

CUICATEC TALES ABOUT WITCHCRAFT

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The three Cuicatec texts recorded here come from Concepción Pápalo, Oaxaca.¹ They were told by Margarita Guevara de Zúñiga, a bilingual Indian about 45 years old. While the informant was a child she heard these stories from her grandmother, though the second tale deals with something that actually happened to her.

The following are resumé in English of the three stories:

I. There was a time of a great famine. Two old ladies lived in a certain town, each of them with a son. One of the men had a good harvest that year. His mother used to go every day to his house to ask for corn. Sometime later the son got tired of giving his mother corn. When he saw his mother coming he said to his wife, "I'm going to hide in the corn crib. Tell my mother I'm not home." The man hid in the corn crib. When his mother asked to see her son in order to obtain corn, the wife answered, "Come back some other time." After the old lady departed, the wife opened the corn crib and the door made a tremendous noise. Many locusts appeared and there was her husband. The locusts had only left his skeleton, for not giving his mother corn.

¹ The Cuicateco language is written phonemically. Symbols which do not occur in the Spanish and in the English languages are as follows: nasal vowels are written with the vowel plus a small raised n, as v^n , vv^n , and $v^n\eta v$. The rearticulated vowel has the small raised n following the first vowel and the nasalization carries through the second rearticulated vowel. The glottal stop is written with the symbol [ʔ]. There are three tones, high, mid, and low. The high tone is written with a symbol [ʰ], the mid tone is shown by the absence of a symbol, and the low tone is written with the symbol [-]. These tones are written over the vowels and each vowel has its separate tone.

Concepción Pápalo, is a large town of Indians with a population of about 1,550 people. About 150 years ago the inhabitants of the town ran all their witches out of town by throwing dung at them. However, today, one can find a few witches in the town who do all their witchcraft practices secretly.

The first person singular pronoun I is in brackets because it is not a separate word. It is a fused form and is indicated by a raised tone of the final vowel of the preceding morpheme. (M. D.)

II. There was a woman who went down to wash clothes. She became hungry but she did not go home to eat. When she finished her washing she was no longer hungry. After a week she went crazy. She showed her insanity by her wild laughter. On lying down to sleep her hair became tangled and wild. Even though her mother combed and brushed the woman's hair with oil, in a moment it was unruly again. Every one who went to visit her saw her vomiting clothes. Her mother then obtained a witch doctor to cure her and soon she got well again.

III. A certain man had two wives. One day on leaving for Oaxaca he told his wife to await him at Rancho Grande. The wife was lazy though and she never went to Rancho Grande to meet him. When the man finally arrived at the meeting place, his wife was there awaiting him. She asked, "Why did you take so long?" She then brought out a chicken, tortillas, tepache, all of which she gave him to eat and drink. As the husband started to eat, he noticed that the meat had no salt. He asked, "Why didn't you salt the meat?" Then he remembered that he had brought some salt with him. He took out the salt and began to put it on the chicken. At that moment the woman turned into a snake and the meat turned into rotten wood. The tortillas turned into oak leaves and the tepache became muddy water. The snake disappeared and the man was unable to catch up with it in order to kill it. When the man got home he found his wife there. It was not his wife that he had seen at Rancho Grande but a ghost.

The first story is perhaps of European extraction, dealing with a moral theme.

The second tale treats of a common pre-Spanish theme and is an excellent example of *nahualism*. Not only did the second wife of the protagonist turn into an animal but also the tortillas, tepache and the chicken reverted to nature. The idea that salt is an weapon against sorcery is possibly taken from the Christian rite of baptism.

