

A Fresh Breeze in the Palace: The Courtly Function of the *Yok Waal*

Sven Gronemeyer^{1,2}

¹⁾ Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn

²⁾ La Trobe University, Melbourne

The present note is about a very rare lexeme in the epigraphic record: *waal* 'fan' (cf. Boot 2009:197, Kaufman 2003:933). Among the handful of examples, a unique context on the polychrome ceramic vessel K2914, the famous Denver Art Museum vase (Figure 1), allows identification of a hitherto unrecognized courtly function: *yok waal* as the 'fan-bearer' or 'fan-wielder'.



Figure 1. Roll-out photograph of polychrome ceramic vessel K2914, Denver Art Museum (object no. 2003.1) Photo by and courtesy of Justin Kerr, digitally enhanced.

Linguistic and Epigraphic Evidence

Classic Mayan *waal* is mostly written as **wa-li** (Boot 2009:197), occurring only one time as **wa-la** (Helmke, Hoggarth, and Awe 2018:61). Cognates can be found in a number of Western Mayan languages, as well as in the Poqom-Q'eqchi' branch (Table 1).

pM	<i>*wel ~ *wal</i>		(Kaufman 2003:933)
WM	<i>wel</i>		(Kaufman 2003:933)
LL	<i>*wal</i>		(Kaufman 2003:933)
LL+	<i>*wahl</i>		(Kaufman 2003:933)
EpM	<i>wal</i>	fan	(Boot 2009:197)
pCh	<i>*wehl-ä</i>	abanicar // fan	(Kaufman and Norman 1984:136)
CHT	<i>Vaalh</i>	abanico	(Morán 1695:81) ¹
CHR	<i>wahr</i>	fanning, winnowing, fan, fly-brush	(Wisdom 1950:752)
CHR	<i>wajri</i>	abanicar, splar, ventilar. blow, fan	(Hull 2016:476)
CHR	<i>wahri u ut</i>	fan one's face	(Wisdom 1950:752)
CHR	<i>wahri e k'ahk'</i>	fan a fire	(Wisdom 1950:752)
CHR	<i>wahrnib</i>	fan, bellows	(Wisdom 1950:752)
CHR	<i>wajrnib'</i>	soplador, ventilador. fan	(Hull 2016:476)
CHN	<i>welän</i>	soplar (con algo)	(Keller and Luciano 1997:281)
CHN	<i>weli</i>	soplé	(Pérez González and de la Cruz 1998:78)
CHL	<i>welel</i>	tendido, plano	(Aulie and de Aulie 1978:129)
CHL	<i>wejlan</i>	soplar (con abanico)	(Aulie and de Aulie 1978:129)
CHL	<i>wejl-an /wejl-ö</i>	abanicar	(Schumann Gálvez 1973:98)
CHL	<i>wejl-ö-ji'</i>	abanico, soplador	(Schumann Gálvez 1973:98)
YUK	<i>wal</i>	mosqueador, abanillo [nombre antiguo de abanico], aventador, abanico	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:909)
YUK	<i>wal</i>	walt, fan; leaf through	(Bricker et al. 1998:299)
YUK	<i>wal</i>	mosquear o hacer aire con el mosqueador a ventable	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:910)
YUK	<i>waltah</i>	abanicar, hacer aire	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:910)
YUK	<i>wal</i>	hoja de arbol, de yerba, de libro o de papel, de tabaco, platanos y de cosas así	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:909)
YUK	<i>wáal</i>	page [folio]; leaf	(Bricker et al. 1998:299)
YUK	<i>chimal wal</i>	abanillo [abanico] grande que hace sombra, mosquedor [sic!] [abanico]	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:100)
YUK	<i>k'inil wal</i>	abanico grande que hace sombra	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:403)
YUK	<i>yok wal</i>	cabo o palo de mosqueador	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:595)
YUK	<i>wal nok'</i>	figurita de trapo, muñeca de niñas para jugar	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:912)
ITZ	<i>waal</i>	palma, soplador. palm frond, fan of feathers for fire	(Hofling and Tesucún 1997:661)
ITZ	<i>waläl</i>	extenderse, tenderse, colgarse, mecerse (con aire). extend, spread out, hang out, sway (in wind)	(Hofling and Tesucún 1997:657)
MOP	<i>waal</i>	soplador, abanico	(Ulrich and Ulrich 1976:234)
MOP	<i>waal</i>	soplador	(Schumann Gálvez 1997:247)
MOP	<i>waal</i>	hoja de palma de tierra. young palm frond	(Hofling 2011:454)
MOP	<i>waal</i>	soplador, abanico. fan	(Hofling 2011:454)
MOP	<i>ajwaal</i>	soplador. fanner	(Hofling 2011:112)
TZE	<i>uelvioghib</i>	aventador, mosqueador	(de Ara 1986:405)

¹ Only the manuscript copy at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia provides the correct entry that corresponds with the other cognates. The publication by William Gates (1935) contains a transcription error, turning the entry into <u calh>. This error is reproduced in later editions of the manuscript (Boot 2004:6, Robertson, Law and Haertel 2010:293).

TZE	<i>wel-</i>	abanicar	(Robles Uribe 1962:77)
TZE	<i>wehluyel</i>	abanicar, aventar	(Slocum and Gerdel 1965:199)
TZO	<i>veluy</i>	fan, winnow. aventar	(Laughlin 1988:327)
TZO	<i>velulan</i>	brandish or shake (lance). blandear, sacudir como lanza	(Laughlin 1988:327)
TZO	<i>veluyab pech'</i>	fan, flyswatter. aventador o mosqueador	(Laughlin 1988:327)
TZO	<i>vel</i>	cut /weeds underbrush/, fan, lop off /branches/	(Laughlin 1975:367)
TOJ	<i>wejl</i>	soplar, abanicar	(Kaufman 2003:933)
CHJ	<i>wel (te')</i>	Plant name. < Spanish "barrumba." <i>Cecropia</i> sp.	(Hopkins 2012:380)
QAN	<i>wel</i>	Arbol [sic!] de madera suave y hojas brillosas	(de Diego Antonio et al. 2001:338)
QAN	<i>Welb'al</i>	Objeto que se usa para soplar fuego	(Com. Ling. Q'anjob'al 2003:162)
POP	<i>Welnhe'</i>	Abanicar. Ventilar	(Ramírez Pérez et al. 1996:309)
QEQ	<i>Uaal</i>	1- soplador 2- hoja, sello, alas de mariposa	(Haeserijn 1979:356)
QEQ	<i>Uaaluunc</i>	1- soplar, avivar el fuego con soplador 2- volar (como la mariposa)	(Haeserijn 1979:357)
PQM	<i>valeh</i>	aviar de Abanillo	(Feldman 2000:430)
PCH	<i>wahlanik</i>	abanicar	(de Sedat 2001:812)
PCH	<i>wahb'al</i>	abanico	(de Sedat 2001:812)
PCH	<i>wahloom</i>	soplador	(Dobbels 2003:766)

