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Time, History and Ritual in a K'iche' Community: Contemporary Maya Calendar Knowledge and Practices in the Highlands of Guatemala

Akker, P. van den

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II. Time and Authority

For writing this chapter, I am greatly indebted to don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, doña María Hernández Ajanel, Gregorio Itzep, don José Angel Xeloj, doña María Theresa López, don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar, Marleny Tzicap, don Roberto Poz Pérez, don Miguel Chan and Elias López for the knowledge that they shared with me. Errors that might appear in the contents of this chapter are my fault alone. In case such errors or any misrepresentations appear, I would like to apologize beforehand to the community of Momostenango.

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discusses the 260-day cycle and examines how time is perceived as a living being. Chapter II explores how time is organized as an authority that has agency on the human being. The 365-day count takes a central role in this discussion but, as the two cycles are entangled, the role of the 260-day count is also addressed here.

In this chapter, authority is understood as role of leadership that relies on wisdom and a strong sense of responsibility. The main goal is to explore the relationship between the hierarchical organization of time and of the community. I examine the organization of time as an authority by looking into the characteristics of the *Mam*, the first day of the 365-day count and the leader of the community of 365 days. My discussion is based on my observations during the participation in rituals for welcoming the *Mam* in 2015 and numerous interviews and informal talks about the *Mam* with several calendar specialists. Furthermore, I also look into the organization of a single day as an authority over the community of 260 days through an in-depth discussion of a ceremonial discourse that I recorded in 2014 (see appendix A). In that section I

discuss how the ceremonial discourse addresses the authority of a day in a way that resembles colonial and precolonial sources on the Maya calendar.

In the part that follows I discuss how the perception of time as a form of authority is reproduced in the social service provided by the indigenous authority of Momostenango and social structures of the household. Finally, I will end this chapter with a discussion of a few characteristics of the *chol q'ij* and the *junab' q'ij* that are imposed on the Gregorian calendar. I will explore here how also the Gregorian calendar is understood as an authority of time.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE YEAR

The duration of the K'iche' *junab' q'ij* is similar to the precolonial Maya calendar (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, pp. 104-128). The K'iche' year counts 365 days, which is slightly less than the duration of the actual solar year (+/- 365.242 days). The beginning of the year count shifts therefore every four years one day back in relation to the solar year and the Gregorian calendar. In the leap year 2016, for example, the K'iche' New Year is celebrated on the night between the 20th and 21st of February, while in 2017 it is celebrated in the night between the 19th and 20st of February (Table 7). The first day of the year is known as the *Mam*, the Grandfather, who watches over the events that occur throughout the year. As mentioned in the introduction of Chapter I, the *chol q'ij* and *junab' q'ij* are not separated counts; the days in the *junab' q'ij* follow thus the names of the *chol q'ij* (Day-Number and Day-Lord). The personality of the *Mam* is therefore based on the *chol q'ij*.

Maya New Year	Gregorian date
13 Imox to 1 Iq'	20 th to 21 st of February 2013
1 Kame to 2 Kej	20 th to 21 st of February 2014
2 B'atz' to 3 E'	20 th to 21 st of February 2015
3 Ajmak to 4 No'j	20 th to 21 st of February 2016
4 Imox to 5 Iq'	19 th to 20 th of February 2017

Table 7. Correspondence between the Maya New Year and the Gregorian calendar. The year 2016 is a leap year in the Gregorian calendar, but the extra day is added on the 29th of February, after the arrival of the *Mam*, so the shift in dates for the Maya calendar will be noticeable almost a year later, in 2017.

The Mam or Year Bearer

The name of the *Mam* is composed of a Day-Lord and a Day-Number. As the K'iche' year is a cycle of 365 days, the cycle of twenty Day-Lords fits eighteen times completely in the year, leaving five final days at the end of the year. In the precolonial and colonial times, the division of the year in eighteen periods of twenty days and five final days was called the system of *uinales*, which I will discuss in more detail below. Because of the remaining five days, the name of the *Mam* shifts each year five positions ahead in the list of twenty Day-Lords. For example, after a year that was overseen by Day-Lord E' follows a year overseen by the Day-Lord No'j. As there are only twenty possible names and the first day shifts every year five positions, there are only four possible Day-Lords that can occupy the position of the *Mam*. These Day-Lords are *Kej*, *E'*, *No'j*, and *Iq'*. After four years the same Day-Lord becomes the *Mam* again and the sequence will repeat. This counting system of the years is a widespread Mesoamerican phenomenon, known to have occurred since prehispanic times.

In defining the personality of the year, the characteristics of the Day-Lord are more dominant than those of the Day-Numbers. Each *Mam*, however, also consists of a Day-Number. The cycle of thirteen Day-Numbers fits 28 times in the K'iche' year, leaving only one day at the end of the year. This means that the *Mam* will shift one number up every year. Therefore, a *Mam* that consists of a Day-Number 1 will be succeeded by a *Mam* with Day-Number 2. This means that all thirteen numbers take their turn in composing the *Mam*. As there are thirteen available Day-Numbers for composing the *Mam* and four available Day-Lords,

there are in total fifty-two possible combinations of Day-Numbers and Day-Lords. This means that after fifty-two years, the same *Mam* will return.

The *Mam* acts as an authority for both humans and days. The *Mam* has a role of responsible community leader similar to that of the mayor of a town (*alcalde*), which is why he is also called *alcalde mayor*. Another title that he carries is *Ajpatan*, “expert of the service”, “expert of the *mecapal*”. This is a generic title applied to those who take a cargo in service of the community for a year, such as, for example, *cofradía* members. As the metaphorical term for community service – *Ajpatan* – already shows, authority is perceived as a cargo or heavy load that is carried for the sake of the community. Similar depictions of time as a load carried on the back³⁰ with a *mecapal* are known from Classic period Maya representations of the Maya calendar that indicates the antiquity of this conceptualization (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, pp. 59-60). Don Rigoberto explains about *Ajpatan*:

The word “Patan” means that it is a service; he serves for one year. Ajpatan eqanik [expert of the service of carrying]. Eqanel means that he carries the year; he carries the responsibility of everything, he is the one that guides. To lead a year is similar to [the role of] the municipality. In four years he comes back to retake the burden. So, it is a cargo, he is a carrier; eqanel – Don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, 3rd of August 2016.

The change of the *Mam*'s personality in a period of four years represents according to don

³⁰ In the academic literature, therefore, the first day of the year is usually referred to with the term ‘year bearer’.

Rigoberto the succession of power by the ancient K'iche' rulers. He told me that the ancient Maya could choose their own rulers every four years. The ruler would take office in the year Kej (Deer) because the Day-Lord Kej is strongly related to power and strength, both in a political sense as in a physical sense. After being the authority for a year, the year E' (Tooth) enters, which is the year of the road, a year for making plans for the future. In the year No'j (Wisdom), the year of wisdom and mental strength, the ruler would carry out the plans made in the previous year. Finally, the year Iq' (Wind) would bring crisis and chaos, destroying everything that had been produced over the previous four years. After the year Iq', the year Kej arrived again with new leadership and power for the following period of four years.

As don Rigoberto's explanation shows, the years follow a recurring sequence of a new authority entering, a new road or direction for the future, wisdom and consolidation, followed by destruction. Over a period of fifty-two years, the intensity of the four *Mam* grows as the numbers gradually increase. For example, in a year 1 Iq' the intensity of destruction is weak as the number is low. Twelve years later, however, the year 13 Iq' enters, which will cause much havoc and chaos. A year after the beginning of the destruction introduced by 13 Iq', a new thirteen-year period enters which begins 1 Kej and ends with 13 Kej thirteen years later. I have not found any specific name or term that refers to these periods of thirteen years. However, the same division of thirteen-year periods in a cycle of 52 years appears in generally perceived stages of human life. The first thirteen years of life are the years of the formation; the second set of thirteen years is the period of youth; the third period running from twenty-six years to thirty-nine is the time of adulthood; finally, after thirty-nine years one reaches the period of respected adult. When one has passed the four stages of thirteen years, one is considered an elder. Each of these the stages from infant to elder relate to a different color. These colors are respectively: red, white, yellow, and black.

During its year of service, the *Mam* is accompanied by his *Ajtz'ib'* ("expert of the word", "secretary"). The function of *Ajtz'ib'* is common for religious, calendric and community

authorities. In the case of the indigenous authorities of Momostenango, the *Ajtz'ib'* is responsible for keeping the record of the official decisions taken by the municipality and for passing written information on to the future generations. The Patron Saint Santiago also has his *Ajtz'ib'*, San Felipe, who always accompanies Santiago and carries the Bible in his hand, the attribute of his work as a secretary. As there are four different *Mam*, there are also four different *Ajtz'ib'*. The *Mam* E', No'j, Iq', and Kej are respectively joined by *Ajtz'ib'* Tz'ikin, Kawoq, K'at, and Tz'i' (Table 8). The *Ajtz'ib'* is the Day-Lord that follows two or three days after the *Mam*, and has therefore a Day-Number that is two or three numbers higher than the *Mam*. In the transcription of the ceremonial discourse, for example, don Rigoberto mentions the *Mam* 2 Kej in combination with his *Ajtz'ib'* 5 Tz'i' (appendix A, lines 595 to 599, and lines 810 to 814). The function of the *Ajtz'ib'* is to assist the *Mam* in everything and to receive people at the *Mam*'s altar, when the *Mam* himself is unable to.

