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An Ethnopoetic Approach to a Copala Triqui Myth Narrative

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1. Introduction

The theogony myth of the *Sun and the Moon* has been a familiar hallmark of Copala Triqui culture since its publications in 1899 by Valentini and in 1945 by Monzón. In 1977 Barbara Hollenbach, writing under the pen-name Elena, transcribed and translated four speakers' versions of the *Sun and the Moon* for the Mexican folklore journal *Tlalocan*. However, one of the principal shortcomings of the *Tlalocan* edition, but not necessarily of Hollenbach's own analysis, is that, despite the meticulous parsing for each of the four texts, they are presented in lengthy paragraph blocks, as if these *oral* texts were spoken like segments of written prose. Such a format would seem to undermine the poetic aspects of the spoken texts themselves although poetic features like parallel syntactic structures are still readily apparent. The following paper is a preliminary ethnopoetic analysis of the *Sun and Moon* myth, which will illustrate significant poetic and linguistic features of the *Sun and Moon* with selections from a newly recorded version of the myth. These features will then be compared to similar uses of poetic structure in other Mesoamerican languages, to better locate the *Sun and Moon* within the larger family of Mesoamerican literature.

2. Source Text

This paper is based on transcriptions of approximately seven minutes of text from a thirteen-minute recording of the *Sun and Moon*, narrated in Copala Triqui by Román Vidal López on September 23, 2003. Transcription and translation of the available text were facilitated with Mr. Vidal López's assistance from October 2003 to March 2004. Mr. Vidal López excluded self-interrupted errors in the narration, so while the transcript is not a complete representation of the entire text segment, it benefits from the speaker's own redaction. I have translated the verbs with the consistency for tense that Mr. Vidal López used for translating the narrative in English and Spanish, given that occasionally the Triqui aspect and the English tense do not seem to correspond. During the course of the transcription, Mr. Vidal López also included phrases or tones that were not originally recorded in the narrative but were meant to be, and these are indicated in parentheses in the present text examples. These examples are marked for their positions on the recording by minutes and seconds. I used PRAAT version 4.2.08 to determine pitch and tone contours from the recording. I assume responsibility for any errors in transcription or translation.

3. Phonemics and Orthography

Triqui belongs to the Mixtecan branch of the Oto-Manguean language family (Rensch 1976:184), and Copala Triqui is the dialect spoken in the vicinity of San Juan Copala in western Oaxaca, Mexico. Copala Triqui, like most Oto-Manguean languages, is tonal (Rensch 1976:51ff.), so one of the primary considerations for an adequate orthographic representation of the language is the indication of tone. Copala Triqui tone occurs across a five-tiered pitch spectrum. The pitch tiers for (1) are adapted from the averages of Hollenbach's data (1984: 73):

(1)

Tier	Pitch (Hz)
1	88
2	98
3	117
4	131
5	159

The tones occurring at tiers 1, 2, and 3 are fairly leveled and follow the same numeration. Tone 4, however, is voiced as a slight rise between tiers 3 and 4, and Tone 5 is even more markedly inclined, rising from tier 3 to 5. The other rising tone occurs between tiers 1 and 3, and is so designated as 13. Two tones are falling, both from the initial tier 3: the tone falling to tier 2 is ascribed a 32 tone, and the more sharply falling tone to tier 1 is ascribed as 31. The following eight tones are thereby represented: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 32, 31 (Hollenbach 1984:67,83). They are indicated for each syllable as superscript, e.g. /ʃkuu³/ or <xcuu³> 'animal'.

The consonants listed in (2) below, not including Spanish loan consonants like [p] and [b], are represented in the Copala Triqui phonemic system. Orthographic indications (<>) are given for those consonants and clusters not already represented with their respective IPA symbols.

