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## Ian Graham and the Maya

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Figure 1. Ian Graham, ca. 1975 (photo: Hillel Burger).

Ian Graham passed away at age 93 on August 1, 2017, at the close of an extraordinary and varied life. All future histories of Mesoamerican studies will highlight his unique contributions as an explorer, preservationist, and documentarian of Maya ruins and art. It is no exaggeration to say

that Ian's legacy will forever stand at least equal to those of Alfred Maudslay (his fellow Englishman and personal hero), Teobert Maler, Sylvanus Morley, and other famous explorers from the early years of Maya studies.

Ian James Graham was born on

November 12, 1923, at Chantry Farm, Campsey Ash, Suffolk, to two aristocratic parents. His father, Lord Alistair Mungo Graham, was the youngest son of the Duke of Montrose, and his mother, Lady Meriel Olivia Bathurst, was the daughter of the seventh Earl Bathurst. She passed away suddenly at age 41, when Ian was only eleven years old, and was, in Ian's own words, a woman of "notable beauty, intelligence and sensibility" with a keen sense of humor (Graham 2010:4). Ian inherited much from her.

His youngest years were spent at Chantry Farm, before he was sent to boarding school at the age of eight, where he "failed to be stimulated by most of the teaching." Throughout childhood he had a persistent fascination with all things mechanical and electrical—an interest that would last his whole life, and which came in handy innumerable times in his years in Maya archaeology, with its seemingly constant need to repair camera equipment or Land Rovers in the field, or to tinker with the Rolls Royce he kept for years in his garage in England.

Ian later attended Winchester College and was educated at Cambridge University and Trinity College, Dublin, majoring in physics. The war years intervened in his university work, and between 1942 and 1947 he served in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, helping to develop and test new types of radar equipment. Ian was very proud of this research and of the experiments in which he participated, and in his later years he would often excitedly describe the inner workings of these instruments. Throughout his education Ian never had any formal training in archaeology. His brief idea to pursue a degree in art history after the war nevertheless hints at an early and ever-present fascination with visual images and antiques, interests that would steer him later in life to the world of the ancient Maya.

A fellowship at the National Gallery brought Ian to London in the early 1950s, where he worked as a technician in the art conservation lab. Soon he was earning commissions for his great skills at photography, especially of architecture, and he contributed to a number of coffee-table books into the mid-1960s, including Sir Mortimer Wheeler's *Splendors of the East: Temples, Tombs, Palaces and Fortresses of Asia* (Wheeler 1965). After traveling to New York in 1957, Ian landed a brief job as assistant to the photographer Irving Penn, and in that capacity worked closely with Robert Freson, another noted photojournalist of the twentieth century.

His first encounter with the world of the ancient Maya came in 1958, as a result of having driven his 1927 Rolls Royce Torpedo all the way from New York to Mexico—a slight detour from his westward goal of California! Through fortuitous connections in Mexico City he began to hear for the first time about the existence of the Maya, and of wonderful ruins named Yaxchilan, located in what was then one of the most

remote parts of Chiapas. "How could it be that I had never even heard of Maya civilization?" he wondered in retrospect (Graham 2010:118). Ian thought the Maya would be a ripe topic for a new photography book, and while researching the subject, both in Mexico and when back in London, he learned of Alfred Maudslay and his great work as a photographer and recorder of Maya ruins. He was hooked. Almost immediately Ian was back in Mexico, intent on exploring Maya ruins throughout Mexico, Guatemala, and beyond. In San Cristóbal de las Casas he met the noted Mayanist Frans Blom, who inspired Ian to further pursue his adventures. Over the following months he traversed the entire Maya region, through Chiapas, Yucatan, Belize, Honduras, and then into northern Guatemala. He was eventually led to a site named Aguateca, which he was sure (correctly) no archaeologist had seen before. For Ian, by this time already 35 years old, this was a "Eureka moment," for his life's purpose suddenly seemed clear.

Ian's early efforts to document ruins were sponsored in part by the Middle American Research Institute at Tulane University, which in 1967 published his *Archaeological Explorations in El Peten, Guatemala*, an instant classic that recorded a stupefying array of new finds at sites that few Maya archaeologists even knew existed at that time. These included Aguateca, Dos Pilas (Figure 2), Machaquila, Kinal, Nakbe, and El Mirador (Graham 1967). This last site is today one of the most important in ancient Mesoamerica, a vast Preclassic city that still keeps many secrets about the origins of Maya civilization in the lowlands. In early 1962 Ian was the first (even amateur) archaeologist to survey El Mirador and realize its true extent. With no formal training he accurately mapped and documented the immense ruins over the course of ten days and published a brief newspaper account of his finds that same year (Graham 1962).

The Tulane volume was a great success (a second one was planned on Dos Pilas and other sites but never completed) and by the mid-1960s Ian was regularly corresponding with a number of important figures in Maya research, including J. Eric S. Thompson and Tatiana Proskouriakoff. While in the field, in the Petexbatun region, he came into close contact with those working on Harvard's archaeological project at nearby Ceibal (Seibal), including Gordon Willey and A. Ledyard Smith. His great energy and skill at mapping caught their eye, and he was brought on the dig and given the task to survey Ceibal's extensive ruins, much of them hidden in dense forest and in difficult terrain. These early associations with Harvard, the Peabody Museum, and Willey set the stage for the eventual development of the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions (CMHI) program and its ambitious plan to compile and publish all Maya inscriptions.

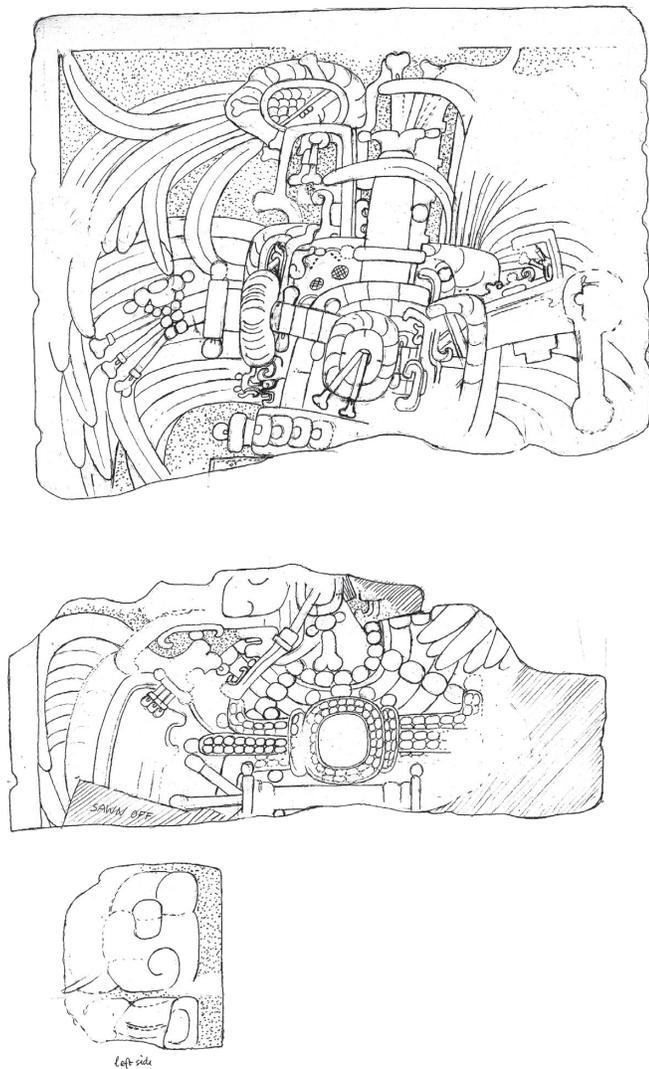
The vision of the Corpus project began as early as 1966, in discussions between William Coe



**Figure 2.** Ian cleaning a newly turned stela at Dos Pilas, Guatemala, 1976 (photo: Otis Imboden).

of Pennsylvania's Tikal project, Robert Wauchope of Tulane University, and Willey. Together they explored ways to fund a joint venture that would take inventory of all of the archaeological sites in Peten, using the records of previous archaeologists as well as oil companies (by the 1960s, Shell Oil and others were exploring and prospecting throughout northern Guatemala). This particular plan fell through due to a lack of money, but it was soon revived and expanded through the support of the Charles Guttman Foundation. By now it was clear to all that Ian was the person to spearhead the ambitious effort, and in 1968 he settled at Harvard as a Research Fellow at the Peabody Museum, poring through the photographic archives of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and those of Teobert Maler. These provided the basic raw materials that Ian sought to expand, and thus the CMHI program was born.

The Corpus project was a game changer, and the results were immediate. He spent many months in the field in both Mexico and Guatemala, and in 1975 produced the very first fascicle on the monuments of Naranjo (Graham and von Euw 1975). Volumes on Yaxchilan soon followed (Graham and Von Euw 1977). In the early 1970s the Corpus hired an assistant, Eric von Euw, who would concentrate most of his efforts in Yucatan and Campeche, while Ian focused on the Peten and Usumacinta regions. Ian opted to focus on poorly known sites or remote ruins that were under threat of looters, which by this time were running rampant, especially in northern Guatemala. Well-published sites such as Palenque, Copan, and Tikal were low priorities. Together these early Corpus efforts produced a trove of field drawings and photographs. Later collaborators who worked under Ian at the CMHI included Peter



**Figure 3.** Field sketch of Piedras Negras Stela 4. Drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.17.3.1.

Mathews, myself, and Lucia Henderson.