My observations regarding the *Mam* and the *Ajtz'ib'* differ from Barbara Tedlock's (1982, p. 100), who mentions that only two Day-Lords can take the function of secretary, Tz'ikin and Kan. According to her, Tz'ikin is the secretary of Iq' and Kej and Kan is the secretary of No'j and E'. Furthermore, she states that the year is ruled by a double *Mam*: the *Mam* and his first reappearance twenty days after. During my fieldwork I was not able confirm the coexistence of two *Mam* and the presence of only two *Ajtz'ib'*. However, in the ceremonial discourse in Appendix A, don Rigoberto does invoke the *Mam* 2 Kej together with the *Mam* 9 Kej (difference of 20 days), each of them with their respective *Ajtz'ib'*, 5 Tz'i' and 12 Tz'i', at two moments in the ritual (appendix A, lines 595 to 599, and lines 810 to 814). Both don Rigoberto and don José Angel told me that there exists only one *Mam*. However, the pairing of the *Mam* and his *Ajtz'ib'* with the first return of the *Mam* and his *Ajtz'ib'* seems to indicate that there is a special relationship between the two. Possibly the knowledge regarding the existence of two *Mam* continues today only as part of ritual discourse. More research on this matter is needed as the exact nature of this relationship can at the moment of writing not be concluded.

Mam	Altar Mam	Color	Ajtz'ib'	Altar of Ajtz'ib'	Direction	Gregorian Years
Kej	Kilija	Red	Tz'i'	Tzokit	East	2014, 2018
E'	Socop	Black	Tz'ikin	Qajinak Ab'aj	West	2015, 2019
No'j	Pipil Ab'aj	White	Kawoq	Koral Ab'aj	North	2016, 2020
Iq'	Tamancu	Yellow	K'at	Kiaq ja	South	2017, 2021

Table 8. Overview of the *Mam*, their mountains, colors, *Ajtz'ib'*, cardinal directions, and the Gregorian years. *Qajinak Ab'aj* means "fractured rock"; *Koral Ab'aj* means "rock of the cattle enclosure"; *Kyak ja* means "the red house"; translation of *Tzokit* is not known to me.

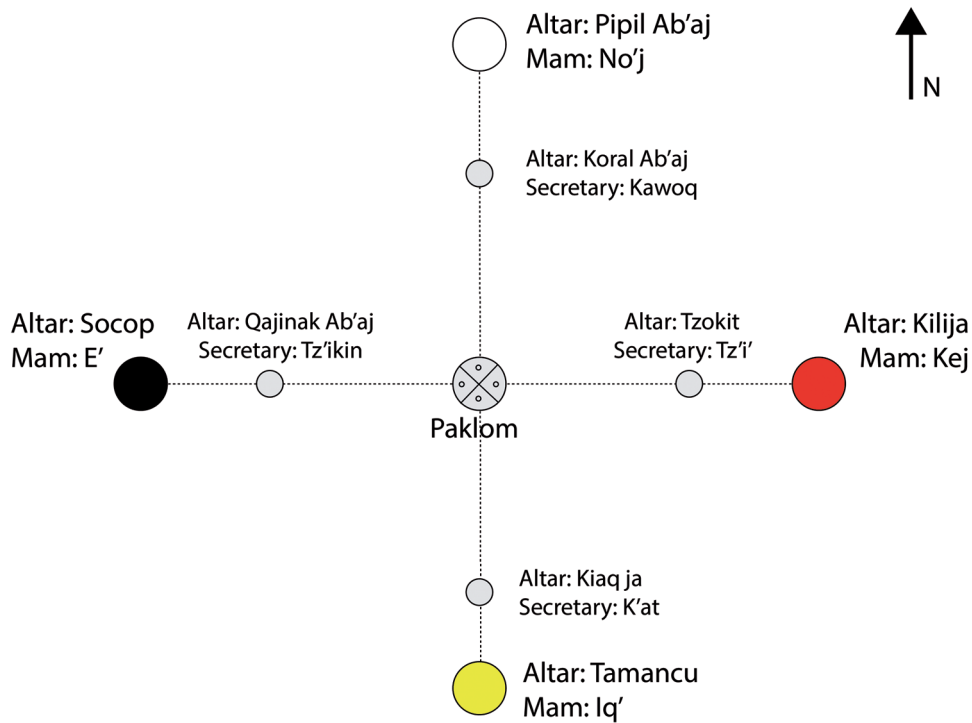


Figure 31. Schematic overview of the location of Momostenango at the center of the four sacred mountains where the *Mam* are seated.

The *Mam* and the *Ajtz'ib'* have their separate altars placed at the four cardinal directions in and around Momostenango's surroundings³¹ (Figure 31). During rituals, the cardinal directions and the *Mam* are elaborately greeted (see appendix A, lines 56 to 123, and lines 1242 to 1270). *Mam E'* and secretary Tz'ikin are in the region where the sun sets (west); *Mam No'j* and secretary Kawoq lie in the region from where the wind comes (north); *Mam Iq'* and secretary K'at lie in the region where the wind falls (south); and *Mam Kej* and secretary Tz'i' lie in the direction where the sun rises (east). The altars of the four *Mam* are located on the four sacred mountains that surround Momostenango: Socop, Pipil Ab'aj, Tamancu, and Kilija. The altar of *Ajtz'ib'* Tz'ikin is located in the aldea Santa Ana, right behind the local municipality building. The altar of *Ajtz'ib'* K'at is located in the center of the aldea Los Cipreses, behind a schoolyard. The altar of *Ajtz'ib'* Kawoq is located in the barrio Santa Ana, in front the radio station Princesa Xmukane. The altar of *Ajtz'ib'* Tz'i' is located in the village of Patzokit ("the place of the Tzokit") near Momostenango. Momostenango's central sacred hill, Paklom, lies at the center of all the altars. The altars of the *Mam* and their secretaries thus locate Momostenango in a central position in time and space³².

There are several moments in which Chuchqajawib' visit the four altars of the *Mam*. Some Chuchqajawib' visit them before initiating a new Ajq'ij, to ask each *Mam*, the authority of time, permission for the initiation at their respective altars. Some

Chuchqajawib' perform elaborate ceremonies just before the ending of the K'iche' year to welcome the new *Mam* and thank the old one for his year of service at the altar of the new *Mam*. Finally, it is common to visit the altar of Kej at Kilija, in the east, on 11 Kej, the altar of E' at Socop, in the west, on 11 Ajpu, the altar of Iq' at Tamancu, in the south, on 11 Aj, and the altar of No'j at Pipil Ab'aj, in the north, on 11 Kame³³ (B. Tedlock, 1992, p. 140). Today, however, not many Chuchqajawib' visit the four sacred mountains around Momostenango because it is not safe to go to such isolated places. Don José Angel explains:

It is dangerous; it is very far away... They sometimes attack there. For example, around here, in the direction of San Bartolo through Santa Ana, there is a sacred place that we call chwi Cruz; it is not far from here. Nowadays there are a lot of people that go there because previously these people used to go to Patzil, but not anymore because there are thieves. So, the people do not go: they prefer to stay close [to town]. It is scary... That is why people do not go anymore – Don José Angel Xeloj, 17th of August 2016.

The Veintenas

In the prehispanic Mesoamerican calendar system, each year of 365 days was divided into eighteen periods of twenty days, called *uinales* or *veintenas*, and one period of five days. Modern scholars interested in the correlation between the ancient Maya system and the Gregorian calendar have relied on colonial documents and contemporary calendar systems in the highlands of Guatemala and Mexico (Berlin, 1951, p. 157; Miles, 1948, p. 47; Villa Rojas, 1988, pp. 146-149). The system of *uinales* is no longer in use anywhere in the Maya region.

