



The Ahau Chronicles



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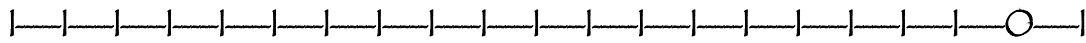


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Long Count: 12.19.19.17.0



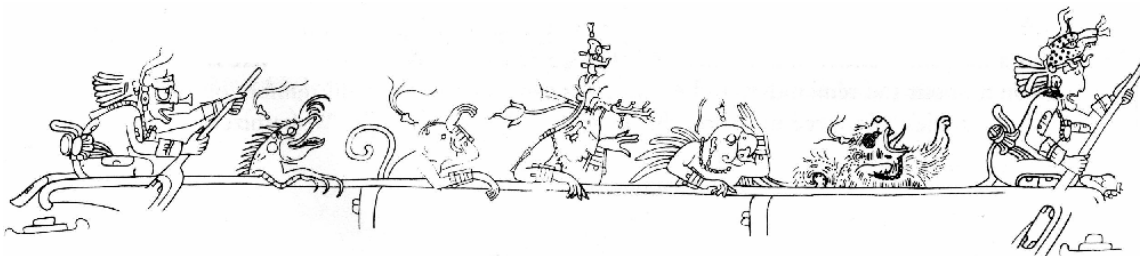
Eclipse Expedition Recap



The moon began to drift in front of the sun as the eclipse commenced. I had never seen the moon look so incredibly huge, five or ten times larger than normal. It also glowed unexpectedly white, as if illuminated by another sun. I waited alongside the great Mayan monolith with mounting anticipation. As the eclipse approached its maximum phase the ground began to shake and light started to shoot from the eyes of the Sun God.



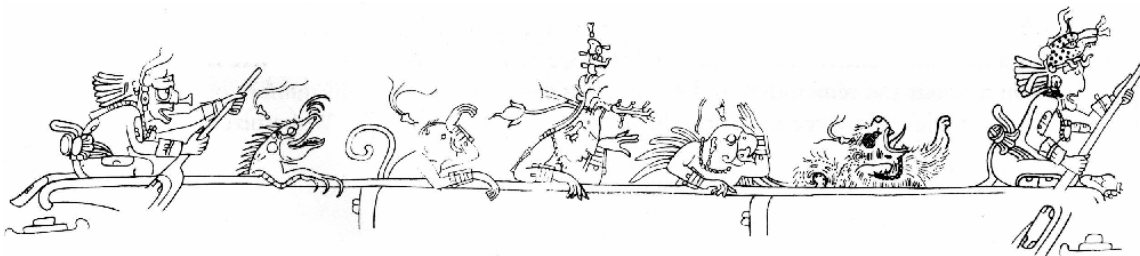
Gripped with unbearable fear I held on to the crumbling volcanic rock as the upper portion of the monument sheared off and crashed down the hill beside me. Pointing my camera up toward the damage I was stunned to see a loin-clothed figure emerge from the forehead of the Sun God. It was the return of Chan Bahlum! He wore a simple headdress of three feathers and carried a walking stick which he then held over his head and shook at the eclipsed sun as if he was angry for being awakened.



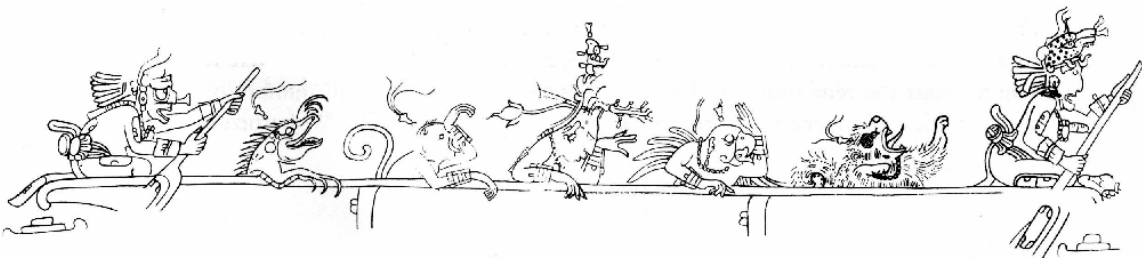
Well, okay, it didn't exactly happen like that but I thought I would take one last swipe at the misleading History Channel movie before it was relegated to the dust-bin of cable TV history. The actual eclipse experience was almost wholly lacking in made-for-TV drama.