Ian's fieldwork usually revolved around three tasks—photography, field sketching (Figure 3), and mapping, at all of which he excelled. And despite having drawn hundreds of inscriptions Ian never saw himself as an epigrapher, nor as having any special insight into the intricacies of Maya hieroglyphic writing. He ascribed this to “an inadequate iconic memory,” stating that he “never pretended to be anything but a bushwhacker outfitted with a camera, compass, pencil, some grains of common sense, and an instinct for self-preservation” (Graham 2010:292). But of course Ian knew a great deal about glyphs, as revealed in many office conversations I had with him when we checked and teased out details of our drawings. He had a strong sense that his own role was not that of a decipherer, but as one uniquely suited

to record, preserve, and disseminate the raw information for scholarship.

Ian's drawings of Maya sculptures stand on their own merits as stunning artworks (Figures 4–6). Their intricate line-work and careful stippling set a new standard for accuracy and objectivity, built on that first developed by William Coe of the Tikal project. In those days and until very recently the drawings were produced using ink on mylar, tracing over a preliminary acetate version that was, in turn, traced from a photograph (see Graham 1975:12-13). A pencil field drawing, ideally made in the presence of the original sculpture, provided a check for all the relevant details of sculpture. In this way Ian created the ideal standard for the recording of Maya monuments. The same can also be said of the site maps he drew and published as part of the CMHI publications, many made from his own surveys undertaken under extremely difficult circumstances. Today those who make archaeological maps or draw sculpture strive to follow Ian's methods and aesthetic sensibility, even when producing drawings and maps digitally on a tablet or on-screen.

The photocopies of field drawings and other output from the CMHI provided the single most important catalyst to the rapid decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs, a wave that crested during the 1980s. Hundreds of new texts were now available to the small community of epigraphers of that time, and no longer were source materials largely restricted to a handful of well-known sites. By generously sharing his visual archive, Ian provided epigraphers with much-needed raw materials to compare texts, analyze alternative spellings, and track dynastic histories. Without these basic raw materials to work from, little real progress would have been possible in deciphering the Maya script and analyzing the Classic Mayan language that underlies it.

In addition to his unending tasks for the Corpus, Ian had a deep interest in researching the lives of key personalities in very early Maya studies, writing important biographies of his famous predecessors in exploration, Alfred Maudslay (Graham 2002) and Teobert Maler (Graham 1997). I suspect that these historical exercises, researched while at Harvard or in Europe in between his field seasons, allowed Ian to understand and reflect on his own role and importance in the exploration and photography of Maya ruins. Through their stories he surely came to realize his own role as their successor, the last of a grand tradition of Maya exploration.

He was sometimes skeptical of new technology, always more comfortable with his tried and true methods and equipment—a Hasselblad 500C large format camera, a clipboard, and a compass. For mapping he would often measure distances between mounds simply by pacing in a straight line, always with astounding accuracy. He never once used a digital camera, to my knowledge, but late in life he foresaw how important



Figure 4. Yaxchilan Lintel 24. Drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.6.5.21.

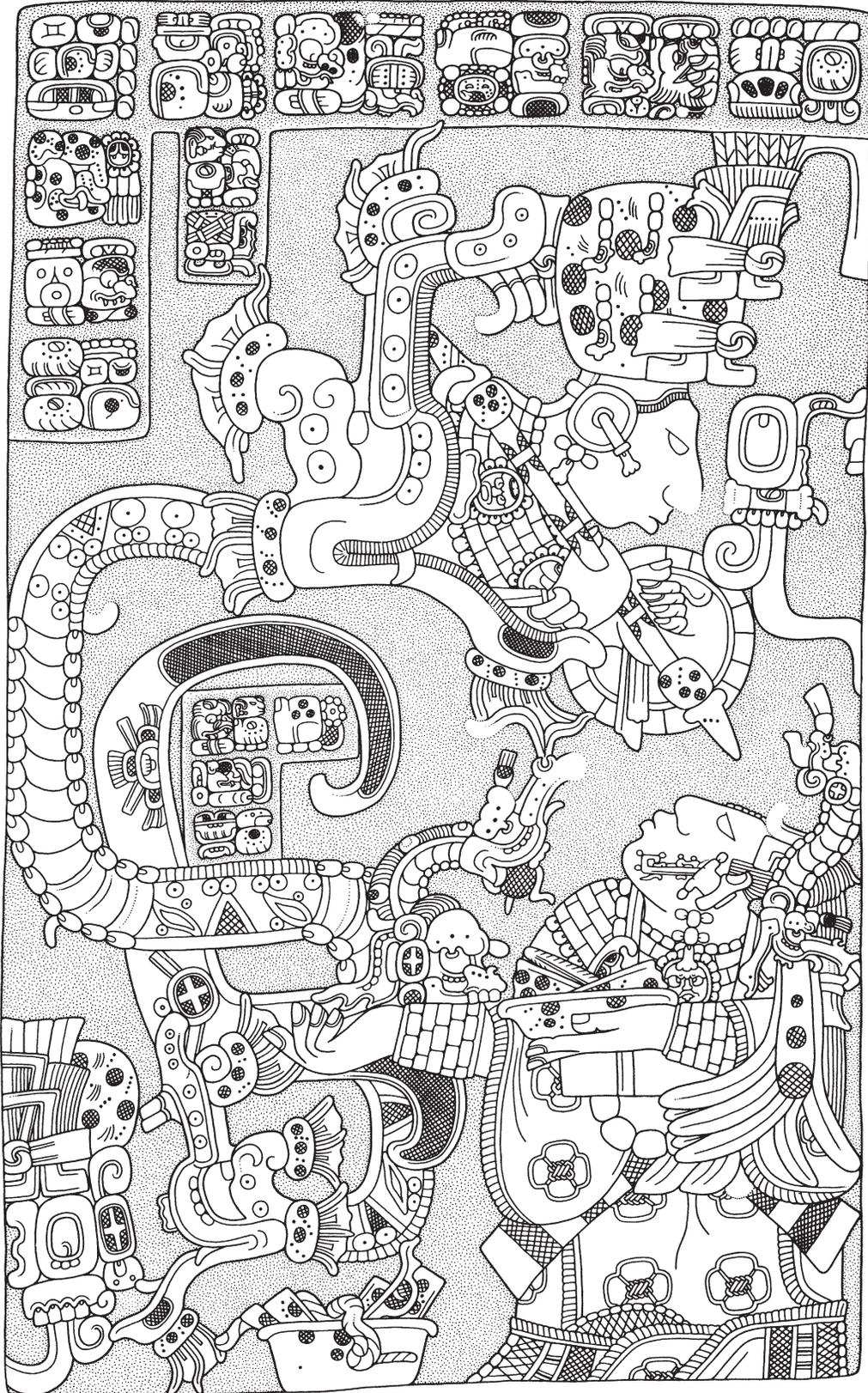


Figure 5. Yaxchilan Lintel 25. Drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.6.5.22.

these new devices would be. He enthusiastically embraced computers, however (again reflecting his old love of electronics), and by the time I was working with Ian in our shared Corpus office, he would spend many hours on his Apple Macintosh, writing chapters of his planned autobiography. This was later published in 2010 as *The Road to Ruins*, a highly entertaining account of his life-long adventures (Graham 2010).

On a personal note, I had the tremendous honor, luck, and pleasure to know Ian in his later years, both as a colleague and as a friend. When in Cambridge I would occasionally visit the office he shared with Tatiana Proskouriakoff, then on the fifth floor of the Peabody Museum. In 1993 Ian hired me as his assistant—a true dream job for an epigrapher. As a result, Ian and I spent a good deal of time together in remote areas of the Maya world, often in the company of his trusted Petenero field assistant, Anatolio López. We teamed up for some weeks in the vast ruins of Calakmul, photographing and drawing the innumerable stelae there. The experience was unforgettable, with long days cleaning and drawing sculptures by day and wonderful evenings listening to Ian's stories over dinners of tortillas and sardines (a favorite of Ian's). One day I remember we were hit with a strong and unexpected *norte*—a cold weather front that changed the steaming rain forest into a misty, chilly, and eerie place, quieting all the birds and animals around us. We weren't prepared for the cold at all, and the nights were especially miserable. Ian and I shared a room at the site's camp house, thanks to the hospitality of the head archaeologist Ramón Carrasco, but we had between us only one very light sheet for a blanket. (We did in fact have two sheets, but we had used one as a reflector for some of our photography of Calakmul's monuments, and I think we must have destroyed that one after a week or so, not thinking much of it). When the cold descended on us, Ian insisted I use our single remaining sheet so I could keep some semblance of warmth. Ian had his own solution: "Ah, but I can use the pages of my newspaper!" I remember him saying with some enthusiasm. I wasn't sure what he meant by this until I saw him reach into his sack and bring out a week-old issue of the *Diario de Yucatán*, separating its many sheets and carefully placing four or five of them over his very extended body as he lay down to sleep. He seemed genuinely proud of his ingenuity, and off we drifted to sleep. At least Ian did. All I can remember of that night was the constant noise of crinkling, crumpling paper as Ian tossed and turned to keep warm. It was a sleepless night for me. But I'll always carry with me the sight as dawn broke of Ian Graham, the great jungle explorer, covered head to foot in newspaper, deep asleep. We next shared a tent a few years later, when Ian and I paid a visit to San Bartolo. It was cold once again, and of course Ian arrived without a proper blanket. But he was ready in his own way, for he had a newspaper in hand, a special Sunday issue

