

THE EARTHQUAKE IN OCOTLAN

THREE TEXTS IN ZAPOTEC

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The following texts are three descriptions of an earthquake which occurred in 1931 in the area of Ocotlán, Oax. The first text describes the earthquake and its results as seen by a brother of the ones who were killed. The second text is by the orphaned son of the ones who were killed who at the time was a small lad of four or five years. The third text is given by a neighbor of those who died and whose own house suffered damage. These three texts were recorded in San Antonino Ocotlán, Oax. in 1965, thirty four years after the events occurred.

TEXT I

by Rubén Córdova

1. Daad Donaldë 2. guadi'dza lul 3. tubi desgraaci
enormë 4. naguc ndë'ë. 5. Dzë catorci shtë enëre 6. año
treinta y uno 7. biidë tubi desgraaci ruú ndë'ë. 8. Biidë
9. tubi llu. 10. Como cosë de quigaadchí garuuldë iur

INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION

1. Señor Donald 2. will-tell-I you 3. a tragedy big 4. which
happened here. 5. Day fourteenth of January 6. nineteen thirty one
7. came a tragedy big here. 8. Came 9. an earthquake. 10. About

FREE TRANSLATION

Mr. Donald, I will tell you about a big tragedy which occurred here.
On the fourteenth of January, 1931, a really big tragedy occurred. There was

gue'lë 11. bidchiini tu cashtigu shtë Dios. 12. Guuti tapë shfamilia. 13. Guuti Rufinë 14. Guuti Rosë 15. Susanë 16. tu shcuniada lë Galdino. 17. Guuti be llë'. 18. Zuu ta'a tubi iu'u ndë'e 19. iu'u basu'u. 20. Iurna bidchiini ta'a llu 21. gurëe tu partë paderón guëc iu'u. 22. Tubi iu'u gui'lli zuubë 23. naguziini 24. Nga'li bëu' ta'a grë mënë 25. por tantë mbë 26. por tantë naaldë. 27. Iur bidchiini ta'a desgraaci 28. gulaaguë paderón guëc iu'u. 29. Guuti Rufinë 30. guuti Susanë 31. guuti Rosë. 32. Shnia'ahía 33. baru'u eridë. 34. Inmediatamentë bëenä currir 35. lu asuntë rë'. 36. Beldë guënaahia. 37. Niatiquë shmamahía 38. rushtialdii. 39. Cani'i' më. 40. Guizaa be saahía 41. bida'dchi. 42. Iurni tantisimë mbë 43. tantisimë ruidë 44. tantisimë gush-

seven thirty at night 11. arrived a punishment of God. 12. Died four my-family. 13. Died Rufina 14. Died Rosa 15. Susana 16. a my-brother-in-law named Galdino. 17. They died. 18. Stood a house here 19. house adobe. 20. When arrived earthquake 21. Fell apart a part of wall on the house. 22. A house of sticks was-there 23. a kitchen 24. There entered all the people 25. on account of the wind 26. on account of the cold. 27. When arrived the tragedy 28. fell the wall on the house. 29. Died Rufina 30. Died Susana 31. Died Rosa. 32. My mother 33. got-out injured. 34. Right away ran-I 35. to the scene. 36. Came to-see-I. 37. Only my grandmother 38. crying out. 39. Said she: 40. All of my loved-ones 41. are covered over. 42. Then very much air 43. very much noise 44. very

an earthquake about 7:30 P.M. God punished us. Four of my family died: Rufina, Rose, Susan, and a brother-in-law named Galdino.

There was an adobe house over there. When the earthquake came a part of the wall fell on the house. There was a stick house which served as a kitchen and there the people entered to keep warm. It was cold and windy. When the earthquake came the wall fell on the stick house in which they were, and they died. My mother got out but she was injured.

Right away I ran to the scene. My grandmother was crying out. She said: "All my family are buried in the ruins!"

