

Chuj (Mayan) Narratives

*Folklore, History, and Ethnography
from Northwestern Guatemala*



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. CHUJ COUNTRY	3
A Note on Language Relations and Prehistory; Field Work in the Chuj Region	
CHAPTER 2. NARRATIVES IN CHUJ	22
Introduction to the Texts; Discourse Structures of the Narratives	
CHAPTER 3. COYOTE AND RABBIT	31
Commentary; Lexical Issues; Overview; Grammatical Notes; Coupletting Marks the Peak Event; Text	
CHAPTER 4. AN OLD MAN WHOSE SON KILLED HIM	41
Commentary; Text	
CHAPTER 5. FRIEND OF THE ANIMALS	52
Commentary; Text	
CHAPTER 6. THE SORCERER	64
Commentary; Text	
CHAPTER 7. THE COMMUNISTS	96
Commentary; Text	
CHAPTER 8. TAKING OUT THE SALT	110
Commentary; Text	
APPENDIX I	
A Short Sketch of Chuj Phonology, Grammar, and Syntax	126
APPENDIX II	
Text Analysis: Coyote and Rabbit	144
References	163
Index	231



FIGURE 1.1. Western parts of the Departamento de Huehuetenango, Guatemala, bordering the Mexican state of Chiapas. After *Traveller's Reference Map of Guatemala and El Salvador*. International Map Productions, Vancouver, BC, Canada. ISBN 0-921463-64-2.

Chuj Country

CHUJ IS A MAYAN LANGUAGE spoken in the northwest corner of the Department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, and in adjacent areas across the international border in Mexico. There are two principal varieties of the language associated with the towns and municipios of San Mateo Ixtatán and San Sebastián Coatán. At the time represented by these stories, Chuj of both varieties extended into the neighboring municipio of Nentón, to the west. These narratives are all from the San Mateo variety of Chuj.

The areas occupied by the Chuj are dramatic. The town of San Mateo Ixtatán sits at an elevation of just under 8,400 feet above sea level (Dirección General de Cartografía 1962[2]:199). Surrounding peaks rise to 11,500 feet. Higher ground across the river valley from the town was covered by cloud forest until recent years. Down the river, called Titz'am in San Mateo ("mouth of the salt," salt mine) and Cambalam downstream to the east, the altitude falls sharply. At Barrillas, the next town, the altitude has dropped to about 4,600 feet above sea level (Dirección General de Cartografía 1962 [1]:37), a drop of some 3,800 feet. The moist gulf air that is pushed up the river valley shrouds San Mateo in a wet afternoon mist that drives people off the streets and into houses to sit next to the hearth.

Given the climate, it is no surprise that the name of the language derives from a prominent feature of households, the sweatbath. "Chuj" is a word that is ultimately of Mamean origin, but is used in local Spanish for the low structures that sit at the sides of houses, used for ordinary bathing as well as curing ceremonies. I once asked a man why they didn't bathe in the rivers, and he looked at me astonished and said, "Good Lord! Do you know how cold that water is?" It is likewise no surprise that the women's huipil (Chuj *nip*) is typically made of a double layer of heavy cotton cloth, with designs in thick embroidery covering the back and chest, and the traditional men's jacket, the *capixay*, is heavy wool. The latter is made by the men, who spin and weave the wool and put the garment together, adding a stitched design resembling a pectoral cross around



FIGURE 1.2. A typical sweatbath (Chuj *ikaj*). The Mam term for sweatbath, *chuj*, provides the name of the language of their northern neighbors. Patalcal, May 1965. Photo by author.

the neck. This element of clothing (Chuj *lopil*) must have been introduced by priests from northwest Spain, because the Spanish word *capixay* comes from the Basque *capo sayo*, vulture cape. These wool tunics are prominent in trade. Their makers carry them across the Mexican border to Comitán, Chiapas, for sale; throughout highland Chiapas they are known as *koton chuj* or just *chuj*, and they are the typical men's jacket in Amatenango, between Comitán and San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

A few miles west of San Mateo, the Ixtenam River (Chuj *yich tenam*, “at the foot of the rock outcrop”), rises and flows west to meet the Grijalva River in Chiapas, falling to about 2,000 feet above sea level near the Mexican border in the municipio of Nentón (Dirección General de Cartografía 1962[1]:481). Chuj country is thus typically high altitude valleys surrounded by higher peaks, drained by swift-flowing streams. Access to water becomes a problem toward the end of the dry season (December to May), when people may be forced to walk miles to the nearest productive spring or waterhole. The desiccated vegetation in this period gives rise to brush fires that march unimpeded across the landscape. Vegetation varies widely from low oak forests to high rain forests, with cloud forests at higher elevations (see Breedlove and Hopkins 1970–71 for details).



