

Popular tradition

The popular wisdom in the traditional tales of Guatemala's East

Introduction

Popular tales, for their nature (1), fulfill a lot of functions in the core of communities and popular groups where they have survived. This type of literature is combined by the historical development of the communities and the economic and social process that envelop their habitants, both at a national level and regional level (2)

In Latin America, as traditional literature scholars have already shown, popular tales fulfill, in addition to the particularly magical recreative function, the one-off drawing the parameters of the society where they subsist. They are the crucible where the collective values get put in a hierarchy that the social group has consecrated throughout their history so that they last and be transferred to the new generations through the process of Enculturation. The five tales we present in this bulletin are a reliable example of what we have expressed. They reflect the intrinsic values of the West society of Guatemala (the versions come from the departments of El Progreso, Jutiapa, Jalapa and one from Escuintla but generated in El Progreso). According to Mr. Juan Crisóstomo García, these stories are told “*pa’que los patojos sepan ser hombres*” [so that children learn to be men.], or like Mrs. María Lucila Del Cid insists, old lady from the village of La Montañita “*como estos cuentos se le dicen a los chirices cuando son muy chiquitios, pues algo se les pega y se vuelven hombres de bien*”. [since these stories are told when children are little, something might stick to them and they turn into men of good.]

This means, that in addition to their intrinsic values, these oral narrations fulfill the role of securing the community's culture,

The social ways of life of the East of Guatemala, based fundamentally in patterns of western culture, have been charged with new content in the historic process of this Guatemalan region, and transmitted like that to the new generations (5).

The values that feature in the type of tale that we present here, generically englobed as “The Three Advices”, are a testimony of the basic way from where the East of Guatemala has developed. Hence its value. Besides that, these five versions present with clarity all themes of the wonderful tale of western root, that because they have

been repeated mouth to mouth, have been made Guatemalan. Like Stith Thompson remarks, these tales are typical of a “coexisting with western culture” area (6). Of course, this type of tales does not present the nominated originality to some animal tales (7). However, the five version of the selected tales, have their equivalent in different European and American collections. But the most important thing is that our tales represent fundamental Hispanic types, determined by Aurelio M. Espinoza (8).

Let us also remark, that these tales keep a lot of the general traits of Western folkloric narrative: good and bad characters, clearly defined and faced to each other; abundant repetitions and the triumph of the youngest of three siblings, etc.

These tales of “The Three Advices” also fit inside the common denomination of Human Tales, because they take place in the real world, almost without fabulous elements like in other cases that we have already touched inside popular literature from the East of our country (9).

The most common trait of these versions is the one of the riddles disguised as advices or admonitions, and also, the actions of the tales (their functions), basically develop in the factual level, and there is no doubt about its intimate relationship with everyday life. As María Rosa Lida affirms, from her Indo-European origins, that in the formative Greek-latin culture and, in particular, in the European Middle Ages, the admonitory character function of the tales has remained throughout the centuries (10). This function was the one that allowed their validity in the oral European culture, even more in Pre-Renaissance Spain. Let us not forget that, on the other hand, the presence of Arabic culture in Hispanic soil, before the *Reconquista*, and the discover and colonization of the New World because in this culture, the oral tradition holds a predominant role, even more in the prehispanic Mesoamerican people (12).

To remark the importance of the admonitory in the folkloric tale, the founder of the Popular literature, Stith Thompson, affirms that in the popular tales, both the riddle and the proverb are almost universal “whatever is the original source from where the proverbs come from—remarks the master--, they reach the impeccable wisdom status. They are thought to inform the best results of the experience of race and, a large proportion of humanity is ruled by them in their everyday activities. Their exact formulation assumes an importance almost as big as essential wisdom that they have” (13). The author adds: “And although their origin might not be specially religious, they could come from the lips of a very known wise man or from the ones of a leader among men” (14).

It is important to remark that these aphorisms that appear in the popular tales offered here, are very precious to the community as a medical prescription. Because of that is

that the wise's formulation is almost always wonderful—and the wisdom of the *Cuentero* [person with the ability to tell tales] is known by the whole community--, and it is the validity of their advices in a later level, when they manifest, that gives them credibility and authority.

On the other hand, what these tales prove is that the experience of “the ancients”, of “the ones who know”, of “the elders from before”. of “the eldest elders”, as they call the elderly in the neighborhoods of Guatemala City; this group of tales “of The Three Advices”, is addict to illustrating this fact: the advisors, apparently insensitive or foolish, are tested through the experience of being wise. An in the measure that the elements of the tales are valid, the validity of the tales is guaranteed in the popular culture of the villages of the East of Guatemala.

Finally, we have to highlight the fundamental update of each of the reasons of the tales. Although they introduce contemporary culture elements, like the phone, the telegraph, the autocars, the “*licenciados*” [Guatemala's equivalent to a bachelor's degree], “*las actas notariales*” [notarial acts], the timelessness of the tale persists. This is nothing but proof that the adaptation and plasticity of the popular traditional culture of the East of Guatemala.

1. The Tales of The Three Advices

1.1 The Girl of The Sweet Charm.

“The thing is that he was a king, he did not see but he had three children, but he reached to see when he heard the sweet charm bird sing, because they were three, Look, the girl, the horse and the bird; when the bird sang, he saw. So, he told his eldest children if he could see them if... they bring that charm, see?

So they left, they told him yes.

“Okay my children” The king says. “I want you to bring me what you want best: Three loads of money each” he told them “or three advices.”

“Ah—they told him--, with he advices we get nothing” they told him.

So he gave them advices and money always, see?, An they went their way; Ah! But he did them them:

“Okay, the first advice is—he tells them—never walk by the pathways. The second—he says--never walk at night, the third: don't ask what is not of your business.

So they went on their way, see? With their three loaded mules: over there, there was a deviation.

“Brother—he says—but when are we going to turn around; let’s take this road here.”

They took the deviation, when seven thieves came out; they beat them, took all their money and left them all ill.



Footer of the picture: Felipe Marroquín Aldana, blind storyteller from Santa Rita village, Municipality of El Progreso, in the department of the same name. (Fotografía: Manuel Guerra Caravantes).

