Introducion

This essay examines parallelism and other essential features of ritual discourse in San Juan Quiñahije, Eastern Chatino. The Chatino languages are spoken in the highlands of Oaxaca, Mexico. The essay focuses on the poetic and discursive features found in two impromptu prayers within a corpus of civic/religious ritual petitions that the members of the community refer to as Laqin kchin, or “Prayers for the Community.”

The “Prayers for the Community” are part of a ritual carried out regularly by elders and traditional San Juan Quiñahije (SJQ) authorities in their official capacity as community representatives. These dignitaries come together at dawn on the first day of each month and on high holidays—the most important feast day is that of the patron saint of SJQ, Saint John the Baptist, June 24th—to petition for the well-being of the entire community, and especially for the younger generations. Both of the petitions analyzed in this essay were made at the same ceremonial event on June 24, 2009 at 5:00 a.m. in the Catholic church. The prayers were said by Simón Zurita and Wenceslao Cortés, two elders from the SJQ community.

On the evening prior to the prayers, a group of municipal envoys visited select elders of the community, including Simón Zurita, and formally invited them to join the municipal officials and participate in the worship. Wenceslao Cortés, serving his final elected position in the SJQ municipality, had instructed the envoys to invite the elders to the ceremony.

The elders who agreed to accompany the authorities to the ceremony were instructed to come to City Hall at around 4:15 a.m. to begin the ritual. A total of six elders participated in the petition and began to arrive at City Hall by 4:00 a.m. At 5:00 a.m. the group walked together from City Hall to the church. Upon arriving at the doorsteps of the church, they all knelt and crossed themselves. Then all proceeded to walk on their knees for three to four minutes toward

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1 SJQ Chatino is one of the richest tonal languages in the world, with 13 different tonal contrasts, indicated here by superscript numbers (number 1 indicates high pitch and number 4 low pitch; see the appendix for more information on the Chatino orthography). The texts discussed here are based on fieldwork that I performed in San Juan Quiñahije. I am a native speaker of this language, which provides an additional emic view of the rhetorical potential of language use in these prayers. For the Chatino orthography used in this essay, see appendix 1.

2 In order to provide the reader with a fuller understanding of the context and performance of the prayer, both texts are offered in their entirety in appendix 2 to this essay.
the main altar holding the offerings in their hands while reciting their individual prayers.

The church attendants (catechists), lower ranking authorities (including helpers of City Hall), and members of the community who wished to be blessed by the elders’ supplications were present at the church. Upon concluding their prayers, the community representatives stood in a row facing the church door, clutching their candles and flowers, in order to allow residents to touch and kiss the offerings they had brought for their petition. The petitioner’s goal is to move and persuade the spiritual intermediaries (such as saints and ancestors) to grant his wishes.

Translation is as much an art as a science. Literary and cultural translations are challenging because cultural concepts frequently do not map one to one from one language to the next. When translating a poetic text, the translator must take into account the different layers of meaning in the source text including aesthetics, phonics, and polysemy (Barnstone 2010:4). These challenges are exacerbated when the source and target languages come from completely different language families. For example, Chatino and English idioms and metaphorical phrases have very little in common.

One of the challenges I encountered when I translated the two prayers studied here is that Chatino poetics make extensive use of positional and existential predicates to achieve poetic tension, imagery, and metaphor. Verses 1-2 of example (7) illustrate this point. The positional expression \textit{tyi^{20} ton^{1}} literally means “s/he or they will stand,” and \textit{tyi^{20} tgen^{24}} means “s/he or they will exist or spread out on the ground.” However, in this context these expressions are being used metaphorically to express that the new generation will one day take charge and step up and stand for the community. For this reason I have chosen to translate these expressions as “now they are about to rise up and now they are about to establish themselves,” to convey the movement and agency that form part of the poetic meaning of these phrases.

Another notable example is the English translation of example (2), below. The preposition \textit{qo^{1}} literally means “with.” However, in order to make the English translation flow better, I’ve chosen to translate verses 17-18 as “now with,” while in couplet 19-20, I employed the phrase “together with.” Beneath each Chatino line is a word for word translation. A poetic English translation is given in the right-hand column.

\textbf{Parallelism in San Juan Quiahije Prayers}

Parallelism is a central and highly developed feature of poetic discourse in the languages and cultures of Mesoamerica, especially in Mexico and Guatemala. In these traditions, semantic parallelism is governed by regular conventions that function as a primary organizing principle of verbal art in much the same way that meter provides an organizing framework for traditional poetries of much of Europe and Asia. This device has been widely studied in both ancient and contemporary Mayan (Norman 1980; Bricker 1974; Edmonson and Bricker 1985; Tedlock 1987; Hull 2003; Hull and Carrasco 2012, and Hull, this volume) and Nahuatl languages (Garibay 1953; Leon-Portilla 1969; Bright 1990). But this feature has been overlooked in most Otomanguean languages spoken in Oaxaca, Mexico, including the Chatino languages.

The two prayers discussed here reveal multiple, varied, and complex forms of parallelism. A stretch of parallel repetition in SJQ verbal art consists of two parts: the “frame”
and the “focus.” The frame is the constant that repeats in every line and the focus is a variable part that occupies a slot in the frame (Cruz 2014:118). Both the frame and the focus draw on elements from the same syntactic category: noun phrases are paired with noun phrases, adjectival phrases with adjectival phrases, and verb phrases must be paired with verb phrases.

Norman (1980), Bricker (1989 [1974]), Hull (2003), and Hull and Carrasco (2012), among others, describe a similar structure for parallel verses in Mayan poetics. What I call the “focus” in the analysis of SJQ verbal art is what Mayan scholars refer to as the “variable.” I choose to call it the “focus” because the elements that occupy the focus position are the items that are highlighted in the phrase (Cruz 2014:121). This is illustrated in example (1), a section of the speech where the petitioner wishes that the young people in the community will grow to become outstanding citizens.

