Language of Poqomchi' (Mayan) offering ceremonies[1]

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Abstract. Some Poqomchi' Mayan communities in Guatemala actually practice traditional offering ceremonies. Through the mediation of a ritual specialist, they provide humans with an opportunity to submit requests to divine authorities for something they wish to obtain. The language used during this ritual communication differs from everyday Poqomchi' in certain lexical, grammatical and discursive respects. Based on primary fieldwork data, this paper discusses parallel syntactic constructions, the metaphorical use of certain lexemes, the functions of loanwords and the unexpected choice of tense/aspect/mood categories, among other features. In addition, this article presents morphologically annotated and translated textual extracts from three offering ceremonies, which may be useful for further studies on Poqomchi' ritual communication.

Keywords: Poqomchi', Mayan languages, ritual discourse, offering ceremonies, syncretism

1. Introduction

Poqomchi' belongs to the K'ichean branch of the Mayan family. This language is spoken in Guatemala in the departments of Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz and El Quiche by around 70,000 people, according to the 2001 census (Richards 2003: 72). However, this estimate seems to be understated.

Since the time of the Conquest, autochthonous pre-Columbian beliefs and the Christian religion have intimately fused together. This process of

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religious accommodation through retaining some of the original traits while borrowing selected themes and institutional arrangements is usually termed syncretism, or hybridization; see Cook & Offit (2013) for a detailed discussion. Manifestations of religious syncretism are observed throughout the Maya area (see, for example, Watanabe 1992 and Wilson 1995), and Poqomchi' communities are no exception.

Although the vast majority of Poqomchi' speakers conform to the Christian religion, traditional cultural beliefs are not as underrepresented as they were a few decades ago. Sometimes, the same people who attend mass in church also become involved in traditional ritual practices. The pan-Mayan movement (Warren 1998; Molesky-Poz 2006) seems to have made a significant contribution to the promotion of these activities. It emerged as an ethno-cultural force in the late 1980s during the last stages of the civil war in Guatemala, seeking to strengthen Maya identity through cultural reaffirmation; see England (2002). The Maya movement rapidly evolved into a political force, whose principal ideas "include a revalorization of Maya culture and language, a demand for public education that better serves Mayan communities and takes indigenous languages into account, access to public services in local languages, access to more equitable economic and political opportunities" (England 2003: 734), etc. This recent attempt at cultural and political decolonization accounts for the even more syncretic nature of most ritual activities in the modern Maya societies.

Offering ceremonies (*ceremonias mayas*) are instances of such activities. Through the mediation of a ritual specialist, they provide humans with an opportunity to submit requests to divine authorities for something they wish to obtain. It is well known in the case of various Mayan groups that the language used during ritual communication differs from everyday language in certain aspects; see Hanks (1984) for Yucatec, Tedlock (1992) for K'iche' and Hull (2003) for Ch'orti', among others. This paper centers on Poqomchi', a Mayan group whose rituals have never been the object of a profound ethnolinguistic study. Based on original fieldwork data, this article describes the most prominent linguistic peculiarities of the Poqomchi' ritual language. Some traits, such as the abundant uses of syntactic parallelisms, have been observed in other

Mayan languages and in Meso-America in general. Other traits are more specific to Poqomchi': for example, the omission of tense/aspect/mood markers and metaphorical uses of certain lexemes.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the basic grammatical features of Poqomchi'. Section 3 introduces the material on which the study is grounded. Section 4 describes the structural principles of the discourse, as delivered by a ritual specialist during the communicative stage of an offering ceremony. Section 5 addresses linguistic properties of the ritual language at some length, highlighting distinctive lexical, grammatical and discursive traits. The appendix contains three short fragments of prayers, which are morphologically analyzed and translated into English.

2. Basic grammatical features of the Poqomchi' language

Poqomchi' is a synthetic language. Its morphology is mainly agglutinative. Nouns lack grammatical categories of gender and case. The distinction between singular and plural number is mostly optional, with some exceptions concerning nouns denoting humans. The most complex noun morphology is found in the semantic domain of possession. A personal prefix attached to a possessed noun signals the person and number of the possessor, as in (1).[2]

(1)a. **nu**-mahk   b.   mahk
       1SG.POSS-sin   sin
       'my sin'   'sin (general term)'

The possessive prefix *nu-* in (1a) conveys the first person singular. Some nouns require additional vowel lengthening when they bear a possessive prefix.

(2)a. nu-**haa'**   b.   ha'
       1SG.POSS-**water**   water
       'my water'   'water (unpossessed)'

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[2] Examples are spelled according to the orthographic conventions of the Guatemalan Academy of Mayan Languages. Abbreviations used in glosses are as follows: 1, 2, 3: first, second, third person; ABS: absolutive; ABST: abstract; AGT: agentive; AP: antipassive; COM: completive; DAT: dative; DEF: definite; DIR: directional; EMPH: emphasis; ERG: ergative; INC: incompletive; INDEF: indefinite; INDPOSS: indefinite possessor; INTENS: intensifier; INTRZ: intransitivizer; IRR: irrealis; NEG: negation; NMLZ: nominalizer; NUM: numeral; OPT: optative; PASS: passive; PL: plural; POSS: possessive; POT: potential; PRED: predicative; PREP: preposition; PROG: progressive; PTCP: participle; REAL: realis; REFL: reflexive; REP: reportative; SG: singular; STAT: stative; TR: transitive.

The noun *ha'* 'water' takes the prolonged vowel in the possessive form: *nu-haa'* 'my water' (2a). If a noun denotes an inalienable object, usually a body part or a kinship term, it bears an additional suffix of unspecified possessor, when a possessive prefix is absent. The noun *tuut* 'mother' exemplifies this feature in (3).

(3)a.   nu-tuut   b.   tut-**b'ees**
        1SG.POSS-mother   mother-**INDPOSS**
        'my mother'   'mother (general term)'

Poqomchi' has a specific class of words traditionally labeled 'relational nouns'. These purely functional nouns have lost a great part of their initial lexical meaning. In a possessed form, they indicate a participant with a certain semantic role or certain spatial relation. Relational nouns thus function like prepositions.

(4)   x-at-yo'-j-ik   w-**uum**
        COM-2ABS-scare-PASS-REAL   1SG.POSS-**cause**
        'You got scared because of me.' (Vinogradov 2016: 188)

(5)   x-i-xit'   koq r-iib'   r-**i'sil**   meexa i   ch'ooh
        COM-3SG.ERG-introduce DIR 3SG.POSS-REFL 3SG.POSS-**under** table DEF mouse
        'The mouse entered under the table.' (Mó Isém 2006: 234)

The relational noun *uum* 'cause' introduces the agent in (4). In (5), the relational noun *i'sil* 'under' specifies the spatial relationship between two objects: the table and the mouse.

    Poqomchi' has a complex tense/aspect/mood system, which consists of two interrelated paradigms conveying different meanings from the temporal, aspectual and modal semantic domains. The first paradigm is prefixal, and includes three basic categories: the completive (*x-*), the incompletive (*k-*, *q-*, *i(n)-*, *Ø*), and the optative (*a-*, *ch-*, *q-*, *k-*, *Ø*). The choice of a particular allomorph depends on the verb transitivity and the following personal prefix. The suffixal paradigm of modal categories usually labeled 'realis' and 'irrealis' complicates this system. In addition, there are two highly productive analytical constructions with auxiliary non-verbal predicates: the auxiliary predicate *k'ahchi'* signals the progressive aspectual meaning, while the predicate *na(ak)* conveys the potential modal/temporal meaning.

