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TRADITIONS OF GUATEMALA



**SAN CARLOS DE GUATEMALA UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR FOLKLORE STUDIES**

TRADITIONS OF GUATEMALA

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LEGEND OF THE HILLS AND THE CORN

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INTRODUCTION

The *Q'eqchi'* (a Mayan indigenous group from Guatemala) indigenous people possess beautiful stories and legends that, to this day, remain a significant example of the high level of literary development they achieved.

Due to the lack of a proper and adequate writing system of their own in recent centuries, they have preserved these stories only through oral tradition, passing them down from generation to generation.

Unfortunately, this shortcoming has led to the permanent loss of numerous legends. Adding to this is another negative factor becoming increasingly evident among the younger generations, who are gradually losing the affection and interest for their stories, traditions, and customs.

The legends that are still known today persist almost exclusively among elderly people and have suffered a decline in their literary quality, as they are no longer told in the elegant, elevated, and pure *Kekchí* language of the past. This language has been undergoing qualitative deterioration due to its blending with Spanish, which is displacing rarely used words and impoverishing the *Kekchí* vocabulary.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to compile, preserve, and translate these legends, which will become a valuable legacy for scholars of future times. Perhaps this effort will also awaken interest in saving the last remaining values of what was once a refined culture. We must be grateful to the indigenous man Tiburcio Caal, who narrated in due time the legend “The Hills and the Corn.”

Previous publications and translations, in Spanish and English, have already been made, but that does not prevent more from being done so that it can be known and read by a greater number of people.

This translation has been adjusted to match the exact meaning of the *Kekchí* version, even if this results in a somewhat less elegant Spanish version.

Guatemala, January 14th, 1969

FIRST PART

Naleb c'ulbil que-cután ban r elcanquil ix rabín Xucaneb.	What happened on the day when the daughter of <i>Xucaneb</i> was taken.
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Sa ix vuaclijic Xucaneb, caxal eclá, qui r-il ma aní ix rabín sa ix vuaribal.	When <i>Xucaneb</i> rose, very early, he saw that his daughter was not in her room.
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Qui patzoc re-eb aj c'anjel,
ma xe r-il na ru chalén
saleucejic.

He questioned the servants
to see if they had seen her
since dawn.

Eb aán qu-eb ix ye nac inc'á.
Qu-eb laj ix siquí yalacbar, ut
mamín qu-eb ix tau.

They told him they had not.
They searched everywhere,
but could not find her.

Ma aní aj chic vuan.
Numtajenac ix josquil
Xucaneb ban ix sachic ix
rabín, qui taclá ix boc'bal-eb
aj usquil tacchí.

She was gone.
Xucaneb's anger was
extremely great due to the
loss of his daughter, and he
summoned his trusted
advisors.

Aín-eb ix c'abá:
Tzul Pan-Suj, Tzul Quec Vuaj,
Tzul Ma Pucúlm, Tzul Chi
Sujay, Tzul Chi Chén.

Here are their names:
Hill Pan-Suj, Hill Quec Vuaj,
Hill Ma Pucúlm, Hill Chi
Sujay, Hill Chi Chén.

Eb aín chi junpat qu-eb chal.
Xucaneb qui él ix c'ulbal-eb,
sachsó ix chool, ra ra ix c'aux.

They arrived promptly.
Xucaneb went out to receive
them; he was devastated, his
sorrow was immense.

Qui cutanobesí ru-eb nac
sachenac ix loclaj rabín, chi
incá na ix náu bar ta qui
canaac.

He explained the loss of his
dearly beloved daughter,
without knowing where she
might be.

Aán ut ix yalal nac xin taclá e
bocbal chan, re nac te ye
garú t-in banú.

This is the reason why I have
called you, so that you may
say what is advisable to do.

Qui chac'oc Ma Pucúlm, tixil
tzuul, aj balac, yaj, puch,
mamá, c'upc'ú ri'x ban ix

The old man *Pucúlm*, an
ancient hill, a liar, sick, and
swollen, *ban ix yoám, aj naaj*
sa ix yolajíc, who by birth

yoám, aj naaj sa ix yolajíc,
qui-ix ye re aj Xucaneb:

belonged to the very place,
then said to *Xucaneb*:

Taclá ix hitbal, jovuí risinquil
caibac la chabil tz'í vuan
avué, ta ye eb-re nac co-eb
riquín qu echcabal vuan sa ix
yanc saquír riquín i' ic.

Set loose, and also send out,
two of the excellent dogs you
own, and tell them to go
among our neighbors who
live all around.

Vui la tz'í naqueb suquí chac,
la rabín ma aní arán; vui la tz'í
incá naqueb c'ulún, retalil
nac' la rabín arán vuan.

If your dogs return, it will
mean your daughter is not
there; but if the dogs do not
return, it will be a sign that
your daughter is there.

