



Glyph Dwellers

Report 46

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

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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 glyphic 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 glyphic band comprises an independent Primary Standard Sequence (PSS) or Dedicatory 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 Zotz style vessels. However, the three intact PSSs identified the vessel as the property of a single individual. As is typical for El Zotz-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 Loooper 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 Zotz-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.

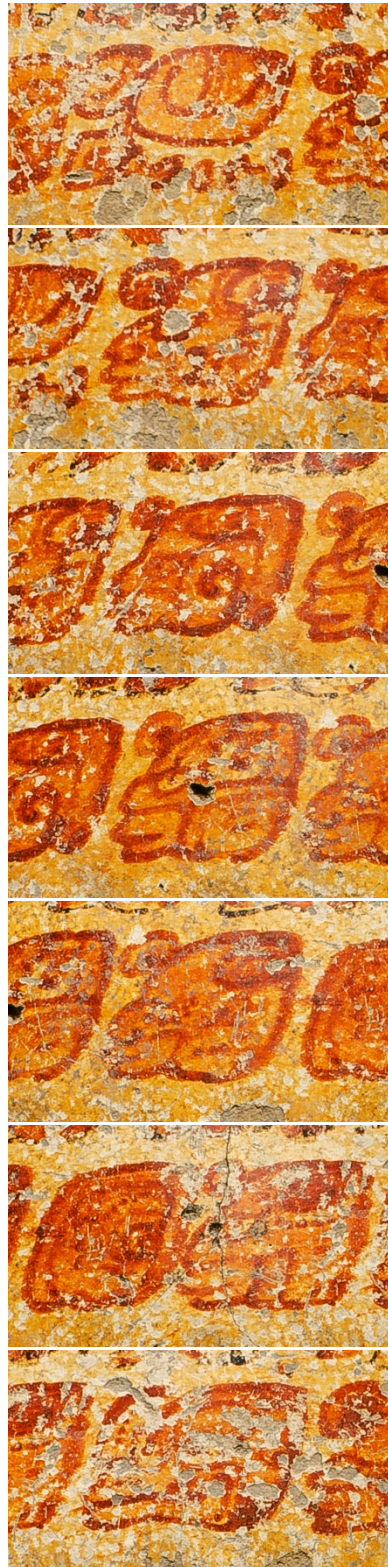
	A1	a-LAY-ya	alay	here
	A2	?	?	is dedicated?
	A3	yi-chi	yich	its surface
	A4	u-	utz'ihbaal	its painting
	A5	-tz'i-	"	"
	A6	-ba-	"	"



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



C2 ? ? is dedicated?



C3 **yi-** yich its surface



C4 **-chi** " "



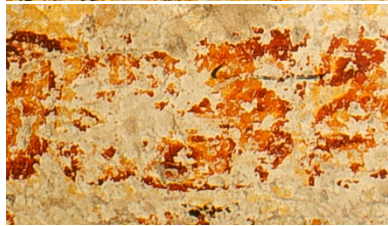
C5 **u-** utz'ihbaal its painting



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

—

—

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D11

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—

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D12

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D13

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D14

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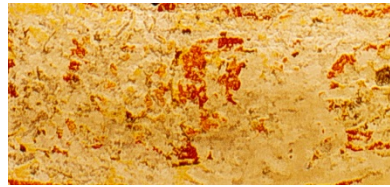


D15

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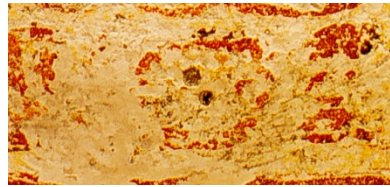


D16

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D17

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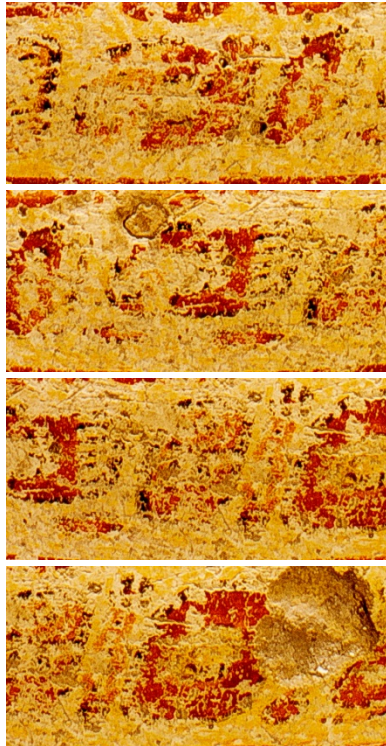


D18

yu-k'i-

yuk'ib

his drinking vessel



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

Acknowledgment: We would like to thank Jean Lancaster for giving us access to this object in the Fralin collection.

References

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