I. kuentó yeⁿē lankóstā

1. ntaa ?áámá tyémpō záámá kuiiku dááⁿ? chí kénuuⁿ.
2. vaā-tá ?uūvē in[?]tii-tá yáāⁿ mii chí váá ?áámá daiyá-yā sáⁿzā.
3. váá taave níⁿnúⁿ yeⁿē-sa.
4. míkú chaaku-sa geⁿé-yā giika-yā níⁿnúⁿ sáⁿā guuve guuve[?].
5. míkú váá ?áámá guuve chí chidaānti-sa ?iiⁿyā.
6. n[?]tiichī-sá ?iiⁿyā chí-kuchii-yā.
7. to[?]mé gaⁿmé gaⁿā-sa gii-sa.
8. “?úú kaⁿá kunuuⁿntei[?]éí cheete va[?]āi naachi váá níⁿnúⁿ.”
9. míkú kúchii-de chaakú chí nkuaá va[?]āi.”
10. mí saⁿā kueⁿē-sa kúnúntei[?]ēi-sa na vá[?]āi chí váá níⁿnúⁿ.”
11. tó[?]mé chaaku-sa iteigúúⁿná-yá saⁿā.
12. “tíⁿ kueⁿē daiyá kate tééché-sá níⁿnúⁿ ?úú.”
13. míkú to[?]me gaⁿā táⁿā-sa mii.
14. “kúéⁿé-nē míkú

I. THE STORY OF THE LOCUSTS

1. Arrived one time that was hunger strong.
2. Are-she two old she land this that are one son-person man.
3. Are much corn of-his.
4. And mother-his went-person asked-person corn man day day.
5. And was one day that was-lazy-he person.
6. Saw-he person that was-coming-person.
7. Then tells-he says-he.
8. “I go (I)³ will-hide (I) inside house where are corn.
9. And will-tell you (familiar) mother (my) that no (I) house.”
10. And man went-he will-hide-he in house that are corn.
11. Then mother-his ask-person man.
12. “Where went child (my) because gave-he corn me.”
13. And then said woman-his this.
14. “Went-he and soon will-come-he.
15. In-the-meantime that arrived-

I. CUENTO DE LAS LANGOSTAS

Llegó un tiempo en el cual había un hambre muy fuerte. En un pueblo vivían dos abuelitas y las dos tuvieron hijo. Pues uno de los hombres tuvo mucho maíz. La mamá de uno de ellos se fué a la casa de su hijo cada día y pidió maíz. Llegó el día cuando el hijo se fastidió de ella. Cuando vió a su mamá que venía por su casa,, entonces le dijo a su esposa, “Voy a esconderme en la casa donde hay maíz y diga a mamá que no estoy aquí.” Pues el hombre se fué y se escondió en la casa donde había maíz. Entonces su mamá preguntó por él y dijo, “¿Donde se fué mi hijo porque tiene que darme maíz?” Entonces la esposa contestó. “Vaya y regrese, mientras que llega su hijo.”

kama chíi-nē. 15. neⁿe chí nántaa-sa." 16. míkú ínⁿtii-ta mii kunaⁿa-yā. 17. táchí ⁿuūvē naáⁿ kunaⁿá-yā toⁿme táⁿā mii cheⁿē-tá naⁿvaaⁿ-tá vaⁿāi nachi kenúuⁿ-sá. 18. ntí túnú chⁿaaku ntii. 19. kanⁿtāā lankóstā chⁿeeⁿ. 20. chⁿííⁿnú cheⁿé-tē sáⁿā. 21. a dámaaⁿ ⁿiini-sá kentííⁿ-sá chí nkúáá kaⁿā-sa níⁿnúⁿ chaaku-sa.

II. ⁿáamá kueentó yeⁿē ⁿáamá nⁿtaataⁿ chí chⁿeeⁿnō

1. cheⁿē-tá naāⁿ-ta. 2. miku chí kuiiku taave-tá. 3. miku nkúáá chí naⁿa-ta cheⁿē-ta luékō. 4. miku dátaāchí chí chinunaā-ta ⁿāāmtá kuiikū-ta. 5. miku nantaā tantoⁿō niiⁿne guuve kuagiivi kentáá guuve yeⁿe-ta tachi lókā-ta. 6. tachi chinkaⁿā chí nigēēⁿ yeⁿē-

he. 16. And old-she this went-person. 17. When two little-time went-person and woman this went-her opened-her house where was-he. 18. Until much sounded there. 19. Came-out locust plural. 20. Finished ate-animal man. 21. Already only bone-he slept-he that no gave-he corn mother-his.

