A Possible Logogram for SITZ', "Swollen Belly, Glutton"

Yuriy Polyukhovych
Department of Art and Art History, California State University Chico

The group of Maya vessels known as Chinos Black-on-Cream is well known for its simple calligraphic style of hieroglyphic inscriptions (see Reents-Budet, Bishop, and Fahsen 1994). Vessels painted in this style seem to constitute one of the largest subgroups within the corpus of Maya painted ceramics. Recent epigraphic analyses suggest an origin of the style in northeastern Peten, especially in the Xultun region (see Krempel and Matteo 2011).

One interesting and until now undeciphered hieroglyphic sign appears on the Chinos Black-on-Cream style vessel Kerr 4387 (private collection). It is unique and occurs only once as a component of the name of the vessel’s owner (Fig. 1). This grapheme, designated with the code ZS6 in Macri and Looper’s (2003:233) glyph catalog, seems to represent a swollen belly with twisted navel.
This identification is confirmed through comparison with representations of one of the wahy spirits studied by Grube and Nahm (1994). For example, vessels K927, K2286 and K2716 depict wahy spirits with distended bellies and everted, twisted navels exactly as represented by ZS6 (Figs. 2, 3, 4). The proper name of this wahy is usually spelled si-tz'i CHAM-ya, sitz' chamay/chamiy, "gluttony death," or si-tz'i WINIK-ki, sitz’ winik, "gluttony man" (Grube and Nahm 1994:709).

Fig. 2. Sitz’ Winik, depicted on painted vase, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia 86.454 (K927). Photographs by Yuriy Polyukhovych.
Fig. 3. Sitz’ Chamay/Chamiy, depicted on painted vase, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore 48.2776 (K1111, 2286). Photographs by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

Fig. 4. Sitz’ Chamay/Chamiy, depicted on painted bowl, Museo Popol Vuh, Guatemala 0419. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.
Several hieroglyphic signs in the Maya script represent body parts of humans or animals. Usually they have the phonetic value of the body part depicted (i.e. K’AB, "hand;" ICH’AAHK, "claw;" JOL, "head;" etc.). These logograms are frequently combined with phonetic complements (K’AB-ba, ICH’AAHK-ki, JOL-lo, etc.).

![Image of a painted bowl with a glyph]

**Fig. 5.** "Swollen belly" grapheme with tz’i complement on painted bowl, private collection (K4387). Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

On K4387, we have the "swollen belly" sign combined with the "bat head" variant of the tz’i syllable (Fig. 5). Taking into account arguments described above, it seems probable that the glyph in question is a logogram SITZ’ or "swollen belly, glutton" and tz’i in this case functions as a phonetic complement (SITZ’-tz’i). Obviously, in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing, we require direct substitutions to reveal readings of unknown logograms, but in this case, a SITZ’ reading seems very promising.

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