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Time, History and Ritual in a K'iche' Community: Contemporary Maya Calendar Knowledge and Practices in the Highlands of Guatemala

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Contemporary Maya Calendar Knowledge and Practices in the Highlands of Guatemala

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Time, History and Ritual in a K'iche' Community

Contemporary Maya Calendar Knowledge and Practices in the Highlands of Guatemala

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Introduction

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Many indigenous peoples in Mexico and Central America share a system for time reckoning that is a basic characteristic of their cultures and defines Mesoamerica as a cultural area (Joyce, 2004, pp. 21-24). *Scholars consider that there are two time cycles that form the basis of the Mesoamerican calendar.* The first cycle is a count of 260 days, of which each day consists of a number and a patron deity (lord or lady). Although the exact names of the lords of the days differ depending on the language spoken, there are only twenty possible Day-Lords and thirteen possible Day-Numbers. The second cycle is that of 365 days, an approximation of the solar year, which in the prehispanic calendar was divided into eighteen periods of twenty days (*veintenas* in Spanish) plus a period of five days. The combination of the 260-day count and the 365-day count produces another cycle of approximately fifty-two years. The Mesoamerican calendar was not only a system for time-reckoning, but it also served divinatory purposes.

The earliest archaeological evidence of the use of this calendar system dates from around 500 BCE and is found on Monument 3 of San José Mogote in Oaxaca, Mexico (Marcus, 1976, p. 44). In later periods, Mesoamerican calendar glyphs are found on commemorative stelae throughout Mesoamerica and in the postclassic Aztec, Mixtec and Maya books. At the time of the Spanish invasion, the Mesoamerican calendar was omnipresent in the region ranging from Central Mexico to the south of Guatemala. Despite the processes of colonization and cultural interaction, which have severely reduced its presence over the last 500 years, the Mesoamerican calendar is still in use among several indigenous communities in Mesoamerica. In the Highlands of Guatemala, the calendar of the K'iche' Maya people – a regional variant of the Mesoamerican calendar – plays an important role in decision making, divination, and ritual activity. This research explores the conceptualization of the calendar through ritual practice in the K'iche' community of Momostenango.

The count of the Mesoamerican calendar is kept by calendar specialists, who have the responsibility to perform specific rituals at certain moments. These specialists know how to interpret the mantic qualities of the Mesoamerican calendar and offer divination services to members of their community. Although the 260-day cycle and the 365-day cycle seemingly form two distinct elements of the Mesoamerican calendar, this research approaches the calendar as one system consisting of multiple entangled cycles. Apart from the basic 260- and 365-day count, there are several more time cycles – mostly astronomical, agricultural or meteorological cycles – experienced in Mesoamerican communities, but that are usually not taken into consideration when discussing the Mesoamerican calendar. However, they play an important role in the perception of time and in guiding social agency in a community. In this research I integrate all these cycles as part of the K'iche' calendar.

Just like the 260-day count and 365-day count, astronomical, agricultural, and meteorological cycles have been present from before Spanish conquest and their current role in daily life in Maya communities may contribute to a better understanding of the integral Maya calendar today and in the past. In my analysis, I also examine important Catholic celebrations as part of the Maya calendar. While scholars often present Catholic and Maya religious celebrations as separated events, *both calendars have in fact merged into one calendar through long historical processes of synergy.* Finally, the usual emphasis on the cycles of time itself in the Maya calendar leaves history out of the equation. In this research I reincorporate, therefore, history by analyzing the role of ritual memory and practice entangled in the calendar.

Ritual performances are communicative acts, set at moments in which multiple time cycles intersect and during which shared social conventions are reiterated (Rappaport, 1999). Therefore, ritual practice is taken as a point for departure for exploring the K'iche' Maya calendar. The main research question is: How is the Maya calendar conceptualized through ritual practices in the K'iche' community of Momostenango? In order to answer this question, several others need to be addressed, as well: How are the 260-day count and the 365-day count used by contemporary calendar specialists in the Highlands of Guatemala? How do meteorological, astronomical, and agricultural cycles guide social behavior? How does the calendar of Catholic celebrations form part of the K'iche' calendar complex? How does ritual narrate or transfer historical experience over generations? How does ritual practice give continuity to cultural values?

The research leading to the result presented here forms part of the project *'Time in Intercultural Context'*, which is directed by Prof. Dr. Maarten E.R.G.N. Jansen (Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, The Netherlands), and which has received funding through an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council in the context of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement n° 295434. The common objective of this research project is the documentation and analysis of the contemporary use of Mesoamerican calendars and their associated rituals and cosmology within their specific social and historical contexts.

The aims of this project, which directly relate to the overall objectives of the ERC research group *Time in Intercultural Context*, are: (1) to document the knowledge, ideas, practices and oral literature related to the K'iche' calendar based on thirteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in the Highlands of Guatemala; (2) to connect the resulting data and insights to already available historical information, which in turn will lead to a better grasp of the symbolic meaning and social function of time in Mesoamerican thought and culture; (3) to produce a comparative and theoretical analysis of the role of perceptions and conceptualizations of time in the construction of memory and identity, and of how these perceptions and conceptualizations are affected by (and influence) long-term and intensive cultural interaction. The results will contribute significantly to our understanding of how ancient perceptions of time and related symbolic codes have survived dramatic colonial transformations and now function in an intercultural and globalizing context, interacting with Christian and modern Western concepts about time. In the framework of this project several other studies were written, such as that of Raúl Macuil Martínez on the rituals and religious specialists (*tlamatque*) in Nahua culture (2017) and that of Juan Carlos Reyes Gómez on the contemporary Ayuuk calendar (2017).

STATE OF RESEARCH

The Maya calendar of the Highlands of Guatemala has received significant scholarly attention in the twentieth century. The first ethnographers that documented the continuing use of the Maya calendar in the Highlands of Guatemala at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century focused on those elements of the calendar that can be identified in colonial and precolonial Maya sources (Burkitt, 1930-1931; Stoll, 1889, pp. 58-69). These studies combined archaeological, linguistic, historical and ethnographic research to identify those places where cultural continuity seemed strongest (Lehmann, 1911; Sapper, 1895, 1904). In the subsequent phase of Maya calendar research, ethnographers began to study specific towns and communities, focusing on regional differences. This resulted in in-depth studies of the Maya calendar in the Q'anjob'al town of Santa Eulalia (La Farge, 1947), the *Mam* town of Todos Santos (Oakes, 1951), the K'iche' towns of Chichicastenango and Momostenango (Bunzel, 1952; Schultze Jena, 1933), and the Ixil towns of Nebaj and Chajul (Lincoln, 1942). While these researchers focused on specific communities, the comparative ethnographic research of Franz Termer (1930) contributed greatly to the understanding of regional variety in the use of the Maya calendar.

By mid-century, continuing research on the Maya calendar showed that the system persisted in several communities in the Highlands of Guatemala, although with striking regional and local differences (Miles, 1948, pp. 13-33; 1952; Nash, 1957, p. 152).

Especially the use of the *veintenas* seemed to be inconsistent. During the twentieth century, much emphasis in ethnographic research was placed on documenting the actual use of the *veintenas* in the 365-day count, because of the interest in the possible existence of a leap year in the prehispanic count. As such, the *veintenas* were considered crucial for a scientific correlation of the prehispanic Maya calendar with the Gregorian calendar (Berlin, 1951, p. 158; Gossen, 1974; J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, pp. 303-310; Villa Rojas, 1988, pp. 146-149). However, while several colonial sources list the *veintena* periods with their names and correlate them to specific moments in the Gregorian year, ethnographic studies have not been able to find a consistent sequence of *veintena* periods in contemporary Highland Guatemalan communities. As I will show in this thesis, however, the sequence of *veintena* names in the Colonial period correspond to stages in seasonal cycles that continue to be ritually celebrated today.

Two major studies on the Maya calendar were finally carried out at the end of the 1970s by Barbara Tedlock (1982) and by Benjamin and Lore Colby (1981). During their fieldwork in Momostenango (1975-1979), Tedlock and her husband Dennis Tedlock[1] were trained by a local specialist to become calendar experts (B. Tedlock, 1982, p. 5). In her classic work on the Maya calendar, *Time and the Highland Maya*, she elaborately discusses the educational process of a calendar specialist and the pervasiveness of the Maya calendar in all aspects of Momostecan community life. One of her major contributions is the documentation of specific mnemonic expressions, that form the basis for the interpretation of the 260-day count in divinatory practices. Colby and Colby, on the other hand, apply the theory of "folk psychology" in their research on the Ixil calendar carried out in late 1960s and beginning 1970s. They take a cognitive approach on the intentionality and consciousness of Shas K'ow, a calendar specialist from the Ixil town of Nebaj, to examine the process of healing through divination (Colby & Colby, 1981). Regardless of the fact that Lincoln (1942, p. 103) had already noticed strong similarities with the K'iche' calendar from Momostenango, some scholars considered the Ixil calendar "in some respects the best preserved yet known among modern Maya" (Drucker, 1944, p. 540). Benjamin Colby (1976) argues elsewhere as well that the Ixil were "bypassed by the postclassic" and by many other events that led other regions to develop in a "modern" way. The perception of the Ixil region as a place where time has stood still was, however, quickly criticized by academics specialized in Maya research and other fields (Agar, 1982; Gossen, 1983). While Colby and Colby were able to document much information about the Ixil calendar, the genocide that took place in the Ixil region in the 1980s has led to severe ruptures in traditional knowledge.

Since the 1980s, no major ethnographic studies on the calendar of Highland Guatemala have been published. However, a contribution to the academic understanding of the colonial Highland Guatemala calendar system was made by Frauke Sachse, Christian Prager, and John Weeks (2009) who transcribed three colonial calendars, dating from 1685, 1722, and 1855, providing new insights in the continuation of the calendar during the Colonial period.

With the approach of 2012, which coincided with the end of the thirteenth *b'ak'tun cycle*[2], the Maya calendar received new scholarly and popular attention, giving rise to new syntheses on the subject, which nevertheless mostly focused on the ancient calendar system (L. P. García, Benito, Cuxil, & Cojtí, 2012; Helmke, 2012; Stuart, 2012). In 2012, almost any museum with a collection of Maya objects held an exposition on the matter. At the same time, the attention that the Maya people received was used as a platform to call for self-determination on the part of Maya organizations (Colectivo por la Revitalización de la Ciencia Maya, 2012; L. P. García et al., 2012; Montejo, 2003, 2005; Zapil Xivir, 2010). Unfortunately, anthropologists did not take this chance to engage directly with Maya daykeepers and ritual specialists, but limited themselves instead to studying Maya people's perception of 2012 and their attempts to overcome the persisting colonial living conditions (Cru, 2015; Little, 2004; Macleod, 2013; Maxwell, 2012).

1 Dennis Tedlock (1996) worked during this period on a new translation of the Popol Vuh by reading it with native K'iche' speakers and by making analogies between the Popol Vuh and contemporary K'iche' beliefs and practices.

2 The *b'ak'tun* cycle is part of the prehispanic Long Count calendar, which was a tool to measure the elapsed days since the creation date 11th of August 3114 BC. A *b'ak'tun* cycle measured a duration of 144.000 days.

TIME, RITUAL, AND CULTURAL CONTINUITY

Ever since the early academic interest in understanding the ancient Maya calendar, ethnographic research among the contemporary Maya people has been primarily applied to archaeological research (Westphal, 1991, p. 151). From the early twentieth century until the beginning of the 1970s, indigenous communities were generally perceived as closed, isolated, and static entities, trapped in an unending earlier stage of time by traditional practices and beliefs (Macfarlane, 1977, pp. 631-634; Redfield, 1950; Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934]; Stoll, 1889; Tozzer, 1907). The calendar systems that ethnographers encountered in Maya communities were therefore seen as "surviving fragments" – nuggets of unchanged cultural elements that could directly contribute to the reconstruction of the past (Burkitt, 1930-1931; La Farge, 1947; La Farge & Byers, 1931; Lincoln, 1942; Nash, 1957; Oakes, 1951; Vogt, 1970). The renowned Mesoamerican archaeologist J. Eric S. Thompson illustratively states about the contemporary Maya calendar:

> *[t]he Maya calendar of today is a pitiful survival. It is not unlike those many ecclesiastical buildings of colonial Middle America which have fallen into such a disrepair that now all that stands is some corner, used as a jail or as quarters for a detail of soldiers. A section of ornate balustrade, the stump of a wide-flung arch, or the mildewed stucco of some ornamental frame are clues to a glory that has departed. The structure of the Maya calendar remains, but the embellishments are no more* (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, p. 90).

The knowledge pertaining to the Maya culture is today indeed endangered and many traditions are no longer practiced or have been changed for new ones. I do not think that this process is restricted to modern times nor to the Maya region, as I see this as part of the global and constant "process of becoming" (Ingold, 2011). According to this approach, humans develop perceptual skills to discover meaning in their environment through constant interaction with other human beings (Ingold, 2011, p. 42). From this perspective follows that there is no essential or "authentic" singular Maya calendar and each calendar form that can be encountered today in the Highlands of Guatemala is an outcome of ongoing processes of human interaction with the environment. With the term 'environment', I refer in this research to both human and non-human parts of the environment.

It must be pointed out, however, that the indigenous peoples[3] in Guatemala live in a neo-colonial condition, in which racism, discrimination, and oppression (by the government) are experienced on a daily basis. In contrast to what has been declared in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN General Assembly, 2007, art. 3 & 4), ratified by the Guatemalan congress in 2007, the right to self-determination of the indigenous peoples in Guatemala has been consistently undermined (van de Sandt, 2009, p. 51). The natural resources of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala are altered through hydroelectric projects, mining activities, multinational companies, and pollution and contamination (Costanza, 2015, p. 277; Einbinder, 2011, pp. 70-83; Grandia, 2014; Pedersen, 2014). In many communities there is a realistic fear for forced migration and demonstrations are often repressed by state violence (Escobar, 2015; Vay, 2015, p. 13). Furthermore, as Human Rights Watch (2015) points out, human rights and environmental activists in Guatemala suffer continuously from threats, attacks, and assassinations. The colonial context in which the environment and cultures of the Highlands of Guatemala are forced to live, is comparable to the conditions that indigenous peoples all over the world live (Hall, Fenelon, & Champagne, 2009). Although cultural change is characteristic of the global process of becoming, in the Maya communities of the Highlands of Guatemala the directions of cultural change are often not based on free choice but on a primary need for survival.

In contrasts to what was generally thought in the twentieth century, I understand the environment as something that is continuously under

3 According to the Guatemala's official political documents, the country's indigenous peoples are the Xinka people, the Garifuna people and the Maya people. The Maya people consists of twenty-one linguistic groups: K'iche', Q'eqchi', Kaqchikel, *Mam*, Poqomchi, Tz'utujil, Achí, Q'anjob'al, Ixil, Akatek, Jakaltek, Chuj, Poqomam, Ch'orti', Awakatek, Sakapultek, Sipakapa, Uspantek, Tektitek, Mopan, and Itza. Violation of indigenous rights extends to all indigenous peoples of Guatemala.

construction. Therefore, it takes a conscious effort to keep something the way it is, or as Rosemary Joyce states: "[w]hat we see today as a continuous tradition is actually the result of generations of practice by people working within the bounds of what they understood to be both possible and desirable" (Joyce, 2004, p. 4). In the case of years of cultural interaction, effortful actions are taken to translate, preserve, and adopt different concepts (Bhabha, 1994; Burke, 2009, pp. 55-60; Foucault, 1966, 1969). Continuity, in this sense, is not the same as changelessness (Joyce, 2004, p. 4). After a period of discontinuity − often caused by traumatic experiences, such as, in the case of the K'iche' Maya, colonization or civil war − reconnection to past practices may occur. This reconnection is dependent on the affordance, need, and identification with past practice by a group of people. Discontinuity does therefore not exclude continuity. Continuity means keeping or preserving what is recognized as an important teaching or lesson for current and future generations. The conscious choice of preserving specific cultural values, based on a shared historical ethic, is thus made with the future in mind.

In the Guatemalan Highlands, it implies above all a lot of courage, sacrifice, and extreme effort to give continuity to the cultural values that were handed down by the ancestors. During the Armed Conflict in Guatemala, indigenous intellectuals realized that their culture was under threat and began to research and promote Maya culture within indigenous communities. These activities led to the formation of the pan-Maya movement, an indigenous grassroots movement that began to fight for the preservation and recognition of indigenous rights and plural Maya identities in Guatemala (Cojtí Cuxil, 1996; Warren, 1998). The emergence of the Maya movement is part of a global movement of indigenous peoples in the struggle for the recognition of their rights (Hall et al., 2009). In Guatemala, it has been supported by several indigenous scholars such as Adrián Inés Chávez (1979), Luis Enrique Sam Colop (1991), and Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil (1997) from the onset.

Many of the current local Maya cultural regeneration organizations[4] in the Highlands of Guatemala started around the 1980s, in the midst of the Armed Conflict (see Bastos & Camus, 2003). While academic ethnographic research on the Maya calendar has almost ceased after the last major publications by Barbara Tedlock (1982) and Benjamin Colby and Lore Colby (1981), local research and promotion of the Maya calendar by indigenous researchers has become increasingly important since then, while also becoming one of the main markers of Maya identity. On her return to Momostenango at the end of the 1980s, Barbara Tedlock mentions that "the priest-shamans of Momostenango took the unprecedented step of publishing a mimeographed Mayan calendar, titled *Rajil-b'al q'ij maya* ("Mayan day count"). Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac was the official compiler of this impressively accurate document, which correlates the Gregorian calendar with the 260-day Mayan calendar" (B. Tedlock, 1992, p. 211). In an interview with don Rigoberto Itzep, he told me that the demand of his printed calendar grew quickly and that it was distributed to many communities all over Guatemala. Calendar specialists from other towns, such as for example don Miguel Sebastián Chan Juárez from Chichicastenango, followed don Rigoberto's example and started to disseminate printed calendars in different communities at the end of the 1980s. Tedlock already noticed upon her return to Momostenango in 1989 that more people were present at the altars during the important celebration of the day 8 B'atz' in Momostenango than in the 1970s, when she did her fieldwork. As it can be noticed today on ritual days like 8 B'atz', the efforts of these specialists have resulted in a great awareness and recognition of the Maya calendar in Guatemala today[5].

During my own research in Guatemala, I was fortunate to collaborate intensively with don Rigoberto's cultural regeneration program *Takiliben May: Misión maya wajshakib batz'* (Maya mission 8 B'atz'). Don Rigoberto and I have built a close

4 The promotion of cultural traditions is in the academic literature usually referred to as "cultural revitalization". This term connotates, however, that something is dead or in the process of dying (Smith, 2012, p. 109). I use the term "cultural regeneration" instead of "cultural revitalization" because I consider the rediscovery and the promotion of cultural knowledge an ongoing process.

5 See the recent study of Lars Frühsorge (2010) for a detailed analysis of the effects of the colonization and the Civil War on the collective memory of the Maya people, and a discussion of the role of the Maya movement and cultural activists in the process of cultural regeneration in the Highlands of Guatemala.

friendship and collaboration because we share the same interest and research goal. In his research activities, don Rigoberto investigates the Maya past by talking to elders, documenting oral histories, visiting archaeological sites, and critically reviewing recent and early twentieth-century ethnographic and archaeological publications[6] with the intention to reincorporate those practices that he considers important[7]. The goal of his research is to overcome the damage and the destruction that have been caused by colonial processes of the last five hundred years and to restore the link between contemporary Maya communities and their heritage. For example, he magnificently blends sections of the Popol Vuh, the early colonial origin account of the K'iche' people that was first translated from the K'iche' by Charles E. Brasseur in 1861, in the extensive ritual discourses that he has been taught by his teachers and mentors. Doing so, he gives continuity to specific cultural values after a period of discontinuity.

Similarly, in my approach, I follow Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011, 181-216) who argue, from the perspective of post-colonial hermeneutics, that the role of anthropology and archaeology is to overcome the damages caused by colonialism, by contributing to the restoration of breaks in social memory (Jansen, 2012; Jansen & Pérez Jiménez, 2007; Lippert, 2006; Montejo, 2005; Pérez Jiménez, 2015). Enabling contemporary Maya communities to access archaeological and historical academic interpretations regarding their heritage, facilitates the process of healing and spiritual recovery after long periods of colonization and oppression (Smith, 2012, p. 117). Therefore, throughout my research I identify possible lines of cultural continuation or areas, in which a reconnection with the past may be possible in the future. To explore processes of continuity and discontinuity in visual representations, such as iconography and dance performances, I adopt the theoretical concept of "thematic units" – clusters of symbolic elements – which has been developed by Van der Loo (1987, pp. 9-26). In short, he argues that a careful diachronic and synchronic comparison of thematic units contributes to new interpretations regarding prehispanic iconography and to the identification of lines of cultural continuity[8].

Considering that the Highland K'iche' culture forms part of the broader Mesoamerican cultural complex, I trace local lines of continuity (Highlands of Guatemala), regional lines of continuity (the Maya region), and Mesoamerican lines of continuity (the Mesoamerican cultural area). In what case and to which extent reconnection with the past may take place in the future is dependent on the affordance, need, and identification with the past practices by current Maya communities. I hope that my research may be a contribution to the process of cultural healing and recovery in the Highlands of Guatemala.

The analysis of ritual practices provides an essential clue for overcoming the broken link with the past. In this research I follow Roy Rappaport's definition of ritual as "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers" (Rappaport, 1999, p. 24). He argues that rituals are intrinsically communicative acts constituted by the transmission

6 The classic ethnographic and anthropological studies are widely available in Guatemala. The American-based *Yax Te' Press* and the Guatemalan *Cholsamaj Press* have recently published Spanish translations of the major studies in the field, with the goal to contribute to the Maya movement (among others: La Farge, 1994; Oakes, 2001; Sapper, Seler, & Termer, 1998; Siegel & Grollig, 1996; B. Tedlock, 2002). Spanish versions of early ethnographic works, translated for the *Seminario de integración social guatemalteco*, are also found at many second-hand book markets and stores (among others: Schultze Jena, 1954; Stoll, 1958; Tax, 1964a, 1964b; Termer, 1957; Wagley, 1957; Wisdom, 1961). This seminario was founded in the 1950s as an autonomous unit of the Guatemalan government with the goal of making foreign research data and methodologies accessible to Guatemalans (Whetten, 1958). The accessibility of these classic works has one the one hand enabled leading figures in the communities to reinstall traditions that were still remembered from the time of the grandparents and which were documented by early ethnographers. On the other hand, returning to the early ethnographic works has also resulted in the incorporation of early 20th century Western views of Highland Guatemalan traditions into contemporary traditional and ceremonial practice.

7 The process of overcoming the damage caused over the past 500 years is a slow and difficult road. A huge step in this process was made with the standardization of the Maya alphabet by the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas in the 1990s and beginning of the 21st century, which made it possible to produce educational books in different Maya languages. Currently, however, there are still many debates and disagreements between representatives from Maya communities, among which the debate on the Maya calendar. Differences in interpretation, beginning of counts, or timing of festivities have posed questions as to whether there should be a standardization of calendars and which community or ritual specialist keeps the supposed "original" count. This and other challenges are to be resolved in the coming years.

8 See Chapter V for a more detailed discussion on the comparison of thematic units.

and reception of two forms of entangled messages that are encoded in a shared symbolic system: the canonical and the self-referential message (Rappaport, 1999, pp. 52-53). These messages communicate the social conventions of a group of people. The canonical messages reinforce social conventions that were established by the ancestors and generally do not change over time. The self-referential messages, on the other hand, are affected by the current physical, psychic or social state of the participants themselves at the time of performance and can therefore be different in each ritual performance. Both messages influence each other, because over time self-referential messages can affect changes to the core of the canonical message, while canonical messages provide structure and control to the variation of self-referential messages (Rappaport, 1999, p. 58). The combination of self-referential and canonical messages updates social conventions shared by a community and provide, among others, guidelines for living with(in) a constantly changing environment. Canonical and self-referential messages constitute therefore the cultural values of a community.

The definition of a community used in this research is the one developed by McMillan and Chavis George (1986). They define a community as a group of people that shares a strong mutual feeling of belonging. The members have a feeling of being important within the group, they get satisfaction and see solutions for their necessities by being part of this community and have emotional ties within the group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, pp. 6-7). This rather broad definition of a community overcomes the reductionist divide between territorial or geographic communities and relational communities, the latter being communities based on the "quality of character of human relationship, without reference to location" (Gusfield, 1975, p. xvi) such as profession or religion.

Ritual plays an especially important role in the conceptualization of time. Each individual has a personal experience of time, highly affected by emotions such as fear, hope, memory, and expectation (Durkheim, 1915; Rappaport, 1999, p. 172). As such, the personal experience alone cannot fully serve as a ground for temporal ordering in society. A shared sense of time is created through the interaction between humans and their environment (Ingold, 2011; Munn, 1992, p. 116). This shared frame of reference regarding time is reiterated and strengthened by ritual performances (Rappaport, 1999, p. 177). In my research, the Maya calendars are, as such, a shared sense of time. The human being is surrounded by many entangled cycles of time, which, with the exception of some astronomical phenomena, generally do not occur in a countable and fixed manner but rather unfold gradually without a distinct break between one period and the next (Hubert, 1904). The intersection of different temporal cycles often defines the moment to perform a ritual and, as such, the ritual creates an interval between two perceived periods, distinguishing a preceding from a succeeding phase (Evans-Pritchard, 1939, 1940; Malinowski, 1927, pp. 210-211).

The symbolic contents of the ritual characterize durations of time and invest the distinguished periods (both the preceding and succeeding period) with specific meanings, proscribing thereby the activities that may or should take place during those periods (Hubert, 1904; Rappaport, 1999, p. 179). A calendar system therefore constitutes and is constituted by daily and ritual practices (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p. 103; Mauss & Beuchat, 1968; Rappaport, 1999, p. 179). This is an important matter when discussing continuity in calendar systems of colonized peoples, as some cycles of time are difficult, if not impossible, to colonize. Regardless of the belief system, rain will appear and stop at specific moments, corn will grow according to seasonal cycles, and the sun will rise and set at specific locations at the horizon throughout the solar year.

I argue that although a colonizing culture may use its dominant position to force specific changes in ritual behavior, the timing of an event needs to coincide with a meaningful moment in the lives of the participants of a ritual. In the case of the Highlands of Guatemala, where most people live from subsistence farming, it is likely that ritual commemorations take place at important stages in the agricultural cycle. Similarly, the canonical aspect of ritual practice limits the extent to which the actual form of the ritual may change and the extent to which new practices may be accepted when introduced. In my research I therefore approach ritual performances as products of cultural synergy, in which not only the K'iche' people have incorporated Catholic aspects

over time but Catholic celebrations have adjusted to K'iche' perception of time. In order to understand the mechanisms of the K'iche' calendar, I explore not only ritual moments in the 260-day count and the 365-day count, but also in other temporal dimensions such as seasonal and agricultural cycles in relation to important Catholic celebrations.

Furthermore, although history and the future are important elements of linear time-reckoning, to my knowledge no Maya calendar study has yet looked into the relationship between the calendar and the perception of history. In my opinion, the focus on a purely cyclical perception of time reaffirms a long-lasting stereotype of Maya people as static and isolated. As Johannes Fabian has argued in his famous book *Time and the Other*, time is a political tool that serves to justify the colonization of "underdeveloped Others" by portraying them as living in a pre-modern and isolated world and denying them 'coevalness', defined as "a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse" (Fabian, 2002, p. 31). In contrast, the inclusion of history and views on the future in a globalizing world contributes to the creation of shared 'coevalness' between the researcher, the audience, and the people and culture investigated.

