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## Chapter 8: Dating the Origin of the Dance of the Conquest of Guatemala

### 8.1. Introduction

While the Conquest Dance recounts a history, its own history has been poorly understood. The origin date is not known but two hypotheses are current. Researchers' choice between these hypotheses largely conforms to differences in geography and language. Those writing in Spanish, usually from Guatemala or Spain, generally accept the assertion by Guatemalan journalist Victor Miguel Díaz that the dance was first performed near the old Guatemalan capital in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. Most of those writing in English accept anthropologist Barbara Bode's argument that it was composed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in the Quetzaltenango region. These linguistic differences among researchers have tended to forestall debate on this three-century difference in hypotheses, but at the same time they also alert us to the necessity for critical evaluation.

What researchers on both sides of this divide share is a propensity to discuss both the dance and hypotheses concerning its origin apart from historical circumstances of their production. This lack is compounded by neglect to pursue reconstruction of a history subsequent to its origin that would arise from either hypothesis. Such dehistoricizing robs the dance of both history and historiography. It thereby contributes to the notion of contemporary Maya as a people without history, timelessly adrift in a rural backwater. It also fails to consider Maya understandings of the *Baile de la Conquista* not only as an offering to a patron saint but also as a long-standing tradition, bequeathed by their ancestors, reminding them of their history and re-asserting their identity. Indeed, Mayanist politics of revindication require reclaiming such history through documentation of both historical change and continuity (Cojtí Cuxil 1996).

### 8.2. Barbara Bode's Hypothesis of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century Origin

As the only extensive anthropological study of the Conquest Dance, Barbara Bode's 1961 publication of her masters thesis has become its standard reference. Bode had neither time nor resources to fully explore the wealth of information she recovered in Guatemala during two months of 1957 (July 14–September 18). That some of her information may be used to argue against her methods and conclusions should be understood as both compliment and complement to her groundbreaking investigation.

Bode's first opportunity to see the Conquest Dance performed was in San Cristóbal Totonicapán. Her field notes record her confusion about the story and inability to understand the speeches. Anxious to acquire a copy of the text, she asked to see the director (*maestro*) who was on the platform that

represents Tekum's palace in Quetzaltenango. As the *maestro* came down to speak to her, a crowd gathered in the dance ground, interrupting the performance. While Bode and the *maestro* bargained over a fee, audience members appear to have become outraged: according to Bode they began shouting that she should not have the copy at any price. She did not obtain this copy. Also, due to the moratorium called at the death, four days later, of President Carlos Castillo Armas, further experiences with the dance were limited to an occasion in Tactic, Alta Verapaz, when she twice saw a shortened two-hour version for presenting to *cofradías*.

To serve her project of reconstructing the dance's origin and history through textual analysis, Bode did manage to acquire eight complete versions of the text from other communities, some by ordering typed copies and some by buying manuscripts that had been recopied or for another reason were no longer needed. She employed her study of these texts primarily to postulate a date of origin for the *Baile de la Conquista*. Consequently, Bode's monograph is most often referenced specifically for her conclusion on a 19<sup>th</sup> century origin for the Conquest Dance, which may be the most problematic aspect of her work. I am concerned with four aspects of Bode's methodology that led to her hypothesis: 1) framing the Dance of the Conquest within a folk model that predisposes it to devaluation; 2) treating dates on copies of scripts as transparent indicators of their time of composition; 3) hypothesizing a rate of change that conflates intentional and unintentional modification; and 4) projecting Guatemala's late 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic-nationalism into the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century without examination. All four issues arise from treatment of the dance's history apart from historical context, which also prevented Bode from fully exploiting the significant historical information that her interviews revealed.

### 8.2.1. The Folk Model

The *Baile de la Conquista* presented a particular kind of anthropological subject in the 1950s, employing masked dancers, a practice which at that time was associated with "tribal" regions, but with a long poetic text more commonly associated with metropolitan urban theatre. Yet Maya communities fit neither category, since they were occupied largely by subsistence-farming peasants, a lifestyle associated with "folk culture" in Europe. To frame her investigation of this seemingly hybrid dance, Bode adapted Robert Redfield's folk model which places "folk culture midway between primitive, tribal culture and urban culture." Bode thus argued that it is "the folk who take part in the *Conquista*" (1961: 226). Using Redfield's methodology, Bode selected other Guatemalan cultural expressions to represent the "tribal" and "urban" poles of the folk continuum, comparing the Conquest Dance with these to better understand its "folk" nature and the manner in which it came to exist as a hybrid of the other two.

Bode's standard questionnaire, gleaned from her field notes archived in the Latin American Library of Tulane University, reveals a particular concern with relating the Spanish language *Baile de la Conquista*

to dances in Indigenous languages, particularly the *Rabinal Achi*.<sup>1</sup> She also consistently sought information on the bilingual (Spanish and K'iche') *Baile de Cortés*, also known as *Zaqi K'oxol* (Edmonson 1997). Bode was especially interested in how the *Conquista* character of Ajitz might relate to the title character Zaqi K'oxol.<sup>2</sup> Evaluating this questionnaire in light of her publication demonstrates that Bode identified plays in Maya languages (*Rabinal Achi* and *Baile de Cortés*) as the “authentic” (tribal) pole, providing a benchmark from which the Spanish *Baile de la Conquista* could be measured and thereby positioned as a recent, 19<sup>th</sup> century folk product.

In order to situate the *Baile de la Conquista* in relation to her tribal primitive pole, Bode constructed not only the *Rabinal Achi* but also the general complex of dances, masks and costumes at Rabinal as exemplifying the “authentic,” representing a time before K'iche' degraded dance forms into “folk” theatre (1961: 234–35, 238). Thus, in comparison to costumes used at Rabinal, she found *Conquista* costumes gaudy and tasteless (1961: 234). However Tedlock (2003: 244) has noted that *Rabinal Achi* costumes are actually modeled after military uniforms of the 18–19<sup>th</sup> century. Since the same may be said for the *Conquista* costumes for Spanish characters, it is evident that Bode's negative assessment arises from a subjective judgment of taste predetermined by a framework that contrasted “authentic” and “acculturated.”

To represent the urban modern pole of her binary, Bode selected the liberal period dramatic works on the subject of the Spanish invasion, the plays of Felipe Silva Leal (1880s) and the epic poem by Alberto Mencos (1903) discussed earlier. These works post-date the earliest known text of the *Baile de la Conquista*, from 1872, so Bode suggested earlier models such as the early 19<sup>th</sup> century works on the Spanish invasion of Mexico by authors like José María Heredia. Comparison of the Conquest Dance to what she considered legitimate urban theater allowed Bode to direct her severest criticism to the style of the dance text, Bode decries its “melodramatic speeches” and “faulty” verse, and judges the poet “limited” (1961: 225, 238). She judged Silva's poetic script far superior in literary quality and contemplated how *La Conquista* might have been improved if Silva had written his play a century earlier and the “folk” had applied it to their dance instead of the script they now use (Bode 1961: 226). The statement is particularly ironic considering Bode's awareness that it was Silva who used text from the *Baile de la Conquista* in his undated play. But Bode's negative assessment arises from the same subjectivity and pre-determined framework as her comments on the costumes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Two other consistent questions concerned the colonial period pageant called *El Volcán*, and the messenger called Jicaque or Lacandón who appears in some late additions to *Conquista* scripts.

<sup>2</sup> This project has been pursued by Barbara Tedlock (1986) Garrett Cook (2000) and Maury Hutcheson (2003).

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, my subjective opinion is that its tight dramatic construction and classical restraint make the early style *Conquista* text far superior to the trope-filled, flowery and operatic romanticism of Silva Leal.

For Bode, the tribal primitive and the urban civilized represent a binary in which both poles are characterized by authenticity. In contrast the folk is understood to originate when producers of tribal culture emulate the urban, the result becoming an inauthentic hybrid in which both authentic elements have become degraded. For Bode folk culture thus represents a form of acculturation, a concept that still carried highly negative connotations in anthropology of the 1950s, despite Ortiz's 1942 argument for the more positive framework of transculturation. Understanding the Conquest Dance as a degraded acculturation of authentic/primitive through an inept imitation of legitimate/urban, Bode could only describe it in consistently negative terms. Judging from her fieldwork questionnaire, it appears that in framing her research through Redfield's folk model, Bode predisposed herself to find the dance distasteful. Her unpleasant experience at San Cristóbal might then have entrenched her disdain. It is not surprising then, that Bode extended her negative assessment to *Conquista* music. She found the music of *chirimía* (shawm flute) and *tambor* (parade drum) monotonous and, in combination with dancers' rattles, cacophonous. She also opined that the *chirimía* was crudely made and sounded "weird" (Bode 1961: 214–15).

