



# *Popular Tradition*



Folklore Studies Center  
University of San Carlos of Guatemala



*"There is no art stranger than war:  
I have fought in 60 battles, and I assure  
you that I have learned nothing I did not  
already know from the very first ones."*

Napoleon

# *The Dance of Napoleon*

## *IN GUATEMALA*

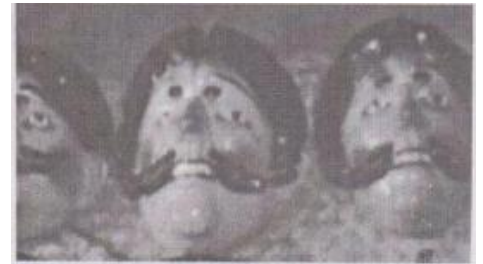
Napoleon Bonaparte (b. August 15, 1769), a native of Ajaccio on the island of Corsica, was the greatest military genius and conqueror of the modern era (19th and 20th centuries). For twenty years, he dominated world history with his legendary military campaigns and had dealings with all the contemporary monarchs of Europe during his time.

His military feats began with the conquest of Austria and Northern Italy in 1795. From that point on, he was believed to be invincible. Then, aiming to attack and defeat England, he set off for Egypt via the Mediterranean Sea, evading the watchful eye of British Admiral Nelson, with the ultimate goal of conquering India. The expedition included 460 warships, 40,000 soldiers, and a team of scientists tasked with studying the history of Egyptian civilization. However, after a

series of setbacks, he secretly returned to France, where he once again rose to power and assumed control of the government.

From that point on, Napoleon's glory grew even greater. He was a skilled organizer and an astute general. He reorganized the Treasury, oversaw public works, revitalized commerce, industry, and education. He reestablished the Catholic religion and commissioned the drafting of his renowned Napoleonic Code. All this was done while restoring a French Republic that had been left in disarray by the chaos following the Reign of Terror that succeeded the Revolution.

Napoleon was proclaimed Emperor in 1804, and his boundless ambition drove him to seek universal dominance. He continued to win battles, seizing



crowns and European territories, which he distributed among his brothers and relatives. Starting in 1807, he became determined to defeat the British at all costs by blocking their access to European trade. He even imprisoned Pope Pius VII, as the pontiff was seen as sympathetic to the British.

In 1808, Napoleon invaded Spain and Portugal, granting the Spanish throne to his brother Joseph Bonaparte. The Spanish, however, rebelled and after six years of warfare (1808–1814) managed to free themselves from French rule. This marked the beginning of Napoleon's decline. The Russians defeated his armies in 1812, and the European nations began to ally themselves against him.

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He finally lost his crown at the Battle of Leipzig in 1813 and was exiled to the island of Elba in 1814. He escaped from there and returned to power for a brief period known as the Hundred Days. However, the European nations once again declared war on him, and he was ultimately defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in Belgium by Admiral Wellington.

The British then exiled him to the remote island of Saint Helena in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, where he died six years later, on May 5, 1821.

### ORIGINAL VERSION OF THE DANCE OF NAPOLEON

*(Based on two original versions  
from San Miguel Dueñas and  
Siquinalá)*

This version is a fusion compiled by the author from two originals found in the towns of San Miguel Dueñas, Sacatepéquez, and Siquinalá, Escuintla, in the year 1992. The first was gathered by first-year students of the School of History at the University of San Carlos, and the second by a team composed of anthropologists from CONACULTA, Mexico, and the School of History, Guatemala, during the course of their respective research projects,

guided and supervised by the present author.

The form in which the verses were originally written has been preserved, with only corrections made to spelling and to the proper names of people, objects, and historical events. The collected originals are part of the archive of the Popular Choreology Area of the Center for Folkloric Studies at the University of San Carlos of Guatemala.

All the original versions of Guatemala's traditional dances narrate a specific story. These stories are the product of a synthesis of ancient legends or significant historical events that occurred in the past either within the communities themselves or in the broader history of humankind. Thus, events are recounted such as those of Charlemagne, the endless battles against the Arabs during the Reconquista of Spain, the trial and sentencing of Quiché Achí, the celebratory bullfights held in honor of patron saints, the buying and selling of cattle on Guatemala's coast, deer hunts, the conquest of Cuautematlan, the dance of the flyers, the worship of the serpent, the cult of corn, the annual visits of the giants, among others.

The case at hand concerns the final chapter in the story of

the formidable warrior who was Emperor of France and of Europe **Napoleon Bonaparte**. Our objective is to reveal a facet of Guatemala's cultural history, likely rooted in the republican era and the twentieth century, when Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, his exile on the island of Saint Helena, and his death shook the Western world. These events left a mark on various aspects of society and gave rise to legendary tales both admiring and critical surrounding the illustrious figure who is still considered the greatest military genius of all time.

In the Guatemalan context, an anonymous original text was created until now unpublished that narrates the trials of Napoleon after losing his final battle at Waterloo. This narrative became part of the oral tradition which, in Guatemala, crystallized into a dance in the style of the *Moros y Cristianos* (Moors and Christians) performances so widespread in our country.

Below is a synthesis of the events mentioned those referenced in both original texts drawn from biographies of Napoleon written by **Emil Ludwig** (1953), **Evgueni Tarle** (1963), and **Sean Brennek** (1974).

The Battle of Waterloo took place on June 18, 1815. On

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June 28, Napoleon headed for the port of Rochefort to embark for America. The French Minister of War had arranged two frigates for him at that port. Napoleon arrived in Rochefort on the morning of July 3, but upon attempting to board, he discovered that an English squadron was blocking all sea routes.

When some of his close advisors suggested fleeing in a small boat to evade English surveillance, Napoleon refused. On July 8, he boarded one of the frigates and sailed to anchor near the island of Aix, northeast of Rochefort. He disembarked and, at the request of the local inhabitants, reviewed the stationed troops. He then sent two of his officers, **Savary** and **Las Cases**, to ask the British whether he could set sail for America.

British Captain **Maitland** opposed the idea of allowing Napoleon to sail away, fearing that he might return once again to conquer Europe just as he had done after his first exile on Elba. Although General **Montholon** suggested sacrificing one of the frigates in a skirmish with the British to let Napoleon escape on the other, Napoleon firmly refused and decided instead to stay briefly on the island of Aix. Meanwhile, Captain **Maitland** offered to receive him aboard

the *Bellerophon* with full honors. However, Napoleon declined this and instead transferred to the *Northumberland*, on which he spent two and a half months en route to the island of Saint Helena, where he would spend the final six years of his life.

He was accompanied by his trusted lieutenants:

- Marshal Bertrand and his wife
- General Count Montholon and his wife
- General Gourgaud
- Count Las Cases and his son
- His valet Marchand among others, the Corsican servant Santini

Until April 1816, the island was under the command of British Admiral **Cockburn**. From then until Napoleon's death, it was governed by **Hudson Lowe**.

Napoleon spent his last days at a place called Longwood, not far from the military outpost of Jamestown the island's only town. He died in the evening at six o'clock, after dictating his will and several letters, at the age of 52, succumbing to an incurable illness.

