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K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich': A New Snake King from the Early Classic Period

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What we know of Classic Maya dynasties are, with few exceptions, patchwork assemblies. Without the relatively complete lists we have for Copan or Palenque, sequences of rulers can only be gleaned from scattered clues—fragments of information with which we try to identify individuals and close temporal gaps. Such is the case with the dynasty of the *kaanul* “Snake” kings whose major seats of power were located at Dzibanche and Calakmul. Here we will set out the evidence for a previously unknown *Kaanul* king from the Early Classic Period, one whose obscurity today in no way reflects his significance in the past.

We begin with a ceramic vessel excavated from Burial 23 at Uaxactun in the

1930s, a small bowl with a series of figural roundels on a black background, its rim bearing a text painted in an orange slip (Smith 1955:Fig. 7f, 80d) (Figure 1a–b). Attributable to the Tepeu 1 polychrome ceramic phase, it is notably similar to a vessel now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art designated as K6813 in the Kerr Archive (www.mayavase.com) (Figure 1c). This was produced for the Naranjo king Aj Numsaaj(?) Chan K'inich (reigned 546–615+), and, given the parameters imposed by the Three-K'atun Ajaw title ascribed to him in its text, it was made between 573 and 595. We can therefore presume that the owner of the Uaxactun bowl lived in the late sixth or early seventh century. Aj Numsaaj(?) Chan K'inich



a



b



c

Figure 1. (a–b) Tepeu 1 bowl from Uaxactun Burial A23: renderings in Smith 1955:Fig. 7f, 80d; (c) K6813 (photograph by Simon Martin).

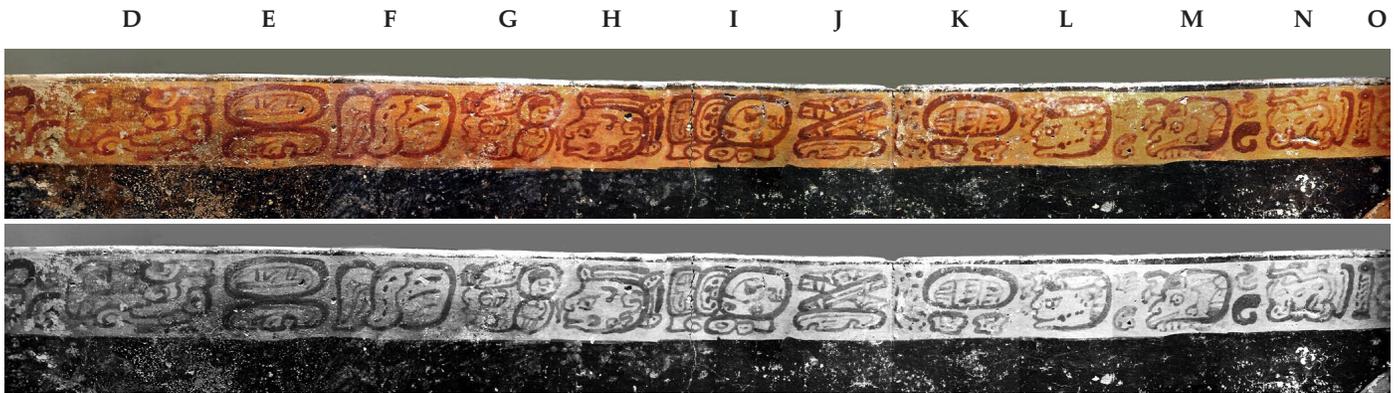


Figure 2. Rim text of Tepeu 1 bowl from Uaxactun Burial A23 (composite of photographs from the Atlas Epigráfico de Petén Project, courtesy of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala).

was a client of the Kaanul kings throughout his long reign (see below) and so we can expect that the lord the Uaxactun vessel was made for fell into their political ambit in some way. This is the period when the Kaanul kingdom was beginning to challenge for primacy in the central lowlands, largely at Tikal's expense.

After a brief introduction, the rim text features an extended nominal sequence that ends with an emblem glyph closely matching a variant used by Tikal, which is normally read *k'uhul mutul ajaw* (Figure 2, glyphs K and L).¹ Although this name shows some similarities to those of other Tikal kings of this era, it remains unique.² Significantly, the text next gives **ya-AJAW**, *yajaw* (at M), which introduces the name of an overlord (Martin 2005a:4 n. 8). His identity is of immediate interest since whoever held this position must have been a very important player in the political dynamics of the period. The published sketch of the bowl is not entirely accurate, and it took time before a compelling reading of the name (at N) emerged. Indeed, it was only after photographs taken as part of the Atlas Epigráfico de Petén project in 2015 that it was confirmed as **K'AHK'** "fire" followed by the "blood" sign **CH'ICH'/K'IK'** within the enclosing glyph for **TI'** "mouth" (a final arc

at right is part of the **TI'** sign) (Figure 3).³

Another, equally important, instance of this name comes from El Peru, where project epigrapher Stanley Guenter recently reported the discovery of Stela 44 (personal communication 2013; Pérez et al. 2014). Dedicated to the Period Ending 9.6.10.0.0 in 564, its text names the local king Chak Tok Ich'aak and his son and successor Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk(?). The regnal moniker Chak Tok Ich'aak is only otherwise seen at Tikal, where it is carried by at least two rulers (Martin and Grube 2000:28, 37). Given the proximity of El Peru to Tikal, and the known practice of vassals employing the names of contemporary or recently deceased overlords, this is very likely a sign that El Peru was subordinate to Tikal in the first part of the sixth century (Freidel



Figure 3. Tepeu 1 bowl from Uaxactun Burial A23: close-up of **K'AHK'-TI'[CH'ICH'/K'IK']** (photo: Atlas Epigráfico de Petén Project, courtesy of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala).

¹ This alternate form of the Tikal main sign **MUT** is seen in a rather later version on Tikal Stela 5 at D12, and again in portrait form at D6 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 8). It recurs within the title **MUT-la a-AJAW** on an unpublished vessel photographed by Nicholas Hellmuth, where it is directly preceded by a compound spelled 6-PET-MUT-la featuring a conventional **MUT** main sign of T569. The selection of different logograms there suggests a desire to avoid repetition in adjoining glyphs.

² Marc Zender (personal communication 2017) points out that position G reads **WI'-OHL-K'INICH**, making this king a partial namesake of the near-contemporary Ruler 8 of Copan.

³ David Stuart has proposed that T628 is the sign for "blood," though we currently lack the phonetic data that would reveal its Classic Mayan reading. Kaufman and Norman (1984:119) reconstruct the word as **kik'* for Proto-Mayan and **ch'ich'* for Proto-Ch'olan. Tzeltalan (**ch'ich'*) and Yukatekan (**k'ik'*) cognates indicate that the assimilation of **k* to **k'* is peculiar to the Lowland Maya linguistic area. The timing of the shift from *k/k'* to *ch/ch'* has lately been reassessed using the hieroglyphic corpus, the evidence suggesting that the change was incremental and diffused, rather than inherited in systemic fashion (Law et al. 2014). If the Kaanul dynasty had a northern, Yukatek-speaking context then it might even have avoided the development, despite the dominant Ch'olan orientation of the script. Thus, we do not rule out **K'IK'** as the reading of the "blood" sign in this king's name and await further evidence that might settle the matter.

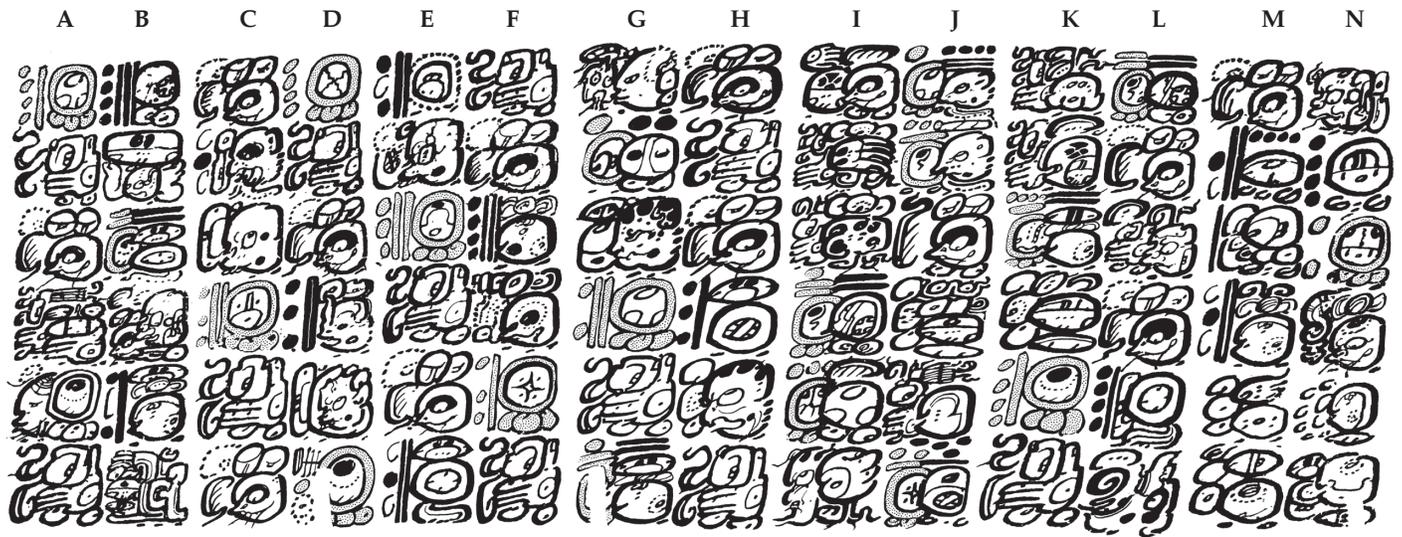


Figure 5. Codex-style Dynastic Vase K6751 lists a series of early Kaanul kings. K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich', the 16th in the sequence, is named at K1b. He is said to have "grasped K'awiil" (K1a) on 7 Lamat 6 Wo (J6). Rendering by Simon Martin after a rollout photograph by Justin Kerr.

