



The Ahau Chronicles



Volume 39

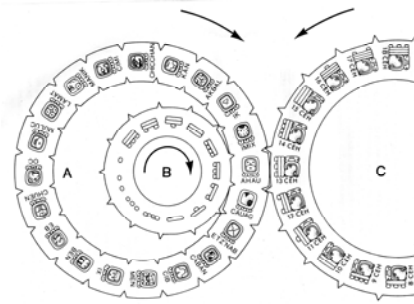
February 7, 2012

Subscribers: 443



9 Ahau 8 Pax

Long Count: 12.19.19.2.0



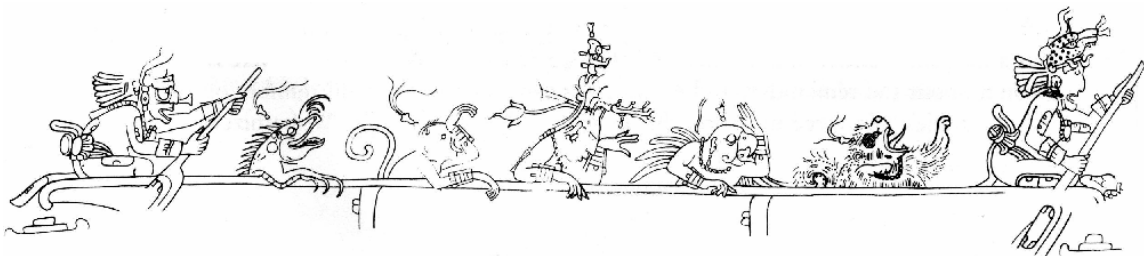
The Mayan Calendar



Since the whole phenomenon of 2012 is predicated on the Mayan calendar it would seem prudent to take some time now to explore its many facets for the benefit of those who might not be so familiar. The calendar is undoubtedly one of the greatest achievements of the ancient Maya and its sublime brilliance was one of the influences that attracted me to the study of this culture. My apprenticeship began during a 5 month road trip to Mexico and Central America in 1995. While camped at Palenque in March, word began to spread amongst my fellow travelers of a gathering at Chichen Itza for the spring equinox. Sensing a momentous occasion, I made the pilgrimage into the middle of the Yucatan Peninsula, arriving a few days before the equinox. Gathered at sunset on the day of the equinox were thousands of fellow pilgrims arrayed around the base of the Temple of Kukulkan, watching as the setting sun created an undulating light “serpent” on the north side of the pyramid.



My imagination was energized by the spectacle and I took to studying the sacred geometry of the great pyramid. I began to reflect on how the architects had made time concrete and had ordered space to reflect the eternal dance of the cosmos. There was something profound in the relics of this ancient people and I embarked on an in-depth investigation into the mysteries they had left behind.



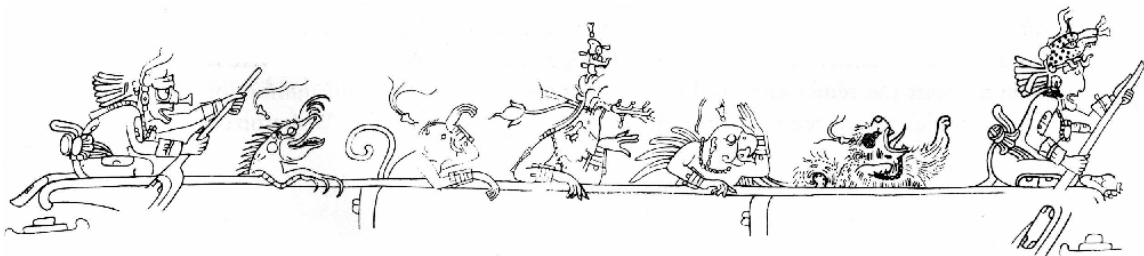
To provide some context for my state of mind at the time, I will remind the reader that I was a recent Philosophy graduate exploring the world in the final years of the Second Millennium of our calendar. Before the anti-climactic “Y2K” problem had begun to cause people to fret over their computers, I was actively grappling with the weighty issues attending the end of a thousand-year period. Artists will speak of a decadent and irrational “*fin de siècle*” attitude that characterized the birth of the 20th Century but I felt that we were looking at a change at least an order of magnitude greater.

