



Glyph Dwellers

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New Maya Polychrome Vessels from Namaan Polity

Yuriy Polyukhovych

Department of Art and Art History, California State University Chico

Recently several high quality Maya polychrome vessels have come to light in private collections in Guatemala. Among these were two finely painted drinking cups featuring a calligraphic style of glyphs that points to production in the Namaan polity associated with La Florida (Guenter 1999; Safronov 2002; Baron 2014). Objects painted in the same style and featuring related historical information have been studied by scholars in the past (Lopes 2003; Matteo 2008). This note does not attempt to summarize the comprehensive history of Namaan polity, but will instead present an epigraphic analysis of the two vessels and some thoughts that came to mind during the examination of these texts. Both vessels have short variants of the Dedicatory Formula (Stuart 2005:114), including the names and titles of the owners.









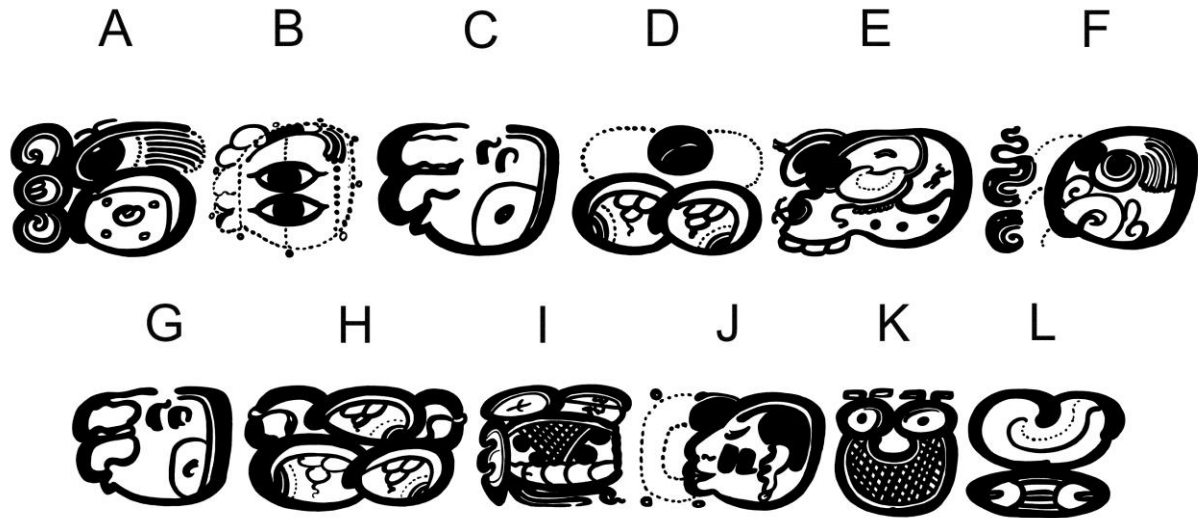


Fig. 1. Vessel 1. Photographs by Bernhard Mittelstaedt; drawing by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

A	yu-k'i-bi	yuk'ib	it is his drinking cup
B	?	?	?
C	TI'	Ti'	Ti'
D	1-PIK	Ju'n Pik	Ju'n Pik
E	JOL	Jolo'm	Jolo'm
F	K'AHK'-K'UH	K'ahk' K'uh	K'ahk' K'uh
G	TI'	Ti'	Ti'
H	?	?	?
I	na-MAN-ni-AJAW	Namaan ajaw	Namaan lord
J	IX-K'UH	Ix K'uh	[the child of] lady-god
K	ch'a	Ch'aj	Ch'aj
K	so-ko	Sok	Sok (can be also Lady-god Ch'asok)

The text of Vessel 1 consists of twelve blocks (Fig. 1). The hieroglyphic signs are painted in red on a cream background and represent one of the best examples of painted texts of the Late Classic period (600-900 CE). The vessel Kerr 5193 contains the same name as on Vessel 1 but in a slightly shortened variant (Fig. 2). It begins with very rare and distinctive grapheme that represents a face with two eyes on one side and decorated with a beaded outline.



Fig. 2. Polychrome vessel Kerr 5193. Rollout photograph by Justin Kerr.

