

THE RABBIT AND THE ALLIGATOR: A CHONTAL MAYAN TEXT

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"The Rabbit and the Alligator" is a favorite Chontal story. José Isabel Hernández Fería, a native speaker of Chontal from San Carlos, Tabasco, told the story and translated it into Spanish in the spring of 1981. Susan M. Knowles transcribed and analyzed the text.

The orthography used is a standard one, with the exception of the central high vowel *ɛ*. Chontal has the following vowels: a, ä, e, i, o, and u; and consonantes: b, p, p', d, t, t', q, k, k', ʔ, č, č', ɕ, ɕ', f, s, š, h, m, n, ñ, l, r, ř, w, and y.

Chontal Mayan Text

Un tu yok ʔah t'ul t'ok ʔun tu

ʔahn-i ʔun tu yok ʔah t'ul t'ok ʔun tu
there was one animate dear masculine rabbit with one animate

ʔähin ʔi ʔum p'e k'in yok ʔah t'ul ba
alligator and one inanimate day dear masculine rabbit clitic

u y-äl-b-en-Ø ʔah ʔähin nan k-ir-Ø-et
he says it to him masculine alligator already I saw you

ka da ʔa w-ahn-e tä ʔuč'-Ø=ha? ʔida kă k'uš-e-ʔ-et
where you are located to drink-water here I eat you

?i ?ah t'u? ?a biš-i-Ø t-u yok č'en-a
and masculine rabbit already went -he to-his dear hole

?i ?u y-äl-b-en-Ø si k'ot-ik-et tä t-e ?ah don
and he says it to him if arrive-you to come masculine title

ahin ba mač kă h-e kă p'al-b-en -et ?i
alligator clitic negative I go I answer it for you and

?ah ?ähin ba t-u k'in ?u h-ir-i-Ø ke yok
masculine alligator clitic to-its day (when) he saw -it that dear

?ah t'u? ba han biš-i-Ø t-u č'en-a ba
masculine rabbit clitic already went -he to-his hole clitic

?a biš-i-Ø ?u y-äl-b-en-Ø tan-et yok č'en, tan-et yok
already went -he he says it to it hello dear hole, hello dear

č'en, tan-et yok č'en ?u h-ir-i-Ø ke mač
hole, hello dear hole he saw -it that negative

?u p'al-b-i -Ø ba ?u y-äl-i-Ø t-u k'in
he answered it for him clitic he said it in-its day (when)

yok č'en mač ?u p'al-i-Ø ?es porke mač
dear hole negative it answered him it is because negative

?u č-e bida ni ?un tu tam-á ? t-u k'in ?a
he does life the one animate inside and in-its day (when) already

tuč'-i-Ø yok ?ah t'u? ba ?u y-äl-e?-Ø tan-et
left -he dear masculine rabbit clitic he says it hello

?u y-äl-e?-Ø ?ah don ?ähin ah..., ?ida ?an -et
he says it masculine title alligator ah..., here exists-you

yok ʔah tʔul ba ʔa tuč'-i-Ø tā puč'-e tā
dear masculine rabbit clitic already left -he to flee to

ʔotra pwerta tā ʔu yok č'en-a ʔi ʔah don ʔāhin
other door to his dear hole and masculine title alligator

ba ʔu hup-i ʔu ba tan č'en ʔu h-ir-an-Ø ʔah tʔul
clitic he put himself in hole he sees it masculine rabbit

ba si yaʔ ʔan -Ø ka ʔu č-i-Ø t'an pero
clitic if there exists-it that he did it words (talked) but

mač ʔan -Ø ʔi despwes ʔu h-ir-i-Ø ʔah don
negative exists-it and after he saw it masculine title

ʔāhin ke mač ʔan -Ø ʔah tʔul ʔa biš-i-Ø
alligator that negative exists-he masculine rabbit already went -he

tā haʔ tā čaʔ num ʔotra k'in ʔa k'ot-i-Ø
in water in two times (again) other day already arrived -he

tā čaʔ num ʔu h-ir-an-Ø si ʔu č-en-Ø trebe
in two times (again) he sees it if he does it ability (can)

ʔu k'uš-e-ʔ-Ø ʔu y-āl-b-en -Ø tan-et yok č'en, tan-et yok
he eats him he says it to him hello dear hole, hello dear

č'en ʔi ʔah tʔul ba mač ʔu p'al-b-e -Ø
hole and masculine rabbit clitic negative he answers it for him

ʔa biš-i-Ø tā ʔotra pwerta tā yok č'en ba
already went -he to other door to dear hole clitic

ʔu y-āl-b-en -Ø tan-et yok č'en, tan-et yok č'en
he says it to him hello dear hole, hello dear hole

ʔu y-ál-eʔ-Ø ʔah don ʔāhin si mač ʔu č-i-Ø
he says it masculine title alligator if negative he did it

t'an ba ʔes porke mač ʔan -Ø tam-à
words (talked) clitic it is because negative exists-it inside

