

## INITIATION AT SCHOOL

### A Sayula Popoluca Text

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This text was recorded in 1956 by Gaudencio Hernández, a native speaker of Popoluca, a dialect of Zoque-Mixe, spoken in Sayula, Veracruz. Gaudencio was seventeen at the time of this recording and he relates here the very difficult and trying experience he went through in order to get started on his high school education. The Mexican town of Acayuacan is five miles from Sayula on the trans-isthmus highway and many students from Sayula travel the distance by bicycle in order to attend the high school there. Gaudencio mentions that there were also four other students from Sayula going to high school there, and this is an interesting commentary on the progress of the Sayula Popoluca. Sayula, once isolated from Mexican life, was put into the mainstream of "civilization" by the construction of the trans-isthmus highway in 1950 which cut through Sayula. At this writing there are many from Sayula who have completed their high school education and some have gone on to university training! There are many from Sayula who now serve as school teachers in many rural areas of Veracruz state. However there are those who have dropped out of high school and one wonders if the initiation rites mentioned in this story contributed to this discouragement on the part of the pupil. It is interesting to learn that these rites have been discontinued.

The story is told in the third person since the speaker at the time didn't want it known that he was referring

to himself. The hesitation form **ayépah** is not included in the free translation.

The orthography is phonemic. The dot following the vowel indicates vowel length, **š** is phonetically **ʃ**. **ʒ** and **č** are affricates. **ĩ** is a high, central, unrounded vocoid. **ř** is a trilled alveolar vibrant, **r** is a flapped alveolar vibrant.

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1. kumpalwáhat tĩnĩngĩšáh yam tu<sup>2</sup>k kwentuway  
mam tu<sup>2</sup>k ya-wayná<sup>2</sup> i<sup>2</sup>ingresáht eskwéla sekundária  
2. ayé ya-wayná<sup>2</sup> yam i<sup>2</sup>estudia-ti<sup>2</sup>hk 3. mit kiš ikiš  
yam ni<sup>2</sup>kš para kapni<sup>2</sup>m. 4. de iniš hem kiš ni<sup>2</sup>inskri-  
biáhtiw 5. ipíčinuh hem demás alu-mnuná<sup>2</sup>hat čúčigaw  
iginĩngaha ni<sup>2</sup>k imuniškáh pa parke<sup>2</sup>á. 6. kiš igimu-  
niškah pa hem igi<sup>2</sup>aktangah čičiw igikupé-ga ikopakná<sup>2</sup>  
7. ikwáhy mayó<sup>2</sup>k igiči<sup>2</sup>tka 8. iyáhkahaw tu<sup>2</sup>k peda-su-

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#### *Literal Translation*

1. Companions! I-will-tell-you- here one story-little where one young-man he-entered school secondary 2. That young-man here he-studied-first 3. and then when-he-finished here he-went to Acayucan-to 4. after he-went there then he-enrolled-himself 5. When-he-left-now there the-rest the-pupils they-began they-to-say-to-hm that they-will-take-him to park-edge 6. after they-took-him to there when-they-grabbed-him began they-to-cut-hair his-head 7. his-hair much-very they-took-off 8. they-left-to-him

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#### *Free Translation*

Companions, I'll tell you a little story about a young man who went to high school after having studied here (in Sayula). Having completed his schooling here, he went to enroll himself in high school. As he was leaving that place, some of the students said they would take him to the park. There they grabbed

wáyu 9. kiš ayé ya-wayná? ižúmgahaw tu?k pohwáy mit čúčiw iginímgaha mongól mongól

10. mit kiš igimunáškah pa mam ičina monhamahmat 11. de hem imuniškaw pa parke?ám igimóygah bwélta po i?akyaškahap la-ta imugušám 12. ya-wayná?hat šíhkap ke 13. mit kiš yámay ya-wayná? ha?iwámpate ipo?kwá?n po komo i?aktágap netí ka?óyawu igiwát

14. mit kiš igimuniškahatu hatú?k lah hem igiyákhahah pintúra ikopakní?k 15. mit kiš igiyáhka pintúra yámay ya-wayná? awa?nó?k 16. igi?aktáhn tu?k igimóhy tu?k hiptulópi kiš i?akpícihnaw nípin 17. igi?akpícin nípin iyahkiš 18. míngawatu i?aktágap 19. igi?ak-

one piece-little-just 9. then that young-man they-tied-to-him one vine-little and began they-to-say-to-him mongolian! mongolian!