(2)

	Labials	Dentals, Alveolars	Alveo-palatal	Velar	Labio- velar	Laryngeal
Stop		t, d		k <qu> <c>, g <gu> <g>	k ^w <cu>, g ^w <gũ>	? <'>
Fricative	β <v>	s, z	ʃ <zh>, ʒ <x>,			h <j>
Affricate		ts̄ <tz>, dʒ̄ <dy>	tʃ̄ <ch>, tʃ̄ <chr>			
Nasal	m	n		ŋ <ng>		
Glide			y	w <hu>		
Liquid		r, l				

The orthographic representation for /k/ will be <c> when preceding the vowels {a, o, u} and <qu> when preceding {e, i}. Similarly, the representation for /g/ will be <g> when preceding {a,

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o, u} and <gu> when preceding {e, i}. Several consonant clusters occur in the language, and these are represented with the corresponding orthography for each consonant, as in (3) below.

(3)
/ʃk^w a² ʔãʔ³/ <xrcua² 'an³> 'our grandmother'

Copala Triqui has five phonemic vowels: {a, e, i, o, u}. They occur as oral vowels, and, aside from /e/, can also be nasalized. Nasalized vowels appear as <V-n>, where the <n> is understood to be the nasalizing attribute but is not intended to be pronounced as a consonant. Long vowels are written as vowel pairs, as (4) illustrates.

(4)
/tʃũũ/ <chruun³> 'tree/wood'

In this instance the vowel is not only long but also nasalized—so represented with the <n> at the coda of this syllabic morpheme. Hollenbach (1984) provides a developed analysis of the phonetic and tonal systems of Copala Triqui.

For my text translations I will use the abbreviations listed in (5) below:

(5)	
V	vowel
3	third-person
sg	singular
M	masculine
Ve	verb
S	subject
PP	prepositional phrase
quant	quantifier
conj.	negative
comp.	completive
cont.	continuative
pot.	potential
pl.	plural
intens.	intensifier
decl.	declarative
dem.adj.	demonstrative adjective

4. Ethnopoetics in the *Sun and the Moon* Text

Any initial discussion of the function of poetics in language must begin with the principle that language is not solely a mechanism for the communication of information, but that language is a *cultural* practice that may entail multiple, even if implicit, dimensions: these can include socially organized interactions, culturally informed presuppositions, and emotionally affective intentions. The latter category is especially relevant for any discussion of the relationship between poetics and language.

Spoken language has numerous strategies for conveying the emotional import, or Jakobson's "emotive function," behind an utterance, particularly with recourse to phonetic modifications to

certain morphemes—especially those modifications that do not affect their referent. Jakobson ([1960]1999) used the example of lengthening the /i/ in the English *biiig* for emphasis without changing the phonemic aspects of the word, and a similar phenomenon seems to occur in the *Sun and Moon* text when the “Hero Twin” boys are filling a deer hide with stinging animals. In two consecutive phrases, the word *xcuuuu*³ ‘animal’ is lengthened, which I have attempted to convey by extending the number of vowels. One of my two interpretations of this phenomenon relies on contextual analysis. This vowel prolongation could be emphasizing the plurality of (stinging) animals that the two Hero Twins are inserting into the skinned deer hide, which I propose as one of two possible interpretations for this poetic strategy. The other possible interpretation for the prolonged vocalization of *xcuuuu*³ is that the speaker was at the time using the vowel as a filler to maintain the discursive flow of the narrative as he searched for the next part of the story, to avoid a gap in the narrative that could be interpreted as a break before the next major episode of the myth.

Another interesting aspect of “emotive function” in Copala Triqui is its effect on pitch. One line in the narrative, diagrammed in (6), is raised approximately 30 Hz above the regular pitch levels used in Mr. Vidal López’s speech, but the tonal contours are nonetheless consistent at this elevation. Pitch levels, given in Hertz, are approximated for each Triqui word.

(6) 10:40-10:44

nanj ³²	yij ⁴	(ya’an ³)	go ⁴	nij ³	xraa ⁴	xraa ⁴	xrcua ⁵	xrcaj ³	ne ²
182.6-	145.5-	[unclear]		156.3-	155.3-	140.6-	146.5-173.3;		117.7-
142.3	178.9		127.8-162.3	162.0	185.4	172.2	129.7-118.1		106.7
PURELY	ROCK	HOT	HIT (cont.)	pl.	UPON	UPON	DRAGON		AND

entirely of hot rocks they struck upon, upon the dragon.

