



The PARI Journal

A quarterly publication of the Ancient Cultures Institute
Volume XV, No. 1, Summer 2014

A Possible Syllable for *t'i* in Maya Writing

ALBERT DAVLETSHIN

Russian State University for the Humanities, Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies, Moscow

PÉTER BÍRÓ

Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Abteilung für Altamerikanistik, Bonn

In This Issue:

A Possible Syllable for *t'i* in Maya Writing

by

Albert Davletshin and
Péter Bíró

PAGES 1-10

•

Alternative Functions of Distance Numbers in Maya Calendrical Texts: Codices vs. Monuments

by

Victoria Bricker and
Anthony Aveni

PAGES 11-24

Joel Skidmore
Editor

joel@ancientcultures.org

Marc Zender

Associate Editor

marc@ancientcultures.org

The PARI Journal
202 Edgewood Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94117
415-664-8889
journal@ancientcultures.org

Electronic version
available at:
www.mesoweb.com/
pari/journal/1501

ISSN 1531-5398

Classic Mayan inscriptions (ca. AD 300-900) comprise a writing system with an inventory of both logographic and syllabic signs. The phonological contrast between glottalized and unglottalized consonants is a basic one in Mayan languages, and it is therefore possible to recognize two main types of syllabic signs: CV (plain consonant + vowel) and C'V (glottalized consonant + vowel). During the last several decades the writing system has been successfully deciphered; in particular, various signs representing CV and C'V syllables have been identified. Nevertheless, a number of *logographs* (signs used to spell words and indicate their meaning) and a smaller number of C'V syllabic signs remain undeciphered or unaccounted for. In the case of syllabic signs, the rarer a given consonant-vowel combination is in the language, the less likely that the corresponding syllabic sign will be attested, and the less likely it is that the sign will exhibit allography (which we define as the existence of several formally distinct signs which are nevertheless equivalent in either sound or meaning). That is, while highly frequent sounds such as *u* and *ba* are represented by syllabic signs (**u** or **ba**) with a large number of occurrences, in multiple different contexts, often with several allographs—thereby greatly facilitating the process of decipherment (e.g., Knorozov 1952:116; Lounsbury 1984; Stuart 1987)—less frequent sounds are not as often or as redundantly represented in the writing system, and thereby prove that much more difficult to decipher.

As one way of approaching this problem, we can consider that scholars now

postulate a hypothetical grid of either 99 or 100 syllables for Hieroglyphic Mayan. The postulate is based on the reconstructed phonological system of proto-Cholan (e.g., Kaufman and Norman 1984) because Hieroglyphic Mayan has been demonstrated to belong to the Cholan branch of the Mayan linguistic family (Campbell 1984; Justeson and Campbell 1997; Houston et al. 2000). In recent years, epigraphic data have contributed significantly to our understanding of Mayan historical phonology (Grube 2004; Houston et al. 2000). Evidence from historical linguistics implies that the glottalized bilabial stop *p'* was not an integral part of the phonological system (Wichmann 2006). Some scholars question the presence of the syllabic sign **wu** (e.g., Lacadena and Wichmann 2004:145), though the sound is nonetheless present in modern Chol. Recently, a series of mostly unpublished and still not completely verified decipherments have filled in several gaps in the grid, including potential syllabic signs for the sounds **be**, **ch'u**, **k'o**, **pe**, **so**, **t'o**, **tze**, **tzo**, **tz'o**, **we**, and **xe**. (Because these proposed decipherments remain insecure and therefore problematic, we mark them with a query when referencing them later in this article.) Most of these decipherments build on observations that **Ce** and **Co** syllabic signs do not behave in quite the same way as other syllabic signs. For instance, they do not participate in disharmonic spellings (Houston et al. 1998; Lacadena and Wichmann 2004), which suggests that any unidentified syllabic sign following a known sign will share its vowel. Despite this very useful feature of the writing

system, there remain several gaps in the syllabic grid which have yet to be filled, even tentatively, with candidate signs. These are the syllables **ch'e**, **ch'i**, **t'a**, **t'e**, and **t'i**. Notably, all of the missing signs are of the C'V type. This is only to be expected, given that glottalized consonants are generally less frequent than unglottalized ones in Mayan languages, and they are typically

absent between grammatical morphemes. Moreover, glottalized consonants are significantly less common in the final position of a word, which is historically one of the strongest contexts favoring syllabic decipherment. Consider Tables 1 and 2, which tabulate the number of occurrences of glottalized and unglottalized consonants in initial and final position.

	Initial position	%	Final position	%
p	157	6.71	24	1.03
p'	40	1.71	108	4.62
b	102	4.36	8	0.34
t	199	8.50	64	2.74
t'	37	1.58	14	0.60
k	119	5.09	114	4.87
k'	105	4.49	68	2.91
ch	118	5.04	50	2.14
ch'	119	5.09	33	1.41
tz	59	2.52	12	0.51
tz'	76	3.25	21	0.90
s	128	5.47	49	2.09
x	68	2.91	31	1.32
m	116	4.96	103	4.40
n	102	4.36	635	27.14
l	78	3.33	303	12.95
w	60	2.56	21	0.90
y	70	2.99	33	1.41
'	363	15.51	137	5.85
h	165	7.05	82	3.50
i	0	0.00	59	2.52
e	0	0.00	70	2.99
a	0	0.00	170	7.26
ä	0	0.00	15	0.64
o	0	0.00	62	2.65
u	0	0.00	40	1.71
(r)	15	0.64	14	0.60
(d)	14	0.60	0	0.00
(f)	5	0.21	0	0.00
(g)	12	0.51	0	0.00
(kw)	13	0.56	0	0.00
total:	2340	100.00	2340	100.00

Table 1. Number and percentage of lexical entries where a consonant appears in initial and final position in a Chontal dictionary (Knowles 1984). Phonemes found in recent loans only are given in parentheses.

	Initial position	%	Final position	%
p	84	6.23	1	0.07
b	89	6.60	40	2.97
t	58	4.30	22	1.63
t'	19	1.41	1	0.07
k	65	4.82	43	3.19
k'	145	10.76	13	0.96
ch	125	9.27	24	1.78
ch'	100	7.42	7	0.52
tz	5	0.37	3	0.22
tz'	25	1.85	7	0.52
s	45	3.34	52	3.86
x	25	1.85	30	2.23
m	68	5.04	42	3.12
n	55	4.08	134	9.94
l+r	39	2.89	209	15.50
w	20	1.48	5	0.37
y	31	2.30	49	3.64
'	215	15.95	103	7.64
h	134	9.94	54	4.01
i	0	0.00	235	17.43
e	0	0.00	42	3.12
a	0	0.00	167	12.39
o	0	0.00	27	2.00
u	0	0.00	38	2.82
(d)	1	0.07	0	0.00
total:	1348	100.00	1348	100.00

Table 2. Number and percentage of lexical entries where a consonant appears in initial and final position in a Chorti dictionary (Hull 2005). Grammatical morphemes and composite lexical entries are excluded from counts.

Strikingly, the consonants *t'*, *tz*, *tz'*, *ch'*, and *w* are extremely rare in final position in both of these languages. This distribution is in fact characteristic of Mayan languages in general. Kaufman and Norman's (1984) proto-Cholan dictionary includes 714 reconstructed roots. Of these, only 20 include **t'* (not including derivations)—nine in initial position, nine in final position, and two in medial position: 196 **jit'* "tie crossbars of structure," 205 **jot'* "scratch (head)," 371 **nut'* "join (tv.)," 461 **set'* "cut, tear (tv.)," 472 **sit'* "swell," 476 **sot'ot'* "liver," 542 **t'äb'* "go up, rise," 542a **t'äb'-esä* "lift, raise," 543 **t'an* "word," 544 **t'el* "lying on side," 544a **t'el* "rooster's comb, coxcomb," 544b **t'ohlök* "lizard, crested," 545 **t'iw* "eagle," 546 **t'ot'* "snail," 547 **t'ox* "break, deal out,"

548 **t'uch* "perched, squatting," 549 **t'ul* "drop (n.)," 549a *t'uj* "drop (n.)," 550 **t'ul* "rabbit," 631 **xet'* "break in pieces," 658 **yot'* "massage, press on belly (tv.)," 685 **et'ok* "and, companion, with."

Brown and Wichmann's (2004) proto-Mayan wordlist includes 282 reconstructed roots, only two of which include **t'* (**looht'* "pressed, tightened, cramped," and **t'iiw* "eagle") and two others **ty'* (**nehty'* "to nibble" and **ty'il* "to toast, singe"). Given forms like *t'ul/t'uj* "drop," it is easy to see that at least some of these words belong to the onomatopoeic portion of the lexicon. Yet despite this, and despite the scarcity of *t'* in the languages, we would like to suggest in what follows that one previously undeciphered sign attested in a few

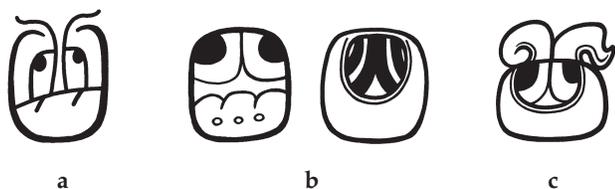


Figure 1. Similar ‘night’-related signs in Maya writing: (a) ‘Split-Akbal’; (b) Late Classic and Early Classic versions of AK’AB (‘Akbal’); (c) AJ (‘Flaming-Akbal’). Drawings by Albert Davletshin.

rare spellings is a reasonable candidate for the syllable **ti**.

The sign in question is not registered in Thompson’s (1962) catalog of Mayan signs, and is instead known to epigraphers by the nickname ‘Split-Akbal,’ which was coined by fellow epigraphers in order to distinguish it from the well-known logogram AK’AB “night” (long referenced in the literature as ‘Akbal’) and the ‘Flaming-Akbal’ sign (Figure 1) recently deciphered by Marc

Zender (2005) as logographic AJ.

As far as we know, the ‘Split-Akbal’ sign occurs only five times in the extant corpus: twice in texts from Comalcalco (Armijo et al. 2000, 2001; Zender 2004) and thrice on painted Codex-style ceramics (Figure 2):

1. Comalcalco, Urn 26, Pendants 8a-8b:
ti-nu₁-‘Split-Akbal’-**li ti**-DATE VERB,
2. Comalcalco, Urn 26, Stingray Spine 4:
DATE **nu₁**-‘Split-Akbal’-**li** VERB,
3. Painted Codex-style vase K1815:
DATE **nu₂**-‘Split-Akbal’-**li** VERB,
4. Painted Codex-style vase K2208:
DATE **nu₂**-‘Split-Akbal’-**li** VERB,
5. Painted Codex-style vase K1370:
DATE **nu₂**-‘Split-Akbal’-**li** VERB.

