

ROMINKA VET AND MARUCH  
MENDES PERES MARIA TZU  
CHIAPAS, MEXICO

LANGUAGE: TZOTZIL

## BOLOM CHON

Bolom Chon ta vinajel  
Bolom Chon ta banomil

Yajvalel ta vinajel  
Yajvalel ta banomil

Kox kox avakan, Bolom Chon  
Natik avakan, Bolom Chon

Tinitin avisim, Bolom Chon  
Natik avisim, Bolom Chon

Likan, tot  
Likan, me'

Va'alan, tot,  
Va'alan, me'

Totzan, tot  
Totzan, me'

Jk'upintik ta banomil  
Jk'upintik ta vinajel



This is an ancient song written down by two Tzotzil women, Rominka Vet and Maruch Mendes Peres Maria Tzu. Tzotzil is a Mayan language spoken by the indigenous people in the Mexican state of Chiapas. There are about 300,000 Tzotzil speakers and most of them are bilingual, with Spanish as their second language. Animals are important in Tzotzil culture. Some animals are believed to be gods or human souls.

BOLOM CHON—PRONUNCIATION HINTS:  
Vowels are pronounced the same as in Spanish.  
j: Guttural throat sound like the German *ch*.  
x: Sounds like *sh* in *ship* or *mush*.  
ch: Sounds like *ch* in *church*.  
' : This is a glottal stop like the pause in *uh-oh*.

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
avakan (n.)	an animal's foot that has claws and pads	paw, foot
avisim (n.)	hair growing on a man's chin and lower cheeks	beard
banomil (n.)	third planet from the sun; where we live	earth, world, planet earth
bolom (n.)	a large, heavily built cat with a yellowish-brown coat and black spots, found mainly in the dense forests of Central and South America	jaguar—symbol of Mayan supernatural power since earliest times
chon (v.)	Two meanings for this word: 1. moves rhythmically to music 2. idealized long, limbless reptile with no eyelids, jaws capable of considerable extension	1. dances, frolics, prances 2. mythical snake, serpent
jk'upintik (v.)	enjoy tender affection for something	we like it here, we enjoy it here, we fancy it here
kox kox (adj.)	the state of having damaged living tissue caused by a cut, blow, or other impact	wounded, injured
likan (v.)	rise to one's feet	rise, get up, find your feet, stand
me' (n.)	a woman in relation to a child or children to whom she has given birth	mother, mama, matriarch
natik (adj.)	measuring a great distance from end to end	long, lengthy, extensive, endless
ta (prep.)	physically in contact with and supported by a surface	on, resting on, resting atop, in
tinitin (adj.)	covered with hair	hairy, shaggy, bushy, furry
tot (n.)	a male animal in relation to its offspring	father, papa
totzan (v.)	move upward	climb up
va'alan (v.)	move from a lower position to a higher one; come or go up	rise up, arise, soar, loom
vinajel (n.)	the region of the atmosphere and outer space seen from the earth	sky, heavens
yajvalel (n.)	a defender, protector, or keeper	guardian, sentinel, keeper

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## PHRASE BY PHRASE

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Jk'upintik ta banomil \_\_\_\_\_

Jk'upintik ta vinajel \_\_\_\_\_



## REFLECTING AND FINDING MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

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What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

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Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?

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