

Translating the Popol Vuh

Advances made possible using Allen Christenson's edition (2003, 2004)
Lloyd Anderson, Ecological Linguistics, version of 20 December, 2007

Many people have contributed to our understanding of the Popol Vuh, with insights from history, archaeology, images on pottery, linguistics, comparative mythology, and other fields. Each attempted translation has made its own contributions, and has benefited from what was achieved by those who went before.

The larger purpose here is to get closer to a true translation, representing accurately the **meaning** of the original text in the Quiché language (K'iché), conveying it in smooth flowing English whose style is high religious and historical to reflect that of the original when it had that kind of style. For English, the chief sources of such special language are the King James version of the Bible, works of Shakespeare, or the formality of legal language (legal language often uses couplets). So it is appropriate to model some English phrasings on such traditions. Phrases similar to those of the Christian Bible have here of course no specifically Christian implications, they only convey nuances of formality and reverence and religion. As they should.

Here are the sections into which this discussion is divided. The lists of examples are intended as tools to help in determining more precisely the range of meanings of elements of the Quiché text.

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Brief survey of a few previous editions

Goetz and Morley (1950) translated into English the Spanish version of Recinos (1947).

Munro Edmonson's edition (1971) displayed the text in paired short lines, reflecting the understanding that Mayan literary forms often used couplets. This was however forced, done rigidly. Edmonson had explanatory notes for the reader wanting to know more.

Dennis Tedlock's editions (1985, slightly revised 1996) had the benefit of close consultations with ritual specialists, whose perspectives improved his understandings. (Tedlock has written elsewhere on how we can let written texts reflect the structure of oral delivery.)

Allen Christenson's edition and analyses (2003 and 2004) and now a searchable CD including a spoken reading of the text in the Quiché language are the latest and the best. Christenson is close to fluent in Quiché, including particularly much of the older formal style of language, and for years has been closely involved with those who maintain classical Quichéan culture. These provide a solid foundation for his many contributions. His "free translation" (referred to below simply with the date 2003) advances our understanding on many points, and the very extensive introduction and notes on matters of literary form, language, and culture are illuminating. Combined with his Volume II (2004) "Literal Poetic Version, Translation and Transcription" (referred to below simply by line numbers), he has provided the best tools we have ever had for studying the text and its language. The line numbers link the flowing translation (2003), the grammatical analysis (2004), and the transcription of the original text (in the same 2004 volume), so it is possible to go back and forth between them.

Also important to note is the version entirely in Quiché by Sam Colop, published in Guatemala by Cholsamaj in 1999. This edition arranges sentences on the page to reflect the structure of the Quiché language itself, and does that better than any other edition so far. It does not adhere to any rigid formula to present the text as pairs of lines, and it does not usually fragment sentences but keeps them more obviously together, as they should be. This, more than any other, warrants the label of a "poetically presented" edition. It has been said that this edition sometimes does not reflect as much the older formal Quiché language, but sticks closer to modern Quiché. As such, it may perhaps be regarded in some small ways as a **translation** from Classical Quiché into modern Quiché, something which can be very useful for modern Mayan readers. This would be much like translations of Shakespeare into contemporary English.

This writer brought to the Austin, Texas meetings, the first year that Mayan people participated, the idea of displaying text the way Sam Colop has done it. The idea itself, or at least ideas very similar to it, originally came from Dennis Tedlock, Dell Hymes, and others who have worked with the recording of oral traditions in print. This way of arranging text is also followed in the drafts accompanying this discussion of methods and tools, for both the Quiché and English texts. Because this kind of arrangement requires the width of a full page, it is not practical to put two languages in parallel columns on single pages, rather facing pages must be used.

What is "Translation"?

As a preface to attempting to go a few steps beyond what Christenson has achieved, it is appropriate to consider a bit further what is normally meant by the concept of "translation".

True translation expresses in one ("target") language the **meaning** of a text originally in another ("source") language. There are of course some things which cannot be translated. Some depend on knowledge of another culture too deep to convey to those who have not experienced it. Puns, single words which can be understood with two different meanings, normally work only in one language, and cannot be translated. Some metaphorical associations cannot easily be translated, though they are not uniformly impossible. There are also barriers to translation from other sources. Often errors arise from attempting to convey the grammar of the source language in the target language, or from trying to translate single words consistently without regard to context, from translating **parts of** idiomatic expressions which already in the source language do not mean what their individual words and

grammatical structure would lead you to expect. You simply have to know the meaning of such combinations of words. Eugene Nida, a specialist in translating the Christian Bible into other languages (*Toward a Science of Translating* 1964), pointed out that a true translation goes all the way down to meaning of the source text, and renders that meaning in the new text in the target language. There should be no trace in the target-language text of purely grammatical features of the source text. Giving word-by-word glosses or morpheme glosses is useful for analyzing the structure of another language, but it is a very different goal than translation. The two goals cannot be achieved at the same time with a single text. Thus, quite properly, Christenson has written two volumes with quite distinct purposes. These two very different goals are often confused, especially in fields like the study of Mayan glyphic texts where we understand only parts of texts. The temptation is to gloss single glyphs (often of course even with “nicknames” for the glyphs rather than glosses of their actual meanings) instead of translating meanings. This rather too conveniently papers over instances in which we simply do not yet know what the texts mean, or what their grammar is.

Some characteristics of Christenson's editions

Despite the subtitles of the two books, Christenson (2003) is actually the more literal translation. It is the more literal of the two books because it represents the meaning of the original text more accurately, with **less** interference from the grammar of the original Quiché text. Christenson (2004) is not a literal translation, nor a free translation. It is not a translation at all. It is rather often a word-by-word glossing of the fragments of the Quiché text, partly even of morphemes of that text, often in ways which make no sense in English. Yet it is extremely valuable in revealing how the Quiché language works to convey its meaning, surely the most valuable work so far published in this regard for those wishing to study the language of this text. This second volume should have been called something like a “grammatical analysis and transcription”. As such it remains very well done and useful.

Christenson (2004) follows Edmonson (1971) in forcing the Quiché text rather rigidly into pairs of lines even occasionally when these are not literary couplets and when the pairs do not reflect the grammar or the meaning of the original text (although the majority of them do reflect that to at least some degree). Here is a list of pairs of lines which should probably be split apart for “poetic” line groupings: 1997 / 1998, 2570 / 2571, 2700 / 2701, 2736 / 2737, 2842 / 2843, 3064 / 3065, 5710 / 5711, 6083 / 6084, 7201 / 7202, 7395 / 7396, 7413 / 7414, 7469 / 7470, 7592 / 7593, 7639 / 7640, 7736 / 7737, 7750-7751, 7772-7773, 7916 / 7917, 8049 / 8050, 8053 / 8054, 8169 / 8170, 8171 / 8172, 8220 / 8221, 8278 / 8279, . Christenson does occasionally present lines in triples, for example 7671-3 and 7674-6.

There are occasional single lines not paired, and a few of these are especially emphatic, culminating summaries of a longer sequence, one of which Christenson points out (2004 note 27; line 657): “The stark finality of this sentence is further emphasized by the fact that it is not paired with a parallel phrase.”. If we consider single sentences without extensive parallelisms or couplets (other than giving the names of two participants) we have several more which act as summaries at the ends of major sections of text. As candidates consider these lines: 270-4, **431-3**, 486-9, **516-7**, **657**, 834-7, **879-80**, **983-4**, **1077**, **1163-4**, **1381-5**, **1522-4**, **1715-20**, and **7640**. Those shown in bold are here regarded as single lines, not couplets. There are of course more which we can hope to add to this list, and eventually use as clues to minor and major divisions of the text.