2015:25-26). This would be consistent with the kind of hegemonic dominion Tikal is believed to have exercised in the Early Classic, especially after it became the core of the Teotihuacan-orchestrated New Order after 378. The presumed mother of Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk(?) bears the titles *sak wayis* and *k'uhul chatahn winik*, which distinctively originate in the northern Peten, the region generally thought of as the "Preclassic heartland." Conceivably, this reflects a shift in Chak Tok Ich'aak's allegiance from Tikal to the Snake dynasty that later becomes closely associated with those titles (Guenter, personal communication 2013; Freidel 2015:2, 26). If so, it would join a scenario of mounting strategic losses for Tikal, coming at much the same moment that Caracol fell from its control (Martin and Grube 2000:39). We believe that another part of the text on El Peru Stela 44 is an important piece of evidence for this process.

The accession of Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk(?) in 556 is followed by another *yajaw* statement, demonstrating that El Peru was indeed subject to a foreign power. The name of this overlord is somewhat eroded but, as Guenter notes, the outlines of K'AHK'-TI'-CH'ICH'/K'IK' (using the abstract form of the TI' logogram) are

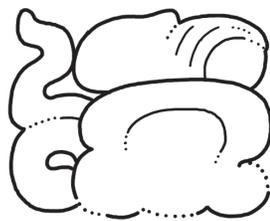


Figure 4. The K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' name on El Peru Stela 44, pE8 (photograph by Stanley Guenter, drawing by Simon Martin).

nonetheless clear (Figure 4). An emblem glyph once followed, but sadly it is now almost completely illegible and cannot help to identify him at present. The recurrence of overlord status and the general chronological fit together suggest that this is the same person as the one cited on the bowl.

K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' is not a common name. On Tikal Stela 40 (C17) it appears as a secondary appellative carried by the Tikal king K'an Kitam (reigned 458-486?) while he was still a princeling (Valdés et al. 1997:41). It turns up again on the codex-style vessel K6751, one of the so-called "Dynastic Vases" listing early Kaanul kings, where it identifies the 16th in line (Kerr and Kerr 1997:846; Martin 1997:861) (Figures 5 and 6). A connection to this kingdom seems distinctly possible, given that (a) the K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' named on the Naranjo-style bowl at Uaxactun was foreign to Tikal, (b) his name was one used by the Kaanul dynasty in primary royal position, and (c) this second overlordship would coincide with the sixth-century expansion of the Kaanul hegemony, when a number of important kingdoms fell under its influence or control.

The 556 accession date from Stela 44 offers our first fixed point for K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich's reign, since most hierarchical relationships were initiated at inauguration events. In theory, the tie could have begun anytime up to the 564 period ending recorded on the stela, but the aforementioned origin of the El Peru ruler's mother, and her potential links to the Kaanul dynasty, suggest that 556 is a viable starting point. It follows that the *k'uhul*



Figure 6. Ruler 16 from Codex-style Dynastic Vase K6751, K1b (drawing by Simon Martin).

mutul ajaw named on the Uaxactun vessel should have been active in this same general timeframe.

The major figure at Tikal at this point was Wak Chan K'awiil, the 21st king of the line whose tenure seems to have begun in 537 and may have lasted until 562 or later (Martin 2003:23-24). His is certainly not the name spelled out on the bowl, so we are obliged to explain its owner's kingly title in some other way. We currently lack the name of Wak Chan K'awiil's predecessor, the 20th Tikal king, and he might be considered a candidate, if a rather weak one.⁴ Alternatively, Wak Chan K'awiil could have had a rival for his throne, with one or more "anti-kings" who claimed a legitimacy of their own. We have come to realize that Classic Maya kingdoms were not inherently stable and on more than one occasion splintered into competing factions. We already know that Tikal's sixth century saw a degree of dynastic turbulence, with the elevation of a six-year-old queen in 511 and irregularities in the rise of Wak Chan K'awiil (Martin 2003:18-24, 2005a:6-8). We also have the precedent of the Dos Pilas dynasty, which arose in the seventh century as an offshoot and antagonist to the in situ Tikal line (Houston 1993:99-102; Guenter 2003; Martin and Grube 2008:56-57). Evidently caused by a fraternal dispute, both groups used the full *mutul* title and the division between them became a permanent one. Notably, Dos Pilas did not stand alone in its claims, but was supported by and subject to the Kaanul dynasty, by then based at Calakmul. Conceivably, K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' acted in a similar manner as the overlord and protector to a Tikal faction almost a century earlier.⁵ A third possibility is that our mystery Tikal king ruled after Wak Chan K'awiil, which would seem more in keeping with the date of the bowl. This would place him after the decisive military defeat Tikal suffered in 562 (Houston 1991:40) and therefore would make good political sense as well. The only difficulty here is that we already have a 22nd Tikal king, Animal Skull, so if that were the case the ruler on the vase was not one counted in Tikal's dynastic list.⁶

Thus far we have demonstrated no more than circumstantial links between K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' and the Kaanul line, but another inscription offers a tangible connection. It comes from a small bone discovered by Ramón Carrasco, director of the Proyecto Arqueológico Calakmul, in Tomb 6 within Calakmul Structure II (Carrasco Vargas 1999:31). The tiny eleven-glyph inscription begins by naming a woman as the owner of the bone which, like others of its kind, was probably used as a weaving pick. She is then said to be the child of a lord whose name likely fills all the remaining positions in the text. This commences at A6 with a cursive version of the K'AHK'-TI'-CH'ICH'/K'IK' name that is much like the one we saw on the bowl (Figure 7). Further down the text at A9 we can further recognize a *kaloonte'* title, preceded at A8 by what is very likely to be *elk'in* "east."⁷

Most interesting for our purposes is the collocation



Figure 7. Detail of an inscribed bone weaving pick from Tomb 6, Calakmul Structure II (photograph by Rogelio Valencia, drawing by Simon Martin, Proyecto Arqueológico Calakmul).

directly following that of K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich', AJ-?SAAK at A7.⁸ This is a close match to the name of a Kaanul king who appears on Naranjo Stela 47, recently uncovered by Vilma Fialko and her team, rendered there as AJ-?SAAK-li (Martin et al. 2016:617) (Figure 8). This unusual

⁴ The missing 20th king ruled at some point after 527 (assuming that the Lady of Tikal was a ruler without a numbered place in the sequence, as was the case with another ruling queen at Palenque). He can be a contender for the Uaxactun bowl lord only if Wak Chan K'awiil did not come to power as early as 537.

⁵ Stanley Guenter (personal communication 2016) suggests that the occupant of Burial 23 at Uaxactun should be the original owner of the Naranjo-style vessel. If so, he believes that Uaxactun might have been the temporary seat of this potential Tikal "anti-king." The Uaxactun vessel is by no means alone in providing the name of an unknown "holy lord" of Tikal; there are several others in this general timeframe.

⁶ One might wonder if a king strongly beholden to Tikal's conquerors could have been excised from the list. There is some doubt that K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' lived beyond 561 (see note 10), but his vassal could have been a former protégé, installed at Tikal after 562. The bonds between vassals and overlords were highly personal ones and known to extend beyond an overlord's death.

⁷ Kaanul kings at Calakmul use the "west" *kaloonte'* title, and the contrasting designation "east" would be appropriate if K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' ruled at the easterly center of Dzibanche (see also Martin 2014:350 n. 17; Carter 2015:11). Another bearer of this "east" *kaloonte'* title from the Kaanul dynasty was Ix Uh Chan, a princess who married into the Yaxchilan dynasty, and she too might have been a native of Dzibanche rather than Calakmul. The last two positions on the bone, A10 and A11, resemble parts of the Kaanul emblem, but not closely enough to advance the idea with any conviction.

⁸ The plain "ajaw-face" T533 has been a debating point among epigraphers for a considerable time. Here we use David Stuart's proposal of SAAK "seed" (personal communication 2006).

