Chol (Mayan) Folktales: A Collection of Stories from the Modern Maya of Southern Mexico. Nicholas A. Hopkins and J. Kathryn Josserand. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016, 216 pp. $27.95, paper. ISBN 978-1-60732-487-4.

An indispensable volume for ethnographers of the modern Chol communities, *Chol (Mayan) Folktales* will also appeal to scholars from a diverse array of fields, from anthropology to linguistics to comparative literature and folklore. Students of Maya epigraphy and iconography will find this collection of stories an invaluable resource, as many of the characters featured in these folktales are descendants of, or related to, prominent figures of precolumbian Maya literature and religion. Beyond Mayanists, scholars concerned with the study of verbal art and the social production of oral texts will also find this book to be relevant.

Hopkins and Josserand present a selection of eleven narratives compiled throughout three decades of work in Chiapas, carefully transcribed in Chol and translated into English, with the two main varieties of modern Chol—Tumbalá Chol and Tila Chol—represented in this sample. The collection adds to an existing corpus of Chol traditional narratives, yet it substantially differs from previous compilations in that the texts presented in this volume are only slightly edited, which makes them a valuable resource for those interested in the poetic form and performative aspects of (Chol) storytelling. The work is based on the authors' extensive fieldwork in the Maya area, which is briefly sketched in the preface, as well as their lifelong relationship with Ausencio Cruz Guzmán, their assistant and a speaker of Tumbalá Chol who narrates or facilitates several stories in this volume.

One of the major contributions of this volume is Josserand's analysis of how the use of aspectual marking relates to narrative structure: scene-setting and background information is indicated by the use of non-completive aspectual verb forms, while events that belong to the storyline, or "event line," are always flagged by verbs inflected for completive aspect. This rhetoric device, which Josserand also identified in hieroglyphic texts, allows for the non-chronological presentation of events in Chol narratives and nevertheless makes the order of the unfolding events perfectly clear to a Chol audience.

Each folktale is carefully introduced by an argument summary, a brief description of the main characters of the story, and relevant contextual information. The first four narratives feature mythological characters and deities known from Classic and Post-Classic Maya art and literature. The two sons of *Our Holy Mother*—*Older Brother Sun and Younger Brother Sun*—are the famous hero twins of the *Popol Vuh*, and the "father rooster" featured in *The Celestial Bird* is related to the Principal Bird Deity of Classic Maya iconography. This first group of narratives concludes with a nativized version of an Aesop fable that was probably adopted in colonial times, *The Turtle and the Deer*. A second group of folktales comprises three stories about the Earth Lord—

the owner of all material resources, who dwells in caves—one of the most popular deities in the syncretic pantheon of modern Chol communities. In *The Cave of Don Juan* and *A Visit to Don Juan*, humans visit his dwellings and ask him for food, riches, or rain, so their *milpas* (cornfields) can grow. In another story he is *Lak Mam*, "Our Grandfather," a manifestation of Chajk, the ancient god of rain and lightning. The third group of narratives presents stories about supernatural evil creatures that lurk in the woods, such as the Jaguar transformers—featured in two stories, *The Jaguar-Man* and *La Comadre—The Blackman*, and demons that attack humans at night, vividly described in *The Messengers*. The theme of these stories is nature versus culture: the protagonists outwit these savage creatures by turning their ignorance of human, and particularly Chol customs, against them. A concluding chapter by Hopkins identifies the key elements of Chol folktales proposed by Josserand—evidentiality statement, scene-setting background, event line, peak event, denouement and closure—in each of the stories.

Nine of these texts are co-referenced with an audio file in AILLA (the Archive of the Indigenous Language of Latin America), an additional value of this book which will allow Chol speakers and researchers to listen to the performances of the gifted storytellers. A highly original book, *Chol (Mayan) Folktales* combines the authors' knowledge of Classic hieroglyphic texts and modern Chol narratives into a sophisticated theoretical framework that can be applied to the analysis of oral and written narratives and demonstrates the continuity of a rich Maya literary tradition, from precolumbian to modern times.

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Language and Ethnicity among the K'ichee' Maya. Sergio Romero.
Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015, 176 pp. $50.00, cloth.
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This book is a tour de force for Sergio Romero. He demonstrates his abilities as a field linguist with careful attention to small dialect variations in phonology and morphology in describing how "Each Town Speaks Its Own Language." He shows his skill at diachronic studies in detailing "ancestor power," as well as the historic influence of missionaries. Sociolinguistics comes to the forefront as he considers the roles of K'ichee' poets and the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala, as well as in his detailed account of "code-switching" or mixing between Spanish and K'ichee'.

The author seeks to show that K'ichee', a Mayan language spoken in the central highlands of Guatemala, (*a*) is not monolithic, but consists of a variety of geographic