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TRADITIONS OF GUATEMALA



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Guatemala, Central America. University Press.

CALENDAR OF JOYABAJ*

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Among the indigenous people, very few currently possess knowledge of the science of their ancestors; the majority are immersed in ignorance, both regarding their own native civilization and the one imposed by the conquerors.

Such is the case with the calendar here in Joyabaj, as only the sorcerers (*ajitz*) and the diviners (*ajij*) possess knowledge of it, due to special circumstances, since they use it to carry out **costumbres** (traditional rituals), as these rites are commonly called. The diviner, in his practices, aims exclusively to do good, unlike the sorcerer, whose inclination is to do harm. The former worships the sun and the moon as gods (*K'tä Ij* and *Kchú Ic*: Father Sun and Mother Moon). He holds beliefs related to owls, the barn owl, the wildcat, and the *pich* (a bird named after its call, which is an onomatopoeic sound), because they

* **Joyabaj**: Municipality in the department of Quiché. Approximately 304 km² and 25,000 inhabitants. Its original name is *Xolabaj* (from *xol*, between, and *abaj*, stone): *between the stones*.

are believed to foretell illness and, at times, even death. It is believed that when a *xara* (bird) lands on a tree in the yard, it is a sign that a friend will soon visit, just like when the fire makes noise. When a dog digs the earth, it means that someone is going to die, and it becomes necessary to consult the diviner so that he may perform the test and determine who the victim will be, and to counteract the effect. When performing the test, the diviner states that animals are messengers who announce what is going to happen due to the **rituals** the sorcerers are performing in the hills on behalf of enemies who want to do harm, for which they burn *tolpol*. As a result of this harm, a husband may have difficulties with his wife, his *chucho* (dog) may die, or his hen, his *coch* (pig), or even a relative might die. The test is performed by the diviner at his home, in the presence of the person making the inquiry. The materials consist of 60 *pito* seeds (*Ubá tzitë*); he places them in groups of four, forming 15 groups. With these red "little beans," as they are also called, arranged in this way, the diviner begins to recite the days of the month, which are twenty, according to the calendar.

Before beginning the test, he asks for the name of the person concerned, who must be present, and tells them what they must do during the ritual, depending on whether the person is male or female. He requires the person to confess and makes them acknowledge all the wrong they have done in order to purify their soul. They drink *aguardiente* (a type of strong liquor) to please the gods of the mountains, the air, the ravines, the roads, etc. He affirms that midnight has its guards (*gendarmes*), who manifest through noises or visions (*apparitions*).

The test can be done on any day and at any time, and once is enough. In this ritual, the diviner invokes nature in the following way: "**Rech ebek itzel rajauxic chi kpe lar miul, lar sutz, lar teu, lar cki, lar chmil, lar coprcán, las muj, lar caj, lar ij, las ic, lar beyá, lar já, lar suan, las jop, lar mesmul, lar sacguach, lar räxap, lar xmún, lar jip Chixilic, Ixtelom, Chojlónikij, Uxip Cruz, Chi Aj, Puitzil, Choxil, Pxtup, Chosabic, Chotuij, Chuikimkij. Rajauxic chi kpé ingiel choop chapchä guch,**

mzät, imul y ingiel tziquin." Translated into English, it expresses the following: *"In order for the evil to go away, the mist must come, the clouds, the cold, the wind, the stars, the tremors, the shadows, the sky, the sun, the moon, the ravines, the rivers, the cliffs, the drizzle, the hail, the dew, the hurricanes, the mountains (places in Joyabaj, such as: Chixilik, place of the chile cricket), the cutete (a lizard-like reptile), the place of the staff, over the cricket, the place of the cricket, the place of the quejque, the place for laying down, the place of the temascal (traditional steam bath), the place of the horse's pasture. It is necessary for all the animals to come, like the tacuazín (opossum), the deer, the rabbit, and all the birds."*

The first 20 days make up the first month of the year; they form the foundation, as they are the elements used to build the subsequent months through a series of combinations until completing the year, which, according to this calendar, consists of thirteen (13) months of 20 days each, since the new year begins with the first day, known as **Jun Batz'**.

This calendar is made up of terms from various dialects, many of which are shared, indicating that it originates from a common ancestral language, such as Maya-K'iche'. This phenomenon can also be observed in the Romance languages.

