



Glyph Dwellers

Report 84

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New Documentation of the Maya Bowl at Williams College (K8713)

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The Maya bowl in the collection of Williams College Art Gallery (accession number 21.1.14) is well known to epigraphers, having been photographed by Justin Kerr and published in rollout form on www.mayavase.com as K8713 (**Fig. 1**). A detailed commentary on its text, by Marc Zender in collaboration with other scholars, appeared on mayavase.com (Zender n.d.). This article observed the presence of a Namaan *ajaw* title on the vessel, which links it to the site of La Florida, as well as the unusual reference to the contents of the bowl as *ach'* or 'fresh' cacao (see also Stuart 2005:144; 2006:199). However, a number of glyphs from this important work have remained problematic, particularly some of those that correspond to names and titles, which make up the bulk of the text. Therefore, we recently requested a set of close-up photos of the vessel to be made by the museum. Jessie Ann Owens also shared with us another set of study photos of the bowl she made in April 2023. In addition, a 3D model of the bowl has been published by Beth Fisher on Sketchfab (<https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/mayan-bowl-with-hieroglyph-rim-12cc286945c84402ab8efa4f2db75061>). These detailed images are valuable in several ways. For example, they show clearly the complex painted details of the inner rim, which looks like a skyband: a non-textual linear device that indicates a celestial or divine setting for a scene or serves as a general framing element (**Fig. 2**; Carlson and Landis 1985). In this band, darkened K'an-crosses and radial forms alternate with a dotted motif. Below the skyband seems to be a band of framed eyeballs. More importantly, the photos confirm several suppositions about the text we had made several years ago while working with high-resolution rollout images taken by Justin Kerr. The purpose of this report is to disseminate the new photos, as well as to discuss various aspects of the text, comparing it with other Namaan-related vessels.



Fig. 1. Gadrooned bowl with hieroglyph rim text, Late Classic, 600-900 AD. Campeche, Mayan, Mexican. Terracotta with orange and black polychrome. Overall: 6 1/2 x 5 in. (16.5 x 12.7 cm); rim: 6 1/4 in. (15.9 cm). Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA: Gift of Herbert D. N. Jones, Class of 1914 (21.1.14).



Fig. 2. Detail of inner rim showing skyband. Gadrooned bowl with hieroglyph rim text, Late Classic, 600-900 AD. Campeche, Mayan, Mexican. Terracotta with orange and black polychrome. Overall: 6 1/2 x 5 in. (16.5 x 12.7 cm); rim: 6 1/4 in. (15.9 cm). Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA: Gift of Herbert D. N. Jones, Class of 1914 (21.1.14).

As the bowl was not excavated scientifically and bears no hieroglyphic date, its dating must be estimated based on style. Zender (n.d.) identified it as a Saxche Orange Polychrome vessel and dated it to 550-700 CE, which seems reasonable. Jørgensen and Krempel (2014:104) suggested a much later, ninth-century date, based on the appearance of raised parallel vertical carving, on its lower exterior, often termed "gadrooning," which is also seen in other Terminal Classic sequences. However, we disagree with this association, given that "gadrooning" is an umbrella term referring to a wide range of sculptural treatments of vessels, which are not always directly comparable. For example, in contrast to the inverse fluting that frequently extends over the entire body of Fine Orange vases (e.g. Smith 1955:vols. 2, Fig. 3j), the Williams College bowl is carved in a distinctly raised pattern with wide, flattened, expanding forms terminating in rounded tops and adorned with incised midribs, which have been compared to flower petals (Smit 2019). The petaled design is reminiscent of Late Classic painted bowls from various regions, including the El Zotz area (K4962, 4357, 4988) and the Petexbatun (Foias and Bishop 2013:449, fig. 3) (**Fig. 3**).



Fig. 3. Polychrome bowl MS1190. Photograph by Ronald L. Bishop, courtesy Maya Ceramics Project.

The text of this bowl was painted using red outlines with a lighter red infill, on a yellowish ground. The lack of contrast in the painting, overlapping of ground and infill with the glyphic forms, as well as damage, have made it somewhat difficult to make out significant details. As is typical for ceramics associated with Namaan, the text lacks the introductory sign and dedicatory verb often appearing in other pottery styles. The text begins with *yuk'ib* 'his drinking vessel' (A) (Table 1; see Polyukhovych 2016). The next three blocks (B-D) indicate the contents of the vessel, *ti ach' kakaw* 'for fresh cacao', with the word *kakaw* distributed across blocks C-D.

