

Calendrical Patterns and Tortuguero Monument 1

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This essay was written several months before Gronemeyer & MacLeod's *Wayeb* Note 34 was released in August 2010. It draws from Gronemeyer's solo piece that was circulated as a draft by about March of 2010, which ultimately was adapted into the collaboration with MacLeod. Several of Gronemeyer's observations about Tortuguero Monument 1 converge with my own work on the larger context of all the known Tortuguero inscriptions, which I had worked out by December 2009. A truncated version of this research was adapted for *Decoding the Counter-culture Apocalypse* (ed., Joseph Gelfer), due out by late 2011.

One thing that developed too late for inclusion in my 2009 book *The 2012 Story* was Barb MacLeod's reinterpretation of the eroded glyphs on Tortuguero Monument 6, which was circulated in private emails in August 2009. In email exchanges that developed between Sven Gronemeyer, Barb MacLeod, Michael Grofe, Erik Boot and a few others, attention turned to figuring out those eroded glyphs. An earlier photograph of the monument was found and a new composite image was created that, upon close scrutiny, revealed that one of the eroded glyph-blocks, at P4, did not consist of cross-hatching with a possible reading of "black" but more probably, according to Barb and other epigraphers, the prefix is "i-" (meaning "to see" or "witness"). Barb offers "i-la-ji" as well as "i-LEM". She considered the revised reading to be fairly conclusive. However, glyphic decipherment allows for a range of possible meanings; often this multivalent scenario is precisely what the Maya themselves intended, much like the way puns and rhymes are used in modern writing. Sven Gronemeyer summarized the various new decipherments in the unpublished March 2010 version of his *Wayeb* Note 34, and Mark Van Stone reported the email exchanges in his self-published book he released in April of 2010. I'll summarize that material in a moment. Barb's findings unfolded in August of 2009 and were augmented and commented on through early January 2010 by the other epigraphers.

Sven Gronemeyer's essay of March 2010 (a beta-version he solo authored that ended up becoming the *Wayeb* No. 34 piece co-authored with Barb, released in August 2010, after my essay was written) suggests that the P4 glyph involves a "mirror-sign" meaning "to see" or "witness." It generally indicates the attendance of an event or rite that, in this case, will happen in the future. He notes three other instances of "seeing" events on TRT Mon 1 and on the TRT Wooden Box. The first two examples, from TRT Mon 1, involve period endings at 9.10.13.0.0 and 9.11.0.0.0. The first, at 9.10.13.0.0 (Nov. 15, 645 J), occurred on the relevant tzolkin-haab date of 1 Ahau 3 Kankin, emphasized in the inscription as a "13-tun" marker. Monument 1 is described in the text as being "the first in order, his stone binding" upon which the "Dark Patron" (AK'?-CHIT) "was seen" (IL-ni) and the "Green Patron [was] amidst Bahlam Ajaw." (Michael Grofe contributed the "Green Patron" decipherment; see page 22 of Gronemeyer's *Wayeb* Note 34 and further discussion of his comments below).

As Gronemeyer points out, Monument 1 may be thematically related to the 2012 date as the first and last "in order" in a series of rites performed by Bahlam Ajaw. Or

perhaps the planned rite for the 2012 date is the ultimate purpose of his receiving of an astrotheological or priestly mandate, as suggested by the interrelated complex of dates connected with the first events and period-ending rites he performed right after his accession (on February 4, 644 (J), 9.10.11.3.10, 1 Ok 3 Cumku). (See my *Center for 2012 Studies*, Note 3, for a summary of the astronomical events leading up to Bahlam Ajaw's accession.) The first *actual* event of his reign was the first war event, recorded on TRT Mon 6 (May 30, 644 (J)). Michael Grofe pointed out that this date fell just a few days after a lunar eclipse that aligned with the southern terminus of the dark rift. According to his decipherment, the inscription associated with the date describes the eclipse as occurring ay Ayin ("the caiman") — appropriately suggestive of the eclipse's astronomical location at the dark rift of the Milky Way.