So the time came... a month went by and they did not appear; so, the king says;

“Look son—he tells the youngest—your siblings don’t seem to be coming, no doubt they disobeyed—he told him—and got killed.”

“Maybe yes dad—he tells him--.”

“And what do you say, are you going?”

“I am dad—he tells him--.”

“Okay, what do you want best—he told him...--Three advices or the three loads of money?

“Dad—he says—money can be my demise—he says—the advice is better—he tells him.

So then, he says, so Don’t walk on the pathways, don’t walk only by day, and don’t ask what is none of your business; so he gave him the money anyways, and... only one load. And he went on his way. He reached the pathway where they went through.

“Ah, here my brothers went—he said—but I am not going here.”

He turned around, then. And he left, see? There before, the night was wanting to reach him, so he stayed there. The next day, around 11 am, he already was hungry, and there was only one *ciena*.

“Ah—he said—Here I am going to eat lunch.

So he entered, then. He greeted the man that was there and told him:

“Come on in, what would you like?”

“So, I came here to see if you could sell me some lunch.”—he said.

“Of course, come on in. Sit here.”

So he sat down, at the leg of the table there was a woman chained to it. He had her punished already. So our protagonist was served lunch, see? He ate it and the bones and meat meant for him, he threw them to the woman, she ran to catch them, see?. Piece of tortilla: he ate then, asked how much was for it and, they did not win. He left then.

“Friend, come back—he was told.—Why is it that you —he told him—did not ask me—he said—Why do I have a chained woman right there?

“Because it is none of my business, sir. —he answers.—That is why I did not ask. Only you know why she is being punished.

“Wow—the man in the *cien*a told the woman. —Up until today, you have freedom.” He unchained her

“Now...reward the young man.”—he told the woman, and she took some money, and she gave him... one hundred pesos only.

“How much did you give him?”

“One hundred pesos.” She says.

“No, give him more. The thing is that your penitentiary wasn’t worth just that.”

She gave him more money; then he left. There before, almost reaching the town, the seven thieves went carrying the mules with them, see?, the ones belonging to the brothers.

“Ah—he said—These are the mules of my brothers—he said—and I’m sure that they would also want to kill me.

So they left together. Finally they arrived to town, there was an *amatón* [a *Ficus insipida* tree] and he was told:

“Where are you going to stay young man?”

“I will stay here.” He says.

“Ah let’s stay together then.” They told him. Then he tells them: Well sirs, you are going to do me the favor of taking care of my things a moment here—he said—I am going to run some errands.

He left. He consulted with the guard and the police went to catch them. They arrested the seven thieves and they took the money that they carried. At the end, the money was deposited and the thieves... in jail. And the brothers were there; hospitalized, but in really serious health condition; so him, see? He left them, he told them to stay there while he returned. And he resumed his journey; he... that day there he was eating lunch, when an old man passed by, see?

“Oh!—He says—How could that poor man be? I am young but I am tired, how could this man be?”

He went to meet him and greet him:

“Sir—he said.—Come here, let’s have lunch.”—He said.

“Really?—the old man says.—and I’m in need of.—He says”

So, they sat to have lunch. They had lunch.

“Son—he says—Where are you going?”

“Oh sir,—he told the old man—I am going I don’t even know where—he said—because I don’t know where this is; I am going in the search of—he said—the girl of the sweet charm.”

“My God—he says—that is far.—he tells him.—Far and hard to reach.—he says.—But surely—he told him—I am going with you—he says—so that you can bring her—he told him.”

So then... they left together.

“So—the old man says.—from now on, you are going to recognize me as your father.”

So they arrived to the point, see? There, the old man took a permit with the guard’s captain and that his son wanted to enter to see the girl, so, they gave him the permit, because she was under seven guards, see? And they arrived then, there he was and I don’t know what got to him to grab the girl, see? Sit her down and the bird shouts:

“The girl of the sweet charm is being taken!”

And that was... a rebellion of the guards, to see what was going on and they caught him.

“No—the old man says—leave him, he does it because of ignorance.”

They didn’t do anything to him. They went out, another day, another day inside. That day he didn’t take her; on the third day, the old man tells the guard, that if he gave him permission, that his son wanted to take the girl for a ride on a horse... with the girl in

front of him and the bird on his shoulder. So the king let him. So he left. They just... told him, they were going to the city; so then... they took flight then, in the skies, they did one turn, then another, at the third he disappeared *dialtiro* [fast without leaving a trace]. So he left, and the old man disappeared too. He didn't get to where he was... this kingdom, but he appeared in where he is, the village where his brothers where. So he came, took them out of the hospital, he send them on their way and he stayed to fix things up, see? He took the money out of the bank. Like that, he fixed everything, see? That he had three days of journey. So he left; overthere, on his way to the palace where he lived, where his dad was, he reached his brothers, but around six pm. There was a flat, so his brothers say:

"Oh, brother,--they say—We can't walk anymore; let's stay here, brother."

"But we are almost there, guys, let's go."—he tells them.

"Oh, we can't walk anymore, let's stay here."

So he followed their instructions. They laid down to sleep and in the night, in the sheet he laid on to sleep, from there, his brothers took each of the corners of the sheet and threw him down a ravine. But yes, when he was in the air, that old man that accompanied him saved his life, he didn't let him get killed.

"See?—he told him—how are your brothers?"

"Yes sir"—he told him.

"Wow—he tells him—So they left, see? With the girl, the horse and the bird, but sad already;... The bird didn't sing, neither the girl; she didn't rise her head, she was... mute."

The brothers arrived with the king.

"And your little brother?"

"He got killed by the thieves."—He answered.

"So... the other day, early, the maid came out..."

"Queen—he says—purely the so-and-so child that is coming over there."

"Oh my god—the Queen says—but my child is dead—she said—because my other children say so."

"But it is him, Queen."

The queen came out to see.

"Yes—she says—it's him—she says."

So the kid arrived then. The kid was arriving to the palace while the bird was singing and looking at the king too.

“Wow child—he says—come here. How come your brothers say you got killed?”

“No, dad—he answers.”

“It is a lie—the girl says—They threw him—she says—to a ravine—she says—because he knew where we were.—She says—That’s why we were sad, but he appeared and what they deserve is being shot.