Table 1. Linguistic evidence for *waal*.

While the Western Ch'olan languages feature *wel*, Eastern Ch'olan languages, the predominant and more conservative daughter languages associated with Classic Mayan (cf. Houston, Robertson and Stuart 2000: 327, fig. 1) feature *wal*, as attested in the epigraphic records. Cognates in Eastern Mayan languages are restricted to the Poqom-Q'eqchi' branch. While the occurrence in Q'eqchi' could easily be explained by contact and diffusion, the presence in its direct sister languages is more difficult to elucidate. In Colonial times, Poqomchi' and Poqomam were also likely adjacent to the Eastern Ch'olan area (cf. MacLeod 1987:225); otherwise, they may have preserved a proto-Mayan substrate.

When grouping together the meanings of *wal* ~ *wel* in the different languages, three partially overlapping semantic domains can be identified:

- 1) **Floral**: A variety of trees und underbrush, especially their leaves, e.g., palm fronds;
- 2) **Flat**: Anything with a level surface, e.g., leaves, sheets or feathers;
- 3) **Movement**: Anything moving up/down or left/right, especially when swirling the air, e.g., leaves, wings and their artificial counterparts such as fans or fronds; and the action of moving in this way.

Of special interest is the Chuj entry that identifies *wel* as the genus *Cecropia*, the trumpet tree. Its fan-like, circular, lobed leaves and candelabrum-like branches resemble the large, rounded fans and parasols on long shafts that are known from Maya iconography (Figure 2). With this information, the less specific entry from Q'anjobal also might refer to the same species. Furthermore, it is possible that the name of this tree was extended to cultural artifacts of similar shape and movement patterns, including Classic Maya fans depicted as either flat (e.g., on K2914, Figures 1 and 6) or with a bent profile (e.g., on K5763, Figure 2b). A third type seems to be more like a parasol, with a circular or conical outline attached to a handle with a flexible joint (e.g., on Site R Lintel 3, Figure 2c; note the almost three-dimensional rendering of the braid).² The question of whether fly-whisks made of feathers or

² Such parasols could also be used as fans at the same time. Also compare the Mayan cognates with the Yukatek entries *chimal wal* (literally "shield fan"), which includes an Aztec loan [Kartunnen 1983:52]), and *k'inil wal*

strips of paper or palm, which are frequently represented in iconography (Figure 3), were also named *waal* in Classic Mayan cannot be answered based on present linguistic evidence, e.g., from Ch'orti', Yucatek, Itzaj or, Tzotzil.



Figure 2. Comparison between the *Cecropia* tree and large fans or parasols in Maya art. a) *Cecropia* sp. Photo by Andreas Kay under CC BY-NC-SA (<http://www.flickr.com/andreaskay/albums>), b) Depiction on vessel K5763. Photo by and courtesy of Justin Kerr, digitally enhanced, c) Depiction on Site R Lnt. 3. Photo by Anonymous and courtesy of Justin Kerr, digitally enhanced.

Nonetheless, there are apparently alternate genus attributions for *wal* ~ *wel* in different languages (possibly because of different habitats), in addition to the identification of *Cecropia* sp. in Chuj that has already been mentioned. In combination with other, more specific modifiers, Yucatek especially distinguishes between different species, e.g., *X-holom-uul* (*Tillandsia streptophylla*) (Roys 1932:245)

(literally “sunny fan”) from the Vienna Dictionary, both defined as a ‘large fan that provides shade’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980:100, 403).

and *X-ual-canil* (*Pteridium caudatum*)³ (Roys 1932:291). But all these plants have in common long, swirling leaves.



Figure 3. Polychrome ceramic vessel K1453. Note the fly-whisks held by the seated ruler and the courtier sitting below. Photo by and courtesy of Justin Kerr, digitally enhanced.

Apart from the courtly function to be discussed shortly, the lexeme *waal* only appears in two other contexts. The first is the designation of a person as *Aj Pach' Waal* on the hieroglyphic stairway of Structure GZ1 of the Guzmán Group to the north of the site centre of El Palmar, Campeche, Mexico (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2014). The phrase appears twice in the inscription (Step II, E-F; Step IV, R-S) (Figure 4). Epigraphic analysis of the monument suggests that *Aj Pach' Waal* was a *lakam* official and that he dedicated the stairway in AD 726 in the presence of the El Palmar ruler and possibly *Yuhknoom Took' K'awiil* of Calakmul as well (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2014:38, 45, 52).