However in certain passages Bode softens her distaste for the dance with opinions that approach ambivalence. On one hand she suggests that the dance with its long text represents Maya progress. Momentarily forgetting that the early colonial *Baile de Cortés* is half in Spanish, she asserts that although there was likely a K'iche' language "Dance of Tekum" since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, "hundreds of years passed before the times were propitious for the Indians to handle the long and involved Spanish text... " of the *Conquista* (Bode 1961: 224). Contrary to Bode, in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century Thomas Gage (1928: 266–71) described Maya participants spending months learning long texts and reciting them in performance. Though these texts were possibly in Indigenous languages, Spanish texts might also have been learned by the same method at this time—as they are today.

On the other hand, Bode suggests that Maya were unequipped to maintain the text for long. This time forgetting that the text of the *Rabinal Achi* has been maintained intact for five centuries, she (Bode 1961: 223–24) argues that:

These manuscripts... simply could not have withstood intensive transmittal over a period of 'hundreds of years.' Merely the fact that there is still one basic *Conquista* play, that it has not broken up into several versions or degenerated into unrecognizable fragments, is pointed evidence that the folk have not had access to the written drama for much longer than a century.

Bode thus argues that the *Baile de la Conquista* originated in the mid–19<sup>th</sup> century, a generation before the Cobán text of 1872, as an imitation of a legitimate urban nationalist theatre of the type represented by Heredia plays about Mexico. She does not explain how the putative author of the dance text in Guatemala would have been exposed to Mexican plays, but instead suggests merely that he was imbued with the romanticism of the age (Bode 1961: 225). Yet this would put the author ahead of his

times in Guatemala, where there were no “legitimate” theatrical versions until those of Silva Leal from the late 1880s.

Sidestepping this contradiction, Bode (1961: 226) actually summons Martí for further evidence supporting the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century date, arguing that if the Dance of the Conquest had not been recently developed, it would have been common in Guatemala by the time of his sojourn, and Martí would have mentioned it. However, Martí’s interest in theatre was confined to what Bode calls “legitimate” theatre, the urban and European style theatre from which Bode herself excluded the *Baile de la Conquista*. Martí not only ignores Maya festival dancing, but in discussing sculpture he ignores masking traditions, and in discussing music he focuses on metropolitan church music and Italian opera without mentioning Maya dance music. Martí’s lack of interest in Indigenous arts of Guatemala, not their diffusion or popularity, explains his failure to mention *La Conquista*. Indeed, no known author mentioned the *Baile de la Conquista* before the book by Carranza, published in 1897. As demonstrated earlier, before the modern period interest in and political uses of Indigenous traditions in Guatemala, dances tended to be mentioned only if problematic, such as the dances that the Catholic church explicitly prohibited for depiction of devils or the government prohibited for depiction of human sacrifice.

### 8.2.2. Dated Copies and Chronological Comparison

To construct a history of textual change, Bode relied on dates written into copies she saw or acquired or heard about. However, the function of these dates as historical evidence is not transparent. Bode bases most of her dating arguments on lack of a text dated earlier than 1872, but the Guatemalan context repeatedly shows that such absences are not reliable for dating. The *Rabinal Achi* is recognized as a 15<sup>th</sup> century, pre-Hispanic dance drama, yet the earliest published reference and earliest text date from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century: four hundred years later. Dances of the Moors and Christians were performed in New Spain from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, yet the earliest known Guatemalan text is a copy dated 1772. Before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when this copy was uncovered in the *Archivo General de Centro América* (Echeverría and Maldonado 1983), the earliest texts known for the *Moros y Cristianos* genre in Guatemala were dated to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, exactly like the earliest “dated” texts of the *Baile de la Conquista*!

Contextual factors further undermine this dating method. A minority of copies include dates, and these may either refer to the date on which a copy was made or a date contained in the version from which it was made. More importantly, the fact that Bode saw no copies with dates earlier than 1872 likely indicates not the age of the dance but rather the time at which historical factors, including antiquarian interests in collecting texts, inspired inclusion of dates. The 1872 Cobán manuscript on which Bode bases her dating arguments was actually copied not for dancers’ use but for a local antiquarian, Rafael Villacorta. Also in Cobán at the same time, according to Bode’s field notes (August 22), Erwin Paul

Dieseldorff, of a German coffee-planting family, in 1870 ordered a copy of the of a *Zaqi K'oxol* manuscript from 1783.

Bode was drawn to use these dates as solid evidence because at the level of analysis she performed, they seemed internally consistent. She divided texts into three categories with some variations (1961: 221–24). The category she considered closest to the original included two copies with the earliest dates, 1872 (Cobán), and possibly 1886 (Ostuncalco, which she did not collect). Bode's interviews revealed that two preliminary scenes, appearing in some scripts, were added after 1900: she called these the Ajitz Variant and Lacandón variant according to the featured character in the added preliminary scene. A second category of *Conquista* texts involved a re-written form which Bode named the *Dioses Inmortales* variant, after its opening line. She noted that all such copies postdate 1894 when Juan Zárate may have modified or introduced this variant to Momostenango. Bode's third category consists of modernized texts that have lost their verse structure, all copies dating after 1920.

Bode's documentation proves invaluable for historicizing the Dance of the Conquest scripts. However, it becomes apparent, when comparing texts of her category one, that what we may glimpse of the original text does not deserve Bode's harsh criticism, as demonstrated in preceding analyses of the poetic form and narrative structure of these early style texts. Bode also did not remark on the introduction of a new poetic form in the *Dioses* variant (using *redondilla abrazada* throughout) from the 1890s, or the freer verse for added scenes like the Ajitz prologue and Lacandón scene.

### 8.2.3. Conflating Intentional and Unintentional Modification

Bode's argument that the *Baile de la Conquista* was still fresh when it was transcribed at Cobán in 1872 relies on a claim for a constant rate of change, arising from conflation of two types of modification that must be distinguished. *Unintentional* changes enter scripts through copying errors and, since the previous copy is usually discarded, will tend to remain fixed. Small differences Bode noted between roughly contemporary copies such as those of Cobán (1872) and Ostuncalco (possibly 1886) could be attributed to such unintentional modifications. But Bode's interviews documented *intentional* alterations and additions produced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including the added Ajitz prologue in Cantel group scripts and the completely rewritten *Dioses Inmortales* variant. Without differentiating intentional and unintentional change, Bode treated the rapidity of intentional changes she documented from the 1890s to the 1930s as a standard rate for all change. Applying this rate inappropriately to small unintentional differences in closely related texts from Cobán and Ostuncalco, she argued that these could be no more than once or twice removed from the original, ancestral composition. Allowing a generation for such changes, she postulated a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century origin (Bode 1961: 224). I have suggested that these texts are one *intentional* step removed from the original (i.e. the added concluding dedications), but there is no information to determine a consistent rate of

change for intentional modifications. Analysis of modifications pertaining to the liberal period (1871–1944) shows that these responded to external factors such as government policy and nationalist ideology. Because such external changes are unpredictable in both rate and occurrence, so too are intentional changes that engage with these.

#### 8.2.4. Projections of Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Nationalism

Bode (1961: 238) asserts that the unknown *Conquista* playwright was “inspired by the romanticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the forces which led literary masters and lesser authors back to their American roots....” Citing early 19<sup>th</sup> century works on Aztec themes by Cuban author José María Heredia Bode (1961: 225) argues further that “this rimador of the *Conquista* imbued his characters with the 19<sup>th</sup> century noble savage tradition....” If Bode had had sufficient time and texts for comparison, she would likely have recognized that while Martí, Silva and Mencos indeed portrayed Tekum as the heroic and noble savage, as did the Cantel authors and the author of the *Dioses Inmortales* variant at the same time, this is precisely what the original author of the *Conquista* did not do. Early style texts (including Cobán 1872) do not exaggerate the character of either Tekum or Alvarado but instead grant them moral stature arising from loyalty to their respective values and beliefs.

