

**UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,
THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM,
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
PUBLICATIONS, VOL. VIII, NO. 2, PP.
183-227: THE HILLS AND THE CORN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649332663

University of Pennsylvania, The University Museum, Anthropological Publications, Vol. VIII,
No. 2, pp. 183-227: The Hills and the Corn by Robert Burkitt

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ROBERT BURKITT

**UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,
THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM,
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
PUBLICATIONS, VOL. VIII, NO. 2, PP.
183-227: THE HILLS AND THE CORN**

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
ANTHROPOLOGICAL PUBLICATIONS
VOL. VIII. NO. 2

THE HILLS AND THE CORN

A LEGEND OF THE KERCHÍ INDIANS OF GUATEMALA
PUT IN WRITING

BY THE LATE TIBURTIUS KAÁL AND OTHERS
AND TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY
ROBERT BURKITT

The mountains skipped like rams, and the
little hills like lambs.—BOOK OF PSALMS.

PHILADELPHIA
PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
1920

PREFACE

When you try to get hold ov a fairy tale in Indian, you hav two principal difficulties. One ov the two iz to get an Indian who can tel a fairy tale. Many Indians, in my experience, cant tel fairy tales. Some Indians hav never heard fairy tales: and thozе that hav, very ofen dont remember what they hav heard. They hav heard some tale, told by an old woman at the fire, perhaps, when they wer half asleep, or told by an old man at a feast, when they wer half drunk: and they remember scraps ov the tale, very likely, and know the tale again when they hear it; but when you ask them themselvs to tel the tale, they ar very likely to be floord. That iz the first difficulty.

And then comes the other, and more vexatious one. When you do find a man who can tel a tale, you stil cant get the tale down on paper. You cant get down the actual Indian. You cant get down the mans words. You cant get a mans words down in English, without short hand: much less in Indian. Ov course you might remember some ov the mans expressions: and in the end no dout you could put something together that would be intelligible Indian: and might, in fact, be very good Indian:—but it would be *your* Indian. It might be az good az the real thing. It might be az good az Indians Indian. But it could not profess to be anything but your Indian. You might az wel, I should supoze, rite the thing in English at once.

The Indian ov this little tale iz the real thing. The difficulty about getting Indians Indian waz got over, by having the tale ritten by Indians themselvs.

Ther ar not many, but ther ar Indians, here and there—mostly about the towns ov Kobán and Karchá—who can read and rite, in some fashion, in their own language. The riting they can do, az you may supoze, iz not apt to be any thing very fine. The men ar more used to grasping a bush nife than a pen, and besides, even to Indians themselvs, riting in Indian iz not such plain sailing az you might think. The men hav learnd reading and riting, not in conexion with Indian, but az something that belongs to Spanish. In riting Indian, they hav no models. Each man spels, and divides hiz words, or joins them together, acording to hiz notion at the moment: and he iz lucky if he gets through many moments without leaving some word altogether out. Each man iz a pioneer. An Indian riting Indian iz exploring hiz own language.

However, it iz hiz own language. And I thought that if any thing worth looking at, in Indian, waz to be got at all, it would hav to be through some ov thoz men. I made the experiment. It happend that two ov the men that I got hold ov, one ov them a Kobán man, and the other a Karchá man, each new something ov this tale—it waz a tale I had heard something ov before—and I got each man to rite out for me what he new.

The two ritings, when they wer done, ov course wer not alike. And it turnd out that one ov the two men, the Kobán man, not only rote much better than the other, but new much more ov the story. At the same time that other man, who new less ov the story, new an intresting part ov it that the Kobán man didnt know. What I did then,—I had the Kobán man read the other mans story, and incorporate the other mans story with hiz own. Some paragrafs ov hiz own wer dropt, and new paragrafs wer added. And throughout the tale, at the same time, the corectness ov the language waz closely examind.

Finaly, az a check on slips ov the pen, more than az any thing else, I had the revized tale ritten out afresh by a third man, who new nothing about the tale, but who had learnd reading and riting in my alfabet. The man found nothing ov the nature ov a mistake, whether in words or in pronunciation: but he made some slight improvements ov fraze.

The result ov the process iz the tale az it now stands. You wil find plenty ov faults ov compozition in the tale. The telling iz uneven. Some points ar brought plainly before you, and others seem to be unduly slighted. You ar struck by abrupt transitions. Possibly ther ar points left out. And so on. But on the hole, considering the riters, I think the tale iz not a bad job.

The Kobán man, who ended by doing nearly all the riting ov the tale, waz a certain Tiburtius Kaál. He waz much the most competent man that could be found: and he iz now, I am sorry to say, dead.

I am able to prezent you with hiz picture. Tiburtius waz a pure Indian, with features, az you may see, ov that somewhat Jewish cast, which iz not at all uncommon among these Indians. Hiz hair waz stil black, but he waz now a man ov over sixty. For a long time past, he had been one ov the chief men, in fact waz the chief man—the father ov the town, az they say—among the Kobán Indians. He waz a man ov sharp wits, ov course—too sharp, hiz enemies said: and he waz that uncommon bird, an Indian ov what you might call a literary turn. He read and rote in Spanish az wel az any body, and he had made a hobby ov reading and riting in Indian. He had even invented an alfabet for Indian. He rote, in the form ov a speech, a life ov Saint Dominic, in Indian—Saint Dominic iz the patron Saint ov Kobán: and a life ov Saint John Baptist, the patron ov an other Kekchí town: and he rote pieces to be spoken by the mummers at feasts: and various other things.