Poqomchi' marks core arguments on the verb form in compliance with the ergative-absolutive alignment, exemplified in (6).

(6)a. x-at-chal-ik
        COM-2ABS-come-REAL
        'you came'

b. x-at-q-il
    COM-2ABS-1PL.ERG-see
    'we saw you'

c. x-oj-aw-il
    COM-1PL.ABS-2ERG-see
    'you saw us'

d. x-oj-chal-ik
    COM-1PL.ABS-come-REAL
    'we came'

The absolutive prefix *at-* cross-references the unique argument of an intransitive predicate in (6a). The same prefix indicates the direct object of a transitive predicate in (6b). Subjects of transitive predicates are cross-referenced by the ergative paradigm of personal markers (6c). The third person singular has no overt absolutive marker.

Poqomchi' is traditionally described as having a split ergative system. The pattern of alignment changes to the nominative-accusative in the progressive and potential tense/aspect/mood constructions, where the ergative markers cross-reference the unique argument of an intransitive predicate (7).

(7)   na=**q**-oj-iik   chaloq   aj=pasear
        POT=**1PL.POSS**-go-NMLZ   DIR   AGT=walk
        'We will go for a walk.' (Mayers 1958: 66)

Instead of the expected prefix *oj-*, in (7), one observes the same prefix *q-*, which is used in (6b) to indicate the subject of a transitive predicate; compare (6d). The construction in (7) is better analyzed as biclausal. It contains the auxiliary predicate *na* and the main verb in a nominalized form as its complement. The morpheme *q-* is, in fact, a possessive marker rather than an ergative prefix (both possessive and ergative sets of markers are typically identical in Mayan languages). A similar situation is also observed in Chol, another Mayan language with a split ergative system, as described by Coon (2010).

Poqomchi' is a verb-initial language. The basic unmarked word order in a transitive construction is VOS, as in (8).

(8)   x-i-q'eb'   i   kinaq' i   teew
        COM-3SG.ERG-knock.over   DEF   beans   DEF wind
        'The wind knocked over the beans.' (Mayers 1958: 41)

However, the basic word order is rather uncommon in a real discourse, as Poqomchi' has several morphosyntactic devices to promote arguments to the first position in a clause.

At present, there is no typologically adequate reference grammar for Poqomchi'. An overview of Poqomchi' morphology can be found in Brown (1979) and Mó Isém (2006). Some relevant information about the language structure is also provided in Malchic *et al.* (2000), where Poqomchi' is contrasted with Poqomam, its closest relative.

3. Corpus of recordings

I was able to attend at three Poqomchi' offering ceremonies during my fieldwork in 2017. They were celebrated in different locations and with distinct ritual specialists performing. These ceremonies apparently belong to the same genre. They did not have a predetermined specific purpose, as is the case of agricultural or burial rituals or inauguration ceremonies of a new dwelling. Instead, participants could come with their own problems and desires. All three recordings were made following consent from the ritual specialists. The overall audio corpus comprises about four hours. Although ethnographic aspects are beyond the scope of this paper, I concisely describe these ceremonies below in order to provide a closer look at the metalinguistic context of the discourses addressed in the subsequent sections.

The first ceremony in my corpus was celebrated on June 28, on day 3 Tz'i' according to the ritual 260-day calendar.[3] The ceremony was celebrated in a rock shelter named Convento Ramchah, which is located near the village of Tampo in the municipality of Tactic (Alta Verapaz). A local group of spiritual guides organized the ceremony. As they pointed out to me, they regularly organize such ceremonies, approximately once a month, in different sacred places around Tactic. This fills them with supernatural energy and allows for maintaining a spiritual connection with the divine world.

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[3] The importance of this calendar for contemporary Mayan spiritual practices has been widely discussed; see Tedlock (1992), for example.

About 15 persons participated in the ceremony: seven ritual specialists and their family members, including three children. A middle-aged man from Tactic was responsible for the organization and a great part of the ritual discourse. The ceremony was celebrated to the sound of marimba music, played on the cell phone of one of the participants.

The second ceremony was recorded on October 7, on day 13 B'atz', in the village of Pajuil in the municipality of Chicaman (El Quiche). Pajuil is located within a chain of mountains at some distance from the main transport corridors, with unique access through a country road, about two hours from Chicaman. The ceremony was celebrated at night on the top of one of the hills surrounding the village, inside a small wooden cabin of approximately 3 x 5 meters, with a slightly elevated altar on one side. The ritual specialist was a local elderly man. The ceremony was dedicated especially to me. I brought the offerings, which were burned during the ceremony; namely, a few bunches of colored candles, two small loaves of bread and two pounds of sugar. Besides the ritual specialist and me, there were only two other participants: my local collaborator and a young assistant to the ritual specialist.

The last ceremony in my corpus was celebrated on October 20, day 13 K'at, in a sacred place named Cuevas Chitul. This is a small and depthless cavity at the foot of a hill, located in the municipality of Santa Cruz Verapaz (Alta Verapaz). It is situated in direct proximity to the roadway, which runs to Coban, the main city of the department. Unfortunately, unavoidable noise from passing buses and trucks negatively affected the quality of the recording.

Around 65 people participated in this ceremony. Some of them came from neighboring departments. This was the longest ceremony in the corpus, lasting more than two hours. As with the ceremony in Tampo, an institutionalized group of ritual specialists organized it. However, in this instance, five spiritual guides were involved in pronouncing ritual discourses at the same time, and their prayers were different. As I was unable to record each of them in an audible way, I only focus on two particular ritual specialists.

4. Structure of prayers

Although the ceremonies in my corpus were celebrated in different places and directed by ritual specialists with different backgrounds, they notably have a similar internal structure. This structure is generally in line with what has been observed for other Mayan groups; see Scott (2009) for Kaqchikel, for example.

The ceremony usually begins with the preparation of the altar. First, ritual specialists, with the help of assistants, clean the sacred place, throwing away garbage and ashes that may have remained from former activities. Next, ritual specialists arrange offerings on the altar. The communicative phase begins when it is lit with fire. At this moment, ritual specialists begin their speech performance. In fact, they are unique speakers during the ritual communicative act, since participation of the attendees is typically limited to nonverbal activities. Furthermore, the ritual communication is unidirectional: from ritual specialists towards divine authorities. Unlike shamans in some Asian traditional communities (Balzer 1990), Poqomchi' ritual specialists do not verbally transmit responses from the divine world.

At the beginning of the communicative act, ritual specialists greet the sacred place and the divine authorities to whom they will address subsequent petitions. This set of addressees is highly heterogeneous and includes, at least, natural phenomena, such as the sun, the sunrise, the wind, the sunset, the darkness, the hills and valleys, as well as ancestral spirits. Depending on the background of the particular ritual specialist, it may also include certain pan-Mayan deities or Catholic saints, and specifically Jesus Christ. The divine addressees may also remain unnamed, just being referred to by second-person forms. These introductory invocations may be simple greetings (9) or general non-detailed thanks (10).[4]

(9)   *k'aleen aweh ixib' tz'i' /*
        k'aleen   aw-eh   ix-ib'   tz'i'
        hello   2POSS-DAT   three-NUM   Tz'i'
        'Hello to you, 3 Tz'i'.' (T)

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[4] The sources of examples are indicated by letters: "T" stands for the ceremony in Tampo, "P" for Pajuil, and "Ch" for Chitul. The symbol "/" divides intonation units. The first line of examples is intended to reflect, wherever possible, salient phonetic peculiarities, while the second line represents the text in normalized orthography, with morphemic division. The proposed English translation mainly relies on Dobbels' (2003) dictionary and attempts to be as close as possible to the original.

