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THE POPTI':

An Approach to the Music and Dance

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POPTI' VILLAGES



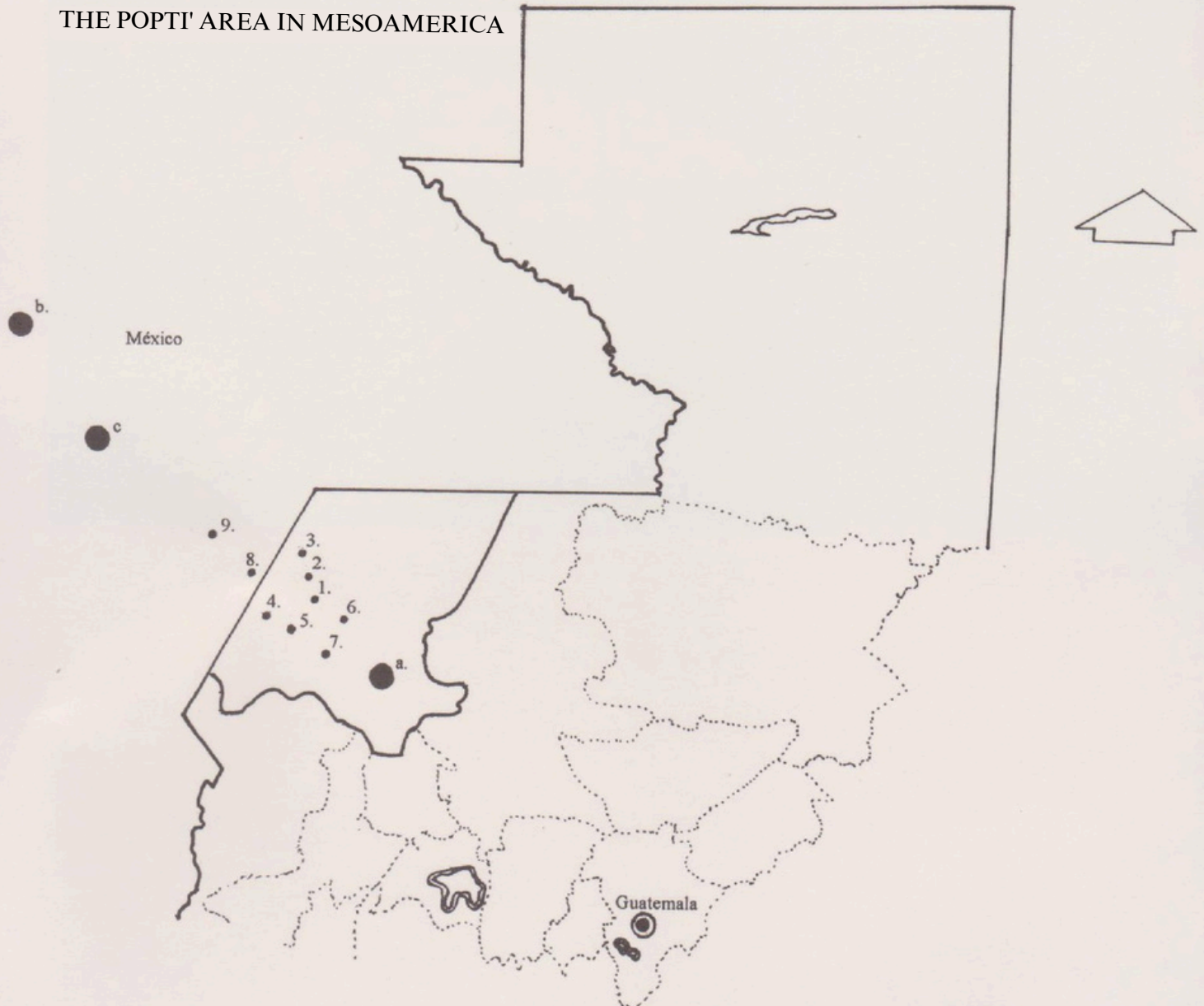
Historic villages surrounding the Popti' area

- a. Huehuetenango, Guatemala
- b. San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas
- c. Comitán

Popti' villages

- 1. Jacaltenango
- 2. San Marcos
- 3. San Andrés Huista
- 4. Santa Ana Huista
- 5. San Antonio Huista
- 6. Petatán
- 7. Concepción Huista
- 8. Guadalupe - Victoria
- 9. Pueblo Hondo

THE POPTI' AREA IN MESOAMERICA



THE POPTI': An Approach to the Music and Dance

Alfonso Arrivillaga Cortés
Sylvia Shaw Arrivillaga *

Abstract

This work is an initial approach to the music and dance of the Popti'. To reach this point, we gathered a succinct description of the group, with special emphasis on their festive system — the place where musical and domestic traditions are preserved. We must thank Antonio López Díaz and his son, also named Antonio, for introducing us to their world, which still has much to teach us. We offer a courageous recognition to the refugee countrymen, since they teach us something about their universe from these dimensions of refuge and exile. Finally, we acknowledge the tradition bearers mentioned here for their ancestral wisdom.

The Popti' Notes on their history

The Popti' group is one of the twenty groups of Mayan ancestry inhabiting the country. Like the other groups, they have a pre-Columbian past that has not been studied in detail, from which greater knowledge could undoubtedly be obtained to better understand their present. In the region occupied by the Popti', different monticules. The best known are in San Marcos: *Jujlina* (Seven Houses), *Lemnish*

(Limón), and *Pohlensam* (Tierra Quebrada), the latter of which is quite extensive. Other sites include Kanil and Jichman, the latter of which was destroyed in 1797². Many artifacts from these sites, mostly ceramics, can be seen in the Jacaltenango Hospital collection. They prove the degree of development of the human groups that inhabited this Cuchumatán region before the arrival of the Spanish. Although there are still some doubts to be clarified, the ethnic panorama at the time of the conquest is becoming clearer and clearer. The Cuchumatanes were inhabited by the Kanjobales, Poptis, Chujes, and Mames ethnic groups. La Farge and Byres (1931) classified these groups as "*Cu Manchón*": San Martín and Todos Santos; San Marcos and Buena Vista for the Popti' (with apparent Toltec influence and dominance); and San Mateo Ixtatán for the Chujes. Chanquejelve and Jolon Conoh (*La Cueva de Santa Eulalia*)* were used as ceremonial centers by the Kanjobales. At the beginning of this century, the archaeological site that attracted the most attention was Chaculá³, located on Mr. Kanter's farm and large house in the municipality of Nentón. Franz Blom described this site in 1924. Today, many of these sites are used for rituals that are part of the agricultural

ceremonial calendar. From this perspective, they should be considered non-collapsed sites because they continue to fulfill a function for the groups that inhabit the region today. Undoubtedly, Carlos Navarrete's (1979) work is one of the best contributions to contemporary archaeology in the Cuchumatanes region, specifically in

¹ Popti'del Pop: Petate. Popbal is a petate or mat where people sit down to talk and make decisions. Ti = mouth, a synonym for language. It can be understood as the language of meetings.

² According to Arnulfo Delgado, there is a document in the Archbishopric archives that verifies this information.

* During the colonial period, this town was called "Pay Conob," meaning "ancient town," because an important indoctrination center was located here, as in other places, on an ancient, pre-colonial site. It is likely that the current Jacaltenango is built on top of a pre-Columbian structure.

³ Chaculá was the large residence of Mr. Kanter, a German immigrant who owned nearly all of Nentón, an area rich in important archaeological sites such as Santo de Piedra (Ken Santo) and Agua Brava. These sites became famous for the quality of their archaeological pieces. Carlos Navarrete demonstrated the importance and quality of this site, as well as the adjacent site in Mexican territory known as "Chincuntik" (1984). At the end of the last century, different regions of the country were occupied by specialists from Western Europe (Germans, Swiss, Austrians, etc.), who developed an interest in archaeology, native cultures, and the development and exploitation of resources that allowed many coffee farms to consolidate a history of archaeology at the beginning of the century. This history has not been well studied.