The section between *nanj*³² and the first instance of *xraa*⁴ in this line is raised in both pitch and speed, for it is spoken in 1.2 seconds. A pause of 0.5 seconds stands between the two utterances of *xraa*⁴ ‘upon’ in this line, and by the second utterance of *xraa*⁴ the pitch for each following syllable has reverted to a level closer to those in the regular patterns of Mr. Vidal López’s narrative. The purpose of this elevation is still unclear, but it appears to be emphatic, which would suggest that pitch and tone in this text are subject to factors of intonation. The influences of intonation on surface tones have been documented in other Oto-Manguéan languages like Mezquital Otomí (Wallis 1968).

Arguably the most salient feature of ethnopoetics in many—if not indeed perhaps all—languages is repetition of at least one linguistic feature, to structure the organization of the spoken narrative into parallel groups of lines. The features to be used in repetition may vary in different languages according to the available linguistic resources. In the present version of the *Sun and Moon* myth, a prominently repeated element is word order, notably at the clause level. The example in (7) illustrates the consistency in word order with which several of the clauses are grouped together.

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(7) 8:29-8:33

ga ² nee ²	ca'anj ³	(yo' ³)	ca'mii ³²		
AND:THEN	GO (com.)	3sgS	SPEAK (com.)		
<i>And then (she) went and spoke,</i>					
	a ³ huaj ³	yo' ³	o ²	quij ³²	
	CALL (cont.)	3sgS	ONE	MOUNTAIN	
<i>she called at one mountain,</i>					
	a ³ huaj ³	yo' ³	o ³	quij ³²	ne ²
	CALL (cont.)	3sgS	OTHER	MOUNTAIN	AND
<i>she called at another mountain,</i>					
	cu ³ chi ³	yo' ¹		quij ³²	i ³ chij ³
	ARRIVE (com.)	3sgS		MOUNTAIN	SEVEN
<i>Till she arrived to the seventh mountain.</i>					

Four observations should be made on this portion of the text. The first is that the latter three lines are consistent for the referent pronoun *yo'*³ after each verb and the location of the action at a mountain, which suggests that these three lines should be read as a triplet. The word order for the second to fourth lines can be outlined as in (8).

(8)

Line 2	Ve ₁ -S-quant ₁ -PP-conj.
Line 3	Ve ₁ -S-quant ₂ -PP-conj.
Line 4	Ve ₂ -S-PP-quant ₃

The second observation is of an especially interesting distinction between the *tones* of the /o/ vowel in the quantifier position for the second and third lines. In the second line, this vowel carries Tone 2, referring to 'one' mountain, whereas in the third line the vowel carries Tone 3, changing its meaning to 'another' mountain. This would indicate that the current protagonist, Grandmother Ca'aj, is repeating the same action of 'calling', in an active progression from mountain to mountain. The third observation is that two changes from the second and third lines have occurred in the fourth. The first and most salient change is in the verb occupying the clause-initial position; this has changed from *a³huaj³* 'call' to *cu³chi³* 'arrived'. The second change in this last line involves the ordinal used to specify the mountain, and the ordinal has additionally moved to the position after *quij³²* instead of preceding it, as in the previous two lines. What is also worth noting is that, although the numerical adjective *i³chij³* could be glossed as 'seven', its meaning can represent the ordinal form, i.e. 'seventh', when it occurs in a subsequent relative clause (Hollenbach 1992: 279). Finally, the fourth observation is that the third line of this proposed triplet lowers the tone for *yo'*, from 3 to 1. This is noteworthy because the process of lowering the tone for the subject pronoun in the third line of a triplet may be a narrative pattern; it occurs again in the third line of the line triplet proposed for (9) below. Whether this pattern is significantly regular in the narrative will require further investigation.

