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Hand gestures in courtly scenes depicted on Maya vases

Monika Ciura

Abstract

Images created on Maya ceramics represent an interesting source for the research on Maya royal court. Many scenes shows life of the Maya nobles, their activities in the court and intimate rituals of the rulers. In this work I focused on one aspect of the interactions between king and his courtiers and subjects, that is on gestures they perform. I studied all the gestures that appears on the vases to understand the patterns of their usage and their possible meaning. I tried to discover their importance in communication, their significance in iconography and analyze a body language hidden behind them. I also compared twenty classified gestures to ones depicted on monumental sculpture, figurines and epigraphy. My research revealed the great complexity of the subject but it also helped to shed some light on the relations prevailing at the royal court.

Key words: Maya vases, ceramics, royal court, courtly culture, gestures, language of gestures, iconography, epigraphy.

Resumen

GESTOS DE LAS MANOS EN ESCENAS CORTESANAS REPRESENTADAS EN LOS VASOS MAYAS

Las imágenes creadas en la cerámica maya representan una fuente interesante para la investigación sobre la corte real maya. Muchas escenas muestran la vida de los nobles mayas, sus actividades en la corte y rituales íntimos de los gobernantes. En este trabajo me he centrado en un aspecto de las interacciones entre el rey y sus cortesanos y los sujetos, que se encuentra en los gestos que realizan. Estudié todos los gestos que aparecen en los vasos para comprender los patrones de su uso y su posible significado. Traté de descubrir su importancia en la comunicación, su significado en la iconografía y analizar un lenguaje corporal escondido detrás de ellos. También comparé veinte gestos a los representados en la escultura monumental, figuras y la epigrafía. Mi investigación reveló la gran complejidad del tema, pero también ayudó a arrojar alguna luz sobre las relaciones que prevalecen en la corte real.

Palabras claves: Vasos mayas, cerámica, corte real, cultura cortesana, gestos, lenguaje de gestos, iconografía, epigrafía.

1. Introduction to the subject of the study

The Maya royal court depicted on ceramics seems to be rather static. The ruler is sitting on the throne, directed towards the standing, sitting or kneeling courtiers and guests. Positions occupied by the characters are still, only gestures bring a noticeable element of movement. Therefore, gestures caught my attention and I hope to understand the court and its main actors better by examining the arrangement of their hands. The imagery shown on ceramics, visually modest and also carrying high educational value, is an ideal source for this kind of research.

The aim of this research is the classification of gestures and their interpretation in the context of courtly culture. The royal court, as an environment of highly conventional behavior, creates a suitable background for such an interpretation. The most important source were the depictions of the king in interaction with attendants preferably in a concrete context like submission of a tribute. For comparison, I also examined depictions of deities and supernaturals because the gods were portrayed forming a court as well. The distinction of gestures that were specific to the gods and, conversely, using the same gestures by both mortals and supernaturals can tell us more about the relations between these two realms. It would seem that gestures carry the largest meaning in communication, but the characters depicted alone perform the same vivid gestures, although they do not have any addressee. It may be a result of an adaptation of these gestures to the situation, a particular activity and the fact that their importance goes beyond the system of non-verbal communication and they were not only performed to distinguish a person's status within a group of other characters.

Hands can adopt a variety of positions, or be involved in various activities. I focused on those which could imply some meaning. I omitted gestures caused by accidental movements, such as the arrangement of hands while playing ball or fighting. Ways of holding items have been treated generally as in most cases they derived from practical reasons. Dancing gestures were useful in comparisons, but their detailed study in the context of the whole ritual would have required broadening of the subject of the study, moreover, such analysis has already been carried out by Matthew Looper (Looper 2009). The most legible scenes, characters and gestures are those painted on ceramics. On the incised and carved vases details such as the arrangement of fingers are often not clear.

I examined 580 vessels with representations of people during courtly interactions: group depictions and images of the gods in contexts that could be compared with real ones, thus scenes of receiving gifts, homage, court scenes, as well as individual depictions. For analogies to the gestures depicted on ceramics I studied monumental sculpture, figurines and epigraphy. I put five research questions, assuming that careful analysis of the context of the occurrence of gestures allows for satisfactory answers.

- Can we talk about special language or system of gestures in case of Maya culture?
- Were gestures/systems of gestures due to certain patterns of behavior suitable for people of a certain social, political or religious status, or were they specific to the situation in which they found themselves?
- Could depictions of gestures be a part of the canon of the depiction of specific characters?
- Are there gestures that express emotions, feelings, states of mind?
- What was the role of gestures in the context of courtly culture?

2. What is a gesture?

A gesture is a movement in time and space, a movement which carries a meaning, most often given intentionally but sometimes involuntarily. The word «gesture» originates from «*medieval Latin “gestura”, from Latin “gerere” which mean “bear, wield, perform”*». The original sense was “bearing, deportment”, hence ‘*the use of posture and bodily movements for effect in oratory*’¹. The modern meaning of gesture is «*a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, then express an idea or meaning, an action performed to convey a feeling or intention or an action performed for the show in the knowledge that it will have no effect*»². Gesture as part of nonverbal communication was studied by psychologists and identified as the action limited to one or more parts of the body (Lamb 1965), or actions of the body – easily noticeable movements, executed by one or more parts of the body as opposed to the posture known as continuous action comprising a coherent tune of each body part in the process of change (Ekman and Friesen 1969). On the other hand, gesticulation was identified as one or more movements of the body, interacting with the verbal statement (Kendon 1985). We have learned, that gestures may differ from each other, some are culturally determined and to understand them we need to know the specific cultural code and there are gestures deriving from our emotions. Gestures can be studied as codes, arbitrary code – if gestures are not related to any imitation, iconic code – when gestures are carrying the guidelines for the meaning of speech, and the inner code – when gestures arise from motives independent from our consciousness. Another division among gestures distinguishes emblems, illustrators, indicators of emotions, regulators of conversation and adaptors. Emblems are body signals, which have verbal equivalents of a specific meaning, emblems can be formed into sign language, that is, a system that can successfully replace verbal communication. Illustrators are used consciously and intentionally to emphasize what is being said, to stress the word or phrase, for example pointing to something or drawing a shape in the air. Indicators of emotion are more related to the face and mimics, because face is the place where emotions are mainly expressed, they rarely show up in gesticulation. Regulators of conversations are displayed with a low level

of awareness, there are behaviors that help in the organization and modification of conversation. Adaptors result from involuntary psychological communication, these are poses and gestures indicating level of comfort, stress or confidence.