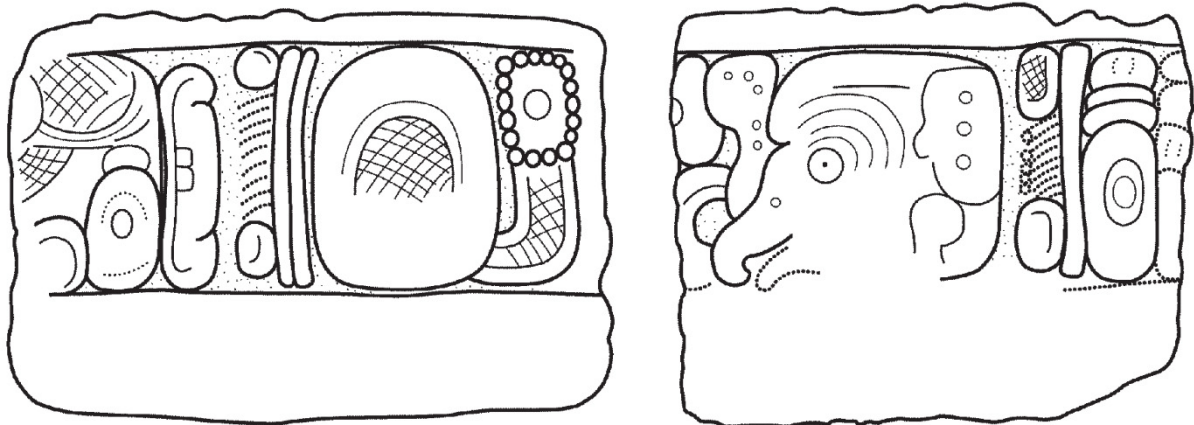


Figure 4. The name of *Aj Pach' Waal*, El Palmar Structure GZ1 Hieroglyphic Stairway, Step II, blocks E-F. Drawing by Octavio Quetzalcoatl Esparza Olguín, from Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín (2014:fig.8).

³ Roys further explains that this species is “[a] large bushy fern with pale yellow fronds. The Indians are said to make fly-whisks of them. This may be the ceremonial ‘caanil ual’ mentioned in the ancient Maya prophecies (Chilam Balam of Chumayel, p. 13)”.

The lexeme *pach'* is predominantly attested in Western Mayan languages with the meaning '(make) flat', 'crush', 'press' or the like.⁴ Ch'orti has some very intriguing compounds with nouns following to describe certain, more specific actions (Wisdom 1950:562): *pach' k'uhtz* 'tobacco-pressing', *pach'mut* 'bird trapping', or *pach'i e ich* 'crush chilli (in a bowl)'. Like other actions, these can also be prefixed by an agentive to derive a profession, e.g., *ah pach'mut* 'bird trapper'. Therefore, it seems less likely that *Aj Pach' Waal* from El Palmar is a personal name (also considering an agentive prefix). As a *lakam* or an official in charge of collecting tributes for the royal court (Lacadena 2008), he probably received emissaries for audience at Structure GZ1, as the text on the stairway lists his predecessors in office (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2014:39). In addition, he might have carried out the profession of a fan and/or basket maker there.

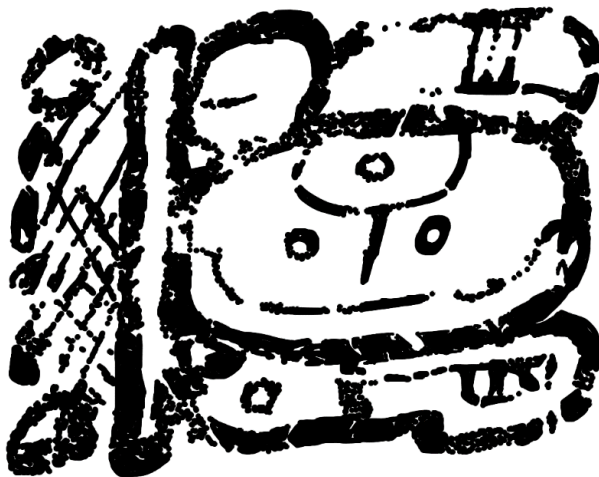


Figure 5. The toponym *aj waal te'* on the "Komkom Vase", block E8. Drawing by Sven Gronemeyer.

The second known context for *waal* in Classic Maya inscriptions is on the so-called Komkom Vase, where it is synharmonically written **wa-la** and used within the toponymic title *Aj Wal-te'* (Figure 5). It is the only mention of this locality in the corpus (Helmke, Hoggarth, and Awe 2018:61). Like the authors of the study of this ceramic vessel, I consider the Chuj entry for *wal* cited previously as a likely etymology for this designation, or alternatively any larger palm species that once may also have been named *wal te'* (see also the study of the generic *xan*, Prager and Wagner 2016).

The *Yok Waal* on Vessel K2914

Let us now return to the topic of the present note, the mention of *yok waal* on the polychrome ceramic vessel K2914. The caption, written in two hieroglyphic blocks as **yo-ko wa-li** (blocks P-Q), is attached to the forehead of the leftmost figure ("Individual 1") seated on an elevated platform in the courtly scene depicted on the vessel (Figure 6). The vessel itself has recently been subject of an extensive discussion (Looper and Polyukhovych 2019). The authors were not sure about the identification of the sign 82 li⁵ and considered the caption to be name of Individual 1 (Looper and Polyukhovych 2019:5, 7). I would like to propose an alternative interpretation of this phrase as indicating a courtly function.

⁴ See CHR: *pach'* 'crushing, pressing, trapping' (Wisdom 1950:562), *pach'i* 'squish, smash, flatten, crush, step on, step, in' (Hull 2016:317); CHL: *pach'al* 'ancho y largo (el pie y la mano)' (Aulie and de Aulie 1978:91); TZO: *pač'al* 'flat (land, stone, board, floor, roof)', *pač'alubtas* 'level /ground/, plane /log/'.

⁵ Closer inspection confirmed the identification of sign 82, although it is more bulbous than normal. The internal lines are apparent, although they are painted with more wash.