Salinas de San Mateo Ixtatán. This Chuj town is near our region of interest and had parallel communication routes with Chincuntic in Chiapas.

Conquering the Popti group was an attractive enterprise because the number of tributaries made the region a source of income for the crown. Several chroniclers mention the town of Jacaltenango and nearby communities in their writings. Jacaltenango was the seat of the curato of the towns that were later called "Huista," derived from the term "Wixtaj," meaning "brother." Jacaltenango has always been considered the "Niman Conhob" or "Pueblo Grande," meaning a "father town" that gives rise to "Huista" "brother towns."⁴ This constant exploitation brought about several indigenous rebellions: In 1586, there was a rebellion in Todos Santos; in 1637, in San Idelfonso Ixtahuacán; in 1653, in Santa Eulalia; in 1697, in San Mateo Ixtatán; and in the first years of the nineteenth century, prior to independence (Navarrete: 1988:200).

The following colonial sources refer to these towns, focusing on Jacaltenango because it was the seat of the Curato. However, it should be noted that these writings include many other Popti towns.

In his *Historia General*, Fray Antonio de Remesal refers to the towns of the corregimientos of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, mentioning the convent of Jacaltenango, administered by the Order of Saint Dominic. However, there is evidence that the Mercedarios arrived first. The sources also indicate that each town had a different language and that Mexican was the general language. Fuentes y Guzmán (1690) writes: "...Jacaltenango, an ancient and principal place, was once the court of a régulo, the seat and habitation of the principal cacique of that Indian gentility, who, even today, with other caciques of that place, lives and remains well known, and is pointed out in veneration of his lineage..." He also writes about the climate, products, and the religious administration of the area. Between 1768 and 1770, Pedro Cortez y Larraz made a pastoral visit to his extensive diocese; in the latter year, he

arrived at the parish of Nuestra Señora de la Purificación de Jacaltenango. There, he made the first reference to the inhabitants' speech as "popti". In his writings, he refers to the towns under his control and the difficulty of their geographic location. Later on, he describes the close relationship these towns had with Comitán and Villa de Ciudad Real, now San Cristóbal de las Casas, in Chiapas, Mexico. In 1800, Domingo Juarros included data on the town he called Purificación Jacaltenango in his compendium of the history of Guatemala City. He also noted that it was the seat of the curato in the Huehuetenango district at the time.

Since the independence, the history of these towns has been little studied. Internal struggles between liberals and conservatives throughout the 19th century caused social tensions in this region that have not been studied.

Navarrete (1988) mentions some rebellions that occurred in the Cuchumatanes region years after independence. After the liberals triumphed in 1871, the coffee economy was established in the region. This was supported by regulations regarding day laborers and the expropriation of communal lands. This gave rise to new landowners and dispossessed Mayans of their communal lands. These lands were key because the Mayans' tenure and cultivation of them allowed them to maintain the structures of the "Cargadores del Año" and the "Alcaldes Rezadores." These structures were fundamental to maintaining the sense of tradition. The indigenous people continued to experience poor conditions and often resorted to mutiny to defend their rights. The situation did not change much during the dictatorships of Estrada Cabrera and Ubico. Only during the revolutionary decade did it seem that change was finally coming. However, it never came, which is why social tensions became increasingly pressing. In the 1980s, these communities were the setting for a violent war that brought death, persecution, and displacement. This war

came to be considered ethnocide. This situation brought significant changes to these people's traditions, as seen in their music.

In addition to violence and displacement, the arrival of Protestant sects and charismatic groups, proximity to and close relationship with the Chiapas region, migration to the United States, and the presence of cooperatives and NGOs have contributed to this situation.

Grassroots organizations such as the Huista Cultural Coordinator and the Niman Conob Cultural Association have promoted rescuing their culture and sought answers to strengthen group unity. Other indigenous organizations, such as 4H Mayab (which gathers Popti, Kanjobales, Chujes, and other groups), were formed in the refuge with significant organizational levels and an interest in their culture and tradition.

In 1940, the Maryknoll Mission arrived in the region with development projects that still benefit the area today, as seen with the Jacaltenango Hospital. They established a radio program that transmitted traditional Popti music. However, they prohibited the tradition of the "Cargadores del Año" and burned the Royal Box containing the "founders of the town's" documents and clothes that were under the care of the "Alcalde Rezador." This event has left a significant mark on the people's memory.

The penetration of religious sects has been felt for a long time. La Farge (1932) emphasizes the active role of Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries in religious conversion.

4 Casaverde's thesis discusses how an ethnic group is formed, using the Popti group as an example. He discusses how smaller villages, or "Wanbials," are formed into "Conhobs," which derive from the "Nimán Conhob" or Jacaltenango, as it is considered the first. The ethnic group is considered a kinship unit with omnilinear genealogical connections to establish the pairs of founding ancestors. Members are distributed into Conhob segments and Wayanb'al sub-segments. When there is more than one Conhob, one of them has a higher status and is recognized by the Nimán, or elders (information provided by Arnulfo Delgado, 1995).

Ethnographic References

Currently, there are around 30,635 Popti' speakers, mainly located in the Jacaltenango municipality, also known as "Xajla," as well as in the San Marcos Huista, San Andrés, and Concepción Huista municipalities. "Tz'ikin ha'," the name of the Mayan calendar; Petatan; San Antonio Huista, "I'bal ha'," where one goes for water; and Santa Ana Huista, "Sti'ha'," the riverbank. The last two have a more Ladino population but still speak Popti'. They are part of Nentón in the department of Huehuetenango, located in the western part of the Mexican border. This area includes towns such as Paso Hondo and Guadalupe Victoria (formerly San José Montenegro or Hacienda Montenegro) within Mexican territory. These towns are considered part of the Popti' territorial tradition.

Their Mayan language is part of the larger Kanjobal trunk, which includes the Popti', Chuj, and Acateco variants. This region is currently defined by its inter-ethnic conflicts with Kanjobal, Chuj, and Acateco to the north, Mames to the east and south, and Choles, Tojolabales (located further north than the Chuj territory), and Tzetales and Zotz'iles to the west. Due to pressure for land, these groups have migrated to Lacandonia in search of better prospects.

The Popti' have divided the territory into "Lowlands," which are hot, and "Highlands," which are cold. The Popti' located in Guatemala belong to the department of Huehuetenango, whose administrative capital is also called Huehuetenango. The Popti' call this city Chinabul, although this actually refers to the important Mam city of Zaculeu. Today, Huehuetenango is a key urban center for administrative procedures, such as when the Cuentera was built, as well as for the commercial chain where they sell and buy basic products. On the Mexican side are Comitán and San Cristóbal de las Casas other urban center

centers of attraction that are part of the Popti' group's general geographic vision.

Due to the wave of violence that hit the region in the 1980s, many settlers from the Huista area took refuge in Mexico, an area that was culturally and historically familiar to them. This is why their cultural survival has been easier compared to other displaced people in the country.⁵

The Popti' tradition has a specific ritual for each stage of life, from the prepartum period to birth (when the umbilical cord is buried), puberty, courtship, and marriage until death. Regarding death, the All Saints' Day festival, "Yoc Ahan," showcases the Popti's belief in the importance of the dead. Popti' mythology also provides insight into the heroes of this people. Among them, "K'anil" stands out. This is the name they use to refer to the highest hill visible from the town of Jacaltenango. The great warrior K'anil, who performed incredible feats, rests on this hill, which protects the Popti'.

Regarding the first "Jich Mam" or "First Father" of the people, it is said that he was "Balum Kana," who purified and prepared the people for better conditions. Other myths refer to expelled brothers or elders who founded brother towns or refer to their rustic dwellings, from which they say they came: the IXCAN. As we can see, there are many cultural and historical heroes in the cosmovision of this group. However, to discuss them here would distract from the central theme of our study.⁶ The Popti' religion has been greatly affected throughout its long history of conquest, yet the central tenets still endure.