Nevertheless, recent prominent investigators of Guatemalan Maya dance support Bode’s dating as well as her understanding of its ideological intent. Maury Hutcheson (2003: 131) links the *Baile de La Conquista* with the *Baile del Torito* and other Spanish language plays as products of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, arguing that these “need to be properly recognized as nationalist efforts to revise and reconstruct the literary and dramatic arts for a self-determinate Guatemalan citizenry rather than principally as works of missionization, or even, strictly speaking, of doctrinal religious expression.” However, the mass baptism that ends *La Conquista* does appear to fulfill an early colonial proselytizing function, as it does in the *Moros y Cristianos* genre brought by the Spanish in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This is quite different from the framework of celebrating the patron saint festival that structures later works in Spanish (the *Baile del Venado*, *Baile del Torito*, and *Baile de los Mexicanos*). Hutcheson (2003: 147) also speculates that the *Conquista*’s precursor may have been the half-Spanish half-K’iche’ *Baile de Cortés*, or *Zaqi K’oxol*. However, beyond the shared derivation from the *Moros y Cristianos* genre, nothing links these two dance dramas. The stories and characters are entirely distinct, since the *Baile de Cortés* concerns the defeat of the Mexica, while the *Baile de la Conquista* concerns the defeat of the K’iche’. Also, as noted earlier, the *Baile de Cortés* adheres much more closely to the *Moros y Cristianos* template, including a major and traitorous female character, which the *Conquista* lacks.

Roland Baumann (2000: 96–97) rejects both the *Baile de Cortés* and *El Volcán* as forerunners of the *Baile de la Conquista*, but he does support Bode’s construction of a succession of dances. Baumann hypothesizes an earlier dance in K’iche’ produced by *cacique* families of the Quetzaltenango region, even though the *Baile de los Moros y Cristianos* and most conquest dances are composed in Spanish.



After independence, Baumann argues, the history of Tekum became more popular as a component of Guatemalan national identity, resulting in a Spanish version of the drama. However, as noted in the previous chapter, there is no evidence that Tekum was being related to Guatemalan identity before the 1880s. Baumann attributes the “classicism” of the early style texts to the conservatism of the regime dominated by Rafael Carrera but lasting from 1839–1871. Baumann argues further that the dance still conserves a Maya vision of the conquest, because it depicts not only the defeat and conversion of the Maya but also their courage in resisting the Spaniards. However this dual aspect conforms to the argument Mercedes Díaz Roig (1983: 187) makes concerning conquest dances in general, that in order to invite the recently defeated population to identify with the defeated group in the dance text, and thus be moved to similarly accept baptism, they must be partially dignified and the Spanish victors must be partially denigrated.

Bode's hypothesis relies on longer a chain of hypothetical scripts: a 16<sup>th</sup> century K'iche' dance, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century Guatemalan romantic–nationalist play influenced by dramas with Aztec themes, and a mid–19<sup>th</sup> century original Spanish script for *La Conquista* influenced by this hypothetical Guatemalan playwright. These absences are compounded by a methodological absence: neglect to clarify historical contexts out of which writing of *La Conquista* might emerge. While Bode agrees with José Barrientos (1941) that the Spanish text of the *Baile de la Conquista* was likely written in the region of Quetzaltenango where the events it recounts took place, she does not investigate political or religious contexts in which a Maya person of that time and place might compose the drama. Likewise neither Baumann nor Hutcheson specifies how nationalist ideology relates to the text of the dance, and perhaps both were misled by the modifications that produced the Cantel and *Dioses* lineage texts during the period of liberal dictatorships. Indeed the nationalist pursuit of roots and heroic histories that both Baumann and Hutcheson flag as underlying a mid–19<sup>th</sup> century production of the Conquest dance did not bloom until the after the 1871 liberal revolution, which underlies the dismay Martí expresses in his 1878 essay. None of these authors investigates concepts of nationalism that would have been generated and debated earlier. To give an idea of such earlier concepts, it may be worthwhile to sketch some outlines of ideological construction from the period leading up to independence through the fall of the conservative government.

Rebecca Earle (2007) demonstrates that *criollo* liberal ideology of those working towards and achieving independence in 1821 harshly criticized the Spanish conquest and subsequent colonial rule that discriminated against them in favour of *peninsulares*. They idealized those Indigenous leaders who defended their nations against the Spanish incursion while at the same time deprecating Indigenous people who were their contemporaries. However, note that the previously mentioned *Canto a la Independencia de Guatemala* by García Granados refers to the capital–region Kaqchikel, not the K'iche'.

The early liberal government fell in part because of support by Maya peoples of western highland Guatemala that brought the mestizo leader Carrera to power. To maintain their support, Carrera's

government shifted the relationship of Indigenous people to the state. Douglass Sullivan–González (1998: 62–63) compares two independence day homilies by the priest Juan José de Aycinena to illuminate this shift. In 1837, before liberal Gálvez fell from power, Aycinena referred to Guatemala’s Indigenous peoples as savages, religious fanatics and idolaters. But in 1840, as conservative Carrera consolidated power, Aycinena praised their religiosity, calling Indigenous peoples “protectors of our custom” and calling Carrera “restorer of the people’s custom.” Carrera’s ideological relation to Maya peoples of Los Altos was thus characterized by colonial–style paternalism and protectionism.

Sullivan–González (1998) also shows that in the period dominated by Carrera, an ideology of nationalism developed that was related to distinctions between staunch Catholicism of the conservatives and secularist tendencies of the liberals. When these conflicts led to wars with liberal regimes in Honduras and El Salvador in 1851 and 1863, Carrera’s victories were presented as the result of a covenant with the divine to protect the Catholic faith.

In contrast to the covenant ideology of the national government, as discussed in the previous chapter a separate liberal ideology was evolving in the secessionist Los Altos region that drew on the K’iche’ as Indigenous precursors. The notion of conquest period Indigenous heroes of resistance was also active. Nevertheless, in his independence day speech of 1844, when Manuel Zacarías Velázquez compared himself to Indigenous heroes who defended their nations, including Motecuhzoma, Cuauhtémoc, Xicotencatl, and Atahualpa (Earle 2007: 77), he did not mention Tekum, or any other Guatemalan. Liberals were likely aware of Tekum’s history, since in 1808 they were celebrating not only their allegiance to Spain but also the work of Fuentes y Guzmán (Taracena 1999: 191–95), but there appears to have been no local interest in celebrating the K’iche’ commander before Martí’s arrival.

#### 8.2.5. Further Points

I want to conclude this investigation of the hypothesis of an early or mid–19<sup>th</sup> century origin for the *Baile de la Conquista* as we know it by making two brief points. First, except for Bode, all of the authors mentioned produced their analyses subsequent to the 1981 publication of Victoria Reiffler Bricker’s *Indian Christ, Indian King*, in which she sites evidence that the *Baile de la Conquista* was being performed in 1820 (Bricker 1981: 82). The evidence concerns transcripts of the trial of Atanasio Tzul for sedition, and in the recent online publication of these transcripts from Bricker’s files, it is clearly stated that Tzul borrowed a Spanish military dress coat with the excuse that he was going to dance in “*un baile de conquista*.”<sup>4</sup> While this evidence would not contradict an origin in the few decades leading

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<sup>4</sup> Archivo de Centroamérica, Legajo 5480, Expediente 47155, interview 42 with Macario Rodas, page 65.

The text (uncorrected) reads: “...y al Sul se representaba un vniforme y sombrero Militar espadin medalla y baston; que el vniforme se lo pidieron con engaño á Balentin Albarado vesino de este Pueblo disiendo

up to Independence, as noted there is no evidence for celebration of Tekum at this time. Were there such interest, then perhaps Atanasio Tzul would have preferred to dress as Tekum rather than as a Spanish soldier.

Second, Bode's notion that an earlier dance in K'iche' was translated into Spanish poetry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century contrasts with other hypotheses on the origin of the *Baile de la Conquista* in positing Maya authors for both texts rather than allowing for a Spanish author at either stage. I respect that such an hypothesis, especially as it applies to studies like those of Hutcheson or Baumann written from the 1980s onward, is imbued with post-colonial concerns with Indigenous agency. This contrasts with Bode's approach, at least for the Spanish version, which she denigrates as a folk corruption of urban legitimate theatre. But to suggest, as I have, that the script for the dance was written by a Franciscan friar, does not rob Maya people of agency. I have argued that the dance likely arose from a series of collaborations, first between the author and the Tzunun family, and then between the author and *fiscales* who likely composed the music, arranged the staging and rehearsed the performers. Maya agency is also abundantly demonstrated in the dramatic revisions of the text during the period of liberal dictatorships. In the next part of this study, I also hope to show that in the intervening period, Maya agency is evidence in the development of pantomimes that often undercut or reversed the intent of the text.