On Eclipse Day I departed from the village and hiked over El Mirador with a full pack including my solar telescope. On the path I passed a few people who were making their way to Punta de Isla, the far western point of the island where the Isla Magica group was gathering to witness the eclipse. I descended the far side of the volcanic ridge and made my way toward the Refugio, a cluster of shacks on the way to the monument. From the path high above the shacks I was excited to see a group of people below sitting around a picnic table. What I failed to notice was that they were all dressed in green.

As I hiked on further and approached the Refugio, the first of the group arose and began to walk towards me. He was a CONAF park ranger, lying in wait for me, and he began to ask me in Spanish if I had paid my park admission and if I had permission from CONAF to visit the monument. With shaking hands he took my ticket and then asked for my passport whose number he recorded on a small pad along with my name. When he was finished he told me that if I was hiking up to the monument I was not to pass the "cintas". I struggled to translate the word thinking maybe he was meaning the "fence". I knew that *cinturon* means "belt" but that didn't make much sense either. Confused, I just nodded as if in agreement and he seemed satisfied and finally let me pass. That was when I realized that the rest of the group consisted of three *caribineros*, island police who had also been waiting for my arrival. They approached me and began to interview me, writing down my name, profession, and passport number in a large ledger book.



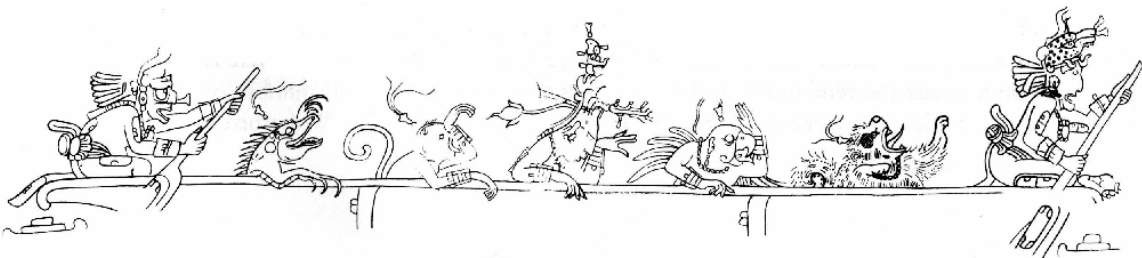
My initial annoyance at this ambush soon turned into mild amusement as the police insisted on accompanying me on my hike to the monument. Though the youngest of the policemen was at least 15 years my junior and his pack likely weighed less than half of my load, I handily beat him up the ridge to the base of the monument. The photos below show the “*cintas*” installed by the CONAF ranger cordoning off the monument.



On our hike to the monument we had picked up Ana and Jorge Palomino who had also been awaiting my arrival. Jorge is the amiable island Post Master as well as pastor for the church. His wife Ana is the eldest daughter of Don Uto, the first park ranger of the island who had passed away during my first visit to the island in 1996. Uto's death was big news back then and I had written a page-and-a-half entry in my travel journal that began with the stark words: "Uto is dead". At the time, Jorge had been administering last rights to Uto and, discussing these events now, Jorge and I both recalled the brief rainstorm in the middle of the night that had accompanied Uto's passing.