The rest of the text consists of titles and personal names for the individual who owned the bowl. Previous researchers interpreted Blocks E-I as a nominal sequence, which remains possible (Jørgensen and Krempel 2014:104, fig. 7.5m). The first of these (E) has not been securely identified in earlier studies, as it displays significant pitting. However, we recognize that it may be an undeciphered grapheme designated with the code PG4 in the MHD Catalog (Fig. 4; Looper et al. 2022). This rather rare sign—we nicknamed it "Picasso"—consists of a humanoid face in profile with two eyes on the side. There is often dotting around the eyes or around the outer edge of the face. In several examples, a darkened circle on the cheek and a curved lock of hair suggest that it may belong to the class of signs related to the T1037 (PY1) XIB template. In the

case of K8713, the sign preserves the humanoid profile, the hank of hair on the upper right and two large circles surrounded by dots, indicating the eyes.

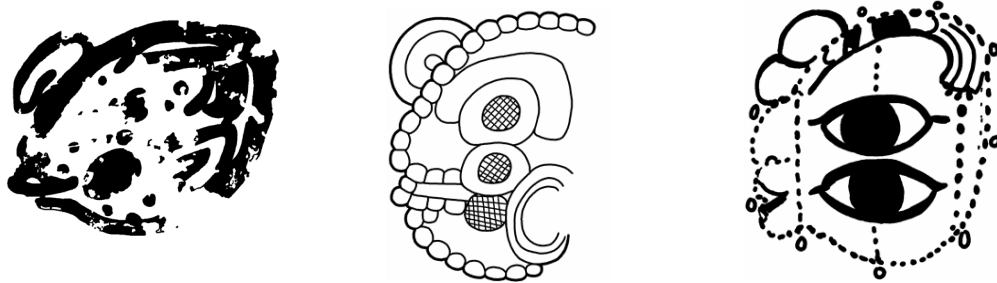
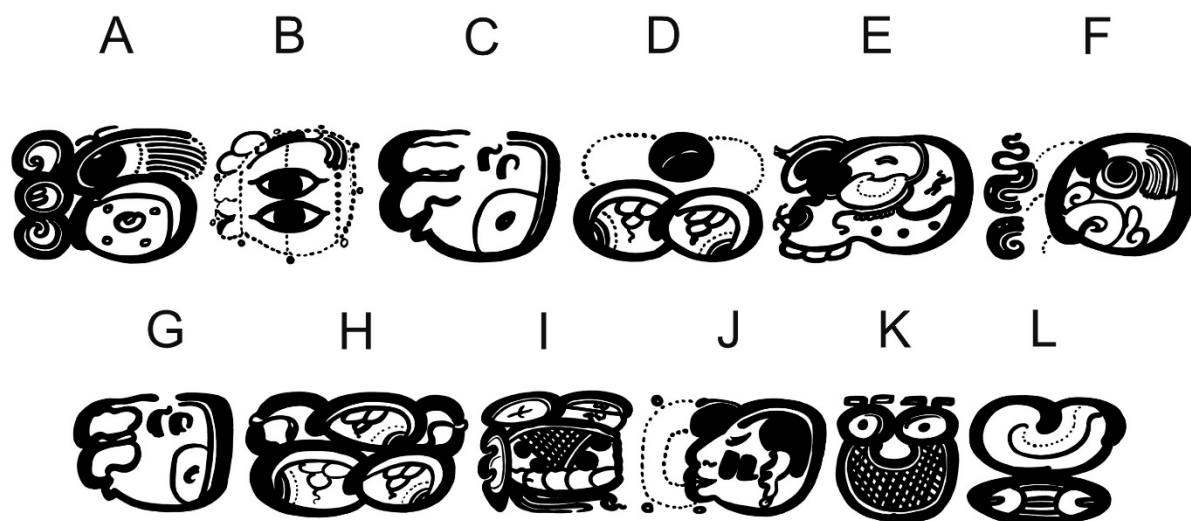


Fig. 4. Examples of PG4 "Picasso" grapheme. **a.** K8713, block E; **b.** Pomona Element 44; **c.** Bowl, private collection. Drawings by Matthew Looper.

