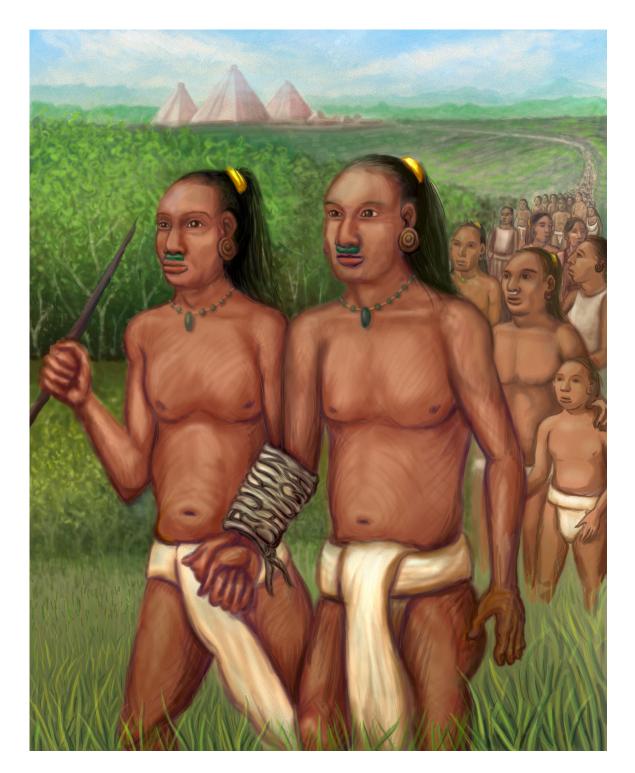# Zombie Words: Kaqchikel Revitalizationists' Use of Colonial Texts to Repurpose Vocabulary

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In my 47 years working with Mayan languages, I have come to appreciate the range and variety of words that have fallen out of active use since the 1530s. In Kaqchikel, for example, some terms have died out as their referents are no longer extant, e.g. mun 'a branded slave', k'ulpatan 'tribute collector', ak'anima'q 'high-ranking nobleman'. Other forgotten words, however, have too clear modern referents, but have not been revived: e.g. lab'al 'warfare', ajlab'al 'soldier'. Many words have shifted their meanings: kej now means 'horse' rather than deer, äk' is 'chicken' not 'turkey'. Activists mining colonial period texts have brought back some words, with shifted meaning. Teleche' and alab'il, which in the 16th century named two ranks of slaves now form the basis of the couplet telechanem, alab'il 'exploitation'. Rajpopi' Amaq' lit. those-of-the mat-of nation, the council of leaders, is now applied to Congress. Phrases of authority such as q'aq'al tepewal "power and majesty' get read as "anger and mountains". Kipus, kinawal 'their divining power, their spirit-companion' are interpreted as 'their rust and their nahuales'. Daykeepers and other Maya activists and scholars are poring over the colonial texts in their newly published forms and rebuilding their understandings of their heritage and the spirit world. This paper will explore some of these adjustments as they reflect the new Kaqchikel Maya dawn in the 13th b'aqtun (pih).

Keywords: *Kaqchikel, language revitalization, semantic shift, marking inversion, cultural reclamation*

Introduction

In 2000, I began the process of translating a series of Kaqchikel documents from the 16ᵗʰ century into English, working with a team of eight native speakers. Unsurprisingly, after 500 years, there were many words in the text that were unknown to these speakers. At first, they tried interpretations based on modern homophones or similar sounding roots. But colonial era dictionaries soon proved to give more coherent translations, the most helpful of these being Thomas de Coto's (1983) *Thesaurus Verborum*, compiled between 1647 and 1656, as well as Pantaleón de Guzmán's (1984) *Compendio de Nombres en Lengua Cakchiquel*, which appeared in 1704.

These same references had been used sporadically in the late 1980s, as the Guatemalan Ministry of Education began to experiment with teaching in Mayan languages in select Mayan communities: the four *idiomas mayoritarias*, the most widely spoken indigenous languages (K'iche', Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi' and Mam) plus Q'anjob'al. Pedagogues needed vocabulary that wasn't an active part of vernacular usage. For the Kaqchikel, these colonial sources became fonts.