The mysterious hieroglyphs that attended most of the sacred inscriptions at Palenque were typically initiated with a long series of glyphs in the upper left corner that recorded the Long Count date of the inscription. The ubiquity of these dates and their prominent position in the sacred inscriptions suggested great importance and so I tried to imagine what life was like when perceived from within the time-obsessed worldview of the ancient kings. Living in a thatched-roof palapa with no electricity had already begun to transition me into a more natural relation with nature and the cosmos. For certain weeks of each month, the moon would provide an eerie light that allowed evening adventures, whereas during New Moon the darkness would envelope us shortly after sunset. The stunning night sky became my companion, especially when I would venture into the ruins after dark and gaze at the Milky Way from the tops of Chan Bahlum’s temples. As I grew more familiar with the temple inscriptions it became obvious to me that I needed to study the calendar that formed the basis of these works.

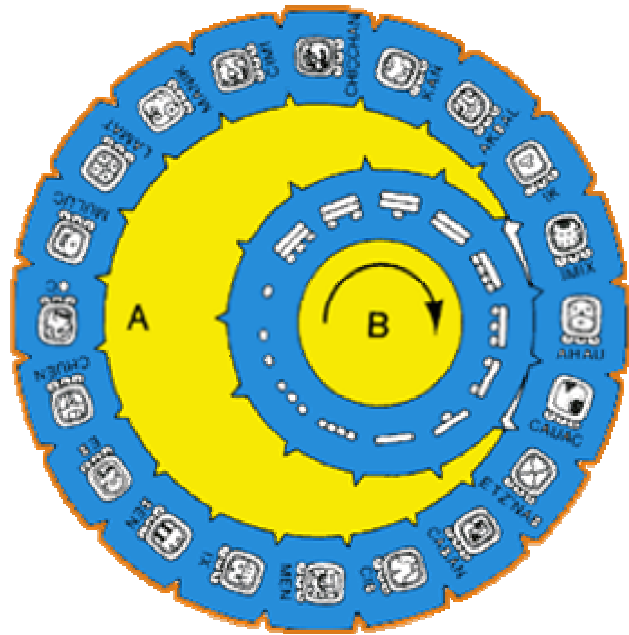
Later, while traveling into Guatemala and the surrounding Central American countries I was introduced to living Maya who still revered the old calendar and who were still making offerings to the various calendar gods. By now I was totally entranced by the ancient lifestyle being played out in front of me and I began to study the Maya calendar, which is actually a series of distinct calendars that inter-relate much like a series of gears, endlessly clicking forward with the passage of each day.



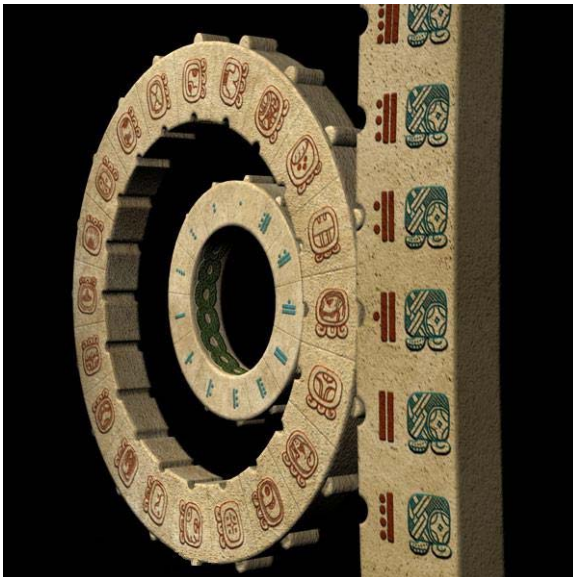
The first calendar that I learned of was the sacred “*tzolk’in*,” based on a 20-day round that begins and ends with the important “Ahau” day for which this newsletter is named. A graphical representation is shown at left where the 20th glyph for Ahau is held by a tump line against the head of a seated figure. This depicts the core belief that time is carried as a “burden,” borne forth by the gods whose favor is garnered by the observant supplicants on earth who make sacred offerings.



