

A CHINANTEC FABLE

Judi Lynn Anderson

Comaltepec Chinantec is one of several related Chinantec languages spoken in the State of Oaxaca, Mexico.¹ This text was first recorded on tape and later transcribed, while I lived in this mountain village. Isaac, a native speaker of this language, shared this story with me in 1972. He was about 25 years old at the time. I selected this text for semantic analysis because it seemed like a simple, straight-forward narrative text. It was only as I studied it further that I saw the overlay of another type of discourse, and I recalled what an anthropologist shared with me after he had spent some time in the village. He said that the men like to sit around the town hall in the evening relating stories which have moral endings. This text is an example of that tradition.

¹Comaltepec Chinantec is one of the highland Chinantec languages. It is mutually intelligible with Quiotepec Chinantec (Robbins 1961, 1968). It is spoken by about 1200 people living in Santiago Comaltepec, District of Ixtlán, Oaxaca, and its ranch areas (some of them a considerable distance away). The lowland Chinantec languages are quite different and not mutually intelligible with the highland languages (Egland 1978.12-15).

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