PG4 also appears as the initial component of the name of a Namaan lord on several painted vessels discussed by Jørgensen and Krempel (2014) and Polyukhovych (2016). In these examples, PG4 is followed by the rest of the nominal sequence: *ti' ju'n pi'k jolo'm*. This name seems to be structured as two parallel noun phrases referring to body parts: PG4 Ti' ('?? Mouth') and Ju'n Pi'k Jolo'm ('Eight Thousand Skulls'), with PG4 perhaps being another noun or an adjective modifying 'mouth' (Fig. 5, 6). On K8713, block F consists of a main sign and affix to the right, which are unfortunately damaged. The main sign looks like a human face in profile with a large circle at the bottom, possibly a partitive disk. This suggests a possible **Ti'** logograph, as appears in the name of the individual mentioned on the bowls illustrated in Fig. 5 (Block C) and 6 (Block C), but the "lips" component is not clear. Further, the affix on the right of Block F has arcing elements similar to T24 li, but this identification is also not secure. This suggest that the individual named on K8713 is not identical to "Picasso" Ti' Ju'n Pi'k Jolo'm, even though their names both begin with grapheme PG4. Further, Jørgensen and Krempel (2014:97) point out that K5193 and related bowls compare closely with Balche phase ceramics from Piedras Negras (560-620), suggesting a Middle Classic date for this individual, rather than a solid Late Classic date for the individual named on K8713.



A	yu-k'i-bi	yuk'ib	it is his drinking cup
B	?	?	? ("Picasso")
C	TI'	Ti'	Ti'
D	1-PIK	Ju'n Pi'k	Ju'n Pi'k
E	JOL	Jolo'm	Jolo'm
F	AJ	aj	he of
G	TI'	Ti'	Ti'
H	?	?	?
I	na-MAN-ni-AJAW	Namaan ajaw	Namaan lord
J	IX-K'UH	ix k'uh	[the child of] lady god
K	ch'a	Ch'aj	Ch'aj
L	so-ko	Sok	Sok (or Ch'asok)

Fig. 5. Namaan bowl 1; drawing and revised transcription after Yuriy Polyukhovich (2016).



Fig. 6. Polychrome bowl Kerr 5193. Rollout photograph by Justin Kerr.

The next block (G) on K8713 is damaged and has repainting from repairs but seems to be *ch'ajo'm* 'incense-offerer' spelled **ch'a-JOM-ma**. This could provide an additional component of the nominal sequence, or it could be a title.

The next block (H), consisting of a stingray spine over a hand, could continue the nominal sequence, as indicated by previous researchers. This is a unique combination that could be either a single compound grapheme, or it could represent two logographs, the T713a "flat-hand" and the T212/T555 spine, as suggested by Zender. Although the flat-hand securely reads **K'AL**, epigraphers have offered differing translations of this word (Stuart 1996:155–156; Zender 2018). While ethnohistorical and contemporary sources and some images strongly support its translation as 'to tie/wrap' or 'to close', other images associated with the term—as well as the iconic form of the grapheme itself—suggest to some epigraphers a meaning such as "raise" or "present" (Fig. 7; Martin 2020:110). Another interpretation of this term is that it refers in general to doing some action. The spine is read **KOKAN**, literally 'serpent's tooth' (Davletshin 2002; Stone and Zender 2011:78–79); however, it is possible that it refers to a sharp object like a stingray spine or obsidian blade that is ritually bound/wrapped, presented, or displayed.¹ Such rites were associated with the childhood of elites, as depicted on Palenque Temple of the Foliated Cross main tablet, in which the six-year-old K'inich Kan Bahlam II holds an obsidian blade in a coming-of-age ceremony (Fig. 8; see Bassie-Sweet 1991:200–210). On the jambs of the same temple, the ruler is shown as an adult after his royal accession, also holding the blade of auto-sacrificial bloodletting (Joralemon 1974:65–66; Schele and Freidel 1990:240–243).

¹ In addition to identifying stingray spines, **KOKAN** is apparently used to refer to a bone pin from the plaza fill at Caracol (Chase and Chase 2015:15, fig. 46).



Fig. 7. Incised bone showing accession ceremony described using T713a 'flat hand' for verbal root. Dallas Museum of Art 1988.129. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

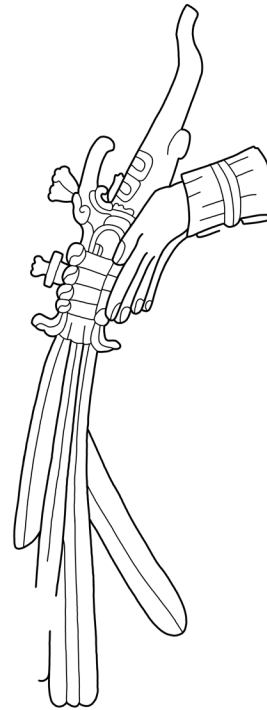


Fig. 8. Obsidian bloodletter held by K'inich Kan Bahlam II on Palenque Temple of the Foliated Cross Main Tablet. Drawing by Matthew Looper.

