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Chapter 4. Background Information

4.1. Introduction

The Dance of the Conquest is built on a textual framework, a poetic script in the form of a *siglo de oro* style Spanish play, likely written by a Franciscan friar around 1580–1620. If the original text still exists, it lies unrecognized in some archive. More likely, it was discarded as it became too worn to use and had to be copied, a practice that has continued for four centuries and still continues. Some copies were also made so that additional *municipios* could take on the dance as part of their festival calendar. This dispersion appears to have been initially limited to communities in the Otzuyá region comprising the Samalá River valley and surrounding *municipios*, but by the late 19th century the dance extended throughout the highlands of western Guatemala and was eventually taken up by a few non–Maya communities as well (e.g. Ciudad Vieja). Maya communities appear to have lacked an antiquarian interest in preserving dance texts, though they did preserve many other historic manuscripts such as the 16th century *títulos*. Thus the earliest surviving Conquista text is a copy dated 1872, not made for Maya festival dancing, but instead made for his own ethnographic collection by Rafael Villacorta, a Cobán artist and entrepreneur.

Villacorta's 1872 manuscript was copied, archived, and publishd by Barbara Bode, who came to Guatemala for ten weeks in 1957 to research her masters thesis on the Dance of the Conquest for Tulane University. Bode collected eight complete texts, which she deposited in the Latin American Library at Tulane. Since her fieldwork, many other complete texts for the dance have been archived or published, and I have been able to copy or acquire several others not publically available. Altogether, I have been able to study 23 complete texts for the dance encompassing more than a century of production and use.

Bode recognized that the seventy years or so before her arrival saw many modifications to the basic dance script, some of which she was able to document through interviews, and she recognized some particularly widespread variations, giving them names like "*Dioses Inmortales* variant" and "Ajitz Variant." With the larger sample available to me, I have been able to build on Bode's documentation and deductions to arrive at a deeper understanding of the basic text and to recognize several other variations. This augmented comparison in turn has permitted identification of different lineages of texts. These lineages arise from modifications of the text that occurred at different times, so their comparison helps flesh out the history of the evolution of the Conquest dance scripts since 1872 that Bode sketched in her thesis.

While these intentional modifications generate investigation and insights into the recent history of the Dance of the Conquest, all dance scripts are also replete with unintentional changes that are not—or at least not yet—useful for this project. Such unintentional changes are largely due to copying errors that would have been compounded over the centuries, some of which were also generated by mistaken recitation of phrases that were never fully understood by Maya performers who knew little or no Spanish. The increasingly obscure language of texts through compounded unintentional degradation does not prove a problem for the *maestros* and dancers with whom I have raised the issue. They tend to find understanding of particular words or phrases unnecessary since they understand the general intent of the larger passage in which these are found. The most extreme of these unintentional degradations appear in the *gracejo* speeches, characterized by humorous word-play and biblical references that likely have been obscure to Maya audience and performers throughout the entire history of the dance. As a result, in these texts these *gracejo* speeches significantly degraded, drastically curtailed, intentionally re-written, or eliminated entirely. Attempting to translate and/or reconstruct an original form of *gracejo* speeches is a daunting and largely unsuccessful task, as none of these speeches survives without severe problems in all available texts.

4.2. Texts Studied for This Project

Manuscripts of the text used by *maestros* in Guatemala are known by the term *originales* though all are actually copies of copies. In the years since Bode's 1957 fieldwork, several texts have been published. It is also possible to study other texts in public and private collections. Through fieldwork from 2008 to 2014 I have been able to obtain photocopies of texts in use in all four communities studied for this project. In comparing the texts, I have focused on complete examples rather than invidual parts, examples of which were also collcted by Bode. In the following list, organized by source, only complete texts are included. When possible I have included the date and title of the copy studied. Bode collected considerable information on the eight *originales* she collected, which is listed in appendix 1 of her 1961 monograph.

4.2.1. Bode Collection

Archived in the Latin American Library of Tulane University, the collection includes both copies Barbara Bode purchased and typescripts she had made while in Guatemala in 1957.

Concepción Chiquirichapa. Copy made 1940. Title: *Historia del Baile de la Conquista por Pedro de Alvarado*. Bode appendix number A-2.

