

Challenges to the study of variation in Colonial Poqom (Mayan)

JAMES TANDY

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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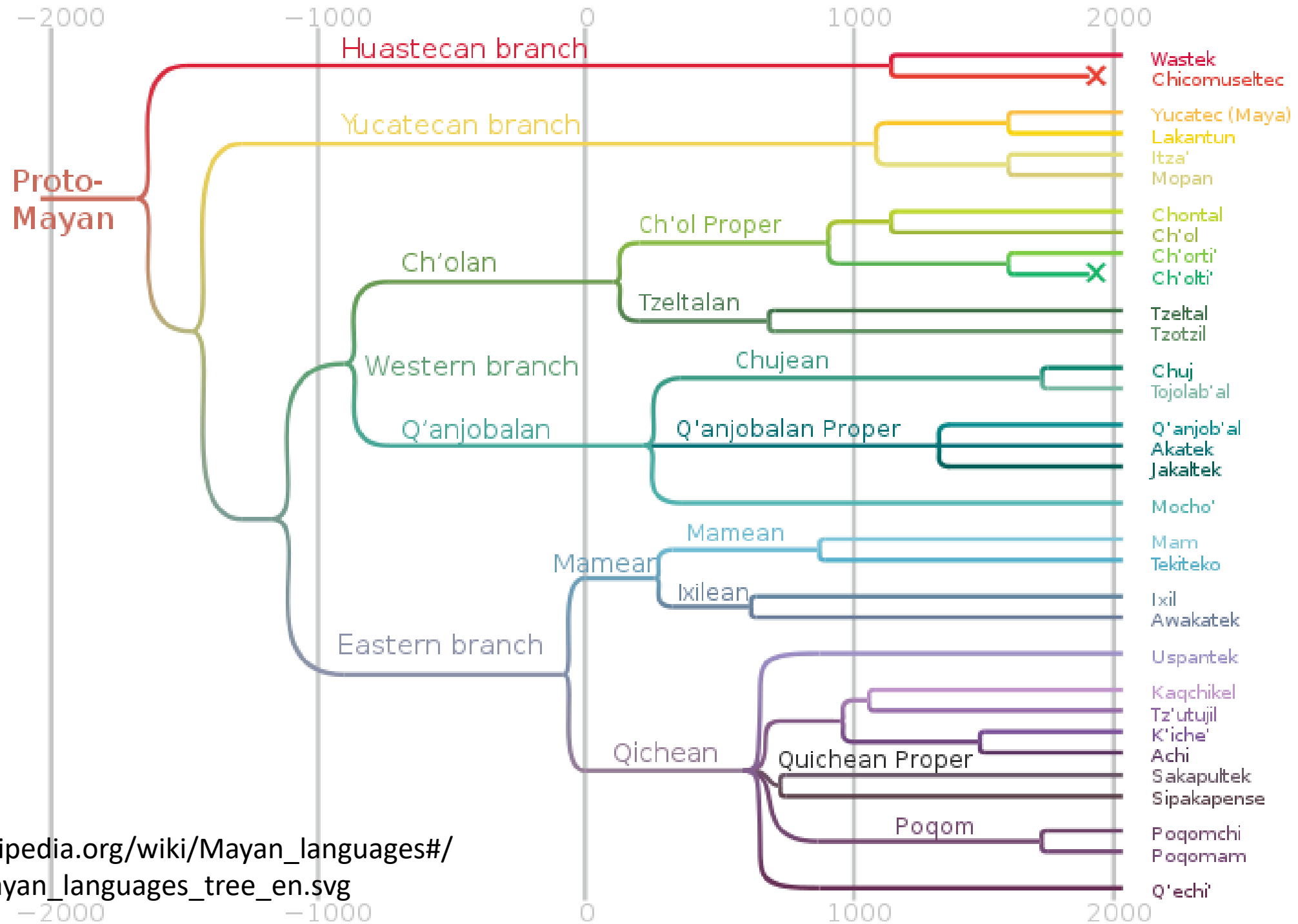