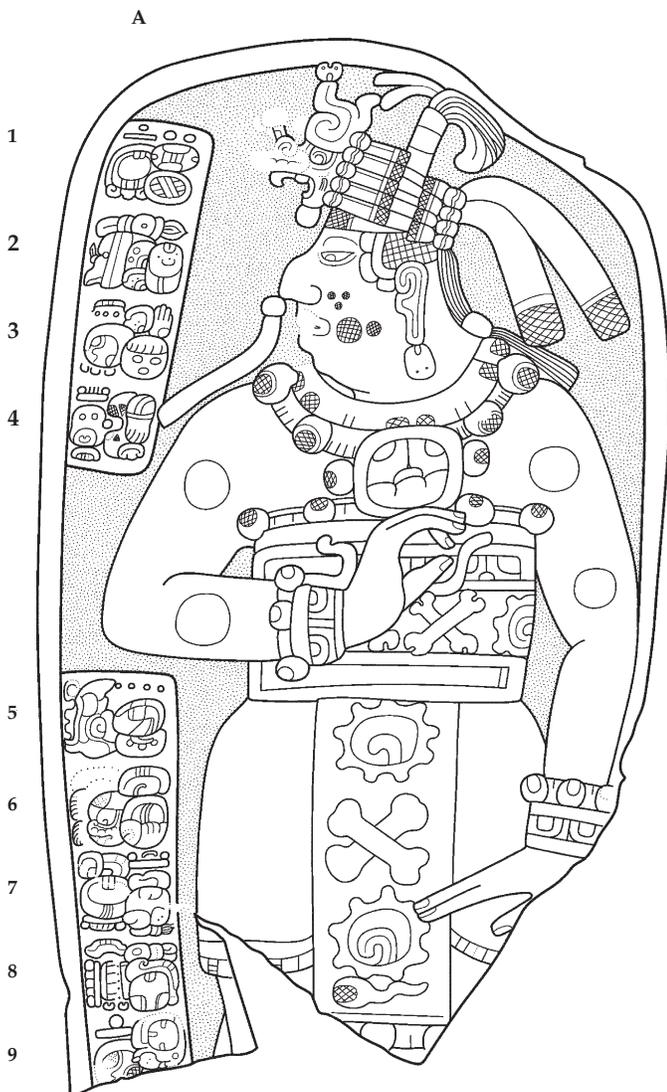


Figure 8. Naranjo Stela 47, front face (drawing: Alexandre Tokovinine).

inscription mentions three other Kaanul kings and states that they are **4-TZ'AK-bu K'UH-ka-[KAAN]AJAW** *chan tz'akbu(ul) k'uhul kaanul ajaw* "(the) four Snake kings in order," referring to the four successive overlords of the aforementioned Aj Numsaaj? Chan K'inich (Figure 9). The bone inscription gives us every reason to believe that Aj Saakil and K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' are one-in-the-same person. Moreover, returning momentarily to the bowl, it seems hardly coincidental that the lone sign at the very end of the text after the K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' name is **AJ**—which would not be an arbitrary filler in this case but a truncated reference to Aj Saakil (see Figure 2, glyph O). There are precedents on other painted vessels for this kind of stunted spelling.⁹ Aj Saakil occupies the second position in the Stela 47 list, interposed between the well-known kings Tuun K'ab Hix and Sky Witness. Our c. 556 mark fits into this scheme very well, since the last date

we have for Tuun K'ab Hix falls in 546 and the first for Sky Witness is in 561.¹⁰

Proceeding from our current assumption that all the Early Classic kings of Kaanul were based at Dzibanche, then this chronological range leads us to consider one of only two firmly dated monuments at that site, Lintel 3 from Building VI (Figure 10).¹¹ Carved into three wooden beams, the text on Lintel 3 is the conclusion of a continuous narrative whose first two installments are heavily damaged or destroyed. Featuring the period ending 9.6.0.0 from 554, it refers to the elevation of a king (one who goes unnamed on Lintel 3) into the high status of *kaloomte'*.¹² This title describes only the most powerful of Maya rulers and its appearance within an accession phrase is one of just two examples outside Tikal—where it only appears in its late period and reflects its return to political ascendancy. Working out the chronology of the lintel text is complicated by damage and some unusual phrasing, but the best reconstruction in our view

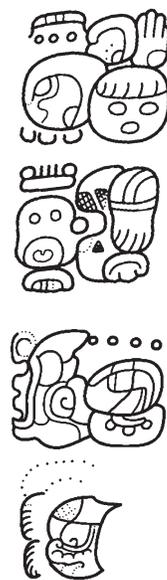


Figure 9. Detail of glyphs A3–A6 of Naranjo Stela 47 (drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine).

⁹ Maya scribes sought to fill all the available space on vessel rims, closing any final gap with narrow signs and motifs that have no real significance. However, some instances clearly suggest the truncation of prototypical texts. On K1355, for example, the filler is **yu** exactly where we would expect **yu-k'i-bi yuk'ib** "his drinking cup" to follow. The breaking of text to fill the available space is well-attested on "Dynastic Vases," most of which end mid-passage (see Martin 1997:848-849).

¹⁰ One intriguing possibility is that K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' is named as the "star war" victor against Tikal in 562, a conflict described on Caracol Altar 21 at Q4. Little of this nominal glyph survives, but a tendril at the upper left would be consistent with **K'AHK'** (Martin 2005:4 n. 8). However, if the date of 561 we have for Sky Witness at Los Alacranes (Grube 2008:195) is correct, that tendril may instead be the projected vision of the "eye" hieroglyph that begins that king's name (Martin 2005:3-5, Fig. 7).

¹¹ There can be no doubt that Dzibanche hosted a line of major Snake kings (Velásquez 2005, 2008) and that its Kaanul toponym makes it the origin of the dynasty (Martin and Velásquez 2016). Yet much remains to be learned about the history and organization of the Snake dynasty, especially in this early period, and we do not rule out greater complexity (see Martin 2005b:11).

¹² A small portion of Lintel 1 survives and appears to contain the verb *pat* "to form/make." Dmitri Beliaev and Alexandre Safronov have considered the possibility that Lintel 3 twice names the lintel's commissioning ruler as **a-?be-ya**, comparing it to a name seen on El Resbalon Hieroglyphic Stairway 1. However, more recently Sergei Vepretskii (personal communication 2015) has made a better case that they are both forms of the "focus marker" spelled **a-AL-ya**.

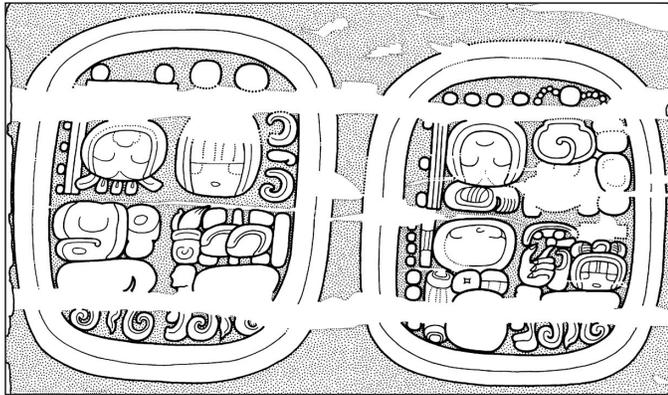


Figure 10. Dzibanche Lintel 3 (drawing by Alexandre Safronov, with minor amendments by Simon Martin).

is shown in Table 1.¹³

It will be noted that an accession date in 550 fits the reign of K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich', but much more importantly, the corresponding Calendar Round position of 7 Lamat 6 Wo is precisely the one associated with Ruler 16 in the Dynastic Vase sequence (see Figure 5, J6). There are many problems with linking that painted king list with what we know from monuments, but this connection is so strong it must be concluded that the vase text records a historical sequence from the Early Classic period, albeit one with alternative names for some kings and "errors" in several dates (Martin 1997:862-863).¹⁴ This finding will be elaborated elsewhere (Martin n.d.), but for the present we can say that K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' was the 16th king in the Kaanul dynasty and that a record of his inauguration as *kaloomte'* was inscribed in a major structure at Dzibanche.

In conclusion, we hope to have demonstrated that K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' Aj Saakil was one of the illustrious

¹³ This revised scheme takes the shrinkage and edge-erosion of the beams into account, making it necessary to switch the *winal* in the first Distance Number from 7 to 12 to fit the available space.

¹⁴ The only previous hint of an Early Classic setting was the Distance Number that concludes the king list on K6751 (see Figure 5, M2-M3). This figure of 5.4.4.11, or 104 years, would be ideal to link the era of Scroll Serpent (Ruler 19) to the period when codex-style vases were in production about a century later (Martin 1997:862-863, n.d.).

line of Kaanul kings who held sway over parts of the central lowlands during the Early Classic, an overlord who exercised influence at Naranjo and El Peru, and even over some portion of the Tikal line. This shines additional light on the formative period of the Kaanul hegemony, the years in which it first rose to challenge its great rival Tikal and set a course toward regional dominance.

Acknowledgments

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(9.05.18.13.02) 02.12.14 -	(6 Ik' 10 K'ank'in)	552	Building dedication?
(9.05.16.00.08)	(7 Lamat 6 Wo)	550	Seating as <i>kaloomte'</i>
(9.05.18.13.02) 01.04.18 +	(6 Ik' 10 K'ank'in)	552	Building dedication?
9.06.00.00.00	9 Ajaw 3 Wayeb	554	Period Ending

Table 1. Date scheme of Dzibanche Lintel 3.

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Yaxchilan Lintel 25 (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).

The Chan Tuun Itzam: Epigraphic and Iconographic Observations on a Classic Maya Collective Theonym¹

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In this essay I provide epigraphic information on the correct reading order of a particular Classic Maya collective theonym. A collective theonym is a deity name that refers to or encompasses more than one god. Common examples include the Palenque Triad and the various gods identified as Chanal K'uh "Celestial God(s)" or Kabal K'uh "Terrestrial God(s)." After introducing known examples of this particular collective theonym, I will present a short text from a well-known Classic Maya vase which provides what I argue to be some definitive clues to its proper reading order. Additional epigraphic and iconographic observations are presented through the introduction of related visual narratives that provide important additional details.

The collective theonym here under discussion is known from Classic Maya hieroglyphic texts as well as the Postclassic Maya screenfold books. Here I introduce ten examples. The first and second can be found in the text on Panel 1 from Pomona (Figure 1a–b). Importantly, as will be seen, this must originally have included four individuals, each bearing the theonym (Schele and Miller 1986:Fig. III-12). The third and fourth examples come from a panel from the site of 'Laxtunich' (Figure 1c–d). The fifth and sixth examples are from Cancuen: one on Panel 2 (Figure 1e), the other from two shell plaques that comprised portions of a necklace belonging to the ruler K'an Maax (Figure 1f). The Codex Dresden provides at least two variants of the collective theonym. The first features the T528 **TUN** sign (Figure 1g), while the second features the T548 or **HAB** variant (Figure 1h). The Codex Paris provides the T548 **HAB** variant with an additional bottom element, possibly a reduced **li** (no inner detail) (Figure 1i). The Codex Madrid example

follows the common composition with **TUN** (Figure 1j).

