In a recent article in the PARI Journal, Alexandre Tokovinine (2010) has drawn attention to several unusual Calendar Rounds in Early Classic Maya inscriptions referring to individuals associated with Teotihuacan. I agree that these dates should be regarded as notational variations, rather than errors, because they are highly patterned. I offer here an explanation for these dates that involves a shift from elapsed to current time in numbering the days in the months of the "haab," without a concomitant change in the Maya year bearers. This modification of the Maya Calendar-Round notation in inscriptions associated with Teotihuacan suggests that the annual calendar of Teotihuacan used current time, a practice that is well documented for Central Mexico in later times.

The notational variation at issue can be illustrated with one of the unusual Calendar Rounds discussed by Tokovinine: 11 Eb 16 Mac. In the traditional notation for the Classic period, the tzolk'in day 11 Eb can only be paired with month coefficients 0, 5, 10, and 15. Therefore, the Calendar Round should be 11 Eb 15 Mac (not 16 Mac). The significance of this change can best be seen by comparing the Calendar Rounds that begin the month in the two systems. The month in question would have begun on 9 Caban 0 Mac in the traditional system. In the new notation, the first day of the month was 9 Caban 1 Mac. The change in the month coefficient from "0" to "1" implies a shift from elapsed to current time in numbering the days of the month, as explained below.

In the traditional notation, the month coefficient was "0" (phrased as the "seating" of the month) because the day in question had not been completed. Morley (1915:46) pointed out long ago that we use a similar system for numbering the hours of the day:

... in describing the time of day, that is, in counting hours, minutes, and seconds, we speak in terms of elapsed time. When we say it is 1 o'clock, in reality the first hour has passed and the second hour after noon is about to commence. When we say it is 2 o'clock, in reality the second hour after noon is finished and the third hour about to commence. In other words, we count the time of day by referring to passed periods not current periods.

Morley (1915:46) went on to contrast our method for numbering the hours of the day with the one we use for days, years, and centuries, which are referred to as current periods of time. It is the 1st day of January immediately after midnight December 31. ... In this category should be included also the days of the week and the months, since the names of these periods also refer to present time. In other words when we speak of our days, months, years, and centuries, we do not have in mind, and do not refer to completed periods of time, but on the contrary to current periods.

If the notation 9 Caban 1 Mac referred to the first day of Mac, then it would have been an example of Morley's second method for counting time. In this case, both the day in the tzolk'in (9 Caban) and the day in the month (1 Mac) would have referred to current time, whereas in the traditional notation, the day in the tzolk'in (also 9 Caban) referred to current time, but the day in the month (0 Mac) referred to elapsed time. The effect of this shift in month coefficients was to move from elapsed to current time in numbering the days of the month while at the same time retaining Ik, Manik, Eb, and Caban as year-bearer (and "month-bearer") days.

Several characteristics of the 11 Eb 16 Mac Calendar Round link it to Teotihuacan and other Central Mexican sites of the same time period. The first is the one mentioned by Tokovinine (2010:20), namely that it appears "in inscriptions dealing with or commissioned by individuals with some connection to Teotihuacan." The second is the reversed order of this Calendar Round at La Sufricaya—as 16 Mac 11 Eb, with the reference to the "haab" preceding rather than following the reference to the tzolk'in (Tokovinine 2010:18, Fig. 2a) (Figure 1). Although this order is rare, it is not unprecedented in the Maya area. For example, it also appears on the Hauberg stela (Schele 1985:136-137) (Figure 2). See Martin (2000:52-54) for additional examples and discussion. Outside the Maya area, it can be found on Stela 1 at La Mojarra (Winfield Capitaine 1988:14-15).

Tokovinine (2010:20) points out that there are no Calendar-Round inscriptions at Teotihuacan. However, there are examples of tonalpohualli dates associated with...
“trapeze-and-ray” year signs at Teotihuacan and other Early Classic sites in Central Mexico, such as Tenango, Texmilinacan, and Xochicalco (Caso 1967a:Figure 4a-c, 1967b:Figures 18-19, 1967c:Plate 2). In later inscriptions containing this year sign, the reference to the year always preceded the reference to the day in that year. It is in this sense that the 16 Mac 11 Eb Calendar Round at La Sufricaya mimics a Central Mexican calendrical pattern of placing the reference to the year before the reference to the day.

The third link between the 11 Eb 16 Mac Calendar Round and Teotihuacan and other Early Classic sites in Central Mexico was the retention of the Ik-Manik-Eb-Caban year bearers after the shift from elapsed time to current time. Three of these year bearers—Ik (Wind), Manik (Deer), and Caban (Movement)—are associated with year signs at these sites. It may be that the traditional Maya year bearers were preserved in Calendar Rounds such as 11 Eb 16 Mac because they were the same ones in use at Teotihuacan and other Central Mexican sites at the time. Caso (1967c:182) has interpreted the presence of other year-bearer days at the sites of Teotihuacan, Texmilinacan, and Xochicalco as evidence of a shift to the House-Rabbit-Reed-Flint system (= Akbal-Lamat-Ben-Edznab in the Maya tzolk’in) that was common in Central Mexico in later times.

The connection with Teotihuacan at sites like La Sufricaya, Copan, and Palenque seems to have had no lasting influence on Maya notions of time. The traditional system continued, and it was not until centuries later that the lowland Maya shifted completely to a notation employing current time for numbering the days of the month and a new set of year bearers, Kan-Muluc-Ix-Cauac, the one in use in northern Yucatan when the Spaniards arrived.

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