

## Ek Balam: A New Emblem Glyph from the Northeastern Yucatán

Alexander Voß and Markus Eberl

### Introduction

The reconstruction of the sociopolitical organization of the Classic Maya society remains one of the prominent subjects for the disciplines involved – archaeology, ethnohistory and epigraphy (cf. the special section in *Current Anthropology* 37(5) 1996; Haviland 1997). One may concentrate on three aspects of the sociopolitical system:

- The internal organization. With regard to the complexity of Classic Maya culture, consensus on a state-level society has been reached. Discussions on the nature of Maya states oscillate between centralized and segmentary states.
- The political landscape. City states characterized the territorial organization. Epigraphic research (Martin & Grube 1994; 1995) has only recently put forward the super-state model for the Late Classic (600–900 A.D.) which implies the structured association of individual city states within larger orbits of power.
- The temporal and regional variation. The varying availability and applicability of archaeological data, epigraphic records and ethnohistorical documents highlights the individual characteristics of Maya states and denies a homogeneous picture (cf. Marcus 1993).

The case study which is presented here epitomizes questions evolving from the above three aspects: Focal point of our study is the northeastern Yucatán region during the transition from the Late Classic to the Terminal Classic period (700–1000 A.D.). Contrary to the collapse phenomenon in the Southern Lowlands, the northern part of the peninsula experiences the emergence of a New Order. Chichén Itzá overwhelms the fractionized city states and establishes itself as the center of a state with pan-Mesoamerican influence. While most of the inscribed monuments vanish in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnohistorical sources from early Colonial times begin to speak up loudly for Chichén Itzá. Thus archaeology, epigra-

phy and ethnohistory shed light from differing perspectives on this period.

New inscriptions from the archaeological site of Ek Balam evidences the Late Classic presence of an Emblem Glyph at this site. It enhances the otherwise sparse epigraphic record for this region and period of time considerably. Additional insights gained from the ethnohistoric sources on Ek Balam allow for a more precise reconstruction of the changing political landscape of the northeastern Yucatán during the Late and Terminal Classic.

### The site of Ek Balam

Favorable geographic and climatic conditions characterize the northeastern Yucatán karst plain which environs Ek Balam. The site lies 27 km north of the present-day Valladolid and 51 km northeast of the archaeological site of Chichén Itzá (Figure 1). Notably, the archaeological site, the ethnohistorically attested Early Colonial *pueblo* and the modern-day village overlap and cluster within eyeshot at Ek Balam.

The archaeological site was first reported by Desirée Charnay in 1886. The discovery of a hieroglyphic inscription at the site in 1927 caused Morley to visit the ruins briefly (Morley 1927). Almost sixty years expired until archaeological surveys started in 1984 by William Ringle (Bey *et al.* 1998: 102). Since 1994 the site's center is being investigated by the Proyecto Arqueológico Ek' Balam headed by Leticia Vargas de la Peña from the Centro I.N.A.H. Yucatán. (Ortegón Zapata 1997a; 1997b; Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: 26).

Recent analyses of the ceramic sequence (Bey *et al.* 1998) trace the settlement history of Ek Balam back to the Middle Preclassic. The continuous increase of population seemingly halted during the Early Classic before culminating during the Late and Terminal Classic period. "Ceramic and architectural evidence indicates that, during its apogee in the Late/Terminal Classic periods (600–1050 A.D.), Ek Balam and its surrounding hinterland formed one of the larger and more powerful polities in the northern Maya lowlands." (Bey *et al.* 1998: 101–102) Occupation dwindled during the Postclassic. The Spanish conquest of Yucatán saw the establishment of an *encomienda* at Ek Balam. The Early Colonial community (which included the forcefully resettled population of neighboring villages) centered around the Franciscan chapel due east of the archaeological site and existed from 1555 through 1606. The modern town was founded around 1900 to the west of the archaeological site.

The Late and Terminal Classic Ek Balam boasts a walled center (appr. 0,125 km<sup>2</sup>) amidst a settlement area stretching over 12 km<sup>2</sup>. Several *sakbeob* or causeways

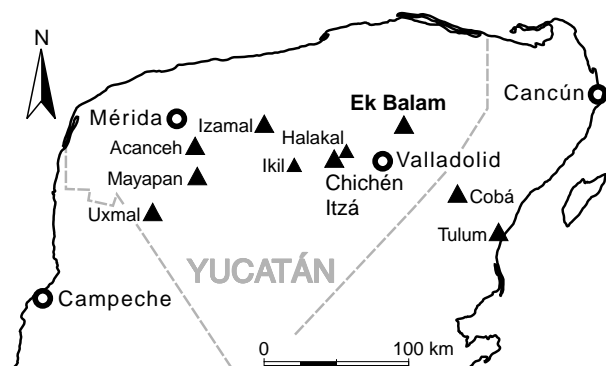


Fig. 1. The Northern Maya Lowlands.

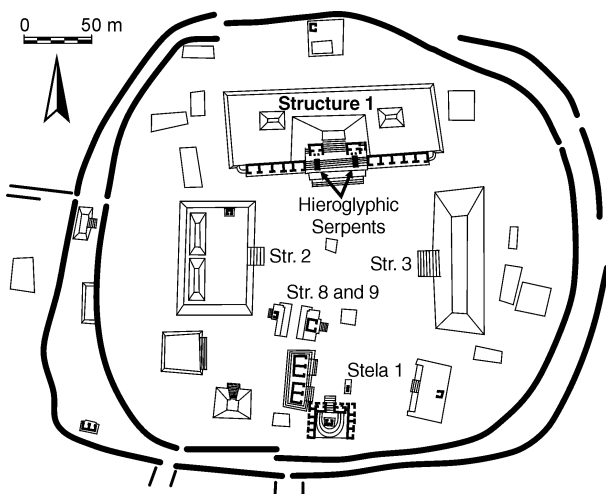


Fig. 2. The archaeological center of Ek Balam (map by Markus Eberl based on Bey & Ringle 1989: Figure 2, Vargas de la Peña & Borges 1999: 28)

connect the center with outlying groups. Its double enclosure walls lack defensive characteristics (cf. the discussion in Bey & Ringle 1989) and are now thought to delimit the ceremonial and administrative precinct (Figure 2). The latter is corroborated by the presence of a ball court (Structures 8 and 9) and the Acropolis (Structure 1), a 30 m-high pyramid which dominates the site (Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: 27). While the Early Colonial Relación de Ek Balam informs us that “these buildings display sculptures [...] and there seem to have been characters, too old, though, for their meaning to be understood” (after Garza *et al.* 1983, II: 138), the hitherto known inscriptions were scarce. Until the initiation of the Proyecto Arqueológico Ek’ Balam the epigraphic record consisted of four stela fragments which were dated stylistically to the Late and Terminal Classic (García Campillo 1995: 304–305). The present excavations at Ek Balam yielded several new inscriptions, among them two inscribed balustrades, four capstones and two sculptured columns (Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: 30–31).

