



IMS Explorer

Our Explorers of the Month are a dynamic duo of Mayanists. They recently released a book that integrates new insights and information from the fields of astronomy, archaeology, ethnography, and iconography.

A monthly newsletter published by the **Institute of Maya Studies**



July 18, 2012 • Maya Long Count: 12.19.19.10.4 • 4 K'an 7 Xul • G6

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The Transit of Venus and the Self-Sacrifice of Hun Ajaw

by Michael J. Grofe, Ph.D.

Hopefully you were aware of the important astronomical events that we recently experienced in 2012. In late May and early June of this year, we witnessed a series of rare events involving an annular eclipse of the sun on May 20, followed by a partial lunar eclipse on June 4, and the rare transit of Venus on June 6.

The transit of Venus usually occurs twice every century in pairs separated by eight years, while the close pairing of the transit with an eclipse event is even more rare. The last such event took place on June 3-4, 1769, with a solar eclipse occurring only several hours after the transit.

There is no evidence that the Maya knew about the exact transit of Venus, which involves the rather difficult Earth-based observation that Venus passes directly in front of the sun during inferior conjunction.

However, it is clear that the Maya and the peoples of Mesoamerica took notice of the heliacal rise of Venus as morning star immediately following its inferior conjunction, approximately every 584 days. We'll explore how the Maya recorded and symbolized this movement in their astronomical tables and in many parallel mythological stories.

From the Dresden Codex Venus Table (**Fig. 1**), it is evident that Maya astronomers were particularly interested in the return of the heliacal rise of Venus to the day 1 Ajaw, associated with the Hero Twin Hunahpu in the *Popol Vuh*. Together with his brother Xbalanque, Hunahpu sacrifices himself in the fires of Xibalba.

Fig. 1: Fifth page of the Dresden Codex Venus Table. Page 50, Dresden Codex. Courtesy FAMSI.



Fig. 2: Resurrection Plate. K1892 ©Kerr June 6, 1998.

As the story goes, the bones of the twins were burned, ground up like maize, and cast into a river. Five days later, it is said, they were reborn as "fish-men". Elsewhere (Grofe 2009), I have explored this fascinating story and its remarkable similarity with a Central Mexican story from the *Anales de Cuauhtlan*. In this version, Quetzalcoatl similarly burned himself in a great pyre at the edge of Veracruz after being cast out of Tula. His ashes sank beneath the water, and several days later his heart appeared in the east as the brightly burning Venus.

Stan Iwaniszewski (1995) notes that Quetzalcoatl was said to be in the underworld of Mictlan for a total of eight days, which symbolizes the movement of Venus at the end of its role as evening star as it seemingly dives into the burning sun, whereupon it then disappears for about eight days during inferior conjunction, and it re-appears as the brilliant morning star before sunrise.

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July 2012

ISSN: 1524-9387

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July 18, 8 pm



"Bolon Octe and Venus in the Dresden Codex"

with **Victoria R. Bricker, Ph.D.**



Jim Reed,
Editor

The *IMS Explorer* newsletter is published 12 times a year by The Institute of Maya Studies, Inc. 3280 South Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida 33129. The Institute is a non-profit corporation. The newsletter is available to IMS members and by subscription. See Membership Application on page 7. ©2012 I.M.S. Inc.



Part II: My Visits with the Lacandon

By **Hilario Hiler**

As I mentioned at the conclusion of Part I, when I learned that the legendary Chan K'in Viejo was living in Najá village as the chief, and prayed to the Maya Gods, I knew that I had to go visit him ... and his community. I felt a strong urge to go and spend some time in Najá.

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I was able to do this with friend Barbara Benary in 1984. We took a pickup truck from Palenque to Najá and had the good fortune to spend ten days there. We both were, after some time of hanging around the airstrip, invited to hang our hammocks in a very nice *choza*, right next to Chan K'in's three houses. In our thatched oval room, right next to a wood table, was a pyramid of cigarette butts. These were the work of Don Roberto Bruce, who smoked tobacco and drank *white lightning*, though from the empty bottles in his house, I could see he preferred Scotch.

