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Chapter 10: Generalized Dance Sequence for the *Baile de la Conquista*

10.1. Narrative of Performance

The *Baile de la Conquista* dance-drama may be considered in six sections. The first and last are extended dances, which will be called the opening and closing dances. The intervening four sections, here called Parts I–IV, combine dance, declamation of text, and pantomime. Divisions among these four are suggested by both text and dance. These divisions are clearest in the sequence of dances that structure the *Conquista* performance at San Cristóbal Totonicapán where, as will be discussed, it has been enlarged to include a prologue. Specifically, these are the dances that do not fulfill the narrative function of indicating travel from one location to another. Instead, they introduce each of the parts (Prologue and Four Parts), though at San Cristóbal also this aspect has been extended to include exit dances for both the morning and afternoon sessions. Furthermore, the personages who participate in each of these introductory dances are those including and most directly related to the character whose monologue begins the text for the part. Thus: the Court with the *Caciques* introduces Part I that beings with Rey K‘iche’s monologue; a Spanish march introduces Part II that begins with Alvarado’s monologue, and the *Caciques* introduce Parts III and IV, both of which begin with monologues by Tekum.

Description of the dance will be fairly detailed in this section. Of necessity, some of these elements will be repeated in one or more of the chapters describing the dance in each of the four municipios studied. Some actions will be mentioned that were not viewed in any of these four municipios but are rather derived from two other sources. These are: 1) videotape produced under the direction of Carlos René García Escobar in August, 1993, of two sections of the *Baile de la Conquista* in Sololá municipio; and 2) my observations of the dance in Nebaj over three days in August of 2010.

Over the centuries, conventions of performance have altered the narrative of the original text, in some parts amplifying the story and in others denying the original intent of the author. One significant addition is the character of Ajitz Chiquito, a subsequent Maya invention with no place in the original text. Thus in most communities Ajitz Chiquito accompanies Ajitz Grande but without dialogue. In Joyabaj, Chiquito precisely repeats both texts and movements of Ajitz Grande.

10.1.1. Opening Dance

The standard opening for the *Conquista* is a dance that takes up to an hour. Choreography is complex, requiring a precise order of distinct actions and involving many shifts in direction of movement. Overall construction, like that of the *Conquista* as a whole, involves bilateral symmetry and parallelism. However, symmetry is the predominant aspect of the opening dance.
The opening dance is performed only by K’iche’ personages: Spaniards do not take part at all, and in some communities have not yet come to the dance ground. The basic structure involves Rey K’iche’ drawing out each of the other K’iche’ dancers individually in order to gather them into a single line, and then returning them in reverse order, distributing or appointing them to their proper domains. For purposes of explication, I divide this long and choreographically complex dance into nine stages.

The first and second stages of the dance involve Rey K’iche’ circling the Princes and Malinches then dancing out alone, performing two counterclockwise circuits. In the third stage, Tekum joins Rey K’iche’ when the latter has reached his corner, and the two dance together, often in a singular configuration that emphasizes their special relationship, since Tekum is Rey K’iche’s eldest son and heir.

In the fourth stage, each of the other K’iche’ dancers is gathered into the line. The order of the next two to join is invariable: it must first be the First Prince, second in line to the throne, and then Tzunun, second in command to Tekum. After these two have joined, the order tends to be more variable, until the final entrance of Ajitz and Chiquito together as a pair.

Their final position may be because as priest–diviners they lack noble origin and have no claim to leadership or the throne. During this fourth stage, dance directions may or may not reverse periodically, depending on the community.
The fifth stage is the pivot. Rey K'iche' dances alone into the centre of the dance ground and dances back and forth along the central axis while Tekum leads the rest of the line of dancers in a broad circle around the ruler, either dancing or running. Then, in most cases, the line reverses and the Ajitz pair lead the circle back.

Following this pivot begins the sixth or distribution stage, as the line becomes shorter and shorter, leaving off dancers in exactly the reverse order that they joined. This stage usually requires a reverse of direction for each personage deposited in his place. Most commonly the line reverses at the Tekum and Alvarado corners, which means the musician side of the dance ground may not be traversed at all during the distribution stage.
A further complexity of the sixth stage is that the personage to be deposited leads the line in front of Rey K'iche' until reaching his or her position. In some communities, this personage is first left in a holding position near the Quirijol corner as Rey K'iche' leads the rest of the line to the Alvarado corner. Then when the line reverses and reaches the Quirijol corner, this personage joins the line at its head, leading it to the place where he or she will remain. Often as this personage leaves the line, he or she shakes hands with Rey K'iche' and may also do a vuelta with the personage next to him in the line he has just rejoined (court or Caciques).

In the seventh stage, Tekum and Rey K'iche' again dance alone for two rounds, and when they reach Tekum's position a final time, they will shake hands or embrace. The eighth stage, like the second, sees Rey K'iche' dancing alone for nearly two rounds.

The final ninth stage parallels the first, in that Rey K'iche' interacts only with the youths of the royal court, but in a more complex procedure than earlier. Rey K'iche' dances down the central axis of the dance ground backwards, as the youths of the court dance in a line up to meet him. They then dance forwards or backwards a few times, the exact number depending on the community. These lateral line dances along the central axis form a widespread convention to which I refer as the “honouring sequence.” When they reach the court position at the end of this sequence, Rey K'iche' circles them again.1 This ends the opening dance.

1 In Nebaj, the Princes and Malinches do not dance with Rey K'iche' until the final stage of the opening dance. After Tekum has been deposited at his corner, Ajitz dances two circuits to the court position where the Princes and Malinches who have been standing there join in behind him as he then dances to the centre of the dance ground where Rey K'iche' awaits them. Ajitz leads the youths in
The opening dance fulfills separate functions and meanings. In part it functions like an overture, announcing the beginning of the performance and attracting potential onlookers from afar through the sounds of chirimía and tambor. At the same time, it serves to bring the dancers and audience into an ancient time and ancient stage of their history, using time and repetition to define the past era carefully. Many dancers say that it portrays the K'iche' nation as a place of peace before the arrival of Spanish invaders. I suggest that it also portrays the K'iche' nation in terms of its hierarchy of rulers, nobles and priests, especially through the depiction of Rey K'iche' assigning other personages to their appropriate positions. Also the symmetry of the stages around the central pivot reinforce the sense of order and balance. As such, it resists the textual narrative that characterizes the kingdom as incomplete and imbalanced because it is not part of a Christian empire. The perpetrator of such subversion might have been the fiscal who first organized dancers and musicians into a full scale production of the friar's text.

