



Chol (Mayan) Folktales: A Collection of Stories from the Modern Maya of Southern Mexico

By Nicholas A. Hopkins and J. Kathryn Josserand with Ausencio [Chencho] Cruz Guzmán. 2016. Boulder: University Press of Colorado. 191 pages. ISBN: 978-1-60732-487-4 (soft cover).

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Chol (Mayan) Folktales: A Collection of Stories from the Modern Maya of Southern Mexico is the product of nearly thirty years of fieldwork on the Chol language and folklore by Nicholas A. Hopkins and the late J. Kathryn Josserand. Following landmark texts like Whittaker and Warkentin's *Chol Texts on the Supernatural* (a Summer Institute of Linguistics publication) this collection includes English translations of eleven Chol texts collected during Hopkins and Josserand's fieldwork with the help of Ausencio (Chencho) Cruz Guzmán. Hopkins notes that the goal of this collection is to "convey a more nuanced sense of the oral tradition" (xviii). With rich companion chapters to the collection of eleven tales, this book certainly achieves its goal.

As Hopkins notes in the preface, this volume is an expanded version of an earlier manuscript called *T'an ti wajali*, or "Stories from Long Ago" (xvi). After the untimely death of Josserand in 2006, Hopkins set about gathering and editing materials collected from their fieldwork for this volume, one of which, "The Narrative Structure of Chol Folktales," was compiled by Hopkins using Josserand's notes.

An introductory chapter, "The Chol Maya and Their Folktales," follows the preface and offers an overview for the reader unfamiliar with Chol folklore. Though this chapter is brief, it provides the necessary details for understanding the context of the stories collected in this volume. Following this introduction is Josserand's "The Narrative Structure of Chol Folktales," which outlines a basic structure for these texts and elaborates on the markers of that structure. A modified version of this chapter appeared in *Parallel Worlds: Genre, Discourse, and Poetics in Contemporary, Colonial, and Classic Maya Literature*, edited by Kerry Hull and Michael Carrasco.

Josserand's chapter is followed by "Introduction to the Texts," a chapter that briefly contextualizes the collection. Following that are the Chol texts, which are divided into three parts: Myths and Fables, Tales of the Earth Lord, and Things that Come Out of the Woods. Each story is preceded by a short introduction that details the occasion of the telling and an overview of the characters featured. Following this introduction, the text is presented in two columns, the Chol on the left and the English translation on the right. Hopkins notes that wherever possible, the Chol text corresponds line-by-line with the English version. The orthography used follows the conventions of the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala. The transcription method preserves the unique characteristics of each speaker resulting in "instances of 'missing' final glottal stops (and occasionally laterals and semi-vowels)" (36). There are four texts in the volume that feature back-channeling ("The Turtle and the Deer," "The Jaguar-Man," "A Visit to Don Juan," and "The Comadre") and they are among the most dynamic reads in the collection. Those interested in back-channeling should pay particular attention to "The Jaguar-Man," which features interruptions from listeners as they negotiate how to tell the story.

In the final chapter, "Discourse Analysis of Chol Narrative Texts," Hopkins applies the narrative structure outlined in Josserand's chapter to each of the eleven texts included in the volume. Using this basic structure outlined by Josserand, Hopkins paints a more nuanced picture of the oral tradition by highlighting divergences from this structure within each of the texts, underscoring the creativity of the speaker.

This volume is primarily of interest to folklorists, anthropologists, and linguists and is accessible to non-specialists in Maya studies. Josserand's chapter on narrative structure attends to linguistic features present in these texts, and small portions of it might be less accessible for those not familiar with Chol or other Mayan languages. However, the structure that she develops for Chol folktales is incredibly valuable and Hopkins' companion chapter applying that structure to these texts speaks to its viability.