For the study of history from the perspective of the Momostecan K'iche' people, I follow the approach developed by Carlos Severi who, working on shamanic practices among the Kuna people of Panama, argues that traumatic historical events can be embedded in ritual in the form of "ritual memory" (1996, p. 23). Ritual memory, he argues, relates to a memory shared by a group while at the same time it is embodied individually during ritual, thereby bridging the present, the past, and the distant past (the latter also referred to in the academic discourse and Western narratives as "mythology") (Severi, 1996, p. 23). Severi shows that, in the case of the Kuna, traumatic conflicts such as the invasion of the Americas by Europeans are incorporated in ritual and represented as a form of suffering (e.g. sickness, death, or pain), *because of the experienced necessity to preserve history* (Severi, 1996, p. 45). As historical memory is embedded in ritual, it is constantly updated and applied to the present situation of the performance through interaction with self-referential messages. As such, ritual relates a historical account in a different form from narratives of the recent or distant past.

Ritual is, therefore, capable of incorporating new concerns that relate to experiences of past generations. As such, generational gaps between a lived experience and a recounted experience are overcome by the incorporation of communal traumatic experiences in ritual (Assmann, 2011, pp. 45-49). Doing so, ritual strengthens the social memory of a group and contributes to its identity formation (Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs, 1942, 1950). Furthermore, reiterating and remembering the suffering caused by colonization leads to a shared hope to overcome the colonial condition in the future (Severi, 1996, p. 45). However, the failure of scholars to recognize ritual memory and history embedded in memory has led to the idea that there is no indigenous history in the Americas (Severi, 1996, p. 20) and has contributed to the largely Eurocentric image of World History (Hobson, 2012; Kanth, 2009; Said, 2003).

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF FIELDWORK

I chose Momostenango[9] (Figure 1 and Figure 2) as my main place for ethnographic fieldwork because earlier ethnographic works in the Highlands of Guatemala indicated that the K'iche' calendar was well preserved and very much practiced in the town (Bunzel, 1952, p. 285; Burkitt, 1930-1931; Schultze Jena, 1933; B. Tedlock, 1982; Weeks et al., 2009, pp. 162-175). Lincoln (1942, p. 114) mentioned even that in the 1930s some calendar specialists in the Ixil area had travelled to Momostenango to be trained and initiated. Furthermore, although Momostenango was affected by the prolonged Armed Conflict, the experience of violence and forced migration was limited in comparison to other regions of Guatemala. After the end of the armed conflict, Momostenango became therefore one of the centers from which Maya calendar was reintroduced into other regions of Guatemala.

9 The name Momostenango (Fortified Place of the Altars) is a Nahua name, while the K'iche' name for the town is Chuwa Tz'aq, Before the Shrine. This name also appears in the Popol Vuh (Christenson, 2007, p. 262).



Figure 1. Map of Guatemala and the location of fieldwork in the Highlands of Guatemala.

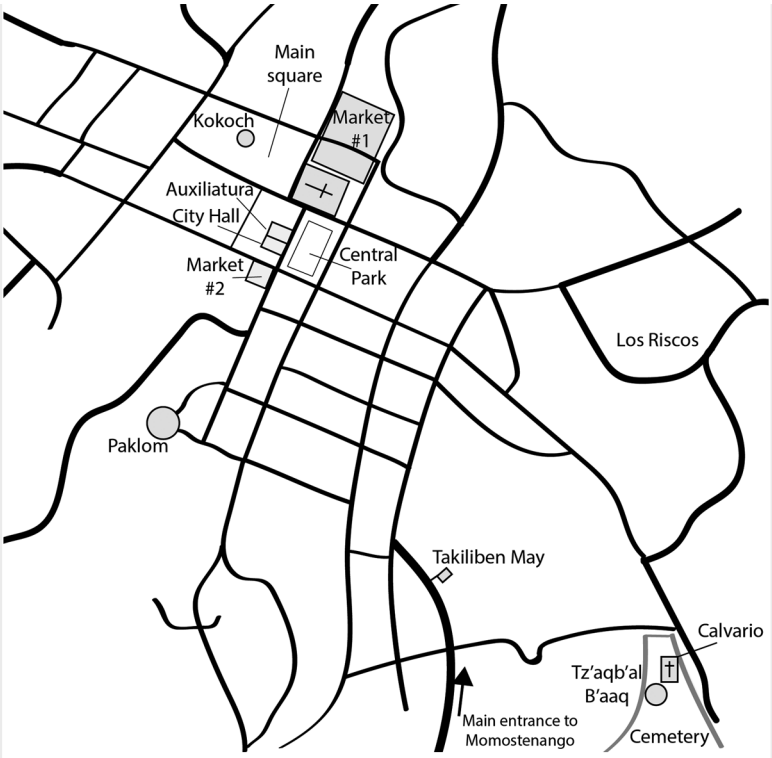


Figure 2. A map of the center of Momostenango.

The presented research is based on three major fieldwork periods, preceded by a short explorative fieldwork trip to Yucatan, Mexico, focusing on agricultural activities and ritual celebrations (April 29th to May 14th 2013). The first fieldwork in the Highlands of Guatemala took place in 2014, between January and May. During my stay, I focused on learning the basics of the K'iche' language, studying the 260-day count, and participating in ceremonies and rituals. The second fieldwork was carried out between December 2014 and May 2015. During this time, I took a six-week K'iche' language course, which greatly contributed to my further understanding of K'iche' culture. Also, the fieldwork addressed the synergy of Catholic and Maya religious celebrations. Furthermore, I assisted in the organization of the *baile de la culebra*, an important dance in Momostenango, which is discussed in Chapters IV and V. The last fieldwork period ran from July to September 2016. During this fieldwork I focused on checking the data I had previously collected and I also delved into the importance of meteorological changes throughout the year.

Decolonizing critiques have pointed out the unequal power relationships between anthropologists and "their objects" (Deloria, 1970, 1988; Fanon, 1952, 1961; Spivak, 1988) and recent studies have furthermore highlighted these unequal power relations during interviews (Aléx & Hammarström, 2008; Kvale, 2006; Vähäsantanen & Saarinen, 2012). Taking this into account, I did not conduct long recorded interviews until the last fieldwork season. Prior to the interviews, I took into account the local etiquette for becoming acquaintances and building a respectful and equal relationship. I participated in many agricultural or daily activities to understand the life rhythm of the local community. Finally, during the third and last fieldwork period, from July until September 2016, I focused on recording interviews. At that point all experts knew not only my research interests, but also my personality, background, and personal life, and in that context, it was easy to organize several interviews with the specialists that were closest to me.

During my fieldwork I worked closely with two ritual specialists from Momostenango, don Rigoberto Itzep and don José Angel Xeloj, who approach and

practice their religion in very different ways. Don José Angel Xeloj is the son of Andrés Xiloj Peruch, the calendar specialist with whom Barbara Tedlock and Dennis Tedlock worked. He is Ajq'ij, a calendar specialist with social responsibilities within his family household. Don José Angel has a great knowledge of Christian celebrations and during his ceremonies he frequently addresses Catholic saints. According to don José Angel, there is no separation between the Catholicism and Maya religion. Don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, on the other hand, is a Chuchqajaw, a calendar specialist with high responsibilities towards his lineage, and rejects any open Christian influence in Maya religion. Although he is respectful towards other religions, he promotes a form of Maya religion which is free of any obvious Christian influence. He also incorporates interpretations of the Popol Vuh in his prayers and discourses. During my fieldwork in Momostenango, I had my own room in the house of don Rigoberto and his wife, doña María Hernández Ajanel, and we had the ample opportunity to exchange ideas regarding Maya culture and the calendar. Furthermore, while staying in the house of don Rigoberto I could participate in activities that he organized with the *Takiliben May: Misión maya wajshakib batz'*.

The aim of *Takiliben May: Misión maya wajshakib batz'* is to raise awareness of the Maya heritage and to promote indigenous research in the community of Momostenango. Founded in 1984, the organization is maintained with the income that don Rigoberto makes with his consultations as Chuchqajaw and with sporadic donations by visitors (Figure 3). As the organization is completely dependent on local volunteers, the actual members tend to change over the years as new commitments arise and members have to relocate to find work. Together with his son Gregorio Itzep Ajanel, a knowledgeable K'iche' language teacher, don Rigoberto has organized in the past free K'iche' language classes and traditional dance courses for children. He has also been actively involved with local radio and television stations, where he has taught about Maya spirituality.

Every 260 days, on the day 8 B'atz', the *Takiliben May* organizes the "Expo Maya" in the center of Momostenango, a three-day exposition during which the volunteers of the organization give workshops in K'iche' and pan-Maya traditions to local peoples, ranging from the production of cacao to astronomical observations (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Furthermore, don Rigoberto has taken it as his task to educate the community members about contamination and cleaning of the sacred altars in the town of Momostenango. Also, once every thirteen days, he is present from an early hour of the day at the entrance to the sacred altar of Paklom in the center of Momostenango to sell books that deal with Maya spirituality, including calendars and guidelines for ritual specialists that he wrote.

Collaboration with the *Takiliben May* enabled me to share my archaeological expertise with a local audience. In 2014, I was invited by don Rigoberto to an interview about cultural values, traditions, and modernity on the local radio station *La princesa Ixmukane*. Later that same year, I was again invited to an interview on the local Momostecan television channel, *Momovisión*, to discuss the topic of cultural continuity. In 2015, I was invited to participate in the Expo Maya event with a photo exhibition about Maya ceremonies and sacred places in the Highlands of Guatemala with the intention to show similarities in practice and beliefs over this entire area. In May 2015, don Rigoberto Itzep was invited to the Leiden University to join in the weekly meetings and seminars of the ERC-research team *Time in Intercultural Context.* In 2016, I taught to two classes on archaeology and historical research to high-school students working towards a teaching degree in Momostenango. Furthermore, aside from the *Takiliben May*, I participated in 2014 in the revitalization of the *Museo del Occidente*, a regional museum in the center of Quetzaltenango, led by the Guatemalan archaeologist Julio Cotom.

While Momostenango was my main place for fieldwork, I also travelled to other towns in the Highlands of Guatemala, the Coastal Lowlands, the Cuchumatanes mountain region, and the tropical Peten region. The goal of these short excursions was to compare observations in the use of the Maya calendar with Momostenango, to establish to what extent my observations on the perception of time could be generalized, by visiting different (linguistic) regions in the Maya area. I was very fortunate that don Rigoberto was able to join me on many of these explorative excursions; his rich knowledge of Maya



"Takiliben May"

MISION MAYA WAJSHAKIB BATZ'

3°. Av. "A" 6 -85, zona 3
Momostenango, Totonicapán
Guatemala





En el día 4 Batz (domingo 30 septiembre 1984)

En una reunión de 50 aj q'ijab se formo y se reconoció la formación de Takiliben May wajshakib Batz – Misión Maya.

Como única y legitima organización Religiosa maya que se preocupa y se propone a defender, rescatar y valorar la ESPIRITUALIDAD "MAYA de nuestros Pueblo Sholmumus (Momostenango) Nuestra Espiritualidad Maya Kiche se basa en tres principios FUNDAMENTALES QUE SON LOS SIGUIENTES:

1. *la pureza de la Espiritualidad Maya la purificación consiste sin la mezcolanza de otra Religión.*

2. *El Aj q'ij (Qij) debe practicar así.*
   Invocar a UKUSH KAJ UKUSH ULEU -KAJA – DIOS, LA MADRE TIERRA. LOS ABUELOS RI NAN TAT NUESTRA DESCENDIENTES GENEOLOGICOS.
3. *Invocación del Espíritu del calendario y todo lo que están inmersa en y manifiesto en el espacio Divino como los Nawales (Kabawil es) del agua, del aire, del fuego, Tojil , Ajpu Ishbal umq'ij, Ishkik, ishmukane y otros más todos estos conjuntos de fuerzas Sagradas son seres partes del "SER DE DIOS – AJAU. LA JERARQUIA DIVINA.*

   Y los nombres de los altares mayas.

Estos tres principios divinos debe de conocer el aj q'ij no dejarlos por un lado.

Estos tres principios de la Espiritualidad Maya estamos viendo que nuestra "FE" Maya Kiche dentro de un contexto Sagrado y Religioso no es solo una costumbre si no que es inspiración DIVINA Y CÓSMICA en la conciencia y en el corazón de nuestros abuelos y esto es lo que debemos de dejar a nuestros hijos y nietos.

Es necesario que el aj q'ij de hoy se debe de proponerse a formarse dentro de estos conocimientos Sagrados estas son las metas y objetivos de misión maya Wajshakib Batz compartir y la superación del AJ Q'IJ mil gracias.

Figure 3. A copy of the act stating the foundation of the *Takiliben May: misión maya wajshakib batz'* on the 30st of September 1984.



Figure 4. Members of the *Takiliben May* in 2015, top left to right: don Flanicio Cuxuc, don Luis Torres, don Florentino Xiloj, don Juan Velasques Pelico, don José Hernández Marroquín, don Rigoberto Itzep. Bottom left to right: Estela Hernández Vicente, Doña Julia Hernández Vicente, Doña María Hernández Ajanel, Yessica Cojuix Ajanel, Ralankil Abiyayala Itzep Hernández.



Figure 5. Book sale at the Maya Expo organized by the *Takiliben May* to promote the Maya culture on a local level.

history and local and regional difference together with his extensive network of contacts of leading ritual specialists enabled me to learn about each place in the limited time at my disposal.

STRUCTURE OF THIS RESEARCH

Chapter I explores[10] the characteristics of the *chol q'ij*, the 260-day count. In this chapter I discuss the social role of the calendar specialists and the basic functioning of the calendar. In this chapter, I furthermore describe and analyze the interaction

10 This research presupposes a general knowledge of the linguistic, historical, and geographic knowledge of Momostenango and the Highlands of Guatemala. These have been described in detail by Tedlock (1982), Choi (2011), Carmack (1973, 1988), and Cook and Offit (Cook, 2000; Cook & Offit, 2008a, 2008b).

between Day-Numbers and Day-Lords in the K'iche' calendar of Momostenango and the way that they relate to the human being. An important part of the discussion of this chapter is the *trecena* cycle, a period of thirteen days that has not yet been given much scholarly attention. In my research I explore how ritual activities in different parts of the town of Momostenango follow a cycle related to the trecena and how this results in the decentralization of space and religious power.

Chapter II examines how notions of authority and responsibility are embedded in the perception of time. In this chapter I first discuss the 365-day count, the *junab' q'ij*, and the celebration of the New Year in the K'iche' calendar. Throughout this chapter I explore how the perceived authority of time is duplicated in the social organization of the community of Momostenango. Furthermore, I discuss here my research on the postclassic and colonial almanacs dealing with a five-day partition, a count still found in contemporary ceremonial discourses.

Chapter III deals with the intersection and celebration of multiple time cycles in the Highlands of Guatemala. Here I discuss how seasonal cycles, related to the wind, rain, animal behavior, agriculture, and the sun, guide human behavior throughout the region. I discuss the intersection of time and Catholic holidays to show that the most important celebrations in the Highlands of Guatemala mark and separate specific time periods related to agriculture and human behavior. I suggest that these celebrations should be understood as a cycle of festivities in the K'iche' calendar.

Chapter IV deals with a ritual dance called *el baile de la culebra*, the serpent dance, which is performed at important times in the agricultural cycles in different towns in the Highlands of Guatemala. Chapter IV discusses how the dance incorporates historical experiences specific to each town and how through the performance of the dance a communal history is reiterated. Chapter V continues on the topic of the *baile de la culebra* and traces the symbolic meaning of the dance by looking into prehispanic Mesoamerican symbolism. In this chapter, I discuss how symbolic elements embedded in the *baile de la culebra* promote specific cultural values and I make a first explorative analysis of possible prehispanic antecedents.

PART ONE:
TIME CYCLES

I. The Chol Q'ij – the 260-day count

For writing this chapter, I am greatly indebted to don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, doña María Hernández Ajanel, Gregorio Itzep, don José Angel Xeloj, doña María Theresa López, don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar, Marleny Tzicap, don Roberto Poz Pérez, don Miguel Chan and Elias López for the knowledge that they shared with me. Errors that might appear in the contents of this chapter are my fault alone. In case such errors or any misrepresentations appear, I would like to apologize beforehand to the community of Momostenango.

INTRODUCTION

The K'iche' calendar consists of several interlocked cycles, that together form one calendar. Chapter I and II focus on the counting of the days in the form of two intertwined cycles, the *chol q'ij* (260-day count) and the *junab' q'ij* (365-day count). Chapter I explores the application of the *chol q'ij* in the community of Momostenango, whereas Chapter II discusses, among others, the functioning of the *junab' q'ij* and the relationship between time and authority.

The 260-day count is, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, a shared characteristic of the Mesoamerican calendar system. This chapter addresses the underlying logic behind the cycle, the mantic qualities of the days, and the social role of the calendar specialists in the community of Momostenango. Furthermore, my general interest in the relationship between the perception of time, the landscape, and the formation of a community, which runs through the entire study, is also explored here. The data on which this chapter builds comes from participating in several rituals with don Rigoberto and don José Angel, and many formal and informal interviews and talks that I have conducted with calendar specialists.

The different forms of specializations among the calendar specialists are discussed first, followed by an overview of the different sorts of sacred places related to the K'iche' calendar in Momostenango. In the section that follows I discuss the 260-day count, elaborating on the perception of the Day-Lords and the Day-Numbers. After this, I look at the relationship between the 260-day count and the human being by examining how calendar divination works, how human beings are created by the days of the calendar, and how one's birthday determines his/her animal companion. In the last part of this chapter, I explore how the calendar promotes a specific movement through the landscape and, finally, I describe and analyze an initiation ritual for becoming calendar specialist.

CALENDAR SPECIALISTS

There are different specializations among calendar experts in Momostenango. If and how a person specializes depends on his or her abilities, which are revealed over the course of life. Each calendar specialist is always an Ajq'ij (lit. "expert of time"), even when he or she takes more roles, which will be added to that of Ajq'ij. Each Ajq'ij[11] has a *chak patan* ("work-service"), which is a burden that they carry throughout their life. The *chak patan* of the Ajq'ijab' (an *–ab'* or *-ib'* suffix indicates that the word is in plural) is to keep track of the *chol q'ij* calendar, the indigenous Maya calendar, and to pass its knowledge on to the future generations. Despite the colonial oppression after conquest, generations of calendar specialists have kept count of the days and have passed it on without letting the calendar shift one day (Miles, 1952, p. 281).

11 The role of Ajq'ij is present in many Highland Guatemalan communities (e.g. see Christenson, 2016; Lincoln, 1942; Schultze Jena, 1933).

Besides counting the days, the *chak patan* of the Ajq'ijab' is a social matter as it promotes the core values of the community and helps those that are in need. Being an Ajq'ij thus requires a strong sense of responsibility and justice. Every person who has a leading role in the community is a *kamalb'e* ("guide of the road"). Each calendar specialist is therefore, together with other people who have leading roles in the community, also a *kamalb'e*. Ajq'ij María Teresa López from the *Mam* speaking community of Concepción Chiquirichapa explains about the social responsibility of the Ajq'ij:

> *The Ajq'ij is a person who truly wants to guide his/her community. This is very different from the Ajq'ijes that only perform their own ceremony and one ceremony for the people but do not talk about the political situation, that do not talk about Mother Nature. Previously, the function of an Ajq'ij in a Maya community was to guide the community, to know how the economy, politics, and everything else would develop: the guidance of a community. This role also includes the prevention of, for example, the arrival of an earthquake, the [arrival of a] drought. This is the function of an Ajq'ij because he/she knows everything that will cause suffering. So, the Ajq'ij knows how to prevent, how to prepare, in the case of an approaching storm* – Doña María Teresa López, Concepción Chiquirichapa, May 2014.

Each Ajq'ij receives training for a period of 260 days. During their training, the novices learn how to perform ceremonies, recite a ceremonial discourse, address the days, and perform a divination. The day of initiation, the Ajq'ij receives a sacred bundle, the *patan* ("service")[12]. Inside the *patan* are the *tz'ite* seeds, red seeds from the coral tree (*Erythrina corallodendron*), which the Ajq'ij will use for divination purposes (Figure 6). People visit an Ajq'ij when encountering difficulties in life. The advice given is often based on the consultation of the K'iche' calendar through divination with the *tz'ite* seeds. Receiving the sacred bundle means for the Ajq'ij to accept the burden or *eqele'm*.

12 The *patan* is the mecapal or tumpline with which loads are carried on the back, by attaching the load to a rope that leans on one's forehead. As such, assuming the *patan* indicates that the service is a burden that has to be carried, wherever one goes.



Figure 6. The sacred *tz'ite* seeds and crystals that are kept inside the bundle of the Ajq'ij.

The Ajq'ijab' usually offer their service only to close family members, the *alaxik*. Occasionally, people from outside this circle also come for advice. Some Ajq'ijab' continue to actively learn and acquire knowledge from elder Ajq'ijab', although this is not obligatory and derives from a perceived necessity on the part of the Ajq'ij themselves. As the Ajq'ij acquires more knowledge, he or she becomes wiser and more experienced, which is reflected in his or her divination skills. As a result, more visitors will come to seek advice from him or her. Over time an Ajq'ij may become *Ajmesa* ("expert of the table"), a specialized role for recognized wise diviners. The *mesa* refers to the table that the Ajq'ijab' use for divination purposes. Usually a special table covered with a cloth is used for these practices. Apart from their duties as Ajq'ijab', *Ajmesa* specialists will perform ceremonies for the four directions at a specific altar (the *sillas y mesas* altar, see below) on the sacred hill of Paklom in the center of the town on specific days in the *chol q'ij*. The *Ajmesa* should not be confused with the *Ajnawal Mesa* ("expert of the spirit of the table"). The *Ajnawal Mesa* is a powerful expert in communicating directly with spirits during rituals, but does not necessary have to be a calendar priest.

Finally, there is the role of the *Chuchqajaw*. The Chuchqajaw is a calendar specialist with a responsibility for the *xe'al* ("roots", lineage), which includes several *alaxik* (nuclear families), usually

between eight and ten. The Chuchqajawib' are highly respected persons in the community. Don Rigoberto and don José Angel estimate that there are around 60 Chuchqajawib' in Momostenango. If one should become Chuchqajaw depends on the day of birth and his/her personal capacities. The Chuchqajaw performs ceremonies for each family of the lineage on crucial moments in the year and in the *chol q'ij*. Furthermore, the Chuchqajawib' have the duty to educate and train the Ajq'ijab' in their lineages. Each Chuchqajaw has thus a responsibility over the religious wellbeing of a relatively large section of the town.

Chuchqajaw means "mother-father", a term that indicates their role in the community. A Chuchqajaw is a responsible authority that takes the leading role of a mother and a father for their lineage. A new Chuchqajaw is chosen after the death of the former Chuchqajaw of the patrilineage, although this may take several years. The prospective Chuchqajaw is chosen through a divination ceremony performed by the Ajq'ijab' of the lineage or by the Chuchqajawib' of neighboring lineages. Although most Chuchqajawib' are male, women can also become Chuchqajaw.

The Chuchqajawib' are loosely organized in a council of Chuchqajawib', which meets several times per year to discuss the concerns regarding the wellbeing of the town. The council is led by two *Chuchqajawib' rech tinamit* ("the mothers-fathers of the town"), who carry the lifelong burden to perform ceremonies for the wellbeing of the whole community at important moments in the year, such as during the 8 B'atz' celebrations and at the beginning of a new year. It is also the *Chuchqajawib' rech tinamit's* responsibility to perform a sequence of rain petitions for the community of Momostenango from February until May (see Chapter III). Today, however, the *Chuchqajawib' rech tinamit* are criticized by several Ajq'ijab' and Chuchqajawib' in Momostenango for their involvement in local politics, disregarding the service that they are supposed to offer to the community. According to some, the droughts that have threatened the community of Momostenango in the last five years are the result of the lack of commitment of the *Chuchqajawib' rech tinamit*.

SACRED PLACES

There are many sacred places for ceremonies in and around Momostenango. These places are usually called *tab'al* ("altar") or *porob'al* ("place of burning"). The ceremonies that are performed in relation to the K'iche' calendar always involve fire, which is why the place for doing the ceremonies is called *porob'al* or *quemadero* in Spanish. Each Ajq'ij has his/her own exact way of performing a ceremony but generally a ceremony involves burning offerings such as sugar, incense, candles and aromatic herbs. I will therefore refer to this type of ceremony as "fire ceremony". The smoke that the burning offerings produce is the alimentation of the sacred beings that are invoked during the ceremony (Figure 7 and Figure 8). The altars are living beings and can be summoned in ceremonial discourses.



Figure 7. Representation of the world drawn in white sugar. The other offerings will be placed on top of this representation.



Figure 8. The offerings for an elaborate fire ceremony.



Figure 9. A house altar. In the wooden chest stands the *meb'il*, in this case a stone relic that was found at the milpa.

The altars of Momostenango can roughly be divided in those that belong to the community (*komón*) and those that belong to the family (*ri alaxik*). Only initiated Ajq'ijab' are allowed to perform fire ceremonies at these sacred places. The house altar, *awas rech alaxik* ("altar of the family"), is usually located within the household. Bigger houses may have a separate room for the *awas rech alaxik* but often it is found in the living room or bedroom. This is the place where an Ajq'ij or Chuchqajaw performs his/her ceremonies for the family, and where visitors are invited to come and talk or to perform a divination ceremony. At the altar are the *meb'il*, archaeological pieces and important stones that have been found by family members or given by friends, and offerings (Figure 9). Because the *meb'il* are characteristic of each house shrine, the house shrine itself is often referred to with the *pars pro toto* term *meb'il* rather than *awas rech alaxik*. The ones who take care of the *meb'il* become by extension protectors of the nuclear family. Usually the *meb'il* are attended by leaving a glass of water and flowers, burning a candle, and offering drops of alcohol. When the *meb'il* needs something, they will manifest themselves in the dreams of those who live in the house in order to make their needs heard.

Each lineage (*xe'al*) has its own altars. At these places, lineage members come together at specific moments in the calendar to participate in a ceremony carried out by the lineage spiritual guide, the Chuchqajaw. The patrilineage altars are located outside the individual households of the families, usually on the lineage ancestral grounds (*chinamit*). Although distinct from the house altars, the lineage altars are also called *awas rech alaxik*. The two main types of patrilineage altars are the *warab'al ja*[13] ("the place of the house for sleeping"), the shrine to pray for health and support from the ancestors, and the *winel*, the shrine related to agricultural prosperity. These shrines are visited at specific moments and days in the K'iche' calendar (see also Chapter III for the timing of rituals related to agriculture and meteorology).

The public altars are known as *komón*, a derivative of *comunal* ("communal"). The term *komón* is also used to refer to a large group of people from a specific town or even to all members of a patrilineage (see lines 1038 to 1047 of appendix A). In general, *komón* refers to something that is shared with a large group of people (a community) and is accessible for everybody (Figure 10 and Figure 11). The *komón* are public and communal ceremonial places. Even if the shrine legally lies on private property, there is no owner of this place. The public altars are hierarchically organized, mirroring the social organization of the community and the hierarchy of the K'iche' calendar (see Chapter II). The public altars are also open for people outside of Momostenango. For example, during the patron saint feast (*nim q'ij* – "big day") many visitors from San Francisco el Alto, Quetzaltenango, San

13 The term *warab'al ja* connotates the perception that this is one of the places where the ancestors of the patrilineage rest and can be contacted.

