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VERBAL ART AND PERFORMANCE IN CH'ORTI' AND  
MAYA HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING

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**Verbal Art and Performance in Ch'orti' and  
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by

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents, Vanetta Marie Hull and Milo Lamar Hull whose love and support I have never questioned.

To my children, who are the light of my life. They inspire me at every step.

And to my wife, whose unfailing love and patience enabled me to accomplish this goal. Therefore, I especially dedicate this work to my loving wife.

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## **Verbal Art and Performance in Ch'orti' and Maya Hieroglyphic Writing**

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This dissertation project set out to accomplish five primary goals: 1) to document oral narratives and ritual speech, in actual performance whenever possible, 2) to establish genre types in Ch'orti' oral narratives to gain an understanding of the structuring methods and poetic imagery associated with each, 3) to ascertain the features and use of poetic discourse in ritual contexts, 4) to carry out a large-scale study on the verbal art of the Maya hieroglyphs to determine the function of rhetorical devices within this system, and 5) to do a comparative analysis of Ch'orti' and hieroglyphic poetics in order to see if residual elements—be they linguistic, poetic, or cultural—could be of use to scholars in understanding certain aspects of the hieroglyphic script. This final stage of the project synthesizes all the data collected from Ch'orti' and that found in the hieroglyphic texts in order to draw comparisons between their poetic form and content. The overall purpose of this research is to advance our understanding of Ch'orti' narrative genres, oral narrative

poetic usage, hieroglyphic verbal art, and the relationship at the level of poetic discourse between Ch'orti' and the hieroglyphic inscriptions. I also investigate specific issues regarding the sociocultural context of poetics in the Classic period in terms of the notion of recitation literacy. I not only argue that many hieroglyphic inscriptions were performed orally, but also that this performance could have entailed poetic elaboration whose realization depended on the individual circumstances of the occasion. The poetics features built into many hieroglyphic texts are shown to be opportune moments of strategic emphasis in most cases. At times, however, there are certain texts whose poetic content is so dense as to suggest works of "literature" for the ancient Maya. At this stage in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing I argue that it is in the arena of poetics and performance that we can more fully grasp and comprehend the indexical semantics of glyphic texts.

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# Introduction

## 0.1. Research Objective

This dissertation project set out to accomplish five primary goals: 1) to document Ch'orti' oral narratives and ritual speech, in actual performance whenever possible, 2) to establish genre types in Ch'orti' oral narratives in order to gain an understanding of the structuring methods and poetic imagery associated with each, 3) to ascertain the features and use of poetic discourse in ritual contexts, 4) to carry out a large-scale study on the verbal art of Maya hieroglyphic writing in order to determine the function of rhetorical devices within this system, and 5) to do a comparative analysis of Ch'orti' and hieroglyphic poetics in order to see if residual elements in Ch'orti' poetic discourse—be they linguistic, poetic, or cultural—could aid in our understanding of certain aspects of the hieroglyphic script. This final stage of the project synthesizes all the data collected from Ch'orti' and that found in the hieroglyphic texts in order to draw comparisons between their poetic form and content. The overall purpose of this research is to advance our understanding of Ch'orti' narrative genres, oral narrative poetic usage, hieroglyphic verbal art, and the relationship at the level of poetic discourse between Ch'orti' and the hieroglyphic inscriptions.

## 0.2. The Ch'orti' Maya

The Ch'orti' Maya live in and around the Department of Chiquimula in southeastern Guatemala (figure 1). The term *Ch'orti'* is commonly etymologized as

deriving from *chor*, 'milpa' (field), and *ti'*, 'mouth' meaning 'the language of the *milperos*'. This interpretation fails to account for the missing glottalization of the /ch/ in *chor*, 'milpa' (which should have the shape of *ch'or*). Wichmann (1999) attributes this to a possible case of hypercorrection. I believe, however, that this folk etymology is better abandoned in favor of *ch'or*, 'windpipe' or 'larynx' and *ti'*, 'mouth' for 'larynx' and 'mouth'—where language is mechanically produced.

The Ch'orti' language belongs to the Eastern branch of the Ch'olan language family. Ch'olti', the other member of Eastern branch of Ch'olan, is today extinct. In the Department of Chiquimula, Ch'orti' is spoken in and around Jocotán, Quetzaltepeque, and a few speakers in Olopa. There are also some speakers in La Unión in the Department of Zacapa (although probably less than 100). General estimates as to the Ch'orti' population vary significantly from source to source. For example, the most commonly quoted population estimate today usually places the number around 52,000 (see Cojti 1992). In 1990, however, the Summer Institute of Linguistics estimated the total Ch'orti' population in Guatemala and Honduras as 31,500 (SIL website at <<http://www.ethnologue.com>>). Fought estimates the number of Ch'orti' in the Chiquimula area at 20,000 (1967:1). López de Rosa quotes statistics from the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (INE) that posit a total of 107,948 *persons* (both indigenous and non-indigenous) in Jocotán, Olopa, Camotán, and La Unión (2001:8). According to statistics from the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (INE), the population in the Ch'orti' area is 28,011, 80.06% of which are indigenous Ch'orti' and 17.28% were non-indigenous (with 2.66% unidentified) (cited in López de Rosa 2001; López de Rosa, personal

communication, 2003). In yet another census conducted by the *Centro de Salud de Jocotán* at the beginning of 2001, the population figure of 39,959 was given, of whom 92% lived in rural areas and 8% in urban zones. Finally, in 2001, the group *Acción Contra el Hambre* placed the number of Ch'orti' in the *municipio* of Chiquimula at 41,532 (López de Rosa, personal communication, 2003). While there is considerable variation in these numbers, it is important to note that in each case they refer not to the number of *speakers* of Ch'orti', but rather to ethnic Ch'orti'. Based on my research on this topic in the field, together with discussions with other researchers among the Ch'orti', I would conservatively estimate the number of Ch'orti' speakers to be between 12,000 and 15,000. While aware of another recent census taken in 2002 placing the number of Ch'orti' speakers at 11,734, López de Rosa, based on data personally gathered in most Ch'orti' communities, approximates the number of speakers at 20,000 (personal communication, 2003).

In addition to the Ch'orti' of Guatemala, there is also a modest Ch'orti' population, somewhere between 4,200 and 7,000 inhabitants (depending on the source of one's data), in northern Honduras near the city of Copan Ruinas (Flores 1997:3; Rivas 1993:213). Except for a handful of elderly individuals, the Ch'orti' in Honduras do not speak Ch'orti'. Recent efforts by *Consejo Nacional Indígena Maya-Chortí de Honduras* (CONIMCHH), however, are making progress in teaching and promoting the Ch'orti' language again in Honduras.

The daily life of the Ch'orti' of southeastern Guatemala is largely based on agriculture, craft production, and mercantilism, or often a combination of these (Dary et

al. 1998; Metz 1998:332). The staples of the Ch'orti' diet, which are reflected in their agricultural crops, are corn, various types of beans, *maicillo*, squash, sugar cane, and a wide variety of fruits such as mangos, bananas, oranges, guavas, *jocotes*, *nances*, avocados, and others. Coffee is widely grown today in the higher elevations. Rice, while consumed regularly by many Ch'orti', is usually purchased instead of cultivated. The Ch'orti' also raise a number of domesticated animals, such as chickens, turkeys, pigs, and, when possible, cows. Land is precious and owned by only a small percentage of the Ch'orti'. In most cases, the larger tracks of arable land necessary to sustain a standardized *milpa* (cornfield) are held by wealthy ladino (non-Ch'orti') landowners. The Ch'orti' farmer "rents" a plot of land from the landowner in return for which he must give a percentage or, more commonly, a set amount of the yearly yield, regardless of the actual production.

The Ch'orti' have been proselytized in various degrees since the first half of the sixteenth century. In the year 1524, the first Spanish expedition arrived in Chiquimula (Torres Moss 1996:18). The Ch'orti' wasted no time in revolting against the Spanish incursion into the Ch'orti' area in 1529 and 1530. This set the stage for an "ineffectual relationship" between the Spanish clergy and the Ch'orti' that allowed Ch'orti' religious practice to continue without significant opposition (Brewer 2002:1-2; Metz 1995:326-327). The Catholic Church has been able to establish a considerable foothold in most Ch'orti' communities today. More recently, Evangelical Protestant groups have spread throughout the Ch'orti' area. They have a significant following today that strongly opposes traditional Ch'orti' religious practices of any kind. The hybridization that has

occurred throughout Ch'orti' communities has created strong ideological divisions as separate religious groups have demonstrated different levels of tolerance for traditional Ch'orti' religious rites. As will be borne out in this study, it is precisely in this volatile environment of conflicting ideologies that poetic discourse has suffered near irreparable damage among the Ch'orti'.

### **0.3. Research Methodology and Stage One of Project: Ch'orti' Poetics**

In order to carry out a study of Ch'orti' verbal art, it was first necessary to collect a significant amount of data through field research that could be used as the basis of this analysis. This included the documentation to the fullest degree possible of the extant occurrences of the rapidly-disappearing poetic discourse still found in Ch'orti' Maya formal speech. For this reason, this study was sharply focused on the documentation of Ch'orti' oral narratives and ritual prayers. This process included recording, transcribing, and textual translation, followed by a detailed analysis of the texts. This effort was in large part motivated by the fact that formal speech forms are quickly dying out in Ch'orti' society today. The younger generation has largely abandoned the use of poetic discourse in step with a serious decline in ceremonial practices—the very contexts in which poetics flourish. Only certain elders in each hamlet where Ch'orti' is still spoken seem to have fragmented knowledge of ancient prayers and healing rites that contain the some of the last vestiges of past poetic styles. In the last forty years, all types of traditional ceremonies, healings, and non-Christian prayers have been highly devalued and, in fact, are sometimes practiced at the peril of their lives. I am fearful that the state of all that is

related to traditional ritual among the Ch'orti' is dangerously close to disappearing. In this volatile environment, the poetic styles of past generations will certainly not survive to the next. For this reason, documentation of these ritual discourse forms was of chief importance to my work.

Due to a dearth in published ceremonial texts in Ch'orti', I placed additional emphasis on gathering ritual texts. My primary sources for ritual texts came from traditional healing ceremonies. Once assembled, these texts then served as the basis for detailed discussions with the narrator and other healers about their poetic forms, metaphors, and concepts related to healing. This turned out to be a boon for my studies of Ch'orti' poetic discourse in that these texts were composed almost completely in a richly poetic style. Ch'orti' ritual texts are replete with archaisms at the grammatical, lexical, and mythological level. In this regard, this body of data is also invaluable for further research on the Ch'orti' understanding of Otherworld conceptions, cause and effect in the realm of sickness and cures, and a myriad of related topics. The dominant use of poetic language in traditional ceremonies assures the presence of these archaic referents and highly metaphorical expressions that may not appear outside of these ritual contexts. Poetic structuring aids in the preservation of fossilized relationships between concepts through couplets and other devices. Ch'orti' poetic forms of speech are themselves a windfall for decoding the complex mythology and metaphors underlying Ch'orti' ritual discourse. My purposes in regards to this study were certainly geared towards preserving these important cultural gems for the Ch'orti' people as well as interested outside scholars.

Determining genre types in Ch'orti' oral narratives was another crucial facet of my research. I wanted to know if certain genres used specific forms of poetic discourse, and if they differed, why so? Fortunately for this research project, several books have been published in the last five years by the Ch'orti' that contain a substantial number of oral narratives. The available written material on Ch'orti' formal and informal forms of discourse is limited to selections from Fought's (1972) book of Ch'orti' texts, a short compilation of Ch'orti' legends by the PLFM (*Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín*) (Martínez 1996), and two recently published works by the *Academia de las Lenguas Maya de Guatemala* titled *Concurso Literario Idioma Ch'orti'* (Tohom Gutierrez 1999) and *Utwachir e Ojroner Ch'orti': Tradición Oral Ch'orti'* (Ramírez 2001). Regrettably, the important work done by Girard (1949) and Wisdom (1940) in describing ceremonial practices is severely handicapped by the absence of Ch'orti' transcriptions of the ritual speech associated with each rite. Therefore, I used a few texts from their data, albeit only in translation (as this is the only form in which they published them). Over the course of my field research, I was able to collect and transcribe over 80 oral narratives representing multiple genres types. Together with all of the texts just mentioned, these oral narratives formed the data set on which I based my analysis of genres and poetic features.

Field research was carried out in and around the *municipio* of Jocotán, Guatemala. Much of my data was gathered in the hamlets surrounding Jocotán such as Escobillal, Amatillo, Las Lomas, Las Lajas, Guareruche, Quebrada Seca, Las Flores, Oken, Queztalepeque, Suchiquer Arriba, Suchiquer Abajo, Pelillo Negro, Kanapará Arriba,

Pakrén, and Titikopote. I spent a total of 15 months in the field from 1999 to 2002. I was based in Jocotán for the majority of that time, except for a few weeks when I lived in the hamlet of Escobillal. Through participant observation, I studied and recorded through audio and video media the various ceremonies still practiced, often clandestinely, by those of the older generation. I focused primarily on recording healing ceremonies since they preserve some of the best examples of poetic style and traditional beliefs, and they were the most available source of information. Special attention was paid to documenting every detail of each ceremony in order to properly contextualize their performance. In other cases, Ch'orti' healers would provide me examples or 'simulations' of healing ceremonies outside of real contexts. While stripped of a certain amount of ethnographic data, these sessions still proved invaluable in my efforts to document as many varieties of healing incantations as possible. Certain healers, however, were simply unable or unwilling to give me 'example' healing prayers for several reasons. First and foremost, these are sacred and efficacious chants for the Ch'orti', and therefore reserved for their intended social contexts. Also, healers often rely on a divination technique known as *zajorín* or *k'in*, ('divination of the calf') in which they ask their *sabio*, or "wise one," to tell them the nature of the illness and its cause. In artificial situations, they will not normally feel comfortable calling upon their *sabio* since there is no actual illness to cure. Surprisingly, however, quite a few healers did give me numerous examples of healing prayers in an interview context, even some where they employed the *k'in* divination. They often became highly involved in the prayer to the point that their incantations were nearly indistinguishable from actual healing prayers. These prayers

were beautifully constructed in highly poetic fashion, and, when compared to texts from healing rites I had attended and recorded, they had a remarkable similarity and continuity. In terms of structural content, a significant amount of information was not lost despite the "artificialness" of the situation. The social constraints associated with my participation in actual healing ceremonies severely limited my access to this pure font of information. Fortunately, however, I was able to attend eight separate healing ceremonies over the course of my fieldwork. These experiences provided a considerable amount of ethnographic and linguistic data. In total, I was able to record over 40 individual healing prayers for a wide variety of illnesses that comprise the majority of the data I used in my analysis of ritual poetics among the Ch'orti'.

In terms of the mechanics of data processing, most of the Ch'orti' texts I collected were transcribed and translated into Spanish with the help of native speaking consultants in the field. Each text then served as the basis of discussion with multiple individuals in each community in order to flesh out the metaphorical and historical referents in each. This process was also useful in determining dialectal variations by having speakers from different areas review each text and comment on content as well as lexical or grammatical differences they observed in each text.

My fieldwork also relied heavily on personal interviews. I conducted interviews in more than twenty different hamlets where Ch'orti' is spoken today in order to document forms of formal speech that are known but not actively used in conjunction with ritual. I engaged in collaborative ethnopoetics (cf. McDowell 2000), fully involving a variety of native speakers in order to illuminate opaque and archaic referents in the

formalized ritual speech, and I then contextualize them through detailed accounts of the rituals in which they occur. As with healing rites, other rituals such as the *Limosna*, or "Promise" ceremony done in the farmer's field each April are rarely practiced today. Participation in such ceremonies was rendered all but impossible. It was often difficult enough to find people who even *knew* the prayers associated with this ceremony, and then more difficult still to find someone willing to talk about it (I describe this in more detail in Chapter 1). Interviewing those few who knew and would discuss it was the principal means at my disposal to elicit what I could about such ritual texts. I was able to record two field ceremony prayers in Ch'orti' and one in Spanish. Interviews were also key in teasing out the meanings of many of the ceremonial texts. Archaisms abound that even the Ch'orti' healers themselves often could not explain. Through interviews with over 50 different Ch'orti' speakers, I was able to gather a significant amount of data on Ch'orti' conceptions of poetry, narratives, issues regarding Ch'orti' linguistics, eschatology, ritual, and many other aspects of the Ch'orti' *na'tanwa'r*, or "understanding."

#### **0.4. Stage Two: Hieroglyphs and Poetics**

The next stage of this project was an analysis of the poetic features of the Maya hieroglyphic script. I have done a significant amount of research on glyphic poetics in the past that proved useful in this large-scale study. In my Master's thesis at Georgetown University, titled "*Poetic Discourse in Mayan Languages and in the Hieroglyphic Script*," I focused on a set of poetic devices common to many Mayan languages and looked for similar usages in the inscriptions. In the present study, however, I have

decided to focus on Ch'orti' as my principal source of data for a comparative analysis due to the close linguistic relationship between Ch'orti' and the majority of the hieroglyphic inscriptions (described in detail below). Using my personal collection of drawings and photos of hieroglyphic texts along with all other available resources, which comprise the majority of the known corpus, I set out to ascertain the form and function of poetic features from the earliest inscriptions through the Post-Classic codices. Much of this analysis was carried out by means of a thorough examination of all texts against a pre-prepared list of poetic devices (e.g. couplets, triplets, quatrains, polystylistic phrases, chiasmus, metaphor, *difrasismos*, etc.) to determine their presence or absence in the hieroglyphic texts. In addition, I placed considerable importance on remaining vigilant for new or unexpected poetic features I observed in the inscriptions.

One of the primary aims of a poetic analysis of Maya hieroglyphic texts was to evaluate each use of a poetic form on a contextual level in order to try to discover the purpose and motivation for its occurrence. Locating specific rhetorical devices in their pragmatic context was an important aspect of this study. I also explored each poetic feature's narrative function within the text. For example, couplets were analyzed in terms of identical, synonymous, associative, augmentative, antithetical (and other) forms of parallelism. The functional application of each parallelism was examined in terms of episode peak or climax, rhetorical value, topicalization or highlighting, devaluation through deletion, contrastive emphasis, and embedding.

### **0.5. Stage Three: Comparative Analysis of Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphs**

The final stage of this research was to undertake a comparative analysis of Ch'orti' verbal art and the poetic discourse structures of Maya hieroglyphic writing. The aim of this portion of the research was to use the results from the poetic analysis of Ch'orti' texts as a comparative template for understanding certain aspects of hieroglyphic poetics (and vice versa). I examined the occurrences of couplets, triplets, quatrains, chiasmus, discourse organizing markers, and other poetic devices in Ch'orti' formal speech. I then compared them in form and content to the poetic features of the hieroglyphic inscriptions. I specifically looked for evidence within rituals contexts where poetic discourse most often occurs in order to discover continuities in practice and beliefs between the Classic Maya and the present-day Ch'orti'. Current research has shown that Ch'orti' closely reflects the language of the Maya inscriptions grammatically, phonologically, and lexically (Houston et al. 2000). The rationale for this phase of my research was based on the assumption that the intimate relationship between Ch'orti' and the language comprising most of the hieroglyphic texts anticipates the presence of shared poetic features and metaphorical imagery as well. I also investigated possible connections between metaphoric and idiomatic expressions in these two languages. Some metaphors emerged from ritual and poetic contexts, while others appeared in everyday forms of narrative speech. In addition, I looked for corroborating Ch'orti' data outside of the linguistic realm that could be used to understand iconographic features of ancient Maya art forms. My research excluded grammatical and phonological relations between Ch'orti' and the inscriptions for two reasons. First, these linguistic features have been

adequately discussed by Houston et al. (2000) and other researchers. Second, this study principally concerns parallels gleaned from issues relating to *poetic* discourse (although other types of parallels are included if they have not been discussed by other researchers). It is hoped that the information contained in Chapters 4 and 5 will be of use to epigraphers and specialists of other disciplines to shed light on certain aspects of Classic Maya culture and language.

#### **0.6. The Historical Relationship of Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan**

The Ch'orti' Maya language has been the subject of increased interest over the past few years due to its recently determined connection to the language underlying Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions (Lacadena 1996; Stuart et al. 1999b; Houston et al. 2000; Lacadena and Wichmann 2000; Wichmann 2002). This research has provided good evidence that the language employed in the majority of the hieroglyphic inscriptions was part of the Eastern Ch'olan branch (of which Ch'orti' is a member). Furthermore, Ch'orti' has taken center stage in epigraphic studies as the only Eastern Ch'olan language in existence today. The close linguistic connection between Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan (the term I will employ throughout this study referring to the language underlying the hieroglyphic inscriptions, following Lacadena and Wichmann 2000; Wichmann 2002) provided the impetus for a closer analysis of these questions concerning possible shared poetic structures and cultural conceptions.

Ch'orti' is one of some 29 different Maya languages spoken by millions of people throughout the Maya region that have descended from a common source, traditionally

called proto-Mayan. Briefly, according to Kaufman and Norman, proto-Mayan split into five major subgroups: Wastekan, Yukatecan, Greater Tzeltalan, Greater Q'anjob'alan, and Eastern Maya (1984:78). Around 2000 B.C., the first dialects from proto-Mayan began to break off (Dahlin et al 1987:371; see Mora-Marín 2001 for a detailed summary of these processes). The diffusion of lexical items into the Lowland Maya languages can be traced to four primary sources: Zapotecan, Mije-Zokean, Nahua, and Totoncan (Justeson et al. 1985:21). Research by Campbell and Kaufman (1976), Kaufman (1976), Stross (1982), and Justeson et al. (1985) has shown the clear impact Mije-Zokean has had on Maya languages in general and the portions of the hieroglyphic script.

Most researchers in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s believed that the hieroglyphic script was based on Ch'olan-Tzeltalan and Yukatecan languages (Justeson 1985:28; Josserand 1986:12; Dahlin et al. 1987:377; Kaufman and Norman 1984:77; Bricker 1986:18-9). In the late 1990s, Stuart, Houston, and Robertson proposed a new paradigm that went against many of the prevailing lines of thought (Stuart et al. 1999b; Houston et al. 2000). Traditionally, Ch'olan was believed to have split into two branches—Western and Eastern Ch'olan. From there, Western Ch'olan further divided into Ch'ol and Chontal, while Eastern Ch'olan split into Ch'olti' (now extinct) and Ch'orti'. In Houston et al.'s paradigm, "Ch'olti'an" (their term for the pre-script language) split off from Ch'olan. From Ch'olti'an came the language of the Classic period inscriptions, which they label as "Classic Mayan." According to their model, "Classic Mayan" was the ancestor language of Ch'olti' and Ch'orti' (Stuart et al. 1999b; Houston et al. 2000). Under this new proposal, Ch'orti' arises as the most direct surviving descendent of Classic

Mayan through Ch'olti'. In their seminal study "*The Language of the Classic Maya Inscriptions*," Houston, Robertson, and Stuart (2000) used lexical, grammatical, and phonological evidence to show an Eastern Ch'olan affiliation to "Classic Mayan" (from here on I will now refer to this only as Hieroglyphic Ch'olan). I will briefly summarize a few key points from their argument here. While recognizing the limited significance of lexical items in trying to determine genetic language relationships (due to the complications arising from historical borrowings and inadequate modern dictionaries), the authors present important data on Ch'olan lexical items in north-central Yucatan texts. Ch'olan terms such as **ti-i**, *ti'*, "mouth, doorway, edge" (Chichen Itza Las Monjas, Lintel 4, E1), **yo-to-ti**, *yotoot* for "his house" (Chichen Itza Temple of the Four Lintels, Lintel 2, F1), and **t'a-b'a-yi**, *t'ab'aay* for "it ascends" (Ikil Lintel 1, B1) appear at these north-central Yucatan sites where Yukatek is spoken today (figure 2). The Yukatekan equivalents to the first two of these would be *chi'* and *yotoch*. Houston et al. rightly move quickly to the much firmer ground of phonology. Due to certain historical sound changes from proto-Mayan as different language branches and individual languages began to break off, through historical linguistics we can ascertain chronologically with a fairly high degree of certainty which languages contained which phonemes. Phonological evidence, therefore, is considerably more accurate than relying on strictly lexical data in determining language affiliation. The authors list the following terms that show distinctive Ch'olan phonology in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan (adapted from Houston et al. 2000:327-328, their orthography retained):

### Glyphic/Ch'olan

<u>phonology</u>	<u>meaning</u>	<u>Yukatekan equivalent</u>
<i>ak'ta</i>	'dance'	<i>ok'ot</i>
<i>b'ih</i>	'road, path'	<i>b'eh</i>
<i>chih</i>	'pulque'	<i>ki[h]</i>
<i>chih</i>	'deer'	<i>keeh</i>
<i>chikin</i>	'ear'	<i>xikin</i>
<i>ch'am</i>	'take, grasp'	<i>k'am</i>
<i>nich</i>	'flower blossom'	<i>nik</i>
<i>och</i>	'enter'	<i>ok</i>
<i>paat</i>	'back, behind'	<i>pach</i>
<i>sakun</i>	'elder brother'	<i>sukun</i>
<i>sutz'</i>	'bat'	<i>zotz'</i>
<i>uht</i>	'happen, finish'	<i>uch</i>

Most of these terms are common throughout the ancient Maya area and argue for a Ch'olan-based phonology in place at these sites. There are other examples that reflect Yukatekan forms (as mentioned above), but they are often more restricted in terms of geography and frequency.

The final line of evidence for an Eastern Ch'olan affiliation for Hieroglyphic Ch'olan from Houston et al. (2000) discussed here is glyphic morphology. While positional, transitive, derived passives of CVC forms, derived passive of non-CVC forms, root intransitives, and other verb forms can be shown to reflect Ch'olan morphology, I will limit my discussion to what Houston et. al refer to as *ROOT-V'y* intransitive verbs of motion from Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. These mediopassive verb forms (originally passives) appear commonly in the inscriptions with such verbs as *puluuy* 'got burned', *t'ab'aay* 'ascended', *jub'uuy* 'got downed', and *sataay* 'got destroyed' (figure 3). Among all post-conquest Mayan languages, the only ones that use this suffix are the now-extinct Ch'olti' language and present-day Ch'orti'. The authors keenly observe that this *-V'y* ending is

unique to Eastern Ch'olan languages (2000:332-333; but see Mora-Marín [2001:271] for a few possible forms in Western Ch'olan).<sup>1</sup> The presence of *-V'y* morphology in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan is therefore another strong indicator that the language of the hieroglyphic inscriptions was part of the Eastern Ch'olan subgroup. Houston et al. conclude their arguments with a call for scholars to "concentrate on Ch'orti', the sole living language of Eastern Ch'olan" in order to understand the historical processes from Hieroglyphic Ch'olan (2002:337).

Supporting evidence for a Ch'orti'-related grammar in the hieroglyphs was offered by Lacadena in 1996. Lacadena was able to convincingly show that the passive form of CVC root transitives of the hieroglyphs reflects a bipartite construction found in Ch'orti' today. Recently, Lacadena and Wichmann (2000) have provided persuasive evidence that a Ch'olan language was principally represented in the script in the Early Classic period. Interestingly, however, Lacadena and Wichmann note that in the Late Classic period, influence from the Western Dialect began to bring about changes in the accepted norm of the prestige language. They summarize their important findings as follows:

We have found that while Ch'olan grammar, for instance verbal morphology, such as active, passive, antipassive, and mediopassive markers, is found all over the area, traits from other languages are also found in some of its geographical extremes, i.e, Yucatecan traits in the northern (northwestern and central northern) part of the Yucatan (Lacadena and Wichmann 1999, 2000; Lacadena 2000), and Tzeltalan (possible Tzeltal) at sites along the western frontier of the southern Classic Maya area (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002). Furthermore, we have found

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<sup>1</sup> Mora-Marín cites data from Ch'ol (Schuman 1973:26) of two possible instances of *-V'y* morphology (2001:271). The first is *wäy-äy-on* (sleep-CMP-1sABS), '*ya dormi'* (I have already slept). The second possible case is *yajl-ij-on* (fall-CMP-1sABS), '*me ca'* (I fell down). These two isolated instances, however, while tantalizing, are ultimately inconclusive in determining whether Ch'ol once had a productive *-V'y* mediopassive suffix.

a number of emerging Eastern vs. Western Ch'olan dialect differences to be reflected in the inscriptions, especially in the Late Classic period (Lacadena and Wichmann 2000:28; see also Mora-Marín 2001).

The linguistic picture, while complex, is quite consistent in many ways. Furthermore, it is significant that Wald (1994) and Lacadena (1997) have also shown conclusively that the Maya codices, often assumed to be strictly Yucatekan, clearly display distinctive Ch'olan forms mixed with other Yucatekan elements (cf. Bricker 2000).

The question of line of descent is at the heart of the debate of which language is most closely related to the language of the hieroglyphic inscriptions. Certain aspects of the recent model of Houston, Stuart, and Robertson explained above have also been challenged by some persuasive arguments by Wichmann (2002). In his article titled "*Hieroglyphic Evidence for the Historical Configuration of Eastern Ch'olan*," Wichmann presents several crucial lines of evidence that would suggest Ch'olti' is *not* the direct ancestor of Ch'orti' as Houston et al. aver. Wichmann points to the preverbal negative future marker *mix* in Ch'orti', which, according to Robertson, derives from the morphemes *mi + x*, the *x* being a reflex of the Ch'olti' future marker. Robertson has suggested that "Ch'olti' *š* is ancestral to Ch'orti' *š*" (Robertson 1998:8). Wichmann, however, interprets *mix* as a combination of *ma'* ('no', 'not') and *ix* 'past marker'. Since Ch'olti' has the negative future marker *max* and Ch'orti' *mix*, this, according to Wichmann, is indicative of two different sound change processes: Ch'olti'  $a + i > a$  where as in Ch'orti',  $a + i > i$ . Arguing against ancestry from Ch'olti' to Ch'orti', Wichmann notes: "The existence of two different processes is unlikely if Ch'olti' is a direct ancestor

of Ch'orti', because it would require that in a phase intermediate between the two historical language stages the underlying form of *max* was resolved as consisting of the two elements *ma'* + *ix*, which would then again merge in a new way" (2002:4).

Wichmann next provides evidence from possession markers against a direct line of descent from proto-Ch'olan (Houston et al.'s "Ch'olti'an"), through Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, next to Ch'olti', and finally resulting in modern Ch'orti'. The form of the first-person singular possession marker in the hieroglyphic inscriptions is *ni-*. The earlier proto-Ch'olan morpheme, according to Wichmann, must be either *in-* or *ni-*. The corresponding Ch'olti' form is *in-* whereas in Ch'orti' it is *ni-*. As Wichmann notes, regardless of whether *in-* or *ni-* is the original proto-Ch'olan form, neither option would account for a direct line of descent from Ch'olti' to Ch'orti'. The two sequences of development from proto-Ch'olan, then Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, then Ch'orti' and finally Ch'orti' would be: 1) *\*in - > ni- > in- > ni-*, or 2) *\*ni- > ni- > in- > ni-*. Since neither option can explain the difference between Ch'olti' and Ch'orti' in this regard, this provides further counterevidence against a 'mother-daughter' historical relationship between them.

Wichmann makes another important argument about the relationship between Ch'olti' and the hieroglyphic script in an analysis of the glyphic term *chaahk*, the god of rain, lightning, and thunder (2002:20-23). The hieroglyphic spelling of this term usually appears as **cha-ki** or **CHAK-ki**, both of which indicate the long internal vowel *aa* (Stuart et al. 1999b; Lacadena and Wichmann, in press) (figure 4). Stuart et al. (1999b) and Lacadena and Wichmann (in press) have argued elsewhere that the preconsonantal *h* must be reconstructed in the hieroglyphic script. The proto-form of the word for "lightning,"

according to Kaufman and Norman (1984), is *\*kahoq*. In Ch'olan, the corresponding form was either *\*chahak* or *\*chahwak* (Wichmann 2002:22). Wichmann makes the observation that Ch'olti'an form *chahak*, the Chontal form *chawäk*, and the Yukatekan form *kawak* are all disyllabic. The *k* in the Yukatekan form *kawak* shows that it "must have been borrowed into Yukatekan before the Ch'olan *\*k > ch* change in the specialized function where it refers to the day name in the ritual calendar..." (2002:22). Therefore, the developmental process of this term, following Wichmann, must have gone from *\*kah(wa)ak > cha(h)wak > chahak* (Ch'olti') / *chawäk* (Chontal) > *chaa[h]k* (Hieroglyphic Ch'olan) > *chahk* (Ch'ol and possibly Ch'orti'). Concerning these changes Wichmann writes:

The interesting observation is that the hieroglyphic form has progressed further than the Ch'olti' form. During the time of the hieroglyphic inscriptions, two Ch'olan forms must have existed, both *chaahk* and a form retaining a disyllabic structure later to be continued by Ch'olti'. Also, both of these forms just have belonged to the Eastern Ch'olan dialect complex since both the hieroglyphic form and the Ch'olti' one are found in the east (Wichmann 2002:22).

The term *chaahk*, then, is an innovative form, thereby making Ch'olti' "more conservative than the language of the hieroglyphic script" (2002:23). The important point here is that Ch'olti' does not seem to be the direct ancestor of Ch'orti'. Instead, it would be more productive to think of them in terms of parallel development from Hieroglyphic Ch'olan rather than viewing Ch'olti' as an intermediate step before becoming Ch'orti'.

Despite their differences with respect to interpreting the shape of internal vowels in the hieroglyphic script, Wichmann and Houston, Stuart, and Robertson are in general

agreement on one major point—that Ch'orti' is the closest extant Ch'olan language to the language of the hieroglyphic script. Wichmann has recently provided further powerful arguments in favor of this proposition. The first point of evidence mentioned by Wichmann concerns the instrumental suffix *-lib'*, which derives from a syncopated participial suffix *-l* and a nominalizing instrumental suffix *-ib'* (2002:6-17) (figure 5). In function, this suffix derives instrumental nouns from positional verbs on two occasions in the hieroglyphic script. The first case is on Tonina Monument 27 where a bound prisoner is named as a *chaklib'*, or "tied-up object" (figure 5a). The second example from Site Q (La Corona) Panel 2B is designated as an *[h]eklib'*, or "thing which is inserted vertically," an appropriate name for a panel mounted on a wall (figure 5b). Wichmann notes that the *-lib'* suffix is found in all Ch'olan languages except Ch'orti', which has *-ib'*. The presence of the *-lib'* derivational suffix argues for a Ch'olan language in use at these sites. At Copan, however, Wichmann identifies a derivational suffix found on a positional verb different from *-lib'*. On a carved bench from Group 10K (CPN 999) the positional verb **CHUM**, 'to sit' appears as **u-CHUM-mu-b'i**, *u-chum-[i]b'*, "(it is) the seat of" followed by the bench owner's name phrase (figure 5c). Wichmann makes the following observation: "The astonishing thing about the Copan example is that, unlike *chak-l-ib'* and *hek-l-ib'*, which accord with the general Ch'olan pattern reconstructable from the proto-language, *chum-ib'* fits the unique Ch'orti' pattern" (Wichmann 2002:17). The presence of the *-ib'* suffix from the bench at Copan is evidence of a direct descent from Hieroglyphic Ch'olan used at Copan to modern Ch'orti'.

One of the most powerful pieces of evidence put forth by Wichmann concerns a verb on Copan Stela A. The relevant phrase reads **su-sa-ja / b'a-ki / cha-CHAM-li-ya / OCH-b'i-ji**, *su[h-]saj Ø b'aak chamliiy och[i]-Ø b'ij*, "the bones were scraped (or shaved), he had died, he entered the road" (figure 6). Nikolai Grube first deciphered this verb translating it as "cut bone of the deceased" (Schele and Grube 1992:7). I later suggested a different translation as "was polished" based on a different nuance of the root *sus* in Ch'orti' as *pulir*, or 'to polish' (Hull 2000a). This unique occurrence of the verbal root *sus* in this context provides a surprisingly good check on language affiliation. Wichmann notes that the proto-form of this root was a non-CVC *\*suhs*. CVC and non-CVC transitive verbal roots are treated differently in Ch'olan languages in regard to how their passives are formed. Transitive CVC roots are passivized through a different process than non-CVC roots. As Lacadena (1996) has clearly shown, CVC transitive roots in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan were derived into passives by infixing an *-h-* before the final root consonant, and by suffixing a thematic marker for derived intransitives *-aj*. Non-CVC transitive roots, on the other hand, derive passive forms with the addition of the *-naj* suffix, the *-n* being the actual passivizer, and the *-aj* being again the thematic marker for derived intransitives. Wichmann marshals linguistic evidence from all Ch'olan languages and Yukatek to demonstrate that in all of these languages, except for Ch'orti', the root *sus* is treated as a non-CVC root, as is evidenced by the suffix chosen to derive the passive form. Without exception, these languages use the non-CVC passivizing suffix. Wichmann summarizes the significance of this pattern as follows:

We can now more easily understand what happened with the verb "to scrape:" in Ch'ol, Chontal, Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, and Ch'orti' it went from *\*suhs* to *sus*, losing the preconsonantal *h*, perhaps as a regular change conditioned by the following *s*. While Ch'ol and Chontal continued to treat the form as if the *h* was still there, i.e., as a non-CVC root, Hieroglyphic Ch'olan shifted the form class to the CVC class, a change which continues to be reflected in modern Ch'orti'. It is highly interesting that not only is Ch'olti' more conservative than the language of the hieroglyphs, it is more conservative by two steps, the first step being the *h*-loss and the second the shift to a new form class. Again we observe a case where the language of the inscriptions behaves more like Ch'orti' than Ch'olti' (Wichmann 2002:26-27).

Based on these and other arguments for a special relationship between Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, Wichmann suggests that in the Classic period "the Motagua region was the cradle of Ch'orti'" (2002:29). In my view, the evidence to date suggests that Ch'orti' represents the closest extant Ch'olan language to Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, and consequently should be the focus of more intensive study.

Having reviewed some of the arguments favoring Ch'orti' as likely the most relevant modern Ch'olan language for hieroglyphic studies, the purposes of this study hopefully have crystallized to some extent. This brief overview of some of the arguments for the close relationship between Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and Ch'orti' serves to set the backdrop for a substantively different approach to contribute to this paradigm. The Ch'orti' language has much more to offer epigraphers than simply a lexical and grammatical source for understanding the inscriptions. When one takes into account that such a relationship indeed exists between these two languages, separated today by more than a millennium, would it not stand to reason that certain poetic features of this language might also have been preserved in Ch'orti'? More to the point, how closely

might the poetic features of Ch'orti' mirror those of the hieroglyphs? Remembering that Houston et al. (2000) have defined the language of the hieroglyphic inscriptions as a highly conservative prestige language, it might be expected that other linguistic and cultural aspects from the past may have survived into the present. I believe that the equally conservative ritual language of the modern-day Ch'orti' contains vestiges from its ancestral language and culture. It is upon this premise that this study continues. I hope to show that a substantial amount of information about Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and its poetic features can be gleaned through a systematic analysis of poetic discourse in its daughter language Ch'orti'. By way of caveat, it is important to state that I am not arguing that these features are necessarily *unique* to Ch'orti' as opposed to other Mayan languages and groups. Other Mayan languages (especially those in the Ch'olan language family) are vitally important to hieroglyphic studies (see Wald 1998, 2001; Josserand 1991). I am confident that similar ethnopoetic studies could be done using Ch'olan, Ch'ol, Yukatek, or other Mayan languages and cultures that would likewise produce important data for understanding many of the same issues discussed in my research here (e.g. Hull 1993). Instead, I believe that Ch'orti' represents the ideal, *not exclusive*, place to investigate these questions, due to its historical connection to the language of the inscriptions. Therefore, it is hoped that the body of data and discussion presented in this research project will accomplish (among other things) the following:

- Bring into mainstream certain issues relating to poetics in the hieroglyphic epigraphic studies.
- Demonstrate the utility of modern ethnographic studies for understanding cultural and linguistic features of the past in related cultures (cf. D. Tedlock 1985).

- Provide additional evidence for an intimate connection between the modern Ch'orti' people and certain groups among the ancient Maya.
- Define narrative genre types in Ch'orti' and the use of poetic discourse within them.
- Make a cohesive case for a performance-based functional model for many hieroglyphic inscriptions.
- Contribute positively to the ongoing debate on questions of literacy and literacy practices from the Classic period until present times.
- Bring about an awareness of the exquisite verbal artistry of the ancient Maya scribes and of modern Ch'orti'.

### **0.7. Theoretical Approach**

My theoretical approach to this project is grounded in a discourse-centered approach to language use. As such, my work is located in the paradigm of ethnography of speaking (Bauman and Sherzer 1974; Hymes 1968, 1974; D. Tedlock 1977). This study seeks to contribute to the discussion of verbal art by locating the use of rhetorical features in a sociocultural frame of discourse. I examine pragmatic contexts of hieroglyphic recitation as a means of understanding the complex discursive relationship among the creator of a poetic text, text lector, and audience. I investigate questions of the role of the audience ,in poetic performance of hieroglyphic texts. I argue for a fluid exchange between performer and audience in which culture is "re-created" through the interaction (see Solomon 1994:379). Poetic recitation of hieroglyphic texts, in my view, should be viewed as a "collaborative venture" in which identities are solidified between performers and those listening (Camitta 1993:237, 239; cf. Bauman 1984:43). In this context, social meaning is both negotiated and emergent in performance. This study represents an effort to more fully define the relationship between notions of oral text among the Ch'orti' and the performance Classic Maya texts following Houston and Stuart

model of "recitation literacy" (1992:590). According to these authors, "...[the] Maya script most likely functioned within a system of "recitation literacy," in which writing served alongside an oral tradition that played a crucial role in fleshing out the schematic messages transmitted by the hieroglyphs" (Houston and Stuart 1992:590-591). In this light, I argue against any notion of 'unalterable text', contending instead that Maya texts served as vehicles, or facilitators, for modified performances in which elaboration in poetic verse was likely the norm in oral contexts (cf. Houston 1994; Hull 1993; Monaghan 1994). I explore in depth this question of whether a text was created with what I term *narrative integrity*, i.e. a text not needing elaboration in order to fill out its message and/or poetic structure. While I argue that narrative integrity was most certainly present in Maya texts, such a statement does not preclude the possibility that they were, nonetheless, *open* to elaboration in performance. Through comparative analyses with other Mesoamerican cultures, I hope to provide conceptual model that may shed light on the close relationship between poetic discourse and performance from Classic period times among the Ancient Maya.

#### **0.8. Review of Literature on Poetic Discourse in Ch'orti' and other Mayan Languages**

One of the most understudied aspects of the hieroglyphic inscriptions on a large-scale is their poetic content within social contexts. One of the goals of this project was to remedy this lacuna in epigraphic research through a detailed study of the poetic structures found in modern Ch'orti'—the closest surviving linguistic relative to the language used in

most hieroglyphic inscriptions—in order to compare and illuminate similar poetic devices encountered in the hieroglyphs.

While various linguistic and cultural aspects of Ch'orti' have been studied in some detail (Brewer 2002, Dary 1986; Dary et al. 1998; Dayley 1982; Fought 1967, 1969, 1972, 1982, 1984; Girard 1944, 1949; López and Metz 2002; Lubeck and Cowie 1989; Moral 1989; Metz 1995, 1998; Oakley 1966; Pérez Martínez 1994, 1996; Pérez Martínez et al. 1996; Quizar 1994a, 1994b; Sánchez González 2001; Starr 1951; Wichmann 1999; Wisdom 1940, 1950), no major, systematic study of Ch'orti' has ever been undertaken to understand its formal poetic discourse. Fought's two important articles on Ch'orti' time narratives (1976) and cyclical patterning in Ch'orti' literature (1985) succeeded in identifying discourse organizing particles (Fought's "narrative postclitics") and several couplet types in Ch'orti' narratives. My research project builds upon Fought's valuable observations and attempts to systematically describe a much broader range of rhetorical devices in Ch'orti' poetics. In addition, I sought to contextualize this information through an understanding of the social implications and status associated with the use of poetic discourse among the Ch'orti' today.

Through the 1960s, studies that dealt with Maya poetics and literature were primarily concerned with a few poetic devices in certain contexts, not with treating issues of the poetic genres per se (cf. Townsend et. al. 1980:51). Fortunately, more recent research has created a large body of literature relating to the study of poetics done by other anthropologists, linguists, and ethnographers in numerous Mayan languages (Burns 1983, 1993; Bricker 1974; Brody 1986; Christenson 1988a, 1988b; Coggins 1987; N.

Colby and M. Colby 1981; Edmonson 1973, 1986; Edmonson and Bricker 1985; Gossen 1970, 1974, 1983, Hofling 1987a, 1987b, 1989; Hunt 1977; León-Portilla 1969; León-Portilla et al. 1980, Maxwell 1987, 1997; Montemayor 1999; Shaw 1971; Stross 1974, 2000; B. Tedlock 1982a; D. Tedlock 1983, 1985; William 1983). These studies have focused more sharply on identifying various forms of rhetorical features including metaphor, *difrasismo*, triplets, prosody, deixis, narrative organizing particles, in addition to the narrative function of poetic features in texts. The results of this project complement this work by also looking at a large range of poetic devices within Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and Ch'orti', and exploring their genetic relationship.

### **0.9. Review of Literature on Poetics in the Hieroglyphic Script**

Josserand (1988, 1991) first laid the groundwork for a discourse analysis approach to the narrative and poetic structures in the hieroglyphic script. Most studies on hieroglyphic poetics to date have highlighted only certain poetic features without engaging the topic itself (cf. Freidel et al. 1993; Grube 1998; Hofling 1989; Hopkins 1997; Lounsbury 1989, 1991; Neuenswander 1987; Reents-Budet 1989; Schele and Ayala 1993; but see Coggins 1992). Epigraphic studies have not yet undertaken a full investigation of the corpus of hieroglyphic inscriptions to identify the use and contexts of these poetic devices. Most studies have instead generally focused on micro-analyses of individual texts. My Master's Thesis (Hull 1993) on the poetics of selected Classic period was the first attempt to correlate on a broad-scale the poetics of the glyphs with Colonial Maya documents and modern Mayan languages. Advances in the past decade in

decipherment now allow for a much fuller understanding of the linguistic subtleties of the hieroglyphic script. This in turn has provided new avenues for research into areas such as speech genres (Grube 1998) that are rich in poetic style.<sup>2</sup> More recent studies on the question of hieroglyphic literacy have made persuasive arguments that the glyphs functioned "in a social setting, to be interpreted in light of the art that so often accompanies it and the oral recitation, discussion, and even performance of the text" (Houston and Stuart 1992; cf. Houston 1994). Viewing hieroglyphic texts in terms of orality introduces the likelihood that the texts were composed with this oral component in mind. A system of oral recitation and performance would certainly invite a separate subset of poetic devices that the scribe could make use of in a given text, such as alliteration and assonance. In Chapter 3, I address this fascinating (yet rarely-discussed) topic by arguing that some hieroglyphic texts may have been read to audiences. The sociocultural implications of this performative frame in relation to hieroglyphic texts alters drastically our conceptions of issues relating to Classic period literacy, literacy practices, monument placement, rhetorical language, text and image, and the role of singers and lectors in ancient Maya society.

#### **0.10. Ancient Maya Literature and Literary Tradition**

Many of the studies that have looked at the poetics of the hieroglyphic script inevitably begin (and often end!) with a discussion of semantic and syntactic couplets. While many researchers speak about couplets or surface parallelism in the inscriptions,

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, first- and second-person texts in the inscriptions show an overwhelming tendency towards poetics in the form of parallel discourse.

no one has adequately defined the significance or motivations behind certain parallel couplet structures in the way that, for example, Judith Maxwell has done with the Mayan language Chuj (Maxwell 1997). Furthermore, any discussion of parallelism cannot ignore the cultural construct of dualism that penetrated deeply into the conceptual patterning of the Maya. The much-understudied area of poetic discourse in the Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions is potentially a rich arena for understanding cognitive structuring of the ancient Maya. At this stage in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs, it is imperative that we approach many texts as forms of *literature*—or at least containing at times highly literary qualities—and not simply as documents with historical value. Only by appreciating the poetic features and associated rhetorical underpinnings of the writing system itself can we understand more fully the intended message of the text. Through a comparative analysis of the poetic devices, discourse markers, and cultural contexts from oral narratives and formalized discourse of modern Ch'orti', I hope to elevate the discussion of hieroglyphic inscriptions beyond grammar and phonology. Above all, Maya hieroglyphic writing, in all of its poetic complexity, should be appreciated for its extraordinary literary accomplishments.

### **0.11. Transcription and Orthography Issues**

The transcription of all Mayan language texts both from my data and from others sources (unless otherwise stated) will generally adhere to the orthography dictated by the *Acuerdo Gubernativo número 1046-97 and 129-88* of the Guatemalan government. Since there are complicated issues surrounding orthographic choices when representing Mayan

words due to factors such as accepted conventions, forms firmly grounded in the literature, and variations in writing calendrical names, proper names, and place names, I have decided to follow a logical compromise proposed by Kettunen and Helmke (2002:5-6). Drawing from the orthographic system put forward by these authors, this study will make use of the following orthographic rules:

- 1) Words from any Mayan language will be written in the "new alphabet," decided upon in the two laws mentioned above.
- 2) Place names will not follow the "new alphabet," but instead will retain traditional geographical vocabulary that is well established in literature, maps, etc.
- 3) Word-final accents will *not* be written since all Mayan words carry word-final stress making any notational mark redundant. Non-Maya words with accents will be marked (e.g. Jocotán).
- 4) When writing the names of Mayan languages and "nations," the "new alphabet" will be used since "new orthographies reflect the names of the languages and nations better than the older somewhat inconsistent names" (Kettunen and Helmke 2002:5-6).

This system attempts to find a reasonable middle ground in the conflicting and often politically-charged area of orthographic representation.

When writing Ch'orti' words, I will not use the exact orthography that has become common among the Ch'orti' in recent years (e.g. Martínez 1996). In terms of phonetic accuracy, this system inadequately represents certain phonemes due to predetermined orthographic conventions.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, there is no complete agreement among different Ch'orti' groups who are currently publishing material in Ch'orti' on their orthographic

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the conjunction *i* (borrowed from the Spanish *y*), "and," is written as *y* since in prevocalic position it is often pronounced as a palatal glide in rapid speech. In preconsonantal position, however, there is no phonological reason to represent this phoneme with *y*. This introduces serious inaccuracy into the orthographic system to try to accommodate a spoken phenomenon, not an underlying phonological one.

systems of choice. In fact, many books today use several orthographies within a single text based on the different authors who contributed to its creation (e.g. Tohom Gutierrez 1999). While I respect the efforts made by some Ch'orti' to define and put into practice a standard orthography (I am presently involved in efforts to further standardize these remaining areas), the restraints of the current system as it now stands in a few areas make it untenable for a wider linguistic community. Therefore, I will use the "new alphabet" as defined above for all Ch'orti' transcriptions (see below for a fuller description).

For all transcriptions of hieroglyphic texts, I will follow a rigid tripartite notational process. The purpose of this seemingly cumbersome system is to represent as accurately as possible the actual phonemic shape of each lexical item or morphological feature. Again, following the system found in Kettunen and Helmke (2004:64), for each hieroglyphic inscription I will provide a transcription, transliteration, and translation. The transcription is a broad one that does not attempt to interpret sounds, be they vowel length, preconsonantal velar fricative /h/'s (which are not represented glyphically in this position), or glottalized vowels, since these features are indicated by orthographic spelling rules employed by the Maya scribes (cf. Lacadena and Wichmann, in press). This first line is a morphemic transcription of the actual core linguistic elements involved. I will separate lexical units in the transcription as defined by glyphic-block layout with a backslash (/). The transliteration, citing Kettunen and Helmke's definition, is narrow in that it includes "reconstructed sounds (marked by [square brackets]) based either on historical, internal, or paleographic evidence" (2002:64). All transcriptions will be given in **bold**. All logographs will be written in capital letters and syllabic signs in

small case letters. In the transcription line, a hyphen (or dash) will be used to show distinct phonetic signs contained in a single glyphic block. The second line interprets this information reading into it all known spelling rules for underrepresented sounds (see below). All transliterations will be given in *italics*. I will not capitalize any letters in the second transliteration line, including proper nouns, since this is an orthographic convention unknown to the ancient Maya. The final line of this system contains an approximate translation to give the reader a good sense of the meaning.

The disadvantage to this lengthy transcription method is that it can detract from the simple poetic structure of a particular phrase when divided into poetic verse. In spite of this, I believe it best to accurately represent all data at the morphemic level, in addition to the narrower transliteration, in order to clearly show how I am interpreting the linguistic data. The translation line may include parentheses when any item is added that is not explicitly represented in the hieroglyphic text, or is an alternate possible reading of the sign. The following is an example of the tripartite transcription method that will be used throughout to represent orthographically the hieroglyphic data:

**chu-ku-ja / u-UH-JOL / ya-xu-na / B'ALAM /**  
*chu[h]kaj uh jol(om) yaxu'n B'a[h]lam.*  
He was captured, Uh Jolom, (by) Bird Jaguar.

It is important to state that I have chosen to remain generally faithful to the word order as it appears in the hieroglyphic texts. While this does not always produce a smooth translation in English, I strongly prefer this method of translation when dealing with

poetically structured data (see Stross 2000). This will allow the reader to better appreciate the structure of the parallelism as it was produced by the Maya scribes.

In terms of spelling rules that I will follow in this dissertation, it must be stated that I find the spelling system deciphered by Lacadena and Wichmann (in press) to most accurately reflect our current understanding of linguistic and historical evidence. The earlier proposal of Stuart, Houston, and Robertson (1999) was groundbreaking for its recognition of disharmonic spellings representing long vowels and medial *h*. Since I do not intend to engage the debate in this forum, I will only state that I consider Stuart, Houston, and Robertson's proposal of morphosyllables less satisfying than that of Lacadena and Wichmann's at present. Most recently, Kaufman and Justeson (2003) have also offered a different interpretation on spelling conventions in the script. These authors disagree with both Lacadena and Wichmann as well as Stuart, Houston, and Robertson that the shape of the vowel nucleus can be altered orthographically through the selection of final syllabic signs containing a different vowel. Kaufman and Justeson suggest that any underrepresented or unpronounced vowel with word-final consonants is determined by the typical *-V:l* suffix that a particular noun or adjective regularly accepts (Kaufman and Justeson:2003). In this system, Maya scribes resorted to their knowledge of the vowel found in *-Vl* suffixes to determine what unpronounced vowel to write. While appealing for a number of reasons, I do not currently find Kaufman and Justeson's argument sufficiently convincing. More work is needed on collecting glyphic examples ending in *-Vl* terms and comparing them to modern data in order to make their case more secure. This approach does show considerable promise, however, and may turn out to be

a crucial step in our understanding of Maya hieroglyphic spelling rules. Nevertheless, I currently subscribe to the system worked out by Lacadena and Wichmann for determining vowel quality in any given collocation. To summarize their findings, I will repeat the basic tenants of their spelling rules:

CV <sup>1</sup> C / CV <sup>1</sup> -CV <sup>1</sup> >	CV <sup>1</sup> C	
CV <sup>1</sup> C / CV <sup>1</sup> -CV <sup>2</sup> >	CVVC	(V <sup>1</sup> = a, e, o; V <sup>2</sup> = i)
CV <sup>1</sup> C / CV <sup>1</sup> -CV <sup>2</sup> >	CV <sup>1</sup> C	(V <sup>1</sup> = i; V <sup>2</sup> = a)
CV <sup>1</sup> C / CV <sup>1</sup> -CV <sup>2</sup> >	CV <sup>1</sup> (V)C	(V <sup>1</sup> = e, o, u; V <sup>2</sup> = a)
CV <sup>1</sup> C / CV <sup>1</sup> -CV <sup>2</sup> >	CV <sup>1</sup> (V)C	(V <sup>1</sup> = a, i; V <sup>2</sup> = u)

Within this rubric, the quality of most any vowel can be indicated orthographically through the selection of signs. While many questions remain to be sorted out with respect to Hieroglyphic Ch'olan spelling rules, Lacadena and Wichmann's system is the best solution in my opinion offered to date, and so will be followed throughout this study.

The phonemic inventory of sounds in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan will be written in by means of the following orthographic system: *a, b', ch, ch', e, h, j, i, k, k', l, m, n, o, p, p<sup>h</sup>, s, t, t', tz, tz', u, w, x, and y*. I do not represent glottal stops before word-initial vowels since I am not fully convinced that they were analyzed as such by the ancient Maya. The consonant *x* represents the voiceless palatoalveolar fricative /š/ (or "sh" in English orthography). Following Grube (in press), /h/ stands for a voiceless glottal spirant while /j/ represents a voiceless velar spirant.

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<sup>4</sup> I should note here that I include /p'/ in this list with some reservation since Søren Wichmann has recently suggested that the /p'/ phoneme was innovated after the Classic period (personal communication, 2003).

## 0.12. Borrowing, Code Switching, and Lexical Borrowing

The Ch'orti' language today has incorporated a great deal of Spanish vocabulary into all levels of discourse. In daily conversation, code switching is very common among all ages of Ch'orti' speakers. In addition, loan words have now come to make up a significant portion of the Ch'orti' lexicon. For reasons I will elaborate in Chapter 1, there has also been considerable lexical borrowing from Spanish in many ritual prayers. The linguistic source for these new terms is always Spanish, but by different means and degrees. The fusion of native terms, borrowed terms, and code switching presents somewhat of a problem for transcriptions of Ch'orti' texts. *Borrowing* refers to the use of a term from another language where "a host language adapts sounds and intonation patterns to suit their native rules" (Bonvillain 1997:320). *Code switching*, as a sociolinguistic process, happens "in conditions of change, where group boundaries are diffuse, norms and standards of evaluation vary, and where speakers' ethnic identities and social backgrounds are not matters of common agreement" (Gumperz 1988:70). *Code mixing* (or code blending), on the other hand, is when material from a second language is more deeply incorporated by "adding morphological markers of the base to introduced elements" (Bonvillain 1997:326). While it would be useful in many ways to distinguish orthographically among instances of borrowing, code switching, and code mixing in the Ch'orti' texts in this study, for the most part I have elected to simply transcribe them in Ch'orti' orthography. The reasons for doing this are as follows: First, in many cases, it is often difficult to tell from an isolated occurrence if a given term represents borrowing, code switching, or code mixing. For example, the temporal adverb *entonces*, "then,

next," in Spanish is, in my view, a fully borrowed and integrated form in Ch'orti' discourse. In practice, the "Ch'orti'" form *entonses* is not 'replacing' or substituting for another Ch'orti' term, but is itself the most common form. Furthermore, ritual terms such as *mal aire*, "evil wind," have become lexicalized with a significantly different meaning in Ch'orti' than the Spanish term entails. In such cases where their semantics have changed, I do not see the value in retaining the term "code switching" since it has become an integrated part of the Ch'orti' language. So while there are certainly instances in this dissertation where I could have distinguished between code switching and code mixing, I have resolved to not represent these distinctions orthographically. Only in cases where it seems clear to me that the speaker has switched to speaking Spanish for a section of discourse do I preserve the original Spanish orthography. Therefore, with this proviso, Spanish terms used in any stretch of Ch'orti' discourse will be written in Ch'orti' orthography, except where no equivalent Ch'orti' phoneme exists (such as ñ), in which case the Spanish phoneme will be used.

When discussing details of both Ch'orti' and hieroglyphic texts, I will generally use single quotes for individual terms mentioned in the text. In cases where I am mentioning unit of discourse larger than a single word, I will employ double quotes. Occasionally, double quotes will also be used when I want to stress that I am quoting directly from a given text. Individual entries from dictionaries and definitions of Mayan terms will be given in single quotes, unless I am quoting data directly from another author.

The Ch'orti' phonemes will be written with the following inventory: *a, b, b', ch, ch', e, g, j, i, k, k', l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, t', tz, tz', u, w, x, and y*. I will also employ the Spanish /ñ/, /d/, /v/, and /rr/ in some cases where lexical borrowing or lending has occurred from Spanish into Ch'orti'. The phoneme /g/ is allophonic with /w/ in Ch'orti' today. Certain speakers prefer /g/ while others /w/, e.g. *ugori/uwori*, 'he rolled it into a ball'.

At times, hieroglyphic signs will be given as a number following a capital "T." These correspond to individual signs in Thompson's glyphic catalog (1962). Numbers prefixed with a capital "K" refer extraordinary collection of cataloged images of Maya artifacts by of Justin Kerr (<http://www.famsi.org>).

Finally, following more-recent standard conventions, I will employ the term *Mayan* only in reference to a language, and *Maya* in all other cases.

### **0.13. Summary of Chapters**

In Chapter 1, I begin with an investigation of the use of poetic devices in Ch'orti' ritual contexts, the majority of which come from traditional healing rites I recorded between 2000 and 2002. I set the stage for a discussion of poetic features by outlining the sociocultural milieu in which poetic discourse occurs. I trace the decline of a poetic tradition to the concomitant wane of ritual practice. I attribute a major portion of this decay to fears of *brujería*, or 'witchcraft', as well as to pressures from modern religious organizations in the area. In order to contextualize my discussion of poetic features, I first analyze five modern works of poetry created by Ch'orti' individuals that provide

insight into how the Ch'orti' themselves define the notion of 'poetic discourse'. I then turn to metadiscourses of poetics in the Ch'orti' language to further refine this definition for the Ch'orti'. In terms of poetic contexts, I show in detail that ritual texts excel in poetic content and imagery. I quantify each poetic feature found in these texts and examine the possible purposes for the use of each. In order to contextualize the highly archaic references and obscure meanings in ritual prayers, I provide discussions of Ch'orti' eschatological perspectives and their mythological backgrounds.

In Chapter 2, I examine the use of poetic discourse in oral narrative contexts. I first attempt to define the major narrative genres in Ch'orti' according to native Ch'orti' narrative categories. I give examples of each of the genres and discuss their structural and thematic contexts. Narrative structuring techniques such as narrative openings and closings are then examined. I investigate the use of evidential particles in Ch'orti' narratives and delineate a rational interpretation of their use and sociocultural implications. I then categorize and illustrate each of the major poetic features contained in Ch'orti' oral narratives. Finally, through an exhaustive comparative study, I isolate which poetic devices are most common in each of the narrative genres.

In Chapter 3, I lay out my arguments for the relationship between performance and poetics in the Classic period. I first review the notion of 'elite language' and its possible implications for this study of poetic discourse. I offer a distinction between *poetic discourse* and *poetry* that forms the basis of my analysis of hieroglyphic inscriptions. I will argue that the ancient Maya were often "more occupied with fortifying their texts with poetic features as a way of adding ritual efficacy or emphasis to

a particular section, without any conscious effort to compose *belles lettres*" (Chapter 3). On the other hand, I find convincing evidence of the presence of highly poetic texts that would seem to fall under the designation of 'literature'. I base part of my definition of 'literature' on three "heterogeneous criteria" proposed by Loprieno (1996a:43):

(a) *fictionality*, with the problem of the distinction between referential and self-referential discourse; (b) *intertextuality*, connected with the question of literary types; (c) *reception*, which touches the concepts of authorship and the classic.

These questions of 'literature' and 'literariness' serve as the background to a discussion of meaning as emergent in performance, and a 'co-creation of culture' that can accompany interactional textual performance. Poetic discourse informs this discussion as part of what is negotiated depending on the specific audience or occasion. I then examine the possible role of a singer of oral histories as it relates to Classic period poetics. I argue that during the Classic period these singers might have functioned primarily as performers of historical and mythological narratives, either by memory or with the aid of written texts. In order to properly contextualize the cultural setting in which poetic discourse played a part in Classic period society, I then examine questions relating to literacy and literacy practices from the Colonial period to the present day as they may relate to Classic period practices. I argue that Maya scribes and priests likely used their literacy and poetic skills as status-validating mechanisms to shore up their positions in society, i.e., by making the populace more reliant on those who had access to these skills. I suggest that the ability of the scribe or priest to elaborate in poetic fashion was a determining factor in gaining control *over* the text that, according to Bowman and Woolf,

would then allow for "power to be exercised *through* [the] text" (1994:8). Performance, I argue, plays a crucial role in understanding poetics and power in ancient Maya society when coupled with notions of literacy practices. Finally, I create a model based on indicators from numerous Mesoamerican cultures that suggests textual elaboration may have accompanied performances of hieroglyphic texts. In my view, texts were covertly skeletal in the sense that the lector would have felt free to expand upon any point in the text as the occasion would have required. This dynamic, performative aspect of hieroglyphic recitation has profound implications for our understanding of the interaction between text and audience in the Classic period.

Chapter 4 consists of an analysis of poetic discourse in Maya hieroglyphic texts. I review the past research in the area of poetics in the inscriptions and offer a critique of the methods and level of examination to date. I then proceed with a discussion on the use and meaning of paralleled discourse in Mayan languages. The main body of this chapter is concerned with identifying and describing the individual poetic features found in Maya hieroglyphic writing. I examine the narrative context of each poetic device in order to determine motivations for each of their uses. I am able to show that in most cases Maya scribes selectively included instances of poetic discourse into their texts at specific points in order to add emphasis or emotive affect. In addition, hieroglyphic texts make strategic use of poetic features as "adornments" to their narrative works. Furthermore, certain hieroglyphic texts are shown to be clearly constructed with a conscious effort towards large-scale poetics. These texts, as I argue, are evidence of a "*tradición literaria*" (Lacadena, in press) among the ancient Maya. Finally, I investigate the important

interplay between visual and linguistic poetics in the highly-iconographic writing system of Maya hieroglyphs.

In Chapter 5, I summarize the data from Chapters 1, 2, and 4 in an effort to show points of correlation between the poetics of Ch'orti' and those of Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. I show that every major structural and sonoric rhetorical device found in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan is also part of the modern Ch'orti' poetic tradition. Moreover, very specific metaphors in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan have been preserved in Ch'orti', usually in structurally poetic contexts. Beyond insights into shared poetic features, I also examine the retention of cultural conceptions of the ancient Maya in poetic Ch'orti' texts. I argue that while all Mayan languages have a considerable amount to contribute to the discussion of ancient Maya poetics, Ch'orti', due to its unique linguistic relationship to Hieroglyphic Ch'olan historically, has preserved a number of specific poetic forms and meanings relevant to the hieroglyphic system.

In Chapter 6, I conclude with a general summary of the arguments made in each chapter. In addition, I review the contributions this study makes in the areas of anthropology (especially linguistic anthropology), linguistics, ethnography, and ethnopoetics.

## Chapter 1

### Poetics in Ch'orti' Ritual Discourse

#### 1.1. Introduction

In order to understand the meaning and function of poetics for the Ch'orti' today, one must first investigate the sociocultural environment of which poetic discourse is a part. Poetic discourse among the Ch'orti' exists largely in a symbiotic relationship with ritual and its associated performative contexts. The presence of poetic discourse today is for the most part a direct result of its intimate tie to ritual. Outside of ritual contexts, poetic discourse for the Ch'orti' is not an active sociolinguistic process, but a lingering artifact. To begin this study of the poetic features found in modern Ch'orti' society, I will approach the subject through a series of questions which I hope to address: 1) What is the current state of poetic discourse among the Ch'orti'? 2) What role does poetic language play in Ch'orti' society today? 3) Which poetic features are present in different social and narrative contexts? 4) Are there discernable differences in the types of poetic devices used in ritual vs. narrative contexts? 5) If in decline, what forces, either internal or external, are responsible for a shift in attitudes and perceptions relating to poetics?

The first step in answering these questions was to collect data on Ch'orti' ritual language and oral narratives through fieldwork. To this end, I spent 15 months carrying out field research among the Ch'orti', specifically collecting data on relevant ritual language and poetic devices. Making an accurate assessment regarding the status of

poetic discourse among the Ch'orti' today was a foremost concern of this research. An appeal to the literature on Ch'orti' poetics is valuable, yet somewhat limited. While certain social, cultural, and linguistic aspects of the Ch'orti' people and their language have received varying degrees of scholarly attention in the last 60 years, very little work has been done on either the poetics of Ch'orti' (but see Fought 1972; 1976; 1985) or on assessing the status of a poetic tradition. The purpose of this chapter is to attempt to answer a number of these basic questions regarding the role and status of poetic discourse among the Ch'orti'.

## **1.2. The Decline of Poetic Tradition Among the Ch'orti'**

To say that poetic discourse is alive and well among the Ch'orti' today would be an overstatement. By "poetic discourse" I mean the conscious use of structural or metaphorical features identified by a particular culture as distinct from daily speech that have an intended aesthetic impact on an audience or reader. It would be more accurate to state that a poetic tradition as such is only marginally in use in Ch'orti' society today. This is not to suggest that a vibrant poetic tradition did not exist in the past. In the last 50 years there has been a precipitous decline in the use of poetic styles correlating directly with the abandonment of the ceremonial contexts in which poetic discourse flourished. All forms of language maintenance require language use. It is not surprising, then, that the use of poetic styles would diminish when their accompanying social contexts evaporate. Poetics itself must also have a definable cultural currency, a tangible *raison d'être*, in order to continue as a meaningful aspect of any sociolinguistic system. Poetics

is not happenstance, nor does it occur in a vacuum. Assessing the cultural significance of poetics will likely depend to some degree on an existent metalanguage about poetics within that culture (cf. Stross 1974). Structural assessments can be made, poetic features analyzed, and important conclusions can be reached through this process, but a certain culturally-internal metacognitive awareness of the meaning and significance of poetics must be taken into account. The presence or absence of a metadiscourse on poetics in a given culture is itself highly informative in either case.

I would argue that poetic discourse among the Ch'orti' is undergoing what could be termed as a 'reinterpretive' phase. A poetic tradition that once pervaded social life is now being deemed by many to be superfluous and extraneous. Fortunately, there are those alive today who still have knowledge of ancient prayers and ceremonies that make exceptional use of poetic devices. Regrettably, however, those who retain some level of understanding of these ceremonies are often reluctant to discuss them in any detail. I have personally interviewed over 30 elders, both female and male, who had participated in such ceremonies in the past, a significant portion of whom were not at all eager to discuss certain details. Data collection for this study suffered significantly from consultants who were afraid to speak about certain past ceremonies and beliefs. Let me illustrate the degree of reticence among many Ch'orti' today by relating a personal experience with a consultant, whom I will call Manuel, who was rumored to still "speak with the angels" (covert language among the Ch'orti' for someone who still practices ancient agricultural ceremonies by praying to specific angels). I should preface this by saying that there are an extremely small number of people who still engage in the

agricultural ceremonies described by Girard (1949, 1995 [1962]) and Wisdom (1940). This particular consultant revealed to me that he had always "relied on the angels" since his youth and had never followed the trend of using fertilizer in place of performing *La Promesa* or *La Limosna*, a field dedication ceremony (see Girard 1995, Hull 2001a). Manuel related to me that 20 years ago his neighbors discovered that he was still actively performing field ceremonies. In anger, the community rallied together and effectively chased him out of town. He was not able to return for over a year until he could convince them that he had given up such practices. In fact, he continued to "speak with the angles," albeit clandestinely. My inquiries into this ceremony made him particularly nervous and, even though he knew me quite well, he would not even describe the ceremony or the prayer that is used out of fear. Though I tried to reassure him of complete anonymity, he strongly resisted as he responded, "What if *they* find out?" I thanked him for the other valuable information he had given me that day and told him I had no desire to put him in any danger. Manuel's reaction was typical for most of my consultants (although fortunately not all) and it speaks volumes about the current atmosphere surrounding certain traditional practices among the Ch'orti'.

I can further illustrate this point with another encounter with a *curandero*, or traditional healer. I had heard many stories in a group of neighboring hamlets about a famous healer who had practiced in that area up until about five years earlier. He was famed for his abilities to cure as well as feared for his abilities to curse if provoked. Then, about five years earlier, he (I will call him Luís) joined a local Evangelical Protestant church that was aggressively engaged in an effort to eradicate all vestiges of

"indigenous thinking" (as the pastor of that very congregation once explained it to me). Luís renounced his belief (at least overtly) in Ch'orti' traditional religious thought and ended his thirty-year tenure as a traditional healer. One day by chance I met him on a mountain path. When I found out his name I began to question him on some points concerning healing. He became visibly uneasy and suggested that we meet later at a place where no one would hear us. Later that day we met, and he provided me with significant information about curing ideology. Then, just 45 minutes into the conversation, he abruptly stood up and said "That's it. I can't go on with this. *What if someone found out?*"

Both of these personal accounts provide an ideological backdrop to the demise of poetic tradition and specific forms of traditional beliefs among the Ch'orti'. While there are several factors involved, there are two major discernable causes: 1) attitudes toward anything associated with *brujería*, or "witchcraft" and 2) influences from evangelical groups (actually often closely interrelated to the first).<sup>5</sup> To label someone as a *brujo*, "witch," is a dangerous act that often carries serious and sudden consequences among the Ch'orti'. The term *brujo*, as it is used by the Ch'orti', broadly applies not just to those practitioners of black magic who cause personal harm, but it can also be applied to anyone who practices certain "traditional" ceremonies. In many areas, popular fervor often fans the flames of prejudice against someone who still performs such ceremonies as the *Limosna* rite done in the milpa before planting. Traditional healers, in fact, are the

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<sup>5</sup> A parallel situation exists among Chontal Maya speakers in Mexico. Knowles-Berry reports that "the growing influence of mainstream Catholicism, particularly among Chontal and semi-speakers, is leading to the rejection of traditional religious beliefs" and a disappearance of "Chontal religious rituals and ritual speech" (Knowles-Berry 1987:338).

ones most likely to be accused of being "*brujos*." The training of healers in the spiritual arts of curing seems to equally equip them to use their 'powers' for evil purposes, such as casting spells on a neighbor. Metz has made similar observations among the Ch'orti':

With poverty and a withering environment, many have lost faith in the traditional ritual system, have converted to Catholicism or Evangelical Protestantism, and have accused ritual specialists of praying for drought, sickness, and other mounting misfortunes. Witchcraft accusations have become so rampant that rituals are practiced only privately..." (1998:334).

Traditionally, most Ch'orti' accept that fact that the *padrinos*' (the term used in Ch'orti' for ritual rain-bringing priests) and healers' ability to "talk to the angels" often goes hand in hand with the possibility of using such powers for malicious purposes. Many Ch'orti' have related experiences to me about instances where they had offended a healer, and soon thereafter they became ill or had a family member die. They attributed these to a curse that was placed on them by these healers in retribution. More than a dozen healers with whom I have worked admitted that they could cast a spell if they wanted to (although they were quick to add that *they* of course never would). One famous ex-healer ("Luis" mentioned above) was widely believed to be someone who occasionally crossed the line and dabbled in witchcraft with the intent to harm another. This deep-seated fear and suspicion of those who practice (or even those who have the knowledge to practice) *brujería* literally pervades Ch'orti' communities. As a consequence, most traditional ceremonial practices have come to be directly associated with *brujería* by many Ch'orti'. There is a powerful mistrust of certain *padrinos* and traditional healers who are thought

to also dabble in the art of curses and black magic. Wisdom provides key details about this loathed variety of *padrino*:

A class of *padrinos*, called drought-makers, are considered bad and malicious and are extremely feared and hated. It is believed that they deliberately prevent the advent of the rainy season in May, produce droughts at various times during the year, and cause the crops to wither and die. Sorcerers sometimes do these things, but the drought-makers are said to do nothing else and are looked upon as being *padrinos* with antisocial tendencies. They live to themselves and, like the sorcerers, are given to queer and abnormal practices, such as visiting graves, wandering around at night, muttering to themselves, etc. Although many *padrinos*, especially the older and more eccentric ones, are known or suspected to be drought-makers, without exception they strongly deny it. In the rain-making ceremonies in April, God and the native deities are especially requested to permit no drought-makers to destroy the ceremony and thus stop the rains... The drought-makers seem to have no other function in the social life of the Indians than to act as convenient scapegoats when the ceremonies of the rain-making *padrinos* are unsuccessful (Wisdom 1940:377-378).

The very presence of different classes (both "good" and "malicious") of *padrinos* is an invitation for conflict and misunderstanding, as I will explain below. As the story of Francisco García Díaz indicates (see below), the Ch'orti' people can be equally suspicious of the motives of the non-drought-making *padrinos* as they are of the drought-making variety. Commonly, the unfortunate fate of certain *padrinos* and those who practice certain traditional ceremonies is to be sought out during the night and killed with multiple blows of a machete. Metz has likewise noted that "The most important specialists, the rain-calling *padrinos*, were killed long ago or forced to go underground, while diviners, healers, and midwives continue to be murdered as well, whenever personal tragedies prompt the victims to blame others" (1998:334). Therefore, the very people who made use of highly poetic language and have knowledge of ancient texts and traditions have

been systematically eliminated or intimidated enough to abandon their practice. The once-thriving poetic tradition of the Ch'orti' concomitantly followed suit.

In order to illustrate the strong suspicion held by many Ch'orti' today of those who are involved with traditional ceremonial practices, let me relate personal experience from my fieldwork in 2001, which I quote from an unpublished paper of mine (Hull 2001b):

Last June [of 2001] a group from the hamlet of Suchiquer who were interested in reviving the ancient beliefs and practices had to bring a Mam-speaking priest all the way from western Guatemala to perform a ceremony to thank the gods for the excellent rainy season that they had been having. The reason they had to ask the Mam priest to come all the way to Suchiquer is that they could not locate a single person who would do it from among the Ch'orti'. I hiked up to the top of the mountain with this Mam priest and he privately expressed equal astonishment that no one in the whole area could perform such a ceremony. About 100 people showed up, most quite skeptical and antagonistic, to watch his 3-hour ceremony primarily in Mam! This event caused a huge stir in all the hamlets because everyone was worried about promoting *brujería*, or "witchcraft" in the area. Then, quite amazingly, the rain that had been consistently falling everyday for three weeks stopped cold the day after the Mam priest left. By the time I left in August, 70% of the harvest had been lost and many blamed the priest for offending the Christian god. Others believed the priest had placed a curse on the people for not supporting him financially when he asked for donations at a recess during the ceremony. Regardless of the interpretation, this local event had the immediate effect of confirming to the minds of many Ch'orti' the danger in going back to the ritual ways of their forefathers. This incident is indicative of the current attitude of many of the Ch'orti' people today and relates most directly to the practice of agricultural rites as I have described them here.

The ride down from this sacred mountain with the Mam priest to Jocotán was considerably less congenial than the ride up. He was evidently offended by the meager donations he received from the audience at the ceremony. Discussions began immediately in many of the neighboring hamlets over the next few days about whether the priest was indeed angry, and what he might do in retribution. Within days, the rain

that had been falling daily for weeks on end abruptly stopped. Once the rains disappeared for four consecutive days, the anger was palpable among many Ch'orti', even with people who had not attended the ceremony, but who had heard about what happened. Over the next two weeks, I personally heard several men in groups openly state that if that priest ever showed his face in Jocotán again, "*Vamos a machetearlo*," "We are going to kill him with a machete." It is not difficult to project this image onto the larger Ch'orti' social scene in order to visualize the hostile environment in which ceremonial practices (and the poetic tradition associated with them) have so significantly diminished.

The second principal cause of the decline of ceremonial contexts in which poetic language thrives is the very pro-active stance against such practices by modern religious groups. The systematic eradication and demonization of traditional beliefs and practices that accompany conversion to different forms of Christianity has played a significant role in stigmatizing those who continue within the old belief system. Combined with the suspicion of darker practices, attitudes espoused by certain new religions in the area have instilled a profound intolerance not just for traditional ceremonies, but also for those who *practice* these rites. The hard-line stance against anything involving "indigenous thinking" (see above) taken by certain evangelical groups has created a hostile environment that is critical of the very social contexts within Ch'orti' society in which poetic discourse flourished—traditional ceremonies and healing rites. The unforeseen consequences of such attitudes have resulted in not just a non-tolerant posture against any who engage in traditional practices, but also a violent backlash against those individuals

themselves, often in the form of murder.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps 30 different stories have been related to me by the Ch'orti' about individuals practicing ancient ceremonies who ended up "*macheteado*," or "chopped up."<sup>7</sup> This gruesome custom is carried out by those who feel that such practices are "of the devil" and somehow justify killing in cold blood. No better example of this attitude can be found than in the treatment of the once powerful *padrinos* or rainmakers and ritual priests of the past.

### 1.3. The Role of *Padrinos* in Ch'orti' Society

The tradition of *padrinos* formed a central part of Ch'orti' ceremonial life in the past. I have already discussed in brief the drought-making class of *padrino* and the rain-making variety. Wisdom gives us a concise description of the position of *padrino* in Ch'orti' society:

The most important native religious specialist is the *padrino*. Almost any old man who is much respected in his community and whose moral life is acceptable can consider himself a *padrino*. The *padrinos*, including the rain-makers, the "captain," and the *mayordomos* are the leaders of all the community religious activity, as only they know how to recite the prayers and perform the ceremonies. They are distinct from the sorcerers, cursers, and diviners, who are endowed with a knowledge and power all their own, although the Indians are inclined to consider any person with esoteric knowledge and power as a *padrino*. In a strict sense, therefore, the *padrino* is the religious specialist, and in a loose sense he is what the Indians call a "wise man" (Sp. *sabio*). . . . There are several types of *padrinos*. Those in charge of the rain-making ceremonies are the most important. It is their principal duty to bring on the rain at the end of the dry season in April as well as to check it during the year when there is too much. These *padrinos* are the only individuals who "have permission" from God and the native deities to perform the rain-making ceremonies, the agricultural ceremonies, and the transition rites, and only they know how to conduct them (Wisdom 1940:373-374).

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<sup>6</sup> It should be stated that such actions are not condoned by the local religious leaders with whom I have spoken.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the homicide rate in Jocotán in 1996 was roughly 1.1 per thousand people, a figure over 13 times higher than of the United States for the same year (Metz 1998:335).

Rain-making *padrinos*, known as *Ajk'ajpesyaj*, are prayer-sayers responsible for petitioning the rains (see Fought 1969:473). Wisdom notes they are also known as *ajjorchan* (my orthography), which I believe translates best as "He the head of the rain-making ceremony" (Wisdom 1940:374, note 11).<sup>8</sup> On a community-wide level, the *padrinos* as Wisdom describes function quite differently today. Today, only a handful of a different brand of *municipio*-level *padrinos* exist in Quetzaltepeque and a few other areas. Known as "captains," this type of *padrino* is "elected or appointed each year on the saint's day and serves for the year following" and is responsible "to care for the pueblo saint throughout the year of his captaincy" (Wisdom 1940:375). A few *padrinos* can also still be found in some communities in Honduras among essentially non-Ch'orti-speaking Ch'orti' (Flores 1997). The rain-making *padrinos* of the past are all but a distant memory in most Ch'orti' areas (cf. Metz 1998:334). As one elderly Ch'orti' consultant of mine poetically lamented, "*Mixtuk'a e padrino, mixtuk'a e rogante*," "Now there are no more *padrinos*, now there are no more petitioners." Where have these crucial rain-bringing priest gone? What factors could have contributed the virtual disappearance of what Wisdom called "the most important native religious specialist" from among the Ch'orti'? Let me answer these questions by relating a story about the renowned *padrino*

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<sup>8</sup> Wisdom speculates on several possibilities for the meaning of *ajjolchan*. He suggests it derives perhaps from "*hor*, "head chief," and *tca'n*, "ceremony," or *ha'*, "water," "rain," or, "head," "chief," and *tca'n*, "ceremony" (Wisdom 1940:374, note 11). The *aj-* is clearly the 'agentive' "one who" prefix, not *ja'* for "water." Interpreting *jor* (Wisdom's *hor*) as "head chief" is surely correct. Wisdom's designation of *chan* (or *tca'n*, Wisdom has both forms in his dictionary, [Wisdom 1950]) as 'ceremony' is correct in this context. The term *chan* is applied to the specific ceremony prior to the coming of the rains in April over which a *padrino* presides (see Girard 1995:99).

named Estevan Díaz who lived in the middle of the twentieth century and his son Francisco Díaz García. Based on data I gathered in interviews with numerous different elders who knew one or both of them, it is clear that Estevan was a powerful and well-respected *padrino* in the Ch'orti' area. It is said that Francisco would abstain from sex for forty days and fast for a period of time before performing any ceremony. The people would tell him on what day they wanted the rainy season to begin each year, either the 8<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of May (or sometimes a different date). Francisco (also commonly known as "Chico"), was put to the test one day by a group of unbelievers to see if he could summon the rains on command. They all met in the plaza of Jocotán, and Francisco began his ceremony on the top of the Catholic church. Within a short time, according to those who were actually present at the ceremony, a huge storm developed around 12:00 p.m., and it continued to rain throughout the day. During the following year, all of the Ch'orti' area was suffering from a severe drought. Therefore, all of those who believed in Francisco came to the cross on the hill above Jocotán where he traditionally performed these rain-making ceremonies and left money and food at the foot of the cross. When the rains did not soon appear they stopped bringing offerings, which reportedly angered Francisco. Then the cry went out that Francisco was a "*brujo*" and that he was somehow "blocking" the rains out of spite for not receiving any more offerings. He managed to escape with his life. The next year he was challenged again to "speak to the angels" and call the rains, but this time in Chiquimula. When the rains did not come immediately the crowd again clamored against the "*brujo*." Within days, they tracked him down and killed him.

The following is a transcription and translation of one story told to me by a consultant whose father knew Francisco well and had told him many details about Francisco's life.

*K'ani ink'ajti e k'ajtsyaj twa' yajk'ajt jaja'r xe' ayan ani oni'x tara takaron twa' e pak'ab' Ch'orti'. Oni'x xe' ayan ani inkojt winik, xe' uk'ab'a' Francisco García o kawa're Chico García. I ayan ani me'yra uk'otorer o me'yra e ujurir koche' twa' uk'ajti jaja'r. Ja'x konde uch'ani e nojk'in twa' e jaja'r ma'chi ani amajresyan konde uya're ani e pak'ab'ob', "Kachik e nojk'in twi'x e jaja'r." I k'otoy yajk'in uch'ani e nojk'in uya're ani e pak'ab'ob', "Ejk'ar ikojko e jaja'r o kone'r e'ra ikojko e jaja'r." I b'an koche'ra ub'an uyub'i ani twa' e ajpatna'rob i jay uk'anyo'b'ix ani e jaja'r o uk'anto twa' ukojko'b'. B'anixto ani ja'xir ub'an cha'ni e nojk'in koche' pak'ab' uk'anyo'b' ja'xir ma'chi ani taka ojron. Konde ja'x ani atoyma twa' uk'ajti e jaja'r take' anxerob' te' Katata' ja'xir ob'na'ni uk'ajtsyaj umen e Katata' i eb'tana ani watar e jaja'r wa'kchetaka. Konde ja'xir uk'ajti ani e jaja'r ma'ni tuk'a e takinar koche' kone'r kawira ayan me'yra takinar, koche' kone'r kawira ma'chi'x alok'oy e nar, ma'chi'x alok'oy e ch'um, ma'chi'x alok'oy tuno'r xe' kapa'k'i, e b'u'r, e kuskus k'anix ataki umen e takinar. Tartaka ke' me'yra k'in a'chempa konde no'n war kakojko e jaja'r. Kone'r war kawira ke' mixma'chi' k'ani uk'ajti e jaja'r tartaka ke' kone'r maja'chi'x ak'ub'espera kasati'x kak'ub'seyaj oni'x ani konde turu ani e Chico García xe' uk'ajti ani e jaja'r. E winik ira uk'ajti ani e jaja'r i ob'na ani uk'ajti. B'an koche'ra ani oni'x ma'ni tuk'a e wina'r tuno'r xe' apa'k'tz'a'ni tu'yok chor tuno'r ani alok'oy tuno'r xe' no'n ani kapa'k'i alok'oy tu'yok chor. Ma'cha'ni ub'an kayari e yok'marir koche' kone'r kayari yok'marir tu'suy e jinaj koche' ayan ani me'yra jaja'r i e rum ub'an toyb'ir ani umen e pak'ab'ob'. Utoyo'b' ani uyok e chor ub'an. Uk'ajtyo'b' ani e k'ek'wa'r twa' matuk'a unumse ub'a. B'anixto koche'ra ani katurar ixnix. K'otoy yajk'in e pak'ab'ob' uxejb'o'b' u't e pak'ab' ira uchamsyo'b' i konde chamay. Inton ka'y e takinar ub'an este ke' kone'r ma'chi'x k'ani ak'axi koche' no'n kak'ani. Ma'takix watar e jaja'r.*

I want to relate a story about a *padrino* who was here long ago with us the Ch'orti' people. Long ago there was a man, whose name was Francisco García, or as we say, Chico García, and he had lots of power or lots of ability to pray for rain. It was when they did a ceremony for the rain. He didn't deceive them. When he said to the people, "Let's have a ceremony. The rains are on their way." And when the day arrived and they performed the ceremony he said to the people, "Tomorrow expect the rain" or "Today expect the rain." And thus in this way also he asked the field laborers if they wanted the rains now or if they still wanted to wait. That's how it was. He would also perform a ceremony as the people

wanted. He did not trick them with words. When he made a payment [an offering] in order to ask the angels of God for the rains, his petition was obeyed by God and the rains were sent quickly. When he prayed for the rain there wasn't drought like today. We see lots of drought like today. We see that now the corn no longer sprouts, now the pumpkins no longer sprout, now everything that we plant no longer sprouts, the beans, the *maicillo*, now it's all going to dry up because of the drought. It's just that there is lots of sun while we are waiting for the rain. Today we are seeing that nobody will pray for rain simply because today no one believes anymore, we have lost our beliefs that we use to have when Chico García was alive who prayed for rain. This man prayed for rain and he was able to pray. Thus in this way there was no hunger in the past, everything that was planted in the *milpa*, everything sprouted, everything that we planted sprouted in the *milpa*. Also, we didn't spread fertilizer like we spread fertilizer today in the *milpa* since there was plenty of rain on the land. Also, a payment [an offering] was made by the people. They also made a payment in the *milpa*. They asked for strength so that nothing bad would happen to it. Thus in this way were our lives in the past. The day came that the people despised this person and they killed him. And when he died, then the drought also started. Right up till today it still doesn't rain as we want it too. Now the rains no longer come.

According to several of my older informants who knew Francisco, the group who challenged him to these tests was a mix of believers, members from certain modern religious groups, and others who were suspicious of his possible misuse of powers (read witchcraft). Mistrust and apprehension eventually led to these *padrinos* going into hiding, giving up their practice, or suffering death at the hands of those distrustful of their motives. The cause of the disappearance of rain-making *padrinos*, therefore, was a combination of persecution and a very literal "elimination" (by death) of the once powerful *padrinos*.

#### **1.4. Conceptions of Ritual and "brujería"**

The fear of witchcraft has arguably had the strongest impact on the disappearance of ceremonial practices, and along with them, a significant portion of the poetic tradition

among the Ch'orti'. Much of the suspicion surrounding traditional ceremonies stems from an association with actual practitioners of witchcraft. Workers of black magic in Ch'orti' are known as *ajna't*, 'knowers', or *ajb'a'x*, 'sorcerers'. Wisdom also recorded the term *ajposoner* (Wisdom 1950), which is equivalent to another form used today, *ajpus ojroner* (lit. 'one who throws words', i.e. one who casts a spell). Sorcerers are both hated and feared by the Ch'orti' (cf. Wisdom 1940:334). *Brujos* are blamed for a myriad of illness and even deaths in the Ch'orti' area. Let me illustrate the perceived basis for this fear and distrust surrounding those who practice black magic with the text of curse of a *brujo*. Among the Ch'orti', one of the more common maladies seen as a direct result of *brujería* is partial or complete loss of vision, both involving severe eye pains for the individual. The following short text is one of the prayers of a *brujo* to the planet Venus in order to cast such a spell:

*Don Paskwal de Lusero Briyante,*  
*Briyador.*  
*Ch'a'r usaktokarir o'k,*  
*Ch'a'r usaktokarir akwerpo,*  
*Tya' a'si wate't tama e Pwerta Poniente Kristo,*  
*Don Paskwal de Lusero Briyante.*  
*Ink'ajti usaktokarir oy't,*  
*usaktokarir akwerpo.*  
*Ink'ajti uyempanyir uch'ijrje'yr o'yt,*  
*uch'ijrje'yr ak'ab' tu'naku't Jwan.*  
*Ink'ajti ubriyador uyespejir o'k,*  
*uyespesir ak'ab'.*  
 Don Pascual of the Bright Star,  
 Bright One.  
 Lying is the blurring of your eyes,  
 Lying is the blurring of your body,  
 Where you come to play in the Western Portal of Christ,  
 Don Pascual of the Bright Star.

I ask for the blurring of your eyes,  
the blurring of your body,  
I ask for the blurring of the water-increasing of your eyes,  
the water-increasing of your hands in the eyes of Juan.  
I ask for the shininess of the mirror of your eyes,  
the mirror of your hands.

The result of this the curse is not just blindness, but excruciating pain over a long period of time. Note the vivid (and poetic) description given to me by a Ch'orti' healer on how workers of black magic use the planet Venus in casting spells with agonizing results:

*E luser xe' k'ob'ir koche'ra ja'xto e ti'n uk'ajtyo'b' e ti'n aketpa naku'tob',  
k'ani awitk'a*

*anaku'tob.*

*Ja'x e ti'n ajna't yajjentob' uk'ajtyo'b'.*

*Ja'xto ch'a'r takar uprinsipo u'tob',*

*take' e nukir lusera,*

*Prinsipo de Lusero.*

*Ch'a'r taka ub'osya'n jararyo'b',*

*Ch'a'r atanlum ujararyo'b',*

*Ch'a'r atanlum.*

*War apok'omyo'b',*

*War t'ot'omya'n jararyo'b'.*

*Ajch'ujrja' Ausente de Lusero,*

*Ajch'ujrja' Ausente de Lusera de Don Paskwal,*

*Nube de Pulsera.*

*Ch'a'r ach'ujje'yr jarari'.*

*War ab'osya'n,*

*War atanlum jararyo'b'.*

*Ch'a'r amotz'mo'b' jararyo'b',*

*War amotz'mo'b' b'akyo'b ya'.*

*Atz'u'ya'n jararyo'b',*

*War atzaksa'n,*

*War alojya'n.*

The star that is big like this, that's the one to which some people ask that the eyes of some others remain shut,

your eyes will burst open.

The ones who ask this are people who work in black magic.



analogous 'dark' counterpart to nearly all traditional practices. For example, the *Limosna* ceremony is performed in the milpa by digging holes to deposit offerings at night to protect the milpa and ensure a good harvest. Similarly, however, certain curses are done in precisely the same manner: digging holes in the milpa and putting offerings in at night. (One difference between them is that in the *Limosna* ceremony one must face east during the prayer whereas *brujos* must always face to the west in the field when praying "so it will be forgotten.") Healers have the power to cure, but also have the power to curse. Candles are common object used by healers to petition the deity as well as the principal objects used by *brujos* in placing a curse on someone<sup>9</sup>. *Naipes* or 'playing cards' are used by healers to determine diseases, and likewise are used by *brujos* to cast spells. Both healers and sorcerers first consult with their *zajorín*, or divining calf before performing a ceremony. While significantly more common in the last generation according to many consultants, there are still some Ch'orti' who pray to Venus with multiple candles as offerings in order to secure protection and certain blessings. Similarly, as mentioned above, workers of black magic also pray to the Morning Star in order to cast spells to blind someone. It is no wonder then that the practice of many such traditional ceremonies might easily be misconstrued as the actual practice of witchcraft. On another level, as I have already mentioned, for growing number of Ch'orti' and *ladinos* (i.e. non-indigenous person), traditional practices of all kinds *are themselves* "evil" and "of the devil." In other words, many traditional ceremonies are outright viewed as *brujería*

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<sup>9</sup> Ch'orti' healers use three principal types of candles: a long, thick candle called a *sirio*, smaller candles called *esritos*, and very small candles known as *korreos* since they 'send' the healers message to heaven.

under any circumstances. The conflict is often settled by violence and/or intimidation, resulting in death, or at least the abandonment of the 'objectionable' practices. In this combative struggle between traditional and modern, the poetic prayers and ritual chants associated with such traditional practices have become casualties of war. Even in text from the curse given above, the highly poetic language used in these contexts is immediately apparent. The length to which I have gone to illustrate the decline of much of Ch'orti' ceremonialism is necessary I feel to properly describe the backdrop for a waning poetic tradition that in large part subsists in these ceremonial contexts.

### **1.5. The Survival of a Poetic Tradition**

The major portion of remaining poetic discourse today among the Ch'orti' resides within the curing chants of the few healers who still operate in various Ch'orti' communities. The rain-making *padrinos* of the past are all but gone, or only practice clandestinely. In 15 months of fieldwork, I was unable to locate a single traditional rain-making *padrino* functioning at the community organizational level in all the Ch'orti'-speaking areas where I worked. The majority of Ch'orti' today believe that in most areas rain-making *padrinos* no longer exist, and have not for decades (except perhaps in Quetzaltepeque and areas of northern Honduras). Today, the art of poetic structuring most visibly survives in the healing texts of traditional curers. It is safe to say that there are very few ritual specialists today on a community-wide basis who make use of poetic discourse forms in regular prayers and chants in Ch'orti'-speaking areas. Instead, knowledge of poetic styles is primarily being passed down to a handful of traditional

healing apprentices today. Most healers have indicated to me that they do not know of any among the present generation who are studying the craft, and they fear its disappearance within 20 or 30 years. I have met a few individuals who were in training with healers who were in their mid 20's and 30's. (Fortunately, I am sure that my experiences are reflective of only a part of the story, and that there are other healers and those in training beyond that which I was able to discover.) While certain poetic features in oral narratives are still employed today by the older generation, I would not classify these as representative of a fully productive literary tradition (in terms of established rhetorical devices known in most Mayan languages). In many cases, those narrators who include poetic devices in their narratives have had some experience as healers, or have used specialized ritual prayers in field ceremonies, house dedications, weddings, etc. in the past. The younger generation of Ch'orti' narrators shows almost no familiarity with any of the poetic devices discussed below in this chapter. Those Ch'orti' of the older generation who still make use of the ancient poetic styles represent a very small percentage of the population. Therefore, I do not consider such usage representative of a thriving poetic tradition, but instead as artifacts of a tradition that will likely fall into near disuse within the next few generations. Ch'orti' traditional healers, or *curanderos*, are without a doubt, the principal conservators of poetic forms of speech today. It can be safely stated that in them remain the last vestiges of a once-vibrant poetic tradition in the Ch'orti' area.

## 1.6. Metadiscourses of Poetics in Ch'orti'

As I have mentioned, the younger Ch'orti' generation is not being exposed to poetic discourse to the extent that even their parents were. Consequently, they do not have as clear an understanding of even the forms of poetic features of these past oral styles. In order to determine what knowledge of poetics is still had in the Ch'orti' area, I did a considerable amount of interviewing with Ch'orti' speakers of all ages, specifically trying to ascertain their conception of just what is 'poetic' for the Ch'orti'. I find the following comments of a 90-plus year-old consultant of mine particularly revealing about the Ch'orti' notion of poetics. After reciting to her four couplet phrases in Ch'orti' as an example, I asked her directly why certain Ch'orti' speakers use this style of speech. She answered without hesitation: "*Así hablan los ángeles*," or "Thus speak the angels." She further explained that she had been taught by her grandfather that "speaking in two" (i.e. in couplets) was appropriate when praying since that was how heavenly beings speak. This reference to "speaking in two" was the first instance of a metalanguage for talking about poetic style that I had encountered. Many Ch'orti' understand the general repetitive, parallel nature of ritual texts without necessarily being able to define this process easily in words. Consultants regularly could easily *demonstrate* a few simple couplets, but very often could not *describe* them. On several occasions, when I questioned older consultants about distinguishing features between ritual prayers and everyday speech, they had trouble explaining the difference without resorting to giving me examples of parallel structures. While parallelism is without question the most common rhetorical device in use among the Ch'orti' today, as far as I been able to

determine, there seems to be no standard metalanguage for discussing the notion of couplets among the Ch'orti'. While the above reference to the angels "speaking in two" provides evidence of limited metalinguistic terminology referring to couplets, I was not able to confirm this with others outside of this one particular instance.

Most Ch'orti' over forty years of age with whom I spoke related couplet speech to curing rites and other ritual contexts. Other Ch'orti' simply associated parallelistic forms with religious prayers. Some, especially elder Ch'orti', make a connection to what a 72 year-old consultant described as "*onya'n ojroner*," or "ancient speech." Such terminology is reminiscent of the '*antivo k'opetik*, or "ancient speech" of the Tzotzil of Chamula (Gossen 1974:398; 1984:105-109) and the *poko k'op*, or "ancient speech" of the Tzeltal (Stross 1974:215). One consultant from Suchiquer mentioned to me that his father "knew the prayers and *the way to say them*" (emphasis mine). The "way to say them" referred to his ability to properly formulate a prayer in couplet style. When asked directly about certain specific poetic devices (other than couplets), almost all the Ch'orti' I have spoken with were unable to explicate their usage (indeed, even their existence). Healers, on the other hand, are cognizant of many of these structural forms, but often had very little to say about them, especially in terms of their textual function. One consultant (about 45 years old) commented that second stich couplet augmentation (this will be discussed further below) was a means of adding a sense of "elegance" to speech. In most cases, however, explicit details surrounding the functional meaning of each poetic device in Ch'orti' must remain a matter of non-native (i.e. my) interpretation for the time being. I am confident, however, that there is more knowledge about poetics than my experience

and research was able to discover. Further research with older Ch'orti' speakers will likely improve our understanding of the Ch'orti' perspective on the use of poetic devices.

### **1.7. Modern Ch'orti' Poetry: A 'Native' Perspective**

Finnegan has criticized the functional approaches to native literatures that imply that 'primitive people' have no understanding of aesthetics (1970; 1976). Similarly, Babcock cautions against invalid assumptions that native narratives "are fundamentally different from 'our' literary ones," thereby requiring a different set of criteria by which they should be analyzed" (1984:63). For my purposes here, I have selected several avenues of investigation which, it is hoped, will lead to an accurate assessment on the nature of poetics from the perspective of the Ch'orti'. Beyond a metadiscourse about poetic features, we can also look to modern works of Ch'orti' poetry in order to determine what the authors were trying to accomplish through language and structure. Fortunately, a small collection of modern poetic works recently appeared that was included in *Concurso Literario: Idioma Ch'orti'* (Tohom Gutierrez 1999). The context for the creation of these poems was that a group of Ch'orti' speakers was asked to compose an original 'poetic' work in Ch'orti' for inclusion in a published work by the *K'ulb'il Yol Twitz Paxil*, or *Academia de Lenguas Maya de Guatemala*. None of the Ch'orti' participants in this project had had any formal training in poetry, be it Spanish or Ch'orti', and had little or no experience using traditional Ch'orti' poetic styles (through their position as a healer or otherwise). This provides a unique lens through which to investigate just what these Ch'orti' authors considered to be 'poetic'. The authors decided

to express themselves in the form of lyrics of a song or through poems. Topics were varied, but mainly revolved around issues on the Ch'orti' language. Many of these poems were beautifully crafted and deserve recognition as perhaps the first published modern Ch'orti' poetry. The following is a discussion of the poetic features of five of these modern Ch'orti' poetic compositions. All translations are my own. Also, in all of the poems below, I make amendments (as few as possible) to the orthography on occasion to correct major errors in transcription found in the published version. The original arrangement of lines is preserved.

Poem 1:

***Uk'ampesna'r e Ch'orti'***

*(K'ay)*

1. *Inwa'ryo'x pya'rox kana'tik e Ch'orti',*
2. *tya' wa'rtaka war katakre ka'xin kak'otoy.*
3. *Kakani xe' turo'b' tama e kanseyaj,*
4. *uk'anyo'b' twa' kakano.*
  
5. *Tya' taka war kak'ub'eyan,*
6. *ka'xin kak'otoy katajwi imb'on.*
7. *Tama tuno'r e ojroner ya'yan inte',*
8. *ink'ani imb'on erer ja'x e Ch'orti'.*
  
9. *Ja'x xe' ne'n ink'ani,*
10. *tamar era inwa'ryo'x me'rer iwakta,*
11. *tya' war katakre a'xin, xe' turo'b'.*
  
12. *Tama e ajkanseyaj xe' uchekswob',*
13. *takaron tama tuno'r xe' anumuy,*
14. *tama e turer Ch'orti'.*

Poem 1:

**The Use of Ch'orti'**

**(song)**

1. I say to my friends let's learn Ch'orti'!
2. Wherever we are, we are helping, we are going to succeed.
3. We learn that which is in the teaching,
4. we have to learn.
5. When we are simply believing,
6. we are going to succeed in finding much.
7. Among all the languages there is but one,
8. what I want the most is to be able to speak Ch'orti'.
  
9. That is what I want,
10. because of this I say to you all you can't give up,
11. when we are helping those live here.
  
12. Among the teachers who clarify things,
13. with us in all that happens,
14. in the Ch'orti' area.

Poem # 1 was composed as a song. Lines 1-6 show alliteration and consonance in the repetition of the hard consonant /k/, especially from lines 2-3 and 5-6. Similarly, lines 10-14 all begin with the consonant /t/ and lines 13-14 are highly alliterative in their use of the consonant /t/. In addition, grammatical parallelism is present in lines 10-14 all of which begin with /t/-initial prepositions.

Poem 2:

**E K'ulb'il Yol Twitz Paxil**

1. *Niwojroner war ab'ixk'a, i ja'x upejk'en,*
2. *niyuxinar inwajk'u twa' ukorpa'r.*
3. *Ojronik chi k'ani o'jron xe' ma'chi ak'ampa.*
4. *Ne'n niwojroner ma'chi innajpes.*
  
5. *Insati nisaksak b'ujk, insati nixanab',*
6. *ne'n niwojroner ma'chi inwakta asatpa.*

7. *Ojronik chi k'ani o'jron xe' ma'chi ak'ampa.*
8. *Ne'n niwojroner ma'chi innajpes.*
  
9. *Ch'ajb'eyr twa' e katata' tame' K'ulb'il war utakryo'n,*
10. *twa' ak'untz'a ub'ixirar kawojroner.*
11. *Ojronik chi k'ani o'jron xe' ma'chi ak'ampa,*
12. *Ne'n niwojroner ma'chi innajpes.*
  
13. *E saksak winikob' utijresob' tuno'r,*
14. *upatna'rob' e b'ajxan pak'ab'ob'.*
15. *Upatana'rob', chi k'ani o'jron xe' machi'x ak'ampa.*
16. *Ne'n niwojroner ma'chi innajpes.*

Poem 2:

**The Academy of Mayan Languages, Guatemala**

1. My language is living, and it is what speaks to me,
2. I would give my heart (life) to protect it.
3. Let speak he who wants to speak what serves no purpose.
4. My language I will never forget.
  
5. I have lost my white clothing, I have lost my sandals,
6. but my language I will not let be lost.
7. Let speak he who wants to speak what serves no purpose.
8. My language I will never forget.
  
9. Thanks be to God for the ALMG for helping us,
10. for giving life to our language.
11. Let speak he who wants to speak what serves no purpose.
12. My language I will never forget.
  
13. The foreigners have destroyed everything,
14. the work of the first people (ancestors).
15. Their work, he who wants to speak what now serves no purpose.
16. My language I will never forget.

Poem #2 has a markedly more structured style than the other four poems. What is immediately apparent is the exact repetition in the final two lines in three of the four stanzas: "Let speak he who wants to speak what serves no purpose. My language I will

never forget." It is only the final stanza (lines 13-16) where the last two lines (15-16) are not repeated verbatim. Instead, the author deletes the phrase "*ojronik*," "let speak," and appends the deictic clitic *-ix* to the term "*ma'chi*," "no," resulting in "*machi'x*," "now no." After having established a pattern in the previous three stanzas, the breaking of expectation has a powerful poetic effect at the end of the poem. Line 5 contains a classic example of a semantic couplet (or identical parallelism):

5. <i>Insati nisaksak b'ujk,</i>	I have lost my white clothing,
<i>Insati nixanab',</i>	I have lost my sandals,

In the first line, *saksak b'ujk* refers to the traditional white clothing worn by males in Ch'orti' society. Once a proud cultural marker for Ch'orti' men, today it is hardly ever worn of fear of discrimination from the *ladino* community. Similarly, *xanab'* are specifically the traditional sandals used by Ch'orti' men (known as *caite* in Spanish), which, while more common than the white clothing today, are also steadily being replaced by western-style sneakers or boots. The author of this poem clearly associates these two items of his traditional *traje* as symbols of Ch'orti' culture.<sup>10</sup> Note also the poetic contrast that the author sets up by stating in the first line of the stanza (line 5) that while these important cultural markers have been lost, he will not allow his language to be lost. Lines 9-10 contain an example of an identical shape and related meaning parallelism:

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that in Yukatek the paired expression "pants and sandals" is a kenning for "religion," showing just how closely related specific clothing can be to cultural and religious ideology (León-Portilla and Shorris 2001; cf. Edmonson 1986).

9. *Ch'ajb'eyr twa' e katata' tame' K'ulb'il war utakryo'n,*  
 10. *twa' ak'untz'a ub'ixirar kawojroner.*
9. Thanks be to God for the ALMG for helping us,  
 10. for giving life to our language.

The couplet shows ellipsis in the line-initial term "*ch'ajb'eyr*," "thanks," in the second stich. The complement phrase of each preposition is semantically related, equating the 'help of the ALMG' with the "giving of life to our language." Lines 13-14 also contain a nice example of synonymous parallelism showing second line-initial ellipsis together with augmentation and elaboration:

13. *E saksak winikob' utijresob' tuno'r,*  
 14. *upatna'rob' e b'ajxan pak'ab'ob'.*
13. The foreigners have destroyed everything,  
 14. the work of the first people (ancestors).

The foreigners (lit. "white men") are said to have destroyed (lit. 'dismantled', 'put in disorder') "everything" in line 13. This final term is then amplified and explained in line 14 in parallel fashion by clarifying that "everything" refers to "the work of the first people," that is, their ancestors. Finally, the last line of each stanza is the only one repeated verbatim throughout, thereby emphasizing its message: "My language I will never forget."

Poem 3:  
**Uk'ek'wa'r e Ojroner Ch'orti'**

1. *Kawojroner ye' na'tanyaj,*  
 2. *war ani awayan kocha inte'*

3. *k'opot xe' axujra yer unuk',*
4. *umen e morajtun pak'ab'ob'.*
  
5. *Ye'ra war asutpa ab'ixk'a,*
6. *ya a'chpa kocha inte' tajte',*
7. *a'xin wa'kchetaka tichan,*
  
8. *Nukta' ajkanseyajox morojsenik ib'a twa' ixpathna.*
9. *Upater kawojroner Ch'orti'.*
10. *Era ja'x uyojroner e K'ulb'il Yol Twitz Paxil*
11. *patne'nik.*

Poem 3:

### **The Strength of the Ch'orti' Language**

1. Our language and our knowledge,
2. were sleeping like a
3. plant that was cut at its neck,
4. by the *ladinos*.
  
5. And now it is returning to life,
6. there it is rising up like a pine tree,
7. going quickly upward,
  
8. You wonderful teachers, gather yourselves to work,
9. on behalf of our Ch'orti' language!
10. This is the language of K'ulb'il Yol Twitz Paxil,
11. go to work!

The author of Poem #3 uses simile as his primary poetic tool. Simile, metaphor, and other forms of figurative language are major elements within poetry, and are especially appropriate in performance (Bauman 1984:17). In the first stanza (lines 1-4), the author creates a dramatic metaphorical image of the language and knowledge of Ch'orti' people as (*kocha*) a 'sleeping plant' that was "cut at the neck" by the non-Ch'orti' of that area.

This somber simile sets that backdrop for the contrastive simile of hope that follows:

"And now it is returning to life, there it is rising up like (*kocha*) a pine tree, going quickly upward." Here the language of the Ch'orti' is likened to a tall pine tree (a symbol of strength and fortitude for the Ch'orti') that is growing and advancing. Through the use of contrastive agricultural similes, this author constructs a vivid mental picture describing the repression of the past to the strength and progress of the present and future for the Ch'orti' people. The final stanza (lines 7-10) breaks the descriptive tone of the poem up until this point and poetically injects a series of exhortative and exclamative phrases.

Poem 4:

**E Ojroner Ch'orti'**

1. *Yaja' war ak'ajna e ojroner Ch'orti',*
2. *satpi'x, ma'chi una'to'b' jay sutpi'x b'ixk'a,*
3. *intza'y ture'n tame' Maya Ch'orti', chicken tya' chicken,*
4. *niwojroner Ch'orti' ma'chi innajpes.*
  
5. *E Ch'ortyo'b' b'ixir, turo'b,' me'ra, me'ra asatpo'b',*
6. *kocha che e mojr pya'rob',*
7. *e Ch'ortyo'b' machi'x ak'ampo'b',*
8. *ma'chi insub'ajra inwa're, Mayen.*
  
9. *Chicken tya' chicken, ne'n o'jnron ta niwojroner Ch'orti',*
10. *inkwi'k tuno'ron pya'rox inkwi'k,*
11. *katz'ijb'i'k kawojroner, ira kasub'ajra,*
12. *tame'ja'x e b'ajxan ojroner.*

Poem 4:

**The Ch'orti' Language**

1. There it is being said that the Ch'orti' language,
2. disappeared, they didn't know if was going to be revived,
3. I'm happy to be among the Ch'orti' Maya, come what may,
4. my Ch'orti' language I will not forget.

