

Chikchan

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Chikchan

Fifth of the twenty. Yucatec **Chikchan**; K'iche' **Kan**. The Classic sign is usually a head variant carrying the distinctive serpent marking on the cheek — a scale element that identifies snakes wherever it appears in the script — and the name is transparently the serpent in the highland form. The site's tooltip gives it as **the celestial serpent**. Direction east, colour red.

Snakes in Maya art are rarely just snakes. The serpent is the conduit: ancestors and gods emerge from the mouths of vision serpents on Classic lintels, and the sky itself is figured as a two-headed serpent bar carried across a ruler's chest. Chikchan sits in that complex.

Religion and daykeeping

In **contemporary highland practice**, Kan is life-force in the body. Ethnographic accounts and Guatemalan Maya organisations describe it as the day of vitality, of spiritual strength, and of justice in the sense of a force that straightens what is bent. Its most specific association is with the *coyopa* — the "lightning in the blood", the small involuntary movements an *ajq'ij* feels while counting seeds, which are attended to as part of the answer. A daykeeper born on Kan is spoken of as having that sensitivity strongly, and as carrying an intensity that has to be governed. Petitions on this day commonly concern health, potency and the resolution of a wrong. The working detail belongs to the apprenticeship, not to a public page, and emphasis differs between communities.

Among the **Ch'orti' Maya** of eastern Guatemala, ethnographers of the mid-twentieth century recorded belief in the *chicchans* — great serpents living in springs and hills whose movements bring rain and earthquake. That is a Maya group in a different language keeping a serpent complex under a cognate name, which is the sort of convergence that makes a reading more secure than any single source could.

In the **Classic and Postclassic record**, the feathered serpent is a Mesoamerica-wide figure. In the **Popol Vuh**, **Q'uq'umatz** — Sovereign Plumed Serpent — is one of the makers present in the water at the beginning, who speaks the earth into existence alongside Heart of Sky. The **Dresden Codex** almanacs distribute their 260 days among gods and auguries; the **Madrid Codex**, dominated by working almanacs, includes hunting and agricultural sequences where serpents appear as omen and as prey. The colonial **Books of Chilam Balam** preserve day lists with short auguries. Classic epigraphy, colonial ethnohistory and living daykeeping are three separate sources and should be weighed separately.

The Aztec cognate is **Coatl**, serpent, whose patron is Chalchiuhtlicue. The Zapotec *piyè* and the Mixtec codices hold the same position, conventionally glossed Serpent.

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: vision serpents and serpent bars on lintels and stelae; day signs in cartouches.
11th–12th c. CE (<i>debated</i>)	The surviving Dresden Codex copy, with its 260-day almanacs.
c. 1554–1558	The <i>Popol Vuh</i> is written down in K'iche', naming Q'uq'umatz among the makers.
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

Chikchan returns **every twenty days**. Its coefficient advances by seven each return — twenty modulo thirteen is seven — so it runs 7, 1, 8, 2, 9, 3, 10, 4, 11, 5, 12, 6, 13 through all thirteen numbers in thirteen appearances, which is **260 days**.

Upcoming in 2026, on the site's GMT anchor: **15 August (10 Chikchan)**, **4 September (4 Chikchan)**, **24 September (11 Chikchan)**.

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