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Chapter 18: Traditional Festival Dance as Folklore

18.1. Matthew Krystal's differentiation of traditional from folkloric dance

Matthew Krystal's recent volume (2012) investigates the nature of folkloric dance in Guatemala, particularly San Miguel Totonicapán, and its relation to what he calls the traditional dances, here also called festival dances. Some of Krystal's arguments are problematic because he took the *Baile de la Conquista* as it is performed in San Cristóbal as the source for defining traditional dance in contrast to folkloric dance, the latter based on the group *La Vanguardia Indígena* of San Miguel Totonicapán. However, San Cristóbal's version of *Conquista* is highly divergent from the norm in Guatemala and even among K'iche' communities, and an important part of this divergence in fact involves incorporation of elements that he uses to characterize folkloric dance. Such incorporation is in fact signaled by the name the dance team has chosen: *El Grupo Folklórico Baile de la Conquista de San Cristóbal Totonicapán* (Dance of the Conquest Folkloric Group of San Cristóbal Totonicapán). Thus a third issue is that by defining traditional and folkloric dances as completely separate entities, Krystal does not investigate the possibility in Guatemala of the same dance performance involving both traditional and folkloric qualities.

Krystal (2012: 44–45) correctly characterizes the traditional or festival dances as dance–dramas performed for several hours in outdoor spaces by male dancers who are not formally trained and who do not dance for monetary reward. Rather they invest considerable funds in renting *traje* and masks from a *morería* and considerable time in rehearsals with a *maestro* in order to learn their lines as well as dance steps and choreography. He notes some ritual aspects including performance at the patron saint festival, abstinence before and during the *feria* as well as ritual treatment of the masks. Krystal also notes that the festival dances represent an unbroken tradition established in the early colonial period.

In contrast, those dances that Krystal terms folkloric usually consist of short pieces taking from six to ten minutes in order to accord with a tourist's itinerary. They often involve un-masked non-Indigenous male and female performers who have been trained in an educational institution and expect remuneration, as well as a commentator who explains elements to the audience (Krystal 2012: 146, 182). Krystal also explains that while folkloric dances by non-Indigenous people representing Indigenous history or life style in the context of their defeat are documented in reports of the 16th and 17th centuries¹, this genre did not become widely popular until the mid–20th century as an aspect of modernism (2012: 151–52), and has been taken up by Indigenous groups as well.

¹ Krystal (2012: 151) cites Max Harris' (2000: 212–13) description the pageant dramatizing the defeat of the Mexica presented in 1571 in Alcalá, Spain, as well as Juarros' (1857: II, 356–64) description of

Limiting the discussion to this contrast, the *Conquista* at San Cristóbal Totonicapán would appear to conform well to the traditional or festival dance genre. However, Krystal also characterizes folkloric dance in Guatemala according to several traits that are part of the practice of San Cristóbal's *Conquista* dance team. Krystal notes that a folkloric dance presentation "may portray ritual but is not ritual itself" and that in such performances "beliefs and practices are presented as images of Indigenous life and culture." In comparing the two genres, Krystal notes that whereas the traditional dance is a ritual offering performed by a local Maya team as part of living their Maya lifestyle, the folkloric dance group often travels to other locations to perform both for Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, including tourists. They are representing aspects of Maya lifestyle, often in a theatrical fashion, to those who may not be involved in living this way. Despite this separation of performer and audience, audience members command the right to judge the performance's authenticity in terms of costume and action (Krystal 2012: 32–37). Similarly, Hutcheson (2003: 263) comments on folklorizing developments that involve "the civic conversion of a devotional practice aligned with *costumbre* into a secular expression of ... Mayan identity."

Citing *La Vanguardia Indígena* of San Miguel Totonicapán as an example of a folkloric dance group, Krystal notes that two of their goals are teaching and reinforcing the local Indigenous culture in their own community, and presenting a positive image of K'iche' culture to tourists and other outsiders (2012: 179). He also notes that presenting Indigenous culture to tourists is understood as a means to enlist powerful outside allies, which explains why tourists may be invited to don traditional dance *traje* and masks and attempt to dance (Krystal 2012: 181–83).

