

Comments on “The Great Return” essay by Barbara MacLeod and Mark Van Stone

John Major Jenkins. August 13-16, 2014

This essay by MacLeod and Van Stone was written in May of 2011, and was revised after August of 2011 for publication and release by mid-2012, in the German journal *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik*. It won the award offered by the editors of that journal, for the best paper on the “2012” topic, and was published alongside an essay by John Hoopes and Kevin Whitesides (which might perhaps be considered the runner-up for the prize). I reviewed the Whitesides/Hoopes essay in the January 2014 issue of *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik*.¹ My critique-review was approved by the editors and their reviewers with only a few minor changes added to my original submission. My review of the MacLeod/Van Stone article, presented here, was written with similar attention to documentation and argument. I offer my review for the small community of scholars and writers who are interested in moving the 2012 discussion forward. The authors stated they were “amiably skeptical” about my 2012 alignment reconstruction,² but were open to being “persuaded”. I have a rather simple logical response which I offer in Part 2 of my review, and summarize at the end.

I’d like to focus on the most important launching-off point for how we can go to the next step with understanding how the ancient Maya understood 2012. The “Great Return” essay is like a platform and the authors offer some open questions as to what their findings might imply. In particular, there is the question about the relationship between Classic Maya beliefs about 2012 (which they largely focus on), and the pre-Classic origins of the Long Count. Their open minded invitation to be “persuaded” that the creators of the Long Count anticipated the “alignment of the Solstice Sun with the Galactic Equator” occurs in note 3 on page 19 of their essay. Firstly, it is wonderful and rare to have the galactic alignment (which is the centerpiece of my reconstruction work) acknowledged as real astronomy and accurately defined. Their definition is congruent with how I’ve defined and discussed the galactic alignment since the mid-1990s, emphasizing that it is the *solstice* Sun that aligns with the Galactic Equator. Long ago I emphasized the accurate definition that *it is the December solstice sun aligning with the Dark Rift/Crossroads along the Galactic Equator in Sagittarius*, as that highlights the astronomical feature of the Dark Rift that I argue, in my work that draws from archaeoastronomy and iconography, was important to the creators of the Long Count cosmology (at Izapa).

Footnote 3 on Page 19 is a statement that addresses my work, and I can clarify several items. I read an early draft of this paper in August 2011, and it contained a slightly different version of this footnote. In the final published version, we find a late addition to the first sentence of the footnote, citing a personal communication from astrologer Ray Mardyks, made to one of the authors. The first sentence of footnote 3 reads: “The Galactic Alignment and associated theory was proposed and popularized by writer and

¹ See my summary of this curious episode (Jenkins 2014b), “Deceptive Scholars Refuse to Correct Factual Errors in Their Peer-Reviewed Study”: <http://update2012.com/Scholars-Refuse-to-Correct-Errors.pdf>.

² Which is my proposal that the creators of the Long Count, in the pre-Classic Period, intended the 13-Baktun period ending (13.0.0.0, December 21, 2012) to target the rare precession-caused alignment of the December solstice sun with the Galactic Equator in Sagittarius (Jenkins 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998).

Maya researcher John Major Jenkins (1998), though Raymond Mardyks (p.c. 2010) also claims credit for its origin.” This statement begs correction. First of all, my “2012 alignment theory” is unique and unprecedented because it documents the evidence for how the ancient Maya embedded the galactic alignment into their core traditions, including the ballgame, the Creation Myth, and king-making rites. The Dark Rift in the Milky Way is an important key, and I’ve argued the case and cited evidence that the Classic Maya and pre-Classic people at Izapa symbolized the Dark Rift as a “portal” and “birth-place” concept related to mouths, birth canals, and the goal-ring. Another unprecedented key to my work is my correct calculation of the Izapa ballcourt’s alignment to the December solstice sunrise azimuth. None of this can be mapped backward onto the work of astrologer Ray Mardyks, who didn’t research Izapa, and to state that he claims credit for the origin of the galactic alignment and “associated theory” reveals a confusion as to the wide gulf of difference between my work and his ideas.

Since this compromising bit of rhetoric (a p.c. from Mardyks) was not part of the original essay, and gives the false impression that I modeled my work on the ideas of Mardyks, I inquired and discovered that Van Stone was the author who added this. I asked if he could supply the p.c. email of 2010 that he based the statement on. For nine months Van Stone has not been able to send me the relevant p.c. email; disclosure would be important in regard to Mardyks because he has established a track record of being unreliable, of lying, of misrepresenting my work and his own early work. In fact, he has tried to blackmail me, has harassed me over a period of 15+ years, and has spread disinformation about the galactic alignment which certain scholars have eagerly adopted.³ In my 1998 book I acknowledged Mardyks along with other thinkers, science historians, and astrologers who were aware of the galactic alignment in the 1980s, 1970s, and 1960s. None of them were engaged in reconstructing what the ancient Maya thought about 2012, or with showing how the Maya symbolized the galactic alignment in their traditions.

If Van Stone could disclose the personal communiqué we could determine the nature of the cited claim. Curiously, in my efforts to discuss this with Van Stone, during which he has not been able to produce the relevant email, he stated the following:

I will try to locate the particular e-mail I got from Ray M. that you requested. But I have to admit, it's like looking for a needle in a manger. The attached screen shot covers just five months of his messages to me (the boldfaced ones I never even read, so I can eliminate those). But you can see he wrote to me A LOT at that time... And I recall that he claimed to have originated every interesting idea about 2012 and the Maya, including, I think, that the Izapans invented the calendars... (email to me of 11/30/2013)

³ For example, in an email thread to which I was privy Mardyks asserted that the galactic alignment was astrology. John Hoopes, also on the thread, gratefully said “thank you” and has used this as a means of debunking the galactic alignment, because for Hoopes astrology is pseudoscience. See “Hoopes-Mardyks Collaboration on Galactic Alignment Disinformation”: <http://update2012.com/Hoopes-Mardyks-Collaboration.pdf>.