### The Hieroglyphic Serpents of Ek Balam

Of special interest are the inscriptions found during the investigation and consolidation of Structure 1. The main stairway which leads to the top of the Acropolis is framed midway by two balustrades shaped in the form of oversized snake-tongues with well preserved glyphic texts written on them (a.k.a. “Hieroglyphic Serpents”; Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: 30, Figures 3 and 6).

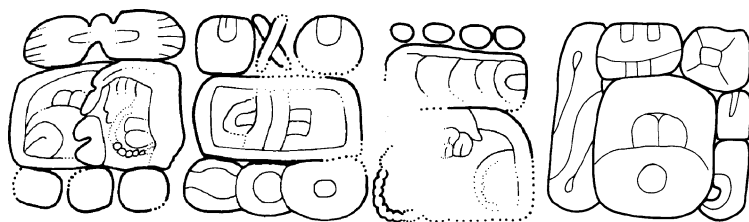
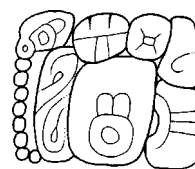


Fig. 3. The nominal phrase of Kalom Ukit Kan Lek from the western Hieroglyphic Serpent (Drawing by Alexander Voß redrawn from photographs from Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: Figure 6)

Fig. 4. The Emblem Glyph of Ek Balam from the eastern Hieroglyphic Serpent (Drawing by Alexander Voß redrawn from Vargas de la Peña & Castillo in Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: Figure 5)



It catches the eye, that both texts are identical in content although with slight deviations (Vargas de la Peña, Castillo & Lacadena 1998: 6; Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: 30). Duplicated inscriptions of this kind belonging to the same building are basically non-existent. A counterpart may be the partially duplicated inscription on a pillar said to originate from Xcocha, Campeche. The texts are placed on the sides of the pillar with a standing male figure in full ornate decorating the front (cf. Mayer 1984: Cat.No.44, plate 77).

The nominal clause of the owner of the Hieroglyphic Serpents opens with the title *Kalom*, continues with hieroglyphs read *Ukit Kan Lek*, and ends with an Emblem Glyph (Figure 3). A full discussion of the text of the Hieroglyphic Serpents is presented Alfonso Lacadena (Vargas de la Peña, Castillo & Lacadena 1999: 176–177).

Unfortunately, the inscription contains no date which would allow a precise chronological placement. Nevertheless, with the presence of the name of *Kalom Ukit Kan Lek* it is possible to establish a tentative date for the construction of the inscribed balustrades. The name of *Kalom Ukit Kan Lek* appears again on the front of the fragmented Stela 1. The date of Stela 1 can be reconstructed as 10.0.10.0.0 6 Ahaw 8 Pop equivalent to January 22, 840 A.D. (Vargas de la Peña, Castillo & Lacadena 1999: 174; Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: 31). This date is posterior to his lifetime as he is represented as deified ancestor sitting in a so called ancestral cartouche on the front of Ek Balam Stela 1 (Vargas de la Peña, Castillo & Lacadena 1999: 182). This date is fairly consistent with the corrected radiocarbon date of 779–889 A.D. which comes from an intact wooden zapote-lintel from the eastern pyramid atop Structure 1 (Bey & Ringle 1989: 3). This date which makes Ek Balam contemporaneous with Chichén Itzá is corroborated by the ceramic analysis (Bey *et al.* 1998).

Yet, the most prominent feature of the ruler’s name on the Hieroglyphic Serpents is the Emblem Glyph at A4 (Figures 3 and 4)<sup>1</sup>. The same Emblem Glyph can be recognized on the fragmented Ek Balam Stela 1 at G6 (Figure 5). According to Heinrich Berlin’s definition (1958) an Emblem Glyph consists of three components. Ideally it is represented by two constant elements, a prefix of the so-called “Water Group” T35–41 (Thompson 1962: 445; 1971: 276), the “Ben-Ich” T168 as superfix and a variable element as main sign which designates the individual site. The re-analysis of the Emblem Glyphs by Peter Mathews and John Justeson (1984: 217–219) shows that the “Water Group” prefix (*k’ul*) and the “Ben Ich” (*ahaw*) are sometimes substituted by functional equivalents and allographs.

At Ek Balam the Emblem Glyph consists of a facultative *k’ul* (T38) element and a constant T168 /AHAW/ with phonemic complement T130 /wa/. The distinctive part is made up of the two elements T676 /TAL/ and T580 /lo/. Its reading as either *tal* or *talo’* remains problematic. The continuous employment of T580 speaks for the phonetic impor-



Fig. 5. The inscription from Ek Balam Stela 1: glyphs G2–G6 (Drawing by Alexander Voß redrawn from Lacadena in Vargas de la Peña, Castillo & Lacadena (1998), an unpublished field drawing by Eric van Eeuw and photographs)

tance of the final vowel. On the other hand there are several potential occurrences of the distinctive element of the *tal*-Emblem Glyph in the inscriptions of Chichén Itzá were T580 is absent (see discussion below). In this respect, calligraphy might be regarded as another reason for continuous use of the sign T580. This syllable may thus be employed as a simple phonemic complement or an independent lexeme. A solution to this problem has to be postponed until further evidence may allow a definite decision, i.e. by the appearance of another sign following T580 in the present context. In any case, the identification of an Emblem Glyph for the site of Ek Balam is positive (Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: 30). This new emblem site is among a handful of sites to be identified and documented for the Northern Maya Lowlands.