Because the next block (I) on the bowl is clearly T1037 (PY1) **XIB** 'male/man' (note the hank of hair and large circle on cheek), the components of block H might be either nominals, as previous researchers suggest, or be part of a title for the vessel owner, indicating that he is a penitent, or 'male/man' who performs auto-sacrificial bloodletting by ritually displaying a blade or stingray spine. This ritual, usually termed *yax ch'ahb* 'first penance', is also mentioned on several other vessels, which may have been commissioned to commemorate this event (Green 2014; Harris and Stearns 1997:85; Houston 2012; Houston 2018; Schele and Grube 1994:105). In monumental representations, such as Dos Pilas Panel 19, the protagonist of this event is youthful, suggesting that this was a coming-of-age ritual. A structurally analogous title sequence to the *k'alkohkan xib* 'spine-binding/presenting(?) male' sequence on the bowl appears on Naranjo Stela 38 as *hux k'altuunaj* 'three-stone-binding/presenting(?) person' (**Fig. 9**).

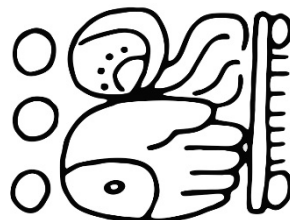


Fig. 9. Naranjo Stela 38 B6: *hux k'altuunaj* 'three-stone-binding/presenting person'. Redrawn after Ian Graham (Graham 1978:97).

The next two blocks (J-K) provide a title for the vessel owner, indicating that he is an incense-offerer of 1 k'atun, or less than about 20 years of age (Zender n.d.). Next is another k'atun glyph (block L) followed by a block that Zender et al. interpreted as *yunen* 'his child' (M; **Fig. 10a**). However, the main sign of this block is actually a **XIB**-template human head inside of a cartouche and with a darkened background. There are also several small dots below it. The main sign in this block may be T236, a logogram which also serves as the main sign of the Altar de Sacrificios Emblem Glyph. The elongated sign that appears in front of this sign is not T61 **yu** but is asymmetrical and has a double-dotted central element and may therefore be T57 **si** or T89 **tu**. In the Altar de Sacrificios Emblem, the complements to T236 are (**na**)-**si** or **ti-ni** (**Fig. 10b, c, d**). Other prominent contexts for T236—but without phonetic complements—include multiple examples of the name of the deity "GIII" at Palenque (**Fig. 10e**) as well as a title on the vase from Cuychen Cave (**Fig. 10f**; Helmke et al. 2015). While the phonetics of this logogram are still not clear, on K8713, the prefixed **tu** or **si** may provide evidence regarding its initial consonant. On K8713, it is likely that it functions as the second part of a coupleted title for the vessel owner, who is a k'atun *ch'ajo'm* and k'atun ???. Parallel title sequences appear elsewhere in the Maya script, as on Moral-Reforma Stela 2 D4-C5 (**Fig. 11**).