Those elements that Krystal has identified as characteristic of folkloric dance practice that are evident in the performance and other activities of the dance team at San Cristóbal may be discussed in terms of four topics: presentation of Maya culture; concern with authenticity; theatricalization; and seeking outside allies. In no way do these folkloric elements dominate the *Baile de la Conquista* at San Cristóbal, but they do enter significantly into the group's activities.

18.1.1. Presentation of Maya Culture

One of the ways that a dance may be recognized as taking on the folkloric trait of presentation to outsiders is when the group performs outside of the context of its home *municipio* and of the *fiesta patronal*. In the 1990s, the San Cristóbal group performed in other *municipios* in a tour sponsored by the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture and Sports as well as ADECSA (*Aporte para la Decentralización Cultural*).

children's dances and cleric's processions that formed part of the celebration in 1680 for the inauguration of the cathedral in Antigua Guatemala, then the capital of the Kingdom of Guatemala .

Performance of the *Baile de la Conquista* outside the community is not new: as commanded by Ubico's government, in 1933 the team from Momostenango participated in the National Fair by performing the *Baile de la Conquista* in the artificial *Pueblo Indígena* that became a major attraction for tourists. While performances are normally for *Costumbristas* in the *feria* context, and while scripts for the *Conquista* are closely guarded to prevent unwarranted copying which could jeopardize the income of a *maestro*, in 1934 the Cantel group performed the *Baile de la Conquista* at a regional fair in Quetzaltenango and published their heavily augmented version of the script to help raise funds for a projected monument to Tekum to be erected on Cerro Baúl, overlooking the city. In 1965, student organizers of a humanities festival at the Universidad de San Carlos invited a performance of the *Conquista* by a team from Patzicia, with a speech and expert running commentary on the dance by *Conquista* scholar Matilde Montoya.² But the extended tour in which the San Cristóbal team took part is a more recent idea as is international travel: the San Cristóbal *Conquista* dance team was invited to perform at a micro-enterprise fair held in Los Angeles, on August 18, 2013 but lack of funds for travel prevented their participation.

Another example of travel to an outside community is represented in the sitting room of Don Pancho's extended family residence in San Cristóbal, where a large sign occupies much of the wall space opposite the sofa. The sign was produced by Inguat, the Guatemalan national tourism agency and is of a standard type featuring the interesting sites of a particular department, in this case Totonicapán. Superimposed on the montage is the title "*Baile de la Conquista*." The sign was made for the San Cristóbal dance team to carry in a parade held in Coatepeque in the department of Quetzaltenango, where they were participating.

During the San Cristóbal *feria* of 2012, a helper was asked to carry this sign in the same way as in the Coatepeque parade, in front of the dancers as they processed from Don Pancho's house to the dance ground. Once at the dance ground, and during the opening dance, the sign was attached to the lower part of Ajitz's shrine tower where it could be easily seen by all spectators. In 2014 the sign was again placed on the shrine tower, though without being carried in procession. Only on July 24 of this year, another sign reading "*Grupo Folklórico, La Conquista de Guatemala, San Cristóbal Totonicapán*" was attached to the back of the platform representing Tekum's palace in Quetzaltenango, arranged so it would be visible above the *Cacique's* heads when they are seated. These signs thus joined another banner display that has been used since 2011 as a backdrop for the royal Court of the Rey K'iche', and that was taken from the montage I created for the opening page of the website devoted to San Cristóbal's *Conquista* group. The website announces the group by its formal title: "*El Grupo Folklórico Baile de la Conquista de San Cristóbal, Totonicapán*". To those familiar with the *Baile de la Conquista*, such signage is unnecessary. Its usage thus suggests the need to convey information to members of the community that do not have this knowledge, a need that conforms to the folkloric dance

² This event was reported by two similar articles, dated September 17, 1965, in the *Archivo Histórico* of CIRMA in Antigua.



Folkloric constructions at San Cristóbal

characteristic of presenting Maya tradition to those who are not familiar with it, even if they are also Maya. These activities also coincide with the *Vanguardia Indígena* goal of reinforcing local traditions for the local community and introducing them to outsiders.