Previously, the *ahaw* titles from the inscriptions of Uxmal and Kabah were regarded as Emblem Glyphs (cf. Kowalski 1985; Riese & Mayer 1984). A comparison with spellings of this title in the Southern Maya Lowlands shows that the main sign of the *ahaw* collocation in Uxmal and Kabah is a graphic variant of T518. Together with T168 they constitute the full graphic version of the *ahaw* title (cf. Mathews & Justeson 1984: 218, fig. 31; Schele 1991: 41). The same phenomenon applies to all other Late Classic sites in the Puuc and for Chichén Itzá. Only a title of origin is attested for Coba (cf. Stuart & Houston 1994: 7–18). This title is present on Etzna Stela 19 (Figure 6) and is composed of the agentive prefix *ah* (T12) and the toponym spelled /*ko-ba-'a*/ (Grube & Stuart 1987). In fact, it was not before 1995 that an Emblem Glyph was identified for the site of Dzibilchaltun. In the inscription on Dzibilchaltun Stela 19 (Figure 7) Linda Schele identified an emblem at A5–A8 she read *k'ul ?-chantiho' ahaw*, “divine lord of ?-chantiho” (Schele, Grube & Boot 1998: 414). The distinct element *?-chantiho* is regarded as the ancient name of the archaeological site of Dzibilchaltun during the classic pe-



Fig. 6. The title of origin *ah koba'*, Etzna Stela 19: glyphs D10–D11 (Drawing by Alexander Voß)

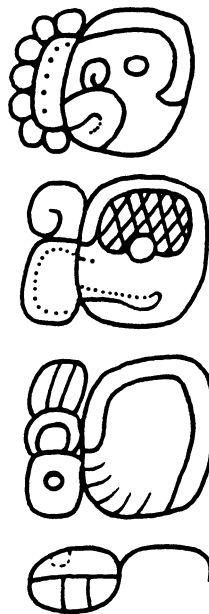


Fig. 7. The inscription on Dzibilchaltun Stela 19 (glyphs A5–A8; Drawing by Alexander Voß)

riod. In the course of time the population obviously shifted the settlement to the location where the Spaniards found late postclassic Tiho' which was then given its present-day name Mérida. More Emblem Glyphs

are documented for Jaina (García Campillo 1995: 213–214), the small site of Kayal (Mayer 1998; 1999) and most probable for Acanceh (Figure 8).

But except for their presence in the inscriptional record no additional informations concerning the socio-political organization of the sites and their surroundings can be deduced from the Emblem Glyphs at Dzibilchaltun viz *?-chantiho*, Jaina, Kayal viz *Chi'* and Acanceh viz *Akankeh* as suggested by David Stuart (personal communication Nikolai Grube 1999). In contrast the Emblem Glyph of Ek Balam and its bearers show up at different sites.

### Hun Pik Tok' and the *tal*-Emblem

Apart from the occurrences at Ek Balam, the *tal*-location appears several times in the inscriptions of the Chichén Itzá area, namely Halakal and Chichén Itzá itself (Figure 1)<sup>2</sup>. At Halakal the bearer of the *tal*-emblem is Hun Pik Tok' who was first identified by David Stuart (in Schele & Freidel 1990: 498, note 16). The external relations of Ek Balam viz *tal* involve the participation of its divine lord Hun Pik Tok' in rituals at Halakal and Chichén Itzá respectively, and the presumed residence of a member of the Ek Balam elite at Chichén Itzá (see the next chapter).

The small and largely unexplored site of Halakal lies 3 km northeast of Chichén Itzá. Its only inscription, a lintel, presumably comes from a collapsed structure described by Karl Ruppert (1952: 154). The lintel shows three armed and partly masked persons, two of them confronting the third one. The text enframes the scene on three sides. The inscription begins with a conjuring (*tsak*) rite involving fire where the actor is accompanied by a second and (according to the titles) other-worldly person. It then continues with a second fire ritual dated to March 29, 870 A.D. (10.2.0.11.8 10 \*Lamat \*6 Sek). The ritual was performed by *k'inich hun pik tok'*, *k'ul*-“headless man”-*nal*, *tal ahaw*, “the sun-eyed Hun Pik Tok', divine “headless man”, Lord of Tal” (Figure 9). In our opinion the glyphic similarity between the Emblem Glyphs on the Halakal Lintel and on the Ek Balam Hieroglyphic Serpents (Figures 3, 4 and 9) provides firm evidence that Hun Pik Tok' was a ruler of Ek Balam. Yet, some epigraphic subtleties shouldn't be overplayed: a headless man with the *nal*-glyph (T86) underneath his feet intervenes between *k'ul* “divine” (T35) (which substitutes for the head of the “headless man”) and the rest of the Emblem Glyph. One may argue that the “headless man” constitutes an as yet unread title different from the Em-

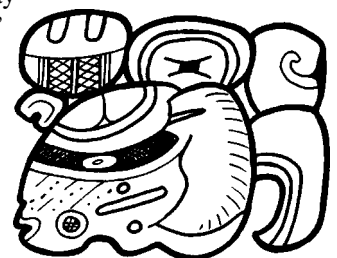


Fig. 8. The Emblem Glyph (glyph B3) on the pumpkin shaped vessel said to originate from Acanceh (Drawing by Alexander Voß).

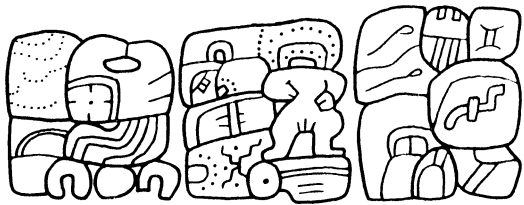


Fig. 9. Detail of the inscription from Halakal Lintel 1: glyphs G4–G6 (Drawing by Alexander Voß)

blem Glyph. In the case of Hun Pik Tok', this would lower his status on the Halakal lintel to a "simple" Ahaw. The contemporary Casa Colorada text (see below), however, characterizes Hun Pik Tok' ask'ul "headless man"? ahaw (Figure 10) and the *k'inich*-title which was reserved for divine lords precedes his name in both inscriptions. I.e. Hun Pik Tok' obviously was an overlord. The truncated inscription on Ek Balam Stela 1 (Figure 5) confirms the close association of the "headless man" with the Emblem Glyph: the rather eroded glyphs read most likely *kalom* ? ? *k'ul* "headless man"-*nal*, *k'ul tal ahaw*. The date for Ek Balam Stela 1 is reconstructed as 10.0.10.0.0 equivalent to January 22, 840 A.D. (Vargas de la Peña, Castillo & Lacadena 1999: 174). Pityingly enough, the remains of the name of the divine lord are illegible. The second epigraphic subtlety concerns the earplug as part of the Emblem Glyph on the Halakal lintel. A **KAH** 'place' or 'town' reading has been proposed for the orthodox variant of the earplug (Martin 1996: 225). The close comparison of the latter variants with the one on the Halakal lintel revealed differences (esp. the orientation of the earplug) too large to allow for an application of the **KAH** reading. Examples from Casa de Las Monjas (Chichén Itzá) Lintel 3 (at E2) and Uxmal Altar 10 (at A4; compare the substitution with E1) corroborate our assumption that the earplug on the Halakal lintel serves as a variant of T518; i.e., the earplug under T168 constitutes the full version of **AHAW** and has no reading on its own.