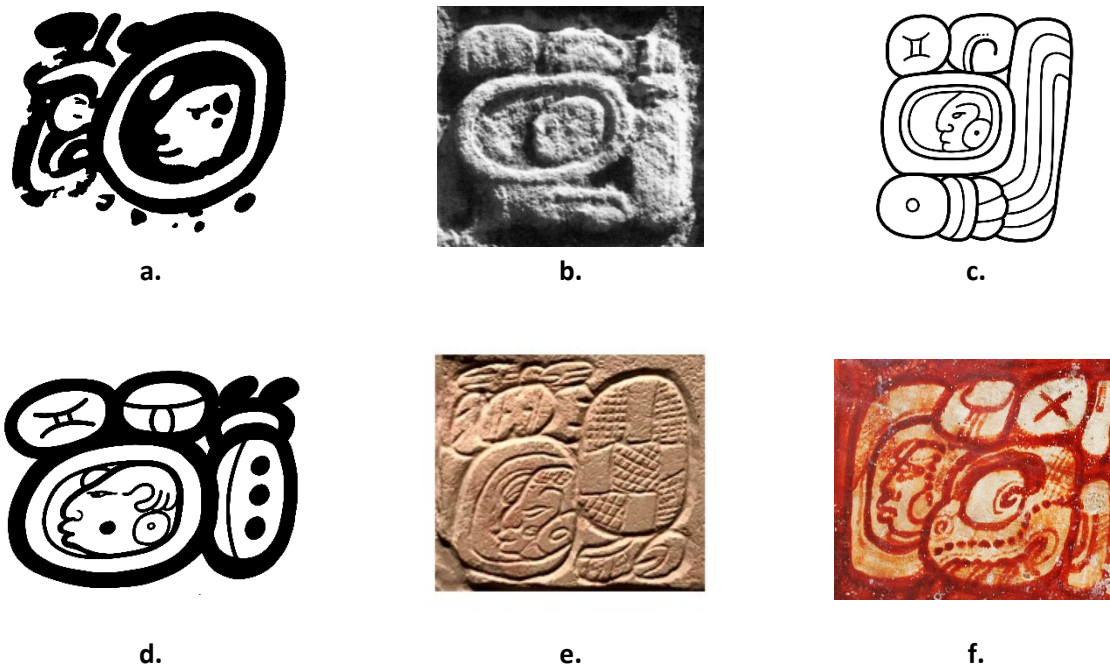


Fig. 10. K8713 Block M compared other contexts for T236 (PY2). **a.** K8713 Block M. Drawing by Matthew Loooper; **b.** Altar de Sacrificios Emblem Glyph showing T236 with **-na-si** complements. Altar de Sacrificios Stela 4, C3. Photo by John Graham, MHD archive; **c.** Altar de Sacrificios Emblem Glyph showing T236 with **-ti-ni** complements. Itzan Stela 17, D13. Drawing by Yuriy Polyukhovych; **d.** Altar de Sacrificios Emblem Glyph showing T236 with **-si** complement. Vase, Museo Nacional de Arqueología e Etnología, Guatemala 09153. Drawing by Yuriy Polyukhovych after photograph by Inga Calvin K30092; **e.** "GIII" deity name. Palenque Temple XXI bench, E10. Photo by Matthew Loooper; **f.** Detail of Vase from Cuychen Cave, MS2265. Photo by Ronald L. Bishop, courtesy Maya Ceramics Project.



Fig. 11. Moral-Reforma Stela 2, D4-C5. Drawing by Cesar Lizardi Ramos (Pavón Abreu 1945:fig. 4).

As observed by Zender et al., the next two blocks (N-O) are the title 2-k'atun Namaan (La Florida) lord. The appearance of a 2-k'atun title immediately following completed 1-k'atun titles suggests that a different person is referenced here and that the text is probably missing a parentage expression before block N. This is further suggested by the last (oversized) block in the text (P), which presents the proper name of the 2-k'atun Namaan lord, Sihyaj Chan K'awiil. The grapheme on the upper left is the 'upended frog' T740 **SIH**, preserving the diagnostic circles on the upper left, a "breath" scroll on the lower left and what is probably a large circular eye on the lower right. Beneath this is T126 **ya**, and the lunar crescent T181 **ja** appears in the center of the block with an infixed T561 **CHAN** 'sky' sign. Finally, on the right side of the block is the mirrored forehead of K'awiil (T1030d). Two small dots to the right of block P mark the end of the text. The text of this vessel therefore repeats the structure of the bowl illustrated in **Figure 5**, which provides the name of "Picasso" Ti' Ju'n Pi'k Jolo'm followed by the name of a female ancestor, most likely his mother, Ix K'uh Ch'aj Sok, without an explicit parentage expression. On K8713, the Namaan lord, Sihyaj Chan K'awiil, is the male ancestor (likely father) of "Picasso" ... Ch'ajo'm.

Sihyaj Chan K'awiil is also named on K1670, where he is associated both with Namaan and "Chatahn" (Lopes 2003; **Fig. 12**). He also appears on a Saxche Orange vessel lid excavated at La Corona, where he is called a Namaan lord (Barrientos Q., Canuto, and Bustamante 2015:fig. 1.4). These two vessels provide chronological ties for Sihyaj Chan K'awiil, as K1670 can be compared with Yaxche phase ceramics from Piedras Negras (620-750), and the lid is from late seventh-century fill. Taken together, these data suggest that Sihyaj Chan K'awiil ruled sometime during the early to mid-seventh century (Jørgensen and Krempel 2014: 100). In turn, because K8713 likely was owned by a son of Sihyaj Chan K'awiil, it is possible that the vessel was made sometime in the mid- or late-seventh century.