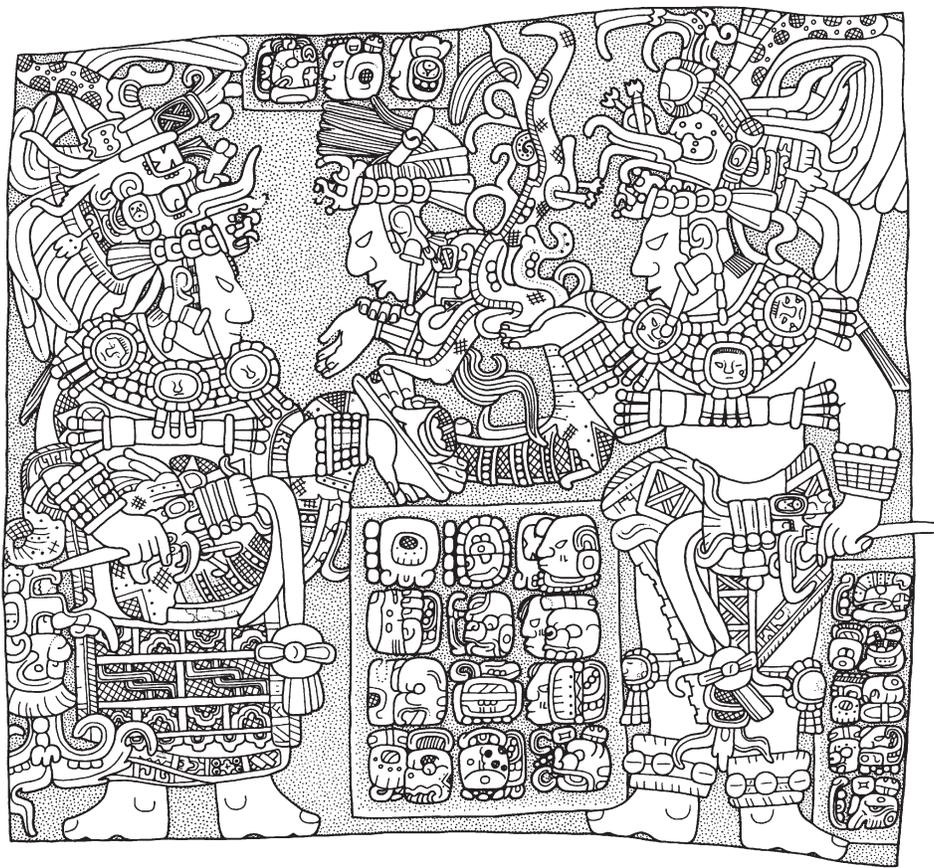
of *Prensa Libre*. I knew I was in for a long night.

Of our joint adventures perhaps the most memorable was our 1997 expedition to an intriguing new site we would together name La Corona. This soon was proven to be the source of many looted sculptures that had come to be known as "Site Q." Our journeys together are now precious memories, and few though they were they provided me with a glimpse of Ian's life as a discoverer and adventurer in the old romantic sense, a true successor to the great explorers of the nineteenth century, and without doubt the last of a kind.

Ian stopped traveling in the Maya world in 2009, his last field visit being once again to Yaxchilan. There he had come full circle in a way, having first been attracted to the Maya area by hearing stories of this great Maya city, and devoting so much of his field work to the documentation of its monuments. The Corpus project, now under the direction of Barbara Fash, continues with more fascicles on Yaxchilan, La Corona, and other sites now in preparation.

Ian received numerous deserved honors and awards throughout his later career. One of the very first MacArthur Prize Fellowships was awarded to him in 1981, and Tulane University bestowed an honorary doctorate in 1998. In 2001 he was awarded the Orden del Pop by the Museo del Popol Vuh in Guatemala, and soon afterwards he received the Orden del Quetzal, the highest honor awarded by the Government of Guatemala. In 2004 the Society of American Archaeology honored Ian with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

It is worth reiterating that Ian's transformative role as a documentarian and explorer was always difficult to reconcile with the professionalized academic world of late twentieth-century archaeology. He held no advanced degree, never taught a course, and never expressed much interest in interpreting his remarkable finds. It was an untethered existence by necessity, allowing Ian to focus on exploring, preserving, and recording sites and monuments. And yet the singular importance of the Corpus project, with its focus on pure, old-school data-gathering, also posed certain challenges when it came to funding and institutional support. Harvard never directly contributed funds to Ian's fieldwork, and without overarching "research questions" and theorizing, traditional grants were often hard to come by. It is an irony that is still very much with us today, with key data-gathering and efforts at preservation lacking the support they need. Basic, fundamental endeavors like the Corpus project must be funded well, for they create legacies that will last decades if not centuries. All too often they take a distant back seat to more monied research projects that are short-term, heavy on theory, and potentially light on long-term relevance. Ian's contributions were hard to categorize within the institutions of modern academia in the United States, but they were basic and will forever live on.



**Figure 6.** Yaxchilan Lintel 14. Drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.6.5.13.

Ian's "entering the path," to use a Classic Maya expression for death, came several years after the onset of Alzheimer's disease. He had returned to England and resided once more at Chantry Farm, unable to go to the field or even to make new drawings. His retirement put an end to nearly five decades of dedication and work that brought to light the precious records of an entire civilization, sealing a legacy that can never be equaled. His adventurous life will forever stand as one of the greatest in the history of archaeology.

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# A Bowl Fit for a King: A Ceramic Vessel of the Naranjo Court Bearing the Komkom Emblem Glyph

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The Maya Ceramics Project (formerly the Maya Survey Project), now centered at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, has as its primary focus the sampling and documentation of the chemical composition of ancient Maya decorated ceramics from a wide array of sites and collections throughout the Maya lowlands (for discussions of the INAA analytical technique, see Bishop et al. 1982; Blackman and Bishop 2007). This project combines nuclear chemistry, archaeology, and art history to investigate the socio-historical implications of Classic Maya (AD 250–850) painted ceramics. The sampling program began in the 1970s and continues as an opportunistic patchwork of chemical analyses with the collaboration of many colleagues and institutions. Project objectives include the production of a pottery paste compositional survey of ceramic production in Mesoamerica with a special emphasis on the Maya region. The compositional data allow the discerning of compositionally and stylistically similar sherds and whole vessels, which imply their being made from similar clay resources and ceramic recipes as well as being viewed as the products of a specific area, site, and perhaps even a group of aligned artisans and/or workshop(s) (Bishop et al. 1986; Reents and Bishop 1985, 2003). The ultimate goal is the detection of patterns of use and exchange to shed light on ancient sociopolitical and economic interaction in Mesoamerica and especially among the Maya.

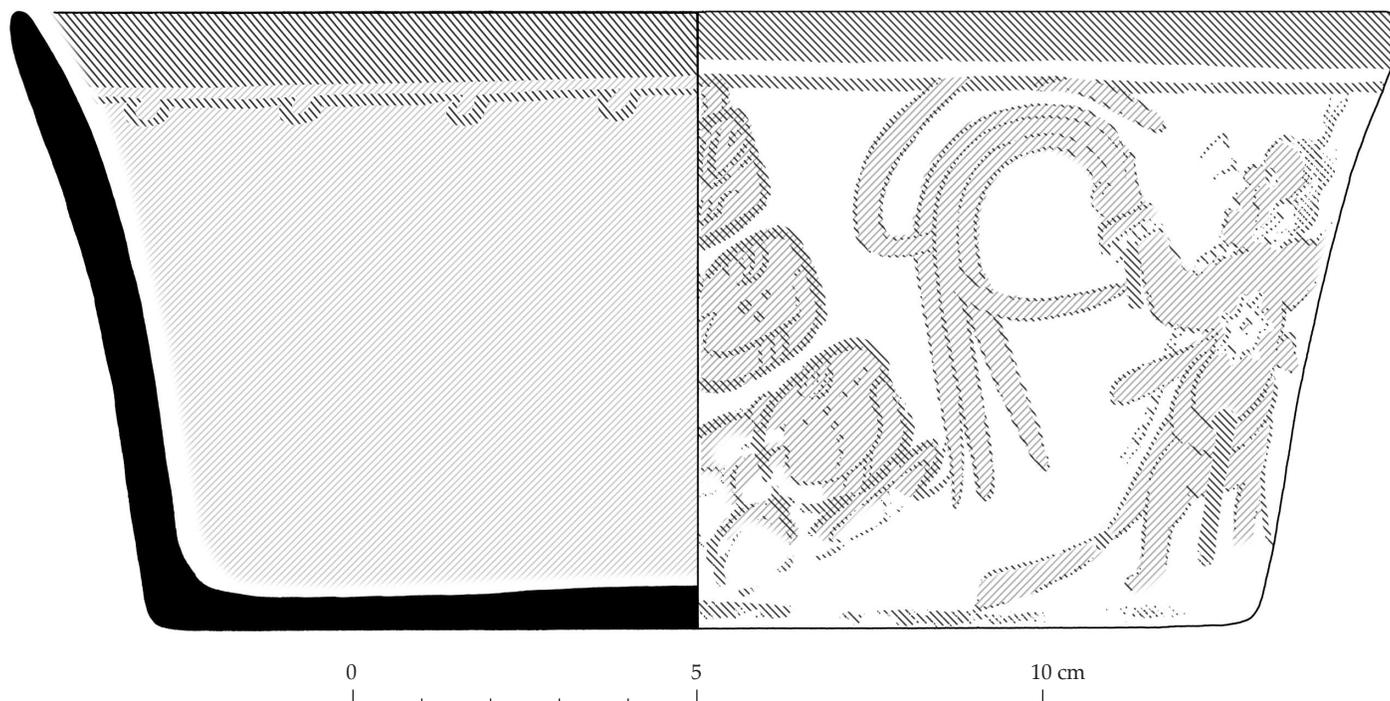
The Maya Ceramics Project was operating in Guatemala in 1993 at which point a pottery bowl in a private collection was brought to the attention of Ronald L. Bishop, which was promptly sampled and attributed the analytical number MS5331. This same bowl is now