For Mardyks to claim to have “originated every interesting idea about 2012” — including Izapa! — should be a huge red flag for any discerning scholar, as to his credibility. Van Stone recognized this problem, in stating:

Anyone who has had more than casual contact with him knows he's a loony. A vindictive, unfunny loony. (email to me of 12/5/2013)

My email response to Van Stone encapsulated the contradiction we have here, regarding why Mardyks’ dubious “claim” was worth reporting in their essay:

Hi again,

You sent me the screen shot of all the emails to you from Mardyks. I scrutinized them and was trying to help identify the ones most likely to involve the "personal communication" that you cited in your Anomalistik article. As I mentioned, there are three emails from Mardyks to you that are grouped together with the subject "The 2012 Story". As I write my review, I'd like to be accurately informed regarding what Mardyks actually communicated to you.

In a related matter, in your recent email you said that "Anyone who has had more than casual contact with him [Mardyks] knows he's a loony. A vindictive, unfunny loony." Well, I'm sure you probably understand that he is particularly vindictive toward me, right? (I have **hundreds** of emails I could send you.) Do you think a vindictive loony (with a demonstrable track record for lying) would be a reliable source?

I hope you can clarify something. It would seem that with the dozens of emails he sent to you by the end of 2010, as your screen shot shows, you would have had plenty of experience with him to know that he was a "vindictive loony" by the end of 2010. And that was before the Anomalistik piece would have been written. Consequently, I'm a little confused as to why you would have thought some claim he made in an email was reliable, and worth reporting? Since such assertions were coming from a person you believed to be a "vindictive and unfunny loony," why would you insert that into the revised version of your article? (It doesn't appear in the version I received from Barb on August 30, 2011 — yet it appears in the final published version). Any clarification you can offer will be appreciated. Best wishes, John [Jenkins] (email to Van Stone, 12-15-2013)

I renewed my contact with Van Stone through the first half of 2014, but he was always busy with school or summer travels. As of August I still don't have the relevant p.c. email from Mardyks, but it would be moot anyway, since he is a proven liar and his claim to have originated my 2012 alignment reconstruction is completely baseless. Yes, he mentioned the galactic alignment (not using that phrase) as early as the late 1980s, but that's just a fact of astronomy that could have been deduced from the 1930s edition of the *Norton Star Atlas*.⁴ That's not the same as the evidence and argument and reconstruction of authentic ancient Maya beliefs that I laid out in my 1998 book *Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012* (with early publications on it going back to 1994).

⁴ Jenkins (2013): “Notes on Various Editions of *Norton’s Star Atlas* and the Galactic Alignment of Era-2012”: <http://alignment2012.com/Notes-on-Nortons.pdf>.

But a question remains as to why a claim from an unreliable and vindictive liar, or “loony”, which had the effect of calling into question the original and pioneering nature of my work on 2012, would have merited inclusion. Well, I’m sorry to say, but it’s part of an undiscerning reflex that seeks to downplay, counter, or mitigate my work.

Ironically, that same footnote 3 on page 19 continues with supportive observations about my “contributions” and this very issue of being “a target of debunkers.” This material was in the earlier draft, and I suspect it was written by MacLeod (even though the pronoun “we” is used):

In fairness to Jenkins, we recognize (1) that his work has developed in a more scholarly direction over time (p.c. 2009, 2010);⁵ (2) that he has an excellent grasp of the phenomenon termed “the precession of the equinoxes” and associated astrological ages,⁶ and has never said that the Alignment falls only on the Winter Solstice of 2012--- though early enthusiastic statements might suggest this and many 2012ers mistakenly believe this; (3) that he has made some important contributions to Maya studies; (4) that having taken his inspiration from Schele et al in *Maya Cosmos* (1993) he has made no greater leaps in the iconographic / astronomical interpretation than they, but takes far more heat because he is a popular author, an advocate of shamanic practice andentheogens, and a target of debunkers; and (5) **that to our view, it cannot be either proven or disproven that the alignment of the solstice sun with the Galactic Equator (technically, per the IAU, the Equatorial Plane of the Galactic Reference System), could have been anticipated by the creators of the Long Count; all we can do is be amiably skeptical until persuaded otherwise.** (MacLeod and Van Stone 2012:19; item 5 emphasized for the following discussion).

I am grateful to the authors for these observations which largely do accurately frame my work and efforts over time, and acknowledge that I’ve made contributions. In item 5, the construct suggests they are willing to be persuaded that the contested scenario can be proven or disproven. This conceptual construct is problematic, because a demonstrated proof or disproof does not involve persuasion, merely the acceptance of a logically demonstrated fact-based case. The truth is that very few reconstructions of ancient paradigms can be proven or disproven definitively. However, open-minded and rational skeptics can, theoretically, be persuaded to accept a *most likely* scenario. In my discussion that follows in Part 2, I’ll assume that it is unrealistic for a definitive proof to be presented (we don’t have definitive proofs for the vast majority of historical and cultural reconstructions that gain consensus among scholars), and that a *persuasive logical argument for the most likely scenario* is how to move forward.

⁵ I appreciate this acknowledgement and through time, one can certainly improve. However, *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012* (1998) is more thoroughly documented and cogently argued, as a scholarly study, than many PhD dissertations I’ve read. Scholars might have problems with only a few sections where I step back and speculate on larger implications, and Chapter 21 where I take the reader on an imaginative initiatory trip around the Izapa monuments (which was identified as such).

⁶ I prefer “doctrine of World Ages” to avoid a Western projection of what “astrology” means onto a Native American cosmo-conception that is better expressed as “non-dual.” Regarding methods for tracking precession, I discovered and articulated a previously unknown method using the New Fire ceremony and the Calendar Round “World Age” tradition that utilized the precession-caused shifting of the annual sun-Pleiades alignment into convergence with the solar zenith-passage date at a given latitude (Jenkins 1998).

