

## APPENDIX A

### THE QʼEQČIʼ LANGUAGE

An introduction to Qʼeqčičiʼ phonetics and grammar may help readers to find simplicity behind the apparent complexity of words which appear throughout the text. The first point to notice is that the consonant sounds *d*, *f*, and *g* are absent except in loan words from Spanish and in the phoneme represented by *w*, which could as well be symbolized *gw* or *kw*. The orthography used here is not that used in Guatemalan publications; it offers precision and compactness but it admittedly sacrifices congruence with common usage in order to fit the alphabet used in a contemporaneous linguistic study of Qʼeqčičiʼ.<sup>1</sup> The minor peculiarities of *b* and *p* can be passed over in order to concentrate on the 'explosive' consonants, marked by a following apostrophe, and the familiar sounds with unfamiliar symbols.

The *ch* of chair is *č*; the *ts* of rats is *c*; the *c* of can is *k*; and a very awkward back-of-the-throat sort of *k* is *q*. Each of these consonants has a glottalized or explosive counterpart which is made by compressing air behind the glottis and releasing it forcefully as the rest of the mouth forms the consonant. The only other consonant with such a counterpart is *t*, and the two remaining un-paired but reassigned symbols are *š* for the *sh* of ship and *x* for the *ch* of Bach.

Vowels are pronounced as in Spanish, but unlike Spanish in that there exists a full set of counterparts which are prolonged for

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<sup>1</sup>Freeze, 1970.

twice the time of the simple phoneme and represented by *a:*, *e:*, etc. Vowels, too, may be followed or interrupted by a glottal stop, designated by '?' in place of the correct phonetic symbol (which resembles a question mark, minus its dot), and formed with the glottis in the way that English-speakers unconsciously block off their throats before the initial *E* of the word *English* itself! Finally, initial and medial *y* is usually pronounced *ty*.

The resulting alphabet contains 32 symbols:

|              |              |              |              |              |          |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| <i>a, a:</i> | <i>e, e:</i> | <i>q, q?</i> | <i>o, o:</i> | <i>s</i>     | <i>š</i> |
| <i>b</i>     | <i>h</i>     | <i>l</i>     | <i>p</i>     | <i>t, t?</i> | <i>y</i> |
| <i>k, k?</i> | <i>i, i:</i> | <i>m</i>     | <i>w</i>     | <i>c, c?</i> |          |
| <i>č, č?</i> | <i>x</i>     | <i>n</i>     | <i>r</i>     | <i>u, u:</i> |          |

The point of Q?eqči? grammar which will be most useful is the possessive of nouns. This is in the form of a prefix; the third person singular is *š-* for words starting with a consonant or *y*, and *r-* for those starting with vowels. It follows that alphabetization of words is by initial letter of the root, even where the prefix is an integral part of denotation. Unfortunately, the same *š-* prefix will sometimes appear in its other role as indicator of verbs' third person singular proximal past tense.<sup>2</sup>

Transliteration to or from the alphabet used in Guatemala may be carried out with the following table of equivalent symbols, arranged to match the table above, and substituting *qu* for *c* after *i* or *e*.

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<sup>2</sup>The source for grammar is Haeserijn, 1966; for pronunciation and vocabulary, the source is Sedat, 1955 (with transposition of orthography by the author).

|             |             |       |             |             |   |
|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---|
| a, <u>a</u> | e, <u>e</u> | k, k' | o, <u>o</u> | s           | x |
| b           | h           | l     | p           | t, t'       | y |
| c, c'       | i, <u>i</u> | m     | cu          | tz, tz'     |   |
| ch, ch'     | j           | n     | r           | u, <u>u</u> |   |