



Glyph Dwellers

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Four Painted Vessels in the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University

Matthew Looper

Department of Art and Art History, California State University Chico

Yuriy Polyukhovych

Faculty of History, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

The Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University houses an important collection of Maya art that is mostly familiar to scholars through various publications, particularly the *Painting the Maya Universe* catalog, as well as Justin Kerr's Maya Vase Database, online (Kerr n.d.; Reents-Budet 1994). Two specific art works—the fragment of El Temblor Stela 1 (Mayer 2019) and the El Zotz-style plate 1978.40 (K5460) (Zender 2000)—have been discussed in detail in articles. However, at least four painted ceramic vessels in this collection have important texts and have not been adequately discussed. In this report, we describe the texts of these vessels, which are presented in no particular order but are grouped by style.

1. NDU79193 [Accession no. 1979.19.3]: A Hix Witz-style atole bowl (Fig. 1).

The exterior of this bowl is decorated with bright red pigment and has a text just below its rim painted with black outlines and red fill on a yellowish ground. This overall style suggests its production within the Hix Witz polity, which was associated with La Joyanca, Pajarál and Zapote Bobal (see Stuart 2003).¹ Many vessels in this style mention owners who carry the Hix Witz dynastic title (*hix witz ajaw*).

The text of this vessel includes important information, but is painted in an idiosyncratic, non-standard fashion, including the presence of extraneous "pseudoglyphic" elements, out-of-order glyphs, and unusual representation of known graphemes. These factors complicate its interpretation. The text begins

¹ Dorie Reents-Budet (pers. comm. 2022) suggests an alternative stylistic association with the El Peru area.



with a standard initial sign (A) followed by the "hand-head" dedication verb variant (B). C gives the suffix for this verb, consisting of **yi** and the "agave head" variant of the syllabogram **chi**. The drinking vessel (D) is designated for sour or fermented atole (E—H). The term for atole is spelled in an unusual fashion, spread across two glyph blocks (G—H). At G is the "shark" variant of **u**, while H consists of what look like two graphemes **Iu-wa**. The presence of the additional **wa** here is unusual and might represent the term for atole as *uluw* or *uluuw*. The term for 'atole' is reconstructed in proto-Mayan as **?uul*, diffused from Sokean **?unu* (Kaufman and Justeson 2003:118). The term is preserved in Yucatec and some Tzeltalan languages including proto-Ch'olan as a reflex of *ul*, while Q'anjobalan languages are reflexes of *ulul*. If the **wa** syllable on this bowl it is not pseudoglyphic, it might suggest the existence of an alternate pronunciation for the word for 'atole' in the Classic period, which preserves the second syllable typical of the Q'anjobalan terms.

Next, the text has two blocks reading **WINIK/WINAK/WINKIL?** (I) and **YAX CH'AHB** (J). Although these two blocks are reversed, they are related to sequences appearing on other Hix Witz style ceramics: San Diego Museum of Us 2010.1.19, K1116, K9244, New Orleans Museum of Art loan EL.1990.157, Museo VICAL de Arte Precolombino y Vidrio Moderno 1.2.75.225; as well as Tikal Misc. Text 218 (**Table 1**; see Houston 2018:108, 110). The distinction between the full versions of ZF1 **WINIK/WINAK** and ZF2 **WINKIL?** is often unclear (see **Fig. 2**); however, on Tikal Misc. Text 218, the **li**-like element diagnostic of ZF2 **WINKIL?** is apparent.² Museo VICAL 1.2.75.225 has a clear **wi-WINIK/WINAK-ki** in final position in this sequence, preceded by a block containing an unclear main sign, as well as definite **NAL-ia**. This may correspond to the **NAHB-NAL** that appears on K1116 and possibly also on K9244. Taken together, these patterns suggest that block I on the Nasher bowl is either **WINIK/WINAK** or **WINKIL?** and that the full sequence would be *yax ch'ahb nahbnal winik/winaak/winkil?*.

² On David Stuart's suggested reading of T84 as **WINKIL**, see Houston and Schnell (2018). For grapheme codes used in this report, see Looper et al. (2022).



Fig. 1. Required caption: Maya, Bowl, 7th–10th century CE. Ceramic with pigment; 6 x 6 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (15.24 x 16.51 x 16.51 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel J. Holtzman, 1979.19.3. Photo by Matthew Looper.

**Table 1.** Structural analysis of *yax ch'ahb nahbnal winik/winaak/winkil?* sequences.

	YAX CH'AHB	NAHB?-NAL(-la)	(wi-)WINIK/WINAK (-ki)/WINKIL?
Nasher Mus. 1979.19.3 K-L (reordered, photo by Matthew Looper)			
San Diego Museum of Us 2010.1.19 F-G (drawing by Dana Moot II)			
New Orleans Museum of Art loan EL.1990.157 F-G (drawing by Matthew Looper)			
Museo VICAL 1.2.75.225 I-L (photo by Yuriy Polyukhovych)			
K1116 F-G (photo by Justin Kerr)			



K9244 K-L (photo by Justin Kerr)			
Tikal Misc. Text 218 D (drawing by Dana Moot II)			



Fig. 2. Full variants of ZF1 WINIK/WINAK and ZF2 WINKIL? Drawings by Matthew Looper.

