



A Probable Reference to Na-“Gourd” Chan Ahk on Naranjo Stela 15

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Our knowledge of the Early Classic dynasties of most Maya kingdoms remains highly incomplete given the scarcity of epigraphic material from that period and the fact that retrospective texts are equally rare. A particularly bad case of this state of affairs is the dynasty of Naranjo, whose sequence of rulers only becomes fairly well known with the late sixth- and early seventh-century reign of “Double Comb”.¹ Martin and Grube (2000:70-71; see also Grube and Martin 2004:22-24) discuss two kings who predate “Double Comb” and for whom we have references in the inscriptions. One of these rulers, Na-“Gourd” Chan Ahk, is known only from a reference on an Early Classic ceramic vessel (Figure 1). This individual is assumed to be a Naranjo king since he carries the elite title *saak churwe’n*,² usually associated with royal individuals of that site.



Figure 1. Na-“Gourd” Chan Ahk’s name on an early vessel (K8042, courtesy of Justin Kerr).

His name is spelled as **na-‘gourd’ CHAN a-ku**. The ‘gourd’ glyph is commonly read as syllabic **tzu**. However, it is also possible that it is working as a logograph, the prefixed **na-** merely being a phonetic complement. To my knowledge there are only two other instances of a similar name, apparently a namesake from Rio Azul. This individual is

¹ This ruler’s name is commonly read as *aj wosaaj* but the reading is problematic (Simon Martin, in Grube and Martin, 2004:47, fig.44) hence I prefer to adopt the former nickname, “Double Comb.”

² The *churwe’n* reading is problematic and results mostly from the observation that the head variant represents a monkey scribe.

named on the walls of Burial 12 at Rio Azul, spelled as: **WAK-MUY-CHAN-NAL-la na-‘gourd’-[CHAN?]AHK** in the context of his burial ceremony. This same individual is also named on K1446, a vessel likely from Rio Azul. The name here is spelled as: **na-‘gourd’ AHK[CHAN?]-WINIK**, and he is said to be the son of a Rio Azul lord and the underlord of a high-ranking *kalo’mte’* who, given the time frame associated with these contexts, might well be *Siyaj K’ahk’* of Tikal. The way the ‘gourd’ part of the name is written is rather unusual in this example, half of it a mammal’s head, the other half the usual gourd.

Despite these references on ceramics, the reality of these Naranjo rulers from the Early Classic remained somewhat speculative since no references to them were known in Naranjo’s corpus of inscriptions (Graham and Von Euw 1975; 1978). Over a year ago, while revisiting the Naranjo corpus, I found what appeared to be a reference to Na-“Gourd” Chan Ahk on Naranjo Stela 15 (Figure 2).

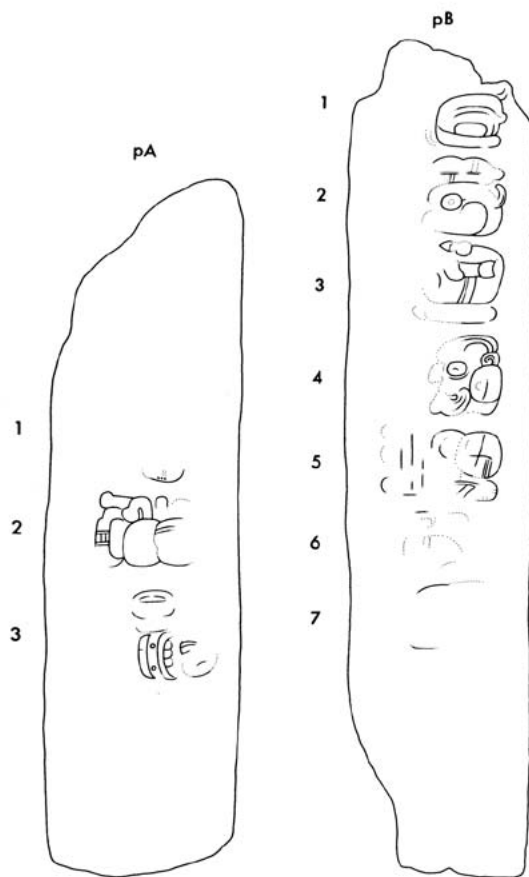


Figure 2. Naranjo’s Stela 15 (after Graham and Von Euw, 1975. CMHI 2:42).

The reference appears at pB2 in Figure 2. The first half of the glyph compound seems to be missing, assuming a width for the text comparable to that observed at pB5.

Visible is a ‘gourd’ glyph (either syllabic **tz** or a logograph as discussed before) above an **AHK** logograph in the form of the head variant with the usual mouth scroll. There is ample space in the erased part of the compound to provide the **na** syllable that precedes the ‘gourd’ glyph in K8042 and the **CHAN** part of the name. Another possibility is that the **CHAN** logograph is conflated with the **AHK** logograph, although it is impossible to be sure from the drawing alone.

Preceding the name, at pB1, we have what looks like a “child of father” statement, probably read *u mijiin* and spelled **u-MIJIIN-na** (Grube and Martin 2004:27, fig. 27; and Zender, personal communication 2005). If this identification is correct the actual owner of this stela would be a son of Na-“Gourd” Chan Ahk, likely his successor to the throne (Simon Martin and Marc Zender, personal communications 2004).

Following the name, at pB3, we have what may be a *saak chuwe’n* title spelled as ***SAAK-CHUWE’N-na**. Next, at pB4 we have a possible Jaguar God of the Underworld title also carried by “Double Comb” on Naranjo Altar 1 (at F3). Finally, at pB5, we get a 12 or 13

tz’akb’uul or ‘twelfth or thirteenth in the line’ title spelled as **12/13-[TS’AK]b’u?-li**. This title may mark the position of the son of Na-“Gourd” Chan Ahk in the royal dynasty of Naranjo, although it is noteworthy that, beginning in the reign of “Double Comb”, the founding of the dynasty was attributed to a supernatural in mythological times. This was probably caused by a dynastic shift with the introduction of “Double Comb” as ruler under the auspices of the Calakmul ruler Tuun K’ab Hiix, in A.D. 546. The counting of kings becomes problematic after this time. However, if this position in the dynastic sequence for the son of Na-“Gourd” Chan Ahk is given from a true founder, then the twelfth or thirteenth position in line would correspond to a reign sometime in the fifth century, with Na-“Gourd” Chan Ahk positioned a generation earlier. This time frame is consistent with the evident Early Classic style, likely early fifth century AD, of K8042 (Marc Zender, personal communication 2005).

Focusing our attention on the first part of the inscription, we see that what must have been the calendar information is completely destroyed, except for what looks like the ending of a 3.0.0 cycle, spelled as **YAX-tsi?-PIK**, at pA2 (Marc Zender, personal communication 2004), and this may have been the event commemorated on the stela. Thus, a Long Count of the form 9?.3.0.0 in the Early Classic is likely, although it is currently impossible to provide an exact date.

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