FIGURE 1.3. The older design of the San Mateo Ixtatán huipil, *lak'an nip*. Photo by Elizabeth Purdum.



FIGURE 1.4. The newer design of the San Mateo Ixtatán huipil, *kolob'nip*. Photo by Elizabeth Purdum.



FIGURE 1.5. The San Mateo Ixtatán men's jacket, *lopil* (Spanish *capixay*). Photo by Elizabeth Purdum.



FIGURE 1.6. Vegetation along the trail from San Mateo Ixtatán to Bulej, May 1965. Photo by author.

In the 1960s, when these stories were collected, the official estimate of the number of Chuj speakers at the last census (and it was only a rough estimate) was 10,771 (Dirección General de Estadística 1950, Cuadro 29). The total population of the three municipios (San Mateo Ixtatán, San Sebastián Coatán, and Nentón) was 17,496. By 1964, a later census reported that total population figures had jumped to 28,214, an increase of more than 61 percent. The number of indigenous language speakers must have increased accordingly. If so, the number of Chuj speakers may have been around 17,000 in 1964.

At the time I did my field work there were virtually no published reports on the language. The missionary David Ekstrom (1961) had produced a partial San Mateo Chuj translation of the New Testament. Similar translations into San Sebastián Chuj had been made by Kenneth Williams (1963a, b, c), as well as a short grammatical sketch (Williams and Williams 1966). A few brief vocabulary lists had appeared in a variety of sources (Recinos 1954, Swadesh 1961, Mayers 1966), and Andrade (1946) had supplied some textual data. But there was no adequate description of the language to be consulted. As a result, I was assigned the task of producing the basic descriptive package of structural linguistics: a phonology, a grammar, and a set of texts.

My mentor and major professor, Norman A. McQuown, who had done his dissertation on Totonac under Edward Sapir, had inherited Manuel J. Andrade's Mayan materials when he came to teach at the University of Chicago, and he decided to direct research into the relatively undocumented family of Mayan languages. He set about assigning graduate students to one language after another, choosing the tasks according to the place of the language in the family, field conditions, and the abilities and weaknesses of the student. A major effort went into the Chiapas Study Projects, starting in the late 1950s and coordinated with Stanford and Harvard Universities, focused on the Chiapas Highlands. Harvard continued its concentrated research in Zinacantán (Vogt 1994); Stanford and Chicago took on the rest of the Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities (McQuown and Pitt-Rivers 1970). My first field experience, 1960–62, was with this project. Married couples with children were given assignments that kept them in more civilized conditions. As an expendable bachelor, I was assigned to the north Tzotzil area and specifically to San Pablo Chalchihuitán, where the Cuban anthropologist Calixta Guiteras Holmes had done basic ethnographic work (Guiteras Holmes 1951).

San Pablo Chalchihuitán was a small community with a ceremonial center located on a ledge beneath a mountain massif that had kept its population—located on the other side of the ridge—free of contact with the outside world since the Conquest. There was only one non-Indian (Ladino) resident in the village,



FIGURE 1.7. *Capitanes* perform at the crosses in front of the church in the center of downtown San Pablo Chalchihuitán, Chiapas, 1961. Photo by the author.

doubling as the schoolteacher and *secretario municipal*. No electricity, no plumbing, no stores, and no road connecting it to the outside. It was good preparation for San Mateo Ixtatán. In 1964, when I told John Avant, a friend who had done ethnographic survey work in Guatemala, that for my dissertation work I had been assigned to San Mateo Chuj, he just laughed and said, “If you liked Chalchihuitán, you’ll love San Mateo!” The first passable road connecting San Mateo to the departmental capital at Huehuetenango had been blazed just a year or so before by the army, under the threat to local Indian authorities of cutting out their tongues if they objected, and the road still had sections of “corduroy,” logs laid across the road for traction on muddy slopes.