### **History of Napoleon's Last War and the Great Admiral, King of England and Spain**

### **England and Spain**

1. Great Admiral
2. Captain Maitland
3. General Liverpool
4. General Sir Hudson Lowe (Secretary)
5. General George Cockburn (Governor)
6. Court Jester Don Cabbage

### **France**

1. Emperor Napoleon
2. Marshal Bertrand
3. General Count de Montholon
4. General Gourgaud
5. Count Las Cases
6. Court Jester Don Camote

### **Admiral:**

Oh, famous generals!

Defense of England

For those torrents are astonishing, shaking the very earth it is time that all together, now in burning crimson, we rise from our graves and offer our chests to the front, for the barbarous Napoleon comes with all his armies... He seeks to plunder our homeland for the treasures it holds but he shall not succeed while I still draw breath. I shall make him repent with the punishment I shall deliver! My soldiers swell in number, England's battalions grow. If he brought down Fernando,

then I shall bring him down  
tenfold.  
In defense of Europe,  
I offer up my interests,  
and also my arms and strength,  
which shall never fade away.  
Now I want you all to tell me  
those who offer me their  
loyalty  
will you leave me all alone,  
or shall we all strike as one?

**All respond:**

We all offer ourselves, my lord,  
to your exalted Highness,  
to shed our blood  
in defense of our homeland.

**Admiral:**

For it has been prophesied  
that triumphant Spain  
shall reign until Judgment Day,  
crying out for the law of  
"grace."

**Don Cabbage:**

Well, that is what we want  
we do not want freedom.  
Ever since we were baptized,  
we've gone without confessing.



Faction of the Dance of Napoleon Representing Napoleon and His Loyal  
Generals. San Miguel Dueñas, Sacatepéquez, 1992.  
*Photograph by the author.*

**(Napoleon, lying down and  
asleep, wakes up, sits up and  
speaks)**

What is this heavy sleep,  
steeped in anguish,  
when I know no fear  
nor its color ever known?  
Even Napoleon Bonaparte,  
terror of the depths,  
is shaken by a sudden jolt  
but I think it is feigned.  
For such a bold man as I,  
never seen by the ages  
since the world began,  
since time had a beginning.  
Let my squadrons march  
in case I'm still dreaming,  
to the sound of a general's call,  
that my senses be awakened.

**(They sound the general's call,  
and Napoleon rises, marches  
with his ranks, and speaks  
from his position)**

A sudden jolt  
brings me to such confusion  
from a dream vividly painted  
that foretold my death.  
What is this, Napoleon?  
Wake up, see the danger!  
It is not wise to sleep  
when the enemy is near!

**All speak:**

Have no fear at all,  
Napoleon, the proudest of all,  
for you hold within your hands  
the entire world in thrall



**Napoleon says:**

One must not trust in fortune  
remember this always:  
that one named Francis Stephen  
was killed by his loyal friend.

**Don Camote:**

Well said, my dear little master.  
When will we come to know  
if our ill fate so wishes  
that we may fall low,  
and they seize us by the hands  
and cast us into Petén.

**(Napoleon's ranks circle  
around. Then Napoleon  
speaks):**

Ah, brave Frenchmen,  
forged in the crucible of law,  
the time has come to cast away  
all wrath, all rage, and furious  
awe  
against all Christendom  
strip it of its adoration,  
of all its false gods  
that were formed by human  
hands.  
Destroy all religions,  
for the times already foretell  
it;  
those monasteries must now  
serve  
as stables, no longer sacred.  
For the illustrious Napoleon,  
with his armies now  
approaches,  
and those so-called churches  
shall be turned into barracks.  
Every sign, I believe,  
already warns us so:  
those false edifices  
are driven by greedy desire.

I swear by my knowledge  
and my sovereign power  
no one who crosses my path  
shall be left in this world.  
I'll impose my laws  
to avenge my many grievances,  
at the cost of my boldness  
and this fierce, relentless arm.  
In my bloody battles,  
I shook the world awake.  
I caused a fiery comet  
to appear in heaven's face  
as I stormed the strongholds  
of Spain and all its lands.  
It was I who put the Catholic  
king in terrible captivity,  
tore off his crown  
and dragged it through the dust,  
showing once and for all  
that no power is absolute.  
He who now sings of triumph  
tomorrow may be undone.  
Let Fernando VII serve  
as a lesson and a fool's mirror.  
After I dethroned him,

he was left mad, without spirit  
a memory for the ages,  
a warning to the reckless.  
Let us press on with our  
victories,  
tearing every kingdom down,  
and let the central councils  
decide who shall wear the  
crown.

**Maitland**

At the cost of this arm,  
I promise you victory  
I will bring France to its end,  
and still, I won't be satisfied.

**Liverpool enters**

My most powerful King,  
great admiral and warrior,  
here stands a loyal vassal  
ready for any endeavor  
Thirty thousand infantrymen  
march at my side



Dialogue from the English camp. In the background, a child can be seen holding the identification sign attached to the banner bearing the image of a Virgin. *San Miquel Dueñas, 1992. Photo by the author.*



and just as many cavalry  
to guard your mighty empire.  
For I know that Napoleon  
intends to lay siege  
to all of England  
¿How can this be?  
I swear by my own name  
and I vow with all my honor  
that I will bring France to ruin  
and the whole world along with  
it.

Against Napoleon  
I unleash thunder and lightning,  
for he is a destroyer of crowns,  
laying waste to so many  
kingdoms.  
So let us take up arms  
and together march forth,  
to destroy and to battle  
those wicked armies.

### **Admiral**

My brave Liverpool,  
I trust in your nobility,  
that with your valor alone,  
this battle shall be mine.

### **Liverpool**

I promise you, my lord,  
with no hint of fantasy,  
to finish off Napoleon  
and his entire family.

### **Sir Hudson speaks**

Illustrious King Admiral,  
of unmatched power,  
ruler of nations,  
of the mightiest empires



Another Dialogue in the Same Faction. 1992. Photo by the Author.

As it is from Asia and Samaria,  
Africa and England as well,  
they grant you the noble name  
of Great Victor in war and  
flame.

Forty thousand skilled hunters  
I bring for your defense and  
thunder

General Sir Hudson  
stands firm for your protection.

For the Kingdom of Brittany  
is the root of my legacy.

They have sung of my brave  
deeds

on these lands and across the  
seas.

So tell me if you require  
my service and my fire.

Admiral:

My General Sir Hudson

I trust in your fine nobility,  
for I shall emerge victorious  
with your mere availability.

### **Sir Hudson speaks**

Like the fiercest roaring lion  
I shall march out of Britain.  
I give my word to Napoleon  
He shall not win another war.

### **Sir George Governor:**

Illustrious Monarch,  
mirror of England's might,  
astonishment to all of France  
and venom to Napoleon's  
pride,  
here stands Sir George before  
you  
with twenty thousand Saracens,  
all dressed for war,  
armored in steel with no  
pretense.

**Admiral:**

Brave Governor,  
yours is the honor due  
you always hold your ground  
and make your name shine true.

