

ACCORDING TO OUR ANCESTORS

folk texts from guatemala and honduras

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Table of Contents

| | Page |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Preface | 6 |
| Comparative notes on the texts | 7 |
| Free translation of the texts | 37 |
| Achi | 39 |
| Aguacatec | 59 |
| Cakchiquel | 71 |
| Carib | 89 |
| Chuj | 97 |
| Ixil | 109 |
| Jacaltec | 129 |
| Jicaque | 145 |
| K'ekchi' | 151 |
| Mopan | 167 |
| Pocomam | 193 |
| Pocomchi | 205 |
| Quiche (Cantel) | 211 |
| Quiche (Joyabaj) | 219 |
| Rabinal-Achi | 225 |
| Tzutujil | 235 |
| Uspantec | 241 |
| Texts in the original languages | 247 |
| Bibliography of works cited | 509 |

Preface

The purpose of this volume is to make available certain materials of interest to linguists, anthropologists, and any who are interested in folklore. It is not intended to be a study in depth, but does include some notes and observations based on the texts. It consists of legends, lore, and first-person accounts originally told to investigators who were seeking a body of material for linguistic analysis.

The informants who submitted these texts are present-day Mayans,¹ many of whom prefaced their remarks with, "According to our ancestors. . . ." They are not necessarily polished story tellers; some were apologetic for their lack of skill, but they were still encouraged to relate the account so that the investigator might obtain a connected corpus of native speech. Most of the contributions were recorded without interruption on magnetic tape, then transcribed and interpreted with the help of a native speaker.

All contributions have been made by members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics working in Central America, all of whom have had at least two years' residence in their respective ethno-linguistic regions. It is their hope that some of the pleasure that has been theirs in collecting the tales might be shared by those who read them.

Mary Shaw

1 Exceptions: Carib and Jicaque narrators, although there is probably a certain amount of Mayan influence present in these ethnic groups also.