I am convinced that the selection in (7) is a solid example of the operation of Jakobson's "principle of equivalence" in poetics. That patterns within a poetic genre can be said to be "repeated" at all implies that some aspect within one segment of the text is *equivalent* to the

same aspect in other segments. Using the current selection, the following syntactic pattern could be interpreted as equivalent among the latter three lines of (7): Verb- yo^{3} - $quij^{32}$, with a quantifier appearing on either side of $quij^{3}$. The fact that the initial verb is switched from a^3huaj^3 to cu^3chi^3 in the fourth line is significant because it reflects, as I contend, Jakobson's "axes of selection and combination." This "axis of selection" refers to the existence of a position within a repeating pattern for which a specific linguistic resource is *selected* to occupy. In other words, the "verb" position at the introduction of each line may be presupposed, and the specific verb a^3huaj^3 is deliberately selected for the second and third lines to describe the particular action that Grandmother Ca'aj, the referent of the pronoun yo^{3} , is meant to perform in that clause. For the final line the verb cu^3chi^3 is likewise selected to occupy the same syntactic position, though occupied by a verb different from the former. Similar instances occur elsewhere in the text, as illustrated in (9), describing the moon's ambulation.

- (9) 14:22-14:30
- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| che ² da ² zuun ³ | va ² | o ² ra ³ | chee ⁴ | zo ³ | (ni ² gan ¹³) |
| FOR THIS | THERE: | HOOR | WALK (cont.) | 3sgM | ALL: |
| REASON | ARE | | | | NIGHT |
- For this reason, there are hours during which he walks (all night),*
- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| | va ² | o ² ra ³ | ni ¹ naj ³ | zo ³ | |
| | THERE: | HOOR | REST (cont.) | 3sgM | |
| | ARE | | | | |
- there are hours during which he rests,*
- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--|
| | va ² | o ² ra ³ | naj ⁴ | zo ¹ | |
| | THERE: | HOOR | LAG (cont.) | 3sgM | |
| | ARE | | | | |
- there are hours during which he lags,*
- | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | | naj ⁴ | zo ³ | do ¹ |
| | | | LAG (cont.) | 3sgM | [unclear] |
- he lags,*
- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| | va ² | o ² ra ³ | ni ³ | xrgun ³² | za ³ |
| | THERE: | HOOR | neg.cont. | ILLUMINATE | WELL |
| | ARE | | | (cont.) | |
| | | | | ya ³ | zo ³ |
| | | | | DO, MAKE (cont.) | 3sgM |
| | | | | | do ³ |
| | | | | | neg. |
- there are hours during which he does not make light well at all.*

The first three lines of (9) are especially suggestive of a line triplet structure, with the same clause $va^2 o^2ra^3$ preceding a Ve-S sequence with a different verb for each respective line. In (7) and (9), each respective verb is *combined* with the remaining elements of its respective phrase, in a manner that makes sense for the speaker or audience. This is the "axis of combination" along which the selected items are set. As Jakobson argued, *equivalent* items must be *selected* from linguistic resources and *combined* into meaningful patterns: such is the function of poetics.

Another interesting pattern in the narrative can be sketched as AB / BC / ABC. A clear instance of this pattern appears in (10).

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(10) 9:41-9:48

ga ² ne ²	na ³ do ³	ni ³	yo ³	xrcoo ³²	ne ²
AND:THEN	SEEK (cont.)	pl.	3sg	CHERIMOYA	AND

Then they sought a cherimoya,

				xrcoo ³²	co ² toj ³²	ne ²
				CHERIMOYA	SLEEP (pot.)	AND

a sleep-inducing cherimoya,

	na ³ do ³	ni ³	o ²	xrcoo ³²	co ² toj ⁽³⁾²	ne ²
	SEEK (cont.)	pl.	ONE	CHERIMOYA	SLEEP (pot.)	AND

They sought a sleep-inducing cherimoya.

In this moment, the two boys are looking for a type of cherimoya whose consumption induces sleep, which in the first line is simply identified as *xrcoo*³². In the second line the focus shifts from the boys' searching action to the fruit itself, which is specified as a type that induces sleep. The third line includes the noun phrase introduced from the previous line into the complete clause. The structure, then, can be organized as (A) the boys searching for (B) the fruit which (C) causes sleep. This structure is then told in the AB / BC / ABC pattern. A similar instance appears in (11).