Gestures can be short, single, can also be arranged in long sequences. They replace a word, phrase or certain mental attitude and they can also express more complex concepts, like the gestures used in prayer and rituals. Their meaning can change over time and be culturally reinterpreted. Gestures performed unconsciously, tell us a lot about a person, while conscious gestures informs us about the culture and its characteristic behavior, therefore these ones belong to the area which I will explore here. «*Gesturing, like speech, is influenced by cultural values and historical tradition, and its usage is adjusted according to the setting, social circumstance and micro-organization of any given occasion of interaction*» (Kendon 1997: 117). Particularly vulnerable to cultural differences are the emblems, which may be as different as languages are. Conventionalization of gestures depends on the circumstances, behavior and gestures are handled differently in official situations and daily interactions. The *Book of the Courtier* (Italian: *Il Cortegiano*) released in 1528, was a handbook for courtiers, advising as one should speak and behave, which was associated with an appropriate posture and gestures. Another reference guide concerning gestures as forms of learned behavior which affects the presence and reception of the person who executes them, was *Chironomia, or a Treatise on rhetorical prescription* written by Gilbert Austin in 1806. Gestures were treated there as a part of effective rhetoric.

The gesture captured in a work of art is already the subject of iconography. These gestures may be a reflection of real ones performed by the real people, but also can be part of the canon in which certain characters should be depicted. Through art we can explore the gestures used in the past so far, as far into history goes back to tradition of figural representation. The largest field of research is given by the images on which we can be quite sure that nothing was shown accidentally, that is official and religious art. These are gestures which signify strength, power and various transcendental concepts.

3. History of research on Maya gestures

A lot of researchers perceived the presence of various gestures, hand and body positions, that did not seem to be entirely natural and free. The ones who studied Maya iconography, first turned their attention to the monumental sculpture, in which characters were shown in a canonical and static pose. One of the first ever studies of Maya art, *A Study of Classic Maya Sculpture*, by Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1950), raises the problem of poses and gestures, arranging them in chronological sequences. Although attention is focused on the overall presentation of the characters and their poses.

Elizabeth Benson's article «*Gestures and Offerings*» attempted a systematic interpretation of the two gestures, hand-towards-mouth and hand-raised-in-front-of-chest, on the basis of their depictions, both in sculpture and on ceramics. The first of these gestures was by the author described as similar to the bloodletting activity performed by women, who dragged the rope with thorns through their tongue. Therefore, placing hand near the face and mouth, would be the gesture deprived of its object and its meaning would include the worship and sacrifice. The gesture of hand raised in front of chest was also associated with offerings, performed by the central character (Benson 1974). The author also emphasized that what was presented in Maya art certainly was meaningful and important and assumed that Maya elites used a special sign language (Benson 1974: 110). Another researcher who took up the topic of gestures was Virginia Miller, who compared those presented in the art to those described in post colonial sources. She analyzed so-called «gestures of submission», the crossing of hands on the chest, putting one hand on the opposite shoulder, putting hand to mouth and suggested that all of these gestures could be a greeting, combined with presenting offerings (Miller 1983).

The most comprehensive article concerning gestures «*Some Observations on hand gestures in Maya art*», was published in the *Maya Vase Book*, Volume sixth. Authors, Patricia Acona-Ha, Jorge Pérez de Lara (2004) and Mark van Stone assume that gestures generally reflect the hierarchy and studied them in terms of performance by a central or secondary character. They distinguish sixteen different gestures, some of which are the distinctive arrangement of the hand only, some requiring special positioning of the arm and even torso. From this study, came out a few interesting observations. Even though the different styles and regional differences, gestures exhibit a high degree of uniformity and their usage seems to closely connected with the hierarchy. It is also noted that the central figure is usually presented in a freer position and further from the center, the more stiff and bound the pose is (Ancona-Ha *et al.* 2000).

Still, gestures and their meaning resist the satisfactory. The contextual analysis has a limited scope but it certainly is the first step, the basis for further research.

4. Contextual analysis of gestures depicted on the ceramics

As the source, I used Justin Kerr's online database. I distinguished gestures mainly on morphological basis while trying to capture the differences in the context of occurrence. I studied the twenty gestures that appeared more than three times. The characteristic arrangement of both hands I called poses. I believe that they carried broader meaning than just the sum of meanings of two gestures. The exception is the pose 1, which is characteristic sitting pose, where character is shown from the front and it is specific and frequent pattern of depicting rulers and sometimes also deities. Also gestures performed in this pose may have a slightly different meaning, or expression.

4.1. Gesture 1

In this gesture arm is outstretched forward, often bent at the elbow, palm is facing the addressee and fingers are pointing down. Person might be standing or sitting. Gesture is performed with only one hand, usually left one in the depictions in profile, visible when figure is sitting turned to the right (Fig.1). Right hand is used by the characters sitting in pose 1. The response to this gesture are gestures 6 and 2.

This gesture is performed by people and by gods, both in the group scenes and individual representations. The group scenes are especially the scenes of sacrifice, as on K1183 or K1555, conversation, K114, K679, and the various types of audiences. Very often appears in scenes depicting deities or rulers alone, in which there is no addressee. This indicates that gesture 1 might be regarded as canonical for this kind of depictions, recalling the significant moment of presenting or reception of the offerings. Gesture 1 is not always performed by the central character, or ruler, but it seems to be attributed to important figures only, in most cases it is adopted by the one person. Presentation of an open hand can indicate the openness, the attitude seems to be friendly, in the same time, the open hand is a kind of weakness and exposure. This gesture performed by the ruler could indicate that he is not afraid and trusts his subjects. It is also a gesture appropriate for dedication of offerings. On the vase K4617, ruler outstretches his left hand, which is touched by a man kneeling before the throne, maybe it is an element of greeting, as in our culture, kissing the royal hand as a sign of reverence and respect. An interesting case of using this gesture is provided on the vase K4356. A pair of standing characters, man and woman, is depicted on two separate panels. Their arms are straight and extended, their hands that perform gesture 1, are almost touching each other, while the second hands perform gesture 2. This intimate representation of the relationship between two people may present a marriage and perhaps the moment of establishing a relationship, which additionally is confirmed by a flower held by a woman. In this case, the use of gesture 1 could mean a commitment, and trust for the other person.