Each one of the four verses in (1) is built around a fixed frame made out of the phrase \( Ka^{24} \_sqwe^3 \) (“may s/he be a good ___”), marked here in bold underline. The focus element in each line is then filled by a subject phrase, which in this case is one of a set of nouns describing different types of humans: \( nten^{14} \) (“people”), \( neq^4 \) (“a kind of person”), \( no^4 \, kiyu^1 \) (“man/men”), \( no^4 \, qan^1 \) (“woman/women”), presented in brackets in (1). Cohesion in this verse sequence is achieved by the repeating anaphor \( ka^{24} \) (“s/he will be”) in each line:

Example 1

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>( Ka^{24} )</td>
<td>( nten^{14} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POT::BE</td>
<td>PEOPLE</td>
<td>( sqwe^3 ),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>( Ka^{24} )</td>
<td>( neq^4 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POT::BE</td>
<td>INDIVIDUAL</td>
<td>( sqwe^3 ),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>( Ka^{24} )</td>
<td>( kiyu^1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POT::BE</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>( sqwe^3 ),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>( Ka^{24} )</td>
<td>( qan^1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POT::BE</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>( sqwe^3 ),</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Structural Hierarchy of Parallelism

The ideas developed and performed in parallel verses are organized by a structural hierarchy of parallelism. Stanza here refers to a parallel group of verses that expresses a single unit of meaning. These semantically and syntactically related stanzas can have any number of verses, including couplets, triplets, or quatrains. The four-verse structure in example (2) illustrates this. In the passage, Cortés states that his ancestors and the sacred instruments (the cross and the staff of his office) endow him with the authority to carry out prayers for the community.

The parallel verses in the example are organized into a quatrain of two related couplets. Each verse is built around the same frame, and the focus elements are all nouns. The first couplet is built with kinship nouns “mother//father” as the focus (verses 17-18), while the second couplet

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Because the Chatino languages do not distinguish number in nouns this lexical item, \( sqwe^3 \), could be singular or plural.
contains parallel elaborations based on objects “cross//sacred staff” (verses 19-20). In the first couplet, the petitioner declares that he has come to the ceremony infused with the power of his ancestors. In the second, he states that the cross and the sacred staff he has brought to the ceremony are the symbols of his office. Each verse begins with a repeated anaphoric conjunction $qo^1$ (“with”), giving the entire structure cohesion:

Example 2

17 V Qo$^1$ sten$^{24}$ ne$^2$, Now with my father

18 V Qo$^1$ yqan$^1$ ne$^2$, Now with my mother

19 V Qo$^1$ ksi$^1$ qnya$^0$, Together with my cross

20 V Qo$^1$ chaq$^3$-jyaq$^3$ qnya$^{24}$, Together with my staff

Hierarchical Parallel Structures: Symmetrical and Asymmetrical

The parallel stanzas in this hierarchical parallel structure can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. Symmetrical structures are fashioned with parallel stanzas containing the same number of verses (for instance, couplets are paired with couplets, triplets with triplets, and so on). Asymmetrical structures, on the other hand, comprise stanzas with differing numbers of verses. A structure can comprise a couplet followed by a triplet, or a triplet can be found next to a quatrain, and so on. Example (2) illustrates a symmetrical parallel structure: both of its stanzas are couplets. Example (3), which consists of seven parallel verses organized into two semantically related parallel stanzas, illustrates an asymmetrical parallel structure: the entire structure contains seven verse lines divided into two couplets and a triplet. The first stanza, a quatrain, vocalizes the physical life achievements of the ancestors, namely that they survived and grew old (verses 4-7). The second stanza, a triplet, conveys the moral lives that the ancestors led when they were part of this world (verses 8-10). The entire structure is bound by a repeating anaphoric pronoun $no^4$ (“those who”):

Example 3

4 II No$^4$ yqu$^2$ Those who survived

5 II No$^4$ ndlu$^3$ Those who thrived

6 II No$^4$ suq$^3$ Those who matured

7 II No$^4$ sen$^3$ Those who multiplied

8 II No$^4$ ya$^{42}$ tykwi$^4$ Those who lived entirely
Parallel Elaborations around a Single Complex Sentence

Parallel stanzas that comprise a hierarchical parallel structure are frequently elaborated around a single complex sentence. This is illustrated in a passage that captures the moment when the petitioners begin to walk on their knees from the entrance of the church to the altar in example (4). Both the main phrase and the complement of the sentence are formed through the repetition of several parallel verses. The main phrase is the couplet in verses 15-16, and its complement is formed by the prepositional phrases in verses 17-20:

Example 4

15 V Nde\textsuperscript{2} na\textsuperscript{3} jnya\textsuperscript{1} yaq\textsuperscript{42}, I ask this with my hands
\text{THIS THINGS PROG:ASK HAND:1SG}
16 V Nde\textsuperscript{2} na\textsuperscript{3} jnya\textsuperscript{1} tqwan\textsuperscript{20}, I ask this with my mouth
\text{THIS THINGS PROG:ASK MOUTH:1SG}
17 V Qo\textsuperscript{1} sten\textsuperscript{24} ne\textsuperscript{2}, Now with my father
\text{WITH FATHER:1SG NOW}
18 V Qo\textsuperscript{1} yqan\textsuperscript{20} ne\textsuperscript{2}, Now with my mother
\text{WITH MOTHER:1SG NOW}
19 V Qo\textsuperscript{1} ksi\textsuperscript{1} qnya\textsuperscript{0}, Together with my cross
\text{WITH CROSS TO (ME)}
20 V Qo\textsuperscript{1} chaq\textsuperscript{1-jyaq\textsuperscript{3}} qnya\textsuperscript{24}, Together with my staff
\text{WITH PERMISSION TO (ME)}

