



# Glyph Dwellers

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## A Vessel from the La Corona Area in the Fralin Museum of Art

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In this note, we discuss the inscription of a Maya vessel housed in the Fralin Museum of Art, University of Virginia, Charlottesville (Acc. no. 1980.EL.6.4; MS1214). This vessel is a wide-mouthed bowl with a polychrome-painted inscription of twelve glyph blocks on a yellowish cream ground and a black rim (**Figs. 1-3**). The inscription begins with the Primary Standard Sequence (PSS) formula: *alay t'abaay(?) yuk'ib ta ul*, "Here is dedicated his drinking vessel for atole." While this part of the text is expected for a wide-mouthed bowl, what comes next is an interesting name/title sequence. It begins with the proper name of the owner, which is likely Ha'al Pi'kaj Wak Chan Yopaat ("Rain-dressed Six Sky Yopaat"). Following his name is the term *son* (**so-no**), deciphered by Polyukhovych (2009) as "dwarf." This reminds us of the palace scene of Kerr 1453 (Australian National Museum 82.22.92), in which a dwarf sips a beverage (probably pulque in this case) from a similar wide-mouthed bowl (**Fig. 4**).

Dorie Reents-Budet and Ronald Bishop (personal communication, 2016) affirm that the paste chemistry of this vessel as well as its style identify it as a product of a workshop at La Corona, Guatemala or in its immediate vicinity. Indeed, a fragmentary vessel excavated from a looters' trench in Group O2 at La Corona closely matches the Fralin bowl in style and text content (**Fig. 5**). This vessel, which seems to have been painted by the same workshop or possibly even the same artist as Fralin 1980.EL.6.4, begins with a PSS that reads: *alay t'abaay(?) jich/yich yuk'ib ta ul*, "Here gets dedicated the surface of his drinking vessel for atole." Next is *son* "dwarf," followed by **WAHY**, an abbreviation for the title Sak Wahyis, found frequently on monuments and vessels created within the Calakmul and La Corona sphere of influence. On Fralin 1980.EL.6.4, the dwarf also carries the Sak Wahyis title. Next on the La Corona vessel is a "child-of-father" statement, spelled out over three glyph blocks. This text is highly significant, as it demonstrates that the full "child-of-father" expression is *uk'ahk'al mihiiinil* (here written **u-K'AHK'**-



**k'a-la MIHIIN**). The other instance in which the child-of-father is written out over several blocks is on a bone excavated from Structure II Tomb 6 at Calakmul; however, in this case we only see **u-K'AHK' MIHIIN-na-li** (Dmitrii Beliaev, pers. comm. 2006). The name of the parent is omitted on the La Corona bowl, and there is no parentage statement at all on the Fralin vessel.

In conclusion, even though the La Corona vessel does not preserve the proper name of the dwarf as it appears on Fralin 1980.EL.6.4, we believe the close artistic similarity between these two bowls implies that they were created for the same individual, Ha'al Pi'kaj Wak Chan Yopaat. This is also suggested by the fact that no other vessels dedicated to a dwarf are known to us from the Classic Maya culture. These two examples underscore the privileged status of some ancient Maya dwarfs, who had access to high quality ceramic art, and may even have been the artists who painted these works.

