

Oral Tradition and the dance of Los Fieros of Palín, Escuintla

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Abstract

Each population of the world has customs and traditions rooted in its collective memory, which are transmitted from generation to generation through oral tradition, allowing new generations to practice cultural activities such as traditional dances that are performed at festivals and patron saint commemorations. The main objective of this study was to collect elements of oral tradition to protect the practice of the Danza de los Fieros of Palín, Escuintla.

The dance and the dance are observed in this study, from an analytical, anthropological, and social perspective that explain the structural relationships between the members of the community, how knowledge, ritual practices, oral histories are transmitted and that together they constitute the local identity. In relation to the above, the ethnographic method was used since it is proven that it helps historians, anthropologists and pedagogues to collect legends, myths and stories. The compilation of these cultural manifestations serves to document celebrations and describe costumes, foods, traditions and customs that have been transmitted from generation to generation through oral tradition as an ancestral pedagogical tool of a group.

For this reason, the use of the ethnographic method is so important since it allows the compilation of historical facts of the community such as miraculous events, which in the particular case, are interpreted in various dances as well as in other artistic expressions that give continuity to ancestral knowledge,

being an important part of the festive cycle of the community. Regarding sociology and its point of view on orality, it allows us to analyze social interactions through identity. Through dance and popular dances, members of the community find means of expression to represent rituals, beliefs or religiosity, and it is these expressions that are loaded with popular symbolism.

Keywords: Traditional dance, Los Fieros, oral tradition, popular dances

Resumen

Cada población del mundo tiene costumbres y tradiciones arraigadas en su memoria colectiva, las cuales se transmiten de generación en generación a través de la tradición oral, permitiendo que las nuevas generaciones practiquen actividades culturales como los bailes tradicionales que son ejecutados en fiestas y conmemoraciones patronales. El objetivo principal de este estudio fue recopilar elementos de tradición oral para proteger y preservar la práctica de la danza de Los Fieros de Palín, Escuintla.

Se estudió desde una perspectiva analítica, antropológica y social que explica las relaciones estructurales entre los miembros de la comunidad, cómo se transmiten los conocimientos, prácticas rituales e historias orales que en conjunto constituyen la identidad local. En relación con lo anterior, se utilizó el método etnográfico, ya que está comprobado que ayuda a historiadores, antropólogos, pedagogos y otros profesionales a recopilar leyendas, mitos e historias. La recopilación de estas manifestaciones culturales

sirve para documentar celebraciones y describir trajes, comidas, tradiciones y costumbres que se han transmitido de generación en generación a través de la tradición oral como herramienta pedagógica ancestral de un colectivo.

Es tan importante el uso del método etnográfico ya que permite compilar hechos históricos de la comunidad como los eventos milagrosos, que en este caso particular son interpretados en diversas danzas, así como en otras expresiones artísticas que dan continuidad a los saberes ancestrales, siendo parte importante del ciclo festivo de la comunidad. En cuanto a la sociología y su punto de vista sobre la oralidad, permite analizar las interacciones sociales a través de la identidad. A través de la danza y los bailes populares los miembros de la comunidad encuentran medios de expresión para representar rituales, creencias o religiosidad, y son estas expresiones las que están cargadas de simbolismo popular.

Palabras clave: Danza tradicional, Los Fieros, tradición oral, bailes populares.

Introduction

Each population in the world has customs and traditions in the collective memory that are passed from generation to generation through oral tradition. Thanks to oral transmission, young people can practice activities such as traditional dances, a fundamental part of local culture. These dances are performed at patron saint festivals and other religious ceremonies and can carry the connotation of penitence, as well as gratitude for favors received. The human being dances for an internal need since immemorial times. There is no culture without music, and music drives the body to

move. These movements are related to externalize spiritual experiences.

As stated by the French dancer and choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre, the essential mission of dance is to express ideas and emotions by itself, with a logical narrative as in a play, and in the particular case of the dance of Los Fieros from the municipality of Palín, Escuintla, this is exactly what happens.

The main objective of this study was to compile elements of the oral tradition to safeguard the dance practice of Los Fieros of Palín, Escuintla. In order to achieve the proposed goals, ethnography was used, which allowed the researcher to know the context of the studied phenomenon through data collected from first people, assessing behaviors, value systems and beliefs of the culture.