There was a lot of air, dust, and noise. Then the people began arriving

bë'dzë. 45. Iurni bidchiini guëllu'në be mënë 46. con alludë 47. be shni 48. con grëhaaguë 49. linternë 50. parë bë'në be llë' 51. bichisiuu be llë' 52. descombrë nanadchi'bë guëc tagúl. 53. Perë taapë tagúl gualuu. 54. Shnia'ahiá baru'u eridë. 55. En cantidad mënë bidchiini. 56. Bidchiini autoridadë. 57. De manërë que tristë guc. 58. Mënë demasiadë ru'në 59. por sentimentë naguu ndëë. 60. Gaduubi guë'dchi 61. na'a lquëë nguiu 62. ru'në por sentimentë naguu ndëë. 63. Be lachi birie'zi lu guiu'u. 64. Demasiadë nadzë'bë. 65. Iur gudëëdë desgraci rë' 66. bëa'në llu gati gati. 67. Casë por termino ga'i minutë 68. chi'i minutë 69. lë'ë llu ze'dë. 70. Nabichi'i llu ze'dë. 71. Perë scanii bileezë ná'a 72. con el tiempë de chopë dzë 73. parë guleezëti' llu. 74. Iurna

much dust. 45. Then arrived running the people 46. with help 47. with light 48. with torches 49. lanterns 50. to do-they 51. take away-they 52. the debris on top of the dead. 53. But four dead bodies there-were. 54. My mother got-out injured. 55. Many people arrived. 56. Came authorities. 57. Very sad it was. 58. People really cried 59. on account of the feeling there-was there. 60. The whole village 61. women and men 62. cried on account of the feeling there-was there. 63. In fields broke-open the ground. 64. Really fearful-it-was. 65. When passed the tragedy 66. remained-still earthquake every little while. 67. For five minutes 68. ten minutes 69. the earthquake came by. 70. Small earthquakes came by. 71. But so we waited. 72. For two days 73. finally it stoppen the earthquake. 74. When

with help, lights, and torches, in order to uncover the bodies of those who had been buried in the debris.

There were four dead. Many people came including the village authorities. Everyone was crying because of the tragedy, both men and women.

Out in the fields the ground broke open. It was very fearful. Every little while the earth shook. For two days every five or ten minutes it shook, but they were not severe earthquakes. For two days we waited for the earthquake to pass and when it did we went to look around. A bell tower on our church was completely destroyed. The corridor on the town hall had fallen down.

gudëedë 75. iurni biagnaa ná'a. 76. Iadu'u shtë ná'a
 77. completamentë gulaaguë 78. tubi campanari de bo-
 beda. 79. Una vez guc desquebrar në. 80. Juzgadë co-
 rredor shtë ná'a 81. completamentë gaduubi gulaaguë
 në. 82. Cosë nadzë'bë guc. 83. Bidaapë ná'a nótisi
 84. dequë tubi alludë 85. bashe'ldë gobiernë 86. parë
 desgraaci naguu. 87. Perë autoridadë 88. adë pë bane'e
 guia'a ná'a 89. niátiquë. 90. Scanii roadi'dza. 91. lul
 Daad Donaldë. 92. Desgraaci naguu ndëë 93. tantismë
 tristë naguc la'ni iiz treinta y uno 94. catorsi de enerë
 año treinta y uno. 95. Nii naá tu histori 96. tu novedad
 97. tu cashtigu shtë Dios nabiidë. 98. Roadi'dza lul Daad.
 99. Demasiadë nadzë'bë guc.

it passed 75. then we went to see. 76. Church ours 77. completely
 fell 78. a bell-tower. 79. Really it was broken in pieces. 80. The
 town-hall corridor ours 81. completely all had fallen-it. 82. Thing
 fearful happened. 83. Had received-we word 84. that help sent the
 government 86. for the tragedy which occurred. 87. But the athorities
 88. not anything gave to us 89. nothing. 90. That way tell-I 91. you
 Señor Donald. 92. Tragedy occurred here 93. Very sad happened-it
 in nineteen thirty one 94. fourteenth of January, nineteen thirty one.
 95. There it is a history 96. a happening 97. a punishment of God
 which-came. 98. Tell-I you Señor. 99. Very fearful it-was.