(11) 11:18-11:25

cu ³ nan ³	ndo ³	ro ³²		ne ²	a ²
RUN (pot.)	intens.	BOTH		AND	decl.

"We will both run hurriedly

	ca ² no ²	ndaa ¹³	quij ³²	yo ¹	ne ¹
	ARRIVE	UNTIL	MOUNTAIN	dem.adj.	AND
	(pot.)				

"until we arrive at that mountain,

cu ³ nan ³	ndo ³	ro ³²	ca ² no ²	ro ³²	ndaa ¹³	quij ³²	yo ¹	ne ¹
RUN (pot.)	intens.	BOTH	ARRIVE	BOTH	UNTIL	MOUNTAIN	dem.adj.	AND
			(pot.)					

"we will both run hurriedly until we both arrive at that mountain."

Here the pattern unfolds as (A) the boys agree to race to (B) the mountain, and then by the third line they state (A) and (B) together in a single sentence.

The *Sun and Moon* myth can be divided into smaller "blocks" of text. By "blocks" I do not refer to the paragraph format of *Tlalocan*, but the term should instead convey the sense of the mythical narrative's constituent parts, assembled from lines and *groups* of lines, as Dell Hymes (1996) has suggested of oral narratives in general. One way to consider the groupings of lines

into larger units of discourse, which for the case of this myth would correspond with episodic events, is by the presence of markers that additionally group the lines into larger episodes, and these episodes can be separated through boundaries delineating the text.

One of the lexical items that I propose as helping to separate narrative events is the compound verb *na³ vij³ ra⁴*, which Mr. Vidal López offered as literally *terminar de pensar*, or idiomatically ‘finally deciding to act’. This verb occurs twelve times in the narrative, and in each case to introduce a new episode of the narrative. The presence of this verb phrase indicates that its subject is about to undertake a critical action, motivating a series of consequential events. Four of the twelve instances involve an action performed by Grandmother Ca’aj, and seven instances introduce actions planned by the twin boys. In one other instance, it introduces the decision made by a fly to inspect whether the dragon had indeed been slain. An additional phrase that deserves brief mention is *vee³ da³² nee¹* ‘one more time’. This is the only apparent mention of the phrase in the text selection, but it is critical because it introduces a major episode of the text, namely Ca’aj’s journey to the seven mountains to look for her husband, the deer. Further research may test my hypothesis that certain morphemes are both semantically and structurally critical for the performance of Copala Triqui myth.

5. Myth as a Copala Triqui Speech Genre

A *genre* can be defined as a type of social language constituted from linguistic forms, emotional affect, discursive content, and other elements recognized as culturally appropriate for specific social situations and between the appropriate set of speakers (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 56-59, 64). A genre is thereby a distinct configuration of both linguistic and cultural resources, and, as James Gee (1999) has emphasized, these configurations are integrally linked to the performance of social roles or identities. The myth should therefore be understood as the product of a specific *social* language. Such a definition for “social language” suggests that the features particular to the genre of myth make cultural sense when this language is uttered by the qualified speaker and under the proper social setting. It may well be argued that Mr. Vidal López’s own attention to maintaining the genre-specific features of this myth in his version of the text is connected to his personal commitment to the communal maintenance of Copala Triqui customs and language in the immigrant setting.

Furthermore, social languages tend to follow “collocational patterns” (Gee 1999:29-30), meaning that social languages are often organized around sets of distinct linguistic and cultural phenomena, which in turn contribute to the production of the speaker’s identity, and its concomitant social relationships, through the *performance* of the given social language. The language in Mr. Vidal López’s version of the *Sun and the Moon* has several collocational features that, when integrated together, contribute to the separation of this genre from more “mundane” modes of speech, a relationship that John du Bois has elaborated on the practice of ritual speech. One such feature is use of the pronoun *yo³*: when it refers to Grandmother Ca’aj, Mr. Vidal López translated it as ‘she’. In conversational Copala Triqui, however, *yo³* is a deictic meaning ‘that’, but it cannot be used for ‘she’; the conventional pronoun for the third-person singular feminine is *no³*. Mr. José Fuentes, another Copala Triqui speaker, even argued that the translation of *yo³* as ‘she’ is wrong. This observation invites the research question of how well another speaker would be able to transcribe and translate this text, considering the linguistic “peculiarities” it is using.