5. The Ch'orti' are alive, they live, they have not yet disappeared,
  6. like the other folks say,
  7. the Ch'orti' are good for nothing,
  8. I am not ashamed to say, "I'm Maya."
- 
9. Come what may, I will speak in my Ch'orti' language,
  10. Let's go all my friends! Let's go!
  11. Let's write our language! Let's not be ashamed,
  12. about this the original language!

The author of Poem #4 uses synonyms in line 5, "alive, they live, they have not yet disappeared." In addition, the term *me'ra*, "not yet," is repeated in Line 5 for emphatic purposes. Line 8, the final line of the second stanza, contains a monocolon that breaks from the previous three lines that were part of a single thought. The poetic effect of the monocolon is the emphasis of the crucial point, "I am not ashamed to say, 'I'm Maya!'"

The repetition of imperative forms creates a grammatical parallelism as the poem finishes.

Poem 5:

**B'ijnusyaj Ch'orti'**

1. *Uwarar e k'in, ye' makchan,*
  2. *taka utz'ijb'ar uchektes*
  3. *yu'bixk'es e ojroner Ch'orti'*
  4. *xe' war ani awayan kocha inte'*
  5. *uch'ajnar ch'um taka uyutir,*
  6. *xurb'ir uwi'r umen e morajtun*
  7. *pak'ab'ob' ixni'x.*
- 
8. *Era war asutpa a'chpa*
  9. *kocha inte' tokar,*
  10. *twa' uwech'e e chijrja' a'xin*
  11. *tama tuno'r uxor e rum Ch'orti',*
  12. *pak'i'k u't e ch'um, kuxpak,*
  13. *ch'i'k, uyu'yari'k uyutir.*

Poem 5:

### Ch'orti' Thought

1. The rays of the sun, and the rainbow,
2. with its colors it makes it appear
3. and it brings to life, the Ch'orti' language
4. that was sleeping like a
5. squash vine with fruit,
6. its roots cut by the *ladinos* long ago.
  
7. Now it is rising again
8. like a cloud
9. in order to go sprinkling showers
10. on all over the surface of the Ch'orti' land
11. Let's plant squash! Let's sprout!
12. Let's grow! And let's bear fruit!

This final poem uses nearly an equivalent simile to the one we saw in Poem #3. In this case, the Ch'orti' language is compared to a squash vine with fruit (*uch'ajnar ch'um taka uyutir*) who has its roots cut by the *morajtun pak'ab'ob'*, a common term for *ladinos*, i.e. non-Ch'orti' or non-Maya. Precisely in the same way that the author of Poem #3 sets up a contrastive simile between the first two stanzas, the author of Poem #5 paints a picture of past struggles and oppression (lines 4-6) that is then contrasted with the image of a cloud (the Ch'orti' people and language) 'rising up' (progressing, advancing) and sprinkling showers over the Ch'orti' area (spreading the knowledge of their culture and language) (lines 7-10). The poem ends by invoking string of agricultural metaphors in a vocative call for all Ch'orti' to take matters into their own hands: "Let's plant squash!" (Let's cultivate our culture and knowledge!), "Let's sprout!" (Let's begin learning!), "Let's grow!" (Let's progress!), and "...Let's bear fruit!" (Let's be productive!). Grammatical

repetition of the imperative form within these metaphors adds to the overall poetic effect of the message.

These five short poems by ordinary Ch'orti' (i.e. no specialized training in this area) allow us to make some general conclusions as to what these authors were trying to do in an effort to create 'poetry'. First, the description of poetic features within these poems was not meant to be exhaustive, but only illustrative. Many other points could have been discussed but were not for the sake of brevity. Among the features noted above, however, several patterns quickly emerge. Perhaps foremost is the consistent use of repetition (parallelism) as a rhetorical device. The repetition was both grammatical and semantic. Also, contrastive similes were used by several authors across stanzas. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, a wide variety of couplet structures did not appear in any of these texts. This could reflect the lack of exposure to traditional forms of poetic discourse in the daily lives of the authors (a strong possibility as I will argue below). Another possibility is that well-formed couplets are often difficult to create. The author of Poem #2 did pen a wonderful example of an identical parallelism (semantic couplet) in line 5. Several instances of synonymous parallelism also appeared in Poem 2 in lines 9-10 and lines 13-14. The latter also contains a good example of ellipsis in the initial-element of the second line of the stanza. Consonance and alliteration were clearly apparent in Poem 1 at several points in the text. Vocative or exclamative interjections were used a number of times to break the narrative flow of the poem. Similarly, imperatives introduced other grammatical moods into the otherwise indicative clauses. Finally, the use of monocolons for emphatic purposes was seen in line 8 of Poem #4.

What can we learn from this short descriptive analysis of these modern Ch'orti' poetic compositions? For this group of Ch'orti' authors, repetition, identical couplets, synonymous couplets, simile, specific agricultural metaphors, alliteration, mood and person shift, and controlled line and stanza length were the most notable features of their poems. From this, we could deduce that these represent some of the rhetorical devices which they associate with 'poetry'. By way of caution, it should also be noted that the authors might also consider other stylistic features 'poetic', but were not adept in producing them. In addition, there may be some other features they consider poetic but that I have not noted here. Regardless of this and other possible complicating factors in this data analysis, this investigation still reveals several important characteristics of 'poetry' in the eyes of the modern Ch'orti'. At the end of the next chapter, I will compare these features with the poetic devices encountered in ritual and oral narrative contexts to see the points of correspondence.

### **1.8. Sources of Ritual and Narrative Data for Poetic Analysis**

Curing rites represent the primary data source for this study of Ch'orti' poetics. In terms of structural poetics, curing texts are rich and highly productive in terms of content and archaic syntactic forms. Metaphorical extension, assonance, alliteration, and numerous other poetic devices found in Western poetry are regularly employed in these curing prayers. While this study also hoped to draw heavily upon ritual texts (e.g. agricultural ceremonies, new house dedications, etc.) for analysis of poetic content, this was made nearly impossible since the Ch'orti' have virtually abandoned most of these

rites. Fortunately, I was able to record two field ceremony prayers in Ch'orti, one in Spanish, and fragments of prayers from other rituals that represent some of the only known written forms of many of these rites. One English translation of a field ceremony was also provided by Helen Oakley (1966:240-241). Girard included four ritual texts (in translation only) and an abbreviated oral narrative (1995 [1962]). I collected about 50 curing texts for all sorts of maladies from 12 different healers with whom I worked, of which 40% were female healers and 60% were male. Some of these texts were as short as two minutes, while others lasted over an hour of continuous praying. Three curing prayers (or excerpts from curing prayers) from Fought's *Ch'orti' (Mayan) Texts* (1972) were included. While the curing prayers in Fought's texts were given in written form by his main consultant Isidro González, who was not a trained healer, they are still remarkably consistent with pure Ch'orti' healing tradition and contain a wealth of important data. These 60 or so texts (as well as numerous fragmented sections of prayers given during interviews in my data) comprise the texts for the poetic analysis of ritual texts.

### **1.9. The Presence and Absence of Poetic Discourse**

While the major thrust of this study focuses on the stylistic features of ritual language, this is not meant to imply that more natural speech situations are void of poetic structuring. In fact, Ch'orti' traditional oral narratives do make use of certain rhetorical devices, albeit on a limited scale compared to ritual language. Couplets, the principal poetic structuring unit in Mayan languages, do appear in oral narratives on occasion.

Formal ritual contexts, however, account for roughly 95% of couplet use among the Ch'orti' today. The Tzotzil-speaking Chamula of the Highlands of Chiapas, according to Gossen, also make copious use of couplets "whenever they speak formally, in whatever genre, for whatever reason" (1978:271). Stross similarly notes that among Tzeltal speakers, parallelism "is particularly apparent in more formal types of discourse" (2000:249-250). Unlike K'iche' (Christenson 2000:19), and several other Mayan languages (see Brody 1993), Ch'orti' daily speech does not commonly utilize traditional poetics structures, such as couplets, triplets, etc. (but see below). It is also interesting to note that out of the 80 or so Ch'orti' oral narratives I have personally collected, there is a clear distinction between younger and older narrators in terms of poetic style. At least in my data, narrators under thirty rarely or never incorporated rhetorical devices into their narrations. In fact, the oldest narrators were those who consistently seemed most familiar with poetic structuring techniques. While certainly not surprising, there is also a substantial increase in the use of poetic styles in the oral narratives by elderly Ch'orti'. Additionally, the daily speech of Ch'orti' healers displays considerably more poetic forms than the rest of the Ch'orti' population. Let me illustrate this with one example. In healing texts a very common couplet is "*Pero k'otoy e diya, k'otoy e ora,*" "But the day has arrived, the hour has arrived." One elderly Ch'orti' gentleman who had worked as a healer many years before used this same couplet in an oral narrative:

*K'otoy e diya,  
K'otoy e tyempo.*

The day arrived,  
The time arrived.

The similarity in these expressions suggests to me that the narrator was drawing upon poetic forms that he used as a healer in the past. During an interview with a Ch'orti' healer in 2001 in Spanish, I was struck by his use of couplets (and triplets) in *explanations* of healing rites. The following are excerpts from this interview:

Example 1:

*"¿Cómo quieren que parezca una persona sin causa,  
sin motivo?"*  
"How do they want a person to suffer without cause,  
without motive?"

Example 2:

*Entonces vamos averigüando con Dios al tribunal del cielo,  
tribunal de la gloria.*  
Then we go finding out with God at the tribunal of the sky,  
tribunal of the heavens.

Example 3:

*Si no pasamos hasta 18 juzgado del cielo,  
de la gloria.*  
If we don't pass on to the 18th judgement of the sky,  
of the heavens.

Example 4:

*Podemos tener unas averigüanzas hasta el corte supremo del cielo,  
de la gloria.*  
We have some findings out until the supreme court of the sky,  
of the heavens.

Example 5:

*Hay muchas justicias donde viene alrededor del mundo,  
alrededor del cielo.*  
There are many evil spirits where they come around the world,  
around the sky.

In Example 1, he forms a couplet with "...*sin causa, sin motivo,*" "without cause, without malicious motive," a standard couplet or part of a triplet in healing rites. For example:



essentially designated as 'Conqueror of Everything'. Poetic expressions are freely borrowed into other genres of speech by healers who are well acquainted with them. Therefore, in some cases, poetic forms that appear in oral narratives given by healers or ex-healers may be less indicative of an active poetic tradition in oral narratives than might otherwise be assumed.

In most cases, the clearest correlation can be made between speaker's age and their use of rhetorical devices in oral narratives. Out of the hundreds of Ch'orti' oral narratives I examined, many contained the unmistakable use of rhetorical devices at certain points within the text. Other texts lacked both poetic structural features and any notion of intertextuality, and as such read as pure prose. With only rare exception, texts from younger narrators did not use any of the standard poetic structuring devices found elsewhere in Ch'orti'. This startling fact brings into sharp focus the precarious state of poetic discourse in Ch'orti' today.

In order to begin this discussion on Ch'orti' poetics I am inclined to divide this study into two primary sections. First, I will treat instances of poetic features in ritual texts, including curing and other ceremonial texts. Subsequently, in Chapter 2, I will do a large-scale analysis of oral narrative texts. The rationale behind this division lies in my assumption that ritual poetics and story telling poetics may not share all of the same features. Indeed, ascertaining dissimilarities along with similarities between ritual and narrative texts is an important facet of this study. A full comparative analysis between poetic usage in fluid, naturally-occurring oral narratives and that found in ritualized, (often) codified ritual texts may in the end produce significant, quantifiable data on poetic

function and use. Since ritual texts make use of considerably more rhetorical devices than oral narratives, beginning this study with them will enable me to define the major categories of poetic features from the outset. What I hope to present is a cogent description of the magnificent verbal artistry shown by both Ch'orti' ritual specialists and narrators of oral texts that will allow the reader to fully appreciate the poetic sophistication of Ch'orti' narrators and prayer sayers.

### **1.10. Curing Rites, Ritual, and Poetics**

In the study of Ch'orti' poetics, the principal area of research lies in the enigmatic realm of Ch'orti' curing texts. These prayers of Ch'orti' healers that abound with poetic features are a veritable wellspring of information about poetic structuring, Ch'orti' world view, cause and effect in Ch'orti' society, and frozen linguistic forms of speech. Archaic terms and grammatical features are a hallmark of Ch'orti' curing discourse (in spite of the fact that many healers do not now understand their much of their meaning and function themselves). Two explanations for the presence of these ancient forms are readily available. First, traditional healers, as ritual priests, would tap into reserves of specialized vocabulary, or better, a ritual language relevant to the discourse of curing as part of their trade. Second, the use of archaic words and obsolete grammatical forms served as a distancing device that distinguished the speech of the healers from that of non-specialists. Since the time of the conquest, Spanish vocabulary has been steadily incorporated into curing chants by Ch'orti' healers for the same end. Code switching and lexical borrowing from Spanish soon became a tool in the hands of the community

healers to reinforce their position and status. In the strongly monolingual hamlets of the past, Spanish, as the language that signified power and prestige, was quickly adapted by healers into their ritual prayers. This large-scale borrowing of principally lexical forms resulted in the falling into disuse of many ancient terms for ritually-related items such as altars, *incensarios*, and scores of other terms associated with ceremonial practices and Otherworld conceptions. It is important to note that in many cases what was borrowed was the Spanish form, not necessarily the Spanish meaning. Many of these terms have been heavily reinterpreted and lexicalized. Today, Spanish loan words and forms comprise a significant portion of curing texts, even though most of the Ch'orti' population today speaks Spanish (in contrast to even 60 years ago when largely monolingual communities were much more common). Thus, the inclusion of Spanish terms no longer represents a statement of power and prestige for the healers to the extent it did in the past. The unfortunate consequence of the displacement of such a large number of ritual terms in the past is the complete disappearance of many of these forms from the Ch'orti' language. Ch'orti' healing prayers, then, stand at the intersection of use of archaisms and modern borrowings in an effort to create distinctive forms of speech for reasons relating to power and prestige (cf. Brody 1995:135).

The presence of a large number of Spanish terms in Ch'orti' curing rites can also be attributed to more pragmatic causes. Since *parallelsimus membrorum* forms the structural core of poetic discourse in most languages of Mesoamerica, the process of creating complementary second stichs to couplets would be greatly facilitated by the existence of a second language from which to draw terminology (cf. Bricker 1974:372;

Brody 1995:139; Bonvillain 1997:320-321). In fact, Ch'orti' healers and ritual priests have three separate forms of speech available to them: archaic forms not otherwise in use today, modern spoken Ch'orti', and Spanish loan words. By way of example, in Yucatek Spanish loan words in the couplets of narrative texts are a common occurrence (Mudd 1979:50). In terms of importance on a compositional level, Mudd notes that out of 178 loan words in a single narrative text 129 were the focus of the parallelism in the couplet (1979:51). For Yucatekan narratives Mudd (1979:58) concluded that

...Spanish loan words constitute an integral aspect of Yucatec narrative parallelism. As an important element in this pervasive stylistic device, they enhance the similarity and contrast operative at the various linguistic levels—phonological, semantic, grammatical, and syntactic.

While there are a considerable number of instances of code switching, I believe that most Spanish words used in Ch'orti' ritual contexts should be classified as loan words. As I will discuss further below, loan words comprise a large portion of many healing texts. Ch'orti' healers take advantage of their knowledge of Spanish terms for inclusion in the second stich of a stanza:

<i>Koche b'an atz'i <u>ik'ab'a'</u>,</i>	As thus are your names,
<i>b'an atz'i <u>inombre</u>, Señor.</i>	Thus are your names, Masters.

The choice of *inombre*, 'your names' (plural suffixes are commonly omitted in Ch'orti' speech, and nearly always so in loan words in curing texts where lexicalization has occurred), may have been motivated by the lack of a clear synonym for *k'ab'a'*, 'name' in Ch'orti'. A related case of lexical borrowing utilizes the verbal form 'to name':

*Tya' achpe'n inche't nombrar,  
Ink'ab'ajsye't.*

Where I rise up I name you,  
I name you.

The derived transitive verb *k'ab'ajse* 'to name' (from the nominal form *k'ab'a'*, 'name') in the second line is paired with the Spanish verb *nombrar* 'to name' in the first line. In standard fashion when a Spanish verb is used in Ch'orti', the borrowed form is preceded by the verb *che*, meaning 'to do' or 'to make', which together translate simply as 'to name'. Note also the use of the Spanish form in the following couplet by a Ch'orti' healer.

*tu't e rum,  
tu't e tierra.*

on the earth,  
on the land.

Since *rum* in Ch'orti' means both 'earth' and more generally 'land,' the Spanish form *tierra* was employed to easily complete the second half of a couplet that may have otherwise been more difficult to adequately form due to the semantic range of the Ch'orti' term *rum*. Similar code switching with Spanish can be seen in a version of the legend about the *Chijchan*:

*E chan ak'otoy serka de virtiente  
ak'otoy ach'a'n serka u't e ja'.*

The snake arrives near the spring,  
arrives and lies near the spring.

The narrator created an identical shape and related meaning parallelism through a combination of the Spanish term *virtiente* and the Ch'orti' *u't e ja'*, both meaning 'spring'. Note also the use of code switching in the following opening to a *Limosna* ceremony prayer done in the *milpa*:

*Te pido Madre Santisima,  
ink'ajti Yajgorgortu',  
Yajgorgortata',  
Yajgorgor-Espiritu Santo.*

I ask you Holiest Mother,  
I ask you Mother Seed,  
Father Seed,  
Yellow Squash God Seed?.

This prayer opens with a petition to "Holiest Mother," meaning "earth." The orator begins the prayer in the Spanish with "*Te pido*," "I ask you." The second line of the couplet then uses the Ch'orti' equivalent to this phrase, "*ink'ajti*," "I ask you." This section of the prayer includes ritual terms for 'yellow squash', *ajgorgor*-.<sup>11</sup> Yellow squash, like maize, beans, and certain other important plants in the lives of the Ch'orti', have a complementary male/female principle (cf. Bassie-Sweet 2000:3; Tarn and Pretchel 1986), a fuller discussion of this conception appears below).

A final example of a couplet illustrating the poetic use of code switching comes from an oral narrative about the creation of the world:

*En akel tyempo kwando matuk'a ani e pak'ab'ob',  
ma'ni tuk'a e jente.*

In that time when there were no inhabitants,  
there were no people.

The narrator of this story, an 80 year-old gentleman, selected the Spanish loan word *jente* in the second line to complement the standard word for 'people' in Ch'orti', *pak'ab'ob'*. In this case, however, while other synonyms were available in Ch'orti', a Spanish form was used.

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<sup>11</sup> In a report for the Foundation of Ancient Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. in 2000, I also noted the use of 'mother/father' terminology with yellow squash in Ch'orti'. Yellow squash, usually *ch'um* in daily speech, is called *e gorgortu' ajgorgortata'*, "the mother round thing, the father round thing" (Hull 2000a).

Spanish forms are also employed within stanza lines of a triplet. Note the following example:

<i>tamar ipago presente,</i>	with your payment here,
<i>tamar ipago karera,</i>	with your payment ??,
<i>tamar itoyb'ir che.</i>	with your payment indeed.

In the first two lines, the healer displays code mixing by adding Ch'orti' morphological markers (in this case the second-person singular possessive pronoun *i-*) to the Spanish term *pago*, or 'payment' (cf. Bonvillain 1993:326-327). In the first and second lines the Spanish form is used whereas the standard Ch'orti' term appears in the third line. Often, however, Ch'orti' draws upon Spanish lexical items that have been reanalyzed and lexicalized in Ch'orti'. Take the following triplet for example:

<i>e b'ik'it kriaturas,</i>	the little afflicted ones,
<i>anjelito,</i>	little spirit,
<i>anxerito.</i>	little spirit.

In line one, the term *kriaturas* is a case of a reanalyzed Spanish loan word (meaning 'creature', but in this context 'patient') that in Ch'orti' specifically refers to the 'afflicted ones', or those who have been struck ill by menacing spirits. The application of the term *kriatura* may also be related to the weak and debilitated state of the patient being like that of a 'baby', i.e., one who lacks "heat" and strength (Brian Stross, personal communication 2003). The second line consists of only the word *anjelito* from the Spanish *angelito*, 'little angel'. In Ch'orti', however, *anjelito* has undergone a semantic shift to refer specifically to 'spirit of the afflicted' thereby precluding an interpretation of *anjelito* as

simply a borrowing, despite the presence of the Spanish diminutive suffix *-ito*, 'little'. The third line contains another reanalyzed form, *anxerito*, which is also originally from the Spanish *angel*. Most Ch'orti' with whom I have spoken consider *anxer* a Ch'orti' term, and they see it as distinct from the Spanish *angel*. While *anxer* does refer to something akin to the Western notion of "angel," it also encompasses the Ch'orti' conception of a wide range of spiritual beings who work with God in Ch'orti' mythology that differ significantly from such beings in Western thought. In addition, *anxer* has been co-opted by Ch'orti' healers who also employ the term for 'spirit of the afflicted'. Thus, the above example is complex on both linguistic and sociolinguistic levels. The use of Spanish terms in the construction of couplet lines contributes to what Brody calls "a powerful aesthetic force" to the poetic of the language (1995:139).

Spanish terms also regularly appear in one or both halves of couplet stichs. Bricker has noted a similar phenomenon among the Tzotzil of Chamula (1974:372). The eclipsing of Ch'orti' terms in the focus position in many of the most commonly-encountered couplets is a direct result of the replacement of Ch'orti' terms with Spanish forms that began after the conquest (as I discussed above). Let me illustrate this with a short list of common couplets and triplets in Ch'orti' curing texts where one or both terms are of Spanish origin (Spanish orthography retained in this section):

*puerta nacimiento de Cristo,*  
*puerta saliente de Cristo.*

birth door of Christ,  
eastern door of Christ.

*camposanto mayor,*  
*camposanto real.*

major graveyard,  
main graveyard.

<i>mesa antibano,</i> <i>mesa anterior.</i>	ancient altar, ancient altar.
<i>sombra,</i> <i>nawalch'u'r.</i>	shade, house [word used only by healers].
<i>mesón del mundo,</i> <i>peteción del mundo.</i>	altar of the world, ritual offering table of the world.
<i>estumeka,</i> <i>sendeyu't.</i>	this world, blurry eye disease.
<i>silencio hora,</i> <i>silencio noche.</i>	silent hour, silent night.
<i>silencio hora,</i> <i>silencio día.</i>	silent hour, silent day.
<i>día,</i> <i>hora.</i>	day, hour.
<i>ángel,</i> <i>kriatura</i>	spirit of a person, patient (afflicted by disease).
<i>espíritu,</i> <i>ángel.</i>	spirit of a person, spirit of a person.
<i>4 esquinero del mundo,</i> <i>4 pilaestre del mundo.</i>	4 corners of the world, 4 pillars of the world.
<i>mediante cielo</i> <i>mediante gloria.</i>	middle of the sky, middle of the heaven.
<i>hierbita llana,</i> <i>nawalch'a'n.</i>	tobacco, tobacco [ritual names for tobacco used in curing].
<i>defensor,</i> <i>abogado</i>	defender, lawyer
<i>mundo,</i> <i>cielo.</i>	earth, sky.

<i>Santa Madre,</i> <i>Santa Tierra.</i>	Holy Mother [earth], Holy Earth.
<i>grado,</i> <i>estado.</i>	layer, level [levels of the underworld].
<i>pan,</i> <i>agua.</i>	bread, water.
<i>oro,</i> <i>plata.</i> <i>sagrado,</i> <i>bedecido.</i>	gold, silver. holy, blessed.
<i>ángel,</i> <i>senteyo,</i> <i>estrella.</i>	angel, lightning bolt, star.
<i>sin falta,</i> <i>sin causa,</i> <i>sin delito.</i>	without fault, without cause, without sin.
<i>jolchan,</i> <i>munndo.</i>	type of evil heat, world.
<i>agua,</i> <i>munndo.</i>	water, world.
<i>espíritu,</i> <i>umajín.</i> <i>mesa olvidado,</i> <i>mesa desconocido.</i>	spirit, soul [from Spanish <i>imagen</i> ]. forgotten altar, unknown altar [altars in heaven].
<i>vida,</i> <i>salud.</i>	life, health.
<i>permiso,</i> <i>lisensyo.</i>	permission, license.

The pair *silencio hora, silensio dia* represents a good case example of the process of incorporation of Spanish in curing prayers. In the 1960s, Fought recorded several

instances of this same couplet in which the Ch'orti' term *ch'anche'* was still being used instead of the Spanish term *silencio* (1972:271, 379). I have documented over 40 occurrences of this couplet from various healers and without exception the Spanish form *silencio* was always used. In no case was original Ch'orti' form *ch'anche'* used. This example serves to illustrate how the practice of lexical replacement, while diminishing somewhat due to the increased use of Spanish in all Ch'orti'-speaking areas, is still an active sociolinguistic process.

### 1.11. Parallelism and Structure in Ritual Texts

Ch'orti' poetics are not isolated in form or content from the poetics of other Mayan languages. Instead, the primary poetic structuring mechanism shared by all Mayan languages, including Ch'orti', is the parallel couplet. (A full description of couplet types and uses appears later in this chapter.) Past research by John Fought on Ch'orti' poetics succeeded in defining certain devices through descriptive analyses (Fought 1976, 1985). In Ch'orti' healing rites, couplets make up roughly 75% of the strophic length poetic structures. By way of example, note the use of couplets in the following section from a ceremony to heal an eye disease:

*Ch'a'r takar ujolchan uyok,  
takar ujolchanir uk'ab'.*  
*Ch'a'r takar uyansir uyok,  
takar uyansir uk'ab'.*  
*Ch'a'r takar umakje'yr b'aki,  
takar umakje'yr jarari'.*

Lying there with the infecting heat of his feet,  
with the infecting heat of his hands.



<i>takar usututjutir u't,</i> <i>takar usututjutir uk'ab'.</i>	with the whirlwind of its face, with the whirlwind of its hand.
<i>takar usakb'urichir u't,</i> <i>takar usakb'urichir uxamb'ar.</i>	with the simple heat of its face, with the simple heat of its walking.
<i>takar ufiebrir uk'ab'ob',</i> <i>takar ufiebrir u'tob'.</i>	with the fever of their hands, with the fever of their appearance.
<i>takar umalairir ixamb'ar,</i> <i>takar umalairir iwajner.</i>	with the bad air of your walking, with the bad air of your running.

In each of the above stanzas, the healer identifies the source of illness through synecdoche by mentioning either two body parts of the malevolent spirit or two actions associated with them. The repetitive pairing of these elements within this substitution set function as a framing device for each stanza. These semantic couplets comprise a large portion of the parallelism in Ch'orti' healing texts. Note their use in the following prayer:

*Uyatravesir uyok,*  
*Uyatravesir uk'ab'.*  
*Uxek'onir yer uyatravesir uyok,*  
*Uxek'onir yer uyatravesir uk'ab'.*  
*Ya'syob' tama e gotera,*  
*Ya'syob' tama e gotera,*  
*Takar ususte'yir uyatravesir uyok,*  
*Takar uyatravesir uk'ab'.*  
*Ususte'yir uyok,*  
*Ususte'yir uk'ab'.*  
*Uxek'onir uyok,*  
*Uxek'onir uk'ab'.*

The blocking of their feet,  
The blocking of their hands.  
The stabbing pain of their feet,  
The stabbing pains of their hands.  
There they play in the eaves,  
There they play in the eaves.

With the poking pains of the blocking of their feet,  
 With the blocking of their hands.  
 The poking pains of their feet,  
 The poking pains of their hands.  
 The stabbing pains of their feet,  
 The stabbing pains of their hands.

In this prayer, the patient had fallen near the eaves of a house—an especially dangerous area where evil spirits are said to "play," i.e., mischievously cause illness (Hull 2000a). The evil spirit is said to be making use of its whole body to poke and stab at the body of the person who has fallen ill. The pairing of these body parts and actions relating to them provides a structural framework for the rhythm and flow of particular sections of text.

Ch'orti' curing texts consistently employ several such framing devices. By far the most common poetic structuring device in Ch'orti' healing texts is the pairing of *enyax*, 'green,' and *ensak*, 'white'. Note this example:

<i>A'si tamar <u>enyax</u> alaguna,</i>	They come playing in the green lagoon,
<i><u>ensak</u> alaguna.</i>	the white lagoon.

Grammatically, both terms are contractions: i.e. *e* + *in* + COLOR. The first morpheme is the definite article *e*, 'the'.<sup>13</sup> Fought has termed the second element, *in-*, an "attributive prefix" (1985:135) while Wichmann prefers the term "formative element on adjectives" (Wichmann 1999:144). In the above example, *enyax laguna*, *ensak laguna*, "the green lagoon, the white lagoon," these two terms function as attributive adjectives describing

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<sup>13</sup> There is no vowel reduplication with the assimilation of the /e/ and the initial vowel /i/ of *in-*.

the type of lagoons being referred to. Elsewhere I have written about the imagery and use associated with pairing *enyax* and *ensak* as a framing device (Hull 2001a):

The lagoons referred to here are large basins of water in the sky in which evil spirits "play." There are varying opinions on how many of these basins there are but the number is usually put at between 2 and 4. Some place them at each corner of sky. The constant repetition of *enyax* and *ensak* by Ch'orti' *curanderos* is today primarily a poetic framing device for a given couplet. No *curandero* with whom I have spoken has offered an explanation for their usage in general. Most say they probably refer to the colors "green" (*yaxyax*) and "white" (*saksak*). Indeed, in references to water and watery places these color associations are directly relevant, e.g. *enyax mar* (sea), *ensak playa* (beach), *enyax pila* (trough), *enyax corriente* (gutter), *ensak alaguna* (lagoon). Such an explanation, however, simply does not fully explain the hundreds of contexts in which they can occur. (For example, *enyax* and *ensak* appear with table, temple, prince, shade, patio, corral, graveyard, oven, highway, intersection, street, chicken, cemetery, *incensario*, pan, house, grinding stone, lightning bolt, and cross of Christ, just to mention a few). Instead, I believe they are usually gratuitous and decorative and used as a stock structuring technique for encasing any reference within a poetic framework.

In my view, the origin of these terms, *enyax* and *ensak*, probably stems from a literal understanding of the watery landscape of the Otherworld in which there are five enormous colored lakes (some Ch'orti' identify between two to four lakes) at the corners of the world; black, white, red, green, and brown (cf. Girard 1995:140). Four of these bodies of water are positioned at the four corners of the world and one at the center. The Ch'orti' believe that these lakes are repositories of evil spirits milling around causing illnesses for people on earth. These malevolent spirits can manifest themselves or simply their power at numerous locations on the earth considered to be "*vivo*," or 'alive' in a very special sense. In an unpublished paper (Hull 2002a) I have described this concept of being *vivo* in Ch'orti' thought:

For the Ch'orti' certain items are imbued with a sacred, living force that make them dangerous to humans. Such objects are termed "*vivo*" ('alive'), which refers to 1), their infusion with a harmful spiritual energy that emanates from malevolent spirits "playing" there or 2), a spiritually active place where otherworld beings or their influence can exist. In most cases, being "*vivo*" relates to the fact that one can get infected (*t'e'nsan*) by an evil spirit through contact with or close proximity to these objects. While in most instances the object is viewed as inherently "*vivo*," it is also possible for a place to become infected with this type of spiritual energy.

Evil spirits can access these points that act as portals between realms. Many of these places are areas where there is water since, as the Ch'orti' explain it, the watery environment of the Otherworld makes the transition to watery places here on earth much easier. References to the *enyax laguna*, *ensak laguna* by Ch'orti' healers are without a doubt directed to Otherworld bodies of water in Ch'orti' mythology. As I mentioned above, despite this immediate correlation between these concepts, this leaves unexplained the literally scores of objects that *enyax* and *ensak* can modify that have nothing to do with the Otherworld lakes or with water at all (see Hull 2001a for a partial list). For this reason, together with internal organizational evidence, I interpret their use primarily as a structuring device that retains rhythmic consistency within a narrow substitution framework. All substitutions, however, are usually restricted to the subsequent couplet, not within any single stanza. Note the following passage in which both verses of the couplet consistently repeat the element modified by *enyax* and *ensak*:

*A'si tamar enyax korriente,  
ensak korriente.*

*A'si tama enyax orniya,  
ensak orniya.*

They play in the green water gutter,  
the white water gutter.

They play at the green hearth,  
the white hearth.

<i>A'si tamar enyax poyeton,                   ensak poyeton.</i>	They play at the green hearth, the white hearth.
<i>A'si che tamar enyax kamino real,                           ensak kamino real.</i>	They play at the green highway, the white highway.
<i>A'si tamar enyax akrusada,                           ensak akrusada.</i>	They play at the green intersection, the white intersection.
<i>A'si tamar enyax kaye,                           ensak kaye.</i>	They play in the green road, the white road.
<i>A'si tamar enyax petision,                           ensak petision.</i>	They play at the green 'sacred offering table', the white 'sacred offering table'.
<i>A'si tamar enyax kaxtiren,                           ensak kaxtiren.</i>	They play around the green chicken, the white chicken.

It is quickly apparent from this example that besides of *korriente*, 'water gutter' or 'water channel', none of these modified objects has anything to do with watery areas.<sup>14</sup> Instead, *enyax* and *ensak* have lost their primary meaning as color terms becoming instead nothing more than the skeletal framework for listing specific objects in poetic verse (in this case, objects relating to points that are "vivo" where evil spirits come to "play"). This can be further illustrated from another healing text.

<i>A'si tamar enyax de munision,                           ensak munision.</i>	They play (on) the green munitions (copal), the white munitions (copal).
<i>A'si tamar enyax palanketa,                           ensak palanketa.</i>	They play (on) the green big pot, the white big pot.
<i>Asi tamar enyax kopal,                           ensak kopal.</i>	They play (on) the green copal, the white copal.
<i>A'si tamar enyax bamba,                           ensak bamba.</i>	They play on the green copal pieces, the white copal pieces.
<i>A'si tamar enyax xarten,                           ensak xarten.</i>	They play on the green pan, the white pan.
<i>A'si tamar enyax oyita,                           ensak oyita.</i>	They play in the green jar, the white jar.
<i>A'si tamar enyax bambita,</i>	They play (on) the green copal pieces,

<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note that very similar terminology appears in the Ritual of the Bacabs in healing contexts. The Yukatekan term for 'gutter' in this case is *chul ha* (Roys 1965:64).

<i>ensak bambita.</i>	the white copal pieces.
<i>A'si tamar enyax insensaryo,</i>	They play (on) the green incense burner,
<i>ensak insensaryo.</i>	the white incense burner.

The terms following *enyax* and *ensak* are (originally) Spanish words that relate to pots and incense. The second line of each couplet shows ellipsis of the verb and the preposition (this poetic process is discussed in detail below). It is immediately evident that both lines of each couplet use the same term instead of forming a couplet with a synonym of the first line.

### 1.12. Ellipsis

In most Mayan languages, ellipsis (or deletion) represents a pivotal tool in poetic phrase construction. Ch'orti' poetics likewise makes regular use of ellipsis in non-first stich contexts. Both content words and functional words are regularly deleted either when they occupy the line-initial position or when they are roughly contained in the first half of the line:

Example 1:  
*Ne't ma'chi awakta ak'axi tama yar e pak'ma'r ira,*  
*tama yer e pak'tz'aj ira.*  
 You do not let [pestilence] fall on this little crop,  
 on this little harvest.

Example 2:  
*Ch'a'r takar ubrisir u'tob',*                      Lying with the evil wind of their appearance,  
*ubrisir uyerojob'.*                                      the evil wind of their expressions.

Example 3:  
*A'si tamar enyax nawalch'u'r che,*              They play in the green house indeed,  
*ensak nawalch'u'r che.*                              in the white house indeed.

Example 4:

*Manik ja'x sub'ar niweroj,*      Let not my face be embarrassed,  
*i sub'ar nyu't.*                      and my eyes be embarrassed.

Example 5:

*Tama ajnawalch'a'n,*              With tobacco,  
*ajxujch'ch'a'n.*                      tobacco.

Example 1 is an excerpt from the field dedication ceremony known as *La Limosna*. The orator deletes the entire verbal phrase in the second line. Note especially the subtle variation in the complement of the preposition in both lines. In the first line, the orator uses the term *pak'ma'r* for 'harvest', whereas in the second line he slightly alters the form to *pak'tz'aj*, 'harvest'. The form *pak'tz'aj* is an older form not used commonly today. The orator is clearly using all of the semantic tools at his disposal to poetically construct this phrase. In Examples 2 and 3, the verb *a'si* 'it plays' or 'they play' (the Ch'orti' regularly delete plural markers) is deleted in the second verse. In Example 2, the second verb *wato'b'*, 'they come', is also deleted in the second verse. In Example 1, the term *uwaporyantir* refers to a kind of 'bad heat' emanated from evil spirits that "grabs" people (i.e., make them sick). *Uwaporyantir* is a loan word from the Spanish *vapor* ('vapor'). Its meaning, however, has been reanalyzed and lexicalized to connote a kind of sweat-like heat that is exuded from the bodies of the evil spirits that infects the person when they come in contact with these spirits. Example 3 mentions that the evil spirits "play" in a *nawalch'u'r*. *Nawalch'u'r* is a ritual word for 'house' that is only found in curing texts.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The term *nawal* in Ch'orti' is best translated by 'spirit' or 'soul' in many cases, but it also includes the notion of alter-ego, or companion spirit, that is able to leave the body of a person at night and roam through the hamlet or the forest. "*Nawal*" also carries a negative connotation as trouble-making evil spirits who can kill or otherwise cause harm. One of the most common is the *tz'u'ma'x*. Also known as *Uwinkir Ak'b'ar*, or

Example 4 deletes the negative exhortative *manik*, 'let not,' along with the demonstrative *ja'x*. In Example 5 the preposition *tama*, 'with', is left out of the second stich. Note also in Example 5 that two exact synonyms for 'tobacco' are used, *ajnawalch'a'n* and *ajxujch'ch'a'n*.

While the preposition can occasionally be repeated in all lines of a stanza in Ch'orti' poetics (see Example 6 below), more often strings of prepositional phrases, all subordinate to one principal clause, retain the preposition in the first line of the couplet (triplet, etc.) and delete it in subsequent lines in the stanza. The following are examples (1-5) of this type of preposition ellipsis:

Example 1:

<i>Tamar imano dichoso,</i>	In your fortunate hands,
<i>mano sagrado.</i>	holy hands.

Example 2:

<i>Takar uyestreyir u'to'b,</i>	with the star beams of your appearance,
<i>uyestreyir unuk uk'ab'ob',</i>	the star beams of your wrists,
<i>uyestreyir uxamb'arob'.</i>	the star beams of your walkings.

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"Lord of the Night, this evil spirit is said to enter houses at night in the form of a small rodent where it sucks the blood out of infants' noses killing them (see Hull 2000a for a more detailed description of this). The second element *ch'u'r*, according to Wisdom (1950) (incorrectly recorded as *chur*), has various meanings such as "watcher, guardian spirit (Sp. dueño), saint, deity, spirit of living things or places, sacred." Based on data from my fieldwork, I have elsewhere described the term *ch'u'r* as follows:

Another word for "spirit" that is not commonly encountered today is *ch'u'r*. Some consultants translated it as "life force of the hills" or, simply "life force." *Ch'u'r* may be equivalent to *nawal* but there is no agreement on this point among different speakers. The word *ch'u'rur* may mean "spirit," "life," or "god" (Hull 2000a).

Only elderly consultants still knew the meaning *ch'u'r*. One consultant once said: "*nich'u'r*," meaning "my god." This form is clearly cognate with the Tzeltalan *ch'ul* and *ch'uhul* 'sacred', Ch'ol *ch'uj* 'holy' and *ch'ujlel* 'the holiness' or 'the soul' (Josserand and Hopkins 1995), Yukatekan *k'u* 'god', and the hieroglyphic form *k'uhul* 'sacred, divine'. The semantic overlap with the term *nawal* makes the compound *nawalch'u'r* meaning 'house' even more intriguing.

Example 3:

*Tamar enyax rueda,*

*ensak rueda te' Nuestro Padre Divino Señor.*

In the green wheel,

the white wheel of Our Father Divine Lord.

Example 4:

*Tama e nawalch'a'n,*

With the tobacco,

*ajxujch'ch'a'n,*

the tobacco,

*yerba yana,*

the tobacco,

*yerba benesida,*

the tobacco.

Example 5:

*Takar uk'uxurterir uwaporyantir u'tob',*

*uwaporyantir uk'ab'.*

With their stomach pains, the evil heat of their appearance,

the evil heat of their hands.

Example 6:

*Tamar imilagro,*

With you miraculous power,

*Tamar isanto,*

With you holiness,

*Tamar ipoder.*

With your power.

In Example 1, the healer thanks God for keeping him "in your fortunate hands, your holy hands," a metaphor in Ch'orti' for 'under divine protection or care'. The second line of the couplet deletes the preposition *tamar*. Example 2 shows a triplet in which the second and third lines delete the preposition *takar*, 'with', from the initial line. The reference "star beams" relates to the Ch'orti' understanding of the origins of certain illnesses stemming from the "evil beams" emanating stars on or around which malevolent spirits are thought to reside (Hull 2000a). Examples 3 and 4 both delete the preposition *tamar*, 'with/in'. In Example 3, the "wheel of Our Father Divine Lord" refers to a watery ring around the sun in which evil spirits 'play' that, when visible, signals impending rains (Fought 1972:386, 435; Hull 2000a). These examples again demonstrate the strong tendency to alter the

length of the second line (and subsequent lines in a single stanza) through ellipsis and/or augmentation. Example 6 shows the less common use of full repetition of the prepositions in all three lines of the stanza. Once the preposition is deleted, however, it is routine for the stanza to continue for many lines with simply the objects of the preposition:

Example 1:

*Ch'a'r takar upiketir ukolero  
upiketir ut'oxpe'  
ulansir kolero  
ut'oxpe' kolero*

Lying with the poking of his anger evil eye,  
the poking of his evil eye anger pain.  
the lancing pain of his anger evil eye,  
of his evil eye  
anger pain.

Example 2:

*A'syob' tamar e 17 estado,  
17 pwerta,  
17 estreya .  
rabaniya del mundo,  
eskina del mundo.  
koykin del mundo,  
4 koykin del mundo.*

They play at the 17th level,  
17th portal,  
17th star.  
wheel of the world,  
corner of the world.  
support of the world,  
4 supports of the world.

In Example 1, the preposition *takar*, 'with' only appears in the first line of the stanza and is deleted in all the following lines and the next couplet. Example 2 contains a triplet followed by two couplets that show ellipsis of the preposition *tamar*, 'in, on, at', everywhere except the first line of the initial triplet.

In other cases, the second couplet can repeat the preposition in the first line:

Example 1:

*A'si tamar enyax mesa,  
ensak mesa.  
tamar e rueda de mesa,  
e rabaniya mesa de mundo.*

They play on the green altar,  
white altar.  
in the wheel of the altar,  
the wheel altar of the world.

Example 2:

*A'si tame' enyax sombra,  
ensak sombra.*

*tama enyax patyo,  
ensak patyo del mundo.*

They play in the green shade,<sup>16</sup>  
the white shade.

on the green patio,  
the white patio of the world.

In Examples 1 and 2 the preposition *tamar*, 'in/on', is repeated in the first line of the second couplet. The prepositional phrase is still subordinate to the initial clause in the first line of the first couplet of each.

In longer stanzas in which many consecutive prepositional phrase couplets are presented there can be a playful intermeshing of preposition deletion and preposition repetition:

Example 1:

1. *Ch'a'r takar uxunk'ajkir u'tob'*, Lying with the fire building of their appearance,
2. *uxunk'ajkir yerojob'* . the fire building of their expressions.
3. *takar t'ork'ajkir yerojob'*, with the fire making of their expressions,
4. *takar t'ork'ajkir uxamb'arob'*. with the fire making of their walkings.
5. *takar umojrk'ajkir u'tob'*, with the fire lighting of their appearance,
6. *takar umojrk'ajkir yerojob'*. with the fire lighting of their expressions.
7. *takar uyestreyir u'tob'*, with the star beams of their appearance,
8. *uyestreyir unuk uk'ab'ob'*, the star beams of their wrists,
9. *uyestreyir uxamb'arob'*. the star beams of their walkings.
10. *takar ulusimiento u'tob'*, with the beams of their appearance,
11. *takar ulusimiento uyerojob'*. with the beams of their expressions.

Example 2:

1. *Pero kone'r che pestijado inombre,* But now indeed sacred are your names,
2. *pestijado ik'ab'a' che.* sacred are you names indeed.
3. *tamar inte' oja santa yerba de yana,* with a leaf of the sacred tobacco plant,
4. *tamar yerba divino,* with the divine plant,
5. *yerba dichoso,* the lucky plant,

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<sup>16</sup> The term *sombra*, 'shade', in this couplet refers to a house. In Ch'orti' ritual texts, 'shade' is commonly paired with 'house' in different lines in a parallel stanza. Similarly, among the Achi Maya, Neuenswander reports that in ritual rhetoric, one would never say simply 'your house', but *a muh a soc*, "your shade, your nest" (1981:18).

6.	<i>yerba sagrado.</i>	the sacred plant.
7.	<i>tamar ipago presente,</i>	in it is your payment now,
8.	<i>tamar ipago karera,</i>	in it is your payment?,
9.	<i>tamar itoyb'ir che.</i>	in it is your payment indeed.
10.	<i>tamar wixnemb'ir,</i>	in it is your exits,
11.	<i>tamar ixnawal che,</i>	in it is your spirits indeed,
12.	<i>nawal k'otente'.</i>	<i>k'ontete'</i> spirit.
13.	<i>tamar ixnawal che,</i>	in it is your spirit indeed,
14.	<i>nawal te supliko.</i>	spirit, I ask you.
15.	<i>tamar ixnawal che,</i>	in it is your spirit indeed,
16.	<i>nawal k'ub'ente' che.</i>	<i>k'otente'</i> spirit indeed.
17.	<i>tamar usujtib'ir yu't che,</i>	in it is the returning of their appearance,
18.	<i>tamar utojyib' ipat ixana atz'i ya' che,</i>	in it is the payment of your backwards walking indeed,
19.	<i>tamar twa' ixpakaxpati ya' che.</i>	in it so that you walk backwards indeed.
20.	<i>tamar iwajner atz'i ya' che,</i>	in it your very runnings indeed,
21.	<i>tamar itarer ya' che.</i>	in it is your comings indeed.

In Example 1, the first couplet in lines 1 and 2 deletes the preposition in the first stich.

The subsequent couplets, however, all repeat the preposition. In fact, the only other place in this stanza where the preposition does not appear is in lines 8 and 9, which are comprised of the second and third lines of a triplet that poetically interrupts the flow of three consecutive couplets. Example 2 likewise presents several triplets in varying forms. The triplet in lines 4-6 is a nested structure, building off the couplet of lines 3-4, that deletes the preposition in the second and third lines. The following lines (7-9) also contain a triplet that repeats the preposition throughout instead of deleting it, again creating a contrastive aesthetic. Lines 7-9 also use the Spanish form *pago*, 'payment', in the first two lines of the triplet but then switch to a Ch'orti' term, *toyb'ir*.<sup>17</sup> Lines 17, 18, and 19 also show a triplet with the preposition *tamar* restated in each line. In terms of

<sup>17</sup> Also available, but not used, were the Ch'orti' terms *twa'nib'* and *tojma'r* for 'payment'.

alternation, among the three triplets, two repeat the preposition in all lines while one triplet deletes it in the second and third lines. As for the couplets, of the six couplets involving the preposition *tamar*, three delete the preposition and three do not. Interweaving ellipsis with non-ellipsis couplets is here used effectively to increase the text's 'poeticness'. The fluid alternation and inclusion of triplets and couplets is likewise well-demonstrated in this example.

As the preceding analysis has shown, the preposition *tamar* (in, on, at, with) and *takar* (with) often undergo ellipsis in all lines except the first line in a stanza. A more mild form of ellipsis can also occur with these two prepositions. In Ch'orti', *tamar* and *takar* have standard syncopated forms that are realized as *tar* and *taka* respectively. *Tar* also appears as a nominal form derived from this preposition meaning 'place'. There can, at times, be a slight semantic distinction between *taka* and *takar*. *Takar* can include the object of the preposition in its meaning, i.e. 'with it', whereas *taka* does not. Commonly, however, in healing texts both *takar* and *taka* are used interchangeably with no distinction in meaning. Ch'orti' healers engage in a playful variation with *tamar/tar* and *takar/taka*. In other cases, *tamar* is shortened to *tama*, or even to *ta* in the second line of a stanza. Instead of deleting the preposition in these cases, the preposition is syncopated in the second line of the couplet:

Example 1:

*Tamar ink'ajti e lisensya,*  
*Tar ink'ajti e supliko.*

In it I ask for the license,  
In it I ask the pleading.

Example 2:

*Tamar yerbita ch'a'n*  
*Tar ink'ajti lisensya*

In tobacco,  
In it I ask for the license.

Example 3:

*Pero tamar insajka,  
Tar inwajk'u e lisensya.*

But in it I search,  
In it I give the license.

Example 4:

*Tamar ink'ajti e lisensya,  
Tar ink'ajti e supliko, Nuestro Señor,  
Tamar e kriatura .*

In it I ask the license,  
In it I ask the pleading, Our Lord,  
On the patient.

Example 5:

*Tamar ink'ajti e lisensya,  
Tar ink'ajti e virtud, Señor,  
Tamar e kriatura atz'i ya' che.*

In it I ask the license,  
In it I ask for virtue, Lord,  
On the patient indeed.

Example 6:

*Takar uluserir uyok,  
Taka uluserir uk'ab'.*

With the evil rays of their,  
With the evil rays of their hands.

Example 7:

*Ch'a'r takar ujolchanir uyok,  
takar ujolchanir uk'ab'.  
Ch'a'r taka ujolchanir uyok,  
taka ujolchanir uk'ab'.*

Lying with the evil heating of their feet,  
with the evil heating of their hands.  
Lying with the evil heating of their feet,  
with the evil heating of their hands.

Example 8:

*Ch'a'r a'syob' atz'i ya' tamar e silensyo ora,  
tama e silensyo diya atz'i ya'.*

They are indeed playing in the silent hour,  
in the silent day indeed.

Example 9:

*Ya ch'a'r a'si tamar e mediyante syelo,  
tama e mediyante gloria.*

There they are playing in the middle of the sky,  
in the middle of heaven.

Example 10:

*K'echik tamar ibajo de poder,  
ibajo tu santisimo.  
tama imilagro,  
ta'santisimo,  
ti'poder.*

May you bring them in under your power,  
under your holy power.  
with your miraculous power,  
with your holy power,  
with your power.

In Examples 1, 2, and 3, the preposition *tamar* is syncopated to *tar* in the second line of the couplet. The healer is asking for assistance in healing with tobacco in each of these examples. In Examples 4 and 5, the same phenomenon occurs, but this time with the addition of a third line beginning again with *tamar*. The pattern of *tamar – tar – tamar* envelopes the central element through this poetic interplay of terms. Example 6 shows the variation between *takar* in the first line and *taka* in the second. The type of stylistic variation is not limited within stanzas, but can also occur *between* stanzas. This can be seen in Example 7 where the first stanza uses *takar* in both lines, but the subsequent stanza switches to *taka* in both lines of the couplet. The preposition *tamar* can also be syncopated to simply *tama*. This syncopated form also appears in poetic alternation with the full form *tamar*, as in Examples 8 and 9. Example 10 shows a complex, systematic variation in the realization of the preposition *tamar*. In the first line the preposition is used in its full form *tamar*. The preposition is then deleted in the second line of the couplet. The third line syncopates the final /r/ resulting in the form *tama*. In the fourth line *tamar* is further syncopated to *ta*. The vowel of *ta* assimilates with the vowel initial /i/ vowel of *isantísimo*, which then, by standard Ch'orti' phonetic processes, undergoes a kind of compensatory lengthening (really reduplication) to *ta'santisimo*. The final line follows a similar yet variant pattern. The underlying term following the preposition is *ipoder*, 'your [pl] power'. After syncopation, *tamar* > *ta*, vowel assimilation should result in the form *ta'poder*, not *ti'poder* as we have in the final line. There are two possible explanations for this oddity. The first is that the second-person plural possessive pronoun *i-* was altered with the second-person singular possessive pronoun *a-*, a common form of



In Example 1, the intransitive verb *a'si*, 'they play' (plural by context), is deleted in second half of the first couplet as well as in both lines of the next two couplets. Only the subject of the intransitive verb is mentioned. In Example 3, the direct object of the transitive verb (*k'ech*, 'to bring') is deleted everywhere except in the initial line of the stanza. A wonderfully poetic effect is created in Example 3 by the quatrain "your hands...your power, your blessing, and your mercy..." In addition, within this quatrain one can also discern an enveloped triplet. The expression "on the patient" in the first and fourth lines literally envelopes the triplet. Furthermore, a prosodic effect is also generated through assonance in each of the four lines—*ak'ab'*, *apoder*, *abendision*, *amiserikordia*. The assonant quality of the quatrain also extends beyond these focus terms: *tya' war ak'eche ak'ab' tu'jor e kriatura*, *ak'ab'*, *apoder*, *abendision*, *amiserikordia tu'jor e kriatura*. Example 4 comes from the prayer for the cursing of someone with blindness. The *brujo* in this case was addressing the planet Venus to impair the eyesight of some individual. Structurally, the direct object is deleted except for the modifying element *o'yt*, 'your eyes'.

Another common form of ellipsis is prefix deletion in the second couplet half for stylistic purposes. Ch'orti' healers commonly personify names of sickness, actions, and locations by the use of the 'agentive' prefix *aj-*, 'one who does something' or 'one who is from place X'.

Example 1:

*Ajsuririyo tijtjutir,*

*Susiriyo espanto de ombryob'.*

The one who (causes) uneasiness by domination (of one's spirit),

Uneasiness from a fright of men.

Example 2:

*Ajgarradera tijtjutir,*

*Garradera espanto de ombryob' atz'i ya' che.*

The one who grabs by dominating (one's spirit),

Grabber fright of men indeed it is.

Example 3:

*Ajjawalir tijtjutir,*

*Jawalir espanto jolchanob' atz'i ya' che.*

The evil spirit of intimidation by fright,

Evil spirit of fright *jolchanes* indeed they are.

Example 4:

*Ajposol kolero*

The grinding pain anger evil eye,

*Uposol malairir ut'oxpe'*

It is the grinding pain of the evil wind of his evil  
eye pain.

Example 5:

*Ajk'oyer kolero*

The lazy feeling anger evil eye,

*Uk'oyer ut'oxpe'*

It is his lazy feeling anger pain.

Example 6:

*Ajmaneador kolero,*

? anger evil eye,

*Umaneadorir malairir ut'oxpe'.*

The ? of the evil wind of his evil eye anger  
pain.

Example 7:

*Ajlojte' kolero,*

The sharp pain anger evil eye,

*Ulojte' t'oxpe' kolero.*

It is the sharp pain of the evil eye anger pain.

Example 8:

*Ajpempem tijtjutir,*

The tapping intimidation,

*Pempem espanto de ombryob',*

Tapping fright of men,

*Ajpempem tijtjutir ombryob'.*

The tapping intimidation of men.

In Examples 4, 5, 6, and 7, the *aj-* prefix is deleted and replaced by the third-person singular ergative pronoun *u-* with a resulting minor semantic shift. In Example 8, a triplet construction shows the *aj-* prefix in the first and third lines, while the center line has just the reduplicated root *pem*, 'to tap' in the initial word of the phrase. Example 1 shows poetic alteration between *ajsusiriyo* ('the one who causes uneasiness') and *susiriyo*

('uneasiness'). In Example 2, *ajgarradera* (from the Spanish *agarrar*, 'to grab') is reduced to *garradera*, although it retains essentially the same meaning due to the presence of the Spanish agentive suffix *-era*. Example 3 also deletes the *aj-* agentive prefix in the second half of the couplet. *Jawal* is probably a variant of the form *nawal*, 'companion spirit; spirit'. In Example 4, the effects of the afflicting spirit are described as a 'grinding pain' felt in the bones of the individual. In Example 5, the repeated root *k'oy* (or *k'o'y*) means 'to be lazy' or 'to feel tired' and refers to the weakening effect of the illness on the patient. The reduplicated root *pem* means 'to tap' and refers to the painful throbbing pain one feels when afflicted with certain kinds of illnesses that the Ch'orti' envision as an evil spirit "tapping" from the inside of your body. In all of these examples, morphological (and verbal) deletion serves to create a gradual 'scaling down' effect as the couplet progresses into the second line—one of the most aesthetically powerful poetic devices in Ch'orti'. The wide-spread use of deletion in verse-initial portions of the second stich of a couplet in most Mayan languages suggests that it generates a highly valued aesthetic effect for the listener or reader. Couplets, as I will discuss below, can operate under various emotive paradigms, including augmenting elements in the second stich. Such augmentation, however, generally functions within a framework of *verse-final* additions, not to verse-initial sections as is most common observed with deletion.

### 1.13. Narrative Framing Devices

Ch'orti' curing prayers make use of several structural framing devices that form the backbone of many couplet constructions. One of these, the common pairing of *enyax-*

*ensak*, was analyzed above. Another standard framing feature of healing texts is the combination of *jarari'* + *b'aki*, 'woven' + 'bone'. *Jar-* is a root transitive verb meaning 'to weave'. Additionally, *jarar* is the nominal form of the term for 'reed', the variety used in the making of *petate* mats. The term *b'ak* is means 'bone' and, by metaphorical extension, 'body'. In curing prayers, *jarari'* refers to a kind of 'woven pain' that one experiences as evil spirits "play" around one's body. Ch'orti' healers describe this type of pain in terms of a *petate* mat that is being 'woven' around the outside of one's whole body so as to leave no portion free from pain. One healer opted for a second possible etymology for the word as deriving from *jarar*, 'reed', and that the pains were being likened to one being 'whipped' by a stock of reed. The majority of healers with whom I worked, however, interpreted *jarari'* as 'woven pains'. The term *b'aki*, on the other hand, refers to a deep, internal pain that one feels down 'to the bone' as it were. In these healing contexts, it seems that *jarari'* and *b'aki* function as a kind of synecdoche for 'pain over the entire body'. Note their use in the following curing prayer for a patient with diarrhea:

<i>War asib'ijk'ya'n jarari'</i> ,	They are bloating with woven pains,
<i>War asib'ij b'akyob'</i> .	They are bloating with on the bones.

Structurally, *jarari'* and *b'aki* always occupy verse-final position respectively in a couplet. In this paradigm, verse-initial and verse-internal elements are freely substituted while *jarari'* and *b'aki* remain constant as a single poetic unit. The functional pairing of *jarari'* and *b'aki* creates a framework for couplet reproduction, as the following example demonstrates:

*War ijolchan jarari',  
 War ixtijb'ya'n b'aki.  
 War ixloch'te'yr b'aki,  
 War ixloch'te'yr jarari'.  
 War ijolchan b'aki,  
 Ch'a'r ijolchan jarari'.  
 War ixtijb'ya'n b'aki,  
 War ixtijb'ya'n jarari'.  
 Ch'a'r ijolchan b'aki,  
 War ijolchan jarari'.  
 War ixtijb'ya'n b'aki,  
 War ixloch'te'yr b'aki,  
 War ixloch'te'yr jarari',  
 Ch'a'r takar uch'ajrje'yr ixamb'ar,  
 Ch'a'r takar umalairir ixamb'ar.  
 Ch'a'r ijolchan jarari',  
 War ijolchan b'aki.  
 War isaksak b'aki,  
 War isaksak jarari'.  
 War ixjolchan b'aki,  
 War ixjolchan jarari'.  
 Ch'a'r takar e Niño Kolerin de Kristo,  
 Kristo Kolerin de Kristo.*

In this section of text, the position of *jarari'* and *b'aki* are inverted within the couplet lines. In most of the couplets in this section of the prayer there is no alternation in the verbal phrase. "*Niño Kolerin de Kristo, Niño Kolerin de Kristo*" forms a couplet as the name for the "*Dueño de La Enfemedad de Diarrea*" ('The Owner/Master of the Sickness of Diarrhea'). On a practical level, *jarari'* and *b'aki* create a template with which the healer can easily form long streams of well-scanned couplets.

Another common framing device employing paired terms in curing prayers is the combination of *kolero/t'oxpe'* (*kolero*). The term *kolero* refers to a kind of 'anger' in the evil spirit who is afflicting someone. It can also be an *enojo* or 'evil eye' from another

person who is upset with an individual and wishes harm to befall them. For the Ch'orti', this *kolero* is a principal cause of diseases and can be transferred from person to person under certain conditions. *T'oxpe'* is described as a "*dolor, un enojo, molestado por algo cuando uno está enfermo,*" "*la mente es bravo,*"<sup>18</sup> "*su sudor cambia de humor,*" or "*dolor de enojo.*" *Kolero* and *t'oxpe'* do not lend themselves to a concise translation (as is the case with so many terms in Ch'orti' healing prayers). The translations given here are only simple glosses. Both terms refer to the result of an 'evil eye', or *enojo*. I gloss *kolero* as 'anger evil eye' and *t'oxpe'* as 'evil eye pain'. When the terms appear in sequence, I gloss them together as 'evil eye anger pain'. The Ch'orti' attribute many different infirmities to evil effects of someone having given another person an 'evil eye'. The lingering effects of 'evil eye' are contagious and, just like *kolero*, *t'oxpe'* can be transferred to other humans. For example, if a man who is 'angry' with *t'oxpe'* is walking with a woman, she could easily become infected and fall ill. These two terms work together in curing texts to specify the general cause of a particular illness. However, they operate functionally at a number of different levels. In the first line, *kolero* is always modified by a preceding term, e.g. *ch'a'r ajpikete kolero*, "lying is poking pain *kolero*." In many cases in the second line of the couplet *t'oxpe'* or *t'oxpe' kolero* is likewise specified by another word. Note the following two examples:

Example 1:

*Kebrador ukolero,*  
*Umalairir ut'oxpe' kolero.*

Grinder is his anger evil eye,  
The evil wind of his evil eye anger pain.

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<sup>18</sup> The disjuncture in gender agreement ("bravo" instead of "brava") is a common feature of Ch'orti' ritual language in cases where Spanish terms, once borrowed, become lexicalized as Ch'orti' terms and then no longer agree in number and gender with associated nouns or adjectives.

<i>Ajporeador kolero,</i>	Pulverizer anger evil eye,
<i>Umalairir t'oxpe' kolero.</i>	The evil wind of the evil eye anger pain.

Example 2:

<i>Ukebradorir umalairir ukolero,</i>	The grinding of the evil wind of his anger evil eye,
<i>Umalairir ut'oxpe' kolero.</i>	The evil wind of his evil eye anger pain.
<i>Uporeadorir kolero,</i>	The pulverizing of the anger evil eye,
<i>Umalairir ut'oxpe' kolero.</i>	The evil wind of his evil eye anger pain.

In Examples 1 and 2, *umalairir*, 'the evil wind', modifies *ut'oxpe' kolero* in the second line of the couplet. A more common pattern involving these terms, however, uses *t'oxpe'* or *ut'oxpe' kolero* unmodified as the sole element of the second stich as the following examples demonstrate:

Example 1:

<i>Lanseador kolero,</i>	Lancer anger pain,
<i>Ut'oxpe' kolero.</i>	His evil eye anger pain.
<i>Ajsinam kolero,</i>	Stinging anger pain,
<i>T'oxpe' kolero atz'i ya' che.</i>	Evil eye anger pains indeed.

Example 2:

<i>Ch'a'r a'syob' uchawchaw kolero,</i>	
<i>Ut'oxpe' kolero.</i>	
<i>Uxuxa'nir ut'ojt'te'yr kolero,</i>	
<i>Ut'oxpe' kolero.</i>	
They are playing the chewing-like anger pains,	
Evil eye anger pains.	
The stinging of tapping anger pains,	
Evil eye anger pains.	

Example 3:

<i>Ulot kolero,</i>	The grabbing softly of anger evil eye,
<i>Ut'oxpe' kolero.</i>	His evil eye anger pain.
<i>Wa' kolero,</i>	The exhaustion anger evil eye,
<i>Ut'oxpe.</i>	His evil eye.
<i>Wawa' kolero,</i>	The exhaustion anger evil eye,
<i>Ut'oxpe' kolero.</i>	His evil eye anger pain.

Again in Example 3, *ut'oxpe'* and *ut'oxpe' kolero* stand alone in the second line of the couplet. The term *ulot*, 'its grabbing softly', derives from a root transitive verb *loti* 'to grab something softly with the hand' and refers to the pain caused by an evil spirit 'grabbing' at the body. *Wa'* is simply a shortened form of *wawa'* meaning an exhaustion caused by sickness to the point of not even being able to lift up one's head (like the Spanish *aguado*). In colloquial English, the expression 'wet noodle' reflects in part the nuance of this Ch'orti' term. *Wa'* and *wawa'* are also synonyms of the commonly reduplicated root *jaw* that appears in the following excerpt from a healing text:

*Ujawaw kolero,*  
*Ut'oxpe' kolero.*

The exhaustion anger evil eye,  
His evil eye anger pains.

In terms of stanza structure, *t'oxpe'* or *t'oxpe' kolero* usually occupy the second line of a couplet and often seem to act almost as line 'fillers', as in the previous three examples. In other cases, however, they can be modified and specified with additional information about the nature of the pains involved. It is clear that *kolero...t'oxpe'/t'oxpe' kolero* are another example of a structural framing device used exclusively by Ch'orti' healer in couplet building within a restricted thematic context.

Having discussed several framing tools employed by Ch'orti' healers in creating complex poetically structured texts, it seems appropriate to show a larger example of how these various systems operate in context. The following text is a section from a healing rite for a woman who was suffering from stomach cramps while pregnant. The pairings of *jarari'/b'aki* and *kolero/t'oxpe' (kolero)* are interwoven throughout the text and form



35. *Ch'a'r e kriatura che,*
36.                   *takar che,*
37.                   *takar ukexkanir ukolero,*
38.                   *ukexkanir ut'oxpe' kolero.*
39. *Takar upakaxpatir ukolero,*
40.                   *Upakaxpatir ut'oxpe' kolero te' kriatura.*
41. *Ch'a'r apakaxpaya'n jarari',*
42. *War apakaxpya'n b'akyob' ya' che.*
43. *Ch'a'r takar uk'oyirir ukolero,*
44.                   *uk'oyirir ut'oxpe' kolero.*
45. *Ch'a'r ak'oyer jarari',*
46. *War ak'oyer ub'akyob' che,*
47.                   *tama e kriatura che.*
48. *Ya ch'a'r amenesado che,*
49. *Tya' ch'a'r che,*
50. *Tya' ch'a'r takar che,*
51.                   *Ch'a'r taka upetejk'ya'nir ukolero,*
52.                   *ut'oxpe'.*
53. *Uloch'te'yr kolero,*
54. *Ut'oxpe' kolero.*
55. *Ch'a'r aloch'te' jarari',*
56. *War aloch'te' ut'oxpe' kolero.*
57. *Ch'a'r aloch'loch' jarari',*
58. *War aloch'loch' b'akyob' che.*
59. *Ch'a'r che takar che ajjawjaw kolero,*
60. *Jararte'yr u't t'oxpe' kolero.*
61. *Ch'a'r ajararte' jarari',*
62. *War ajararte' b'akyob' che,*
63.                   *tamar e kriatura.*
64. *ya ch'a'r che ajkolerin kolero,*
65.                   *ajkolerin t'oxpe' kolero.*
66. *Ch'a'r ajararte'yr jarari',*
67. *War ajararte'yr b'akyob' che.*
68. *Umakajrya'nir ukolero,*
69. *Umakaj ut'oxpe' kolero.*
70. *Ch'a'r amakajrya'n jarari',*
71. *War makajrya'n b'akyob' che,*
72.                   *tamar e kriatura che.*
73. *Ch'a'r che,*
74.                   *takar che.*
75. *Ch'a'r takar upelotir ukolero,*
76.                   *ut'oxpe' kolero.*
77. *Ch'a'r utzimajya'nir ukolero,*

78. *utzijb'ijrya'r ukolero.*
79. *Ut'oxpe kolero,*
80. *Umalairir ut'oxpe' kolero.*
81. *Ch'a'r asijb'ijya'n jarari',*
82. *Utzimajya'nir ukolero.*
83. *Utzimajya'nir ut'oxpe' kolero,*
84. *Ch'a'r atzimajya'n jarari'.*
85. *War atzimajya'n b'akyob' che,*
86. *tamar e kriatura che.*
87. *takar che.*
88. *Ch'a'r takar upiketir ukolero,*
89. *upiketir ut'oxpe'.*
90. *ulansir kolero,*
91. *ut'oxpe' kolero.*
92. *Ch'a'r awajrsya'n jarari',*
93. *tamar e kriatura yaja' che.*
94. *takar usinamir ukolero,*
95. *ut'oxpe' kolero.*
96. *Ch'a'r tamar che,*
97. *Ch'a'r takar uxekb'ar ukolero,*
98. *umalairir ut'oxpe',*
99. *Ajjitjitya'nir umalairir ukolero,*
100. *Ujit malairir ukolero.*
101. *Ch'a'r ajitjit jarari',*
102. *War ajitjit b'akyob',*
103. *tame' kriatura yaja' che.*
104. *Ch'a'r che,*
105. *Ch'a'r takar che.*
106. *Ch'a'r ulat kolero,*
107. *uwak kolero.*
108. *Ajwawa' kolero,*
109. *Ut'oxpe' kolero.*
110. *Ch'a'r awawa' jarari',*
111. *War awawa' b'akyob',*
112. *tame' e kriatura yaja' che.*
113. *Ja'xto ch'a'r ujararte',*
114. *tamar e kriatura yaja' che.*
115. *Ja'xto ch'a'r che,*
116. *takar uk'oyte'yr ukolero ut'oxpe',*
117. *ulat'aj t'oxpe' kolero.*
118. *Ch'a'r alat'ajya'n jarari',*
119. *War alat'ajya'n b'akyob',*
120. *takar atz'i ya' che.*

121. *Ch'a'r takar utasador ukolero,*  
 122. *kansamiento kolero,*  
 123. *t'oxpe' kolero.*  
 124. *Ch'a'r alat'ajya'n jarari',*  
 125. *War alat'ajya'n b'akyob'.*

This lengthy section of a yet much longer prayer displays numerous rhetorical devices operating at different poetic levels. As is obvious from the visible structure, the majority of the text is composed in parallel fashion. Several different types of couplets are used in this passage. Lines 23-25 begin with a couplet in the first two lines that only shares the initial adverb *ya* ('there') in common. A nested couplet then is created in lines 24 and 25 with the repeated *namchetaka* followed by *uyespiritu*, a synonym for 'his angel'.

- |     |                                      |   |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 23. | <i>Ya tya' ch'a'r che.</i>           | There where they are lying indeed,            |
| 24. | <i>Ya k'otoy namchetaka uyanjel,</i> | There they arrived to rob his spirit quickly. |
| 25. | <i>namchetaka uyespiritu.</i>        | quickly robbing his spirit.                   |

Several triplets occur in this passage:

- |      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
| 28.  | <i>Ja'xto ch'a'r taka umal infurya kolero,</i> | These are the ones lying with the angry<br>evil eye, |
| 29.  | <i>furiente ukolero,</i>                       | powerful evil eye,                                   |
| 30.  | <i>t'oxpe' kolero.</i>                         | evil eye anger pains.                                |
| 121. | <i>Ch'a'r takar utasador ukolero,</i>          | Lying with the ? of his anger pain,                  |
| 122. | <i>kansamiento kolero,</i>                     | exhaustion anger pain,                               |
| 123. | <i>t'oxpe' kolero.</i>                         | evil eye anger pain.                                 |

In both of these triplets we see the exact same structural configuration. *Ch'a'r taka(r)*, 'lying with' introduces both first lines, lines 28 and 121. This phrase is then syncopated in all other lines. The noun phrase within the prepositional phrase is prefixed by the

third-person possessive pronoun *u-* (*umal, utasador*). In the second line of both triplets (lines 29 and 122), however, the *u-* pronoun is deleted from the nominal phrase within the prepositional phrase (which also deletes the verb and the preposition). In the third line of both (lines 30 and 123) the same combination of *t'oxpe' kolero* appears. The gradual attrition of segmental elements from one line to the next is a hallmark of Ch'orti' poetics. Several of the structural framing devices described above are interwoven throughout this text. The combination of *jarari'/b'aki* appears in lines 5-6, 42-43, 45-46, 57-58, 66-67, 70-71, 84-85, 101-102, 10-111, 118-119, and 124-125. The second structural framing device of *kolero/t'oxpe' (kolero)* occurs in lines 1-2, 3-4, 7-8, 9-10, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 19-20, 28-30, 31-32, 33-34, 37-38, 39-40, 43-44, 51-52, 53-54, 59-60, 64-65, 68-69, 75-76, 79-80, 82-83, 88-89, 90-91, 94-95, 97-98, 108-109, 116-117, and 121-123. Elements of both framing pairs *jarari'/b'aki* and *kolero/t'oxpe' (kolero)* are occasionally intermixed, an indication that they are not mutually exclusive categories but, on a structural level, conceptually related. Note the following example in line 55-56:

55. *Ch'a'r aloch'te' jarari'*  
 56. *War aloch'te' ut'oxpe' kolero*.

This example also contains the alternation between *ch'a'r* and *war*. The form *ch'a'r* is a past participle of the positional verb root *\*ch'a* (with the addition of the *-ar* past participle ending yielding *ch'a'r*). *War* is the present progressive marker (e.g. *Lukas war axana ta chinam*, "Lucas is walking to the town"). In Ch'orti' healing texts, *ch'a'r* and *war* are often alternated in poetic fashion, *ch'a'r* appearing in the first line of the couplet and *war*

in the second. *Ch'a'r* literally means 'lying down' but is commonly used as a near equivalent to the present progressive 'is (X-ing...)'. Therefore, in translation *ch'a'r* and *war* are synonymous in usage and in general semantics. Note the following examples from the above text:

110. *Ch'a'r awawa' jarari'*, Lying there exhausting with woven pains,  
111. *War awawa' b'akyob'*. They there are exhausting on the bones.
118. *Ch'a'r alat'ajya'n jarari'*, Lying there grabbing at him with woven pains,  
119. *War alat'ajya'n b'akyob'*. They are grabbing around his bones.

Further instances of this alternation pattern appear in lines 41-41, 45-46, 55-56, 57-58, 61-62, 66-67, 70-71, 84-85, and 101-102. In the majority of cases in the above passage of text where *ch'a'r* and *war* are interchanged as the line-initial element, an additional poetic device is present—the affirmative particle *che*. I first identified the affirmative particle *che* in Ch'orti' in 2001 after discovering its presence in several curing texts.

About this particle I have elsewhere written (Hull 2001a):

Ch'orti' makes regular use of the quotative particle *che* in reported speech. In poetic contexts, however, a seemingly different *che* is used as a kind of discourse marker that terminates lines. It is part of a group of affirmative particles (which are occasionally difficult to translate in context) that appear as *atz'i, ya'*, *atz'i ya'*, and *atz'i ya' che*. Most traditional healers sprinkle this *che* particle throughout curing prayers without adding much to the meaning of the phrase. Instead, it seems to mark the end of a line or thought and is usually the point where the healer takes a breath. Its function seems rhythmic as much as it is grammatical at times...All of the *curanderos* with whom I have spoken tell me that *che* in these ritual prayer contexts does not mean "they say" but instead, as one old *curandera* explained, "*es como una afirmación*" (it's like an affirmation) that does not translate easily. Some prayers make use of this *che* discourse marker at the end of nearly every line to mark a pause point...It may resemble more closely the

Chontal *che'en* "thus it is" (Knowles 1985:242) or the Ch'ol *che'* "asi" ("thus") (Aulie & Aulie 1978:47).

As mentioned above, the quotative particle *che* meaning 'he/she said it,' 'they say,' or 'it is said' is altogether distinct from the discourse marker *che* that I am describing here. In terms of semantics, *che* functions as an emphatic particle, much like *atz'i, ya', -ixto, b'ari, ajchi,* and *imb'a*. In these contexts, *che* is best translated as 'thus' or 'indeed'.

Structurally, *che* is a discourse marker indicating a break in the phrase or an inbreath point. *Che* has completely fallen into disuse in everyday spoken Ch'orti' and only appears at times today in curing texts. In fact, many Ch'orti' healers were unable to explain its function saying simply that was just how they learned it. In the above passage *che* regularly appears at the end of the second line of a couplet (only in lines 23, 35, 48, 73, 87, 96, 104, and 115 it occurs in the first line). It is especially noteworthy that in the clear majority of cases where *ch'a'r* and *war* are poetically alternated, *che* appears as the terminus of the second line. *Ch'a'r* is a positional verb meaning 'lying (there)' while *war* is the present progressive aspect marker (English "-ing"). Note the use of *che* in these situations:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 41. <i>Ch'a'r apakaxpaya'n jarari'</i> ,             | Lying coming back again with woven pains,                  |
| 42. <i>War apakaxpaya'n b'akyob' ya' <u>che</u>.</i> | They are coming back again on the bones<br><u>indeed</u> . |
| 45. <i>Ch'a'r ak'oyer jarari'</i> ,                  | Lying debilitating with woven pains,                       |
| 46. <i>War ak'oyer ub'akyob' <u>che</u>.</i>         | They are debilitating on his bones <u>indeed</u> .         |
| 57. <i>Ch'a'r aloch'loch' jarari'</i> ,              | Lying grabbing at him with woven pains,                    |
| 58. <i>War aloch'loch' b'akyob' <u>che</u>.</i>      | They are grabbing on his bones <u>indeed</u> .             |

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 61. <i>Ch'a'r ajararte' jarari',</i>            | Lying weaving with woven pains,                                |
| 62. <i>War ajararte' b'akyob' <u>che</u>.</i>   | They are weaving on his bones <u>indeed</u> .                  |
| 66. <i>Ch'a'r ajararte'yr jarari',</i>          | Lying weaving with woven pains,                                |
| 67. <i>War ajararte'yr b'akyob' <u>che</u>.</i> | They are weaving on his bones <u>indeed</u> .                  |
| 70. <i>Ch'a'r amakajrya'n jarari',</i>          | Lying water-blocking with woven pains,                         |
| 71. <i>War makajrya'n b'akyob' <u>che</u>.</i>  | They are water-blocking his bones <u>indeed</u> .              |
| 84. <i>Ch'a'r atzimajya'n jarari',</i>          | Lying making chilling woven pains,                             |
| 85. <i>War atzimajya'n b'akyob' <u>che</u>.</i> | They are making chilling pains on his<br>bones <u>indeed</u> . |

A melodic cadence is created through the combination of the line-initial element (*ch'a'r/war*) and the addition of the *che* particle at the line-final position in the second stich. On a larger scale, the affirmative particle *che* is also an important discourse marker, often appearing before breath intakes in performance. In this regard, the structure of several sections of the above text is significantly illuminated. Note the following cases:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 35. <i>Ch'a'r e kriatura che,</i>                   |  |
| 36. <i>takar che,</i>                               |  |
| 37. <i>takar ukexkanir ukolero,</i>                 |  |
| 38. <i>ukexkanir ut'oxpe' kolero.</i>               |  |
| 36. The patient is lying indeed,                    |  |
| 37. <i>with indeed,</i>                             |  |
| 38. <i>with the panting of his anger evil eye,</i>  |  |
| 39. <i>the panting of his evil eye anger pains,</i> |  |
| 48. <i>Ya ch'a'r amenasado che,</i>                 |  |
| 49. <i>tya' ch'a'r che,</i>                         |  |
| 50. <i>tya' takar che,</i>                          |  |
| 51. <i>ch'a'r taka upetejk'ya'nir kolero,</i>       |  |
| 52. <i>ut'oxpe'.</i>                                |  |

48. There he is lying afflicted indeed,  
 49.                                   where he is lying indeed,  
 50.                                   where with indeed,  
 51.                                   lying with the crawling pains of the anger pain,  
 52.   evil eye anger pain.

73. *Ch'a'r che,*  
 74.       *takar che.*  
 75. *Ch'a'r takar upelotir ukolero,*  
 76.                                   *ut'oxpe' kolero.*

73. Lying there indeed,  
 74.                                   with indeed.  
 75. Lying with his ball-like anger evil eye,  
 76.                                   his evil eye anger pain.

104. *Ch'a'r che,*  
 105.   *ch'a'r takar che,*  
 106.    *ch'a'r ulat kolero,*  
 107.                                   *uwak kolero.*

104. Lying indeed,  
 105.   Lying with indeed,  
 106.    Lying the ?? of his anger pain,  
 107.                                   the ?? of his anger pain.

A powerful, gradual 'building up' effect is produced as the narrator takes an inbreath after each instance of *che*. Syntactically, *che* poetically interrupts the continuity of the phrase as each subsequent line augments additional information. A suspenseful tension is the result of this poetic scaling effect that figures quite prominently into many Ch'orti' curing texts.

Other uses of the affirmative particle *che* also appear in the above passage. The prepositional phrase *tama e kriatura* ("with the patient") often appears as the sole element

in the second line of a couplet.<sup>19</sup> When this prepositional phrase is isolated in the second line of a couplet it very often will carry the *che* affirmative particle:

71. *War makajrya'n b'akyob' che,*  
72. *tama e kriatura che.*
85. *War atzimajya'n b'akyob' che,*  
86. *tama e kriatura che.*
102. *War ajitjit b'akyob',*  
103. *tame' kriatura yaja' che.*
111. *War awawa' b'akyob',*  
112. *tame' kriatura yaja' che.*
113. *Ja'xto ch'a'r ujararte',*  
114. *tamar e kriatura yaja' che.*

Several of these contexts (71-72, 85-86) show the use of *che* as a discourse marker signaling a break in the first line. The prepositional phrase, rather than being interpreted as part of a monocolon with what precedes, is relegated to the second line by the intervening *che* particle. In all of the above cases, *che* also marks the *locus termini* of the stanza in the second line. As a rhetorical device *che* functions as both a line and stanza boundary marker. In addition, in texts where *che* used in nearly every line, it operates as framing device enveloping text within an aesthetic, repetitive assonance.

Finally, note the heavy use of *che* as it appears in conjunction with two other affirmative particles *atz'i* and *ya'* from two different curing prayers from different healers:

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<sup>19</sup> The preposition *tama* is a shortened form of *tamar* and both are freely substituted in Ch'orti' (*tamar*, however, being the more formal usage). *Tame'* is an assimilation of *tama* + *e*, *e* being the definite article.



the oration. The examples provided in this discussion of the use of *che* shows it to be an extremely important and hitherto undocumented discourse particle in Ch'orti'.

This brief (and incomplete) poetic treatment of a single section of one curing prayer should suffice to indicate the wide range of poetic devices that Ch'orti' healers draw upon in performance. The principal purpose of looking more closely at this single text was to show 1) the variety of structuring mechanism employed by Ch'orti' healers in the creation of texts, and 2) how these assorted framing systems can and do interact within a larger narrative.

#### **1.14. "Speaking in Two": Couplets and Parallelism in Ch'orti'**

Throughout much of the preceding discussion, the dominant position of couplets in Ch'orti' poetics should already be overwhelmingly apparent. Since many of the poetic styles and variations that feature prominently in Ch'orti' couplet construction have been investigated above, what remains is a systematic analysis of the character of couplets themselves. There are a myriad of possible manifestations of even a simple parallel stanza that together make up part of the 'poetic consciousness' of Ch'orti' narrators. In order to explicate the use and function of parallelism in Ch'orti', we must first define the range of variations within this major poetic category. For the purposes of this analysis of parallelism in Ch'orti', I will use Allen Christenson's excellent list and definition of parallel types that accompanied his recent translation of the mythic sections of the Popol Vuh (2000). While this list is based on observed rhetorical devices in the Popol Vuh, the majority of these are likewise found in Ch'orti', and therefore make a convenient point of

departure for a discussion of each poetic form. I make several additions and alterations to Christenson's list where appropriate for Ch'orti', or where I see the need to amend it for my purposes. It is also important to state here that not all couplet types in Ch'orti' will be analyzed in this section since many will be (or have been) discussed while describing other poetic devices.

Outside of the work by Fought, couplets in Ch'orti' have received little in the way of a functional or descriptive analysis. His efforts in this area represent the only published investigation on this subject. In an important study titled "*Cyclical Patterns in Chorti' (Mayan) Literature*," Fought set out to explore "the characteristic features of Ch'orti' rhetoric...in order to show their verbal artistry" (1985:133). Couplets in Ch'orti', according to Fought, operate on a large-scale and multiple level organizational cycle (1985:136). In this way, they are akin to Woodbury's "rhetorical structure" (1987:178). Fought defines a couplet as "a simple paradigmatic structure composed of two pairs of elements, such that one element is common to both pairs and one element is unique to each pair" (134-135). For Fought, couplets arise through "the exploitation of the most basic syntactic resources of the Mayan languages" (1985:135). He contends that Ch'orti' couplets are based on two fundamental classes of predication. The first is equational and intransitive, which he defines as "two items [that] are juxtaposed, [and] placed on symmetrical and equal footing" (1985:135). The following is an example of this type of attributive relationship between constitutive elements to which Fought refers:

*Enyax makchan,*  
*Ensak makchan*

The green rainbow,  
The white rainbow.

The second form is the possessive type of predication in which "the possessed constituent bears a prefix (or occurs with a specialized particle) which subordinates it to the possessor" (Fought 1985:135). For example:

<i>Usututjutir u't,</i>	The whirlwind heat of your expression,
<i>Usututjutir uk'ab'.</i>	The whirlwind heat of your hands.

In this case, the possessive pronoun *u-* is prefixed to the nominal from *sututjut* thereby subordinating the following terms *u't* and *k'ab'*. While Fought correctly identified two of the principal structural patterns involved in Ch'orti' couplet construction, his analysis did not address numerous other facets of couplet formation. Building on Fought's work, the discussion that follows is an attempt to more fully define the range and depth of couplet composition in Ch'orti' in order increase our appreciation of highly sophisticated poetic skills present among the Ch'orti'.

### **1.15. Identical Parallelism and Semantic Couplets**

Identical parallelism comprises the most basic level of poetic structuring in Ch'orti'. Christenson defines identical parallelism simply as "the repetition of identical elements" (2000:14). Identical parallelism regularly appears in dyadic structures known as "semantic couplets," one of the most common couplet patterns in all Mayan languages. In addition, semantic couplets were also a highly typical trait of Nahuatl poetry among the Aztecs (Edmonson 1992:55). I divide identical parallelism into two structural categories: A) Identical Structure and Related Meaning Parallelism, and B) Identical Structure and Shape Parallelism. Identical structure and related meaning parallelism

implies the presence of a separate but semantically related term or phrase that is employed in each line in an otherwise identical structure. Identical structure and shape parallelism refers to 100% repetition of the first line in the second with no alteration whatsoever. Identical structure and shape parallelism is not common in Ch'orti' ritual contexts—a phenomenon that Hanks has also noted for Yukatek (Hanks 1989:107). Also, identical structure and related meaning parallelism is closely related to synonymous parallelism, and, in fact, overlaps in many ways. In both cases, however, syntactic parallelism is highly common. Identical structure and related meaning parallelism often benefits from the use of exact synonyms within Ch'orti' (see Example 5 below), code switching between Ch'orti' and Spanish (see Example 2 below), and also Spanish forms in both lines (see Example 3 below), all of which provide identical meanings. Note the following examples of identical structure and related meaning parallelism from Ch'orti' healing texts:

Example 1:

*Urelampir uyok,*  
*Urelampir uk'ab'.*

**The lightning of their feet,**  
**The lightning of their hands.**

Example 2:

*Tijtjutir te' mundo,*  
*Espanto te' mundo.*

**Fright of the world,**  
**Fright of the world.**

Example 3:

*mediyante el syelo,*  
*mediyante la gloria.*

**middle of the sky,**  
**middle of the heavens.**

Example 4:

*Utzimajya'nir ukolero,*  
*Utzimajya'nir ut'oxpe'.*

**The mucus string of their evil eye,**  
**The mucus string of their evil eye anger pain.**

Example 5:

*tama ajnawalch'a'n,*  
*tama ajxujch'ch'a'n.*

**with tobacco,**  
**with tobacco.**

Example 6:

*Ch'a'r atijb'ya'n b'aki,*  
*Ch'a'r atijb'ya'n jarari'.*

**They are jumping** on the bones,  
**They are jumping** with woven pains.

Example 7:

*Ajwajyib' Jolchan Tijtjutir,*  
*Ajb'ajk'ut Jolchan Tijtjutir.*

The Clothesline **Evil Heat Fright**,  
The Fright **Evil Heat Fright**.

Example 8:

*A'si tamar enyax kamino real,*  
*A'si tamar ensak kamino real.*

**They play in the green highway,**  
**They play in the white highway.**

Example 9:

*Ch'a'r takar umalairir ixamb'ar,*  
*Ch'a'r takar umalairir iwajner.*

**Lying with the evil winds of your walking,**  
**Lying with the evil winds of your running.**

Example 10:

*A'si watar tamar e 500 estado de infernal,*  
*A'si watar tamar e 90 estado de infernal.*  
**They come playing in the 500th level of hell,**  
**They come playing in the 90th level of hell.**

Example 11:

*Ya'syob' tama e gotera,*  
*Ya'syob' tama e gotera.*

**And they play on the eaves,**  
**And they play on the eaves.**

Example 12:

*At'e'nsa'n ub'an,*  
*At'e'nsa'n ub'an.*

**It infects also,**  
**It infects also.**

In Examples 1-10, a single element is substituted in the second line, while the rest of the structure remains consistent. Examples 11 and 12 represent rare cases or identical structure and shape parallelism in Ch'orti' healing texts where the first line is an exact

mirrored image of the second. Identical parallelism is the structural core of the vast majority of all Ch'orti' poetic formations and ranks as its most important poetic device.

### 1.16. Synonymous Parallelism

A closely related form of parallelism that was briefly discussed above is synonymous parallelism. Christenson defines synonymous parallelism as "the repetition of elements that are similar in meaning or significance" (2000:14). Synonymous parallelisms often do not repeat the focus elements between the the second line. In some cases, synonymous terms are used in the second line of the couplet, often with some alteration in syntax.

*Piketir ukolero,  
Ut'oxpe' lanseador.*

**The poking pain** of its evil eye,  
The evil eye anger pain of the **lancer**.

This example contains the semantically related terms *piketir*, 'poking pain', and *lanseador*, 'lancer' or 'stabber'. Synonymous parallelism is only marginally significant in Ch'orti' ritual texts and is greatly overshadowed by the pervasive use of both varieties of identical parallelism.

### 1.17. Augmentative Parallelism

Augmentative parallelism often shows deletion of the first part of the second line, but then further explains or clarifies the following term in the second half of the second line (cf. Christenson 2000:14). Augmentative parallelism is exceptionally common in

Ch'orti' ritual speech and represents one of the favorite poetic forms in Ch'orti' discourse.

Note these examples:

Example 1:

*A'si watar tamar enyax kaye,*  
*ensak kaye mayor.*

They come on the green street,  
on the white highway.

Example 2:

*A'si tu'templo sagrado,*  
*sagrado anxerob' de infernal.*

They play in their sacred temple,  
sacred of the angels from Hell.

Example 3:

*A'si watar pwerta saliente,*  
*pwerta saliente de Kristo.*

They come to play at the eastern door,  
the eastern door of Christ.

Example 4:

*A'si wato'b' tamar e 17 sementaryo,*  
*e 17 sementaryo infernal.*

They come to play in the 17 cemeteries,  
the 17 infernal cemeteries.

Example 5:

*Tya' tarye'n impak'i,*  
*Tya' yo'penix impak'i yar u't e ixim ira.*

Where I have come to plant,  
Where I have arrived to plant these little seeds of corn.

In the first example, *kaye*, or 'street', is elaborated upon in the second half of the couplet with the addition of *mayor*, or 'major', and changes the nuance to a 'highway' from 'street'.

In Example 2, *templo sagrado* is augmented with *anxerob' de infernal*, "angels from Hell" in the second half of the couplet. The reference to "the eastern door" in Example 3,

connoting the portal in the eastern sky from which the sun emerges, is amplified in the second line with the additional description of it being "the eastern door of Christ." The "door of Christ" also refers to one of the four doors of the universe located at each of the cardinal directions where malevolent spirits "play" and pass through on their way to cause a particular sickness. The first line of Example 4 mentions "the 17 cemeteries," which is augmented with "infernal" in the second line of the couplet. The 17<sup>th</sup> level of the underworld is considered one of the most dangerous nether regions where some of the worst disease-causing spirits reside. Augmenting the second line where ellipsis has already taken place is an important poetic technique of Ch'orti' formal discourse that adds a sense of "elegance," as one consultant described it, to the prayer. Example 5 comes from a prayer for a *Limosna* field dedication ceremony. In the second line of the couplet, the orator augments the phrase by including the direct object of what was to be planted, "yar u't e ixim ira," "these little seeds of corn."

### **1.18. Antithetic Parallelism and *Difrasismos***

Up until this point, all of couplet structures I have discussed have involved complementary or semantically related items. Another important aspect of parallelism is the creation of contrast between lines. While emphasis is obviously a byproduct of synonymous parallelism, at times an even greater poetic tension is created through the pairing of antithetical elements. In fact, Monaghan argues that "the power of the couplet then lies in the *contrast* between the first and the second line" (Monaghan 1990:136-7, emphasis mine). Antithetic parallelism is defined by Christenson as "the contrast of one

element with an opposite or antithetical element" (2000:14). Focus is brought to bear by the stark contrast between two paired elements showing antonymy. For example, Norman has noted several such cases of antithetic parallelism in K'iche': *k'ij/ak'*—"day/night"; *juyub/ tak'aaj*—"mountain/smooth"; *akan/k'ab*—"leg/arm" (Norman 1983:116). D. Tedlock also gives the example of *chopalo*, consisting of the term *cho*, "lake," and *palo*, "sea," meaning "all the pooled water of the world" (1987:148). From a non-native perspective, meaning can sometimes be discovered at the intersection of both terms. Meaning is derived by abstracting from the extremes a more general notion related to both. The case of *k'ij/ak'*, or "day/night" is a good example of this. One might extrapolate from such antithetic terms a general sense of 'time'—precisely the intended meaning of this pairing. In other situations, however, the meaning may be masked by a deeper metaphor that may be only decipherable from a native perspective. The second example given by Norman of *juyub/ tak'aaj*, or "mountain/smooth" is a case in point. D. Tedlock notes that the pairing of "mountain/plain" is indeed a metaphor that refers to the human body (1985:253). Antithetic parallelism, then, is often (but not always) best treated as a metaphoric expression, sometimes generalizable at a basic abstract level, but other times highly emblematic and opaque.

In Ch'orti' healing rites curers constantly use a select group of couplets showing antithetic parallelism which can all be interpreted metaphorically. Examples of this type of antithetic parallelism can be seen in the combination of such terms as "day/night," "night/morning," and "walking/running." More specifically, antithetic parallelism can also be analyzed as a type of *difrasismo* representing a related but more

general concept. Garibay first coined the phrase *difrasismo* to describe the pairing of two terms employed as a single metaphorical unit (1961; 1968). The use of this powerful stylistic device was common throughout Mesoamerica (Knab 1986:46). Christenson defines it (he uses the term "merismus") as "the expression of a broad concept by a pair of complementary elements that are narrower in meaning" (2000:17). In Aztec literature, *difrasismos* are commonly found where two words are combined to create a metaphorical referent. The prototypical example of a *difrasismo* comes from the Nahuatl phrase *in xochitl, in cuicatl*, or "flower, song" which together means "poetry, art, symbolism" (León-Portilla 1992:54). In other Nahuatl texts, warriors are referred to as "a small eagle, tiger" and children are referred to as "one's hair, one's fingernail" (León-Portilla and Anderson 1980:78). According to León-Portilla, a *difrasismo* does not present simply abstract ideas, but rather meanings that are "fresh, vigorous, and dynamic" (1963:102). The Classic Nahuatl language *hue:huehtlahto:lli*, "the old ones' manners of speaking...ancient colloquies," was filled with this type of dualistic metaphor constructions and were "highly stylized and prestigious speech" (Maxwell and Hanson 1992:19; see also León-Portilla 1992:54-55). The Tulal Manuscript written in Classic Nahuatl provides a good illustration of the density of *difrasismos* in this type of ritual speech. The following is an example titled "Authority as Protector" with the metaphorical meaning given in parentheses (Maxwell and Hanson 1992:169):

A Mother, a father is as	(ascending lineage; protection)
A foundation, and a covering	(protection?)
Like the silk cotton tree, the cypress tree	(king, rulership)
They afford shadow, shade, shading	(to be under someone's protection)
As a cool bower, as a spindle	(meaning unknown)

The stichs of each line have a metaphorical referent when used in combination with each other. Notice also that the entire example is composed strictly in *difrasismos*. According to Johansson, *difrasismos* (or "*binomios léxicos*" as he terms them) also abound in Nahuatl political discourses (1993:86).<sup>20</sup> There seems to be a poetic or aesthetic allure to this type of discourse construction that may be grounded in the dualistic tendencies of many Mesoamerican groups (Neusanwander 1987:715-32; Karttunen 1986:5.1; Hull 1993:21, 42; Bricker 1974:378; Edmonson 1986:17). I have previously mentioned a few *difrasismos* as they occurred in earlier sections of this study. For purposes of clarity, let me review the most common types of *difrasismos* encountered in Ch'orti' ritual speech:

Example 1:

*Ya ch'a'r tama e pwerta mundo,  
pwerta syelo.*

There they lie in the door of the world,  
door of the sky.

Example 2:

*A'si tama oriente mundo,  
oriente syelo.*

They play in the east world,  
east sky.

Example 3:

St. Francis Conqueror of the World,  
Conqueror of the Sky.

(Girard 1995:153)

These examples seen previously show pairings from among the elements "sky,"

"heaven," and "world." As I pointed out earlier, combinations such as 'sky/world'

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<sup>20</sup> Somewhat confusingly, however, Johansson states that "*los binomios léxicos no se ubican en la expresión poética*" and that "*El epónimo global de género, In xóchitl incuicatl "flor y canto" es quizás el único ejemplo de ellos presente en la poesía*" (Johansson 1993:83, footnote 21). He seems to suggest that they appear most often in political discourses and rarely in poetic texts. This is certainly incorrect. The scores of examples of *difrasismos* in the Tulal Manuscript alone make his position on this point untenable.

represent the broader notion of 'everywhere' ('everywhere between heaven and earth'), as can be seen in Examples 1-3. Similarly, in the Popol Vuh the pairing of *caj*, "sky," and *ulew*, "earth" also stands for the abstract concept of "world" (D. Tedlock 1987:148). In Example 2, "they play in the east world, east sky" is a *difrasismo* meant to designate 'everywhere in the east'. This is reminiscent of the K'iche' triplet expression from the Popol Vuh, "world where they sun rises, world where the sun sets, all worlds," where the antithetical first two lines are generalized in the meaning found in the third line, "all worlds" (D. Tedlock 1987:159). Now, it must be stated clearly that *not all cases of antithetic parallelism are examples of difrasismos*. The simple fact of the matter in Ch'orti', however, is that in each case that I have located of antithetic parallelism it happens that they can also be interpreted as a *difrasismo*. This is surely not a universal characteristic of antithetic parallelism, but should at least be considered a tendency. Therefore, I have collapsed the discussion of both antithetic parallelism and *difrasismos* for illustrative purposes because of their tight correspondence in Ch'orti', not to imply that they are one and the same poetic device. Note the use of antithetic parallelism and *difrasismos* in these excerpts from healing texts:

Example 1:

*Ch'a'r a'syob' atz'i ya' tamar e silensyo **diya**,*  
*tamar e silensyo **noche**.*

They are playing indeed in the silent **day**,  
in the silent **night**.

Example 2:

*Ink'ajti niwamparo koche **ink'b'are**,*  
*koche **insakojpa**.*

I plead for my assistance as much at **night**,  
as the **morning**.

Example 3:

*takar ujolchanir uxamb'ar,*  
*takar ujolchanir uyajner.*

with the evil heating of their **walking**,  
with the evil heating of their **running**.

Example 4:

*Ch'a'r tamar e silensyo ora,*  
*tamar e silensyo diya.*

Lying in the silent **hour**,  
in the silent **day**.

Example 5:

*Pero k'otoy e diya,*  
*K'otoy e ora.*

But the **day** has arrived,  
The **hour** has arrived.

In Example 1, "They are playing indeed in the silent day, in the silent night" probably refers to the fact that these evil spirits are thought to be playing 'all the time'. The combination 'day/night' connotes the idea of 'all the time' in these instances in Ch'orti'. Hanks also considers the pairing of 'day' and 'night' in Yukatek as a metonymic emblem of time (1989:107). Similarly, in Example 2, "as much at night as the morning" probably carries the idea of 'all the time,' that is, "I plead for your assistance always." The evil spirits in Example 3 are said to be 'evil heating' (i.e. infecting the individual with *jolchan*, a disease carrying heat or sweat) with their "walking" and "running." These two terms may stand as a *difrasismo* for something more akin to 'all their movements'. Examples 4 and 5 show the antithetic pairing of *ora/diya*, or 'hour/day', to represent the idea of 'time'. Example 5 is a stock expression of Ch'orti' healers that is used when petitioning the help of the angels in curing and means "the time has come (to help this patient)." Again, the resulting meaning is an abstraction of the initial two literal elements. Thus, antithetical parallelism provides fertile ground for a metaphoric extension in the form of *difrasismo* and metonym.

Among the older generation there exists a couplet expression that makes use of the archaic term *konoj* that is not understood by most under fifty years of age. *Konoj* appears in the expression, *e pak'ab'*, *e konoj*, and forms a metaphorical meaning something akin to 'human race' or 'human beings'. Note its use in the following description of the nether region of the Otherworld:

<i>Tya' matuk'a kamayores,</i>	Where there are none of our older brothers,
<i>Tya' matuk'a kawijtz'inob',</i>	Where there are none of our younger brothers,
<i>Tya' matuk'a e <u><b>pak'ab' e konoj.</b></u></i>	Where there are no human beings.

Note a similar example of its use:

<i>Medikiadora y Kuradora,</i>	Doctor and Curer,
<i>Remediadora te' kriatura,</i>	Healer of the patients,
<i>te' <u><b>pak'ab' e konoj.</b></u></i>	of human beings.

In this case, *pak'ab' e konoj* complements *kriatura*, or 'patients', referring to all people whom healers cure, i.e., all the people of the world.

The first example given above concerning *e pak'ab' e konoj* also contains an example of a similar type of metaphorical pairing.

<i>Tya' matuk'a kamayores,</i>	Where there are none of our older brothers,
<i>Tya' matuk'a kawijtz'inob'.</i>	Where there are none of our younger brothers.

The narrator in this part of the curing rite attempted to emphasize that region where the afflicting spirits live is in the farthest, most remote corner of the Otherworld where there are no humans whatsoever. The first two lines of this triplet, "where there are none of

our older brothers, where there are none of our younger brothers," themselves make up an identical structure and related meaning parallelism. Furthermore, the combination of the terms 'older brother/younger brother' is a known *difrasismo* from Yukatek representing the idea of 'everybody' (Edmonson 1986:19; cf. León-Portilla and Shorris 2001:565). The pairing of 'older brothers/younger brothers' in this Ch'orti' passage is a type of *difrasismo* in sentence form that complements the *e pak'ab' e konoj* reference to 'all humans'.

### 1.19. Associative Parallelism

Christenson defines associative parallelism as "the correlation of elements that are complementary to one another" (2000:14). He further divides this category into four subgroups: material, familial, functional, or gender-based. While each of these subgroups is present in Ch'orti', gender-based association is the most commonly encountered form. I will examine each of these subgroups in turn.

### 1.20. Material Association

Material association is when "the substance of the elements is similar in nature" in different lines of verse (Christenson 2000:14). I have found very few examples of material association in the Ch'orti' ritual data used for this study. One instance appears in the prayer during a field dedication ceremony:

*Grano de oro,  
I grano de plato.*

Grains of gold,  
And grains of silver.

The seeds of corn that Ch'orti' farmers plant in the field are often referred to as "grains of gold, grains of silver," alluding to the precious nature of this most important food source for the Ch'orti'. The material association of "gold" and "silver" as being something 'precious' is the basis of this couplet structure.

### 1.21. Familial Association

Familial association refers to parallel elements that refer to kinship (Christenson 2000:14). In curing texts, this type of pairing is not common due to the thematic content of the texts themselves. Let me illustrate this type of parallelism by referring to a triplet (discussed above) in which "older brothers" and "younger brothers" comprise the first two lines:

<i>Tya' matuk'a kamayores,</i>	Where there are none of our older brothers,
<i>Tya' matuk'a kawijtz'inob',</i>	Where there are none of our younger brothers,
<i>Tya' matuk'a e <u>pak'ab' e konoj.</u></i>	Where there are no human beings.

The Spanish term *mayor* from the expression *hermano/hermana mayor*, 'older brother/older sister', has been co-opted by Ch'orti' and reanalyzed with this meaning by itself. Other examples containing pairings of "mother" and "father" are not included here inasmuch as they are not expressing familial relationships, but rather gender associations (see gender association parallel below).

### 1.22. Functional Association

Functional association is the combination of "two elements [that] act in a similar manner" (Christenson 2000:14). There is an inherent relationship of action between the

terms in each line of a couplet. Christenson gives the following example of functional association in K'iche':

<i>Xa u tukël ri Tz'aqöl, B'it'öl,</i>	Merely alone the Framer, Shaper,
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The term *Tz'aqöl*, "Framer," and *B'it'öl*, "Shaper" are titles that are associated on the level of actions produced by those who carry them. Ch'orti' healing texts use this poetic form extensively in direct address contexts as well as when discussing titles of heavenly beings:

Example 1: <i>Abogado, Defensor.</i>	Lawyer, Defendor.
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Example 2: <i>Kocha apoderado Lisensiyado, Abogado.</i>	Like a powerful Lawyer, Lawyer.
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Example 3: <i>Kurador, Medikante.</i>	Curer, Doctor.
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Example 4: <i>Kurador, Remediador.</i>	Curer, Healer.
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Example 5: <i>No'x wa'rox Remediadorox, Kuradorox.</i>	You all stand as Healers, Curers.
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Examples 1 and 2 place three different terms synonymous with "lawyer" in an associative relationship. Ch'orti' healers refer to certain angels as "lawyers" or "intermediaries" who

can 'mediate' between this world and the Otherworld. The ability to intercede in healing ceremonies is considered to be one of their greatest powers, as is reflected by the consistent mention of these terms in their nominal titles. Similarly, in Examples 3-5 various titular terms relating to the role of these angels as 'healers' are paired.

### 1.23. Gender Association

Due in large part to mythological conceptions of the Ch'orti', gender association is very frequent in all healing and ritual texts. Christenson defines gender association as "two elements [that] are paired as male and female representatives of a parallel occupation" (2000:14). I would expand this definition to include representatives of parallel male/female aspects of an object or person. For the Ch'orti', most Otherworld beings, including disease-spreading spirits, have both a male and a female counterpart. This duality can take the form of a good and evil equivalent for each heavenly being. An illustrative example of this dualism in Ch'orti' mythology is San Antonio. San Antonio, the God of Fire, while usually feared as one who causes fevers, burns down houses, and causes all sorts of other illness if one falls near a fire, has a good counterpart who is one of the four "princes of the angels of God" ("*principos de ángeles de Dios*").<sup>21</sup> Such dyadic relationships pervade Ch'orti' mythology. In the realm of disease, each infirmity is linked to a specific "*Dueño de la Enfermedad*," or "Master of Disease," who is directly responsible for inflicting his or her illness on mankind. For example, the "masters of disease" for diarrhea are a female and male duo, known as *Doña Jwana de Portero* and

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<sup>21</sup> The term *principos* has been lexicalized in Ch'orti' from the Spanish *príncipes*.

*Don Jwan de Portero*. To a certain extent this relates back to complementary male/female principle that is central to many Maya groups (see below for a fuller discussion on this). Instances of gender association parallelism abound in Ch'orti' healing texts on account of the dualistic lens through which they view much of their world. In other cases, gender association parallelism results from the common frame of reference of the sun and the earth, or as the Ch'orti' say today, "*Padre Jesus*" and "*Madre Tierra*." Note the following gender dyads, each of which occupies one line of the couplet:

Example 1:

*A'si tamar e Niños Venturoso,*  
*Niñas Venturas.*

They are playing on the Adventurous Boys,  
Adventurous Girls.

Example 2:

*A'si Don Vyejo,*  
*Doña Vyeja.*

They play, Don Old One,  
Doña Old One.

Example 3:

*Ante el Padre Jesukristo,*  
*Ante de la Reyna Madre Santisima.*

Before the Father Jesus Christ  
Before the Queen Holy Mother

Example 4:

*Yer e kriatura twa' e Divino Padre Eterno,*  
*Madre Eterno.*

The poor little patient of the Divine Eternal Father,  
Eternal Mother.

Example 5:

*A'si tame Don Lyoniso,*  
*Doña Lyonisa.*

They play, Don Lyoniso,  
Doña Lyonisa.

Example 6:

*A'si tama e Madre Eva,  
Padre Adan.*

They play on Mother Eve,  
on Father Adam.

Example 7:

*Ch'a'r Umadre Kolera,  
upadre Kolera.*

Lying is his Mother Kolera,  
his Father Kolera.

Example 8:

*Ja'xir amejk'a umen e Santa Madre,  
del Mundo Kasador.  
Doña del Mundo,  
y Don Rey Mundo.  
Don Lyoniso,  
Doña Lyonisa.*

He is embraced by the Holy Mother,  
of the Capturer World.  
Doña of the World,  
and Don King World.

Example 9:

*A'si te' Madre Santisima,  
Padre Jesukristo.*

They play on the Holiest Mother,  
Father Jesus Christ.

Example 10:

*Don Jwan de Portero,  
Doña Jwana de Portero.*

Don Juan of the Portal,  
Doña Juana of the Portal.

Example 11:

*Ya a'si tari e Don Jwan Fiebrista,  
Don Jwan Entabardiyado.  
Doña Jwana Enfiebrista,  
Doña Jwana Entabardiyado.*

There they come to play, Don Juan Fiebrista,  
Don Juan Entabardiyado.

Doña Juana Enfiebrista,  
Doña Juana Entabardiyado.

Example 1 shows the gender association pairing of "Adventurous Boys, Adventurous Girls," ritual terminology for both newly sprouting plants and the evil spirits who are said to play around them. Example 2 mentions "Don Old One, Doña Old One," the male/female counterparts of evil spirits who are believed to be responsible for earthquakes. Example 3, 4, and 9 all make reference to the Sun God and Earth Goddess. Example 9, however, specifies that it is around the sun and on the earth that evil spirits "play." "Father Adam" and "Mother Eve" are likewise names of the sun and the earth in Example 6. In Example 5, "*Don Lyoniso*" and "*Doña Lyonisa*" are the dangerous spirits who reside in the ashes of a fire who can "grab" (i.e. infect) someone who may get too close. Example 10 mentions "*Don Juan de Portero*" and "*Doña Juana de Portero*" who are the male/female duo of menacing spirits who are responsible for bringing diarrhea. Finally, Example 11 shows the male/female pairing by joining two distich name phrases of "*Don Juan Fiebrista, Don Juan Entabardiyado*" and "*Doña Juana Enfiebrista, Doña Juana Entabardiyado*." This couple works with San Antonio to cause fevers such as an "*entabardiyo*," an especially severe kind of fever. All of these examples illustrate the context in which gender associated parallelism can occur due in large part to the dualistic male/female mythology of the Ch'orti'.

#### 1.24. Grammatical Parallelism

Grammatical parallelism refers to "elements that are grammatically parallel in construction" (Christenson 2000:15). The principal feature that distinguishes this type of parallelism is the presence of repeated grammatical forms in each line of stanza. It is important to clarify that many cases of grammatical parallelism could be included in any of the other categories based on other parallel features within the stanza. In all other constructions (except for identical parallelism), strict grammatical parallelism is not essential for their classification. When the narrator makes the conscious effort to stress the grammatical parallels within a particular stanza, such grammatical paralleling is deserving of a separate category, especially when the grammatical form breaks the flow of other previous grammatical patterns. Moreover, grammatical parallelism very often fits comfortably within larger parallel structures. For example, several instances of grammatical parallelism at the couplet level can be strung together in a longer parallel stanza. Note the following examples:

Example 1:

*Tya' namsena,*

*Tya' pijch'na uyalma.*

Where (his spirit) is robbed,

Where his spirit is touched.

Example 2:

*¡Chenik retirar!*

*¡Chenik soltar tamar uyanjel e kriatura!*

Cast them out!

Make them leap out from the spirit of the patient!