Eb aín qu-eb ix c'utú naleb
qu-ix yé ma Pucúlm, jocán ac
Xucaneb qu-ix boc' ix tz'í
caíb.

The others agreed with the
advice given by the old man
Pucúlm; therefore, *Xucaneb*
called his two dogs.

Ma vuá tzacal tz'í ta: cac coj li
jun, ut li jun hix.

They were not truly dogs:
one was a young lion, and the
other a tiger.

Qu-eb ix taclá-eb chi ixi
banunquil jo junxilaq qu-ix yé
li puchej mamá.

And he sent them to carry out
what the swollen old man
had previously advised.

Naqueb c'ulác-eb a tz'í aín sa
tzuul qu-eb taclá vui, incá
chic qu-eb él chac, toj sa ix
cab cután.

The so-called dogs arrived at
the hills to which they had
been sent, and they did not
return until the second day.

Chi ix cab cután, maj í ac ix
vuaclíc Xucaneb sa ix vuarib,
ac yoqueb ix tz'í r uibeninguil.

On the second day, before
Xucaneb had even risen from
his bed, the dogs were there,
waiting for him.

Qui vualc'íc Xucaneb, qui boc
ix tz'í caíb, re ix patzbal c'arú
qu-eb ril chac; lix tz'í qu-eb ix
ye:

Xucaneb got up and called
both dogs to ask them what
they had seen; and the dogs
said to him:

La rabín ix Suj-quím x c'a táu
c'ojc'ó ben r a tzuul aj Quix
Mes. Incá c o chalc chi
junpat x maac bacbó ban aj
Quix Mes, ut c o r achab chi
ru cojyín, xú re nac ta náu
bar vuan a rabín.

We found your daughter
sitting beside *Quix Mes Hill*.
We could not return promptly
because *Quix Mes* tied us up
and did not release us until
nightfall, fearing that you
would find out where your
daughter is.

Xucaneb qui laj ix táu yalal
aín, ¿c'a qu-ix banú?

Xucaneb, understanding the
state of affairs, thought, what
would he do?

Qui tac'lá ix molc'anquíl
chijunil ix juncabal, qu-ix boc
aj calamjé, qu-ix boc aj
c'uch.

He ordered all his wealth to
be gathered, and he called
the earwig, and he called the
hawk.

Ayuuc riquín tzuul Sac Lech
chan: Yeomac re nac tin
tzamá r aj chi ru nac chi ix
c'ul chi c'ulá sa jun ix c'ulbal
pec chijunil lin juncabal.

He went with them to *Sac
Lech Hill* and said to them:
“Tell him that I ask him to
keep all my possessions
in one of his caves.”

Tzacal ix been ut iyaj ixím.
Chijunil lin vualc, chan,
xic'anel xul, jovui aj cahíb r
oc, na ix vuatesí r íb riquín a
ixím aán.

His goods and the corn seed,
all his belongings, he said:
animals, reptiles, as well as
four-legged creatures, and
that they should be
sustained with that corn.

Hithó nac che eb vuanc,
riquín aj Sac Lech re

They remained under the
care of *Sac Lech*,

nimanquíl r u ix quichebaal,
ruibeninguil nac tix taclá bi
chic ix c'ambal-eb.

adding to the forest's fauna,
awaiting the order to bring
them back.

X có li c'uch ruchben aj
calamjé re ix yebal ix
tac'lanquil-eb.

The *hawk* and the *earwig*
went off to deliver the
message.

Usilal sumen vui aj Sac Lech.

Sac Lech agreed favorably.

Toj hoonac Xucaneb qu-ix
molcá chijunil-eb ix xul r e
nac sa quial che-eb ix c'ám r
iquín aj Sac Lech, bi oob pay
chi ix ixím qu-ix c'ulá aj Sac
Lech.

Immediately, *Xucaneb*
gathered all his animals to be
taken to *Sac Lech*, along with
five different varieties of
corn, which he entrusted to
Sac Lech for safekeeping.

Sac Lech ix been aj tzaam re
Suj-Quím, rabín ix nimal
Xucaneb, anchal ix chool nac
qu-ix c'ulú ban c'a qui tzamá
chir ú, aabán incá qui ix náu
nac ix Suj-Quím qui elcá ban
aj sutuc aj Quix Mes.

Sac Lech was the main suitor
of *Suj-Quím*, daughter of the
great *Xucaneb*, and had
asked for her with all the
strength of his heart, yet at
that time, he did not know
that *Suj-Quím* had been
kidnapped by the foolish
Quix Mes.

Ac x lub Xucaneb r
uibeninguíl ix rabín, incá na
nac'hóc riquín chi ix catc', qui
taclá r itz'ín aj china Xucaneb
chi ix c'ambal.