The *yax ch'ahb* 'first penance' event has been interpreted as a first bloodletting ceremony undertaken by certain elite youths as a first public demonstration of bravery and piety (Green 2014; Houston 2012; 2018). This suggests that the Nasher bowl may have been created to commemorate such an event and was probably used for the accompanying feasts. Moreover, in the Maya script, *nahbnal* is often used as part of an epithet for the sun god, *Unahbnal K'inich* and is particularly prominent at Tikal and Dos Pilas (Fig. 3), but also appears on some ceramics that indicate *yax ch'ahb* events (Fig. 4). We suggest that the appearance of *nahbnal winik/winaak/winkil?* following *yax ch'ahb* in the vessels signals the identification of the named individual with the sun god as part of the first bloodletting ceremony. Indeed, in several images, initiates are represented wearing attributes of the Sun God, particularly a flaming plaited headband, as on the Palenque Temple XXI platform (Fig. 5), or a multi-tier plaited headdress as shown on Dos Pilas Panel 19 (Fig. 6), similar to that worn by the Sun God on a painted vase (Fig. 7) and Waxaklaju'n Ubaah K'awiil impersonating the Sun God on Copan Stela A (Fig. 8; Newsome 2001:132–136).



Fig. 3. Unahbnal K'inich title on Dos Pilas Stela 9, p1. Drawing by Dana Moot II.



Fig. 4. Bowl, Museo Popol Vuh 1188, block I (*yax ch'ahb winik/winaak/winkil?*) and blocks U—V (*nahbnal k'inich*). Photo by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 5. Palenque Temple XXI platform, detail. Drawing by Dana Moot II.



Fig. 6. Dos Pilas Panel 19, detail. Drawing by David Stuart and Stephen Houston.



Fig. 7. Vase showing Sun god wearing plaited headdress. Honolulu Museum of Art 4213.1. Public domain image by Hiart, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 8. Copan Stela A (cast). Photo by Matthew Looper.

Next on the bowl, at blocks K—M is a series of three graphemes that provide a secondary name (or "theophoric appellative;" see Beliaev, Davletshin, and Vepretskii 2018) of the individual who owned the vessel. The same sequence again appears on the San Diego Museum of Us bowl (**Table 2**). This nominal sequence is similar to other titles based on deity names that appear widely in Maya texts, but which includes some elements that are not securely deciphered. The first component is **HA'** (K). On the bowl, a second unidentifiable oval element appears to the right of the main sign. In other examples of the deity name/title, there is a **la** suffix, yielding *ha'al*. Next is **ILA-ni**, spelling *ilaan* (L). The next block contains three components, **IHK'**, **MIJIN**, and a **na** complement (M). Following this is a skeletal head that is likely SC2, the personified variant of T533, possibly **MOK**.³ In some examples of this title, like K1261, the **MOK** element is either deleted or merged with **MIJIN**, while in other cases, such as K1116 and K9244, the T533 grapheme is written in a separate block. Therefore, although the precise meaning of this nominal is elusive, its rough transcription would be *ha'al ilaan ihm' mijin mook?*.

³ For example, SC2 substitutes for T533 on Bonampak Stela 1, K1 (in 'child-of-father' statement); Yaxchilan Lintel 24, F2 (in personal name); and a lidded tripod vase (MHD objabbr: COLH87T745), A2 (in deity name/title). **MOK** is a provisional decipherment for T533 outside of the 'day sign' or **AJAW** context (Polyukhovych 2015).



Table 2. Comparison of deity name/title sequences on various vessels.

	HA'(-la)	ILA-ni	(IHK') MIJIN(-na)	MOK?
Nasher Mus. 1979.19.3 K-N (photo by Matthew Looper)				
San Diego Mus. of Us 2010.1.19 H-K (drawing by Dana Moot II)				
New Orleans Museum of Art loan EL.1990.157 F-G (drawing by Matthew Looper)				
K1261 L-N (photo by Matthew Looper)				
K1116 H-K (photo by Justin Kerr)				
K9244 (photo by Justin Kerr)				

The remaining three blocks on the Nasher bowl (O—Q) provide another secondary name of the individual for whom it was made. Again, these components correspond to blocks found on the San Diego Museum of Us bowl 2010.1.19 and K1116 (Table 3a, b, c). First is a sign that includes three components (O): **su**, **mu**, and another unclear element at the lower right. These correspond to the three elements in the nominal phrase on the San Diego vessel (L). Because the head on the lower right of this block on the San Diego bowl might be the frog/toad personification head that is a part of the **mu** grapheme, we provisionally read the block on the Nasher bowl as **su-mu?(-ta?)**: *sum* or *sumut*. Next is **a-ku** (P). Normally this would be read simply as *ahk*; however, the example of this name on the San Diego vessel has a notch



at the bottom, indicating conflation of **ku** with **yi**. Therefore, we read this block as *ahkuuy*. The last block is unclear (Q). The upper oval grapheme might be **ka** or **KAB**. If it is **ka**, then it could be analogous to block N on the San Diego vessel, which consists of a clear **ka** that complements a zoomorphic creature with a shiny forehead. This main sign is a logograph deciphered as **KAMIS** 'centipede' (Beliaev, Davletshin, and Vepretskii 2018). In the analogous sequence on K1116 (**Table 3c**), block L contains the **su-mu?** sequence, while block M has a **ka** syllable followed by an uncertain elongated grapheme that would have to be equivalent to **KAMIS** or **mi**.

This sequence seems to be a variation on a secondary name or deity name used as a title that appears in the name of K'inich Waw ("Animal Skull"), ruler of Tikal. For example, on Tikal MT 218, **a-ku-yi ka-KAMIS** is preceded by *kab chan* 'earth, sky' (**Table 3d**). In other instances, however, the **a-ku-yi** component is eliminated from this nominal. This deity name may be derived from a form of Glyph X of the lunar series (**Fig. 9**; X5 in Kelley 1976:37, fig. 8; X9 in Grube 2018). It should be noted that the sequence of *ha'al ilaan ihm' mijin mook?* is followed by *kab chan kamis* in some cases (Altar de Sacrificios Stela 8, K1261, K3642), but either component can also appear alone or in combinations with other names (K772, K1116, K3092, K4427, K4961, K8955, Museo Popol Vuh 1188, Copan Stela 2, 12, Piedras Negras Stela 6, Yaxchilan Lintel 26). This suggests that they are two different secondary nominals. These examples suggest other interpretations for block Q on the Nasher bowl: **ka-KAB** or **KAB-CHAN**.