Tortuguero Jade Celt 1 celebrates the first period ending of Bahlam's reign, the 12-tun ending of 9.10.12.0.0 on November 23, 644. Interestingly, this date is 173 days after the eclipse of May earlier that year (173.3 days = the eclipse half-year, 1/3 of two 260-day tzolkin periods, 6 synodic lunar months). It would thus theoretically be the time of the next eclipse, this time with the positions of the sun and moon reversed, both again near the two crossing points of the Milky Way and the ecliptic. So, we have implied in the first events and period-ending celebrations of Bahlam Ajaw's royal career a use of, and therefore recognition of, the astronomical features involved in the 2012 alignment (sun, dark rift, Milky Way, crossing points). The 5 Ahau 8 Kankin combo of the Jade Celt 1 date (the second eclipse date on the 12-tun ending) sets the stage for the following tun ending, in which the haab position becomes 3 Kankin (congruent with the 2012 haab position) and the Ajaw coefficient shifts from 5 to 1. As long as Gronemeyer is entertaining calendrical and conceptual associations, it may also be significant here that 1 Ajaw is conceptually cognate with "One Hunahpu," the primordial deity of the Creation Myth, who is sacrificed and then reborn at the end of an Age, and who I have argued is the solar deity depicted at Izapa being reborn on Stela 67 and the throne in the ballcourt, which is aligned with the December solstice sunrise.

The second date on TRT Mon 1 comes 7 tun after the 13-tun ending of 1 Ahau 3 Kankin, reaching the larger 11-katun period ending of 9.11.0.0.0 (12 Ajaw 8 Ceh, October 9, 652 J). Here we link into the 3-katun Venus-Long Count commensuration which will next land on the Venus evening star appearance on the very important 9.14.0.0.0 date (TRT Mon 2, Copan Stela C, and elsewhere). This 9.14.0.0.0 katun period ending is significant because the sun was in alignment with the dark rift/Crossroads on the date, providing a parallel astronomical image to Bahlam's birth date, the sweat bath rite of 510 AD, the December 5, 647 AD date, and the 2012 period-ending date. Venus made its first appearance as evening star around 9.11.0.0.0, just as it did 3 katuns later, on the sun-dark rift alignment of 9.14.0.0.0.

The next use of the "seeing / witnessing" glyph (designated as a "not-seeing") is found on the TRT Wooden Box, and it relates to Bahlam Ajaw's death. It comes 1 katun plus 7 tun after 9.11.0.0.0, on 9.12.7.0.0, two days after his death on 6 Etnab, 11 Sek. That his death fell on an Etnab day (Flint Knife) may allude to the possibility that his death was a sacrifice act. The reason why his death date may have been planned is because it corresponds to Jupiter aligned with the dark rift, which should not be taken as being a meaningless or irrelevant moment for the death of a king (as with Pakal "entering the road" of the dark rift at his death). This is especially true for Bahlam Ajaw,

considering the pattern of Jupiter and dark-rift alignments established and emphasized on his biographical Monument 6. In any case, the posthumous TRT Wooden Box reference indicates that, unlike the previous period endings, Bahlam Ajaw was not present to “see” or oversee or preside over the 9.12.7.0.0 period ending. He has gone into the underworld. The text actually can be read as “he was not seen” suggesting a passing over or passing beyond much like the “he entered the road” (the dark-rift road to the underworld) death expression. It is interesting to note that Jade Celt 1 begins with an early period ending, years before Bahlam Ajaw’s accession, which for some reason was relevant to record: 9.10.7.0.0 (December 17, 639 AD). This was exactly two katuns before the period ending referenced at his death. It was also a 12 Ajaw day in the 260-day calendar, which recurs on the 9.11.0.0.0 period ending (13 tun later). Two additional things about this 639 AD date need to be noted. First, it was a December solstice date. Secondly, perhaps the most significant underlying factor in why this date would be important is that Bahlam Ajaw may have been born on November 28, 612 AD, which is a 12 Ajaw day.

Gronemeyer suggests that the “first in order” Monument 1 dedication of 9.10.13.0.0 (1 Ahau 3 Kankin) was the first event in a ritual trajectory that leads to Bahlam Ajaw’s involvement with the 2012 date: “Taking the importance of the number 13 into account, it may have been Bahlam Ajaw’s intention to implicitly connect these two events and see the completion of the 13th Baktun almost as a logical consequence of what he has begun with the 13-tun ending at the beginning of his tenure” (Gronemeyer 2010: 22). If Sven’s suggested reading of a *calendrical parallel* is deemed a possibility, then we might consider shifting the frame of reference slightly to acknowledge the *astronomical parallel* between Bahlam’s birth date and the 2012 date. In this way we can see that it would be equally feasible and congruent with the rhetorical exploitation of providential circumstances by the Maya elite for Bahlam Ajaw to have seen himself as destined *from birth* to play a role in the grand sacrifice & renewal rite at the end of the 13-Baktun period. As Sven wrote in regard to his own observations, “If this is the case, then we can also assume that in his [Bahlam Ajaw’s] view it was nobody else than himself to celebrate the B’aktun ending” (2010: 22). (Here Gronemeyer reiterates a suggestion I circulated in emails back in February 2009.) We can thus see the 1 Ahau 3 Kankin date on Monument 1 as a conceptual and calendrical link-point utilizing the 365-day haab.

