



12/21/2012: The Game Ball Goes Through the Goal-ring!

by John Major Jenkins

Editor's note: I posed the same 2012-themed questions that we posed to the scholars at the Sixth Annual Maya at the Playa Conference to the man I consider to be the "Godfather of 2012", my good friend, John Major Jenkins. Since he penned The 2012 Story, John offers us another chance to put it all into perspective – at such a poignant point in time.

MayaBall reenactment at Xcaret, Quintana Roo, Mexico.

How aware do you think the ancient Maya were about the precession of the equinoxes?

The evidence, of many types, points to a conceptual awareness of the precessional shifting. The early evidence, from scholars such as Gordon Brotherston, Eva Hunt, and Marion Popenoe Hatch, was summarized in my 1998 book *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012*.

As presented in my 2010 paper at the 75th meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, a Classic Period awareness of the alignment of the solstice sun with the crossroads/dark rift is strongly suggested by the astronomy within the dates on Tortuguero Monument 6. Unless an extremely unlikely level of quadruple coincidence is going on here, this unavoidably points to an ability of the early Maya to accurately calculate precession at the very origin of the Long Count calendar (1st century BCE).

Recent work on Sidereal Year intervals in Maya inscriptions by Michael Grofe, the 3-11 Pik formula by Barbara MacLeod, and my work on the two 2012 inscriptions and the archaeo-astronomy at Izapa, all factor into



Tat Rigoberto Itzep and other K'iche' Maya spiritual guides preside over John Major Jenkins as he makes an offering during the reactivation of the sacred fire ceremony near the Group F Ballcourt, Izapa, 2010.

a definite "yes" for the precession question, in both the qualitative and quantitative domains.

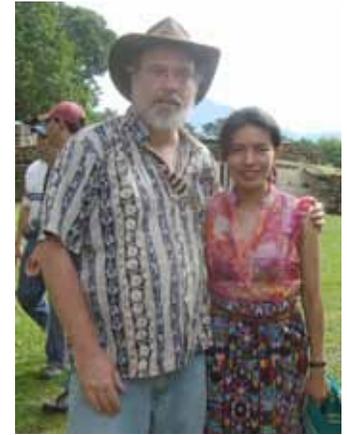
Do you plan to do anything special, or be anywhere particular on 4 Ahau 3 K'ank'in, December 21, 2012?

I will be speaking at "The Great Return" conference in Copan, Honduras, where "2012: The Beginning" – the film that features my work – will be shown (see trailer at www.2012thebeginning.com).

In your opinion, how should our editor show the 13 Bak'tun in the mastheads of our monthly IMS Explorer newsletter?

The Creation Texts at Quirigua refer to the Base Date of the Long Count (in 3114 BCE) as the end of a previous 13-Bak'tun cycle (13.0.0.0.0). But then, all subsequent Long Count dates throughout Maya history are calculated as if this Base Date was conceptually, and mathematically, equivalent to 0.0.0.0.0. This provides evidence for how the Maya conceived of Era (or World Age) cycles within the Long Count system, and a 13-Bak'tun CYCLE is evident. In addition, the 260-day cycle can recycle back to 4 Ajaw after 13 Bak'tuns have elapsed, but it does not do so after 20 Bak'tuns.

At Izapa, which is the culture that many scholars agree was involved in the formulation of the Long Count calendar, we find an interest in solar zenith-passage dates (indicated by the three Group B gnomons) and the December solstice date (indicated by the alignment of the Group F ballcourt). It is striking that August 12 and December 21 are the dates in the tropical year indicated by these monuments – the first day and the last day of the current 13-Bak'tun cycle. Based on these



John Major Jenkins and Ixquic Poz (a Maya representative from Zunil) in the Group F Ballcourt at Izapa, 2012.

considerations, December 22, 2012 should thus be called 0.0.0.0.1. We may thus suspect that a 13-Bak'tun cycle concept was intended at the origin of the Long Count, but later machinations by Classic Maya kings might have introduced other alternative latter-day perspectives generated by other factors.

Janaab Pakal's use of the future 20th Baktun cycle-ending (in 4772 CE), for example, seems motivated by his need to craft rhetoric propaganda, exploiting a circumstance of his accession date. The distinction between intentions at the origin of the Long Count and the unorthodox manipulations of later kings should be explored further, which I do in my forthcoming book *Time Conscious Kingdoms*.

What do you see as the future of Maya studies, now that the hoopla of 2012 will soon be behind us?