The statement that I am an advocate for entheogens and shamanic practice requires a correction. Due to the undiscerning abuse of entheogens by some users, I've been careful to provide a caveat when I've discussed my own shamanic explorations with these psycho-integrator plants. For example, in *The 2012 Story* (2009:401), after recounting an experiment I conducted in an isolation tank in 1984, I stated that "I don't advocate LSD use or suggest this experiment should be repeated." I even used the explicit phrase "I don't advocate..." In fact, I've consciously distanced myself from the platform of "advocacy" that others have, in no uncertain terms, adopted (O'Leary, McKenna, Pinchbeck, Hancock) because I'm not interested in being a crusading advocate and my personal life and beliefs aren't relevant to the scholarly work of reconstructing ancient Maya cosmology. It's an opening for *ad hominem* attacks, which in fact started happening in mid-2010 — despite my published caveat in my 2009 book. This doesn't mean that I disavow my own uses of medicinal plants, and I have spoken openly of my belief (congruent with the scientific literature on their qualities) that they can facilitate creativity, healing, introspection, and problem solving.

More important academically, and less personally, is that my studies of Mesoamerican shamanism and the archaeological and iconographic evidence at Izapa resulted in me pointing out that the pre-Classic Izapans were using psychoactive mushrooms and the vision-producing DMT entheogen extracted from toads (e.g., Izapa Stela 6). These are possibly some of the "contributions" I have made to Maya studies that MacLeod & Van Stone were alluding to in their article, as quoted above, although my pioneering work at Izapa was off the docket of consideration in their article.⁷

Part 2: The Most Likely of Two Scenarios

I could write a very long review, but I want to focus on point 5, bolded in the quote above. It connects with two concluding questions that are raised on page 45. I'll quote the full passages on page 45 for the appropriate context:

Before we leave Tortuguero 6, it behooves us to briefly mention the possibility of an intentional sidereal interval between the king's birth date and the 13.0.0.0 date. While *Bahlam Ajaw's* birth date can only be reconstructed to within five days due to a damaged Distance Number coefficient, that date would nonetheless have also placed the Sun at the Dark Rift very close to the December 21, 2012 position.[50]⁸ There are, incidentally, two other dates in this text which fall—sidereally speaking—

⁷ Jenkins (1996, 1998, 2002, 2009). Also: <http://alignment2012.com/summary-of-my-work-on-Izapa.pdf>.

⁸ Footnote 50 reads: "Proceeding from this discovery by Michael Grofe, John Major Jenkins (2010) presented a paper at the annual meetings of the Society for American Archaeology on the astronomical implications of the monument, including these four dates and other dates related to Jupiter. An energized, sometimes heated online discussion took place thereafter which brought to the table a number of disagreements—not only between Jenkins and academic Mayanists, but significantly, between academics—on the subjects of precession, pseudoscience, and archaeoastronomy. One view—amid a wide spectrum—seemed to marry these all together. One of the authors took part, as did Michael Grofe." See Appendix 1 for a discussion of this footnote.

within a day or two of the above pair, and for these, there seems no rationale at all.⁹ Our position[51], and that of Grofe (personal communication, 2010, 2011) is that the Maya of Tortuguero likely had the astronomical sophistication not only to notice that the 13.0.0.0 date would fall on the winter solstice, but that this solstice would fall within the Dark Rift somewhere past the midpoint of the solstice Sun's slow transit.

This raises two questions: (1) did the Maya tweak the king's birth date? And (2) does this demonstrate that the Preclassic creators of the Long Count set the 13.0.0.0 date intentionally? Our answers would be: (1) Possibly, because they contrived certain other dates, but it still seems a stretch, and (2) No; it would be illogical to invoke hindsight as proof of original intent. (MacLeod and Van Stone 2012:45).

I'll get to the two questions that were raised in a moment.

The understanding that Bahlam Ajaw's birthday must fall within a 5-day range resulted from some careful scrutinizing by MacLeod, myself, Grofe, and possibly others in late 2010. Earlier statements by Gronemeyer (2004, 2006) and Gronemeyer & MacLeod (2010) assumed a 14-day range. But there really isn't enough space for the needed extra place-register to fit. Some concurrence was achieved on this during the *MEC-Facebook Discussion* (December 2010) that is alluded to in note 50.¹⁰ Then, in March of 2011, I visited Tortuguero Monument 6 in a closed museum in Mexico and examined the physical evidence near the broken Distance Number that generates Bahlam Ajaw's birth date. There was indeed physical evidence that the DN should be "10" and therefore the birthday would be November 28, 612 AD (Julian, in the 584283 correlation), which falls on 12 Ajaw in the 260-day Tzolkin calendar. This is the first day in the allowable 5-day range, and is only one day off from an exact Sidereal Year parallel to December 21, 2012. My deduction and evidence-based observation, from a direct eyeball-to-glyph examination, were supported by other uses of the 12 Ajaw date on Tortuguero monuments, notably a jade staff ornament dated to a solstice period-ending date (9.10.7.0.0, Dec. 17, 639 AD) that fell on 12 Ajaw, some 4.2 years before Bahlam Ajaw took office in 644 AD. My report was published online in June 2011 and sent to the authors and other scholars, including my close-up photos (the most detailed and high-definition photos of the monument available) of the controversial eroded P4 glyph near the 2012 date.¹¹ I also presented my argument that November 28 was the best candidate for Bahlam Ajaw's birthday at *The Great Return* conference in Copan, Honduras (Dec. 18 – 23, 2012), where MacLeod and Michael Grofe also spoke.¹²

We read, in the quote above, that MacLeod and Grofe hold the position that the Maya scribes and astronomers at Tortuguero "likely had the astronomical sophistication" to notice that 13.0.0.0 in 2012 would fall on a solstice (an accurate Tropical Year calculation) *and also that* "this solstice would fall within the Dark Rift somewhere past

⁹ Actually, as discussed in my work (2009) and in the 2010 *MEC-FB Discussion*, the building dedication of Dec. 6, 510 AD (which is one of those dates with the sun at the Dark Rift) provides a metaphorical "fire entering" of the sun alighting the cave/sweat-bath of the temple; i.e., symbolic of the sun in the Dark Rift.

¹⁰ Jenkins (compiler) (2011). Online: <http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/MEC-Facebook-Discussion-2010-ON-Jenkins-SAA-TRT-Astronomy.pdf> and also on the MEC website.

¹¹ <http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/T6Monument.pdf>. My better photos invited minor corrections to the existing line drawings, but were not used or cited by scholars.