Example 3:

*¡Chenik levantar!*

*¡K'echik tamar ibajo poder!*

Raise them up!

Carry them under your power!

Example 4:

*¡Chen levantar!*

*¡Chen retirar!*

*¡Chen soltar, Nuestro Señor!*

*¡Chen limpyar uyanjel!*

Raise them up!

Cast them out!

Make them leap out, Our Lord!

Cleanse his spirit!

Example 5:

*Tya' robado uyanjel,*

*Tya' robado uyespiritu.*

*Tya' kasado,*

*agarrado,*

*amenesado jolchan tijtjutir.*

Where his spirit is robbed,

Where his spirit is robbed.

Where it is seized,

it is grabbed,

it is afflicted by the evil heat of fright.

Example 6:

*War alemb'ray jararyo'b',*

*War atzurukte'yr b'akyob',*

*War atzurukte'yr jararyo'b'.*

*War achinchin b'akyob',*

*War achinchin jararyo'b'.*

They are shinning with woven pains,

They are shivering on the bones,

They are shivering with woven pains.

They are rattling on the bones,

They are rattling with woven pains.

Example 7:

*A'si ukebrantir,*

*A'si uremolinir,*

*A'si uk'ek'we'r uyok,*

*A'si solo uwaporyante de San Antonio Servisyante,*

*A'si Don Lyoniso.*

Their debilitating pains play,

Their whirlwinds play,

The forces of their feet play,

Only the vaporous San Antonio Servisyante plays,

Don Lyoniso plays.

Example 8:

*Ch'a'r ufiembradorir,*

*Ch'a'r ubrisa.*

*Ch'a'r ukalambra,*

*Ch'a'r uyausente.*

Lying are their fever creators,

Lying are their evil winds.

Lying are their cramps,

Lying are their murdered spirits.

Example 9:

*Ch'a'r takar usakb'ub'ir ixamb'ir,*

*Ch'a'r takar usakb'ub'ir iwajner.*

*Ch'a'r takar ujolchanir ixamb'ar,*

*Ch'a'r takar ujolchanir iwajner.*

*Ch'a'r takar umalairir ixamb'ar,*

*Ch'a'r takar umalairir iwajner.*

Lying with the "sakb'ub'" of your walkings,

Lying with the "sakb'ub'" of your runnings.

Lying with the evil heating of your walkings,

Lying with the evil heating of your runnings.

Lying with the evil winds of your walkings,

Lying with the evil winds of your runnings.

The passive verbs *namesna*, 'was robbed (quickly of one's spirit)', and *pijch'na*, 'was touched (i.e. afflicted by an evil spirit)', in both lines of the couplet comprise the parallel grammatical structure of Example 1. Examples 2, 3, and 4 use parallel imperative

statements with plural morphology—singular morphology in Example 4 and plural in Examples 2 and 3. Note also that in Example 3, different verbs are selected with parallel grammatical features. Past participle forms (all originating from Spanish verbs with a certain degree of semantic reinterpretation) are repeated in parallel fashion in five continuous lines in Example 5. Each line in Example 6 employs the progressive aspect marker *war* in a present progressive construction throughout. In Example 7, simple incompletive aspect verb forms (in this case all *a'si*, 'it/they play') are used in parallel fashion. In Example 8 the common positional verb *ch'a'r*, 'lying', begins all four lines followed by possessed nouns in each case. Example 9 also repeats the line-initial verb *ch'a'r*, but this time in the context of a prepositional phrase in a possessive construction. In each of the above examples there seems to be a conscious repetition of a specific grammatical pattern for poetic effect.

### **1.25. Enveloping Parallelism**

Enveloping parallelism appears in passages of text that strategically repeat a unit of discourse at the beginning and the end of stanza in order to envelope or frame the inner phrase thereby creating a 'bookends' effect for the section (see Examples 1, 2, 3, and 6 below). Christenson defines envelope parallelism as "the repetition of parallel elements at the beginning and end of a long stanza or section of poetry...[that] has the effect of tying together the introduction and conclusion of a passage to set it apart from that which precedes and follows it" (2000:17). Enveloping parallelism is not restricted to couplets, but can appear in any parallel construction. Other couplets may occur within the

enveloped section. Enveloping often causes the listener or reader to search later in the text for the second stich of the opening couplet. The narrative flow of the couplet is interrupted, and the expectation of the listener/reader broken, thereby producing the desired poetic effect. Note the following examples from of envelope parallelism:

Example 1:

<i>A'si tamar enyax rueda,</i>	<b>They play</b> in the green ring,
<i>tamar enyax rueda,</i>	in the green ring,
<i>tamar uruedir a'syob'.</i>	in their ring <b>they play</b> .

Example 2:

<i>Pero kone'r che pestijado inombre,</i>	But now <b>indeed</b> sacred are your names,
<i>pestijado ik'a'ba che.</i>	sacred are you names <b>indeed</b> .

Example 3:

<i>Susiriyo tijtjutir,</i>	<b>Chills</b> fright,
<i>Espanto susiriyo.</i>	Fright <b>chills</b> .

Example 4:

<i>Ch'a'r a'syob' atz'i ya' tamar e silensyo ora,</i>	
<i>tama e silensyo diya atz'i ya'.</i>	
They are <b>indeed</b> playing in the silent hour,	
in the silent day <b>indeed</b> .	

Example 5:

<i>Tya' war ak'eche ak'ab' tu'jor e kriatura,</i>	
<i>apoder,</i>	
<i>abendision,</i>	
<i>i amiserikordia tu'jor e kriatura.</i>	
Where you are bringing your hands <b>on the patient</b> ,	
your power,	
your blessing,	
and your grace <b>on the patient</b> .	

Example 6:

<i>A'si watar takar uyatravesir uyok,</i>	
<i>uyatravesir uk'ab'.</i>	
<i>makajrir uluserir uk'ab'ob',</i>	
<i>makajrir uluserir uyatravesir u'tob'.</i>	

*taka umakchanir uluserir uyok,*  
*umakchanir uluserir uk'ab'.*  
*tamar enyax rueda,*  
*tamar enyax rueda,*  
*tamar uruedir a'syob'.*

**They come playing** with the inhibiting force of their feet,  
the inhibiting force of their hands.  
the stopping up of the beams of their hands,  
the stopping up of the beams of the inhibiting force  
of their feet.  
with the rainbow of the beams of their feet,  
the rainbow of the beams of their hands.  
in the green wheel,  
in the green wheel,  
in the wheel **they play**.

In Example 1, a triplet is formed when referring to the watery rings in which the evil spirits are thought to "play." Both the sun and the moon are thought to be surrounded by watery troughs. These circular basins correspond to the ringed halos that form around the sun and moon when light is refracted in a circular pattern by water or ice crystals in wispy cirrostratus clouds that float in the upper atmosphere. For the Ch'orti' (and for many other cultures around the world) these rings signal an impending rainstorm. (Indeed, that such cirrostratus clouds precede storms is a scientific fact of our own day). The structure of this triplet in the above example is noteworthy in that the verbal phrase comes at the beginning of the first line and is repeated at end of the third. Example 2 uses the discourse marker *che* to frame a couplet that occurs within. The couplet phrase is also a nice example of code switching between the Spanish *nombre* and the Ch'orti' *k'ab'a'*, both meaning 'name'. Example 3 is a short, four-word couplet that is enveloped by the term *susiriyo*, 'chills (from a sickness brought by an evil spirit)'. The enveloped

terms, another example of code switching, are the Ch'orti' and Spanish synonyms for a "fright" that leads to an illness. The central portion of the couplet, "*tama e silensyo ora, tama e silensyo diya*" in Example 4 is enveloped by two emphatic particles, *atz'i* and *ya'*. In Example 5, the end of the first line contains the prepositional phrase "*tu'jor e kriatura*." This phrase is then repeated at the end of the fourth line thereby completing the couplet. The internal couplet in the second and third lines is enveloped by this second couplet phrase. This line could also be analyzed as an occurrence of couplet breaking (see below). As I have shown earlier, this phrase can also be analyzed as a quatrain. Example 6 is a fuller version of Example 1. Remarkably, each was used by a different healer for a different illness. In Example 6, the verb *a'si*, 'they play', both opens and closes this section of the text. These verbs envelope the entire section by delineating the beginning and the ending points of the passage (cf. Christenson 2000:17).

### 1.26. Reduplication

The natural rhythm associated with parallel structures can be augmented through the use of reduplicated roots. Reduplication is a common grammatical process in Ch'orti' that serves to increase the intensity of an adjective. For example, the root adjective *ch'ok* means 'tender' or 'young', but when reduplicated as *ch'okch'ok*, it means 'very tender' or 'very young'. Healing texts in Ch'orti' are replete with reduplicated forms in verbs, adjectives, and verbal nouns. Adjectives are often prefixed by an adjectival formative marker *in-*, e.g. *ink'un*, 'soft; bland'. When the adjective is reduplicated the resulting form carries an intensified meaning. In curing texts, the affect of such reduplication creates a

repetitive cadence that appears, in part, to be aesthetically motivated. Note the following examples of reduplicated roots in couplets and monocolons:

Example 1:

*Ch'a'r aloch'loch' jarari',*

*War aloch'loch' b'akyob' che.*

They are pinching with woven pains,  
They are pinching on the bones indeed.

Example 2:

*Ajijitya'nir umalairir ukolero,*

*Ujit malairir ukolero.*

Stretching the stomach pains of evil wind of its evil eye,  
The stretching stomach pain of its evil eye.

Example 3:

*Ch'a'r ajawjaw jararyob',*

*War ajayjay b'akyob'.*

They are exhausting with woven pains,  
They are wearying on the bones.

Example 4:

*Ch'a'r awawaw jarari',*

*War awawaw jararyo'b'.*

They are debilitating with woven pains,  
They are debilitating with woven pains.

Example 5:

*War achinchin b'akyob',*

*War achichin jararyo'b'.*

They are rattling on the bones,  
They are rattling with woven pains.

Example 6:

*War alat'lat'te'ya'n b'akyob',*

*War alat'lat'te'ya'n jararyo'b'.*

They are handling on the bones,  
They are handling with woven pains.

Example 8:

*War ixsaksak b'aki,*

*War ixsaksak jarari'.*

You are whitening on the bones,

You are whitening with woven pains.

Example 9:

*Ch'a'r a'syob' uchawchaw kolero.*

Chewing-like evil eye pains are playing.

In the performance of these sections of text Ch'orti' healers slow the pace of the line and heavily stress the first foot of each reduplicated term. The prosodic affect created by this reduplication is both rhythmic and emphatic.

### 1.27. Monocolon

Before moving on to look at large parallel structures beyond the couplet, it should be pointed out that in a text replete with versification, the appearance of a single non-parallel line can be a powerful rhetorical tool. Known as monocolons (also epigrams or monostichs), these isolated lines of text break the narrative flow of parallel structures, thereby increasing their poetic effect. While Ch'orti' ritual texts are built principally on the notion of parallelism, monocolons are still used at strategic points in the narrative. Monocolons in Ch'orti' are used as a means of drawing attention to a particular point in the text. Note the function of monocolons in breaking the parallel continuum of these healing incantations, sometimes actually signaling the end of section of text:

Example 1:

1. *Ya ch'a'r a'si e San Antonio,*

2. *San Antonio de Prinsipo.*

3. *takar umakje'yr uyok,*

There lies playing San Antonio,

San Antonio of the Princes.

with the water-stopping of his feet,

- |    |                                 |                                       |
|----|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 4. | <i>takar umakje'yr uk'ab'.</i>  | with the water-stopping of his hands. |
| 5. | <i>takar uremolinir uyok,</i>   | with the whirlwind of his feet,       |
| 6. | <i>takar uremolinir uk'ab'.</i> | with the whirlwind of his hands.      |
| 7. | <b><u>Atravesyado,</u></b>      | <b><u>Inhibitor,</u></b>              |
| 8. | <i>tame' yer e kriatura,</i>    | with this poor patient,               |
| 9. | <i>tame' yer e anjelito.</i>    | with this poor spirit.                |

- Example 2:
- |    |                                |                            |
|----|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | <i>Ajkalor Tijtjutir,</i>      | Evil Heated One Fright,    |
| 2. | <i>Ajsudor Tijtjutir,</i>      | Sweaty One Fright,         |
| 3. | <i>Ajsakb'urich Tijtjutir.</i> | Mild Sweaty One Fright     |
| 4. | <i>Ja'xto ya'.</i>             | Those are the ones indeed. |

- Example 3:
- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 1.  | <i>Ch'a'r takar che,</i>                                       | Lying with indeed,   |
| 2.  | <i>takar umenazadorir utijtjutir,</i>                          | with the menacing fright,  |
| 3.  | <i>utijtjutir te' Jolchan de Ombre.</i>                        | the fright of the Evil Heat of Men.                                    |
| 4.  | <i>Robador Tijtjutir,</i>                                      | Robber Fright,   |
| 5.  | <i>Ombres Robador.</i>   | Robbing Men.   |
| 6.  | <i>Ombres Kasador</i>  | Seizing Men,   |
| 7.  | <i>Garradera Espanto Ombres.</i>                               | Grabbing Men Ghosts.   |
| 8.  | <b><u>Ja'xto ch'a'r tamar tya' b'a'k'ta e kriatura.</u></b>    | <b><u>These are the ones lying in him</u></b>                          |
|     |  | <b><u>where the patient is afraid.</u></b>                             |
| 9.  | <i>Namchetaka utijtjutir e kriatura,</i>                       | Robbing quickly is the fright of the<br>patient,                       |
| 10. | <i>Namchetaka uyanjel,</i>                                     | Robbing quickly his soul,  |
| 11. | <i>Namchetaka uyespiritu.</i>                                  | Robbing quickly his spirit.  |
| 12. | <i>Tya' k'otoy jajpna umen e Jolchan<br/>de Ombre Robador.</i> | Where he happened to be grabbed by<br>the Evil Heat of the Robber Men. |
| 13. | <i>Tijtjutir Ombre,</i>  | Fright Men,  |
| 14. | <i>Robador Espanto de Ombre .</i>                              | Robber Fright of Men   |
| 15. | <i>Kasador,</i>  | Siezer,  |
| 16. | <i>Amenesador.</i>   | Menacer,   |
| 17. | <b><u>Ja'xto ch'a'r tamar e kriatura ya'.</u></b>              | <b><u>These are the ones lying on the</u></b>                          |
|     |  | <b><u>patient indeed.</u></b>  |
| 18. | <i>Pero ne't Nuestro Señor Jesukristo en el Syelo,</i>         | But you Our Lord Jesus Christ<br>in the Sky,                           |
| 19. | <i>Padre Niño de Jesus de Jesukristo en el Syelo.</i>          | Father Son of Jesus of Jesus<br>Christ of the Sky.                     |

Example 4:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>Adelante Ajdefonsorox</i>         | Step forward you Defenders,                   |
| 2. <i>Abogadorox.</i>                   | you Lawyers.                                  |
| 3. <b><u>Ja'x ch'a'r tamar ya'.</u></b> | <b><u>These are the ones lying on him</u></b> |
|   | <b><u>indeed.</u></b>                         |
| 4. <i>Tya' namchetaka uyanjel,</i>      | Where his spirit is robbed quickly,           |
| 5. <i>namchetaka ukriatura.</i>         | robbed quickly his spirit.                    |
| 6. <i>Tya' b'ajk'usena.</i>             | Where he was frightened.                      |
| 7. <b><u>Ja'xto pwes.</u></b>           | <b><u>Well that's it.</u></b>                 |

Example 5:

1. *Takar ukebradorir umalairir kolero tijtjutir.*
2. *Takar ukebradorir umalairir uyespantir ukolero te' kriatura che.*
3. **Ja'xto ch'a'r che.**
1. With the debilitating of the evil winds of evil eye fright,
2. With the debilitating of the evil winds of fright evil eye of the patient indeed.
3. **These are the ones lying indeed.**

Example 6:

1. *Ch'a'r a'syob' takar uch'awxejr ukolero,*
2. *ut'oxpe'yr.*
3. *uxuxa'nir ukolero,*
4. *ut'oxpe'yr kolero.*
5. **Ch'a'rob' atz'i ya' che.**
6. *Ch'a'r axuxa'n ch'ojch'o'n kolero,*
7. *ut'oxpe' kolero.*
1. Lying playing with the sharp pains of evil eye,
2. evil eye anger pains.
3. the stinging pains of evil eye,
4. evil eye anger pains.
5. **They are indeed the ones lying.**
6. Lying stinging pecking evil eye,
7. evil eye anger pains.

Example 7:

1. *Ch'a'r war amuxurte'ya'n b'akyob',*
2. *war amuxurte'ya'n jararyo'b'.*
3. **Yixto ya' ch'a'r war atormentar uyanjel.**
4. *War ucho'b' tormentar umajin uyespiritu te' kriatura,*
5. *War ucho'b' tormentar uyanjel umajin uyespiritu menos.*
1. They are lying grinding on the bones,
2. They are grinding with woven pains.

3. **There indeed they are tormenting his spirit.**
4. They are tormenting the soul of the spirit of the patient,
5. They are tormenting the soul of the spirit of this little one.

Example 8:

1. *Ink'ajti e perdon tu'jor e kriatura.*
2. *Te supliko su mersed, Nuestro Padre Divino.*
3. *Ke' e kriatura ayanix e diya,*
4. *ayanix e ora.*
5. **Ch'a'r atormetado umajin uyespiritu te' kriatura.**
1. I ask for forgiveness on this patient,
2. I ask for your mercy, Our Divine Lord.
3. That the patient will now have days,
4. will now have hours.
5. **Lying tormented is the soul of the spirit of the patient.**

In Example 1, a sequence of couplets (three shown here) preceded the monocolon in line 7. Subsequently, lines 8 and 9 begin afresh with another group of couplet stanzas. The monocolon stresses the attribute of "Inhibitor" of the afflicting spirit, San Antonio.

Example 2 demonstrates the use of monocolons as a kind of deictic marker signaling the end of section. It begins with a beautiful triplet describing different sorts of 'evil heat' or 'sweat' that infect people. The poetic flow of the tricolon is then broken by the insertion of the monocolon *ja'xto ya'*, or 'That's it'. In fact, in Examples 1-5 each monocolon begins with the deictic *ja'x* or *ja'xto*, 'that is the one'. This deictic particle is specifically used in Ch'orti' to emphasize or draw attention to a particular element or idea. In Example 3, lines 1-3 contain an abbreviated couplet followed by a nested couplet. Lines 4-7 list four titles of the evil spirits who are afflicting the patient in the form of two couplets. Then, in line 8, a monocolon breaks the stream of parallel stanzas that begins with the deictic "*Ja'xto*," "These are the ones," stressing that *these* are the spirits who are

responsible for the illness. Next, a triplet followed by a sequence of three couplets precedes another monocolon in line 17, again starting with "*Ja'xto*," "These are the ones," referring to the names given in the two previous couplets. After the monocolon, the text continues in parallel fashion as can be seen in lines 18-19. Example 4 shows this exact process again by giving the names of the evil spirit causing the illness (lines 1-2) followed by a monocolon in line 3 with the same deictic marker, "*Ja'x*," "These are the ones." A few lines later, another monocolon with the deictic "*Ja'xto pwes*," "Well that's it," is used to close the section. Example 5 begins by carefully describing the attributes of the afflicting evil spirits in lines 1-2. Then, in line 3, a monocolon focuses the attention of the listener as the narrator emphasized that "These are the ones" (*ja'x*) who are causing the problems. In Example 6, a list of terms describing the pain the patient was feeling is given. *Ch'awxejr* in the first line is a kind of stinging pain similar to a thorn prick, *xuxa'n* (third and sixth lines) is a stinging or poking pain like a bee sting that is caused by an evil spirit afflicting a person, and *ch'ojch'o'n* (sixth line) comes from a verb meaning 'to peck' or 'to grab with the mouth and eat' (like a bird grabbing a fly and eating it). In this case, however, the deictic *ja'x* is not used in the monocolon, but instead a sequence of three consecutive emphatic particles, *atz'i ya' che'*, takes its place and fulfills a similar function. Instead of using the deictic *ja'x*, Example 7 emphasizes the monocolon through the use of *yixto ya'*. Four separate morphemes make up this phrase: the adverbial deictic *ya*, 'there', the postclitic *-ix*, 'now; already', the postclitic *-to*, 'still; then; emphatic particle', and *'ya*", an emphatic particle. The vowel of *ya* is assimilated with the initial vowel of the postclitic *-ix*, usually with no change in the quality of the

vowel. The postclitics *-ix* and *-to* are often used as if they were a single morpheme in Ch'orti'. Fought has argued that "*-ixto*" is a "narrative particle combination" used to advance the narrative and also "serve[s] to relate whole clusters of events" to each other (Fought 1985:233-234). While in general agreement with Fought's explanation of its meaning and use, I interpret *-ixto* also as an emphatic particle used to call attention to the location of an action in time or space. The combination of *ya* and *-ixto* as *yixto* commonly means "*así mismo*," or "just the same, similarly" and more concretely, "*allí pues*," "right (over) there." Note its use in the following examples:

Example 1:

*Yixto ani yaja' me'yra k'ob'irte'.*

**Right over there is where** there were many big trees.

Example 2:

*Yixto tya' aka'yob' utzoryob' e nar.*

**There is** where they begin to stack up the corn.

Example 3:

*E sib'ik ub'utz'ar si' xe' atak'wan tu'pat e semet tya' achab'na e pa'. I tu'pat e b'ejt tya' achajpa e b'u'r yixto ayan me'yra sib'ik.*

It's the soot from firewood that sticks underneath the skillet where tortillas are cooked. And underneath the pot where beans are cooked **there also** there is lots of soot.

Example 4:

*Incheixto.*

**I can indeed** do it.

In Example 1, *yixto*, used together with *yaja'*, 'over there', emphasize the place where there was once a great forest. In Example 2, *yixto* specifies that it was 'right there' that the workers were stacking the corn after the harvest. Example 3 shows the use of *yixto* as

a referential particle to items mentioned earlier in the narrative. In this case, *yixto* harkens back to the previous statement that it was "underneath the skillet" that soot from the fire collects and relates it the fact that 'the same thing' happens to the bottom of the pot used to cook beans. Example 4 demonstrates the use of the combination of *-ix* and *-to* as *-ixto*, an emphatic postclitic.

Returning to Example 7 of the previous example set, *yixto* in the monocolon of line 3 stresses in a declarative sentence that 'it is there that...' the evil spirits are tormenting the patient. Further emphasis is gained by the inclusion of the emphatic particle *ya'* immediately after *yixto*. Note that after this monocolon in line 3 the prayer continues in couplet form in lines 4-5. Finally, in Example 8, a monocolon appears in the same context as Examples 3-7, but without a deictic or emphatic particle. In this case, the breaking of expectations within the narrative flow of parallelism with the insertion of a monocolon is sufficient to poetically highlight the line of text.

### 1.28. Triplet Constructions

Triplets are standard features in Ch'orti' formal discourse. Christenson defines parallel triplets, or tricolons, simply as "three parallel lines of text" (2000:19). In Ch'orti', triplets usually consist of ellipsis in the verbal or prepositional phrase and the alteration of a single term in each subsequent line(s). By way of general introduction to this poetic process, note the following examples:

Example 1:

*Ya k'otoy namchetaka,*  
*namchetaka uyanjel,*  
*namchetaka uyespiritu.*

There it arrived robbing quickly,  
robbing quickly her soul,  
robbing quickly her spirit.

Example 2:

*takar uvestreyir u'to'b,*  
*uvestreyir unuk uk'ab'ob',*  
*uvestreyir uxamb'arob'.*  
with the infecting rays of their appearance,  
the infecting rays of their wrists,  
the infecting rays of their walking.

Example 3:

*Ink'ajti agrande bendision,*  
*agrande poder,*  
*amilagro.*  
I plead for your great blessing,  
your power,  
your miraculous power.

Example 4:

*A'si taka uyatrasir ujolchanir ukolera,*  
*yususirantir ukolera,*  
*usakb'urichir ukolera.*  
They play with their inhibiting force of the heat of their anger evil eye,  
the sigh of their anger evil eye,  
the simple heat of their anger evil eye.

Example 5:

*A'si tame' gotera,*  
*tame' enyax gotera,*  
*sak gotera.*  
They play in the eaves [of the house],  
in the green eaves,  
white eaves.

In Example 1, the triplet shows deletion of the verbal and adverbial elements in the second and third lines. The adverb *namchetaka* is based on the root *nam* which means 'to rob'. The Ch'orti' believe that evil spirits "rob" their souls and put them in a corral and that this is the cause of illnesses. Example 2 deletes the preposition *takar*, 'with', in the second and third lines and uses three words as a synecdoche for 'the whole body'. The

triplet in Example 4 comes from a curing incantation for a woman who was having trouble giving birth. The second and third lines only repeat the final word *kolero* from the first line and modify it with a different descriptive term. The modifier in the second is a form of the word for 'sigh', *yususiryantir*, which refers to the exhaling of an 'evil breath' onto the individual. In the third line, the modifier is a form of the healing term *sakb'urich*, a compound of the term *sak*, 'simple', and *b'urich*, meaning 'sweat; evil heat'. *Sakb'urich* is a milder (yet potent) variety of 'evil heat' than *jolchan*. In Example 5, the second line deletes the verb and initiates the common structuring device *enyax/ensak*; only in the third line *ensak* is shortened to simply *sak*, 'white'. Evil spirits are said to "play" in the eaves of the houses. During rain storms the Ch'orti' believe that the eaves of houses become active locations for the "play" of malevolent spirits. As is the case for nearly all Ch'orti' triplet constructions, partial or continual deletion as the triplet progresses is standard practice in creating the desired aesthetic effect.

In order to more precisely define manifestations of triplet constructions in Ch'orti', I will classify triplets from Ch'orti' ritual in one of three principal categories: 1) the repetition of prepositional phrase in second and third stich, or 2) the repetition of semantically-related items (e.g. *kon 60 anjel*, *60 estreya*, *60 relampago*), or 3) the repetition of the certain line-initial elements of the first line. The first category appears to have two standard variations differing only in the manner in which the prepositional phrase is repeated. Sometimes the preposition is restated in all three lines of the triplet:

Example 1:

*Tya' ch'a'r atormentado uyanjel,*  
*Tya' ch'a'r amenesado uyanjel,*  
*Tya' ch'a'r ingrietado che.*

Where his soul is lying tormented,  
Where his soul is lying afflicted,  
Where thus it is lying handcuffed.

Example 2:

*tamar enyax rueda,*  
*tamar enyax rueda,*  
*tamar uruedir a'syob'*

in the green wheel,  
in the green wheel,  
in the wheel they play.

Example 3:

*sin delito,*  
*sin kulpa,*  
*sin motivo.*

without sin,  
without fault,  
without malicious motive.

Example 4:

*tamar imilagro,*  
*tamar isantisimo,*  
*tamar ipoder.*

with your miraculous power,  
with your holy power,  
with your power.

Example 5:

*tamar e silensyo ora,*  
*tamar e silensyo de diya,*  
*tamar e silensyo de noche.*

in the silent hour,  
in the silent day,  
in the silence of the night.

Example 6:

*tamar e mar rojo che,*  
*tamar e mar de leche,*  
*tamar e mar de breya che.*  
in the red sea indeed,  
in the milk sea,  
in the tar sea indeed.

Example 7:

on this appointed day,  
on this day decreed,  
on this day now with us.  
(Girard 1995:20)

In Example 1, the preposition *tya*, 'where, when,' is repeated in each line of the triplet. The mention of *ingrietado* refers to the Ch'orti' conception of sickness as the spirit of an individual is kept captive in a 'jail' or 'corral' while being 'handcuffed' by the evil spirits. Examples 2, 4, 5 and 6 repeat the preposition *tamar*, 'in, on', in all three lines. Example 3 likewise duplicates the preposition *sin*, 'without', while altering the following single term. Example 7, a prayer for rain and a good harvest recorded by Girard, likewise shows repetition of the preposition throughout. Note also that in the first category above (as well as the third as we shall see) the triplets are easily analyzable as instances of grammatical parallelism due to their strict repetition.

In the second category of triplets, the second and third stichs of the triplet delete the preposition altogether:

Example 1:

*tamar e kamarin divino,*  
*kamarin dichoso,*  
*kamarin sagrado.*

*tamar e altar divino,  
altar dichoso,  
altar sagrado.*

on the divine altar,  
the lucky altar,  
the sacred altar.  
on the divine altar,  
the lucky altar,  
the sacred altar.

Example 2:

*takar uvestreyir u'to'b,  
uvestreyir unuk uk'ab'ob',  
uvestreyir uxamb'arob'.*  
with the evil beams of their appearance,  
the evil beams of their wrists,  
the evil beams of their walking.

Example 3:

*Yixto twa' ak'ek'ojsyo'b' tamar e 3 mar divino,  
3 mar dichoso,  
3 mar sagrado che.*

There in order to fortify themselves in the three divine seas,  
the three lucky seas,  
the three sacred seas indeed.

Example 1 contains two consecutive triplets, both of which delete the initial preposition *tamar* in the second and third lines. Example 2 similarly deletes the preposition *takar*, 'with', in the second and third lines. The term *uvestreyir* (from the Spanish term *estrella*, 'star') refers to that Ch'orti' belief that evil spirits "play" around certain stars and that the beams of these stars are their disease-causing emanations (Hull 2000a). The second and third lines show ellipsis of the preposition. In similar fashion, the second and third lines in Example 3 delete the preposition *tamar*.

The third category of triplets consistently repeat certain line-initial elements from the first line of text. Note the following examples:

Example 1:

*Ya ch'a'r a'si ukebrantir remolino uk'ek'we'r uyok,*

*Ya ch'a'r a'si yauxilyo uyok,*

*Ya ch'a'r yausente mal aire matado.*

Lying there playing is the debilitating whirlwind of the force of their feet,

Lying there playing is authority of their feet,

Lying there is the murdered spirit killed evil wind.

Example 2:

*Ajsutut ik'arob',*

*Ajnawal ik'arob',*

*Ajmoymoyte'yan ik'arob'.*

The turning winds,

The spirit winds,

The sweeping-up winds.

(Fought 1972: 261-262, 266 [with orthographic alterations])

Example 3:

*Twa' akuxpa,*

*Twa' uche prosperar.*

*Grano de oro,*

*I grano de plato.*

*Ajkotojk'ya'ntu',*

*Ajkotojk'ya'ntata',*

*Ajkotojk'ya'n Espiritu Santo.*

*Ajch'a'ntu',*

*Ajch'a'ntata',*

*Ajch'a'n Espiritu Santo.*

So that they will sprout,

So that they will prosper.

Grains of gold,

Grains of silver.

Mother Maize,

Father Maize,

Maize God.

Mother Vine,

Father Vine,

God of the Vine.

Example 1 repeats the initial phrase "*ya ch'a'r*," "lying there," in each line while altering the nominal phrase that follows in turn. In Example 2 (from Fought 1972), the rotating winds that are thought to cause diseases are named in a triplet form, emphasizing different aspects of these winds in each line. Example 3 is an excerpt from a prayer

giving during a *Limosna* or field dedication ceremony I recorded in 2000. The triplet of "*Ajkotojk'ya'ntu'*, *Ajkotojk'ya'ntata'*, *Ajkotojk'ya'n Espiritu Santo*" is composed of ritual terms for corn and the spirit of corn. The first two elements, *ajkotojk'ya'ntu'* and *ajkotojk'ya'tata'* are ancient terms using grammatical features found almost exclusively in ritual language.<sup>22</sup> The final morphemes on each are *tu'* and *tata'* respectively, 'mother' and 'father'. Both terms refer to certain aspects of maize that some consultants say is both male and female. Bassie-Sweet has recently argued that corn "'embodies aspects of the complimentary male/female principle." She further explains:

The corn plant has male and female parts. It is composed of a single stalk that terminates in a male tassel. Buds are found attached to the upper stalk just below the tassel. In the initial development of the female ear, many leaf-like husks grow from the bud, then the corn ear begins to appear with silks emerging from the end. The male tassel produces pollen, which falls on the silk of the female ear and fertilizes it. A mature corn plant is incomplete without its female ear of corn, just as a man is incomplete without his wife. The mature corn plant is the epitome of the complementary male/female principle (Bassie-Sweet 2000:3).

Bassie-Sweet notes that other Maya groups refer to corn as "our mother corn" since they view "the stalk and leaves of the corn plant as male and the ear of corn and its seed as female" (2000:3). Remnants of this 'complementary male/female principle' are contained in the terms *ajkotojk'ya'ntu'* and *ajkotojk'ya'ntata'*, 'mother maize' and 'father maize' in this Ch'orti' field ceremony prayer. The final term, *ajkotojk'ya'n espiritu santo*, has been

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<sup>22</sup> The *-k'i* suffix seems to derive intransitive verbs from nouns previously derived from CVC positional roots (and possibly CVC transitive roots) using the nominal suffix *-V'j*. I have some 20 cases of this suffix in my data but they all come from complex healing texts whose grammatical contexts do not assist much in deciphering its function. It may, however, be a type of affective suffix. It is surely a relic of an archaic grammatical ending that is only marginally productive in spoken Ch'orti' today (for example, *xoyojk'i*, 'to spin around').

identified as "the spirit of maize" by Girard (1995:39). Similarly, the final triplet of "*Ajch'a'ntu', Ajch'a'ntata', Ajch'a'n Espiritu Santo*" is composed of the 'agentive' prefix *aj-*, 'the one who', followed by *ch'a'n*, 'vine', and finally either 'mother', 'father', or 'holy spirit' (probably signifying the god associated with this type of bean plant). Other plants such as beans can also share this complementary male/female principle, not just corn. In both of these triplets from this passage, each line consists of a listing of items without ellipsis of any kind.

Before leaving this discussion of triplet use, I want to reiterate one of the most salient features of triplets in Ch'orti' in terms of emphatic value. As we have seen with couplets in Ch'orti', augmentation to the second half of the second stich is widespread. Augmentation is an equally powerful poetic tool in triplet structures. Two consecutive triplets from Fought's text "Rainmaking" (1972:392, 411) show this process [original orthography altered]:

*Ne't xe' ik'otori tama tuno'r e anxerob',  
   tama tuno'r lo ke' ayan,  
   tama tuno'r lo ke' ayan to'r e rum.  
 Ne't ik'otori porke' ne't achu't ek'in,  
   ache' rum,  
   ya'che tuno'r lo ke' kawira.*  
 You who rule over all the angels,  
   over everything there is,  
   over everything there is on the earth.  
 You rule because you made the heaven,  
   you made the earth,  
   and you made everything we see.

The third line of each triplet expands upon the previous two lines with a fuller statement

through augmentation. Augmentation likewise often co-occurs with deletion in the same line of text in parallel constructions as we have seen. The augmentation of certain elements and the simultaneous deletion of others represent two of the most important poetic devices in Ch'orti' verbal art.

### **1.29. Quatrains and Polystylistic Phrases**

Parallelism can take the form of longer stanzas such as quatrains. Also known as tetracolons and parallel quatrains (cf. Christenson 2000:20), a quatrain consists of a paralleled four-line stanza. Quatrains in general can be divided up into five major variations. I will refer to these as Types 1-5:

Type 1: ABAC or ABCB (unbounded, or ballad)

Type 2: AABB (a double couplet)

Type 3: ABAB (interlaced, alternate, or heroic)

Type 4: ABBA (envelope or enclosed)

Type 5: AABA

(Lancashire 2000)

In Ch'orti' ritual texts, there are a number of standard quatrains that reappear time and time again. Not all of the Types shown above are present in Ch'orti' texts. While Type 5 is the most common form of quatrain in K'iche', they do not seem to occur in Ch'orti' except for two possible cases, which are not enough to convince me that this is a known and used form (D. Tedlock 1987:161). Ch'orti' healing texts primarily use Type 2 quatrains:

Example 1:

*E kriatura matawar twa' amenas,*  
*matawar twa' asote,*  
*matawar twa' e tormento,*  
*matawar twa' martiriyo, Nuestro Padre Divino.*

The patient cannot handle affliction,  
cannot handle beatings,  
cannot handle torments,  
cannot handle *martiriyo*, Our Divine Father.

Example 2:

<i>tama e nawalch'a'n,</i>	with tobacco,
<i>ajxujch'ch'a'n,</i>	tobacco,
<i>yerbita yana,</i>	tobacco,
<i>yerba bendesida.</i>	tobacco.

Example 3:

<i>A'si amejk'a umen e Santa Madre,</i>	They play embracing the Holy Mother,
<i>Santa Tierra,</i>	Holy Earth,
<i>Santa Magalena,</i>	Holy Magdlena,
<i>Mundo Kasadora.</i>	World Hunter.

In Example 1, the first two lines comprise a standard couplet for referring to the 'afflictions' of evil spirits. These afflictions are commonly characterized as whippings, torments, floggings, beatings, etc. The last two lines are also a known couplet (while I am not sure of the meaning of *maritiriyo*, it is likely semantically similar to *tormento* in the previous line). The AABB patterning is typical of Type 2 quatrains (or double couplets). The four terms for 'tobacco' found in Example 2 are regularly clustered in Ch'orti' healing texts. Tobacco represents the most important ritual plant in healing rites today. A healer will chew tobacco throughout the curing ceremony, occasionally pausing to spit a spray of tobacco over the patient in order to purge body of the evil spirit. Chewed tobacco is also rubbed onto certain parts of the body at the beginning of

ceremony. Healers directly address tobacco at numerous points in the ceremony as they petition its ritual cleansing powers. The first term for tobacco in Example 2, *nawalch'a'n*, literally means 'spirit vine'. This appears in a couplet in the second line with *ajxujch'ch'a'n*, which translates literally as 'the robber vine', referring to its ability to 'steal away' the evil spirit. The third and fourth lines contain another couplet with two additional words for tobacco, *yerba yana* and *yerba bendesida*. While the meaning of *yana* is enigmatic, *yerba* comes from the Spanish term *hierba*, 'plant'. In most situations, these four terms are paired precisely as shown above, creating an AABB Type 2 quatrain structure. All four nominal forms in Example 3, *Santa Madre*, *Santa Tierra*, *Santa Magalena*, and *Mundo Kasdora* are familiar terms meaning 'earth'. The earth, like all other 'good' beings in Ch'orti' mythology, have 'evil' counterparts. All the principal angels have Underworld counterparts who are responsible for causing illnesses. Even Jesus Christ has his evil equivalent in Ch'orti' thought. This practice of dual naming highly complicates full comprehension of some curing texts since their context does not always indicate which one is being referenced in some situations. In the above example, the evil counterpart of "Mother Earth" is said to be "embracing" the spirit of a patient. For the Ch'orti', evil spirits 'embrace' someone, meaning they make them ill or cause them some physical discomfort. In this example two common couplet names for the 'earth' are used together forming a Type 2 (AABB) quatrain.

Very few examples of Type 3 quatrains (interlaced couplets) have been noted. It does not appear to be a productive form in Ch'orti'. The following is one of the possible occurrences of this quatrain style conforming to the ABAB patterning:

<i>Wa' kolero,</i>	Exhausted feeling anger evil eye,
<i>ut'oxpe'</i>	his evil eye pain.
<i>Wawa' kolero,</i>	Exhausted feeling anger evil eye,
<i>ut'oxpe' kolero.</i>	his evil eye anger pain.

The terms *wa'* and *wawa'* are synonyms, the latter being simply a reduplication of the former referring to a tired and sick feeling that is so overwhelming that you just look down without even the power to lift you head. The ABAB patterning is clearly visible.

Type 4 quatrains do occur in curing texts with mild frequency:

Example 1:

<i>A'si tamar e mesa abandonado,</i>	they play on the abandoned altar,
<i>tamar e mesa antibano,</i>	on the ancient altar,
<i>tamar e mesa anterior,</i>	on the ancient altar,
<i>tamar e mesa olvidado.</i>	on the forgotten altar.

Example 2:

<i>Tya' agarrado,</i>	Where it is grabbed,
<i>Tya' arobado uyanjel,</i>	Where his spirit is robbed,
<i>Tya' arobado uyespiritu,</i>	Where his spirit is robbed,
<i>Tya' kasado, agarrado uyanjel.</i>	Where his angel seized, grabbed.

The first and fourth lines literally envelope the middle two in poetic fashion. These forms are simply four-lined chiasms and can be analyzed as such. This example provides a good lead in for a discussion of the poetic device 'chiasmus'.

### 1.30. Chiasmus

The presence of chiastic structures in Mesoamerican texts was first noted by Allen Christenson (1988). In this important work, Christenson addressed both use and motivations of chiasmus in oral texts that were constructed in complex chiastic forms.

Christenson defines chiasmus (or reverse parallelism) as "parallelism in which the first element of a strophe parallels the last, the second element parallels the next to last, etc." This arrangement tends to focus attention on the central elements, thus asserting their importance (2000:15). On the whole, Ch'orti' poetic texts do not make extensive use of chiasmus. In the texts where it does occur, there is a clear and conscious patterning associated with them. In each case, the line or lines at the central axis of the chiasm are the focal point of the text. Some chiasms are limited to four lines of text (see above) and therefore could be also interpreted as Type 4 (or enveloped or enclosed) quatrains. I have not identified a Ch'orti' chiasm longer than 10 lines (a dizain). In most cases, chiasmus appears as a series of couplets that do not necessarily rely on the chiasm to provide their overall poetic structure. The chiasm adds an additional layer of 'poeticness' that is both independent of yet intimately tied to the poetics of the couplets themselves. In general, triples are no longer than the following excerpt from text from a curing rite:

<i>Ajtamu de Estumeka</i>	
<i>Ajtamu Sendeyu't</i>	
<i>Ajsokyan de Estumeka</i>	
<i>Ajsokoyan Sendeyu't</i>	
<i>Ajgraniyo de Estumeka</i>	
<i>Ajgraniyo de Sendeyu't</i>	
<i>Ajsokolyan de Estumeka</i>	
<i>Ajsokolyan de Sendeyu't</i>	
<i>Ajtamu de Estumeka</i>	
<i>Ajtamu de Sendeyu't</i>	

This section of this curing prayer shows the common ABCDD'C'B'A' pattern of chiastic structures. Five separate couplets make up the frame for this chiasm. The couplet

"*Ajgraniyo de Estumeka, Ajgraniyo de Sendeyu't*" is located at the axis of the chiasm and focuses on the *graniyo* or 'lumps' that appeared on the body of the afflicted person. In this section of the prayer, the healer sought to emphasize this aspect of the illness through its position at the axis of the chiasm. The reference to "*Estumeka*" in this and many other curing prayers refers to 'this world' and is also the name of a sacred place, like an altar, where incense is burned. The term *ajsokolyan* means 'shaker' and refers to the shaking and chills that this evil spirit is bringing to the person. *Sendeyu't* is the name of a kind of eye disease. Note also that within this chiasm several other poetic devices are simultaneously used, such as assonance which found in the opening syllable of each line.

Another example of a chiasm occurs in a healing prayer where the central focus is on the location of the afflicting spirit—the eaves of the house (cf. Hull 2001a).

1. *Uyatravesir uyok,*
2. *Uyatravesir uk'ab'.*
3. *Uxek'onir yer uyatravesir uyok,*
4. *Uxek'onir yer uyatravesir uk'ab'.*
5. *Ya'syob' tama e gotera,*
6. *Ya'syob' tama e gotera.*
7. *Uxek'onir yer uyatravesir uyok,*
8. *Uxek'onir yer uyatravesir uk'ab'.*
9. *Uyatravesir uyok,*
10. *Takar uyatravesir uk'ab'.*

1. The inhibiting force of their legs,
2. The inhibiting force of their hands.
3. The stabbing pains of the inhibiting force of their legs,
4. The stabbing pains of the inhibiting force of their hands.
5. There they play in the eaves,
6. There they play in the eaves.
7. The stabbing pains of the inhibiting force of their legs,
8. The stabbing pains of the inhibiting force of their hands.
9. The inhibiting force of their legs,
10. With the inhibiting force of their hands.

The location of the afflicting evil spirit is also emphasized in this text by repeating the pivotal phrase twice verbatim at the axis of the chiasm at lines 5-6. It is of interest that the chiasm in this case progresses by couplets, not by lines as in most other instances:

A1  
A2  
B1  
B2  
C1  
C1  
B1'  
B2'  
A1'  
A2'

While the line order in the couplets is inverted throughout the chiasm, it still retains chiasmic structuring at the level of stanza. Therefore, while Ch'orti' makes minimal use of chiasmus overall in ritual texts, the few cases shown here at least indicate their familiarity with this poetic device (see Chapter 2 for its use in narrative texts).

### **1.31. 'Nesting' and Internal Structuring Mechanisms**

One of the more salient feature of Ch'orti' poetic structuring is couplet 'nesting'. Nesting refers to the double use of one line of a couplet as both as a terminating point for one couplet and as the initial line of another. It can also take the form of couplets located within other couplets (Mudd 1979:59). In terms of structure, a second couplet is added to the second line of the previous couplet, thereby intensifying the poetic affect. Nesting can also appear in triplets, quatrains, or longer sequences. Not restricted to any genre of poetic discourse, couplet nesting is an elegant means of maximizing the poetic unit—a



The first two lines of Example 2 form a couplet through the repetition of the preposition *takar*, 'with', followed by a nominal form that begins with the agentive prefix *aj-*, 'one who-'. The third line uses the second line as the base for the beginning of a new couplet by repeating and elaborating upon the entire nominal *ajjolchan*.

Example 3:

*Ausente Infernal de San Manwel Rey de Bronse,*  
*Rey de Koludo de 17 Kapa,*  
*17 Mal Espiritu.*

Murdered Infernal Spirit San Manuel King of Bronze (clothing),  
 King of Koludo of the 17 Layers (of clothing),  
 17 Evil Spirits.

The second line of Example 3 syntactically and semantically parallels the first line while simultaneously augmenting the nominal form with the number "17." The third line then makes use of this newly appended information as the base of a syntactically but not semantically equivalent verse. As far as I am aware, the "Layers" and "Evil Spirits" are not synonymous in Ch'orti' thought, so I take this to be a case of simply syntactic parallelism.

In certain instances of nesting the second line repeats verbatim a section of the first line without adding new details. The nested couplet that follows plays off one or more elements in the second line to create a parallelism.

Example 1:

*Yixto ch'a'r uyatavesir uyok,*  
*uyatavesir umakajrir uyok,*  
*umakajrir uk'ab'.*

There is lying the inhibiting force of their feet,  
 the inhibiting force of their feet,  
 of their hands.

In the second line, *uyatradesir umakajrir uyok* is repeated from line one following verbal and adverbial deletion. The nested couplet likewise deletes the first element *uyatradesir* and substitutes *uk'ab'*, 'their hands', for *uyok*, 'their feet' in order to form the new couplet.

Example 2:

*Uch'ajrje'yr uyok,*

*Uch'ajrje'yr ukolodorir uyok,*

*ukolodorir ukwerpo.*

The water straining of their feet,

The water straining of the strainer of their feet,

the strainer of their body.

Example 2 is structurally equivalent to Example 1 except with the exception that line two does not delete information, only augments it.

Example 3:

*Ya ch'a'r uk'ek'we'rir uyok,*

*uk'ek'we'rir uyausentir uyok,*

*uyausentir uk'ab'.*

Lying there is the strength of their feet,

the strength of the murdered spirit of their feet,

the murdered spirit of their hands.

In Example 3, after deleting the verbal phrase the second line repeats the nominal form *uk'ek'we'rir* (*k'ek'we'r* is a common variant by healers of the standard Ch'orti' term *k'ek'wa'r*), 'his strength', with the addition of *uyausentir*. The third line creates a second couplet by repeating *uyausentir*, and by completing the second half of the synecdoche *uyok...uk'ab'*, 'their feet...their hands'.

Couplet nesting represents an integral poetic and stylistic device in Ch'orti' healing texts (as well as other genres). Essentially, nesting is the blurring of stanza

boundaries for poetic effect. In practice, nesting markedly increases the intra-textual complexity of the level of stanzas. In performance, the ability to rapidly formulate nested structures in couplets, triplets, and quatrains is a sign of significant poetic prowess.

### **1.33. Couplet Breaking and Embedding**

In Saussure's semiotic approach to structural analysis, the syntagmatic and the associative ("paradigmatic" in Jakobson's terminology) relationship must be taken into account to properly determine meaning in an utterance (Saussure 1974:122). The syntagm is identified as the horizontal or diachronic relationship among signifiers in a particular code. Paradigmatic refers to the vertical substitution set of signifiers or signifieds that operate on the notion of interchangeability within a particular class. Meaning is derived at the intersection of these two axes. In terms of poetics, any alteration in syntagmatic axis can break the audience's expectation with a resulting poetic affect. According to Kent, these disruptions along the syntagmatic axis can be caused "by the repetition of a narrative element in an unexpected context, or by the omission of an important narrative element from the text" (1986:50). Jakobson succinctly defined poetics as the projection of the paradigmatic onto the syntagmatic axis (1960:358). The highly structured system of *parallelismus membrorum* so prominent in Mesoamerican languages provides a fertile environment for breaking of expectations through variation along the syntagmatic axis. Couplet breaking and embedding interrupt syntagmatic progression and thereby often signal a highlighted or focal point in the narrative. Note the following examples:

1. *A'si umesonir uyok,*
2. *umesonir **uk'ab'**.*
3. *uch'ajrnir uyok,*
4. *uch'ajrnir **uk'ab'**.*
5. *ukebrantir uyok,*
6. *ukebrantir **uk'ab'**.*
7. *uremolnir uyok,*
8. *uremolnir **ukwerpo**.*

1. The sweeping of their feet plays.
2. the sweeping of their **hands**.
3. the straining of their feet,
4. the straining of their **hands**.
5. the debilitating of their feet,
6. the debilitating of their **hands**.
7. the whirlwind of their feet,
8. the whirlwind of their **bodies**.

1. *Ch'a'r ijolchan jarari',*
2. *Ch'a'r ijolchan b'aki atz'i ya'.*
3. *Ch'a'r ijolchan jarari',*
4. *Ch'a'r umusijk'es uyanjel e kriatura.*
5. *Ch'a'r umusijk'es upet yanjelito,*
6. *Ch'a'r ijolchan b'aki ya'.*
7. *War ijolchan jarari',*
8. *War ixtijb'ya'n b'aki.*

1. You are evil-heating with woven pains ,
2. You are indeed evil-heating the bones.
3. You are evil-heating with woven pains,
4. It is breathing on the spirit of the patient.
5. It is breathing on the ?? of the little spirit,
6. You are evil-heating the bones.
7. You are evil-heating with woven pains,
8. You all are leaping on the bones.

In Example 1, the healer had previously established a pattern using the pair *uyok/uk'ab'*, 'their feet/their hands' through lines 1-6. Line 7 begins, as would be expected, with *uyok*, 'their feet', but then breaks expectation of the listener by switching the second element of

the reference with *ukwerpo*, 'their bodies'. Example 2 comes from healing rite performed for a woman suffering from diarrhea. In lines 1-3 and 6-8 of this text, the verb of each stich is intransitive. In the couplet of lines 4 and 5, however, a transitive causative verb form appears, breaking the expectation that had been built up for even prior to lines 1-3 of this text. This insertion of a different verbal form interrupted the line of anticipation of the listener for poetic affect. The poetic tension in this the contrast increases again as the narrator returns to a long stream of intransitive verb forms in lines 6-8 and beyond in the text, enveloping the transitive form.

In addition, lines 7 and 8 introduce an important poetic device operating under the same paradigm of expectation breaking. A notable feature of poetically structured Ch'orti' healing texts is the variability of person markers and plurality in the different couplet stichs. This poetic alternation often appears in two principal contexts, 1) in sections of prayers in which the healer is directly addressing the evil spirit(s), and 2) in narrative sections where the alternation is between singular and plural. In most cases, healing texts are directed, either implicitly or explicitly, at a group of evil spirits who are together responsible for the illness. For example, in line 7 the intransitive verb *jolchan* is prefixed by the second-person *singular* Set C pronoun, *i-*. The verb in line 8, the second line of the couplet, however, interchanges the singular pronoun with the second-person *plural* Set C pronoun, *ix-*.<sup>23</sup> Fought noted a similar pattern in Ch'orti' curing texts which

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<sup>23</sup> Very often verbs in curing texts are difficult to classify. For example, *war isaksak*, must be verbal since it follows the present progressive marker *war*. *Saksak*, however, appears to be the adjective *saksak*, 'white'. Assumedly, a verbal root *saksak* or *sak* exists that means something akin to 'whitens', although I have not been able to confirm this root outside of curing contexts. Further difficulties arise in other forms such as *war ixloch'te'yr*. The verbal root *loch'* means 'to hold or carry in the hand'. *Lochte'* is a noun that refers to a

contain "an opposition running through the text between second-person plural forms (*i-*, *ix*, and *-ox*)...and third-person forms (*u-*)" (1985:136). In incantations offered during Ch'orti' curing rites healers not only pray to God and his angels for help in curing the individual, but also often directly address the menacing spirits who are thought to be responsible for the malady. Note the following alteration in second-person pronouns in the following prayer directed to the angels imploring them for help in curing the patient:

<p><i>Patron San Jwan Bautisador Mediko,</i>  <i>ke' ne't ache levantar,</i>  <i>no'x che levantar,</i>  <i>iche retirar,</i>  <i>iche saltar uyanjel,</i>  <i>iche saltar uyespiritu.</i></p>	<p>Patron Saint John the Baptist Healer,  that you [singular] raise up,  you [plural] raise up,  you [plural] make them retreat,  you [plural] make his spirit jump,  you [plural] make his spirit jump.</p>
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In the second line, the healer used the second-person singular pronoun 'you' in the first line of the couplet, and then switched to the second-person plural for the second line and subsequent couplets. Moments of direct address such as this allow for intermingling of second and third-person pronouns. Such alternation between second-person plural and third-person singular forms reflects the fluid shifting of referents being either addressed or mentioned by the healer. Fought's contribution in this regard involves identifying the poetic variation between second-person plural verbal morphology and third-person singular nominal pronouns. What my data additionally shows is that this poetic alternation can also occur between second-person singular and second-person plural

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'cramp' that resembles an arthritic pain in the hand that prohibits you from opening your fist. *Loch'te'yr*, then, is nominalized in form, but verbal syntactically. Nominal-looking forms regularly function as intransitive verbs in these Ch'orti' healing texts.

markers. A powerful poetic affect is created when singular and plural pronouns interchange through a section of the text. Note this longer example:

- 1- *War ijolchan jarari,*
- 2- *War ixtijb'ya'n b'aki.*
- 3- *War ixloch'te'yr b'aki,*
- 4- *War ixloch'te'yr jarari'.*
- 5- *War ijolchan b'aki,*
- 6- *Ch'a'r ijolchan jarari'.*
- 7- *War ixtijb'ya'n b'aki,*
- 8- *War ixtijb'ya'n jarari'.*
- 9- *Ch'a'r ijolchan b'aki,*
- 10- *War ijolchan jarari'.*
- 11- *War ixtijb'ya'n b'aki,*
- 12- *War ixloch'te'yr b'aki,*
- 13- *War ixloch'te'yr jarari'.*
- 14- *Ch'a'r takar uch'ajrje'yr ixamb'ar,*
- 15- *Ch'a'r takar umalairir ixamb'ar.*
- 16- *Ch'a'r ijolchan jarari',*
- 17- *War ijolchan b'aki.*
- 18- *War issaksak b'aki,*
- 19- *War issaksak jarari'.*
- 20- *War ixjolchan b'aki,*
- 21- *War ixjolchan jarari'.*

In this example, pronoun alternation takes place both within and between stanzas lines. It is interesting to note that the sudden triplet in lines 11-13 among a group of couplets also serves to break the listeners' expectation. While all the pronoun forms in the above example appeared on verbs, the variation between singular and plural pronouns can work also simultaneously on verbs and nouns in a larger poetic interplay:

- 1- *Ch'a'r takar ujolchanir ixxamb'ar,*
- 2- *Ch'a'r takar ujolchanir iwajner.*
- 3- *Ch'a'r takar umalairir ixxamb'ar,*
- 4- *Ch'a'r takar umalairir iwajner,*

- 5- *Ch'a'r ijolchan jarari'*,
- 6- *War ijolchan b'aki*,
- 7- *War ijolchan jarari'*,
- 8- *War itijb'ya'n b'aki*.
- 9- *War ixtijb'ya'n jarari'*,
- 10- *War ijararya'n b'aki*,
- 11- *War ixsuste'yr jarari'*.

- 1- Lying with the evil-heating of **your** [plural] walking,
- 2- Lying with the evil wind of **your** [singular] running.
- 3- Lying with the evil wind of **your** [plural] walking,
- 4- Lying with the evil wind of **your** [plural] blowing.
- 5- Lying with the evil-heating of **your** [singular] woven pains,
- 6- **You** [singular] are evil-heating on the bones,
- 7- **You** [singular] are evil-heating with woven pains.
- 8- **You** [singular] are leaping on the bones,
- 9- **You** [plural] are leaping with woven pains.
- 10- **You** [singular] are weaving on the bones,
- 11- **You** [plural] are stabbing with woven pains.

In this curing prayer excerpt, the second-person singular pronounced *i-* and the second-person plural form *ix-* are freely substituted within the couplets of lines 1-2, 3-4, 8-9, and 10-11. Lines 5-7 make up a triplet construction that poetically breaks the stylistic flow of the text. In addition, it is important to note that within this intervening triplet, only second-person *singular* pronouns are used, creating a further contrast for aesthetic purposes. The question as to whether the healer intended to address one or more evil spirits in each is complicated by the fact that overt plural markers are often optional in both formal and informal Ch'orti'. Plurality is most often implied from context, and is commonly not represented morphologically. In standard Ch'orti' fashion, both verbal and nominal plural markers are regularly omitted, similar to Japanese and many other languages of the world, particularly those with numeral classifiers. The above examples



The final two lines switch to the plural marker. The text, then, is progressing and creating contrasts at the stanza level. Often there is a balanced alternation that can extend over several stanzas.

<i>War <u>ix</u>loch'te'yr b'aki,</i>	<b><u>You</u></b> [plural] are gripping the bones,
<i>War <u>ix</u>loch'te'yr jarari'.</i>	<b><u>You</u></b> [plural] are gripping with woven pains.
<i>War <u>ij</u>olchan b'aki,</i>	<b><u>You</u></b> [singular] are evil-heating on the bones,
<i>Ch'a'r <u>ij</u>olchan jarari'.</i>	<b><u>You</u></b> [singular] are evil-heating with woven pains.
<i>War <u>ix</u>tijb'ya'n b'aki,</i>	<b><u>You</u></b> [plural] are leaping on the bones,
<i>War <u>ix</u>tijb'ya'n jarari'.</i>	<b><u>You</u></b> [plural] are leaping with woven pains.
<i>Ch'a'r <u>ij</u>olchan b'aki,</i>	<b><u>You</u></b> [singular] are evil-heating on the bones,
<i>War <u>ij</u>olchan jarari'.</i>	<b><u>You</u></b> [singular] are evil-heating with woven pains.

In this example the healer freely interwove pairs of singular and plural pronouns in each subsequent stanza throughout this section. All of these different forms of pronoun alternation represent a highly-effective poetic tool for the breaking of expectations for aesthetic purposes.

### 1.33. Anaphora

Anaphora is the successive repetition of words or short phrases at the beginning of a line. Due to the naturally repetitive nature of Ch'orti' parallel ritual discourse, it stands to reason that anaphora might figure prominently among the poetic devices used by the Ch'orti'. Indeed, anaphora is extremely common (literally hundreds of examples appear in my data alone) and often serves as an important rhetorical device to emphasize a particular section of a text. Anaphora almost always supplements structural poetics, and it is rarely the only overt rhetorical device in any given stanza. In fact, all the excerpts below could have appeared in other sections of this chapter discussing their

other poetic structures. Note how anaphora complements these already highly-poetic sections of text:

Example 1:

*Ch'a'r ukalorir,*  
*Ch'a'r uyogamiento,*  
*Ch'a'r ukebrante,*  
*Ch'a'r uyanciador.*

Their evil heat is lying there,  
Their exhaustion is lying there,  
Their debilitating force is lying there,  
Their tiredness is lying there.

Example 2:

*Tya' k'otoy leb'ena,*  
*Tya' amusijk'yo'b' wajrna uyanjel.*  
*Tya' agarrado uyanjel,*  
*Tya' agarrado.*

Where it arrived touched,  
Where they breath on his breathed on spirit.  
Where his spirit is grabbed,  
Where it is grabbed.

Example 3:

*Tya' wajrna uyanjel,*  
*Tya' wajrna umajin uyespiritu te' kriatura.*  
*Tya' achukur uyanjel,*  
*Tya' achukur umajin uyespiritu te' kriatura.*  
*Tya' mejk'a uyanjel,*  
*Tya' mejk'a umajin uyespiritu te' kriatura.*

Where his spirit is blown on,  
Where the soul of the patient's spirit is blown on.  
Where his spirit is captured,  
Where the sold of the patient's spirit is captured.  
Where his spirit is embraced,  
Where the soul of the patient's spirit is embraced.

Example 4:

*Ch'a'r takar usakb'ub'ir ixamb'ir,* Lying with the infecting heat of your walking,  
*Ch'a'r takar usakb'ub'ir iwajner.* Lying with the infecting heat of your running.  
*Ch'a'r takar ujolchanir ixamb'ar,* Lying with the evil heat of your walking,  
*Ch'a'r takar ujolchanir iwajner.* Lying with the evil heat of your running.  
*Ch'a'r takar umalairir ixamb'ar,* Lying with the evil wind of your walking,  
*Ch'a'r takar umalairir iwajner.* Lying with the evil wind of your running.

Example 5:

*A'si tamar utek'erir u't.* They play with the stepping of their expressions.  
*A'si tamar e mediyante syelo,* They play in the middle of the sky,  
*e mediyante de la gloria.* the middle of the heavens.

<i>A'si watar tamar enyax caye,</i>	They come playing on the green road,
<i>ensak caye mayor.</i>	the white road.
<i>A'si tamar enyax petasion,</i>	They play on green altar,
<i>ensak petasion.</i>	white altar.
<i>A'si tamar e kwatro pilastre,</i>	They play on the fourth pillar,
<i>e sinco pilastre.</i>	the fifth pillar.

In Example 1, the positional verb *ch'a'r*, 'lying (there)' is repeated four times in a row at the beginning of the lines. That anaphora appears right at the end of a long curing text indicates that its function is to emphasize for the last time which other menacing spirits are there causing the problems. Example 2 begins each of its four lines with the preposition *tya'*, 'where', in anaphoric style. The 'touching' and 'blowing on' in this example are different expressions for describing the evil spirit's infecting and afflicting actions. Example 3 also restates the preposition *tya'* through six lines of text as the line-initial word. Note the tight semantic parallelism along with regulated augmentation in the second, fourth, and sixth lines. The phrase "*umajin uyespiritu*," "the soul of the spirit," is a descriptive way of referring to 'spirit' of the patient (although I admit that the exact nuance both of these terms is still eludes me). Example 4 shows another instance where *ch'a'r*, 'lying (there)' is repeated numerous times at the beginning of each line. The structure of Example 4 includes three consecutive instances of identical parallelism with a pattern of single lexical substitution between the verses of each stanza. The final illustration of anaphora appearing in Example 5 begins with a monocolon, "*a'si tamar utek'erir u't*," "they play with the stepping of their expressions." This provides the model upon which the subsequent four stanzas build. Example 5 demonstrates the use of anaphora at the level of stanza in that the repeated element *a'si*, 'they play', only appears

in the first stich of the four stanzas following the monocolon. The orator broke the expectation of the listener in the first stich of the second stanza with the verb *watar*, 'they come'. In each of the other three couplets (and the initial monocolon) the preposition *tamar*, 'with', followed directly after the verb *a'si*. Only in this one case was the verb *watar* inserted to interrupt the flow of pattern. While the examples of anaphoric usage presented here are all relatively short (no more than six verse-initial repetitions), some examples in my data stretch over twenty lines of text. I have observed a general tendency for anaphora to appear more frequently near a narrative climax or at a point where the narrator displayed intensified prosodic activity. I consider anaphora an important stylistic and prosodic rhetorical feature that has the additional function in Ch'orti' ritual texts as an emphatic or highlighting device.

### **1.34. Ritual and Performance of Text**

The final aspect of ritual texts that I will address is performance. Healers as ritual practitioners are at some level 'performing' at every healing ceremony. There is, however, a clear distinction between performance in healing rites and in oral narratives. Healers are by trade masters of the spoken word. Their training involves all forms of esoteric knowledge (relating to conceptions of Otherworld matters), medicinal plants and their uses, and the proper verbal artistry to construct a healing prayer according to strict stylistic tradition. The healers with whom I have worked stress tradition, formality, and "proper language" for the occasion when questioned about the poetic styles they employ in prayers. According to Eyer, formulaic structural patterns such as "non-colloquial

grammar and vocabulary overlap as markers of a literary style that has its roots in performance" (1996:429). Several healers also noted that the formulaic phraseology and metaphoric imagery is *expected* by the patient and others listening. This considerably alters the dynamic of performance in my mind when it comes to healing rites. Healers are performing *to* the audience in a certain respect, not simply speaking to the angels, spirits, and other distant beings. Archaic forms of speech and rhetorical speech delivery styles are intimately tied to aesthetic purposes of the performance. Eyer has noted that "The formal devices used to create the purely audial pleasure and effect on its audience, the occasion, and the purpose of the performance all make up a context that is part of the content" (1996:423-424). For example, in Ancient Egypt, the "Inscriptions of the period of Hatshepsut give the impression of an originality in the use of language: a manipulation of classical and archaizing grammar, with vocabulary and phrasing chosen for deliberate literary effect" (Eyre 1996:418). Such distinctive, archaic grammatical and lexical forms, then, are literary tools that enrich a text, and that can be exploited further in performance. In addition, the "difficult ideas" ("*ideas difficiles*"), as one healer put it, contained in healing prayers clearly serve as social distancing devices between the trained specialists and the people. Even a cursory look at any healing text will show archaic verbal forms, ritual terms, reinterpreted Spanish terms, and metaphors, not to mention numerous poetic structural features interacting with each other. Archaic forms of speech and rhetorical speech delivery styles are also intimately tied to the aesthetic purposes of the performance. In addition, metaphoric imagery and archaisms may diminish comprehension to some extent for all involved. Many Ch'orti' healing texts are poorly

understood at best by the general Ch'orti' population (as I found out every time I enlisted help in trying to work through translations of the texts from non-healers). Even more striking still is the fact that healers themselves very often cannot explain much of the imagery and terminology contained in these texts. They are often working strictly from ancient tradition. Prayers containing such archaic forms and meanings are certainly not meant to *increase* the understanding of the patient and the audience. In fact, to a certain degree, I would argue the very opposite is the case; curing prayers are in part esoteric in order to solidify the position and status of the healer. Power relations most certainly play a role in the complexity of healing prayers. As I have previously mentioned, some healers actually told me that they used to replace Ch'orti' ritual terms with Spanish ones when the communities were heavily monolingual. Comprehension was precisely *not* the point. As healers perform a curing rite, they reproduce power relations within their society through linguistic forms and actions. In recent years, since most healers no longer use crystals (cf. Wisdom 1940:344), chickens, and cards, other paraphernalia in curing, the verbal component of the rite has been elevated even further in importance. Along with this increased ritual currency, the spoken word had to also shoulder a larger portion of the reproduction of power relations. The increased use of Spanish terms is a concrete example of the compensation for this additional social significance it acquired.

The performative aspect of ritual language also invites a separate extra-linguistic subset of performative features that are located outside the realm of the text. Prosody, gesticulation, and kinesics are just a few such means utilized by performers that can increase the aesthetic and poetic realization of the text. Note the following example of

prosody from a performance of the Yukatekan tale, "The Story of the Hunchbacks" recorded by Burns, "that he makes a boat, [quietly] that he makes a boat" (1982:28). While identical repetition is usually avoided in Yukatek (Hanks 1989:107), the narrator of this story forms a couplet by repeating verbatim the preceding phrase, distinguishing it only through prosody. Ritualized prosodic features in performance carry significant weight in terms of poetic effect for Ch'orti' healers. Healing prayers have a mesmerizing cadence to them whose effect is generously increased through deletion in the second line of couplets and through other poetic devices (cf. Urban 1991:88). Fought has also commented on their "metrical and phonological regularities that can be heard in recitation to have a most impressive incantatory effect" (1985:137-138). The first syllable of the first word of each line is powerfully accentuated and held for over a second. The first word of the first line of a couplet is articulated more strongly than in the second line, especially if there is any early-line deletion. First syllables of all words are generally more heavily stressed than others. The entire line is delivered with a raised tone throughout, except for certain melodic pitch drops in alternating syllables. The final word of any line is articulated with a rapidly descending tone to the point that it is often nearly inaudible. The cadence common to all Ch'orti' healing incantations is itself an important aspect of performance. Healers must sound like healers. Just as some Ch'orti' healers told me that patients expect certain styles that they associate with 'ritual' or 'sacred' activities, the articulatory patterns in performance must also be a part of this expectation. Prosody, then, is simply another facet of the complexity and 'ritualness' of textual performance in Ch'orti' healing rites.

### 1.35. Conclusion

Ch'orti' ritual language is defined by its verbal artistic qualities. There is an overriding parallel character to all forms of language involved in ritual that is itself the *sine qua non* of the genre. Parallelism pervades every facet of ritual discourse, principally at the couplet stanza level. Semantic and syntactic couplets are both hallmarks of Ch'orti' ritual language. Ellipsis and augmentation of second stich elements are favorite poetic devices used to add "elegance" to the stanza. The frequent use of polystylistic features (multiple rhetorical devices in use simultaneously), as I have termed them, in a given section of text in Ch'orti' ritual language attests to the sophisticated verbal artistry of these ceremonial specialists. Indeed, the social position of all types of ritual priests is continually recreated and reified through their demonstrable knowledge of poetic speech. According to Bauman, fluency in a "language marked by extra regularities is an effective vehicle for the display of communicative competence" (1984:19). Some Ch'orti' healers have indicated to me that they are aware that those listening expect the prayers to sound a certain way (poetic structuring, chanting cadence, etc.), which they associate with efficacious ritual discourse. The aesthetic value of poetics entails their performance. Poetic discourse also serves to reaffirm social relationships between ritual specialists and the population. Poetics for the Ch'orti', then, crosses over from being simply an aesthetic phenomenon to become intimately associated with sociocultural power relations. The ability of the Ch'orti' healers to 'sound like healers' reassures the patient of their status and qualifications as healers, precisely parallel to the "doctor talk" of Western culture where the physician carefully uses certain phrases, mannerisms, and

'ritual language' (i.e. medical terms) for reasons relating to power relations (Fisher 1993). At another level, Ch'orti' ritual poetics are simply the "language of the trade" in that those who deal in spiritual matters must use the appropriate form of speech when addressing Otherworld beings. As I mentioned earlier, this 'speaking like the angels' refers to strictly bound couplet phraseology and other rhetorical devices evident in Ch'orti' healing and other ritual texts. While the use of poetic discourse is limited and is most certainly on the decline due to internal and external pressures, the language of Ch'orti' healers evidences a highly complex literary tradition that once flourished among the Ch'orti'.

## Chapter 2

### Ch'orti' Narrative Genres and Poetics

#### 2.1. Narrative Genre Designation

The first step in an effort to understand Ch'orti' poetics in oral narratives is to attempt to define the major narrative genres in Ch'orti' today. The process of classifying narrative genres can be a complex one. For Bauman, the "classic problem of genre [description]" entails "the formal definition of narrative genres, the functional and transformational interrelationships that link them into larger expressive system" (1986:6). Among other difficulties surrounding genre designation, determining the appropriate degree of analytical and linguistic specificity is a forefront issue. For Parkinson, imprecise terminology is preferred to a highly precise one since genres of literature "are mutable, and frequently overlap" (Parkinson 1996b:299). A cross-cultural analysis of genres quickly shows them to be strongly culturally determined, often resistant to generalizations outside of their own linguistic and sociolinguistic system. "Genres," according to Hawks, "...are essentially culturally-bound, 'relative' phenomena" (Hawks 1977:104). Parkinson has noted this difficulty in attempting to classify certain ancient Egyptian texts in terms of genres. He writes: "Egyptian genres have no equivalents for the (to us) familiar categories of epic, tragedy, comedy, or pastoral, and if one views the Eloquent Peasant in terms of modern systems of genres, it eludes satisfactory identification and interpretation (Parkinson 1996b:297). In defining genres in literature,

some cast a wide net to include 'a choice in subject matter' on the paradigmatic level (Thwaites et al. 1994:95). Some caution, however, must be applied to genre designation to ensure intertextual characteristics, in addition to metaterms and metanarrative frames, of the narratives are used as the foremost criteria in making such judgements. Sherzer finds a more productive approach in looking at both the internal taxonomic structure together with the contexts in which the narratives occur, including setting, variety, channel, sender, receiver, audience, and purpose (1984:142).

Researchers in oral literature in the Maya area have devised numerous systems to classify genres (c.f. Peñalosa 1996:15). In his analysis of literary genres of the Yucatek Maya, Gutierrez-Estevez identifies four principal categories: autobiographical, true narrative, major worlds, and virtual (Gutierrez-Estevez 1998). Maxwell discussed in detail three formal genres of Chuj discourse, '*ab'ix* 'news', '*ik'tihal* 'history', and *lasalej* 'prayer' (1997). In many cases, overt linguistic indicators signal a shift among different genres. According to Bricker, Yucatek and Tzotzil speakers differentiate implicitly structures between speech genres (1974:378). She further notes that both Zinacantan Tzotzil and Yucatekan speakers do not "refer to structure when they classify speech genres" but instead distinguish "in terms of function, moral value, or provenience (traditional or recent)" (Bricker 1974:388). The only published analysis of Ch'orti' narrative genres is found in Fought's *Ch'orti' (Mayan) Texts* (1972). In this excellent collection of 40 Ch'orti' oral texts, Fought groups the texts according to six general types: Legends, Fables, Mores, Disease and Curing, The Universe, and Religion. These 40 texts, while significant, represent only a portion of the texts Fought has recorded. He has

well over 100 more narrative texts that he may publish in the future (John Fought, personal communication 2001; cf. Fought 1985:133). Fought, following (as he states) the well-known Aarne-Thompson processing methods for folktale categorization, selected a system that is "purely and simply catalogues of literary forms, independent of their social and psychological connotations..." (Fought 1972:540). While such a methodological approach to defining oral narratives has a long history of use, other avenues might also be explored with regard to the Ch'orti' in an effort of classify narrative genres based on a more 'native' perspective.

For my purposes here, in order to determine a classification system of genres types (indeed, Parkinson keenly observes that a genre is a type, not a mutually exclusive class [1996b:299]), I first appeal to the explicit metadiscourse about genres in the Ch'orti' text themselves. Babcock has urged researchers to "look at the ways in which the tales themselves tell us both implicitly and explicitly what their conventions and standards of esthetic judgment are" (1984:71). General native categories can be ascertained by referring to the beginning and endings of many narratives. The beginnings and ending points of narratives "are of crucial importance in the formulation of systems of culture: in narrative they are one of the ways in which a narrator sets up an interpretive frame which tells us this is play, this is performance, or more specifically, this is such and such type of story and should be understood and judged accordingly" (Babcock 1984:71). In many instances, Ch'orti' narrators will specify the type of narration being recounted. The positive side of text-internal genre identification is that one can expect to determine something closer to a 'native' interpretation of genre type than judging strictly from a

contextual analysis alone. The downside, however, is that the Ch'orti' do not often make as careful a distinction among different styles of narration as do the Tzotzil speakers of Chamula (Gossen 1974) or the Tzeltal speakers of Tenejapa (Stross 1974). Nevertheless, in an effort to define 'native categories' as well as possible, I believe an analysis of the Ch'orti' genre classification system (to whatever degree it exists) is the logical and proper point of departure for any study of narrative taxonomies.

For this genre analysis (as well as the poetic analysis later), I recorded, transcribed, and translated over 80 Ch'orti' oral narratives texts during my fieldwork with the Ch'orti'. I also make use of textual material from 37 of Fought's narrations in *Ch'orti' (Mayan) Texts* (1972) (the remaining three dealt with healing and were used in the ritual and healing data), a small collection of eleven Ch'orti' texts, called *Leyenda Ch'orti'*, from the *Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín* (Martínez 1996), ninety seven texts (forty four and fifty three texts, respectively) in two publications from the *Academia de las Lenguas Maya de Guatemala, Concurso Literario Idioma Ch'orti'* (Tohom Gutierrez 1999) and *Utwa'chir e Ojroner Ch'orti': Tradición Oral Ch'orti'* (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001), a single Ch'orti' narrative recorded by Helen Oakley (1966:248-250), eighteen texts from a UNICEF publication by Lucas López de Rosa called *Uyejtz'una'r Kaworjoner Ch'orti'* (1998), sections of the *Kumix Anxer* story that appeared in Fought (1985:141-143), a heavily condensed version of the same story by Girard (in translation only) (1995), and two short texts from Lubeck and Cowie's pedagogical grammar (1989). This data set represented roughly 282 oral narrative Ch'orti' texts of various lengths.

## 2.2. Ch'orti' Narratives Genres

The Ch'orti' often differentiate genre types in their narratives with terms such as *k'ajpesyaj*, *k'ajtsyaj*, *k'ub'seyaj*, *aras ojroner*, *chiste*, *ojroner*, *numer*, *istoriya*, *k'ajtmayaj*, *na'tanwa'r*, *k'ub'esna'r*, *kostumbre*, and *kaso* (all defined below). When these metanarrative frames (Babcock 1984) appear in Ch'orti' narratives, they are usually given in the introduction to the narration or as a summary statement at the end. Note this process from the following excerpts of Ch'orti'narrative openings from my fieldwork data:

### **k'ajpesyaj**

*K'ajpesyaj twa' e gigante...*  
(Story about the giant...)

### **k'ajtsyaj**

*K'ani ink'ajti e k'ajtsyaj...*  
(I want to relate a story...)

### **kub'seyaj**

*Ayanto inte' k'ub'seyaj xe'...*  
(There is still a tradition that...)

### **numer**

*K'ani ink'ajti unumer xe' ak'ajdato ani oni'x...*  
(I want to tell the story that was still told long ago...)

### **istoriya / istoriko**

*Ne'n k'ani ink'ajti inte' istoriya...*  
(I want tell a story...)

*Ayan ani inkojt otronte' yar e chuchu' yer e istoriko xe'...*  
(There was another tiny little story that...)

**kaso**

*Tara ink'ajti ukaso e k'ech'uj xe' amajresyan...*  
(Here I want to relate the story of the Sesimiete who deceives...)

**aras ojroner / chiste**

*E aras ojroner ayanayan uyojronerir...*  
(There are many kinds of jokes...)

*K'ani inche kontar otronte' chiste...*  
(I want to tell another joke...)

**ojroner**

*K'ani ink'ajti uyojronerob' e mama' sapo taka e masa'.*  
(I want to relate the story of Uncle Toad with the deer.)

In other cases the genre specification is itself the closing of the narration. Note the following examples:

*E ojroner ira ja'x uyojroner e k'ech'uj...*  
(This story was the story of the *Siwanaba*...) (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:71)

*Tara ak'a'pa e ojroner ira.*  
(Here ends this story.) (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:48)

The following is a statistical summary (based on an analysis of 282 Ch'orti' oral narratives) of the metalanguage used by the narrators themselves to classify each text.

Number of Ch'orti' texts surveyed:	282
Number with text-internal genre specification:	140
Percentage with text-internal genre specification:	49.6%

Essentially, 50% of the texts in this data set used some form of overt genre classification.

In 140 texts with text-internal genre specification, thirteen distinct terms were used to

classify each text. The following is a numerical and sequential breakdown of these categories and their frequency of usage.

<i>ojroner</i>	56
<i>numer</i>	33
<i>k'ub'seyaj / k'ub'seyaj</i>	12
<i>na'tanwa'r</i>	10
<i>k'ajpesyaj</i>	7
<i>k'ajtsyaj</i>	7
<i>kaso</i>	6
<i>istorya / istoriko</i>	3
<i>chiste / aras ojroner</i>	2
<i>kwento</i>	2
<i>kostumbre</i>	1
<i>k'ub'esna'r</i>	1

*K'ub'esyaj* and *k'ub'seyaj* are simply variants of the nominal form from the derived transitive verb *k'ub'se*, 'to believe, to have someone believe'. The terms *istorya* and *istoriko* (from the Spanish *historia*, 'history, tale,' are also variants. Similarly, *aras ojroner* is the Ch'orti' term for 'joking story' or 'joke' and in Ch'orti' narrative usage is in function exactly the same as the Spanish form *chiste*. Joke narratives represent one of the most popular sub-categories of narrative forms among the Ch'orti'. As the chart above shows, *ojroner* and *numer* are most commonly appearing genre specifications in this data set. Apart from being a term used in genre specification, *ojroner* literally means 'speech' and *numer* 'event'. Next, then, is to define the ranges of meaning for each of these Ch'orti' terms based on more general categories of folktale genre classification. While not unproblematic, it is possible to indicate clusters of related terminology that share general characteristics. In order to determine larger categories in which these clusters might be a part, I analyzed all Ch'orti' oral narratives in this data set for internal

distinguishing characteristics. The results of this analysis were clear groupings of certain genres. Based on their internal features, I noticed immediately that these newly-formed categories corresponded quite well with traditional Western genre types (myth, legend, etc.). For reasons I will outline below, I decided to employ these Western terms for reasons of convenience. In so doing, I am fully aware of the dangers in using such terminology that brings with it some much cultural "baggage." Nevertheless, after defining each category specifically based on the native internal characteristics, I feel the use of terms that happen to correspond well with them is acceptable (see below).

In his description of Maya folktales, Peñalosa differentiates among the different genres of Maya oral literature as follows:

A legend explains the origin of people, animals, customs, animals, beliefs, etc. A myth recounts the exploits of the gods or of the ethnic heroes in the remote past. Believers assure us that what is told in the legends and myths actually took place, while skeptics reject their credence. All, however, are subject to the moral or cultural teachings they encompass. The personal narrative, often referred to by the Spanish word *caso* 'case', recounts some interesting or curious thing that happened to a person from the same community in which it is told. One may or may not believe it ever happened. But what is recounted in the folktale we know never happened and never could happen... Listeners are delighted by folktales, but know that it is all pure invention. They are usually anonymous and have no placement in space or time, as happens in the case of legends and myths (1996:11).

Since I will use three major terms common to Western genre classification, let me first define each of these main Western categories as I employ based on the internal characteristics of the narrative groupings I discussed above:

**Myth:**

Version of a sacred narrative passed orally from one generation to another that describes events relating to the creation of man, the world, and the natural environment. Myths usually take place in pre-creation contexts. A myth may recount the adventures of cultural heroes.

**Folktale:**

Animal trickster tales or personal tales about the exploits of a person or people involved in personal pursuits. Folktales often take place in a non-specific post-creation time frame in non-specific locations.

**Legends:**

Legends are narratives in liminal space. They are stories which take place in the real world and have a definite location in place and time. These stories often concern dangerous supernatural beings and their interactions with humans. Legends also serve to explain how something came to be in its present form.

I will collapse many of the Ch'orti' terms for genres that overlap significantly (see discussion below) into these "Western" categories based for convenience of reference. The underlying determiner for classification of each genre was based on internal characteristics of the narratives themselves. Therefore, while these three major genre classification terms in Western oral traditions are used throughout, the inclusion of all narratives in each category is dependent on internal factors, not on Western notions of genre type. In addition to these three categories, I will also use observable genre types that accurately reflect the data set on which this analysis is based.

The following is a summary of Ch'orti' metalanguage on narrative genres and how they related to the observable content of each narration (Table 1):

Table 1. Ch'orti' metalanguage of genre types

<b>Ch'orti' genre</b>	<b># in data set</b>	<b>General characteristics and # of occurrences of each</b>	<b>General definition for narrative genres</b>
<i>ojroner</i>	56	legend (22), folktale (27), myth (2), celestial phenomena belief (1), traditional practice explanation (4)	legend, folktale, story
<i>numer</i>	33	legend (20), folktale (7), beliefs (3), traditional practices explanation (2), celestial phenomena belief (1)	legend, folktale, story
<i>k'ub'esyaj / k'ub'seyaj</i>	12	beliefs of ancestors (12)	belief
<i>k'ajpesyaj</i>	7	legends (4), folktale(3)	legend, folktale, story
<i>kaso</i>	6	myth (3), folktale (3)	myth, folktale
<i>k'ajtsyaj</i>	7	folktale (3), traditional practice explanation (2), legend (2)	folktale, legend, traditional practice explanation
<i>istorya / istoriko</i>	3	legend [stories with a moral] (3)	legend with a moral
<i>chiste / aras ojroner</i>	2	joke (2)	joke
<i>kwento</i>	2	folktale (2)	folktale
<i>na'tanwa'r</i>	10	celestial phenomena belief (4), traditional practice explanation (1), folktale (5)	understanding of celestial phenomena
<i>kostumbre</i>	1	traditional practice explanation (1)	traditional practice explanation
<i>k'ub'esna'r</i>	1	celestial phenomena belief (1)	understanding of celestial phenomena

It is difficult to draw sharp distinctions among many of these classifications since there is considerable looseness in specification by the Ch'orti' in narratives texts. The substantial overlap among these categories suggests a number of possible explanations. 1) A more

detailed analysis of narrative content may help to distinguish among them, 2) Some of these categories may not represent a true metalanguage tradition for narrative genres, but may instead be simply descriptive terms, 3) Variation due to individual speakers' usage and preferences may have influenced the data, and 4) The Ch'orti' have more than one term for certain narrative genres. While I believe Option 1 could certainly assist in clarifying genre types in some cases, the presence of additional characteristics might also muddy the picture considerably more if overlapped features incrementally increased. Option 2 may have some relevance to categories such as *kostumbre*, "custom," since "custom" could equally as well fit into *k'ajtsyaj* (or, though less likely, vice versa). Option 3 is a plausible line of reasoning. For example, in Fought's collection of narratives, seventeen out of the thirty seven text-internal genre specified cases were given as *ojroner*, spanning all five genre types specified by Fought. Personal preference of the term *ojroner* may have influenced the narrator's choice in some of these cases. Similarly, out of the PLFM's short collection of eleven texts, seven (or 63%) were expressly labeled "*ojroner*." In this case, while not explained as such in print, the book was a compilation from various authors and one gets the impression that a certain degree of 'standardizing' was enforced. The convergence in text specification may be editorial, and not original to the narration. Conversely, it could be argued that *ojroner* is sufficiently broad to accommodate such a wide range of narrative types that there would be no reason to appeal to questions of individual preferences. Indeed, following also the line of reasoning of Option 4, *ojroner* and *numer* may in fact be synonymous terminology across the board. As will be shown below, they share similar functional distribution throughout

this data set. Furthermore, in two cases the narrator uses both terms within a single line to describe the type of narration. Note one of these instances in which both *ojroner* and *numer* appear:

*K'ani ink'ajti inte' yar chuchu' yojroner tama e numer e Mama' Sapo...*  
(I want to relate a cute little story about the incident of Uncle Toad...)

There is considerable overlap among different speakers within these categories. Note these examples where the narrator changed the category in performance:

*K'ani ink'ajti inte' yar ojroner, k'ajpesyaj, xe' ak'ajna ani oni'x*  
(I want to relate a little tale, a story that was told long ago)

*K'ani ink'ajti unumer o inte' k'ajpesyaj twa' e ejmach*  
(I want to relate the case or the story of the raccoon)

Out of the 140 occurrences of text-internal genre specification, in twelve cases the narrator mentioned two genre terms in the same text. Even after re-listening to recordings of six of the twelve cases (which were from my data) in which the terms appeared in the same line, it is difficult for me to state categorically if the second term is a case of self-correction by the narrator, or simply a kind of restatement of a related (or synonymous term). There are supporting lines of evidence, however, that would suggest the latter rather than the former. In a few instances, the opening line used one term and the closing line of the narrative used a different one. In spite of the small data set, there was a notable pattern of clustering:

Table 2. Genre-term overlap

<b>Genre type</b>	<b>Overlap term</b>
<i>numer</i>	<i>ojroner</i>
<i>numer</i>	<i>ojroner</i>
<i>k'ajpesyaj</i>	<i>ojroner</i>
<i>k'ajpesyaj</i>	<i>ojroner</i>
<i>na'tanwa'r</i>	<i>ojroner</i>
<i>na'tanwa'r</i>	<i>ojroner</i>
<i>k'ajtsyaj</i>	<i>ojroner</i>
<i>k'ajpesyaj</i>	<i>numer</i>
<i>k'ajpesyaj</i>	<i>numer</i>
<i>k'ajpesyaj</i>	<i>k'ub'esyaj</i>
<i>k'ub'esna'r</i>	<i>k'ub'esyaj</i>
<i>chiste</i>	<i>kaso</i>

The term *k'ajpesyaj* appears in five out of the twelve cases of this "double-labeling" of genre types, perhaps suggesting a general category that has overlapping features with several other genres. Four pairs occurred twice: *k'ajpesyaj* with *ojroner*, *k'ajpesyaj* with *numer*, *na'tanwa'r* with *ojroner*, and *numer* with *ojroner*. I believe that in three cases the repetition reflects an intimate relationship among all three terms — *k'ajpesyaj*, *numer*, and *ojroner*. A quick glance at Table 1 above confirms this observation. *K'ajpesyaj* and *ojroner* indeed share the same principal characteristics. *Ojroner* and *numer* are nearly a perfect reflection of each other in terms of intertextual characteristics (as well as a close correlation in frequency of occurrence among these different characteristics). In usage, then, I propose that *k'ajpesyaj*, *ojroner*, and *numer* are equivalent genre types in Ch'orti' narratives and comprise a large class of texts including legend, folktale, and general story. The occurrence twice of *na'tanwa'r* and *ojroner* is suggestive of some relationship (they do share some overlap in meaning), but I tend to view this more as a personal narrator preference since these texts came from the same narrator. The two remaining

cases of double terms in Table 1 present a different basis for interpretation. The single occurrence of *k'ajpesyaj* and *k'ub'esyaj* does not suggest a more direct connection between considering their distinct characteristics in Table 1. *K'ub'esna'r* and *k'ub'esyaj* are easily explainable since they are variant nominal forms meaning "believing" and "belief," respectively.

Overall, most of my consultants were generally consistent themselves in their usage of specific genre terms, although they would sometimes blur the boundaries between certain groupings. When asked directly about these categories, the majority indicated that many of these were not hard-and-fast classifications, such as the difference between *numer* and *k'ajpesyaj* which, as I have argued, can designate the same genre of narratives.

Considering the complications that arise from the overlap in Ch'orti' terms of genre specification, it does not seem possible then to use these native terms to classify Ch'orti' oral narrative genres. This unfortunate consequence of overlapped terms required me to look at the internal characteristics of each of the 140 narratives in order to attempt to find clusterings of narratives that might seem to form a natural class. Table 1 and Table 2 summarize these groupings. Surprisingly, the clusterings that surfaced from this analysis fit quite well into many genre classification systems of Western literature. Therefore, in order to categorize these many terms more coherently, I have adopted several established genre terms, such as folktale, belief, legend, and myth, and added to them three additional

genre types.<sup>24</sup> I have given definitions above for each of these Western categories that reflects the actual content of the Ch'orti' narrative. While I certainly recognize the inherent baggage that comes with employing Western terms, they are only convenient nomenclature, that are properly defined in advance. The following Table summarizes the areas where many of these story types intersect.

Table 3. Narrative characteristics and categories

<b>Narrative characteristics</b>	<b>Narrative categories which include this characteristic</b>
folktale	<i>ojroner, numer, k'ajtsyaj, k'ajpesyaj, kaso, kwento, na'tanwa'r</i>
belief	<i>k'ub'esna'r, k'ub'esyaj, na'tanwa'r</i>
legend	<i>ojroner, numer, k'ajpesyaj, k'ajtsyaj, istorya</i>
myth	<i>ojroner, kaso</i>
celestial phenomena belief	<i>ojroner, numer, na'tanwa'r, k'ub'esna'r</i>
traditional practice explanation	<i>ojroner, numer, k'ajtsyaj, kostumbre</i>
joke	<i>aras ojroner/chiste, numer</i>

### 2.3. Folktales

Folktale most commonly crossed boundaries between narrative categories (58% in data set shared this characteristic). Folktales encompass stories of individuals involved in personal pursuits that are not set in time or space. Animal stories, counting trickster tales, comprise a major part of this genre. Many stories in the Folktale genre are of people with common names, such as Juan, who experience something interesting, go somewhere new, try something dangerous or illegal, find a great treasure, etc. One of the

<sup>24</sup> It should be immediately apparent that this classification system does not include one of the main genre types—that of personal narrative. The reason I have not included personal narrative in this discussion is because in my data there was relatively little in terms of poetic content in the texts I had available. Poetic features do not seem to play a significant role in personal narratives in Ch'orti'. Therefore, while I certainly acknowledge their importance in defining the oral traditions of any group, they are not included in this specific study on poetics.

most common narrative subgenres among the Ch'orti' today is Animal Folktales. A large number of animal folktale narratives in Ch'orti' are often explanatory in function in that they serve to describe the origin of an animals' physical features through creative storytelling. This genre in Ch'orti' offer explanations of such things as why the black buzzard has a red head, why the armadillo has stripes on its back, why rabbits have long ears, and many similar themes. Within the Animal Folktale genre, trickster tales rank as one of the most popular subgenres of oral narrative. Trickster tales commonly pit the cunning of Uncle Rabbit against the buffoon Uncle Coyote. Among the Ch'orti', Uncle Rabbit and Uncle Coyote engage in a never-ending episodes in which Uncle Coyote wants to catch Uncle Rabbit, but is consistently outsmarted by Uncle Rabbit and tricked into some painful situation. The following narrative involves Uncle Coyote (*b'oj* in this story, but most commonly *b'objb'* in Ch'orti') and Uncle Rabbit in one such scene where

*War ak'ijna axana e Mama' B'oj. War una'ta tuk'a war uche. E Mama' T'ur war atze'ne axana ya ke' taka war umajres e Mama' B'oj. Entonse kwando e Mama' B'oj utajwi ayi, "Aay Mama' T'ur " cha'yi. "Kone'rixto si inxin ink'uxe't ya'" cha'yi. "Ne't tzajtaka ache'n" cha'yi. "Ache'nix u'nch'i e ja'" cha'yi. "Asujki e momoj tu't nisuy" cha'yi. Y e'ra ache'n inlat'i e noxi' tun yaja'" ch'ayi. "Taki niti' tya' wa'ren inlat'i e tun i k'oye'n" cha'yi. "I e tun ma'chi ajchi war axana" cha'yi. "Taka war amajresen" cha'yi. "Kone'r ixin ink'uxe't ta tuno'r lo ke' achi'x takaren" cha'yi. I e Mama' T'ur, "Inma Mama' B'oj" cha'yi. "Jola ab'ijnu tuk'a ache takaren" cha'yi. "La'r tara" cha'yi. I b'an koche'ra ke' ja'xir tu'k'ab' inte'te' e'yni ayan ani k'atar b'ari tu'k'ab' ute'rar e saput e'yni k'atar. Ya ayi k'atar war umak'i e saput. Y atza'y ayi e Mama' B'oj. Ja'xir ke' ya k'ani uyemse twa' uk'uxi. "Jola ik'ijna" cha'yi. "Kamak'i'k e saput" cha'yi. "Ayan e saput" cha'yi. "Jay ak'ani ingojr, inweb'ta watar ingojr" cha'yi. "Aktan pwes" cha'yi e Mama' B'oj. Ja'xir numuy uk'ijna'r ja'xir. "Ojres tari'k ingojr" cha'yi. "Japa awej," cha'yi, "i k'ani u'nri e saput watar ejmar." Uwajpi ayi uyej e b'oj. Ja'xir uyeb'ta tari ingojr noxi' ne'p saput ke' tya' k'axi ayi e noxi' saput yaja' che tz'ajwan ta u't uyej. K'a'pa ayi k'ajsa uyej e Mama' B'oj. Tya' war uwajk'u ub'a umen e noxi' k'uxner yaja' ke' tya' ak'uxun u't uyej tya' k'ajsa umen e saput, uyakta ub'a tari e Mama'*

*T'ur otronyajr tu't rum. IxIIIIN ajnesb'ir che. Ma'chi'x uyakta ub'a k'ujxa. Ixin che. Ja'xto ayi e Mama' B'oj ya ch'a'r war uwarku ub'a war a'ru. I b'an koche'ra numuy ajk'in numuy ajk'in ma'chi utajwi twa' uk'uxi. I ja'xir war ak'ijna axana, war ak'ijna axana. Inton che k'otoy inte' ajk'in otronyajr. Ixin war usajka war usajka. Ma'chi utajwi.*

Uncle Coyote was walking angrily. He was thinking about what to do. Uncle Rabbit was walking smiling since he had tricked Uncle Coyote. Then when Uncle Coyote found him he said, "Ah, Uncle Rabbit" he said. "Today I am definitely going to eat you" he said. "You made me suffer" he said. "You had me drink the water" he said. "You stuck stinging nettle in my butt" he said. And now you made me hold up that huge stone" he said. "I was thirsty when I was standing there holding up the rock and I was tired" he said. "And the stone didn't move at all" he said. "You deceived me" he said. "Today I am going to eat you for all that you have done to me" he said. "Come here!" he said. And thus it was that he was seated in the branch of a tree, they say, on the branch of the Chicle tree, they say, he was seated. There they say he was seated eating Chicle fruit. And Uncle Coyote was happy they say. There he wanted him to drop one for him to eat. "Don't get mad" he said. "Let's eat the Chicle fruit" said. "There are Chicle fruits" he said. "If you want one, I'll send one down" he said. "Let it go then" said Uncle Coyote. His anger increased. "Drop one down" he said. "Open your mouth," he said, "for I want to throw down the Chicle fruit." They say Uncle Coyote opened his mouth. He sent down a huge semi-ripe Chicle fruit that when it fell they say that huge Chicle fruit stuck in his mouth. It ended up breaking the tooth of Uncle Coyote. When struck by that intense pain where his tooth hurt when it was broken by the Chicle fruit, Uncle Rabbit let one go again to the ground. It fIEEEEEW down they say. Now it didn't stop hurting. He left they say. Therefore they say that Uncle Coyote was lying there writhing and howling in pain. And thus in this way days past and days past and he did not find him to eat him. He was walking around angrily, walking around angrily. So they say another day arrived. He was looking for him and looking for him. He didn't find him.

The preceding scene is just one of many in this popular subgenre that occupies such a central position in the humorous oral literature of the Ch'orti'. At the same time, however, such trickster tales operate on a separate sociocultural plane. The constant outwitting of the bungling Uncle Coyote is also part of a larger cultural metaphor for the relationship between the Ch'orti' and the *ladino* population. Across many cultures, such

'trickster' tales often symbolize the relationship between the dominant group and an indigenous population. Several Ch'orti' have explicitly noted that the rabbit represents the Ch'orti' people as the coyote represents *ladinos*. In this paradigm, the coyote (i.e. *ladinos*) as the powerful, aggressive, dominant creature is shown to be actually gullible (repeatedly!) and manipulable. The rabbit (i.e. the Ch'orti') as a passive, non-dominant prey is in reality clever, in control, and always comes out on top in the end. I would argue that this subgenre openly mocks the established power paradigm between the marginalized Ch'orti' population and the *ladino* authorities as a form of internal resistance. Trickster tales for the Ch'orti' then go beyond amusing storytelling and locate themselves at the intersection of questions of identity and power relations. As Pelton has pointed out for Trickster tales in Africa, a trickster "symbolizes the very manner in which traditional peoples try to seize the contradictory and the anomalous" in an effort to grapple with their own situation (1980:252).

Trickster tales involving the coyote and the rabbit (the animals can vary from culture to culture) also widely distributed throughout North America, Central America, and South America (cf. Peñalosa 1996). These tales share numerous common themes (coyote holding up large rock, cheese in the water, etc) in many of these regions and argue for a strong, ancient tradition for this narrative genre. In fact, a polychrome ceramic from the Late Classic period seems to depict just such a trickster tale (figure 7). Commonly known as the 'Rabbit Pot', K1398 shows two scenes of interaction, each accompanied by textual explanations and direct quotes from the actors themselves. In the first register (the rightmost scene of K1398), an elderly deity, identified as God L, is

shown in a gesture of submission standing below a rabbit who stands aloft on a zoomorphic *witz*, or 'mountain'. The rabbit holds in his hand a cloth, staff or back rack, and a hawk that seemingly belong to God L. The captions above the rabbit begin with an imperative verb from *pul* meaning perhaps 'throw', 'bring', 'undress', or 'hit' (Hull 2003a). The rabbit is clearly ordering God L to do some action in order to get his things back. The second register (the leftmost scene of K1398) now depicts God L kneeling with his arms crossed over his chest in a gesture of humility and subordination before a deity seated on another zoomorphic mountain. The text is explicit in narrating the conversation that takes place between the two characters. The small caption above God L's head is connected by a 'speech scroll' to the mouth of God L to emphasize that it is he to whom this phrase is attributed (figure 8). Starting with the third glyph in the sequence the text reads:

**T'UL? / u-CH'AM-aw / ni-TE'? / ni-b'u-ku / ni-pa-ta**  
*t'ul? uch'ama'w nite'?, nib'uk, nipat*  
 The rabbit, he took my staff(?), my clothes, my back rack(?)

In this scene (what Nielson and Wichmann [2000] have dubbed 'America's first comic'), God L, having been tricked out of his belongings by the rabbit, pleads his case before the Sun God. God L bemoans the loss of his staff, clothes, and back rack (precisely the items the rabbit holds in the right register) as he asks for help from the Sun God. In terms of structure, the glyph *t'ul*,<sup>25</sup> "rabbit," the subject of the verb, is fronted in poetic fashion to

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<sup>25</sup> The reading of the rabbit head sign as *t'ul* has recently been confirmed by Stephen Houston who found a syllabic substitution for this logogram at Edzna of *t'u-lu* (personal communication 2003).

precede the transitive verb *uch'ama'w*, breaking the expectation of standard VOS syntactical order. The continuity of this 'rabbit trickster' motif from the Late Classic period to the present day suggests that this narrative genre occupies a central place in the narrative tradition of the Maya (and certainly groups from other regions). Moreover, it provides evidence of a concurrent *written* tradition for this genre of literature as far back as at least the Late Classic.

#### **2.4. Legends**

In Table 1, legends were also distributed among 41% of the categories. The most popular themes for legends among the Ch'orti' today are the *Chijchan*, *K'ech'uj*, and the *Noj B'itor*. The *Chijchan* is an enormous snake with large, resplendent horns on his head that lives under the surface of the earth. Their horns and sometimes their tails are thought to contain huge sums of money (Fought 1972:122-124). According to Girard, the *Chijchan* (also called *Noj Chijchan*) lives at the bottom of a sacred spring and is intimately tied to the production of rain (1995:115-116). *Chijchans* are believed to travel along subterranean streams and rivers when "*aktana aloko'b' umen e Katata*," "when they are allowed to go out by God." They are especially active during times of heavy rains. Their movements are thought to be the direct cause of mudslides, the formation of new valleys, ravine, and rivers, or even alterations in the direction of rivers (Fought 1972: 83-85, 96-99, 110-113). At the intersection where the road to Copan meets with the entrance to the Ch'orti' town of Jocotán, a large landslide completely buried a large portion of the entrance way in 2001. Universally, the Ch'orti' from all areas told me that

the *Chijchan* was responsible since "it doesn't like highways." A consultant from Pakrén described the connection between the *Chijchan* and rainstorms as follows:

*E chan ak'otoy serca de virtiente. Ak'otoy ach'a'n serca u't e ja'. Entonse ya ach'i'ya'. K'otoy 18 años. Kwando ak'axi inte' nojja', ya ak'axi tama e nojja' i tame' e xukur, a'xin tama e nixi' ja' xe' ch'u'r taka. Entonses e pak'ab' ucho'b' ab'a'kto'b' kwando e kojn ayo'pa nojta' jay serca u't e ja' tya' turo'b'. Entonses ja'xirob' ub'a'k'ro'b' ja'xirob' war ak'axi e jaja'r me'yra.*

The snake arrives near a spring. It arrives and lies down near the spring. Then it really grows there. 18 years passed. When there is a big rainstorm, there the heavy rain falls and in the river. It [the *Chijchan*] goes in the great river just floating along. Then the people become afraid when the ravine becomes large if there is a spring near where they live. So they become afraid when it is raining a lot.

There are both male and female *Chijchans* who, when they travel together, can wreak havoc on the landscape as their horns carve through the surface of the earth.<sup>26</sup> The male and the female *Chijchans* seek each other out for marriage. One consultant gave an interesting description of the female *Chijchan*:

*E Chijchan uk'ab'a' "Chana Lucía, Siwanaba, Siwanaba Prinisipo de Anjel" porke' ja'x umayu't inte'. War uwiti e rum twa' alok'se e ja'. K'ani a'xin pero ma'chi aktana a'xin. K'ani anujb'i e chan yaja' pero ma'chi a tyempo porke' ja'x uche averya. Pero achamesna lo mismo. Por eso ayan e chan alok'o'b' ma'chi ucho'b' mucho perfisyo. E tortuga awiti e rum ub'an. Ketpa Sierpo. E tortuga ach'i' upat ub'an.*

The [female] *Sierpo* is called "*Chana Lucía, Siwanaba, Siwanaba Prinisipo de Anjel*" because it confounds a person. It is breaking open the land so that water comes out. It wants to go but God doesn't let it go. That snake wants to get married but it doesn't have time because it does do many bad things. But it is killed in the same way (by the angels). That's why there is a snake that goes out

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<sup>26</sup> Girard recorded a different version of this tradition in which the female of the *Chijchan* is an alligator (Girard 1995:116).

that doesn't do a lot of bad things. The turtle breaks open the ground too. It remained a Sierpo. The turtle grows its shell also.

The following is another brief description of one pair of *Chijchans* by one of my consultants.

*En dos war a'xyo'b'. Ja'x ucho'b' e señal ixin esto tame' mar. Este ke' lok'oy ixin esto tichan. Uche abrir ixin en akel diya. Kisas e mundo ani mato ani ja'x duro kocha kone'r. Kisas ch'ok e mundo akel diya kwando ixin e sierpo yaja' uyari uyok ixin. Pero k'otoy esto tara ma'chi awajk'u kwenta delante e Puente Negro ya'turu. A'rena ta K'okrem Cacho che a'rob'na en Zacapa. Ya ta K'okrem Kacho che a'rena e noxi' serro che uyajk'u te' korneado unak' e ch'en. Ma'chi'x numuy...querbró los cachos del sierpo. Ellos van dos sierpos, una hembra y un macho. Son hermanos. Pero allí se llegó e quebrada el kacho allá abajo agarró. Entonses se fue por allá a Puerto Barrios.*

They travel in twos. They are the ones who gave a sign coming from the sea. They went out skyward. They went making an opening. In those days perhaps the world was not so hard as it is today). Maybe the world was younger in that day when that Sierpo set out. But when he arrived up until here, he did not realize that in front of him was the Black Bridge nearby. They call it Broken Horn, as they call it in Zacapa. Broken Horn is what they call this mountain where it gouged out the walls of the ravine...he broke the horns of the Sierpo. They go in twos, a female and a male. They are siblings. When they arrived in the gully their horn grabbed in over there. Then they left for Puerto Barrios.

Another consultant from Guareruche related a similar account of the *Chijchan* and the Puente Negro:

*E'ra k'ani kasutpa kak'ajti otronte' kaso tama e chijchan. I ma'chi kana'ta tuk'a e'ra jab' porke' e'ra onya'n kaso. Kocha tara pwes kawira ke' ch'a'r inte' xukur. E xukur ira ch'ab'na chi' uch'ab'u ub'ijrar, ja'x inte' chijchan che...Ma'chi kana'ta porke' tya' xe' lok'oy. Che ke' tya' lok'oy ya tya' atob'oy e k'in. I ja'xir che ke' k'ani uche inte' apwesto k'ani uyari e xukur a'xin este tya' anamtz'a e k'in. I por eso desde ke' lok'oy yaja' tya' tob'oy e k'in. K'ani a'xin esto ke' tya' anamtz'a e k'in i b'an tari. Kay uwejrú e witzir tari. Uwejrú e witzir i war watar e ja' takar, tama chate'rti' ukacho. Ja'xir che ke' war ub'ijnu ke' k'ani a'xin, a'xin esto tame' mar eso tya' anamtz'a e k'in. En eso che numuy tya' turo'n tara i cheker verdad ke' ya numuy porke' ch'a'rto e xukur esto kone'r. I kawira ke' tya' numuy tu'jor e*

*peña tuno'r a'xin ejmar yaja' tya' turo'n. De al mirar porke' cheker tya' uxuri u't e peña numuy tamar ukacho. I b'an uche ixin e lugar tuno'r tya' tuno'r. Numuy ixin Flores, numuy ixin tamante' lugar xe' a'rob'na abundante yaja' nukir e witzir tuwam e witzir ira anumuy i porke' ya numuy e xukur esto kone'r. I che ke' ixin mas ejmar. K'otoy tamante' pareja xe' a'rob'na e Chilar. Ya k'otoy uche topar takante' noxi' witzir ke' puro tun. Pero ja'xir war uwejrú a'xin taka ukacho. I yeb'ar utormenta che. I k'otoy yaja' tame' lugar yaja'. Ub'ijnu uwira che ke' jay war watar e syan ja' tu'pat, ut'ere ub'a che ch'ujksan tu'pat. I tya' ut'ere ub'a ch'ujksan ajk'una e senteyaso che tu'kacho. K'aspa inte' ukacho i ya utz'ajwan ketpa ukacho tama u't e peña. Che'no'b' ke' ya tz'apar esto kone'r ira. I entonses kocha ketpa takante' ukacho ma'chi'xto ob'na ya' twa' uwejrú ya' tante' ukacho, ma'chi'xto ob'na ya' uwejrú mas e witzir tya' anamtz'a e k'in. Lo ke' uche ya'taka uk'ochi ub'a ixin numuy tama e parte Zacapa. Ixin ejmar ya'taka sutpa tu'pat tya' alok'oy ani ya'taka sutpa ixin otronyajr k'axi tama e mar. I entonses e'ra pwes ma'chi kana'ta jay ma'chi ak'uxin ukacho kwando k'otoy yaja' pero ukacho ya'to tz'apar tara tamar e parte Zacapa tama u't e peña. Ti'n uk'ani uwira enteramente erer a'xin uwira tya' tz'apar e kacho tama u't peña tya' kawa're e Puente Negro. Ya ketpa ukacho tamante' uvuelta wa'r e noxi' poso. Ja'xtaka era imb'ijk xe' kaso twa' e chijchan.*

Now I want us to return to tell another story about the Chijchan. But we do not know in what year because this is an ancient story. Since here, well, we see that there is a river. This river was set out by someone; it was a Chijchan who set its path they say... We do not know because of where it went out. They say that where it went out, there is where the sun rises. And it, they say, wants to do something. It wanted to dig out a river going until the west. And this is why it left from there in the east. It wants to go all the way to the west and so thus it came. It came ripping through the mountain. It ripped through the mountain and water was coming along with it with both of its horns. It, they say, was thinking that it wanted to go, to go all the way to the sea in the west. In this, they say, it passed where we are here and it appears to be true that just there it passed because the river is still there today. And we see that where it passed above the big rock, everything went down over there where we are. Just look at this since it appears where it cut through the surface of the large stone it passed with its horns. And thus it went to all the places where we live. It passed by Flores, it passed by in a place that is called "Abundant." There, the big mountain, in the ravine of this mountain it passes because there the river passed right up until today. And they say that it went further below. A pair of them arrived, that is called Chilar. There they arrive to stop up a big mountain that made of pure stone. They were ripping through with their horns. And below there was a storm they say. And they arrived there in that place. They thought to look, they say, if a lot of water was coming behind them. And where they were sideways having fun they were struck with a lightning bolt on their horns. One of their horns broke and there their horn

remained stuck on the surface of the large rock. They say that there it is stuck in right up until the present day. And then since in of their horns remained they were no longer able to rip through with their horns, they were now no longer able to tear up anymore the mountain in the west. What they did was they went zigzagging and passed into the area of Zacapa. They went down nearby where they used to go out nearby and they went out again descending into the sea. And so now we don't know if their horns did not hurt when they arrived there but their horns are still are indeed stuck in here in the area of Zacapa in the surface of a the large rock. If someone wants to see the whole thing, they can go to see it where the horns are stuck in the surface of the large rock that we call Black Bridge. There they remain in one of the turns where there is a large spring. And that is a little story about the Chijchan.

In this text ,the male *Chijchan* is named as *Chilar* and the female is said by others to be named *Chana Lucía*. The *Chijchan*, however, is not free to move around at will because "*e Katata' ma'chi aktana alok'oy*," "God doesn't let it out." Furthermore, there is an intriguing connection between the *Chijchan* and the *K'ech'uj*, or *Siwanaba*, the other popular figure of Ch'orti' legends.