We got word that the government was sending help to us but the local
 authorities gave us nothing.

Well, that's what happened in 1931 on the fourteenth of January. I tell
 you this history so you might know what happened. It was very fearful.

TEXT II

by Antonio Campos

1. Pos na también ruuná recordar 2. tiempë nabiidë
llu. 3. Na naahíá lga'në Galdino Santiago 4. tse'lë' lë
Rosa Campos. 5. Na naahíá tubsë shiini' 6. lë Antonio.
7. Bëaaná bizeebí. 8. Porquë rëagnaa ldoa'a shnia'ahíá
9. iurna baru'i' la'ni iu'u. 10. Híá muertë naai'. 11. Con
be chopë shtiahiá 12. híá muertë naa bei'. 13. Zuubë
bei' la'ni tubi iu'u 14. iurna bidchiini ná'a con shmamá.
15. Shamamá lë Marsela Cuevas. 16. Bidchiini nuu ná'a
më. 17. Biniaa ná'a lu be desgraaci nii. 18. Demasiadë
rbiini ldu'u ná'a 19. nu guc admirar ná'a 20. porquë
nia'së gualuu biriu'u bei' 21. liidchi ná'a. 22. Nia'së
gualuu bë'në bei' despidir 23. guni'i bei': 24. Guziaa

INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION

1. Well I also remember 2. time when-came earthquake. 3. I am
son of Galdino Santiago 4. wife-his name Rosa Campos. 5. I am
their-only child 6. name Antonio. 7. Was-left-I orphan. 8. Because
I remember my mother 9. when she got out of the house. 10. She
was dead. 11. With two aunts-mine 12. Dead they were. 13. Were-
they inside a house 14. when arrived-we with my grandmother.
15. My grandmother is named Marsela Cuevas. 16. Came with us she.
17. Came-we to see the tragedy. 18. Very much we were sad. 19. And
we admired 20. because just had gone-they 21. from our house.
22. Just finished had they saying goodbye 23. said they: 24. Leaving-we

FREE TRANSLATION

I also remember the time when the earthquake came. I am the son of
the man died in the earthquake, Galdino Santiago. His wife's name was Rosa
Campos, my mother. I am their only child. My name is Antonio. I was left
an orphan. I remember my mother when they took her out of the fallen house;
she was dead. Along with two of my aunts she died. They were in a house
when we came, my grandmother and myself. Her name was Marsela Cuevas.
We saw what had happened and we were really sad of heart. We were
surprized because it seemed they had just left the house. They had just said
goodbye to us saying they were going to visit their folks.

ná'a tubi ratë 25. tën hiagnaa ná'a shmamë ná'a. 26. Pëll de poco tiempë bidë'ë ná'a tomar descansë 27. con abuelitë shna. 28. Iurna quierë rquigaadchi o rquishuunë 29. lë'ë tubi llu ruu bidchiini. 30. Nalëë gubëë. 31. Nalëë ruidë. 32. Be maani ladi guë'dchi 33. be mbeecu 34. be nguú gushtiaa be ma. 35. Iurni pues lë'ë ná'a 36. adë chu ruunë lligaabë 37. saac be më rë' desgraaci. 38. Tse'lë Namadë níí bidë guë'në visë 39. shbacaal ná'a. 40. Cagni'i guëc shmamë ná'a: 41. Na Marsël cagni'i. 42. Gu careeldël. 43. Pëd guunël favor 44. sëël tē guiniaal 45. be shga'nël 46. con Rosë. 46. Guzaac be llë' desgraaci. 47. Pues lë'ë ná'a adë chu gualdíí ldu'í'. 48. Iurni bidchiini ná'a ndëë 49. En cantidá mënë narëë be 50. con be shni. 51. Tristë rloa'a. 52. Nez callu'në ga'a be mënë 53. nez rë' nez rë' nez rë' con be shni.

