

The conjunctions of Colonial and Modern Valley Zapotec: Evidence from Feria (1567)

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1 Introduction¹

Doctrina Christiana en lengua castellana y zapoteca, by Fray Pedro de Feria (1567) is one of the longest texts in Colonial Valley Zapotec – 117 leaves (or 233 pages), but it has so far received little or no attention from linguists.

It has been largely overshadowed by the work of Fr. Juan de Córdova, a Dominican priest, who published a grammar and dictionary of the language in 1578. While this grammar and dictionary are of inestimable value to our understanding of the language, they focus primarily on the lexicon and morphology of Colonial Valley Zapotec, and tell us very little about its syntax.

For that, we must turn to examination of texts, and Feria is well suited for this. The document is a bilingual Spanish-Zapotec explanation of Catholic doctrine. For this paper, I have been working with a database composed of about forty pages of Feria, comprising 501 records. Each record contains one or more sentences, with the boundaries set by paragraph breaks or punctuation in the text. Most records contain multiple clauses, so the total number of clauses represented in the database is in the range of one thousand.

2 Conjunctive coordination – ‘and’

¹ I thank Pamela Munro and David Tavárez for helpful comments on this paper.

I use the following abbreviations in the glosses: clit = clitic of unidentified meaning, com = completive aspect, foc = focus, fut = future aspect, hab = habitual, neg = negative, pl = plural, pot = potential aspect, prohib = prohibitive, q = question particle, p = possessed, rel = relativizer, top = topic. Person marker are identified by 1, 2, 3 and number, where s = singular, p = plural, and pinc = inclusive plural.

Glosses which are uncertain are italicized. The gloss given is a guess based on the context of the translation, but the item has not yet been identified based on an entry in a colonial dictionary or a cognate in a modern Zapotec language.

Many items are identified in footnotes by their entry in the Junta Colombina dictionary (Junta Colombina de México 1893) (=JC) and the excellent reverse dictionary of the JC, Whitecotton and Whitecotton (1993). Although published in 1893, the manuscript seems to have been composed in approximately 1793.

Data from San Dionicio Ocotepéc Zapotec and Santa Ana del Valle Zapotec are from my field notes.

2.1.1 Colonial Valley Zapotec

Córdova's *Arte* says that 'and' is expressed by =la, postposed:

- 1) 'Et, que y atque mas, quoque, tambien. Para las dos primeras sierve, *chela* vel *la*, postpuesto. yt. v.g. Llamame a pedro y a juan y a alonso. *co xeni pedro la juan la alonso la*. (Córdova 1578:80)

This correlates well with what is found in Feria. The normal means of conjunction is =la, which appears following each of the conjoined elements. Consider the following example:

- 2) ... *chela* *co-nnitiloo-tete-to* *co-çana-tete-to* *quelahuezaa=la²*,
 and *com-destroy-very-2* *com-verb-very-2p* idolatry= and

quela_huecete *quie=la* *yaga=la...*
worship stone-and stick-and

'... y acabad de destruyr del todo la ydolatria, dexando de adorar a los palos y piedras'
 'and completely destroy idolatry and give up worshipping sticks and rocks.' (p. 24)

=la can occur on each of three conjuncts:

- 3) *Tuatij tigabañenini peniche xilla B. Dios beniati,*
com-make gift god God men

quieba=la, *layoo=la* *niça-too=la*, *chela cechacueeloo:*
 heaven=and earth=and water-big=and and

'And in this point is God having given man the sky, the earth, and the sea and all the other creatures' (p. 25)

- 4) *nayaani quitopa cuee anima=la* *pela=la* *pelalati=la.*
all part soul=and flesh=and body=and

'..being composed of the soul, flesh, and body.' (p. 25)

=la can go on even longer strings:

²JC *quelahuezaa* 'idolatría'

- 5) Tuacani ya-còcha laci quela_zij=**la**, quela_chi baa=**la** quela_cobiña=**la**,
neg-exist affliction=**and** misery=**and** hunger=**and**

quela_huechaganiç=**la**: nalla=**la**, nàgui=**la**, quela_huelacelachi=**la**,
 thirst=**and** cold=**and** heat=**and** *punishment*=**and**

quela_huiñalachi=**la**, quela_toxo=**la**, quela_tilla=**la**:³
 sadness=**and** *distress*=**and** *quarreling*=**and**

