

The Ballgame Period-Ending on Xunantunich Panel 3, Clause 3

John Major Jenkins. © August 11, 2016

In May of 2016 new inscriptions were discovered at the Maya site of Xunantunich in Belize. The Mesoweb article was released in August, authored by Christophe Helmke and Jaime J. Awe, titled “Death Becomes Her: An Analysis of Panel 3, Xunantunich, Belize”: <http://www.mesoweb.com/pari/publications/journal/1604/Xunantunich.pdf>.

Part of this discovery, Panel 3, belongs to a larger narrative on other blocks which have not yet been discovered (2016:3). It is part of a stairway from Naranjo, relating to events centrally involving Calakmul, but was relocated to Xunantunich. These inter-regional dynamics are explored in the essay but I won’t treat them here. Rather, I’ll focus on the reconstructed date sequence as found in three clauses, with thanks to the authors.

There are three clauses on the new Panel 3. The careful reconstruction of Distance Numbers and Calendar Round positions on pages 6-7 show that the final date of Panel 3 is 9.10.10.0.0, which is, however, “suppressed.” It is suppressed, or not stated, because “it would have been well known and implicit to the reader” (2016:7). That makes sense, and supports my position, stated in my other essays, that not everything (including astronomy associated with dates) needed to be *explicitly stated* in hieroglyphic narratives, as some Maya epigraphers have assumed.

Lady Batz’ Ek is the mother of Kan II and her death is recorded on Panel 3, on September 23, 638 (given by the authors in the 584286 correlation, which is not a viable and rationally supportable correlation; see: <http://thecenterfor2012studies.com/Review-Martin-Skidmore.pdf> and <http://thecenterfor2012studies.com/2012center-note18.pdf>). She is possibly a royal princess hailing from Yaxha, and it has been “long assumed” that her tomb is probably at Caracol, in “the central building of the triadic temples at the summit of the majestic Caana palatial complex and as such the individual interred in this tomb must have been of paramount importance, particularly given that this is one of the most elaborate and well-furnished interments discovered at Caracol” (2016: 9). However, a 634 AD date in that tomb combined with the new info from Panel 3 cause the authors to conclude (without reservation) that “it is no longer tenable to assume that the B19-2nd tomb is the final resting place of Lady Batz’ Ek” (2016:9).

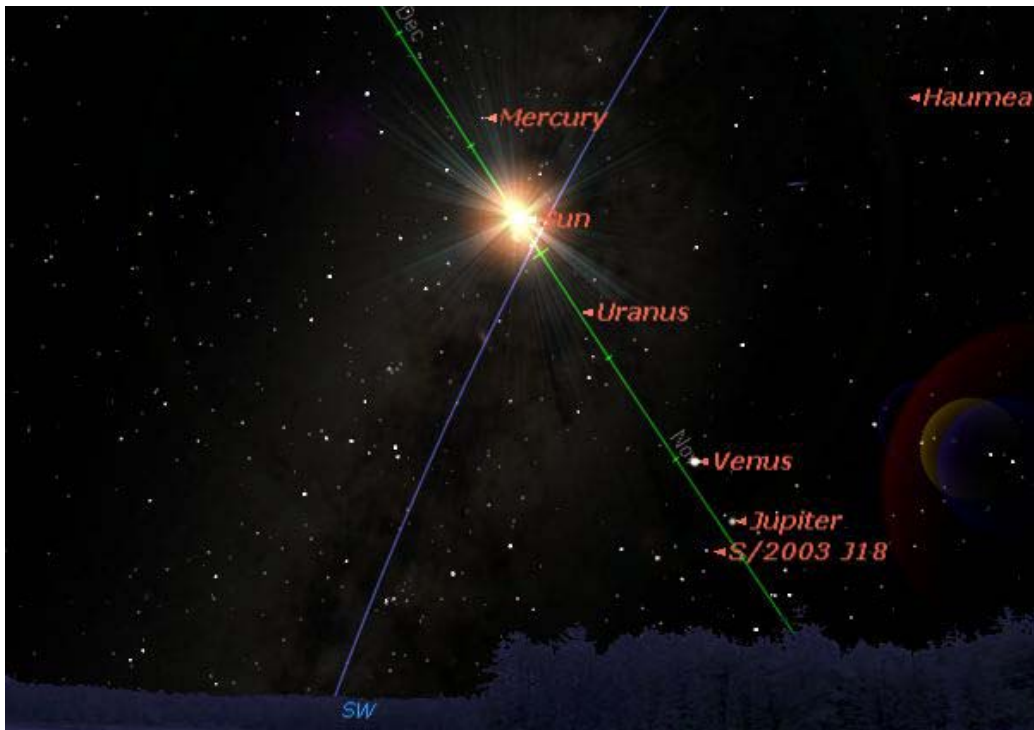
In Clause 2 there is a death statement (July 7, 640, in the 286 correlation) of a male, a Calakmul (“Snake-head” clan) dynast to whom Caracol owed fealty. His royal name (after his accession to the throne) is reconstructed as Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kan, which the authors explicitly point out is reminiscent of Copan’s ruler 18 Rabbit (Waxaklajuun Ubaah K’awil), who was executed roughly 98 years later. In a Clause 2 statement dated 636 AD, four years earlier, this Calakmul king was defeated by Yuknoom Head, who eventually established himself as king of Calakmul and was the father of the Calakmul king, Yuknoom Yichhack K’ak, who commissioned the “2012” inscription found at La Corona, dated to 696 AD. (See <http://thecenterfor2012studies.com/LaCorona-2012.pdf>, <http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/LaCorona2012-StepbyStepguide.pdf>, and