part of the Palacios-Weyman Collection that is managed by the Fundación para la Bellas Artes y la Cultura (FUNBA) in La Antigua, Guatemala. The FUNBA curates 4,000 pieces from the collections of the architect Amelia Weymann de Palacios (née Weymann Tejeda) and José María Palacios Porta, lawyer by profession. On account of their shared interest in history and culture, the Palacios-Weyman Collection was started at a very early date and enriched over five decades, until it grew to its current size, becoming one of the most important collections of Guatemalan art. The Palacios-Weymann Collection, which has been registered as national patrimony by the Guatemalan government's Institute of Anthropology, Ethnology and History (IDAEH), covers three major periods: namely, a) Prehispanic, b) Colonial and Hispano-Guatemalan, as well as c) modern and contemporary.

Below we provide a description of this remarkable bowl, its physical properties, and iconography, but we will focus mostly on the chemical attributes and the paleographic features of the glyphic text that adorns the vessel, in order to consider the interplay of these two distinct lines of evidence and how they shed light on the socioeconomic and historical context of its manufacture.

## Physical Properties and Chemical Analyses

The vessel is registered as 84-A-5-311-1 in the Palacios-Weymann collection. The shape of the vessel is that of a bowl according to the archaeological shape-typology for Maya ceramics (Sabloff 1975:23-24) with a flat bottom and outslipping walls. Its maximal rim diameter is 20 cm



**Figure 1.** Section and elevation drawing of MS5331 (drawing: Christophe Helmke).

(16 cm at the base), with a total height of 9 cm (Figure 1). The bowl's painting style resides in the greater Holmul style, first defined at the site of Holmul, Guatemala (Merwin and Valliant 1932; Reents 1985). The Holmul pottery style features a cream-white base slip and painted imagery using shades of red, particularly a red outline and orange interior wash, the wash perhaps a dilution of the red slip. An unusual feature of MS5331 is the replacement of a deep black slip for image accents—as is typical for the Holmul style—with a dark-value red slip. These darker areas may simply have been painted over multiple times using the same red slip rather than comprising a separate paint recipe. The pictorial scene is an abridged version of the so-called “Holmul Dancer Theme” (Reents-Budet 1991), with only the dancing dwarf present (which is to say without the Maize god figure that usually dominates such scenes). Diagonal texts, of three glyphs each for a total of nine hieroglyphs, separate three dwarves.

Based on examination of the original surfaces of MS5331 it is clear that it was found in fragmentary condition and with a partially eroded exterior (with minor exfoliation evident also in parts). This weathering is due in part to the relatively soft surfaces typical of this ceramic ware. The repaired breaks are visible on the interior of the bowl with a sizable amount of fill material added to restore lost areas. The exterior imagery has been repainted in selected areas to mask the repair lines and restore areas of eroded imagery.

The bowl's interior is highly burnished and painted

with a light orange slip, and a wide red band encircles the rim. Directly below the interior red rim band is a thinner line in the same paint, with regular half-circle loops dipping below the thin line. An unusual feature of the bowl is the large Ajaw date notation adorning the interior center of the bowl, likely recording the dedicatory date. This practice echoes that of the so-called “Giant Ajaw” altars best known for Caracol (see Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981:77-102; Satterthwaite 1951:30-37) and to a lesser degree Tikal (Schele and Freidel 1990:213, Fig. 5:28). Similar Ajaw vessels are known from the Eastern Central Lowlands, particularly at Caracol (Chase 1994:163; Chase and Chase 1987:15, 17, Fig. 11b, d, g), Baking Pot (Ricketson 1931:25, Pl. 17a) and most recently finds made at Xunantunich (Helmke and Awe 2017). We will return to this feature when we consider the dating of the bowl from the historical vantage of its creation.

The combined features identify MS5331 as a member of the Zacatel Cream-polychrome ceramic type. Lacking a secure provenience and sufficient numbers of similar examples, a variety assignment is not warranted. The bowl's stylistic and iconographic attributes unquestionably point to its being a product of a workshop located somewhere in the eastern central lowlands. The origin of the bowl can be ascribed to a more circumscribed location in the greater Naranjo area, based on an analysis of the paste composition combined with paleographic features in the glyphic text, including the title borne by the historical owner of the vessel. We explore these data below.

Relative to the overall patterning of ceramic paste compositional divisions in the Maya lowlands, MS5331 fits comfortably within the compositional pattern for pottery made in the eastern central lowlands. That being said, for archaeological sites located in present-day Guatemala we can exclude Holmul, La Sufricaya, Yaxox, Chunhuitz, Ucanal, Yaxha, and Nakum as probable locations of manufacture. Similarly, on the opposite side of the border in adjoining western Belize, we can equally exclude the sites of Xunantunich, Buenavista del Cayo, Las Ruinas de Arenal, Baking Pot, Barton Ramie, and Caracol. Unfortunately the data cannot confirm a specific workshop locale, although it does point to the immediate Naranjo area as the most promising and probable candidate. However, the bowl's compositional profile is not notably close to any of the 146 Naranjo-excavated samples in the database, which may suggest that it was made from different clay resources and/or tempering materials and/or from an idiosyncratic potting recipe divergent from those used in the Naranjo workshops represented by the presently analyzed samples.

Of particular note is MS5331's chemical dissimilarity to any of the unprovenienced vessels in the database whose workshop, patron, and/or artist have been successfully connected to Naranjo based on paste analyses, artistic or ceramic typological attributions, and/or epigraphic evidence (Table 1). For example, MS5331 is chemically unlike the three vases painted during the second part of the eighth century for the Naranjo ruler K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaahk (r. AD 755–780+) (Figure 2a–c). Yet the three vases are so similar to each other as to suggest they are the product of one workshop, while the especially strong chemical similarity between K633/MS1374 and K635/MS1375 can be used to infer that they represent two vessels made from a common clay preparation.

Further, MS5331 does not chemically resemble the so-called Jauncy Vase (K4464/MS1416) (Figure 2d) made at Naranjo for its 38th king, K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk (r. AD 693–728+) but excavated at Buenavista del Cayo (Houston et al. 1992; Reents-Budet et al. 1994:303–302; Taschek and Ball 1992). The Jauncy Vase was painted by an artist who produced distinctive vessels for Naranjo's court under the reign of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk, these works being distinguished by singular hieroglyphic and pictorial styles. Another vase attributed to this artist is K1698/MS1684, based on shared similarities in pictorial composition and paleography discussed below (Figure 2e). Yet unlike the Jauncy Vase, this one was specifically produced as a gift for the Ucanal ruler "Itzamnaaj" Bahlam, who is named as its owner (Reents-Budet et al. 1994:300). The paste compositions of the Jauncy Vase and K1698/MS1684 are similar enough to suggest they were made from the same general clay resources, although there is sufficient variation in the rare earths and differences in the volcanic glass inclusions, specifically in

the volcanic ash used as tempering material. Similarly, differences also are noted in the surface quality of the red slips used to paint the two cylindrical vases: That of MS1684/K1698 is significantly shinier, harder, and thicker than the Jauncy Vase's slip paint. Such surface characteristics typically indicate slightly different slip paint preparations (or "recipes"; see Reents-Budet et al. 1994:301). Also divergent is line quality seen especially in the glyphic texts, which from an art historical perspective imply that these are works of different painters. Yet there are so many shared paleographic features to suggest that these two vases may have been produced in the same workshop attached to the Naranjo court. In summary, the paste compositional data, paleographic details, and stylistic features lead to the interpretation of the two vases as being made by two artists who, if not working together, were certainly intimately knowledgeable of each other's works. The compositional variation stems from slight changes in resource utilization and/or paste recipe, as typically happens among aligned artists even in the same workshop. These may occur due to the routine changes in availability of resources and natural "potting behavior," wherein adjustments are made in any workshop over even a short period of time to adjust to available resources.

Whereas a conclusive match could not be established on the basis of chemical profiles and trace elements, the NAA data does shed light on the place of MS5331 in the socio-ceramic milieu of the eastern central lowlands. The analyses also confirm that MS5331 is chemically similar to other Zacatel Cream-polychrome vessels in the database. Most notable are MS1420 (K4669) (Figure 3a), MS1866 (Figure 3b), NK0011 (excavated at Nakum) (Figure 3c), and BVB009 (excavated at Baking Pot, Belize) (Figure 3d), as well as other Naranjo-excavated sherds and whole vessels whose ceramic types and artistic styles are consistent with Naranjo-area pottery in much the same way as MS5331. The available evidence suggests the immediate Naranjo area as the place of origin of these five Zacatel Cream-polychrome specimens including MS5331. We interpret the group as a small subset of the larger corpus of greater Naranjo pottery production, yet separate and distinct from the known ceramic output of the royal workshops of Naranjo, including vessels bearing the name of ruler K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk. As the product of a workshop in the vicinity of Naranjo, the bowl's paste chemistry cannot assist in the search for the geographic location of the elusive Komkom site unless it were positioned within the wider Naranjo community.