Fortunately, among the many things McQuown taught his students was that you didn’t have to suffer more than necessary. Getting the work done was the main thing. While ethnographers and social anthropologists have to be present in their field areas as “participant observers,” taking part in community affairs and constantly observing the goings-on, linguists have the luxury of being able to remove themselves to a more comfortable setting, away from the complications and constant interruptions of village life. What we need to know resides largely in the mind of any one speaker of the language, so acquire a good speaker to help you and go somewhere you can concentrate on the research without having to maintain community relations (and where you have electricity, hot showers, and cold beer).



FIGURE 1.8. San Mateo Ixtatán (*ko chonhab'*, “our town”), seen across the valley from the road to Barillas. August 1964. Photo by author. The road from Huehuetenango is visible above the town. Below it, the church, and to the left the school and the precolumbian ruins of Guaxaclajún (*Wajxaklajunb*, “eighteen”). The salt mines lie below the town, above the (unseen) river.

My first excursion to San Mateo was with the goal of finding a good language consultant. The Catholic priest, Father Arthur Nichols, recommended a man who had served him as simultaneous translator, Francisco Santizo Andrés. We talked and he agreed to come to Huehuetenango for a trial two weeks, after which we would decide if we wanted to work together. We both enjoyed the experience so much that we continued to work together for a little more than a year. During that time I accumulated some four hours of recorded tape (160 pages of transcription) from Francisco, and on excursions into the field another six hours (525 pages) from other speakers, as well as two dozen dialect survey questionnaires that covered the area of San Mateo Chuj speech. We also collected and identified hundreds of plants (Breedlove and Hopkins 1970–71) and recorded ethnographic information about topics like kinship, salt production, the Mayan calendar, geographical place names, and, of course, a corpus of folktales and narratives. Some of this material has been published, some awaits discussion. All the recorded material has been archived at AILLA (www.ailla.utexas.org, the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America), including the recorded performances of the narratives presented here.

The situation of Chuj and the speakers of Chuj has changed drastically since my field work was carried out. The devastation of the Guatemalan civil

war (“*la violencia*”) hit the Chuj area hard. Dozens of villages were destroyed or abandoned. Population fled to Mexico and on to the United States, where there are Chuj colonies in California, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida (at least). New populations flowed in to fill the empty spaces, so the current demography is nothing like it was when my study was done. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (Ethnologue.com) estimates there are 41,600 Chuj speakers in Guatemala, and another 1,770 elsewhere (but this refers only to Tziscaco, Chiapas, and other populations in Mexico, and not the populations in the United States).

The status of linguistic studies has also changed drastically. The Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín (PLFM), initiated by Maryknoll priests but picked up by North American linguists when the former were expelled from the country, has trained several generations of native Mayan language speakers, including Chuj, and turned the direction of the Proyecto over to its graduates. That organization has in turn spawned the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (ALMG) and other activist groups, and these have negotiated educational and cultural reforms with the Guatemalan government, including a set of official orthographies that have replaced the ad hoc creations of missionaries and dilettantes (Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala 1988). A very active publication program operates under the rubrics of PLFM and Cholsamaj, among others. This movement has produced two Chuj-Spanish dictionaries (Felipe Diego and Gaspar Juan 1998, Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala 2003), with other material available on the internet. An American linguist working with PLFM, Judith Maxwell, now at Tulane University, was a consultant on the dictionary project, and has produced a dissertation on Chuj (Maxwell 1978b) as well as a number of scholarly articles (Maxwell 1976–2001). My own dictionary of Chuj is an on-line publication (Hopkins 2012a). A Mexican linguist, Cristina Buenrostro, at the Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, has worked with the Mexican Chuj colony at Tziscaco and produced a series of works (Buenrostro 2002–13). A recent addition to the repertory are the works of Jessica Coon at McGill University (Coon 2016, Coon and Carolan 2017).