San Tomás Chichicastenango. Copy obtained 1920. Untitled. Bode appendix number A-3.

Sacapulas. Copy made 1895. Untitled. Bode appendix number A-4.

Cantel. Published 1934. Title: *El Baile de la Conquista*. Bode appendix number A-5.

Coatepeque. Copy obtained 1900–1908. Title: *Historia de la Conquista de Guatemala por don Pedro de Alvarado*. Bode appendix number A-6.

Rabinal. Typescript made 1950. Title: *Baile de la Conquista*. Bode appendix number A-8.

Rabinal. Estimated date of copy prior to 1900. Untitled. Bode appendix number A-9.

Cobán. Copy made for Rafael Villacorta dated 7 January, 1872. Title: *Historia de la Conquista de Quesaltenango copiada en el año de 1872*. Bode appendix number A-10. Also published as appendix 2 in Bode's 1961 monograph.

4.2.2 Texts in other public institutions.

San Sebastían Lemoa. Typescript made in 1935 from copy dated January 1, 1895. The 1895 version was made in Tecpán by Estanislao Luiz, collected by Sol Tax. Title: *Baile de la Conquista*. Peabody Museum, Harvard University.[1]

San Miguel Totonicapán. Typescript obtained by Samuel K. Lothrop in 1926. Title: *Baile de la Conquista*. Latin American Library of Tulane University.

Ciudad Vieja. Copy dated 1961. Title: *Historia de la conquista de Almolonga por los Españoles*. Collected by Roland Baumann. Latin American Library of Tulane University.

4.2.3. Texts in private collections.

Santa María Nebaj. Copy dated 1927 of earlier copy dated 1892, made in Cunén. Title: *Historia del Baile de la Conquista del Reyno del Quiché por Pedro Albarado de 1892*.

San Cristóbal Totonicapán. Copy likely dated 1947. Private collection. The text in use presently in San Cristóbal Totonicapán was copied from this manuscript.

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[1] My thanks to Rachel McCleary who graciously sent me a photocopy of this text.

Tecpán. Copy made 1937. Title: *Original del Baile de la Conquista*. Collection of Jim Pieper.[2]

Finca Las Ilusiones. Copy made 1974. Title: *Istoria del Baile de la Conquista Compuesta de 20 personas.* Collection of Jim Pieper.

4.2.4. Published texts

Cantel. Published revision, 1934. Title: *El Baile de la Conquista*. Published by García and Colop Robles 1934. An example was collected by Bode, number A–5. Also re-published in Montoya 1970.

Cobán. Copy made by Rafael Villacorta, 1872. Copied by Bode in 1957 and published in Bode 1961 as appendix 2. Re-published in Montoya 1970.

San Pedro la Laguna. Title: *Diálogo u "original" del Baile de la Conquista*. Published in Guatemala Indígena 2, 1 (2): 103–47 (1961). Re-published in García Escobar 2011.

San Martin Jilotepeque. Copy made in 1922. Title: *Baile de la Conquista*. Published in Guatemala Indígena 6, 2 (2): 87–132 (1962).

Sacapulas. Copy made in 1955. Similar but with additions from version represented by Bode's A–4. Published in Montoya 1970.

Sacapulas. Copy made in 1997. Similar but with additions from version published by Montoya in 1970. Published by García Escobar 2011.

Ciudad Vieja. Similar but not a duplicate of the version collected by Baumann and now in the Latin American Library of Tulane University. Title: *Baile de la Conquista*. Published in Armas Lara 1964.

Uspantán. Copy obtained 1974. Title: *Texto Uspanteco del Baile de la Conquista*. Published in Barreno Anleu 1980.

San Andrés Xecul. Copy dated 1937. Title: *Historia de la Conquista*. Published in Montoya 1970.

4.2.5. Copies made during my research of texts currently in use.

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[2] My thanks to Jim Pieper who graciously made this and the following manuscript available to me and to Tsao Hsingyuan for photographing both manuscripts to aid this research.

Names of owners are concealed for their protection.

<u>Santa María Joyabaj</u>. Photocopies made in 2009 of two nearly identical and undated scripts currently in simultaneous use in Joyabaj.[3] Title: *Historia del Baile de la Conquista*.