These cultural elements Will be manifested in traditional and popular arts such as dance, dancing music and their relationship with popular religiosity, being the reflection and expression of community thought. Dance and dancing are the focal points of this research, which starts from ideas from a pedagogical, anthropological and social point of view that explains the structure among community members, the process of learning the knowledge of ritual practices, the oral narration of the history of that particular dance and how it has become a fundamental piece of the local identity. It was possible to collect legends, myths and stories, as well as the description of costumes, food, traditions and customs. In such a way that, the oral tradition is manifested in songs, tales, myths, legends and even prayers that allow the Palinecos to express their particular feelings. Therefore, the preservation and transmission of oral tradition is very important.

The dance of Los Fieros is for the Palinecos performers a collective practice that is inescapable. Each member who decides to participate chooses a way of expression and to

narrate a story that arises from oral narration, combining themes, colors, costumes and masks in a pleasant and particular way.

Sociology, through its vision of orality made it possible to know and analyze the interaction of the performers with the spectators, through the sense of identity. The dancers find in popular dance and dances a means of expression to represent ritual and beliefs linked to their own popular religiosity. Each of the elements is loaded with symbolism. Analyzing them helped to build a path that leads to the preservation of knowledge by obtaining first-hand information from the voice of the performers themselves and their role as part of society.

Traditional dances are those that follow a pattern of movements and body expressions dictated through oral tradition, while professional dances that are taught in specialized schools and that have previously gone through a curriculum design process to create or establish teaching methods in order for students to achieve optimal learning.

This article deals with the study of the traditional dance of Los Fieros of Palín, Escuintla, the adaptations that have arisen over time, giving rise to new expressions in this popular tradition which, incidentally, are elements included in recent years as a result of the economic processes of globalization, an influential factor in the fields of human artistic expressions, and a phenomenon that has created processes of accelerated changes and adaptations. For this reason, it is pertinent to safeguard ancestral knowledge through studies such as the present one, to analyze how it has been altered and the direction taken by culture towards a new re-signification of the identity of the communities.

Study bases for the dance of Los Fieros

Each population in the world has customs and traditions rooted in the collective memory, which pass from generation to generation thanks to oral tradition, allowing the youngest to practice cultural patterns such as traditional dances, represented in festivals and religious events as a form of penance or public acts of gratitude for favors received. As mentioned by Paulino Ossona (1984), human beings dance out of an internal need, closer to the spiritual field than the physical plane. With this, they try to find a way of escape or demonstrate emotions, such as desires, joy, gratitude, respect, courage, or strength.

The dance of Los Fieros in the municipality of Palín, Escuintla, is performed in honor of three saints venerated in the community that are celebrated according to the official calendar. The saints are: Santa Teresa, on October 15th, San Cristóbal, on July 30th, and Santiago Apóstol, colloquially called Santiaguito, on July 25th. The Corpus Christi festivity is also performed in the dance. This representation is organized by the brotherhoods of the four neighborhoods in which the municipality is divided: San Lucas, San Antonio, San José and San Pedro. The majority of the population living in the barrios belongs to the Mayan Poqomam linguistic group.

The dance of Los Fieros constitutes a part of the so-called rites of passage or initiation rites to adulthood, as was found during the fieldwork. As Van Gennep (1986) refers, an individual in his stage of development can participate in rituals that show his transmission from youth to adulthood or in some cases show courage or prowess to the community. Strength is a fundamental element in dramatization, since, as will be explained later, full days are

invested in the development of the dance for its presentation.

The main objective was the collection of information from the oral tradition to safeguard the practice of Los Fieros de Palín, Escuintla, through the ethnographic methodology used in research with qualitative approaches in the social sciences. This methodology has been useful to describe and interpret cultural phenomena of different communities, as explained by Cárdenas (2017): ethnography allows the researcher to know the context of the studied phenomena, which allows data collected from first people, valuing behaviors, value systems and beliefs proper to the culture of social subjects. This research method is based on observation, followed by interviews in intimate circles for subsequent analysis. This study was applied during the months of March to October 2022.

Traditional dance, reflection of a community through orality

By way of introduction, it is worth mentioning that several social practices are based on tradition: the practices of popular religiosity, agrarian rituals, to mention a few, and which contain a complex network of symbols and concepts recognized by the social group, rooted over time, creating local identity. The dance and the dancing are collective practices that are inescapable, where each member who decides to participate chooses a form of expression and to narrate a story that arises from orality. The elements of tradition are manifested in the popular arts and, of course, in dance, dancing and music, which are used so that the villagers can live the popular religiosity and reflect their community thinking.

Therefore, from the ideas seen from a pedagogical, anthropological and social sense, it is possible to explain the structural relationships between the members of the community. This relationship allows the transmission of knowledge through ritual practices thanks to orality and together they make local identity possible.

