

The Trecena of Caban (No'j)

by Kenneth Johnson

Today is the beginning of a new trecena or 13-day cycle. At the beginning of each trecena in my own Mayan town of Momostenango, we used to follow a little trail that begins right behind the Vicente family *tienda* and walk down to a place called Paja (the Place of Water). The trail head would have been difficult to find were it not for a little shop that sold *ofrendas* (sacred offerings). Unlike other such shops, they also sold little glass vials in which to collect water. A rushing stream ran through the meadows of Paja, and there the Daykeepers would gather water in the vials. They often sprinkled it upon their students during the initiation day of 8 B'atz' (Chuen).

This trecena is unusual in several respects.

Though the Aztecs began their count of days with 1 Imix and the contemporary K'iche' begin with 8 B'atz' (Chuen), there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the Classic Maya of 200-800 CE began with 1 Caban (No'j).

How do we know this? While everyone is familiar with the “bar-and-dot” numeration of the Maya, few are aware that a number may also be written out as a complete hieroglyph. The full glyph for the number “1” has what Mayan scholars call an “infix” – a visual element from another glyph which is included or “infix” into the design of the hieroglyph for another word. An abbreviated version of the Caban glyph is infixed into the hieroglyph for number 1. Similarly, elements of the Etnab glyph are infixed into number 2, Cauac into number 3, and so on until Muluc.

This strongly suggests that the Classic Maya began counting from Caban. And there are a few peculiarities about this trecena which make it even more likely:

- The “world age” or “cycle of emergence” in which the great civilizations of Mesoamerica flourished is said by the Aztecs to be called “Earthquake,” the day sign which corresponds to the Mayan Caban.
- 4 Ahau, the all-important “end date” of the most recent cycle of 13 bak'tuns, falls within this trecena.
- 1 Caban is the first “1” day to occur after the K'iche' celebrations for the tzolk'in “New Year” which are held on 8 B'atz' (Chuen).

The word no'j quite literally means “thought” or “idea.” Today is the day of the Thinker. You have the opportunity to experience genuine inspiration today.

To the Maya, the mind is a tricky thing. A character from folklore, called Juan No'j, is fabulously clever – but he might just sell your soul to the devil. Therefore it is impingent upon us to clear the mind of fuzzy or negative thinking, and to send forth only the clearest intentions.

Send your thoughts forth to the infinite, for your higher self is listening.

Thoughts that soar high into the realms of spirit are the best thoughts to have. Such thoughts belong to shamans. Therefore it is said that the best time to visit a shaman for a consultation is a No'j day.

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