**Sir George:**

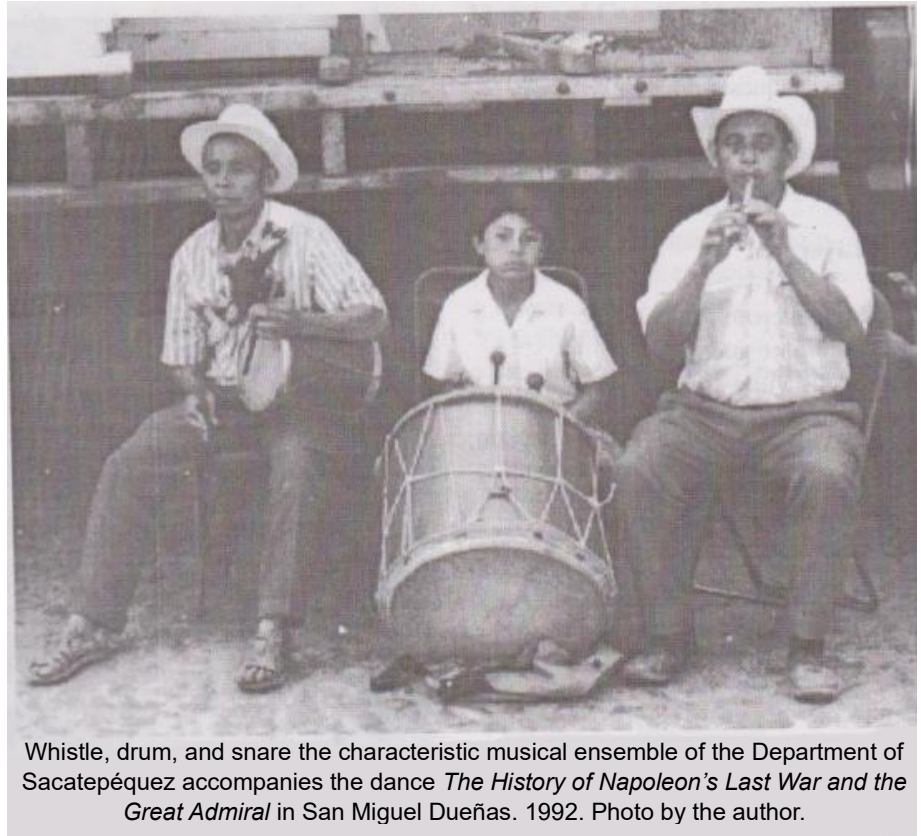
I promise you, my Lord,  
to serve you all my days,  
and forever shall I be  
the wonder of that misty place.

**Don Cabbage:**

Mighty Lord,  
great admiral of war,  
here stands a soldier  
whose hair stands up from afar  
for I've never seen a battle  
where I didn't fall asleep  
though awake, I still don't  
fight,  
I just run and disappear.  
But this I swear to you:  
if in the field I meet Napoleon,  
with this great machete of  
mine, I'll kill him from a  
distance. So, use me as you will  
make me the very last one.  
But don't send me to the front...  
or I'll get myself out of fear.

**Admiral**

My valiant Cabbage,  
who shows his gallant flair,  
you shall always lead the  
charge  
alongside the hunters there.



Whistle, drum, and snare the characteristic musical ensemble of the Department of Sacatepéquez accompanies the dance *The History of Napoleon's Last War and the Great Admiral* in San Miguel Dueñas. 1992. Photo by the author.

**Cabbage:**

Now that I really dislike  
Lord, don't count me in, I pray!  
I might just take a cannonball  
and not live another day.

**(Napoleon's line marches,  
and Napoleon enters)**

**Napoleon speaks:**

My brave generals,  
advance and do not fear,  
for you already know well  
the way I've always led.  
Times are changing now,  
the signs could not be clearer.  
Let's destroy every kingdom  
on Earth and its whole sphere.  
The crowns of the

**Mohammedans**

I shall cast beneath my feet.

**(Bertrand marches in and  
speaks with Napoleon)**

My Lord, as powerful as you  
are,  
we can carry out  
all you have declared  
with the utmost precision.  
Let not a single parish house  
remain standing in the world;  
let the clergy comply  
with the laws that you  
command starting with Europe  
for it is the capital  
of the Spanish Crown  
and of all humanity.  
Now you clearly understand  
the plan I aim to shape  
to destroy all kings



and let you alone rule,  
so you shall be the president  
of all national affairs,  
tearing down old customs  
and their foolish superstitions,  
stripping them of their vain  
religion casting them into ruin  
until they are brought low  
and you will see the nations  
all calling you their equal.  
The battalions will grow,  
and you shall gain more power.

### **Napoleon**

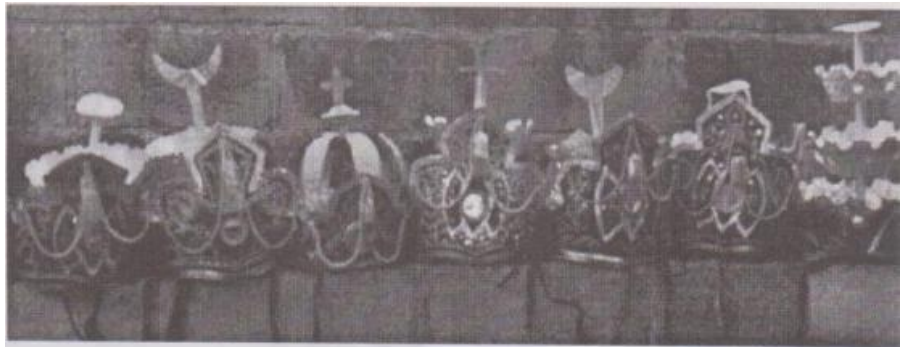
Famed Count Bertrand,  
you shall be the one to lead.  
The French battalions  
are now under your command.

### **Bertrand**

In carrying out your command,  
I shall promptly proceed  
you shall gain more merit  
by the strength of Bertrand's  
arm.

### **Montholon**

Most powerful Lord,  
by your unrivaled might,  
here stands Montholon,  
who brings the world to obey.



Here we have the crowns worn by the dancers in the Dance of Napoleon from the Municipality of Siquinalá, Department of Escuintla. Note the crescents and crosses, which symbolize "Moors and Christians." 1993. Photo by the author.

Let them submit to your Law  
without excuse or delay  
and forget forevermore  
their so called Law of Grace.  
And whoever dares refuse,  
I shall commit such slaughter  
run them through with blades,  
bringing upon them such  
misfortune that they shall be  
condemned for all eternity  
and not even holy Liberty  
shall grant them absolution.  
So send forth your commands  
across the entire world,  
for Paris is the capital  
of all the universe.  
Let the drums now sound,  
strike up a general call,  
and at the beat of drumsticks  
the world shall bow and fall.

### **Napoleon**

Brave Montholon,  
such is the delight you bring  
you cherish what I envision,  
you stir my heart within.

### **Montholon**

I vow I shall fulfill it with  
matchless courage and will.

Either your law is fulfilled  
or I shall lay waste to the entire  
world.

### **Gourgaud enters**

Valiant General,  
invincible Napoleon,  
wonder of the nations,  
terror of all Europe  
the most prodigious man,  
of supreme intellect.  
In council of war,  
none can rival your might,  
being the most illustrious  
that liberty has ever borne.  
There's been no equal through  
the ages,  
since the world's very dawn  
you who sealed the abyss  
of uttermost anarchy,  
who brought civility to France  
and enlightenment to the world.  
Your exploits, brave King and  
Champion outshine all others  
beneath the sun.  
Here I offer this arm  
to magnify your glory  
for in every bitter conflict  
I have emerged victorious.