(10)   *inut'yosej aweh nuwa' nuhaa' /*
        i-nu-t'yos-ej   aw-eh   nu-wa'   nu-haa'
        INC-1SG.ERG-thank-TR 2POSS-DAT 1SG.POSS-meal 1SG.POSS-water
        'I thank you for my meal, my water.' (T)

In (9), the greeting is directed to the spirit of the calendar day on which the ceremony is celebrated. In contrast, the addressee's individuality of the acknowledgment in (10) remains unclear from the context.

At the initial stage of the prayer, human participants remain unnamed, being referred to by third-person plural or first-person plural forms (11).

(11)   *ayu' qojkan / chupaam i loq'laj ye'aab'*
        ayu'   q-**oj**-kan   chi   ru-paam   i   loq'-laj   ye'aab'
        here   INC-**1PL.ABS**-be PREP 3SG.POSS-in DEF   holy-INTENS   place
        'We are here, at the holy place.' (T)

In (11), the ritual specialist from Tactic uses the verbal absolutive prefix *oj-* to refer to the entire group of attendees (probably including himself), but does not provide any further information about who they are.

Closer to the midpoint of the prayer, ritual specialists typically invoke names of some hills, volcanoes, towns, ancient cities, rivers and other geographical objects, as in (12).

(12)   *ajwal kampana yuuq' kampana k'ixkaab' / ajwal ketzalteka yuuq' ajwal ketzalteka k'ixkaab' /*
        ajw-al   kampana yuuq' kampana k'ixkaab' ajw-al   ketzalteka
        father-ABST   Campana hill Campana valley   father-ABST   Quetzalteca
        yuuq' ajw-al   ketzalteka   k'ixkaab'
        hill   father-ABST   Quetzalteca   valley
        'Lord Campana hill, Campana valley, lord Quetzalteca hill, lord Quetzalteca valley.' (P)

Some of these geographical objects only have local significance and are likely unknown to inhabitants from other regions. On the other hand, some well-known ancient Mayan cities are also commonly mentioned, including those located in Mexico, such as Palenque, Bonampak and Edzna.

At a certain point, perhaps closer to the second half of the ceremony, ritual specialists begin to invoke each of the 20 nahuals, one after another.[5]

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[5] For basic information on nahuals, see de la Garza (1987), among many others.

These invocations are simple wordings, which include numerals from one to 13 and the nahual's name: 'one K'at', 'two K'at', 'three K'at', and so on. If more than one ritual specialist performs during the spiritual act, the invocations to nahuals are the only points where they speak in chorus, usually accompanied by the attendees. When a particular nahual is invoked, this is an opportunity to address specific petitions to it concerning its area of responsibility. For example, the nahual Tz'ikin is considered a protector of business. Therefore, petitions of financial well-being are normally addressed to it (13).

(13)   *chan bendecir ruho'oob' rulajeeb' awak'uun benedikto ja' / [...] wilik ta naq ruho'oob' wilik ta naq rulajeeb' /[...] chayeew reh haaw / loq'laj nawaal tz'ikin /*

ch-a-b'an   bendecir   ru-ho'-oob'   ru-laj-eeb'   aw-ak'uun
OPT-2ERG-make   bless   3SG.POSS-five-NUM 3SG.POSS-ten-NUM 2POSS-son

benedikto ja'   wi-lik   ta_naq   ru-ho'-oob'   wi-lik   ta_naq
Benedicto Ja   exist-PRED   OPT   3SG.POSS-five-NUM exist-PRED   OPT

ru-laj-eeb'   ch-a-ye-ew   r-eh   jaaw   loq'-laj
3SG.POSS-ten-NUM OPT-2ERG-give-TR 3SG.POSS-DAT sir   holy-INTENS

nawaal   tz'ikin
nahual   Tz'ikin

'Bless five, 10 of your son Benedicto Ja, […] so that he has five, so that he has 10; […] give it to him, sir, holy nahual Tz'ikin.' (Ch)

In (13), the spiritual guide asks for prosperity in business for a man by the name of Benedicto Ja. The possessed numerals 'five' and '10' refer to bank bills of five and 10 quetzals. This petition is directed exclusively to the nahual Tz'ikin rather than to an undefined set of multiple supernatural authorities. At this stage, ritual specialists tend to mention petitioners by name. When the spiritual guide concludes the petition, the beneficiary usually comes closer to the altar and makes several circles by walking counterclockwise around the fire.

Prayers in my corpus have no special closing formula at the end. The ritual communicative act ends with a repetition of general thanks to supernatural authorities. After that, participants kiss the sacred place and clean the altar. Hugs and handshakes also play an important role at the end of the ceremony.

5. Linguistic analysis

This section discusses linguistic phenomena, which are typical of the Poqomchi' ritual discourse. It illustrates differences in grammar, discourse structure and lexicon between ordinary conversational Poqomchi' and its ritual variety. In this section, I present syntactic couplets and triplets as the most prominent syntactic features of ritual discourse (Section 5.1). Then, I move onto particular issues with word choice (Section 5.2). To illustrate deviations in the grammatical system, I discuss the use of tense/aspect/mood categories in Section 5.3.

5.1. Parallel syntactic constructions

Abundant use of couplets (or syntactic parallelisms) is probably the most widespread linguistic trait of ritual discourses in Meso-America (Bricker 1974; Lengyel 1988; Monod Becquelin & Becquey 2008; Vapnarsky 2008; García 2014). Parallelisms are usually defined as subsequent repetitions of the same syntactic structure, which includes a variable element; see Monod Becquelin & Becquey (2008) and Lacadena (2010). Norman (1980: 387) notes that "among the Mayan communities of Mexico and Guatemala, verse forms based on pervasive grammatical parallelism are to be found in ceremonial speeches, oral history, songs, prayers, curing rituals, magical incantations, and dance dramas". Poqomchi' offering ceremonies are not an exception in this regard (14).

(14)   *ayu' loq'laj q'iij / ayu' loq'laj saqum / ayu' na qaq'oriik ayu' na qapahqaniik chi achii' chi awach haaw /*

ayu'	loq'-laj		q'iij	ayu'	loq'-laj	saq-um	ayu'
here	holy-INTENS		day	here	holy-INTENS	white-NMLZ	here

na=qa-q'or-iik			ayu'	na=qa-pahq-an-iik		chi
POT=1PL.POSS-speak-NMLZ			here	POT=1PL.POSS-ask-AP-NMLZ		PREP

a-chii'	chi	a-wach	jaaw
2POSS-edge	PREP	2POSS-front	sir

'Here is the holy day, here is the holy light; here we will speak, here we will ask; at your edge, at your front, sir.' (Ch)

Fragment (14) illustrates three consecutive syntactic parallelisms. The first one is 'here is the holy day, here is the holy light'. Two nominals, *q'iij* 'day' and *saqum* 'light', are incorporated in the same syntactic frame, 'here is the holy...' In the second and third parallelisms, the variables are lexical

roots, while their grammatical marking is repeated. Both verbs, *q'or* 'speak' and *pahqan* 'ask', are used in the potential aspect and take the first-person plural marker. The nominals *chii'* 'edge' and *wach* 'front' attach the same second-person possessive prefix *a-*.

