

# Guide to Orthography (Spelling) Changes in Cakchiquel/Kaqchikel

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This guide explains the various orthographies (spelling systems) used over the years in the Cakchiquel (Kaqchikel) language spoken in Guatemala and how to convert from one orthography to another.

- **Orthography 1** was used in the 1969 grammar book *Cakchiquel Basic Course* by Robert W. Blair, Kristine Campbell, Lyle Campbell, John S. Robertson, et. al.). This orthography used the number 7 for a glottal stop, the letter *k* for the hispanic *c/qu*, and *q* for the hispanic *k*. (Read about it beginning on page xviii of [volume 1.](#))
- **Orthography 2** was used in translations published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ([see list](#)) from 1976 to the 1980s and in the [1981 Diccionario Español-Cakchiquel-Inglés](#). This is the orthography used by previous translators of the New Testament.
- **Orthography 3** is the standardized orthography of the Guatemalan languages established by the [Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala \(Guatemalan Academy of Mayan Languages\)](#), founded in 1990. This changed the letters *c/q* to *k* and *k* to *c/q*, effectively changing the spelling of the language from “Cakchiquel” to “Kaqchikel.”

Orthography 1 (1969)	Orthography 2 (LDS publications 1980s)	Orthography 3 Standardized Orthography 1990
a	a	a, ë (e with umlaut)
b	b	b'
c	c, q, que	k
e	e	e, ë (e with umlaut)
k	c (except before e or i, when it becomes qu)	q
q, qu	k	c, q
7	' (apostrophe)	
w	v	w
y	See note 1	

Note 1: The letter y as the penultimate letter of a verb or noun changes as follows: in a verb it becomes e, in a possessed noun it becomes a, and in an unpossessed noun it becomes e (due to the difference in pronunciation of a possessed or unpossessed noun).

Here are the steps to automatically convert from orthography 3 to orthography 2. Using a word processor, perform the following find-and-replace changes exactly in the order shown:

1. Change k to c
2. Change q to k
3. Change ce to que
4. Change ci to qui
5. Change b' to b

It doesn't handle all words perfectly, and it doesn't handle borrowed Spanish words correctly, but it gets you 90% there.

For a description of different orthographies used in Cakchiquel (Kaqchikel) and how to convert from one to the other, see [LarryRichman.org/cakchiquel-translation-history-lds](http://LarryRichman.org/cakchiquel-translation-history-lds).