Much of their traditional heritage is based on the pre-Hispanic calendar system. The survival of this tradition implies a social structure that is quite fragmented today. It is composed of the "Alcalde Rezador," who is in charge of

"Alcalde Rezador," who is in charge of keeping the town's records and the clothes of "Jich Mam", visiting the village crosses and praying "lexhal" in these places. This set of elements, along with others that we will mention, constitutes what the group defines as "Txa," which is regularly translated as "custom." The actions to be performed by the rulers and the "Mátuma" should also be specified. Unlike others, the "Watch" Winaj holds a lifetime position. His function is to address the people and thank God for their health and welfare. Together with the Ahb'e, the soothsayer and prophet, he must keep track of the calendar and announce the ritual days. These include the Jom Hab'il, periods of penance and fasting that propitiate the arrival of the rains. For these occasions, they prepare a "Yahanb'al," a sacrifice offered to God in prayer (Delgado Montejo: 1933:63).

In their kinship structure, the way in which a person's name is chosen is important. In the Chujes and Kanjobales, the first name of the father is used as the surname. Thus, the group's names and surnames have not changed much throughout history. Nowadays, people identify a person's family circle by their names and surnames. Families are constituted here that conserve names and surnames for posterity. It is here that systems are established that allow ethnicity to be reproduced in the new members of the group. Other cultural manifestations, such as costumes, have been completely

⁵ Jacalteco anthropologist Victor Montejo wrote, "Testimony: Death of an Indigenous Community in Guatemala," in which he recounts the experiences of a teacher who goes to a refugee camp. Antonio Cota García, a refugee in the Mexican camps, has dedicated himself to systematically compiling myths and legends of the Popti. His work includes an excellent novel in the testimonio genre, *Arde en la Frontera*, which vividly describes the tragic events they experienced. He also has an extensive body of poetic work.

⁶ La Farge and Byres (1931) include an excellent narration of this rich mythical universe in their work. Amulfo Delgado Montejo (1993) provides an updated vision of this in his work.

lost among men and significantly modified among women. Women are characterized by wearing a cut without a sash and by wearing a shawl acquired in Comitán, Mexico. Several women still carry out the tradition of using stick looms, and there are cooperatives in the region that buy their products and sell them abroad. As in other parts of the Maya area, women are also responsible for activities such as carrying water, washing clothes, cooking food, and caring for children.

Men are dedicated to cultivating corn as a means of subsistence because of their traditional attachment to this production system. They are also dedicated to harvesting coffee, which, in recent decades, has allowed them to engage in other transactions and access other markets. Without these opportunities, they would not survive today. The dynamics of coffee exportation cause them to migrate to other farms as temporary workers under difficult subsistence conditions.

Many of these farms are in Mexico. They are also large producers of "rosa jamaica" and manias. They have distinguished themselves as great producers of hats, which they sell to *Todosanteros*. Chipilin is a very important and fundamental ingredient in the Popti diet and grows easily in this region.

The region's difficult access and proximity to Mexico, as well as its historical affinity with this part of the region, have caused many changes to come from here and alter the Popti's traditions, which is why many of their cultural expressions have transformed. However, we could point out more characteristic elements of the Popti', such as housing, diet, land tenure systems, and the "wayab" cooperation system. However, this would prolong the exposition. We will focus only on the festive cycle because it is where

music and dance, the main focus of our study, are most intensely manifested.

The festive and ritual cycle

We understand the festive and ritual cycle to be the series of events that celebrate the Popti' throughout the year. These events have sacred purposes and are dedicated to images, crosses, and important events such as sowing and harvesting, the transmission of charges, and the rituals of the calendar. The purpose of these events is to ask for and thank the deities for what has been requested, as well as to increase and recreate the sense of internal solidarity among the people. For this reason, important musical and dance forms are manifested in the festive and ritual cycle. We will organize this cycle, as well as the rest of the work, based on the central data of the town of Jacaltenango. It should be noted that the calendar of celebrations for the saints varies in other communities. The sacred calendar remains the common axis, and it is deeply syncretized today, as seen in festivities such as Carnival, Holy Week, Corpus Christi, the Day of the Saints, and celebrations such as the end of the year and the beginning of the Mayan year.⁷

We will not refer to the other festivities that change, such as those of other saints or patron saints of other towns, e.g., San Antonio, Concepción, etc. Jacaltenango's titular feast is on February 2 in honor of the Virgin of Candelaria. The Brotherhoods of the Ek (Lion's Tail) and the Flower of Candelaria (Caj Ch'eya) are mainly in charge of organizing this festival, though other brotherhoods participate in various commissions, such as candles, meals, evenings, novena days, food, rockets, balloons, music, and dance. This is why it is considered the most important festival in the Huista

region. To the traditional ritual structure of the festival, games and entertainment were added, such as "tiro al blanco," the Chicago wheel, and lotteries, as well as the sale of clothes and other industrial goods. Fair committees, mainly composed of ladinos or with an "aladinado" character, were added to these festive structures. They are in charge of organizing sports games, ballroom dancing, and the Queen's election. The Ek and the Virgin of Concepción festivities are important events within the community that bring together members of nearby communities.

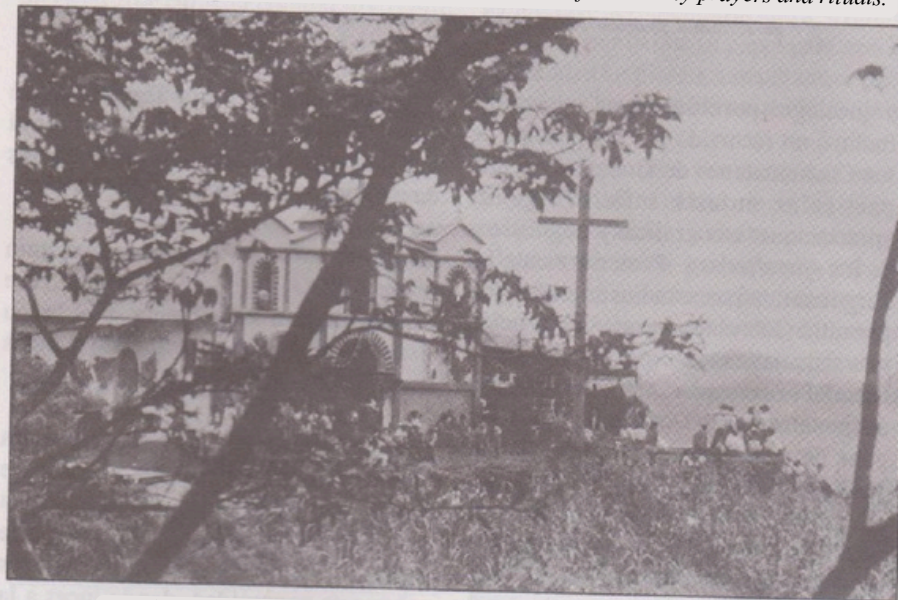
The Carnival continues the festive cycle as a celebration with a variable date. However, it has lost the importance and connotation with which it used to be celebrated. Traditional dances that ridiculed traditional dances used to be performed here, although this does not mean that the festival can be considered as something outside of the sacred. Delgado (1993:52) refers to the belief that Carnival is a festival dedicated to the "Lord of the Hills." Carnival dances include: "Canal Che" (Dance of the Horse); "Canál Xil Wej" (Dance of the Old Rags); and ridiculing expressions performed only by men, even when women's roles were played in the dances of "Yi/Moro," "Xil Cortez," and "Xil Venado."