The first Ministry of Education neologism project ran between 1993 and 1998 with the goal of developing vocabulary to enable monolingual instruction for k-12 students, *preprimaria – diversificado*. Kaqchikel Cholchi', the Kaqchikel branch of the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala*, was chosen to do the initial creation. I worked as a consultant with Kaqchikel Cholchi' in 1993 and 1994. The vocabularies were vetted with educators, community linguists, elders and daykeepers from these linguistic groups. In the validation process, we found that new formations based on phonological and morphological rules sometimes met with pushback, but when these colonial texts and dictionaries were cited as sources, acceptance was nearly automatic.

In 1995 these same sources were mined for vocabulary during the translation of the Peace Accord that dealt with indigenous rights: *Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas*. Educators and activists continue to pore over the colonial documents, sometimes without the use of the colonial dictionaries, to re-activate words, often fitting them into new usages and niches.

In 2018 I was commissioned to translate the Xajil Chronicle into modern Kaqchikel to be used as a textbook in high school. My first draft, written with high school students in mind, was read by three Kaqchikel scholars with *licenciaturas*, of whom one was a sociolinguist. Even the scaled back language I had used needed to be revamped. More modern equivalences for archaic phrases and lexemes were needed. Since footnotes had been prohibited, new words were offered along with translations as couplets, triplets or quadruplets.

In 2019 and 2020 teachers from Oxlajuj Aj, an intensive Kaqchikel language and culture program that I have run for the past 33 years, read and taught from this modern translation. Despite their training, some vocabulary was still non-transparent. Teachers reverted to folk etymology. In part, this was due to an upstreaming of egalitarian values, militating against interpreting any words as showing distinctions of hereditary rank, be it "noble" or "enslaved."

This paper examines prime examples of colonial era words that had fallen into disuse by the 1900s and which have been brought back to life to serve new purposes. The new referents may likewise be changed to fit contemporary needs.

I discuss four types of shift: (a) Loss of domain and reassignment, (b) marking reversal, (c) replacement of Spanish loans, and (d) grammatical shift and simplification.

Types of Semantic Shift

A. Domain Loss and Reassignment.

Perhaps the easiest shift to understand is the loss of domain. When the Spanish took over governance, they first used the indigenous ruling class and structures, but gradually replaced them and/or stripped them of their powers. We have terms for many indigenous noble titles, the actual duties and responsibilities of which aren't completely clear. Some of these titles, which have not been revived, are shown in Table 1.

Titles that are still in use, with some semantic drift included, are seen in Table 2.

Not only did the Spanish replace the nobility and abolish most of the indigenous governmental offices, their "pacification" also eliminated the warriors, their weapons, and regalia. War related terms that have disappeared appear in Table 3.

Of course, war did not disappear from Kaqchikel territory. Most prominently, a genocidal war was waged in Guatemala from 1960 to 1995. These old terms did not resurface, rather the Kaqchikel developed new ways of speaking about the warring factions. The government forces were referred to as *raxkeja'*, which could be taken as *räx* "green" + *kej* "horse" + *a'* "plural", given the color of

Table 1. List of colonial Kaqchikel noble titles and possible responsibilities.

title	translation	charge
rajob' achi'	potentiality (desire) man	guard town roads
ajtz'alam	he (of) boards	care of buildings, apportion labor parties to maintain town and town lands
q'alel, q'al achi'	prince, crowned one	war leader, with some political power
k'amajay	lineage-bringer	organize the lineage
nimak'amajay	great-lineage-bringer	oversee the work, tribute and policies of the lineage
k'ulpatan	tribute-receiver	collect tribute
ch'ikb'al	survey	surveyor
te'ajaw	mother-lord	female ruler
Xoq'ojaw	woman-lord	female ruler
ajxit	he (of) jade	jade-worker, artisan
ajpwäq	he (of) metal/gold/silver/copper	metalworker, artisan
ajtz'ib'	he (of) writing	scribe
ajk'ot	he (of) sculpture	sculptor

Table 2. Modern Kaqchikel titles with current responsibilities.