Table 3. Comparison of deity name/title sequences from various vessels.

a. Nasher Mus. 1979.19.3 O—Q (Photo by Matthew Looper)				
b. San Diego Mus. of Us 2010.1.19 L—N (drawing by Dana Moot II)				
c. K1116 L—M (photo by Justin Kerr)				
d. Tikal Misc. Text 218 E—G (drawing by Dana Moot II)				



Fig. 9. KAMIS logograph (SR5) preceded by KAB CHAN in Glyph X, Quirigua Mon. 26. Drawing by Matthew Looper.

In conclusion, the text of the Nasher bowl indicates that it likely belonged to a person who bore the same secondary name as the owner of San Diego Museum of Us 2010.1.19 and K1116, even though the three vessels were painted by different hands. Importantly, the text of the San Diego bowl is longer than that of the Nasher bowl, providing additional nominal elements in blocks O-R, consisting of two eroded blocks followed by *k'in ahk*. Therefore, the proper name of the San Diego bowl's owner may have been ?? K'in Ahk, who is also stated to be a Hix Witz lord (**Fig. 10**). It is therefore possible that the Nasher bowl was owned by the same individual, but the lack of a primary name on this bowl makes it difficult to confirm this supposition. Because all three of these Hix Witz-style vessels are designated as commemorating a first bloodletting rite, it is possible that they may have been commissioned for the same occasion.



Fig. 10. Additional name/title sequence from San Diego Museum of Us 2010.1.19 O—S. Drawing by Dana Moot II.



Table 4. Required caption: Text of Maya Bowl, 7th–10th century CE. Ceramic with pigment; 6 x 6 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (15.24 x 16.51 x 16.51 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel J. Holtzman, 1979.19.3. Photos by Matthew Looper.

	A	a-AL-ya	alay	here
	B	T'AB?	t'abaayich?	is dedicated?
	C	-yi-chi	"	"
	D	yu-k'i-bi	yuk'ib	his drinking vessel
	E	ta	ta	for



	F	pa-ja	paaj	sour/fermented
	G	u-	ul	atole
	H	-lu-wa	"	"
	I	WINIK/WINAK/ WINKIL?	winik/winaak/ winkil?	person?
	J	YAX CH'AHB	yax ch'ahb	first penance



	K	HA'	ha'al	Ha'al
	L	ILA-ni	ilaan	Ilaan
	M	IHK' MIJIN-na	ihk' mijiin	Ihk' Mijiin
	N	MOK?	mook?	Mook?
	O	su-mu?(-ta?)	sum/sumut?	Sum/Sumut?



	P	a-ku	ahkuuy	Ahkuuy
	Q	ka/KAB?- KAB/CHAN?	kab chan [kamis]?	Kab Chan Kamis?

**2. NDU80892 [Accession no. 1980.89.2; MS0284]: A Xultun-area vase for a woman (Fig. 11).**

Painted in red and black on a cream background typical of the Baax Witz polity, corresponding to the Xultun region (see Garrison and Stuart 2004; Krempel and Matteo 2013; Matteo and Krempel 2011; Polyukhovych and Looper 2019), this large vase features identical glyptic icons on two sides. These represent the toponym Wuuk Ihk' K'ahnal or 'Seven Black Stairway Place', which is frequently paired with another toponym consisting of the number nine, a grapheme depicting a "blood" cartouche topped by footprints, and NAL (see Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 57). In this case, the K'AHN grapheme is in its head-variant form, including serpent features. This toponym is mentioned widely on monuments and portable objects from throughout the Maya realm, from the Early through the Late Classic period. It appears in a wide array of contexts and is particularly associated with offerings and caching (Fig. 12). Rulers sometimes stand on top of (or adjacent to) this toponym.



Fig. 11. Required caption: Maya, Cylinder vase, 7th–10th century CE. Ceramic with pigment; 9 1/2 x 3 7/8 x 3 7/8 inches (24.1 x 9.8 x 9.8 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of Dr. David B. Graves, 1980.89.2. Photos by Matthew Looper.



Fig. 12. Examples of the Wuuk Ihk' K'ahnal toponym. **a.** Early Classic cache vessel lid (drawing by Dana Moot II); **b.** Underside of Late Classic plate, Mint Museum 1984.237.19 (photo by Matthew Looper); **c.** Copan Stela D, east, lower part, showing the toponym atop a stepped "earth" band (drawing by Anne Dowd).

The rim text of the vase is typical for the style, beginning with the initial sign (A), followed by the "old god" variant of the dedication verb, combined with the footprint adapted from the "step" variant of this verb (B). Blocks C-D spell out the word *utz'ihbnajal* 'its painting' in syllabograms, followed by *yuk'ib*, 'her drinking vessel' (E) and the contents: *tzih* 'fresh [drink]' (F). The rest of the text consists of the titles and names of the owner, who is female. It begins with the incompletely deciphered "inverted vase" title, commonly associated with women in the Classic period (G) (see Justeson 1984:329; MacLeod 1990:338). The next block (H) is **IX HA'-NAL** which seems to read together with the next block (H), which is the Maize God head **IXIM** with a **ma** complement. The first part of this lady's name may therefore be read as **Ix Ha'nal Ixiim**, roughly translated as 'Lady (of the) Water-place Maize [God].'¹ It is possible that this nominal sequence refers to the mythology of the Maize God, specifically the dressing of the Maize God by female attendants at the Wuuk Ha'nal 'Seven Water-place' location, as illustrated on codex-style pottery (**Fig. 13**; see Boucher Le Landais 2014:60; Chinchilla Mazariegos 2017:199–202; Quenon and Le Fort 1997).