We had the great fortune, perhaps also because I spoke Mayan, of being invited to stay in his palapa, right next door to the big man, Chan K'in. We were told that Robert was in Mexico City and would not mind us spending a few days in his place.

For our visit to Najá, Barbara and I had brought along three bottles of red wine, which we shared with Chan K'in. We did not see a lot of him, but his many children were around us most of the time, and I became good friends with Chan Bor, a deaf-mute son of Chan K'in's and Koh Three, his mother.

This boy would visit us daily, and bring us hot tortillas, radishes, cilantro chili, boiled beans, fruit, and other things to eat. We would give him drawing books and colored pencils and sometimes a little money and chocolate candy.

We were not bothered by fleas (the worst experiences were the times I had spent in Lacanjá), as this house was clean and closed, so that the dogs did not live inside the house with us.

Chan K'in told me he liked red wine and it did help to make him more talkative. We had three very nice meetings with the help of the three bottles. Later, I sent back one more upon our return to Palenque to be given to him. It



A very informative website covering the cultural heritage of the Lacandon is maintained by the University of Victoria, at: <http://web.uvic.ca/lacandon>

was red wine, since the Maya have a preference for red and especially favor one labeled Castilan Ke.

During these talks, I asked him who was the God in power at this time now. He always answered, *Huch ak yum* or *Hunaku* (the one true God), but also right now *Akyantho* had a lot of power. I asked him who is *Akyantho*? And he said it was the God of the foreigner and merchant-businessman.

Chan K'in's belief system can probably be traced back to the Olmecs of ancient times. The Lacandones may therefore have the oldest unbroken religious and cultural tradition on earth today. Chan K'in prayed in the God House every day, I believe for a good harvest, health, a life of no war, to alleviate human suffering, and most of all to care for

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IMS Explorers of the Month:

Harvey and Victoria Bricker

Harvey and Victoria Bricker are Emeritus Professors of Anthropology at Tulane University

and Courtesy Professors of Anthropology and Research Associates of the Florida Museum of Natural History at the University of Florida. Harvey M. Bricker is an

archaeologist who received

his Ph.D. in anthropology from Harvard University. His early research was in French Palaeolithic archaeology. He was associated for many years with the excavation and analysis of a prehistoric rockshelter at Les Eyzies, in the Périgord region of southwestern France, and he directed the excavations of a late Neanderthal site in the French foothills of the Pyrénées. Since the early 1980s, he has collaborated with Victoria Bricker in a program of research on Maya archaeoastronomy. Victoria R. Bricker is a cultural anthropologist who received her

Ph.D. in anthropology from Harvard University. Her fieldwork in Mexico includes several years with the Tzotzil-Maya Indians of highland Chiapas, investigating their ritual humor. Since 1971, she has carried out research on the Maya language of Yucatan, including ethnobotanical research for a Maya-English dictionary. Together, they now focus on the astronomy present in the Precolumbian Maya codices.

Victoria Bricker will present a new program for the IMS on July 18, see the event announcement on page 7.

Part II: My Visits with the Lacandon

By **Hilario Hiler**

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Mother Earth. Those who knew him understood that this man really believed in the sacredness of the earth.

The nights were cold and we got the last truck out just before a real cloud burst of rain washed out the white road for several days. I mean Barbara was ready to terminate our visit and ready to get back to civilization, so it worked out very well for us both.

Chan K'in left us in 1998, just as he said he would. The flame that was kindled over three millennia ago still burns in the God House of Najá, and other parts of the high jungle communities, of which today, there are few. But it burns low and flickers. Then it brightens as I have learned that a number of younger Lacandon men and women carry on the old belief system, returning to the "old" style life in some ways. Some are removing their cowboy hats, jeans and boots, and returning to a modern-traditional way of being Lacandon Maya, and proud of it.