title	translation	charge
ajpop achi'	he (of) mat man	town councilor, principal
chinamital	ward leader, now *cantón* leader	organize town neighborhoods for work levies and tribute, now COVID-19 protection
rutza'm chinamital	his-nose ward leader	assistant ward leader, especially for dependents outside the town proper
samajel	today a worker or laborer, in colonial times, specifically a messenger	carry messages, especially between towns and polities
mama'	elder, councilor, today "large as an adjective". This is the root of *grandfather*.	Lead extended household
nimawinäq	noble, now anyone with money or power	leader for the municipality, traditionally there were four such leaders, per town
ajaw	ruler/owner, today only owner, or as Ajaw, God	Leader of the polity
k'ajol	noble/son of a man, today only son of a man	lieutenants of a ruler

some of the uniforms. The guerrillas were variously known as *aj pa q'ayïs* "those in the monte, the brush" or *b'atz'i'* "howler monkeys". However, in the Peace Accords, the guerrilla got the much nicer appellative *molöj chupüy meb'a'il aj Iximulew* "the group that extinguishes poverty of Guatemala". It should be noted that *Iximulew* is a neologism adopted in 1995 by the working group appointed by the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala to produce the Kaqchikel translation of the Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas. The working group (personal communication) noted that corn is a mainstay of Mayan diet and culture and should be an emblem for the people and their nation.

With regard to weaponry, while the word for bow and arrow did not disappear, nor did slings and their names, new terms were needed for the European arms. Guns and other firearms have become known collectively simply as *q'aq'* "fire". These current weapon terms are seen in Table 4.

In addition to losing words of status for upper classes, words for the lower classes and slave ranks have also been lost. These lexemes are shown in Table 5.

Words for wealth or pre-contact regalia have also been lost, as seen in Table 6

Another arena where vocabulary has been lost is that surrounding animal pairs or spirit

Table 3. Colonial Kaqchikel warfare vocabulary fallen in desuetude.

Colonial Kaqchikel term	gloss
ajlab'al	Warrior
xajpota'	Breastplate
pokob'	round armshield
b'oko'	full-body shield, still present as place name for Chimaltenango
to'j	Spear
tunatiw q'uq'	battle plumes
tunatiw k'ub'ul	battle armor
achkayupil	padded cotton armor (borrowing from Nahuatl (i)chca ''cotton'+ -yo: '-ness' + -pil) 'diminutive') N.B. Classical Nahuatl did not have an o/u distinction. Nahuatl words with back vowels are often borrowed into Kaqchikel with the u realization. Alternatively, Campbell (personal communication) suggests that the final two syllables may come from Nahuatl /wipil/ 'blouse'.

Table 4. Current Kaqchikel weapon terms.

Kaqchikel weapon term	gloss
ch'ab'	bow
ral ch'ab'	lit. child of the bow, arrow
ikäq'	sling
q'aq'	firearm

Table 5. Colonial Kaqchikel terms for ranks of slaves and their modern reappropriations

Kaqchikel term	colonial usage	modern usage
teleche'	slave	root of exploitation
alab'il	slave, captive	root of discrimination
mun	domestic slave, tattooed as such	root of "fruit" or "tasty treat"

transforms. While the term "nawal" remains, used in both Spanish and Kaqchikel, the belief that someone with spiritual power, who is not a witch, can transform themselves into an animal pair is no longer common. Witches, of course, are known to transform themselves, but when they do so,

Table 6. Colonial Kaqchikel terms for wealth and regalia

Kaqchikel term	colonial usage	modern usage
xit	jade, greenstone	largely unknown, use the Spanish word *jade*
pwäq	precious metal	money
k'wal	jewel	unknown, homophonous with "well, water source"
q'uq'uraxon	quetzal tail plume	unknown form, now use paraphrastic *nïm rusum-al q'uq'*, lit. big feather quetzal
k'ub'ul	trogon feather	Unused
chaktit	red plume	Unknown
cholq'ij	260-day calendar	260-day calendar
mayq'ij	solar calendar	unknown, use *cholab'*, ordering of the year
q'inomal	riches	unknown, use *b'eyomal* "wealth", recent suggestion to bring back *q'inomal* to mean "territorial dominion", no uptake to date