Fray Diego de Landa, the Spanish bishop of Yucatan from 1572 to 1579, describes in his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* that religious celebrations related to agriculture took place during the *uinales* in a fashion similar to the Central Mexican calendar (De Landa, 1966, Chapter XXXIX-XLI). Sachse, Weeks, and Prager (2009, pp. 186-187) conclude on the basis of their analysis of three K'iche' calendars from the

31 Tedlock (1992, p. 101) documents a strikingly different orientation of the order and location of the sacred mountains. According to her, the northern mountain Pipil is the seat of *Ajtz'ib'* Tz'ikin, the eastern mountain Quilija is the seat of *Mam Kej*, the southern mountain Tamancu is the seat of *Mam E'*, and the western mountain Socop is the seat of *Mam Iq'*. She mentions another mountain in the south southwest, named Joyan, which lies in between Tamancu and Socop and which is the seat of both *Mam No'j* and *Ajtz'ib'* K'at. According to Tedlock, therefore, the annual authority shifts from Quilija (east), to Tamancu (south), to Joyan (south-southwest), and finally to Socop (west). According to my data, however, the authority shifts from Quilija (east) to Socop (west), to Pipil Ab'aj (north) and finally to Tamancu (south). Why our data is so strikingly different is not entirely clear to me. As Barbara Tedlock worked often in the aldea of *Los Cipreses*, it is possible that she received this information from specialists living in this aldea (the perception of time and space may differ slightly between communities). Don José Angel Xeloj, the son of the calendar specialist that Tedlock worked with, however, agreed with the data that I have presented here.

32 A similar form of spatializing time and temporalizing space can be found in the Prehispanic period, for example on Madrid codex page 75-76 (Vail, 2013, p. 185).

33 At the moment of writing it is not completely clear to me why these specific days are related to the four cardinal directions and the four *Mam*.

	Kaqchikel 1685	Interpretation	K'iche' 1722	Interpretation
1	Nab'ey Mam	First Old Man	Nab'e Mam	First Old Man
2	Rukab' Mam	The Second Old Man	Ukab' Mam	The Second Old Man
3	Likinka	Soft and Slippery Earth	Likinka	Soft and Slippery Earth
4	Nab'ey Toqik	First month of harvest	Ukab' Likinka	Second month of slippery Earth
5	Rukab' Toqik	Second month of harvest	Nab'e Pach	First time of hatching
6	Nab'ey Pach	First time of hatching	Ukab' Pach	Second time of hatching
7	Rukan Pach	Second time of hatching	Tz'isi Laqam	The Sprouts show
8	Tz'ikin Q'ij	Season of Birds	Tz'ikin Q'ij	Season of Birds
9	Kaqan	Hot Season	Kaqam	Red Clouds
10	Ib'ota'	Season of various red colors or of rolling up mats	B'otam	Tangled Mats
11	Qatik	Burning or cleaning	Nab'e Si'j	First month of white flowers
12	Iskal	Sprouting or throwing of buds	Ukab' Si'j	Second month of white flowers
13	Pariche'	Season of protecting against cold	Rox Si'j	Third month of white flowers
14	Tz'api Q'ij	Closing days	Che'	Trees
15	Tacaxepual	Season of sowing the first milpas	Tekexepoal	Time to plant the milpa
16	Nab'e Tumuxux	Month of the flying ants	Tz'ib'a Pop	Painted Mat
17	Rukab' Tumuxux	Companion to the month of the flying ants	Saq	White
18	Q'ib'ixix	Time of sowing	Ch'ab'	Muddy ground
19	Uchum	Season of re-sowing	Tz'api Q'ij	Closing days

Table 9. The names of the colonial calendar *veintenas* according to Weeks et al. (2009, pp. 188-193).

Highlands of Guatemala, dating between 1685 and 1854, that the *uinales* in the K'iche' calendar were named after important periods in the agricultural calendar (Table 9). However, the timing of the colonial *uinales* does not seem to coincide precisely with agricultural events and practices that give them their names. This might suggest that the *uinales* – fixed in the K'iche' year of 365 – ran independently from the astronomical solar cycle. If this were the case, then the cycle of agricultural celebrations would also run independently from the *uinales*. Possibly, the count of the *uinales* has disappeared after the Spanish colonization, differently from the cycle of the year and the *chol q'ij*, perhaps because it played a minor role in ritual celebrations. In the next chapter, I will come back to this idea.

Several ethnographers (La Farge, 1947, pp. 167-169; Lincoln, 1942, pp. 115-118; Schultze Jena, 1933, p. 41; B. Tedlock, 1982, p. 103) have tried to document the surviving knowledge of the *uinal* system in Ixil and K'iche' communities. Some scholars were able to retrieve the names of the individual *uinales*, but a comparison of their findings shows that surviving *uinal* sequences are

fragmented and *uinal* names vary significantly in each community. Lincoln even stated that there were sometimes “12, 14, or 18-month names [*uinales*] which vary in name and order in each town with each calendar priest” (Lincoln, 1942, p. 106). According to Termer (1957, p. 129), who discusses a questionable list of *uinales* in the Chuj language from a place close to Santa Eulalia, the *uinales* were no longer in use as early as the mid-1920s. The only place where the names of the *uinales* still seem to be in use, is among the Tzotzil speakers of San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, Mexico (Gossen, 1974, pp. 230-241). A comparison of Gossen's data and a *uinal* calendar document from 1688 written by the Franciscan Friar Juan de Rodaz (in Berlin, 1951, p. 157), who lived in the northern Tzotzil village of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Gueytiupan around this time, shows that there is a strong correlation between the two.

Tedlock (1992, p. 103) states that the celebration of the return of the *Mam* was celebrated every twenty days, a fact that suggests the counting of a *veintena* period. Only the return of the *Mam Iq'* was not celebrated because it was a dangerous day. The only month names that had survived into the

1970s in Momostenango, however, were the Nab'e *Mam* and Ukab' *Mam*. Today these names are not in use anymore. Don Rigoberto Itzep received in 1997 a copy of the *uinal* names as they are mentioned in the Berendt calendar³⁴ dating from 1722 and has tried to revive the *uinal* tradition in Momostenango. So far, however, the use of the *uinales* has not continued by any of his students possibly because its exact functions are still not completely understood.

The Celebration of the Mam

The arrival of the New Year is a very important event, because this is when the new *Mam* becomes the authority of the year. The celebration of the arrival of the *Mam* takes place mostly inside the houses of Momostenango. Some Ajq'ijab', however, welcome the new *Mam* together with a communal ceremony at the top of Paklom. In 2015, don Rigoberto and his wife doña María Ajanel invited me to join the welcoming of the new *Mam* in their house in the evening of the 20th of February. The celebration consists of an evening celebration and a morning celebration the following day. In the evening the new *Mam* starts entering and he is welcomed, while the next morning the new *Mam* has fully entered and is welcomed at his altar.

Both don Rigoberto and doña María Hernández Ajanel individually emphasized that the preparation of the food and dining are the most sacred activities related to the celebration for the welcoming the new *Mam*. Doña María and five female relatives prepared the food, a special atol and *tayuyos*, two days before the celebration, on the 19th of February (Figure 32 and Figure 33). Only women are allowed to prepare the food for the celebration of the *Mam* and there are strict rules that regulate this activity. Except for the women who prepare the food, the cooking process could only be seen when the women allowed it, otherwise, nobody could enter the kitchen. Pregnant or menstruating women are not allowed to assist in the preparation because, as doña María explained, they often feel weak, tired or stressed, which would cause the food to spoil. Food is very carefully treated



Figure 32. Preparation of the *tayuyos*.



Figure 33. The *tayuyos* are cooked on a fire in the patio behind the house. The pot rests over the fire on three stones.

³⁴ This calendar dates from 1722 and was copied by Berendt in 1877 from a document in the Museo Nacional de Guatemala (Carmack, 1973, pp. 166, 396). The original document has disappeared. The copy by Berendt includes three calendars. The first one is a year calendar and includes a list of the thirteen *veintenas*. The other two calendars are *chol q'ij* counts.

because if the preparation fails or does not turn out the way that it is intended, it is a very bad sign for the year to come.

Tayuyos are layers of bean and corn dough, wrapped up in a corn leaf and cooked in water. They are made by making first normal size tortillas by clapping with the hands both corn and bean dough. Then, nine layers will be placed on top of each other, alternating five layers of white maize dough and four layers of black bean dough. The *tayuyos* should always have nine layers. Doña María Hernández explained me that the white dough represents the woman and the black dough represents the man. The white maize layer is at the bottom and once all nine layers are put on each other, this layer “embraces” all the other layers as the tortilla cake is folded. Subsequently, they are rolled in the form of a long sausage, which is then cut in pieces of around five centimeters thick. Each forms a *tayuyo*, eventually wrapped in a maize leaf and boiled. The *tayuyos* are cut with a steel knife, but doña María explained me that this was strictly forbidden when she was young: the *tayuyos* could only be cut with a special wooden knife. If it were cut with a steel knife it would cause the maize plants for that year to fall before giving *mazorcas* ‘cob’. Wooden knives, however, are no longer sold at the market, so today people have to cut the *tayuyos* with steel knives.

