



Portraits of Four Kings of the Early Classic? An Inscribed Bowl Excavated at Uaxactún and Seven Vessels of Unknown Provenance

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Uaxactún is one of the best known Classic Maya sites in the Petén area in Guatemala. It is known for its early monuments (from which it derives its name “8 (*b'ak'tun*) stone,” as bestowed by Sylvanus G. Morley in 1916), its architecture (specifically the Group E configuration), its connection to the major site of Tikal (especially through the mention of the foreigner Siyaj K'ak') and the ceramics from several important and elaborately furnished burials (Smith 1955). Most prominent among these burials is Burial A-31 (found in Structure A-V). From this burial important ceramics were collected, illustrated and described in detail by Robert Smith in 1955. Thirty years later these ceramics were discussed by Charles Lincoln (1985). One specific ceramic vessel from this burial has been exhibited abroad (e.g. Eggebrecht and Eggebrecht 1992: Catalog No. 41 [p. 336]). This vessel, which currently resides in the Museo Nacional de Etnología y Arqueología (inv. no. 231), is the subject of this essay.

This blackware rounded bowl on a low pedestal base has a height of 10.5 cm and a diameter of 7 cm. It belongs to the Tzakol 3 phase of Early Classic origin (ca. A.D. 278-593).¹ In this essay it will be referred to as Vessel 1. It is incised with a hieroglyphic text consisting of ten collocations (Figure 1). The hieroglyphic text may be analyzed as follows²:

A	yu-k'i?-b'i	<i>y-uk'ib'</i>	“(it is) the drink-instrument of
B	'u-MIHIN?-na	<i>u-mihin(?)</i>	the (male) child (of father) of
C	PA'?-SKY	<i>pa'(?)chan</i>	<i>pa'(?)chan</i>
D	MAM	<i>mam</i>	grandfather ³
E	YAX-NAH-K'AN	<i>yax nah k'an</i>	<i>yax nah k'an</i>
F	WINIK/WINAK?	<i>winik/winak(?)</i>	<i>winik/winak(?)</i> ⁴
G	HEAD	?	?
H	K'UK'?[B'ALAM?]-ma	<i>k'uk' b'alam(?)</i>	<i>k'uk' b'alam(?)</i>
I	?	?	?
J	?	?	?”

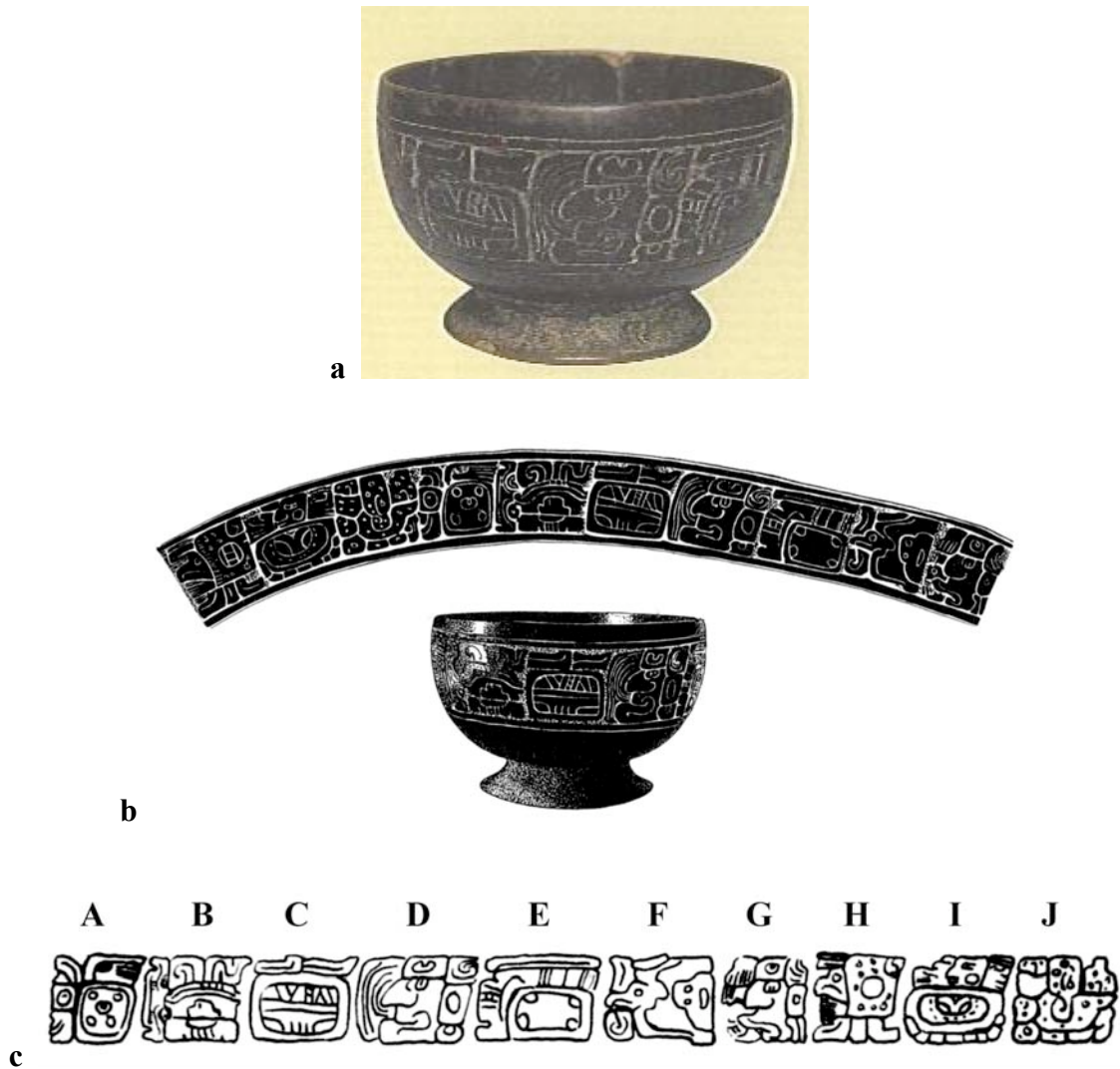


Figure 1: Vessel 1. Blackware Vessel from Uaxactún Burial A-31, a) Still Photograph (in Eggebrecht and Eggebrecht 1992: Cat. No. 41), b) Rollout Drawing and Bowl (in Smith 1955: Figures 8g & 8h), c) Rollout Drawing of the Text (in Smith 1955: Figure 81s).

The hieroglyphic text opens with the common vessel type denominator *yuk'ib'* “(it is) the drink-instrument (of)” (Boot 2005). This is as short as a Primary Standard Sequence dedicatory formula can get (Coe 1973). It is followed by the expression *umihin(?)*, in which the value **MIHIN?** for the T535 collocation was tentatively suggested by Marc Zender (n.d.). Alternatively, Nikolai Grube has proposed **MI'IN**. Independent of its decipherment, structurally this collocation refers to “(male) child (of father)” (Jones 1977, Schele and Mathews 1983). The third collocation was identified by Federico Fahsen as a variant of the Uaxactún “Emblem Glyph” (Eggebrecht and Eggebrecht 1992: 336), which is followed here with some hesitation. The fourth collocation seems to be the Early Classic variant of the

logographic sign **MAM** GRANDFATHER, a sign deciphered first by David Stuart.⁵ The fifth collocation, and last which can be identified with some certainty, can be transcribed **YAX-NAH-K'AN** (or, alternatively, **NAH-YAX-K'AN**).⁶ The resulting transliteration *yax nah k'an* or Yax Nah K'an may provide a personal name (Valdés, Fahsen, and Escobedo 1999: 52). The remaining collocations are transcribed with less confidence; these collocations are rare (F, G, H: K'uk' B'alam[?]) and possibly even unique (I, J) within the corpus of Classic Maya hieroglyphic texts.⁷ At this moment this important text can thus only in part be understood. It identifies the vessel as an *uk'ib'* “drink-instrument”, which seems to belong to the (male) child of a certain Pa'(?)chan Mam, who may through a personal name be known as Yax Nah K'an (or, alternatively, Nah Yax K'an). A second nominal phrase seems to follow.

For a long time this vessel with its incised hieroglyphic text was unique within the corpus of Maya cultural artifacts. However, in recent years seven ceramic vessels have come to light which seem to be closely related to the Uaxactún bowl. These seven vessels provide intriguing but still difficult to understand hieroglyphic texts as well as some intriguing iconography. A first ceramic vessel, here to be referred to as Vessel 2, can be found in the collection of the “Museo Juan Antonio Valdés” at the site of Uaxactún. The vessel, of unknown provenance, has been assigned a Tzakol 3 date, and it has a height of 13.2 cm and a diameter of 16.5 cm (Grube 2000: 34) (Figure 2).⁸ It has suffered slightly from breakage.