On February 28 or 29 and March 1 or 2, the change of powers and responsibilities of the cargadores of the year takes place in accordance with the end and beginning of the Maya year "Ijom Ab'il". This system of change of positions has been lost but everything seems to indicate that the calendar as

⁷ The pre-Hispanic calendar system survives, with different expressions, in many ethnic groups of the country, which has been studied by different anthropologists. Among these we can mention the work carried out by Benjamin N. Colby and Lore M. Colby "El Contador de los Días. Life and Discourse of an Ixil Soothsayer".



The Santa Cruz, located in the Jacaltenango Cemetery, is of great importance to the Popti' people and is the focus of their daily prayers and rituals.



The Chapel of the Holy Cross is a recent construction, but it has allowed the people who visit it to imprint a dynamic of recovery of the tradition.

such survives and is vital for the daily life and religiosity of the Popti'. The Semana Santa (Holy Week) continues, which is also located on a mobile date, of great importance within the system of traditions. The brotherhood of the 5th Friday of Lent plays a key role in this celebration, in which the "Santo Entierro" (Holy Burial) stands out. As in other parts of the Department of Huehuetenango, the Passions represented live are well known due to their authenticity. As in other areas of

the country, during this festivity it is customary to play matracas - "lokob"- in view of the prohibition of ringing the bells. The bells also have a tradition of sound accompaniment to the important events of the communities as well as within the festive system.

The Feast of the Holy Cross continues on May 3 in the cycle. For the Popti', the cross is of great importance, and they say that wherever a cross is planted, life is planted. Crosses adorn the houses,

the square, the cemetery, the hermitages, and the roads. These crosses are said to protect the town and its inhabitants and ensure a good harvest. According to La Farge (1932) and Anita Cox de Collins (1967), the crosses also served as boundary markers that defined the town's limits and were visited by Alcaldes Rezaadores on these dates. They are still considered sacred sites. During the festival, it is customary to decorate the crosses and visit the hermitages, where marimba music is played and people dance the traditional son, also known as the regional son. Several brotherhoods of the Holy Cross are key to the development of the festival: the Cantón Parroquia, the churchyard (Yul Amak), and the Bridge.

Other celebrations are held in honor of the Virgin María Auxiliadora, the patron saint of Cantón Hernández, on May 24th. In June, San Antonio de Padua is celebrated. He has his own chapel, which is considered one of the oldest and is located in the Canton of San Sebastian. On June 14, San Basilio is celebrated. He is the patron saint of the canton of the same name, where the brotherhood and chapel for this saint are located. The Feast of San Juan Bautista, the patron saint of Canton Llano, is celebrated on June 24. The town has a chapel and brotherhood dedicated to him. The Feast of Corpus Christi, which usually falls in June, has a brotherhood responsible for organizing the Dance of the Ur or the Blacks. This dance is characterized by participants blackening their faces, and it undoubtedly still retains many pre-Hispanic elements. The dance is also performed to propitiate the rain cycle. The dance is accompanied by a whistle and a small drum, which is also used to call people. This small drum is known as the "Tix Tix."

On August 15, the Assumption of Mary is celebrated. In former times, this was the town's titular feast. Nowadays, it is considered the second titular feast after

that of the Virgin of Candelaria. The Nativity of the Virgin is celebrated on September 8 and has a Brotherhood that was created as a result of the restoration of the image. The feast of the Brotherhood of the Virgen de Dolores is celebrated on September 14. The Brotherhood of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is celebrated on the 15th. The feast of San Miguel follows on the 24th, with two brotherhoods in charge of preparing for the celebration.

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On October 30, the Day of the Dead Children is celebrated, and on November 1, All Saints' Day is celebrated. This day is also very important for the Popti because it signifies the veneration of their deceased ancestors. As in other parts of the country, it is customary to go to the cemetery, take food for the deceased, and play music for them. For this reason, it is not uncommon to see marimba or string ensembles playing melodies for the departed saints during this festivity. During other traditional festivities, we can see Popti recording traditional music to take to the deceased. This music is also used for recreational purposes and to send to relatives in the United States. We have also seen video samples sent.

Some studies on the Popti'

In 1925, Frans Blom and La Farge, sponsored by the University of Tulane in Louisiana, United States, carried out an archaeological expedition through the Mayan area. This expedition included a tour of the Cuchumatanes villages in Guatemala, with a particular focus on the ethnographic and linguistic characteristics of the Jacaltecos. La Farge subsequently continued his studies in the region, which allowed him to compile more systematic information about the Popti'. His seminal work, *Los Cargadores del Año*, co-authored with Douglas Byres in 1931, unveils the



The use of domestic electrical devices, such as tape recorders, to "capture" musical expressions that one will later use in other contexts, proves that tradition and modernity could be two concepts that are not exactly antagonistic.

intricate pre-Columbian calendar system employed during that period. He also refers to the intricate organic structure on which this tradition rests. La Farge continued his studies in the Q'anjobal area, specifically in Santa Eulalia, in 1932. The result of this work is *Santa Eulalia: The Religion of a Cuchumatán Indian Town*. As mentioned at the beginning of the text, the first references to the area were archaeological. The German archaeologist Eduard Seler visited the area between 1895 and 1896 and published the results of his investigations. Later, in 1913, Adrián Recinos published his Huehuetenango monograph, which included information on the area. Villacorta also referred to it in his writings (Navarrete 1979:8-9).

The German ethnologist Franz Turner brought many pieces to the region from Europe and indicated key ceremonial centers for study, such as Santa Eulalia. The Kanter family owned a large tract of land in the region and was fond of archaeology. Their son-in-law, Robert Burkit, became instrumental in investigating the site.

The Kanters were fond of archaeology and owned a large tract of land in the region. Their son-in-law, Robert Burkit, became instrumental in some research at the site.

In 1970, the Instituto Indigenista Guatemalteco published *Notes on San Marcos Huista*, which were compiled by Anita Cox de Collins. In 1967, Collins, a Peace Corps volunteer, collected notes on this community, shedding light on the Popti calendar use in San Marcos at that time.

As with many Mayan groups in Guatemala, the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics has been essential to developing the written form of these languages and to the interests of this institution.

Gerónimo Camposeco Rojas (1975) also began researching this group, but his work was interrupted by the violence that hit the region. Today, from Florida in the United States, he continues his studies to improve our understanding of the Popti's cultural dynamics. Victor Montejo emerges from this historical juncture.

From literature and with the support of anthropology, he contributes to the study of the group. It is important to note that Delgado Montejo, Camposeco Rojas, and Victor Montejo are Popti', so their studies and contributions undoubtedly belong to a different area of social science development. Juventino Casaverde (1979) wrote his doctoral thesis on the area of Jacaltenango, focusing on Dr. Sol Tax's definition of the ethnic group and municipality.

In 1993, Arnulfo Delgado Montejo conducted a comparative study of the reality reported by La Farge and contemporary Jacaltenango. For this study, he employed an interesting methodology involving communal reflection on historical facts and their critical analysis. Delgado Montejo also made valuable observations in this study.

Specific reports on music in the region

Previous reports (Arrivillaga, 1992) have revealed that, despite the unique nature of indigenous music studies, there are aspects that require further explanation. Studies reporting information on the area include Pare-Limardo de Vela's (1962) "Musical Folklore of Guatemala," which includes violin melodies from several regions of the country. Among these melodies are those from Mames towns such as San Sebastián Huehuetenango, San Rafael Petzal, San Juan Atitán, and Soloma (Q'anjob'al), in the Department of Huehuetenango.

Starting in 1950, with the arrival of the Maryknoll priests in the Jacaltenango region, a multitude of programs were developed to promote group development. These programs used traditional sociocultural practices to stimulate and guide this development. Antonio López Silvestre told us how he helped install the radio station and develop programs. He compiled

traditional music for these programs, which he later broadcast to villages with monoband receivers. This is particularly significant because it establishes Don Antonio López Silvestre as a precursor to contemporary generations in compiling traditional music "in situ." Don Antonio is highly regarded for his community service and his role as mayor of Jacaltenango. Additionally, he is recognized for being born on a significant date in the Mayan calendar, "Hujeb Tz'ikin," which prophetically announced his role in the community (Héroes de la Vida Cotidiana, 1992, pp. 89-90).