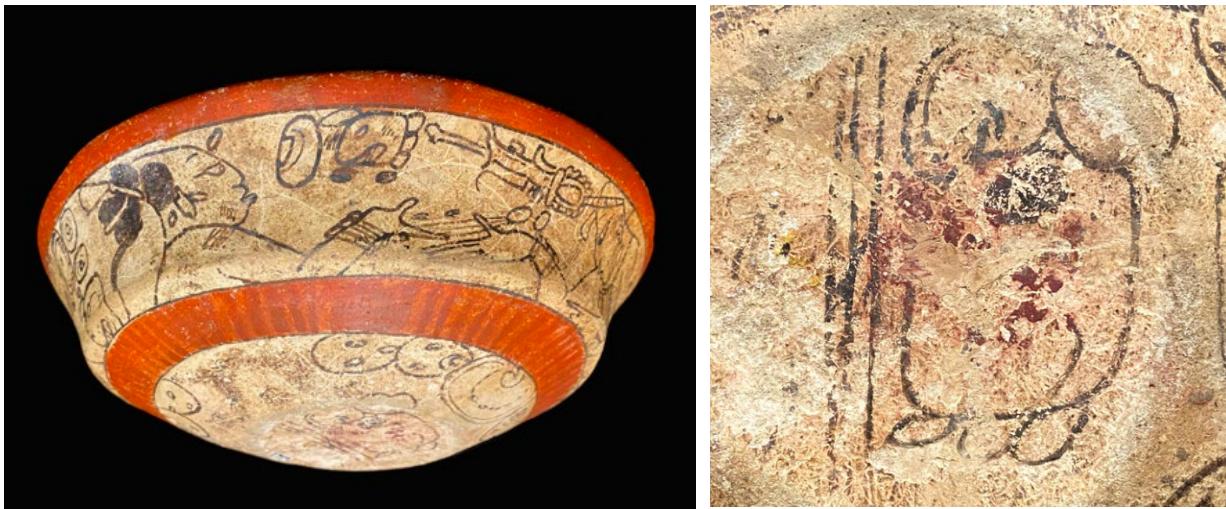


Fig. 13. Codex-style bowl showing Maize God with female attendants at Wuuk Ha'nal location indicated on base. 1985.96.5 (K1488). Collection of the Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Francis Robicsek. Photographs by Matthew Looper.

Chinchilla (2017:199-202) notes the association between the women in these mythological scenes with eroticism and temptation, relating them to the characters of Xtaj and Xpuch 'Lust Woman' and 'Wailing Woman,' who tempt the K'iche gods in the Popol Vuh. In addition, Houston (2014; 2018:53, 172) made an argument for the existence of a class of courtesans in Maya courts termed Ix Nahb 'Ladies of the Water Lily,' relating them to the Aztec prostitutes known as *āhuiyani*, who are also symbolically associated with water. For example, on a Maya vase, a woman who may be a courtesan kneels behind an enthroned ruler, the adjacent caption identifying her as Ix Nahb Ha'nal (**Fig. 14**). While it is not certain, there is a possibility that the Ix Ha'nal Ixiim nominal expression on the Nasher vase, given its aquatic and mythological symbolism, may indicate a similar courtly role for the woman who owned the Nasher vase.



Fig. 14. Rollout of painted vase, K5456. Photo by Justin Kerr.

The vase owner's second nominal phrase on this vase can be interpreted as **IX u-bu-k'u-CHAN** or **IX u-yo-OK-k'u** (I). The first possibility takes account of the marking of the leaf-like grapheme with three darkened circles, which would suggest it is the dotted "curl" **bu**. Logically, the **k'u** grapheme at the bottom of the block—the hatched element framed by dots which is often attached to the T149ef "eggs"—would follow **bu**. In this reading, the head with darkened patch above the eye could be the snake head **CHAN**, and the full name would read Ix Ubuk' Chan. However, the head with the darkened eye patch could also be the canine **OK**, suggesting that the "leaf" grapheme would be **yo**. This collocation would include double possession (*u-* and *y-*) and might therefore be an abbreviated form of *uyookte'*, possibly translated literally as 'its pillar,' as attested in other texts, such as Quirigua Stela J: *uyookte' chan/kab* (Looper 2003:217).⁴ In this reading, the **k'u** grapheme would possibly be an abbreviated spelling of *k'uh* 'god'. The expression *yookte' k'uh* appears frequently in the inscriptions, both as a reference to deities but also in royal names, as at Altar de Sacrificios (Ruler 4) (see Eberl and Prager 2005). A woman with a similar name, Ix Balu'n Yookte' K'uh, is mentioned on Dumbarton Oaks Panel PC.B.537 (Tokovinine 2012). If this interpretation of the signs is correct, then this component of the woman's name would read Ix Uyookte' K'uh, roughly translated as 'Lady Pillar? of the Gods.' As far as we know, this is the only attestation of the name Ix Ha'nal Ixiim Ix Ubuk' Chan / Ix Uyookte' K'uh in the corpus.

Women are mentioned frequently on Maya pottery, though often in parentage expressions or other relationships, or as participants in ceremonies. However, the explicit naming of a vase as owned by a specific elite woman is rare, though various examples are known, and nearly half of these are associated with the Baax Witz polity (Houston 2018:68–70, 193 n. 22; Houston 2021). **Table 5** lists at least 12 previously known vessels with named female owners. The Nasher vase can thus be added to this short list

⁴ *Uyookte'* appears the Alvaro Obregon box (S1) and Moral-Reforma Altar 2 (23), *uyookte'el* on Yaxchilan Lintel 25 (I2), and *uyookte'elbaahil* on Tonina Mon. 183 (B4). Other common examples of double possession in the script include *uyajawte'*, *uyajawk'ahk'*. Cf. *okom* 'columna de madera'; *okom che'* 'pilares poner de madera a las plantas'; *te'ex yokomal kab, kah* 'vosotros sois los pilares del pueblo' (Barrera Vásquez, Bastarrachea Manzano, and Brito Sansores 1980:599).



as a rare example of a vase owned by a woman and the unique vessel said to be owned by this specific person.