The Casa Colorada text is reckoned among the inscriptions recording public events in Chichén Itzá. It gives an account of four fire-drilling events (cf. Barthel 1955: 13; Kelley 1968; 1976: 278, 288, 284–285; 1982: 4) which were successively performed between 10.2.0.1.9 (September 11, 869) and 10.2.2.6.11 (December 12, 871) (Eberl & Voß 1998). At the very end it names K'ak'-u-pakal, Hun Pik Tok' and Yahawal Cho' K'ak'? with their titles (Voß & Kremer 1998). This final clause is introduced by the relational glyph *u-kaban* (Figure 10). From this it appears that notwithstanding the functional role of the other individuals mentioned in the Casa Colorada text, the ultimate responsibility for this type of public affair at Chichén Itzá rested with the three persons mentioned at the end of the text. Unfortunately, no relational term or expression indicating a visit links Hun Pik Tok' with any of the other individuals named in the inscriptional corpus of Chichén Itzá (cf. Wagner 1995: 60–61). Thus, it is impossible to determine Hun Pik Tok''s socio-political role at Chichén Itzá. It is only save to say that the distribution of his name in the inscriptions link him with Chichén Itzá and Halakal and his Emblem Glyph associates him with Halakal and Ek Balam.

The ethnohistorical sources mentioning Hun Pik Tok' are not congruent with the epigraphic data. According to Bernardo de Lizana (1995: 63–64, 81, 82) he held a high

military office at Izamal and was a human sacrificer. The crucial point is the fact that Hun Pik Tok' is addressed as military commander of Izamal in the ethnohistorical sources which cannot be corroborated by the epigraphic data at hand. The only plausible explanation is that the information provided by Lizana about Hun Pik Tok' does not refer to the individual known from the hieroglyphic inscriptions but to an official from postclassic Izamal addressed by the same name. It is very likely to assume that this personal name converted into an office and was adopted by the individual in charge. This phenomenon is well documented for the *teopixque* of Tenochtitlan who adopted the name of the god they worshipped and their individual character became unimportant in comparison with the office they impersonated (cf. Lanczkowski 1978: 102–104). In Izamal the importance of the Hun Pik Tok' office is stressed by the fact that apart from the temples of the gods or idols called Itzam Na Thul, Kabul and K'inich K'ak' Mo' and the priesthood he is the only one which is entitled with a residential complex atop a pyramidal platform (Lizana 1995: 62–64).

### More Ek Balamistas at Chichén Itzá?

As said above, the glyphic texts of the Chichén Itzá area have Hun Pik Tok', the divine lord of Ek Balam, enter the stage only in restricted ritualistic settings. The nature of his attendance (especially his relation to the local elite) is open to discussion, but one may tend to agree on a principally visit-like and temporary character. The ethnohistorical sources have shown to be of little help in resolving this dilemma. A second set of *tal* occurrences in the inscriptions of the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jamb, however, hint at a longer-lasting presence of Ek Balamistas at Chichén Itzá.

The Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jamb (Structure 6E3) is rather isolated from the rest of the Chichén Itzá buildings with inscribed monuments. It is located southeast of the site's center at a distance of approximately 1,5 kilometers. The temple rests on a platform with several other smaller structures; a short *sakbe* which abuts the platform is directed towards the center.

The two inscribed doorjamb of the temple date to 10.0.2.7.13 9 Ben 1 Sak which corresponds to August 4, 832 A.D. (Krochock 1995: 1–2). This is the earliest date recorded at Chichén Itzá. Quite notably all the dated inscriptions that mention *tal* range among the earliest monuments at Chichén Itzá (832–897 A.D.).

*Tal* viz Ek Balam is featured on both doorjamb. Jamb 1 (Figure 11a) contains the phrase /**u-NAB-li 'a-ta-la/ u nabil**<sup>3</sup> *ah tal* "the plaza of the one from *tal* (Ek Balam)"; "plaza" most likely refers to the courtyard of the Temple of

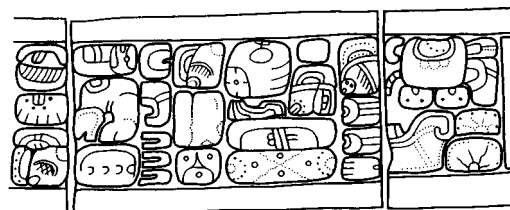


Fig. 10. Detail of the inscription from the Casa Colorada frieze (Chichén Itzá): glyphs 55–57 (Drawing by Alexander Voß)



Fig. 11. Inscriptions of the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jamb, Chichén Itzá

- a) Jamb 1: glyphs C6–A7 (Drawing by Ruth Krochock)  
 b) Jamb 2: glyphs A5–C5 (Drawing by Ruth Krochock)

the Hieroglyphic Jamb which has been called a “Gallery Patio Structure” in the literature (Ruppert 1952).

