



Glyph Dwellers

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Five Inscribed Vessels in the Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia

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The Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Virginia houses one of the most important collections of ancient Maya inscribed objects in the United States, many donated by Edwin Pearlman, M.D. Some of these works are of particular historical significance, such as a Tikal area plate commemorating the ruler Animal Skull (86.432; Kerr 1261) and two vessels depicting *wahy*, one owned by the king K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk of Naranjo (86.454; Kerr 927). An elegant and famous incised conch trumpet also resides in this museum (86.457). While many of these works have been exhibited and published extensively, starting with Michael Coe and Justin Kerr's book *Old Gods and Young Heroes* (Coe 1982), others feature inscriptions that have not been published at all or only in part. In this brief note, we make available to epigraphers the complete inscriptions of five of these vessels. Four are painted in the "codex style," hailing from the Nakbe or greater Mirador Basin area of northern Peten, Guatemala, while a fifth polychrome vessel is in a style identified with El Zotz, Peten, Guatemala. Although most of these works do not include important historical data, all are expertly painted and of high artistic merit. In addition, the vessel from the El Zotz area includes an example of a previously unrecognized **yi** grapheme.

Vessel 82.118 (Codex style)

A still photo of this codex-style bowl appeared in *The Maya Book of the Dead* by Francis Robicsek and Donald Hales (Robicsek and Hales 1981:221, Tab. 22a). It has an inscription of thirteen blocks, twelve painted around the exterior wall of the vessel and another block appearing on the underside (**Fig. 1**). The interior of this bowl features elegant depictions of herons catching fish or tadpoles (**Fig. 2**). The inscription identifies the bowl as a drinking vessel for atole, owned by an unnamed artist and *a'nab* (an undeciphered title) attached to the court of Calakmul. On the bottom of the vessel was painted a toponym or title, Seven Black Yellow person (?) (**Fig. 3**; see Stuart 2009:323-324).



Fig. 1. Codex-style vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 82.118 Photographs by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 2. Codex-style vessel, interior. Chrysler Museum of Art 82.118 Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 3. Codex-style vessel, underside. Chrysler Museum of Art 82.118 Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



A a-LAY-ya alay here



B tz'i-bi- tz'ihbnaj is painted



C -na-ja " "



D ji-chi jich surface



E yu-k'i-bi yuk'ib his drinking vessel



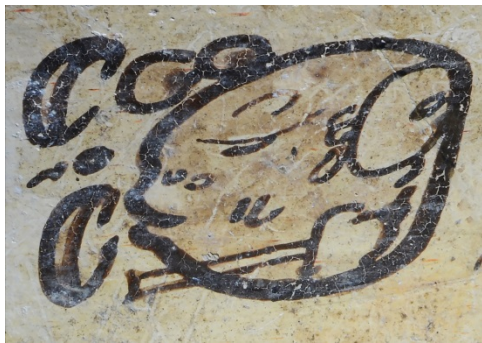
F ta u-lu ta ul for atole



G ITZ'AAT-ti itz'aat artist



H AJ la-tzi aj laatz he who piles?



I ya-na- ya'nabil his a'nab



J -bi-li " "



K	K'UH ka-KAN AJAW	k'uhul Kanul ajaw	holy Kanul (Calakmul) ajaw
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L	KAL-ma	kaloomte'	kaloomte'
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Vessel 85.139.10 (Codex style)

This bowl, supported on three T-shaped legs, is also in the codex style, but features Teotihuacan-style serpents on its interior walls (Figs. 4, 5). Its inscription consists of eleven blocks, stating that this is again a “drinking vessel” for atole, owned by an artist. The last two titles he bears, holy Chatahn person and Sak Wahyis, are common on vessels in the codex style.



Fig. 4. Codex-style vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 85.139.10. Photographs by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 5. Codex-style vessel, interior. Chrysler Museum of Art 85.139.10. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



A a-LAY-ya alay here



B tz'i-bi- tz'ihbnaj is painted



C -na-ja " "



D ji- jich surface



E -chi " "



F yu-k'i-bi yuk'ib his drinking vessel



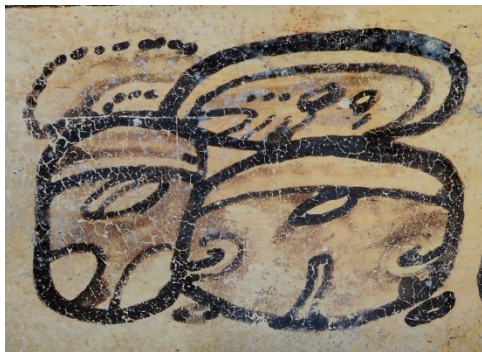
G ta u-lu ta ul for atole



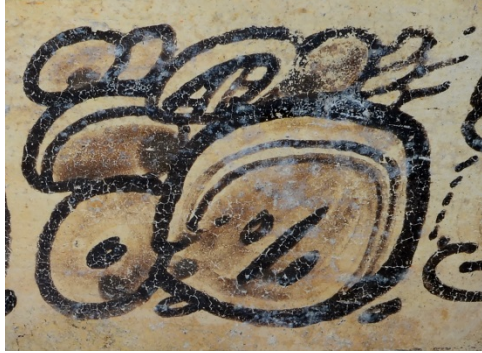
H i-tz'a-ti itz'aat artist



I AJ la-tzi aj laatz he who piles?