Parallel couplets provide the canvas for the ritual discourse, while fragments that do not form part of any parallelism are in the minority; see also Lengyel (1988). In fact, Fragment (14) consists of 15 words, but only the appeal *jaaw* 'sir' does neither belong to the invariable frame nor to the variable part of a parallelism.

Different semantic relations between variable elements are possible.

(15)   *hat ta naq ilool hat ta naq ka'yineel keh taqeh loq'laj awixq'uun loq'laj awak'uun*

hat	ta_naq	il-ool	hat	ta_naq	ka'y-in-eel	k-eh	taqeh
2	OPT	see-AGT	2	OPT	observe-AP-AGT	3PL.POSS-DAT	PL

loq'-laj	aw-ixq'uun	loq'-laj	aw-ak'uun
holy-INTENS	2POSS-daughter	holy-INTENS	2POSS-son

'You would be the one who sees, you would be the one who observes your daughters, your sons.' (Ch)

There are two parallelisms in (15). The first one includes the words *ilool* and *ka'yineel*, which are close synonyms denoting an agent of the action of seeing or observing. In contrast, the second parallelism in (15) includes two antonyms, *ixq'un* 'daughter' and *ak'un* 'son', which are clearly opposed to each other for sex.

Another option for creating a parallelism is to alternate a Poqomchi' word with a related Spanish loanword (see also Bricker 1974: 372), as in (16).

(16)   *chateh taqeh i b'eeh / chateh taqeh i pwerta /*

ch-a-teh	taqeh	i	b'eeh	ch-a-teh	taqeh	i	pwerta
OPT-2ERG-open	PL	DEF	road	OPT-2ERG-open	PL	DEF	door

'Open the roads, open the doors.' (Ch)

Although *puerta* 'door' is not an accurate synonym for *b'eeh* 'road', this does not matter to the possibility that these two lexemes occur in the same parallel construction (16). See also a very detailed semantic classification of Mayan parallelisms in Christenson (2007: 35-41).

Besides couplets, there are also instances of the use of triplets (Hull 2003; Vapnarsky 2008) in Poqomchi' ritual discourse, as illustrated in (17).

(17)   *ma' qojakanaa' ma' qojaq'eb' ma' qojach'i'taaj*

ma'   q-oj-a-kan-aa'   ma'   q-oj-a-q'eb'   ma'
NEG   OPT-1PL.ABS-2ERG-abandon-TR   NEG   OPT-1PL.ABS-2ERG-lose   NEG

q-oj-a-ch'i't-aaj
OPT-1PL.ABS-2ERG-disturb-TR
'Do not abandon us, do not lose us, do not disturb us.' (T)

In (17), the vetative morphosyntactic frame is repeated three times in a row with different verb stems. Variable elements of a triplet are usually combined together, according to the principle of semantic proximity concerning their meanings (18).

(18)   *k'aleen / loq'laj elb'al i teew elb'al i suutz' elb'al i mayuul /*

k'aleen   loq'-laj   el-b'al   i   teew   el-b'al   i   suutz'
hello   holy-INTENS go.out-NMLZ   DEF   air   go.out-NMLZ   DEF   cloud

el-b'al   i   mayuul
go.out-NMLZ   DEF   fog
'Hello, holy way out of the air, way out of the cloud, way out of the fog.' (T)

The nouns *teew* 'air', *suutz'* 'cloud' and *mayuul* 'fog' are not synonyms, but have related meanings from close semantic domains. According to Christenson's (2007) classification, this is a functional-based associative parallelism.

With regard to possible quatrains, it is not easy to elaborate a principle that could strictly differentiate them from a simple pair of couplets (Montes de Oca 2008: 227). One such factor can be the presence of a semantic relation between all parts of a quatrain and, at the same time, the absence of a closer relation between both first and second, and third and fourth variable elements of this construction.

(19)   *k'aleen aweh okb'al i q'iij / okb'al i saqum / okb'al i ora okb'al i tiempo /*

k'aleen   aw-eh   ok-b'al   i   q'iij   ok-b'al   i   saq-um
hello   2POSS-DAT   enter-NMLZ   DEF   day   enter-NMLZ   DEF   white-NMLZ

ok-b'al   i   ora   ok-b'al   i   tiempo
enter-NMLZ   DEF   hour   enter-NMLZ   DEF   time
'Hello to you, beginning of the day, beginning of the light, beginning of the hour, beginning of the time.' (T)

Example (19) does not satisfy this criterion. There are four consecutive nouns occurring in the same syntactic environment: *q'iij* 'day', *saqum* 'light', *ora* 'hour' and *tiempo* 'time' (the last two lexemes are loans from Spanish). Nevertheless, two first elements ('day' and 'light') and two last elements ('hour' and 'time') frequently occur in couplets separately; compare the pair *q'iij – saqum* in (14) above. Furthermore, there is no evident semantic property that would link all these four items together more than they are related within respective pairs.

A more probable candidate for a quatrain is presented in (20).

(20)   *hat qatuut hat qamayaab' hat qayuq'ul hat qak'ixkab'al /*

hat   qa-tuut   hat   qa-mayaab'   hat   qa-yuq'-ul   hat
2   1PL.POSS-mother   2   1PL.POSS-Maya.PL   2   1PL.POSS-hill-ABST   2

qa-k'ixkab'-al
1PL.POSS-valley-ABST
'You are our mother, you are our Mayas, you are our hills, you are our valleys.' (P)

Example (20) illustrates a highly productive combination in the speech of the ritual specialist from Pajuil. The last two items, in fact, do form a stable diphrasism, 'hill' – 'valley', but this is not true for the first two items, 'mother' and 'Mayas', which are not encountered as parts of an identical couplet in my corpus. Although there is a clear semantic relation within each pair of elements (the first pair relates to ancestors, and the second to the natural environment), these four terms are also related as a whole, describing the divine addressees of the prayer.

Two couplets may follow each other without any binding, as in (14), or some additional material may separate them, as in (15). There are also instances where two couplets are overlapped. Sometimes, the variable element of one parallelism at the same time forms part of the invariable syntactic frame of the subsequent parallelism, as in (21).

(21)   *qojatoob'eej qojamehreej chaloq yuuq' qojamehreej chaloq k'ixkaab' /*

q-oj-a-toob'-eej   q-oj-a-mehr-eej   chaloq   yuuq'
OPT-1PL.ABS-2ERG-help-TR   OPT-1PL.ABS-2ERG-hold-TR   DIR   hill

q-oj-a-mehr-eej   chaloq   k'ixkaab'
OPT-1PL.ABS-2ERG-hold-TR   DIR   valley
'Help us, hold us hill, hold us valley.' (T)

Fragment (21) contains two couplets. The first one includes two different verbs, *toob'eej* 'help' and *mehreej* 'hold', which take the same set of grammatical morphemes. The second couplet is based on the frame *qojamehreej chaloq* 'hold us', which exhibits variation due to the diphrasism *yuuq'* 'hill' – *k'ixkaab'* 'valley'. Therefore, the verb *mehreej* belongs both to the variable part of the first parallelism and to the invariable part of the second.

Example (22) illustrates a similar chain of parallel constructions.