So the king sentenced them, by heart, to be shot, see? And that child that brought him the clothes, that one was King. But the child never made me see, I’m blind up until today. (Inf.2.1)

1.2 Juan the Plowman

“This was a Plowman named Juan, that arrived where a worker, a farmer and his job; he only worked the plow, see? To farm the soil with his plow, yokes and oxes and everything.

He worked for two years with his boss and he told him:

“So I’m leaving boss, I am leaving you to work with other boss, to see what *modables* I can find.”

“Okay.” He told him. “Don’t you want some money?” he told him. “So that it can be useful?” He told him. “Two years worth?”

“No sir—he told him—Only six *reales*, I want only six reales.—he said.” [Reales was the currency Guatemala had before the Guatemalan peso and the quetzal.]

He was given the six *reales* and he left and searched for a job with the other boss and he told him:

“What kind of job do you do? What is your name?”

“I am Juan the Plowman.” He answered.

“I need men for that job—he told him, the boss, see?—The oxes yokes are there, grab the ones you want. Start to work.

He started to work and all, the boss liked all that he worked, he couldn’t get tired, see?

By the way, he worked for two... two years with this other boss. Four years later, he said:

“I was given six *reales* by my other boss, and with six *reales* that you give me, it would be enough, I’ll come back for the rest. I want to go to the city—he said—to have some fun.”

“But what are you going to do with so little money?” The other boss answered.

“You don’t understand.—he told him—Even with six... twelve *reales* I’m leaving.”

So he left.

“By the way—he told him—I’m going to walk the earth, knowing new places.”

“Oh, okay—he told him—make sure to come back for your money—he told him.”

“If I don’t come, I’ll send you a telegram—he said—from wherever I am—”

“Okay, son.”

So he hung around, and around and around in a big mountain, where he didn’t find a house to stay or anything to sleep in, see? Or eat. He said:

“God, What am I going to do? Night has already arrived.”

And there was a big rock, and on top, it had... some sort of plan.

“I climb here—he said—If the animals come, they don’t get here and eat me in this mountain.



Footer of the picture: Mrs. María Lucila del Cid and her elder mother, Josefa, from whom she learned the tales she tells. (Fotografía: Manuel Guerra Caravantes).

By the way, he climbed. Around eleven pm, a sound was heard, like someone pushing something, on the foot of the rock (very down). The sound there in the large mountain. So he said:

“Uncle—he said—tell me a tale.”

“Pay me first.”—Juan said.

“You don’t understand, I’ll give it to you.”—he said.

“Never walk on the pathways.”—Juan said.

There, the tale ended... The child expected Juan to say more. So, then, another sound like that was heard. He said:

“This man is going to kill me here. Tell me another tale, uncle.”—He was told.

“Pay me first.”—Juan said.

“Oh, you don’t understand, I’ll pay you.”

So he came and said:

“It is worth one half.” Juan said. “Never ask what is none of your business.—He said, listen then:--Never ask what is none of your business.”

“Is that all, uncle?”

“That is all.” He said.

Three o’clock arrived... two halves.

So, at the next sound, he said:

“Uncle, tell me another tale, to pass the night.”

He was amusing the child, see? , to pass the night, because he was scared. So he tells him:

“It will be another half. *A la tierra que fueres, haz lo que vieres* [do what you see, if you go to foreign land].” They were already three tales.

So he continued, wanting to sleep, he wanted to sleep, and the other man kept making that sound, so he said.

“Uncle, tell me another tale.”

“Another half.—He says—*Nunca hagas fiesta, lo que no te cuesta* [Don’t celebrate what was not hard for you].” He said.

Around four am, when the moonlight appeared, when the moon came out on day, he... was feeling the atmosphere more and everything, another sound was made, and he said:

“Uncle—he said—tell me another tale.” He said.

“It is worth another half.”

It was already four *reales*.

“*El hombre casado con mucho cuidado*. [The married man must be careful.]” He said.

So the *bulto* went on his way, and he left, nothing more (and left him alone on the rock.), and he left him alone, and the day had come. So he thanked God that the sun had risen (without novelty) and he jumped on the ground and left.

In front of him, the first question crossed, the first tale, what the man told him, see? The *bulto*. He said:

“Shall I go here straight? I come out in front of the road—he said—but “never walk on the pathways.”

So he took the real path, straight..., yes, the real way, and he turned around. Turning around, he found a diner. He said:

“Here I’ll have breakfast—he said—because there isn’t anything else.”

So he arrived where there was a tied up lady... with chains on the foot (legs), on her throat, her feet, walking with her hands, turning and turning and turning, she was chained up, see?, where the diner was.

So, he ate, breakfast was served and everything:

“How much is it, sir?”

“This much—he said.”

So he went on his way, but he didn’t ask anything, instead he went on his way. Over there, the diner’s owner reached him and told him:

“Come back, young man—he said—You have been the salvation of that woman—he said—because you did not ask why she was tied up, nor why she was that thin, nor nothing.”

“I don’t have to ask what is none of my business.”

Because the tale went like that, see? The old man’s tale, the advice he was given.

So the chains were removed and the woman was given freedom.

Okay, it happened and he went on his way. Then he arrived to the city and said:

“Over there, the soldiers are giving instructions—he said—and they are the ones from the King’s army. I am going to see if there are uniforms and weapons in that warehouse.”

So he went to ask and he told a Chinese man:

“Aren’t there weapons and uniforms?”

“There are uniforms, Weapons no. Put on a uniform—he told him—and grab a mallet—he told him—take it and go to the line.”

He left with his mallet and uniform, because the troops were already there and every move the troops did, he did them too.

After that, the king’s daughter was charmed and the king had said that whoever made her laugh, would marry her. So when he was on the top, he said:

“What are you laughing about?”—the king told his daughter.

“See... I am laughing about that fool that is doing those movements with that stick—she said—there in the lines—she told him.”

“Call him over.—the king said to a server—bring me the one with the stick—he said—here I am giving an instruction.”

When he arrived, he told him:

“I am at your service my king—he said—what do you need me to?”