Dances combine with music to create a type of collective behavior that in turn is repeated and becomes traditional. This relationship between the traditional and the popular, the endogenous and the exogenous, is the result of the term hybridity, as explained by Nestor García Canclini (1990), which perfectly describes the evolutionary reality of Latin American cultures, which he recognizes as multiple, because they are the result of the sedimentation of American, European and African beliefs that give meaning to current dynamics.

By clarifying the term hybrid, it is possible to understand how cultures in America have been built, mixing elements of the elite culture with the popular experience. This creates a syncretism and miscegenation of the native peoples, which will be reflected in the expression of dance and dancing, combining themes, colors, costumes and masks in an aesthetic and particular way of each community.

When approaching dance from a sociological perspective, the history of the community itself must also be analyzed in order to understand its context and development, which can be understood through oral narratives that academics specializing in microhistory call oral history, as David Mariezkurrena (2008) writes. This makes it possible to investigate the passage of time, the changes in customs, ways of life and different cultural phenomena. This methodology will be applied in this article as a

pillar that will support the theoretical foundations.

This methodology helps historians and anthropologists to collect legends, myths and tales, to document festivities that describe costumes, food, traditions and customs that have been transmitted from generation to generation, aided by the oral tradition that is present in the collective memory.

Memory makes it possible to remember symbols, codes and information from the past and to preserve them in the present, with particular characteristics. Memory then allows the creation of a collective identity that will be represented in popular artistic expressions such as dance and dancing.

Memories find a way of being transmitted through oral tradition, the very concept of memory is not only to be able to remember, but its main function is also to transmit knowledge to perpetuate historical facts relevant to the community. Memory is the basis of oral history, making it possible to analyze the past in order to convert it into dynamic processes that continuously enrich the identity of a social group.

Orality is manifested in songs, tales, myths, legends and prayers that allow to express the traditions of a culture, as Marisela Jiménez explained (2015), hence the relevance of the preservation and transmission of oral tradition.

The concept of orality is based on the writings of Walter Ong (1987), who mentions that people create links and exchange experiences through stories. This is why oral tradition allows the reconstruction of important historical events in the community, such as miraculous events that sometimes break into everyday life and the will be interpreted in different dances and popular dancing that will perpetuate these expressions, forming an important part of the festive cycle of each community.

As for sociology and its vision of orality, it allows the analysis of social interactions through the sense of identity that will find a way of expression through dance and popular dancing, which will represent rituals, beliefs or popular religiosity loaded with symbolism, as explained by María Agustina Romero (2013). This makes it possible to create a way to preserve knowledge based on the voice of the social subjects themselves as first-hand information. Hence its importance for sociology, giving value to the voice of individuals as fundamental elements for the preservation and analysis of culture.

It is appropriate, of course, to make a precision in this section, and that is the difference between dance and dancing, since there are established differences between the two concepts, either by the interpretative technique or by the development of the same. To understand this difference, we will take as a basis the writing of Carlos René García (2009), who contributes that the first is a series of organized, structured and defined steps of artistic, sacred and profane humane expressions, which vary according to the improvisation of the movement; the second lacks a structure, leaving each individual the freedom of movement. That is why this article deals with the dance as such, since with the passage of time this structure has been left in the past.

For this reason, it should also be noted that globalization has an influence on human artistic expressions, where culture, through expressions such as dance and music, it is not stranger to this process, as stated by Néstor García Canclini (1990), who assured that in the face of these accelerated processes in societies, ancestral knowledge has been altered, which leads to a dynamic culture of resignification of the identity of the communities.

In agreement with García Canclini, the traditional and the modern cannot be separated, since the union of these two concepts results in current cultural phenomena, offering a new form of presentation of dances and dancing based on hybridization.

In order to give a description of the dancing and dance of Los Fieros it was necessary to address specific dates ranging from the celebration of Corpus Christi to the celebration of the Brotherhood of Santa Teresa, among others, between March and October, resulting the following:

Ethnohistory of the dance of Los Fieros

Ethnohistory is an anthropological method that deals with the historical and cultural reconstruction of different peoples, through the analysis of culture and lifestyles by using archival sources, oral history and life histories. As stated by Ana María Lorandi and Mercedes del Río (1992), this makes it possible to compile expressions of ancestral knowledge, cosmovision, customs and traditions. Therefore, this work is based on oral history and testimonies to understand the dance of Los Fieros and its importance for the Palineca community.

