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## **Linguistic Study: Chichén Itzá Inscriptions**

*English translation by Rita Fleming, FAMSI*

**Research Year:** 1998

**Culture:** Maya

**Chronology:** Classic

**Location:** Yucatán, México

**Site:** Chichén Itzá

This investigation, financed by the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., (FAMSI), has consisted of the compilation and systematizing of a lexical corpus from the Classic inscriptions of Chichén Itzá's archaeological center. The objective of this investigation has been to subject this corpus to a philological analysis, with the intention of contributing to the dialectal characterization of the language of Chichén Itzá's classic inscriptions.

The development of the work has been based on the transliteration, transcription and translation of a total of 47 hieroglyphic texts from Chichén Itzá, which represent 90% of the known inscriptions in the city.

Thanks to the publication of these texts I have been able to compile a Lexical Classification that consists of a total of 107 entries, distributed in the following categories: Verbonominal Roots = 88 items; Numerals and Classifiers = 5 items; Pronouns = 6 items; Demonstratives = 3 items; Particles = 5 items.

The philological analysis of these 107 entries has enabled us to classify them in the following categories, effective for the Terminal Classic:

Vocabulary of Cholan Origin = 13 items (12.5%)

Vocabulary of Yucatecan Origin = 22 items (21.2%)

Vocabulary of non-distinct characteristic = 65 items (62.5%)

Vocabulary documented in other Mayan languages = 4 forms (3.8%)

(The percentages are calculated with regard to a total of 104 items, since there are three glyphic forms that I have not been able to classify).

Conclusions derived from these percentages should be extracted with caution, since the non-distinct vocabulary characteristic allows two considerations: that the lexical base of the language of Chichén Itzá's inscriptions during the Terminal Classic was 79% Cholan and 21.2% Yucatecan; or that it was 83.7% Yucatecan and 12.5% Cholan. The choice between one or another alternative depends upon the point of view of the investigator:

either that the language of all Classic Maya inscriptions is a specialized and archaistic selection of Cholan affiliates; or that Chichén Itzá's inscriptions reflect a dialectalization and linguistic regionalization (Yucatecan), with a minority intrusion (Cholan). A single appraisal is difficult to obtain from what has been analyzed concerning the verbal morphology and the style of speech of Chichén Itzá's inscriptions. These tasks have not been contemplated specifically in this study, although indications about both aspects are offered in the notes to the publication of the glyphic texts.

*Submitted 02/01/1999 by:*  
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