The academic reader will note that there is no attention given here to linguistic theory nor is there reference to literary analysis, beyond noting some aspects of the discourse strategies of the narrators. This is deliberate. My purpose is descriptive and empirical, to present to those who would wish to see such analyses the material they would need to do the job, and to introduce the language and its oral literature to students and others.

A Note on Language Relations and Prehistory

The Mayan language most closely related to Chuj is Tojolabal (ssat.missouri.edu), whose speakers reside to the west in adjacent parts of the eastern extremes of the state of Chiapas, Mexico, between the border and the town of Comitán. The subgroup of Mayan composed of Chuj and Tojolabal is called Chujean (chart 1). Mexican Tojolabals make an annual pilgrimage to San Mateo to carry out rituals and take home salt, and it is reasonable to postulate that the ancestors of the Tojolabal came from the Cuchumatanes area and expanded into lowland Chiapas. According to the approximate dating of glottochronology, the native and migrant populations would have achieved effective separation by about 1,600 years ago, or somewhere around 400 AD (in terms of Mayan archaeology, in the Early Classic; language classifications and all glottochronological figures are from Kaufman 1978:959; for a detailed discussion of the family, see Campbell 2017).

CHART 1. The Mayan Languages

Huastecan

Huastec (Wastek, Teenek), Chicomuseltec (Chikomuseltec, Kabil)

Yucatecan

Yucatec Maya (Maya, Yucatec), Lacandón (Lakantun); Itzaj (Itzá), Mopan (Mopán)

Western Mayan

Cholan: Ch'ol (Chol), Chontal (Yokot'an); Ch'orti' (Chorti) and extinct
Ch'olti' (Cholti')

Tzeltalan: Tzeltal (Tzeltal), Tsotsil (Tzotzil)

Kanjobalan: Q'anjob'al (Kanjobal), Akatek (Acatec), Popti' (Jacaltec); Mocho'
(Mochó, Tuzantek, Motozintlec)

Chujean: Chuj, Tojol-abal (Tojolabal)

Eastern Mayan

Quichean: Q'eqchi' (Kekchi'), Uspantek (Uspantec); Poqom (Poqomam, Poqomchi');
K'iche' (Quiché), Kaqchikel (Cakchiquel), Tz'utujil, Sakapultek (Sacapultec),
Sipakapense (Sipacapeño)

Mamean: Mam, Tektitek (Teco), Awakatek (Aguacatec), Ixil (Ixhil)

Language names not in parentheses are the preferred current usage (Aissen et al. 2017:8–9), names in parentheses are traditional and alternative names. Many more variants exist, and preferences are in constant flux. Family subdivision names are those established in modern literature; all but Huastecan constitute Southern Mayan. Western and Eastern Mayan together constitute Central Mayan (Kaufman 2017:66–67).

Surrounding Chuj on the south and east are varieties of the Kanjobalan (Q'anjob'alán) languages: from west to east Jacalteco, Acateco, and Kanjobal proper (Popti', Akateko, and Q'anjob'al). This subgroup is the closest relative of Chujean, sharing a common ancestor that existed around 100 BC (in the very Late Preclassic). Chujean and Kanjobalan constitute "Greater Kanjobalan." The situation of these languages within the Western branch of Mayan suggests that their ancestors in turn became distinct from their nearest relatives after migrating into the Cuchumatanes from the riverine areas to the east, the lower Ixcán and Chixoy Rivers, by about 1,000 BC (in the Middle Preclassic). Shortly thereafter a similar movement into the Chiapas Highlands resulted in the diversification of the remaining riverine group, "Greater Cholan," evolving into Tzotzilán (Tzeltal and Tzotzil) in the Chiapas highlands and leaving Cholan (which later became Chontal [Yokot'an], Chol [Ch'ol], and Chortí [Ch'ortí']) in the riverine lowlands.

The two large subgroups of languages Greater Kanjobalan and Greater Cholan constitute the branch of the Mayan family known as Western Mayan, in contrast to Eastern Mayan, the languages of the Guatemalan highlands. The Mayan family consists of these languages (which form Central Mayan) plus Yucatecan (to form Southern Mayan) and Huastecan (Kaufman 2017). The diversification of the family was effective by about 2,100 BC (that is, by the Early Preclassic), and probably involved dispersion from a common homeland into the Yucatán Peninsula and the upper Gulf Coast (Yucatecan and Huastecan, respectively), into the lowland riverine and piedmont areas of Guatemala (Western Mayan), and into the Guatemalan Highlands (Eastern Mayan).

