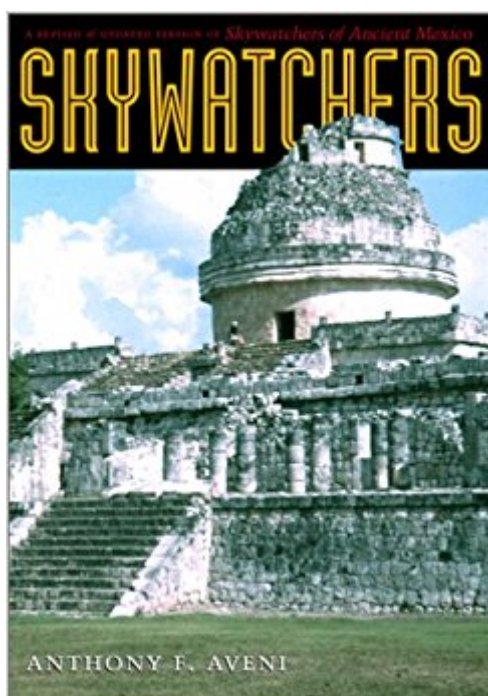


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Skywatchers : A Revised And Updated Version Of Skywatchers Of Ancient Mexico



Synopsis

Skywatchers of Ancient Mexico helped establish the field of archaeoastronomy, and it remains the standard introduction to this subject. Combining basic astronomy with archaeological and ethnological data, it presented a readable and entertaining synthesis of all that was known of ancient astronomy in the western hemisphere as of 1980. In this revised edition, Anthony Aveni draws on his own and others' discoveries of the past twenty years to bring the Skywatchers story up to the present. He offers new data and interpretations in many areas, including: The study of Mesoamerican time and calendrical systems and their unprecedented continuity in contemporary Mesoamerican culture The connections between Precolumbian religion, astrology, and scientific, quantitative astronomy The relationship between Highland Mexico and the world of the Maya and the state of Pan-American scientific practices The use of personal computer software for computing astronomical data With this updated information, Skywatchers will serve a new generation of general and scholarly readers and will be useful in courses on archaeoastronomy, astronomy, history of astronomy, history of science, anthropology, archaeology, and world religions.

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Customer Reviews

". . . a well-written, stimulating, and excellently illustrated book. Buy it or borrow it!"--

Archaeoastronomy

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ethnological data, it presented a readable and entertaining synthesis of all that was known of ancient astronomy in the western hemisphere as of 1980. In this revised edition, Anthony Aveni draws on his own and others' discoveries of the past twenty years to bring the Skywatchers story up to the present. He offers new data and interpretations in many areas, including: -- The study of Mesoamerican time and calendrical systems and their unprecedented continuity in contemporary Mesoamerican culture-- The connections between Precolumbian religion, astrology, and scientific, quantitative astronomy-- The relationship between Highland Mexico and the world of the Maya and the state of Pan-American scientific practices-- The use of personal computer software for computing astronomical data. With this updated information, Skywatchers will serve a new generation of general and scholarly readers and will be useful in courses on archaeoastronomy, astronomy, history of astronomy, history of science, anthropology, archaeology, and world religions. Winner of several teaching awards, including National Professor of the Year from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, Anthony F. Aveni is the Russell B. Colgate Professor of Astronomy and Anthropology at Colgate University in upstate New York.

There are easy ways to convert between the Long Count calendar and the Julian calendar (used by astronomers for dates before 1582). These involve finding a sum of the units of the Long Count and then using a simple arithmetic algorithm such as the method of Jean Meeus to get a calendar date, or one can convert a calendar date to a Julian date and then use modular arithmetic to get a long count and Calendar Round. Surprisingly for an astronomer, professor Aveni did not use these methods for these conversions, but rather has invented a new method for doing this, using complex tables of decimal numbers. Unfortunately there is some problem with this method and with only a handful of exceptions, all of his calendar dates and most of his astronomical event dates are wrong. He also seems to have accepted, without checking them, many dates from other authors who use either the proleptic Gregorian calendar (not used in astronomy) and/or the very dubious 584,285 correlation. Sadly, this all could have been checked quite easily using a readily available computer program. For this reason, chapter IV and its appendices should be rewritten. This problem severely compromises an otherwise monumental work of scholarship.

Astronomy at its best in order to tie it to Mesoamericans. Excellent for History of Mexico. IRMA DICKINSON

A brilliant work by a master scholar

Was exactly what I was looking for after a trip to Mexico. Very interesting and informative. Make me want to go back to the Maya ruins.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS¹. This book is available in Spanish as *Observadores del cielo en el México antiguo* (Sección de Obras de Antropología) (Spanish Edition). But please be careful not to confuse it with the previous edition, whose cover appears to be identical.² It's a shame that the "Look Inside" feature doesn't let prospective customers view Part I, since that's where Aveni explains what he's updated, and why. However, you CAN view that information, apparently just once, in the Google Book version. (See link in first comment, below.) Especially important is the section entitled, "Archaeoastronomy: Twenty Years of Hindsight". There, Aveni explains that advances in our understanding of the mesoamerican astronomy had made parts of the first edition "embarrassingly out of date". (E.g., regarding the Maya and their calendars.) In addition, Aveni discarded the sections about doing calculations on calculators that use magnetic cards (I remember them well), and replaced those sections with lists of modern software for home computers.

REVIEW OF THE BOOK ITSELF

In short, this is a valuable update to a classic. Its section on naked-eye astronomy, and what can be deduced therefrom, is invaluable to a novice like me. I intend to write more at a later time, but for now I think prospective customers would be better served by searching the web for reviews written by more-qualified people. A link to a brief on-line review is given in the first comment.

This is one of my favorite books. I am a writer and happened to stumble onto this amazing book while researching Velikovsky, the current failed comet model, earth changes and much more. Aveni produced this fine scholarly work on the central American archaeological sites. I was blown away when I realized from this source that the grid axes of nearly all of the ancient mesoamerican sites are skewed to the east. Aveni didn't grok on the reason but his reliable data is invaluable. And the reason? The ruins are much much older than the so-called experts claim -- and date to before the last crustal shift which probably occurred at the close of the last ice age -- around 9500 BC. Thereabouts. The ruins, in other words, were once oriented N-S just like the pyramids of Giza today -- but when the crust moved so did the temples. Aveni's analysis of the Berlin Codex is also a treasure. Amazingly, the Codex includes an authentic Mayan ephemeris of Venus -- and it is telling. Aveni is puzzled by it -- and wonders how these Mayans (whose calendar was accurate to how many decimal points -- and yet they) couldn't manage to record the stations of Venus accurately.

Aveni doesn't get it -- but his translation and analysis is nonetheless a tremendous contribution. Of course the Mayans did record the stations accurately. They recorded what they saw: namely, a planet (Venus) that was in an extremely elliptical orbit. (Venus today has an almost perfectly circular orbit.) Velikovsky was right. Venus was then a comet in the process of being captured by the sun. And this confirmatory evidence - which Velikovsky did not know about -- has been lying around since 1980 when this book was published -- and no one (except for me) has even noticed. Aveni's scholarship is second to none. The book is a gem.

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