## Napoleon

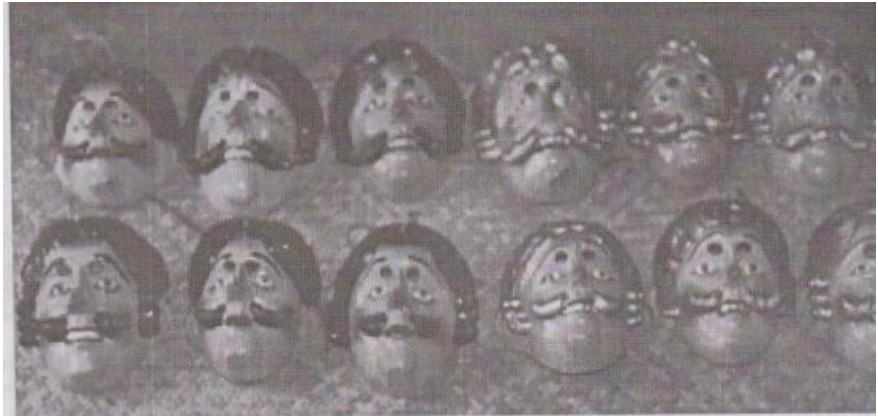
My valiant general  
who brings me such renown,  
you shall remain etched forever  
in the portrait of my heart.

## Gourgaud

I stand ready to serve you  
with all my battalion,  
pledging for your cause  
my soul, my life, my very  
heart.

## Count Las Cases

My valiant general,  
mighty Lord  
by your arm you earned  
the title of Emperor.  
Here stands Count Las Cases,  
head of the battalion,  
at your feet, my Lord  
as you well know my worth.  
Seventy thousand artillerymen  
I bring in your defense  
disciplined in warfare,  
they rally to your cause.  
We'll destroy the world entire  
should it stand in our way,  
and let your name resound  
as the conqueror of all.  
Worry not for currency,  
for I have made a plan:  
not a single sacred vessel  
shall remain unminted, my  
Lord. So let the alarm be  
sounded, let the drumbeat roar  
and may the trumpets echo  
the call to slaughter evermore.



Here are the masks from the same dance. 1993. Photo by the author.

## Napoleon

Brave Count Las Cases,  
I trust in your resolve,  
that you shall not fail me  
until we die or conquer.

## Count Las Cases

Do not doubt, my lord,  
for this I vow to you  
I'll keep on fighting fiercely  
three days after I'm dead too.

## Don Camote

Valiant Napoleon  
most courageous of warriors,  
here stands a loyal vassal  
who strikes terror through the  
village don't ask my name  
aloud for it's so fearsome and  
wild that, upon its mere  
mention even temples could  
come crumbling.

## Napoleon

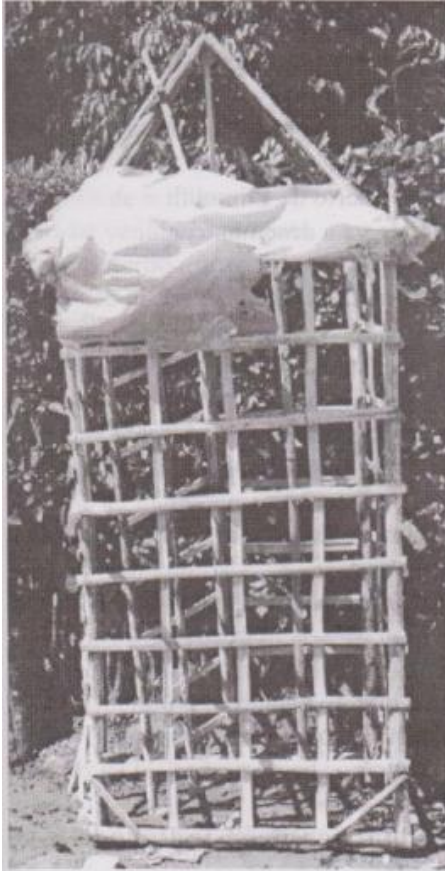
Speak it for my knowledge,  
I shall hear you most  
attentively.

## Don Camote

I'll spell it out slowly,  
to soften the fright it provokes,  
for if I say it outright,  
the whole town may collapse.  
Don Camote, Don Camote,  
the bravest of brave men,  
even vultures take flight  
when they see me grab this  
machete men scream in terror  
and coyotes begin to howl  
Now, I may not go to war  
it's a rather well-known fact  
for I fear Don Repollo,  
because I know he's a tough  
one but even so, I am brave too  
I devour two hundred chickens  
and a thousand eggs in one go.  
This, my lord, is no jest  
I could destroy an army  
without even drawing my blade  
just with my mighty arms.

## Napoleon

If you can take down an army,  
as brave as you claim to be,  
then you shall go ahead of all  
so that none of my men may  
fall.



This is the prison where Napoleon's generals are held. Siquinalá, Escuintla. 1993.  
Photo by the author.

### **Don Camote**

Go ahead now that I won't  
That kind of courage I lack.  
Let the battalion march up front  
I'll stay in the rear snacking.

### **(Napoleon speaks from his position)**

Because I wronged my own  
son, this is the fate that I now  
face all my battalions  
have turned against me in  
disgrace. There is much  
bitterness

and I must pay for it this way.  
The ministerial courts  
I can no longer applaud or  
obey. So let us leave Paris now,  
without the slightest delay,  
and retreat instead  
to the estate of Malmaison.

### **(All the French speak together)**

It is now quite clear that  
General Napoleon, who began  
in fortune, ended in misfortune  
and alone.

### **(Napoleon and his line march toward Malmaison; once in place, he says)**

My brave generals,  
you who still heed my word,  
the schemes I've devised  
have been the cause of my fall.  
Yet since we now stand  
in the land of salvation,  
it is better that we depart  
for the port of Rochefort  
a place of providence,  
where two frigates await,  
fully prepared for us  
to set sail to England's gate.  
There I shall seek asylum.

### **(Napoleon's line responds, then marches to position)**

It is better that we depart  
for the port of Rochefort,  
a place of providence,  
where we shall be better off.

### **(Maitland enters dancing and speaks to the Admiral)**

My lord, if you grant me leave  
and lend me your attention,  
I shall mask my true intentions  
with a clever little invention.

### **Admiral**

Speak, Captain Maitland,  
since it is to my advantage,  
do not hesitate  
it is a favor I grant you.

### **Maitland (steps forward defiantly)**

The plan I have devised  
to win this encounter,  
is that I already know  
where the barbaric Napoleon is.  
With the superior power  
granted by my General,  
I will soon depart  
for the port of Rochefort,  
deceiving him with a ruse  
thus it must be  
claiming that England  
calls him to rise once more.

### **Admiral**

Your plan pleases me well,  
and should you succeed,  
you shall be more highly  
honored by the crown you see  
before you. Aboard the  
*Bellerophon* you will soon  
depart and take a thousand  
more frigates as your escort  
and guard.



**Maitland departs for the port of Fortball. He boards and speaks to General Liverpool, who steps forward:**

**Maitland to Liverpool:**

My valiant Liverpool,  
without any delay,  
carry this false message  
to General Napoleon,  
and told him directly  
that I am a loyal friend,  
and that at the port of Fortball  
I await him aboard the  
*Bellerophon*.