Another compelling feature of the language in Mr. Vidal López’s version of the *Sun and the Moon* myth is that *a²*, a morpheme otherwise used in quotidian discourse as a sentence-terminal

declarative, is notably rare in the narrative, though it does terminate the first line in (11). This observation is especially noteworthy because the same declarative a^2 is ubiquitous as a sentence terminal in all four renditions of the myth transcribed in Hollenbach (1977). The present text also contains phrases that otherwise surface in contracted forms in conversational Triqui, like the phrase $cu^2nun^1daj^2ni^3$ 'all'. Contemporary conversational speech contracts this phrase into $cun^2daj^2ni^3$. The non-contracted (or perhaps less contracted?) form of the expression is used in the mythical narrative as an indication that myth possesses a language that is *not* of quotidian speech, just like the social situations in which these myths are told. These introductory remarks on the "collocational" features of Copala Triqui myth should promote further investigation on the linguistic resources available in Copala Triqui and on which speech genres they are more preferentially or even uniquely used.

6. Ethnopoetics in Mesoamerican Literature

Since the pioneering ethnopoetic works of scholars like Angel María Garibay Kintana, Dell Hymes, and Dennis Tedlock, many non-Western languages, especially Native American languages, have become more frequently transcribed with sensitivity to the poetic nuances that may structure certain genres and even help to define them (Hymes 1996: 166). This procedure has offered a profound service to Mesoamerican literature because it has helped to elucidate the poetic rhythms and patterns through which indigenous culture is expressed through oral and occasionally literary genres. This part of the paper will focus on examples from Mesoamerican texts, namely Mexica Nahuatl poetry and the K'iche' Maya epic of the *Popol Vuh*.

The poetry of Mexica or the so-called "Classical" dialect of Nahuatl is well-known for its rhythmic structure and meter. Garibay Kintana's commentary on Nahuatl poetry uses the sample verse (Garibay K. 1965: xxxiii, xxxvii), which I have transliterated and translated in (12):

(12)

/noyollo itek k ^w eponi/	'within my heart blooms
/in k ^w ikafot̄jit̄ ewaya/	the flower of songs, ehuaya'

Nahuatl poetics could innovate syllabic clusters like /e.wa.ya/ that have no semantic meaning aside from the purpose of a phonetic "filler" allowing both lines to share the same number of syllables, in this case eight. Mexica Nahuatl poetry strongly emphasized the use of meter as a criterion for its "principle of equivalence," recalling Jakobson (1999), and the arrangement of rhythm was facilitated with the natural patterns of stress in Nahuatl, to suggest patterns of alternation between "strong" and "soft" voices (Garibay K. 1965: xxxvii).

Perhaps the clearest example of the "principle of equivalence" in Mexica Nahuatl poetics is the genre of *difrasismo*, a style of spoken metaphor that describes its referent concept through a pair of complementary phrases (Garibay K. 1965: xxvii f). A metaphor for 'my nourishment' was /in no-cot̄j̄-ka, in no-neew-ka/ 'that which I have for my sleep, that which I have for my waking' (Carochi 2001: 192-193). These two phrases can refer respectively to the meals of dinner and breakfast, and although these meals occur at the opposite ends of the day, by their juxtaposition they encompass the totality of the food that one eats through the course of one's day, and by extension, of one's life. The two phrases are equivalent in grammatical construction: the subordinator /in/ precedes an abstract verbal nominalization, possessed with the first-person singular prefix /no-/. The *difrasismo* was usually grammatically equivalent between its two (or occasionally three) complementary phrases, and so the axes of selection and combination

operated through this structural constraint, as well as through cultural constraints on the extent of metaphoric reference. Although the Copala Triqui *Sun and Moon* myth is more literal in its language than the metaphor-laden genres of Nahuatl poetry and *difrasismo*, I believe that the rhetorical and poetic genres of Nahuatl share significant similarities with the Copala Triqui mythical genre, particularly in the rhythm and complementarity of the spoken lines. To further relate the *Sun and Moon* myth to Mesoamerican literature, I will conclude with some comments on another Mesoamerican myth, the *Popol Vuh*.