### 8.3. Victor Miguel Díaz's Assertion of a Mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century Origin

Victor Miguel Díaz asserted his version of the origin of the *Baile de la Conquista* in at least four published pieces, all of which arose from a strong interest in the history of Santiago de los Caballeros, the old capital of Guatemala now known as Antigua Guatemala, and for the department of Sacatepéquez in which it is located. The earliest is a section in his book *Sacatepéquez* (1924–25). He republished much of this content and added a bit more in his 1933 article entitled "*Crónicas del tiempo pasado*", printed in the *Diario de Centro América*, a newspaper that he edited and published.<sup>5</sup> As usual, Díaz signed this article not with his name but as "*el viejo reporter*." The final two articles both appeared in the 1934 book *Las Bellas Artes en Guatemala*, which Díaz authored and published. The first reference in this book appears in the article on San Juan del Obispo (498–502), the community that he asserts as the location for the first performance of *La Conquista*, and the second in an article on "*El Baile en*

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*que era para un baile de Conquista, y que el sombrero porno haver otro igual en el Pueblo, parese ser del difunto Felipe Enríquez...."*

Translation: "...and they presented to Tzul a military uniform and hat, sword, medal and staff; that they deceitfully requested the uniform from Valentín Alvarado, resident of this town, saying that it was for a Dance of the Conquest, and that since there was no other similar hat in the town, it seemed to be that of the deceased Felipe Enríquez."

<sup>5</sup> This version was reproduced in full in Montoya (1970: 37–38).

*Guatemala*" (575–79). Even in the three short articles, the origin of the Conquest Dance is only one of several topics, rather than a central point.

In the two longest and earliest of these publications, Díaz makes the claim that he took this information from the Dominican friar Jerónimo Román, who relates that the dance was commissioned by the Indigenous leaders of Ciudad Vieja and of the community of K'iche' from Q'umarcaaj resettled near Jocotenango. The *municipio* of Ciudad Vieja in the Almolonga Valley includes, on its eastern margin, the first capital of the colony founded in 1527 by Jorge de Alvarado and buried in a landslide in 1541. Ciudad Vieja was largely settled by Indigenous Mexicans (Tlaxcalans) under Alvarado's command. The reason Román is said to have given for this commission is that these Indigenous leaders wanted to offer it as a present to Bishop Francisco Marroquín on the occasion of his birthday, especially since he was aged and unwell. Thus a Dominican friar was commissioned to write the script for the dance, and several months were spent in rehearsing as well as preparing the masks and costumes.

Díaz does not give a year date for this performance in the 1924–25 publication, though the date 1563, the year of Marroquín's death, is mentioned before and after this description. In the most extensive, 1933 article, no date is given. Of the two 1934 references, the first dates the first performance to 1559, which is four years before Marroquín's death, while the second dates it to 1542, and credits the playwright Silva Leal for this information. All later references to this reputed origin use the date of 1542, despite the fact that even in terms of Díaz's argument that Marroquin was old and unwell, 1559 would have been a better fit. One should also remember the historical context: after a landslide destroyed the first capital in 1541, Marroquín and other leaders, including Pedro de Alvarado's brother-in-law, were fully occupied with constructing the new capital in the Valley of Panchoy. But this inconsistency is only the first clue that Díaz's account is fictional.

Later authors have also misread Díaz's statement that the information came from Román, author of *La República de los Indios* to mean that this was the volume in which Román provided information on the origin of the *Baile de la Conquista*.<sup>6</sup> It seems no one thought to check the volume, which does not contain such a reference. Indeed I have found no reference at all by Román to this dance. Other inconsistencies apply to this reference. First, in 1925 Díaz refers to Román as a Dominican friar, whereas he was actually Augustinian. Augustinian missionaries did not have a major presence in colonial Guatemala, and Rolena Adorno (1992: 824) argues that Román most likely never came to the Americas. Díaz's last attribution of the information to Silva Leal provides another empty inconsistency, because it appears that what Díaz took from Silva is the practice of inventing sources.<sup>7</sup> Díaz was likely aware of Silva's plays: in his 1933 description of the dance, he mentions K'iche' archers and Spanish harquebusiers, a reference likely drawn from Silva's undated play *La Conquista de Uatlán*.

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<sup>6</sup> The correct title of Román's book is *Repúblicas de Indias: Idolatría y gobierno en México y Peru antes de la Conquista*.

<sup>7</sup> Silva claims that his 1887 play was merely a transcription of accounts recited by K'iche', Kaqchikel and Tzutujil elders (1887: 73).

One of the features in the 1933 article that does not appear in 1924–25 is the addition of three more *Caciques* named Ahzumanché, Ahzol, and Ahpocob. These three characters figure prominently in Fuentes y Guzmán's accounts of the K'iche' defeat. It appears that Fuentes invented these characters by misreading the K'iche' text of the *Título Izquin Nijaib' II*, a *título* known in both K'iche' and Spanish versions, and dated 1558. In the K'iche' text four *groups* of fighters are called “*Ah Tzol, Ah Tzununche, Ahchab, Ahpocob*” (Recinos 1957:108), translated by Carmack and Mondloch (1989: 199) as sling-shooters, lancers, archers, and shield-bearers. In three passages, Fuentes (1969–72: II, 290, 294; III, 95) read the text as naming specific leaders subordinate to Tekum, and listed three of them in the same order as in the *título*.<sup>8</sup>

In 1933, Díaz may have taken these three character names directly from Fuentes, whose great work *Recordación Florida* was re-published in Guatemala in 1929–32, or perhaps they had been incorporated into a dance that he witnessed. Some other aspects of Díaz's description are likely to have been derived from performances of the *Baile de la Conquista* that he witnessed in Ciudad Vieja, where it is still regularly performed in a tradition quite different from the K'iche' version. For example he describes an opening *desafío* (challenge) between the Spanish and K'iche' forces before the drama proper begins. So far I have seen such a *desafío* scene in only two scripts, one likely from Ciudad Vieja (Armas Lara 1964: 83–85). I suggest this possibility that Díaz is drawing on his memories from Ciudad Vieja because in both of the longer descriptions, Díaz notes that the dance is still performed annually in December on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which would relate to the patron saint of Ciudad Vieja, la Santísima Virgen de Concepción.

By the 1950s it was clear to some academics at least that Díaz was a particularly sloppy historian who freely embroidered his material (Lamadrid 1952: 309). And, in October of 1963, perhaps to celebrate the four hundred year anniversary of Marroquín's death, Ernesto Chinchilla Aguilar wrote a newspaper article entitled “*El Obispo Marroquín y el Baile de la Conquista.*” After summarizing Díaz's 1924–25 account of the dance's origin, Chinchilla expresses doubt by including three questions. Chinchilla asks whether Román really did mention the origin of the dance, whether Díaz's account is credible, or whether Díaz invented the account to spice up his writing. These were likely rhetorical questions but nevertheless they have now been answered. What is clear is that Díaz invented his story of the origin of the *Baile de la Conquista*, but it is not so clear why he did so.

Unfortunately I have not found information that would explain why Díaz would create this fabrication in 1925. It may be enough to say it fit into Díaz's desire to promote the historical significance of the old capital and the department of Sacatepéquez, which is theme of all of Díaz's publications that deal with

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<sup>8</sup> Fuentes' mistake is understandable, as the “*ah*” prefix can designate a role or function as well as identify a personal name.

the origin of the Conquest Dance. But such an agenda seems particularly clear for the 1933 publication when viewed in its context.

The 1933 passage on the origin of *La Conquista* is part of a long nostalgic article chronicling festivals associated with Antigua's past as the long-standing colonial capital. Díaz begins by describing ostentatious festival processions of monks and *peninsulares* in Antigua, and ends with a humbler Indigenous festival in the small nearby community of San Felipe de Jesús. Between these he describes various festivals in which Indigenous inhabitants of Jocotenango, also near Antigua, took part. One is the local *fiesta patronal* for the Virgin of the Assumption on August 15. Another is *El Volcán*, citing Fuentes y Guzmán's description of this spectacular re-enactment of the putative capture of the rebellious Kaqchikel ruler Sinacam in 1526 that led to the foundation of Guatemala's first capital in 1527. A third is the passage described above concerning the creation of the *Baile de la Conquista* which Díaz attributes to a Jocotenango population of Utatecos: K'iche's brought from their capital Utatlán (Q'umarcaaj).