**Liverpool speaks:**

Sir, with your permission,  
I shall leave without delay,  
and soon you will have the  
reply from the illustrious  
Napoleon.

**(Liverpool goes to speak with Napoleon. Maitland waits on the *Bellerophon*.)**

Most illustrious General  
and noble Napoleon,  
the great Captain Maitland  
has sent you this note (he hands  
it over), and he also says with  
words that if you wish to  
embark, he is aboard the  
*Bellerophon*, awaiting you  
at the port of Fortball.

**Liverpool gives Napoleon the note. Napoleon receives it, invites him to sit at his side, and speaks:**

Come and sit by my side,  
for a note from a friend  
should never be dismissed.  
Now, my allies,  
attend and listen closely  
to the message sent to me  
by the ministerial court.

**(Napoleon opens the note and reads aloud)**

Most noble Napoleon, gallant  
and wise,  
whose courage and mind make  
the nations arise,  
by your bold hand and political  
flame,  
the world is enlightened, you  
carry great fame.  
The Court of fair England has  
reached one accord:  
to name you our  
monarch, our crown, and  
our Lord.  
By valor and virtue,  
you're worthy indeed  
to reign o'er our  
kingdom and bravely to  
lead.  
If fortune allows you to  
grant your consent,  
we offer allegiance with  
hearts fully bent.  
The ship *Bellerophon*  
waits at Fortball's shore,  
with orders to serve you  
and honor you more.  
You'll want for no  
comfort, no care shall  
you miss  
we welcome you, Sire,

with friendship and bliss.  
So countless deep bows in  
goodwill we send,  
and pray your long reign shall  
know never an end.

**All the French speak**

This chance, so blessed, we  
shall not delay the Fortball Port  
we march today

**Napoleon to Liverpool:**

Tell noble Maitland I accept  
with grace,  
no written words shall take my  
place.  
I am the answer, bold and true,  
and I shall come my whole  
retinue too.  
May God protect him, strong



Image of Saint Catherine, patroness of Siquinalá, Esquintla. According to religious legend, she beheaded her father for refusing to convert to Christianity. Notice her father's head at the feet of the statue. 1993. Photo by the author.

and wise,  
until before him, I arise.

**(Liverpool marches, speaks to Maitland, and takes his place)**

**Liverpool**

Brave and valiant captain mine,  
your cunning plan has worked  
just fine. No written words  
were sent ahead for him, in  
person, comes instead.  
He'll soon be here, without  
delay, since he accepted right  
away.

**Maitland**

Noble Liverpool, so true,  
this joy is ours, for me and you.  
God's judgments are beyond  
our sight  
none knows His ways, nor  
reads Him right.

**(Napoleon to his generals)**

My faithful generals, proud and  
strong, the time to leave won't  
take too long.  
We march now to the waiting  
shore, to honor Maitland and  
much more.

**(All the French)**

Indeed, your will we now obey  
yet traitorous seems this grand  
display.  
For he who dares not face our  
might,

now hides his sword in cloaks  
of night.

**Napoleon**

Fear not, nor let your spirits  
sink for moral truths make  
clear the link between a friend  
and spouse so dear, it's often  
friends who persevere.

**(Napoleon marches toward the port. Now speaks Don Camote)**

**Don Camote**

I shall not follow in your track  
I'll take a different, safer back.  
What if this be just a ploy  
And I'm the fool they seek to  
cloy.

**(Napoleon arrives and says)**

**Napoleon**

Noble Captain, brave and wise,  
may fortune lift you to the  
skies. Behold me now, in flesh  
and form, with all my host.

**Maitland speaks**

How glad I am to see you,  
noble General renowned,  
let us now clasp hands,  
so you may come aboard.

**Napoleon**

I have come upon your deck,  
across both sea and land,  
under the protection

of my kingdom's laws and  
hand.

**Maitland**

Now while you find some rest,  
we must set our sails anew,  
toward the port of Plymouth  
to arrive in England true.

**Napoleon**

But one thing I have noticed,  
and it fills me with surprise:  
why is the Bellerophon  
in full warlike guise

**Maitland**

It is enough to make you doubt,  
judging by these signs you see,  
but now surrender yourself  
this task belongs to me.  
Let Repollo now set forth  
without delay or hesitation,  
to bear the news with urgency  
to the Superior Court's station,  
and declare that now is  
captured the great General  
Napoleon.

**(Repollo steps forward)**

My lord, I go this moment  
without the least delay,  
to plead and make his case  
perhaps they'll grant him grace.

**Repollo**

Famous King Admiral,  
I bring this report to our  
Captain Maitland

---

has done a noble sort.  
 He has captured Napoleon,  
 and where he soon shall go  
 is to the port of Plymouth,  
 where he'll be brought ashore.  
 Admiral speaks  
 Then let him be secured well,  
 let no chance for escape  
 remain,  
 for once he's back in battle,  
 how deeply we'd feel the pain!  
 (Repollo returns to deliver the  
 reply)  
 To Maitland, Repollo says:  
 The King Admiral declares  
 you must hold him tight and  
 sure, for once in open  
 campaign, his wrath we'd not  
 endure.

**Napoleon angrily to his men:**

Not only do I protest  
 in sleepless shock, I cry  
 I protest the peace of heaven,  
 and that of humankind.  
 Without a single struggle,  
 my sacred rights denied,  
 I now stand here, a captive,  
 my freedom cast aside.  
 I came of my own will,  
 yet now I'm held in chains  
 I scarce recall the moment,  
 nor how I crossed the plains.  
 To the *Bellerophon* I came,  
 o'er land and sea I strode,  
 to find myself a prisoner  
 upon England's noble road.  
 I came to meet a captain,  
 so young, so bold, so brash,  
 who claimed he bore the orders  
 to take me, with my staff,  
 unto the land of England.

I never dreamed such shame  
 to be betrayed so deeply  
 beneath a friendly name.  
 I trusted, came in honor,  
 but now must firmly say:  
 from England's pledged  
 allegiance  
 I must turn and walk away.  
 Maitland  
 At last, brave General,  
 you've seen the bitter truth:  
 the root of all betrayal  
 now lies bare before you.  
 Come, let us proceed to  
 England,  
 my valiant Napoleon.

**(Maitland presents Napoleon  
 before the Admiral and says)**

Undeclared King Admiral,  
 mighty man of state,  
 here stands General Napoleon  
 before you, face to fate.

(Napoleon surrendering to the  
 Admiral)

**Napoleon**

A humbled, weary general  
 kneels now at your feet  
 with all my faithful comrades  
 command me as you please.  
 For I set foot on this soil  
 in hope, not dread or fear,  
 trusting England's laws and  
 honor, by Maitland brought me  
 here.

**Admiral**

It was your fate, unfortunate

one, to fall into our hands this  
 time.  
 You were the one who waged  
 war in days now past  
 upon the English land.  
 A debt long owed must now be  
 paid with sighs and sorrow,  
 to the Ministerial Court  
 they shall decide your fate  
 tomorrow.

**(All English Ministers  
 proclaim the sentence)**

Then let our sentence be  
 proclaimed he shall be burned  
 alive in flame.

**Napoleon**

To him who toppled crowns  
 and kings, you now decree this  
 cruel end I appeal this harsh  
 decree exile me instead to a  
 prisoned destiny.