Recently, we began rescuing the tapes of this collection with Antonio López (son). Some of these recordings are of groups that we will discuss 30 years later, and we will be able to measure change and survival phenomenologically. We hope to address this topic later. For his part, Antonio López (son) has initiated an intense replanting process, in which some tradition bearers have been able to refresh their memories.

The musician

The profile of the musician in this region

shares similarities with traditional Mayan musicians. Most of them are peasants who live in poverty and are often forced to abandon their musical traditions in order to survive. A family structure exists for transmitting the musical heritage, linking family and musical tradition. From this perspective, musical tradition and event location become parameters for relations with other communities, where prestige is important. For example, the tradition of the shawm and drum in Jacaltenango has disappeared due to the death of its traditional bearers and the lack of inheritance or continuation. Currently, the chirimitero and drummer from San Marcos Huista who performs in Jacaltenango's traditional festivities has double prestige: as a carrier of an extinct musical tradition in Jacaltenango and as a representative of his town. In addition to this musical tradition, the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of the sound allow one to identify a type and, therefore, a tradition.

Musicians only dedicate themselves exclusively to their musical work in specific cases. This is achieved after many years, during which the acceptance and use of their musical knowledge is key to reproducing a traditional practice within



General view of the pito and drum ensemble, dancers, and audience.

certain contexts. In other words, learning the techniques and ways of playing an instrument or knowing the repertoire is not enough if they are not applied coherently within the contexts for which they were created. Many musicians also consider their profession to be their destiny, their purpose in life.

The ensembles

The Popti' musical tradition consists of different ensembles that play an important role in developing their festive and daily traditions.

Pito-tzu and tamborón (drum)

As in other areas of the country, this ensemble is considered to have the most pre-Columbian roots since the pito, a type of flute, has been used as a musical instrument since pre-Columbian times. Current variants are the Pito-Yu, made of Castilla cane. The variants observed in the Cuchumatanes and in San Marcos (as in Quiché) indicate that they are large whistles, often without an elaborate bevel or wax stopper, but with a sheet of the same cane. The whistle is accompanied by a drum made of two tightened calfskin drumheads with leather or loop straps forming a "W" or "Y" on the instrument's body. The body is generally made of pigskin with holes that allow it to "breathe." Due to its size, it is not carried by the pitero as it is in other parts of the country when played on the move, but rather by another person. When played in one place, the instrument is supported at one end by natural fibers so that the ground does not dull the sound. This is the largest drum used by the Maya, called the "Tamborón" or "Tambor de Pito." Despite its characteristics, it is a Spanish-introduced instrument. Its function within this group is to replace the pre-Columbian membranophones that accompanied the pitos-flautas. The greatest acoustic differences in the elaboration of the pitos have been found

in the Cuchumatanes region. However, the pito and drum set is nearly extinct today in the Popti' region. The only surviving dance accompanied by a whistle and drum is the "Moros y Cristianos" dance, performed during the region's traditional festivities.

The Ur or Del Negro dance is accompanied by a whistle and a small drum called a "Tix Tix." In earlier times, this ensemble accompanied processions, special prayers, and the "planting of a cross." However, it rarely participates today.

Chirimía and drum

This ensemble, introduced by the Spaniards, is one of the most popular and still survives today. Of unquestionable Mozarabic descent, the Iberians used this ensemble to convert the natives to Christianity. Used by all Mayan groups, this ensemble has physical variations, primarily in the shawm. Thus, the variants of this ensemble's musical tradition can be found in its melodic forms and physical variations. In the region inhabited by the Popti', the shawm and drum ensemble accompanies the well-known "Baile de

Cortés." This dance features several characters, including Spaniards such as Hernán Cortés and Pedro de Alvarado, as well as Malinches, who are depicted as allies of the Spaniards, and soldiers. The Indians include Moctezuma, the monarch; the Chichimitos, who are considered sorcerers or shamans; Teutil, the monarch's ambassador; the warrior Indians; monkeys; tigers; and a lion. Each character, as well as specific dance formations, has its own sones for the Indians and marches for the Spaniards. In other words, there are as many sones as there are characters in the dance, as well as others specific to certain choreographic formations. There are other utensils that could be called the "sound tools of the dancer," such as glasses, plates with coins or tokens, chicotes, swords, bells, and rattles. These are used to accompany the dancers' speeches, which are difficult to hear due to the disguised voices caused by the masks. All of these elements come together to form the sound texture of the event. Another type of repertoire is the ceremonial sones used in processions and rituals for the saints in the *cofradías*. Like the dances, these sones or ceremonial toques are anonymous, identified only as *Son Antiguo*, *Son del Santo* (dedicated



The Pito y Tambor ensemble during a performance of the Moors and Christians Dance. This musical expression is becoming increasingly rare.

a saint), Son de la Actividad (processional, for prayer), or Sin Nombre. On other occasions, they are identified by a correlative numbering system.

In some places, the shawm drum was not held between the performer's legs, as is usually done in other areas of Guatemala. Instead, a pedestal was used to allow for a more comfortable performance and greater sound from the instrument. The reported shawms were made of cedar wood, and the mouthpieces were made of palm leaf and sheet reeds. The drums were made of hollowed-out cedar wood with bejuco hoops and calfskin drumheads. Among the bearers of this tradition are Pascual Pérez Ramírez, a 73-year-old chirimitero born in San Marcos Huista, and Baltazar García, a 60-year-old drummer also born in San Marcos Huista. Their teacher was Don Sebastián Díaz, Baltazar García's father, who learned from Don Manuel Jesús. Camposeco de Jacaltenango. Bartolo Hernández is a chirimitero who was born in Santiago Petatán, as was Pablo López Domínguez, a tamborero.

The marimba

The marimba musical tradition of the Popti' is particularly recognized by the people of the country. The degree of development, the variety of interpretive techniques, the melodic characteristics, and the physical finish of the instruments make it possible to speak of a Popti' marimba tradition. Based on the various references received regarding the structural characteristics of instruments in the area, it is evident that they have undergone a continuous process of change and refinement solely to enhance interpretive and sound production capabilities. In this region, it was reported that children sometimes play small keyboards held between their feet since adults do not allow them to play



The Marimba Xajla and its performers, Hermelindo Silvestre Camposeco, Daniel Montejo Mateo, and José Jiménez Cárdenas.

the larger instruments.

Marimba of three and four registers

This is the most traditional and common way of playing the marimba among the popti' group. It is usually divided between the lower, middle and treble registers and, on other occasions, a counter melody, called contratiple, is added. These diatonic instruments have up to six octaves and wooden casing with the characteristic mirlitones that are obtained thanks to the "entelado" that is achieved by adhering small fibers of "tripa de coche" in the "rings" that are located in the inferior part of the resonance boxes. Many of the rings reported, unlike the wax ones built in the rest of the country, were made of wood, permanently attached to the

drawers. This instrument is the most popular in the region because it is requested for most festivities. The marimba usually accompanies two dances: the "Baile de Toritos" and the "Baile de Venados". In the case of the "Baile de Toritos", of colonial character, it has bulls, old men, sagales, monkeys, mayordomos and caporales. The "Baile de Venados" of pre-Hispanic character has deer, tigers, monkeys, dogs, princesses. Each one of these characters has a specific son for marimba, in addition to the sones for the "Encadenados" or turns as well as other displacements typical of the dances reported.