Of particular interest in this dance is the fifth and central stage, which functions as a pivot around which the sequence begins to reverse. This pivot is the only place in the whole Conquista performance in which a line of dancers moves in a circle rather than in straight lines. The anonymous narrator from San Juan la Laguna saw this circular dance as an image of the peaceful K'iche' kingdom (Sexton 1992: 103). Perhaps he was thinking of the Rey K'iche' in the centre at Q'umarcaaj and the Caciques defending the nation's margins. The approach at San Juan must be different from Momostenango, where the dancers run rather than walk in the circle around Rey K'iche'. I questioned Ernesto Ixcayauh Alvarado, who has many times danced Ajitz and whose father served both as Tekum and maestro, and circumambulating Rey K'iche' who then remain with the monarch. Ajitz then shakes hands with the Rey K'iche' and dances alone to his corner. The full court group can then perform the honouring sequence.
his explanation was that it represented a ritual in which participants run around the offering fire. One of the ways that the dance remains vital is that when original references are lost for some aspect, it is opened up to varied interpretations that are meaningful in the present.

10.1.2. Part I: Preparations for an imminent conflict

10.1.2.1. Scene 1: Q'umarcaaj, Palace of the Rey K'iche'

After concluding the opening dance, Rey K'iche' remains in place if there is no castillo, or he climbs up onto the platform. He then begins his opening monologue, "Valedme, Dioses, Valedme" (Help me, Gods, Help me), in which he muses about the letter he has received from Motecuhzoma and ponders a pretense of submission and ends in despondence. The Princes and Malinches often sit during this monologue as they are not supposed to be present. Their entrance at its conclusion usually just entails them standing up to speak, but in Nebaj they dance 1 \frac{1}{2} rounds and then enter the court on its axis before they begin their dialogue with Rey K'iche'. The youths ask what is troubling their father but he resists sharing his information. Finally they kneel before him and plead for him to explain, prompting Rey K'iche' to begin his second monologue. Rey K'iche' begins with the line: "Hijas mías, levántad" (Rise up my daughters), at the same time taking the Malinches' hands and helping them to stand. After he has explained his fears of the Spanish invaders, the Princes offer to go to Quetzaltenango to fetch Tekum so that he can organize a resistance. They stand in


front of Rey K’iche’ and bow to him before beginning their dance.


10.1.2.2. Scene 2: Quetzaltenango, Palace of Tekum

The two Princes immediately depart and dance two rounds to their particular son in order to arrive at Tekum’s palace in Quetzaltenango. They leave along the central axis, dancing alternately facing each other and back to back. Arriving at the opposite side of the dance ground, they begin two circuits to arrive at Tekum’s position in the Cacique line. They find Tekum seated or kneeling with his head shaded by his plato to show that he is asleep. They call his name or shake his shoulder to wake Tekum, who jumps up with a start. After the Princes rebuke Tekum for his lack of attention to current problems, the Caciques begin their ‘reports’, offering allegiance to Rey K’iche’ in resisting the Spaniards. In rank order, the Caciques each walk up to Tekum and stand in front of him to deliver their lines and then return to their place in line. In more formal performances, leaving their place in line and reentering it will require a vuelta with the next personage. However when it is Ajitz’s turn, he may run around the dance ground circuit then jump three times in front of Tekum. As he delivers his speech concerning his desire to make an offering at his mountain shrine, he punctuates his words with dance movements. Then he jumps three times again and returns.

Princes wake Tekum, Momostenango, 2009

10.1.2.3. Scene 3: Q’umarcaaj

The two Princes lead Tekum, the Caciques and the Ajitz pair in dance to Q’umarcaaj, making two circuits and then proceeding to Rey K’iche’s palace along the central axis. When they arrive, all the Caciques kneel in a line before

Rey K’iche’, while Ajitz and Chiquito, at the end of the line, face away from the others to watch for danger.

Rey K’iche’ asks Tekum and the other Caciques to rise and appoints them as generals of his army of defence. In their reports, Tekum and the Caciques each offer their thanks and their loyal defense of court and kingdom. Each simply stands aside to let the next Cacique speak. After Ajitz has promised to enlist Lucifer’s aid, Tekum and Rey K’iche’ engage in a long dialogue in which Rey K’iche’ foresees the fall of his kingdom and Tekum reassures him that their forces will be able to resist. They may carry on this conversation publicly or as a private conversation aside from the others. The scene ends with Rey K’iche’ handing Tekum the Guatemalan flag, exchanging it for the sceptre that Tekum has been holding. Tekum and the Caciques then kneel again to take leave of Rey K’iche’.

10.1.2.4. Scene 4: Quetzaltenango

Carrying the flag, Tekum leads the Caciques in their dance back to Quetzaltenango, leaving the royal palace on the central axis and then dancing two circuits. After the Caciques take their places, Tekum continues to dance solo, and then delivers a speech concerning the Spanish threat and his belief it will be overcome. Beginning “Ya mis Caciques aliados” (Now my allied Caciques), Tekum outlines a battle plan including the construction of defensive walls at the entrances to the Samalá valley. As he speaks, he paces in front of the Caciques or along the central axis of the dance ground.

It is now time for each of the Caciques to again exchange words of committed alliance with Tekum, but this time each Cacique’s dialogue is preceded and followed by a dance circuit. In times past the musicians played a distinctive son for each individual, but these are no longer used in the four communities studied. In some communities, each of the Caciques carries Tekum’s flag for his circuit. Ajitz and Chiquito report as a pair, without carrying the flag.
Ajitz plans to take the form of a quetzal in order to fly to the Spanish camp and harass the invaders. Again he is often dances in place while reciting his lines, preceded and followed by jumping.