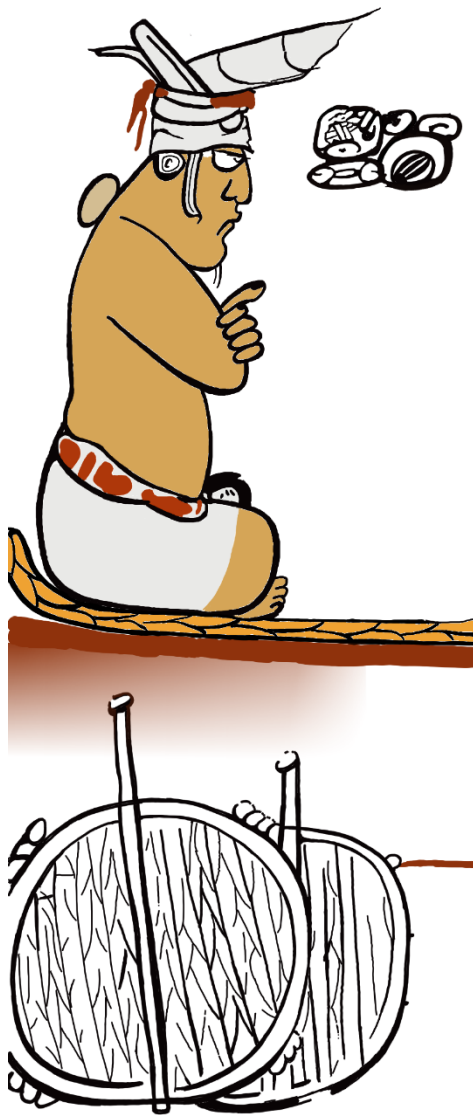


Figure 6. Detail of vessel K2914 with “Individual 1” sitting on a platform, with the caption *yok waal* in front and two large fans next to the platform. Drawing by Elisabeth Wagner with additions by Sven Gronemeyer.

The *Diccionario de Motul* provides *yok wal* as ‘cabo o palo de mosqueador’ (end or pole of a fly-whisk) (Barrera Vásquez 1980:595). Constructions with *(u-)y-ok* + noun are frequently deployed in Mayan languages to describe one, specific end of an object, or the bottom part of an object or natural or artificial feature (Table 2).

The construction is most prominent in the epigraphic record within the theonym *Balun Yok-te’ K’uh* (Eberl and Prager 2005), which may be translated as ‘Nine / Many are the Steps / Pedestals of the God’ (cf. Grofe 2009:8). Another well-known instance appears on Yaxchilan Lintel 25, where the *Wil-te’ Naah* is referred to as the *u-y-ok-te’-[e]l* (note the inalienable possession suffix -*VI* [Zender 2004]) of Lady *K’abal Xook* within the centre of Yaxchilan (blocks G1-H3). In a similar way, a supernatural is referred to as the *u-y-ok-te’ chan u-y-ok-te’ kab* ‘the support of the heaven, the support of the earth’ of *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Yopaat* on Quirigua Stela J, C9-C13. Only recently, another intriguing context was discovered on Tonina Monument 183 (B4-B7), a statue with the ruler sculpted in the round (Figure 7a). The monument is called *u-y-ok-te’-[e]l baah u-lakam-tuun-[i]l k’inich baak-nal chahk* ‘the image-pedestal, the stela of *K’inich Baaknal Chahk*’ (Sánchez Gamboa, Sheseña and Krempel 2019:55).⁶ There

⁶ Alternatively, it may be interpreted as the ‘the tenon of the image’, referring to the actual cone at the base of the monument that secured its position in the ground.

is also a caption **yo-OK-ki**, *y-ok* ‘(it is) its base’ on K1645, just above a stand with a sacrificial bowl where the baby jaguar is being burnt (Figure 7b).

CHT	<i>yoc noc</i>	estambre	(Morán 1695:114)
CHT	<i>uiocincucte</i>	estambre	(Morán 1695:114)
CHR	<i>uyok te’</i>	upright pole (as that on which maguey leaves are rasped)	(Wisdom 1950:550)
CHR	<i>uyok e nar</i>	maize stalk, full-grown maize	(Wisdom 1950:550)
CHR	<i>-ok e ak</i>	hebra de zacate. blade of grass	(Hull 2016:313)
CHR	<i>uyok e buur</i>	bean stalk	(Wisdom 1950:550)
CHR	<i>-ok e chor</i>	milpa. cornfield, agricultural field	(Hull 2016:313)
CHR	<i>-ok e ja’</i>	zanja, toma de agua, sanjo de agua. ditch, brook, irrigation ditch	(Hull 2016:313)
CHR	<i>-ok e jijk’ib’</i>	cabo de pala. shovel handle	(Hull 2016:313)
CHR	<i>-ok e k’ajn</i>	pata de banco. bench leg, stool leg, chair leg	(Hull 2016:313)
CHR	<i>uyok e machit</i>	handle of machete	(Wisdom 1950:550)
CHR	<i>-ok e patna’r</i>	contenido, solución. scope, contents, solution	(Hull 2016:313)
CHR	<i>uyok e xa’n</i>	palm frond	(Wisdom 1950:550)
CHN	<i>yocja’</i>	corriente de agua	(Keller and Luciano 1997:298)
CHN	<i>u yoc mäsc’äb</i>	cordel, hilo para anzuelo	(Keller and Luciano 1997:298)
CHN	<i>u yoc otot</i>	horcón de casa	(Keller and Luciano 1997:298)
CHL	<i>yoc ja’</i>	zanja	(Aulie and de Aulie 1978:101)
CHL	<i>yoc ja’lel</i>	zanja	(Aulie and de Aulie 1978:142)
YUK	<i>ok</i>	cabo de hacha, azuela, cuchillo y de otra herramienta	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:595)
YUK	<i>yok wal</i>	cabo o palo de mosqueador	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:595)
YUK	<i>yok u tsub; yok kampana</i>	asa de campana, asiento de alguna vasija con que se tiene enhiesta que le sirve de pies	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:595)
YUK	<i>u yok bat</i>	[el astil del hacha]	(Barrera Vásquez 1980:595)
LAK	<i>’ook</i>	pie, corriente cabo, pata. foot, current, handle, leg	(Hofling 2014:245)
LAK	<i>’ook b’aat</i>	mango de hacha. axe handle	(Hofling 2014:245)
LAK	<i>’ook ja’</i>	fuelle de agua, corriente de agua. spring, current	(Hofling 2014:245)
LAK	<i>yokman</i>	pilar	(Bruce 1968:144)
LAK	<i>’ook much’</i>	pie de hongo. mushroom stem	(Hofling 2014:245)
ITZ	<i>ok</i>	pie, pata, cabo, mango. leg, foot, handle	(Hofling and Tesucún 1997:484)
ITZ	<i>uy-ok im-b’aat</i>	cabo de mi hacha. the handle of my axe	(Hofling and Tesucún 1997:484)
ITZ	<i>ok ja’</i>	corriente de agua. water current, river	(Hofling and Tesucún 1997:484)
ITZ	<i>ok witz</i>	pie de cerro. foot of hill, bottom of hill	(Hofling and Tesucún 1997:484)
MOP	<i>oc</i>	pie, culata, pata, caña, mango de algo, cabo	(Ulrich and Ulrich 1976:145)
MOP	<i>ok</i>	pie, culata, pata, caña, cabo, tronco de palo, mata. foot, paw, leg, tree trunk, plant	(Hofling 2011:334)
MOP	<i>ocja’il</i>	lecho de río	(Ulrich and Ulrich 1976:145)
MOP	<i>ok ja’</i>	corriente, río. current, river	(Hofling 2011:334)
MOP	<i>ok le’</i>	tronquito de hoja. stem of leaf	(Hofling 2011:334)
MOP	<i>ok maaska’</i>	cabo de machete. handle of machete	(Hofling 2011:334)
MOP	<i>ok näl</i>	caña de maíz. cornstalk	(Hofling 2011:334)