<u>San Cristóbal Totonicapán</u>. Typescript made by Juan Oswaldo Hernández Chanax of 1994 copy of 1947 manuscript.

<u>San Juan Olintepeque</u>. Photocopy made in 2009 of undated version.[4] Title: *Historia del Baile Conquista de Guatemala por don Pedro Albarado con el Rey Tecum Umán.*

<u>Santa María Cunén</u>. Typescript made in 2008 by Jaime Gamarro. Title: *Historia del Baile de la Conquista*.

<u>Santiago Momostenango</u>. One of two nearly identical texts currently in use in Momostenango. Copy made by Julio Xiloj.[5] Undated. Untitled.

4.3. Poetic Forms

The most conservative style texts for the *Baile de la Conquista* employ a handful of poetic forms, all of which are characteristic of *siglo de oro* theatre scripts in Spain and some of which continued in popularity into later centuries. In contrast, additions to the texts after 1870 tend to ignore the conventions of the original either by substituting other forms or by writing lines outside poetic form.

With a particular exception, the lines in conservative texts are normally octosyllabic (8 syllable). Within this line length, rhyming patterns determine the subsidiary poetic forms. Contributing to these differences is the distinction between consonant and assonant rhyme. In consonant rhyme, the last stressed vowel and consonant are involved in the rhyme, and sometimes the last unstressed vowel. In assonant rhyme, the last stressed vowel, sometimes a second, unstressed vowel are involved in the rhyme, but not the last consonant. Most of the poetic forms used in the *Conquista* involve consonant rhyme—only the *romance* and the heptasyllabic (6 syllable) *romancillo* are characterized by assonant rhyme.

Poetic forms that appear in the conservative *Conquista* texts:

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[3] With great appreciation to Carlos Galindo for making these copies available to me.
[4] With great appreciation to Leoncio Ventura for assistance in obtaining photocopy of this text.
[5] With great appreciation to Santiago Itzep for assistance in obtaining photocopy of this text.

1. The Couplet is formed of two lines with the same rhyme. This form appears primarily inserted into the *décima* format.

   Tekum:
   > *Toda la gente ha de estar,*
   > *Porque yo pienso avanzar.*

2. The *Quintilla* is a five-line form with the rhyming pattern ABBAA. This form rarely stands alone in the *Conquista* early style texts.

   Rey K'iche':
   > *Estoy con tanto pavor*
   > *Ay, Tzunun mi fiel amigo,*
   > *Que no sé lo que me digo*
   > *Pues todo me causa horror.*
   > *Se acabó ya mi valor.*

3. The *Décima* is the most complex form used in the early style texts. It is formed of two *quintillas* but in the second, the rhyme is the reverse of the first, as AABBA, a rhyme pattern that outside of the *décima* is considered improper for a *quintilla*. Seen as a whole, the rhyme would be ABBAA CCDDC. Also, usually the last line of the first *quintilla* begins a sentence that is completed in the second *quintilla*.

   Alvarado:
   > *Caballeros y señores*
   > *Leales hijos de España,*
   > *Ya estamos en la campaña*
   > *Donde seréis vencedores.*
   > *Mandad tocar los tambores*
   >
   > *Que Anuncian nuestra victoria,*
   > *Dando a nuestro rey la gloria*
   > *De esta gente conquistada.*
   > *Que vuestro valor y espada*
   > *Hará eterna su memoria.*

In the *Conquista* texts, a speech may be extended by using a series of *décimas*, or a single *décima* may be split into two *quintillas* with an intervening series of rhymed couplets:

Tekum:

> *Estoy con tanto coraje*
> *Contra don Pedro de Alvarado*
> *De que en aquel su recado*
> *Quiera imponerme homenaje.*
> *Que he pensado que el salvaje*
>
> *De Ajitz vaya con Tzunun*
> *Y diga al gran Quichétun,*
>
> *Del Español el intento*
> *Y Que es mucho atrevimiento,*
>
> *Y depravada intención*
> *Querer que la religión*
> *De Quetzalcoal la dejemos,*
> *Y que la suya abracemos*
> *Manchando nuestra opinión.*

4. The *Redondilla* is a four line or quatrain form. Two patterns of *redondilla* are distinguished:

   a. *Redondilla Cruzada*: the rhyme pattern is ABAB.
   b. *Redondilla Abrazada*: the rhyme pattern is ABBA.