Idioms whose parts are not literally meaningful

Idioms involving *wach* “face” in K’ichéan languages:

In Quiché, *wach* (face, countenance) carries the connotation of individual “self.” If something is pleasing to a person, it is said to “fall well upon the face” (*utz kaqaj chuwach*). To ask, “How are you?” the question would be phrased, “Is your face good?” (*La utz a wach?*) It is also intimately tied to vision and status. In one section, the first men’s extraordinary vision is what gave them their ability to gain knowledge.

Christenson’s glossing “Is it good your face?” is of course attempting to give a sense of the grammatical structure and word order of the original, but since that gives an impression of incoherent speech, it is better when giving a grammatical analysis or a glossing of the parts of such an idiom to do it in grammatical English, as “Is your face good?”. None of these are of course a translation. A correct translation is the one Christenson actually gives, “How are you?”. That is a literal translation, not a free translation. None of the others are **translations** into English at all, because they do not express in normal English the same meaning as was expressed in the Quiché sentence. “Is your face good?” simply does not **mean** the same thing as “How are you?” Glossing and translation cannot both be done in a single text.

Christenson (2003 p.199) renders a thank-you from the first true humans created to the gods who created them thus: “Truly we thank you doubly, triply that we were created, that we were given our mouths and our faces.” In note 488 he says “Literally “we were faced.” A translation might include something like “that we were given speech and personhood”.

Quiché *ri sach ta u wach K’iche’* is glossed “the loss then their faces Quichés” and rendered (2003 p.264) “that the Quichés be destroyed”.

Some phrases involving this word *wach* occur very commonly in the *Popol Vuh*. The word itself is usually best not rendered in English by a single other word, but it can influence how other words are translated, or put better, in combination with other words, it can still be reflected in a true translation.

Quiché	Glossing	Truer Translation
<i>ch-u-wach ulew</i>	on the face of the earth	upon / on the earth [reverence]
<i>ch-u-wach Ajaw</i>	in the face of the Lord(s)	before the Lords (or) in the presence of the Lords

The first example above does not mean “on the surface of the land”, because *wach* conveys reverence, not a physical part-whole relation. The second example is easier because we have formal models. Except when the word “before” would be ambiguous (where one interpretation could refer to an earlier **time**) it can serve to add the sense of reverence which is appropriate.

We can compare the biblical English “before the Lord thy God”, which like the Quiché means “in the presence of”. Christenson does translate a number of occurrences in this style, as “before the faces of the Gods”, “before the face of Tohil”, etc. See lines 6292, 6312, 6348, 6351, 6358, 6369, 6474, 6553, 6663, 7028, 7413-4, 7626, 7642, 7741, 7899, 8009, 8248, 8253, 8285, 8293, 8322, 8470, 8473. But an actual translation would be “before the Gods”, “before Tohil”, etc. Two examples “before the faces of the Castillian people” lines 8548 and 8629 he translates “under the Catillians”. Another group are “before the faces of the Caveks / Nihaib / Ahau Quichés”, and might imply that the lords are at least in theory subordinate to their peoples, who accept them or do not accept them: lines 7575, 7788, 7800, 7821, 8110, 8113, 8115, 8562, 8638, 8657, 8681, 8695, 8706, 8707, 8708. In line 8710 this is summarized “each .. before the face of their lineages”. But in some place(s) he translated “over (their peoples)”, which might be quite an opposite meaning.

Historically, the English word “front” drives from Latin *frons*, *front-is* ‘forehead’. In a different but related area of meaning, the word “anti” in English, ‘against; opposite’, derives from the same source as ancient Hittite *hanti* ‘forehead’ or ‘face’ [check to get the correct translation]. It would be incorrect to translate English “before the Lord thy God” into some other language using words having very different meanings in context in that other language. That is like what is done to the Quiché text when a purported translation uses instead a glossing with the English word “face”, not sufficiently taking context and meaning into account. (There is of course the difference that Quiché uses the same word *wach* for both literal and reverential meanings, where English “before” is not the same word as “face”.) Notice in English also the phrase “saving face” which comes close to some Quichéan sensibilities for this word.

Quiché *chi-ki-wach* is at least once glossed as a more physical location (lines 8369-70, also 8359-60) “behind them, before their faces” and translated (2003 pp.289-90) “(may they not have impediments placed) behind them or before them” and “(May no deceiver come) behind them or before them”. This might in both cases be translated “behind them or in front of them”. Or do both mean “with their knowledge or behind their backs”?

The Quiché idiom glossed “Take pity on my face” can be translated “Take pity on me” with no explicit word “face” in English. See lines 1100-1101, 1111, 1131, 1442, 1455, 5608, 5616, 5884, 6342 7169. More accurate is perhaps "Have mercy on me" or "Be compassionate to me".

Quiché *chi-matzalaj ki wach* is glossed “would hide their faces (line 1301) and translated (2003 p.103) “hid their purpose”. Clearly the glossing is misleading as to meaning.

Quiché *rax ki wach* is glossed and rendered “Their faces are changed / new.” (line 2875; 2003 p.144, note 334), but a true translation needs to communicate the loss of self-control.

Quiché *Qi junam wach* is glossed “Truly same face” (line 5771), and translated (2003 p.219) “They were truly united.” See also lines 5986, 6091, 8163.

Quiché *u wach-in-ik* is glossed “its appearance” (lines 6040, 6045)

Quiché *ta x-wach-in q'ij* is glossed “when the Sun appeared” (lines 6048-9, 6188-9) See also 6366, 6702, 6924, 8501-2

Quiché *Chi-tilt-ot-ik u wach* is glossed “its face would glitter” (line 6055). Christenson translates with the better (2003 p.228): “(It came forth) glittering...”

Quiché *u tz'aqat qa wach* is glossed “the completion of our faces” (line 6217), and rendered “We were complete” (2003 p.231). Should it be translated to mean something like “the achievement of our full status” ? (ugly wording, but is the sense closer?)

Quiché *K'ajisabal ki wach* (line 6966) is rendered (2003 p.249) as “This was a punishment upon their faces.” A translation might be “This was a humiliation.” (But compare line 7163, rendered (2003 p.252) “(all the nations) were humiliated” with a different verb.)

Quiché *chi-q-il u wach ri qa puwaq* is rendered (2003 p.249) as “We shall see (again) the face of our precious metal.”

Quiché *x-u-k'am ki wach* is glossed “received their faces” (line 7540) and translated (2003 p.261) “they were (not) content.”

Idioms “to grind their faces” and “to crush their faces”

This means “to punish them”, see Christenson (2003) lines 723, 734, 743, 789, 801, and 821-823, pp.86-89 and note 132. In this case, instead of a true translation, Christenson regularly glosses the parts of the idioms even in what is supposed to be a free translation: “Their faces were ground up”, “Their faces were crushed”, “All of them crushed their faces”, “Thus their faces were crushed”, “Thus their faces were all crushed”, and “The mouths and the faces of all of them were ruined and crushed.” All of the translations should be according to the meaning, thus variants of something like “They were punished.” A speaker of Pokomchi (RMI) suggested that something like "shame them" might be appropriate. Or (? LA) "humiliated" (even though that translates another Quiché expression)? At line 7638 appear the glosses "Mocked then its face".

Idiom “seeds of the face”

This is the normal expression for “eye” in the Quiché of the *Popol Vuh*. There appears to be no other expression in common use in that text. So it should be translated simply as “eye”. To translate it as “seeds of the face” is to translate the parts of an idiom, misrepresenting the meaning. Christenson normally does translate this as “eyes” (2003) and gloss it as “seeds of the face” (2004). He uses the gloss “seeds of the face” (2004) for lines 711, 862, 1117, 1126, 1142, 1155, 5117, 7122 This is grammatical analysis of parts of an idiom. Christenson (2004) does use “eyes” for lines 1126, 1155, 1156, 7131, presumably recognizing this is the literal meaning. “Eyes” should therefore appear in both versions, with footnotes to the structure of the idiom. (In modern Quiché, *wach* is ‘face’ and *wach-aaj*, *nu-wach* is ‘eye, my eye’.)