¹² Jenkins (2012): "Echoes of the Galactic Alignment Through the Maya Classic Period." Audio of the presentation: <http://www.alignment2012.com/WS320253.WMA>.

the midpoint of the solstice Sun's slow transit" (a Sidereal Year calculation). We are dealing here, of necessity, with a *likelihood*, and that's fine. This kind of reconstruction work can rarely be resolvable to absolute proofs. Given the evidence, it seemed eminently reasonable to MacLeod and Grofe (footnote 51 omits Van Stone from concurring with this position) that the Classic Period Maya at Tortuguero were aware of the future galactic alignment (and by necessity could thus calculate it, in both Tropical Year and Sidereal Year terms). And MacLeod and Grofe also used, in their assessment, the relevant naked-eye identifier (the Dark Rift) that was the key, for me, back in the early 1990s, that allowed the pursuit of the question to be reasonable and within the realm of known Maya concepts.¹³

However, Grofe¹⁴ and MacLeod/Van Stone (p. 19) have stated that it doesn't therefore follow that the *originators of the Long Count* were aware of the galactic alignment. We see this in the "two raised questions" that immediately follow in the quoted passage. To reiterate, the authors asked: "(1) did the Maya tweak the king's birth date? And (2) does this demonstrate that the Preclassic creators of the Long Count set the 13.0.0.0.0 date intentionally?" Their (MacLeod & Van Stone's) answer to the first question is "Possibly, because they contrived certain other dates, but it still seems a stretch." The lingo here is a little unclear. They seem to prefer a more likely scenario that his birthday was not manipulated, because to do so would be unusual and unexpected. If the "stretch" is too much then the congruence between his birthday and 2012 would be based on his real birthday, and that's fine. The parallel was then exploited for its rhetorical power. Grofe (2012) has stated that this circumstance, along with other similar examples from the Maya corpus of inscriptions, is completely understandable as kings liked to craft powerful statements regarding their intimate connection to the calendrics of the Creation Mythos. This is also a position I articulated and shared with scholars in February of 2009, in comparing the respective strategies of Janaab Pakal of Palenque and Bahlam Ajaw. I also explained this to Ed Barnhart in an email exchange of July 2010.¹⁵

MacLeod & Van Stone's very important response to the second raised question is: "No; it would be illogical to invoke hindsight as proof of original intent." Okay, this needs to be looked at carefully. In the quote we see that "proof" is being required to "demonstrate" a pre-Classic intention in setting the 2012 cycle-ending date to the galactic alignment (which the Tortuguero astronomers are admitted to be "likely" aware of). Instead of incongruently requiring "proof" on one side of the argument and only requiring a "likelihood" on the other, we can acknowledge that "likelihoods" are the best that can be entertained. (As previously mentioned, absolute proofs are almost never possible in virtually every reconstruction effort of this kind — including the work of epigraphers who make deductions based on sets of phonetic, linguistic, and syllabic

¹³ No one had previously made this connection between the galactic alignment and the Dark Rift, with the possible exception of Dennis and/or Barbara Tedlock. In a conversation with Dennis in June or July of 1994 (at the Naropa Ethnopoetics conference in Boulder, Colorado), he either was previously aware of the galactic alignment (with or without the Dark Rift association) or he immediately understood my description of it, but objected that it was problematic because it could not be directly observed (the sun obscures the background features). D. Tedlock loosely and dismissively refers to the galactic alignment in his interesting book *2,000 Years of Mayan Literature* (2000). My review: <http://thecenterfor2012studies.com>

¹⁴ Grofe (2011, *Archaeoastronomy Journal* Vol. XXIV, released after stated pub date in August 2012). Grofe also stated this position in the documentary film *2012: The Beginning* (2012).

¹⁵ <http://thecenterfor2012studies.com/Email-exchange-Barnhart-Jenkins.pdf>.

possibilities.) So, let's correct the lopsided application of the need for "proof" versus "likelihood" and reframe the question: "Given that it's *likely* that the Tortuguero astronomers knew about (and could calculate) the future galactic alignment of era-2012, what is the *likelihood* that the more ancient creators of the Long Count also were aware of it, and fixed the 13-Baktun cycle ending in the Long Count to it?" This question can be answered by looking at the two possible scenarios (below).

As an aside, I'm having difficulty, I confess, understanding who would be invoking "hindsight." Is this catch-phrase intended to mean that one cannot retroactively apply a likely later knowledge onto an earlier cultural substratum? That seems my best guess as to what this is intended to mean — like, to say "when I was 50 years old I knew that I would one day die" does not logically mean that "when I was 7 I knew that I would one day die." It must be like saying "Jenkins (or fill in the blank) believes that if the Tortuguero astronomers knew about the galactic alignment, then that proves that the creators of the Long Count must also have known about it." If that's what the catch-phrase is intended to convey, then I'll have to insist that is not my position. My position derives, rather, *from a logical understanding of the relative merit of two possible scenarios*, and I invite the authors, and Michael Grofe, to choose which one of the following seems most likely to them — or provide some other scenario or argument against my approach.

Okay. A logical consideration of the "likely" position (adopted by MacLeod & Grofe), resulting from the evidence at Tortuguero, generates two scenarios. Let's take a look from the reasonable vantage of which one would be the *most likely scenario*:¹⁶

Scenario 1. The astronomers of Tortuguero *were not* basing their knowledge or calculations on an older knowledge embedded into the Long Count tradition. They accidentally "discovered" the fortuitous and accidental placement of 13-Baktun cycle end-date and exploited the coincidence that it happens to fall on accurate astronomical alignments within both the Tropical Year and the Sidereal Year. That the solar position of this two-part (tropical and sidereal) alignment coincides also with the Dark Rift feature and the Crossroads of the Milky Way and the ecliptic — two powerful concepts within Maya Creation Myth symbolism — is also a total coincidence, and the Tortuguero scribes must have invented the idea that it would be meaningful to associate Bahlam Ajaw's birthday with such celestial features. There was no Maya tradition already in place that such astronomical features were associated with Creation Myth and period-ending concepts. Got it? *All of this requires one to assume an extreme unlikely quadruple coincidence of circumstances*, for the Tortuguero astronomers to have only "locally" discovered and established the future galactic alignment as being important. I'm trying to think of a good analogy to drive home the extremely unlikely nature of this scenario. Maybe this works: you play the lottery with Abraham Lincoln's birthday numbers, and you win the jackpot. That's very very very very unlikely. You didn't contrive Abe's birthday numbers, and logic dictates that you probably knew about them before you played the game. That's not a perfect analogy, but something like that.

