

EB TRECENA

by Kenneth Johnson

In the *Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel*, the nagual or day-sign called Eb is a “ladder” or “stairway.” It is said that upon 2 Eb God “created the first ladder so that God could descend into the midst of the sky and the sea.”

The ladder of the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel* is clearly the pyramid of heaven and earth, which dominates Classic Mayan cosmology. To climb the ladder is to climb the pyramid. The modern Maya call this day-sign “the Road of Life.” In many Native American philosophies, the Road of Life is the “Good Red Road” that leads from east to west and represents the spiritual path. To the Maya, walking the Road of Life means climbing the ladder or pyramid to the summit of creation, the thirteenth heaven.

In the same story, four Maya women see a man’s footprints along a path. They proceed to measure the footprints “in accordance with the Word of the Mistress of the World.” By so doing, they create time, the Sacred Calendar itself. To the Maya, all of time is perceived as a path. The gods walk the path; so do human beings. In that sense, the path of time is the road of history as well.

When the Hero Twins set forth to challenge the Lords of the Underworld, they travel the path of the Milky Way or road of souls, following it through the sky until they reach a Crossroads, and then they take the dark or black road that leads to Xib’alb’a. This crossroads is the place where the ecliptic and the Milky Way cross at the Galactic Center. The starry path of the Milky Way is the White Road or *saq b’e*; a yellow (sometimes said to be green) road follows the ecliptic eastward while a red road follows it westward. The dark swathe of sky which we call the Great Rift in the Milky Way and which marks the Galactic Center is known among the Maya to this very day as the black road or the Road to Xib’alb’a, and it is this road that the Hero Twins choose. This is yet another meaning of the day-sign Eb.

As above, so below.... The road to the Otherworld lies not only in the heavens above us, but upon the earth as well. Throughout the Yucatan, there are the remains of ancient causeways made of white stone. These are also known as “white roads,” (*sac beob* in the Yucatec plural), and may have been intended as earthly counterparts for the Milky Way – and perhaps for other celestial pathways as well. Traveling in perfectly straight lines along the geomantic energy paths of the Mayan world, they may have linked one sacred site with another.

Another commonly known meaning of this sign is “the tooth,” and teeth are an esoteric symbol for all the things which mark our path along the Road of Life. And if Eb is sometimes said to signify “a tooth,” it is also sometimes taken to symbolize “a human being” as well. The Maya regard the teeth as a particularly human thing, and one which distinguishes us from the gods. Author Martin Prechtel tells the saga of “The Toe Bone and the Tooth,¹” in which the primordial Goddess is slain and dismembered, only a few bones remaining, among which are a toe bone (the toes help us to walk the Road of Life) and a tooth. Her human lover – for all men are ultimately

¹ Prechtel, Martin, *Stealing Beneficio’s Roses* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2002), pp. 26-101.

the lovers of the Goddess – tries to chant her back to life because he possesses her toe bone and tooth. But instead of restoring the Goddess to her original unity, he creates a new and beautiful creature – a human woman.

The woman known as Malinche or Doña Marina was probably born on the day 1 Eb (the name Malinche is probably a Spanish pronunciation of Ce Malinalli, which means 1 Eb in Nahuatl). This woman, born a princess but raised as a slave to Aztec lords – she had no great reason to feel any affection toward the Aztec overlords. Bestowed upon the conqueror Cortez as a gift, her rage against her former masters, the Aztecs, led her to provide assistance to Cortez in toppling Montezuma's empire. She was his translator, lover, spy, and perhaps his principal strategist when it came to Native psychology. Hence some have called her the great traitor who betrayed her people to the Spaniards. Paradoxically, she also became the mother of the mestizo race by bearing Cortez's child, the first known union of Aztec and Spaniard. So she is the mother of the Mexican people, as well as being the great betrayer.

Upon this day we give thanks for the Road of Life upon which we continually walk, for this day represents the Road itself. It is the best possible day upon which to begin a journey. It is also a most favorable day for the initiation of any business manner or for the signing of contracts.

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