Table 2. Linguistic examples for constructions of the form (*u*)-*y-ok* + noun from Ch’olan and Yucatekan languages.

There is a group of Emblem Glyphs that also feature the structure *y-ok* + noun and which may deserve a reconsideration under the present discussion. The emblem **yo-ko-MAN-AJAW**, *y-ok man ajaw* (e.g., on Lintel 3 of Tikal Temple IV, H6; Figure 7c) is the most overt in its structure but cannot be explained

etymologically. The reading of sign 566 **MAN** can only be inferred by phonetic complements and its substitution with sign 505,⁷ but its meaning is not understood, although the graph icon represents a snake body segment (cf. Kettunen and Davis 2004:4, 10, Jørgensen and Krempel 2014:97). Boot (2009:211) proposed ‘pillar’ as an interpretation, probably based on the Lakantun entry *yokman* ‘pillar’ (Bruce 1968:144). The presence of just this single attestation in a colonial-period Yukatekan language⁸ and the lack of a similar auto-referential term on pilasters or columns in Northwestern Yucatan makes this doubtful. The emblem (**K’UH-)**yo-ke-**AJAW-wa** (Figure 7d) appears thrice in the corpus (Grube & Nahm 1994:690-691) and may refer to a site somewhere in the vicinity of Motul de San Jose. It may possibly be analysed in favour of *y-ok e[j] ajaw*, but there is no linguistic evidence that **yok ej* could denote something like ‘root of the tooth’.

Last but not least, there is the emblem of Piedras Negras, written **K’UH-yo-ki-bi-AJAW** (Figure 7e). It is usually transcribed as *yokib*, for which Stuart and Houston (1994:31) first proposed the meaning ‘entrance’, based on TZE *ochib’al* ‘(la) entrada’ (Slocum & Gerdel 1965:168). Similar translations like ‘valley’ (Harris and Stearns 1997:71) or ‘gourge’ [sic!] (Boot 2009:211) have been proposed since, always in reference to the Usumacinta river valley or the rapids in the vicinity. But the word for ‘entrance’ or ‘entry’ in Classic Mayan is *y-och-el* (cf. **yo-che-le**, TIK MT. 176 [K8008], T2). An instrumental with a locative function (cf. Wichmann 2002:6) cannot be derived from the nominal *ok* ‘foot’ in Ch’olan languages. Finally, if **okib* were the base stem, *y-* would be a possessive prefix without a possessor explicitly stated.⁹ Alternatively, the Emblem could also be read as *y-ok ib* ‘lima bean stalk’ (cf. Tokovinine 2014, Prager 2018), comparable to CHR *uyok e buur* ‘bean stalk’ (Wisdom 1950:550).

Most intriguingly, there seems to be another case where a supposed personal name may actually denote a courtly or ritual function, as Christian Prager (personal communication, March 9, 2020) has brought to my attention. In the texts of Temple XIX at Palenque, we find *yok kuk-ch’ajan?* (Figure 7f), written either **yo-OK-²KUK-CH’AJAN?** or **yo-ko-²KUK-CH’AJAN?** (cf. Stuart 2005:31-32).¹⁰ This could be translated as ‘the base / fringe of clothing’ or as ‘the person who helps into vesture’. In a caption on the sculptured pier of Temple XIX, this individual is further identified as a *y-ajaw k’ahk’*, a priestly office (Zender 2004:195-210). And in fact, we see how he supports *K’inich Ahkul Mo’ Nahb* III in the scene by grasping the king’s left hand while the other attendant holds the maw of the back rack.

⁷ There is **xa-ma-566-na**, *xaman* ‘north’ on the Palenque Temple XIV Tablet, F4. Additionally, we have **IX-na-505-ni-AJAW** (e.g., Piedras Negras Stela 3, D3), which substitutes elsewhere with **IX-566-ni-AJAW** (e.g., Piedras Negras Stela 1, I1) for *ix namaan ajaw* ‘Lady from Namaan’.

⁸ Though cf. YUK: *okom* ‘columna de madera’, ‘pilar o poste u horcón de madera sobre que fundan las casas pajizas’ and *okom tun* ‘pilar de piedra o mármol, columna a mármol redondo de piedra’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980:599).

⁹ Similar forms are otherwise restricted to some Eastern Mayan languages (cf. Kaufman 2003:1320). Likewise, a root *ib* ‘lower part, foundation’ (for a possible **y-ok ib*), which may account for the etymology favoured in the past, is only found in some Eastern Mayan languages, in Q’anjobalan languages, and in Wastek and Tzotzil, e.g., pM: **i:b’*, ‘root; vine’ (Fox 1978:197); TZO: **ibel* ‘root /tooth, plant, vine, tree/, wall, side, foot of wall /house, cave/, foot of /rock, mountain/’ (Laughlin 1975:53); TOJ: *ib’el* ‘debajo de’ (Lenkersdorff 1979:125).