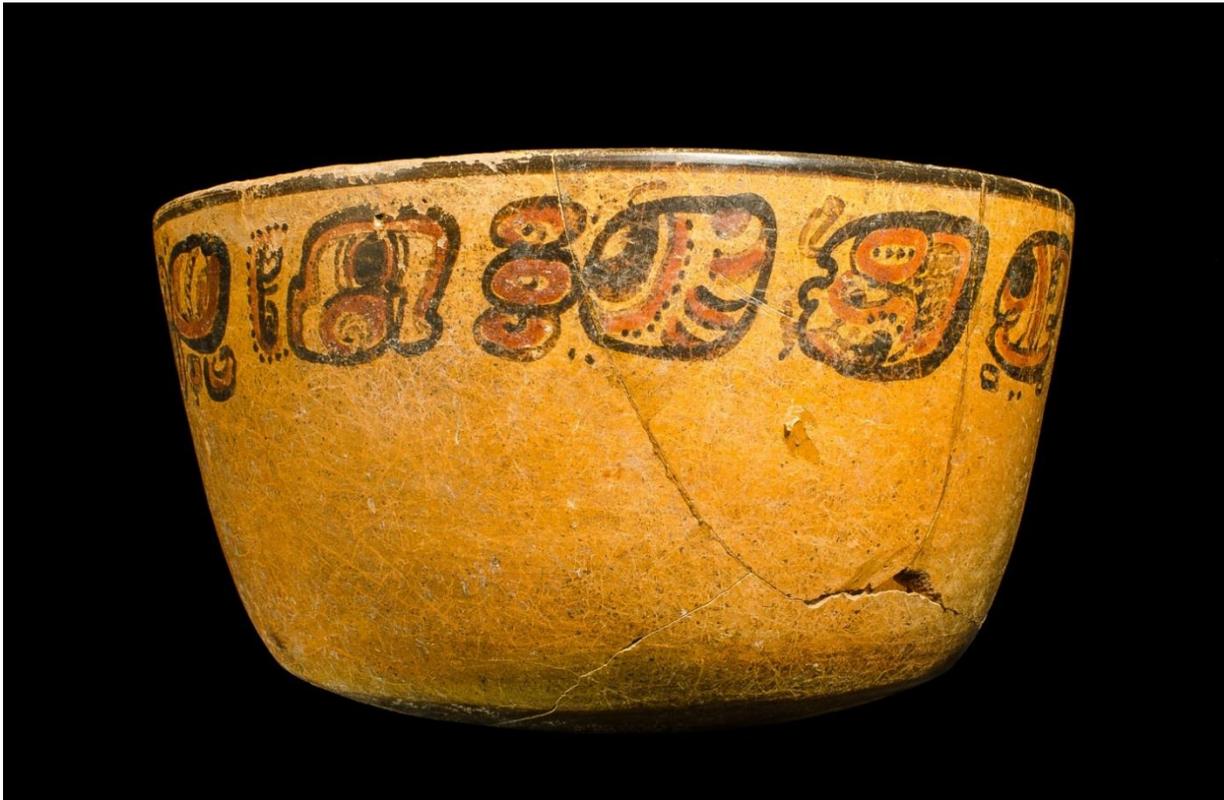


Fig. 1. Bowl, Fralin Museum of Art 1980.EL.6.4. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 2. Bowl, Fralin Museum of Art 1980.EL.6.4. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