‘... where there is no affliction, nor of misery, nor of hunger, [nor of thirst,] nor of cold, nor of heat, [nor of punishment,] nor of sadness, nor of distress, nor of quarreling’ (p. 28)

- 6) ... quela tinni missa=**la**, quela_conna loo missa, quela_tigoo libana=**la**,
 nom say mass=**and** listening to mass preaching sermon=**and**

quela_huiña libana=**la**, quela_huecuana gueta=**la**,
 assisting sermon=**and** *saying* prayer=**and**

quela_huecete Dios=**la**, quela-cazetoo pelalati=**la**,
 God=**and** *disciplining* body=**and**

quela_huezaa lachi=**la**, laxîti cetobi loo quela_nazaca..⁴.
alms giving =**and** all good:deeds

‘como dezir missa, oy r la predicacion, predicar, ayu[n]ar, rezar, disciplinarse, dar limosna, y todas las de mas...’

‘..how to say mass, hear the preaches, preach, fast, pray, discipline oneself, give alms, and all the other good deeds...’ (p.47)

=la can sometimes occur to conjoin other categories, such as PP:

- 7) ... ya che-tiña-to ni-ca=ni loo quie=**la**, loo y àga=**la**
neg pot:go-ask-2p to stone=**and** to wood=**and**

³ JC guelahuiñalachi ‘tristeza’, guelarillalachi ‘agonia’?, guelahueleaachilachi ‘escarmiento’, guelachibaa ‘misericordia, pobreza, adversidad’, gobiña ‘hambre’, guelahuechaganiza ‘sed’, guelanazij ‘trabajo or aflicción’.

⁴ JC guelanazaca ‘bondad, cortés, virtud generalmente’

‘no vays a pedirla a los idolos de palo, o de piedra’

‘don’t go ask the wood and stone.’ (p. 49)

To generalize about the distribution of the conjunction =la in Colonial Valley Zapotec, it seems that =la must occur on each item in the coordinate structure, and that =la is available for the coordination of both NPs and PPs.

2.2 Modern Valley Zapotec

2.2.1 San Dionicio Ocotepc

San Dionicio Ocotepc Zapotec (SDZ) has two apparent kinds of coordination for noun phrases. One uses the Spanish loanword *cùn* ‘with, and’, while the other seems to retain the native pattern of a clitic following the conjuncts.

2.2.1.1 Apparent conjunction with *cùn* ‘with, and’

Perhaps the most frequent means of translating coordination is with the borrowed word *cùn*:

- 8) Là'à Juáàny **cùn** Móòny zèh'èh lòò ìnyá'.
foc John and Ramón went to field

‘John and Ramón went to the field.’

If there is more than one conjunct, the possibilities are like those of English or Spanish – the conjunction may appear between all of the conjuncts, or between the last and the next to last:

- 9) Juáàny, Móòny, **cùn** Màrî
Juan Ramón and Maria

‘Juan, Ramón, and Maria.’

- 10) Juáàny **cùn** Móòny **cùn** Màrî
Juan and Ramón and Maria

‘Juan and Ramón and Maria.’

However, *cùn* may not be a true conjunction, but a preposition instead. In other contexts, it will be translated as ‘with’, and can have both instrumental and comitative (or accompaniment) readings:

- 11) Gwìì Juàány Ldùá' **cùn** Màrî.
com:go Juan Oaxaca with Maria

'Juan went to Oaxaca with Maria.'

- 12) Û-diiny Juàány bèh'cw **cùn** yààg.
com-hit Juan dog with stick

'Juan hit the dog with a stick.'

Furthermore, *cùn* shows some properties that are not generally characteristic of conjunctions. Consider the following example:

- 13) ĩTúú ù-nàà=èhby __ **cùn** Màrîí?
who com-see=3 and Maria

'Who did he see __ and Maria?
(or perhaps 'Who did he see __ with Maria?')

This sentence is grammatical in SDZ. Languages typically do not allow an element within a coordination to be questioned (this is the Coordinate Structure Constraint, Ross 1968). Therefore the fact that this is grammatical might lead us to the conclusion that *cùn* is really a preposition and not a conjunction.