Table 7. Spiritual vocabulary

Kaqchikel term	colonial usage	modern usage
pus	spiritual power	pus, suppuration
jaleb'äl	spirit transform, animal transform	none
nawal	animal transform	day sign associated with one's birth

their animal self is not referred to as their nawal. The Kaqchikel term for nawal, *jaleb'äl,* is no longer in use. The spiritual power, *pus*, and the ability to transform oneself into one's animal counterpart, *nawal,* were qualities often attributed to pre-contact Kaqchikel leaders. However, these terms have different meanings today. *Pus* refers to 'pus, suppuration' and *nawal* refers to the day sign or signs associated with one's birthday in the 260-day ritual calendar. Compare these terms in Table 7.

B. Marking Reversal.

Marking reversal is a common process during language contact and is particularly obvious for the names of both endemic and intrusive animals. The Chuj word *kej*, which originally meant

Table 8. Marking reversals for Kaqchikel animals post-contact.

English gloss	pre-contact Kaqchikel term	colonial Kaqchikel term	modern Kaqchikel term
turkey chicken	äk' Ø	äk' kaxlan äk'	qo'l/pi'y äk'
deer horse	kej Ø	kej kaxlan kej	masat (<Nahuatl) kej
jabalí pig	aq Ø	aq kaxlan aq	juyub'al aq aq

Table 9. Kaqchikel wild animal names re-assigned to non-native counterparts.

referent	original Kaqchikel	current Kaqchikel	literal translation
puma, cougar African lion	köj Ø	o nimames, juyub'al mes	big cat, mountain cat
danta, tapir elephant	tixli' Ø	juyub'äl tix tixli'	m o u n t a i n elephant elephant
jaguar tiger, leopard	b'alam Ø	b'alam b'alam	jaguar jaguar

"deer", illustrates this well. Horses were introduced to the Maya world by the Spanish invaders. The Chuj dubbed this new animal a 'Spanish deer' *kaxtilanh kej*. Over time, horses became more prevalent, and deer were overhunted and became scarce. The more common animal then got the shorter name *kej* and "deer" became *k'ultakil kej* "wild horse". Similarly, pre-contact K'iche' used *k(y)e:j* for "deer"; in the early Colonial period it polysemously for both "deer" and "horse"; once horses became more commonplace, "deer" became the more marked term *k'i:che:' k(y)e:j* literally, "forest horse".

Kaqchikel animal names have undergone similar shifts following the introduction of new animals. Thus, *äk'* "turkey" went through a similar evolution. Chickens were first "Spanish turkey" *kaxlan äk'*, but now far outnumber turkeys and are just *äk'*, while turkeys now have onomatopoetic names, the tom being *qo'l*, the hen being *pi'y*. These marking reversals are shown in Table 8.

Interestingly some animals that were not brought over in large numbers have still displaced their native counterparts linguistically. Judging from the pictures chosen by k-12 teachers and Kaqchikel instructors in national and international university programs, *köj,* originally "puma", now has the African lion as its primary reference, while *tixli'* "danta, or tapir" is now the elephant, either Asian or African. Even the culturally salient jaguar has stiff competition. *B'alam* is as likely to be illustrated with a picture of a leopard or a tiger as with a jaguar. Compare these terms in Table 9.

Table 10. Neologisms to replace loans.

loanword	replacement	gloss
reloj 'clock'	q'ijob'äl	day-instrument
computadora	kematz'ib'	letter-weaver/ writing -weaver
teléfono	oyonib'äl	call-instrument
llave	jaqb'äl	open-instrument

Table 11. Spanish loans resistant to replacement by neologisms.

loanword	possible replacement	gloss
kamixa <camisa	xajpo't	man-blouse
mexa < mesa	ch'atal	table
tumin, mero < tomin, medio	pwäq	precious meal
pale < padre	ajyuq'	shepherd, pastor, minister, priest

Table 12. Current Kaqchikel kin terms.

colonial Kaqchikel	gloss	modern Kaqchikel	gloss
nuxib'al	my brother, my male cousin spoken by a female	nuxib'al nuch'utixib'al	my brother my male cousin
nunimal	my older same sex sibling, my older same sex cousin	nunimal nuch'utinimal	my older same sex sibling my older same sex cousin
nuchaq'	my younger same sex sibling, my younger same sex cousin	nuchaq' nuch'utichaq'	my younger same sex sibling my younger same sex cousin
wana'	my sister, my female cousin (male speaking)	wana' nuch'uti'ana' or ch'utiwana'	my sister my female cousin, (male speaking)

Table 13. Kaqchikel terms for in-laws.

