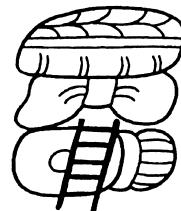


Glyph Dwellers is an occasional publication of the Maya Hieroglyphic Database Project, at the University of California, Davis. Its purpose is to make available recent discoveries about ancient Maya culture, history, iconography, and Mayan historical linguistics deriving from the project. Funding for the Maya Hieroglyphic Database Project is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, grants #RT21365-92, RT21608-94, PA22844-96, the National Science Foundation, #SBR9710961, and the Department of Native American Studies, University of California, Davis. Links to Glyph Dwellers from other sites are welcome.

© 2005 Martha J. Macri & Matthew G. Looper. All rights reserved. Written material and artwork appearing in these reports may not be republished or duplicated for profit. Citation of more than one paragraph requires written permission of the publisher. No copies of this work may be distributed electronically, in whole or in part, without express written permission from the publisher.

ISSN 1097-3737

Glyph Dwellers



Report 19

June 2005

A Possible Alternative Way of Expressing Month Names in Maya Writing

DAVID F. MORA-MARÍN
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL

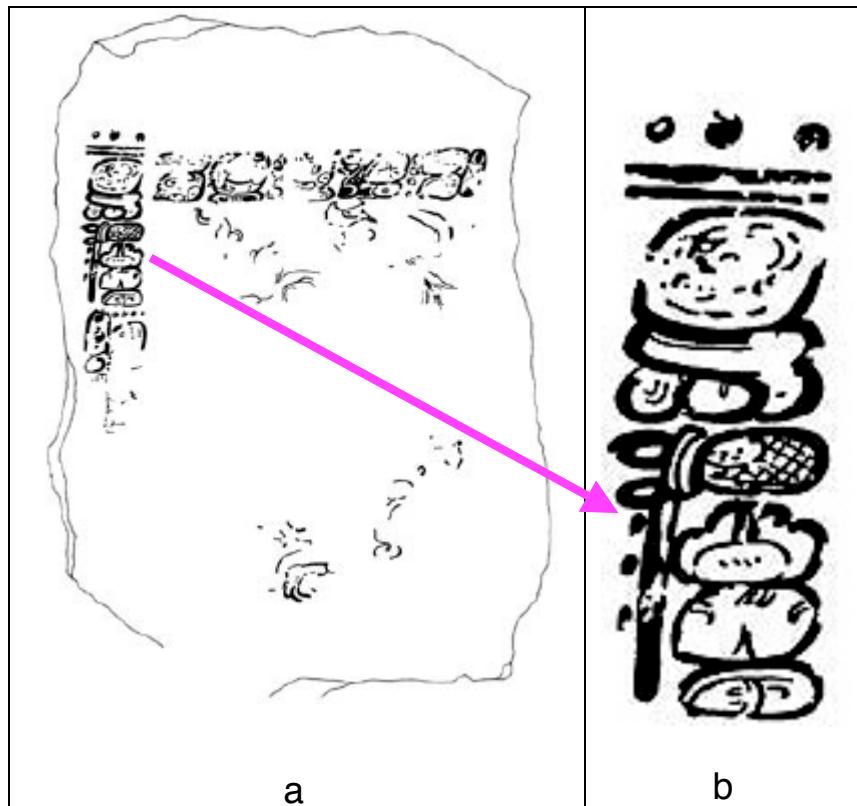


Figure 1. Ek' Balam Vault Cover 18.

Drawing by Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo (Lacadena 2002)

This short note raises the possibility that Maya scribes may have had an alternative way of expressing month counts using an ordinal sequence of ‘months’ rather than the typical sequence of month names. The evidence for this suggestion comes from a single example, but the possibility should nevertheless be entertained seriously, given the parallel Tzeltalan evidence cited below. The example is found on Ek' B'alam Vault Cover 18 (Fig. 1a).

Lacadena (2002) reads the calendar round shown in Fig. 1b as follows: XI CHUWEN **tu** [IX] **YAX WINIK-ki** for *11 Chuwen, tu['] 9 Ya'ax winik* ‘(On) 11 Chuwen, on the ninth of the month Ya'ax’. Lacadena dates this to 9.18.3.15.11. However, it is possible to read the second part, the one pertaining to the month count, differently. The YAX glyph could be referring here to *yäx* ‘first’, and thus it could be modifying *winik(-il)* ‘month’, rendering *yäx winik(-il)* ‘first month’. This could be a conventional alternative way of referring to the first month, Pop. If so, what is being expressed could be in essence 9 Pop. Taking the time span for the Ek' Balam vaults (CE 775–841) as a rough time frame, 11 Chuwen 9 Pop would then result in the following possible set of dates:

Table 1.

09.16.14.17.11	CE 766
09.19.07.12.11	CE 818
10.02.00.07.11	CE 870

This is only a possibility, but one that makes sense in light of the Tzotzil names for the first four months (Thompson 1960[1950]:106; Fox and Justeson 1984:43): <Hum Uinicil> ‘first month’, <Xchibal Uinicil> ‘second month’, <Yoxchibal Uinicil> ‘third month’, and <Xcahnibal Uinicil> ‘fourth month’. It is therefore possible that *yäx winik(-il)* could, in fact, be ‘first month’.

REFERENCES

- Fox, James A., and John S. Justeson
1984 Polyvalence in Mayan hieroglyphic writing. In *Phoneticism in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing*, edited by John S. Justeson and Lyle Campbell, pp. 17–76. Albany, New York: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies.
- Lacadena, Alfonso Gallo-García
2002 *The Glyptic Corpus from Ek' Balam, Yucatán, México*. Final FAMSI Report <www.famsi.org/reports/01057es/index.html>.
- Thompson, J. Eric. S.
1960[1950]. *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: An Introduction*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.