

IMIX TRECENA

By Kenneth Johnson

To some Mesoamerican peoples, notably the Aztecs, Imix was a crocodile. In myth, this is the crocodile who floats in the ocean beneath the World Tree, bearing the earth upon his back. The Crocodile is the primal spirit that sleeps beneath the surface of the earth, the embodiment of birth and generation, the life-giving power that flows up from the Underworld. This cosmological conception was widespread throughout pre-Columbian America. In more northerly regions, the primal world-bearer was a turtle, hence the ancient name for the North American continent—Turtle Island.

The idea of a crocodile floating in a hot tropical swamp, on stagnant water thick with water lilies, might well be reminiscent of the "primordial soup" from which, according to the current scientific world view, all life began.

The Classic Mayan glyph for Imix represents a water lily, often found on tropical ponds where caimans and crocodiles live. The water lily is itself a symbol of the earth's abundance because of its very high food value. In this sense, this day-sign has a strong link with abundance and growth. Imix is the power of the earth itself, a tropical stew from which the sun coaxes abundant life. The collective unconscious is an equally deep and primeval foundation, like earth, mud, or water, from which all human consciousness emerges. Thus Imix is an emblem of the great reservoir of abundance, both biological and psychological, which gives birth to all phenomena.

Imix is the fundamental ground of being, the unity from which individuated consciousness emerges. The psychologist C. G. Jung called this primal unity the collective unconscious, the group mind common to us all. It is symbolized in many different spiritual traditions as the cosmic ocean. The power of the collective mind is a deeply ambivalent thing; all our great dreams, visions, and spiritual experiences emerge from its depths, but so do all our nightmares. The Maya say the dark power made manifest in insanity and possession is also one of the meanings of this day-sign. Indeed, the stormy visions of the mad flow forth from the collective mind just as surely as the exalted visions of artists and mystics.

Since the Crocodile sleeps in the depths of the primal sea, this is also the day-sign governing the sacred energy inherent in the ocean. Each of the four elements (Fire, Earth, Air and Water) has at least one governing day-sign or *nagual*. The element of Water has three. While Ix governs the fresh running water of streams and Muluc is symbolic of the rain, it is Imix which rules over the world's great oceans. Because the sea is vast and filled with infinite variety, Imix has a multiplicity of animal totems. Crocodiles may not exist in all parts of Mesoamerica, but all the creatures of the sea are connected with this day-sign: the dolphins and whales are among its animal manifestations, as are fish of all kinds.

In the Guatemalan highlands, where the ancient calendar has been preserved in its most detailed forms, there are no crocodiles. In the highlands, we call Imix "the Left Hand" because like many other traditional cultures, the Maya associate the light of rational consciousness and ordinary reality with the right side or masculine polarity, similar to the yang principle of Chinese

philosophy. Dreams and visions are associated with the feminine polarity, the yin principle, and with the left side.

The world of reason and practicality is frequently at odds with the world of dreams and visions. Hence Imix days can be “crazy” days, and those born under its influence may also be considered a little bit cuckoo. When we are deeply under the influence of this visionary, oceanic, pre-conscious side of human nature, we may seem to be at odds with all things reasonable. Hence this is sometimes perceived as a sign of madness or lunacy. I remember meeting a shamaness who was born upon 3 Imix. When I told her I was born on 10 Imix, she laughed and said, “Finally, someone who is even crazier than I am!”

And yet it is only when we set aside the dictates of “ordinary reality” that we are able to lift the veil between the worlds and see into other realities. Surreal visionaries like Walt Disney, Federico Fellini and Orson Welles were born on Imix days. This is an excellent day to work on your dream journal, for Imix is the time of dreaming.

Ultimately, the right hand of consensus reality and the left hand of mystical vision were not designed to be at odds with each other, but to cooperate.

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