This self-promotional advertising is unnecessary in the other communities studied. But San Cristóbal is a very different community. The *feria* in San Cristóbal lasts only three days, and the *Conquista* is the only traditional festival dance regularly presented. Leadership in the most important *cofradía*, that of Santiago, has ceased to rotate, but instead has depended for more than a decade on the person of Doña Antonieta Tistoj, owner of the largest *moreería* in San Cristóbal. In contrast, Cunén, Momostenango, and Joyabaj have several active *cofradías* with regularly rotating male leaderships, *ferias* of two octavos (15 days), and multiple dance teams performing on each day. San Cristóbal is more cosmopolitan and perhaps more affluent than the other communities studied, encompassing as it does the traffic-jammed intersection of *Cuatro Caminos*, and neighbouring the largely *Ladino municipio* of Salcajá (the original Quetzaltenango), which in some ways may account for the diluted presence of public *Costumbrista* practices. In this circumstance, such practices have become tied to promotional advertising, including not only the three signs displayed by the *Conquista* group, but also a pamphlet published by the *municipio* highlighting events of the short *feria*.



On one of the first occasions I visited Don Pancho's home, I was asked to wait briefly in the *molino* (mill for grinding maize) and noticed a 2006 calendar on the wall, designed as an advertisement for

Rubios cigarettes. When I questioned Don Pancho about the calendar, he said that the group had traveled to Guatemala City for this photography session. I was struck by the central focus of the image, a conversation between a tall, strong-jawed and otherwise also stereotypically non-Indigenous man who represents the ideal smoker, facing two much shorter *Conquista* dancers wearing the *traje* of Spaniards and looking up to him. I was struck because Don Pancho's sons Juan and Frank, who dance as Spaniards in the *Conquista*, are both quite tall. The choice of short performers, perhaps the youths who dance Moreno and Crijol, makes a very strong and disturbingly patronizing contrast with the tall white man who looks down at them. To me this colonialist juxtaposition signals the risk associated with self-construction as folklore because it invariably constructs a position subordinate to the modern. In social situations such as are found in Guatemala, this hierarchy of modern and folk is also a racial hierarchy.



Touristic presentation in the *cofradía* patio. San Cristóbal, 2012.

These dangers have been realized for the San Cristóbal team on those occasions in which Doña Antonieta has required them to perform some of the *Conquista* dances for tourist groups as recompense for offering them *traje* rental without cost for the *feria*. In a patio of the Tistoj mansion, the same patio in which the *Conquista* team performs for *Patrón Santiago* on July 24, the team in full *traje* performs few short dances in accord with tourists' itinerary and span of attention, which thus accords fully with the character of

folkloric dance. According to Juan Hernández,³ the *Conquista* group does not see this type of presentation as appropriate.

18.1.2. Concern with authenticity

As Krystal explains, presentation of Indigenous lifestyle to those who are not familiar with it brings up judgments of authenticity. These judgments are based on comparison with what is imagined to be factual rather than on historical evidence, because such evidence is not available to the audience. Were this information to be available, this imagined fact would most likely be judged as inauthentic as well.

The San Cristóbal *Conquista* team is keenly interested in authenticity particularly of costumes, not as much for the judgment of the audience as for their own pride in presenting an historical dance drama with greater historical veracity. Don Chepe (José Elías), who dances Tekum, mentioned to me that the group does not want to keep dancing in the same kind of *traje* that is also used for many other dances,

³ Personal communication, 2014.

including the Dance of the Devils.⁴ He and others in the group would like to have costumes closer to what would have been worn by K'iche' and Spaniard in the 16th century. Thus the urge to present an historical event authentically has become more important than the *Costumbrista* goal of maintaining traditions laid down by ancestors, as articulated by a *traje* style in use for two centuries. The website that I was asked to create for this group was designed with the dual goals of informing outsiders about the Dance of the Conquest in San Cristóbal and of soliciting donations to pay for such new and “authentic” costumes. Don Chepe has actually designed and fabricated such a costume, including a satin cape similar to those worn in the *Ladino*-dominated *Conquista* of Rabinal, but nothing like the cape that the historical Tekum might have worn. Don Chepe no longer wears this cape, as he is waiting for an opportunity to create more “authentic” costumes for the entire team. But he does wear the loincloth with souvenir quetzal medallions as decoration.