In some municipios, a divination table is set up for Ajitz at this point and he may begin divining as the Spaniards enter for the entrada that opens Part II.² In the Sololá performance in 1993, this divination was introduced by a short scene in which Tekum, Tzunun and Ajitz take part. All three dance to the centre, then while the others return to their positions, Ajitz and Chiquito dance two circuits as the divination table is set up in the centre. When they return to the table, Ajitz begins the divination. I believe this scene is intended to show how Ajitz came to be assigned as sentry outside of Tekum’s palace in Quetzaltenango.³

10.1.3. Part II. Tekum refuses Spanish conditions of surrender

10.1.3.1. Scene 1: Spanish Entrada

Until fairly recently, it was customary in many municipios for the Spanish to ride into the town center⁴, with Alvarado in particular riding a white horse like Santiago in the paintings depicting him as a Moor-slayer (Santiago Matamoros). Ajitz would rush towards the Spaniards and attempt to inhibit their advance by irritating the horses with the smoke from chili peppers he has placed in his incense burner. As it has become too

² This was witnessed in Cunén and Joyabaj and is also visible on the Sololá 1993 video.
³ There is no text in the original that explains this scene, but it parallels an addition in some communities in which, after the Spaniards have occupied Quetzaltenango, Alvarado and Carrillo assign Quirijol as sentry at the same spot.
⁴ Domingo Gutiérrez of Joyabaj in 2011, and Ernesto Ixcayauh of Momostenango in 2009, estimated that horses had ceased to be used around fifteen years earlier. I wonder, however, whether their use would have been possible at the height of the civil war in the 1980s. Horses are still used in Rabinal, where the Conquista is organized primarily by Ladinos and much greater funds are invested in the production.
difficult and expensive for Costumbristas to rent horses for the feria performances, the Spaniards now march onto the dance ground. The musicians play in imitation of a military band. A chain or string is tied across the drumhead and it is beaten with the wooden end of the drumstick to imitate the sound of a snare drum while the chirimiista imitates the sound of a bugle. Both instruments are called for in the text that Alvarado will shortly recite.

As the Spaniards reach the Cacique side in Momostenango, the Caciques move forward, out of their line, and turn to face the Spaniards, clearly showing that they are observing the invaders’ advance. The San Juan la Laguna author (Sexton 1992: 107) says that the Caciques should react courageously and taunt the Spaniards as they pass. However, Don Ernesto at Momostenango interprets this movement differently. Thinking in terms of relations with contemporary neoliberalism bringing foreign investors and resource developers, Don Ernesto’s explanation is that when the Spanish came they brought gifts and promised peace and benefits, so Tekum leads the Caciques in
welcoming them into Guatemala, but the Spanish instead robbed them of their treasures and lands. As the Spaniards continue marching, the \textit{Caciques} step back into their usual line and thus out of the scene. However Ajitz continues to harass the Spaniards, sometimes by setting traps for them at the corners with his chain.

When the Spaniards finish their march and occupy their side of the dance ground, Alvarado steps out to deliver his opening speech, pacing in front of the Spaniards or along the central axis. Addressing his troops as \textit{"Caballeros y señores, Leales hijos de España"} (Knights and Gentlemen, loyal sons of Spain), Alvarado predicts the success of the coming conflict, bringing glory to the king of Spain. When he commands the drums to sound and the trumpet to play, the musicians respond by playing their \textit{tambor} and \textit{chirimía}, again in imitation of snare drum and bugle. When Alvarado finishes his speech he invites his officers to begin their reports. As with the \textit{Caciques} near the end of the first part, each of the Spaniards then dances or marches individually to Alvarado in order to pledge his loyalty and courage.

And again, each Spaniard was once accompanied by his individual \textit{son} but these are no longer used in the communities studied. Reporting last, Don Quirijol the \textit{gracejo} is granted a comic monologue in which he brags that he is the fiercest and most handsome soldier and has the appetite of a Samson. Quirijol may just step out from his place to deliver this monologue, or pace the central axis, or he may approach Alvarado like the others.

\textbf{10.1.3.2. Scene 2: Spanish Camp}

The Spanish now dance two circuits around the dance ground, most commonly to a lilting \textit{son} called \textit{Balonia}. When they stay in their positions again, Alvarado takes the narrative forward. Stepping out of line and pacing, he announces the necessity to send an embassy to Tekum to provide an opportunity of avoiding war by accepting the conditions of surrender. Carrillo immediately steps out and stands in front of Alvarado to volunteer. Alvarado accepts Carrillo as an ambassador and also appoints Cardona to accompany him. Cardona stands in front of Alvarado as well. Alvarado, Carrillo and Cardona then pace together up and down the dance ground in a straight line with Alvarado in the middle, so that Alvarado can explain the terms of surrender (conversion and submission to the Spanish crown) that they are to present to Tekum. Alvarado returns to his place in line while Carrillo and Cardona stand in front of him again. As Alvarado sends them off, the three exchange salutes.

\footnote{Ernesto Ixcayauh Alvarado, personal communication, January, 2010.}
As noted in the discussion of the original text, it appears that the author intended the Ambassadors to meet Princes and Malinches on the path to find Tekum in Quetzaltenango. However he did not explain whether these are the same Princes and Malinches as in the court at Q'umarcaaj or if they had traveled towards Quetzaltenango for some reason. So Maya performers have simply had the Ambassadors dance to Rey K'iche'. There are no lines for Rey K'iche', as the author did not intend Q'umarcaaj as the location for this scene. Where the text is used, the Ambassadors converse with the Princes and Malinches and may mime the Princes' belligerence with a battle, while Rey K'iche' remains silent. Nevertheless Rey K'iche's presence is considered a requirement for this scene, and the Rey K'iche' performer will be called back for this purpose if he has gone to rest or seek shade. In municipios where the text has become less important, it is assumed that the Ambassadors have come to see Rey K'iche' for a specific reason, likely protocol, so the Ambassadors and Rey K'iche' mime a conversation. In the Tecpán lineage of texts a dialogue has been provided between the Ambassadors and the Cacique Tepe to provide such an explanation for the visit to Q'umarcaaj, but I have not seen any performances using such texts.

