2012: The End of the World as We Know It

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Abstract
Many so-called “2012 doomsayers theorists,” such as John Major Jenkins and Jose Arguelles successfully convinced a portion of the modern Western world that the ancient Maya had predicted the end of the world. They swayed many into believing that the world was supposed come to a violent end on December 21, 2012. This important date is referred to as the end of the “Great Cycle” of 13 Bak’tuns, according to translations of the ancient Maya hieroglyphic texts. But what evidence, if any, in the archaeological recorded suggested a cataclysmic collapse in support of these doomsday predictions? Here, I explore the root of these concepts of violent collapse. Although we now know their predictions were false, they seem to have gotten a good deal of the Western world worried about what was to come this past winter. What exactly did these doomsayers like Jenkins and Arguelles predict and how do their predictions compare with what the ancient and contemporary Maya say? The archaeological evidence that survives suggests the ancient Maya would not have feared this time but would have celebrated it as a time of renewal. Although the ancient Maya mythology suggests destruction of the world at the end of the 13th Bak’tun, a new world would no doubt have been anticipated by the ancient Maya who would have celebrated this period as a time of rebirth and renewal, much like other important period endings in their calendar. Below I review the doomsayers’ theories and present evidence from several archaeological contexts that suggest the predictions of December 21st, 2012 do not accurately reflect the thinking of the ancient Maya.

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