Christenson does say (2003 note 493 p.201) that *u baq ki wach* (the seed of their faces) refers to the eyes. It actually literally **means** ‘their eyes’, it does not merely refer to them. (We can refer to something successfully even if we have the wrong meaning. We can ask someone to hand us a writing instrument in front of them on a table by saying “please hand me that pencil”. Even if it turns out to be a yellow pen, we did successfully **refer** to it using the word “pencil”.)

Similarly Quiché has an idiom we can gloss as “seeds of the blowgun” which we would translate as “blowgun pellets” (line 1630).

For seeds referred to as small bones or skulls in highland Maya languages, see Christenson (2003) page 129 note 276.

Idioms involving *k'u'x* 'heart' but also 'soul; spirit; intention; will; mind; feelings'

There are many idioms containing this word. Let's look first at *u k'u'x kaj* which occurs frequently near the beginning of the *Popol Vuh* and which Christenson glosses as "heart of sky".

One of the problems is that English uses "heart of" to mean something like "center of", with additional nuances. The Quichéan usage has much more to do with intention and soul than with geographical center. The heart is the central defining essence of a person, or what might be referred to as the soul. Thus the creators are those who ensoul living things.

Quiché uses "hearten" to mean 'provide for, look after, tend to, or counsel' someone. The verbal form of this word also has the sense of 'to remember'. In English this would be 'keep in mind,' but for the Quichés this would be conceived as "keep in heart" (2003 p.66 note 44) Quiché *k'u'xlal* (line 8138) is glossed "heartening (by lords)", which clearly misrepresents the meaning. It is translated (2003 p.283) "The lords provided for them".

Another problem is that English "sky" is physical and analytical, where the Quichéan conception is more of a being or force which can motivate things. So "Spirit of Heaven" or "Soul of Heaven" with their nearly explicit religious sense seem closer, if still not entirely satisfactory. Sometimes, as in the case of *wach*, the word *k'u'x* is best not given a separate word in translation. We would then have simply "Heaven", and the capital "H" together with the choice of "heaven" instead of "sky" contributes reverence, while the capital "H" contributes a bit of the sense that this is a proper name, perhaps a being or force. One difficulty with "spirit" in English is that it is also used in the sense of individualized spirits which could move apart from their manifestations, so "spirit of the lake" and "spirit of the sea" might move independently of the "lake" or the "sea". "Soul" (Spanish *alma*) was given as a translation in Coto's dictionary (1656).

Quiché *K'uxlanel* (line 86) is glossed and translated (2003 p.66) "giver of heart", but is better translated "giver of soul".

Another common meaning of English "in your heart" is to emphasize a contrast between what a person really feels or thinks or intends, and what they are saying or doing publicly. This contrast does not seem to be present in at least most of the examples in the *Popol Vuh*, so any translation using "heart" is inappropriate when in English it would suggest such a contrast. The problem is simply that English does not often use an explicit "heart" or "mind" in idioms of this nature, where the Quiché of the *Popol Vuh* does use *k'u'x*.

The closest example to such a meaning may be this one: Quiché *k'o kraj ki k'u'x* "it is desire their hearts ... not" (line 6441). Christenson (2003 p.236) renders this as "It was not the desire of their hearts [to truly frighten them]." A translation could be "It was not really their wish to frighten them.", where "really wish" in English carries the meaning of the *k'u'x* part of the idiom in Quiché, if it refers to true wish, which seems to be the contrast explicitly signaled in that context (as distinct from apparent behavior).

The Quiché *Naqi pa u chak chi i k'u'x?* properly translated "What do you intend to use it for?" is glossed (line 1212) and rendered by Christenson (2003 p.102) as "What use does it have in your hearts?". That is a glossing not a translation, as in most of the examples following. The Quiché simply does not mean what is normally meant by such phrasing in English.

Quiché *Ta x-k'is k'ut u k'u'x ri q'apoj* which we can gloss "So then the heart of the maiden was finished" is an idiom meaning "The maiden's heart sank." (Christenson 2003 p.137 note 308). This is one of the few cases where even English uses an idiom containing "heart".

Quiché *ku'l ki k'u'x* is glossed "Their hearts are seated." (line 7108) and translated (2003 p.251 and note 667) "They were reassured / confident."

Quiché *X-e-cha' chi ki k'u'x* is glossed as “they said in their hearts” (line 3865) and rendered still as a gloss “they asked in their hearts” (2003 p.166). Probably “they asked themselves” would be a good translation.

Quiché *ta x-ki-k'u'x-l-aj ki bik* is glossed “then they remembered their journey” (line 7361). Oddly, Christenson (2003 p.256) inserts an extra “heart” in “They remembered in their hearts the journey they were to make there to the East.” A translation should not include “heart”.

Quiché *x-kos qa k'u'x* which we can gloss “our hearts were tired / weary” (see line 3331) may mean “we got bored”.

Quiché *x-k'oqon k'u ki k'u'x ri amaq'* is glossed as “their hearts cursed” (line 5528), and rendered as “the nations cursed in their hearts” (2003 p.215). What does this idiom mean? Perhaps “the nations cursed”, or “the nations were dismayed” or the like?

Quiché *x-nim-ar ... chi ki k'u'x* is glossed “became great ... in their hearts” (line 5574) and renders it the same way (2003 p.215) instead of translating it. This refers to the (priests of the gods) Tohil, Auilix, and Hacavitz after their importance has been increased, so perhaps a translation might be “They grew proud.” or less strongly “They were encouraged.” or even “They became glad.” What does the Quiché idiom actually mean?

Quiché *r-oq'-ej ki k'u'x, ki pam* is glossed “its weeping their hearts, their bowels” (lines 6199-6200). Christenson (2003 p.230) renders “Their hearts and bowels wept...” A translation might be “They wept from the depths of their souls.” or “They wept from their innermost depths.”

Quiché *ch-oq' ki k'u'x* is glossed “would cry out their hearts” (line 8405), and translated “crying out in their hearts” (on behalf of their vassals and servants) (2003 p.290). Perhaps some translation could use an expression like “feeling the pain of “ (their vassals and servants).

Quiché *utz qa k'u'x* is glossed “our hearts are good” (line 6680), and rendered “our hearts will be content” (2003 p.241). The translation can be “We will be content.”

Quiché *jun ki k'u'x* is glossed “one their hearts” (line 7581) and rendered as “Their hearts were united.” (2003 p.263). A translation would probably be “They were united in their feelings.”

Quiché *amaq' k'o chi ki k'u'x* is glossed “sense of community there is in their hearts” (line 7589), and rendered “a tranquil sense of community in their hearts” (2003 p.264). A translation probably would be “Their feelings were for the entire Quiché people / nation.”

Quiché *xajawarik chi ki k'u'x* is glossed “they exercised lordship in their hearts” (line 7619), and rendered “They wished to exercise lordship in their own hearts.” (2003 p.264). A translation would be simply “They wished to become (the) rulers.” The part of the English which corresponds most closely to the Quiché *k'u'x* is “wish”.

Quiché *u ch'ak chi ki k'u'x* glossed as “(with) victory in their hearts” (line ???). A translation might be “feeling triumphant”.

The next set of examples are not as far from English senses, but still the word “heart” is in most of these examples best eliminated from a true translation, for reasons explained above.