Maya scholars came late to treating 2012 seriously as a valid artifact of ancient Maya thought (as documented in my 2009 book *The 2012 Story*). The Tortuguero monument, as of 2006, forced a serious consideration. My focused work on this topic, going back to the 1980s and generating eight books and hundreds of essays and interviews, with presentations in both academic and popular venues, has for the most part not been accurately treated. Ironically, as we now have some scholars recently interpreting how the ancient Maya thought about 2012, we find the same ideas I published years ago being repeated (namely, astronomy and an ideology of period-ending renewal). The "hoopla" in the

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popular marketplace is to be expected, and I have offered critiques of that arena for over twenty years (see <http://Update2012.com>), as summarized in my chapter in Dr. Joseph Gelfer's anthology *2012: Decoding the Countercultural Apocalypse* (2011).

I'm concerned that Maya Studies – having reluctantly been forced to address 2012 by the mainstream attention to it – will possibly, after 2012 passes, return to avoiding the deeper currents of Maya spirituality and the more challenging aspects of reconstructing ancient Maya astronomy. The 2012 topic has apparently been largely an annoyance, notwithstanding the new breakthroughs in understanding Maya astronomy and the two "2012" inscriptions.

Many hope that things will "get back to normal." In anticipation of this regression, I launched the field of "2012 Studies" in 2009 and have now posted over twenty research essays on the website for The Center for 2012 Studies: <http://thecenterfor2012studies.com>. It features my SAA presentation on Tortuguero astronomy and the lengthy and revealing debate with scholars that ensued, sponsored by the Maya Exploration Center in late 2010.

Editor Jim Reed and John Major Jenkins strike a pose along the scenic route to Panajachel, above Lake Atitlán, 2010.



What will be your focus of attention in 2013? Excavation and field work? Research and writing projects?

Well, I'm interested in documenting this period of time and how 2012 has been treated in many sectors of society. I've already compiled a massive dossier documenting all the various exchanges and critiques, running over 20+ years, and the sequence of publications and events by myself and other people, including scholars, writing on 2012. This is in service to future historians wondering what happened and who said what, a necessary precaution since the narrative is already being rewritten and has already been bowdlerized by a biased media. At some point this dossier will be annotated and made publicly available.

Despite these difficulties, I am grateful for all the support from the Institute of Maya Studies through the years, and maybe someday the recording of that slide-show presentation I gave at IMS in 1997 will be released. Thanks to Jim Reed the video of my 2011 presentation at the IMS is publicly available on YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE_WBFEXLnc.

In any case, I do plan to continue my work with The Maya Conservancy while writing and publishing on a wide variety of topics. I also expect more 2012 inscriptions will be found, providing even more evidence for my "2012 alignment theory," and I am open to continuing my research efforts to reconstruct ancient Maya cosmology.

I even have one more book (fiction), touching upon Maya themes, that is lined up for publication next year. An area of interest for some time now has been the traditional books arts, and I plan on producing limited-edition hand-bound books with letterpress printing equipment that I have rescued and restored. My latest offering was released last month and was partially produced in my printing studio. It is formatted as a booklet called *Reconstructing Ancient Maya Astronomy*; check it out at: <http://alignment2012.com/zzz2012-in-2012.html>. 🏠

Editor's Note: I first crossed the Mopan River on this 'ol ferry more than 35 years ago when I lived for 1-1/2 years with some friends who had purchased a parcel of land behind Soccutz, within view of Xunantunich. As Belize prepares for future visitors beyond 2012, this may be the best news yet!

New Ferry Servicing Xunantunich

A familiar fixture of Xunantunich, the original hand-cranked ferry, is destined to a well earned retirement from its home and workplace for the past 37 years. It is intended that this unique and popular icon will find a final resting place within Succutz as a heritage point of interest and pride, for visitors and locals.

Since 1975, the ferry has withstood the tests of nature and time, transporting overnight tourists, schoolchildren, local visitors and more recently, cruise passengers on their journey to discover the sacred world of the Maya. The old ferry was transporting around 50,000 visitors a year and up to 300 visitors a day on peak visitor days.

On November 1, 2012, her responsibilities were taken over by the new Xunantunich Ferry, which was launched and blessed in true nautical style as she embarked on her maiden voyage across the Mopan River. The new ferry is capable of transporting up to four medium SUV vehicles at a time, which is a substantial increase on the capacity of the original vessel, and it can accommodate the higher mini-buses of today's tourism era.

Of course nostalgia has its place and the much loved hand-crank mechanism will continue to perk the interest of all aboard. It does have an installed electrical drive system with a manual backup hand-crank system.



Director of Belizean Archaeology, Dr. Jaime Awe, cranking the new Xunantunich Ferry.

Other improvements in the Cayo area include updating the facilities and interpretation at the archaeological sites of Actun Tunichil Muknal, Cahal Pech and Xunantunich. New bathrooms, trail improvements and interpretation at Cahal Pech are planned for early next year; and new bathrooms and the inauguration of an entirely new visitor interpretation center at Xunantunich are planned for summer 2013. 🏠

Source: www.ambergristoday.com 🏠