   The standard pattern in the early style Dance of the Conquest texts is the *redondilla abrazada*:

   Ajitz:

   > *Pues yo me prometo estar*
   > *Haciéndole tantos males,*
   > *Que en figura de quetzales*
   > *Les tengo de atormentar.*

5. The *Copla de Arte Menor* is usually used in the rhyme pattern ABBAACCA. It may be thought of as two *redondillas abrazadas* in which the A rhyme of the first is re-used in the second: ABBA + ACCA. Note also that the first five lines seen together are identical in rhyme pattern to a *quintilla*: ABBAA + CCA.

   Tekum:

> *Mucha gente hemos perdido*
> *Pues ha muerto un jiquipil.*
> *Qué me dices Guitzizil?*
> *¿Mirad que estoy afligido*
> *Ya dos veces he subido*
> *Al aire con ligereza,*
> *Por quitarle la cabeza*
> *A ese Alvarado atrevido.*

6. In the *Romance* form, even numbered lines share an assonant rhyme in which the final vowel or final two vowels are repeated.

   Ajitz:
   > *Dicen bien los españoles*
   > *Porque el Indio más bizarro*
   > *No deja de ser un bestia*
   > *Cuando menos un caballo.*

7. The *romancillo*, which is used for songs in the *Conquista*, is a 6 syllable version of the *romance* using the same rhyme pattern. The *romance* and *romancillo* may be extended to any length.

   Malinches:
   > *Soberbio volcán,*
   > *Fecunda montaña*
   > *¿Porqué os humilláis*
   > *a extranjeras armas?*
   > *Vomitad el fuego*
   > *que arde en tus entrañas*
   > *Y abrazad la gente*
   > *que oprima tus faldas.*
   > *.*

Examples of the *romance* and *romancillo* in the conservative lineage text will include specification of the rhyming element involving one or two vowels or a vowel and consonant. For example, the Malinches' song quoted above will be referred to as *romancillo a-a* because each even numbered line ends in two syllables involving the vowel "a".

Although no extant text indicates definite breaks in the action, in line with its conformity to Spanish theatre texts, the original form of the *Baile de la Conquista* text appears to have been conceived as a four-act drama. Indeed in some communities these four divisions are made clear by the use of an

introductory dance that does not involve travel or any other narrative function. However, due to the absence of clear documentation, I will refer to these divisions as 'parts' rather than 'acts.' Within each part, I distinguish specific "scenes" marked by a change in location.[6] The four locations involved are:

1. The royal palace in the K'iche' capital at Q'umarcaaj, also known in Nahuatl as Utatlán.
2. Tekum's palace in Quetzaltenango, often referred to as Xelaju in the text, due to confusion concerning the 1527 move of the Spanish Quetzaltenango settlement from Salcajá to Xelajuj Noj.
3. The Spanish Encampment.
4. The battlefield of El Pinal, also called the Llanos del Pinal.

In the following chapter (5), the most conservative of the texts are analyzed in terms of poetic form, content, narrative structure, and likely agendas within an historical context of the early colonial period. It will be suggested that these conservative texts, largely uniform in themselves, are close to the original version with the exception of copying errors that have ramified through the centuries, and an epilogue dedicating the dance to the Virgen likely added somewhat later. The succeeding chapter (6) deals with intentional alterations to the text made primarily during the years of liberal dictatorships from 1871 to 1944. Innovations likely from different locales in the western K'iche' region led to the development of four lineages of texts that are analyzed and compared, and these changes are also contextualized within the ideology of Guatemala's 19th century liberal movement in a separate chapter (7). A final chapter (8) in this part of the study concerns evidence for an early colonial dating of the original, as well as analysis of problems with the two previously published and widely accepted hypotheses concerning its origin.

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[6] Montoya employs different criteria for distinguishing scenes, emphasizing shifts in personages present, so her scheme differs somewhat from mine. However, I have refrained from accommodating the rapid succession of miniscenes involving movement between the Quetzaltenango palace of Tekum, later occupied by Alvarado, and its sentry station occupied first by Ajitz and then by Crijol, as these are more spatially and dramatically unified than other scene changes.