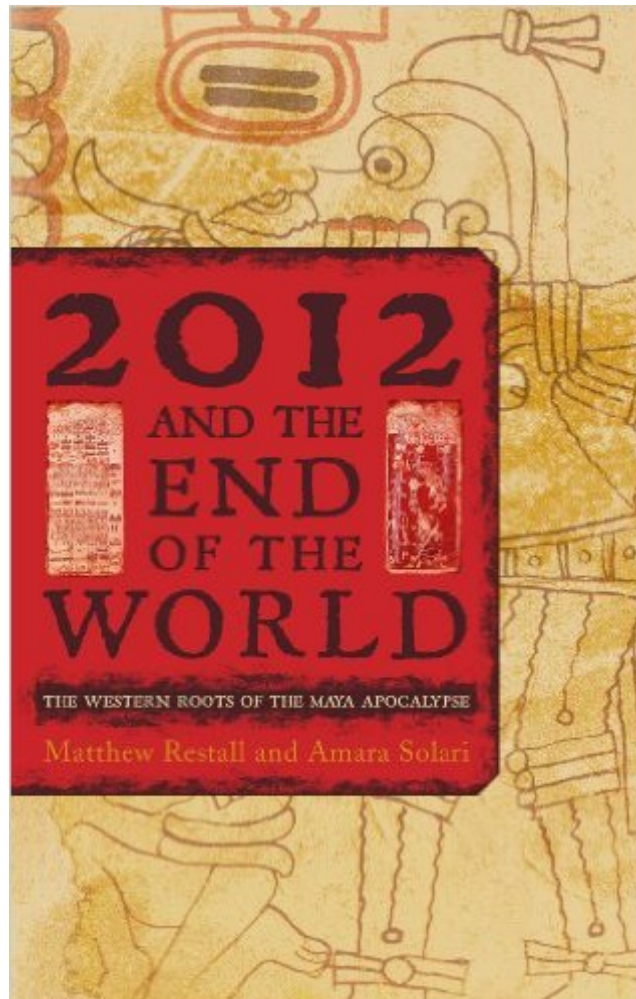


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2012 And The End Of The World: The Western Roots Of The Maya Apocalypse



Synopsis

Did the Maya really predict that the world would end in December of 2012? If not, how and why has 2012 millenarianism gained such popular appeal? In this deeply knowledgeable book, two leading historians of the Maya answer these questions in a succinct, readable, and accessible style.

Matthew Restall and Amara Solari introduce, explain, and ultimately demystify the 2012 phenomenon. They begin by briefly examining the evidence for the prediction of the world's end in ancient Maya texts and images, analyzing precisely what Maya priests did and did not prophesize. The authors then convincingly show how 2012 millenarianism has roots far in time and place from Maya cultural traditions, but in those of medieval and Early Modern Western Europe. Revelatory and myth-busting, while remaining firmly grounded in historical fact, this fascinating book will be essential reading as the countdown to December 21, 2012, begins.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"2012 and the End of the World" is a concise and detailed look into all things 2012, focusing on the history of the New World's apocalyptic fascination and how it connects to this key date in Maya history. Matthew Restall and Amara Solari are professors at Penn State. The two were preparing a class to be taught IN 2012, focused ON 2012 and the result of those preparations is this book.

Spanning only about 100 pages, the chapters are well-organized and well-structured for easy classroom note taking ("first we will be discussing these four points...point 1, etc."). This very readable book is more academic than narrative, but does an incredible job of incorporating a lot of info in only a few pages. It's not written for the academic community, but rather it's targeted at

readers interested in understanding what's behind the 2012 mythos. They refer to 2012ology...the study of all things related to the Maya "Prophecy" and the "end date" of their Long Count calendar: December, 21, 2012. As they state early in the book, the purpose of their class, and this book "is to use 2012ology as a vehicle for combining the sources and methods of art history to explain the medieval, modern, and Maya contributions to the 2012 phenomenon..." The book contains numerous drawings, photos and images that enhance their own descriptive analyses. What started all of this bizarrely intense focus on 12/21/12? It was the fragments of a monument accidentally uncovered by construction workers at a small archaeological site known as El Tortuguero. On what is known as Stela 6 is a reference to 13.0.0.0.0, a date used in the Maya's long range time-tracking calendar, and a strange and brief mythological tale.

A pretty good book. The thrust: the Maya did not predict anything special would happen in 2012, much less an apocalypse. Any apocalyptic matter in Maya religion, so the authors say, is a product of a syncretic spillover from the Catholic-Indian encounter, later puffed up by New Agers. Restall and Solari make some good points, but they make some missteps too. For instance, like many Latin Americanists, they have a thorn in their side when it comes to Christianity, especially the Catholic Church (Christianity=evil; Indians=wonderful untouched, i.e. un-Western, civs). Thus they make some mistakes when it comes to analyzing and discussing Christianity. For instance, on p. 54 they call the birth of Christ an Immaculate Conception. No. Christ was a product of the Virgin Birth, Mary was the product of the Immaculate Conception. On p. 78, Vespucci's narrative, in which he encounters stormy seas and then finds the New World is not a tale of "apocalypse and redemption," it is Providence. (Do the authors really not know what apocalypse and redemption are?) On p. 79, the authors say that a parable in Luke 14 ("Parable of the Great Banquet") is about charity and not about souls and the last judgement. This stems from the liberal Christian view (the "Hippie Jesus" view I call it) that Jesus only taught a brand of proto-communism. No, it is outwardly about charity, but the greater implication is that it is about the Last Judgement. Restall and Solari claim Jesus was only talking about charity and the Franciscans turned it into a millennial prophecy. No, Jesus meant it that way. ("He who has ears, let him hear!") On the Latin American history stage, the authors attempt to rehabilitate the last Aztec emperor Montezuma (pp. 86ff.).

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