The theonym is spelled through a combination of several identifiable hieroglyphic signs. The first sign is **CHAN** or "4," which appears in all known examples (Figure 1a–j). The second and third signs are T528 **TUN** (Figure 1c–g, j) and/or its optional phonetic complement T116 **ni** (Figure 1a–d, f). In those cases where only the **ni** element is visible, the implication is that **TUN** is nonetheless present, but overlaid with another sign (a portrait head in the case of Figure 1a–b). The fourth sign is a portrait head of an old man, a *mam* or "grandfather" (Stuart 2000; Martin 2007; Boot 2008), with a diagnostic "netted" headdress (Figure 1a–b, e). If the full portrait is not present, only the netted headdress element is included (Figure 1c–e, g–j). This portrait head of an old

¹ *Editors' note:* We are pleased to offer this posthumous paper by our dear departed friend and colleague Erik Boot, a frequent contributor to the *Journal*. Erik's article had passed review, and he was able to address many of the comments and suggestions made by reviewers, but he did not have the opportunity to incorporate all of the changes he wished to make, nor to review the galley proofs. We debated whether or not to take it upon ourselves to address some final questions regarding fine points of epigraphic interpretation, the proper orthographic representation of Mayan logograms (e.g., **TUUN** versus Erik's preferred **TUN**), or the absence of citations to recently published literature (especially Martin 2015). In the end, however, we decided that any such changes would not only be unfair to Erik but potentially misleading to colleagues, who might (not unreasonably) infer Erik's acceptance of any such departures from the manuscript as he left it. As such, we offer Erik's article in a lightly edited form which corrects typographical errors and clear inconsistencies without intruding on matters of content, and which we feel best reflects his intentions and final instructions.

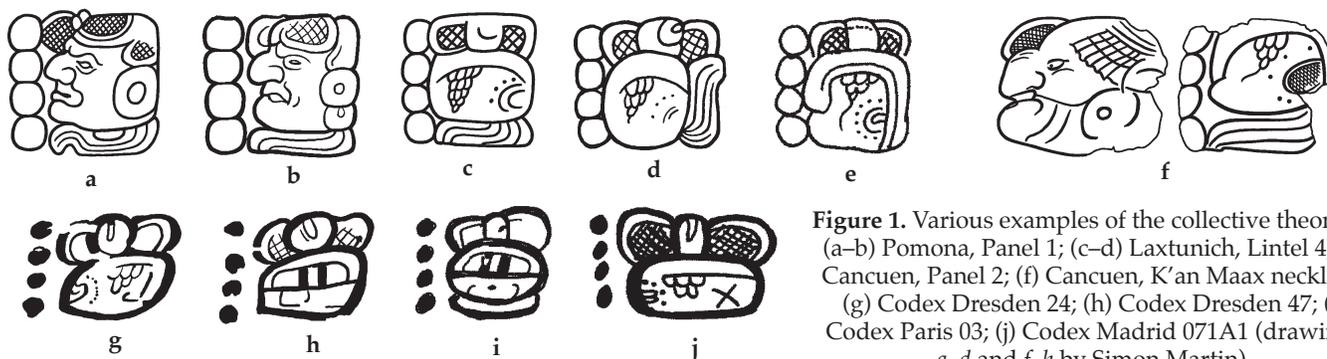


Figure 1. Various examples of the collective theonym: (a–b) Pomona, Panel 1; (c–d) Laxtunich, Lintel 4; (e) Cancuen, Panel 2; (f) Cancuen, K'an Maax necklace; (g) Codex Dresden 24; (h) Codex Dresden 47; (i) Codex Paris 03; (j) Codex Madrid 071A1 (drawings a–d and f–h by Simon Martin).

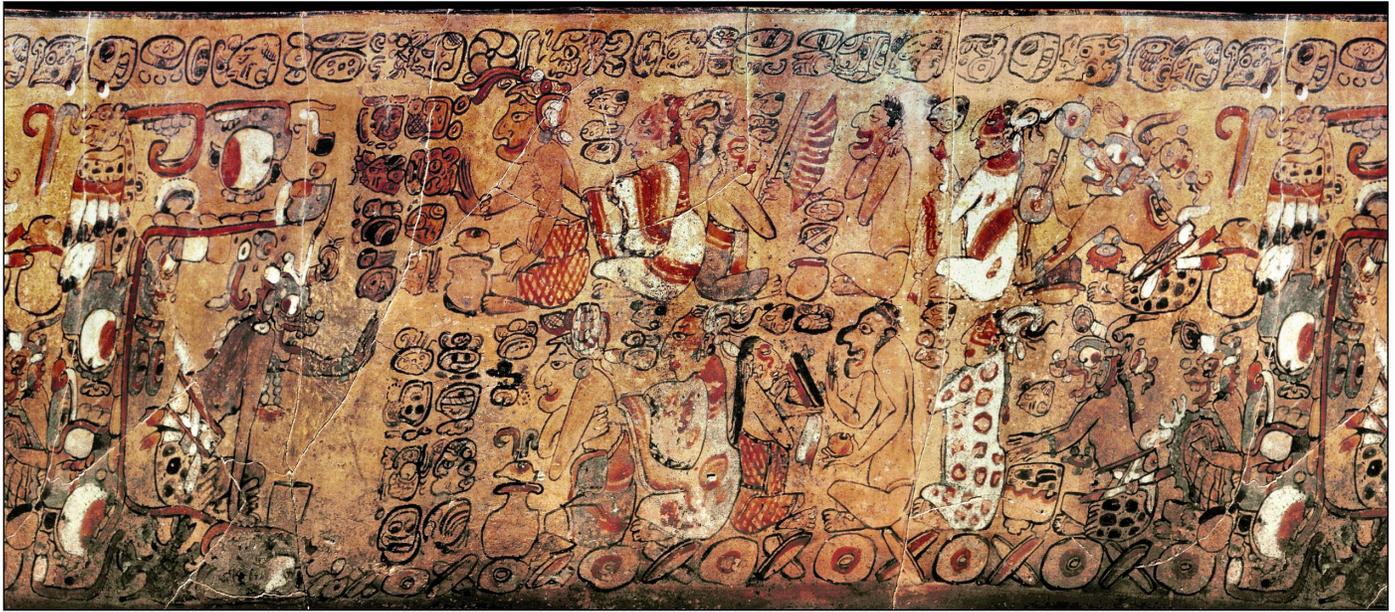


Figure 2. Rollout photograph of K530 (photo K530 © Justin Kerr).

man with netted headdress and the netted headdress element alone (through overlay as well as pars pro toto abbreviation) most likely can be read as **ITZAM**, as first proposed by David Stuart (2000; see also Martin 2007; Boot 2008), a reading supported by occasional examples with preposed *i-* and postfixed *-ma* phonetic complements. Potentially, Itzam may be a contraction of a reconstructed composite noun **itz mam* (perhaps signaling *itz* “dew; enchantment,” *mam* “grandfather; ancestor”), distinguishing this particular *mam* from others, especially mortals (Boot 2008, 2009:78, n. 100). As noted, in the codices, the **TUN** sign can be replaced by T548 **HAB** (Figure 1h–i), perhaps suggesting that both T528 and T548 could be read as *tu[u]n*, at least in the context of this collective theonym.²

In most examples the compound illustrated in Figure 1 combines all signs organized in such a way that a canonical reading order is difficult to establish. All but one of the examples open with **CHAN** “4,” the exception being the shell plaques from the burial of Cancuen king K’an Maax (Figure 1f). However, the order of that example may be incorrect if we consider that the shell plaques could well have shifted before excavation by archaeologists. Unfortunately I do not have access to the project report which may contain some indications concerning the order of the plaques as found, or at least the evidentiary basis for the published arrangement of the plaques (compare Demarest et al. 2006:833–834).³ Alternatively, the shells may have been arranged in the burial in an order contrary to the one beginning with **CHAN** as in the other examples. This naturally leaves us with a question, namely: what is the correct reading order of the theonym? If rearranged, the Cancuen shells would unequivocally establish the order

as **CHAN-TUN-ni** followed by **ITZAM**, thus *chan tuun itzam* instead of *itzam chan tuun*, as one would naturally conclude given the order illustrated in Figure 1f.⁴

There is a previously unrecognized example of this theonym that I believe provides the key to the correct reading order, as well as portraits of this important collective of old gods, along with three of their four individual appellatives. The context is an unprovenanced vessel formerly in the Pelling/Zarnitz collection and now part of a public collection at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin (inv. nr. IV Ca 49923) (Figure 2). This vessel was first published in the catalog *The Lords of the Underworld* (Coe 1978:76–82, no. 11) and more recently in *Die Maya: Schrift und Kunst* (Grube and Gaida 2005), and can be found under the designation K530 in Justin Kerr’s online database of Maya vessels (www.mayavase.com). The vessel was broken and repaired in antiquity.

² Although T548 lacks any phonetic complements in this context, note spellings such as **tu-T548-li** (Codex Madrid, 66A2) and **T548-li-tu** (e.g., Codex Madrid, 68B1). In the section 65–72 in the Madrid codex the T548 compound is once substituted by **tu-T528** or **tu-TUN** (Codex Madrid, 69B2) providing suggestive evidence that T548 can indeed be read as *tu[u]n*, depending on context, phonetic complementation, and substitution.