Andrés Xecul, Zunil, Almolongo, Nahuala, San Cristóbal and Totonicapán came to altar of Paklom to perform fire ceremonies for Santiago. The church of Momostenango (*teoxib'al*, "place of thanking"), where the patron saint Santiago lives, is also a *komón*.



Figure 10. The altar of Paklom is located at the top of the sacred central hill of Momostenango. This altar is a *Komón* and ceremonies may be performed here at any moment.



Figure 11. An Ajq'ij performs her ceremonies at the *Komón* of Alajsab'al.

The main *komón* in Momostenango are the altars Nimasab'al, Alajsab'al, Paklom and Pa Ja', which are respectively related to the Day-Numbers[14] 9, 8, 6 and 1 of the K'iche' calendar (see also the section on the *trecena* cycle). Because the altar of Nimasab'al is related to the highest Day-Number, it is considered the head of the public altars, the *Presidente Mundo*. Just like the days of the calendar, each altar has its own personality, a matter that is fundamental in determining the place to perform a ritual, depending on the type of petition or thanking one wants to do.

Three important public altars, Uja'il Paklom, Uja'il Santiago and Uja'il Alajsab'al, are known as *uja'il* ("place of water", spring) or in Spanish *pila* ("place for washing") and are indeed located near a spring. These altars are places where one comes to be washed and cleansed of impurity or negativity. Spring water flowing near the altars carries the negativity that causes sickness away. Don José Angel Xeloj explains about the *uja'il*:

> *It is symbolically called a "place for washing", uja'il Paklom. It is there underneath Paklom, there one comes to the "place of washing of Paklom" when there is a disease in the family. To call it a place of washing means that there is a spring, there is a water source. So, this is where one begs and asks Dios Mundo that one of the children of the lineage may be refreshed. If one has a pain, for example, then he/she goes there and asks to be refreshed* – Don José Angel Xeloj, 15th August 2016.

The spring altar Uja'il Alajsab'al is also known as Pa Ja' ("the place of water") and lies below the hill that leads to the actual altar of Alajsab'al. Uja'il Alajsab'al is, as just discussed, related to the Day-Number 1 and is frequently visited in the thirteen-day ritual cycles (see below). When an Ajq'ij has sinned towards their sacred bundle and either he/she or their relatives experience repercussions in the form of sickness or other problems, a cleansing ritual is performed at this altar. Uja'il Santiago is related to the patron saint of Momostenango Santiago and to the Day-Number 3 in the K'iche' calendar. Cleansing rituals performed at this altar are usually meant to clear financial or business problems or for personal protection. The Uja'il Paklom lies at the foot of the sacred hill Paklom[15] in the center of Momostenango. This altar is specifically powerful for curing sicknesses. If a person cannot be cured, or relapses, a ritual can be performed at this altar to petition health

14 In the academic literature the term "coefficient" is usually used to refer to the number of a day. Calling it this way, however, presents the calendar as a mathematical equation, which it is not. I choose therefore to use the term "Day-Number".

15 At the top of the hill is the altar of Paklom itself.

and to get rid of the negativity that causes the illness to return. In case of sickness or problems, an Ajq'ij will first perform a ceremony at Uja'il Alajsab'al. If this does not have the expected effect he/she will go, depending of the character of the problem, to Uja'il Santiago or Uja'il Paklom.

Apart from the *Komón*, there are several altars erected to the benefit of the community, but they are not public. For example, the altars dedicated to the yearbearers, which can only be visited by the Chuchqajawib', for example, when making petitions for communal prosperity as part of the New Year ceremonies. Also, the *awas rech tinamit*, the town altar located in one of the rooms at the central park of Momostenango, is for the benefit of the community, but rituals can only be made there by the *Chuchqajawib' rech tinamit* and their assistants.



Figure 12. Don José Angel Xeloj performs a fire ceremony at the sacred place of Q'umarkaj, the ancient capital of the K'iche' people.

Although separated, communal and private altars complement each other. Ceremonial performance at the family altar helps to integrate the lineage, while ceremonies at the *Komón* contribute to the integration of all lineages within the community. For example, the *Komón* Paklom, is also known as *Waqch'ob' ke(ch) nantates*, "six divisions/parts of mothers-fathers", a symbolic reference to the presence of all the Momostecan ancestors at the heart of the community. These ancestors are referred to as *waq remaj, waq tikaj* ("six waterings, six plantings"), the creators of the community. Also, the communal altar at the cemetery, *tz'aqb'al b'aaq* ("wall of bones"), is an important altar for communication with community ancestors (see Chapter IV and V). This shrine is situated in the center of the cemetery, surrounded by the family and individual graves, and commemorates the shared past of the community.

Finally, archaeological sites are also sacred places. Most archaeological sites have specific places where ceremonies can be performed (Figure 12). Rituals performed at these sites usually commemorate the ancestors.

THE CHOL Q'IJ

The basis of the K'iche' calendar is the day, which begins at 12 o'clock at midnight. However, important celebrations start at sunset the day before, a fact that suggests, as I will discuss further below, that the day gradually starts from the moment of sunset on what in the European calendar would be the day before. Each day is a living being that influences the events on that day according to its character or *wachaq'ij* ("face of the day"). This character is defined by the combination of a Day-Number and a Day-Lord[16]. The Day-Number is only an attribute or a specific aspect of the Day-Lord and, although it seems that in the past both the numbers and the Lords were separate living beings (Lincoln, 1942, p. 106), a single Day-Number is today not understood as a living being. On the other hand, the Day-Lord is alive. So, a day (comprised by the Day-Number and Day-Lord) is a separate and living aspect of the Day-Lord.

16 The day-Lord is addressed with *Ajaw* ("Lord") or *nawal*. *Ajaw* is an honorary title for any responsible and divine authority. In the highland of Guatemala the term *nawal* usually refers to a (divine) guardian being. In order to avoid confusion, I will use only the term day-Lords.

Day-Lords	Translation	Day-Lords	Translation
B'atz'	Monkey, Thread	Imox	Translation unknown
E'	Tooth	Iq'	Wind
Aj	Reed	Aq'ab'al	Darkness
Ix	Translation unknown	K'at	Net
Tz'ikin	Bird	Kan	Snake
Ajmak	Sinner	Kame	Death
No'j	Wisdom	Kej	Deer
Tijax	Flint	Q'anil	Seed
Kawoq	Translation unknown	Toj	Payment
Ajpu	Blowgunner	Tz'i'	Dog

Table 1. The Day-Lords of the K'iche' calendar and their translation. See Thompson (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, p. 68) for a comparison of the names of the Day-Lords among different linguistic groups in the Maya region.

The Day-Numbers and Day-Lords follow a strict sequence. For the numbers this means that the days are numbered in sequence from one to thirteen and after the thirteenth day the count begins again with the number one. There are twenty day-Lords in the K'iche' calendar. Each of the Lords has a specific name that gives an indication of some of its characteristics. Some of the names, such as Kawoq, Ix and Imox, are ancient K'iche', which makes it impossible to give a clear translation (B. Tedlock, 1992, p. 107). The names of the twenty days and their translations can be seen in Table 1. The meaning of each day, however, goes beyond a mere translation as each of the days is entangled in a web of many related connotations and mnemonic expressions, which together give meaning to that specific day. These connotations and expressions may differ again per community and, to certain extend, per person within a community. The many connotations and meanings of each day can be found in Appendix B and several mnemonic expressions are documented in Appendix C. The section below discusses the interpretation of the Day-Lords in more detail.

The Day-Lords also follow a strict sequence that is repeated after the twentieth Day-Lord has fulfilled his service. As the amount of Day-Numbers (13) and Day-Lords (20) are uneven, the exact same combination of Day-Number and Day-Lord is repeated after 260 days. This cycle of days is called the *chol q'ij*, the "lining of the days".

For example, after the day with Day-Number 1 and Day-Lord B'atz' (1 B'atz') follow the days 2 E', 3 Aj, 4 Ix and so on, until the day 13 Aq'ab'al. After 13 Aq'ab'al the numbers continue from 1 while the Day-Lords continue until the end of their sequence of twenty is reached. Thus, the days that follow 13 Aq'ab'al are 1 K'at, 2 Kan, and so forth, until the day 7 Tz'i is reached. After 7 Tz'i, each of the twenty Lords have served for one day and the cycle starts again from the beginning, while the numbers continue in their sequence. Thus after 7 Tz'i follow 8 B'atz' and 9 E until after 260 days (13 number x 20 lords), all possible combinations have passed and the count repeats the exact same days for the first time again. The *chol q'ij* works the same way in each Maya community where it is counted and although the names of the Day-Lords differ per linguistic region, the intrinsic meaning of the days is shared over a wide area (Bunzel, 1952; Colby & Colby, 1981; Gossen, 1974; La Farge, 1947; Lincoln, 1942).

An intense debate regarding the first day of the 260-day cycle took place during the 20th century (see: Girard, 1962, p. 330; La Farge, 1947, p. 179; Lincoln, 1942, p. 108; J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, pp. 101-102). The final word was by Barbara Tedlock (1982, p. 96) who, based on her fieldwork in Momostenango from 1976 to 1979, argued that a first day of the 260-cycle did not exist and that the *chol q'ij* is a continuous uninterrupted cycle without end nor beginning, as was already suggested by Morley (1946, p. 269). According to her, anthropologists

looking for a starting date in the *chol q'ij* are referred to a nearby important date in the calendar rather than a starting day (B. Tedlock, 1982, p. 96). Today, however, the Ajq'ijab' in Momostenango agree that the day Wajxaqib' B'atz' (8 B'atz') – a very important day for those who keep track of the Momostecan K'iche' calendar – is the first day of the *chol q'ij*.

THE DAY-LORDS

Each Day-Lord has an effect on the events, feelings and weather phenomena that take place during his day. Appendix B gives a short overview of the personalities of the twenty Day-Lords. I composed this overview after interviews that I did with the Ajq'ijab' don José Angel Xeloj and don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac from Momostenango, don Miguel Chan from Chichicastenango, and don Roberto Poz Pérez from Zunil. As it can be seen in Appendix B, the character of the day indicates fruitful activities for that day. One's birthday in the *chol q'ij* is a determining factor in the development of the personality, interests, abilities, skills, and weaknesses of a human being. Although there is in the Highland of Guatemala a general consensus of the main characters of the Day-Lords, each person can have a different experience with a specific Day-Lord, which influences his/her perception of this Day-Lord's character. For example, the general character of the Day-Lord Ajmak is the following:

> *The day Ajmak connotates the concepts of reconciliation, mediation, fault, pardon, sin, atheism, and gift. The day Ajmak is also the day of the grandparents, the day of the deceased. This is a good day for communication with the ancestors, to tell their story, or to explain the origin of the peoples. Ajmak is the nawal of all the faults; on this day a person asks forgiveness for all the errors that he or she has made. Therefore, the day Ajmak is also the indicated day to resolve any problems that you have.*
>
> *The person born on the day Ajmak is a good mediator and is very good in projecting plans for the future. This person studies a lot, is intelligent, has a good memory and treats others respectfully. He/she is very analytical, has patience, and is tenacious. This prudent person is a visionary. He/she is also shy and easily commits errors. Vanity is a problem for him/her. He/she is vicious, unfaithful, and angry, and tends to lie easily. He/she might have problems in the house. His/her health is determined by self-destructive processes, by his/her irresponsibility, and his/her irritated and confronting character* – see Appendix B, Day-Lord Ajmak.

As will be discussed below, the outcome of the Day-Lord's character is also influenced by the number with which it forms the day. The characteristics of the Day-Lord are reflected in the behavior of the person who is born on this day. The day Ajmak, for example, is a day on which one easily commits errors. As such, this is also the day to petition pardon for the errors that were made. Therefore, a person born on this day can be unfaithful or may easily commit errors. This does not mean, however, that this person will definitely be like this, rather the character of the Day-Lord shows the possible weaknesses of a person and in doing so suggests the development of personal skills to counter the weaknesses. Knowing his/her tendency to commit errors, a person born on the day Ajmak may develop ways to overcome this weakness and become a better person.

Furthermore, on a day Ajmak it is possible to petition that an enemy (*k'ulel*) damages his/her social life by growing envy, unfaithfulness and vanity. One can perform a ceremony on the day Ajmak to petition protection against these destructive characteristics, if he/she feels that such a petition was made towards him/her. The ceremony itself is a moment of reflection and return to the morals that were established by the ancestors which strengthens the character of the one who experienced a growing envy (Rappaport, 1999). The moral values of the day are evident in each of the characteristics of the days. Socially accepted or unacceptable behavior is pointed out by these characters. In other words, social conventions are embedded in the mantic quality of the days. The

days of the calendar emphasize appreciated social behaviors, such as sharing, bonding, taking care of family or friends, working hard, justice, and creativity. They also address incorrect social behavior, for example anger, selfishness, doubtfulness, lying, jealousy, envy, laziness, scariness, unfaithfulness, arrogance, or cheating. A negative personality feature is defined in terms of what behavior is not beneficial for the coexistence of members in a community. If the negative features of a person are not addressed correctly, the person may become seriously sick.

Each Day-Lord is related to specific words or expressions (see appendix C) identified by Barbara Tedlock (1992, p. 107) as mnemonic tools that map the meanings of the days in terms of social actions. She argues that the expressions related to each specific day are a way to keep and pass on the knowledge about the characteristics of each day. As she notes, some of these expressions use the literary or poetic tool of "paronomasia": the name of the day recalls other words that have more or less the same sound. During my work in Guatemala I went through the mnemonic expressions that Tedlock documented with don José Angel Xeloj and don Rigoberto, to check if they are still used and to document additional expressions.

The mnemonic expressions are important in ritual contexts. For example, in ceremonies in which specific days are addressed, the mnemonic expressions are part of the flowery speech to properly address the day. Speech can be a form of offering, especially when it is a beautiful poetic speech built on metaphors. For this reason, a ritual specialist is called *Ch'awanel* ("talker"). Those specialists capable of the most elaborate and distinct speeches are usually regarded as very good ritual specialists and are highly respected in Momostenango.

In a ceremony, all the twenty Day-Lords are usually addressed in combination with the thirteen Day-Numbers, starting from the day of the ceremony itself (see appendix A, lines 222-765). As the Lord is addressed, his titles or functions in relation to specific aspects of life are mentioned and its positive aspects are petitioned. This flowery speech is guided by a net of mnemonic expressions. For example, one of the mnemonics of day E' is *ri b'e*, "the road". This brings up a series of petitions and themes related to the road – in a metaphorical sense and literal sense – such as *Xasachom ub'e* ("guide our road") or *ma xasi taj nub'e* ("may my road not divert"). An experienced Ajq'ij will be able to connect several mnemonic expressions and connect these to the ceremony that takes place that day. The exact expressions differ per Ajq'ij, as they depend on their personality, teacher, and experience.

The mnemonic tools are originally in K'iche', but some of the Momostecan intellectuals such as don Rigoberto Itzep have invested much time and energy in finding correct Spanish translations for these mnemonics. Over the last 30 years don Rigoberto has been contributing to this process (see appendix A) to be able to share the knowledge of the calendar with a broader group of people, which includes both *ladinos* and K'iche'. Furthermore, the Spanish translation of the mnemonics is a good example of the continuity through practice: while the environment changes and fewer people speak K'iche', effort is taken to preserve that what is recognized to be important – in this case the symbolism embedded in time, transmitted and preserved in mnemonic expressions.

NUMEROLOGY

Numbers define specific characteristics of the days. This section discusses mainly two forms of numerology in relation to the K'iche' calendar: 1. Day-Numbers; 2. Distance-numbers. The Day-Numbers have been introduced above. These are the numbers that constitute a day in combination with a Day-Lord. The term distance-number, which I have taken for the lack of a better term from the academic literature on the precolonial Maya calendar, defines periods of a specific number of days. Although the symbolism related to the Day-Number and to the distance-number is very similar, there is one major difference: the first defines a moment, while the latter defines a period.

The Day-Number influences the intensity of the characteristics of a Day-Lord: low numbers give a light character, while high numbers give an intense character to the Day-Lord and its effects. For example, a storm on the day 13 Iq' – the day Iq' is related to wind and destruction (see appendix B) – will have a bigger impact than a storm on 1 Iq'. The numbers also influence the characteristics of the babies that are born on their day. For example,

Day-Lords	The Day-Numbers												
B'atz'	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1
E	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2
Aj	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3
Ix	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4
Tz'ikin	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5
Ajmak	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6
No'j	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7
Tijax	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8
Kawoq	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9
Ajpu	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10
Imox	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11
Iq'	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12
Aq'ab'al	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13
K'at	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1
Kan	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2
Kame	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3
Kej	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8*	2	9	3	10	4
Q'anil	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5
Toj	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6
Tz'i'	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7

Table 2. An overview of the 260 days of the *chol q'ij*. Reading starts at the left column.

a person born on a day with Day-Number 13 will have a more pronounced character in comparison to a person born on a day with Day-Number 1. People that are born on Day-Numbers above 5 usually have the capacity to become leaders because of their strong mindset. How this comes into being depends on the Day-Lord as well.

The combination of twenty Day-Lords and thirteen Day-Numbers dictates that when a Day-Lord returns after twenty days, its Day-Number is seven digits up (Table 2). For example, twenty days after the day 1 Tz'i', the same Day-Lord returns but this time in the combination 8 Tz'i'. Another twenty days later, the Day-Lord serves as 2 Tz'i'[17]. The Day-Numbers thus follow a specific sequence in combination with the same Day-Lord, which is: *1, 8, 2, 9, 3, 10, 4, 11, 5, 12, 6, 13, 7,* and then *1* again and so forth. Similarly, the Day-Lords also follow a specific combination of appearance with the same number. In each reappearance of the same Day-Number, the Day-Lord that joins it will be thirteen positions ahead of the previous Day-Lord that appeared with this number, which produces the following sequence: B'atz', K'at, No'j, Tz'i', Aq'ab'al, Ajmak, Toj, Iq', Tz'ikin, Q'anil, Imox, Ix, Kej, Ajpu, Aj, Kame, Kawoq, E', Kan, Tijax.

The numbers define days as *alaj q'ij* ("small day", the day with the numbers 1 to 5), *nik'aj q'ij* ("medium day", the days with the numbers 6 to 8), and *nim q'ij*, ("big day", the days with the numbers 9 to 13). In many communities in Guatemala, the *nik'aj* q'ij, Day-Numbers 6, 7, and 8, are important days for rituals (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 277-283; Weeks et al., 2009, pp. 166-167), because they are balanced: not too high or intense, neither too low or weak. The sequence of Day-Numbers in combination with a specific Day-Lord enables an internal balancing of the intensity of the Day-Lords: a Day-Lord with a high intensity (high number) will be followed twenty days later by the same Day-Lord with a low intensity (low number). This system also facilitates counting in the vigesimal system as, for example, 40 days after 1 B'atz' follows the day 2 B'atz'. For a ceremony, the most appropriate number of the day depends on the specific occasion. Don José Angel Xeloj gives an example of the day Ajpu, the day of the ancestors:

> *Ceremonies on Ajpu can be performed from [the Day-Number] one until thirteen. But if there is a special work to be done, for example if the person [that the ceremony is*

17 The difference between the cycle of 13 numbers and 20 lords is 7. Thus each time when a Lord reappears his number will be 7 digits higher than during his previous appearance. However, after the number 13 the count continues again with number 1. Therefore 20 days after the 8 Tz'i' follows the day 2 Tz'i'.

> *performed for] is deceased or if it is an elderly person, then one should wait for the numbers nine until thirteen. Yes, because these are strong. If it is a boy of, for example five years old, then one can use the day 1 Ajpu, 2 Ajpu, 3 Ajpu… And if the ceremony is to defend oneself in front of the day Ajpu, the days nine until thirteen and the day seven should be chosen. But the soft days, the small days, should also be used. Because, if we use the Day-Numbers 13 or 12, the result will be very strong as well: it will hit the other [who has cast a spell] very hard. In contrast, if we look for the Day-Numbers 2 or 3, it will take away the spell but [the effect on the other] will not be hard. The intention is to save myself, and that is it. It is then the choice of the Day-Lord, God or divine justice to hit the other back or not. The most important thing is that I save myself. Should I come to Ajpu, for example, [saying] "alright Ajpu, go make this guy suffer"? No! Because I would be mirroring that what it being done to me. It is better to relieve myself and leave it there* – Don José Angel Xeloj, 24th August 2016

A clear distinction between good and bad days does not exist in the Maya calendar of Highland Guatemala (Colby & Colby, 1981, p. 224; B. Tedlock, 1982, p. xi). Days with high numbers are often described as dangerous because they intensify on the characteristics of the Day-Lord. This does not mean, however, that the day is intrinsically bad. There are also numbers that are more stable than others. The instable days are often slightly more dangerous, as it is difficult to know what to expect from them. I think that in early ethnographic studies these days have been taken as "bad days" (La Farge, 1947, p. 178; Schultze Jena, 1933, p. 28; Stoll, 1889, p. 63). Odd numbers tend to be unstable days and can therefore be slightly more dangerous. Especially the numbers 3, 7, and 11 need to be treated with much care. On the other hand, even days are more balanced days.

The days with a high Day-Number, whether an odd number or even number, are very adequate days for petition ceremonies. As the number is high, the effect of the petition might be stronger. Petitions on *alaj q'ij* might have less impact. However, in urgent cases a ritual specialist cannot always wait until a high number of a specific day appears. For example, when a person is very sick the specialist will perform a ceremony on an *alaj q'ij* instead of waiting for another 20 days until a high number comes, because by then the patient might have passed away already.

Apart from high and low, even and odd numbers, each number has its own connotations and characteristics. These are always taken into consideration when deciding on the day for a ritual. The following list of numerals were the ones that I came across during my fieldwork as most significant:

1 The number one is important as it indicates the start of a motion and a beginning: without a beginning there would be nothing that follows. The number one is also the start of a thirteen day period (*trecena*) in Momostenango and celebrated with ceremonies.

3 The number three is related to the creation of life, as the place of creation is often referred to as a place of three big stones or mountains. The number three is also related to the three hearth stones, which are used for boiling food and alimenting the family. The number 3-days are related to the patron saint of Momostenango, Santiago, and it is an adequate day to petitioning health at the altar of *Uja'il Santiago*. Furthermore, number 3-days are good days for conducting business.

4 The number four carries many connotations and is a very important number. The number four is related to the four colors of maize, the four (colors of the) cardinal directions, the four stages of the day and the four colors day, the four yearbearers (see Chapter II), the four founding fathers, and the four stages of the moon. The number four also relates to steadfastness and stability: something carried by four legs is very stable. For example, the day 4 Kej is an important day in the calendar for authority: the number four connotates stability while Kej refers to the deer, the leader of the forest: it relates to the masculine powers and is often also perceived as a masculine day. This is a very suitable day for men to make petitions for strength and for travels.

6 The number 6-days are important days for fire ceremonies on the sacred hill of Paklom in the center of Momostenango.

7 The number seven is a day that is easily brought out of balance because of its central position in the sequence of thirteen numbers.

8 The number eight is the sum of one (the beginning) and seven (the middle). Furthermore, it is the double of the number 4 and therefore indicates discipline and strength. In a ritual context the number 8 calls to mind the days 8 B'atz' (the day of the Ajq'ij) and 8 Kej (the day of the Chuchqajaw). It connotates authority and leadership. In Momostenango, number 8-days are days for performing ceremonies at the altar of Pa Ja'.

9 The Day-Number nine is related to both new life and death. This number is associated to the nine moons that pass during the gestation period while it is also linked to the nine days of *velación* (vigil) after a person's death. The number nine is an important number in relation to the ancestors. For example, 9 Kame is a day for the commemoration of the deceased. Also, participants to ritual dances usually promise the ancestors to fulfill a *novena* (nine times) of performances (see Chapter IV and V). For dances that take place annually this means a promise for 9 years, while for dances that take place biannually, such as the *baile de la conquista* in Momostenango, the *novena* encompasses 18 years. The number nine is a feminine number related to women. The day 9 B'atz' is related to the umbilical cord and is a day to commemorate anything that has to do with pregnancy. Midwifes usually perform ceremonies on this day. Finally, the number nine is an adequate day to perform ceremonies at the altar of Nimasab'al

13 The number thirteen signifies the end the cycle of 13 numbers. This number connotates a completion of something, and indicates the beginning of something new. It relates to continuity and repetition. In contrast to the number nine, the number thirteen is a masculine number.

20 Twenty is an important distance number. Lapses of time are often, also in the Gregorian calendar, counted within a vigesimal system.

40 Often a period of 40 days is counted for the preparation of important ceremonies and dances.

CALENDAR DIVINATION

There are many forms of divination in the Maya communities of the Western Highlands that do not involve the use of the calendar. For example, information or messages can be revealed in the flames of the kitchen fire or the ceremonial fire, or in the reflection of light by the bubbles inside a crystal stone. Also during the preparation and consumption of specific food, such as the sacred maize drink *atol*, mantic messages can be experienced. For example, when *atol* has a bitter taste it prognosticates that there will be a disagreement within the family. During the preparation of *atol* in anticipation of the arrival of the K'iche' New Year, two important ingredients of the ceremonial drink, the *kuchun* root and zapote seed, need to rise and turn white. If they fail to rise and remain grey or black it will mean that the year to come will be a difficult year with many obstacles to overcome. Divinatory signs can also be revealed in the environment at any moment. Talented people, not necessarily Ajq'ijab', are able to discover these signs and interpret the message that they convey.

One of the divinatory abilities that is shared by the Ajq'ijab' of Momostenango – but not restricted to them – is that of the movement of blood (*brinca la sangre*, "the blood jumps"). The twitching of specific parts of the human body carries specific meaning (see appendix D). Although the interpretation of the twitching signs generally follows a shared system – for example, the rights side of the human body signals that events will have a positive outcome while the left side usually prognosticates a less fortunate outcome – each person has to learn how their body communicates to them. For example, a twitch above or underneath the eye may mean that sickness or death will come or that a family member or friend that has not been around for a long time will come to visit. Therefore, a person has to learn how to interpret the messages conveyed in the speaking of blood in his or her own body. There are three forms in



Figure 13. Don Rigoberto Itzep performs a calendar divination.

which the blood speaks to a person: pulling, pushing, and tapping (or running from one side to the other). The speaking of blood is an important divinatory tool that supplements the messages revealed in calendar divination.

The use of the calendar for divinatory purposes (*ch'ob'onik,* "to understand") in modern K'iche' is a practice rooted in pre-Columbian times (D. Tedlock, 2010, pp. 165-183). Different divinatory calendar practices have been previously documented in several communities throughout the Highlands (Colby & Colby, 1981, pp. 222-247; La Farge, 1947, p. 182; Lincoln, 1942, pp. 121-122; Schultze Jena, 1933, pp. 42-46; B. Tedlock, 1982, pp. 153-171). Calendar divination is a mantic technique that is based on counting and interpreting days of the *chol q'ij*[18]. As previous studies have shown, the practice of calendar divination in different communities shows much similarity. In a divination session the calendar specialist uses the *tz'ite* seeds that are kept in the sacred bundle to count the days. As these studies have already provided detailed accounts and analyses of the divination practices, I will restrict my discussion here to the observations of calendar divination with don Rigoberto Itzep.

The exact counting and interpretation of the *tz'ite* seeds differs between communities but also between members of the same community. The description of calendar divination with *tz'ite* seeds that follows is based on the methodology employed by don Rigoberto Itzep and should thus not be taken as standardized form of *tz'ite* reading, but rather as one of the many possible ways. It shares many similarities with the methodologies of other Ajq'ijab' in and outside of Momostenango, but it differs at some points depending on the training each specialist has received.

