

About JMJ



John Major Jenkins (b. 1964) is an independent researcher, author, and lecturer, whose interests and work cover a wide spectrum of topics. He was born in Chicago and grew up in western suburbs of Elmhurst and Lombard. Summers were spent with his brother Don at his grandmother's house in Wisconsin, or at his uncle's campground in Colorado. Don is a teacher in the Pacific northwest. His older brother Bill is a musician and works in the film industry in Los Angeles. His sister, Cindy, is an architect and lives in Kentucky. After graduating from Glenbard East high school in 1982, a crisis led him to meditation and yoga, a healing path that he nurtured over the next few years, having deeply integrative inner experiences. In October of 1983 he traveled to the Arkansas Ozarks, hiking and camping out in the woods for two weeks. After more adventures in the Gulf Coast area, and his VW Bug breaking down in Mississippi, he hitchhiked back to Chicago. It was 1983; he was 19 years old. During this coming-of-age time he wrote poetry, songs for guitar, and a few short stories and philosophical treatments.

In early 1985 he embarked on a pilgrimage through the southeastern states, traveling in his "mobile hermitage" (a 1969 Dodge van). Through his meditation and yoga practice a spiritual awakening occurred in Florida which was documented in his 1991 book *Mirror in the Sky*. His seven-month Florida "vision quest" trip opened up new possibilities and led to Jenkins moving to Boulder, Colorado later that year. There, he worked nights in a factory to save money for more travels. In 1986-87 he first traveled to Mexico and Central America on a three-month trip, and between 1988 and 1994 returned four times, doing service work such as rebuilding a school and delivering relief supplies to Highland Maya villages in Guatemala. His early travel articles were published in the Chicago-based newspaper *Scenezine* and his first book, *Journey to the Mayan Underworld*, was published in 1989.

In 1991, at age 27, Jenkins began work on his book *Tzolkin: Visionary Perspectives and Calendar Studies* (published with Borderland Sciences Research

Foundation in 1994). He had taken a few classes at Metropolitan State College in Denver, and then audited a few anthropology classes at the University of Colorado in Boulder. He applied there as a non-traditional student, scored high on the ACT and was accepted, but then confronted the stark reality of the world of Guaranteed Student Debt. Assessing the likelihood of achieving his goals within the academic system of mind-training versus continuing with his path as an autodidact and finishing his third book, he opted for the latter and never looked back. A chapter from his book *Tzolkin*, written in early 1992 ([“Toward Reconstructing the Ixil / Quiché Venus Calendar”](#)), shows a level of knowledge of the Maya calendar and Maya astronomy that is only taught in graduate programs of Mesoamerican Studies (if at all), and that many of his scholarly critics have yet to achieve. To spend expensive years going through undergrad and graduate training, learning how to reinforce consensus perspectives on the Maya and squeeze Maya genius into the little boxes of Western reductive science, would have been time wasted. Indeed, by 1993 Jenkins had hit upon the key to understanding the greatest enigma of Maya intellectual achievement — the 13-Baktun period ending of the Long Count calendar. [The bibliography for his 1998 book *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012*](#) reveals the depth and scope of his studies in the early 1990s.

As a self-taught scholar of ancient Mesoamerican calendar traditions, Jenkins has investigated the authentic underpinnings of the Maya calendar period-ending in 2012 AD. His “2012 alignment theory,” first published in 1994 and greatly elaborated in his 1998 book *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012*, argues that the December 21, 2012 date was selected by the ancient Mesoamerican calendar makers to target a rare alignment within the precession of the equinoxes. He was the first to show how the astronomical features involved in the rare “solstice-galaxy alignment” of era-2012 were centrally important features in the Maya Creation Mythology, in the sacred ball game, and in the archaeology at the site of Izapa. These include the “Dark Rift” of the Milky Way, and the cross formed by the Milky Way and the ecliptic. He was also the first to propose and present evidence for the idea that the visually perceivable “nuclear bulge” of the Galactic Center was thought of by the Maya as a center and source, a “womb” of a cosmic mother deity. This was presented as one of many identities the ancient Maya applied to the Milky Way. In reconstructing ancient Maya precessional astronomy, Jenkins sought to define and clarify the factual basis of the era-2012 “galactic alignment,” discussing timing parameters and ranges of duration, in his 2002 book *Galactic Alignment*, citing the calculations of astronomers Jean Meeus and Patrick Wallace.