Jamb 2 (Figure 11b) goes on: /yo-OTOT-ti’i-’a ta-la/ *yotot-i<sup>4</sup> ah tal* “the residence of the one from *tal* (Ek Balam)” with the Temple itself being the designated residence. José Miguel García Campillo was the first to ascribe these two phrases to a location he named *yatal* or *atal* (1995: 244). Yet, his interpretation neglects that the preceding *’a* (T228 on Jamb 1 and T228°743 on Jamb 2) corresponds to *ah* (T12). Both particles are used in Chichén Itzá texts to specify the occupation, title or the origin of a person. One has to note the disagreeing glyphic expressions for the *tal*-compound: the respective glyphs on the doorjamb read *ta:la* (T552:178, transcribed *ta-la*), while the above inscriptions use different glyphs (T676:580 **TAL:(lo)**, i.e. *tal*) to arrive at the same morphem *tal* (the last vowel is dropped according to Knorozov’s last-vowel-out-rule). The thus remaining *tal* is unknown as occupation or title of a person (as stipulated by Ruth Krochock 1995: 4,5). José Campillo’s interpretation of the *tal*-compound as a location gains weight when the inscriptions of Ek Balam are taken into account. The *tal* which is present in the inscriptions of the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jamb refers presumably to the Emblem Glyph of Ek Balam.

In the discourse of the Hieroglyphic Jamb, *tal* appears in passages which refer to the temple structure itself and to the nearby platform. In the cited cases the respective owner is called an *ah tal*. The Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jamb and its associated structures may therefore have served as a residential area for an Ek Balamista.

The discovery of the Ek Balam Emblem Glyph throws light on a supposition of William Ringle. Put forward in 1990, he suggested the presence of the Cupul lineage at Chichén Itzá (Ringle 1990). The Cupul lineage dominated the Valladolid area during the Late Postclassic and Early Colonial period (the province was named after them; Figure 12) and provided rulers to several cities, amongst them Ek Balam (Roys 1957: 113–114). Ringle’s argument rests on a new reading of the name of “Kin Cimi”. This individual was discovered by Michel Davoust (1980: 26) and appears ten times in the inscriptions of Chichén Itzá (Wagner 1995: 48–49; only K’ak’-u-pakal is more frequent). Ringle proposes the second part of the name of “Kin Cimi” that consists of **ko-**“Death Head”-**la** to spell the patronym *Kopol* (presum-

ably equivalent to Cupul as written in the Colonial orthography). Yet, the decisive reading of the death head or skull as **POL** “head” is still open to discussion and no other person’s name contains the supposed *Kopol* (which would be necessary to establish *Kopol/Cupul* as patronym). The present evidence does not support far-reaching conclusions especially with regard to the (Late Postclassic) Cupul rulership at Ek Balam.

## Sociopolitical Organization in Light of the Sources

The inscriptions that were presented above underpin a compelling insight into the sociopolitical organization of north-eastern Yucatán during the Terminal Classic. The three introductory facets of sociopolitical organization – internal organization, political landscape, and temporal and regional variation – may serve as linchpins in the following discussion.

The sources of information vary considerable in quantity and quality. The relevant glyphic inscriptions are limited to the 9<sup>th</sup> century (and for the Chichén Itzá area to around 870 A.D.). Explanatory data or background information is rare and the glyphic ‘stage’ is reserved for selected main events and main actors. The ethnohistorical documents – e.g. the *Relación de Ek Balam* – on the other hand abound with memorized narratives. Myths make up for the 700 years that separate them from the accounted events. Published archaeological data from Ek Balam is still rather scanty; nevertheless it covers all time periods from a rather unbiased perspective.

The *Relación de Ek Balam* written by Juan Gutiérrez Picón renders a historically foreshortened sequence of Ek Balam rulers (Garza *et al.* 1983, II: 127–140). Coch Cal Balam (a.k.a. Ek Balam which seems a convenient etiology for the place name) and his son He Blay Chac [Ah Bolay Chak] are said to have been the first rulers who for their growing barbarity and idolatry were eventually replaced by the Cupules. With the rise of the Cupules anchored to the fall of Mayapan and therefore to the Late Postclassic period, the inscribed monuments confirm the existence of rulers preceding the Cupul era. The Ek Balam rulers given in the inscriptions are Ukit Kan Lek and Hun Pik Tok’. Yet, there are too few inscriptions to detail the dynastic history. Since they are Terminal Classic in date, a direct connection between epigraphy and ethnohistory cannot be drawn. The ostensibly different names underscore the loss and altering of information from the Classic to Early Colonial period. The case of Hun Pik Tok’ is telling: He appears as historical person of highest rank (*k’ul ahaw* “divine lord”) in the Terminal Classic inscriptions. The historical person and its name seemingly became institutionalized and linked to an office during the Postclassic. Lizana ascribes the same name (most likely reflecting the Late Postclassic situation) to the military-priestly leader of Izamal (Lizana 1995: 63–64, 82).

The epigraphic evidence for an Ek Balam Emblem Glyph makes the ethnohistorical clues to the eminent rank of Ek Balam into a whole. The ethnohistorical Coch Cal Balam is translated as “lord over all” and is said to have been a “supreme lord” (Garza *et al.* 1983, II: 138). Ek Balam joins rank with Dzibilchaltun which was the only Emblem Glyph

site hitherto known from the Northeastern Yucatán. Chichén Itzá on the other hand displays several contemporary *k'ul ahawob* or “divine lords” (for a list see Grube 1994: 330) but has no Emblem Glyph on its own. The comparison with Chichén Itzá highlights the more traditional standing of Ek Balam. The rather uninterrupted ceramic sequence from the Middle Preclassic through the Late Classic bespeaks a continuous occupation. The architectural styles, the iconography and features like stela cult, the *Kalom*-title and the acropolis-like Structure 1 tie Ek Balam in with the Late Classic polities from the Southern Lowlands. Ek Balam adhered to the ‘classical’ tradition and flourished from 700 through approximately 1100 A.D.; it must have coexisted quite successfully with Chichén Itzá as the participation of Hun Pik Tok’ in his neighbor’s ceremonies manifests.