This fairy tale that I am sending you, which Tiburtius had promist to follow with others, turnd out to be hiz last riting. He had a stroke ov palzy at the beginning ov the year [1918], and he died in July.—This little picture [Plate IV] iz a view at the foot ov the calvary hil, in the town ov Kobán. The hil which iz to the right iz where Tiburtius is buried.

Tiburtius belonged not to this prezent day ov progress, and liberalizm (az the name iz), in Guatemala, but to a day a little before it: when the country waz stil out ov the world: when the land owners wer not yet planters: when the jolly labour recruiter, and the daggletail scool mistress, wer objects stil below the horizon: when the Indian waz oprest, without also being continually dragd about and interfered with: and Indian society and customs, and Indian learning, such az it waz, stil flourisht under the shadow ov the church. That day is gon. Whatever the prezent day may produce, it wil probably produce nothing rezembling Tiburtius Kaál.

To come back to the fairy tale—or to the tale: ther ar no precise fairies in it—the tale iz entitled by Tiburtius, a Thing that happend in ancient times, through the stealing ov Shukanéps dauter: but I supoze it might az wel be entitled The Hills and the Corn. The main buziness ov the tale iz a hiding and recovery ov corn. The persons ar hills and animals.

Quare populi meditati sunt inania?—Thoze who make a sience ov fairy tales, wil be able I supoze, at once, to declare the interpretation ov the tale, and to identify the tale with any one ov a dozen others. For my own part, I find the tale dul. And I should supoze that the chief intrest ov the tale would lie, not in the tale itself, but in the fact ov its being prezedent in authentic Indian. The tale would be intresting, I should supoze, not so much to thoze who for any reason wer intrested in fairy tales, az to thoze who wer intrested in the Maya languages.

And that iz why it iz that I hav made the translation the sort ov translation that it iz. You wil see at once that it iz not a free translation. It iz a translation meant to be ov use, especialy, to readers who wish to follow the Indian. It iz meant to be az nearly as possible, a translation ov that slavish kind that scool boys call a key.—I say, az nearly az possible: becauz any thing like a word for word translation, from a Maya language into English, iz not az a rule possible. The two languages ar so differently put together, they step with such unequal steps, that any intelligible translation from one to the other iz bound to be a loose translation. But ther ar degrees ov looseness: and I hav taken pains, in my translation, to make the looseness a minimum.

I think that most readers ov the Indian wil find the translation a decided help: at the same time that thoz who cannot follow the Indian, and hav to accept the translation, wil find the translation readable. And for them, I might say this: many translators, including Indians themselvs, hav a propensity to what you might call, heighten the Indian: to make it say more, or speak finer, or more sofisticatedly, than it realy does. That iz very eazy to do: and it iz something that I hav particularly avoided. I think that readers ov the translation only, wil yet get a right impression from it, not merely ov the matter ov what the Indian says, but what I supoze may be thought more important, ov the level ov the words in which the Indian says it.

The foot notes that I hav added to the translation ar mostly to point out defects in it: or at least to point out discrepancies between the Indian and the English. The discrepancies ar realy what make the translation intelligible, and the number ov them iz endless. Thoz that I hav noticed must be taken merely az samples ov the great heaps that I hav not noticed.

Ther iz one point ov discrepancy between the Indian and the English, that might attract the notice ov any body, though it did not at first attract my own. When the paragrafs ov Indian and English ar put side by side, you see that the English, in most cases, turns out a trifle longer than the Indian. The reazon ov that, iz not that Indian iz a briefer language than English, but simply, I believ, that any close translation haz a tendency to be longer than the original.

The Indian ov the tale iz not mine, but the apearance ov it on paper iz mine, and might hav been different. The division into paragrafs iz mine. And the division ov words iz mine: or at least Im responsible for it. And the spelling iz mine:—and it remains for me to explain that spelling.

I wil explain az little az possible, and I wil begin by taking something for granted. The language ov the tale iz Kekchí. And the reader ov the Indian may not be particularly aquainted with Kekchí. But he must, by supozition, be aquainted with some one ov the Maya languages. He must, consequently, already be aquainted, in general, with the sounds and pronunciation ov thozе languages. That iz what I take for granted. I shal escape, in general, from having to explain sounds or pronunciation. Ther may be one or two peculiarities in the pronunciation ov Kekchí to mention: but in the main, what I hav to speak ov, wil be not sounds in themselvs, but only my way ov riting.

Acording to that way ov riting, the point ov accent in a word will be markt with a ritten accent. Doing the same in English, the word Muzeum would apear, Muzéum, so, with an accent on the E. And no matter if the word iz only one syllable:—Cat, and Dog, if they wer Indian, would apear, Cát, so: and, Dóg, so. The accented syllable ov a word wil be markt, no matter if ther iz no other syllable.