2.2.1.2 Conjunction with =na

The other pattern continues that seen in the Feria text. This pattern postposes the clitic =nà:

- 14) Û-náá Lwíèhz, Léhèhn(=**nà**), Móòny=**nà**.
com-see:1s Luisa Elena(=and) Ramón=and

'I saw Luisa, Elena, and Ramón.'

The rule for the use of =nà seems to be that it obligatorily appears on the last conjunction, and optionally appears on any preceding conjunct except the first.⁵

- 15) *Û-náá Lwíèhz=**nà**, Léhèhn=**nà**, Móòny=**nà**.
com-see:1s Luisa=conj Elena=and Ramón=and

'I saw Luisa, Elena, and Ramón.'

⁵ The pattern could be expressed as X → X (X=Conj)* X=Conj

Unlike the pattern seen with *cùn* above, it is not possible to question one of the elements in the conjunction:

- 16) *ǰTúú ù-nàà Móòny ___ Léhèhn=**nà**.
 who com-see Ramón Elena=and

‘Who did Ramón see and Elena?’

It is also possible to combine *cùn* and *=nà*:

- 17) Nà ù-zí=yá gèhèht, gèhèhtgùù=**nà cùn** èhncilàad=**nà**.
 I com-buy=1s tortilla tamale=and and enchilada=and

‘I bought tortillas, tamales, and enchiladas.’

2.2.2 San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec

SLQZ shows a pattern much like that in SDZ, using an element *nab* ‘also, as well’. However, SLQZ allows *nab* on all the conjuncts, and in this respect is more similar to the Colonial Valley Zapotec pattern:

- 18) R-càa’z=a’ g-ùuny=a’ liaz=a’ sti’lly re’nn ba’i,
 hab-want=1s pot-do=1s house=1s style this really

cosye’nn **nah** ba’nny **nah** sa’ll **nah**.
 kitchen and bathroom and living:room and

‘I want to make my house in the style [of those] here, with a kitchen, a bathroom, and a living room as well.’ Munro and Lopez et al. (1999:170)

SLQZ also shows a borrowed conjunction/preposition *cēbnn*, *cwēbnn*.

2.2.3 Mitla Zapotec

Mitla Zapotec uses the conjunctions *nāj* and *nājza*, which appear between each conjunct (Briggs 1961). *Nājza* probably contains the clitic *=za* ‘also’. These conjunctions are shown in the following examples, taken from the Mitla Zapotec translation of the New Testament (Xtidcoob 1981).

- 19) ... re-beñ guedx Sodoma **nāj** Gomorra.
 pl-people city Sodom and Gomorra

‘...the people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.’ Matt 10:15

- 20) ... ba-zalajz-reni oor, **nājza** yaal **nājza** yalnejxh.
com-present?=3pl gold and frankincense and myrrh

‘... they presented gold, frankincense, and myrrh.’ Matt 2:11

2.2.4 Isthmus Zapotec

Isthmus Zapotec (Pickett and Black 1997:30) shows a conjunction *ne* ‘and’, which appears between the conjuncts

- 21) Gu-zi’=ne ti kilo bichooxhe **ne**’ chupa papaya ro’.
com-buy=3 a kilo tomato and two papaya big

‘He bought a kilo of tomatoes and two big papayas.’

In Isthmus Zapotec, it seems that the pattern of adding a clitic to each conjunct has disappeared.

2.3 A remaining puzzle

One puzzle about the Colonial Valley Zapotec conjunction = *la* is that no Modern Zapotec language seems to have an /l/ at the beginning of the cognate. It appears that cognates always begin with /n/ instead:

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|------|----|
| 22) | San Dionicio Ocotepc (E. Valley) | = na | |
| | San Lucas Quiavini (E. Valley) | nah | |
| | Mitla (E. Valley) | nāj | |
| | Isthmus Zapotec | ne’ | |
| | Ayoquesco (S. Valley) | | nò |
| | Quiérolani (S. Sierra) | | no |
| | Yatzachi el Bajo (N. Sierra) | ne’ | |

The evidence here seems to be strong enough to reconstruct *nV as the word for ‘and’ in Proto-Zapotec, therefore we would expect a form beginning with /n/ in Colonial Valley Zapotec. Was CVZ really different, or is there something unusual about the orthography? It seems at least possible that the colonial writers were being influenced by *la* = ‘or’, discussed in the following section.