The dance of Los Fieros is often confused with Los Fieros de Villa Nueva, however, this belief is far from reality, since they are totally different cultural expressions. According to the compiled accounts, the Palineca dance dates back to pre-Hispanic times. Juan Cornelio Alonzo Gutiérrez (2008) comments that the locals called it Tocotín. The author also describes that this dance has a connection to agriculture and that it is thanks to the oral tradition that passes from generation to generation. He also mentions that some elements remain in the collective memory of the community. It is worth mentioning that in

the archives of the National Newspaper Archives it was found a news item from the newspaper *El Liberal Progresista* in 1937 which describes the following:

In Palín, we had the happy opportunity to admire this disconcerting dance, because by the costumer, it is not the dance of the sun, nor the dance of the moon, nor the dance of the venadito, a lot less the dance of the Conquest; it seems more like the rumba of defeat, or the son of the cacaxte, or the dance of the old clothes, or the carioaca of the piltrafas, or perhaps or is the son of those who are not among who are. There our readers with what they wish to baptize it, we are left seeing visions among the warm dust of the Plaza de Palín, where these emulators of Pie de Lana, turn and turn. What a surprise for the tourists who come to see it with the eyes of the Leica. The camera speaks. (*El Liberal Progresista* Newsroom, 1937, n/p).

The above gives a general descriptive idea of the dance of Los Fieros, described more than eighty years ago, mentioning basic steps such as turns and costumes that agree with what Alonzo Gutiérrez described. In a newspaper article in *Nuestro Diario*, on September 15, 2021, in an interview with historian Maximiliano García, it is mentioned that the dance itself has been performed for approximately 400 years.

The oral tradition

In the following lines a description is made by the same dancers who kindly collaborated by allowing themselves to be interviewed. Each one of them has a different version, as always happens in the oral tradition, however, they maintain the essence of the legend. According to them, the dance of Los Fieros has its origin in a legend that is presented below, told by three dancers.

The caves of San Pedro Mártir:

A long time ago, there was no Palín as we know it now, this place was uninhabited, the oldest families lived in a town known as San Pedro Mártir, which is geographically located between current Amatitlán and San Cristóbal Palín. The eldest say that there were some caves and a person found a sacred image of the Risen Jesus, which was guarded by an enormous snake that surrounded it completely. The villagers say that they did not want that Risen Jesus to be abandoned in a cave, so they tried to remove the image but, when they tried to do so, the big snake attacked them and ran them away, frightened they informed the other villagers. According to the belief that the animal was a protective nawal, they had to please it and ask for permission to move the image, so they decided to please it with the dance of Los Venados, but the snake attacked them again, scared again they tried again this time with the dance of Los Negritos, but their attempt failed for the second time. Not satisfied, the villagers call the dancers of the dance of Montezuma but for the third time they are expelled. Already tired of the situation they make the last attempt, they call the dancers to present the dance of Los Fieros, which represented a kind of bullfight, between the presentation the dancers hit each other and spilled blood. This representation was to the linking of the snake, who at the end of seeing the dance unwinds from the image and allows them to take the Risen Jesus, which is transferred to the new populated territory in procession and in front of it were Los Fieros opening the passage of the route. (M. Chin, personal communication, September 10, 2022).

The previous story tells the origin of the dance, which then, year after year, is represented in the streets of the town. It mentions the town of San Pedro Mártir that Pedro Cortés y Larraz mentioned in 1769 as a town belonging to de Parish of San Cristóbal Amatitlán at a distance of four leagues. Cortés y Larraz identified 39

families, which gives a temporal approximation between the village and the oral stories of more than 250 years. Other elements are aforementioned caves. Deyvid Molina recalls: “my mother was from Palín, and she told me that nearby was the town of San Pedro Mártir... they had very deep caves nowadays I cannot identify where they are, I only remember what my mother said”. (D. Molina, personal communication, September 11, 2022).

The narration of Deyvid Molina confirms that such caves did exist and that the memory of them was in people’s minds, so the legend has real historical data.

Another theme of the legend gives origin to the dance of Los Fieros is the element of blood present in the story. Leda Peretti (2020) made an analysis in one of the chapters of the Popol Vuh that narrates that the K’iche population received from the hands of the gods the element of fire that was conferred to them thanks to the rite of self-sacrifice and human sacrifice. In the K’iche mythical poem, the god Tojil is described as a benevolent being who is pleased by means of offerings. Probably other groups could have been more bloodthirsty with respect to sacrifice, but for the K’iche it was enough for the offering. That is why the story of Los Fieros, indirectly offering their blood to the snake, is an important connection with the pre-Hispanic heritage in this dance.