Kaqchikel in-law terms	gloss
nujite'	my mother-in-law, male speaking
nujinan	my father-in-law, male speaking
walite'	my mother-in-law, female speaking
walinan	my father-in-law, female speaking

C. Replacement of Spanish Loans.

Since the mid-1970s, Mayan educators and linguistic activists have been trying to eliminate Spanish loanwords from educational materials and from common parlance. Some loanwords are easy to identify and have been eagerly replaced. A few examples are given in Table 10.

Other words, though identified as loans, have resisted replacement, despite available Kaqchikel counterparts. A sample of these more resistant terms is shown in Table 11.

Interestingly, many households refer to the tables therein (Table 11) as *ch'atal*, while ritual altars throughout the countryside are referred to as *mexa'* by the locals and spiritual practitioners.

Spanish loanwords often survive even in Mayan ritual contexts. Many *ajq'ija'* refer to the spirit, the essence of themselves and their clients as *ruyosil, rusanto'il. Dios* itself is a resilient loanword, often simplified to *yos*.

In 2017, while speaking to the presidents of the 22 Mayan linguistic communities in the *Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala* (ALMG), I noted that in their efforts to get rid of Spanish loans, they had left one that was perhaps the most used, *matyöx* "thank you", which derives from *(ru)ma dios* "because of, or due to god". By early 2018, a replacement was being touted by the ALMG, *nink'awomaj chawe* "I thank you"; a form attested in the de Coto dictionary and listed in the Cojti' and colleagues' (1998) dictionary. The revivers of this term, perhaps realizing that its length might impede its adoption, suggested the shortened form *k'amo*. This is a neologism, which doesn't follow the general morphological rules of Kaqchikel, but it has, in fact, spread quickly. The short form attested in de Coto *k'ama'* was not salvaged and re-introduced.

As family structures change, family terms have also been replaced. *Te'ej tata'aj*, "mother and father", are safe. However, whereas cousins would once have been seen as classificatory brothers, older *nimalaxel* or younger *chaq'laxel*, these terms have been replaced by *primo*. Likewise, aunts and uncles are now known by Spanish terms, except for the most avid language activists, though here they do retain the idea that the kinship term should not apply to those not consanguineous, so your father's brother is *tío,* but his wife is not *tía*. Neologisms have been created as equivalences for the Spanish kinship terms, but no effort has gone into trying to re-introduce the pre-contact classificatory kinship system.

 The terms for in-laws have ceded ground. While most people do know the terms for mother- and father-in-law, they tend to use the Spanish terms. Sibling-in-law terms are well on their way out and are replaced in daily parlance by their Spanish terms. No one has yet sought to resuscitate these failing words. Note the terms in Table 13.

The term *wach'ali'* which was used between *consuegro*s, the couples whose children wed each

Table 14. Guatemalan Spanish terms from Kaqchikel falsely identified as Spanish and replaced.

Kaqchikel term	gloss	Guatemalan Spanish	possible replacement
majk'uy	*Lycianthes synanthera quileute*	makuy	kilete
ch'ip	last born child	chipe	ti k'isib'äl
kolo'ch	ball, round	colocho	kolotz', kolokïk

Table 15. Colonial period adverbial phrases and modern simplifications.

colonial form	rough gloss	modern form	rough gloss
ja öq	that is when	töq	When
ja k'a ri'	that then this	k'a ri'	then this
re' k'a	this (proximal) then	rere'	this
chi ri' k'a	at this then, there	chi ri'	there
(je) na wi pe	they still trace come, these exactly	je ~ rere'	they, these
we ta k'a	if irrealist then, if	we ~wi	if

Table 16. *Pero > po > xa ja ri.*

common modern Kaqchikel	gloss	activist alternative	gloss
po < *pero*	but	xa ja ri'	but

other, has generalized to co-godparents, and to the ritual sponsors of those becoming *ajq'ija'*.