Additive Parallelism

Another prevalent type of parallelism in Prayers for the Community is additive parallelism, whereby “the introduction of additive information” (Stepanova, this volume) differentiates a verse or verse group in the parallel structure from preceding members. Example (5) from Cortés’ prayers illustrates how this feature strengthens, develops, and expands the message elaborated within the structure. Each verse begins with the expression sa\textsuperscript{4} nde\textsuperscript{20} eq\textsuperscript{20} jnya\textsuperscript{1} ___ (“this is what ___ petitioned”). The first couplet deploys a well-known formula that combines the kinship terms “father/mother” in the focus element of the verse. One might expect that the focus in the third line would be filled by another kinship term, such as grandfather or grandmother, but instead the petitioner chose to enhance the message by filling the slot with the adjective chaq\textsuperscript{3} thyu\textsuperscript{2} riq\textsuperscript{2} qnya\textsuperscript{1} (“forgiveness or good things onto me”), which is not completely parallel to the previous stanza but serves to focalize the message of the entire construction:
Example 5
62 XVI Sa^4 nde^20eq^20 jnya^1 sten^24
LIKE THIS CPL: ASK FATHER:1SG
Thus was the supplication of my father,

63 XVI Sa^4 nde^20eq^20 jnya^1 yqan^20
LIKE THIS CPL: ASK MOTHER:1SG
Thus was the supplication of my mother,

64 XVII Sa^4 nde^20eq^20 jnya^1 chaq^3 tlyu^2
FOR THIS CPL: ASK THING BIG
riq^2 qnya^1,
ESSENSE TO (ME)
Thus was their petition [lit. the forgiveness
or good things they made on my behalf]

Parallelism across Intervening Verses

Though the great majority of parallel structures in SJQ Chatino operate between successive verses, Zurita’s prayer shows that parallelism also occurs between discourse units that are separate from one another. The formulaic cluster in verses 4-7 is repeated in verses 14-17, shown in example (6). These repeating parallel units exhibit morphological variation according to the context in which they appear and the semantic integer to which the textual sequence refers.

Greg Urban (1986:26–29) describes parallel text sequences of larger scope as “macro-parallelism.” Frog notes that these types of parallelisms occur, for example, in formalized dialogic poetry and narrative poetry for instance a request repeated three times that elicits compliance uses the same formulaic cluster with morphological variation (personal communication, Frog February 15, 2015, and Frog “Parallelism Dynamics I,” this volume). In the present case, the parallel sequence in verses 4-7 elaborates on the physical and moral lives that the ancestors led while the sequence of verses 14-17 deals with issues concerning the younger generation:

Example 6
4 II No^4 yqu^2
THE.ONE COMPL:SURVIVE
Those who survived

5 II No^4 ndlu^3
THE.ONE COMPL:THRIVE
Those who thrived

6 II No^4 suq^3
THE.ONE COMPL:MATURE
Those who matured

7 II No^4 sen^3
THE.ONE COMPL:MULTIPLY
Those who multiplied

14 IV Sa^4-kwa^20 nya^14 kqu^0
SO.TO APPEAR POT:GROW
So too may (they) survive

15 IV Sa^4-kwa^20 nya^14 klu^0
SO.TO APPEAR POT:THRIVE
So too may (they) thrive

16 IV Sa^4-kwa^20 nya^14 ksuq^0
SO.TO APPEAR POT:MATURE
So too may (they) mature

17 IV Sa^4-kwa^20 nya^14 kxin^0
SO.TO APPEAR POT:MULTIPLY
So too may (they) multiply
Formulaic Language and Grammar

Formulaic expressions are another key tool in Chatino verbal art. The classic definition of the formula in verbal art was coined by Parry (1971:272): “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea” (see also Lord 1960:4). Parry proposed this definition specifically for Homeric verse, and it does not work for all metered poetries (Foley 1981:263). A metrical criterion for the formula is generally problematic for Chatino prayers because they lack a periodic meter. Formulae have been shown, however, to be a fundamental part of how language works: rather than being specific to metered poetry, formulae are simply shaped by the organizing principles of the form of discourse (Frog 2017:14-18). Semantic parallelism is a main organizing principle for Chatino Prayers. Fox (2016:xi) proposes that Parry’s definition can be modified for traditions organized on the basis of parallelism rather than periodic meter as “a group of words which is regularly employed under the conditions of strict parallelism to express a given essential idea” (emphasis original).

Formulaic language has been addressed in several Mesoamerican traditions based on parallelism, such as the poetic traditions of the Nahuatl (Garibay 1953; León-Portilla 1969), and the traditions of the Mayan people of Mexico and Guatemala (Hull 2012 and this volume). The term difrasismo was coined to refer to words and phrases conventionally paired across parallel verses to express a coherent metaphorical meaning in Mesoamerican poetry traditions. Here, I use the term formula to refer to such conventionally paired parallel words and phrases as established units of the poetic lexicon. Recurrent phraseology used in a series of verses will be referred to as “frames” according to the terminology introduced above. Some frames are a type of formula comparable to conventionally parallel vocabulary, but using the term frame avoids the thorny issue of whether a particular expression is part of the collective tradition, the performer’s personal idiom, or generated in the performance context. Formulae are part of the collective knowledge of the community and provide petitioners with an important lexical reservoir that simultaneously enables flexibility while facilitating conformity to conventions of form and style in performance.