The preparation of *atol* with *ch'un* and *kuchun* ingredients is also a sacred activity, that starts two days before the celebration. According to doña María, however, her grandparents used to prepare the sacred *atol* forty days before the entering of the *Mam*, which has been reduced to only two days. She explains that the preparation of the drink is a dangerous activity as it can have an impact on the events of the year to come and because of this responsibility, many people do not want to prepare the drink anymore. In the process of making the ceremonial *atol* drink, the greyish product of the zapote seed and *kuchun* root needs to rise up and become white. If the drink does not rise and no foam is formed it is a prognostication for a bad year.

In the first instance of preparing the *atol*, the *ch'un* and *kuchun* had failed to rise up. Late in the afternoon of February 20th, doña María came to the patio to show don Rigoberto that the ingredient turned black and failed to rise and become white.

They explained that this meant that in the coming year there would be death, sickness, a fight, or other problems. Doña María went to the kitchen to pray next to the bowl with the sacred *atol*. It worked, as an hour later she came back to show that the drink had risen a bit and had become partially white.

In the afternoon of 20th of February, the first visitors that would join the celebration came to the house to help the organizers. In K'iche', this is known as *tob'ik*, *ulanik*, *katoj*. Usually *tob'ik*, *ulanik*, *katoj* happens on important days, for example, before 8 B'atz or when someone passes away. *Tob'ik* means “to help out” and *ulanik* means “visiting”. *Katoj* is more difficult to translate, but it refers to men and women joining in an activity or a festivity. *Tob'ik*, *ulanik*, *katoj* is then the coming together of many people, who help the hosts to make a celebration, activity of commemoration. This form of sharing the burden and joy of an important celebration is characteristic of the whole highlands of Guatemala. The visiting women help the lady of the house in the preparation of the dinner and the men usually help her husband with the decoration of the house, which they refer to in Spanish as *amarrar mesas*, *sillas*, gathering tables and chairs, and in K'iche' as *wiqonik*, decorate.

In the afternoon, don Rigoberto placed a special wooden chair³⁵ (*utem ri Mam*) in front of the house altar, where the new *Mam* could sit and enjoy the *tayuyos* and *aguardiente* that would be left at the altar. The chair was covered by a clean cloth of brown and white colored stripes and on top of it, don Rigoberto placed a special staff of power usually kept in a box and opened only once a year. This is the staff of power (*b'araj* or *ch'ami'y*) of the new *Mam*, the symbol of his authority for the following year. The *uku'b'i'k*, seating, of the *Mam* took place from the sunset of 20th of February 2015 until the sunrise of 21st of February 2015; during the night the new *Mam* slowly entered into power. The *Mam* received the staff from his predecessor 2 Kej, the previous *Mam*, just as happens in the traditional change of authority in Momostenango on 1st of January each year (see below).

At sunset, don Rigoberto burned copal incense and ritually cleaned the house with it. He explained

35 Almost all chairs in the house are plastic, but for the *Mam* a wooden chair was most suitable.



Figure 34. The entrance of the house is decorated with flowers and the door is kept open so that the *Mam* can enter the house.



Figure 35. A little girl receives the red wire around her wrist to protect her against the power of the *Mam*.

that the incense helps to make the house more accessible for the new *Mam*. After the ritual cleaning of the house, we spread pine leaves on the floor to create a path from the entrance door of the house to the patio, where the ceremonial dinner would take place. More pine leaves were placed before the house altar. The door of the house would remain open the whole night, in order for the *Mam* to enter and take its place (Figure 34). From time to time during the evening, we played music with a drum and rattles to welcome the *Mam*. Finally, we placed a piece of food made from corn, a *tayuyo* or a *tamilito*, on the roof of the house for the *chokoys* (the black birds that usually eat the planted seeds), so that they would not eat the corn seeds of the sowing and harvest this year.

In the evening, we placed four *tayuyos* together with two glasses of *aguardiente* on the house altar. They were for the two *Mam* and their secretaries who exchanged power that evening. The leaving *Mam* and his secretary were 2 Kej and 5 Tz'i' and the entering *Mam* and secretary were 3 E' and 6 Tz'ikin. As don Rigoberto explained, from sunset onwards the two *Mam* enter in discussion with each other; they talk about the events of the previous year and the projections or plans for the following, giving and taking advice.

Around seven o'clock in the evening, dinner was served at the table in the patio. Don Rigoberto said a few words, after which we all ate *tayuyos* and drunk our *atol* quietly as don Rigoberto instructed us to do. Although it did not happen when I was there, doña María told me that usually the couple in charge of organizing the celebration dance with *canastas* filled with the *tayuyos* before eating them for dinner. The man would carry the *canasta* in front of his chest and the woman would carry the *canasta* on top of her head while dancing on the music of the marimba or violin.

Right after dinner, it was time to tie up the boys and the girls by their wrists and legs (*kaxim ri q'ab*, *kaxim ri rakan*, "it is tied the hand, it is tied the foot") with red wires (*ximonik*, to tie). The girls received a red wire around their left wrist and right leg from a male Ajq'ij, and the boys received a red wire around their right wrist and left leg from a female Ajq'ij (Figure 35). Gregorio Itzep, the oldest son of don Rigoberto, told me that the wires can be taken off after 40 days (on the day 4 E' that year). Don Rigoberto, however,



Figure 36. Don Rigoberto Itzep places the candles for the arriving and leaving *Mam* on his altar. On the right of don Rigoberto stands the chair for the arriving *Mam*, which has the staff of authority and several offerings placed on top of it. On the altar behind the chair is a plate with four *tayuyos*, one for each of the *Mam* and *Ajtz'ib'*.

said that it can be done already after 20 days (on the day 10 E' that year). The red wire is a protection against the *Mam*, who, because he is so powerful, can be bad to children, bringing diseases, and such. The tying up of the wrists and legs used to be a practice only for boys and girls. Don Rigoberto, however, decided to extend it to involve all adults as well, so that the tradition would be continued even in absence of children.

Before bringing the evening celebration to a closure, we all came one by one to the house altar, where don Rigoberto took two large white candles, one for the leaving *Man* and one for the entering *Mam*, and passed them over the main articulations of our body while reciting a sacred discourse (Figure 36). Then, don Rigoberto placed the two candles at the center of his altar. Before lighting them up, he touched the paraphernalia on the house altar. The

candles would that evening burn away any negative thought or feeling and help us in our petitions or plans for the New Year. Although according to don Rigoberto the festivities usually continue until 12 o'clock, we finished the evening around 10 o'clock because he was not feeling well. Each visitor took home some of the food that had remained.

With sunrise the next morning, day 3 E', year 3 E' or the 21st of February 2015, the new *Mam* was fully seated. At 6.30 am we went to welcome him at Qajinak Ab'aj, the altar for the secretary of the new *Mam*, together with the same people that participated in the celebration the night before (Figure 37). The altar of the new *Mam*, 3 E', is Socop and lies on the west of Momostenango, but because it is in the woods, it is too dangerous to visit. Qajinak Ab'aj, in contrast, lies in the center of the aldea Santa Ana of Momostenango, right



Figure 37. The altar of Qajinak Ab'aj, where we welcome the new *Mam* and his *Ajtz'ib'*.



Figure 38. Marleny Tzicap offers incense during the ceremony for welcoming the *Mam*.

behind the building of the local authority. Because Tz'ikin is the secretary of E', he also functions as a substitute for the *Mam*, in case someone is not able to go to the altar of the *Mam*.

The ceremony for welcoming the new *Mam* was more elaborate than the ceremonies that are performed during the *trecena* (see previous chapter). Pine leaves were placed all around the altar and flower petals were spread over them. Two *Ajq'ijab'* incessantly walked with incense burners around the altar and the participants to bless the surroundings with their smoke. In K'iche', they refer to this act as *kokaj alaq* ("You smell" [plural formal]) or *kotzi alaq* ("You smell the flowers"

[plural formal]) (Figure 38). The ceremony lasted about two and a half hours. Music was very much part of this ceremony. The three *chinchines* and the *tambor* were played throughout the ritual. Playing the music was, according to doña María Hernández Ajanel, a way to show the *Mam* that we were happy with his arrival. As in the previous evening, in the morning of the first day of the *Mam*, some *tamalitos* were left for the birds at the altar Qajinak Ab'aj.

AJAW JOB' – THE AUTHORITY OF THE DAY

As a day is a living being, it has authority over the events that happen during that day. The events that take place, however, are the result of the interplay between the year authority (the *Mam*) and the day authority. Similar to the year authority, which consists of a *Mam* and a secretary, it seems that the authority of the day does not consist only of one single day, but rather of a group of five days that are addressed in ritual discourses known as *Ajaw Job'*, Lord Five. In documents of the Colonial period and the Prehispanic period we find the same groupings of Day-Lords in almanacs. So far it has been thought that these groupings of Day-Lords were not in use anymore today. However, I came across the *Ajaw Job'* when I was working on the transcription of the ceremonial discourse that I recorded during a ceremony at Rax Amolob' with Gregorio Itzep, son of don Rigoberto Itzep and K'iche teacher (see appendix A). Although more research is needed on this topic, I will elaborate on my preliminary thoughts regarding the *Ajaw Job'* here. First, I will examine the current use and perception of the *Ajaw Job'*. After this, I will explore how the contemporary use of this grouping of days may lead new insights for understanding of the colonial and prehispanic almanacs.

