

B'en

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B'en

Thirteenth of the twenty. Yucatec **B'en**; K'iche' **Aj**. The Classic main sign shows vertical elements with bound or knotted tops, described in the epigraphic literature as bundled reeds or as thatch — the material a roof and a wall are made of. The Aztec cognate is **Acatl**, reed, which supports the reading. The K'iche' *Aj* means cane or the standing cornstalk, and by extension the household that the cane encloses and the staff of office cut from it. The site's tooltip gives it as **the green reed of the household**. Direction east, colour red.

Religion and daykeeping

In **living highland practice**, Aj is the home. Ethnographic accounts and Guatemalan Maya organisations describe it as the day of the household and of children — for the roof over a family, for the wellbeing of the people under it, and for the authority a person holds inside it. It is also the day of the *vara*, the staff or bundle that marks a ceremonial office in highland communities; carrying the cane and carrying the household are the same idea seen at two scales. An *ajq'ij* born on Aj is spoken of as a householder in temperament, protective, with a strong sense of what belongs to whom, and sometimes as too closely bound to the family to see past it. Petitions for a house, for children and for the settling of a domestic difficulty are common on it. The particulars are taught inside the initiation lineage and are not written down here.

B'en belongs to one of the three attested **year-bearer** sets — Ak'b'al, Lamat, B'en, Etz'nab' — the four names on which a Haab' year could begin, necessarily five apart because 365 leaves five on division by twenty. Landa's Yucatec set was K'an, Muluk, Ix, Kawak; the Guatemalan highlands today use Ik', Manik', Eb', Kab'an, called the *Mam*. Which set a community used varies with place and period.

In the **Classic and Postclassic record**, the reed and the growing maize stalk sit inside the largest single image complex in Maya art: the Maize God, who dies, goes under, and is raised again by his sons. That narrative is painted on more Classic vessels than any other. The **Madrid Codex**, almost entirely 260-day working almanacs, gives extended space to agriculture — sowing, burning, the maize cycle — and the **Dresden Codex** distributes its day stations among gods and auguries in the same structure. The colonial **Books of Chilam Balam** carry short auguries and associated occupations for each of the twenty days.

Three source layers are in play on this page and they should not be blended: what the Classic inscriptions demonstrably say, what the colonial-era manuscripts record after a century of Spanish rule, and what daykeepers hold now. Agreement between them is meaningful; assuming it is not.

The Zapotec *piyè* and the Mixtec codices hold the same position, conventionally glossed Reed.

Key dates

Date	Event
c. 600–500 BCE (<i>contested</i>)	Earliest 260-day count glyphs, Oaxaca — San José Mogote and Monte Albán. Zapotec, not Maya.
36 / 32 BCE	Chiapa de Corzo Stela 2 and Tres Zapotes Stela C, the earliest dated Long Counts. Both partly reconstructed.
c. 250–900 CE	Classic period: the Maize God cycle on painted pottery; day signs in cartouches on the monuments.
11th–12th c. CE (<i>debated</i>)	The surviving Dresden Codex copy, with its 260-day almanacs.
1562 / 1566	Landa burns the books at Maní, then records the twenty day names in his <i>Relación</i> .
1905–1935	The Goodman–Martínez–Thompson correlation, constant 584283. Mainstream, not unanimous.
11 Aug 3114 BCE	Long Count zero under GMT 584283 (6 Sep 3114 BCE Julian); the 584285 variant gives 13 August.
21 Dec 2012	13.0.0.0.0, 4 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in — the anchor this site counts from.
1995 / 1996	Guatemala's Peace Accords recognise Maya spirituality and access to sacred places.

In the count

B'en returns **every twenty days**, its coefficient advancing by seven at each return because twenty leaves seven on division by thirteen: 7, 1, 8, 2, 9, 3, 10, 4, 11, 5, 12, 6, 13. Thirteen appearances take **260 days**.

Upcoming in 2026, on the site's GMT anchor: **23 August (5 B'en)**, **12 September (12 B'en)**, **2 October (6 B'en)**.

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- [Maya Tzolk'in](#) — the system, the count, and what it is not.
- [Eb'](#) — the day before.
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