¹⁶ MacLeod (2011:234, *IAU Vol. 7 no. 278*) recognized and used the approach of identifying the most likely scenario (rather than limiting investigations and interpretations to absolute proofs).

Scenario 2. The creators of the Long Count, around 50 BC or perhaps even earlier, established the 13-Baktun cycle ending to fall on their calculation of a future solstice date positioned reasonably well (quite accurately) at the Dark Rift/Crossroads. This proposition is not without support from a variety of evidence-based positions, and in fact the first part of it (the solstice placement criterion) was briefly entertained by Edmonson (1988). The full scenario requires an awareness of the precession of the solstices (and equinoxes), which can be addressed with three points: 1) archaeologist Marion Popenoe Hatch argued that the Olmecs became aware of precession around 1200 BC, based on archaeological evidence at La Venta. 2) Hatch cites archaeological evidence that the pre-Classic people of Takalik Abaj (a sister city to Izapa during the pre-Classic period) were adjusting stone pointers to account for precession. 3) Hipparchus did not require telescopes or advanced equipment to notice and calculate precession around 128 BC; he was using star position data recorded over a 140-year period and the data itself, as Neugebauer showed, supported a quite accurate value for precession (although Hipparchus loosely stated his results, probably to conform to the general Greek notion of a “Great Year” lasting 36,000 years). In addition to these factors, I’ve pointed out that, at Izapa, the Group B gnomons and Izapa’s latitude point to solar zenith-passage dates, thus to August 12, and the Group F ballcourt points to the December solstice (December 21).¹⁷ These two dates, evident in the cosmological tradition at Izapa, are the bookends of the 13-Baktun cycle — its *first* and *last* days within the Tropical Year.¹⁸ I’m not arguing *proof* here; these items are merely suggestive pieces of evidence, showing that we do have some evidence to support the likelihood of one of the scenarios. A supportive attitude toward the other scenario illogically assumes that *extremely unlikely coincidence* should be the safe default position of the skeptic.

So, the definite “No” and the objection via the catch-phrase that “hindsight does not prove original intent” is assumed to have merit (and perhaps it would if this were a simpler scenario), but when the two *actual scenarios* are laid out, as I have done above, the choices become much more stark and rationality favors the *more likely scenario* that the creators of the Long Count embedded their knowledge of a future galactic alignment into the structure of the Long Count, such that the 13-Baktun cycle end-date would position the solstice sun (meaningfully symbolic of a “First Father / Solar Lord” concept) at the Crossroads (meaningfully symbolic of a “cosmic center / throne” concept) and the Dark Rift (meaningfully symbolic of a “birthplace, mouth, portal” and, in the ballcourt symbolism at Izapa, of the “goal-ring” concept). That’s a pretty rich stew of accidentally meaningful symbolic and positional correspondences, where the alignment happens. All of this would have to be extraordinarily coincidental, not to mention *fortuitous* for the rhetorical fortunes of Bahlam Ajaw seven centuries later, for it *not to have been intended* by the originators of the Long Count.¹⁹ The situation strongly suggests that Bahlam

¹⁷ See also Sitler (2012) for a reiteration of my observation (originally from Jenkins 1998).

¹⁸ For another consideration that argues for intention, related to a suggestion by Susan Milbrath, please read Part II of my letter here: <http://alignment2012.com/Response-to-Mark-Van-Stone.html>.

¹⁹ The logic of my position on this has not been commented on by those I’ve shared it with. It was an important concluding observation in my chapter for the Benfer /Adkins anthology (first draft October 2010) and is also presented in my 2012 book *Reconstructing Ancient Maya Astronomy* and in an excerpt on <http://JohnMajorJenkins.com> (“Quadruple Coincidence of Intentional Embedding?”). It seems to me that

Ajaw *did* employ hindsight, of a sort — recollecting or possibly even reviving a half-forgotten ancient knowledge — to exploit an already existing, long established, tradition. I'm open to the conversation that can unfold from my simple observation, and am also open to hearing viable alternative scenarios (if there are any) *that embrace all the contexts and facts*. The only coincidence in Scenario 2 is that Bahlam Ajaw was born near a direct Sidereal Year parallel to the 2012 period-ending date. Or, possibly, his birthday was manipulated — which itself suggests that his rhetoricians were planning on exploiting an already existing tradition.

As an ancillary consideration, we have a similar situation in GI's birthday on the Tablet of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque (Grofe 2012). This shows they had the ability to calculate an accurate solar position within the Sidereal Year, going back to 2360 BC, utilizing the *same solar position that the 2012 period-ending falls on*. There are numerous other examples of placing the sun at the Crossroads/Dark Rift position, all of which add the weight of implausibility to the coincidence position (Scenario 1). It's probable that after MacLeod/Van Stone's paper was finalized, in late 2011 or early 2012, Grofe's work (2012) would have contributed significantly to their views on the galactic alignment question, not to mention the inclusion of the astronomy of the new "2012" inscription, from La Corona, which was announced after their paper was finished.²⁰

Conclusion

There are many significant contributions in this essay, and I've largely limited my focus on an unexplored area where forward movement and discussion is most compellingly possible. I have provided an argument to persuade the skeptic toward seeing how it logically follows that, in all likelihood, the creators of the Long Count intended the 2012 alignment (given that one accepts that Bahlam Ajaw's scribes in the 7th century were likely aware of it and using it in his political life-biography). One hopes that the *persuasive argument* will not be required to *demonstrate* an absolute *proof*, but that *the most likely scenario* will become the default position, rather than an insistence on adhering to the extremely unlikely alternative scenario, as some kind of safe skepticism.