J K'UH cha-TAHN WINIK k'uhul Chatahn winik holy Chatahn person



K SAK WAHY

sak wahyis

Sak Wahyis

Vessel 87.195 (Codex style)

This small vase is also in the codex style, previously published in a still photograph by Robicsek and Hales (1981:226, Tab. 27d). Its lower exterior zone is decorated with a “checkerboard” pattern, while an inscription of nine blocks accents the rim (Figs. 6, 7, 8). As expected from its tall-walled form, this vase is stated to be a drinking vessel for cacao. The owner is not mentioned by name but only bears the holy Chatahn person and Sak Wahyis titles, associated with Calakmul.



Fig. 6. Codex-style vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 87.195. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 7. Codex-style vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 87.195. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 8. Codex-style vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 87.195. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



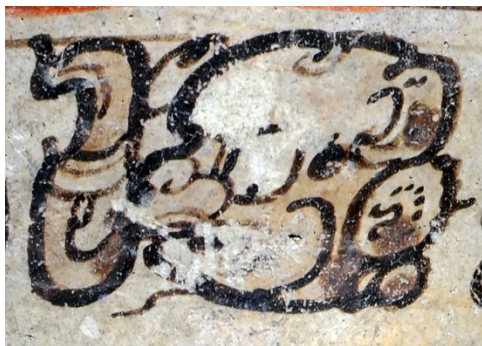
A a-LAY-ya alay here



B tz'i-bi- tz'ihbnaj is painted



C -na-ja " "



D ji-chi jich surface



E yu-UK' yuk'ib his drinking vessel



F ta yu-ta-la ta yutal for fruity/tasty



G ka-ka-wa kakaw cacao



H K'UH cha-TAHN
WINIK K'uhul chatahn
winik holy Chatahn
person



I SAK WAHY-si sak wahyis Sak Wahyis

Vessel 85.139.9 (Codex style)

A taller vase, 85.139.9, is a codex-style vessel previously published in a still photograph by Robicsek and Hales (1981:213, Tab. 12b). Its lower exterior walls are decorated with personified water lily plants (**Figs. 9, 10, 11**). The short inscription of nine blocks identifies the vase as a drinking vessel for cacao owned by a person named Yopaat. This appellative is reminiscent of Yopaat Bahlam, a name that appears on numerous codex-style vessels (e.g. Kerr 1335, 1560, 2583, 3433, 5424, 5721, 8479, as well as vase 103 A.20.72 [López and Fahsen 1994:fig. 4]). “Yopaat” is also a component of the appellative Tz’apniw Chan Yopaat Yat Wahyis (see Musée du Quai Branly 2009:340–341, pl. 136). Since *Yopaat* appears on Chrysler 85.139.9 at the end of the PSS, without any titles, it is possible that the name phrase is merely a truncated version of some other name. A similar situation pertains to Kerr 5567, which also ends with Yopaat. Alternatively, the name may simply be Yopaat, as on Kerr 3472, where Yopaat is immediately followed by the titles Chatahn person Sak Wahyis.



Fig. 9. Codex-style vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 85.139.9. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 10. Codex-style vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 85.139.9. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 11. Codex-style vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 85.139.9. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



A a-LAY-ya alay here



B tz'i-bi- tz'ihbnaj is painted



C -na-ja " "



D ji- jich surface



E -chi " "



F yu-k'i-bi yuk'ib his drinking vessel



G ta yu-ta ta yutal for fruity/tasty



H ka-wa kakaw cacao



I YOPAAT-ti? Yopaat Yopaat

Vessel 76.23.43 (Polychrome)

The final unpublished Maya inscription in the Chrysler Museum is found on a polychrome vase painted in a style associated with El Zotz (see Houston 2008). This vessel is included in the Hellmuth photographic archive, held at Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections (PC.M.LC.cb2.142). The upper zone of the exterior has a dedicatory inscription in polychrome glyphs on a cream background, while the lower zone features large portrait heads of monkey scribes (**Fig. 12, 13, 14**). Like many vessels in this style, the vase's dedicatory inscription spells *utz'ihbal* over four glyph blocks. The owner is named as a woman, Lady Sup, while the last three blocks (presumably additional components of the name or titles) are mostly illegible.

In contrast to the vessels discussed above, the dedication verb on 76.23.43 consists of an undeciphered main sign similar to T1000 followed by a rare gourd-like sign that is a **yi** syllable (Polyukhovych and Loper 2016). The usual PSS dedication verb forms that are followed by **yi** syllables are the God N head, step, and skull-with-breath, as well as a female head.



Fig. 12. Polychrome vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 76.23.43. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 13. Polychrome vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 76.23.43. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 14. Polychrome vessel. Chrysler Museum of Art 76.23.43. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



A a-LAY-ya alay here



B ??-yi [t'abay?] [appears?]



C yi-chi yich its surface



D u- utz'ihbal its painting



E -tz'i- " "



F -ba- " "



G -li " "



H IX ix Lady



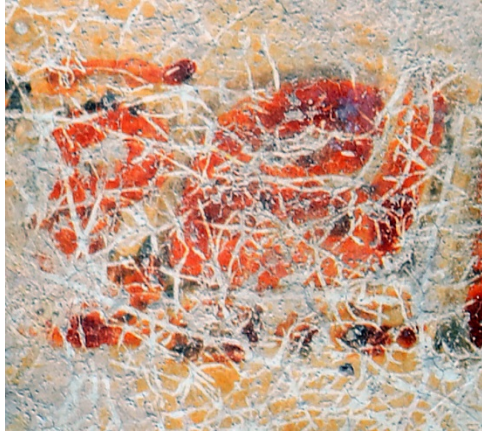
I su-pu Sup Sup



J IX lu lx ? Lady ?



K ja- _ _



L ch'a-ho? _ _ _



M 05? _ ma ho'? _ 5? _

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