The *K'ech'uj*, the Ch'orti' version of *La Llorona*, also known as the *Sisemite* or *Siwanaba*, is greatly feared by the Ch'orti' for her ability to kill and cause harm. She is said look like an old woman with backwards feet (cf. Fought 1972:72-74). A similar motif can be found throughout the Maya region (cf. Peñalosa 1996). The Ch'orti' say that she seems to be "part animal, part spirit" but appears in the form of a woman. Some say she is "*intey'x animal*," "another kind of animal" while others belief that the "*K'ech'uj e ixik yaja' maja'x ke' verdad jente pero uyeroj ulok'su't ke' mero ja'x e ixik*," "*Siwanaba* is that woman who is not truly a human, but her face appears to be a real one." The lore that has developed among the Ch'orti' concerning the *K'ech'uj* has created a palpable fear of traveling alone at night or even in remote areas of the forest during the day. The

*K'ech'uj* appears to individuals in the forest in the form of someone they know well, usually in as one's wife in the case of a male, and tries to deceive (entice) the person. If she succeeds, she leads them away "*maku' e tun*," "into the rock (mountain)," i.e. to their death.

The *K'ech'uj* also figures prominently in what is without a doubt the most important oral tradition among the Ch'orti'—*E Kumix Anxer* (or *Kumix Anjel*), "The Penultimate Angel." I am yet to find a single Ch'orti' adult who was not completely familiar with it. While certain Ch'orti' know the details of this lengthy narrative much better than others, the general theme is everywhere known. The fullest version of the story can take over an hour to recount. Girard first published a condensed version of this story in 1966. Recently, the *Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín* (PLFM) has published another version of this story (Pérez Martínez 1996). In brief, the topic of the narrative describes the adventures of a young angel who has four older brothers who want to kill him. They attempt to murder him in river, but he survives and is taken under the wings of the *K'ech'uj* who raises him as her own. She has ulterior motives, however, and is secretly planning on devouring him while wrapped up in a blanket and sleeping one night. The *Kumix Anjel*, also known as Gabriel, is aware of her plan and puts a pestle in the blanket so that when she bites down on it she breaks her teeth. Kumix escapes and goes to live on his own. After spending years hunting to sustain himself, *Kumix* then sets out on a mission to get to heaven to see his mother and father who are dead. He tries to employ the help of different birds to carry him to heaven, finally finding success with the hummingbird. He finds his mother in heaven struggling to survive with no food or water.

*Kumix* goes hunting to provide for his mother. He then asks about his father who was killed by 'evil men' and inquires about his father's accoutrements (the physical items that gave him his power). His mother tells him all of his uncles have divided them up and he would need to collect them. *Kumix* then visits his uncle monkeys, uncle armadillos, etc. and recovers his father's drum, sword, clothes, and other items. These empower the *Kumix* with the power his father (God) held before his death. Then, *Kumix* notices that his older brothers, the very ones who tried to kill him, are building a rock mountain to try to get to heaven. His mother is not pleased with their actions and asks *Kumix* to go down to put a stop to the construction. *Kumix* attempts to deter them, but they pay him no heed. *Kumix* sends a lightning bolt down from heaven and obliterates the mountain. Different pieces of the mountain are said to have fallen around the Ch'orti' area and are identified as some of the larger mountains in that region today. The actors in this legend, the *sakumb'irob'*, or "older brothers," and Gabriel (*Kumix*), are also the principal figures in rain production for the Ch'orti'. *Kumix* is not the only 'younger' angel, but has a group of helpers who assume the same name. About their function I have elsewhere written:

The angels who are given charge over lightning are known as "the first angels" (*e b'ajxan anxerob'*), "the first children" (*e b'ajxan maxtak*), or as "the first youths" (*e b'ajxan ma'nob'*) [or "first laborers"]. These angels "work" (*apatna*) from January to August but do their principal work between April 25th and May 5th since they are responsible for bringing the rain for spring planting. After the first planting season is over (*e b'ajxan pa'k'ma'r*), these angels are said to *a'xin ajiryo'b'*, or "go to rest." Another set of angels, known as "the younger angels" (*e kumix anxerob'*) begin their work in September. The most powerful angel among this group is the "penultimate angel" who is known as Angel San Miguel or Angel San Gabriel. He begins to work on the first day of September and goes though the middle of November. The rest of the "young angels" continue to work until

December (the time between September and December is known as *pejwa'r*, or the Second Period) (Hull 2000a).

The story of the *Kumix Anxer* represents in my opinion the pinnacle of oral tradition among the Ch'orti'. When I have asked Ch'orti' speaker to relate a traditional story, 70% of them will begin by asking if I've heard the *Kumix Anxer* story. In addition, a great deal of Ch'orti' mythology is based on events and consequences of actions in the *Kumix* narrative.

Another popular legend involves a dangerous being known as the *Ajnoj B'itor* or *Noj B'itor* (lit. [He of the] Large Hat). The *Noj B'itor* is often described as a "goblin" or "dwarf" who wears a large hat and rides on a horse.<sup>27</sup> He lives inside a mountain and only comes out when he wants to deceive a greedy person out of their soul. Some say his wife is the *Siwanaba*, who also lives in a cave. In the area above the hamlet of Las Lajas near Jocotán there is a huge square stone on the side of a grassy hill. Local lore identifies this as the "door" through which the *Noj B'itor* passes to go into his mountain home. The following is an account of the *Noj B'itor* I recorded in 2000 in the hamlet of Oken:

*K'ani ink'ajti inte' numer twa' e Juan Gonzalez kochwa unumse ub'a tama e onya'n turer tara Oken. E Juan Gonzalez ja'x ani inte' winik ayi' ajneb'eyr. Matuk'a utumin. I k'otoy inte' ajk'in e Juan Gonzalez tama uyuxin yak'b'ar utajwi ayi' e Ajnoj B'itor i kay ayi' o'jron takar y ub'na twa' tuk'a uk'ani. I cha'yi e Juan Gonzalez, "Ne'n ink'ani e tumin i ink'ani e wakax b'antaka ke' ne'n war uche'n tzajtaka e neb'eyr." Inton cha'yi e Noj B'itor, "Akojkikne'n ak'b'ar kone'r ejk'ar ink'otoy intareset to'tot i i'xin takaren." Inton e Juan Gonzalez kay ukojko tu'yuxinar yak'b'ar e Ajnoj B'itor i k'otoy tu'yuxinar yak'b'ar. Cha'yi inton cha'yi najtaka aru, "OOoy Juanó" cha'yi. "¿Tuk'a?" cha'yi "La'rixto ya'. Ne'n tara yo'penix." I lok'oy ajnesb'ir e Juan Gonzalez utajwi e Ajnoj B'ito. Inton cha'yi,*

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<sup>27</sup> Compare to *Yahval Balamil*, or "Earth Lord" of Tzotzil lore (Vogt 1976:16-17).

"¿I'xin ka takaren?" cha'yi. "Inxin" cha'yi. "Inko'. Turen tara tu'jor nichij. Ink'echye't i'xin. I k'atwan ayi' to'r e chij. "Aaj, ajk'una ink'ojt uchij ajk'una inkojt uchij. Tara ink'eche inkojt achij i turen tu'jor." Uk'eche ixin ixo'b' ayi' yaja' ixo'b' ixo'b' tama e b'i'r. K'oto'b' tu'suy ingojr nuxi' tun tya' takar e nojta' tun uwira ayi' e Juan Gonzalez ke' Ajnoj B'itor upasi unak' e witzir. Ulok'se uwab'u najt e tun. Pask'a unak' e witzir. Ochoy ixo'b' makwi'r ya yaja' che. Ocho'b' makwi'r e witzir. Uwira ke' janch'aken e rum makwi'rixto yaja'. Uwira ayan e syan wakax ayan me'yra e rum, k'opot tuno'r ayan yaja'. Inton k'oto'b' ayi' yaja' tu'yotot Ajnoj B'itor i cha'yi e Ajnoj B'itor, "¡B'ut'u amukuk taka e tumin ya'! Akachi tu'pat e chij ak'eche a'xin ch'akojt awakax. Atza'y ayi' e Juan Gonzalez. Kay ub'ut'i e tumin tama e mukuk i ukachi tu'pat uchij. I lok'oy tari uk'eche uwakax. Konde asakojsa intey'x ajk'in e Juan Gonzalez ayan e tumin me'yra i ayanix uwakax. Ton ka'y umani e k'opot tya' twa' uwab'u uwakax twa' awe'. I b'an koche'ra che k'otoy utajwi tumin e Juan Gonzalez taka e Noj B'itor. Ton inte'to jab' inte'to jab' ak'otoyixto ani Ajnoj B'itor utares e Juan Gonzalez twa' uyose tu'nak' e witzir. Inte'to jab' ke' asakojsa ayan e wakax taka e Juan. Kay b'oro uwakax i e syan chij yixto. Koche yaja' che k'otoy lok'oy te' neb'eyr e Juan Gonzalez.

I want to relate a story about Juan Gonzalez about what happened to him a long time ago here in Oken. Juan Gonzales was, they say, a poor man. He had no money. One day Juan Gonzalez was out in the middle of the night and he ran into, they say, the *Ajnoj B'itor* and, they say, he was speaking with him and asked him [Juan] what he wanted. Then Juan Gonzalez said, "I want money and I want cattle because poverty is making me so sad." Then the *Noj B'itor* said, "You wait for me tonight and tomorrow night and I will arrive to take you to your house and you will go with me." So Juan Gonzalez was waiting in the middle of the night for the *Ajnoj B'itor* and he arrived in the middle of the night. They say that from afar he cried, "OOoy, Juan" he said. "What?" he said. "Come over here! I have arrived here." So Juan Gonzalez arrived quickly and found the *Ajnoj B'itor*. Then he said, "Are you going with me?" he said. "I'm going" he said. "Let's go. Sit here on my horse. I'll take you away." So they say he mounted the horse. "Ah, you'll be given a horse, you'll be given a horse. Here I will bring you your horse and you sit on it." He brought it and they went, they say, over there, they went, they went on the road. They arrived at the foot of a huge rock where next to the large stone they say that Juan Gonzales sees the *Ajnoj B'itor* open the wall of the mountain. He took out and place far off the stones. The walls of the mountain broke apart. They the entered inside there they say. They entered inside the mountain. He saw that the ground was translucent inside there. He saw that there were a lot of cattle, lots of land, forest, it had everything there. They arrived there, they say, in the house of the *Ajnoj B'itor* and the *Ajnoj B'itor* said, "Stuff your bag with money! You tie it on the back of the horse and take two of your cows." Juan Gonzalez was very happy. He was stuffing the money in the

bag and he tied it on the back of the horse. He took his cattle and left. When it dawned on another day Juan Gonzalez had lots of money and he had lots of cattle. So he began to buy mountain grass to give to his cattle to eat. And thus in this way they say that Juan Gonzales met up with the *Noj B'itor*. Then after several years the *Noj B'itor* arrives there and takes Juan Gonzalez in order to put him inside the walls of the mountain. Every year that passed Juan did indeed have cattle. The cattle were multiplying and there were many horses. Just like that they say poor Juan Gonzalez came and went.

Thematically, legends such as the *Noj B'itor*, the *Chijchan*, and the *K'ech'uj* commonly share one common feature: danger for the Ch'orti'. In each of these three cases, these mythological beings are said to be responsible for much of the destruction to the land and the people who live on it (the *Chijchan*) as well as the disappearance of any individual (the *K'ech'uj* or *Noj B'itor*). While there are numerous other menacing and dangerous beings or spirits in Ch'orti' mythology, the *K'ech'uj* and *Noj B'itor* are two of the most discussed and most widely encountered. Underlying a certain portion of such mythology is commentary on the mores of daily Ch'orti' life with respect to antithetical notions of rich and poor, seduction and destruction, trust and deception, and many others. Unsuspecting men are seduced at time by the morphing *K'ech'uj* who assumes the appearance of a beautiful woman or the figure of the man's wife (not meant to be exclusive categories!). The *Noj B'itor* tries to entice a person with riches who is then faced with the choice of 'selling his soul' to gain worldly treasures. Many Ch'orti' legends and other genre types represent warnings about obsessive avarice, a base characteristic that is commonly associated with *ladinos*. On the other hand, 'get rich quick' stories are not dismissed outright as fiction, but rather are often semi-prized as a sort of 'hero's tale', a brand of inspiration that good fortune may indeed come along some day. Fought's

account of the *Chijchan* (1972 122-124) is good example of a 'rags to riches'-type story.

A man who finds a dead *Chijchan* by a river cuts off its tail to find a special kind of copal that, when burned, changes into piles of money.

## 2.5. Jokes and Humor

In Table 2, jokes were once called *numer*, but in all other cases they were referred to as *aras ojoner* (lit. play speech), or *chiste*, 'joke'. Joke telling is a popular genre for entertainment at all levels of Ch'orti' society. Jokes usually take the form of a story set in no particular time period (cf. Sacks 1974:340). Note the following *aras ojroner* I recorded in the hamlet of Guareruche in 2001:

*Tamanyajr ayan inte' rey i e rey ira ayan inte' ukojto ijch'ok wa'r twa'. I che ke' war ak'oto'b' k'ora syan maxtak ajk'ajtmayaj twa' e rey. I e maxtak ira che ke' insolo reyob'ix ub'an. I konde ak'otoyob' ak'ajtmayanob' e maxtak ira cha'yi e rey ja'xir, "Ne'n chiktaka erer inwajk'u niwijch'ok" cha'yi. "Ajtaka ke' inwa'ryox," cha'yi, "ke' ink'ani twa' ib'ijnu iwira b'ajxan tuk'a ukojko e ijch'ok ira" cha'yi. "I e ti'n a'xin ub'ijnu tuk'a ukojko e ijch'ok ira, ja'xto twa' innujb'se takar" cha'yi e rey. I e syan maxtak ajk'ajtmayaj che ke' ya'tix turob' tu'yotot e rey akb'are akb'are che i mamajchi' ayo'pa tu'jorob' tuk'a twa' uk'ajtyo'b'. I che ke' yayi' wa'r ob'yan tu'majk'ib' e otot inte' yar merex winik ub'an. Tzajtaka u't. Mamajchi' umen apejkna tya' war amerekna u't che. Pero ja'xir war ub'ijnu tuk'a twa' uya're e rey i cha'yi, "Erer k'ani awakte'n o'jnron ub'an," cha'yi, "twa'taka inwa'ret tuk'a ukojko awijch'ok" cha'yi uya're e rey. "A'rena" cha'yi e rey, "wa'kchetaka," cha'yi. "Awijch'ok," cha'yi, "ayan ingojr umam tu't unak'" cha'yi. "I tamartaka ujur e mam wa'r cha'te' tzutz i ja'xtaka e'ra xe' ukojko awijch'ok" cha'yi e merex winik. I ja'xto e'ra atza'y uyub'i e rey ke' yar winik lok'oy ub'ijnu tuk'a ukojo e ijch'ok. I cha'yi e rey takarixto e winik ira, "Twa' innujb'se niwijch'ok" cha'yi e rey. I e enmojr ajk'ajtmayajob' ani k'ijno'b' takar yar e winik i che'no'b' ayi, "Ma tya' a'xin. Koni kawira tuk'a ajk'in anujb'senob'" che'no'b' ayi. I e rey uturb'axix e ajk'in twa' anujb'seyan take' winik. I konde nujb'seyan uche inte' nixi' nojk'in. Tu'yotot ayan e syan sijpa'r take' e syan pak'ab'ob' xe' ya turo'b'. Kay we'seno'b', kay lajbo'b', kay akto'b', kay karayob' che. I nakpat ka'y lok'oyob' patir ka'y ab'chyob', ka'y to'b' che. I nakpat lok'oy ayi wa'wan patir e merex winik ub'an che. I cha'yi uya're e winikob'yaja', "¿Tuk'a turo'x iche tarex?" cha'yi. I e*

*winikob' yaja' kocha war ak'ijno'b' tame' e ijch'ok, che'no'b' ayi, "Tara turo'n kamak'i kata" che'no'b' ayi. I e merex winik uchab'e ke' era'chob' e syan winikob' ira. Ya'tix uyakta ub'a turan ka'y ta' ub'an y ka'y umak'i uta'. I wa'kchetaka k'ijna irna umen e ijch'ok. Chojka aktana ub'ajner umen e ijch'ok. Ixin taka otronte' winik. B'anixto koche'ra k'a'pa e aras ojroner tama e cha'te' pak'ab'ob' xe' matuk'a uk'ampib'ob'.*

Once upon a time there was a king and this king had a firstborn daughter. And they say that some young men were arriving trying to court this young lady. And they say that the young men had just become kings also. And when they these young courters arrive they say the king said to them, "I can give my daughter to any of you" they say he said. "It is just that I'll tell you," they say he said, "I want you to guess first what this young lady has" they say he said. And whoever guesses what this young lady has, that one I will marry to her" they say the king said. And they say that even though the numerous young courters were living in the houses of kings night after night, they say, and it didn't come to mind for any of them as to what he asked them. And they say that there was standing at the door of the house a poor, humble man also. He was sad. He was not spoken to by anyone where he was being sad they say. But he was thinking what he was going to say to the king and they say he said, "Would you kindly allow me to speak also," they say he said, "just to say tell you what your daughter has." "Tell it to me!" they say the king said. "Quickly!" they say he said. "Your daughter," they say he said, "has a mole on her stomach" they say he said. "And on this very mole there are two hairs and this is what your daughter has" they say he said. And with this the king was happy hearing that that poor man had come up with what his daughter had. And they say the king to this man, "I will give you my daughter in marriage" they say he said. And the other ex-courtiers were upset with the poor man and they say they said to him, "There is nowhere to go. We'll see when you'll get married" they say they said to him. But without further ado the king decided on the day for her to marry the man. And when they got married, they had a large party at the house. At the house there were many gifts with many people who were there. They were eating, they were playing music, they were dancing, and they were getting drunk they say. Afterwards, they were going outside and they were urinating, and they were defecating they say. After the poor man also went out to stand outside they say. And they say that he said to those other men, "What are you doing here?" they say he said to them. And those men, since they were angry with the young lady, they said to him, "We are here eating our feces" they say they said to him. And the poor man thought these were upstanding men. Finally he gave in and he sat down and began to eat his feces also. And the young lady was immediately angered seeing this. He was left alone by the young lady. She left with another man. Thus is this way the humorous story about the two useless people ended.

A genre category for jokes is problematic in that so many Ch'orti' stories that belong, based on other textual features, to other genres very often have a humorous point to their telling. In practice, genres such as folktales are replete with punch lines and comical themes. The purpose of their telling is commonly humorous, yet such stories are not typically included with the 'joke' genre. Therefore, it must be recognized that while straight forward joke telling certainly deserves its own genre category, many other types of stories likewise fall into a larger category of comedic performance.

## 2.6. Myth

In Table 1, Myths were restricted to *ojroner* and *kasó* and were distributed in only 16% of the categories. The few examples of myth that from this data set concern the origin of corn from a termite mound, the creation of the world, or how some people became animal through disobedience to God. Let me illustrate this genre with two short myths about the original state of armadillos and monkeys as humans I recorded in 2002 in the hamlet of Pakrén. While these stories take place at the early phases of creation, the narrator of the following myth was not sure if these events took place "b'ajxan ke' Ch'ortyo'b'," "before the Ch'orti'."

*K'ani ink'ajti unumer o inte' k'ajpesyaj twa' ejmach. E ejmach ja'x ani inkojt pak'ab'ob' ub'an xe' turanob' b'ajxan to'r e rum. Ma'chi kana'ta jay ja'x turanob' b'ajxan ke' Ch'ortyo'b'. Inton che ke' yer e animalob', koche kawa're, e'ra yer uyarak'ob' e Katata' i ma'chi ob'yanob' che. Turanob' to'r e rum ani koche no'n. A'reno'b' twa' upa'k'yo'b' e nar, e b'u'r, e ch'um ja'xirob' che. B'ajxan ke' ak'otoy e jaja'r o ayo'pa e jaja'r uk'uxo'b' u't ujinajob'. I b'anto ya' kay che ucho'b' inte'to jab'. Watar ja'xob' uk'uxo'b' u't jinajob'. Uketyo'b' i uk'uxy'ob'. I ak'otoy yajk'in matuk'a twa' upa'k'yo'b'. Ton che e Katata' k'o'yran i maja'xtaka era ucho'b', ucho'b' me'yra mab'anb'anir. I e Katata' ak'ijna uwira. Inton che e Katata', "E*

*pak'ab'ob' ira xe' ne'n inwakta k'ani insatyo'b' b'antaka ke' ja'xirob' ma'chi ob'yanob'." Tari e Katata' kocha uyarak'. Tari ja'xir ujajpi ejmach utz'oki unuk' tz'ojka unuk' e ejmach. Sujb'a tu't usuy. I b'an koche'ra che lok'oy unej. I b'anixto che twa' a'reno'b' ke' ja'xirob' ta k'opotixto ya' twa' aturanob'. Mixto ja'x koche no'n. Ayan uyototob'. Inton b'an koche'ra k'otoy sutpa ejmach. I b'an ub'an ketpa yaja' sutpa yaja' xe' kaware ma'xob'. E ma'x ja'x, ayi' ucho'b' ub'an ke' ja'xirob' uk'uxo'b' ayi' ub'an u't ujinajob'. Ma'chi ob'yanob'. I b'an koche'ra che ub'an ja'xirob' sajto'b'. Ub'an ke' tz'ojka unuk' ub'an i sujb'a tu't usuyob' i lok'oy unejob'. I b'an koche'ra kone'r kawira ke' ajk'opot arak'ob'ixto ya'. Maja'x tama otot aturanob' koche katuran no'n. I b'an koche'ra k'otoy sajto'b' e b'ajxanob' t'oxma'r era xe' uche e Katata'.*

I want to tell you a tale or a story of the raccoon. The raccoons were people also who lived first on the earth. We don't know if they lived before the Ch'orti's. So, they say, that the little animals, as we say now, little creatures of God did not obey hey say. They used to live on the earth just like us. They were told to plant corn, beans, and yellow squash they say. Before the rain arrives or the rain comes, they ate the seeds. And thus they were, they say, doing every year. They came to the seeds. They kept them and they ate them. Then the day arrives in which there was nothing to plant. So the say that God become tired of them, and it was not just this thing that they had done, for they had done so many bad things. And God became angry seeing this. So God said, "These people whom I have allowed (to exist), I'm going to destroy them because they do not obey." God came as one of his animals. He came and grabbed the raccoon and ripped out his intestines and the intestines of the raccoon ripped out. It was put in his butt. And thus in this way, they say, his tail came out. And thus it is, they say, because of this they are said to live in the forest. They are no longer like us. They have their houses. Thus in this way the raccoon came to be. And thus also those who we call monkeys transformed. The monkeys are the ones, they say, who also ate, they say the planting seeds too. They didn't obey. And thus in this way, they say, they were also destroyed. Their intestines too were ripped out also and were placed in their butts and out came their tails. And thus in this way today we see that they are indeed wild animals. They do not live in houses as we live. Thus in this way they came to be destroyed these first creations that God made.

Animal origin myths comprise a large portion of Ch'orti' myths that are held in high esteem by the Ch'orti' for their explanatory and humorous value. The narrator of the preceding myth openly laughed as he described God ripping out the intestines of the armadillos and monkeys and inserting them in their rear ends to make tails. Jocularity

finds its way into many such myths, thereby increasing their aesthetic appeal in group story telling. Indeed, a light hearted moment in any narration is an essential element in Ch'orti' oral performance. Other Ch'orti', however, firmly believe many of these accounts since they are an established part of oral lore and offer ready explanations for observable features of animals and the natural environment.

## 2.7. Understanding of Celestial Phenomena

Understanding of Celestial Phenomena appear in 33% of the categories, *ojroner*, *numer*, *na'tanwa'r*, and *k'ub'esna'r* (see Table 1). Descriptions and explanations of the stars, the movements of heavenly bodies, and the relationship between celestial bodies and events on earth make up the major part of this genre. A good example of this genre is an explanation of the Southern Cross given to me and a few visiting neighbors in the hamlet of Oken on a May night of 2000:

*K'ani ink'ajti ub'an xe' kawira. Ayan mey'ra numer o irsyaj tu't e k'in. I tu't e k'in kawira anumuy inte' yar kurus tama e xe' ustab'ir taka ek'. Ayan chan ek' xe' turu kurusb'ir i no'n kawira ke' ayan cha'te'. Ayan inte' chuchu' i ayan inte' nojta'. E kurus nojta' ja'x anumuy tama yuxinar e jab' i xe' kawa're mes mayo. Tama e mes mayo kawira e kurus jay wa'r, kocha' ak'b'are, tama e mes mayo. Ak'b'are ch'a'r to'r e witzir tama e kuxpar k'in tya' alok'oy e k'in koche' war a'xin e ak'b'ar tya' warix ak'b'are a'xin aka'y a'chpa a'xin a'chpa a'xin este ke' ak'otoy tu'yuxin ak'b'ar e kurus a'wan inyajrer tojb'ir tu't e k'in. I tya' numix uyuxinar ak'b'ar aka'y at'erpa a'xin ub'an at'erpa a'xin esto ke' ach'a'n tama e eyxner k'in. Inton koche'ra ub'an kaw'are ke' ayan inte' kurus i xe' anumuy ke' a'rena kurus mayo, inte' nojta' y inte' chuchu'. I tya' matuk'a e tokar no'n kawira ke' inyajrer ke' cheker tya' anumuy e kurus ira.*

I want to also tell about what we see. There are many events or signs in the sky. And in the sky we see passing a little cross in which stars are ordered. There are four stars that are crosswise and we see that there are two (crosses). There is a small one and a large one. The large cross is the one that passes in the middle of

the year, that we call the month of May. In the month of May we see the cross if it is standing up, like last night, in the month of May. At night it lies on the mountain in the east where the sun goes out like the sun as it is going, when the night is already going, it begins to rise up, it goes rising up, it goes rising up until it midnight arrives. The cross stands up totally erect in the sky. And when midnight has passed, it begins to tilt also, it goes tilting until it lies down in the duration of the sun. So in this way we also say that there is a cross that passes that is called the Cross of May, one large one and one small one. And when there are no clouds we surely see that it appears where this cross passes.

## 2.8. Traditional Practice Explanation

Traditional Practice Explanations similarly are distributed in 33% of the categories, *ojroner*, *numer*, *k'ajtsyaj*, and *kostumbre* (see Table 1). Often couched is phrases like, "This is what our ancestors used to do," Traditional Practice Explanation genre primarily describes ritual agricultural rites, but can include other ceremonies such as new house dedication. I do not include healing prayers and other ritual texts in this category since I believe they represent a distinct genre. Curing texts generally do not have text-internal genre identification, and so were not included in the basic classification system outlined above. All prayers from healers, however, can safely be considered a separate genre apart from Traditional Practice Explanation, which I will label Ritual Texts, since they are internally consistent contextually, thematically, and structurally. Traditional Practice Explanation as a genre is not a construct of the anthropologist-native consultant experience in which the anthropologist asks what they "ancestors" used to do and the consultant replies. Instead, Traditional Practice Explanation represents a vibrant local discourse in an area where traditional ceremonialism is not a factor in the lives of many Ch'orti'. I can illustrate the use of the Traditional Practice Explanation genre with a

personal experience. In 2002, I arrived just after dark at Suchiquer Arriba, a hamlet in the vicinity of Jocotán. A group of 20 or so people, primarily men and boys, had gathered at an individual's house after returning from their work in the *milpa*. The discussion that was taking place when I walked up to the house was focused on the three-week dry spell that was plaguing the area. After a few minutes of sitting among them and listening, a young man abruptly asked an open question to everyone as to why such droughts were becoming more common. An elderly gentleman quickly stood up and began speaking to the group. He described how "*e onya'n pak'ab*" (the ancestors) used to take great care in performing the *Limosna*, or 'Promise' ceremony in the *milpa* before planting. He went on to describe in wonderful detail the steps and procedure they used to follow in carrying out this rite. His narrative performance was impressive as his voice inflection and kinesics became highly animated. He continued his narration for about 10 minutes and finished by saying that the "ancestors" always performed ceremonies and never suffered a lack of food, unlike today. The reaction from the audience was of general approval with lots of head-nodding and a few literal pats on the back for the narrator. Clearly his in-depth knowledge and personal experience with regards to ancient practices, as well as his ability to so eloquently narrate such events, was held in high regard by many of the Ch'orti' present. The answer to the young man's initial question was apparent to many—the ancestors had it right. Indeed, the theme of 'the good old days' (referring to times past when field ceremonies were done and the harvests were bountiful) is commonplace when speaking to those of the older generation.<sup>28</sup> Note this

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<sup>28</sup> In an interview with Metz, an elderly Ch'orti' man blamed the infertility of the land on the fact that "[the

section from an excerpt of an interview I had with a 91 year old Ch'orti' man from Amatillo when I asked him about the pre-planting field ceremony called *La Promesa*:

Kerry:

*¿Tama e eskina te' chor uch'ub'a e sa'yaja' ub'an? ¿Uyari tama e ch'en yaja'?*

Gregorio:

*Inma ya', al medyotaka e chor. Aturb'ana yeb'a ingojr yar tun koche'ra twa' mamajchi' chi' twa' utek'e, b'anixto ya'. B'an aturb'ana maja'x ke' tama oriya sino ke' al medyo e chor. Apojrna segun tya' ayan tya' turu algun tun. Yeb'a e tun koche'ra. Apajnwina ya ache'na yar e ch'en ya yajra e sa'. I b'an ani kay inwira ucho'b' e difunto nitata i niabwelitob', pero eso ani ke' tyempo EEEEEey. Ne'n inwirato, ayan suficiente. Ayan e ak'ach, ayan chumpi', ayan ani e abundansia, todo. Kone'r ma'chi'xto ya' war kawira ya'. K'a'pa e kosecha, ayanto pero ja'x tix yar e nar wartyo alok'oy pero por pura fwerza yar e maisiyo. Pero en akel tyempo, aaaay Dyos, ayan ani e b'u'r. Ma'chi'x ani. Ak'a'pa uche kosechar e jente. Ayan ani e chapaneco, ma'chi'x ucho'b' kosechar. Ayan e perom, ma'chi'x ucho'b' kosechar. Intaka ani a'xin upusyo'b' xe' onya'n jente b'an ani a'xin upusyo'b'... K'a'pa e kosecha porke' kocha verdad galan ani turo'n, galan inte' ani akel tyempo. Ma'chi kawira kocha kone'r. I ayan e syan si' ti kalugar tuno'r tara. Kone'r todo eskaso. Matuk'a kate', matuk'a kasi'.*

Kerry:

Did they also put *atole* there in the corners of the field? Did they pour into those holes?

Gregorio:

No, just in the center of the field. It was put under a stone, a little stone like this (shows size with hands), so that no one would step on it, that's it. Thus it was placed in, not in an oven, but in the middle of the field. Accordingly, a place where there was a stone was sought out. Under a stone like this (shows size with hands). It was dug there, a hole was made there and the *atole* was thrown in. And that is what I used to see my now-deceased father do and my grandparents, but this was EEEEEey, a long time ago. I can still see it now, there was sufficient everything. There were chickens, there were turkeys, there was an abundance of

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angels] are no longer paid" and so the "rains no longer fall" (1998:334).

everything. Today, we are seeing that there is no longer anything. The harvest is gone, there is still some but just a little bit of corn is still sprouting, but by pure inner strength, the little *maicillos*. But in those days, ooooooh God, there were beans. Now there isn't anything. The people stopped harvesting. There were *chapaneco* beans, now they don't harvest them. There were *perom* beans, now they don't harvest them. The ancestors just went about scattering them, thus went about scattering them... The harvest is gone because, truly we lived wonderfully back then, it was a wonderful time. Not like we see today. There was plenty of firewood in all of our area here. Now everything is scarce. We have no trees, we have no firewood.

Inevitably, the always-stimulating interviews with elderly Ch'orti' will at some point turn to discussions of 'the good old days', always with an agricultural theme. Traditional Practice Explanation is an important relic of the actual ceremonial practices themselves. Such ceremonies, having been substantially relegated to the verbal realm only, now live on as components of the oral lore of the Ch'orti'. As younger generations are increasingly further removed from such practices, the act of narrating such stories itself becomes a more vital sociocultural phenomenon.

The purpose of the above discussion on genres was an attempt to define from internal textual evidence the 'native categories' of narrative genres in Ch'orti'. While a more thorough analysis based on more specific textual features and characteristics could likewise be done from an 'non-native' perspective (as I am preparing for publication), I have chosen here to limit myself to an analysis based solely on explicitly 'native' principles in determining guidelines for classifying Ch'orti' genres. Based on thematic groupings, I could have included many of the non-intertextually-specific genre texts in each of the genre types discussed above. I am persuaded, however, to retain these 'native categories' that more accurately describe the classification system of the Ch'orti'

themselves, not that of a Western observer. Once established, however, I can use these categories with non-intertextually-specific genre texts to some degree in order to accurately analyze the use of rhetorical devices in specific genres.

## 2.9. Narrative Openings

As I have discussed at length above, Ch'orti' narratives often prescribe the type of narration explicitly in their openings and closings. Opening and closing formulae are also of great importance for other reasons relating to narrative structure. Fought notes that presence of terms such as "now," "today," and "we" in curing rites parallel "strikingly the organizational plan of folktales...which commonly end with a brief section returning the action of the narrative to the present and reminding the listeners of what they are expected to notice about the relevance of the tale" (1985:138). The manner in which Ch'orti' narrators initiate and terminate narrations is of principal importance for understanding what Fought calls "cyclical patterns" of Ch'orti' narratives. It is standard practice in Ch'orti' to both introduce the narrative as well as to close it with one of many stock techniques designed for this purpose. All such openings and closings function as framing devices for the narrative itself. In certain cases, however, the frame is more pronounced when the narrator introduces the point of the narration in the first line and follows it with a similar restatement in closing, as this example demonstrates:

Opening:

*K'ani ink'ajti tuk'a anumuy konde a'ru inkojt ch'ajch'*  
I want to relate what happens when a mountain lion roars

Closing:

*Ja'x era anumuy konde a'ru inkojt ch'ajch' tu'yejtz'er e mormor ototob' tya' turo'n.*  
This is what happens when a mountain lion roars near the hamlets where we live.

Different narrators disclose different details at the onset of a narration. Similarly, closings are variable depending upon whether the narrator wants to summarize the tale, review the moral or main point, or opt for a quick ending. As I mentioned above, openings and closings are also significant in that they often contain explicit references to the narrative's genre. In some cases the narrator will carefully specify the type of narrative in *both* the opening and the closing. Note these two examples of this process:

Opening:

*E aras ojroner ayanayan uyojronerir.*  
There are various kinds of joking stories.

Closing:

*B'anixto koche'ra k'a'pa e aras ojroner tama e cha'te' pak'ab'ob' xe' matuk'a uk'ampib'ob'.*  
Thus in this way ended the joking story about the two people who were worthless.

Opening:

*Ayan inte' unumer e k'anti' konde k'ejcha ixin tu'k'ab'te'.*  
There is a story of a frog when it was carried away into the branch of a tree.

Closing:

*Ja'xto era numer e k'anti' tu'k'ab'te' i kocha ja'xir matuk'a uwich' twa' atob'oy ta e ik'ar.*  
Thus is the story of a frog in the branch of a tree and how it had no wings to fly in the air.

The selection process for openings and closings in Ch'orti' narratives is remarkably consistent from narrator to narrator, even from distant hamlets. This homogeneity argues strongly for a vibrant oral narrative tradition throughout a broad geographical space. In

addition, uniformity suggests a narrative consciousness concerning proper textual construction techniques. Of course, many of these opening and closing devices are somewhat universal in cultures throughout the world. However, that Ch'orti' narrators display such a strong tendency to draw from a select group of techniques shows this to be culturally important signifier within their oral tradition. In order to demonstrate the cohesive patterning that is observable in Ch'orti' narratives in terms of openings and closings, I will give examples of the most common forms of each from my working database of 282 Ch'orti' texts. I will provide several examples of each technique from various sources to show the consistency across time and among different speakers. The texts from Fought were recorded in 1964, and so they allow some diachronic observations relating to openings and closings. The texts in Tohom Gutierrez (1999), López de Rosa (1998), Tuyuc and Ramírez (2001), and in my collection were given by dozens of different narrators, thus providing certain checks on distribution and possible personal preferences affecting the results of this analysis. Again, changes were made to orthography (and some typos) in all texts to conform to the orthography chosen for this study. All unspecified texts are from my fieldwork. For ease of reference, I will label each of the following closings styles as Opening A, Opening B, etc.

**Opening A:** *E/u (kaso, k'ajpesyaj, numer, etc)...*  
**The story of the...**

*Ukaso e juj yaja'.*  
The case of that iguana.

*Entonse ukaso e gorrion.*  
Then the case of the hummingbird.

*E na'tanwa'r tama e makchan...*  
The understanding about the rainbow... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:20)

**Opening B: *K'ani ink'ajti inte' (numer)....***  
**I want to/I'm going to relate a (story)...**

*K'ani inche kontar uyojroner tame' t'isim...*  
I am going to tell the story about the ant... (Fought 1972:183-184)

*K'ani ink'ajti inte' niwojroner...*  
I want to tell a story of mine... (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:35)

*K'ani ink'ajti inte' yar chuchu' yojroner tama e numer e Mama' Sapo.*  
I want to tell a little story about the account of Uncle Frog.

*K'ani ink'ajti ub'an ani e kochwa twa' aturanob' e onya'n pak'ab'ob'...*  
I wanted to also tell about how the ancestors lived...

**Opening C: *Che ke'.../che ak'ajna***  
**They say that... (It is said that...)/ they say it is said**

*Che ke' tama inyajr ayan e'yni kora winikob'...*  
They say that once upon a time there was said to be some men... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:41)

*Che ke' ayan ani uxe' winikob' ajxujch'ob'.*  
They say that there were three robbers. (Pérez Martínez 1996:10)

*Che ke' usij yaja' jente e'yni.*  
They say that those buzzards were said to be humans.

*Che ak'ajna ejmach pak'ab' ani...*  
They say it is said that the raccoon was a person... (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:25)

*Che ke' e ijmach jente ani ub'an.*  
It is said that the Raccoon used to be like a person. (Fought 1972:151, 153)

**Opening D: *Ayan inte' (k'ajpesyaj, numer, etc.)...***  
**There is a (story)...**

*Ayan inte' k'ajtsyaj xe' arob'nob' e pak'ab'ob'...*  
There is a story that is said about the people... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:48)

*Ayan ontronte' ojroner tama e Ijmach.*  
There is another story about the Raccoon. (Fought 1972:151)

*Ayan inte' unumer e k'anti' konde k'ejcha ixin tu'k'ab'te'...*  
There is the story of the frog when it was carried away into the branch of a tree...

**Opening E: *Ninoyob' oni'x uk'ajtyo'b' / uya'ryenob'...***  
**Long ago my grandparents related...**

*Ninoyob' oni'x kay uya'ryenob'...*  
My grandparents long ago would tell me...

*Uya'ryonob' kanoyob' ixni'x...*  
Our grandparents told us long, long ago... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:45)

*Ninoy uk'ajti ani takaron kochwa' k'otoy utajwi e tumin upixam Jwan...*  
My grandfather used to tell us how it came to be that his brother-in-law Juan got rich...  
(López de Rosa 1998:30)

**Opening F: *Tanyajr... / Tama inyajr / ayan inyajr / ayan tanyajr***  
**Once upon a time.../ there was once a time ...**

*Tanyajr e Katata' kay ayi ub'ijnu ke' mab'amb'an kochwa turob' e ixiktak.*  
Once upon a time God was, they say, thinking about how the women were living was wrong.

*Tama inyajr che ke' ani inkojt yar tz'i'.*  
Once upon a time they say there was a little dog. (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:14)

*Tanyajr e k'anti' uya're e Joj...*  
Once upon a time the frog said to the Heron... (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:25)

*Ayan ayi inyajr numuy tama e mora'r Ok'em...*

There was a time when it happened in the hamlet of Oken... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:70)

*Ayan tanyajr tama inte' otot oni'x...*

Once upon a time in a house long ago... (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:11)

**Opening G: *K'ani ink'ajti xe' u'mb'i ani ak'ajna... / u'mb'i ak'ajna...***

**I want to relate something I heard told... / I have heard it told...**

*K'ani ink'ajti unumer xe' ak'ajnato ani oni'x...*

I want to relate the story that was still told long ago...

*K'ani ink'ajti xe' u'mb'i ani ak'ajna i ke' tara keter ta nijor...*

I want to relate what I heard told and that is recorded in my mind...

*K'ani ink'ajti inte' ojroner xe' ak'ajna oni'x...*

I want to relate a story that was told of old...

*Ne'n u'mb'i ak'ajna...*

I have heard it told ... (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:21)

**Opening H: *Ixni'x... / Tarix tyempo/e jab'***

**Long ago... / many years ago**

*Ixni'x che ke' ayan inkojt winik xe' ayan ani me'yra uyarak'...*

Long ago they say that there was a man who had lots of animals... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:36)

*Tarix e jab' ayan inte' winik...*

Many years ago there was a man...

*Ixni'x ayan ani e nukte'...*

Long ago there was a forest... (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:38)

*Ixni'x ak'ajna ayan e pak'ab'ob'...*

Long ago it is said there were people... (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:11)

*Ixni'x che ke' ayan ani inte' yar chokem sitz'b'ir...*

Long ago they say there was an orphan boy... (Pérez Martínez 1996:13)

**Opening I:** *Uk'ajtyo'b' e pak'ab'ob' tama...*

**People tell about...**

*Uk'ajtyob' e pak'ab'ob' tama una'tanwa'r inkojt ixik xe' wa'r b'ut'ur...*

The people tell of a story of a woman who was pregnant... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:21)

*Uk'ajti e pak'ab'ob' tama e maxtak xe' a'ru me'yra....*

The people tell about the child who cries a lot... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:11)

**Opening J:** *Tama ajk'in...*

**One day...**

*Tamante' ajk'in uxkojt winikob' war ukojkob'...*

One day three men were watching over... (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:19)

**Opening L:** *Ak'ajna ke'...*

**It is told that...**

*Ak'ajna ke' ayan ani inte' winik xe' ajchonma'r ani.*

It is told that there was a man who was a vender. (Martínez 1996:19)

*Ak'ajna ke' ayan ani ko'ra anxerob'...*

It is told that there were some angels... (Pérez Martínez 1996:25)

While I have selected the most common openings for this summary, it should be noted that there are several other less-encountered openings that could have been included. It will be noticed immediately that there is some overlap in certain cases. There are several reasons for this. The crucial point to make here is that these are simply *observable* openings, not strict classifications or categories. Instead, subtle narrative directions can

be represented through the use of one or more of these opening lines. Indeed, the constant mixing of these 'pseudo-classifications' shows them to be overlapping, not mutually exclusive. Narrators commonly combine different forms of the openings presented above since there seem to be no restrictions whatsoever on doing so. It boils down to the discretion of the narrator more than any other single factor. So, while each of these forms is itself standardized to some extent, variations are regular and allowable according to oratory caprice.

All of the openings described above are for the most part equally frequent. I have noticed, however, that some narrators whom I have heard recount many different narrations prefer certain openings over others. Opening B appears in printed literature (many of the printed narratives were written first, not recorded and then transcribed) with great frequency. In my data Opening B also figures prominently. There is a noticeable difference in usage in this form between natural and less-natural narrative circumstances. Opening B is used less frequently in natural performance situations, i.e., when the linguist is not eliciting the story directly. In fact, I have only heard Opening B used a few times in a natural performance of a narrative. Since most oral texts found in the literature today from Maya (and other) groups are the result of direct elicitation and not actual performances in natural situations, there is possibility that both openings and closings could suffer some alteration (if the analysis were based only on naturally-occurring narratives) (cf. Bauman 1984:8). In most cases, however, the representative openings shown above accurately reflect what is used in both natural and less-natural narrative situations.

## 2.10. Narrative Closings

Narrative openings and closings set up what Babcock calls an "interpretive frame" that serves to "tell us this is a play, this is performance, or more specifically, this is such and such type of story and should be understood and judged accordingly" (1984:72).

Closings have additional importance inasmuch as they are the narrator's last chance to emphasize or reiterate certain aspects of the narration. Closings also represent a final moment to display one's oral skill in bringing the story to a smooth and controlled end, not an abrupt termination of the narrative. In Ch'orti' narratives, there are a number of standard endings techniques employed by speakers from all Ch'orti'-speaking regions.

Again, for ease of reference, I will label each of the following closings styles as Closing A, Closing B, etc.

**Closing A:**    *E (ojroner, numer, etc.) ira ja'x...*  
                  **This (story) was...**

*E ojroner ira ja'x uyojroner e K'ech'uj...*

This story was the story of the *Siwanaba*... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:70)

*E numer ira ja'x xe' numuy oni'x.*

This story was what happened long ago. (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:55)

**Closing B:**    *Ja'x era e (numer, etc)...*  
                  **That was the (story) of...**

*Ja'x era uyojroner e Jwan Recinos ye' t'ur.*

That was the story of Juan Recinos and the rabbit. (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:63)

*Ja'x era una'tanwa'rir e tokar.*

That was the understanding about the clouds. (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:53)

*Ja'xtaka era lo ke' inche contar.*

That was just what I related.

*Ja'x era anumuy konde a'ru inkojt ch'ajch' tu'yejtz'er e mormor ototob' tya' turo'n.*

That what happens when a mountain lion roars near the hamlets where we live.

*I ja'xixto e'ra ak'ajna tama unumer e chijchan xe' uk'ajtyob' kanoyob'.*

And that is still what is told in the story of the Chijchan that my grandparents told.

(López de Roza 1998:28)

**Closing C: *Ak'a'pa e (numer, etc)...***

**The (story) ends...**

*Ak'a'pa e lajb'a'r ye' ojroner tama e winik xe' uyuch'i me'yra sa'.*

The music ends and the story of the man who drank lots of atol.

(Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:45)

*Tara ak'a'pa e ojroner ira.*

Here ends this story. (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:48)

*Tara k'a'pa e ojroner.*

Here ended the story. (Pérez Martínez 1996:13)

*K'a'pa e chitam taka e juj...*

The (story about) the pig and the iguana ended...

*K'a'pa e k'ub'seyaj kocha e onya'n pak'ab' ucho'b' ani.*

The belief about how the ancestors used to do things ended.

**Closing D: *B'an...***

**Thus...**

*B'an ub'ijnusyaj e pak'ab'ob' tya' turo'n.*

Thus is the thinking of the people where we live. (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:18)

*B'an uk'ajtyob' ejsto kone'r.*

But so people tell it to this day. (Fought 1972:208, 211)

*B'an era e numer tama e chinam tya' turo'n.*

Thus is this story about the town where we live. (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:13)

*B'an ani uk'ub'seyajob'...*  
Thus were the beliefs of...

*B'an k'a'pa uyojroner e sitz'b'ir.*  
Thus ended the story of the boy. (Pérez Martínez 1996:19)

*B'an ani ke'onya'n pak'ab' matuk'a unumse ub'o'b'...*  
Thus it was that the ancestors did not suffer...

**Closing E:**     *B'an koche'ra /B'anixto koche'ra*  
                  **Thus in this way...**

*B'an koche'ra ak'a'pa e ojroner...*  
Thus in this way the story ends... (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:37)

*B'an koche'ra k'a'pa e ojroner.*  
Thus in this way the story ended. (Martínez 1996:10)

*B'an koche'ra sutpa ajtumin e Xwan...*  
Thus in this way Juan became rich... (López de Roza 1998:31)

*B'an koche'ra e k'ub'esyaj xe' ne'n k'echer nimen.*  
Thus in this way was the belief that I carry with me (i.e. I remember).

*B'an koche'ra k'otoy usatparir e b'ajxan pak'ab' ira umen e mab'amb'anir...*  
Thus in this way the destruction of the first people came about by the wrongdoing...  
(Tohom Gutierrez 1999:25)

**Closing F:**     *Ja'xto...*  
                  **That is ...**

*I entonses ja'xto ucho'b' ani e jente.*  
And so that is what the people used to do.

*Ja'xto ukaso e Tio Mapache.*  
That is the case of Uncle Raccoon.

*Ja'xto era numer e k'anti' tu'k'ab'te' i kocha ja'xir matuk'a uwich' twa' atob'oy ta e ik'ar.*  
That is the story of the frog in the branch of a tree and how he didn't have wings to fly in the air.

*Ja'xto era ukonta yusij.*

And that is the story of the buzzard. (Fought 1972:179, 183)

**Closing G: Resultative statement**

*Sujta miko che i ketpa mono.*

They were changed into monkeys they say and they remained monkeys.

*Por mal obedesido aktano'b' ayi taka e tujtuj kosa.*

For disobedience they were left they say with foul smelling things.

*Kay usajka ko'ra ko'ra pero ma'chi utajwi.*

He was searching for him everywhere but he could not find him.

*I unumse ub'a koche'ra porke' ma'chi ob'yan...*

And he suffered because he did not obey...

**Closing H: *I por eso..*  
And that is why...**

*I por eso kone'r e jente tya' uwirob' turu umujr e t'isim...*

And that is why people today where they see an anthill... (Fought 1972:184, 185)

*I por eso kone'r no'n kab'akre twa' kak'uxi e nar tzijtzi b'ajk'atix kasutpa koyote.*

And this is why we are afraid of eating raw corn because we risk becoming coyotes.  
(Fought 1972:155, 157)

*I por eso che e jente ke' e K'ech'uj b'ak'axb'ak'a axana por ke'...*

And that is why people say the *Siwanaba* walks backwards because... (Fought 1972:68, 73)

**Closing I: *K'otoy*  
It came about that...**

*Entonses ya k'otoy ukaso e t'ur xe' ta'k'wan ani...*

So there came about the story of the rabbit that was stuck....

*Ya k'otoy e istorya e konejo...*

There came about the story of the rabbit...

*B'anixto k'otoy k'a'pa e winik xe' k'otoy ani awayan taka uwixka'r...*

Thus came the end of the man who used to come to sleep with the wife of... (Fought 1972:233, 240)

*Koche'ra k'otoy satpa e winik xe' Miguel uk'ab'a'.*

Thus in this way it came about that the man named Miguel disappeared.

*Yixto k'otoy tama inte' utja...*

And with that it came about that in the spring... (Tohom Gutierrez 1999:10)

*B'an koche'ra k'otoy sajto'b' e b'ajxanob' t'oxma'r era xe' uche e Katata'.*

Thus in this way the destruction of the first litter that God made came about.

In many instances, closings in Ch'orti' narratives take the form of declarative statements, "That was the story of the rabbit and the coyote" (cf. Closings A, B and F). Closing C, while sometimes rather abrupt in performance, is fairly common in all types of narrative situations. While Closings D and E could have been collapsed into a single category of closings that begin with *b'an*, or 'thus', I separated them since *b'an koch'era*, 'thus it is', is so formulaic and common. Under the rubric of Closing D, I have included all other statements that begin with *b'an*. Closings D and E offer a smooth summation statement that 'wraps up' the narrative. Closings G, H, and I are closely related as resultative statements that explain what happened as a result of the events described in the story. Closing G is the more terse and matter-of-fact of the three. Closing H, "And that is why...", is somewhat more expressive than Closing G in focusing the listener on the connection between the events of the story and what happened because of them. Closing I is used to reiterate the fact that the point of the story was to explain how something came to be the way it is. The verb in Closing I, *k'otoy*, literally translates as "it arrived," but in these contexts it means 'it came about' or 'it came to be'. Irrespective of some

tendencies and general clustering, there seems to be no strict correlation between genre and which closing is employed. Therefore, openings and closings in Ch'orti' narratives are not bound or restricted to certain genres, but instead, as part of a well-established tradition, are freely selected according to the whim of the narrator.

### **2.11. Narrative Organizing Particles**

The storyline in many Ch'orti' narratives is segmented through the use of discourse particles. Sometimes known as "quotative" particles, these discourse markers serve to identify moments of direct address and are crucial in establishing the narrative frame of the text. The quotative particle *che*, 'he/she/it said,' in Ch'orti' is probably a derived form that developed from a once-productive verb *\*che*, 'to say' that no longer exists in Ch'orti' outside of the third person. This quotative particle *che* must be carefully distinguished from two similarly shaped grammatical elements. The first is the emphatic particle *che*, 'thus it is', a possible homophonous root, discussed earlier. The second is the evidential particle *che*, 'they say', that is repeated throughout certain narrative genres. Evidentials are grammatical particles that appear in third-person contexts and indicate the speaker's source of information (Curnow 2001:1). More specifically, evidentials are overt grammatical indicators that the speaker is reporting a non-witnessed action, not something personally experienced. While there is still considerable debate on the issue of evidentials and implied truth condition or non-truth condition (cf. Ifantidou 2001), what is clear is that evidentials distance the speaker from being accountable for the information contained in the statement. The evidential *che* in Ch'orti' is a non-conjugatable particle

that, depending on aspectual context, means 'they say' and 'it is said', both expressing that the speaker is simply reporting what they have heard. We have seen the use of *che* in the above in Opening C, "*Che ke'*...", "They say that....," where it functioned as a means of stating up front that the story about to be told is a non-firsthand account. In this section, I want to treat both the evidential *che* as well as the quotative particle *che* in the context of Ch'orti' narratives.

Oral traditions are commonly stories passed down from generation to generation. Their original author or creator is often not known inasmuch as they are ancient stories far removed from the present. In other cases, the time reference may be quite recent (as with some legends), such as reporting a sighting of the *Chijchan* by one's neighbor the week earlier. Excluding personal narratives and personal experience, what is common to most narrations is a non-firsthand telling of the events. By their very nature, then, many oral traditions are reported speech. Not surprisingly, grammatical elements (evidentials) fill the function of distinguishing reported speech from firsthand experience. Evidentials serve to disavow the speaker from any accountability as to the truthfulness of the narrative. Maxwell notes that in Chuj a similar particle, '-*ab'*, 'they say', is used to "weaken the assertive force" of a given statement (1997:100). Ch'orti' has several different grammatical forms that are used to set the narrative off as a non-firsthand event: *che*, *ayi*, and *e'yni*. Each of these will be examined in order starting with a more detailed discussion of *che*.

## 2.12. Evidentials in Ch'orti' Narratives

The evidential particle *che* is one of the most frequent evidentials in all genres of Ch'orti' speech. Note its use in the following sentence: *E ochemch'ak o'choy yeb'ar uyejch'akir o'r uyok e sitz' i **che** ke' ak'uxun me'yra*, "The flea enters under the toenails of the boy and **they say** it really hurts." The speaker makes it clear that he has not experienced the pain when this flea crawls under the toenail; he is simply reporting what he has heard. Fought offers two perspectives from which one can interpret what he calls the "narrative particle" (evidential) *che*. He writes (Fought 1976:234):

The form *che* 'he said it' or 'it is said'... can be said to invoke the authority of an anonymous past narrator (the person who told the story to the person who is telling it to you), or just 'people'. It was that past narrator who said it this way; so I too shall say it.

In this passage Fought makes the important observation that the *che* particle may simply deflect responsibility for the story's authenticity back to the person who told it to the present narrator, not always to an unknown, unspecified "they." In this way, according to Urban, evidentials can also "contribute to a feeling of continuity" within a culture (1991:80). While this certainly applies to some contexts, the vast majority of cases of *che* likely refer to the more general 'they say', i.e., 'people say'. Either way, the purpose is the same: to distance the narrator from taking any overt stance as to the truth of the narrative (cf. Urban 1991:80). In Ch'orti' storytelling, the evidential *che* is sprinkled throughout the narrative. In the following story titled "The Rabbit, the Coyote, and the Tar Scarecrow," a version of the "Tar Baby" story of Western lore, which is very

common in many different Mayan languages (cf. Peñalosa 1996:53), the particle *che* is used repeatedly to emphasize that the narrator is only telling what he has heard, not what he has seen firsthand.

*K'ani inche kontar otronte' chiste tama e t'ur i e b'obj' i e pak'b'irch'ab'i. Che [1] ke' kay upak'i ko'ra syan sandiya tu'chor. I kwando kay k'a'wan che [1] ke' ma'chi aktana usandiya umen e t'ur. Kwando kay nejpa xe' kay tak'a, atza'y uwira che [1] galanik e nukir sandiya k'ob'irik ch'u'r a'xin. Koche ya axana e t'ur kay uyori ixin e syan sandiya. Kada rato ak'otoy a'xin umak'i e sandiya. Upasi imb'ijk unak' e sandiya che [1]. Uyose uk'ab' a'xin ja'xir che [1] i ak'a'pa umak'i uta' e sandiya. I sutpa uch'ab'u otronyajr usuti uch'ab'u e sandiya che [1] komo ke' matuk'a ukojko. Kwando ak'otoy uwira usandiya uchape ayi [2] ke' ch'a'r usandiya interti'. I kwando a'xin k'ani uch'ujch'i e sandiya i k'ani umak'i, uwira ke' tojb'en upat. Entonses uche admirar che [1]. Cha'yi [3], "¿Tuk'a ukojko nisandiya ke' matuk'a uta'? Tuno'r tob'entix upat i ma'chi utajwi. Che [1] ke' tuk'a umen war ache'na yaja'. Tuk'a umen war ak'ujxa usandiya. B'anto ya' che [1]. Entonses luego che [1] yo'pa ubibesa ja'xir. Cha'yi [3], "K'ani inche inte' yar prueba." I kay turan che [1] upak'i inte' noxi' ch'ab'i. Uwab'u al medyo uchor usandiya. I kwando k'otoy e t'ur yaja' otronyajr uwira ke' wa'r e pak'b'irch'ab'i. Wa'r e noxi' aparato. Uwira ke' negru't. Entonses cha'yi [3], uya're e pak'b'irch'ab'i, "¿Tuk'a k'ani ne't tara?" cha'yi [3]. "¡Ne't lok'en tara!" cha'yi [3]. "¡Kiki!" cha'yi [3] e pak'b'irch'ab'i. I e noxi' pak'b'irch'ab'i ma'chi anijki ty'a' wa'r che [1]. I ja'xir war ak'ijna uwira che [1]. Cha'yi [3], pwes uya're e pak'b'irch'ab'i, "¡Lok'en tara porke' si no, ne'n inwajk'e't. Inwajk'e't inte' aporaso." Ma'chi ojron e noxi' aparato uyub'i che [1]. Tanto war uk'ayi che [1] uyajk'u inte' aparato tu'k'ab'. I kwando uyajk'u e paraso tu'k'ab' e noxi' pak'b'irch'ab'i yaja', ya ketpa ch'uwan uk'ab'. Ta'k'wan uk'ab' ja'xir. Intakaixto aru ya' che [1]. Cha'yi [3], uya're uch'ab'i, "¡Aktane'n ombre! ¡Aktane'n!" cha'yi [3]. "Aktan nik'ab' porke' jay ma'chi awakta ente' nik'ab'," che, "inwajk'e't tama ente' nik'ab'." I e noxi' pak'b'irch'ab'i che [1] ma'chi ojron. K'oyran aru ja'xir sutpa uyajk'u tama ente' uk'ab' otronyajr. I kwando uyajk'u tama ente' uk'ab' otronyajr, che [1] ya ketpa ta'k'wan uk'ab' otronyajr tama e ch'ab'i. Mas a'ru. Entonses che [1] ke' war uya're twa' aktana i ma'chi aktana. "¡Aktane'n!" cha'yi [3]. "Porke' jay ma'chi awakte'n," cha'yi [3], "inwajk'e't inte' apatada" cha'yi [3]. Uyajk'u otronyajr e apatada tu'yok che [1]. Ya ta'k'wan uyok. Kachpi'x uk'ab' i inte' uyok. Cha'yi [3], "¡Aktane'n! ¡Aktane'n!" cha'yi [3]. "Si ne'n k'ani i'xin" cha'yi [3]. "Jay ma'chi, inwajk'e't otronte'" cha'yi [3]. Sutpa uyajk'u tama inte' uyok che [1] i k'a'pa ta'k'wan uk'ab' i ta'k'wan uyok. Tzajtixixto u't ya' tya' goroj ch'u'r che [1]. Pero ja'xir che [1] ke' ayan ub'ijnusyaj. En eso che [1] ke' yi'x ak'otoy inkojt b'obj'. Cha'yi [3] uya're, "I ne't, ¿Tuk'a anumse*

*ab'a tarex ch'a'aret? ¿Tuk'a anumse ab'a tarex," **cha'yi [3]**, Mama?" **cha'yi [3]**. "Aaa. Ne'n tara war inch'ujksan ko'ra" **cha'yi [3]**. "Ne'n intzayi ch'u'ren tara" **cha'yi [3]**. "Jay k'ani awira e tzayer ub'an," **cha'yi [3]**, "lok'esne'n tya' ch'u'ren ira," **cha'yi [3]**, "i inch'u'b'e't ub'an tara" **cha'yi [3]**. "I entonses al bwen rato," **cha'yi [3]**, "twa' awira e tzayer" **cha'yi [3]**. "Bweno" **cha'yi [3]** e b'obj'. Ukerejb'a lok'oy e t'ur. I kwando ukerejb'a lok'oy **che [1]**. Entonses yaja' ta'k'wan ja'xir aktana umen e t'ur. Ya ketpa ta'k'wan **che [1]**. Kwando al bwen rato yi'x ak'otoy e ajyum sandiya. Entonses e ajyum sandiya atza'y uwira ke' ya tak'ar ch'u'r e nixi' b'obj' tama e ch'ab'i. "Ne't ajchi e ya'x," **cha'yi [3]**, "xe' ma'chi awakta nisandiya" **cha'yi [3]**. "Pero kone'r si atoyi" **cha'yi [3]**. I kay jajpna jajtz'a e b'obj' tamante' te' jajpa aleñyaso intaki'ta'ru ya' e b'obj' ya **che [1]**. I kocha twa' alok'oy ajni kachpa tama e ch'ab'i. Ya kachar ch'u'r. Entonses ya k'otoy ukaso e t'ur xe' ta'k'wan ani. Pero ma'chi jajtz'a ja'xir. Ketpa b'antaka intaka uk'uxi e sandiya. Otronte' uchonpati uyakta i ja'x e b'obj' tojma upater e t'ur ja'x ukuchi e syan barejonaso este tara ma'chi inna'ta jay ma'chi chamay o chamay umen e syan leñaso.*

I want to relate another humorous tale about the rabbit and the coyote and the tar scarecrow. **They say [1]** that he was planting many watermelons in his field. And when they began to bear fruit **they say [1]** that he never left his watermelons because of the rabbit. When they began to get near ripe and dry up, he was happy to see, **they say [1]**, how beautiful were the large watermelons, how big they sat on the vine. Since the rabbit was walking there it was digging up lots of watermelons. Every few minutes he arrives to eat up the watermelons. He made a small opening in the side of the watermelon **they say [1]**. He stuck his paw in **they say [1]** and finished eating the fruit of the watermelon. And it was put back again, he put back the watermelon **they say [1]** since there was no one guarding them. When he arrives to see his watermelons he thought **they say [2]** that his watermelons were whole. And when he was going to pick the watermelons and he wanted to eat them, he saw that they were hollow inside. So he marveled **they say [1]**. **They say he said [3]**, "What was guarding my watermelons that have not fruit? All of they are already hollow and I can't find the fruit. **They say [1]** that it was because of what was being done there. Because the watermelons were being eaten. That was it indeed **they say [1]**. So soon **they say [1]** a thought occurred to him. **They say he said [3]**, "I am going to conduct a small test." And he, **they say [1]**, was erecting a large tar scarecrow. He set it up in the middle of his watermelon field. And when that rabbit arrived again he saw the tar scarecrow standing there. "What are you doing here?" **they say he said [3]**. "You, get down here!" **they say he said [3]**. "Come here!" **they say he said [3]** to the tar scarecrow. And the large tar scarecrow didn't move from where he was standing **they say [1]**. And he was angry seeing this **they say [1]**. **They say he said [3]**, well, he said to the tar scarecrow, "Come down here because if you don't, I will punch you. I give you a punch." The large apparatus didn't speak, he couldn't

**they say [1]**. After scolding him **they say [1]** he gave the apparatus a blow with his hand. And when he hit him that large tar scarecrow with his hand, his hand got stuck there. His hand was stuck. He just cried out **they say [1]**. They say that he said to the scarecrow, "Hey, let me go!" "Let me go!" **they say he said [3]**. "Let my hand go because if you don't let the other hand go," he said, "I'll hit you with the other hand." And the large tar scarecrow, **they say [1]**, didn't speak. He became tired of yelling and hit him again with the other hand. And when he hit him again with the other hand, **they say [1]** that he was ordering it to be let go and it was not let go. "Let me go!" **they say he said [3]**. "Because of you don't let me go," **they say he said [3]**, "I will give you a kick" they say he said. He gave him a kick again with his foot **they say [1]**. His foot was stuck there. His hands and one foot were no disabled. **they say he said [3]**, "Let me go! Let me go!" **they say he said [3]**. "You are indeed going to free me" **they say he said [3]**. "If not, I will kick you again" **they say he said [3]**. He kicked him again with one of his feet **they say [1]** and his hands ended up stuck and his feet ended up stuck. He was now extremely sad where he was hanging ball-shaped **they say [1]**. But he, **they say [1]** had a thought. Just then they say that there now came a coyote. **They say he said [3]** to him, "Hey you, what's happening to you here? What's happening to you here," **they say he said [3]**, "Uncle?" **they say he said [3]**. "Oh, I'm just here having a great time" **they say he said [3]**. "I'm really happy just hanging here" **they say he said [3]**. "If you want to be happy too," **they say he said [3]**, "free me from where I'm hanging," **they say he said [3]**, "and I'll hang you here also" **they say he said [3]**. "And so just for a moment," **they say he said [3]**, "so that you can be happy" **they say he said [3]**. "Fine" **they say the coyote said [3]**. He carried him on his shoulders and freed the rabbit. There he remained stuck **they say [1]**. Soon thereafter, the owner of the watermelons arrives there. Then the owner of the watermelons is pleased to see that the big coyote is stuck there hanging on the scarecrow. "You are the one after all," **they say he said [3]**, "who wouldn't leave my watermelons alone" **they say he said [3]**. "But now you are really going to pay" **they say he said [3]**. And the coyote was grabbed and struck with a stick to the point that the coyote was howling there **they say [1]**. And how was going to get free since he was tied up around the scarecrow. There he was hanging bound. So that is how the story of the rabbit that was stuck came to be.

In this short story, the evidential *che* was used 22 times in a Ch'orti' text of 624 words.

*Che*, therefore, accounts for 3.5% of words in the text. I selected this text at random from my collection in order to show rate of occurrence in an average text. Several other texts utilize *che* more often than the above story. I also randomly selected (from appropriate

genres) a single text from six different narrators in order to test the frequency of usage of *che*. In percentages, *che* accounted for between 2-4.5 percent of the words of these six texts, or an average of 2.8 percent. In one case within a particularly long text, *che* appeared 88 times. It can be deduced from this that Ch'orti' narrators, on average, will use the evidential particle *che* alone once about every 35 words in a given narration. (See below for a detailed summary of all evidentials and their relationship to specific genres).

Some confusion can arise in determining usage due to the existence of a related form *cha'yi*. In the above text, I have marked with "[3]" all occurrences of the compound *cha'yi*. The interpretation of this term is crucial to our discussion of evidentials and quotative particles. The difficulty stems from some degree of uncertainty surrounding the functional breakdown of this compound. *Cha'yi* consists of two separate particles, *che* and *ayi*. Through natural phonological processes in Ch'orti', the final vowel of *che* assimilates with the initial vowel of *ayi* resulting in a reduplicated /a/ medial vowel. As I have already mentioned, *che* has three possible meanings in Ch'orti': 1) an affirmative particle, or 2) a quotative particle, or 3) or an evidential particle. Which is represented in the compound *cha'yi*? First, it should be noted that Fought interprets the origin of this compound differently than I do. Fought believes that *cha'yi* derives from an assimilation of *che* 'he said' (i.e., quotative particle) and the Spanish term *allí*, 'there' (Fought 1985:141). I, on the other hand, view *cha'yi* as a combination of *che* (I will offer a suggestion as to which meaning of *che* below) and the evidential particle *ayi* or *ayi'* (an allomorphic form) meaning 'he said'. In terms of etymology, the evidential *ayi/ayi'* is the result of a historical development from the root *ab'*, 'to report', found in Tojolob'al and

Ch'olan languages.<sup>29</sup> The fact that both *ayi* and *ayi'* are commonly used in Ch'orti' today strongly suggests the earliest form is *ayi'*. The Ch'orti' regularly translate *cha'yi* as "dice que dijo," or "they say he said." Etymologically and semantically, *cha'yi* is precisely the same compound as the Chuj *chi-ab'*, 'said, they say', where *chi* is the quotative verb 'say' and *'ab'* is 'report' (Maxwell 1997:100). While the evidential particle *che* marks the discourse as being non-experienced firsthand (i.e., 'they say'), *cha'yi* incorporates a quotative element into this compound. The question is then which morpheme is responsible for which meaning within *cha'yi*. The element *che* could be taken as the evidential ('they say') and thus *ayi* have to stand as the quotative particle 'he said'.<sup>30</sup> This interpretation is problematic in that, as far as I know, the particle *ayi* does not function as a quotative particle, rather only as an evidential. This being the case, the *che* of *cha'yi* must be the quotative particle and *ayi* the evidential. Note the use of *ayi* as an evidential in the following sentences:

Example 1:

*Ch'akon ayi e winik taka e machit..*

**They say** someone killed him with a machete.

Example 2:

*Ayan ayi e morwa'r kone'r.*

**They say** that there is a meeting today.

Example 3:

*Chokmayan ayi e ixik. Chojka ayi ixin.*

**They say** that they gave the woman over in marriage. They say she was given in marriage and left.

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<sup>29</sup> Nora England has also suggested the possibility the reportative *ab'* originates in the root *ab'* 'to hear', as is found in many Mayan languages today (personal communication 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Or, alternatively, *ayi* may have some function as a 'hearsay' particle.

Example 4:

*Entonses atza'y **ayi'** uwiro'b' e sitz'.*

So **they say** they were happy to see the boy.

Example 5:

*De ayi, de repente **che** uchamse **ayi** e masa' **che** uk'eche **ayi** a'xin **che**.*

From there, quickly, **they say**, he killed, **they say**, deer, **they say**, and carried them, **they say**, away **they say**.

*Ayi* is clearly functioning as an evidential particle in all of these contexts. Note especially the high frequency of use of both *che* and *ayi* in Example 5, where nearly every other word is an evidential particle. Also, in the preceding story about the scarecrow, *ayi* as an evidential appeared once (marked as [2]) in the text. It is difficult to draw a clear line of distinction in usage between *che* and *ayi*. In many cases they appear in the same syntactic position and apparently function similarly. For example, they both appear following verbs, adverbs, and in sentence-final position. It is possible, however, to make some division in usage along the following lines. *Ayi* most regularly follows verbs and grammatical particles. *Che* is significantly more common after nouns. *Ayi* is never used as the initial lexeme in a sentence, whereas *che* as a quotative particle can be. *Ayi* common follows adverbial postclitics, such as *-to*, *-ix*, and *-ixto* whereas the evidential *che* does not. The evidential *ayi* commonly follows all forms of negative particles whereas *che* does not. *Ayi* seems to occur more commonly after adjectives than *che*. This evidence would suggest, then, that *ayi* and *che* cannot be considered synonymous terms in usage.

Returning to the question of the etymology of *cha'yi*, we can show conclusively that *che* in *cha'yi* is the quotative particle by examining a few other relevant contexts.

Note the following uses of *ayi* in these excerpts from the story of the *Kumix Anxer*:

Example 1:

*Kwando k'a'pa uk'asi luego chekta e sitz' che. Uya're ayi', "Ombre, ne't ijo," cha'yi. "¿Tuk'a twa' ab'asi e tun ach'ab'u?" cha'yi.*

When she finished breaking [her tooth] the boy soon appeared they say. **They say** she said to him, "Hey, you son," they say he said, "Why did you wrap up the stone and put it there?" they say she said.

Example 2:

*Pero ayan inyajr che uya're ayi' utu' e k'ech'uj, "Nana," cha'yi...*

But once upon a time **they say** that he said to his mother the *Siwanaba*, "Mom," they say he said...

In the Example 1, the evidential *che* appears at the end of the first line. The next line begins by setting up a direct quote, but not with the particle *cha'yi* as is usually the case. Here the transitive verb *uya're* ('she said it') appears followed by the particle *ayi'*. In this context, the verb *uya're* is clearly assuming the function of the quotative particle 'she said' which leaves only *ayi'* to fulfill the role of the evidential 'they say'. Therefore, being synonymous with *cha'yi*, 'they say she said', the narrator chose to use *uya're ayi'*, 'they say she said' to introduce this direct quote. Note carefully that what follows the quote in the first and second examples is a restatement using *cha'yi*, confirming their equivalence. Example 2 contains precisely the same structure and use of *ayi'*. Therefore, the ubiquitous compound particle *cha'yi*, 'they say that he/she said', consists of the quotative particle *che*, 'he/she said', and the evidential particle *ayi/ayi'*, 'they say'. In the above story about the scarecrow, the particle *ayi*, both within and outside of the compound

*cha'yi*, appears 32 times. In this example text, then, the narrator used evidentials (both *che* and *ayi*) 44 times, accounting for 8.6 percent of the words in the text. Cast in this light, nearly one out of every nine words in this story are evidential particles. This remarkable frequency of use clearly locates this grammatical phenomenon as one of the most important structural elements within Ch'orti' narratives. Furthermore, it accentuates the overt need to distance the narrator from associating himself with truth-content of the narrative. The use of the evidentials *che* and *ayi* is not meant to imply the narrator necessarily disbelieves the events within the narrative, but only that he or she is not openly taking a position either way. In this way I think the whole question of truth-content and degrees of narrator's certainty can be answered, at least as far as the Ch'orti' are concerned (cf. Frajzyngier 1985). Having heard more than one hundred performances of oral narratives by the Ch'orti', I can say that Ch'orti' narrators are very often preoccupied with making sure the audience knows they are not stating categorically that these events are true or not. On many occasions the narrator would give a disclaimer at either the beginning or the end of the story explicitly stating he was not committing himself to the truthfulness of the story. Fought also noted this in from his experience working with Ch'orti' narrators. He notes that this ending formula "typically comes near the...end of tale, presumably as a means of claiming for the narrative the authority of the old bearers of tradition, and then disclaiming personal responsibility when retelling the story" (Fought 1976:235). Let me illustrate this with some examples of these text-final disclaimers from Fought's collection (I preserve his translations but alter his orthography) and one text-initial case from my data:

Example 1:

*I por eso ma'chi ink'ub'se jay berda.*

And that is why I don't know if it's true. (Fought 1972:248, 254)

Example 2:

*Pero ne'n ma'chi inwira.*

But I didn't see it. (Fought 1972:240)

Example 3:

*Pero ne'n ma'chi inwira kay tekerna e winik umen uyetwinkir...I por eso ma'chi ink'ub'se jay berda.*

But I didn't see when the man began being kicked by his fellow-man...And that is why I don't know if it is true. (Fought 1972:219, 225)

Example 4:

*Pero ne'n me'rato inmani e semita imb'a'xe twa' inwira jay berda ink'anch'ojres.*

But I have not yet bought a loaf and cursed it to see if I would truly turn it yellow. (Fought 1972:208, 211)

Example 5:

*I tamarera ma'chi kana'ta jay berda...*

And because of this we do not know if it is true... (Fought 1972:201, 204)

Example 6:

*Pero no'n kocha ma'chi katajwi, ma'chi kan'ata jay verda ayan utumin. Pero e jente b'an k'ajtyob' ke' e chan mey'ra utumin.*

But we, since we haven't found it, we don't know if it is true that it has money. But people tell it so, that the snake has much money. (Fought 1972:120, 124).

Example 7:

*Pero no'n ma'chi kana'ta jay b'an berda. Pero e jente b'an uk'ajtyob'.*

But we do not know if it is true. But so people tell it. (Fought 1972:109, 113)

Example 8:

*Pero no'n ma irato kawira kocha, ma tya' katajwi, ma'chi kana'ta turu usuy yok. Pero b'an ak'ajna umen e jente ti'n uwiro'b'ix.*

But we didn't see him; we haven't met him, and we don't know where his heels are. But so it is said among the people who have seen him. (Fought 1972:70, 74)

Example 9:

*Entonses ayan kisas ya' verdad, pero ne'n ma'chi'x inwiru't kocha'ni e chijchan oni'x ani.*

So maybe it is indeed true, but I have never seen anything like the Chijchans there used to be long ago.

Notice that in all of these examples the narrator specifies that it is because he has not witnessed or experienced these events that he cannot vouch for their authenticity. Again, this is not to imply disbelief on the part of the narrator, but neutrality. Truth, in certain genres of Ch'orti' narrative, then, is left up to the listener to determine. As for the narrator, arguing for or against the validity of the narrative is not the issue, only making sure that the audience knows the narrator is not passing judgment one way or the other. Disclaimers, therefore, function in tandem with evidentials to create a neutral frame of discourse with respect to truth-content. In contradistinction, personal narratives naturally do not concern themselves with disclaimers since it is assumed that they narrator is telling the truth.

A third evidential in Ch'orti' is the particle *e'yini*. The following are examples of its usage:

Example 1:

*Ixin tichan ixin tichan che. Imb'ijk takix e'yini twa' ak'otoy tu't e k'in.*

He went up, he went up, they say. Just a little, **they say**, in order to arrive in the sky.

Example 2:

*Ya e'yini ja'xir alok'oy tama e b'i'r yaja' makwi'r e witzir konde ayan ani yaja' e tz'ojyir taka e mojrob' e noj winikob'.*

There, **they say**, he goes out on the road that is inside the hill when there was a war there with the other kings.

Example 3:

*Warix e'y<sup>ni</sup> ach'i' inkojt yer usitz'.*

One of his children is already growing, **they say**.

Example 4:

*Ma'chi'xto e'y<sup>ni</sup> uyajtu't unana ya'.*

**They say** that they didn't pity their mother anymore.

Example 5:

*U'mb'i k'ajna ke' ne't tejne't yajre't ta ja' kocha inte' tz'ak twa' achamse e'y<sup>ni</sup> e chay.*

I heard it told that you were beaten and thrown in the water like a poison to kill fish, **they say**.

Example 6:

*Ja'x, e'y<sup>ni</sup>, e ajyum tumin xe' war ak'otoy yaja' che.*

That is, **they say**, a rich man who is arriving there, they say.

Example 7:

*I uyejta, e'y<sup>ni</sup>, e Tio Sope.*

And he breathed, **they say**, on Uncle Frog.

The evidential *e'y<sup>ni</sup>* functions as a kind of 'hearsay' particle in Ch'orti' to express that what one is saying is based on what is said by others. It is used contextually similarly as *che* and *ayi'* in that it distances the speaker from making a judgment as to its truthfulness.

In order to summarize this discussion on Ch'orti' evidentials, it would be fitting to attempt to tie specific evidentials to certain genre types. In order to determine which evidentials are most commonly used in which genre, I did an analysis of 73 transcribed texts of oral narratives from my fieldwork data. The texts were a mixture of the seven major Ch'orti' narrative genres I defined above. In terms of methodology, I did a computer search of each text, case by individual case, of each occurrence of all the three evidentials in Ch'orti'. The process was time consuming since, as I have mentioned, the

form *che* in Ch'orti' can be an emphatic particle (although unattested in oral narratives), an evidential, or a quotative particle. Therefore, each occurrence had to be examined for context in order to categorize it correctly. The data on the evidential *ayi*, 'they say', is presented below in two separate columns in the table. The reason for this is that *ayi* appears so commonly in the compound *cha'yi*, 'they say he said', that I wanted to also get an idea as to its frequency outside of this context since it is so intimately tied to the quotative *che*, 'he/she/it said' in these situations. The 73 texts upon which this analysis is based comprise over 41,000 words of text. This large data set ensured a wide variety of narrators and genre examples to provide accurate data on evidential use and relationship to certain genres. Table 4 below is a summary of this analysis:

Table 4. Use of evidential particles in Ch'orti' narratives genres

Genre	<i>che</i>	<i>ayi</i> (including <i>cha'yi</i> compound)	<i>ayi</i> (alone)	<i>e'yni</i>	Average percentage of evidentials per text in genre
	percentage	percentage	percentage	percentage	
Folktale	3.3	9.66	2.35	0.15	12.11
Myth	2.18	3.38	1.89	0.79	6.35
Joke	2.3	3.61	1.8	0	5.91
Understanding of Celestial Phenomena	1.8	0.6	0	0	1.86
Belief	0.30	0.9	0.09	0	1.20
Legend	2.56	2.6	0.81	0.06	6.22
Traditional Practice Explanation	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Overall average:</b>	1.77	2.88	.99	0.14	4.8

Among the seven major genre categories, Folktales used evidential particles twice as often as the next closest genre with evidentials accounting for more than 12% of each text. Myths, Legends, and Jokes were the next most common respectively with a textual frequency of between 5.91-6.35%. Understanding Celestial Phenomena and Belief were much less common at 1.86-1.20% respectively. In this data, Traditional Practice Explanation did not use evidential particles at all. This is logical to a certain extent in that this is a very descriptive genre that is usually based on firsthand knowledge. On the other hand, descriptions of ceremonies based on descriptions (i.e., not witnessed by the present narrator) would be expected at times and in these situations evidentials could certainly be used (although my present data does not support this idea). In terms of individual evidential usage, *che* occurred most frequently in Folktales (3.3% average). Legends, Jokes, and Myths are clustered together in the 2% plus or minus range with Understanding of Celestial Phenomena just below them at 1.8%. Beliefs made negligible use of *che* with only 0.30% textual average. The first column for the evidential *ayi*, 'they say', includes its use in the compound particle *cha'yi*, 'they say he said'. With *cha'yi* taken into account, Folktales used *ayi*' an astonishing 9.66 percent of each text. This was nearly three times the rate of recurrence compared to the next most frequent occurring genres (Myth, Joke, Legend respectively). Understanding of Celestial Phenomena (0.6%) and Belief (0.9%) did not make significant use of *ayi*. If the *cha'yi* compound is excluded from the data, the ordering of frequency is hardly altered, except for a significant shift downward for Legends. This analysis also revealed some important details about the evidential *e'yni*. Apart from the fact that *e'yni* occurs with relative

infrequency compared to *che* and *ayi*, it is noteworthy that it appears most commonly in Myth (0.79%), more than five times more often than the next closest genre, Folktale (0.15%). This suggests that *e'yni* may also function as a kind of distant past evidential marker.

The accumulative totals from each evidential also present us with some intriguing data. First, and most surprising to me, was that *ayi*, when the compound *cha'yi* is included, is the most commonly occurring evidential in Ch'orti' oral narratives. Before this analysis I would have speculated that *che* was slightly more common. *Ayi* seems to be etymologically and contextually best translated as 'it is reported', 'it is said', or 'they say'. If this is true, certain genres of Ch'orti' oral narratives are most concerned with establishing the 'reported' nature of what they are telling. Folktales use *che*, 'they say', more than other genres on average. In fact, Folktales in general make significantly more use of evidentials than any other genre type of Ch'orti' narratives. Folktales, Jokes, Myths, and Legends are the main genres that frequently incorporate evidentials. These, then, seem to invoke a great need to distance the narrator from being responsible for the truth or falseness of their content. The highly restricted use of the evidential particle *e'yni* primarily in Myths argues for an interpretation as a distant past evidential, or some other nuance that still needs to be teased out. Understanding of Celestial Phenomena and Beliefs use evidentials very infrequently presumably because the narrators are less concerned with deflecting responsibility for their content. I would propose that this relates directly to the fact that they are usually phenomena for which people have some degree of credence, and therefore do not necessitate any truth-mediating particles. In

addition, due to the descriptive, firsthand nature of Tradition Practice Explanation, evidential particles have little or no place in this genre (though presumably, there is room for them if they are reported second hand). Finally, one of the major points of interest from this data is that evidentials account for an average of 4.8% of each oral narrative in Ch'orti'. Within the four genres that most commonly use evidentials (Folktale, Myth, Joke, Legend), the average percentage of evidentials is over 8%. Evidentials, then, are a crucial component to Ch'orti' narrative organization that clearly play a role in sociocultural facets regarding truth-content in their telling and interpretation.

### 2.13. Quotative Markers

While I have mentioned quotatives several times up until this point, I have yet to adequately address questions regarding their usage in Ch'orti' as narrative organizational particles. I have already described the etymology of the assimilated compound *cha'yi* as: *che*, 'quotative particle', and *ayi*, 'evidential particle'. We have seen how *cha'yi* functions in narrative contexts to indicate direct address while simultaneously framing the discourse as a 'non-experienced event' on behalf of the narrator. *Che*, used alone and in compounds, is the primary quotative marker in Ch'orti' oral narratives. The basic meaning of *che* is 'he/she/it said' or, in colloquial speech, 'they said'. *Che* is a defective verb, meaning it cannot be conjugated for any other than the third person, i.e., "*\*Ne'n inche nitu'...*," "I said to my mother..." would be ungrammatical. In order to say, "I said to my mother..." in Ch'orti', one would have to say, "*Ne'n inwa're nitu'*," employing a

separate verbal root.<sup>31</sup> Functionally, *che* introduces or immediately follows direct address when the speaker's exact words are quoted. Let me illustrate the use the quotative particle *che* with a short section of an oral tradition titled "The Spoiled Man" I recorded in the hamlet of Pakrén in 2002:

*Intonse inkojt pya'r, "Yaja' ayan yotot. Kreo ayan ani yotot" **che**. "Ne'n inxin inch'ujku e patna'r jay ayan." "Ne't ana'ta," **che** ente', "pwes erer i'xin" **che**. Entonse ixin ente'. Uyub'i e patna'r. Konde lok'oy turu e winik entonses uya're ke' "¿Ayantik e patnar ta'b'a"?" **che**. "Ayan ya'" **che** ente'. "Tuno'r e tyempo ayan e patna'r ta nib'a" **che**. "Warto k'ani amajno'n inte' yar kasemana" **che**. "Inmajno'x ya' pwes" **che**. "Syan ayan e patna'r" **che**. "Tuno'r patna'r ayan." I entonses, "Kiki' pejkan apya'rob' watar twa' e'yro'b' tara" **che**.*

Then one friend, "There is the house. I think there was a house" **he said**. "I've gone out looking for work if there is any." "You know," the other one **said**, "well you can go" **he said**. So the other one went. He could do the work. When he arrived, the man was there so he said to him, "Might you have some work?" **he said**. "There sure is" the other **said**. "There is always work with me" **he said**. "Do you still want to hire us for just one week?" **he said**. "I'll definitely hire you" **he said**. "There is lots of work" **he said**. "There are all kinds of work." And then, "Go tell your friends to come rest here" **he said**.

In this excerpt, *che* appears both before and after the quoted section of speech. In Chuj, separate particles are typically used depending on whether they precede or follow the quoted speech, (*chi* and *'ab'* follow, *'al* generally precedes) (Maxwell 1997:101). As is evident from the above section of text, the quotative marker *che* is an organizing particle *par excellence* in narratives involving verbal interchange. In effect, *che* signals advancements in the narrative along the dialogic line.

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<sup>31</sup> In fact, as will be discussed below, Ch'orti' can *inwa're*, *awa're*, *uya're*, etc. (I say/said, you say/said, he/she say/said), for quotations. In addition, the verb 'to speak', *ojron*, can also be used in these contexts.

Several important points must be made concerning *cha'yi* and certain similar terms used in identical circumstances. First, in the majority of dialogic texts in which they *co-occur*, *cha'yi* and *che* are indistinguishable in meaning. *Che* is not a more assertive statement since it lacks the evidential *ayi*, 'they say', as one might assume. In addition, *cha'yi* can be used in conjunction with the standard verbal form *uya're*, 'he said to her', even though this 'doubling up' on meaning might seem inappropriate. Note the following examples:

Example 1:

*Kwando yo'pa tu'yotot che makar e pwerta. War awayan e ixik. "¿Ture't ka? **cha'yi uya're e ixik.** Ma'chi ojron e ixik che. Pega ojron, "¿Ture't ka?" cha'yi. "Bixiret ka? cha'yi.*

When he arrived at his house they say the door was closed. The woman was sleeping. "Are you there?" **they say that he said to the woman.** The woman did not speak they say. He kept talking, "Are you there?" they say he said. "Are you alive?" they say he said.

Example 2:

*"K'ani inxin inwajk'u inte' yar vuelta," cha'yi, "twa' inxana" **cha'yi uya're uwijch'ok.***

"I am going to turn around," they say he said, "so I can walk" **they say that he said to his daughter.**

Example 3:

*Entonse **cha'yi uya're,** "¿Ke' tal ture't?" **cha'yi uya're.***

So **they say that he said to her,** "How are you?" **they say that he said to her.**

All of these examples use both *cha'yi*, 'they say he said' and *uya're*, 'he said' together'.

This begs the question as to what grammatical function *uya're* (and *upejka*, 'he said it',

which occasionally substitutes for it) is serving in these contexts since *cha'yi* itself

adequately represents the desired semantics. The important key to understanding this is

the appearance of an expressed indirect object in some of these texts. If the narrator wants to specify the indirect object overtly together with *cha'yi*, it is not possible to simply say "*cha'yi e ixik*" since, according to Ch'orti' syntactic rules, this would be interpreted as "they say the woman said," not "they say he said to the woman."

Therefore, if the narrator wants to express the *indirect object* overtly or emphasize the fact that the speech is directed to such-and-such a person without having to mention precisely who, then the verb *uya're* is used in this situation. The presence of *uya're*, then, can indicate that an indirect object is emphasized by some means in that line. In Example 1, this is clearly evident in the case of "*cha'yi uya're e ixik*," they say that he said to the woman." The indirect object is overtly marked in Example 2 also since it is preceded by *uya're*: "*cha'yi uya're uwijch'ok*," "they say that he said to his daughter." In Example 3, however, the indirect object is not expressed lexically but contextually. In this case, *uya're* serves to stress the implied indirect object. In my estimation, the quotative particle *che* is still carrying the lexical load of 'he said' while *uya're* is more emphatic in function in its role as a dative construction highlighter.

Just as an aside, it is interesting to note that *cha'yi* is not restricted to human speech. I (and others) have translated the first element of *cha'yi*, *che*, as 'he/she/it said'. As is so often the case, seeming standard Maya terminology often has a different semantic range than their English 'equivalents'. In Ch'orti', *che* can also be applied to the chirping of birds, the roar of a mountain lion, or the croak of a frog in certain contexts. I am not now referring to folktales in which the animals are actually speaking to each other. Instead, I refer to animal vocal sounds. Let me illustrate this with one example:

*Pwes entonses che ke' kay xana yar e mut, "trrrrrrrrrrrrr" a'ru yar e mut, "wek wek wek wek wek" cha'yi.*

Well then they say that the little bird was flying around, "trrrrrrrrrrrrr" the bird was chirping, "wek wek wek wek wek" they say that it said.

This section of text first describes the sound of the bird using the verb *a'ru*, 'to howl, growl', but often can be applied to vocal sound of any animal. Interesting, the next line describes the sound "*wek wek wek wek wek*" as "they say it *said*." *Cha'yi*, then, can on occasion be applied to the vocal sound of certain animals in addition to its more common meaning referring to human speech.

#### **2.14. Adverbial Phrases and Narrative Organizing Particles**

John Fought's important contributions to understanding Ch'orti' time narratives (1976) and cyclical patterning in Ch'orti' discourse (1985) stand as the only aspects of Ch'orti' verbal art that have been studied to date. In his article "*Time Structuring in Chorti (Mayan) Narratives*" (1976) Fought argued that the Ch'orti' order events in narratives based on deixis, relational elements in addition to a combination of semantic components and linguistic devices, and rhetorical means (such as narrative particles and repetition). Ordering of events, according to Fought, is often sequential by "clusters" that are demarcated by rhetorical devices (1976:232). Ch'orti' has an aspectual rather than a tense verbal system, and therefore establishes the narrative relationship in terms of completive/incompletive by taking into account a whole cluster of events (cf. 1976:232). In oral narratives, movements along the timeline are accomplished by the use of deictic or other adverbial postclitic particles (such as *-ix* and *-to* discussed below). Fought has

noted the use of Spanish borrowings in Ch'orti' narrative particles such as *konda*, *konde*, or *kwando*, 'when', and *inton*, *intonses*, or *entonses*, 'then; so'. In addition to these, other Spanish borrowings are commonly used such as the conjunction *y*, 'and' (written as *i* in Ch'orti') and the adverbial phrase *y de ahí*, 'and from there' (which I transcribe in Ch'orti' orthography as *i de ayi*, even though some confusion might result for the reader between the evidential *ayi* 'they say' and this form).<sup>32</sup> These three narrative discourse markers initiate lines and segment a narrative into topical chunks. In addition, the demonstrative pronoun *ja'x* or *ja'xto* (as we have seen above) is used to begin a new thought in order to stress a particular line of text. New information is almost always introduced into the narrative by means of these particles. In Ch'orti', these narrative discourse organizing particles are very often loan words from Spanish. Brody has shown this to be a widespread pattern in Mesoamerica (1995:136). The most commonly occurring of these in Ch'orti' are *entonse/enton/inton*, 'then, next', *pwes*, 'well', *i*, 'and', *i de ayi*, 'and from there', *konde/konda/kwando*, 'when'. Brody keenly suggests that such loan words more frequently appear in spoken language suggesting "the conversational aspect of the degrammaticalization may also be in process, where the particles are taking on a larger component of conversational meaning" (1995:141). Note the use of these discourse organizing particles in the following section of legend about *Kumix Anxer*:

1. ***Pwes entonse*** *che ke' era ketpa ub'ajnerob'*.  
**Well then** they say that now they remained alone.

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<sup>32</sup> It is coincidental that the hieroglyphic form of a very similar discourse particle is also *i-*, '(and) then'.

2. **I entonse** *ixo'b' tu'ti' ja' che.*  
**And then** they went to the bank of the river they say.
3. **Ja'xto** *ayi yar e Kumix ayan ani e chek tama yar u'tupix che. Utziri ayi ub'a makwi'r e ja'.*  
**It was the** little *Kumix*, they say, who had a sore on his knee they say. He got in the water.
4. **I watar e syan chay che.** *Uch'ijcho'b' e chek tamar yar u't upix yar e Kumixito. Uk'uxo'b' ayi e we'r.*  
**And then** lots of fish came they say. They bit off pieces of the sore on the knee of little *Kumix*. They say they ate his flesh.
5. **Entonse** *che'nob' ayi e sakumb'irob' ira, kawitz'in, kocha awayo'b' e syan chay tama uchek cha'yi, "Kachamsenik," che. Uchamsyo'b' yar e anjel yaja'. E sakumb'irob' uk'uxo'b' e chay tar.*  
**Then** they say that these older brothers, our younger brothers, since they hang the multitude of fish on his sore, they say that they said, "Let's kill him," they say they said. They killed that little angel. The older brothers ate the fish with him in them.
6. **Entonse** *kocha ya'xana e k'ech'uj taka uvyejo kwando k'oto'b' tama uremanso yaja', a'ru uya're e ch'urkab', "Tz'oye tz'oye tz'oye tz'oye" a'ru yar e ch'urkab'.*  
**Then** since the *Siwanaba* was walking with her husband there, when they arrived at that water hole, the child was crying out saying, "Tz'oye tz'oye tz'oye tz'oye," the child was crying.
7. **Entonse** *ch'ayi, "Ajo," cha'yi, "tara a'ru inte' swerte" cha'yi.*  
**Then** they say that they said, "Wow," they say they said, "here cries a lucky thing for us" they say they said.

This short section of text shows with great clarity the use of line-initial narrative particles as organizing devices. Lines 1, 2, and 3 use two different narrative particles in tandem to begin a new section of the narrative. Marking the points of progression of themes throughout the narrative is consistently done with *i*, *ja'x/ja'xto*, and *inton/intonses/entonses*. Harkening back to my earlier discussion of evidentials in Ch'orti', it is also important to mention in passing that evidential particles were used once

or more in five of the six sections of text from this excerpt. There seems to be a tendency to use evidentials in each individual section of narrative that is framed with a new line-initial narrative particle.

The use of these and other narrative particles is illustrated in the following text from a story about the *Chijchan*. In addition, this excerpt from the opening episode of the *Chijchan* legend shows the use of the deictic adverbial particle *ya*, 'there', as a narrative organizational particle (Line 6 and 8):

1. *K'an'ani yub'i yojroner tama ke' oni'x ani ayan ani e chijchan, a'rob'na ani.*  
I wanted you to hear the story that long ago there was a Chijchan, as it was called.
2. *Ja'xto sierpo kawa're takar.*  
**The "Sierpo" is what** we call it.
3. *Entonses ayan kisas ya' verdad, pero ne'n ma'chi'x inwiru't kocha'ni e chijchan oni'x ani. Kawira e b'ik'it chan xa'xano'b' b'ik'it yar e chan, pero ayan e nukir chan oni'x kisas kocha'ni ayan ani e nukir te' ani oni'x, e te' mas suficiente. Maja'x inte'ra animal ayan ani. Ayan a'rob'na e k'ech'uj che twa' axano'b' ani, axano'b' makwi'r e nukta' te' axano'b' komo utu' ilambo'b' ayi ak'otoy tamo'tot che. Uwarajse e pak'ab'ob' ixni'x ani.*  
**So** maybe it is indeed true, but I have never seen anything like the *Chijchans* they had in the past. We see little snakes that travel along, little small snakes, but long ago there were huge snakes like there were large trees in the past, sufficiently big trees. It is not that they were not fully animals. It is told that there are *Siwanabas* they say that used to walk around, walk around in the forest, walk around like the mother of their wives, they say, arriving at the house they say. They visited the people long ago.
4. *Yixto yaja' pwes ayan ani kisas verdad e nukir chijchan ani porke' ayan inte' winik una'ta ayi u'ri e masa' i una'ta' u'ri e mut tame' e flecha.*  
**So there**, well, there were perhaps really giant Chijchans because there is a man who knew how, they say, to shoot deer and he knew how to shoot birds with arrows.

5. **Entonses konde** war axana konde uwira inkojt noxi' chan ch'a'r e'ron che. B'an ub'a unak kocha e noxi' ta'kin wa'r ira. Unak e nixi' chan k'atar e'ron tama uxor e nixi' te', e nixi' te'k'o'b'ir e noxi' te'. K'o'b'ir e noxi' te'.  
**Then when** he was walking when he saw a huge snake curled up they say. The stomach of the large snake was thus, like this metal here. The stomach of the huge snake was perched there in plain sight on the top of a large tree, an enormous, huge tree. The tree was enormous.
6. **Ya** k'atar e nixi' chan e'ron che i ayan inte' noxi' bongo kawa're takar ya ch'u'r tu'nej che. Vyejo ch'u'r e'ron sierpo ayi ayan ukacho. Ch'u'r ukacho ub'an twa' ach'ujsan war ak'ixi tu'jor e te'.  
**There** the huge snake sat looking down in plain sight they say and there was a big bongo, as we call it, hanging there on its tail they say. The snake looked old hanging they say with its horns. Hanging its horns also in order to see it warming itself on the top of the tree.
7. **I de ayi** che ke' **kwando** uwira e winik yaja' ochoy tu'ch'en inte' noxi' charko anam pero anam bastante anam.  
**And from there** they say that **when** that man saw it enter into its cave, a huge muddy water hole, but there was lots of mud.
8. **Ya** ixin galan utz'u' a'xin makwe' rum. Ixin de repente ochoy e noxi' botija ub'an. Ochoy ixin makwe' rum pero tumin ch'u'r tar.  
**There** it went being swallowed up into the ground. The big *botija* also went in right away. It entered into the ground but the money was in it.
9. **De ayi** che ke' **kwando** otro diya **entonses** che e winik, "Ne'n k'ani inxin inwira. Ne'n k'ani u'nk'i nimachit." Kay u'k'i inte' usuy machit byen juk'b'ir tu'jor e rax. U'k'i byen uyej.  
**From there** they say that **on** a different day **then** the man said, "I am going to go to see. I'm going to sharpen my machete." He was sharpening one end of the machete really sharp on the whetstone. The sharpened the tip well.
10. **Entonse konde** k'otoy otro diya a medyo diya che konde ya turu k'ixi otronyajr tu'jor e te'.  
**Then when** another day arrived at midday they say that when he was seated there warming himself again on top of the tree.
11. **I de ayi** che ke' **konde** uwira tari usutpa uyakta ub'a e chan.  
**And from there** they say that **when** the snake saw him coming and he gave up.

Line 2 uses the demonstrative pronoun *ja'x*, 'that one,' to indicate a jump to the next step along the narrative ladder from the introductory line. Line 4 provides us with an example of the narrative particles *-ix* and *-to* used together as a compound postclitic that attaches to the adverbial deictic *ya*, 'there', together meaning 'so there' or 'then there'. The particle *-ix* means 'already; 'completed reference', and *-to*, means 'so then; still'. The compound particle *-ixto* functions as an emphatic marker and helps in segmenting section beginnings in narratives. Fought's insight on the function of these two particles is noteworthy:

The postclitics serve to relate whole clusters of events just as the perfective aspect markers relate individual events in time. For some specific narrative purpose, a cluster of contextually identified events already mentioned in the narrative are placed by -ix before a reference time; -to marks the beginning of a new event cluster or reference time...[T]he last cluster or group in the text, in the final paragraph, is again introduced by a combination of -ix and -to. Sometimes, then, a particle is repeated for rhetorical reasons, and sometimes it is used afresh to advance the narrative... (Fought 1976:234).

In line 4 the *-ixto* particle is used to move the narrative along while simultaneously making a reference to what was said in line 3. In lines 5, 9, and 10 the narrative organizing particles *entonses* and *kwando* are used in the same opening phrase to signal the beginning of new episodes. Lines 7, 9, and 11 make use of a form of the highly common "*i de ayi*," "and from there," to advance the flow of the narrative. Even a casual survey of a Ch'orti' narrative text (of an appropriate genre) will show that the narrative organizing particles described here form its narrative structural backbone. Their purpose is to move the scenes of the narrative along while simultaneously emphasizing certain

aspects of the story. Repetition of particles (or lines) can slow the pace of the narrative and the incoming new information for poetic effect.

### **2.15. Performance and Text in Oral Narratives**

Before beginning a discussion on the poetic features of Ch'orti' oral narratives, I want to first address the issue of performance of text among the Ch'orti'. The event of storytelling provides the situational arena for the use and development of performance practices. Storytelling is a cherished sociocultural facet of daily life for the Ch'orti'. Whether it is a group of men working in the *milpa*, a company of individuals seated waiting for the local trucks to take them home, or families gathered together after dinner on the porch of the house, oral narratives serve any number of sociocultural purposes. Narrations are often humorous, told specifically to get a laugh. Other narrations are explanatory in response to a question. Still others are 'classics' in a sense that all Ch'orti' enjoy hearing told again and again. Textual performance is a crucial factor in all of these and other narrative situations. Good narrators are highly acclaimed. What constitutes a "good" narrator for the Ch'orti' is quantifiable with some general characteristics that I was able to glean from interviews with Ch'orti' speakers and from observations of performances during my field research. The following is a list of characteristics (in order of importance based on all interviews) compiled from these two sources: my observations from witnessing of over 100 recitations of Ch'orti' oral narratives, and from specific data I elicited from Ch'orti' speakers on what qualities a good narrator possesses:

- One must know the details of the story well so they do not hedge, stop to think, or skip elements
- One must be physically animated as the narration requires
- One must properly set up the punch line (with humorous texts) and deliver it well
- One must select the proper narrative for the situation (i.e., know the audience)
- One must have a strong repertoire ("always have another story ready")
- Voice inflection in general

Most of those whom I interviewed stressed that knowing all the *main* details was most important. This does not, however, imply that variation is necessarily viewed negatively. Instead, knowing the story well enough to be able to relate it without pausing to think about what comes next is essential to good storytelling. Of course, covering the central details is part of a good performance. In fact, one consultant of mine refused to tell me a story once until he could remember the sequence of two events within the story. He finally recounted the story a week later after having worked out this one detail. Variation itself, however, is often looked upon quite favorably by the Ch'orti'. There does not seem to be any notion of a "standard text" with any oral narratives as far as I can tell. New details are welcomed and are often the subject of immediate conversations after a narrative performance. I have witnessed several cases where a listener became visibly excited during the narration when new details with which he was unfamiliar were presented. On one occasion, a regular consultant of mine and I were listening to two men tell several stories each on the patio of a house. This consultant whom I was sitting next to leaned over to me during the performance and excitedly mentioned that he had never heard two major details of this popular story that was being told (he had told me his version just two weeks earlier). More than four months later I was at his home when he

began to tell stories to a large group of his extended family. He told the same story, but this time included *both* new details in his narrative. What struck me then is that narratives can have an emergent quality that flies in the face of any notion of "standard text" for the Ch'orti. Even folktales, whose content is generally well known, regularly vary considerably in detail from one narrator to the next with no negative valuation. Simple stories such as ones about Uncle Rabbit and Uncle Coyote that are often told in a single, short 'scene', can still accommodate alterations and variations in certain details. In many cases, it is the narrator's choice to elaborate on certain points within the text that bring out new details. As long as the narrator hits the main points of the text, no infelicity results.<sup>33</sup>

Legends are, by their very nature, fluid texts in which variation is the norm. For the Ch'orti', the *K'ech'uj* (*Siwanaba*), the *Chijchan*, the *Noj B'itor*, *El Cadejo*, and other legendary beings and creatures are considered to be continually active and therefore always providing contexts for new events to be told. Every Ch'orti' hamlet (indeed, nearly every Ch'orti' person) has a different *Chijchan* or *K'ech'uj* story that happened in their area or to someone they know. There are also more standardized, well-known versions of these legends that enjoy a wide geographical distribution, even among distant hamlets. Legends are also one of the most fruitful areas to analyze performance of text among the Ch'orti' since very often the version or episode one is narrating is only locally known. Narrators have a "captive" audience so to speak in that such legends are

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<sup>33</sup> This emergent aspect of even fairly standardized texts has possible implications for understanding performance and practice with Classic period hieroglyphic texts, as I explain in Chapter 3.

extremely popular and each new account is received with great interest. Narrators whom I have seen recounting this type of 'local' or personal account were highly animated and made use of considerable prosody, since such legends are often quite scary (and real) to many Ch'orti'. Indeed, many oral narratives that fall into the category of Legends are part of the 'cultural landscape' of the Ch'orti' people and are as 'real' as trees or rocks. Others treat them as a genre of 'scary stories' (parallel to the Western tradition of telling ghost stories) that while not 'true', still may have some elements that 'ring true' to them. Narrators of such legends play off the emotional nature of this genre through generous uses of prosody and gesticulation.

## **2.16. Oral Narratives and Poetics**

The second major component of this chapter is to determine the forms and uses of poetic features in oral narratives among the Ch'orti'. The more extensive treatment above of ritual poetics will certainly supercede in terms of size and content this discussion of poetics and oral narratives. This is a consequence of a significantly smaller data set to analyze (the reasons for which I have already explained in detail earlier). The goal of this section is to assess the nature of poetics outside of ritual contexts that are much closer to ordinary speech. As I have mentioned, I have not noted any significant use of parallelism or other major poetic features in the daily speech of the Ch'orti' (more direct research in this area is needed however). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, oral narratives will serve as a bridge between these two social and linguistic extremes in attempting to ascertain the use and sociocultural significance of poetic features in a natural speech

situation. As a practical matter, many of the same categories of rhetorical devices for the above analysis of ritual poetics will be repeated in this section. I will, however, limit the introduction of each of these to a simple definition so as not to repeat too much information that has been already covered in Chapter 1. The reader is referred to these earlier sections for a more complete discussion of their meaning and function.

### **2.17. Ellipsis**

Before looking specifically at strophic length poetic structures, I will first cover more general ground with an analysis of the important rhetorical device of ellipsis. As was shown in Chapter 1, ellipsis represents one of the most common poetic devices in all forms of parallel structuring in Ch'orti' ritual language. It is interesting, then, that ellipsis plays an equally important role in Ch'orti' narrative parallel structures. Ellipsis is the deletion of a word or phrase whose meaning can easily be inferred despite its absence. It should be noted that the ellipsis pertaining to this study is an intraparallel phenomenon. Therefore, in order to show examples of ellipsis we must use instances of other larger poetic structures, like identical parallelism, augmentative parallelism, etc. I will only use these examples in one of the two sections so as to avoid any significant overlap. Some of the data relating to those other sections will be contained in this discussion of ellipsis.

I have already noted in Chapter 1 that many times individuals who have had prior experience as an orator in traditional ceremonies or as a traditional healer often use parallel language more often than other Ch'orti' narrators. Examples 1-4 below were

given as evidence of this phenomenon from an explanation of traditional practice in Spanish from a consultant I have called Luís.

Example 1:

*"¿Cómo quieren que parezca una persona sin causa,  
sin motivo?"*

"How do they want a person to suffer without cause,  
without motive?"

Example 2:

*Entonces vamos averiguando con Dios al tribunal del cielo,  
tribunal de la gloria.*

Then we go finding out with God at the tribunal of the sky,  
tribunal of the heavens.

Example 3:

*Si no pasamos hasta 18 juzgado del cielo,  
de la gloria.*

If we don't pass on to the 18th judgment of the sky,  
of the heavens.

Example 4:

*Podemos tener unas averiguanzas hasta el corte supremo del cielo,  
de la gloria.*

We have some findings out until the supreme court of the sky,  
of the heavens.

Example 5:

*Hay muchas justicias donde viene alrededor del mundo,  
alrededor del cielo.*

There are many evil spirits where they come around the world,  
around the sky.

Example 6:

*De allí podemos averiguar porque Dios tiene su tabla de la ley,  
Dios tiene el libro de la familia.*

From there we can find out because God has his tablet of the law,  
God has his book of the family.

Example 7:

*Estamos actuando en una cosa,  
una nueva idea.*

We are acting on a new thing,  
a new idea.

In precisely the same fashion as in ritual language, ellipsis commonly takes the form of second stich line-initial deletion. Examples 1-7 are all couplets that appear in similar or identical form in Ch'orti' healing texts. This process goes far in illustrating the pervasive influence parallelism in ritual prayers can have on those who still use them. For this healer, discussing these ceremonial concepts and practices required a more elegant mode of discourse, perhaps on a smaller scale reminiscent of the "Ritual Speech" described by Gossen for the Tzotzil speakers of Chamula. Gossen notes that most people could switch to "Ritual Speech" whenever they discussed ritual practices (1974:410). Note one more example of an identical parallelism used when describing a field dedication ceremony:

<i>War akuxpa e jinaj,</i>	The milpa was sprouting,
<i>War akuxpa e ixim.</i>	The corn was sprouting.

After giving a description of the steps involved in this ceremony, this consultant from the hamlet of Pakrén poetically paired two terms, *jinaj*, *milpa* and *ixim*, 'corn' in an identical structure and meaning parallelism. The narrator used a couplet at this exact moment in the description since this phrase was explaining the positive results of performing the ceremony. Emphasis was clearly the motivation for the appearance of this couplet at this point in the narration.

I have observed several cases of ellipsis in couplets in Ch'orti' legends. Note the following examples:

Example 1:  
*E chan ak'otoy serca de virtiente,*  
*ak'otoy ach'a'n serca u't e ja'.*

The snake arrives near the spring,  
arrives and lies down near the spring.

Example 2:

*Uk'eche a'xin makwe' e witzir,*  
*e peña.*

He carried him away inside the mountain,  
the large rock.

Example 1 is taken from a legend about the *Chijchan*, or Horned Serpent that was used earlier in Chapter 1. In the second stich, the head noun of the phrase is deleted. The narrator then augments a second verb *ach'a'n*, 'lies', in the second stich. Note also the use of code switching ('*virtiente*') by the narrator in order to find a synonym of *u't e ja'*, 'spring'. In Example 2, an associative parallelism is used between *witzir*, 'mountain, hill', and *peña*, 'large rock'. In the second stich, the entire phrase except for the locative complement of the prepositional phrase is deleted. Example 2 appeared in the telling of the legend of the *Noj B'itor*, or 'Big-Hatted Dwarf'. The text relates the moment when the *Noj B'itor* was able to lead the man into his mountain cave. This climatic point in the text is poignantly expressed with a couplet showing significant ellipsis.

Ellipsis in couplets has also been noted in Ch'orti' myths. The following is one instance of this from a story about the creation of the world told to me by a consultant in the hamlet of Amatillo.

*En akel tyempo kwando matuk'a ani e pak'ab'ob',*  
*ma'ni tuk'a e jente.*

In that time when there were no persons,  
there were no people.

The entire adverbial phrase from the first line is deleted in the second line. In quite beautiful poetic fashion the narrator alters the syntax slightly in each line. In the first line, the irrealis particle *ani* follows the term *matuk'a* (from *ma*, 'no', and *tuk'a*, 'what'), 'there is none'. In the second line, however, the particle *ani* is embedded in between *ma* and *tuk'a*, an unusual but grammatically acceptable action. In addition, the narrator used code switching in by employing the Spanish term *jente*, 'people', as an identical parallel complement to *pak'ab'ob'*, 'people, persons'. In this one couplet, then, ellipsis, code switching, and syntactical alteration are used to create the desired poetic effect.