Figure 2: Vessel 2. Three Views of the “Museo Juan Antonio Valdés” Vessel (photographs by Karl-Herbert Mayer, reproduced with permission).

The text can be analyzed as follows:

A	ka-wa	(<i>ka</i>) <i>kaw</i>	“(for) cacao
B	yu-k'i?-b'i	<i>yuk'ib'</i>	(it is) the drink-instrument
C	HEAD	?	(of) ?
D	MIHIN?	(<i>u-</i>) <i>mihin</i> (?)	the (male) child (of father)
E	YAX-NAH-K'AN	<i>yax nah k'an</i>	(of) Yax Nah K'an
F	MAM	<i>mam</i>	grandfather”

This text is somewhat distorted,⁹ although it clearly relates to the first part of the Vessel 1 text, referring to the vessel type (plus contents) and the phrase *(u-)mihin(?) yax nah k'an mam*.

A second ceramic vessel, here referred to as Vessel 3, is Kerr No. 5018. This vessel was added to the Classic Maya Data Base on September 7, 1998; it has a height of 10 cm, a diameter of 16.5 cm, and a circumference of 56.5 cm. It was part of the Leroy Cleal collection, now in its entirety at the de Young Museum in San Francisco (Donald Hales, e-mail to the author, May 17, 2005). The body of this oval-shaped vessel contains four columns of hieroglyphic signs, each separated by a cartouche containing a portrait head. The headdress or headband of each of the four portrait heads is distinctively and individually rendered. Each of the four glyph columns contains two glyph collocations (Figure 3).

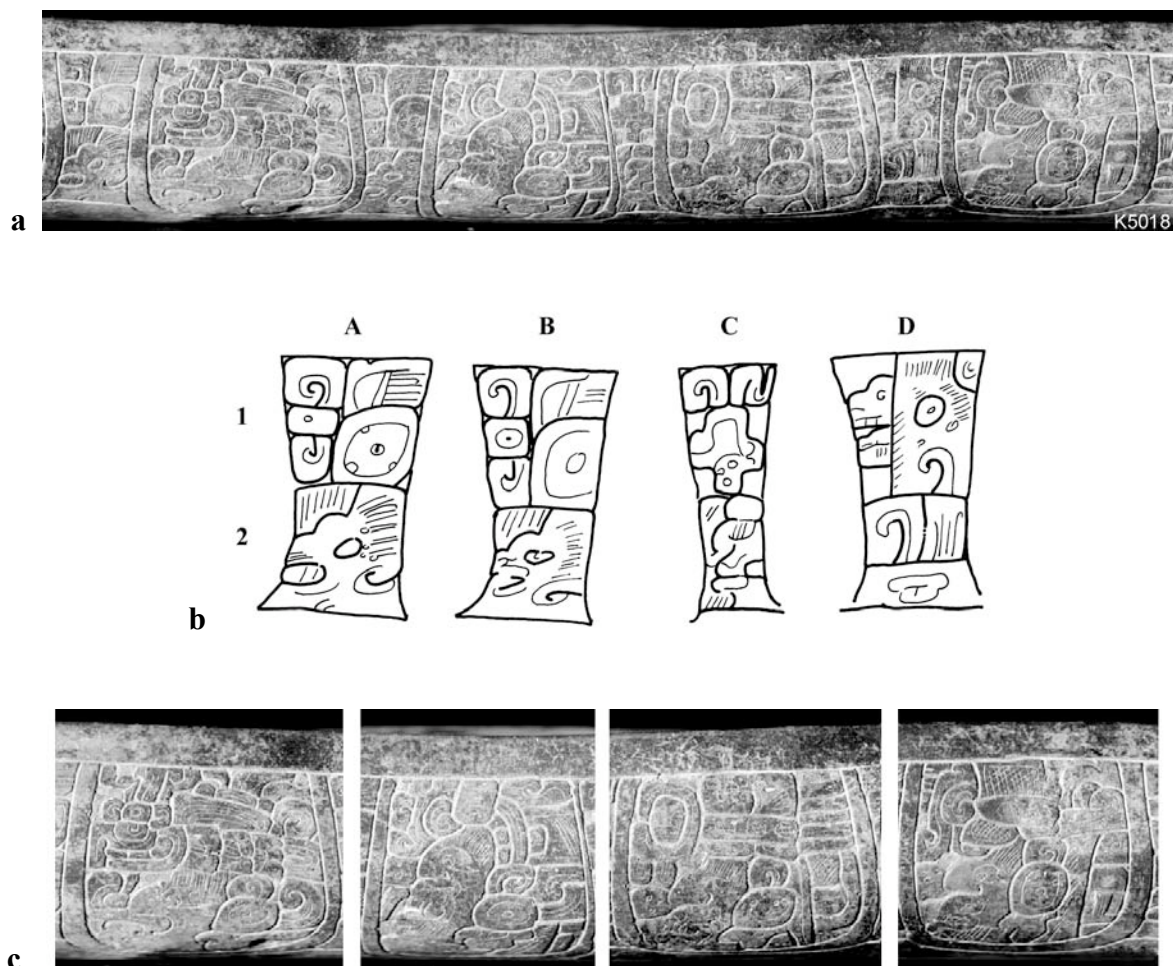


Figure 3: Vessel 3. Kerr No. 5018, a) Rollout Photograph by Justin Kerr, b) Preliminary Drawing of the Four Text Columns (drawing by the author), c) The Four Cartouches with Individual Portrait Heads on Kerr No. 5018 (photographs by Justin Kerr).

In order the text columns on Vessel 3 can be analyzed as follows:

A1	yu-k'i?-b'i	<i>y-uk'ib'</i>	“(it is) the drink-instrument
A2	ka	<i>ka(kaw)</i>	(for) cacao of
B1	yu-k'i?-b'i	<i>y-uk'ib'</i>	“(it is) the drink-instrument
B2	ka	<i>ka(kaw)</i>	(for) cacao of
C1	MIHIN?	<i>(u-)mihin(?)</i>	(the) (male) child (of father) of
C2	MAM	<i>mam</i>	grandfather
D1	K'UK'?[B'ALAM?]	<i>k'uk' b'alam(?)</i>	K'uk' B'alam (?)
D2	?-'IK'	<i>? ik'</i>	? Ik' ”

The first two columns provide the introductory text *yuk'ib' kakaw* “(it is) the drink-instrument (for) cacao”. Like Vessel 2 this text elaborates on the introductory label on Vessel 1 from Uaxactún by providing the contents, *kakaw* or cacao. The present text however, as well as the text on Vessel 2, is abbreviated in regard to the preposition *ti* or *ta* “for”.¹⁰ The two remaining columns provide an additional part of the text on Vessel 1. The passage C1-C2 *(u-)mihin mam* is parallel to B-D *umihin pa'(?)chan mam*, while D1-D2 seems to be parallel to H *(K'UK'?[B'ALAM?]-ma)*. The final collocation at D2 *(?-'IK')* seemingly is not contained in the Uaxactún vessel. The superfix may be an independent sign or part of the **'IK'** logograph.¹¹

Another ceramic vessel, here referred to as Vessel 4, entered the art market a short time ago through the Arte Primitivo web gallery.¹² This incised and carved blackware ceramic container evokes a (Xolalpan phase) Teotihuacan tripod. The body of the vessel contains four text columns, each column is separated by a cartouche or panel containing an individual portrait head (Figure 4). These portrait heads are the same as the heads on Kerr No. 5018.

The four text columns can be analyzed as follows:

A1	yu-k'i?-b'i	<i>y-uk'ib'</i>	“(it is) the drink-instrument
A2	ka-wa	<i>(ka)kaw</i>	(for) cacao (of)
A3	MAM	<i>mam</i>	grandfather
B1	YAX-NAH-K'AN	<i>yax nah k'an</i>	Yax Nah K'an, (he is)
B2	'u-MIHIN(?)	<i>u-mihin(?)</i>	the (male) child (of father) of
B3	HEAD	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
C1	BIRD	<i>?</i>	<i>?¹³</i>
C2	?-T535	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
C3	yu-ne	<i>y-une(n)</i>	(he is) the son (of father) of
D1	HEAD	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
D2	BIRD	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
D3	?-'IK'	<i>? ik'</i>	? Ik' ”