Quiché *x-ki-tzay-ij chi ki k'u'x* is glossed “tormented again to their hearts” (line 7157). and rendered “tormented their hearts” (2003 p.252). A simple translation would be “They tormented them.”

Quiché *u q'atat ki k'u'x* is glossed as “troubled of their hearts” (lines 5598-5599) and rendered as “troubled in their hearts” (2003 p.215), where a simple translation “They were troubled” would do. See also lines 5818, 5838, 6231.

Quiché *ch-u-k'u'x amaq' taqchi'bal ta kex-ux-ik* is glossed (line 6874) “To the heart of nations then they come to be temptations.”. It is rendered “They came to be temptations to the heart of the nations.” (2003 p.246). A simple translation “a temptation to the nations” would do well.

Quiché *k'ub-ul wi u k'u'x ri ati't* is glossed ‘comforters of the heart of the grandmother’ is better translated starting from the simpler ‘comforters of the grandmother’ (line 2570). See also line 6990.

Quiché *Ta x-ku'b-ax u k'u'x* is glossed (line 4793) “Then was comforted his heart.”, and even in translation (2003 p.191) given as “Thus his heart was comforted.” More accurate would be simply “Then he was comforted.” See also lines 5994, 6016.

Quiché *x-ki-'kot ... ki k'u'x* are glossed as “their hearts rejoiced” (line 5146), rendered as “their hearts rejoiced” (2003 p.202), but a translation would be simply “they rejoiced”. There is simply no implication that they rejoiced internally but concealed it publicly, which an English version with “their hearts” invites.

Quiché *Nima ki'kotem xk'oje' wi ki k'u'x* (line 6164), rendered “There was great joy in their hearts.” (2003 p.230) and *Nim k-e-ki'kotik* (line 6169). These can be translated “They rejoiced greatly.” Quiché *ki'kotem chi ki k'u'x* is glossed (line 7681) and rendered (2003 p.265) “joy in their hearts”. It can be translated “They were joyful”. See lines 7189, 7399, with the same verb root, but no *k'u'x*, rendered “They rejoiced.” (2003 pp.252, 256).

Quiché *xraj ki k'u'x* is glossed (line 7639) “their hearts desired” and rendered “They had desired in their hearts ...” (2003 p.265). A translation would be “They had desired ...”

There is much more work to be done to determine more precisely the meanings of these idiomatic expressions, and how best to reflect them in a translation into English or another language.

Various other idioms

Making plans

An idiom *xk'am ki na'oj* which means 'made plans', occurs in many places. It is translated properly by Christenson (2003) for lines 1233, 2795-2796, 6596, 6599, although glossed as "gathered their thoughts". A similar nominal form *u k'amik na'oj* (line 8169) is glossed "their gathering thought" but properly translated (2003 p.283) "their consensus".

But elsewhere there occurs the gloss "gathered their thoughts" not merely in the grammatical analysis (2004) but also (2003) where we should expect a true translation. English glossing is not transparent (lines 1823-1824, 1889-1890, 2121, 6611, 6886, 8041, 8160).

Translations "plot; plan; consider" are given also for *-na'oj* in lines 6699, 6881, 6915, 6939, 6999, 7732. This may possibly be the non-completed equivalent (without the verb *k'am*).

A similar idiom using a different verb *x-ki-kuch ... ki na'oj* occurs in lines 2377-2378. It is rendered in Christenson (2003) p.131 by the same "gathered their thoughts".

The same verb *kuch* occurs in lines 5776 and 5783 in a literal sense of gathering together (meeting as a group), not in this idiom.

Questioning someone intensively

An idiom "dig at the mouth (of a person)" can be translated "question (a person) insistently." (line 2385)

Sap and other secretions

The phrase glossed *u wa'l che'* "secretions of a tree" may best be translated as "sap" (lines 2452, 2457), contrasting with *kik'* 'blood' or 'blood-red sap'. (lines 2444, 2460),

To "cry out" or "scream"

An idiom *u-raq-uj u chi'* which means simply 'cry out, scream' is glossed as "to break open one's mouth", but is more properly translated by Christenson for lines 1297, 6849 as 'cry out'. Compare line 7094 with a different verb.

Common Grammatical Oddities

Possessive constructions

Very common is the glossing of parts of possessive constructions including possessive pronoun prefixes instead of translating them. Grammatically these are very different in Quiché and in English, in two ways. In one respect Quiché is much like Italian. Italian *il mio bambino* means ‘my child’, even though there is an article *il* at the beginning which in **other** contexts would be properly translated ‘the’. We would not dream of **translating** such Italian expressions into English as ‘the my child’. (Even language teachers do not often gloss it that way, because repeating such odd English does not help someone learning Italian. Rather they simply use correct Italian examples.) This reveals that a similar English rendering for the similar Quichéan possessive construction is not a translation. It is a glossing of grammatical parts. It actually hinders understanding. There are other situations also where Quiché uses a definiteness marker where English would not, as with known proper names.

Quiché	<i>ri nu chaj</i>	line 2211
Gloss	def. my torch	(“def.” = definiteness marker, like English “the”)
English	my torch	

Quiché	<i>ri Jun Junajpu</i>	line 2229
Gloss	def. One Hunahpu	
English	One Hunahpu	

Of course Christenson (2003) does not translate using expressions like “the his Noun”. Not because he is there doing a free translation, but precisely because he is there aiming at a translation. But his (2004) second volume purports to offer a “literal poetic” translation, and such examples should not appear there either. Even a grammatical analysis should use a label like “def.” (definite) for the article, as shown above, rather than using English “the”.

The second and more fundamental difference between Quichéan possessive constructions and those of English emerges when both possessed noun and possessor are full nouns, not pronouns. Glossing of Quiché in this context makes for very awkward English, even sometimes leads to complete misunderstanding of meaning except by those trained to cope with this artificial pseudo-language which is not English.

Quiché	Psv-Possessed	Possessor
English	<u>the</u> Possessed	<u>of</u> Possessor (or) Possessor's Possessed
Quiché	<i>u-wi' che'</i>	line 995 (see also line 2856)
Quiché gloss	its top tree	
English	" <u>the</u> <u>top</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>tree</u> " or with other nouns the analog of "the tree's top"	
Quiché	<i>ch-u-wi' jom</i>	lines 1965, 1974
Quiché gloss	on it's top ballcourt	
English	atop the ballcourt	
Quiché	<i>ch-u-wi' tem</i>	lines 2101, 2102 (and one after 7000)
Quiché gloss	on its top bench	
English	on the bench	
Quiché	<i>ch-u-wi' taq abaj</i>	line 5829
Quiché gloss	on its top stones	
English	on top of the rocks	
Quiché	<i>ch-u-wi' juyub</i>	lines 5868, 5935, 6173, 6185, 6278, 6401,
Quiché gloss	on its top mountain	6560, 6572, 6905, 6908, 6992, 7181,
English	on top of the mountain	7188, 7192, 7300, 7328
Quiché	<i>u chol-ik u tzij</i>	line 1976
Quiché gloss	its order their words	
English	the order of their words	
Quiché	<i>ri u Jolom Jun Junajpu</i>	line 2354
Quiché gloss	def. his head One Hunahpu	
English	the head of One Hunahpu	

Where better translations really change the meaning of the text

Xpiyacoc and Xmucane

Christenson's careful analysis of the Quiché use of a literary device called "Chiasmus", an ABBA pattern, has led to a different understanding of the genders of the creator couple than understood by previous investigators who assumed an ABAB pattern. In lines 32-35, we have

A	<i>I'y-om</i>	Midwife (or L.A.: Grandmother ?)
B	<i>Mam-om</i>	Patriarch (or L.A: Grandfather or Ancestor ?)
B	<i>Xpiyacoc</i>	Xpiyacoc
A	<i>Xmucane</i>	Xmucane, u b'i'

AC: "...the Midwife and the Patriarch, whose names are Xpiyacoc and Xmucane."