This gesture becomes part of a pose 1, in which the character is presented frontally, and both hands are visible. In this form the gesture is performed by a central figure, usually a ruler, most often with the right hand outstretched to the audience, when the left hand is performing this gesture, the arm is bent so as the hand is also presented to the right. This variation appears in similar contexts as the version shown in profile, but this time exclusively in the scenes involving the ruler. High raised hand adopting this gesture may occur with a hand adopting gesture 2, forming a pose 2 in which both hands are presented towards the recipient and that seems to be very sophisticated arrangement of the hand. Relationship with the gesture 2 is shown as well on depictions in two aspects on which character performs a gesture 1 in first aspect and gesture 2 on the second one, as if performed pose 2, spread over time (K1734, K3411).



Figure 1. Gesture 1
(K 114, drawing by Monika Ciura).



Figure 1. Gesture 2
(K 2732 drawing by Monika Ciura).

Another pose in which this gesture appears is pose 3, in which both hands are spread out on both sides of the body. This is a pose characteristic for the Maize God.

Gesture 1 is also an essential gesture of dance, dancing pose usually consists of two straight arms, at least one hand is facing downward like in a gesture 1.

4.2. Gesture 2

Arm is extended, may be bent at elbow, palm is facing the addressee, fingers are pointing up, like in common salutation (Fig.2). Usually adopted by one hand only. This is a gesture similar to the gesture 1 and closely associated with it, which is confirmed by the fact, that they are implemented at the same time in the pose 2 and performed by the same person in consecutive scenes like on K2756, K3411. Similarly to gesture 1, it is adopted by frontally presented ruler on the throne on K3462, K1452 and K1670 and supernatural characters like on K2782. Just as a gesture 1, it is characteristic to rulers in group scenes, often at a time when important events like a dance, ritual or bloodletting are displayed before the throne. Ruler is also performing it in front of a single kneeling figure. If not adopted by the ruler, this gesture is eligible for characters standing or sitting directly in front of the throne, also appears in the more intimate scenes of conversation between two characters. On the vase K2699, there is an interaction between gestures 1 and 2, performed by characters sitting in front of each other. Similar close interaction seems to exist between the ruler on the throne and the figure seated before him on the K1303, the ruler adopts gesture 2 and figure before him gesture 1 and his hand is in just a few centimeters from the hand of the ruler. On the vase K3054 two dressed up lords are depicted, greeting or talking to each other by adopting gesture 2 by their left hands.

This gesture is also an element of posture that is depicted on the individual scenes, so also may be considered canonical and popular gesture that did not need a direct recipient and not necessarily needed to be associated with the interaction.

This gesture also is characteristic for dance poses, when the arms are drawn on the two sides and when both hands gesticulate in one direction.

The answer to the gesture 2 is a gesture 6 and 1, but is often left without a specific answer. In contrast to the openness of gesture 1, this gesture may create a barrier and appears to be an appropriate gesture of expressing power. Due to its popularity and repeating patterns of responses can be considered as a greeting.

4.3. Gesture 3

This gesture is only a specific hand shape in which forefinger is straight, rest of fingers bent and arm may be in different positions (Fig. 3). It is executed by one or both hands.

Most frequently hand is positioned horizontally and the finger points straight ahead, it also happens that the gesture is part of the pose 2, as on the vessel K1219, where Maize God is shown with one forefinger pointing up a second one is pointing down. In most cases, more than one character performs this gesture. The context of its occurrence is diverse, but the gesture with raised hand is presented in the scenes that not always picture a friendly interaction, as on the K1219 and K1365. It is performed primarily by supernaturals and adopted by both secondary and main characters. In the case of a single portraits hands carrying out this gesture are raised, like on K6071, arrangement of arms could also be important. Gesture 3 is often adopted as hand shape, even if the position of the arm is free and hands are based on the ground.

4.4. Gesture 3a

This is variant of the gesture, in which the hand is lowered but vertically positioned, the index finger is slightly bent and points down, the rest of fingers are bent (Fig.4). The gesture is performed by a central characters, rulers, figures that are directly before the throne, but also servants. It is performed by a hand which is not involved into most important movement of the body. In two cases, K1790 and K1454 is performed by the rulers looking into the mirror.

4.5. Gesture 3b

It is a gesture characteristic for the pose 1, in which the central figure is shown frontally. The right arm is bent in the elbow and the hand raised to the chest, near the heart. The index finger is straight and pointing upwards (Fig.5). The second hand usually lays on the leg and also adopts gesture 3.



Figure 3. Gesture 3
(K1196 drawing by
Monika Ciura)



Figure 4. Gesture 3a
(K796 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 5. Gesture 3b
(K868 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 6. Gesture 3c
(K1196 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 7. Gesture 4
(K1227 drawing by
Monika Ciura).

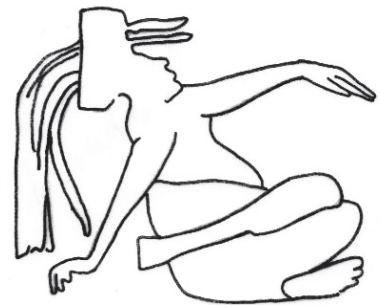


Figure 8. Gesture 5
(K1790 drawing by
Monika Ciura).

4.6. Gesture 3c

In this variant, the arm is positioned as in gesture 1, but all the fingers except forefinger are bent and pointing down (Fig.6). It is displayed in similar contexts as a gesture 1, mostly in a scenes of offerings performed by an important, central figure.

One of possible interpretations is that this hand position is considered elegant and appropriate for courtly behavior. Accordingly it is not related with status and hierarchy. There is no specific answer for this gesture.

4.7. Gesture 4

Hand is set horizontally, palm facing up, fingers may be straight or slightly bent, arm is usually bent at elbow. The arm can be lowered or raised high (Fig.7). This gesture is performed with one or both hands, by humans and supernaturals.

It is adopted by a woman, in a scene of dressing the Maize God on K1566, and in the mythological scene with Moon Goddess - K559. It appears as the gesture of rulers towards his courtiers and guests, as a part of pose 1, in which the hand is close to the heart, also in a scenes of conversation as K278, K3469, in individual representations of deities and as the gesture of Maize God in scenes of confrontation. Perhaps this is just a version of the gesture 1 in which the hand is not bent at wrist. At similarly open and outstretched hands are kept the items and the offerings, perhaps this gesture is an invocation of this activity but without an object. Therefore the meaning would be associated with giving.

There is no typical response to this gesture, it depends more on the context, if the ruler is performing it, the recipient usually adopts gesture 6.