The sign designated here as **nu₂** and depicting a tied knot of cloth deserves some commentary. It is attested

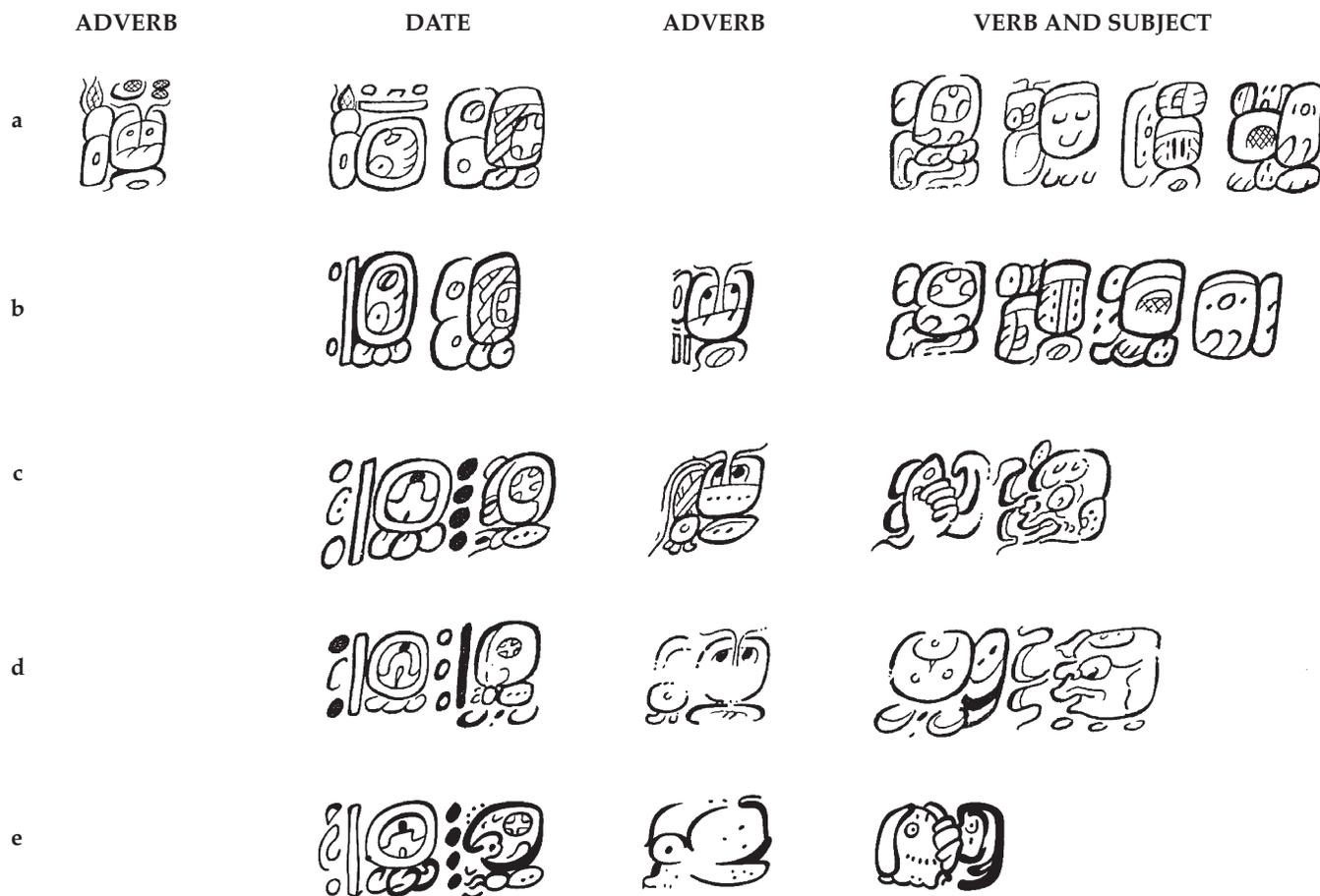


Figure 2. The ‘Split-Akbal’ sign in its contexts: (a) Pendants 8a and 8b, Comalcalco Urn 26 (Armijo Torres et al. 2001:Fig. 13); (b) Stingray Spine 4, Comalcalco Urn 26 (Armijo et al. 2001:Fig. 14); (c) codex-style vase, K1815; (d) codex-style vase, K2208; (e) codex-style vase, K1370. Drawings courtesy of Marc Zender (a-d) and Philippe Galeev (e).

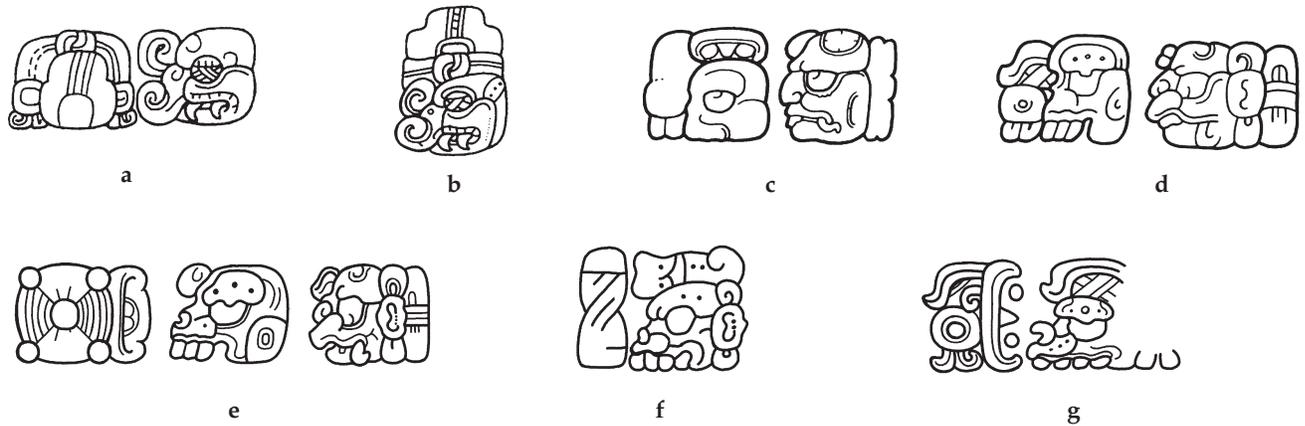


Figure 3. The *nu*, syllabic sign in the names of Nu'n Ya'x Ahiin, Nu'n Ujo'l Chahk, and Nu'n Ujo'l K'inich: (a) *nu*/NU'N-YA'X-AHIIN, Tikal Stela 31:I3-J3; (b) *nu*/NU'N-YA'X-AHIIN, Tikal Stela 31:N2; (c) *nu*/NU'N-u-JO'L-K'INICH, Tikal Lintel 2 of Temple III:D17-C18; (d) *nu*/NU'N-JO'L-CHAHK-ki, Dos Pilas Stairway IV:C2-D2; (e) *nu-na*-JO'L-CHAHK-ki, Dos Pilas Stairway IV:I2; (f) *nu-u*?-JO'L[CHAHK], Dos Pilas Stairway IV:F2-H1; (g) *nu*/NU'N-u-JO'L-CHAHK, Dos Pilas Stairway IV:Step 6. After William R. Coe's drawings in Jones and Satterthwaite (1982) and Ian Graham's drawings in Houston (1993:109).

as part of such names as Nu'n Ya'x Ahiin, Nu'n Ujo'l Chahk (also written as Nu'n Jo'l Chahk) and Nu'n Ujo'l K'inich. In these examples it can perhaps be interpreted as a logograph for NU'N "mute" (Figure 3). Nevertheless, this sign is clearly used as a phonetic complement in a glyphic passage from Tikal Stela 9 (Figure 4) recording the well-known 'deity impersonation' formula as: *u-BAAH-li (a)-A'N-(nu)...*, *u-b'aahil a'n ...*, "it is his image impersonating X." In this example, the sign in question must clearly be phonetic. Perhaps what was originally a logogram for NU'N "mute" later gained a *nu* syllabic reading via the principle known as acrophony (see Houston et al. 2000:328; Zender 1999:38-41).

Given its preverbal position in all five of its occurrences, Marc Zender (personal communication 2001;

see also Armijo et al. 2001:396) and Alfonso Lacadena (personal communication 2003) have independently proposed that the glyphic collocation *nu*-Split-Akbal'-li must function as some kind of temporal adverb. They have further suggested that 'Split-Akbal' is a logogram referring to a period of time, possibly, "twilight" or "sunset." Indeed, the sign seems to be a graphic modification of the logogram AK'AB "night" and the glyphic collocation always follows dates and precedes verbs, adequately filling the slot occupied by temporal adverbs in Mayan languages and Mayan hieroglyphic writing. Indeed, it behaves rather similarly to the well-known glyphic expression *pas'aj*, meaning "sunrise, dawn," as on Pendants 11a and 11b from Comalcalco Urn 26 (Figure 5):

ti-1-PAS ti-*7-CHIJ? 10-CHAK-AT-ta t'o?-xa-ja a-pa-ka-la-TAHN-na ...

ti ju'n pas[aj] ti huk chij? laju'n chak at t'ohxaj? aj pakal tahn ...

"at daybreak on the day 7 Manik 10 Zip, Aj Pakal Tahn was cut(?) ..."¹

The sign **PAS** "sunrise, dawn" is a compound sign consisting of the otherwise independent logographs **CHAN** "sky," **K'IN** "sun," and **KAB** "earth," combined in such a manner that the sun appears between the earth and sky, yet with substitution patterns clearly demonstrating the reading value of **PAS** (Stuart 1998; Zender 1999). *Pas'aj* "sunrise" (literally "uncovering, opening") would be a verbal noun derived from the transitive

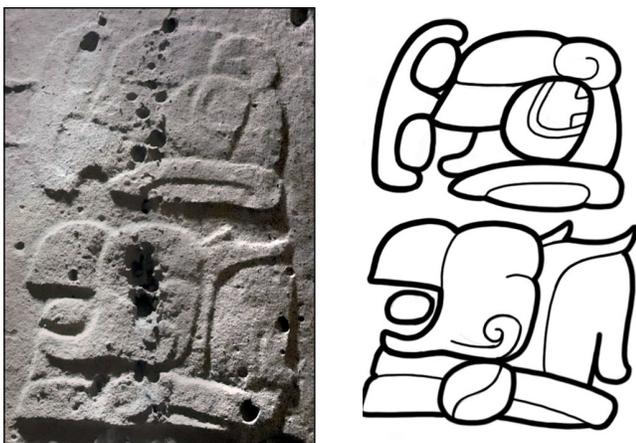


Figure 4. The *nu*, syllabic sign as a phonetic complement on Tikal Stela 9 (B1-2). Photo courtesy of the "Atlas Epigráfico de Petén" project, drawing courtesy of Philippe Gaelev.

¹ As Zender (2004:254) has shown, this annual ritual bloodletting rite took place in March of AD 773, in the presence of one of Comalcalco's patron deities, an aspect of the storm god Chahk.

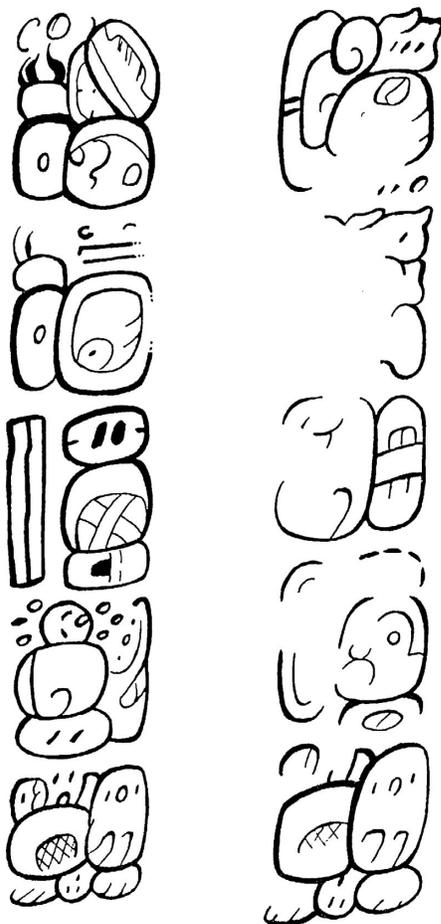


Figure 5. A sunrise event on Pendants 11a and 11b, Comalcalco Urn 26. Drawing courtesy of Marc Zender.

verb root *pas-* “to open, show, uproot, uncover,” in the same way as the distance number introductory glyph *u-tz’ak’aj* “the counting of (days, months, years, etc.)” is derived from the transitive verb *tz’ak-* “to count.” The etymology of the suffix in question is unknown, but its meaning is recoverable from the examples mentioned if we suppose that both derived forms contain the same suffix: one deriving verbal nouns from transitive verb roots. From this interpretation comes the glottal stop reconstructed for *pas’aj*, because a glottal stop seems to be indicated by many attested spellings of the distance number introductory glyph, such as **u-TZ’AK-ka-AJ-ja**, **u-TZ’AK-ka-AJ**, and **u-TZ’AK-AJ** (Table 3).

On Comalcalco Pendants 8a and 8b (Figure 6), the **nu-Split-Akbal’-li** glyphic collocation precedes a date, but it also receives the preposition **ti** “at,” further highlighting its role as the marker of a period of time:

ti nu-?-li ti-7-CHIJ? CHUM-[K’AN]JAL-wa wa-WA’-wa-ni ...

ti nu...l ti huk chij? chum k’anjalaw wa’waan ...