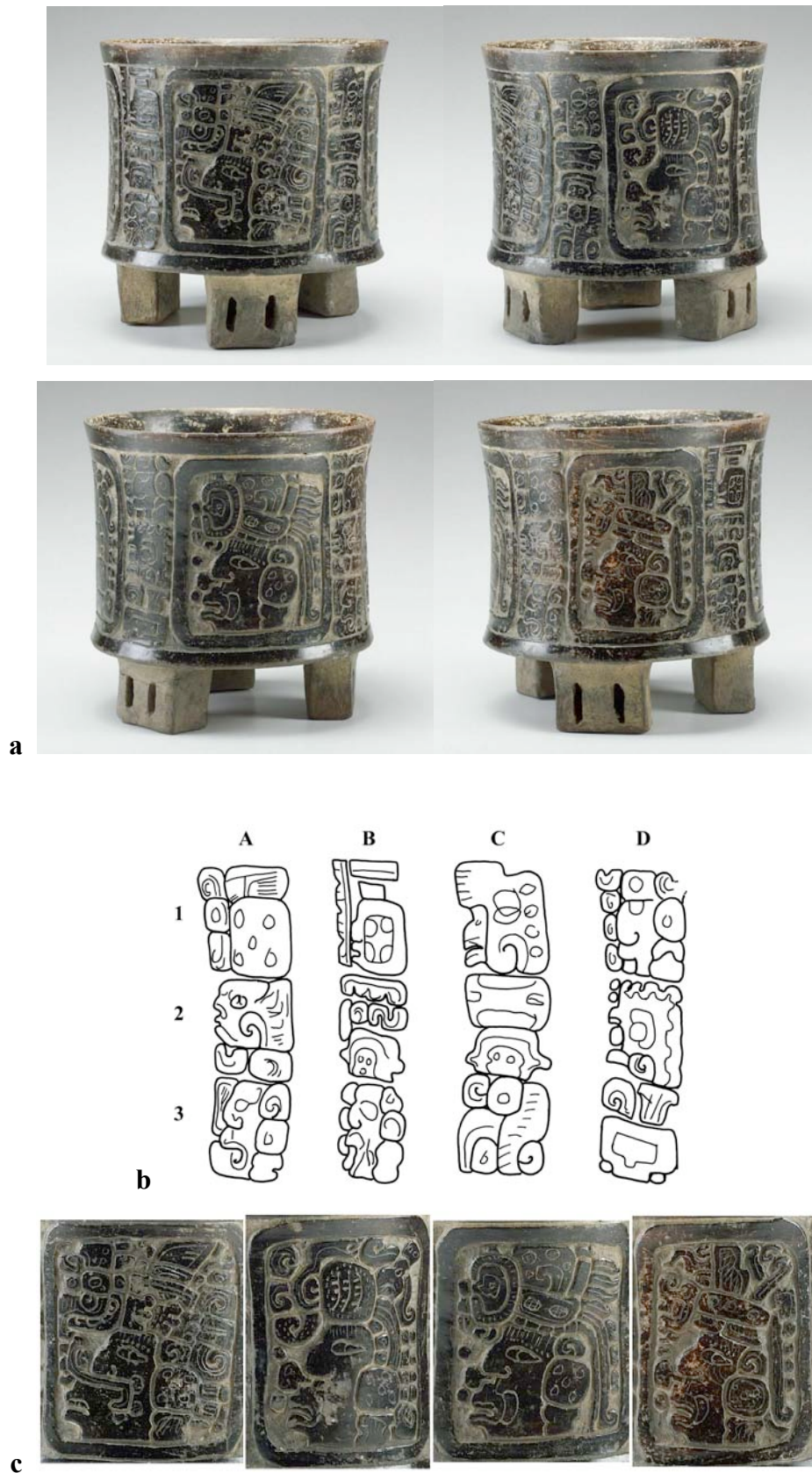


Figure 4: Vessel 4. Teotihuacan-style Tripod Vessel, a) Still Photographs by Arte Primitivo, b) Preliminary Drawing of the Text Columns (drawing by the author), c) The Four Portrait Head Panels on the Teotihuacan-style Tripod Vessel (photographs by Arte Primitivo).

The collocations at A1-B1 (*yuk'ib' (ka)kaw mam yax nah k'an*) on this vessel are parallel to A-E (*yuk'ib' umihin(?) pa'(?)chan mam yax nah k'an*) on Vessel 1 from Uaxactún, A-F (*kakaw yuk'ib' (?) (u-)mihin(?) yax nah k'an mam*) on Vessel 2, and A1-C2 (*yuk'ib' ka(kaw) yuk'ib' ka(kaw) (u)mihin(?) mam*) on Vessel 3 (Kerr No. 5018). The text continues with eight collocations which only in part seem to be parallel to Vessel 1 and Vessel 3.

The occurrence of the *umihin(?)* collocation at B2 is puzzling, but I think it is simply out of order, taking the Vessel 1 text from Uaxactún to be in the correct order. If correct, in order of the present discussion the first part of these texts can be transliterated as follows ¹⁴:

Vessel 1:	<i>yuk'ib'</i>	<i>umihin(?)</i>	<i>pa'(?)chan mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 2:	<i>(ka)kaw yuk'ib' (?)</i>	<i>(u-)mihin(?) yax nah k'an mam</i> , or	
	<i>yuk'ib' [(ka)kaw] (?)</i>	<i>(u-)mihin(?)</i>	<i>[mam] yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 3:	<i>yuk'ib' ka(kaw)</i>	<i>(u)mihin(?)</i>	<i>mam</i>
Vessel 4:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw mam yax nah k'an umihin(?)</i> , or		
	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>[umihin(?)]</i>	<i>mam yax nah k'an</i>

If correctly deduced, these four texts are indeed parallel and all three vessels refer to the same person (*umihin(?) (pa'chan) mam yax nah k'an/nah yax k'an*) and possibly a second person (*k'uk' b'alam(?)*). This second person may be mentioned in the remainder of the text on this vessel. I return to this part after the introduction of the next vessels.

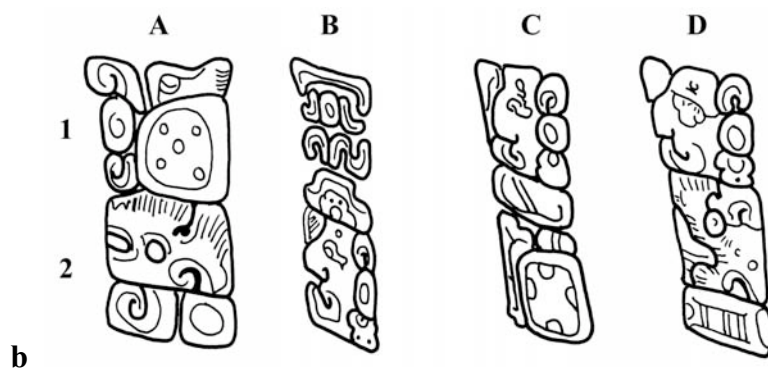
Also a couple of years ago another vessel, referred here to as Vessel 5, was offered for sale at the web site of HD Enterprises.¹⁵ This Teotihuacan-style tripod vessel is clearly similar in shape to the previous vessel; it also provides a similar text in four vertical columns and four individual portrait head panels (Figure 5). The text on Vessel 5 can be analyzed as follows:

A1	yu-k'i?-b'i	<i>y-uk'ib'</i>	“(it is) the drink-instrument
A2	ka-wa	<i>(ka)kaw</i>	(for) cacao of
B1	'u-MIHIN?	<i>u-mihin(?)</i>	the (male) child (of father) of
B2	MAM	<i>mam</i>	grandfather
C1	MAM	<i>mam</i>	grandfather
C2	NAH-YAX-K'AN	<i>yax nah k'an</i>	Yax Nah K'an
D1	['IK']HEAD	<i>ik' ?</i>	Ik' ?
D2	K'UK'?[B'ALAM]-?	<i>k'uk' b'alam(?)</i>	K'uk' B'alam(?)”

The first part of the text on this vessel runs parallel to the opening part on the other vessels.¹⁶ A comparison of the opening part on these four vessels shows the following:



a



b



c

Figure 5: Vessel 5. Teotihuacan-style Tripod Vessel, a) Still Photographs by HD Enterprises, b) Preliminary Drawing of the Text Columns (drawing by the author), c) The Four Portrait Head Panels (photographs by HD Enterprises).

Vessel 1:	<i>yuk'ib'</i>	<i>umihin(?)</i>	<i>pa'(?)chan mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 2:	<i>(ka)kaw yuk'ib' (?)</i>	<i>(u-)mihin(?) yax nah k'an mam, or</i>	
	<i>yuk'ib' [(ka)kaw] (?)</i>	<i>(u-)mihin(?)</i>	<i>[mam] yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 3:	<i>yuk'ib' ka(kaw)</i>	<i>(u)mihin(?)</i>	<i>mam</i>
Vessel 4:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw mam yax nah k'an umihin(?), or</i>		
	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>[umihin(?)]</i>	<i>mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 5:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>umihin(?)</i>	<i>mam mam yax nah k'an</i>

The final part of the text on Vessel 4 (D1-D2) is parallel to Vessel 1 (G-H), Vessel 2 (D1-D2), and Vessel 3 (D1-D3). The sign below the tentative **K'UK'?**[**B'ALAM?**] can actually be found infixed to the bird's eye on Vessel 1 at position H (compare to Figure 1b).