¹⁰ The darkened spiral sign 576 appears twice with the syllabic doubler in the Temple XIX texts, which can also be applied to CVC logograms with identical consonants at the beginning and end (cf. Zender 1999:128), as with **2K’AK’** (e.g., Quirigua Stela J, C12). Based on CHT evidence, Prager (2020) therefore proposes the reading **KUK** for sign 576, cf. *cucte* ‘hilo’, ‘obillo’, ‘tela’ (Morán 1695:125, 149, 167) and *cucteni* ‘debanar’ (Morán 1695:106). CHR still preserves the aspect of something rolled up, cf. *kuk* ‘a turning or rolling over, anything rolled up or over, a roll of’ (Wisdom 1950:496). On vessel K1256, we also find the spelling **KUK-ki**. Thus, *kuk* might refer to a roll of fabric or bundle. Underneath is a sign that looks like 274 **TAL**. A closer look especially at the example from the Temple XIX Alfarda Tablet, however, reveals that it more resembles sign 98, for which Zender (in Stone and Zender 2011:24) proposed the reading **CH’AJAN** ‘rope’. This becomes clear in the example on La Amelia Panel 2, block A7, which clearly shows the twisted rope graph in **u-KUK-CH’AJAN?**. This is possibly a kenning for “cloth widths” and “cloth stripes” as the most basic components of a garment.



Figure 7. Examples of *y-ok* + noun constructions. a) Tonina, Monument 183, B4-C5, preliminary drawing by and courtesy of Guido Krempel, b) K1645, drawing by and courtesy of Guido Krempel, c) Tikal Temple IV Lintel 3, H6, d) Naj Tunich Drawing 82, H1, e) Piedras Negras Panel 3, N2, f) Palenque Temple XIX Pier, B1. Drawings c-f by Sven Gronemeyer.

Since the caption *yok waal* on K2914 is placed in front of Individual 1, it seems unlikely that it refers to the two large fans placed at the base of the platform (also possibly as tribute).¹¹ Objects like fans (cf. Kurbjuhn 1976, 1977) or parasols were certainly signs of wealth and above all authority. Mallory Matsumoto (written communication, March 18, 2020) referred to various K'ichee' Títulos, in which baldachins and their number are used as status symbols and rank signs.¹² The word *muj* used in the texts for this is used for both shade and the object providing shadow (see *muj* 'el palio, o sombra', Dürr and Sachse 2017:125). Here, it appears that the material designation "fan handle" is transferred to a person to mark his function at the court. As a "fan-wielder," the individual is seen as a human prolongation of the object which he brings it into movement to provide breeze and ventilation.

The context of the scene provides further support for interpreting *yok waal* as the name of a function or office. As Elisabeth Wagner (personal communication, February 28, 2020) pointed out, only the main protagonist of the courtly scene, *Nahbna! K'inich* ("Individual 3", blocks T3-T4) and his wife (?) Lady *Chan Ahk* ("Individual 8", blocks X-Y) are designated by their personal names. All other persons are simply referred to by their office or relationship to the lord: *baah ajaw* 'First Lord' ("Individual 2", block R; possibly a priestly rank, Zender 2004:223-224) and *u-saku'un* 'his elder siblings' ("Individuals 4-7", block W5). The second female ("Individual 9") and the seated courtier at the platform base ("Individual 10") are not named at all.

Thus far, this scene provides the only attestation of *yok waal*, and no person actually holding a fan, parasol, or fan-bearer is named as such in any pictorial representation. However, the compositional proximity of the two large fans in reach of Individual 1, coupled with etymological evidence and iconographic context, supports the proposed interpretation of *yok waal*. Together with *yok kuk ch'ajan?* (Prager 2020), this title provides evidence for an entirely new ontological class of courtiers: the "human inventory."

Final Considerations

Although unique in its written attestation, the caption on vessel K2914 indicates that fan-bearers played an important role as courtiers in a "noble" household, although it remains unclear whether the office of *lakam* was part of the "native" nobility or, more likely, simply belonged to some sort of "money nobility" (cf. Lacadena 2008:33-36). As collectors and distributors of tribute for the royal court, *lakam* officials likely wielded both political and economic power. *Nahbna! K'inich*, who was a *lakam* for *Yuhknoom K'awiil* of Río Azul, was wealthy and important enough to own a polychrome drinking vessel that can be safely called an artistic masterpiece. In addition to bearing a number of titles of political and religious significance, he himself claims to have a connection to the ruler of Río Azul (*u-kiit* 'his patron', block O2, Polyukhovych and Looper 2019:1-2). Likewise, the circumstance that *Aj Pach' Waal* of El Palmar was not only able to build a hieroglyphic stairway to his supposed audience room, but also have its dedication witnessed by the ruler of Calakmul, suggests that individual's significant political authority even at a regional level.

¹¹ Note the caption **cha-chi**, *chaach* 'basket' (block S) right on top of the basket in front of Individual 1 (Figure 1).

¹² For example in the Título de Totonicapán: "Entonces juntaron para Balam C'onaché el palio de plumas de quetzal, el palio verde, el trono de león, el trono de jaguar, la flauta, el tambor, las piedras negras y amarillas, la cabeza y las patas de venado, los huesos de falange de águila y jaguar, el caracol, la red de tabaco, las plumas de garza, la cola de buitre, el brazalete, las trenzas, la piedra de hongo, (todas) las señales del señorío fueron juntadas y traídas por los (que se fueron) de donde sale el sol. 'Que sean elegidos nuestros señores, como una señal', les fue dicho a los mensajeros. El señor Ajpop tiene cuatro palios sobre su trono, plumas verdes, una flauta y un tambor. El Ajpop C'amjá tiene tres palios sobre él. El Nimá Rajpop Achij, dos palios, y el Ch'utí Rajpop Achij, sólo uno." (f. 15v-16, Carmack and Mondloch 1983:183, fn.148).