for awhile 25. to go see our grandmother. 26. For a little time we rested 27. with grandmother-mine. 28. Then about seven or eight o'clock 29. a big earthquake came. 30. Very much it sounded. 31. Much noise. 32. The animals in the village 33. the dogs. 34. the oxen they cried out. 35. Then we 36. no one thought 37. would happen anything to them. 38. Husband of Namada he arrived with word 39. to our house. 40. Said-he to our grandmother: 41. I, Marsela am speaking. 42. Are you home? 43. Do the favor 44. go see 45. your son 46. with Rose. 46. Suffered they a tragedy. 47. Well we did not believe it. 48. Then we arrived there 49. Very many people were there 50. with lights. 51. It appeared very sad. 52. Were running the people 53. here and there with lights. 54. But now

We were resting about seven or eight o'clock when this earthquake came. It made a lot of noise. The animals in the village, dogs and bulls, began barking and bellowing. Why we never thought anything would happen to our loved ones!

Then the husband of a woman named Namada came to our house with these words. "I am Marcela who is talking. Are you home? I wonder if you will do the favor of going to see your son along with Rose who have both been injured.

54. Perë hiá shnia'ahiá hiá ni tubi d'i'dzë 55. adë ruuni'
respondë. 56. Nietiquë shuuziá Galdino 57. nia'a naá
nabaani'. 58. Naeridë guc guëai'. 59. Guc despedasar
be guëai'. 60. Pos bia'a ldu'i' sto'pë momentë 61. como
cosë de rquitubi parë rquichop 62. iur gue'lë 63. iurni
guuti'. 64. Hiá guc bei' tapë cadaver 65. naga'a bei'.
66. Pos níi guc desgraaci 67. tiempë dzanii. 68. Tapë
tagúl biriu'u tubsë lugar. 69. Nalëë grëti' be më guë'dchi
70. rbiini ldu'u bei' 72. nu ridzëëbë bei'. 73. Ndëë naa
tubi histori 74. narëagnaa ldo'a tiempë nabiidë llü.
75. Iurna biga'chi bei' pantión. 76. Pues biga'chi bei'
juntë la'ni tubi ba'a. 77. Tubi cugaa guleezë cadë tubi'.
78. Níi despedidë shtë desgraaci naguc.

mother-mine not one word 55. did-she say. 56. Only father-mine
Galdino 57. still was living-he. 58. Injured were his feet. 59. Were
mashed and crushed his legs. 60. Lasted-he awhile 61. about one or
one thirty 62. in the morning 63. then died-he. 64. So there were
four dead bodies 65. lying they were. 66. Well that way happened
the tragedy 67. time back then. 68. Four dead came out of one place.
69. Very much all the people of the village 70. cried 72. and feared-they.
73. This is a history 74. I remember time when-came earthquake.
75. When were-buried they in graveyard 76. well were buried they
together in one grave. 77. One little spot rested each one of them.
78. That is end of the tragedy which-occurred.

Well we didn't want to believe it. But when we arrived there, there were
very many people gathered. Some had lanterns and it was very sad. They were
running about here and there.

My mother could say nothing; she was dead. Only my father, Galdino,
was alive. His legs were crushed. He lived for awhile, perhaps until two o'clock
or so in the morning and then he died. So there were four dead people! All
were taken out of the same place. All of the village folk were so sad, even
alarmed.

That's what happened, the way I remember it. When they were buried in
the graveyard they were put into a common grave. Each one occupied a small
place, one beside the other. That is the end of the tragedy which happened.