CALENDAR

FIRST MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Jun Batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Kiep e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Uxip aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Kijap</i>
5th day.....	<i>Jop Tziquin</i>
6th day.....	<i>Guaquip ajmak</i>
7th day.....	<i>Ucup noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Guaxquip tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Veljep Kaguc</i>

10th day.....	<i>Ljuj ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Junluj imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Capluj í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Oxlujuj abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Jun cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Kiep can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Uxip camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>kijap kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Jop anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Guaquip toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Ucup tz'í</i>

SECOND MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Guaxquip batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Veljep e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Ljuj aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Junluj íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Capluj tziqín</i>
6th day.....	<i>Oxlujuj ajmak</i>
7th day.....	<i>Jun noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Kiep tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Uxip kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Kijap ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Jop imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Guaquip í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Ucup abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Guaxquip cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Veljep can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Ljuj camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Junluj kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Capluj anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Oxlujuj toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Jun tz'í</i>

THIRD MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Kiep batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Uxip e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Kijap aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Jop íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Guaquip tziqúin</i>
6th day.....	<i>Ucup ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Guaxquip noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Veljep tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Ljuj kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Junluj ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Capljuj imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Oxlujuj í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Jun abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Kiep cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Uxip can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Kijap camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Jop kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Guaquip anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Ucup toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Guaquip tz'í</i>

FOURTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Veljep batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Ljuj e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Junluj aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Capljuj íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Oxeljuj tziqúin</i>
6th day.....	<i>Jun ajmak</i>
7th day.....	<i>Kiep noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Uxip tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Kijap kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Jop ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Guaquip imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Ucup í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Guaxquip abal</i>

14th day.....	<i>Veljep cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Ljuj can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Junluj camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Capluj kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Oxeljuj anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Jun toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Kiep tz'í</i>

FIFTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Uxip batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Kijap e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Jop aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Guaquip ix</i>
5th day.....	<i>Ucup tziqúin</i>
6th day.....	<i>Guaxquip ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Veljep noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Ljuj tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Junluj kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Capluj ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Oxlujuj imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Jun í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Kiep abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Uxip cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Kijap can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Jop camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Guaquip kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Ucup anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Guaxquip toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Veljep tz'í</i>

SIXTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Ljuj batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Junuljuj e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Capluj aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Oxeljuj íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Jun tziqúin</i>
6th day.....	<i>Kiep ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Uxip noj</i>

8th day.....	<i>Kiap tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Jop kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Guaquip ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Ucup imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Guaxquip í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Veljep abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Ljuj cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Junuljuj can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Capljuj camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Oxeljuj kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Jun anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Kiep toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Uxip tz'í</i>

SEVENTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Kiep batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Jop e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Guaquip aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Ucup íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Guaxquip tziqúin</i>
6th day.....	<i>Veljep ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Ljuj noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Junuljuj tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Capljuj kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Oxeljuj ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Jun imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Kiep í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Uxip abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Kiap cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Jop can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Guaquip camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Ucup kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Guaxquip anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Veljep toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Ljuj tz'í</i>

EIGHTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Junuljuj batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Capljuj e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Oxeljuju aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Jun íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Kiep tziquín</i>
6th day.....	<i>Uxip ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Kiap noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Jop tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Guaquip kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Ucup ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Guaxquip imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Veljep í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Ljuj abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Junuljuj cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Capljuj can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Oxljuj camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Jun kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Kiep anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Uxip toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Kijap tz'í</i>

NINTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Junuljuj batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Capljuj e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Oxeljuju aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Jun íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Kiep tziquín</i>
6th day.....	<i>Uxip ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Kiap noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Jop tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Guaquip kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Ucup ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Guaxquip imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Veljep í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Ljuj abal</i>

14th day.....	<i>Junuljuj cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Capljuj can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Oxlujuj camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Jun kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Kiep anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Uxip toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Kijap tz'í</i>

TENTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Capljuj batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Oxeljuj e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Jun aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Kiep íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Uxip tziqín</i>
6th day.....	<i>Kijap ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Jop noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Guaquip tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Ucup kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Guaxquip ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Veljep imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Ljuj í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Junuljuj abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Capljuj cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Oxelujuj can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Jun camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Kiep kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Uxip anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Kiap toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Jop tz'í</i>

ELEVENTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Guaquip batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Ucup e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Guaxquip aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Veljep íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Ljuj tziqín</i>

6th day.....	<i>Junuljuj ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Capljuj noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Oxeljuj tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Jun kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Kiep ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Uxip imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Kiap í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Jop abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Guaquip cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Ucup can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Guaxquip camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Veljep kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Ljuj anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Junuljuj toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Capljuj tz'í</i>

TWELFTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Oxeljuj batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Jun e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Kiep aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Uxip íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Kijap tziqúin</i>
6th day.....	<i>Jop ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Guaquip noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Ucup tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Guaxquip kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Veljep ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Ljuj imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Junuljuj í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Capljuj abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Oxeljuj cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Jun can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Kiep camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Uxip kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Kiap anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Jop toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Guaquip tz'í</i>