(22) *ma' qojq'ehb'ik ma' qojsahchik tuut ma' qojsahchik haaw /*

ma'   q-oj-q'e<h>b'-ik   ma'   q-oj-sa<h>ch-ik   tuut ma'
NEG   OPT-1PL.ABS-fall<PASS>-REAL NEG   OPT-1PL.ABS-lose<PASS>-REAL lady NEG

q-oj-sa<h>ch-ik   jaaw
OPT-1PL.ABS-lose<PASS>-REAL sir
'Let us not fall, let us not be lost, lady, let us not be lost, sir.' (T)

In (22), the overlap also concerns a verbal form, *sahchik* 'be lost'. It alternates with the verb *q'ehb'ik* 'fall' in the first parallelism. Meanwhile, as part of the syntactic frame *ma' qojsahchik*, it also provides the invariable basis for the subsequent couplet.

5.2. Lexical peculiarities

Although the corpus size is not large enough to make substantiated claims about the lexicon, there seem to be some genre-specific lexemes in Poqomchi', which are typical of ritual communication. For example, the ritual specialist from Pajuil abundantly uses the word *ma'ley* (23), which is absent in most Poqomchi' dictionaries. According to one of my language consultants, this term can be translated as 'spirit'; however, further semantic study is required.

(23) *ma'ley awach ma'ley achii' / qahaaw /*

ma'ley a-wach   **ma'ley** a-chii'   q-ajaaw
spirit   2POSS-front **spirit**   2POSS-edge 1PL.POSS-father
'Spirit in your front, spirit at your edge, our father.' (P)

In invocations to particular nahuals, specific lexemes are used to describe them by association. For example, when ritual specialists address themselves to the nahual I'x, which is considered as a protector of natural

resources, they usually refer to mountains and forests in accordance with this associative principle (24).

(24)   *chakuy qamahk i'x / q'an amontaña saq amontaña / q'an araxchee' saq araxchee' /*

ch-a-kuy   qa-mahk   i'x   q'an   a-montaña   saq
OPT-2ERG-forgive 1PL.POSS-sin I'x   yellow 2POSS-mountain   white

a-montaña   q'an   a-rax-chee'   saq   a-rax-chee'
2POSS-mountain yellow 2POSS-green-tree   white 2POSS-green-tree
'Forgive our sins, I'x, your mountain is yellow, your mountain is white, your forest is yellow, your forest is white.' (T)

Fragment (24) is also notable with regard to the use of the adjectives *q'an* 'yellow' and *saq* 'white', which do not denote colors in this context. When combined within the same couplet, they receive an indirect meaning, which appears to be similar to that of the word *loq'laj* 'holy' in several examples above. As this color metaphor is found in all three ceremonies in my corpus, it seems to be very useful in Poqomchi' ritual discourse.

There are several other instances of the metaphorical use of certain lexemes. Typically, an uncommon reading is triggered by the context that deals with an individual nahual, as in (25, 26).

(25)   *chapuhb'aaj i ti' chapuhb'aaj i k'axkilal / chapuhb'aaj i problema*

ch-a-puhb'-aaj   i   ti'   ch-a-puhb'-aaj   i   k'ax-kil-al
OPT-2ERG-shoot-TR DEF pain   OPT-2ERG-shoot-TR DEF difficult-NMLZ-ABST

ch-a-puhb'-aaj   i   problema
OPT-2ERG-shoot-TR   DEF   problem
'Shoot the pain, shoot the difficulties, shoot the problems.' (T)

(26)   *k'ahchi' qaq'aanb'iik /*

k'ahchi'   qa-q'aan-b'-iik
PROG   1PL.POSS-yellow-INTRZ-NMLZ
'We are getting yellow.' (T)

In (25), the verb *puhb'aaj* 'shoot' conveys the indirect meaning 'free, liberate'. The context apparently inspires such an unordinary word choice. This fragment is dedicated to the nahual Ajpuhb', whose name literally means 'shooter'. A similar situation is observed in (26), which uses the verb *q'aanb'ik* 'get yellow'. By means of this lexeme, the ritual specialist expresses the idea that the petitioners become wiser. This metaphor stems from the name of the nahual Q'aniil, which is literally translated as 'yellowness'.

Religious syncretism, which runs through the prayers, is especially salient at the lexical level. Two dimensions of syncretism are observed in my data: one stems from pan-Mayan activism, and the other from Christian traditions. The influence of the pan-Mayan movement is manifested, for example, in appeals to certain legendary personages from the Popol Vuh, such as Tepew, Q'uq'umatz, Xpiyakok, B'alam K'itze' and B'alam Aq'ab', among others. They have no direct relation to Poqomchi' culture; rather, they serve to certify the identity of modern Poqomchi' people as descendants of the ancient Mayan civilization.

In addition, Poqomchi' prayers contain certain non-Poqomchi' words, which were apparently loaned from other Mayan languages. The most frequent source is the K'iche' language, as there is substantial evidence of contact between Poqomchi' and K'iche' societies (see van Akkeren 2008). For example, the word *tz'ite'*, which means small red seeds used in ritual practices, has evident Mayan origins, but it is not a proper Poqomchi' word. The root *te'* 'tree' would be *chee'* in Poqomchi'. While this word is also absent in Dobbels (2003), it occurs in my corpus (27).

(27)   *wilih q'an atz'ite' saq atz'ite' q'an ab'ara saq ab'ara*

wilih   q'an   a-tz'ite'   saq   a-tz'ite'   q'an   a-b'ara   saq
DEM   yellow   2POSS-tz'ite'   white   2POSS-tz'ite'   yellow   2POSS-staff   white

a-b'ara
2POSS-staff
'This is your yellow tz'ite', your white tz'ite', your yellow staff, your white staff.' (T)

The word *tz'ite'* is used in (27) together with *b'ara* 'staff' (from Spanish *vara*) within the same couplet. Both words denote important ritual objects. Sentence (27) can be translated as 'This is your holy tz'ite', your holy staff'.

Another example of such an internal Mayan influence is the diphrasism *tz'aqol* 'former' – *b'itol* 'shaper'. In Poqomchi', there is the word *tz'aqol* 'the one who constructs', but there is no word *b'itol*, nor even the root *b'it*, which is present in K'iche' (Christenson 2003: 19), for example. The Poqomchi' alternative for this diphrasism would be *tz'aqool – k'oxool* (Dobbels 2003: 735). However, it is the wording *tz'aqol – b'itol*, which is consistently used in my corpus (28).

(28)   *chakuy qamahk jaaw / loq'laj tz'aqol loq'laj b'itol*

ch-a-kuy	qa-mahk	jaaw	loq'-laj	tz'aq-ol	loq'-laj
OPT-2ERG-forgive	1PL.POSS-sin	sir	holy-INTENS	build-AGT	holy-INTENS

b'it-ol
form-AGT

'Forgive our sin, sir, holy former, holy shaper.' (T)

The Christian dimension of syncretism manifests itself in Spanish loanwords for denoting religious concepts, such as *santísima trinidad* 'holy trinity' and *dios ajawb'ees* 'God the Father'. Fragments of Catholic prayers (the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, etc.) can be incorporated in the discourse of ritual specialists, either in Spanish or in Poqomchi'. The use of the directional particle *johtoq* 'up' can also be attributed to Christian influence (29).

(29)   *inqat'yoxej johtoq aweh /*

in-qa-t'yox-ej	**johtoq**	aw-eh
INC-1PL.ERG-thank-TR	**DIR:up**	2POSS-DAT

'We thank you.' (P)

As several Poqomchi' ritual specialists pointed out to me, Mayan divine authorities are not located in any specific place or direction, but are rather dispersed throughout the universe and can be evoked at any site; see similar observations by Wilson (1995) and Scott (2009). However, the particle *johtoq* 'up' in (29) makes it clear that the utterance is directed upwards, although the English translation does not reflect this. Hence, this acknowledgment is specifically intended for the Christian God, who is located in the sky, and not to nahuals, ancestral spirits or other Mayan divinities.