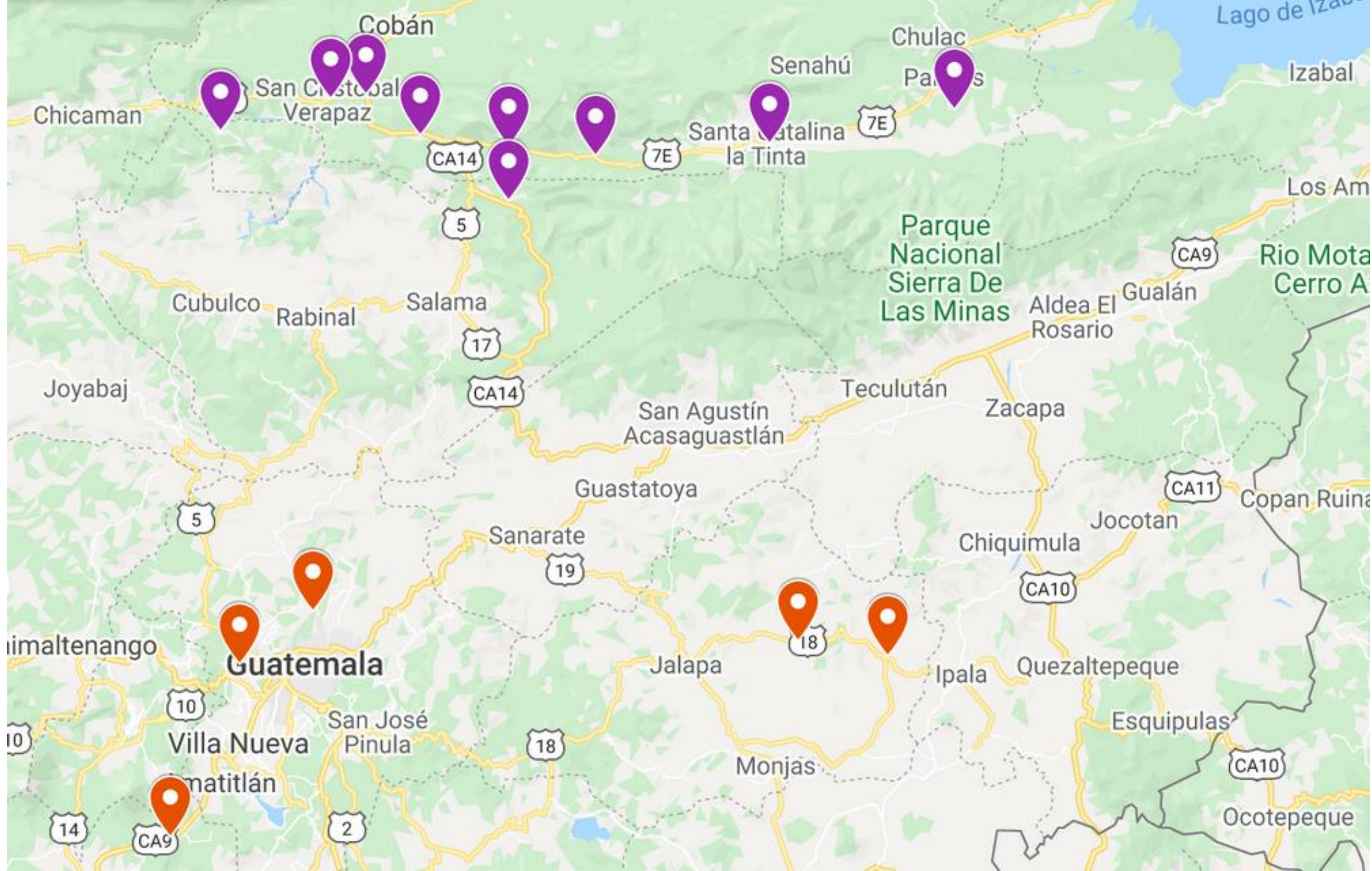
Colonial Poqom

- Nearly 5,000 pages of colonial manuscripts in Poqom Mayan
- Mostly missionary documents
- In this talk:
 - Historical dialectology of Poqom
 - Challenges in interpreting the manuscripts
 - Some ways forward

Poqom background

- A Mayan language belonging to the K'iche'an subgroup
- Typically considered two languages: Poqomam and Poqomchi'
 - Small but noticeable differences
 - Mostly mutually intelligible
 - Compare American English to British English