The *Ajaw Job'* or "Lord Five" is mentioned by don Rigoberto in the ceremonial discourse that I transcribed and added in appendix A (see lines 208 to 218, and 792 to 827). In these lines, don Rigoberto summons twice a sequence of five days: 9 Ix, 9 Tijax, 9 Iq', 9 Kame, and 9 Tz'i'. When we were transcribing the ceremonial discourse, Gregorio explained to me that these were the *cinco*

*principales*³⁶, the five chiefs, which constitute the day 9 IX, the day that the ceremony was performed. The group of five days formed an authority³⁷ (the *Ajaw Job'*) for the day 9 IX, which was the leading day of that authority. Thus, on each day, different personalities have to work together and are held responsible for the events that take place during that day. This resembles the role of the indigenous authorities throughout the year, in which each person has his function and fulfills a service for the community, under the guidance of the *alcalde*.

As it can be seen in the appendix, the *Ajaw Job'* are mentioned before and after the invocation of each of the 260 days of the *chol q'ij*. As the invocation of the 260 days begins and ends with the mentioning of the *Ajaw Job'*, it seems that summoning the *Ajaw Job'* is part of its *entrada* and *finalización*. Before the second time the sequence of five days is mentioned, the term "Ajaw Job'" is mentioned for the first and only time during the prayer.

In the following page I copied an excerpt of the two sections of the ceremonial discourse where the *Ajaw Job'* are invoked. In the second mentioning of the *Ajaw Job'*, after the invocation, the authority of the day is listed in a sequence of other authorities in time and space. After mentioning the *Ajaw Job'*, the year authorities are addressed. Each of the *Mam* and with its respective *Ajtz'ib'*³⁸ is mentioned. This listing is closed with the *Mam* of that year (Kej) and his *Ajtz'ib'* (Tz'ikin). After mentioning two *chol q'ij* dates³⁹, don Rigoberto mentions "twenty times the place of number one". This expression probably refers to the completion of twenty *trecena* cycles, during which the altar of Pa Ja' is visited on each Day-Number 1 (see previous chapter), thus

completing a cycle of 260 days. Then he summons the four main altars of Momostenango, each related to a specific Day-Number of the *chol q'ij*, that form the authority of space. This authority is led by the altar Nimasab'al, the *presidente mundo*, the place of Day-Number 9 (see previous chapter). Finally, he closes the passage with the invocation of the (grand)mother earth and the four ancestors of the K'iche' People: B'alam Aq'ab', B'alam Kitze, B'alam Ikim, and B'alam Majakutaj.

The Day-Lords of the *Ajaw Job'* are addressed according to their relative position in the *chol q'ij*, each separated from the other by four positions, while each Day-Lord has the same number. If the sequence of days is counted in chronological order, then each day would fall 104 days after the previous one in the sequence and the entire sequence would have a duration of 520 days. However, I think that, instead of counting the days chronologically, the five Day-Lords in the *Ajaw Job'* should be understood as the representatives of the 260 days in the *chol q'ij*; each of the Day-Lords is a representative of a section of 52 days⁴⁰. This responsibility of the *Ajaw Job'* over the events of the day is shared with the authority of the year (the *Mam* and his *Ajtz'ib'*) and the ancestors. In sum, this section of the ritual discourse invokes the authority of the day (*Ajaw Job'*), the authority of the year (the *Mam* and *Ajtz'ib'*), the authority of space (the main altars of Momostenango that are related to the *chol q'ij*), the earth itself, and the primordial authority of the ancestors; it brings together all authorities in time and space.

36 In the social organization of Momostenango, the term *principales* refers to the group of elders that has fulfilled their community service and forms a council for the indigenous authority of the town. They choose and advise the town's authority.

37 The term *Ajaw Job'* shows the conceptualization of the five Day-Lords forming together one entity.

38 In appendix A, it is explained that Don Rigoberto actually performs two discourses at the same time (I wrote one in italics and the other in regular script). The discourse in italics addresses the participants who, when they hear their *wachaq'ij*, step forward and offer candles to the fire. For matter of convenience, I have left this out of the discussion here, because it may confuse the reader in following my argumentation.

39 I do not know the exact reason why they are mentioned here.

40 I base my idea on the comparison with the *alcaldía indígena* of Momostenango. The *alcalde indígena* of the authority of Momostenango is supported by each of the four *alcaldes indígenas* of the separate *barrios* of Momostenango. Each of the *alcaldes* is a representative of a partition of the town and the five of them together, under the lead of the main *alcalde indígena*, carry the responsibility for the indigenous population of Momostenango.

The opening for the invocation of the 260 days is as follows:

Are wa' cho ri nim q'ij,
are wa' cho ri alaj q'ij,
are wa' presente cho wa'

nim q'ij,
nik'aj q'ij,
utzalaj q'ij,
raxlaj q'ij,
kowilaj q'ij,

**B'elejeb' Ix,
Chom Q'ij.**

**B'elejeb' Ix,
B'elejeb' Tijax,
B'elejeb' Iq',
B'elejeb' Kame,
B'elejeb' Tz'i',
Q'ij Hora.**

Chok'ow la, Corazón del Cielo,
Corazón de la Tierra,
Creador y Formador,
maltyox.

Ajaw Jun Ix,
Ajaw Kyeb' Ix,
Ajaw Oxib' Ix,
Ajaw Kajib' Ix ,
Ajaw Job' Ix,
Ajaw Waqib' Ix,
Ajaw Wuqub' Ix,
Ajaw Wajxaqib' Ix,
Ajaw B'elejeb' Ix,
Ajaw Lajuj Ix,
Ajaw Julajuj Ix,
Ajaw Kab'lajuj Ix,
Ajaw Oxlajuj Ix.

Q'ana q'ij,
oxq'ij
Ix.

This is in front of this large/abundant day,
this is in front of this small day
this is present, in front of this

big day,
mid day,
very good day,
green day,
powerful day,

**9 Ix,
Fat day.**

**9 Ix,
9 Tijax,
9 Iq',
9 Kame,
9 Tz'i',
Day-Hour⁴¹.**

Pass to the front You, heart of the Sky,
Heart of the Earth,
Creator and Former,
thank you.

Lord 1 Ix,
Lord 2 Ix,
Lord 3 Ix,
Lord 4 Ix,
Lord 5 Ix,
Lord 6 Ix,
Lord 7 Ix,
Lord 8 Ix,
Lord 9 Ix,
Lord 10 Ix,
Lord 11 Ix,
Lord 12 Ix,
Lord 13 Ix.

Yellow day,
third day (Tuesday),
Ix.

⁴¹ The diaphrastic kenning *Q'ij-Hora*, Day-Hour probably refers to the abstract concept of time.

The closing prayer for the invocation of the 260 days is as follows:

Uk'u'x Kaj,
 wa' presente,
 wa' multa,
 kinya' kan che ri Ajaw,
 loq'laj Corazón del Cielo, loq'laj Corazón de la Tierra,
 Tojil, Jakawitz,
 Ixmukane, Ixkik'.
 Cho nimalaj q'ij,
 [una] ofrenda,
 Ajaw Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,
 chuwach alaj q'ij,
 chuwach nik'aj q'ij.

**Chom q'ij,
 Ajaw Job',**

**Ajaw B'elejeb' Ix,
 B'elejeb' Tijax,
 B'elejeb' Iq',
 B'elejeb' Kame,
 B'elejeb' Tz'i',
 Ajaw Kej.**

Ajaw q'ij,
 Ajaw hora,
 maltyoxinik.

Ajaw Kej,
 Ajaw E',
 Ajaw No'j,
 Ajaw Iq',

Ajtz'ib' Tz'ikin,
 Ajtz'ib' Kawoq,
 Ajtz'ib' K'at,
 Ajtz'ib' Tz'i'.

Ajaw Ajtz'ib' Tz'i',
 maltyox.

Ajaw Kyeb' Kej,
 B'elejeb' Kej,
 Job' Tz'i',
 Kab'lajuj Tz'i',
 Winaq k'o junib'al.

Cho wa' Ajaw Q'ij,
 Junib'al,
 Wakib'al,
 Wajxakib'al,
 B'elejeb'al.

Chuwach la nan,
 B'alam Aq'ab',
 B'alam Kitze,
 B'alam Ikim,
 B'alam Majakutaj.