18.1.3. Theatricalization

This desire for authentic costumes may also be considered a drive for greater realism that pertains to a third topic highlighted by Krystal's study of folkloric dance: theatricalization. Performance of the *Baile de la Conquista* in San Cristóbal is distinguished from those of the other communities studied by dramatic recitation of the complete text, sometimes enhanced with electronic amplification requiring a



Conquista dancer using microphone. San Cristóbal, 2010.

performer to hold a microphone when delivering a speech. Combined with well-practiced and complex dance steps, and reduced pantomime to keep the narrative moving, performances of *El Baile de la Conquista* at San Cristóbal evince a sense of polish and professionalism that suggest some degree of adoption of qualities associated with modern theatre. Audiences sometimes respond to this approach by clapping. For example, in public performance I have often heard the lengthy *Tres Pasos* dance that opens Part IV elicit applause from the audience. The step is slow and difficult and the audience is given ample time to applaud what they understand as its virtuosity. It was noted earlier from Horspool's study of the *Conquista* music at Momostenango, that there is generally no emphasis on or appreciation of virtuosity, and this is the same for the dance in the other *municipios*. I suggest therefore that the virtuoso dance and the audience's reaction to it represent an example of adoption of elements of a European-derived and non-sacred theatrical tradition, as much on the part of the audience and its expectations as on the part of the dancers. In fact, even when the team performs at the *cofradía* Santiago on July 24, those present for the ceremony clap for each dance.

⁴ Personal communication, 2010.

This gives the impression that the dances are presented primarily for their enjoyment, not as a gift and sacred offering for Santiago, because clapping is normally understood as being inappropriate to a ritual context.

Also, in performing the *Conquista* on the last day of *feria*, instead of a choreographed *despedida*, Don Pancho changes into street clothes and gathers performers onstage in order to give a short speech about the dance group and their contribution to the *feria* and the community, a practice resonant with the function of a commentator in folkloric dances. Don Pancho then introduces to the audience each of the performers and the part they play, with each announcement involving a bow from the performer and applause from the audience. In other words: curtain calls. One might then compare the more traditional performance break on the first day of the *feria*, to accompany Santiago Apóstol in procession to the church, with this “folkloric” break for a commentary on the final day.



Speech on the last day of the *feria*. San Cristóbal, 2013.

18.1.4. Seeking outside allies

My relation to the dance team at San Cristóbal, which I have noted is closer and more friendly than in most other communities, may be due in part to the more cosmopolitan nature of the community and the more democratic character of the group, but it also corresponds to Krystal’s point about seeking allies among outsiders (2012: 181). Thus my annual contribution to the group is made publicly at a meeting, usually on the night of the *Velada de los Trajes*, unlike in other communities where the *autor* keeps my contribution secret. In his speech on the last day of the *feria*, Don Pancho also publicly thanks me, along with Doña Antonieta, for our contributions. This alliance has also taken the form of reciprocity, an ideal that underlies many forms of social relations in Maya communities. In return for my acquisition of some of their knowledge of the dance, the team has asked me to create the website mentioned above, and they also asked that a certificate of appreciation be issued by a department in my university that could be given to the mayor to demonstrate their achievement of international recognition. I see as related to this topic the fact that on two occasions Don Pancho invited me to dress in his Ajitz costume to have my picture taken. I did not feel comfortable in accepting this invitation, so on the second occasion I asked Don Pancho to put on his costume so that I



Francisco Hernández and myself, 2012.

could have my picture taken with him. I could not put this invitation and my discomfort with it in perspective until reading Krystal's (2012: 183) account of the *morero* at a folkloric performance asking tourists to dress in traditional festival dance *traje* and attempt some steps. My experience concerning this photograph likewise suggests an intent to build alliances with potentially useful outsiders.

