



Glyph Dwellers

Report 47

August 2016

A Familial Relationship Between Nobles of El Peru (Waka') and El Zott (Pa'chan) as Recorded on a Polychrome Vessel

Matthew Looper
Yuriy Polyukhovych

Department of Art and Art History, California State University Chico

Inscribed ceramics in museum collections often preserve important historical information about the ancient Maya elite. A good example is a vessel located in the San Diego Museum of Man (2010.001.0014; **Figs. 1-3**). This vessel is a polychrome painted bowl with a yellowish ground and black and red lines highlighting the rim and base. The main pictorial field is dominated by two images of the Quadripartite Badge or Emblem (Robertson 1974), placed on opposite sides of the vessel. Elsewhere in Maya art, this motif serves as the headdress of the god GI and the Maize God as well as an independent icon, often representing the bowl of an incense burner with sacrificial implements (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:216–217; Taube 2009:99–105). Located between the two Quadripartite Badge icons are two short vertical captions of three blocks each, framed in red. These simply list sequences of day names: Imix, Ik', Ak'bal and K'an, Chikchan, Kimi.

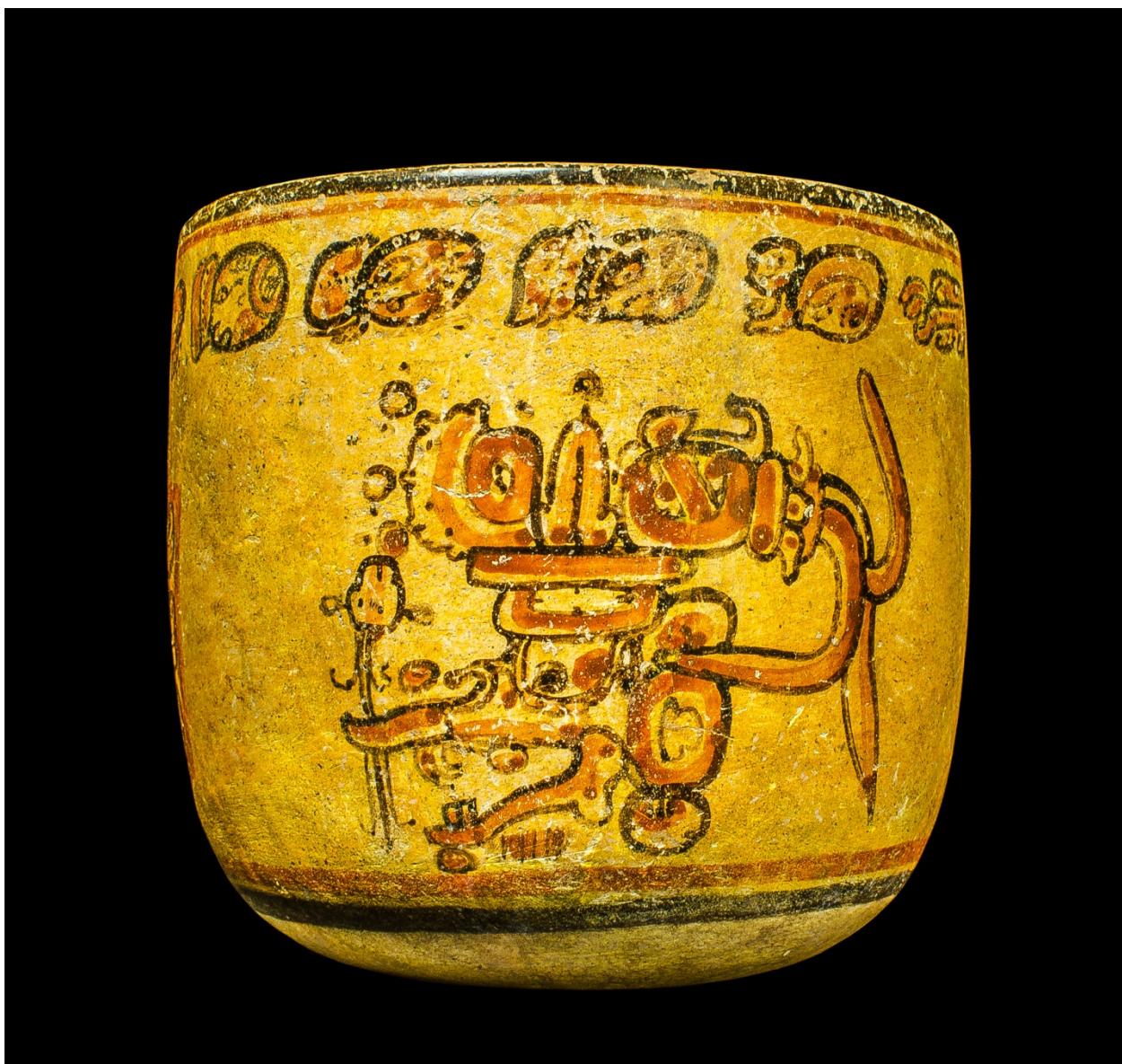


Fig. 1. Bowl, San Diego Museum of Man Acc. no. 2010.001.0014 © San Diego Museum of Man.
Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 2. Bowl, San Diego Museum of Man Acc. no. 2010.001.0014 © San Diego Museum of Man.
Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 3. Bowl, San Diego Museum of Man Acc. no. 2010.001.0014 © San Diego Museum of Man.
Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