Heart of the Sky,
 this gift,
 this fine,
 I leave it (as inheritance) to the Lord,
 Sacred Heart of the Sky, Sacred Heart of the Earth,
 Tojil, Jakab'itz,
 Ixmukane, Ixkik'.
 In front of the great day,
 [an] offering,
 Lord Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
 facing the small day,
 facing the mid-day.

**Fat day,
 Lord Five,**

**Lord 9 Ix,
 9 Tijax,
 9 Iq',
 9 Kame,
 9 Tz'i',
 Lord Kej.**

Lord day,
 Lord hour,
 [we] thank.

Lord Kej,
 Lord E',
 Lord No'j,
 Lord Iq',

Secretary Tz'ikin,
 Secretary Kawoq,
 Secretary K'at,
 Secretary Tz'i'.

Lord Secretary Tz'i',
 thank you.

Lord 2 Kej,
 9 Kej,
 5 Tz'i',
 12 Tz'i',
 20 is the place of number one.

In front this Lord Day,
 place of number 1 (Pa ja'),
 place of number 6 (Paklom),
 place of number 8 (Alajsab'al),
 place of number 9 (Nimasab'al).

Facing You (grand)mother,
 Jaguar Aq'ab',
 Jaguar Kitze,
 Jaguar Ikim,
 Jaguar Majakutaj.

Group I		Group II		Group III		Group IV	
Yucatec	K'iche'	Yucatec	K'iche'	Yucatec	K'iche'	Yucatec	K'iche'
Imox	Imox	Ik'	Iq'	Ak'bal	Aq'ab'al	K'an	K'at
Chikchan	Kan	Kimi	Kame	Manik'	Kej	Lamat	Q'anil
Muluk	Toj	Ok	Tz'i'	Chuwen	B'atz'	Eb	E'
Ben	Aj	Ix	Ix	Men	Tz'ikin	Kib	Ajmak
Kaban	No'j	Etz'nab	Tijax	Kawak	Kawoq	Ajaw	Ajpu

Table 10. Four sequences of five Day-Lords that appear grouped together in the Dresden Codex, the colonial calendars, and the ceremonial discourse of don Rigoberto.

In the following part I will explore how the ceremonial discourse, in which the *Ajaw Job'* is mentioned, may relate to the colonial and precolonial almanacs. The way in which don Rigoberto summons the *Ajaw Job'* is reminiscent of the structure that is followed in the almanacs in the Maya codices and in the colonial documents about the K'iche' calendar (Table 10). In both the codices and the colonial calendars similar sequences of the same five Day-Lords appear. Whereas in the prayer of don Rigoberto the distance between each day is 104 days, in the Colonial period the distance between the days is fifty-two days, which results in a different sequence with the same grouping of Day-Lords. There are four groups of five Day-Lords that always appear together in the Maya codices⁴² and colonial calendars:

The first 24 pages of the Dresden Codex, for example, show 52 almanacs, which follow a similar sequence as the *Ajaw Job'*. On the following page I have reproduced Dresden Codex page 13b-14b (Figure 39; Table 11) with the most recent interpretations (Grube, 2012, pp. 94-96; L. Schele & Grube, 1997, p. 115). Each almanac mentions a sequence of five Day-Lords in a row that share the same Day-Number. Furthermore, hieroglyphic texts and drawings accompany each row. It is generally understood that the almanacs should be read by starting with the Day-Lord and Day-Number in the upper left corner and counting the distance numbers (the black dots and bars which indicate a certain amount of days) towards the right to find the next day in the *chol q'ij*, whose Day-Number is written in red numerals. After a count of fifty-two distance numbers, the reader reaches the second row in the

almanac that starts with the same Day-Number. At the end of the almanac, a period of 260 days has been completed.

The almanacs are thus generally thought to represent a cycle of 260 days, divided in five periods of fifty-two days. However, as Nikolai Grube (2012, p. 92) has pointed out, the understanding of these almanacs is troubled by the lack of contextual knowledge. Why these Day-Lords always appear together is not clear. Neither is clear how the Day-Lords influence the prognostications of the day, which are given in the texts at the top of the almanac, or in what kind of setting the almanacs were used.

Similar almanacs are found in colonial K'iche' calendars from the Highlands of Guatemala. Calendar B in Karl Hermann Berendt's copy of the "Calendario de los indios de Guatemala 1722. Kiche'", for example, contains two 260-day almanacs (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 69). The first calendar dates probably to 1722 and the second one to 1770. I give a schematic overview of the suggested reading order of this almanac below (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 69). Similar to the almanac of the Dresden Codex, pages 13b-14b, the almanacs in the colonial calendar are organized in four groups of five Day-Lords, that seemingly share the Day-Number and the prognostication. The five Day-Lords within each group are separated by fifty-two days, while the distance between each group is one day (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 69). Similar to the almanacs in the Dresden Codex, the sets of five days are accompanied by a text. While there is no mentioning of the term *Ajaw Job'*, Lord Five, some of the sequences finish with the expression *roo ychal vae q'ij*, "All five of this day" (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 110), which hints a similar conceptualization.

42 Also in the prehispanic Central Mexican codices we find similar groupings of Day Lords. It seems therefore that this is a shared characteristic of the Mesoamerican calendar.



Glyph transcription	U mak' waaj Kimil	U mak' waaj Nal tz'ak ahaw	U mak' waaj K'u ox wi'il	Mak'aw waaj God L yutzil	Mak'aw waaj God Q u muk	Mak'aw waaj Itzamnah nikil
English translation	He swallows maize "bread" the Death God	He swallows maize "bread" the Maize God royal succession	He swallows maize "bread" God much food	He eats maize "bread" God L goodness	He eats maize "bread" God Q his divination	He eats maize "bread" Itzamnah flowers
6	+13 6	+9 2	+7 9	+7 3	+7 10	+9 6
Ajau	B'en	Ik	Muluc	Cib	Akb'al	Eb'
Eb'	Chicchan	Ix	Imix	Lamat	Men	Kan
Kan	Caban	Cimi	B'en	Ahau	Manik	Cib'
Cib'	Muluc	Etz'nab'	Chicchan	Eb'	Cauac	Lamat
Lamat	Imix	Oc	Cab'an	Kan	Chuen	Ahau
IV	I	II	I	IV	III	IV
	God of Death	Young Maize God	God (K'uh)	God L	God of Offerings	Itzamnaaj

Figure 39 & Table 11. Dresden Codex page 13b-14b. Suggested reading of the almanac on p. 13b-14b of the Dresden Codex (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, pp. 99-101). Glyph translation after (Grube, 2012, pp. 94-96; L. Schele & Grube, 1997, p. 115).

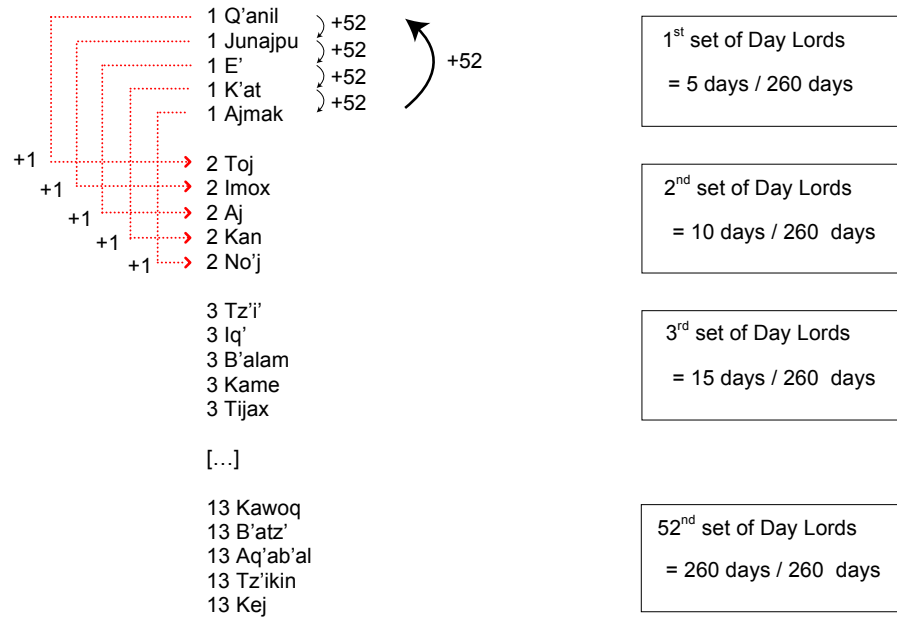


Table 12. Schematic overview of the suggested reading of the 1722 & 1770 calendar.