3 Alternative Coordination – ‘or’

3.1 Colonial Valley Zapotec *la=* ‘or’

Córdoba’s *Arte* describes the CVZ equivalent of ‘or’ as preposed *la=*. The Feria text correlates with this, showing many instances of an initial clitic *la=* ‘or’.

We can see *la=* in examples like the following:

- 23) ... quela ninaquiña ça-lo neza, c[ç?]a= lo queya tobi tobi queche:
pot:go-2 road go= 2 every village

la= oa-naca= lo coniya, **la=** oa-naca= lo còona, la= [o]a-naca= lo cobeche...
or= ?-be= 2 merchant or= ?-be= 2 laborer or= ?-be= 2 official

‘It is necessary that you go through the path and through the markets from town to town being merchant, laborer, official...’ (p. 28)

- 24) Ti càni yobi coquí Rey castilla, **la=** coquí obispo, **la=** bixoce copabitoo,
q? that king king castle or= king bishop or= father priest

la= bixoce colàya nàca= ni sancta y glesia?⁶
or= father priest be= 3 holy church

‘O por ventura pensays, que la yglesia es el Rey de castilla, o el obispo, o los padres?’

‘Do you (pl) think that the Church is the king of the castle, or the bishop, or the priests?’ (p. 43)

- 25) Tebela nàquin ni-ya missa, **la=** coo-ya libana, **la=** cocuana-ya gueta,
if say-1s mass or= preach-1s sermon or= fast-1s tortilla

la= caze-a too lati= a.
or= *discipline*-1s? body= 1s

‘... que si yo digo missa, o prediço, o ayuno, o me disciplino.’

‘Or if I say mass, or preach, or fast, or discipline myself.’ (p. 47)

⁶ Apparently *bixoce copabitoo* and *bixoce colàya* refer to different kinds of priests.

- 26) Tobì beni Christiano ni-co-tobaniña⁷
 one man Christian rel-com-baptize

(**la=** beni Castilla naca-ni, **la=** beni Yndio, **la=** beni yace, **la=** beni yàti,
 or=men Spanish be-3 or=men Indian or=men black or=men white

la= toti cechacue loo beni Christiano)
 or=whatever *quality* to man Christian

‘... todo fiel Christiano que ha rescbido el sancto Baptismo (ora sea Eñspaol,
 ora sea Yndio, ora sea negro, ora sea blanco, ora sea de qual quera otra
 qualidad)’

‘... all faithful Christians who received the holy Baptism (being Spanish, Indian,
 Black, White, or of any other quality)’ (p.42)

3.2 Modern Zapotec

3.2.1 San Dionicio O cotepec

In SDZ, the normal equivalent of ‘or’ is *gù=*

- 27) Lá=Juáány **gù=**Móòny zè’èh lòò ìnyá’.
 q=John or=Ramón com:go to field

‘Was it John or Ramón who went to the field?’

Phrases conjoined with *gù=* obligatorily appear in a (preverbal) discourse focus position, so they don’t appear after the verb.

3.2.2 Mitla Zapotec

MZ seems to show two strategies. One uses the borrowed conjunction *o*, but the other simply lists the conjoined elements, with no explicit conjunction:

- 28) Nani-sa-nälajz= ru x-tad=ni, x-nan= ni luxh narä...
 rel?-fut-love= more p-father= 3 p-mother= 3 more I

‘He who loves his father or mother more than me...’
 Matt 10:37

3.2.3 San Lucas Quiavini

⁷JC rorobaniza ‘bautizar’

The main word for ‘or’ in SLQZ is *wùa’lla’*

- 29) ¿A nndèè’ **wù a’lla’** nndèè?
 top this or that

‘This one or that one?’ Munro and Lopez et al. (1999:351)

Initial /w/ at the beginning of SLQZ often seems to 1.) alternate with /g/ in SLQZ, or 2.) derive historically from /g/ or 3.) to correspond to words which have /g/ in other Zapotec languages. For example:

- 30) *wbiia’z* ‘fork in a tree; forked pole used in building houses’
 (variant of SLQZ *gy ubiia’z*)
weer ‘light-skinned’ (from Sp. *güero*)
wbye’e’rnn ‘government’ (from Sp. *gobierno*)
wbwi hzh ‘sun’ (compare Isthmus *gubidxa*)
wbwèè’ ‘broom’ (compare Isthmus *gù bá’y à’*)

Therefore it seems likely that at least the beginning of SLQZ *wùa’lla’* is cognate to SDZ *gù=*. Perhaps the /-la/ sequence at the end of this is related to the /la/ ‘or’ found in Colonial Valley Zapotec.