**Admiral**

The sentence shall be revoked  
 it was indeed too grave a yoke.  
 He shall be sent to end his days  
 upon the isle of Saint Helena,  
 where soldiers stand on  
 constant guard, alert and ever  
 watchful there,  
 lest he escape once again  
 and return to reign with iron  
 flair and let his four devoted  
 men, his generals of flame and  
 fame, receive the same in just  
 reward to share their master's  
 shame.



**Maitland**

Then let us sail to that lone rock,  
to Saint Helena's windswept shore, where slowly he shall waste away, a shadow of the war before  
for all his crimes, his wrath, his lore.

**(They are led away as prisoners to the Isle of Saint Helena, their faces sorrowful and resigned. As they walk, Napoleon speaks)**

Oh Fortune, where have you gone.  
Who could have told me then how swiftly you would turn again, your promises so quickly fade, your loyalty, a fleeting shade.  
Yet I do not grieve this exile's cost, I only bid farewell, for all is lost. Farewell, brave land of proud decree Cape of France... Farewell to thee.

**Don Camote**

Goodbye, dear Papa Napoleon, I warned you just the day before eyes that once watched you depart shall never see you anymore. But I'm coming right behind lest they kill you out of spite, at least to bring your water and stir your chocolate right.

**(They arrive at the island. Maitland speaks to Governor Sir Hudson)**

Valiant Governor, strong and wise, of this island lost in skies, you now remain upon this rock, guarding day and night the lock and with the jailer by your side dear Repollo, ever kind you'll watch with care and duty sworn, for now you both are oath-bound sworn.

**Sir Hudson**

I shall fulfill this noble charge, brave Captain Maitland, bold and large, for this decree, the Court has laid, and what it says must be obeyed. I'll bolt the gates, reinforce the bars, lest cunning minds unleash new wars.

**(Captain Maitland and his men depart. Repollo speaks to the prisoners as they enter)**

Now step on in, no need to weep it's not my fault you fall so deep. You've landed in my grasp, you see the devil's got you now... not me.

**(Repollo locks the prison gate.)****Napoleon, enraged, speaks:**

I am no longer what I was  
What is this, Napoleon

Was I not the one who gave  
The Revolution its bright sun  
all was beneath my rule,  
by my laws and my command,  
I ennobled every people,  
placed the crown in monarchs' hands.  
They shall say this much of me:  
That it was my mighty name  
That sent word to all the vessels, that with eloquence and fame  
I rose to highest glory,  
In my reign of iron will,  
Yet one thing shall be remembered  
I chained Freedom, and stood still.

**(Bertrand speaks sadly to the Governor)**

Brave Sir Hudson, noble warden, if a favor may be won, I come now to make petition  
Let your jailer be the one to carry this humble message to the admiral's stronghold,  
For though I do not write, let my heart and voice be bold.

**Governor**

You may send him with my blessing; I allow it with good grace.

**Repollo**

At your orders, General  
Just tell me time and place.

**Bertrand**

---

Go and tell the secretary  
Of the warlike admiral's hand,  
That I write not from low pride  
But for lack of ink at hand.  
Beg he speak now on our  
behalf, hear our human, tearful  
cries if no mercy now is  
granted, in this island, we shall  
die. And for my General,  
Napoleon, I must also beg once  
more send him to a gentler  
climate here, he fades from  
shore to shore.

**(Repollo goes to Secretary Sir Hudson)**

My General, Sir Hudson,  
A poor prisoner sends this plea  
he did not write from lowliness,  
But the ink denied him, you  
see. He bids me beg for mercy,  
That you might intercede  
For here, upon this island,  
Their lives shall surely bleed.  
And for his noble General,  
He makes one final cry to move  
him to a kinder land  
For here, he fades and dies.

**Sir Hudson**

Then go and tell those generals,  
So brave and full of grace,  
That when I reach the island,  
Relief shall take its place.

**(Repollo returns and speaks to Bertrand)**

I've fulfilled your request,  
And this is what he said

once he reaches this rough  
land, your suffering shall be  
shed.

**Bertrand**

I live in deep gratitude  
May God repay your aid.

**(Sir Hudson dances out and addresses Governor Sir Cockburn)**

Valiant Governor of power,  
I bring an order writ it  
commands the allied generals  
Be released without delay or  
split. But first, before they  
walk, a solemn vow must be  
heard let them speak their  
loyalty,  
And bind it with their word.

**(The Secretary departs, and Governor Sir Cockburn asks the oath)**

Now speak do you all swear  
Never again to raise the sword,  
To live beneath the law and  
care of England and her lord.

**(The four allies speak in unison)**

We all do swear, my lord,  
To never speak of war again.  
We pledge to live beneath the  
laws Of England's royal reign.

**(The allies exit, all but Napoleon. The jailer Repollo**

**escorts them out. They turn to Napoleon and speak.)**

Farewell, noble Emperor,  
Hear the sorrow in our cries.  
Though parting, we still hope  
To see your star arise.

**(Napoleon speaks sadly)**

Farewell, beloved friends,  
Now pain shall be my fate.  
These are our final glances  
You'll see me no more at the  
gate.

**(The allies march away to their posts. Sir Hudson addresses them.)**

This revolution now decrees  
Napoleon shall be stripped with  
pain by mandate of the Russian  
lords, this punishment shall  
remain.

He shall be drained of water,  
And slowly waste away  
One ounce of bread his ration  
Each sorrowful, bitter day.  
Let this serve all men as lesson:  
Those who scorn their God  
shall pay.

You shall bear responsibility  
For the Emperor's lonely end  
He'll be buried far from honor,  
In Saint Helena, condemned.

**(Sir Hudson returns to his station. Sir Cockburn speaks to Napoleon.)**

Though I'd wish to ease your  
pain and grant you clemency,

The orders stand too clearly to  
disobey risks even me.

**Napoleon**

I do not blame you, no  
But that cruel, unyielding foe:  
A jailer in his nature,  
A hangman in his soul.  
Now he holds my life in hands  
As cold as prison stone.  
I protest once more, and mourn  
That I'll be buried all alone  
Not among my proudest men,  
But far from France, my own.  
Farewell, homeland of my  
birth,  
Where I rose and fell with  
pride.  
Farewell, beloved comrades  
Let me now behold a crucifix,  
For He, the truest God,  
I seek in these last hours,  
To beg for pardon ere I die,  
Knowing death is near and  
nigh.

**(Repollo gives him the  
crucifix. Napoleon receives it  
and speaks.)**

O Divine Redeemer mine,  
Ease this agony of soul.  
All I've done here in the world,  
Forgive it, Lord, as whole.  
You forgave the sin of Adam  
Though his fault did all  
condemn,  
You forgave Saint Peter too,  
Though he thrice denied Your  
name.  
And when Longinus pierced  
Your side,

You healed his blinded eyes.  
If these were granted mercy,  
Lord,  
Then I implore, hear my cries.  
Now as death draws close to  
me, forgive me, Lord, as well.  
And in this last contrition,  
Before Your feet I fall and  
dwell.  
This is my final breath,  
My final whispered voice:  
France, O France farewell,  
farewell!

**(Napoleon dies.)**

**(Don Camote bursts in,  
crying, opens the prison door  
and weeps aloud)**

Oh, my dear Tatita Napoleón,  
It's true he's really gone.  
But one thing gives me peace:  
I saw he saved his soul at last.