LA: "...the Grandmother and Grandfather, whose names are Xpiyacoc and Xmucane"

A similar arrangement occurs later (lines 5107-5110). See also lines 5105-5106.

A	<i>Al-om</i>	One Who Has Borne Children (as a woman does)
B	<i>K'ajol-om</i>	One Who Has Engendered Sons (as a man does)
B	<i>Xpiyakok</i>	Xpiyacoc
A	<i>Xmuqane</i>	Xmucane

The point of the ABBA analysis is that Xpiyacoc is the male ancestor, Xmucane is the female ancestor. In Central Mexican tradition, corresponding ancestors occur with names Oxomoco and Cipactonal, with the difficulty that some sources give the genders one way, other sources give them the other way. (Does this indicate that the Central Mexican versions are borrowings from something related to our Maya versions?) Scholarship seems to have drawn the same conclusion for Central Mexico as Christenson drew here, that the analog of Xpiyacoc is male, Xmucane female.

Notes on my own translation here: In Quichéan and other languages, *mam* can mean 'grandfather' or 'grandson' as well as "ancestor". The Palenque sarcophagus lid in Pacal's tomb probably uses it in the sense of "ancestors". The Quiché word *I'yom* does mean 'midwife', and there is a distinct word *atit* 'grandmother', but even the latter occurs in a phrase *r-atit ak'al* 'midwife' (parts glossed "grandmother of child"), so perhaps *i'yom* went through a similar history. This is a context in which speakers of many languages can understand "grandmother" and "grandfather" to metaphorically refer to distant female and male ancestors, so they seem to be a better translation. These two are also addressed with *atit* in lines 512-513, and in the same chiasmic structure as *atit, mam* in lines 538-541. The pair *atit, mam* occurs also in lines 5052-5053.

"Midwife" and "Patriarch" seem too concrete. They can lead the reader's mind in directions which seem not germane to the text, and so probably were not intended by its author(s). See also Christenson (2003) note 27.

References to *mam* and *qajaw* 'grandfather(s)' and 'father(s)' can clearly have the sense of 'ancestors' in the later historical parts of the texts. See lines 7546-7, 8067-8, 8499-8500, 8606-7, 8660-8664.

In attempting to determine whether the text is giving multiple names for a single entity, or names for multiple distinct entities, it is well to keep in mind that in modern Quiché, the compound noun *chuchqajaw* refers to a daykeeper, a single person, while *nantat* can only mean 'parents' in the plural, this last one cannot be a singular.

The Text as Teaching – the verb root *k'ut-*

k'ut- ‘to teach, show’ in simple forms (perfective)

x-k'ut ‘revealed’ (line 4915, when the animals revealed the path; line 7465)

x-u-k'ut ... r-ib ‘showed himself’ (line 5546, see also lines 6122, 6352, 6524 ‘revealed itself / yourself’)

An imperfective form *k'utun-is-axik* “the being made to be showing”

AC: “Here we shall gather the manifestation ... lines 10-11

LA: “So we shall receive the teaching ...

The second translation seems much more comfortable with the meanings of the words, less exotic, and probably more appropriate to the context. Translations of the verb *-k'am-* as ‘to receive’ or ‘to gather’ are a problem throughout the Popol Vuh. Perhaps a simpler ‘to take’ is often the root meaning, and we can add nuances as with ‘receive’. (Notice the English uses of "take", "have", "get" to indicate differences of agency: "take a bath", "have a bath", "get a bath".)

For *k'ut* or *k'u* as sentence particles, see under particles

For lines 5-17, we have these (the first is in AC's words, by the alignment by LA)

AC: ... the beginning
the origin of all that was done in the citadel of Quiché,
among the people of the Quiché nation.
Here we shall gather the manifestation,
the declaration,
the account of the sowing and the dawning
by the Framer and the Shaper,
[other names or gods follow]

LA: ... the beginning,
the foundation of everything done in the Citadel of Quiché,
among the nation of the Quiché people.
“So we shall receive the teaching (/ showing),
the revelation (/ making visible),
the making known (/ telling) of that which is hidden
(of) the creation done by Framer
and Shaper

Christenson (2003 p.60 notes 9 and 10) takes *eu-axibal* followed by *saq-ir-ibal* to be the same pair which occurs frequently later in the text, glossed as “sowing” and “dawning”. Such an interpretation requires changing *eu-axibal* to *aw-axibal*. This writer instead keeps the word as written *eu-axibal*, and takes *saq-ir-ibal* to have a meaning like ‘creation’ or ‘coming into being’ (of true existence) parallel to the preceding ‘beginning’ *tik-ar-ibal* and ‘foundation’ *xe'-n-abal*. The root *ew-* of ‘hidden’ does occur again nearby in line 57 “But hidden are those who see it, those who ponder upon it” which seems a good parallel to line 14 “that which is hidden”.

Lines 82-88 The major differences here depend on taking *amaq'il* as related to the Kaqchikel word *amaq'* 'people, nation' (see Christenson 2003 note 8) rather than being the word 'eternal', and on the use of *saq* in the sense of "true (people)", "true (existence)" (Compare Gary Gossen's publications on some Mayan attitudes towards outsiders as not being true human beings, not eating maize, etc. On the other hand, 'true person' can be expressed as *qas winaq.*).

AC: the giver of breath
 and the giver of heart
 they who give birth
 and give heart to the light everlasting
 the child of light born of woman
 and the son of light born of man

LA: Giver of breath
 giver of soul
 giver of birth to them
 giver of soul to the true people (/ nation)
 the true children born of woman
 the true sons of man

Seven Macaw claims to be a "true descendant" of the people (from the time of the flood), rather than a "bright sign". "True" represents *saq*, as in another lineage context discussed above. The word *etal* is 'sign', but also 'trace' and hence 'descendant'. The same term is used by Hunahpu of his sons. [get exact citation] *Etal* means 'descendant' several times in the genealogical parts of the text (lines 7910, 7930,). Christenson (2003 p.206 note 532) notes that the combination of *etal* 'sign' with *tzijel* 'word' ... paired together refer to descendants (Coto 1983 [1656]). Christenson (2003 p.91 note 152) shows that this same bird or a similar one was important as a founder of lineages in the Chilam Balam of Yucatan.

AC: "He therefore declared himself to be a bright sign for those who were drowned in the flood."

LA: "... a true descendant of the people (from the time) of the flood."

Christenson for lines 871-873 renders "throne" for an instrument noun *q'al-ibal* "means of making visible". While "throne" is certainly conceivable, since a lord is made more visible by sitting on a high throne (or standing on an Olmec one), the interpretation is not certain. Lines 7429-7430 do pair "canopy" with "throne" in a couplet, but the word here glossed as "throne" is a different one, *q'al-ibaj*. Here is an alternative:

AC: "My throne is gold and silver. When I go forth from my throne, I brighten the face of the earth."

LA: "Precious metal is what I use to (make myself) visible. The earth is bright when I come out (showing) my visible countenance."

Another related word *q'al-ej* is glossed and translated "adorn" (line 8155, 2003 p.283).

A phrase *x-ok ki q'alem* is glossed "entered their command" (line 8179) and translated (2003 p.283) "This was the edict that was given." (perhaps an edict makes something visible / known)?

Another nearly chiasmic arrangement involves the pair “trees” and “bushes”, which seems to refer to most plant life outside of cultivated fields. These occur together in lines 177-8 “the creation of trees *and* bushes” and again in lines 291-2 and lines 5544-5, lines 8351-2. The same pair also brackets the beginning and end of a longer section in lines 275-286.