“at twilight(?), on the day 7 Manik 0 Pop, he stood up ...”²

Even from these two spellings, crucial observations can be made. First, the ‘Split-Akbal’ sign only appears in the context of the spelling **nu-Split-Akbal’-li**. Second, this compound always occurs in the same context: following a date and preceding an intransitive verb. In one context it precedes a date, but then it receives the preposition **ti**. The structure of the spelling is CV(C)CVC. Taking into account that the last sign in the glyphic collocation is **li**, we should suspect that one of the frequent **-VI** suffixes is involved in derivation of the word. In Hieroglyphic Mayan various **-VI** suffixes are used to derived nouns, adjectives, and participles from verbal and nominal stems (see Houston et al. 2001). If these observations are correct, then the structure of the spelling is CVCVC, and ‘Split-Akbal’ either represents a logograph (of the form **NUC**, where **C** represents an unknown consonant) or an unknown CV syllabic sign. Although one cannot be certain, given that only five examples are known, it is surely relevant that both preposed (**nu-**) and final (**-li**) phonetic signs are present in all cases, making it perhaps unlikely that ‘Split-Akbal’ is a routinely-complemented logograph of the shape **NUC**, particularly given that initial **nV** phonetic complements are very infrequent in the script (Grube 2010). For this reason, we entertain the idea that ‘Split-Akbal’ is instead a syllabic sign. As the sign apparently does not substitute in any context for one of the known syllabic signs, we conclude that it probably refers to one of the still missing glottalized syllables—that is, either **ch’e**, **ch’i**, **t’a**, **t’e**, or **t’i**. (The previously mentioned problematic syllables **b’e?**, **ch’u?**, **k’o?**, **tze?**, **tzo?**, **tz’o?**, **we?**, and **xe?** may also be added to this list.)

How to precede to narrow down this list? We can begin with a review of the **-VI** suffixes of different shape found in the script:

- V₁l** ‘adjectives from nouns,’
- VV₁l** ‘stative participles from transitive and positional verbal stems,’
- aal** ‘nouns from nouns,’
- il** ‘adjectives from compound nouns,’
- il** ‘abstract nouns,’
- il** ‘nominalizer (from compound verbs),’
- e’l** ‘nominalizer (gerundival nouns),’
- u’l** ~ **-iil** ~ **-al** ‘place-names from nouns.’

(The symbol “**V₁”** is used above to designate the

² See Zender (2004:254) for more details on this text.

proto-Cholan	<i>*pas-</i>	tv.	to show, uproot, uncover	Kaufman and Norman 1984
Chol	<i>pasel</i>	iv.	salir (el sol), brotar (una planta)	Aulie and Aulie 1996
	<i>Päs</i>	tv.	mostrar, enseñar	
Chontal	<i>paso' k'in, pasib k'in</i>		oriente	Keller and Luciano 1997
	<i>Pas</i>		salir, quitarse; ensuciarse	
	<i>Päse'</i>		sacar debajo de la tierra, desenterrar, arrancar	
	<i>päskab</i>		al día siguiente, al otro día	
Cholti	<i>pasek'in</i>		oriente, este	Morán 1695
	< <i>pascael</i> >		amanecer	
	< <i>pazcab</i> >		de mañana	
Chorti	< <i>upascael upehcahel dios</i> >		se nos manifiesta la palabra de dios	Hull 2005; Pérez Martínet et al. 1996
	<i>pas-i</i>	tv.	abrir, destapar / open, uncover	

Table 3. The *pas* root in Cholan languages.

so-called “synharmonic” or “echo” vowel of the suffix, which repeats the vowel of the root when the suffix is used for derivation.) Given the characteristics of these suffixes (from which we require a derived noun that can function like the attested temporal adverb *pas'aj*, as discussed above) and the previously-stated stipulation that **Ce** and **Co** signs cannot typically appear in disharmonic contexts, we can therefore discount the syllables **ch'e** and **t'e** from consideration. (We can also discount the problematic syllables **b'e?**, **k'o?**, **tze?**, **tzo?**, **tz'o?**, **we?**, and **xe?**.) At this point, we have greatly reduced the feasible candidates for ‘Split-Akbal’ to either **ch'i**, **t'a**, or **t'i** (among the unidentified syllables) or perhaps **ch'u?** (among the problematic ones). Interestingly, the four potential spellings—**nu-ch'i**, **nu-t'a**, **nu-t'i**, and

nu-ch'u—would cue only two roots: *nuch'* or *nut'*.

In searching for a promising dictionary entry in modern Mayan languages, we were unable to find any relevant entries for *nuch'*, but *nut'* is rather widespread and may fit the context admirably (Table 4).

The examples support the reconstruction of a proto-Cholan root **nut'*- “to join, close.” Further, it is reasonable to suppose that a derived noun of the form *nut'il* would have meant “joining, closing.”

The putative derived noun *nut'il* “joining, closing” bears a semantic resemblance to the previously-discussed expression *pas'aj* “sunrise (lit. opening, uncovering).” Just as *pas'aj* indicates the beginning of the day, referring to the climbing of the sun from the horizon or its ‘detaching’ from the horizon, *nut'il* may indicate the



Figure 6. A sunset event on Pendants 8a and 8b, Comalcalco Urn 26. Drawing courtesy of Marc Zender.

Lowland Mayan	*nut'-	tv.	to join	Wichmann and Brown n.d.		
proto-Cholan	*nut'-	tv.	pegar juntura, juntar	Kaufman and Norman 1984		
Chol	ñut'ul	adj.	pegado (una juntura)	Aulie and Aulie 1996		
Cholti	<nutu>		juntar	Morán 1695		
	<nutul>		junto			
Chorti	nut'	Root	a joining or splicing, cluster, bunch	Wisdom 1950		
	nut' e b'ujk		sew patch (to cloth)			
	nut'i takar		to attach to			
	nut'i e te'		to join timbers (end to end)			
	nut'i		juntar (las manos), cerrar (la boca)		Schumman n.d.	
	nut'-u	tv.	conectar, unir, comparar, igualar			
	nut'-r-u	iv.	andar con los pies cerrados (un juego)			Wichmann 1999
	nut'pe'n	iv.	cerrar, topar			Wichmann and Brown n.d.
Itzaj	nuut'	Root	estrechadura/narrowing	Hofling and Tesucún 1997		
Yukatek	nut'-	tv.	to close, snap together (feet)	Bricker et al. 1998		
	nú'ut'	adj.	tight, narrow			
	nú'ut'chah	incv.	to become tight, constricted			
	nùut'ul	adj.	closed			

Table 4. The *nut'* root in Cholan and Yukatekan languages.

end of the day (dusk, sunset) when the sun is 'closing the horizon' or 'joining to it' and beginning its journey to the underworld. Apparently, in addition to recording that some rituals took place at dawn (*pas'aj*) and at night (*ti-ihk'k'in*), the Classic Maya also noted that at least some events had taken place at dusk. In the Comalcalco inscriptions found in Aj Pakal Tahn's funerary urn, two rituals are thus said to have taken place at sunset (*ti-nut'il*), and three others at sunrise (*ti-pas'aj*) (see Zender 2004:246-263 for details). Interestingly enough, and perhaps not accidentally, both of the Comalcalco texts referring to possible sunset events do so in the context of a ritual where a priest (*yajawk'ahk'*) represents and possibly impersonates a 'bat-being' (*suutz'il*). Thus, on

the aforementioned pendants 8a and 8b (Figure 6):

ti-nu-t'i?-li ti-7-CHI? CHUM-[K'AN]JAL-wa wa-WA'-wa-ni ?-na-ji u-su-tz'i-li a-pa-ka-la-TAHN-na yi-chi-NAL-la ch'o²-ko u-UNE[K'AWIIL]

ti nut'il? ti huk chij? chum k'anjalaw wa'waan ...naah usuutz'il Aj Pakal Tahn yichnal ch'och'ok unen k'awiil

"at twilight(?), on the day 7 Manik 0 Pop, the 'bat-being' (of) Aj Pakal Tahn stood before very young Unen K'awiil (the god) in/at ... house"³

³ Again, see Zender (2004:254) for the initial reading, context and dating of this interesting text.



Figure 7. A mythological event taking place at sunset. Codex-style vase. Photograph K2208 © Justin Kerr.

Intriguing as they are, however, the Comalcalco texts remain the only known Mayan inscriptions where sunset rituals are mentioned, while rituals taking place at sunrise are attested throughout the Maya Lowlands. Interestingly, at least one mythological event is explicitly mentioned as taking place at sunset. Often called the ‘throwing of Baby-Jaguar’ (see, for example, Robicsek and Hales 1988), these scenes probably represent the discovery of maize by the Storm God, who seems to use the Baby Jaguar to crack open the mountain where the first maize seeds were hoarded (Figure 7).

Given the rarity of the ‘Split-Akbal’ sign, it is difficult to find additional support for our proposed *t'i* reading. However, it might be worth considering a possible acrophonic origin of the sign in question (e.g., Houston et al. 2000:328; Zender 1999:38-41). The sign’s appearance possibly represents something with a hollow interior that is cracked or split open.⁴ If this visual interpretation is correct, it is possible to suggest the following lexical entries from Tzotzil as a likely source for its origin: *t'ij* tv. “to break top off egg,” *t'ijan* tv. “break eggs,” *t'il* iv. “fray (ribbon, edge of clothing), split or crack (wood),” *t'illajet* av. “splitting open (bean pods),” *t'illuj* av. “splitting apart suddenly (wood)” (Laughlin 1988). We will require additional contexts to test our proposal, yet if we are correct in our proposal these will prove hard to come by; the syllable *t'i* is very rare in Lowland Mayan languages.

⁴ Philippe Galeev (personal communication 2014) usefully suggests to us that the similarity between ‘Split-Akbal’ and ‘Akbal’ may be spurious, and mostly due to the ‘crack’ element bifurcating the sign.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Philippe Galeev for his help in the preparation of the paper and to Dmitri Beliaev, Alfonso Lacadena, Christian Prager, Alexandre Tokovinine, and Marc Zender for sharing their observations with us. Many thanks to Marc Zender and Philippe Galeev for permission to publish their drawings and also to Cecil Brown, Otto Schumann, and Søren Wichmann for the opportunity to work with their unpublished manuscripts. Kerry Hull kindly sent a digitalized version of his dictionary and thus saved us a lot of time while doing calculations. This study was possible thanks to a six-month stay at the Department “Anthropology of the Americas” at Bonn University (2008-2009), supported by an “Immanuel Kant” scholarship offered by the German Academic Exchange Service to Albert Davletshin.

Bibliography

- Armijo Torres, Ricardo, Miriam J. Gallegos, and Marc Zender
2000 Urnas funerarias, textos históricos y ofrendas en Comalcalco. *Los Investigadores de la Cultura Maya* 8(2):312-323.
- Armijo Torres, Ricardo, Miriam J. Gallegos, and Marc Zender
2001 Vida y obra de Ah Pakal Tahn, un sacerdote del siglo VII en Comalcalco, Tabasco, México. *Los Investigadores de la Cultura Maya* 9(2):118-123.
- Aulie, H. Wilbur, and Evelyn W. de Aulie
1978 *Diccionario ch'ol-español, español-ch'ol*. Serie de vocabularios y diccionarios indígenas “Mariano Silva y Aceves” 21. Mexico: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano.
- Bricker, Victoria, Eleuterio Po'ot Yah, and Ofelia Dzul de Po'ot
1998 *A Dictionary of the Maya Language as Spoken in Hocabá, Yucatán*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Brown, Cecil H., and Søren Wichmann
2004 Proto-Mayan Syllable Nuclei. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 70(2):128-186.