The prayer formulae use the highly sophisticated linguistic resources of the Chatino language to elicit poetic imagery, persuasion, and contrast. Some of the most frequent syntactic categories employed in such formulae include positional, existential, and motion verbal predicates. For example, some of these expressions translate as “to hang,” “to stand,” “to sit elevated,” “to sit on the ground,” “to exist,” “to stay,” and “to fall.” Cortés employs positional and existential predicates to achieve a high level of cohesion and great contrast when he mentions the beginning of the new generation in example (7), a structure comprising eight couplets. In the first couplet, there is a combination of the predicates “to stand” in the first verse and “to exist” in the second. As the passage progresses, the positional/existential combination is briefly discontinued in the parallel couplet in verses 3-4, but resumes in the following couplet. The anaphoric adverb $ka^{24}$ (“just”) strengthens the entire construction. The structure is bookended by the repetition of the opening couplet of verses 1-2 and verses 7-8, but varied as the second is the only couplet that does not end its verses with the adverb “now.”
Common Themes Elaborated with Formulaic Language

The supplications on behalf of the community uttered by the two petitioners, Zurita and Cortés, share certain recurrent themes: the cycle of life, the new generation, the town of SJQ, the spirits, and civic service. It is formulaic language that communicates these themes, as discussed in this subsection.

Example (8) illustrates recurrent topics in SJQ prayers, issues surrounding birth and other biological stages of human life, elaborated with formulaic expressions. By employing an agricultural metaphor, “to sprout/to be born,” in the first couplet of this theme in Cortés’ prayer (verses 65-66), the petitioner recounts the moment when he was born. He uses a metaphor comparing the sprouting of a plant to his birth. He also describes his birth with the motion verbs “to come down” and “to drop from a high place,” perhaps from the sky (verses 67-68). Cohesion in the entire passage is maintained with the use of the word *tsan* (“day”) in each parallel verse:

### Example 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>XVII</td>
<td>Tsan⁴</td>
<td>The day I sprouted,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ntson⁴²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>XVII</td>
<td>Tsan⁴</td>
<td>The day I was born,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lan¹</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>XVII</td>
<td>Tsan⁴</td>
<td>The day I descended,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>qyan⁴²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>XVII</td>
<td>Tsan⁴</td>
<td>The day I came down,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ndlyon⁴²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using formulae with lexical extensions that denote time (hour, day) and various words that describe human beings (people, woman/women, man/men), the petitioners also express their hopes and concerns for the well-being and moral and physical success of the new generation. The point is illustrated by a passage in Cortés’ prayer that expresses his hopes that the new generation will follow in the ancestor’s footsteps and achieve prosperity, longevity, and wisdom, as shown in example (9). The new generations are also described in SJQ prayers by synonymous pairings of the words *kwiq*//*kneq* (“babies//infants”) (verses 27-28):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 9</th>
<th>31 1X</th>
<th>Tya24 wra10,</th>
<th>When the time comes,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32 1X</td>
<td>Tya24 xa3,</td>
<td>When the daylight comes,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 X</td>
<td>Ka24 nten40 sqwe3,</td>
<td>May they be good people,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 X</td>
<td>Ka24 neq32 sqwe3,</td>
<td>May they be upstanding citizens,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 X</td>
<td>Ka24 kiqyu1 sqwe3,</td>
<td>May they be upright men,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 X</td>
<td>Ka24 wqan1 sqwe3.</td>
<td>May they be upright women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nouns “mountain,” “community,” and “people” are key formula components that express a variety of ideas relating to the town of San Juan Quiahije, its institutions, citizens, and land. The mountainous terrain provides imagery in SJQ formulae such as *qya*//*kchin* (“mountains//people”) in the frame *Snyiq* ___ (“children of ___”): *Snyiq* *qya*//*Snyiq* *kchin* (“The children of the mountains/The children of our people”), referring to the citizens of SJQ (verses 9-10). These formulae recur throughout the prayer (verses 9-10, 23-24, 37-38), in Cortés’s petition (78-79), and in Zurita’s prayer (verses 28-29 and 40-41).

Civic service and community engagement is an obligation for every male citizen in SJQ. SJQ culture views this obligation as innate for a man born into the community. Throughout their lives, men discharge different *cargos*, or duties, in City Hall. This service begins when a young man is initiated into service as a helper, or *topil*, at the age of twelve. These *cargos* change during a man’s life time until his old age when he becomes an elder as in example (10). This passage recounts the wishes of his ancestors that one day he serve his community, and states that he is fulfilling their wishes and desires by enunciating his prayer.

In the first couplet, the petitioner uses the formula “hand//mouth” in the frame “to ask with ___” to express that his ancestors spoke prayers on his behalf when he was young. In the second couplet, employing a common formula “work//community” in the frame “so that I may become ___,” he states that his parents wished that he would one day serve the community. In the third couplet, he employs a formula comprising positional predicates “to sit in front // to hang in back” to declare his will both to lead and follow his community. He concludes this passage by
using another well-known formula “mountain/community” to acknowledge the community of SJQ as the beneficiary of his service:

Example 10

72 XVIII Jnya₁ yaq² qnya₁,  On my behalf, they asked with their hands,
CPL: ASK HAND TO (ME)
73 XVIII Jnya₁ tqwa₁² qnya₁,  On my behalf, they asked with their mouths,
CPL: ASK MOUTH TO (ME)
74 XVIII Chaq³ kan²⁴ tnya³,  So that I may become work,
SO.THAT POT:BE:1SG WORK
75 XVIII Chaq³ kan²⁴ kchin¹,  So that I may become the people,
SO.THAT POT:BE:1SG COMMUNITY
76 XVIII Chaq³ tykwan²⁴ lon²⁰,  That I may lead,
SO.THAT POT:SIT.ELEVATED:1SG AHEAD:1SG
77 XVIII Chaq³ tykwen²⁰ ntyqan²⁴ qin²⁴,  That I may follow,
SO.THAT POT:HANG:1SG FOLLOW:1SG TO
78 XVIII No⁴ nka²⁴ qya²,  The mountains,
THE.ONE PROG: BE MOUNTAIN
79 XVIII No⁴ nka²⁴ kchin¹,  The people,
THE.ONE PROG: BE COMMUNITY