“You are marrying my daughter—the king told him—because it is the king’s word. I have said that the one that makes her laugh, I’m marrying her to him.”

“Sir—Juan told him—I am poor—he said—I don’t have the resources to marry your daughter.”

“No... You are marrying her and it’s over.”

The king’s word, right?

So they married. They got married.

At night, he came and told the woman, the girl and the man, Juan the Plowman:

“Lay down Juanito—he told him—it’s already night and you don’t go to bed.”

But... the next part is that the girl was enchanted, a snake arrived to sleep with her. So him, according to the advices that the man at the foot of the rock told him, he went grabbing them, see? And he grabbed the machete, and sharpened it, a very sharp machete.

So... one finger of stripping and he stayed at the front of the palace, where the girl slept until twelve am, that the snake started creeping in, but a large snake, to sleep with the girl so he attacks it with the machete.

By the way, another day in the early morning, the king was in the mouth of the snake, the man... woke up early and he said:

“Juan—he said—Juan, get up”

But he thought that the snake had already eaten the king. (He thought that the snake had already eaten him). Yes, and to compliment him, he called him. Yes, he called him by his name. So he said:

“What the hell do you want, sir the king?—he said.”

“Fuck, the man is indeed alive!—he said—the wild beast didn’t eat him—he said.”

An the man takes those pieces of the snake and removes it from him.

“Okay, come in—he told him.”

So he saw the big hanger with the snake there killed.

So:

“Damn—he told him—you are man—the king said—Never imagined you could be alive—he said—but in the claws of the wolf.”

“Oh, you think of it like that—he said—but no, *hombre casado con mucho cuidado*.”

“So here you have the keys—he told him—and enjoy the money that is in the closet and everything.”

So, he told him:

“Don’t celebrate what was not hard for you—he told him—The only thing I need are twelve *reales*—he said.”

“Twelve *reales* for what?” He said.

“To get to where I used to work.—He told the king—Now I am married, so I’m leaving.”

“Here are the twelve *reales*—the king told him—don’t you want to take some money from there?—he said.”

“No—he answered—I don’t celebrate what was not hard for me.”

So, he went on his way.

By the way, he arrived where he used to work, and he told his old boss:

“Good morning, boss”

“Good morning, my son—he told him—Are you back?”

“Yes—he answered.”

“And do you want your old job?”

“Yes.”

“Your oxes are there—the boss told him—get to work.”

By the way, because he was Juan the Plowman, he was fine with just some tortillas, a piece of chese and a coffee that they brought him as breakfast, see?

The sever of the boss came and brought him breakfast.

“Tell the boss that times change—he told her—that now I am no longer Juan the Plowman, but a man of the king’s palace. I am the king’s son-in-law.”

So, he says that the boss told the server when she told him that:

“Juan must wash his mouth because those words are not to be told. He could be hanged!”

So, the server left once again and brought Juan some coffee and food.

“The boss says that he needs you to have a talk with you.”

So, he went and the boss told him:

“Is it true that you said this and that?”

“Yes—he said—I said it because it is true—he said.”

“If it is not true, I loose my farm—he told him in closed doors—and you loose two years worth—he told him.”

“It’s okay—Juan answered.”

“Let’s see, two layers that write a testimony, the act—he told him..”

“No—Juan said—I am going to call the king myself.”

So, he grabbed the phone and called the king. A while later... the daughter, Juan the Plowman’s wife, in front and in the back, the King.

So, when the boss saw that:

“Fuck, quickly, take a census of how many animals there are, the amount of terrain there and furniture that are in the house of this man, because it is mine.”

Because the king had lawyers and lawyers, they lifted everything and gave Juan an old donkey so that he takes his last *chamarritas* that he had, see? So that he didn’t leave without anything.

So the rich left, like a poor man, once again.

“Oh, leave already—he told him—this remains as Juan the Plowman.”

The label there: “Juan the Plowman”.

“And I’m leaving to my other old job—he said—I’m calling again.”

“Okay.” The boss told Juan.

So, they left to the city, with the other boss and Juan told him:

“I am going where my other boss—he said—I’m going to become richer—he said.”

So, he left.

“Take your breakfast, Juan—the boss said—Before you go plow the oxes.”

The other boss.

“Take your breakfast, Juan—he said—then grab some coffee.”

And they put some coffee there, immediately, see?, like a moor.

So, he said:

“But, look boss—he said—I don’t want this breakfast.

“Why not Juan?” The boss answered.

“Because now I have other customs—Juan said—because I am the king’s son-in-law—he said—the princess is my wife.”

So, yes, the boss burst out laughing and said:

“Clean your mouth Juan—he said—because you could fall in the wolf’s claws.”

“No sir—Juan said—Because I am telling you the truth.”

He hasn’t even started to work when...

“Would you like me to call—he suggested—the king, with the princess?”

“Oh, no.—he said—you have to bet—he said—bet something first—he said—your two years of work, and I’ll bet my farm on closed doors—he said—if it is not true, you loose your two years, and if it is true, I loose my... farm on closed doors.”

“Okay.” Juan said.

Juan telephoned and, a while later, the committee came, and in front... the girl.

“We have already lost—the rich man said to the woman, to his wife, see? We have already lost it, because the king is coming—he said.”

“Ha! That man has already won.”

Then...

“Here we have another manor from another farm—he said to the king—with the bet that if not, if I wasn’t married to your daughter, I would lose two years of work, and if not, on closed doors, all this is mine—he said—Write an act here and record that this farm is Juan the Plowman’s property.

Then the king went back and Juan became rich and here I am in poverty...”

1.3 The Three Advices

“This tale is about a marriage, that formed in those times, filled with joy... after those happy times, the honeymoon, the husband decided to forget his home. And he left, without a destination, leaving his wife... like we say... with child behind.

He traveled for a long time, through various places and could not find a place to stay. But finally, in a farm, the owner offered him a job and he accepted.

When talking about the conditions of the job, they went like this: He could get paid weekly, monthly, yearly or how he wanted it. The referred man in our tale accepted that he got paid when he leaves the place. It was like that that he started to work, in the farm, for very years, until thirty years passed, the man decides to get back home, knowing that he would find his wife, without a doubt, with another man, because he had this time away from home.