When this article was published on August 12, the annual national fair was in full swing in the capital. Walter Little (2008) observes that president Ubico updated these national fairs to foreground not only Guatemala's economic and technological progress but also the touristic potential of the nation's Indigenous populations. Beginning in 1932, Ubico brought Indigenous groups to the capital to pursue their daily and artisanal activities within the artificial *Pueblo Indígena*, which became the fair's most popular attraction for both national and foreign tourists. That Díaz's 1933 article was designed in part to promote the fair is suggested by its touristic illustrations of Maya weavers and of a potter with musicians, apparently taken in the *Pueblo Indígena* rather than in their home communities. The fair also included Maya ceremonial dances. It may not be coincidental that the page preceding Díaz's 1933 article displays an announcement of ceremonial dances to be presented at the *Pueblo Indígena* on the following day, including a performance of the *Baile de la Conquista* by the dance team from Momostenango.

The fair's success in promoting tourism, and Díaz's contribution to that success, are evident in subsequent publications in the United States on touristic attractions of Guatemala, beginning in 1937, that describe the Dance of the Conquest using Díaz's fabrications of its origin (Fergusson 1937: 267; Kelsey and Osborne 1939: 107; Reynolds 1956: 32). In their 1939 travel guide, Kelsey and Osborne may have been the first to cobble together an origin story combining Díaz's description from the 1933 article that sources Jerónimo Román, with the date of 1542 from the 1934 publication that sources Felipe Silva Leal. This indefensible conflation has achieved unwarranted widespread acceptance through continual repetition, most citing Kelsey and Osborne's travel guide as if it had arisen from scholarly analysis or recovery of new archival sources. An origin date of 1542 for the *Baile de la Conquista* has thus become canonical in Guatemala.

The only image in the Díaz 1933 article that does not picture the *Pueblo Indígena* illustrates the model by Rafael Yela Günther for the proposed statue commemorating Tekum discussed in the previous chapter. While the point made in that context concerned differing meanings of Tekum's history to *Ladino* and K'iche' of Quetzaltenango, in the present context the relevant issue is the competitive antagonism between the capital area and Los Altos. As noted previously, the idea for a monument to Tekum on "Cerro Tecún Umán" developed as a response to the proposal by the jefe político of Sacatepéquez to put up such a monument in that department. This monument proposal and counter-proposal illustrate one stage in a long-standing rivalry between Quetzaltenango and the capital city region, earlier stages of which had involved three mid- 19<sup>th</sup> century attempts at secession by a Los Altos state. Rivalry was further expressed in the context of the monument's dedication. Whereas the 1933 article by Díaz was associated with a national fair in which dancers from Momostenango performed the *Baile de la Conquista* in the capital, the monument dedication in 1934 was part of a Quetzaltenango Independence Day fair for which the Cantel dancers publicly performed the *Baile de la Conquista*, most likely in the *Pueblo de Indígenas* erected on the Quetzaltenango fairgrounds (Grandin 2000 194-95).

Díaz's 1933 and 1934 publications thus participate in factional conflict between Los Altos and capital regions. In Díaz's writings, the Dance of the Conquest, and by extension also the celebration of Tekum, are relocated from the area of Quetzaltenango to the region of the old capital and tied to Bishop Marroquín, a towering figure in the early history of capital and colony. To situate the dance's narration of events in K'iche' history within the Kaqchikel region of the capital, Díaz ascribes its origin to the K'iche' population of the Utateco barrio of Jocotenango. Díaz thereby contributes to the process of appropriating Tekum as a national rather than regional hero, and promotes the project of the Sacatepéquez governor to anchor that appropriation with a monument. The next counter-response from Quetzaltenango appeared in 1941 in the first book on the *Baile de la Conquista*, in which Los Altos landowner José Barrientos (1941) studied geographic references in the text to instead affirm the origin of this dance in Los Altos.

By the late 1930s and early 1940s, the capital region had largely appropriated Tekum as a national symbol, evident from the murals in the National Palace built under Ubico and the contemporary (1943) poem "Tecún Umán" by future Nobel Prize winner Miguel Angel Asturias. This nationalist project was renewed in the early 1960s under military dictatorship, constructing Tekum as the ideal soldier (Otzoy 1999). This discourse permeated many media, with scholarly research and publication (including the Huitzitzil Tzunun *título* describing Tekum's duel with Alvarado), a hymn, a national holiday to commemorate Tekum's death on February 20, and a monument in Guatemala City by Roberto González Goyri. And again, Los Altos responded with its own assertion of Tekum-ownership, erecting a pair of statues, partially designed by Quetzalteco sculptor Rodolfo Galeotti Torres, in Quetzaltenango and in Santa Cruz del Quiché. These competing productions of the 1940s and 1960s are distinguished by an

increased tendency to extract Tekum from the *Baile de la Conquista*, and from the Maya population, to become “Tecún Umán,” national or regional hero.

#### 8.4. Recent Hypotheses Arising from the Díaz Fabrication

In the 1990s the origin of the *Baile de la Conquista* again began to figure into this regional antagonism, but this time in the hands of academics and involving relations between Kaqchikel and K'iche'. Though not the earliest contribution to this discourse, Daniel Contreras (2004) provides the least radical argument. Contreras' view that Kaqchikel history has been dealt with unfairly is traced back to the Spanish invasion, in which the Kaqchikel fulfilled their duties as Alvarado's allies by helping to capture K'iche' who had fled the burning of Q'umarcaaj so they could be branded and distributed as slaves, and then welcoming the Spanish to their capital Patinamit-Iximche. He argues that this assessment of the Kaqchikel as traitors is unfair because a few months later the Kaqchikel rebelled against the Spanish while the K'iche' served as their allies. As the rebellion was led by the Kaqchikel Ajpop with the calendar name of Kahi' Imox, who was called Sinacán by the Spanish, this would make the Kaqchikel the true heroes of Indigenous resistance in the land that would become the Kingdom of Guatemala. To support this point, Contreras offers some distortions and elisions that may be disputed. First, while Alvarado and his troops retreated from Iximche to a secure garrison at Olindepeque, near Quetzaltenango, this does not mean that the K'iche' in general were his allies. Actually the sons of the two K'iche' rulers that Alvarado burned at the stake, and that he named as their successors, rebelled as well. The new Ajpop K'iche', Tekum 9 Jaguar (the Naui Ocelotl mentioned by José Martí), was hanged for his leadership of rebellion by Jorge de Alvarado at what is now Santa Maria Chiquimula, near Momostenango. The new Ajpop *Kamja*, Tepepul 8 Rain, is considered by most chroniclers and scholars of this history to have been the ally of Sinacán called Sequechul by the Kaqchikel, who was imprisoned along with Sinacán and ultimately executed with him by Alvarado in 1540 (z.B. Fuentes y Guzmán 1969-72 I, 132-33, 231-35, 346-48; III, 324, 330-32; Juarros 1857: II, 289; Recinos 2001: 47; Christenson in Anonymous 2003 : 279-80). Therefore instead of acknowledging Kaqchikel and K'iche' as jointly leading the rebellion, and thus as “patriots” rather than “traitors,” Contreras attempts to reverse the earlier attribution by constructing the K'iche' as traitors.

Contreras argues that privileging Tekum's short-lived resistance in contrast to Sinacán's extended rebellion is a product of the nationalist cult of Tekum. In contrast, he discusses the focus on Sinacán's rebellion in the spectacular pageant of *El Volcán* in Antigua Guatemala around 1680, as recorded by Fuentes y Guzmán and described earlier. Contreras (2004: 71, 75-76) asserts that this performance was the true Dance of the Conquest of Guatemala both because it follows the structure of conquest pageants like that of Tlaxcala in 1539 and because at the time these events took place, the term “Guatemala” referred specifically to the Kaqchikel nation. Therefore Contreras argues that Díaz's 1542 date and the venue at Bishop Marroquín's residence refers to the origin of what should be considered the “true” *Baile de la Conquista de Guatemala*. That is, *El Volcán*, the capture of Sinacán, not the later



*Baile de la Conquista de Quetzaltenango*, involving the death of Tekum, which Contreras dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in agreement with Bode. Though he has no direct evidence for a 16<sup>th</sup> century origin, Contreras cites Tovilla's description of the spectacle type performance in Antigua around 1631. Tovilla describes the elaborate preparations and the construction of the volcano, but records Motecuhzoma as being the ultimate captive. Contreras corrects Tovilla, saying he misunderstood the import of the story. This is possible, but as Tovilla's cousin was in charge of the festival arrangements, as stated in a phrase that Contreras eliminates through an ellipsis, it is also possible that Tovilla knew exactly what the story was about, and that the conquest of Mexico was being performed, since the Tlaxcalans assisted in this conquest as well. The jury is still out on this issue.