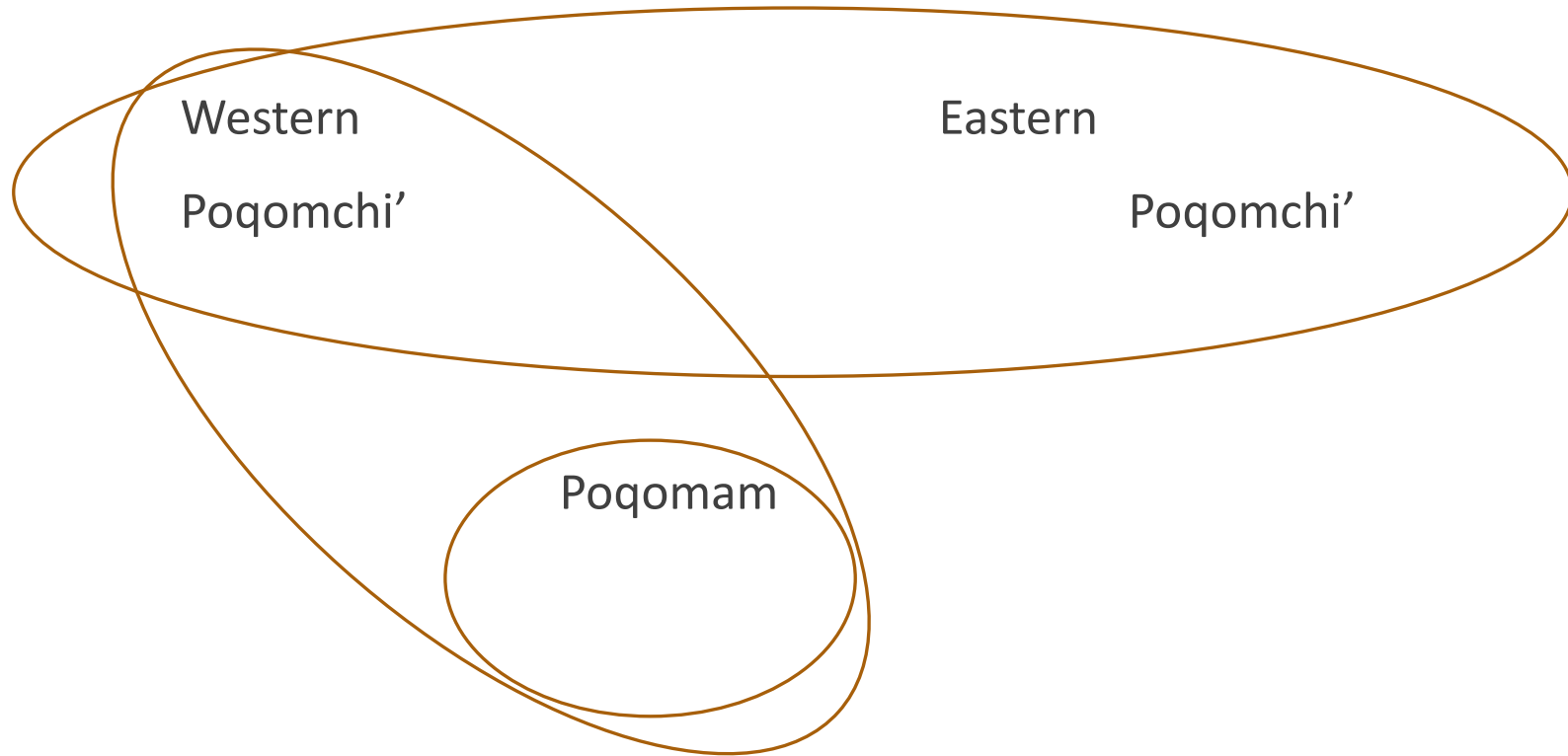




Poqom background

- Three main varieties
 - Eastern Poqomchi'
 - Western Poqomchi'
 - Poqomam
- Used to form a dialect continuum
- Then Poqomam split from the others
 - Invasion of K'iche' speakers from the west (Campbell 1978)

Poqom background



Spanish conquest

- Spanish colonized the Poqom area in 1530s
- Catholic (mostly Dominican) friars came to convert Mayas to Christianity
- In the process, had to learn more about Mayan languages and beliefs
 - Wanted to stamp out secret heresies
 - Reach people in their language
- Extant Poqom manuscripts from 1565 through late 1800s



Colonial Poqom documents

- Material by priests
 - Grammars (*artes*)
 - Vocabularies
 - Sermons
 - Confessionals
- Material by native speakers
 - Single land deed: *Título del Barrio de Santa Ana*

Modern Poqom documentation

- Late 1800s explorers
 - Mostly Poqomam wordlists
 - Stoll (1888) grammar of Poqom
- Modern descriptions
 - Grammars, dictionaries, etc.