The owner of the farm wasn't that surprised when he told him that he was leaving and he needed to be paid for his work all these thirty years. So the owner made the offer to pay him in cash or with three advice.

The man in the story, the worker, thought that that advice must be very good, see? And he decided to get paid... for twenty years, but to be given also one advice. And here is the first advice, given to this man as payment for ten years of service and it went like this:

Don't ask what is none of your business.

With this advice, the man noticed that it was useless because he had in his hand, two unknown people. And he asked only to get paid ten years and another advice. Here is the other advice, he said:

Don't walk on the pathways.

But he noticed that his desire wasn't complete, so again he says:

“See, sir, you know, I don't have money, if you prepare something for my way, give me the last advice and you have paid me the thirty years.”

An the farm owner, with pleasure, says:

“So the last advice, friend, is:

Don't go with the first [impression].

The next day, the traveler went on his way, back to his hometown, knowing that his wife, undoubtedly, already had another man. But in the way, he found some men that told him:

“No one can go here without stopping to eat at this place.”

The man told them he couldn't because he didn't have any cents on him, but it was impossible, he had to go with them, and when he sat down, he was served a magnificent breakfast, with the only condition that any bone, from the meat he was served, were to be given to a girl, that was at the foot of the table, chained up. When he tried to ask why the girl was that way, he brought to his mind the advice that costed him ten years worth of work, and it was like that that he could avoid asking during that day. But the case got longer, three days, no one had to ask why so that they could get the price and the girl's punishment stopped. After he was taken to that place, they didn't allow him to leave, it was then then it happened, more individuals arrived and then they disappeared from the table, they weren't even served breakfast, and he didn't see them, but he did hear moans coming from a distance, but he didn't understand what was going on in that house. It was like that, that after three days of service, he comes back to the same service for him, with the same recommendations. After those three days, the king arrived and he told him:

"Friend, why after three days of service here, you haven't asked why this girl is tied here, in this place?"

"Sir—he tells him—because it doesn't matter to me?"

"Very good—the king says—You have been the owner of this prize, for a long time you have been assigned to this place, you have thirty loads of money to your disposition, come here and see all that have died here, for asking what was not their business."

When the king opened a door, he saw lots of bodies, and some were even still alive, living their last moment.

The next day, he left with the load of money, thirty mules that the man gave him and the servants and went his way to his hometown. When he arrived to a place, he noticed there was a pathway that lead immediately to a town, and the main road was way too long. However, the servants said:

"Friend, let's go on the pathway, then we go the other side."

But he answered:

"No, let's go on the main road."

The servers were insistent, but he knew that other advice was "Don't go on the pathways", that costed him ten years of work, and made the ones with the load of money, go on the main road. It was like that that he arrived to the neighboring town, but his surprise was huge because he found the police chief and he says:

"Friend, where did you pass with that load of... loaded beasts?"

"Through the main road."

“Well, God made it—he says—because in the center of that pathway, there is a band of thieves that we can’t terminate them. There, the one that passes, falls. You couldn’t have gone through with all that.”

The second time it saved his life, he saved the money with the second piece of advice.

But the third one remained, that was about getting to his hometown on the third day. He was really annoyed because he carried money.

On the third day, already in his town, he went and deposited the money, in a special place, he sent the servers back and at night, he went to his house, the one he had abandoned thirty years ago, and through the key hole, he saw that, in fact, his wife was having dinner with a young man that seemed to be around thirty years of age.

Enraged by that sight, he took his gun out, to kill the person he was looking at, that according to him in that moment, was his wife’s second husband. But then the thought of the third advice he was given, that was ten years worth of work, and was *Don’t go with the first* [impression] and could calm, he went to his room, where he couldn’t fall asleep all night. The next day, at five am, he was knocking again at his wife’s house. The wife came out immediately:

“Sir—she said—what can I do for you?”

He says:

“Please, could you sell me a cup of coffee?”

“Right now, I’m starting the fire.—the lady says”

She didn’t recognize him either.

“But, come in—she said-“

“Thank you very much—he said.”

He came in and sat down, he started to see the cape, the hat, the shoes, the boots, everything from that man that was there in the house.

“Ma’am—he says—Hasn’t your husband woke up?”

“No, sir—she answers—My husband abandoned me, when I was already pregnant with my child, my son—she said—that now is the priest of the place—she said.”

So he started to realize that, if he went with the first [impression], he would have killed his own son. Then the lady finished breakfast and said:

“I’m going to wake up my son—she said—because he is the priest and it is almost seven, he must lead mass.

So she left, came up to her child and told him:

“My son, it is time for you to get up, I’m going to introduce you to a man that is here in the house, I had to make him breakfast, he came very early.

“After that, he greeted him. However, in that moment, the veil was lifter and until this moment right now, they are hugging.”

4. The prize of the three advice

“This was a man that had three children. He was already old and he finally told his children:

“It is good that you each go on your own, because I’m old and I can’t provide for you any longer. It is necessary that you learn a job, and for that, I’m giving you your inheritance. So to the first, What did you want me to give you? I had thought of three thousand quetzales [the current Guatemalan currency.] or three advices, what do you want?”

“Father, I want... three thousand quetzales.”

“Okay, the next one, you, what would you want? The three thousand or advices?”

“Well, I want the three thousand quetzales.”

“And you?—he asks the youngest—what do you want? The three thousand or advices?”

“Well, me, father, I want the advices.”

“Let’s see my dear sons, the two oldest leave and stay there listening your inheritance that I’m going to give you. Sit down child. Because three words I’m going to tell you and that is your inheritance, you are going to take good care of them and appreciate them, you are going to put them in practice. The first: Don’t walk on pathways. The second: Don’t ask what is none of your business. The third: Don’t go with the first [impression].”

“Well dad. It is enough with that one. I say good-bye to you, see you.”

“Okay son, have one hundred quetzales so that you can start to live.”

And that is how they said goodbye... the three sons. And they left, they went of their way all together, they arrived to a big tree and the oldest said:

“Well, my dear brothers, it isn’t good that we leave all together, so each has to see what we are going to do... how are we going to do with our luck, to see if we are going to be successful or not.”