It also accompanies spontaneous dances where the "Son Tradicional" or "Son Regional" is performed. These dances appear regularly within the



Two chromatic marimbas are accompanied by an electric bass, drums, and amplified tumbadoras. This type of ensemble has become popular among the Popti'.

context of the festival system. Some of the sones performed on these occasions are: "Son Xap" (Son Sebastián), "Son Candelaria," and "Son Granadía." Other known rhythms are barreños, in the local Popti' variant, with pieces such as "Kal pel Luch" (Catarina Pedro). Traditional barreños are the most important and characteristic of the Popti's traditional rhythms. They are known as "Tzuti," which translates to "sleep," and exemplify the additional rhythms of this son. This son consists of "sleeping" the note, or making prolonged tremolos. There are other types of sones for the marimba used for saints that have a ceremonial function. These are different from the sones executed only for processions and carrying offerings in novenas. In this situation, some people help carry the marimba so that it can be played while moving.

A variant of the simple marimba interpretation in the region is worth mentioning. Two single marimbas are played together as if they were double marimbas. When two single marimbas are played, percussion and amplification are often added to the ensemble to allow

it to reach a larger audience.

Due to the number and variety of traditional marimbas in the region, it is impossible to refer to them all. The following are some of the best-known marimbas that, due to their level of development, have received great praise. Due to the time and the group that plays them, they have different ways of playing the same melodies within the Popti' tradition. The "Marimba Independencia" from Jacaltenango is owned and played by Don Timoteo Díaz García, a 77-year-old piccolo player and son of Antonio Díaz, who was his teacher. José Díaz García, 67, is the center player and brother of Don Timoteo. He also learned from his father. Fernando Jacinto Díaz, the center player, is the nephew and student of Don Timoteo. Antonio Díaz Silvestre, the bass player, is the son and student of Don Timoteo. This marimba was built in San Miguel Acatán more than 35 years ago, but the keyboard was inherited by Don Timoteo's grandparents*. Don Timoteo points out that, at the time of Independence, the mayor Manuel Camposeco ordered the instrument to be called by the name it

bears today.

Due to the way the instrument is handled, as tradition says, it has continued under the direction of Don Antonio's son, Antonio Díaz C., also known as Antonio Xux Andrey. Timoteo Díaz García (Tim), the marimba has continued the musical tradition. This marimba recorded a long-playing record in the early '80s. This edition's repertoire is very well selected: "Yap" (Sebastián); "Cantin Peluch" (Barreño 1°) (Catarina Pedro); "K'anil" (Maximum Jacalteco warrior hero); "Yahel" (name of a stream in Jacaltenango); "Antonio Shush Andrés" (dedicated to Timoteo Díaz, grandfather); "Comi Cantel" (Our Mother Candelaria). "El Son de la Granadilla" is a traditional piece. Other pieces include "Sat Toñec," named after a ravine in Jacaltenango; "Antonio Swi Witz," dedicated to San Antonio Punta del Cerro; "Tie Pitzin," named after Diego Lagartija; "Culus Sat Ch'en," dedicated to La Cruz de las Lajas; and "Jila 'wej Cob 'a Xin," dedicated to Adiós, pues, señores. All of these are traditional sones. In addition to these sones, the following could be reported: Son Ceremonial "Virgen de Candelaria," "Son de Despedida," "Tzuti," "Barreño sin nombre," "Son sin nombre" (dedicated to the Cerro where lime was made), "Son San Miguel" (dedicated to the small house saints), "Chan Chulul," "Al pie del injerto," "Son San Juan," "Jacaltequita," "Wich pu un," and "Una Paloma."

"Marimba Reina Jacalteca." It was made by Martín Gaspar and is played and directed by Manuel Camposeco Miguel, a 57-year-old composer and native of Jacaltenango. He learned to play with tablas on guineo stalks. He

* The tradition of inheriting and adapting old keyboards to new bodies, or "mesas," is a situation that we have observed in other parts of the country.

plays the piccolo or contra-tiple. Teodoro Alejandro Montejo Camposeco plays the tiple. He learned from an early age by putting the keys between his feet. The Centro is played by 13-year-old Jesús Rolando Camposeco Silvestre. His teacher is his grandfather, Xina Manuel Camposeco. Antonio Camposeco Díaz plays the bass, and his father, Xina Manuel Camposeco, was his teacher.

Hermelindo Silvestre Camposeco, born

in Jacaltenango in June 1925, owns the "Marimba Xajlá." He has been self-taught since the age of eleven, and his grandfather was also a marimba player. He plays the piccolo or contra-tiple. Don Hermelindo is also a violinist and plays in the Canal Che dance group. He purchased the marimba from Juan Gaspar in San Miguel Acatán. He previously owned another marimba called "Rio Azul," which he sold in Todos Santos to Juan José de Dios. It was later sold again in Chiapas, Mexico,

where it has received widespread promotion. Daniel Montejo Mateo plays the tiple. He was born in Jacaltenango in 1935. He learned to play the marimba from Don Hermelindo. José Jiménez Cárdenas, also from Jacaltenango and born in 1940, plays the bass. Don Hermelindo has dedicated himself to teaching marimba music at the Regional School of Agriculture. This has preserved a tradition and a musical school while fostering a taste for regional music. The ensemble has also performed abroad. In 1978, they toured California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado through Jerónimo Camposeco of the Instituto Indigenista Nacional. The Indigenous Organization "Cuatro Flechas" assisted them. They then made a second tour to Albuquerque, Seattle, and Vancouver. Their repertoire includes the following pieces: "Son Tradicional de la Novena de la Virgen de Candelaria"; "Son Trinidad"; "Son siempre las copas"; "Ich yoosh" — "A la sombra del aguacatío," also known as "Palo de Judas." "Son Wanit" (Son Juana); "Son los Pasos del Cadejo"; "Son el Wo Ba'l"; "Son del Moro"; "Son Tradicional José Santiago"; "Son Balun Canan"; "Son Eshtep Nop" (Ojo de Agua de Esteban), a traditional Barreño. This marimba's unique feature is that, instead of the traditional wax rings attached to the drumhead that produce the "charleo" of the marimba, these are made of wood.



The passing on of musical knowledge from father to son is a common way for people to learn music.



The Marimba Xajlá' of Jacaltenango.

The Marimba Ixtía Jacalteca, composed by Antonio Mendoza Montejo "Malín," consists of two simple marimbas and is accompanied by drums and a violin. This well-known ensemble has recorded more than seven albums, which is why the marimba is popular even outside the Popti' area. For example, it is highly prized among the Quichés. Within this category of large ensembles, Jacaltenango has the Conjunto Sonora Juvenil and the Conjunto Kanil. In addition to the marimba group, these ensembles include the organ, electric

bass, trumpets, and other instruments. In addition to performing regional music, this ensemble has added popular music to its repertoire.

The "Marimba Ana Mikin" is from the municipality of Nentón and is named after Ana Micaela, a woman who loved to dance. The instrument has had this name since 1966 and was donated by Colonel Amed Castillo, the governor of Huehuetenango at that time. The municipal mayor, Israel Castillo, ordered the purchase of the instrument with a donation of 40 quetzals. Alvino Gabriel García, 57, born in Nentón, plays the tiple. His teacher was Félix Mendoza. Manuel Montejo, 27, plays the Centro; Alvino Gabriel was his teacher. Hermenegildo Castillejo Montejo plays the bass. He is 45 years old and first learned to play the guitar before learning to play the marimba.

Regarding the development of the "Ana Mikin" marimba of Nentón, Castillejo said that the tradition of sones dates back to the last century. The first great players were Ramón Montejo, Victoriano García, and Juan Ross. The most important tradition related to sones is associated with Carnival festivities. Later, Félix Mendoza, a marimbist, brought the sones to prominence. Mariano Montejo, Adrián Camposeco, Miguel López, and Baudilio Escobedo were among those who followed in his footsteps. The Montejo brothers maintained the tradition for many years until the present day. Current members include Manuel Montejo, the great-grandson of Ramón Montejo, and Alvino García, the grandson of Laureano García. These men initiated the marimba tradition in Nentón, and the marimba has been passed down through the generations. Its repertoire includes: "Mis Tristezas," "El Pobre Mozo," "Son Félix," "El Matellanito," "Parabienes," "Son Particular," "Son de Vuelta," "Son

de la Cadena," "Sacaltuyo," "Masaya," and "El Toro."