In a divination ceremony, the visitor (*uwinaqil*, "person") sits at a small table in front of the Ajq'ij. Don Rigoberto covers the table with a white cloth on which he places his sacred bundle (*patan*). As the visitor and don Rigoberto talk, the reason for doing the calendar divination becomes clear. There may be many reasons for performing the divination: land disputes, experienced envy by others, disagreements between friends or family, loss of objects or money, illnesses that affect oneself or the family, plans for starting a business, a travel, or another project, interpretations of dreams, determining a day for marriage proposal, and many more. Community members can visit the Ajq'ij basically for any concern they may have.

Once the concern of the visitor has been determined, don Rigoberto empties the contents of the *patan* on the cloth. From this heap of seeds and stones, don Rigoberto selects four stones – crystals and other stones – that will be used to count the

18 This form of calendar divination is practiced by many indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica. For a recent study on Ayöök (Mixe) calendar divination, for example, see Rojas Martínez Gracida (2014).

rounds, and places them on the side of the table. Then he rubs with the palm of the hand over the heap of *tz'ite* (*b'arajear*[19]) in a counterclockwise movement, while speaking in manner similar to the discourse pronounced, in the case of don Rigoberto, at the beginning of fire ceremonies. Don Rigoberto incorporates the question of the visitor into his ritual discourse. Following this, he grabs a handful of *tz'ite* seeds from the heap and forms a smaller heap of *tz'ite* that is then placed on the right side of the table. While reciting specific words, don Rigoberto forms groups of four seeds, creating first rows and then columns. According to don Rigoberto, a single handful of beans will yield between 19 and 25 groups of seeds. The row consists of seven groups of four *tz'ite* beans. When completing a row, he proceeds to group the beans in a new row, starting again on the right side. The first row is placed close to the visitor while don Rigoberto slowly works his way towards himself (Figure 13).

Each of the *tz'ite* seed groups forms a day of the K'iche' calendar. When the groups have been formed on the table, the Ajq'ij usually counts them, starting from the day of the performance of the divination or from the day that a specific concern arose. While counting the days, the Ajq'ij receives signs from the movement of his/her blood on specific days, which leads him/her to bring specific topics to the conversation.

According to Tedlock (1982, p. 162), the last pile on the last row indicates if the outcome of the divination is reliable, while according to Schultze Jena (1933, p. 42) the last pile displays the outcome's value. Both can be said to be correct in my experience. If the calendar divination closes with a final group consisting of three beans it means that the answer is negative, but not extremely devastating. If only one bean remains, the outcome is very negative. When two beans form the final group, it indicates that the result is mildly positive. In case the final group is formed exactly by four beans, the result is very positive. When three beans remain in the last group, don Rigoberto splits them in a group of two and a group of one bean. If the amount of beans of the last pile differs in each of the four divination rounds, it means that the outcome of the divination ritual is not very reliable or that the outcome is uncertain, which the Ajq'ij will tell to the visitor.

The lining of days, the communication with specific days, the personal story of the visitor and the speaking of blood experienced by the Ajq'ij bring to the table a range of topics. The visitor and the Ajq'ij enter in a dialogue during which the specialist is able to discern the underlying issues of the concerns or problems of the visitor. Issues are brought to discussion by using the symbolic system of the calendar days. After performing four rounds of divination, counted with the four stones that have been selected at the beginning of the divination ceremony, the Ajq'ij has a clear understanding of the situation and can offer counseling on the possible solutions. The practice of calendar divination is therefore not a case of fortune telling or making prognostications, but is rather about allowing a person to cope with the situation he/she is in.

If the concern of the visitor is a closed question – for example if they can travel to Chichicastenango in following two days- the Ajq'ij will have a positive or negative advice after four rounds. Even with a positive response, don Rigoberto advices the visitor to be always careful and conscious. If the concern of the visitor is very open – for example why he or she has been losing money – the Ajq'ij will be able to determine the cause of the problem and propose a solution, for example in the form of a ceremony or offering at a specific place, for sacred beings or ancestors who can help in this situation. The Ajq'ij bases the moment for such a ceremony on the *chol q'ij* and the characteristics of the Day-Lords.

TIME AND THE HUMAN BEING

The numbers of the *chol q'ij* tend to have a feminine aspect while the Day-Lords have a masculine aspect. When the number and the Lord join for a day and interact, they create *pensamiento y movimiento*[20] ("thoughts and movement") or *chapo winaq* ("to begin a human"). A day is thus both feminine and masculine and it creates human life.

19 *B'araj* means "to roll" and *b'arajear* is likely a Hispanicized form of the K'iche' verb. However, it is also possible that there is a link with the Spanish word *baraja*, a set of playing cards from Spain which are also used in divinatory practices.

20 *Pensamiento y movimiento* a diaphrastic kenning that stands for (human) life.

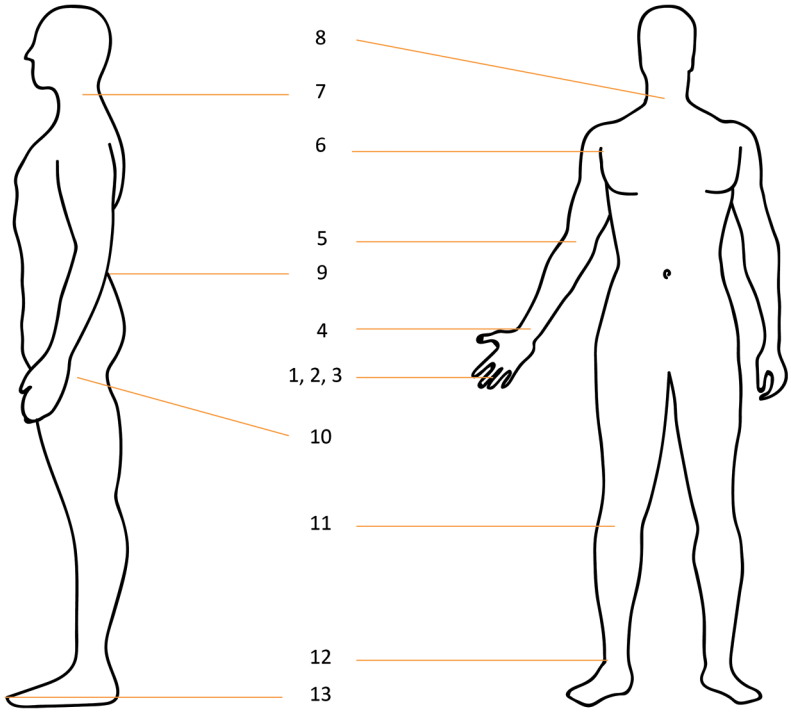


Figure 14. The locations of the thirteen Day-Numbers in the human body: 1, 2, 3. The joints that connect the phalanxes of the finger; 4. The wrist; 5. The elbow; 6 The shoulder; 7. The neck joint that enables moving up and down; 8. The neck joint that enables moving to the sides; 9. The lower spine; 10. The hips; 11. The knees; 12. The ankles; 13. The phalanxes of the toe.

The length of the cycles of the numbers and Lords, respectively thirteen and twenty, represent the human being. The relationship between the twenty Day-Lords and the human being is very clear as *winaq* is the K'iche' word for "twenty" and for "human being". All specialists in Momostenango agree that human being is the basis of the vigesimal counting system because the human being has twenty fingers (toes and fingers). The thirteen numbers of the *chol q'ij* represent thirteen joints that make movement of the human body possible (Figure 14). The relation between the numbers and the human articulations is shared over a large area. Ajq'ij José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar from the *Mam* speaking community of Concepción Chiquirichapa explains:

> *These thirteen joints are very much related to the life of the human being: because of these there is equilibrium in the body. If one joint would be missing, the human being would be disabled and would not be able to do any normal work. So that is why these thirteen joints are so important for us* – Don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar, Concepción Chiquirichapa, May 2014.

Today, the days of the Momostecan K'iche' calendar create life[21]. Although not all Ajq'ijab' agree on this, for many people the days build the human. During pregnancy, different Day-Lords are each day at work on a specific part of the baby's developing body in the mother's womb. For example, Lord Aj (Reed) works on the spine. Each day of Lord Aj, the

21 Schultze-Jena (1933, p. 35) was the first to register the existence of a close relationship between the *chol q'ij*, the cycle of the moon and the human gestation period. In short, he observed that nine moons pass after the last menstrual period of the mother until the baby is born. This period of nine moons encompasses nine months, a period of more or less 260 days.

Day	Part of the Body	Nawal of the person
B'atz'	The umbilical cord The veins	Monkey
E'	The feet The teeth	Mountain cat
Aj	The spine	Armadillo
Ix	The blood	Jaguar
Tz'ikin	The eyes	Quetzal
Ajmak	The female genitals	Vulture
No'j	The brain	Gazelle
Tijax	The teeth and the tongue The sexual organs	Wolf
Kawoq	The heart	Lion
Ajpu	The chest	Eagle
Imox	The left arm The muscles	Fish
Iq'	The lungs	Weasel
Aq'ab'al	The stomach The right hand	Fawn
K'at	The ribs	Lizard
Kan	The nervous system	Serpent
Kame	The nails	Owl
Kej	The hands	Deer
Q'anil	The sperm and the ovule	Rabbit
Toj	The ears	Shark
Tz'i'	The nose	Opossum

Table 3. Relationship between the *chol q'ij* days, the human body, and the *nawales*.

baby will develop a part of the spine. The section of the spine that is being developed that day depends on the Day-Number. After all thirteen combinations with this Day-Lord have passed, the spine will be complete. Similarly, on days that Lord No'j, the day of wisdom, is present, the brain and memory of the baby are developed, and on the days B'atz' the umbilical cord progresses. Therefore in 260 days (= nine months) all Day-Lords have worked thirteen times on the development of a baby, and the baby will be fully formed (Table 3). The *comadronas*, midwifes, guide and monitor the developmental process and help the days, the mother, and the baby with their knowledge.

According to don Rigoberto, after the 260 gestational days the baby remains for another nine or thirteen days in the womb[22]. This period is needed to make sure the baby is ready for birth. After birth and throughout the course of one's life, the Day-Lords continue to have an influence on the bodily parts that they once helped to create. Twenty days after a baby boy is born, i.e. on the first return of the Day-Lord on which he was born, he is presented to the ancestors and the *Ajaw*[23] at the house altar. Having fulfilled the period of *jun winaq* ("one human" / "one time twenty"), the baby boy has become a complete human. Baby girls are presented forty days after birth, upon completion of the period of *kyeb' winaq* ("two human" / "two times twenty").

The relationship between specific Day-Lords and parts of the human body in the Momostecan calendar calls to mind the famous page 54r of the Codex Vaticanus A, which combines 16th Century European astrological imagery with a model from precolonial religious codices that can be found in the Borgia Group. On page 54r, a human body is depicted surrounded by days that are related to a specific part of the body (see Anders & Jansen, 1996, pp. 245). A comparison with contemporary views of this relationship between the days and the body might provide a better explanation of this codex scene.

22 The number nine is feminine and could therefore be related to the birth of a girl. The number thirteen is male and could therefore be related to the birth of a boy.

23 The *Ajaw* ("Lord") is the creative force of everything around us.

THE NAWAL

The existence of *nawales* is a phenomenon present in many indigenous communities of Mesoamerica. The term *nawal* derives from the prehispanic Nahuatl word *nahualli*. The original meaning of this word is still heavily debated, but it seems to be related to the ability of powerful leaders to change shape (see Klein, Guzmán, Mandell and Stanfield-Mazzi, 2002, 391-392; López Austin, 1967, 95-99; Mikulska Dąbrowska, 2010, 272-331; Martínez González, 2011). Today, as maybe in the past as well, the conceptualization of the *nawal* or *nahualli* is slightly distinct in each region of Mesoamerica. In Momostenango, a *nawal* is a specific energy that accompanies a person, an object or natural manifestation and may manifest itself in the form of a particular animal. This companion animal will be one's guiding spirit for the rest of his/her life.

The presence of *nawales* in Guatemala has been dealt with in the past by several anthropologists (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 274-275; Wagley, 1949, pp. 65-66). Today, one's *nawal* is determined by the day on which one is born, while in the past people were often not aware of their animal companion. According to Termer (1957, p. 129), for example, people had to consult an Ajq'ij to know their *nawal*, or they would realize that by having a rare encounter with that animal. The change in awareness of one's *nawal* might be related to the growing accessibility of printing techniques and social media in the Highlands of Guatemala. Don Rigoberto has written and printed, for example, overviews of the relationship between a Day-Lord and a *nawal*, and he sells these documents at a market stand. On the social media website of Facebook there are also many Maya organizations that publish information about the Maya calendar, such as lists of *nawales*. Easy access to this information probably contributes to a growing awareness of one's *nawal*.

The birthday imbues a person with specific characteristics that will accompany them throughout their life. Furthermore, the Day-Lord that ruled on the day of birth also defines one's *nawal*. The twenty different *nawales* are the animal counterparts of the human being. At specific moments, usually at night, a person can become his/her *nawal* and experience what the *nawal* experiences. If something happens to the animal, the person will also feel the same. Today, there is a general consensus, however, that apart from one's *nawal*, a person may also have a special relationship with a different type of animal. This animal manifests itself occasionally to a person when he or she is alone, but not often when other people are around.

Not only humans have *nawales*. Each aspect of nature has its *nawal*. For example, watery places in Momostenango often have a snake as a *nawal* (see also Chapter V) but also the wind, mountaintops, trees, and stones, among others, have a *nawal*. Although these *nawales* are not tied to the K'iche' calendar, they do represent the living aspect of the place. The *nawales* of these places are usually animals that behave strangely or always appear at the same location. For example, ducks that swim at the waterfall at *barranquito*[24] in Momostenango are the embodied form of the waterfall itself. Disturbing these ducks is a form of disrespecting the *barranquito* site and can have repercussions in one's life.

A TRECENA CYCLE

In Momostenango there are four public altars (*komón*) that are related to the Day-Numbers 1, 6, 8, and 9 of the K'iche' calendar (Table 4). Days with these numbers are very appropriate days for performing ceremonies at their respective altars and the altars are therefore highly visited on these days. The repetition of these numbers within a thirteen-day period establishes a routine of ritual movement through the landscape as the Ajq'ijab' come together at a different altar four times during a thirteen-day period, or *trecena*. It is not obligatory to come to the altars on these specific days (as it is for example, in the case of the renewal rituals surrounding the day 8 B'atz'), but many devout Ajq'ijab' and especially Chuchqajawib' do follow the *trecena* cycle of ceremonies. More importantly, if an Ajq'ij commits to perform a ceremony on one of the altars but does not follow through, he or she will suffer repercussions for not fulfilling the promise. As will be discussed in more detail below, on the day 6 Toj the debts of unfulfilled promises can be repaid.

Important ritual Day-Numbers[25] related to the *trecena* in Momostenango are 1, 6, 8 and 9. Robert Burkitt, one of the few ethnographers who worked in

24 *Barranquito* is one of the bath places located at the border of the town's urban zone.

25 Day-Number 3 is related to the altar of *Uja'il Santiago*. However, most Ajq'ijab' do not consider it to be part of the same ritual cycle that the Day-Numbers 1, 6, 8 and 9.

Day-Lords	The Day-Numbers												
B'atz'	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1
E'	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2
Aj	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3
Ix	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4
Tz'ikin	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5
Ajmak	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6
No'j	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7
Tijax	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8
Kawoq	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9
Ajpu	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10
Imox	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11
Iq'	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12
Aq'ab'al	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13
K'at	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1
Kan	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2
Kame	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3
Kej	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8*	2	9	3	10	4
Q'anil	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5
Toj	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6
Tz'i'	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7

Table 4. The count of the *chol q'ij* with the ritual days in the *trecena* cycles marked in blue and the celebration of 8 B'atz' marked in red.

the Highland of Guatemala in the beginning of the 20th century, documented in his field notes (1918-1923) that in Momostenango the average amount of donations in the town church peaked on the days 1, 6, 8, and 9 of the K'iche' Calendar (Weeks et al., 2009, pp. 162-175). Although he does not incorporate factors such as rainy season, dry spells, earthquakes, Christian celebrations or other phenomena that could have affected the donations on a specific day, his findings show that the ritual *trecena* cycle in Momostenango involved the same Day-Numbers at the beginning of the 20th century as it does today. Furthermore, it is clear that the church was mostly visited at moments that were and are meaningful in the K'iche' calendar.

On days with Day-Number 1, the ritual specialists perform ceremonies at Pa Ja' ("the place of water") also known as Uja'il Alajsab'al (Figure 15). Because Pa Ja' is related to the number 1, it is also known as *junib'al* ("number-one-place"). The altar of Pa Ja' is situated next to a water spring on the banks of a small river that flows through Momostenango. On the sacred site are several old adobe structures. Pa Ja' is specifically related to the sacred bundle of the Ajq'ijab' for which ceremonies are often performed at this place. As the Day-Number 1 announces a new period of 13 days, it is likely that the ceremonies performed at Pa Ja' on these days are opening ceremonies for the *trecena* that follows. According to Barbara Tedlock (1992, p. 60), both numbers 1 and 8 days are appropriate for performing permission rituals (*permisos,* "permissions", or *ch'ajb'al*, "water for washing"; a metaphoric expression for the ritual preparation and presentation of new Ajq'ijab'). Today, however, only number 8 days are suitable for this ritual presentation.

On days with Day-Number 6, the Ajq'ijab' perform ceremonies at the altar of Paklom at the top of the sacred hill in the center of Momostenango (Figure 16). While the entire hill is the heart of the



Figure 15. The altar of Pa Ja' is located near a water spring. Several old structures and adobe walls make up this sacred place.

town, the altars are located only on the southwestern part of the hill. Paklom is also located in the center of the four sacred mountains that surround the town of Momostenango (see Chapter II). Because it is the heart of the town, the altars of Paklom are the most visited; at any moment of the day specialists are performing rituals there. As Paklom is related to Day-Number 6, the altars are also known as Waq'ib'al ("number-six-place").

On days with Day-Number 8, the Ajq'ijab' perform ceremonies at the shrines of Alajsab'al, also known as also known as Ch'uti sab'al, which both mean "little place of offering" (Figure 17). Because this altar is related to Day-Number 8 it is also referred to as Wajxaqib'al ("number-eight-place"). Alajsab'al is located on a small hill overlooking the town of Momostenango, a few hundred meters away from Pa Ja'. Number 8 is one of the most powerful and celebrated Day-Numbers of the Momostecan K'iche' calendar which is why many Ajq'ijab' visit Alajsab'al on this day. This is also evident in the numbers collected by Robert Burkitt in relation to church visitation (Weeks et al., 2009, pp. 173-175). Furthermore, number-eight-days are also adequate days for permission rituals in the preparation of future Ajq'ijab'.

Finally, on days with Day-Number 9, the Ajq'ijab' perform ceremonies at the shrines of Nimasab'al, the *Presidente Mundo*. Nimasab'al means literally "big place of offering" but is also known as B'elejeb'al ("number-nine-place") because of its relation with its Day-Number (Figure 18). Nimasab'al is located on the top of a hill at the western outskirts of town. Standing atop on the hill of Nimasab'al one can see the three other main altars of Momostenango. However, the overview of average donations on Day-Numbers by Burkitt shows that the donations on Day-Number 9 are significantly less than on other ritual Day-Numbers. A possible explanation for this is that Nimasab'al is located at quite a distance from the Church of Momostenango and the most appropriate moment for ritual is at sunrise, coinciding with Catholic mass. This might have resulted in less participation during mass and, consequently, less donations. However, it is also possible that throughout the 20th century Nimasab'al was restricted to Chuchqajawib', as Tedlock (1992, p. 71) mentions, and that the current accessibility for all Ajq'ijab' is only a recent development.



Figure 16. The sacred hilltop of Paklom on the day 6 Kan.



Figure 17. The altar of Alajsab'al.



Figure 18. The altar of Nimasab'al lies on a hill top about 30 minutes walking from the town center.

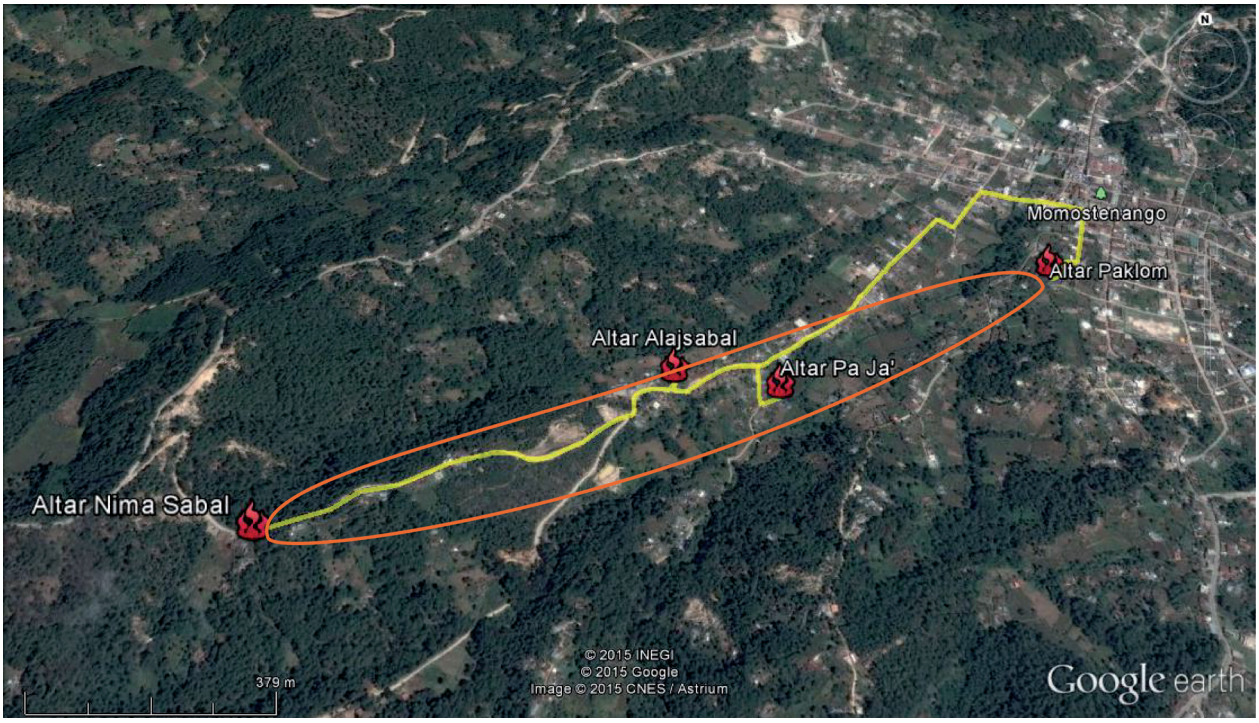


Figure 19. The ritual activities during a *trecena* cycles plotted on the map of Momostenango shows how the *chol q'ij* decentralizes religious space.

As it can be seen on the map above (Figure 19), the ritual cycle creates also a cyclical movement of calendar specialist throughout the *trecena* period. The numbers 1, 6, 8, and 9 direct the Ajq'ijab' respectively counterclockwise from the south, to the east, and north, and then west, a cycle which they complete during a period of thirteen days. In a period of 260 days, the most devout Ajq'ijab' might visit the altars up to 80 times and complete 20 *trecena* cycles. For the Chuchqajawib' it is an obligation to complete all cycles of the *trecena*.

By visiting the altars at specific moments in time the Ajq'ijab' reiterate the feeling of belonging to a community: they see the same people at the same place at the same time. This feeling is strengthened by the performance of a ritual. Although each ceremony is done individually, these rituals nevertheless enforce the shared social conventions and religious basis of a community. Momostenango's space is decentralized as the spiritual guides move through town during a period of thirteen days. When there is only one place of spiritual worship, such as a Catholic church, the environment is organized according to a pattern of center and periphery, in which the latter is usually marginalized, while the former attracts more attention. By visiting all four main altars of town on a strict cyclical basis, marginalization of certain parts of the town is precluded.

While most ethnographers, such as Termer (1957, p. 129), Lincoln (1942, p. 104), and Wagley (1949, p. 69), have focused their attention on finding remnants of the *veintena* cycle (see Chapter II), to my knowledge, only Ruth Bunzel has specifically mentioned the *trecena* cycle in Chichicastenango. According to her, each *trecena* cycle had specific characteristics that were usually determined by particular prominent days within that *trecena*. She[26]

26 Bunzel argues that "[t]here is a striking correspondence between the character of the great days that dominate these periods and the fortune attributed to the "houses" occupying the corresponding position in the Aztec *tonalamatl*, as expounded by Sahagún" (Bunzel, 1952, p. 284). In early colonial Central Mexico, the *trecena* periods were called "houses". Each house was named after the first day of the *trecena* and had a particular effect on the events in society for a duration of thirteen days. Bunzel's observation has, to my knowledge, been largely overlooked. Future research on the parallels between the Central Mexican *trecena* system and contemporary perceptions of the *trecena*

Trecena	Prominent days	Influence
1 B'atz'	7 No'j, 8 Tijax	General pardon.
1 Q'at	8 B'atz', 9 E'	Good days. Commemoration of the Calendar.
1 No'j	7 Aq'ab'al, 8 K'at, 9 Kan	Bad days. Days of sorcery.
1 Tz'i'	7 Ajmak, 8 No'j	Bad days. Pardon for the evil thoughts.
1 Aq'ab'al	7 Toj, 8 Tz'i'	Bad days. No ceremonies.
1 Ajmak	7 Iq', 8 Aq'ab'al, 9 K'at	Bad days. Defense against sorcery.
1 Toj	7 Tz'ikin, 8 Ajmak	Bad days. Pardon for covetousness.
1 Iq'	7 Q'anil, 8 Toj, 9 T'zi'	Bad days. Pardon for sexual sins.
1 Tz'ikin	7 Imox, 8 Iq', 9 Aq'abal	Bad days. Defense against destruction.
1 Q'anil	6 Aj, 7 Ix, 8 Tz'ikin	Good days. Thanksgiving for wealth.
1 Imox	7 Kej, 8 Q'anil	Good days. Thanksgiving for crops. Celebration of the Milpa.
1 Ix	7 Ajpu, 8 Imox, 9 Ix	Bad days. Defense against occult powers.
1 Kej	7 Aj, 8 Ix	Good days. General thanksgiving. Commemoration of earth.
1 Ajpu	7 Kame, 8 Kej	Good days. Commemoration of the dead.
1 Aj	7 Kawoq, 9 Imox	Bad days. General Pardon.
1 Kame	7 E', 8 Aj, 9 Ix	Good days. Invocation of Destiny.
1 Kawoq	7 Kan, 8 Kame, 9 Kej	Good days. General Pardon.
1 E'	8 Kawoq, 9 Ajpu	Bad days. Pardon of ancestors.
1 Kan	7 B'atz', 8 E', 9 Aj	Good days. Celebration of Life.
1 Tijax	7 K'at, 8 Kan, 9 Kame	Bad days. Defense from sorcery.

Table 5. The *trecenas* periods and their general characteristics in Chichicastenango according to Ruth Bunzel (after Bunzel, 1952, pp. 277-301).

even documented prayers of rituals specialists invoking the Lords of the *trecenas* during curing rituals (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 391-394).