Another version of the oral tradition narrates the following legend that also explains the origin of the dance of Los Fieros:

In relation to the oral tradition of the dance of Los Fieros that is told in the Barrio de San Lucas, who also refer to themselves as Partideños... According to our grandparents, on the hill of Candelaria certain peasants who were on their way to work found an image of Jesus in the Sacrament, which was abandoned

in the weeds, the men decided to take it to the church considering that this would be the best place for its safekeeping, but when they tried to move it, Jesus was too heavy, so they looked for other people to move it to the center of Palín, they made several attempts but none of them were successful, they even called the priest to pray to the image together with other villagers, but even so they could not bring the image to the town of Palín. In one of those, some peasants had the idea of dressing up with old rags, they looked for some kind of mask and danced in front of Jesus in the Sacrament, after that the image became light and easy to move, in procession it was moved from the place where it was and the dancers made way for it until it reached the center of the town. Over time the dance of Los Fieros is presented to remember this miraculous event in the community, some are dressed in old rags, others have incorporated other types of clothing such as representing animals and some are disguised as women. It is in this way that every year in celebration of Corpus Christi los fieros dance through the streets of Palín. (A. García, personal communication, June 15, 2022).

The profesor Agustín García has elements similar to those of the first narration. He also includes other elements such as costumes and masks to perform the dance. Regarding this last topic, Henry Vargas (2010) mentions that the costumes, headdresses or masks in traditional dances incorporate hybrid components, as usually happens in most rituals, sharing elements from the pre-Hispanic, Iberian and contemporary world. Those used by the dancers of Los Fieros are representations of various characters, identifying the following:

- The Quirina death
- Cowboys or kings
- Stewards
- The monkeys
- Los Fieros

The masks

The masks are made by Palinec hands. In the present study, two artisans were identified who currently elaborate this art: Mr. Maximiliano Chin, 67 years old, and Mr. Secundio López, 76 years old, both carpenters. At this point, the collaborators mentioned that one of the most important rituals for the development of the dance is the blessing of masks. This ritual consists of making several prayers requesting protection and blessings so that each of the bearers can have strength throughout the activity. In the process, the dancers must accompany their prayers with incense and holy water making an evening of masquerades.

Clothing

Men dressed up as women has been a recently incorporated adaptation. It serves to perform mockery and derision within the Palineca society. Little by little it has become part of the tradition. Some dancers report that a man who wishes to participate in the dance and wants to dress himself as a woman usually borrows his costume and cloths from his girlfriend, if he does not have a girlfriend then he resorts to his mother, sisters or aunts. This element has given a satirical character to the presentation of Los Fieros.

The profesor García mentions that the legend about the origin of Los Fieros comes directly from the dancers of the barrio of San Lucas, one of the four neighborhoods into which Palín is divided. The collaborators agree with García's narrative. They maintain that the dance arose in that neighborhood and affirm that it has speeches. These speeches or dialogues are known as Partideños. Likewise, each neighborhood contributes other elements, as well as specific dates for their presentation. For your understanding, the following table or significant differences between the four neighborhoods is made:

Table 1
Description of characteristics and differences

Name of the neighborhood	Characteristics	Dates of presentation
San Lucas	It has its own speeches and melodies.	They present themselves during the celebration of Corpus Christi.
San Antonio	It has its own melodies, but no speeches.	They present themselves for Corpus Christi's date.
San José	It has incorporated in the dance men dressed up as women, as well as other elements such as: clown costumes or cartoon characters, giving them an convivial characteristic.	They present themselves for the festivities of Santa Teresa, San Cristóbal and Santiaguito (Santiago the Apostle), images of high devotion among the Poqomam community of Palín.
San Pedro	Although it does not have its own speeches or melodies, it has a character that represents a cat, which differentiates this dance from the others. It also has other elements to highlight: the adornment of the masks with stick seeds, made by the dancers themselves.	They present themselves during the Corpus Christi festivities.

Note: this table shows the differences in relation to the Fieros dance in each neighborhood of Palín, Escuintla.

Source: own elaboration.

As is evident, two of the neighborhoods have their own melodies, which are performed on a double marimba by local men. According to Felipe Sabán (2010), both the dance and the dancing are accompanied by the turtle shell and the cacho, the latter is the horn of an animal that functions as a wind instrument that emits a particular sound and is of utmost importance, as it is used to call all the Fieros to participate in the different activities.