5.3. Tense/aspect/mood categories

Grammatical properties of the ritual discourse are mainly determined by the communicative situation. Many utterances pronounced by a ritual specialist are petitions. Furthermore, the communicative situation implies the presence of a speechless divine addressee. Hence, second-person referential forms and optative constructions prevail in the discourse.

(30)   *qojawuch'ihleej chupaam qatz'eet chupaam qasak'aaj*

     q-oj-aw-uch'ihl-eej   chi   ru-paam   qa-tz'eet   chi
     OPT-1PL.ABS-2ERG-accompany-TR   PREP   3SG.POSS-in 1PL.POSS-left PREP

     ru-paam   qa-sak'aaj
     3SG.POSS-in   1PL.POSS-right
     'Accompany us at the left side, at the right side.' (P)

Example (30) presents a typical verb form of Poqomchi' ritual discourse, which is marked by the optative and refers to the second person of the subject. However, other verbal categories can also be in an optative sense during ritual communication. There are instances, where the construction, which denotes the potential tense/aspect/mood in ordinary everyday communication, describes a desired situation, rather than a probable one (31, 32).

(31)   *na'awisam chu'nchel i ti' na'awisam chu'nchel i k'axik wilik chi kiij haaw /*

     na='aw-is-am   chu'nchel i   ti'   **na**='aw-is-am   chu'nchel
     POT=2POSS-quit-NMLZ PREP.all   DEF   pain **POT**=2POSS-quit-NMLZ PREP.all

     i   k'ax-ik   wi-lik   chi   k-iij   jaaw
     DEF difficult-NMLZ exist-PRED PREP 3PL.POSS-back sir
     'Quit all the pain, quit all the difficulties [that] they have, sir.' (Ch)

(32)   *nakooj ab'eesam nakooj awilom / na'ayeem qeh rusuqkiil i qak'uxl rusuqkiil i qanima' /*

     nak=ooj   a-b'ees-am   **nak**=ooj   aw-il-om
     POT=1PL.ABS 2POSS-guide-NMLZ **POT**=1PL.ABS 2POSS-see-NMLZ

     na='a-ye-em   q-eh   ru-suq-kiil   i   qa-k'uxl
     POT=2POSS-give-NMLZ 1PL.POSS-DAT 3SG.POSS-nice-NMLZ DEF 1PL.POSS-heart

     ru-suq-kiil   i   q-anima'
     3SG.POSS-nice-NMLZ DEF 1PL.POSS-soul
     'Guide us, see us, give us happiness of our hearts, happiness of our souls.' (T)

The examples in (31) and (32) may also be understood as simple predictions of future situations (as in 'you will quit all the pain' and 'you will guide us, you will see us'), yet their interpretation as desired optative events fits more naturally into the context of ritual performance. In ritual speech, grammatical meanings of both verbal categories, the optative and the potential, seem to be very close to each other.

Another phenomenon concerns the contextual omission of overt tense/aspect/mood morphology. Verbal predicates, which must normally bear a tense/aspect/mood marker, can sometimes lack it, specifically when

the corresponding semantics can be inferred from the context or from the peculiar properties of the speech act situation (33).

(33)   *ayu' wilik haaw i nik' nimaal i kimayiij kik'am chaloq loq'laj awak'uun /*

    ayu'   wi-lik   jaaw   i   nik'   nim-aal   i   ki-mayiij
    here   exist-PRED sir   DEF how big-NMLZ DEF 3PL.POSS-offering

    ki-k'am   chaloq   loq'-laj   aw-ak'uun
    3PL.ERG-bring DIR   holy-INTENS 2POSS-son
    'Here is, sir, the value of the offerings [that] your holy sons brought.' (Ch)

A complete form in (33) would be *x-ki-k'am*, but the completive prefix *x-* is dropped. Any alternative interpretation of this verb form (as an event that is planned in the future or that is still not concluded, for example) would not make much sense.

    Contextual omission is possible, not only for the completive prefix, but also for the incompletive (34).

(34)   *ayu' qasik' awuuk' qapermiso*

    ayu'   qa-sik'   aw-uuk'   qa-permiso
    here   1PL.ERG-look.for 2POSS-with 1PL.POSS-permission
    'Here we look for our permission with you.' (T)

The form *qa-sik'* 'we look for' in (34) apparently stands for a complete form *in-qa-sik'* with the incompletive prefix *in-*.

    Such instances of the contextual omission of tense/aspect/mood markers have also been reported for other Mayan languages of different subgroups; see Ayres (1991: 143-144) for Ixil, Zavala Maldonado (1992: 69) for Akatek and Vinogradov (2015) for Q'eqchi', among others. This seems to be a remnant of the earlier autonomous morphological status of the preverbal tense/aspect/mood markers in Mayan languages, which was subsequently lost in the process of grammaticalization. Although the contextual omission of tense/aspect/mood markers in Poqomchi' is not exclusively restricted to the particular genre of ritual discourse, the ritual communicative act significantly narrows the metalinguistic context, which results in the more frequent use of this grammatical device.

6. Conclusion

Offering ceremonies among contemporaneous Poqomchi' people naturally combine ancient pre-Columbian traits with Christian traditions imposed by Spanish colonialists in the 16th century and new pan-Mayan ideas of cultural self-identity, which emerged at the end of the 20th century. This syncretism manifests itself not only in the ethnographic peculiarities of these ceremonies, which are beyond the scope of this paper, but also in the language used by Poqomchi' ritual specialists throughout the ceremony. This study only presents a first attempt to document and analyze the linguistic properties of this specific discursive genre.

It is possible to identify some traits, which seem to be typical of ritual speech in Poqomchi'. They include the use of parallel syntactic constructions (couplets, triplets and chains of them), the use of certain genre-specific lexemes, the development of specific indirect lexical and grammatical meanings and the contextual omission of tense/aspect/mood markers. Of course, this list is far from exhaustive. The fact that there are several features, which are specific to a particular ceremony or a particular ritual specialist, suggests that the present study is based on a very small corpus of recordings, which does not allow for making well-grounded reliable conclusions. Further studies are necessary to confirm these preliminary findings and to consider them from a broader cultural and cross-linguistic perspective, when a wider sample of primary data is available.

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Appendix

This appendix contains three textual extracts from ceremonies described in Section 3. These are samples of coherent discourse, rather than just utterances taken out of context, which are meant to serve further studies. This is a first attempt at documentation of Poqomchi' ritual speech, presenting the primary data (albeit linguistically processed) in addition to the discussion of theoretical findings based on these data.