THIRTEENTH MONTH

1st day.....	<i>Ucup batz</i>
2nd day.....	<i>Guaxquip e</i>
3rd day.....	<i>Veljep aj</i>
4th day.....	<i>Ljuj íx</i>
5th day.....	<i>Junuljuj tziqúin</i>
6th day.....	<i>Capljuj ajmac</i>
7th day.....	<i>Oxeljuj noj</i>
8th day.....	<i>Jun tijax</i>
9th day.....	<i>Kiep kaguc</i>
10th day.....	<i>Oxip ajpú</i>
11th day.....	<i>Kiap imox</i>
12th day.....	<i>Jop í</i>
13th day.....	<i>Guaxquip abal</i>
14th day.....	<i>Ucup cat</i>
15th day.....	<i>Guaxquip can</i>
16th day.....	<i>Veljep camé</i>
17th day.....	<i>Ljuj kij</i>
18th day.....	<i>Junuljuj anil</i>
19th day.....	<i>Capljuj toj</i>
20th day.....	<i>Oxeljuj tz'í</i>

As can be seen, the 20 day names are combined with the ordinals from the first to the thirteenth and then repeated to form a series of combinations that make up thirteen months of 20 days each. If one looks for a repeated combination, it is not possible to find one: the cycle begins again with **jun batz** at the start of a new year.

Joyabaj, August 26th, 1968.

Editor's Notes:

1. *Coch*, an apocope of *coche* (a colloquial term for pig in Guatemala and other parts of Mesoamerica). In the K'iche' language, there is a word to refer to the pig: *ak*, undoubtedly used pre-Alvaradian times to designate the "wild pig" — *jagüilla* in one of the Guatemalan variants, identical to the South American *peccary*.
2. The K'iche' text from Joyabaj that has been transcribed is clearly modern, as indicated by the use of the letter *y* and the Spanish alphabet. Most of the words belong to the K'iche' language or its dialectal forms, but, for example, *imox* – woman, which appears in the calendar, comes from Kaqchikel (in K'iche': *ixok*). The concept of horse also appears, referred to as *kij* in the Joyabaj dialect (originally *kiej*), which previously designated the deer; and for *deer*, they use the Mexican word *mzat* (*mazatl*). Likewise, the influence of *Nahuatlisms* in the Spanish translation is notable — terms that came to what is now Guatemala before and during the Spanish conquest: *temascal*, for *tuj*; *tacuzín*, for *guch* (*vuch*).
3. This Joyabaj calendar is the same as the K'iche' religious calendar and is a legacy of the Maya *Tzolk'in*. In Maya and the derived calendars (Aztec, K'iche'), the months have proper names.

The numbers of the days range from one to thirteen (1 to 13), forming a "week", although it is not like the Western calendar, which consists of several weeks. Below are the numbers, with the non-dialectal K'iche' forms in parentheses: *taj* – zero; *kiep*, *uxip* (*oxip*), *kijap* (*kilep*), *jop*, *guaquip*, *ucup* (*gucup*), *guaxquip* (*guaxaquip*), *veljep* (*belejeb*), *luj* (*laju*), *junuluj* (*jun laju*), *capluj* (*cab laju*), *oxeluj* (*ox laju*). Then the sequence repeats. (There is no consensus among K'iche' scholars regarding the spelling.)

The names of the twenty days are: *batz*, monkey; *e*, acceptance; *aj*, reed, stick, cane field; *ix*, breath, essence of life; *tziqín*, bird; *ajmak*, sinner; *noj* (*nooj*), genius, idea; *tijax*, ---; *kaguc* (*kwoc*), difficulty, dispute; *ajpú*, blowgunner; *imox*, woman (in Kaqchikel), (according to Don Adrián Chávez: left-handed, madness, in K'iche'); *í*, wind, suffocation (*ik* in K'iche', *ig* in Maya; could also be an apocope of *Ic*, moon); *abal*, dawn (*akbal* in Maya, *agabal* in K'iche'); *cat*, fire; *can*, serpent – fierce, yellow; *camé*, dead; *kij* (*kiej*), deer, day, time, sun; *anil* (*ganil*), semen, yellowing, vigor of the maize; *toj*, rain, plea, harvest; *tz'i*, dog, cooked maize. Then they repeat.

In the "K'iche'-Spanish Dictionary" by Professor Juan de León, *tijax* is translated as *flint* (*Ajau Tijax*: god or lord of the flints). *Kaguc* could be an apocope of *Caj Guak*: four eagles (the Southern Cross); but *caj bal* is *cross* and *guc* (*kuk* in Maya) is *quetzal*, not eagle.