4.8. Gesture 5

It is a position of the hand facing upwards with fingers outstretched. More often, palm is facing down, rarely is laid flat, or facing up. This gesture is performed with one hand, rarely with both. The arm can be lowered or raised high (Fig. 8). It is typical for humans and supernaturals but performed by only one person in the scene.

On the vases K3063 and K1790 is used in the same way – in conversation, in the first case, the answer is a gesture 6, in another, gesture 2. Rulers often extend their arms toward the characters, or animals sitting or kneeling before the throne as on the K4030, K4999, K8004, which resembles the modern gesture of blessing, and could have a meaning of acceptance. This gesture is performed by the characters sitting and leaning over the item that is interpreted as a codex (K1787, K1220) thus it may be interpreted as a gesture of reading, or some other symbolic gesture connected with writing or painting (Fig. 9). The elegant version in which the hand is positioned perfectly vertical is used in dance. The response for this gesture depends more on the context and the performer.

4.9. Gesture 6

In this gesture one or both arms are crossed on the chest, the arms can be based on the chest, or slightly raised. Different variants of this gesture refer to the arrangement of the hands relatively to the arms. In case when the exact position of hands and arms is not visible gesture is assigned generally to group 6, but not to any variant.

4.10. Gesture 6a

Arms are crossed and the left hand is visible over the right shoulder (Fig.10). If a second, invisible hand was placed in a similar manner, the arms would form the shape of X on the chest. This position is the most tight and preventing any movement. This variant is performed by people kneeling, standing and sitting, often localized far from the central action, like on the K1180 or K512, but it can be also adopted by the only person standing before the throne as on the K3056. It is typical both for people and supernaturals. Image on the K558 is representing the captive, probably of high rank with the torso presented frontally and both hands crossed over the chest, kneeling before the king on the throne. Hand based on the arm could have been arranged in a gesture in which two fingers were straightened as on the K5353. In one case, this gesture in the form «d» is repeated by the recipient, in other cases the recipient is most often the ruler or the deity on the throne, performing other gestures.

4.11. Gesture 6b

Left hand is located under the right arm, adopting various shapes, such as a gesture 3, on K625 (Fig. 11). This gesture also hinders any movement. It is used in the scenes of a war processions, or as the gesture of people concentrated around the ruler, who adopts pose 1. It is performed by characters sitting close to the ruler and also appears on individual depictions, performed by the ruler, like on K8001.

4.12. Gesture 6c

In this gesture, left hand is shown based on the right shoulder, just over the elbow. Hand could embrace the arm or fingers could be slightly bent or straightened (Fig. 12). In the most dignified version, arms are raised and form a right angle with the chest. It is performed by humans and supernaturals. This gesture is adopted by the people who are in a proximity to the ruler or god, who perform pose 1 with right hand raised close to the heart, or perform a gesture 1. There are also cases where the characters performing it are the ones of the high rank, like lord on K54, as well as individually shown ones, sitting in front of the offering most often a drinking vessel.

4.13. Gesture 6d

One hand, usually left is placed on the opposite shoulder, the other arm, usually the right one is free and can perform other actions and activities (Fig. 13). In one case this gesture is displayed by the god towards the attendant (K3056) in all the other cases this gesture is performed by secondary characters standing or kneeling in front of the ruler. An important feature of this arrangement is the opportunity to engage hand into other activities, it is mostly holding something, but it happens that the free hand was used to kill the captive while the rest of body was remaining in the position with gesture 6 (K5850).

4.14. Gesture 6e

A visible, usually right arm is crossed over the chest, above the arm at the height of the waist, free hand is sticking out, which logically should be the left hand, but it is sometimes portrayed as right (Fig. 14). The free hand can perform various gestures, and often is holding something. This variant is performed by humans and supernaturals. This gesture was often combined with gestures relating to high status, as a gesture 1, 4, rarely gesture 2, or 15. This variant is often performed by the characters presented individually, perhaps presenting the offering, the visible hand performed gesture 4 or 1, which appear to be characteristic for this activity, often on the outstretched hands laid vessels or bundles. This variant could also be performed by a central and high rank figure.

4.15. Gesture 6f

One arm, usually the left is straight and based on the floor, while the opposite one is bent and the hand embraces the elbow or upper part of arm (Fig. 15). This is the most noble of gestures in group 6, and is performed by the lords or kings or supernaturals.

Response to this gesture depends on the context, but usually the ruler answer with gesture 1 or 2 and characters who seem to be of the same rank, honored each other, both performing gesture 6 in different variations.

Gesture 6 is probably a respectful pose adopted in front of important and powerful people. It is not reserved only for servants, courtiers, and warriors, also rulers and deities are performing it. A characteristic feature is that, in a row of people in front of the ruler almost every one of them performs gesture 6, but each in a different variant, trying not to repeat the exact same gesture. Perhaps for each participant there is assigned a version relating to his status, achievements or origin or it is an artist's idea to avoid repetition. It seems that variants in which hands are not able to move freely, are those whose meaning in the context of respect and sub-



Figure 9. Gesture 5
(K1220 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 10. Gesture 6a
(K512 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 11. Gesture 6b
(K625 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 12. Gesture 6c
(K532 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 13. Gesture 6d
(K593 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 14. Gesture 6e
(K1186 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 15. Gesture 6f
(K1205 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 16. Gesture 7
(K558 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 17. Gesture 8
(K1524 drawing by
Monika Ciura).

mission is the strongest one. In any case, it is a gesture strongly associated with the hierarchy, but cannot be equated only with low status.

4.16. Gesture 7

Forefinger and thumb are close or touching each other, rest of fingers are straight or slightly bent. This is one of the characteristic gestures to pose 1, where the right arm is bent at the elbow and the hand is placed near the heart (Fig. 16). Gesture 7 is performed by the humans and mythological figures. When it was performed by the ruler sitting in pose 1, the attendants usually adopted gesture 6. Perhaps the most significant feature of this gesture is that the hand is bent at the elbow mimicking gesture 6, or the fact of placing hand near to the heart, the seat of emotions. Raising hand to the heart was a gesture typical only for the ruler, for example, on a vase K558, person standing in a row before the throne performs gesture 7, but is placing the hand much lower, while the arm of ruler is raised and hand is arranged in the same gesture 7 in both cases. This gesture is used regardless of the pose 1 in the conversation, as on the K4500 and K7727.