Because many scholars concurred that the Izapan civilization was involved in the formulation of the Long Count calendar system, Jenkins studied and performed field research at the pre-Classic site of Izapa. His study of ancient archaeoastronomy and the cosmological interests of the Izapans is the backbone of his pioneering work. He was the first to observe and publish (in 1995) the fact that the Group F ballcourt at Izapa is aligned with the December solstice sunrise azimuth. For this work he was nominated in 2008 for National Fellow membership in the Explorers Club founded by Sir Edmund Hillary. His findings at the site were unprecedented in the literature and contributed to understanding the iconographic message of the carved monuments at Izapa. This facet of his work involves the spiritual teachings embedded in the Maya Creation myth, well represented on the carved monuments of Izapa. This more intangible area of investigation led to Jenkins identifying the core teachings of Maya spirituality and metaphysics as

expressions of the Perennial Philosophy, elucidated by great 20th-century thinkers such as Ananda Coomaraswamy, Rene Guenon, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Kathleen Raine, and Joseph Campbell. Ignoring the value of discerning analysis, Maya scholars critical of Jenkins' work have intentionally engaged in the intellectually dishonest tactic of confusing these thinkers, and the Perennial Philosophy, with "New Age" thought.

Within the 2012 discussion, Jenkins has debated other writers and has critiqued baseless doomsday theories, "New Age" dogma, and all manner of under-informed models and systems in the popular marketplace. Jenkins has also sought to engage professional Maya scholars in investigating what the ancient Maya themselves may have thought about 2012. This sincere effort began in the early 1990s and met largely with scoffing disdain until 2008, because professional scholars harbored misunderstandings about Jenkins's work and, more often, they lacked discerning analysis in associating the 2012 topic with Y2K or doomsday ideation. The professional scholars could not acknowledge that 2012 may have been a true and intentional artifact of ancient Maya thought, even though the period ending falls on an accurate solstice, December 21, 2012.

By 2006 Jenkins had written eleven books and dozens of articles on Maya calendrics and cosmology, and had presented his work at *The Institute of Maya Studies* in Miami, the Esalen Institute, the University of Oregon, Naropa University, and numerous other venues. He has presented his research at popular and academic conferences around the world, including in England, Belgium, Holland, Copenhagen, Canada, Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Brazil, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Rome, and all over the USA. Since 1995 many reports, based on field research at the site, essays, reviews, and exchanges with others have been freely published on his website Alignment2012.com.

In April of 2006, Tortuguero Monument 6 received widespread attention. It contains the only explicit Classic Period reference to the 2012 period ending date. Professional epigraphers, such as David Stuart, immediately tried to downplay its significance, saying that "it doesn't tell us much." He maintained this position in his 2011 book. This superficially dismissive position has been proven to be a misleading assessment, with Gronemeyer & MacLeod's revised decipherment of the Monument 6 inscription in August 2010, Michael Grofe's work on the astronomy of the dates, and Jenkins's further research and reporting of these developments in his 2009 book [*The 2012 Story*](#) and in his presentation ("Astronomy in the Tortuguero Inscriptions") at the 75th meeting of the *Society for American Archaeology* (April 2010). (This essay, and others, are available at [*The Center for 2012 Studies*](#).) As it turns out, in a wildly unlikely but supremely validating way, the astronomy associated with the thirteen dates on Tortuguero Monument 6 supports Jenkins's earlier findings on 2012 at Izapa.

Jenkins' work as an independent thinker was featured in the *Sunday Magazine* of the *New York Times* ([July 1, 2007](#)). His acclaim in the popular media continued to grow with the release of his 3-CD audio program in late 2007, and the writing of a series of articles that appeared in popular book anthologies including *The Mystery of 2012* and *You Are Still Being Lied To*. His book *The 2012 Story* (Tarcher / Penguin) was released just prior to Hollywood's 2012 cataclysm movie, and Jenkins was invited by Sony Pictures to speak at the press conferences for the movie, including the red carpet premier in Hollywood on November 3, 2009. Since there is no evidence that the ancient Maya

thought of 2012 as a cataclysm, Jenkins accepted the challenge to lend corrective clarity to the doomsday hype. The only worthwhile result can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/user/mandalay37>. In addition to the press conferences he gave over sixty radio, TV, and newspaper interviews, and did several bookstore appearances and conferences over a four-week period after the release of his book.

Jenkins' progressive reconstruction of the mid-1990s, fully documented and represented in his 1996 monograph *Izapa Cosmos* and in his 1998 book *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012*, was accomplished independently without degrees or university support. Since his work is now receiving support from new evidence, these exciting developments have been ignored or denounced, without any cogent analysis, by the defenders of the status quo in Maya academia. Several scholars have even engaged in libelous character assassination in their efforts to mitigate Jenkins's presence and the priority of his work in the evolving 2012 discussion. Jenkins has responded to all his critics on his Update2012.com and Alignment2012.com websites, in the academic e-lists Aztlán and UT Mesoamerica, and in his 2009 book *The 2012 Story*.