Bahlam Ajaw's awareness of, and use of, the future alignment (which MacLeod and Grofe consider "likely") is rather important, because it begs the question as to whether his astronomers discovered it accidentally (and it had no basis in the origins of the system) or if he was drawing clues from an older tradition to build his rhetorical text, based on his birthday. Again, the two scenarios, logically considered, lead on one hand to an extremely unlikely convergence of quadruple coincidences, or on the other hand to a more plausible scenario that the creators of the Long Count were aware of the Tropical Year and the Sidereal Year, and projected forward to a future date of alignment that would anchor their system. (It should be noted that "the system" is not just astronomical in nature—it nicely incorporates Creation Myth, ballgame, and king-making themes and symbols within a World Age doctrine connected to ceremonial practices of deity sacrifice

the "No" response to the question results from not having logically thought out the implications of accepting the likelihood of the awareness of the future galactic alignment at 7th-century Tortuguero.

²⁰ See my three essays at <http://thecenterfor2012studies.com>, MacLeod's comments on David Stuart's blog (July, 2012: <http://decipherment.wordpress.com/2012/06/30/notes-on-a-new-text-from-la-corona/>), and MacLeod's comments during my presentation at the Copan "Great Return" conference: <http://Alignment2012.com/MacLeod-Abyss12-19-2012.pdf>.

and renewal.) The “future anchor” scenario does not obviate the possibility that during the nascent defining of the Long Count time periods and sub-periods that the early thinkers (astronomers, shamans, scribes, calendar-makers and priests) constructed an interval that would also target, back-calculated from the future solstice date, a solar-zenith-passage date in the distant past (August 11-13). I suspect this was the case, for, at Izapa, solar zenith-passage dates and the December solstice date are prominently evident. (My “Three Cosmic Center” model for understanding Izapan cosmology was presented in my 1998 book *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012*.)

Appendix 1: A Discussion of Footnote no. 50

Footnote 50 reads: “Proceeding from this discovery by Michael Grofe, John Major Jenkins (2010) presented a paper at the annual meetings of the Society for American Archaeology on the astronomical implications of the monument, including these four dates and other dates related to Jupiter. An energized, sometimes heated online discussion took place thereafter which brought to the table a number of disagreements—not only between Jenkins and academic Mayanists, but significantly, between academics—on the subjects of precession, pseudoscience, and archaeoastronomy. One view—amid a wide spectrum—seemed to marry these all together. One of the authors took part, as did Michael Grofe” (MacLeod & Van Stone 2012:45).

In the brevity of academic papers, the full context of discussion often gets left out. I greatly appreciate that the authors mentioned my *SAA* presentation of April 2010 that followed from Grofe’s discovery of Bahlam Ajaw’s birthday astronomy. That discovery actually followed directly from email exchanges Grofe and I were having in February of 2009, as I’ve recounted elsewhere (see footnote 10). The key was my Copan Stela C essay (*IMS*, December 2000, also in my book *Galactic Alignment 2002*), which itself followed from a strategy of investigation I employed in *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012* (1998:134) and that I presented to Linda Schele in a letter of May 1994.²¹

The authors also allude to an energized and “sometimes heated” debate that followed from my *Society for American Archaeology* paper. This was the “MEC-Facebook Discussion” of November-December 2010, an experimental public peer-review of my *SAA* arguments. It was suggested by Dr. Ed Barnhart at the *Maya Exploration Center* after an informative and cordial email exchange we had in July of 2010, and was approved by the scholars on the board of the *MEC*. I personally invited all my scholarly critics and detractors; only a few responded and participated. The subject was, specifically, my *SAA* paper which was a “read paper” already written (April 2010), which I formatted with the slides I had used, so reviewers could read it.²²

Fortunately for a demonstration of the selective, circularly persistent, and *ad hominem* tactics employed by my academic critics, Stanley Guenter participated.²³ The results were striking, the process was exhausting, and it was all transcribed into a 206-

²¹ Duplicated and discussed in: <http://alignment2012.com/HOWWHY1994-2014.pdf>.

²² Jenkins (2010): “Astronomy in the Tortuguero Inscriptions”:
<http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/Astronomy-in-TRT-SAA.pdf>.

²³ <http://www.update2012.com/Demonstration-for-Guenter.pdf>.

page document, published online by the MEC and on *The Center for 2012 Studies* website. MacLeod and Grofe took part; Hoopes, Freidel, and Van Stone and other scholars who were invited did not. Regarding this debate, I'm not sure what is meant in their statement (MacLeod & Van Stone 2012:45) that "One view—amid a wide spectrum—seemed to marry these all together" [the "subjects of precession, pseudoscience, and archaeoastronomy"]. My summary statement capped the 4-week-long event, and was written on December 19, 2010.²⁴

Appendix 2: Additional Comments, Briefly

On Page 20 the authors address two considerations, acknowledging that "for modern people", understanding the 2012 phenomenon "serves several ends." One is the human desire to understand other human cultures on this planet, and that "is a good thing." The second consideration is that "Most importantly, the end is indeed near." We've exceeded the planet's carrying capacity, concentrated wealth has increased exponentially ... and 2012 is a vector or "popular metaphor" for this discussion. The authors appeal that "focusing attention on our folly may yet inspire real solutions to it." It is reasonable and understandable for investigators and cultural observers (i.e., citizens of planet earth) to address this unavoidable aspect of the 2012 topic. I have done so, as a free-standing or detachable aspect of my reconstruction work. However, my own critics have focused on this aspect of my writings and identify it as a contestable expression of the marketplace's "invented mythology" — that ancient Maya wisdom can save us from our own self-created delusions and destruction. But here we have prize-winning scholars enunciating the same, quite reasonable, consideration, without the blow-back that I've experienced. This underscores the double-standard that has often been applied to the wide-spectrum of treatments in my writings, from astronomy to spiritual teachings to creating a sustainable future to shamanism, indigenous rights, and appeals for personal and social change and transformation.