The zeal to eliminate loanwords has led to suggesting replacements for words that are originally Kaqchikel, but have been borrowed into local Spanish, compare the items in Table 14.

D. Grammatical Shift and Simplification.

After 500 years of exposure to and pressure from Spanish, Kaqchikel has undergone some structural changes, such as loss of focus antipassive, word order simplifications, loss of syntactic flexibility, and the partial elimination of *wi* traces for locative movement. We see structural changes interacting with the lexicon primarily in two places: (1) clause-introductory particles and (2) conjunctions.

(1) Clause-introductory particles. In Kaqchikel, a listener or reader's attention is directed through the narrative storyline largely by short adverbial particles. These particles tend to cluster at the beginning of clauses, indicating whether the action is foregrounded, backgrounded, shifting main actors, beginning or ending an episode. In colonial texts, discourse structure is clearly marked. Sections are introduced adverbially, often with *wa'e'*. This particle might be translated as "herein", and is particular to written accounts and histories. *Wa'e'* has dropped out of modern

usage. The related form *wawe'* "here" is a spatial locative rather than a discourse marker *per se*. Once an episode is launched by the introductory adverbial particles, pronouns that mark subjects and additional adverbs direct the reader's attention through the narrative. Subsections of an episode are generally linked with particles, often time adverbs or subordinating conjunctions. A robust set of such particles was used in colonial texts and clustered together in complex opening adverbial phrases. Though many of the members of this set are still known today, they are seldom used in sequence, but tend to occur alone to link sections. Compare the terms in Table 15.

One multi-particle clause-introductory series still in active use is *xa ja ri'* "just that this". This particle string is being promoted by activists to replace the subordinating conjunction *pero* or its Kaqchikel apocopation *po*. The (r)evolution of *pero* can be seen in Table 16.

2. Conjunctions. One of the most pervasive borrowings from Spanish has been the coordinating conjunction *y*. This conjunction peppers Kaqchikel speech, coming between nouns, verbs, adjectives and even adverbs, as well as conjoining clauses. Activists have become sensitive to this tiny, but ubiquitous conjunction. They use a couple of strategies to depose *y*. In some instances, they substitute *-uk'in ~ -ik'in* , a relational noun with the approximate meaning of "with". This noun must be inflected for a possessor, the person or thing that would be the object of the preposition "with" in English. This can be seen in the examples below. The abbreviations used in the morpheme by morpheme gloss line are as follows: Imp = imperative, 1 = first person 2 = second person, 3 = third person, s = singular, p = plural, A = absolutive, E = ergative, comp = completive, incomp = incompletive, art = article, conj = conjunction, neg = negative, irr = irrealis, lig = ligature, ind = independent, d = deictic, pass = passive.

2.1.   *Katam pe wuk'in*!
         K-at-an   pe   w-uk'in
         Imp-2sA-move   come   1sE-with
         Come thither with me.

2.2.   *Xb'e ruk'in.*
         X-Ø - b'e   r-uk'in
         comp- 3sA – go   3sE-with
He went with her.

2.3   *Yesamäj quk'in.*
         y-e-samäj   q-uk'in
         incomp-3pA-work   1pE-with
They work with us.

2.4   *Xeb'eb'iyaj kuk'in ri aj Pa Jotöl.*
         X-e-b'e-b'iyaj   k-uk'in   ri   aj   Pa Jotöl
         comp-3pAp-go-outing   3pE-with   art   one-of   at north/high/The United States
                                                                    of America
         They went on an outing with the gringos.

This gets repurposed as a conjunction so that a sentence like 2.5 (a) would be "corrected" to 2.5 (b).

(a) *Ma Lu' i ma Xwan man xe'apon ta.*

ma Lu'	i	ma Xwan	man x-e-apon	ta
Mr. Pedro	conj	Mr. John	neg comp-3pA-arrive/there	irr

Pedro and Juan didn't arrive there.