4.17. Gesture 8

Hand is set vertically, forefinger and thumb are close, rest of fingers are bent. The gesture is executed with one hand, often in a sitting position (Fig. 17). In many respects it could be regarded as a variant of the gesture 3, but has a very distinctive characteristic element, the thumb and forefinger are arranged as in the modern gesture reflecting the small size. Often, this gesture is combined with a gesture 1, such as on the K679 and K3008. It is often performed by more than one character in a scene. This is a gesture apparently very important in a conversation and closely related to speech and interaction between characters. It is performed by the rulers and high rank characters sitting in front of the ruler. On the K2784 lord performs this gesture to the four characters sitting in front of him, two of which repeated the gesture, imitating the monarch, or responding to it.

4.18. Gesture 9

Forefinger and little finger are straight and pointing up, rest of fingers are bent (Fig. 18). The gesture can be performed with one hand or both. It is adopted primarily by supernatural beings. When the palm is presented to the recipient, this gesture reminds gesture 2, it may be its variant but with unique otherworldly connotations. It seems that particularly Lords of Underworld were fond of this position of hands. This gesture can be executed without any interaction, if it is performed by the most important figure as on the K2796, rest of characters typically perform gesture 6.



Figure 18. Gesture 9
(K512 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 19. Gesture 9a
(K512 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 20. Gesture 10
(K1210 drawing by
Monika Ciura).

4.19. Gesture 9a

Hand is set horizontally. Fingers usually are pointing forward or down, sometimes placed in another position (Fig. 19). This gesture seems to be particularly characteristic for the Maize God, as he adopted it twice in the scene of confrontation with the G1 on the K2096 and K2710.

4.20. Gesture 10

This gesture should rather be called a feature, as hand position is similar like in the other gestures, but little finger is separated and bent (Fig. 20). Such bending appears with gesture 1, 2, 4 and 5. It can also be performed by both hands. It is performed by the rulers, attendants and supernaturals, so it is not directly associated with the hierarchy. On the K2697 arm of one of the characters is drawn straight away and a little finger touches the back of person sitting before. On K1210 person sitting before the king is bending his little fingers, he is accompanied by musicians, therefore this gesture may be connected with dance moves.

These contexts suggest that this is an elegant gesture, associated with the etiquette. In cases where the deviation is a feature of another gesture, it would be the most sophisticated and courtesy form of it.

4.21. Gesture 11

Forefinger and thumb are close, rest of fingers are straight and pointing up. Hand is raised (Fig. 21). This gesture is used in many different contexts and it is difficult to determine what exactly it could be referred to. It can also be confused with

the gesture 22, especially when fingers are not depicted in great detail. On the K751, gesture 11 is performed by two attendants towards the ruler. It is also adopted by the rulers towards characters gathered in front of the throne. On K1227 it is performed by the woman, her raised hand is decorated with bracelet, by God L. It is also adopted by Maize God in a scenes of confrontation with G1. Both hands of ruler shown on the K1563 perform this gesture, which could be related to dance, because in the same scene are also musicians. This gesture is also specific for dance moves of Maize God or impersonator.

4.22. Gesture 11a

In this variant, hand is positioned like in gesture 1, presenting palm to addressee (Fig. 22). It appears in context of offerings and individual depictions as on the K7008 and K5377 and in the context of conversation as on the K4339.

This is a very interesting gesture, because of the specific hand position, which could not happen accidentally and diverse context of appearance. Sometimes it is performed by more than one character. It seems that it was associated with the interaction and carried a specific message not necessarily related to hierarchy.

4.23. Gesture 12

Forefinger and thumb are close and pointing down. This its the opposite of gesture 7. It is performed by only one hand, almost always right one (Fig. 23).

It appears in the context of real and supernatural palace in group and individual scenes. In some contexts it may simply be a gesture of grasping something, like on K2707. There is also a gesture of the person sitting in the pose 1 and hand is raised to the chest. There is no specific response to this gesture and it is displayed by one person only.

4.24. Gesture 13

It is a position with palm facing up. All the fingers are bent apart from the forefinger, which resembles gesture 3, but in this case forefinger is slightly bent and pointing up (Fig. 24). This gesture is performed by only one hand, the left one. It appears very rarely, performed by a secondary characters, watching the main action from the side.

4.25. Gesture 14

In this gesture the most important feature is hand clenched in a fist, while the position of the arms is very diverse, although most frequently they are raised

(Fig. 25). Gesture is performed most often by the right hand or both hands. Fist is not complete, because the thumb is usually straight. It was performed by the characters in real and mythological context. Could be adopted by a ruler, in the pose 1 as on the K4542 and K5737. Hand could be positioned in a way in which all bent fingers were visible. On the K5002 fists of two characters seem to clash in battle, in this case aggressive meaning of fist may resemble the one known from our culture. Other depictions however imply other meanings, image on K5416 indicates that this gesture imitate the gesture of holding something, the ruler holds a cigarette in his clenched right hand, while his wife seated behind him also clenches her right hand but without any object. Other meaning is probably implied by this gesture when it is performed by the captives as on the K1606. It is also commonly adopted by the ruler, maybe as a symbol of force and power.

4.26. Gesture 15

Hand is clenched in a fist and placed close to the mouth, sometimes touching the lips, mouth can be opened as if in a gesture of eating (Fig. 26). Gesture is performed most often by one hand, could be the right and the left one as well. This gesture has been interpreted so far as eating dirt, on ceramics it appears very rarely. It is never performed by a central, important character. It appears twice in the supernatural context. We don't have enough amount of depictions to draw any radical conclusions, but it seems that it might be a gesture of worship and humility.

4.27. Gesture 16

It is very rare gesture, but performed in specific arrangement in which the hand is set vertically, the thumb is straight and also part of a straightened middle finger is visible (Fig. 27). This gesture is represented by the right hands of two characters, who in their left hands are holding the mask. It is possible that gesture 16 in this context is associated with painting and creating. In addition, it is performed by several mythological characters in the scene on K1485 used by deities in conversation, or by Itzamnaaj seated on a throne. This gesture is quite enigmatic, but it seems that its meaning is associated with the supernatural world.

4.28. Gesture 17

In this group, I included a rare gesture in which the flat hand is close to the face, or under the chin (Fig. 28). On the K1180 it is performed by a kneeling man behind the throne, supporting his chin on a hand with fingers slightly bent. It appears to be courteous gesture, just like the one depicted on the K1648, performed by an elaborately dressed woman kneeling before the king, her left hand is opened



Figure 21. Gesture 11
(K751 drawing by
Monika Ciura).