The prominent days of the *trecenas* are the central days with the Day-Number 7, 8, and 9, which are, according to Bunzel, "indifferent, neither gentle nor violent, the days of measured strength" (Bunzel, 1952, p. 283). Comparing her description of the characters of the *trecenas* and the prominent days that she mentions of Chichicastenango (Table 5) with the mnemonics and meanings of these days (appendix B & C) in Momostenango, it seems that characters of the *trecenas* are mostly influenced by the number-8-day of that *trecena*. Both in Chichicastenango and Momostenango the day before and after a very important ritual day are commemorated as respectively annunciation, or welcoming, and a farewell. For example, on 7 Kej, the day before the day of the milpa (8 Q'anil), some Chuchqajawib' already go to the *meb'il* to prepare the welcoming of the day 8 Q'anil. Similarly, the day 8 B'atz' is welcomed already two days before (on 6 Toj) and fades out a day after (on 9 E') and rituals preparations for the K'iche' New Year also start two days before the actual entrance of the Year Bearer.

Concerning the calendar system in the Ixil area, Robert Burkitt mentions that in Nebaj the "blessed numbers" are 5, 7, 8 and that in Aguacatan the most important numbers are 5, 6, 7, 8, with the number 8 being the most prominent ritual day (Weeks 2009, 167, 171-172). It is therefore quite likely that a *trecena* system, in which each *trecena* is defined by the Day-Number 1 until 13 and is characterized by the number-eight-day, was widespread in the Highlands of Guatemala. Today, although agreeing on the importance of number-8 days, the Ajq'ijab' with whom I worked with in Momostenango state that there is no shared characteristics in the days that share a trecena.

One final observation made by Ruth Bunzel is worth mentioning here. Several important number-8-day celebrations in the *chol q'ij* have a parallel Catholic celebration in the Gregorian calendar (Table 6). Thus, while the celebrations of the *chol q'ij* shift in relation to the solar calendar and meteorological phenomena, these Catholic parallels are fixed within a specific period of the solar year and all the cycles that are influenced by the solar cycle, such as the agricultural cycle. This means that in the case of Chichicastenango, the day 8 Q'anil commemorates the milpa at any moment in the solar year, even when unrelated to the agricultural event they mean

system in Guatemala might contribute to the understanding of the process of continuation and to the interpretation of the precolonial Mesoamerican calendar systems.

K'iche' calendar day	Celebration	Christian variant in Chichicastenango
8 Kej	commemoration of the dead	2nd of November: all saints
8 Ix	commemoration of the earth	3rd May: Exaltation of the Cross
8 E'	commemoration of personal life	San Juan Bautista (June 24th, Midsummer night)
8 Q'anil	celebration of the *milpa*	Corpus Christi
8 B'atz'	commemoration of the calendar	Feast of San Pedro

Table 6. Identification of the characteristics of the *chol q'ij* in the Catholic celebration cycle in Chichicastenango (after Bunzel, 1952, p. 301).

to propitiate, while *Corpus Christi* always coincides with the commemoration of the milpa, at its first stage of sprouting, a very crucial moment in Maya subsistence farming. Similar parallels between *chol q'ij* celebrations and astronomically fixed Catholic celebrations are to be found in Momostenango (see Chapter III).

In sum, the *trecena* ritual cycle in Momostenango decentralizes religious activity. Not only the Ajq'ijab' move through the town throughout the *trecena* but also the centers of ritual attention shift counterclockwise in Momostenango. As such, a broad area of Momostenango is incorporated into the geographical range of religious activities, which, to a certain extent, prevents their marginalization for not being close to the central square of Momostenango, marked by the Catholic church. Remnants of the *trecena* cycle have been documented in other towns as well in the Highlands of Guatemala. In these places, however, there were no known altars that had to be visited according to the Day-Number, as is the case in Momostenango. Possibly, all the *trecenas* in these towns followed a similar system in which the number-eight-day was characteristic for the personality of the *trecena*. However, more research on this topic is needed for a concluding statement.

BECOMING AN AJQ'IJ

The Ajq'ijab' of the community are born with the abilities needed for this role. To become Ajq'ij is often not their own choice but rather the choice of the ancestors and the days. Although they receive a calling for their future service to the community, they still have to train with a Chuchqajaw from their lineage. After a period of training, the students are initiated in the community of Ajq'ijab'. The social responsibilities and duties that come with this initiation will last a life-time. Only on very rare occasions Ajq'ijab' refuse to continue their social duty, for example if they convert to Protestantism, in which case they will leave the sacred bundle they received upon initiation at one of the sacred places of Momostenango. The majority of Ajq'ijab', however, will accept their important role in society for the rest of their lives.

The Calling

To become Ajq'ij, a person needs to receive a calling by the world or *Juyub'-Taq'aj*, the days, and the ancestors[27]. The calling comes in the form of experienced problems and dreams. The most common problems taken as a calling are specific illnesses (B. Tedlock, 1982, p. 54). Usually these illnesses will not be cured until the person accepts the role in society that he or she is selected to fulfill. However, any personal problem that one has trouble solving might be an indication of the calling to fulfill a service to the community. Financial problems, such as for example loss of money or being unable to find a job, might be indicative of the fact that a person needs to follow another path altogether in life. In fact, practically any problem experienced in life can be a suggestion that a person is not following the mission that was determined for him or her.

Incurable sickness or financial problems do not necessarily mean that one has to take up the burden as Ajq'ij, as there are many other services for the community. For example, the musician Francisco Siguentes, whom I met on 8 B'atz' year

27 Juyub'-Taq'aj literally means "mountain-valley". This diaphrastic kenning refers to the complete world. Cultural regeneration programs prefer the word *cosmos* as a translation of Juyub'-Taq'aj, because it has a more universal connotation and goes beyond the world as a mere physical entity. Juyub'-Taq'aj is the totality of everything that exists and of everything that has existed and contributed to world as it is today. Although time and the ancestors are aspects of the Juyub'-Taq'aj, they are often also emphasized and invoked additional to the Juyub'-Taq'aj.

2 Kej (31st of January 2015), told me that he became musician because when he was 25 years old, he came back to Momostenango from Guatemala City and was financially broke. The father of his friend, a *kamalb'e,* interpreted this problem as a sign for having to take the burden to become musician. By becoming a musician and returning to the traditions of the ancestors of the community of Momostenango, he was able to get his life back on track. He has been playing the tambor in Momostenango for over 50 years on important moments such as 8 B'atz' or during the Patron Saint feast (Figure 20).



Figure 20. Francisco Siguentes (on the right) plays music with his friend at the central park of Momostenango during the celebration of 8 B'atz'.

The calling of an Ajq'ij is usually accompanied by dreams in which the Day-Lords manifest themselves to the person. The combination of experiencing seemingly unsurmountable troubles and dreaming about the Day-Lords is a reason for visiting the Chuchqajaw of one's lineage. When the Chuchqajaw believes that this might be a call to become Ajq'ij, he will perform a divination ceremony during which it will become clear if this person should become Ajq'ij or if there is another *patan* ("service") or *eqele'm* ("burden") for this person to fulfill.

An important aspect of determining the social duty of a person is the *wachaq'ij* ("the face of my day"; the characteristics of one's birthday). Whether someone should become Ajq'ij depends on the Day-Number and the Day-Lord of his/her day of birth. In contrast to what Tedlock (1992, p. 116) states, in my experience there is no specific Day-Lord that prevents one from becoming Ajq'ij. If one is born on a day consisting of a reasonably mild Day-Lord and a very high Day-Number, a person might be determined to become Ajq'ij, while someone born on a day consisting of a strong Day-Lord and a very low Day-Number might not be destined to be Ajq'ij. The main requisite for becoming Ajq'ij is feeling comfortable in a leading role.

In other cases, if the dreams and problems are not recognized as signs in a specific moment, later in life the person may realize the true call. For example, when an Ajq'ij of a family passes away and the family is in need of a new Ajq'ij to perform the ceremonies of the household, other ritual specialists from the lineage will come together to make a divination to determine who should fulfill the role of Ajq'ij. After the divination, the one who is pointed out to become Ajq'ij will probably realize that he or she has been receiving the signs of the calling but had not recognized them until this point. It is not really possible to refuse the role of Ajq'ij. If one does not take up the burden that is bestowed upon him/her, it is likely that he or she will experience negative consequences.

The Training

When the Chuchqajaw has determined that a person should become Ajq'ij, he establishes a training period for the future Ajq'ij. The moment of initiation usually determines the form of training. In Momostenango there are two possible moments for the initiation of a new Ajq'ij: on the day 8 B'atz' or on the *wachaq'ij* (the day of birth in the *chol q'ij*) of the future Ajq'ij. In both cases the training period is exactly 260 days, a full cycle of the *chol q'ij*, and is known as *kachaj ri patan* ("to wash the service"). Thus, if a person will be initiated on the day 8 B'atz', his or her training will start immediately after the previous celebration of 8 B'atz', while if a person will be initiated on his or her *wachaq'ij*, the training will have to start on the previous *wachaq'ij*, 260 days earlier. The moment of initiation is determined by both the Chuchqajaw and the Ajq'ij, who discuss the possibilities depending on other obligations. However, initiation on 8 B'atz' is in Momostenango by far the most popular moment for initiation.

Although the training period is officially 260 days, it sometimes happens that a novice who starts halfway a 260-day period is still able to be initiated on the following 8 B'atz' or on his/her *wachaq'ij*. On the other hand, it is also possible that the training period of a person takes longer. For example, don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac took almost 4 years (from 1979 until 1982) to receive his *patan*. The reason for extending his training period, he explained, was that he truly wanted to know what his task was about. He spent therefore four years investigating the details of the K'iche' calendar and talking with the elderly Ajq'ijab'. He realized that one day the elders would pass away and he would be in charge of passing on their knowledge to future generations.

In the case of initiation on the *wachaq'ij*, thirteen ceremonies (each time that the Day-Lord of the *wachaq'ij* returns in a period of 260 days) have to be performed by the Chuchqajaw, during which the novice is presented to the calendar and to the deceased calendar specialists of his or her lineage. Powerful calendar specialists from the lineage continue to be influential in daily life even after death, and they need to be informed about the initiation of a new Ajq'ij. In the case of initiation on 8 B'atz, twenty ceremonies (each time that the number 8 returns in a period of 260 days) have to be performed by the Chuchqajaw[28]. These ceremonies can only take place at the sacred altars of Alajsab'al (see below), the altar that is related to the number 8. The other altars cannot yet be visited for rituals by the apprentice.

As in the case of the duration of the training period, the moments of the presence of the student during these rituals are not strict. In the ideal case, a novice joins the Chuchqajaw, who introduces him or her into the knowledge of the calendar in each of the thirteen or twenty ceremonies, in which he or she is presented. However, it might be possible that the future Ajq'ij is not able to join in the ceremonies due to work or other obligations. Depending on the Chuchqajaw, the novice has to be present at each ceremony, or there is flexibility. Even if the novice is not present, it is important that the Chuchqajaw brings the *patan* of the novice to the ceremony and twirls it through the smoke of the ceremonial fire at the end of each ceremony.

28 According to Barbara Tedlock, preparation ceremonies take place on days with Day Numbers 1 and 8. During my fieldwork I have only come across the Day Number 8 for training and preparation rituals.



Figure 21. Don Rigoberto renewing his responsibilities as Chuchqajaw on the day 8 Kej.

In the initiation period leading to the day 8 B'atz', the day 8 Kej is an important day. In general, on this day the Chuchqajawib' of the town reinforce their promise of social duties in special ceremonies on the sacred places in and around Momostenango (Figure 21). 8 Kej is also the day on which Ajq'ijab' in training formalize their commitment to the community and their family. On 8 Kej, 104 days before the initiation on 8 B'atz', the Chuchqajaw that guides the Ajq'ij announces to the Day-Lords, the ancestors, and all divine beings, that there will be a new Ajq'ij. During this ritual, the divine beings are invoked for guidance and strength for the future Ajq'ij. From 8 Kej onwards the apprentice will have to accompany the Chuchqajaw on the number 8 days during the last quarter of 260 days: 8 Ajpu, 8 Aj, 8 Kame, 8 Kawoq, 8 E', 8 Kan, 8 Tijax and finally 8 B'atz'.

Apart from learning to perform fire ceremonies, during their training period apprentices are also taught how to read the *tz'ite* seeds. The apprentice accompanies the Chuchqajaw, who explains the procedure to the novice while performing a divination. Over the time of apprenticeship, the novice has participated several times in divination ceremonies and they are able to understand and perform at least the basics of the *tz'ite* reading.

The training of the apprentice, or in K'iche' *we k'omal*, is based on practice. By accompanying the Chuchqajaw to the altars, the novice gradually learns what is being done. Each time that the novice accompanies the Chuchqajaw, he or she is allowed to perform more activities. The training starts with being

present, while observing and listening. It continues with the preparation of the offerings at home and at the altar. Ideally, the novice learns the prayers by listening to his teacher and will be able to perform the whole ritual by themselves at the end of the 260-day period. During the training period, the novice dreams often of the Day-Lords and learns counting in his/her dreams.

Those who join their teacher to the ceremonies during the period of training will have at the moment of final initiation a profound knowledge of the *chol q'ij* and are able to perform the counting of days and to express the ritual speech by themselves. Often, as I saw during my fieldwork in 2014 and 2015, and as also Tedlock describes (1992, pp. 60-71), even on the day of the initiation, the apprentices are not completely independent and the teacher has to join in to perform the ritual correctly. After the initiation many Ajq'ijab' continue to learn from the Chuchqajaw who guided them during the 260-days training and from other wise Chuchqajawib' in the community. The day 8 B'atz' is therefore the moment for accepting the social role which had been promised and formalized on the day 8 Kej, while after accepting the role the education often continues.

Apart from learning the counting of the days during the training period, the future Ajq'ij is also gradually introduced in the community of Ajq'ijab'. By joining in the ceremonies at Alajsab'al on the days with number 8, the novice is not only presented to the Divine Beings but also to the community of calendar specialists.

The Renewal of Commitment

After 260 days of training follows the initiation of an Ajq'ij. The day 8 B'atz' is the main day of initiation for the novices, but those who are already initiated also renew on this day their commitment to the community and to the world. As 8 B'atz' is a powerful day, its presence or characteristics already start two days before, on the days 6 Toj and 7 Tz'i', and fade away a day after, on 9 E'. Therefore, the four days of 6 Toj, 7 Tz'i', 8 B'atz' and 9 E' are important in the initiation of Ajq'ijab' and in the renewal of the social promise by those who are already initiated. Participants should not undertake many other activities during these days and abstain from heavy food such as meat and chili and have to practice sexual abstinence.

The day 6 Toj is the day for paying the debts (*tojonik*: "payment"). This is the appropriate day to perform a ceremony that an Ajq'ij has not been able to complete despite having committed to it. Each Ajq'ij should keep track of the ceremonies that she/he missed since the previous 8 B'atz' celebration and address the days on which these ceremonies would have taken place and the divine beings that should have been addressed. The offerings are for these days and their corresponding divine beings. Because of the number of the day 6 Toj, these ceremonies should be publicly performed at the sacred hill of Paklom near the center of Momostenango. After the day 6 Toj, each Ajq'ij is able to start a new 260-cycle without any ceremonial debts to the calendar and the world.

The day 7 Tz'i' is a day of self-reflection for the Ajq'ijab' and ceremonies are privately performed at the house altar. In these private ceremonies the Ajq'ij petitions that his/her life of and the lives of relatives be guided by the morals and principles established by the ancestors. Guidance is asked to avoid improper behavior and to have an equilibrated and conscious life. After sunset on 7 Tz'i' the day 8 B'atz' starts entering the present and usually the first Ajq'ijab' begin their pilgrimage to the sacred places of Momostenango.

The day 8 B'atz' is for the profession of Ajq'ij the most important day of the *chol q'ij*. Currently, all Ajq'ijab' that I have spoken agree that the day 8 B'atz' is the first day of the K'iche' calendar. On 8 B'atz' the Ajq'ijab' visit the main sacred places of Momostenango, performing ceremonies and leaving offerings at each of them (Figure 22). Those who come from the *aldeas* (surroundings) of Momostenango usually start visiting the altars from sunset on 7 Tz'i' onwards but the majority of Ajq'ijab' wait until 12 o'clock at night. The altars of Momostenango are crowded until at least sunset of the day 8 B'atz'. During the entire day all Ajq'ijab' who have been trained and initiated in Momostenango, come to the town and visit the five main altars: Nimasab'al, Alajsab'al, Pa Ja', Paklom, and Kokoch. Depending on the Ajq'ij and their specific education, the altar of Uja'al Santiago at the foot of Paklom is also included. On 8 B'atz' the Ajq'ij renews his/her bond with the sacred bundle and reinforces his/her promise to the community, the ancestors, the calendar and the world.



Figure 22. The 29th of January 2015: the day 8 B'atz' at Paklom.

The day 9 E' is the day of the new road (the mnemonic for E' is *ri b'e*, "the road") that follows the payments of the debts (6 Toj), the reiteration of the morals and values of the community (7 Tz'i') and the renewal of the promise (8 B'atz'). On this day, a clear road in life is petitioned together with guidance for the following 260 days. The ceremonies are publicly performed on the sacred place of Nimasab'al. For those who are initiated the previous day, 9 E' is the new road of being Ajq'ij.

The Initiation

The initiation ceremony is similar in practice and meaning to that of marriage (Ajxup Pelicó & Zapil Xivir, 1999, pp. 37-42). The *tz'ite* seeds that the novice receives after initiation are the *kulaj* ("spouse") of the Ajq'ij. The female Ajq'ijab' refer to their sacred bundle, in which they keep the *tz'ite* seeds, as *wachajil* ("my husband"), and the male Ajq'ijab' will call the bundle *wixoqil* ("my wife"). The bond between the Ajq'ij and the *tz'ite* is similar to that of spouses: the Ajq'ij takes care of the *tz'ite* and the *tz'ite* will complement the Ajq'ij. During the initiation ceremonies in 2014, don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac emphasized several times that just as with spouses, one should never leave their sacred bundle and should always treat it with respect and affection.

The private ceremony for initiation is comparable to that of marriage. In the case that the future Ajq'ij is not married, he/she will be presented to the ceremonial guide (the Chuchqajaw) and to the *tz'ite* seeds by his/her parents. The role of the parents in and after the ceremony is similar to their role in marriage: to support, accept, and advice about the duties that their child will have as Ajq'ij. Close relatives and friends are present in the ceremony as testimonies of the social commitment that takes place. In the case of a married Ajq'ij, his/her spouse is usually also trained and initiated together with his/

her partner. Even if the spouse is not initiated, the responsibility for fulfilling the norms and rules of being Ajq'ij is still shared in marriage, for example in the cases of sexual abstinence on ritual days.

While ceremonies on the day 6 Toj are similar to the initiated and the uninitiated alike, the activities on 7 Tz'i' and 8 B'atz' differ. In 2014 I was present at the initiation of three Ajq'ijab' under the training of don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac. The students were Ralankil Abyayala Itzep Hernández, Anita Garr, and Javier García. Because, according to don Rigoberto, the sacred altars of Momostenango would be overcrowded with Ajq'ijab' and disturbed by very loud *zarabanda* music performances on the day 8 B'atz, he chose to do the private rituals of 7 Tz'i' and public rituals of 8 B'atz' on one single day, 7 Tz'i' (15th of May 2014). The fact that it is possible to shift to an earlier moment or to postpone ritual activities shows the flexibility in religious practice among the specialists of Momostenango. I will discuss my experience of the initiation at don Rigoberto's house below.

At 9 o'clock in the morning of the day 7 Tz'i', the visitors – mostly relatives or very close friends of don Rigoberto and the future Ajq'ijab' – came to the house of the Chuchqajaw don Rigoberto Itzep. Some visitors also helped to decorate the house with flowers, pine needles and lemons. At 10:30am the ceremonies began. The novices entered the house patio in procession by passing through the front door and underneath an arch made of flowers and pine branches. Each of the novices was accompanied by three relatives or close friends, who helped to carry the offerings (Figure 23). Among these offerings were a woven basket with four *comales* (flat ceramic pans for warming up tortillas) and two ceramic vases, filled with pure water from the spring of *Uja'il Paklom,* and pine needles.

The short procession entered the patio and came to a close in the middle of it, where Chuchqajaw don Rigoberto sat on a bench shared with two Ajq'ijab' who would assist him during the initiation ceremony, one on each side of him (Figure 24). In front of them stood a table with the offerings. While the novice sat down in front of the table, one of the assistants recited a ceremonial discourse meant to present the novice and the offerings to the Chuchqajaw. As don Rigoberto explained in his opening speech, the three



Figure 23. The ceremonial entering of the house. The novice (in the back) is assisted and presented to his teacher by his relatives.



Figure 24. The authority of the initiation ceremony: Chuchqajaw don Rigoberto flanked by a male and a female Ajq'ij.



Figure 25. Ralankil Itzep receives her flower necklace and headband.



Figure 26. The novices have prepared their offerings in the four *comales* and are ready to perform the fire ceremonies.

Ajq'ijab' behind the table represent the religious authority. He emphasized that by sitting in this way, they were not copying the social order, but, quite the opposite, the social order (the indigenous authority) was made according to a sacred hierarchy, expressed in the K'iche' calendar (see Chapter II). During his speech, don Rigoberto pointed out the importance of this moment and elaborated on the gifts that the Ajq'ijab' brought. After him, the other two Ajq'ijab' also addressed each of the novices personally. Both gave the future Ajq'ijab' advice on the social role of the Ajq'ij. It was emphasized that the Ajq'ij should never ask a specific price for their service, but will always accept whatever can be given. Following the speeches, don Rigoberto invited everybody present to join in reciting the "First Dawn" section (see appendix A lines 33 to 55) of the Popol Vuh, which is characteristic of don Rigoberto's teachings.

After the speeches, each of the three future Ajq'ijab' received a flower necklace and headband, which we had prepared the evening before, a headband of four colors that distinguished the persons as Ajq'ijab', a necklace made of the *tz'ite* seeds, and personal gifts that had been blessed by don Rigoberto (Figure 25). The religious paraphernalia were handed to the participants by an Ajq'ij from the opposite sex.

Following the handing of the gifts and religious paraphernalia came the consumption of sacred atol, a ceremony referred to as *kwaq uja'il* ("we consume his drink"). The atol or *uja'il patan* ("the water of the service") was prepared by the doña María Hernández Ajanel, the wife of don Rigoberto Itzep, and her relatives. All visitors and participants were given a cup of atol, called *k'a*, that is especially prepared with crushed zapote seeds. This atol should be finished completely and



Figure 27. The novices perform the fire ceremonies in the four *comales.*

the residues should be taken out of the drinking cup. Repercussions, *kuya' k'ax* ("it gives pain"), will follow if the atol is not completely consumed.

After the consumption of atol, the novices performed fire ceremonies in the four *comales* that they brought. In each of the *comales* a fire was made and each of the 260 days were invoked (Figure 26 and Figure 27). The first time that they invoked the cycle of 260 days, the novices needed help from don Rigoberto. Later during the day, the novices had repeated the cycle of 260 days several times and were able to count it individually and express the appropriate ceremonial discourse independently.

To close the private ceremonies of the day, the participants danced together with the Chuchqajaw around the offerings and the *comales*. Finally, a ceremonial lunch of *caldo* and *tamalitos* (broth and small tamales), prepared again by doña María Hernández Ajanel, was shared with all visitors (Figure 28). This lunch would usually conclude the activities for the day 7 Tz'i', but in this specific occasion it bridged the private morning ceremonies and the public afternoon ceremonies, of which the latter usually take place on 8 B'atz.

After the lunch at home, we made a pilgrimage to the *komón* of Momostenango. Normally Nimasab'al is also visited on the initiation day but don Rigoberto decided to skip this altar due to his health problems; the complete pilgrimage from Nimasab'al, to Alajsab'al, Pa Ja', Paklom, and Kokoch is an intense hike. Each Ajq'ij has his/her personal place to perform ceremonies at the public altars. The exact location for the novice to perform his/her ceremonies was revealed in a divination ceremony performed by don Rigoberto, prior to the activities of 7 Tz'i' and 8 B'atz'. At the public altars, each of the novices performed a ceremony.



Figure 28. After the ceremonies all the visitors joined in for the lunch.

After arriving at the altar, pine needles were gently thrown in a circle around the altar. All the *comales* that had been used earlier in the day, were left at the first altar that was visited[29]. After making a circle of flower leaves on the altar, don Rigoberto placed the *comales* neatly top-down in line on the spot where the future Ajq'ij would be performing their ceremonies in the future. The ashes and residues of previous private ceremonies held at home remain in the *comales*. The comales would remain there as an offering for the four year bearers (see Chapter II). The many ceramic sherds at the altars of Momostenango show that the new Ajq'ij follow the footsteps of the ancestors. Because all Chuchqajawib' visit the altars in a different sequence or start the procession at a different altar, each of the altars Nimasab'al, Alajsab'al, Pa Ja', and Paklom have remains of many ceramic sherds and whole pots on their shrines. Each of these sacred sites consists for a part of broken ceramic sherds that past generations of initiated Ajq'ijab' have left there (Figure 30).

The same pattern of rituals was followed on the other altars that were visited that day: Pa Ja', Paklom, and Kokoch. At Pa Ja' the initiation ritual discourse invoked not the number-8 days but the number-1 days and at Paklom the number-6 days were invoked. At each following sacred altar, the student took a more independent role in the reciting the prayers and performing the ritual. The pilgrimage ended at the altar of Kokoch, in front of the church of Momostenango. Here the sacred bundle was handed to each apprentice, as a sign that they have become officially an Ajq'ij and accepted all duties and responsibilities that come with this role. The

29 Because people do not always follow the same sequence in visiting the altars on 8 B'atz' and traditions may vary between persons, sherds of *comales* or whole *comales* can be found on each of the altars.



Figure 29. Ralankil Itzep performs her initiation ceremony at the altar of Alajsab'al.



Figure 30. A large part of the hill of Alajsab'al consists of ceramics sherds.

Chuchqajaw embraced the three new Ajq'ijab' one by one, and after him all those who are present followed in line to congratulate them, before each family finally went to their own house. On 9 E', the new Ajq'ijab' would perform their first individual ceremony at the altar of Nimasab'al.

II. Time and Authority

For writing this chapter, I am greatly indebted to don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, doña María Hernández Ajanel, Gregorio Itzep, don José Angel Xeloj, doña María Theresa López, don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar, Marleny Tzicap, don Roberto Poz Pérez, don Miguel Chan and Elias López for the knowledge that they shared with me. Errors that might appear in the contents of this chapter are my fault alone. In case such errors or any misrepresentations appear, I would like to apologize beforehand to the community of Momostenango.

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discusses the 260-day cycle and examines how time is perceived as a living being. Chapter II explores how time is organized as an authority that has agency on the human being. The 365-day count takes a central role in this discussion but, as the two cycles are entangled, the role of the 260-day count is also addressed here.

In this chapter, authority is understood as role of leadership that relies on wisdom and a strong sense of responsibility. The main goal is to explore the relationship between the hierarchical organization of time and of the community. I examine the organization of time as an authority by looking into the characteristics of the *Mam*, the first day of the 365-day count and the leader of the community of 365 days. My discussion is based on my observations during the participation in rituals for welcoming the *Mam* in 2015 and numerous interviews and informal talks about the *Mam* with several calendar specialists. Furthermore, I also look into the organization of a single day as an authority over the community of 260 days through an in-depth discussion of a ceremonial discourse that I recorded in 2014 (see appendix A). In that section I discuss how the ceremonial discourse addresses the authority of a day in a way that resembles colonial and precolonial sources on the Maya calendar.