More recently, several progressive Maya scholars have been more fair and open-minded toward Jenkins's work. In early 2008 Jenkins renewed acquaintance with Maya epigrapher Barb MacLeod (who he had first met at the Austin Maya Meetings in 1995), and learned of her "3-11 Pik" theory. This was a new development that suggested how important tracking the precession of the equinoxes was to the ancient Maya, and the role it played in Maya kingship. MacLeod introduced Jenkins to Maya epigrapher and astronomer Michael Grofe, whose 2007 PhD dissertation argued that the Serpent Series in the Dresden Codex tracks the sidereal year, the tropical year, and precession. Conversations and dialogue with Grofe eventually led them, in February 2009, to a thorough examination of the thirteen dates on Tortuguero Monument 6, and the identification of striking patterns that underscore the importance of the very same alignment in 2012 that is the centerpiece of Jenkins's "2012 alignment theory." The strategy of looking for "like-in-kind" astronomical alignments was supplied by an article written by Jenkins for the *Institute of Maya Studies* newsletter ("The Astronomy on Copan's Stela C," Vol. 22, Issue 12, December 2000). Grofe and Jenkins pursued more detailed analyses of the astronomy of the Tortuguero, Copan, Palenque, Tikal, and Quirigua monuments, and Grofe has developed a methodology for identifying sidereal year and tropical year constants in the Maya inscriptions. MacLeod examined the Monument 6 text from an epigraphic perspective. The important revision she co-authored with Sven Gronemeyer in August 2010 (Wayeb No. 34) did not discuss or mention the astronomy.

It was only after Jenkins's public confrontation with Maya scholar Anthony Aveni at the Tulane "2012" conference in February 2009 that Jenkins was invited to present his work, by Dr Robert Benfer, in a peer-reviewed academic publication. This led to his 2010 *Society for American Archaeology* presentation and then to a chapter in a University Press of Florida anthology (due out in 2012). The SAA paper led to discussions, in July 2010, with *Maya Exploration Center* director Dr Edwin Barnhart, who invited Jenkins to defend his work in a public debate on a Facebook Discussion board. In November 2010 this debate was announced, and Jenkins personally invited twenty-five of his scholarly critics to participate. The result was a heated and intense

exchange that culminated between December 10 – 19, 2010. All exchanges were compiled into a 216-page PDF file and [made publicly available in January of 2011](#). In late January, Jenkins gave a presentation at the *Institute of Maya Studies* in Miami, on the latest breakthroughs in Maya astronomy, focusing on Tortuguero Monument 6. In March of 2011 Jenkins traveled to Villahermosa, Mexico, to examine Tortuguero Monument 6 in person. He succeeded in identifying physical evidence to clarify the probable birth date of Lord Jaguar, 7th-century king of Tortuguero and the protagonist of the monument. In June 2011 his report, with many close-up photos, was posted at [The Center for 2012 Studies](#). In June of 2009 Jenkins had visited an area of southern Chiapas to examine a previously undocumented carved boulder. Jenkins's report, with photos and line drawings, was posted at *The Center for 2012 Studies* in July 2011. In July 2011 Jenkins began to post, as "occasional notes" on *The Center for 2012 Studies*, a series of previously unpublished reports, notes, and essays on various aspects of his study of Tortuguero, ongoing since 2006.

Jenkins was involved in conceiving a non-profit that was launched in early 2010, called [The Maya Conservancy](#). He serves as an advisory board member. One of the first events sponsored by The Maya Conservancy was a tour in July 2010, with thirteen Maya spiritual guides led by Tat Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac. This tour brought the Maya guides around to different Maya sites to do ceremony, including a momentous event at Izapa: *the ritual re-opening of that sacred site*. Ceremony by Maya guides had not been performed there for centuries, perhaps 1,000 years. This goal was conceived by Mary Lou Ridinger and Jenkins in 2007, and was put into manifestation by Jim Reed and Georgeann Johnson (President of The Maya Conservancy), with the assistance of numerous others. [A historic speech was given that same day by Tat Rigoberto](#) to the Tapachula council. This occurrence at Izapa was a near miracle to achieve, because the Mexican government generally does not allow Maya ceremonies to take place within the archaeology sites managed by INAH.

Jenkins' reconstruction work is clearly spelled out and documented in his many books and articles. Professional Maya scholars consistently misrepresent or ignore the evidence Jenkins has brought to bear on his "2012 alignment thesis." The 2012 topic is distorted by a dumbed-down mass media, and amidst the growing noise it is likely that Jenkins' work will be clearly understood for what it is only after Carnival 2012 blows over. It has been over twenty-six years since Jenkins first contemplated planning a trip to Maya lands in Mexico and Central America. As of mid-2011, several very important essays by Michael Grofe are scheduled for publication. Properly understood, Grofe's work adds a great deal to understanding how the ancient Maya were tracking the sidereal year, the tropical year, and the precession of the equinoxes. Forthcoming articles by Jenkins will appear in a University Press of Florida anthology and in [2012: Decoding the Counter-cultural Apocalypse](#) (ed., Joseph Gelfer, 2011). A book of Jenkins's collected articles is planned, and his final book in his 2012 oeuvre, *Lord Jaguar and 2012*, will be out in early 2012.

John's other interests include graphic design and letterpress printing, old books and the history of printing, the Kalevala epic of Finland, researching local history, genealogy, songwriting on the bouzouki and guitar, and biking.