AC: Then were conceived the animals of the mountains, the guardians of the forest,
and all that populate the mountains – the deer and the birds,
the puma and the jaguar
the serpent and the rattlesnake,
the pit viper and the guardian of the bushes.

Christenson follows earlier writers in thinking of the “guardian of the bushes” as a name for another kind of serpent. But if we let ourselves be influenced by the common pairing “trees and bushes”, then “the guardians of the bushes” becomes a summary referring perhaps primarily to the later members in the lists of wild animals, while “the guardians of the forests” would be referring to the first members in the lists of wild animals. Here is an alternative

LA: Then next they conceived the animals of the mountains
the guardians of the forest,
all the creatures of the mountains
the deer *and* birds
the puma *and* jaguar
the serpent *and* rattlesnake *and* pit viper
the guardians of the bushes.

Says The One who has Borne Children,
The One Who Has Begotten Sons:
“Will it just be solitary? [?silent]
It should not be silent beneath the trees
and the bushes.”

For some terms and expressions Christenson does use in part proper translations, but these probably need to be extended to additional contexts instead of glossings:

jun “one”, translated as “united” more often than Christenson does

chik, chi glossed usually “again”, sometimes “next” or “then” or “other”. Often better “now”.

In most cases, one of the other glosses would be more accurate instead of “again”.

Several terms and expressions where a different translation may be better (no concordance yet)

k’oj-e’- often translated “essence” (too much a term of philosophy?) –

replace many instances by “exist” or by “live” (in a location)

In line 7551, *x-e-k’oj-e’ wi* is glossed and translated (2003 p.262) “they dwell”

“lordship” can often be usefully replaced by “rule; reign” etc.

q’aq’-al often glossed and translated “glory” (too much like “fame”?) –

replace in most instances by “splendor”

nawal often glossed and translated “enchanted” (too much as in fairy tales; no naguals present)

replace in some instances by “finely dressed” or something less specific

Ah Pop K’am Ja often glossed “Ah Pop of the Reception House”, which suggests the reception of guests, where the meaning is probably rather receipt of gifts (line 8443) or of tribute (several lines). So “Tribute House” is more likely to be correct.

Taq’ajal, Juyub is glossed and translated “plains and mountains” (lines 8096-7; 2003 p.282).

Tedlock in his 1999 edition of the *Rabinal Achi* points to this as a couplet meaning simply “lands”.

saq often may be translated “true” (culture, people), rather than “white, bright, light”.

Sentence-particles

Many languages have small sentence particles which contribute what we might term nuances, sometimes translatable into other languages using simple adverbs, sometimes to be left out because any full word misrepresents their meaning, sometimes reflected in more sophisticated ways in choices of translation. The particle *xa* is usually not accurately translated as "merely" or "only", but I have not yet attempted to systematically address that problem.

k'ut or *k'u* as sentence particles

Christenson (2004) glosses these as 'therefore', in such a way that when the English rendering has this word, we always know what word was in the Quiché. That is the essence of a glossing rather than a translation. The implication of logical connectedness of the English "therefore" is often not appropriate to the Quiché context. Often an English translation can comfortably include "so" or "thus", either of which avoids the stronger logical implications of "therefore". This particle is a reduced form of a verb root *k'ut*- 'to show', and that seems to be reflected in the contexts and meaning of the particles. It has a slight similarity to colloquial English "see" in a sentence like "John, see, was already on the way to success." It may possibly be further support for those who argue that as this text was being dictated for transcription, the speaker was pointing to a codex with text and pictures.

The combination of the particle next discussed, *chik* or *chi*, with a following *k'ut* or *k'u* yields a combination which often occurs at beginnings and endings of major sections of text, the kind of thing we would represent by ending one paragraph and beginning the next, or even sometimes by ending and beginning entirely new sections, or by "So then ...".

chik or *chi* as sentence particles

Christenson (2004) usually glosses these as "again", though his renderings in the translation (2003) are much more varied and more accurate. Most often the particle implies not a repetition but a contrast between two time periods, like English "now" (not "right now" but "now" as opposed to previously) or "then" or even "next". A very nice example which is translatable with "now" is in lines 46-48.

AC: This account we shall now write under the law of God and Christianity.

LA: This we shall write, now under the authority of God,
now in Christianity.

The second translation just above provides a bit more support for those who argue that one motivation for transcribing the Popol Vuh into Latin letters was its endangerment under the new religious authorities. In the original Quiché, the "now" was adjacent to "under", not to the "write" which precedes in the English. These lines are immediately followed by the famous lines 49-52

AC: We shall bring it forth,
because there is no longer the means whereby the Popol Vuh may be seen

LA: We shall bring it forth, because there is no longer any way to see the *Popol Vuh*,
any way to see the truth.

LA: We shall bring it forth, because it is no longer possible to see the *Popol Vuh*,
it is no longer possible to see the truth.

The "no longer" in all three renderings corresponds to Quiché "not now" (English "now not" = "no longer"), and reflects the the particle *chik* using normal English. Christenson did translate here using "no longer". (The word "truth" used for Quiché *saq* refers to the "true culture" or "enlightenment" or similar ideas. As a mere color term, *saq* means 'white' or 'bright', but in the text of the *Popol Vuh* its connotative meanings are much more important than its color meanings. Translations of *saq* are one of the most difficult tasks in understanding this text.)

For the book or means of seeing *il-bal*, see also the parallel closing lines 8711-8714.

Ambiguity of Transcriptions k / k' / q / q'

The orthography of the Popol Vuh text is not consistent in distinguishing these sounds, which were of course difficult for Spanish outsiders for whom the four were not distinct. In theory, they could all be distinguished as <c> / <k> / <g> / <reversed-3> respectively. But often glottalization and backness were not indicated, so <c> (~ <qu> before <e,i>) could stand for all of them. This leaves great freedom for students of the Popol Vuh to choose different words and different meanings depending on their understanding of the context.

There are two of these in immediate succession in lines 60-75.

Where Christenson for line 63 has chosen *tz'uk* 'germination', we can choose *tzuk* 'formation' or 'origin'. The original manuscript has <tzuk> using <k> instead of the most common <c>, so perhaps signaling some sound other than simple /k/. There is a similar context in line 175, spelled the same way in the original manuscript.

Where Christenson for lines 66 and 74 has chosen *tz'uk* in the phrase 'its four cornerings', we can choose *tzuk* in the phrase 'its four sightings' (possibly the sightings one does when surveying before founding a new town). This is a bit of a speculation by this writer, since the meanings in dictionaries are close (seeking, searching) but not exactly sightings. The original manuscript has <tzuc> using <c> not <k>. Such distinctions in spelling are **not** consistent, but how often and under which circumstances they may correctly reflect distinctions of sound is something that needs to be investigated in a special study devoted to this question.

Christenson does choose to read a spelling as the verb *tzuk* glossed as 'search for' in line 4823, and *tzukuj* in lines 5894, 7489, 7534, *tzuk-ux-ik* in lines 6370, 6374.

AC: Great is its performance
and its account of the completion and germination of all the sky and earth –
its four corners
and its four sides.

All then was measured and staked out into four divisions,
doubling over and stretching the measuring cords of the womb of sky
and the womb of earth.

Thus were established the four corners,
the four sides, as it is said, by the Framer and the Shaper.

LA: Great is the performance of it,
the teaching of when was completed the formation of all Heaven *and* Earth
the four sightings,
the four sidings,
the four stakings,
the doubling-over cord measurement,
the stretching cord measurement in Heaven and on Earth

Four sightings,
Four sides, as it is said, by the Framer and Shaper.

We can compare the foundations of towns or entire sets of towns in the Codex Vindobonensis pages 32, 21, 20, 18, 16, 14, 13, 11, and 5, where a measuring cord is clearly shown.