TEXT III

by Julia Alonzo

1. Gue'lë rquishuunë 2. raac llu'u ta'a be llguë'në.
 3. Badzëu núu ná'a be llguë'në 4. raac du'u rumëdi.
 5. Garrëesë reepi më 6. Llu ndë'ë ribëë. 7. Gunaa 8. Zi-
 quë ribëë trën 9. candë ribëë 10. ruidi ruú shtë llu
 ze'dë. 11. Zuu hiaaguë tëchi puertë. 12. Ndigaa bë'në
 më. 13. Baseebi më patadë tëchi tranc 14. parë gulaaguë.
 15. Apënë Dios, 16. baru'u ná'a naniu'u. 17. Lë'ë ná'a
 baru'u ná'a naniu'u scanii. 18. Gulaaguë gutsë be dzanë
 19. gutsë completë. 20. Guc destruir be iu'u. 21. Lë'ë
 stubi iu'u guëa' tubi hiaaguë limii. 22. Con lu lu' nadzu

INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION

1. Night seven o'clock 2. were sick the children. 3. Inside with
 the children we were 4. treating them. 5. "Fast" said he 6. Earth-
 quake it it sounds. 7. Look 8. As sounds train 9. That way it
 sounds 10. Noise big of the earthquake comes. 11. There was a wood
 brace behind the door. 12. Just this he did. 13. Gave he a kick the
 board 14. so it would fall. 15. Just barely God 16. we got out of the
 house. 17. We got out of-we the house that way. 18. Fell broken up
 the saints 19. broken completely. 20. Were destroyed the houses
 21. Another house at the foot of lemon tree 22. by the wall were-we

FREE TRANSLATION

One night about seven o'clock the children were sick. We were with them
 treating their sickness. "Quick!" he said, "There is a sound of an earthquake."
 Exactly as a train rumbles that way it sounded. There was a great big noise
 as the earthquake came. There was a pole brace behind the door holding it
 shut. The man went like this; he gave it a kick so it would fall down. Just
 barely we got out of the house before it fell. The saints all fell broken in
 bits. Houses were destroyed. Another house stood near the lemon tree and
 near the wall. Just then the tree scraped our heads. Another kitchen house fell like
 this. Even the clods of broken adobe fell at our feet. Alive we stood among
 the ruins!

ná'a scandë'ë. 23. Ndigaa guëc ná'a billa' tubi hiaaguë limii. 24. Lë'ë stubi hiu'u guziini gurëë scandë'ë. 25. Hashta guëa ná'a gurëë billu. 26. Vivë lë'ësë ná'a nadzu ná'a ladi billu. 27. Gurëë iu'u tëchi rë'ë. 28. Guuti tsonë mënë 29. tubi llë' lë Galdino. 30. Tsonë llë' guuti liidchi Rubén. 31. Bë'në llu 32. bida'dchi be llë'. 33. Nia-tiquëtubi me'dë nii 34. adë guuti. 35. Ndëtiqüë bëa'në lu guëa' shnia'i'. 36. Zuubë ga'a ichi guiichí 37. tubi guiichí ruú. 38. Ndë bëa'në llë' roa ldu'u shnia'a llë'. 39. Iur guuti shnia'a llë, 40. Gulaaguë be cosë pesadë iu'u nii 41. nietiquë lë'ë llë' bëa'në llë'. 42. Baru'u llë' la'ni iu'u nii. 43. Lë'ë llë' nabaani iurne 44. mitë'ë llë' 45. Baru'u llë' la'ni be cosë duúsh níí. 46. Baru'u llë'. 47. Dzanë batsë'a Julian Calvillë 48. dzanii biidë në 49. gati gati riidë në 50. Guzuu në mas tu quartë iur. 50. Lëd du'u ziquë riidë du'u llu'i ne'. 51. Perë pë

like this 23. Here our heads scraped a lemon tree. 24. Another house kitchen fell like this. 25. To our feet fell the pieces. 26. Living just-we were-we among the rubble. 27. Fell a house back there. 28. died three people 29. one was named Galdino. 30. three of them died in Rueben's house. 31. Did the earthquake 32. buried they were. 33. Only a baby 34. did not die. 35. There-just he remained at feet of his mother. 36. There was a grinding stone 37. a big stone. 38. There he was near the heart of his mother. 39. When died his mother 40. fell the heavy things on that house 41. Only he survived. 42. Got out he from that house 43. he was living then 44. little-he 45. He got out among the heavy things. 46. He got out. 47. The time married Julian Calvillo 48. then it came 49. every little while it came 50. It lasted more than a quarter of an hour. 50. Not light like come

