

[The text below is an excerpt from my dissertation *A Grammar of Southern Pomo* (Walker 2013: 349-350)]

The Southern Pomo numeral system shows traces of an earlier base four (e.g. *k^homhča* ‘eight’ comes from *ʔak^h:o* ‘two’ + *mihča* ‘four’), but there is no synchronic evidence that the system is built around four. In the past, before European and American expansion into Pomo lands, Southern Pomo people must have counted to very high numbers as part of their production and trade in shell money. Though this might have been the case, there is no record of higher numbers. All known numbers, as recorded by Halpern from Annie Burke, are given below (I have provided a regularized transcription for 1-8; the numbers above eight are unfamiliar to me, and Halpern’s transcription is therefore allowed to stand alone).

Southern Pomo numerals 1-20, 25, 30, 40, 100

(1) čá:ʔa	č'a:ʔa	(11) ná:nč'a
(2) [ʔ]ák ^h :o	ʔak ^h :o	(12) ná:nk ^h o
(3) mis:ɪbo	mis:ibo	(13) ná:n síbo
(4) míhčá	mihča	(14) sím hmá šon
(5) ʔú:šo	ʔu:šo	(15) símhma [or] símhma ʔék
(6) lá:Nč'a	la:nhč'a	(16) símhma ná:nč'a
(7) lá:ʔ ^h k ^h o	la:ʔ ^h k ^h o	(17) símhma ná:nk ^h o
(8) k ^h óMča	k ^h omhča	(18) símhma ná:n síbo
(9) č'áʔč ^h o		(19) čámhma šon
(10) č'ášóʔo		(20) čámhma [or] čámhma ʔék
(25) ʔu:šóhma [or] čámhma wína ʔú:šo		(30) la:Nč'áhma
(40) č'á: hay		(100) č'a: sénʔu

Several of the numbers in the above list are clearly compositional. The number č'áʔč^ho ‘nine’ probably comes from č'a:ʔa ‘one’ + ʔač^h:o- ‘there is none’ (literally ‘one is

absent'). The numbers above nine and below nineteen are a mystery. Ten has 'one' as its first syllable, but the following element is unknown. Similarly, the numbers for eleven through thirteen clearly have 'one', 'two', and 'three' added to the element *na:n*, but what this element might mean (or have meant in the past) is not clear. Fourteen through eighteen begin with the element *sim-*, and it is possible that this is an ancient variant of *mis:ibo* 'three'. If this analysis is correct, then *simhma*, one of the variants for 'fifteen', might literally mean 'three places' (*-hma* is the suffix for 'place' which may be attached to numerals), which might indicate that something was set down (in piles perhaps) in several places by fives during counting.

I believe the above analysis is correct for 'fifteen', and it lines up well with a possible analysis for the numbers for 'twenty', 'twenty-five', and 'thirty', which might be 'four places', 'five places', and 'six places' respectively. These numbers seem to show evidence of counting by fives. However, note that the form for 'forty' is literally 'one stick'. Though I have no oral or written evidence, I believe the stick was literally—at some point, anyway—laid on the ground as part of counting, perhaps in trade, and that this is the origin of the term for 'forty'. If smaller items (shells, stones, etc.) were laid out for numbers below forty (perhaps by fives), the reservation of the stick for the unit 'forty' suggests that remnants of a base four system were part of the numeral system in the higher numbers. The number *č'a: sen̄tu* 'hundred' is a combination of *č'a:(?a)* 'one' and an obvious borrowing of Spanish *ciento* 'hundred'.