³ Published photographs of the shallow burial of K’an Maax show his body lying on the floor, with the collar around his neck (e.g., Moran and Koumenalis 2005). However, it is impossible to discern precisely how the individual shell plaques of the collar were arranged when they were excavated by the archaeologists. It would be interesting to know whether any excavation report reveals the order as initially encountered.

⁴ Because of these questions, I opted for Chan Itzam Tuun in the most recent version of my Preliminary Vocabulary (Boot 2009:47). Simon Martin (2007) proposes Itzam Chan Tuun, while nonetheless leaving the matter open for additional investigation.

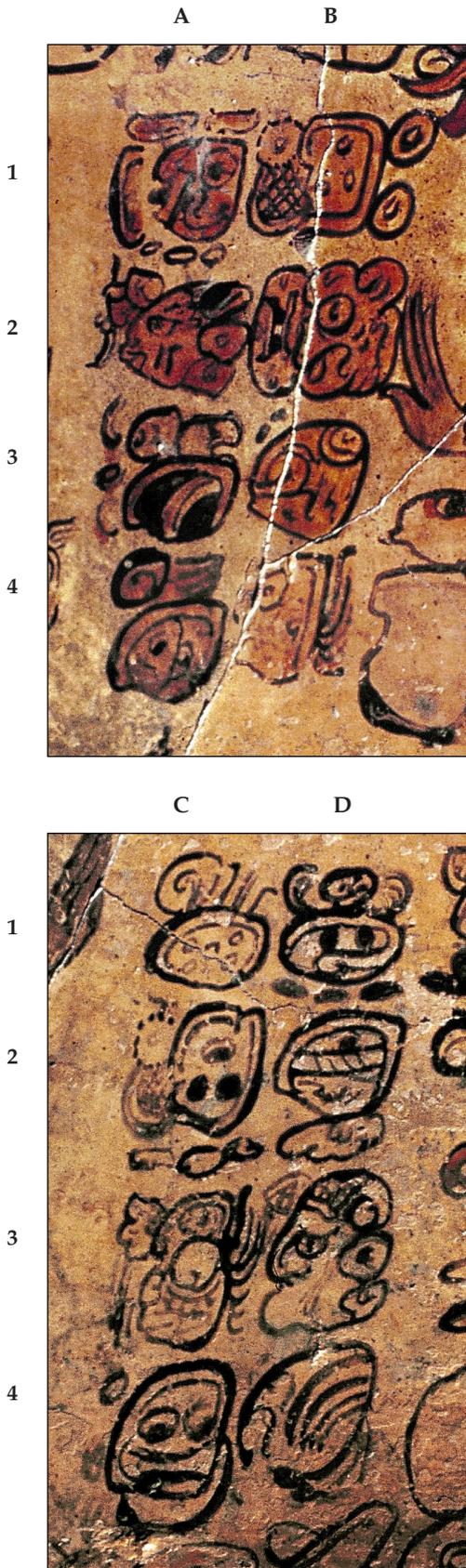


Figure 3. Glyphs A1-B4 and C1-D4 of K530.

It must also have been encountered in fragments by looters, for it was evidently repaired once again after entering the art market, and it has suffered some repainting. The text in question has been at least partly repainted as well, but enough of the original remains to repay cautious epigraphic study.

The double column text at issue opens at C1 with a recognizable but still-undeciphered sign group (Figure 3). This sign group occurs in short texts on several other vessels as well, in the context of old gods, women, and deer (e.g., K1339, De Young Museum L.10.4.4), and there are some indications that the collocation might be verbal. The lower element is likely to provide syllable **bi**, and may indicate a verb terminating in *...b-i*. If so, then a root intransitive along the lines of **u-ti**, *u[h]t-i*, “it happened, it occurred” is likely, and the following blocks would represent the verb’s subject(s). At D1, we find the common Classic Maya compound for *katun*, a twenty-year period known in Classic Mayan as **WINAK-HAB** for *wina[ak] ha[a]b* “twenty year(s).” At C2 follows the collocation **ch’a-ho-ma** for *ch’ahol’im*. Combined, blocks D1–C2 provide the common title *Winaak Haab Ch’aho’m*, to which I will return below. The glyph blocks at D2–D3 provide the actual nominal phrase. At D2 we can identify the compound **CHAN-na** for *chan*. Here *chan* “sky” is employed, targeting *chan* “four” through homophonic play (Houston 1984; Boot 2010a). At C3, despite some infelicitous repainting, we can identify the cephalomorphic variant for **TUN**, complete with its usual phonetic complement **ni**, providing *tu[u]n*. And finally, at D3, we can recognize the **ITZAM** portrait head for *itzam*. Thus D2–D3 likely provides **CHAN-na TUN-ni ITZAM** for *Chan Tuun Itzam*. This text, in my opinion, provides the correct reading order for the collective theonym, and all other examples as illustrated in Figure 1 can now also be read as *Chan Tuun Itzam*. The order of the Cancuen example in Figure 1f thus needs to be corrected. The Cancuen example actually provides confirmation of a sort for the now-established order, as *Chan Tuun* is written on one shell plaque and *Itzam* on the other. Given this, only two reading orders are possible: *itzam chan tu[u]n* or *chan tu[u]n itzam*. As *chan* refers to the fact that there are “four,” it seems logical that the collective theonym would open with this number, as is also seen in the Palenque Triad collective theonym, *Ux [...] K’uh*, “Three [...] Gods.”

With the reading order established, we continue with the text in order to glean additional insights. The text ends with two collocations, at C4–D4. Here I identify particularly heavy repainting, most probably executed at some time during its sojourn on the art market. While only conjecture at present, based on the outlines I suggest these glyphs were once intended to read *ba[a]h* (C4) *tu[u]n* (D4). If anything, what remains at D4 looks rather like a **TUN-ni** collocation. The **BAH** identification I base only on what remains of the outline of the original sign, and on the fact that **BAH-TUN-ni** for *ba[a]h tu[u]n* is a common title for high-ranking individuals. Semantically, it may make sense as well, as the *Chan Tuun Itzam* (collectively) would here be identified as *Baah Tuun*. Another *ba[a]h* title is associated with an *itzam* old god. The god known as *Itzam K’an A[h]k* “*Itzam Precious Turtle*” elsewhere carries the title *Baah Kab* (Machaquila, Plaza F, Structure 4, Hieroglyphic Bench: pLb-pM; Graham 1967:Figs. 38, 39A). *Baah Kab* is also taken as a title by high-ranking individuals. Most importantly, on a finely incised Late Classic vessel that takes its name from its find spot in the *Mundo Perdido*, Tikal (Laporte and Fialko 1995:Fig. 68), *Itzam K’an Ahk* is portrayed first in a line of four old gods. These four “old gods,” fronted by *Itzam K’an Ahk*, may well constitute a variation of the *Chan*



Figure 4. Chahk seated in cave mouth of mountain with O' Chaak portrait on top of mountain at upper left.

Tuun Itzam.⁴

The scene on K530 shows a manifestation of Chahk seated cross-legged on an elevation within a cave, identified as the open mouth of an animated *witz* or mountain (e.g., Boot 2003) (Figure 4). Note the owl-like bird in the upper left corner. This is the *o'* "bird of omen" to which reference is made in the theonym O' Chahk. O' Chahk is a specific manifestation of Chahk known from four texts at Yaxchilan, where Lintel 35 shows a small O' feather on the tip of Chahk's nose (Figure 5a, left glyph). The O' Chahk name on Lintel 35 is followed by another theonym defined by a god head with Roman nose and cruller around the large spiral eye. This is the jaguar god of the number seven and the head variant for

⁴ Perhaps the Codex Dresden examples can be explained semantically as well. As noted above, the Chan Tuun Itzam are identified as *Winaak Haab Ch'aho'm*. While *tuun* and *haab* are phonologically completely different words, within a calendrical context they refer to the same unit, one of 360 days. The metaphysical *haab* "year" (as used to refer to the 360 day year in the Long Count and Distance Numbers) and the physical *tuun* "stone" (which was used to commemorate the *haab* "year," as in the *chum-tuun* "sit stone" commemorative 360-day event) are thus structurally on par. The fact that the Chan Tuun Itzam are referred to as *winaak haab ch'aho'm* may underlie the *tuun-haab* substitution in these examples of the nominal phrase as well. Note also that, in several examples in the Codex Dresden, a **HAB** sign appears as part of the headdress assemblage of these old gods.

the day Kib, as on Yaxchilan Lintel 48 (Figure 5b). Note the small smoke scroll attached to the ear, indicating that this deity is associated with fire. Other examples of the O' Chahk theonym at Yaxchilan include the prefix Aj K'ahk', "He of Fire," an epithet modifying the O' Chahk theonym in the Late Classic (Figure 5c). I suggest that this Aj K'ahk' prefix evolved out of the second, fire-associated theonym on Lintel 35. Now note the small deity head with two pendant celts that is attached to the upper back wall of Chahk's cave on K530. This may be the same deity head as on Yaxchilan Lintel 35, here referring to the fire aspect (i.e., Aj K'ahk') of O' Chahk.

Also note the *o'* feather on the upper right of the cave entrance and the large eye, front of head, nasal area, upper jaw, and extended row of teeth. This is not a simple animated *witz* or mountain (to which the integrated *tuun* signs and curled split on top direct). Rather, this is the head and mouth of O' Chahk himself serving as the cave and its entrance.