II. THE STORY OF ONE WOMAN THAT HAPPENED

1. Went-she washed-she. 2. And that hunger much-she. 3. And no that went-she ate-she soon. 5. And completed meanwhile eight day afterwards arrived day of-her when crazy-she. 4. And when that finished-washing-she no-longer hungry-she. 6. Then began that showed

Pues la abuelita se fué. Después de un tiempo la mujer abrió la casa donde estaba su marido. Cuando abrió la puerta, tronó la puerta con un ruido muy grande. Salieron muchas langostas. Acabaron de comer el hombre y puro huesos estaban tirados porque él no dió maíz a su mamá.

II. CUENTO DE UNA MUJER QUE PASO

Una mujer fué a lavar y la dió mucha hambre. Pues no se fué luego a comer. Cuando ella acabó de lavar ya no la dió hambre. Entonces despues de los ocho días le resultó que la mujer se volvió loca. Ella misma comenzó a

ta chi lókā-ta. 7. chinkaʔā ʔiiⁿyuⁿ-ta. 8. ʔiiⁿyūⁿ taave-tá. 9. miku tachi ʔiintiiti-tá gidááka taave tiíⁿ-ta. 10. miku tachi chaakū-tá ʔiiyā ntúkū aséitē inadidāuⁿ-yā venaáⁿ ntuuve dááka taave tuūⁿʔ. 11. miku kaada ʔiiⁿʔyā chi géⁿʔé-yā yaaⁿvi-yā taⁿztā ʔtika inantaachi-tá tiinó yeⁿʔé-yā. 12. toʔme chaaku-tá cheⁿʔē-yā ʔnuāⁿ-yá ʔáámá kúáá chi nadigiiku-sa taⁿʔā. 13. míkú toʔme nantūuva yeⁿʔē-ta.

III. ʔáámá kuéentō yeⁿʔē tá ntiiyu chí chíi

1. ʔáámá saⁿʔā chi ntúku-sa ʔuūvē nⁿʔtaataʔ. 2. ʔáámá guuve kueⁿʔē-sá ntuuva. 3. mí gaⁿʔā-sa gii-sa nⁿʔtaatá yeⁿʔē-sa chi kueeⁿno-tá saⁿʔa raacho chⁿʔaata. 4. miku

of-her that crazy-she. 7. Began laugh-she. 8. Laugh much-she. 9. And when sleep-she tangles much head-her. 10. And when mother-her combs with oil smooths-person before before turns-around tangled much again. 11. And each person that goes-person greets-person woman thus vomits-she cloth of hers. 12. Then mother-her went-person hunt-person one witch that healed-he woman. 13. And then healed of-her.

III. THE STORY OF A GHOST THAT HAPPENED

1. One man that with-him two women. 2. One day went-he Oaxaca. 3. And says-he tells-he woman of-his that will-wait-she man ranch

mostrar que ya era loca. Empezó a reir mucho. Pues cuando se acostó se puso muy mechuda su cabeza. Cuando su mamá lo peinó con aceite y lo alisó, al buen rato se volvió a mechudarse. Y cada gente que fué a visitarla, vió a ella vomitando su ropa. Pues entonces su mamá fué a buscar un brujo para que la curara. Y entonces ella sanó.

