



Glyph Dwellers

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A Maya Vessel Inscribed with Four Dedication Formulae in the Fralin Museum of Art

Matthew Looper
Yuriy Polyukhovych

Department of Art and Art History, California State University Chico

The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, has an important collection of inscribed Maya vessels. One of these (Inv. no. 1980.5.8) is a very large globular fluted drinking vessel with a yellowish orange ground, double red lines adjacent to the rim, and a heavily damaged black line encircling the rim itself. There are four bands of glyphs, two adjacent to the rim and two above the base. The base is also accented with an orange wash, set off from the lowest glyph band by a red line. The glyptic bands are painted in different palettes. The top band has a black outline and orange plus ground-color fill, while the second upper band has a dark red outline and orange fill. The lower bands mirror this arrangement, with the black-orange-ground glyph band at the bottom and the red-orange band above.

This vessel is remarkable not only for its large number of glyph blocks (84), but also because each glyptic band comprises an independent Primary Standard Sequence (PSS) or Dedication Formula. While a few vessels have multiple PSS texts, we know of no other Maya vessel that has four such inscriptions. We have labeled these, from top to bottom, as A, B, C, and D. PSSs A and B have more or less the same content, which differs from PSS C. PSS D is only partly legible. It is also interesting that each PSS uses a different form of the dedication verb: God C-variant, female head, "haab-hand" (see Stuart 2005:152), and "step." Three of these variants—the God C-variant, female head and "haab-hand"—are common on El Zozt style vessels. However, the three intact PSSs identified the vessel as the property of a single individual. As is typical for El Zozt-style ceramics, certain words in the PSS are spelled out across multiple glyph blocks.



Fig. 1. Polychrome bowl. Fralin Museum of Art 1980.5.8. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 2. Polychrome bowl. Fralin Museum of Art 1980.5.8. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 3. Polychrome bowl. Fralin Museum of Art 1980.5.8. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

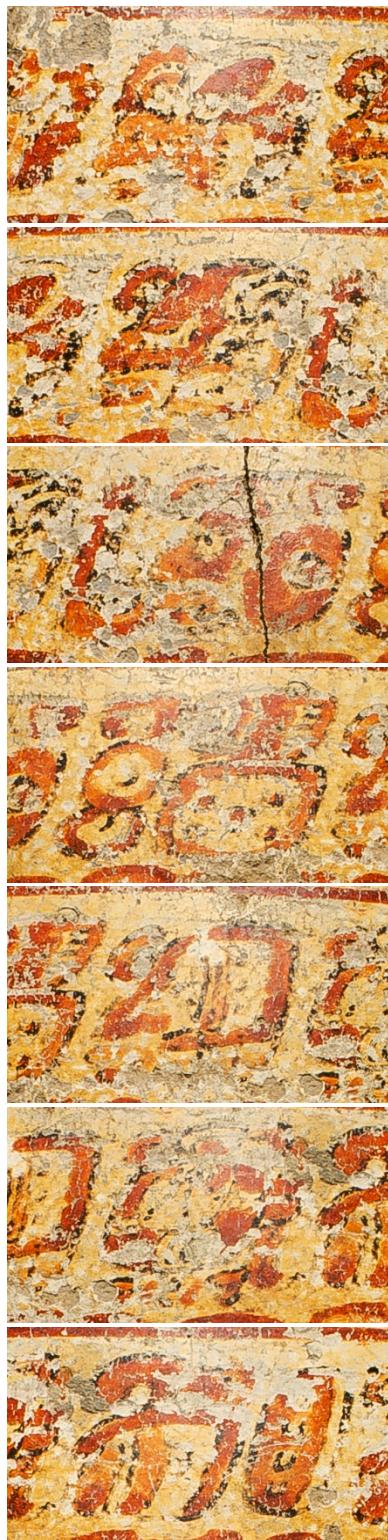
The first and second PSSs (A and B) of 1980.5.8 are standard, stating that the vessel is a cup and drinking vessel for tree-fresh(?) cacao, of the "great youth, young male." PSSs A and C may also provide the personal name of the vessel's owner, spelled with combinations of **a-tzi** (A18) and **tzi-a** (C21). PSSs A-C refer to the owner as the child of a "holy lady," who is otherwise unnamed. In each case, the **la** grapheme of *yal* is painted inverted, perhaps implying a common source from which the PSSs of this vessel were copied. This parentage statement parallels the content of Kerr 0679 and San Diego Museum of Man vessel 2010.001.0014 which also refer to the owners as the children of women from El Zotz (see Looper and Polyukhovych 2016). Interestingly, the third PSS (C) also states that the vessel is a cup and