Let us turn now to the Chahk manifestation seated in the cave marked by O' Chahk (Figure 4). He fully extends his left arm, the hand of which is placed in an upright position. This particular Chahk, with this hand and arm gesture, is unique in Classic Maya iconography, but in my estimation he is known from hieroglyphic renderings in several early Maya texts (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Chahk theonym with upraised hand sign, Tikal Stela 31, A24-B24 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 52b).

In front of Chahk one can identify four old gods, the Chan Tuun Itzam, sitting one in front of the other in two rows. Each row opens with a double-column hieroglyphic text that provides detail on the visual narrative. Unfortunately, text A1-B4 in front of the top row of gods has suffered from both breakage and heavy retouching (Figure 3). The opening collocation at A1 is no longer recognizable except for, perhaps, a prefixed **u-**. Perhaps this once conveyed **u-[BAH]hi?** for *uba[a]h[?]* "the image[s] of ...," a common introductory expression, but this is by no means certain. B1 is also significantly retouched; only the **ch'a** sign seems original, perhaps

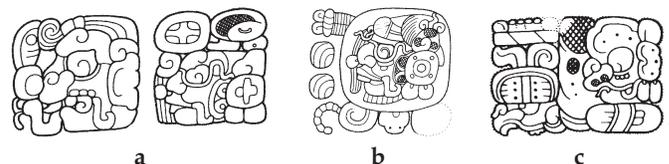


Figure 5. O' Chaak: (a) Chahk glyph at left with O' feather on nose, followed by second theonym, Yaxchilan, Lintel 35: C8-D8; (b) the day 2 Kib, Yaxchilan, Lintel 48: D5-6; (c) Aj K'ahk' O' Chahk, Yaxchilan, Lintel 25: D (drawings by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.6.6.7, 2004.15.6.6.21, and 2004.15.6.5.22.

providing the opening of another *ch'aho'm* title (compare C2); the *-ho-ma* part is repainted. There follow three nominal phrases, unfortunately all retouched to a greater or lesser degree. The first appears at A2, a Maize God portrait head **IXIM** (*ixiim* "maize grain"), still recognizable from the inverted "IL" marking on the cheek and the forehead jewel. The second appears at B2, but only the prefixed **CHAK** "red, great" is clearly recognizable, although also retouched, and the following jaguar-like sign is dubious. The third nominal appears at A3, opening with **JUN** or *ju[n]n* "one." The remaining element might comprise a complex variant of *ajaw*, in which case Juun Ajaw might be named here.

The fact that three nominals are recorded may provide a direct connection to the visual narrative on the vessel. Behind the four old gods and the six female consorts one can find three musicians, each wearing a Chahk mask (Figure 7). Note especially their facial characteristics and shell ear ornaments, which compare favorably to the seated Chahk in the cave. Their topknots are fashioned in a similar manner as well. The Chahk musicians play shakers of some kind, a cylindrical drum, and a turtle carapace beaten with deer antler (compare Starr 1902:72, Fig. 51). The one who plays the drum has a single hieroglyphic sign associated with him, perhaps serving as a name caption. It likely does not belong to the female in front of him, as she has her own name caption consisting of two glyph blocks. Instead of a female portrait glyph, this may represent a portrait of the Maize God, similar to the one found at A2. If so, this would provide confirmation that these three musicians are indeed the three gods mentioned in the upper text and that they are Chahk impersonators.

The top row features five protagonists (Figure 8). In



Figure 7. The three Chahks, or Chahk impersonators.

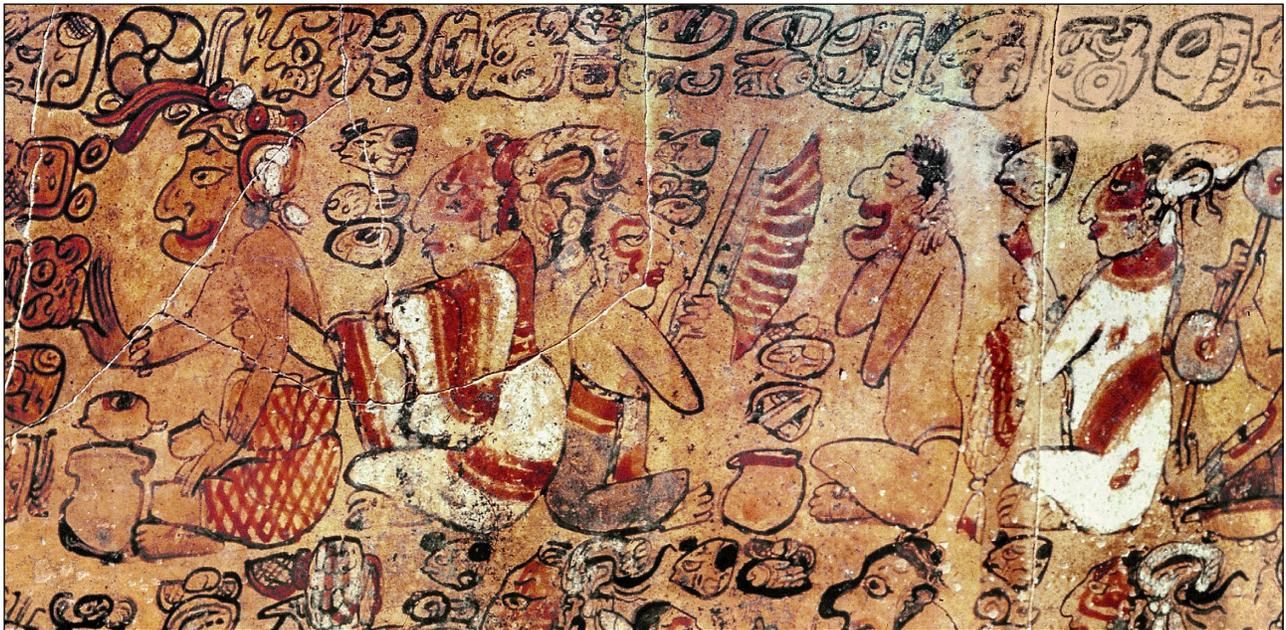


Figure 8. The five protagonists of the top row.

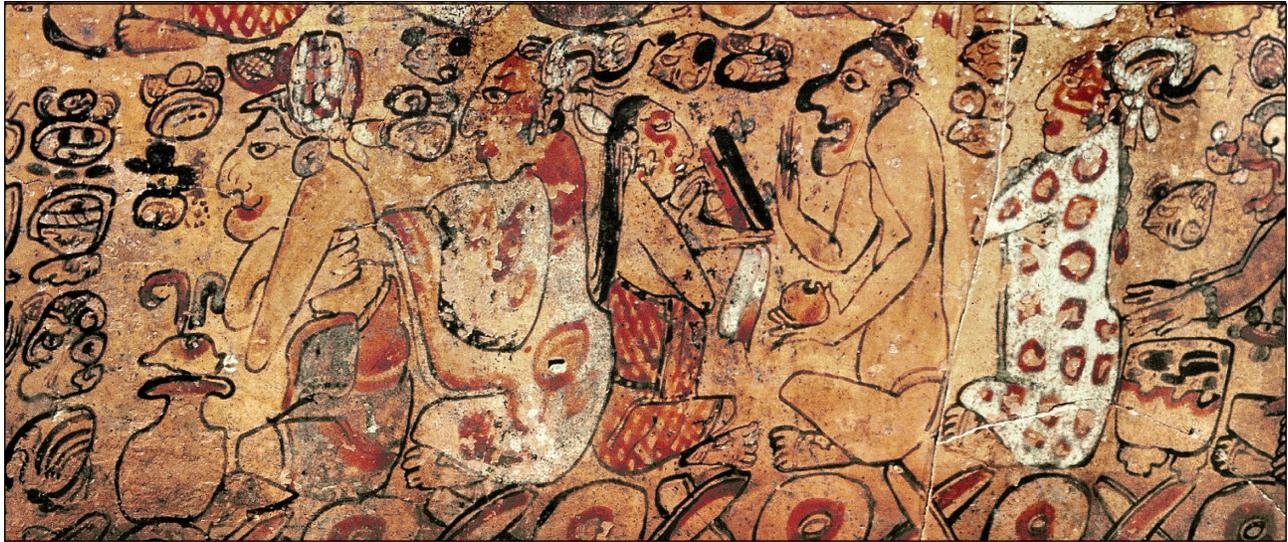


Figure 9. The five protagonists of the bottom row.

front is an old god, an Itzam. The whole upper section that includes his face and headdress is very heavily repainted. (Note that the face in all respects is a copy of the first Itzam in the bottom row.) There is no individual name caption for him. If there was one originally it was not “recreated,” as the modern painter could not have known what to paint. A broad-rimmed vessel is positioned in front of him. Atop it is an instrument which I identify as a shell scoop. Below his left upper arm the hidden left hand and lower arm of a female consort extends. She is elaborately dressed and has a short name caption, **IX [HA’]NAL** for Ix Ha’ Nal “Lady Water Place.” Behind this pair one can find a nearly naked Itzam. His hair is short and unkempt. A broad-rimmed vessel is also placed before him, though without the scoop. A name caption identifies him as **ITZAM K’AN-AT** for Itzam K’an At. He is seated between two female consorts, both elaborately dressed and each holding costume elements. On the left, the consort may hold a fan or headdress element of some sort. Note the patterning of this fan or headdress element and compare it with the headdress pattern of the **ITZAM** portrait head from Cancuen (Figure 1f). I suggest they both refer to the same costume element.

The female consort has a short name caption that also identifies her as Ixik Ha’ Nal. On her face she wears a red *kaban* curl. The consort on the right holds an elaborate headdress and seems to be named simply Ixik. She is fully dressed, her body completely covered except for head, hands, and feet. Also note her facial painting, executed in red, around the eye.