18.2. Maury Hutcheson on Folklorization in Rabinal

As noted above, Krystal's analysis is useful to this project but also limited in its applicability. Krystal is contrasting traditional festival dances with short folkloric presentations, whereas the issue concerning the *Baile de la Conquista* in San Cristóbal involves modifying a traditional dance by incorporating folkloric elements. This pertinent issue has been taken up by Maury Hutcheson in relation to folkloric uses of festival dances of Rabinal, a *municipio* that shares with San Cristóbal a history of more profound exchange between Maya and *Ladino* communities and the embrace of festival dance as folklore (Hutcheson 2003: 247–48). According to Hutcheson, members of the Rabinal community have promoted their *cabecera* as a cradle of Maya folklore as a means of attracting tourists, but the folkloric transformation of the dance from sacred offering to secular entertainment has been contested. Hutcheson (2003: 245–46, 250–51) recounts a particular example in which the mayor of Rabinal asked dance teams to participate in full costume in a “*desfile Folklórico*” (folkloric parade) to mark his installation as mayor. Hutcheson (2003: 246) writes that:

The mayor's swearing-in... was a thoroughly secular affair. His invitation to the dancers had little to do with supporting the *bailes* as devotional activity, but everything to do with the nationalization and folklorization of Indigenous practice. Their presence that day was a necessary token of local, regional, and national identity.

Hutcheson later (2003: 250) adds that “the mayor was not interested in having the *bailes* performed as a religious obligation. What he wanted was for the dancers to appear in costume, with their masks and their musicians, in order to provide a photo opportunity for visitors.” Contestation arose in at least one dance team that accepted the invitation but felt out of place in this secularized celebration. Dancers also were not remunerated for the costs of the costumes, *costumbres*, journey into the *cabecera*, and for missing the day's work, so they used this financial strain as an excuse to resist such invitations in the future.

In the larger context of the effect such events have on people's understanding of traditional festival dance and its place in Indigenous society, Hutcheson (2003: 248–49) explains that:

The *bailes* had always been as much a form of entertainment as of celebration. But they had not been taken as an outwardly directed mark of local and ethnic identity. Rather, they had been

organized for the pleasure of their participants and directed toward the *Santos*. A means of manifesting corporate faith and solidarity, they had been an expression of social effervescence, a Durkheimian celebration of the interdependent social world that they helped bring into formation. The advent of the folkloric parade, however, redirected the semiotic mission of the *bailes*, converting them from inwardly directed signs of spiritual integrity into outwardly displayed tokens of difference and ethnicity.

Hutcheson (2003: 253–54) adds that “the secularized and exhibitionary promotion of the regional dances as aspects of folklore has worked to commodify participation in them among a population that heretofore had organized them volitionally, as a religious contribution to the festive life of the community.”

However the monetary issue of subsidy is not the only instigation towards folkloric presentations of traditional festival dance in Rabinal and elsewhere. Hutcheson (2013: 263) recognizes that:

Maintaining the visible, public presence of the traditional dances in the face of growing sectarian discord increasingly requires their neutralization as effective carriers of religious alternacy. This is the unrecognized mediation performed by the school teachers and their student folklore festival, the civic conversion of a devotional practice aligned with *costumbre* into a secular expression of Achí Mayan identity. And this work of vitiation has been accomplished by the simplest of means, cooption and redirection via economic patronage. The goals and meaning of the *bailes* have been refigured through the well-intentioned act of sponsorship, of their civic endorsement beneath the national banner of *folclor*.

Hutcheson’s concern with the acceptance of funding that results in demands for folkloricized performances recalls the smaller scale consequence of Doña Antonieta’s donation of *traje* rental without charge, for which she has asked for touristic folklore dances in return.

Hutcheson (2003: 256–63) also details some of the factors that he argues mitigate against the continuation of the traditional festival dances and thus provide more incentive to elaborate traditional dance as folklore. These factors include: damage to Maya communities caused by genocidal scorched earth campaigns and the civil patrol during the war that ended in 1996; neo-liberal economic restructuring leading to greater poverty among *campesinos* especially and causing them to migrate to seek work; pressures to convert coming from Catholic Charismatics and Evangelical Protestants that also involve persecution of *Costumbre* institutions including dance teams; and desires to modernize. However, whereas these same factors operate in other Maya *municipios* studied for this project, only in San Cristóbal do folklorizing tendencies appear to parallel those that Hutcheson describes for Rabinal. I suspect therefore that such changes in these two *municipios* are more the result of intensive contact

and interrelations with outsiders, whether it is because Rabinal has become a tourist draw or because San Cristóbal is situated at a transportation hub.