The next vessel of the series, referred to as Vessel 6, was offered for sale at Sotheby's in November 2004 (Horsley 2004).¹⁷ At present I have only two still photographs of this Teotihuacan-style tripod vessel available (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Vessel 6. Teotihuacan-style Tripod Vessel, a) Still Photograph by Sotheby's prior to auction (left) and Donald Hales prior to restoration (right), b) Preliminary Drawing of the Two Text Columns (drawing by the author), c) Portrait Head Panel (photograph by Sotheby's).

Vessel 6, based on a general comparison of the three previous vessels, should have four text columns of three collocations each, while there should be four cartouches or panels with individual portrait heads. The photograph as illustrated in Figure 6a (left) shows two of the text columns and one complete cartouche or panel with individual portrait head. The other photograph in Figure 6a (right) shows the vessel prior to restoration.¹⁸

The two text columns can be analyzed as follows:

A1	yu-k'i?-b'i	<i>y-uk'ib'</i>	“(it is) the drink-instrument
A2	ka-wa	<i>(ka)kaw</i>	(for) cacao of
A3	MAM	<i>mam</i>	grandfather
B1	YAX-NAH-K'AN	<i>yax nah k'an</i>	Yax Nah K'an, (he is)
B2	'u-MIHIN?	<i>u-mihin(?)</i>	the (male) child (of father),
B3	yu-ne	<i>y-une(n)</i>	(he is) the son of
...”

Again, part of the text seems to be out of order (B2 may be in front of A3), but it is clearly parallel to all of the previous vessels:

Vessel 1:	<i>yuk'ib'</i>	<i>umihin(?)</i>	<i>pa'(?),chan mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 2:	<i>(ka)kaw yuk'ib' (?)</i>	<i>(u-)mihin(?) yax nah k'an mam,</i> or	
	<i>yuk'ib' [(ka)kaw] (?)</i>	<i>(u-)mihin(?)</i>	<i>[mam] yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 3:	<i>yuk'ib' ka(kaw)</i>	<i>(u)mihin(?)</i>	<i>mam</i>
Vessel 4:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw mam yax nah k'an umihin(?),</i> or		
	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>[umihin(?)]</i>	<i>mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 5:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>umihin(?)</i>	<i>mam mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 6:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw mam yax nah k'an umihin(?),</i> or		
	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>[umihin(?)]</i>	<i>mam yax nah k'an</i>

A most interesting collocation can be found at B3. Here clearly one can identify the spelling **yu-ne**, probably an abbreviated spelling for *yune(n)* “(he is) the son (of)”. Two vessels, that is Vessel 3 and Vessel 5, specifically record the *yune(n)* collocation; this may indicate that a further parentage statement may have been present.¹⁹ It is actually based on the occurrence of these two examples spelled **yu-ne** that it is possible to identify collocation J on Vessel 1 as found at Uaxactún, the first vessel discussed in this essay. The jaguar appearance of this collocation, as first discussed by Fahsen (in Eggebrecht and Eggebrecht 1992: 336), is of importance. I think the winding tail of a jaguar is depicted, to provide the syllabic sign **ne** (from *neh* “tail”). The **yu** sign does not seem to be present, but may simply be abbreviated; one can compare this kind of abbreviation with the **MIHIN?** collocation on Vessel 2 instead of the regular **'u-MIHIN?** spelling (Vessels 1, 4, 5, and 6).²⁰ If correct, this collocation on

Vessel 1 may be out of order and possibly should be inserted in front of G-H-I. As such it is parallel to Vessel 4 and possibly to Vessel 6 (but that part of the text is still unknown).²¹

The next vessel of the present series, here referred to as Vessel 7, is a lidded vessel of Early Classic origin. The vessel is part of a private collection (location unknown). The lid of this vessel provides an incised text consisting of nine hieroglyphic collocations (Figure 7).²²

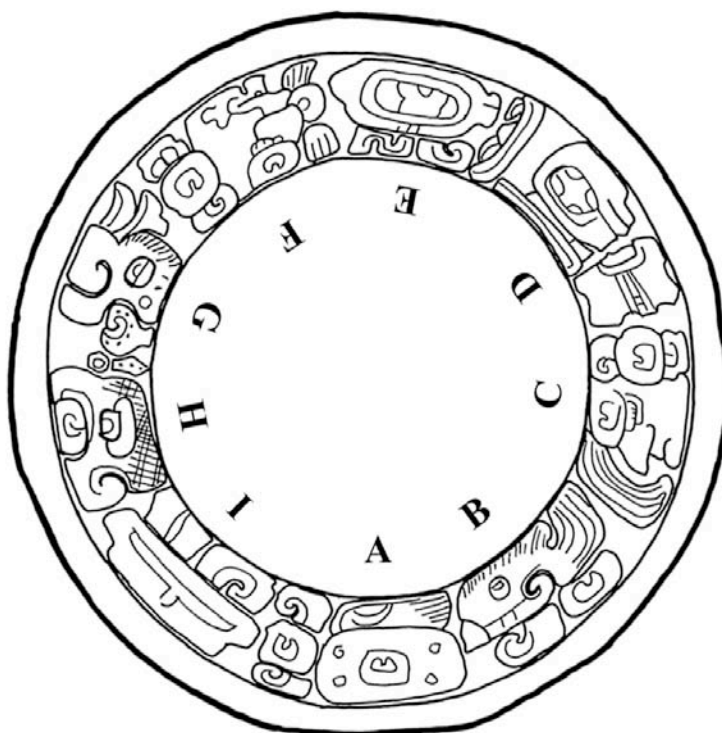


Figure 7: Vessel 7. Preliminary Drawing of the Lid Text (drawing by the author, drawn from Nicholas Hellmuth photographs in the possession of Donald Hales, all rights reserved)

The text on this lid can be analyzed as follows:

A	yu-k'i?-b'i	<i>y-uk'ib'</i>	“(it is) the drink-instrument”
B	ka-wa	<i>(ka)kaw</i>	(for) cacao (of)
C	MAM	<i>mam</i>	grandfather
D	YAX-NAH-K'AN	<i>yax nah k'an</i>	Yax Nah K'an, (he is)
E	'u-MIHIN?	<i>u-mihin(?)</i>	the (male) child (of father) of
F	HEAD	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
G	K'UK'?[B'ALAM]	<i>k'uk' b'alam(?)</i>	K'uk' B'alam(?)
H	BIRD	<i>?</i>	<i>?²³</i>
I	?-'IK'	<i>? ik'</i>	<i>? Ik' ”</i>

This text provides yet another variant of the previously analyzed texts. The first part of this text is parallel to the other examples and can be added to the listing:

Vessel 1:	<i>yuk'ib'</i>	<i>umihin(?)</i>	<i>pa'(?)chan mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 2:	<i>(ka)kaw yuk'ib' (?) (u-)mihin(?)</i>	<i>yax nah k'an mam, or</i>	
	<i>yuk'ib' [(ka)kaw] (?) (u-)mihin(?)</i>		<i>[mam] yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 3:	<i>yuk'ib' ka(kaw)</i>	<i>(u)mihin(?)</i>	<i>mam</i>
Vessel 4:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw mam yax nah k'an umihin(?)</i>	<i>, or</i>	
	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>[umihin(?)]</i>	<i>mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 5:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>umihin(?)</i>	<i>mam mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 6:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw mam yax nah k'an umihin(?)</i>	<i>, or</i>	
	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>[umihin(?)]</i>	<i>mam yax nah k'an</i>
Vessel 7:	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw mam yax nah k'an umihin(?)</i>	<i>, or</i>	
	<i>yuk'ib' (ka)kaw</i>	<i>[umihin(?)]</i>	<i>mam yax nah k'an</i>

The section of the text after the *u-mihin(?)* collocation on Vessel 7 is more difficult to decipher. The first head glyph at position F is a variant of the head glyph as found in the other texts, while the conflation or compound **K'UK'?**[**B'ALAM**] at G is similar to examples on for instance Vessel 1 and 5 (specifically note the jaguar ear in the Vessel 7 text). The last collocation contains a clear '**IK**' sign; the superfixed sign on this vessel is the same as on the other vessels (but reversed). Interestingly, this sign combination can be found on Late Classic Maya ceramics, for instance in the hieroglyphic texts on Kerr Nos. 1728 and 3844 (Figure 8).



Figure 8: A Comparison of the ?-'**IK**' Collocation: a) The Early Classic Vessels (drawings by the author), b) Kerr 1728 (photograph by Alexandre Tokovinine), and a Glyph Collocation on Kerr No. 3844 (photograph by Justin Kerr).