From an epigraphic standpoint, the most interesting aspect of this vessel is its rim inscription, rendered in black and red pigments and introduced with three dots. Unfortunately, the first couple of blocks seem to have been partially effaced through retouching. The first block has a clear **yu** sign, followed by a sign that looks like **AJAW**, probably copied from the block to the left. It is likely that this block was originally *yuk'ib* "his drinking vessel." The next block seems to be T501 **ba**, with the lower part restored, and a clear **ki** suffix. The next two blocks are heavily overpainted.

Fortunately, the remaining blocks are clearly readable and convey important information. They begin with the name of the vessel's owner, spelled out over three blocks (E-G). These are: Chak "Animal-with-Fish" Ahk, a name familiar from monuments and ceramics associated with El Zotz polity (see Houston 2008). A good example of this name appears on vase Kerr 0679, where this person is said to be the child of a woman from El Zotz (Fig. 4). Importantly, the San Diego Museum of Man vessel preserves crucial



information regarding the sociopolitical identity of Chak "Animal-with-Fish" Ahk, as blocks H and I spell out the toponymic title **wa-ka AJAW**, or Waka' [El Peru] ajaw. This title is spelled in the same way as on Kerr 8777, using the centipede head **wa** with a **ka** fish-fin inserted into its mouth (**Fig. 5**; see Guenter 2014:149). As far as we know, this person does not seem to have been mentioned on monuments at El Peru-Waka' and therefore may not have been a ruler of the site.



Fig. 4. Detail of inscription from polychrome vessel owned by Chak "Animal-with-Fish" Ahk, son of a lady from El Zotz. Photograph ©Justin Kerr K0679.



Fig. 5. Waka' ajaw titles from Kerr 8777 and San Diego Museum of Man 2010.001.0014. (a) Photograph ©Justin Kerr K8777; (b) © San Diego Museum of Man; Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

The San Diego Museum of Man vessel inscription also indicates the partial parentage of Chak "Animal-with-Fish" Ahk. Block J is **ya-la**, which indicates the relationship between a child and his mother. Next is the **ixik k'uh** title borne by noblewomen from many sites during the Classic period. The San Diego Museum of Man vessel renders this title in a manner similar to many other texts, in which the two logographs are compressed into a single glyph block. In other contexts, when the title is spelled out over multiple glyph blocks, the **IX** grapheme precedes **K'UH**. This is the pattern seen in the following texts:

Museo Rufino Tamayo Stela

La Corona Stingray Spine (Barrientos Q., Canuto, and Bustamante 2015:476)

Naranjo weaving bones 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10

Naranjo Stela 13

Pomona Jamb 2/Element 2

Pomona Jamb 3 (Dallas Museum of Art)

Yaxchilan Lintel 25

Yaxchilan Lintel 32

Yaxchilan Lintel 38

Yaxchilan Lintel 40

K'UH precedes **IX** only rarely, as on Naranjo weaving bone 4, plate K5458, and vessel 1980.5.8 in the Fralin Museum of Art (see Looper and Polyukhovych 2016). Because of this pattern, in most cases, we read this title as **ixik k'uh**, which may translate as something like "lady god." The reading of the female head as **ixik** rather than **ix** in this context is confirmed by Yaxchilan Lintel 32, which reads **IX-ki K'UH**.



The inscription of the San Diego Museum of Man vessel concludes with a second title for the mother of Chak "Animal-with-Fish" Ahk. In blocks L and M she is stated to be a Pa'chan [El Zott] lord. This information is significant as it provides evidence of a familial relationship between nobles at El Peru-Waka' and El Zott. Because of its parallel inscription, we think that Kerr 0679 also names the same individual and his mother (see **Fig. 4**). Apparently, the prestige of this family was connected to the female line, which justifies the deletion of the name of the father on two separate vessels.

The evidence of connected families of El Zott and El Peru-Waka' is consistent with other epigraphic data indicating a political relationship between the two polities in the Early Classic. For example, a mirror back from Bagaces, Costa Rica contains a reference to a "gift" of the Early Classic El Peru-Waka' king K'inich Bahlam, following the name of Chak "Animal-with-Fish" Ahk of El Zott (probably a different individual than the person named on the SDMM vessel; see Houston 2008:4-5). Whether the connection between El Zott and El Peru-Waka' extends to the royal line of the latter site is a topic that remains to be explored as more monumental texts are discovered and published.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the place of origin of the vessel. Stylistically, we consider the San Diego Museum of Man vessel to be reminiscent of Kerr 1670 (Princeton University Art Museum 2002-9), a vessel understood to be in a style associated with the royal court of La Florida (**Fig. 6**; see Matteo 2008). Although Kerr 1670 has much more elaborate imagery, it shares several features with the SDMM vessel, including the treatment of the rim, the placement of two large images on opposite sides of the vessel, and the use of vertical captions, framed in a thick red line. If the SDMM vessel was in fact painted in a workshop associated with La Florida, it would be no surprise, as this center was located down the Río San Pedro from El Peru-Waka', which is in turn linked geographically to the Valle Buenavista in which El Zott is located. The style and inscription of this vessel hint tantalizingly at political relationships between three centers in the western Petén. As more inscriptions come to light, perhaps the precise nature of these connections will be clarified.



