



Glyph Dwellers

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An Early Classic Jade Celt in the Appleton Museum of Art

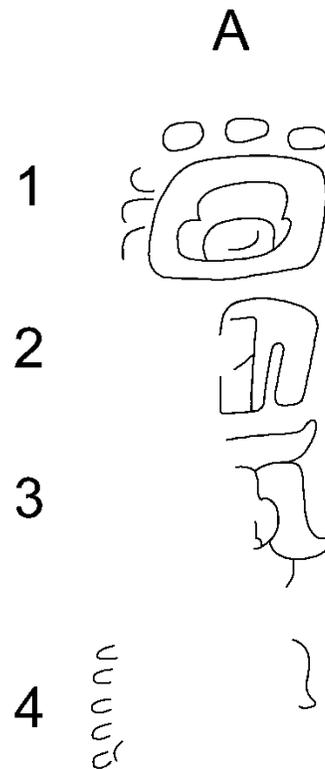
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In early 2015, as part of a project to document inscriptions for inclusion in the Maya Hieroglyphic Database, the authors had the opportunity to examine a jade celt in the collection of the Appleton Museum of Art, Ocala, Florida (**Fig. 1**; inventory number: G12828). As this celt has not been published as far as we know, a brief commentary on its inscription is warranted.

The celt is crafted of a pale blue-green jade and measures 3.8 cm. in length. It is rounded at the top and flat at the bottom, and is drilled with four holes: two on the top and two on the left side. An inscription of four glyph blocks arranged in a single column is incised on one surface. These glyphs conform to the irregular surface of the celt, suggesting a repurposing of the object at some point. It is not clear if the inscription was originally longer and then reduced to four blocks through cutting, because the four blocks seem to fit comfortably in the space provided (although the column is off-center). The incised lines of the inscription fade out on the raised portion of the celt face, implying that additional extensive polishing occurred at some point later in the history of the object.

Despite damage, three of the four glyphs can be read (**Fig. 2**). The first block shows a clear Ajaw sign (T533) within the day sign cartouche. The pinched outlines of the day sign are indicative of an Early Classic date. The coefficient of 3 is also clear. The three small partial circles to the left of the cartouche cannot be identified with certainty. Logically, they should be either the preposition *ti* or *ta*, but the exact grapheme used to represent this word is not apparent. The Long Count date corresponding to this isolated tzolk'in position is also impossible to determine with certainty. However, it is worth mentioning that the period ending of 8.16.0.0.0 fell on 3 Ajaw (8 K'an'k'in; Feb. 3, 357). The celt's style is appropriate to this date; however, there is no additional evidence to support a period ending position.



Figs. 1 and 2. Inscription from jade celt, Appleton Museum of Art G12828. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych; drawing by Matthew Looper.

The next glyph block (A2) includes the "step" sign, possibly reading **T'AB** (Stuart 1995:409–417). The prominent notch in the step is similar to that which appears in other Early Classic examples, most notably Tikal Stela 31 (E5) and Stela 39 (zB4). The notch is probably part of the outline of an infixed **yi** syllable, as seen in other Early Classic inscriptions (e.g. Tikal Marcador D2; carved tripod vessel, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, IV Ca 49845; K6547). The resulting verb may therefore be *t'abayi*, sometimes translated as "it got ascended" or "it got raised," based on glosses in various Ch'olan languages:

Proto-Ch'olan: *t'äb' 'rise, go up' (Kaufman and Norman 1984:133)



Ch'olti: tabse 'subir' (Morán 1935:60)

Ch'orti: t'ab'sen 'alzar, subir, levantar, empinar, ahorrar, guardar' (Pérez Martínez et al. 1996:213)

In the Maya script, this verb most commonly precedes a collocation that refers to the surface painting or carving of a vessel or other object (MacLeod 1990:128–166; Grube 1991). In other contexts, the verb is followed by a location (e.g. Tikal Stela 31 F5, Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Stairway 2; El Palmar Hieroglyphic Stairway A19; Piedras Negras Stela 12), a person (e.g. Palenque Temple of the Inscriptions west panel R4), a structure (e.g. Tikal Miscellaneous Text 140, K8009; Palenque Tablet of the Foliated Cross M6), or an architectural element such as a wall or stairway (La Corona HS2 Block 8 E4; Tonina Stuccoed Wall). On the La Corona Hieroglyphic Stairway Block illustrated by Sebastian Matteo (2010:Fig. 1), the verb (A1) is followed by *ti ajk'uhuunil* "in the priesthood/as worshipper." An unusual context of the verb is in a parentage expression on Tikal Stela 39, where it is followed by *uch'ab yak'abil* "his sorcery," then the name of the father. Given this range of contexts, we suspect that the meaning of the verb may be similar to "appear" (Polyukhovych 2012:504).

Only half of the next glyph block (A3) survives; however, it almost certainly consisted of a variant of the grapheme read by David Stuart (2012:122–123) as Ux Yop Huun, literally meaning "Three-Leaf-Paper." On the celt, we see the right half of the "pinched" T533, as well as two of the three leaves that normally frame the upper part of the sign. The remains of the curve below the leaf on the right side of the glyph block suggest the outlines of the avian deity face seen in the better-preserved examples of the grapheme on the Nosara Jade Plaque (Fig. 3; see Stone 1968:Fig. 9; Mora-Marín 2000:Fig. 37). We suggest that the Appleton celt grapheme was this sign, rather than the simpler T533 with leaves.

The short and damaged inscription on the Appleton celt makes it difficult to ascertain the correct referent of the Ux Yop Huun sign. While Stuart (2012) argued that in many contexts, Ux Yop Huun referred to the deity associated with royal headbands, this makes little sense in the present context. On the other hand, as Stuart (2012:128) pointed out, on Tikal Stela 4, Ux Yop Huun refers to the royal headband itself. Analogously, the Appleton celt may refer to the "raising" (or perhaps better, "appearance") of a royal headband.



The fourth glyph block (A4) is almost completely gone. Traces of a curve can be seen on the right, and a column of five tight curves are on the left side. The five curves are reminiscent of T134, deciphered as **no** by Stuart (Martin and Grube 2000:231). Without additional information, however, it is not possible to make a secure identification, nor speculate as to its significance in the context of this inscription.

Fig. 3. Ux Yop Huun, from Nosara jade plaque. Drawing by David Mora-Marín, after Mora-Marín (2000:Fig. 37).



In summary, we interpret the short text of this jade celt in the following way:

A1	ti/ta 3 AJAW	ti/ta ux ajaw	on 3 Ajaw
A2	T'AB?-yi?	t'abay?	appeared?
A3	UX YOP HUUN	ux yop huun	the headband 'three-leaf-paper'
A4	no? _	_	_

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