## 2.18. Identical Parallelism and Repetition

I begin this analysis of strophic length poetic features with identical parallelism. Identical parallelism is the repetition of elements in lines of a couplet, triplet, etc. In Chapter 1, I divided identical parallelism into two subgroups. I quote from that earlier section:

A) Identical Structure and Meaning Parallelism, and B) Identical Structure and Shape Parallelism. Identical structure and meaning parallelism implies the presence of a separate but semantically related term or phrase that is employed in each line in an otherwise identical structure. Identical structure and shape parallelism refers to 100% repetition of the first line in the second with no alteration whatsoever.

Identical structure and shape parallelism can sometimes be interpreted as simply repetition. In the context of conscious strophic patterning, the presence of consistent versification with repeated elements is indicative of identical parallelism. In some cases, exact repetition in two sequential lines is done for a specific emphatic effect. Note the

following examples of line repetition, both exact and partial, from the legend of the

*Kumix Anxer*:

Example 1:

1. *Uk'eche ayi ixin che,*
2. *Uk'eche ayi ixin yaja' che.*
3. *Kay ayi uch'ijrse che,*
4. *Kay ayi ch'ijrseixto ayi e k'ech'uj.*
5. *Entonses kay ch'i',*
6. *kay ch'i'.*

1. They say she carried him away the say.
2. They say she carried him away there they say.
3. She was rearing him they say,
4. The Sesimite was rearing him they say.
5. Then he was growing up,
6. he was growing up.

Example 2:

1. *K'a'pa ayi uk'asi u't uyej,*
2. *uk'asi ayi u't uyej che.*
3. *I entonses cha'yi, "Ak'asi u't niwej bechu" cha'yi.*
4. *"Ak'asi u't niwej bechu" cha'yi.*

1. The say she finished breaking her tooth,
2. breaking her tooth they say.
3. And then they say that she said, "You broke my tooth, child" they say she said.
4. "You broke my tooth, child" they say she said.

In Example 1, the narrator repeated with some variation elements from lines 1, 3, and 5 in lines 2, 4, and 6. In this scene, the *Siwanaba* has rescued *Kumix* from the river where his older brothers had just tried to kill him. She takes him away to raise him (really to 'fatten the calf' as it were). The repetition in these 6 six line occurs at a point in the story where *Kumix* is being taken away, reared, and grows up. I would argue that the repetition in lines 3-6 is *durative* in nature, stressing the "on-goingness" of the actions involved, rather

the emphasizing the actions per se through couplets. The repetition in lines 1-2 could be interpreted either as an identical structure and shape parallelism or as simple repetition. The answer lies in whether the narrator was consciously forming a couplet or only repeating information for a separate aesthetic reason. In Example 2, we have a scene from the same story as Example 1. After the *Siwanaba* has reared *Kumix* for some time, she decides the time has come to eat him as she had always planned on doing. She has wrapped him in a blanket and left the house for a moment before returning to finish him off. *Kumix*, aware of her intentions, wrapped a pestle in the blanket instead so that when the *Siwanaba* returned she bit down on the hard rock and broke her tooth. At this climactic moment in the story the narrator used two consecutive dyads with repeated elements. Lines 1 and 2 are a type of reverse parallelism, or chiasmus with ellipsis. In lines 3 and 4 the direct quote of the *Siwanaba* is repeated verbatim. Do lines 3 and 4 form a couplet, or are they simply repetition of the statement? The question again returns to the narrator's original intent, which is not always clear from the perspective of the listener. What is known is that certain degree of emphasis is accomplished through repetition during this emotive scene in the story.

Traditional practice explanation narrative genre has proven to be exceptionally rich in identical structure and related meaning parallelisms. For example, in a discussion with an elderly Ch'orti' gentleman he began to reminisce about 'the good old days' when the Ch'orti' were "more observant" of traditional practices which ensured an abundance of food and supplies from their natural environment. During an explanation of traditional

practices, he used to following two cases of identical parallelism in semantic couples at separate points in the text, both at moments of lament:

Example 1:

*Kone'r todo eskaso. Matuk'a kate',  
Matuk'a kasi'.*

Today everything is scarce. We have no trees,  
We have no firewood.

Example 2:

*Mixtuk'a e padrino,  
Mixtuk'a e rogante.*

Now there are no more *padrinos*,  
Now there are no more petitioners.

After extolling the faithfulness of his ancestors in continuing with traditional ways and the plentitude which they enjoyed, the narrator then contrasted that situation with the state of affairs today in Example 1. This identical structure and related meaning parallelism comes at a point of emphasis and emotion in the narrative as the narrator expresses distress over the fact that the forests are now depleted therefore there is no firewood to be had. Indeed, firewood collecting has become nearly a full-day affair in many Ch'orti' communities since they must walk up to four hours away to find sufficient wood for a few days of cooking. Men, women, and sometimes children often leave long before the sun come up to begin the long trek in search of suitable wood and only return late in the afternoon. I have stood overlooking a square mile of space on the side of a mountain near Oken and listened to several elderly Ch'orti' describe how sixty years ago that particular mountain side was once covered with plentiful large trees. Today, during heavy rainstorms the whole mountain side is continually scarred even further with enormous gullies eroded by the rushing runoff (cf. Dary et al 1998:118). The use of a

semantic couplet for this poetic lament concerning the deforestation of these areas provided the emphasis and emotional component intended by the narrator. In Example 2, the same narrator had just finished describing the ceremonial practices he saw as a child and young man. His demeanor then changed as he reminisced about these 'beautiful' and 'efficacious' ceremonies of the past. He then assigned blame for much of their current suffering on the fact that the ritual rain-making priests, known as *padrinos*, had long since stopped practicing in that area. After recounting a story that mentioned these *padrinos* he ended with this statement (from which Example 2 was taken):

*Por eso pwes ke' b'an ani, pero kocha verdad, i kone'r kocha war kak'ajti mixtuk'a e padrino, mixtuk'a e rogante. Por eso war kache sufrir, pero estamos un poco bien.*

For this reason, well, thus it was, but for real, and today how we are petitioning. Now there are no more *padrinos*, now there are no more petitioners. That's why we are suffering, but we are a little okay.

Once again during a lament, this narrator used an identical structure and related meaning parallelism at the point in the text where he was identifying the true cause of the suffering today: the absence of *padrinos*. A similar occurrence of an identical structure and related meaning parallelism involved with a lament can also be seen in a folktale about a poor man:

*"Ma'chi atz'akta yar nitumin" cha'yi,*  
*"Ma'chi atz'akta yar nitrabajo lo ke' inche" cha'yi.*  
"My money isn't enough" they say he said,  
"My work that I do isn't enough" they say he said.

The poor man in this story bemoans the fact that his money is not sufficient (*"ma'chi atz'akta"*). His lament is highlighted through the use of identical parallelism in this couplet. It is noteworthy that other laments in addition to this instance in a folktale have a strong tendency to use identical parallelism in semantic couplets. From these examples (and others not mentioned), it is clear that emotive sections (especially laments) are ripe for the use of identical structure and related meaning parallelisms.

The strategic use of parallelism at moments of lament in narration is well illustrated by the following excerpt from the story of Francisco Díaz García I related in Chapter 1. The narrator was lamenting the times when the padrinos of the past ensured bountiful rains and abundant crops:

1. *Konde ja'xir uk'ajti ani e jaja'r ma'ni tuk'a e takinar koche' kone'r,*
2. *Kawira ayan me'yra takinar, koche' kone'r,*
3. *Kawira ma'chi'x alok'oy e nar,*
4. *ma'chi'x alok'oy e ch'um,*
5. *ma'chi'x alok'oy tuno'r xe' kapa'k'i,*
6. *e b'u'r,*
7. *e kuskus.*
8. *K'anix ataki umen e takinar.*
9. *Tartaka ke' me'yra k'in a'chempa konde no'n war kakojko e jaja'r.*

1. When he prayed for the rain there wasn't drought like today,
2. We see lots of drought like today,
3. We see that now the corn no longer sprouts,
4. now the pumpkins no longer sprout,
5. now everything that we plant no longer sprouts,
6. the beans,
7. the *maicillo*,
8. Now it's all going to dry up because of the drought.
9. It's just that there is lots of sun while we are waiting for the rain.

Structurally, this lament makes use of a variety of forms of parallelism in an effort to produce a certain emotive aesthetic. Lines 1 and 2 form an antithetical parallelism in which the days when there was no drought is contrasted to the present situation of drought. Line 2 also begins the first stich of a nested couplet with line 3, both of which begin with *kawira*, or 'we see'. Line 3 also hosts the first line of another nested parallelism, this time a triplet, that plays off the repetition of the adverb *ma'chi'x*, 'now no longer' in lines 4 and 5. Following this pattern, line 5 also serves as the final stich of the previous triplet as well as the initial stich a subsequent couplet with line 6. Lines 7 and 8 form a synonymous parallelism referring again to the drought mentioned in lines 1 and 2. Moreover, the stanza of lines 1 and 2 works together with the stanza of lines 7 and 8 to create a larger enveloping parallelism since all four lines make reference to a "drought." This brief lament absolutely excels in poetic structuring. The result of these powerful parallelistic constructions is the creation of a considerable emphatic and emotive effect to highlight the textual message of this lament.

Further examples with identical parallelism also appear in other narrative genres. Two instances occurred in a telling of the famous legend of the *Kumix Anxer*, told by a 45-year old consultant from the hamlet of Suchiquer. This consultant, I will call him Ignacio, was partially trained as a healer and still practiced healing ceremonies within his extended family only. He used parallel speech more than most of my other consultants in oral narratives and in explanations of traditional practice (some of which appears below).

Example 1:

*Ekmo'b' k'axo'b' tu't e tun,*  
*Ekmo'b' k'axo'b' tu't e rum.*

They came falling down onto the stone,  
 They came falling down onto the earth.

Example 2:

*Matak'ix uturb'a ub'a twa' uchamse e mut,* He had little interest in killing birds,  
*Matak'ix uturb'a ub'a twa' e masa'.* He had little interest in deer.

In Example 1, Ignacio chose to emphasize these important phrases in the narrative by means of an identical structure and related meaning parallelism. A single lexical item, *tun*, 'stone', is altered in the second stich of the stanza for *rum*, 'earth'. In this narrative, while the older brother angels were building a rock tower to try to get to heaven, Gabriel (i.e. *Kumix Anxer*) stood at the base of this colossal pile of rocks and told his older brothers that their mother wanted them to stop building the tower. The brothers, react with suspicion inasmuch as they thought they had killed Gabriel at the river. This is the point in the story when the *sakumb'irob'*, or older brothers, descend from stone hill and discover that they had indeed failed to kill their younger brother. The couplet captures the irony and tension of the moment. Both lines of Example 2 are essentially equivalent except the standard nominal substitution in the second line. In addition, due to ellipsis the verb *uchamse*, 'he kills' does not appear in the second line but is implied by the couplet itself.

A final example of an identical structure and related meaning parallelism comes from an explanation of traditional practices by a 90 year-old consultant from the hamlet of Amatillo. During this interview, he was describing the way they used to perform the field dedication ceremony (*La Limosna*) long ago. At the end of the explanation he finished the final sentence with this phrase:

*K'otoy e diya,  
K'otoy e tyempo.*

The day arrived,  
The time arrived.

A nearly identical couplet was discussed in Chapter 1, "*pero k'otoy e diya, k'otoy e ora*," "but the day arrived, the hour arrived" (meaning 'the time has arrived'), which I identified as the rhetorical device known as *difrasismo*. In this instance, the narrator actually used the word *tyempo*, 'time' in the second stich of the stanza, thus violating the basic premise upon which a *difrasismo* is constructed—that both terms should be narrow in meaning with a more broad semantic result. For this reason, this could either be simply a case of identical structure and related meaning parallelism, or a mistaken attempt to use a known *difrasismo* by an individual who had worked as healer many years before. Regardless of its exact classification and meaning, the very use of this identical structure and related meaning parallelism at the end of the story suggests a conscious effort by the narrator to highlight the ending point of the narrative.

### **2.19. Augmentative Parallelism**

While augmentative parallelism proved to be a highly productive process in Ch'orti' ritual contexts, there were surprisingly few cases found in narrative texts.

Example 1:

*Ya turu utamborob' che,  
Ya ayi turu utamborob' yaja' utata e Kumix Anjel.*  
There were his drums they say,  
There they say were those drums of *Kumix Anjel*'s father.

Example 2:

*Pero en este area,*

*en este lugar hay muchos problemas en nuestras vidas.*

But in this area,

in this place there are many problems in our lives.

Example 3:

*Haciendo trabajo,*

*trabajo de tierra.*

Doing our labor,

labor of the land.

Example 1 is an excerpt from a version of the legend of the *Kumix Anxer*. The second line of the couplet augments the first in several ways. First, the second line substitutes the evidential reportative particle *ayi*, 'they say', for the evidential *che*, 'they say', that appeared in the first line. Then, the phrase "*yaja' utata e Kumix Anjel*," "those (drums) of *Kumix Anjel's* father" is appended at the end of the second line. This couplet comes at a point in the narrative where *Kumix* has set out to find all of the accoutrements of his father (i.e. all the items from which his father, God, drew his power). The search finally bore fruit when *Kumix* succeeded in finding his father's drums (that allowed him to make thunder). This moment of the text is highlighted by the use of identical parallelism with augmentation in this couplet. In Example 2, the narrator fronted the prepositional phrase in each line, a poetic device known as highlighting or fronting, in order to place emphasis on that particular phrase. Example 3 shows ellipsis in the line-initial position of the second line together with augmentation at the end of the line with "*de tierra*," "of (the) land." Anadiplosis is also present in the repetition of "*trabajo*" at the end and beginning of lines.

## 2.20. Grammatical Parallelism

Grammatical parallelism refers to "elements that are grammatically parallel in construction" (Christenson 2000:15). Note its use in the following triplet:

<i>Kay patno'b' e rum,</i>	They were working the land,
<i>Kay tz'aymo'b'.</i>	They were watering it.

The parallelism in this case is based on the equivalent grammatical structures underlying the semantic content. In both verses, the grammatical particle *kay*, meaning 'repeated action in the past,' introduces the main 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural transitive verbs.

Another example of grammatical parallelism (or syntactic couplet) uses a parallel negative stative phrase with the demonstrative *ja'x*, 'this is the one':

<i>Ma'yi' ja'x tara turu,</i>	They say it is not he who lives here,
<i>Ma'yi' ja'x takar inch'i'.</i>	They say it is not he with whom I grew up.

The first line of the couplet follows uses the adverb *tara*, 'here', together with the verb *turu*, 'he lives'. The second line imitates syntactically the initial portion of the phrase, "*ma'yi' ja'x*," "they say it is not he who," but alternates the predicate phrase with "*takar inch'i'*," "with whom I grew up." The parallelism is grammatical with only a semantic variation between the two verbal phrases.

## 2.21. Synonymous Parallelism

Synonymous parallelism did not appear with great frequency in my data on Ch'orti' oral narratives. It is more frequently used in ritual speech, but is not widespread

in either. According to Christenson, synonymous parallelism is "the repetition of elements that are similar in meaning or significance" (2000:14). Again, the overlap with identical structure and related meaning parallelism is apparent. Note the following couplet in which the repetition is synonymous:

<i>Apajnwina ya,</i>	It was dug there,
<i>Ache'na yar e ch'en ya.</i>	The hole was made there.

The narrator was describing a ceremony in which the farmer digs holes in the center of his field in order to make an offering of *chilate* and other food items within. In the first line he uses passive form *apajnwina* of the verb *pajni*, 'to dig'. In the second line, however, he used the expression "*che e ch'en*," "to make a hole," here is the passive form as "*ache'na...e ch'en*." Grammatical parallelism is also created through the repetition of the passive voice in both lines. The adverbial deictic *ya*, 'there', ends each line, helping to strengthen their parallel status.

I have already mentioned the synonymous parallelism that occurred in the context of a lament above:

<i>K'anix ataki umen e takinar.</i>
<i>Tartaka ke' me'yra k'in a'chempa konde no'n war kakojko e jaja'r.</i>

Now it's all going to dry up because of the drought.  
It's just that there is lots of sun while we are waiting for the rain.

Both lines refer to the "drought" and its effects on the crops in synonymous terms.

During an interview done in Spanish in the hamlet of Suchiquer, my consultant (whom I called Ignacio previously) broke into a beautiful string of couplets:

1. *No tan tranquilo,*
2. *Siempre intranquilo,*
3. *Porque haciendo nuestras obras,*
4. *Haciendo trabajo,*
5. *Trabajo de tierra.*

1. Not so calm,
2. Always uneasy,
3. Because we are doing are works,
4. Doing our labor,
5. Labor of the land.

In lines 1 and 2, Ignacio used as semantic couplet by restating the phrase "*no tan tranquilo*," "not so calm," with a synonymous phrase "*siempre intranquilo*," "always uneasy." Then, in lines 3-4, Ignacio created another couplet using synonymous parallelism with line-initial and line-medial ellipsis. Next, in line 5 he appended a single phrase, not in the form of an epigram, but rather as the second stich of a nested couplet with line 4. Finally, he augmented the phrase "*de tierra*," "of (the) land," at the end of line 5. In this short section, Luís used synonymous parallelism, couplet nesting, ellipsis, anadiplosis, and augmentation. Putting Example 5 in context, this section of the discussion is clearly a lament over the insecurities of daily life and the daily work routine. That Ignacio constructed such an elegant and poetic statement during a discussion where prose was the norm shows remarkable talent and poetic sophistication. The mood created through the generous use of poetic devices in this section perfectly complemented the message of the text.

A final example of synonymous parallelism with ellipsis appears in this excerpt from an explanation of celestial phenomena. In this passage, the narrator was describing to me the *Cruz de Mayo*, or Southern Cross that sets in the eastern sky in May in Jocotán (cf. Hull 2000a):

*Ak'b'are ch'a'r to'r e witzir tama e kuxpa'r k'in,  
tya' alok'oy e k'in.*

At night it lies on the top of the mountain at the birthplace of the sun (the east),  
where the sun leaves (the east).

In this couplet, the narrator used synonymous expression for "east." Since no single term for "east" exists today in Ch'orti', a number of phrases are used instead to describe this concept. Other phrases I have noted for "east" are "*tya' atob'oy e k'in*," "where the sun leaps," "*ajtober e k'in*," "the leaping sun (place)," and "*tob'er e k'in*," "leaping sun (place)." In the above example the narrator described the east using the couplet expressions "*e kuxpa'r k'in*," "the sprouting of the sun," and as "*tya' alok'oy e k'in*," "where the sun leaves/sets out."

## 2.22. Chiasmus

Chiasmus is in effect simply reverse parallelism. I again quote Christenson's concise explanation of the meaning and use of chiasmus:

"[Chiasmus is] parallelism in which the first element of a strophe parallels the last, the second element parallels then next to last, etc. This arrangement tends to focus attention on the central elements, thus asserting their importance" (2000:15).

I have noted several instances of chiasmus in Ch'orti' oral narratives. Let me illustrate this process with four examples which I will discuss individually. The first example comes from an explanation of how Ch'orti' women protect their unborn child when there is visible eclipse (explanation of traditional practice genre):

Example 1:

*Twa' ma'chi uwiro'b' ub'an,*

*Twa' ma'chi ak'ujxa e ch'urkab'.*

*Ukacho'b' ani twa' ma'chi ache'na kilisar,*

*Entonses ma'chi uwiro'b'.*

So that they do not see it either,

So that the children are not eaten.

They used to tie them up so that they would not be 'eclipsed',

So, they do not see it.

Eclipses are considered by the Ch'orti' to be extremely dangerous for pregnant women (Fought 1972:429; Hull 2000a; 2001a). During an eclipse, Ch'orti' women tie a red cloth around their waists to protect their unborn children from possible deformation or even death. The verb *che kilisar* (lit. 'to eclipse'), derived from a methasized form of the Spanish *eclipse* preceded by *che*, 'to do', means 'to cause birth defects'. The idea of eclipses causing birth defects is also found in Yukatekan sources (cf. Bricker and Miriam 2002). The second line mentions that the red cloth is tied around the waist "so that the children are not eaten (by the eclipse)."<sup>34</sup> The Ch'orti', along with numerous other Mesoamerican groups, believe that during a lunar eclipse the sun is "eating" the moon (and vice versa for a solar eclipse). This meaning is metaphorically extended to the

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<sup>34</sup> See Hull 2000a for a possible Classic period parallel of this practice.

'eating' of the children, i.e., producing birth defects, by the eclipse. The third line of this chiasm is therefore a restatement of the second, both marking the center of the chiasm.

The next example of a chiasm is from a folktale about a how raccoons got their tails. The chiasm works considerably better in Ch'orti'. The visible structure of the chiasm was altered slightly in the English translation to accommodate English syntax:

Example 2:

*Tari ja'xir ujajpi ejmach,*

*Utz'oki unuk'.*

*Tz'ojka unuk',*

*Ejmach.*

He came here and grabbed the raccoon,

And broke its neck.

The neck,

Was broken,

Of the raccoon.

The 'breaking of the neck' is the highlighted due to its position at the axis of the chiasm.

Example 3 of chiasmus comes from an interview done in Spanish with discussing traditional practices:

Example 3:

*Pero más que todo usamos nuestras propias ideas,*

*nuestra cultura,*

*el que usamos nosotros.*

But more than anything we use our own ideas,

our culture,

that which we use.

It is interesting that the narrator paired "our ideas" with "our own culture." As is so often the case, pairings done in parallel structures can reveal significant insights into

deeper cultural conceptions (Hull 1993:100). Due to their position at the center of the chiasm, "our ideas" and "our own culture" is given emphasis in this text.

The chiasmic structure of the next example comes from the story *Uk'ay e Pekpek*, "The song of the Frog" (with some orthographic alterations) from a collection of Ch'orti' texts in *Utwa'chir e Ojroner Ch'orti'* (Tuyuc and Ramírez 2001:23).

Example 4:

*E pekpek che ke' una'ti'x tuk'a ajk'in twa' ak'axi e jajar che ke' e pekpek xe' chuchu'taka  
xe' uche tya' una'to'b'ix  
akay umorojse ub'ob' twa' usajko'b'  
tya' twa' a'xo'b' uk'ajtyo'b' taka e Katata',  
i ak'aywyo'b' twa' e Katata' uyeb'ta watar e jaja'r  
che ke' tya' utajwyo'b' tya' twa' uk'ajtyo'b' taka e Katata'  
che ke' umorojse ub'ob' i ak'aywyo'b' ayi tono'rob' ak'aywyo'b'  
kochwa' ja'xob' una'to'b' tuk'a ajk'in twa' e katata' uyeb'ta e jaja'r*

Frogs, they say, **already know on what day it will rain**, they say the little frogs do it when they **already know**

They begin **to gather themselves together** to search  
**when they should ask God**

And they croak to God to send the rains

They say that when **they find when to ask God**

They say that **they gather themselves together** and they croak, they say, they croak  
Since **they know on what day God should send the rains**

The chiasm in this case is larger and more complex than the other examples cited previously. As the lines progress they are simultaneously paralleled in reverse fashion starting from the end of the text. Frogs and toads, in Ch'orti' mythology, are considered to be *padrinos*, or 'rainmakers' who have the ability to summon the rains by petitioning God and his angels (Fought 1972:417-418; Wisdom 1940:389, Girard 1995:114, 137, Hull 2000a). The pivotal statement in the story is that the frogs croak in order to have

God send the rains. Appropriately, this line stands alone at the very axis of the chiasm so as to draw attention to it.

### 2.23. *Difrasismos*

As was discussed in Chapter 1, *difrasismos* are defined as "the expression of a broad concept by a pair of complementary elements that are narrower in meaning" (Christenson 2000:17). Oral narratives in Ch'orti' rarely use this poetic device. The only case I have noted is in a variant of the expression *konoj e pak'ab'*, 'human beings' as explained in Chapter 1. During a telling of a legend, an elderly consultant from Pelillo Negro used a different version of this expression:

*K'ani wato'b' tara i para tyempo e konoj e familia ekmay yanimalob' uk'uxi e familia.*

They want to come here and for now humans, animals are descending to eat the people.

This is a scene from the *Kumix Anxer* where his older brothers were building a rock tower to get to heaven. Eagles were making their nests in the cracks of the rocks and were flying down to snatch up the humans on the earth to eat them. The narrator substituted *pak'ab'* for the Spanish term *familia*, which in daily Ch'orti' speech has been reinterpreted to mean 'people'. Importantly, these paired terms again form a single semantic unit that represents the idea of 'human beings'.

## 2.24. The Interaction of Poetics in Narrative

Before finishing this discussion on rhetorical features found in Ch'orti' oral narratives, I think it would be appropriate to give an example of a larger section of text from the most poetic oral narrative in my data. The narrative is that of the *Kumix Anjel*. I recorded this version of the story in the hamlet of Amatillo in 2002. The narrator was an engaging elderly man of more than 90 years. Due to his age and experience with traditional Ch'orti' ceremonies throughout the first half of his life, he was presumably exposed to a significant amount of poetic discourse. More than any other narrator with whom I work, he consistently used a variety of parallel and repetitive forms. The following is the opening few scenes of the legend of the *Kumix Anjer*. I have structured the lines of the story according to natural syntactic breaks as well as poetic breaks, where the subsequent phrase formed the second stich of a couplet.

1. *Ayan inte' kaso mentado chamesna e Kumix Anjel,*
2. *Chamesna ayi e Kumix Anjel umen uyermanob',*
3. *Yaja' umen ayi uyermanob'.*
4. *K'ejcha ixin tu'ti' e rio che.*
5. *I de ayi ayan upoder ub'an e kocha espiritwix ub'an de los Angeles.*
6. *Entonses che ke' yixto yaja'.*
7. *Aktakarna kay kormo'b' tama uch'ich'er e Kumix Anjel.*
8. *Entonse che ke' yak'b'ar a'ru ayi makwi'r e ja',*
9. *tu'yorir e rio a'ru ayi.*
10. *Inton k'otoy ayi e k'ech'uj.*
11. *Uwajpi ayi uk'eche tya' ch'a'r a'ru yar e sitz'.*
12. *Uk'eche ayi ixin che,*
13. *Uk'eche ayi ixin yaja' che.*
14. *Kay ayi uch'ijrse che,*
15. *Kay ayi ch'ijrse ixto ayi e k'ech'uj.*
16. *Entonses kay ch'i',,*
17. *kay ch'i'.*
18. *Entonses kay ayi xana uchamse ayi e mut.*

19. *Uk'eche a'xin uyajk'u unana ayi kocha, "Nana" cha'yi.*
20. *De ayi de repente che uchamse ayi e masa' che uk'eche ayi a'xin che.*
21. *Ayan ayi utata e winikob' k'ech'uj.*
22. *Entonses che ke' k'otoy ayi yaja' awe' ayi uveyejo e k'ech'uj ub'an,*
23. *Ayan uveyejo e ixik k'ech'uj.*
24. *I entonses yixto yaja' tya' war ayi axana anumuy atz'i xe' mero usij.*
25. *Anumuy atz'i to'r e witzir.*
26. *"¿Atatatoka?" cha'yi.*
27. *¿Atu'toka?*
28. *¿Atatatoka? cha'yi.*
29. *Ub'ijnu ayi ke' war a'rena ke' maja'x unana.*
30. *ke' maja'x utata.*
31. *War uwe'se tamar e mentado masa' yaja',*
32. *War uk'eche a'xin.*
33. *Entonses che ke' al fin pensando ayi e Kumix Anjel.*
34. *Entonses ma'chi'xto ayi kay uchamse e masa',*
35. *Ma'chi'xto uk'eche ya'.*
36. *I entonses al fin k'anixto ani ya' ak'ujxa umen e k'ech'uj che.*
37. *I entonses yaja' che ke' ayan ani inte' yar tojrok che ayan ayi yar ukorona,*
38. *e tojrok yaja'.*
39. *I entonses che ke', "Kiki' iran ninana tuk'a war uche" cha'yi.*
40. *Ixin ayi uwira tu't ja' che,*
41. *K'otoy ayi uwira tu't ja'.*
42. *War ayi a'ti e k'ech'uj,*
43. *War ujuk'i u't uyej.*
44. *Che, "Ch'e'n yej,*
45. *ch'e'n yej,*
46. *ch'e'n yej" cha'yi.*
47. *War ayi ujuk'i u't uyej.*
48. *Entonses e tojrok che ke' numuy ayi yeb'a uyok e k'ech'uj,*
49. *Entonses jujra ketpa ayi yar ukorona,*
50. *e korona yaja'.*
51. *Entonses che ke' uya're e Kumix Anjel cha'yi, "Ne'n k'a'pa urye'n" cha'yi.*
52. *"Ch'ujkun" cha'yi.*
53. *"Ayix e korona ya'" cha'yi.*
54. *"Mamajchi' chi' twa' uchamsye't" cha'yi.*
55. *I syerto ke' kochwa axan mamajchi' umen e chamesna.*
56. *Ma'chi ak'ujxa ya' porke' esta bendesido ayi umen e Katata', e Kumix Anjel.*
57. *Entonse che ke' yixto de ayi yo'pa taka ayi.*
58. *B'ajsa ch'ajb'a.*
59. *"Waynen bechu" cha'yi,*
60. *"Waynen" cha'yi.*
61. *Kay ayi b'ajsa ch'ajb'na che.*

62. *T'ab'esna ch'ajb'na tama e ch'akte' che konde yixto ayi yo'pa yaja' taka ayi uwajpi ub'i'r.*
63. *Entonse lo ke' uche ayi e Kumix Anjel ub'asi inte' uk'ab' e cha' che,*
64. *Uch'ab'u che.*
65. *I entonses de ayi lok'oy ayi patir ja'xir che uwira ke' ch'a'r ayi e bulito,*
66. *Yixto ch'a'r ayi e bulito tama uch'akte'.*
67. *I una'ta ayi kisas ke' ja'x e Kumix Anjel uwajpi uk'ab' e cha' che.*
68. *K'a'pa ayi uk'asi u't uyej,*
69. *Uk'asi ayi u't uyej che.*
70. *I entonses cha'yi, "Ak'asi u't niwej byen" cha'yi,*
71. *"Ak'asi u't niwej byen" cha'yi.*
72. *Entonse uyajk'u uvuelta e Kumix Anjel.*
73. *Uch'ub'a e k'ajk' ta pwerta che.*
74. *Entonse uputa ayi ketpa inte' noxi' sutz'tun che,*
75. *Ayan koche tya' turo'n,*
76. *Ayan e nukir tun blanko.*
77. *Ja'xto ayi ketpo'b' tun ayi yaja' b'an che.*
78. *Ja'xto ani akay uk'ajti kocha no'n maxtako'nto.*
79. *Akel tyempo vyejito ja'xto ani ucho'b' kontar.*

1. There is a story already mentioned of when the *Kumix Anxer* was killed,
2. They say the *Kumix Anxer* was killed by his older brothers,
3. There by his older brothers.
4. He was carried away to the bank of a river they say.
5. And from there they say he had power also like the spirits also of the angels.
6. So they say that it was right there.
7. They were helped while fishing with the blood of the *Kumix Anxer*.
8. Then they say that at night he was crying they say in the water,
9. along the banks of the river he was crying they say.
10. So they say that the *Siwanaba* arrived.
11. She grabbed him they say and took him from where the child was lying there crying.
12. They say she carried him away they say,
13. They say she carried him away there they say.
14. She was rearing him they say,
15. The *Siwanaba* they say was rearing him they say.
16. So he was growing up,
17. he was growing up.
18. Then they say he would walk around killing birds they say.
19. He carried them away and gave them to his mother they say like this ("Mom" they say he said).



60. "Go to sleep, child" they say she said.  
 61. They say that he was wrapped up and set down they say.  
 62. He was lifted up and set down on the bed they say when she arrived right there  
 they say she just started her journey.  
 63. Then what the *Kumix Anxer* did was he wrapped up a pestle they say,  
 64. He put it in.  
 65. And then from there they say that he left, they say, outside, they say, to see, they  
 say, a bundle lying there,  
 66. A bundle was lying right there they say in his bed.  
 67. And they say she knew that perhaps it was the *Kumix Anxer* who had grabbed the  
 pestle they say.  
 68. They say she finished breaking her tooth,  
 69. breaking they say her tooth they say.  
 70. And so they say she said, "You broke my tooth, child!" they say she said,  
 71. "You broke my tooth, child!" they say she said.  
 72. The *Kumix Anjel* turned around.  
 73. He built a fire at the door they say,  
 74. Then they say he burned it.  
 75. There remained a huge white limestone stone they say,  
 76. There was one like where we live,  
 77. There is a big white stone.  
 78. They say it was those stones that remained, they say, there in this way, they say,  
 79. It was this that they would tell us like we were children still,  
 80. In that time long ago this is what they would tell.

Line 1 sets the frame for the narrative as "*inte' kaso*," or "a story" about the death of the *Kumix Anxer*. Lines 2 and 3 immediately begin with a couplet with identical parallelism, line-initial ellipsis, and augmentation of the adverb *yaja'*, 'there' in the second verse.

Lines 8-9 contain a synonymous couplet when *Kumix* is thrown in the water and being eaten by the fish. The first verse of the couplet begins at line 8, "he was crying they say in the water," which is synonymously paired with the second verse of the couplet in line 9, "along the banks of the river he was crying they say." It is also possible to analyze these lines a chiasm:

He was crying they say.  
    In the water.  
    Along the banks of the river,  
He was crying they say.

In lines 12-13, which were discussed above, after the *Siwanaba* arrived as saw *Kumix* in the water, the narrator employs nearly exact repetition. Only the adverb *yaja'*, 'there' is augmented (similar to line 3):

12. They say she carried him away they say,
13. They say she carried him away there they say.

This is immediately followed by two more consecutive repeated statements in lines 14-15:

14. She was rearing him they say,
15. The *Siwanaba* they say was rearing him they say.
16. So he was growing up,
17. He was growing up.

With only minor variation, lines 14 and 16 are reiterated in the following lines. As I mentioned above, the repetition in this context creates a durative effect emphasizing the continuous, progressing nature of these events. Line 23 contains a restatement of a portion of what was said in the previous line (22) referring to the fact that 'the *Siwanaba* has a husband'. When a bird flies over the head of *Kumix*, the quoted words of the bird are presented in an identical triplet construction:

26. "Is you father still alive?" they say it said.
27. "Is you father still alive?"
28. "Is you father still alive?" they say it said.



The first couplet is broken by three intervening lines (44-46). Lines 43 and 47 make up both verses of a couplet with an identical structure and content parallelism, except for the additional evidential particle *ayi* 'they say', in line 47. Lines 44-46 have a three-line repetition of the phrase "Grow tooth!" The three repeated elements are enveloped by two evidential particles at line-initial position in line 44 and the line-final point of line 46.

The effect of this repetition is emphatic inasmuch that the *Siwanaba* is coaxing her tooth along to 'grow sharper'. A similar emphasis is created in lines 59-60 where the *Siwanaba* tells *Kumix* to go to sleep so that she can eat him.

59. "Go to sleep, child" they say she said,  
60. "Go to sleep, child" they say she said.

The repetition serves to lull *Kumix* to sleep. Later in lines 68-71, the *Siwanaba* breaks her tooth in her attempt to eat *Kumix*. The narrator highlights this episode in the story through two consecutive repeated phrases.

Example 2:

68. *K'a'pa ayi uk'asi u't uyej,*  
69. *uk'asi ayi u't uyej che.*  
70. *I entonses cha'yi, "Ak'asi u't niwej byen" cha'yi,*  
71. *"Ak'asi u't niwej byen" cha'yi.*

68. The say she finished breaking her tooth,  
69. breaking her tooth they say.  
70. And then they say that she said, "You broke my tooth, child" they say she said,  
71. "You broke my tooth, child" they say she said.

Line 69 deletes line-initial information and augments the evidential *che*, 'they say'. In line 71 there is ellipsis of the previous line's adverbial phrase, "*I entonses*," "And then,"

as well as the quotative/evidential compound particle *cha'yi*, 'they say that she said'.

The repetition serves to both accentuate the pain of the *Siwanaba* and to capitalize on the humorous currency of this moment in the narrative.

This episode in the story ends with the *Kumix Anxer* burning the *Siwanaba* while she is in the house. As the story goes, when the house had finished burning there remained a large white stone in its place. In some hamlets they identify certain large white stones with this event. This important point in narrative is given special emphasis through sequential couplets and repetition:

72. The *Kumix Anjel* turned around.
73. He built a fire at the door they say.
74. Then they say he burned it.

Line 68 begins with an epigram (or monocolon) as it sets the stage for the main event. In line 69, the narrator uses a synonymous parallelism as *Kumix* builds a fire at the door of the *Siwanaba*'s house (line 69) and he burns it down (line 70). Then, in lines 75-77, we are told in triplet form about the large stone that stood where the house once was:

75. They say it was those stones that remained, they say, there in this way, they say,
76. There was one like where we live,
77. There is a big white stone.

The narrator makes an analogy using identical parallelism of the stone mentioned in this story to one in his hamlet. He is, however, quick to dismiss the event as something that is not known empirically. Note the heavy use of evidentials in line 78: "**They say** it was those stones that remained, **they say**, there in this way, **they say**." The narrator further

distances himself from asserting the truth of this account in the final two lines of this episode:

79. *Ja'xto ayi ketpo'b' tun ayi yaja' b'an che,*  
78. *Ja'xto ani akay uk'ajti kocha no'n maxtako'nto,*  
79. *Akel tyempo vyejito ja'xto ani ucho'b' kontar.*

77. They say it was those stones that remained, they say, there in this way, they say,  
78. It was this that they would tell us like we were children still,  
79. In that time long ago this is what they would tell.

These last three lines make up two separate couplets. The first is generated by the repetition of the deictic *ja'xto*, 'it was this (one)' at the beginning of lines 77 and 78. The second is a synonymous nested couplet in line 79 that restates the meaning of line 78 in a different ways. The narrator used code switching in these two lines with the principal verb of each, the Ch'orti' form *uk'ajti*, 'they tell' in line 78 and the partially Spanish form *ucho'b' kontar*, 'they tell' in line 79. In terms of content, these two final couplets conclude the story with a poetically-highlighted disclaimer that everything he has said up until this point is what "they" say.

The narrator of this version of the legend of the *Kumix Anxer* clearly possessed great oratory and narration skills. In addition, as is evident from the poetic structural analysis of this episode alone, he is highly adept at judiciously employing rhetorical devices for poetic effect throughout this narrative. While this example is not representative of the majority of Ch'orti' oral texts today in terms of amount of poetic content, it is certainly indicative of a once more productive poetic tradition associated with oral narratives. The fact that his narrator was well into his nineties certainly

suggests that he has likely enjoyed considerable exposure to this type of poetic structuring in the past.

## **2.25. Conclusion**

The discussion of Ch'orti' genre types and accompanying rhetorical features provided in this chapter clearly shows that poetic discourse is at some level still an active part of oral narrative among the Ch'orti'. Several observations, both broad and specific, can be made from this analysis of Ch'orti' narrative genres and narrative poetics. As a caveat, it should be remembered that the results shown below are based on the data set specified earlier. Also, depending on one's interpretation of what constitutes a 'poetic device', certainly others could be found in this data that are not included below. Table 5 below contains a summary of the frequency of usage of poetic features in the different major Ch'orti' oral narrative genres. I have categorized them using a scale of 1-5, "5" being most common and "1" being least common. It should be remembered that these are *intertextual* comparisons comparing the frequency (or lack thereof) of poetic usage in each genre. A designation of "5" for a particular poetic feature signifies it is very common relatively speaking, or, stated differently, is frequent as far as poetic usage in these genres are concerned.

Table 5. Use of poetic devices in Ch'orti' oral narrative according to genre type

Table Key: 4 = very common, 3 = common, 2 = occasional, 1 = rare, 0 = never used							
Type of parallelism	Folk-tale	Myth	Legend	Joke	Understanding of Celestial Phenomena	Belief	Traditional Practice Explanation
identical parallelism	1	1	4	1	0	1	3
synonymous parallelism	1	0	2	2	1	2	2
augmentative parallelism	1	1	3	0	0	0	3
associative parallelism	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
grammatical parallelism	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
chiasmus	2	0	1	0		0	2
difrasismos	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
triplets	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
ellipsis	1	1	3	0	0	0	4

Folktales made very little use of parallelism in general. Comparatively speaking, Folktales do use Chiasmus more than most other genres (as often as Traditional Practice Explanation). Overall, Myths do not contain many instances of parallelism or many of the other poetic devices mentioned here. This corresponds well with Urban's observation that a myth "is experienced as linear narrative, a story, not as a poetic structure built up from units that are repeated with variation..." (1991:58). Legends, on the other hand, showed a significant amount of most varieties of parallelism. Identical parallelism was by far the most common form found in Legends. Augmentative parallelism was also common throughout the legends in my data set. The only cases of associative parallelism in my data appeared in Legends. Ellipsis in the second line of couplets was also very common among the couplet structures observed in Legends. In fact, no genre used

ellipsis more than Legends. Jokes showed very few cases of the kind of rhetorical devices discussed in this chapter. This category, however, was the least represented in my data, which could have affected the results. Understanding of Celestial Phenomena only showed a few cases of synonymous parallelism and otherwise made very little use of poetic features. Beliefs contained a few instances of identical, synonymous, and grammatical parallelism albeit very infrequently. Excluding these forms of parallelism, Beliefs generally used no other poetic devices. Traditional Practice Explanation was somewhat of a surprise category. It contained, comparatively speaking, a strong tendency to use identical, synonymous, and augmentative parallelism. In addition to a few cases of grammatical parallelism, Traditional Practice Explanations also used chiasmus on a number of occasions. Furthermore, ellipsis was very common in the various types of parallelism used in Traditional Practice Explanations.

From this data and analysis, some broader conclusions can be reached. Jokes, Understanding of Celestial Phenomena, and Beliefs are the genres least likely to make use of rhetorical devices in Ch'orti'. Again, somewhat surprisingly, Traditional Practice Explanation showed a wide range of poetic usage, even though it shares an explanatory nature with Understanding of Celestial Phenomena and Beliefs. If I were to speculate, I would attribute this to the fact that poetic language is a core component of traditional practices, and therefore may be reflected even in explanations of them. Folktales, generally speaking, did not contain a great deal of poetic structuring outside of a fair amount of augmentative couplets and chiasmus. Similarly, Myths were nearly devoid of poetic devices. Legends, conversely, made copious use of many different poetic and

stylistic features. Among all the narrative genres that I have defined for this study, Legends and Traditional Practice Explanation appear to use the most poetic structuring techniques.

Early in Chapter 1, I examined five modern Ch'orti' poems for their poetic content. The most common poetic features in these compositions were identical parallelism (and repetition) synonymous parallelism, simile and metaphor. Overall, the strophic length poetic features match up fairly well as the most common forms of parallelism in both ritual contexts and oral narrative contexts. Synonymous parallelism is not as common in ritual as it is in oral narratives and the modern poems, comparatively speaking. Identical structure and related meaning parallelism is a hallmark of ritual, oral narrative, and modern compositions. Without a doubt, identical structure and related meaning parallelism is the poetic core of all forms of discourse in Ch'orti'. In this we can see a strong thread of continuity from archaic forms of ritual speech, to oral narratives, and into the modern Ch'orti' psyche as the defining rhetorical device in poetic discourse.

Poetic discourse in Ch'orti' oral narratives is almost always traceable to an intended emphatic or emotive affect by the narrator. Oral narrative poetics in Ch'orti' differs substantially from the poetics found in ritual speech only in terms of frequency of occurrence. Ritual language is *based* on poetic structuring whereas oral narratives strategically incorporate it for aesthetic reasons.

## Chapter 3

# Poetic Discourse, Performance, and Literary Conventions

### 3.1. Introduction

The early methodical process of decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing since Etienne Charles Brasseur de Bourbourg and Ernst Förstemann first worked out much of the complicated dating system of the codices has virtually eclipsed any discussion surrounding possible literary qualities of the hieroglyphic script. It was not until the 1970s that hieroglyphic script was sufficiently deciphered to merit any serious literary study. Since the breakthroughs of the 1970s, significant progress has been made in all areas of epigraphic research that now allows, or better, calls for a detailed study of the poetics features relating to verbal art found in Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions. Such verbal art, according to Bauman and Sherzer consists of forms that are "the most conspicuous, attractive, or powerful sectors of the speech activity of any society" (1974:311). In this chapter, I will investigate the poetic language and context of ritual performance within its likely social setting during the Classic period. I will argue for a multi-leveled performance value associated with each poetic recitation in ritual or narrative context. This aspect of the theory of performance includes an emergent subset of goals and purposes that directly affect the artistic outcome of each performance act (Bauman and Sherzer 1974:422; Hanks 1996:190). I hope to elucidate the relationship between oral text and the performative function of the hieroglyphic script of the Classic

Maya in terms of what Houston and Stuart have called a "recitation literacy" (1992:590). I posit a relationship between literacy and poetic discourse in terms of literacy practices of the élite (Street 1993b), drawing a comparison between the use and control of literacy in immediate post-conquest Mesoamerica as a conceptual model of literacy practices in the Classic period. Poetics, I argue, figure prominently into the advanced scribal and priestly knowledge that would have been even more pronounced with the poetic recitation of hieroglyphic texts, especially in the realm of understanding and interpreting metaphorical imagery. I will, however, argue against a narrowly defined, static model of élite records produced solely to enforce or extend power of the ruling class (cf. Thomas 1994:49) contending instead that each monument provides the structure for fluid elaboration and modification in performance (Houston 1994; Hull 1993; Monaghan 1994). Power, in my view, is primarily located in the performance of the text, not just simply the presence of text. I will also argue that poetic textual elaboration was an integral part of ancient Maya performance. Performance, according to Freidrich, must be taken into account in any definition of poetics (1979:492). The ability of the scribe or priest to elaborate in poetic fashion was a crucial aspect of gaining control *over* the text that, according to Bowman and Woolf, would then allow for "power to be exercised *through* [the] text" (1994:8). I will also investigate the question of 'sacred text' in terms of either alterability in performance or post-reading elaboration and explanation. Did the texts of the Maya contain complete *narrative integrity* or were they written with the intention of being added to in performance by the priests? Again, by "narrative integrity," I mean a text that is not overtly skeletal, i.e. not awaiting elaboration in order

to fill out its message and/or poetic structure. This query, while crucial in attempting to determine the nature of elaboration, may not be provable empirically even through a comparative finding of similar phenomena among other Mesoamerican groups. Such comparisons will, however, certainly offer alternatives for interpreting patterns that may emerge from this glyphic study, indicating ways in which Maya priests could have made use of elaboration in performance.

Finally, I investigate the role of "singer" in both the Classic and Post-Classic periods as an avenue of understanding the role of performance and text for the ancient Maya. I argue that the office of "singer" in Maya society was much closer to an "oral poet" of sorts, one who was responsible for reciting historical and literary narratives. This discussion sheds light on the notions of performance, text, and poetics as interactive processes for the ancient Maya. With this emphasis on viewing texts in their performative contexts, I hope to create a conceptual model from both a modern and ancient perspective, illustrating the intimate relationship between poetic discourse and elaborative performance, irrespective of the medium for recitation.

### **3.2. Deciphering Poetics**

In the age prior to the first major decipherments in Maya hieroglyphic writing, opinion varied greatly on the nature of the hieroglyphic script. In fact, very few scholars believed that the glyphs were anything but pictographic representations. In the late nineteenth century, Cyrus Thomas was one of the first who attempted to systematically prove his theory that the glyphs were phonetically based. Other key researchers of the

time such as Eduard Seler and Leon de Rosny thought the hieroglyphs to be strictly pictographic, not phonetic. Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg, on the other hand, did consider the possibility that the system was alphabetic. Whorf revived the idea that the script was phonetic in the 1930s, but his approach suffered from a faulty methodology that prohibited any advancements in decipherment. The great Mayanist J. Eric Thompson made considerable contributions to the early stages of decipherment. Out of the forty plus readings proposed by Thompson, a remarkable percentage of them have stood the test of modern scholarship and are generally accepted today (Kelley 1962:14). The next crucial step in decipherment came from the Russian scholar Yuri Knorozov in 1952 who, using Diego de Landa's "alphabet" recorded in the early sixteenth century, deciphered a series of signs in the Dresden Codex that demonstrated conclusively that Maya hieroglyphic writing was indeed partially a phonetic system. On the heels of this major breakthrough came the brilliant observation by Tatiana Proskouriakoff that the inscriptions contained distributional patterns indicating the presence of historical information recorded in the script. With the realization that the glyphs were both phonetic and historical, the foundation was laid for a steady stream of structural advancements in the early 1970s stemming from the *Primera Mesa Redonda de Palenque* in 1973. From that time, the significant progress has been made in the decipherment of syllables and logographs, perhaps none more ground breaking than David Stuart's "Ten Phonetic Syllables" published in 1987. These meetings were crucial in determining syntactic patterns and grammatical categories. The once mysterious and enigmatic code of the ancient Maya had been broken, at least its underlying principles of operation.

### 3.3. Poetics and Progress in Decipherment

Despite the major strides made in decipherment in the early 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the inability of scholars to read significant portions of the hieroglyphic inscriptions outside of dates, names, and general interpretations of certain 'historical' verbs (cf. Proskouriakoff), precluded any discussion of possible literary or stylistic features in the hieroglyphic script. It was, however, information from Proskouriakoff's groundbreaking article in 1960 "*Historical Implications of a Pattern of Dates at Piedras Negras*" that allowed Floyd Lounsbury to identify a semantic couplet in the inscriptions of Palenque in 1978 (Lounsbury 1980:107-115). On the Temple of the Cross at C17-D17 the first line of the couplet reads **i-hu-li ma-ta-wi-li**, for *i huli matawil*, "and then he arrived at *Matawil*" (figure 9). After a Calendar Round date of 9 Ik' 15 Keh at E2-F2, the second stich of the couplet appears with an enigmatic glyph showing a hand resting on top of the *kab'* 'earth' glyph with phonetic complementation. Lounsbury inferred a meaning of something akin to 'he touched the earth' from this glyph. The glyphic expression could then be glossed as "he arrived at *Matawil*...his 'touching the earth'." Next, Lounsbury was able to relate this to a similar couplet in Ch'ol, *huli ti panimil, tel lum* "to arrive on the topside, to touch earth," also a metaphor for birth (Lounsbury 1980:113). It is eminently appropriate that the first concrete identification of a couplet in the hieroglyphic script was made with the aid of a modern attestation in a modern Mayan language, thereby setting a precedent for future lines of investigation. The importance of Lounsbury's discovery can hardly be overstated. Poetic features, long known to be part of spoken Mayan languages, now appeared to be present in the hieroglyphic texts. The

entire dynamic of decipherment was permanently altered from being primarily a grammatical endeavor to including questions of stylistic features and narrative discourse structures.

### **3.4. The Language of the Élites**

Beyond semantic couplets such as the one identified by Lounsbury, does the hieroglyphic script make use of other literary figures? Houston et al. (2000) have argued convincingly that the hieroglyphic inscriptions reflect a highly conservative prestige language, comparable in use to Middle Egyptian in Egypt, which was not necessarily reflective of the language spoken by the majority of the Classic period population. It could be argued that a language of the élite would likely employ a higher degree of literary figures, metaphorical extensions and archaic or simply distinct vocabulary in an effort to create distance between itself and spoken speech. It is not uncommon for members of an élite class to employ special lexical registers as a kind of "secret language" (Agha 1999:216). The presence of such ritual languages is well documented in Mesoamerica. For example, Marcus has suggested the Mixtecs the élite used a "ritual language" in conjunction with their 260-day almanac (Marcus 1992:79). Fray Juan de Mijangos noted the presence of "*frases y modos de hablar, elegantes...*" among the Mixtecs which included distinctive names for the body parts of the king that were different from the common terms of reference (Escalante 1994:7). Likewise, the Aztecs had a "metaphoric communication" that was "understood by the few whose business it was to interpret the calendar, mathematics, glyphs, and cosmic phenomena" (Heyden

1986:43). According to León-Portilla, the ritual language of the Aztecs, known as *tecpillahtolli*, "*palabra noble*," was "*cuidadoso*" and "*elegante*" as taught in the famous Calmecac school for priests (1991:14). Alarcón reports that the among Aztec élites there existed a special language, known as *nahualtocaitl*, that he describes as a

*...lenguaje dificultoso, y casi ininteligible, assi porque el demonio su inventor con la dificultad del lenguaje que se halla en todos los conjuros invocaciones y encantos afecta su veneracion y estima, como porque el lenguaje quanto mas miguras y torpos tuuiere tanto es mas difficil de entender, y el que refiero no es otra cosa que vna continuacion de metaphoras, no solo en los verbos, sino aun en los nombres substantiuos y ajetiuos, y tal ves passa a vna continuada alegoria" (1892:127-128, cited in Hinz 1970:34; original orthography retained).*

Alarcón's characterization in 1629 of this ritual language as something invented by "*el demonio*" in order to explain its complexity and difficulty is reminiscent of Mendel's (1612) expression of disdain at the Maya priests' "barbarous and outlandish words which the people did not understand" (1941:222-223).

For the ancient Maya, Dütting has suggested the existence of a "sacred language" for the priests and hierarchy "which certainly emphasized metaphors and hidden ritualistic expressions of great ambiguity" (1978:210). Colonial sources mention the use of Zuyua, a "densely metaphorical" (Coggins 1992:99) language employed in the sixteenth century in the Yucatan by priests and ruling élite. A prospective noble was quizzed with metaphoric riddles to see whether he could accurately decipher the complex imagery, thereby proving his worthiness and ability in this high-level linguistic register. According to Coggins (1992), Zuyua was significantly more metaphoric than common speech. She writes:

This "language" was probably in part the result of a bilingualism that sensitized the speakers to wordplay, thus stimulating the conscious use of metaphor, of homophony (different words with one pronunciation), of synonymy (different words with one pronunciation), and especially of polysemy (one word with many meanings) to insure that the esoteric knowledge of the rulers remain inaccessible to the uninitiated.

This effort to restrict esoteric matters through language is one of the motivations behind the use of poetic and ritualized language by the élite (other factors will be investigated later in this study). The active use of Zuyua in the Yucatan when the Spaniards arrived provides an ancient precedent for a ritual language among the ancient Maya élite. Stross, on the other hand, has deemphasized the metaphorical connection between paired elements in these "riddles." He notes instead that homophony and punning in a Mijean language may account for some of the pairings (Stross 1983). The books of *Chilam Balam*, the *Popol Vuh*, and many other post-conquest documents written in Mayan languages show an extreme tendency towards highly poetic features and structures that are distinctive in large measure from everyday Mayan speech. As will be shown later, the language of Ch'orti' healing rites is highly esoteric to the point where it is not understood in parts by the healers themselves. Townsend et al. have noted a similar situation among the Ixil Maya of Cotzal whose ritual prayers "contain both archaic and literal (Spanish) morphological, grammatical, and semantic renderings" to such an extent that few people understand even half of their words (1980:21). Ritual languages, however, do not necessarily have to be incomprehensible to the layperson in every respect (see Bauman 1984:17). In highly conservative communities where religious life

is so closely intermeshed with daily life, we could assume a certain degree of familiarity with some aspects of a ritual language by the average adult in a community (as is the case with many Maya groups today). In fact, Sherzer points out that among the Kuna of Panama "there is an intimate relationship between colloquial and ceremonial speech according to which one phonological possibility sometimes exploited in colloquial speech (the underlying form) takes precedence in ceremonial speech" (1984:136). 'Ritual' or 'ceremonial' forms can appear side by side with colloquial ones. The distinguishing aspects of a ritual language could be metaphorical phrases, specialized vocabulary, and additional poetic structures and devices within the general framework of the spoken language. There can be degrees of distinction in ritual speech dependant on the community. For example, among the Tzotzil of Chamula, both laypersons and ritual officials use what they term as "ritual speech" when discussing ritual concepts on an elevated plane (Gossen 1984:107; cf. England 1993:109). The extreme alternative to this scenario is a ritual language that is not reflective of spoken speech and not understood by the general population at all. For the texts of the ancient Maya, while certainly conservative in retaining archaic forms, I believe they were also distinguished from the daily speech to some degree by metaphors, poetic structures, and ritual vocabulary. This partially distinctive parlance at times may have reflected more the "ritual speech" of the day heard in prayers, curing rites, prognostications, and other ceremonies. In fact, the ancient hieroglyphic texts, as will be shown later, mirror in both form and content most of the literary styles that appear in later post-Colonial documents arguing for a profound literary continuity from past to present.

### 3.5. Poetics and Poetry

It would be prudent to begin this discussion of poetic devices in the hieroglyphic texts by asking whether the poetic and literary features of the hieroglyphic inscriptions truly rise to the level of being considered "literature"? A crucial determination in any textual analysis concerns the distinction between "literature" (i.e. *belles lettres*) and the use of literary techniques. At what point does a text become "literature"? Across cultures the language of poetry is usually distinct in some way from daily speech. In formal Sanskrit poetry, according to Chaitanya, "Poetic expression uses language; but it is startlingly different qualitatively, from ordinary linguistic discourse" (1969:1). In ancient Egypt, "The language of literature was archaic, and fairly remote from everyday speech, with formal diction and grammar which only occasionally displays colloquial features" (Parkinson 1997:9). Parkinson clarifies for us that such an archaic form of speech "does not mean that poetry was necessarily inaccessible to common people, only that it was distinct from normal speech" (1997:9). Bains similarly notes that the language of Literary Late Egyptian is "distinctive" and is "is far from the language of contemporaneous documents" (1996a:159-160). Houston et. al (2000) cogently argued that the language of the Classic period Maya inscriptions was a conservative Ch'olan language of the élite that was not necessarily reflective of the language that was spoken at each site. Recently, Lacadena and Wichmann have further defined certain isoglosses of the Classic period by locating a primary Eastern Ch'olan prestige form as well as important local variations at certain sites of a Western and Yucatekan dialect (2000:11). Poetic language, in general, often employs a higher degree of literary features and

specialized terminology that distinguishes it from common speech. It cannot be emphasized enough, however, that the mere existence of literary techniques does not itself imply the presence of literature. This point has important ramifications for studying the 'poeticness' and literary character of ancient Maya inscriptions. While there are currently roughly fifteen thousand hieroglyphic texts (of various lengths) on a variety of media, what percentage of these could accurately be described as works of "literature"? If a definition of "literature" is equivalent to the tradition of *belles lettres*, I would argue that only a small portion of the available corpus could legitimately be classified as such. For the most part, Maya hieroglyphic texts encompass historical, ceremonial, mythological, calendric, and practical matters, often recorded in pithy, space-conscious form. Furthermore, it might be argued that certain genres were more suitable for poetic structuring than others. However, while the content of some inscriptions could be interpreted at first glance as not appropriate for the use of poetic and stylistic features, surprisingly, the use of poetic devices is not precluded by any known genre in the inscriptions (see Chapter 4). Maya scribes seem to have felt free to include any number of poetic features within any genre of text, regardless of its thematic content. In other words, even calendrical notations can be (and often were) expressed in highly poetic fashion. Even subjects such as warfare were commonly referred to using the *difrasismo to'k' pakal* (lit. flint-shield) and larger parallel constructions. Kiparsky (1976:88) has noted that

The language of oral literature does not differ qualitatively from ordinary language. It does differ quantitatively in the extent and frequency of its use of bound phraseology, especially, but not exclusively, when the meter is strict.

In this light, we can imagine that poetics were part of ancient Maya discourse at a very pragmatic level. Rather than attempting to create extensive works of "poetry" in the formal sense, often the ancient Maya seem to have been more occupied with fortifying their texts with poetic features as a way of adding ritual efficacy or emphasis to a particular section, usually without any conscious effort to compose *belles lettres*. There are, however, instances where the Maya scribes clearly intended to structure the majority or even the entire narrative in poetic form, adorning the text with multiple poetic devices and metaphorical referents. In such cases, I would argue that these texts rise to the level of "literature" in its fullest sense. In order to clarify my use of the term, it would be prudent to further investigate the notion of "literature" in a broader context of defining "poetry" and "poetic discourse" and how this definition might be applied to Maya hieroglyphic texts.

Is there an ostensible difference between poetic language and poetry? Gumbrecht has cautioned against taking for granted "the romantic notion of literature" as well as the "tendency to attribute the status of "literature" to any text that could be used in the function of mediating between the normative image of society and everyday experience" (1996:8). Furthermore, "a not sufficiently skeptical application of the concept of literature," Gumbrecht continues, "may also run the risk of producing effects of homogenization and impressions of homogeneity that are as problematic as the effects of

isolating literature from its discursive environment" (1996:15). A clear definition of poetic discourse and poetry, then, is of primary importance to any study of stylistic features in Mayan languages.

Egyptologists have grappled with a similar difficulty in attempting to characterize the literary status of Egyptian texts throughout time and across genres. Parkinson laments the complete absence of ancient criticism or "explicit indications" of just how the Egyptians determined "literature" and suggests that scholars are "left with deductions from the contexts of the manuscripts and from the works themselves" in order to assess what the Egyptians considered "literature" (1997:2). Tait notes that some Demotic Egyptian texts "sit very awkwardly between the literary and the documentary" (Tait 1996:178). For Parkinson, "Religious texts are most difficult to distinguish from literature: they are stylistically close and both share a fundamental aim of comprehending reality" (1996b:308). Egyptian texts can be classified as "literary," according to Eyre, when "they have a deliberate artistic form appreciated as such by the audience" (Eyre 1996:432). For Quirke, "frame and context are more important than length and content in determining whether a text was composed to secure good health (non-literary), or without such an immediate pragmatic affect in mind (literary) (1996:267). The preponderance of historical inscriptions in Egypt poses a particular difficulty in assigning them *a priori* to a non-literary class of texts. Simpson argues that there is a "literary/*belles lettres* component in many, if not all historical texts" since "almost all historical texts are in effect unadulterated propaganda, frequently in heavily literary form" (1996:442). Eyre sees commonalities in historical texts and classical *belles lettres* on the literary level of

performance "arts" (1996:433). Hawks reminds us that the key concept in poetics is "a concern, not with *content*, but with the *process* by which content is formulated" (1977:158). Textual content, then, may not preclude certain genres from a designation as "literary." In fact, as Loprieno (1996:42) has stated,

Many Egyptian texts will strive for aesthetic elegance and employ certain prosodic devices regardless of the discourse to which they belong, and to a certain extent regardless of the nature of the information they convey. What makes literary texts deserving of a discrete treatment is their *primary* function, which can be described as "poetic," i.e. self-referentially oriented towards the message itself...

Textual self-referentiality is the principal determining factor in classifying a text as "literary." Words in poetry, then, according to Hawks, "have the status not simply of vehicles for thoughts, but of objects in their own right, autonomous concrete entities" which, in Saussurian terms, "cease to be 'signifiers' and become 'signifieds'..." by means of devices like rhyme, meter, rhythm (1977:64). Loprieno (1996a:43) expands upon this to include three "heterogeneous criteria" that can be used in assigning a text to the "domain of literature":

(a) *fictionality*, with the problem of the distinction between referential and self-referential discourse; (b) *intertextuality*, connected with the question of literary types; (c) *reception*, which touches the concepts of authorship and the classic.

For Hawks, verbal art is "auto-referential" as "its own subject" and "does not function as a transparent 'window' through which the reader encounters the poem's or the novel's 'subject'" (1977:86). Parkinson likewise stresses that Egyptian literature texts "mingle the

general and the particular; they are self-conscious and concerned with self-definition and expression" (1997:3). Thus, "self-referentially" and 'self-consciousness' could be considered core indicators for a true work of literature. Such implicit narrative forms of self-commentary and self-reference allow us to view the "texture" of the text itself (Babcock 1984:72). Furthermore, this "palpability of signs" is itself promoted by the 'poetic' function of language (Hawks 1977:86). Loprieno also reminds us that while the simple presence of "stylistic devices" such as oratorical style, prosodic structure, and *parallelismus membrorum* can be enough to "assess the literary nature of a text," such poetic categories are "widespread in the Ancient Near East as well as in later literary history." Significantly, if these criteria were the sole basis for determining "literature," "funerary corpora would score higher than belles lettres; the same would hold true for cultic texts in *égyptien de tradition* as opposed to demotic tales in Ptolemaic Egypt" (Loprieno 1996a:43). According to Chaitanya, "The mere fact that a metrical medium is employed and sometimes a gifted writer makes the technical thing readily attractive, as in the case of *Lilavati* in Mathematics, does not entitle these works to be called poetry" (1969:9). In other words, strict classifications based on the presence or absence of certain stylistic features will not produce an accurate assessment of literary genres. Instead, it must be recognized that poetic devices can be employed in any context or genre for reasons of affect, without then being obliged to label such texts as works of "literature." Jakobson, for example, has noted that in India even jingles and Sanskrit scientific treatises are composed in verse and "make use of poetic function" (Jakobson 1960:359). "Thus verse," Jakobson continues, "actually exceeds the limits of poetry, but at the same

time verse always implies poetic function" (Jakobson 1960:359). Poetic discourse, in my view, is a tool that is not reserved exclusively for highly literary texts and *belles lettres*, but instead can be effectively used at any level of discourse for a number of emphatic or emotive purposes. Bains, for example, found that in texts from the XVIII dynasty in Egypt, "creativity in literary composition is visible principally in royal inscriptions, autobiographies, and hymns" and that these genres "belong to the category of "useful" texts rather than belles letters" (1996a:162). This important distinction between "*belles lettres*" and "useful" texts that make use of similar poetic devices punctuates the inherent difficulty of implied categories for determining "literature." The vital point I wish to stress is that a given text could make intermittent use of poetic devices without itself being "literature" per se.

### **3.6. Drama and Ritual**

The role of the audience in the performance of texts has received very little attention in Maya studies. Much of the hesitation to address this issue stems from a lack of information on the nature of performance in the Classic period. Elaborate scenes on ceramics, murals, and carved monuments attest to the often ostentatious nature of ancient Maya drama and ritual. Graffiti at Tikal and other sites also preserve perhaps glimpses from a spectator's viewpoint of several of these presentations. The social context of dance scenes, processions, textual recitation, and performance of songs in Classic period iconography is not always readily apparent. Were these dramatic performances for the general public, local royalty, visiting dignitaries, or rituals for the gods? In terms of oral

recitation, the question has particular relevance for determining the audience and its role in the performance. Rappaport posited a fine distinction between the realization of drama and ritual (1979:177). While they resemble each other in certain ways, drama, according to Rappaport, entails an audience that watches, whereas ritual implies the participation of a congregation (1979:177). Rappaport's dichotomy, however, fails to take into account an emergent process of negotiated meaning that takes place in oral recitation and performance between performer and audience, arguably an aspect of drama more so than perhaps ritual. There are many variables that contribute to the outcome of any oral performance. Bauman (1986:3-4) suggests four primary situational factors are involved in the structure of performance:

1. Participants' identities and roles
2. The expressive means employed in performance
3. Social interactional ground rules, norms, and strategies for performance and criteria for its interpretation and evaluation
4. The sequence of actions that make up the scenario of the event

For Bauman, this emergent quality in performance "resides in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participants, within the context of particular situations" (1984:38). Bauman further stresses the importance of an implicit collaboration in the construction of the text in each performance (Bauman 1984:43). "The act of sharing the text with the reader or listener," according to Camitta, "is a kind of performance that makes writing a collaborative venture between author and an audience composed of readers or listeners" (Camitta 1993:237). According to Hanks, "The special responsibility that a verbal artist assumes

in 'performance' is...a metalinguistic phenomenon, insofar as it amounts to recasting the relation between the expression itself and the participants in its production (the performer and the audience)" (Hanks 1996:194). For example, Solomon found with Quechua verbal dueling "the relationship between the singers themselves in the performance of coplas... suggests that all those present during the event were indeed involved in a cooperative intertextual cocreation of the performance" and that "the order in which the participants sang the coplas was not fixed but was emergent in performance" (1994:396). Bauman conceptualizes this process as a "creation of social structure" accomplished in performance (1984:43). In oral performance, as Burkhart has succinctly put it, "There are no monologues or soliloquys, only dialogues" (1996:408). The receiver may directly influence the outcome of a given performance by providing certain stimuli to the transmitter (Dundes 1968:119). Analogously, Eyre argues that Egyptian literature was "for performance, not silent or private reading" but "was a social rather than a private activity" (Eyre 1996:423-424). Parkinson also cautions that despite the presence of some Egyptian manuscripts in tombs, "we should not imagine a private person reading alone; rather—and perhaps primarily—the compositions were probably recited at a formal gathering, like a soirée"(1997:7). For the ancient Maya, according to Houston, "...reading was not silent, and a tradition of oral discourse, or reciting from memory and of public performance, still represented the principal means of aesthetic and intellectual satisfaction" (1994:30). It is in the arena of performance where texts are actually 'created' in a fluid exchange between performer and audience in which "performers manipulate the basic linguistic resources with which important aspects of culture are re-created through

performance" (Solomon 1994:379). Camitta argues further that the "collaboration between author and audience that takes place during the creation of a text points to the role that writing has *vis-à-vis* culture" (1993:239-9). For Burkhart, an oral performer "is directly engaged in a social transaction with at least one listener, and listeners may participate in various ways in the reading" (1996:408). The tacit understanding of participation begins with the "audience's expectation that the performer will display communicative competence" (Bauman 1984, in Solomon 1994:396; cf. Bauman 1986:3). The performer, conversely, assumes that the audience knows "how to look and what to see" (Collins 1991:17).

The social interaction that accompanies performance has the effect of creating 'culture' and solidifying identities in a mutual exchange between performer and audience, reshaping the experience for both parties (Camitta 1993:239). Solomon argues against a unitary "purpose" or "function" for all performances seeing instead "an example of how the verbally artistic practices of members of one temporarily bounded social group, brought together in a moment of performance, served to create and stress identities appropriate to that moment and for those participants" (Solomon 1994:405). In this context, verbal art emerges as "a form of mediation between the socially defined producer(s) and receivers(s)..." (Hanks 1996:187). Meaning must then be viewed as continually evolving in performance, and not a phenomenon bound exclusively to the written text. For Bauman, a community's "social structure" is emergent in such performances where "communicative interaction" is accomplished (1984:43). According to Sherzer, narrative lines "are marked according to a coparticipant dialogic interactional

structure in which an addressee responds with one of a set of ratifiers after each line" (1987:105). Burns notes that exchange and dialogue are key features of Yukatekan oral literature (1980:4; 1983:19-23). In Yukatekan ethnopoetics, recitation often includes a responder in addition to the narrator and the audience. The role of the responder, a person with expertise in narrative performance, is to sit near the main narrator and to respond at any point in the recitation. Stories then become "the result of two people actively engaged in dialogue" rather than a monologic address (Burns 1980:5). The dialogue can be elevated to a higher poetic level when the two participants make use of semantic or syntactic couplets, one reciting the first stich and the other the second of the stanza. Burns (1980:5) cites the following example:

(N) "Jesus, he was smelling..."  
(R) "...he smelled the odor."

Sherzer has found similar dialogic interjections during the *arkan kae*, or "ritual greeting" between chiefs in which one chief talks and the other responds with "*teki*," 'so it is,' a mix of gathering house chanting and "spontaneous and informal verbal interactions" (1998:457). This performative pattern is reminiscent of Quechua verbal dueling where "ideally a single person never sings two coplas in a row" (Solomon 1994:387). While this level of participation in performance by the responder is not necessarily broadly applicable to a larger discussion of the interactional relationship between performer and audience in Classic Maya performance, it seems plausible to posit a more active audience role in performance and the cocreation of meaning in context for the Classic period Maya.

Burns discovered a traditional form of presentation of the *Santo Huunoob* among the Maya of X-cacal near Señor in East Central Quintana Roo that I believe has important implications for understanding the role of performance and poetry for the ancient Maya. While standing in front of the church two scribes recite "prayers, episodes from myths, and other sacred language" (Burns 1980:6). Burns further describes this process as "two "scribes," *ah dzibo'ob*, who are responsible for keeping the books, stand in front of audiences of five to six hundred people and take turns reading passages aloud, improvising on the lines or *thaan hahaldios* written in the books (Burns 1983:23-23). It is not hard to imagine a similar situation in the Classic period in which written texts served as a backdrop to an elaborated oral performance of the text. In African oral literature, this type of "fluidity of the detailed wording," according to Finnegan, was "dependent on the circumstances and personnel involved" (1976:133). She also asserts that the emphasis in African oral literature is "on variability, unique performance and balance of creativity/tradition..." (1976:129). Finnegan further remarks that "the two really salient points ...are, first its variability: the absence of the single correct version; and second, the unique nature of each performance by the composer/performer: the poem or story as delivered, as a unique creation, on that particular occasion" (1976:128). I suggest that Classic period Maya oral performers similarly negotiated meaning depending on the audience and occasion, and that actual written content was in no way a limiting factor in performance. Texts most likely served as a type of "guarantor of authenticity" for the recitation with elaboration (Leibsohn 1994:171). It was in performance, however, that sociocultural meaning was crystallized during poetic recitations and elaborations.

When we contextualize performance in this way, according to Mohaghan, "we are beginning to see performance not just as a framework for understanding how Mesoamerican people used these texts, but as integral to our understanding of the texts themselves..." (1994:88-89).

### **3.7. Oral Recitation: The Role of the Singer**

"Verbal art in preconquest Mesoamerica," according to Burkhart, "was predominantly an art of the spoken word, an art of oratory and of song" (1996:407). The art of speaking and other vocal skills, such as song, were highly valued in ancient Mesoamerica society. Fray Diego Durán reported that among the Aztecs "there were great orators and speech-makers who on any occasion could talk at length and beautifully and most delicately, filling their addresses with profound and remarkable metaphors" (1964 [1581]:50). Bricker notes that for the Tzotzil of Zinacateco, "A song is identified by the couplets which compose it, not by the music which accompanies it" (1974:373). The common term in hieroglyphic texts and many modern Mayan languages for 'lord' is *ajaw*. Houston and Stuart have recently suggested the etymology of this word as deriving from *\*aj-* 'he who' and *\*aw* 'to shout, meaning 'he of the shout' (1996:266). Houston and Taube (2000:273) point to the Colonial Tzotzil entry from Laughlin (1988:II:569) of *k'opoj*, 'speak', which is the same as 'become a lord'. This would make it equivalent to the Nahuatl term *tlatoāni* 'ruler' which is based on the verbal root *tlatoa* 'to speak'. In both of these examples, it is the ability of the king to 'speak' in a particular way that is somehow

prerequisite or at least highly admired of one in this position. Oratory skills, then, were deemed an essential quality of rulership (Houston and Taube 2000:276).

In the early sixteenth century, Diego de Landa recorded the existence of an official he simply called "*cayom*" (in proper orthography, *k'ayom*). *K'ayom* in Yukatek means 'singer' (*k'ay* is the verbal root 'to sing' and *-om* is an agentive suffix). Landa makes a single reference to a "Cayom" as an assisting official during a youth purification rite:

They then took a large vessel of wine, and having placed it in the middle they offered it to the gods, and with devout supplication they begged them to accept that little gift from those children; and calling another official who assisted them, whom they called "Cayom," they gave it to him to drink, which he did without taking a breath; for they say that to stop to take breath would be a sin (Tozzer 1941:106).

This cursory reference only reveals that the "Cayom" served a mid-priest position at this purification ceremony. The text is silent as to any additional function related to this office. The Cordemex Yukatek dictionary does provide some information on the nature of this title (Barrera Vásquez 1980:391-392). The title *ahk'ayom* is defined as *cantor, oficial eclesiástico que asistía al sacerdote* (singer, ecclesiastical official who assisted the priest). In order to reconstruct in some measure the function of the *k'ayom* for the ancient Maya, we must investigate the very notion of singing and oral recitation in relation to the royal court and within the public sphere. Moreover, only a 'native' definition of what constitutes 'poetry' for the Maya will allow us to fully appreciate the intricacies of the Maya poet as singer, official, and as oral performer. Therefore, what follows attempts to

capture the essence of what we might call native Mesoamerican poetic tradition from 'native' points of view, using the indigenous languages themselves for guidance.

Singing has always formed an integral part of performance in Central and South American cultures (Arias-Larreta 1976:147, 207). In the Popol Vuh, the monkey gods Jun Batz' and Jun Chowen are said to be *ajbix*, or "singers." Tedlock and Tedlock note that "their skills may have extended to the composition of spoken prayers; such as is the case with the contemporary Quiché ajbix" (1985:123-124; B. Tedlock 1982a:62, 66). In modern Tzeltalan communities, songs "embody traditions that are to be passed on from generation to generation" (Stross 1974:224). Gossen notes that among the Tzotzil of Chamula song "is a form of language addressed to supernaturals or giving them information about the progress of a ritual." Furthermore, the structure of song "is an extreme statement of redundancy, for the musical form and couplet structure make it possible to repeat them *ad infinitum* until the ritual events they accompany have concluded" (Gossen 1984:108). Stross has defined several native song categories for the Tzeltal of Tenejapa: 1) standards, 2) women's improvised songs, and 3) men's improvised songs. According to Stross, couplets (often corresponding to four measures) in the form of parallel syntax are a common feature of many of these songs (1975a:320-321, 328). The poetic competence and verbal skills of the singer is regularly evaluated by the audience (1975a:329). Importantly, Stross identifies the processes of "creative conformity," what he defines as "novelty within the system of rules," and "dynamic novelty," or the "violation of some or all of the rules of the system," the former being more appreciated by the audience than the latter (1975a:330, 345-347). This notion of a

creative conformity and dynamic novelty may have implications for the discussion below on elaboration of text in the Classic period.

How did the role of singer correlate with the recitation of oral poetry and historical narratives for the ancient Maya? First, it is important to state that the definition of a 'singer' for ancient Mesoamerica would have represented something very different from that of a modern-day western perception of the term. As Davidson (2000:30) has noted, "The idea of "singing" cannot be universalized culturally, except to the extent that all singing is a matter of performance." In Tzeltal, for example, the term *k'ay* refers not only to human singing but also to the sound drums make, where as the sound from flutes uses a different root, *ok'* (Brian Stross, personal communication 2002).<sup>35</sup> In Ch'orti', *k'ay* can refer to the vocal sounds of certain animals such as birds and frogs, but not to other animals such as pigs or cats. I believe that 'singers' during the Classic period functioned primarily as performers of historical and mythological narratives from memory or with the aid of written texts. Houston has previously noted that among the ancient Maya "historical tales and other narratives were often sung or paralleled by oral disquisition—that is, they conformed to a pattern of recitation literacy" (Houston 1994:34). Similarly, the Aztec pictorial manuscripts, far from being reserved for priestly or royal activities, were related or sung before audiences (Boone 1994:72). Aztec singers were upper class officials whose responsibility it was to recount through song historical tales, battles, and other narratives. Durán mentions that these composers also "created chants about

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<sup>35</sup> The Lacandon Maya actually mold the features of *K'ayum*, the "Lord of song and music," on the front of drums (McGee 1990:67).

grandeur of and praises to the gods" (Durán 1971:299). Further detail about the role Aztec singers is provided by Durán:

In their kingdoms songs had been composed describing their feasts, victories, conquests, genealogies, and their extraordinary wealth. I have heard these *cantares* sung many times in public dances, and even though they were in honor of their native lords, I was elevated to hear such high praise and notable feasts.

The statement corroborates well the report of Ixtlilxochitl who specifically noted that the wise men of the sixteenth century who were in charge of painting the books taught "from memory all the songs that preserved *their learning and history...*" (emphasis mine) (1975:1:527). Sullivan has described such songs as "the highest achievement in verbal art among the Aztec" (1986:9). There are scores of depictions from documents and monuments from the area of the Valley of Mexico of priestly individuals with 'speech scrolls' emanating from their mouths that probably indicate 'singing' rather than 'speech' (cf. Hull 2000b:10). For example, scattering scenes on the walls at Techinantitla at Teotihuacan show a series of priests scattering some substance as they walk towards headdresses and other paraphernalia on the ground. Speech scrolls emanate from their mouths. An early Nahuatl poem composed in couplets and *difrasismos* provides a possible link with these scenes to singing (Maxwell and Hanson 1992:169):

Before the idol bundle, before the coffer  
He intones it.  
He scatters, he sprinkles  
The turquoise, the precious stones.  
They fall shining, they fall smoking  
They do not fall in vain  
God is realized with him there,  
God comes to him alone.

Concerning the relationship of this passage to the scattering scenes at Teotihuacan I have previously written:

In this poem someone approaches sacred paraphernalia, chants or sings, scatters, and materializes a god. That this so exactly describes the scenes from the Wagner Murals and others at Teotihuacan argues strongly for some type of continuity or common practice. It also offers an interpretation of the events depicted at Teotihuacan as conjuring rites (Hull 2000b:9).

This description of the role of the Aztec singer strongly resembles that of singers among the Mixtecs. Pohl notes that Mixtecs singers performed narratives before large audiences:

The codex hung upon a wall from which a court poet recited an epic legend can be compared to a storyboard presentation used in film animation or advertising in which artists, actors, and musicians act out a story before hundreds of sequential drawings as a means of evaluating narrative strengths and weaknesses in planning a production. In a similar fashion, Burgoa (1934b, 1: 396) speaks of the histories as being dramatized on the days of the major religious festivals (Pohl 1994:140).

Similarly, the Mixtec Vienna codex, according to King, also "shows that "song" is related to the words a shaman speaks..." and that "...the concept of "music," the syllable "-*cu*-" and "scroll" symbolism are all analogous structures in Mixtec language and writing at the time of the conquest" (King 1994:114-115). Oral recitation among the Mixtecs also included presentation by song and music. King has noted the resemblance among the segmental elements *tutu* ('page', 'design', 'to whistle'), *toto* ('to sing', 'to put in order', 'kingship'), *cutu* ('wind instrument', 'copal incense'), and *catu* ('whistle', 'pipe'), which he believes emphasizes "the musical or performative aspects of the codices" (King

1994:105). Additionally, according to Pohl, the "Codex Rios states that the story of the fall of Tula and the construction of the great pyramid at Cholula by Xelhua were sung and performed during a festival called Tullanianhululaez" (Pohl 1994:147). Thus, singing and performance were clearly an integral part of ancient Mesoamerican performance of oral narratives. The position of singer in the Classic period likely entailed functioning as an official mouthpiece of king as the one responsible for reciting all genres of narratives, often through the medium of song. Gapsler Antonio Chi recorded that the immediate post-conquest Maya had writings of things that occurred in the past along with "certain songs in meter...according to the history they contained" (Tozzer 1941:28, note 154). From this survey of related historical material, it is clear that historical narratives were indeed performed in song among the ancient Aztecs, Mixtecs, and the Maya.

In addition to the position of *k'ayom*, 'singer', of the Maya, we know of another title relating to singing and performance. Cogolludo (1955) recorded other important information concerning the office of *holpop*:

In the time of their idolatry, and even now, they dance and sing according to the customs of the Mexicans. They have one principal singer who sets the key and teaches what is necessary to sing. This man they venerate and respect and give him a special place in the church and at the feasts and assemblies. They call him *Holpop*, and it is to his care that the drums or *tunkules* are entrusted as well as the other musical instruments, such as trumpets, sea conch shells and other things which they use.

The Cordemex also offers the several additional definitions (Barrera Vásquez 1980:228):

*(ah) hol pop* *principe del convite: el casero dueño de la casa llamada **popol na**, donde se juntan a tratar cosa de república y enseñarse a bailar para las fiestas del pueblo*

From these sources we learn that the *holpop* (lit. 'head of the mat'), or 'principal singer', was the leader of the *popol na*, or 'counsel house', keeper of the musical instruments, responsible for the 'setting the key' and selecting the songs for each performance, and was in charge of dance instruction. Significantly, Fray Diego López de Cogolludo also noted that those who hold the office of *holpop* "sing their fables and their ancient lore" (1955). Again we find that the singers of ancient Mesoamerica were principally responsible for recounting histories and myths in song. According to Lord, "The singer of tales is at once the tradition and an individual creator" (1960:4). With this understanding we may need to reanalyze the means and manner of oral recitation among the ancient Maya to possibly include vibrant performances through song of the texts on monuments and codices.

The earlier citation from the Yukatek Cordemex dictionary designating the "*ahcayom*" as an official who assisted the priest (Barrera Vásquez 1980:392) implies that the title of *k'ayom* was considered perhaps a medium-tier religious position in Maya society. Following this narrow translation of the term, "singer," however, may not accurately represent the function of this office for the ancient Maya. I suggest, based on the cross-cultural analysis above, that the title "singer" connoted something more akin to 'oral poetry and traditional narrative performer' in addition to simply a performative singer in the traditional sense. Davidson notes a similar semantic extension of the word

for "singer" سراینده (sarāyanda) in Persian oral performance to its proper meaning of "a performer of oral traditions" (Davidson 2000:28). Such an interpretation is likewise evidenced by the semantic range of the root *k'ay* in Mayan languages. The primary meaning of the verbal root *k'ay* in many Mayan languages is 'to sing' just as the nominal root *k'ay* generally means 'song'. The semantic distribution of the term in Yukatek (Barrera Vásquez 1980), however, is especially instructive:

(390)	<i>k'ay</i>	<i>músico</i>
	<i>ahk'ay</i>	<i>músico; cantor o músico</i>
(391-392)	<i>k'ayom</i>	<i>cantor o músico de canto, cantante</i>
(392)	<i>ahk'ayom</i>	<i>cantor, oficial eclesiástico que asista al sacerdote</i>
		<i>cantor que canta mucho</i>
	<i>k'ay</i>	<i>música, canción</i>
		<i>poesía</i>
		<i>canto</i>
		<i>pregón</i>
		<i>canto</i>
		<i>voz</i>

In addition to 'sing' and 'song' in Yukatek, *k'ay* is also a term for 'poetry'. This entry alone provides substantial insight into the Maya's conception of 'poetry'. The relationship between poetry and song also surfaces in the Nahuatl *in xochitl*, *in cuicatl*, or "flower, song" forms a conceptual unit (*difrasismo*) meaning "poetry, art, symbolism" (León-Portilla 1992:54). From this we could surmise that the role of *k'ayom* would have included a broader notion of performance as one who recited oral poetry and oral traditions as a government or religious official. A *k'ayom* would likely have led the recitation or reading of poetic texts and oral traditions in either a public forum or in

private session with royalty. In fact, Thompson held the view that Maya nobles in the sixteenth and seventeenth century would indeed use *song* as a means of recounting history to the people (1972:5-14). The rank of *k'ayom* likely invested an individual with the sanctioned authority to recite sacred texts—be they memorized or written—as well as the implicit freedom and authority to embellish and alter each recitation in accordance with each given situation.

There are a number of depictions in Maya iconography and hieroglyphs of singers and iconic forms representing singing. The hieroglyph for *k'ayom*, as identified by Houston and Taube, consists of a human head with a speech scroll (perhaps a more accurate description would be a 'sound scroll', but for convenience I retain the form common in the literature) (2000:275-276) (figure 10a). Phonetic evidence from an Early Classic conch trumpet provides the reading of this title as **k'a-yo-ma**, for *k'ayo'm* (from this point on I will use the correct glyphic rendering showing the reduplicated final vowel when referring to the glyphic title, i.e. *k'ayo'm*) (Houston 2002; Zender 1999) (figure 10b). Houston and Taube illustrate logographic examples (figure 10a, c-d) of the *k'ayo'm* title that come from Room 1 of the Bonampak Murals, a Late Classic ceramic vessel, a painted text on a polychrome vessel from Burial 196 at Tikal, and from the texts of an Early Classic conch shell trumpet (2002:275, Figure 10). In 1996, the well-known Bonampak Murals were the subject of intense study through infrared photography by Mary Miller, Stephen Houston, Karl Taube, and Beatriz de la Fuente. The results of this process were staggering as the murals revealed unexpected details not visible to the naked eye. One of the hieroglyphic texts contained a youthful head with a speech scroll

emanating from his mouth designating this individual as a *k'ayo'm*, or 'singer' (figure 10c). The third example (Vessel MT176) found in Burial 196 at Tikal represents a crucial key for understanding the nature of the *k'ayo'm* title. Burial 196 of Structure 5D-73 at Tikal yielded one of the richest tomb deposits in all the Maya area, including a jadeite necklace weighing over sixteen pounds. One of the offering vessels (K8008) was a polychrome ceramic that depicts two scenes of Itzamnaaj speaking to hummingbirds who sit at his feet. The captioned texts are in the second-person and record the actual words spoken in these scenes (cf. Grube 1998). The Primary Standard Sequence on the upper rim of the vessel is typical in form and content, except for the appearance of the rare *k'ayo'm* logograph in the title sequence of Chan K'awiil. The *k'ayo'm* title here is modified with the "*3-winikhaab*" notation indicating the ruler had held this office from between forty and sixty years (i.e. the rule is in his third twenty-year period as ruler). Houston and Taube see the appearance of the *k'ayo'm* glyph in this titular sequence of a lord as an indicator "that singing counted as an important accomplishment of royalty" (2000:276). I would expand this interpretation to include the reciting of oral history and poetry as inherent within the office of *k'ayo'm*. The very fact that this Tikal ruler proudly includes this title (and only this title) in his name phrase, in addition to specifying that he has held this position for upwards of sixty years clearly implies a high level of prestige associated with this rank during Classic times.

### 3.8. Classification of Poetics and Poetry for the Ancient Maya

Any effort to define 'poetry' in general terms and across cultures will certainly produce an inaccurate and biased description. How poetry or poetic discourse is defined for one group may not hold true for another. For example, in Sanskrit, poets strive to create *rasa*, a type of "aesthetic configuration" (Dwivedi 1969:16) that is the "source of unmixed pleasure" for the audience (Bhattacharya 1976:16), and represents "the soul of poetry" itself (Chaitanya 1969:2). The regular metrical patterns of found in much of Greek, Latin, or English poetry are not important considerations in certain other cultures. In order to flesh out the emic interpretation of what comprises poetic discourse for the Classic Maya we must further analyze the various terms and nuances of relevant lexical data in modern Mayan languages. Yukatek contains a number of highly significant entries relating to poets and performance that shed light on the Maya conception of poetry:

(Barrera Vásquez 1980)

(266)	<i>ik'</i>	<i>el espíritu, vida y aliento, aire, resuello, viento, alma</i>
	<i>ik'</i>	<i>contar fábulas o nuevas</i>
	<i>ik'tal</i>	<i>fábula</i>
	<i>ik'til</i>	<i>fábula, cuento, mito</i>
	<i>ik'tili</i>	<i>fábula, conseja o evento o patraña, fábula y fabular, contar fábulas o novelas</i>
(267)	<i>ik'tan</i>	<i>cosa divina, que pertenece a Dios, divino</i>
	<i>ik'tanil</i>	<i>poesía</i>
	<i>ah ik'tilil kan</i>	<i>novelero que trae nuevas o las cuenta</i>
	<i>ik'tan</i>	<i>ingenioso, hábil agudo y diestro</i>
(210)	<i>h-ik't'an</i>	<i>poeta</i>
(266)	<i>(ah) ik'al</i>	<i>poeta, vate</i>
	<i>ik'al</i>	<i>poeta</i>
	<i>ik'am</i>	<i>poeta o el que sabe música</i>
	<i>ik't'an</i>	<i>poeta, vate</i>
(519)	<i>mek'tan ik'</i>	<i>poeta, varón o mujer</i>

(Carrillo y Ancora 1893)

*ic'cab*            *sacerdote*

(Ciudad Real 1984 [1575])

*ah iktili can*    *novelero, que tare nuevas o las cuentas*  
*ah ikal*            *poeta, varón o mujer*

All the above entries are ultimately based on the nominal root *ik'*, which in Yucatek means "*el espíritu, vida y aliento, aire, resuello, viento, alma*" (Barrera Vásquez 1980:266). Compounds with *ik'* 'wind' and *t'an* 'word' produce meanings related to 'creative', 'capable', and 'quick learning' which are then related directly to poets, poetry, and priests. According to Barrera Vásquez, *ik'* is also a verbal root that means "*contar fábulas o nuevas*" (1880:266). A literal translation of *h-ik't'an* (poet) would be 'he who recounts the words of fables/stories/myths' or perhaps 'he who is creative with words'. It is noteworthy that the entry *ik'am* for "*poeta o el que sabe música*" likewise directly equates a poet with the role of a singer, or "one who know music." From these entries in Yucatek, it is apparent that a poet in ancient Maya society was a performer of oral traditions, often set to song. I believe that this notion of 'singer-as-story teller' has important implications for epigraphic studies. A strong oral tradition complemented by performative readings or 'singings' from hieroglyphic texts is most likely an accurate assessment of ancient Maya recitation practices under the auspices of the state. Oral narratives, however, cannot be assumed to have been only a part of regal presentation. Ethnographic data from all Maya groups today shows a pervasive tradition of oral recitation at all levels of society. Among the Ch'orti', some of the best and most talented

story tellers I have ever met were simple farmers who held no special position in the Ch'orti' community. Great story telling is not a monopoly of the trained or initiated of the upper class. There is, however, a marked distinction in *genres* and *content* insofar as a priestly class would have access to spiritual, mythological, and prognosticatory texts unavailable to the common person. Thus, regal recitation hinged on ability of the priests to tap into esoteric literary and narrative sources. More importantly, the possession of literacy skills would have deepened the perceived gap between the priests and the people and increased a reliance on the priestly class. Poetic discourse, as forms of verbal art, further widen the divide between ordinary speech and sacred recitation of poetry. Indeed, in Yukatek *ik'tan* and *ik'tanil* mean 'poet' and 'poetry' as well as "something divine, that pertains to God" (Barrera Vásquez 1980:267).<sup>36</sup> Oral recitation by priests or high-ranking performers distinguished itself from simple oral narration in that the performance was legitimized by the status of the performer. Textual performance enjoyed the same legitimizing force yet added to it the power of the visible 'authorized text' and interpretation (c.f. Leibsohn 1994:171). The ability of the priests to both read and properly interpret the hieroglyphic texts was a major component in preserving the sacrality of their position in society (c.f. Burkhart 1996:428).

### **3.9. Literacy and Performance**

Many researchers in Mesoamerica have posited a direct relationship between ideas of propaganda and monument. Marcus, in attempting to synthesize patterns from

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<sup>36</sup> Among the Lacandon Maya, *K'ayum* is the Lord of song and music and is an assistant to Hachäkyum, the principal solar deity and creator of humans (McGee 1990:62, 67).

Mesoamerica in general, defined two types of propaganda; vertical and horizontal. Vertical propaganda refers to an "attempt to influence the behavior of the ruled" by the ruler (1992:437). Horizontal propaganda, on the other hand, denotes the effort by the ruler to legitimate his or her position on the throne (1992:14). Marcus sees the public placement and size of stelae as clear indicators of vertical propaganda, while other monuments that were secluded from obvious public view (such as lintels of temples) would serve, according to Marcus, to foster horizontal propaganda (1992:81, 84). While I feel that Marcus' emphasis on the propagandistic function of monuments is overstated, there can be no doubt that Maya lords sought to legitimate their position and fortify a particular interpretation of events through the media of inscribed monuments. The question, then, is not whether the erection of monuments was motivated by propaganda per se, but rather defining the precise nature of the propaganda. I find Simpson's notion of "maintenance propaganda" especially applicable to the ancient Maya. Simpson defines "maintenance propaganda" as "the concept of maintaining the status quo, the political, religious situation and not changing it" (Simpson 1996:436). In this way, propaganda "becomes coextensive with publication" (Loprieno 1996c:521). Marcus proposes a vertical and horizontal dichotomy that pits the imposition of royal will on the populace against notions of legitimization on the other. "Propaganda," as Simpson wisely cautions us, "is not necessarily invidious and may be benign; it is persuasive and reflects and promotes a cause generally thought to represent the viewpoint of the author or commissioner..." (1996:437). Was the principal function of inscribed monumental architecture simply regal display, or did they play a more interactive role in society? (cf.

Stuart 1996). In order to determine a plausible functional interpretation of inscribed Maya monuments we must not hesitate to challenge some long-held assumptions about *strategema regium* and certain misunderstandings relating to notions of performance and text in ancient Mesoamerica. I believe that we need to approach questions of monument function through an analysis of literacy practices and performance. Determining the affect on the audience of a message on any monument can only be safely hypothesized after examining the cultural context in which a given monumental text was made accessible. The relationship between literacy and power almost assuredly played into the politics of regal presentation associated with monumental architecture. The ongoing dialogue between literacy and power serves as a proper prelude to a discussion of performance and text for the Maya of Classic period.

### **3.10. Literacy and Literacy Practices in Mesoamerica**

I believe an appropriate point of departure for a discussion of literacy practices in ancient Mesoamerica would be to analyze the ideology and function of literacy practices from the time of the Spanish conquest of the New World. The complex relationship between the newly subjugated Maya to the conversion-minded invaders provides a fertile ground for understanding power relations revolving in part around issues of literacy.

Though nearly a cliché today, the relationship between certain forms of power and literacy cannot be denied (see Street 1993a:7). "Literacy is power," according to Rockhill, and it is an equation that "is still the assumption that dominates most discourses about literacy" (1993:159-60). Literacy, according to Woolard, "is not an autonomous,

neutral technology but rather culturally organized, ideologically grounded, and historically contingent" (1998:23). In order to understand the dynamics of this power relationship we need to recognize, as Street keenly observes, "the central role of power relations in literacy practices" (1993a:2). It is in the realm of 'practices' where literacy can become a tool of the élite to exercise power and control over the lower class as well as burgeon into a space for contestation and creativity for the subordinate groups. According to Mora-Marín, "...writing and literacy were political tools par excellence for the Mayans, especially at the hands of the royal lineages who used it to claim and reclaim ancestral legitimacy" (2001:35). Woolard has similarly argued that "the selective valuation of literate traditions is closely linked to mechanisms of social control" (1998:23). In Hruby's view, "Royal groups wished to control interaction with supernatural forces, largely through institutionalized writing and ritual practice" (2002:56). In this portion of this study I address literacy practices among the Classic period Maya through an examination of the struggles of modern-day Maya groups to acquire literacy and thereby directly affect their efforts to contest the power structures of the élite. I hope to draw a parallel between the present and the past on the strict power relations involved with controlling and manipulating literacy leaving one group marginalized while sustaining and reinforcing the existing ruling class. Furthermore, with this analysis I intend to illuminate the notion of literacy practices as it relates to poetics, power, and performance for the ancient Maya.

Literacy, for my purposes here, meaning the ability to both read and write, can represent both symbolic and practical power exercised by the dominant group. Soon after

the conquest, the efforts of the Catholic Church in Central America were directed chiefly at conversion. An attitude of apathy towards the effects of illiteracy pervaded much of Central America from government and Church leaders. The Catholic Church in Ecuador, for example, according to Benalcazar, encouraged indigenous groups to simply accept the conditions of their lives, in particular illiteracy, "*como algo natural*" (Benalcazar 1989:28). Part and parcel of this ideological imposition was the eradication of native literacy practices since the hieroglyphic texts of the priests contained the very 'evil' doctrines that they were eager to replace with Christianity. The new Christian priests knew that the erasure of all knowledge of the hieroglyphic writing would position them where the people would then become dependent upon them for spiritual guidance through the Christian scriptures and the Latin alphabet. The reticence among some clergy to proliferate literacy stemmed from a fear of loss of power if the common person could read and interpret the Holy Writ on their own. As Probst has noted, when literacy is introduced, "adherents of a certain belief system are now no longer defined by birth and the practice of certain rituals and prayers but first and foremost by their attachment to a sacred text, a holy book, in which the doctrine is written down" (1993:199). In 1541, the conquistador Jerónimo López wrote back to Charles V that "reading and writing are harmful as the Devil" to indigenous groups (Kandell 1988). The specialized abilities of the Maya scribe to read the hieroglyphic texts was certainly viewed as a danger to social and religious control for the Spanish conquerors.

Soon after the conquest an animosity quickly developed between the government schools and church-based education. Reder and Wikelund (1993:185) report that

the literacy specialists of the Church domain...had played a key role in the maintenance of the faith over the years...In addition to other conflicts stimulated by the missionaries' challenge, their School-based literacy threatened the social order within the parish itself because it would replace traditional expertise and social roles with those derived from School learning.

The measure of this controlling dogma even resulted in expulsion of the Jesuits from the New World in 1767 due to the perceived threat to the crown of their higher education. With the eviction of the Jesuits, the Catholic Church was given complete control over education in the New World. While some progress was achieved, the inability of the Church to establish schools in rural areas together with their failure to institute a coherent system of education prohibited the indigenous populations from making any significant advancements in literacy and other areas of education at that time.

With the Mexican Constitution of 1857, however, the utter lack of progress by the conservatives in the Catholic Church in terms of any meaningful educational reform resulted in the exclusion of all clergy from public education (Vaughan 1990:39). The educational reforms that soon took place did manage to increase non-rural literacy, both reading and writing, for persons twelve or over from seventeen percent in 1895 to thirty-three percent by 1910 (Vaughan 1990:43). According to Vaughan (1990:43), the literacy skills of the indigenous population actually decreased during the Porfiriato due in large part to centralized building of nearly all schools in cities and large towns (c.f. Landsberger 1969:109). However, the new literate class, while only representing a very small portion of the population, was able to play an important role in the Revolution of 1910. The Mexican Revolution was in part a reaction to the lack of educational

opportunities available to the populace. Literacy was one important issue that affected not just the rural population but also those of Mexico City. More than 40% of the Distrito Federal was illiterate just before the revolution (Wilkie 1967:207-208) as were 70% of all Mexicans (Landsberger 1969:109). The social reforms that accompanied post-Revolution Mexico allowed for progress to be made in areas of education and literacy. Such nominal advancements were, however, neither rapid nor far reaching until after 1940 (Wilkie 1967:276-277). Since that time, literacy rates in all areas of Mexico as a whole have shown slow but constant improvement overall. Nevertheless, there still remains today a significant portion of the indigenous population who do not have sufficient access to adequate education or literacy instruction in comparison to urban areas.

In the twentieth century, the governments of Central America have made cautious use of programs to teach literacy *in* Mayan languages to the rural populations. In most cases, as Fischer and Brown have noted, these efforts had specific underlying goals, which were usually aimed at facilitating the transition to Spanish literacy and lifestyle, not at promoting of literacy in the native language *per se* (1996:183-184, 211). The medium of the native language was used as a "transitory instrument" rather than a tool to stimulate growth in these languages (Bonfil Batalla 1996:117-118). The role the Church in the education of indigenous groups was clearly evangelization *through* education and assimilation into the Spanish empire, which then readily became fused into a single project (Gonzalbo 1994:13-14, 16, 21).

By limiting access to literacy skills the Spanish *conquistadores* and the subsequent governments in Central America have succeeded in maintaining the marginalization of a large portion of indigenous groups (c.f. Benalcazar 1989:25-26). In the case of the present-day Maya, the failures of the past governments to adequately provide basic educational opportunities has resulted in, among other things, constrictive laws that take advantage of the high indigenous illiteracy rates in order to suppress their political and social advancements. A stark example of this occurred in February of 1955 when the Guatemalan government declared (in Articles 236-238 of Decree #217) that any *campesino* organization must have at least fifty members of which 60% must be literate (Adams 1970:450). This was enacted at a time when the majority of Maya groups suffered from illiteracy rates well over 80%. Such legislation effectively eliminated large portions of the population from organizing themselves politically to fight for badly needed social reforms. This brazen politicizing of the literacy issue can also be seen in the electoral practices in Nebaj, Guatemala. In Nebaj, all adults are eligible to vote, but literate adults *must* vote by law. Colby and van den Berghe (1969:85-86) have noted that this subtle form of voter discrimination leads to a *de facto* disenfranchisement of a significant number of illiterate Maya since in 1964, for example, only 15.4% of the Guatemalan indigenous population over the age of seven were literate in contrast to 54.4% of the Ladino community. More specifically in Nebaj, only 5.5% of indigenous Maya were literate whereas 61.4 percent of Ladinos were literate in 1966 (Colby and van den Berghe 1969:94). Such biased voting laws naturally stack the odds of voter turnout

resulting in the enactment of Ladino-based policies and the marginalization of important issues relating to the native Maya.

It must be noted that while there have been efforts by many of the ruling class and the Church leadership to limit access to literacy skills of the indigenous populations, there has also always been some degree of resistance to literacy by certain members of the indigenous groups themselves. For example, not all farmers in every milpa can see a practical value in literacy (Vaughan 1990:41). Among the Ch'orti' today where literacy rates for adults hover around 20%, some fieldworkers have expressed to me a complete indifference to learning how to read. One consultant responded simply, *¿Kocha k'ani utakrye'n konde war inpatna tama nichor?*, "How is it going to help me when I am working in my milpa?". Questions of perceived practical value from the perspective of some Maya must be taken into account in any assessment of literacy practices. For the ancient Maya, a certain section of the population probably saw no visible benefit from literacy skills, irrespective of any efforts by the ruling class to limit their access to it. Exploiting the status quo, however, would have allowed the élite to foster such sentiments toward their own purposes. While this line of reasoning is highly speculative, no assessment of literacy practices can be accurately made without taking into account possible local attitudes towards literacy itself.

The intrinsic value of literacy for the modern-day Maya in their efforts to contest the social ideologies of governments who seem ambivalent about their plight is obvious. The ability to communicate to a larger audience, via the internet or other written media, has certainly brought literacy into the forefront of many Maya revitalization movements

(Fischer and Brown 1996:181). In Chiapas, for example, Subcomandante Marcos prepared his followers for war by teaching them, among other things, literacy. The Zapatistas' effective use of the internet in promoting their cause alone establishes the importance of literacy for the struggle of indigenous peoples today (c.f. Vaghan 1990:53).

### **3.11. Literacy Practices from the Classic Period through the Post-Classic**

Questions of literacy rates for pre-conquest Maya society are, regrettably, consigned largely to the realm of educated speculation. In ancient Egypt, Parkinson notes that literacy is "tentatively estimated at less than 1 per cent of the population" (1997:7). While there are some indicators of possible lines of evidence one way or the other, any specific conclusions on what percentage of the population could read the glyphic texts are most certainly premature and untenable. What evidence is there as to whether the general population was literate in either reading or writing the hieroglyphs among the ancient Maya? Were the texts readily accessible to the commoner, or was it strictly an esoteric knowledge that was monopolized by the élite, priests, and scribes? Early colonial sources suggest that literacy extended no further than the nobles of Maya society, at least in Post-Classic times (cf. Mora-Marín 2001:31-32). According to Landa, "Some of the principal lords were learned in these sciences, from interests, and for the greater esteem they enjoyed thereby; yet, they did not make use of them in public" (Gates 1978:vii). From Gaspar Antonio Chi we learn that the Maya élite soon after the conquest "did not teach these [letters] to any except noble persons; and for this reason all the

priests, who were those most concerned with them, were persons of rank" (in Roys 1943:87). The reasons for a limited distribution of literacy skills must have been in part a conscious effort by the élite to restrict it. Burkhart argues that a certain control over writing "helped the nobles to maintain their positions of authority in the native social structure" (Burkhart 1996:428). Brown avers that while most speakers of Maya languages were probably acquainted with hieroglyphic writing they could not produce or write it (Brown 1991:495). Houston and Stuart conclude that literacy was "relatively uncommon" during the Classic period (Houston and Stuart 1992:592). More recently, however, Houston, has argued that writing in the Classic period "developed in ways that reflected increased literacy" (1994:40). In Houston's important study on Classic Maya literacy, he stresses the significant role that social context has in any discussion of Maya literacy. I fully agree with this emphasis, and further suggest that it is in the arena of social performance that we can begin to appreciate the use and distribution of literacy skills among the Classic Maya. I follow closely the sentiments of Camitta who sees "literacy...as social discourse comprised of meanings and expressions of experience that are negotiated in the context of social interaction or 'performance'" (1993:229).

There are persuasive indications that the Classic Maya texts were likely 'performed' by scribes or priests to select audiences. The important question of accessibility of text informs this discussion in terms of which texts were intended for what audience. I believe that the Maya élite extended control over the people both by restricting access to some texts as well as by making others more accessible to the public. In terms of control *through* accessibility, the Maya élite positioned many monuments in

areas most likely visible to a large section of the population. These highly image-laden monuments most certainly depicted specific historical or mythological realities that the Maya élite intended the people to be able to interpret, at least on a visual level. Indeed, the Maya showed an increased tendency to include image with text throughout the Classic period, suggesting perhaps a greater accessibility of the intended message (Miller 1989:186). The gradual coalescing of text and image was a natural outcome from an upsurge in depicting elaborate ritual during the Classic period. It may also be linked to the transition from an oral genre to a written one (see Eyre 1996:416). Quirk has rightly noted, "Without explicit liturgical texts, it is difficult to discern a narrative in depictions of rituals..." (1996:266). In this way the élite could control both the content and its exposure of any monument or text thereby imposing an 'authorized' version of any event through its placement. Bowman and Woolf have argued for precisely this idea that power could be *exercised* through the location of a monument (1984:8).

In other cases, however, inscriptions were set into the inner walls of temples, such as the Panels of the Temple of Inscriptions at Palenque or the lintels of temples (such as those of Yaxchilan). The placement of texts in restricted areas suggests that the target audience was not the general public, but instead perhaps only a select group of élites from the site or visiting dignitaries. For example, texts that were located in areas with highly restricted access ways seem to suggest a specific audience for the message of the text. It must be remembered, however, that thematically some of the most restricted texts are the same as many public monuments. Therefore, while we can assume some measure of exclusionary practice in their remote location, this does not necessarily imply a their

message was not meant for a wider audience. What can be understood from this practice is that there was most certainly restrictions on who was able to see or read it strictly based on its location. Perhaps the most obvious restriction on accessibility was with hieroglyphic codices, which even in Landa's day were in the sole possession of the Maya priests. Indeed, each priest was buried with many of his personal codices at death. The codices represent a distinct form of literature that assumes a different function and accessibility than monumental texts. Gumbrecht (1996:12) has noted a similar disjuncture between Egyptian papyri and inscribed monuments:

If papyri were the most frequently used material medium facilitating this process of socialization, it is obvious that the royal inscriptions in monumental hieroglyphs fulfilled different functions. Above all, they were meant to impose a specific impact on the beholders and their behavior.

It is the Maya codices where we find some of the most esoteric knowledge and cosmological information that the people relied on for prognostication and healings. Priests were consulted about auspicious days for events such as weddings, names for children that were appropriate for the day of their birth, and omens relating to planting and other activities. From Landa we learn that the priests would open their books to make predictions and preach about observances, as well as "to discourse and teach their sciences, to indicate calamities and the means of remedying them" (Gates 1978:47, 71). Many of the Books of Chilam Balam are principally curing and medicinal texts such as the Chilam Balam of Nah. According to Nikolai Grube, more than anything else the codices served divinatory functions (personal communication, 2003). Commoners would

have come to the priest to find the appropriate herb or concoction to heal their infirmities. One can easily imagine that the literate priests exercised a significant degree of dominion over the people by controlling access to the texts that contained what amounted to the community's primary divinatory resource. In effect, the restricted access to the codices allowed the priests and/or élites to take control of what Probst has elsewhere described as the "professionalising [of] religious activities and [the] rationalising [of] religious discourse" (1993:199). Thus, power was carefully maintained by the élites by limiting access to certain texts as well as through the performance of 'authorized' readings of others.

If literacy was indeed a limited commodity in the Classic period, the ability to read and write would have represented an esoteric skill perhaps associated principally with the élite and religious leaders. The combination of intellectual and physical access to religious texts would have empowered the Maya priests with a highly-respected (and likely feared) social position in the community. Literacy in such a context is a correlate of power itself. In Nigeria, Probst has noted a similar situation where the literacy ability of 'wizards' "was believed to provide magical access to supernatural power" (1993:202). In a highly literate society where religious texts play such an important part, such power relations between religious leaders and commoners would be significantly altered. If literacy was as restricted in usage as I propose for the Classic Maya, literacy (with its accompanying performative and poetic manifestations) would have been instrumental in safeguarding the social standing of the religious leaders and the governmental leaders to whom they answered.

I see a general parallel between the use of literacy practices by the ruling class and religious institutions in Central America to the methods of literacy control employed by the Classic Maya priests. Street has argued that "...the conceptualisation of literacy as ideological practice opens up a potentially rich field of inquiry into the nature of culture and power" (1993a:12). Even issues of orthography can become contentious forums where religious institutions attempt to retain a certain level of control. Fischer and Brown have questioned the motives of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in opposing the new alphabet by the *Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala* citing the Summer Institute of Linguistics' objection to the decision making on which alphabet to use being in the hands of the indigenous peoples themselves (1990:185; cf. Woolard 1998:23). The recent progress of different Maya groups and of some governments in Central America to allow for the teaching of literacy in the indigenous language of each group has laid a simple foundation upon which they must now build. Members of modern Maya revitalization movements such as DIGEBI, ALMG, PFLM, CEDIM, OKMA and many others view literacy as an ideological practice and have seized the opportunity to extend literacy skills to the rural populations. At the same time, however, they are having to defend themselves from criticisms of being "elitist" or "assimilationist" from different sources. Indeed, some in the *ladino* community, as Nelson has recently discussed, accuse the leaders of these movements no longer being "Maya" since, according to one government official, "they all have a book under their arm" (1996:229). Probst noted a related phenomenon in Nigeria where a "semi-educated proletariat" were "disliked by the Europeans because of their self-confident opposition and arrogance"

(1993:202). Similarly, Lesley Byrd Simpson reported hearing the some in of aristocracy of Mexico in the early twentieth century say: "Education is bad for them, makes them discontent and 'uppity'" (Landsberger 1969:108-109). Sadly, such reaction reflects the élites' fear over a loss of power associated with the educational advancements of indigenous groups. It also locates literacy in the realm of what Street has described as "social and ideological practice involving fundamental aspects of epistemology, power and politics...and struggles for power" (1993a:9).