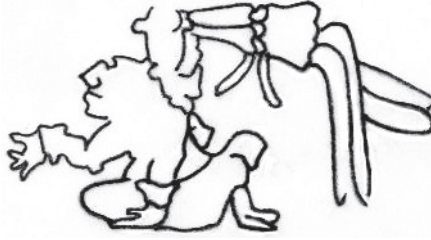


Figure 22. Gesture 11a
(K7008 drawing
by Monika Ciura).



Figure 23. Gesture 12
(K2707 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 24. Gesture 13
(K764 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 25. Gesture 14
(K1606 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 26. Gesture 15
(K1790 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 27. Gesture 16
(K1485 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 28. Gesture 17
(K2573 drawing by
Monika Ciura).



Figure 29. Gesture 18
(K6754 drawing by
Monika Ciura).

and raised just below the chin. Another significance could have a variant in which the flat, vertically set hand is raised to the height of mouth, as if someone wanted to kiss its inside. On the K1648 it is performed by a woman involved in dressing Maize God, on the K8242 is performed by one of the character sitting in a row before the king. This hand position might be a variant of that depicted on K6979, interpreted as singing or prayer.

4.29. Gesture 18

It is a gesture in which both hands are opened and fingers are straight. Palms are placed near each other, in a short distance, sometimes almost touching each other (Fig. 29). This gesture occurs very rarely, almost always in the mythological context on Codex Style vases, performed mainly by God A or God N. It may be associated with speech, as it is shown on the K4012, where character adopting this gesture had a clearly open mouth, indicating speaking. In one case, this gesture is displayed in a variant with raised hands, touching each other as in gesture of begging. It is performed by a person kneeling before the throne (K7998). This context appears only once so it is difficult to say whether the analogy with supernatural one has any significance.

4.30. Gesture 19

In this rare gesture, the right or left hand is open, with the thumb and fingers slightly separated (Fig. 30).

A small number of representations does not allow for specific interpretation, this gesture is performed by supernaturals and humans, but mainly in the context of mythology. On K7727, this gesture is performed by a man whose speech is marked by speech scrolls, so perhaps it was related to verbal communication, emphasizing it, especially when a hand is raised close to the face. However, not all contexts of its appearance can be explained in this way, such as the outstretched hand of man depicted on the K1790, the hand seems to be reaching the face of character sitting in front of him, perhaps there is no deeper meaning.

4.31. Gesture 20

In this gesture the hand is extended forward, set vertically, fingers are pointing up but one of the middle finger is bent and is very close or even touching the thumb (Fig. 31). If the fingers are not depicted carefully, it is very easy to mistake it with the gesture 11. This one is performed by people and supernaturals, always by a central character. Appears as a gesture of ruler towards his subjects, but in contrary to gesture 11 no one else is adopting it. It is also depicted in the context of

the conversation, like on the K6994, and on the individual scenes. It seems that its significance is associated with ruler's speech, his decisions or orders. It is also one of the dance moves.

4.32. Pose 1

The figure is sitting cross-legged and is presented from the front, the head is facing left, torso can also be slightly leaned to the left. Austere form of this pose is one with both hands lowered and based on legs, but more often one or both hands perform gestures towards right. Most frequently gestures are performed by right hand. This is typically a royal pose, it is displayed by only one, the most important and central character in a scene. Furthermore, it is connected with gestures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, but also, 8, 12, 22. Hand is often pulled forward, towards the attendants, or bent at the elbow and held at level of the heart. There are cases where both hands are gesticulating.

4.33. Pose 2

It is a pose in which the hands are arranged vertically so that one points upwards and one downwards. In the most sophisticated versions, both hands are touching at the wrist.

The most common combination is a combination of gesture 1 and 2. This pose is performed by the gods, usually Maize God, characters standing before the throne or a woman, but almost always in the supernatural context. It appears once in the depiction of individual, connected with offerings. The setting of one hand in a gesture 1 and the other in gesture 2 appears also at the dance poses, but in this case, hands are not facing one direction, except in the pose of dancing women on the K6888. Pose 2 in this variant seems to be associated with supernatural realm, in particular the Maize God, perhaps signifying his power to maintaining the universe in a right balance. There are other combinations, but much less often represented and it's hard to determine their meaning. However, it seems noteworthy that such arrangement of hands is defining the two directions and forming a vertical axis, a reference to the earth and the sky.

4.34. Pose 3

Torso is depicted frontally, arms are spread out to the both sides, hands are facing down, as a gesture 1. This is a rare pose, performed only by the Maize God or his impersonators while dancing. Two times it appears in the context of the resurrection of Maize God, when he is emerging from a turtle shell. Maybe its significance is associated with the gesture 1, only adopted by both hands, presenting palms on two sides and also taking a large space.



Figure 30. Gesture 19
(K4118 drawing by Monika Ciura).



Figure 31. Gesture 20
(K2914 drawing by Monika Ciura).

5. Gestures in epigraphy

Hand writes, hand paints and hand creates. The researches on its significance in the iconography are important and particularly interesting as well as the conclusions drawn from the study of glyphs representing the hand. Maya script contains the greatest amount of signs depicting the hand of all the scripts. Eric Boot in his article analyzed 45 of them (Boot 2003a, 2003b). I will present those that may be relevant in the case study of gestures.

Logograph *CHOK* (T710) shows the hand with fingers straight and pointing down. It is similar to the gesture 1, but in this case from the hand little drops are falling out. *CHOK* means «to throw, scatter». Perhaps the gesture had a similar meaning, relating to the offerings and took on a more metaphorical meaning when it was performed by rulers or gods, recalling the fact that through their blood and sacrifice they maintain the continuity of existence and prosperity. It is also possible that this gesture with dots is associated with sowing.

Sign that might resemble a gesture 2 is *K'AB*, flat hand raised up. *K'AB* means «the hand» and appears in the nominal phrase of ruler from Bonampak. But it has no other defined meaning beyond the pictographic one. Another sign showing an open hand is the *PAS*, (T222,) it consists of an open hand and a leaf. In Ch'orti the verb *'pasi* means «to open» or «open-up, break open, make an opening». Its meaning is probably associated with the opened palm, but may be transferred to the meaning of gesture or at least one of the meanings.

