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Ritual Symbols in the K'iche' Tutelary Deity Complex



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Chronology: Contemporary

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Site: Momostenango

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Abstract

The traditionalist (*Costumbrista*) cult of the Patron Saint in Santiago Momostenango in 2006 and 2007 includes the Dance of the Monkeys and the *cofradía* of Santiago. The Santiago/San Felipe dyad is based on an ancient K'iche' model of bipartite rule. The dance team is a medicine society whose members seek to be protected by Santiago and the souls of the dead dancers, and are imbued with the power of the animals they portray as a result of sexual abstinence and an exhausting cycle of vigils and visits to mountain altars. They constantly seek signs, and their acrobatic tricks on a rope are tests of their derived powers. In the *cofradía* the images are feted, danced with, dressed and undressed, and transported to their places of origin in another exhausting round of visits and vigils. Besides the two saints, the main ritual symbols are outdoor altars and their powers called *mundos*, masks, the dance pole, the houses and house

altars where visits take place, as well as offerings, sacred fires, visits, tests, the felling and whipping and erecting of the pole, and the reading of signs.

Resumen

En los años 2006 y 2007, el culto tradicionalista (costumbrista) del santo patrono en el pueblo de Santiago Momostenango incluyó el Baile de los Monos y la cofradía de Santiago. La diada de Santiago/San Felipe tiene mucho que ver con el antiguo modelo de gobierno bipartito de los K'iche'. Los danzantes son parte de una sociedad medicinal y ellos mismos piden la protección de Santiago. Éstos se abstienen del sexo y participan en muchas vigiliyas y visitas a los altares en las montañas. Las almas de los danzantes se convierten en energía de animales. Los danzantes siempre están buscando señales, y sus impresionantes acrobacias con el mecate son las pruebas que muestran sus nuevos poderes derivados. En la cofradía, las imágenes son celebradas, y la gente baila con ellas y también las visten y las desvisten. Después, hay que regresar a los altares en las montañas y participar en otras vigiliyas antes de que transporten las imágenes a sus lugares de origen. Aparte de los dos santos, los meros símbolos rituales son los altares de afuera y sus energías, a las que llaman "mundos", máscaras, el palo de la danza, las casas y los altares de la casa donde ocurren las visitas, y también ofrendas, fuegos sagrados, visitas, pruebas, el pliegue y los azotes, el levantamiento del palo y las interpretaciones de señales.

Location Information

The research reported here relates to a K'iche' speaking Maya community and its culture. The K'iche' speaking people live in the Western Highlands of Guatemala. The research site is the municipality of Santiago Momostenango in the Department of Totonicapan. Momostenango lies on what was the northwestern frontier of the pre-Hispanic K'iche' speaking polity centered on Q'umark'aj at the time of the conquest, and still today marks a frontier with Mam speakers to its north and west. Momostenango is identified by a triangle in the southwestern quadrant of the site location map.



Figure 1: This map of Guatemala shows Momostenango in its lower left quadrant.

Description of the Project

In July and August of 2006, with financial support provided by the Baylor University Research Committee, Garrett Cook and Tom Offit spent about two weeks in Santiago Momostenango during the patron saint's festival, documenting the Monkeys Dance with digital video and photos. While some interviews with dancers and the chief ritualist of the Monkeys Dance were completed, the constant ritual obligations, often accompanied by extensive drinking on the part of the dancers and dance sponsors, made it impossible to complete the interviews needed to develop a full understanding of the cultural context of the dance or to provide native exegesis for the core ritual symbols. A request for funding from FAMSÍ was therefore submitted in the fall of 2006 to

document the Momostecan version of the K'iche' tutelary deity complex. Specifically, the goals were to follow-up the 2006 Monkeys Dance project during a year when the dance would not be performed in order to complete a series of interviews with the dancers and dance sponsors, to record the marimba music associated with the dance, and to expand the field investigations to include documentation of the newly organized private *cofradía* for the patron saint which had taken the place within the Costumbrista (traditionalist) community of the older but now defunct church based *cofradía* for Patron Santiago. We were very pleased when FAMSI funding was approved in December of 2006, and we are grateful to David Freidel, Karl Taube, Allen Christenson and John Fox for providing letters in support of our proposal and to the FAMSI board for approving the grant.

In April of 2007 Garrett Cook, continuing to work with support from the Baylor University Research Committee, visited Momostenango for several days in order to plan the FAMSI supported field work for the summer of 2007. We needed to decide between field work in June at a time when we could conduct interviews without the distractions of the festival, or a return engagement with the festival itself. Field work during the festival was the best way to document the new *cofradía*, but would repeat the difficulties with binge drinking and with very busy schedules, not to mention the constant loud noise in the town center which made recording of interviews difficult. During this visit Cook conducted an interview with Don Paco, the main sponsor (*autor*) and chief ritualist (*chuch kajaw*, *lit. mother/father*) of the monkeys dance, and with one of the dancers, Don Pedro who portrayed a jaguar (*tigre segundo*) in the dance and who assisted Don Paco the *chuch kajaw* as his cantor (*aj bi'x*) during ceremonies. These interviews made it clear that our only hope for interviewing other dancers would be to work during the fiesta, since they were young men with jobs outside of Momostenango, and they would not be in town in June. During this April visit Cook also secured an agreement to participate in the planned work from the marimba player of the monkeys and from the deputy of the *cofradía* of Santiago. With the marimba player interested in the project we recruited two musicology students from Baylor, Robert Moore and Chase Peeler, to record the marimba music and to do a formal analysis of the music for course credit, and arranged to borrow the needed recording equipment.

Cook, Offit, Moore and Peeler arrived in Guatemala on July 5, 2007. We had arranged for a Momostecan friend, Don Emiliano, to transport us from the airport to Antigua, and then to Momos, and to rent us an apartment, and to provide us with transportation and guide services during our work in Momos. Don Emiliano is from the *aldea* of Xequemaya, the home community of most of the monkey dancer performers, and of the deputy of the *cofradía* of Santiago, and is a nephew of Don Venancio, the marimba player for the dance, thus his participation in the project was extremely helpful. Our FAMSI supported work in Momos began on July 8 with an interview with Don Obispo, the deputy for the *cofradía* of Santiago, followed by a visit with Don Obispo to the Ventana Mundo altar to make offerings for the *cofradía* and the pueblo. On July 9 Cook completed the interim report for FAMSI and emailed it from an internet access service in Momos. On July 10 we interviewed Don Venancio the marimba player and arranged for a recording session with him and his cousin Don Esteban the flute player at Venancio's house on July 11. On July 11 we spent the day recording the entire marimba

performance for the deer dance/monkey dance from the two musicians who have performed this music for the past fifty years. We made the traditional cash payments for a musical performance and provided a meal and drinks. Since the dance is no longer performed in its entirety, and the script with the spoken lines of the dance characters has been lost, this became an interesting exercise in salvage ethnomusicology, and in memory ethnography since we also asked Venancio and Esteban to describe the actions in each phase of the performance. Don Venancio's grandfather had introduced the marimba to the community and may have been the first sponsor of the monkeys dance in *aldea* Xequemaya back in about 1900. Venancio also provided a brief and culturally dense explanation of the female connotations of the dance pole and the complex of burning offerings on the fallen tree, and of whipping it.

On July 12 we had a short exploratory interview with Don Paco the sponsor and chief ritualist for the monkeys dance. This was followed by a long interview with Don Paco on July 13. This included a full description of the offering cycle for the dance, a detailed explanation of purposes and powers of the offerings made by the dance priest, and the exegesis of several photos showing the ritual symbols that figure in the dance and its supportive offerings.

On July 16, following arrangements that we had made on July 14, we visited the home of one of the young leaders of resurgent Maya spirituality, and with his help we recorded the shawm (*chirimía*) and drum (*tun*) music associated with the Conquest Dance, an important dance that was the central element in the patron saint's festival throughout the 20th century, and was thoroughly documented in 1976 (Cook 2000: 118-131), but that has not been performed in Momos for the past several years. We again made the appropriate traditional payments to the musicians and secured their permission to record the music. We understood this to be another episode of salvage documentation, though at the time of this writing it appears that the Conquest will be performed again in July of 2008, and we plan to be there to document it.

On July 18 we completed a second interview with Don Obispo, the deputy for the *cofradía* of Santiago. On July 19 we conducted a second interview (the first back in April), with a young man who danced as the second jaguar (*tigre*) in 2006. On July 21 we interviewed another, who had danced as a monkey in 2006 and who was participating this year in the Mexicans Dance. On July 22 we met with Don Mauricio, the *alcalde* for the *cofradía* of Santiago and Don Obispo the deputy. We made a donation to help offset the musical and food expenses of the *cofradía* fiesta, and so, as co-sponsors, were invited to attend the *cofradía* functions and allowed to photograph and video the activities in the *cofradía* house. On July 23 we spent most of the day documenting the festival at the *cofradía* house, ceremonies at a hilltop altar near the *cofradía* house, and the procession from the *cofradía* house to the *hermandad* chapel for Santiago in the town center. We were also able to interview the *alcalde*, Don Mauricio. That night Cook conducted some participant observation and photography in the *hermandad* chapel, and witnessed and photographed the presentation of a pair of boots to the image, but honored the request of the *cofrades* that we not photograph nor witness the midnight ceremony when, behind a blanket screen, the *cofrades* change the clothes of Santiago revealing the image which, except for its face and arms, is ordinarily

hidden by scarves, towels, blankets, and boots. We then spent a couple of days transcribing interview recordings, organizing photos and writing up notes.

On July 27 we completed the third interview with Don Obispo, at the important altar for patron Santiago at the hilltop Paclom altar complex in the center of Momos. On July 28 we conducted another interview with *alcalde* Don Mauricio at the altar table in the *cofradía* house and Offit completed a digital photography study of the altar that morning. In the afternoon we witnessed and documented a formal visit to the house by the members of the *hermandad* for patron Santiago. On Sunday, July 29, we ended the field work by showing some selected sections of the 2006 video of the deer and monkeys dance to the six dancers who were home for the fiesta in a rented salon in Momos. We discussed some of the ritual symbols and the activities depicted in the video with several of the dancers.

In October we received the sad news that the first sponsor and official Maya priest for the monkeys dance, Don Paco Lajpop, had died in an accident or assault on October 13. This created considerable doubt about the future of this dance since its leadership had passed from his father, Don Agostino Lajpop to Don Paco in about 1980, and no one had been fully trained to take his place as dance sponsor or *chuch kajaw*. However, we have learned that there is a plan to continue the dance and Cook and Offit will be visiting Momos in February to document the erection of the practice pole and the first rehearsal of the dance at the new sponsor's house, and will return for a month in July to continue this research. Thus the FAMSI supported work of 2007 is an important installment in an ongoing project.

Upon return from the field in the fall semester of 2007 Cook worked with Moore and Peeler to contextualize their formal analysis of the marimba music from the deer and monkeys dance, and completed transcription of interviews and processing of field notes and photos and videos from the summer work. In December, utilizing the new cultural information produced by the FAMSI supported field work, Cook completed the script to produce a documentary video on the Monkeys from the 2006 field recordings and in February the video was completed with the technical and artistic aid of Scott Myers in the Baylor Digital Media Center. Cook has secured a Baylor research leave to permit work with Offit on a monograph on the cult of the patron saint and how it is being affected by the neoliberal economy in Guatemala, during the fall of 2008. The FAMSI support in 2007 will then continue to bear fruit for the next several years. The remainder of this report combines a brief discussion of the changing cultural context of the tutelary god complex in Momostenango with the ethnographic findings on its ritual and ritual symbols supported by the FAMSI grant to study the tutelary deity complex in 2007.

The Cult of the Patron Saint and its Ritual Symbols

The *cofradías* and their immediate antecedents under Spanish rule, the *parcialidades*, have been central institutions within highland Maya village cultures since the 1600's

(see seminal accounts by Cancian 1967, Carrasco 1961, and Wolf 1959). They derive from pre-Hispanic tutelary deity cults called *chinamits* (Hill and Monaghan 1987, Cook 2000), and have undergone several major social transformations as they have adapted to colonialism, and to 19th and early 20th century neocolonialism, and new modes of production with new social and cultural implications (Chance and Taylor 1985, Rojas Lima 1988, Watanabe 1990). A complex of practices and beliefs that survived, albeit often under transformation (see Gossen 1986), through the 1970's, the ethnographic present for the literature currently extant on Momostenango (Tedlock 1982, Carmack 1995, Cook 2000) is currently undergoing another major round of adaptations within a continuing but embattled highland Maya religious tradition. We seek to document and understand this process in our future work, though it is not our purpose here. Nevertheless, fundamental changes in the social organization and economics of the cult of Santiago are touched on here to the extent necessary to provide a context for the ritual symbols in a living tradition.

The communal rituals in Momostenango in 2006-2007 that constitute the main elements in the local cult of a K'iche'an tutelary deity complex focus on the image of Santiago on horseback and the image of his secretary San Felipe, small carved and painted colonial period wooden images. The communalistic cult institutions (Wallace 1966) that reproduce this cult within the traditionalist faction in Momostenango continue to be *cofradías* and dance teams as they have been for several centuries. An extensive account of the ethno-history and the social organization and the cultural themes embodied in the Momostecan patron saint complex has been published (Cook 2000; see especially chapters 2, 3 and 4). The goal here is to call attention to some of the recent changes in the complex which are suggestive of issues affecting cultural continuity within highland Maya religious tradition that may interest ethnographers, archaeologists and Maya social activists who seek to connect recent or contemporary village cultural traditions with the ancient Maya, but to focus on describing and interpreting the central ritual symbols (Turner 1977) in the team based collective rituals, or communalistic cult institutions (Wallace 1966) centered on the community's tutelary deity, the patron saint Santiago, and so to describe a complex of enduring, if currently threatened, Maya themes, meanings and concerns. This investigation explores two complexes which come together in the annual Momostecan *fiesta patronal*, or *feria* as it is most commonly denominated today, the Monkeys Dance and the *cofradía* of Santiago.

The Tutelary God's Image

Of all the ritual symbols that are manipulated in the rituals of the tutelary deity cult institutions, clearly the paramount objects are the carved wooden statues known as Santiago, and his companion San Felipe, a bipartite complex that represents a poorly understood but seemingly ancient K'iche'an concept of how protective power is manifested at the societal level:

The Santiago and San Felipe pair reflect the Quichean cultural pattern of dualistic authority...This might be a southern Maya pattern. For example, a chest called Ordinance found in San Miguel Acatán... (Siegel 1941) and the San Martín Bundle in Santiago Atitlan (Mendelson 1965) are associated with rain and wind ceremonies, and each is also an element in a dualistic complex (Ordinance-Gaspar, San Martín-Yashper) functioning as a community protector and rain-wind deity. The ancient Quiché combined an image (Tojil) and a sacred bundle (Pizom Gagal) in their corporate iconography, while in the colonial *parcialidades* saints and *titulos*, the latter often stored in chests, came to play these roles. (Cook 2000:87).

A full discussion of the meanings of the images of Santiago and San Felipe in 1970's period Momos is found in Cook 2000(75-98). Within the dyad Santiago is dominant and is referred to as captain, a role symbolized by his brandished sword, while San Felipe, who carries a book (the Bible) is his secretary. Momostecans still make this named distinction, though the claims that like Momostecans, Santiago could not read, nor speak good Spanish, have far less accuracy or relevance today and are not commonly expressed. Still the pair's combination of charismatic power with managerial/secretarial functions is critical here and it seems has been an important way to dichotomize authority during the last few centuries in both religious symbolism and in municipal governance where there is an elected *alcalde* and a professional *sindico* who oversees day to day business. Furthermore, the ancient K'iche' had bipartite ruler-ship of their center at Q'umarkaaj, and of smaller constituent units, with an *aj pop* and *k'alel* presiding over each fortified center or *tinamit* including Chwa Tz'ak the ancestral Momostenango (Carmack 1979: 143-144, Carmack 1995: 29).

Like the *cabawil*, the tutelary god image in the Popol Wuj, Santiago's image (*wachibal*) the colonial carved wooden *santo*, has an associated spirit or *nawal*. Field data from the 1970's showed that this *nawal* sent signs to dancers and *cofrades* through specific events during the ongoing communication of offerings and rituals, and this is still clearly the case today as is evidenced below in discussions of the Monkeys Dance and the *cofradía*. Here is a specific contemporary example provided by Don Mauricio, the *alcalde* of Santiago in 2006 and 2007:

The Patrón has his miracles, and when one says he will go with him he must, because the Patrón exacts justice (or revenge, *juicio*). He is very *delicado*, because one time a man did not observe his day, he fired a *bomba* (percussive sky rocket fired from a mortar) and boom, he was killed, his face here (gesture showing removal of his face). So in our case we observe 40 days for the fiesta, we do not touch women. This is how he is, our Patrón.

There is a story of Pueblo Viejo. At his fiesta there if the *costumbre* is good the spring flows, if not it is dry. If the water does not flow there is danger there. There will be dissension there if the water is not born there in Salpachan. But if they do *costumbre* and the water flows it will be okay.

The *nawal* of Santiago also appeared on the battlefield to lead the Momostecans to victory (Carmack 1995:194, Cook 2000:96), and the *nawal* also appears in dreams,

usually to elicit some service, but sometimes to warn his adherents of dangers or of approaching calamities. Finally like Tojil in the Popol Wuj, Santiago has a celestial association with Venus in its morning star appearances, and combines the war god and protector attributes of a tutelary deity with specific weather and storm attributes. In connection with most of the above, Don Obispo, the deputy of Santiago, relates the following:

The image used to move and to speak to the ancestors who founded our town. It still has power, but now it gives signs to the *chuch kajaw* in his blood and in dreams. My wife was widowed in her seventh year of a *novena* (vow to serve for 9 years) to sponsor the rockets (skyrockets fired at stops during the procession with Santiago). I have helped her for the remaining two years because if not the Patrón would send dire punishment.

QUESTION- Is Santiago the Morning Star? Have you heard of any link between Santiago and the Milky Way?

The old ones said that the great star (*nima chu'mil*) that appears in the morning before the sunrise is Santiago. I do not know about Santiago and the Milky Way. It is said that the Milky Way is a sign of frost. It is also a sign of the time when winds (*aeres*) are dangerous, when hail and wind may destroy the *milpa*.

This account is very interesting in that it indirectly relates the Milky Way to two times that are critical in the Monkeys dance. Its practice sessions begin when the Milky Way runs across the sky from north to south in January, the time of frosts, and the festival for Santiago and the dance performance occurs in July, the greatest time of danger from winds and hail, and the other period during the year when the Milky Way runs from north to south across the center of the sky. In Momostenango in the 1970's, as in Chichicastenango (Bunzel 1952: 58, 268), Santiago was explicitly seen as a *milpa* destroyer and sender of hail storms. Santiago has additional significance as a rain bringer or with-holder. For example if rain is needed his image may be dressed in green, and the image of Santiago leads the procession of saints with San Felipe, San Miguel (the archangel) and San Francisco, founder of the religious order that evangelized Momos, that leave the church to visit parched fields during a drought .