1. Ceremony in Tampo (Tactic, Alta Verapaz)

This is a fragment from the introductory part of the prayer. The spiritual guide presents himself and greets the ceremonial site and some supernatural divinities, including ancestral spirits, phenomena of the surrounding environment and several nahuals.

k'aleen aweh convento ramchah /

k'aleen	aw-eh	convento	ramchah
hello	2POSS-DAT	convent	Ramchah

'Hello to you, convent Ramchah.'

k'aleen aweh loq'laj ye'aab' /

k'aleen	aw-eh	loq'-laj	ye'aab'
hello	2POSS-DAT	holy-INTENS	place

'Hello to you, holy place.'

hin awak'uun / ayu' xnub'eesaj cho wooq nuq'ab' /

hin	aw-ak'uun	ayu'	x-nu-b'ees-aj	cho	w-ooq	nu-q'ab'
1SG	2POSS-son	here	COM-1SG.ERG-guide-TR	DIR	1SG.POSS-foot	1SG.POSS-hand

'I am your son. I brought here my feet, my hands.'

k'aleen aweh q'equm aq'ab' /

k'aleen	aw-eh	q'eq-um	aq'ab'
hello	2POSS-DAT	black-NMLZ	night

'Hello to you, darkness night.'

reh qawiriik / reh qahi'liik / i loq'laj q'equm aq'ab' /

r-eh	qa-wir-iik	r-eh	qa-hi'l-iik	i
3SG.POSS-DAT	1PL.POSS-sleep-NMLZ	3SG.POSS-DAT	1PL.POSS-rest-NMLZ	DEF

loq'-laj	q'eq-um	aq'ab'
holy-INTENS	black-NMLZ	night

'The holy darkness night, for our sleep, for our rest.'

k'aleen aweh b'alam aq'ab' / b'alam aq'ab' hin awak'uun /

k'aleen	aw-eh	b'alam	aq'ab'	b'alam	aq'ab'	hin	aw-ak'uun
hello	2POSS-DAT	tiger	night	tiger	night	1SG	2POSS-son

'Hello to you, tiger night.[6] Tiger night, I am your son.'

chakuy numahk tutb'ees /

ch-a-kuy	nu-mahk	tut-b'ees
OPT-2ERG-forgive	1SG.POSS-sin	mother-INDPOSS

'Forgive my sins, mother.'

ri'sil awooq ri'sil aq'ab' /

r-i'sil	aw-ooq	r-i'sil	a-q'ab'
3SG.POSS-under	2POSS-foot	3SG.POSS-under	2POSS-hand

'Under your feet, under your hands.'

aha' kihi'lik wii' qamaam / kihi'lik wii' qati't

aha'	k-i-hi'l-ik	wii'	qa-maam	k-i-hi'l-ik
where	INC-3PL.ABS-rest-REAL	STAT	1PL.POSS-grandfather	INC-3PL.ABS-rest-REAL

wii'	q-ati't
STAT	1PL.POSS-grandmother

'Where our grandfathers are resting, our grandmothers are resting.'

ki'ooj kisutinik i qamaam i qati't taqeh pasados

k-i-'ooj	k-i-sut-in-ik	i	qa-maam	i
INC-3PL.ABS-go	INC-3PL.ABS-return-AP-REAL	DEF	1PL.POSS-grandfather	DEF

q-ati't	taqeh	pasados
1PL.POSS-grandmother	PL	past.PL

'Our grandfathers, our grandmothers of the past go and return.'

---

[6] *B'alam Aq'ab'* can also be understood as a proper name from the Popol Vuh.

ajkamanom / ajpom ajkandela / ajsones / ajq'ooj taqeh /

aj-kam-an-om	aj-pom	aj-kandela	aj-sones	aj-q'ooj	taqeh
AGT-work-AP-AGT	AGT-incense	AGT-candle	AGT-dance	AGT-music	PL

'Workers, ritual specialists, dancers, musicians.'

kitz'uyinik kib'ichinik /

k-i-tz'uy-in-ik	k-i-b'ich-in-ik
INC-3PL.ABS-sing-AP-REAL	INC-3PL.ABS-intone-AP-REAL

'They sing, they intone.'

hoj aha'lak'uun /

hoj	a-ha'lak'uun
1PL	2POSS-son

'We are your sons.'

chawilow taqeh chaloq awixq'uun ayu' wilkeeb' /

ch-aw-il-ow	taqeh	chaloq	aw-ixq'uun	ayu'	wi-lk=eeb'
OPT-2ERG-see-TR	PL	DIR	2POSS-daughter	here	exist-PRED=3PL

'Take care of your daughters, [who] are here.'

ayu' xk'o'loq nawaal keej nawaal b'aatz' nawaal kan / nawaal ajpuh /

ayu'	x-k'u'loq	nawaal	keej	nawaal	b'aatz'	nawaal	kan	nawaal	ajpuhb'
here	COM-come	nahual	Keej	nahual	B'aatz'	nahual	Kan	nahual	Ajpuhb'

'Nahual Keej, nahual B'aatz', nahual Kan, [and] nahual Ajpuhb' came here.'

ayu' tooj / ayu' xk'o'loq i k'at / ayu' xk'o'loq tuut /

ayu'	tooj	ayu'	x-k'u'loq	i	k'at	ayu'	x-k'u'loq	tuut
here	Tooj	here	COM-come	DEF	K'at	here	COM-come	lady

'Here is Tooj, here came K'at, here came lady.'

ayu' xk'o'loq i tz'i' ayu' xk'o'loq i… ajnawaal no'j /

ayu'	x-k'u'loq	i	tz'i'	ayu'	x-k'u'loq	i	aj-nawaal	no'j
here	COM-come	DEF	Tz'i'	here	COM-come	DEF	AGT-nahual	No'j

'Here came Tz'i', here came nahual No'j.'

ayu' xk'o'loq i nawaal aaj /

ayu'	x-k'u'loq	i	nawaal	aaj
here	COM-come	DEF	nahual	Aaj

'Here came nahual Aaj.'

noq k'o'loq taqeh kemeh /

noq	k'u'loq	taqeh	kemeh
when	come	PL	Kemeh

'When [nahuals] Kemeh came.'

ayu' wilkooj / hin awak'uun keej / ayu' wilkooj /

ayu'	wi-lk=ooj		hin	aw-ak'uun	keej	ayu'	wi-lk=ooj
here	exist-PRED=1PL.ABS		1SG	2POSS-son	Keej	here	exist-PRED=1PL.ABS

'We are here. I am your son Keej. We are here.'

2. Ceremony in Pajuil (Chicaman, El Quiche)

This fragment is derived from the beginning of the prayer, where the ritual specialist presents the attendants to the divine authorities. He does not mention their names, but describes their activities in broad terms. Some generalized petitions to the divine world are also made at this stage of the prayer.

qat'yoxej chuwach i q'iij saqum /

qa-t'yox-ej	chi	ru-wach	i	q'iij	saq-um
1PL.ERG-thank-TR	PREP	3SG.POSS-front	DEF	day	white-NMLZ

'We thank [it] in front of the day light.'

re' hat / wilik naj aorden chi naah / ajk'achareel / ajhi'leel / taqeh awak'uun /

re'	hat	wi-lik	jenaj	a-orden	chi	naah	aj-k'ach-ar-eel
DEF	2	exist-PRED	INDEF	2POSS-command	PREP	above	AGT-alive-INTRZ-AGT

aj-hi'l-eel	taqeh	aw-ak'uun
AGT-rest-AGT	PL	2POSS-son

'It is you who rules over those who live, those who rest, your sons.'

wilih xik'uloq

wilih	x-i-k'u'loq
DEM	COM-3PL.ABS-come

'They came here.'

chatah chaloq chachii' chawach ajawb'ees santisima cruz ajawal dios yuuq' k'ixkaab' /

ch-a-tah	chaloq	chi	a-chii'	chi	a-wach	ajaw-b'ees
OPT-2ERG-observe	DIR	PREP	2POSS-edge	PREP	2POSS-front	father-INDPOSS

santisima	cruz	ajaw-al	dios	yuuq'	k'ixkaab'
saint.INTENS	cross	father-ABST	God	hill	valley