While in Najá, we sometimes, talked about Lacandon cooking. They said that they lacked the large variety of spices that could be found where I come from in Chichimila. Here, it is worth mentioning that all indigenous people fast at certain times. When they eat the first food after a fast, most often it's prepared without salt, pepper or other spices.

I have heard of, but have not found a cookbook on Lacandon



Kimbor, Najá, 1959, by Trudi Blom.
©2007 Asociación Cultural Na Bolom A.C. / Gertrude Blom bearing witness, Alex Harris and Margaret Sartor, The University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

There are only a handful of images of Chan K'in publically available.

This one is courtesy of the online PopuLarte photo gallery of the Universidad Veracruzana.



cooking. Of course the person who authored this book thinks it's great food and it is simple Maya food, good food I am sure. Most all of them do slash and burn farming, have their fruit trees and vegetable gardens, and if they wish so, may get two harvests a year in the rain forest. They supplement their diet with jungle meat.

To me, meeting the Lacandon Maya people was a very helpful experience. If I had a way, I would go see the new younger generation at Najá day after tomorrow. I'd like to get a feel for the atmosphere and to witness the changes that have taken place in Najá.

The "Leo" Sidebar

For now, however, please let me recount the "Leo" story that ties in with my Chan K'in story. The Leo Bruce story was completely written, but then seems to have erased itself. This is not the first time this has happened. So, I now rewrite the "Leo" sidebar notes for you here:

Young Leo J. Bruce was walking by the beach in downtown Akumal when I was working as a dive guide and PADI scuba instructor at the original Akumal dive shop. I went out to meet him and invited him to my home so that we could continue to share information about the Lacandon Maya and his relative, Dr. Robert D. Bruce, whose office (palapa hut) was built right next door to Chan K'in's. This was the same hut that had accommodated us in Najá a few years before.

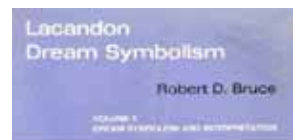
We had an enjoyable conversation and upon his leaving, he agreed to loan me his book and said he would return for it on another day.

Robert Bruce, an anthropologist, had learned the Lacandon language and spent most of his youth and a lot more time, studying with Chan K'in. The book Leo left with me was



Chan K'in Viejo leading a balche ceremony in Najá, 1970, by Trudi Blom.
©2007 Asociación Cultural Na Bolom A.C. / Gertrude Blom bearing witness, Alex Harris and Margaret Sartor, The University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

The cover of Bruce's book: Lacandon Dream Symbolism.



Bruce's work, *Lacandon Dream Symbolism*:



and Interpretation Among the Lacandon Maya, 1979. Bruce looked like, lived like, spoke and dressed like a Lacandon for much of the time he spent in Najá. He devoted his life to these studies and was one of the few experts on the Lacandon, especially of the village of Najá.

I never saw Leo again, and the book remained in my library. I too am lucky. It's a treasure and a very hard-to-find book, which I continue to use for research. Years later, a good friend of mine, Citlali after seeing the book in my library, proceeded to tell me Leo's story.

Dates were not given, however at some point, Don Leo returned to Najá and fell lustfully in love with a señorita from the village. It seems they proceeded to get married. Like a good number of Lacandon men, Leo liked to drink heavily from time to time, and I do not mean balché wine in the God house. Perhaps occasionally he had enough money to buy whiskey. Then, like a few Lacandon men, he would sometimes beat his wife. During the last beating it seems he got vexed and hit her with a reed several times,

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The Transit of Venus and the Self-Sacrifice of Hun Ajaw

continued from page 1

While not describing an exact transit, this eight-day period of average invisibility is clearly recorded in the Dresden Venus Table, and we can see that the story of the death and resurrection of Hunahpu likewise parallels this same celestial phenomenon.

