

# The Birthing of Kings

by Kenneth Johnson

I remember a conversation with Tat Rigoberto during which we discussed Mayan astrology. We had touched upon the five-sign horoscope diagram that has been made popular in the Western world largely thanks to the influence of Don Alejandro. In general, it is agreed that this type of horoscope is not from ancient times but is a product of the contemporary renaissance of Mayan spirituality which is even now giving rise to important new variations upon ancient themes.

Therefore I was surprised when Tat Rigo told me that the “conception sign” – a part of the typical Mayan Cross horoscope – is in fact one of the most ancient factors in Mayan astrology. The conception sign is found by counting nine (inclusive) signs back from one’s original day-sign: hence those born on Chuen will have Akbal as a conception sign, those born on Ix will have Cimi, and so on. The conception sign symbolizes the essential heritage that accompanies us into the world from before our present birth; it can represent the psychology of the family, experiences in the womb, or even the influence of past incarnations.

I was a bit confused. If the five-sign horoscope was relatively modern, how could one of its components be so “fundamental”?

A few months later, I received a possible answer during a lunchtime conversation with two female Daykeepers who specialized in midwifery. Since the talk was quite informal, I never asked permission to mention their names, and shall not do so here. One of them came from a family which is well known to have lived in Momostenango since before the Spanish Conquest.

The midwives insisted that in ancient times the Maya were able to manipulate pregnancies so as to insure that a child was born on a particular day and thus with a particular day-sign. It has been noted that many Maya Daykeepers link the 260-day tzolk’in to the cycle of human gestation. Skeptics have replied that this span is too short to represent an actual pregnancy. However, if one counts back inclusively from the day-sign of birth to arrive at the conception sign, we have a span of 268 days, which is closer to the actual human gestation period.

Apparently, the shamans and midwives of Classic times may have encouraged kings and queens to make love on the conception day in hopes of producing a child who would be born 268 days later on the expected day-sign.

It will be immediately objected that human pregnancy is always subject to certain irregularities, such as premature births and so on. But I was told that pregnancies were carefully monitored by shamanic midwives and guided by various techniques in order to have a fairly good chance of inducing normal labor on the expected day.

The monitoring may have taken place through the use of quartz crystals, used as vehicles to “see within” the womb and assess the progress of gestation. The use of crystals as “seeing stones” is common among many Native American groups. Tat Rigo has written that the hieroglyph for the day-sign Cauac represents the human embryo as perceived through a seeing crystal. This is a

very meaningful observation, as his own teacher was Gabriel Xiloj, commonly regarded as the most extraordinary crystal gazer of modern times.

But what techniques were used to guide the pregnancy to a successful conclusion? In all likelihood, this was accomplished by a combination of herbal medicine and the technique known to the contemporary world as “Mayan abdominal massage.”

Would such a practice work every single time? No, of course not, for the human body is still subject to its own inconsistencies. But a combination of herbs, massage and experience might have worked perhaps seven out of ten times.

Let us take a look at the hieroglyphic inscriptions from Palenque. Sometimes the birthdates of Mayan kings were recorded and sometimes not, but Palenque has the most thorough list of royal birthdates of any Mayan city, with 11 names.

One would expect that the occurrence of day-signs as birthdates would be completely random, but this does not seem to be the case. Four out the eleven rulers were born upon the day Ahau. Since this is the day-sign associated with lordship and sacred kings, this seems a bit too much for chance. Three more rulers were born upon the day Lamat, which to this very day is still regarded as one of the most favorable day-signs. This gives us seven out of eleven names, more than half the list, born on only two day-signs, which is not what we would expect from a purely random selection. The great king Pakal, who reigned for 68 years, expanded the kingdom, built some of Palenque’s most famous architecture, and was buried beneath the magnificent carved sarcophagus lid once mistaken for a portrait of an “ancient astronaut,” was born upon 8 Ahau, and it is difficult to imagine a more powerful day-sign (the contemporary Maya regard 8 as the most auspicious of the numbers).

There may be something to what the midwives said, and it is possible that the idea of the “conception sign” really is quite ancient. In such manner did the Maya accomplish the birthing of kings.

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