In the Late Classic texts (Figure 8b) the collocation is last in a nominal and titular phrase, suggestive of an important title as commonly the most important titles are last in a sequence. The Late Classic examples can be transcribed **K'UH-?-'IK'-?** (Kerr No. 1728) and **K'UH-?-'IK'** (Kerr No. 3844) for *k'uh(ul) (?) ik'*. The Early Classic versions do place the *(?) ik'*

collocation last; it is important to note that the added distinctive and discriminatory qualitative adjective *k'uh(ul)* “divine, god-like” may be a Middle or Late Classic innovation.²⁴

The last vessel in the present series, here referred to as Vessel 8, is part of a public collection, in this case the collection at Duke University. There this bowl was photographed by Donald Hales some 25 years ago (Figure 9).

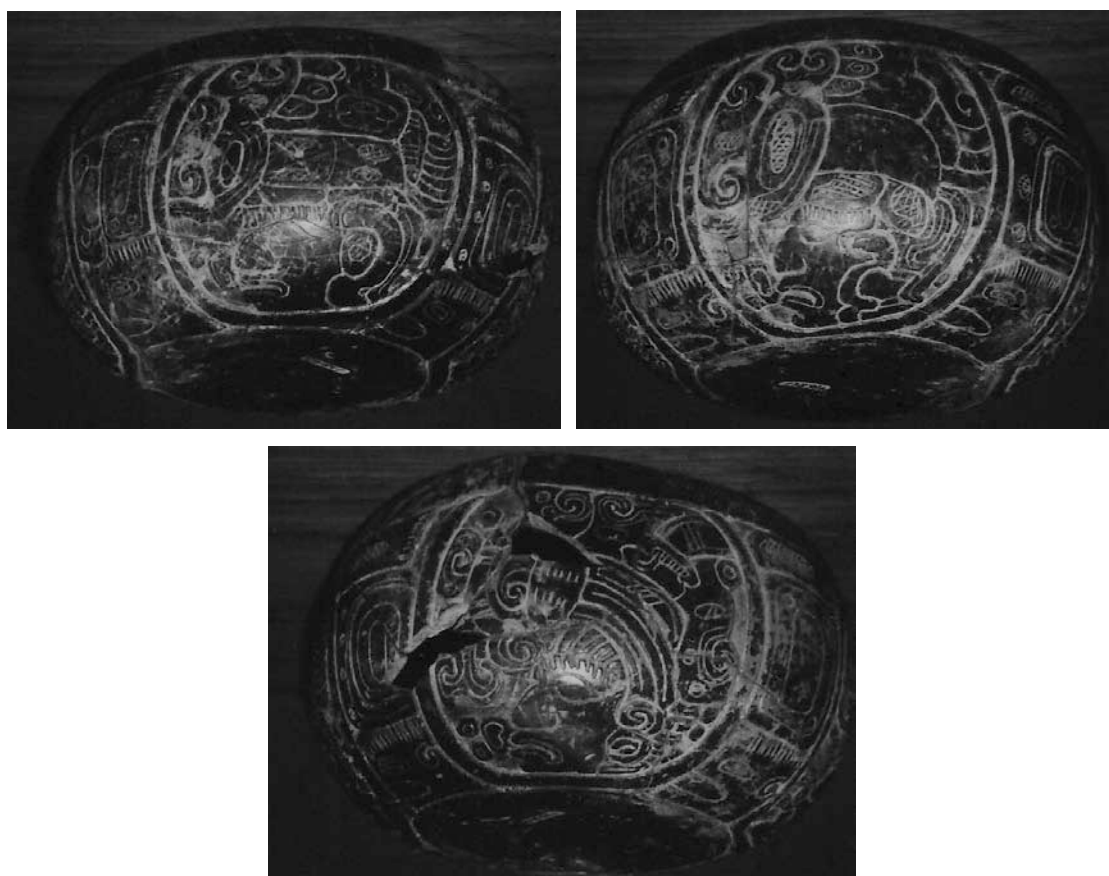


Figure 9: Vessel 8. Three Views of the Duke University Bowl (photographs by Donald Hales).

This bowl provides four texts and four oval panels or cartouches containing individual portrait heads comparable to those as found on Vessels 3, 4, 5, and 6. The four short text columns provide four slightly different variants of the phrase **yu-k'i?-b'i ka** for *y-uk'ib' ka(kaw)* “(it is) the drink-instrument (for) cacao”. The portrait heads are difficult to identify. The first and second view of this bowl seems to be portrait head 3 (as on the other vessels, compare to Figure 10), while the other the third view may actually depict a different individual.

Before I continue with an analysis of the individual portrait heads, a small section of the first part of these texts needs to be addressed. Vessel 1: F seems to be parallel to Vessel 4: C1-C2. The collocation on Vessel 1 depicts a bird emerging from a T535 “capped” *ajaw* sign (as described by Fahsen [in Eggebrecht and Eggebrecht 1992: 336]) which may have the value **WINIK/WINAK?** (see note 4). The two collocations on Vessel 4 provide a glyphic sign depicting the head of a bird, a sign comparable to T570 (but lacking the distinctive wavy center line) and T535, the “capped” *ajaw* sign (but without the superfixed CURLS sign). The collocation on Vessel 1 may be the fully contracted or conflated version of the three single signs as employed on Vessel 4. Separately these collocations, however, remain without a good decipherment. Based on all eight vessel texts I take this **WINIK/WINAK?** compound and the sequence BIRD T570? T535 to be part of the nominal or titular phrase of Mam Yax Nah K'an (or Mam Nah Yax K'an).

Although not each and every collocation on these eight vessels can be identified with complete confidence, seven of the eight texts clearly refer to the same people. The tentative identification of the Pa'(?)chan or Uaxactún “Emblem Glyph” main sign by Fahsen may connect these people with the site of Uaxactún, the site where Vessel 1 in this essay was excavated. The person with the name Yax Nah K'an (or Nah Yax K'an) has not been identified in a monumental hieroglyphic text yet at Uaxactún, nor has the other person named K'uk' B'alam(?). The texts on these eight vessels all contribute to the following summary English paraphrase: “(it is) the drink-instrument (for) cacao of (name) (,) the (male) child (of father) of (Pa'[?]chan) Mam Yax Nah Kan (Bird Emerging from *ajaw*-head), (who is) the son (of father) of (?) K'uk' B'alam(?) (?) Ik' ”.

Not only the hieroglyphic texts on these vessel are of great importance, but also the four cartouches or panels each containing an individual portrait head. The Uaxactún vessel (here Vessel 1) only provides a hieroglyphic text, as did Vessel 2 and Vessel 7; the other vessels provide variations of this hieroglyphic text and the cartouches or panels with portrait heads. As can be seen in Figure 10, the cartouches or panels on Vessels 3, 4, 5, and 6 contain a portrait head with an individually rendered headdress or headband (with Vessel 6 only contributing one cartouche or panel, due to lack of additional photographs, and Vessel 8 perhaps providing one or two other portrait heads).

There are four different portrait heads. Each of the portrait heads can be identified by a different headband or headdress. Each of the four vessels provides some differentiation, due to

artistic ability and surface treatment, but clearly there are four portraits intended. In Classic Maya art the headdresses of individual persons can be used to provide iconographic and hieroglyphic elements to identify the person depicted. This particular means of individual identification is quite common (e.g. Kelly 1982, Houston and Stuart 1998, Grube 2001). The first cartouche or panel, as I rank them in Figure 8 (this I base on which cartouche or panel was parallel to the opening collocation on the right side of the hieroglyphic text), contains a male human head. This is Individual 1.



Figure 10: The Four Cartouches or Panels with Individual Portrait Heads, a) Vessel 3, b) Vessel 4, c) Vessel 5, d) Vessel 6 (photographs by [a] Justin Kerr, [b] Arte Primitivo, [c] HD Enterprises, and [d] Sotheby's).

Individual 1 has a *k'inich* (*ajaw*) or Sun God nose piece.²⁵ His head is crowned by a headdress or headband formed by a majestic bird (the “Principal Bird Deity”) in Early Classic style. Recognizable are the beak and head with headdress, the wing, and the tail feather assemblage (or, alternatively, a part of the headdress independent of the bird) (Figure 11).²⁶

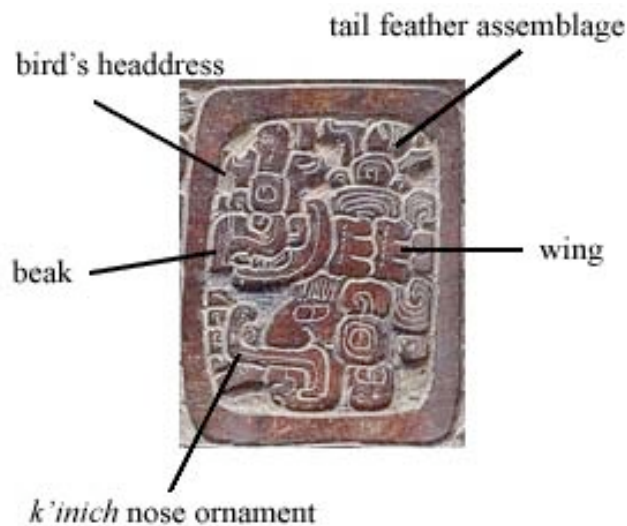


Figure 11: Identification of Iconographic Elements of Individual 1 on Vessel 5 (photograph by Sotheby's).