Sign *HUL*, (T 713var) depicts a palm facing up with the index finger straight and pointing up, the rest of the fingers are bent. Positioning of fingers resembles gesture 3. Sign *TZUTZ*, (T713 b) depicts hand with a thumb facing up, forefinger is pointing up, others are bent. *TZUTZ* which means «to complete, to end, to ter-

minate». Gesture 3 could have similar meaning. Sign *ye*, (T 710var), depicts hand pointing down, with forefinger straight and the rest bent, the palm is presented to the addressee, resembling gesture 3c, «*the value ye is probably derived from the verb ye'el, which in the Ch'ol language means "to grab, to take with the hand"*» (Boot 2003a: 16).

CH'AM, K'AM, (T 670) is a sign in which hand is set horizontally, all the fingers are visible and the thumb is separated. It is a part of other logo-graph and it means «to receive». This can be simplified and conventionalized representation of gesture 4, corresponding to the context, in which the gesture is used, which is giving and receiving offerings. Almost identical form has sign carrying different phonetic value – YAL?, (T670), depicting open hand, placed horizontally, with the thumb on top, bent 90 degrees up. «*The logographic value YAL may be derived from a reconstructed linguistic item *yalk'ab, which means 'the children (y-al) of the hand (k'ab)' or "the fingers"*» (Boot 2003a: 16). This sign is used in parental statement as «child of mother».

Sign K'AL, (T713a) represent open hand with outstretched fingers, the thumb rests on top of fingers, wrap *k'al* means «to present», «*k'al-tuun "to wrap stone (i.e. tuun period)", k'al-sakhu 'un "to present (the) white headband", k'al-hu'un "to present (the) headband"*» (Boot 2003a: 8). This sign is another reminiscent of gesture 4, and it confirms that this gesture means sacrifice, presentation, and is associated with the ritual.

Sign *chi* (T671) represent the right hand. The thumb and forefinger are close to each other, the rest of the fingers are bent, the palm is facing up. This arrangement is known for gesture 7. «*The actual hand-sign may Represent the Antlers, a distinctive element of deer (compare to Barrera Vásquez 1980). Note for instance the chi-like antlers on Huk Si'ip "Seven Deer", the "Lord of the Deer", as illustrated on Dresden Codex 13C1. Chi TheT671 sign and the sign T796 CHI DEER Freely substitute for each other in various contexts*» (Boot 2003a: 3). PUK is a rare sign, showing the palm facing downwards, thumb and forefinger are close together and pointing down, the rest of the fingers are freely arranged, slightly bent, as in a gesture 12. The association of this sign with fire rituals and reading *puk* (*k'ahk'*) - «to scatter (fire)» is suggested by Nikolai Grube (Boot 2003a: 4).

Several glyphs are similar to gesture 14, hand is clenched into fist. Syllable *cha* (T668) represents the right or left hand curled up in a fist, only thumb is visible. In Colonial Yucatec Maya *chach* means «handful». A similarly arranged hand is a part of logogram CHA' (T1086), which means number «2». Another sign depicting a fist is YOM, (T672) – very symbolically depicted hand, with the thumb visible on the right side, the rest of the fingers are bent, it is the element of expressions *ch'aj'oom* – «scatterer». The gesture 14 in this arrangement where fingers are visible is similar to sign *ke*, (T220 c-d, 711). The hand is set vertically, interior is facing the addressee, fingers are bent, and thumb separated. Syllable *ke* is a part of the word *kele'em* – «youngster», in modern tzetzal – *keh* – is the term of measure between thumb and forefinger (Boot 2003a: 6). Sign *k'o*, represent a lowered fist, the

thumb points straight down. It appears in the context of «creation» in Palenque. *OCH*, (T218b/221a T666,) representing the fist facing up and means «to enter». This multiplicity of meanings, and their dispersion from purely pictographic to metaphorical meaning clearly indicates that also gesture 14 could have multiple meanings. None of them, unfortunately, fits into the context of the fight or force, which appeared on the depictions on ceramics. The meaning of *OCH* and the association of sign *k'ò* with creation, could explain by the use of gesture 14 by mythological figures, performing this act in the sense of magic and ritual.

There are two signs which depicts hands holding quill or brush. They appear at K772, one is a superfix to sign T561. It is a representation of left hand facing the holding of a brush, the second is logograph *tz'ib*, this time depicting right hand, the brush is held between the index and middle finger (Boot 2003a: 2). Such ways of holding the brush/quill also appear in the figural art.

In general, the left hand is depicted on 22.2% of glyphs, right hand on 26.7%, both hands can be presented on 37.8% and at 13.3% it is impossible to determine the side. It was not rigidly determined which hand should be used to depict a sign, it wasn't a matter of great importance, or more important were reasons of composition. Many of signs has a pictographic meaning, visual representations of the hand mean hand, catching, taking, keeping or other actions, less often in has metaphorical and symbolic meaning that is attributed to gestures. These gestures, which are reflected in the script could be called emblems, as phonetic value that they carry, allow for accurate identification of meaning. However it is difficult to find such a satisfactory equivalents. The relationship between gestures and their representations in epigraphy was spotted by researchers. «*Some of these hieroglyphic signs may even have evolved from an intricate and complex gestural language of elite which many of the hand signs, as contained in iconographic narratives on Classic Maya ceramics. It was Wurth who at one time a suggested link between gesture and pictorial or pictographic writing in his discussion of the development of writing in human history, written signs, as he suggested, were often the fixation of manual gestures*» (Vygotsky 1978 [1930] cited after Boot 2003a: 29).

6. Summary and conclusion

After careful examination of the vessels, and a brief review of the analogy, the issue still draws a somewhat vaguely. Many of gestures are used in too many contexts and are performed by characters of differing status and importance. However, some conclusions can be made.

Gesture 1, is performed regularly by the central person of highest status, the gesture is directed towards the gathering before the throne, which usually performs gesture 6. If it is used in conversation, gesture 2 seems to be a characteristic answer. Perhaps these two are the gestures of greeting. Its resemblance to the glyph *CHOK* and the sowing hand of ruler depicted on the Stela 19 of Seibal indicates its

relationship to throwing, sowing. It could be understood metaphorically – the ruler as one who gives, offers well-being, this may also apply to making offerings. It is interesting that this gesture rarely appears on monumental sculpture, apparently its significance was not strong enough and it was rather typical for court etiquette and ritual offerings that were happening within the palace.

Gesture 2 was associated with gesture 1 and used in similar situations, often by the most important person in the scene. The epigraphical analogy may indicate the meaning of opening, but it could just signify an open hand. Lack of representations on the sculptures, indicates that this interaction is specific to the court and served the ruler for a greeting and expression of his power.