The call of the dancers

In relation to the participants of Los Fieros dance, according to data collected with representatives of the San Pedro neighborhood as a focus group, in past decades those who decided to participate were instructed to learn some steps, recognize the rhythms and learn the speeches. In the physical preparation aspect

according to Cornelio (2008), food was important due to the long days of presentation, as well as the high consumption of foods such as chili, avocado, onion and boxwood drink, which was an aphrodisiac for the dancers. At present, the leaders interviewed mentioned that men no longer want to participate due to the responsibility of work. They described that in the past, those who participated were farmers and that in their free time or rest time between harvests they dedicated themselves to the dance. Today, however, agriculture is no longer the major economic activity in which Palineco men engage; it has taken a back seat. Farming work has been displaced by industrial work, preventing many who still show interest in the traditional dance from joining in the preparations and organization of Los Fieros.

The description of the dance

Based on the different focus group interviews, a description of the structure of the dance was obtained. It is important to thank the collaboration of Mr. Secundio López because, with his help, it was possible to unite all the stories obtained and make the following description of the dance of Los Fieros as the elders remember it:

It is a mix of characters of a bull in the neighborhood of San Lucas, for the other neighborhoods are cows in the center, accompanied by kings or cowboys, who give the start to two finals, after them are placed the Fieros and at the end of the rows are placed the stewards. At the beginning they recite some words in front of the bull, then they initiate the rotation of the different fieros. This is done in front of the venerated image that will be accompanied in the different routes. The function of the kings or cowboys is to call in order to each fiero to perform the dance, the role of the stewards is to ensure the established order in the presentation of the dance, outside the rows and constantly surrounding the dancers is a character known as the Quirina Death, who is present throughout the presentation, along with her there are also two dancers dressed as monkeys, who make fun of the spectators and in turn invite them to witness the dance.

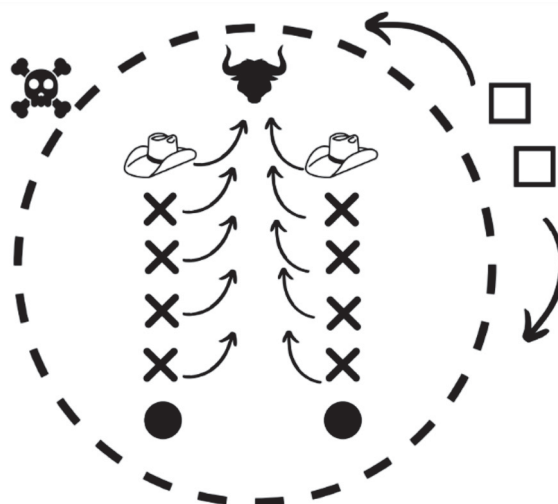
In essence, this shows the dance of Los Fieros as it was until recently. As mentioned by several contributors, unfortunately this way of performing the dance has gradually been diluted. Nowadays, anyone can participate in the dance. Now it is allowed to “disturb” the character by the bull, but this loses the solemnity that once enveloped the dancers in the festivity. There are also moments in the performance of the dance where children can participate and disturb the Quirina Death, to whom they shout “Muerte Quirina que

andando se orina” (Quirina Death, who while walking is peeing).

This phrase makes the character angry and then begins a chase that is a source of amusement for both the children and the dancer who hopes to attract the attention of his interlocutors. Mr. Maximiliano Chin affirms that this amusement is sometimes overshadowed, since the character of the Quirina Death is used as a method to reprimand the children who misbehave. Then they are frightened by telling them the Quirina Death is going to take them away, so the character leaves the dance cycle and becomes an element of the oral tradition present in the intimacy of home (M. Chin, personal communication, October 15, 2022).

To better understand the dance, the following diagram shows the original steps that nowadays, according to the contributor, have been forgotten:

Figure 1. Graphic description of the dance



Note: description of the dance of Los Fieros, showing the different characters: in the center the bull, on the sides the cowboys, followed by the fieros to conclude with the stewards, the squares on the right side represent the monkeys and on the left side a skull representing the Quirina Death. Nowadays this dance structure is no longer practiced and remains in free movements for that reason this article prefers to use the term “baile de Los Fieros”.

Source: own elaboration.

The bull

As observed in the different festive activities, the bull is represented by a weapon made of wood, lined with fabric simulating the skin of the animal, at the tip of the structure is placed the skull with its respective bull horns. Whoever plays the role of the bull must be a person recognized by the locals as the strongest and most skilled. As it is a role that requires a great physical effort, sometimes two other people are called so that they can take turns during the tour or while performing the dance in the house of the brotherhood.