Two other vessels, one in the Museo de Arte Precolombino y Vidrio Moderno (Hotel Casa Santo Domingo, La Antigua, Guatemala) (Fig. 3) and the other in a private collection (Fig. 4), also have the same personal name with titles, but these two texts have an additional glyph (the so-called “Flaming Ak’bal” or **AJ**) before the “Three Stones” glyph. Therefore, his complete name was [undeciphered] Ti’ Ju’n Pik Jolo’m K’ahk’ K’uh Aj Ti’ [undeciphered], and according to the text, he was a king of Namaan.



Fig. 3. Polychrome vessel in the Museo de Arte Precolombino y Vidrio Moderno, Hotel Casa Santo Domingo, La Antigua Guatemala. Photographs by Alexandre Tokovinine.









Fig. 4. Polychrome vessel, private collection. Photographs by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

It is interesting that Pomona Hieroglyphic Panel 12 (also known as Element 44) contains the same composition of glyphs as on Vessel 1, including additional **-ma** after **JOL** “skull/head” sign (Fig. 5). It is possible that the person mentioned on the Pomona panel is the same individual who appears on Vessel 1. Unfortunately the date and associated verb on that panel are damaged, so it is not possible to determine the complete content of this text. Nevertheless, we have possible evidence of interaction between the two polities of Pomona and La Florida.

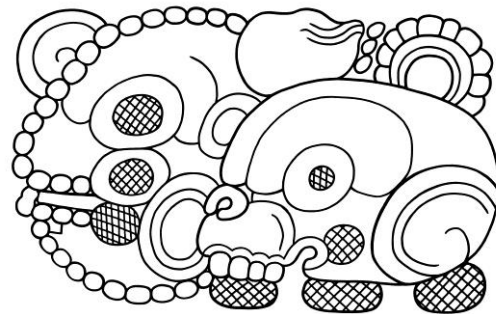


Fig. 5. Pomona Hieroglyphic Panel 12 (Element 44), detail of ruler's name. Photograph by Peter Mathews and drawing by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Although the parentage relationship glyph is omitted here, we are also provided with the mother's name, Lady Ch'aj Sok (or Ch'asok). Her name contains a beautiful example of a rare syllable **so**, previously deciphered by the author (Polyukhovych 2009).