drinking vessel for serving sweet potato atole. Beliaev, Davletshin, and Tokovinine (2010:263–264) identified this beverage as the intended contents of another El Zozt-style vessel in the Museo de Arte Precolombino y Vidrio Moderno, La Antigua Guatemala. Fralin 1980.5.8 therefore provides evidence that some vessels were not necessarily devoted to serving a single food or drink, but could be explicitly multi-functional. Unfortunately, the fourth PSS is partly damaged, with the sections devoted to contents and owner largely illegible and perhaps partly pseudoglyphic.

Table 1. Inscription from Fralin Museum of Art 1980.5.8. Photographs by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

	A1	a-LAY-ya	alay	here
	A2	?	?	is dedicated?
	A3	yi-chi	yich	its surface
	A4	u-	utz'ihbaal	its painting
	A5	-tz'i-	"	"
	A6	-ba-	"	"



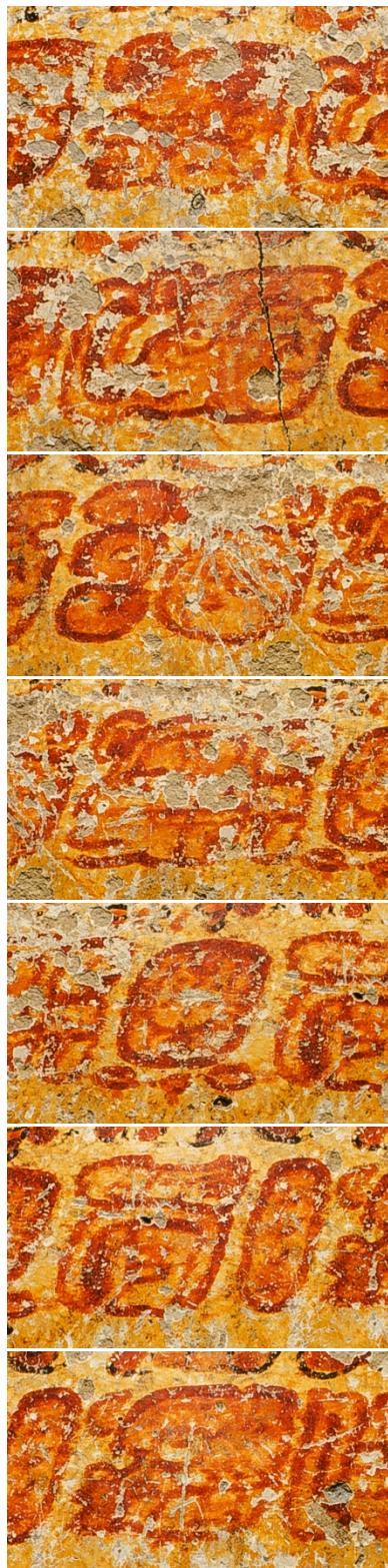
A7	-li	"	"
A8	u-	ujaay	his cup
A9	-ja-yi	"	"
A10	yu-k'i-bi	yuk'ib	his drinking vessel
A11	ta	ta	for
A12	tzi-hi-la	tzihil	fresh?
A13	TE'-le	te'el	tree



A14	ka	kakaw	cacao
A15	CHAK	chak	great
A16	ch'o-ko	ch'ok	youth
A17	KELE'M	kele'm	young male
A18	a-tzi	aatz?	Aatz? [personal name?]
A19	ya-la?	yal?	her child?
A20	K'UH IX	k'uhul ixik	holy lady