(b) *Ma Lu' ruk'in ma Xwan man xe'apon ta.*

ma Lu'	r-uk'in	ma Xwan	man	x-e-apon	ta
Mr. Pedro	3sE-with	Mr. John	neg	comp-3pA-arrive/there	irr

Pedro and Juan didn't arrive there.

A second alternative to *y/i* has been *chuqa'* "also", a word that isn't used once in the 92 folio pages of the Kaqchikel Chronicles, spanning the 1500s and early 1600s.

2.6   *Nqatïk ixim, kinäq' chuqa'.*

n-Ø-qa-tïk	ixim	kinäq'	chuqa'
incomp-3sA-1pE-plant	corn	beans	also

We plant corn, beans also.

2.7   *Xqïl kaqaxtän, ruq'a' ne'y chuqa'.*

x-Ø-q-ïl	käq-a-xtän	ru-q'a'	ne'y	chuqa'
comp-3sA-1pE-find	red-lig-girl	3sE-hand/finger	baby	also

We found red-girl-mushrooms, baby-finger mushrooms as well.

Chuqa' unlike *–uk'in* that requires a pronoun possessor and its optional noun referent, *chuqa'* can link other parts of speech and clauses.

2.8   *Rija' nïm raqän, jeb'ël chuqa' ütz runa'oj.*

rija'	nïm	r-aqän	jeb'ël	chuqa'	ütz	ru-na'oj
3sind	big	3sE-leg	pretty	also	good	3sE-personality

She is tall, pretty and good-natured.

2.9   *Xulöq' kinäq' chuqa' saqmolo'.*

x-Ø-u-löq'	kinäq'	chuqa'	saqmolo'
comp-3sA-3sE-buy	beans	also	eggs

She bought beans and eggs.

3.0   *Xuch'äj ri läq, xusu', chuqa' xuyäk kan.*

x-Ø-u-ch'äj	ri	läq	x-Ø-u-su'	chuqa'	x-Ø-u-yäk	kan
comp-3sA-3sE-wash	art	dish	comp-3sA-3sE-wipe	also	com-3sA-3sE-place	remain

She washed the dishes, dried them and put them away.

3.1   *Xub'ös q'aq' pa ri tuj, chuqa' xuk'äm pe jun q'e'l ya'.*

x-Ø-u-bös	q'aq'	pa	ri	tuj
comp-3sA-3sE-kindle	fire	in	art	sweatbath

x-Ø-u-k'äm	pe	jun	q'e'l	ya'
comp-3sA-3sE-bring	come	one	jug	water

She kindled the fire in the sweatbath and she brought a jug of water.

These replacements for *i/y* are common in the speech and writing of activists, such as the pedagogues and scholars of Kaqchikel Cholchi', the Kaqchikel branch of the ALMG. However, it must be pointed out that this is one place where they did not go back to the Colonial sources and replicate

the pattern, perhaps because there is no lexical equivalent. In colonial period documents we find that coordinating conjunction is achieved through juxtaposition.

3.2 *Je k'a k'oj kitzij ri Q'aq'awitz, Saktekaw.*

je	k'a	k'oj	ki-tzij	ri	Q'aq'awitz	Saktekaw
3pd	then	there/are	3pE-word	art	Q'aq'awitz	Saktekaw

These then are the words of Q'aq'awitz (and) Saktekaw. (Maxwell and Hill 2006: 6)

3.3. *Ja ri chiköp utiw, qo'ch kib'i'.*

ja	ri	chiköp	utiw	qo'ch	ki-b'i'
3sd	art	animal	coyote	crow	3pE-name

Thus the animal(s) coyote (and) crow (were) their-names. (Maxwell and Hill 2006: 10)

3.4 *Oxlajuj achi', kajlajuj k'a ixöq xüx.*

Ox-lajuj	achi'	kaj-lajuj	k'a	ixöq	x-Ø-Ø-üx
three-ten	man	four-ten	then	woman	comp-3sA-create-pass

Thirteen men (and) fourteen then women were-created. (Maxwell and Hill 2006:12)

The syntactic pattern of Spanish has accustomed Kaqchikel speakers, even those for whom Spanish is a weak second language, to having an overt conjunction. For most speakers the borrowing *i/y* fulfills this function. Language activists seeking lexical purity replace the *i/y* with *–uk'in ~ -ik'in* or *chuqa'*, but they do not, or have not yet, reactivated the early colonial mechanism of juxtaposition, despite active consultation of these documents.