There fell another house behind us in which died three people. One was named Galdino. Three died in Ruben's house. They were covered up by the ruins. Only one baby escaped. He was found at the feet of his mother. There was a big grinding stone there where the baby was next to his mother. When his mother died from the heavy things that fell on her the baby was saved and came out alive. He was just a tiny baby then, yet he came out alive from under the heavy rubble.

guuná. 52. Gushtiahiá. 53. Guëedchá ienisë ndëë
 54. Guëedchá me'dë ndëë. 55. Hashta quëë du'u ldoa'a
 56. Shni naquëë naniu'u. 57. Iurni rdchiini núu be mënë
 shni. 58. Juli Juli, guaa të. 59. Lë'ë ná'a ndëë 60. rni'i
 ná'a lu mënë. 61. Iurni lë'ë be shtiu ná'a 62. lë'ë be
 vicini bidchiini 63. parë nia'a guaa ná'a. 64. Ni tubi
 ná'a adë guuti ná'a. 65. Ni tubi ná'a adë bida'dchi ná'a.
 66. Perë barëeti' iu'u 67. Gulaaguë ta'a 68. Barëeti'
 iu'u gulaaguë. 69. Ni tubi iu'u adë bëa'në. 70. Centavë
 grëti' mër balaabë më dumíi. 71. parë gua'a më parë
 lula'. 72. Naquëë tu cajonë cula'ni iu'u 73. gulaaguë
 basu'u nez 74. grëгаа centavë zia'a. 75. Niatiquë barrili
 hashta bëaac nguutë barrili 76. badzeel 77. Barrili'

light earthquakes now. 51. But what could I do? 52. I yelled. 53. I
 was carrying that one 54. I was carrying that baby. 55. Then were
 coming people with lights. 58. "Julia, Julia, where have you gone?
 59. We are here 60. we answered the people. 61. Then our uncles
 62. our neighbors came 63. to see where we were. 64. Not one of us
 died. 65. Not one of us were covered up. 66. But was completely
 destroyed the house 67. it fell 68. The house was destroyed it fell.
 69. Not one house was left standing 70. Money all of it he had just
 counted it 71. in order to go to Oaxaca. 72. There was a big box
 inside the house 73. Adobes fell in the street 74. All the money went.
 75. Only a small barrel well smashed was 76. found. 77. The barrel

All this happened at the time Julián Calvillo married. The earth quaked
 every few minutes and lasted over a quarter of an hour. It wasn't like the
 little quakes we have now; it was really strong!

What did I do, you ask? I screamed! I was carrying this baby around my
 neck and when the earthquake came my heart nearly stopped beating! Light
 shone inside the house. Then the people began arriving. "Julia, Julia, where
 are you?", they called out. "We are here," we replied.

Then our uncles and neighbors arrived to see where we were. But none
 of us suffered harm in any way. But the house was completely gone; it had
 all fallen down. In fact, no house was left standing!

Then there was some money we lost. The man here had counted it
 because he was about to make a trip into the city of Oaxaca. It was in a box

badzeel hashta despēs. 78. Perē dumii adē badzeel
79. Como shni ruú noa'a be llē'. 80. Noa'a be llē' grēaguē
81. Noa'a be llē' shni parafinē. 82. Nia'a guaa ná'a.
83. Lē'ëquē ná'a badzeel 84. Ni tubi ná'a adē guuti ná'a.

was found afterwards. 78. But the money was never found 79. As
big lights they carried. 80. Carried they torches 81. Carried they
lights candles. 82. To see where we had gone. 83. We were found
84. Not one of us died.

but when the wall fell into the street the box did too. Only a small barrel was
found and it was mashed up. None of the money was ever recovered as the
people all had lights and they must have taken it. Well, we were saved; not
one of us died!