The internal organization of the Ek Balam polity had the *k'ul ahaw* remain on top of the proverbial pyramid. The *Relación* elucidates:

“Éste edificó el uno de los cinco edificios, el mayor y más suntuoso, y los cuatro fueron edificados por otros señores y capitanes; éstos reconocían al Coch Cal Balam por señor y él era el supremo.” (“He [Coch Cal Balam, the mystic founder of Ek Balam] built the first of the five buildings, the largest and most sumptuous, and the other four were built by other lords and captains; these recognized Coch Cal Balam as lord and he was the paramount”) (Garza *et al.* 1983, II: 138; translated by Bey & Ringle 1989: 5)

The fact that the Ek Balam ruler Hun Pik Tok’ participated in rituals with the Chichén Itzá elite and that an Ek Balamista presumably resided at this site lays bare to some extent the political landscape of the Terminal Classic. The information gained from the inscriptions demonstrates that Ek Balam claimed sovereignty through its use of an Emblem Glyph and was integrated at the same time into the political sphere of Chichén Itzá. The contacts, however, seem to have been restricted to elite-level and/or sporadic interaction: The Late Classic Sotuta pottery which is now attributed to the influx of Chichén Itzá is almost absent at Ek Balam (Bey *et al.* 1998: 115–116, 118); a similar argument which promotes a small-scale impact of Chichén Itzá on Ek Balam has been made for the Terminal Classic C-shaped structures (Bey, Hanson & Ringle 1997: 250).

The absence of Chichén Itzá at Ek Balam may also indicate that the external political relations between both of them which can be extrapolated from the joint ceremonies of

Hun Pik Tok’ and the Chichén Itzá elite were not mutual. Ek Balam is present in the Chichén Itzá area but not vice versa. A hierarchy is not directly discernible from the inscriptions, yet it is likely that the Ek Balam elite played its role within an overarching Chichén Itzá rule. The inclusion of Hun Pik Tok’ as ruler of Ek Balam into the rulership of Chichén Itzá affirms the collective government or *multepal* which has been proposed for Chichén Itzá (Schele & Freidel 1990: Chapter 9; Grube 1994: 335–336). Diego de Landa’s report reflects the notion of his informants concerning the political organization at Chichén Itzá:

“Es pues Chichenizá un asiento muy bueno [...], en la cual, según dicen los antiguos indios, reinaron tres señores hermanos los cuales, según se acuerdan haber oído de sus pasados, vinieron a aquella tierra de la parte del poniente y juntaron en estos asientos gran población de pueblos y gentes, la cual rigieron algunos años en mucha paz y justicia.” (“Chichén Itzá, then, is a very fine site, [...], in which, as the elders of the Indians say, three venerable brethren ruled, who as they remember to have heard from their ancestors, came to this land from the west, and brought together in those settlements a great number of commoners and gentry, whom they governed in great peace and justice for several years.”) (Landa 1959: 112; own translation)

Rather paradigmatically, the Casa Colorada inscription not only unites Hun Pik Tok’ with K’ak’-u-pakal and Yahawal Cho’ K’ak’, two of the most prominent leaders at Chichén Itzá, but stresses in its first part K’ak’-u-pakal. The latter assumed a heightened role which was likened to a *primus inter pares* within the collective government. The lack of a parental statement for Hun Pik Tok’ that might connect him to the Chichén Itzá elite favors a councillor model of collective rule more than a siblingship one. In other words, mechanical solidarity which resounds in the definitions of centralized states may have prevailed over organical solidarity at Chichén Itzá.

The reconstruction of Chichén Itzá’s statal dimension had to rely thus far on the inscriptions of the site and his immediate surroundings. The references to Ek Balam admit a look on Chichén Itzá’s hinterland and validate a thrust north towards the coast and Isla Cerritos as island port. The areas of influence that are documented for the Early Colonial period (Figure 12) coincidence remarkably with the Terminal Classic political landscape.

## Summary

The inscribed balustrades presented above establish Ek Balam among the less than a handful of sites in the Northeastern Yucatán with a sizeable epigraphic record. In a rather unique manner, epigraphic data complements the archaeological and the ethnohistorical information on Ek Balam. The Emblem Glyph evidences that Ek Balam *viz Tal* adhered to the concept of divine rulership and confirms a polity which retained the tradition of the Late Classic Southern Lowlands. The apogee of Ek Balam concurred with the rise of Chichén Itzá. The latter did not eclipse Ek Balam despite of its predominant standing but integrated Ek Balam’s ruling elite into its collective government. The inscription from the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambes may indicate that a noble from Ek Balam even had its residence at Chichén Itzá.

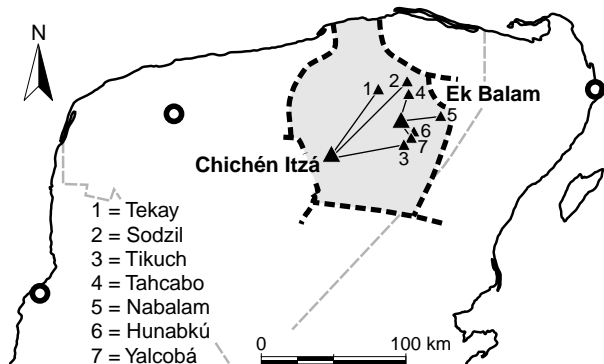


Fig. 12. The Cupul province in the Late Postclassic and Early Colonial periods (based on Okoshi & Quezada 1990: 367)

## Endnotes

1. The Emblem Glyph of Ek Balam was independently identified by Leticia Vargas de la Peña, Víctor Castillo Borges & Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo (1999; cf. Vargas de la Peña & Castillo 1999: 30), José Miguel García Campillo (in press) and the authors of this paper. William Ringle (Ringle *et al.* 1991: 4) was the first to suggest the presence of an Emblem Glyph at Stela 1 but failed to provide a proper description.
2. The inscribed lintels of Ikil which lies 25 kilometers west of Chichen Itza (Wyllys Andrews & Stuart 1975: 70) describe the dedication of Structure 1. At the very end of the inscription on Lintel 2 (Glyph T) the glyphs **TAL.lo** appear as written on the Ek Balam balustrades. We hesitate to identify these glyphs as Ek Balam Emblem Glyph since the 'Ahaw' is clearly given in the preceding Glyph S. Secondly, Glyph T begins with T74 *ma* (which would lead to *matal*) and ends with yet another two eroded and unidentifiable glyphs below the "Tal".
3. The **NAB**-reading of T625 is based on its resemblance to T244 (Stuart & Houston 1994: 28–30) and the phonemic complementation on Lintel 7a (glyph E1) from the Casa de las Monjas, Chichén Itzá (T4:625:501:24 **na:NAB:ba:li**).
4. Christian Prager suggested that T679 'i may serve in this inscription as a deictic particle attached to *y-otot* that refers directly to the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambes ("this house here").