Conclusion

As Kaqchikel takes back domains that had for centuries been ceded to Spanish, they are making up for lost time in creating neologisms to fill gaps that have developed. Kaqchikel linguists, pedagogues and scholars, actively mine colonial texts, particularly the *Kaqchikel Chronicles* and the *Popol Wuj*. Access to the colonial dictionaries is more limited as copies of the de Coto dictionary are rare, and the new edition of Pantaleón de Guzmán (2001), sponsored by Kaqchkel Cholchi', was a limited run. The guidelines adopted by the ALMG for the creation of new words are:

(a) Respect the grammatical rules of the language: phonological, morphological, and syntactic.
(b) Respect the Maya worldview (eschew Euro-centric concepts)
(c) Keep words short, not "kilometric". They should be lexemes, not phrases.
(d) Retrieve old words fallen in disuse.
(e) Repurpose old terms.
(f) If words are borrowed rather than created or revived, borrow from Mayan languages first, then from Mesoamerican sources, then American indigenous sources, then other languages. Spanish should be a last resort (Maxwell and Chacach 1995).

Notice that two of these recommendations promote the resuscitation of old lexemes. Field-testing the neologisms showed that teachers, students, parents, and *ajq'ija'* "daykeepers, Maya ritual specialists, spiritual guides" would accept unfamiliar words, even when their morphological make-up was non-transparent, if the words were shown to be in colonial texts. The language of these documents is taken to be authentic. Words from these documents rightfully belong to the

Table 17. Semantic widening.

Kaqchikel	colonial reading	modern usage
tinamït	walled town	town
-b'ös	engender	arrive in a place (of people), hatch (of birds), kindle (fire)
xajan	ritual abstinence	taboo, mystical
achij	warrior	male, macho, tough

Table 18. Semantic narrowing.

Kaqchikel	colonial reading	modern usage
uxla'	breath, soul, honor, fame	breath
-wär	sleep, be defeated	sleep
-yakatäj	awaken, arise, rise from defeat, make a comeback	awaken, arise (from sleep)
-juruj	pull out a thread, escape	sneak

language and to their descendants. Repurposing the words, while expanding their meanings and usage, recapitulates the normal semantic drift of the language with widening and narrowing. Examples of semantic widening can be seen in Table 17.

Semantic narrowing can be seen in Table 18.

The new life breathed into these old words is allowing a new generation of speakers to use Kaqchikel to speak about their modern realities. Not all suggested words have made it into daily use, but the expanded teaching of Kaqchikel, given the 2010 Ministry of Education dictum that all schools (public and private) must offer the indigenous language of their region, is familiarizing more people with the new vocabulary. Expanding domains in public media and the ceaseless promotion of the language by Kaqchikel Cholchi' have enlivened these zombie lexemes, even succeeding in changing quotidian language routines. Some activists are now suggesting that Kaqchikel spiritual concepts replace Eurocentric ones. They suggest, for example, that the Kaqchikel belief in an animate universe should be acknowledged so that farewell blessings such as *Ri Ajaw tuya' ruq'a' raqän pan awi'! "*May God place his hands and legs over you!" and *Ri Ajaw tujaqa' ri q'anab'ey, ri saqab'ey chawäch! "*May God open the yellow-road, the white-road before you!" be replaced by *Ri rajawala' tikiya' kiq'a', kaqän pan awi'! Tikijaqa' ri q'anab'ey, ri saqab'ey chawäch! "*May the spirit-owners place their arms and legs over you! May they open the yellow-road, the white-road before you!" Activists have already changed accepted modes of thanks-giving. Zombie words are making a comeback, they have already entered the brains of activists, schoolchildren, and through them, parents.

Matyöx chiwe! Thank you!..... oops! ? Nink'awomaj chiwe! K'amo!

I thank you! Thanks!

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