3.3 Historical development

I delay the discussion of the development of alternative conjunction to section 5.3 below.

4 Negative coordination – ‘nor’

4.1 Colonial Valley Zapotec

QVZ does not seem to have had a distinct conjunction for ‘nor’. Most frequently it uses no overt conjunction:

- 31) *Quitaalij loo quichaa guechelayoo yaca xi-quizaca=ti, yaca xi-quichono=ti,*
all to riches world neg p-value= neg neg p-price= neg

‘Todos los bienes deste mundo ningun valor, ni precio tienen’
 ‘All the riches of this world have neither value nor price.’

- 32) ‘Laaca quichaa ni-tij-ya-cõhui=ti, y a-guize= ti ...’
 focus property rel-?-neg-given= neg neg-handed= neg

‘These goods and riches are not to be given, nor handed out.’
 ‘Estos bienes y riquezas no las ha dies [Dios?] de dar, ni repartir.’ (p. 28)

In other cases, it uses the ordinary =la ‘and’ conjunction in a negative context:

33) Tuacani ya-còcha laci quelazij=**la**, quela_chibaa=**la** quela_cobiña=**la**,
 neg-exist affliction=**and** misery=**and** hunger=**and**

quela_huechaganiç=**la**: nalla=**la**, nàgui=**la**, quela_huelacelachi=**la**,
 thirst=**and** cold=**and** heat=**and** *punishment*=**and**

quela_huiñalachi=**la**, quela_toxo=**la**, quela_tilla=**la**.⁸
 sadness=**and** *distress*=**and** *quarreling*=**and**

‘... where there is no affliction, nor of misery, nor of hunger, [nor of thirst,] nor of cold, nor of heat, [nor of punishment,] nor of sadness, nor of distress, nor of quarreling’ (p. 28)

4.2 Modern Valley Zapotec

4.2.1 San Dionicio

In the negative, the conjunction *nìzà* ‘nor’ is used with both clauses and noun phrases:

34) Íity rr-cááz=tì’ gèhèht **nìzà** gèhèhtgùù **nìzà** èhñchiláàd.
 neg hab-want:1s=neg tortilla nor tamale nor enchilada

‘I don’t want tortillas, tamales, or enchiladas.’
 ‘No quiero tortillas ni tamales ni enchiladas.’

35) Íity rr-cááz=tì’ yà’y=á’ **nìzà** g-ùny=á còsìnáàrr **nìzà** g-ùld=à.
 neg hab-want:1s=neg pot:dance=1s nor pot-do=1 cook nor pot-sing=1s

‘I don’t want to dance, cook, or sing.’
 ‘No quiero bailar, ni cocinar, ni cantar.’

Nìzà obligatorily appears before each conjunct except the first; it is ungrammatical to omit it in any

⁸ JC guelahuiñalachi ‘tristeza’, guelarillalachi ‘agonia?’, guelahueleaachilachi ‘escarmiento’, guelachibaa ‘miseria, pobreza, adversidad’, gobiña ‘hambre’, guelahuechaganiza ‘sed’

of these positions.⁹

- 36) *Íty rr-cááz=tì' gèhèht gèhèhtgúù **niizá** èhnhiláàd.
 neg hab-want:1s=neg tortilla tamale nor enchilada

'I don't want tortillas, tamales, or enchiladas.'
 'No quiero tortillas ni tamales ni enchiladas.'