Xucaneb grew tired of waiting
for his daughter's return,
as she did not come back to
him. So he sent his younger
brother, *Xucaneb the*
Younger, to bring her back.

A bán aj Quix Mes incá qui raj
quebal. Al china Xucaneb chi
r ilbal ix quetquetquil aj Quix

But *Quix Mes* refused to give
her up. Seeing *Quix Mes's*
arrogance, *Xucaneb the*

Mes, qui taclá ix josquil tz'í sa
ix ben.

Younger set his fierce dogs
on him.

Eb aj tz'í qu-eb ix paab, qu-eb
ix hoposí aj Quix Mes chi
mocó chi jocán qui r isí ix
rabín aj Xucaneb.

The dogs obeyed and
harassed *Quix Mes*,
but even then, he would not
return *Xucaneb's* daughter.

Qui suquí aj china Xucaneb,
qui ix ye re r ás.

Xucaneb the Younger
returned to report to his
brother.

Chi r-abinquíl Xucaneb,
numtajeñac qui pó.

Upon hearing this, *Xucaneb*
became terribly angry.

Qui taclá Xaán Abás r-
echcabal aj Quix Mes, vui sa
usilal, vui sa mausilal o chi r-
isinquil ix rabín.

He then sent the old woman
Abás, neighbor of *Quix Mes*,
to tell him that, whether
peacefully or by force,
he would take his daughter
back.

A ut xaán aán, aj naubal aán,
r ixaquil Ma Puclúm, qui ix
cauresí r-íb, qui ix c'ut r-íb sa
sebal chi ix ben aj Quix Mes,
ut aán sa junpat ix qué r-íb,
mac'á chic r u qui ix ye, caj
chic ix tzamanquil chi r u a
xaán nac aán ta ocsiinc eb re,
chi ru ix nimal tzuul Xucaneb.

And that old woman, wife of
the old man *Pucúlm*, upon
hearing this, got herself ready
and cleverly surprised *Quix Mes*.
He gave in at once and
no longer resisted when the
old woman offered to act as
mediator and present him as
a suitor before the great hill
Xucaneb.

Jocán qui banú li bitbitej ' tiix.
Ut Xucaneb qui c'ojlá ix chool
riquín r ilbal nac qui nac'hóc
ix sachal rabín chi ix catc', qui
ix cuy ix maac aj Quix Mes qui

Thus the kind little old
woman succeeded. And
Xucaneb was content, seeing
that the daughter he had lost
was approaching his side

elc'án re, qui náu jo chabil
hibej.

again, and he forgave *Quix Mes*, who had abducted her, upon learning that he would be a good son-in-law.

Chi ríx aán *Xucaneb* qui ix
boc chic aj calamjé jovuí aj
c'uch: X-numé in josquíl chi x
been aj *Quix Mes*, chan.
Ayu'c r-iquín tzuul aj *Sac*
Lech, yeomac re nac chi rix
eb aj vui lin xul chi c'ajsí li
quilá pay chi r u ixím, qui qué
chi ix c'ulá.

After that, *Xucaneb* once
again called upon the
scissors-tail and the hawk:
"My anger toward *Quix Mes*
has now faded," he said.
"Go, then, to the hill *Sac*
Lech, and tell him to return to
me, along with the animals,
the different species of maize
I entrusted to him."

Li cuch jovuí aj calamjé c o
eb ix banú taclanquil-eb.

The hawk and the scissors-
tail went to carry out the
task.

A ban tzuul *Sac Lech* qui
sach ix c'aux, ix ye: ¿Carú x
c'ulman nac na ix ye "x cotzc
lin josquil"?

But Hill *Sac Lech* was
troubled, and said: "What
has happened, since he says,
'my anger has passed'?"

Aj c'uch jobalvuí aj xalamjé
sumén: Yuvuá ix c'ulmán, ix
Suj-Quím qui r elc'á, ut chi rix
aán qui sumlá r iquín tzuul aj
Quix Mes, ut vuanqueb chi ix
catcj cavuá *Xucaneb*.

The hawk, as well as the
earwig, replied:
"It happened to your Lord
Father that his daughter *Suj-Quím*
was abducted, and as
a result, she married Hill *Quix*
Mes, and now they remain
with Lord *Xucaneb*."

A, ¿chan ix yalal nac aj *Quix*
Mes ix sumlá riquín lin raóm
ix *Suj-Quim*? ¿Chan aj
Xucaneb x banú a balac'quil

"Ah, how is it possible that
Quix Mes has married my
beloved *Suj-Quím*?
How could *Xucaneb* betray

aín, toj jo laín x been aj tzaam
r e ix rabín?

me, when I was the main
suitor for his daughter?"

E naleb incá cuyé, mac'á chic
na raj cajvui junac ec'ajunc.
"Yemac re nac rajaua us
c'amé chi xerimbil, chi ru
c'axtesimbil qui ix qué
c'ulaac".