The dressing and undressing of the image during clothing ceremonies with their Mayan and general Native American sacred bundle aspects, and the role of Santiago as a travelling saint and owner of distinctive altar complexes are described and discussed below in the section on the *cofradía* and its ritual symbolism.

The communalistic cult institutions for the patron saint, the *cofradía* and several dance teams, have been the means through which the larger community of Momostecans has delegated its responsibility to sustain and entertain its powerful protector via a system of rotating sponsorships. At the same time, they have provided means for certain individuals with strong needs for personal power and supernatural protection to cement long term dyadic contracts with a miraculous saint, a living object that has accumulated great power in its passage through time and the hands of many generations of powerful ritualists, and also a spirit or *nawal* that is the owner of the town. The festival

sponsoring organization, the *cofradía*, or some alternative institution with the same function, and the dance teams that perform at the festival, are the means for individuals called by sickness, by the need for protection from dangerous enemies or for personal supernatural power and confidence to achieve these goals. The festival is a rite of intensification and renewal for the community, and the service of the *cofrades* and dancers takes the form of a classic rite of passage. In a way that closely parallels the media mediated myth of the mafia, their service, while sometimes dangerous in its own right, makes them into “made men” impervious to the threat of retribution or attacks by their peers . The company in which the symbolism of the rite of passage is most obvious and in which the service is literally most dangerous, with rewards that are commensurably greatest, is the Monkeys Dance. Description and interpretation of this dance in 2006 is followed by a similar treatment of the contemporary *cofradía* of Santiago.

The Monkeys Dance

A description and interpretation of the Monkeys Dance was a key ingredient in Cook’s analysis of axis mundi symbolism and myths of regeneration within 20th century Momostecan culture (Cook 2000 107-118). That account was based entirely on interviews as the Monkeys Dance was not performed during Cook’s residency in Momostenango in 1975 and 76. The opportunity to observe and to document the dance with photos and video in 2006, and to do so with the help and literal blessing of Don Paco, the son of the 1970’s period dance sponsor, who had served as a dancer at that time, and who had participated in one of the interviews with Cook, was then a timely and much anticipated culmination of delayed ethnographic gratification for this FAMSI project’s principal investigator. The new work on the Monkeys Dance in 2006 and 2007 has largely confirmed the description from the 1970’s, but has added considerable richness to the information, including the extensive photographic and video documentation as well as Cook’s and Offit’s opportunities to participate in the offerings and ritual prior to the dance as minor dance sponsors in 2006, and to have many conversations and to conclude several formal interviews with dancers and dance sponsors in 2006 and 2007.

This dance is not for the faint hearted nor for those who are not committed to the endeavor, or as Momostecans put it, "of one heart." The dangerous tests (*pruebas*) on the rope, 70 feet in the air above the plaza, are only accomplished by those with strong faith and with a need to experience and to repeatedly confirm personal power derived from direct contact with the supernatural. This is true today as it was 30 years ago, though many dancers today add their attachment to Momostecan tradition as a reason for dancing, a reason that would not have made sense at a time when for most Momostecans the local tradition was the only accessible option, and though under attack by Catholic Action and a few Protestants was not as yet endangered. The reason to dance then was to please Patrón Santiago thus acquiring his protection, and similarly to please the dead. This is still true.

The team was and is a typical Native American medicine society, the performance complete with clowning, physical ordeals and the search for personal power conferred by spirits to which young men are called by sickness and by dreams, and by a desire for excitement and for supernatural protection as well as by family connections and social pressure. The dancers are initiands of different grades according to their ranks, and the *chuch kajaw* is their master. As in the sun dance of the most famous Plains Indian medicine society the central undertaking is the cutting and raising of an *axis mundi*. While the Crow would count coup on the fallen tree before raising it again as a lodge pole (Lowie 1959:198) the Momostecans run around the fallen tree in rank ordered file thrashing it with their whips. And the medicine bundles that figure prominently in North American societies are duplicated by the bundled costumes of the dancers, each surmounted with its sacred mask, being blessed in the smoke of the fires at the six *mundos* within Momostenango the day before the final two practice sessions lead into the festival itself.

The team is composed of nine members represented by the nine sherds or *tejas* on which copal and candles are burned in ceremonies of cutting and erecting the pole, and during the dances and practices. There are two jaguars (*tigres*), two mountain lions (*leones*), and four monkeys (*monos*, or *c'oy* in *K'iche'*, literally *spider monkeys*), divided into first and second teams with half performing on any given day, and a spiritual guide and protector, the *chuch kajaw* of the dance, a priest shaman of *aj mesa* rank, a rank that is necessary since the offerings are made at powerful and exclusive *mesa* altars, who is also first author. The *chuch kajaw* must be able to hear the animal spirits calling inside C'oy Abaj (Spider Monkey Stone) to perform his duties. There are also a little lion and a little tiger, young boys who participate in costumed clowning on the dance ground, but are not involved in the ordeals or rituals. Still they belong to the team and are likely recruits as monkeys when they reach the age of 16 or so. They are usually the sons of dancers.

Ideally, sponsors and dancers promise a novena, 9 performances, with the dance performed every other year, a commitment to a minimum of 16 years of service, moving from entry as a monkey through service as a lion and jaguar. But some dancers do not promise or do not complete the novena, and each potential dancer decides in any given performance year whether or not to dance that year according to his financial standing, health, social pressure and dreams. The oldest dancer in 2006 was in his middle twenties, so few are completing the ideal novena today, and most men in their twenties and thirties now work outside of Momos and lack the time to participate in all of the preparatory ceremonies and practice sessions.

A commitment to bring out the dance in the following year is made before the patron saint in November by the dance sponsors, and once made is not lightly broken as Santiago is demanding and dangerous (*delicado*). To field a team in a given year the first *autor* needs to recruit in August at the end of a non-dancing fiesta in order to have the new team organized and promised by November. Recruitment is based on trust in the power of the dance priest (*chuch kajaw*), and on family connections and enculturation, thus most dancers come from the aldea of Xequemeya and have had fathers, uncles and brothers who have danced. For example, don Paco, the first *autor*

in 2006, who also served as the *chuch kajaw*, was himself a dancer for many years. His father was first author and dance priest in the 1970's. Don Paco's eldest son is being prepared to take on sponsorship within the next few years, and one of his grown sons about 17 years old dances as a monkey while his youngest son dances as a little lion. Because of the need to practice for two days each month from January through July, and the 36 plus days of *costumbre*, many of which involve trips to altars on distant mountains and require revolving in-turn dancer participation, only those with flexible time can serve as dancers. Thus dancing worked well in a community of farmers and weavers who were largely in control of their own time and were almost always at home. It does not fit as well with the current situation of long periods of work in the capital or even in the U.S. It has been impossible for the marimba player and flautist to recruit and train potential replacements, so there is a good chance that the dance music will die with them. This concerns the musicians and the dance author and dancers who recognize the dance as a special and uniquely Momostecan enterprise, and who personally value the local tradition, but without apprentices the music cannot be passed on and the dance will have to adjust. The complete recording of the dance music made with FAMSI support in 2007 may then turn out to be an invaluable document for Momostecan performers in the future.

The monkeys actually perform a "dance" within a dance, a collection of pranks and clowning skits on the ground and dangerous acrobatic tricks on a rope suspended above the dance ground, performed by a jaguar, a lion and two monkeys on any given day, in the midst of what would otherwise be a typical highland Maya deer dance (for the deer dance see Paret-Limardo, 1963, Mace 1970, Cook 2000: 110-112, Hutcheson 2003:366-498). The deer dance and monkeys components, though officially part of a single dance in Momostecan worldview, are separated here since it is only the jaguars, lions and monkeys who participate directly in the *costumbre* at the mountain altars, and only they who select and cut the dance pole and perform its ceremonies, and only they who are full-fledged participants in a medicine society and its initiatory ordeals. The public performances of the dance team, including the dancing itself, occurs over a two week period from July 21 through August 4 of alternate years, and includes four elements performed in order: The entry, the erection of the dance pole, the dance itself, and the taking down of the pole and closing ceremonies. However, the public performance is embedded in about nine months of offerings and ceremonies, and follows monthly rehearsals for six months, and even during the public dancing phase there are ceremonies at a native altar at dawn, and a private performance at the *cofradía* house. The following description of the performance in 2006 will outline the entire project in chronological order, but will focus for detailed description on the exoteric and esoteric elements that figured in the immediate lead up to the festival and the performances in the plaza during the festival between July 18 and Aug 2, 2006, since Cook and Offit were observers of most of the important events during this period. The principal ritual symbols are described and, where data permit, provided with both native exegesis and cultural context based on the authors' knowledge. This description includes a narrative designed to accompany and explain the Monkeys Dance video, and is therefore keyed to the relevant sections of the video. **The video explication is easily identified below as the material dated between July 18 and July 24, the dates during which we were able to observe and film.** The dance performance

proper continues for the remainder of the fiesta, i.e. until August 3, and is then followed by the closing of the altars and a farewell ceremony.

Announcing the Dance

The dance sponsor visits the image of Santiago on November 2 to announce an intention to dance in the following July. This begins the 9 month and two week period of *costumbre* which continues until the dancing is finished and the dancers' pots and sherds have been delivered to the altar called the water of Santiago on the west side of the Paclom in August of the following year.

Erecting the Practice Pole

On January 22 the dance team cuts down a 50 foot tall pine tree or cedar, and then erects it at the sponsor's house. The technical aspects of the erection process are described below in connection with the dance pole set up in the plaza during the festival. Details of the offerings and ceremonies related to the process of erecting the pole at the sponsor's house are not currently known to the authors, though in general they parallel those of the dance pole erected in town. Cook and Offit will visit Momos in February of 2008 to attend a practice session, and to learn more about this phase of the dance. At the same time that the practice pole is felled and brought to the sponsor's house each of the dancers also acquires the large ceramic sherd on which he will make offerings on several occasions related to erecting the practice pole and then later to felling and erecting the dance pole in the plaza. Once the practice pole is erected it is used for rehearsals once each month from January through June, and then for a final two day dress rehearsal in July. The practice pole is chopped down and chopped into pieces after the session in July, and the pieces are brought into town and used as wedges or shims when the dance pole is erected in front of the church.

Visiting Powerful External Mundos and Saints

Between the announcement of the dance in November of the preceding year and the visit to the 6 mundos within Momos that occurs on July 18 to clear the road before the last two rehearsals and the formal entry of the dancers to town, dancers and their *chuch kajaw* visit mountain altars and miraculous saints that define a K'iche' cosmogram of power centered on Momos. These visits are pilgrimages for the dancers, and require expensive offerings that must be carried to the offering sites during long and physically difficult journeys. These visits also define a topography of powers external to Momos including distant *mundos* and miraculous saints, and also define the borders of the sacred topography of Momos by visiting the four cardinal points. The *mundos* visited on July 18 then continue this process started outside, and involve the penetration of Momos by the team of pilgrims whose personal powers have been awakened and fortified by the visits to the external power centers. The purpose of this *costumbre* is to defend the dancers. For the most part it is voluntary, but visits to the 4 mountains may be required. The *costumbre* occurs according to a complex schedule that links two sets of *visitas*, a Maya calendar set and a Christian calendar set.

Maya Calendar Set

Visits to the mountains are always scheduled on good days in the Maya calendar according to signs read by the *chuch kajaw* of the dance, and take place on days numbered one (*ujunubal*) and 8 (*wajxaquibal*). The mountains are visited in the following order, and for each visit there is mandatory participation for specific dancers. The first four are the mountains at the cardinal points that figure in the Momostecan yearbearer cult visited in the sequence east (Quilaja), south (Tamangu), west (Socop) and north (Pipil). Minas is a cave near Huehuetenango and Santa Maria is the huge volcano that guards the pass to the coast south of Quetzaltenango.

PLACE	DANCER
Quilaja	Tigre (The two jaguars)
Tamangu	León (The two lions)
Socop	Primero Mono (Two of the four monkeys)
Pipil	Segundo Mono (The other two monkeys)
Minas	All Dancers
Volcán de Sta Maria	All Dancers

Offerings are made at each visit by dance sponsors (*autors*) and dancers. The following list would be required for a dance sponsor. A dancer would do this much in some cases where an unusual need for protection or atonement exists, but would ordinarily do less.

OFFERINGS: 18 doz copales, 200 candles (wax/cera de cinco), 300 candles (tallow/cebo de cinco), 2 lbs sugar, 2 lbs chocolate, 2 bunches ocote (resin soaked pine splint fire starters), ½ lb. incense, ½ lb. ajonjolin (sesame seeds), 100 colored candles, and 13 candles de 50.

Christian Calendar Set

On specific dates in the Christian calendar visits are made to miraculous images by all the dancers.

15 de enero 1/15	Esquipulas- Visit Cristo (the black Christ), the cave, Cruz Milagro (the miraculous cross) and Compadre Abaj (A <i>chuch kajaw</i> turned to stone for having sex with his comadre)
28 de enero 2/28	Maria Candelaria (Chiantla)- Visit the Virgin in the church and the altar called Minas Porobal (Mine Burning Place).
1 st Fri lent	Ayutla (tres caidos)- Candles in church, there is no <i>porobal</i> .
2 nd Fri lent	Chajul (another Virgin Candelaria)- Andres (<i>mesa y silla</i>) and Oxlajuj cruz (13 cross) de Jesus Nazareno.

Visiting the Local Mundos: JULY 18 2006

On the road

On July 18, 2006 the *chuch kajaw*, the two tigers and two lions and three of the four monkeys, accompanied by two anthropologists who were being inducted as dance sponsors, left the plaza in Momos at about 4 AM in a light drizzle to make prescribed offerings at 6 altars (referred to as *mundos* or holy worlds) for protection of the dancers and sponsors. The four mountain altars (Puerto Joyam [the door Joyam?] Pasanyep' [At the Sand], K'ak' Ja [Red House], Pa Xetun [At Under the Drum or At Under the Maguey]) paralleled the current road on its east side running north from the high ridge (*cumbre*) between Momos and San Francisco El Alto down into town. We then visited the cemetery east of the town center, and ended up passing through town to the Spider Monkey Rock (C'oy Abaj), an altar located in a fissure in a cliff face above the baths northeast of the town center on the road to Xequemeya. At the beginning between 4 and 4:30 AM on the drive to Puerto Joyam, while the dancers riding in the back of the tarp covered pickup were not aware of the danger, most of the drive on an ascending road with lots of switchbacks from Momos to Puerto Joyam was in a heavy fog, and the pickup had very poor lights and a worn out windshield wiper. To the anthropological observer seated in the pickup cab, and the white knuckled driver with his face pressed to the windshield, this clearly marked the journey as the dangerous passage phase of an ordeal. We arrived at Puerto Joyam, elevation of about 9,000 feet, with about an hour to go before sunrise in a moderate wind and very cold rain. The travelling from altar to altar is itself then a meaningful unit within the ritual structure, that is a ritual symbol in its own right, as part of an initiatory ordeal involving physical danger, privation, and exhaustion.

Sweeping the altar

Every altar is always swept before lighting a fire, and this provides one of the terms used for an altar, a *mesabal* or swept place. The sweeping purifies the altar removing any vestiges of the offerings or attached sentiments, requests or complaints from the ceremonies of previous users of the altar. In the case of Puerto Joyam shown in the video the sweeping was accomplished by breaking off pine branches or leafy branches from bushes near the altar and sweeping briskly in the light of a flashlight and in a cold and steady rain. Invocations do not begin until the altar has been properly swept.

Placing the costumes

Costumes are usually rented from San Cristobal Totonicapan, though a few are now available for rent through the municipal offices in Momos. The masks (and the crowns worn by lions and jaguars) are venerated and are thought to have powers because they have been worn by other dancers and have been blessed at shrines over some time. While older masks would be especially powerful, most older masks have been sold to collectors over the years, and newer ones have a more striking appearance. In any case, when the altar has been cleaned the masks are set atop the bundled costumes and placed on the rocks and potsherds that constitute the altar or on the ground flanking the altar and its fire. There does not seem to be a compulsory pattern for displaying the masks. In 2006 at Joyam a jaguar wearing its crown, a lion with its crown and a monkey were arrayed on each side of the altar. At the second stop, Pa Sanyep' the two lions were arrayed on one side and the two jaguars on the other, while there was a monkey on each side. The pattern does involve establishing two teams of masks, as there are two teams of dancers, and places the masks in position to witness the ceremony.



Figure 2. Dance team with masks and crowns on costume bundles at Pa Sanyep'.

The masks are also displayed on the altar table of the *chuch kajaw* / dance sponsor at his house and offered incense and candles while the marimba plays during a ceremony

called the *cruzada* at midnight, ending the day that the six altars are visited. This ceremony, in which the nine *tejas* of the *chuch kajaw* and eight dancers are also used for offerings around the practice dance pole at the sponsor's house ends the *visita* phase of the rite and marks the transition to the rehearsal phase. The first dress rehearsal using the masks and costumes begins the following day.

Invocations

As soon as the masks have been placed on or around the altar the *chuch kajaw* begins a series of invocations. Invocations in K'iche', occasionally interrupted by Catholic chants and songs, continue throughout the ceremony, but there is a fairly lengthy series that occurs before the fire is lit.

In 2006 the invocations, which are invitations to the named powers to come and be present at the ceremony to accept the offerings, began in the rain and in the dark well before sunrise. First there was a Spanish language introduction, calling on God the father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, followed by Santa Maria. When the video begins another invocation of Jesus is followed by Santiago and San Felipe (the patron saint duo honored in the fiesta), then San Gabriel and San Rafael (angels who have the power to fight devils and the forces of evil) and then by San Manjuona or San Mojona, a "saint" that does not figure in the church and about whom additional research is needed. Then the four sacred mountains (Qilaja (E), Socop (W), Tamancu (S), and Pipil (N)) are invoked, each addressed as *mesa* and *silla* (table and chair), figurative language referring to the altars on the mountains which are likened to tables at which the spirits or *nawals* of the mountains, in this case identified with the yearbearers (Tedlock 1982: 99-102), are seated. After the four mountains another series of *mundos*, powerful mountains or mountain altars are called, with *silla* and *mesa* repeated again in most cases: Rachel (maybe Rochochel, a named hamlet southwest of Momos center)), Puerto Joyam (the location of this ceremony), Belejeb (Nine, currently unknown to the authors), Carcel (Jail, also currently unknown), San Jorge (a shrine center near Lake Atitlan), Telegrama (a place currently unknown to the authors), Ledevisa (again, currently unknown), Maria Tecun (a very important shrine near Los Encuentros), Poja (unknown to us), Xucut (also unknown) and Santa Maria Mundo, Santa Maria Tak'aj (the volcano of Santa Maria as both (mountain)altar and plain, a way of encapsulating the idea of the holy world). The invocation sequence in the video ends with a sense of urgency: placement at the feet of the powers comes now, the mercy comes now, the word comes now, the speech comes now, right now the day, right now the hour, right now the day.