For Contreras, these Kaqchikel and K'iche' dances of conquest do not overlap in time or character. He considers *El Volcán* to represent an official event, considering the enormous expense in constructing the volcano and decorating the facades of buildings fronting the huge plaza of the capital. Contreras also notes that *El Volcán* did not diffuse to Maya communities where it could be transformed into what he considers "folklore" and thus survive with recopied texts. In contrast, by accepting Bode's date and origin for the K'iche' Dance of the Conquest, Contreras implies that this *baile* never had an official event status as a pageant and instead originated as folklore (Contreras 2004: 75–76). This is also a subtle means to further privilege the story of Kaqchikel resistance over that of the K'iche'.

Guillermo Paz Cárcamo does not agree with the 19<sup>th</sup> century date for the K'iche' *Baile de la Conquista*, but he follows the same agenda of demeaning Tekum and the K'iche' in order to elevate the Kaqchikel. He draws on the earlier, 1993 article by Jorge Luján Muñoz and Horacio Cabezas Carcache on the Spanish invasion of Guatemala which shares this agenda. Luján Muñoz and Cabezas Carcache (1993: 52–53) situate their discussion of the *Baile de la Conquista* within an argument that the Tekum of this dance did not exist, and thus did not participate in the K'iche' resistance to Alvarado's invasion in 1524.

Evidence for the veracity of Tekum's leadership in this resistance has been discussed by Carmack (1979: 179–86) and Akkeren (2007: 67–70), both of whom note that the titles accorded to Tekum in the *Título Coyoi*, as *Nima Rajpop Achij*, match the rank and office recorded by Alvarado. Alvarado said that the man who died in the battles now collectively referred to as El Pinar was both captain general and one of the four lords of Utlán, these being the *Ajpop*, *Ajpop Kamja*, and their respective designated successors, the *Nima Rajpop Achij* and the *Ch'uti Rajpop Achij*. Nevertheless, Luján Muñoz and Cabezas Carcache (1993: 52) argue that the leader to whose death Alvarado refers was a different person. They inappropriately cite the anonymous chronicle of 1710–11 in which the deceased leader of El Pinar is identified as Galel Ajpop, actually a title rather than a name. However, this *Isagoge Histórica-Apologética* (Anonymous 1935) follows Fuentes y Guzmán, who in his second treatise did not place Tekum's death in the battle of El Pinar. Fuentes argued that Alvarado was referring to Ahzumanche who, as noted above, Fuentes invented, and delayed Tekum's death to the battle a few days later at

Urbina, apparently because he could not imagine K'iche' regrouping for another battle without Tekum's leadership. The author of the *Isagoge* repeats Fuentes' ascription of Tekum's death to the Urbina battle, differing only on the identity of the leader who died in the battle of El Pinar. In their argument, Luján Muñoz and Cabezas Carcache do not reveal that the *Isagoge* subscribes to the leadership of Tekum.

Concluding their argument denying Tekum's historical existence, Luján Muñoz and Cabezas Carcache propose instead that he is an invention of the Conquest Dance's Spanish writer who produced the original script and needed this duel for theatrical purposes. They suggest that the dance's author took the name Tekum from the Ajpop 9 Jaguar appointed by Pedro de Alvarado, who they claim assisted the Spanish in putting down what they call the Kaqchikel rebellion, not admitting that he was executed for his leadership of the rebellion by Jorge de Alvarado. While these authors do not argue for a specific date for the origin of this dance, they do argue that it must precede those K'iche' *títulos* in which the duel of Tekum and Alvarado is narrated.

In his 2006 volume, *La Máscara de Tekum*, Guillermo Paz Cárcamo greatly expands on the arguments of López Luján and Cabezas Carcache, both in the denial of the historical existence of Tekum of the dance and in crediting the dance for originating the story of Tekum's duel in the K'iche' *títulos*. Paz Cárcamo (2006: 92) claims, on the testimony of Kaqchikel linguist Chacach, that Tekum was not a name or title used for K'iche' persons, thus denying the validity of several lists of K'iche' kings, including that in the *Popol Vuj!* In contrast, these king lists appear to indicate that Tekum was a royal name, rather than a personal name or a title of rank, and was one of a selection of names adopted when one became an heir to the position of *Ajpop* or *Ajpop K'amja*. This practice would be analogous to renaming a Pope with one of a series of standard papal names, except that all four of the highest positions in the ruling Cavek lineage entailed adoption of official royal names upon selection. It is likely that upon the death of Tekum, his "official" name passed to the brother, 9 Jaguar who took his place as heir designate to the *Ajpop*. In comparison, the "official" name of the heir designate to the *Ajpop K'amja* was Tepepul 8 Rain, and the list of K'iche' rulers demonstrates this pairing of a Tekum and a Tepepul as *Ajpop* and *Ajpop K'amja* was customary.

Luján Muñoz and Cabezas Carcache (1993: 53) argue further that the duel between Tekum and Alvarado arose as a necessary dramatic device in the Conquest Dance and was later repeated in the *títulos*. Paz Cárcamo (2006: 224–39) supports the Luján Muñoz and Cabezas Carcache argument that the description of Tekum's duel with Alvarado in the K'iche' *títulos* derives from the Dance of the Conquest by highlighting further examples of theatricality in the *títulos*, such as the resplendent costume of jewels and feathers described for the appearance of Tekum and his *nawal*. For Paz Cárcamo, decapitation of Alvarado's horse also suggests stage business adapted from *autos* of the martyrdom of John the Baptist or Judith slaying Holofernes. Paz Cárcamo therefore argues for the theatrical origin of the vision in the *Título Nihai'b' I*, in which the Virgin, angels, and the Holy Spirit

protect the Spanish. However, the *título's* narration that these visions caused the K'iche' to fall to the ground, blinded, likely derives from the story of the conversion of Saint Paul.<sup>9</sup>

But while these gestures in *títulos* may indeed be theatrical, this does not prove that the *Baile de la Conquista* is their source; several are part of the *Moros y Cristianos* performance tradition from which the conquest genre derives, including the chivalrous deciding duel shared by both dance and *título* accounts. Theatrical elements could also enter the *títulos* from *autos* dramatizing biblical themes or even church paintings. While the issue of whether the *títulos* or the dance invented the symbolic duel might still remain open, for chronological support Paz Cárcamo (2006: 171) cites the Kelsey and Osborne ascription of a 1542 date for the dance described (and invented) by Díaz as an authoritative source. From this he argues that the *títulos* describing the Tekum–Alvarado duel follow the invention of the dance by 20, 30 or more years.<sup>10</sup> For further support, Paz Cárcamo (2006: 171) cites Bode's mention (in a footnote) that she heard some claims in Ciudad Vieja for the connection of the dance's origin with Bishop Marroquín and the date 1542. However Bode's field notes reveal that this was a minority claim, disputed by a majority of the town residents who she questioned on this matter.<sup>11</sup>

Following in the steps of Severo Martínez Peláez (1970: 613–14), Paz Cárcamo's overt objective for making these claims is to provide a Marxist interpretation of the Spanish occupation, arguing very similarly to his mentor that the Conquest Dance was invented by the Spanish as a tool of colonization designed to appropriate Indigenous labour and alienate Indigenous peoples from their culture and spirituality. However, Paz Cárcamo's argument also continues the thrust of the two earlier articles, by Contreras (2004) and Luján Muñoz and Cabezas Carcache (1993), that advance a claim to the superiority of Kaqchikel resistance, designed to rehabilitate their reputation as briefly allied to Alvarado. This discourse represents another stage in the insertion of the story of Tekum and the *Baile de la Conquista* in rivalries between regions and ethnic groups. Considering the ongoing nature of these rivalries, it is not surprising that so many authors have neglected to question the sources and veracity of Victor Miguel Díaz and of Kelsey and Osborne. But in this regard, it is greatly to her credit that Kaqchikel scholar Irma Otzoy avoided such partiality in her analysis of the ways that the story of

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<sup>9</sup> Guaman Poma provides another example of this kind of miracle concerning the Spanish defeat of Inka rebels in Cuzco, when the Virgin Mary appears to protect Spanish forces by throwing dirt in the eyes of the rebels. The image and description of this miracle are on pages 404–05 of his text. See: <http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/405/es/text/?open=id3087886>

<sup>10</sup> These figures are exaggerated since although the *Título Huitzitzil Tzunun* dates 1567, the *Título Izquín Nijaib' I* may date to 1558. Furthermore, Díaz said that Marroquín was old and infirm, and this may relate to his sickness and death in 1563, a date also mentioned by Díaz, which is five years after the possible writing of the *Izquín Nijaib' I*.