### **3.12. Performance and Elaboration**

The mere presence of inscribed monuments likely failed to convey the full breadth of the intended message of iconography and linguistic data due to the inherent limitations in expressing both within a confined space and context. Performance and elaboration of text-bearing monuments were surely instrumental in promulgating their intended message. Similarly, Eyre notes that in ancient Egypt

Oral display was a significant part of the presentation of the king. The formal context of performance motivated the elaboration of literary form, and reinforced the potential for exploiting audience reaction (1996:426).

According to Bauman, "performance set up, or represents, an interpretive frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood" (1984:9). Oral display through performance cannot be separated from the visual display in royal representation. A comparative search of textual performance practices in Mesoamerican cultures allows us to construct a cohesive model of performance practices for the ancient Maya.

Burkhart succinctly states that for ancient Mesoamerica "... the written form was intended to be the basis for an oral performance: There were no texts whose principal function was to be contemplated in silence and solitude" (1996:407). Oral and written literature, according to Vernus, "...*sont très souvent appréciées, non par une lecture silencieuse, mais en étant psalmodiées en public, que ce soit dans un cercle d'amis ou dans une classe d'apprentis scribes*" (1996:559). For example, Mixtec codices were probably read aloud and/or performed thereby expanding the range of audience (Monaghan 1990:133). Aztec monuments and codices, being pictographic, and therefore not phonetically specific, "had a mnemonic function...[whose] complex messages were meant to be filled out, amplified, or otherwise qualified by knowledge transmitted orally" (Townsend 1992:160; c.f. Sullivan 1986:9). Elizabeth Hill Boone (1994:71) has noted a similar function associated with painted Aztec manuscript:

The Aztec pictorial histories were read aloud to an audience, they were interpreted, and their images were expanded and embellished in the oration of the full story. The pictorial histories were painted specifically to be the rough text of a performance. The separate images in Aztec pictorial histories were fashioned as signal references to an oral story. The varied events in the histories are reduced to their epitome, their most essential and distilled visual form...

In the context of performance, Maya inscriptions were probably a springboard for the specialized knowledge of the scribes, and were economical to the extent that the scribe could elaborate appropriately for any occasion, similar to the practice of the modern K'iche' that Barbara Tedlock (1982a:130-131) has described:

The ancient reader, on coming to the logograph glyph for a day name or some other word heavily laden with meaning, may not have been content with simply pronouncing that word (and then going on to the next glyph), but may have opened up its wider implications through the recital of just such interpretive words and phrases as are used by the Quiché diviner today.

McAnany sees a hieroglyphic text as a "crib sheet" that the scribe/priest "undoubtedly extemporized for ritual orations" (1995:130). As I have mentioned earlier, Burns described the reading the Chilam Balam by two scribes who "stand in front of audiences of five to six hundred people and take turns reading passages aloud, improvising on the lines ...written in the books" (Burns 1983:22-3). Burns insightfully points out that such readings may represent "an ethnographic account of how hieroglyphic texts were read" (1983:23). I further suggest that this model of performance of text can be broadly applied to most texts from the Classic period to Post Classic texts on monuments, books, and other written media (in addition to oral texts given from memory). Recitation in performance would have been customized to fit the needs a particular context (be it royal visit, commemoration, or otherwise). Burkhart notes that in ancient Mesoamerica

...the written text provided a kind of model or key—widely varying in its degree of detail and specificity—that the speaker interpreted orally. The precise words chosen to express the text's meaning could vary among different readers or from one reading to the next (1996:407).

Coggins summarized well this position as follows:

Lapidary prose was precise and economical and ideally carried as much weight as possible. In this the scribes of Maya monumental prose excelled. In the finest inscriptions many words, possibly every word (even dates), carried several levels of meaning, and many phrases might be read in more than one way and were thus

more poetry than prose. The choice of meaning may have been determined by the occasion or context in which it was read (Coggins 1992:100).

I have argued earlier that the hieroglyphic texts functioned as "a sort of unimposing guide from which the speaker gets ideas and then uses personal discretion in exactly what is said" (Hull 1993:69). The practice of elaboration and semantic expansion empowered the reader or performer of the text to make revisions in style or content to the core narrative. Elsewhere I have summed up the central role elaboration played in Maya textual performance:

[Elaboration served]...as a bare-bones format for the cultural and situational knowledge the scribe. They would have facilitated the memorization of texts in case the text was not before the scribe at the time of the recitation. With these ideas in mind we can more fully appreciate the benefits of deletion to the Maya scribe enabling him to save space and time and giving him the opportunity to alter the message to accommodate the occasion (Hull 1993:70).

Recitation in this view would be an interactive process of textual recreation and adaptation in performance. Houston has similarly argued that Maya texts "...serve as points of departure for performance or further elaboration of their message."

Furthermore, "They do *not* stand alone, but, rather must be read by someone with a comprehension of the context and broader meaning, by someone who will take cues from the script" (Houston 1994:30). Implicit in this paradigm is a thorough acquaintance with the story by the performer that would allow him or her to elaborate at will during the performance. Boone (1994:72) has lucidly described this viewpoint:

The graphic messages triggered in them their understanding or memory of the story, with all its details and with all the verbal requirements and the conventional phrasing of its telling. The images in the manuscript gave meaning by recording the sense or the gist of the story, and they directed them as readers or interpreters to the elaborate oral exposition of the story they already knew.

It must be emphasized that the cultural context, or *Sitz im Leben* (lit. situation in life or setting), would have been the determining factor in selecting both form and content in any recitation by drawing on "broader social and cultural considerations" (Parkinson 1996b:300). Fluidity, not rigidity was the rule. In fact, there is no supporting ethnographic evidence from any Mesoamerican group indicating that texts could not be altered in performance because of some notion of perceived 'perfection' or 'sacrality-as-is'. Instead, I believe the lector or rector would have been free to modify the content and style of a given text to suit the particular occasion. "Form and content are defined by the medium in which the text was published, and by the audience reception" (Eyre 1996:428). Within the strongly oral-based societies of ancient Mesoamerica this position seems eminently probable. This position does not preclude, however, the fact that each inscription had what I would call *narrative integrity*, that is, on a local level, a complete message, whether in abbreviated form or not, both in terms of content and style, in and of itself. Conversely, however, such narrative integrity would in no way inhibit the alteration of either content or style in performance. Indeed, ethnographic data from Mesoamerica show this to be both the norm and, in fact, an essential part of oral performance.

Textual recitation in performance could have also included elaborate dances and body movements. In the Classic period Maya texts and iconography dancing represents a central means of regal presentation. The crucial decipherment of the hieroglyph for "dance" by Nikolai Grube (1992) has allowed for a deeper understanding of ritual acts by nobles in Maya art. Monaghan points out that the linguistically close forms of Yucatek *ok'ot* 'to dance' and *ok'otba* 'to pray' show a conceptual relationship "between dance and prayer, and between the dancer and one who mediates with the sacred" (Monaghan 1994:80-90). Furthermore, Monaghan notes that Mixtec verb 'to dance', *cata tie'e*, literally means "to sing with one's feet." "What this suggests," according to Monaghan, "is that from the Mixtec point of view, "dancing" is a kind of "singing," and, by extension, that linguistic communication should not be treated as a phenomenon that is absolutely distinct from other forms of communication" (Monaghan 1994:90). Monaghan continues: "The Mixtec definition of dance as "singing with one's feet" also suggests the possibility that in performance, standardized bodily movements would not only be a crucial component of the performance of a text, but could actually substitute for a verbal reading" (Monaghan 1994:90-91).

The oral component of Maya hieroglyphic writing has been largely overlooked until recently. Houston and Taube stress that the Maya script "was intended to be read aloud...a point reinforced by the occasional appearance of first- or second-person references and quotative particles" in certain inscriptions (2000:263). These authors conclude that "...Mesoamerican writing was not so much an inert or passive record, but a device thought to 'speak' or 'sing' through vocal readings or performance" (2000:263).

### 3.12. Text as an Artifact

Monuments, as visible testimonies of the "state's memorial of elite values," were themselves artifacts of ideological practice (Parkinson 1996a:150). Texts, as physical entities, are often terse to the point that direct 'readings' would have lasted only minutes in most cases. Elaboration provides the practical framework for performance. In these performances, however, the text itself may not have always been 'read' per se. The prolific memorization of texts was a major part of most ancient Mesoamerican societies (Sullivan 1980:9). For example, education among the Aztecs

put great emphasis on oral recitation and on memorizing texts and discourses to preserve traditions and knowledge. Those who read the manuscripts had already memorized the histories, the stories, painted therein, and they knew the discourses as familiar roads (Boone 1994:71).

I assume a nearly identical situation existed among the ancient Maya in which those who were in charge of performance of text or tradition had committed the text to memory long before they were to perform. The actual monumental or codical text most likely served as an artifact of the performance, and was not always read directly from since the rector would often have known the narrative by heart beforehand. Once freed from the physical text, the rector would then be in a better position to develop story as the situation called for. The text on the monument itself in these circumstances would have been more symbolic than integral to the content of the message. According to Leibsohn (1994:171),

...cartographic histories leave much open to interpretive elaboration. If one set of images could prompt a variety of stories, then historical memory was permitted (if not encouraged) to course with a certain amount of fluidity. As long as

narrators used the cues available, the painting served its purpose as a guarantor of authenticity. It is immaterial that the painting could not ensure that the telling would be identical each time.

An illustrative parallel to this comes from the Tzotzil-speaking community of Chamula. Gossen reports that the text for the Festival of Games is contained in a written document, even though 90% of the community is illiterate. At numerous points in the festival the Crier "reads" from the text. In reality, the Crier simply *recites* from memory even though the text is before him. The written text, in many cases, serves as an overt symbol that functions in these performative contexts as a mnemonic device, not as the literal basis for the reading. Bruce Love (personal communication, 2003) similarly describes a ceremony he witnessed in the Yucatan at which the priest held an open book (*La Cruz de Calvaria*) in his hand throughout the prayer even though he was completely illiterate! Hieroglyphic texts may have played a similar role in certain performances as an artifact or, as Leibsohn puts it, a "guarantor of authenticity" for the narration (1994:171). The "sheer possession" of such textual emblems, according to Tedlock and Tedlock, "was a mark of enduring legitimacy" (1985:125). The textual monument was perhaps more of an icon like-in-kind to royal emblems used to legitimate a ruler's authority. In the Classic period, other such iconic symbols of authority included K'awiil scepters, bundles, palanquins, palanquin gods, headbands, and other regal paraphernalia. In fact, Stuart and Houston have recently suggested the very sacrality of the rulers themselves may have hinged upon the possession of just such legitimating icons. In Colonial sources such as the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel we are told that icons such as gourds, mats, bundles, special

robes, trumpets, burdens, and shields were used to represent certain aspects of a ruler's elite position. Among the Colonial K'iche', all titles for leaders had specific emblems like jaguar claws, pumas, eagles, etc. that were confirmed upon the person when they took office (Chonay 1953:183). For the K'iche' the sacred emblems of rulership were passed down from one ruler to the next as an integral part of legitimizing the new ruler. Classic Maya monumental texts are often explicitly said to be 'owned' by a particular ruler. During the lifetime of a ruler, his or her monuments functioned as legitimating icons of the ruler's power as well as permanent visual authenticators of their textual and iconographic content.

#### **3.14. Specialization, Poetics, and Religious Dependency**

In the Classic period, Houston and Stuart believe that readings and performances of hieroglyphic texts would have taken place when foreign lords visited a given site. They conclude that the "Maya script most likely functioned within a system of "recitation literacy", in which writing served alongside an oral tradition that played a crucial role in fleshing out the schematic messages transmitted by the hieroglyphs" (Houston and Stuart 1992:590). In addition, I have argued that the performative and elaborative aspects of Maya literacy practices may have also been used to impose an authorized reading of each text (Hull 1993). This line of thought would suggest that even if there were some literate or semi-literate among the non-élite, the ability to expand based on historical and mythological knowledge would have still imbued the priests with a kind of sacred knowledge that was unavailable to the general population. These factors,

together with the religious expertise of the scribes, would have given them a power *over* the text that then would allow for "power to be exercised *through* [the] text" (Bowman and Woolf 1994:8). The consistent combination of text in conjunction with images of rulers created a tangible cohesion between writing itself and the sacred authority of the ruler. According to Bloch, "This way of representing writing so that it appears to emanate from those in authority negates any of the cognitive and revolutionary potential writing has sometimes been said to have" (1993:104). Fox has argued that just such a "sacred literacy" served to reinforce the authority structure of early Christianity (1994:128-130). Similarly, Bledsoe and Robey (1993:112) have found that the Mende of Sierra Leone viewed literacy as

...a resource to bolster the legitimacy of claims and provide (or preclude) access to secret domains of knowledge whose meanings are dangerous to those without legitimate social and ritual qualifications. This means that writing skills can be withheld or divulged strategically to gain power and dependants.

I would argue that the Maya priests of the Classic period retained a degree of social control through their own literacy skills in addition to their religious, astronomical, and historical knowledge. Redfield notes that in the Yucatekan town of Tusik "writing and reading are esoteric arts cultivated by special functionaries for the benefit of the entire group, and the uses of the art are to consult sacred books and to prepare and read messages emanating from the supernaturals" (1941:17). I find another good parallel to this in the literacy practices among the Somali as described by Lewis. He writes that: "The men of God who controlled this prestigious, if minority, literate tradition clearly had

vested interests in maintaining its exclusiveness, and they were not necessarily anxious to extend its use to promote written Somali" (1993:147). Part and parcel of this sacred knowledge of Maya priests was surely forms of highly poetic discourse. In most modern Maya communities today, native priests or shamans make copious use of various poetic structures in formal or religious contexts. I have written elsewhere about the close correlation between the poetic traditions among the modern Maya and verbal art of the hieroglyphic script (Hull 1993). I suggest that knowledge of specific couplet, triplet, quatrain structures, rebus writing, metaphors and other poetic forms of discourse played a crucial role in the performance of the Classic Maya texts. Even literate non-élite might have been limited at times in their understanding of certain texts of since they would not be trained in the same literary and poetic traditions as the Maya priests. In a similar vein, Egyptian literary texts, according to Parkinson, "require a higher level of literacy than the title-less inscriptions" and the "studies on literacy suggest that by virtue of being written they were an élite phenomenon, and an integral part of the "restricted" written culture (1996a:140). Classic Maya priests, much like their sixteenth-century counterparts in the Yucatan as I described earlier, were able to draw upon their specialized training to elaborate on the text by transforming it into a more poetic form such as by adding a proper second stich to any line of a text to form a couplet. In many Maya communities, the ability to complete couplet halves with appropriate terminology and imagery is considered a highly advanced skill that requires great effort and training. I have observed a similar phenomenon in my fieldwork with Ch'orti' Maya traditional healers. On one occasion the patient was asked what was wrong to which she replied, "I have a pain in

my stomach." When the curer began the healing rite he immediately asked the angels to "Seize the pain in her stomach, the pain in her belly." The healer, rather than simply repeating what the patient told him, added a second stich to form a couplet stanza in line with the strict pattern of *parallelsimus membrorum* in Ch'orti' curing prayers. The process of creating couplets, triplets, etc, is governed by a limited set of "appropriate" pairings from which one can choose. A Ch'orti' healer once commented to me that it was better to repeat verbatim the phrase if you cannot think of a proper second stich rather than make an 'infelicitous' parallelism. Gossen's (1974) classic study on the metaphor of "heat" associated with dyadic verse structures in Ancient Speech among the Tzotzil of Chamula provides a model for the Classic period for the kind of linguistic sophistication needed to successfully create such metaphorical stacking in performance. For the Chamulas, any error in the patterning of repetition of couplets halves is considered 'bad' and, according to Gossen, "would render a given performance weaker" (1974:398). Indeed, proper execution of this ritualized form of speech is only accomplished by "using prescribed redundant style *competently*" (Gossen 1974:399, emphasis mine). This recalls the comments of a Ch'orti' consultant of mine who said her father "knew the prayers and the way to say them." Thus, while some non-élite may have had certain literacy skills, the priests were still able to use an advanced or sacred form of literacy practices and poetic skills that insured their continual power over and through the text at numerous levels.

### 3.15. Conclusion

Performance of hieroglyphic texts from the times of the Classic period almost certainly played an important part in royal display and the dissemination of state ideology. Inscribed monumental architecture, far from being static visual monoliths, was actively employed in the performance of narrative histories and mythology. Written texts, in my view, could have served as the base for elaboration in such performances. The highly literate priestly class who produced the texts and iconography of the inscribed monuments of the Classic period in effect guaranteed a certain level of populace dependence through their careful controlling of ritual and mythological texts. The ability to 'fill out' texts with authorized readings and interpretations secured their position in the community. I have argued that the office of *k'ayo'm*, 'singer', was an important appendage to the system of royal propaganda in the more benign sense of being a 'performer of oral narratives', squarely in an established poetic tradition. The very presence of a prestige language that made generous use of poetic features would have contributed to the distancing of text and audience in terms of intellectual accessibility. In addition, physical accessibility of texts was also a powerful tool of the Maya élite to restrict and control the message of the texts. Excluding the inherent propagandistic elements of regal performance for the ancient Maya, I find the most compelling aspect of this notion of 'poetics in performance' to be the new light it casts upon inscribed monuments in the Maya area as players in a powerful literary as well as theatrical tradition.

## Chapter 4

# Poetics in the Maya Hieroglyphic Script

### 4.1. Introduction

Perhaps one of the more underappreciated aspects of the Maya hieroglyphic writing system is its underlying poetic composition. Until recently, the general thrust of research in the field of epigraphy has tended to focus on issues of decipherment (and rightfully so), not on decoding the literary features of the inscriptions. This natural progression in the study of an ancient writing system has resulted in significant advancements in our understanding of phonological, grammatical, and cultural facets relating to the hieroglyphic texts. These major intellectual strides of the last fifty years have laid the groundwork for a new direction of research in Maya epigraphy—that of poetic analysis. Any attempt to discuss poetic features in the inscriptions even thirty years ago would have been severely hampered by the inability to accurately read continuous portions of texts. Strophic length poetics would have been possible on a limited scale, but would have relied principally on syntactic or very general semantic parallel features for analysis. Today, with the hieroglyphic script largely deciphered, we are presented with a unique opportunity to rediscover the poetics of a past culture in the ancient Maya. While continual process of language change from 2000 BC has produced a large number different Mayan languages (around twenty-nine), there is still a remarkable continuity in rhetorical style that pervades ritual speech in most of these languages. Parallelism is (and always has been) the structural backbone of all Maya

poetic discourse. Due to the conservative nature of ritual speech, changes come slowly, often influenced by extra-cultural factors. If the language of Hieroglyphic Ch'olan was equally conservative (cf. Houston et al. 2000), we may expect to find many of the poetic devices found in modern Mayan languages likewise present in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. In this chapter, I will explore this relatively new yet deserving field of inquiry into the verbal art of the hieroglyphic inscriptions. I will state up front that I approach the glyphic system as a fully functional writing system able to record phonological nuances of spoken speech as well, let's say, as Spanish orthography is capable of doing for Spanish. In so doing, I believe that many rhetorical devices that operate best at the audial level (i.e., assonance, alliteration, consonance, etc.) could also be part of the poetic repertoire of the ancient Maya scribes. The decipherment of the entire graphic vowel system assures that Maya poetic studies will not be hindered in the same way as the heavily consonantal writing system of ancient Egypt, which has made the analysis of lyrical and sound qualities especially "precarious" (Gumbrecht 1996:11). The writing system of the ancient Maya was in no way a limiting factor in representing poetic features, but rather in many ways it significantly facilitated stylistic constructions, often in conjunction with visual poetics. In the following analysis, I argue strongly for the existence of a Maya poetic tradition in place as far back as the Early-Classic period (and probably well into the Pre-Classic period) continuing right up until the present day.

## 4.2. Methodology of Analysis

Methodologically, I began this glyphic analysis with a survey of the majority of the known Maya inscriptions to assess the presence of rhetorical features. Each text was analyzed individually for its poetic content. If a poetic device was present, I noted its type and surrounding textual context (i.e., date of passage, textual genre, etc.). Special attention was paid to the context of the poetic device in order to understand larger patterns that might indicate the scribal motivation for its use in each case. Once determined, this information was then entered into a database for comparative purposes at the end of this chapter. This inscriptional analysis included all media of transmission, including carved stone and wooden monuments, ceramics, shells, codices, bones, painted texts, and all other varieties of physical materials on which the Maya wrote hieroglyphs. The wealth of textual data available thanks to Justin Kerr's five volumes on Maya ceramics and his online database (<http://www.famsi.org>) was absolutely crucial in determining poetic features in ceramic texts.

The following research questions informed my study on hieroglyphic poetics during the analysis of texts:

- What types of poetic devices are present in the hieroglyphic inscriptions?
- What specific forms of parallelism are present in the inscriptions?
- Are there discernable variations in parallel structures (cf. Christenson 2000)? If so, how do these subcategories of parallelism function in relation to textual content?
- What metaphorical expressions can be identified in the script? Can any of these be correlated with similar expressions in modern Mayan languages?
- How do the ellipsis and augmentation function and interact in parallelisms in the hieroglyphs?

- Do the physical media on which the text is written relate to use of poetic devices?
- What can be said about the development of literary features from the earliest inscriptions to the latest ones?

### **4.3. Past Research on Hieroglyphic Poetics and Narrative Structure**

As I discussed in Chapter 3, Floyd Lounsbury first noted the presence of a couplet in an inscription from the Temple of the Cross at Palenque in 1978 (Lounsbury 1980:107-115). The presence of paralleled forms in post-Colonial documents in the 1950s by Thompson had preceded Lounsbury's identification (1950:61-62). Work by Garibay, Edmonson, and León-Portilla (see below) in the 1960s had further shown many of the Books of Chilam Balam and the Popol Vuh to be structurally built on parallelism. Advances in glyphic syntax from the 1970s to the 1980s aided researchers in their ability to discern parallelisms in the hieroglyphic texts. A major step in this direction came in 1988 with the publication of Josserand and Hopkin's ground-breaking article on narrative discourse structure of the hieroglyphs (1988; see also Josserand 1991, 1995, 1997). Josserand and Hopkins were able to identify discourse marking particles that highlighted the beginning of new phrases, which allowed for the 'chunking' or blocking into structural units of narrative as defined episodes. Josserand and Schele attempted to decipher the narrative structure of Maya hieroglyphic texts through the application of discourse analysis. This approach was successful in identifying episode peaks, background, and capsules, that is, "statements which essentially anticipate the events of the entire narrative" (1999:2). Coggins' contribution followed on the heels of Josserand's with a poetic analysis of Copan Stela A (1992). Coggins succeeded in showing the underlying

poetic structuring of this magnificent monument. My Master's thesis on the poetic features of the hieroglyphs was the first large-scale study on the poetics of the hieroglyphic script (Hull 1993). Schele and Ayala's (1993) analysis of the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs from Palenque was also a pioneering effort in viewing the hieroglyphic texts as literary, not just as historical or mythological documents. In addition to these authors, researchers in general have intermittently pointed out individual cases of poetic usage (usually in the form a couplet) in many different hieroglyphic inscriptions. A recent exception is the excellent study by Alfonso Lacadena (in press) on the literary tradition of the hieroglyphic inscriptions. Lacadena's article is a model, methodologically, of the type of research that can and should be done with regard to the glyphic poetics. With the advances in decipherment of today, the field is much more prepared for a fuller analysis (such as Lacadena's) of all the manifestations of poetic discourse in the hieroglyphic inscriptions.<sup>37</sup>

#### **4.4. The Question of a Literary Tradition Among the Ancient Maya**

Did the Classic Maya have a "literary tradition"? If so, to what extent did that tradition survive through the collapse of the Classic period, the turmoil of the Post-Classic, and the arrival of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century? Attempting to determine the presence or absence of a literary tradition was a crucial aspect of this

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<sup>37</sup> I define poetic discourse as the conscious use of certain structural and prosodic features that are associated by that culture with a higher degree of aesthetics than common speech. For Mayan languages, couplets and other strophic length parallel structures are the core building blocks for all forms of poetic discourse. Mayan languages make use of distinctive stylistic features which are easily defined as 'poetic' (Bricker 1974; Josserand 1986; Hanks 1989; Edmonson 1982; León-Portilla 1980; Hofling 1991; Burns 1983; Maxwell 1997; Fought 1976, 1985).

research. As I indicated in Chapter 3, a literary tradition is not necessarily tied to the concept of *belles lettres*, rather it can appear as poetic discourse to any degree in a given text. One means of determining the presence of a literary tradition is to check the earliest Post-Conquest documents for instances of the poetic structuring techniques of the Maya before the Conquest. We have a fair amount of literary material from the first few centuries following the conquest of the New World that we can survey in order to assess the nature of their literary tradition. The most obvious source to begin with is the K'iche' Popol Vuh. Early translations of this text, such as that of Ximenez, were done completely in prose with very little punctuation. It was Miguel León-Portilla who first discovered the existence of verse in the Popol Vuh (1969). Soon after, Edmonson published his translation of the Popol Vuh that showed parallelism to be widespread throughout the text. The recognition of internal textual poetic structuring in the Popol Vuh would have profound consequences for the study of poetics in Mayan languages. Edmonson wrote:

It is my conviction the Popol Vuh is primarily a work of literature, and that it cannot be properly read apart from the literary form in which it is expressed. . . The Popol Vuh is in poetry, and cannot be accurately understood in prose. It is entirely composed in parallelistic (i.e., semantic) couplets (Edmonson 1971:xi).

Edmonson realized that the Popol Vuh was not a work of prose, but rather a highly-structured poetic document built on the principle of semantic couplets. As Christenson points out, Edmonson's division of the Popol Vuh into couplets throughout, while both innovative and significant, actually went too far by assuming that *every* passage must fit

the in the strict couplet paradigm. According to D. Tedlock, this blanket approach caused Edmonson to actually *reconstruct* many lines where he felt they had originally been deleted in order to be faithful to the couplet scheme (1987:146-147). This also contributed to Edmonson's overlooking of many other poetic devices in play, such as triplets, quatrains and even longer strophes, ellipsis, and others. Tedlock has criticized Edmonson for placing such an emphasis on couplets at the expense of ignoring larger structures such as triplets (D. Tedlock 1985:92-3, 103, 220-222). Regardless of what was missed by his structuring method, Edmonson must be credited with opening the door for all future studies on Mayan poetic discourse. It was Dennis Tedlock who then significantly advanced our perceptions of the poetics of the Popol Vuh (1985). In Tedlock's translation of the Popol Vuh, he emphasized a different set of poetic features in addition to simply semantic couplets. Tedlock introduced the notion of prosody into the study of the Popol Vuh by enlisting ritual specialists among the modern K'iche' in order to analyze the prosodic features of similar genres of discourse. Such a study, according to Tedlock, allows one to "*no solo leer sus palabras sino escuchar su voz*" (not only read their words but listen to their voice) (Tedlock 1983:132). In many ways, my research is closely related to that of Tedlock's in that I also hope to use present-day speakers of Mayan languages to illuminate our understanding of languages and cultures of the past.

#### **4.5. Couplets and Parallelism in Mayan Languages**

Since couplets are the most common poetic device in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, it might first be prudent to more fully explore the meaning and use of couplets in relation to

modern Mayan languages. Parallelism is the foremost stylistic device in Mayan and other Mesoamerican languages. In terms of strophic length, the distich, or couplet is the principal basis for all structural poetics in Maya hieroglyphic writing. Metrical features of the Western tradition play no significant role in Maya poetics. According to Josserand, what meter and rhyme are to Western poetry, couplets and parallelism are to Maya poetry (personal communication 1993). Maxwell defines couplets as "the stylized repetition of all or part of an utterance, echoing either form or content..." (1997:101). For Monaghan, a couplet is the repeating of a line that is associated by parallelism in semantics or syntax to the previous one (Monaghan 1990:134). In every variety of speech situation, Mayan languages make extensive use of couplets. Gossen notes that "*todas las narraciones chamulas también utilizan la copla semántica como unidad poética principal*" (Gossen 1983:309). Even a cursory glance at one of the many Books of Chilam Balam reveals that their dominant compositional feature is the semantic couplet. The Ixil of Cotzal make considerable use of both figurative and non-figurative couplets in ritual contexts (Townsend et al. 1980). The oral narratives of the Lacandon Maya in Chiapas, Mexico show complex poetic structures including couplets, triplets, and chiasmus (see McGee 1993:1-7). Ritual speech among most Maya groups tends to be denser in couplet forms and frequency than other varieties of speech (Gossen 1974; Maxwell 1997; Stross 1974). England notes that speaking in couplets is a knowledge sometimes shared by both ritual specialists and non-specialists at times (1993:109). She writes:

*Cada persona que tiene que utilizar el lenguaje ceremonial debe saber cómo hablar en paralelismos—cuál de éstas va primero, cuáles son las estructuras sintácticas que pueden variar y cómo varían, etc. En varias comunidades hay ocasiones en que toda persona adulta tiene que usar el lenguaje ceremonial, a pesar de que este tipo de lenguaje sea usado por especialistas. Así, es un arte practicado por especialistas, pero, en cierta medida, es del conocimiento de todos. Se puede notar que este tipo de lenguaje formal y poético viene de una tradición maya muy larga.*

Couplet structuring is not isolated to the Maya, but has also been identified in many other languages in Central America. For example, the Kuna of Panama also made use of richly poetic styles and couplet structures (Sherzer 1987; 1990:66, 77; 1984). Monaghan has also shown that the Mixtec codices are centered on semantic, metrical and syntactic couplets (Monaghan 1990:134-137). The Aztec ritual language, known as *tecpillahtolli*, was also highly dualistic, especially in forming *difrasismos* through paired items.

#### **4.6. Purposes of Parallelism**

What motivations underlie the use of couplets and other forms of parallelism in Mayan languages? On the surface, the repetitive nature of parallelism might be misconstrued as tedious and disruptive to the narrative flow of a text. Christenson has similarly noted that "the beauty of K'iche' poetry may sound awkward and repetitive when translated into European languages" (2000:13). Referring to ancient Egyptian poetry, where couplets form the structural backbone of much of that literary tradition, Parkinson has noted that "The use of formulae may look dull on the page, but is very helpful and stimulating when a work is performed" (1997:9). In narrative contexts, couplets may be perceived as retardant to the flow of the narrative text. Fought, however,

has pointed out how a couplet structure in these situations serves to stress "the importance of a particular event or cluster, and it serves to temporarily slow the pace of the narrative" (1976:234). This slowing of the narrative can also be an important means of emphasizing a particular point. Maxwell has also noted the use of couplets in Chuj at the episode peak, the climax, and the moral of the narrative (1997:101). Urban stresses the "saliency-producing and attention getting" qualities of parallelism as a marked speech style (1991:80). In the context of oral poetry, Parkinson also notes that the balanced phraseology typical of *parallelismus membrorum* "seems to be a stylistic feature which heightens the poetry" (1997:11). For Urban, "parallelism exercises its sway, produces an aesthetic experience of felt power to the discourse, lends its persuasive or compelling force to the thought shaped by it" (1991:58). Parkinson (1997:11) also makes the following important observations about parallelism:

That structure and (on a more minor scale) the use of repetition give the work a great resonance and profundity; passages and incidents echo one another, illuminating the narrative and its significance. The repetition of phrases can give an effect of integrity and authority, presenting the same subject in a variety of complementary ways, but it can also produce a polyphonic interweaving of imagery and motifs that embody the richness and complexity of the poem's subject matter.

Therefore, repetition and parallelism can have an emphatic, clarifying, emotive, and authoritative function (among others). Parallelism most often involves the highlighting of a particular point of a text for specific purpose of the author. There seems to be some discernable difference in use among the various forms of parallelism dependent upon the type of emphasis desired by its producer (these will be discussed in more detail below).

Furthermore, Christenson stresses the crucial role of parallelism as "a means of structuring the book's ideas into distinct and coherent entities," while at the same time giving us insight into the mind of the ancient authors (2000:20). Urban argues for a stronger cultural component to the process of structural parallelism. "Like cultural continuity," Urban writes, "parallelism involves the replication of units over time" (1991:80). It is also important to stress the fact that parallelism in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan is not limited to couplets, but instead includes triplets, quatrains, and other longer strophes just as do many modern Mayan languages (see Chapter 1, 2; D. Tedlock 1982; Hull 1993).

On a practical level, couplets and other strophic length features facilitate the memorization of texts in case the text itself was not before the scribe at the time of the recitation (cf. Monaghan 1990:136; Hull 1993:64). Lewis has described a similar function with Somali texts which are encoded into a highly poetic form "for rapid word-of-mouth transmission among the nomads" (1993:148).

#### **4.7. Early Recognition of Parallelism in the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions**

The presence of couplet structures in the hieroglyphic inscriptions was not fully appreciated until 1978 when Floyd Lounsbury masterfully demonstrated the presence of a clear semantic couplet on Temple of the Cross (Lounsbury 1980:107-115). The text beginning from C17-E2 reads (figure 9):

**i-hu-li / ma-ta-wi-li / 9 ik' / 10 keh /  
u-'hand'-ka-b'a / ma-ta-wi-li /**

*i huli matawil 9 ik' 10 keh,*  
*u-'hand'-kab' matawil*  
(And) then he arrived at Matawil on 9 Ik' 10 Keh,  
He 'touched' the earth at Matawil.

At the time, the main sign of what we now read as *hu* was dubbed the 'birth frog', following Tatiana Proskouriakoff's identification of meaning of this glyph as 'birth' in the 1960s. Lounsbury realized that this the birth statement in the first line may explain the 'touching of the earth' glyph in the second line. This was confirmed when he found a comparable metaphor for 'birth' in Ch'ol. In Ch'ol, the expression *huli ti panimil, tel lum* means "to arrive on the topside, to touch earth" (Lounsbury 1980:113). The first collocation in the second half of the couplet visually shows a down-turned hand actually touching the syllables *ka-b'a*, or *kab'*, meaning 'earth'. Today, we know that the glyphic metaphor is actually even closer to the Ch'ol example since we now know that the 'birth frog' has a syllabic reading of *hu* (deciphered by Nikolai Grube), which is here followed by *-li* to produce the reading of *huli*, or "he arrived." With the identification of this semantic couplet Lounsbury changed forever the direction of glyphic studies in several ways. First, he demonstrated the clear relevance of and advantage in using modern Mayan languages in the decipherment of hieroglyphic writing. Furthermore, he was able to show unequivocally that Maya scribes employed poetic structuring techniques in their writing. While scholars have been slow to fully explore this second point, we are certainly now in a position to make up for lost time and more systematically study Maya hieroglyphic texts as literary.

#### 4.8. Identical Structure and Related Meaning Parallelism

Without a doubt, the most common form of parallel discourse in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan is the semantic couplet, or identical parallelism as I have label it. As I noted in Chapter 1, I have divided identical parallelism into two structural categories: A) Identical Structure and Related Meaning Parallelism, and B) Identical Structure and Shape Parallelism. I define identical structure and related meaning parallelism as the presence of a separate but semantically related term or phrase that is employed in each line in an otherwise identical structure. Conversely, identical structure and shape parallelism refers to 100% repetition of the first line in the second with no alteration whatsoever. Identical structure and related meaning parallelism is by far the most common between these two from in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. A good illustrative example of identical structure and related meaning parallelism comes from K1398, a polychrome ceramic commonly known as the 'Rabbit Pot' (figure 11):

**u-TZ'AP-li / TE' /**  
**u-TZ'AP-li / TUN-ni /**  
*utz'apil te'*,  
*utz'apil tuun.*  
His planting of the tree,  
His planting of the stone.

Note that the line-initial elements are repeated verbatim (*utz'apil*) while the final element (*te'* and *tuun*, respectively) show the alteration. The nominal form *utz'apil*, 'his planting', derives from the verb *tz'ap* (deciphered by Nikolai Grube), which regularly appears in the inscriptions as the verb for the 'erection' of stela into the ground. The terms *te'*, 'tree', and

*tuun*, 'stone', as Freidel and Schele (1992) first suggested, are closely related semantically since they both are things that can be 'planted' (*tz'ap*).<sup>38</sup> The repetition of the line-initial element and the semantically related elements that follow create a well-balanced identical structure and related meaning parallelism.

Some texts have only a slight variation of a single element in an identical structure and related meaning parallelism. The vessel K635 contains a semantic couplet in a diagonal text that shows only a single morphemic variation between lines (figure 12):

**u-hi-HIX-li / 10-NAB' /**  
**u-hi-HIX-li / 9-NAB' /**  
*uhixil 10 na[h]b'*,  
*uhixil 9 na[h]b'*.  
It is the jaguar of 10 handspans,  
It is the jaguar of 9 handspans.

The term *hix* is an attested term for Jaguar in the Highland Mayan language of Q'eqchi'. The alternation between lines appears in the two numbers, "9 and "10." While the context of this inscription is unclear due to erosion, this elegant example of identical structure and related meaning parallelism is fortunately preserved.

One particular titular expression shows considerable repetition at a number of sites. Rulers often list their titles as a temporal sequence to indicate how long they have held a certain position of rank. At times, the temporal notation is deleted after its first mention. At Yaxchilan and neighboring Dos Caobas, Shield Jaguar records a similar title sequence, only in these cases he does not delete the temporal marker from the subsequent

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<sup>38</sup> Roys has also noted a metaphorical meaning associated with the pairing of *che*, 'tree', and *tun*, 'stone' in Yukatek as "defeats and pestilence" based on an entry in the Motul Dictionary (Roys 1967:99) (cf. León-Portilla and Shorris (2001:565).

lines, but instead repeats it throughout. The first example of this comes from Yaxchilan Stela 18 at D1-C2 and Stela 1 from Dos Caobas (figure 13a-b):

Example a:

**5-WINIKHAB'-AJAW /**  
**5-WINIKHAB'-b'a-TE' /**  
*5 winikhaab' ajaw,*  
*5 winikhaab' b'a[ah]te'.*  
5 'K'atun' Lord,  
5 'K'atun' *B'aahte'*.

Example b:

**5-WINIKHAB'-AJAW /**  
**5-WINIKHAB'-b'a-TE' /**  
**5-WINIKHAB'-pi-tzi /**  
**5-WINIKHAB'-ch'a-ho-ma /**  
*5 winikhaab' ajaw,*  
*5 winikhaab' b'a[ah]te',*  
*5 winikhaab' pitz[il],*  
*5 winikhaab' ch'aho'm.*  
5 'K'atun' Lord,  
5 'K'atun' *B'aahte'*,  
5 'K'atun' Ballplayer,  
5 'K'atun' Youth.

On this occasion, the scribe chose to repeat the temporal indicator with each title. The desired effect of this repetition is to draw attention to the both the longevity of Shield Jaguar as well as to underscore his power and prestige.

Maya Codices also have distinctive discourse structures that show a significant use of parallelism. The Paris Codex, for example, has a large number of couplets of various kinds. Note the following example from Page 9 (figure 14):

**wi-i-ma / TZEN / NAL /**  
**3-chu-ka-ja / NAL /**  
**??-HAB'-li /**  
**CHAM-HAB'-li /**  
**12-TUN-ni /**  
**CHAM-la K'UH /**  
**CHAM-la K'AWIL /**  
*wi'm tzen nal,*  
*3 chu[h]kaj nal.*  
*?-haab'il,*  
*cham-haab'il*  
*12 tuunil.*  
*chamal k'uh,*  
*chamal k'awiil.*  
*Wi'm (is the) food of the Maize God,*  
*3 were seized of the Maize God.*  
*? year,*  
*year of death.*  
*In the 12<sup>th</sup> year.*  
*Death of the Gods,*  
*Death of K'awiil.*

The couplet in the first two lines is based on the shared presence of the Maize God logograph (read *nal*). The second identical structure and related meaning parallelism shows two distinct heads preceding the *haab'*, or 'year' sign. The identification of the first sign is not secure, but the second is clearly a 'death' head. This, then, would indicate a negative augury for that year. A single monocolon, "in the 12<sup>th</sup> year," poetically disrupts the sequence of couplets. Finally, a third identical structure and related meaning parallelism resumes thereafter bemoaning the "death of the Gods, death of K'awiil."

From Page 10 of the Paris Codex we have another series of identical structure and related meaning parallelisms (figure 15):

**CHAM-la / K'UH /**  
**CHAM-la / TZ'AK-AJAW-wa /**  
 'eclipse of the sun'  
 'eclipse of the moon'  
*chamal k'uh,*  
*chamal tz'ak ajaw.*  
 'eclipse of the sun',  
 'eclipse of the moon'.  
 Death of the gods,  
 Death of Tz'ak Ajaw.  
 'Eclipse of the sun',  
 'Eclipse of the moon'.

The negative prognostication for this year is said to include the death of gods and both as well as both a solar and lunar eclipse (events fraught with danger and uncertainty for the ancient Maya). The first couplet is a synonymous parallelism in that it begins with a broad statement about 'gods' in general followed by the mention of a specific deity, Tz'ak Ajaw. The lines have an identical shape except for the alternation of a single item. The second couplet is antithetical in that it pairs the eclipse of the sun and the moon.

In identical structure and related meaning parallelism, the substituted element in the second line can be longer than a single term. In many cases, the alternation takes the form of a phrase. For example, on Randall Stela at I9-I12 (figure 16), the death of a 5-'K'atun' Sajal, named B'ahlam Chilkey (Jaguar Manatee), is recorded in couplet fashion (see Mayer 1991, Plate 94):

**i-CHAM-mi / b'a-la-ma / chi-li-ka-yu / 5-WINIKHAB' /**  
**CHAM-mi / u-sa-ja-la / K'AB'-CHAN-na-TE' / SAK-TZ'I'-AJAW**  
*i chami b'a[h]lam chilkey 3 winikhaab',*  
*chami usajal k'ab' chan te' sak tz'i' ajaw.*  
 Then died B'ahlam Chilkey, a 5-'K'atun' [Sajal],  
 Died the Sajal of K'ab' Chan Te', Lord of Sak Tz'i'.

In the first line of the stanza, the intransitive verb *chami* appears after the deictic clitic *i-*, "(and) then," followed by the name of the *sajal* B'ahlam Chilkey.<sup>39</sup> B'ahlam Chilkey was already named as a *sajal* earlier in the text at F2. Therefore, the dangling reference to "5-'K'atun'" indexes this previous point in the text. The second line immediately repeats the verb *chami* in the initial position followed by the possessed reference *usajal k'ab' chan te'*, "the Sajal of K'ab' Chan Te'." While the mention of "5-'K'atun'" is deleted in the second line, the line is also augmented with the name of the possessor of the Sajal B'ahlam Chilkey, K'ab' Chan Te', the ruler of Sak Tz'i' at this time. The repetition of the verb *chami*, 'he died', together with the appositive replacement form in the second line, deletion, and augmentation, all serve to create a well-cadenced balance in this parallelism at this moment of lament in the text.

#### 4.9. Identical Structure and Shape Parallelism

As I stated above, identical structure and shape parallelism, where the second line is exactly the same as the first, is very rare in the hieroglyphic inscriptions (as it is in Ch'orti' poetic texts). One of the few examples in the hieroglyphs comes from the text of Quirigua Altar P' at M1a-N2b (figure 17):

**u-hu-b'u-li / CHAN?-sak-YAX-CHAN /**  
**u-hu-b'u-li / CHAN?-sak-YAX-CHAN /**  
*ujub'uul chan? sak yax chan,*  
*ujub'uul chan? sak yax chan.*  
 (It is) the descending of Chan? Sak Yax Chan,  
 (It is) the descending of Chan? Sak Yax Chan.

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<sup>39</sup> A *sajal* was second-tier position in Classic Maya nobility. The title perhaps derives from the root *saj* meaning "to fear" in Ch'ol (lit. 'one who fears'). Those who held the title of *sajal*, a title prevalent in the western portion of the Maya lowlands, "administered smaller sites under the supervision of a suzerain" (Houston 1992a:128-129).

Each element from the first line of the stanza is fully repeated in the second line. The emphasis brought to bear on the line through such exact repetition must be considerable.

#### 4.10. Repetition

The logic in creating a separate category called "Repetition" in a chapter based on all the various manifestations of repetition in parallelism may not be perfectly apparent. In some inscriptions, however, multiple listings of related items are occasionally given where the first element remains constant while all the subsequent items differ. Of course, these structures could be classified simply as quatrains or larger strophic length poetic constructions. However, some of these texts may merely be lists of items whose rhetorical value may be trumped by their 'catalogic' conventionalism. Such sequences in the form a list, however, strongly resemble many prayers of Maya priests today (Brian Stross, personal communication 2003). Here are a few examples given with only a basic transliteration and for purposes of simplicity (figure 18a-c):

Example 1:

(Yaxchilan Stairway III, Structure 44)

*chuhkaj ub'a-? tinik 7 chapaat tz'ik'in ajaw to'k'-pakal ti-9-mi k'ahk'-wa-?*

*ucha'n 7 ??;*

*ucha'n nohol ajaw,*

*ucha'n to'k'? etz'nab'?*

*uch'an ??.*

He was captured, *Ub'a-? Tinik 7 Chapaat Tz'ik'in Ajaw, To'k' Palak ti-9-mi K'ahk'aw-?*,

His captive, *7 ?,*

His captive, *Nojol Ajaw,*

His captive, *To'k'? Etz'nab'?,*

His captive *??.*

Example 2:  
(Yaxchilan Structure 44, Stela 21)  
*ucha'n tajam mo',*  
*ucha'n 9-le ajaw,*  
*ucha'n a-?-man?,*  
*ucha'n ajik'a.*

His captive, *Tajam Mo'*,  
His captive, *9-le Ajaw*,  
His captive, *A-? Man?*,  
His captive *Ajik'a*.

Example 3:  
(Tikal Bone #42)  
*ub'aak xikuup ajaw ch'ok,*  
*ub'aak ? ajaw ju-?,*  
*ub'aak ? b'aakal ajaw,*  
*ub'aak k'uhul b'aak ajaw tz'ul b'aak,*  
*ub'aak xukuup ajaw ch'ok,*  
*ub'aak ? ajaw hul b'aak*  
*ub'aak ??,*  
*ub'aak k'uhul b'aak ajaw.*

The bone of *Xikuup Ajaw Ch'ok*,  
The bone of *? Ajaw Hu-?*,  
The bone of *B'aakal Ajaw*,  
The bone of *K'uhul B'aak Ajaw Tz'ul B'aak*,  
The bone of *Xukuup Ajaw Ch'ok*,  
The bone of *? Ajaw Hul B'aak*,  
The bone of *??*  
The bone of *K'uhul B'aak Ajaw*.

The parallelism is pronounced in each of these inscriptions, yet there is an inescapable list-like quality to each that deepens the rhetorical affect through such consistent repetition.

#### **4.11. Discourse Structure and Parallelism**

One of the remarkable aspects of Maya hieroglyphic syntax is constant repetition of elements in restatements. In an effort to chronologically link one event to the next, the Maya would make use of "distance numbers," i.e. numerical notations expressing how much time has passed between events. In many cases, the distance number appears in conjunction with the intransitive verb *uht*, which means 'happened'. For example, after stating a verbal phrase, the scribe would often something like, "23 days after X-ing, then it happened (*i-uht*) on (X-date) that...". In practice this means that many events are actually written twice, once in the initial clause and a second time in the chronological restatement. This syntactical pattern naturally breeds couplet structures as we will see in the discussion that follows on the poetic forms of the hieroglyphic inscriptions.

#### **4.12. Identical Parallelism and Ellipsis**

Based on my observations of the poetics of Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, texts containing couplets in general are not restricted to any particular media or genre. Identical structure and related meaning parallelism showing ellipsis, for example, are common to Early Classic short texts on portable objects, shells, lintels, stelae, panels, bones, and many others. One can trace their usage from the Early Classic period through the Late Classic codices, into Colonial documents, and finally to modern Mayan languages who make considerable use of them. A good example of this can be seen on an unprovenanced text on an onyx bowl showing use of identical structure and related meaning parallelism with the second line deletion of all but the final element (K4692):

K'A'-yi / u-NIK?<sup>40</sup>-SAK / IK' /  
u-ti-si /

k'a'[aa]y, unik?<sup>?</sup>sak ik',  
utis.

It was finished, his flower white wind (spirit),  
his bad wind.

This metaphorical expression details the 'native' Maya view of the human soul. Death is here expressed with the elegant phrase 'his flower white wind was finished'. The 'flower white wind' forms the first stich of a semantic couplet that is followed by *utis*, 'his bad wind'. In modern Mayan languages, the term *tis* refers to 'flatulence' or any bad odor. In Yukatek, it also has the meaning of 'life force' or 'body energy' (Nikolai Grube, personal communication 2002). It seems that the Maya conceived of two 'winds'—one good and the other bad—that leave from the body at the time of death (cf. Houston and Taube 2000:267). This couplet is also an excellent example of a contrastive or antithetical couplet in that it poetically contrasts these 'good' and the 'bad' winds. Structurally, the second line of couplet deletes the verb in classic fashion for Mayan languages, especially Ch'orti' (see Chapters 1 and 2).

Verbal deletion is found in a number of hieroglyphic texts. For example, on the West side of Copan Stela A at D4-D5 we find the following semantic couplet (figure 20):

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<sup>40</sup> The exact reading of T533 is still in debate. Nikolai Grube first offered the decipherment of *nik* meaning 'flower'. T533 regularly carries a *ki-* suffix, seemingly adding support for Grube's reading. Grube suggested the reference to 'flower' was an appropriate metaphor for 'child' since the cognate form *nichim* 'flower' in Tzotzil is also a metaphor for 'child'. This reading seemed very appropriate both inside and outside of parentage contexts. Stuart et. al have recently noted some uncertainty about this reading (1999). Barbara MacLeod has most recently offered a new reading of T533 as *nuk*, 'great, large,' that also seems to have considerable promise (personal communication 10/2003). Until these newer hypotheses can be more fully worked through, I will retain the reading of *nik* in this study albeit marked with a "?."

**CHAM-mi / tzi-pi-TI' / ch'a-ho-ma /**  
**tzi-pi-TI' / nu-na**  
*chami tzipti' ch'aho'm,*  
*tzipti' nu'n*  
 He died, Tzipti' Youth,  
 Tzipti' Broken Speaker?<sup>41</sup>

The intransitive verb *chami* 'died' in the first line is omitted in the second half of the couplet. A smooth cadence is the result of this type of line-initial deletion.

Another occurrence of a identical shape and related meaning parallelism showing verbal deletion comes from Tortuguero Monument 6, at F11-F12 (figure 21). On this monument, Wichmann has pointed out the presence of the following semantic couplet (2002:10):

**i-e-ke-wa-ni / 6 NOH-? /**  
**6-mu-lu-b'a-ja-li /**  
*i ekwan 6 noh-?,*  
*6 mul b'ajil*  
 Then were hung, 6 great ?,  
 6 'stacked objects'

Wichmann has convincingly argued that this verb records the action of the 'hanging' of two stone panels on the wall. The verb (*h*)*ekwan* is a positional root that in Yukatek means "to straddle, mount." The passive subjects of the intransitive positional verb both contain the number "6," which amplifies the parallelism in this case. The verbal phrase

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<sup>41</sup> Erik Boot has offered the translation of 'broken speaker' for the *nu'n* title that appears at Tonina and Chichen Itza. Boot relies on Colonial Yukatekan documents that contain several mentions of the Itza as "*nun*," suggesting that it was their 'broken speech' that set them apart from the Yukatek speakers of the area. At Tonina, we see that *nu'n* is likely a kind of office since someone is said to 'be tied in as a *nu'n*' (*jo[h]yaj ti nu'n*).

"Then they were hung" is deleted from the second stich with only the nominal element given in couplet form.

The Tablet of the Creation at Palenque contains another example of second line deletion (figure 22). In this couplet, only the final element of each line is identical. The text reads:

**u-B'AH-hi TUN?-ni-li ka-yo-ma**  
**a-k'a-b'a ka-yo-ma**  
*ub'aah tuun?il kayo'm,*  
*ak'ab' kayo'm.*  
It is the image of the stone? of the fisherman,  
the night fisherman.

While the meaning of the couplet is not readily ascertainable, the parallelism and ellipsis in the second line is perfectly apparent in its structure.

On the ceramic vessel K5456, a visiting lord is shown arriving seated on his palanquin together with one of its bearers (figure 23). He and a local lord are shown facing each other in the scene in dialogic interaction. Grube (1998) first identified this inscription as quotative statement that contains two second-person singular possessive pronouns. The intervening between the speakers text records the following direct quote:

**? / CH'AM /**  
**a-? /**  
**a-? /**  
**CHAN-na /**  
**CH'EN /**  
**?-WINIK /**  
**K'UH /**  
**che-he-na /**

? *ch'am(a) a-*?,  
     *a-*?,  
     *chan*,  
     *ch'e'n*,  
     ? *-winik*,  
     *k'uh*,  
     *chehen*.  
 "? take your ?,  
     your ?,  
     sky,  
     cave,  
     ?-person,  
     God!"  
     he said.<sup>42</sup>

When structured out in this way, it is evident that the text contains perhaps three different couplets. The first couplet begins both lines with the second-person singular possessive pronoun *a-*, 'your'. Regrettably, the meaning of both glyphs is opaque. The presence of the repeated pronoun, however, secures this identification as a semantic couplet. The second couplet contains the common pairing of *chan-ch'e'n*, or 'sky-cave' that seems to be a *difrasismo* for 'everywhere' (see fuller discussion below). The third couplet is perhaps antithetical in that it contrasts 'human' with 'God'. The statement ends with the quotative particle *chehen*, 'he said it'. The verbal phrase in the first line of the first couplet is deleted from the second line. It is also noteworthy that this text may contain one of the few imperative statements in Maya hieroglyphs.<sup>43</sup> As we will see below, imperative and

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<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that Steve Houston disagrees with my reading order of this text. He prefers to read it in single columns (personal communication 2003).

<sup>43</sup> About this text I have elsewhere written:

The verb here, *ch'am*, is given without any visible morphology. In the context of a spoken text, an imperative form seems eminently appropriate. I would interpret the shape of the verb in this case as *ch'ama'*, meaning "Take (it)!" Regrettably, both objects of the imperative are terms of unknown meaning. In both cases, they are prefixed with the second-person singular possessive

directly quoted speech in the inscriptions prove to be highly poetic in terms of parallelisms such as with K5456. In fact, in first- and second-person texts, there is a strong tendency for parallel discourse in the hieroglyphic script.

An unprovenanced stela located today in Musée Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels contains another example of an identical structure and related meaning parallelism with line-initial second stich deletion (Mayer 1995: Plate 74) (figure 24). The inscription reads:

**i-PAS / tu-KAB' /**  
**tu-CH'EN /**  
*i pas tu kab',*  
*tu ch'e'n.*  
Then (is) the opening in his land,  
in his cave.

In this case, there is no overt verbal form in the first line. Instead, the uninflected form *pas*, 'opening', appears, probably representing a noun. It is possible that this is an existential statement requiring the addition of "is" for a smoother translation. We see here, then, that line-initial deletion can be for nominal as well as verbal elements in the inscriptions.

Another example of line-initial deletion with a nominal form is found on the West Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque at I10-I11 (figure 25). The inscription reads:

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pronoun *a-*, "your." The following two glyphs, *chan ch'e'n*, or 'sky cave (literally 'what is above and what is below'), make up what is commonly called a *difrasismo* (diphrastric kenning) or merismus... On K5456, then, the local lord may be telling the visiting noble to 'Take your ? and your ? everywhere...!' (Hull 2003).

**u-tu-ta-li / CHAN-na-K'UH /**  
**KAB'-al-K'UH /**  
*utu'tal chan[al] k'uh,*  
*kab'al k'uh.*  
The gift? of the Heaven[ly] God,  
of the Earthly God.

The pairing of 'sky' and 'earth' creates an antithetical parallelism that is highly suggestive of a broader interpretation than that of its two individual component parts (see below).

The possessed noun at the beginning of line one, *utu'tal*, "the gift? of," is poetically deleted in the second line of the stanza. Deletion as a poetic process serves to both speed up the flow of information, since not every element is repeated, as well as to emphasize one part of the second stich by its sole repetition.

#### **4.13. Parallelism in Names and Titles**

Our understanding of name and title phrases in the inscriptions has progressed considerably in the last decade. Recent research on name phrase structure has also made us aware that all Maya names of lords can be read as sentences (Nikolai Grube, personal communication 2001). For example, K'ahk'upakal, the powerful ruler of Chichen Itza, means 'Fire is his Shield'. In addition, I believe that many names and titles contain conscious poetic paralleling. On an unprovenanced panel (possibly from La Mar), a 'fire-entering' ceremony takes place in a *wayb'il*, or 'sleeping house' of a god whose name appears in couplet form (Mayer 1987: Plate 96) (figure 26a-b):

**OCH-K'AK' / tu-WAY-b'i-li / ko-lu-b'u-chi /**  
**ko-lu-XULUB'?** /

*och[i]k'ahk tu wayb'il kol b'uuch,*  
*kol xuluub'(?).*

Fire enters into the sleeping house of Kol B'uuch,  
Kol Xuluub'(?).

The nominal phrase Kol B'uuch, Kol Xuluub'(?)<sup>44</sup> forms a semantic couplet with line-initial deletion and line-final alteration in the second line.

On Stela A at Quirigua, Waxaklaju'n Ub'aah K'awiil of Copan is mentioned with two titles that show poetic structuring (figure 27):

**4-ch'a-HOM-la /**  
**4-IK'-WAY-NAL-la /**  
*4 ch'aho'mal,*  
*4 ik' waynal.*  
4 Youth,  
4 Black 'Portal Place'.

The line-initial repetition of the number 4, together with the assonance created by the final syllable *-al*<sup>45</sup> of both lines, i.e. *ch'aho'mal* and *waynal*, serves to amplify the aesthetic cadence of verse.

A final example of name phrases showing parallelism comes from Bone MT41 from Tikal (figure 28). The final segments of a longer name and title sequence appear as:

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<sup>44</sup> The reading of the 'deer antlers' is unknown. However, in many Mayan languages *xulub* is an attested term for deer antlers. The phonetic complement of *-b'a* in this context possibly suggests this reading for the logogram.

<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to note that the suffix *-la* is not commonly appended to this title. It may be that in an effort to amplify the poetic affect of the text, the scribe inserted the *-la* syllable to create a rhyming cadence at the end of each line to complement a similar cadence found at the beginning of each line.

**NIK?-ki / B'ALAM /**  
**AB'AT / B'ALAM /**  
*nik? b'a[h]lam,*  
*ab'at b'a[h]lam.*  
 Flower<sup>46</sup> Jaguar,  
 Messenger<sup>47</sup> Jaguar.

Structurally, the alteration in the first half of each line and the repetition of the final element form the semantic couplet in this name phrase.

#### 4.14. Synonymous Parallelism

Synonymous parallelism refers to the "the repetition of elements that are similar in meaning or significance" (2000:14). I distinguish between synonymous parallelism and identical parallelism repeats the majority of the line (except when ellipsis occurs) whereas with synonymous parallelism there can be much less rigidity in structural similarities, focusing instead on similar overall meaning. The Temple of the Cross at Palenque contains a good illustrative instance of synonymous parallelism in which the meaning of both lines is synonymous, but expressed through different means (figure 9).

At C17-E2 in the text it reads:

**i-hu-li / ma-ta-wi-li / 9 ik' / 10 keh /**  
**u-'hand'-ka-b'a / ma-ta-wi-li /**  
*i huli matawil 9 ik' 10 keh,*  
*u-'hand'-kab' matawil*  
 (And) then he arrived at Matawil on 9 Ik' 10 Keh,  
 He 'touched' the earth at Matawil.

<sup>46</sup> Barbara MacLeod's reading of T533 as *nuk*, 'great' instead of 'flower' in this context would also fit well contextually.

<sup>47</sup> Nikolai Grube (personal communication, March 2003) has suggested that the 'headband-bird' is not to be read *itz'aat*, 'sage' or 'wise person', as has long been thought. Instead, Grube believes this title reads *ab'at*, 'messenger'.

Since I have discussed this couplet in detail earlier, suffice here to point out that in each stich the notion of 'birth' is communicated though two separate expressions, 'to arrive at' and 'to touch the earth', both of which form a metaphor for birth in modern Ch'ol and Ch'orti' (see Chapter 4). The message of the verbal phrase is synonymous in both lines.

A passage from Page 46c of the Dresden Codex contains another clear instance of synonymous parallelism, this time in a *difrasismo* (see fuller discussion of this below) (figure 29):

**po-po /**  
**TZ'AM-ma /**  
*po[h]p,*  
*tz'am.*  
Mat,  
Throne.

Two distinct yet synonymous terms for 'throne' are given in couplet form to represent the notion of 'authority'. At this level, the synonymous parallelism is trumped by the secondary metaphorical meaning brought about by the specific pairing of these two terms.

The Tablet of the 96 Glyphs at Palenque at I5-J5 contains an example of highly interesting kinship expression that exhibits synonymous parallelism (figure 30).<sup>48</sup>

K'ihnich K'uk' B'ahlam's relationship to his father is stated as follows:

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<sup>48</sup> This exact metaphor also appears on the Temple XVIII Stuccos at Palenque, a fragment from a panel from the Palenque region, and a jade plaque from a private collection (see Davletshin 2003:2, fig. 4).

**u-NIK?-li /**  
**ye-u-KOKAN?-na /**  
*unik(?)il,*  
*ye ukokan?<sup>49</sup>*  
He is the flower of,  
The point of stingray spine of...

As Albert Davletshin has demonstrated, this metaphorical 'child of father' expression relating flowers and stingray spines makes sense since "we know that the Mesoamerican peoples made an association between the concepts of the bloodletting ritual, creation and conception" (2003:2). The act of bloodletting for Maya male lords usually entailed piercing their penis with a stingray spine to draw blood.<sup>50</sup> Through the process of bloodletting, the Maya believed their king could 'give birth' to certain deities (Schele and Miller 1986). This conceptual relationship between bloodletting and birth is metaphorically extended to the literal kinship between K'ihnich K'uk' B'ahlam and his father K'ihnich Aku'l Mo' Anaahb' II. In this way, "flower" and "point of the stingray spine" can be understood to be synonymous means of representing the idea of 'offspring'.

Two identical cases of synonymous parallelism appear on the painted texts of the recently discovered Capstones 6 and 14 at Ek' Balam. The inscription from Capstone 14 reads (figure 31):

**ma-ka-ja / u-WAY-li/**  
**u-k'a-li / u-ki-ti / 4-le-ku /**  
**TAL-lo-AJAW-wa /**

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<sup>49</sup> The reading of the stingray spine as *kokan* is per Marc Zender (personal communication to Albert Davletshin in 2002) and independently by Albert Davletshin (Davletshin 2003:3).

<sup>50</sup> The Book of Chilam Balam of Kaua contains very vivid references to penis bloodletting. The text specifies which months are good for "bleeding" and which are not good: "It [July] is dangerous for bleeding a man's penis too" (Bricker and Miram 2002:133).

*ma[h]kaj uwayil,*  
*uk'aal ukit kan le'k,*  
*talol ajaw.*  
It was closed, the portal of,  
the opening of Ukit Kan Le'k,  
Lord of Talol.

Michael D. Carrasco and I have identified the capstone region of the corbeled vault in Maya architecture as a portal place (Carrasco and Hull 2002). In this Ek' Balam text, the space "closed" in this ceremony is explicitly called the *wayil*, or 'portal' of the Lord Ukit Kan Le'k. This phraseology is especially common on painted capstones from sites of Ek' Balam and Caracol. Capstones 6 and 14 at Ek' Balam poetically pairs the synonymous terms *uwayil*, "the 'portal' of" and *uk'aal*, "the opening of," in order to describe the opening that spans the gap at the apex of the corbeled vault.

#### **4.15. Augmentative Parallelism**

Augmentative parallelism involves the deletion of certain elements in the first portion of the second stich, while simultaneously adding other elements to the end of the same line to further explain or clarify. The Tablet of the 96 Glyphs at Palenque contains an excellent example of augmentative parallelism. Since the text is discussed in greater detail below, I will only mention two instances of augmentative parallelism found in this inscription. The text records the accession of several Palenque lords in couplet fashion. In the second line of each couplet, the name of the lord is deleted and a prepositional phrase is augmented:

He was seated into lordship [name phrase],  
His seating on the jaguar throne (?) in the white skin building.

In all three successive couplets on this tablet the same augmentative parallelism occurs. The name phrase is deleted in the second stich and the prepositional phrase is augmented. Augmentation adds a sense of "elegance" to the line, according to one of my Ch'orti' consultants.

On the polychrome vessel K1440, a long hieroglyphic text graces most of its visible surface. The text is highly poetic a numerous level, and will be discussed in detail below. At R1-S1, an augmentative parallelism appears (figure 32):

R2 - *4-mi?-na ta k'a[h]n*                      *4-mi?-n(a)* on the bench,  
S2 - *2-matotib'ik ta k'a[h]n ta yotoot.*      *2-Matotib'ik* on the bench at his house.

The meaning of the first lexeme in both stichs is not clear. The subsequent two elements are paralleled exactly, *ta kahn*, "on the bench." In the second line, however, the scribe then augments additional information to the couplet with *ta yotoot*, "at his house." It is also possible to analyze this as nested couplet in which the phrase *ta yotoot* plays off the same preposition *ta* in the second line to form the first line of the nested couplet.

#### **4.16. Antithetic Parallelism and *Difrasismos***

According to Christenson, antithetical parallelism is simply "the contrast of one element with an opposite or antithetical element" (2000:14). As I have discussed in Chapter 1, the disjuncture of meaning inherent in antithetical terms heightens the poetic

tension of parallelism structures. One instance of an antithetical parallelism (that we have already seen above) appears in a death expression couplet on K4692 (figure 19):

**K'A'-yi / u-NIK?-SAK / IK' /**  
**u-ti-si /**  
*k'a'[aa]y, unik?sak ik',*  
*utis.*  
 It was finished, his flower white wind (spirit),  
 his bad wind.

The contrast is made between 'his flower white wind' (i.e. the soul) and 'his bad wind'. Somewhere in the eschatological understanding of the ancient Maya, death was conceived as the loss of both of these *ik'*, or 'winds'. The statement gains additional emotional force through the antithetical pairing of these two types of 'winds' associated with one's life force.

David Stuart first deciphered a instance of antithetical parallelism found on K2026. The scene on this ceramic vessel shows a seated lord facing an individual who holds a large bird while being surrounded by a plethora of rabbits (figure 33). A small hieroglyphic text that intervenes between the two figures reads:

**o-na / T'UL? /**  
**ma-o-na / wa-k'u /**  
*o'n t'ul?,*  
*ma' o'n wa'k'.*  
 There are many rabbits,  
 There are not many *wa'k'*.

The repeated element in the both verses is *o'n*, a common adverb in Ch'olan languages that means 'much', 'many', or 'a long time'. The affirmative statement in the first line

("There are many rabbits") is contrasted with a negative in the second line ("There are not many *wak'*") using *ma'*, 'meaning no' or 'not'. The accompanying scene attests to the presence of 'many rabbits'. The meaning of the term *wak'* is not known, but it could be the name of the bird being held by the individual since there is only one shown in the scene.<sup>51</sup>

Antithetical parallelisms often appear as part of other poetic constructions, especially *difrasismos*. A *difrasismo* is the combination of two narrowly defined terms used metaphorically for a broader or more general concept distinct in meaning from its individual components (cf. Chapter 1). In the middle of the twentieth century, Garibay noted a particular practice of Nahuatl poetry in which two terms were employed as a single metaphorical unit (1961, 1968). Garibay termed this rhetorical feature *difrasismo*. Garibay, however, was not the first to discover the process, just the first to elaborate on it. In Volume 7 of the Florentine Codex Sahagún demonstrated the use of these metaphorical expressions in Nahuatl poetry (1997 [1590]). *Difrasismos* are a prominent feature of Nahuatl, especially in the language of *hue:huehtlahto:lli*, or "the old ones' manners of speaking...ancient colloquies" (Maxwell and Hanson 1992:19). Note these examples of *difrasismos* in Nahuatl (all taken from Karttunen and Lockhart 1987):

- *a:tl tep:tl* (lit. water, mountain) > the city, the state-*cuexa:nco*, *-ma:malhuazco cah* (lit. to be in someone's lapfolds, someone's backpack > to be the responsibility of someone, be governed by someone
- *cua:uhtli*, *o:ce:lo:tl* (eagle, jaguar) > person of low condition, farmer
- *itqui*, *ma:ma:* (to carry, to carry [on one's back]) > to govern

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<sup>51</sup> In the Ritual of the Bacabs, there is a mention of a bird named *wakeh* [*wak'eh?*] (Roys 1965:45).

- *-i:x, -yo:lloh* (one's face [eye], one's heart) > emotion or volition > spirit, mood, state of morale
- *ixtla:hui po:po:hui* (to be paid or restored, to count) > to flourish
- *onmati, ontaca* (lit. to know, to follow) > one's forebears in the other world
- *po:cho:tl a:hue:hue:tl* (silk cotton tree, water cypress) > ruler
- *quiya:huatl ithaulli* (exit, patio) > house-*tepenxihuia.*; *-a:to:ya:huia:* (to fall from a precipice, to fall into the river) > to fall into sin and bad living
- *tla:lli zoquitl* (earth, clay) > body of a living person
- *to:chtli maz:tl i:ohhui quitoca* (to follow the road of the rabbit, the deer) > to follow wild ways, to live without rule

Due to the sheer number of *difrasismos* in texts from Colonial Nahuatl, many have assumed this to be a distinctive feature of Nahuatl itself. Even modern Mayan languages, however, make considerable use of *difrasismos* (cf. Chapter 1). By way of example, note this list of some of the *difrasismos* in Yucatek found in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel compiled by León-Portilla and Shorris (2001:565):

**Literal components**

**Metaphorical meaning**

Rope and cord	war
sticks and stones	war
born and engendered	noble
fatherless and motherless	poor peasants
older and younger brothers	everybody
gourdroot and breadnut	famine
food and water	fate
shot and shout	soon
pants and sandals	religion

Indeed, the presence of *difrasismos* in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan predates all examples from Nahuatl—dismissing all possibilities of this being a Nahuatl-only phenomenon. On this important point Lacadena writes:

*Detectar la enorme antigüedad de este difrasismo y, en general, de la utilización de los difrasismos como figura literaria tanto en los textos mayas coloniales como prehispánicos es de gran importancia porque ha sido sugerido que su presencia en la literatura maya se debe quizá a influencias tardías procedentes de la literatura nahuatl, donde abundan...Sin embargo, la aparición de difrasismos en los textos mayas del periodo Clásico es clara...antecediendo en más de medio milenio a cualquier pretendida influencia nahuatl en los textos mayas (Lacadena, in press).*

Thus, *difrasismos* must be seen as Mesoamerican phenomenon dating back as far as the Early Classic period in the Maya area that endured in written form through the time the Post-Classic codices.

It should be made clear, however, that a metaphorical meaning does not always have to be assumed with paired opposites, rather it is a possible interpretation that must rely on contextual clues in order to make that determination. Therefore, I present all examples here with that same disclaimer. My primary purpose is to raise the issue surrounding possible *difrasismos* based on structure, semantics, and other contextual clues.

#### **4.17. *Pohp/tzam* 'Mat/Throne' *Difrasismo***

A classic *difrasismo* whose use is attested across Mesoamerica is the pairing of 'mat/throne' to represent the idea of 'rulership' or 'authority'. For example, in Nahuatl *petlatl/icpalli* ('mat/throne') was one of the primary metaphors for 'authority'. In the Chilam Balam of Chumayel contains the following illustrative example of this same *difrasismo* in Yukatek:

*Buluc Ahaau Katun*  
*Cumaan ti pop*  
*Cumaan ti dzaam*  
*Ti ualaac yahaulili.*  
(Roys 1967:75)

11 k'atun,  
Is set upon the mat,  
Is set upon the throne,  
When the ruler is set up.

1584- *C u maan ti pop,*  
1585- *C u maan ti tz'aam.*

That came to the mat,  
That came to the throne.

3426- *Ah ca kin pop,*  
3426- *Ah ca kin tz'aam.*  
(Edmonson 1986)

Those of the 2-day mat,  
Those of the 2-day throne.

The installation of the ruler is described as being 'set upon the mat, set upon the throne'.

This paired motif also appears in the Book of Chilam Balam of Kaua (Bricker and Miram 2002:311) (original orthography altered):

*Kuman ti pop,*  
*Kuman ti tz'am.*

He is seated on the mat,  
He is seated on the throne.

This metaphor makes reference to the traditional *petate*, or woven reed mat in conjunction with the more regal 'throne' to represent the notion of 'authority'. According to Marcus, the Mixtecs likewise referred to the administrative unit as the *yueui tayu* "the place of the mat," similar to the Nahuatl *in petlatl, in icpalli* "the mat, the chair/throne" denoting 'authority' (Marcus 1992:61, 309). On Page 46c of the Dresden Codex, precisely the same *difrasismo* occurs using the identical terms as the examples from the Chilam Balam of Chumayel cited above (cf. Knowlton 2002:10) (figure 29):

**po-po /**  
**TZ'AM-ma /**  
*po[h]p,*  
*tz'am.*  
Mat,  
Throne.

The presence of 'mat/throne' metaphorical expression in the hieroglyphic inscriptions attests to its antiquity.

The conception of rulers being 'seated' on such thrones as a metaphor for 'taking office' also dates back to the earliest Mayan inscriptions from the Early Classic. The Leiden Plate (or Plaque) (dated September 17, AD 320) records the accession of an early pre-dynastic ruler of Tikal (figure 34a). The verbal phrase denoting this ruler's installation as lord is given with the logogram *chum*, or 'to be seated'.<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to point out parenthetically that this expression is itself part of a larger parallelism. In the glyph block above this verb, the month numerical coefficient is 'zero', expressed in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan in Calendar Rounds as 'the seating' of a month. Therefore, the month Yaxk'in is 'seated' on the same day that the ruler is 'seated', forming a metaphoric pun (cf. Josserand 1991:16-17). The verb *chum*, 'to be seated', is one of the most commonly-encountered accession terms in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. The specific office or rank into which the individual in acceding follows with the prepositional phrase *ti/ta ... -le(l)*, 'into ....-ship'. For example, a typical accession phrase would read as *chumwan ta ajawle(l)*, 'he was seated into rulership' (figure 35). Indeed, it was Lounsbury who first

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<sup>52</sup> The verbal morphology is written with only *-aj*, an early form of the more common positional suffixation *-laj*.

pointed out an equivalent expression found in Colonial Chontal, *chumvanihix ta auule* (Lounsbury 1989:228). The metaphors surrounding notions of authority, therefore, were closely correlated to the act of 'seating' as well as the physical object upon which these rulers sat—the mat or throne. The metaphor of 'seating' as 'taking office' helps to illuminate the etymology of *pop/tz'am* as a *difrasismo* as appears in the on Page 46c of the Dresden Codex (see figure 29).

#### 4.18. *Uyul/Uch'e'n* as a *Difrasismo*

Another possible *difrasismo* found on ceramic vessels from the Xultun region is the pairing of *uyul* and *uch'e'n* (figure 36a). Reents-Budet has interpreted this combination as a reference to the 'workshop' of artisans (1994:133). Contextually, deciphering this duo is highly problematic. The first element, *uyul*, can be segmented as *u-*, the third-person possessive pronoun, and *yul*, which means 'smooth, even,' and 'flat' as an adjective in Lacandon and 'polish' as a verb (Bruce 1968). Similarly, in Ch'ol, *yuluc-na* means 'even, evenly spread,' and 'smooth' (Annatasi 1973). In Yukatek, the verbal root *yul* means 'to polish' and 'to burnish' (Barrera Vásquez 1980:982). On several monumental texts we also find the root *yul* in contexts that would suggest a meaning of 'carving'. Furthermore, on a panel from Site Q we have a specific reference to ***a-yu-lu***, for *a(j)yul*, 'one who polishes or burnishes' as a title (figure 36b).<sup>53</sup> The glyphic *uyul*, therefore, may possibly refer to ideas of 'smooth', 'even', 'polish', 'carving', or 'burnish'. The second term in this pair is *uch'e'n*, the possessed form of *ch'e'n*, which usually

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<sup>53</sup> In Yukatek, *ah yul* is given as "el que bruñe alguna cosa" (Bolles 1997).

signifies 'cave', 'hole', or 'grave' in modern Mayan languages and in the inscriptions. Since the relationship between the terms *uyul* and *uch'e'n* is not immediately apparent in the context of the diphrastic pairing on ceramic vessels, we may have to look for a possible metaphorical referent, or at least a complementary pairing.

A first step in determining the meaning of this possible *difrasismo* is to look at the contexts in which it occurs. Here are three illustrative examples (figure 36a, c-d):

K4909	<i>uyul uch'e'n To'k' Witz Ajaw</i>
K4387	<i>Chan Ek' uyul uch'e'n Tok' Witz Ajaw</i>
K4572	<i>B'aahkab' chehen uyul uch'e'n K'ahk' Tzukul Chan</i>

In each of these cases, *uyul uch'e'n* appears as part of the nominal phrase of a lord. On all three inscriptions the site is specifically mentioned as To'k' Witz, or Xultun. It is tempting to speculate that these embedded possessive statements are references to the vessel itself, which is possessed by the lord. If we allow for a metaphorical interpretation of the vessel as a *ch'e'n* (not necessarily such a stretch), the *difrasismo* could be referring to 'his polished (thing), his vessel' (lit. 'his flat surface, his indented or concave surface'). This interpretation finds support from an entry in Chuj of *ch'en* as 'vessel' or 'dish' (Stoll 1887). What remains to be explained is how this *difrasismo* is working syntactically in nominal phrases. On K4387 (figure 36d), it appears between the name Chan Ek' and other of his titles. Despite not fully understanding its function syntactically, we can, however, posit a possible metaphoric reference in the pairing of these two possessed nouns as another example of a *difrasismo*. Additionally, we can also look to a similar

pairing found in the Primary Standard Sequence to shed some light on this type of couplet structure.

In the Primary Standard Sequence (hereafter PSS), specific linguistic information is given regarding the vessel classification, vessel content, and vessel owner. To date, a number of different vessel names have been deciphered in the glyphs such as *uyuk'ib'*, 'his drinking vessel', *ujawa[n]te'*, 'his tripod vessel,' and *ulak*, 'his plate (figure 37a-c). Occasionally, the possessed term *ujaay* is also employed in the PSS. Traditionally, this term has been interpreted as referring to the 'thinness' of the vessel. In 1994, however, I suggested that *jaay* may actually be a term for a kind of vessel itself, not just an adjective referring to its 'thinness'. I based this observation on the Tzotzil entry *jay*, '*tol, tecomate grande para tortillas*' (Delgaty 1964), *jay* 'gourd, tortilla gourd' (Laughlin 1975), and *jaay* for '*tazón de barro*' in Mopan (Ulrich and Ulrich 1976).<sup>54</sup> In many instances, *ujaay* appears right before *uyuk'ib'*, 'his drinking vessel' (although the order is reversed in one case on K4925). This is particularly common on Chocholá-style ceramics from the Yucatan Peninsula (cf. Tate 1985). K4378 is a good example of this pairing: *yuxulil ujaay, yuk'ib' ti ul*, 'the carving of his 'vessel', his drinking vessel for *atole* (figure 37d).<sup>55</sup> Precisely in the same fashion as the *uyul uch'e'n* pairing discussed above, we have a description of a single vessel with dual terminologies. In this case, admittedly, the context is considerably more secure for identifying the paired elements as a vessel type.

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<sup>54</sup> Additionally, *jayjay moch* and *jayil moch* in Tzotzil refer to a 'basket' (Delgaty 1964).

<sup>55</sup> Other examples appear on K4684, K4925 (reversed reading order), K6055, and Grolier Vase 73.

The combination of *ujaay uyuk'ib'* must be a more descriptive (or at least more poetic) way of referring to the type of vessel in question.

#### 4.19. *B'aah Te'/B'aah To'k'* Pairing

In several instances in the hieroglyphic texts, the terms *b'aah te'* and *b'aah to'k'* (lit. 'image wood', 'image flint', respectively) are paired in such a way to suggest a possible metaphorical reference. The vessel commonly referred to as the 'Rabbit Pot' (K1398) makes use of a number of couplet structures in its two main vertical texts (figure 38a). An interesting metaphorical expression appears about midway through vertical text behind the seated Sun God. The relevant section of the inscription reads:

**hi-na / PAT-ta / b'u-ni-ya / 'jaguar throne'-na /**  
**TE'-B'AH /**  
**TOK'-B'AH /**  
*hiin patb'uniy*  
*'jaguar throne'.*  
*te' b'a[a]h,,*  
*to'k' b'a[a]h.*  
This one was made,  
the 'jaguar throne'.  
Wood image,  
Flint image.

According to Grube, the combination of *to'k'* and *b'aahte'* (or *te'-b'aah*, as in this case) may make reference to making war with flint knives (Schele and Grube 1997:27). The implications of Grube's comments for the pairing of *te' b'aah* (or *b'aah te'*)/*to'k' b'aah* on K1398 are that warfare was in some way associated with the making of the jaguar throne.

On a looted panel likely from Site Q we have another pairing of *b'aahte'/b'aahto'k'* at A1 (figure 38b):

**TE'-TOK'-B'AH-ja**

*te' [b'aah]aj,*  
*to'k' b'a[a]haj,*  
Wood image,  
Flint image.

For reasons possibly relating to aesthetics and glyphic positioning, the *b'aah* sign is only written once with the *te'* sign prefixed with the *to'k'* sign superfixed. As this was certainly a well-known expression, the reading of the *b'aah* twice would have been fully understood. This collocation is followed by a *yitaaaj* expression, glossed as 'together with', and **14-PAT-ta**, *14 pat*, for '14 (items) of tribute'—a nice correlate to a war-related interpretation of the *b'aahte'/b'aahto'k'* compound (see Stuart 1998).

**4.20. *Utz'akb'uj/Ukab'ji* Pairing**

Tikal Stela 31 contains several instances of a rare couplet pairing two otherwise common verbal expressions: *utz'ajb'uj* and *ukab'ji* (figure 39a-b). In the inscriptions, the positional stem *tz'ak* is sometimes derived into a transitive verb through the addition of the *u-* pronoun and the *-b'u(j)* suffix (cf. Stuart et al. 1999a:II-32). The second expression, *ukab'ji*, is a transitive verb that refers to the 'watching' or 'overseeing' of an event by some authority. At D3-C4 (figure 39a) and C8-D8 (figure 39b) of Tikal Stela 31, these two forms appear as a couplet following locative expressions introduced by *uhti*, 'it happened (at)'. Robert Wald has suggested that the verb *tz'ak* may be also relate

to 'watching over' something in Yukatek (personal communication 2001). This would, accordingly, suggest we are dealing with a simple synonymous couplet, not a diphastic metaphor. I want to point out, however, that since the affixation on the verb *tz'ak* is only used to derive transitives from *positional* roots, we may have to look to another meaning not found for standard transitive verbs (since 'to watch over' is an impossible meaning for a positional verb). Therefore, I suggest we keep open the possibility that this pairing may actually be a *difrasismo*, depending of course upon the identification of an appropriate meaning for *tz'ak* as a positional root from modern Mayan languages.

#### **4.21. *To'k'/Pakal*, or Flint/Shield War Metaphor**

One of the earliest *difrasismos* discovered in the hieroglyphic inscriptions is the pairing of the terms *to'k'*, 'flint', and *pakal*, 'shield' (figure 40a). First deciphered by Stephen Houston, this combination of signs has been variously interpreted, although most epigraphers are in agreement that it must refer to some aspect of war. The visual pairing of a flint and shield finds good company among Aztec iconography and linguistics. The *difrasismo* in Nahuatl, *in mitl in chimalli*, 'arrow and shield', is a well-known metaphor for war (cf. Marcus 1992:365). The merging of arrow and shield is also ubiquitous in Teotihuacan iconography with direct connections to warfare (Freidel et al. 1993:301). The mediopassive verb *jub'uuy*, 'it got brought down' regularly appears in context with *to'k'/pakal* in Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions. Several Colonial K'iche' and Yukatekan documents also confirm the existence of this very metaphor for war. For example, in the

Chilam Balam of Chumayel we have the following reference (Edmonson 1986) (original orthography retained):

385-	<i>Emom chimal,</i>	Descended will be the shield,
386-	<i>Emom halal.</i>	Descended will be the arrows.

The same metaphor appears in the Book of Chilam Balam of Kaua (Bricker and Miram 2002:310) (original orthography slightly altered):

<i>emom halal,</i>	The arrow will have descended,
<i>emom chimal y okol paxebalob.</i>	The shield will have descended over the ruins.
<i>utzoc sitzil.</i>	It is the end of tyranny.

In this example, the termination of rule of Kinich Kakmo is described as the descending of the arrow and the shield, a clear reference to warfare. The demise of his reign is further punctuated in the third line: "It is the end of tyranny." The metaphorical interpretation of the 'flint/shield' and 'arrow/shield' combination as some reference to war or military seems sufficiently overt.

A second verb that commonly precedes the *to'k'/pakal* expression is the yet-undeciphered 'Starwar' glyph. While there is absolutely no doubt as to its meaning relating to warfare, the precise reading and definition of the logograph remains frustratingly unknown. Contextually, I think there is little doubt that *to'k'/pakal* pairing refers metaphorically to warfare in the inscriptions. The genealogy of this expression goes back to some of the earliest inscriptions in the Early Classic period. For example, an Early Classic inscription on an unprovenanced jade plaque that may come from Costa

Rica contains the combination of *to'k'-pakal* (see Stone 1977:68, Figure 78c) (figure 40b). A typical Late Classic use of this *difrasismo* can be illustrated the text of M.91 at Tonina (figure 40c):

'Starwar' / **u-TOK'**-  
**u-PAKAL / K'IN-TE'-MO' /**  
 'Starwar' *uto'k'*,  
*upakal k'in te' mo'*.  
 It got 'Starwar'-ed<sup>56</sup>, the flint,  
 the shield of K'in Te' Mo.

In my view, the pairing of *to'k'/pakal* makes metaphorical reference to the 'military capabilities' of the opponent. The documented longevity of the particular *difrasismo* stretches over at least 1,300 years making it one of the earliest such metaphors still in existence at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards.

At this point, it seems prudent to mention a particular contribution to our understanding of Hieroglyphic poetics by Alfonso Lacadena relating to the *to'k'/pakal difrasismo*. Lacadena has isolated a possible case of *personification* as a poetic device in the inscriptions. He notes following passage from Stela 23 at Naranjo at G14-H15 (figure 41) (hieroglyphic translation Lacadena's) (Lacadena 2002:44-45):

**WI'-ja / u-TOK'-PAKAL / a-?-li / u-ti SAK-HA' /**  
*wi'[a]j uto'k' [u]pakal a[j]...l; u[h]ti sakha'*  
 'el pedernal y el escudo de los de 'Naranjo' se alimentaron; ocurrió en Sakha.'  
 ('the flint and the shield of those from 'Naranjo' were fed; it happened at Sakha'.')

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<sup>56</sup> The verb often appears with mediopassive verbal morphology *-V'y'*, therefore suggestive of the 'got 'Starwar'-ed' reading.

About this expression Lacadena writes:

*El sujeto de la frase son 'el pedernal' y 'el escudo'—las armas de los guerreros de Naranjo, posiblemente un difrasismo—, seres inanimados. En el texto, sin embargo, se les hace sujeto del verbo **WI'-ja**, wi'[a]j 'alimentarse, comer'—cf. *ch'orti'* wyar 'comida, comer' (vid. Lacadena 2002)—, actividad propia de seres animados. Encontramos la explicación de esta imagen sumamente expresiva en fuentes coloniales yucatecas del siglo XVI, donde las expresiones relacionadas wi'il jalal y wi'il tok' se glosan como 'matanza grande haber en la guerra y hacerse' (Barrera 1980: 923). Pero este es el sentido figurado, la equivalencia semántica que lo convierte en figura literaria. Con ecos que recuerdan las ricas imágenes de la literatura germánica antigua, la 'matanza grande haber en la guerra' es, literalmente, wi'il jalal 'el alimento de la flecha', wi'il took' 'el alimento del pedernal'. Las armas de guerra cobran vida y, como seres vivos que son, se alimentan como ellos. El alimento del pedernal, del escudo —las armas de guerra por excelencia—es la sangre y la carne de los enemigos, la vida hecha muerte de los vencidos (Lacadena, in press).*

Lacadena's brilliant insight into the origin of the *to'k'/pakal* expression allows us to take a more intimate view into the conceptual patterning involved with this metaphor. The presence of the 'arrow and shield' metaphor in sixteenth century Yucatek with the same root *wi'* found in Naranjo Stela 23 further attests to the antiquity of this *difrasismo* and its 'native' interpretation.

#### **4.22. *Kab'/Ch'e'n, Chan/Ch'e'n, and Chan/Kab'* Expressions**

The hieroglyphic inscriptions contain a number of other metaphorical pairs that form *difrasismos*. Three of the most frequent of these are the combinations of *kab'/ch'e'n* (T526.571), 'earth-cave', *chan/ch'e'n* (T561.571:23), or 'sky-cave', and *chan/kab'* (T561.526), 'sky-earth' (figure 42a-c). The process of deciphering the various semantics

in each of these three pairings has posed considerable problems for epigraphers. Let's begin this discussion with the pairing of *kab'/ch'e'n*.

Stuart and Houston first identified many of these expressions as locative in the classic study on Maya place names (1994). They noted the contexts of the occurrences of the *kab'/ch'e'n* pairing "suggests a locational association" (Stuart and Houston 1994:12).<sup>57</sup> To what, however, do these two elements refer when paired poetically? We need to investigate the specific contexts in which they occur in order to make that determination.

One of the earliest dated occurrences of *kab'/ch'e'n* comes from an Early Classic (undated) example on a Jade Celt from Costa Rica (figure 42e):

**tu-KAB' /**  
**tu-CH'EN-na /**  
*tu kab',*  
*tu ch'e'n.*  
In his land,  
In his cave.

In the Post-Classic codices, we find this same expression still in use. On Page 24 of the Dresden Codex, the follow triplet appears: *Umu'k kab', umu'k uch'e'n, umu'k uwinik*, 'Bad omen for land, bad omen for their caves, bad omen for men' (figure 43a). Similarly, on Page 66a of the Dresden Codex an inversed form of this pair appears as *ochha' ch'e'n kab'*, 'He dies, (at the) the cave, the land' (figure 43b). In Late Classic inscriptions, *kab'/ch'e'n* is occasionally mentioned as the object of war verbs. For example, on Monument 83 from Tonina the collocation *uchanch'e'n* follows the 'Starwar' verb (figure

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<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, the pairing of *kab'/ch'e'n* does appear in an entry in Yukatek as *ah chhen cab* (original orthography retained) meaning "el que es señor de hoy de cacau" (Bolles 1997).

43c). On an unprovenanced Stela illustrated in Mayer 1995, Plate 118, a warrior is shown standing next to a text that records the battle as: *puluuy ?-chan? ch'e'n*, "It got burned, the 'sky?-cave'" (figure 43d). We know from other epigraphic contexts that major caves at particular sites were attacked during military campaigns. Most sites in the Maya area were located near large caves for ritual reasons (Nikolai Grube, personal communication 2000). For example, when Calakmul waged war against Naranjo on 9.9.18.16.3 (Dec. 24, AD 631), an inscription on the Naranjo Stairway explicitly states that 'its cave' (*uch'e'n*) was the object of the 'Starwar' verb (figure 43e). Similarly, in AD 44, perhaps eager to get revenge on Naranjo for the capture of one of Tikal's nobles in AD 695, Tikal launched an attack on a location within the Naranjo polity. An inscription on Lintel 2 of Temple 4 at Tikal describes this battle as being against the cave, patron gods, and palanquin of Naranjo (figure 43f). The destruction or possible desecration of the sacred cave of Naranjo was probably a powerful punctuation of Naranjo's defeat. Further evidence for this can be seen in the inscriptions from the Cave of Naj Tunich that record the arrival of pilgrims from Naranjo on 9.15.12.9.15, exactly 4 months after the despoliation of the cave at Naranjo (figure 43g). Perhaps the cave of Naranjo has been "destroyed" in some fashion that made it unusable for ritual purposes, and therefore Naranjo needed instead, at least temporarily, to make the journey to a well-know cave such as Naj Tunich. Due to the literal meaning of 'cave' associated with the term *ch'e'n*, the pairing of *kab'/ch'e'n*, therefore, could be viewed as a reference to a physical location within a site.

There is another line of reasoning that would suggest a more metaphorical interpretation of *kab'/ch'e'n*, while retaining its general semantics as 'place'. On Quirigua Stela D (AD 766) we have the following inscription (figure 44):

**u-ti-ya / YAX-** 'head' / **KAB' CH'EN** /  
*u[h]tiiy yax-'head' kab' ch'e'n.*  
It happened at Yax-'head' *kab' ch'e'n*.

In this instance, a 'witnessing' event is said to have taken place at *kab'/ch'e'n*, a clear toponymic reference. David Stuart has recently argued that the combination of *kab'/ch'e'n* represents a term for "territory, land, or polity" (personal communication, 2002). As Lacadena has pointed out, interpreting this pair as 'territory' "*sería equivalente al también difrasismo existente en nahuatl de altepetl o in atl in tepetl, literalmente 'el agua, el cerro', pero significando 'pueblo, ciudad'*" (in press). As a *difrasismo*, *kab'/ch'e'n* expands upon the narrowly defined meanings of the individual elements (i.e. *kab'* meaning 'earth', *ch'e'n* meaning 'cave') to instead refer to a broader, more general term for 'territory'.

Finally, it is necessary to stress again that the *kab'/ch'e'n* metaphor is found in Early Classic texts right through to the Post-Classic Codices. In fact, Lacadena has also shown that this metaphor survived through to Colonial times in the Chilam Balam of Tizimín (Lacadena, in press). He cites the following examples:

*tu kin yan ah uuc chuuah,*  
*elom u uich tu cab tu ch'enil*  
(Roys orthography 1949:180)

*U profesia Chilam Balam,  
T ix kayom cabal chen Mani  
Profecía de Chilam Balam,  
para ser recitada—o como se ha recitado—en la ciudad de Mani  
(Edmonson orthography 1982: lines 3951-3954) (translation Lacadena's)*

Lacadena notes that both of these passages come from special prophetic literary texts, which are "*sumamente conservador y de alto valor literario* (highly conservative and of high literary value)" (Lacadena, in press). Thus, the *kab'/ch'e'n* combination stands as one of the oldest *difrasismos* documented from Early Classic texts up through Colonial documents.

#### **4.23. Chan/Ch'e'n, or 'Sky Cave'**

A frequent alternative to the *kab'/ch'e'n* pairing is the related *chan/ch'e'n*, or 'sky-cave' compound (figure 42b). Stuart and Houston have noted that this "sky-bone" (an older term for this pairing) commonly followed place names, directional glyphs, and locations in themselves. They did not offer an interpretation of its exact meaning at the time, but only pointed out its "association with locational glyphs" in hieroglyphic texts and iconography (Stuart and Houston 1994:12). An examination of the contexts in which this pairing occurs immediately leads one to believe that this refers to a location. For example, on the Tablet of the Slaves at Palenque, the captive lord of Lak's name is followed by *a[j]chan-ch'e'n*, 'the one from *Chan Ch'e'n*' (figure 45a). On the Side A of the Tikal Ballcourt Marker (Group 6C-XVI with Marcador), Siyaj K'ahk' is said to have arrived at *Mutul Chan Ch'e'n*, or Tikal 'Sky-Cave' (this is abbreviated on the other side of marker to simply *ch'e'n*) (figure 45b). In this case, the toponymic reference is abundantly

clear. On Tikal Stela 31 at D16-C17, there are a number of mentions of the *chan/ch'e'n* compound following *uhti*, or 'it happened (at)', again suggesting a physical location for the event (figure 45c). On Copan Stela J, Block 36, *chan/ch'e'n* follows a mention of the early name of Copan—*Uxwitik*—directly relating this compound to a locale (figure 45d). The Palace Tablet at Palenque at R19 makes reference to *chan/ch'e'n* after Lakam Ha'—a toponym within the Palenque sphere (figure 45e). On the Temple of the Cross at Palenque at A14-B15, the *chan/ch'e'n* compound follows the directional notation given in the 819-day count (figure 45f). The cardinal directions mentioned in the 819-day count have traditionally been interpreted to mean the region or area in the sky in which a particular deity was being 'set up'. The inclusion of the *chan/ch'e'n* compound in this context again strongly suggests an actual location. In some cases, this toponym seems to indicate a mythical location rather than a physical one. For example, on K1609, the birth of the Maize God is said to have happened at *ik' waynal, ik' naahb'nal, ho(?)mnal, chan ch'e'n*, 'the black portal place, the black lake place, the chasm? place, 'sky-cave' (figure 46a). Similarly, K6020 records a mythological event taking place at *ho(?)mnal chan ch'e'n*, 'the chasm? place, the 'sky-cave'. Interestingly, *chan/ch'e'n* is followed by *uch'e'n*, 'his cave', rendering the whole phrase as 'the 'sky-cave' of his cave' (figure 46b). On Piedras Negras Altar 1 at position C2 there is an enigmatic reference to *k'uhul chan ch'e'n*, or 'divine 'sky-cave' as a location (figure 46c). The clear locative connotations of this pairing can also be seen on the Temple of the Foliated Cross at Palenque, where an event is said to have occurred at *lakam ha' chan ch'e'n tu ch'e'n*, 'Lakam Ha', the sky-cave

at/in his cave' (figure 46d). From all of the above examples, it is sufficiently plain to see the toponymic meaning of the *chan/ch'e'n* pairing.

Interpreting *chan/ch'e'n* as a *difrasismo* requires us to look at similar compounds in modern languages. David Stuart applies a slightly broader interpretation to this pairing to mean something akin to 'world' or 'universe' (personal communication 2003). Stuart sees a distinction in meaning between the combination of *kab'/ch'e'n*, 'earth-cave' and *chan/ch'e'n*, 'sky-cave'. He believes that *kab'/ch'e'n* (discussed above) refers to "territory, land, or polity" where as *chan/ch'e'n* stands for a broader concept of 'universe' or 'world'. On a grammatical level, there may also be some discernable difference since, as Knowlton has pointed out, the *chan/ch'e'n* compound does not seem to use the possessive marker *u-* in the same way that *kab'/ch'e'n* occasionally does (2000:11). Based on the physical and mythological locations this term modifies, I view *chan/ch'e'n* as a toponymic reference to some notion of 'region'. Again, the specific meanings associated with each of the terms in the compound become reinterpreted metaphorically to the general concept of 'region' or 'area'.

#### **4.24. *Chan/Kab'*, or 'Sky-Earth' Compound**

Yet another combination of the elements 'sky', 'earth', and 'cave' appears in number of hieroglyphic texts. Of these three terms, the pairing of two of them is most commonly encountered in modern Mayan languages today—*chan/kab'*, or 'sky-earth' (figure 42c). The antithetical relationship between these terms, together with their high-frequency occurrence individually in ritual prayers, makes them a likely pair for use in

different couplet lines. There is ample evidence from modern Mayan languages that the combination of 'sky-earth' can represent the larger conception of 'everywhere' or 'world' (cf. Chapter 1). In other cases, however, a more literal interpretation of the each term seems more appropriate. The hieroglyphic texts regularly also create parallel structures based on these two elements of 'sky' and 'earth'. For example, on Stela J at Quirigua, the terms 'sky' and 'earth' are paired in the second half of a semantic couplet (figure 47a).

The passage reads:

**u-yo-OK-TE' / CHAN-na /**  
**u-yo-OK-TE' / KAB'-? /**  
**K'AK' / TIL-li-wi / CHAN-YOPAT /**  
*uyokte' chan,*  
*uyokte' kab'-?*  
*k'a[h]k' tiliw chan yopaat.*  
 The strides of the sky,  
 The strides of the earth,  
 of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yopaat.

The term *uyokte'* is repeated as the initial element in the first two lines followed by the *chan*, 'sky', and *kab'-?*, 'earth', respectively. In Yukatek, *yokte'* can be taken literally to mean 'his foot of wood'. It can, however, also refer to 'strides'. Perhaps this passage from Quirigua refers to the 'the strides of the sky, the strides of the earth'. If we treat *chan/kab'* as a diphrastic kenning, it may stand for some notion of 'strides everywhere' (cf. Christenson 2000).

Another example of *chan/kab'* appears on the text from South Subterraneo Bench below Palace E at Palenque (see discussion in Hull 1993) (figure 47b). This inscription contains a beautiful antithetical parallelism that pairs the terms 'sky' and 'earth':

**nu-mu-li / ta-CHAN-na /**  
**nu-mu-li / ta-ka-b'a /**  
*numil ta chan,*  
*numil ta kab'.*  
Passing in the sky,  
Passing in the earth.

The pairing of 'sky' and 'earth' in this context could be interpreted metaphorically as 'passing everywhere' (lit. 'between heaven and earth'). David Stuart, however, has taken a more literal approach to understanding the reference in this section of text (Stuart 2003b:2). He writes,

The couplet is, I believe, the most explicit and descriptive known statement of what I call the "Starry Deer Alligator," an aspect of what has long been known as the "Cosmic Monster." "Passing in (through?) sky, passing in (through?) earth" aptly describes its known behavior in Maya iconography as an arching or framing element in the heavens. That it is also associated with the earth is intriguing, and likewise indicated by certain patterns in the iconography. In all likelihood this descriptive phrasing refers to the Starry Deer Alligator as the animate Milky Way (Stuart 1984), which visibly progresses during the night across the sky and into the earth.

It seems to me that interpreting the 'sky-earth' as a *difrasismo*, yielding an interpretation of 'passing everywhere', does not interfere with Stuart's understanding of the movements of the "Starry Deer Alligator." Regardless, this inscription is a model of the pithy sophistication of identical structure and related meaning couplets as they were used by the ancient Maya.

Stela N at Copan designates Yax Pasaj as a *chan kab' ajaw* (figure 48b). I would argue that in such cases Yax Pasaj is being given the title of 'Lord of the World' or 'Lord

of All Places'. In passing, the visual interplay between the main signs of Yax Pasaj's name (sky-sun-ear) and the sky-earth compound adds is not lost to the careful observer.

One of the most common contexts for the pairing of *chan/kab'* is found in references to 'sky/heavenly gods' and 'earth/earthly gods'. Just as we saw with the *chan/ch'e'n*, the combination of *chan/kab'* also appears in Early Classic inscriptions. For example, on a looted mask, probably from the Río Azul region, we have the following portion of text (figure 49a):

**CHAN-na-la / K'UH /**  
**KAB' / K'UH /**  
*chanal k'uh,*  
*kab'[al] k'uh.*  
Heavenly God(s),  
Earth(ly) Gods(s).

There are several ways these terms appear in context. The first is with the *-al* adjectival suffix on one or both nouns, as it was in the case just mentioned above. This derives an adjective from the nominal form resulting in 'heavenly' and 'earthly'.<sup>58</sup> Another example of this type of adjectival pairing occurs on the Middle Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque at B6-A7 (figure 49b):

**CHAN-NAL / i-ka-tzi? /**  
**KAB'-la / i-ka-tzi? /**  
*chanal ikatz(?),*  
*kab'al ikatz(?).*  
Heavenly bundle(?),  
Earthly bundle(?).

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<sup>58</sup> The lack of *-al* in this case (it appears commonly in other inscriptions) may simply be a case of underwriting.

In this case, both *chan* and *kab'* have the adjectival suffix *-al*, thereby specifying the type of bundle as 'heavenly' and 'earthly'.<sup>59</sup> It is also possible, however, that the *-al* is some type of nominal suffix in other contexts. This would better explain instances where *chanal* and *kab'al* are preceded by *k'uh* or *k'uhul*. Strictly speaking, *k'uh* is generally translatable as 'deity' and *k'uhul* as 'divine' or 'holy'. On the Right Side of Copan Stela 7 at G1, liquid droplets representing 'god' or 'divine' appear before *chanal* and *kab'al* (figure 49c). If the the liquid droplets are signifying simply *k'uh*, or 'god', they we would translate the phrase as 'the god(s) of heaven and earth', assuming the *-al* is a nominal suffix. If, on the other hand, we take them to be an underspelling of *k'uhul*, the adjective 'divine', this would produce a translation of 'divine god(s) of heaven and earth'. In some cases, then, treating the *chanal* and *kab'al* as nouns works significantly better than viewing them as adjectives.

The question of whether *chanal k'uh* and *kab'al k'uh* refer to specific deities or to a more general metaphorical meaning of 'all gods' must be addressed at this point. In many instances, the text makes its meaning explicit. For example, on Tikal Stela 31 at B13-B14 the text reads (figure 50a):

**1-PIK / K'UH-CHAN /**  
**K'UH-KAB' /**  
*1 pik k'uh chan,*  
*k'uh kab'.*  
 8,000 Gods of the Sky,  
           Gods of the Earth.

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<sup>59</sup> Brian Stross first deciphered the term *ikatx* as 'bundle' (1988).

The term *pik* (or *pih*) means both 'bundle' and refers to the number 8,000. In Ch'orti' curing rites, the numbers 8,000 and 80,000 have special significance in that it is used to mean 'a great many' or 'infinity'.<sup>60</sup> The number 8,000 is also found in the Ritual of the Bacabs in a triplet where it seems to have a similar metaphorical extension (Roys 1965:66). This being the case, *1-pik k'uh chan, k'uh kab'*, could mean 'many/an infinite number of divine gods'. In this context, there is clearly a reference to many deities, not simply a pair of them.

There are other examples where it seems likely that *chanal k'uh* and *kab'al k'uh* instead refer to two specific deities. The ceramic vessel K2796 depicts seven seated gods at the moment just prior to creation (figure 50b). The text accompanying names each of these deities:

**TZ'AK-ya-ja / IK'-u-TAN / K'UH /**  
**CHAN-NAL-la / K'UH /**  
**KAB'-al / K'UH /**

*tz'akyaj ik' uta[h]n k'uh,*  
*chanal k'uh,*  
*kab'al k'uh.*

Ordering, Black is his Center God,  
 Heavenly God,  
 Earthly God.

On 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u, Creation day for the Ancient Maya, this particular creation is said to have been 'ordered' by these seven deities.<sup>61</sup> The second and third gods mentioned are named as *chanal k'uh* and *kab'al k'uh*, 'Heavenly God' and 'Earthly God'. In this case,

<sup>60</sup> A typical usage of this expression in Ch'orti' is "*Awajkun nivida ochenta mil nijab', ochenta mil mi salud*," "Give my life 80,000 of my years, 80,000 of my health."

<sup>61</sup> The verbal root *tz'ak* is best translated as 'order' in this context. I take the *-yaj* suffix as a case of a nominalizing suffix found in Ch'olan and Yucatekan languages.

interpreting this as a *difrasismo* does not seem appropriate in the context of a list of different god names together with their images (if interpreted literally). Therefore, it seems likely that *chanal k'uh/kab'al k'uh* can function either as a reference to two specific gods at times and, as a *difrasismo*, as a broader notion of 'all gods' (lit. 'the gods in heaven and earth'). In Chapter 1, I have already noted the pairing of terms such as 'sky/world' represent the broader notion of 'everywhere' (i.e. 'everywhere between heaven and earth'), in Ch'orti' and other Mayan languages. For example, the duo of *caj*, 'sky', and *ulew*, 'earth' in the Popol Vuh represents the abstract concept of "world" (D. Tedlock 1987:148). The pairing of *chan/kab'*, then, can at times form a *difrasismo* meaning 'everywhere', or 'all' when used adjectivally.

The ubiquitous presence of these various toponymic couplet metaphors in the inscriptions from Early Classic times provides a glimpse into the poetic conceptual pattering of the ancient Maya in terms of how they viewed and described their world.

#### **4.25. *Chan/Kab'/Ch'e'n* Metaphor**

On a few occasions, all three terms, *chan*, *kab'*, and *ch'e'n* appear together in sequence (e.g. Tikal Stela 31, E28b-F28) (figure 51). David Stuart sees the triplet use of these elements as a broader conceptualization of *chan/ch'e'n*, 'world' (personal communication 2003). It is noteworthy that possible versions of this triad appear in the Ritual of the Bacabs. In one passage, a creature known as *bob-och* is said to be 'frightened' while "in the sky...in metnal...on earth" (Roys 1967:67). The second term, 'metnal', refers to 'Hell' or the 'Underworld'. The glyphic counterparts to each term

mentioned in the Ritual of the Bacabs (*chan* = 'sky', *ch'e'n* = metnal<sup>62</sup>, *kab'* = earth) have exact corresponding semantics—arguing strongly for a similar meaning in combination. I would suggest that the triple reference to 'sky', 'Underworld,' and 'earth' act as a broad *difrasismo* to represent the idea of 'everywhere' or 'universe'. It is also worth stressing the point that this metaphor shows up in Early Classic texts such as Tikal Stela 31 (AD 434), confirming the antiquity of its usage.

#### 4.26. Antithetical Temporal Parallelism

Expression of time, especially 'day' and 'year', are occasionally paired hieroglyphic texts. Functionally, they seem to be operating as a metaphorical reference to a general notion of 'time' or 'all the time'. On Page 24 of the Dresden Codex we have the following instance (figure 52a):

**xu?-le K'IN-ni /**  
**xu?-le HAB' /**  
*xu'l? k'in,*  
*xu'l? haab'.*  
 Work? (in) the day,  
 Work? (in) the year.

The pairing of *k'in* and *haab'* here suggest a *difrasismo* for metaphorically referring to 'all the time'. This positive augury, then, predicts work will be plentiful 'all the time'.

Another pairing of 'day' and 'year' appear on an incised Chochola-style vase from Xcalumkin that shows both a high level of visual and verbal artistic skill (K8017) (figure

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<sup>62</sup> David Stuart has pointed out that all the allographs of the *ch'e'n* glyph (containing an eye, bone, jawbone, or skull) have strong Underworld connotations (personal communication 2003).

52b). The text of Column AB contains two successive, well-balanced couplets following the initial verbal phrase (here given in only in transliteration and gloss):

<i>che ta k'in,</i>	Thus it was in the day,
<i>che ta haab'.</i>	Thus it was in the year.
<i>tu b'a[a]h boh aab',</i>	The portrait of Boh Aab',
<i>tu b'a[a]h b'a[ah]kab'</i>	The portrait of B'aahkab'.

As Nikolai Grube has previously discussed (1998), the *che* here could be a quotative particle indicating something 'said' both "in the day" and "in the year." Lacadena, on the other hand, takes the *che* to be the particle affirmatory particle 'thus it is' that I discussed in Chapter 1 (Lacadena, in press). I would argue that again refers to a broader conception of 'all the time' in this context.<sup>63</sup>

An especially interesting pairing of *k'in* and *ak'ab'* occurs on Lintel II of the Four Lintels at Chichen Itza at D6-C8 (figure 52c):

**ta-yi-li-li / K'IN-ni /**  
**ta-yi-li-li / HAB'-li /**  
*ta yilil k'in,*  
*ta yilil haab'il.*  
 On the sign of the day,  
 On the sign of the year.

---

<sup>63</sup> Alfonso Lacadena (in press) has reached a similar conclusion about this *difrasismo*: "El significado de la expresión es posiblemente "en ese tiempo", y está muy en relación con una clase de difrasismos que aparecen en lenguas mesoamericanas, donde la secuencia de expresiones de periodos de tiempo —en sucesión periodo menor-periodo mayor— como 'día-semana', 'semana-mes' o 'semana-año' significan 'tiempo'."

This elegant semantic couplet alternates *k'in* and *haab'* in the second half of each stich, while repeating the initial elements *ta yilil* in both. The form *yilil*, literally 'its sign' or 'seen thing', is a nominalization of the verb *il*, meaning 'to see'. I prefer to translate this term as 'sign' instead of 'seeing' due to an attested parallel form in Ch'orti' of *uwirib'ir*, 'his sign'. Structurally, these terms are nearly identical, being made up of a third-person pre-vocalic possessive pronoun (*y-* in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and *u(w)-* in Ch'orti'), the stem *il* (the cognate form *ir* appears in Ch'orti' since Ch'orti' /r/ corresponds to /l/ in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan), and a nominalizing suffix (*-il* in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and *-ib'ir* in Ch'orti'—the instrumental suffix *-ib'* and the nominal suffix *-ir*). As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, I have documented an archaic expression in Ch'orti' for 'calendar' that makes use of this precise term: *uwirib'ir e ajk'in*, *uwirib'ir e jab'*, 'the sign of the day, the sign of the year'. In this Ch'orti' metaphor, the notion of 'calendar' is gracefully expressed in a couplet of *k'in* and *jab'*, or 'day' and 'year', respectively. Therefore, I would suggest that the closely parallel form found on Lintel II at Chichen Itza may also make reference to 'calendar' or 'time'. Ch'orti' has preserved this metaphor both in form and content from this Terminal Classic inscription.