The invocation continued for several more minutes not shown in the video during which time the fire was being laid. The powers called on during this unrecorded phase repeated Santiago, San Gabriel, San Rafael and San Mojona. Then following another formulaic invitation to the day and the hour, emphasis shifts to ancestral figures, the *nantat*, called with increasing urgency as three little crosses of resin soaked pine are laid in a circle of sugar on three crosses drawn with sugar in the fire place. This culminates in a dramatic moment just before the fire is lit with the invocation of the

deceased father of the *chuch kajaw*, Agostin Lajpop Elias, the man who served, until his death, as the preceding *chuch kajaw* of the dance.

The Fire

Still in the darkness of the end of night the fire was started at Puerto Joyam when the *chuch kajaw* lit a single bunch of candles lying amidst the three sugar and *ocote* cresses arrayed within a circle of sugar in the fireplace. This was followed by instructions and discussion about how many dozen *copales* to prepare for the fire. Then, as the video begins, copal is being fed into the small fire marked by another invocation of the day and the hour, followed by our mother/father (*ka nantat*), that is the ancestors, and the *mun*do. During the first few moments of the new fire the theme of ancestors is continued. Now the *chuch kajaw* offers copal, called their sacrifice (*que toba'l*) to the souls of the deceased members of the named patrilineages of dancers (as in *quetoba'l comun Barrera*). The *chuch kajaw* asks for health for the dancers and rest for the deceased ancestors, and continues to invoke ancestral and familial powers. As rattling is heard in the darkness the camera shifts to show several dancers preparing to sweep a trail around the perimeter of the altar.

The fire is of great importance and is the central ritual symbol in the traditional religion, which the Momostecans call burning (*poronel*) when speaking K'iche'. It is the only way to call the powers since the invocations are invitations to a feast and the fire provides sustenance, wax candles and incense for the saints and angels, copal and candy and liquor for the *mundos* and tallow candles for the dead. Beyond this though, it is a medium of communication. Periodically during the invocations specific requests for protection, health, rest or a clear road are made. And there are also crucial transition points, especially at the end of an individual's blessing at the fire. If the fire burns brightly and consumes the offerings this is a sign that the offering is acceptable and all is well. If the fire smokes or sputters, and dies down even when it is stirred, this is a sign that there is a problem with the offering, or the requests that have been made, or, most likely, with the personal purity and commitment of the client. This happened in the case of the first offering made for Cook at Puerto Joyam. The fire nearly died when the damp rosemary sprigs used for purification were tossed in, and would not revive after stirring. This prompted the *chuch kajaw* to demand to know the cause of the problem, but none was obvious. When Offit's ceremony began it flared up and burned with cheerful crackling. Don Paco's response was that we would try again at Pa Sanyep'. Had that fire failed to accept the offering it seems that some major penance and additional *costumbre* would have been needed, or perhaps the project would have collapsed at that point. Fortunately the problem did not recur.



Figure 3. An early phase of the fire at PaSanyep'. Offerings at this point include sugar, three ocote crosses, dozens of copal nodules, chocolate wafers, grains of incense and a single bunch of tallow candles, the tallow indicating that this is the phase of the offering destined for the souls of the dead. Notice that the altar is made of rocks and smashed crockery.

Sweeping the Trail and Activating the Masks

At Joyam the final events to occur before the sunrise are the sweeping of a circular trail around the central ritual precinct, and the donning of masks by the dancers. The latter is not done in any structured way and seems to be entirely according to the volition of the individuals involved. This is the first time that the masks have been worn in this year's ceremony, and as the masks, which have been activated by the offerings and invocations in the liminal period between darkness and dawn are donned by the dancers the dancers enter into the character of the beings they will embody in the dance. Tentatively at first, and then with more confidence and authority they become monkeys, though only briefly. While it is not possible to know what the dancers are feeling they report that if the ceremonies are working they feel the strength or force of the animals when they wear the masks. This is a sign for them and for the *chuch kajaw* that the invocations and offerings and all the *costumbre* of the dance over the past 9 months leading up to this moment have been effective.



Figure 4. At C'oy Abaj a dancer feels the power of the lion.

At Puerto Joyam as the sweeping of the trail concluded it was time to begin blessing the dancers. The sky was now pearl grey and the forest and mist were becoming visible in soft grey light. The rain had stopped but the dawning was cold and dank.

The Circle Run and the Blessing of the Dancers

The dancers are called by *chuch kajaw* don Paco to be blessed one at a time, in rank order, starting with the first jaguar. Each dancer brings a single bunch of wax candles and a packet of 1 dozen copal nodules. The dancer is a penitent asking forgiveness and acceptance, and he kneels. The candles are placed on the dancer's head while the *chuch kajaw* prays for his safety. Then the dancer kisses the candles three times and the *chuch kajaw* feeds them into the fire. The dancer opens his dozen packets of copal, one at a time, handing each to the *chuch kajaw*, who feeds the nodules into the fire. The *chuch kajaw* keeps up a continuous invocation of saints, angels, *mundos* and the dead during the entire proceeding, requesting health and protection for the dancer. When the offerings are completed the dancer crosses himself and leans over to kiss the earth. Then any sponsors who are participating are blessed, following the same pattern, but with many more offerings as noted in the list at the beginning of this account. Then the dancers are called back in rank order for purification. The penitent

kneels again and the *chuch kajaw* sprinkles scented water on a foot long sprig of rosemary and gently whips and then brushes each dancer, beginning with the body and then doing the arms and ending with the legs, brushing away from the body towards the extremities, with a motion like that of a security wand in an airport. The *chuch kajaw* also cleansed himself in this way at Pa Sanyep, before cleansing the dancers.

During the offerings phase of the blessing, while each dancer is making his individual offerings, the team, arrayed in rank order, runs around the altar circling the penitent and his priest nine times in a counter clockwise direction and then nine times clockwise. Sometimes they sprint and sometimes they jog with the pace set by the highest ranking dancer in the group. Occasionally they race and the order of the running is lost for awhile. Two have rattles and two have short braided leather quirts, and so there is a constant rattling and snapping, and the runners also whistle loudly while running. If someone falls it is considered a bad sign, a sign that they have not completed their individual vows to remain sexually pure, or that they have reservations and are of two hearts. The second monkey, who appeared to be the youngest in the group, and who seemed to be a bit less coordinated, fell several times. This would result in some bantering and good natured light whipping with the quirts, and did not really seem to be taken very seriously by anyone. These are high spirited teen-aged boys and young men, and whenever possible they seek fun. There is constant joking and teasing within the group.

The individual blessings and the running took place at Puerto Joyam, Pasanyep, K'ak'Ja and PaXetun. At Pa Xetun it was very difficult because the altar is located on a narrow ridge which is being eaten away by erosion on both sides, leaving dangerous undercut banks with lethal drops of forty or fifty feet. Here the running was slow and very close to the officiants. There were no individual blessings and there was no running in the cemetery. Here the offerings were simply combined as a group affair, and the ceremonies were relatively short. At C'oy abaj running was impossible, but individual dancers each made their offerings again.



Figure 5. At Pa Sanyep', while the first jaguar, kneeling, interrupts his blessing to answer his cell phone, the dancers, led by the second jaguar, begin the second phase of the run, nine clockwise circuits.

Don Paco addressed our questions about the running and whistling with the following remarks:

QUESTION In this photo at Pasanyep' they are running around in a circle. What does this mean?

This means that they are being overcome by the *nawales* of the animals. For this they run, to give strength to their feet, because it is thus RWhiihihi.... And to see one that falls, he needs a whipping because it will be like this whenever (i.e. to fall here means also to fall from the rope). Here one sees when there is failure, one falls there and the failure (will be) sustained. If not (i.e. to prevent this), then we go to arrange the road, yes, then for this it is a sign.

NOW, for this, when they are working, I am calling the spirits, the *nawales*, *los encantos*. And it is all (so) that you (spirits) protect this man who is doing the turn (*dando la vuelta*). Because he is a dancer and a runner (*Bailante y corriende*), so that they... when you come with all your heart, with all your soul... Because some do not come out. There are things, enchantments, so they are not affected at all, and in this ceremony, in this work, in this dance, so that it will

not happen (or be done), so there will be no attacks here in town. This is why we do this running.

QUESTION And when they whistle- is this the sound of a hawk? (In the cemetery a hawk had flown over the dancers and given a piercing whistle. They had all responded in kind and became quite excited by the sign)

For them, the situation is that for them, it is a feeling, well, like, for (or by) an animal because... (long pause with some false starts)... well good.

QUESTION Is it any animal in particular?

This is invisible. Invisible as they are, it is felt by them, though invisible it is not with nothing. They have no fear. This is why we put it, we send it to you, and I know it (the offerings and invocations) has no worth if you are not protected. Now, when I am (there) you are protected, then you feel brave and manly (*macho*), because of the calling (his invocations here rendered as *llamamente*). Because you know very well that here in the earth there are spirits. There are good spirits and bad spirits. For this the good spirits are called. The bad spirits are not called. I can call the bad spirits, but as I do not work with them, thus it is.

Farewell

All of the ceremonies except for the visit to C'oy Abaj ended similarly. The group knelt in a semicircle with the *chuch kajaw* either in the center facing the altar, or anchoring the left wing so that the group was arrayed in rank order to his right. The closing involves singing of Catholic litanies in Spanish and asking for forgiveness. The second jaguar who serves as the cantor or reader (*Aj bi'x*) may read an accompanying text from the missal while the *chuch kajaw* invokes the powers. The fire which is now dying is stirred several times with a stick to be sure that the entire offering is consumed and so accepted by the powers. At the end all participants cross themselves three times and bend over as a group to kiss the earth.

Invoking the Dead at the Cemetery

The ceremony at the cemetery was basically an opening in which the fire was started with invocations, a collective offering and a closing. It only lasted for fifteen minutes. The team had planned to make the offering on the steps in front of the *calvario* chapel, but a new sign had been posted there forbidding burning. The *calvario*, a whitewashed chapel where the dead rest briefly before burial, and where the community of *costumbristas* visit the souls of their deceased family members, is the home of the image of the entombed Christ (called Corpus) that is understood by traditionalists to be the lord of the dead. It is where the souls of the dead are propitiated on the Day of the Dead and on days AJ Pu (Cook 2000, 159-167). The *chuch kajaw* lead the group to the ossuary near the middle of the cemetery, the small building with a domed roof and

single high window that appears in the video. Whenever bones are removed from a tomb to allow for a new burial, or whenever bones are encountered while digging a grave or maintaining the cemetery, they are placed within this structure through the window. Thus it is a good place to encounter and propitiate the common souls of the dead, and can stand in for the *calvario* which has this same function. After the short ceremony at the cemetery the dance team took a break for a late lunch at a *comedor* in the market, a meal that was paid for by the anthropologists. This was followed by a visit to the final altar, a *mundo* called Spider Monkey Stone (C'oy Abaj).



Figure 6. The team flanks the *chuch kajaw* on the burning ground in front of the ossuary

Calling the animal spirits at C'oy Abaj

A fissure with a ledge below it on a cliff face at least 100 feet above the baths located in a deep and wide ravine southeast of the town center is the location of an altar that belongs exclusively to the monkeys dance team. There are stories that a dancer who fasts and prays and cries at this altar and sleeps there for the forty nights will be rewarded by an earth spirit who will invite him into a cave and provide him with a wonderful old fashioned dance costume. There are reports that monkeys are seen here in the years when the dance is to be brought out. The father of don Paco, don Agostino, reported in 1976 that anyone who wishes to be *chuch kajaw* for the monkeys must make an offering here to call the animals, and that he knows that he is acceptable to the *mundo* if he can hear the coyotes howling and yipping inside the rock. As can be seen in the video there is only a narrow ledge in front of the altar and it is just possible

for the entire team to fit on the ledge. Here a collective offering is made, and the *chuch kajaw* calls on the *mundo* to release the animals so that the dancers will have their courage and skill when performing on the rope. As at other altars some of the dancers here wear the masks and crowns for brief periods of time, and some may feel the courage of the animals, so that in the video the first lion dancer, greatly encouraged by the *costumbre*, climbs onto a little promontory of stone above the dance team where he whistles and makes the hand blowing and expansive arm gestures indicating the presence of the fearlessness that comes with the power of the animals.



Figure 7. The dance team on the ledge at C'oy Abaj. Though it is not clear in this picture the ledge drops vertically to a stream bed in the bottom of a ravine about 100 feet below.

The ceremony at C'oy Abaj is followed by the *cruzada* at the author's house at midnight which was described above, a final consecration of the masks and the practice dance pole before the first dress rehearsals take place the following afternoon.

In reflecting on the purpose of these visits to the *mundos*, and responding to our questions, Don Paco provided the following narrative:

QUESTION- Why did we visit the altars as we did, starting at Joyam?

This is to ask protection for the *tigre* (i.e. jaguar), the Joyam. So that we can bring (out) the *nawal* of the *tigres*, no of all the animals there in that mountain. Later we come to ask in Pasanyep' the same for the lion. The same, the same thing, the same ceremony that we do.

QUESTION- So at each we ask protection for all? But for example is Joyam mostly for the jaguar?

It's of the jaguar, to ask the *nawal*, that is the force, because this (animal spirit/force) is going to raise the pole, and is going to climb to the top of the pole. Then it's necessary, for how is the sacrifice to come out, for how it comes out okay, we don't know, there are always envious ones. So then it's necessary, the ceremony to repel (*retirar*) evil spirits. For this it's necessary to watch/guard (*cuidar*) and to ask (for protection), to place candles. There is God of the *mun*do, and those above, for this we need *costumbre*. Thus it is.

QUESTION- The nawal of the jaguar- is it a spirit or a power?

It is a power, it is a spirit, because we go to call the *nawal*, that of the animal: the jaguar, the lion, squirrels, birds. In this (critical) moment (of climbing the pole and doing tests on the rope) (it is the power) that gives you courage, because it is of all the animals of God. It is in this sense that we give (ourselves) the force. Because it is one (of) its powers to arrive (when needed). It is common that there are such necessities. If it is omitted or if it should be that black forces come, then what? Then for this there are necessities for protection for this dance. Accordingly, they placed (all this in our hands), the ancestors, our little grandpa of the beginning times left this knowledge, this was taught, this traditional *costumbre* of this authentic Momostenango. Then we do not yield to the ways of one who does not comply, this one would encounter evil. Then for this we need the protection.

QUESTION- HERE IN THIS PHOTO of Joyam, and in this photo at Pasanyep', the masks and costumes are on the altars...

Exactly. For this we bring them, and for the ceremony we conduct the costumes are brought. And when it comes here (to Momos) it (the mask) will frighten (*van a sustar*) all the people for the road of being an animal, pues. We are human, but for the secret we perform then, poof!

QUESTION- Is it the spirit of the animal?

Yes, it is purely animal (*Puro animal, pues*).

QUESTION- In what part of the ceremony does this happen? Does it happen at C'oy Abaj?

All of it, this ceremony in Puerto Joyam, in Pasanyep, the same work. In K'ak'ja the same work. In Paxetun the same work, in the cemetery the same work, in

C'oyabaj Mundo the same work, and with the Patron the same work, in the *cruzada*, the same work. For this there are tra...or there are always, when, *pues*, there is a *dueño* (an owner, in this case the spirit owner). The jaguar, the lion, the male monkey and female monkey, and in general all the dancers, and this gives all that is needed.

Rehearsal at the Author's House JULY 19 and JULY 20, 2006

Invocations and offerings at the dance pole

The dance pole was cut and erected at the sponsor's house on January 22 of 2005 and the first practice session was then held there, with another each month through June. The seventh and eighth rehearsals are the only dress rehearsals and are held on July 19 and 20th, with one of the two teams practicing on each of the two days. After lunch the costumed dancers from one team of the deer dance and the monkeys dance begin clowning around on the practice dance ground. While this is happening the marimba is set up and tuned and members of the monkeys team that is not dancing fasten the dance rope to the top of the pole and tie a guy line from the pole to a tree or some other fixed object in the opposite direction from the direction in which the rope will be stretched to steady the pole and to be sure that the rope can be pulled tight. A slack rope swings too much and is dangerous and makes it very hard to do the tricks. The nine *tejas* representing the *chuch kajaw* and the dancers were laid in a line from the base of the pole to the anchor during the *cruzada* and candles and copal were placed in each and burned to consecrate the dance ground. Now the *tejas* are moved and arranged in a circle around the base of the dance pole. The *chuch kajaw* and his assistant light offerings on the *tejas* and he invokes the powers and asks for the safety of the dancers. If the weather is clear and the marimba can be played outside he may also dance with a censor as part of this ceremony.

This is a time of light hearted clowning by the costumed dancers with and for a small group of local spectators. The Deer Dance couple called Pedro and Catalina, and the dancers called *segales*, representing Spaniards, chase the monkeys, lion and tiger, trying to whip them and shooting them with their wooden pistols. The Monkeys Dance animals wrestle each other and try to abduct Catalina, and capture eight or ten year old boys from among the spectators, wrestling them to the ground and piling on them, "licking" their faces and tying their shoelaces together. Many dancers are likely to be either drunk or hung over on the first day from the *cruzada* of the night before, and the *chuch kajaw* is likely to be at least mildly inebriated, but drinking continues whenever the dancers are not performing during these two days.

Stretching the rope

When the blessing of the pole is finished the team stretches the rope as tightly as they can by heaving on the end of the rope while a couple of members wrap it around the anchor stake and cinch it there between heaves. When it is as tight as they can make it, it is tied off. During the rehearsal on July 19 the guy line broke during the stretching of the rope, and there was no good way to repair it, so the rehearsal continued with a wobbly pole and slack rope. The performing dancers later complained, and the *chuch kajaw* was blamed for not having performed an adequate ceremony. On the second day with a new guy line the pole and rope were tight and confidence in the *chuch kajaw* was restored.

Ascending the pole

The jaguar performs first, followed by the lion and then by the two monkeys. Each dancer in turn climbs the pole after the preceding dancer has finished the tricks, called tests (*pruebas*) in Spanish. The pole is 12 or 15 meters tall and has ladder rungs nailed to it. This takes a couple of minutes in costume since visibility is very poor through the masks, and since the dancer may periodically feel the force or power of the animal and gesture and rattle and whistle while climbing.



