

**CHANG MARÍN – A PROMINENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PANAMANIAN  
LITERATURE****Sevara Mahmudova**Associate Professor, Candidate of Philological Sciences  
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Journalism and Mass Communications, Tashkent**Annotation**

This article examines the life, socio-political activity, and creative legacy of Carlos Francisco Chang Marín, one of the most prominent representatives of 20th-century Panamanian literature. Special attention is given to the influence of his difficult childhood and social inequality on the formation of his worldview and political position. The study highlights his participation in the communist movement, his struggle against U.S. dominance over the Panama Canal, and his role as a defender of the oppressed. The article also analyzes Chang Marín's multifaceted творчество, including his poetry, short stories, novels, essays, and works for children. His literary works are explored in connection with avant-garde traditions and their strong social and political themes. Particular emphasis is placed on his décima poetry, which reflects national identity, resistance, and social protest. In addition, his contributions to journalism, music, and visual arts are discussed.

**Keywords**

Carlos Francisco Chang Marín, Panamanian literature, inequality, political activism, Panama Canal, folklore, Latin American literature.

**Introduction:** A major representative of 20th-century Panamanian literature, poet, writer, public figure, politician, folklorist, painter, musician, and journalist Carlos Francisco Chang Marín was born on February 26, 1922, in the city of Santiago de Veraguas. He was the second illegitimate child of a wealthy Panamanian Chinese merchant, Carlos Chang, and a Creole woman, Faustina Marín.

Chang Marín's childhood was difficult. Since he was not officially recognized by his father, he was raised in his mother's family. For some time, he lived under the care of his aunt, where he was treated like a servant and subjected to various insults because of his social origin.

It is not clear when Chang Marín managed to escape such a life, but he later moved to Panama City and engaged in various jobs. Among other things, he worked at the Panama Canal under the supervision of American managers. There, he witnessed the humiliating and unjust treatment of Panamanian workers by American specialists. Having already faced discrimination in his childhood due to his social background, these experiences of inequality and injustice profoundly shaped his worldview, turning him into a defender of the poor and motivating him toward political activism.

Chang Marín received his secondary education from South American and European intellectuals who had suffered under Spanish fascism. He also studied for a short time at the National Conservatory of Music of Panama. He began writing early, and in 1942, while studying in college, he participated in the Ricardo Miró National Prize competition with his first collection of poems. Some scholars consider his early works as part of the Ibero-American

post-avant-garde literary movement of the World War II period. Influenced by avant-garde literature, his poetry at that stage took on an openly revolutionary tone, often expressing a sense of despair.

His political activity intensified in 1950 with the establishment of the Panamanian Communist Party. According to the laws of Panama at that time, communist movements were illegal and operated secretly. Due to growing dissatisfaction with state policies in rural areas, the Panamanian government increased pressure on communist organizations. Between the 1940s and 1950s, Chang Marín worked as a teacher in remote provinces, actively participated in strikes, organized student movements, and openly criticized government policies while speaking about pressing social issues in the country. This eventually led to his dismissal.

According to Chang Marín, he spent four years of his life behind bars. Despite this, he held several leadership positions as an organizer and leader of the Panamanian communist movement. As a result of various political accusations, he was arrested and exiled to Chile in 1968. Tireless as ever, Chang Marín studied painting at the National University of Chile and even actively participated in Salvador Allende's presidential campaign.

**Main part:** After being allowed to return to Panama, Chang Marín remained faithful to his beliefs and continued his activities as a member of the communist movement. During this period, he was recognized as one of the key figures responsible for the struggle against the United States to reclaim the Panama Canal. This struggle eventually ended with the return of the Panama Canal—previously under U.S. control—to the Panamanian people.

Chang Marín's творчество developed in close connection with his political activity; he used his works as a primary tool in resisting social injustice. He worked across various literary genres and styles, publishing short stories and poetry collections in Spanish, as well as three novels. His worldview and reflections on society are most vividly expressed in his poetry.

His poetry collection *Poemas Corporales* ("Body Poems"), written in the classical literary spirit and in decasyllabic (ten-syllable) meter, was awarded the Ricardo Miró National Prize in 1955. His décima-style poems—powerful like bardic songs—such as "I Want to Plant Crops in the Canal Zone" and "I Want Them to Leave the Canal," reflect resistance to U.S. expansionist policies. In his décima works, Chang Marín masterfully portrays the national sentiments of the oppressed, filled with social anger, where "each fist is full of resistance and each step feels like a march."

Chang Marín was also a skilled short story writer. His stories cover a wide range of themes. Many depict rural life, its spirit, and its beauty. For example, in the collection *Faragual* (1961), the central theme is land ownership issues that oppress rural populations. In general, his stories portray historical and political events characteristic of different periods in Panama's history. In *Christmas of the Poor* (1992), he describes the U.S. military invasion of Panama on December 20, 1989, while in *Life in Darkness* (1962), he depicts the harsh conditions of prisoners on Coiba Island. The author himself served two years in prison on this island for his anti-imperialist activities.

Chang Marín is also the author of novels such as *The Transparent Guerrilla* (1985), *In This Village They Killed No One* (1992), and *Christmas of the Poor* (1995). He mainly employs a historical narrative style, and critics have positively evaluated his detailed depictions of flora and fauna, geographical features, and cultural life. His final novel, autobiographical in nature—*The Gratitude and Misfortunes of Little Xinyón* (2005)—is aimed at a younger, modern readership.

The writer was also highly productive in the essay genre; many of his essays were published in international journals and newspapers. Most of them discuss U.S. policies



regarding the Panama Canal and Panama as a state, as well as its economic models and regional influence. As an active supporter of socialism, Chang Marín expressed critical views in his essays and journalistic articles on contemporary U.S. foreign policy, globalization-oriented states, and the activities of international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

**Conclusion:** Based on his pedagogical experience, Chang Marín also wrote a number of works for children and illustrated them himself. His poetry collections written for his grandchildren, such as *Songs and Stories of the Cicada* (1975) and *Tus Bilagi* (1978), are today taught as core literature in secondary and higher educational institutions in Panama.

Chang Marín also holds an important place in the history of Panamanian journalism. For several years, he wrote for the newspaper *Tula's Famous Letters*, where he expressed his views on contemporary issues in a satirical style, gaining the attention and appreciation of readers. At the same time, Chang Marín was recognized as a musician. He was the author of a number of musical compositions, songs, and arrangements. In Chile, the well-known folk group *Tío Caimán* performed his songs, while in Panama he was recognized as a composer in the *décima* (a poetic-musical style) tradition.

Until the end of his life, Chang Marín lived in his hometown of Santiago de Veraguas with his wife Eneida Romero and their five children. He remained actively engaged in political and economic debates and continued his creative work as a writer, painter, and composer. He passed away on December 5, 2012, after suffering from stomach cancer. A great son of the Panamanian people, a patriot and devoted cultural figure, Carlos Francisco Chang Marín promoted a simple philosophy of life throughout his 90 years. He remained faithful to his beliefs, rejected the process of Western industrial development, and advocated for preserving harmony between culture and nature. His political and social views are fully reflected in his creative legacy. His poetry and prose works were translated into Russian by Bulat Okudzhava.

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