Table 5. Ceramic vessels with designated female owners.

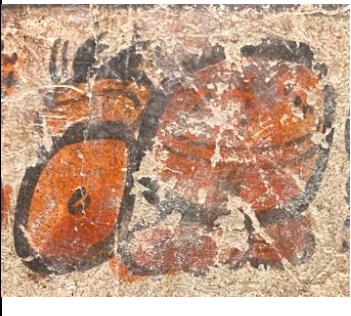
Designation	Type	Region of origin	Owner	Citation
K1941	Vase	Tikal	Ix K'an Ahk? ??	(Houston 2018:193, n. 22)
K2324?	Vase	Xultun	Ix Chan Chahk?	(Houston 2021)
K2695	Vase	Tikal	[personal name not given]	(Houston 2018:193, n. 22)
K2777?	Vase	Motul de San José	[personal name not given]	(Houston 2018:193, n. 22)
K4463	Vase	Oxkintok	[personal name not given]	(Houston 2021:fig. 5)
K4996	Vase	Motul de San José/Xultun	Ix Ha'al ??	(Matteo and Krempel 2011)
K5629	Bowl	Xultun	Ix Chan Tz'uunu'n	(Luín et al. 2018)
K5976	Vase	Xultun	Ix We'en Ohm Yo'hl Ch'e'n?	(Matteo and Krempel 2011)
K7055	Vase	Xultun	Ix Ch'e'n?	(Houston 2018:193, n. 22)
K8007	Vase	Xultun	Ix Yax We'en Chaahk	(Houston 2021)
K9072	Plate	?	K'ahk' ?? Chan Yopaat	(Houston 2018:193, n. 22)
Etnologisches Museum, Berlin 50139	Flask	Oxkintok	Mook? Tz'ikiin? Aakan?	(Grube and Gaida 2006:189–191, cat. 28)
Chrysler Museum of Art 76.23.43	Vase	El Zotz	Ix Supul ??	(Looper and Polyukhovych 2016)
FUNBA 84.A.6.320.1	Plate	Xultun	Ix We'en Ohm Yo'hl Ch'e'n?	(Polyukhovych and Looper 2019)
Vase (Houston 2021:fig. 3)?	Vase	Xultun	[personal name not documented]	(Houston 2021:fig. 3)



Table 6. Required caption: Text of Maya Cylinder vase, 7th–10th century CE. Ceramic with pigment; 9 1/2 x 3 7/8 x 3 7/8 inches (24.1 x 9.8 x 9.8 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of Dr. David B. Graves, 1980.89.2. Photos by Matthew Looper.

	A	a-AL-ya	alay	here
	B	T'AB?	t'abaay?	is dedicated?
	C	u-tz'i-bi-	utz'ihbnajal	its painting
	D	-na	"	"



	E	yu-k'i-bi	yuk'ib	her drinking vessel
	F	ti tzi-hi	ti tzih	for fresh [drink]?
	G	?? K'UH IXIK	?? k'uhul ixik	?? holy lady
	H	IX HA'-NAL	ix ha'nal	Ix Ha'nal



	I	IXIM-ma	ixiim	Ixim
	J	IX u-bu/yo- CHAN/OK-k'u	ix ubuk' chan / uyook(te') k'uh	Ix Ubuk' Chan / Uyook(te') K'uh

**3. NDU81336 [Accession no. 1981.33.6; MS0277]: A Xultun-area vase for 'royal-tree' cacao (Fig. 15).**

This black-on-cream vase is decorated with leaf-embellished serpent motifs symbolizing the royal headband. It has a PSS painted near its rim, which is defined by thin black band. Its style can be compared with other vessels that include references to Baax Witz, the polity that included Xultun, though it was painted by a different artist (Fig. 16).



Fig. 15a. Required caption: Maya, Cylinder vase, 7th–10th century CE. Ceramic, 9 1/4 x 4 1/8 x 4 1/8 inches (23.5 x 10.4 x 10.4 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of I. L. and E. E. Lopata, 1981.33.6. Photo by Matthew Looper.



Fig. 15b. Required caption: Maya, Cylinder vase, 7th–10th century CE. Ceramic, 9 1/4 x 4 1/8 x 4 1/8 inches (23.5 x 10.4 x 10.4 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of I. L. and E. E. Lopata, 1981.33.6. Photo by Matthew Looper.