It is marginally possible for *nìzà* to appear before the first conjunct:

- 37) ? Íty rr-cááz=tì' **niizá** gèhèht **niizá** gèhèhtgúù **niizá** èhnhiláàd.
 neg hab-want:1s=neg nor tortilla nor tamale nor enchilada

'I don't want tortillas, tamales, or enchiladas.'
 'No quiero tortillas ni tamales ni enchiladas.' 8:299

4.2.2 San Lucas Quiavini

SLQZ uses *nyèe'c...nyèe'cza'* or *nyèe'c...nyèe'c* for 'nor':

- 38) **Nyèe'c** nndèe' **nyèe'cza'** nndèe que'ity r-yu'làa'z=a.
 nor this nor that neg hab-like=1s

'I don't like either this one or that one.' Munro and Lopez et al. (1999:190)

- 39) **Nyèe'c** la'anng **nyèe'c** nàa' tèe'bag tu ny-ie=di'.
 nor he nor I neg any one neg-go-neg

'Neither he nor I went.' Munro and Lopez et al. (1999:190)

4.2.3 Mitla Zapotec

Mitla Zapotec shows a similar pattern, with *nicla* or *nicla=za* used in contexts for 'nor':

- 40) Na'c gun=tu xhigab siädgudzuca=ä leei x-ten toMoisés **nicla=za**
 prohib do=2p think come=1 law p-thing Moses or=also

re-diidx ni-balui re-daad ni-gu-nii x-tidx Dios.
 pl-word rel-write pl-men rel-com-speak p-word God

⁹ The pattern might be summarized as X → (Conj) X (Conj X)⁺

‘Do not think that I am come to destroy the law (of Moses) or the prophets (lit. the words that the men who spoke the words of God wrote.)’ Matt 5:17

- 41) Narä r-ni-ä, na’c gun=lu juraar, **nicla** tej mood, **nicla** por xhaguibaa...
I hab-say-1s prohib do=2s swear nor a way nor by heaven

nicla por loj_guidexliuj ... **nicla** por guedx Jerusalén...
nor by earth nor by city Jeru salem

nicla=za por lagajc bitiuyc=lu
nor= also by ow n head=2

‘I say to you, do not swear by anything; neither by the earth...
nor by the heavens...nor by Jerusalem... nor by your own head.’
Matt 5:34-36.

These examples seem to show that *nicla* is optional before the first conjunct, like the pattern seen in SDZ.

4.3 Historical development

The SLQZ *nyèe’c* and the first syllable of Mitla *nicla* appear to be cognate. The most likely CVZ source for these forms would appear to be the negative predicate *yaca*, seen in examples like the following:

- 42) ... **yaca** zochi tapa-to ticha_pea xi-teni=ni...
neg never guard-2p law p-thing=3

‘...nunca guardays sus mandimientos...’

‘...you never keep his commandments...’ (p.27)

- 43) Qui taalij loo quichaa guechelay oo **yaca** xi-quizaca=ti, **yaca** xi-quichono=ti,
to riches world neg p-value=neg neg p-price=neg

‘Todos los bienes deste mundo ningun valor, ni precio tienen’

‘All the riches of this world have neither value nor price.’

All the Modern Valley Zapotec languages also have a negative aspect prefix /ni-/ or /ny-/, like that seen in the following SDZ example:

- 44) Juáány íity=bí **ny**-úút=bì rájte bzìiny.

John not=3 neg-kill=3 all mouse

‘John didn’t kill all the mice.’

The combination of /ni-/ with the *yaca* negative would give us *niyaca, which could be the source of *nyèe’c* and *nic-*. However, this development may be problematic, since in most MVZ languages, the /ni-/ or /ny-/ aspect marker shows up on the word that follows the negative particle.¹⁰

The second portion of the Mitla *nicla* may very well be the *la=* of CVZ, now appearing as an enclitic rather than a proclitic. And many of the words for ‘nor’ include a form of =*za*, a clitic meaning ‘also’.

5 Yes-no question particles

5.1 Colonial Valley Zapotec

It is not completely clear if there is a yes-no question particle in CVZ. It is possible that *ti* has this function in the Feria text. Consider the following examples:

- 45) Na-to nà, tebela tobi bitoo quizalacoca naca=ni,
say-2p 1s if one god all:powerful be=3

xi= xa naquiñaxa cechacuee bi too? Xi= xachi na c-òni= ni?
what=clit *involved* other god what=? com-do=3

Ti càni zoba-xihui= ni? Cani natii-late=ni¹¹?
q *perhaps* lazy-bad=3 *perhaps* weak-?=3

‘Dezid me si un dios es todo poderoso, paraque eran todos los de mas dioses? En que entendi an? Estavan porventura baldios y ociosas?’