Differences within the Cuchumatán languages (Greater Kanjobalan) came about at least in part by differential influences from their neighbors to the north and south. A chart of shared innovations (Josserand 1975:503, fig. A) shows that Tojolabal and Chuj (as well as Tzotzilán) share several phonological innovations with Cholan and Yucatecan Mayan to the north, the languages most involved in Classic Mayan culture. Kanjobalan languages share one of these innovations, but also share innovations with Eastern Mayan languages to the south. The Cuchumatanes is thus a "shatter zone," an area of closely related languages that is splintered by differential external influences. In fact, the most notable difference between the two varieties of Chuj, the loss of vowels and the reduction of resultant consonant clusters in San Sebastián Coatán Chuj, resembles features of the development of the Mamean languages that extend northward into the Cuchumatanes. In grammar and lexicon, the creation of the noun classifiers that characterize Chujean and Kanjobalan languages (and

some varieties of Mam) has been attributed to the influence of Chiapanec, a dominant Otomanguan neighbor to the west, in late pre-Columbian times (Hopkins 2012b).

Early and insightful ethnographic work was done in the Cuchumatanes by Maud Oakes on Mam-speaking Todos Santos Cuchumatán (1951), by Oliver LaFarge on a Kanjobal community, Santa Eulalia (1947), and by LaFarge and Douglas Byers on Jacaltenango (1931). Frans Blom and LaFarge made archaeological, ethnographic, and linguistic notes as they traveled through the area in 1926–27. The status of ethnographic knowledge at mid-twentieth century was briefly summarized by Charles Wagley (1969). A similar report on mid-century linguistic work was compiled by William Bright (1967), and McQuown (1967) sketched earlier work on Mesoamerican languages sources, beginning with European contact. Hopkins and Josserand (1994) have outlined trends in Mayan linguistics from the Colonial period to the present.

Field Work in the Chuj Region

The narratives presented here were gathered during my dissertation field work in 1964–65. My first exposure to the Chuj language was in 1962, when I went to the Department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, with Norman A. McQuown and Brent Berlin to gather data on the languages of the Cuchumatanes (Berlin et al. 1969). At the time I was a graduate student in the Linguistics Program at the University of Texas at Austin. Like Berlin, I was temporarily employed as a research assistant on the University of Chicago's Chiapas Study Projects, directed by McQuown (McQuown and Pitt-Rivers 1970; Hopkins 1964b, 1967a,b, 1969, 1970a, 1974). Working through the Maryknoll priests who were then the Catholic clergy in the indigenous areas of Huehuetenango and elsewhere in Guatemala, we recorded material, usually in the form of 100-word Swadesh lists (for glottochronology), from several languages. The sample included two speakers of San Mateo Ixtatán Chuj, including the man who was later to become my tutor.

In the spring of 1962, as field work for the Chiapas project wound down, I returned to Austin to finish drafting my master's thesis (Hopkins 1964a), and then went on to Chicago to begin graduate studies in anthropology at the University of Chicago, with McQuown as my major professor. I continued to work on Chiapas project materials in McQuown's archives, and in 1963 he assigned me the Chuj language as the topic of my upcoming doctoral dissertation (Hopkins 1967a). Over the next academic year I transcribed and analyzed the Chuj



FIGURE 1.9. Huehuetenango. The yellow house on the corner (with a door and two windows) was my home and project headquarters, shared with Francisco Santizo Andrés. In the background, the Cuchumatán Mountains. Photo by the author.

materials we had collected and prepared preliminary analyses of the phonology and morphology of the language. During this period I also worked as a laboratory assistant in the Language Lab at the University of Chicago, and I am indebted to its technical director, Don Ledine, for teaching me the proper protocols for recording, handling, and preserving magnetic tape recordings.