10. and then they-took-him to where they-were the-nuns 11. from there they-took-him to park-edge when-they gave-turn but they-sounded-to-him can his-behind-edge 12. the-young-men they-laughed how! 13. and then here-of the-young-man in-vain-he-wanted to-flee but since they-grabbed-him nothing he-couldn't-do

14. and then when-they took-him-again another place there they-put-on-him paint his-head-on 15. and then when-they-put paint this-of young-man angry-very 16. when-he-grabbed-one he-gave-him one nose-blow then he-took-out- of-him blood (he made him bleed) 17. when-he-too-out blood he-left-them 18. they-came-again they-grabbed-him 19. when-they-grabbed-

him and began to cut off his hair. They cut it all except one tiny lock to which they tied a small vine. Then they said to him: "Mongolian! Mongolian!"

From there they took him to the church, and then all around the park making noise after him with a can. How the others laughed! Then the young man tried in vain to get away, but they grabbed him, and he couldn't do anything.

Then they took him somewhere else and put paint on his head. This made him very angry. He grabbed one of them and socked him in the nose causing it to bleed. Then he fled, but they chased him and grabbed him again. They

tángah imuniškawatu imóygaw bwélta merkado<sup>2</sup>ám.  
20. hem kéhama awá<sup>2</sup>nama ičikhó<sup>2</sup>nganu

21. kiš igikómnuh kačúčawáy mínu pa yam 22 min nigupéhipay tik bisént isidó-ro 23. hem ayé iwayná<sup>2</sup> igikupé-w 24. igiwát pelón pelón 25. igi<sup>2</sup>aknášaw nawá-ših 26. mit kiš hem ayé ya-wayná<sup>2</sup> ičúhkahaway iwimpíhk 27. hemí<sup>2</sup>k hínap ka<sup>2</sup>oyó<sup>2</sup>k iyó<sup>2</sup>y 28. ihtip tu<sup>2</sup>k bisiklétna<sup>2</sup> 29. mit hem mam ináš eskwéla iníngahap berdú-gu ni<sup>2</sup>k berdú-guná<sup>2</sup> ayé tu<sup>2</sup>k lučadorná<sup>2</sup> de méhikoway mit kopakčímna<sup>2</sup>éy 30. hemí<sup>2</sup>k itomátkap por he<sup>2</sup>

31. bwéno mit kiš hínap i<sup>2</sup>óhy tí<sup>2</sup>hy-kapí<sup>2</sup>m igipá-tkawatu i<sup>2</sup>iškíš hapú-t yawayná<sup>2</sup>hat 32. kiš igi<sup>2</sup>aktángah hapú-t ya-wayná<sup>2</sup>hat ni<sup>2</sup>ášamu igiwátkah 33. porke hem

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him they-took-him-again they-gave turn market-edge 20. there really angry-now they-let-him-loose-now

21. after he-put-on-now cap-little he-came-now to here 22. came he-got-himself-a-haircut house-at Vicente Isidoro 23. there that-one his-son he-cut-his-hair 24. he-made-him baldhead baldhead 25. he-passed-on-him razor 26. and then there that young-man they-cut-to-him his-eye-hair (his eye lashes) 27. that's-why now not-very-well he-walks 28. he-has one bicycle 29. and there where he-passes school they-say-to-him Verdugo because Verdugo that one is-a-wrestler of México-of and he-his-gourd-headed-also. 30. that's-why they-take-it for him

31. well and then now he-went-and-came-back yesterday Acayucan-to they-found-him-again he-saw-them the-rest the-young-men 32. after they-grabbed-him the-rest the-young-men the-same they-did 33. because there they-not-good-very

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made him go around the market, but he was really getting angry now, so they let him go.

He put on a small cap and returned home (to Sayula). When he arrived, he went to the house of Vicente Isidoro to get a haircut. Vicente's son shaved his head with a razor, making him completely bald. The students had also cut the young man's eyelashes which is the reason that he cannot walk very well now.