#### **4.27. Day and Night Antithetical Pairing**

A highly common feature of modern Mayan ritual discourse is the pairing of 'day' and 'night' distributionally in couplet halves. I have already shown this to be a stock couplet in Ch'orti' ritual prayers meaning 'all the time' (see Chapter 1). For Hanks, the pairing of 'day' and 'night' in Yukatek is a kind of metonymic emblem of time (1989:107).

Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions, especially in the Terminal Classic and Post Classic periods, poetically pair *k'in*, 'day', and *ak'ab'*, 'night', in a number of telling contexts. The first example to illustrate the common pairing of day and night comes from a recently discovered text on a bone at Ek' Balam. Miscellaneous Text 7 contains the following antithetical pairing (figure 53a):

**K'IN-ni** / 'head' / **TZ'AK-ka-ja** /  
**AK'AB'-la** / 'head' / **TZ'AK-ka-ja** /  
*k'in* 'head' *tz'a[h]kaj*,  
*ak'b'al*<sup>64</sup> 'head' *tz'a[h]kaj*.  
 Day ? was completed,  
 Night ? was completed.

This couplet occurs in a long list of nominal phrases relating to Ukit Kan Le'k—the first major lord of Ek' Balam. It may actually be a reference to a deity whom he is said to be an impersonation of in the same text. The alternation between 'day' and 'night' marks the only change in the otherwise identical lines of the stanza.

Maya codices also abound in references to the *k'in/ak'ab'* *difrasismo*, such as Pages 66a, 66a, and 68a, just to mention a few. Page 68a of the Dresden Codex actually contains two consecutive *difrasismos* (figure 53b):

**K'IN-AK'AB'-b'a** /  
**TI'-WE'-HA'** /  
*k'in*,  
*ak'ab'*,  
*ti' we'*,  
*ha'*.

---

<sup>64</sup> When the suffix *-la* is added to the noun *ak'ab'*, the shift of the stress to the final syllable causes the internal vowel /a/ to syncopate producing *ak'b'al*.

Day,  
Night.  
Mouth of food,  
drink.

The second phrase pairs 'food' and 'water' in possible *difrasismo* for 'sustenance', or perhaps even 'fate', based on this presence of just this metaphorical meaning in Yukatek from the Chilam Balam of Chumayel (León-Portilla and Shorris 2001:565; Bricker and Miram 2002:311-312). Together these two poetic stanzas may represent the idea of 'sustenance for the mouth all the time', or perhaps 'the fate of the mouth (i.e. getting sustenance) all the time'.

On Lintel II from the Four Lintels at Chichen Itza, a semantic couplet with line-initial deletion in the second stich pairs the possessed forms of *k'in* and *ak'ab'* (figure 53c):

**u-K'IN-ni /**  
**ya-k'a-b'a /**  
*uk'in,*  
*yak'ab'.*  
Its day,  
Its night.

The pairing of the possessed forms 'its day' and 'its night' is rare in the hieroglyphic inscriptions.

#### **4.28. Allographs of the Distance Number Introductory Glyphs (DNIG)**

One of the specific issues I wanted to address in this dissertation is the function and meaning of different *difrasismos* in the inscriptions. In an earlier study of mine of

hieroglyphic poetics, I examined certain dualistic pairings that substitute for the Distance Number Introductory Glyph (hereafter DNIG) (Hull 1993:26). The DNIG collocation functions syntactically as a termination marker for specific clauses or themes (figure 54a). What usually follows is a Distance Number introducing a new chronological sequence and change of event. The main sign of the standard form of this glyph (T573) has been securely read by Nikolai Grube as *tz'ak* (Freidel et al 1993:416-417). The root *tz'ak* refers to 'medicine', 'healing', 'stacking', 'order', 'completion', 'lineage', and 'succession' among other things (see Hull 1997 for fuller discussion of this term).<sup>65</sup> In many cases, however, the combination of two individual signs substitutes directly for T573. These allographic forms comprise a variety of paired items from antithetical to uncertain relationships. The following are the most common pairings are as follows (figure 54c-m):

<u>Example</u>	<u>Translation</u>	<u>Example Text</u>
<i>chan/kab'</i>	sky/earth	(Copan T11 East Door South)
<i>muy(al)/ha'</i>	cloud/water	(Copan T11 East Door North)
<i>k'in/ak'ab'</i>	day/night	(Yaxchilan HS 2, Step VII)
<i>ik'/ha'</i>	wind/water	(Palenque Tablet of the 96 Glyphs)
<i>ek'/uh</i>	star/moon	(Palenque Tablet of the 96 Glyphs)
<i>yax/k'an</i>	green/yellow	(Palenque Temple XIX 'Bench')
<i>waj/ha'</i>	tortilla/water	(Copan Hieroglyphic Stairway)
<i>ixik/xib'</i>	woman/man	(Yaxchilan Structure 20, HS 5)
<i>?/nik?</i>	?/flower?	(Palenque Tablet of the 96 Glyphs)
<i>?/ch'ich'?</i>	stingray spine/blood?	(Tonina M.20)
<i>te'/ha'</i>	wood/water	(Lucha incised vessel Baking Pot) <sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> It seems clear that the origin of all these semantic variations is found in the notion of 'healing', i.e., in putting something back in order (cf. Kaufman and Norman 1984:134; cf. Stuart 2003a).

<sup>66</sup> The text is found on Vessel 2, Bedran Group, Structure 2/3<sup>rd</sup>, Burial 2 at Baking Pot, Belize. It was published in Colas et al., 2002. Epigraphic and Ceramic Analyses of Two Early Classic Maya Vessels

Epigraphers have offered several different explanations for this fascinating phenomenon. I have interpreted them in the past as a type of contrastive semantic couplet in which metaphoric meaning could be derived from the intersection of contrasting meaning of the individual elements (Hull 1993).<sup>67</sup> More recently, Marc Zender has taken the position that the terms are actually *complementary* rather than contrastive (Zender 1999:88-90). Let's examine some of the occurrences of these allographs in order to set the stage for a more detailed discussion.

The root *tz'ak* is used in three primary contexts in the inscriptions: numbered succession, in time references, and as a numeral classifier. Lacadena and Wichmann have noted that when *tz'ak* is functioning as a numeral classifier, it must be transcribed as *tz'a[h]k* since numeral classifiers are derived from positional roots through the infixation of *-h* (Lacadena and Wichmann, in press). The earliest possible allograph of one of these numbered expressions appears on the Delataille Tripod at A5-B6 (figure 54b). The text reads:

**16 K'IN-AK'AB' / EB'-XOK /**  
*16 k'in ak'ab' e[h]b' xook.*  
 16 'day/night', Ehb' Xook.

Strictly speaking stylistically, the vessel probably dates between AD 400-450. Due to uncertainties about the context, it is not possible to state with assurance that the *k'in/ak'ab'* compound is substituting for the T573 in this case. It is important to mention,

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from Baking Pot, Belize. *Mexicon* vol. 24:33-39. In this text, the *tz'ak* main sign that is part of the common '*9-Tz'ak-Ajaw'* name/title is replaced by the *te'ha'* elements (see fuller discussion below).  
<sup>67</sup> Vogt attributes the use of such "binary oppositions" in Tzotzil to the "result from social paradoxes which lead to social tensions, and from cognitive contradictions that pose logical incongruities" (1976:12).

however, that the combination of *k'in/ak'ab'* is one of the most common of these allographic substitutions. As we have seen above, when *k'in* and *ak'ab'* are paired, the result is often a metaphorical meaning of 'all the time'. If we take *k'in/ak'ab'* as a representative case for the others, do these two signs truly represent a *difrasismo* in this context? Since the *k'in/ak'ab'* pairing is common in modern languages, we have some semantic control over it in certain hieroglyphic contexts. If the reference is metaphorical, how are we to reconstruct meaning for the majority of the other compounds for which we have no direct equivalents in modern Mayan languages to provide us with its definition? Furthermore, are we to read each logograph as an individual unit or in a manner altogether different corresponding to its metaphorical reference? We can start by answering the last of these questions as to the phonetic rendering of the compound. Marc Zender has shown that at Yaxchilan on Structure 20, HS 5, Block 164, both of the individual substituted signs, *ixik* 'woman' and *xib'* 'man', are suffixed with a *ka* syllable (Zender 1999) (cf. Stuart 2003:1) (figure 54j). T573 also regularly takes the *-ka* suffix as a phonetic complement to the *tz'ak* reading (figure 54a). While *ixik* does end with a *-k*, this logograph always takes the phonetic *ki* syllable when a phonetic complement is provided (especially evident at Yaxchilan). Furthermore, the term *xib'* would have no use for the syllable *ka* either.<sup>68</sup> It follows, then, that both signs in their entirety must be read as *tz'ak* rather than representing individual readings that combine to create a certain metaphorical reference (see Zender 1999). Further evidence for reading all allographic

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<sup>68</sup> Even if one read the male head as *winik* in this context, the disharmonic *ka* would be completely unexpected and unique.

forms of the DNIG as *tz'ak* comes from a recently discovered Lucha incised vessel from Baking Pot, Belize mentioned above (figure 54m). At position H in the PSS, the *tz'ak* element in the name or title *9-tz'ak-ajaw* is substituted by the *te'/ha'*, or 'tree (or wood)/water' compound. In the hieroglyphic inscriptions, *9-tz'ak(b'u)-ajaw* commonly appears in titles of high-ranking individuals, especially lineage founders (Hull 1997:11-14). The replacement of *tz'ak* with the *te'/ha'* pairing provides further confirmation that these allographic compounds are read *tz'ak*, irrespective of their individual components.

In terms of semantics, however, I believe that the intentional pairing of specific items cannot simply be happenstance, and must relate to some conception hidden in the metaphorical meaning of these terms when used together. Even if the reading remains the same as *tz'ak* in all cases, there must be something inherent in the intersection of meaning between the two terms that forms the semantic basis for this visually and linguistically poetic usage. I suggest the possibility that the notion of 'completeness' associated with the *tz'ak* in the DNIG contexts may be a crucial clue to the function of the dual-sign allographs. Perhaps it is duality itself that represents the idea of 'completeness', i.e. day and night = 'complete time', woman and man = 'complete couple', tortilla and water = 'complete sustenance', or sky and earth = 'complete space'. A full understanding of the resulting meaning of certain pairings may be deeply embedded in the psychology of the ancient Maya, and therefore not known today. One could further speculate that in each of the pairings cited above, the two objects may themselves be a kind of *pars pro toto* representing some idea of 'completeness' with a specific realm (e.g. 'Venus/moon' standing for 'the complete heavens or celestial bodies', etc.). Expressing completeness

through the component "extremes" of a particular sphere, i.e. 'day' and 'night', therefore, may be an appropriate explanation to these dualistic pairings in the DNIG (cf. Tarn and Prechtel 1986). David Stuart has recently suggested a similar interpretation in which these various pairings represent "paired and complementary illustrations of a conceptual whole" that together "show that certain things or substances cannot naturally exist without their respective partners" (2003a:4).

#### **4.29. Associative Parallelism**

As I described in Chapter 1, there are four main branches of associative parallelism: material, familial, functional, and gender. In general, associative parallelism suggests a correlation of complementary elements in a stanza. I will deal with each of the four major types of associative parallelism in order.

#### **4.30. Material association**

Material association is based on a related physical substance shared by both elements in the stanza. On Step 4 of the Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, West Section at Dos Pilas, a death expression is recorded with a the following graphic metaphor (figure 55):

**NAB'-ja-u-CH'ICH'?-le /**  
**WITZ-ja / u-JOL-li**  
*naa[h]b'aj uch'ich'el?,*  
*wi[h]tzij ujool.*  
Was pooled, his blood?,  
Were stacked, his bones.

The two primary physical elements of the human body are paired through material association in this couplet, "...his blood?, ... his bones." Among many Maya groups today, "blood" and "bones" are conceived of as the two building blocks of the human body. The poetic pairing of these terms, therefore, suggests a metaphorical reference to 'flesh'.<sup>69</sup>

#### 4.31. Familial Association

A fairly typical example of familial association parallelism can be seen in an inscription from Panel from Site Q which records a series of two couplets detailing the birth of Chak Ak' Uy (figure 56). The first couplet is formed through apposition, with both lines referencing Chak Ak' Uy. Similarly, the second couplet, again through apposition, mentions Chak Ak' Uy in the context of 'child of mother' and 'child of fathers' paired expressions.

**SIY-ya-ja / CHAK-a-k'a / u-yu /**  
**i-tz'i / wi-WINIK-ki / CH'OK-ko /**  
**ya-YAL-la / K'UH-IXIK / IX-6-CHAN-AJAW / AJAW / IX-CHAK / to-ko-**  
**CHAK /**  
**u / 'capped ajaw'-li / CHAK-NAB'-b'i / CHAN-nu /**  
*siyaj chak ak' uy,*  
*i[h]tz'i[in] winik ch'ok,*  
*yal k'uh[ul] ixik ix 6 chan ajaw ajaw ixchak tok chaa[h]k,*  
*u-'capped ajaw'-li chak naa[h]b' cha'n.*  
 He was born, *Chak Ak' Uy*,  
 The younger brother person noble,  
 He is the child of the Divine Lady, *Ix-6 Chan Ajaw, Ajaw Ixchak Tok Chaahk*,  
 He is the 'son of' *Chak Naahb' Cha'n*.

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<sup>69</sup> Among the Tzotzil, this relationship is made explicit in the following couplet (Gossen 2002:35):  
 That which had been clay turned into flesh.  
 Its blood started to form.  
 Its bones started to form.

The direct references to Chak Ak' Uy in the first two lines are structurally paired with lines three and four in familial association. As a matter of course, all 'child of mother' and 'child of father' combinations are themselves instances of this type of parallelism.

#### 4.32. Functional Association

According to Christenson, functional association is the combination of "two elements [that] act in a similar manner" (2000:14). I would add to this the definition that the two elements serve a similar function. We have an example of this type of functional association parallelism on the Middle Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque at B8-B9 (figure 57a):

**u-ha-ja,**  
**tu-pa-ja.**  
*uhaj,*  
*tupaj*  
(The) necklace,  
(The) earflare.

In this text, "necklace" and "earflare," both being items of personal jewelry, are paired as a functional association parallelism. In addition, the shared use of the absolutive suffix suffix *-aj*, thereby forming a grammatical parallelism, enhances the poetic aesthetic of the verse. Since both necklaces and earflares of the nobles were most commonly made of jade, we might also surmise the presence of a material association in this couplet.

Another example of functional association can be seen on Page 46c of the Dresden Codex in the *difrasismo* of *pohp/tz'am*, or 'mat/throne' (figure 57b):

**po-po /**  
**TZ'AM-ma /**  
*po[h]p,*  
*tz'am.*  
Mat,  
Throne.

Since both a *mat* and a *throne* serve similar functions as objects upon which rulers sit, their metaphorical pairing is based on the functional, quotidian use of each. In this case, this couplet also forms a synonymous parallelism at the same time.

From a newly discovered text on the Hieroglyphic Mural of 96 Glyphs from Ek' Balam we find an interesting case of functional parallelism (figure 57c). The parallelism is based on a main sign I call the 'double big Kawak'. The text reads:

'big double kawak'-na / **WAJ-ta-ji /**  
'big double kawak'-na / **WAJ-pi-tzi-li /**  
'big double kawak'-n(a) *waj taaj,*  
'big double kawak'-n(a) *waj pitzil.*  
'big double kawak'-n(a) *tortilla? obsidian,*  
'big double kawak'-n(a) / *tortilla? ballplaying.*

The alternating element in each stich, *taaj*, 'obsidian',<sup>70</sup> and *pitzil*, 'ballplaying', respectively, must be related semantically in some way. A fight scene on an alabaster vessel (K7749) may provide some context to relate obsidian and ballplaying. The scene of K7749 shows two individuals stabbing each other with sharpened femurs while two well-dressed lords stand on either side handing them additional femurs as needed. The

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<sup>70</sup> While the lexical item *taaj* is relatively rare in the inscriptions, it does also appear on Copan Stela 11 (first identified by Elizabeth Wagner).

text along the upper rim of the vessel specifically labels these combatants as 'ballplayers'. Just what a stabbing ritual fight has to do with the Maya ballgame remains to be determined. The mention of *taaj*, or 'obsidian' from the Ek' Balam text in a couplet with 'ballplaying' may be related to this type of ritual battle at the ballcourt. An inscription from Naranjo Stela 23 dated to 9.13.18.9.15 (June 24, AD 710) also contains two 'big double Kawak' signs in a couplet form (figure 57d):

NOHOL / 'big double kawak'-na /  
 xa?-MAN?-na? / 'big double kawak'-na /  
*nohol* 'big double kawak'-na(),  
*xaman?* 'big double kawak'-n(a).  
 South 'big double Kawak'-n(a),  
 North? 'big double Kawak'-n(a).

Furthermore, this same 'double big kawak'-na combination appears on a recently discovered inscription from a ballcourt marker at Naranjo, providing additional support for the relationship between this collocation and the ballgame itself.<sup>71</sup> In this couplet there is also an implied *functional* association between obsidian and the actions at the ballcourt.

### 4.33. Gender Association

According to Christenson, gender association is defined as "two elements [that] are paired as male and female representatives of a parallel occupation" (2000:14). In the inscriptions, the most common parentage expressions fit nicely into this parallel pattern.

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<sup>71</sup> A less-clear case of the 'big double kawak' sign is found on Comalcalco Moldelled Brick 2 where the inscription reads, *uk'uhil* 'big double Kawak' *k'ihnich ohl k'uhul b'aak ajaw*, 'It is the god of 'big double Kawak', K'ihnich Ohl, the Divine Lord of Palenque'. There is no overt relationship to ballcourts in this single use of the sign. Here it functions simply as part of the name of a lord related to Palenque.

For example, in nominal phrases a particular lord's name will often be given with a parentage expression such *yal*, 'the child of', followed by the mother's name, then *unik?*, 'the flower? (i.e. child) of', followed by the father's name (figure 58a). Both lines of this couplet refer individually to the original lord through apposition. The couplet pattern in which these lines are presented as male and female pairs produces a prototypical gender association parallelism. As noted above, this type of parallelisms could also be interpreted as familial if the *names* of the parents are the focal point, not the reference to the child.

On the East Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque an elegant identical structure and meaning parallelism appears that contains gender parallelism. At this moment in history, Palenque had just been suffered defeat through a Calakmul military offensive. The text then records the following lament at O8-P9 (figure 58b):

**sa-ta-ya /K'UHUL-IXIK/**  
**sa-ta-ya / AJAW /**  
*satay k'uhul ixik,*  
*satay ajaw.*  
 The divine lady/ladies got destroyed,  
 The lord(s) got destroyed.

The consequence of the battle with Calakmul is the destruction of noble ladies and lords of Palenque. The basis of the couplet derives from the gender association between female and male nobles among the ruling class. In both stichs, the mediopassive verb

*satay*, 'got destroyed', makes use of different graphemic syllables in order to complement the linguistic parallelism with visual poetics (see below).<sup>72</sup>

#### 4.34. Grammatical Parallelism

According to Christenson, grammatical parallelism refers to "elements that are grammatically parallel in construction" (2000:15). As I discussed in Chapter 1, the hallmark of grammatical parallelism is the presence of repeated grammatical forms in each line of stanza. Repetition of identical verbal or nominal morphology in paralleled lines is the most common manifestation of this rhetorical device in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. There has been surprisingly little attention paid to this significant poetic feature of Maya inscriptions to date. Major ceremonies, decisive battles, and other important events are poetically highlighted through the use of grammatical parallelism. The focus of attention is centered on the *action* taking place in the sentence. A good example of a simple grammatical parallelism appears on the Pomona Panel (figure 59a):

**u-CHOK-wa-ch'a-ja /**  
**u-K'AL-wa-TUN-ni /**  
*uchokow ch'aaj,*  
*uk'alaw tuun.*  
He threw drops,  
He tied the stone.

This verbal duo is regularly found in texts detailing the events of 'K'atun'-ending ceremonies. The standard transitive suffixation for CVC verbs is shared by both line-

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<sup>72</sup> In Ch'orti', the verbal root *sat* means 'lose, destroy, disappear, make a mistake, spend, erase, eliminate'. In Ch'ol, *saatel* also means 'die'—another meaning appropriate for this passage (Attinasi 1973).

initial verbs (i.e. u...V'w). In some cases, the fuller expression is given in the text: 'He threw drops, he tied the stone, and he planted the stone', each referring to a major component of these period-ending rituals.

Another example of this grammatical parallelism appears on Ixtutz Stela 4. The relevant section of the text reads (figure 59b):

**u-tz'a-pa-wa-tun-ni /**  
**u-CHOK-wa / ch'a-ji /**  
**...yi-IL-? / K'UHUL-MUTUL-AJAW**  
**yi-IL-wa / 8-WINAK-ki / TZUK-AJAW /**  
*utz'apaw tuun,*  
*uchokow ch'a(a)j,*  
*...yili(?) k'uhul mutul ajaw,*  
*yiliw 8-winaak tzuk ajaw.*  
 He planted the stone,  
 He threw drops,  
 ...He saw it, the Divine Tikal Lord,  
 They saw it, the 28 *Tzuk* Lords.

In this case, the order of the actions in the first couplet is inverted from Pomona Panel example. A subsequent second couplet most likely contains another example of grammatical parallelism. In line 4, the verb is clearly spelled out as **yi-IL-wa**, or *yiliw*, 'he saw it'. In the third line, the final *-wa* suffix is not securely present, but it is likely reconstructable from the tight semantic and grammatical constraints of this parallel phrase. Therefore, not only did the Divine Lord of Tikal witness this ceremony at Ixtutz, but it was also seen by twenty-eight lords from *Tzuk* (perhaps Quirigua).

Another grammatical parallelism can be found on the newly discovered Hieroglyphic Stairs on Structure L5-49 at Dos Pilas (figure 60a). These inscriptions

contain several clear instances of parallel morphological features between couplet lines.

Step 3 of the West Section of Stairway 2 contains the following parallelism:

'Starwar'-**yi-ya** /  
**PULUY** /  
**LOK'-yi**  
'Starwar'-*yiiy*,  
*pul[uu]y*,  
*lok'o[ooy]*.  
'Starwar',  
It got burned,  
He escaped.

The yet undeciphered verb, dubbed the 'Starwar' glyph, carries a *-Vy* ending, the mediopassive verbal morphology for verbs of motion. The second main verb *puluuy*, is written in its logographic form. The final verb in the triplet, *lok'ooy*, 'he escaped', also shows *-Vy* mediopassive morphology. The repetition of identical verbal morphology creates a certain aesthetic affect through these grammatically parallel lines.

On the West Section of Step 6 of the Hieroglyphic Stairs at Dos Pilas, a similar but substantially longer example occurs of grammatical parallelism (figure 60b):

'Starwar'-**yi** / ? / ? / **i-u-ti** / 7 IX / 12 KASEW /  
**PULUY** / ?-**HA'** /  
**PULUY** / ? / 7 **K'IN-1-WINIL-la** / 9 **AK'AB'** / 6 **YAXK'IN** /  
'Starwar'-**yi** / ?-? / ?-**KAB'-ya** / **MUTUL-la-?** / ? /  
**LOK'-yi** / **TOK'-BAJ** / **CHAN** /  
**HUL-yi** / **IX-WITZ** /  
'Starwar'-*yi* ? ?. *i-u[h]t 7 ix 12 kasew*,  
*pul[uu]y ?-ha'*,  
*pul[uu]y ? . 7 k'in, 1 winal, 9 ak'ab' 6 yaxk'in*,  
'Starwar'-*yi* ?, ?-*kab'[jii]y mutul* ?,  
*lok'[oo]y b'aj[laj] chan*  
*hul[ii]y ix witz*

'Starwar' (against) ?. Then it happened, 7 Ix 12 Kasew,  
 It got burned, 'Dos Pilas',  
 It got burned, ?. 27 days later on 9 Ak'ab' 6 Yaxk'in,  
 'Starwar' against ?, (he) oversaw it, the Tikal ?,  
 He escaped, B'ajlaj Chan,  
 He arrived at Ix Witz.

In the first 5 lines, each of the line-initial verbs is a mediopassive with a *-Vy* shape. The final verb in line 5 also makes use of the *-Vy* morphology, although this verb traditionally appears with a *-ya* suffix, indicating the need to read the final *-i* (the marker of root intransitives). A chiasmus is also formed lines 1-4 with first and last lines beginning with the 'Starwar' verb and the two center lines with *puluuy*, "it got burned." The final semantic couplet records the 'escape' from Dos Pilas and the 'arrival' at Tikal of B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil. What is remarkable about this historical account is the clear pattern of grammatical parallelism in verbal morphology. In such cases, one needs to see the transliteration rather than the translation to appreciate the masterful poetic work that it is.

Yet another instance of grammatical parallelism appears on the same Hieroglyphic Stairs at Dos Pilas. On Step 4 of the Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, West Section at B2-D1, the text records the defeat of Nuun Ujol Chaahk at the hands of B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil of Dos Pilas (figure 60c). Two successive couplets recount the details of the battle:

**hu-b'u-yi / u-TOK'**  
**PAKAL / NUN-u-JOL-CHAK /**  
**NAB'-ja-u-CH'ICH'?'-le /**  
**WITZ-ja / u-JOL-li**  
*jub'uuy uto'k'*  
*pakal nuun ujoal chaa[h]k.*



one who' or 'one who'. While the *-ix* prefix (or *x-*) commonly accompanies female names and titles, it should be noted that *aj-* is also used in many cases when referring to women in Ch'orti' and other Mayan languages (see Hull 2000c for examples in Ch'orti'). It seems, then, that both males and females could use *aj-*, but only females could use *-ix*. Therefore, *aj-* must be inherently unmarked with respect to gender while *ix-* functions as the marked counterpart for women only. In the hieroglyphic inscriptions, these 'agentive' prefixes are often repeated in both lines of a stanza in identical positions. Note this example of the *aj-* prefix from Tonina M82 (figure 61c):

**a-ko-lo-TE' /**  
**a-wa-li /**  
*a[j]kol[o'm]te'*,  
*a[j]waal.*  
 Ajkolo'mte',  
 Ajwaal.

The repetition of both the prefix *aj-* and *ix-* can similarly be seen on Panel 4 of Xcalumkin (figure 61d). The text reads:

**a-K'IN-ni /**  
**a-tz'i-b'a /**  
**IX-ma-b'a-lu-ma / CHAN-na / CH'EN? / 'Venus hand' /**  
**IX-?-K'IN-ni**  
*a[j]k'in,*  
*a[j] tz'i[h]b'.*  
*ixmab'alu'm chan ch'e'n 'Venus hand',*  
*ix-?-k'in.*  
 (She is a) Diviner,  
 (She is a) Scribe,  
 Lady Mab'alu'm Sky Cave 'Venus hand',  
 Lady ?-K'in.

In the first stanza, the generic 'agentive' prefix *a(j)-* is used, presumably in reference to Lady Mab'alu'm. Then, in the final stanza, the strictly female version *ix-* is prefixed to the names of Lady Mab'alu'm. There is a nice poetic interplay between the two 'agentive' prefix between these stanzas.

#### 4.36. Enveloping Parallelism

We have seen the use of enveloping couplets in Ch'orti' in Chapters 1 and 2. In that chapter, I defined an enveloping couplet as parallelism that strategically repeats a unit of discourse at the beginning and the end of a stanza in order to envelope or frame the inner phrase. Christenson has noted that enveloping parallelism "has the effect of tying together the introduction and conclusion of a passage to set it apart from that which precedes and follows it" (2000:17). An inscription from Nim Li Punit Stela 15 demonstrates the use of enveloping parallelism (figure 62a):

**u-TZ'AP / u-TUN-ni / CHAK-u-na-na /**  
**u-6-TZ'AK-a / ?-TUN-ni / u-TZ'AP /**  
*utz'apaw utuun chak unan,*  
*u-6-tz'aka ?-tuun utz'ap.*  
 His planting of the stone of Chak Unan,  
 The sixth ? of the ?-stone of his planting.

The initial verb in the first line is the transitive form of the verb *tz'ap*, meaning 'to plant' or 'to stick something in the ground'. The object of the action is a stela of Chak Unan. The second line of the couplet repeats the word *tuun*, or 'stone' (i.e. 'stela'), and terminates

with a nominal from of the verb *tz'ap*, here *utz'ap*, for 'his planting'. The root *tz'ap* literally envelops both lines of the couplet in poetic fashion.

Triplets can also be encased in repeated elements at the beginning and end of a long stanza. On the West Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque at L3-K7, a complicated section of text contains an enveloped triplet construction (figure 62b). The text reads:

**9-TZ'AK-AJAW / yu-ti-b'i / ?-na-?-na /**  
**yu-ti-b'i / K'INICH-JANAB' /**  
**yu-ti-b'i / u-?-TUN-ni-li / u-tu-ta?-li / 9-TZ'AK-AJAW**  
*9 tz'ak ajaw yutib' ?-na-?-na,*  
*yutib' k'i[h]nich janaa[h]b',*  
*yutib' u-?-tuunil ututa?-l 9 tz'ak ajaw*  
 9 Tz'ak Ajaw, it is the *yutib'* of ??,  
 the *yutib'* of K'ihnich Janaahb',  
 the *yutib'* of the ?-stone of the ? of 9 Tz'ak Ajaw.

The meaning of most of the text is utterly unclear. What can be said is that there is a triplet created by the repetition of *yutib'* in each line, whose meaning is likewise unknown.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, a reference to a 9 Tz'ak Ajaw appears at the beginning of the clause as well as at its conclusion thereby literally enveloping the triplet within. Significant emphasis is placed on the internal triplet through this type of poetic construction.

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<sup>73</sup> The root *ut* in Ch'olan languages refers to 'face' or 'surface' of something as well as 'eye' and 'fruit'. The addition of the instrumental suffix, *-ib'*, suggests *yutib'* may represent the possessed object with which one does a particular task.

#### 4.37. Contextually-bound Parallelism

Parallelism is occasionally not as overt or obvious as is typically assumed. In many cases in Maya inscriptions, parallel verbs rely on context in addition to semantic or grammatical parallelism to define the full relationship between individual line referents. For example, through the scores of texts dealing with period ending rites we know that these comprised one or more of the following ceremonial actions: scattering, planting of a stela, and the binding of a stela. When more than one of these actions is mentioned in a period ending ceremony, structurally we can associate them strictly by context. Therefore, contextually-bound parallelism plays a significant role in our understanding of poetic patterning in the inscriptions. A good example of this comes from a period ending ceremony in which a somewhat unexpected verb appears as the possible second line of a couplet. The inscription from Tonina M. 113 at J-O reads (figure 63a):

**10 AJAW / 8 YAXK'IN /**  
**u-12-WINIKHAB' /**  
**u-CHOK-wa-ch'a-?(ji?) /**  
**PAT-la-ja / u-HACH?-TUN-ni /**  
*10 ajaw 8 yaxk'in,*  
*u-12-winikhaab',*  
*uchokow ch'aaj (?),*  
*patlaj uhach(?)tuun.*  
On 10 Ajaw 8 Yaxk'in,  
The 12th 'K'atun',  
He threw drops (?),  
It was made, his 'carrying stone'.

In the third line we have a standard period ending verb and object given as 'he threw drops'. The fourth line, however, deviates from other texts by mentioning the forming or

making of a *hach(?)tuun*, or 'carrying stone'.<sup>74</sup> This reference in 'carrying stone' probably refers to an *incensario* that was made for this particular period ending ceremony.

Contextually, both *uchokow* and *patlaj* are parallel by association as the two actions mentioned on this date.

On the Palace Tablet at Palenque at F18-F19, a similar example of parallelism in a period ending context appears (figure 63b). In this case, however, the paired verbal expressions are two of the common actions that occur at period ending rites:

**u-K'AL-wa-TUN-ni**  
**u-CHOK-wa / ch'aj-ji /**  
*uk'alaw tuun,*  
*uchokow ch'aj.*  
He tied the stone,  
He scattered drops.

The parallelism is obvious at the grammatical level (see discussion of "grammatical parallelism" above), but it is also through context that these phrases are linked.

Contextually-bound parallelism, then, can often complement and enhance other forms of parallelism.

#### **4.38. Triplet Constructions**

Among the rhetorical devices available to Maya scribes, triplets seem to have been favored for bringing focus to bear on a particular element or to accentuate emotional

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<sup>74</sup> The *hach* reading for the enigmatic T174 glyph was recently suggested by David Stuart. Traditionally, Barbara MacLeod's reading of *kuch*, 'to carry' has received wide acceptance, even by David Stuart at one time. I, instead, offered a reading of *k'och*, 'to carry on one's shoulders' in 1994 based on several phonetic substitutions and contextual clues. None of the readings adequately accounts for all occurrences of T174, so its exact transcription remains unknown.

content in the passage. Triplets are actually quite common in comparison to many other poetic devices used in the hieroglyphic script. In modern Mayan languages, triplets are commonly found in episode peaks and focal point in the narrative. According to Barbara Tedlock, many K'iche' ritual prayers are almost completely orated in *triplet* form (B. Tedlock 1982:189). In fact, Dennis Tedlock once criticized researchers for paying too much attention to couplets in Mesoamerican texts while ignoring larger structural patterns such as triplets. Triplets are a powerful poetic tool that allow for a higher level of description and emphasis in a stanza than can often be achieved solely through a couplet. A good illustrative triplet occurs on Stela B from Copan (figure 64a). The text describes events surrounding the period ending rite held on 9.15.0.0.0. Before detailing the rituals that took place on that day, the text first mentions three gods in triplet who were overseeing the ceremony:

**mi-OL-la / CHAN-na-NAL K'UH /**

**mi-OL-la / KAB'-la-K'UH /**

**mi-OL-la / 'Venus God' /**

*mi[h] o[h]l chanal k'uh,*

*mi[h] o[h]l kab'al k'uh,*

*mi[h] o[h]l 'Venus God'.*

Lively?/There was no heart of the Heavenly God,

Lively?/ There was no heart of the Earthly God,

Lively?/ There was no heart of the 'Venus God'.

I have argued elsewhere that the enigmatic *mi* syllable in line-initial position throughout the triplet can possibly be understood through the Ch'orti' term *mijmijres*, 'to aliven' or

'to cheer up'.<sup>75</sup> If this bound root *\*mij* (meaning something akin to 'alive' or 'cheerful') is adjectival in this case, we could interpret the *mi[h]* on Stela B as describing the state of the "heart" of the Gods before the period ending rituals began. Nikolai Grube, David Stuart, Stephen Houston, and John Robertson have read this passage as a reference to there being 'no' gods since the *mi* sign is commonly used for the numeral coefficient zero (Nikolai Grube, personal communication 2002; Stuart et. al 1999). This interpretation may also be appropriate if we think of the ceremony as 'bringing' or 'conjuring' the Gods since they were not present previously. Brian Stross (personal communication 2003) has suggested that this *mi* syllable could be a reflection of a similar particle in Lakandon which, according to Baer and Merrifield (1971) means "late" or deceased." Importantly, this reading would also suggest a lament—an ideal occasion for a parallel construction to focus the reader on this episode. Regardless of the exact interpretation of this particular collocation, the appearance of a triplet in this context clearly draws attention to the specific deities who would preside over the ceremony.

At Copan, another triplet appears on Step 67, Block 2 of the Hieroglyphic Stairs of Structure 26 (figure 64b). Curiously, each line of the triplet also begins with the *mi*

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<sup>75</sup> I quote the main section of this argument here: " I believe that the *mi* or *mih* sign on Stela B of Copán can be better interpreted in relation to the Ch'orti' term *mijmij*. In Ch'orti' the bound root *\*mij* is commonly reduplicated to create verbal and adjectival forms. The meaning of the reduplicated verbal form *umijmijres* is "avivarlo, ponerlo más activo, contemplar (to enliven, to make more active, to make content)." The core meaning of the root *\*mij* is 'liven up' in all of its forms. If a parent picks up a quiet child and tries to get him to smile or become more animated they would say in Ch'oti', *E winik war umijmijres e mimi'* (The man is livening up the baby)." The action is one of putting life into someone who is otherwise subdued. Take for example the case when a baby is sitting alone looking up with a smile on her face. The Ch'orti' say, "The child is being cheered up by the Virgen" (*War amijmijresna e chuchu' umen e Katu'*). (They believe that babies can still peer directly into heaven and see the face of *Katu'*, the Virgen). I suggest that Stela B of Copán refers to just such a 'cheering up' of the hearts of the gods at this period ending ceremony" (Hull 2002b).

sign. The inscription generally reads as follows: *mi*-‘temple’, *mi*-‘altar’, *mi-kab*-*ch’e’n?*. In this context it would seem clear that interpreting *mi* as ‘no’ or ‘non-existence’ is particularly appropriate. Once again, the text poetically laments the lack of altars, temples, and no ‘place’ using a parallel triplet. In both of these cases we have evidence of the conscious use of poetic devices to amplify the emotional affect of the message.

A triplet based on shared yet distinct metaphors for death appears on Tortuguero M6 (figure 64c). The text reads:

**NAB’-CH’ICH’-ja /**  
**WITZ-ja-JOL /**  
**9-hi-na-ja / u-NIK?-SAK-ik’-li / tu-u-CHAN-na /**  
*naa[h]b’aj ch’ich’,*  
*wi[h]tzij jol(om),*  
*9-hi[h]naj unik? sak ik’il tu uchan.*  
 Was pooled, the blood,  
 Was mountained, the skull (bones),  
 Was ?, his flower white wind in his sky.

The first two metaphors refer to the ‘pooling of blood’ and ‘mountaining of the skulls/bones’, a couplet used to represent the results of warfare that I discussed above. In this case, these metaphors are then paired with the enigmatic expression *9-hihnaj* of unknown meaning.<sup>76</sup> What follows the *9-hihnaj* compound is a reference to the ‘soul’ expressed with the common metaphor ‘his flower white wind’. In this inscription, however, the phrase *tu uchan*, ‘in his sky’ is unique to this otherwise standard reference to

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<sup>76</sup> It is possible that *9-hihnaj* not a passivized verb here, but instead should be transcribed as a nominal form *9-hinaj*, or ‘9 seeds’.

the soul in Maya thought. Each of the three metaphors of death displays passive morphology and related semantics.

The Palace Tablet at Palenque also contains a series of metaphors for death in a triplet structure that provides a particular emotional boost to the narrative. The inscription records the death of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam II on 9.13.10.1.5 (Feb. 16, AD 702)—a very appropriate context for poetic and emotional highlighting. The text makes use of three separate expressions, two of which are metaphoric, to describe his death. The first at M7 is *ochi b'ijj*, 'he entered the road' (figure 65a), followed by *ub'utuw*, 'they covered him over' at M11 (figure 65b), and finally the stative construction *hamliiy usak hu'n*, 'untied was his white headband' at M13-N14 (figure 65c). The use of triplet metaphors on the Palace Tablet at Palenque and on Tortuguero M6 at once instills these particular passages from longer texts with an enhanced emotive impact as well as highlights them as a critically important event in the inscription—the death of a ruler.

On Page 24 of the Dresden Codex, we also find a triplet used in a context that is usually reserved for monocolons or couplets (figure 66). The text is a negative augury for this particular time period. The text reads:

**u-mu-ka / KAB'-b'a /**  
**u-mu-ka / u-CH'EN-na /**  
**u-mu-ka / wi-WINIK-ki /**  
*umuk kab',*  
*umuk uch'e'n,*  
*umuk uwiniik,*  
'(Bad) omen for the land,  
(Bad) omen for their caves,  
(Bad) omen for their men.

This ill-fated prognostication is couched in a triplet construction in order to provide additional emotional impact to the omen.

Triplets are sometimes used to poetically and gradually reveal more information about someone or something. For example, on K7749, a beautiful marble vase showing an unknown ballgame ritual or sacrifice, the name of the owner of the vase is given in triplet form (figure 67). In each line of the triplet, more details about the same individual are progressively given:

**yu-k'i-b'i lu-mi-li / pi-tzi-la /**  
**u-WI'IL / wi-WINIK-ki-li / b'a-TE' / pi-tzi-la /**  
**u-NIK?-li / ka-b'a-la / pi-tzi-la /**  
*yuk'ib' luumil pitziil,*  
*uwi'il winikil b'a[ah]te' pitziil,*  
*unik(?)il kab'al pitziil.*  
(It is) the drinking cup of the hometown-ballplayer<sup>77</sup>,  
The last man of the head-ballplayer,  
The son of the earthly-ballplayer.<sup>78</sup>

In the first line, we learn only that the owner of the vessel is called "hometown-ballplayer." Then, the second and third lines of the stanza steadily add information such as that he is "the last man of the head-ballplayer" and "the son of the earthly-ballplayer." The appositive statements appear in controlled, poetic fashion as the stanza develops. In addition, the repetition of "ballplayer" at the end of each line represents an instance of the poetic device known as *epistrophe*, i.e. the successive repetition of a line-final element.

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<sup>77</sup> Brian Stross suggests the "hometown" translation of *luumil* in contrast to Marc Zender's translation of "dirty" since the *luum* does not mean dirt, but "earth."

<sup>78</sup> Part of the reading of this section was first offered by Marc Zender (2001) at (<http://www.famsi.org>).

A final example of name phrase triplet structures appears on the West Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at J6-I11 (figure 68a). This poetic section of the texts contains both a triplet followed by an antithetical couplet that shows line-initial deletion in the second stich:

**4-ti-HUN-li / u-?-TUN-ni-li /**  
**4-u-?-na / CHAN-na /**  
**4 PIH? / ya-AK'-wa /**  
**u-tu-ta-li / CHAN-na-K'UH /**  
**KAB'-al-K'UH /**

*4 ti hu'nil u-?-tuunil,*  
*4 u-?-n(a) chan,*  
*4 pih? yak'aw.*  
*utu'tal chan[al] k'uh,*  
*kab'al k'uh.*  
 4 are the headbands for his ? stone,  
 4 are the ? of the sky,  
 4 are the bundles(?) he gave.  
 It is the gift of the Heavenly Gods,  
           of the Earthly Gods.

This portion of the inscription discusses items offered to certain deities, including four headbands for stone effigies, four unknown objects for the sky, and four bundles(?). The subsequent couplet further defines these gifts as belonging to Heavenly and Earthly Gods. The triplet in this instance focuses attention on the specific offerings given to the gods.

Locatives in triplet form are also attested in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. On K1609, the Maize God is shown at the moment of his rebirth emerging out of a split skull

encased in the open maw sign of the underworld (figure 68b). The upper portion of the text reads:

**UT-ti / K'UH-'split earth' / OCH /**  
**u-ti-ya / IK'-WAY-NAL /**  
**IK'-NAB'-NAL /**  
**5-mo-NAL /CHAN / CH'EN-na /**  
*u[h]ti / k'uh[ul]-'split earth' / och[i],*  
*u[h]tiy ik' waynal,*  
*ik' naa[h]b'nal,*  
*ho?mnal chan ch'e'n.*

It happened that at the divine 'split-earth' (place), he entered.  
It happened at the Black Sleeping Place,  
Black Pool Place,  
Chasm? Place Region.

The first two lines form a couplet based on the shared use of the intransitive verb *uht*, 'to happen'. The *k'uhul* 'split-earth' place is poetically highlighted through topicalization by its placement before the verb—an unexpected syntactical occurrence. The three Underworld locations appear in triplet form in the second to fourth lines based on the common locative suffix *-nal* on each. Each of these terms complement each other in a steady, progressive building-up effect of detail.

#### 4.39. Grammatical Parallelism with Triplets

In some cases, triplets are formed through paralleled grammatical elements. For example, at Chichen Itza on a text from the Casa Colorada we find the following triplet (figure 69):

**ha'-i / TZAK-ka-ji / tu-K'IN-ni /**  
**tu-b'a /**  
**tu-NAB'-li / ka-k'u-pa-ka-la /**  
*ha'i tza[h]kaj tu k'in,*  
*tu b'a[ah],*  
*tu naa[h]b'il k'a[h]k'upakal.*  
 This one was conjured on the day,  
 by himself,  
 in the pool(?) of K'ahk'upakal.

The general preposition *tu* is repeated three times following the initial verbal phrase in the first line. While the English translation of each occurrence of the preposition *tu* is different in the three lines ("on," "by," and "in"), the triplet works perfectly in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan.

#### 4.40. Triplets in Name Phrases

We have already analyzed nominal and titular phrases of individuals in terms of couplet structure. There are also a number of cases where these names and titles appear in triplet form. It is not always clear whether three different people are being referred to, or if it is just a single person. Structure 11 Panel at Copan is a good example of this type of triple repetition (figure 70a). The text reads:

**k'u-yu-NIK?-ki / a-AJAW-wa /**  
**MO'-WITZ-AJAW-wa /**  
**tu-ku-ni / wi-tzi-AJAW /**  
*kuy nik? ajaw,*  
*mo' witz ajaw,*  
*tukuun witz ajaw.*  
 Owl Flower Lord,  
 Macaw Mountain Lord,  
 Dove Mountain Lord.

Regardless of whether this passage refers to three separate beings or just a single entity, there is a marked symmetry visible among the lines in terms of words per line. In addition, the equivalent final element (*ajaw*) is an instance of *epistrophe*. Thematically, each line contains a type of bird in the name phrase in a kind of synonymous parallelism.

Another example of a triplet appears on Yaxchilan Lintel 18 at A2-B4. This tricolon is soon followed by a semantic couplet at C1-D1 (figure 70b). The text reads:

**mu-xi / CH'OK-ko /**  
**mu-UH / CH'OK-ko /**  
**ya-xu?-ni / CH'OK-ko /**  
**a-TZUK-TE' /**  
**K'AN-na-TZUK-TE' /**  
*muux ch'ok,*  
*muh ch'ok,*  
*yaxuun ch'ok*  
*a[j]tzukte',*  
*k'an tzukte'.*  
 Muux Ch'ok,  
 Muh Ch'ok,  
 Yaxuun Ch'ok.  
 The one from Tzukte',  
 Yellow(?) Tzukte.

The repetition of *ch'ok*, 'youth' or 'young', in the first three lines, suggests we are dealing with three separate young nobles. The text continues in poetic fashion with a semantic couplet *Ajtzukte'*, *K'an tzukte'*. The use of several poetic devices in succession, or polystylistic phrases, as I have termed it (Hull 1993), shows the adroitness of the scribes who produced this text. Furthermore, it demonstrates a conscious effort on behalf of these scribes to incorporate poetic features into glyphic texts for specific purposes.

#### 4.41. Triplets with Line-initial Deletion in Second Stich

One of the most common stylistic patterns in Ch'orti' parallel discourse, both ritual and oral narrations, is the deletion of the line-initial elements in all but the first line. The deleted item is usually the verb or the entire verbal phrase. This poetic convention is also common in hieroglyphic texts that show parallel structuring. When several items are listed that related to a single action, the verb is not repeated; just the successive nouns. This type of deletion can be observed in a quatrain recorded on the Cancuen Panel at G4-H5 (figure 71). The phrase begins with the arrival somewhere of an individual named a B'ab' Ajaw. The still-undeciphered verb *tun?-yi* follows directly after his arrival. The next section of text reads:

**tun?-yi / ICHIL?-LAKAM-HA' /**  
**ICHIL? / ma-?-ka? /**  
**ICHIL? / WINIK?-NAB' / 3-AK / PET-ne /**  
**ICHIL?-yo-OL / a-ku /**  
*tun?-[V]y ichil? lakam ha',*  
*ichil? ma-?k,*  
*ichil? winik? naa[h]b' 3 a[h]'k peten,*  
*ichil? yo[h]l a[h]'k*  
Set up? inside of Lakam Ha',  
inside of Ma-?k,  
inside of Man? Pool 3 Turtle Island,  
inside the heart of the turtle.

While the content of the text is difficult to understand, the parallelism is readily apparent.

Following the initial mention of the verb in the first line, all subsequent lines delete the verb and begin with the preposition *ichil?*, 'within'.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> The exact reading of this logograph is still in debate. From substitution evidence at Chichen Itza, it has been proposed that it reads *ichil*, meaning 'within'. Most recently, Alfonso Lacadena has suggested a

#### 4.42. Quatrains

Quatrains appear infrequently as a poetic device in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. The text of Copan Stela A is a notable exception in that contains three separate quatrains on one side of the stela (figure 72a-b, d). Since I discuss this inscription in greater detail later in this chapter, I will only concern myself with the relevant quatrains and one couplet in the text here. These longer sections of text will only be given in transliteration and translation for simplicity:

*ha'o'b' chan te' chan,  
chan na chan,  
chan ni chan,  
chan may chan.*

These ones are *chan te' chan,'  
chan na chan,  
chan ni chan,  
chan may chan.*

*k'uhul xukpi(?) ajaw,  
k'uhul mutul ajaw,  
k'uhul kan(al) ajaw,  
k'uhul b'aak ajaw.*

Divine Lord of Copan,  
Divine Lord of Tikal,  
Divine Lord of Calakmul,  
Divine Lord of Palenque.

*u(?)-niyil tzuk(?) chan,  
u(?)-niyil tzuk(?) kab'.*

?? of the sky,  
?? of the earth.

*elk'in,  
ochk'in,  
nohol,  
xaman.*

East,  
West,  
South,  
North.

The first quatrain begins with the plural demonstrative *ha'o'b'*, 'these ones' (figure 72a).

Then, the text proceeds with a stream of well-balanced repetitions of the word *chan* (meaning either 'snake', 'sky', or 'four'). An alternating element intervenes between the

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reading of *war* "in times of," based on similarities in usage with *ti wal* in the Chilam Balam of Tizimin and *tawarto* 'still on time' in Ch'orti' (Grube and Lacadena 2003:II-23).

dual *chan* references in each line of the quatrain. The second quatrain lists four divine lords from the sites of Copan, Tikal, Calakmul, and Palenque (figure 72b). Again, the alternating element is contained between the repeated forms *k'uhul...ajaw*, 'Divine...Lord' in similar fashion to the enveloping found in the first quatrain. In the first and second quatrain, the successive repetition of the line-final elements (*chan* and *ajaw*, respectively) represents additional examples of epistrophe. An antithetical parallelism breaks the flow of successive quatrains thereby breaking the expectation of the reader/listener for another quatrain (figure 72c). The final quatrain is yet another list, this time of the four cardinal directions (figure 73d). An alliterative cadence is created in the first two quatrains through the high degree of repetition.

#### **4.43. Embedded or Nested Parallelism**

In Chapter 1 (1.31.) I defined 'nested couplets' as:

'Nesting' refers to the double use of one line of a couplet as both as a terminating point for one couplet as well as the initial line of another. It can also take the form of couplets located within other couplets (Mudd 1979:59). In terms of structure, a second couplet is added to the second line of the previous couplet thereby deepening the poetic affect. 'Nesting' can also appear in triplets, quatrains, or longer sequences. Not restricted to any genre of poetic discourse, couplet 'nesting' is an elegant means of maximizing the poetic unit—a kind of integrated couplet stacking.

Ch'orti' makes considerable use of nested couplets in variety of contexts and genres. Not surprisingly, nested couplets are also appear in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. A title sequence on Quirigua Stela A at D7-F9 provides a good illustrative example of this process (73a):

**4-ch'a-ho-la/ma? /**  
**4-TE'-IK' -AJAW-?? /**  
**IK' / xu?-ku-pi-AJAW /**  
**IK'-AJAW / WAY-NAL-la /**  
*4 ch'aho'm(?),*  
*4 te' ik' ajaw (?),*  
*ik' xukpi(?) ajaw,*  
*ik' ajaw waynal.*  
 4 Youth,  
 4 Black Lord (?),<sup>80</sup>  
 Black *Xukpi*(?) Lord,  
 Black Lord of the Sleeping Place.

The second stich of the first couplet contains the term *ik'*, or 'black'. The second line of the first couplet also serves as the first line of the next parallel structure. The third and fourth lines build on the term *ik'* from the second line to create the subsequent triplet. The 'nesting' of the second line allows for it to perform 'double duty' as it were.

Another example of a nested couplet is found on Tonina M.106 at Pg1-Pb3 (fig 73b):

**ta-?-AJAW / CHUM-? /**  
**tu-WITZ-li / 'Fire Serpent'<sup>81</sup> /**  
**?-WITZ / ? /**  
*ta ? ajaw chum-*  
*tu witzil 'Fire Serpent',*  
*?-witz ?.*  
 On ? Ajaw, seating-?  
 On the mountain of Fire Serpent,  
 ? the mountain ?.

It is possible to analyze this phrase as comprising of two stanzas, which share one line (here the second line). The first couplet is based on the repetition of the preposition *ta*,

<sup>80</sup> I do not translate the *te'* in this case since it is likely a numeral classifier in this context.

<sup>81</sup> Karl Taube identified this head as a reference to "Fire Serpent" (2003:430-431).

'on', in the first and second lines. The third line of text seems to be the second half of a separate couplet built on the term *witz*, or 'mountain', that it shares in common with the second line.

The text on the Left Side of Copan Stela P at E3-F4 presents us with another possible case of couplet nesting (figure 74). The text reads:

**3-wi-ti-ku /**  
**3-CH'EN-na-ja /**  
**xu-ku-pi / CHAN-CH'EN? /**  
**u-b'a-ji-CH'AB'-b'a / YAX-K'UH /**  
**YAX-AJAW-wa /**

3 *witik*,  
 3 *ch'e'naj*,  
*xukpi? chan ch'e'n?*  
*ub'aaj ch'ab' Yax K'uh*,  
*Yax Ajaw.*

3 *witik*,  
 3 *ch'e'naj*,  
*Xukpi? Sky Cave?*  
 It is the image of the Green Gods,  
 the Green Lords.

The first couplet is formed through the shared initial number 3 in both lines. The term *witik* seems to refer to the early name of Copan, or perhaps of an area within Copan proper. It is possible that a second nested couplet then plays off the *ch'e'naj* of the second line with a paralleled *ch'e'n?* in the third line. The third couplet appears in the fourth and fifth lines in which the line-initial material of the first line of the stanza is deleted in the second. The repetition of the adjective *yax*, 'green' or 'new' forms the basis of this couplet ('Green Gods, Green Lords').

#### 4.43. Breaking of Expectations and Embedding

Breaking of expectations in a narrative context is an especially powerful poetic device (see fuller discussion in Chapter 1). Jakobson couched this process in terms of the projection of the paradigmatic onto the syntagmatic axis (1960:358). Couplet breaking interrupts syntagmatic progression and often signals focal point within the narrative. The breaking of expectation is particularly effective in this regard in the highly parallel texts common to Mesoamerican literature.

On the sarcophagus of Janaahb' Pakal I at Palenque, we have an excellent example of poetic breaking or embedding (figure 75). The inscription sets out a steady pattern in detailing events in the lives of Palenque's rulers: Temporal indicator > verb > subject. After mentioning the death of Janaahb' Pakal I, the text at Block 42 begins with a Calendar Round with two day names—an impossibility in Maya dating. The first day name is given as 3 Chikchan. Then, another day name interrupts this phrase and begins a full Calendar Round notation. The month sign corresponding to the first day sign appears later in the text in a separate clause. The splitting of the Calendar Round in effect forms a kind of parenthetical phrase within (Kathryn Josserand, personal communication 1993). The embedded phrase is highlighted considerably by breaking the standard pattern followed quite faithfully since the beginning of the text. I have previously written that "the embedded clause, which uses standard Maya syntax, is being highlighted, both visually and syntactically, to signal that this event is of particular importance" (Hull 1993:46). The gloss of the relevant section of the text would be: 'On 4 Chickchan [On 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab', was the stone-seating of Sak K'uk'] 13 Yax, Sak K'uk' entered the road

(i.e. died)'. The rule of Sak K'uk', a female, interrupted the normal patrilineal descent of Palenque rulers. The mention of her presiding over the seating of a stone monument at a period ending ceremony is underscored through this syntactic breaking. Sak K'uk' then gave authority to her son, Janaahb' Pakal II, thus permanently altering established patrilineal descent. "By embedding this small phrase," I have elsewhere noted, "the scribe was waving a red flag to the reader/listener that something big was going on here, something out of the ordinary—a break in the patrilineal bloodline" (Hull 1993:46).

On Stela C at Quirigua we find an excellent example of couplet breaking on a large scale (figure 76). The Creation context of text is poetically highlighted by inserting *two* couplets between the first and second stich of the initial couplet. Since I discuss this text in detail below, I give only the translation at this point:

- |    |   |                      |
|----|---|----------------------|
| 1- | Were replaced the hearthstones              |                      |
| 2- | Were tied three stones,                     |                      |
| 3- | They planted the stone, 'the Paddler Gods', |                      |
| 4- | It happened at Naah Ho' Chan,               | Jaguar Throne Stone. |
| 5- | They planted the stone, Ik' Naah Yax ??,    |                      |
| 6- | It happened at Earth Town?,                 | Snake Throne Stone.  |
| 7- | And then was the stone tying of Itzamnaaj,  | Water Throne Stone,  |
| 8- | It happened at the Edge of the Sky,         |                      |
| 9- | the First 'Hearth' Place.                   |                      |

Lines 1 and 2 form an identical structure and related meaning parallelism as well as a grammatical parallelism. Lines 2 and 7 form a couplet that is separated by two other couplets in lines 3-4 and 5-6. The poetic affect of couplet breaking is to focus the

attention of the reader/listener on a particular point in the text—the planting and tying of the three thrones of Creation.

#### 4.45. Fronting or Topicalization

A closely related feature to breaking and embedding is the use of fronting (sometimes known as topicalization). Fronting is a syntactic process in which grammatical elements are taken from their standard syntactic position and placed at or near the beginning of a sentence. The effect of such an action is to draw attention to a particular item through a disjuncture in syntax. The hieroglyphs contain a number of instances of the poetic fronting of nominal forms. The text on K1609 is a good case in point (figure 68b):

**UT-ti / K'UH-'split earth' / OCH /**  
**u-ti-ya / IK'-WAY-NAL /**  
**IK'-NAB'-NAL /**  
**5-mo-NAL /CHAN / CH'EN-na /**  
*u[h]ti / k'uh[ul]-'split earth' / och[i],*  
*u[h]tiy ik' waynal,*  
*ik' naa[h]b'nal,*  
*ho(?)mnal chan ch'e'n.*  
 It happened at the divine 'split-earth' (place), he entered.  
 It happened at the Black Sleeping Place,  
 Black Pool Place,  
 Chasm? Place region.

The intransitive verb *uhti*, 'it happened' often precedes a verbal phrase with a locative, e.g. *uht + verb + location*. In this case, however, the location is fronted to the beginning of the phrase in an effort to poetically highlight that it was "at the divine 'split-earth' place" where "he entered." The syntax is reversed and the poetic affect created.

Another example of fronting as a poetic device appears on the famous 'Rabbit Pot', or K1398 (figure 77). The subject of the pot is the taking of some personal items of God L by a Rabbit. When the Rabbit refuses to return his belongings, God L kneels before the Sun God and begins his plea: **AJAW / ?-ch'a-la / T'UL? / u-CH'AM-wa / ni-TE'? / ni-b'u-ku / ni-pa-ta**, *ajaw, ?-ch'al? ajaw t'ul? uch'amaw nite'?, nib'uk, nipat*, for "Oh Lord! *?-ch'al*, the Rabbit took my stick(?), my clothes, and my back rack(?)." <sup>82</sup> The first *ajaw* glyph could be a vocative particle as God L addresses the Sun God. The subject of the transitive verb (*uch'amaw*), *t'ul*, 'Rabbit', is poetically fronted by God L before the verb in this speech for emphatic purposes.

#### 4.46. Chiasmus

Chiasmus turns out to be relatively uncommon in the hieroglyphic texts. Considering its plentiful usage in modern Mesoamerican literature (cf. Christenson 1988a, 1988b), its relative rarity is somewhat surprising. While it may be possible to view certain cases of enveloping parallelism discussed above as short chiastic phrases, there do not seem to be any significant number of larger chiastic constructions in the inscriptions. It may be possible, however, to find a chiastic structure in Quirigua Stela C (see figure 76). An example of a brief chiasm comes from Bone #41 of Tikal (figure 78). The text reads:

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<sup>82</sup> Robert Wald first suggested to me that *pat* in this context could refer to 'back rack' (personal communication 2001).

**a-ma-yu-u / ?-CHAN-na /**  
**NIK?-ki / B'ALAM /**  
**ITZ'AT / B'ALAM /**  
**a-ma-? ?-?-CHAN-na**  
*amayu' ?-chan,*  
*nik? b'a[h]lam,*  
*itz'aat b'a[h]lam,*  
*ama-? ?-chan.*  
*Amayu' ?-sky,*  
 Flower Jaguar,  
 Messenger Jaguar  
*Ama-? ?-sky.*

The clear repetition in the first and fourth lines of *ama-* followed by "?-sky" seems to produce an enveloping effect common to all chiasmic phrases. The central stanza forms a semantic couplet of 'Flower Jaguar, Messenger Jaguar'. The poetic power of the chiasm lies in its ability to focus attention to the axis of the chiasm—in this case on 'Flower Jaguar, Messenger Jaguar'.

#### 4.47. Alliteration, Assonance, and Anaphora

One of the more exciting aspects of understanding the poetic underpinnings of the hieroglyphic texts is extending the purely structural into the realm of the sonic poetics. A large number of texts contain clear instances of alliteration, consonance, assonance, and anaphora. While anaphora can be viewed strictly as a structural feature, it often works in tandem with emphasizing alliteration and assonance. Anaphora is the successive repetition of the same words or short phrase at the beginning of a line "for the purpose of providing a strong emotional effect" (Sherzer 2002:76). We have already seen how prominently this particular poetic device figures into Ch'orti' ritual language.

Alliteration and assonance are natural consequences of the presence of anaphora. Many of the following examples in this section make use of combinations of these three rhetorical features.

#### 4.48. Assonance

Assonance refers to the rhyming of two words, usually on their accented vowels. To illustrate the character of assonance in the inscriptions, we can first turn to an example with a simple repetition of the initial vowel, such as we find on Yaxchilan Lintel 10 at E4-E5 (figure 79a):

**u-KAB'-ji-ya /**  
**u-CHAN-nu /**  
**u-4-b'a-ki/**  
*ukab'jiy,*  
*ucha'n,*  
*uchan b'aak.*  
He oversaw it,  
He is the guardian of,  
His fourth captive.

The third-person pronoun *u-* is repeated at the beginning of each phrase, both as a personal and possessive pronoun (they share the same form). When this section of text is taken as a poetic unit, the structure assonantal qualities of the text become more apparent.

An excellent example of assonance together with anaphora appears on an panel of unknown provenance found today in the Musées Royaux d'art et d'Histoire, Brussels perhaps originating from the area around the site Sak Tz'i' (Mayer 1995, Plate 75) (figure

79b). The inscription contains a string of nominals that begin with the 'agentive' prefix *aj-*, 'one who (does something)': The text is given in simple transliteration only:

<i>pe(?)hkaj,</i>	It was said?,
<i>yab' K'awiil Ajk'an Naakal,</i>	<i>Yab' K'awiil Ajk'an Naakal,</i>
<i>ajyah?-a 8 Chak To'k'al,</i>	<i>Ajyah?-a 8 Chak To'k'al,</i>
<i>aj-?-su,</i>	<i>Aj-?-su,</i>
<i>ajpaanam,</i>	<i>Ajpaanam,</i>
<i>ajatuun,</i>	<i>Ajatuun,</i>
<i>ajamua,</i>	<i>Ajamua,</i>
<i>pe(?)hkaj.</i>	It was said?.

This parallel structure creates an enveloping couplet with "it was said?" appearing in the first and last lines. Of the six intervening lines, five of them begin with the 'agentive' prefix *aj-* (the second line in the passage has an *aj-* on the third noun in the phrase). The anaphoric repetition adds a sonoric cadence to this poetic stanza. The repetition of the vowel /a/ in five consecutive lines creates the additional assonant affect.

There are several other instances in the inscriptions where assonance appears with the repetition of the 'agentive' *aj-* prefix. Since they are nominal forms, no effort will be made to translate each collocation (figure 80a):

<b>a(j)-?-B'AK /</b>	<i>aj-?-b'aak,</i>
<b>a(j)-?-AJAW / ? / ?</b>	<i>aj-?-ajaw, ? / ?</i>
<b>a(j)-K'AN?-?-? /</b>	<i>ajk'an-??,</i>
<b>a(j)-chu-?-wa / ? / ?</b>	<i>ajchu-?-w(a), ? / ?</i>
<b>a(j)-K'AN?-? /</b>	<i>ajk'an?.</i>

In this example from Piedras Negras Stela 12, this heavily eroded section shows five consecutive nominals that begin with the vowel /a/.

A similar instance of anaphoric assonance appears with the other 'agentive' prefix that commonly accompanies female names and titles in the inscriptions. On Yaxchilan Lintel 23 at N7-N8, a sequence of female titles is given as follows (figure 80b):

**IX-K'UHUL /**  
**IX-KAB'?-li /**  
**IX-OCH-K'IN KALOM-TE' /**  
**IX-AJAW /**  
*Ixk'uhul,*  
*Ixkab'?il,*  
*Ixochk'in Kalo'mte',*  
*Ixajaw.*  
 Divine Lady,  
 Earthly? Lady,  
 Western *Kalo'mte'* Lady,  
 Female Lord.

The repetition of the prefix *ix-* in this sequence according to an established schema creates an anaphora. Assonance likewise plays a role in the overall poetic affect of this passage with the repetition of the initial vowel /i/.

In some cases, the consistent repetition of vowel or consonant is so pronounced that it can only be explained as a conscious effort to form a kind of assonance or sonoric affect. K4619 contains two vertical texts that appear near dancing Maize God scenes (figure 80c). There is a seemingly intentional repetition of the vowel /a/ and the consonant /n/ throughout:

**TAN-na-ja / u-b'a-na / CHAN-na-? / ja-b'a-na / ko-b'a-na / ?-na-na / wi-b'a-na / ?-?-na / ?-ja /,**  
*tanaj, ub'an, chan, jab'an, kob'an, ?-nan, wib'an, ?-(a)n, ?-aj.*

The translation of this text is difficult, yet ultimately unnecessary in order to appreciate the beautiful sonoric qualities of the passage.

#### 4.49. Alliteration

Alliteration is generally defined as using the same consonant to begin a sequence of words in a line. Lacadena has pointed out the following case of alliteration from Pages 16c-17c of the Dresden Codex (Lacadena, in press) (figure 81).

**8-MUWAN / u-mu-ti / U?-IXIK-ki / u-mu-ka /  
 k'u-k'u / u-mu-ka / U?-IXIK-ki / OX-WI' /  
 mo-o-o / u-mu-ti / SAK-IXIK / u-mu-ka /  
 ya-YAXUN? / U?-IXIK-ki / u-mu-ti / AJAW-le /  
 ? / u-mu-ti / U?-IXIK-ki / ?-le /**

**ku-tzu- / u-mu-wa U?-IXIK-ki / UCH'-WE' /**  
*8 muwan umuut u?-ixik umu'k,*  
*k'uk' umu'k u?-ixik oxwi',*  
*mo' umuut usakixkik umu'k,*  
*yaxuun? u?-ixik umuut ajawle,*  
*kutzu umuwa[k] u?-ikik uch' we'.*  
 8 Muwan is the omen of the ?-woman, the news,  
 Quetzal is the omen of the ?-woman, plenty of food,  
 Macaw is the omen of the White Woman, the omen.  
 ? is the omen of the ?-woman ??,  
 Turkey is the tidings of the ?-woman, drink and food.

Lacadena makes the observation that the three words used in this passage to refer to 'news' or 'omen', *muut*, *mu'k*, and *muwak*, are all synonyms in Yukatek and all begin with the letter /m/. He suggests that the scribe purposely selected these terms in order to create an alliteration.

A beautiful example of line-initial alliteration appears on Lintel 2 of the Four Lintels at Chichen Itza at D6-F3 (see discussion above) (figure 82).

**ta-yi-li-li / K'IN-ni /**  
**ta-yi-li-li / HAB'-li /**  
**ta?-?-li / K'AL-la-K'IN-ni /**  
**tu-?-ho-ta / u-pa-ka-b'a /**  
**ti-i-li OTOT-ti K'UH /**

*ta yilil k'in,*

*ta yilil haab'il.*

*ta? ?-li k'al k'in,*

*tu-?ho't upakab',*

*ti'il otot ti k'uh.*

On the sign of the day,

On the sign of the year.

On ?? binding of the day,

On ? of his shield,

At the door of the house for the God.

Note that in each of five lines the first word begins with the consonant /t/. Moreover, each of these words beginning with /t/ is a preposition, thereby creating a grammatical parallelism. The first two lines poetically pair the antithetical terms *k'in*, 'day', and *haab'*, 'year' in order to metaphorically refer to 'all the time'.

At Chichen Itza on the Casa Colorada we have similar use of line-initial consonant repetition for prepositional phrases (figure 69).

**ha'-i / TZAK-ka-ji / tu-K'IN-ni /**  
**tu-b'a /**  
**tu-NAB'-li / ka-k'u-pa-ka-la /**

*ha'i tza[h]kaj tu k'in,*

*tu b'a[ah],*

*tu naa[h]b'il k'a[h]k'upakal.*

This one was conjured on the day,

by himself,

in the pool(?) of K'ahk'upakal.

The triplet begins with a focusing deictic *ha'i*, 'this one', followed by *tzahkaj*, 'was conjured'. Immediately thereafter, a sequence of three prepositional phrases forms a triplet structure. The preposition in each is given as *tu*, which is actually made up of two morphemes, *ta/ti*, 'general preposition', and *u*, third-person possessive pronoun (cf. Bricker 1986). (Since it is impossible to know which pronoun is contained in the underlying form (either *ta* or *ti*), I simply transcribe and transliterated the preposition as together with the subsequent noun above.) Each of the prepositions begins with the consonant /t/ followed by the vowel /u/, thereby producing the alliterative affect of the phase.

#### **4.50. Literary Texts**

The question as to what constitutes 'literature' has been dealt with in Chapter 3. Thus far in this chapter we have seen a myriad of poetic styles and techniques used by Maya scribes in all genres of inscriptions. In most of these cases, however, the remainder of the inscriptions from which I drew poetic examples often does not show consistent poetic patterning throughout. Instead, calculated instances appear at points in the narrative where the author wants to stress or otherwise emphasize something for one of several different purposes. This could lead one to ask: Can *any* hieroglyphic texts be considered 'literature' or '*belles lettres*' in even the broadest definition of the terms? The answer in my opinion is a resounding yes. There are a handful of texts in the corpus that display such carefully crafted sentence structure as to lead us to believe that they were designed with poetic patterning as a foremost concern, not just as opportune emphasis.

Several of these texts come from Palenque—the site where poetic discourse reached its apogee in the ancient Maya world—and show poetic structures operating at the macro narrative level. The Middle Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions, for example, contains a large number of poetic structures, from couplets to quatrains (figure 83a).

Beginning at B4-A7, the first two couplets read:

'split-earth'-**la-ja** / **WINB'A?-UH-TE'** /  
 'split-earth'-**la-ja** / **5-'Mars deity'-TE'** /  
**CHAN-na-NAL** / **i-ka-tzi?** /  
**KAB'-la** / **i-ka-tzi?** /  
 'split earth'-*laj winb'a? uh te'*,  
 'split earth'-*laj 5 'Mars Deity'-te'*.  
*chan-nal ikatz?*,  
*kab'al ikatz?*.  
 The earth was split?, *winb'a? uh tree*,  
 The earth was split?, 5 'Mars Deity' tree.  
 Heavenly bundle?,  
 Earthly bundle?.

The first two lines form a beautiful identical structure and meaning parallelism and share the same positional verb, the enigmatic 'split earth' collocation, as well as the final lexeme *te'*, or 'tree'. The third and fourth lines are a kind of antithetical parallelism and *difrasismo* (as they commonly appear together) in which a 'heavenly bundle?' and an 'earthly bundle' are mentioned. The text then continues with an associative and grammatical parallelism (figure 83b):

**u-ha-ja,**  
**tu-pa-ja.**  
*uhaj,*  
*tupaj*  
 (The) necklace,  
 (The) earflare.

These two items of personal jewelry are both given the absolutive suffix *-aj*. In other cases in this inscription, the same terms are possessed with the standard possessive prefix *u-*, 'his/her/its'. In this case, however, the *-aj* suffix denotes an absolutive suffix for personal for personal property thereby necessitating a translation of simply '(the) necklace, (the) earflare' (Zender n.d.). The pairing of these precious items shows both material and functional association parallelism (discussed above) in addition to grammatical parallelism, i.e. the *-aj* suffix.

After an intervening nominal sequence, date, and 'witnessing' verbal phrase, the poetic style of the text again resurfaces with the following couplet C5-F6 (figure 83c):

**ya-k'a-wa** / 'quadripartie badge' / **u-KOHAW-wa** / **HUN-WINIK-ki** / **u-PIH** / 'G1' /  
**ya-k'a-wa** / **tzi-?** / 'G1' / **KOHAW-wa** / **HUN-WINIK-ki** / **u-PIH** / **K'AWIL** /  
**ya-k'a-wa** / **SAK?-JUN** / **u-KOHAW-wa** / **u-PIH** / **K'IN-AJAW** /  
*yak'aw 'quadripartite badge' ukohaw hu'n winik upih 'G1',*  
*yak'aw tzi-? 'G1' kohaw hu'n winik upih k'awiil,*  
*yak'aw sak? ju'n ukohaw upih k'in ajaw*  
 He gave the 'quadripartite badge', his helmet, and 21 bundles to 'G1',  
 He gave the *tzi-?* of 'G1', his helmet, and 21 bundles to K'awiil,  
 He gave the white? headband, his helmet, and his bundle to the Sun God.

This triplet shows distinct grammatical parallelism in the repetition of the transitive verb *uyak'aw*, 'he gave it'. In addition, each line ends with the mention of the name of a particular deity as the indirect object of the verb.

The text continues with some minor poetic features until H7 where the text begins with another identical shape and related meaning parallelism that ends at G9 (figure 84a):

**EL-K'IN / AJAW-TAK /**  
**OCH-K'IN / AJAW-TAK /**  
*elk'in ajawtak,*  
*ochk'in ajawtak.*  
 East lords,  
 West lords.

In a similar fashion to C5-F6, the text then launches into a long triplet construction with grammatical parallelism using the verb *uyak'aw*, 'he gave it'. Then, at M6-N7, another couplet appears, this time with line-initial deletion in the second stich (figure 84b):

**ya-AJAW-wa / CHAK-OTOT-ti /**  
**CHAK-nu-ku /**  
**CHAN-na-? /**  
**6-CHAN-na-? /**  
*yajaw chak ootoot,*  
*chak nu[h]k.*  
*chan-?,*  
*6-chan-?.*  
 His lord of the red house,  
 red skin/hide.  
 Sky-?,  
 6 Sky-?.

The reference to 'red house, red skin' recalls a passage on the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs at F6 where House E at Palenque is called the *sak nuhk naah*, or 'white skin building' (Martin and Grube 2000) (figure 84c). In fact, House E was the only major structure at Palenque that was *not* painted red, but was covered with white plaster. The repetition of *chan* at N7-M8 in the above passage creates the final couplet in this series.

From this short analysis, we can immediately see that a major portion of the Middle Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions is composed in poetic fashion using

various kinds of couplets and triplets. I would make the argument, therefore, that this text was likely viewed as a literary document by the ancient Maya. This inscription is truly a masterpiece of verbal artistry.

Another one of the great literary texts of the Maya can be found on the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs from Palenque (figure 85). Visually, this tablet has always instilled a sense of awe in those who appreciate this *tour de force* of calligraphic achievement. In terms of poetic structure, a large portion of this inscription is built into four principal couplets. The line preceding these couplets (artificially numbered below for convenience) acts as an introductory phrase that sets the pattern for the couplet. The skeletal couplet structure is as follows:

Temporal indicator	Verbal Phrase	Protagonist	
	Verbal Phrase		Locative

A schematic gloss in English of B7-H5 (figure 86) reads as follows (with some deletion of calendrical notations and abbreviated name and title phrases):

1- Fire enters		in the white skin building
2-		in the house of (name)
3- He was seated	into lordship	
4- His seating on the jaguar throne (?)		in the white skin building
5- He was seated	into lordship (name)	
6- His ???		in the white skin building
7- He was seated	into lordship (name)	
8- His seating on the jaguar throne (?)		in the white skin building

Line 1 begins with a 'fire-entering' ceremony that is said poetically to take place "in the white skin building, in the house of K'ihnich Janaahb' Pakal." The second line deletes the

verbal phrase. The second stich of each of the subsequent three couplets (lines 4, 6, and 8) shows ellipsis of the prepositional phrase "in the white skin building." A melodic cadence is the result of this type of poetic structuring in texts with multiple related couplets. In addition, it seems (although it is not completely clear) that Lines 3, 5, and 7 begin with the ergative pronoun 'he' while Lines 4, 6, and 8 begin with a possessive pronoun 'his', suggesting a nominal phrase rather than a verbal. Note also that the two mentions of the 'jaguar throne' literally envelop the central focal line (6) where a separate term is used (*umek'jiiy*)<sup>83</sup> thereby drawing attention to it. This carefully constructed passage reveals a clear poetic intent across forty-five glyphic blocks of text, thereby leading us to classify this as a major literary work in the hieroglyphic corpus.

Stela C of Quirigua, one of the most important texts in terms of our understanding of the events of Creation, shows a myriad of highly poetic features at a number of levels. The inscription employs several poetic devices simultaneously, including identical structure and related meaning parallelism, synonymous parallelism, triplets, embedding, nesting, and couplet breaking. The following numbering system is arbitrary and is used for purposes of convenience. The relevant portion of the text from B5-A13 reads (figure 76):

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<sup>83</sup> The precise meaning of the term *umek'jiiy* in this context is not clear in this clear accession context. The root *mek'* in Ch'olan and Yucatec languages is to 'embrace' or 'hug'. It can also refer to the carrying of a child astride the hips. This may be a metaphorical expression referring to the gods' 'embrace' of the new lord as accedes to office. Grammatically, however, it may be the *sak nuk naah*, or 'white skin house' doing the 'embracing'.

- 1- JEL-la-ja / k'o-b'a /
- 2- K'AL-ja-3-TUN /
- 3- u-TZ'AP-wa / TUN-'Jaguar Paddler' / 'Stingray Paddler' /
- 4- u-ti-ya-NAH-5-CHAN / IX-TZ'AM-TUN-a /
- 5- u-tz'a-pa-wa-TUN-ni / IK'-NAH-YAX-? /
- 6- u-ti-ya-KAB'-? / CHAN-TZ'AM-TUN-ni /
- 7- i-u-ti-ya-K'AL-TUN-ni / ITZ'AMNAJ / HA'-TZ'AM-TUN-ni /
- 8- u-ti-ya-TI'-CHAN-na /
- 9- YAX-'3-stone'-NAL /

- 1- *jel-laj k'o'b'*,
- 2- *k'a[h]laj-3-tuun*

- 3- *utz'apaw tuun 'Paddler Gods'*,
- 4- *u[h]tiy naah 5 chan* *hix tz'am tuuna'.*

- 5- *utz'apaw tuun ik' naah yax-??,*
- 6- *u[h]tiy kab'-?* *chan tz'am tuun.*

- 7- *k'a[h]laj tuun itzamnaaj* *ha' tz'am tuun,*
- 8- *u[h]tiy ti' chan,*
- 9- *yax-??-nal.*

- 1- Were replaced the hearthstones
- 2- Were tied three stones,

- 3- They planted the stone, 'the Paddler Gods',
- 4- It happened at Naah Ho' Chan, Jaguar Throne Stone.

- 5- They planted the stone, Ik' Naah Yax ??,
- 6- It happened at Earth Town?, Snake Throne Stone.

- 7- And then was the stone tying of Itzamnaaj, Water Throne Stone,
- 8- It happened at the Edge of the Sky,
- 9- the First 'Hearth' Place.

Lines 1 and 2 form an identical structure and related meaning parallelism as well as a grammatical parallelism. The scribes who created this inscription framed much of this discussion of the Creation in a couplet that makes use of *breaking*, i.e. the insertion of

lines belonging to different stanzas between two lines that make up a couplet (see above). The verbal phrases in lines 2 and 7 ("Were tied three stones...And then was the stone tying") form a couplet, even though they are separated by four lines of text (two intervening couplets). Simultaneously, however, line 7 is also part of a triplet expressed in lines 4, 6, and 7 ("Jaguar Throne Stone...Snake Throne Stone...Water Stone Throne"). Lines 3 and 4 together with lines 5 and 6 form synonymous couplets in which both lines refer to the action of 'planting' the stone, the first directly ("he planted it") and the second indirectly ("it [the planting] happened..."). At the stanza level, these two couplets themselves also create a separate semantic couplet. In addition, lines 4, 6, and 8 make up an internal triplet in that they repeat the same phrase ("it happened at") at identical points in the strophes. It is also possible that parallelism the first phrase in line 2 ("were tied three stones") and the final glyphic collocation of this portion of text in line 8 ('[at the] First Hearth [i.e. 3-stone] Place') is an additional enveloping device to delineate the beginning and the end of this section of inscription. Finally, the "Edge of the Sky" is paired in a synonymous parallelism with the "First 'Hearth' Place" in lines 8 and 9. The use of multiple, interwoven poetic structures in one text causes us to marvel at the sophisticated level of verbal artistry found among the scribes who produced this masterfully poetic narrative.

Somewhat surprisingly, one of the longest poetic texts is found on a polychrome ceramic vessel, not on a monumental inscription. On K1440, the majority of the text is composed of various types of couplet phrases (figures 87, 88). The translation of the text is quite difficult at times, and so some interpretations given here are tentative. (Similarly,

some of the most difficult texts to translate in Ch'orti' are the most poetic ones.)

Typically, highly poetic inscriptions often show an increase in metaphorical content and complex imagery. For purposes of simplicity, I will forego the first line morphemic transcription so that the beauty of the couplet structure will be more apparent. I will give only the poetic sections at this point:

D1 - 'head' <i>ti'?-si,</i>	'head' mouth,
G1- 'head' <i>b'aah-si.</i>	'head' body.
R1 - <i>ik' k'uh,</i>	Wind God,
S1 - <i>polaw(?)<sup>84</sup> k'uh.</i>	Ocean God.
R2 - <i>4-mi?-na ta k'a[h]n</i>	<i>4-mi?-n(a)</i> on the bench,
S2 - <i>2-matotib'ik ta k'a[h]n ta yotoot.</i>	<i>2-matotib'ik</i> on the bench at his house.
R3-T2 - <i>naknaj san winik,</i>	He was seated? <sup>85</sup> , <i>san</i> person,
S4-V1 - <i>li[h]ptaj san winik.</i>	??, <i>san</i> person.
W1- <i>ha'o'b'yax k'uh,</i>	These ones are the Green Gods,
X1- <i>yax ajaw.</i>	the Green Lords.
Y1- <i>u-?,</i>	His ?,
Z1- <i>uch'ok ta hat</i>	His unripe <i>ta hat</i> .
A'2-Z3 - <i>4-ub'i[j]il k'i[h]nich,</i>	4 are the roads of the Heated One,
A'3-Z4 - <i>8-ub'i[j]il chij?.</i>	8 are the roads of the Deer?.
A'4- A'5 - <i>ha-i ik' k'uh awaax?,</i>	This one is the Wind God Awaax?,
B'1-B'3 - <i>ha-i ak'aywi ik' jul kab'.</i>	This one sings? at the Black Speared Earth.
B'4-D'2 - <i>hiin ?-yiyas tz'i?-na chehen utz'ib'-hach? ti,</i>	
E'1-F'2 - <i>?-yiyas tz'i?-na upi?-na sajal.</i>	

<sup>84</sup> The main sign of this glyph does not appear in Thompson's catalog. Michael D. Carrasco (personal communication 2001) has pointed out to me that this main sign is equivalent to a glyph dubbed the "surf-glyph" by Luis Lopes (2003). Lopes has suggested a reading of *polaw* for "ocean, sea."

<sup>85</sup> Robert Wald and Michael D. Carrasco have suggested to me the reading of *naknaj* as "he was seated" (personal communication 2001).

This inscription exemplifies the sophisticated poetic tradition that was in place during the Late Classic period. The text looks like it could pass as a modern ritual chant in a Mayan language with its tightly coordinated couplet structure. In addition, identical structure and related meaning parallelisms are intermingled with synonymous parallelism (R3-V1), line-initial deletion (X1 and E'1-F'2), associative parallelism (D1-G1), and a possible grammatical parallelism (Y1-Z1). The vast majority of these 87 glyphic blocks have been arranged in couplet form. Without a doubt, this text contains no incidental parallelism or strategic moment of poetic emphasis. Instead, we have a powerfully poetic document detailing mythological happenings in underworld caves that, by all accounts, would have been viewed as a literary work in its time.

Among the hieroglyphic texts from the Classic period, style of Stela A at Copan represents the apogee of Maya hieroglyphic poetics. In terms of verbal artistry, no text among the ancient Maya in the surviving corpus can compare to Copan Stela A for its balanced, poetic presentation of events. Of this text Clemency Coggins has written: "This inscription employs ritual sets that have symmetries and closures at many levels – formal, iconographic, semantic, and phonetic..." (1992:102). With only a few exceptions, the majority of the lengthy text was composed in couplets or quatrains form. In addition, such a large number of poetic devices are used as to create a true work of literary genius among Maya texts. In the following description, I will only give a simple transliteration for structural clarity's sake. The following numbers are for convenience only and do not necessarily reflect textual position relative to other glyphs. Excluding calendrical, Lunar Series information, and eroded sections the core of the text reads (figures 89-91):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>tz'ap lakam tuun ,</i>                  | The erection of the great stone,           |
| 2. <i>wa'wan yax sak tomaj.</i>               | It was stood up, Yax Sak Tomaj.            |
| 3. <i>7 chapaat tz'ik'in ajaw,</i>            | 7 Centipede <i>Tz'ik'in</i> Lord,          |
| 4. <i>uk'uh lakam tuun.</i>                   | The God of the great stone.                |
| 5. <i>tz'apajiiy lakam tuun,</i>              | It was erected, the great stone,           |
| 6. <i>wa'wan k'ahn tuun(?) -il uk'ab'a'.</i>  | It was stood up, Stone Base was its name.  |
| 7. <i>chami tzipti' ch'aho'm,</i>             | He died, Tzipti' the Youth,                |
| 8. <i>tzipti' nu'n.</i>                       | Tzipti' the Broken Speaker (?).            |
| 9. <i>uxte' maax,</i>                         | 3 Monkey,                                  |
| 10. <i>puhwi ajaw.</i>                        | Lord of Puhwi.                             |
| 11. <i>k'ahk' ti' chan,</i>                   | Fire-is-the-Mouth-of-the-Snake,            |
| 12. <i>ma ajaw.</i>                           | Lord of Ma.                                |
| 13. <i>b'olon iplaj b'aak naab' (?) k'in,</i> | Many-strengths bone painting (?) ceremony, |
| 14. <i>suhsaj b'aak uchamliiy.</i>            | The bones of the dead one were cut.        |
| 15. <i>ha'o'b' chan te' chan,</i>             | These ones are <i>chan te' chan,</i>       |
| 16. <i>chan na chan,</i>                      | <i>chan na chan,</i>                       |
| 17. <i>chan ni chan,</i>                      | <i>chan ni chan,</i>                       |
| 18. <i>chan may chan.</i>                     | <i>chan may chan.</i>                      |
| 19. <i>k'uhul xukpi (?) ajaw,</i>             | Divine Lord of Copan,                      |
| 20. <i>k'uhul mutul ajaw,</i>                 | Divine Lord of Tikal,                      |
| 21. <i>k'uhul kan(al) ajaw,</i>               | Divine Lord of Calakmul,                   |
| 22. <i>k'uhul b'aak ajaw.</i>                 | Divine Lord of Palenque.                   |
| 23. <i>u (?) -niyil tzuk (?) chan,</i>        | ?? of the sky,                             |
| 24. <i>u (?) -niyil tzuk (?) kab'.</i>        | ?? of the earth.                           |
| 25. <i>elk'in,</i>                            | East,                                      |
| 26. <i>ochk'in,</i>                           | West,                                      |
| 27. <i>nohol,</i>                             | South,                                     |
| 28. <i>xaman.</i>                             | North.                                     |
| 29. <i>ha'oob', pasno'm 'portal',</i>         | These 'portals', having been opened,       |
| 30. <i>makno'm 'portal'.</i>                  | 'portals', having been closed.             |

The verbs in lines 1-2 and 5-6 are crafted with synonymous parallelism. The first line of each stanza uses a form of *tz'ap*, meaning 'to plant' or 'to erect', while the second line uses a synonymous positional verb *wa'wan* 'is stood up'. In both couplets, the item that was set up is described in with semantically related yet distinct terms in each line. Lines 7-8 show verbal deletion in the line-initial position of the second stich. Lines 9-10 and 11-12 are two parallel synonymous couplets. Lines 13-14 create a couplet based on the repetition of the word 'bone', first by naming the ceremony, and then describing the actions involved with it. As Grube has argued, this ceremony likely refers to the exhumation and 'cutting' of someone's bones (Schele and Grube 1992:7). Lines 15-18 comprise a melodic quatrain with strong assonant qualities. The line begins with the plural deictic *ha'o'b'*, 'these ones here'. The repetition of the term *chan* (meaning 'sky', 'snake', or 'four') twice in each line with a variable lexeme between creates a nearly hypnotic cadence when read aloud. On the tail of this quatrain comes a second quatrain detailing the names and home regions of the four major lords from Copan, Tikal, Calakmul, and Palenque. This sequence of quatrains is then broken in poetic fashion with the inclusion of an antithetical parallelism that contrasts something on the earth (*kab'*) with something in the sky (*chan*). The subsequent four lines make up another quatrain comprising of the four cardinal directions. The inscription ends with a plural deictic (*ha'o'b'*) introducing two verbs, *pasno'm* ('having been opened') and *makno'm* ('having been closed'), that show grammatical and antithetical parallelism.<sup>86</sup> The

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<sup>86</sup> The verbs are *pasno'm* and *makno'm*. The *-o'm* suffix on these verbs has generally been taken to future reference for both events, but this may not be the case Mora-Marín has suggested *-om* is a "potential/future"

ceremony being referenced here is that of 'opening' a cache pit in order to ritually cleanse the area from evil spirits, to deposit an offering, and then to 'close' the cache chamber, i.e. ritually seal and protect the area (Hull and Carrasco, in press). The sheer beauty created by this careful meshing of such a wide variety of poetic devices distinguishes this text as one of the greatest literary works from the ancient Maya.

#### **4.51. Visual Parallelism**

Due to the highly pictorial nature of the hieroglyphic signs, Maya scribes were able to create visually poetic texts in addition to strophic length and sonoric parallelisms. In recent years, the Maya hieroglyphic syllabary has rapidly filled empty compartments and allographs have been added to existing word signs. In addition, allographic forms have also been identified for a number of logographs. The ability to select from a substantial collection of interchangeable signs provided Maya scribes the ability adapt signs in glyphic blocks as space and aesthetics demanded. Furthermore, a large pool from which one can draw similarly encourages scribal caprice in the choice of signs where syllables or lexemes are repeated. Among the ancient Maya, visual aesthetics and poetics surely played a role in determining sign selection. England has described this as visual parallelism derived from "*...la posibilidad de escribir el mismo mensaje usando dos o más signos diferentes* (the possibility to write the same message using two or more different signs)" (England 1993:109). For example, on the East Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque at O8-P9 contains a semantic couplet in which the

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suffix (2001:96). Additionally, Robert Wald has recently proposed that the *-o'm* suffix cues the perfect tense for intransitive verbs (personal communication 2003).

mediopassive verb *satay*, 'it got destroyed', is spelled out syllabically in both stichs of the stanza (figure 58b).

**sa-ta-ya /K'UHUL-IXIK/**  
**sa-ta-ya / AJAW /**  
*satay k'uhul ixik,*  
*satay ajaw.*  
The divine lady/ladies got destroyed,  
The lord(s) got destroyed.

Instead of using the same syllabic signs in both cases, the scribe opted to use two different *sa* and *ta* syllables. The beauty of this poetic lament is heightened visually by the conscious variation in sign selection.

Similarly at Palenque, the list of the accession of lords on the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs is recorded in three beautifully crafted couplets (figure 86). The common accession phrase *chumljaj ta ajawle(l)*, 'he was seated in rulership', appears in each of the three successive couplets. However, in the expression *ta ajawle(l)*, 'in rulership', the scribe carefully selected alternate syllabic and logographic signs to show both scribal prowess as well as visual elegance. At C6 and H2, the scribe uses T113 for the syllable *ta*, while at F3 the allographic sign T151, *ta*, appears instead. What is more, the three couplets are followed by overt notation that this was K'ihnich K'uk' B'ahlam's first 'K'atun' *ta ajawle(l)*, 'in rulership', where the *ta* syllable selected (T565) is different yet again. In addition, the logograph for *ajaw*, or 'lord', is written *three* different ways in these couplets. First, at C6, the scribe chooses the 'Ben-Ich' compound, or T168, that reads *ajaw*, 'lord'. At F3, the scribe uses T747a, the 'vulture head' variant of the *ajaw*

glyph. Then, at H2, the scribe chooses T1000d, another allograph of the *ajaw* sign. Finally, in the 'K'atun' notation that follows, still another variant sign is chosen in the *ajaw* position. From this, it is more than apparent that the scribe was taking considerable care to add visually to the poetics of the text by incorporating such a wide use of sign variation in the repeated phonetic elements of each couplet. Visual poetics—the ornateness and presentation of the visual language—was of primary importance for Maya scribes in their effort to create true works of art, both visually and linguistically (cf. Burkhardt 1996:408).

#### 4.52. **Conclusion**

In terms of matching specific poetic devices with certain kinds of monuments or media, I was unable to establish any clear patterns in these areas. All types of glyphic media—from ceramics, stelae, panels, tablets, bones, spines, codices, hieroglyphic stairways, altars, tomb painting, lintels—were all found to use various types of rhetorical devices. Texts on stelae showed the greatest range of various poetic devices. Among the three major genres of hieroglyphic texts—dedication, historical, and cosmological—there was not a notable difference in poetic usage. Furthermore, I could not discern any major clustering of poetic types associated with any one kind of monument or media. In general, however, stelae, panels and tablets, and ceramics contained the most poetic features. The highly-structured codices are also replete with parallelisms, mostly of identical structure and related meaning parallelism.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated at length the underlying poetic qualities of many Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions. *Parallelismus membrorum* is indeed the heart and soul of Maya poetic constructions. This study has isolated a wide range of variations on the simple term 'semantic couplet' present in the inscriptions. Parallelism has rather been shown to be based on gender association, material association, familial association, grammatical association, antithetical relationships, nesting, and enveloping. Moreover, the dualistic tendencies found throughout Mesoamerica are clearly manifested in all of these parallelistic forms of the hieroglyphic script. According to Sherzer, this type of "metaphorical couplet," or *difrasismo*, is in fact a "linguistic expression of the dualistic mode of thinking" in Aztec and Maya civilizations (2002:199). This study has also shown *difrasismos* to play a much more important role than has been previously thought in the poetics of hieroglyphic texts. Beyond couplets, however, the hieroglyphic script also makes copious use of larger rhetorical structures such as triplets and quatrains. This analysis of the inscriptions has also brought to light the presence of sonoric aspects of their poetics such as alliteration. Violations of expected syntax (embedding, breaking of expectation, fronting) for poetic affect also turn out to be actively in use from the Late Classic period.

The scribes in the hieroglyphic tradition clearly made a conscious use of poetic devices at carefully chosen points within texts. Based on this study, I see the purpose of poetic usage in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan primarily as emphatic, to mark episode peaks in the narrative, or to infuse the text with a particular emotive quality appropriate for the message of the inscription. For example, it is noteworthy that in a large number of

instances of laments in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan —a highly emotive context—were recorded in triplet form. In other ways, when used sparingly in a longer text, poetic devices served as a kind of *adorno*, giving that portion of the text a sense of 'literariness'. Indeed, some lengthy texts only have a single parallelism, but it is precisely to that point in the narrative that the scribe want draw special attention. In addition to these 'surgical strikes' as it were, scribes also produced highly literary texts on a number of different media that show a major effort towards poetic discourse. In fact, one of the main purposes of this study was to investigate the possible existence of such 'literary texts' among the Classic Maya. I hope that from the selection of texts I provided in this section on 'literature' that these extraordinary texts will begin to be viewed and appreciated as works of worthy of the title of 'literary'. This conscious use of such a staggering array of poetic devices by Maya scribes attests to the remarkable tradition of verbal artistry in place among the ancient Maya.

## Chapter 5

# Ch'orti' Poetics and the Hieroglyphic Script

### 5.1. Introduction

The intimate relationship between Ch'orti' and the language underlying most hieroglyphic inscriptions anticipates the possible shared use of similar poetic and rhetorical devices between them. In this chapter, I investigate the formal characteristics of poetic discourse that have been retained in modern Ch'orti' from ancient hieroglyphic antecedents. I begin with some general structural and stylistic observations linking the two linguistic systems. What follows is a more detailed discussion of specific poetic forms mutually shared between the two languages in addition to specific cultural insights that were preserved in poetic discourse that illuminate our understanding of the hieroglyphic script and Classic period culture. These poetic features held in common between Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and Ch'orti' serve as a reminder to us of the inherent value of using modern Maya language and cultural data in interpreting hieroglyphic texts.

### 5.2. Common Poetic Features in Mayan Languages

I believe that within the poetic traditions of Ch'orti' (and other languages Mayan relevant to the hieroglyphic script) there remain vestiges of poetic structuring that reflect elite, ritual discourse (as well as more colloquial) forms found in Mayan hieroglyphs. Since the language of the hieroglyphs was highly conservative (Houston et al. 2000:123), it stands to reason that the poetic tradition of the Classic period so intimately tied to it

would likewise be slow to change over time. Furthermore, metaphorical references and archaic imagery that are so closely bound to poetic forms would logically be later preserved in memorized texts together with specific discourse structures found in ritual prayers in modern-day descendant languages. Unfortunately, the Ch'orti' have largely abandoned the practice of most of the ceremonies in which much of this poetic tradition once flourished. The motivation for this study derives in large measure out of a desire to document the last vestiges of major poetic usage by the Ch'orti' Maya. This study looked to both structure as well as content in Ch'orti' poetic oral texts for points of correlation with the hieroglyphic inscriptions. As I have made clear, I am not arguing that similar parallel forms do not exist in other Mayan languages. In fact, structurally speaking, most of the strophic length poetic features of the hieroglyphic inscriptions can be found in part among many different Mayan languages today. There are many Maya groups today, such as the Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Yucatekans, and others for whom poetic discourse of the kind I have described in this study plays a much more significant role at various levels within their societies today than for the Ch'orti'. For example, many Tzotzil communities show a degree of paralleled narrative discourse that is substantially more structured and developed than anything found in the Ch'orti' region today (see Gossen's 2002). These marvelous oral traditions from all Maya groups must also be treated as sources of data for understanding the poetics of the past. It is in the Ch'orti' language, however, that a number of highly specific metaphors, expressions, and poetic structural forms have survived that can be shown to correlate directly to Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. It is in these areas that I hope to make a contribution to our understanding of hieroglyphic texts.

### 5.3. Comparative Data on Poetic Features

A significant number of points of correlation between them can be identified between Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. Structurally, we can summarize the various types of poetic devices used in Ch'orti' ritual discourse and oral narratives in the form of a comparative layout. In the diagram that follows, the "+" symbol indicates the presence of a particular poetic feature while a "-" indicates an item that did not appear in the data.

Table 6. Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan poetic comparison

Poetic Device	Ch'orti'	Hieroglyphic Ch'olan
identical structure and related meaning parallelism (simple semantic couplets)	+	+
identical structure and shape parallelism	+	+
synonymous parallelism	+	+
augmentative parallelism	+	+
antithetic parallelism	+	+
<i>difrasismos</i>	+	+
associative parallelism	+	+
material association	+	+
familial association	+	+
functional association	+	+
gender association	+	+
grammatical parallelism	+	+
enveloping parallelism	+	+
reduplication	+	+
monocolon	+	+
triplet constructions	+	+
quatrains and polystylistic phrases	+	+
chiasmus	+	+
'nesting' and internal structuring mechanisms	+	+
couplet breaking and embedding	+	+
alliteration	+	+
assonance	+	+
anaphora	+	+
ellipsis	+	+

A cursory glance at Table 6 will be enough to show that for each of the major categories I was able to identify a parallel usage for each poetic device in both Ch'orti' poetic discourse and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. (I will not repeat many specific comparative examples of poetic devices from each system here since they have already been given in Chapters 1, 2, and 4.) The perfect correlation of these various rhetorical features central to Ch'orti' poetics argues powerfully for a shared poetic tradition. More specifically, most poetic devices in this comparative study proved to have a similar usage frequency. For example, chiasmus relatively was rare in both data sets. Monocolons were infrequent yet strategically employed at moments of heightened narrative intensity. Identical structure and related meaning parallelism was the most common poetic pattern in both languages. Grammatical parallelism was plentiful, and often combined with other rhetorical forms. Antithetical parallelism in both Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, especially in time or space related concepts, was regularly encountered in similar topic-focusing contexts. *Difrasismos*, in general, were found in specific, usually fossilized cases in both systems. It is significant that two of the most common *difrasismos* in both Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan are *sky/earth*, meaning 'everywhere', and *day/night*, meaning 'all the time'. In terms of frequency, triplets were moderately common to each system (perhaps slightly more so in Ch'orti'). Triplets, however, entail a powerful emotive impact that both Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan took full advantage of in laments and similar moments of narrative tension. While quatrains appeared infrequently, they were always used to draw special attention to a particular focal point in the text (cf. D. Tedlock 1986:126). Enveloping parallelism in both systems was used as a

strategic mechanism to highlight a central portion of text (usually another couplet). Couplet breaking or embedding showed a somewhat restricted but emotive use as it structurally forestalled narrative flow and increased poetic suspense in both Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. In a few areas, the poetics of Ch'orti' did not reflect well that of Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. For example, augmentative parallelism proved to be significantly more frequent in Ch'orti' than in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. For example, one of the favorite stylistic features of couplets and triplets in Ch'orti' is the augmentation of information at the end of the last stich of a stanza. This pattern turns out to be markedly less common in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. Outside of this single instance, however, there was a considerably high degree of correlation in terms of style and frequency in poetic usage between Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan.

In several instances, I was able to determine specific usage relationships between Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. For example, identical structure and related meaning parallelism in which a single element is alternated among lines were specially selected by both systems to highlight statements of lament. Let me illustrate this with a single example of each (though there are many more in my data). The first example from Ch'orti' has already been discussed at length in Chapter 2. During an interview with an elderly Ch'orti' gentleman, he lamented the fact that things were so much better in the past when the Ch'orti' practiced traditional field ceremonies to benefit the harvest. He employed the following identical parallelism at the moment of lament at the end of this passage:

*K'a'pa e kosecha porke' kocha verdad galan ani turo'n, galan inte' ani akel tyempo. Ma'chi kawira kocha kone'r. I ayan e syan si' ti kalugar tuno'r tara. Kone'r todo eskaso. Matuk'a kate', matuk'a kasi'.*

The harvest is gone because, truly we lived wonderfully back then, it was a wonderful time. Not like we see today. There was plenty of firewood in all of our area here. Now everything is scarce. We have no trees, we have no firewood.

To punctuate the final line of his lament, he uses an identical structure and related meaning parallelism. Soon thereafter in the interview, he also made use of another identical structure and related meaning parallelism at the point of lament:

*Mixtuk'a e padrino,  
Mixtuk'a e rogante.*

Now there are no more *padrinos*,  
Now there are no more petitioners.

This process of selecting identical structure and related meaning parallelisms when expressing a lament is also found with some frequency in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. For example, on the East Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque at O8-P9, the text recounts the effects of two attacks by Calakmul against Palenque. The result of this military incursion is couched in the following identical structure and related meaning parallelism (figure 58b):

**sa-ta-ya /K'UHUL-IXIK/**  
**sa-ta-ya / AJAW /**  
*satay k'uhul ixik,*  
*satay ajaw.*  
The divine lady/ladies got destroyed,  
The lord(s) got destroyed.

The text openly laments the destruction of the noble males and divine females. The scribes chose an identical structure and related meaning parallelism at this point in the narration to heighten the poetic tension of the passage and to mark the climax of the narrative.

An inscription at Copan also contains a poetic lament expressed this time through an identical structure and related meaning parallelism in *triplet* form. On the Hieroglyphic Stairway of Structure 26, three successive *mi* syllables are prefixed to three items: an altar, a temple, and an unidentified object (figure 64a). As I discussed in Chapter 4, this *mi* syllable, that usually represents the notion of "zero" in counting contexts, may indicate the idea of 'non-existence' or 'deseased'. This passage, then, probably records a lament bemoaning the lack or destruction of altars, temples, and another related objects at Copan. The use of identical structure and related meaning parallelism in this context of a lament again suggests a conscious selection of this poetic device to amplify the emotive response in the reader/listener. Both Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, then, are tapping into the same poetic tradition in using identical structure and related meaning parallelism specifically at moments of lament within a narrative.

#### **5.4. Shared Metaphors and Expressions**

The hieroglyphic inscriptions have several metaphoric expressions relating to the concepts of death (cf. Chapter 4). One of the most common among these is the phrase *k'a'aay unik? sak ik'il*, 'it ended, his flower? white wind' (figure 19). The verb in case is a

mediopassive form of the verb *k'a'*, meaning 'to end, to finish'. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the phrase *unik? sak ik'il*, 'his flower white wind', is a metaphorical reference to the 'spirit' or 'soul' of an individual. The linguistic and conceptual correspondence between the idea of 'wind' and 'breath' to the notion of 'soul' among the ancient Maya is everywhere reflected in the languages and eschatology of the ancient and modern Maya. David Stuart was the first to relate this expression in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan to an equivalent metaphor *ch'ay ik'* in Tzotzil (see Laughlin 1975:197). This Tzotzil entry proved crucial to the decipherment and proper interpretation of this death phrase. I have recently found a similar metaphor among the Ch'orti' that also conforms well to this expression in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. In Ch'orti', this expression appears as *k'a' umusik'*, "his breath ends." The nominal form *musik'*, 'breath', has cognates in other Mayan languages such as Yukatek (Blair and Vermont-Salas 1975) and Itza (Schumann 1971). The term *musik'* in Ch'orti' seems to be a compound form of the morpheme *mus-* (of unclear meaning) plus a form of *ik'* ('wind', 'spirit'). The Ch'orti' form *musik'* is semantically equivalent to *ik'* of Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, and to similar forms found in the majority of Mayan languages today. The verb *k'a'* in Ch'orti' means "to end, to finish, to run out of; to finishing doing something; to have just done something; to end up." Note its meaning and use in the following sentences:

**to run out of**

Example 1:

*K'a'pa nipa'*.

My tortillas ran out.

Example 2:

*Ne'n unch'i paxja' to'r niwya'r b'antaka ke' k'a'pa nichab'.*

I drank bitter water on my food because my sugar ran out.

**To finish doing something:**

Example 3:

*Warix amaxan k'a'pa kache kapatna'r.*

It is now turning to dusk and we have just finished doing our work.

Example 4:

*K'a' insati nitumin.*

I have finished spending my money.

In Examples 1 and 2, the root *k'a'* appears as *k'a'pa* with the mediopassive suffix *-pa* that usually accompanies verbs of motion (Wichmann 1999:69). This is unquestionably the most common form of this verb in spoken Ch'orti' today. When *k'a'pa* precedes nominal forms, it always means 'to run out of' something or 'to end'. In Example 3, we see a different use of *k'a'pa* as it occurs in a pre-verbal position where its function is similar to the Spanish expression *acabarse de (hacer algo)*, "to have just finished (doing something)." Example 4 shows another common form of *k'a'pa* where it appears as a simple verbal root with no other verbal morphology. In these cases, it is functionally related to the mediopassive form *k'a'pa* when it precedes a verb. Incidentally, it is also significant that both Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and Ch'orti' both make use of a form of mediopassive verbal morphology in this context. The verb form *k'a'pa* is an attested form in Ch'orti' as an expression of death. Note these examples:

*E chamer ja'x konde ak'a'pa umusik'.*

Death is when one's breath runs out.

*K'a'pa umusik' e ijch'ok umen e purer.*

The breath of the young woman ran out (i.e. she died) because of the fever.

Ch'orti' has not only retained nearly the same metaphorical expression as found in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, but it also preserves the original phonetic spelling (unlike the Tzoztil *ch'ay ik'*). In Ch'orti', my consultants translate *k'a'pa umusik'* as either "*se acabó su respiración* ('one's breath ran out')" or "*se acabó su espíritu* ('one's spirit expired')." Both translations accord well with our understanding of death in the Classic period in the context of the phrase *k'a'aay unik?sak ik'il*. In this expression, then, Ch'orti' has preserved semantically, grammatically, and phonetically the forms of this metaphor for death among the ancient Maya.

### **5.5. *Och Witz*, or 'Entering the Mountain' Metaphor**

The hieroglyphic inscriptions contain several other metaphors used to describe the process of death. For example, *hamliiy sak hu'n*, '(it was) untied, his white headband', *och-b'ij*, 'he entered the road', *och-ha'*, 'he entered the water', and most interesting for our purposes here, *och-ch'e'n*, 'he entered the cave', and *och-witz*, 'he entered the mountain' (figure 92a-e). The *K'ech'uj*, a dangerous Ch'orti' mythical being whose distinctive physical characteristic is backward-facing feet, appears to individuals in the form of someone they know and trust, usually in the form of one's wife if it is a man, and tries to deceive (entice) the person ("*umajres e pak'ab*"). Once she can convince them to come with her, she leads them away "*maku' e tun*," "into the rock (mountain)" and they are often never heard from again. Similarly, the *Noj B'itor*, or *Sombredón*, a mythical large-

hatted dwarf, tempts individuals with riches in this life if only they will sell their soul. The contract the *Noj B'itor* makes humans is often for a stated period of time (twenty years is common) after which time he leads their soul into cave in the side of a mountain, i.e. to their death. The two glyphic expressions *och-ch'e'n* and *och-witz* ('he entered the cave' and 'he entered the mountain', respectively) both make reference to the soul of the deceased entering a cave in a mountain as equivalent to death. It is perhaps significant then the Ch'orti' retain this exact conception of 'cave entering' and 'mountain entering' as tantamount to death itself. In one version of the story I recorded about the *Noj B'itor* in 1999, the individual is taken to a cave entrance in the side of huge rock face. Then, in couplet form, the text records the actions of the *Noj B'itor* as follows:

<i>Uyose</i> <sup>87</sup> <i>unak' e witzir,</i>	He entered him inside the mountain,
<i>Chamay.</i>	He died.

The act of 'entering' someone into the mountain is equated with death. In another oral narrative about an ancient Copan king who would hide himself in a cave ("*unak' e witzir*," lit. "in the belly of the mountain"), the story recounts that he entered (*ochoy*) his cave one day, but never came out—a explicit reference is to his death. These Ch'orti' examples clearly show that the Classic period metaphor of 'cave/mountain entering' as a reference to 'death' has been retained in these Ch'orti' oral narrative texts.

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<sup>87</sup> The form *uyose*, 'to place, to enter something', is the transitive equivalent to the intransitive *och*, 'to enter' in Ch'orti'. Note the similar phraseology to another story about the *Noj B'itor* recounted in Chapter 2: *uyose tu'nak' e witzir*, "he put him inside the walls of the mountain."

## 5.6. 'Day/Year' as Metaphor for 'Calendar' or 'Time'

The antithetical pairing of *k'in*, 'day', and *haab'* in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan appears in a number of contexts (see Chapter 4). On Lintel II of the Temple of the Four Lintels at Chichen Itza, this combination occurs in the following semantic couplet (figure 82):

**ta-yi-li-li / K'IN-ni /**  
**ta-yi-li-li / HAB'-li /**  
*ta yilil k'in,*  
*ta yilil haab'il.*  
On the sign of the day,  
On the sign of the year.