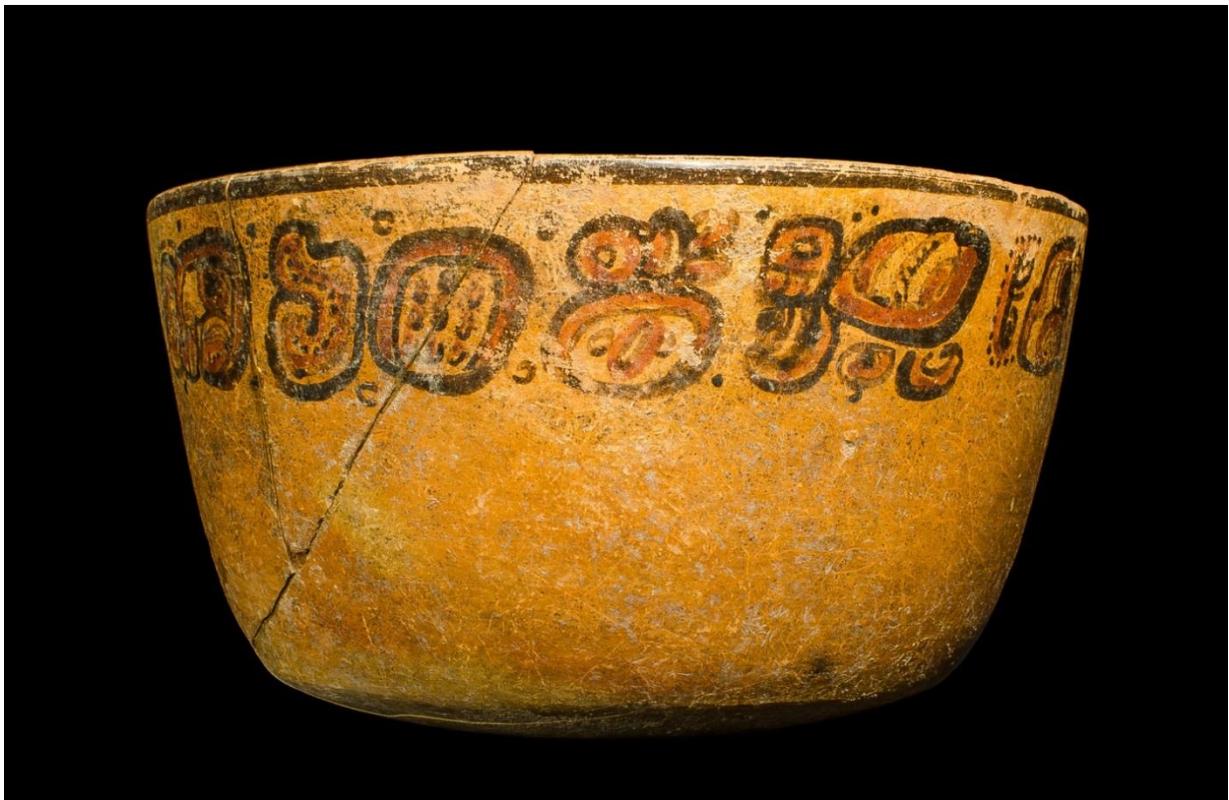


Fig. 3. Bowl, Fralin Museum of Art 1980.EL.6.4. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



Fig. 4. Rollout of Classic Maya vase showing a court scene, Australian National Museum 82.22.92. Photograph ©Justin Kerr K1453.

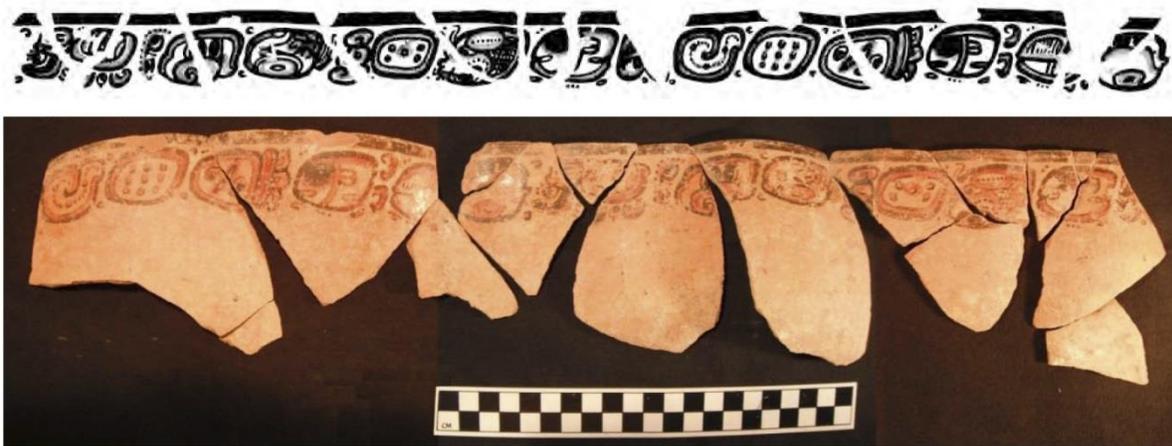


Fig. 5. Vessel fragments excavated from a looter's trench at La Corona, Guatemala. Photograph by R. Guzmán and drawing by C. Sansregret (after Barrientos Q., Canuto, and Ponce 2012:fig. 4.13).



Table 1. Inscription from Fralin Museum of Art 1980.EL.6.4. Photographs by Yuriy Polyukhovych.



A            **a-LAY-ya**            alay            here



B            **T'AB?-yi**            t'abaay?            gets dedicated  
'ascends'?



C            **yu-k'i**            yuk'ib            his drinking vessel



D            **-bi**            "            "



E            **u-**            ul            atole



F            **ta lu**            ta ul            for atole



G

**HA'AL**

ha'al

Ha'al



H

**pi-ku-ja**

pi'kaj

Pi'kaj



I

**WAK CHAN-  
na**

wak chan

Wak Chan



J

**YOP-AAT**

yopaat

Yopaat



K

**so-no**

son

dwarf



L

**SAK WAHY**

sak wahyis

Sak Wahyis

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