Finally, the colonial calendar and the ceremonial discourse expressed by don Rigoberto follow a similar pattern in addressing the five days. The *Ajaw Job'*, led by the day 9 Ix, is addressed by don Rigoberto as “abundant day”, “midday”, “eloquent day”, “green day” (metaphor for “fresh day”), and “powerful day”. In the colonial calendar, an apparent description of each day follows directly next to the mentioning of the day. In these documents the days are addressed as, among others, “beautiful day”, “evil day”, “day of anger”, “good day”, “petition day”, and “powerful day” (Weeks et al., 2009, pp. 102-134). In both the opening and the closing prayers, don Rigoberto uses the expression *Chom Q'ij*, “fat day”⁴³, to refer to the day 9 Ix or to the complex of *Ajaw Job'*. The same expression (*Chaom*) is also used in the colonial calendar, where it is translated as “beautiful day” (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 115).

Interestingly, the ceremonial discourse of don Rigoberto uses a similar configuration to that of the colonial document, in which a day is coupled with an expression or characteristic. It is possible that

1722	
3 Ajmak	An evil day,
3 Q'anil	tight is his hair
3 Junajpu	in the cotton
3 E'	like this,
3 K'at	loosened down is the cotton from his hair, like this it says, all five of this day.
1770	
3 Ajmak	A beautiful day,
3 Q'anil	day of the milpa,
3 Junajpu	day of the planting,
3 E'	planting and sowing,
3 K'at	with only the place where eagle and jaguar eat flesh, a very good day.

⁴³ According to Gregorio Itzep the term “fat day” should be understood as a metaphor for “leading day” or “abundant day”.

K'iche':

9 Ix	Are wa' cho ri nim q'ij,
Chom Q'ij	Are wa' cho ri alaj q'ij
9 Ix	Are wa' presente cho wa' nim q'ij
9 Tijax	nik'aj q'ij
9 Iq'	utzalaj q'ij
9 Kame	raxlaj q'ij
9 Tz'i'	kowilaj q'ij

English:

9 Ix	This is in front of this large/abundant day
Fat day	This is in front of this small day
9 Ix	This is present, in front of this large/abundant day
9 Tijax	mid-day
9 Iq'	eloquent day
9 Kame	green day
9 Tz'i'	powerful day

the configuration of the colonial calendars shows the poetics, such as parallelisms, and indicates trained specialists how to read them. This might suggest that the tables of 260 days divided in groups of 52 days is not just a divinatory almanac, but also could be used as mnemonic tools for memorizing and reciting extensive ceremonial discourses. The descriptions of the days, if this is the case, would form the canonical part of the ceremony, which the ritual specialist could complement with his or her own knowledge, experience and present situation. To strengthen my point, I have organized a section of don Rigoberto's ceremonial discourse according to the configuration of the colonial calendar above (see grey boxes).

As I attempt to show, the text accompanying the *chol q'ij* dates in the Berendt calendars could be read as mnemonic tools for extensive prayers. As such, these long tables of dates might have not only a divinatory purpose, but also a performative discursive purpose. Similarly, in the Dresden Codex, the groups of five days are in the almanacs accompanied by text and images, which may have served both a divinatory reading and a discursive performance. The comparison of the *Ajaw Job'* with the grouping of five days in the Colonial period and the Dresden Codex raises several questions.

Were the almanacs in the prehispanic Maya codices from lowland Yucatan and the colonial Highland Guatemala calendars read in a similar fashion? If so, are the texts in the codices and colonial calendars both mnemonics devices for ceremonial discourses, as well as prognostications for specific days? Is it possible that the groups of five days in the almanacs of the prehispanic and colonial calendars resemble sets of authorities that rule together on one day? If this is the case, do the prognostications or

descriptions in the prehispanic and colonial calendars apply to all five days or only to one day, while the other four days support its authority? I think that for now no concluding statements regarding the use of the groups of five Day-Lords in the past can be made, because more research is needed on this topic.

I would like to stress that in further research on this topic, it is important to collaborate with indigenous specialists. The knowledge that calendar experts keep, can help to give new insights in the interpretation of the ancient calendar system. Knowledge regarding the Maya heritage that is produced in the academia, should also be given back to the communities, so that the link with the past, which has been damaged by centuries of colonization, can be restored so that maybe one day the historical calendars can be used again in contemporary rituals.

THE TEMPORAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

The authority of the day and the year shows similarities with the *alcaldía indígena* or the *auxiliatura* (Auxiliary Organization) in the indigenous communities in the Highlands of Guatemala. The role of indigenous authority in Momostenango, which is similar to that of other indigenous authorities in the Highland Guatemala communities (for example, see: La Farge, 1994, pp. 35-41; Tax, 1964a, pp. 39-45; Vogt, 1970, pp. 19-22; Wisdom, 1961, pp. 241-284), has been already been discussed in detail by others (Garvin, 2004; B. Tedlock, 1992, pp. 34-35).

The civic hierarchy in Momostenango still generally functions according to what Tedlock observed (1992, pp. 34-35), upon which I base the following summary. The *auxiliatura* is the traditional

organization that exists next to the Municipal Organization and its offices, in contrast to the Municipal Organization, are taken on an unpaid and voluntary basis. The role of the *auxiliatura* is to mediate in legal issues and to administer any affair concerning the indigenous population of Momostenango. The head of this organization is the *alcalde indígena* (also known as *Ilol qatinamit*, the seer of our town), who is a town elder, who has already served in a lower function in the *auxiliatura*. The *alcalde indígena* also fulfills the function of *síndico segundo* (city manager) in the Municipal Organization. Below him are two assistants (*rach'il*), who also have a minor role in the Municipal Organization. One of them is *Ajtz'ib'*, secretary, an honorary function that entails the production of official (written) statements. Furthermore, the *alcalde indígena* is assisted by eighteen auxiliary *alcaldes indígenas* (one for each of the four *barrios* and one for each of the fourteen *aldeas* of Momostenango), two drummers, and twenty helpers that serve as policemen and messengers.

The *auxiliatura* is chosen and assisted by the elders (*ajawab'* or *principales*) of the town (B. Tedlock, 1992, pp. 34-35). The role of the elders is to choose and to council the members of the *auxiliatura*. The role of the elders for the community is similar to the role of the grandparents in the family house, about which don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar from Concepción Chiquirichapa explains:

In the Maya perception, the past, the present and the future are attached to each other: they are not separate times but are very united times. This can be seen most of all in the house. For example, the grandfather is the past, the son of the grandfather is the present, and the grandchild of the grandfather – or the son of his son – is the future. So, food cannot be served at dinner time if the grandchild is not there. They have to call him, they all have to sit down. Or when the son of the grandfather is not there: “please, call Juan for me, it is time to have dinner”. We all have to be together. So, there is the grandfather, there is the son of the grandfather, and there is the grandchild. In this way, the past, the present and the future are together at the moment of receiving the food.

[...]

The presence of the grandfather is very important, because the grandfather passes his experience to his son, and his son passes the experience to the grandchild of the grandfather, who is the son of the son of the grandfather. It is a chain of learning. Our grandparents are our logs and the son is the offspring, and the son of the son is the continuation of life. This is why the Maya women always carry their sons when they are working. [...] But in the European society, when the elders are not capable of working anymore you have to send them to an elderly home. So, we are sending the past to an elderly home, while the function of the past is to be right here [with us]! Because it is he who transfers the knowledge, the experiences, the science, the wisdom. He should not be kept in an elderly home! And then, the mother has to work and cannot carry her son on her back. For example, if she is working in Walmart, or el Pais, then she sends her son to a place, to a kindergarten. So, the past is gone, the future is gone, and all that is left is the present! This is where loneliness enters. When one remains alone, when despair enters, when many things occurs and the father is not there to help and the son is there neither to bring happiness: only loneliness remains. So, at this point destruction has entered the house. The integrity of the house, of the family, has been destroyed – Don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar, Concepción Chiquirichapa, May 2014.

Twice a year the elders and the members of the *alcaldía indígena* formally meet: at the collection of *pa job'* and for the election of the future *alcaldía indígena*. The collection of *pa job'*⁴⁴ takes place in February on the consecutive days Kej and Q'anil. On the day Kej, the elders and the members of the *alcaldía indígena* go door to door to collect five quetzales from each house. On another day Kej, the members of the *alcaldía indígena* go with the

⁴⁴ The term *pa job'* derives from *puaq* (“money” or “silver”) and *job'* (“five”).

collected money to Antigua Guatemala, where they buy all the candles that will be used throughout the year by the Catholic church for Catholic celebrations in town. On Holy Tuesday, these candles are brought to the main entrance of Momostenango, *Chu Cruz*⁴⁵ (“at the cross”), where the community members and authorities of Momostenango meet and proceed to bring the candles in a procession to the center of the town (Figure 40 and Figure 41). The procession, in which I participated in 2015, leads from the entrance of Momostenango to the City Hall (Figure 42). It enters the building and it passes through each room, and then goes to the office of the *alcaldía indígena*, which is located next to the City Hall. After a short speech by the *alcalde* of the *alcaldía indígena* the procession continues to the church, where the candles are handed to the parish priest. This procession closes with a Mass.

