

INTRODUCTION



The Maya Calendars

THE CALENDARS OFFERED in this guidebook are interpretations of those mastered by the Maya, the inhabitants of the Yucatan peninsula in what we now call Central America and Southern Mexico. The calendars have been resurrected from ancient sites in that region and refreshed in language and imagery that makes sense to a modern world. The master planner of this new incarnation of the calendars was Dr. Jose Arguelles, who connected to the Mayan teachings through profound visions and messages that came in meditation. He was a channel, receiving a transmission from a surreal spot in the cosmos, and it was his life's mission to offer what he received to those with whom it resonates here on earth.

Arguelles was humble, and was not made wealthy or into a spiritual superhero by this work of interpreting a psychic feed. He was, in the cosmology of the calendar itself, born a *Blue Spectral Monkey*, a grand illusionist or old-fashioned magician. His birth energy as *Blue Monkey* correlates to the Coyote in Native American spirituality, the Heyoka. Through tricks of the eye and tongue, humor, persistence and even fallibility – the maker of both mischief and mistakes – *Blue Monkey* teaches us to have humility, to laugh at ourselves.

It's not clear if the original Mayan culture had this lightness at the heart of their spiritual path. We may be shocked by the legendary human sacrifices that the Maya enacted, cutting the still-beating heart out of a chosen martyr and offering it to the gods. Their civilization ended darkly, a demise that coincided with the arrival of explorers and marauders who could only see the Maya as savages, even though we

now know they were the most astute observers of astronomy in pre-industrialized planetary history.

The Maya still live in the Yucatan, sometimes in remote sects where they continue to practice their famed traditions in weaving and calendar augury. Spaces have been cleared in the jungle to reveal their towering pyramids, which demonstrate the other incredible, almost implausible accomplishment of Mayan civilization: the erection of temples to brush up against their imagined heavens without the invention of a wheel or participation of any animal who could be harnessed to haul the massive blocks of stone. The toil fell on humans themselves, making them either superhuman or slave.

When we journey into the mythos of the Mayan calendars, our work is not necessarily to dig out further remains of the original Mayan civilization and presume to align ourselves with its habits, mindset and private history. We will each discover how we connect to the Maya as they lived and inscribed their calendars into the temple stairs. If we come from that ancestry, we can follow the flow of our bloodline; if we are foreign to Mexico and Central America, we may still discover we were there in spirit, through a past life or simply the Dreamtime that allows us to be anywhere from all points in existence, through collective threads of remembering.

For his part, Jose Arguelles was of direct Mexican ancestry, although raised in the United States. He was an art historian researching Mayan civilization as well as a dreamworker, visionary and artist who approached the Maya through intuition and imagination. His academic and psycho-spiritual findings have formed the Natural Time calendars, which he originally called the *Dreamspell*. Aligning with Natural Time, we follow Arguelles' invitation into his personal ties to the Maya: through his DNA as well as from his shamanic journeying that realized another level of consciousness bequeathed by the Mayan civilization. Natural Time is an intimate description of Mayan mythology, reclaimed as a present-day resource, from a depth of spiritual understanding that may never be uncovered by archeology.

Arguelles identified his psychic connection to an ascended Maya, the community of souls that rose when the landscape and culture of the Mayan people were destroyed. These heavenly Maya offer their



calendars anew to guide us away from the high-speed tailspin of our civilization, where the phrase ‘time is money’ shows we are no longer in reverence to the sacred cycles of the earth, moon, stars and sun. The realm of the ascended Maya is simply another version of what many of us feel within the silence of meditation or prayer: an invisible world, the presence of angels, the divine. The astral Maya are just one color or texture in a much greater weave of higher consciousness that comes to us, through us, when we are open.

The landed Maya – who have survived genocide in the Yucatan and endured war, disease, famine, industrialization and the day-glow trappings of our new techno-culture – still live in the remote regions of Central America and hold their calendars at the heart of their spiritual rituals. The knowledge held by the living Mayan shamans is in their blood, and deserves deep honoring for the tenacity of the generations who kept these calendars alive against the grain of Gregorian timekeeping.

However, this book is not a study of the Mayan calendars still used in the Yucatan. To describe my own ancestry, I often use the phrase, ‘I couldn’t be whiter,’ and so it would feel a bit imperialist to pretend to present a spiritual discipline distinct to a region where I have spent but 13 days of my life. Instead, this book is a teaching that reflects my own learning from the cosmic Maya, the higher consciousness that influenced the Mayan people to have such adept interpretation of astronomy, vivid imagination in their mythologies, and a reverence for the passage of time as a spiritual principle. Like Arguelles, I envision these Maya as now alighted in the sky, in one layer of the heavens they revered, pulsing down to us their inspiration and aid.

We could say that these spirits remember from their stay on earth how we feel when life as we know it is starting to unravel at every edge; when we, in the midst of it, feel threadbare. They recognize, from above, the way commerce overtakes our connection to nature and makes us forget reverence for the bounty brought by the interrelation of sun, rain and soil. The ancient Maya navigated overpopulation, intertribal wars, and ultimately rampant disease and starvation as their territories were invaded. As surviving souls they might be able to see us, a global picture of discord and misused resources, and encourage us to slow



down, scale down and simplify before we are also lost.