‘Tell me -- if one of the gods is all powerful, what are all the other gods for? what are they in charge of? Were they perhaps lazy and idle?’ (p. 22)

- 46) **Ti** càni yobi coquí Rey castilla, la=coquí obispo, la=bixoce copabitoo,
q? that king king castle or=king bishop or=father priest

¹⁰ An alternative hypothesis is that these words include a reflex of the borrowed Spanish conjunction *ni*.

¹¹ JC nazobachii ‘ocioso, estar’, nati ‘muerto, flojo, ó no tener viveza, ser para nada’

la= bixoce colàya nàca= ni sancta yglesia?¹²
or= father priest be= 3 holy church

‘O por ventura pensays, que la yglesia es el Rey de castilla, o el obispo, o los padres?’

‘Do you (pl) think that the Church is the king of the castle, or the bishop, or the priests?’ (p. 43)

The Junta Colombina dictionary lists *tè* as ‘por ventura ó quizás’, which may be the particle appearing in the examples above. The Junta Colombina definition is roughly compatible with the suggestion that *tí* or *tè* was a question particle.

Although I have not so far discovered any instances of it in the Feria text, there may have been another question particle, *la*. The Córbova dictionary lists *làa* as ‘si, por ventura’. The JC dictionary also lists a *là* said to have the same meaning.

5.2 Modern Valley Zapotec

5.2.1 San Dionicio O cotepec

Yes-no questions are shown with an initial clitic *lá=*, which attaches to the first word of the sentence, whatever it may be. The following examples show *lá=* attached to a noun, verb, the negative particle, and an adverb.

- 47) ¿**Lá=**Juáány gù=Móòny zè’èh lòò ìnyá’?
q=John or=Ramón com:go to field

‘Was it John or Ramón who went to the field?’

- 48) ¿**Lá=**bèh’ty Juáány bzìiny?
q=com:kill John rat

‘Did John kill the rat?’

- 49) ¿**Lá=**íity Juààny nyúúty bzìiny?
q=not John neg:kill rat

‘Didn’t John kill the rat?’

- 50) ¿**Lá=**nnà’ì bèh’ty Juààny bzìiny?
q=yesterday com:kill John rat

‘Did John kill a rat yesterday?’ 5:44

¹² Apparently *bixoce copabitoo* and *bixoce colàya* refer to different kinds of priests.

Lá= normally attaches to a sentence, but it may also attach to other elements that are understood elliptically:

- 51) ¿Túú ù-dâw gèhèht? ¿**Lá**=Juáàny? ¿**Lá**=Màrî?
 who com-eat tortilla q=Juan q=Maria
 ‘Who ate the tortilla? [Was it] Juan? [Was it] Maria?’

5.2.2 Mitla Zapotec

The same *la* yes-no question particle is found in Mitla Zapotec:

- 52) ¿**La** di bejn gu-to’ tío’p manbâz ni-ru-tajt por te centaab, ä?
 q neg men com-sell two bird rel-hab-? for a cent q
 ‘Do men not sell two sparrows for a cent?’ Matt 10:29

5.2.3 San Lucas Quiavini

SLQZ also shows a *la* yes-no question particle;

- 53) ¿**La** r-àa’p Gye’eiħly pasapoo’rt?
 q hab-have Miguel passport
 ‘Does Mike have a passport?’ Munro and Lopez et al.
 (1999:141)

In addition, SLQZ has a yes-no question particle *gu*, as in the following example:

- 54) ¿**Gu** nu’ x:-ta’ad-ùu’ y-nniì’ni=a’?
 q exist p-father-2s pot-speak= 1s
 ‘Is your father there for me to talk to him?’ Munro and Lopez et al.
 (1999:121)

5.2.4 Santa Ana del Valle

SAV has a yes-no question particle *gu*=, as in the following example:

- 55) **Gu**=re-lilaaz=detu=ni?
q= hab-believe= 2p= 3i

‘Can you believe that?’

5.3 Historical development

It seems striking that the two particles used for yes-no in the cited Modern Valley Zapotec languages show a relationship to particles meaning ‘or’ in other languages.