Where Hunahpu and his brother are transformed into fish following their self-immolation, we find a parallel in the Central Mexican story of the people of the last Sun who were transformed into fish following the deluge that ended the previous age. Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, another avatar of Quetzalcoatl, journeys into Mictlan, the land of the dead, in order to retrieve the bones of these fish-people to be ground into flour to ultimately create the people of this world (Miller and Taube, 1993:142; Taube, 1993:38).

In classic agricultural parlance, human bodies are both symbolically and literally formed from maize throughout Mesoamerica. Similarly, the Classic period Hero Twins Hun Ajaw and Yax Bahlam are repeatedly depicted resurrecting the Maize God (Fig. 2, pg. 1), which Karl Taube (1985) first identified as the father of the twins.

One significant image in the upper right of page 50 from the Dresden Venus Table depicts Hun Ajaw wearing a skeletal costume in dialogue with the Maize God. This image represents the fifth and final page of the Venus Table, and these figures in the upper right of each page of the table are described as the Regents. These deities correspond to the first Venus



TI' CHAN-na, YAX-YOKEHT?-NAL

Fig. 4: Undated Early Classic Jade Mask. Era Base Event. Drawing by author after Michael Carrasco.

Fig. 3: Hun Ajaw Regent from the Venus Table, speaking with the Maize God. Page 50, Dresden Codex.

Image courtesy of FAMSI.



Patron on each page in the lower part of the table. On page 50, the first Venus Patron is Hun Ajaw (Fig. 3).

The five-fold nature of the Venus Table clearly corresponds to the observation that five cycles of 584 days is equivalent to eight cycles of 365 days. In other words, five reappearances of Venus as morning star will return the position of the heliacal rise to almost exactly the same time of year, and the same constellation. Therefore, it is likely that the five Regents represent five idealized constellations in which the heliacal rise of Venus appears. The table was then corrected to account for the accumulating error over 104 years of one complete run of the table. Exactly how and why this was done is still a matter of debate.

Gerardo Aldana (2001) proposed that the five Regents each correspond with a specific sidereal position on the ecliptic, as do the other Venus Patrons. He noted that the table begins with the Itzamnaaj Caiman Regent, which represents the heliacal rise of Venus in the general region of the Milky Way in Sagittarius. When adding 326 days to reach the first evening visibility of Venus in Scorpius, a constellation that the Maya also associated with a scorpion, we reach the Venus Patron Sinaan "scorpion". Based on the predominant entry dates given, Dennis Tedlock (2010) has proposed a similar idealized configuration for the Venus Table, and I tend to agree. I will be examining this possible sidereal component of the Venus Table more closely in a future publication.

Note that if we begin the Venus Table with a heliacal rise of Venus in conjunction with the Milky Way in Sagittarius, as dictated by the Caiman Regent, we would reach the fifth and final Hun Ajaw Regent when the sun and Venus would be very close to the Pleiades, a star cluster associated with maize seeds and a rattlesnake's rattle – the very same we find associated with Quetzalcoatl throughout Chichén Itzá. Indeed, the disappearance of the Pleiades in May and their reappearance in June are used throughout the Maya area to time the planting season and

the beginning of the rains.

While I am not suggesting that the Maya were intentionally calculating or highlighting the importance of the heliacal rise of Venus in this particular year more than any other, we coincidentally find the annular eclipse, the transit of Venus and its heliacal rise of Venus this year in the sidereal region of Taurus and the Pleiades. Close by is the constellation Orion, which contemporary K'iche' astronomers refer to as the three hearthstones.

The earliest reference to the three hearthstones (Fig. 4) comes from an unprovenanced, Early Classic greenstone mask of the deity known as GI, the first born of the Palenque Triad. The verb used to describe the actions of GI toward the hearthstones is unclear, but it depicts a WINAL glyph infixed inside a larger curled element, followed by "[at] the edge of the sky, the first three hearthstone place".

