



The Ahau Chronicles



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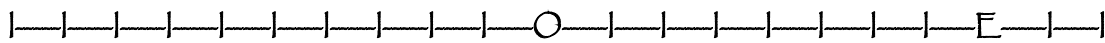


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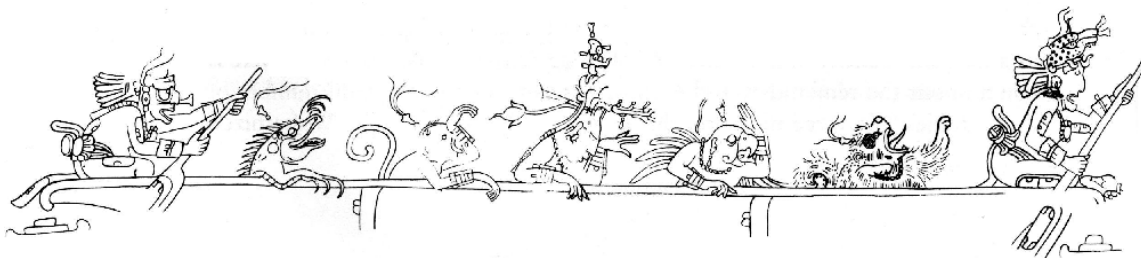
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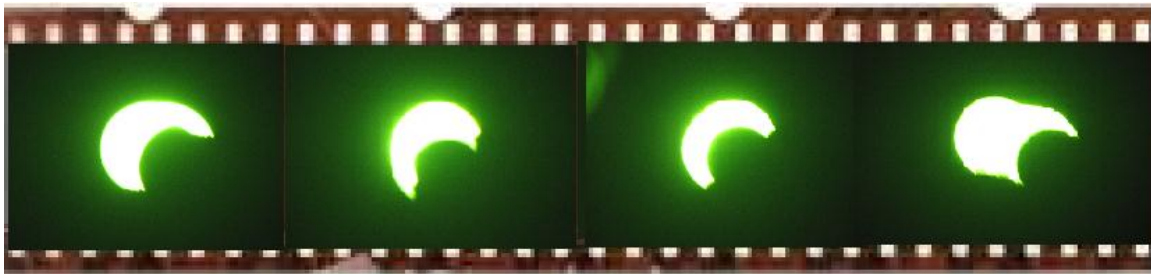
Cosmic Triple Play



Since the publication of the last newsletter 20 days ago, a stunning trifecta of cosmic events has occurred which has signaled the final countdown to the end of the Mayan Calendar in December of this year. On May 20th, an annular eclipse awed viewers across two continents with a ring of fire as the moon slid stealthily in front of the sun. Half a lunar cycle later, the earth crossed between the sun and moon in the early morning hours of June 4th, creating a partial lunar eclipse with one-third of the moon's face darkened by an ominous reddish shadow. This was a harbinger of the rarest of cosmic spectacles, the Transit of Venus, which occurred the next evening on June 5th, the last of its kind for more than 105 years. Though I had foreseen all of these events coming and made valiant long-distance journeys to witness them, their cumulative effect was unexpected. In rapid-fire succession, the visible movement of time overtook my ability to comprehend and I am left transformed as we count the final months to the November eclipse on Robinson Crusoe Island and the fulfillment of our long-awaited destiny.

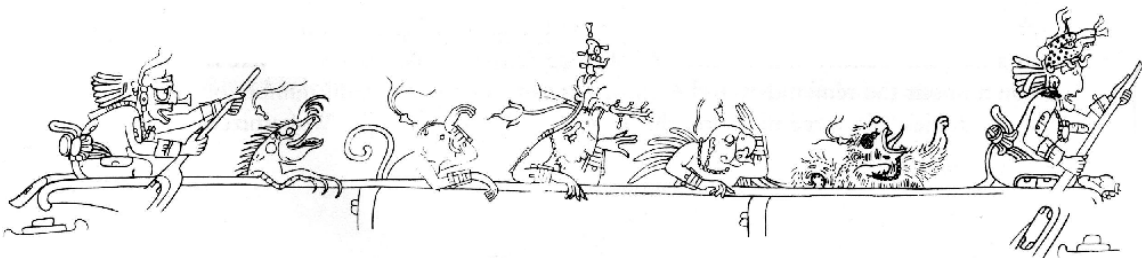


The first event I witnessed from outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico, on the tabular mesa with 20-mile views to the horizon. Ben Earthwalker has created a series of labyrinths which force the participant to contemplate the sacred ground beneath their feet while the impending eclipse further accentuated the energy coursing from the earth. I set up my new solar telescope and pointed it toward the eclipsing sun. The telescope became the star of the show with people lined up 20 deep to look through the eyepiece. It is to the right of the standing stone in the photo above and I am proud to say that anyone who gazed through it came away with a new appreciation of the massive thermonuclear storm at the center of our solar system. I had lent my favorite eclipse glass to a fellow eclipse-watcher so that she could try to photograph the eclipse. Instead, I made due with another #14 welders glass held in front of my camera. Unfortunately, my only tripod was supporting the solar telescope so I was left to shoot my eclipse photos from the hip. The mediocre results are shown below, with enough unintentional movement on the long exposures to make them almost unrecognizable. Trust me, it was an amazing spectacle!