18.3. Folklore as national heritage

A third framework within which we can view the steps toward folklorization taken by the *Conquista* team in San Cristóbal Totonicapán is the governmental framework under which policies of study and preservation have been institutionalized. Guatemala is not unique in this consideration of its Indigenous traditions. The Charter of American Folklore, ratified by the Organization of American States in 1970, underscores the importance of the study and preservation of folklore which it identifies as national cultural patrimony and an unalterable heritage essential to the definition of national identity, (García Canclini 1995: 152). It is unclear when Guatemala's non-Indigenous communities and governmental institutions began framing the traditional festival dances as national folklore: the concept is fully present in a 1971 publication by Guatemala's Dirección General de Cultura y Bellas Artes entitled *Danzas Folklóricas de Guatemala*. The Centro de Estudios Folklóricos (CEFOL), a research institution belonging to San Carlos University, founded in 1967, began to support intensive research in traditional dance in the 1980s, largely through the efforts of Carlos René García Escobar, who has published several books and articles on festival dances (*El Torito* and *Los Moros y Cristianos (El Español)*) in which he took part as a dancer. His 1992 *Atlas Dansario de Guatemala*, which he updated in 2009, is an encyclopedic compendium of knowledge concerning Guatemalan festival dances. Most important to note for this discussion is the reason he gives for collecting and disseminating this information. He does this “*con el objetivo de contribuir con ellos al fortalecimiento de la identidad y cohesión cultural de los guatemaltecos, en el convencimiento de que sólo investigando, conoceremos, amaremos, y por lo tanto sabremos proteger y defender lo que es nuestra herencia histórica e identitaria*” (García Escobar 2009: 372–73).⁵ García Escobar (2006: 1) has also renewed his call for a law to protect Guatemalan traditional dances as an essential constituent of Guatemalan identity.

García Escobar has threaded through several of his writings a loyalty to the concept of *mestizaje*, in the Mexican sense of a homogeneous national society combining both Indigenous and European heritage. His participation as an outsider in Maya traditional dances represents one example of this desired hybridity, as does his praise for *morerías* as institutions, many of which are operated by *Ladinos* yet serving Maya *Costumbristas* (García Escobar 1987). From this viewpoint also, in the passage quoted above, García Escobar constructs Guatemalan society as a *mestizo* society with an Indigenous heritage that may be shared by, and is crucial to the identity of, all Guatemalans. Such appropriation of

⁵ “...with the objective of contributing thereby to the strengthening of Guatemalan's cultural identity and cohesion, in the conviction that only by investigating will we know and love and therefore know how to protect and defend what is our historical heritage and identity” (translation mine).

Indigenous heritage as national heritage is the process underlying folklore studies, and it invariably carries with it a desire to “protect” and “preserve” this heritage along with the secure belief that non-Indigenous outsiders know how to best accomplish this task.

John Storey (2003: 1–6) explains some of the origins of these concepts, noting that the belief that “folk culture” must be preserved arises from a notion of a nation’s peasantry as the common ancestor of all citizens, connected most closely to the soil and therefore to the soul of the nation. Storey also examines one of the most serious drawbacks of the model, that this “authentic folk culture” is associated with the ancestral peasantry of the past, as opposed to contemporaneous peasants considered too ignorant of what they possess to properly care for it. As a result, folk culture is appropriated by bourgeois academic disciplines as an object of study and preservation, thereby causing the “folk” to lose a significant degree of control over their own heritage (Storey 2003: 13–14). To the extent that “preservation” is considered a governmental policy in Guatemala, it threatens to appropriate these dances, extracting them from their traditional context and subjecting them to paternalistic state control. For those who choose for themselves the path of folklorization, potential financial assistance might be considered to be worth the risk.