He went back to school on his bicycle, and when he passed by they called to

ka<sup>?</sup>oyó<sup>?</sup>hkat 34. siempre wenamé itigüyga 35. mit kiš  
igi<sup>?</sup>aktangah ayé čú-čiw igikučimga

36. po kaniyáhkíw hatú<sup>?</sup>k mas mihó<sup>?</sup>k čú-čiw igi<sup>?</sup>ak-  
tángahatu ikupumčétkaw 37. mit kiš i<sup>?</sup>ukyó<sup>?</sup>tkaw  
38. inimgahaw inyi<sup>?</sup>kópakní<sup>?</sup>k itp kařetérah 39. yam  
ya-wayná<sup>?</sup> inim ni<sup>?</sup>k ho 40. inim mit pihin kařetéra  
i<sup>?</sup>it 41. inim pos itp tu<sup>?</sup>k 42. inim a. bwéno. 43. inim  
pos ayépah nat ayé kařetéraná<sup>?</sup> awá<sup>?</sup>ç o titikwáy 44. inim  
pos médio awák<sup>?</sup>ç 45. čú-čiw igiwátkaha tu<sup>?</sup>k to-wná<sup>?</sup>  
ikopahní<sup>?</sup>k 46. tu<sup>?</sup>k pedásu awá<sup>?</sup>çik 47. mit kiš ayépah  
inim ayépah itp sí-ne inyi<sup>?</sup>hkópakní<sup>?</sup>k 48. inim ho  
49. inim a. bwéno 50. pos inim pihin i<sup>?</sup>it 51. inim itp

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34. always like-that they-enter 35. and after they-grabbed-him  
that-one began they-to-gourd-head-him (to shave his head)

36. but he-didn't-leave-himself (he didn't permit it) another  
more big-very began they-grabbed-him-again they-hit-him-hard  
37. and then they-asked-him 38. they-said-to-him your-town-in  
there-is a-highway (query) 39. here young-man he-said that  
yes 40. he-said and how-many highway there-are 41. he-said  
well there-is one 42. he-said oh good 43. he-said well that-then  
how that highway wide or little-little 44. he-said well half wide  
45. began they-to-do-to-him one road his-head-on 46. one piece  
wide 47. and then that-then he-said that-then there-is theatre  
your-town-in (query) 48. he-said yes 49. he-said oh good  
50. well he-said how-many there-are 51. he-said there-are two

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him: "Verdugo!" (Verdugo is a bald wrestler from Mexico city. That's why they  
called him that.)

Well, he had returned to Acayucan the day before when they found him  
again. He saw the others, and they grabbed him, and did the same again. They  
are not very nice there. That's what always happens when a person goes there  
(to school). After they had grabbed him, they began to shave his head.

Another boy who was quite big didn't yield himself, so they all grabbed  
him and hit him hard. Then they asked him if there was a highway near his  
town. He said there was, so they asked him how many there were. He said there  
was just one, and they replied: "Good!" Then they said: "How is the highway?  
Is it wide, or very narrow?" He said it was kind of wide, so they cut him a road  
on his head, a nice wide piece. Then they said: "Is there a theatre in your

mečk 52. inīm a pos nawatkáh 53. iwátkahaw mečk  
mečk fruedaná?hat ašam tu?k pantá.yaná? 54. inīm mit  
ayépah inyi?hkópakní?k yámay itp nat inīhy kuyhúk o  
ca?itp 55. inīm itp kuyhúk 56. inīm pos yo kreo ke ni?k  
mas oy naš?ahka?wá?n ayé kuyhukná? 57. kiš igi?ak-  
tánga čú.čiw igikupe-pi?hna nu?pihñ

58. mit kiš inīmp ayépah inīmp hínap mi?iwáh  
59. inīm po tīngahátp 60. inīmp poesía inyimáh 61. inīm  
tīngahátpéy 62. inīm ti inhátp 63. inīm netí 64. inīm  
a po itp ti ičhatwá?n tu?k kósa 65. inīm po tīngahátp  
netí 66. inīm ingahátp 67. inīm ka?

52. he-said oh well we(incl.)-will-make-it 53. they-did-to-him  
two two wheels like one's screen 54. he-said and that-then your-  
town-in those-of there-is how its-name (what's its name) forest  
or there-isn't (query) 55. he-said there-is forest 56. he-said  
well I think that that more good we(incl.)-knock-down- that  
forest 57. then when-they-grabbed-him began to-cut-hair-all-to-  
him all

58. and then he-said that-then he-said now you-will-sing  
59. he-said but I-don't-know-how 60. he-said poetry you-will-say  
61. he-said I-don't-know-how-also 62. he-said what do-you-know  
63. he-said nothing 64. he-said oh but there-is that you-know-how  
(you have to know it) one thing 65. he-said but I-don't-know  
nothing 66. he-said you-don't-know-how (query) 67. he-said  
no!

town?" When he said there was, they said: "Good! How many?" He told them  
there were two, and they said they would make them. They made him two, two  
wheels like screens. Then they said: "And in your town—what's its name?—  
is there a forest or not?" He said there was, but they said they thought it would  
be better to cut the forest down. So they held him tightly and began to cut off  
all his hair.