## Acknowledgements

The authors want to take the opportunity to express their gratitude to the Proyecto Arqueológico Ek Balam, especially to its Director Leticia Vargas de la Peña, to Víctor Castillo Borges, and to Alfonso Lacadena Gallo-García for placing their paper which was presented at the VIII Encuentro de Investigadores del Area Maya, Campeche at the disposal of the authors. Without their approval (*Oficio* dated 03/08/1999) the present endeavor would not have been possible. The critical contributions made by Daniel Graña-Behrens, Nikolai Grube, Alfonso Lacadena, Christian Prager, and Ute Schüren are much appreciated.

## References

- Berlin, Heinrich  
1958 *El Glifo "Emblema" en las Inscripciones Mayas*. Journal de la Société des Américanistes, n.s. 47: 111–119.
- Bey III, George J., Tara M. Bond, William M. Ringle, Craig A. Hanson, Charles W. Houck & Carlos Peraza Lope  
1998 *The Ceramic Chronology of Ek Balam, Yucatan, Mexico*. Ancient Mesoamerica, 9: 101–120.
- Bey III, George J., Craig A. Hanson & William M. Ringle  
1997 *Classic to Postclassic at Ek Balam, Yucatan: Architectural and Ceramic Evidence for Defining the Transition*. Latin American Antiquity 8(3): 237–254.
- Bey III, George J. & William M. Ringle  
1989 *The Myth of the Center. Political Integration at Ek Balam, Yucatan, Mexico*. Paper prepared for the Symposium "Changing Views of Classic Maya Political Organization," 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, April 1989.
- Current Anthropology 37(5), 1996: 795–830. CA ☆ Forum on Theory in Anthropology "The Maya State: Centralized or Segmentary?" (with contributions by John W. Fox, Garrett W. Cook, Arlen F. Chase, Diane Z. Chase and Arthur A. Demarest).
- Davoust, Michel  
1980 *Les Premiers Chefs Mayas de Chichén Itzá*. Mexican 2 (2): 25–29.
- Eberl, Markus & Alexander Voß  
1998 *Fire Rituals at Chichén Itzá: The Casa Colorada Inscription*. Manuscript.
- García Campillo, José Miguel  
1995 *Antroponimia y toponimia en las inscripciones Maya Clásicas de Yucatan*. Tesis Doctoral (Departamento de Historia de América II) Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid.
- In press *Implicaciones de un aniversario de doce años túnicos en las inscripciones de Chichén Itzá*. Manuscript to be published in the Revista Española de Antropología Americana, Volume 29 (1999)
- Garza, Mercedes de la, *et al.* (Editors)  
1983 *Relaciones Histórico-Geográficas de la Gobernación de Yucatán*. 2 Vols. (Fuentes para el estudio de la cultura Maya I.) Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Centro de Estudios Mayas), México, D.F.
- Grube, Nikolai  
1994 Hieroglyphic Sources for the History of Northwest Yucatan. In: *Hidden among the Hills. Maya Archaeology of the Northwest Yucatan Peninsula*, edited by Hanns J. Prem: 316–358. (Acta Mesoamericana 7) Von Flemming, Möckmühl.
- Grube, Nikolai & David Stuart  
1987 *Observations on T110 as the Syllable ko*. (Research Report on Ancient Maya Writing No. 8) Center for Maya Research, Washington, D.C.
- Haviland, William A.  
1997 *On the Maya State*. Current Anthropology, Volume 38, Number 3, June 1997: 443–445.
- Kelley, David Humiston  
1968 *Mayan Fire Glyphs*. Estudios de Cultura Maya, 7: 141–157. México, D.F.  
1976 *Deciphering the Maya Script*. University of Texas, Austin.  
1982 Notes on Puuc Inscriptions and History. In: *The Puuc: New Perspectives. Papers presented at the Puuc Symposium, Central College, Pella*, edited by Lawrence Mills. Central College, Pella.
- Kowalski, Jeff Karl  
1985 A Historical Interpretation of the Inscriptions of Uxmal. In: *Fourth Palenque Round Table, 1980*, edited by Elizabeth P. Benson: 235–247. (San Francisco: Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute).
- Krochock, Ruth J.  
1995 *A New Interpretation of the Inscription on The Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambes, Chichén Itzá*. Manuscript submitted for publication to Texas Notes on Precolumbian Art, Writing, and Culture.
- Lanczkowski, Günter  
1978 *Einführung in die Religionsphänomenologie*. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt.
- Landa, Fray Diego de  
1959 *Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatán sacado de lo que escribió el padre Fray Diego de Landa*. (Introducción de Angel María Garibay Kintana.) Porrúa, México, D.F.
- Lizana, Bernardo de  
1995 *Devocionario de Nuestra Señora de Izamal y conquista espiritual de Yucatán*. Facsimile of the 1633 edition, edited by René Acuña. (Fuentes para el estudio de la cultura Maya 12.) Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Centro de Estudios Mayas), México, D.F.
- Marcus, Joyce  
1993 Ancient Maya Political Organization. In: *Lowland Maya Civilization in the Eighth Century A.D.*, edited by Jeremy Sabloff & John S. Henderson: 111–183 (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington).
- Martin, Simon  
1996 Tikal's "Star War" against Naranjo. In: *Eighth Palenque Round Table, 1993*, edited by Martha Macri & Jan McHargue: 223–236 (Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute, San Francisco).
- Martin, Simon & Nikolai Grube  
1994 *Evidence for macropolitical organization amongst Classic Maya lowland states*. Manuscript in the possession of the authors.  
1995 *Maya Superstates*. Archaeology 48(6): 41–46.
- Mathews, Peter & John S. Justeson  
1984 Patterns of Sign Substitution in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing: the "Affix Cluster". In: *Phoneticism in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing*, edited by John Justeson & Lyle Campbell (Eds.), pp. 185–232. (Institute for Mesoamerican Studies Publication 9) State University of New York at Albany, Albany.
- Mayer, Karl Herbert  
1984 *Maya Monuments [III]: Sculptures of Unknown Provenance in Middle America*. Von Flemming, Berlin.  
1998 *An inscribed stone relief fragment from Kayal*. Mexican XX (5): 92–93.  
1999 *A drawing of Relief Panel 4 from Kayal, Campeche*. Mexican XXI (1): 3.
- Morley, Sylvanus Griswold  
1927 *Report of S. G. Morley on the Ekbalam Expedition*. Carnegie Yearbook 27: 317–318. Washington, D.C.
- Okoshi, Tsubasa & H. Sergio Quezada  
1990 Tzucub y Cuchcabal[:] dos términos para entender la organización territorial de los mayas yucatecos del tiempo de la invasión española (El caso de la llamada provincia de los Cupul). En: *Ethnoarqueología: Coloquio Bosch-Gimpera*, editado por Yoko Sugiera Y. & Mari Carmen Serra P.: 363–369 (UNAM, México).
- Ortegón Zapata, David  
1997a *Ek Balam, sitio prehispánico con características propias*. Diario de Yucatán, Domingo 12 de enero de 1997.  
1997b *El Juego de Pelota de Ek Balam, signo de sociedad bélica*. Diario de Yucatán, Lunes 13 de enero de 1997.
- Riese, Berthold Chr. L. & Karl Herbert Mayer  
1984 *Altar 10 von Uxmal, Yucatan, Mexiko*. Mexican VI (5): 70–73. Berlin.
- Ringle, William M.  
1990 *Who was Who in Ninth-Century Chichén Itzá*. Ancient Mesoamerica, 1: 233–243.
- Ringle, William M. George J. Bey III & Carlos Peraza Lope  
1991 *An Itza empire in Northern Yucatan?: A neighboring view*. Unpublished manuscript presented at the International Congress of Americanists, New Orleans.

