

Mayas calendar system

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Compare and contrast our calendar system with that of Maya. In your answer be sure to cover the function, significance and importance of the calendar in each culture.

All calendars derive originally from observation of the sky and the planets, since the earth's revolutions cause the change from day to night, and its orbit round the sun causes the seasons to change on an annual basis.

Calendars mark units of time, festivals, ceremonies and key points for the planting of crops and other critical human endeavours. As such they are designed specifically to fit the needs of their individual culture of origin.

The calendar which is used in the Western world is cyclical and geared to suit the annual festivals of the Christian Church. The year zero is fixed as the birth of Christ, and time is counted back from that point and forwards from that point. Muslims have a system based on the emigration of the prophet Mohamed. The Old and New Testament scriptures form much of the rationale for the calendar's structure, and it became a significant tool for forging unity, and occasionally also disunity, of the global Church, as for example when the Eastern Orthodox Church split from the Roman Church and had its own calculation of Easter. The ancient Maya calendar, on the other hand, is based on very long counts of time, in units of 260 days - a figure which may relate to the length of human pregnancy, or to multiples of 20, and reaching even to the figure of 26, 000 years, which is the time it takes the sun to move in a single revolution round the main star of the Pleiades. (Men, 2010, p. 67). In Maya culture there was also a strong connection with divinities, and key locations, and the calendar was used to calculate auspicious times for crucial activities and it was vital as a way of situating human existence within the very large scale and long term history of the universe.

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Reference

Men, Hunbatz. 8 Calendars of the Maya: The Pleiadian Cycle and the Key to Destiny. Vermont: Bear and Company, 2010.