www.davidschneiderphotography.com

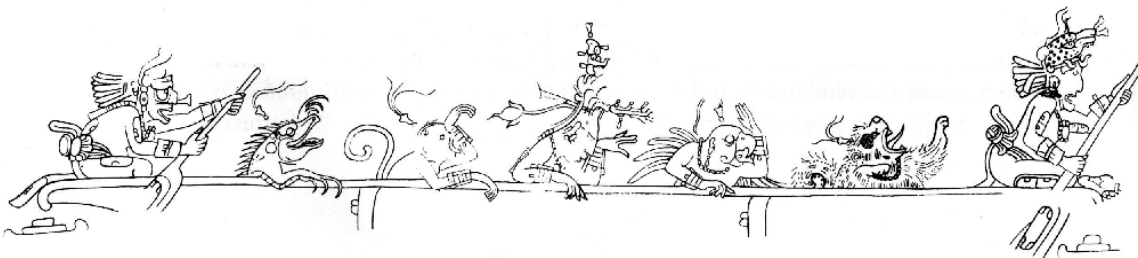
Thankfully I have some talented acquaintances who know how to use their cameras with more skill than I do. Here is a photo sent to me by David Schneider who was also outside of Albuquerque. He emailed me this photo showing the eclipse at maximum phase, when 96.5% of the solar disk was covered by the wayward moon. For more of David's work, follow the link to his website. The eclipse event was an incredible experience with many magical folks in a mystical environment. Debbie Marue was especially great as she opened the labyrinth and blessed the sacred directions.



With the rare Transit of Venus approaching I then flew to Hawaii to position myself in one of the optimum viewing locations in the Western Hemisphere. The benefit of this move was that it allowed me to view the partial lunar eclipse that was centered over the Pacific Ocean. After waiting until midnight, I noticed the first dimming of the moon early Monday morning by squinting my eyes at the bright lunar disk. Soon after, a noticeable bite was taken out of the moon. The photo below was taken from the balcony of my condo shortly after the eclipse had reached its maximum phase. I fell asleep early the following evening and was recharged for the Venus Transit adventure of June 5th.



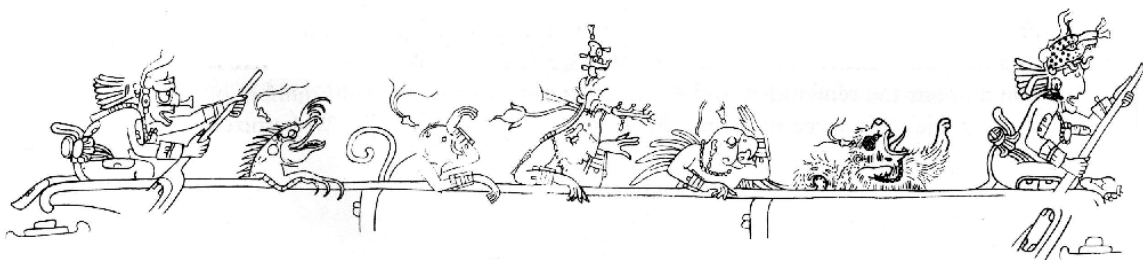
The morning of June 5th dawned slightly overcast, a sharp contrast to the perfectly blue skies that I had observed for the five days previous. Fearing a scorching afternoon on an exposed beach, I had resolved to depart for the famed Green Sand Beach after First Contact, when Venus had already begun its six-and-a-half hour journey across the face of the sun. However, with clouds overhead at my first location, I quickly packed up and sped toward South Point where the weather prospects looked more promising.



Although my guide book had warned about the difficult drive to Green Sand Beach, a warning that was echoed by a helpful Hawaiian youth at the parking area where the asphalt ended, I decided to take my chances with the rental car and headed out onto the raw lava toward my destination. With spotty clouds above, I pulled over to observe the dark spot of Venus through the protective shades I had picked up a few days before at the Imiloa Astronomy Center in Hilo on the University of Hawaii campus.



While the miniscule dot of Venus crossing the sun confirmed that the transit had indeed begun, I was obsessed with getting to the Green Sand Beach and setting up my solar telescope to view it in Hydrogen-Alpha wavelengths at higher magnifications. Unfortunately, the road was **ridiculously** difficult and was easily **THE MOST INSANE** driving I have ever done in my life. Chunky lava rock appeared all over the random pathways that criss-crossed the southern-most landmass of the USA while I bobbed and weaved to save the suspension of my vehicle. Endless challenges to my driving ability and poor judgment presented themselves one after the other, each precipitous drop or ruined pathway a fresh insult to my road-tripping pride. It wasn't until we were within view of the cove that erodes the green sand that I began to doubt the trustworthiness of my ride and made the bad decision to try to back up from a particularly threatening drop. That's when the front end dipped low and ripped the entire bumper from the vehicle.





While the Green Sand Beach was certainly stunning, the cloud cover prevented any observations of the sun. After an equally harrowing drive back to the overcast condo I arrived home and pulled up the NASA transit coverage online. The photo below shows me in Hawaii watching the Transit of Venus as seen from Mauna Kea, broadcast from the famous observatory some 13,000 cloudless feet above me. Better luck next time!