For years I have described myself as scholar and teacher of the Mayan calendars, but there has been dissent about the use and appropriation of that term. *Mayan* calendars, some argue, only exist in the far reaches of the Yucatan where medicine men are the keepers of time, descendants of the lords who tended ceremonies atop pyramids in the heyday of their culture. There are Mayan shamans who have spoken out to say their calendars and prophecies are distinct to their corner of the world and not for broad global consumption.

Their protection of this cultural heritage is understandable, given the history of invasion of their territories and the First World appetite for media hype and merchandising of any spiritual teaching. I imagine this is how the traditional yogis of India feel when they see the *asanas* and chants of their holy scriptures influence everything from suburban American workout regimes to pop songs and leisure wear.

But yoga as a body-mind-spirit integration has changed and healed millions of people outside of Asia. The original practice of breath modulation, focused strengthening exercises and extended meditation is still seeded in modern-day yoga classes, offering a new-millennium version of the first yogic form. Who are we to say that this is not the full bloom of yoga intended by the gods: a worldwide commitment to stretched limbs and slow breaths, taking time out from helter-skelter high-speed commuting and communication? Similarly, Natural Time is the outreach of sacred Mayan wisdom to teach multitudes how to override their reliance on digitalized timekeeping in order to reconnect to nature's cyclical changes and the ancient ways of honoring them.



INDEED, WE CAN IMAGINE that the resurrection of the Mayan calendars is an echo of the Hindu principle of *maya*, the Sanskrit word translating to *ma* – ‘not,’ and *ya* – ‘that.’ We assert ourselves when we finally understand something, ‘That’s it!’ But *maya* teaches us that we can never be certain, that there’s always another view or interpretation to dispel what we think we know: our control of reality through labels, assertions, judgment. *Maya* is anti-egoic. It will not let our thought



terns and personal experiences cloud us with assumptions, but moves deeper than the superficial layers. In essence, *maya* is the clearest truth, the one we seek to know and that we hunger for. Perhaps we never find it, because thinking we have, we discover it's 'not that' either. But it keeps us searching, surrendering, going under the surface to the surreal – 'beneath real' – realms. *Maya* presents a grand illusion: that 'life is but a dream' as surprising, incongruous and illuminating as the ones from which we wake.

Beneath the surface, we are all connected. We feel this harmony in the reverie of meditation. Journeying into the Dreamtime, we can reconnect to specific details of the ancient and recent past and into the future to feel where the flow is leading. *Maya* encourages us to commit to the big illusion, the most vital dream, rather than individual aspirations for success and comfort. In the illusion of *maya*, we don't know the details of existence, but we feel we are a vital, transcendent piece of it, connected with all the others who are equally part. This is the perspective we can hold for a while when we learn the calendars of the Mayan civilization: we are interwoven with this cultural legacy by an unfathomable grace.

Separation between peoples and regions or time periods is illusory. We need not hoard the discoveries made within them. To say we can steal teachings or dilute them with our own devotion is hard to prove. We have already been blessed with the universalization of Buddhism, of the *I Ching*, the *Kabbalah*, the Tarot, Celtic runes, and even the mystical origins of the Christian Bible. From all over the world map, profound spiritual teachings have surfaced and spread. Africa, for its part, has given us the rhythm of life that now floats routinely over the radio waves and is the primary initiation ritual of every young adult in Western civilization. When I picture the Mayan calendars coming into recognition by the masses, I feel relief that Mexico and Central America will also be revered for their gifts to global spiritual consciousness.

The calendars we'll rediscover together are also illusory, 'not that.' From the start, I hope we can agree to take them lightly as we take them to heart. While they are in themselves training away from attachment and egotism, we modern people can easily turn them into another tightly-gripped control mechanism. In my devotion to Natural Time,



I drift in and out of accidental fixation on the calendars every day I live through them, laughing at my own spiritual convictions. Part of my awakening in these moments is my need for a magic trick to believe in, some fairy dust stronger than the dark voodoo I see causing disharmony in the world. It is our deepest work to accept illusions as part of the landscape of life on earth and choose which ones to align with. The illusion of *maya* is not a falsehood or an ill-willed deceit. It's a pretty charm offered by the gods for us to focus on or lean against for strength, as long as it's there.

Jose Arguelles was a spectacular magician and the right initiator for those attracted to this reformation of the Mayan calendars. His birth-right as a *Blue Spectral Monkey* translates to 'liberation of magic' and 'release of illusion.' The promise of a magician's illusion is not of permanence, but of presence, sparking us through amazement and wonder back to the now. The Mayan calendars, the *maya* calendars, have that flavor of being marvelous, unbelievable, and centered in present time. So for now, for as long as we track the days through this rediscovered prism, we have a spectacular illusion to charm us, a divine fabrication to keep us from gazing only inward or at the troubles of our civilization.

This book is dedicated to *your* discovery of the Maya calendars, which are meant to beautify, enrich and support your life for as long as the illusion lasts. Jose Arguelles intended this contemporary version to be a universal teaching of the Mayan cycles, accessible to anyone who was drawn to calendars based on nature instead of fashioned by humankind. Derived from the ancient Maya in the Yucatan, envisioned anew by a true modern shaman of Mexican-American ancestry, Natural Time is for all of us – our rainbow, planetary community – to enhance our experience of being alive in this present moment. And certainly, the more you grow into these old-school rhythms of primal connection to earth and sky, you will find that the calendars come from far beyond any illusion we can name – the Yucatan, Jose Arguelles, Lisa Star. They are from the gods themselves and the essence of the Maya in some other ethereal plane.