The double standard also occurs in the proper citing of my own contributions and publications, which have often anticipated the writings of other scholars by many years. Scholars will often cite "p.c." communications with their colleagues for ideas and explanations, so it's not a matter of always needing to cite peer-reviewed publications. For example, in footnote 8 on page 21 we find a discussion of the calendar correlation question. The authors wrote that "We owe clarification of the following data to Michael Grofe (personal communication 2011)." However, in early 2008 I was in email communication with Van Stone and the correlation issue came up. On May 27, 2008, I sent him a lengthy email, which is reproduced here: <http://alignment2012.com/Response-to-Mark-Van-Stone.html>. I succinctly and clearly explained the various correlation issues, and cited my article in the *Institute of Maya Studies* newsletter (March 2008) for additional support. These were the same issues addressed in footnote 8. Van Stone and I continued our email exchange through 2008. At the bottom of the footnote Van Stone claims to have been informed in a 2007 p.c. from Robert Wald about Floyd Lounsbury's 2-day shift proposal in the correlation question, saying the data wasn't as exact as

²⁴ <http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/MEC-Facebook-Discussion-2010-ON-Jenkins-SAA-TRT-Astronomy.pdf>, pp. 202-206.

Lounsbury asserts. Well, I discussed this in my 1992/1994 book *Tzolkin*, and in an analysis of Lounsbury's data in an essay I wrote and posted online in 1995: <http://www.alignment2012.com/fap9.html> (mentioned in the email to him). Van Stone did not seem to be informed of this 2-day error issue when I was in communication with him in 2008 (see Appendix 3 for a brief discussion of Van Stone's book of 2010).

Also in footnote 8 we find a description of my proposed "36-year" alignment zone, and the "womb" and "mouth" attribution for the Dark Rift region that I have argued for and emphasized in my work as keys to understanding how the ancient Maya thought about 2012. The idea is simply credited to "some interpreters" and "others." I very often find that, despite my exchanges with scholars, when it comes to actually citing me for the ideas and discoveries and frameworks of discussion that I've put forward and often pioneered in my work, they just become general property cited to "some researchers believe." For example, in my 1998 book *Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012* I provided citations and arguments for the Dark Rift being thought of as a birth place and the nuclear bulge region of the Galactic Center as a womb. Those ideas are either derided or accepted as if they'd been known all along, offering a no-win situation for the originator/identifier of the ideas.²⁵

On page 25, the angled serpent bar (Fig. 3) as the ecliptic is an idea I also discussed, in *Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012*, following and extending the work of Linda Schele to incorporate the "cosmic center" cross-form throne symbolism (as at Izapa).

The description of the galactic alignment at the top of page 26 needs clarification. There seems to be a conflation of perspectives that may have resulted from the dual authorship of the essay. My own published work could have been cited for succinct clarity, but it gets lost in the murk of these descriptions. Note 16 refers to an idea I wrote about in the 1990s, which supposedly is the subject of "continuing debate" (if I stated that $2 + 2 = 4$, I'd have my detractors).

In footnote 17 on page 27 we read: "We have little direct evidence that they [the pre-Classic people] valued solstices as checkpoints...". This is certainly from Van Stone, who tenaciously clings to this talking point. We have the December solstice alignment of the ballcourt at Izapa, which I was the first to calculate and publish (1996, 1998),²⁶ and Izapa stands above any other pre-Classic site as the likely origin place for the Long Count calendar cosmology.²⁷ Izapa is only mentioned once, briefly, in the article (on page 28), where the dates for Izapa's stelae are limited to 100 BC to 100 AD. The correct

²⁵ See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

²⁶ The history of wrong statements about the Izapa ballcourt's alignment is rather fascinating. The BYU archaeologists never state it, and their maps can easily be misinterpreted due to vagueness in accounting for the 7° magnetic deviation. This is why Laughton (p.c. 2001) thought my solstice alignment discovery was not correct. In *The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, citing Lowe et. al (1982), Pierre Agrinier (1991:193) states Izapa's ballcourt is aligned 10S of East (a 100° azimuth, which is 14° in error). Aveni & Hartung (2000) got it right, but then in Aveni's book (2009:54), he states the Izapa ballcourt's alignment 48° in error (see my essay at: <http://www.update2012.com/Review-Aveni-Izapa-ballcourt.pdf>). Another issue is the misleading notion that the Izapa ballcourt is post-Classic, which seems derived from the fact that activity occurred there in the post-Classic and other monuments were relocated there, speculated as occurring in the late-Classic. This late dating, for its construction, is a fallacy and is not even congruent with BYU's own C-14 data; See Jenkins (2011), "Dating the Construction of the Izapan Ballcourt": <http://www.thecenterfor2012studies.com/dating-the-ballcourt.pdf>.

²⁷ I've written (Jenkins 2009) that while the underlying cosmo-conception was formulated at Izapa, it may have been calendar makers at nearby Takalik Abaj who inaugurated and first carved the Long Count.

archaeological dating of this is clear in the literature — the oldest stelae at Izapa are dated to 400 BC, and since many depict Hero Twin episodes, they antedate the “First Father / One Hunahpu” scene on the San Bartolo murals. Izapa usually gets short shrift as a very early, if not the earliest, location for Hero Twin myth scenes.

The authors cite Carl Callaway (2011) for a “like-in-kind” concept that I’ve enunciated since 1995 (my book *The Center of Mayan Time*), in which it is reasonable to expect that the 2012 period-ending would echo the 3114 BC period-ending, stated in the inscriptions as “the completion” of a 13-Baktun period. The pertinent extract from the Callaway quote is: “Era day acts echo what will happen near the close of the next 13 *Bak’tun* period in the year 2012... Past is very much prologue.” In my work I referred to “Era day” as “Creation day” (which I think followed Schele’s use), and I saw it as applicable to both 3114 BC and 2012 AD. The authors likewise use the same “Creation” day term on page 30. Top of page 32, the “cardinal points” might actually be the solstice-equinox horizon points, as that kind of directional cosmogram was evidently of interest to the Maya, as I discussed in *Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012* (1998).

Regarding “Modern Maya leaders and calendar-keepers” (page 36), my 2009 book *The 2012 Story* discussed them in several chapters, including Victor Montejo and the Baktunian Movement and also discussing the work of Jennifer Harbury, Robert Sitler and Garrett Cook (2000). The first eight years of my work with the Maya (1986–1994) was largely concerned with traveling in Central America, service work in Maya communities, delivering relief supplies, and writing journalistic exposés on death squads and the socio-political challenges of the modern Maya. But Robert Sitler’s many years of devotion to Maya causes, and his ability to make fast friends in Maya communities and speak their language, has surely given him intimate insight into the Maya world.