To conclude this section, Table 1 presents a summary of the most common formulaic expressions found in the two prayers. Column 1 lists the words that make the formulaic expression; column 2 provides English glosses; and column 3 reflects the metaphorical sense of the combined elements in column 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tyon²⁴/tykwá²⁴/tyqín²⁴/tyqán²⁴</td>
<td>to stand/to sit.elevate/to exist/to sit.ground</td>
<td>to rise up, to establish oneself, to protect, to prosper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kqu²⁴/klu²⁴/ksuq²⁴/kxin²⁴</td>
<td>to grow/to thrive/to mature/to multiply</td>
<td>life accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qya²/kchin¹</td>
<td>mountain/community</td>
<td>San Juan Quiahije, people from San Juan Quiahije</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tykwí⁴/ykwá⁴/ykwá⁴</td>
<td>entire/direct/even</td>
<td>upstanding citizen/ straight and narrow road, flat land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwan⁴/wra¹⁰</td>
<td>sunlight/hour/light/earth, time</td>
<td>time, this world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xa³/xá³-liyu³²</td>
<td>light/earth</td>
<td>earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stí⁴/qyan¹</td>
<td>father/mother</td>
<td>parents, ancestors, god, authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kíqyu¹ klu²⁴/wqan¹ kla²⁴</td>
<td>old men/old women</td>
<td>ancestors, grandparents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jnya²⁰ yaq²/Jnya²⁰ tqwa⁴</td>
<td>to ask with hands/to ask with mouth</td>
<td>to pray, to petition, to plead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndon⁴² jneq³/ndon⁴² xtyinq³</td>
<td>to genuflect/to kneel</td>
<td>plead, to sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tykwá²⁰ Ió²⁴/tykwí²⁰ ntyqá²⁴</td>
<td>to sit in front/hang in back</td>
<td>office in municipal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tnya³/kchin¹</td>
<td>work/community</td>
<td>officer in municipal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a result of the long history of contact between the Chatino and Spanish languages, the prayers contain many borrowings from Spanish. This is similar to what Hull describes in this volume regarding Mayan curing rites. Spanish derivations in these prayers are religious terms: God, the Patron Saint, and the Holy Spirit. In praising the spirits, the petitioners state that they are healthy, courageous, and powerful. These pronouncements are made with a combination of Chatino and Spanish words as illustrated in example (11) below.

This construction comprises four parallel verses organized into two couplets. Using Chatino words, the first couplet states that the spirits are healthy and powerful (verses 89-90). The second couplet draws on Spanish loan words. The Chatino word *jwe*\(^4\)-sa\(^0\) in line 91 comes from Spanish *fuerza* (“strength”) and *wa*\(^4\)loq\(^14\) in line 92 comes from Spanish *valor* (“courage”):

Example 11

89  XXII  Qwen\(^4\) ndwa\(^20\) qo\(^1\) no\(^4\) lye\(^42\), You are seated in health,  
    2SG PROG:SIT:2SG WITH THE:ONE HEALTHY

90  XXII  Ndwa\(^20\) qo\(^1\) no\(^4\) tkwa\(^3\), You are seated in power,  
    PROG:SIT:2SG WITH THE:ONE POWER

91  XXII  Ndwa\(^20\) qo\(^1\) jwe\(^4\)-sa\(^0\) in\(^20\), You are seated in strength,  
    PROG:SIT:2SG WITH STRENGTH INTJ

92  XXII  Ndwa\(^20\) qo\(^1\) wa\(^4\)loq\(^14\), You are seated in courage,  
    PROG:SIT:2SG WITH COURAGE

Examples (12) and (13) offer further illustrations of praise to the spirits that combine Chatino words and Spanish loan words. Each construction comprises three verses. The first two verses address the spirits with a well-known Chatino pair “father//mother,” accompanied in the third line by a borrowing from Spanish: *patron* (“patron saint”) in example (12) and *Dios* (“God”) in example (13):

Example 12

101  XXV  Tlu\(^2\) qa\(^1\) qwen\(^32\) nka\(^42\) sten\(^4\), For great you are, my father,  
     BIG EMPH 2SG PROG:BE:2SG FATHER:1SG

102  XXVI  Tlu\(^2\) qa\(^1\) qwen\(^32\) nka\(^42\) yqan\(^20\), For great you are, my mother,  
     BIG EMPH 2SG PROG:BE:2SG MOTHER:1SG

103  XXVI  Tlu\(^2\) qa\(^1\) no\(^4\) nka\(^24\) Patron, For great is our Patron Saint,  
     BIG EMPH THE:ONE PROG:BE PATRON

Example 13

Part VI

82  X1X  Tlu\(^2\) qa\(^1\) no\(^4\) nka\(^24\) sten\(^32\), For great is our father,  
     BIG EMPH THE:ONE PROG:BE FATHER:1SG

83  X1X  Tlu\(^2\) qa\(^1\) no\(^4\) nka\(^24\) yqan\(^20\), For great is our mother,  
     BIG EMPH THE:ONE PROG:BE MOTHER:1SG

84  X1X  Tlu\(^2\) qa\(^1\) no\(^4\) nka\(^24\) sten\(^{en}1\) ndyo\(^14\) si\(^{10}\). For great is our father God.  
     BIG EMPH THE:ONE PROG:BE FATHER:1INCL GOD
Metapragmatic representation is the marriage of the spoken word to the performance event’s manifestation by referring to what is happening in the verbal art. Keane (1997:50) asserts that, at their core, prayers and spells are metapragmatic: “they reflexively refer to the very actions they are undertaking.” In the introduction to this volume, Frog and Tarkka add that verbal art contains “references to, reflections on, and representations of the verbal art being performed and of the performer in the act of performance.”