Figure 8. Jaguar and Lion feel the force of the animals and respond with the arm gestures, rattling and whistling.

The Pole Top Signs

When a performer reaches the pole top he is expected to demonstrate the fearlessness of the animal he is portraying. Minimally this means that he will show signs like whistling and arm extension gestures when he reaches the top, and that resting his abdomen on the pole top he will spread his arms and legs so that he is balanced on a point about the size of a teacup fifty feet in the air. Those who have really acquired the power of the animals may kick their legs and wave their arms, or do the whistling, rattling and arm extension gestures while balanced on the pole top. They may also shake the pole violently, demonstrating courage and animal impetuosity.



Figure 9. A lion balances on the pole top, rattles and whistles.

The Tests on the Rope

After performing on the pole top the dancer transitions to the rope. This appears to be one of the more dangerous times, and seems to be done by most dancers slowly and with considerable care, though some performers will shake the rope during the transition, especially if it seems to be slack. This demonstrates their strength and courage and shows the other dancers and the *chuch kajaw* who is straddling the rope where it is anchored on the ground that the rope is loose. If the rope is loose enough a violent shaking or swinging of the rope at the pole top can nearly topple the *chuch kajaw*, who is quite likely somewhat inebriated and will fall easily.



Figure 10. Day 1: Leg hooked spin (*vuelta*) when the rope is dangerously slack.



Figure 11. Day2: Leg hooked spin on a good tight rope.

The tests on the rope usually begin with some leg hooked spins (*vueltas*), first in one direction and then in the other. After sliding down the rope a little ways the performer hangs upside down by his legs while swinging his torso, sometimes violently. Regaining his position atop the rope he slides down a bit and attempts another trick, perhaps hanging under the rope by both hands, or holding the rope under one arm while his body swings free and he makes running motions. The most difficult and dangerous trick, which is not attempted by all, appears to be holding the rope between the legs in an upright straddling position and then releasing the hand hold on the rope and extending the arms in a horizontal position. The best dancers may then regain their hold on the rope and begin spinning rapidly in the straddle position with the rope between their legs.



Figure 12. Straddling the rope with no hands at the first performance in the central plaza.

These tricks are called tests (*pruebas*) because they are interpreted within the dance team mainly as proofs of individual spiritual powers conferred by the 40 days of sexual abstinence beginning on the holy day Espiritu Santo, and by the many offerings and invocations that have been made to repel evil influences and to call up the power of the animals to make the dancers fearless. One dancer made the following brief report which here has been combined from two different interviews:

A pair of dancers (i.e. first and second tigers who dance on alternate days) watch out for each other. When one is on the rope, the other is watching out for him. Both must avoid sex and the behavior of one can affect the other, or even the whole group. There is an obligation to go in turns, because otherwise it is

exhausting, but sometimes, if one is not prepared, it is better not to go. Sometimes there is only one jaguar or one lion, and then you must do it all.... I dropped from the rope one time. Everything was fine and I had completed several tests, but I had misbehaved with a woman during the *costumbre*. I was hanging from the rope and suddenly I relived the scene with the woman. I became frightened and lost my strength and fell. The power of the animals is given by the *costumbre* and we feel it as fearlessness.



Figure 13. A monkey demonstrates the normal rope-top position used for moving down the rope. Note the rattle attached by a loop to his right wrist.

The Landing

As the “animals” near the ground they come within reach of the quirts of the deer dance performers who are dancing and clowning under the rope. At this time Pedro and Catlalina will begin whipping an animal, who may respond defensively by rapid spinning, which drives the tormentors back out of range. Upon reaching the ground the performer hugs the *chuch kajaw* and then rejoins the dancers under the rope. After the last performance the dancers may run around the *chuch kajaw* several times.



Figure 14. Dancers circle the *chuch kajaw* in position on the rope anchor stake at the end of a rehearsal.

Delivering the Flowers JULY 21 2006

The Palacio

The municipal authorities must issue a permit (*acta*) for the dance, and to allow the removal of a tree from the cemetery, and are also relied upon to provide a truck for hauling the pole into the plaza and a team of officials to oversee the removal of the tree from the cemetery and its safe passage through town to the plaza. Today some of the costumes are also rented from the municipality, or more properly speaking, from the mayor who owns them and keeps them in a room in the municipal palace, renting them to the dancers. The contact between the dance team and the municipal authorities though has a ritualized formal aspect to it. On July 21 the dancers in costume march into town from C'oy Abaj where they have performed a dawn ceremony. Accompanied by the marimba they bring a bouquet to the mayor and play the marimba in the municipal palace in the waiting area outside of the mayor's office. The video shows the dance team passing the *Mexicanos* who are dancing in the street in front of the

municipal palace and ascending the stairs to the mayor's office, and then shows the *chuch kajaw* and some other dance sponsors presenting the flowers to the mayor and the first councilman. The staffs of office of the municipal officials are displayed on the desk top between the dance sponsors and the town officials.

The giving of flowers is associated in Momostecan culture with the *cofradías*. Until recently when a new *cofrade* was asked to serve a representative group of the *principales* who had nominated him brought flowers to his house. He was told it was his duty to serve, and that he could be relieved of that duty only if he brought the flowers to someone else who then accepted the duty in his place. While the flowers in this case are being presented by social subordinates to their superiors, they still may carry some of the meaning of a call to service, that is that the town is hereby asked to fulfill its obligation in service to patron Santiago, who is represented in the transaction by his dance team.

Church

A second bouquet is then presented to the priest or to the sacristan as his representative in the church either at the main altar, or to the left of the altar where Santiago and San Felipe are kept. This is again a symbol of subordination in that the dancers are requesting permission to erect a pole on church property and to use the church building as their staging area. They request permission to enter the north tower on the façade to measure its altitude with a rope and to station a crew there while erecting the pole, and to use the tower for ascent while dancing. Though the images of Santiago and San Felipe are the property of the parish, this is of less relevance since it is the *cofradía* and not the dance team that transports the images in procession or changes their clothes.

We were not able to document the events within the church. While we had the permission of the dance team to document their activities we had not secured permission from the priest to film within the church, and several congregants objected to our taking pictures forcing us to desist. We were however able to film the clowning of the dancers on the steps and the church portico outside of the church, and this provides a real feeling for the behavior of these animal impersonators who climb on buildings and vehicles, and who interact somewhat aggressively with spectators. Once the flowers have been delivered there is an hour long deer dance in the plaza in front of the church. It is basically a series of circle and line dances by the costumed dancers without enacting a story. During the dance the old couple and the *segales* wrestle with the monkey dance team and try to whip the animals just as during the rehearsals. Then the team breaks for lunch before going to the cemetery to locate a tree to be used as the dance pole.

Erecting the Pole JULY 21 and 22

Selecting and measuring the tree

After lunch a rope is lowered from the roof of the north façade tower in front of the church and marked with a knot to measure the desired height of the pole. A pole any taller than this height (plus two meters in the ground) is too long to maneuver through a tight corner on the road from the cemetery to the plaza. When speaking Spanish, the dancers invariably talk about the pole, *el palo*, but in K'iche' the word for tree, *che'* is also the word used for pole. The dance team takes the rope and goes to the cemetery in the afternoon. When a tall and straight tree, either a pine or cedar, has been identified the first monkey climbs it with the measuring rope looped around his waist. This is a dangerous and impressive feat without climbing spikes or a belt and loop, and takes about twenty minutes. When a tree of the right height and soundness has been identified and measured the climber remains in the top of the tree and uses the measuring rope to haul up a machete to trim the tree. During the filming branches fell on a turkey coop and the owners used a bucket of grain to encourage the turkeys to roost elsewhere. The coop and some corn plants were damaged, and the *autor* of the dance offered compensation to the family, but they said that as the dancers were acting on behalf of the community and serving Santiago, that they did not desire any compensation. The measuring rope is also used to haul up the thick braided rope (*laso*) used in the dance which is tied firmly near the top of the tree to be used to help fell the tree. The climber descends on this rope. In the film he makes the dancers laugh by doing a few spins on the rope (*vuelatas*) just before he reaches the ground. The first and second jaguars then tie the rope off on the trunk of the tree far enough above the ground to prevent anyone from easily loosening it and using it to climb the tree overnight. The dance team will return in the morning with first light to fell the tree.

Felling the tree

With the first and second jaguars and the monkey who climbed and trimmed the tree manning axes and the dance team and other volunteers on the rope the tree is brought down in the cemetery at about 7 AM. Amazingly, though it drops into an area with numerous graves it is felled so that it does not land directly on any graves and none of the concrete crosses marking the graves are damaged. Clearly the *costumbre* is working. Officials from the town government, carrying their staffs of office with handkerchiefs so that their hands will not directly touch the sacred staffs, and many of them sucking lollipops, arrive and oversee the rolling and turning of the tree trunk in the cemetery, and the removal and replacement of crosses marking graves that are in the way.

Offerings and the Tejas Complex

When the tree has been felled, and trimmed, and rolled and maneuvered until it is out of the actively used part of the cemetery, the *chuch kajaw* and dancers place the nine *tejas* along the tree trunk in rank order, and then when offerings are burning in the *tejas*, with the town officlas looking on, they first walk and then run around the tree trunk, striking the areas between the *tejas* with their whips. It is said that this will ensure that the the *palo* is cooperative during the journey to the plaza.



Figure 15. Offerings are placed along the tree trunk.

Then they walk the tree trunk, stepping over the *tejas*. If a *teja* is bumped and falls, it is a sign that the *costumbre* of the person who is responsible is not as it should be. When the walking of the tree is completed the dancers use tight loops in their quirts to lift the *tejas*, still holding burning wax and incense, and carry them to the tree stump, where they are arranged as an offering to the felled tree.



Figure 16. The offering to the felled tree.

Transporting the pole to the plaza

In moving the trimmed tree trunk from the place where it fell, to the paved road, the team, augmented by an equal number of volunteers, strengthened by marimba music, and overseen by the municipal officials, is directed by the second dance sponsor, Don Pedro. They skid the tree trunk out of the cemetery using rollers and levers as needed to cross uneven ground, often to the 1-2-3 prompts of Don Pedro. His shouted directions became increasingly hoarse, but remained strong all day. The municipal government provides a dump truck to haul the pole for the half mile or so from the cemetery to the plaza. Upon arrival at the plaza the pole is again skidded by manual labor through the market stalls to a cleared area in front of the north façade of the church. Here, the socket in which the butt of the pole is seated had been reopened while most of the team was working in the cemetery. The pole is aligned with the hole and the team and the officials establish a roped off area surrounding the pole and the hole. A crowd begins to gather along the ropes to observe the ceremony of the *tejas* and then the erection of the pole. During this period it is considered to be bad luck if a dog crosses the roped area, and volunteers with whips are stationed in strategic locations to try to discourage canine trespassers. Since there are many dogs, and the

sacred precinct is on their normal thoroughfare between the plaza and the covered market, this is a difficult task. Several dogs manage to cross the sacred precinct in spite of the vigilance of the guards and the ongoing battle of wits and tests of agility help to entertain the crowd during slow times in the proceedings.

The Hole



Figure 17. The pole is aligned with the hole and a work area/sacred precinct is roped off



Figure 18. Don Paco prepares the offering to seat the pole.

In 2006 the offering for the pole was placed in the hole by the *chuch kajaw* of the dance, don Paco. He created a quadripartite field using about 200 copal nodules and then surrounded it with 97 small wax candles and one large candle in the east. In commenting on this photo don Paco said:

The tree (pole) is alive. You know that all things are alive? Then for this reason it must be overcome so that it doesn't offer harm to the dancers. Then when it is thrown down, when it is here in the plaza, we offer the secret of the hole. We put 300 candles, 100 candles (i.e. 200 copal nodules and about 100 candles), more than this will not increase the effect. So then, in the picture there is the center, this is what receives the pole so that it will not strike the church. You see the cross, because it is Quilaja, Tamancu, Socop and Pipil, the four cardinal points.

QUESTION- And the big candle, what is that?

Ah, that is the protection, that it be received, that the pole does not strike the church. This is the center, and it is the king that is the fat one. The invisibles that

are walking, that is this one. There is a commander, as in the nation there is a president, one who commands.



Figure 19. The offering with the large candle on the east, and the quadripartite world of the four mountains indicated by an X of copal, that is, the four directions are read between the lines. This model of the center is designed to center the pole.

Offerings and the Tejas Complex

The placing of offerings on the pole and whipping of the pole that took place in the cemetery is repeated in the plaza. Again each member of the team places his *teja* on the pole and makes an offering of wax candles and copal. Again the whipping and walking and running of the pole have a diagnostic purpose since they will identify anyone whose personal commitment is lagging. They can be whipped by the dance team, counseled and scolded by the *chuch kajaw*, and may make additional offerings to request forgiveness. It is far better to handle this now, then to have someone fall from the rope because of poor spiritual preparation. The first whipping in the cemetery was to domesticate the tree/pole so that it could be carried from the cemetery to the plaza. This second round of offerings and whippings is so that it will allow itself to be erected for the dance.



Figure 20. Whipping the pole in the plaza.



Figure 21. Walking and whipping the pole.

The meaning of the whipping of the pole remains somewhat mysterious. Here are two explanations provided by native experts. The full explanation is hidden somewhere within the full cultural contextualization of these explanations. A partial contextualization is provided here through some notes added in the translations.

From don Paco, *chuch kajaw* and first sponsor of monkeys dance, Momostenango, July 2007:

Whipping is used to overcome the pole, because first when we go to begin to drop it, we go to ask permission of God, the permit, the license, that secret of Jesus that was planted here in the earth (*'tierra'*, not *'mundo'*).

Later, that which gives the permission is the *mundo*, because of our mother, because of the earth. Here the beans come forth, our food, and here we sleep, here we bathe, here the water comes forth, and this is the second. Third, we ask

permission of the invisibles, those who have passed (through life, or away), those who have danced, they are those that made this.

And after all this we ask permission of the tree, "That we are going to fuck (ruin) you (que vamos a joder), that we are going to make your ceremony, and we are going to bring you down. Your time has come. You have been picked to dance for 15 days in the plaza." Thus we secure our permission so that it falls.

To start its road (in the cemetery) - "Now we go, pues", "choc'otea pues." Because the *palo*, well sometimes it doesn't come. What it did one time, it remained enterrado (stuck in soft ground) and didn't want to come. Lots of them don't want to come. We repeated the argument, and we put the whips to it and "pin!" (bingo!) It came.

This is why we need the whip, because there are some who don't comply and it works for this too because it is a necessity. BECAUSE (in a very loud voice with careful diction) WHEN ONE DOES NOT FOLLOW THE COSTUMBRE, THERE ARE THREE BLOWS WITH THE WHIP FROM EVERYONE IN THE COMPANY, BECAUSE THAT ONE HAS FALLEN IN ERROR. SWISSHHH, THREE. And as they are 9 (apparently he also is expected to self flagellate) he has to endure 27 blows of the quirt for not respecting the *costumbre*, this tradition of our town of Momostenango!

QUESTION And this is the same then for the pole?

Basically I have told you, to overcome (it), to bring (it), for this it must be whipped. And for him who does not comply, he also falls in his life, too. Not just that we beat you, its not that the person is struck, it is that they don't comply. Put it this way, there are people who don't respect the *costumbre* of this town. For this the quirt, the need to whip.

From don Venancio, marimba player for the monkeys since 1957, Aldea de Xequemeya, July 2007:

Because this pole, when they strike it, when they walk it, they have only 9 tiles (belejeb xot). Then they are asking (of) you (the pole), as the pole among the monkeys is a little woman (mujercita). They raise you and they raise you and they raise you, and the whip cracks, and they raise you and raise you.

Alright (ba), when the *costumbre* ends, the *chuch kajaw* comes with a good offering in order to bring down the pole. Alright then, he is arranging it.... This is why the pole is lifted, and with his good (offering).

Because it is said the pole is.... Is how would you want to put it? It is disliked (he says *desagrado*, but perhaps he means sacred, *sagrado*, with a misused word?), the pole, for this *cubij tsij le che caslik*, "the pole is alive," it is said. Because for

this we eat, here is the rain, yes, it is a little woman (*mujercita*). Because we are looking when the mist rises, the rain, there comes the mountain. It cries it is said, it gives milk it is said, the tree has milk it is said.

QUESTION Do you mean like breasts?

Exactly! For this the pole is *desagrado*. Because the lady of the house fits it in there, under the comal, for (pat..pat...pat- hands making tortillas), she goes and carries two pieces of firewood and fits them under the comal.... We get up as men, and there is our breakfast. Now, every piece of firewood that comes is a little woman. A *licendiado* there in Toto told us, when we went (to play marimba music) on channel 11. A little pole was brought out there, it was pure woman, yes, and this is why the monkeys beat it. When the people come together and place the *crusabo* (the crossed, lashed poles used as struts to raise the pole), little by little, little by little, they raise it, now it arrived there this pole. (i.e he is using a mix of tenses to describe the raising of the pole that he witnessed in Toto).

QUESTION So- the pole is a woman because it provides us our food?

Yes, the territory of the *mundo*, yes the territory of the *mundo*...

QUESTION But I still don't understand exactly the punishment, when they whip it. In most cases we do not beat our women, right, so why do this to the pole?

By this means they are asking forgiveness, "pardon woman" they tell her, as the pole is thrown down. Then they presently place on it each *teja*. *Perdoname, perdoname, perdoname, perdoname*. Throw this if you can! (i.e. throw off the power of the ceremony if you can). *Perdoname*, if you stop we are going to fuck you up (*Si te paras, nosotros te vamos a judar*). That's good. Raise up, *pues*, raise up, raise up, *pues* raise up. The *costumbre* goes with this. This is the pardon before it, before the *palito*, Little-by-little. Thus, like our mother. At times she is *encomodo* (uncomfortable, or did he mean *enconado*, angry?) "A la gran puta usted, Mama" (Oh, you great whore, Mom!) At that, still we are brought to think. Well, the mothers, little by little after, we (as children) play before them, a *chinear* (to be carried in ones arms) there, and it puts them to smiling. For this they say to it (her), *belejeb xot cabec p'wi*, they say (i.e. nine tejas go to your hair i.e. above you, as it is said to the dead when offerings are made to them in church or cemetery)

These accounts share an emphasis on the personification of the pole and its intractable nature. They reflect a value system within which corporal punishment is seen as an appropriate way to correct wanton behavior, but they also see the importance of positive rewards, the offerings, in eliciting the cooperation of nature. There is an interesting structural inversion in relating the fallen tree with the *tejas* holding burning offerings to the cooking fire, and the feminine associations of wood. That is, in cooking the clay *comal* holds food above the burning wood. Here the clay *teja* holds burning "food" (candles and copal) above the living but now defeated and partially domesticated wood.