For example, the *la*= question particle in SDZ, SLQZ, and MZ is similar to the preposed *la*= used for ‘or’ in Colonial Valley Zapotec. And the *gu*= yes-no question particle seen in SAV resembles the *gu*= ‘or’ in SDZ and *wùa'lla*’ in SLQZ.

This makes sense if we consider the semantic relationship between yes-no questions and alternative conjunction. A yes-no question asks us to choose between two alternatives – *yes* or *no*, so it is reasonable that a particle meaning ‘or’ might come to be a yes-no question particle, or vice-versa.

But does *la*= originate as a conjunction which becomes a yes-no question particle in most modern Valley Zapotec languages? If this were the case, it would seem puzzling that no modern Valley Zapotec language continues the pattern for alternative conjunction seen in CVZ. I would tentatively like to suggest the following hypothesis.

In the early colonial period, the normal colloquial way of forming alternative conjunctions was to simply list the conjuncts, with no overt conjunction in use. (I.e. a pattern like that seen in Mitla Zapotec.) The priests seeking to translate the *Doctrina* and other religious documents pressed their Zapotec-speaking assistants into finding a way to translate Spanish *o*. They used the question particle *la* to translate *o*. So when the CVZ says something like ‘If I say mass, or preach, or fast, or discipline myself’, the syntax of the Zapotec is closer to ‘Do I say mass? Do I preach? Do I fast? Do I discipline myself?’ (Compare the elliptical use of *lá*= in SDZ.)

The result is a somewhat artificial Zapotec that roughly captures the sense of the Spanish *o*, but doesn’t correspond to normal usage. For that reason, none of the modern Valley Zapotec languages continue this pattern.

If it is correct to identify *ti* as a yes-no question particle in CVZ, then its most likely connection is to the negative clitic which appears on the word after the negative. Consider the following SDZ example:

- 56) Íity ù-lù’ù=tì’ Juààny bzyàá lè’èny bòòls.
neg com-put=neg Juan beans in bag

‘Juan didn’t put the beans in the bag.’

It is again surprising that no modern Valley Zapotec language seems to have retained *ti* as a yes-no

question marker.

6 Conclusion

The conjunctions of Colonial Valley Zapotec are in many cases strikingly different from those found in modern Valley Zapotec languages. None of them are an exact match in terms of their morphology and syntax.

There are two factors that may play some role in explaining the difference. One is the possibility that the Zapotec of the Feria text is somewhat artificial, and does not very accurately reflect colloquial 16th century Zapotec. The other is the growing influence of Spanish on modern Valley Zapotec languages. Although most modern Valley Zapotec languages retain native lexical items in coordination, it is possible that the syntax of their usage is influenced by Spanish.

Our understanding of the history of the Zapotec languages is still at a early stage. Perhaps further investigation will make the historical development of the conjunctions clearer.

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8 Appendix – other instances of /la/

In the Feria orthography, the < la > of the preceding morphemes is easily confused

with the word *là'á* 'name', also spelled < la> . At first glance, the sequence < ni la> appears to be a conjunction, but more careful examination shows that < ni la> consistently seems to introduce loanwords. This suggests that rather than a conjunction < ni> should be analysed as /ní=là'á/ 'which is named'.

- 57) ... chela quela toniche xilla=ni=tono, quela piànî tao xi-teni-ni, ni-là fè,
 and nom give=3=1pinc nom great p-thing=3 rel-name faith

chela quela co-beza xi-teni=ni, ni-la esp[er]ãça:
 and nom com-? p-thing=3 rel-name hope

chela quela cò-nachij xi-teni=ni, ni là caridad:
 and nom com- p-thing=3 rel-name charity

'and gives us his grace, pardoning our sins, giving us faith, hope, and charity...'
 (p. 25)

- 58) Chela pezaa lachini quela naguichi¹³ xi-teni pelalati, ni-là sentidos corporales.
 and nom p-thing body rel-name senses corporal

Chela quela naguichi xi-teni anima: ni-là potencias del anima.
 and nom p-thing soul rel-name powers of:the soul

'And also having been given the senses of the body and the powers of the soul.'
 (p. 26)

¹³ JC guelanaguichi 'esfuerzo, firmeza, impedimento, salud o sanidad' ; JC guelaguicha-lachitoo 'pasiones de alma'