Arte breve, y compendio de la Lengua Iocomeca de la Pro-
vincia de la Vera Cruz compuesta, y ordenada por el Reverendo Padre
Fray Dionysio de Cebalga para los principiantes que comienzan a
aprender, y traducida en la Lengua Iocoman de Omatlan por
el Padre Fray Pedro Moran, quien lo empezó a escribir en el
Convento de S. P. de S. Dominga de Teotihuacan, a 15 de Mayo del mes de
Abril de este año de 1616, celebrando, y ayuntamiento.

Cap. 1. del Pronome primitivo.

Ego. yn. mei. Vichin. mihi. Mehin. & cetero me. na qui n.
Uquin. para presente. Xim. para preterito. aquin. para futuro. = te.
ame. Vium. pro me. tuam. mecum. Vuc. in me. chioth.

Plural.

Nominat. ngr. sh. nostri. que. nobis. que. Acuat. nor. nacoht, l. coht.
para presente. Xoh. para preterito. acoht. para futuro. = que. Ablat.
a nobis. Cuum. pro nobis. cuum. nobiscum. cuc. in nobis, chi quih.

2.ª persona.

Nom. tu. At. sui. aue. Viti. aue. Acuat. te. nacoht. l. at. para presente.
Xat. para preterito. at. para futuro. Vocat. tu. aue. Ablat. ate. cuum.
pro te. aium. tecum. aluc. in te. chavith.

Plural.

Nom. vos. ata. vestrum. auita. vobis. auita. Acuat. vo. nacoht. l.
ata. para presente. Xata. preter. abt. fut. auita. Vocat. vos. ata. Ablat. a to.

Vinac nru cam sancto sacramento yulihij, chi voronchioe ru
cuxl, chimoc ves tzahoh ruklab ranima, uum quimic n
ru cam quimic nru cux nru cat chohoc cat bal coric china
chirih chohoc, yah nim rihz nru coti chirih uum nru
quizineh, nru queb nru yes rutiholal ru quiquel Dies, he
hinah chie Iudas ru viarie nqui, ru catail ru cuxl ru câni,
quimic ah nohvi celoc chirih—

Re sancto sacramento yulihij (atac vacari) yquinac nim
ru xib, ruklab, rotobil, ru sanctoil riele m nac vilic, uum
xtil rutiholal ru quiquel quihauat vilic chipam

A otça equilica tono imperfecto maestro tati ne achli y culil^{c6}
 ziui y mochebal bitz vahxacqmil henacle y culi. Nual caual cuy y culil⁵
 zivi y mochebal hitz. atz nie ibia tono imperfecto maestro ilatça techlal.⁵

verso.



tercero tono imperfecto maestro.

A otçacquilica tono imperfecto Discipulo tatine achli yculil⁵
 ziui y mochebal bitz cahual⁵ oual hey yculil⁵ cahual⁵ cuy atz nie ibia
 tono imperfecto Discipulo ilatça techlal.

Colonial Poqom documents

	Poqomchi'	Poqomam	Total
Arte	4	18	22
Vocabulario	324	1223	1547
Doctrina	3146	212	3358
Titulo	5	0	5
Total	3479	1453	4932

- Counts all known archival documents before 1917, including wordlists by explorers
- But not formally published sources (Gage 1648, Stoll 1888)

Prior work

- Stoll (1888)
 - Referenced Gage's (1648) Poqomam grammar
 - Noted Poqom had not changed much in 250 years
- Campbell (1977)
 - Showed sound change in progress: $*ts, *s > s$
- Vinogradov (various - this list not exhaustive)
 - Colonial Poqomchi' future *a* borrowed from Ch'olan Mayan (Vinogradov 2021b)
 - Progressive>Future in Poqomchi' (Vinogradov 2022b)
 - Religious vocabulary (2021a) and translation practices (2022a)
 - Does not discuss Poqomam