This human head with bird headdress to me is reminiscent of Kerr No. 2300, which refers to two Early Classic bone tubes (Figure 10).²⁷



Figure 12: Kerr No. 2300, Early Classic Bone Tubes (photographs by Justin Kerr).

If all examples of Individual 1 are compared to the individual portrayed on these bone tubes there are indeed direct parallels (Figure 13): the bird's beak, bird's head, wing, and tail feather assemblage. The individual in this portrait does not have a *k'inich* (*ajaw*) nose piece, but a simple bead (common to the portraits of Individuals 2, 3, and 4) (see note 25). Tentatively I suggest that the individual portrayed on the bone tubes is the same as Individual 1.²⁸



Figure 13: Comparison of Kerr No. 2300 Early Classic Tube Portrait and the Individual 1 Portraits (photographs by Justin Kerr, Arte Primitivo, HD Enterprises, and Sotheby's).

I take Individual 1 to be a historical figure, whose elevated status is indicated through the *k'inich* (*ajaw*) nose piece. If so, who are the other three individuals? Each individual has a distinctive headdress or headband. The distinctive element of Individual 2 is most interesting, as it seems to consist of an Early Classic rendition of T533 'AJAW from which flow two or three elongated leafs or vegetal elements (Figure 14).

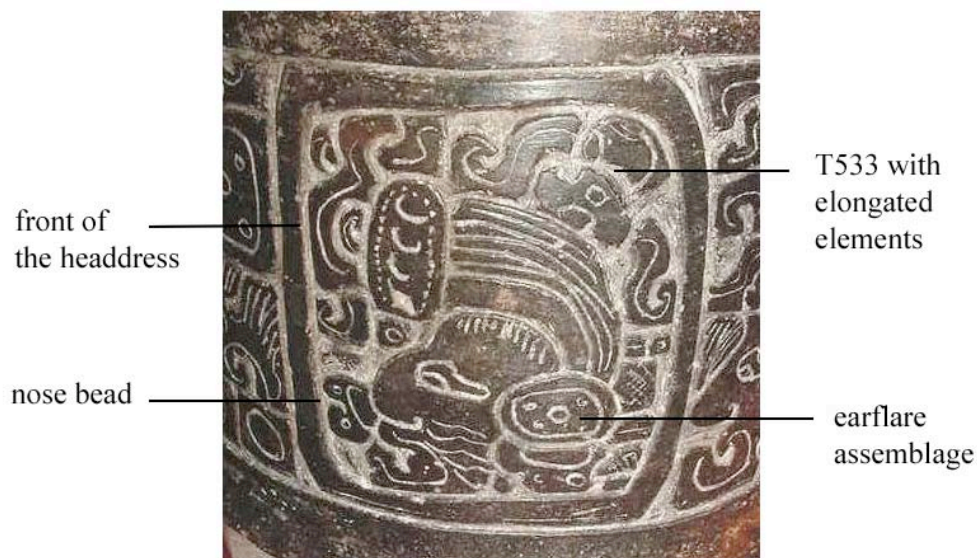


Figure 14: Identification of Iconographic Elements of Individual 2 on Vessel 4 (photograph by HD Enterprises).

The most prominent and distinguishing element of Individual 2 is the T533 'AJAW with elongated leafs or vegetal elements. Within the corpus of Maya monumental inscriptions there are five inscriptions which may shed some light on the identity of this particular individual (Figure 15).

The individual referred to as K'inich "Foliated Ajaw" on Copán Stela I is associated with the date 8.6.0.0.0, 10 Ajaw 13 Ch'en in A.D. 159 (Figure 15a). The individual nicknamed "Foliated Ajaw" on the Copán Peccary Skull is related to the date *8.17.0.0.0, 1 Ajaw 8 Ch'en in A.D. 376 (Figure 15b). The individual "Foliated Ajaw" on the Costa Rica Jade pendant is not associated with a date (Figure 15c), while the "Foliated Ajaw" B'alam Kalomte' on Tikal Stela 31 is associated with events that pre-date 8.14.0.0.0 or A.D. 316 (Figure 15d). The "Foliated Ajaw" as mentioned on Pusilhá Stela K again is associated with the date *8.6.0.0.0, 10 Ajaw 13 Ch'en in A.D. 159 (Figure 15e). With a "Foliated Ajaw" associated with A.D. 159 and A.D. 376, the distance of some 220 years suggests that these were different individuals (Grube and Martin 2001: II-10).

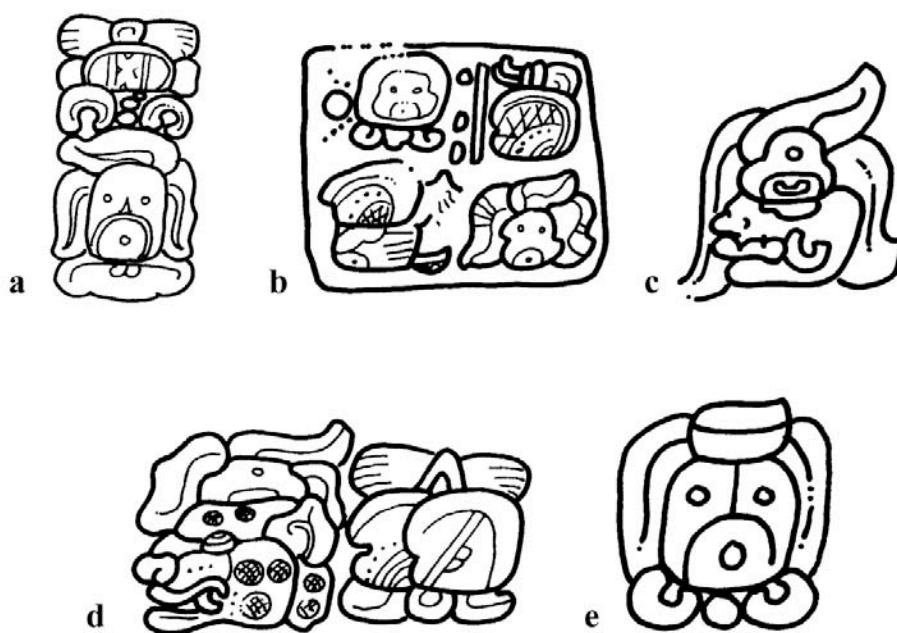


Figure 15: Five Examples of an Individual Nick-named “Foliated Ajaw”,
a) Copán, Stela I, b) Copán, Tomb 1, Peccary Skull, c) Costa Rica Jade Plaque,
d) Tikal, Stela 31, e) Pusilhá, Stela K (drawings by the author).

With possibly only two (historic) individuals known as “Foliated Ajaw,” could the portrait head marked by the T533 'AJAW sign with elongated leafs or vegetal elements on the vessels discussed above be a depiction of one of those individuals? The individuals known as “Foliated Ajaw” are associated with the Late Preclassic and Early Classic, while the vessels discussed above are associated with the Early Classic. I think there is a fair chance that Individual 2 on these vessels is indeed one of these “Foliated Ajaw” individuals (or, if not, a namesake). The other two individuals at present remain without a good identification. Their headdresses or headbands contain distinctive attributes which may make a further identification possible in the future, when more Early Classic material becomes available.²⁹ At present there does not seem to be a connection between the names as mentioned in the hieroglyphic texts on these eight vessels and the portraits depicted on five of these vessels. For the educated Early Classic “reader” of the portraits, the iconographic and hieroglyphic elements provided sufficient clues.

This essay opened with a discussion of the hieroglyphic text on an Early Classic vessel from Burial A-31 at Uaxactún. I additionally introduced seven vessels which provided variants of

the hieroglyphic text; five of these vessels additionally provided four cartouches or panels with individually distinguished and recognizable portrait heads. I related the first portrait head (Vessels 3-6) to the portrait head on two Early Classic bone tubes (Kerr No. 2300), while I tentatively identified the second as the portrait of an individual known as “Foliated Ajaw” of some Late Preclassic and Early Classic fame. The other two portrait heads currently remain without a solid identification. Perhaps these four vessels of the late phase of the Early Classic period depict the portraits of four Early Classic (or even Late Preclassic) kings or important men of elevated status. This series of vessels with its distinctive hieroglyphic text is unique in the corpus of Maya objects. I know of no other series of objects that has such clearly related text and iconography dealing with the same individuals. Future research may shed more light on these vessels, their hieroglyphic texts, and the four individual portrait heads.