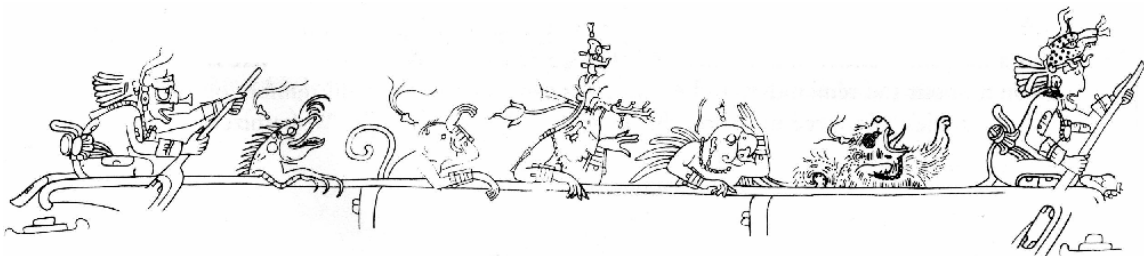
The 20 days of the *tzolk'in* are intermeshed with a series of 13 numbers as shown by the graphic at right. Using the bar-and-dot number system (where each dot is equal to 1 and each bar is equal to 5) the date shown is 8 Ahau. As the gears roll forward the dates would progress: 8 Ahau, 9 Imix, 10 Ik, 11 Akbal, etc. Since 13 and 20 do not share a common factor the earliest point at which a given date will repeat is after 260 (13x20) days. This 260-cycle is called the *tzolk'in* or “count of days.”



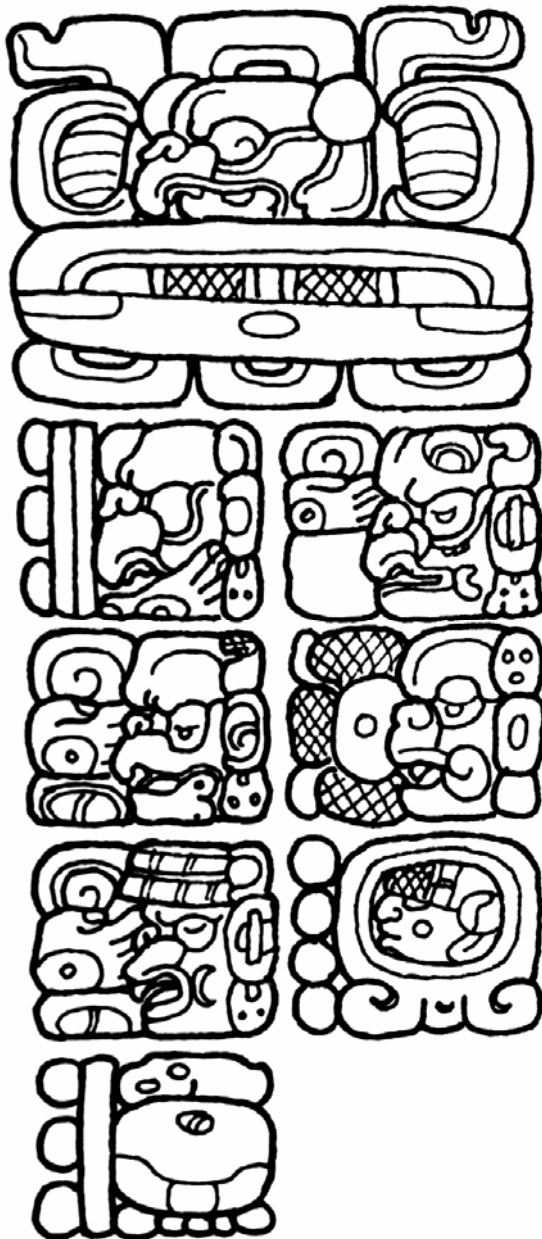
As I adjusted to an otherwise unstructured life on the road during my travels, I reflected how our modern calendar structures our lives and even permeates our consciousness. The 7-day cycle that dictates our workaday existence, though based loosely on the phases of the moon, is nonetheless an artificial construct created by man. With leisure time in abundance, I couldn't help think of how the 5-days-on-2-days-off rhythm seemed oppressively work-oriented and even somehow detrimental to our mental and spiritual health. I wondered how the Maya had structured their lives around day counts of 13 and 20 days in length.



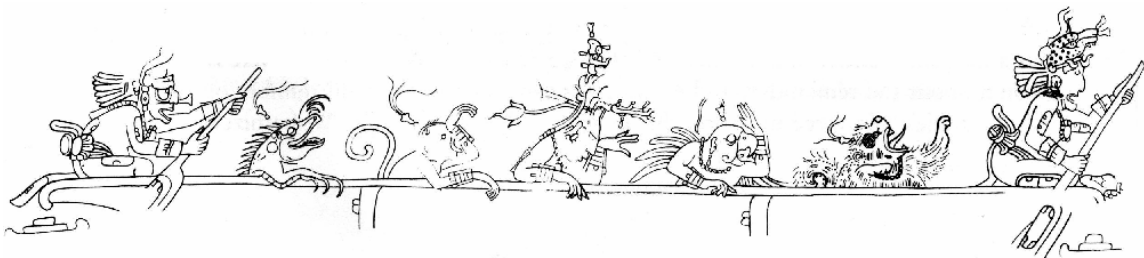
Another calendar, called the *haab*, was based on the vague solar year of 365 days. This calendar consisted of 18 months of 20 days each plus a period of 5 days at the end of the year known as the *Uayeb*. The *haab* meshes with the *tzolk'in* as depicted at left where the *haab* date shown progresses as 11 Pop, 12 Pop, 13 Pop, etc. When taken together the two calendars give us a “Calendar Round” date, such as the 11 Eb 11 Pop date shown here. By comparison, the Calendar Round date of this newsletter is 9 Ahau 8 Pax.