- Grube, Nikolai
2004 The Orthographic Distinction Between Velar and Glottal Spirants in Maya Hieroglyphic Writing. In *The Linguistics of Maya Writing*, edited by Søren Wichmann, pp. 61-81. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- 2010 Proposed Phonetic Complements in Maya Hieroglyphic Writing. In *Linguistics and Archaeology in the Americas: The Historization of Language and Society*, edited by Eithne B. Carlin and Simon van de Kerke, pp. 27-41. Leiden: Brill.
- Hofling, Charles Andrew, and Félix Fernando Tesucún
1997 *Itzaj Maya–Spanish–English Dictionary*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Houston, Stephen D.
1993 *Hieroglyphs and History at Dos Pilas: Dynastic Politics of the Classic Maya*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Houston, Stephen D., John S. Robertson, and David Stuart
2000 The Language of Classic Maya inscriptions. *Current Anthropology* 41(3):321–356.
- 2001 *Quality and Quantity in Glyphic Nouns and Adjectives / Calidad y cantidad en sustantivos y adjetivos glíficos*. Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing 47. Center for Maya Research, Washington, D.C.
- Hull, Kerry
2005 A Dictionary of Ch'orti' Maya, Guatemala. *FAMSI*: www.famsi.org/reports/03031/index.html.
- Jones, Christopher, and Linton Satterthwaite
1982 *Monuments and Inscriptions of Tikal: The Carved Monuments*. Tikal Report 33, Part A. University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- Kaufman, Terrence S., and John Justeson
2003 A Preliminary Mayan Etymological Dictionary. *FAMSI*: www.famsi.org/reports/01051/pmed.pdf.
- Kaufman, Terrence S., and William M. Norman
1984 An Outline of Proto-Cholan Phonology, Morphology and Vocabulary. In *Phoneticism in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing*, edited by John S. Justeson and Lyle Campbell, pp. 77-166. Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York.
- Keller, Kathryn, and Plácido Luciano G.
1997 *Diccionario chontal de Tabasco (mayense)*. Serie de Vocabulario y Diccionarios Indígenas "Mariano Seilva y Aceves" 36. Tucson: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano.
- Kerr, Justin
n.d. Maya Vase Database: An Archive of Rollout Photographs: www.mayavase.com.
- Knorozov, Yuri V. [Кнорозов Ю.В.]
1952 Древняя письменность центральной Америки. Советская этнография 3: 100–118.
- Knowles, Susan Marie
1984 A Descriptive Grammar of Chontal Maya (San Carlos Dialect). Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Tulane University.
- Lacadena, Alfonso, and Søren Wichmann
2004 On the Representation of the Glottal Stop in Maya Writing. In *The Linguistics of Maya Writing*, edited by Søren Wichmann, pp. 103-162. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Laughlin, Robert M.
1988 *The Great Tzotzil Dictionary of Santo Domingo Zinacantán, with Grammatical Analysis and Historical Commentary*. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology 31. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Lounsbury, Floyd
1984 Glyphic Substitutions: Homophonic and Synonymic. In *Phoneticism in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing*, edited by John S. Justeson and Lyle Campbell, pp. 167-184. Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York.
- Morán, Francisco
1695 Vocabulario en lengua cholti que quiere decir la lengua de los milperos. Manuscript, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
- Pérez Martínez, Vitalino, Federico García, Felipe Martínez, and Jeremías López
1996 *Diccionario ch'orti', Jocotán, Chiquimula. Ch'orti'-español*. Guatemala: Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín.
- Robicsek, Francis, and Donald M. Hales
1988 A Ceramic Codex Fragment: The Sacrifice of Xbalanque. In *Maya Iconography*, edited by Elizabeth P. Benson and Gillett G. Griffin, pp. 260-276. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Schumann Gálvez, Otto
n.d. Vocabulario chorti-español, español-chorti. Unpublished manuscript in possession of the authors.
- Stuart, David
1987 *Ten Phonetic Syllables*. Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing 14. Washington, D.C.: Center for Maya Research.
- 1998 "The Fire Enters His House": Architecture and Ritual in Classic Maya Texts. In *Function and Meaning in Classic Maya Architecture*, edited by Stephen D. Houston, pp. 373-425. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks.
- Thompson, J. Erik S.
1962 *A Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Wichmann, Søren
1999 A Ch'orti' Morphological Sketch. Unpublished manuscript in possession of the authors.
- 2006 A New Look at Linguistic Interaction in the Lowlands as a Background for the Study of Maya Codices. In *Sacred Books, Sacred Languages: Two Thousand Years of Ritual and Religious Maya Literature*, edited by Rogelio Valencia Rivera and Geneviève Le Fort, pp. 45-64. Acta Mesoamericana 18. Markt Schwaben: Verlag Anton Saurwein.
- Wichmann, Søren, and Cecil H. Brown
n.d. Panchronic Mayan dictionary. Electronic manuscript in possession of the authors.
- Wisdom, Charles
1950 Materials on the Chorti Language. Microfilm Collection of Manuscript Materials on Middle American Cultural Anthropology 28. University of Chicago Library, Chicago.
- Zender, Marc
1999 Diacritical Marks and Underspelling in the Classic Maya Script: Implication for Decipherment. M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary.
- 2004 A Study of Classic Maya Priesthood. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Archaeology, University of Calgary, Calgary.
- 2005 'Flaming Akbal' and the Glyphic Representation of the *aj*-Agentive Prefix. *The PARI Journal* 5(3): 8-10. Available: www.mesoweb.com/pari/publications/journal/0503/Akbal.pdf.

Alternative Functions of Distance Numbers in Maya Calendrical Texts: Codices vs. Monuments

VICTORIA BRICKER
ANTHONY AVENI

Introduction

In the context of Classic Maya monumental inscriptions, the function of distance numbers is well known and understood. They refer to intervals linking important events in the lives of Maya rulers and members of their families. Less well known, and often misunderstood, is the function of intervals in the Postclassic Maya codices. The purpose of the present study is to explain the different functions of intervals in monumental and codical texts and what this means for understanding the structure of codical texts.

Intervals in Codices

The three principal surviving Maya codices, the ones conserved in the cities of Dresden, Madrid, and Paris, are concerned with a variety of topics (ritual, astronomy, meteorology, and agriculture), but not human biography. In fact, the anthropomorphic figures that populate their pages are deities, not people. Another characteristic that distinguishes codical from monumental inscriptions is their treatment of distance numbers, represented almost universally in the former with bar-and-dot numbers alone, without accompanying period glyphs. The codical treatment of *tzolkin* dates is similarly abbreviated: in many cases, only the coefficient is represented and the day sign must be inferred from context. The bar-and-dot coefficients of *tzolkin* dates are painted red to distinguish them from distance numbers, their bars and dots being painted black. Another difference between intervals in monumental and codical texts is that the ones in the codices are often numerologically driven (cf. Aveni 2006) and occur in highly repetitive sequences, such as 13-13-13-13-13, 16-16-16-17, or 6-7-6-7-6-7-6-7, whereas those on the monuments are not numerologically driven, but reflect the variation that is characteristic of human life histories. In the repetitive series of the codices, the only function of the dates that begin and end an interval is to anchor a span, within which the date(s) of interest may fall. This stands in contrast with intervals bounded by dates on the monuments, where the historical dates connected by distance numbers, not dates that happen to fall inside the intervals, are significant. In the codical model, the boundaries of an interval can be adjusted to fit a numerological imperative, as long as it includes the date of an iconographically targeted event. If that date falls in or near the center of an interval, then its

beginning or end can be moved forward or backward (or both) by a few days to accommodate the desired numerological pattern.

In securely dated contexts it is possible to show that codical intervals can serve as the source of dates of recurrent events of interest to users of the Maya codices, such as solstices and equinoxes or stations of the Maya *haab* (New Year and Half Year). To take an example, the seasonal tables on pages 61 to 69 of the Dresden Codex provide such a context. The introduction or preface to the tables on pages D.61-D.64 contains multiple dates in ring-number or serpent-number formats that can be tied into the Maya long count and from there into our Western, Gregorian calendar (Figure 1). It also contains a table of multiples, indicating that the seasonal tables were intended to be recycled.

The tables themselves occupy the upper and lower registers of pages D.65-D.69 (Figure 2). Each table is composed of 13 pictures and the captions above them and has two rows of distance numbers and *tzolkin* coefficients, one row above the captions and one below them, indicating that the user should go through each table twice. The intervals in each row sum to 91 days. Thus, the full length of each table is 182 days.

The upper row of black distance numbers and red coefficients above the upper seasonal table is heavily damaged; some of them are completely effaced. Enough remains, however, that what is missing can be inferred from what is still legible and from the fact that the intervals in that row form a highly patterned sequence that mirrors the intervals in the row of distance numbers below the captions in the lower seasonal table. The four rows of intervals in the two tables are arranged in an a-b-b-a numerological pattern as follows (reconstructed numbers are italicized):

9-5-1-10-6-2-11-7-3-12-8-4-13

11-13-11-1-8-6-4-2-13-6-6-8-2

11-13-11-1-8-6-4-2-13-6-6-8-2

9-5-1-10-6-2-11-7-3-12-8-4-13

The intervals in the last row exhibit an internal patterning such that each value is exactly four less than its predecessor. Enough remains of the intervals in the first row to suggest the same internal patterning, thus validating the inferred values for the effaced numerals.

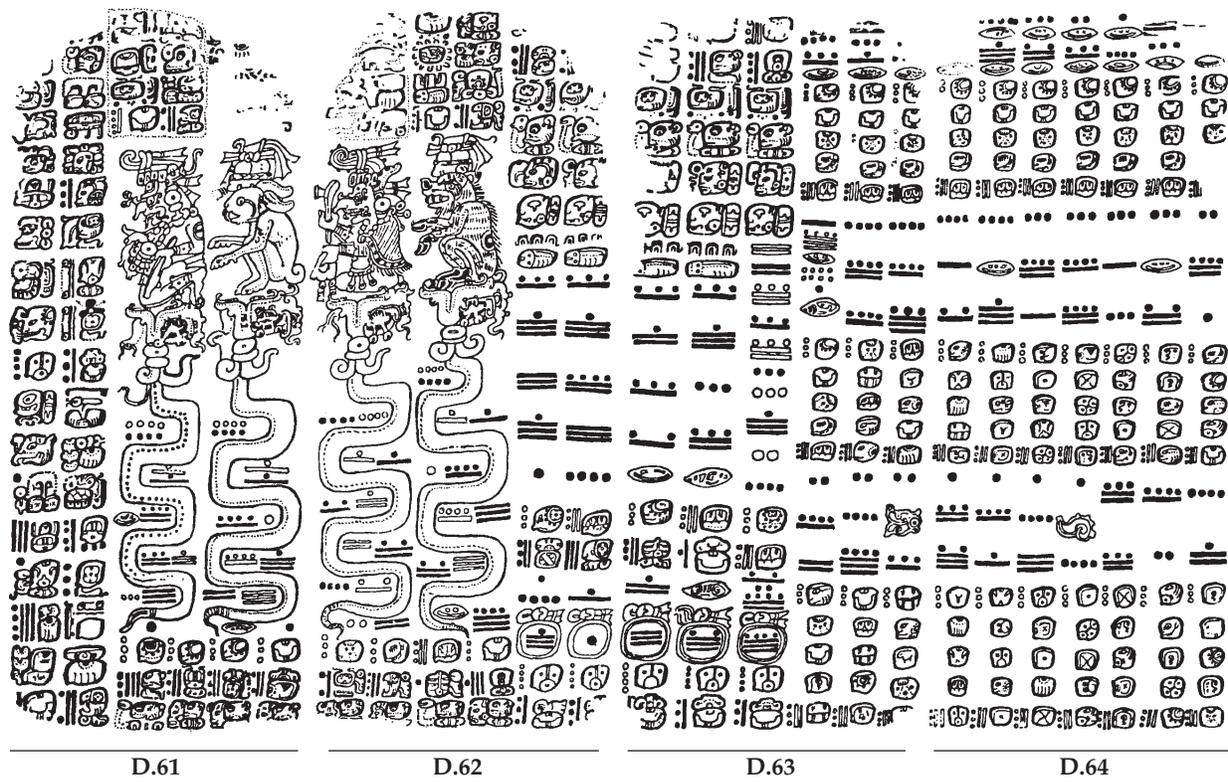


Figure 1. The left half of the seasonal tables on pages 61 to 64 of the Dresden Codex. After Villacorta C. and Villacorta (1976:132, 134, 136, 138).