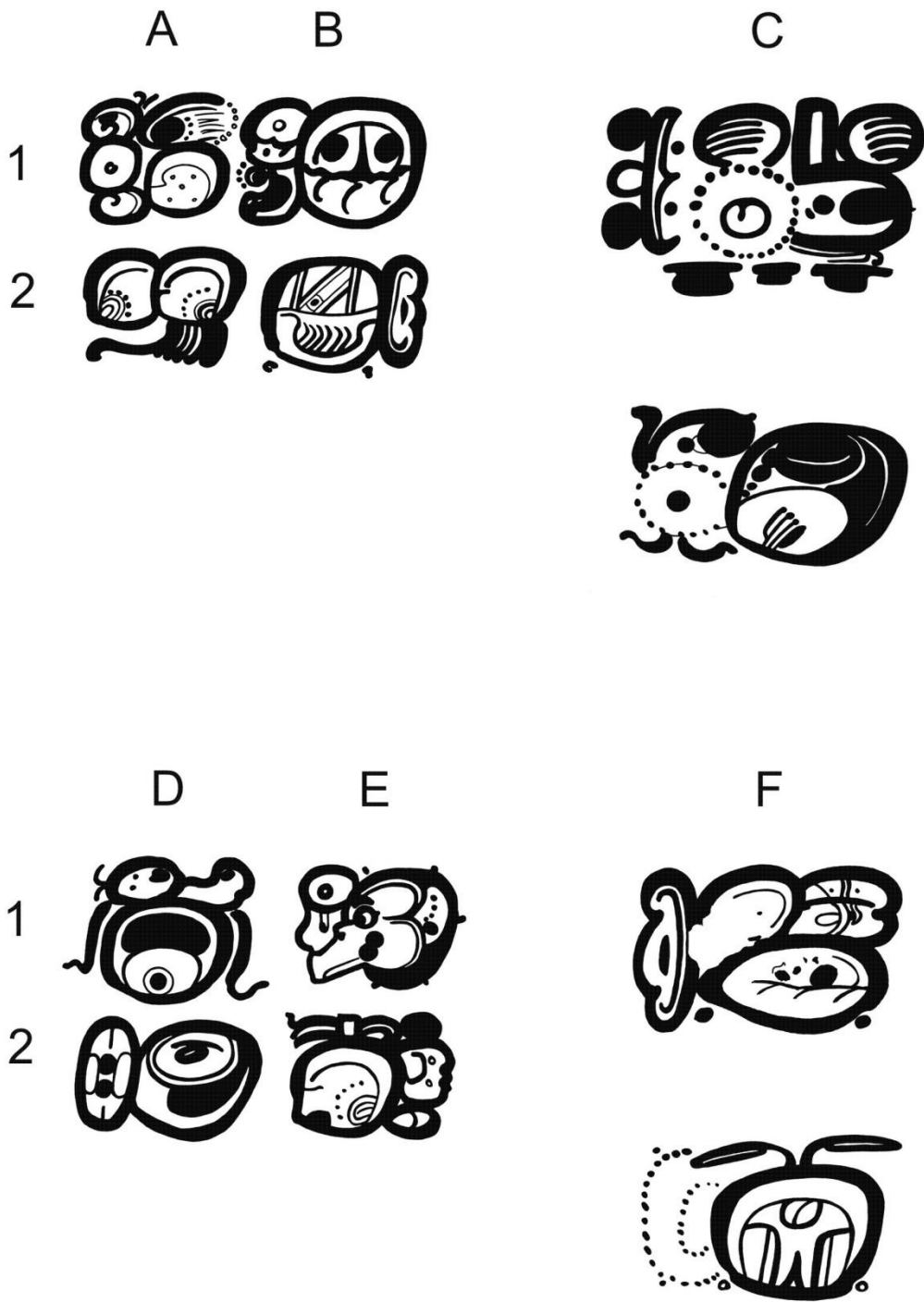


Fig. 6. Vessel 2. Photographs by Bernhard Mittelstaedt; drawing by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



A1	yu-k'i-bi	yuk'ib	it is his drinking cup
B1	a-AK'AB	Ak'ab	Ak'ab
A2	KAL	Kal	Kal
B2	CHAN-na	Chan	Chan
C1	u-ma-mo-o-la	umamo'l	the <i>mamo'</i> (title) of
C2	o-o	O'	O'
D1	IHK' WINIK?	lhk' [Mix] Winik?	Black <i>Mix</i> person?
E1	AJAW	ajaw	lord
D2	CHAK-ja-la	Chakjal	Chakjal
E2	CHAAHK	Chaahk	Chaahk
F1	na-MAAN AJAW	Namaan ajaw	Namaan lord
F2	K'UH cha	k'uhul cha[tahn winik]	holy Chatahn person

Vessel 2 also has twelve glyph blocks painted in red on a cream background (**Fig. 6**). Its inscription conveys information about the owner, who is known from several other texts on ceramics published and analyzed by various scholars (Société Générale de Banque 1977:fig. 149; Hellmuth 1987:figs. 334–337; Hoppan 2016:128; Matteo 2008:fig. 3.7). The name of this historical individual differs from one text to another, but two main components are always the same: Ak'ab Kal Chan and Chakjal Chaahk. It is important to note that in block 3 we have two possible interpretations for the collocation based on the grapheme reading **KAL**. One is that this is merely **KAL**, where **-ni** is just part of the grapheme and is actually not read (see for instance Kerr 927, 2085). Another alternative is that **KAL-ni** might form an antipassive verbal construction as a component of the name of a historical individual known from other texts on ceramics (see above). On Vessel 2, this person is also stated to be the ruler of Namaan and “holy Chatahn person.” The interesting part of the text is in blocks 5-8, where we have a parallel construction to the texts on the Brussels plate (Matteo 2008:fig. 3), a vessel from a private collection (**Fig. 4**), and the Pomona plate (Matteo 2008:fig. 5). It is important to note that block 5 on vessel 2 contains the same title *mamo'* as appears on a bowl published by Van Swieten, Hellmuth, Matteo, and Hoppan (Société Générale de Banque 1977:fig. 149; Hellmuth 1987:figs. 334–337; Hoppan 2016:128). In the case of Vessel 2, however, it is possessed: *umamo'l* or “his *mamo'*.”

Thus, we have new texts from the Namaan region with beautiful calligraphy and featuring historical information about rulers known from other inscriptions.

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