ʔu y-ál-eʔ-Ø yok ʔah t'ul ba hin ba don
he says it dear masculine rabbit clitic that clitic title

ʔāhin ba gran y -ol-ba ʔu k'uš-eʔ-on pero bada
alligator clitic great his desire he eats me but now

mah-niʔ ʔu š-Ø-on kā p'al-b-en -Ø ʔah don ʔāhin
no longer go -I I answer it for him masculine title alligator

ba ʔu y-ub-i -Ø ke mač ʔu š-Ø-on kā p'al-b-en -Ø
clitic he heard it that negative go-I I answer it for him

ʔah don ʔāhin ba ʔu y-ub-i -Ø ke mač
masculine title alligator clitic he heard it that negative

ʔu p'al-b-int-ik ba ʔu y-ál-i-Ø t-u k'in kā yok
he was answered clitic he said it in-its day (when) my dear

č'en mač ʔu č-e-Ø t'an ba ʔes porke
hole negative it does it words (talks) clitic it is because

yaʔ ʔan -Ø ʔalgo tam-à ʔu y-ál-eʔ-Ø ʔah t'ul
there exists-it something inside he says it masculine rabbit

ba kobarde, kā h-e kā č-en-et ganar ʔa biš-i-Ø
clitic coward, I go I make you win already went -he

ta ʔotra pwerta ʔah don ʔāhin ba
to other door masculine title alligator clitic

ʔu y-əl-b-en -Ø tan-et yok č'en, tan-et yok č'en ʔi
he says it to him hello dear hole, hello dear hole and

ʔu č-i ʔu ba kansar ʔah don ʔāhin ʔi
he made himself tire masculine title alligator and

ʔu y-əl-b-en -Ø kih-in yok č'en mač ʔan -Ø ni ʔun
he says it to him remain dear hole negative exists-it the one

tu tam-á mač ʔu p'al-b-Ø -on ʔi ʔu y-əl-i-Ø
animate inside negative he answered it for me and he said it

ʔah t'ul ʔu y-əl-e-Ø hin da ba ti han
masculine rabbit he says it this clitic clitic perhaps already

č'am-Ø-on hišuk'a ʔu y-əl-i-Ø han biš-Ø-on pero ʔa
died -I for this he said it already left -I but already

t-i -Ø noh ʔāhin ba ʔu y-əl-b-en -Ø adios yok
came-he large alligator clitic he says it to him good-bye dear

č'en ʔi ya? (ʔa) biš-i-Ø tā ha? ʔi ʔa k'ot-i -Ø
hole and then (already) went-he in water and already arrived-he

tā ha? yok ʔah ʔāhin ʔu y-əl-b-en -Ø
in water dear masculine alligator he says it to him

ʔu y-əl-e-Ø ʔah t'ul ʔik'ā ʔu t-e ba mah=ni?
he says it masculine rabbit tomorrow he comes clitic no longer

ʔu h-Ø-on kā p'al-b-en -Ø ʔotro k'in ʔa k'ot-i -Ø
go -I I answer it for him other day already arrived-he

noh ʔāhin ʔu y-əl-b-en -Ø tan-et yok č'en, tan-et yok
large alligator he says it to him hello dear hole, hello dear

č'en ʔi ʔah t'uɪ ʔu y-əl-b-en-Ø tan-et ʔi
hole and masculine rabbit he says it to him hello and

ʔu y-əl-e-ʔ-Ø ʔah don ʔāhin aahaa... t-u k'in
he says it masculine title alligator ... in-its day (when)

yok pwerta ta yok č'en ta yok don t'uɪ ba ʔu č-en-Ø
dear door of dear hole of dear title rabbit clitic he does it

t'an ba kiere desir ke mač ʔan-Ø porke
words (talks) clitic it means that negative exists-it because

ʔu č-i-Ø t'an ʔu y-əl-e-ʔ-Ø ʔah don ʔāhin
he did it words (talks) he says it masculine title alligator

hin ba yok ʔah t'uɪ ba hin-i ʔa māh
that clitic dear masculine rabbit clitic that one very

baliente-Ø pero bada tan kā pīt-ān-Ø ka ʔora ʔu h-e
brave -he is but now that I wait for it what hour he comes

tā t'uč'-e dari kā k'uš-e-ʔ-Ø ʔi ʔu pīt-ān-Ø
to leave later today I eat him and he waits for it

ʔu k'uš-e-ʔ-Ø ʔah t'uɪ ba pero ʔah t'uɪ
he eats it masculine rabbit clitic but masculine rabbit

baliente-Ø ʔa tuč'-i-Ø ta ʔotro pwerta ʔu yok č'en
brave -he is already left -he to other door his dear hole