10.1.3.4. Scene 4: Quetzaltenango

Ajitz shows the blood jumping in his leg. Joyabaj, 2010.
The Ambassadors continue their traveling dance to Tekum’s palace in Quetzaltenango. While they are traveling, Ajitz and Chiquito (alternately Ajitz and Lacandón/Azteca/Jicaque) emerge from their position and set up a divining table in the central space of the dance ground. According to the text, these priest-diviners have been stationed as sentries to warn Tekum of the Spanish advance. But to this framework has been added a divination procedure that is not indicated in the script and is thus entirely in pantomime. Ajitz and Chiquito seat themselves on chairs flanking the divination table on which has been spread a cloth which he has taken from his morral. He also takes out the vara, and from it pours out a number of red tz’ite seeds onto the cloth. He also sets a quartz crystal and the doll-like idol on the table. A number of seeds are then taken from the pile and arranged in small groups, each signifying one of the twenty days in the autochthonous divination calendar. In addition to the casting of seeds to foretell the future, Ajitz looks in his crystal, and finally points to the place on his limbs his blood is jumping due to the activity or inspiration of sheet lightning. Lightning is the activity and attribute of the K’oxol, and especially the Red K’oxol with whom Ajitz has become identified. These are all Costumbrista methods of divination more-or-less precisely rendered depending on the performer. In her study of divination procedures, Barbara Tedlock (1992: 138–47) noted, for example, that the location of blood signals on the diviners body place the knowledge gained in spatial, temporal and social contexts. For example, the front of the body refers to future events and the back to the past. The right side concerns males and the left concerns females. The inside of a limb places the event within the family, and the outside of the limb socially distant from it.
Some dancers are quite accurate in pointing to the outside front of the right leg, which would indicate male concerns of a future action by outsiders.

After leaving Q’umarkaaj along the central axis and dancing two circuits, the traveling Ambassadors arrive at the outskirts Quetzaltenango and come upon the two diviners. Although they have been dancing in a circuit around Ajitz and Chiquito for some time, only when the “arrive” can they “see” Ajitz because they are now in the same “location.” The text calls for the Ambassadors to comment on Ajitz’s repulsive appearance and then to address him, telling him to stop hopping like a goat. In performance, the hopping is mimed by Ajitz jumping over the table and the disgust at his appearance is mimed by attacking Ajitz or upsetting his table. The order of these two actions depends on the municipio. The Ambassadors demand and interview with Tekum, so Ajitz and Chiquito depart for Tekum’s palace. If Lacandón is included, he will remain to watch over the Ambassadors.

Ajitz dances two rounds with Chiquito, generally using a special step for this particular dance. Meeting Tekum inside his palace, Ajitz may give evidence through pantomime that he has been attacked by the Ambassadors. He then explains that the Spanish Ambassadors desire an interview and Tekum grants the interview on the condition that the Ambassadors be blindfolded. Ajitz and Chiquito then dance back to where they have left the Ambassadors, using their customary step.
During the time of Ajitz’s conversation with Tekum as well as the dances before and after, in some municipios the Ambassadors have been desecrating Ajitz's sacred divination table, rendering it unfit for its ritual use. If Lacandón/Azteca/Jicaque is present, the Ambassadors may tie him up. When they finish, the Ambassadors act as sentries. They station themselves at the two corners of the Court or music side and each walks towards the other corner, so that they pass each other in the middle. When Ajitz and Chiquito return, they must repair or rearrange and resanctify the table.

Ajitz then calls the Ambassadors to face him across the table and gives Tekum's response. At first outraged at the insulting condition of a blindfolded entrance, they realize that it is necessary to complete their mission, and that in the process they may gain valuable information concerning Tekum’s forces. So they agree and call Ajitz to carry out his obligation. However, Ajitz goes far beyond this prescription. Before binding the Ambassadors' eyes he also disarms them and binds their hands. Binding their hands is indicated in the text he later recites to the Ambassadors, and though the taking of swords is not supported by text, it is a logical necessity before binding them. This sequence of disarming, binding, and blindfolding the Ambassadors, can be highly entertaining in the hands of an Ajitz who is a skilled comedian.

To begin this long pantomime, Ajitz first disarms the Ambassadors, taking their each of their swords with considerable struggle, usually on the third try. As he examines the first sword, confiscated from Carrillo, he is first amazed at its dullness, and proceeds to sharpen it, usually on the edge of his divination table. Then looking down the shaft, he notices that it is bent and, resting the tip on the ground, adds pressure with his foot or hammers it with his axe. Satisfied with the outcome, he places the sword on the table and proceeds to confiscate, sharpen and straighten Cardona’s sword. One disarmed, Ajitz binds them both to a single chain or rope. Then it is time to apply the blindfolds. In turn for each Ambassador, Ajitz takes a square cloth pañuelo from his morral for a blindfold. Ajitz first decides it would be
appropriate humiliation to make the pañuelo smell as rank as possible by wiping the armpits and crotches of the Caciques and court members as well as his own butt. When he is satisfied that it is appropriately disgusting, he ties the pañuelo around Carrillo's mask. In performance, it would be dangerous to the dancer for the eyes of the mask to be covered so the pañuelo is instead tied around the mouth area. Ajitz then enacts the same procedure for Cardona. With the chain he then pulls the Ambassadors toward him across the table and exultantly calls for playing of the pito (cane flute) because he intends to dance in triumph.

Ajitz does dance but the Ambassadors refuse and merely walk, some times having to be literally dragged by Ajitz, as Chiquito prods the Ambassadors from behind. They move around the table counterclockwise and then make their way, dancing, walking, dragging and prodding, two circuits to Tekum's palace.

Once inside the palace, Ajitz announces the Ambassadors and hands the end of the chain to Tekum. Tekum tells the Ambassadors they may deliver Alvarado's message without fear, but reacts with rage when Carrillo demands a seat. As Tekum’s rage subsides, the Ambassadors deliver the message exactly as Alvarado had earlier instructed them. Carrillo explains the requirement of conversion to Christianity and submission to the Spanish king, while Cardona explains the consequences of refusal: death in battle, confiscation of lands, and slavery for survivors. Tekum then reacts with even greater rage, arguing that his gods and his army are superior and therefore refusing the conditions of surrender. Then agreeing that they will
meet in battle, he dismisses the Ambassadors. As they depart, the Ambassadors angrily threaten Tekum with war and destruction.