### Iconography

The exterior of MS5331 is decorated with both pictorial imagery and a hieroglyphic text. All elements of the imagery are outlined in red, and resulting areas are filled

Element	MS5331 (K1698)	MS1684 (K4464)	MS1416 (K633)	MS1374 (K635)	MS1375	CV*
Na%	1.85	1.50	1.51	1.57	1.26	2.2
K%	1.72	1.93	1.30	2.35	2.19	5.3
Ca%	0.00	2.99	0.00	5.15	4.59	—
Sc	7.05	5.47	8.04	8.99	8.59	1.7
Cr	11.0	15.0	29.2	21.3	21.6	3.1
Fe	1.44	1.67	2.34	2.29	2.15	3.0
Co	5.14	6.35	—	6.04	5.66	2.0
Zn	89	109	65	72	84	10.6
As	7.1	4.2	5.4	10.6	9.9	5.4
Rb	135	99	60	169	167	7.7
Zr	139	87	214	216	185	—
Sb	1.45	0.76	1.00	1.53	1.47	16.8
Cs	5.50	4.45	2.61	7.55	6.90	3.1
Ba	575	938	1260	621	468	12.2
La	21.6	23.2	23.3	36.5	32.7	1.6
Ce	48.4	36.0	45.8	66.1	60.0	2.4
Nd	13	14	11	29	26	11.6
Sm	4.67	3.33	4.32	6.22	5.61	2.5
Eu	0.63	0.58	0.72	0.94	0.83	3.0
Tb	0.76	0.52	0.46	0.87	0.98	13.8
Yb	3.22	1.95	1.81	3.05	2.54	5.3
Lu	0.39	0.27	0.23	0.42	0.29	6.9
Hf	6.05	3.59	6.53	6.58	5.33	4.0
Th	13.20	7.06	11.80	13.20	12.10	2.7
U	2.00	1.42	1.10	1.73	1.65	15.3
La/Yb	6.7	11.9	12.9	12.0	12.9	
Th/Sc	1.9	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.4	
Cr/Th	0.8	2.1	2.5	1.6	1.8	
La/Sm	4.6	7.0	5.4	5.9	5.8	
La/Lu	56	87	102	87	111	
La/Ce	0.45	0.64	0.51	0.55	0.55	
Cr/Sc	1.56	2.74	3.63	2.37	2.51	

**Table 1.** Comparison of MS5331 and a selection of vessels produced in workshops attached to the Naranjo court. Trace-elemental data in parts per million except where percentages are indicated. \* CV = Coefficient of variation determined from 17 years of repeated analyses of SRM 679 Brick Clay, n = 311 (data from Blackman and Bishop 2007:327).



Figure 2. Vases produced at the royal Naranjo workshop for K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaahk and K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk: (a) K633/MS1374; (b) K635/MS1375; (c) K2796/MS1763; (d) K4464/MS1416; (e) K1698/MS1684 (photos: Maya Ceramics Project).



**Figure 3.** Zacatel Cream-polychrome ceramics with Holmul Dancer scenes that are close in chemical composition to MS5331: (a) K4619/MS1420; (b) MS1866; (c) NK0011 discovered at Nakum, Guatemala; (d) BVB009 discovered at Baking Pot, Belize (photos: Maya Ceramics Project and Christophe Helmke).



**Figure 4.** Two of the iconographic panels on MS5331 showing the dancing dwarves (photos: Yuriy Polyukhovych and Ronald Bishop, courtesy of Amelia Weymann de Palacios).

in with a lighter red/orange wash. The decorative field is divided into six rectangular spaces, wherein each of the three largest ones is dominated by a depiction of a dwarf figure (exhibiting achondroplastic dwarfism), glancing upwards (Figure 4). Separating these depictions are three glyphic bands, which together form one complete glyphic clause. The dwarves' raised heels, bent legs (Grube 1992:201, 204; Looper 2008:88, 92, 124; Proskouriakoff 1950: 28, 145, Fig. 9.J1), upraised arms, and dynamic poses (Looper 2008:3, Fig. 1; Taube 2009:46-47) make it clear that they are performing a type of ritual dance or pageant. Whereas the dwarves are shown wearing plain loincloths and their hair is simply bound in cloth wraps, it is their earspools and necklaces adorned with shell gorgets that mark their distinctive status. In each arm they brandish bundles of long feathers swaying wispily in the air—undoubtedly the long and highly prized tail feathers of the quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*). The same feather bunches are frequently paired with valves of spiny oyster shells (*Spondylus* sp.), placed atop stacks of folded cotton mantles, a combination comprising the idealized tribute package offered by vassals to higher nobles and their kings (see Stuart 1998:411).

Without a doubt the dwarves and their dance serve to celebrate the time of the Maize God's resurrection.

This is made abundantly clear by the many portrayals of this deity and the accompanying dwarves on cylinder vases and plates, often painted in the Holmul style, made at workshops at a variety of sites in the eastern central lowlands (Reents-Budet 1991; Reents-Budet et al. 1994:179-186). It is in this part of the Maya area that this mythic motif predominated, and it is evident that it was of particular importance to the rulers of the area (Helmke and Kupprat 2016:59-69; Houston et al. 1992; Reents-Budet et al. 1994:179-188). In these scenes we see the Maize God shortly after his resurrection and resplendent in fine regalia, while he dances in the company of a dwarf (Taube 2009). This seminal mythology from a maize-based culture led to the dwarf becoming the model companion of Classic Maya kings who themselves often acted in the guise of the Maize God (Houston 1992). Although the Maize God is conspicuously absent on MS5331, the dwarves function as *pars pro toto* actors of the pivotal scene, their solitary dance conjuring the entire epic narrative.<sup>1</sup>

### Epigraphy

The glyphic text on the exterior is evenly subdivided into three equal segments of three glyph blocks apiece, each segment serving as a diagonal dividing band between the dancing dwarf figures. These segments run diagonally from the rim to the base of the vessel, the uppermost and lowest glyphs each delicately touching at the red bands that define the exterior of the vessel. We will explore the text on the exterior first and will return to the Ajaw date in the interior at the end of the paper.

#### *Dedicatory Segment and Vessel Type (A1–B1)*

The first glyph block (A1) is well preserved and can be identified as an Initial Sign that initiates a dedicatory statement on ceramic vessels (see MacLeod and Reents-Budet 1994:109, 124) (Figure 5a). On monuments this same glyph serves as a type of focus marker, emphasizing the most salient clauses (e.g. at Tikal and Caracol) (see Grube and Martin 2000:69, 71, 109) and also serving as a type of final emphatic device in texts of the eastern central lowlands (e.g., at Dzibanche and Lamanai) (see Helmke in press). On portable objects, and ceramics in particular, this glyph functions as a type of demonstrative pronoun (if read *alay* “this, here”) (MacLeod and Polyukhovich 2005) or as a type of quotative device that

<sup>1</sup> Given the form of the ceramic vessel, we can also entertain the possibility that this bowl once formed part of a set or ware of vessels with different forms and functions, including a vase for beverages and a tripod dish for serving solid foodstuffs, such as tamales—the typical steamed maize breads of Maya cuisine. On the other vessels of this set other agents and elements of the same myth might have been represented. Ultimately, the relatively low height of the bowl may account for the election of subject matter that was deemed most suitable.

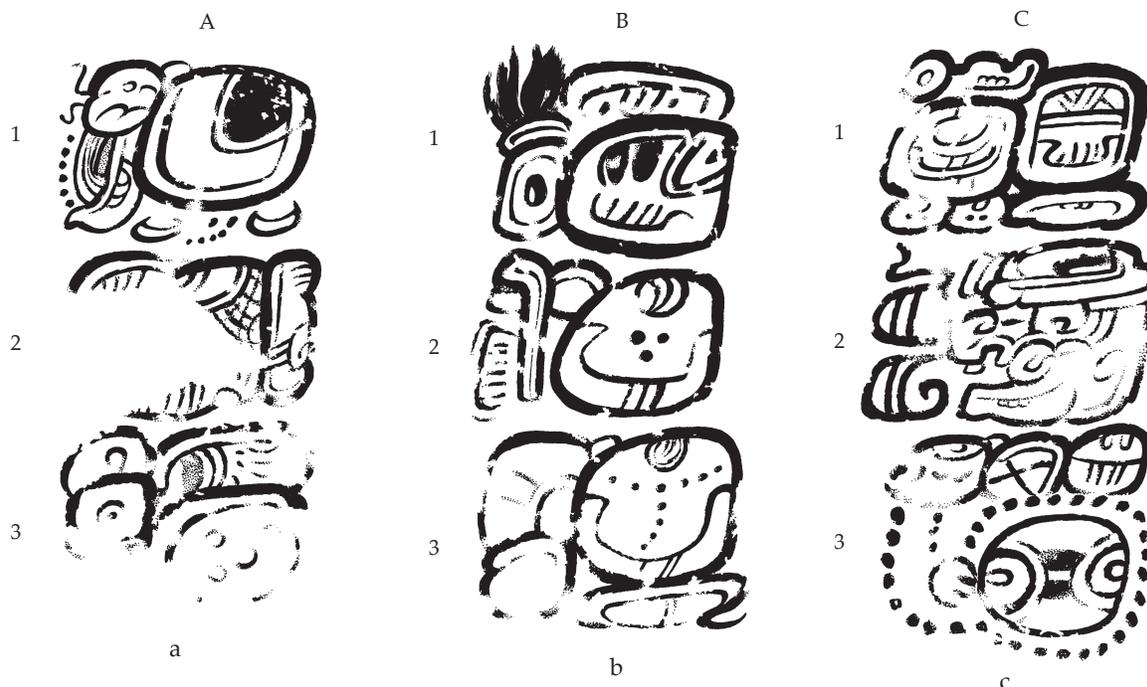


Figure 5. The glyphs of the A–C columns on MS5331: (a) the A column; (b) the B column; (c) the C column (drawings: Christophe Helmke).