Los Fieros

These are the characters who try to provoke que bull to gore him. At this point it is worth to mention that the word fiero comes from the Latin word *furia*, which means an access of madness, the insane outburst, the violent deviation and a strong agitation. In Palín, as elsewhere, it also means a brave, strong and dexterous man, in short, a beast. Hence the name of the dance and its respective dancers. Los Fieros are called to the celebration through the sound of a cacho or animal horn that serves as a sonorous instrument. The sound of the cacho is the signal that starts the festivity. The clothing of Los Fieros is simple, it is usually everyday clothing, but they cover their heads with the cloths made by the traditional weavers. They wear hats, boots or comfortable shoes, long sleeved shirts, jackets and whips.

Discussion of the results

La tradición oral permite materializar una creencia por medio de la expresión en la danza, que es un elemento eminentemente visual y sonoro. En el caso de la danza tradicional de Los Fieros, se combinan los movimientos con la música e incluso con los diálogos, creando atmósferas de celebración, orgullo e identidad.

Es importante resaltar que dichos espacios de desarrollo de las danzas tradicionales y bailes populares se han mantenido gracias a la organización comunitaria, como los diferentes comités de barrio y las cofradías. En estos lugares se comienza por reconocer una identidad local a partir de mantener tradiciones y costumbres propias de la cultura palineca.

It is also worth mentioning that, despite the social dynamics that currently affect the dancers, those who decide to participate contribute their own economic resources to maintain their participation in the activities. Economic activities outside of agriculture also affect the participation and constancy of the participants, since the time required for organization and preparation takes up long days.

The inclusion of cartoon characters in the dances reinforces the idea of García Canclini that hybridization influences the different cultural manifestations that contrast with the traditional elements, adapting to the globalized culture. This generates a style that gives particular characteristics to each cultural manifestation, in this case, to the dance of Los Fieros.

The dance of Los Fieros arises from the oral stories present in the memory of the adults of the community, which reinforces what David Mariezkurrena wrote about oral history and its importance for the preservation of customs and traditions. It should be emphasized that in this dance it is specific places that have served to create a sense of relevance of the territory, recounting the feat of the first participants. These stories are the starting point for popular stage performances in the streets of the locality and each person has a different version of this story according to their imagination and natural environment. But it is important to emphasize that, although some of the stories

that narrate the beginning of Los Fieros differ in some aspects, they share a common denominator. This is how the legend is transmitted through movement, costumes, music and dialogues, to communicate, inform and recreate a historical event in the identity of the community. It should also be mentioned that, for the purpose of perpetuating the tradition, some villagers adapted a romanticized version of the story, emphasizing that Los Fieros are strong, brave and worthy of performing a task that for many was impossible. These values are preserved in the community, as a reference of bravery and courage for the participants, making them admired by the community.

Conclusions

To speak of identity can be a broad conceptualization and in many ways complex, but thanks to expressions such as dance and other forms of popular art, it can be a simple way of understanding and materializing thoughts, cosmovision, customs and traditions, which, through oral traditions, can achieve continuity. It is the same orality that often goes unnoticed due to the routine of life itself, but it is the members of the community who try to perpetuate it in order to re-signify their own identity.

The dance of Los Fieros is an instrument that projects a cosmovision, which is an inspiration for the continuity of expression of traditional dances. It is through the masks, costumes, movement and music that the palinecos describe a story from the oral tradition, highlighting the courage of the dancers in the mastery of the movement and the strength they transmit, managing to move the spectators and, in turn, excite the younger generations to try to imitate the dance itself. The confidence in the interpretation of a sign of gallantry in public acts that will later become part of the community identity.

The oral tradition is an important pillar to express in movements that which some human beings need to express with sound and movement, which results for the spectator in an activity that creates multisensory scenarios, inviting the community to stay in expectation and participate in these festivities.

The original idea of the choreography of the dance of Los Fieros has been diluted over time, resulting in community members having greater freedom of movement expressions. The result is a popular dance, but this has not affected the importance of the dance for the identity of the population; on the contrary, it has become even more rooted in the collective thinking.

In this study, it was not possible to have access to the speeches. Incidentally, it is a separate task that requires more time to investigate expressions, forms of speech, phrases that could be interpreted as relevant historical facts for the community and their relevance as national heritage, but a door was opened for the future research in which the main objective is the recovery of the speeches and the creation of archives of oral tradition important for the safeguarding of this heritage.

The dance of Los Fieros uses the different neighborhoods as alternate stages for its presentation, which is an achievement for the recovery of the oral tradition. They also continue to perform in sacred spaces, that is, in the houses of the brotherhoods where the cult images are kept, uniting the cosmovision of the palineco people.