Ajitz and Chiquito then lead the Ambassadors back to Ajitz's sentry post, dancing two rounds and then again circling the divination table. Ajitz first removes the Ambassadors' blindfolds, noting with each in pantomime that the pañuelos have become infected with fleas, ticks, and lice from their unwashed bodies. He lays part of each pañuelo on the ground and stamps on the bugs to kill them. He may also begin scratching and search to find the offending insect on his own body. Then Ajitz removes the chain and returns the Ambassadors' swords, often in an insulting way.

10.1.3.5. Scene 5: Spanish Camp

The Ambassadors dance two rounds in return to the Spanish camp; in some municipios Ajitz accompanies them for the first round. After saluting Alvarado, the Ambassadors again pace with him in a private conference, relaying Tekum’s response precisely. Alvarado invites them to rest and then the other Spaniards report to Alvarado concerning their expectations of success in battle. Quirijol then steps out for his comic speech, as usual concerning his quest for Indigenous wives, though delivered without any sense of its humour. Alvarado then speaks to his captains as a whole, assigning duties according to his strategy for the coming battle.

10.1.4. Part III. Announcement of coming war
10.1.4.1. Scene 1: Quetzaltenango

Tekum and the Caciques dance to begin this part. After dancing, Tekum speaks of his determination to resist, beginning “Estoy con tanto coraje contra don Pedro de Alvarado” (I am filled with so much courage against Pedro de Alvarado). Tekum assigns Tzunun and Ajitz to convey his decision to Rey K’iche’ in Q’umarcaaj as demanded by protocol. Tzunun takes leave of Tekum and dances to Ajitz to inform Ajitz that Tekum has appointed him as a companion in the journey. Ajitz refuses to go, afraid of Spanish retribution for his mistreatment of the Ambassadors. When Tzunun insists, Ajitz delivers his comic speech. Although Ajitz’s final words in this scene reiterate that he will not go with Tzunun, in performance he and Chiquito invariably do go, and may even lead.

10.1.4.2. Scene 2: Q’umarcaaj

Tzunun, Ajitz, and Chiquito dance two rounds and then enter the palace along its central axis. They bow before the king, as usual with Ajitz and Chiquito facing away to watch for danger. Rey K’iche’ asks them to rise and deliver Tekum’s message. When Tzunun explains that Tekum has chosen war rather than conversion to Christianity and submission to a foreign king, Rey K’iche’ panics and virtually abdicates. After Tzunun tries to encourage the king, the Malinches sing to comfort him king and the Princes offer their own support. When the Malinches again call on the volcano to destroy the Spaniards, Rey K’iche’ begs them to stop and Tzunun departs with Ajitz and Chiquito.

10.1.4.3. Scene 3: Quetzaltenango

Tzunun, Ajitz, and Chiquito dance back to Tekum’s palace and report the result of their mission. Tekum invites Tzunun to rest and the other Caciques then report, individually reaffirming their loyalty. Ajitz concludes this sequence with a speech accompanied by dance gestures concerning his plans to bewitch the Spaniards with epidemic disease.

Note that in all communities studied, when time is short, the first shortcut to be taken is the elimination of Part III, centering around Tzunun’s visit to Rey K’iche’. This section was crucial to the original, early colonial agenda of the dance. It also helps maintain the parallel with the Moros y Cristianos genre characterized by two embassies rather than one. But considering that current
performance does not reveal Rey K'iche's meltdown when he is informed of the coming war, likely because this would be, in Maya views, demeaning, there remains nothing of dramatic interest in this part and its frequent absence is not mourned.

10.1.5. Part IV: Battle and Conversion

As both armies are about to meet in battle, part IV begins with parallel scenes involving K'iche' and Spanish forces. Each of these parallel scenes is in two parts. In the first part, a dance is followed by a speech from the leader and then individual comments from each of the followers in turn. In the second part, the dance or march to the battlefield is followed by a short declaration by the leader and a unison response from his followers.

10.1.5.1. Scene 1: K'iche': From Quetzaltenango to El Pinal

After the Caciques dance two rounds, Tekum delivers his moving speech that begins "Hecho un mar de confusiones se halla mi espíritu, amigos" (Friends, I find my spirit has been made a sea of confusions). After Tekum heroically chooses death in battle rather than submission, the Caciques give their reports, and Ajitz offers to raise the furies of hell to aid the K'iche'. The Caciques now proceed in dance to the battlefield. In the western K'iche' municipios of Momostenango and San Cristóbal, members of the court join this dance to provide a proper despedida (sendoff).

10.1.5.2. Scene 2: Spaniards: From the Spanish Camp to El Pinal

The scene begins with a dance of the Spanish. Alvarado then addresses his captains, noting that the distant sound of martial instruments tells him that the K'iche' are organizing themselves on the battlefield. Each of the Spaniards reports, followed by Quirijol delivering his monologue from in front of his place in line or pacing along the central axis. The Spanish then march to the battlefield (though occurrence of this traveling sequence is irregular) where Alvarado speaks a few words and the Spaniards respond in unison.
The battle scene is choreographed differently in each municipio, as there is little text to support the piece of action that draws the most audience attention. Despite this diversity, some features appear regularly. First, despite their own assertions of cowardice, the gracejos, Quirijol and the Ajitz pair, fight bravely aflag as his weapon throughout, while the other Caciques use sticks. The Spaniards all fight with swords, except that in the second part Alvarado fights with the Spanish flag that Portocarrero carries. Third, the battle is divided into several skirmishes, each of which may require a shift in position of one or both forces. Fourth, at certain points the general skirmishes are suspended and the two leaders meet in spectacular duel choreographed in the form of a cruzada in which leaders run at each other from opposite ends of a diagonal bisecting the dance ground. As they near each other they jump, and while in mid-air they pivot and clash swords. When they land, they continue running to the opposite corner. Fifth, the final encounter in which Tekum will be stabbed is often generally drawn out for dramatic effect. Sixth, texts are delivered by both Tekum and Alvarado at crucial points between skirmishes.