The only other example of this verb that I know of in the inscriptions comes from Quirigua Stela E, where it is used in combination with CHAN "sky" to substitute for Glyph D, the age of the moon during the solar eclipse associated with 9.17.0.0.0. Therefore, it is a possibility that the verb has something to do with either the new moon or the eclipse itself. Regarding the actions of GI the verb may operate in a similar way, perhaps describing the self-immolation of GI in the region of the hearthstones.

David Kelly first observed that both Palenque's GI and the Central Mexican Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl share the birthday 9-Wind, and both are associated with the planet Venus (Kelley, 1965). Furthermore, the text from Temple XIX in Palenque repeatedly mentions the day 9-Wind (9-Ik') in association with

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The Transit of Venus and the Self-Sacrifice of Hun Ajaw

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GI (Stuart, 2005:168). Ehecatl, meaning "Wind", appears in the Central Mexican codices with a cut conch shell pendant, representing the power of wind and the conch horn Quetzalcoatl successfully blows in the watery underworld, outsmarting the lord of the dead, Mictlantecuhtli, and retrieving the bones of the people of the previous world. Similarly, GI is usually depicted with a cut shell in his ear flare.

Elsewhere (2009), I have suggested that GI, as a visible fish-man with catfish barbels, is analogous to the Hero Twins who transform into fish-men in the *Popol Vuh*. Here, Hunahpu is variously associated with Venus or the sun, while Xbalanque is associated with the moon. Given their overlapping associations, we may understand GI, Hunahpu, Hun Ajaw, and Quetzalcoatl to be different representations of an archetypal, self-sacrificing Venus deity.

GI is often depicted carrying the solar brazier on his forehead, and this appears to reference solar self-immolation. The skeletal GI and his solar brazier helmet are depicted at the base of iconographic trees, as on the Tablet of the Cross in Palenque (**Fig. 5**). The life-giving qualities of solar self-sacrifice are made clear, and we find a similar Aztec story of the self-immolation of the penitent Nanahuatzin, who willingly burns himself in a great pyre in Teotihuacan in order to bring life to the world by becoming the sun. Even from the most literal of perspectives, we can understand that the destructive self-sacrifice of the sun provides the energy for plants to grow, which is the very energy for human life.

It appears that the creative depiction of Venus as representative of self-sacrifice and rebirth may be traced back to the murals of San Bartolo, which depict five sacrificing deities, four of which appear to be Hun Ajaw with large spots on their bodies. The fifth and final deity is the Maize God. Each deity appears in the self-sacrificing act of penis perforation, in front of a hearth on which various animals or flowers are sacrificed. Following each stone hearth sacrifice, a

different tree rises. One surviving text from directly above one of these

Hun Ajaw figures names the deity as EK'-WINAL "Venus Man". The five-fold organization of these Venus deities appears to directly parallel what we find in the Dresden Codex Venus table.

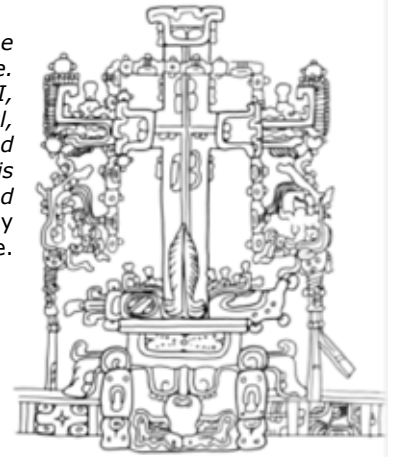
While the heliacal rise of Venus occurs in the region of the Pleiades and Orion approximately every eight years, as each successive repetition of the Venus Table also indicates, the co-occurrence of this close to an eclipse in this same sidereal position occurs approximately every 56 years. It is apparent that Maya astronomers were interested in such commensurations, and Aveni (1992) notes that there is lunar information encoded in the Venus Table.

Hopefully, you carefully observed both the annular solar eclipse and the transit of Venus this year, in ways far beyond the capabilities of the Maya, perhaps we can connect to the ways in which the Maya and the peoples of Mesoamerica have given us rich and beautiful stories about the movements of the heavens and the cycles of life, death, and rebirth.