From a social point of view, the dance of Los Fieros is important for the socialization of men within the community. The induction that the dancers receive as children to become part of the collective should be valued, as well as the link with other families that organize and

participate in the different social and religious activities in which Los Fieros participate too.

Nowadays, the use of technology makes it possible to preserve important information that makes up a heritage. Therefore, it can be started that it was possible to compile a series of photographs of masks and people who have participated in the development of the dance, either as organizers, musicians or dancers, which resulted in a photographic archive that will allow in the future comparative studies for its analysis and understanding, and this important for the preservation of a cultural expression that should be recognized as heritage of the nation.

The dynamics of oral tradition and the concept of hybridization allow cultural expressions to be made with elements of different traits, which enriches the customs and traditions of a community, thereby increasing a sense of identity.

Based on direct observations of the dance of Los Fieros, people have forgotten the sense of structured movements, as well as the order and preparation of the dancers, leading to free movements without any preparation, which allows anyone to become part of the dance group and can cause accidents due the recklessness of some curious and not very cautious people.

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Figure 1.
One of the most long lived dancers
of the locality.



Figure 2.
Carving of the masks



Figure 3.
Mayan symbolism in the costumes of the people in the dance of Los Fieros

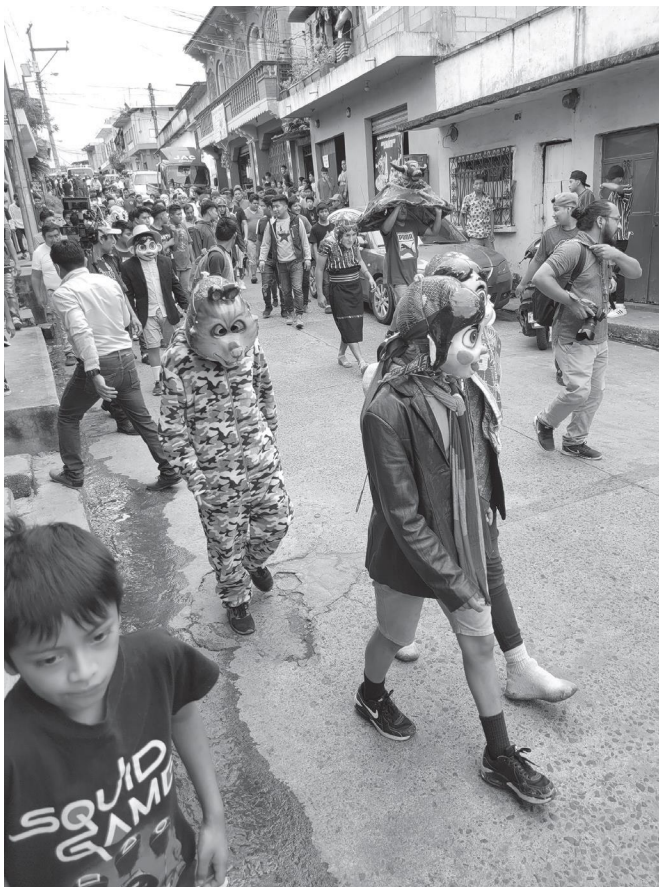


Figure 4.
Tour of the dance through the main streets of the town



Figure 5.
Characters of the dance walking
through the main streets of Palín.



Figure 6.
Main carácter of the dance of Los Fieros, who
invites to observe the dance of Los Fieros.



Figure 7.
New generation of dancers



Figure 8.
Show of courage on the part of the dancers



Figure 9.
Characters represented in
traditional masks



Figure 10.
The satire present in the
dance of Los Fieros



Figure 11.
The mask in its process
of creation



Figure 12.
Scene from the dance of los Fieros



Figure 13.
Scene of the dance of Los Fieros called La Comeada



Figure 14.
Character of El Fiero



Figure 15.
The dance between the sacred and the profane



Figure 16.
The dance of Los Fieros accompanying
the Confraternity of Santa Teresa



Figure 17.
Craftsman and mask carver



Figure 18.
Art embodied in the masks used in the dance of Los Fieros



Figure 19.
Satire in Los Fieros



Figure 20.
Between the sacred and the profane



Figure 21.
The Quirina Death between of dancers



Figure 22.
One of the main characters of the dance of
Los Fieros the Quirina Death



Figure 23.
One of the Fieros
challenging the bull



Figure 24.
One of the Fieros
getting gored



Figure 25.
Los Fieros walking in the streets of Palín, Escuintla.



Figure 26.
One of Los Fieros showing courage