The 5-day period at the end of the *haab* was considered to be an unlucky time of bad omens. These “epagomenal days” were also observed by the ancient Egyptians, who used them to balance out their civil calendar of twelve 30-day months ($12 \times 30 = 360 + 5 = 365$). It would seem that the calendar-ending periods, liminal stages that must be overcome to begin anew, were very much a part of the fabric of the Maya worldview. As we carry the burden of time forward into the future it becomes incumbent upon us to successfully transition into each new period. For larger cycles, the transition becomes more important and transcendent and we are now approaching the end of the largest period, the completion of the 13th Baktun and the 5,125-year Mayan Great Cycle.



In addition to the *tzolk'in* and *haab* calendars, the Maya also utilized the “Long Count” system which counted 20-day cycles forward from a distant Creation Date, much as our calendar counts forward from the birth of Christ. The current creation began on a day 13.0.0.0 4 Ahau 8 Kumku, as shown at left from Quirigua Stela C. The zeroes in the Long count date represent the completion of the previous 13th Baktun and the birth of the current World Age. Today’s Long Count date is 12.19.19.2.0, indicating that we are nearing the completion of the current 13th Baktun. Reading from the top of the inscription at left, we begin with the Initial Series glyph which places the Long count date within the respective World Age. The next glyph shows the bar-and-dot number 13 with the glyph for “baktun.” Reading left to right and down the rows we see the next set of four glyphs showing 0 *katuns* (7,200 day periods or 20 *tuns*), 0 *tuns* (360 day period or 18 *uinals*), 0 *uinals* (20 day period) and finally 0 *kins*. The last two hieroglyphs are the Calendar Round date representing 4 Ahau 8 Kumku. The current 13th Baktun will reach completion on December 23, 2012 or 13.0.0.0 4 Ahau 3 Kankin.



The correlation of the Long Count date with our current era is a contentious issue. Many people favor the “Goodman-Martinez-Thompson” or GMT correlation which matches the previous Creation Date of August 11, 3313 BC with the Julian Day Number 584,283 and thereby ends the current creation on the solstice of December 21, 2012. However, there is a competing correlation constant known as GMT+2 or the 584,285 correlation that places the end of the 13th Baktun on December 23, 2012 as I have shown above. My research relies heavily on GMT+2 to align the cosmic events of 2012 with the sacred Ahau day of the *tzolk'in*.



During my Master's thesis research I studied the Dresden Codex Venus Table. This brilliant document tracks the movement of Venus across centuries by correlating the synodic period of Venus with the solar year into a cycle of 2,920 days ($5 \times 584 = 8 \times 365$). A single 2,920-day cycle is represented across a single line of the Venus Table. The graphic at left shows the final page of the table where each line concludes on the sacred Ahau day, shown in red. It seemed to be of critical importance to the Maya for the Venus Table to conclude on the Ahua day. Incidentally, the Venus Table is followed in the Dresden Codex by the Eclipse Table.

The insistence on ending the Venus Table on Ahau dates is echoed in the cosmic events of 2012 when one uses the GMT+2 or 584,285 calendar correlation. The Transit of Venus on June 6, 2012 becomes an Ahau day as does the November 13 Total Solar Eclipse. The calendar ending is also an Ahau date, although that is predicated by the structure of the calendar and would occur regardless of the correlation coefficient used. However, given the importance of the Ahau day related to Venus in the Dresden Codex and the coincidence of the Eclipse Table following immediately after the Venus Table, the evidence is suggestive that celebrating 2012, the final year of the calendar, was the original goal of the calendar itself. The earliest known uses of the calendar are more than 2,000 years old, including La Mojarra Stela 1 which records a solar eclipse. To recognize that we are now within the final year of this grand cycle of time and that we will be witness to the cosmic events predicted so long ago must certainly give one pause to wonder at the mysterious and magical possibilities that could be in store for us.