The oldest said:

“I am leaving here. There is a shorter path to get to the city, so I’m going to get rich, I’m going to put some businesses, and I want to get there soon.”

And he left through the pathway. The thieves were watching him closely, they knew he carried lots of money and they saw him going through a pathway. So they robbed him, took his money and took his head. The first died there.

The second left, turned around and went through a big paddock, a road passed through it, where cars passed, on one side there was cattle and on the other side too. But the mystery was that the grass was very big and green, where the cattle were thin and they almost fell to the ground, because they didn't have the strength to walk. The other side had little to no grass, there were more stones and dirt. The cattle were very fat, they were a bomb how they looked; but the youngest came and passed through it, and he saw the very thin cattle with food and the other side with the fat cattle and barely any food; but he stopped and wanted to ask the herdsman that was there, but because he carried the inheritance, that was the three advices, he didn't ask because it was none of his business and kept walking.



Footer of the picture: Mr. Cesáreo Marroquín, from the town of Conacastón, municipality of Sanarate, department of El Progreso, narrates the uncountable tales that he inherited as tradition. (Fotografía: Manuel Guerra Caravantes.)

When he came out of the paddock, he got screamed at and told:

“Hey...! Young man! Why don't you ask about this mystery? You see that the cattle are dying where there is grass and where it barely is, the cattle is fat.”

“Sir, I can't ask what is none of my

business.”

“Well, you have won the lottery. From here you take two thousand pesos.” [Translator's note: Sometimes, people use peso as a slang for quetzal.]

And like that, he took two thousand quetzales from that mystery well kept there. And he kept walking.

Then, there was a big hotel, because he soon reached the city, and there was a big hotel, where they had good service and didn't charge a cent. So he saw the sign, the second, see? And said:

“Here we are...”

Well, he had little money, because he only tried to eat well, live a soft life, but didn't have an income: he didn't think of working, but his money was diminishing. So he said:

“Here to this hotel, I came here starving. Here the food is given out, so I'm going to eat here.”

And he entered. Those delicious food were tempting, but in the middle of the diner, there was a woman tied by the neck with a chain. So food was served and the girls serving and the man told him:

“You know what? You have to throw your leftovers to this woman, even the bones.”

So, the man felt sad seeing the thin, tied up woman and couldn't bear any longer the curiosity so he stood up and asked the hotel's owner and told him:

“Look sir, could you tell me why you don't give food to that woman? I would give her half of my food.”

“Well, because you have said, here is the answer.”

And it was that they got hanged, they cut their heads off and they were in a ditch, the heads of all those that asked.”

Well, eventually, the youngest passed there too and saw the sign that said: Food here is given out.” And he said:

“I'm going to enter.”

And he did.

“May I get served?”

“Of course, young man—he was told—but the only thing is that you have to give your leftovers, even the bones, to that woman.”

The man stared at her. The woman only looked at them and crouched sadly. So the youngest ate, he stood up and told the owner:

“How much do I owe you?”

“Nothing sir, food here is given out.”

“Thank you very much. Goodbye. —he said and left.”

So, he was called, with so much joy, by the woman that was tied up and the hotel's owner.

“Come here, young man, why don't you ask about this mystery trapped in here? You see this poor woman tied up by the neck and given leftovers. Why didn't you ask?”

“Sir, because I must not ask what is none of my business.”

“Well, you have won—the woman said—I’m a princess and I was being punished until a man came that didn’t ask about my punishment, that man would save my life and I would marry him. And I’m going to give you my inheritance that belongs to me, for saving my life. And too, if you want too, I could marry you.”

And like that, the young man received the princess inheritance, and he married her. He carried a lot of money already and he was given beasts loaded with money and he carried them because he was already successful and he decided to go home, searching for his parents.

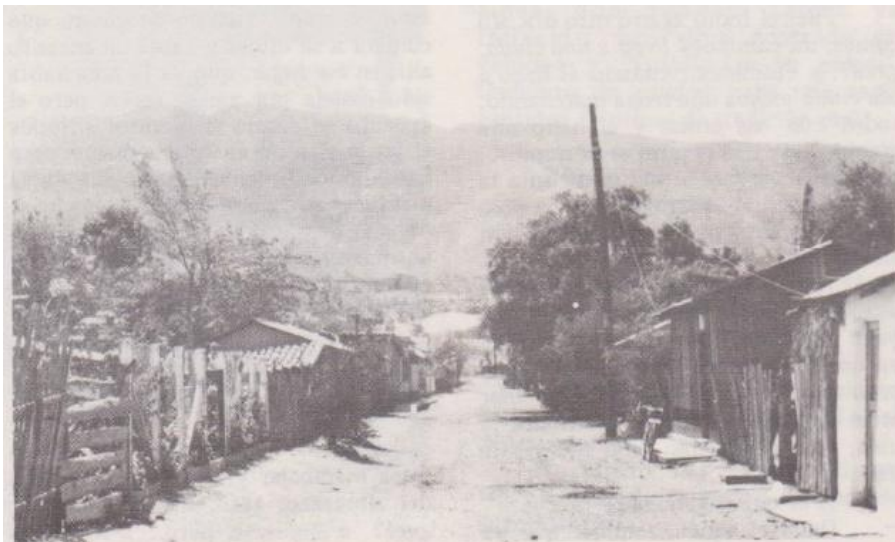
When he got home, his mom... was in a hammock sitting, and in her arms, she had a young man, that she kissed and hugged, so he said:

“I will take the life of that man, because he is not my dad and I don’t even know him and he is hugging my mother and I will not allow that. I’m going to do that, I’m going to kill him.—he said.”

So he took out a gun. When he remembered the advice his dad told him that he should never go with the first [impression]; so, he put back his gun and spoke to his mother:

“Mother—he said—do you remember me?”

“Oh, my son! You are my son indeed! See this boy that kisses me and hugs me? This was the baby that was three months old when you left. He is your youngest brother.”



Footer of the picture:
Geography of a town in the East of Guatemala, Main Road of Sanarate, El Progreso, residency of many storytellers of popular literature. (Fotografía: Celso A. Lara Figueroa).

And it was a huge joy. And... the young man gave her the news, that he brought wealth to make a palace and make her happy, so that she died made a princess.