Both Hunahpu and Xbalanque jumped into the fire in Xibalbá, and this year we can playfully witness the passing of both the moon and Venus directly in front of the sun in the region of the Pleiades and the three hearthstones in Orion – perhaps the very region where GI himself was said to have jumped into the fire of the sun, thereby inaugurating our current age.

These stories have even more relevance this year as we celebrate the thirteen bak'tun anniversary of the events that are said to have taken place at the end of the previous age of thirteen bak'tuns and the beginning of the current cycle. As we can see, these creation stories are not merely descriptive of events that happened long ago – they are ways of describing the continuing movements of the cosmos and recounting them in the form of stories that help us experience our humanity within the unending cycles of nature.

Fig. 5: Central image from the *Temple of the Cross, Palenque*. The skeletal head of GI, wearing the solar offering bowl, sits on a sky band. A stylized ceiba tree emerges from his head, with square-nosed caiman flowers. Drawing by author after Linda Schele.



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Perfect synchronicity! On July 18, we have Maya scholar Victoria R. Bricker, Ph.D., sharing her own research and insights concerning the importance of Venus:

"Bolon Octe and Venus in the Dresden Codex"

See program announcement on page 7.
It's 2012, live it up!

July 11, 2012: IMS Explorer Session:

"The Relationship Between Visionary Plants and Iconography in the Art of Tiwanaku, Bolivia, ca. 300–900 CE"

with **Constantino Torres, Ph.D.**



Snuff tray and tube, Solcor 3, tomb 99, San Pedro de Atacama, Chile

A comparative analysis of the iconography represented in snuffing paraphernalia and in monumental stone sculpture at Tiwanaku reveals significant differences as well as similarities. Determination of the presence or absence of specific iconographic elements provides information related to chronology, temporal distribution, and variability of the iconographic system. Affinities and differences in the iconography as depicted on snuff trays and tubes and in its representation on the monumental stone sculpture provide the framework to determine the structure of the iconographic system. This work presents the results of this comparative analysis. First, snuff tray iconography is discussed, its geographic distribution is noted, and iconographic elements are determined. Second, the iconography of the stone sculpture at Tiwanaku is presented, placing particular emphasis in composition and icon variability.



Snuff tray and tube, Solcor 3, tomb 107, San Pedro de Atacama, Chile

Constantino Manuel Torres has conducted research on ancient cultures of the South Central Andes since 1982. His work has concentrated on the San Pedro de Atacama oasis, where hundreds of well-preserved archaeological burial sites facilitate a comprehensive understanding of this desert people. Torres is also involved in the study of the art of Tiwanaku, the most important pre-Inca Central Andean civilization. On two occasions he has been an invited presenter to the prestigious Dumbarton Oaks Round Table, in Washington DC. He has participated in a symposium on the art of the South Central Andes at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts of the National Gallery, Washington, DC. Torres organized several symposia on the art and archaeology of the Andes for the International Congress of Americanists and for the Society for American Archaeology.



Gate of the Sun, Tiwanaku, Bolivia.

His books include *Anadenanthera: Visionary Plant of Ancient South America* (2006), a comprehensive and detailed study of this important visionary plant. Dr. Torres is Professor Emeritus of art history at Florida International University, Miami. He is a member of the Institute of Andean Studies, Berkeley, CA, the Sociedad Chilena de Arqueología, Santiago, and adjunct professor for the graduate program in Anthropology and Archaeology, Universidad Católica del Norte, San Pedro de Atacama campus, Chile.



Ponce stela, Tiwanaku, Bolivia.

All meetings are 8 pm • Institute of Maya Studies • Miami Science Museum • Maya Hotline: 305-279-8110

Part II: My Visits with the Lacandon

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while arguing. She passed out, lost consciousness, and was taken to the hospital in Palenque, where she died. Leo was put in jail in Ocosingo, while they tried to figure out what to do with him and his crime. The laws in Mexico, or the ways they are applied, are different than they are in Canada or the United States. So be it.