Dennis Tedlock's 1985 edition of the *Popol Vuh*, the epic cosmogony myth of the K'iche' Maya, is an exemplary model for the translation of Mesoamerican mythology into a written poetic format. Tedlock's representation of the myth succeeds because of his meticulous attention to the poetic structure overlaying the course of the text in the original K'iche'. Tedlock's endnotes provide commentary on the poetic features of the myth's narrative discourse. The text commentary describes, for example, several instances from the remarkable number of parallel structures running through the text, featuring consistent patterns of grammar and semantics within each group of lines. Numerous parts of the text are grouped into pairs of complementary phrases, and Tedlock indents them into small block paragraphs to highlight their structure as distinct from that of the surrounding text.

Arguably the most prominent similarity between the cosmogonies of the *Sun and the Moon* and of the *Popol Vuh* is the presence of the Hero Twin protagonists. Many of their actions are used as "mythical precedents" to explain the current human and environmental situation. As in many Native American myths, the Hero Twins are also necessary agents for *gigantomachy*, the slaying of great monsters threatening the cosmic or social order, like the great serpent of the *Sun and Moon* (Hollenbach 1977: 142-143) and the crocodilian Zipacná in the *Popol Vuh* (Tedlock 1985: 97-99). Ultimately, in both the *Sun and Moon* and the *Popol Vuh* the Hero Twins transform into the sun and moon. These parallels in the Copala Triqui and K'iche' Maya myths are substantial enough to conclude that such folkloric elements have been diffused between Oaxaca and Guatemala and elsewhere in Mesoamerica. Indeed, Hollenbach (1977: 124 n4) commented on the similarities that the Copala Triqui myth bears with other versions printed in *Tlalocan*, notably among other Oto-Manguen languages like Chinantec (Carrasco and Weitlaner 1952), Chatino (Cicco and Horcasitas 1962), and Zapotec (Stubblefield and Stubblefield 1969). However, what has been missing from this consideration of cultural diffusion is an analysis of the features that are *unique* to the Copala Triqui versions, a subject for further investigation.

7. Conclusions

Although this paper has had recourse to four minutes of the entire 13-minute *Sun and Moon* tale narrated by Román Vidal López, this portion of the text has nevertheless yielded a significant number of linguistic features that I have proposed are either structuring the narrative or presenting the narrative in such a way that speakers can separate its language from that used in more quotidian discourses in Copala Triqui. The use of *yo*³ instead of *no*³ to refer to a female character in the *Sun and the Moon* indexes the "antiquity" of the tale and perhaps even its "authenticity" as a cultural product of San Juan Copala, as Du Bois (1986) has suggested of the culturally recognized "archaic" elements of ritual speech in other Mesoamerican languages like K'iche' and Tzeltal. Myth, like all genres, is a *social* language, meaning that language use is intimately tied to aspects of identity "performance" and social relations.

This paper has principally focused on the patterns of discourse and the presence of grammatical items that are structuring the *Sun and Moon* narrative into its constituent units. I

have argued, for instance, that the compound verb *na³ vij³ ra⁴* has the sense of ‘deciding to act’, in which case it is behaving like a line-initial verb phrase, but it is more specifically placed at the beginnings of major narrative events, to introduce a new part of the narrative and to tag its separation from the preceding text. Likewise, many of the lines can be perceived as occurring in couplets or triplets, based on the parallels in syntax even when one or two of the elements may vary. In other cases, the lines are in almost complete repetition, excluding one or two words.

