The Ahau Chronicles

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3 Ahau 13 Chen

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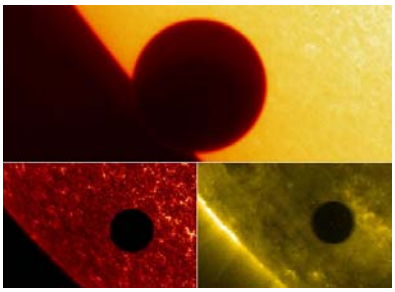
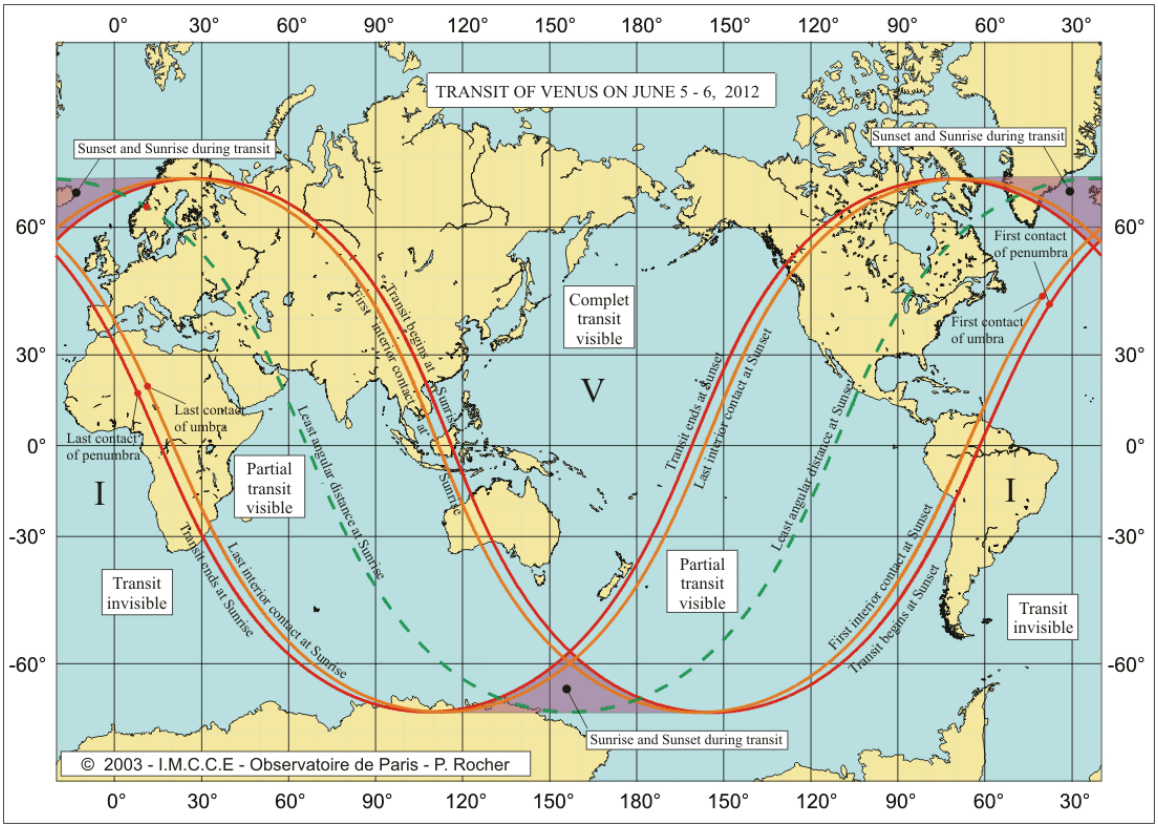


Venus Transit

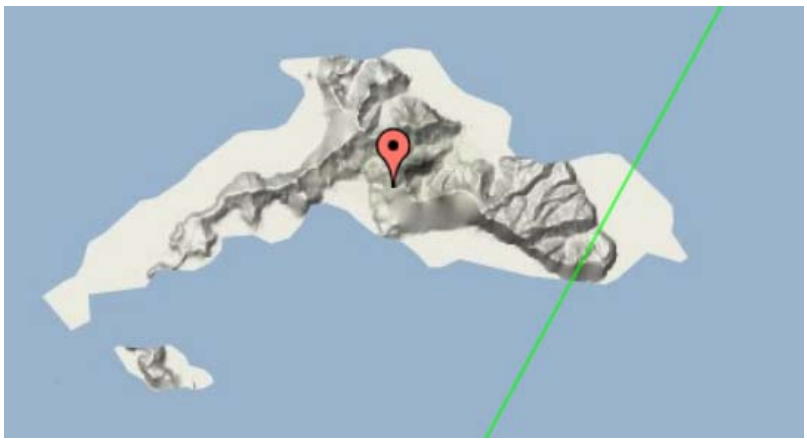
On a beautiful morning more than six years ago I witnessed a Transit of Venus from the beach in Sperlonga, Italy. After waiting through the night, our group greeted the rising sun which soon after experienced First Contact with Venus. For the next six hours we casually watched the dark spot drift across the solar disk. Using only a piece of green welders glass (the same glass through which I filmed the recent solar eclipse) we were able to watch Venus "eclipse" the sun with our naked eyes. The date was June 8, 2004 or 4 Ahau 3 Zotz (12.19.11.06.00) in the Mayan calendar.

The last Venus Transit before 2004 occurred more than 120 years before on December 6, 1882 (*not* an Ahau day*).* We will be lucky enough to have the opportunity to witness another Venus Transit on June 6, 2012, or 12 Ahau 13 Zotz (12.19.19.08.00). Since this date is precisely 200 days before the end of the Mayan Great Cycle, the final day of this grand cycle of 5,125 years is also an Ahau date (December 23, 2012). The next Venus Transit after 2012 will be on December 11, 2117 (*not* an Ahau day).