It seems that after being in jail for about a week, Subcommandante Marco showed up and freed all the prisoners, including Leo, who right away left Mexico with no plans to ever return. Sadly, Don Roberto felt that because of this incident, he would have to leave Najá and his work there behind, which is what he did.

Just thought I'd fill in one missing moments in time. Until the next, enjoy yourselves, I'm off to compose a cookbook!

– Hilario Hiler



One of the last photos taken of Chan K'in Viejo, courtesy of the University of Victoria.

July 18: IMS Presentation: "Bolon Octe and Venus in the Dresden Codex"

with **Victoria R. Bricker, Ph.D.** Tulane University and University of Florida

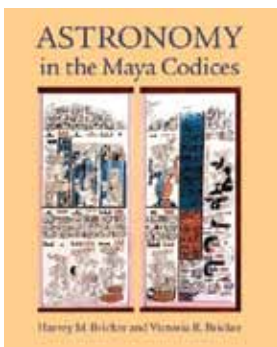


In a recent publication, Michael Grofe (2010) suggested that the Venus deity, God L, could be identified with another deity known as Bolon y Octe in the Colonial Maya Books of Chilam Balam and as Bolon Octe in the Classic-period inscriptions because of the sash with nine footprints worn by God L on the sculptured panel on the east side of the doorway of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque. I learned about it for the first time in a recent issue of the IMS Explorer.



Bolon oc can be translated as 'nine footsteps' in Yucatecan Maya, and bolon y oc would then mean 'nine are his footsteps.' The function of te in these expressions is unknown. Grofe reasoned that because God L is one of the deities in the Venus table of the Dresden Codex, Bolon Octe must have had something to do with Venus as well, although his name is not mentioned explicitly on any page of the Venus table.

However, Grofe also mentioned another Venus context in the Dresden Codex, where Bolon Octe's name appears twice, along with images of several deities from the Venus table. It is on page 60, which bears a k'atun-ending date of 11 Ahau. I will show that the text and the pictures on this page can be dated to the k'atun running from January 771 to October 790 CE and that they refer to five of the twelve heliacal risings of Venus that took place during that period. Because the Venus events would have corresponded to two pages of the Venus table, the references to Bolon Octe would not have been limited to God L, but they do support Grofe's association of Bolon Octe with Venus, specifically the planet's first appearance as a morning star after invisibility at inferior conjunction.



Written by our Explorers of the Month: "The Brickers' work, *Astronomy in the Maya Codices*, is special in that it gives a complete account of the historical background of scholarly inquiries into each of the instruments they deal with. Finally, and most importantly, rather than imagining them to consist merely of endless temporal rounds, the Brickers' attempt to place each codical instrument in real time, an approach they uniquely develop and fully justify. In its depth, thoroughness, and revealed new insights, this work will remain the 'last word' on the role of astronomy in the codices and in Maya thought for a long time to come."

– Prof. Anthony F. Aveni, the Russell Colgate Distinguished University Professor of Astronomy and Anthropology and Native American Studies at Colgate University.

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Coming up next month:

The Maler Ruins of Vena Revisited

by **Stephan Merk**, Mexican

The German-Austrian explorer Teobert Maler (1842-1917) dedicated several years of his life to discover, describe, and photograph ancient Maya ruins in the Yucatán. Between 1886 and 1894, he inspected the northern part of the peninsula, that is, the Mexican states of Yucatán, Campeche and Quintana Roo. Maler was the first one, after Stephens and Catherwood, who seriously searched for ruins in the northern Yucatán. He discovered and revisited around 100 sites in the Puuc and Chenes areas. He finished his systematic search in that part of Mexico in June 1894, and the last Maya site Maler explored was the ancient Puuc-style site of Vena. Merk pens an informative article that chronicles not only Maler's visit, but also the results of Merk's more recent exploration of the site.



time numerous temples, palaces, ballcourts, and pyramids were built.