<sup>11</sup> I would argue further that those residents citing the Marroquín–1542 connection received this information directly or indirectly from the Kelsey and Osborne 1939 publication, as it is unlikely for such a precise Christian date to be handed down through Guatemalan oral history over four hundred years. It is not matched by any other such precise oral history accounts to my knowledge.

Tekum has been adapted to serve nationalist political purposes, and further that she took seriously the importance of Tekum to contemporary *Costumbristas*. Paz Cárcamo, for all his diatribes against Akkeren as a colonialist non-Guatemalan, does not listen to the voices of those people who have most at stake in the legend of Tekum.

The arguments by Contreras, Luján Muñoz and Cabezas Carcache, as well as Paz Cárcamo, which enter into a long-standing rivalry between K'iche' and Kaqchikel peoples of Guatemala that may indeed date back to the events of 1524 and the alliance of Kaqchikel against the K'iche', parallels other "rivalries" constructed as binary or even polar oppositions that encourage people to align with one side or the other. An early example in Guatemala's colonial history would be the bitter feud between Franciscan and Dominican missionary orders, which was seen to contribute to the origin of the K'iche' *Baile de la Conquista*. Another version, more closely allied to the antagonism between K'iche' and Kaqchikel, is the rivalry between the area of the Guatemalan capital (ethnically Kaqchikel) and the Los Altos region centred around Quetzaltenango (ethnically K'iche'). The politics of this rivalry in from 1838 to 1871 involved heated antagonism between Conservatives of the capital and Liberals of Los Altos, to the point that Los Altos liberals several times attempted to secede from Guatemala. As discussed previously, this regional rivalry also surfaced in the mid-1930s with the Sacatepéquez proposal of a monument to Tekum and the counter-proposal from Quetzaltenango, and again in the 1960s, when the erection of a Tekum statue in Guatemala City was conquered by the erection of two statues to Tekum in the K'iche' region (Quetzaltenango and Santa Cruz del Quiché).

Thus the binary opposition of "good" and "bad" through which the conflict between Spanish invaders and K'iche' defenders in 1524 has been framed, and symbolized by the fictive duel between Alvarado and Tekum, has been repeatedly used as a means of privileging one party over another in subsequent conflicts in Guatemala likewise framed through a polarized binary. It is worthwhile to note that such reductive arguments contrast with the complexity of multivalent meanings conveyed by the *Baile de la Conquista* as performed by Indigenous Maya *Costumbristas*, and by the ambivalence of responses to it, including both rejection of outside oppression and of celebration of Maya Christianity.

In her study of the ways that Tekum has been configured through the *Baile de la Conquista* as well as through the discourse of nationalism, Otzoy (1999: 62) brings up the Díaz assertion concerning the origin of the dance as designed to celebrate Marroquín and the date of 1542 but without judgment. Otzoy notes first that the fact the text was written by a Spaniard does not preclude incorporation of Indigenous elements, and second that its origin and agenda have little relevance in the present. This is because, through observation and interviews with dancers, Otzoy came to realize that performance of the dance has altered the agenda and viewpoint to a representation and remembering of resistance. In her conclusion, Otzoy (1999: 163-64) notes that the Maya Movement has generally rejected Tekum as a unifying symbol, but in the spirit of unity she argues that the movement's adherents would do well to re-examine the importance of Tekum to rural Maya as a means to celebrate resistance.

## 8.5. Conclusion on an Early Colonial Origin of the Quetzaltenango-Based *Baile de la Conquista*

With the most accepted hypotheses for the date of origin for the *Baile de la Conquista* have been shown to be both unsubstantiated and illogical, it remains to consider an alternate hypothesis that meets stricter criteria within the limited evidence available. Ideally, in the face insufficient evidence, one should investigate how this dance might have entered into power relations as an active agent at each stage of colonial and national history, but sources are uneven in this regard. We have available important ethnohistorical and auto-ethnological descriptions of Maya belief and practice of the conquest period in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the much more abundant anthropological descriptions of these aspects from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, beginning with John Lloyd Stephens' use of ethnographic detail to analyze the potential for exploiting Indigenous labour in 1838–39. Both periods of detailed description involved aspects of both salvage (recording what is fast disappearing) and surveillance (information useful for technologies of control) that accompanied the tension between the economic exploitation of a racially marked group and pressures for that group to assimilate. Not surprisingly, these are also the only two periods that have been suggested for the origin of the Conquest Dance. We have seen that two 17<sup>th</sup> century authors, Fuentes y Guzmán and Gage, include ethnographic detail on dance and religion, but this interest noticeably decreases in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The paucity of relevant information on intervening centuries is matched by lack of suggestions as to how the *Baile de la Conquista* fit in, and by suggestions for dates without supporting evidence.

A second imbalance in the literature concerns the history of evangelizing theatre in Mesoamerica, which has inordinately focused on Mexican plays in Nahuatl, to the near exclusion of plays written in Spanish and of theatre in the Guatemalan region. Due perhaps to the lack of useful discussions, in the chart formulated by Munro Edmonson (1997: 87) to show the time at which each of the Guatemalan dances might have been introduced, he relegates all dances with Spanish language texts to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A useful antidote to this imbalance and absence of information is the literature on the *Pastorella* genre plays common from western Mexico into the US southwest (Bauman 1996; Flores 1994; Romero Salinas 2005). These are thought to derived from 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century originals written in *siglo de oro* style poetry, and some still display the characteristic octosyllabic verse using the *romance* form along with rhymed couplets, *redondillas abrazadas*, and *décimas* (Bauman 1996: 306): a description that also applies to the *Baile de la Conquista*.

Many have seen the lack of references to the *Baile de la Conquista* in archival documents as conclusive evidence that it did not exist in the colonial period, but investigation of these documents demonstrates that specific dances are mentioned only when they pose a problem that the church or government wishes to solve through regulation or prohibition. Even the Atanasio Tzul trial transcripts, the earliest known specific reference to the *Baile de la Conquista*, only mention the dance because it had become problematic as part of the evidence for the accusation of sedition. Similarly, the 1772 script for a dance

of the *Moros y Cristianos* genre was only preserved because permission to perform it was denied in 1796 and the script offered in evidence was archived.

This 1772 script bears further commentary. This dance-drama concerns the conversion of Saint Paul, but set within a *Moros y Cristianos* template, with the usual embassies, conflict, and conversion. Yet the study of this text by Echeverría and Maldonado (1983) has some relevance to dating the origin of the *Baile de la Conquista*. These authors (Echeverría and Maldonado 1983: 437–39) argue that this 1772 Conversion of Saint Paul represents an evangelizing play from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, integrating medieval liturgical theatre, Spanish *siglo de oro* comedy, and Spanish dances of Moors and Christians developing since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. They note the *siglo de oro* usage of the *gracejo* who links the spectators to the play by commenting on the action. They (Echeverría and Maldonado 1983: 435, 445) attribute the writing of the Conversion of Saint Paul to a priest and relate it to the encouragement in 1550 by the *oidor* of the Guatemalan *audiencia*, Tomás López, for religious personnel to compose historical romances and songs that narrate biblical stories and/or convey the principles of Christianity. All of these characteristics apply equally to the *Baile de la Conquista*.

In addition, the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century revelation of this archived *Moros y Cristianos* genre manuscript is relevant to the process by which the *Baile de la Conquista* has been dated by Bode and others. There has been a tendency to assume the origin of a dance around the date of the earliest known script. Until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the earliest known Guatemalan scripts of the *Moros y Cristianos* genre were dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Echeverría and Maldonado 1983: 447). Suddenly, the revelation of the 1772 manuscript pushed knowledge of the text back more than a century. This is a cautionary tale that we can never assume the earliest known text reveals the date of origin. Indeed, Echeverría and Maldonado (1983: 449) show that the 1772 manuscript is incomplete and therefore its origin must lie earlier. Perhaps some day a 16<sup>th</sup> century manuscript of the conversion of Saint Paul may be found. By comparison, Aracil Varón (1998) notes that a play on Spanish invasion of Peru dealing with the death of Atahualpa is documented to have been performed as early as 1555, whereas the earliest surviving script is dated 1871. We are reminded that the earliest documentation and text of the 15<sup>th</sup> century *Rabinal Achí* date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. And the same caution applies to the *Baile de la Conquista*. The fact that the earliest *Conquista* text presently known is dated 1872 says nothing about how long before that date it might have originated.