Case studies: Dialectal variation

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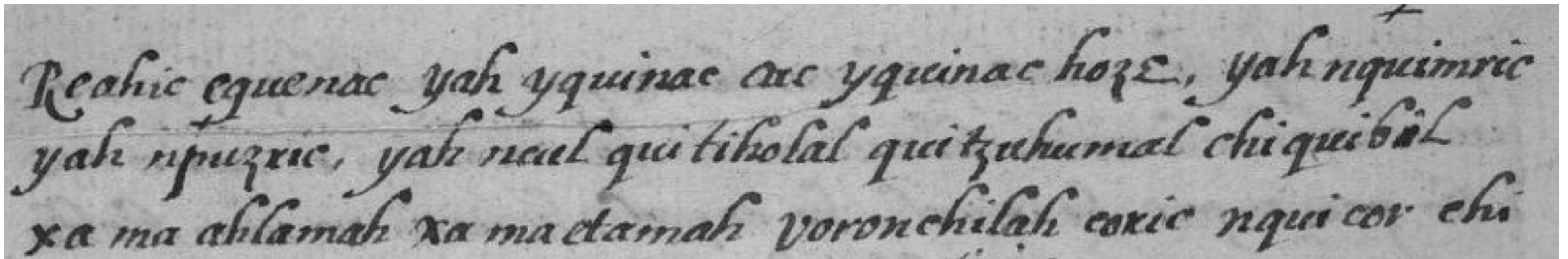
- Innovation of *p'* phoneme
- 2nd person absolutive prefix *at-* vs. *ti-*
- 2nd person plural postclitic
- Regional variation already present in colonial period

Case study: p' phoneme

- Some Poqom varieties innovated p' phoneme
 - From original $*b'$, $*p$
 - Borrowed from Lowland Mayan languages (Campbell 1977)
 - Notoriously sporadic (Campbell 1996, Wichmann 2006)
 - Further discussion: Tandy 2021
- Campbell traces to before Spanish conquest
 - Present in both Western Poqomchi' and Poqomam
 - Must have occurred before they split

Case study: *p'* phoneme

- *p'* in colonial documents
 - <npuzrik> 'it was folded' (below - GG 232, fol. 34v, ln. 2)
 - root *p'us-* 'fold' (other varieties: **b'us-*)
 - Colonial dictionaries have <pus> 'something doubled over' (Feldman 2004: 160)



Reahic equenac yah yquinac ac yquinac hozē, yah nquimric
yah npuzric, yah neul qui tiholal qui tzuhamal chi quibōl
xa ma ahlamah xa ma etamah voronchilah coxic nqui cor chi

Case study: 2nd person absolutive

- Modern Poqomchi'
 - *at-* used in completive aspect
 - *ti-* used in incompletive aspect

(1) *x-at-chal-ik*
com-2.abs-come-iv
'you came'

(2) *ti-wir-ik*
2.abs-sleep-iv
'you are sleeping'

(Mó Isém 2006: 170-171)

Case study: 2nd person absolutive

- Modern Poqomam
 - *ti-* used everywhere
 - Paradigm leveling

(3) *x-ti-kam-an-a*
com-2.abs-work-ap-iv
'you worked'

(4) *ti-b'ej-a*
2.abs-walk-iv
'you are walking'

(Santos Nicolás and Benito Pérez 1998: 88)

Case study: 2nd person absolutive

- Colonial Poqomam

- Leveling in progress
- *ti-* appears in completive aspect
- *at-* still used in biclausal sentences with ‘want’

(5) <xtilari> or <xtiylari>
x-ti-(i)l-ar-i
com-2.abs-see-pass-iv
‘you were seen’

(6) <xat rah ylari>
x-at-r-aj *il-ar-i*
com-2.abs-3s.erg-want see-pass-inf
‘you wanted to be seen’

(Moran 1720, fols. 6v-7r)

Case study: 2nd plural clitic

- 2nd person plural formed by adding plural postclitic
 - Poqomchi': *at-/ti-...taq*
 - Poqomam: *ti-...ta*

Poqomchi'

(7) *xatchalik taq*

'you pl. came'

(Mó Isém 2006: 180)

Poqomam

(8) *tib'eja ta*

'you pl. walked'

(Santos Nicolás and Benito Pérez 1998: 88)

- *taq* is original (cf. K'iche'), *ta* is reduced

Case study: 2nd plural clitic

- Colonial Poqom
 - Difference already present
 - Shown here with relational noun *aweh ta(q)* ‘to you pl.’

Colonial Poqomchi’

(9) <auetac>

aw-eh ***taq***

erg2-rel.n pl

‘to you pl.’

(GG 232, fol. 33r, ln. 3)

Colonial Poqomam

(10) <aueta>

aw-eh ***ta***

erg2-rel.n pl

‘to you pl.’

(Moran 1720, fol. 2r)

Interpreting Colonial Poqom manuscripts

Goals?