Several ensembles are known to have existed prior to the 1980s, but their current status has not been confirmed. Among these are: Marimba Voces de San Antonio de San Antonio Huista, whose members were David Ambrosio (Piccolo); Magdaleno Vicente Camposeco (Centro); César Hernández (Bajos); Filomeno Ross López (Centro Segundo); and Ernesto Ross Jiménez (Director and Centro Segundo). The Marimba Indita Petateca from Santiago Petatán had the following members: Baltazar Camposeco (Tiple), Pedro Pérez (Centro), Mariano Alvarado (Bajo Primero), Antonio Recinos Camposeco (Bajo Segundo), and Fidel Hernández-Rafael (Director).

String Ensembles

Stringed instruments were used throughout the conquest process. There is no evidence that the groups settled in this territory before the arrival of the Europeans used stringed instruments. During the conquest, the Europeans used music to attract the natives to "conversion" and "redemption," as previously mentioned. The degree of development achieved in music allowed it to be easily adapted and expressed in many ways. String ensembles, like other instruments, are still widely used among indigenous groups, and their use remains largely consistent across all contemporary Mayan groups, with variations in instrumental grouping and organological characteristics, as well as melodic and rhythmic variants.

The guitarrilla in Guatemala

When referring to string ensembles in general, the acceptance and use of this instrument among different indigenous groups in the country was noted. These situations will not be described in detail

due to space limitations.

Sáenz Poggio (1878) highlights the interest in the guitar in Guatemala. The author mentions that, by 1837, guitars came from Mexico with 14 strings, though traditional Guatemalan guitars had six strings, and older ones had five. Among the variants of the instrument, it refers to the requinto, which is smaller than the guitar and has five strings. Other variants include the jarana requinto, the bandola, bandolín, or bandurria, which has a box shaped like a nut; and the guitarrilla or tiple, which has four strings and is tuned to the performer's preference. The guitarrilla is the most traditional variant in the Huehuetenango region. In the Verapaces region, the term refers to a five-string guitarrilla without frets.

The catalog of musical instruments (Arrivillaga, 1982) reports a large number of guitarrillas and their acoustic variants used by indigenous peoples, which proves the common use and acceptance of this instrument. In 1993, we studied the Lacandon instrument collection at the Va-Bolom Museum in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. Thanks to the collaboration of the museum's director at the time, archaeologist Mario Tejada B., we were able to appreciate the variety of instruments used by the Lacandon people. Of particular interest was the quantity of chordophones in this collection, including a variety of guitars with unique acoustic properties. This demonstrates the incredible number of musical instruments that these groups recreated, surpassing those imposed by the Spaniards. The instruments of the Lacandón people must be related to the Popti', as one of the many attempts to conquer the Lacandón people originated from this territory.

The Popti' guitarrilla

The guitarrilla, a typical instrument of

this region, ceased to be used in the last decade. Given that no living makers of this instrument have been reported, it is difficult to propose its revival. Without an instrument to examine, it is impossible to provide a detailed description. However, it has been heard in recordings made by Don Antonio López (see below), which demonstrate the important role this instrument played in Popti' string ensembles. The guitarrilla was built regionally, and in the ensemble, it developed the melody using the plucking technique with a plectrum, similar to the mandolin and requinto. The dynamics of change in the towns, coupled with the rise of the charismatic movement, led to the introduction of new instruments, such as the mandolin, which ultimately displaced the guitarrilla. This phenomenon is more prevalent among refugees from Chiapas.

Current situation of string ensembles

The current situation of these ensembles and the available information indicate that their groupings have evolved to the point that they are in different situations today.

The traditional popti' ensemble consists of a guitar and a violin, and it previously included a guitarrilla and occasionally a tun. This ensemble accompanied the "Canal Che" dance. Nowadays, the ensemble has been joined by the guitarrón, also known as the tololoche, which serves as the bass; some still use the tun for this purpose. The Tololoche is a well-known instrument in ranchera and nortena music ensembles in neighboring Mexico. On other occasions, one can find mandolins in the string ensemble. This instrument probably works as a substitute for the popti' guitarrilla. The Catequista movement of the '70s modified the instrumentation by removing the guitarrillas and adding

mandolins and more than three guitars, as is common in religious services. This movement was characterized by composing songs in the Popti' language that conveyed a religious message. In 1974, Pascual Esteban premiered his work, "Misa Jacalteca," and from that moment on, this type of performance became widespread. The most complete expression of this dynamic change is the formation of norteno music groups consisting of accordions, guitars, and guitarrones or tololoche, which is what the majority of the public prefers. However, it is worth appreciating how these expressions rework texts insofar as their content is closer to reality, as they carry news. From this perspective, narrating an event or bearing news fulfills the same function as traditional Jacalba music.

Currently, instruments of industrial origin are preferred, although the practice of building them still exists. The artisanal instruments that can be seen today show a more precise construction process than other stringed instruments made by the Maya in other areas of the country, such as the Verapaces. Builders report that demand for these instruments is decreasing and that there is a marked preference for industrial instruments, many of which are purchased at bargain prices given that some border areas between Mexico and Guatemala have facilities to obtain new instruments.

The assemblages reported in this fieldwork are as follows: Grupo Jacalteco "Jet Konhob" (Somos El Pueblo) from Bushup Village in the municipality of Jacaltenango. Second Voice and Guitar: Manuel Cruz Camposeco is 40 years old and self-taught. He requested a method from Don Miguel Diaz in Cantón Pila, Jacaltenango, when he was 17. He has lived in Bushup with his family for 10 years, and he also plays the "Reina Campesina" marimba. Guitarrón: Pedro

Lucas Camposeco Hernández, 44, self-taught and interested in maintaining this tradition. Voice and violin: Eduardo Mendoza Silvestre, 48, self-taught. The Camposeco family donated all the instruments four years ago for the Candelaria feast. Their repertoire includes: "Husep" (Eusebia), "B'itnob'al" (Mi Canción), "Nikol Nixh" (Nicolás Dionisio), and "Palas Katin" (Francisco Katin), among others.

Another group that is very popular among the Popti' is "Maya Honh," which is originally from the village of La Laguna in the municipality of Jacaltenango. Due to violence, they sought refuge with their Mexican neighbors. From the camp where they currently reside, they have continued their work as bearers of their people's musical tradition. Its members are: Candelario Rojas Esteban (guitar), José Rojas Esteban (mandolin), José Montejó Recinos (guitarrón), and Alfonso Rojas Esteban (violin) are faithful examples of how these bearers of tradition have become processors of their history and the reality they lived through. Through their songs, they have kept part of their culture alive and captured part of their life, experience, pain, and great love in sounds, songs, verses, and rhythms. Their repertoire includes the following: "Mi linda chacaj"; "Hin tak k'ulalan" (My feeling); "Stxam chulul" (Alaorilla del injerto); "Jovencita amada mía"; "Stz uti" (Old son for the navaja dance). "Stz 'ayik wag'b'alan" (My Life); "Quisiera ser espinita"; "Son meba"; "Kuenta ha gu"; and "Linda Juanita." This group has already recorded a cassette that has been very well received in Mexico and their own region. Below is an English translation of the song "Mi Sentimiento," which reflects their worldview.

"Hin Tak K'ulalan" — My Feeling.

This is the song I sing.

For those who like to listen.

One day, I was feeling very sad.

I was inspired by the words of the song.

