

Notes on the *Popol Wuj* Manuscript Transcription

The present copy is the verbatim typed transcription of the manuscript that begins with the cover page *Empiezan las Historias del Origen de los Indios de Esta Provincia de Gvatemala* by Fray Franzisco Ximenez, circa 1701-3, currently archived at the Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois, as part of the *Ayer MS 1515*.

The purpose of this typed transcription is to assist readers of this facsimile with a tool for their scholarly work. The idea is to make the reading of the 18th century handwritten calligraphy easier and more precise. In addition, keeping in mind the needs of future translators, this transcription calls attention to certain lexical, grammatical and written issues which present special characteristics. As a general trait, we can say that when comparing the present transcription with the previous ones, many differences are evident.

The main criterion for this transcription has been to reproduce Father Ximénez's orthography with the maximum fidelity possible. For this reason, in both columns—K'ichee and Spanish—we have conserved words or phrases that we know do not follow the rules of standard writing, even some that do not make sense in the way in which they are written. However, since this is the way that Father Ximénez composed the transcription and translation of the K'ichee text, we have preserved them as they are in the manuscript.

In the K'ichee column (left) the calligraphic, linguistic, and phonetic peculiarities related to Father Ximénez's own transcription are particularly significant. The copious deviations and inconsistencies observed in the manuscript could be the result of the friar's reading and understanding of K'ichee words, or perhaps the result of a very personal way of transcribing them. Most likely, the way in which Ximénez merged or divided words was the unintended consequence of his limited knowledge and command of the native language at the time. It could also have been the result of haste or incidental decisions made by the priest at different moments of his work. We must keep in mind that K'ichee sounds are very different than Spanish ones, thus, we must consider that several additional different kinds of difficulties overlapped within the text.

To transcribe a text of such complexity always implies some degree of arbitrariness. In some cases it is unavoidable to make a decision based on some kind of interpretation. Basically, these issues have been the main concern and difficulty faced by previous transcribers of the *Popol Wuj*. Now, in the present online edition, each reader has the chance to compare vis-à-vis the typed transcription with the facsimile, thus, each can make their own final decision.

For all the above-mentioned reasons, in the present transcription of the manuscript we have been meticulous in copying the following exactly:

- Different words that appear together as one, or when one word appears split (there are examples in both languages). Some times it is very difficult to judge if the space between letters means that there is a single word or there

are two, or more. Whether this was because Ximénez at that time did not know sufficient K'ichee grammar or vocabulary, or simply because this was his perception of the linguistic sequence or syntax, is something that we cannot determine.

- Occasional transpositions of letters or morphemes in Ximenez's own hand. Particularly in the K'ichee column there are cases that we assume to be transpositions but we are not sure what Ximénez's intention or interpretation might have been. We must remember that at the beginning of the 18th century, Spanish orthography was not standardized, thus, we must assume that the K'ichee phonetization implied numerous additional problems and linguistic issues that were far from being resolved at that time. An example of this lack of consistency in Ximénez's writing can be seen in the following four different spellings for the Spanish word *cerro* (hill): *cerro*, *çero*, *çerro*, *cerro*. In K'ichee the problems multiply.
- Corrections, side-notes, or added words between lines. Only crossed-out words and comments that were added in the margins by Father Ximénez himself have been considered valid for transcription. Marks made with a black ink, perhaps during the 19th century, have been omitted (see: f. 7r, 24r, 26r, 28r, 32r, 36v—in this folio only the side note which has been controversial was added in a footnote— 51v, 52r, 53r, and 54r).
- In folio 54r lines six and seven appear repeated and we have kept the repetition.

Father Ximénez only numbered the folios until the number 12, and only in the recto side of the leaf; after this folio the numbers appear written with pencil in a modern calligraphy. This difference has been indicated in the transcription by use of a different font. In folio 26r the number 31 appears at the top center. This number does not match the sequence, thus, it is probably a folio that Ximénez was readying for use in another document.

Finally, in the present transcription two features have been added. One of them is the numeration of the lines of the manuscript. These numbers—referring to folio and line—allow for easy and unquestionable identification of specific points in the manuscript. In this way, references based on non-standardized verses or in particular editions are avoided.

The second innovation is that in some specific cases footnotes comparing discrepancies or agreements between some of the previous transcriptions have been added. Obviously, there are many more discrepancies than those that we have specified, but we want to emphasize that the purpose of these footnotes is only to help identify some particular variant and not to scrutinize the whole text. The criterion has been to locate critical points in the manuscript, such as crossed-out words, additions between lines, or similar elements and compare different readings or versions. The closest transcriptions to the manuscript are the ones done by Leonhard Schultze Jena, Adrián Inés Chávez, and Allen Christenson. For the present transcription we also consulted other copies that are mentioned below. For future translators we strongly recommend looking at all of these other transcriptions.

Following is the chart with the abbreviations for the references used in the footnotes, the names and the years of publication:

B.B.:	Charles Brasseur de Bourbourg (1861)
S.J.:	Leonhard Schulze Jena (1944)
B.-X.:	Dora Burgess and Patricio Xec (1955)
A.V.:	Antonio Villacorta (1962)
A.I.CH.:	Adrián Inés Chávez (1979)
L.-L.:	Carlos Rolando de León Valdés and Francisco López Perén (1985)
A. Ch.:	Allen Christenson (2004)

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Transcriptions Consulted

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