Bode did not accept this limitation, so she tried to imagine how much removed from the original text this Cobán 1872 manuscript might be, and came up with a single generation based on the degree of degradation. Yet, returning to the *Conversión de San Pablo* manuscript, Echeverría and Maldonado (1983: 449) argue that in the parts of the text preserved, there is almost no difference between the 1772 Antigua manuscript and one from Rabinal dated 1888. In fact, they were able to use the 1888 version to restore missing parts of the 1772 text. This consistency over more than a century is another blow to Bode's methodology. It also shows the danger of dating the origin of a dance according to the

language of its script. For example, in the aforementioned chart of dance introductions, In Edmonson (1997: 87) places the Conversion of Saint Paul in the 20<sup>th</sup> century!

Mercedes Díaz Roig (1983: 183–84) has studied a fragment of a dance of the Conquest of Mexico in Spanish poetry that is dated 1692 and which she also finds reason to argue that an original precedes it. Another early conquest play with evangelizing agenda in Spanish, dating to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and influenced by Lope de Vega's work, is the Colloquy of the Last Four Tlaxcalan Kings (Baumann 1987: 144–45). Edmonson's chart, along with comments by other scholars mentioned above, assumes both priority and authenticity for dance texts in Indigenous languages, imposing a model similar to Bode's folk model, and equally contradicted by abundant evidence to the contrary.

In discussions of the early style texts, I noted that several particular aspects of the *Baile de la Conquista* were entirely consistent with theatrical texts of the *siglo de oro* in Spain. The friar who penned this text was likely educated in Spain but he may also have absorbed the current dramatic style from published texts shipped to the Americas and from performances in the colonies as well. For example, Thomas Gage (1928: 17) notes that a play by Lope de Vega was performed on board during the Atlantic crossing in 1624. Elements of *siglo de oro* theatrical scripts that are evident in the early style text for the *Baile de la Conquista* include poetic forms (*décima, copla de arte menor, redondilla abrazada, romance, romancillo*) that also appear in texts for the *pastorela* genre of evangelizing theatre originating in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. *Siglo de oro* content is also evident in narrative structures based on late medieval and renaissance models of "everyman" and heroic tragedy, and characterization of the two *gracejos* as related to the Spanish *simple* and *gracioso*.<sup>12</sup> The form of the Conquest Dance also derives directly from that of the *Moros y Cristianos* genre present in Mesoamerica since the early days of the colony. Adaptations of this genre include not only the two embassies, decisive duel, and culminating baptism but also the inclusion of a *gracejo* at the end of the line for each of the two opposing groups in the small scale texted versions: the logical translation of *siglo de oro* conceits into the dance-drama format of hierarchically ordered opposing forces. In terms of subject matter, the Conquest Dance fits within this half century because it is a proselytizing dance that ends with an encouragement for audience members to undergo baptism, and because it concerns the rehabilitation of Alvarado, as does Bernal Díaz's contemporary text. In comparison, Terraciano (2010) shows that in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Bernardino de Sahagun, also Franciscan, was likewise working to rehabilitate the reputation of Cortés. Another important dating reference is the Huitztitzil Tzunun *título*, dated 1567, which involves the same list of personages (minus the two *gracejos* and members of the royal court), and which likewise foregrounds Tzunun as an early leader to convert and demonstrate allegiance to the empire. These elements do not allow a narrower suggestion of possible dates of origin because they

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<sup>12</sup> The language of the early style text also betrays some early features, such as the humble greeting to the Rey K'iche' (*a tus plantas reales*), the use of the word *bizarro* to mean distinguished, or the reference to *furias infernales*. Also, when Ajitz says "*entre Juanes anda el cuento*" he is likely making reference to the popular 16–17<sup>th</sup> century saying "*entre bobos anda el juego*" (Raúl Álvarez Moreno, personal communication, 2013).

point in slightly different directions. While the content points to a date in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>13</sup> as does the four-act construction,<sup>14</sup> other aspects of the form may point to a slightly later date in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, based on some particular comparisons of the character of the *gracejo* in the *Baile de la Conquista* and the plays of Lope de Vega. Also, the notion of a dream revealing a delusion, as in Rey K'iche's final speech, appears in early 17<sup>th</sup> century plays<sup>15</sup> as well as the culmination of Part Two of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

Another element relevant to dating the origin of the *Baile de la Conquista* is the particular instrumentation of *chirimía* and *tambor*. In his discussion of two dances of Rabinal, Maury Hutcheson (2003: 154–56) notes that the particular instrumentation of a dance is “an important key to the relative age of each *baile*, as one can reconstruct the moment in which the dance was developed or acquired its present form in relation to when the musical instruments employed in it were introduced.” This would be due to assigning the instruments to a new dance that are currently the most popular, both within and outside the church.

Hutcheson demonstrates this point by reviewing instrumentation of various dances according to the chronology of their introduction. He notes that two dances of pre-Hispanic origin use the slit gong or log drum (*q'ojoom*) along with a second instrument. For the Rabinal Achí, the second instrument is a trumpet, formerly of wood but now brass, and for a pre-Hispanic deer dance the second instrument is the cane flute (*pito* or *suu'*). The second stage is the first generation of conversion to Christianity. Hutcheson dates the *Baile de San Jorge* (Dance of Saint George and the Dragon) to this era, a surviving example of the dances composed in this region by Dominican friars beginning in 1537. This dance retains the pre-Hispanic cane flute but substitutes the *tambor* (parade drum) for the log drum. Hutcheson does not mention the *Moros y Cristianos* genre, which shares the same *tambor* and cane flute instrumentation, and which would be an example of a Spanish language dance introduced in the same first generation of proselytizing. Hutcheson's third stage is the late 16<sup>th</sup> century when the introduced *chirimía* is substituted for the cane flute and accompanied by the *tambor*. An example is the Martyrdom of Saint Paul at Rabinal (Hutcheson 2003: 240–41). Hutcheson also notes the introduction of conquest dances in this phase, such as the Zaqi K'oxol. This is also the instrumentation of the *Baile de la Conquista*.

The fourth phase is marked by the introduction of the one-man *marimba sencillo*, brought by African slaves in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and used for revised dances such as *Tz'ul* and *Patzká*. The *Baile de Cortés/Zaqi K'oxol* must have also been revised at this time, since according to Edmonson (1997: 4),

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<sup>13</sup> See also Thompson's (2000) suggestion of a 16<sup>th</sup> century introduction of the dance to Jacaltenango.

<sup>14</sup> Lope employed a four-act construction until 1583, after which he switched to three-act plays (Bruerton 1935: 248).

<sup>15</sup> Raúl Álvarez Moreno, personal communication, 2009.



the K'iche' dancers were accompanied by the log drum and marimba, while the Spaniards were accompanied by the snare drum (*caja*) and trumpet (*clarín*). Though Hutcheson does not mention it, the Deer Dance performed at Momostenango involves the *marimba sencillo* and cane flute. The fifth phase extends probably from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and involves the larger three-man marimba as in the *Baile de los Costeños*, to which are later added saxophones as in the *Baile del Torito* and *Baile de los Mexicanos*. The sixth and present stage involves the enlarged *marimba orquesta* with three man marimba, electric guitar, drum kit and brass instruments, used in the *Convite Típico* and *Disfraces*.

Significantly, instrumentation for important *cofradía* ceremonies also obeys this chronology. *Cofradías* were introduced in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and while Hutcheson reports use of the *tambor* and cane flute for *cofradías* in Rabinal, I have instead seen the *tambor* and *chirimía* used for this purpose in K'iche' communities. There is much further corroborating evidence concerning the popularity of the *chirimía* in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the period I argue for the introduction of the *Baile de la Conquista*.

Despite this chronology, Hutcheson (2003: 147) agrees with Bode that the *Baile de la Conquista* originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It appears that he squares this late date with the use of the early style instrumentation of *tambor* and *chirimía* by arguing that the *Baile de la Conquista* is a later evolution of the *Baile de Cortés*, which was introduced with those instruments (Hutcheson 2003: 68). But, as mentioned previously, the *Baile de Cortés* has virtually nothing in common with the *Baile de la Conquista*, so this does not provide a useful rationale for early instrumentation. Further, Hutcheson is not able to site any dance that is first introduced using instruments from the past that had long gone out of style for popular use.

In conclusion, as there is no secure evidence for an origin date for the *Baile de la Conquista*, suggestion can only be made on the basis of indirect or circumstantial evidence. I have shown that the dates previously most accepted, in the early 16<sup>th</sup> and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, are unsupported due to fabricated evidence or faulty methodology. At present, the weight of the indirect evidence supports a date in the early colonial period, roughly 1570-1620, and so far no evidence has been introduced to contradict this date.