	B1	a-LAY-ya	alay	here
	B2	?	?	is dedicated?
	B3	yi-	yich	its surface
	B4	-chi	"	"
	B5	u-	utz'ihbaal	its painting
	B6	-ba-	"	"
	B7	-li	"	"



B8	u-	ujaay	his cup
B9	-ja-yi	"	"
B10	yu-k'i-bi	yuk'ib	his drinking vessel
B11	ta -hi-	ta	for
B12	tzi-la	tzihil	fresh?
B13	TE'-le	te'el	tree
B14	ka	kakaw	cacao



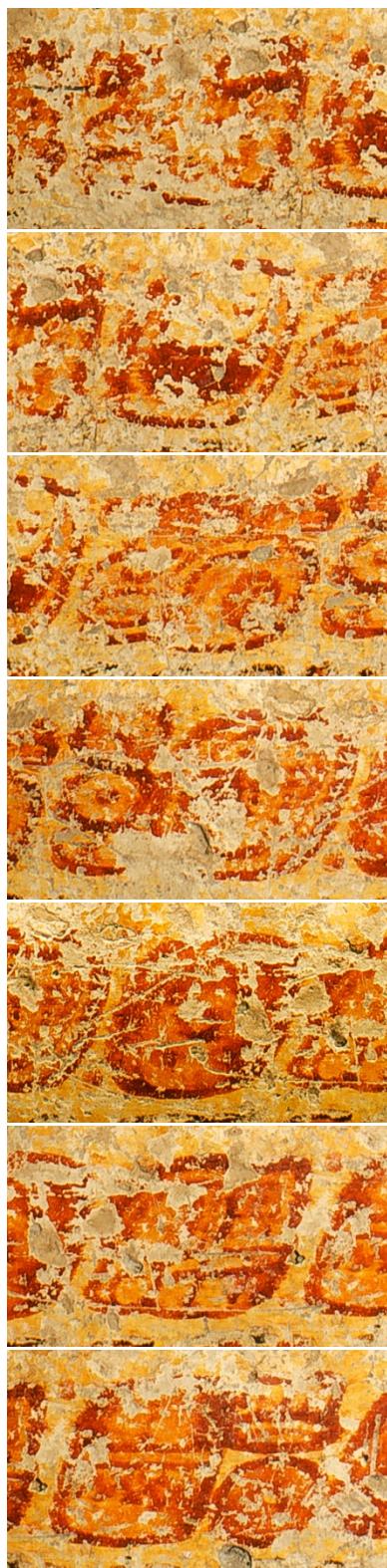
B15	CHAK	chak	great
B16	ch'o-ko	ch'ok	youth
B17	KELE'M	kele'm	young male
B18	ya-la?	yal?	her child?
B19	K'UH	k'uhul	holy
B20	IX	ixik	lady



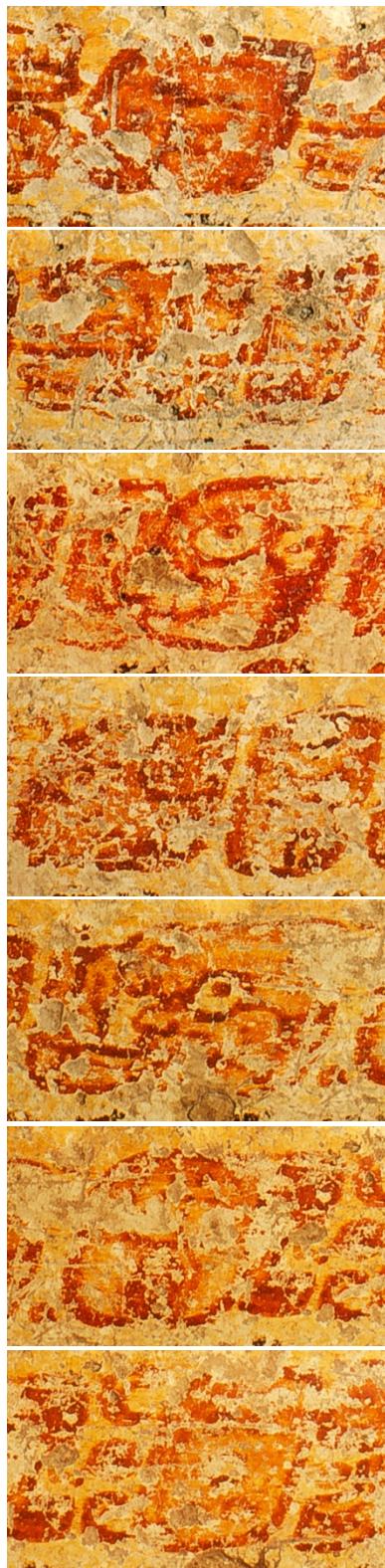
C1	a-LAY-ya	alay	here
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	C2	?	?	is dedicated?
	C3	yi-	yich	its surface
	C4	-chi	"	"
	C5	u-	utz'ihbaal	its painting
	C6	-tz'i-	"	"
	C7	-ba-	"	"
	C8	-li	"	"

