

## A New Classic Maya Vessel Type Collocation on a Uaxactun-style Plate

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Every now and then a researcher takes up a book or catalog that he hasn't read or studied for some time. Last Thursday (October 9) I had the opportunity to look into a few auction catalogs published in the late eighties and early nineties of the last century by the Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer in Munich, Germany, available at the library of the Leiden Museum of Ethnology.

To my surprise one of the catalogs contained a black-and-white image of a large polychrome tripod plate painted in the Uaxactun style or tradition. The feet of the plate contain small ceramic kernels, as such the feet functioned as rattlers. The plate stands at a height of 7,5 cm. and has a diameter of circa 33 cm. The plate has suffered a breakage in antiquity, which was mended in the common manner of drilling two small holes after which some kind of string kept the parts together. As the explanatory text to the plate explains, the painting at the center of the plate was "expertly" restored ("Die Malerei im Zentrum des Tellers ist fachmännisch restauriert") (Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer 1991: 32, Lot number 66). The present location of the plate is unknown to me.

The catalog provides only one image, unfortunately a small black-and-white photograph, which in comparison to other images in this catalog is of relatively poor quality. Two slightly different high resolution scans (one is a full color scan, the other a black-and-white scan) of the photograph are illustrated here (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Two scans of the Uaxactun Style Plate

This short essay is concerned with the textual matter on the plate, not the iconography. The rim of this plate contains a long hieroglyphic text, the details of which indicate that a variant of the so-called Primary Standard Sequence (cf. Coe 1973) common to the Uaxactun-style has been painted. The Primary Standard Sequence (henceforth PSS) at present is generally, within the epigraphic community, identified as a highly standardized and formulaic introductory and dedicatory phrase commonly containing a hieroglyphic collocation that names the vessel type. Interestingly, this new hieroglyphic text contains several important hieroglyphic and semantic differences when compared to two similar plates recently discussed and illustrated by Zender (2001), namely a plate in the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art (G83.1.120 [Kerr No. 6080]) and the Duke University Museum of Art (1978.40 [Kerr No. 5460]) (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Kerr No. 6080 (left) and Kerr No. 5460 (right)

The plates as discussed by Zender contain a rare vessel type designation presently only found on these two plates, *u-lak u-we'ib'* "(it is) the plate, the eating instrument (for)" (compare to Zender 2000: 1043). While "paint-written" in the tradition of the Uaxactun-style PSS, these vessel types do not contain the so-called "Uaxactun designer label", a collocation representing the main sign of the Uaxactun "Emblem Glyph" (perhaps to be read as [PA?']SKY-na or *pa'chan(?)* "split sky") preceding the vessel type. This designer label can be found in vessel types as "Uaxactun" *ja[a]y y-uk'-ib'* (cf. Reents-Budet 1994: Figs. 4.3, & 4.7), although this label is not always present (cf. Reents-Budet 1004: Fig. 4.47).

The hieroglyphic signs contained in the rim text on the new Uaxactun plate are executed in a bright beige with black lining on a red background ("Der äußere Rand der Innenseite ist mit einem Hieroglyphenfries auf rötlichem Grund in Hellbeige und Schwarz verziert", cf. Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer 1991: 32). This color scheme is identical to the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art and Duke University Museum of Art plates. If correct, also this new Uaxactun plate belongs to a ceramic type named *Saxche Orange*, common to the greater Uaxactun ceramic style or tradition.

Here follows a short analysis of the hieroglyphic text. Letters in the first column indicate the position in the rim text; other columns provide a tentative transcription, transliteration, and a provisional translation:

A	'a-LAY-ya	<i>a-lay</i>	“here
B	<b>K'AL?</b>		
C	<b>ja</b>		
D	<b>ji-chi</b>	<i>k'a[h]l-aj-ich</i>	was presented
E	'u		
F	<b>tz'i</b>		
G-H	<b>b'a</b>		
I	<b>li</b>	<i>u-tz'i[h]b'-al-i[l]</i>	the writing-painting (of)
J	“Uaxactun” ([PA'?]SKY-na)		
K	<b>la</b>		
L	<b>ka</b>	<i>pa'chan(?) lak</i>	“Uaxactun” plate;
M	'u		
N	<b>WE'</b>		
O	'i		
P	<b>b'i-li</b>	<i>u-we'ib'-il</i>	(it is) the eating-instrument
Q	<b>ta</b>	<i>ta</i>	for
R	<b>SAK-chi?</b>	<i>sak chi[j](?)</i>	white venison(?)”

In a future study, at present in preparation, every specific epigraphic detail of this text will be discussed and illustrated (note for instance the variant for **K'AL?** [B] or the separate “kawak” [G] and “imix” [H] to spell the syllable **b'a**, in other examples found merged into one sign).



**Figure 3:** (a) New Plate (preliminary drawing by the author, (b) Kerr No. 5460, and (c) Kerr 6080 (drawings by Marc Zender)

Here I direct the attention of the reader to the extended vessel type collocation that identifies the class to which this ceramic object belongs (Figure 3). The plate is identified by its scribe

as a *pa'chan lak u-we'ib-il*. This is a new Classic Maya vessel type, although in large part it is based on or derived from the vessel types *u-lak u-we'ib'* as identified by Zender. The new vessel type collocation opens with the so-called “Emblem Glyph” of Uaxactun, which may be transcribed as [PA'?]SKY-na for *pa'chan(?)* “split sky”; it is followed by the spelling **la ka** for *lak* “clay object, plate”. The next collocations spell **'u WE' 'i b'i-li** for *u-we'ib'-il*; it is the first time that the possessed form of *we'ib'* “eating-instrument” is followed by a clearly spelled possessive suffix (*-b'i-li* for *-il*).

This new plate may also explain the typology of Uaxactun-style ceramic vessels in a better way. The variant but paired types *pa'chan(?) lak u-we'ib'-il* and *u-lak u-we'ib'* on plates seem to be parallel in structure to the variant but paired types *pa'chan(?) ja[a]y y-uk'ib'* and *u-ja[a]y y-uk'ib'* on bowls and cylindrical vessels.

The new Uaxactun-style plate, illustrated in a 1991 auction catalog, contains a new Classic Maya vessel type collocation. This new vessel type collocation reads *pa'chan lak u-we'ib'-il* or “Uaxactun plate, the eating-instrument (for)”. Future research, either in not well-known catalogs or public and private collections, may identify additional vessel types. In another manuscript the author identifies and discusses a total of some 25 different Classic Maya vessel types based on a database of over 500 PSS texts (cf. Boot 2003). At present the new vessel type would be the 26<sup>th</sup> Classic Maya vessel type collocation.

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