Erecting the Pole

After the ceremony of the *tejas* ends at about noon, the rest of the day is devoted to erecting the pole. This is done with the help of a large crew of volunteers with as many as 80 men involved during the peak period when there are four or more active braces under the pole. They use long poles arranged in pairs of graduated lengths. Each pair is lashed together near their tips so that they work as scissors. The first prop is a very sturdy little five foot tall “tee” that is fit under the 65 foot long pole about 20 feet from its tip. Then the lashed scissor poles are fit under the pole, one pair at a time. The leader calls out 1-2-3 and on three the work teams pull the scissors together raising the pole. As the pole is raised the scissors are moved slowly towards the base as the taller ones are fit into place out near the tip. Six such pairs are used, and as the pole is raised the shorter ones are dropped out and chopped into pieces which are used later to shim or wedge the pole in place as it begins to seat itself in the hole. The video shows the process quite clearly, including some of the rope work that is needed to lift the final tall three pairs of scissor poles into place. There is considerable danger since the dance pole could easily tip over to either side as it begins to reach angles above 45 degrees. If it falls it would kill or injure workers below and could crack the concrete pavement. The final moment when the pole stands up and slowly sets itself, leaning gently against the front of the church, is a moment of considerable triumph and demonstrates the power of men, properly prepared with the right attitudes, and the right magic, and guided by tradition and their intelligence, to dominate nature.

Just after the pole base slid into the hole, and while the pole was at an angle of about 45 degrees there was a very heavy downpour, and work was abandoned for an hour. The workers returned and had the pole set up, wedged at the base, and tied to the church at the top, before dark. The following morning, the first combined deer and monkeys dance with *pruebas* on the rope took place. That afternoon the dance team had lunch at the *cofradía* house of Santiago and then escorted Santiago and San Felipe in procession for a couple of miles to the *hermandad* chapel, arriving in the late afternoon. The visit to the *cofradía* house and the procession are described first, followed by a conjoined description of the dance performances documented on July 23 and 24.

Visiting Patron Santiago JULY 23

Dance at the Armita

When the dance team arrived at the *cofradía* house each dancer in turn knelt before the image of Santiago and his companion San Felipe displayed on the altar table in the front room and was blessed by the deputy of the *cofradía*. Then a lunch of rice with chicken and black beans and *tamalitos* was served in a back room. After this the marimba played in the courtyard and each of the deer did a few turns around the courtyard while the other dancers stood in little groups and kept time with their rattles. Unlike street dances there was no clowning in this performance.



Figure 22. A *segal* and two deer prepare to dance in the courtyard.



Figure 23. A dancer from the team that performs on the second day poses at the altar table.

Placing Santiago in the Palanquin

While the marimba played San Felipe was carried from the altar table to the palanquin. Then, accompanied by a waltz played by a band hired for the day Santiago was danced around the courtyard once and then placed in the palanquin. This ceremonious handling of the images was accomplished by the head of the *cofradía* (the *alcalde*) and four assistants, while the deputy oversaw the fastening of the images to the palanquin. The ritual symbols of the *cofradía* were displayed with greater elaboration and were provided with more cultural context during observations and interviews with the *alcalde* and deputy of the *cofradía* in 2007, and are described below.

The Procession

Preceded by the deer and monkey dancers in and out of costume, and the marimba and wooden flute of the monkeys dance and by the *chirimía* and drum of the *cofradía* procession, and flanked by the *alcaldes* of the remaining nine *cofradías* in Momos, Santiago and San Felipe left the *cofradía* house at about 2 o'clock. The procession stopped for one formal visit at a neighbor's house, and then walked down hill into Momos arriving at the *hermandad* chapel at about 4:30. Firecrackers and a *bomba* marked the exit from the *cofradía* house and the arrival at the *hermandad*. A group of 60 or so men, women and children, relatives of the dancers and *cofrades* followed along behind. The procession itself is an important ritual symbol, but within the procession, in addition to the images, the silver pole top emblems of the *cofradías* are powerful and sacred objects by virtue of their depictions of holy beings and by virtue of their having been used in *cofradía* rituals over many generations. Some of the emblems used today are new since the original emblems were stolen from the church in the 1990's. A few however, including, possibly Santa Cruz (a silver crucified Christ) and certainly the silver sun disk of Santiago, are originals and are still highly venerated.



Figure 24. The procession has just emerged from the *cofradía* house. Smoke from the firecrackers is visible in the background.



Figure 25. The procession in 2006 turns the final corner before arriving at the *hermandad* chapel. Note the silver emblem of Santiago in the right foreground, which may be the only surviving colonial period standard in Momos.

Dancing in the Plaza JULY 23 and 24

The Deer Dance

The *chuch kajaw* and the dancers perform *costumbre* every day at sunrise at C'oy Abaj. They arrive in town in costume at about 9 Am and prepare to dance. We observed and documented the dance for its first two complete performances in the plaza. Both days the dancing started at about 10 Am and the rope was stretched across the dance ground at about noon, with the four animal impersonators each taking about 20 minutes to descend. The entire dance would be finished in the early afternoon, well before the afternoon rains began. The Mexicanos, dancing on the other side of the plaza, performed for the entire afternoon, and often danced in the rain.

The deer dance has changed dramatically in recent years. In the 1970's the dance told the story of an old couple, Pedro Botón and his wife Catalina. They had a strained relationship, manifested in arguments, and in a little skit with their dogs, but they controlled the magic for hunting deer. They were commissioned by a group of

Spaniards to hunt the deer, and visited the four corners of the dance ground, concluding a successful hunt. At that time there was a script for the dance, owned by a dance master who taught the characters their lines. **The basics of this older performance are outlined elsewhere (Cook 2000: 110-112), and another version of the overall structure of the Momostecan deer dance, as it was performed in the past, is provided as an appendix to this report with an accompanying sampler of the music, written by Robert Moore and Chase Peeler.** Their study presents a formal analysis of the marimba and flute performance that accompanied the full dance of older times, based on a day long recording session with the elderly musicians who have performed the dance music for the past fifty years.

Today the dance continues to portray the traditional characters, the old couple, a group of Spaniards, two dogs and, at least in theory, four deer, all in expensive rented costumes. However, the dance master died several years ago, and the script has been lost. According to the *chuch kajaw* of the dance the plaza is now so noisy that there would be no point in reciting the lines anyway since nobody would hear them. This is certainly true, as even the marimba music is often drowned out by salsas and other lively Latin music played by professional nationally known bands (eg. The Earthquake Rabbits) in front of the church, literally a yard away from the dance ground, with vocalists, keyboards, horns, guitars and drums amplified over two or four refrigerator sized speakers.



Figure 26. The dance used to have four deer, two male and two female, but in 2006 there were three.



Figure 27. Don Pedro dances. Notice his cane. Two *segales*, Catalina and a dog are in the background.

As it is performed today the dance focuses on the deer who, from time to time, dance up and down and around the dance ground with a graceful skipping, prancing step and lots of turns and bobs and swirls.



Figure 28. A deer prepares to dance diagonally across the dance ground while the marimba plays.

The rest of the time the action, in which the aloof deer take no part, is a conflict pitting the couple and their allies the *segales*, against the jaguar, lion and monkeys, who do not figure as characters in the official deer dance. The animals seek to molest or abduct Catalina and wrestle with the *segales* and Don Pedro, while Pedro, Catalina and the *segales* pursue the animals and whip them with their quirts.



Figure 29. The jaguar and the lion molest Catalina.



Figure 30. "Female" Monkey with rattle.



Figure 31. “Female” monkey with baby on its back.

These animals are no respecters of persons or conventions. They drag children out of the crowd and wrestle them to the ground and tie their shoelaces together. Sometimes they get into real fights with protective parents. On one occasion, caught in the video selection, an angry mother drove them off with a long wooden stave. They make fun of tourists. One may pose for a picture while another gets behind the photographer and trips him or her. They climb on vehicles. In short they do not behave like well socialized humans, a trait that is shared by the animals they portray, but also by other nature personifiers depicted in K'iche' dances, as in the case of the *grasejos* (*tzulab*) dancers halting a *cofradía* procession of Maria Concepción and using their whips to lift her skirts (see Cook 2000 171-182 for the *tzulab*).



Figure 32. Monkey and lion molest a youth dragged from the audience.



Figure 33. As in other K'iche' dances children portray "*chiquito*" versions of some key characters. In this case, as at the rehearsals, sons of the lions and tigers clown as *chiquitos*. Their participation is not considered *delicado*, and they do not have to follow any special rules nor is *costumbre* performed on their behalf as the *costumbre* performed for their fathers should protect the entire family.

Stretching the rope

After Pedro, Catalina and the deer have all had a chance to dance their solos around the dance ground, and there has been some time for clowning, an hour or two into the dance, at about noon, the rope is stretched across the dance ground and anchored on the opposite side of the plaza. The *chuch kajaw* takes his place straddling the rope. Then while the clowning and non-narrative dancing continue below, the jaguar, the lion and the two monkeys each in turn ascends the church tower to the roof of the church, and then begin their tests on the rope.



Figure 34. The rope is anchored in the plaza.

When the rope has been stretched across the plaza, and the animals take turns descending, Pedro and Catalina await them and, as at the practice sessions described above, begin whipping them as soon as they come within reach. The symbolism of the dance pole and the whipping of the pole as explained above pits humans against a recalcitrant and dangerous natural world, and this same symbolism is repeated again in the whipping of the animals.



Figure 35. Catalina whips the jaguar while Don Pedro and an attentive crowd look on.

Here is Don Paco's take on this conflict and the role of the whip in the dance:

Ah, yeah, yeah, this picture (Figure 35) is in the story. Well Pedro Botón is her husband, and the jaguars want to violate Catalina. The jaguar wants to take his woman. But as it is, well, his (i.e. Pedro's) politics is his pistol, and this one is his favorite one to beat. And this is also true of Catalina. It is for this that they give it (the jaguar) shit, these people. This jaguar, this lion, because they molest a lot, this is why they do this. It is like, they want to fuck (*chingar*), it is like their desire is to screw (*joder*), and so this is why it is done this way.

QUESTION Is this just in the story, because, well, do animals wish to have our women?

No, it is not to violate them, but they do want to carry them off to eat them.

This classic culture-versus-nature oppositional structure appears to be the central theme of the dance as it is now produced. The opposition is mediated by *costumbre*, both by the offerings understood as payments to nature deities (*mundos*) and also by the knowledge, the *secretos*, left by the *primeros* that provides their descendants with the power both to control nature (as in raising the pole) and to internalize and use the powers or spirits of the animals to enhance individual courage and personal strength. The opposition, is an active cosmic principal, within K'iche' cosmology. Humans and wild animals remain locked in conflict throughout the performance and there is neither resolution nor a clear winner within its current simplified narrative structure. The possession-like imbuing with animal potency and courage though does free the affected dancers from conventional restraints, and, temporarily, from the power of their enemies and the evil eye, and suggests that the conflict is resolved in them, and for awhile, within the liminal period marked by repeated respectful human visits to the altars and appropriate payments to the *nawals* who own them and dispense their powers.

The Jaguar/El Tigre

The video selection was filmed from the plaza next to the marimba on the second day of the performance. Although this would ordinarily be a fresh dancer, in this case, the first jaguar was unable to dance on the first day, and this is the second day of performing for the second jaguar. The selection in the video shows a beautifully executed spin of the leg-hooked variety. This is an especially impressive performance because of the speed with which it is executed, and this causes the performer's wig to fly outwards making for a very dramatic image. The wig can be a problem as it will sometimes become tangled with the rope forcing the dancer to hang underneath and un-wrap the tangled strands.

The Lion

Filmed on the first day from the balcony of a building next to the church this selection recorded the loud music and announcements that dominated the performance on the first day, and on most days, making it impossible to hear the marimba during much of the performance. This is the environment which would also make it impossible to hear the dance dialogue if the dialogue were still part of the performance. This selection captures another leg-hooked spin, but one which lacks the snap and speed of the jaguar's performance, clearly indicating the expected variability in athleticism and artistry of the performers. The camera pulls back to show the lion suspended forty to fifty feet in the air above the busy plaza with the Paclom hill, the location of the major shrine center of Momos in the background. It provides a good sense of the danger of these performances which occur without safety lines or nets, relying for safety on the skill and confidence of the dancers and the power of the protective *nawals*.

The Monkeys

This video selection shows the second monkey on the second day performing a straddle-sit with no hands, which then goes into a straddle spin which is transformed into a leg-hooked spin and then reversed. This routine would not even be attempted by most of the dancers. This all takes place about five minutes into the routine, and perhaps $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way down the rope, at a height of about 45 feet above the plaza. Don

Pedro and Catalina can be seen on the church roof in the background. The filming is taking place next to the marimba and the marimba and flute music dominate the sound track, but one can also hear the grunting of a jaguar or lion in the background, a soft uh-uh-uhh-uh. The lions and jaguars make two sounds, the whistle and this rather subdued grunting sound. Aside from whistling the monkeys are usually silent, though they rarely grunt as well.

Reaching the Ground

As at the rehearsals the performances are often interrupted near the end when the old couple or the *segales* move in below and begin to whip the animals on the rope. The return to earth, and eventually the return to unmediated human existence, is a return to conflict and to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The tests though are now over, for today, and have been passed, and a relieved jaguar or lion or monkey embraces a relieved *chuch kajaw*, grateful that for a short time of extreme and public vulnerability and danger, the malice and evil power of one's enemies has been forestalled.

The video ends with a still scene of one such embrace, and dedicates the film to the memory of Don Paco, Francisco Javier Lajpop Barrerra (1949-2007), first sponsor and *chuch kajaw* of the dance for many years, *aj mesa* and *aj nawal mesa*, community leader and barber, without whose cooperation and willingness to share the traditions of Momostenango with a wider world the project would have been impossible.

Ending the Dance

The dancing continues every day until August 3. In one interview Don Paco provided a very succinct description of the entire dance, including the ending. Cook and Offit have not witnessed any of the events that transpire after the dance performances are over on August 3, and so rely on this account of the closing.

After we throw it (the pole) down we bring it here (the plaza) and make a ceremony here in the *plazuela*. Then we begin to raise it. After it is raised we celebrate. After the celebration we begin the tests (*a probar*). Then after a total of 15 days we put out all the ceremony (*apogar* as in blowing out a candle) at Pipil (altar on the eastern mountain) and then with Patron Santiago Apostol. And more, when we end this, to close the ceremony, thank God, the *mundo* the invisibles at C'oy Abaj. Secondly we go to give thanks at the *ujuyubal* of Patron Santiago Apostol (his hill top altar at Paclom in the center of town), thankful that we have now lowered the pole. Third we go to the house (i.e. the house of the dance sponsor) to close the *silla*, the *mesa* (to close the *mesa* altar) and to explain (at the *mesa* altar and at the altar table in the sponsor's house) that we have now ended the devotions. Fourth we give thanks at *Uja'l* Santiago (the well of Santiago, where a spring is located on the west base of the Paclom) to return the *tejas* there at El Sacramento (that is at the cistern that captures the spring water), there we go to deliver them. It ends thus after these following days. We do the farewell (*despedida*) and each returns to his house.

THE COFRADÍA OF SANTIAGO

A wachibal cult

The relatively small number of *cofradías* of religious and social or political importance in 20th century highland Maya communities have descended from the cults of the tutelary gods of colonial period multilineage estates called *parcialidades*, and these in turn were colonial period revisions of the decentralized agrarian multilineage estates dominated by elite families that the K'iche' called *chinamits* (Hill and Monaghan 1987). The *parcialidades* were only effectively replaced by the cargo system of rotating festival sponsorship with centralized *cofradías* operating out of a Catholic church and effectively controlled by the church in the 20th century (Chance and Taylor 1985). Yet, even after the *cofradías* were established, field work in Momosteango shows that cults for locally honored miraculous images, known as *wachibales*, continued to be maintained in rural hamlets by private owners of images. While the focus of attention and dynamism in the cult of the saints entered the public sphere with control by the town and church during the first major round of modernization in the early 20th century (Cook 2000: 32-35), a small scale and largely esoteric private sector cult of miraculous images co-existed with it. Within the past few years the church has eliminated all but 9 of the 21 *cofradías* that existed at the middle of the 20th century (see Cook 2000: 35-40).

It appears that those that remain are staffed by one or two *cofrades* appointed by the priest. They collect some donations and sponsor recognition of the saint's day in the church. Most of the images of saints in the church were ignored by the *costumbristas* anyway and only two, Santiago and Niño San Antonio, in the church, and two Cristos from the *calvario*, were of any magico-religious or social importance. Thus the decrease in the number of *cofradías* is not a major issue for the *costumbristas*. However loss of the *cofradía* of Santiago would be a major blow. Today the *hermandad* leaders meet, functioning like the *principales* of old, to identify and nominate and provide social pressure to elicit the cooperation of younger men in assuming the responsibilities of sponsoring and managing Patron Santiago's festival, and the associated ceremonies and offerings, through a private *cofradía* functioning within the larger and increasingly secularized *feria patronal*. For the time being this strategy has forestalled the loss of *costumbre*, and the *cofradía* of Santiago continues to function much as it did thirty years ago. However it only has three official members as opposed to the eight members in the past, and the economic burden on the smaller number of *cofrades* is truly daunting.

The head of the *cofradía*, the *alcalde* and the chief ritualist of the *cofradía*, the *deputado*, today manage a new privatized *cofradía*, similar in some respects to the model in the traditional *wachibal* cults. They are not officially appointed by church or town authorities, and they do not have officially appointed *mortomas* to assist them. Theirs is a very entrepreneurial calling, like that of the big man in the anthropological literature. They convince others to assist them, and take on an onerous personal financial burden in order to comply with the *costumbre*, with the patterns of ceremonies

and offerings and festivals established by the ancients who founded the community, and necessary to assure the continued protection of the town. An important element in the continued research agenda of Cook and Offit is to develop a much richer understanding of how the Santiago cult is adapting to the new global order and the privatized neo-liberal model that now dominates life in Guatemala. This new and still changing, and as yet kind of sketchy, organizational model describes the current context within which the tutelary god cult and its ritual symbols will need to persist if they are to survive. The fiesta at the *cofradia* house and the procession to the *hermandad* chapel were already described above in connection with the monkeys dance in 2006. Additional observations of the *cofradia* festival, and some photos and videos were completed in 2007, but there will be no attempt to present all of this here. What follows below is a quick description of the major complexes and ritual symbols of the cult as we observed them, or as they were described to us, in 2006 and 2007.