<http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/Yuknoom-birthday-Panel-6.pdf>). Since the Waxaklahun Ubaah Kan who was defeated by Yuknoom Head, in 636, also had an emblem-glyph designation as a Snake-head lord (Calakmul), the authors suggest we have a battle between different contenders to the Calakmul throne, perhaps half-brothers (2016: 11). As such, “Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kan may have been the last of the Snake-head kings to rule at Dzibanche — apparently the seat of the [Calakmul] dynasty in the Early Classic” (2016:11).

Panel 3, Clause 3: A Ballgame of the Creation Mythos on 9.10.10.0?

And now we come to Clause 3 of the newly discovered Panel 3 from Xunantunich. Allow me a brief aside. I visited Xunantunich long ago on one of my early trips in the 1980s, and also in 2008 with a group led by Jim Reed, ex-president of the Institute of Maya Studies and editor of their *IMS Explorer* publication. We got a tour and lecture from Jaime Awe, and I was newly impressed with Xunantunich’s scale and temples.

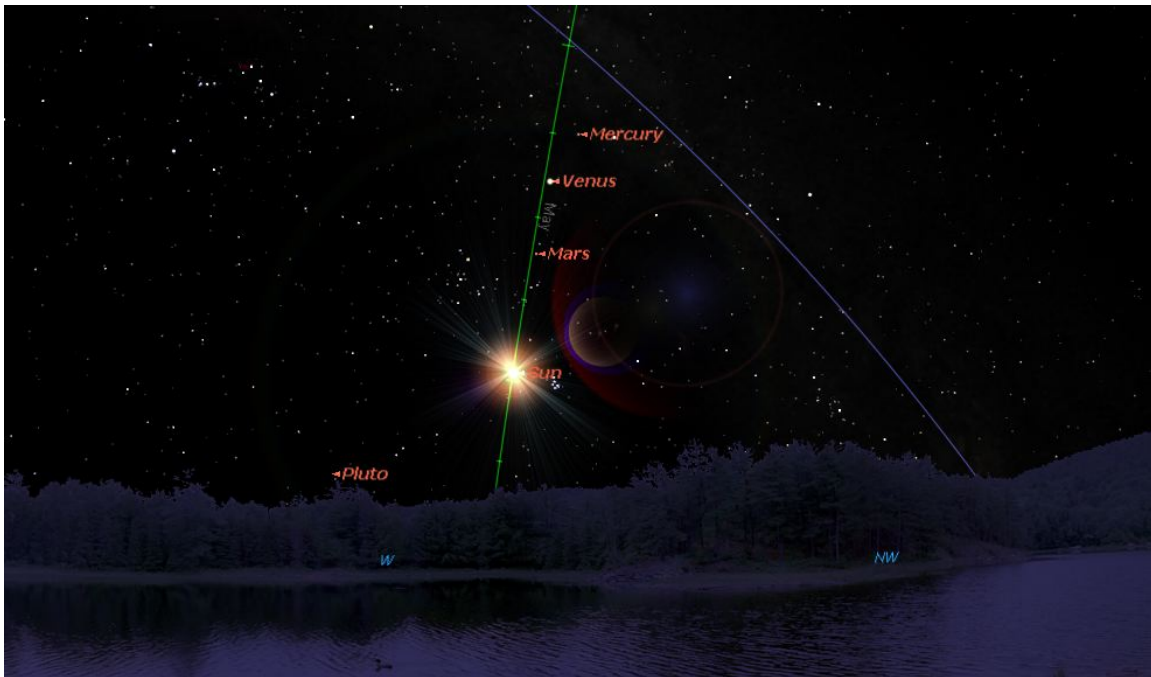
Tantalizingly, “The third and final clause is only partially preserved and apparently would have continued on another panel” (11). So, we might be in for some new surprises as archaeologists make more discoveries. What we do have in Clause 3 is rather striking. The Calendar Round date of the action described is not recorded, but as previously discussed it was suppressed from explicit mention and can be reconstructed as the lahuntun period-ending (half-Katun): 9.10.10.0.0. This date corresponds to December 1, 642 (in the correct 584283 correlation). It is the subject of heir-designation statements by Pakal’s son at Palenque (see pp. 6-7: <http://thecenterfor2012studies.com/review-tedlock.pdf>). The astronomy of this date shows the sun positioned very close to the Dark Rift at the Crossroads of the Milky Way and the ecliptic in Sagittarius:



All that is preserved in the inscription is a verb-action involving a ballgame. Let's recall that Panel 3 was relocated from the stairway at Naranjo, and on two other blocks from the Naranjo stairway (Steps 7 and 11) there are two mentions of ballgames. One corresponds with the date April 29, 627 AD, and involved the predecessor of Yuknoom Head. This important ballgame echoed events of the Creation Mythos, because it

was played in a ballcourt named Ux Ahal Ehbul or the “three conquest stair” (see Martin and Grube 2000:130; Bíró 2013:18-19). This name is that of a legendary ballcourt where the Maize God was decapitated in the distant past, but was also a name attributed to historical ballcourts at a series of different sites across the lowlands, all as material emulations of the mythic precedent (Freidel et al. 1993:353-355). As such, any ballgames played within such courts were in essence replications of mythic events that transpired in the time before creation. (2016:11)

The astronomy of April 29, 627 is striking and will be fully discussed in a moment:



Sun in conjunction with the Pleiades on a primordial solar-zenith passage date

The implications here are quite striking if the astronomy of the dates are considered. Unfortunately, astronomy is something that epigraphers and archaeologists currently rarely consider when offering their interpretations. If the ballgame described above was part of the Naranjo stairway's dynastic narrative that included our Panel 3 inscription, which seems to be the case, then the tacit period-ending of Panel 3 (December 1, 642), which also involved a ballgame, may also have involved a “three conquest stair” ballcourt where legendary events of the Creation Mythos were played out, when the Maize God / First Father deity was decapitated and then reborn. These “Maize God” Creation Myth events reflect the well-known events of the *Popol Vuh* involving One

Hunahpu, whose decapitated head was hung in the crook of the branches of the calabash tree, the Dark Rift in the Milky Way (Tedlock 1996; Jenkins 1998). In this astronomical context, the sun's position on the lahantun period-ending makes sense, as it references the alignment in 2012 that is one bookend of the 13-Baktun Era-period which delineates the timing of World Age creations and renewals (in 2012 AD and 3114 BC).

Curiously, Kan Bahlam at Palenque commissioned a narrative which associated his heir-designation ritual at age seven in 642 — explicitly utilizing the same lahantun period-ending date — with the mythological precedent of GI's birth (or "earth-touching"). That date is November 8, 2360 BC, which *also places the sun at the Dark-Rift/Crossroads* — a sidereal location that was recognized by the ancient Maya and is found in the Maya Creation Myth (Tedlock 1996; Grofe 2011; MacLeod & Van Stone 2012; Jenkins 1998).

The earlier bookend of the recently completed Era period, August 11, 3114 BC, places the sun in the zenith. The latitude associated with the origins of the Long Count, 15° North, defines two solar zenith-passage dates: August 11 and April 29. The Creation Myth ballgame from Naranjo, mentioned by the authors in the quotation given above, falls on a primordial zenith-passage date, preserving even at the different latitude of Naranjo the astronomy of the orthodox 13-Baktun Era Base. This non-local preservation is well-known and understood by Maya scholars. Moreover, April 29, 627 *also has the sun in conjunction with the Pleiades*, suggesting a retroactive idea of the sun in the zenith *with the Pleiades*. I reconstructed how the Pyramid of Kukulcan at Chichen Itza encodes this type of precessional alignment, which at the latitude of Chichen Itza points to the 21st century AD. See: <http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/ChichenItza-Panel-1.pdf>.

Conclusion

On Panel 3 from Xunantunich, it is likely that there is a narrative involving a symbolic ballgame that has relevant astronomical undertones pointing to astronomical alignments, as I've reconstructed in my work, occurring in both 3114 BC and 2012 AD. These are, indeed, locations of events of the Creation Mythos, involving the celestially enthroned Sun God as a mythic prototype emulated by Maya kings as they sought to legitimize their dynastic claims. (He is enthroned in two different cosmic centers, one zenith and one galactic). As the authors conclude: "The other references made to the ballgame, on the hieroglyphic stair found at Naranjo, are mentioned in conjunction with Snake-head kings as their primary agents. As such we can see that there is an intimate relation between the ballgame and the hegemony of the Snake-head overlords" (2016:11). Yes, and this relation was maintained in Yuknoom's use of the ballgame and the 2012 date.

We can only hope that more information will come to light. As it stands, this new discovery, properly analyzed with respect to astronomy, adds more support to the importance of the Dark Rift and the Crossroads, and certain dates that indicate the sun's alignment with those features that are centrally important to the Maya Creation Mythology. I first broached this methodology of looking for these sun-Crossroads alignments in the Maya inscriptions in a letter to Linda Schele, in May of 1994. See pp. 22-23: <http://www.alignment2012.com/HOWWHY1994-2014.pdf>.

1635 words

See also: <http://www.mesoweb.com/pari/journal/archive/PARI1602.pdf>.