III. CUENTO DE UN FANTASMA QUE PASO

Un hombre tuvo dos mujeres. Un día se fué a Oaxaca. Y le dijo a su mujer que esperara en Rancho Grande. Pues la mujer tuvo flojera. No quiso

tá²ā mii kenúú daān²tī naá-tá. 5. nkúáá timikuūⁿ-tá che²ē-tá cheenō-tá saⁿā raancho ch²aata. 6. mí saⁿā ²kūū ²aaku-sa chi táⁿā mii vaa-tá veeno-tá saⁿā niiⁿnu na raancho ch²aata. 7. tachi n²taā-sa to²me gaⁿā-ta gii-tá saⁿā. 8. “dei²ēi chúkā ²naaⁿ-di a vēnāāⁿ vééné díí muⁿu. 9. miku ntaī-tá tu²u, ntaī-tá yuūntū, ntaī-tá gaade chi kaⁿā-ta chi ku²sa che²sa. 10. pero tachi kueⁿe-sa ²kuiinti-sa che²e-sa yuūntū, yútā mii nkúáá chi núū giimā. 11. to²me gaⁿā-sa. 12. “dei²ēi kuuve chi nkúáá n²tīi-de giimā yúta ²kūū.” 13. miku inankáá-ká-sá na sirvyeeⁿtá yeⁿē-sa keneeⁿ ta²líiⁿ giimā. 14. to²me cheⁿe-sa chítá²a-sa. 15. miku ch²íi-sa giimā yúta mii. 16. to²me n²tiichi-sa chi n²taata mii navakuntáa-yā kúú. 17. miku yutā mii navakuntáa yáⁿá toō. 18. míkú yuūntū mii navakuntáa yaātā íntei²ei². 19.

big. 4. And woman this was lazy face-hers. 5. No want-her went-her waited-her man ranch big. 6. And man that think-he that woman this is-sitting-she waits-she man near in ranch big. 7. When arrived-he then says-she tells-she man. 8. “Why much late-you already before wait (I) you here.” 9. And brought-she chicken, brought-she tortillas, brought-she tepache that gave-she drank-he ate-he. 10. But when went-he sat-he ate-he tortillas, meat this no that found salt. 11. Then says-he. 12. Why able that no put-you salt meat that. 13. And thinks-he in napkin of-his is little salt. 14. Then went-he took-he. 15. And put-he salt this. 16. Then saw-he that woman this turned-person snake. 17. And meat this turned stick rotten. 18. And tortilla this turned leaf oak. 19. And

a ir hasta Rancho Grande a esperar el hombre. El hombre creyó que la mujer estaba esperandole arriba del Rancho Grande. Cuando llegó, entonces la mujer le dijo a él, “¿Porque tanto te dilatastes? Ya hace un rato que estoy esperando aquí.” Pues ella trajo una gallina, trajo tortillas, trajo tepache que le dió a él que se toma y come. Pero cuando el hombre se fué a sentarse y a comer tortillas, la carne no tenía sal. Entonces él dijo, “¿Porqué no echastes sal en éste carne?” Pues se acordó que tenía un poquito de sal en su servilleta. Entonces se fué y lo agarró y echó sal en la carne. Entonces vió que la mujer se volvió culebra. Y la carne se volvió palo podrido. Y las tortillas

miku gaade mii navakuntáa nuu^ane ya^aā. 20. míkú kúú
 mii kue^aé-tē. 21. nkúáá tunéé-sá [?]iite chi ch[?]ii[?]nū-sa
[?]iite. 22. miku sá^aā mii naváyuū^anē-sa. 23. miku tachi
 nantaā-sā kenuu^a n[?]taata ye^aē-sa va^aāi. 24. nkúáá ta^aā
 mii chi n[?]tíichi-sa sino tá ntiyū.

tepachi this turned water dirt. 20. And snake this went-animal. 21. No
 caught-he animal that killed-he animal. 22. And man this turned-he
 went-he. 23. And when arrived-he was woman of-his house. 24. No
 woman this that saw-he but she ghost.

se volvieron hoja de encino. Y el tepache se volvió agua de lodo. Y la culebra
 se fué. Pues el hombre no alcanzó la culebra para matarla. Entonces el hombre
 regresó a su casa. Y cuando llegó la mujer estaba en la casa. No estaba ésta
 mujer que la vió, pero era un fantasma.