A Saint that Travels

Since the little image of Santiago on horseback has always, at least until the very recent past, been claimed by those who controlled Momos, it has also followed that those who control Momos would control the image. Control of the image has been then a ritual symbol of political salience. And it has been a central tenet of local village culture that the village owns the patron saint and the patron saint owns the village. As control has shifted from the Vicentes, whose descendants are the *caciques* (originally chiefs, now families of higher inherited status and wealth) of San Vicente Buenabaj, to the Herreras, *caciques* of Pueblo Viejo, and then to the ladino *caudillo* (19th or early 20th century war lord/political boss) Teodoro Cifuentes and then the *cofradías* under the control of the “modern” bureaucracy of urban “civilized” Mayas and Ladinos that ran Momostenango for most of the 20th century (see Carmack 1995), the physical placement of the image has shifted around, but at each stage in this process a compromise has been reached. That is that though the image is under the control of a new social actor it revisits the places and the descendants of its earlier owners. Thus the travels of this saint reconstruct in a symbolical/mythological dimension the actual political history of the town.

These travels, and control of the image during the travels, continue to be a truly important symbol for *costumbristas*, and one fraught with real political struggles for them, even as the image itself has seemingly lost much importance in real-politick in a very pluralistic community and neo-liberal order. An account from Don Mauricio, the current *alcalde* of Santiago’s *cofradia* helps elucidate the meanings of the saint’s travels for *cofrades* and provides a rationale for his preference for Momos, and so for his belonging there. The first account addresses the trip to Pueblo Viejo, the second the trip to San Vicente.

...there in Ventana Mundo is the altar (*porobal*) for the Patron, for his exit (*salida*), for his way out of town. Now in Chicococh is his altar, a *mesa silla*. There is the one for the Patron, and there is another for other persons, an altar (*awas*) for every sickness that they have (so) they can be saved. There are his altars and they are for the entire pueblo there in Salpachán, for the Patrón, to

request blessings, for one to make their petitions. This is what is done there in Pueblo Viejo.

And from there in the morning after the mass, the next day, November 25-26, there is a procession (of Santiago) with the image of Sta. Catalina because according to the story there was a long time when he lived there, when with the ancestors, with Diego Vicente, the town of Momostenango had its center there. According to the story, Patrón Santiago and San Felipe had their little old house there, but they could not be found there because there was not good *costumbre* there. They came to Momostenango because there was *costumbre* there, Vaqueros (a dance), and I don't know what all else because it was long ago, but they came here to Momos.

Those of Pueblo Viejo came to return him again but as he came back by himself it seemed he should stay in Momos and so they made his *costumbre* in Nimasabal, Alajsabal, Puja'lsabal (shrine complexes) and he stayed here. And for the saints as well, Santa Catarina and Santa Isabel and Sana Ana (patron saints of three of the four wards or barrios of Momos), for the women, so for them he stayed here in Momostenango. So he stayed here in Momos, not Pueblo Viejo, only Sta Catarina stayed there. And so for this reason the people of Pueblo Viejo have fought to have the Patrón, but he stays here for the *costumbre*. For the Maya altars in the mountains he stays here: Masabal, Alajsabal, Ojerisabal, Pujerisabal, Wajchab Mundo and all, right? And Chic'oy Mundo (this is probably C'oyabaj in Momos, but there is a Chic'oy altar near the town of Tactic). Well, and all this with its meaning. And the heart of earth with its four cardinal points- Quilaja, Socop, Pipil, Tamanco, Chumin (?). This is the reasoning of the saint's image (that is the *nawal* or spirit or mind of the image of Santiago), then, these (altars are the reason). Well, thus is the story of the Patrón Santiago Apostol...

QUESTION And how about the trip to San Vicente?

In the old days yes (we made this trip), but not now. Now the people of San Vicente are of Charismatic Renewal (Renovación Carismática). They do not accept the *costumbre*. We have just now entered into an argument with them. At this time when it is time to change the clothes they want to dress him in pants and a black jacket, a plain jacket. It is not indigenous dress (*traje típica*). This got me mad and I told the father in the church that we should never lose our tradition. If they want to change the clothes it must be indigenous costume, and they cannot change the clothes. Only the *alcalde* can change the clothes because for this there is a *costumbre*. Others cannot, there is a *costumbre* the day before. And another thing. They want to bring the Patrón in a car. Before, it was always carried on our shoulders. And now they bring the image in a car and last year they changed the clothes, which is only permitted to the *cofradía*. And they say the clothes do not matter because when the image came to Momos it did not come with clothes, it was just wood. But the tradition here is that we use clothes. Well we dress it in Conquest costumes, all this, like Spaniards. Well

they do not agree and we do not allow them to change the clothes and so this is the story of those of San Vicente. And they have suffered the consequences over the past two or three years. Cars have gone into ravines. They have paid for abandoning the *costumbre* of the patron.

And so now we will enter into the time again, in November, the fiesta of Santa Isabel. Perhaps we will form a group to accompany the image so they cannot change the traditions.

The Mundos Complex

The *nawal* of Santiago and the souls of the deceased *cofrades* who have served him over the centuries are called by invocations and offerings to appear at specific altars dedicated to Santiago's cult. A similar parallel series of altars or *mundos* was presented above in connection with the Monkeys Dance, though in that dance the emphasis is on the *nawals* that are called to imbue the dancers with animal courage in high places, as well as the souls of the dead dancers. Still, the *chuch kajaw* of the monkeys does make offerings on their behalf at both the hill top (*ujuyubal*) and the spring (*uja'l*) altars dedicated to Santiago on the Paclom hill, and at the end of the dance these altars are closed, and the *tejas* used by the dancers are left at the spring altar.

After the image itself the altars are the paramount symbols in the tutelary deity cult. They function rather like pay telephones in that those with the power to read signs are in direct contact with the *nawals* at these locations once the fires have been started and offerings are being burned. At this point it is not clear that all of even the most important altars have been identified, and in fact our interview transcriptions mention several locations about which we lack any detailed information. The identification and location and understanding of the functions of the altars that figure in the communalistic cults and the pilgrimage like visits made by their personnel is an ongoing research project. Here however is a brief account of what is known at this time as a result of the 2006 and 2007 projects.

Altars in Momos

According to Don Obispo, the deputy of Santiago in 2006 and 2007 there are three altars for Santiago located in Momostenango. These are called Paclom, Uja'al and Ventana Mundo. Ventana Mundo (World or Earth Window) is the most exclusive of these, restricted by tradition to use for *cofradía* functions. Don Obispo reports that except for Niño San Antonio which maintains its own altar in Pologua, the important *cofradías* that still exist, Santiago, Corpus, Maria, Capitagua (Cristo Crucificado) and Santa Cruz, all pay respects to Santiago at Ventana Mundo. Ventana Mundo is located at the top of the steep climb out of Momos to the west on the road to Pueblo Viejo near the point where that road forks with the road to Pologua. Santiago came to Momos from Pueblo Viejo, which had been the original local fortified outpost of the Q'umark'aj centered K'iche' polity prior to the conquest, and continues to visit Pueblo Viejo in a procession on this road in November, with a stop at this altar. The deputy of Santiago makes about 70Q (\$10) worth of offerings there on every day numbered 1, 6 or 8 in

sequence of 13 repeating numbers in the Maya 260 day divining calendar, and the *alcalde* makes offerings there every day numbered 9, 11 and 13. Offerings include wax and tallow candles, sugar, copal, incense and tobacco. Don Obispo explains that these ceremonies are for the protection of Momos and the entire world. Although new religions have developed and not everyone is in accord, the offerings are for everybody.



Figure 36. In the afternoon on July 8, 2007, the deputy of Santiago opens the altar at Ventana Mundo by removing rocks and tiles from the northwestern section of the encircling wall.

Less than 1000 feet due south of the portico of the Catholic Church, there is a grouping of altars on the top of a hill called Paclom. Among the altars there, and located on the highest ground in the southern portion of the hilltop there is a prominent raised circular grouping of fireplaces constructed of rocks and pot sherds. This is the *wak chob'* (six teams) altar complex where anyone may burn, which includes a specific altar for Santiago located on its southwestern face. This is the Paclom, the *ujuyubal* (mountain altar) dedicated to Santiago and to all the deceased cofrades and dancers who have served him. Anyone who wishes to petition Santiago may burn here, and anyone who wishes to visit the image would burn here, prior to the visit if possible, for permission. The *wak chob'* altar atop the Paclom is part of a dyadic complex with a water associated counterpart altar (Tedlock 1982: 54, 76, 80 first described hill and water altar complexes) located next to a cistern that collects the water that seeps from a spring at base of the Paclom hill on its west. We lack photos of the Paclom-top complexes from 2006 and 2007 because there were always people making offerings there when we

visited and we know from previous experience that photography there is considered to be a nuisance. The spring side altar has an interesting special feature. It is the depository for the *tejas* used by the monkeys dance team which are left there as part of the closing of its ceremonies, and other residuals from ceremonies honoring the patron, for example unburned wax from candles offered at the *cofradía* house, are later offered there.

Should it be impossible to arrange to make offerings at the *wak chob'* altar dedicated to Santiago at the Paclom however, it is permissible to make an offering at another *wak chob'*. Thus on the day of the fiesta at the *cofradía* house, when offerings are to be made prior to the procession to the *hermandad* chapel, the *alcalde* may not leave to go to the Paclom. On a hill called Xelaj Queka' located just south of the *cofradía* house, and corresponding to its Paclom, there is a *mesa silla* altar complex known as Mundo San Gabriel, that includes a *wak chob'*. Here the *alcalde* offers copal and candles invoking Santiago and San Felipe, and interestingly invoking the souls of Diego Vicente, the original owner of the image of Santiago, and *comun* (in common) Herreras, that is the souls of any and all deceased Herreras who ever performed ritual for Santiago during the Pueblo Viejo sojourn.



Figure 37. The *alcalde* of Santiago makes an offering at the *wak chob'* at San Gabriel Mundo near the *cofradía* house to request a safe procession to the *hermandad* chapel. July 23, 2007.

In the 1970's Cook was told that there was also an altar, or at one time, perhaps prior to the construction of the building there had been an altar, within a room in the municipal building, and that during his fiesta, that the image of Santiago was brought into that room. Don Obispo, the deputy, reports that today the image does not enter the municipal building, and only stops at the doorway, and even that only if the municipal officials are present when the procession is passing by. This further strengthens an impression of the ongoing erosion of the political importance of the image and of the faction that struggles to keep the *cofradía* alive.



Figure 38. On July 18 2007, offerings are made for Santiago on the Uja'l, a burning place on a roadside concrete ledge just below the concrete cistern that captures water from a seep at the western base of Paclom hill. This altar and the cistern are also called Sacramento.

Altars In Pueblo Viejo

We have not visited the altars in Pueblo Viejo, and so we are relying entirely on descriptions from interviews. According to the deputy of Santiago there are three altars in Pueblo Viejo as there are three in Momos. A big difference is that the image of Santiago is not physically brought to the altars on the Paclom, though it does stop at Ventana Mundo when on the road to Pueblo Viejo. It is however brought to visit the three altars in Pueblo Viejo. The *alcalde* of Patron Santiago provided the following somewhat confusing account of the altars and *costumbres* there. It is our intention to seek clarification of this in future work.

QUESTION- How about the trips to Pueblo Viejo or to San Vicente? Are there *porobals* (altars) or ceremonies?

Yes, for example the ceremony on the road to Pueblo Viejo. It goes in November and there is Ventana Mundo. First is Chiquicoch, it stopped there, but nowadays no because they no longer respect the *costumbre* there. Now it just passes through Chiquicoch, but we do make an offering. After Chiquicoch there is Ventana and then there is Chiquich and now one sees Pueblo Viejo. After Chiquich at the Sacramento (that is a spring or cistern) of Pueblo Viejo there is *costumbre*. After the image is brought to the church in Pueblo Viejo, after the *costumbre* in the afternoon at Pa Xoral Mundo, and Pa Ja' Mundo, Salpachán. In Salpachán there in Pueblo Viejo we make this *costumbre*. There is his water,

Uja'l Sacramento, his water in Salpachán, and there throughout all the ceremonies, Herrera, Herrera, Herrera, Herrera, and all of those who have died , we call all their names for the dead that passed on, and that they come by their names are called there in the *porobal* (altar, place of burnt offerings).

QUESTION- Was there someone to act as your guide the first time?

No, because there in Ventana Mundo is the *porobal* for the Patrón, for his exit (*salida*), for his way out of town. Now in Chicococh is his altar, a *mesa silla*. There is the one for the Patrón, and there is another for other persons, an altar (*awas*) for every sickness that they have (so) they can be saved. There are his altars and they are for the entire pueblo there in Salpachán, for the Patrón, to request blessings, for one to make their petitions. This is what is done there in Pueblo Viejo.

Our current understanding then is that on the road from Momostenango to Pueblo Viejo there is a *mesa silla* altar in Chiquicoch, that is an altar at which only priests of *aj mesa* rank may perform offerings, and then the altar at Ventana described above. Then it appears that within Pueblo Viejo proper there is a water of the image called Uja'l Sacramento, which is visited upon arrival. Then after the visit to the church in the afternoon there is another altar referred to as Pa Xoral Mundo. This would make two. Then there appears to be an offering at Pa Ja' Mundo, another uja'l Sacramento, this one in a place called Salpachán, where the Herrera dead, the founders of Pueblo Viejo and keepers of the image of Santiago in earlier times, are invoked. However it is possible that there is an altar at Chiquich just prior to entering Pueblo Viejo, and then visits to two additional altars, an *uja'l* or *sacramento* in Salpachán, which might be visited twice, and an altar, probably the *ujuyubal* called Pa Xoral Mundo. In the 1970's a *cofrade* reported that the main altar for the patron in Pueblo Viejo was behind the church (Cook 2000: 46), but it was not named. It is not currently clear which of the three altars in Don Mauricio's account is associated with the church.

Dancing with the images

Thirty years ago the plaza in front of the church had very few vendors other than some food stands, but there were dance grounds for the Moros, the Vaqueros, the Mexicanos and the Conquista every year, to which the Monkeys was added on alternate years. Each had their own distinctive musical accompaniment, but all the music was acoustic, and though it provided a sort of background noise, one could still plainly distinguish the music of each dance. In 2006 the Monkeys and the the Mexicanos were the only two traditional dances performed on the plaza, though a new *convite* dance in which costumed pairs compete for prizes to an electronically amplified band had been added on the southern edge of the park in front of the municipal building. Additionally two large band stands are now erected in front of the church, and expensive nationally known bands with very big amplifiers pointed towards the church perform every day beginning in mid morning and continuing until eleven at night. Generally there is a crowd, sometimes as large as 100 or more, standing between the band stands and the church portico listening to the music and watching the performers on stage, and as

darkness falls also watching the drunks who dance and occasionally argue and wrestle in a throng of just a few to twenty or more in the cleared area directly in front of the bandstand. The music, all of it, is dedicated to Santiago and San Felipe, and it is sponsored via subscriptions by businesses, associations and families. There are also social dances from time to time in the salon on the eastern side of the park. Then there is the very special and ritualized dancing that occurs at the *cofradía* house.

When Santiago travels in procession he is preceded by a drum and shawm (*chirimía*), and by any dance teams that are performing that year accompanied by their musicians, and followed by a brass band. At the *cofradía* house hired bands playing dance music alternate with the drum and *chirimía* so that there is some music playing almost constantly for the 24 hours of the vigil. For most of this time Santiago and San Felipe remain on the altar table in the front room, while the music is played and guests who wish to dance do so in the inner courtyard.

However, from time to time, under the direction of the *alcalde*, the images are danced with by the *cofrades* and their close relatives and invited guests. The performances that we have witnessed involved marimba music and sometimes saxophones and horns, and was invariably to a quick waltz tempo. Each *santo* was brought from the altar table into the courtyard and danced at least once around the courtyard, with several changes of personnel. San Felipe would be carried by two, but the *alcalde* also danced solo with San Felipe. After San Felipe was returned to the altar table it was Santiago's turn. He was usually carried by three people, one on each side and one in the rear, but was sometimes carried by two with one in front and one in the rear. While most of the bearers were males ranging in age from teenagers to about 60, at least one woman, the fiancée of the *alcalde*, was also invited to participate during performances that we observed.



Figure 39. Don Mauricio dances with San Felipe.



Figure 40. Santiago is danced by *alcalde* Don Mauricio and *deputado* Don Obispo in 2007

The opportunity to dance with a *santo* is a great honor. At the same time, as in so much else, it is *delicado* because it represents an opportunity for a sign (*retal*) to be given. A fall or a near fall or a stumble would mean disfavor and would be a prognosticator of worse things yet to come.

The dancing theme is also now part of the grand entrance of Santiago into the church just after dark on July 31st. After a major procession around town on July 30th there is a procession from the church to the chapel in the cemetery (the *calvario*) sponsored by the *hermandad* on July 31st. As sunset approaches on July 31 the procession prepares to leave the *calvario* and the two images, on a very large and heavy Palanquin with a generator and electric lights, are carried on the shoulders of about 30 bearers, for a final walk through town arriving at the church at about 8PM. The drunks are cleared out of the area in front of the portico, and the imported musical acts take a break. To the strains of a variety of tunes from lively ranchería music to a slow and almost dirge like waltz played by the *hermandad* sponsored brass band that has accompanied the procession and now flanks the entrance to the church, the Palanquin is danced up to the church door and back out into the plaza many times. There is a dramatic build up as long strings of fireworks are prepared and the crowd wonders each time if this will be one in which the church is entered. Finally at about 8:23 the Palanquin is halted on the Portico and set down. While the band continues to play string after string of firecrackers, sometimes with three going at once, bring the sounds of battle and stroboscopic flashes and billowing clouds of sulfurous white smoke gradually from the

distant edge of the plaza to the front door of the church. Then there is silence as the smoke begins to clear and to a simple drum roll the images are returned to their home.

The Saint's House and Altar Tables

The *cofradia* house and the *hermandad* chapel both are used for overnight vigils and visits during the festival. As in the house of any *costumbrista* there is a house altar, a table that displays sacred objects. The *cofradia* house in use in 2006 and 2007 is the actual home of the *alcalde* and so the saints are placed on his house altar, which already displays numerous objects with spirit counterparts (*nawals*) and supernatural power. In the *hermandad* the table is decorated with flowers and just displays the images. The pattern is always for Felipe to stand on the left hand side of Santiago. In both cases the large table is covered with cloths and banners and decorated with flowers, and holds a bowl or pitcher of water since the *nawals* are capable of thirst. There is a cleared space directly in front of the table where a carpet of pine needles establishes a sacred space within which visitors may approach the images, displaying the candles they have brought and touching the candles to the images robes. Then, about five feet back from the table, there is a rectangular area on the floor where candles that have been offered to the images during the visit are burned by kneeling supplicants.



Figure 41. The front room in the *cofradia* house becomes a shrine with Santiago and San Felipe and two images of San Simon all available for visits by the faithful. *Cofrades* who are in charge of the shrine are seated on the right just inside the door to the street.