I have been informed that the scribes for the classical Kaqchikel documents were much more careful in distinguishing these four sounds. Although it is not the same language, it is very close to K'iché, and so it can be beneficial to compare the texts with each other.

Verb forms in –e’ referring to change-of-state

This type of verb can make distinctions of meaning which are more difficult to make in English.

In a passage concerning the creation of rivers and mountains (lines 257-260), there are a large number of verbs with the suffix –e’ which on positional verbs in Quiché regularly indicates change-of-state. The meaning is appropriate here, and can be indicated in English translation by ‘came to be’ or ‘came to (Verb)’.

AC: The waterways were divided, their branches coursing among the mountains. Thus the waters were divided, revealing the great mountains.

LA: Then the paths of the waters were divided.

Their branches came to make their way among the mountains.

The waters were separate then.

Then great mountains came to be revealed.

It is the second and fourth lines in the translation just above which have the change-of-state verbs. The word “separate” conveys the meaning of a state, not a passive event, so it is deliberately not rendered “were separated”. A translation “were separated” or “were divided” here would be ambiguous between those two meanings. English often cannot easily distinguish such pairs of meanings (passive vs. stative). Quiché does not have that problem. The corresponding word here in Quiché is not a passive, its meaning is simply that of a state, that state resulting from the act of dividing the paths of the waters. (The word “waters” is put in the plural here to give a flavor of religious usage, as in the corresponding chapter Genesis of the Christian Bible where “the spirit moved upon the waters”.)

In lines 1502-1505 there is a direct contrast between two forms of the positional verb ‘to be lying on one’s back’, the first containing the suffix –e and therefore to be translated as a change of state, ‘lie down on one’s back’ to differentiate it from the second one ‘be lying on one’s back’.

AC: Perhaps it would be good then if I went in again lying on my back, he said therefore.”
Then he went back in again lying on his back.

LA: Perhaps it would be good if I lay down on my back and went in. So he said this.
So then lying on his back he went in.

In line 8338 there is a pairing of *u k’as-e’-ik* with *winaq-ir-ik*, the two of them glossed “its life” and “creation”. The first would better be “its coming to life”, since a change of state is signaled. The suffixes –e’, –ir have similar functions, the first occurring on “positionals” (temporary states), the second with nouns and adjectives which are not temporary states.

The Recent Past of Quiché Verbs

This uses the prefix *mi-* and is most often to be translated with the English “present perfect”, conveying current relevance, instead of with the simple past. In addition to the examples below. This may be relevant also to line 2559.

AC: Were we not told this? line 2431

LA: Have we not been told this?

AC: It was successful, O Lords lines 2486-7

LA: It has been successful, O Lords

Astronomical interpretations of events and characters in the stories

Bassie (2007 review) credits Christenson with providing the additional evidence that Hunahpu is equated to the Morning Star. This goes beyond having the same name as the day on which Venus first rises in advance of the Sun in the idealized Venus Table of the Dresden Codex, and goes beyond the sentence in the *Popol Vuh* which stated that Hunahpu became the Morning Star.

Bassie (2007 forthcoming book) collects some of the information which can be used to support a claim that the three “Thunderbolts” *Kaqulja Huracan*, *Ch’ipi Kaqulja*, *Raxa Kaqulja* are representatives of Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. This idea has long been mentioned, particularly in connection with the three images adorned in connection with the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn and the crossing of paths with Mars and the Moon at the same time during the famous “2 Kib 14 Mol” event recorded at Palenque.

There are a number of expressions which metaphorically can apply to humans (or gods) and taken in a literal physical sense can apply to planets. Here follows a list of some phrases in which these occur.

This writer has long maintained that the “birth” of gods, when these are taken to have analogs among the planets, are to be equated with the first risings of those planets after periods of invisibility. Stuart (2005) has concluded from the Temple XIX texts at Palenque that a single god can be born more than once, that therefore G-One-prime and G-One are the same entity.

The word translated as the “birth” of Hunahpu is Quiché *-yak-*, which actually means ‘to rise’. See Christenson 2003 page 113 note 228. Both of the verbs involved are positionals with the suffix *-e*, therefore convey change-of-state meanings. Here is one place where a more concrete and literal translation can also be understood metaphorically in English, so we can nearly capture both meanings in one translation if we stick to the literal meanings. The “freer” translation excludes one of those meanings.

Quiché:	<i>Xa utz ki k’oj-e’-ik</i>	line 1760
	<i>ki yak-e’-ik puch</i>	line 1761
AC:	They were good by their nature, and in their birth as well.	
LA:	Their coming into existence was good, as was their rising up (/ birth).	
Quiché	<i>Xa sqaqi’n chik mawi k-e-yak-e’-ik</i>	line 2521
AC:	it wasn’t long now before the birth of Hunahpu and Xbalanque.	
LA:	it was now not long until they would rise up.	
Quiché	<i>Libaj chi x-e-yak-e’-ik,</i>	line 2676
	<i>E kaib chi k-al-ax-ik</i> Junajpu, Xbalanke ki bi’.	lines 2677-2679
	<i>Pa juyub x-e-yak-e’ wi</i>	line 2680
AC:	these two arose suddenly. Hunahpu and Xbalanque were their names.	
	They arose in the mountains, ...	
LA:	Suddenly the two arose, they were born, those called Hunahpu and Xbalanque.”	
	It was in the mountains where they arose, ...	
Quiché	<i>k-oy-yaka-taj-ik</i>	line 5880
AC, LA:	We must rise up.	

In the next example, we have verbs both for rising and for falling.

Quiché *X-e-k'is yaka-taj uloq k-onojel* line 2500
X-e-chiq-e ch-u-wi' line 2501 (-e change-of-state)
... *Are' k'ut e chiqich-oj wi kan-oq* line 2504
AC: They all rose up to lean over it...
...while they were bent over ...
LA: They all finished rising up *and then* fell down on it. ...
So here is where they were fallen, to remain so. (...where they remained fallen.)

When the true people were about to be conceived, there are two occurrences of a verb meaning “to appear”, from a root with the suffix *-e'* so ‘came to be visible’ (lines 4832, 4837)

q'al-aj 'visible'
x-q'al-e'-ik 'came to be visible' / 'appeared' (Provider, Sustainer,
True Child of Woman, True Son of Man)
x-q'al-e' 'came to be visible' / 'appeared' (humanity)

Quiché *Chi ew-al taj k-oj-i-ya' wi* line 5882
AC: Place us in hiding
LA: Put us where we are hidden.

An etymology of Morning Star seems evident in the classical Quiché name *Ik'ow-q'ij* which appears to be an incomplete in **(o)w* of the root *ik'*, the whole glossed as 'passes the Sun' or the like. This verb form does not occur in the PLFM Quiché dictionary, but it does in the PLFM Kaqchikel p.88: *ik'owel* 'peregrino, aventurero', *ik'owinik* 'pasar' (vida; a otra persona en altura), *ik'owsanik* 'pasar, atravesar'. For line 900, AC glosses *ik'owen* as 'transcendence'. Lines 1081, 1195, possibly 1542, have *x-e-ik'ow-ik* 'passed by'. Line 1325 has *k-e-'ek'ow-ik* '(3 days) passed'. (Edmonson lists *iq'ov-* 'exceed, surpass')

Quiché *K-ila-wach-in ri Ik'oq'ij Nima Ch'umil.* lines 5320-5321
AC: They watched closely for the Morning Star, the Great Star that ...
LA: They watched closely for the Great Star (named) Precedes-the-Sun ...
(compare line 5819 *x-e-'ik'ow wi uloq* passed through hither')

Quiché *r-il-ik ri Nima Ch'umil, Ik'oq'ij u bi'* lines 5704-5705
AC: looking for the Great Star, called Icoquih

Quiché *r-el-ik ul-oq Nima Ch'umil, Ik'oq'ij u bi'* lines 5957-5959
AC: the coming forth of the Great Star, named Icoquih

Quiché *chi-k-il ri ch'umil, r-et'al q'ij* lines 5767-5768
AC: they looked for the star *which was* the sign of the Sun

Quiché *chi-k-ila-wach-ij r-el-ik ula ch'umil* line 5810
AC: They would look for the first appearance of that star
[first before the face of the Sun when it is born].