At the end of the summer of 1964, with support from a National Defense Education Act Foreign Language Fellowship, I went to Huehuetenango to begin field work on Chuj. By the end of August I had contracted a native speaker of Chuj, Francisco Santizo Andrés, and rented a house in the city of Huehuetenango, where we began work in earnest. From then until September of 1965 we worked an eight-hour day, six days a week, with occasional breaks when Francisco would go home and I would go to San Cristóbal de Las Casas, where Berlin and other anthropologists and linguists were working on their own projects.

We began by reviewing my preliminary analyses and correcting my errors of transcription, as well as my phonemic analysis. Francisco had worked as a simultaneous translator for the San Mateo Maryknoll priest, Father Arthur Nichols, and he had a keen sense of language. He quickly pointed out errors in my analysis, including the missed contrast between the consonants written here as /j/

and /h/, velar and laryngeal fricatives. Chuj is one of the few Mayan languages to preserve this contrast from Proto-Mayan (see Kaufman 2003). I learned later that Kenneth Williams, the Protestant missionary working on San Sebastián Coatán Chuj, had caught the contrast, but his Summer Institute of Linguistics colleagues refused to accept his analysis, to his great frustration. Based on the revised analysis of the phonology, Francisco and I agreed on a technical orthography for Chuj, using the cent sign for /tz/ ([ts]), the letters <c> and <s> with hachek for /ch/ and /x/ ([tʃ] and [ʃ]), the letter <x> for /j/, and so forth. This was reasonable at the time, since we were decades away from the era of practical orthographies.

Francisco mastered the new way of writing without delay, and we began to record short narratives dictated by him: an encounter in the market with a friend from home, a short biographical sketch, accounts of agriculture and salt production; see the archives at AILLA (the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America, www.ailla.utexas.org) for these recordings. Francisco would dictate a text to the tape recorder, operated by me, and then transcribe the tape, preparing a Spanish glossing if necessary (see Hopkins 1980b, a text on salt production). I would go over the transcriptions and ask questions about the grammar and lexicon. All the lexical material gathered by these techniques was put on three-by-five-inch slips and filed in the lexical file that is the basis for my dictionary of Chuj (Hopkins 2012a). I also used a technique devised by Terry Kaufman for Mayan languages, the Monosyllable Dictionary, to elicit vocabulary. This technique involves constructing all the possible CVC sequences (Consonant-Vowel-Consonant, the most common root shape in Mayan) and trying to find lexical items based on each. Surprising things emerge that neither speaker nor linguist would expect.

After a field trip to the San Mateo area in February 1965, to collect plants with Dennis Breedlove (Breedlove and Hopkins 1970–71), in May of 1965 Francisco and I carried out a two-week dialect survey of the area in which San Mateo Ixtatán Chuj was spoken, in the municipios of San Mateo Ixtatán and Nentón, collecting material from seventeen aldeas and the town center, a total of twenty-seven questionnaires. (No regional patterns of distinction were noted.) Several texts were recorded during this field season and as usual the transcribed material was incorporated into my lexical files. Back in Huehuetenango, Francisco spent his time transcribing the material we had collected and consulting with me as questions arose. When a topic came up, we would extend the lexical data by eliciting more items in the same domain, that is, animal names (Hopkins 1980a), place names (Hopkins 1972), and other lexical and ethnographic



FIGURE 1.10. Cloud forest vegetation featuring tree ferns. The first time my botanist colleague Dennis Breedlove saw these, he thought they were palm trees—until he saw the spore spots on the undersides of the fronds! Photo by the author.

material. Since that was the era of ethnoscience, some research was done into the semantic structures of these domains (Hopkins 2006). When the transcription of a narrative was finished, I would prepare an English translation on the basis of the Chuj original with support from Francisco's rough Spanish glossing. We also worked on numeral classifiers, and I was engaged with Brent Berlin and Chris Day in a comparative study of this domain in Chuj, Tzeltal, and Jacalteco Maya (Hopkins 1970b).