Figure 42. In the usual pattern for visiting a saint during a *cofradía* vigil candles are burned on the floor in front of the table where the image is displayed. This is an unusual set-up though, in that a series of *nawal* bearing stone objects recovered from *mundos* are arrayed in the first row.

Research on the many objects displayed on the *alcalde*'s altar and the process of converting the altar room into a shrine is ongoing in connection our attempts to document the local *costumbrista* strategies for maintaining and even renewing the traditional syncretized religion.

The Clothes and Bundle Symbolism

Giving Santiago Some New Boots

The *cofradía* of Santiago is responsible for dressing the image and for keeping and caring for all his possessions. Private individuals who wish to seek a special relationship with Santiago offer cloaks, towels, or boots which may be worn during the fiesta. Over the centuries this clothing of the image has proliferated until it fills many boxes and is kept in a secure place. If relatively prosperous private citizens have not come forward it is up to the *cofradía* to provide new feathers for Santiago's crown and a new cloak or brightly colored towels and scarves with which to drape the image. In 2007 a family that is known to the authors decided to give Santiago a new pair of boots. It was their hope that the new boots could be part of his new outfit that he would wear after the vigil in the *hermandad* chapel on July 23. The plan had been cleared with the

alcalde and *deputado* of the *cofradia* and the offering was to be made at about 8 PM. Since only the *alcalde* or the *deputado* may actually clothe or unclothe the image, the offering would require that one of them be present and officiate.

Don Selvín, Doña Alejandrina and their children arrived at the *hermandad* chapel at dusk. They followed the normal procedure of waiting their turn to pass before the images on the table to present their candles, which are gently touched to the images clothing, prior to kneeling and lighting the candles, either on the floor or on the little metal table set in front of the altar table.



Figure 43. In the *hermandad* chapel, a family has waited in line and touched the images with their candle offering. Now they kneel before the altar to light the candles.

The candles are lighted with accompanying invocations. At this point an ordinary visit would end, but in this case the family awaited the return of the *deputado* who had left on an errand. When he returned he knelt with the family before the image and after some invocations he presented the new boots, wrapped in a white cloth, to Santiago, then to each family member touching the head and heart with the covered gift and then allowing it to be kissed.



Figure 44. A family that wishes to offer a pair of boots to Santiago kneels in prayer at the altar while the *deputado*, in the center, invokes the powers and requests acceptance of the gift on their behalf.



Figure 45. The family members in turn kiss the offering, still wrapped in a white cloth.

Finally, the boots were unwrapped and the *deputado* carefully removed the existing boots and placed the new ones on the image's feet. Since the ankles do not bend this is a difficult and *delicado* undertaking, and again represents the real possibility that the

boots will not fit and thus be rejected by the image. Fortunately everything had been done correctly and the offering was accepted.



Figure 46. The boots are accepted.

Keeping and Washing and Changing the Clothes

One measure of the power and prestige of an image is the extent of its wardrobe. The *cofrades* of an important saint face a problem similar to that of a museum administration. The collection gets bigger and bigger and there is no policy for de-accessioning any of it. It belongs to the saint. Here are some excerpts from Don Mauricio's comments about the clothing that belongs to the image.

QUESTION- And when he is given new clothing, what happens to the old clothes?

They are kept in a house and we guard them in a rented house. He (still) has all his clothes. Twice or thrice each year, we change them. We change his towels (colorful beach towels are often used to drape Santiago and his horse) and all of his clothes. For example tomorrow there is one from above in Los Cipreses. They want to give clothes, but not until now, because last year I gave clothes to him. But this year, tomorrow, there are those who will give him clothing (*ropa*), and tomorrow in the house, well first tonight at nine there is a vigil in the house, and tomorrow we go down and I will change his clothing tomorrow, but they have only bought his cape.

Now he who has the old clothing guards it in his wardrobe (*ropero*). .. We just put them there, and there they are. Now all the plumes, here (decorating his altar table) I have some, see. Every year when we remove the plumes I put some here as an adornment. We are also having a discussion about his clothing. Some of it is very old and the older clothing is much better and fancier. It is all kept in chests and guarded. And there it is, all of it...

Before I provided support and did *costumbre* (that is he was serving as *chuch kajaw*) but I never imagined it (that is becoming *alcalde*) would fall on me. I always had faith in the Patrón, and when there came a day in May, May 1st, and they came here and there were a lot. The Sociedad de la Banda- there were two groups of band sponsors- and the *cofradías*, and other gentlemen that came with incense and they spoke to me personally.

“Now in the future we are going to take a double, a double,” they told me. “You are the *Chuch kajaw*, and now you will also be the Patrón Santiago and San Felipe. You will take charge of all this. And here is the key for the *ropa*, and all his things, and do the *costumbre*, and all this, and we are going to deliver his *porobal*”.

So I said, “I am going to think.”

So a year passed and who knew how it would come out? When the year came they returned and called on me.

“Okay, I will go with him, but with all the expenses I want to leave it for another year. I don’t want to do it because it will cost too much. But we will see if I am blessed, maybe. Maybe with a good fight (*lucha*, the struggle for life), but this we cannot know now.”

For example, in the *costumbre* of the patron, it falls in February that ALL of his clothes must be washed at the baths in Pala Grande. The clothes are given to be washed and the dates are arranged, and the *cofradía* and the women go to Pala Grande to wash the clothes. One kneels on the rocks with the capes and all. We do all this in February, and so as I tell you this *costumbre*, year by year it costs. Look, I estimate that year by year I have spent some Q25,000 (\$3,500) and only on *costumbre*, incense (*pom*), candles for the town, well yes. Now the fiesta is even more (because of the additional costs of decorating the house and palanquin, hiring bands and buying large amounts of food).

The Tutelary Deity in the 21st Century

For the practitioners of *costumbre* Santiago and San Felipe are powerful by virtue of centuries of contact with the ancestors, whose souls are invoked and are present whenever the traditions they inaugurated or practiced are re-enacted by the living, and

also because they have in-dwelling spirits or *nawals*, who walked the earth with Jesus in an earlier creation, and who have retired from corporeal presence in the material world, but still have the power to effect human destiny and to control at least some natural forces, and to communicate with the human community through signs and dreams. They require feeding and invocation by humanity. These same powers, as well as the *nawals* or spirits of the days, and of sacred locations, are also accessed at hilltops and springs, at altars made of rocks and broken crockery. The powers visited at these altars, and the altars themselves are designated '*mundos*.' The miraculous saints, and the *mundos*, are direct descendants of the *cabawils* of the ancient K'iche', of their idols carved of stone and wood like Tojil and Awilix, that required feeding and praise from humankind and that protected communities and accompanied them to war and appeared in animate form to their leaders.

Dancers and *cofrades* during the periods of *costumbre* and of sexual abstinence that accompany their ritual obligations, are initiands living in a liminal world. The symbolism of this liminality is a journey which takes the form of the numerous *visitas* in the narratives and photos presented above. This is a symbolism of the heroic journey to the other world from which the successful initiand returns with the boon of a spirit protector if the offering is accepted, and in some cases with enhanced personal power, whether this takes the form of the courage of the animals allowing for daredevil stunts on a tightrope, or the accumulation of power objects with *nawals* on the house altar. In the *cofradía* and the dances, the invocations and offerings made by ritually pure supplicants, and the performances of parties, processions and dances that utilize their time and labor, please the powers and secure their blessings for the community. The dancers and *cofrades* meanwhile secure for themselves very powerful protectors which allow them to carry on in a world which they perceive as a constant battle with enemies who seek their destruction through sorcery and the evil eye. When they speak of life as a struggle (*lucha*) they do not mean this just in the social Darwinist sense that applies so clearly in the neoliberal economy that has replaced peasant farming, but also in the sense that those with whom they compete in the struggle for life would kill them if they could, and without the power that comes from their service of Santiago they would be dead men.

The current cult of the patron saint derives much of its inspiration from the *wachibal* model that successfully maintained small local shrines and a ceremonial cycle, on private property, to meet a public need, throughout the 20th century, without attracting the attention of religious authorities or the government or anthropologists. The 21st century *costumbrista* cult of the saints is clearly embattled in a world that offers many challenges. It begins with a casting off of the outmoded forms of a church centered and government mandated system of corvee labor and mandated sponsorships, and a reduction in scope, but with a renewed focus on traditional mission. Our continuing research will seek to more fully understand the adaptations and intentional strategies hinted at here, and to further elucidate continuity and change in this reconstitution of local indigenous culture.

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[Figure 39](#). Don Mauricio dances with San Felipe.

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[Figure 41](#). The front room in the *cofradía* house becomes a shrine with Santiago and San Felipe and two images of San Simon all available for visits by the faithful. *Cofrades* who are in charge of the shrine are seated on the left just inside the door to the street.

[Figure 42](#). In the usual pattern for visiting a saint during a *cofradía* vigil candles are burned on the floor in front of the table where the image is displayed. This is an unusual set-up though, in that a series of *nawal* bearing stone objects recovered from *mundos* are arrayed in the first row.

[Figure 43](#). In the *hermandad* chapel, a family has waited in line and touched the images with their candle offering. Now they kneel before the altar to light the candles.

[Figure 44](#). A family that wishes to offer a pair of boots to Santiago kneels in prayer at the altar while the *deputado*, in the center, invokes the powers and requests acceptance of the gift on their behalf.

[Figure 45](#). The family members in turn kiss the offering, still wrapped in a white cloth.

[Figure 46](#). The boots are accepted.

[Figure 47](#). The flute is made of a single piece of cane measuring about 13" long. It doesn't look to be perfectly cylindrical; it seems to have an average interior width of about 1 1/4 inches and tapers slightly at the end. It is side blown with six finger holes. The closed end is covered with cloth impregnated with black wax. The flute player inserts a removable ring into the open end of the flute to give it a slightly buzzy timbre.

[Figure 48](#). The marimba is diatonic with one row of 22 keys. The resonators are made out of wood with wax at the bottom tips. The mallets have hard rubber tips of different sizes.

[Figure 49](#). Playing the marimba with two mallets.

APPENDIX 1

The Marimba Music of the Dance of the Deer and the Monkeys in Momostenango, Guatemala

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This document is a compilation of ethnographic information concerning the Deer-Monkeys Dance as it is performed at the festival for Santiago in Santiago Momostenango, in the Department of Totonicapan, Guatemala. The information comes from interviews with the musicians who accompany the Deer-Monkeys Dance—*Don Venancio* the marimba player and *Don Esteban* the flute player—and recordings of the dances themselves (as performed by these musicians) taken on July 8, 2007. This dance-drama was described by the musicians as it had been performed in the past prior to the recent death of the dance master who taught the dance, and the subsequent loss of the dance script. It was a sequence of eleven dances performed in the town plaza by a team of costumed dancers. The first section of this document narrates the story of the Deer-Monkey Dance, and provides an overview of what actions the dancers perform during each individual dance. The second section is a discussion of the music itself, including information about general characteristics of the songs and instruments, and a breakdown of the form and phrase structure for each individual dance. This document ends with both a list of conclusions about the dance music based on the information presented here, and a list of further questions that this information brings up. A sampler containing the first 30 seconds of each song accompanies this report. The complete recordings are currently on file with Garrett Cook at the Baylor Anthropology Department pending archiving in an ethnomusicology collection.

The eleven dances in the Deer-Monkeys dance tell the story of a deer hunt. The human characters are Pedro Botón and his wife Catalina, and four Spaniards (called Segales, possible a corruption of 'seculares'). The animal characters include four deer, and two dogs in the deer dance proper, plus a tiger (*tigre*, actually a jaguar), a lion, and two monkeys. The story begins with Pedro arranging for his hunt; he and Catalina go and ask the mountains to provide them with deer, the lion, the tiger, monkeys, and doves. After he does this, he is approached by four Spaniards who also want to hunt and would like him to arrange it for them. He agrees and tells them that it has already been arranged, and then there is an interlude while the deer have their dances. When the action returns the Spaniards have already left for their hunt, and Pedro and his dogs are hungry and waiting for Catalina to arrive with food. When she does he scolds her for being late, and they have a fight. She gives the dogs his food. He then goes out to hunt and gets his deer. This ends the deer part of the dance, and the monkeys part begins. The monkeys dances involve costumed dancers doing tricks on a long, taut rope with one end attached to the top of a 20-meter high pole, and the other attached to the ground about about 35 meters away so that it slants steeply (a slope of 35-40 degrees). The dancers represent the tiger, lion, and two monkey characters, and they

descend the rope, in that order, one by one, to musical accompaniment. The dance ends when the final monkey has arrived on the ground. What follows is a description of the actions performed by the dancers during each dance based on the interview with Don Venancio and Don Ernesto in 2007. Please note that an alternative Momostecan account, which is mostly in agreement with this one and that may clarify some points, was recorded from the dance ritualist in 1976 (see Cook 2000: 110-112)

The **Esperanza also called La Entrada** is the entrance for all of the dancers. They come in forming a large circle with the Segales (Spaniards) off to one side. They then divide up into two escuadras (lines) with Pedro at the head of the first and Catalina at the head of the second. This may be the point when they used to recite their lines. Other than Pedro and Catalina, it is not clear which characters are in which of the lines. Next, Pedro and Catalina begin to tell how they need to go hunt the deer. At that point or sometime after that, the Segales come and embrace Pedro. The song ends with the dancers still in two lines.

The action is unclear in **Primer Venado** and **Segundo Venado**. There are four deer – two male and two female. The title “Segundo Venado” could be referring to the second male deer, with the female deer being called “embra”. In this case, it seems logical that the first male/female pair would dance in “Primer Venado”, and the second pair would dance in “Segundo Venado”. However, the marimba player describes “Segundo Venado” as being the female deer. It may be, therefore, that the two male deer dance in “Primer Venado” and the two female deer dance in “Segundo Venado”. An alternative would be that the “Primer Venado” and “Segundo Venado” songs just introduce one pair and the other pair lacks its own dance. Maybe a second pair was added at some point to allow more dancers into the action, but they do not have their own songs.

In any case, in “Primer Venado” all the characters take their places- they are still in the escuadras- and then the deer move forward to a place of prominence. The male deer stands on the left of the marimba player and the female on the right. At this point, it appears that all of the characters dance, but the dance seems to be initiated by the deer. When the dance concludes, the deer return to their places in the lines. The action in “Segundo Venado” follows the same form.

Nimamuloj means “the great get-together”. This is a group dance, and all the characters participate.

In **Tata Pedro Botón y Catalina**, Pedro and Catalina move from their lines and dance together. They then each have a solo dance. After the solo dances have finished, Pedro and Catalina return to their places at the heads of the two lines.

The Segales are the primary actors in **Mancuerno**. Our research indicates that the name of this dance comes from the Latin American Spanish name for a plant, *Lepidium Virginicum*, or Virginia Pepperweed (see <http://herb.umd.umich.edu/herb/search.pl>) which has widespread indigenous ethno-medical applications for skin diseases and conditions of the lungs. Why the dance is named after this plant is unclear. In this dance, the four Segales come forward and ask Pedro for permission to hunt the deer.

Pedro knows the ceremonies needed in order to hunt the deer, and they ask him to perform the ceremonies or organize the hunt. After they have spoken with Pedro and requested the hunt, the Segales return to their places.

In **Tata Pedro Sale Solitro**, Pedro comes forward and dances by himself. In **La Catalina Sale Solita**, Catalina comes forward by herself carrying a basket or a dish with two tamalitos or two pieces of bread in it. She dances, but it is not clear whether she dances by herself, with the Segales, or with everyone.

A skit begins after Pedro and Catalina have both danced. Pedro approaches Catalina and begins scolding her. An argument ensues, and eventually the two of them come to an agreement over what they have been arguing about. The two musicians we interviewed are not sure what the argument is about. Pedro then takes the bread from Catalina. Two dogs arrive, one male and one female (named Bonaparte and Atravesada, respectively). The male dog speaks, and then both dogs begin biting Pedro. Pedro asks the male dog to stop biting his leg.

In **Cazada**, Pedro and Catalina go out to hunt the deer and the tigers (jaguars) at the four corners, representing the four mountains. **Cazada** is the last of the deer dances.

The action now shifts to the pole and the rope, and the tiger is the first character to descend. He takes his time and does tricks on his way down, accompanied by the dance music **El Tigre / El Leon**. When he's down, the lion starts his descent. The music is the same, but it is begun again. The dance is played through twice—once for the tiger and once for the lion. After the lion is down, the first monkey takes his turn to the **Mono** dance. When he's down, **Mono** begins again and the second monkey descends the rope. When the second monkey has finished, the Deer-Monkey dance-drama is completed.

This next section describes the music of the dances. First is a list of general musical characteristics, followed by a description of the instruments. This is followed by a set of diagrams that represent the structural forms of the individual dances, including information about the phrase patterns, phrase lengths, cadences, meter, tempo, and bass line. The phrases (or sub-phrase melodic units, depending on the dance) are represented in the order that they are played as consecutive letters (A, B, C, and so on). There is a break in each diagram before the opening phrase unit is repeated, and this separates the song into statements (the exception to this is *Tata Pedro y Catalina*, where it is more clear to separate each phrase group). The number of measures in each phrase, whether or not the phrase cadences, how the phrase cadences, and the overall length of the dance are indicated underneath the phrase diagram. Then the patterns within the form of the particular dance are discussed and any unconventional notation is defined. The last line of this section defines the meter, tempo, and the number of mallets used in the bass line of the song. Using the information found on the form diagrams we have written both a list of conclusions about the dance music, and a list of further questions that this information brings up.

General characteristics of the music:

Every dance is played by two musicians: a marimba player and a flute player.

The flute mirrors (for the most part) the melody played in the right hand of the marimba. The marimba player plays melody in the right hand and harmony in the left hand. The left hand also serves as a rhythmic base for the song, keeping a constant eighth-note pulse with little or no intentional deviation through most of the songs. The chordal harmony in the left hand is sometimes arpeggiated using only one mallet; at other times two mallets are used to play block chords.

Right hand melodic rhythms consist mostly of eighth, quarter, and multi-measure sustained notes. There are dotted eighth-to-sixteenth rhythms, and eighth-to-two-sixteenths rhythms, but there are never more than two sixteenth notes in a row.

Melodic figures always stay within the harmony outlined by the left hand of the marimba.

The flute has a limited range of less than an octave. When the marimba plays outside the range of the flute, the flute player sustains his highest or lowest note until the marimba is back within his range and he can once again mirror the melody.

Both instruments are diatonic, and every dance is played in C major. There is no modal playing.

The flute player always stands to the right of the marimba player.

Descriptions of the instruments:



Figure 47. The flute is made of a single piece of cane measuring about 13" long. It doesn't look to be perfectly cylindrical; it seems to have an average interior width of about 1 1/4 inches and tapers slightly at the end. It is side blown with six finger holes. The closed end is covered with cloth impregnated with black wax. The flute player inserts a removable ring into the open end of the flute to give it a slightly buzzy timbre.