Acknowledgments

I thank Elisabeth Wagner and Joel Skidmore for their efforts to provide the relevant images of the Uaxactún Burial A-31 vessel, as the Smith’s 1955 publication was far out of my reach in time of need. I thank Donald Hales for directing my attention to the line drawings of the texts on the Early Classic tubes in Stuart, Houston, and Robertson 1999. Additionally I thank him for providing photographic images of several other objects, some of which are reproduced in this essay with his permission. I thank Federico Fahsen, Christophe Helmke, and Carl Callaway for their comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this essay, from which the present version has benefitted. I thank Justin Kerr for providing a high resolution rollout photograph of Kerr No. 5018 on which the drawing in Figure 3 is based. I thank Karl-Herbert Mayer for directing my attention to the bowl in the “Museo Juan Antonio Valdés” at Uaxactún and for providing eight color images, three of which are reproduced in this essay with his permission. As always, unless stated otherwise, the opinions expressed in this essay are mine.

Notes

1) With these dates I follow one of the earliest proposals on the dating of the Early Classic, starting at 8.12.0.0 or A.D. 278 and terminating at 9.8.0.0 or A.D. 593 (Smith 1955: 105-108). Other proposals suggest a time period of for instance A.D. 250-550 (e.g. Adams 1999: 14, Culbert 1985: 76-78) or A.D. 300-600 (e.g. Miller and Taube 1993: 10). The Early Classic ceramic phase (at Uaxactún) is referred to as Tzakol. The Tzakol 3 sub-phase, to which the Uaxactún vessel is assigned, covers the last part of the Early Classic, circa A.D. 500-593. For a discussion of the validity of this and the other Tzakol sub-phases, see Lincoln 1985: 55-57. Bowls on a low pedestal base are quite rare in Maya ceramic art. From the Early Classic period this Uaxactún bowl is a rare example; Late Classic examples are more common (e.g. Kerr No. 8722 [Robicsek and Hales 1981: Figure 4b for prerestoration still photograph]; Hellmuth 1987: Figs. 402, 404 & 412-415 [ornamented pedestal]).

2) In this essay the following orthography will be employed: ', *a*, *b'*, *ch*, *ch'*, *e*, *h*, *j*, *i*, *k*, *k'*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *o*, *p*, *p'*, *s*, *t*, *t'*, *tz*, *tz'*, *u*, *w*, *x*, and *y*. In this orthography the /h/ represents a glottal aspirate or glottal voiced fricative (/h/ as in English “house”), while /j/ represents a velar aspirate or velar voiced fricative (/j/ as in Spanish “joya”) (Grube 2004). In this essay there is no reconstruction of complex vowels based on disharmonic spellings (compare to Houston, Stuart, and Robertson 1998 and

Lacadena and Wichmann 2004, n.d.; for counter proposals see Kaufman 2003 and Boot 2004a). In the transcription of Maya hieroglyphic signs uppercase bold face letters indicate logograms (e.g. **MAM**), while lowercase bold face letters indicate syllabic signs (e.g. **yu**). Items placed between square brackets are so-called infixed signs; order of the transcribed signs indicates the epigraphically established reading order (e.g. **K'UK'?**[**B'ALAM?**]). Queries added to sign identifications or transcribed values express doubt on the identification or the assigned logographic or syllabic value (e.g. **PA'?**). As a caveat, all reconstructions (i.e. transliterations) in this essay are but approximations of the original intended Classic Maya (“epigraphic”) linguistic items (Boot 2002: 6-7). Occasional citing of so-called T-numbers (e.g. T533) refers to the hieroglyphic signs as numbered and cataloged by Thompson (1962). In this essay Classic Maya dates are converted to a (Julian) Christian date through the 584,285 correlation constant (Lounsbury 1982: 166) employing the software program Maya Calendar (version 2.0) by Right Brain software.

3) The word *mam* has a larger range of meaning than just “grandfather” in Maya languages. The full range may include “(maternal) grandfather, grandson, nephew; ancestor” (Kaufman 2003: 113-115) (compare to Hage 2003: Table 1, Figure 2) as well as possibly “imposter, replacement” (based on Codex Dresden Pages 25-28) (compare to Stuart 1997: 4-5).

4) Albeit tentative, the sign compound BIRD.EMERGING.FROM.T535 may represent the value **WINIK/WINAK?** (as such the added query) for “man, person.” I base this suggestion on the occurrence of birds emerging from T535 signs employed for the *winal* period on Sacchana Stela 1 (“0 *winal*”) and a fallen stucco glyph block at Toniná (identified first by David Stuart; depicting the bird manifestation of Itzamnaj [“Principal Bird Deity”] emerging from T535, prefixed with 10 and suffixed with **-ji-ya**, thus part of a Distance Number). It also occurs in the inscription of Altar de Sacrificios Stela 12 (compare toLooper 1998: 2; Sacchana example noted in correspondence between Linda Schele and the author in 1995 regarding the decipherment of T533/535). The Altar de Sacrificios example is part of a late phase Early Classic (at 9.4.10.0.0 or A.D. 524) nominal phrase (Altar de Sacrificios Stelae 10, 11, 12, 13, and 18 are all late phase Early Classic) (drawings by the author, photograph by Joel Skidmore):



Sacchana



Altar de Sacr.



Toniná

The example on the Uaxactún vessel, turned 90° counter clockwise, would be the second example outside a calendrical context and also part of a nominal phrase (independent of any decipherment of the sign in question).

5) Oswaldo Chinchilla and Federico Fahsen identified this particular head, but without a reading, as one specifically preceding nominals in their presentation at the 13th Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala (Fahsen, e-mail to the author, April 29, 2005).

6) Notable from a calligraphic point of view are the different renditions of the **YAX NAH K'AN/NAH YAX K'AN** collocation. The **YAX** signs can be found written in five different ways, while the **K'AN** sign is included as either its regular abstract variant or its cephalomorphic variant (there is also a skull variant of the **K'AN** sign). Also the **NAH** sign can be found in different variants.

7) Several of these “unique” signs are close to well-known signs from other Early Classic texts. Christophe Helmke (e-mail to the author, May 5, 2005) suggested that the HEAD sign at position G on this vessel may be **K'INICH**; although this is possible, certain pertinent and distinctive attributes are missing, notably the triple cheek spots (found on many Early Classic **K'INICH** signs) and the infixed *k'in* sign (e.g. Bedran Burial 2, Vessel 2: I & Kerr No. 1216: D). He also noted the possible

K'UK'?[**B'ALAM?**], but without the benefit of Vessel 7 (which combined with Vessel 1 provides the best evidence for this transcription).

8) It was Karl-Herbert Mayer (e-mail to the author, May 1, 2005) who directed my attention to this vessel (illustrated in Grube 2000 as Figure 29). Through his kind permission three of the eight images he provided are reproduced here.

9) The order in this hieroglyphic text and most of the other vessels is seemingly distorted, specifically when Vessel 1 is considered to be in relative good order (or any of the other vessel texts for that matter). This group of texts particularly suffers from disorder or order distortion, which is quite rare in well-rendered hieroglyphic texts on ceramics. Examples of distorted texts (or, texts in disorder) are Kerr No. 4030 and Kerr No. 8722 (of which currently only the post-restoration version is shown at Justin Kerr's Maya Vase Data Base at URL <http://research.famsi.org/kerrmaya.html>).

10) There are various examples of the Primary Standard Sequence in which prepositions are abbreviated. For instance note Kerr No. 1203 (*yuk'ib' ta ul*) versus Kerr No. 1670 (*yuk'ib' ul*) or Kerr No. 4995 (*yuk'ib'il ta sakha'*) versus Hellmuth 1987: Figure 411 (*yuk'ib' sakha'*).

11) Christophe Helmke (e-mail to the author, May 5, 2005) suggested that the superfix may be an Early Classic version of **NAL**. While visually close to some Early Classic variants of **NAL** I identify this sign as being of unknown value; it may simply be part of the '**IK**' logograph, comparable to the rare Early Classic T23inverted-'**IK**' compound (e.g. Uaxactún fresco [twice, as day sign]; Río Azul, Tomb 7: A1 [day sign]; Río Azul, Wooden Bowl, Fragment [iconography]; Jade Museum Jade Plaque: pB10). The superfixed sign has a Late Classic manifestation much different from **NAL**, two examples of which are illustrated further below in the main text in this essay. The superfixed sign is different from T278/285 and variant signs, some of which are **sa** (e.g. T278var:552var in the Naranjo "Emblem Glyph"), others of which may be a **hu/wu** syllabic sign (e.g. T278var:EYE, as suggested by Stephen Houston [**wu**] and Marc Zender [**hu**]), while others may operate as a **nV** syllabic sign (e.g. SKY-**na** vs. SKY:T285 in the Dresden Codex & Chichén Itza, Tombstone: 10.SKY:T285, see Boot 1995). The '**IK**' sign may actually be infixed into, or superimposed upon, the sign of unknown value (see note 24).