Then they told him to sing, but he said he couldn't. So they told him to  
recite a poem, but he replied that he didn't know one. Then they asked him  
what he did know, and he replied: "Nothing." "Oh, but you must know some-  
thing," they said. "But I don't know anything," he said. "You don't know how?"  
"No."

68. entonses igi<sup>?</sup>aktánga čú-čiatu igitukú<sup>?</sup>tka 69. kiš ahta i<sup>?</sup>ak<sup>?</sup>i<sup>?</sup>hkap ayé ya-waywáy 70. kiš inim niš iw yáhmú 71. kiš níkš iw níkš igi<sup>?</sup>iwatu hem 72. po kómo igigagustátkapéy ayé ya-wayná<sup>?</sup>hat inim ka ayé tīngawángap kansioná<sup>?</sup> 73. tīwángap hatú<sup>?</sup>k mas óyway 74. pos čú-čiatu iginim hatú<sup>?</sup>k mas óyway 75. igawángapatu 76. inimp tu<sup>?</sup>k poesía nim 77. inim tīngahátp 78. inim pos ayépah nim mi inkopakní<sup>?</sup>k himay inwa<sup>?</sup>-nápay.

79. čú-čiatu iginim igawámp 80. mit kiš entónse mának hínap mi<sup>?</sup>ecáh 81. we<sup>?</sup>n iginimgahah 82. mit kiš mának 83. héma pú-ru ayé kopakčimnáchat čú-čiw éčkapay 84. éčkaw hem yahmayní<sup>?</sup>k eskwelaní<sup>?</sup>k 85. ha-

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68. then when-they-grabbed-him began-again they-to-climb-on-top-of-him 69. then until they-make-him-grunt that young-man-little 70. then he-said go sing that 71. then he-went he-sang he-went to-sing-it there 72. but since it-didn'tlike-to-them-either (they didn't like that either) those young-men he-said no! that we(excl.)-don't-want-it song 73. we(excl.)-want-it another more good-of 74. well began-again he-to-say another more good-of 75. they-don't want-it-again 76. he-says one poetry say 77. he-said I-don't-know-how 78. he-said well that-then say you your-head-in where-of (which) you-will-want

79. began-again he-to-say he-doesn't-want-it 80. and then then get-down now you-will-dance 81. so they-said-to-him 82. and then he-got-down 83. there only those gourd-heads began they-to-dance 84. they-danced there in-that in-the-school

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Then they grabbed him and piled on top of him and made him grunt. Then they said: "Sing that!" So he sang for them, but they didn't like that either, and said: "No, we don't want that song. Sing us a better one." So he began again and sang a better one. But they didn't want that either. "Say some poetry," they said. He protested that he didn't know how, so they said he should say from memory whatever he wanted.

He began saying that he didn't want to when they said: "Get down! Now

pú·htat ikumpalná? ituší·hkap ni?k pú·ru kopakčimná?  
hem éčkap

86. bwéno mit kiš ayépah ikišnuway ayé hatú?k.  
igi?ahkú?tka ni?ášamu igiwátkah 87. mit hínap ayé  
ya·wayná? nikšáh lúnes estudiá·tpay hem 88. yam ma-  
yó?k iniškanuway pa hem 89. komo kwátrohanuta  
90.kwatro alumnuná?hat 91. yo kreo ke ni?k mas óyway  
hem nanikšwá?n 92. po ni?áčamuata yam po kwáandu  
i?ít túmi·n hīngapá?tu óyap inyíkš

85. the-rest his-companions they-laughed-at-them because only  
gourd-head there they-danced

86. well and then that-then they-finished-now that another  
they-made-go-up the-same they-did 87. and now that young-man  
will-go Monday to-study there 88. here many-very they-have-  
gone-now to there 87. about four-now-probably 90. four pupils  
91. I think that that more good-of there we(incl.)-go 92. but  
it-would-be-the-same here but when there-is money everywhere  
can you-go

dance!" So he got down and just the bald ones started to dance. They danced  
there in the school while their companions laughed at them.

When they had finished with them, they made another one go up and they  
did the same to him. The young man will go there on Monday to study. Very  
many have gone there from here. Probably about four students. I think it is  
better to go there. It would be the same here, but when there is money you can  
go everywhere.