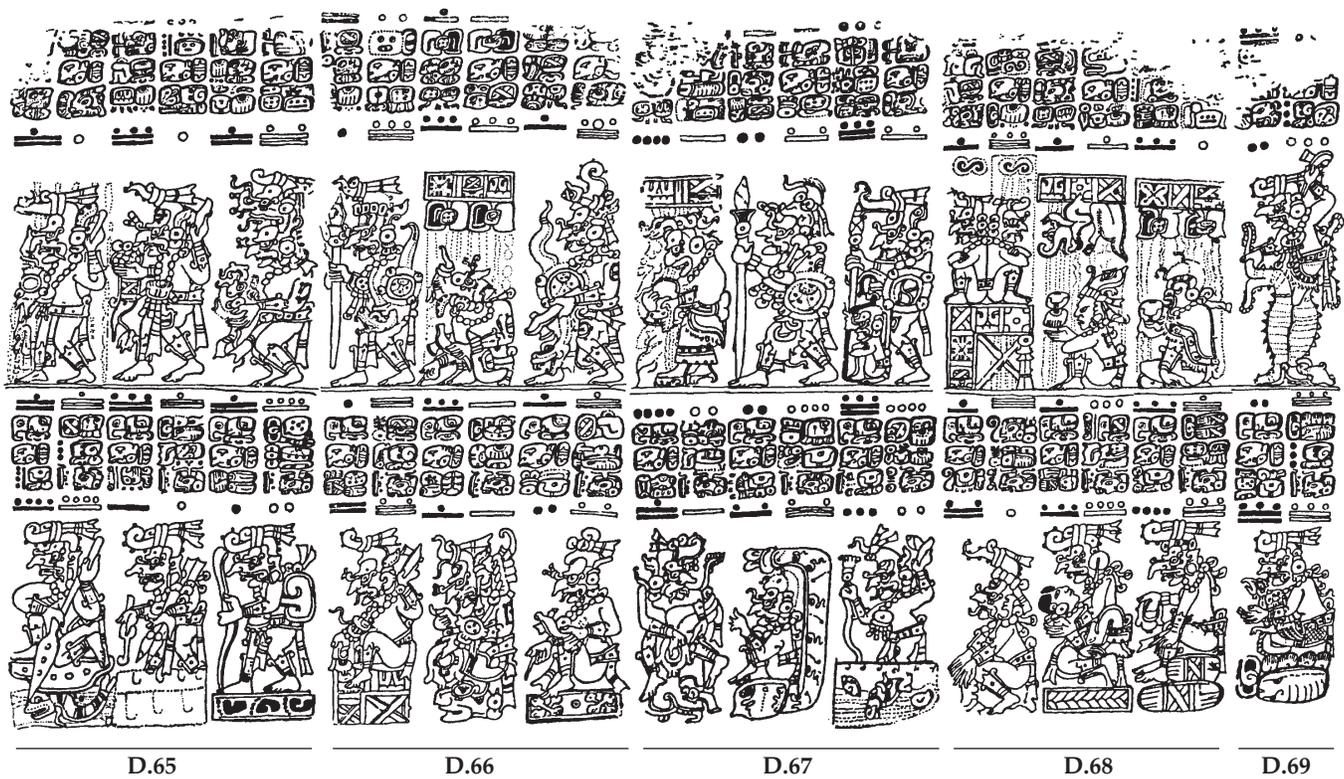


Figure 2. The right half of the seasonal tables on pages 65 to 69 of the Dresden Codex. After Villacorta C. and Villacorta (1976:140, 142, 144, 146, 148).

Elsewhere, Bricker and Bricker (2011:527-545) have shown that some of the pictures and their captions in the seasonal tables pertain to the two intertwined ring-number base dates that immediately precede the table of multiples. From one of those base dates, the long-count equivalent of which is 10.6.1.1.5 3 Chicchan 8 Zac (= 12 July AD 949), an entry date of 10.6.1.5.16 3 Cib 19 Muan can be derived for the upper seasonal table, which corresponds to 11 October AD 949. It leads to the date of the vernal equinox on 20 March AD 950 (= 10.6.1.13.14 7 Cib 14 Tzec in the Maya calendar) in the second row of the table, which is associated with the first picture and caption on page D.68a (Figure 3). The picture consists of a bent skyband on which two images of the rain god Chac are seated back-to-back. Above them are two clouds. Rain falls from the one on the right onto the Chac directly below it.

A six-day interval is associated with the bent-skyband picture, and the vernal equinox in AD 950 fell on the first day of the interval. In the second multiple of the table, 182 days later, the picture is associated with the autumnal equinox on 23 September AD 950 (= 10.6.2.5.3 12 Akbal 1 Muan in the Maya calendar), which fell on the *sixth* (and last) day of the interval. The third multiple returns the bent-skyband picture on D.68a to the vernal equinox on 20 March AD 951 (= 10.6.2.14.1 8 Imix 14 Tzec), this time on the *second* day of the six-day interval. The even multiples of the table no longer link this picture with autumnal equinoxes, but the odd multiples continue to associate it with vernal equinoxes, on the *fourth*, *fifth*, and *sixth* days of the interval in AD 952, 953, and 954, respectively, after which the relationship ends (Table 1). Because two runs through the table equal only 364 days (2×182), they fall short of the 365.2422-day length of the tropical year by 1.2422 days. Between AD 950 and 954, this error accumulates until it has used up the six days of the interval, after which the table is no longer effective for targeting vernal equinoxes. The greater emphasis on vernal equinoxes is consistent with the scene in the picture, which places the dry season (represented by the cloud without rain on the left) before the rainy season (represented by rain falling from the cloud on the right), not vice versa. In this example, the dates connected by the interval are less important than the equinoctial dates that fall on different days within it in five sequential years.

The intervals are equally useful for locating dates of ritual significance in sequential years or *haabs*. For example, the first day of the eight-day interval associated with the second picture on page D.68a happens to coincide with Maya New Year on 4 Ik 0 Pop (= 16 December AD 949) in the first row of the table (Table 2). The maize god (God E) served as the yearbearer for Ik years, and he is depicted sitting with the glyphs for food and water balanced on his right hand. No event is associated with that picture in the second multiple of the



Figure 3. Page 68a of the upper seasonal table in the Dresden Codex. After Villacorta C. and Villacorta (1976:146).

table, but Maya New Year on 5 Manik 0 Pop falls on the *second* day of the interval in AD 950. The odd multiples of the table continue to link this picture with Maya New Year's days on the *third*, *fourth*, *fifth*, *sixth*, *seventh*, and *eighth* days of the interval in AD 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, and 956, respectively. Only in AD 949 and 953 was the maize god appropriately represented by the picture. In this case, the discrepancy between the length of the *haab* (365 days) and the length of two runs through the table (364 days) is only one day, and the interval itself is two days longer than the interval associated with the equinoctial picture (eight days, instead of only six days). For these reasons, the table is efficacious for targeting Maya New Year's day for seven years, instead of only five years.

Table 2 also shows that, beginning in AD 952, the upper seasonal table begins to target the 180th day of the year—on 0 Yax—as well as the first day of the year—on 0 Pop—and this relationship continues through AD 959, three years after it ceases to be effective for tracking the New Year. Because this relationship does not materialize until four years after the beginning of the table, we consider it to be an artifact of the structure of the table, rather than an objective of the person who designed it. We regard it as more likely that interest in the ritual significance of 0 Yax was expressed in the third picture

Mult.	Year (AD)	Vernal	Autumnal	Day in Interval
Orig.	950	20 March		1
2nd	950		23 September	6
3rd	951	20 March		2
4th	951		--	--
5th	952	20 March		4
6th	952		--	--
7th	953	20 March		5
8th	953		--	--
9th	954	20 March		6
10th	954		--	--
11th	955	--		--

Table 1. Dates of equinoxes falling in the 6-day interval associated with the first picture on page 68a of the Dresden Codex.

in the *lower* seasonal table on page D.65b, which depicts the rain god (God B) on a road (Figure 4). The lower seasonal table begins 218 days after the upper seasonal table, after which they overlap each other in time. The interval associated with the third picture is eleven days, and what we call the Half Year, 2 Ik 0 Yax (= 14 June AD 950), falls on the fifth day of the interval. Table 3 shows that the odd multiples of the lower seasonal table link the third picture of the lower seasonal table to the *sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh* days in the interval in AD 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, and 956, respectively. These are the same years during which the second picture on page 68a of the upper table is linked to Maya New Year. And because of the structure of the lower seasonal table, the even multiples of it link the third picture to 0 Pop in AD 950, 951, 952, and 953. In this sense, the dates associated with the two pictures concerning stations of the *haab* mirror each other, even though the picture in the upper table is not positioned directly above the corresponding picture in the lower table on pages D.65-69. Other examples of the relationship between the upper and lower seasonal tables appear in Bricker and Bricker (2011:540-541, Table 11-9).

The foregoing example of D.61-69 was discussed in detail in order to reveal motives for contriving intervals in order to accommodate seasonal events in succeeding runs of codical almanacs. In a separate study, Aveni (2011) established the existence of patterns in intervallic

day sequences in a large number of almanacs and dealt with a variety of motives for contriving such patterns. These include the desire to *avoid* or *arrive at* a particular day or date (e.g., an interval of 20 returns an almanac

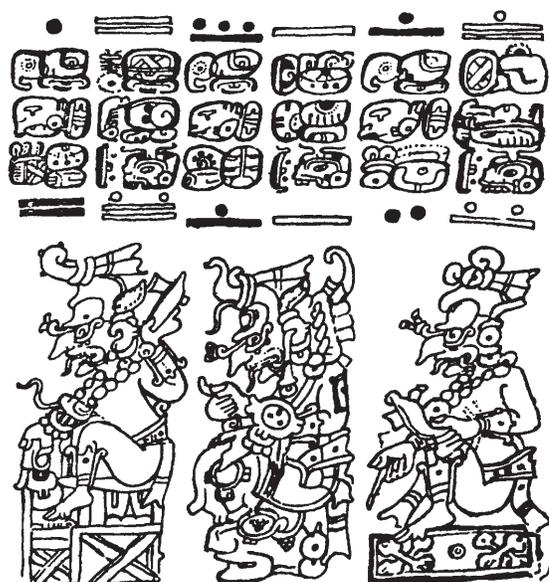


Figure 4. Page 65b of the lower seasonal table in the Dresden Codex. After Villacorta C. and Villacorta (1976:140).

Mult.	New Year	Half Year	Day in interval
Orig.	4 Ik 0 Pop 16 Dec 949		1
2nd		--	--
3rd	5 Manik 0 Pop 16 Dec 950		2
4th		--	--
5th	6 Eb 0 Pop 16 Dec 951		3
6th		4 Eb 0 Yax 13 Jun 952	1
7th	7 Caban 0 Pop 15 Dec 952		4
8th		5 Caban 0 Yax 13 Jun 953	2
9th	8 Ik 0 Pop 15 Dec 953		5
10th		6 Ik 0 Yax 13 Jun 954	3
11th	9 Manik 0 Pop 15 Dec 954		6
12th		7 Manik 0 Yax 13 Jun 955	4
13th	10 Eb 0 Pop 15 Dec 955		7
14th		8 Eb 0 Yax 12 Jun 956	5
15th	11 Caban 0 Pop 14 Dec 956		8
16th		9 Caban 0 Yax 12 Jun 957	6
17th	--		--
18th		10 Ik 0 Yax 12 Jun 958	7
19th	--		--
20th		11 Manik 0 Yax 12 Jun 959	8
21st	--		--
22nd		--	--

Table 2. Dates of New Year and Half Year falling in the 8-day interval associated with the second picture on page 68a of the Dresden Codex.

Mult.	New Year	Half Year	Day in interval
Orig.		2 Ik 0 Yax 14 Jun 950	5
2nd	5 Manik 0 Pop 16 Dec 950		8
3rd		3 Manik 0 Yax 14 Jun 951	6
4th	6 Eb 0 Pop 16 Dec 951		9
5th		4 Eb 0 Yax 13 Jun 952	7
6th	7 Caban 0 Pop 15 Dec 952		10
7th		5 Caban 0 Yax 13 Jun 953	8
8th	8 Ik 0 Pop 15 Dec 953		11
9th		6 Ik 0 Yax 13 Jun 954	9
10th	--		--
11th		7 Manik 0 Yax 13 Jun 955	10
12th	--		--
13th		8 Eb 0 Yax 12 Jun 956	11
14th	--		--
15th		--	--

Table 3. Dates of New Year and Half Year falling in the 11-day interval associated with the third picture on page 65b of the Dresden Codex.

user to a given day *name*, an interval of 13 to the same coefficient) or a lucky or unlucky day for planting, burning milpa, fishing, hunting, etc. If almanacs have been altered to record lucky and unlucky days for religious, civic, and other subsistence activities, as indeed the post-conquest and ethnographic sources attest (Thompson

1950:93-96), then we might expect certain days in the 260-day count either to surface or to be suppressed more than others in the almanacs. It turns out that the distribution of day names for all dates in the *tzolkin* arrived at via the intervals in each of the almanacs in the Dresden and Madrid codices are relatively uniform. On the other

hand the distribution of the day names associated with entry dates is decidedly non-uniform.