The oldest texts have only two such breaks for text, of which the second is the most important and divides the two parts of the battle. In this segment, Tekum reaches a point of indecision bordering on despair, calling on the furies of hell to replace his fallen soldiers. Alvarado furiously exclaims that "Sin caballo me ha dejado aquel feróz animal" (This ferocious beast has left me without a horse). It would appear that as the horse fell, Alvarado also lost his lance, since instead of asking for another horse, he asks to borrow Portocarrero's lance, actually the flag that Portocarrero exchanges for Alvarado's sword. Alvarado thus walks to Portocarrero's position and, facing him, exchanges his sword for the flag.
In many communities, the battle segment is greatly elaborated and includes an ironic near fatal wounding of Alvarado before the actual fatal wounding of Tekum. The text does not support this elaboration but it is a logical interpretation of the statement that Tekum has left Alvarado without a horse. The collapse of Alvarado's horse would certainly endanger his safety. The severe wound in these performances is shown to have been received in Alvarado's leg, and requires assistance in healing.

When Alvarado finally succeeds in stabbing Tekum, the Spaniards immediately march away to occupy Tekum's palace in Quetzaltenango. At the same time or directly following the Spanish march, and supported by two Caciques, Tekum staggers in a circuit to the centre of the dance ground. Knowing that his death is imminent, Tekum names Tzunun as the new commander and hands Tzunun his flag and headdress. A mat or blanket is placed on the dance ground for Tekum to lie upon, and in some municipios Chiquito will lie down to serve as Tekum's pillow. Tekum's cape is removed and his normal mask is changed for a bloodied death mask.
When Tekum has expired, Tzunun declares to the other Caciques that he will end the war by submitting and converting to Christianity. The other Caciques respond in unison that they will do the same and that the king must be advised. Tzunun then announces that he must take Tekum's crown to the king personally. In several municipios a coffin is brought out and Tekum is gently placed inside it. When the coffin lid has been closed, Tekum’s cape is laid on top. The Caciques and/or other helpers will then raise the coffin as a procession forms with Tzunun in the lead carrying Tekum’s headdress and flag.

10.1.5.4. Scene 4: Q’umarcaaj

Tzunun leads the coffin to Q’umarcaaj to the sounds of a funerary dirge, in some communities a slow and mournful variation on Rey K’iche’s theme. Ajitz and Chiquito follow the coffin, making it visually evident through pantomime that they are overcome with grief. In those municipios where a coffin is no longer used, Tekum walks in the procession but with the understanding that he is dead.

The procession enters the palace along its central axis. If Tekum is being walked due to lack of a coffin, he may remain standing with the Caciques as they face Rey K’iche’ or enter the cofradía. If Tekum is being carried in a coffin, the coffin set down before the king as Tzunun hands him the crown and flag. Rey K’iche’ then begins his grief-stricken monologue “Amigo, al fin vuestro brillo se mira desanimado” (Friend, in the end your brilliance appears dimmed). At the monologue’s conclusion, Rey K’iche' hands the headdress back to Tzunun, as it must be buried with Tekum. Another funeral procession forms and the coffin is carried (or the deceased Tekum is led) away from the dance ground.

Tzunun then leads the Caciques back to the royal palace, now to their usual tune which seems quite joyful in contrast to the preceding dirge. The Malinches sing a mourning song but Rey K’iche' asks them to stop. He has now resumed control of the kingdom and,
like Tzunun, has made the decision to submit to Spanish demands. He calls the two Princes to carry the message to Alvarado in Quetzaltenango, inviting the Spaniards to come to Q'umarcaaj and offering to be baptized. Tzunun’s offer to go with the Princes to guide them is refused, so the youths depart alone.

10.1.5.5. Scene 5: Quetzaltenango

The two Princes dance two rounds to Quetzaltenango, where they first meet Quirijol who, like Ajitz before him, is positioned as a sentry. They ask Quirijol for an interview with Alvarado and Quirijol agrees to conduct the Princes to Alvarado. As he dances before them, Quirijol makes hand gestures that he does not use in any other dance. In most communities, he shades his eyes, alternating hands, in the gesture of “reconnoiter” that conveys his task as a lookout. Arriving at Alvarado’s position, Quirijol presents the royal youths and Alvarado asks the reason for their visit. In most of the municipios studied, the Princes are young boys who are not able to carry on the dialogue with Alvarado, so the scene ends quickly. Also skipped are the reports of the Captains in response to Alvarado asking their opinion about the Princes. According to the text, the Princes leave first, but in practice they usually lead the dance line, followed by Alvarado and his captains.

10.1.5.6. Scene 6: Q’umarcaaj

Great attention is given to the text in San Cristóbal Totonicapán, including by the Princes, but their text lacks the final pages, hence there is no text at all for most of this scene and for all of the following scene at Q’umarcaaj.
As usual, the line of dancers performs two circuits of the dance ground and then enters the royal palace along its central axis. Upon arriving, Alvarado greets Rey K’iche' warmly and courteously, and the two embrace. Rey K’iche’s long monologue relaying his prophetic dream is rarely delivered apart from the first few lines. Following the dream’s warning, Rey K’iche' asks to be baptized and he and the Caciques may kneel for Alvarado to perform a baptism with imagined water in his cupped hands. In Cunén and Joyabaj, this scene closes with another dance involving Alvarado and one or all of the other Spaniards, the purpose of which is not explained, but may involve reconnoitering this newly conquered K’iche’ territory as Alvarado kneels and makes the ‘reconnoiter’ eye-shading gesture at specific intervals.

10.1.6. Closing
The closing dance, often called the Dance of Peace, celebrates an assumed *convivencia* or peaceful coexistence of Spanish and K'iche. Two lines are formed, one all or primarily K'iche' and the other all or primarily Spaniard. They dance circuits around the dance ground in opposite directions, passing each other's lines on the court and music side. Precise choreography differs, but the point in all cases is to demonstrate that Spanish and K'iche' communities are living together in harmony and equality. The dance concludes by forming into a single line and dancing backwards and forwards in an honouring sequence that ends at the music side, conceptually facing the church, with spoken dedications by Rey K'iche' and Alvarado to the local municipio's patron saint.