'Observe, at your edge, in your front, father, Holy Cross, lord God, hill valley.'

qat'yoxej awach na'eel /

qa-t'yox-ej   a-wach   ne'eel

1PL.ERG-thank-TR 2POSS-front INTENS

'We thank you a lot.'

wilih ab'ihnaal akik'eel taqeh /

wilih   a-b'ihn-aal   a-kik'-eel   taqeh

DEM   2POSS-name-ABST 2POSS-blood-POSS PL

'These are your names, your bloods.'

tijinik inkan /

tij-in-ik   in-ki-b'an

learn-AP-NMLZ INC-3PL.ERG-make

'They are learning.'

sik'ooj weeh inkan /

sik'-ooj   b'eeh   in-ki-b'an

look.for-PTCP   road   INC-3PL.ERG-make

'They are looking for a road.'

molooj na'ojb'al inkan /

mol-ooj   na'oj-b'al   in-ki-b'an

collect-PTCP   know-NMLZ   INC-3PL.ERG-make

'They are collecting knowledge.'

inkiq'oreej awach ta inkiq'oreej achii' ta

in-ki-q'o'r-eej   a-wach   ta   in-ki-q'o'r-eej   a-chii'   ta

INC-3PL.ERG-call-TR 2POSS-front OPT INC-3PL.ERG-call-TR 2POSS-edge OPT

'They would call your front, they would call your edge.'

kab'laj no'j oxlaj no'j /

kab'-laj   no'j   ox-laj   no'j

two-ten   No'j   three-ten   No'j

'Twelve No'j, thirteen No'j.'

cheew sabiduria taqeh cheew experiencia taqeh je' akab' taq haaw je' akab' taq tuut /

ch-a-ye-ew   sabiduria   taqeh   ch-a-ye-ew   experiencia   taqeh   je'

OPT-2ERG-give-TR wisdom   PL   OPT-2ERG-give-TR experience   PL   so

a-kab'   taq   jaaw   je'   a-kab'   taq   tuut

2POSS-like PL   sir   so   2POSS-like PL   lady

'Give wisdom, give experience; like you, sirs, like you, ladies.'

re' wo' inqapahqaaj re' wo' inqaq'or /

re'   wo'   in-qa-pahq-aaj   re'   wo'   in-qa-q'or

DEF   also   INC-1PL.ERG-ask-TR   DEF   also   INC-1PL.ERG-say

'This is also what we ask, this is also what we say.'

3. Ceremony in Cuevas Chitul (Santa Cruz Verapaz, Alta Verapaz)

This is a particular petition pronounced by the ritual specialist on behalf of a middle-aged woman. The abundant use of the reportative marker *inkih*, in order to introduce direct citations, is especially notable in this fragment.

ayu' wilkeeb' awak'uun / ayu' wilkeeb' awixq'uun /

ayu'   wi-lk=eeb'   aw-ak'uun   ayu'   wi-lk=eeb'   aw-ixq'uun

here   exist-PRED=3PL   2POSS-son   here   exist-PRED=3PL   2POSS-daughter

'Here are your sons, here are your daughters.'

k'ahtoq chu'nchel i ti' /

k'a<h>t-oq   chu'nchel   i   ti'

burn<PASS>-IRR   PREP.all   DEF   pain

'Let all the pain to be burned.'

k'ahtoq chu'nchel i k'axik wilik chi wiij inkih /

k'a<h>t-oq   chu'nchel   i   k'ax-ik   wi-lik   chi   w-iij   inkih

burn<PASS>-IRR   PREP.all   DEF   difficult-NMLZ   exist-PRED   PREP   1SG.POSS-back   REP

'Let all the difficulties that I have to be burned, [she] says.'

aha' ink'oloq haaw inkih /

aha'   in-k'u'loq   jaaw   inkih

where   INC-come   sir   REP

'Where does [it] come, sir?, [she] says.'

chih jariik i pahqamaj chaloq chi wiij inkih /

chih   jariik   i   pahq-amaj   chaloq   chi   w-iij   inkih

what   something   DEF   ask-PTCP   DIR   PREP   1SG.POSS-back   REP

'What is my petition?, [she] says.'

kinatoob'ej weh maam kinatoob'ej weh k'een inkih /

k-in-a-toob'-ej		w-eh	maam	k-in-a-toob'-ej
OPT-1SG.ABS-2ERG-help-TR	1SG.POSS-DAT	grandfather	OPT-1SG.ABS-2ERG-help-TR

w-eh	k'een	inkih
1SG.POSS-DAT	grandmother	REP

'Help me, grandfather, help me, grandmother, [she] says.'

kinatoob'ej loq'laj yuuq' kinatoob'ej loq'laj k'ixkaab' /

k-in-a-toob'-ej		loq'-laj	yuuq'	k-in-a-toob'-ej
OPT-1SG.ABS-2ERG-help-TR	holy-INTENS	hill	OPT-1SG.ABS-2ERG-help-TR

loq'-laj	k'ixkaab'
holy-INTENS	valley

'Help me, holy hills, help me, holy valleys.'

qahaaw tz'aqol b'itol tz'aqol b'itol tz'aqol b'itol /

q-ajaaw	tz'aq-ol	b'it-ol	tz'aq-ol	b'it-ol	tz'aq-ol	b'it-ol
1PL.POSS-father	build-AGT	form-AGT	build-AGT	form-AGT	build-AGT	form-AGT

'Our father Tz'aqol B'itol, Tz'aqol B'itol, Tz'aqol B'itol.'

chaj reet inkixowaj nuwach inkih /

chih	aj	r-eet	in-k-ixow-aj	nu-wach	inkih
what	EMPH	3SG.POSS-reason	INC-3PL.ERG-envy-TR	1SG.POSS-front	REP

'Why do they envy me?, [she] says.'

chaj reet haaw inkih /

chih	aj	r-eet	jaaw	inkih
what	EMPH	3SG.POSS-reason	sir	REP

'Why, sir?, [she] says.'

inkixowaj nuwach ruum naak haaw inkih /

in-k-ixow-aj	nu-wach	r-uum	naak	jaaw	inkih
INC-3PL.ERG-envy-TR	1SG.POSS-front	3SG.POSS-cause	maybe	sir	REP

'They probably envy me for some reason, sir, [she] says.'

hin naak b'ehom chaj inkil taqeh awixq'uun haaw inkih /

hin	naak	b'ehom	chih	aj	in-k-il	taqeh	aw-ixq'uun	jaw	inkih
1SG	maybe	rich	what	EMPH	INC-3PL.ERG-see	PL	2POSS-daughter	sir	REP

'Perhaps your daughters see [that] I am rich, sir, [she] says.'

ruum chaal nupahqaaj aweh haaw inkih /

r-uum	chaal	nu-pahq-aaj	aw-eh	jaaw	inkih
3SG.POSS-cause	come	1SG.ERG-ask-TR	2POSS-DAT	sir	REP

'This is why I came to ask you, sir, [she] says.'

chawisaj weh nuch'i'k chi wiij inkih /

ch-aw-is-aj	w-eh	nu-ch'i'k	chi	w-iij	inkih
OPT-2ERG-quit-TR	1SG.POSS-DAT	1SG.POSS-bother	PREP	1SG.POSS-back	REP

'Free me from my bother, [she] says.'

loq'laj qahaaw inkih /

loq'-laj	q-ajaaw	inkih
holy-INTENS	1PL.POSS-father	REP

'Our holy father, [she] says.'