Another motive for intervallic alteration, perhaps so practical as to escape attention, likely derives from the basic need to save space in a manuscript. Such a consideration might involve reducing the number of intervals and stations by combining two or more of the latter. In the U.S., the conflation of Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays into a single President's Day offers an example. Conversely, an almanac can be expanded by subdividing an interval and consequently adding a station. Examples from the Western calendar include tacking on Boxing Day to Christmas in Britain or 'Pascuetta' (little Easter) to Easter Sunday in Italy. The need to save space is clearly evident in the cognate pair D.21b and M.90d-92d. In the former, three of the four pictures are absent, though the intervallic sequence 7-7-7-5 persists. But there are instances in which pairs of pictures and their content (a single picture/interval) are subdivided. Compare the following sequences:

11 - 7 - 6 - 16 - 8 - 4 .. (D.17b-18b) (Figure 5)
 $\begin{matrix} / & & \backslash \\ 5 & - & 5 & - & 7 & - & 6 & - & 8 & - & 8 & - & 8 & - & 4 \end{matrix}$ (M.94c-95c)

and

15 - 33 - 4 (D.17c-18c) (Figure 6)
 $\begin{matrix} / & & \backslash \\ 7 & - & 8 & - & 8 & - & 13 & - & 12 & - & 4 \end{matrix}$ (M.93d-94d)

Finally, there exist purely esoteric reasons for contriving intervals. Among these are examples of intervallic mirror symmetry, e.g.,

12-8-12-8-12 (D.10a-12a)

13-26-13 (D.12b)

1-1-3-3-6-6-10-10-6-[6] (M.85a)

20-[12]-20 (M.83b)

13-[39]-13 (M.84b)

(1-2)-5-3-2-11-2 (M.49c: symmetric about 11);

and the slightly aberrant sequence centered on the sixth interval in D.4b-5b:

4-4-4-3-4-3-4-3-6-3-4-4-3-3

To summarize, codical intervals express time spans within which rituals might be conducted. Many of these numbers follow particular numerological rules. Having dealt with what we know of such numbers, we turn next to an inquiry into the properties of intervals, called distance numbers (hereinafter DN), in the monumental inscriptions.

Intervals on Monuments

All dates and DNs discussed in this section were acquired with the kind permission of Martha Macri from the Maya Hieroglyphic Data Base (1991-2012). We begin with a few examples illustrating the general properties of distance numbers in monumental biographical



Figure 5. Cognate almanacs: Dresden Codex, pages 17b-18b (top), and Madrid Codex, pages 94c-95c (bottom), showing intervallic changes (black lines).

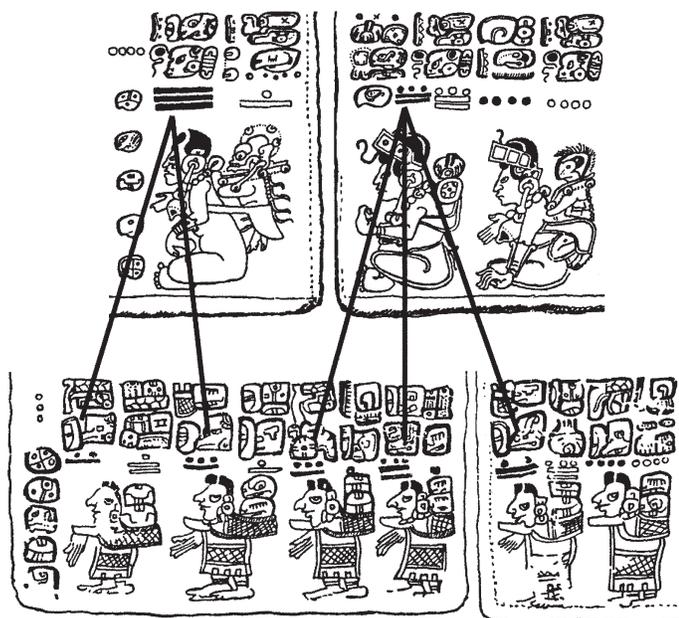


Figure 6. Cognate almanacs: Dresden Codex, pages 17c-18c (top) and Madrid Codex, pages 93d-94d (bottom), showing intervallic changes (black lines).

texts by referring to the life of a woman named Lady Katun (now known as Lady Winikhab Ajaw), known from the inscriptions of Piedras Negras, Guatemala. Her birth is prominently recorded on the back of two monuments, Stela 1 and Stela 3 (both from the terrace of Structure J-4), as well as on the first of a set of four engraved shells recovered from Burial 5 of Structure J-5 (Stuart 1985). Lady Katun was born on 9.12.2.0.16 5 Cib 14 Yaxkin. On Stela 3 (Figure 7), the reference to her birth (at A1-A10) is immediately followed by the distance number, 12.10.0 (at C1-D1), leading to the calendar round of her marriage to Ruler 3 (now known as K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II), 1 Cib 14 Kankin (9.12.14.10.16) (at C2b-C4). In this case, the distance number has two functions: (1) to link the date of her birth to the date of her marriage, and (2) to indicate her age at the time of her marriage as being between twelve and thirteen years old.

The text on the back of Stela 1 (Figure 8) also begins with Lady Katun's birthday (at A1-H1), but the distance number that follows it (at H2-I2) refers to a smaller interval: 12.9.15 versus 12.10.0. This leads to a different event, her betrothal to Ruler 3 on 9 Chuen 9 Kankin (9.12.14.10.11) (at J1-K2). A second distance number of only five days (at J3) (not present on Stela 3) leads from her betrothal to her marriage on 1 Cib 14 Kankin (9.12.14.10.16) (at K3-K4 in Figure 8), the same date that is recorded on Stela 3.

The same three events—the birth, betrothal, and marriage of Lady Katun—are mentioned on a sequence of three incised shells discovered in Burial 5 of Structure

J-5 (Figure 9), perhaps the tomb of a male ruler of Piedras Negras (see Stuart 1985). This inscription begins with the calendar round of Lady Katun's birth, 5 Cib 14 Yaxkin (at A1-A2). It continues with the distance number 12.9.15 (at C2-D1) which links it to the date of her betrothal on 9 Chuen 9 Kankin (at E2-D3). By analogy with Stela 1, we would expect the next distance number to be five days and the date following it to be 1 Cib 14 Kankin, but neither expectation is realized. Instead, the next distance number is *six* days (at H1) and the calendar round reached by the addition of six days to 9 Chuen 9 Kankin is 2 *Caban* 15 Kankin (at I1-H2), *one day later* than the marriage date inscribed on Stela 3 and Stela 1.

The one-day discrepancy in these dates suggests that the wedding took place over a two-day period. Lady Katun's marriage is also attributed to 2 *Caban* 15 Kankin on the front of Stela 8, suggesting that the choice of that date on the shells was no accident. The epigraphic record contains two references to 1 Cib 14 Kankin (on Stelae 1 and 3) and two references to 2 *Caban* 15 Kankin (on the Burial 5 shells and Stela 8) as the dates of the wedding.

We have considered the records of Lady Katun's birth, betrothal, and marriage in some detail in order to make the point that the length of intervals between events apparently had no symbolic significance. The interval between Lady Katun's birth and marriage on Stela 3 was easily split into two smaller intervals to accommodate her betrothal on Stela 1, and the distance between her betrothal and her marriage could be either five or six days. Neither five nor six seems to have been a sacred number. The length of intervals was easily adjusted to fit the historical circumstances.

The inscriptions on Stelae 1, 3, and 8 have a repeating calendrical structure, beginning with an initial series date and a calendar round permutation, followed by distance numbers leading to the next calendar round permutation in the chronological sequence, followed by another distance number, another calendar round permutation, and so on until the completion of a *katun* or quarter-*katun* (or *hotun*) at the end of the text:

$$IS - CR_1 - Event_1 - DN_1 - CR_2 - Event_2 - DN_2 - CR_3 - Event_3 \dots DN_{n-1} - CR_n - PE$$

In this structure, every calendar round permutation is linked to the next calendar round permutation by a distance number representing the interval between them. This is the same structure that one finds in the codices, except that there the dates flanking the distance numbers are expressed in terms of the *tzolkin* alone, without mentioning the *haab* portion of the calendar round.

Not all monuments at Piedras Negras have such a consistent structure. On Stela 36, for example, there are three dates, but only one distance number (Figure 10). The order of elements is as follows:

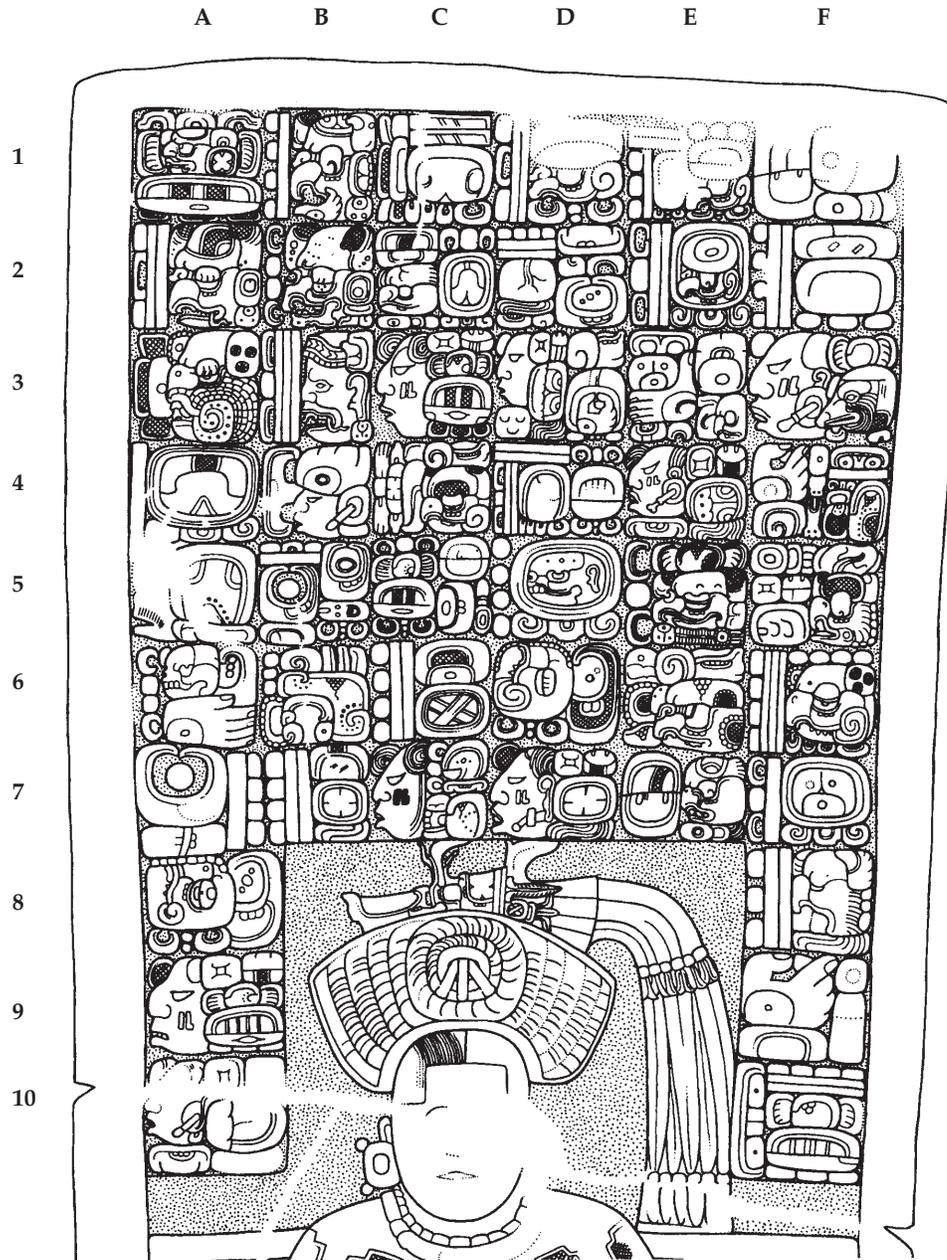


Figure 7. The text on the back of Stela 3, Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart (after Stuart and Graham 2003:26).