10.1.7. Despedida

In several communities the final performance of the *feria* is marked by an elaborately choreographed sendoff or *despedida* differentiated by an elaboration on the format of balanced symmetry that underlies much of the choreography, but that here also emphasizes friendship and cooperation. Though these differ by community, they commonly involve the interruption of a standard closing dance with a sequence in which each K'iche' personage dances in turn with each Spaniard, and *vice versa*. The sequence begins with the leaders, Alvarado and Rey K'iche', approaching each other on diagonals and dancing together. In the next sequence Alvarado will dance with a second K'iche' performer and Rey K'iche' with a second Spaniard. This means four people dancing. In the third sequence, the leaders dance with the performer in third position of the opposite side, while those in second position dance with each other. The process continues adding dancers by moving down the ranks until each member of one group has danced with each member of the other group, another example of a "gathering phase." Then the process reverses for a distribution phase that moves back up the ranks, eliminating a pair with each sequence. Finishing this, the dancers are arranged on the opposite sides from where they started, so the whole sequence of moving down and up the ranks, gathering and distribution, is danced again, returning the dancers to their original sides. At this point the closing dance resumes and proceeds until its usual finish.

10.2 Discussion: Interrelation of Performance Conventions

With this narrative in mind it is possible to look more closely and from a more historical perspective at the interrelation of four main dramatic components of the *Baile de la Conquista*: choreography, text, pantomime and staging.

10.2.1. Interrelated Principles of Staging and Choreography
Movement of personages through the dance ground repeatedly demonstrates spatial organizational principles that are consistent with a continuity of Maya cosmography from pre–Hispanic times to the present. *Vueltas* mark the four corners of the dance ground, suggesting the four cardinal directions, while the divination table occupies the central point or direction, thus forming the basic quincunx–shaped cosmogram.

Further principles of bilateral symmetry, linear repetition symmetry, and hierarchy articulate the standard organization of participants as they are staged in the dance ground, as well as their formation in processions and even as their costumes are laid out in the ceremony to welcome the *trajes*. The lines of *Caciques* and Spaniards are ordered hierarchically from leader to *gracejo*, an arrangement adopted from the *Moros y Cristianos* genre. From the same source comes the symmetry that relates these two opposing lines. But to this format the *Conquista* adds the mediating element of the Royal Court of Rey K’iche’. The resulting arrangement is both hierarchic and bilaterally symmetric, as the *Cacique* and Spaniards flank the court. The arrangement of court members is likewise both hierarchic and bilaterally symmetric, with Rey K'iche' flanked first by Malinches and then by Princes.

This arrangement of bilateral symmetry around the court group creates a hierarchy that is focused on the central axis of the dance ground, connecting the court and music sides. The hierarchic importance of this axis is expressed in various ways throughout the performance. Dancers always approach and depart from the Rey K’iche’ in his palace at Q’umarcaaj along the central axis. The Rey K’iche’ himself, together with the four youths that form his court, also dance in a bilaterally symmetric lateral line formation up and down this axis in the opening dance. In the closing dance, the final movement is an honouring sequence incorporates all dancers in another bilaterally symmetric lateral line formation moving up and down the central axis. The line finishes at the music side, opposite the court, where the dedication to the patron saint is delivered, thus marking this position as sacred, perhaps standing in for the church.

This organization of hierarchic bilateral symmetry is maintained outside of the dance ground, whether in processions with saints, movements to and from the dance ground, and even the arrangement of *trajes* in ceremonies to welcome the masks. The significant difference in processions is that the Ajitz pair of priest–diviners moves from the end of the *Cacique* line to occupy, and move freely within, the central space. Another deviation from these overriding organization forms is a switch to rotational symmetry when the lines of *Caciques* and Spaniards are lined up with leaders at opposite ends in order to create diagonal relationships for *cruzadas*, as in the battles at Joyabaj and the *despedidas* that end final performances at Cunén and Momostenango.

The same principles of hierarchy, bilateral symmetry and rotational symmetry affect choices made in choreography in other ways as well, particularly in the ensemble dances of opening and closing as well as choreographed battle sequences. The combination of hierarchy and bilateral symmetry clearly
dominates both the relation of gathering and distribution phases in opening dance and the series of paired encounters in the despedida that ends the final performance, as participation moves down the hierarchy in a gathering phase and up the hierarchy in a departure phase. Similarly, choreography for the battle sequence at Joyabaj involves serial cruzadas in which each leader duels with each member of the opposition, moving down then up the ranks.

Bilateral symmetry is also expressed through time, as in the overall structure of the opening dance sequence. The gathering and distribution phases are inserted into a longer sequence of actions that is likewise repeated symmetrically around the pivotal point: the circular movement around Rey K’iche’ that occurs in no other part of the Conquest dance. The main deviation from exact symmetry is that the choreographic pattern for the distribution phase requires reversals of direction while for the gathering phase it does not.

5 Circle Dance

4 Gathering

3 Rey K’iche’ + Tekum

2 Rey K’iche’ Solo

1 Rey K’iche’ + Court

6 Distribution

7 Rey K’iche’ + Tekum

8 Rey K’iche’ Solo

9 Rey K’iche’ + Court

In comparison, as the following chapter on Cunén’s Conquista will demonstrate, the sequence of public religious events and particularly the sequence of cofradías honoured during the patron saint festival at Cunén, involving dancing by the Conquista and other groups, is arranged in this hierarchic bilateral symmetry through time. At San Cristóbal, where the opening dance lacks this symmetry, the battle scene by contrast is structured symmetrically, beginning and ending with general skirmishes but centering on the leaders’ duel. Considering that the standard form of Conquista presentation involves long dances that both begin and end the piece, one could also suggest an underlying bilateral symmetry for the whole performance. These opening and closing dances serve not only narrative purposes of defining the nature of K’iche’ society before and after conversion to Christianity, but they also establish hierarchies and convey the basics of the stylistic codes within which the virtual world of the performance can be read by an audience.

A second method of articulating a binary is to repeat a long section but in the same order rather than in the reverse order. In Cunén and Joyabaj (also Nebaj), the battle scene is greatly extended by such repetition, with the first half devoted to wounding Alvarado and the second half to wounding Tekum. The standard despedida shares this structure, repeating the entire gathering and distribution sequence
though in reversed orientation. Repetition of component parts in the same order also characterizes the son according to Horspool’s analysis.

The cosmographic articulation of the dance ground through movement, and the principles of hierarchy, bilateral symmetry and linear repetition symmetry that further organize staging and choreography, share a concern with balance and order. These concerns are also frequently articulated as ritual goals by Costumbristas as well as by followers of the newer Maya Spirituality movement.

10.2.2. Interrelation of Text and Pantomime

Text and pantomime are interrelated in at least three different ways that may be mentioned here: scripted pantomime, inverse proportion, and subversive contradiction.