SJQ prayers are rich in metapragmatic references regarding the petitioner’s agency, identity, and authority. Many passages in Prayers for the Community vocalize bodily actions (kneeling, walking on knees, and gestures such as crossing themselves and pounding on their chests) that petitioners perform while they recite their prayers and advance toward the altar. The four parallel verses in example (14) illustrate these metapragmatic reflections. The metonymic use of body-part terms (“hand//mouth” in the first couplet) expresses the action of voicing the prayers out loud while concurrently performing the gestures that are included in Catholic worship. Actions performed during this ritual include making the sign of the cross, striking the breast, passing candles, and offering up a prayer using the iconography of a saint. The second couplet in this structure is a statement of identity and agency. The speaker identifies himself as the one conducting the prayers out of his love and care for the community:

Example 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Intonation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Naq²</td>
<td>jnya¹</td>
<td>yaq²</td>
<td>in²⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Naq²</td>
<td>jnya¹</td>
<td>tqwan²</td>
<td>in²⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Naq²</td>
<td>qne¹</td>
<td>qna³</td>
<td>in²⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Naq²</td>
<td>qne¹</td>
<td>xnyi⁴</td>
<td>in²⁰</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example (15) further illustrates embodied prayer, performance, and action. In this section, Cortés voices the actions he performs during the prayer event stating that he is walking on his knees along with the other petitioners (line 93). Next, he reiterates the “hand//mouth” formula in the “to ask with ___” frame to declare that he is carrying out the prayers seen in example (14) (verses 94-95). He then states that he is kneeling in place, indicating his bodily stance (line 96). Finally, pairing the words “face” and “feet,” he reflects on his actions and posture while he walks on his knees and speaks the prayer aloud as he advances toward the altar (verses 97-98):

Example 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Intonation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Ne²</td>
<td>wa²⁴²</td>
<td>re²</td>
<td>ntqan²²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Wa²⁴²</td>
<td>re²</td>
<td>jnya¹</td>
<td>yaq² wa²⁴²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are asking with our hands,
Many passages of Prayers for the Community are dedicated to the reflection, assertion, and expression of the performer’s identity and authority. This metapragmatic assertion is vocalized when the worshiper states that he has come to this prayer event infused with two powerful forces: spiritual assistance from his parents, and the instruments of prayer in the form of the cross and sacred staff. The petitioner states that these elements endow him with the authority to represent the community. This is illustrated below in example (16):

Example 16

15 V Nde² na³ jnya³ yanq⁴², I ask this with my hands,
16 V Nde² na³ jnya¹ tqwan²⁰, I ask this with my mouth,
17 V Qo¹ sten²⁴ ne², Now with my father,
18 V Qo¹ yqan²⁰ ne², Now with my mother,
19 V Qo¹ ksi¹ qnya⁰, Together with my cross,
20 V Qo¹ chaq⁴-jyaq³ qnya²⁴, Together with my staff.
21 VI Qne¹ ka²⁴ qna³ in²⁰, Because I care,
22 VI Qne¹ ka²⁴ xqnyi²² in²⁰, Because I remain concerned,
23 VI Qin⁴ kqya², For the mountains,
24 VI Qin⁴ kchin³², For the people.

Performance

The performance of the Prayers for the Community adheres to a specific culturally expected form, idiom, content, and organization. Each petitioner has the freedom to apply his
own personal style to the basic form. In this respect SJQ oral prayers correspond with the view of rigidity and flexibility of oral traditions around the world according to Oral-Formulaic Theory (Parry 1971; Lord 1960 and 1991; Foley 1990).

SJQ supplications are spoken in a rapid crescendo ending in almost incomprehensible speech. The beginning of each paragraph is delivered in a strong and clear voice. As the prayer progresses, the petitioner’s voice becomes faint, feeble, and often times inaudible. This is illustrated in stanza II of Cortés’s prayer (see appendix): Ka²⁴ kqu¹ni¹ / Ka²⁴ klu²ni¹ (“Now they are about to grow / Now they are about to thrive”) (verses 3-4). This section is spoken loudly and clearly. As the petition progresses the rendition becomes softer and fainter. The end of stanza II — Ka²⁴ tyqin³² ni¹ (“Now they are about to establish themselves”) (line 6), is said more softly and almost mumbled. At this point the petitioner briefly pauses to breathe and gather the energy to start a new stanza. Then, at the beginning of stanza III, before starting a new paragraph, Cortés once again energetically utters Ka²⁴ tyi²⁰ ton¹ (“They are about to rise up,”) (verse 7).

Comparison of the two prayers reveals various commonalities and differences. Both prayers invoke and exalt the spirits by describing their physical and moral characteristics. Both speakers declare their hope that the new generation will follow in their ancestors’ footsteps and will be able to maintain and continue the community and its traditions. While Cortés’ prayer is rich in metapragmatic reflections of his own agency, authority, and identity, Zurita’s prayer does not touch upon such points. Cortés recounts the personal sacrifices he has made to the community and asserts his willingness to do so because his services were offered to the spirits the moment he was born. When these prayers were spoken, Cortés was serving his last compulsory position in City Hall, and perhaps for this reason he elaborates on his service to the community. Structurally, Zurita’s prayer contains macro-parallelism that is not present in Cortés’ prayer.

Conclusion

The Prayers for the Community offer splendid examples of the dynamic range of parallelism found in the Chatino language, adding to the study of that found in other Mesoamerican languages. The two prayers examined here reveal assorted structures of parallelism working in conjunction with repetition, formulaic expressions, performance, as well as a wealth of stylistic features such as metaphor, anaphora, and metonymy. Parallel verses are organized around hierarchical parallel structures of both symmetrical and asymmetrical parallel stanzas.

SJQ petitioners skillfully manipulate Chatino grammar. Many hierarchical parallel structures are built from repetitions of single complex sentences. The different sentence elements, such as the main clause and the complement of the clause, are repeated a number of times. Similarly, formulaic expressions are built by pairings of positional, existential, and motion predicates. These elements provide cohesion, tension, and poetic contrast to these prayers.