IS – CR₁ – Event₁ – DN₁ – CR₂ – Event₂ – CR₃ – PE

The initial series date and its calendar round permutation are 9.10.6.5.9 8 Muluc 2 Zip (at A1-B4 and A8). The distance number is 2.1.13.19 (at C3-D3). It is followed by the calendar round permutation, 6 Imix 19 Zodz (at C4-D4) that refers to the birth of Ruler 2 on 9.9.13.4.1, a date that preceded his accession by thirteen *tuns*, one *uinal*, and eight *kins*, an interval that is not mentioned on Stela 36. The stated distance number links the date

of Ruler 2's birth to the calendar round, 4 Ahau 13 Mol (at D7-C8 in Figure 10), which corresponds to the *hotun* ending on 9.11.15.0.0. In other words, the distance number *precedes* both of the dates that it links, rather than lying between them. This is quite different from the temporal structure of Stelae 1, 3, and 8, where all dates are linked by distance numbers, and the distance numbers lie between the dates that they link. Another difference is that the second date precedes the initial series date in

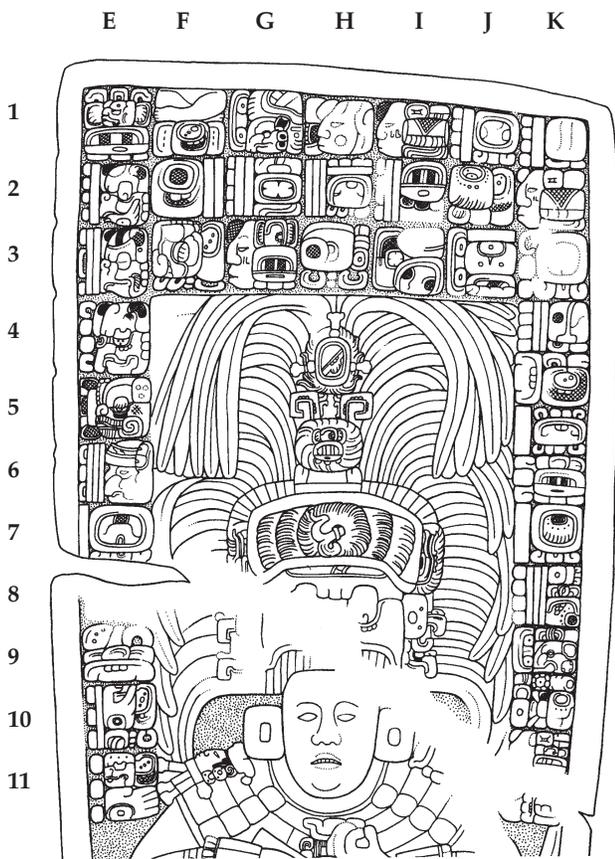


Figure 8. The text on the back of Stela 1, Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart (after Stuart and Graham 2003:18).

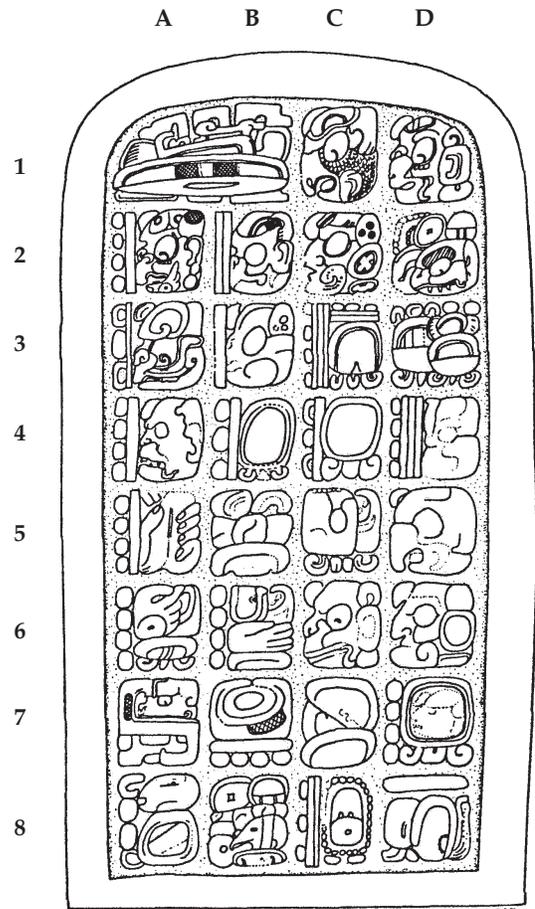


Figure 10. The text on Stela 36, Piedras Negras. Drawing by William Ringle.

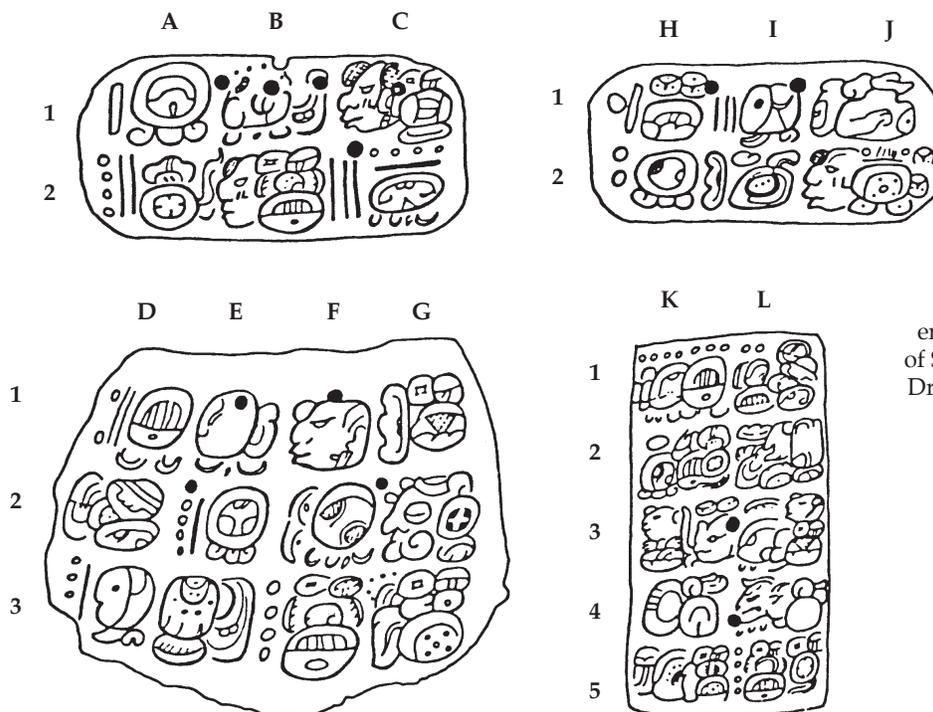


Figure 9. The text on four engraved shells from Burial 5 of Structure J-5, Piedras Negras. Drawing by Linda Schele (after Stuart 1985:Figure 1).

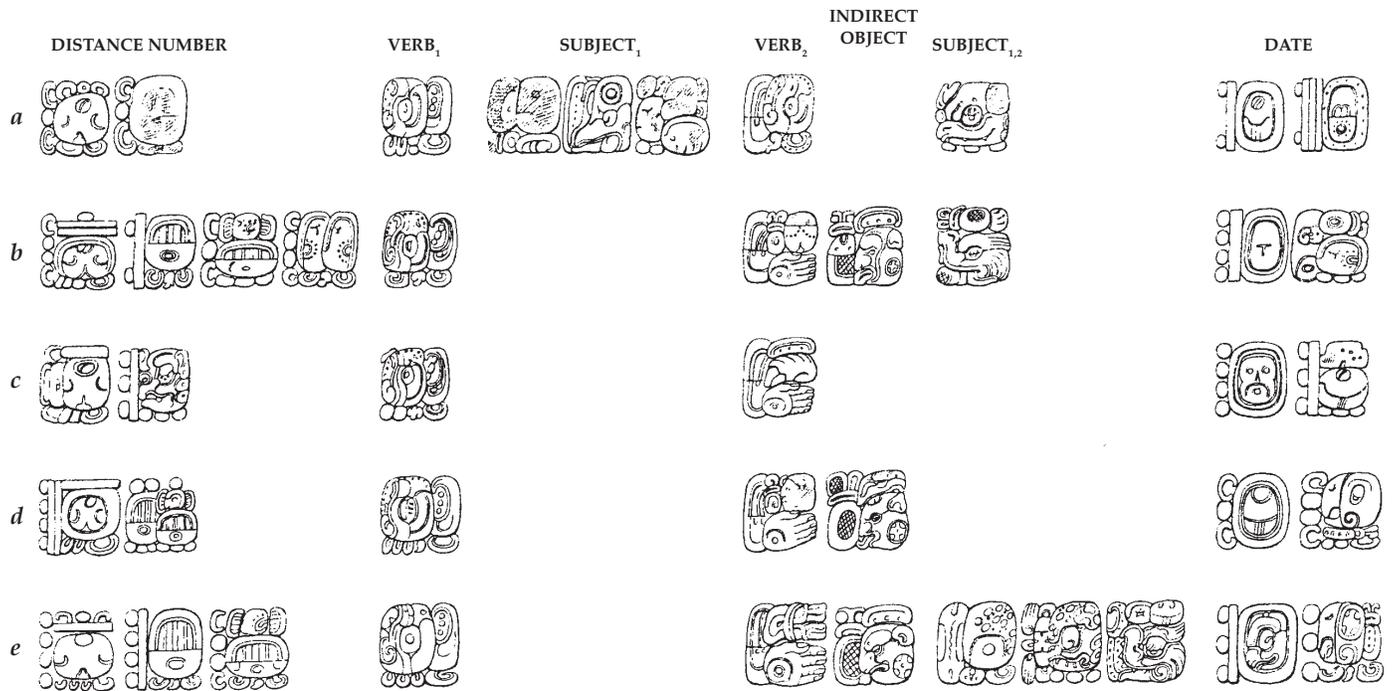


Figure 11. Context of distance numbers on the Cross Tablets at Palenque: a) Pal. Cross, U6-T11; b) Pal. Cross, E5-F9; c) Pal. Cross, D1-C4; d) Pal. Cross, P6-P9; e) Pal. Fol, M17-O5. After V. Bricker (1986:174, fig. 207).

time, instead of following it. Such “flashbacks” are rare in monumental inscriptions and do not occur at all in codical texts, but they are common in Maya oral narratives today.

Yaxchilan has relatively few distance numbers because, on many monuments, the hieroglyphic texts mention a single event. The texts that refer to multiple events and the intervals that separate them have the same calendrical structure as Stelae 1, 3, and 8 at Piedras Negras, with the distance numbers lying *between* the dates linked by them, and this is the dominant pattern in monumental texts throughout the Maya area. At Palenque, however, a variant of the pattern we have documented for Stela 36 at Piedras Negras, where the distance number *precedes* the two dates and events linked by them, is common on the large wall panels in the Temples of the Cross and Foliated Cross, except that only the second of the two events is accompanied by a calendar round permutation, which *follows* the reference to the second event, instead of immediately preceding it (Figure 11).

$$\text{DN} - \text{Event}_1 - \text{Event}_2 - \text{CR}_2$$

These examples suggest that scribal traditions varied from site to site (and probably also from epoch to epoch within a site), and it is not possible to identify a structure for the placement of distance numbers relative to the dates and events to which they refer that would

accurately characterize the texts in the entire region. What we have established is that there is more variation in the relationship between dates and distance numbers on the monuments than there is in the codices. The only constant seems to be that the dates that were connected by the distance numbers were of greater significance than the intervals represented by the distance numbers, which is consistent with the historical nature of the texts where they were found.