12) This vessel came from a Texas private collection to be auctioned in June 2004 at Arte Primitivo's "Auction 26: Fine Pre-Columbian and Tribal Art." The vessel has a height of 16.2 cm and a diameter of 16.8 cm. The Arte Primitivo web site can be found at www.arteprimitivo.com.

The web site "International Cultural Property Protection," maintained by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, contains the largest selection of documents on U.S. and international laws and conventions that guard the cultural patrimony of all nations (see the web site at <http://exchanges.state.gov/culprop/sindex.html> and scroll down to the section "U.S. and International Laws"). This site also contains all relevant material, both in text and image, to identify illegally imported Precolumbian artifacts into the U.S.

13) The BIRD sign here employed seems to possess all the attributes of the **K'UK'?**[**B'ALAM?**] collocation. However, this collocation combined with the next may be a full version of the **WINIK/WINAK?** or BIRD.EMERGING.FROM.T535 collocation as found on Vessel 1. The disorder of most of these texts, as well as the variation within the disorder, makes it difficult to identify some specific signs with more confidence (compare to note 9).

14) Within this listing the order of some of these texts is reconstructed. First, with each vessel the order of each text as written will be presented, after which the reconstructed order will follow. Any reordered collocation will be placed between square brackets.

15) This vessel was offered for sale at HD Enterprises probably some two years ago. Information on this vessel is no longer available and unfortunately I have not kept any further notes. The HD Enterprises web site can be found at www.trocadero.com/HDENTERPRISES.

16) Although rare, in the Primary Standard Sequence one can find collocations being repeated, as is the case with the **MAM MAM** sequence. In hieroglyphic texts on Classic Maya ceramics, for instance note Kerr No. 1348 (*jich jich*), Kerr No. 5454 (*yuk'ib' yuk'ib'*), and Kerr No. 1810 (*ta yutal ta yutal*) (some spelling variation may occur in the repeated collocation). Also note Vessel 3 in this essay with the repeating *yuk'ib' ka(kaw) yuk'ib' ka(kaw)* text segment.

17) This was Sotheby's sale or auction 8029; the object had the auction number 298. The vessel has a height of circa 15.6 cm; I do not know the diameter. At present I only have Carter Horsley's 2004 online review available on this auction.

18) Donald Hales provided the pre-restoration photograph, taken some 25 years ago, reproduced here with his permission. This vessel was once part of the Peter G. Wray collection. A drawing of part of the other side of this vessel (also provided by Donald Hales) shows that the last glyph of the fourth column contained the '**IK**' main sign, with vestiges of the superfix sign of unknown value (Hales, e-mail to the author, May 3, 2005).

19) A good example of another Early Classic **yu-ne** collocation can be found on Kerr No. 1216, also a Tzakol 3 bowl (Coe 1982: 68 [No. 32]):



The text on this vessel (digitally edited by the author) may actually be related to the texts which are the subject of this essay. On this particular vessel the sections A-B and G-H are parallel (both open with *u-b'ah* "[it is] the head/portrait/image/self [of]" and the same head sign [of unknown value]). The nearly vertical placement of the T198 **ne**, as employed on Vessels 4 and 6, can be compared to the text on the Early Classic Kendal Earflare (at A3) (Schele and Miller 1986: Plate 10a).

20) The abbreviation of the third-person possessive pronoun is rare in monumental inscriptions, but note the text on an unprovenanced lintel (Mayer 1995: Plates 264-265). Here (at position A4) the common epithet *uchan(ul?)* of the Yaxchilán king Chelet(?) Chan K'inich Itzamnaj B'alam is abbreviated to just *chan* (by using the numeral "4"). No sign to represent the sound *u-* of the third-person possessive pronoun is recorded.

21) The disorder or distortion of order can clearly be seen at this point (compare to note 9). The complete (reconstructable) text probably contained two parentage statements, one spelled *umihin*, the other *yune(n)* (the decipherment of this relationship was suggested first by Nicholas Hopkins). Both these collocations refer to the same relationship, namely son (of father) or "man's child" (Stuart 1997: 3). Possibly the *umihin* collocation became to be displaced as it meant and referred to the same as *yune(n)*; it may actually have substituted for it in these texts.

22) The preliminary drawing by the author is based on Hellmuth photographs provided by Donald Hales. Hellmuth illustrated only small portions of this text in his 1987 monograph "Monster und Menschen in der Maya-Kunst", reproduced here (Hellmuth 1987: Figs. 450 & 453):



23) This particular BIRD sign only occurs in this text variant. It is very close to the BIRD sign as contained in a nominal phrase on the Hauberg Stela, Lower Text Panel, at position F2, possibly suffixed with a phonetic complement (**wa?**) (drawing by the author):



In the Vessel 7 text this BIRD sign is part of the nominal and titular phrase of the second person HEAD **K'UK'**?[**B'ALAM**]. Possibly the BIRD sign on Vessel 4 at position D2 is a variant form.

24) At present I do not think that these Late Classic examples are variants of the Motul de San José polity (a.k.a. the Ik' site), as some have suggested (e.g. Mathews and Zender 1998: 76), but simply the Late Classic manifestations of the Early Classic title (see note 11). The addition of the qualitative adjective *k'uhul* on the so-called “Emblem Glyph” was a late innovation to distinguish between holders of these comparable (but differentiated according to location/polity) paramount titles (Houston and Stuart 2001: 59; Martin and Grube 2000: 17; Stuart 1995: 197-198). The same may apply in the present case; the title (?) *ik'* (or *ik'* (?)) in the Early Classic and the title *k'uhul* (?) *ik'* (or *k'uhul ik'* (?)) in the Late Classic. It seems to operate as an important title as it is placed last in the sequence of nominals and titles. Common paramount titles in last position are *b'a[h]kab'* and *kalomte'*, which interestingly on rare (Late Classic) occasions can be found as *k'uhul b'a[h]kab'* (Chinkultic stela fragment; penultimate title) and *k'uhul kalomte'* (Kerr No. 4427; title prefixed to nominal phrase). The two small circular elements in the ?-**IK'** collocation on Vessel 4 are part of the logographic sign **IK'**; these do not represent a phonetic complement **la**. A phonetic complement **la** would have been written quite differently according to the Early Classic canons and calligraphic conventions of Maya writing (compare for instance to **IK'** and **la** signs occurring in the texts on Tikal Stela 31, Kendal Ax, Kendal Earflare, and an unprovenanced Olmecoid Jade Spoon).

25) This nose ornament can be found as the nose ornament of the Sun God *K'inich Ajaw*, for instance in his portraits in the Codex Dresden (Page 22B) (Late Postclassic) and Tikal Stela 31 (upper portion) (Early Classic). In most of his portraits the Sun God has a simple bead as nose ornament (much like the other three portraits on these vessels).

26) If indeed this majestic bird is the “Principal Bird Deity,” it may be identified as Itzamnaj Mut or Mut Itzamnaj (Boot 2004b for an alternative name of this bird manifestation). Thus possibly this person carried as his personal name a reference to the bird associated with the creator god Itzamnaj. In the corpus of Early Classic texts at present I am unfamiliar with any person named in this way. The text on some bones (discussed below) may have mentioned his name, but that part of the text is too eroded (see note 28).

27) The bone tubes each have a single column of glyphs, providing a continuous text from the Early Classic period (illustrated through a line drawing in Stuart, Houston, and Robertson 1999: II-37). The text records the Long Count date [Patron of the Month: K'ayab'] 8.18.4.13.19, 2 Kawak 7 K'ayab', a date in A.D. 401. I thank Donald Hales (e-mail to the author, April 28, 2005) for directing my attention to the line drawings of these tubes.

28) After the Long Count and Calendar Round date there seems to be a dedicatory verb; unfortunately the object and subject of the verb are illegible. This text may have provided the nominal phrase of the individual depicted.

29) Fahsen (e-mail to the author, April 29, 2005) directed my attention to the small *ajaw* head placed on top of the portrait of the small jaguar on Tikal Stela 29 (front) (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: Figure 49a). According to Fahsen this head may be a portrait of “Foliated Ajaw” and may be

connected to the Tikal Stela 31 reference, in which “Foliated Ajaw” is placed on top of a jaguar head (this possible parallel was also noted by Mora-Marín [2001: 172, Fig. 6.27f], but with a different interpretation) (also compare to Sheseña 2004: 24-30, Figs. 7-23 for yet another interpretation). At present I am not yet convinced of this identification; I think the small *ajaw* sign with scrolls on top of the jaguar head on Tikal Stela 29 (front) is an Early Classic rendition of T535, a “capped” *ajaw* sign with vegetal scrolls, common to other depictions of jaguar entities (e.g. Uaxactún Stela 3, Front [Graham 1986: 137]). The scrolls and elongated elements each have distinctive shapes and marks.

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