This was the happiness of the mother and the prize of the three advices.”

1.5 The Indian, The Charm and the Advice.

“There was a poor Indian that worked many years for a boss, see? And with the years, he worked three halves, for his work time and he got fired. He went his way, walking leagues and leagues, finally he reached a mountain, where there was only one house and an individual rocking on a hammock, there he let him stay for the night. So he said:

“Sit there, Indian—he said.”

He sat on a railing and... he asked for advice, see? To the house owner and he tells him:

“I’m giving you a tale, I’m telling you a tale, but if you give me one half.”

So, he told him:

“Tell me then...friend—the indian said.”

So he told him: “When you go through a road, don’t walk on the pathways, don’t ask what is none of your business, when you arrive to a place, do what you see, when you marry, take care of your wife.”

So the Indian went on his way, the other day, without eating, and he arrived to a city, see? And so, when he arrived, there were some troops marching, everyone with their guns and he found an old broom and put it over his shoulder, but because the king had said to his daughter that if there was someone, something, she liked and made her laugh, he would marry her to him. So, see? Because that man found the broom and the old man had said “When you arrive to a place, do what you see.” So, he grabbed the old broom, and he put it over his shoulder and started marching behind everyone else, see? And the girl started to laugh, the king came out and told her:

“What are you laughing about, girl?”

“Seeing that man that is marching—she said—behind everyone—she said—with a broom—she said.”



Footer of the picture: House and atmosphere in the riverside of the Motagua River in the department of El Progreso, in the East of Guatemala. (Fotografía: Celso A. Lara Figueroa).

That caused her so much happiness, see? So, the king says:

“That is... your husband, daughter—he said—bring him to me.”

And they brought him over, but he was scared, thinking that he was going to get shot, and not that they were going to dress him up... they gave him good shoes, good clothes and they took him to the marriage; but because that one, see? Told him too, that when he got married to take care if his wife, and there was a charm there, in that place, that the girl was already married before a few times, but the charm ate the husband; so, he didn't sleep all night, but there were good guns there on the table, when at midnight a huge animal fell, see? And then, he grabbed the gun and shot the animal six times and that lot fell to the floor, that huge animal. Well, because he killed it; the next day, the king was more than happy to throw a big party.

After two days, the Indian came and he put on the same suit he carried... of a poor man, and left to a farm to work, and he says, and at lunch time: ding-dong, the bell, see? The lunch bell, but everyone was given a tortilla in their hands, so the Indian says:

“I am not a dog, boss, I am of good table and good food, not like you are giving food to these people, as if they are dogs, we don't do that.”

“Oh, Indian—the boss told him—today you came to work and also with impositions?—he said.”

“No—he said—Look—he said—let's bet something—he said—you give me a farm—he said—on closed doors, if tomorrow, the king's daughter doesn't come to bring me lunch here—he challenged.”

“Oh Indian, don’t say that because the King could get you shot, man—the boss says.”

So the next day, see? When he arrived there, he tells the princess:

“Tomorrow you are going to bring me lunch—he said.”

“Oh, but how is that going to be—she says and starts to cry and went to complain with her dad, see? With the king. So, the king said:

“Yes, yes my daughter—he said—you are going to go, because he is your husband—he said.”

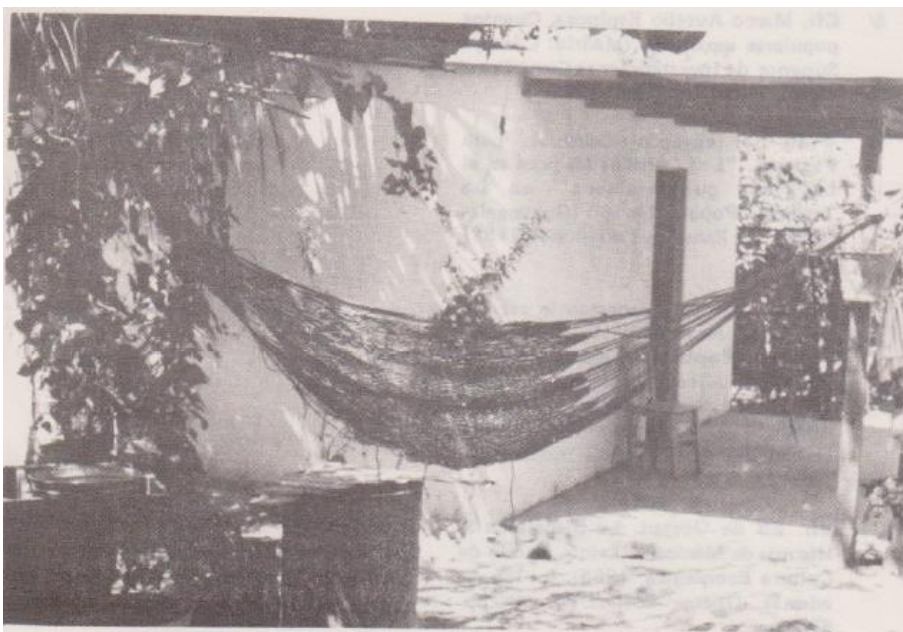
So he left... Oh, that same night, the king goes his way to the farm and the next day around lunch time, through those roads to the farm; because when the sun rose up, the road was already paved... and they entered then... those roads. The boss was left an awe, see? Of seeing all that, but because they had made a paper, even with a witness and everything, the Indian kept everything... with his farm, relaxed, because it wasn’t hard for him. At lunchtime, he ringed the bell and gathered the people, he put, then, tables and served them a good lunch, and there was me, in the middle, and from there I came here.”

2. Biographic outline of the storytellers (15)

2.1 Felipe Marroquín Aldana.

Mr. Felipe is 60 years old; he was born in the town of Santa Rita in the municipality of Progreso (El Progreso). He attended two years of school. He became blind at the age of twenty seven, before this incident he worked in agriculture, with his lost vision, he moved to Gualán and Mazatenango, before returning to the town of Santa Rita.

He lives alone, in a house which construction was a gift from the governor, shortly after the San Gilberto 1976 earthquake, in land that was given by his sister.