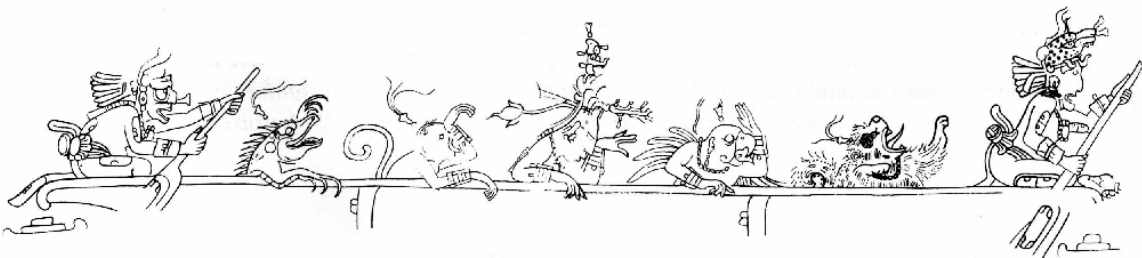
The policemen left us alone at the monument in the hours before the eclipse while they hiked to the *punta* to join the other group. Ana, Jorge and I ducked under the red tape wrapped around the monument and relaxed in Chan Bahlum's garden, the debris field comprising a level terrace alongside the southern flank of the monument. Ana has lived her entire life on the island and Jorge has been there for 32 years and yet, with great pride, I was able to show them for the first time this hidden corner of their island that they had never known. Jorge and I scampered around, assessing the unnatural landscape while Ana gazed meditatively at the beautiful panorama of the El Yunque peak which is afforded from this location. Unfortunately, Jorge needed to open the Post Office the next morning and could not afford the time to spend the night on the far side of the island.



Ana and Jorge needed to hike back to the village before dark and, besides, the low cloud deck did not offer much hope for eclipse visibility. We bid farewell and I was left there alone alongside the monument that had dominated my thoughts for the last 16 years. I positioned myself at the base of the Sun God tower and stared forlornly at the opaque clouds that drifted low across the sky. By extrapolating the sun's rays back to the point of convergence I could tell how high the sun was above the horizon. Darkness began to descend but it was an unnatural twilight, an early approach of night with the sun still high in the sky. The eclipse had begun.



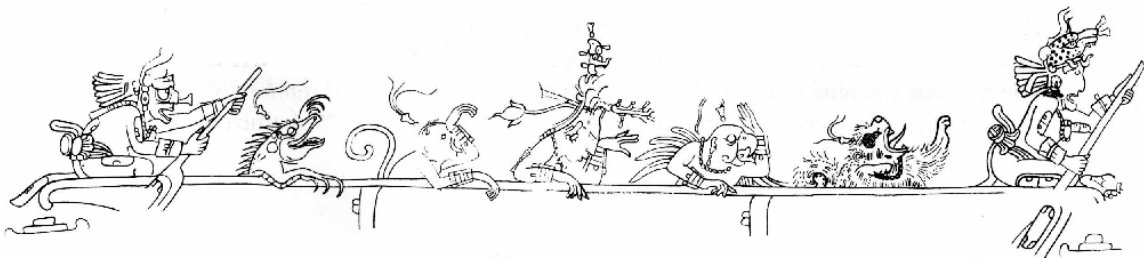
A volatile mix of emotions began to overwhelm me as I thrilled at the prospect of fulfilling my long-time dream while simultaneously grappling with the disappointment that I was likely not to witness the eclipse spectacle itself. Ultimately I would see nothing of the eclipse, not a glimpse through the clouds, not a single second. The defeat was utter and complete. And yet, standing beside the monument I felt a powerful sense of calm envelope me in the strange half-light of that perfectly still evening. The timelessness of the monument expressed itself with its stoic stare and abject silence as the planets continued their eternal dance through the cosmos. I envisioned in my mind's eye the image of the eclipse as I had done so many times in the past. For me, the eclipse was a purely metaphysical spectacle experienced internally, a phenomenon of consciousness instigated across the centuries by the transcendent works of a great Mayan king. The message of Chan Bahlum had been successfully transmitted. Alas, my selfish disappointment only arose because the message was not what I had been expecting. I had hoped for some gaudy made-for-TV drama to prove once and for all the veracity of the great monument that I had struggled to reveal to the world for so long. But the noble king did not stoop to accommodate such trivial mortal desires. Therein lies the message.