Regarding Guenter’s quote on page 37, I questioned (in my Benfer/Adkins essay and on Stuart’s “Maya Decipherment” blog) the accuracy of suggesting that the Palenque scribes believed Pakal “would reign again” (like the “return” of King Arthur) in 4772 AD. Rather, as I discussed in my 2011 book *Lord Jaguar’s 2012 Inscriptions* (sent to MacLeod in September 2011), a more *Maya* concept would be that he was expected to be invoked into supernatural manifestation on that far-future period-ending date. The practice of invoking departed ancestor-kings is already attested in Maya royal ceremonies; we just have to deduce that it would have been equally likely for living Maya kings to expect that they could be invoked, after their deaths, for a future reappearance—a concept that apparently has not been previously considered by scholars.

Appendix 3. Brief Survey of Comments in Van Stone’s 2012 book (8-20-2014)

Van Stone’s *2012: Science and Prophecy of the Ancient Maya* (2010) was elaborated from a 2008 Power Point presentation, originally posted online on FAMSI in late 2008. It’s gone through several iterations and was officially released in book form in early-2010. My copy is dated May 11, 2010.

Although I’ve already reviewed the book (<http://www.Update2012.com>) it’s worth revisiting in a concise way to observe how Van Stone has treated my work. We can do this by searching through the text for his references to key items from my work, such as “Izapa”, “galactic alignment”, “dark rift”, “solstice”, “Milky Way”, and my name,

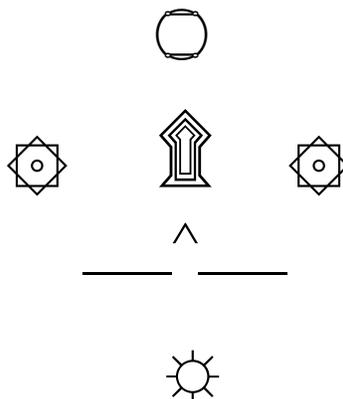
“Jenkins.” In a nutshell, despite our lengthy earlier email exchanges (in 2008) he avoids connecting my name with the concepts that are diagnostic of my pioneering work.

I’ve decided to link this as a separate treatment, as it grew larger than I anticipated, and I should keep this review more concise and on point. My recent survey of comments in Van Stone’s 2010 book is linked here:

<http://www.Update2012.com/Survey-Comments-Van-Stone.html>

Brief Synopsis of My Logical and Persuasive “Most Likely” Scenario Comparison

- First, we must entertain *most likely scenarios*, not a requirement of absolute proof.
- If we accept that it is *likely* that the 7th-century AD Tortuguero astronomers knew about the future alignment of the solstice sun with the Dark Rift / Crossroads on 13.0.0.0.0 in 2012, then it logically follows that the creators of the Long Count *most likely* intended to target that alignment with the placement of the 2012 period-ending, at the inauguration of the Long Count calendar (in the pre-Classic).
- Why? Because the alternative explanation is that the convergence of at least four different coincidental circumstances accidentally occur on the 13.0.0.0.0 date which falls arbitrarily in 2012; the Tortuguero astronomers accidentally noticed it during their astronomical ruminations and decided to exploit the accident of the future alignment’s occurrence on a big period ending, which accidentally involves important astronomical features involved in Maya Creation Mythology.
- There is evidence that the pre-Classic people at La Venta and Takalik Abaj were aware of and adjusting for the precession of the equinoxes. Evidence at Izapa points to a recognition and use of dates within the Tropical Year (August 12 and December 21) that are the first and last days of the 13-Baktun cycle.



email to Barb, August 26, 2014:

Thank you again for your clarifications on Lagunita Stela 2. I also thank you (and Mark) for your comments in your *Zeitschrift* piece, which fairly summarized my role in the 2012 discussion. I think the essay is a very very important piece, but I want to focus on an aspect of it that I think provides an opening to move the discussion forward. Only recently have I been able to read through and digest this revised and published version. I hope you'll have the time to consider my response, which is pretty straightforward.

You and Mark wrote (p. 45):

"Our position[51], and that of Grofe (personal communication, 2010, 2011) is that the Maya of Tortuguero **likely** had the astronomical sophistication not only to notice that the 13.0.0.0.0 date would fall on the winter solstice, but that this solstice would fall within the Dark Rift somewhere past the midpoint of the solstice Sun's slow transit.

This raises two questions: (1) did the Maya tweak the king's birth date? And (2) does this demonstrate that the Preclassic creators of the Long Count set the 13.0.0.0.0 date intentionally? Our answers would be: (1) Possibly, because they contrived certain other dates, but it still seems a stretch, and (2) No; it would be illogical to invoke hindsight as **proof** of original intent."

(note 51 disclaims Van Stone agreeing with the position held by you and Grofe.) This quote follows up on your earlier comment (footnote 3 on page 19) that:

"...to our view, it cannot be either **proven or disproven** that the alignment of the solstice sun with the Galactic Equator ... could have been anticipated by the creators of the Long Count; all we can do is be amiably skeptical until **persuaded** otherwise."

The two quotes go between a desire for "proof" versus allowing for a likely or persuasive position. I think we agree --- especially in reconstructing ancient beliefs and paradigms -- that it is unrealistic to expect that definitive proof can be marshaled for the vast majority of positions that have become consensus. Scholars routinely settle for "most likely" interpretations. So, "proof of original intent" can't realistically be expected, especially based on something as indirect as "hindsight". I'm not invoking hindsight. Rather, based on the "likely" scenario that "the Maya of Tortuguero had the astronomical sophistication ... to notice that the 13.0.0.0.0 date would fall on the winter solstice", I'm offering a logical comparison of the two possible consequent scenarios (regarding the pre-Classic awareness of the future alignment). I'm also open to other possible scenarios, apart from the two I present, but I haven't thought of any.

So, if you're ready and willing, I can send about one page that lays out the persuasive argument as to the most likely scenario. I've been chewing on this for several years; time and attention have kept it on the sidelines. But since you've invited a persuasive argument, I have one. :) Best wishes,

John

She replied and said to send it: <http://Alignment2012.com/two-possible-scenarios.html>.
No response as of 9-10-2014; no response to the same invite sent to Grofe.