This turn of events upset him,
and *Sac Lech* no longer
wanted anything, only to find
revenge. "Tell him (*Xucaneb*)
that I find it a perfect
occasion to destroy
everything he entrusted to
me."

¡R ixím qu-ix qué chi ix c'ulá,
laín tin muc' chi anajvuán,
chijunil-eb li xul cheeb cam'c
chi vuaxil, chi vuiejil, ma jaruj
chic ta r-il riquín r ú, ma jun
torolac' chic ixím!

"The corn he entrusted to
me, I will now hide at once,
and all the animals will die of
madness from hunger, and
nothing will ever be seen
again, not even a single grain
of corn!"

Aj xalamjé, jovuí aj c'uch ix
qué ix tac'lanquíl re Xucaneb.
Ut aín ix taclá ix boc'bal-eb aj
tacchrí, re nac eb ix ye c'arú
na x banú.

The earwig and the hawk
reported this to *Xucaneb*.
And he summoned his
counselors so they could
advise what should be done.

Chiru aj vui cután aán qui
taclá jun ix nimal vuiej sa ix
yaanc-eb chijunil a xul.

That very same day, *Sac Lech*
unleashed a great famine
upon all the animals.

Ac xe eb chichió x ban ix
tzocajíc. Eb chacouh, quiché
ac', haláu, jo chijunil-eb r
uchenb c o eb chi ix sic'bal ix
tzacaím, ut incá qu-eb ix tau.
Cajvui aán r ech c'ulub e li
yac.

And they grew desperate
from hunger. The wild boars,
peccaries, pacas, and all the
others went in search of
food, but found none. They
collapsed by the side of a
river.

A yac numtajikanac ix chuíl,
qu-eb r il ac siip ix sá.
¿Carú xa tzacá chac
chanqueb re, nac siip la sá
jovui chú a vu?

The ocelot gave off a strong
stench, and they saw that his
belly was full.

"What did you eat?" they
asked him. "Why is your belly
swollen and why do you
reek?"

Aj yac qui chac'oc:
"Vui siip lin sa, vui yoquín chi
qu'ix bac cabpa'cal sa ix
cabá taná li vuiej aj vui lin
coc nac x tzacá".

The ocelot replied: "If my
belly is swollen, and if I'm
burping from both ends, it
must be from hunger,
because I haven't eaten even
a crumb."

Aj patzonel qu-eb oc chi
seéc, qu-eb ix ye chi r ilbaleb
r íb ix taquenquil sa muc'mú
aj yictí aín, yal re ix naubal
c'arú ix tzacá. Qu-eb r íl nac x
có aj yac sa tzuul Sac Lech,
sa ix toon jun sacjonac vuan
vui jun mul tequén.

Those who questioned him
burst out laughing and
agreed to spy on him, to
secretly follow the liar and
find out what he was really
eating. And they saw that the
ocelot went toward the hill of
Sac Lech, to the foot of a
great rock where there was a
mound of leaf-cutter ants.

Chi c'aal, chi ocob naqueb él
naqueb oc sa jun r itzilal ix
sacjonac. Vui naqueb él vuan
r iic'. Yoqueb chi ix c'ambal
ixím sa eb ix mul.

Two or three of them (the
leaf-cutter ants) would come
out and enter through a crack
in the rock. As they came
out, they carried loads.
They were transporting corn
to the anthill.

Arán qui ix c'ojob r íb aj yac,
chi re ix bee eb aj tequén.

There, the ocelot lay down,
right in the path of the leaf-
cutter ants. And he began to

Qui oc chi ix macbal ixím chi
ru-eb aj ic'anel naque él sa ix
c'ulbal r íb sacjonac.

steal the corn from the
carriers as they exited the
crack in the rock.

Arán qu-eb ix táu a jun chool.
Anacvuan x at náu bar nac a
táu la vua, chanqueb. Mocó
c'a ta pe ru nac ix c'ux aj yac,
a pe ixím eb ix táu aj tequén
sa ix naajeb muc'bil vui x ban
tzuul Sac Lech.

And that's how the others
found out. "Now we know
where you get your food,"
they said to him. It was
nothing else the ocelot was
devouring but the corn he
found thanks to the leaf-
cutter ants, in the place
where the hill Sac Lech had
hidden it.

Saa, saa, eb ix chool eb a xul
riquín c'a r ú xe eb ix
cutanobres c o eb naque
quilc'ot chi ix num- sinquil
chi ru Xucaneb.

The animals were overjoyed
with what they had
discovered, and they hurried
off to inform Xucaneb.

Note: The text continues. Due to the translator's time constraints, we have not included it in full, but the second (and final) part will be offered in the next issue of the magazine. (Editor's note).