Following up on the haab implication here, let’s look at something else. We have a range of possible days for Bahlam Ajaw’s birth. The reading that I accept of the eroded kin-place in the DN that generates his birthday suggests a narrow 5-day range of November 28 to December 2, whereas Sven sees a larger range and argues for November 24 (J). This date in the haab turns out to be 4 Kankin, the day after the important 3 Kankin date that parallels the haab position of the 2012 period ending. So, even if his birthday was several days off the 3 Kankin haab, we still have a general indicator, still compelling for the Maya calendar priests. It links Bahlam’s birth date with Sven’s calendrical parallel between the “first in order” 3 Kankin date on Monument 1 and the 3 Kankin date of the period-ending date in 2012 (on Monument 6).

In suggesting this additional link to Bahlam’s birth date, we can also entertain the parallel congruence of dark rift alignments. The solar-dark-rift alignment on his birthday and on the 2012 period ending have already been noted. The dark rift comes into play in connection with the 13-tun period ending on Monument 1 because it is bundled with a

series of “firsts” occurring right after Bahlam’s accession: The first event of his reign was the war event (May 30, 644) three days after the lunar eclipse in the dark rift. The first actual tun-period ending of his reign was the 12-tun ending noted on the Jade Celt (9.10.12.0.0), which occurred an eclipse half-year after the earlier May eclipse event and therefore when the sun, rather than the moon, was aligned with the dark rift region of the Milky Way. Then, 1 tun later the first monument of Bahlam’s reign (Monument 1) was erected at a period ending (with a 13-unit marker, 9.10.13.0.0). Furthermore, another link from this date is provided by the 7-tun Distance Number in the Monument 1 text that results in the 9.11.0.0.0 period ending, which in turn opens the Venus-Long Count commensuration (37 synodic Venus cycles equal 3 katun) leading to the “sun-in-the-dark-rift” alignment of 9.14.0.0.0 (recorded on TRT Monument 2 and elsewhere). (Both 9.11.0.0.0 and 9.14.0.0.0 correspond to Venus’s first appearance as evening star.) So, although these interlinked calendrical and astronomical patterns are complicated, they are there. It is misleading to say that they might be coincidence and simply end the investigation, because the Maya calendar priests were many times more savvy than we are in our ability to recognize and utilize these patterns. Anything that *we* may see, in our best efforts, was certainly known to them.

There is another relationship between 9.10.13.0.0 and 13.0.0.0.0, and it is astronomical. Of course, just a glance at the respective tzolkin-haab positions indicates, as mentioned, a haab relationship in the shared 3 Kankin position, but the 365-day period is not explicitly astronomical (only approximately). It is a key, however, to the Venus cycle’s inclusion into the tzolkin-haab Calendar Round system, because 8 haab equal 5 Venus synodic periods of 584 days each. As such, we find that exactly 855 Venus cycles (499,320 days) separate the 9.10.13.0.0 date on Monument 1 (the allegedly “first in order” of Bahlam’s dedication rites) from the 13.0.0.0.0 date (the implied *final* rite according to Gronemeyer). We may dismiss this as coincidence, based on the happenstance of the haab parallel given the haab’s nice numerical relationship to the Venus cycle. However, it is doubly compelling considering that the first date in our commensurate pair has not only 3 Kankin in the haab position but 1 Ahau in the tzolkin position, the *traditional Sacred Day of Venus* in the Venus Round system of 104 haab. I believe this may have been recognized by the Maya to conceptually link the 1 Ahau (One Hunahpu) deity and thus the concept of solar-Venus rebirth cycles (seen, for example in the Quetzalcoatl myth) with the future 2012 period ending on 4 Ahau, also treated as a solar rebirth. It’s 13 Venus Rounds plus 5840 days (16 haab). The use of 1 Ahau, linked meaningfully to 2012 via astronumerology involving the sun and Venus, is further evidence that my work on Izapa cosmo-conception and the role of One Hunahpu as the deity who represents worldrenewal in 2012, was on target when I published it over fifteen years ago. It seems acknowledged here at Tortuguero as another layer in a tapestry of calendrical, mythological, and astronomical threads.

This essay barely scratches the surface of the interlocking evidence provided by all of the Tortuguero monuments. It is becoming apparent, for example, that there are deep connections between One Hunahpu, “First Father,” the Maize Deity, GI, Bolon Yokte, God L, and Maximon. These various deities seem to be expressions of the same underlying archetypal theme of solar deity sacrifice and worldrenewal occurring at period endings.

Sources

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