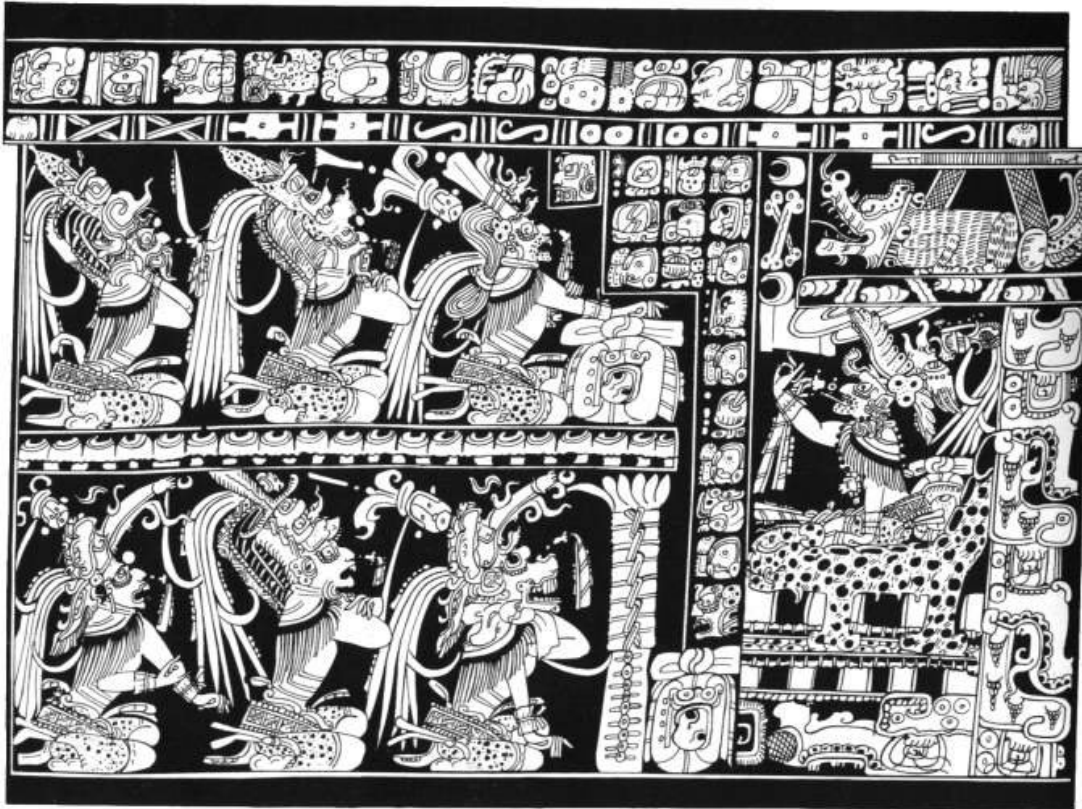
As I stood alongside the monument on that most special of Ahau days I couldn't help but recall that my location beside the Sun God tower lay at precisely 323 meters above sea level, the exact same elevation as the peak of the Morro do Pico on Fernando de Noronha Island off the coast of Brazil. This abstract interplay of altitude, distance, and time linked me to that remote island as well as to the fount of all this knowledge, the majestic jungle city of Palenque in Mexico. The inverted triangle formed by the three circles in the Ahau glyph suggests that the monument located on Robinson Crusoe Island is the god mouthpiece intended to communicate its sacred wisdom to us across the ages. Chan Bahlum has spoken.