initiates the clause (if read *aliiv* “it is said”) (Lacadena 2003:15). Despite this continued ambiguity, it clearly serves to initiate clauses and is written **a-AL-ya** (or alternatively as **a-LAY-ya**). Of the several variants that can be used to write this expression, in this case the main sign is the mirror variant.

The phonetic signs bracketing this logogram are highly distinctive variants and serve as diagnostic paleographic markers of a particular workshop, or perhaps even a specific scribe. The first **a-** phonetic complement represents the upper and lower beaks of a parakeet with the dotted circular element in the middle of the darkened tongue. It is the two small wavy lines that emanate from the nostril that distinguish this variant from other allographs of this vocalic sign. Precisely the same **a** variant is found on ceramics produced at a Naranjo workshop under the patronage of K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk (Martin and Grube 2000:74-77). Salient examples in the archives of Justin Kerr include K927,<sup>2</sup> K1698, K2085 (Figure 6a),<sup>3</sup> K7750 a rare quadrangular vase (Figure 6b), and K8622 (Figure 6c). A very similar example, but with some minor idiosyncratic differences, is found on the Jauncy Vase (i.e., K4464/MS1416) (Figure 6d) that also names K’ahk’ Tiliw as its original owner, although as we have remarked above, it was found in a royal tomb at Buenavista del Cayo in Belize (Houston et al. 1992; Reents-Budet et al. 1994:303-302; Taschek and Ball 1992).

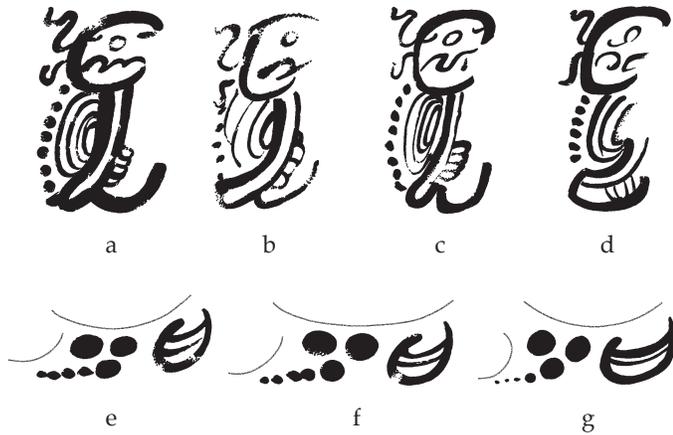
Similarly, the **-ya** syllabogram in subfix position to the main sign is also highly distinctive. What sets it

apart from other variants is that the right crescent is visible whereas the left one is wholly or partly concealed by the initial vocalic sign. In addition, in this particular variant there are three main dots between the crescents, arranged in triangular fashion, a line of small dots trailing from the lowest of these larger axial dots. The same feature is found once more on K927, K2085 (Figure 6e), and K8622 (Figure 6f), as well as on K1398 (Figure 6g)—also known as the Regal Bunny Pot (see Beliaev and Davletshin 2006; Helmke 2012; Stuart 1993).<sup>4</sup> The use of the same **a-** vocalic sign and **-ya** syllabogram, as

<sup>2</sup> On this vase, the Initial Sign has been repainted as part of restoration work, and although the restorer has attempted to be faithful one can see that there are small discrepancies, which is why this particular example is not reproduced here.

<sup>3</sup> It may well be that this vessel dates from the initial part of the reign of this king, as is suggested by a distinctive spelling of his name as **K’AK’-TIL-wa**, instead of the more common **K’AK’-TIL-wi** or **K’AK’-ti-li-wi**. The latter spellings are synharmonic and prompt the transcription *K’ahk’ Tiliw*, with a short vowel in the **-Vw** suffix. In contrast, the spelling found on K2085 is disharmonic and suggests the transcription *K’ahk’ Tiliw*, with a long vowel **-VVw**. The shift from disharmonic to synharmonic spellings is a feature of texts of the eastern Maya lowlands and is usually attributed to a period between AD 747 and 849 (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002:293-302), yet this instance demonstrates that experimentation with this process is at least a few decades earlier, since K’ahk’ Tiliw reigned between AD 693 and at least 726 (Martin and Grube 2000:74-77).

<sup>4</sup> This sign is eroded on K7750, and on both K1698 and K4464 a GI head-variant is used, which is not accompanied by a **-ya** sign.



**Figure 6.** The paleographic commonalities of the Initial Sign: a- and analogous variants on Naranjo ceramics: (a) 2085; (b) K7750; (c) 8622; (d) 4464; analogous variants of the *-ya* syllabogram on the same ceramics: (e) 2085; (f) K8622; (g) K1398 (drawings: Christophe Helmke).

well as the use of the mirror main sign (also used on K927, 1398, 1689, and 2085) speak in a very evocative manner of MS5331 as a vessel that was produced in a Naranjo workshop during the reign of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk. We will return to this observation after we have determined the name of the original owner of the vessel under scrutiny.

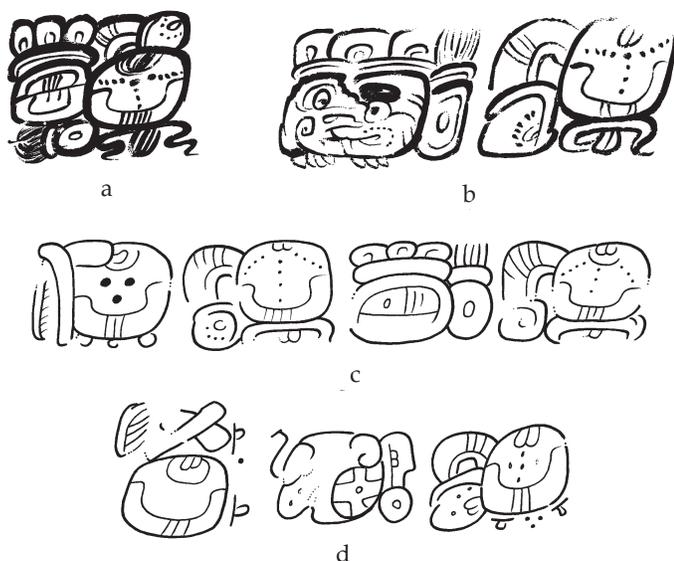
The second glyph block (A2) has, unfortunately, suffered from breakage and thus only little remains. Syntax and comparison to other vessels from the area suggest that this should record the dedicatory verb, the manner by which the vessel was formally activated or brought to life, enabling it to serve its intended function in society. What remains includes the *-yi* syllabogram in final position. Whereas this particular syllabogram is less distinctive than the foregoing phonetic signs, the variant in use in Naranjo workshops during this time has a noticeable cleft or gap between the main rounded portion of the sign (the “paw”) and the lined protrusion at the top (the “claw”) (see K927, K1398, K4464, and K8622). The preferred main sign at this period in the Naranjo workshops presents the head of the aged male divinity known as God N (see Martin 2016; Taube 1992:92-99) although in one instance (K8622) a stylized footprint, an abridged form of the Step sign, is present. On MS5331 what remains suggests that the dedicatory verb was written with the head of God N, especially the characteristic netted headdress and the pronounced wrinkles along the jaw. In almost all cases a *-yi* syllabogram closes each of these verbal expressions to mark them as change-of-state verbs, presumably read *t'ab-aay* “it was raised / it got lifted” (see Stuart 1998:409-417), in reference either to the production of the ceramic vessel or to its ceremonial presentation as part of a dedicatory ritual.

The verb is followed by a substantive (A3) that refers to the object that was dedicated. In this case the glyph block has suffered a fair bit of erosion, but the remaining elements can nonetheless be distinguished as *yu-k'i-bi* for *yuk'ib*. This lexeme can be segmented as *y-uk'-ib* and translated as “it is his drinking implement,” involving the verb *uk'* “to drink” followed by an instrumental suffix *-ib*, the whole prefixed by the third-person singular pronominal possessive prefix (see Houston et al. 1989; MacLeod and Reents-Budet 1994:115, 127-128). As such it is clear that this bowl was primarily intended as an implement for drinking, which also implies that it was designed to contain a liquid. Ordinarily the forms of Maya ceramics tell us something of their contents, with tall vases with narrow orifices reserved for beverages, wide dishes of shallow depth for solid foodstuffs, and bowls of intervening size for broths and semi-liquids.