In the part that follows I discuss how the perception of time as a form of authority is reproduced in the social service provided by the indigenous authority of Momostenango and social structures of the household. Finally, I will end this chapter with a discussion of a few characteristics of the *chol q'ij* and the *junab' q'ij* that are imposed on the Gregorian calendar. I will explore here how also the Gregorian calendar is understood as an authority of time.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE YEAR

The duration of the K'iche' *junab' q'ij* is similar to the precolonial Maya calendar (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, pp. 104-128). The K'iche' year counts 365 days, which is slightly less than the duration of the actual solar year (+/- 365.242 days). The beginning of the year count shifts therefore every four years one day back in relation to the solar year and the Gregorian calendar. In the leap year 2016, for example, the K'iche' New Year is celebrated on the night between the 20th and 21st of February, while in 2017 it is celebrated in the night between the 19th and 20st of February (Table 7). The first day of the year is known as the *Mam*, the Grandfather, who watches over the events that occur throughout the year. As mentioned in the introduction of Chapter I, the *chol q'ij* and *junab' q'ij* are not separated counts; the days in the *junab' q'ij* follow thus the names of the *chol q'ij* (Day-Number and Day-Lord). The personality of the *Mam* is therefore based on the *chol q'ij*.

Maya New Year	Gregorian date
13 Imox to 1 Iq'	20th to 21st of February 2013
1 Kame to 2 Kej	20th to 21st of February 2014
2 B'atz' to 3 E'	20th to 21st of February 2015
3 Ajmak to 4 No'j	20th to 21st of February 2016
4 Imox to 5 Iq'	19th to 20th of February 2017

Table 7. Correspondence between the Maya New Year and the Gregorian calendar. The year 2016 is a leap year in the Gregorian calendar, but the extra day is added on the 29th of February, after the arrival of the *Mam*, so the shift in dates for the Maya calendar will be noticeable almost a year later, in 2017.

The Mam or Year Bearer

The name of the *Mam* is composed of a Day-Lord and a Day-Number. As the K'iche' year is a cycle of 365 days, the cycle of twenty Day-Lords fits eighteen times completely in the year, leaving five final days at the end of the year. In the precolonial and colonial times, the division of the year in eighteen periods of twenty days and five final days was called the system of *uinales*, which I will discuss in more detail below. Because of the remaining five days, the name of the *Mam* shifts each year five positions ahead in the list of twenty Day-Lords. For example, after a year that was overseen by Day-Lord E' follows a year overseen by the Day-Lord No'j. As there are only twenty possible names and the first day shifts every year five positions, there are only four possible Day-Lords that can occupy the position of the *Mam*. These Day-Lords are *Kej*, *E'*, *No'j*, and *Iq'*. After four years the same Day-Lord becomes the *Mam* again and the sequence will repeat. This counting system of the years is a widespread Mesoamerican phenomenon, known to have occurred since prehispanic times.

In defining the personality of the year, the characteristics of the Day-Lord are more dominant than those of the Day-Numbers. Each *Mam*, however, also consists of a Day-Number. The cycle of thirteen Day-Numbers fits 28 times in the K'iche' year, leaving only one day at the end of the year. This means that the *Mam* will shift one number up every year. Therefore, a *Mam* that consists of a Day-Number 1 will be succeeded by a *Mam* with Day-Number 2. This means that all thirteen numbers take their turn in composing the *Mam*. As there are thirteen available Day-Numbers for composing the *Mam* and four available Day-Lords, there are in total fifty-two possible combinations of Day-Numbers and Day-Lords. This means that after fifty-two years, the same *Mam* will return.

The *Mam* acts as an authority for both humans and days. The *Mam* has a role of responsible community leader similar to that of the mayor of a town (*alcalde*), which is why he is also called *alcalde mayor*. Another title that he carries is *Ajpatan*, "expert of the service", "expert of the *mecapal*". This is a generic title applied to those who take a cargo in service of the community for a year, such as, for example, *cofradía* members. As the metaphorical term for community service – *Ajpatan* – already shows, authority is perceived as a cargo or heavy load that is carried for the sake of the community. Similar depictions of time as a load carried on the back[30] with a *mecapal* are known from Classic period Maya representations of the Maya calendar that indicates the antiquity of this conceptualization (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, pp. 59-60). Don Rigoberto explains about *Ajpatan*:

> *The word "Patan" means that it is a service; he serves for one year. Ajpatan eqanik [expert of the service of carrying].* Eqanel *means that he carries the year, he carries the responsibility of everything, he is the one that guides. To lead a year is similar to [the role of] the municipality. In four years he comes back to retake the burden. So, it is a cargo, he is a carrier,* eqanel – Don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, 3rd of August 2016.

The change of the *Mam*'s personality in a period of four years represents according to don

30 In the academic literature, therefore, the first day of the year is usually referred to with the term 'year bearer'.

Rigoberto the succession of power by the ancient K'iche' rulers. He told me that the ancient Maya could choose their own rulers every four years. The ruler would take office in the year Kej (Deer) because the Day-Lord Kej is strongly related to power and strength, both in a political sense as in a physical sense. After being the authority for a year, the year E' (Tooth) enters, which is the year of the road, a year for making plans for the future. In the year No'j (Wisdom), the year of wisdom and mental strength, the ruler would carry out the plans made in the previous year. Finally, the year Iq' (Wind) would bring crisis and chaos, destroying everything that had been produced over the previous four years. After the year Iq', the year Kej arrived again with new leadership and power for the following period of four years.

As don Rigoberto's explanation shows, the years follow a recurring sequence of a new authority entering, a new road or direction for the future, wisdom and consolidation, followed by destruction. Over a period of fifty-two years, the intensity of the four *Mam* grows as the numbers gradually increase. For example, in a year 1 Iq' the intensity of destruction is weak as the number is low. Twelve years later, however, the year 13 Iq' enters, which will cause much havoc and chaos. A year after the beginning of the destruction introduced by 13 Iq', a new thirteen-year period enters which begins 1 Kej and ends with 13 Kej thirteen years later. I have not found any specific name or term that refers to these periods of thirteen years. However, the same division of thirteen-year periods in a cycle of 52 years appears in generally perceived stages of human life. The first thirteen years of life are the years of the formation; the second set of thirteen years is the period of youth; the third period running from twenty-six years to thirty-nine is the time of adulthood; finally, after thirty-nine years one reaches the period of respected adult. When one has passed the four stages of thirteen years, one is considered an elder. Each of these the stages from infant to elder relate to a different color. These colors are respectively: red, white, yellow, and black.

During its year of service, the *Mam* is accompanied by his *Ajtz'ib'* ("expert of the word", "secretary"). The function of *Ajtz'ib'* is common for religious, calendric and community authorities. In the case of the indigenous authorities of Momostenango, the *Ajtz'ib'* is responsible for keeping the record of the official decisions taken by the municipality and for passing written information on to the future generations. The Patron Saint Santiago also has his *Ajtz'ib',* San Felipe, who always accompanies Santiago and carries the Bible in his hand, the attribute of his work as a secretary. As there are four different *Mam*, there are also four different *Ajtz'ib'*. The *Mam* E', No'j, Iq', and Kej are respectively joined by *Ajtz'ib'* Tz'ikin, Kawoq, K'at, and Tz'i' (Table 8). The *Ajtz'ib'* is the Day-Lord that follows two or three days after the *Mam*, and has therefore a Day-Number that is two or three numbers higher than the *Mam*. In the transcription of the ceremonial discourse, for example, don Rigoberto mentions the *Mam* 2 Kej in combination with his *Ajtz'ib'* 5 Tz'i' (appendix A, lines 595 to 599, and lines 810 to 814). The function of the *Ajtz'ib'* is to assist the *Mam* in everything and to receive people at the *Mam*'s altar, when the *Mam* himself is unable to.

My observations regarding the *Mam* and the *Ajtz'ib'* differ from Barbara Tedlock's (1982, p. 100), who mentions that only two Day-Lords can take the function of secretary, Tz'ikin and Kan. According to her, Tz'ikin is the secretary of Iq' and Kej and Kan is the secretary of No'j and E'. Furthermore, she states that the year is ruled by a double *Mam*: the *Mam* and his first reappearance twenty days after. During my fieldwork I was not able confirm the coexistence of two *Mam* and the presence of only two *Ajtz'ib'*. However, in the ceremonial discourse in Appendix A, don Rigoberto does invoke the *Mam* 2 Kej together with the *Mam* 9 Kej (difference of 20 days), each of them with their respective *Ajtz'ib'*, 5 Tz'i' and 12 Tz'i', at two moments in the ritual (appendix A, lines 595 to 599, and lines 810 to 814). Both don Rigoberto and don José Angel told me that there exists only one *Mam*. However, the pairing of the *Mam* and his *Ajtz'ib'* with the first return of the *Mam* and his *Ajtz'ib'* seems to indicate that there is a special relationship between the two. Possibly the knowledge regarding the existence of two *Mam* continues today only as part of ritual discourse. More research on this matter is needed as the exact nature of this relationship can at the moment of writing not be concluded.

Mam	Altar Mam	Color	Ajtz'ib'	Altar of Ajtz'ib'	Direction	Gregorian Years
Kej	Kilija	Red	Tz'i'	Tzokit	East	2014, 2018
E'	Socop	Black	Tz'ikin	Qajinak Ab'aj	West	2015, 2019
No'j	Pipil Ab'aj	White	Kawoq	Koral Ab'aj	North	2016, 2020
Iq'	Tamancu	Yellow	K'at	Kiaq ja	South	2017, 2021

Table 8. Overview of the *Mam*, their mountains, colors, *Ajtz'ib'*, cardinal directions, and the Gregorian years. *Qajinak Ab'aj* means "fractured rock"; *Koral Ab'aj* means "rock of the cattle enclosure"; *Kyak ja* means "the red house"; translation of *Tzokit* is not known to me.

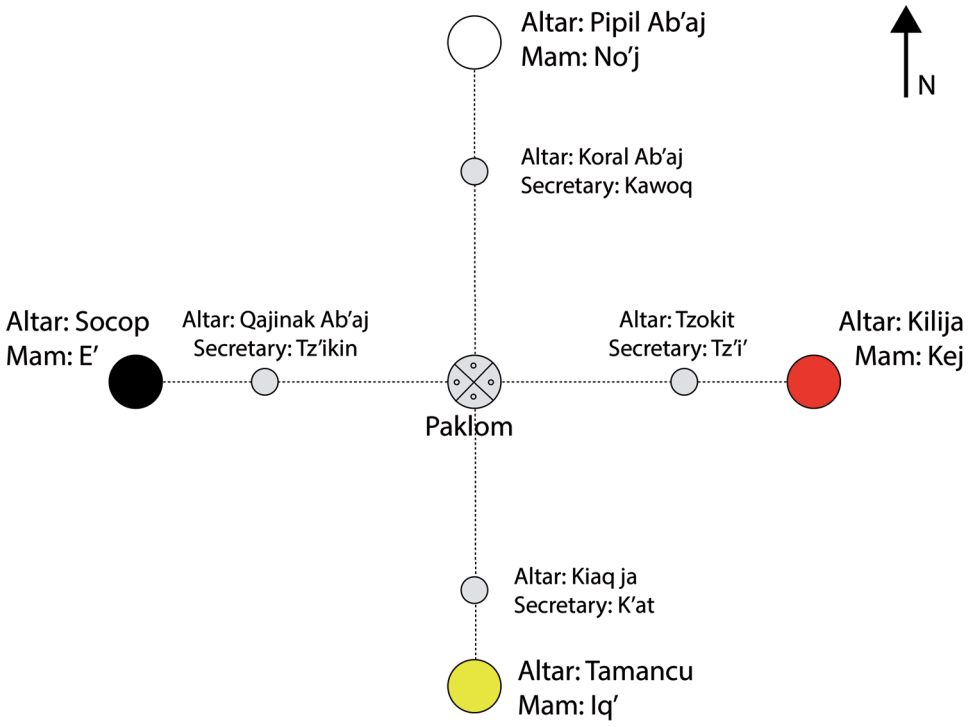


Figure 31. Schematic overview of the location of Momostenango at the center of the four sacred mountains where the *Mam* are seated.

The *Mam* and the *Ajtz'ib'* have their separate altars placed at the four cardinal directions in and around Momostenango's surroundings[31] (Figure 31). During rituals, the cardinal directions and the *Mam* are elaborately greeted (see appendix A, lines 56 to 123, and lines 1242 to 1270). *Mam* E' and secretary Tz'ikin are in the in the region where the sun sets (west); *Mam* No'j and secretary Kawoq lie in the region from where the wind comes (north); *Mam* Iq' and secretary K'at lie in the region where the wind falls (south); and *Mam* Kej and secretary Tz'i' lie in the direction where the sun rises (east). The altars of the four *Mam* are located on the four sacred mountains that surround Momostenango: Socop, Pipil Ab'aj, Tamancu, and Kilija. The altar of *Ajtz'ib'* Tz'ikin is located in the aldea Santa Ana, right behind the local municipality building. The altar of *Ajtz'ib'* K'at is located in the center of the aldea Los Cipreses, behind a schoolyard. The altar of *Ajtz'ib'* Kawoq is located in the barrio Santa Ana, in front the radio station Princesa Xmukane. The altar of *Ajtz'ib'* Tz'i' is located in the village of Patzokit ("the place of the Tzokit") near Momostenango. Momostenango's central sacred hill, Paklom, lies at the center of all the altars. The altars of the *Mam* and their secretaries thus locate Momostenango in a central position in time and space[32].

There are several moments in which Chuchqajawib' visit the four altars of the *Mam*. Some Chuchqajawib' visit them before initiating a new Ajq'ij, to ask each *Mam*, the authority of time, permission for the initiation at their respective altars. Some Chuchqajawib' perform elaborate ceremonies just before the ending of the K'iche' year to welcome the new *Mam* and thank the old one for his year of service at the altar of the new *Mam*. Finally, it is common to visit the altar of Kej at Kilija, in the east, on 11 Kej, the altar of E' at Socop, in the west, on 11 Ajpu, the altar of Iq' at Tamancu, in the south, on 11 Aj, and the altar of No'j at Pipil Ab'aj, in the north, on 11 Kame[33] (B. Tedlock, 1992, p. 140). Today, however, not many Chuchqajawib' visit the four sacred mountains around Momostenango because it is not safe to go to such isolated places. Don José Angel explains:

> *It is dangerous; it is very far away… They sometimes attack there. For example, around here, in the direction of San Bartolo through Santa Ana, there is a sacred place that we call* chwi Cruz*; it is not far from here. Nowadays there are a lot of people that go there because previously these people used to go to Patzil, but not anymore because there are thiefs. So, the people do not go: they prefer to stay close [to town]. It is scary… That is why people do not go anymore* – Don José Angel Xeloj, 17th of August 2016.

The Veintenas

In the prehispanic Mesoamerican calendar system, each year of 365 days was divided into eighteen periods of twenty days, called *uinales* or *veintenas*, and one period of five days. Modern scholars interested in the correlation between the ancient Maya system and the Gregorian calendar have relied on colonial documents and contemporary calendar systems in the highlands of Guatemala and Mexico (Berlin, 1951, p. 157; Miles, 1948, p. 47; Villa Rojas, 1988, pp. 146-149). The system of *uinales* is no longer in use anywhere in the Maya region.

Fray Diego de Landa, the Spanish bishop of Yucatan from 1572 to 1579, describes in his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* that religious celebrations related to agriculture took place during the *uinales* in a fashion similar to the Central Mexican calendar (De Landa, 1966, Chapter XXXIX-XLI). Sachse, Weeks, and Prager (2009, pp. 186-187) conclude on the basis of their analysis of three K'iche' calendars from the

31 Tedlock (1992, p. 101) documents a strikingly different orientation of the order and location of the sacred mountains. According to her, the northern mountain Pipil is the seat of *Ajtz'ib'* Tz' ikin, the eastern mountain Quilija is the seat of *Mam* Kej, the southern mountain Tamancu is the seat of *Mam* E', and the western mountain Socop is the seat of *Mam* Iq'. She mentions another mountain in the south southwest, named Joyan, which lies in between Tamancu and Socop and which is the seat of both *Mam* No'j and *Ajtz'ib'* K'at. According to Tedlock, therefore, the annual authority shifts from Quilija (east), to Tamancu (south), to Joyan (south-southwest), and finally to Socop (west). According to my data, however, the authority shifts from Quilija (east) to Socop (west), to Pipil Ab'aj (north) and finally to Tamancu (south). Why our data is so strikingly different is not entirely clear to me. As Barbara Tedlock worked often in the aldea of *Los Cipreses*, it is possible that she received this information from specialists living in this aldea (the perception of time and space may differ slightly between communities). Don José Angel Xeloj, the son of the calendar specialist that Tedlock worked with, however, agreed with the data that I have presented here.

32 A similar form of spatializing time and temporalizing space can be found in the Prehispanic period, for example on Madrid codex page 75-76 (Vail, 2013, p. 185).

33 At the moment of writing it is not completely clear to me why these specific days are related to the four cardinal directions and the four *Mam.*

	Kaqchikel 1685	Interpretation	K'iche' 1722	Interpretation
1	Nab'ey Mam	First Old Man	Nab'e Mam	First Old Man
2	Rukab' Mam	The Second Old Man	Ukab' Mam	The Second Old Man
3	Likinka	Soft and Slippery Earth	Likinka	Soft and Slippery Earth
4	Nab'ey Toqik	First month of harvest	Ukab' Likinka	Second month of slippery Earth
5	Rukab' Toqik	Second month of harvest	Nab'e Pach	First time of hatching
6	Nab'ey Pach	First time of hatching	Ukab' Pach	Second time of hatching
7	Rukan Pach	Second time of hatching	Tz'isi Laqam	The Sprouts show
8	Tz'ikin Q'ij	Season of Birds	Tz'ikin Q'ij	Season of Birds
9	Kaqan	Hot Season	Kaqam	Red Clouds
10	Ib'ota'	Season of various red colors or of rolling up mats	B'otam	Tangled Mats
11	Qatik	Burning or cleaning	Nab'e Si'j	First month of white flowers
12	Iskal	Sprouting or throwing of buds	Ukab' Si'j	Second month of white flowers
13	Pariche'	Season of protecting against cold	Rox Si'j	Third month of white flowers
14	Tz'api Q'ij	Closing days	Che'	Trees
15	Tacaxepual	Season of sowing the first milpas	Tekexepoal	Time to plant the milpa
16	Nab'e Tumuxux	Month of the flying ants	Tz'ib'a Pop	Painted Mat
17	Rukab' Tumuxux	Companion to the month of the flying ants	Saq	White
18	Q'ib'ixix	Time of sowing	Ch'ab'	Muddy ground
19	Uchum	Season of re-sowing	Tz'api Q'ij	Closing days

Table 9. The names of the colonial calendar *veintenas* according to Weeks et al. (2009, pp. 188-193).

Highlands of Guatemala, dating between 1685 and 1854, that the *uinales* in the K'iche' calendar were named after important periods in the agricultural calendar (Table 9). However, the timing of the colonial *uinales* does not seem to coincide precisely with agricultural events and practices that give them their names. This might suggest that the *uinales* – fixed in the K'iche' year of 365 – ran independently from the astronomical solar cycle. If this were the case, then the cycle of agricultural celebrations would also run independently from the *uinales*. Possibly, the count of the *uinales* has disappeared after the Spanish colonization, differently from the cycle of the year and the *chol q'ij*, perhaps because it played a minor role in ritual celebrations. In the next chapter, I will come back to this idea.

Several ethnographers (La Farge, 1947, pp. 167-169; Lincoln, 1942, pp. 115-118; Schultze Jena, 1933, p. 41; B. Tedlock, 1982, p. 103) have tried to document the surviving knowledge of the *uinal* system in Ixil and K'iche' communities. Some scholars were able to retrieve the names of the individual *uinales*, but a comparison of their findings shows that surviving *uinal* sequences are fragmented and *uinal* names vary significantly in each community. Lincoln even stated that there were sometimes "12, 14, or 18-month names [*uinales*] which vary in name and order in each town with each calendar priest" (Lincoln, 1942, p. 106). According to Termer (1957, p. 129), who discusses a questionable list of *uinales* in the Chuj language from a place close to Santa Eulalia, the *uinales* were no longer in use as early as the mid-1920s. The only place where the names of the *uinales* still seem to be in use, is among the Tzotzil speakers of San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, Mexico (Gossen, 1974, pp. 230-241). A comparison of Gossen's data and a *uinal* calendar document from 1688 written by the Franciscan Friar Juan de Rodaz (in Berlin, 1951, p. 157), who lived in the northern Tzotzil village of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Gueytiupan around this time, shows that there is a strong correlation between the two.

Tedlock (1992, p. 103) states that the celebration of the return of the *Mam* was celebrated every twenty days, a fact that suggests the counting of a veintena period. Only the return of the *Mam* Iq' was not celebrated because it was a dangerous day. The only month names that had survived into the

1970s in Momostenango, however, were the Nab'e *Mam* and Ukab' *Mam*. Today these names are not in use anymore. Don Rigoberto Itzep received in 1997 a copy of the *uinal* names as they are mentioned in the Berendt calendar[34] dating from 1722 and has tried to revive the *uinal* tradition in Momostenango. So far, however, the use of the *uinales* has not continued by any of his students possibly because its exact functions are still not completely understood.

The Celebration of the Mam

The arrival of the New Year is a very important event, because this is when the new *Mam* becomes the authority of the year. The celebration of the arrival of the *Mam* takes place mostly inside the houses of Momostenango. Some Ajq'ijab', however, welcome the new *Mam* together with a communal ceremony at the top of Paklom. In 2015, don Rigoberto and his wife doña María Ajanel invited me to join the welcoming of the new *Mam* in their house in the evening of the 20th of February. The celebration consists of an evening celebration and a morning celebration the following day. In the evening the new *Mam* starts entering and he is welcomed, while the next morning the new *Mam* has fully entered and is welcomed at his altar.

Both don Rigoberto and doña María Hernández Ajanel individually emphasized that the preparation of the food and dining are the most sacred activities related to the celebration for the welcoming the new *Mam*. Doña María and five female relatives prepared the food, a special atol and *tayuyos*, two days before the celebration, on the 19th of February (Figure 32 and Figure 33). Only women are allowed to prepare the food for the celebration of the *Mam* and there are strict rules that regulate this activity. Except for the women who prepare the food, the cooking process could only be seen when the women allowed it, otherwise, nobody could enter the kitchen. Pregnant or menstruating women are not allowed to assist in the preparation because, as doña María explained, they often feel weak, tired or stressed, which would cause the food to spoil. Food is very carefully treated



Figure 32. Preparation of the tayuyos.



Figure 33. The tayuyos are cooked on a fire in the patio behind the house. The pot rests over the fire on three stones.

34 This calendar dates from 1722 and was copied by Berendt in 1877 from a document in the Museo Nacional de Guatemala (Carmack, 1973, pp. 166, 396). The original document has disappeared. The copy by Berendt includes three calendars. The first one is a year calendar and includes a list of the thirteen *veintenas*. The other two calendars are *chol q'ij* counts.

because if the preparation fails or does not turn out the way that it is intended, it is a very bad sign for the year to come.

Ta*yuyos* are layers of bean and corn dough, wrapped up in a corn leaf and cooked in water. They are made by making first normal size tortillas by clapping with the hands both corn and bean dough. Then, nine layers will be placed on top of each other, alternating five layers of white maize dough and four layers of black bean dough. The *tayuyos* should always have nine layers. Doña María Hernández explained me that the white dough represents the woman and the black dough represents the man. The white maize layer is at the bottom and once all nine layers are put on each other, this layer "embraces" all the other layers as the tortilla cake is folded. Subsequently, they are rolled in the form of a long sausage, which is then cut in pieces of around five centimeters thick. Each forms a tayuyo, eventually wrapped in a maize leaf and boiled. The tayuyos are cut with a steel knife, but doña María explained me that this was strictly forbidden when she was young: the tayuyos could only be cut with a special wooden knife. If it were cut with a steel knife it would cause the maize plants for that year to fall before giving *mazorcas* 'cob'. Wooden knifes, however, are no longer sold at the market, so today people have to cut the tayuyos with steel knifes.

The preparation of atol with *ch'un* and *kuchun* ingredients is also a sacred activity, that starts two days before the celebration. According to doña María, however, her grandparents used to prepare the sacred atol forty days before the entering of the *Mam*, which has been reduced to only two days. She explains that the preparation of the drink is a dangerous activity as it can have an impact on the events of the year to come and because of this responsibility, many people do not want to prepare the drink anymore. In the process of making the ceremonial atol drink, the greyish product of the zapote seed and *kuchun* root needs to rise up and become white. If the drink does not rise and no foam is formed it is a prognostication for a bad year.

In the first instance of preparing the atol, the *ch'un* and *kuchun* had failed to rise up. Late in the afternoon of February 20th, doña María came to the patio to show don Rigoberto that the ingredient turned black and failed to rise and become white. They explained that this meant that in the coming year there would be death, sickness, a fight, or other problems. Doña María went to the kitchen to pray next to the bowl with the sacred atol. It worked, as an hour later she came back to show that the drink had risen a bit and had become partially white.

In the afternoon of 20th of February, the first visitors that would join the celebration came to the house to help the organizers. In K'iche', this is known as *tob'ik*, *ulanik*, *katoj*. Usually *tob'ik*, *ulanik*, *katoj* happens on important days, for example, before 8 B'atz or when someone passes away. *Tob'ik* means "to help out" and *ulanik* means "visiting". *Katoj* is more difficult to translate, but it refers to men and women joining in an activity or a festivity. *Tob'ik*, *ulanik*, *katoj* is then the coming together of many people, who help the hosts to make a celebration, activity of commemoration. This form of sharing the burden and joy of an important celebration is characteristic of the whole highlands of Guatemala. The visiting women help the lady of the house in the preparation of the dinner and the men usually help her husband with the decoration of the house, which they refer to in Spanish as *amarrar mesas, sillas*, gathering tables and chairs, and in K'iche' as *wiqonik*, decorate.

In the afternoon, don Rigoberto placed a special wooden chair[35] (*utem ri Mam*) in front of the house altar, where the new *Mam* could sit and enjoy the tayuyos and aguardiente that would be left at the altar. The chair was covered by a clean cloth of brown and white colored stripes and on top of it, don Rigoberto placed a special staff of power usually kept in a box and opened only once a year. This is the staff of power (*b'araj* or *ch'ami'y*) of the new *Mam*, the symbol of his authority for the following year. The *uku'b'i'k*, seating, of the *Mam* took place from the sunset of 20th of February 2015 until the sunrise of 21st of February 2015; during the night the new *Mam* slowly entered into power. The *Mam* received the staff from his predecessor 2 Kej, the previous *Mam*, just as happens in the traditional change of authority in Momostenango on 1st of January each year (see below).

At sunset, don Rigoberto burned copal incense and ritually cleaned the house with it. He explained

35 Almost all chairs in the house are plastic, but for the *Mam* a wooden chair was most suitable.



Figure 34. The entrance of the house is decorated with flowers and the door is kept open so that the *Mam* can enter the house.



Figure 35. A little girl receives the red wire around her wrist to protect her against the power of the *Mam*.

that the incense helps to make the house more accessible for the new *Mam*. After the ritual cleaning of the house, we spread pine leaves on the floor to create a path from the entrance door of the house to the patio, where the ceremonial dinner would take place. More pine leaves were placed before the house altar. The door of the house would remain open the whole night, in order for the *Mam* to enter and take its place (Figure 34). From time to time during the evening, we played music with a drum and rattles to welcome the *Mam*. Finally, we placed a piece of food made from corn, a *tayuyo* or a *tamilito*, on the roof of the house for the *chokoys* (the black birds that usually eat the planted seeds), so that they would not eat the corn seeds of the sowing and harvest this year.