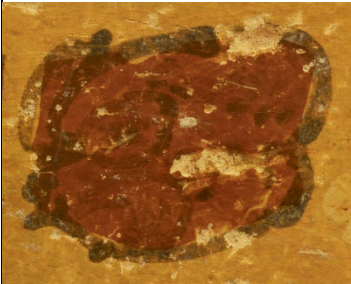
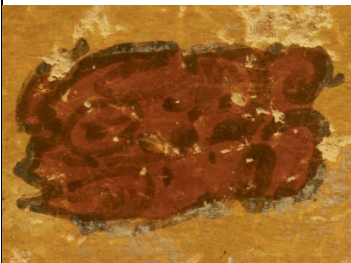


Fig. 12. Polychrome bowl Kerr 1670, with mention of Sihyaj Chan K'awiil shown in detail. Rollout photograph by Justin Kerr.





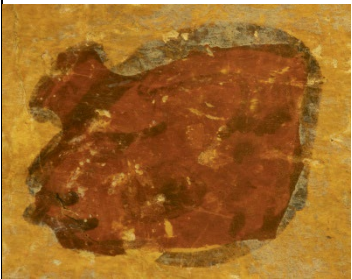
In conclusion, the new photos provided by Williams College suggest that this bowl for 'fresh cacao' was owned by a young (under 20 years old) individual from Namaan. Although his name cannot be read in entirety, it includes the initial "Picasso" grapheme found in the name of the Middle Classic Namaan ruler "Picasso" Ti' Ju'n Pi'k Jolo'm but followed by an additional eroded element and *Ch'ajo'm*. "Picasso"...Ch'ajo'm was a relative (likely a son) of a lord of Namaan, Sihyaj Chan K'awiil. This genealogical relationship as well as cross-ties with excavated ceramics suggest a Late Classic date for the bowl, perhaps mid- to late-seventh century. Part of the bowl text could have been a commemoration of penitential bloodletting by its owner, or this section could be part of his personal name of "Picasso"...Ch'ajo'm. Additional vessels naming the same individual would help to understand better the structure of his name.







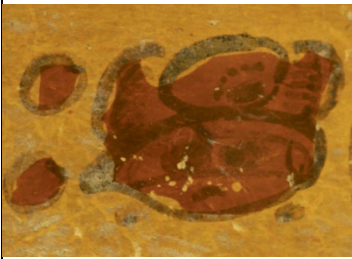
Table 1. Text of gadrooned bowl with hieroglyph rim text, Late Classic, 600-900 AD. Campeche, Mayan, Mexican. Terracotta with orange and black polychrome. Overall: 6 1/2 x 5 in. (16.5 x 12.7 cm); rim: 6 1/4 in. (15.9 cm). Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA: Gift of Herbert D. N. Jones, Class of 1914 (21.1.14).

	A	yu-k'i-bi	yuk'ib	his drinking vessel
	B	ti a-ch'a	ti ach'	for fresh
	C	ka-	kakaw	cacao
	D	-ka-wa	"	"

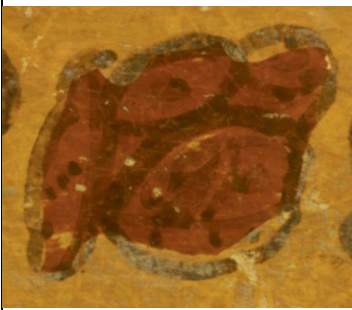



	E	??	??	"Picasso" [part of name]
	F	_-li?	??	[part of name]
	G	ch'a-JOM-ma?	ch'ajo'm	incense offerer [or part of name]
	H	K'AL-KOKAN?	k'al kohkan?	spine-binding/presenting [or part of name]
	I	XIB	xib	male [or part of name]



	J	WINAKHAB?	winakha'b?	[1] k'atun
	K	ch'a-JOM-ma?	ch'ajo'm	incense offerer
	L	WINAKHAB?	winakha'b?	[1] k'atun
	M	si/tu?-??	??	??
	N	2-WINAKHAB?	cha' winakha'b?	[child of] 2 k'atun



	O	na-MAN-AJAW	Namaan ajaw	Namaan lord
	P	SIH-ya-ja-CHAN-K'AWIL	Sihyaj Chan K'awiil	Sihyaj Chan K'awiil

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