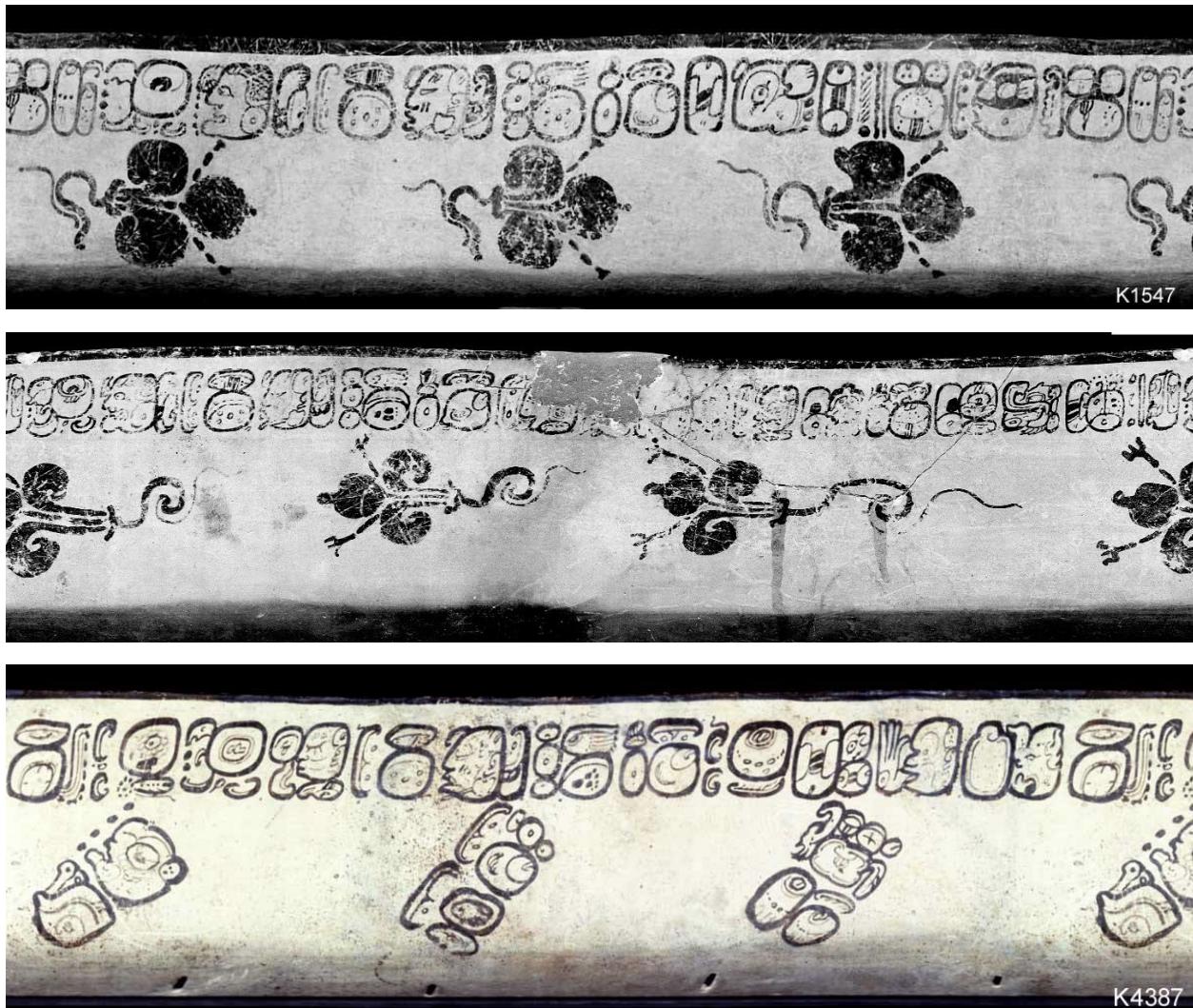


Fig. 16. Rollouts of painted vases associated with Baax Witz polity: K1547, 2358, 4387. Photos by Justin Kerr.

The presentation of the text is similar to other Xultun-area vessels from the Late Classic period, including the use of a distinctive "earflare" variant of the Initial Sign main sign (XG8) at A and a "breathing skull" (SE9) as the main sign of the dedication verb (B). The person for whom the vessel was painted is named at the end of the text through generic titles also typical of this style. The first (G) consists of **AJ** followed by **AJAW** over **tzi**; however, it is likely that this is mis-drawn and the **AJAW** sign was intended to be **la**, yielding **aj laatz**. Another example of the same error appears on K1256. This title is seen on other Xultun-style vessels including K532, K3025, K3395, and K9153. The following two blocks are the "sacrificial head" **u** in block H, which serves as a complement for block I, which is the "knot-head" grapheme, tentatively read as **UB** (Tunesi and Polyukhovych 2016). This title also appears on other Xultun-style vases, including K532, K4354, and K9153. The use of the "sacrificial head" **u** as a complement for the **UB** logograph is rare but does also appear on the "Huehuetenango vase" (Univ. of Pennsylvania Museum 12699). The 'hand-monkey' **KELEM** title closes the inscription; this is also common in Xultun-style ceramics.



Even though the owner of the vase is not named personally, the PSS is interesting, as block F reads **ti AJAW-TE'-le, ti ajawte'el**, which is the preposition *ti* followed by a compound noun based the words for 'royal' and 'tree' but with an adjectival suffix. As this comes immediately after the *yuk'ib* 'his drinking vessel' collocation (E), the phrase must be a reference to the intended contents of the vase. A parallel for this phrase appears on an Early Classic bowl in the Museo Popol Vuh, Guatemala City, which states that the vessel is intended for not only *yutal kakaw* and *ixiimte'el kakaw*, but also **AJAW-TE' ka-wa**, interpreted as 'royal-tree cacao' (Fig. 17; Luin et al. 2018). This expression may emphasize cacao as a substance of particularly elevated status, appropriate to kings. Another Early Classic vessel in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art includes a reference to **AJAW-TE'** as well, which follows **ka-wa kakaw** (Fig. 18). Even though it was executed hundreds of years after these two vessels, the Nasher vase suggests that its text referred to cacao in a similar way, as pertaining to a 'royal-tree', even though the term for cacao itself is omitted.



Fig. 17. Inscription from bowl, Museo Popol Vuh 7098. Drawing by Guido Krempel (Luin et al. 2018).