I returned to Chicago in September 1965, to finish my graduate work and my doctoral dissertation. I then took a job teaching anthropology at the University of Texas in Austin, and continued to process my Chuj materials. I married Kathryn Josserand in 1970 and spent a year in Milwaukee, where she had been teaching, and then returned to Texas. In 1973 we left Texas for Mexico City at the invitation of Angel Palerm to establish the Programa de Lingüística at the new Centro de Investigaciones Superiores del INAH that he directed (CISINAH, now CIESAS, the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social). Work on Chuj was abandoned in favor of field training and research on languages closer to Mexico City, especially Otomanguean languages (Hopkins and Josserand 1979). A few years later, because we had begun to follow the developments in Maya epigraphy, we began to work on Mayan languages



FIGURE 1.11. The San Mateo aldea Patalcal (*pat alkal*, “house of the mayor”), May 1965. The entire countryside was shrouded with smoke from an uncontrolled brush fire. Photo by the author.



FIGURE 1.12. A typical house in Patalcal: walls of adobe, roof of wood shingles. The porch and patio in front of the house are the principal work areas. Photo by the author.

again, but field work was on Chol, not Chuj (Hopkins and Josserand 2016). We returned to the United States in 1982 and spent some ten years hustling a living with grant support, workshops on Maya hieroglyphic writing, and leading tours to the Maya areas we knew from field work. In 1991 Kathryn took an academic



FIGURE 1.13. During our dialect survey, tin roofing arrives for the new Catholic church in the aldea of Xubojasun (*xub'oj asun*, “breath of the clouds”), municipio of Nentón. May 1965. Photo by the author.



FIGURE 1.14. Cross shrine on a rock outcrop on the outskirts of the aldea of Canquintic (*k'ankintik*, meaning unknown), municipio of Nentón. May 1965. A woman in a red huipil kneels to the left of the cross. Entering the village with a loaded mule, I was hailed by a woman who ran from her house to ask “*Tas ha chonho?*,” What are you selling? Photo by the author.

job at Florida State University and I began to work there as an adjunct professor. We concentrated our field work on Chol and our academic work on Maya hieroglyphics.

I did not return to work on Chuj until 2005–6, when I received a National Endowment for the Humanities Documenting Endangered Languages Fellowship.