This observation is borne out in this case also, since the following glyph block, at the start of the second column (B1), refers to the intended contents (Figure 5b). Here this is spelled fully phonetically as *ti-u-lu*, and read *ti ul* “for *atole* / maize gruel” (MacLeod and Reents-Budet 1994:118-119, 128). As such we can see that the text corroborates the intended contents of the vessel as viscous maize gruel, one of the favored beverages of the Maya, both then and now. The *lu* syllabogram used in this glyph block is also a distinctive variant, exhibiting two large dots in the upper portion of the sign, an otherwise uncommon feature. Interestingly, as far as we have been able to ascertain, this particular variant of *lu* does not appear on other ceramics of Naranjo workshops, suggesting that this is an idiosyncratic feature of the scribe who painted MS5331.

#### *Patronage and Nominal Segment (B2–C3)*

The initial portion of the text was given over to an abridged dedicatory statement, as well as specifying the type of vessel in ancient Maya typologies and its intended contents. The remainder of the text starts with the next glyph block (B2) providing an honorific titular expression that introduces the name of the original owner of the vase. Whereas it may seem a rather abrupt transition between the first and second portions of the text, the latter is linked to the former via the possessive prefix *y-* appended to *uk'ib*, marking this drinking implement as the prized possession of a distinct and particular individual. Anthroponyms, or the names of human individuals (particularly regnal names), are usually followed by titles, in keeping with the syntax of the Ch'olan language recorded in the glyphs, although at times additional titular expressions precede the name. These can be identified as honorific expressions, and in this case one such is spread over the remaining two glyph blocks of the medial column. The first half is written **CH'AK-OL** (B2) followed by **pi-tzi-li** (B3). Together this was probably read *ch'ak-ohl pitzil*, involving the verbal



**Figure 7.** Honorific titles: (a) the *itz'aat pitzil* honorific of K'ahk' Tiliw on K8622; (b) the same title of K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaahk on K7750; (c) the same title and the *ch'ahk-ohl pitziil* honorific of Bat K'awiil on the Holmul tripod dish; (d) honorific designating Ukit Kan Lek as *ch'ak-ohl bahte' pitziil* (drawings: Christophe Helmke).

root *ch'ak* “to chop, axe,” the substantive *ohl* “heart,” and the head of the expression, *pitziil*. The latter probably serves as the substantive “ballplayer” and is a derived form of the verbal root *pitz* seen as part of the verb “to play ball” in reference to the fascinating ballgame of the ancient Maya (see Freidel et al. 1993:337-391; Miller and Houston 1987:60; Stuart 1989:24-25).

The honorific title *itz'aat pitziil* “wise man/sage ballplayer” is also found in the nominal segment of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk on K8622 (Figure 7a) and of his son K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaahk on K7750 (Figure 7b) as well as in reference to a Naranjo ruler nicknamed Bat K'awiil, who ruled sometime in the 780s (Figure 7c) (Martin and Grube 2000:81). The latter example is found in the rim text of a tripod dish discovered in a royal tomb at the site of Holmul (Str. F in Group 1) (M1-N1) (Reents 1986). In the same text, Bat K'awiil is not only referred to as an *itz'aat pitziil*, but also as a *ch'ak-ohl pitziil* (K1-L1) (Figure 7d). At Ek Balam, the remarkable tomb of Ukit Kan Lek contained among other things an incised ceramic vase, where its text designates the king as a *ch'ak-ohl bahte' pitziil* (Lacadena 2003:77).<sup>5</sup> The intrusion of the martial title */baah-te'/* (possibly “head-spear”) indicates that the initial portion of the honorific serves as a modifier to *pitziil* and the latter is the discrete

<sup>5</sup> Here, in the transcription, we present the segment */baah-te'/* with a short vowel since morphophonetic processes are at play, wherein *VV > V*, since compounding involving a stressed syllable eliminates preceding vowel length (see Lacadena and Davletshin 2013:16).

syntactic head of the expression. The example from Ek Balam, as well as the pairing of *pitziil* titles on the Holmul vessel, suggests that these are references to the king as a ballplayer, whose various virtues are emphasized, serving to qualify what type of ballplayer he was. As such, the owner of K5331 likewise appears to have been designated as a “heart-chopping ballplayer,” although whether this is nuanced lyrical language or chillingly meant in a rather literal way remains unknown.

The name proper follows over the first two glyph blocks of the final column (Figure 5c). Split over two glyph blocks, the first part of the name can be transliterated as **TE'·?-la-CHAN-na** (C1) that modifies the syntactic head, the deity **K'AWIL** (C2), whose snout is partly eroded. Most individual elements are readily identified, save the second sign, marked with a question mark, which here may be rendered as a rarer variant the **OL** logogram within a circular frame. This is reminiscent of the rare **OL** variant also seen in the nominal segment found on the large jadeite plaque recently discovered at Nim Li Punit, involving what appears to be a T-shaped wind sign within a cartouche (Prager and Braswell 2016:271, Fig. 6b). Together the name on MS5331 thus reads *Te' Ohl Chan K'awiil*. Alternatively this name may involve a moon sign—designated as T181 in the Thompson catalog (1962). As such one alternate transliteration would be as **TE'·ja-la**, in which case the name is read *Te'jal Chan(al) K'awiil*, wherein the putative *-jal* would function as an attributive suffix. The same sign might also function as the logogram **K'AL**, “twenty” for *Te'k'al Chan K'awiil*, although at present we are unsure as to which of these alternatives is more likely, without additional examples of the name.

This type of name is typical of the eastern central lowlands, naming one particular aspect of a deity. The structure of these names is rather methodical, involving the name of the deity at the end of the nominal phrase, *chan* “sky” in the medial segment, and opening with either a verbal expression or a substantive (see Grube 2002; Colas 2014). Thus the name may mean something along the lines of “K'awiil is ... in the sky” if the medial segment is understood prepositionally as *ti chan* “within the sky,” or alternatively, “... is the celestial K'awiil” if the medial segment was meant to be treated in derived form as *chan[al]* “celestial.” Clearly a coherent understanding and translation of the name is impeded by the initial compound, the constituent parts of which are patent enough in isolation, but less so in compound form.

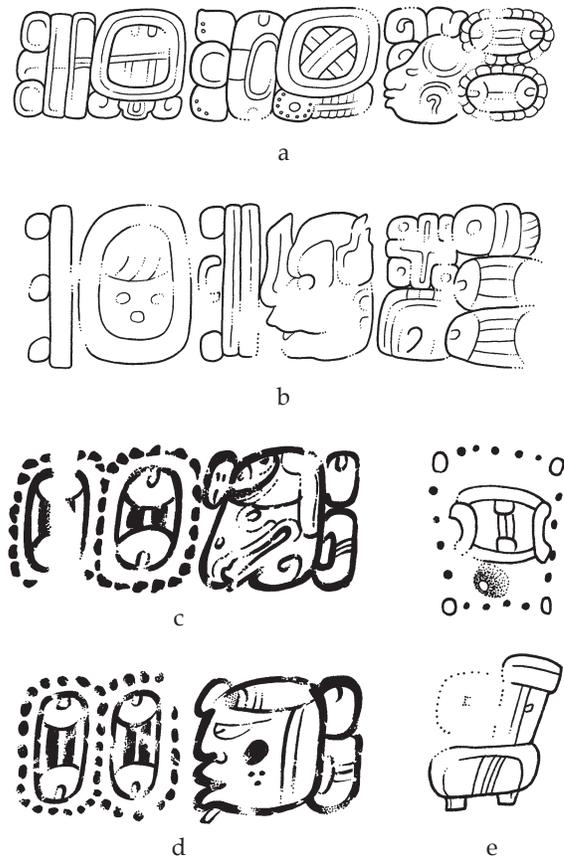
The final glyph (C3) provides the title proper of the original owner and in many ways is the most fascinating part of the whole text. It provides a complete emblem glyph, the exalted title of ruling kings, here written as **K'UH-[ko]mo-AJAW**. While somewhat abridged this can be read *k'uh[ul] kom[kom] ajaw*, wherein the medial segment is the most truncated. As such this provides us with the dynastic title of the “divine king” of a place or

dynastic house named Komkom. This locality is known from the texts of Naranjo as a place that was attacked and burned on March 30 AD 696, not all too surprisingly during the reign of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk (Figure 8a). The same locality may also be mentioned in connection with a "Star War" verb on April 24 AD 726, towards the end of the reign of the same king (Figure 8b). The same regal title also appears on Late Classic ceramics found at Buenavista del Cayo (Figure 8c) and Baking Pot (Figure 8d) in western Belize, suggesting that this ancient locality was probably tied to a site in the vicinity (Helmke and Kettunen 2011:42, 63; Helmke et al. 2016; Houston et al. 1992:507-508; Yaeger et al. 2015:185-188). Whereas the ceramic texts and the mentions made at Naranjo spell this locality as [ko]mo-[ko]mo, on a recently discovered Early Classic shell gorget found at Buenavista del Cayo the title of the original owner is written more synoptically as [ko]mo AJAW (Yaeger et al. 2015:185-186) (Figure 8e), abbreviating the toponym in precisely the same way as seen on MS5331. Based on these numerous examples, and the attribution of MS5331 to a Naranjo workshop, we are thus on rather secure footing to suggest that this is the same title as seen at sites in the eastern central lowlands, although here the regal title is exceptionally preceded by *k'uhul* "godly." In all other cases the title presents the toponym in combination with *ajaw*, thereby forming a partial or so-called "problematic" emblem glyph (Houston 1986).