ʔi ʔu y-əl-e-ʔ-Ø ʔu yer-o mundo, ʔu yer-o mundo ʔi ʔah
and he says it it falls world, it falls world and masculine

don ʔāhin ba ya? ʔan-Ø ʔan č'en ʔu hup-i-Ø
title alligator clitic there exists-he inside hole he put it

ʔu pam tan ɕ'en ʔi ʔu y-ub-i-Ø ke ʔu šup-o mundo
his head inside hole and he heard it that it ends world

ʔa tuɕ'-i-Ø ʔu h-ir-an-Ø ʔah t'ul ʔan -Ø
already left -he he sees him masculine rabbit exists-he

tā haʔ ʔu y-āi-eʔ-Ø ke ʔu šup-o mundo pero maɕ
in water he says it that it ends world but negative

toh -Ø maɕ ʔu šup-o mundo sino ke noh ʔāhin
true-it is negative it ends world but large alligator

ba muk' ʔu ɕer-k-an torear k'a yok ʔah t'ul
clitic he is being made tease by dear masculine rabbit

ka maɕ ʔu ɕ-e-Ø trebe ʔu k'uš-eʔ-Ø ʔah
that negative he does it ability (can) he eats it masculine

t'ul yok ʔah t'ul kwanta ʔa num-i-Ø pan haʔ
rabbit dear masculine rabbit when already passed-he over water

ʔa biš-i-Ø t-un-še ʔi ʔah ʔāhin ʔu ɕ-i-Ø
already went -he other side and masculine alligator he did it

segir ʔi mah ʔu ɕ-i-Ø trebe ʔu k'uš-eʔ-Ø
follow and negative he did it ability (can) he eats him

hišuk'a ʔah ʔāhin ba mah ʔu ɕ-i-Ø
for this masculine alligator clitic negative he did it

trebe t'ok ʔah t'ul ʔu k'uš-eʔ-Ø
ability (can) with masculine rabbit he eats him

Free Translation

THE RABBIT AND THE ALLIGATOR

Once upon a time, there was a rabbit and an alligator. One day the alligator said to the rabbit, "I see you where you are drinking water. I am going to eat you here." And the rabbit went to his hole. He said, "If it happens that you come, I am not going to answer you." And when the alligator saw that the rabbit had gone to his hole, he went and he said, "Hello, dear hole; hello, dear hole; hello, dear hole." He saw that it did not answer him, so he thought, "When the dear hole does not answer, it is because no one lives inside." And when the rabbit left his hole, he said, "Hello." The alligator said, "Ah, here you are." The rabbit left to flee to the other entrance of his hole. And the alligator put himself in the hole to look for the rabbit, to see if that was where the rabbit was talking from. But it was not. So, after the alligator saw that the rabbit was not there, he went in the water again. The next day, it happened again that the alligator tried to see if he could eat the rabbit. The alligator said, "Hello, dear hole; hello, dear hole." And the rabbit did not answer him. So, the alligator went to the other entrance of the hole and said, "Hello, dear hole; hello, dear hole." The alligator thought, "If it doesn't answer, it is because nothing is inside." The rabbit said, "That alligator really wants to eat me, but now I am not going to answer him." The alligator heard it—the "I am not going to answer him." The alligator heard that he was not going to be answered. He said, "When my dear hole does not talk, it is because something is inside." He said to the rabbit, "Coward, I am going to win." The alligator sent to the other door. He said, "Hello, dear hole; hello, dear hole." Finally the alligator became tired. He said, "Remain, dear hole. There is nothing inside. He did not answer me." And he said, that is, the rabbit said, "This one, perhaps he thinks I died, that is why he said I left." But the large alligator came back and said, "Good-bye, dear hole." Then he went in the water. And when the alligator arrived in the water, the rabbit said (loud enough for the alligator to hear him), "If he comes tomorrow, I am not going to answer him."

The next day the alligator arrived. He said, "Hello, dear hole; hello, dear hole." The rabbit said, "Hello." And the alligator said, "Aha! When the entrance of the rabbit's hole talks, it means that nothing is there because it talks." And then the alligator thought, "That rabbit, he is very brave, but now I'm going to wait for him to leave. Later today, I will eat him." And he waited to eat the rabbit.

But the brave rabbit had already gone to the other entrance of his hole. He said, "The world is falling; the world is falling!" The alligator was inside the hole. He had put his head inside. When he heard that the world was ending, he left the hole and saw that the rabbit was in the water. He said that world was ending, but it was not true. The world did not end. But the large alligator was being teased by the rabbit. The rabbit had already crossed the water. He went to the other side. The alligator followed him, but could not catch him to eat him. He was not able, with the rabbit, to eat him.

Resumen

Este cuento chontal de San Carlos, Tabasco, transcrito y analizado por Susan Knowles y relatado por José Hernández, relata como el lagarto trata de engañar al conejo y hacer que salga de su hoyo porque lo quiere comer. Sin embargo, el conejo logra engañarlo a él y se escapa al otro lado del río.