This folkloristic operation corresponds to what Richard Rogers (2006: 486–88) described as a situation in which the dominant group exploits the subordinated group by appropriating, commodifying, and fetishizing its culture. Although situated as an intent to preserve, Rogers notes that his process reinforces dominance by submitting the appropriated cultural elements to the dominant group’s own systems of value and classification and by neutralizing any oppositional or resistant meaning or function that had developed around the commodified elements. As “folk culture,” Maya traditional festival dances have been appropriated to serve more popular interests, as seen in the Rubios calendar mentioned above. Studies by CEFOL have also produced instructions for the preparation of dance costumes in public elementary schools.⁶ Perhaps more egregious but likely a less ideologically damaging result of folklorizing the Conquest Dance was the display of “national costume” by the—as usual—non-Indigenous Miss Guatemala contestant Lourdes Figueroa in the Miss Universe contest of 2009, modeling a pastiche combining high heels with a composite *Conquista traje* of male Spanish and K’iche’ elements and holding the unpainted mask of a Spaniard near her face.⁷ While 2009 is the only example of dance *traje* used in the Miss Universe competition of which I am aware, for over a decade Guatemala and other nations of the Americas have been adapting Indigenous elements to represent a “national costume.” For example, the 2011 Miss Canada dressed in a teepee-shaped skirt with the headdress of a Prairies male chief.⁸ But comparing various Miss Guatemalas from 2003 to 2013 reveals

⁶ I have not been able to recover the reference for this manual which I saw briefly in the library of CIRMA in Antigua, Guatemala.

⁷ http://i181.photobucket.com/albums/x31/misscontest/Miss_Universe_2009/Contestants/National_Costume_Guatemala.jpg

⁸ <http://www.tomandlorenzo.com/2011/09/miss-universe-2011-national-costumes.html>

an important trend. In all examples on which I have information from the internet (I am missing 2007 and 2008), those elements selected for use are adapted from male ceremonial costume. The largest number are designed to suggest a lowland classic Maya ruler with elaborate headdress, beaded collar, loincloth, and cape. In two years (2005 and 2013), the headdress featured Tikal pyramid I, the iconic image of Maya past also featured on Guatemala's license plate. Contemporary male ceremonial garb included not only the 2009 *Conquista* traje but also the 2011 costume of a male *cofradía* officer with embroidered black jacket and short pants, holding the silver-topped staff. I have not found any images of Miss Guatemala in a national costume either of a non-Indigenous woman or an Indigenous Maya woman. These national costumes thus represent a triple transvestitism, with non-Indigenous women modeling clothing in a secular pageant adapted from the ritual clothing of Indigenous Maya men. The danger of folklorization lies in this appropriative process in which meanings are constructed that are not only beyond Indigenous control but also insulting and often demeaning to the Indigenous population.

Returning to the issue of preservation of Indigenous tradition as shared national heritage, it is important to recognize that this value has become widely disseminated outside of Guatemala's ministry of Culture and Sports or its universities to be embraced by the *Ladino* population in general. In Cunén, *Ladino* Jaime Gamarro, who has served as an autor of the *Conquista*, responded to the absence of the dance this year in the feria of late January and early February by organizing friends and relatives to perform the *Conquista* in September. In more *Ladinized* San Cristóbal, preservation of Indigenous traditions has become a community value. For example, a plaque hanging in the salon of the Tistoj *morería* recognizes Doña Antonieta and the Santiago *cofradía* that she has headed for over three decades for their "dedication to the preservation of the customs and traditions of our beloved city." The inscription is fully folkloric in that the traditions of some are appropriated as the heritage of all, and these traditions are marked as something to be "preserved."

Similarly, on July 17, 2010, the *Grupo Folklórico Baile de la Conquista* was officially recognized and honoured in the civic theatre for its "maintenance of the traditions and cultural values of the *municipio*." One of the speakers listed some of the dance team's efforts. First mentioned was the team's 1990s tour, noted above, sponsored by ADECSA and the Ministry of Culture and Sports. Note that ADECSA's mission according to their website⁹, is to promote culture as a source of sustainable social and economic development. To this end, the ADECSA group chooses projects that favour the rescue, conservation, diffusion, and promotion of popular culture as cultural patrimony. All of these points are firmly situated within the framework of folklore as national heritage to be preserved as national identity. The speaker also cited my own interest as an investigator, mentioning the certificate and website that I had provided for the dance team as examples of international recognition. In his acceptance speech on behalf of the *Conquista* group, Don Pancho spoke from the dual position of both Maya *Costumbrista* and citizen of the multi-ethnic *municipio* when he said that he hoped the efforts of the *Conquista* team

⁹ <http://www.adesca.org.gt/informacion/info05.html>

had raised the esteem of San Cristóbal on the international as well as national stage. Don Pancho's dual standpoint, likely shared by many of the team members, is perhaps key to the unusual path the Grupo Folklórico has forged in linking folklore with tradition.