The *principales* (“elders”) of the community hold a meeting with the *alcaldía indígena* around August to discuss who should form the next indigenous authority on the 1st of January. This meeting always takes place on a day *Kej*, which is the patron of authority, accompanied by a high Day-Number (preferably Day-Number 12 but the Day-Numbers 10, 11 or 13 are also acceptable). Forty days before the meeting, also on a *Kej*-day with a high Day-Number, the elders send a first invitation to the *alcaldía indígena* to join the election of the new authority. Twenty days before the meeting, also on a *Kej* day, but with a low Day-Number, the elders send a second reminder to the indigenous authority.

Once the next members of the *alcaldía indígena* have been appointed by the elders and the current authority, a period of four months follows during which the newly-elected members are prepared for their role by the current authority. During this period, it is still possible to reject the appointed function. If this happens, the elders have enough time to find a replacement and the current authority has enough time to train the new member. After exchanging the power on 1st of January, the previous authority continues to assist the members of the *alcaldía indígena* until they can work independently.



Figure 40. The cross of *Chu Cruz* is decorated with flowers and pine needles.



Figure 41. Candles are handed to the indigenous authorities and community members of Momostenango.



Figure 42. Holy Tuesday in Momostenango. The elders, the members of the *alcaldía indígena* and community members bring the candles to the center of town. Photo by Juan Carlos Tayun.

⁴⁵ There are four crosses surrounding Momostenango. Each cross is placed at a main road that leads to the center of town. The cross that is important for this occasion, *Chu Cruz*, stands just above the split at Dos Cabezas on the principal road just before entering Momostenango.



Figure 43. The change of authority in Momostenango.

Four months after the elections, on New Year's Day of the Gregorian calendar, indigenous authorities change in most communities of the Highlands (La Farge, 1994, p. 197; Siegel, 1941, pp. 71-74; Vogt, 1970, p. 79; Wagley, 1949, p. 109). At this moment, a new group of leaders takes the responsibility to guide and protect their communities. In Momostenango, the new authorities officially receive their positions at sunrise of 1st of January. The old and new authorities of the four *barrios* of Momostenango (Santa Isabel, Santa Ana, Santa Catarina, and Pa Tz'ite) and the fourteen *aldeas*⁴⁶ meet in front of the City Hall, where they face each other in two long lines (Figure 43). The mayor of Momostenango addresses them, thanks the old authority and welcomes the new one, mentioning each person by their name. The mayor is hereby assisted by one of the *Chuchqajawib' rech*

tinamit, the *Chuchqajawib'* of the town. As soon as the power has been handed over, the authorities go back to their *aldeas* and *barrios* where they each continue their individual ceremonies.

It is likely, as don Rigoberto has pointed out to me, that the authority of the community mirrors the authority of time or, even in a broader sense, of the world as a whole. As such, I suggest that the arrival of important days, such as the *Mam* or the day 8 B'atz' (see previous chapter), is a dynamic process rather than a binary change of one day to the next. Don José Angel Xeloj taught me that every important ceremonial day is complemented by the day before and the day after, because one day gives rise to the next. These have indeed to be mentioned in the ceremonial discourse performed on that day, as don Rigoberto does in line 1173 of Appendix A.

Similar to the system of the *alcaldía indígena*, where the moment of election is followed by a period of training, the moment of investiture and a period

⁴⁶ Not all communities are present, however, as today some communities prefer to organize the official event in their own community.

of emancipation, I believe that important days start entering several days before their specific arrival and fade out during a period that follows the actual day. For example, religious festivities related to the day 8 B'atz' begin already two days before and continue until the day after. Similarly, the preparation for the arrival of the *Mam* begins two days before the actual day of the *Mam*. This period used to be even 40 days before. In contrast to the common view of a binary opposition between one day and the next, I suggest that the change of the day in the K'iche' calendar is a gradual process that, in the case of important ritual days, might overlap with a period consisting of several days. This hierarchical understanding of time and community reproduces the coexistence of the three generations – the past, the present, and the future – in one house. The past is represented by the grandfather and the grandmother, who have already lived a long time, experienced things and acquired knowledge. They pass this on to their daughters and sons, the present, who, in turn, have children, the future. They all live together (coexist) in the house and are conscious about their shifting roles in the family once they become parents and grandparents.

A K'ICHE' GREGORIAN CALENDAR

The Gregorian calendar is also recognized as an authority. A couple of days before the Gregorian New Year of 2015, don Rigoberto told me that the 1st of January was going to fall on the day 4 Imox of the *chol q'ij*. The Day-Lord Imox indicated, according to him, that the year of 2015 would be characterized by rain fall, while the Day-Number 4 suggested that rain would fall, but not in a destructive way. According to don Rigoberto, the New Year's Day of the Gregorian year and the New Year's Day of the K'iche' year had to work together and oversee the events of the year, just like the *alcaldía indígena* and the municipality should – in an ideal situation – collaborate closely. For the Gregorian New Year, however, no elaborate celebration took place, differently from the celebration of the *Mam* that was, on the other hand, a big event.

Several of the mantic characteristics of the *chol q'ij* and the *junab' q'ij* are also present in the Gregorian calendar. For example, while the dry season usually begins between November

and December (see Chapter III), the beginning of January is often characterized by some light rainfall. The first days of January, therefore, are taken as prognostications for the rest of the Gregorian (solar) year. Every day from 1st of January until 12th of January represents one of the twelve months of the year. According to the rainfall on each day, one can see when and how much rain will fall each of the coming months. This aspect is often taken into consideration when the moment for sowing has to be determined, for example when one has to decide to sow at the end of April or in the beginning of May. The connotations of the Day-Numbers of the *chol q'ij*, especially those days that are taken to be unbalanced (3, 7, and 11), also apply to the Gregorian calendar.

Both the Gregorian and the K'iche' calendars are consulted in Momostenango in relation to everyday activities. The community members usually combine both calendar systems. For example, a good moment for visiting the family, following the Gregorian calendar, would be Sunday (after Mass). During this day children are not in school, students do not go to the university in Xela, and most people do not have to work. Furthermore, Sunday is the day of the market in Momostenango, which brings a very social and lively atmosphere in town. A good day for family matters in the *chol q'ij* is the day Aj (see appendix B). Therefore, a Sunday that falls on Aj is an excellent day for organizing a meeting with relatives.

Other characteristics of the *chol q'ij* are also evident in weekly cycle of the Gregorian calendar. One of the best days in the *chol q'ij* for visiting the ancestors at their graves in the cemetery is, for example, the day Ajpu. However, currently the graves of the ancestors in Momostenango are visited on Mondays and, to a minor extent, on Thursdays. On this day, small market stands sell candles and food at the cemetery. In short, the seven-day week cycle has thus taken over some of the characteristics of the K'iche' 20-day cycle⁴⁷.

47 Bunzel mentions that this was also the case in Chichicastenango during her fieldwork in the early 1930s. She states that "Monday is the day of the dead; Tuesday the day of San Sebastian and the Earth [San Sebastian Martín, corrupted from San Sebastian Martyr. San Martín is the *dueño* of the Earth, and Tuesday (*Martes*) is his day]; Wednesday is the day of San Miguel; Thursday is Commemoration of the Sacrament (Corpus Christi falls on this day); Friday, "a good day", is the day of María Concepción and María Rosario (a

Finally, don Rigoberto correlates the *chol q'ij* with the Gregorian calendar for consultation about birthdays. He made his first correlation when he was trained to become Ajq'ij:

You see, I have a table, I have made that table. So, from 1977 until 1981, for five years, I retraced the days. Well, there was no computer yet, there was nothing really. So, I began to count backwards [in time] on paper and I arrived until 1890. I took a break for three years and then I made another retracement, from 1889 until 1870, something like that. So, this is how I made the retracement. As we were in the year 1980 I had a 100 years that I could count back –
Don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, 10th of August 2016

Today he keeps a document that summarizes the lists that he made in the 1970s. On it, he keeps track of the first day of each month. From the first day of the month of a given year, he can easily count forward. For example, if the first day of the month March is 2 E' and he needs to know the *chol q'ij* date of the 4th of March he counts four days ahead, reaching the day 5 Tz'ikin. Similarly, if he needs to know the *chol q'ij* date of the 28th of March, he adds twenty days to the first day of March, which is 9 E', and adds another eight days, reaching the day 4 Ajpu. This correlation between the K'iche' and Gregorian calendar enables don Rigoberto to switch quickly between the two calendar systems.

good day for asking pardon; Friday is better); and Sunday is the day of Padre Eterno (a neutral day)" (Bunzel, 1952, p. 301).