The vessel K2914 was a surface for projecting the status that *Nahbnał K'inich* ascribed to himself, a material manifestation and accentuation of his grandeur. In this light, perhaps, one can also explain why the scene explicitly points out that he has a fan bearer in his service, with two fans. Whether he commissioned the vessel himself or received it as a gift, it may be only thanks to this *lakam*'s desire for prestige that we have an attestation of the Classic Maya office of *yok waal*.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Daniel Graña-Behrens, Nikolai Grube, Guido Krempel, Mallory Matsumoto, Christian Prager and Elisabeth Wagner for comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this note. Mallory Matsumoto kindly corrected the English.

References

Aulie, H. Wilbur, and Evelyn W. de Aulie

1978 *Diccionario ch'ol-español, español-ch'ol*. Serie de vocabularios y diccionarios indígenas Mariano Silva y Aceves, 21. México, DF: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano.

Barrera Vásquez, Alfredo

1980 *Diccionario Maya. Maya-Español, Español-Maya*. Mérida: Ediciones Cordemex.

Boot, Erik

2004 *Vocabulary in the Ch'olti' Language. A Transcription of the 'Bocabulario Grande' by Fray Francisco Morán (1695)*. Electronic Document.

2009 *The Updated Preliminary Classic Maya-English / English-Classic Maya Vocabulary of Hieroglyphic Readings*. Electronic Document. Mesoweb.

Bricker, Victoria R., Eleuterio Po'ot Yah, Ofelia Dzul de Po'ot, and Anne S. Bradburn

1998 *A Dictionary of the Maya Language as Spoken in Hocabá, Yucatán*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press.

Bruce, Robert D.

1968 *Gramática del Lacandón*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Mexico), Departamento de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Publicaciones, 21. México, DF: Departamento de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Carmack, Robert M., and James L. Mondloch

1983 *El título de Totonicapán: texto, traducción y comentario*. Fuentes para el estudio de la cultura maya. México: Universidad nacional autónoma de México.

Comunidad Lingüística Q'anjob'al

2003 *Jit'il q'anej yet q'anjob'al: vocabulario q'anjob'al*. Guatemala: Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala.

de Ara, Domingo

1986 *Bocabulario de lengua tzeltal según el orden de Copanabastla*. Mario Humberto Ruz, ed. Fuentes para el estudio de la cultura maya, 4. México, DF: UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Centro de Estudios Mayas.

de Diego Antonio, Diego, Adán Francisco Pascual, Nicolas de Nicolas Pedro, Carmelino Fernando Gonzalez, and Santiago J. Matias

2001 *Diccionario del idioma q'anjob'al*. Antigua: Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín.

de Sedat, Elizabeth R. V.

2001 *Tusq'orik Poqomchi' – Kaxlan Q'orik*. Guatemala: Cholsamaj.

Dobbels, Marcel

2003 *Tusq'orik Poqomchi' – Kaxlan Q'orik*. Guatemala: PROASE/UE.

Dürr, Michael, and Frauke Sachse, eds.

2017 *Diccionario k'iche' de Berlín: el vocabulario en lengua 4iche otlatecas: edición crítica*. Estudios Indiana, 10. Berlin: Gebr. Mann.

Eberl, Markus, and Christian M. Prager

- 2005 B'olon Yokte' K'uh: Maya Conceptions of War, Conflict, and the Underworld. In *Wars and Conflicts in Prehispanic Mesoamerica and the Andes*. Peter Eeckhout and Geneviève Le Fort, eds. Pp. 28–36. BAR International Series, 1385. Oxford: Hedges.

Feldman, Lawrence H.

- 2000 *Pokom Maya and Their Colonial Dictionaries*. Electronic Document. Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies (FAMSI).

Fox, James A.

- 1978 *Proto-Mayan Accent, Morpheme Structure Conditions, and Velar Innovations*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, Department of Linguistics.

Gates, William E.

- 1935 *Arte en lengua choltí, que quiere decir lengua de milperos*. The Maya Society Publications, 9. Baltimore, MD: Maya Society.

Grofe, Michael J.

- 2009 *The Name of God L: B'olon Yokte' K'uh*. Wayeb Notes 30.

Haeserijn, Estéban

- 1979 *Diccionario k'ekchi' español*. Guatemala: Piedra Santa.

Harris, John F., and Stephen K. Stearns

- 1997 *Understanding Maya Inscriptions: A Hieroglyph Handbook*. 2nd edition. Philadelphia, PA: The University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. University of Pennsylvania.

Helmke, Christophe G.B., Julie A. Hoggarth, and Jaime J. Awe

- 2018 *A Reading of the Komkom Vase Discovered at Baking Pot, Belize*. Monograph, 3. San Francisco, CA: Precolumbia Mesoweb Press.

Hofling, Charles A.

- 2011 *Mopan Maya - Spanish - English Dictionary / Diccionario Maya Mopan - Español - Ingles*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press.
- 2014 *Lacandon Maya-Spanish-English Dictionary*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press.

Hofling, Charles A., and Félix Fernando Tesucún

- 1997 *Itzaj Maya - Spanish - English Dictionary*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press.

Hopkins, Nicholas A.

- 2012 *A Dictionary of the Chuj (Mayan) Language: As Spoken in San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehuetenango, Guatemala*. Electronic Document. Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies (FAMSI).

Houston, Stephen, John Robertson, and David Stuart

- 2000 The Language of Classic Maya Inscriptions. *Current Anthropology* 41(3): 321–356.

Hull, Kerry

- 2016 *A Dictionary of Ch'orti': Mayan-Spanish-English*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press.

Jørgensen, Mads S., and Guido Krempel

- 2014 The Late Classic Maya Court of Namaan (La Florida, Guatemala). In *Palaces and Courtly Culture in Ancient Mesoamerica*. Julie Nehammer Knub, Christophe G.B. Helmke, and Jesper Nielsen, eds. Pp. 91–110. Archaeopress Pre-Columbian Archaeology, 4. Oxford: Archaeopress.

Karttunen, Frances

- 1983 *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Kaufman, Terrence

- 2003 *A Preliminary Mayan Etymological Dictionary*. Electronic Document. Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies (FAMSI).