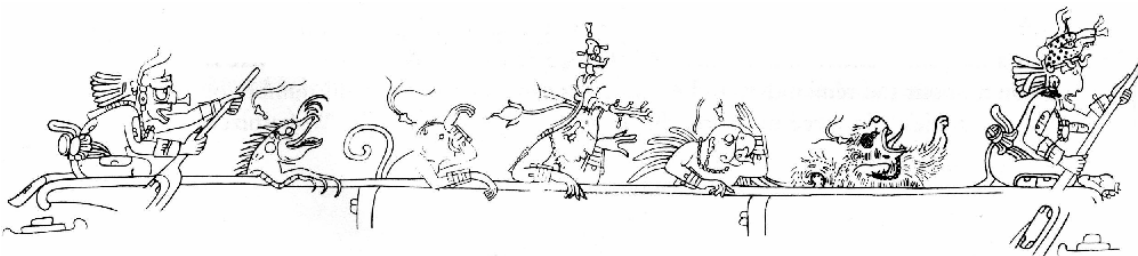
After waiting long past the last moment when a final glimpse of the eclipse would have been possible, I shouldered my backpack and began the second of my nighttime descents from the monument. I made my way back to the shelter of the Refugio in the dark only to find upon my arrival a deserted camp. I was alone once again.



As I lay down on a picnic table to cool off after my grueling hike I looked up toward a quicksilver sky and the blackened shadow profiles of the island surrounding me. The sun had long ago set and taken the new moon with it leaving only starlight to illuminate the thick clouds above. As I cursed my tragic fate having waited more than 14 years for such an utter disappointment, I caught a glimpse of an outline of the island ridge that had always reminded me of a reclining Chan Bahlum with his hand clenched to his chest gazing upwards to the heavens. Gaining a greater perspective, I realized that Chan Bahlum had waited almost a century for every year of my wait. Further west lay Three Point Hill that can resemble Bolon Yok'te, "The Smoker" figure from the Temple of the Cross, in a similar position. The stark monochrome scene reminded me of the "Vase of the 7 Gods" showing a congress of deities assembled in the darkness of the Underworld.



I knew that behind me lay the Sun God tower and crouching jaguar of the monument along with El Yunque, the tallest peak on the island that resembles the Egyptian Sphinx. The entire outline of the island also resembles the wizened profile of an ancient ancestor and so as I lay there I was surrounded by six gods of the Underworld. I envisioned myself as the seventh, the living embodiment of Bolon Yok'te, astride my jaguar throne with my *flacopito*, holding court at the end of the 13th Baktun. The bundles shown above being presented to Bolon Yok'te count eighteen layers, the same number of *uinals* needed to complete the final *tun* of the calendar cycle. This newsletter marks the last *uinal* of the final *tun* of the current cycle when 12.19.19.17.0 rolls over to 13.0.0.0.0.



I am still processing the experiences I had during the eclipse expedition. Besides some transcendent insights which I am certain I had previously intuited, the anti-climax has left me somewhat confused as to the ultimate meaning of the monument. I worry that perhaps I did not make sufficient offerings, that the gods found me wanting and unworthy. Or maybe the revelations are yet to emerge, possibly as early as the next few weeks when the calendar rolls over to the next World Age. Whatever the outcome I am confident that such a grand project, spanning multiple ancient cultures across thousands of years, will end not with a whimper but with a bang.

However, my current project is now coming to a close. The web hosting for the Apocalypse Island website expires on December 18th (coincidentally the 10th anniversary of my father's death) and I do not intend to renew it. I had never liked the movie title which was unilaterally chosen by the History Channel execs. I suspect it has bred some animosity amongst the islanders and it no longer describes the island which is now in a period of vigorous reconstruction. The birth of the next World Age is a perfect opportunity to put the tragedy and loss of recent years behind us and look ahead to a bright new future. R.I.P. Apocalypse Island.



My work will move to a new website, www.chichibel.com, the name that I chose so long ago for the island monument. Here you will be able to find the entire collection of **The Ahau Chronicles** newsletter as well as copies of my travel journals and other pertinent research materials. Since there will no longer be a globally televised movie to promote this work the site will be more private. It will also be harder to find so if this work has inspired you then please share the link with your friends.

The next newsletter will be published December 23, the first day of the next World Age. I look forward to sending greetings from the dawn of the Age of Aquarius.

