

28-day "moonths" [Digest urth.v028.n015]

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 13 Aug 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1742>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

John Bishop — 13 Aug 1999, 10:22

You have to alternate between long and short months, or the lunar connection disappears: if you pick any whole number of days, it'll be off by half a day.

This means that the full Moon starts out on the first, two months later is on the second [if the count is long, and a day early if it is short], another two months later the full Moon is on the third; gradually it will rotate through a whole month, over a period of about four years.

If you pick 28 days, then you're 1.5xxx days off, and the rotation is faster. It's hard to call it a lunar month when it's not connected to the Moon.

The unending cycle of 28-day periods is more like weeks; uncorrelated with anything astronomical (which is OK). The Mayan calendar had several such cycles, of varying numbers of days (20?, 13?), so that the rotation from the equivalent of Monday the 1st of July back to the next Monday the 1st of July took a long time (as it does for us, too). But it's not lunar reckoning: you can't look at the sky and read the date, as you can in a true lunar calendar.

The reason for all the Moon names (Hunters' etc) is that due to the way the lunar months mesh with the solar year, the full Moon shows up at different solar dates. So a full Moon on Oct 1 gets one name, and a full Moon on Oct 7 gets another name. I don't think this was ever elaborated into a full system.

This all aside, I agree that the `_ad_hoc_` calendar, like the seasonally varying lengths of watches/hours, is meant to make Urth both more foreign and less technical. The way both refer to usages of our own past is deliberate. We are given strong clues that Urth is in our future and that it is in our past, up to Severian's musing about echos of time when in the Jungle Garden (if I recall correctly).

-John Bishop