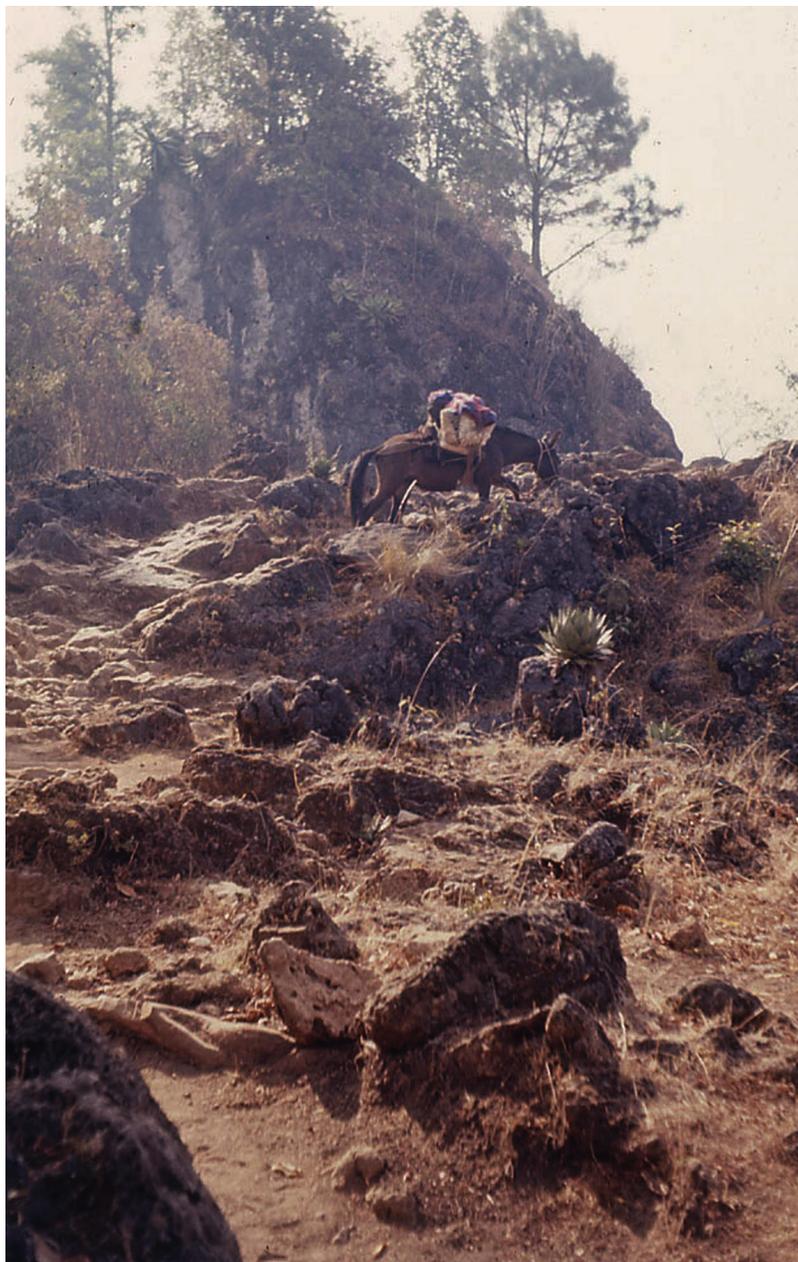


FIGURE I.15. On the trail in the Yolcultac (*yol k'ultak*, “center of the brushland”) forest, municipio of Nentón. May 1965, at the end of the dry season. Photo by the author.

This fellowship allowed me to prepare my Chuj materials for digitization and archiving at AILLA. All my recorded materials on Chuj are archived there, along with my transcribed Field Notes and Field Photos, and a revised version of my dissertation (in a modern orthography). The collection includes some forty samples of Chuj speech from eight Chuj settlements, some of which no longer exist. More than twenty of the settlements reported in my inventory of place names were abandoned or destroyed in the genocide of the so-called civil war (Manz 1988:83–89).

In the summer of 2011, I dug out of a closet a wooden chest that contained four drawers of lexical slip files, untouched since about 1970. Over the next few months I transcribed the lexical entries into an electronic text file, using the practical orthography that I had designed for Chuj; the now-official orthographies did not exist at the time (Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala 1988). These transcriptions included all the data on plant and animal names, place names, numeral classifiers, and so forth, that I had previously published. The resulting dictionary (Hopkins 2012a), which includes a grammar sketch, is housed on the website of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. (www.famsi.org/mayawriting/dictionary/Hopkins/dictionaryChuj.html), now administered by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. I continue to unearth and revise Chuj materials (Hopkins 2012b), and after publishing on Chol folktales (Hopkins and Josserand 2016) I turned back to the Chuj texts I had collected some fifty years earlier. A sample of those texts constitutes the present collection.

A Note on Orthography

In my field work with Francisco Santizo Andrés, we used a technical linguistic orthography that used the cent sign <¢> and a letter <c> with hachek (as in Czech orthography) for the affricates, an <x> for the velar fricative, and other conventions of contemporary linguistic usage. When I prepared my material for archiving at AILLA, I transcribed my Chuj material into a practical orthography of my own design. Now, a set of new orthographies for Mayan languages has been negotiated between Maya activists from the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala, the Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín and other native-speaker organizations. The Chuj narratives that follow have been retranscribed to follow the norms of *Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala* (1988). Note that despite efforts to standardize, there is still considerable variation in the orthographies used by Mayanist scholars (Aissen et al. 2017:9–11).

Elsewhere my Chuj materials have been presented in my earlier orthography. For those who wish to consult that material, the changes from the official orthography are the following: I write glottal stop as <ʔ>, following Kaufman (2003), and I write it thus in all positions. The official orthography does not write word-initial glottal stops, which are implied by a word-initial vowel, and writes them elsewhere as <'>, the same as the glottalization on consonants. The alveolar affricates are written <tz, tz'> instead of <ts, ts'>. The glottalized bilabial stop is written <p'> instead of <b'>. I do write the velar nasal <nh>, as it is written here (in my dissertation it was written <N>, and <ng> would be a reasonable option). All these choices have linguistic motivations, but orthographies are not strictly linguistic devices, and I support Maya activists in their preferences.