Gesture 3 is a gesture with only forefinger straightened. Placing of the arm was different, and perhaps influenced the meaning of gesture. It was executed by more than one character, so it could have been an elegant arrangement of the hands, specific for courtly interactions. The forefinger pointing up, has parallels in *TZUTZ* glyph meaning «to end», but it's hard to say whether the gesture had similar significance, because in this version it appears too rarely, usually performed by supernaturals or rulers on the throne.

Gesture 3 appears on sculpture, so its importance was strong enough to be shown in public space. In sculpture, variant 3a often appears adopted by lowered hand, which seems to be an elegant, sophisticated arrangement of the hand, perhaps part of an official position.

Gesture 4 is a variant of gesture 1 or separate gesture connected with offerings. Similar meaning is indicated by the epigraphical analogy. In sculpture it was depicted in a variant in which the hand is lifted up and placed in front of the chin, which may be associated with speech or prayer.

Gesture 5, is a gesture performed by the monarch towards characters or animals sitting directly before the throne, perhaps as a greeting, or blessing. It is also significantly associated with reading.

Gesture 6 in all versions is a gesture showing respect to a character of higher status. Variants in which only one hand is crossed through the chest, which allows a greater freedom of movement may be performed by a central characters, rulers or deities on the throne. Variants with low or negligible possibility of movement are performed by the characters standing, sitting and kneeling before the ruler on a throne. In sculpture it is most frequently adopted by captives.

Gesture 7 is an important gesture, that seems to be an important gesture in which the ruler's hand is raised to the chest and the heart. In sculpture it appears frequently in the scenes of the accession in Palenque, executed by the ruler at the moment of receiving the scepter. This gesture could express ruler's joy, pride or readiness to seize power. The epigraphical parallels connects this gesture with deer antlers and deer.

Gesture 8 is associated with speech and interaction and appears only in group scenes, usually performed by more than one person.

Gesture 9 is executed mainly by supernatural beings, rarely by people who apparently wanted to refer to the supernatural realm. The positioning of the hand and arm are various and could add more specified meaning to the gesture itself.

Gesture 10 is elegant, sophisticated arrangement of the hand with little finger bent and separated sometimes in a way that couldn't be easy to adopt. This gesture could be a characteristic feature of other ones.

Gesture 11 is a characteristic arrangement of hands, which may be adopted by one or more characters in the scene and is not associated with the hierarchy, it seems that more has to do with verbal communication.

Gesture 12 can be regarded as an action of grasping something. It also appears in more serious context, performed by the ruler with his hand raised to chest. Similar representation is encountered also in monumental sculpture. Epigraphical parallels suggest a relationship of this gesture of fire rituals.

Subsequent gestures are rarely reported and difficult to investigate. Exceptions are the gestures 14 and 17 in the version of kissing palm.

Gesture 14 is used in many contexts and has many slightly different variations. It also seems to have multiple meanings. It is often represented in sculpture performed by the rulers but also captives. This gesture has representations in epigraphy, one is the verb meaning «to enter».

Gesture 17 – «Kissing Palm» – it is a gesture adopted by the orator on the Tablet of Orator, so is inevitably associated with speech. It looks like applying hand to mouth to give a right direction to the voice. This gesture rarely appears on ceramics.

Those are the general conclusions that could be drawn from the classification. Now is the time to give the answer to the questions.

- Can we talk about special language or system of gestures in case of Maya culture?

It seems to me, that the number of gestures and their diversity is not sufficient to cover the meaning of every word spoken. Among the studied gestures only few could have a meaning of emblem. That indicates that we cannot speak about the language of gestures, but a specific system certainly existed. The specific arrangements of hands appear on a great numbers of scenes, they had to be intentionally painted by the artist and understandable to the viewer. Gestural message was obviously very important for pictures as they could not speak by themselves. In addition some of the arrangements of the hand, are so specific that it had to required a detailed knowledge of their implementation and usage. It indicates that they had great significance in communication.

- Were gestures/system of gestures due to certain patterns of behavior suitable for people of a certain social, political or religious status, or is it specific for the situation in which they find themselves?

The gestures represented on the pottery seem to cover both functions. There are gestures characteristic for a certain characters, as a gesture 1 and 2 for the ruler, pose 2 for Maize God. Also those ones which were performed by one central person, distinguishing it from the rest and showing its unique status and hierarchy. There are also gestures that are performed due to the situation and circumstances, gestures of captives representing fear and pain, gestures of subjects expressing respect for the sovereign, or gestures, such as gesture 8 performed by many characters probably just because of the situation and a particular verbal message which was associated with it.

- Could depictions of gestures be a part of the canon of the depiction of specific characters?

Canonical gestures are important because of their special meaning, not necessarily the frequency of their appearance. These are gestures that appear in individual depictions where only one character is shown in two aspects, usually during the same action. A gesture that had no receiver could have been a gesture which didn't have to be associated with communication, and more with ritual, prayer or canon of depiction. Similar meaning could have been displayed by poses, especially pose 1, the most canonical representation of the ruler, who in reality didn't necessarily have to sit sideways to his subjects, but still was shown in this way, because the action had to be centered on him. Gestures depicted on ceramics were not so much canonical as probably the most formal gestures are those presented on sculpture. U'bah of king had to express what was the best of him – power, authority and mightiness.

- Are there gestures that express emotions, feelings, states of mind?

Mayan elite valued the mastery of controlling the own body and what it could express. What they wanted to pass non-verbally, they conveyed through emblems or other symbolic gestures. Any uncontrolled, non-verbal messages are not perpetuated on the ceramics, the depiction of mourning women on K6979 would be the only example. One might wonder how a controlled gesture could express a true feelings of how it was changed by the tradition, etiquette and convention. It is possible that such emotional meaning had those gesture which were performed close to the heart, from which all the feelings are emanating. Perhaps a gesture 14 in certain circumstances could implied malice, anger and a desire to confrontations in a conventional way.

- What was the role of gestures in the context of courtly culture?

I believe that gestures were important factors of royal etiquette. Behavior performed at the court had to be conventionalized and reflecting the hierarchy of characters. Gestures were a part of code, in which rul-

er expressed his power and divinity while courtiers, their humbleness. Gestures also added some esthetic value to the appearance. It is more than probable, that in certain circumstances they could express some more complex ideas and be a part of prayer or ritual movements. Their meaning is unfortunately still blurred, maybe a modern viewer is not prepared enough to penetrate through this special cultural code.

Notes

¹ <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/gesture?q=gesture>

² <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/gesture?q=gesture>

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