El Tajín was named a World Heritage site in 1992, due to its cultural importance and its architecture. This architecture includes the use of decorative niches and cement in forms unknown in the rest of Mesoamerica, as visible above in the Pyramid of the Niches. On a recent visit to El Tajín, members in an IMS group noticed several unexpected construction details, and our Director of Research, Joaquín Rodríguez, has filed a report to share their observations.



Outstanding Maya Murals Revealed at Xultun

Archaeologists led by William Saturno of Boston University announced the discovery of early ninth-century murals and associated astronomical tables in a residential structure at Xultun, Guatemala. *National Geographic* funded the research and preliminary results were released in the June issue of *Science*. Skidmore College archaeology professor and artist Heather Hurst played a key role in artistically recording this major discovery (above).



Construction at El Tajín

by **Joaquín J. Rodríguez III PE, SECB**

El Tajín is a pre-Columbian archeological site and one of the largest and most important cities of the Classic era of Mesoamerica. A part of the Classic Veracruz culture, El Tajín flourished from 600 to 1200 CE and during this

Upcoming Events at the IMS:

July 11, 8 pm: *IMS Explorer Session*
"The Relationship Between Visionary Plants and Iconography in the Art of Tiwanaku, Bolivia, ca. 300-900 CE" – with **Constantino Manuel Torres**, Ph.D.
See program announcement on page 6.

July 18, 8 pm: *IMS Program*
"Bolon Octe and Venus in the Dresden Codex" – with **Victoria R. Bricker**, Ph.D., Tulane University and University of Florida.
See program announcement on page 7.

August 8, 8 pm: *IMS Explorer Session*
"Archaeology and Chicle: A Sticky Combination" – The story of when, by whom and how this sticky substance came to the U.S. is full of twists and turns. At times the chew of housewives, millionaire baseball team owners and ladies of the night – **Dr. Anne Stewart** shares its true history.

August 15, 8 pm: *IMS Program*
"Maya Codices and the Books of the Chilam Balam: Spanning the Spanish 'Conquest'" – with renowned epigrapher, translator, modern Maya specialist **Bruce Love, Ph.D.**

Upcoming Events and Announcements:

September 27-30: *M@TP Conference*
"Maya At The Playa" – the Sixth Annual conference sponsored by American Foreign Academic Research and The Archaeological Institute of America (AIA). This year, the achievements of Ian Graham and the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions will be honored. Although Ian will not be able to attend, members of the Maya Corpus Project will be gathering at M@TP to celebrate Ian's accomplishments and share their experiences with the attendees. Ian will be represented by Barbara Fash, Peter Mathews, David Stuart, and Marc Zender. Get the lowdown at: www.mayaattheplaya.com/Maya_at_the_Playa/Home.html

October 5-6: *Symposium*
"The Measure and Meaning of Time in the Americas" – theme of the Dumbarton Oaks 2012 Symposium, organized by Anthony F. Aveni. At the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, Washington, D.C. For additional info, visit the Events link on: www.doaks.org
Through Nov. 4: *Art Exhibition*
"Verdant Earth and Teeming Seas: The Natural World in Ancient American Art" –

This exhibition highlights the Harn Museum of Art's collection of ceramic figures and vessels, stone sculptures, jade ornaments, and textiles from diverse cultures of Ancient America including, Mesoamerica, Central America, and the Andes. At the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, Gainesville, FL. Get info at: www.harn.ufl.edu/exhibitions

December 9-15: *Conference*
"How We Know What We Think We Know About the Maya" – Theme of the 17th European Maya Conference, Helsinki, Finland. Get more info at: www.wayeb.org/conferencesevents/emc_nowsymposium.php

Through Jan. 13: Museum Exhibition
"MAYA 2012: Lords of Time" – The exhibition features over 100 remarkable objects, including artifacts recently excavated from Copán. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia, PA. Info at: www.penn.museum/upcoming-exhibits/995-maya-2012-lords-of-time.html