The present analysis corroborates Hymes’s contention that an ethnopoetic approach to oral texts must include analytical units comprised of *groups* of lines, and not simply on a line per line basis. A recent observation I have made on the structure of the myth is that not only are lines and clauses showing degrees of equivalence and repetition, but these patterns seem to be occurring even at the level of the narrative *episodes* themselves. Susan Perdomo translated a prior excerpt from the same text that includes the journey of Grandmother Ca’aj from mountain to mountain until she reaches the seventh, in order to provide tortillas for her husband—this sequence of events is comparable to the episode presented in (7). Such episodic parallels would suggest that the analytical units may have to extend beyond lines or even groups of lines, to larger units of narrative.

The *Sun and Moon* myth told by Mr. Vidal López additionally contains several prosodic features that have not been addressed here but invite further research. While in this paper I have discussed repeating structural patterns in the narrative, I did not develop on the function of verb reduplication in the narrative, which in Copala Triqui “signals continuation, repetition, or intensification of a predicate” (Hollenbach 1974: 176). *The Sun and the Moon* ultimately merits a multi-dimensional linguistic analysis, from its morphemes to its larger narrative units, in order to provide a more complete overview of its complexities, as well as its relations to similar features in other representatives of Mesoamerican literature. Such an approach could improve the modes of written representation that have been used for Copala Triqui myth, in order to better locate this narrative amidst the “classics” of Mesoamerican mythology and poetry.

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Edgar Martín del Campo

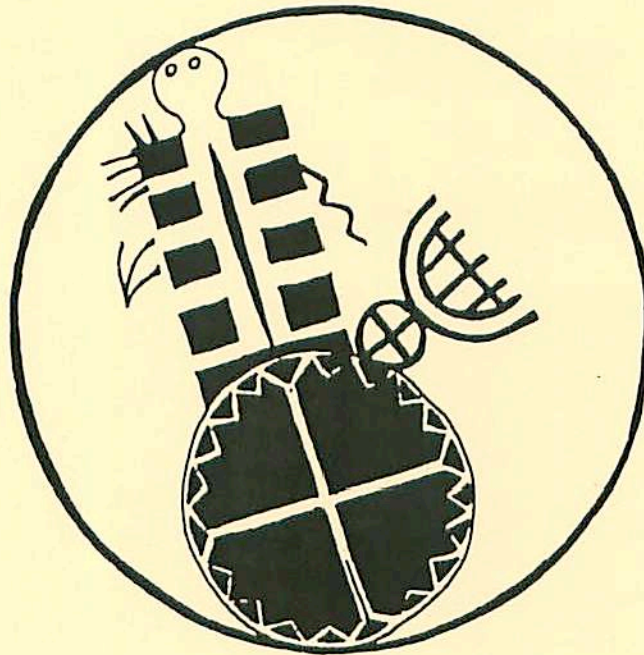
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REPORT 13

**SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA AND
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INTRODUCTION

This volume of Survey reports is a sample of the papers heard at the Conference on Otomanguean and Oaxacan Languages (COOL), which took place at UC Berkeley March 19-21, 2004. There is more scholarly investigation being done on Otomanguean languages and other languages of Oaxaca today than ever before, yet unlike other groups such as Uto-Aztecanists and Mayanists, Otomangueanist and Oaxacanist scholars have not had a regular forum in which to meet and share their ideas. In 2000 a one-time conference took place at UCLA called *La Voz Indígena de Oaxaca*, organized by Pamela Munro, G. Aaron Broadwell, and Kevin Terraciano. As a result of this conference many of the participant linguists were able to make new and fruitful contacts with each other and several proposed that the conference should become a recurring event. With the help of the UC Berkeley Graduate Assembly, Graduate Division, Center for Latin American Studies, and the departments of Linguistics, Anthropology, and Ethnic Studies, four years after the original UCLA conference COOL was finally able to follow in its footsteps. Now there are plans for a third conference to be held very appropriately in the city of Oaxaca at the Centro Cultural Santo Domingo in 2006, organized by Alejandro de Ávila. We all hope that this will become an on-going event and it appears that COOL is on its way to becoming a regular, biannual and international conference.

Rosemary Beam de Azcona
COOL 2004 Organizer

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