Figure 48. The marimba is diatonic with one row of 22 keys. The resonators are made out of wood with wax at the bottom tips. The mallets have hard rubber tips of different sizes.



Figure 49. Playing the marimba with two mallets.



[Entrada](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

AABBCC AADCC AADCC AABBCC AADCC AADCC AABBCC AABBCC
AADCC AABBCC AABBCC AABBCC AADCC AADCC AADC Coda

A= 12 measures, cadence on tonic (sol do), sustained note phrase

B= 6 measures, cadence on tonic (re do)

C= 9 measures, cadence on tonic (sol do)

D= 6 measures, no cadence

10:37

A is the most recognizable phrase; it constitutes the high point; it is always repeated; AA appears 15 times.

The A cadence is the same as the C cadence (sol do); C is always repeated (except at the end), and CC always ends the section.

Phrases are always stated exactly with no intentional variation.

Formal variation appears in the selection of whether to play BB or D after each AA phrase group. There appears to be no definite pattern in this recording.

The coda repeats the final chord of the cadence a few times, slowing down the rhythm, then arpeggiates the chord, then repeats the chord a few more times fading out in volume.

This song is in compound time, stately sounding, moderately fast tempo, with a one mallet bass line.



[Primer Venado](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

AB AABCC AABCC AAD**B**CC AAD**B**CC AAB**B**CC AADBCC AADBCC
AADBCC AABCC AADBCC Coda

A=8 mm., no cadence, sustained note

B=10-13 mm., cadence on tonic (mi re do), sustained note

C=13 mm. cadence on tonic (mi re do), sustained note

D=6 mm. no cadence

10:33

A is the most recognizable phrase; it constitutes the high point; it is always repeated EXCEPT on the first statement; A does not cadence.

The B cadence is the same as the C cadence; mi re do (different from the Entrada cadence); B is repeated from the 3rd statement to the last statement, but single in the first 2 statements; B can be between 10-13 measures depending on how long the last note of the cadence is held.

C is always preceded by B; C is always repeated; A always follows C.

D is never repeated; D only appears between A and B; D doesn't appear in every statement; the marimba bass pattern changes for D; D does not cadence.

B begins the same as B, but has a slight variation in the marimba bass pattern during the cadence

The beginning looks like a building effort: It starts with AB, then adds more phrases during each of the next three statements.

The coda is similar to the Entrada coda, but it does not follow functionally from its preceding section

This song is in compound time, moderately fast, with a one mallet bass line. The bass line leaves out a few beats at **B**.



[Segundo Venado](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

AABCC AAAB**B**CC AAAB**B**CC AAAB**B**CCC AAB**B**CC AAB**B**CC AAABCC
 AAAB**B**CC AAB**B**CC AAB**B**CC AAB**B**CCC AAB**B**CC AAB**B**CC**Coda**

A=13-14 measures (depending on transition), cadence on tonic (mi re do)

B=9 measures, sustained note

C=8 measures, sustained note

C=8 measures, cadence on tonic (sol do), sustained note

B=9-10 measures, cadence on tonic (sol do), sustained note

12:39

A isn't necessarily most prominent phrase—both A and B contain high points. A always appears at least twice in a row, sometimes three. A is always followed by some kind of B. A always cadences.

B is always between A and C. B and **B** start the same, but B does not cadence—**B** does. B can either follow A or **B**, but never C. **B** never precedes C. Whenever **B** appears, B always follows. B sounds very similar to the A of Primer Venado.

C always follows B. C does not cadence—**C** does. C may be stated once or twice, followed by **C** which is only stated once. **C** always precedes A.

The Coda is only a lengthening of **C**. It follows the same pattern as the first two dances.

The only variation in the pattern of this dance occurs in the repetitions of B and C, and whether or not they cadence. There is no “optional” D material that appears in one set but not another.

This song is in compound time with a one mallet bass line, moderate tempo, more relaxed feel.



[Nimamuloj](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

ABcBcBdd ABcBcBdd ABcBcBdd ABcBcBcBdd ABcBcBdd ABcBcBdd
 ABcBcBdd ABcBcBcBdd ABcBcBcBdd ABcBcBcBe ABcBcBdd ABcBcBcBcBe
 ABcBcBcBcBdd ABcBcBcBdd ABcBcBcBdd ABcBcBdd ABcBcBdd ABcBcBcBdd
 ABcBcBcBcBdd ABcBcBcBdd ABcBcBc Coda

A= 7 mm., no cadence

Bc= 6 mm., sustained note, cadence on tonic (re do), then half cadence

Bdd= 8 mm., sustained note, cadence on tonic (mi re do)

Be= 5 ½ mm., no cadence
14:09

The phrase structure of this dance isn't as clear as that of the other dances. I separated the sections according to repeated melodic material rather than cadence.

A contains the high point of each section, but it's not repeated within a section. It transitions directly to B without a clear cadence.

B is defined by the sustained note that begins each statement. It has three possible endings. The c ending is a descent to a cadence, and then that cadence stated again lower in a sequence. This ending is always followed by B. The d ending is a rising melodic figure that is always repeated, and the repetition is always followed by A. The e ending is a short burst of high notes, never immediately repeated, and always followed by A.

The Coda is different from the previous three codas; it arpeggiates a triad up to the fifth, then follows the scale back down to tonic. Tonic is then repeated and fades out.

This piece takes a much different form from the previous three. Taken as sets, the A material takes the form of introductory material, and B is the main motive of the dance. This B has three possible endings: a continuous ending which goes back to B, and two terminal endings which lead back to A. This is unique; the other dances have much clearer phrases, and those phrases are much more distinct from one another. There are two ways of set variation in this dance: how many times to repeat B, and whether to terminally end B with d or e. This is the first dance with a different Coda.

It is in simple time with a two mallet bass line and moderate tempo.



[Tata Pedro Boton y Catalina](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

AA -B1-B1 CC B2-B3 CC B3-B1 CC AA -B3-B2 CC B3-B1 CC AA -
B3-B2 CCC AA -B4-B2 CCC AA -B4-B3 CCC AA -B4-B3 CCCC B3-B1
CC B3-B1 CC AA -B4-B4 CC Coda

A= 4 mm. cadence on tonic (la ti do)

B1= 6 mm. cadence on tonic (mi re do), sustained note

B2= cadence on tonic (do ti do), sustained

B3= cadence on tonic (re ti do), sustained

B4= cadence on tonic (re do ti do), sustained

C= 6 mm. cadence on tonic (re ti do)

8:57

A begins the song, but has the least repetitions. A is always immediately repeated, and is always followed by B. After the beginning, A is always preceded by C. A is never stated more than twice in a row.

B is the sustained note phrase in this dance. B can follow A or C, and it is always followed by C. B can either have an intro (-B) or no intro (B). There are four different cadences that can follow B: B1, B2, B3, and B4.

C is the phrase with the most statements in this song. It is the most prominent phrase. It is always preceded by B, and can be followed by either B or A. C is always immediately repeated at least once, and can be stated as many as 4 times in this song. The coda is an extension of the final C cadence, and follows the pattern of the Nimamuloj cadence.

This song is unique in that it is the first one to repeat previously heard B and C phrases before the next statement of the A phrase. All others follow a more strictly ordered pattern. Also, this is the first song in which every phrase cadences. This adds a sense of continuity to the dance.

It is in simple time, moderate tempo, with a two mallet bass line.



[Mancuerno](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

c AABcBc AAcBc AAAc AAcBc AAAcBc AAAcBc AAAcBc A Coda

A= 16 mm. cadences on tonic (sol do)

C= 8 mm. sustained note, ends in a half cadence

B= 4 mm. sustained note, no cadence

6:34

A is made up of four smaller parts that all work together to make A a unified phrase. All four parts always appear each statement of A, and only the last part cadences (on tonic). A is a long phrase: 16 measures. A is the defining phrase of this dance.

B is an ornament of c; c is the part of the phrase with the cadence, and as such it can stand on its own (the introductory statement and the third statement). The B part of the phrase is the high point of the dance—it is introductory material that always leads into the c phrase/cadence. The c cadence is on the dominant, and always leads strongly either to B or A. Both B and c contain sustained notes, but the more prominent sustain is in the c part of the phrase. By itself, c is 8 measures long, and B is 4 measures long.

The coda at the end is an extension of the cadence on the last A. It follows the coda pattern of the first three dances.

Overall it sounds like the dance is made up of the A material interspersed with cBc filler material. The variation in this dance is represented by whether or not to play B between A's, and how many times to state A before going on to B or c. A only goes directly to B in the first statement—otherwise it is always followed by c (even in the very beginning).

This song is in compound time with a one mallet bass line, moderate tempo.



[Tata Pedro Sale Sitro](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

AABBCCDD **AABBCCDD** **AABBCCDD** **AABBCCDDD** **AABBCCDDD**
AABBCCDDD **AABBCCDD** Coda

A= 8 mm., cadence on tonic (mi re do), sustained note

A= 8 mm., cadence on tonic (mi re do), sustained note

B= 4 mm., cadence on tonic (re do)

C= 8 mm., cadence on tonic (re do)

D= 8 mm., cadence on tonic (re do)

6:43

A is the sustained note phrase for this dance. It cadences, and is always stated twice before moving on to B. The A phrase is the only point of variation in this dance at all—sometimes the marimba player will ornament the beginning of the sustained note. Ornamented A's are bold.

The B phrase is a descending pattern, and always cadences. It is always stated twice, and is always between A and C.

C is an ascending pattern (the inverse of B), and always cadences, and is always stated twice. It is always between B and D.

D is very similar to B in melody. They both start on the same note, and both follow the same melodic motion. The only difference is that the first note is a longer value in D, and D carries the pattern out 8 bars before cadencing rather than just 4. D is always between C and A, and is always stated at least twice (sometimes three times).

The coda is an extension of the final D cadence, and follows the pattern of the first 3 dances.

This has been the most precisely played dance so far. There are no variations in the order of phrases, and there are no phrases that don't appear in all statements. The only phrase variation at all between statements is whether to play D twice or three times.

The ornamented A's are interesting and somewhat consistent—the second A in a statement is always ornamented, and sometimes the first one is. It is a slight ornamentation and doesn't take away from the identifying factors of the phrase.

This song is in compound time with a one mallet bass line, waltz feel.



[La Catalina Sale Solita](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

AABB CCCBB AABB CCCBB CCCBB AABB CCCBB CC Coda

A= 16 mm., sustained note, cadences on tonic (re ti do)

B= 8 mm., cadences on tonic (re ti do)

C= 10 mm., cadences on tonic (re ti do)

5:33

This dance begins with introductory material that is very similar to A—it has the same rhythm and melodic shape and cadence as A, but the actual pitches are a little bit higher, and it is played without flute. I've put that section in bold. A is the sustained note phrase, and it always cadences. It is always preceded and followed by B (except in the first statement where it follows the intro material). A is 16 measures long.

B is a descending pentascale, and it is always stated twice, and it functions as transition material between A and C. B cadences, and is only 8 measures long.

C is the other important phrase in this dance. It has the most statements (14), and is always stated 3 times in a row (except at the very end). It is melodic, and it always cadences. It is 10 measures long. It is always preceded by and followed by B.

The coda occurs after the final C cadence, and it follows the pattern of the Nimamuloj coda.

This dance is arranged as two primary phrases with consistent transition material. The phrases are stated consistently, and a source of variation in this dance is whether the B material will lead to A or C. In one instance B transitioned from C to C, but it never transitioned from A to A.

It is in compound time with a two mallet bass line, moderate tempo, waltz feel.



[Cazada](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

a-a-a. B-b. B-b-a-A. 1A. 2A-a. 2A-a. B-b. B-b-a-A. 1A. 2A-a. 2A-a. B-b.
 B-b-a-A. 2A. 2A-a. 2A-a. B-b. B-b-a-A. 2A. 2A-a. 1A-a. B-b. B-b-a-A. 2A.
 2A-a. 2A-a. B-b. B-b-a-A. 1A. 2A-a. 2A-a. 2A-a. B-b. B-b-a-A. 2A. 2A-a.
 2A-a. B-b. B-b-a-A. A. 2A-a. 2A-a. B-b. B-b-a-A. 1A. 2A-a. 2A-a. B-b. B-
 b-a-A. 2A.Coda.

phrases vary in length. The (.) cadence is on tonic (sol do)

A and B are sustained note patterns

7:35

The way the melodic material in this dance is arranged, repeated, and cadenced requires a different system with which to notate its form. In this case, A and B (and a and b) represent sub-phrases that have different starting notes. Each sub-phrase follows the exact same melodic pattern after that starting note. The difference between A and a is that A is sustained significantly longer. Same with B. The dash between sub-phrases indicates that the sub-phrase does not cadence but transitions directly to the next sub-phrase. The periods show where the cadences lie. Every cadence is the same. This dance is a set of varied ways to play a single motive. The phrase sizes are irregular, and the cadences are irregular, and the starting note varies, but the melodic motion is always the same. The numbers 1 or 2 in front of a big A indicate that the marimba played an introductory high note before sustaining the key note. 1 is a whole step higher intro note, 2 is a 4th higher intro note. The coda is a repetition of the final A cadence in the style of the first three dances.

Some common phrase figures are: B-b. B-b-a-A. A-a. and xA. (x being either 1 or 2)

B-b. is always followed by B-b-a-A. this is always followed by some kind of A.

This song is in compound time with a one mallet bass line, moderate tempo.



[El Tigre / El Leon](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

=A-B-CDB ACDB-C-C-B ACDB ACDB ACDB-C-C-B ACDB
 ACDB-C-C-B-C-C-B ACDB-C-C-BDB ACDB-C-C-BDB
 ACDB-C-C-BDB ACDB-C-C-B Coda

Phrases vary in length. B cadences on tonic (mi re do), nothing else cadences, the final cadence sounds like a modulation wherein the do of B becomes sol and resolves up to do of the coda. A and C are sustained note patterns

7:42

Both A and C refer to sustained notes; A is higher than C. B and D are sections of melodic movement; B is much longer and more prominent than D.

A is the highest note in the dance. It is always sustained, and except the first statement it is always followed by C and preceded by B. It usually does not have any introductory material. When A follows B it is a direct transition. The first statement is different. A is preceded by the low transitional measure, but the pitches in that low transitional measure pattern are played up a fifth. This is the only time that occurs, and serves as a unique introduction. This intro is indicated with the equal sign.

B is the only real pattern that could be considered a phrase. It is about 5 measures long, and usually follows D or C. It can be followed by C or D or A. There are two forms of B: B with a high intro and B with a low intro. B with a low intro is indicated with a dash before the letter: -B. Except for the first statement, low B can only be preceded by C. High B can only be preceded by D. The B in the first statement is strange in two ways: first, it is played up a fifth (with the low intro also up a fifth), and second, it is preceded by A. The first statement is the only time either of those things happen. Despite those irregularities it is still completely recognizable as a passage of B material.

C is the other sustained note. It isn't as high as A, but it is played more often. Because of this it is hard to tell whether A or C is more prominent. Listening to the dance, they sound equally important. C can be preceded by A or B, and can be followed by B or C or D. The C note also has two possible intros, a high intro and a low intro, and the low intro is indicated with a dash: -C. The high intro consists of a scale down from A. The high intro is only played when C follows A. The low intro consists of a do-re-mi-do pattern before the C note is sounded. The low intro is only played when C follows B, or C follows C.

D is always the same. It is a 3 measure variation on the C note where the note skips up and then returns in rhythm. It has no intro, and it is always followed by B. It is usually preceded by C, but in three instances it is preceded by B.

The coda follows the pattern of the entrada coda.

It is in simple time with a one mallet bass line.



[Mono](#): (Click to hear a simple music file)

ABBCBCB- A-ABBCBCBBCBCB- A-ABBCBCB- A-ABBCBBB Coda

-A= 10 cadence on tonic (sol do), sustained note

B= 8 mm. cadence on tonic (sol do)
C= 10-12 mm. and transitions directly to B, sustained note
5:07

This dance is very straightforward; almost every phrase cadences, and every repetition is stated similarly.

A is the strange phrase in this dance. It serves sort of a transitional purpose. It is the phrase that causes the exception to the cadence rule in this dance. When phrases lead into A, they don't cadence. Only B and A lead to A, and when A directly follows, that B or that A does not cadence. When they don't lead to A they do cadence. When A leads to B, for instance, A does cadence. The phrase is followed by a dash when it does not cadence. A contains the lower of the two sustained notes in this dance. The bass ostinato is different for A than it is for the other phrases. Except in the initial statement, A is always stated twice.

B is the prominent phrase in this dance. It is 8 bars long, and contains the melodic material for this dance. B always cadences unless proceeding directly to A. B has the most statements in this dance: 20. B can follow and precede any other phrase.

C is a variation on B. It starts similarly, but then rises to the high point of the dance and contains a sustained note. It is always surrounded by B.

The coda is an extension of the B cadence, following the same pattern as the first three dances.

This song is in compound time with a one mallet bass line, moderate tempo.

This information leads to a number of conclusions about the songs in the Deer-Monkey Dance:

None of the material is improvised. Every phrase is repeated at least once, and that repetition is always exact or near-exact.

Every dance has its own unique internal structure. No two dances are constructed in the same way.

There is room for variation in each dance. Some dances have an optional substitute phrase, some dances vary the amount of repetitions of certain phrases, some dances change where the cadences occur. No dance is a set of exact repetitions of the first statement, and this gives the performer some personal control over how the dance will sound.

The flute plays the same melodic material as the marimba without any countermelody or counterpoint between instruments.

Distinct fragments of melodic material do not need to cadence. They can lead to other sections that may or may not cadence, and they can be repeated distinctly without cadence.

Every song has a coda that follows one of two distinct coda patterns.

Every song has at least one sustained note phrase. Some have more.

Some dances have introductory material and some do not.

This information also brings up a number of unanswered questions:

Do the variations in each dance indicate something specific? Maybe a message to the dancers or the audience? Are they only present to allow the performer to show off his own musical judgment and/or skill?

The first few dances are 10 minutes and longer, and the last few dances are 7 minutes and shorter. Why do they suddenly and consistently shorten? Is it because the dances really do get shorter, or were the musicians just getting tired of playing for us. During an actual performance of the dances, who decides how long a dance will last?

Do the musicians take cues from the dancers or vice versa? Who leads and who follows?

How much does the music for the dances vary from performance to performance?

What is significant about the sustained note phrase pattern? Every dance has one.

Why?

How do the performers personally understand the forms of the dances? Do they think about phrases and numbers of repetitions and cadences, or do they think of it some other way?

Why do only some dances have introductions?

Who is the most important audience for the performances?

How does this music compare to Deer Dance music in other communities?

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