SJQ petitioners spent a great deal of time rationalizing and reflecting on their gestures, bodily movements, and actions during prayer. In an effort to achieve a stronger and more forceful prayer, petitioners articulate their concurrent bodily actions through their verbal art. Each
petitioner brings his own collective knowledge and experiences to bear in their respective prayers. Both Zurita and Cortés ably represent their community, one as a community elder and the other an elected official. While both prayers appeal on behalf of the new generation that they might grow and become a force in the community, Cortés’ prayer places a greater emphasis on voicing his own agency, identity, and authority in his performance.

The examples of the Prayers for the Community are consistent with the verbal art found in SJQ, Eastern Chatino. There is a long tradition of orators using formulaic expressions and parallelism with the latitude to embellish their own style within the verbal discourse. This verbal art is also consistent with poetic forms found throughout Mesoamerican poetic traditions.

University of Kentucky

Appendix 1: Chatino Orthography

The orthography used in this essay is based on the practical orthography developed by the Chatino Language Documentation Project (CLDP). Some of the conventions for representing consonants are as follows: \(<q> = [ʔ], <x> = [ʃ], <ch> = [tʃ], <j> = [h], <y> = [j], <ty> =\) laminal alveolar; \(<y>\) before consonants = voiceless palatal glide; \(<y>\) elsewhere = voiced palatal glide. \(<Vn>\) represents a nasalized vowel. SJQ Chatino is one of the richest tonal languages in the world with 13 different tonal contrasts. Tones are associated with syllables and are expressed using numbers (0, 1, 2, 3, 4). Below is a description of the tones, their form, and their sandhi expressions in SJQ:

0 = is a floating, super high tone  
1 = High  
2 = Mid  
3 = Low mid  
4 = Low  

04 = Super high to low  
14 = High to low  
24 = Mid to low  
42 = Low to mid  
32 = Mid to high  
40 = Low to super high  
20 = Mid to super high  
10 = High to super high  
140 = High to low to super high

SJQ Chatino has a set of complex tones that are the result of a nasalized vowel clitic (=Vn) in combination with a tone-bearing stem. This occurs with verb stems containing tones (1, 2, 3, 4, 20, 32, 42, and 40) inflected for the first person singular (1SG) and first person plural
inclusive (1INCL) (E. Cruz 2011). For instance, $kwi$ (“she/he hangs”) has a double mora when inflected for first person singular: $kwen^{20}enq^{32}$ (“I hung”) and the first person inclusive (INCL): $ndywen^{20}en^{32}$ (“we (INCL) hang”). The rule and representation of this in the practical orthography are as follows: for complex tones, put one tone on each mora, for example: $yan^{\uparrow42}$ $an^{\uparrow32}$ (“we came (away from base”)). For further information on SJQ tones see (Cruz and Woodbury 2005):

- INTJ = interjection
- 1SG = first person singular
- 2SG = second person singular
- CPL = completive aspect
- POT = potential aspect
- PROG = progressive aspect
- B = base

### Appendix 2: The Prayers

Audio recordings of the prayers were transcribed into the Chatino language by the author using time aligned annotation with EUDICO Linguistic Annotator (ELAN). Breaks and sections in the text were made using parallelism. The texts are presented in four columns: Column 1 is the line number; column 2 divides the texts into stanzas; and column 3 shows the division of the text into parts, which are ultimately the themes and topics elaborated by the texts. It also holds the Chatino transcription with the gloss of each lexical item below it. This presentation follows Urban (2010). Column 4 provides an English translation of the same.

#### Simón Zurita’s Prayer

Simón Zurita’s prayer is divided into three parts and topics are largely organized in the following way. Verses 1-3, stanzas I-II, invoke the deities and ancestors. Verses 4-13, stanzas II-III, describe the ancestors and the lives that they led while in this world. Verses 14-23, stanzas IV-V, describe the young generation. Verses 27-41, stanzas VII-X, are the petitions made to the deities and ancestors, and verses 42-44, stanza XI, again invoke the deities.

Text 1. Prayer for the Community performed by Zimón Zurita:

1  I  Sa$^{14}$nta$^{14}$  A$^{14}$yma$^{14}$  Santa Ayma

2  II  Kiqyu$^{1}$  kla$^{24}$  Forefathers

---

4A description of the Chatino orthography is given in the appendix below.
PRAYERS FOR THE COMMUNITY

3 II Wqan¹ kla²⁴
FEMALE OLD
Foremothers

4 II No⁴ yqu²
THE.ONE COMPL: SURVIVE
Those who survived

5 II No⁴ ndlu³
THE.ONE COMPL: THRIVE
Those who thrived

6 II No⁴ suq¹
THE.ONE COMPL: MATURE
Those who matured

7 II No⁴ sen³
THE.ONE COMPL: MULTIPLY
Those who multiplied

8 II No⁴ ya⁴² tykwi⁴
THE.ONE COMPL: GO.AWAY ENTIRELY
Those who lived entirely

9 II No⁴ ya⁴² nyi⁴
THE.ONE COMPL: GO.AWAY STRAIGHT
Those who lived directly

10 II No⁴ ya⁴² ykwa⁴
THE.ONE COMPL: GO.AWAY EVEN
Those who lived evenly

11 III Yan⁴² lo⁴ kwan⁴
COMPL:COME.AWAY TO SUNLIGHT
They came to the sunlight

12 III Yan⁴² lo⁴ xa³
COMPL:COME.AWAY TO LIGHT
They came to the light

13 III Yan⁴² lo⁴ xa⁴-liyu⁴²
COMPL:COME.AWAY TO LIGHT-EARTH
They came to the world

Part II

14 IV Sa⁴-kwa²⁰ nya¹⁴ kqu⁰
SO.TO APPEAR POT:GROW
So too may (they) survive

15 IV Sa⁴-kwa²⁰ nya¹⁴ klu⁰
SO.TO APPEAR POT:THRIVE
So too may (they) thrive

16 IV Sa⁴-kwa²⁰ nya¹⁴ ksuq⁰
SO.TO APPEAR POT:MATURE
So too may (they) mature

17 IV Sa⁴-kwa²⁰ nya¹⁴ kxin⁰
SO.TO APPEAR POT:MULTIPLY
So too may (they) multiply

18 V Tyi²⁰ ton¹⁰
POT:AUX.TO STAND
May they stand up

19 V Tyi²⁰ kqan²⁴
POT:AUX.TO SIT.ON.GROUND
May they sit down

20 V No⁴ kwiq²
THE.ONE BABY
The ones that are newborn

21 V No⁴ kneq¹
THE.ONE YOUNG
The ones that are young

22 V No⁴ ntsu¹²
THE.ONE PROG:BORN
The ones that are being born
The ones that are sprouting

You are my father

You are my mother

You are their father, God!