Quiché Are' k'ut k-e-q'aq'-al ri Jun Batz', Jun Chowen lines 2564-2565

AC: "Now One Batz and One Chouen gloried in these things..."

LA: "So One Batz' and One Chouen were bright ..."

The word *q'aq'-al* literally means "inflames" (Christenson 2003 page 136 note 303) and also has a meaning 'shooting star' (dictionaries), both of which may be relevant.

Quiché *E u ch'um-il-al kaj x-e-'ux-ik.* line? (of the 400 brothers)
AC: They became a constellation of the sky.

Quiché *Oj taj x-k-oj-il-ow-ik r-al-axik q'ij* line 5984
AC: Would that we could behold the birth of the Sun

Quiché *r-al-ax-ik q'ij* line 6083
AC: the birth of the Sun

Quiché *ta x-el ul-o q'ij* line 6084 (and 6092)
AC: when the Sun came forth

Vocabulary mis-matches

A number of small studies can be useful in alerting us to differences in the range of meanings covered by particular vocabulary items. This reinforces the well-known fact that one cannot translate meanings if required always to use the same lexical item to have a one-to-one match between languages. That would be glossing, not translation. The following is approximate, but gives an idea

		(of inanimates) (or abstract, general)	(of animates)	(of animates)	(of animates)
Quiché	ux-	k'o	k'oj(-e-)	k'oj(-e-)	k'oj(e-)
English	come to be	be, exist there is there are have (+poss.)	be, stay, remain	live, dwell	live, be alive
German		existieren	sein, bleiben	wohnen	leben
Spanish		exister	estar ?quedarse	morar habitar	vivir

For suggestions of a difference between *k'o* and *k'oj-e-* see especially lines 1221 vs. 1223, and 1405, 1432, 1459, 1461, 1611, 1623, 1624, 1686. But compare line 1355.

For a transitive *u-koj* 'to place (something somewhere)', conceivably related, see lines 1318, 1404, 1410.

Directionals

The system of Directionals (subordinate verbs making the directional sense more precise) are laid out for modern Quiché in the PLFM Gramática K'ichee'. The last column below contains those meanings which are suggested here as commonly meaningful translations.

uloq	para aca	ul- 'come'	to us/them, up, out (≠ hither)
ula			off, out, from there, away, far away
b'ik	para allá	b'i- 'go'	there (≠ thither)
pe	para aca	pe- 'come (from?)'	
okoq	para adentro	ok- 'enter'	in
apanoq	para afuera	apon- 'go out'	out, out there (? away ?)
aq'anoq	para arriba	aq'an- 'go up'	up
qajoq	para abajo	qaj- 'descend'	down
kan	quedar	kanaj 'remain in position'	

At least several of these occur also in the classical Quiché of the Popol Vuh. Literal renderings of their meanings as given in the grammars seem often to not make sense. The variations for *uloq* are especially interesting, relating to emergence and coming-to-be-visible or relevant. It is rarely well translated as 'hither' < 'come, arrive' but rather good translations depend very much on context. The meaning of *ub'ik* seems to be more 'there' than 'thither' (and especially it seems not to be 'away', so there is probably a need to change the translation for line 1546?). The meanings of *ula* seem to be 'off', 'out', 'from there', 'away', or 'far away'. Here is a collection of examples up to line 1720:

line #	AC gloss	AC translation	LA translation
624	uloq	Finish it hither	Bring it to a conclusion
773	uloq	[chase] us out hither	Finish it for us
774	uloq	threw us hither	chased us out here
811	uloq	thrown off	threw us out here
813	uloq	"not supported hither"	threw them off
872	uloq	go out hither	would not support them
1254	uloq	call hither	defeated [+?]
1270	uloq	said hither	go forth from my throne
1275	uloq	called hither	call
1276	uloq	called hither	called
1291	ulow	sheltered not hither	called up
1293	uloq	dragged hither	called up / called out ?
1338	uloq	hears hither	called up / called out ?

			sheltered
			having attained (?) shelter
			dragged to (the hole)
			was able to hear it
			down there
			(the sound reached him)
1352	uloq	gathered hither	gathered together
1353	uloq	assembled hither	gathered <i>together</i> here
1359	uloq	cut off hair	assembled here
1360	uloq	gnaws off	cut the hair off to give ...
1495	uloq	went out from there	cut off his hair
1507	uloq	his knees showing hither	gnawed off his nails
			came <i>back</i> out <i>from there</i>
			his knees showed outside
			his knees showed outside

In line 813, I do not understand why *uloq* occurs.

In lines 1352-3, the *uloq* seems not to be disambiguated by context, either 'together' or 'here'.

713 ula	cut off their heads	cut off their heads	cut off their heads
732 ula	entered hither little animals	came in upon them	came in upon them
1015 ula	was torn off	tore off	was torn off
1290 ula	said hither	said	said from there
1292 ula	calls out hither	called up	called out from there
1318 ula	placed here himself with us	placing himself over us	placing himself here with us [from elsewhere?]
1361 ula	gives them away to them	to give to the ants	gave away to them
1432 ula	one crab there below	there is a crab there below	a crab far away at the bottom of the canyon
1451 ula	placed hither below canyon	situated below the canyon	placed far away at the bottom of the canyon
1485 ula	there below canyon	there at the base of the canyon	far away at the bottom of the canyon
775 ub'i	raised up thither	raised up [sticks against us]	raised up there
1285-6 ub'i	thither it echoes	echo away	echoes there
1470 ub'ik	enter thither	went in there	were going in there
1473 ub'ik	enter thither	went in	were going in there
1477 ub'ik	you enter thither	if you went in	<i>if</i> you go in there
1503 ub'ik	I enter thither	if I went in	<i>if</i> I ... go in there
1505 ub'ik	he entered thither	he went in	he went in there
1506 ub'ik	entrance thither	he went in	he went in there
1546 ub'ik	lure him away	lure him away to the East	lure him there

In line 775, the meaning added by *ub'i* is not obviously confirmed by context. I suggest us of 'there' in the translation only because it works for all other instances so far examined.

1240 qajoq	abandon him down in	abandon him there	abandon him down in[to]
1243 qajoq	bent over down in	bent over down there in	bent over down in[to]
1244 qajoq	hurl down	hurl down	hurl down
1266 qajoq	said down	asked	called down
1294 qajoq	hurled down	hurled down	hurled down
1303 qajoq	hurled down	hurled down	hurled down
1509 qajoq	settled down	settled down	settled down
1609 qajoq	fell it down	fell it	fell it [down]
1703 qajoq	hurled him down	hurled him down	hurled him down
1218 aq'anoq	carried it on his shoulders up	carried it on his shoulders	carried it up on his shoulders
1268 aq'anoq	call up there	call up to you there	call up to you
576 apanoq	will come out	will come out	will come out
1307 apanoq	dropped out the tree	they dropped down the tree	the tree dropped [...?]
1450 aponoq	standing out there	(until you) reach	until you are standing out there
1452 apanoq	you go out there	Just go along over there	you just go out there

In line 1307, I do not understand why *apanoq* occurs.