In the evening, we placed four tayuyos together with two glasses of aguardiente on the house altar. They were for the two *Mam* and their secretaries who exchanged power that evening. The leaving *Mam* and his secretary were 2 Kej and 5 Tz'i' and the entering *Mam* and secretary were 3 E' and 6 Tz'ikin. As don Rigoberto explained, from sunset onwards the two *Mam* enter in discussion with each other; they talk about the events of the previous year and the projections or plans for the following, giving and taking advice.

Around seven o'clock in the evening, dinner was served at the table in the patio. Don Rigoberto said a few words, after which we all ate *tayuyos* and drunk our atol quietly as don Rigoberto instructed us to do. Although it did not happen when I was there, doña María told me that usually the couple in charge of organizing the celebration dance with *canastas* filled with the tayuyos before eating them for dinner. The man would carry the *canasta* in front of his chest and the woman would carry the *canasta* on top of her head while dancing on the music of the marimba or violin.

Right after dinner, it was time to tie up the boys and the girls by their wrists and legs (*kaxim ri q'ab, kaxim ri rakan*, "it is tied the hand, it is tied the foot") with red wires (*ximonik,* to tie). The girls received a red wire around their left wrist and right leg from a male Ajq'ij, and the boys received a red wire around their right wrist and left leg from a female Ajq'ij (Figure 35). Gregorio Itzep, the oldest son of don Rigoberto, told me that the wires can be taken off after 40 days (on the day 4 E' that year). Don Rigoberto, however,



Figure 36. Don Rigoberto Itzep places the candles for the arriving and leaving *Mam* on his altar. On the right of don Rigoberto stands the chair for the arriving *Mam*, which has the staff of authority and several offerings placed on top of it. On the altar behind the chair is a plate with four tayuyos, one for each of the *Mam* and *Ajtz'ib'*.

said that it can be done already after 20 days (on the day 10 E' that year). The red wire is a protection against the *Mam*, who, because he is so powerful, can be bad to children, bringing diseases, and such. The tying up of the wrists and legs used to be a practice only for boys and girls. Don Rigoberto, however, decided to extend it to involve all adults as well, so that the tradition would be continued even in absence of children.

Before bringing the evening celebration to a closure, we all came one by one to the house altar, where don Rigoberto took two large white candles, one for the leaving Man and one for the entering *Mam*, and passed them over the main articulations of our body while reciting a sacred discourse (Figure 36). Then, don Rigoberto placed the two candles at the center of his altar. Before lighting them up, he touched the paraphernalia on the house altar. The candles would that evening burn away any negative thought or feeling and help us in our petitions or plans for the New Year. Although according to don Rigoberto the festivities usually continue until 12 o'clock, we finished the evening around 10 o'clock because he was not feeling well. Each visitor took home some of the food that had remained.

With sunrise the next morning, day 3 E', year 3 E' or the 21st of February 2015, the new *Mam* was fully seated. At 6.30 am we went to welcome him at Qajinak Ab'aj, the altar for the secretary of the new *Mam*, together with the same people that participated in the celebration the night before (Figure 37). The altar of the new *Mam*, 3 E', is Socop and lies on the west of Momostenango, but because it is in the woods, it is too dangerous to visit. Qajinak Ab'aj, in contrast, lies in the center of the aldea Santa Ana of Momostenango, right



Figure 37. The altar of Qajinak Ab'aj, where we welcome the new *Mam* and his *Ajtz'ib'*.



Figure 38. Marleny Tzicap offers incense during the ceremony for welcoming the *Mam*.

behind the building of the local authority. Because Tz'ikin is the secretary of E', he also functions as a substitute for the *Mam*, in case someone is not able to go to the altar of the *Mam*.

The ceremony for welcoming the new *Mam* was more elaborate than the ceremonies that are performed during the *trecena* (see previous chapter). Pine leaves were placed all around the altar and flower petals were spread over them. Two *Ajq'ijab'* incessantly walked with incense burners around the altar and the participants to bless the surroundings with their smoke. In K'iche', they refer to this act as *kokaj alaq* ("You smell" [plural formal]) or *kotzi alaq* ("You smell the flowers" [plural formal]) (Figure 38). The ceremony lasted about two and a half hours. Music was very much part of this ceremony. The three *chinchines* and the *tambor* were played throughout the ritual. Playing the music was, according to doña María Hernández Ajanel, a way to show the *Mam* that we were happy with his arrival. As in the previous evening, in the morning of the first day of the *Mam*, some *tamalitos* were left for the birds at the altar Qajinak Ab'aj.

AJAW JOB' – THE AUTHORITY OF THE DAY

As a day is a living being, it has authority over the events that happen during that day. The events that take place, however, are the result of the interplay between the year authority (the *Mam*) and the day authority. Similar to the year authority, which consists of a *Mam* and a secretary, it seems that the authority of the day does not consists only of one single day, but rather of a group of five days that are addressed in ritual discourses known as *Ajaw Job'*, Lord Five. In documents of the Colonial period and the Prehispanic period we find the same groupings of Day-Lords in almanacs. So far it has been thought that these groupings of Day-Lords were not in use anymore today. However, I came across the *Ajaw Job'* when I was working on the transcription of the ceremonial discourse that I recorded during a ceremony at Rax Amolob' with Gregorio Itzep, son of don Rigoberto Itzep and K'iche teacher (see appendix A). Although more research is needed on this topic, I will elaborate on my preliminary thoughts regarding the *Ajaw Job'* here. First, I will examine the current use and perception of the *Ajaw Job'*. After this, I will explore how the contemporary use of this grouping of days may lead new insights for understanding of the colonial and prehispanic almanacs.

The *Ajaw Job'* or "Lord Five" is mentioned by don Rigoberto in the ceremonial discourse that I transcribed and added in appendix A (see lines 208 to 218, and 792 to 827). In these lines, don Rigoberto summons twice a sequence of five days: 9 Ix, 9 Tijax, 9 Iq', 9 Kame, and 9 Tz'i'. When we were transcribing the ceremonial discourse, Gregorio explained to me that these were the *cinco*

principales[36], the five chiefs, which constitute the day 9 Ix, the day that the ceremony was performed. The group of five days formed an authority[37] (the *Ajaw Job*') for the day 9 Ix, which was the leading day of that authority. Thus, on each day, different personalities have to work together and are held responsible for the events that take place during that day. This resembles the role of the indigenous authorities throughout the year, in which each person has his function and fulfills a service for the community, under the guidance of the *alcalde*.

As it can be seen in the appendix, the *Ajaw Job'* are mentioned before and after the invocation of each of the 260 days of the *chol q'ij*. As the invocation of the 260 days begins and ends with the mentioning of the *Ajaw Job'*, it seems that summoning the *Ajaw Job'* is part of its *entrada* and *finalización*. Before the second time the sequence of five days is mentioned, the term "Ajaw Job'" is mentioned for the first and only time during the prayer.

In the following page I copied an excerpt of the two sections of the ceremonial discourse where the *Ajaw Job*' are invoked. In the second mentioning of the *Ajaw Job*', after the invocation, the authority of the day is listed in a sequence of other authorities in time and space. After mentioning the *Ajaw Job'*, the year authorities are addressed. Each of the *Mam* and with its respective *Ajtz'ib'*[38] is mentioned. This listing is closed with the *Mam* of that year (Kej) and his *Ajtz'ib'* (Tz'ikin). After mentioning two *chol q'ij* dates[39], don Rigoberto mentions "twenty times the place of number one". This expression probably refers to the completion of twenty *trecena* cycles, during which the altar of Pa Ja' is visited on each Day-Number 1 (see previous chapter), thus completing a cycle of 260 days. Then he summons the four main altars of Momostenango, each related to a specific Day-Number of the *chol q'ij*, that form the authority of space. This authority is led by the altar Nimasab'al, the *presidente mundo*, the place of Day-Number 9 (see previous chapter). Finally, he closes the passage with the invocation of the (grand)mother earth and the four ancestors of the K'iche' People: B'alam Aq'ab', B'alam Kitze, B'alam Ikim, and B'alam Majakutaj.

The Day-Lords of the *Ajaw Job*' are addressed according to their relative position in the *chol q'ij*, each separated from the other by four positions, while each Day-Lord has the same number. If the sequence of days is counted in chronological order, then each day would fall 104 days after the previous one in the sequence and the entire sequence would have a duration of 520 days. However, I think that, instead of counting the days chronologically, the five Day-Lords in the *Ajaw Job*' should be understood as the representatives of the 260 days in the *chol q'ij*; each of the Day-Lords is a representative of a section of 52 days[40]. This responsibility of the *Ajaw Job*' over the events of the day is shared with the authority of the year (the *Mam* and his *Ajtz'ib'*) and the ancestors. In sum, this section of the ritual discourse invokes the authority of the day (*Ajaw Job*'), the authority of the year (the *Mam* and *Ajtz'ib'*), the authority of space (the main altars of Momostenango that are related to the *chol q'ij*), the earth itself, and the primordial authority of the ancestors; it brings together all authorities in time and space.

36 In the social organization of Momostenango, the term *principales* refers to the group of elders that has fulfilled their community service and forms a council for the indigenous authority of the town. They choose and advise the town's authority.

37 The term *Ajaw Job'* shows the conceptualization of the five Day-Lords forming together one entity.

38 In appendix A, it is explained that Don Rigoberto actually performs two discourses at the same time (I wrote one in italics and the other in regular script). The discourse in italics addresses the participants who, when they hear their *wachaq'ij*, step forward and offer candles to the fire. For matter of convenience, I have left this out of the discussion here, because it may confuse the reader in following my argumentation.

39 I do not know the exact reason why they are mentioned here.

40 I base my idea on the comparison with the *alcaldía indigena* of Momostenango. The *alcalde indígena* of the authority of Momostenango is supported by each of the four *alcaldes indígenas* of the separate *barrios* of Momostenango. Each of the *alcaldes* is a representative of a partition of the town and the five of them together, under the lead of the main *alcalde indígena*, carry the responsibility for the indigenous population of Momostenango.

The opening for the invocation of the 260 days is as follows:

Are wa' cho ri nim q'ij,		This is in front of this large/abundant day,	
are wa' cho ri alaj q'ij,		this is in front of this small day	
are wa' presente cho wa'	nim q'ij,	this is present, in front of this	big day,
	nik'aj q'ij,		mid day,
	utzalaj q'ij,		very good day,
	raxlaj q'ij,		green day,
	kowilaj q'ij,		powerful day,
B'elejeb' Ix,		**9 Ix,**	
Chom Q'ij.		**Fat day.**	
B'elejeb' Ix,		**9 Ix,**	
B'elejeb' Tijax,		**9 Tijax,**	
B'elejeb' Iq',		**9 Iq',**	
B'elejeb' Kame,		**9 Kame,**	
B'elejeb' Tz'i',		**9 Tz'i',**	
Q'ij Hora.		Day-Hour[41].	
Chok'ow la, Corazón del Cielo,		Pass to the front You, heart of the Sky,	
Corazón de la Tierra,		Heart of the Earth,	
Creador y Formador,		Creator and Former,	
maltyox.		thank you.	
Ajaw Jun Ix,		Lord 1 Ix,	
Ajaw Kyeb' Ix,		Lord 2 Ix,	
Ajaw Oxib' Ix,		Lord 3 Ix,	
Ajaw Kajib' Ix ,		Lord 4 Ix,	
Ajaw Job' Ix,		Lord 5 Ix,	
Ajaw Waqib' Ix,		Lord 6 Ix,	
Ajaw Wuqub' Ix,		Lord 7 Ix,	
Ajaw Wajxaqib' Ix,		Lord 8 Ix,	
Ajaw B'elejeb' Ix,		Lord 9 Ix,	
Ajaw Lajuj Ix,		Lord 10 Ix,	
Ajaw Julajuj Ix,		Lord 11 Ix,	
Ajaw Kab'lajuj Ix,		Lord 12 Ix,	
Ajaw Oxlajuj Ix.		Lord 13 Ix.	
Q'ana q'ij,		Yellow day,	
oxq'ij		third day (Tuesday),	
Ix.		Ix.	

41 The diaphrastic kenning *Q'ij-Hora*, Day-Hour probably refers to the abstract concept of time.

The closing prayer for the invocation of the 260 days is as follows:

Uk'u'x Kaj,	Heart of the Sky,
wa' presente,	this gift,
wa' multa,	this fine,
kinya' kan che ri Ajaw,	I leave it (as inheritance) to the Lord,
loq'laj Corazón del Cielo, loq'laj Corazón de la Tierra,	Sacred Heart of the Sky, Sacred Heart of the Earth,
Tojil, Jakawitz,	Tojil, Jakab'itz,
Ixmukane, Ixkik'.	Ixmukane, Ixkik'.
Cho nimalaj q'ij,	In front of the great day,
[una] ofrenda,	[an] offering,
Ajaw Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Lord Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
chuwach alaj q'ij,	facing the small day,
chuwach nik'aj q'ij.	facing the mid-day.
Chom q'ij,	**Fat day,**
Ajaw Job',	**Lord Five,**
Ajaw B'elejeb' Ix,	**Lord 9 Ix,**
B'elejeb' Tijax,	**9 Tijax,**
B'elejeb' Iq',	**9 Iq',**
B'elejeb' Kame,	**9 Kame,**
B'elejeb' Tz'i',	**9 Tz'i',**
Ajaw Kej.	**Lord Kej.**
Ajaw q'ij,	Lord day,
Ajaw hora,	Lord hour,
maltyoxinik.	[we] thank.
Ajaw Kej,	Lord Kej,
Ajaw E',	Lord E',
Ajaw No'j,	Lord No'j,
Ajaw Iq',	Lord Iq',
Ajtz'ib' Tz'ikin,	Secretary Tz'ikin,
Ajtz'ib' Kawoq,	Secretary Kawoq,
Ajtz'ib' K'at,	Secretary K'at,
Ajtz'ib' Tz'i'.	Secretary Tz'i'.
Ajaw Ajtz'ib' Tz'i',	Lord Secretary Tz'i',
maltyox.	thank you.
Ajaw Kyeb' Kej,	Lord 2 Kej,
B'elejeb' Kej,	9 Kej,
Job' Tz'i',	5 Tz'i',
Kab'lajuj Tz'i',	12 Tz'i',
Winaq k'o junib'al.	20 is the place of number one.
Cho wa' Ajaw Q'ij,	In front this Lord Day,
Junib'al,	place of number 1 (Pa ja'),
Wakib'al,	place of number 6 (Paklom),
Wajxakib'al,	place of number 8 (Alajsab'al),
B'elejeb'al.	place of number 9 (Nimasab'al).
Chuwach la nan,	Facing You (grand)mother,
B'alam Aq'ab',	Jaguar Aq'ab',
B'alam Kitze,	Jaguar Kitze,
B'alam Ikim,	Jaguar Ikim,
B'alam Majakutaj.	Jaguar Majakutaj.

Group I		Group II		Group III		Group IV	
Yucatec	K'iche'	Yucatec	K'iche'	Yucatec	K'iche'	Yucatec	K'iche'
Imox	Imox	Ik'	Iq'	Ak'bal	Aq'ab'al	K'an	K'at
Chikchan	Kan	Kimi	Kame	Manik'	Kej	Lamat	Q'anil
Muluk	Toj	Ok	Tz'i'	Chuwen	B'atz'	Eb	E'
Ben	Aj	Ix	Ix	Men	Tz'ikin	Kib	Ajmak
Kaban	No'j	Etz'nab	Tijax	Kawak	Kawoq	Ajaw	Ajpu

Table 10. Four sequences of five Day-Lords that appear grouped together in the Dresden Codex, the colonial calendars, and the ceremonial discourse of don Rigoberto.

In the following part I will explore how the ceremonial discourse, in which the *Ajaw Job*' is mentioned, may relate to the colonial and precolonial almanacs. The way in which don Rigoberto summons the *Ajaw Job*' is reminiscent of the structure that is followed in the almanacs in the Maya codices and in the colonial documents about the K'iche' calendar (Table 10). In both the codices and the colonial calendars similar sequences of the same five Day-Lords appear. Whereas in the prayer of don Rigoberto the distance between each day is 104 days, in the Colonial period the distance between the days is fifty-two days, which results in a different sequence with the same grouping of Day-Lords. There are four groups of five Day-Lords that always appear together in the Maya codices[42] and colonial calendars:

The first 24 pages of the Dresden Codex, for example, show 52 almanacs, which follow a similar sequence as the *Ajaw Job*'. On the following page I have reproduced Dresden Codex page 13b-14b (Figure 39; Table 11) with the most recent interpretations (Grube, 2012, pp. 94-96; L. Schele & Grube, 1997, p. 115). Each almanac mentions a sequence of five Day-Lords in a row that share the same Day-Number. Furthermore, hieroglyphic texts and drawings accompany each row. It is generally understood that the almanacs should be read by starting with the Day-Lord and Day-Number in the upper left corner and counting the distance numbers (the black dots and bars which indicate a certain amount of days) towards the right to find the next day in the *chol q'ij*, whose Day-Number is written in red numerals. After a count of fifty-two distance numbers, the reader reaches the second row in the almanac that starts with the same Day-Number. At the end of the almanac, a period of 260 days has been completed.

The almanacs are thus generally thought to represent a cycle of 260 days, divided in five periods of fifty-two days. However, as Nikolai Grube (2012, p. 92) has pointed out, the understanding of these almanacs is troubled by the lack of contextual knowledge. Why these Day-Lords always appear together is not clear. Neither is clear how the Day-Lords influence the prognostications of the day, which are given in the texts at the top of the almanac, or in what kind of setting the almanacs were used.

Similar almanacs are found in colonial K'iche' calendars from the Highlands of Guatemala. Calendar B in Karl Hermann Berendt's copy of the "Calendario de los indios de Guatemala 1722. Kiche", for example, contains two 260-day almanacs (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 69). The first calendar dates probably to 1722 and the second one to 1770. I give a schematic overview of the suggested reading order of this almanac below (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 69). Similar to the almanac of the Dresden Codex, pages 13b-14b, the almanacs in the colonial calendar are organized in four groups of five Day-Lords, that seemingly share the Day-Number and the prognostication. The five Day-Lords within each group are separated by fifty-two days, while the distance between each group is one day (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 69). Similar to the almanacs in the Dresden Codex, the sets of five days are accompanied by a text. While there is no mentioning of the term *Ajaw Job*', Lord Five, some of the sequences finish with the expression *roo ychal vae q'ij*, "All five of this day" (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 110), which hints a similar conceptualization.

42 Also in the prehispanic Central Mexican codices we find similar groupings of Day Lords. It seems therefore that this is a shared characteristic of the Mesoamerican calendar.



Glyph trans-cription	U mak' waaj Kimil	U mak' waaj Nal tz'ak ahaw	U mak' waaj K'u ox wi'il	Mak'aw waaj God L yutzil	Mak'aw waaj God Q u muk	Mak'aw waaj Itzamnah nikil
English trans-lation	He swallows maize "bread" the Death God	He swallows maize "bread" the Maize God royal succession	He swallows maize "bread" God much food	He eats maize "bread" God L goodness	He eats maize "bread" God Q his divination	He eats maize "bread" Itzamnah flowers
6	+13 **6**	+9 **2**	+7 **9**	+7 **3**	+7 **10**	+9 **6**
Ajau	B'en	Ik	Muluc	Cib	Akb'al	Eb'
Eb'	Chicchan	Ix	Imix	Lamat	Men	Kan
Kan	Caban	Cimi	B'en	Ahau	Manik	Cib'
Cib'	Muluc	Etz'nab'	Chicchan	Eb'	Cauac	Lamat
Lamat	Imix	Oc	Cab'an	Kan	Chuen	Ahau
IV	I	II	I	IV	III	IV
	God of Death	Young Maize God	God (K'uh)	God L	God of Offerings	Itzamnaaj

Figure 39 & Table 11. Dresden Codex page 13b-14b. Suggested reading of the almanac on p. 13b-14b of the Dresden Codex (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, pp. 99-101). Glyph translation after (Grube, 2012, pp. 94-96; L. Schele & Grube, 1997, p. 115).

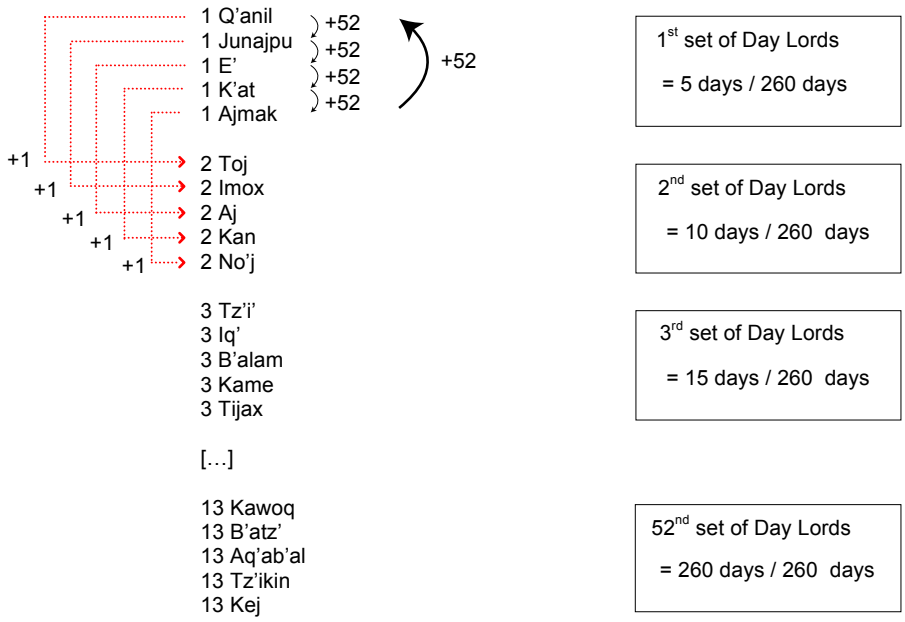


Table 12. Schematic overview of the suggested reading of the 1722 & 1770 calendar.

Finally, the colonial calendar and the ceremonial discourse expressed by don Rigoberto follow a similar pattern in addressing the five days. The *Ajaw Job*', led by the day 9 Ix, is addressed by don Rigoberto as "abundant day", "midday", "eloquent day", "green day" (metaphor for "fresh day"), and "powerful day". In the colonial calendar, an apparent description of each day follows directly next to the mentioning of the day. In these documents the days are addressed as, among others, "beautiful day", "evil day", "day of anger", "good day", "petition day", and "powerful day" (Weeks et al., 2009, pp. 102-134). In both the opening and the closing prayers, don Rigoberto uses the expression *Chom Q'ij*, "fat day"[43], to refer to the day 9 Ix or to the complex of *Ajaw Job*'. The same expression (*Chaom*) is also used in the colonial calendar, where it is translated as "beautiful day" (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 115).

Interestingly, the ceremonial discourse of don Rigoberto uses a similar configuration to that of the colonial document, in which a day is coupled with an expression or characteristic. It is possible that

1722

3 Ajmak	An evil day,
3 Q'anil	tight is his hair
3 Junajpu	in the cotton
3 E'	like this,
3 K'at	loosened down is the cotton from his hair,
	like this it says, all five of this day.

1770

3 Ajmak	A beautiful day,
3 Q'anil	day of the milpa,
3 Junajpu	day of the planting,
3 E'	planting and sowing,
3 K'at	with only the place where eagle
	and jaguar eat flesh, a very good day.

43 According to Gregorio Itzep the term "fat day" should be understood as a metaphor for "leading day" or "abundant day".

K'iche':			English:		
9 Ix	Are wa' cho ri nim q'ij,		9 Ix	This is in front of this large/abundant day	
Chom Q'ij	Are wa' cho ri alaj q'ij		Fat day	This is in front of this small day	
9 Ix	Are wa' presente cho wa'	nim q'ij	9 Ix	This is present, in front of this	large/abundant day
9 Tijax		nik'aj q'ij	9 Tijax		mid-day
9 Iq'		utzalaj q'ij	9 Iq'		eloquent day
9 Kame		raxlaj q'ij	9 Kame		green day
9 Tz'i'		kowilaj q'ij	9 Tz'i'		powerful day

the configuration of the colonial calendars shows the poetics, such as parallelisms, and indicates trained specialists how to read them. This might suggest that the tables of 260 days divided in groups of 52 days is not just a divinatory almanac, but also could be used as mnemonic tools for memorizing and reciting extensive ceremonial discourses. The descriptions of the days, if this is the case, would form the canonical part of the ceremony, which the ritual specialist could complement with his or her own knowledge, experience and present situation. To strengthen my point, I have organized a section of don Rigoberto's ceremonial discourse according to the configuration of the colonial calendar above (see grey boxes).

As I attempt to show, the text accompanying the *chol q'ij* dates in the Berendt calendars could be read as mnemonic tools for extensive prayers. As such, these long tables of dates might have not only a divinatory purpose, but also a performative discursive purpose. Similarly, in the Dresden Codex, the groups of five days are in the almanacs accompanied by text and images, which may have served both a divinatory reading and a discursive performance. The comparison of the *Ajaw Job'* with the grouping of five days in the Colonial period and the Dresden Codex raises several questions.

Were the almanacs in the prehispanic Maya codices from lowland Yucatan and the colonial Highland Guatemala calendars read in a similar fashion? If so, are the texts in the codices and colonial calendars both mnemonics devices for ceremonial discourses, as well as prognostications for specific days? Is it possible that the groups of five days in the almanacs of the prehispanic and colonial calendars resemble sets of authorities that rule together on one day? If this is the case, do the prognostications or descriptions in the prehispanic and colonial calendars apply to all five days or only to one day, while the other four days support its authority? I think that for now no concluding statements regarding the use of the groups of five Day-Lords in the past can be made, because more research is needed on this topic.

I would like to stress that in further research on this topic, it is important to collaborate with indigenous specialists. The knowledge that calendar experts keep, can help to give new insights in the interpretation of the ancient calendar system. Knowledge regarding the Maya heritage that is produced in the academia, should also be given back to the communities, so that the link with the past, which has been damaged by centuries of colonization, can be restored so that maybe one day the historical calendars can be used again in contemporary rituals.

THE TEMPORAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

The authority of the day and the year shows similarities with the *alcaldía indígena* or the *auxiliatura* (Auxiliary Organization) in the indigenous communities in the Highlands of Guatemala. The role of indigenous authority in Momostenango, which is similar to that of other indigenous authorities in the Highland Guatemala communities (for example, see: La Farge, 1994, pp. 35-41; Tax, 1964a, pp. 39-45; Vogt, 1970, pp. 19-22; Wisdom, 1961, pp. 241-284), has been already been discussed in detail by others (Garvin, 2004; B. Tedlock, 1992, pp. 34-35).

The civic hierarchy in Momostenango still generally functions according to what Tedlock observed (1992, pp. 34-35), upon which I base the following summary. The *auxiliatura* is the traditional

organization that exists next to the Municipal Organization and its offices, in contrast to the Municipal Organization, are taken on an unpaid and voluntary basis. The role of the auxiliatura is to mediate in legal issues and to administer any affair concerning the indigenous population of Momostenango. The head of this organization is the *alcalde indígena* (also known as *Ilol qatinamit*, the seer of our town), who is a town elder, who has already served in a lower function in the *auxiliatura*. The *alcalde indígena* also fulfills the function of *síndico segundo* (city manager) in the Municipal Organization. Below him are two assistants *(rach'il*), who also have a minor role in the Municipal Organization. One of them is *Ajtz'ib'*, secretary, an honorary function that entails the production of official (written) statements. Furthermore, the *alcalde indígena* is assisted by eighteen auxiliary *alcaldes indígenas* (one for each of the four *barrios* and one for each of the fourteen *aldeas* of Momostenango), two drummers, and twenty helpers that serve as policemen and messengers.