Fig. 6. Rollout of vessel painted in a style associated with La Florida. Princeton University Art Museum 2002-9. Photograph ©Justin Kerr 1670.



Table 1. Inscription from San Diego Museum of Man 2010.001.0014 © San Diego Museum of Man.
Photographs by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

	A	yu_-	yuk'ib?	his drinking vessel?
	B	ba?-ki	?	?
	C	bu?-_-	-	-
	D	-	-	-
	E	CHAK	chak	Chak
	F	?	?	"Animal-with-Fish"



G

a-ku

ahk

Ahk



H

wa-ka

waka'

Waka' [El Peru]



I

AJAW

ajaw

lord



J

ya-la

yal

her child



K

IX K'UH

ixik k'uh

lady god



L

pa-CHAN-na

pa'chan

Pa'chan [El Zotz]



M

AJAW

ajaw

lord



N1-N3

?
IK'
AK'AB?
ik'
ak'ab"Imix,
Ik',
Ak'bal"

O1-O3

?
?
??
?
?"K'an,
Chikchan,
Kimi"

Acknowledgments: We would like to thank Kelly Williams for kindly giving us access to this vessel in the San Diego Museum of Man. Thanks also to Grace Johnson and Judith Strupp Green for helping us to arrange the visit to San Diego and for their generous hospitality and friendship. We also thank Bryan Just for allowing us to photograph vessel 2002-9 in the Princeton University Art Museum. We are also grateful to Justin Kerr for his kind permission to publish his rollout photographs of Maya vessels.



References

- Barrientos Q., Tomás, Marcello A. Canuto, and Eduardo Bustamante
2015 Proyecto Arqueológico La Corona: Informe Final Temporada 2014. Guatemala: Proyecto Regional Arqueológico La Corona. <http://mari.tulane.edu/PRALC/Files/PRALC%20-%20Informe%20final%202014.pdf>.
- Freidel, David A., Linda Schele, and Joy Parker
1993 *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
- Guenter, Stanley P.
2014 The Epigraphy of El Perú-Waka'. In *Archaeology at El Perú-Waka': Ancient Maya Performances of Ritual, Memory, and Power*. Olivia C Navarro-Farr and Michelle E Rich, eds. Pp. 147–166. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Houston, Stephen D.
2008 The Epigraphy of El Zotz. Mesoweb Resources.
<http://mesoweb.com/zotz/resources.html> Accessed 02/29/12.
- Looper, Matthew, and Yuriy Polyukhovych
2016 A Maya Vessel Inscribed with Four Dedicatory Formulae in the Fralin Museum of Art. *Glyph Dwellers*, Report 46. <http://glyphdwellers.com/pdf/R46.pdf>.
- Matteo, Sebastian
2008 Un plato policromo Maya en las colecciones de los museos de Bruselas, originario de Namaan-La Florida, Petén, Guatemala. *Bulletin Des Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* 79: 87–111.
- Robertson, Merle Greene
1974 The Quadripartite Badge—a Badge of Rulership. In *Primera Mesa Redonda de Palenque: A Conference on the Art, Iconography, and Dynastic History of Palenque, Palenque Round Table Series*. Merle Greene Robertson, ed. Pp. 77–93. Pebble Beach: Robert Louis Stevenson School, Pre-Columbian Art Research.
- Taube, Karl
2009 The Womb of the World: The Cuauhxicalli and Other Offering Bowls of Ancient and Contemporary Mesoamerica. In *Maya Archaeology 1*. Charles Golden, Stephen Houston, and Joel Skidmore, eds. Pp. 86–106. San Francisco: Precolumbia Mesoweb Press.



Glyph Dwellers is an occasional publication of the Maya Hieroglyphic Database Project at California State University, Chico, California. Its purpose is to make available recent discoveries about ancient Maya culture, history, iconography, and Mayan historical linguistics deriving from the project.

Funding for the Maya Hieroglyphic Database Project is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, grants #RT21365-92, RT21608-94, PA22844-96, the National Science Foundation, grants #SBR9710961 and IBSS1328928, the Department of Native American Studies, University of California, Davis, and the Department of Art and Art History, California State University, Chico.

© 2016 Matthew G. Looper. All rights reserved. Written material and artwork appearing in these reports may not be republished or duplicated for profit. Citation of more than one paragraph requires written permission of the publisher. No copies of this work may be distributed electronically, in whole or in part, without express written permission from the publisher.

ISSN 1097-3737