I quote directly from my discussion of this passage in Chapter 4 (4.26):

This elegant semantic couplet alternates *k'in* and *haab'* in the second half of each stich while repeating the initial elements *ta yilil* in both. The form *yilil*, literally 'its sign', is a nominalization of the verb *il*, meaning 'to see'. I prefer to translate this term as 'sign' instead of 'seeing' due to an attested parallel form in Ch'orti' of *uwirib'ir*, 'his sign'. Structurally, these terms are nearly identical, being made up of a third person pre-vocalic possessive pronoun (*y-* in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and *u(w)-* in Ch'orti'), the stem *il* (the cognate form *ir* appears in Ch'orti' since Ch'orti' /r/ corresponds to /l/ in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan), and a nominalizing suffix (*-il* in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and *-ib'ir* in Ch'orti')—the instrumental suffix *-ib'* and the nominal suffix *-ir*). As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, I have documented an archaic expression in Ch'orti' for 'calendar' that makes use of this precise term: *uwirib'ir e ajk'in, uwirib'ir e jab'*, 'the sign of the day, the sign of the year'. In this Ch'orti' metaphor, the notion of 'calendar' is gracefully expressed in a couplet of *k'in* and *jab'*, or 'day' and 'year', respectively. Therefore, I would suggest that the closely paralleled form found on Lintel II at Chichen Itza may also make reference to 'calendar' or 'time'. Ch'orti' has preserved this metaphor both in form and content from this Terminal Classic inscription.

What is so significant about the presence of this nearly identical phrase in both Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan is that the meaning preserved in Ch'orti' can help us interpret its precise usage in the hieroglyphic texts.

### 5.7. Rings Around the Sun and the Moon

In some cases, Ch'orti' has preserved in poetic passages ancient cultural conceptions that can be related to Classic period texts and iconography. One particularly interesting example of this relates to the Maya understanding of the rings that occasionally appear around the sun and the moon. Ch'orti' healing texts make constant reference to the watery rings that surround both the sun and moon in which malevolent spirits are thought to "play" (cf. Hull 2000a). Note these examples from curing texts:

Example 1:

*A'syob' wato'b' uruedir te' Katata',  
tamar uruedir te' Reyna.*

They come playing (in) the wheel of the Sun,  
in the wheel of Moon.

Example 2:

*A'si tamar enyax resplandor,  
ensak resplandor.*

*A'si tamar enyax arkoiris,  
ensak arkoiris.*

*Ya ch'a'r e mediyante del syelo,  
mediyante de la gloria.*

*Niño San Gregoryo de Kristo.*

They play in the green shinning,  
the white shinning.

They play in the green rainbow,  
the white rainbow.

Lying there in the middle of the sky,  
middle of the heavens.

Child Saint Gregory of Christ (i.e. 'the sun')

Example 3:

*A'si tamar enyax alaguna,  
ensak alaguna.*

They play in the green lagoon,  
the white lagoon.



these examples, the evil spirits are said to be playing in the watery rings (variously referred to as 'lagoons', 'rainbows', 'splendor', 'wheels') that surround the sun and the moon. During a discussion with a Ch'orti' healer in 2000 about this belief, the healer related the following to me:

*E Katata' ch'a'r te' rueda,  
Ayan e Katata' war ajchi a'tesna,  
K'ani ak'axi e jaja'r.*

God is lying down in a ring,  
There God is indeed being bathed,  
It is going to rain.

Several other healers have repeated the thing using the *exact* terminology referring to the sun:

*E Katata' war a'tesna,  
K'ani ak'axi e jaja'r.*  
God is being bathed,  
It is going to rain.

This interpretation of natural events stems from the belief that the moon and the sun share a particular watery environment. This becomes visible to us when the moon and the sun appear with rings around them. Scientifically speaking, the most common type of halo around the sun or moon is caused by light refracted by water or light ice crystals which float in the upper atmosphere. These ice crystals are often carried in the wispy cirrostratus clouds that usually precede rainy weather. For the Ch'orti' and numerous other cultures, these rings are considered to be signs of impending rain. Moreover, the

Ch'orti' are able to predict weather cycles based on the duration of these rings. According to the Ch'orti', if the ring around the sun starts in the morning and disappears around noon, this suggests that there are about eight remaining days of dry weather before the rains will arrive. If, however, the ring lasts until 3:00 in the afternoon, then the dry weather will continue for between 20 and 30 more days. According to an older consultant of mine, this ring around the moon is "*una pila de agua*," "a trough of water" (for a similar description, see Fought 1972:267). Conceptually and linguistically, this may have interesting implications for two images from the Classic period on Ixlu Stela 3 (figure 93) and Jimbal Stela 1 (figure 94a). Both scenes depict the Paddler Gods floating in the air above standing rulers. As they commonly do, the Paddler Gods carry the symbols of the 'sun' ("Old Stingray God") and 'night' ("Old Jaguar God"). I believe this direct association between the sun and darkness with these deities suggests they can represent the sun and the moon. In fact, Milbrath has made a compelling argument that "the Paddler Twins may represent a conceptual pairing of the sun and the moon..." (1999:130). Back on Ixlu Stela 3 and Jimbal Stela 1, the Paddlers Gods are surrounded by a common dotted-scroll motif representing *muyal*, or 'clouds'. Stuart, Houston, and Robertson have recently suggested that these scenes are depicting the Paddler Gods "bathing" in a kind of purification ritual (Stuart et al. 1999b:169-70). They argue that the glyph usually associated with the Paddler Gods can be read as a transitive statement, **ya-AT-i**, "they bathed them" (David Stuart, personal communication 2000) (figure 94b). Recently, Søren Wichmann has independently reached a similar conclusion based on a reference to this phenomenon in K'iche' where the same root *at*, 'to bathe', appears in the

expression *ratin iik'*, meaning 'halo around the moon' and *ratin q'ij* for 'halo around the sun' (personal communication 2000). It seems clear, then, that the watery rings around the sun and moon represent the idea of the 'bathing' of these heavenly bodies. Remembering the phrase commonly repeated by Ch'orti' healers, "*E Katata' war a'tesna. K'ani ak'axi e jaja'r*," "God is being bathed. It is going to rain," it is significant then that on Jimbal St. 1 the text specifically mentions Chaahk, the Maya Rain God, immediately after the names of the Paddler Gods, thereby providing a direct link between rain, the image on the stela, and this celestial phenomenon (figure 94c). Moreover, in the *Diccionario Motul*, a Colonial Yukatek dictionary, the rings around the sun and moon are also explicitly said to be "a sign of rain" (cited in Roys 1965:158).<sup>88</sup> The poetic sections of Ch'orti' healing texts, then, preserve these ancient conceptions of the Classic period Maya on the significance of rings around the sun and moon. From these texts we now understand that the ancient Maya also considered lunar and solar halos to be watery rings and signs of impending rain. Importantly, Ch'orti' retained both the exact linguistic and the cultural interpretation of this phenomenon in the poetic language of the Ch'orti' healers.

## 5.8. Metaphors of Birth

Floyd Lounsbury first noted the presence of a semantic couplet at C17 and E2 from the Temple of the Cross at Palenque (Lounsbury 1980:107-115). As I discussed in Chapter 4, the first verb reads *huli*, 'he arrived' (figure 9). The next collocation at E2

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<sup>88</sup> The term given for this phenomenon in Yukatek is *mulul* meaning "a darkening around the sun or moon" (cited in Roys 1965:158).

shows a hand set on top of the syllable *ka* and the logogram *kab'* for 'earth'. Lounsbury was able to relate this phrase to a birth metaphor in Ch'ol, *huli ti panimil, täl lum*, meaning "to arrive on the topside, to touch earth." Ch'orti' preserves in part this same metaphor in the context of birth. In Ch'orti', the expression *ayo'pa to'r e rum*, "to arrive (here) on the earth," is a known expression for birth. Note its use in the following couplet:

*Tya' ak'otoy e ajk'in akuxma e ixik,*  
*Tya' ak'otoy e ajk'in twa' ayo'pa to'r e rum.*

When the day arrives for the woman to give birth,  
 When the day arrives to arrive (here) on the earth.

While Ch'ol more closely retained this full metaphor for birth, Ch'orti' nonetheless preserves the notion of 'arriving to earth' for 'birth' similar to the Temple of the Cross text at Palenque.

### 5.10. Assonance

In Chapter 4, I discussed the use of 'agentive' prefixes used for assonant affect. One of the examples cited earlier of this poetic device comes from Piedras Negras Stela 12 (given here is simple transcription) (figure 80a):

<b>a(j)-?-B'AK /</b>	<i>aj-?-b'aak,</i>
<b>a-?-AJAW /</b>	<i>aj-?-ajaw,</i>
<b>a(j)-K'AN?-?-? /</b>	<i>ajk'an-??,</i>
<b>a(j)-chu-?-wa /</b>	<i>ajchu-?-w(a),</i>
<b>a(j)-K'AN?-?-? /</b>	<i>ajk'an?</i>

The repetition of the equivalent vowel and consonant /a/ and /j/ at the beginning of the phrase creates the desired assonance. Precisely this type of assonance is common to Ch'orti' healing texts where the curer personifies the illness by calling the name of the specific evil spirit associated with each. Note the following example in a chiasmic structure:

*Ajtamu de Estumeka,  
 Ajtamu Sendeyu't,  
 Ajsokolyan de Estumeka,  
 Ajsokolyan de Sendeyu't,  
 Ajgraniyo de Estumeka,  
 Ajgraniyo de Sendeyu't,  
 Ajsokolyan de Estumeka,  
 Ajsokolyan de Sendeyu't,  
 Ajtamu de Estumeka,  
 Ajtamu de Sendeyu't.*

Since I have discussed this passage in Chapter 1, I will limit my comments here to the assonant qualities of the text, not on its meaning. In each of the ten lines, the first term is prefixed with the 'agentive' *aj-*, 'the one who'. Where repetition is this pronounced, the assonant affect of the section of the healing prayer is considerable. In recitation, the Ch'orti' healer heavily stressed the morpheme *aj-* to further accentuate the poetic effect of this sonoric repetition.

Another instance among the many in my data for this type of assonance appears in this healing rite for a *susto*, or 'fright':

<i>Ajcholchan wajyib' tijtijutir,</i>	The Infecting Heated One of the Clothes Line Leaper,
<i>Ajcholchan tijtijutir.</i>	The Infecting Heated One Leaper.
<i>Ajwajyib' jolchan tijtijutir,</i>	The Clothes line Infecting Heat Leaper,
<i>Ajb'ajk'ut jolchan tijtijutir.</i>	The Frightener Infecting Heat Leaper.

Each of the four lines in these two couplets begins with the 'agentive' prefix *aj-* as the healer personifies each menacing spirit. There is also a strong alliterative affect created by the high rate of repetition of the consonant /j/ throughout this passage of text. Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and Ch'orti' both commonly form assonant parallelisms through the use of the 'agentive' prefix *aj-*.

### 5.10. Discourse Particle *Che*

In a recent publication, Nikolai Grube has offered a decipherment for the quotative particle *che*, *che'en*, or *chehen*, as "so they say, they say" (Grube 1998) (figure 95a-b). As I have written about this and a related discourse particle in the past, I quote directly from that report:

Ch'orti' makes regular use of the quotative particle *che* in reported speech. In poetic contexts, however, a seemingly different *che* is used as a kind of discourse marker that terminates lines. It is part of a group of affirmative particles (which are occasionally difficult to translate in context) that appear as *atz'i*, *ya'*, *atz'i ya'*, and *atz'i ya' che*. Most traditional healers sprinkle this *che* particle throughout curing prayers without adding much to the meaning of the phrase. Instead, it seems to mark the end of a line or thought and is usually the point where the healer takes a breath. Its function seems rhythmic as much as it is grammatical at times (Hull 2001a).

There are hundreds of examples in my Ch'orti' ritual data of this affirmative discourse particle *che*. The following represent a few illustrative cases:

<i>Watar ya'</i> ,	<u>Yes</u> , they are coming,
<i>Watar atz'i</i> ,	They are coming <u>indeed</u> .
<i>Ch'a'r a'syob' atz'i ya'</i> , [breath]	They are <u>indeed</u> lying down there playing,

<i>tamar e silensyo ora <u>che</u>, [breath]</i>	in the silent hour <u>indeed</u> ,
<i>tamar e silensyo noche <u>che</u>. [breath]</i>	in the silent night <u>indeed</u> .
<i>Ch'a'r a'syob' <u>atz'i ya'</u>, [breath]</i>	They are <u>indeed</u> lying down there playing,
<i>tamar e silensyo ora,</i>	in the silent hour,
<i>tamar e silensyo diya <u>atz'i ya'</u>. [breath]</i>	in the silent day <u>indeed</u> .
<i>Twa' iche soltar e anjelito,</i>	So that you let loose the little angel,
<i>anjel <u>atz'i ya'</u>.</i>	angel <u>indeed</u> .
<i>A'si tamar enyax nawalch'u'r <u>che</u>,</i>	They play in the green house <u>indeed</u> ,
<i>ensak nawalch'u'r <u>che</u>.</i>	They play in the white house <u>indeed</u> .
<i>Ch'a'r ijolchan jarari' <u>che</u>,</i>	They are lying there infecting with woven-like pains <u>indeed</u> ,
<i>Ch'a'r ijolchan b'aki <u>atz'i ya' che</u>.</i>	They are lying there infecting the bones <u>indeed</u> .
<i>Ch'a'r takar uyansir uyok <u>che</u>,</i>	They are lying with their anxiety of their feet <u>indeed</u> ,
<i>takar uyansir uk'ab' <u>che</u>.</i>	with their anxiety of their hands <u>indeed</u> .
<i>Ch'a'r takar umakje'yr b'aki <u>che</u>,</i>	They are lying with their water-stopping of bones <u>indeed</u> ,
<i>takar umakje'yr jarari' <u>che</u>.</i>	with their water-stopping of woven-like pain <u>indeed</u> .

I continue quoting from my earlier report:

All of the *curanderos* with whom I have spoken tell me that *che* in these ritual prayer contexts does not mean "they say" but instead, as one old *curandera* explained, "*es como una afirmación*" (it's like an affirmation) that does not translate easily. Some prayers make use of this *che* discourse marker at the end of nearly every line to mark a pause point. (It should be noted that I still think this needs further confirmation as a separate discourse marker, but all indications now are that this is precisely its function in these contexts) (Hull 2001a).

From the hieroglyphic inscriptions we have a few possible occurrence of this discourse particle. They appear as the final or penultimate glyph of the PSS, a dedicatory phrase describing such things as the type of ritual action done to the writing of the ceramic, the

kind of vessel, and its owner (see Grube 1998:169). For example, on K595 the *che* syllable stands alone as the final element in the PSS (see also K7459) (figure 95c). Also, on K3924, *che* appears penultimate position in the PSS (figure 95e). Where the *che* syllable is positioned near the final point in these PSS texts, I suggest that this *che* serves a similar function to the affirmative particle *che* in Ch'orti' as "thus it is."<sup>89</sup> It is significant that this discourse particle is today among the Ch'orti' only preserved in poetic verse of ritual texts.

### 5.11. Wings of the Eclipse

In the Maya codices, as well as certain monumental texts, the hieroglyph representing an eclipse appears in what has become to be known as an "eclipse cartouche." Within this circle-like sign appear the logographs for day, *k'in*, and moon, *uh* (figure 96a-c). In other cases, the face of a rabbit (representing the moon) and the face of the Sun God are shown paired within this cartouche (figure 96c) (see Hull 2000a for a fuller discussion of this image). This cartouche has two wing-like elements flanking it on either side.<sup>90</sup> The relationship between an eclipse and the wing iconography has not been understood to date. Based on a reference contained in a poetic pairing in a Ch'orti' curing rite I recorded in 2002, I believe the ancient Maya conceived of an eclipse as a winged deity. The relevant passage from the Ch'orti' healing rite is as follows:

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<sup>89</sup> This discourse particle also has cognates in the Chontal *che'en*, "thus it is" (Knowles 1984:242) and the Ch'ol *che' "así,"* "thus" (Aulie & Aulie 1978:47).

<sup>90</sup> Milbrath also refers to these elements on eclipse glyphs as the "winged Kin" and "winged T682 lunar glyph" (1999:111).

*Ch'a'r e Noxi' Rey e Kilisante,*

*Ch'a'r a'si taka uyogamyente uyala,  
uwich'.*

*Es el que se pone ante la Reina pidiendo las criaturas.*

*A'si mediyante syelo,  
mediyante glorya,*

*está amenazando e Nuestra Madre Santísima pidiendo las criaturas,  
las crianderas.*

Lying there is the Great King the Eclipser,

Lying there playing with his feelings of exhaustion of his wings,  
his wings.

It is he who positions himself before the Moon asking for [her] children.

He plays in the middle of the sky,  
in the middle of the heaven.

He is bothering our Most Holy Mother (earth) asking for [her] children,  
[her] offspring.

The healer states explicitly that the eclipse has "wings." In Ch'orti' understanding, it is these wings that are thought to be responsible for the various illnesses associated with the appearance of an eclipse. The healer then more fully explained his mention of *uyala, uwich'*, "his wings, his wings" as follows:

*Por eso hoy Ángel Satanás de Malo, eso es Satanás, Ángel Kilis, pero Satanás.  
Entonce, lo fabricó todo las criaturas que está encerrando, utravesiyir,  
umakajrir, usaktokarir. Ja'x uwich' e Noxi' Kilis.*

This is why today Angel Satan of Evil, this is Satan, Angel Eclipse, but Satan. So, he made all of the children who are enclosed (in the womb), his blocking (in the womb), his stopping up (in the womb), his blinding of the eyes. *These are the wings of the Great Eclipse* (emphasis mine).

The wings of the eclipse are what actually cause such things as birth defects, myopia, a deviated septum, and other physical disorders and diseases associated with the occurrence of an eclipse by the Ch'orti'. It is notable that this reference to the 'wings' of an eclipse

was preserved in couplet form in this Ch'orti' healing rite. Thus, the hieroglyphic sign for an eclipse containing wing-like elements finds a likely explanation thanks to this reference in Ch'orti' poetic verse.

## **5.12. Conclusion**

In this brief summary of the correlating data from this study, Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan have been shown to mirror each other exactly in poetic feature types. In the vast majority of cases, the frequency of usage of each of these poetic devices similarly corresponded very neatly in both systems. In only a few instances the frequency of use did not match up well between Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. Considering the fact that most of the poetic data from the Ch'orti' came from curing texts—contexts quite unrelated to Classic Maya textual themes—the fact that there were so few discrepancies in usage frequency and such a strong correlation in poetic feature types is all the more remarkable.

Ch'orti' poetic texts have clearly preserved a considerable number of metaphorical expressions that also commonly appear in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. In addition, specific discourse markers, rare but present in the hieroglyphic texts, have also been identified only in the highly poetic ritual healing texts of the Ch'orti' (in addition to Chontal and possibly Ch'ol). Moreover, I was able to identify a number of significant cultural insights into ancient Maya conceptions by drawing on poetic data in Ch'orti' texts. The direct relationship between the rings around the moon and sun as signs of rain and images of

deities being "bathed" in water scrolls on Classic period monuments was greatly clarified due to four nearly identical triplets used by different Ch'orti' healers.

The various levels of correlation between the poetic traditions of Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan provide additional support that argues for a special genetic relationship beyond that of simply being *a* descendant Maya language. Considering the perilous state of poetic discourse among the Ch'orti' today, that such specific structural and metaphorical parallels still remain between these systems seems to confirm the historical linguistic data linking Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### 6.1. Summation of Research

The object of this dissertation, as indicated in the Introduction, was to realize five specific goals: 1) to document oral narratives and ritual speech, in actual performance whenever possible, 2) to establish genre types in Ch'orti' oral narratives in order to gain an understanding of the structuring methods and poetic imagery associated with each genre 3) to ascertain the features and use of poetic discourse in ritual contexts, 4) to carry out a large-scale study on the verbal art of the Maya hieroglyphs in order to determine the function of rhetorical devices within this system, and 5) to do a comparative analysis of Ch'orti' and hieroglyphic poetics in order to see if residual elements, be they linguistic, poetic, or cultural, could be of use to scholars in understanding certain aspects of the hieroglyphic script. In Chapter 1, using primarily data gathered from fieldwork with Ch'orti' traditional healers, I investigated the use of poetic discourse in ritual contexts by the Ch'orti'. I contextualized the use of poetics in the volatile realm of social practice as it relates to inherent fears of *brujería*. I have traced the decline of ritual prayers in which poetic discourse thrives as a direct result of two counter factors: 1) the fear of traditional practices as they relate to notions of *brujería*, and 2) forces from religious groups in the Ch'orti' area who disdain all forms of traditional ceremonialism. The use of poetic discourse in these ritual contexts has diminished in step with the decline of ritual itself.

The prayers done by those who still practice traditional rites are today represent the last vestiges of large-scale poetic usage among the Ch'orti'. In this dissertation, I have attempted to illustrate the highly complex poetic styles that can be found in these ritual texts. *Curanderos*, and other ritual specialists, use an astonishing array of rhetorical devices (often several simultaneously) as an essential component to speaking with deities. Furthermore, as I have argued, the ability to properly construct poetic verse in lengthy prayers helps to define their social status in the community. Poetic discourse, then, operates primarily in the sociocultural realm in Ch'orti' society, not just as a linguistic phenomenon.

In Chapter 2, I sought to define many of the major oral narrative genre types in Ch'orti' by using native Ch'orti' categories as they themselves distinguish them. Furthermore, I aimed to demonstrate a clear distinction in poetic usage within the main Ch'orti' narrative genres. In order to accomplish this, I outlined a series of poetic forms and parallel styles that make up the majority of the poetic repertoire of the Ch'orti'. I was able to show a direct relationship between the use of specific poetic features and certain genre types. Overall, the use of poetic discourse in oral narratives proved to be considerably less than that found in ritual contexts—not a completely unexpected result. Ch'orti' narrators strategically select certain rhetorical devices at moments of narrative climax or emotional content to amplify narrative tension.

The discussion of Chapter 3 was geared at proposing a performance-based model for understanding hieroglyphic texts and their poetic content. In my view, many hieroglyphic texts would have been elaborated on in oral performance. In this context,

their 'poeticness' was likely increased according to the circumstances of the recitation. In many cases the actual hieroglyphic text may have served more as an artifact, or "guarantor of authenticity" of the message simply through their presence (Leibsohn 1994:171). Questions of literacy and literacy practices were shown to relate directly to issues of poetics and performance from the Classic period forward. As I have suggested, Maya scribes and priests were able to exploit their knowledge of reading and writing through the use of poetic discourse. Their ability to elaborate on texts in poetic verse in performance was likely considered a valued and, at times, esoteric skill. In some cases, highly metaphorical and poetically constructed texts would have limited the understanding of certain individuals, thereby increasing their dependence on the expertise of the scribes and priests. The capacity, therefore, to both produce poetic recitations and to properly interpret their meaning may have helped to secure the social position of the scribes and priests through this pronounced discursive asymmetry. When viewed in this light, poetic discourse transcends linguistic parameters into the realm of sociocultural signification.

In Chapter 4, I set out to describe the use of poetic features of Maya hieroglyphic writing from the Early Classic through the Post-classic codices. The underlying poetic content of the hieroglyphic script has received relatively scant attention by researchers to date. Through an examination of the majority of the hieroglyphic inscriptions in the known corpus, I detailed the use and function of different poetic devices in the Maya hieroglyphic writing system. The data from this analysis proved the indisputable presence of a literary tradition from at least the Early Classic period. A wide range of

rhetorical devices were available to ancient Maya scribes, from various forms of strophic length structures to sonoric features such as alliteration and assonance. In general, Maya scribes seem to have used poetic devices for strategic purposes relating to emphasis, emotive affect, and narrative climax. In other instances, however, I am convinced that certain texts were conceived of as works of literature for the ancient Maya. Stela A at Copan, the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs at Palenque, and K1440 are examples of poetic structuring on such a scale and level of complexity that any other explanation simply would not account for this dominant, conscious use of poetic devices. What this study has brought to light is the need for researchers to begin to pay more attention to the literary qualities of Maya texts in order to more fully understand the encoded meaning contained in the use of specific poetic features.

The final chapter in this dissertation attempted to pinpoint certain aspects of modern Ch'orti' poetics that could be correlated with those of Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. The premise for this rests on the observable linguistic relationship between Ch'orti' and Hieroglyphic Ch'olan. The motivation for carrying out a comparative analysis of these two linguistic systems at the level of poetic discourse was based on the assumption that the poetic features found in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, a highly conservative language (cf. Houston et al. 2000), could also have been preserved in its daughter language Ch'orti', especially in conservative ritual contexts. In addition, certain metaphorical expressions central to the glyphic language could well have survived in these similar ritual contexts in Ch'orti', which are full of archaic forms and expressions. In Chapter 5, my findings in regards to poetics in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and Ch'orti' demonstrated an *exact* correlation

in all major poetic categories in both linguistic systems. Each of the poetic features found in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan were similarly present in Ch'orti'—a powerful argument for a shared poetic tradition. The correspondence between the usage frequency of poetic devices in Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and Ch'orti' was also found to be remarkably analogous. In several cases, very specific correlations in form and content were identified. For example, the regular use of identical structure and related meaning parallelism in lament contexts evidences a related poetic tradition from which they are drawing. I was also able to point to specific metaphors such as *och-witz*, 'he entered the mountain,' *och-ch'e'n*, 'he entered the cave,' *k'a'aay unik? sak ik'* (in Ch'orti' *k'a' umisik'*), 'his flower? white breath ended', and 'touching'-*kab'* (in Ch'orti', *yo'pa to'r e rum*), 'he arrived on earth' that have survived into modern Ch'orti' today, often in poetic contexts. Certain deeper cultural conceptions, only represented schematically in the both Hieroglyphic Ch'olan, were considerably amplified through a detailed investigation of their meaning among Ch'orti' poetic texts and ritual specialists. I refer specifically to the rings around the sun and the moon representing the idea of these deities being "bathed" that was unmistakably present in both cultures, but preserved best in Ch'orti' poetic discourse. While other Maya groups, such as the K'iche' and the Yukatek (and likely others), still retain this understanding, Ch'orti' ritual language preserved the fullest exposition of its meaning. Other cultural notions, such as the winged eclipse, are readily explainable from preserved references in Ch'orti' poetic verse. The conservation of both form and content at so many points is in many ways surprising, especially when one considers the fact that most of the Ch'orti' ritual texts used in this study were from healing contexts—rituals not likely

thematically related to Classic period ceremonialism as recorded in the hieroglyphic texts.

## **6.2. Implications and Contributions for the Field of Anthropology**

In terms of contributions to the greater field of anthropology, this work adds to the growing literature of verbal art, especially by indigenous groups on the American continent. Work by Bauman (1984, 1986), Sherzer (1983, 1987, 2002), Stross (1974, 1975a, 2000), Urban (1991), Woodbury (1987), and many others has sought to give voice to these traditions of poetic discourse through careful documentation and an analysis of their sociocultural contexts and performances. Even though in serious decline today, the poetic tradition of the Ch'orti' has been shown to be a highly ornate and complex system of multi-layered discourse features. In this regard, the dissemination of this research among the Ch'orti' people themselves should also be a source of cultural pride in recognition of the intimate relationship between their language and literary styles and those of their Classic period ancestors.

In the area of Ch'orti' studies more generally, this study adds to our understanding of the social contexts of ritual as well as significant details about Ch'orti' ritual language. Building on the earlier work of John Fought (1972, 1976, 1985) on Ch'orti' poetics and discourse analysis, my research provides deeper insights into the inner workings of poetic structuring in both ritual and oral narrative contexts. I have also outlined the social causal factors in the decline of poetic traditions and their accompanying ritual through a combination of internal fears based on "*brujeria*" as well as by outside factors of modern

religion and government. Through documentation of the detrimental effects of these social processes on traditional practice, this study adds to our understanding of how social pressures and extralinguistic factors can contribute to different forms of language loss in a particular society. In the area of oral narrative studies, this work also provides the first large-scale definition of Ch'orti' oral narrative genres to date. By establishing many of the major oral narrative genres, this dissertation has defined a working paradigm upon which future studies in this area expand. Methodologically, I sought a 'native' perspective by relying on metanarrative frames in the narratives themselves in order to create a taxonomic system. Approaching genre designation through native terms and understanding, used so successfully by Stross, Gossen, and others, will hopefully influence other's research methodologies in the classification of oral narratives. Research data gathered for this project also make a significant contribution to efforts of language preservation in the field of linguistics, especially in area of Mayan languages. Importantly, this project was able to preserve hundreds of archaic terms in ritual contexts that are on the brink of disappearing, most of which are not recorded in other literature on the Ch'orti'. In addition, the collection of more than 80 oral narratives and over 40 healing texts for this study has increased by roughly one third the published corpus of Ch'orti' narratives. Finally, ethnographic data contained in this study relating to the Ch'orti' adds significantly to recent efforts to document all aspects of Ch'orti' daily life and world view (see López and Metz 2002).

This study also contributes to important discussions in the field of visual anthropology, especially in the area of understanding aesthetic sensibility in social

contexts. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the large number of both syllabic and logographic signs were a boon for Maya scribes in allowing them to vary signs in repetitive poetic contexts for reasons of visual aesthetics. Ruth Benedict began discussions that have continued through until today about how an individual internalization of certain sensory experience might be culturally determined. Indeed, aesthetics entail culturally defined sensory experience. The interaction between poetics as social performance and the visual aesthetics of a graphemic system based on largely originally pictographic signs invites an intriguing subset of socially-determined sensory reactions. Therefore, through linguistic as well as visual play, the reader of a hieroglyphic text would receive aesthetic sensory input not just from the interplay between text and image, but rather between text and *textual image* (i.e. the visual features of the individual signs themselves). In this way, ancient Maya scribes were able to exploit both linguistic and visual features in order maximize the "poeticness" of the text. Visual poetics—the ornateness and presentation of the visual language—was of primary importance for Maya scribes in their effort to create true works of art, both visually and linguistically.

Finally, what I hope will be the major contribution of this research project lies in the field of epigraphic poetics. This long-neglected area of study now has a base from which future research can draw and build upon. Far from the 'curious signs' in the minds of scholars a hundred years ago, Maya hieroglyphic writing turns out to be rich in poetic content and linguistic complexity—a likely reflection of the strong oral component inherent in its creation. As Chapters 4 and 5 make clear, we now have firm evidence for presence of a Maya literary tradition from the Early Classic period.

In summary, the data and analysis contained in this dissertation suggest that the Ch'orti' have preserved, both in terms of structure and content, a considerable portion of Classic period conceptions and understandings in their oral traditions and ritual speech. It seems clear that Hieroglyphic Ch'olan and modern Ch'orti' share a common poetic and literary tradition that spans more than a millennium and a half. Poetics discourse, as a socio-linguistic process, was likely vital to both linguistic systems as a means of changing ordinary speech into an acceptable form of address for deities, as a form of 'adornment' for a given text, and as a socio-validating mechanism for ritual specialists. Above all, we can now comfortably refer to an established *literary tradition* among the ancient Maya that has been preserved in part in the ritual speech of the Ch'orti' Maya.

## FIGURES



Figure 1.

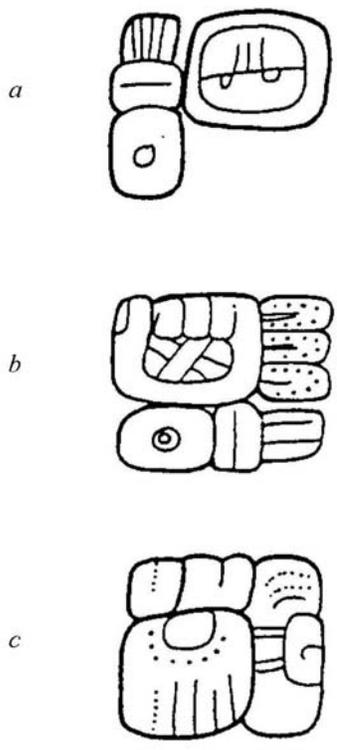


Figure 2.

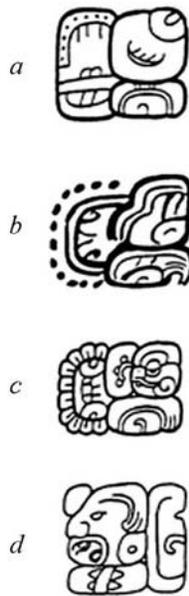


Figure 3.

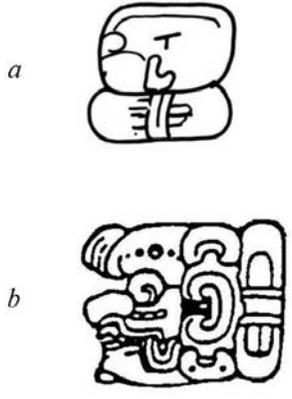


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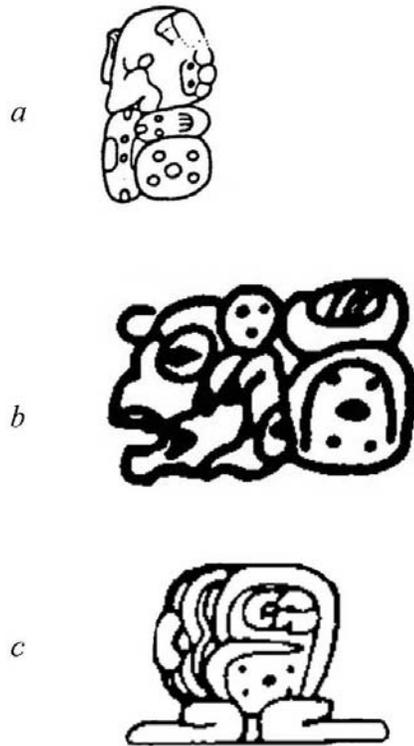


Figure 5.



Figure 6.

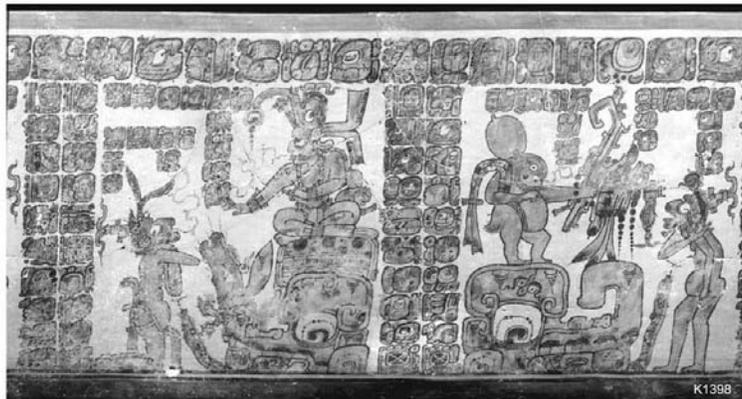


Figure 7.



Figure 8

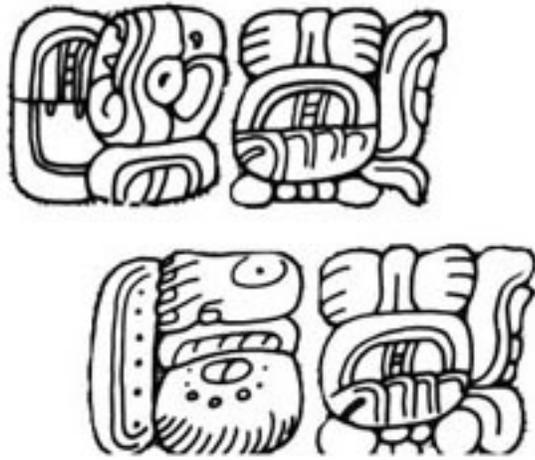


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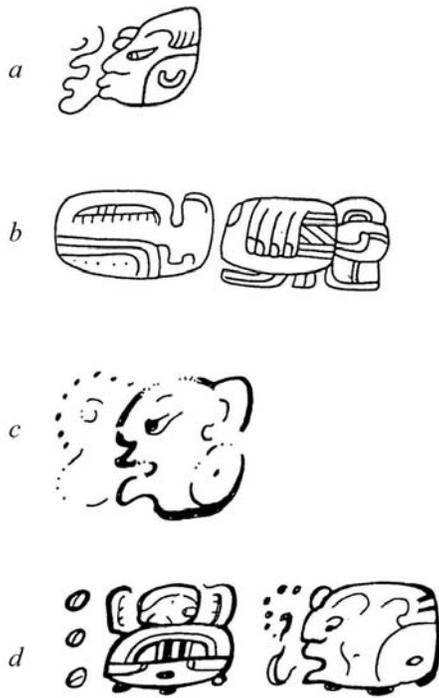


Figure 10.



Figure 11.

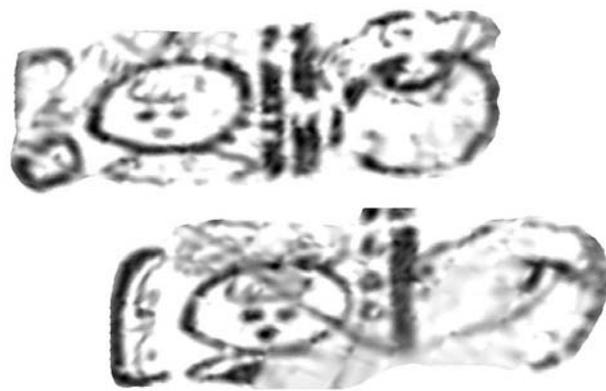


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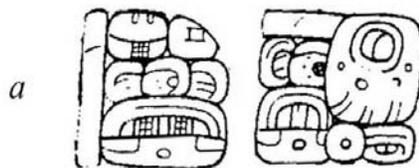


Figure 13.



Figure 14.

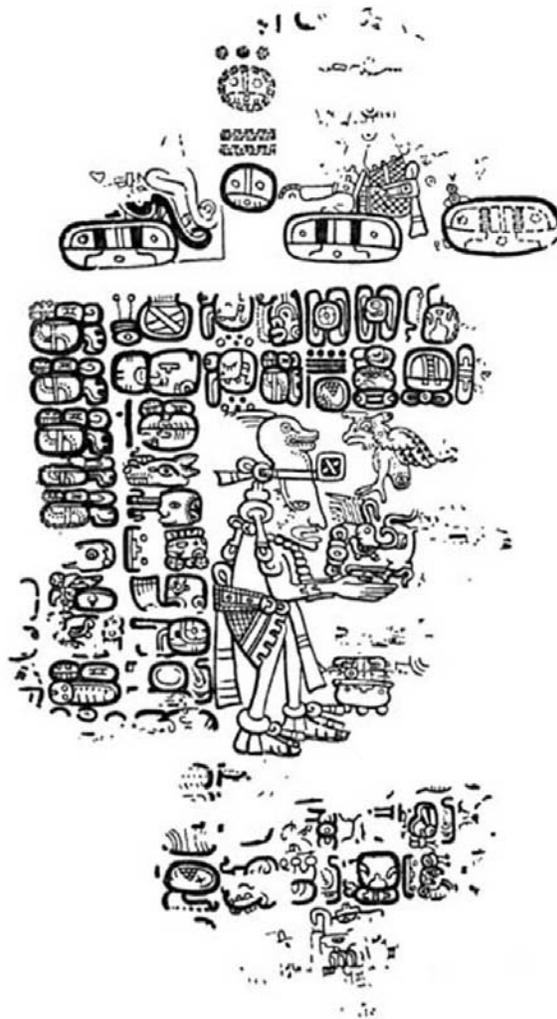


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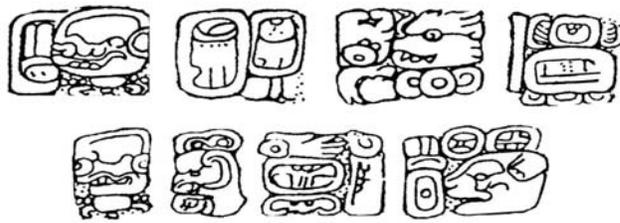


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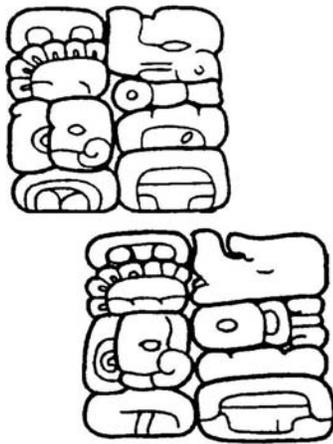


Figure 17.

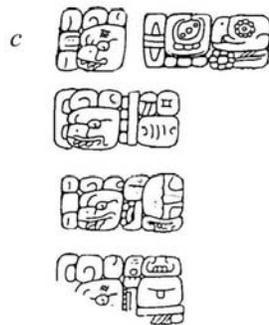
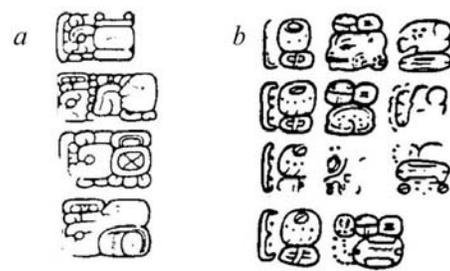


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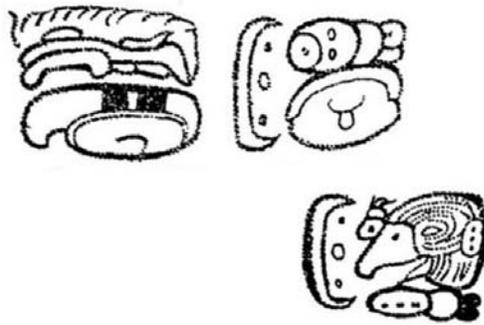


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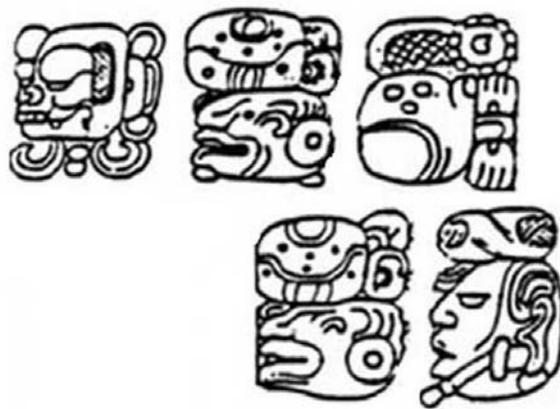


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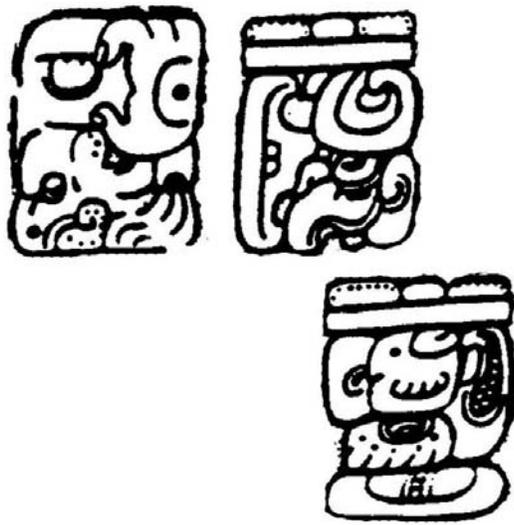


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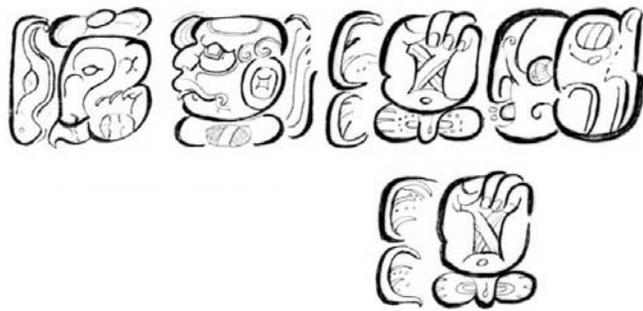


Figure 22.



Figure 23.

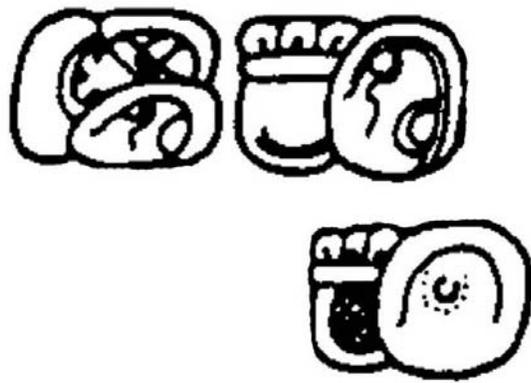


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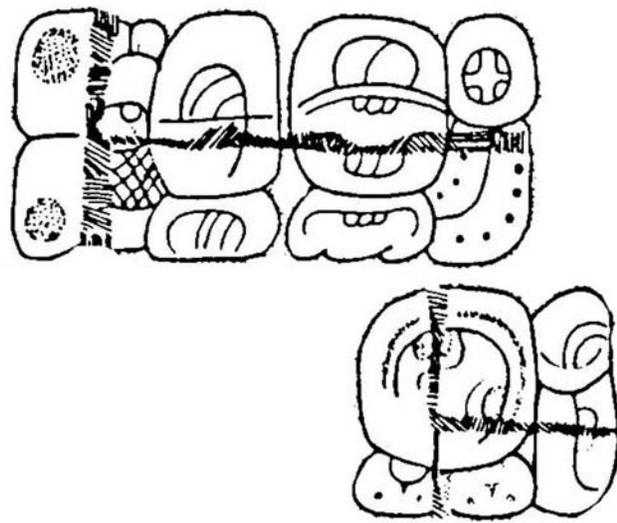


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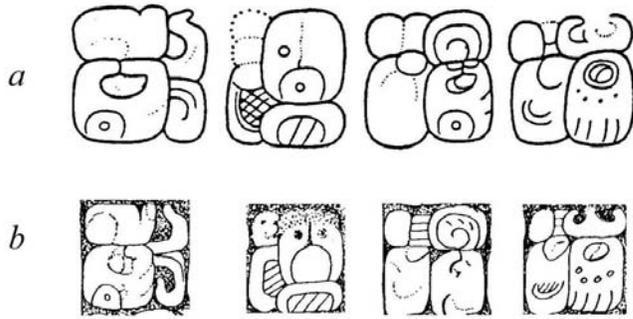


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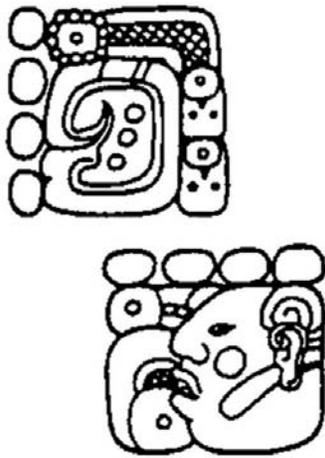


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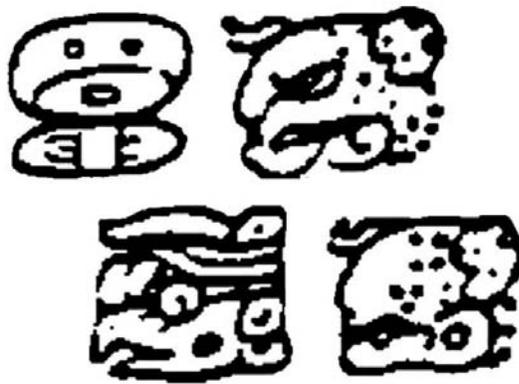


Figure 28.



Figure 29.



Figure 30.



Figure 31.



Figure 32.



Figure 33.



Figure 34.

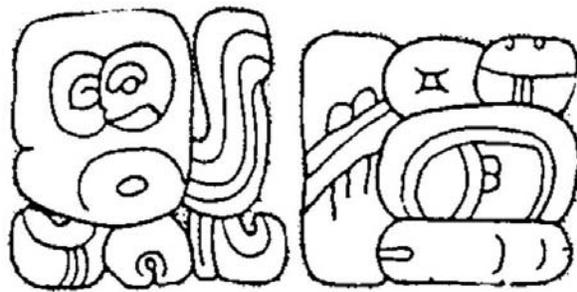


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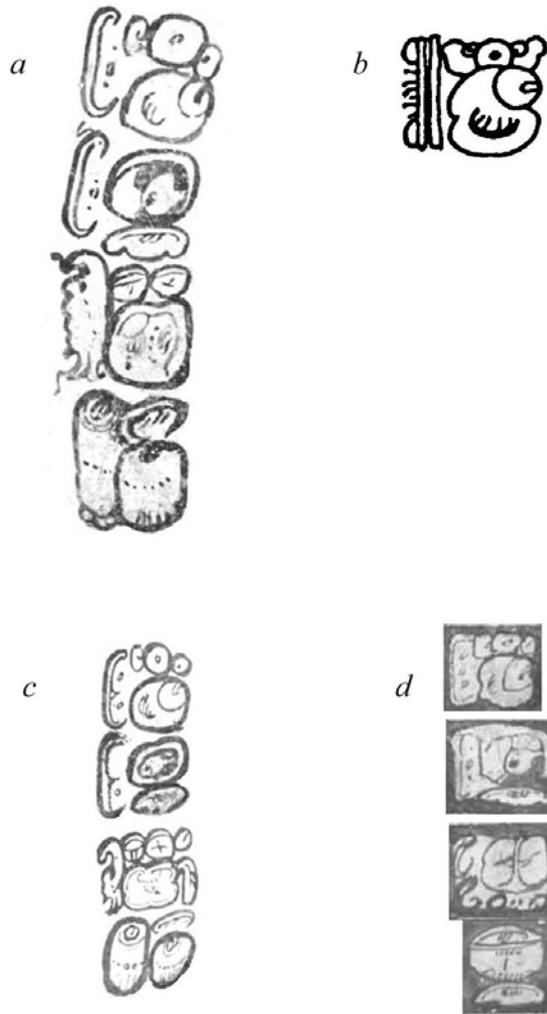


Figure 36.



Figure 37.



Figure 38.

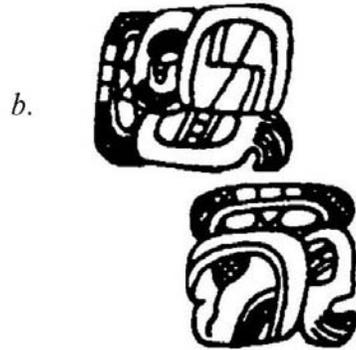
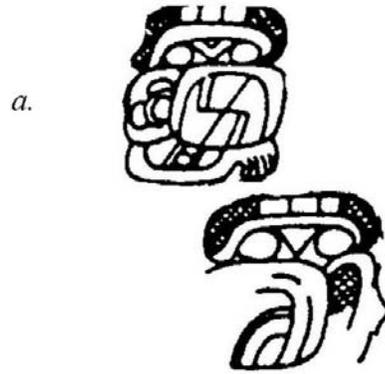


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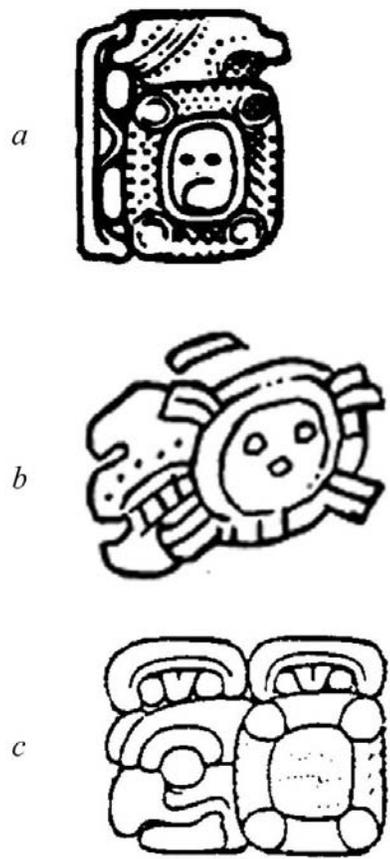


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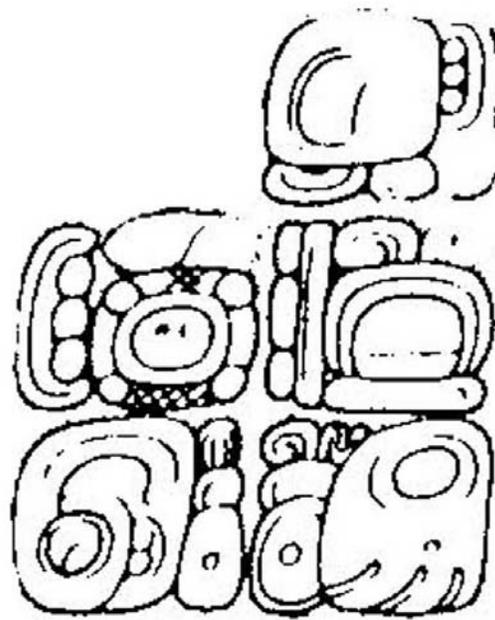


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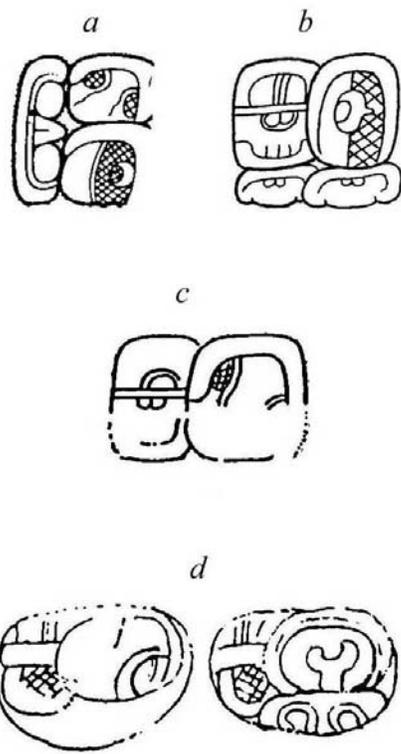


Figure 42.



*a*



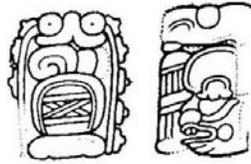
*b*



*c*



*d*



*e*



*f*



*g*

Figure 43.



Figure 44.

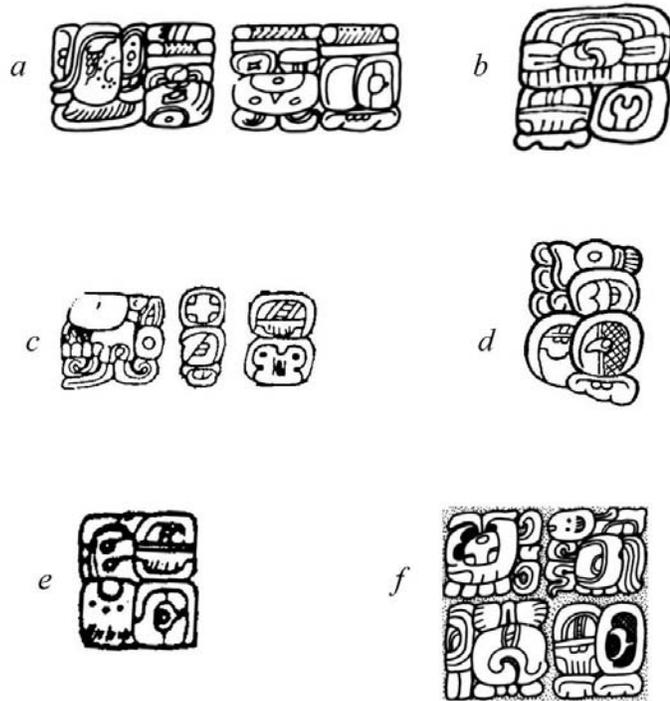


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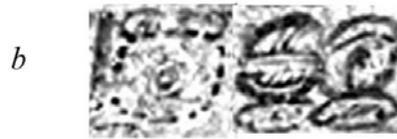


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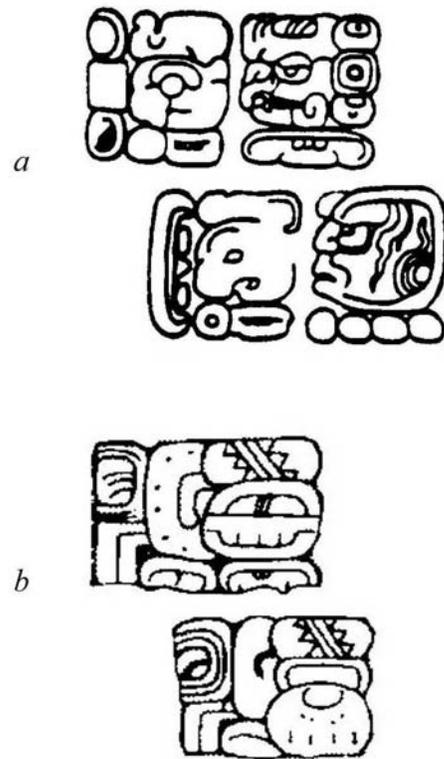


Figure 47.



Figure 48.

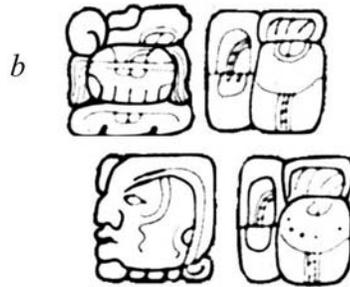


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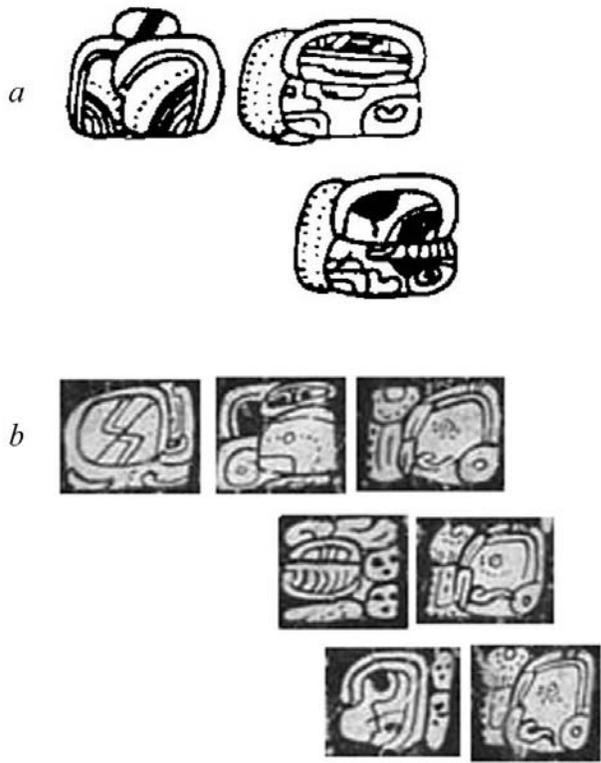


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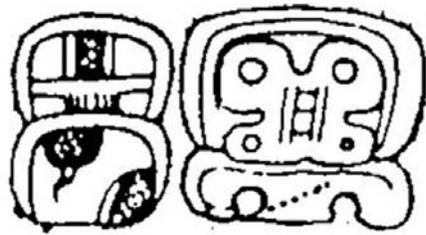


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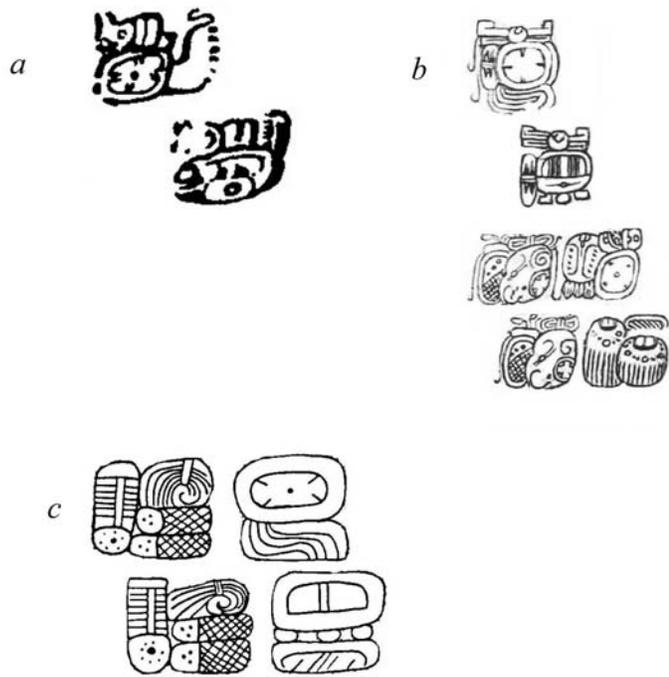


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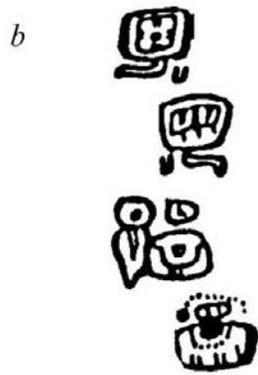
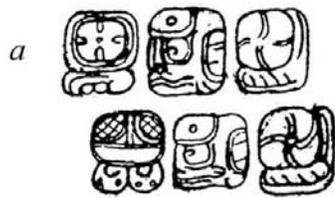
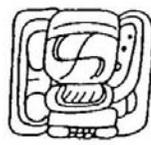


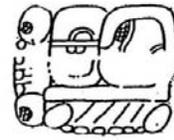
Figure 53.



*a*



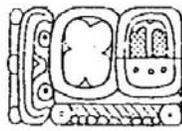
*b*



*c*



*d*



*d*



*f*



*g*



*h*



*i*



*j*



*k*



*l*



*m*

Figure 54.

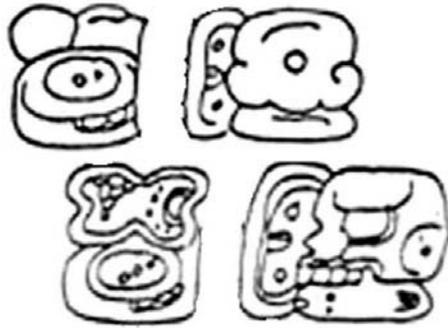


Figure 55.



Figure 56.

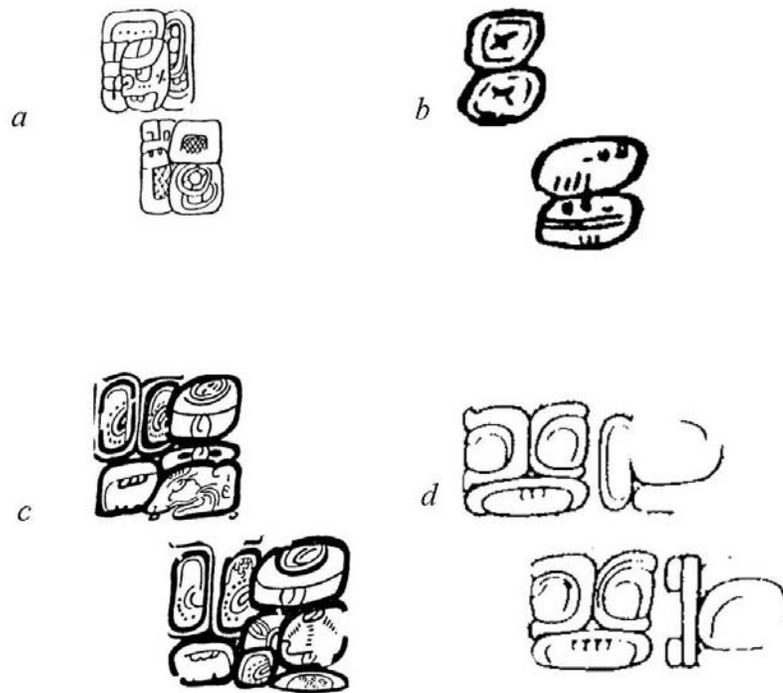


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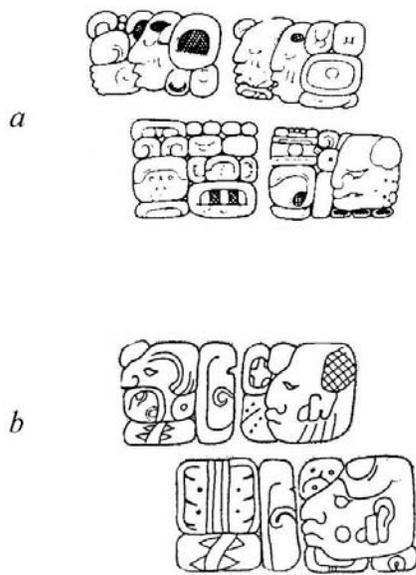


Figure 58.

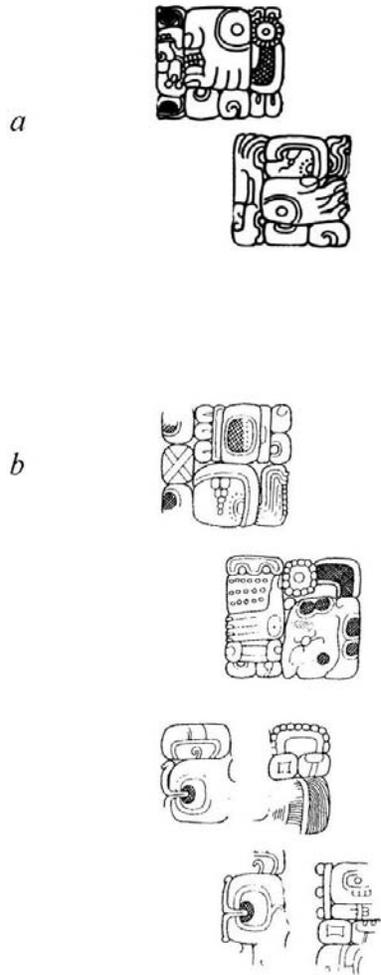


Figure 59.

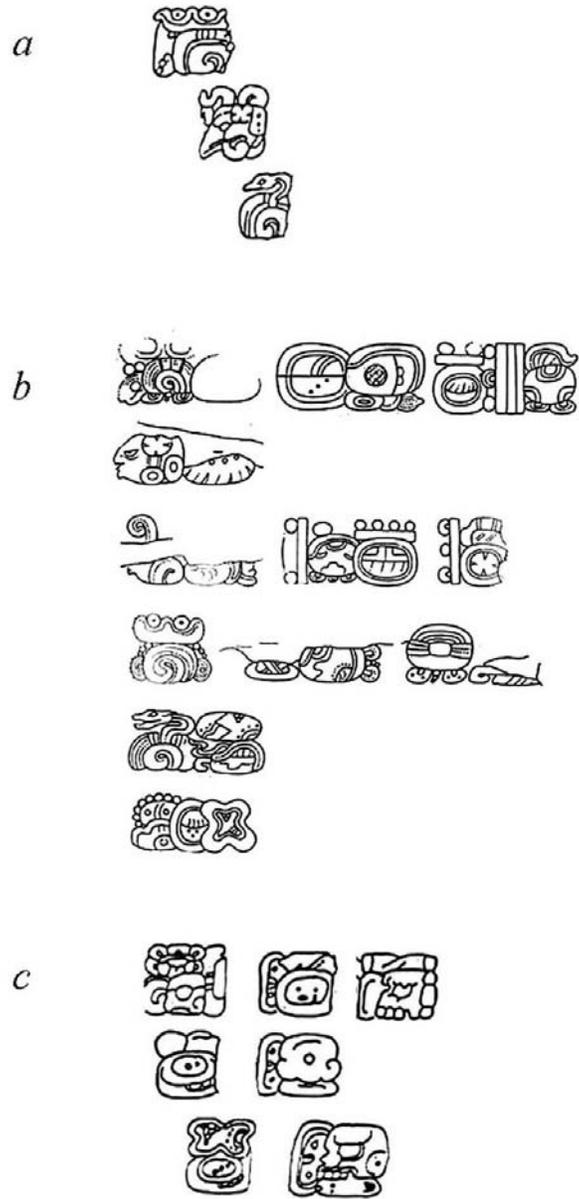


Figure 60.

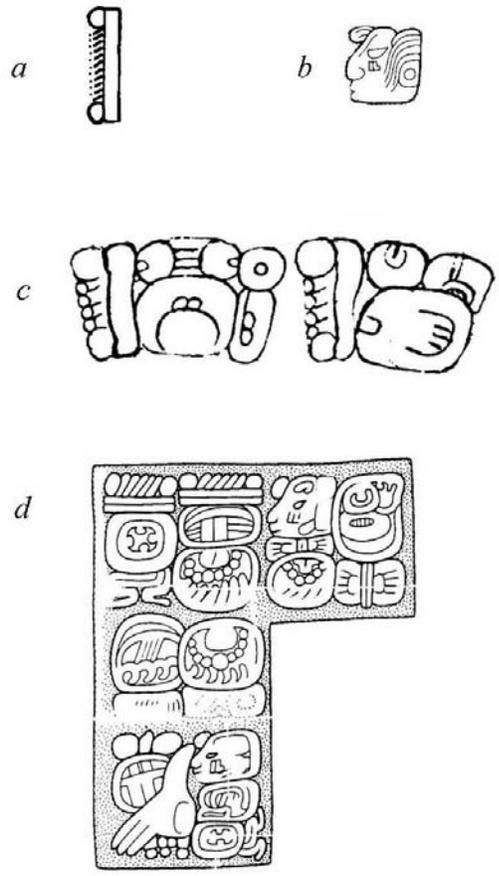


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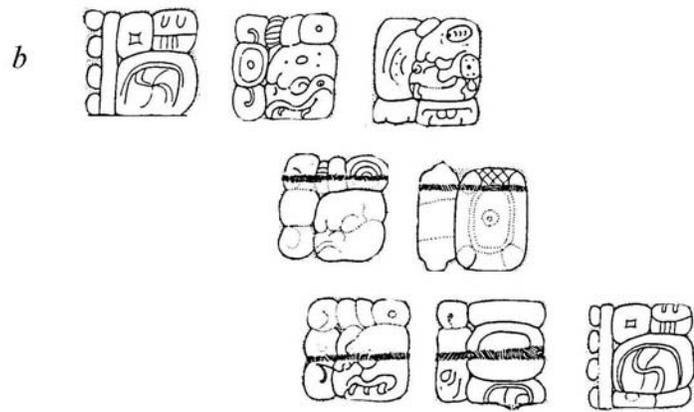
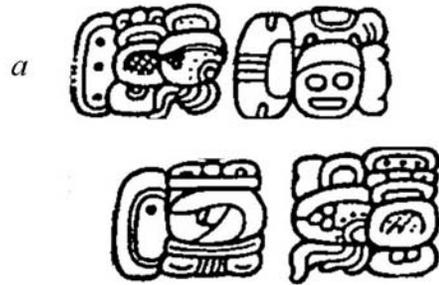


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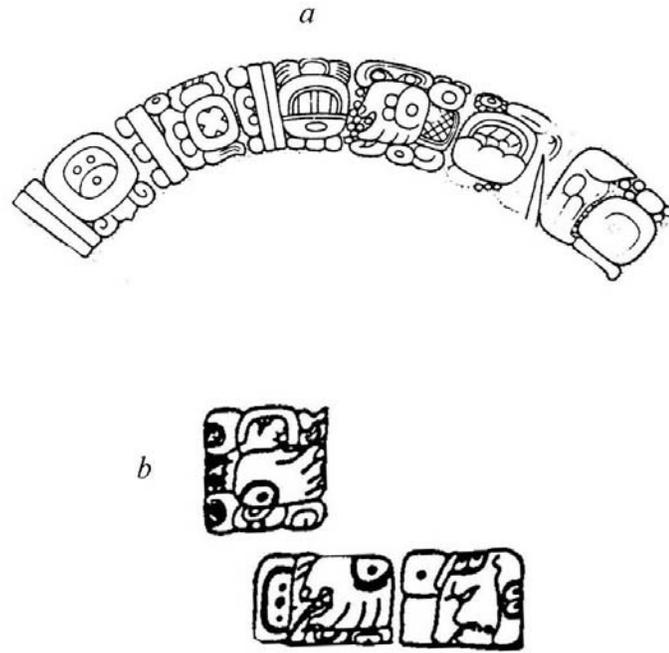


Figure 63.

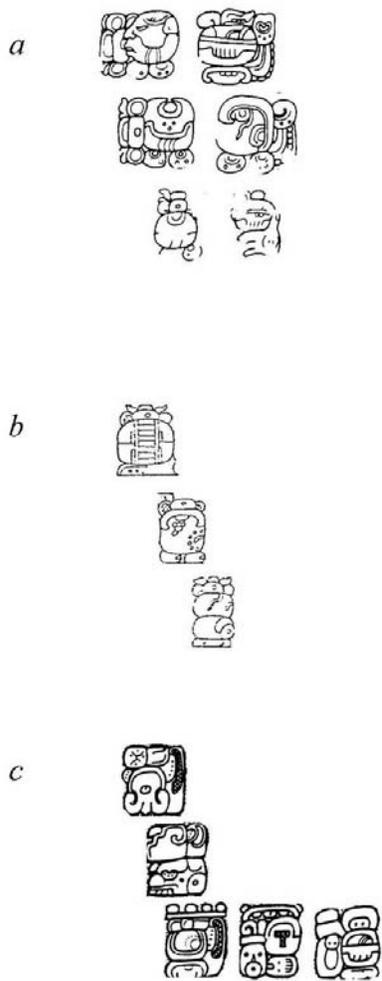


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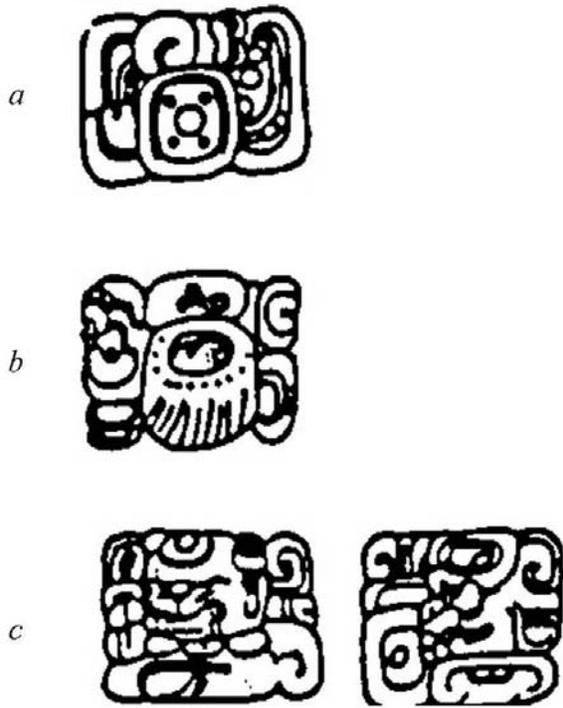


Figure 65.



Figure 66.



Figure 67.

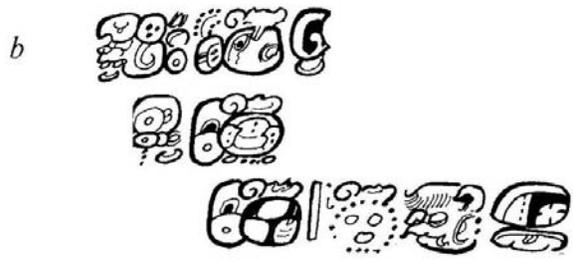
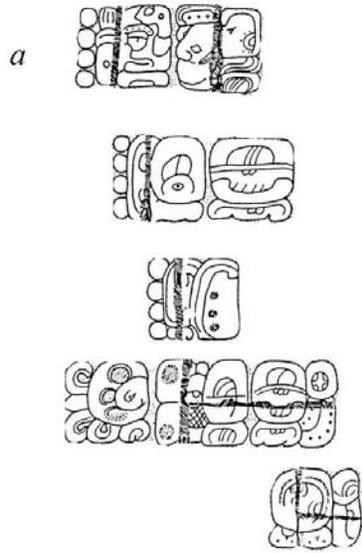


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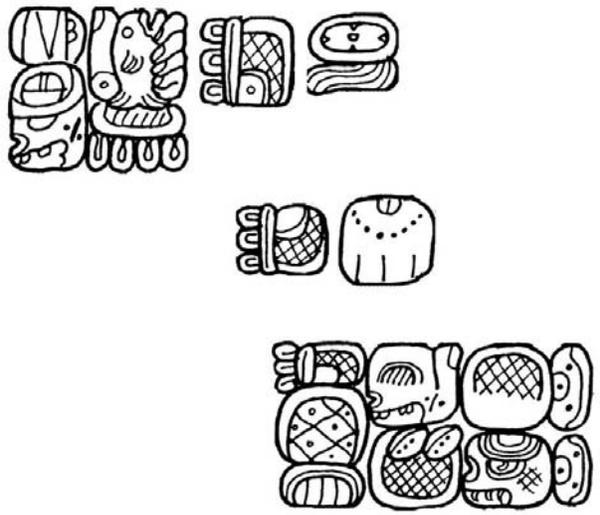


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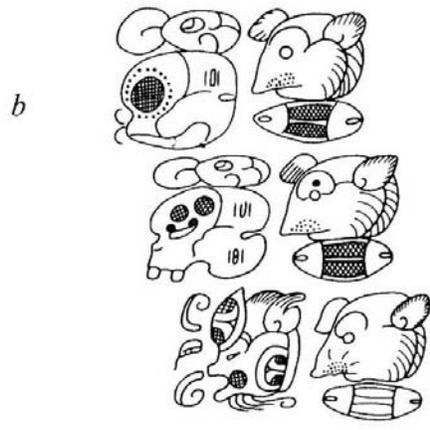
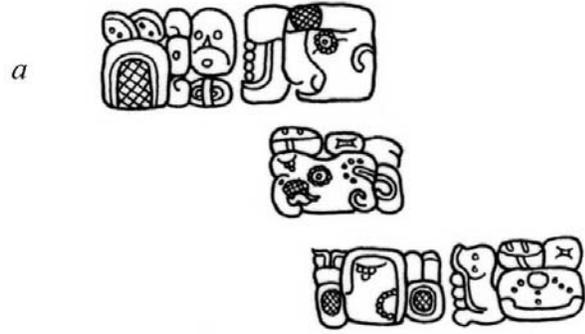


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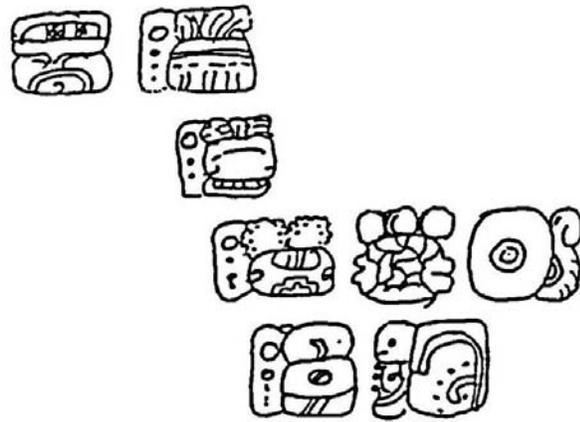


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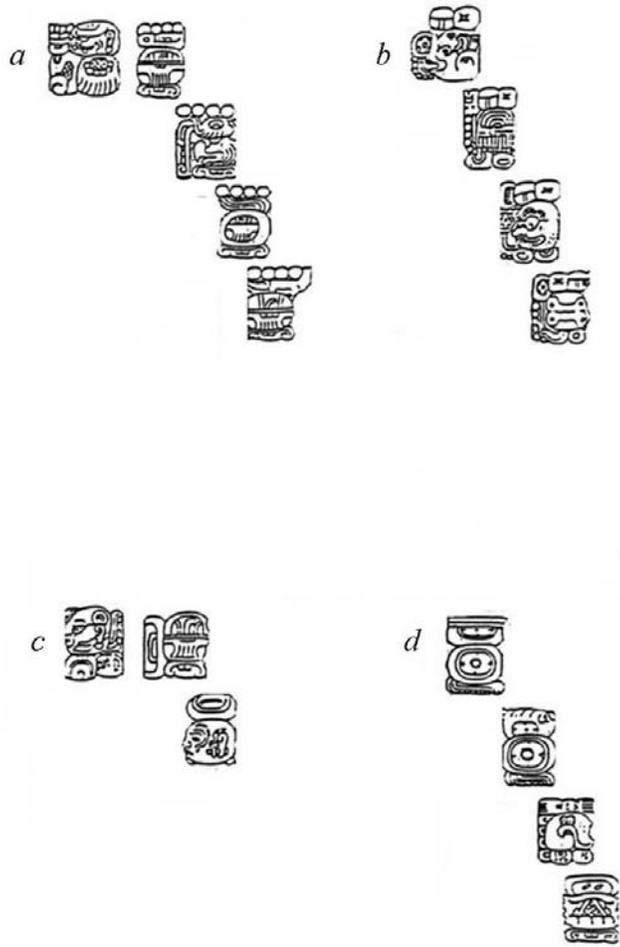


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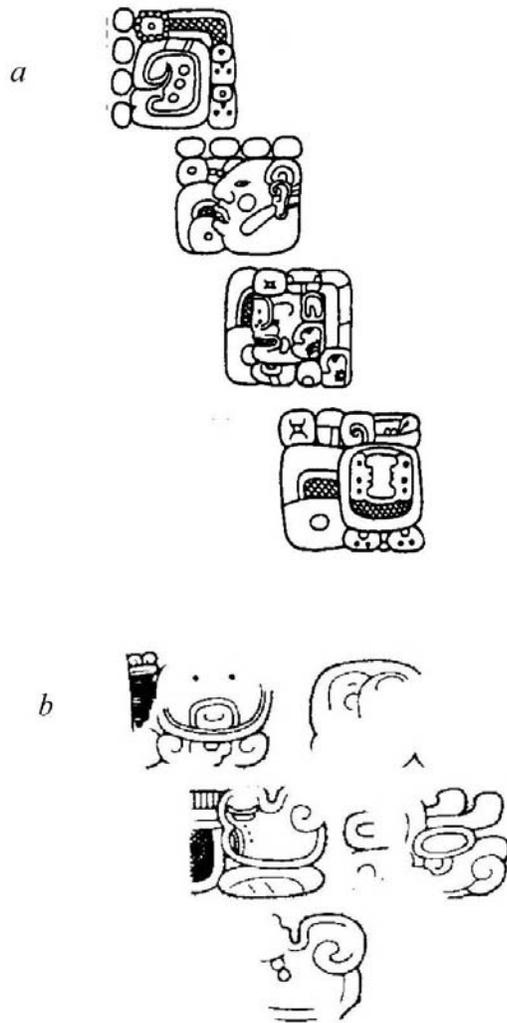


Figure 73.



Figure 74.

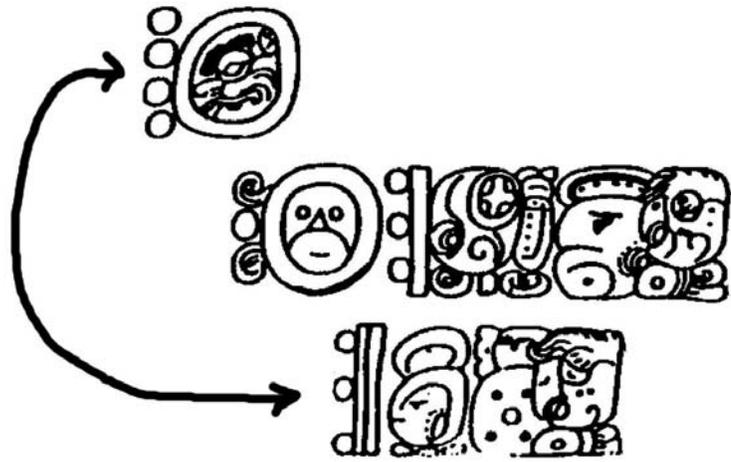


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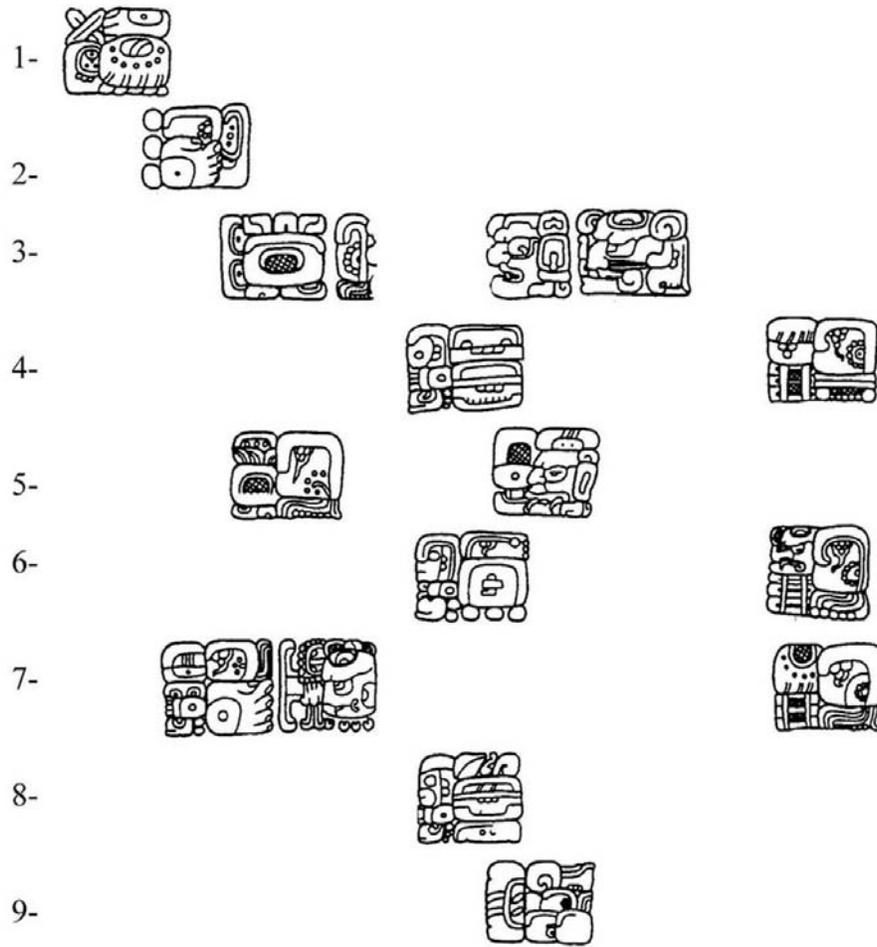


Figure 76.



Figure 77.



Figure 78.

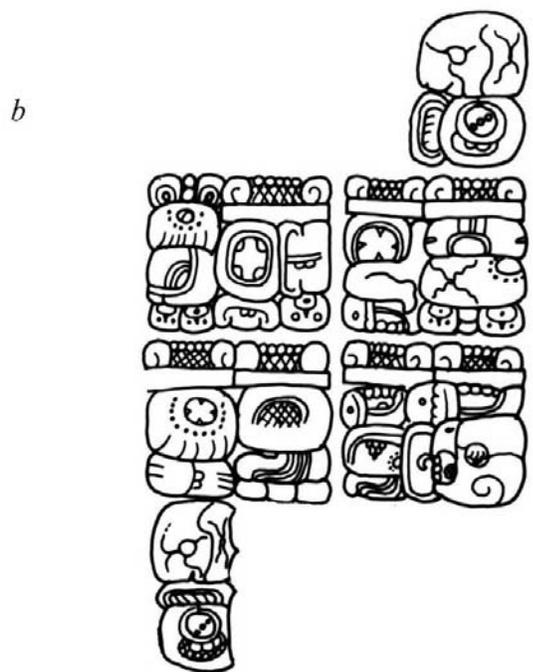
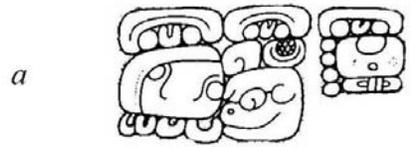


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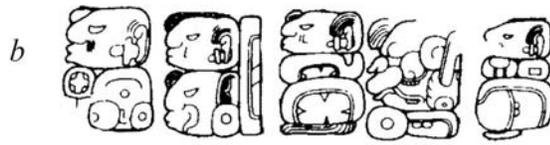


Figure 80.



Figure 81.

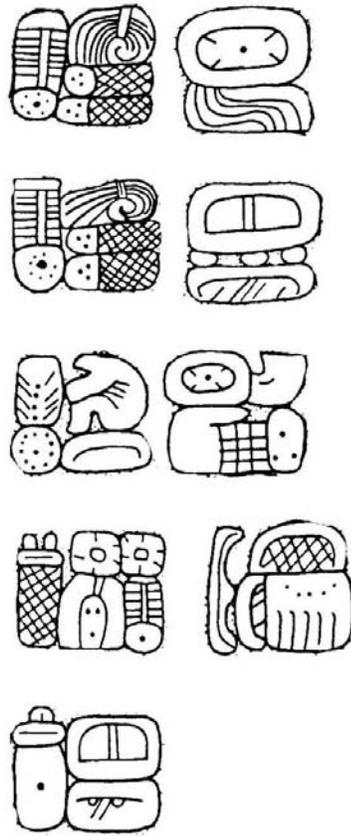


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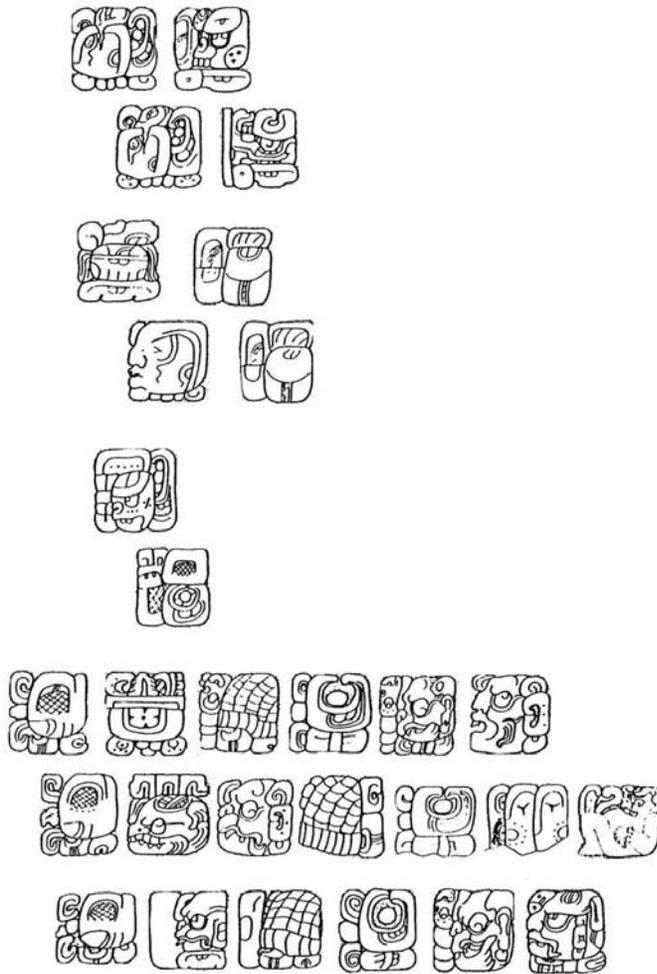


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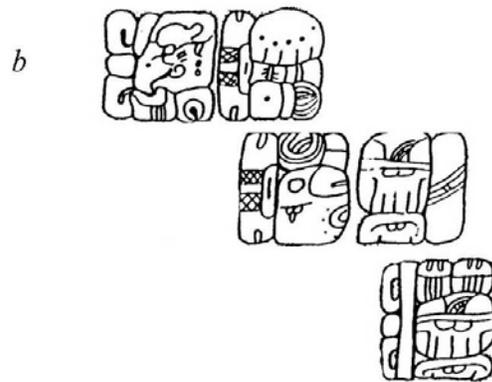
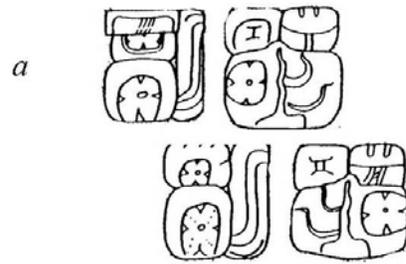


Figure 84.

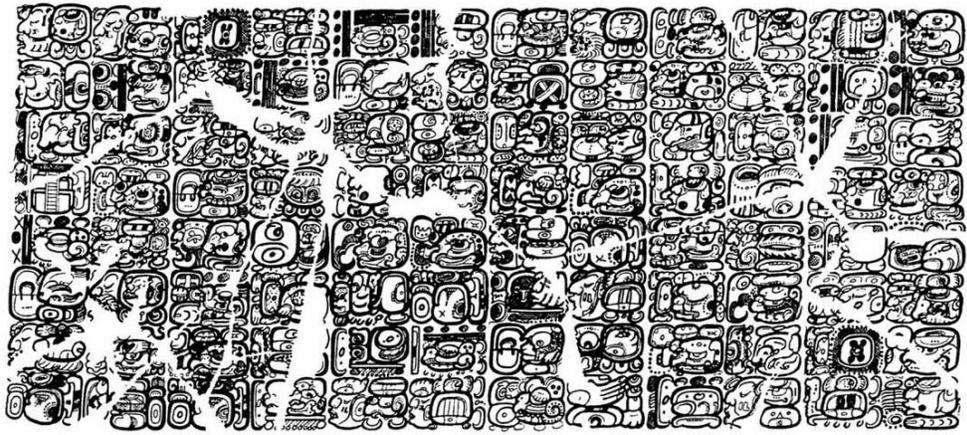


Figure 85.

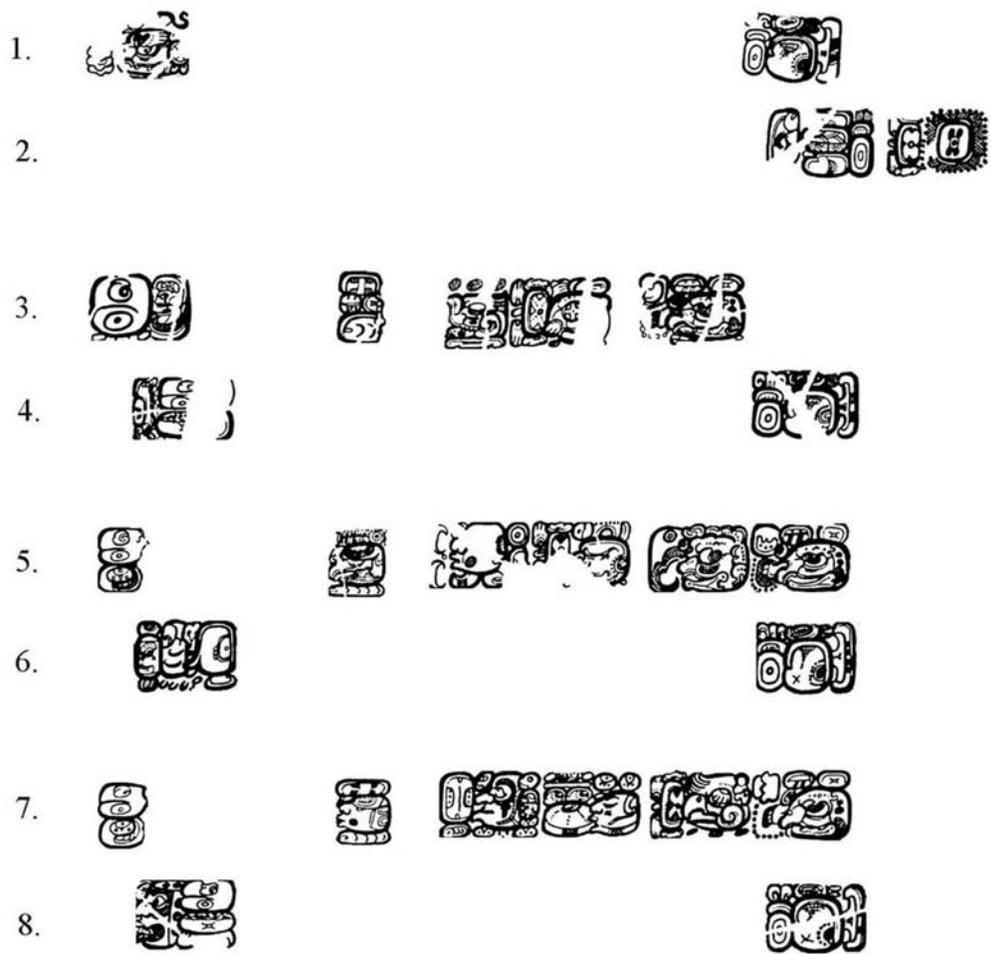


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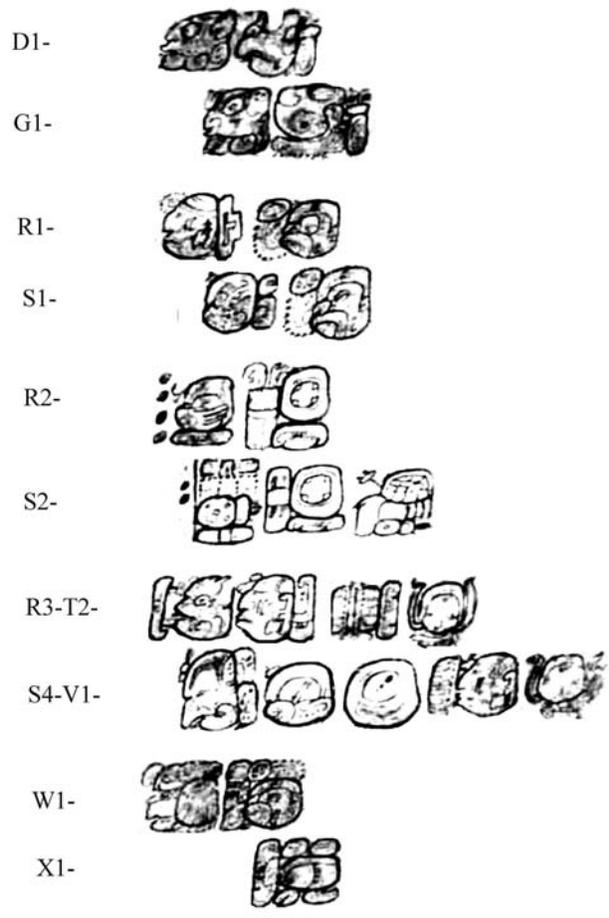


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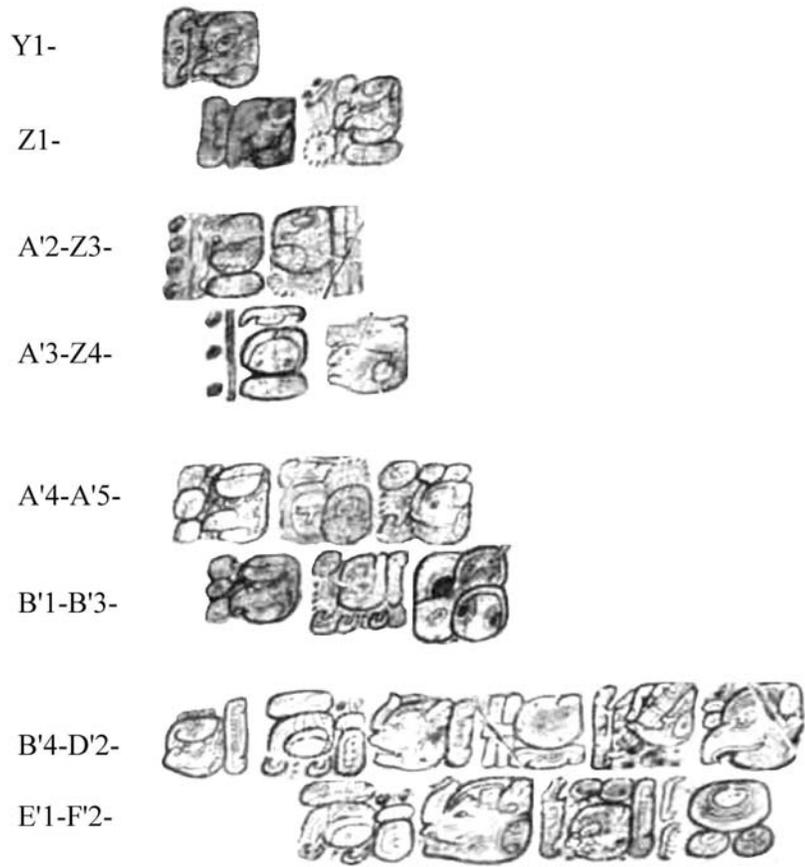


Figure 88.



Figure 89.

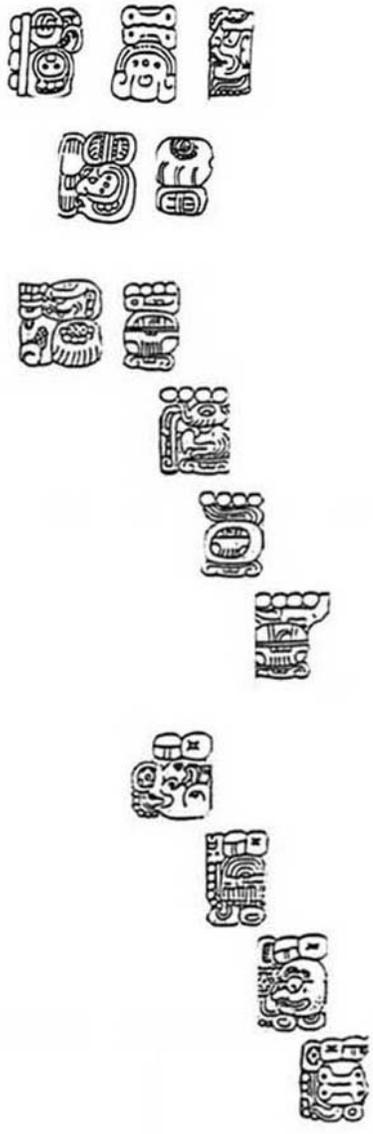


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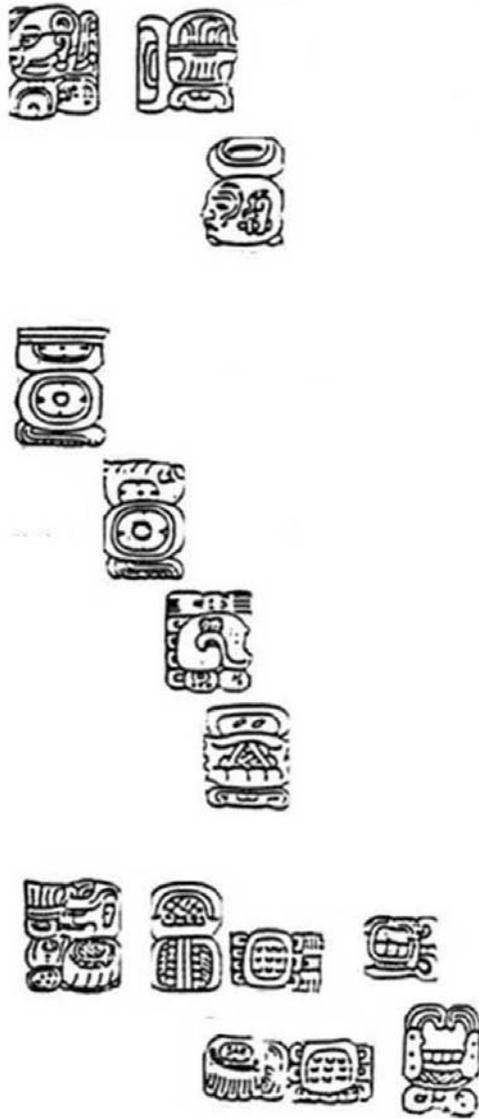


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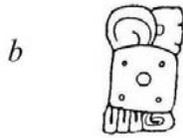


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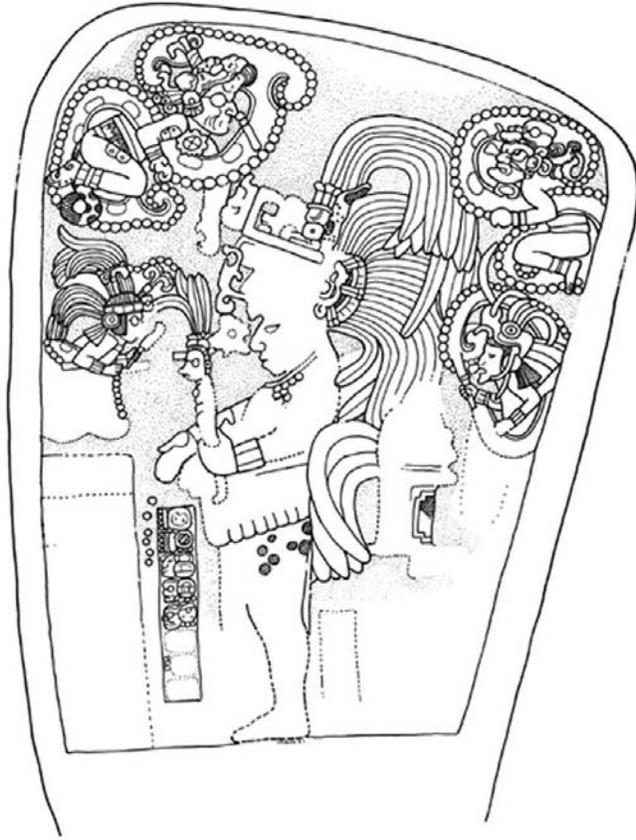
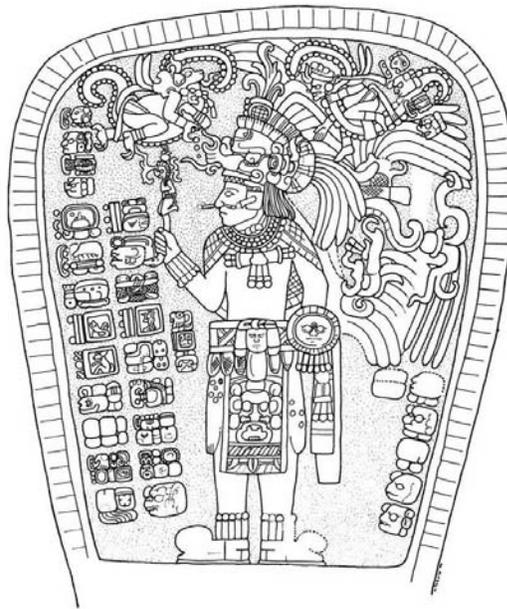


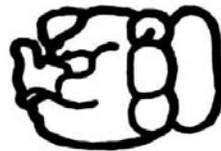
Figure 93.



*a*



*b*



*c*

Figure 94.

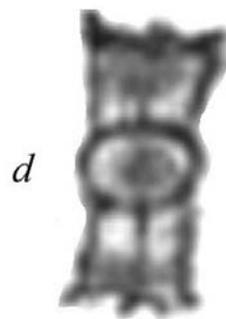
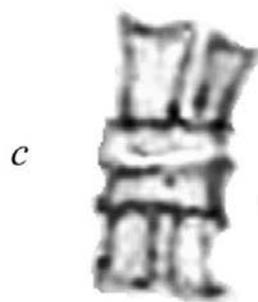


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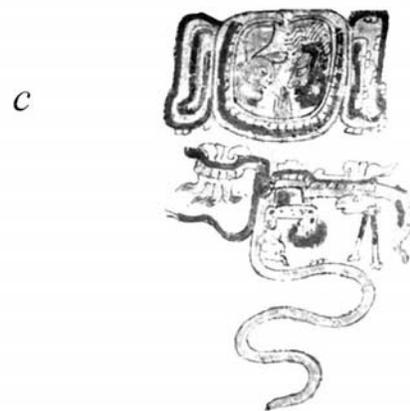
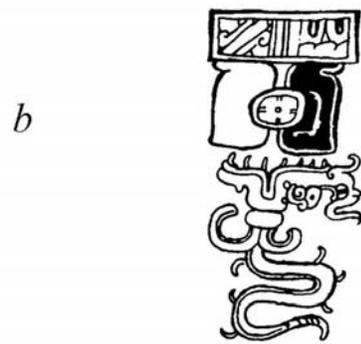
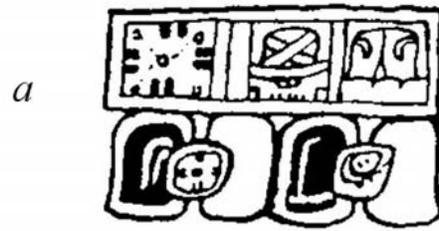


Figure 96.

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## VITA

Kerry M. Hull was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on April 15, 1966, the son of Vanetta Marie Hull and Milo Lamar Hull. After completing his work at Weber High School in 1984, he entered Utah State University in Logan, Utah. During this time he worked as a Teaching Assistant in the French and Spanish Departments. He also taught beginning Latin. He received the degree of Bachelor of Art in French and the degree of Bachelor of Art in Spanish in 1992. Upon completing these degrees, he entered Masters Degree program Georgetown University in Washington D.C in the field of Applied Linguistics. In December of 1993, he graduated with a Masters of Science in Applied Linguistics from the Department of Linguistics at Georgetown University. After completing six months of linguistic fieldwork among the Ch'ol Maya in Chiapas in 1994, he then worked at *America Eigo Gakuin* in Wakayama, Japan as General Manager until 1997. In 1997, he published "A Naming Ceremony for Ox Yohun at Palenque: New Readings of the Captions on the Palace Tablet" in *U Mut Maya VI*, 1-14. He then worked with T.E.A.CH, an English language school in Japan, as Curriculum Designer and Teacher Trainer from 1997-2000. In 1998, he entered the Ph.D. program in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. While a Ph.D. student, he published the following papers:

- (in press) "Journey from the Ancient Maya Tomb: Ropes, Roads, and the Point of Departure," in *Acta Mesoamericana, Vol 14*.
- (in press) "Mak-"portal" Rituals Uncovered: An Approach to Interpreting Symbolic Architecture and the Creation of Sacred Space among the Maya" in *Acta Mesoamericana, Vol. 13*. Co-authored with Michael David Carrasco. 2003
- 2003 "Reconstructing the Past: Ritual Revitalization and Identity among the Ch'orti' Maya," in the *Proceedings of the Second Annual Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences*, June 12-15, 2003 in Honolulu, Hawaii.
- 2002 "The Cosmogonic Symbolism of the Corbeled Vault in Maya Architecture" in *Mexicon, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, April 2002*, pp. 26-32. Co-authored with Michael David Carrasco.

While a Ph.D. student, he presented papers at the following academic conferences:

- 2003 ***Así Hablan los Ángeles: The Poetics of Ch'orti' Ritual Speech and Oral Narratives.*** Paper presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference in Madrid, Spain, November 29-30, 2003.
- 2003 **Deciphering Gender: 'Agentive' Prefixes in Classic Maya Inscriptions.** Paper presented at the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago, November 19-23, 2003.

- 2003      **The Lakes are Alive: Water in Ch'orti' Mythology and Curing Ideology.** Paper to be presented at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Chacmool 2003 Conference, "Flowing Through Time: Exploring Archaeology Through Humans and Their Aquatic Environment," at the University of Calgary, Canada. November 12-16, 2003.
- 2003      **The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth—or So They Say: Evidential Particles in Ch'orti' Maya.** Paper to be presented at the Primer Congreso de Idiomas Indígenas de Latinoamérica at the University of Texas at Austin. October 23-25, 2003.
- 2003      **The Shape of CVC Transitive Imperatives in Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions.** Paper presented at the Crabs & Glyphs Meeting in Arnold, Maryland. September 5-7 2003
- 2003      **Reconstructing the Past: Ritual Revitalization and Identity among the Ch'orti' Maya.** Paper presented at the Second Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences in Honolulu, Hawaii. June 12-15 2003.
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- 2003      **Classic Maya Literary Tradition: Hieroglyphs and Poetics.** Paper presented at the 26th Annual Midwest Conference on Mesoamerican Archaeology and Ethnohistory. March 15, 2003.

- 2002 **Journey from the Ancient Maya Tomb: Ropes, Roads, and the Point of Departure.** Paper presented at the 7th European Maya Conference at the British Museum in London, England. November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002.
- 2001 **Coronation and Continuity: Investiture Ceremonies of the Classic Maya.** Paper presented at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwestern Mesoamericanists Meetings at Iowa State University. March 24, 2001
- 2001 **A View from the Milpa: Cosmology and Mythology in Ch'orti' Maya Agricultural Rituals.** Paper presented the ILASSA Conference on Latin America at the University of Texas at Austin. February 23-24, 2001.
- 2000 **Mak-"portal" Rituals Uncovered: An Approach to Interpreting Symbolic Architecture and the Creation of Sacred Space among the Maya.** Paper presented at the Fifth European Maya Conference at the University of Bonn, Germany. December 5-8, 2000. Co-authored with Michael D. Carrasco.
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- 1999 **Poetic Discourse in Mayan Oral Tradition and in the Hieroglyphic Script.** Paper presented at "Languaging 99: A Conference across Linguistic, Literature, and Writing" at the University of North Texas, Denton, Texas. March 4-6, 1999.
- 1999 **Seats of Power: Palanquins and Political Clout in Mesoamerica.** Paper presented at "XIX Annual Institute of Latin American Studies: Conference on Latin America" at the University of Texas at Austin. Feb. 26-27, 1999.

In terms of teaching experience during his Ph.D. program, he worked in the following positions:

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"Pre-1600 Mesoamerican Art History: Olmecs to Aztecs" in the Department of Art History.
- **ESL Instructor** at the University of Texas at Austin, Austin TX, U.S.A.  
Taught Writing 3, Reading 4, and Listening and Speaking 3b.
- 1/03-5-03 **Teaching Assistant** for "Language and Speech in American Society,"  
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- 9/02-12/02 **Instructor** for "Current Research on Maya Hieroglyphic Grammar" at the  
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