The second row of protagonists begins to the right of the text at C1–D4 analyzed above (Figure 9). In front once again is an old god, an Itzam. Note the “netted” headdress and name caption opening with **ITZAM[AT]**, with a variant of T761a **AT**, for Itzam At. This could be the same Itzam At nominal by which God L is referred to

on the vessels that depict the humiliation of this god by a rabbit (K1398) and the Maize God and his dwarf and hunchback assistants (K1560, on exhibit at the Louvre, Paris). God L is the deity who sits on a jaguar throne in his cave palace and presides on 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk’u over a court scene that features seven gods (K2796) and eleven gods (K7750) and who is tricked at his palace by five maize-related female consorts on 8 Kaban 5 Kej(?), an impossible Calendar Round combination (K511, now at the Princeton University Art Museum). The Itzam At theonym is followed by a compound consisting of three signs, of which **mi** and **ta** are still readily identifiable. The third sign may be **yi** or **li**, but the remaining detail is more suggestive of **li**. If correctly deduced, does this collocation perhaps spell **mi-ta-li** for *mital[al]* (or *mitali[l]*) or *mit[n]a[a]*? Although a bit of a stretch, this could perhaps represent an early Maya approximation of a foreign word (see Boot 2010b), namely the Nahuatl term Mictlan “place of death” (Karttunen 1992:146-147; Siméon 1992:274-275). At the time of the conquest and up to the present day in various Mayan languages, Mitnal (e.g., Yucatec; Barrera Vásquez et al. 1980:524, in *mitnalil* “cosa infernal”), Metlan (e.g., Lacandon; Bruce 1968:30), and Metnal (e.g., Yucatec; Barrera Vásquez et al. 1980:522) are all attested adaptations of this toponym referring to the “Underworld.” If my estimation is correct that this Itzam At refers to God L, it would associate him directly and definitively with the Maya “underworld.” Also it would identify another Mayan loanword from Nahuatl, sometime prior to the eighth century AD.

Behind this Itzam, a female consort extends her left arm below his left arm (thus mirroring the top row arrangement). She is elaborately dressed, and her name caption identifies her as **IX [TUN]NAL** for Ixik Tun Nal “Lady Stone Place.” Perhaps Ixik Tunal was intended. In the composite noun *tun-nal* the consonant

pair *-n-n-* would merge. Interestingly, in Yucatec Maya the title (Aj) Tunal means “hechicero (wizard)” (Barrera Vázquez et al. 1980:822). Ixik Tunal could thus represent a female counterpart or “hechicera (witch).”

Next in line are the three remaining protagonists. In the center is another Itzam, again nearly completely naked. He has a single collocation in front of his head which perhaps reads **ITZAM[K’AB]** for Itzam K’ab. The identification of the hand sign as **K’AB** finds corroboration in a short hieroglyphic phrase written on the Stucco Facade at Tonina (Figure 10), **BAH/ba CH’AK-ka-ja u-K’AB 4-[FLOWER]NAL-la** (note the **BAH~ba** acrophonic reduction of the opening *bahlam* “jaguar head” (Boot n.d.) for *ba[a]h ch’a[h]kaj uk’ab chan* [“flower”] *nal* “first chopped off was the hand/lower arm of Four [“Flower”] Person.” In this text at Tonina the same hand sign is employed as on K530. At Tonina the *u-k’ab* spelling refers to the severed lower arm and hand of the reclining figure, who is identified as Chan [“Flower”] Nal. The “flat hand” on K530 may actually refer to the hand that the Itzam protagonist raises. His right hand gesture—the palm of the hand is turned towards him, as can be seen from the position of the thumb—seems to indicate that he is engaged in applying some sticky black substance from the small container in his left hand, also explaining his blackened digits. The thick black outline of the front of his face may thus be original and intentional, and the thick black outline of the hand sign (especially in comparison to the outline of the *itzam* sign) may be related to this particular aspect as well. Tentatively, the name caption may thus read Itzam K’ab. Itzam K’ab, if correctly analyzed, is reminiscent of the name Itzam Na[h] K’ab Ul, given by the local Colonial inhabitants to a pyramidal structure at Izamal, Yucatan (Lizana 1995:Fol. 6v).

The Itzam observes himself in a mirror held by the



Figure 10. Tonina, Stucco Facade (photo: Erik Boot).

female consort facing him. She is simply named by the female portrait head **IX** for Ixik, like the consort portrayed above in the top row. On her face she too has a red *kaban* curl. The second female consort, seated behind the Itzam, is elaborately dressed and has extended facial markings. She seems to be named **IX [TE’?] NAL** for Ixik Te’(?) Nal, “Lady Tree Place.”

I identify the visual narrative of K530 as an elaborate ritual or ceremony in which the Chan Tuun Itzam participate, all four paired with one or two female consorts or assistants. Three of the four Chan Tuun Itzam are identified by their individual names, Itzam K’an At(?), Itzam At Mit[n]a[a]l(?), and Itzam K’ab(?). Most likely, as noted, the name of the fourth was once provided but is now lost. But there is another late Classic Maya vessel that might provide a pertinent clue to the missing name of the fourth Itzam. This vessel, which has also suffered some repainting, is cataloged as K8763 (Figure 11). Here we are at the court of the same Chahk portrayed on K530. This can easily be

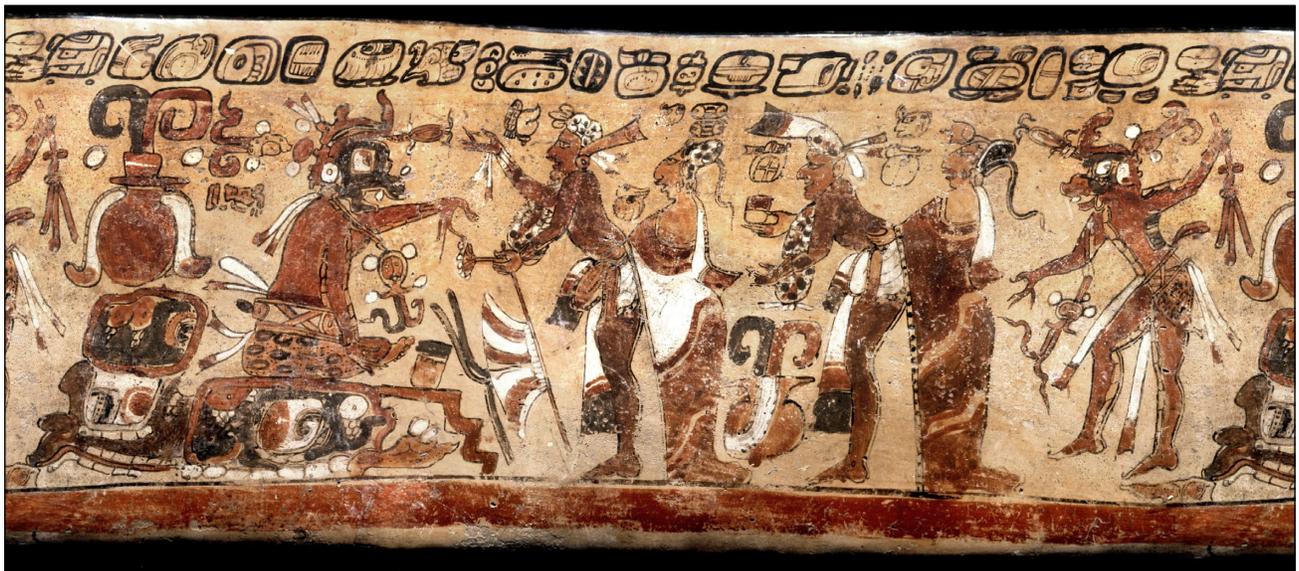


Figure 11. K8763 (photo K8763 © Justin Kerr).



Figure 12. Rollout of vase at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1987.719, Gift of John B. Fulling).

established by a comparison of the portrait heads of the two rain gods. Of interest here is the inclusion of a small *o'* feather element in his headdress assemblage, and the fact that he is seated on a personified *witz* bench or throne. Chahk of K8763 is thus merged with the *o'* bird of the K530 cave to become *O' Chahk*. In front of him stand two of the Chan Tuun Itzam, along with two female companions or attendants. Both of the Chan Tuun Itzam are individually named. The second one is named Itzam K'an (ITZAM[K'AN]), reminiscent of the Itzam K'an At name on K530. The first, directly in front of *O' Chahk*, is named Itzam "Shell." The same nominal occurs in the Dresden Codex (41B-2), where an associated image depicts an Itzam who emerges from a shell. An "Old God" or Itzam emerging from a shell is quite a common theme in Maya visual narratives (e.g., K2787, K8798; De Young Museum 2002.84.1.123; Fundación La Ruta Maya 1.2.144.213). I propose that this may be the missing name caption from K530 identifying the fourth of the Chan Tuun Itzam.