### Concluding Thoughts

The compositional data for MS5331 indicate that this bowl was the product of a workshop located in the greater Naranjo area, although its paste chemistry is unlike that of other whole vessels associated with royal Naranjo patrons with the exception of K1698/MS1684. Yet the physical features of the bowl are very similar to those of other pottery vessels produced during the reign of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk. The iconography of MS5331 represents a small segment of the greater mythic narrative that is best known from the Holmul Dancer scenes that are typical of pictorial pottery produced in this part of the Maya area. This feature also confirms the bowl's origin at a site in the eastern central lowlands. More specifically, the distinctive graphic variants employed in the text of this vessel are in keeping with ceramics produced for K'ahk' Tiliw and which name him as owner.

In fact, the regnal name K'ahk' Tiliw appears on all but one of the vessels whose stylistic and epigraphic features suggest they were produced under his patronage. Thus even though most ceramic vessels were often gifted between sovereigns as a means of cementing alliances, those vases of K'ahk' Tiliw were personal effects that were bestowed upon others, as is made clear by the Jauncy Vase found at Buenavista del Cayo.



**Figure 8.** References to Komkom in the glyphic corpus: (a) Naranjo Stela 22; (b) Naranjo Stela 18; (c) sherd of a Black-on-cream vase found at Buenavista del Cayo; (d) title found on the Komkom Vase discovered at Baking Pot; (e) detail of the shell gorget found at Buenavista del Cayo (drawings: Christophe Helmke).

Nevertheless, one finely painted vase, designated K1698/MS1684 (Figure 9), diverges from this pattern and instead bears the name of a foreign ruler, in this case the king of Ucanal, one "Itzamnaaj" Bahlam. The texts on monuments at Naranjo make it clear that the relationship between these two kings was rather turbulent and not always amicable. For instance, just twenty days after acceding to the throne on May 31 AD 693, K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk unleashed war upon neighboring kingdoms. Whereas much of the warring may have been aimed at lesser localities to draw them once more under the domination of the Naranjo king after a period of dynastic disarray (see Martin and Grube 2000:72-76), some of these raids targeted prizes further afield, including Tubal to the west, Yootz<sup>6</sup> to the north, Komkom to the

<sup>6</sup> An alternative reading, preferred by the second author, is *Yomootz* based on the example on K7786, wherein the toponym may be spelled *yo-mo-tzi* (compare with Boot 1999).

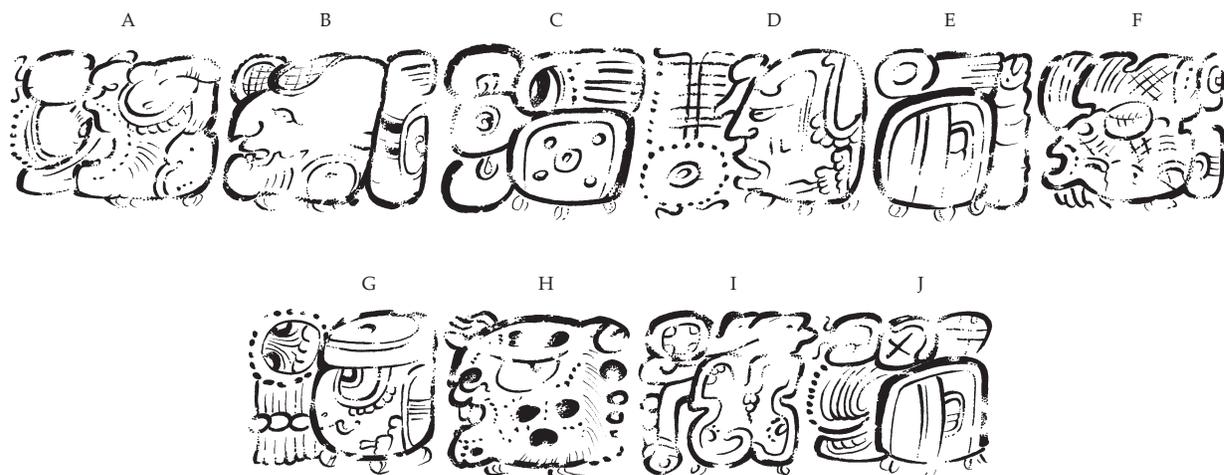


Figure 9. Roll-out of K1689 and drawing of the glyphic text (photo © Justin Kerr; drawing: Christophe Helmke).

east, Bital to the southeast, and Ucanal to the south. The emaciated, near-naked, and powerless king of Ucanal is shown pleading at the feet of K'ahk' Tiliw on the front of Stela 22, which records the attack on Ucanal in September AD 698 (Schele and Freidel 1990:190-191). The texts make

it clear that this is none other than "Itzamnaaj" Bahlam, leaving little doubt as to which court ruled supreme in the region. Following this offensive period wherein K'ahk' Tiliw sought to make his mark on the area, the reign's maturity set in and the texts take stock of the



**Figure 10.** The 4 Ajaw date at the bottom of MS5331 (photo: Fundación para la Bellas Artes y la Cultura, courtesy of Amelia Weymann de Palacios; drawing: Christophe Helmke).

king in his role as diplomat. The finely incised texts on the sides of Stela 2 record the accession of a king of Yootz in January AD 713 under the auspices of K'ahk' Tiliw, who is clearly named as overlord. Similarly, in the same text the accession (possibly a re-accession as faithful vassal) of "Itzamnaaj" Bahlam is said to have taken place the year before in June AD 712, an event that is explicitly said to have taken place *yichmal* or "before / in front of" K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk. This interesting reversal, from defeat in AD 698 to re-accession 14 years later, demonstrates how fleeting power could be during Late Classic times. In addition, this historical event entails the most likely production date for K1698, with the vase perhaps specially commissioned to commemorate the enthronement of the Ucanal ruler and to cement his vassalage to his Naranjo overlord.

Truly remarkable in this regard are the many paleographic features seen in the text of K1698/MS1684 that represent salient points of commonality with the text of MS5331, in spite of the fact that their paste compositions are notably different although both pertain to Naranjo ceramic production. Among these paleographic details, we can point to the same *a-* vocalic sign (A1), the same variants of *yu-* and *k'i* in the vessel-type glyph (C1), and the identical **AJAW** logogram in the title of the Ucanal king (Figure 9). The latter is identical in every detail, including the cap on the "pillow" sign to the left, the cross that marks the center of the same sign, and the interior lines of the "throne" sign to the right (compare J1 on K1698/MS1684 with C3 on MS5331). All of these features together suggest that the texts on both vessels were produced—if not by the same scribe—by contemporaneous painters who produced vessels by closely following the same scribal template. Considering the evidence at hand it seems likely that—much like the Ucanal vase K1698/MS1684—MS5331 was also custom-made for a foreign ruler, in this instance the king of Komkom. Most likely, too, the bowl was commissioned, sometime after AD 712, during the more diplomatic phase of K'ahk' Tiliw's reign and as a direct corollary of the attack inflicted upon Komkom in AD 696.

It is in this respect that the date inscribed in the base of the bowl has direct bearing on this discussion. The date provides a record in the Tzolkin calendar and has been written in abbreviated form as **4-ti-AJAW** for *chan ti [k'in] ajaw* or literally "four on the day Ajaw" (Figure 10). Warranting such a degree of ellipsis is the significance of the date with regards to an important, well-known, and celebrated period ending in the Long Count. As such it is likely the record of a k'atun period ending with a "round" Long Count date, and the best match with these parameters is the date 9.15.0.0.0 4 Ajaw 13 Yax, or August 23, AD 731.<sup>7</sup> What is surprising about this date is that it falls three years after the latest known date for K'ahk' Tiliw's reign, whereas one would expect the bowl to have been produced under his sovereignty. While this bowl cannot be used as tangible evidence for K'ahk' Tiliw remaining in power until 731 it is certainly a tantalizing suggestion. Alternatively, the bowl may indeed have been manufactured to cement an alliance between Naranjo and the lord of Komkom, and this may have occurred under the reign of a successor. This alternative historical scenario could explain the idiosyncratic

<sup>7</sup> This computation is based on the 584286 GMT+1 correlation coefficient (see Martin and Skidmore 2012). An alternate, but less likely, anchor to the Long Count would be to consider a lahuntun date, of which for Baktun 9 the only match is 9.8.10.0.0 or AD 603, which is too early given the style of the bowl, its iconography, and the paleographic features of the text. Alternate hotun and holahun-tun dates provide no good matches either, being too early or too late.

paste chemistry of this specimen within the larger corpus of sampled pottery attributed to K'ahk' Tiliw and other Naranjo kings.

Irrespective of the particulars, this unsung bowl reflects an important event in the history of the Komkom dynasty and celebrates an alliance between Te' ... Chan K'awiil and the rulers of Naranjo. If the bowl were commissioned to celebrate the accession of Te' ... Chan K'awiil, then K'ahk' Tiliw, at the very end of his reign, emerges as the likely patron. But then again, the bowl may have been a gift from the successor of K'ahk' Tiliw on the occasion of his own accession in order to cement an erstwhile alliance with the kings of Komkom, his allies to the east.

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