Footer of the picture: In the nights and times of rest, the oral literature rises. Traditional home of the East of Guatemala, Town of Santa Rita, El Progreso. (Fotografía: Manuel Guerra Caravantes).

2.2 Juan Crisóstomo García

Mr. Juan is 65 years old. He was born in Jalpatagua, department of Jutiapa. He never went to school. He says that “he learned his first scribbles in the army”, where he was sergeant “of the aircraft runway”. He also worked in the *Guarda de Hacienda* and in the term of Jorge Ubico (1933-1944), was a police officer. He always worked, like now, in agriculture. Currently, he lives with his daughter.

For the past thirty years, he lives in the San José Port, Escuintla.

The stories, Mr. Juan Crisóstomo says, he learned them in Jalpatagua, when he was a child. He isn't an extraordinary storyteller but he has a great knowledge of the types of tales in the popular literature of the East of Guatemala.

2.3 María Lucila del Cid widow of Mejía.

Mrs. María was born in the town of La Montañita, municipality of Sansare, department of El Progreso. She is 50 years old. She never attended school, but she knows how to read and write, because her mother, Josefa del Cid, taught her the first letters. She continued learning in a store in Sansare where she worked. She lived in La Montañita, El Progreso, for forty years. Later she moved to Piedras Blancas, Chaparrón, Jalapa, and she was also during a few years in the main city of Sanarate. She has worked a few times, given that she took care of her husband, and now lives with her daughter.

Extraordinary storyteller, she learned her tales from her mother and from the women she has had friendship with. She also likes to tell them to the children or when “she is asked to”.

2.4 Cesáreo Marroquín

Mr. Cesáreo was born and still lives in the hamlet of El Conacastón, of the municipality of Sanarate, department of El Progreso. He currently is 54 years old. He never went to school and has almost never left his department, because he has lived in the municipality of Morazán for a few years.

Currently he works in trade, in a store of his property. He learned the tales from an old man that “knew a lot” in the hamlet, Mr. Telésforo Letona, already passed. He keeps telling them at wakes and “when he gets asked”. Storyteller of quality, he knows a vast amount of pieces of oral tradition.

2.5 José Ignacio de Paz Manrique

Mr. José is 73 years old. He was born in the municipality of Sansare, department of El Progreso. He attended school until second grade. Tailor as profession, he lives selling fabrics and tailor suits for men in the entire department.

He learned the tales from an uncle, brother of his mother, of name Juan Manrique.

Very schematic storyteller, he masters almost all types of tales, characters and places of the East of Guatemala.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

1. We can define the folkloric tale as “anonymous literary work, of a relatively short extension that narrates fictional events and lives in variants in oral tradition.” Cfr. Susana Chertudi, **El Cuento Folklórico**. (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1967), p9. On the other part, Yolanda Salas de Lecuna thinks, surrounding the folkloric tale, that “In its oral form of narration, it reflects on one side, the diverse and meaningful facets of practical cultural beliefs and it is a fictional expression form, where the inventiveness and imagination play a determinant role.” Yolanda Salas de Lecuna, **El Cuento Folklórico en Venezuela** (Caracas, Venezuela: Biblioteca de la Academia de la Historia, 1985) p,63.
2. The oral literatura, as part of popular culture, is subject to the economic and social problematic that determines it in last resort. On the other hand, popular literature cannot be studied in an abstract, but inside a solid society, as a specific historical process, an unrepeatable one.

3. To learn more about the topic, see, Susana Chertudi. **Cuentos Folklóricos de la Argentina** (segunda serie). (Buenos Aires: Instituto nacional de Antropología, 1964) pp. 9-11.
4. In this sense, Yolanda Salas de Lecuna thinks that the folkloric tale is an expression, in this aesthetical transposition, of a world vision. She highlights through her analysis, that all forms of social behavior, beliefs and present thoughts in the community where the tale is produced. However, she remarks that we must not pretend “to see in the tales a mechanical reflex of a culture and its practices, nor an ethnographical reconstruction from the narrations”. Yolanda Salas de Lecuna, op. cit. p.63. Therefore, we must take into account the socioeconomic contextualization of the region where the traditional narration is produced and transmitted. Cfr, about it, María Ana Portal, **Cuentos y mitos en una zona mazateca** (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1986), pp. 81-95.
5. George Foster. **Cultura y Conquista**. (México: Universidad Veracruzana, 1962), pp. 51-70.
6. Stith Thompson. **El Cuento Folklórico**. (Caracas, Venezuela: Ediciones de la Biblioteca de la Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1972), p.48.
7. For the types of animal tales in Guatemala, refer to Celso A. Lara Figueroa, “Tío Conejo y Tío Coyote en la literatura popular guatemalteca” in **La Tradición Popular** No. 25 (Guatemala: Centro de Estudios Folklóricos, 1979), pp 1-9 and the published by the same autor in **Cuentos Populares de Guatemala** (primera serie). (Guatemala: Centro de Estudios Folklóricos, 1982) pp, 3-34.
8. Cfr. Marco Aurelio Espinoza. **Cuentos populares españoles**. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1946) Tomo 2, pp. 320-350.
9. Vid., for example, Celso A. Lara Figueroa, “Los Caballos Mágicos en el folklore guatemalteco” in **La Tradición Popular** No. 40 (Guatemala: Centro de Estudios Folklóricos, 1982), pp. 1-24.
10. Cfr. About it, the interesting study of María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, **El Cuento Popular y otros ensayos**. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1976), and in particular the study dedicated to the function of the traditional tale in the Middle Ages, pp. 109-122.
11. Cfr. Elí de Gortari. **La Ciencia en la Historia de México** (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1963), p. 126, and also, George Foster, op. Cit. Pp. 62-64.
12. Cfr. Miguel León Portilla. **Las literaturas precolombinas de México**. (México: Editorial Pormaca, 1964), pp. 7-31.
13. Stith Thompson, op. Cit. P. 223.
14. Ibid.

15. For reasons of space, the information here recorded is the minimum necessary. The area of oral literature has a life diary of each one of these traditional narrators and is in disposition in the site of the Centro to be consulted. It is the same case for technical details surrounding the tales: records, transcriptions, compilers and transcribers.