*We don't seem to age.
When we are young
I was happily passing the years.
But things go from bad to worse.*

*I cry when I think about
what will our lives be like as we grow up?
We all have to die.
There are different reasons.*

*Some people are hungry. Others are sick.
It could be a disaster or a murder.
Who will be able to choose their destiny?
Does God know what will happen to each
one of us?*

*Some of us are sad.
Dying in a different place
It will be sad for parents and kids.
I don't want to see how they bury us.*

*We can't change the situation.
We are alive today, but not tomorrow.
We all have to die.
This is only the case for different
reasons...*

The experience of string ensembles has undoubtedly generated a whole new series of expressions influenced by recent historical processes, such as religious movements and violence, as well as the mass media. Groups like Aurora were born from the experience of the shelter and are composed as follows: Guitars: Antonio Mendoza, Ángel Díaz Cota, Manuel Santos Montejó. Voice: Mateo Castillo Gregorio and Antonio Díaz Camposeco; mandolin: Félix López Díaz; and guitarrón: Miguel Patrocinio Ross Esteban. The following stand out within the recorded repertoire: "Sb'it Refugiado" (Son del Refugiado) and "Hin Txotx 'an" (Mi Tierra). These songs reflect the challenges they faced and their hopes for the future.

Another important example is Manuel Santos Montejó, who, within the genre of "Canto Nuevo," has achieved an authentic, non-propagandist discourse. His work has been supported by Edgar



The dancers of the Baile de Venados are pictured from left to right: malinches, caporales, and more malinches. In the background, you can see the venado. In this region, as in others in Guatemala, girls can dance as malinches.

Lou, achieving an interesting fusion.

The oldest group is the Esteban Brothers, consisting of Baltazar, Pascual, and Trinidad, also known as "Los Gavilanes Jacaltecos." The group has had several periods of activity and inactivity throughout its history. In 1982, they recorded an album of original compositions, becoming pioneers in the process. Their melodies reflect the "American dream" with the incorporation of English phrases. Another key element of the recording compilation is the interpretation of the guitarrilla, which has practically disappeared from the Popti' area today. José Camposeco and Don Gregorio Díaz, both known for their exceptional accordion and violin performances, played a pivotal role in the development of this group. Their repertoire includes: "San Luis," "Al Pie del Injerto," "Lavadero de Nishtamal," "Mi Padre, Mi Madre," "Yajlá," "Jaj B'al Na," "Pañuelo," "Sacaltuyo," "Mi Vida," "La Caja de mi Guitarra," "Txoxlaj," and "Santiago El Chucho."

Other stringed instruments

The collective memory of the Popti' still

«Pañuelo»; «Sacaltuyo»; «Mi

refers to the use of a musical bow called a caramba*, though most do not remember its name or use. This instrument ceased to be played at the beginning of this century, highlighting yet another region where this instrument, which has been reported as being used by indigenous peoples, can be found (Recinos, 1960; Arrivillaga, 1982). However, the instrument has completely disappeared, and no specimens have been found for study.

Other instruments

Currently, a cone-shaped clay whistle called the "Pilo Xuhew" is made and used in the "Poh Xuhew" festival on September 14. The festival celebrates the first fruits, drives away hunger, and brings good food for the coming times.

About the Dances

Throughout the present work mention has been made of some traditional dances of the popti' group, for which reason only some notes that can be considered of complementary character will be consigned here. The first of them is the one that refers to the "Great

* Balvino Camposeco refers to it as Marimp ha.

Dances" which are: Toritos, Venados, Moros and Cortéz, which always have a "Jajuaw", considered as the owner of the dance although the term implies a greater conception. These people are the ones in charge of taking care of the books with the parliaments of the dance, the ones who supervise and organize, so in them is deposited the survival of this tradition. Entering the dance structure implies, on the part of the dancers, accepting a system of payment or quotas that is used for the rental of the costumes and for other elements of the paraphernalia that accompany the dance. When one person cannot cover this expense, it can be covered by two people, who in turn share the dance activity. Nowadays, the payment system is increasingly difficult and there have been occasions in which some dancers are paid by other volunteers who take charge of the payments.

The dance cycle usually lasts a year and has its maximum expression on the day of the Patronal Feast. This does not

imply that the days of the eve do not have the importance that seems to manifest itself on the day of the Patronal Feast.

In the case of dancing children, it is often due to promises parents made when they had health problems as children. The order of the adults' promises and devotions is different.

Of the Great Dances mentioned, the Deer Dance undoubtedly has the greatest number of pre-Columbian characteristics. Other dances, such as the Ur or Negros dance, accompanied by a tamborcito, and the Canal Che dance, accompanied by a guitar, violin, and tun, are performed during the Feast of Corpus Christi. These dances are considered minor because they do not require a complicated economic structure or rigorous rehearsals. They also have a "jajaw" and pre-Columbian characteristics. It is said that these dances are performed to ask for rain.

Twenty years ago, the structure of the

dances changed when a Morería was created in Jacaltenango. Julio José Nexh -Julio Silvestre- directed it. He had learned how to make traditional dance costumes in one of the Morerías of San Cristóbal Totonicapán. This made the costumes cheaper to rent and more accessible. The complex system of pilgrimage to Totonicapán in search of costumes disappeared. Many elements of the ritual structure continued to be preserved, such as the loss and carving of the costumes. Don Julio Silvestre indicated that, despite the facilities offered by this Moreria in the area -which provides services to communities in Mexico- the demand for costumes has diminished considerably.

Another type of dance has a more spontaneous character but still has certain formal elements. These are the "Xil" parody dances, which are generally performed during Carnival festivities. Another dance is the "Caxarej wil," which was performed during Carnival in Nentón and features lizards and scorpion costumes. Similarly, we learned about the "Baile de las Navajas," which is apparently associated with cockfighting.

We also learned about the "Baile del Salcaltuyo" and the "Pañuelo," the latter of which is remembered for its "Son Masaya." Finally, there is the regional or traditional dance, which is spontaneous and characterized by collective circular movement and improvisation.



The Popti' performing traditional dances, also called regional dances.

CONCLUSIONS

The structure of this work allows us to draw two conclusions: one regarding the change in the traditional group structure and the other regarding music. Regarding the former, we can refer to a situation of change that has been exacerbated by the establishment of communication routes, as well as the impact of Mexican media (radio and television), the only media received clearly and frequently in this region. This relationship with Mexico must be understood in light of the history of commercial line formation, which was initially based on the logic of pre-Columbian commercial routes and later became routes of conquest. There is a long tradition of traveling to Mexico, and the established routes have always worked well. Visits to this territory have also always been supported by family ties and relationships between the two countries, primarily from the town of Jacaltenango.

Currently, many Popti' have also immigrated in pursuit of the "American Dream." Once they have established themselves, they send remittances, which are generally used for construction. These remittances have given rise to new patterns in the design and use of materials, such as block, concrete, zinc sheets, and cast roofs, which have changed the physical appearance of the town.

According to LaFarge in his book, the weight of the arrival of the Protestant sects from the United States was already being felt in the region as of 1931, where he describes the problems that arose due to their continuous visits. Today, the situation has worsened, and the Popti' tradition has endured offenses ranging from the burning of its patrimony in the Royal Boxes to the demonization and prohibition of its rituals.

Regarding the musical and dance tradition, it has been found to undergo

accelerated processes of change that have had an increasing impact throughout its history. An exception to this dynamic of change driven by historical imprints is that of the refugees who were forced to flee in the '80s to save their lives. Here, forms of change have emerged that entail reconfirming identity. Despite this dynamic of change, one can still appreciate a "regional type" of Popti music, the most specific variant of which is the "Zuti" rhythm. "Barreño" type sones have also been reported, and we hope to clarify them phenomenologically soon. The most notable tradition of "musical style" is found in the sones de marimbas. However, much of the cultural heritage is expressed through music and dance, which reflect their unique worldview.

DISCOGRAPHY

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