Text and pantomime of the Conquista have been evolving simultaneously since the dance’s origin in the late 16th or early 17th century. Both the text and the sequences of pantomime appear to have expanded over the course of this evolution, but in different ways and with different intensity. Pantomime sequences almost certainly have been evolving more freely at least since the late 17th century, when the visita records of the bishops and archbishops demonstrate that the church no longer took an interest in the scripted and masked dances that they had developed for proselytizing purposes. In contrast, the text likely remained largely unchanged until the liberal revolution of the 1870s, after which it was rapidly and intensively modified.

In the chapters on text it was noted that several of the post 1870 additions were likely designed to “catch up” with action that had already become established in performance. Specifically, this means that such additions are catching up with conventions introduced and maintained through actions introduced without script—in other words pantomime. Important examples include the Ambassadors’ geographically illogical visit to Q’umarkaj on their way to speak with Tekum in Quetzaltenango, an action that was likely understood by Maya performers as required by protocol and therefore was scripted in the Tecpán lineage texts. The scene of the Malinche’s accord with the Spaniards from the same text may have a similar origin. Other important additions that were initially non-scripted would include the introduction of Ajitz Chiquito, who is scripted in Joyabaj, and, probably much later, the forest man known variously as Azteca, Lacandón, and Jicaque, who is scripted in several Cantel lineage texts.

Text and pantomime in some communities are also inversely related. This proportion is most extreme in the contrast of the two western K’iche’ communities studied. In San Cristóbal, the text remains essential and all dancers memorize their parts. Francisco Hernández, the maestro in San Cristóbal, coaches the dancers to elicit a more dramatic interpretation of the meaning of the text, rather than
formulaic declamation, and when possible uses a microphone to ensure that the audience understands what is being said above the noise and music of adjoining fair booths. Further, textual additions developed in Cantel greatly underline the heroism of Tekum. Pantomime sequences in San Cristóbal are limited to the basic ones shared by all communities, primarily the interaction between Ajitz and the two Ambassadors in Part II. In Momostenango, by contrast, the Spanish text has almost disappeared from performance, while pantomime has greatly expanded. As a result, Tekum has receded to the background and the performance in this community centres around Ajitz. Integral to pantomime in Momostenango is the expectation that Ajitz will improvise humorous banter in K'iche'. In Cunén and Joyabaj, the proportionate relation between text and pantomime is more balanced.

Finally, text and pantomime also exist in relations of contradiction that amount to subversion of the author’s intent. Many aspects of the original text are so closely allied to Spanish siglo de oro theatrical drama that they are out of place in Maya contexts and with Maya values and conventions. For example, the centrality of Rey K’iche’ to the original drama has been greatly altered. He remains today the figure of greatest rank, which shapes how other personages may interact with him, but he is nevertheless fairly withdrawn as the action centres around the Spanish, Cacique, and Ajitz groups. Thus his internal conflict, dramatically expressed in the Spanish poetry, has ceased to impact on performance.

Another contradiction concerns comedy. As noted earlier, the author composed intricate comic texts for Quirijol and Ajitz, the two gracejos. Following siglo de oro conventions, he composed their speeches as intricate word puzzles full of linguistic plays and biblical references as well as building on the standard character type of the randy and gluttonous, lower class coward. All of these aspects have been subverted in performance. The more intricate aspects of comedy in the original text make little sense today, while the characterization of cowardice is beneath the dignity of sacred personages who dance for the benefit of the community. The original comic speeches, if recited, are declaimed with no hint of comedy and likely no understanding from the audience, while instead comic moments are produced through the pantomimed interchange between Ajitz and the Ambassadors. An example would be Ajitz making the “blindfold” reek and later killing the bugs that have infested it from unwashed Spanish bodies. Ajitz in particular has become a paragon of courage. Thus although the text in Part III makes it clear that out of fear Ajitz has refused to accompany Tzunun to advise Rey K’iche’ of the coming war, in performance he always does go. In some communities, he has been provided with a text for that meeting, another example of the text catching up to the subversive action of the performance.

10.3. Introduction to Following Chapters on Specific Municipios

As the preceding narrative makes clear, most Costumbrista performances of the Baile de la Conquista share a great deal of knowledge and customary practice. But it is equally true that each municipio has
evolved a distinct approach to this shared dance-drama. Examining four municipio versions in depth allows us to understand through the distinctiveness of each the tremendous potential for varied expression, interpretation, and praxis that the Conquista framework permits. My brief exposure to La Conquista in a fifth municipio (Nebaj) shows that the study of four K'iche' versions does not in any way exhaust the potential variety. It also shows that language difference is not a crucial factor, since the Ixil community of Nebaj uses a script and musicians from the K'iche' municipio of Cunén.

I expect much more would be gained by studies of the dance in still other municipios in which it has remained current. Furthermore, had such a comprehensive study been done before the Guatemalan armed conflict, when the Conquista was the most popular dance, performed by far more municipios than can mount it today, the scope of this topic would have been both overwhelming and unimaginably fruitful. The far more manageable project I have undertaken to study La Conquista in four K'iche' municipios has nevertheless borne considerable fruit in terms of the depth and diversity of knowledge they reveal.

I begin these individualized investigations with Cunén both because this municipio uses the most conservative text of the four municipios studied and because the interrelation of festival dances with a vibrant cofradía system reveals a complexity and structural logic that may have been a more widespread characteristic in earlier times. Joyabaj is treated next, where the cofradía system is also vibrant but the text employed is the longest of all, an extreme modification belonging to the Cantel lineage. Joyabaj also injects a heightened sense of drama, both in costumes and in delivery of text, designed to foreground Tekum's heroism. Momostenango will be treated third. There the cofradía system has contracted greatly and the text involved is a version of the complete Dioses Inmortales rewriting. However the text is little used in performance, where Ajitz takes on the major role and speaks to the audience in K'iche'. Finally I turn to San Cristóbal Totonicapán, where the cofradía system has also contracted greatly and the text is of the Cantel lineage, featuring both the Ajitz prologue and Azteca section. Often the Conquista is the only traditional dance performed at the annual feria in this community that greatly values progress, with the result that its performance takes on many of the characteristics of what Guatemalans consider folklore.