Patron Saint John the Baptist

You are the lord of the mountains

You are the lord of the community

You shall stand

You shall exist

Give a hand

Give an arm

Stand before them

Stand behind them

Take care of them

Make them strong

Those being born

Those sprouting

In the mountains

In the community

You are my father
43 XI Nka\(^{42}\) yqan\(^{20}\)
PROG: BE:2GS MOTHER:1GS
You are my mother

44 XI Nka\(^{42}\) sten\(^4\) ndiy\(^{14}\) si\(^{10}\)
PROG: BE:2GS FATHER:1INCL GOD
You are our father, God

Wenceslao Cortés’ Prayer

Cortés’ prayer is divided into six parts. Part I describes the new generation, stating that they are young and inexperienced. Part II underscores the petitioner’s responsibility for praying on behalf of the new generation. In part III, Cortés voices his hopes that the new generation will prosper, survive, and thrive, and that they become exemplary citizens and a force for their families and community. In parts IV and V Cortés emphasizes tradition, stating that the ancestors petitioned prayers on behalf of the new generation in a similar fashion. Cortés culminates his prayer in part VI by exalting the spirits and the images of the Catholic Church.

Text 2. Prayer for the Community performed by Wenceslao Cortés:

Part I

1 I Ka\(^{24}\) tyi\(^{20}\) ton\(^1\) ne\(^1\),
JUST POT:AUX:TO STAND NOW
Now they are about to rise up,

2 I Ka\(^{24}\) tyi\(^{20}\) tqen\(^{24}\) ne\(^2\).
JUST POT:AUX:TO EXIST NOW
Now they are about to establish themselves.

3 II Ka\(^{24}\) kqu\(^1\) ni\(^1\),
JUST POT:GROW NOW
Now they are about to grow,

4 II Ka\(^{24}\) klu\(^1\) ni\(^1\),
JUST POT:THRIVE NOW
Now they are about to thrive.

5 II Ka\(^{24}\) tykwa\(^1\) ni\(^1\),
JUST POT:SIT.ELEVATED NOW
Now they are about to sit up,

6 II Ka\(^{24}\) tyqin\(^{32}\) ni\(^1\).
JUST POT:EXIST NOW
Now they are about to establish themselves.

7 III Ka\(^{24}\) tyi\(^{20}\) ton\(^{10}\),
JUST POT:AUX:TO STAND
They are about to rise up,

8 III Ka\(^{24}\) tyi\(^{20}\) tqen\(^{24}\),
JUST POT:AUX:TO EXIST
They are about to establish themselves.

9 III Snyiq\(^4\) qa\(^2\),
CHILDREN MOUNTAIN
The children of the mountains,

10 III Snyiq\(^4\) kchin\(^{32}\).
CHILDREN COMMUNITY
The children of our people.

11 IV Tykwa\(^{140}\) sqwe\(^3\),
POT:SIT.ELEVATED WELL
They will prosper as they sit,

12 IV Tyqin\(^4\) sqwe\(^3\),
POT:EXIST WELL
They will prosper as they establish themselves.

13 IV Sa\(^4\) nde\(^2\) wra\(^{10}\),
FOR THIS HOUR
For all these hours,
For all these days.

Part II

I ask this with my hands,

I ask this with my mouth,

Now with my father,

Now with my mother,

Together with my cross

Together with my staff.

Because I care,

Because I remain concerned,

For the mountains,

For the people.

Part III

They are about to rise up,

They are about to sit up,

The infants,

The young ones,

They will rise up,

They will to sit up,

When the time comes,

When the daylight comes,

May they be good people,
May they be upstanding citizens,

May they be upright men,

May they be upright women.

They are the children of the mountains,

They are the children of the people.

This is our care,

This was the way of our fathers,

This was the way of our mothers.

This was the way of the elder men,

This was the way of the elder women.

When the time came,

When the daylight came,

With their hands they asked,

With their mouths they asked,

They prostrated themselves,

And they knelt down.

In the name of God,

Holy Jesus,

And the holy soul,

The elder men,

The elder women,
Part V

With my hands I ask it,

With my mouth I ask it,

This is my care,

This is my true concern,

Thus was the supplication of my father,

Thus was the supplication of my mother.

Thus was their petition [lit. the forgiveness or good things they made on my behalf],

The day I sprouted,

The day I was born,

The day I descended,

The day I came down,

To the sunlight,

To the daylight,

To the earth.

On my behalf, they asked with their hands,

On my behalf, they asked with their mouths,

So that I may become work,
So that I may become the people,

That I may lead,

That I may follow,

The mountains,

The people,

For all these hours,

For all these days

For great is our father,

For great is our mother,

For great is our father God.

You are my father,

You are my mother.

You are seated in health,

You are seated in power,

You are seated in strength,

You are seated in courage,

Now we are kneeling down,
We are asking with our hands,

We are asking with our mouths,

I knelt down,

Scraping my face on the ground,

Scraping my feet.

For you are my father,

For you are my mother,

For great you are, my father,

For great you are, my mother,

For great is our Patron Saint,

In the heavens,

On earth,

You are my father,

You are my mother,

In the name of God and the Saints,

Holy mother Mary,

Great is our father,

Conceived without sin,

Great is our mother,

By the sign of the holy cross.
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