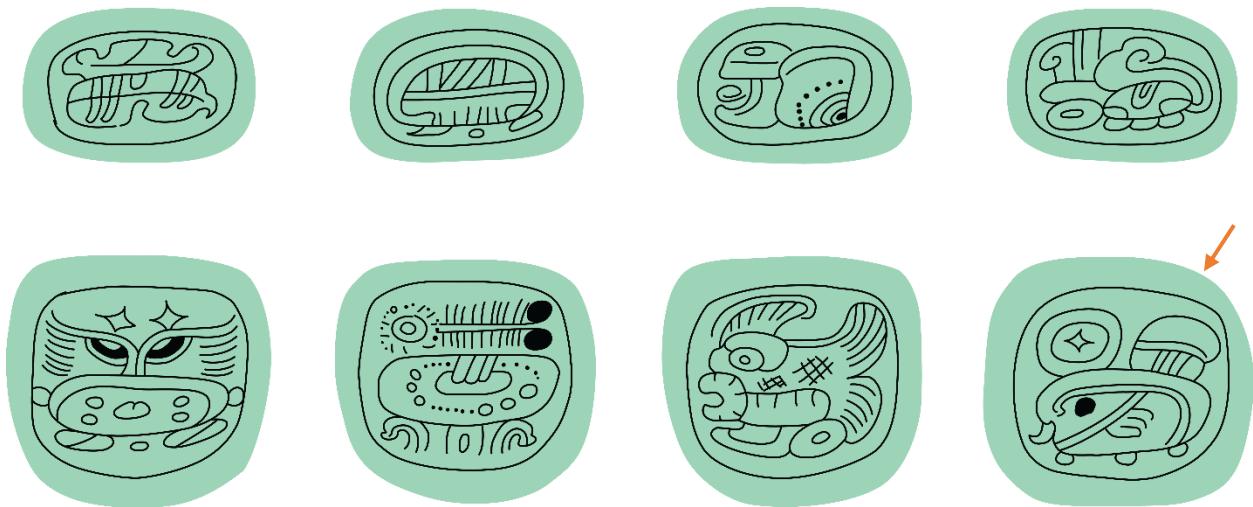


Fig. 18. Inscription from lid and body of tripod vase COLK8042, Los Angeles County Museum of Art M.2010.115.22a-b. Drawing by Dana Moot II.



Table 7. Required caption: Text of Maya Cylinder vase, 7th–10th century CE. Ceramic, 9 1/4 x 4 1/8 x 4 1/8 inches (23.5 x 10.4 x 10.4 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of I. L. and E. E. Lopata, 1981.33.6. Photos by Matthew Looper.

	A	a-AL-ya	alay	here
	B	T'AB?-yi	t'abaay?	is dedicated?
	C	u-tz'i-bi-	utz'ihbnajal	its painting
	D	-na-ja-la	"	"



	E	yu-k'i-bi	yuk'ib	his drinking vessel
	F	ti AJAW-TE'-le	ti ajawte'el	for royal tree?
	G	AJ la?-tzi	aj laatz?	he who piles?
	H	u-	ub?	listener?



	I	-UB?	"	"
	J	KELEM	kele'm	young male

**4. COLMS0274 [Accession no. 83.36.1]: An El Zott-style plate (Fig. 19).**

This large tripod plate is painted in red with a yellowish cream center and black outlines. Dana Moot (2021:62–63) assigned it to the "Mirror Face" artistic group within the El Zott regional style, which also includes K8393, K5465, K5509, and K6618. Its glyph band frames a central composition depicting an enthroned male, either a ruler or the Maize God, given his "celt" body markings, wearing an avian headdress. Attached to his back is a large serpent mouth out of which emerges a feathered panel. Similar attributes are seen on other ceramic paintings depicting avian dancers, a major theme in Maya art (see **Fig. 20**; Looper 2009:106–111). In his hand, the seated individual holds another feathered serpent "wing," framing his body. Analogous images are seen on other plates, such as MS0936, rendered in a different style (**Fig. 21**).



Fig. 19. Required caption: Maya, Tripod plate, 7th–10th century CE. Ceramic with pigment; 4 x 17 7/8 x 17 7/8 inches (10.2 x 45.4 x 45.4 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of Ethel and Irving L. Schwartz, 1983.36.1.

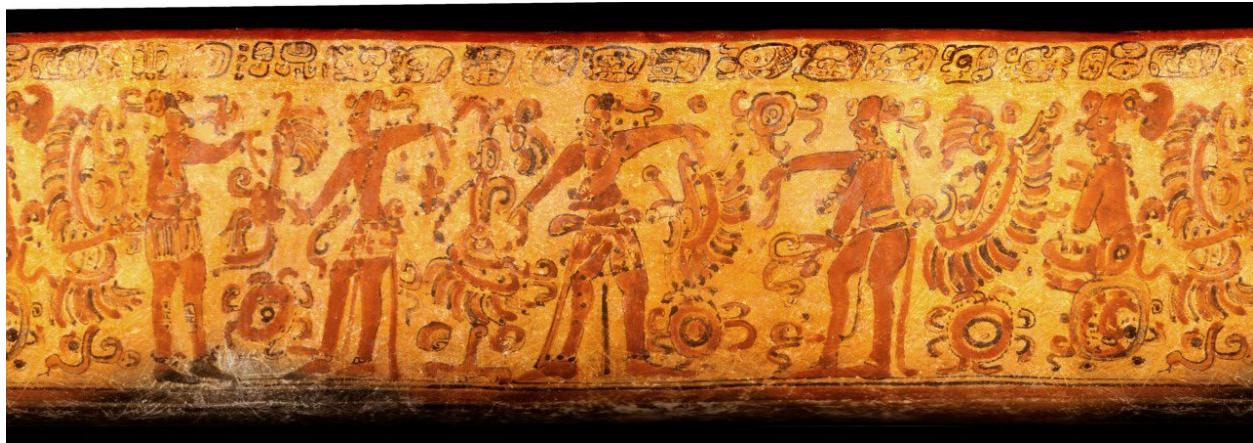


Fig. 20. Rollout of painted vase, K5746. Photo by Justin Kerr.