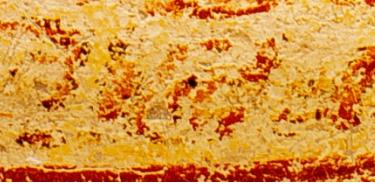
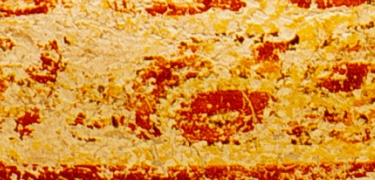
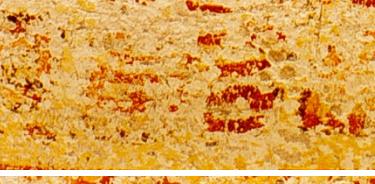


C9	u-	ujaay	his cup
C10	-ja-	"	"
C11	-yi	"	"
C12	yu-k'i-	yuk'ib	his drinking vessel
C13	-bi	"	"
C14	ta	ta	for
C15	i-si	is	sweet potato



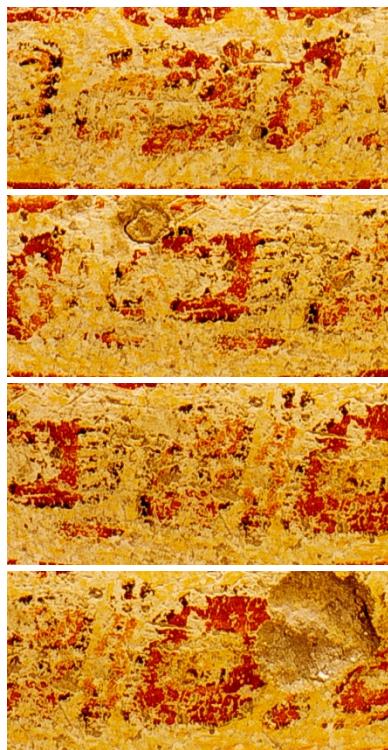
C16	u-	ul	atole
C17	-lu-li?	"	"
C18	CHAK	chak	great
C19	ch'o-ko	ch'ok	youth
C20	KELE'M	kele'm	young male
C21	a-tzi	aatz?	Aatz? [personal name?]
C22	ya-la?	yal?	her child?



	D1	a-LAY-ya	alay	here
	D2	T'AB?	t'abaay?	gets dedicated 'raised'?
	D3	_ -chi?	yich?	its surface?
	D4	tz'i-	utz'ihbaal	its painting
	D5	-ba-	"	
	D6	-li?	"	"
	D7	-	-	-
	D8	-	-	-
	D9	-	-	-



	D10	-	-	-
	D11	-	-	-
	D12	-	-	-
	D13	-	-	-
	D14	-	-	-
	D15	-	-	-
	D16	-	-	-
	D17	-	-	-
	D18	yu-k'i-	yuk'ib	his drinking vessel



D19	-bi-li?	"	"
D20	-	-	-
D21	-	-	-
D22	-	-	-

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