

WELCOMING THE NEW TRECENA

Today the Daykeepers will greet the new *trecena* or thirteen-day cycle.

In Momostenango, the place where days numbered “1” are honored is called Paja’. To get there, walk north toward the plaza, then turn left and go up the hill until the pavement ends and the streets turn to dirt. At the little *tienda* run by the Vicente family, turn left again and keep walking until you reach another store, one which sells sacred offerings.

It smells of copal incense and candle wax in there. They sell *pom cuilco*, chips of copal incense wrapped in corn husks. They also sell all kinds of candles. The ordinary white candles are for the *nawales*, the spirits of the day-signs. The light-brown tallow candles are for the ancestors. You have to be careful with them – they are kind of gooey and the tallow gets all over your hands and your clothing. They also sell miniature bottles of an anise liqueur called La Quetzalteca, which features a cute Mayan girl on the label, dressed in traditional garb.

Behind the store is a dirt path which leads downhill to a meadow. This is Paja’. A pleasant stream runs through it. That’s where the name comes from. Paja’ means “the place (*pa*) of water (*ja*’).”

I have seen the Daykeepers gather water from this stream in small glass vials. When I witnessed the initiation ceremony for a young Daykeeper on 8 B’atz’ (Yucatec: Chuen), his teacher sprinkled water from one of those vials over his head, just like holy water in a Catholic church. I guess you could say that the water from Paja’ is a bit like “pagan holy water.”

There are a fair number of altars there. A Mayan altar begins as a square brick enclosure. For those of you who are from the U.S., it looks a bit like a fire pit in a national park service campground. The Maya build a semi-circle of earth around the brick altar. In time, they will bring pots which will be broken and placed half-buried in the semi-circle. This is all very symbolic. They say that the semi-circular earthwork represents the dome of the sky. Since pottery is used in the home, it symbolizes one’s hearth or homeplace. Thus heaven and earth, sky and household, are blended together.

Then the fire will be lit. The candles and copal chips will be cast into the fire as the Daykeepers speak their prayers. They will pour the La Quetzalteca liqueur into the fire as well. But the most important thing is prayer. According to the Mayan creation epic, the *Popol Vuh*, it is our ability to speak which distinguishes us human beings from our animal brethren. The gods gave us a voice so that we may praise them. Since the gods and the ancestors manifest themselves in every flower, every rainbow, every butterfly and every tree, this means that it is our duty as conscious human beings to continuously praise the beauty of the Blossoming World. Whatever our own circumstances may be, we must never forget to express gratitude for the gift of living in this beautiful world. When our words please the spirits, the world is nourished. The flowers continue to blossom, the trees grow tall, and the sun beams down upon us. Thus we feed the Blossoming World. We nourish the world and the world nourishes us.

In the K'iche' language, the day sign which is called Lamat in Yucatec is known as Q'anil. If you try to pronounce it as they do, I can almost guarantee that you will get a sore throat. The word literally means "yellowing," but it has the context of "ripening." This day signifies the seed, the corn, the harvest, and food. It is the *nawal* of all kinds of animal and vegetable seeds. It is the day of fertility, abundance, and prosperity. In the remote villages they sometimes hold ceremonies for the growth of the crops on Q'anil days, but I have never actually seen these ceremonies performed in the town. Q'anil is auspicious for initiating any kind of planting or business negotiation. This day signifies the four colors of corn – red, black, white and yellow.

This is a wonderful day for farmers or simple planter box gardeners, for upon this day we ask that the world may be made to blossom and be made fertile. We may plant ideas and projects as well as flowers; any relationship or business venture which begins on a Q'anil day will usually turn out favorably.

That's what the Daykeepers are praying about today. So turn off your computer and go work in your garden. If you live where it snows, you can always tend to your indoor plants. This is the day of the regeneration of the earth.

Maltiox, konojel.

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