**(Sir Cockburn dances off to  
report to the Admiral)**

Unvanquished Admiral and  
King,  
A message I bring to you  
This grave news I must declare:  
Napoleon is dead and through.

**(He returns to his place the  
Admiral speaks)**

Then the sentence I decree  
For that infamous Napoleon:  
Let them drag him to the fields,  
Show no trace of pity shown.

**All speaks**

Let the order be fulfilled,  
Yes, let justice now be done!  
Let the traitor lie discarded,  
Left beneath the blazing sun.

**(The Spaniards carry off  
Napoleon with a funeral  
march, laying him in the  
plain. They speak in  
mourning tones)**

With the help of mighty God,  
At long last the war is through  
Down with France, long live  
Spain and long live England  
too.

**(Both lines of dancers echo in  
chorus)**

Down with France, long live  
Spain and long live England  
too.

**Don Repollo**

Now Napoleon is dead  
Let the whole wide world take  
note for in this joyful  
celebration, there was one more  
traitor's stroke.

**Don Camote**

Yes, he's dead, and that's quite  
clear no more pain for him to  
bear and thus concludes the  
story of the martyr of Saint  
Helena fair.

---



**(Both lines march and offer praise first the Spaniards, then the English)**

**Praise of the Spaniards Line of the Admiral:**

Farewell, Great Queen and Lady, source of mercies without end, from our hearts we beg you now, forgive your faithful servants.  
Let your grace descend in favor  
On the English and their kin,  
Who today proclaim your glory, do not forsake them, O Lady, when death's hour shall begin.

**Final Blessing and End:**

And may all the faithful people  
Raise their voices joyfully  
Long live for all eternity  
The Empress Mary, Queen most high.

**THE  
END**



**Ethnographic Data of Both Dances**

Place: **Siquinalá**, Escuintla  
Owner and Representative:  
**Manuel Martínez**  
Age: 53 years old in 1993.  
Born: Siquinalá, in 1940  
Parents: **Pedro Martínez Itzol**  
and **Juliana Martínez**

He has been the owner and representative of this dance and others since 1989, the year his father passed away. His father was the owner and representative of seven traditional dances, including the Dance of **Napoleon**, all of which he had learned from his father, Don Manuel's grandfather, Don José Braulio Martínez.

– Manuel Martínez has been dancing since he was 16 years old, meaning he has been dancing for 37 years, starting in 1956. He doesn't remember which dance he began with, but he has performed all seven dances taught by his father and has played almost every character. He has two children, a son and a daughter, but neither will carry on the tradition, as one lives in Palín and the other in the United States.

– Regarding the Dance of Napoleon, it had not been performed for eight years until this year, 1993, for the festival of Siquinalá, which takes place on November 23rd, the day of Saint Catalina.

– Rehearsals begin two months in advance, and Don Manuel notifies the dancers when the meetings start.

– The opening prayer was held on the night of November 22nd by a woman named **Cristina Cotzal**, who oversees praying and "bringing blessings to us and to all the participants." She recites prayers that "she keeps in her mind." She lives in Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, Escuintla. The final prayer is done on the 26th, when they enter the church so that a group of women may pray and sing the "Salve."

– As for the costumes, they were rented in San Cristóbal Totonicapán at Q100.00 per outfit, meaning Q1,200.00 for the full set of 12 costumes. The town is reached via the southern coast through Quetzaltenango. The rental period was four days, and the costumes were to be returned on November 29th. They were second-hand. Each dancer contributed Q50.00 toward their costume.

– In this dance, a cage called the "tower" is used, measuring approximately 1.5 square meters, in which, during the performance, four dancers representing French characters are imprisoned one by one. The cage is made of bamboo and caulote wood, and a new one is built every year. It is not used in the dances called *David* and *La Conquista*, but it is used in others such as *Azarín* and *Santa Catalina*.

– There are twelve characters in total six French and six English. No women participate. The English characters are the Admiral, the Chamberlain, Chigüichón, Alcohol, the Governor, and Juepuey. The French characters are Napoleon, Beltrán, the Count of Casas, Mantobolán, Tosedoldón, and Camote.

– In this dance, all wear red trousers with stripes and tassels. Napoleon wears a blue military jacket with crossed bands; the next character wears a purple jacket, another a blue one, another green, the second-to-last again purple, and the last one green. The masks are cowboy-style, and the hats are Napoleonic (two-pointed) with feathers. All carry swords and handkerchiefs. The English Admiral carries a blue and white flag, a four-tiered crown, and wears a large mask. His cape is like those used in the Deer Dance, his trousers are puffed and yellow, and he wears a red coat, a sword, and handkerchiefs. The rest of his group wears black coats with crossed bands, swords with handkerchiefs, and Napoleonic hats. The second-to-last in line also carries a cross.

– As for the music, a drum and a flute (pito) are used. The musicians have always come from the town of Palín, Escuintla, where many musicians know the traditional music for these dances.

The flute player is named Luis García Raxgua, born in Palín in 1920. He is 73 years old and has been coming to play in Siquinalá for 30 years. He learned to play only by ear. He plays two dances: *Napoleon* and another called *Drying the Flowers* (*Secando las flores*). He also knows how to play *El negrito* on the marimba, which he used to perform when he went to Palencia 22 years ago.

– “I learned the *sones de Napoleón* from the musicians of Santa María de Jesús. I also learned to make my own flutes with six holes, using wax from sugarcane.”

– Don Agustín (?) is the drum player. Born in Palín in 1926, he is now 67 years old. He has been playing the drums for 20 years. He learned by ear, listening to drums being played in Santa María de Jesús and in Palín. The drum belongs to Don Luis García, the flute player, who bought it already made in Palín 40 years ago. He and Agustín have been playing together for 20 years. They always go together wherever they are hired to perform. The drum is made of cedarwood and goatskin.

#### – Problems related to the dance:

– Is there someone to continue the tradition?

“I don’t think so. You see, all this brings many problems, and

not everyone is willing to take the same risks. Not everyone is able to take on such a serious commitment as this.”

“That’s how people are some come, others don’t, some don’t want to perform, and then there’s the issue of money, because some don’t have any, and everyone has to contribute.”

#### Will you perform another dance next year?

“Maybe, because it’s a tradition I wouldn’t want to abandon. But because of financial issues, since times are tough, the real problem lies with the person in charge. Because of the costs, sometimes there’s leftover money, but other times, there’s none.”

“Well yes, but that’s their problem. I’m not interested in getting involved in that matter. What matters to me is performing. That business with paperwork doesn’t do anything for me, I don’t get anything out of it, and I’m not going to gain anything just from the publicity they give. I don’t care whether they mention me or not.”

Dancers' contribution to their costume:

“Each one had to give Q. 50.00 for their costume” (Note: the rental of each costume cost Q. 100.00).

“Another thing is that depending on how things go, you know, I would continue with the same tradition if I had good financial support from you all, so that I could go on with confidence. But just as you say no I regret it, because who wants to take on the cost of all that now? Every year, it gets more expensive, it's not possible anymore, and people aren't willing. Once you ask them for more, they don't want to do it. Now, if I had told them, it was Q. 100.00, no one would've joined. So, I had already offered them Q. 50.00, which meant I had to figure out how to get the other fifty. That's what I mean. My daughter tells me, 'Don't put anything on anymore, too many problems with the money issue.'”