To return to K530, the consorts are named Ixik Ha' Nal (twice), Ixik Tun Nal, Ixik Te' (?) Nal, and simply Ixik (twice). Perhaps the occurrence of the double names indicates that only four consorts are present, rather than six. I consider this unlikely, as more than one person can have the same name or title. The possibility that Ixik Tun Nal may be the title of a religious specialist (*hechicera*) suggests that Ixik Te' Nal and Ixik Ha' Nal may be as well (although I have not as yet found confirmation for this idea in any Mayan language). Note that the pair *te'* and *tuun* was mentioned in the opening text at A4-B4. Four of the six female consorts have important natural elements in their name, *ha'* "water," *tun* "stone," and *te'*

"wood," all of which end in *nal*. In Classic Maya this *nal* can mean "person," but it can also indicate a "profession" (Boot 2005, 2009), as well as a "place (of origin)" (Stuart and Houston 1994). At present I prefer the last option. Thus, if Ixik Tun Nal meant "She-of-the-Stone-Place," the same may be true of the others: Ixik Ha' Nal "She-of-the-Water-Place" and Ixik Te' (?) Nal "She-of-the-Tree/Wood-Place." Their names hint at the presence of different locations in the Classic Maya "under/otherworld": names associated with regions defined by stone, water, and wood, and which may identify these women as alluring female protectors of some sort (as well as consorts and/or assistants). As such, they can be compared to the women associated with the Old God and the deer (e.g., K1182, now at the MFA, Boston), possible Classic precursors to the well-known Ixtabay from present-day Yucatec Maya folk stories (e.g., Boot 1989).

Also relevant to the consorts on K530 is a vase in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Figure 12). It presents a scene very similar to K530, but now it is young men who are placed between female consorts. The visual narrative features a large central vessel and various scoops or small bowls. Note that the first young man imitates the posture and gesture of Itzam K'ab(?) on the Berlin vessel. This aspect is stressed by the elongated netted headdress they both wear. Now note the well-dressed female on the right and her name caption. This caption reads IX 7-[HA']NAL for Ixik Huk Ha' Nal, "Lady Seven Water Place." Huk Ha' Nal "Seven Water Place" is an important aquatic location in Classic Maya mythological iconography referenced on ceramics and architecture. The similarity of the visual narrative on this vase and the name caption of the female consort

suggests that the nominal *Ixik Ha' Nal* on K530 is likely to be an abbreviation of *Ixik Huk Ha' Nal*. The *Huk Ha' Nal* location is thus a watery location with which specific women are associated, entitled *Ixik Huk Ha' Nal* or *Ixik Ha' Nal* (the abbreviated form). The most important conclusion that I draw here is that these female consorts may not be courtesans as Houston (2014) has proposed. They seem instead to have very specific functions and are associated with important mythological locations. Their frequent appearances and wide associations actually warrant more in-depth research before any further conclusions can be drawn.

The elaborate ritual of the Chan Tuun Itzam on K530 is directed towards *Chahk* seated in his cave house or residence. Two of the Chan Tuun Itzam on this vessel are seated fully dressed directly in front of *Chahk*, while the other two are still in the process of being dressed and groomed. In front of the two dressed Chan Tuun Itzam we see broad-rimmed vessels on which a shell implement of some sort is placed, which I have tentatively identified as a scoop. Note the small bowl in the left hand of the Tuun Itzam in the upper row. This scene presents the Chan Tuun Itzam in front of a specific manifestation of *Chahk*, the rain god. Two of the Chan Tuun Itzam have a broad-rimmed vessel with a (putative) scoop on top. Perhaps the visual narrative on K530 sets the stage for the Chan Tuun Itzam to scoop the contents from the broad-rimmed containers and sprinkle them. This might resonate with the title *Ch'aho'm*, mentioned in both the first text (at B1) and the second text (at C2), in the modified form of *Winaak Haab Ch'aho'm* preceding the Chan Tuun Itzam nominal phrase. The root of the title *ch'aho'm* is commonly taken as *ch'aj-* which can be analyzed as “drop (of liquid).” Final *-o'm* can in turn be analyzed as an agentive (compare to *kayo'm* “fisherman,” *k'ayo'm* “singer”), suggesting that *Ch'aho'm* might signify “dropper” or “sprinkler.”

I suggest that *Ch'ahom* indeed means “sprinkler” and that in the visual narrative on K530 we can observe

the Chan Tuun Itzam behaving as “sprinklers” of drops. They are seated in front of *Chahk*, the rain god; in front of them they have broad-rimmed vessels with scoops, with which they would sprinkle the liquid contained in the vessel. As “sprinklers” the Chan Tuun Itzam would thus be in service to *Chahk*, the rain god. In present-day Yucatan, *Chahk* has a number of helpers who lend him service. One particular group of helpers is collectively known as the *Joya'ob* (Love and Peráza 1984:270), *Aj Joyaob*, and *Aj Joyaobilob* (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:115, 315-316, 352), which in Yucatec Maya means “Water-sprinklers” (cf. *joy* “to sprinkle” and [*h*]a’ “water”). I propose that the Classic Maya title *Ch'aho'm* “Sprinkler” is semantically cognate to the Yucatec Maya *Joya'ob* / *Aj Joyaobil* “Sprinkler (of water).” The fact that the Chan Tuun Itzam are collectively referred to as *Winaak Haab Ch'aho'm* “K'atun Sprinklers” may mean that they are associated with this particular ritual on a twenty-year cycle.

The visual narrative on K530 may thus reference the court of *Chahk*, who is seated on an elevation inside his cave “house/structure” marked by the *o'* “bird of omen” and the portrait of *O' Chahk*, and is fronted by the Chan Tuun Itzam and their female assistants. Two of the Chan Tuun Itzam are in the process of being dressed and groomed and two are already fully dressed and groomed. Two of the Chan Tuun Itzam have broad-rimmed vessels with (probable) scoops associated with them. Perhaps, then, we see them being dressed and equipped for their function as “Sprinklers” in service to the rain god.

Still another Classic Maya ceramic, K8654, also relates to K530 (Figure 13). This less skillfully executed scene features five protagonists. They all look to the left and the first is a *Chahk* figure, perhaps even *O' Chahk*. He holds a torch (stressing his fire association) and faces a two-part date that opens with 8 Ajaw inside a red cartouche. Behind him is seated one of the Chan Tuun Itzam, also holding a torch, with an abstracted shell of



Figure 13. K8654 (photo K8654 © Justin Kerr).



Figure 14. Mundo Perdido Vase, Tikal, Museo Nacional de Arqueología e Etnología, Guatemala (MNAE 11134/ IDAEH 1-1-1509/MPA 215). Rollout photograph (K30098) by Inga Calvin.

some sort wrapped around his upper body. Behind him stands a second Chahk figure, with torch, and a female attendant with some kind of implement (perhaps a bowl or a scoop) in her right hand. The last protagonist is the second seated Chan Tuun Itzam, again holding a torch, and now more easily recognizable through his facial features and headdress. The second Chan Tuun Itzam also has an abstracted shell of some sort wrapped around his upper body.

Earlier in this essay I suggested that there are various local manifestations of the Chan Tuun Itzam. Just as K530 introduces such a set of this collective, so does the Mundo Perdido Vase from Tikal (Figure 14). A short discussion of the narrative on this vessel is warranted here, as it supports many of the suggestions presented above. At the far right of this scene is a bipedal deer standing in front of four seated old gods. The deer and the old gods all emit speech scrolls from their mouths which lead to short quotative texts. The deer says “Tuun Itzamat” (TUN ITZAM[AT]), which could be either question or a statement: “Tuun Itzam (*tu[u]n itzam*) you (-at) are(? /!).” If this is correct, the question or statement seems to be answered or confirmed by the old god seated closest to the deer, who identifies himself as ITZAM[K’AN] AK or Itzam K’an Ahk “Itzam Precious Turtle.” The other three old gods also speak, albeit not necessarily in response to the deer. The second states *i-li ba-li ch’o-ko*, of which only *ch’ok* can be deciphered with confidence. (The speech scroll perhaps opens with imperative *il-i* “see it!”) The third says GOD.HEAD *ka-ba ch’a-ho-ma* or (Itzam?) Kab Ch’aho’m, his name and title. The fourth and final old god, whose portrait is partially lost, seems to utter ITZAM?[K’AN] AT? ITZAM?-K’AB or Itzam(?) K’an At(?) Itzam(?) K’ab. If I have identified these correctly, then we have already seen them on K530. As two nominals are preserved here, perhaps they identify both the fourth and second old gods, since the latter uttered *i-li ba-li ch’o-ko*, which may be a remark of some sort

and apparently does not identify him by name. Usefully, the Mundo Perdido Vase also indicates that each of the four old gods has *tuun* markings on his body, providing further evidence that they are indeed the Chan Tuun Itzam. As such there would perhaps be different collectives of four “old gods” comprising the Chan Tuun Itzam, perhaps even regionally differentiated.

Another vessel at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, portrays a set of the Chan Tuun Itzam associated with the celestial realm; each has *tuun* markings on his body, and three of them are individually named (Figure 15).

Finally, a most interesting potential collective of Chan Tuun Itzam can be identified at Chichen Itza within the western facade of the building known as the Iglesia. On the left and right of a central figure, seated cross-legged and elaborately dressed, one can find a pair of figures that face towards the central figure, who is crowned with a bifurcating headdress. Although their heads are missing (as is that of the central figure), all four must have been “old gods.” Their portraits and particular body coverings, including various shells and a spider web, can be found all over Chichen Itza on carved panels on pillars and columns.

To conclude, the Berlin Vase (K530) provides several pivotal epigraphic clues which have helped to establish the correct reading order of the collective theonym Chan Tuun Itzam. This vessel also provides three of the four individual names of the Chan Tuun Itzam. Additional relevant information was derived from the text and image of K530 and related ceramics depicting the interactions of the Chan Tuun Itzam and the rain god Chahk, and as a result we have been able to infer a supportive rainmaking role for the Old Gods. In future work I hope to delve into the pronounced regional and chronological variations apparent in the depictions of the four old gods constituting the Chan Tuun Itzam collective theonym, as well as into the various architectural settings in which they can be identified.



Figure 15. Rollout of vase at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1988.1174, Gift of Landon T. Clay).

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