- Roys, Ralph L.  
1957 *The political geography of the Yucatan Maya*. (Carnegie Institution of Washington Publication No. 613). Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.
- Ruppert, Karl  
1952 *Chichén Itzá: Architectural Notes and Plans*. (Carnegie Institution of Washington Publication No. 595.) Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.
- Schele, Linda  
1991 *Workbook for the XVth Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop at Texas*. University of Texas, Austin.
- Schele, Linda & David Freidel  
1990 *A Forest of Kings. The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya*. William Morrow & Co., New York.
- Schele, Linda, Nikolai Grube & Erik Boot  
1998 Some suggestions on the K'atun Prophecies in the Books of Chilam Balam in Light of Classic-Period History. In: *Memorias del Tercer Congreso Internacional de Mayistas, 9 al 15 de julio de 1995*: 399–432. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Centro de Estudios Mayas), México, D.F.
- Stuart, David & Stephen Houston  
1994 *Classic Maya Place Names*. (Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology 33) Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.
- Thompson, John Eric Sydney  
1962 *A Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs*. (Civilization of the American Indian Series 62) University of Oklahoma, Norman.  
1971 *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: An Introduction*, 3rd. amended edition. (Civilization of the American Indian Series 56) University of Oklahoma, Norman.
- Vargas de la Peña, Leticia & Víctor R. Castillo Borges  
1999 *Ek' Balam. Ciudad que empieza a revelar sus secretos*. Arqueología Mexicana, Vol. VII, núm. 37: 24–31.
- Vargas de la Peña, Leticia, Víctor R. Castillo Borges & Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo  
1998 *Textos glíficos de Ek' Balam (Yucatán, México): Hallazgos de las temporadas de 1996–1998*. Paper presented at the VIII Encuentro de Investigadores del Area Maya, November 10–13, 1998, Universidad Autónoma de Campeche, Campeche, México.  
1999 Textos glíficos de Ek' Balam (Yucatán, México): Hallazgos de las temporadas de 1996–1998. In: *Los Investigadores de la Cultura Maya* 7, tomo 1: 172–187
- Voß, Alexander W. & H. Juergen Kremer  
1998 *K'ak'-u-pakal, Hun-pik-tok' and the Kokom: History in the Inscriptions of Chichén Itzá*. Paper presented at the 3rd European Maya Conference, Hamburg November 18–22, 1998.
- Wagner, Elisabeth  
1995 *Personennamen und Relationale Glyphen in den Inschriften von Chichén Itzá, Yucatán, México*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin.
- Wyllys Andrews, E. & George E. Stuart  
1975 The Ruins of Ikil, Yucatan, Mexico. In: *Archaeological Investigations on the Yucatan Peninsula*, edited by E. Wyllys Andrews IV, George E. Stuart, Irwin Rovner, Richard E. W. Adams, Michael P. Simmons, Elizabeth S. Wing, E. Wyllys Andrews V, Joann M. Andrews, T. Dale Stewart, & Joseph W. Ball. (Middle American Research Institute Publication 31) Tulane University, New Orleans.

RESUMEN: En este artículo los autores presentan evidencias epigráficas para la presencia de un nuevo glifo emblema que se atribuye al sitio arqueológico de Ek Balam que se localiza en el noreste del estado Yucatán, México. El elemento distintivo de este glifo emblema se lee *Tal* o *Talo'*. Este glifo emblema clasifica a su portador como señor divino de Ek Balam y forma parte de la frase nominal de Hun Pik Tok'. Hun Pik Tok' es conocido de las fuentes etnohistóricas y su nombre está documentado en las inscripciones de Chichén Itzá y Halakal. La presencia del señor divino de Ek Balam en Chichén Itzá aporta nuevos conocimientos a la organización sociopolítica de Chichén Itzá. Al parecer el sitio de Ek Balam fue subordinado y documenta su reconocimiento de la supremacía por el envío y la participación de su gobernante en eventos ceremoniales de Chichén Itzá.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: Im vorliegenden Artikel wird anhand neuer Inschriften aus dem Ruinenort Ek Balam im nordöstlichen Yukatan eine neue Emblemglyphe nachgewiesen, die diesem Ort zugeordnet wird. Als Lesung wird *Tal* oder *Talo'* vorgeschlagen. Die Emblemglyphe weist ihren Träger als göttlichen Herrscher über Ek Balam aus. Sie ist darüberhinaus Bestandteil der Titelfrase von Hun Pik Tok', der aus den ethnohistorischen Quellen und den Inschriften von Chichén Itzá und Halakal bekannt ist. Die Anwesenheit des Herrschers von Ek Balam in Chichén Itzá ermöglicht weitere Einblicke in die soziopolitische Organisation Chichén Itzá. Dem Anschein nach hat sich Ek Balam der Vormachtstellung Chichén Itzá untergeordnet. Die Teilnahme seines Herrschers an den Kulthandlungen in Chichén Itzá kann hierfür als Ausdruck gewertet werden.