On the devotion of the dance:

“The devotion is to the Virgin. One is a devotee. At the very least, we've done this every year, so the day it doesn't happen, you feel it you feel upset for not having done it. It's tradition more than anything else.”

### SAN MIGUEL DUEÑAS (Sacatepéquez)

Interviewee: **Pedro Ajín Pelén**  
Place of birth: San Miguel Dueñas  
Date of birth: December 5, 1931  
Age: 63 years old in 1994  
Parents' names: Eduardo Ajín and Mercedes Pelén

(Both also born in San Miguel Dueñas, from the Ajín Ojer and Pelén Medio families)

- He participated in his first dance in 1946 at the age of 15.
- He played the role of Muley in the *Dance of Moors and Christians Muley*.
- He also took part as a driver, pulling ox carts or floats during the parades in San Antonio Aguas Calientes and Alotenango. It wasn't until 1953 that they had a vehicle to do so.
- The first dance he performed in San Miguel was *Ganalón*.
- To stage the *Dance of Napoleon*, he had been listening to it long before in Ciudad Vieja:

“They knew it because they were given the script, but they didn't know its meaning. So, when I took it on, even this week a young man came to tell me that those who performed said: ‘Maybe it's not even danced anymore, because that dance takes a long time.’ And they were surprised, because the version I did was shorter. It was short and meaningful, with an explanation of how it happened, because with that dance, you must give it context,

explain what it's about, what it really is.”

Because Napoleon was, let's say, a clever man in every battle he won, wherever there were disputes, he always came out victorious. He never lost. But he didn't respect the Church; he respected nothing instead; he ordered churches to be turned into barracks. And in wars and fights, he always triumphed; no one could defeat him. Then came Maitland, Napoleon's second-in-command, his close friend. When Maitland learned that the Admiral had said yes that he would give permission he decided to send Napoleon an invitation. He already knew where Napoleon was hiding and planned to invite him. The Admiral agreed gladly and sent one of his servants to invite Napoleon, telling him he was waiting for

Mr. Manuel de Jesús Martínez, farmer. He was nourished by the teachings of his father and is now an important owner and representative of several traditional dances in Siquinalá, Escuintla among them, the Dance of Napoleon. 1993. Photo by the author.





him in Port Rochefort, where his ship was anchored, so they could talk. The servant went to deliver the message, and since Napoleon believed it was his dearest friend, he accepted the invitation joyfully. He didn't write a reply saying he would deliver it in person, because it was a friendly invitation. Then the jester the gracejo said to Napoleon: "I'm not going with you; I'll take another path. This might be a trap, and we may end up humiliated." So, he refused to go along. Napoleon went with his four closest men, and he went to present himself to his friend. When Maitland heard the news that Napoleon was coming, he was pleased and said to the messenger: "This joy belongs to both of us." But when Napoleon arrived, it was only to be thrown in prison. That was where he lost everything. Then they sent a word to the Admiral that he had been captured. And the Admiral refused to release him only the four men were freed; Napoleon remained in captivity. And once he was imprisoned, the governor issued the order: that he be denied bread and water. So, Napoleon didn't die in battle he died of thirst and hunger. That was the death of Napoleon. And after I heard all this, I created the story in 1983, after hearing it performed in Ciudad Vieja. I worked on it and when I finally managed to control everything, almost by 1990, I spread the word among the Brotherhood that I had the

original script of *Napoleon*, and they told me, "We hope you perform it." I said, "Well, we'll see," because this is the true story of the dance. And that's why the parade float for the dance came out for the *Convite*. He (Napoleon) went on foot, to the jail along with his four vassals. The Moors walked beside him. This is the story I heard about Napoleon, which says that in the year 1756, in France, when he was powerful and fought in the execution of 1793, he kept fighting and nothing could stop him. What I really wanted were exact details, but as the saying goes, "*If you're truly interested, things come to you.*" And even after I had finished the documents, I still wasn't completely sure, until one day, my children passed by a trash heap and found a discarded dictionary, and they brought it to me and with that, I confirmed everything."

### Some Considerations:

After this general overview of the life of Napoleon Bonaparte a man greater than even his own victors and especially his final years following his defeat at Waterloo, which he spent in confinement with a chosen group of loyal followers on the Atlantic island of Saint Helena, it is necessary to pose some interesting questions which, even at the end of the 20th century, seem surprising to still

be relevant. We have asked ourselves the following:

- What did the political figure of Napoleon Bonaparte mean for 19th-century Guatemalans?
- What was the significance and stance of the Guatemalan Catholic Church in relation to the political and universal figure of Napoleon Bonaparte?
- What was the official stance of Guatemalan governments on this matter since the founding of the Republic?
- How, then, does his political figure remain present in Guatemalan popular dance tradition, particularly in towns so far removed from the capital city as Ciudad Vieja and San Miguel Dueñas in Sacatepéquez, and Siquinalá, Escuintla? When did the dance titled "*Napoleon's Last Battle*" begin to be performed in Guatemala?

Who wrote the original, primary script?

It is highly likely that Napoleon Bonaparte's presence as an almost mythical figure in the popular consciousness of some Guatemalans

particularly in the aforementioned communities is the result of a process of evangelization carried out by the Catholic Church during those historical periods. This process was possibly led by a foreign priest or missionary whose knowledge of historical events led him to adapt the choreographic content of the *Moros y Cristianos* dances to a story about Napoleon's final days, most likely drawn from one of the many biographies written about him.

A close reading of the original script we publish here suggests nothing else.

We have confirmed that the events and characters named in the original texts we have identified, collected, and analyzed correspond with historical reality. Everything that happened to Napoleon after Waterloo is dramatized in this dance, as the compiled texts demonstrate. A careful reading reveals a Christian evangelizing intention a moralizing purpose in which the forces of good are portrayed by the English and the Spanish, while Napoleon and the French are cast as the wicked, worthy of damnation.

Furthermore, according to the texts, Napoleon repents at the last moment and dies a Christian. This is a detail not supported by the biographies consulted, but it serves to reinforce our hypothesis of the Catholic Church's moralizing religious intervention. Through

this intervention, the Church casts its ideological Christian veil over the figure of the statesman who, once exalted by the glory of empire, dared in his ambition for conquest to even imprison His Holiness Pope Pius VII, for the sole reason of siding with Napoleon's enemies, the English, whose empire he sought to conquer. Our suspicion would not be unfounded if we also consider the strong Spanish and English intervention in Guatemalan republican governments after 1821 an influence that undoubtedly diminished the legacy of Napoleon's victories. Likewise, the strong French cultural influence at the end of the same century, which, in some way, helped highlight the Napoleonic glories of France.

In Guatemala, the universal significance of Napoleon Bonaparte has been officially ignored for the reasons noted above. However, how can one explain the decades-long use of the Napoleonic system of academic organization at the Universidad de San Carlos? And how can one explain his presence in the popular dance tradition of the Guatemalan regions previously mentioned?

Let this small study suffice, for now, as a starting point in unraveling one of the most fascinating chapters in Guatemala's modern history.



Mr. Pedro Ajín Pelén, owner and director of the dance group from San Miguel Dueñas, Sacatepéquez. 1992. Photo by Ricardo Sáenz de Tejada.

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# Popular Tradition

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