

CABAN TRECENA

By Kenneth Johnson

The Aztec name for this day sign was Ollin, a word which signifies "earthquake," but which also means simply "movement" or "motion." The Aztecs taught that their language, Nahuatl, was a kind of spiritual code, and that many of the religious or mystical terms in that tongue were filled with inner meanings. The words for "life" and "heart" are both derived from the word *ollin*. Hence the "earthquake" symbolized by the day-sign Caban is not merely a geological phenomenon, but a metaphor for the pulsating rhythm or movement of life itself.

When we look at the lore of the day-sign Caban among the Mayan peoples, we find still other dimensions of meaning. *Caban* means literally "earth," and its ideogram depicts a lock of hair, the hair of the young moon goddess who is also corn mother, earth goddess, and creative spirit. Again we meet First Mother, that universal goddess of beginnings. Caban represents the creative spirit (the moon goddess or First Mother) that lies inherent in the earth itself; the vital force that manifests in the human body as *teyolia*, which in the Nahuatl language represents a soul substance centered in the heart and which is believed to reside in the earth. The upsurging motion or movement of this vital force, the source of creative activity, is analogous to the surging motion of the blood in human terms, or, to use a metaphor from the natural world, to an earthquake.

At least initially, the contemporary meaning of this day-sign among the Maya would seem to be very different. This sign symbolizes wisdom and ideas. It is the *nawal* of intelligence. The K'iche word for this day-sign, No'j, actually means "thought," and is the word used in ordinary conversation to describe our thoughts and our ideas. Another keyword for this day-sign, though somewhat overly simplified, might be "the Thinker."

In the *Popol Vuh* or Mayan Creation Epic, it is said that the first human beings could see all things clearly, like the gods. In order that we might not challenge the gods rather than worship them, the gods breathed a cloudy mist on the mirror of our consciousness that serves to obscure our vision. If we were able to clean the mirror, we would see the world as the gods see it. The day-sign Caban teaches us to act with patience and pure intent in order to gain wisdom. Thus this sign symbolizes our aspiration to seek wisdom from Ahau, the Divine Power, for only Ahau is truly wise.

One of the associated meanings of this day-sign is "incense," and the *Chilam Balam* books say that "incense is the brains of heaven." One of the forms of incense most often used in Mayan ceremony is copal; our thoughts, prayers, and intentions rise to Ahau with its smoke. This is why incense is associated with our *no'job*, our thoughts, and why it is part of the symbolism of this day-sign.

Caban also has a symbolic connection with the *tz'ite* tree, the seeds of which are used for divination – seeking answers to our problems from Ahau, from the source – are also taken from the *tz'ite* tree. The divinatory ritual is another way in which we may seek the wisdom of Ahau. Some Daykeepers assert that Caban or No'j is the best of all possible days upon which to consult

a shaman who is adept at divining with the *tz'ite* seeds, and to ask the Divine Power for answers to the questions that confront us in life.

The connecting link between earthquakes, incense, speech, and the thinking process gives us yet one more important clue as to this day-sign's ultimate meaning: it symbolizes the creative force that, manifesting as the surging of heart's blood or the power of an earthquake, may also be compared to the force of inspiration, the spark of creative thought that brings all things into being.

At this time, we may ask the universe to grant us creativity in all our endeavors, and the intelligence to find solutions to all our challenges. At this time, we may strive to realize the talents inherent within us. This trecena enlivens the intellect and enhances the eternal quest for wisdom. During the days of this trecena, we can seek the contact with the divine energy that serves to clean the mirror of our consciousness.

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