya treated (and still treat) period endings in the various calendar systems. But there's much more to this discussion than that. See my recent study called "Lord Jaguar's 2012 Inscriptions": <http://alignment2012.com/LJ2012-booklet.html>.

Other considerations. It is quite possible that definitive references to the 2012 date will be located soon in archaeological findings. What the world seems to ignore is the *pre-hieroglyphic statements at Izapa*, which can be interpreted based on iconographic and archaeoastronomical clues (<http://alignment2012.com/izapa.html>; <http://www.alignment2012.com/ballcourt-schematic-and-description.html>.) Thus, we have Izapa Stela 11 (<http://www.alignment2012.com/Img2-2.html>) and the Group F ballcourt throne depicting an alignment of the December solstice sun with the dark rift in

the Milky Way. This precession-caused alignment happens in era-2012; I've argued and documented evidence for my thesis, since 1994, that this astronomical alignment is the reason why the creators of the Long Count system chose to end the 13-Baktun cycle on December 21, 2012. See, for example, my book *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012* (1998) and essays at <http://Alignment2012.com>.

It is clear from the recent press release that INAH was recycling an old news story to promote a conference event. Good marketing, and luckily for them people easily forget. For more information on Tortuguero Monument 6 and the 2012 date, see my essays at *The Center for 2012 Studies*: <http://thecenterfor2012studies.com>.

See the press release below.

Mexico acknowledges 2nd Mayan reference to 2012

<http://news.yahoo.com/mexico-acknowledges-2nd-mayan-reference-2012-232405916.html>

MEXICO CITY (AP). Mexico's archaeology institute downplays theories that the ancient Mayas predicted some sort of apocalypse would occur in 2012, but on Thursday it acknowledged that a second reference to the date exists on a carved fragment found at a southern Mexico ruin site.

Most experts had cited only one surviving reference to the date in Mayan glyphs, a stone tablet from the Tortuguero site in the Gulf coast state of Tabasco.

But the National Institute of Anthropology and History said in a statement that there is in fact another apparent reference to the date at the nearby Comalcalco ruin. The inscription is on the carved or molded face of a brick. Comalcalco is unusual among Mayan temples in that it was constructed of bricks.

Arturo Mendez, a spokesman for the institute, said the fragment of inscription had been discovered years ago and has been subject to thorough study. It is not on display and is being kept in storage at the institute.

The "Comalcalco Brick," as the second fragment is known, has been discussed by experts in some online forums. Many still doubt that it is a definite reference to Dec. 21, 2012 or Dec. 23, 2012, the dates cited by proponents of the theory as the possible end of the world.

"Some have proposed it as another reference to 2012, but I remain rather unconvinced," David Stuart, a specialist in Mayan epigraphy at the University of Texas at Austin, said in a message to The Associated Press.

Stuart said the date inscribed on the brick "is a Calendar Round, a combination of a day and month position that will repeat every 52 years."

The brick date does coincide with the end of the 13th Baktun; Baktuns were roughly 394-year periods and 13 was a significant, sacred number for the Mayas. The Mayan Long Count calendar begins in 3114 B.C., and the 13th Baktun ends around Dec. 21, 2012. But the date on the brick could also correspond to similar dates in the past, Stuart said. "There's no reason it couldn't be also a date in ancient times, describing some important historical event in the Classic period. In fact, the third glyph on the brick seems to read as the verb huli, "he/she/it arrives."

"There's no future tense marking (unlike the Tortuguero phrase), which in my mind points more to the Comalcalco date being more historical than prophetic," Stuart wrote. Both inscriptions — the Tortuguero tablet and the Comalcalco brick — were probably carved about 1,300 years ago and both are cryptic in some ways.

The Tortuguero inscription describes something that is supposed to occur in 2012 involving Bolon Yokte, a mysterious Mayan god associated with both war and creation. However, erosion and a crack in the stone make the end of the passage almost illegible, though some read the last eroded glyphs as perhaps saying, "He will descend from the sky."

The Comalcalco brick is also odd in that the molded or inscribed faces of the bricks were probably laid facing inward or covered with stucco, suggesting they were not meant to be seen.

The Institute of Anthropology and History has long said rumors of a world-ending or world-changing event in late December 2012 are a Westernized misinterpretation of Mayan calendars.

The institute repeated Thursday that "western messianic thought has twisted the cosmology of ancient civilizations like the Maya."

The institute's experts say the Mayas saw time as a series of cycles that began and ended with regularity, but with nothing apocalyptic at the end of a given cycle.

Given the strength of Internet rumors about impending disaster in 2012, the institute is organizing a special round table of 60 Mayan experts next week at the archaeological site of Palenque, in southern Mexico, to "dispel some of the doubts about the end of one era and the beginning of another, in the Mayan Long Count calendar." —end.