- Learn about Poqom prehistory
 - Data for reconstruction
 - Pre-Columbian language contact
- Identify recent variation and change in Poqom
 - Change from colonial to modern Poqom
 - Post-Conquest language contact

Challenges

- Translation uncertainty
- Provenance/authorship not always clear
- Earliest manuscripts post-date Spanish contact
- Limited genres: almost all missionary documents
- Mostly L2 corpus - Spanish authors

Challenges: Translation uncertainty

- Orthography
 - <c, qu, ɛ> represent /k, k', q, q'/ interchangeably
 - Vowel length not represented
- Monolingual
 - Most texts lack translation
 - Also pointed out by Vinogradov (2022b)

Challenges: Provenance

- Text does not always indicate author and date
- No metadata
- Can sometimes estimate century based on handwriting

Challenges: Spanish influence

- Earliest: 1565 (Spanish colonized Poqomchi' area in 1530s)
- Influence on vocabulary (Vinogradov 2021a)
 - Loanwords
 - Poqom coinages for Christian religious concepts
- More on this later

Challenges: Genre

- 3,363-page textual corpus is almost entirely sermons
 - 5-page Título (land deed)
 - Two confessionals, 82 pages total
 - Treatise for teaching plainchant, 32 pages
- Vinogradov (2022b: 377): “primarily based on translations”
- Grammars and vocabularies also for missionary purposes

Challenges: L2 corpus

- Almost all by Spanish learners of Poqom
 - Except 5-page Título
- Sources of variation?
 - Want to identify variation and change in speech community
 - What if it's learner error?
- Similar question about Spanish influence
 - Did native speakers actually use the new religious terms?

Challenges: L2 corpus

- Though there is some question:
 - “It is unclear whether these texts were indeed written by missionaries (non-native speakers), or whether native speakers were involved in their production” (Vinogradov 2022b: 377)

Challenges: L2 corpus

“...[I am] taking the sermons of Father Francisco de Viana and joining them with those...of Father Gonzalo Ximeno, although **his are not as lavish nor of such elegant language** as those of Father Francisco who was a consummate master of the Poqomchi’ language, and **the difference and style will be clearly seen...**”

- Dionisio de Zúñiga, introduction to GG 232, my translation

- In other words: The difference in both authors’ proficiency is so great that it should be **obvious** to the reader

Challenges: L2 corpus

- Specific area of uncertainty: Possessor agreement
- Possession accomplished by ergative prefixes on noun
- Moran (1720) shows free attachment

Challenges: L2 corpus

- Ergative marker appears before adjective

(11) <nu loc lah vaz>

nu *loq'-laj* *w-aas*

1s.erg beloved-intns 1s.erg-older.sibling

‘my beloved older brother’

(Moran 1720, fol. 3v)

Challenges: L2 corpus

- Ergative marker appears before adjective
- Not attested in modern Poqom
- Calque from Spanish, or grammaticalization?

Solution:
Use all the data!

Use all the data

- Lauersdorf (2018: 211-212)
- Components (verbatim):
 1. Identify all possible sources of language data
 2. Consult the entirety of the language data
 - Avoid selective sampling
 3. Use all the socio-historical data
 - In my case: ethnography, oral history, records from the convent, letters

Sociohistorical sources

1. Sources directly about the Poqom
2. Sources about the Alta Verapaz region in general
3. General information about the colonial context and Dominican missionary activity (including documents in other Mayan languages)
4. References to the Poqom by other Mayan authors

New questions

- Inter-author comparison
 - Why was Viana's writing "obviously" better than Ximeno's?
 - Multiple manuscript traditions?
- Identifying sources of translation
- Author identification
- Rhetorical use of the language
 - Conveying Dominican religious thought
 - Different views on "Indian" traditions

New spin on old questions

- Poqom prehistory
 - Reconstructed proto-Poqom vs. oldest manuscripts
 - Do the manuscripts tell a different story?
 - Could reveal learner error **or** confirm the reconstruction
- Sociolinguistics
 - Compare the Título to the missionary documents
- Change from colonial to modern Poqom
 - How well attested is the colonial construction?
 - Do multiple authors use it?

Next steps

- Transcribe all the documents
 - Plan to use automatic handwriting recognition - Transkribus
- Turn into searchable corpus
 - Filter by year, location, author
- Translate and gloss
 - Work with native speakers
- Collect socio-historical documents

Thank you!

[HTTPS://JTANDYLING.GITHUB.IO/](https://jtandyling.github.io/)

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