The interval between the 2004 and 2012 transits is 2,920 days which is exactly five synodic Venus cycles and eight earth years. The 2,920-day interval is the precise duration recorded in each line of the Venus Table in the Mayan book known as the Dresden Codex. An ingenious mechanism incorporated into the Venus Table allows for periodic corrections to account for gradual slippage. But rather than make observational accuracy paramount, it appears that this was subordinated to a ritual need to have the calendar-ending dates occur on the sacred Ahau day.

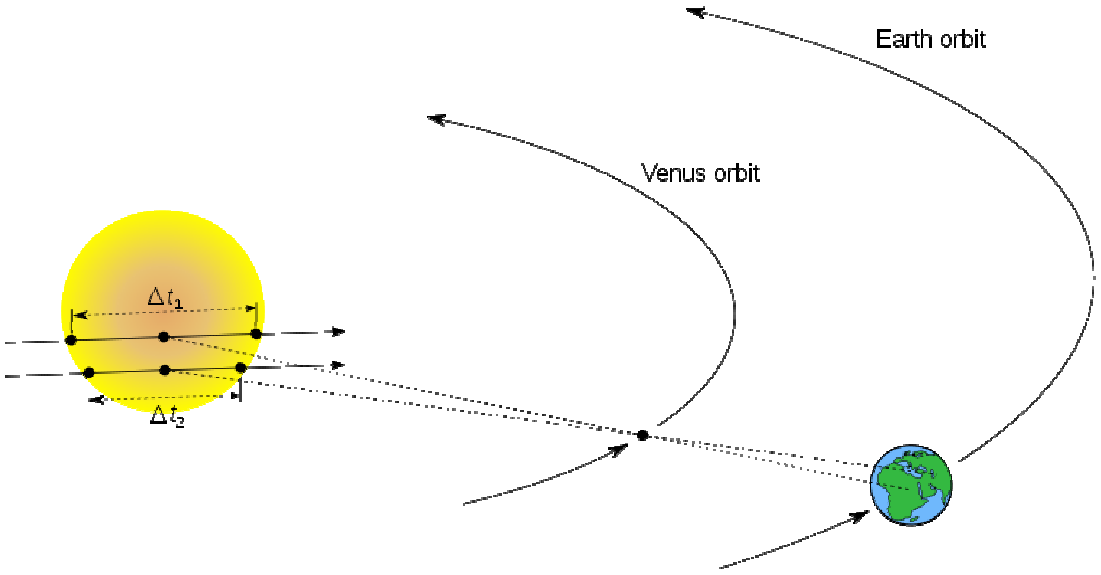


As the map above shows, the 2012 Venus Transit is not visible from everywhere on earth, although about three-quarters of the world will see at least some part of the transit. The 2004 transit was not fully visible from North America which was the reason we chose to go to Italy (besides the excuse for a wonderful vacation!). The 2012 transit is fully visible from Asia, Australia, Alaska and the western Pacific. We claimed in the **Apocalypse Island** movie that the 2012 Venus Transit was visible from Robinson Crusoe Island and the ancient Mayan monument. The green line below corresponds to the limit of visibility with the transit beginning in the west at sunset. The red dot is the monument.



Many people have attacked the representation of the 2012 Venus Transit in the History Channel movie and I can't blame them. As I have said elsewhere, my research was only a creative departure point for a narrative that I was never consulted on. The movie graphic depicting the transit shows the sun vastly larger than it appears in the sky with Venus moving quickly across the solar disk and in the wrong direction. In reality the sun will appear its normal size with the spot of Venus moving almost imperceptibly across. At the precise moment that Venus touches the outer limb of the sun it will be balanced on the ocean horizon as seen from the perspective of the monument. Even though you won't get the gaudy spectacle depicted in the History Channel movie one must nonetheless marvel at the startling accuracy of the Mayan astronomers.

That the precocious Maya should choose such a cosmic event to occur in the final year of their Great Cycle draws our attention and suggests that perhaps they were even more sophisticated than we currently believe. Through observations of Venus Transits and a bit of tricky mathematics one is able to calculate the distance from the earth to the sun, known today as the Astronomical Unit (AU), and thereafter measure the size of the solar system.



Utilizing the phenomenon of parallax (an optical effect much like that which produces the retrograde motion discussed in the last newsletter) during a Venus Transit, two observers at different locations will witness different paths of Venus across the sun. If the observation stations are sufficiently distant from one another (for example, Palenque and Robinson Crusoe Island) the paths of Venus will have noticeably different lengths. If the distance between the two observation stations is known then a little bit of trigonometry will tell you the distance from the earth to the sun.

The final page of the Dresden Codex ends with an image of God L representing Venus. The blackened body hints at the dark face of Venus as it transits the sun while the linear spear may represent the path of the planet during the transit. The sharp tip of the spear could also be seen as a metaphor for the "pinpoint" accuracy needed to calibrate the Mayan calendar with such incredible accuracy.

Through the hieroglyphic inscriptions very conspicuously left for us by the ancient astronomer-priests we come to recognize that they were masters of geography, cartography, astronomy, and time-keeping, among other advanced sciences. Each of these elements were beautifully blended into a system of thought often described as a *cosmovision.* With the cosmic spectacles of 2012 approaching, we are blessed to be spectators at the completion of this Great Cycle and proud participants in the birth of a new World Age. The sublime works of the ancient Maya offer us a glimpse at a unique and coherent reality that has survived and flourished over the course of millennia.