Fig. 21. Painted plate, MS0936. Photo by Ronald Bishop.



The inscription that is painted on the interior of the plate consists of 28 glyph blocks, nearly all of which are legible. It thus constitutes an unusually long example of a text from El Zozt-style pottery. It begins with a variant of the Initial Series Introductory Glyph the main sign of which is a "monkey" allograph (AM5) of the more common "mirror" (1M3). The dedication verb is spelled out across the next four blocks (B—E) using an allograph (PJ8) of the "step" T843, possibly **T'AB**. The suffix includes repeated **chi** syllables, the first of which at D is the personified T671 hand, followed by the "deer" at E. Blocks F—I spell out *utz'ihbal* using the "captive head" **u** variant (PC1) at F, the "bat" **tz'i** (AW1s) at G, the "spiky head-stone" allograph of **ba** (SD6) at H, and the "worm bird" **li** (BV5) at I. *Ulak* "his plate" is spelled across blocks J—L.

The remainder of the inscription records titles and possibly the personal name of the individual who owned the plate (**Table 8**). The first title series appears at blocks M—O, consisting of the "nine sky 'CANINE' sun/day nine" sequence, similar to those found on other El Zozt-style ceramics (see Carter 2015:7–9; Carter, Gutiérrez Castillo, and Newman 2018:97, 111). Because variants of this sequence appear elsewhere in monumental art, we consider it to be a title (see Looper and Polyukhovych 2022). Blocks P—R spell out the Pa'chan emblem glyph for El Zozt. Blocks S—V present another sequence that also appears on at several other El Zozt-style vessels painted in a style similar to the Nasher plate (**Table 8**). The first block is the "half-head" **TI'** with a dotted "blood" glyph in its mouth. This is a simplified spelling of *ch'ich'? ti'is* 'bloody mouth' component appearing on the other vessels. Next is *chan* 'sky', followed by the "axe-earth" grapheme and *yopaat*. The ending of this sequence with *Yopaat*, a deity name, preceded by various modifiers, suggests that this component is an example of a deity name used as a title or personal name (or theophoric appellation; see Beliaev, Davletshin, and Vepretskii 2018).⁵ Following this is **CHAK** (here, the "leaf-skull" allograph SD5), **nu**, and **BALAM**. The same name/title appears on K8393, where it includes the **tzu** syllable as well as a full syllabic spelling of *bahlam* as **ba-la-ma**. The text of K5465 only gives the first part of this name/title: *chak nutz*. While it might be a personal name, Chak Nutz Bahlam could also be an Emblem for El Zozt (see Houston, Garrison, and Román 2018:23).

Table 8. Title/personal name sequences from MS0274, K8393, K5465, COLHMM47580, COLCp2180⁶. Drawings by Dana Moot II.

<i>ch'ich'? ti'is</i>	<i>chan</i>	'AXE-EARTH'	<i>yopaat</i>	<i>chak nutz bahlam</i>

⁵ On the morphology of various component of this deity name/title, see (Zender 2004; Lopes 2011).

⁶ Block Q deleted from illustration, as it seems to be out of sequence.



The final three blocks on the Nasher plate begin with K'UH at Z, followed by a leaf-shaped sign with an elongated, darkened infix that is highly reminiscent of the "rotated earflare" sign (XG2) that is used as an Emblem Glyph main sign on El Zotz Lintel 1, as well as in one of the Emblem Glyphs at Yaxchilan (Fig. 22; see Houston, Garrison, and Román 2018:23). On the Nasher plate, the glyph that follows XG2 has an oval shape with a cleft top, which, although not readily identified, would appear to function as AJAW.



Fig. 22. El Zotz Emblem Glyphs. **a.** MS0274, blocks Z, A' and B'. Drawing by Matthew Looper; **b.** El Zotz Lintel 1, detail of text. Photo by Yuriy Polyukhovych

In conclusion, this plate includes a series of five titles/appellatives following the dedication statement: (1) a "9 sky 'CANINE' sun 9" title; (2) the *pa'chan* El Zotz Emblem Glyph; (3) a Ch'ich'? Ti'is Chan ?? Yopaat



deity name/title sequence; (4) the Chak Nutz Bahlam name/emblem; and (5) the XG2 emblem glyph of El Zotz.

Table 9. Required caption: Text of Maya Tripod plate, 7th–10th century CE. Ceramic with pigment; 4 x 17 7/8 x 17 7/8 inches (10.2 x 45.4 x 45.4 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of Ethel and Irving L. Schwartz, 1983.36.1. Photos by Matthew Looper.

	A	a-AL	alay	here
	B	T'AB?-	t'abaayich?	is dedicated?
	C	-yi-	"	"
	D	-chi-	"	"



	E	-chi	"	"
	F	u-	utz'ihbal	its painting
	G	-tz'i-	"	"
	H	-ba-	"	"
	I	-li	"	"



	J	u-	ulak	his plate
	K	-la-	"	"
	L	-ka	"	"
	M	9 CHAN-na	balu'n chan	9 sky
	N	?? K'IN	?? k'in	??



	O	9	balu'n	9
	P	K'UH	k'uhul	holy
	Q	PA'-CHAN-na	pa'chan	Pa'chan (El Zotz)
	R	AJAW	ajaw	lord
	S	CH'ICH'?-TI'	ch'ich'? ti'is	Ch'ich'? Ti'is



	T	CHAN-na	chan	Chan
	U	??	??	??
	V	yo/YOP-AT	yopaat	Yopaat
	W	CHAK	chak	Chak
	X	nu	nutz	Nutz



	Y	BALAM	bahlam	Bahlam
	Z	K'UH	k'uhul	holy
	A'	KAJ?	kaaj?	Kaaj? (El Zotz)
	B'	AJAW?	ajaw?	lord?

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