We turn next to the question of whether some DNs on monuments might have been contrived for reasons not related to historical events. This question was addressed only briefly by Lounsbury (1978:807). Lounsbury notes that the *tzolkin* entry in the initial date of Palenque’s Tablet of the Cross, 12.19.13.4.0 8 Ahau 18 Tzec, distant by 6.14.0 prior to the end of the previous 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ahau 8 Cumku, is also found in the recorded date, on several other monuments, of the birth of K’inich Janab Pakal I on 9.8.9.13.0 8 Ahau 13 Pop. Now the interval from a day 6.14.0 before 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ahau 8 Cumku is 9.8.16.9.0, or 1,359,540 days. This is decomposable into prime factors $2^2 \times 3^3 \times 5 \times 7 \times 13 \times 83$, and is a whole multiple of a number of well-known calendrical cycles. Lounsbury believed it to be a contrived number. Additionally the old era 12.19.13.4.0 date is declared the birth date of an ancestral deity to K’inich Janab Pakal I. It bears a likeness-in-kind to the king’s 9.8.9.13.0 birth date. Since one’s destiny is determined by the birth date

the contrivance of the synchronic 8 Ahau days suggests that the initial date of the temple “provides a calendrical and numerological charter attesting to the legitimacy of the position of the ruler and of the dynasty that he founded” (Lounsbury 1978:807).

We propose to test the hypothesis that at least some monumental DNs might have been contrived. Our data base consists of inscriptions from three sites for which relatively complete and abundant chronological data bases are extant: Palenque, Yaxchilan, and Piedras Negras. For each of these we looked at DNs between rituals and DNs reckoned from katun-ending dates.

Important events that are not controllable include births and deaths (though it is conceivable that dates applied to them may have been contrived). Those dates that are controllable might include accessions, x-tun anniversaries of events, betrothals, captures, etc. We listed DNs separating rituals and DNs reckoned from katun-entry dates, paying special attention to DNs less than 360 days as well as larger DNs, excluding even multiples of *tuns* and *katuns* as well as period endings and birth/death anniversaries. Our basic goal was to learn how one might have adjusted DNs dictated by historical circumstances to accommodate numerological patterns.

We tested the Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan DNs for commensuration with periodic astronomical and non-astronomical cycles by dividing each of them by significant Maya calendrical cycles: 365 (the vague year), 13, 20, 29.53059 (the lunar synodic period), 177 (the six lunar synodic month period), 365.2422 (the tropical year), 584 (the Venus cycle), 780 (the Mars cycle), 117 (the approximate Mercury synodic period, also 9×13), and 18980 (the Calendar Round). A single number, 13429, in a biographical text of Yaxchilan ruler Shield Jaguar I (now known as Itzamnaaj Bahlam III), connecting two death events, turned out to be commensurate with the Venus cycle, thus:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Yaxchilan Lintel 27, E1-F1: } 13429 &= 23 \times \\ &584^d - 3^d = 23 \times 583.92^d - 1^d \end{aligned}$$

Because no other dates in the sample of 55 yielded a positive result, this result may be coincidental.

Palenque offers a substantial record of monumental inscriptions that can be used to test the hypothesis of contrivance, though, unlike the Piedras Negras inscriptions, many of the DNs are disconnected from chronological dates. While it would be a monumental task, fraught with uncertainties, to undertake an analysis of the precise role of intercallic sequences in the expression of dynastic history at all Maya sites, as we have attempted for the modest, chronologically well organized data bases from Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan, the data from Palenque, a much larger corpus, does offer some possibility for exploring the nature of monumental DNs.

To begin with it is interesting to note (cf. Table 4) that nearly half the DNs are less than 1000 days (about 2.7 years) and that the percentages drop off significantly after one Calendar Round. Palenque seems to exhibit a penchant for ultra-long DNs, which may imply a more significant effort on the part of the dynasts to embed their roots in deep or “mythic” time. We isolated 120 of 138 DNs in the Macri data base. Of these, 27 are longer than two *katuns*, which begins to approach the length of a lifetime of a typical ruler (Proskouriakoff 1960:461); ten DNs exceed five *katuns* (about a century). The longest is 1.25 million years (TIW F9-E12), and the second longest, which follows it at G4-H5, is 4172 years. The longest number, 7.18.2.9.2.12.1, may have been contrived to be commensurate with the Palenque lunar count of 6.11.12 = 2392 days = 81 lunar synodic months - 0.222 days. Thus, treating bundles of 81 moons canonically, one could fit 190,382 of them into 7.18.2.9.2.12.1 with .0071 of a bundle (17 days) left over.

DN Duration	% of DNs (YAX, PN)	% of DNs (PAL)
0-1000	48	48
1000-10,000	32	22
10,000-20,000 (50 years = 18250d) (1 CR = 18980)	13	13
20,000-40,000 (100 years = 36520d)	3	7
40,000-400,000 (1000 yrs = 365200d)	5	7
>400,000	0	4

Table 4. Distribution in duration of Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras, and Palenque Distance Numbers.

Location	Earlier Event	Later Event	DN	DAYS
B13	Mythic Event (819 dc)	Birth Muwan Mat	20	20
P15	PE	Birth 'Casper'	6.3	123
U6-7	Birth Ahkal Mo' Nahb II	Birth Kan Bahlam I	1.1.1	381
K7-8	Birth K'inich Janab Pakal I	Fall of (?)	1.8.17	537
D5-C6	PE	GI Descent (mythic)	1.9.2	542
O2-3	----	Accession of (?)	6.11.6	2386
D1-C2	Birth HSNB (mythic)	PE	8.5.0	2980
P12-Q12	Birth 'Casper'	PE	13.3.9	4749
P6-Q6	Birth K'uk' Bahlam I	Acc. K'uk' Bahlam I	1.2.5.14	8034
F15-16	Birth 'Uk'ix Chan'	Acc. 'Uk'ix Chan'	1.6.7.13	9513
R3-4	Birth Butz'aj Sak Chik	Acc. Butz'aj Sak Chik	1.8.1.18	10118
R8-9	Acc. Butz'aj Sak Chik	Birth Ahkal Mo' Nahb I	1.16.7.17	13117
S13-14	Birth K'an Joy Chitam I	Acc. K'an Joy Chitam I	1.19.6.16	14176
T1-2	Birth Ahkal Mo' Nahb II	Acc. Ahkal Mo' Nahb II	2.2.4.17	15217
U11-12	Birth Kan Bahlam I	Acc. Kan Bahlam I	2.8.4.7	17367
D13-C15	Sky Hearth Event (myth)	GI arrives (myth)	1.18.3.12.0	274920
E5-F6	----	Birth Muwan Mat (myth)	2.1.7.11.2	297942
E10-F11	Acc. of Sak (mythic)	Birth 'Uk'ix Chan' (myth)	3.6.10.12.2	479042

Table 5. Distance Numbers in the text of the Tablet of the Cross, Palenque. (PE = period ending.)

The relatively complete text from the Tablet of the Cross (hereinafter TC) (Table 5) offers a closer look at the general nature of Palenque distance numbers. The TC text breaks down into two Long Count segments:

- a) 12.19.0.0.0 (of the previous epoch) to 5.7.0.0.0 (the "mythic time" framework), which consists of seven DNs, of which four are extremely large.
- b) 8.18.0.0.0 to 9.12.0.0.0 is a "real time" set, consisting of eleven DNs ranging in length from a little over one year to 47 years, with an additional 123-year interval (rounded off); that is, almost all the TC DNs lie within the range of a human lifetime, as one would anticipate in a historical document.

Applying the aforementioned test we found, once again, that few of the TC DNs could be broken down into whole multiples of cycles of known significance. This even includes the DN on the Museo Amparo Censer Stand (D9-D10) 5.3.6 = 1866^d, which is associated with an inscription that purports to link a historical event to the "count of the Venus/star year."

Given the sheer number of DNs we have considered it is difficult to reach any conclusion other than that the DNs on the monuments, except for the possibility of a rare exception or two, are *not* contrived, or at least if they are, the means of contrivance are not known to us. The extra-historical numbers, unless totally made up, may have been fabricated to arrive at anniversaries of dates of historical significance of which we are not aware. Four exceptions are worth noting:

K'an Tok Tablet, pJ12: $17.15 = 355^d - 12 \times 29^d.53059 - 0^d.6$; (lunar)

Palace Tablet, M6-N6: $18.6.15 = 6615^d = 224 \times 29^d.53059 + 0.1$ days (this is one month in excess of the saros eclipse cycle)

Temple 18 stucco glyph #499: $8.17 = 177^d = 6 \times 29.53059 + 0.2$ days (one lunar semester)

Tablet of the Cross Incensario 2, A1-A2:
 $2.16.14.9 = 20449^d = 35 \times 584^d + 9^d$ (one Venus synodic cycle)

The small DNs, because they are closer in magnitude to the intervals one finds in the codices, are worth analyzing separately. Because there is a break in the distribution of monumental DNs between 425 and 500 days, and because the frequency of occurrence of DN values thins out as they increase in magnitude (35% of the sample are less than 425 days while only 13% range between 425 days and 1000 days), we decided to examine for contrivance all the numbers below 425 in the sample. This includes 33 DNs in the Palenque sample (15 from the Temple of the Inscriptions), 11 from Piedras Negras, and three from Yaxchilan. Among the Palenque numbers are 177 (T18, S499) and 355 (K'an Tok Tablet, pJ12), one and two lunar semesters respectively. Interestingly the lowest DN is 28 (Tablet of the Inscriptions, S4), which is one day shy of a lunar synodic month; so the moon cycle may have been a significant factor. Also represented are 365 (Palace Tablet, B18-B19) and 260 (Temple 17, Tablet I1). The number 273, which is $3 \times 91 = 13 \times 3 \times 7$, appears twice (Palace North Gallery jamb panel fragment #54 and Temple 18 stucco glyph #412). Whole number division of the Palenque DNs by 13 and 30 does not rise above the level of what one would anticipate due to chance in the sample. Odd and even DNs are equally represented. There is nothing of perceived significance to report on the relatively small samples from Piedras Negras (11) and Yaxchilan (3), which are incomplete. Additionally, we found a scattering of multiples of 260 and 365 days.

To summarize, while there may be some monumental DNs that were contrived to conform to calendrical/astronomical cycles, none of them reflect the sort of patterned contrivance exhibited by codical intervals. Thus, we reach the conclusion that at least on a statistical basis, the intervals that appear in the codices and those that occur in the monumental inscriptions (so-called distance numbers) serve entirely different purposes.

Acknowledgments

We are indebted to Martha Macri for generously supplying us with information from her data base and to Kayla Sutherland for assistance with data compilation.

References

- Aveni, Anthony
 2006 *Maya Calendars and Dates: Interpreting the Calendrical Structure of Maya Almanacs*. In *The Madrid Codex: New Approaches to Understanding an Ancient Maya Manuscript*, edited by Gabrielle Vail and Anthony Aveni, pp. 147-170. University Press of Colorado, Boulder.
- 2011 *Maya Numerology*. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 21(2):187-216.
- Bricker, Harvey, and Victoria Bricker
 2011 *Astronomy in the Maya Codices*. *Memoirs* 65. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
- Macri, Martha, and Mathew Looper
 1991-2012 *Maya Hieroglyphic Data Base, Beta Version*, available at the Native American Language Center, Department of Native American Studies, University of California, Davis.
- Proskouriakoff, Tatiana
 1960 *Historical Implications of a Pattern of Dates at Piedras Negras, Guatemala*. *American Antiquity* 25:454-475.
- Stuart, David, and Ian Graham
 2003 *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions* 9(1): *Piedras Negras*. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
- Stuart, David
 1985 *The Inscription on Four Shell Plaques from Piedras Negras*. In *Fourth Palenque Round Table, 1980*, edited by Elizabeth P. Benson, pp. 175-183. Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute, San Francisco.
- Thompson, J. Eric S.
 1950 *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: Introduction*. Publication 589. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.
- Villacorta C., J. Antonio, and Carlos A. Villacorta
 1976 *Códices Mayas*. 2nd ed. Tipografía Nacional, Guatemala.