18.4. Marrying tradition with folklore in San Cristóbal

While the *Baile de la Conquista* dance team in San Cristóbal Totonicapán has chosen to embrace elements of folklorization, it is important to qualify the extent to which this has taken place. Performance of *La Conquista* in San Cristóbal continues to function as a ritual offering to the patron saint, as adherence to practices laid down by ancestors, and as a recounting of a shared history that promotes shared identity. But the team is also acutely aware that its audience members include many who do not adhere to *Costumbre* and who may not be Maya, and therefore look on the Conquest Dance as an exotic and antiquated tradition that is their joint heritage.

This difference is not limited to San Cristóbal, though it may be more acute there. For example, on two occasions I heard *Ladinos* in Cunén refer to the festival dances as folklore. The *Costumbrista* and non-*Costumbrista* components of the audience thus see dances like the *Conquista* within very different world views. When *Costumbristas* dance the *Conquista* or other festival dances, they are following traditions laid down by their ancestors and are concerned with the approval of their ancestors and the saint to whom the dance is offered. Performance of the *Conquista* is thus something the present can and must offer to the past. In contrast, *Ladinos* view the dances from the position of outsiders, for whom it represents folklore as a component of Guatemalan national heritage. For them performance of the *Conquista* represents something that the past can offer the present, and that must be preserved, nurtured and directed towards that purpose. This understanding of folklore is distinct from the way that Krystal uses the term, since for the non-Indigenous public in Guatemala traditional dances are not the opposite of folklore: they *are* folklore. The difference in this context is not in the dance but in the audiences' varied receptions of it.

San Cristóbal's dance team seems to me to show pride that they can perform for both audiences. Their comfort with walking both paths arises historically and socially in part from the issue that in the somewhat *Ladinized* community of San Cristóbal Totonicapán, insider and outsider are not as far apart as they are in the other communities studied for this project. Situated at the major crossroads in the western highlands, San Cristóbal is a commercial centre with far less reliance on subsistence agriculture than in many other *municipios*—to my knowledge none of the dance group members in San Cristóbal engages in subsistence farming. In his application of Gramsci's theory of hegemony to folklore studies, Storey (2003: 50–61) explains that when the state struggles for hegemony by winning support for leadership through granting competing and conflicting groups and their ideologies a degree of inclusion, the process requires that such groups negotiate a path, the poles of which are resistance and incorporation. Such groups exercise agency through these choices. Dance teams in

Cunén, Joyabaj, and Momostenango, organized in the more traditional *ad hoc* fashion, maintain a path emphasizing resistance and autonomy. The permanent (since 1915) *Conquista* dance team of San Cristóbal, performing as it does in a highly cosmopolitan, commercialized and *Ladinized* city, has chosen a path that tends slightly toward incorporation through the process of folklorization. In this context, what I argue is striking about the San Cristóbal performance is not that they have turned from tradition to folklore but that they have added aspects of folklorization without having lost the traditional *Costumbrista* ritual importance of the Conquest Dance.

As noted, the *Baile de la Conquista* has on occasion been performed for outsiders, and in other communities, since 1933, so the activities of the San Cristóbal dance group should not be taken as evidence of recent globalization. I emphasize this point because of the tendency to impose a meta-narrative of progress on what are thought of as traditional peasant populations, a narrative Richard Wilk termed the “modernization paradigm.” In his words, the modernization paradigm identifies “the assumption that there is a directional and evolutionary cultural progression from traditional to modern that parallels an economic change from an isolated indigenous system to one that is open and attached to world capitalism” (Wilk 1991: 3). Our common assumption is that aspects of Indigenous culture are threatened to disappear when traditional or peasant communities enter the globalized economy and choose to adopt elements of western modernism. But this view gives little credit to the agency of those traditional communities and their ability to incorporate one without losing the other, as argued by García Canclini (1995), and as epitomized at present in the *Disfraces* dance that has become part of the traditionalist *feria* (Taube 2009, 2012, 2013).