Kaufman, Terence, and William Norman

- 1984 An Outline of Proto-Cholan Phonology, Morphology and Vocabulary. In: *Phoneticism in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing*. John S. Justeson and Lyle Campbell, eds. Pp. 77–166. Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York Publication 9. Albany, NY: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies.

Keller, Kathryn, and Plácido Luciano

- 1997 *Diccionario chontal de Tabasco (mayense)*. Serie de vocabularios y diccionarios indígenas Mariano Silva y Aceves, 36. Tucson, AZ: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

Kettunen, Harri, and Bon V. Davis II

- 2004 *Snakes, Centipedes, Snakepedes, and Centiserpents: Conflation of Liminal Species in Maya Iconography and Ethnozoology*. Wayeb Notes 9.

Kurbjuhn, Kornelia

- 1976 Pre-Columbian Fans in Mesoamerica. M.A. Thesis, Department of Anthropology, State University of New York at Albany.
- 1977 Fans in Maya Art. *The Masterkey* 51(4): 140–146.

Lacadena, Alfonso

- 2008 El título lakam: evidencia epigráfica sobre la organización tributaria y militar interna de los reinos mayas del Clásico. *Mayab* (20): 23–43.

Laughlin, Robert M.

- 1975 *The Great Tzotzil Dictionary of San Lorenzo Zinacantán*. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, 19. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- 1988 *The Great Tzotzil Dictionary of Santo Domingo Zinacantán*. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, 31. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Lenkersdorf, Carlos

- 1979 *B'omak'umal tojol'ab'al-kastiya: diccionario tojolabal-español*. México, DF: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo.

Looper, Matthew, and Yuriy Polyukhovych

- 2019 *Representing the Household on Vase K2914 (Denver Art Museum)*. Glyph Dwellers Report 61.

MacLeod, Barbara

- 1987 *An Epigrapher's Annotated Index to Cholan and Yucatecan Verb Morphology*. Monographs in Anthropology, 9. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri.

Morán, Francisco

- 1695 *Arte y Vocabulario de la lengua Cholti que quiere decir la Lengua de Milperos*. Manuscript. Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society.

Pérez González, Benjamín, and Santiago de la Cruz

- 1998 *Diccionario chontal: Chontal-español, Español-chontal*. México, DF, Villahermosa: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Fondo Estatal para la Cultura y las Artes de Tabasco.

Prager, Christian M.

- 2018 *The Term "Lima Bean Vessel" in the Classic Mayan Lexicon*. Electronic Document. Textdatenbank und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya, Research Note 9.
- 2020 *The Sign 576 as a Logograph for KUK, a Type of Bundle*. Electronic Document. Textdatenbank Und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya, Research Note 15.

Prager, Christian M., and Elisabeth Wagner

- 2016 *A Possible Logograph XAN "Palm" in Maya Writing*. Electronic Document. Textdatenbank Und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya, Research Note 5.

Ramírez Pérez, José, Andrés Montejo, and Baltazar Díaz Hurtado

- 1996 *Diccionario Jakalteko, Jakaltenango, Huhuetenango: Jakalteko-Español*. Antigua: Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquin.

Robertson, John, Danny Law, and Robbie A. Haertel

- 2010 *Colonial Ch'olti': The Seventeenth-Century Morán Manuscript*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Robles Uribe, Carlos

- 1966 *La dialectología Tzeltal y el diccionario compacto*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Mexico), Departamento de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Publicaciones, 16. México, DF: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Roy, Ralph L.

- 1932 *The Ethno-Botany of the Maya*. Tulane University of Louisiana. Middle American Research Series, Publications 2. New Orleans, LA: Middle American Research Institute.

Sánchez Gamboa, Angel, Alejandro Sheseña, and Guido Krempel

- 2019 Nuevos datos sobre Aj Ch'aaj Naah, Aj K'uhuun de Toniná. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 105(2):45–68.

Schumann Gálvez, Otto

- 1973 *La lengua chol, de Tila (Chiapas)*. Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios Mayas, 8. Méxco, DF: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- 1997 *Introducción al maya mopán: "los Itzáes desde la época prehispánica hasta la actualidad: estudio interdisciplinario de un grupo maya."* México, DF: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas.

Slocum, Marianna, and Florencia Gerdel

- 1965 *Vocabulario tzeltal de Bachajón*. Serie de vocabularios y diccionarios indígenas Mariano Silva y Aceves, 13. México, DF: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano.

Stone, Andrea, and Marc Zender

- 2011 *Reading Maya Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Maya Painting and Sculpture*. New York, NY: Thames & Hudson.

Stuart, David, and Stephen Houston

- 1994 *Classic Maya Place Names*. Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology, 33. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

Tokovinine, Alexandre

- 2014 Beans and Glyphs: A Possible IB Logogram in the Classic Maya Script. *The PARI Journal* 14(4): 10–16.

Tsukamoto, Kenichiro, and Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín

- 2015 Ajpach' Waal: The Hieroglyphic Stairway of the Guzmán Group of El Palmar, Campeche, Mexico. In *Maya Archaeology 3*. Stephen D. Houston, Joel Skidmore, and Charles W. Golden, eds. Pp. 30–55. San Francisco, CA: Precolumbia Mesoweb Press.

Ulrich, Matthew, and Rosemary W. Ulrich

- 1976 *Diccionario billingüe maya mopán y español, español y maya mopán*. Guatemala: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano.

Wichmann, Søren

- 2002 *Hieroglyphic Evidence for the Historical Configuration of Eastern Ch'olan*. Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing, 51. Washington, DC: Center for Maya Research.

Wisdom, Charles

- 1950 *Materials on the Chorti Language*. Microfilm Collection of Manuscripts on Middle American Cultural Anthropology, 28. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

Zender, Marc

- 1999 *Diacritical Marks and Underspelling in the Classic Maya Script: Implications for Decipherment*. M.A. Thesis, Department of Archaeology, University of Calgary.
- 2004 *A Study of Classic Maya Priesthood*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Archaeology, University of Calgary.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in the credit line; if the material is not included under the Creative Commons license, users will need to obtain permission from the license holder to reproduce the material. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>