The *auxiliatura* is chosen and assisted by the elders (*ajawab'* or *principales*) of the town (B. Tedlock, 1992, pp. 34-35). The role of the elders is to choose and to council the members of the *auxiliatura*. The role of the elders for the community is similar to the role of the grandparents in the family house, about which don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar from Concepción Chiquirichapa explains:

> *In the Maya perception, the past, the present and the future are attached to each other: they are not separate times but are very united times. This can be seen most of all in the house. For example, the grandfather is the past, the son of the grandfather is the present, and the grandchild of the grandfather – or the son of his son – is the future. So, food cannot be served at dinner time if the grandchild is not there. They have to call him, they all have to sit down. Or when the son of the grandfather is not there: "please, call Juan for me, it is time to have dinner". We all have to be together. So, there is the grandfather, there is the son of the grandfather, and there is the grandchild. In this way, the past, the present and the future are together at the moment of receiving the food.*
>
> *[...]*
>
> *The presence of the grandfather is very important, because the grandfather passes his experience to his son, and his son passes the experience to the grandchild of the grandfather, who is the son of the son of the grandfather. It is a chain of learning. Our grandparents are our logs and the son is the offspring, and the son of the son is the continuation of life. This is why the Maya women always carry their sons when they are working. [...] But in the European society, when the elders are not capable of working anymore you have to send them to an elderly home. So, we are sending the past to an elderly home, while the function of the past is to be right here [with us]! Because it is he who transfers the knowledge, the experiences, the science, the wisdom. He should not be kept in an elderly home! And then, the mother has to work and cannot carry her son on her back. For example, if she is working in Walmart, or el Pais, then she sends her son to a place, to a kindergarten. So, the past is gone, the future is gone, and all that is left is the present! This is where loneliness enters. When one remains alone, when despair enters, when many things occurs and the father is not there to help and the son is there neither to bring happiness: only loneliness remains. So, at this point destruction has entered the house. The integrity of the house, of the family, has been destroyed* – Don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar, Concepción Chiquirichapa, May 2014.

Twice a year the elders and the members of the *alcaldía indigena* formally meet: at the collection of *pa job'* and for the election of the future *alcaldía indigena.* The collection of *pa job'*[44] takes place in February on the consecutive days Kej and Q'anil. On the day Kej, the elders and the members of the *alcaldía indigena* go door to door to collect five quetzales from each house. On another day Kej, the members of the *alcaldía indigena* go with the

44 The term *pa job'* derives from *puaq* ("money" or "silver") and *job'* ("five").

collected money to Antigua Guatemala, where they buy all the candles that will be used throughout the year by the Catholic church for Catholic celebrations in town. On Holy Tuesday, these candles are brought to the main entrance of Momostenango, *Chu Cruz*[45] ("at the cross"), where the community members and authorities of Momostenango meet and proceed to bring the candles in a procession to the center of the town (Figure 40 and Figure 41). The procession, in which I participated in 2015, leads from the entrance of Momostenango to the City Hall (Figure 42). In enters the building and it passes through each room, and then goes to the office of the *alcaldía indigena*, which is located next to the City Hall. After a short speech by the *alcalde* of the *alcaldía indigena* the procession continues to the church, where the candles are handed to the parish priest. This procession closes with a Mass.

The *principales* ("elders") of the community hold a meeting with the *alcaldía indigena* around August to discuss who should form the next indigenous authority on the 1st of January. This meeting always takes place on a day Kej, which is the patron of authority, accompanied by a high Day-Number (preferably Day-Number 12 but the Day-Numbers 10, 11 or 13 are also acceptable). Forty days before the meeting, also on a Kej-day with a high Day-Number, the elders send a first invitation to the *alcaldía indigena* to join the election of the new authority. Twenty days before the meeting, also on a Kej day, but with a low Day-Number, the elders send a second reminder to the indigenous authority.

Once the next members of the *alcaldía indigena* have been appointed by the elders and the current authority, a period of four months follows during which the newly-elected members are prepared for their role by the current authority. During this period, it is still possible to reject the appointed function. If this happens, the elders have enough time to find a replacement and the current authority has enough time to train the new member. After exchanging the power on 1st of January, the previous authority continues to assist the members of the *alcaldía indigena* until they can work independently.

45 There are four crosses surrounding Momostenango. Each cross is placed at a main road that leads to the center of town. The cross that is important for this occasion, *Chu Cruz*, stands just above the split at Dos Cabezas on the principal road just before entering Momostenango.



Figure 40. The cross of *Chu Cruz* is decorated with flowers and pine needles.



Figure 41. Candles are handed to the indigenous authorities and community members of Momostenango.



Figure 42. Holy Tuesday in Momostenango. The elders, the members of the *alcaldía indigena* and community members bring the candles to the center of town. Photo by Juan Carlos Tayun.



Figure 43. The change of authority in Momostenango.

Four months after the elections, on New Year's Day of the Gregorian calendar, indigenous authorities change in most communities of the Highlands (La Farge, 1994, p. 197; Siegel, 1941, pp. 71-74; Vogt, 1970, p. 79; Wagley, 1949, p. 109). At this moment, a new group of leaders takes the responsibility to guide and protect their communities. In Momostenango, the new authorities officially receive their positions at sunrise of 1st of January. The old and new authorities of the four *barrios* of Momostenango (Santa Isabel, Santa Ana, Santa Catarina, and Pa Tz'ite) and the fourteen *aldeas*[46] meet in front of the City Hall, where they face each other in two long lines (Figure 43). The mayor of Momostenango addresses them, thanks the old authority and welcomes the new one, mentioning each person by their name. The mayor is hereby assisted by one of the *Chuchqajawib' rech tinamit*, the Chuchqajawib' of the town. As soon as the power has been handed over, the authorities go back to their *aldeas* and *barrios* where they each continue their individual ceremonies.

It is likely, as don Rigoberto has pointed out to me, that the authority of the community mirrors the authority of time or, even in a broader sense, of the world as a whole. As such, I suggest that the arrival of important days, such as the *Mam* or the day 8 B'atz' (see previous chapter), is a dynamic process rather than a binary change of one day to the next. Don José Angel Xeloj taught me that every important ceremonial day is complemented by the day before and the day after, because one day gives rise to the next. These have indeed to be mentioned in the ceremonial discourse performed on that day, as don Rigoberto does in line 1173 of Appendix A.

Similar to the system of the *alcaldía indigena*, where the moment of election is followed by a period of training, the moment of investiture and a period

46 Not all communities are present, however, as today some communities prefer to organize the official event in their own community.

of emancipation, I believe that important days start entering several days before their specific arrival and fade out during a period that follows the actual day. For example, religious festivities related to the day 8 B'atz' begin already two days before and continue until the day after. Similarly, the preparation for the arrival of the *Mam* begins two days before the actual day of the *Mam*. This period used to be even 40 days before. In contrast to the common view of a binary opposition between one day and the next, I suggest that the change of the day in the K'iche' calendar is a gradual process that, in the case of important ritual days, might overlap with a period consisting of several days. This hierarchical understanding of time and community reproduces the coexistence of the three generations – the past, the present, and the future – in one house. The past is represented by the grandfather and the grandmother, who have already lived a long time, experienced things and acquired knowledge. They pass this on to their daughters and sons, the present, who, in turn, have children, the future. They all live together (coexist) in the house and are conscious about their shifting roles in the family once they become parents and grandparents.

A K'ICHE' GREGORIAN CALENDAR

The Gregorian calendar is also recognized as an authority. A couple of days before the Gregorian New Year of 2015, don Rigoberto told me that the 1st of January was going to fall on the day 4 Imox of the *chol q'ij*. The Day-Lord Imox indicated, according to him, that the year of 2015 would be characterized by rain fall, while the Day-Number 4 suggested that rain would fall, but not in a destructive way. According to don Rigoberto, the New Year's Day of the Gregorian year and the New Year's Day of the K'iche' year had to work together and oversee the events of the year, just like the *alcaldía indigena* and the municipality should – in an ideal situation – collaborate closely. For the Gregorian New Year, however, no elaborate celebration took place, differently from the celebration of the *Mam* that was, on the other hand, a big event.

Several of the mantic characteristics of the *chol q'ij* and the *junab' q'ij* are also present in the Gregorian calendar. For example, while the dry season usually begins between November and December (see Chapter III), the beginning of January is often characterized by some light rainfall. The first days of January, therefore, are taken as prognostications for the rest of the Gregorian (solar) year. Every day from 1st of January until 12th of January represents one of the twelve months of the year. According to the rainfall on each day, one can see when and how much rain will fall each of the coming months. This aspect is often taken into consideration when the moment for sowing has to be determined, for example when one has to decide to sow at the end of April or in the beginning of May. The connotations of the Day-Numbers of the *chol q'ij*, especially those days that are taken to be unbalanced (3, 7, and 11), also apply to the Gregorian calendar.

Both the Gregorian and the K'iche' calendars are consulted in Momostenango in relation to everyday activities. The community members usually combine both calendar systems. For example, a good moment for visiting the family, following the Gregorian calendar, would be Sunday (after Mass). During this day children are not in school, students do not go to the university in Xela, and most people do not have to work. Furthermore, Sunday is the day of the market in Momostenango, which brings a very social and lively atmosphere in town. A good day for family matters in the *chol q'ij* is the day Aj (see appendix B). Therefore, a Sunday that falls on Aj is an excellent day for organizing a meeting with relatives.

Other characteristics of the *chol q'ij* are also evident in weekly cycle of the Gregorian calendar. One of the best days in the *chol q'ij* for visiting the ancestors at their graves in the cemetery is, for example, the day Ajpu. However, currently the graves of the ancestors in Momostenango are visited on Mondays and, to a minor extent, on Thurdays. On this day, small market stands sell candles and food at the cemetery. In short, the seven-day week cycle has thus taken over some of the characteristics of the K'iche' 20-day cycle[47].

47 Bunzel mentions that this was also the case in Chichicastenango during her fieldwork in the early 1930s. She states that "Monday is the day of the dead; Tuesday the day of San Sebastian and the Earth [San Sebastian Martín, corrupted from San Sebastian Martyr. San Martín is the *dueño* of the Earth, and Tuesday (*Martes*) is his day]; Wednesday is the day of San Miguel; Thursday is Commemoration of the Sacrament (Corpus Christi falls on this day); Friday, "a good day", is the day of María Concepción and María Rosario (a

Finally, don Rigoberto correlates the *chol q'ij* with the Gregorian calendar for consultation about birthdays. He made his first correlation when he was trained to become Ajq'ij:

> *You see, I have a table, I have made that table. So, from 1977 until 1981, for five years, I retraced the days. Well, there was no computer yet, there was nothing really. So, I began to count backwards [in time] on paper and I arrived until 1890. I took a break for three years and then I made another retracement, from 1889 until 1870, something like that. So, this is how I made the retracement. As we were in the year 1980 I had a 100 years that I could count back* – Don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, 10th of August 2016

Today he keeps a document that summarizes the lists that he made in the 1970s. On it, he keeps track of the first day of each month. From the first day of the month of a given year, he can easily count forward. For example, if the first day of the month March is 2 E' and he needs to know the *chol q'ij* date of the 4th of March he counts four days ahead, reaching the day 5 Tz'ikin. Similarly, if he needs to know the *chol q'ij* date of the 28th of March, he adds twenty days to the first day of March, which is 9 E', and adds another eight days, reaching the day 4 Ajpu. This correlation between the K'iche' and Gregorian calendar enables don Rigoberto to switch quickly between the two calendar systems.

good day for asking pardon; Friday is better); and Sunday is the day of Padre Eterno (a neutral day)" (Bunzel, 1952, p. 301).

III. Seasonality and Celebrations

For writing this chapter, I am greatly indebted to don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, doña María Hernández Ajanel, Gregorio Itzep, don José Angel Xeloj, doña María Theresa López, don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar, Marleny Tzicap, Carlos Pérez Acabal, Irma Hernández Ajanel, and don Ricardo Zárate Guix for the knowledge that they shared with me. Errors that might appear in the contents of this chapter are my fault alone. In case such errors or any misrepresentations appear, I would like to apologize beforehand to the communities that are mentioned in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the relationship between seasonality and religious celebrations in the Highlands of Guatemala. In the previous two chapters it was noted that both the *chol q'ij* and the 365-day calendar shift in relation to the astronomical solar year. As such, the *chol q'ij* and the *junab' q'ij* move also in relation to the seasonal cycles. However, as most people in the Maya communities of the Highlands of Guatemala are dependent on subsistence farming, gradual changes in the environment caused by seasonal cycles are very important for timing agricultural activities. This chapter explores the relationship between ritual celebrations in the Highlands of Guatemala and important stages in seasonal cycles. Following Rappaport (1999, pp. 177-179), I suggest that ritual moments punctuate these gradual changes, and thus mark separate time periods. Throughout this chapter, I will examine how ritual celebrations separate periods in the seasonal cycle and guide human activity by giving meaning to the preceding and the succeeding period.

Many of the ritual celebrations that are discussed in this chapter form part of the Catholic liturgical calendar. Because the Gregorian calendar is a solar calendar, specific cyclical astronomical events related to the sun and specific meteorological phenomena generated by the movement of the earth around the sun, tend to occur around the same date each year. Catholic Holy Days tend to coincide therefore with the same seasonal events each year. As they were introduced by Europeans, these Catholic celebrations are often left out of the discussion on the Maya calendar. However, in this chapter I argue that the cycle of (Catholic) feasts or celebrations is an integrated part of the Maya calendar and that the timing of important festivals or Holy Days in the Highlands of Guatemala coincides with stages in the agricultural cycle that have likely been present and important since prehispanic times.

In Chapter I, I already remarked on Burkitt's observation that most donations in the church of Momostenango were made on days considered important from the Momostecan K'iche' perception of time rather than on important days in the European liturgical calendar (Weeks et al., 2009, pp. 173-175). Ruth Bunzel (1952, pp. 412-423) also noted that there are few celebrations that are referred to as *ladino* festivals, for example Virgen de la Concepción (15th November) or the Celebration of the Nation (15-17 September), implying that they are not important for the K'iche' people of Chichicastenango. Similarly, in the Ch'orti' area, Wisdom (1961, p. 511) emphasizes that the festivals of the *ladino* population go unnoticed or are ignored by the indigenous people. In a similar vein, Fray Vicente Hernández Spine, the priest of Santa Catarina Ixtahuacan, wrote in 1854 that:

> *[s]o punctually do they observe these days of their calendar, that whereas the Sundays and Solemn fiestas of our religion find the church empty, on the good days of their almanac they are crowded with worshippers who burn*

> *incense, filling the pavement with candles and chanting the responses. With these Catholic appearances they have long deceived the parish curates who did not understand their language and could not note the impious mingling of Christian names with those of the spirits and names of their ancient priests, as appears in the adjoined invocation and literal translation* (Weeks et al., 2009, p. 161).

As Fray Vicente Hernández Spine points out, the churches tend to be full of people on *days that the indigenous communities relate to and consider important*. Days to which the indigenous population cannot relate are largely ignored, whether these are important for the European Catholic Church or not. In other words, people only come to the church on a moment that is ritually meaningful for them.

Because most people in the highland communities tend to their own milpa and grow their staple crops, besides holding separate jobs, the main emphasis in this chapter is placed on the cycle of agricultural activity in Maya communities. Times are changing fast and daily and basic human activities change as well. New time cycles are rapidly introduced and taking important roles such as, for example, the cycle of tourism, an important income for many people today in Guatemala. However, most members of Maya communities continue to grow their own staple crops. Taking into consideration the importance of the *milpa* for the survival of a family, I expect that the most important and elaborate festivities in the Highlands of Guatemala relate to significant and meaningful moments in the cycle of the milpa.

To understand the importance of the religious festivities in the Highlands of Guatemala it is crucial to contextualize my experiences in Momostenango with other examples from highland Maya communities. In the first section of the chapter that discusses seasonal cycles in combination with religious celebrations, I will regionally contextualize the seasonality and activities in Momostenango by comparing my experiences with other studies. Ruth Bunzel (1952) and Charles Wisdom (1961) quite explicitly established a relation between Catholic celebrations and agricultural cycles, and they figure therefore prominently in the following contextualization of the ritual cycle. I do not expect, however, that each community marks the transition from one period to the next on the exact same date: apart from slight differences in climates, each community has gone through specific changes and historical process which have led to community-specific festivals and commemoration calendars in the astronomical year. Neither is it necessary that the ritual is Catholic, the ritual for the community might also be non-Catholic because there is usually no distinction perceived between the two. Furthermore, each community might emphasize specific Holy Days to which they relate or for saints that they identify more with, while other Catholic events might be less represented in that specific community. Finally, it should be also kept in mind that ritual moments might shift depending on the region and environmental particularities. For example, La Farge (1994, p. 158) documents that in Santa Eulalia rituals take place in April to mark the end the period of frost and to ensure maize's growth. In the regions of Momostenango and Quetzaltenango, while frost occurs occasionally, it is so sporadic that rituals to propitiate the end the period of frost are not carried out.

The second part of this chapter discusses five case studies of religious celebrations in which I have participated and explores how they mark time and separate periods. In this second part I discuss seasonal celebrations in a broad region, including: Calcehtok in Yucatan, Mexico, for the burning of the zacate; Momostenango in the department of Totonicapán for Holy Week; Amatitlán in the department of Guatemala for the Holy Cross; Again Momostenango for the feast of Santiago; and finally Chichicastenango in the department of El Quiché during the winter solstice. I explore how these celebrations are related to the agricultural cycle. I have taken a broad regional approach for two reasons: (1) to show that the relation between important communal celebrations and agriculture is shared over an extensive region; (2) because not every community can organize a big celebration every couple of days due to the costs and the energy needed for these events.

SEASONALITY IN THE MAYA AREA

Seasonal and agricultural cycles in Momostenango are similar to those of other parts in the Highlands of Guatemala and Chiapas, Mexico[48]. Furthermore, although the climate is notably different, there are many similarities with the cyclical environmental patterns of the Lowlands of Yucatan and Chiapas, especially those related to the beginning of the rainy season and activities on the land (Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934]; Tozzer, 1907). The similarity in seasonal phenomena experienced over the widespread region of Maya communities is determined by their location on the globe and the relative movement of the sun and the earth (Hidalgo, Amador, Alfaro, & Quesada, 2013).

The movement of the earth around the sun is an oval route, which takes slightly more than 365 days (the exact duration is 365.242 days). Because the earth axis is slightly tilted, the northern hemisphere stands closer to the sun from mid-March until mid-September while the southern hemisphere stands closer to the sun from mid-September until the end of March. On two moments, 21st of December and 21st of June, the earth stands closest to the sun. These are the solstices. On the 21st of December the sun stands straight above the tropic of Capricorn in the southern hemisphere while on the 21st of June it stands straight above the tropic of Cancer in the northern hemisphere. Due to the movement of the earth around the sun, the sun rises and sets in different points in the horizon throughout the year. On 21st of December, the sun rises and sets at the southernmost point at the horizon, while on 21st of June the sun rises and sets at the northernmost point.

The most noticeable change during the period between the solstices, *uk'ex ub'e* in K'iche' ("the change of his road/path"), is that when sun moves from south to north on the horizon (December to June), the daylight gets longer in the northern hemisphere, while when the sun moves from north to south (June-December), the duration of daylight diminishes every day. In Momostenango, these phenomena are called *nim u-paq'ij* ("great is the inside of the day") and *ch'utin u-paq'ij* ("small is the inside of the day"), respectively. Twice a year, the sun reaches the middle point between the two extremes at the horizon: the equinox or in K'iche' *uk'ex ri b'e ri iq'* ("the change of the road of the moon"). On these days, around 21st of March and 21st of September, the duration of day and night is exactly the same. While equinoxes and solstices occur at the same time around the world, the zenith passage of the sun, *nik'aj q'ij* ("half day") is dependent on the region and can only occur in the tropics. Differently from solstices and equinoxes, which are best noticed at sunrise or sunset at the horizon, the zenith passage is experienced at midday when it can be clearly observed that the sun casts no shadow.

The movement of the earth around the sun causes ocean water to alternatively freeze and melt at the poles, which, together with the corresponding heating and cooling of the northern and southern hemisphere leads to a phenomenon known as the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITZC) (Hidalgo *et al*., 2013). The ITCZ is a band of rain- and thunderclouds that circles the globe more or less around the equator. The ITCZ is created by Hadley circulations (Figure 44): at the moment when sun stands straight above a region (the zenith passage), ocean water vaporizes and move upwards from the ocean surface, causing warm winds towards the center of the ITCZ and the formation of heavy clouds (Schneider, Bischoff, & Haug, 2014, p. 47). These clouds are led towards the north or south of the ITCZ, where they cool down and cause heavy rains in the region between the tropics of Capricorn and Cancer ("the tropics") (Schneider et al., 2014, p. 47). As the earth turns around the sun, the zenith position of the sun relative to the earth moves from the tropic of Cancer to the tropic of Capricorn and back. In Guatemala, the first occurrence of the zenith passage is between the 29th of April and the 2nd of May and the second is around 5th of August, while the sun is moving from north to south. The ITCZ follows this movement and shifts respectively between 9°N and 2°N on the North American continent[49] (Schneider et al., 2014, p. 45), causing what is known as the dry season (November-April), during which the sky is usually sunny and clear, and the rainy season (May-October), during which the sky is constantly clouded.

48 See Bunzel (1952, pp. 48-53); Earle (1986, pp. 159-160); La Farge (1994); Tax (1964a, pp. 126-129); Termer (1957); Tozzer (1907, p. 51); Vogt (1970, pp. 49-90); Wagley (1949, pp. 90-121); Wisdom (1961, pp. 60-86, 488-513).

49 The movement of the ITCZ is different in each area due to varying presence of bodies of water or land (Schneider *et al*., 2014, p. 45).

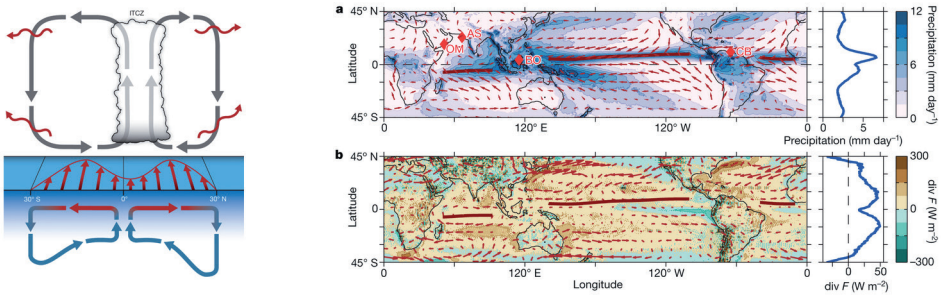


Figure 44. A schematic overview of Hadley circulations and an approximation of the ITCZ by Schneider *et al*. (2014).

The movement of the earth around the sun leads to similar phenomena regarding rain, winds, sun, and temperature in the region between the equator and the tropic of Cancer in the northern hemisphere. Although regional differences appear due to topography and the rain might arrive late or early in a region according to its the distance from the equator, seasonal cycles follow in general lines a similar pattern. The ITCZ leads therefore to a particular timing of human activities that is characteristic for the tropical region in the northern hemisphere. Spain, the country that introduced Christianity in Mesoamerica, lies in the same hemisphere, but the climate is significantly different, given that it lies north of the tropic of Cancer. Therefore, communal rituals that are tied to seasonal changes and mark specific time periods in the Highlands of Guatemala have been likely meaningful moments since before the arrival of the Spaniards.

The following part of this chapter discusses two topics. The first topic contextualizes seasonal cycles in Momostenango within the extensive ethnographic literature on the topic to show that the same patterns are shared over a wide area. In these seasonal cycles I have included the cycle of the wind, animals, rain, the sun and agriculture as well as cycles of human activities. The second topic discusses the celebrations that coincide with important seasonal moments. The aim of the following section is to argue that the intersection of distinct cycles of time create meaningful moments of commemoration that mark time periods and guide social activities (cf. Rappaport, 1999). The separation of periods of time occurs through private or public ritual practices performed in the parish church, at the public altars or at the house altar. As a consequence, human activities themselves generate a sense of time that is primarily felt on an experiential level (cf. Ingold, 2011).

THE DRY AND COLD PERIOD

Seasonal Characteristics

The agricultural cycle never exactly repeats in each community. The height, humidity, temperature, type of soil and micro-climate influence agricultural tasks and thus the timing of agricultural events. Within the municipality of Momostenango, for example, there are high and cold regions where only maize, beans, and squash can be planted, but there are also warmer and lower plots where coffee and bananas are grown. These factors may not only influence the moment of sowing, but can also determine how many harvests can be obtained each year. However, in Momostenango, as in the majority of communities in the Highlands of Guatemala, there is only one agricultural cycle, which runs from roughly the end of April or beginning of May until mid-November or beginning of December.

The end of December marks usually the end of harvest, although in some areas in the Highlands of Guatemala, the harvest may extend well into January or February (Vogt, 1970; Wagley, 1949, p. 52). Mid-January, February, March and April are

the driest months of the year (Figure 45). After all *mazorcas* are taken to the house, the *milpa* can be cleaned. Activities are carried out depending on one's preference. Some prefer to clean the *milpa* completely, taking away all the weeds and preparing the grooves on the field for the next period of sowing. Others cut the remaining corn plants and put them in the existing grooves, where they are left to dry (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 46-48; Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934], p. 132; Tax, 1964a, p. 127; Tozzer, 1907, p. 51; Vogt, 1970, p. 51). It is usual to place some earth on the cut plants, however, so that they fertilize the ground and the wind does not carry them away. Once that the grooves are prepared for the next period of sowing, the milpa is left to rest. Those who do not live next to their fields, bring their organic garbage and ashes from the fireplace weekly there to fertilize the grounds. Don Rigoberto told me that when he was young, his parents made a fertilizer by mixing fallen leaves, lime, ashes and human urine.

In some part of Momostenango, such as the aldeas of *Los Cipreses* and *Tierra Colorada*, sowing begins earlier in the year than in the rest of the community. The soil in these aldeas is moister and enables an early period of sowing. Harvest, however, occurs at the same time as in the rest of Momostenango. So, in these two aldeas it is necessary to have the milpa ready for the next period of planting right after harvest.

During the months January to March, there is hardly any rainfall. Rivers have less water or have become dry during this period. As the period running from mid-January to April is the driest period of the year, work can be done that cannot be done when it rains. This time of the year is used for adjusting the huts on the *milpa*, to repair paths in the community or to do other maintenance work around the field and the house (Figure 46). Furthermore, January and February are the best months to buy new furniture or other household items[50] or to construct a new house. In some areas where the ground is exhausted, a new milpa is prepared by cutting the bushes during these months.

The period that runs from the end of November until the end of January is characterized by cold winds, especially around the December solstice. While the night and early morning can be very cold, during the day temperatures rise considerably, because the sky is clear. Momostecan weavers always make sure to have enough ponchos ready for this period, as sales of the typical garment usually rise when the cold strikes. At the end of January, rough and cold winds blow daily, announcing a warmer period.



Figure 45. The milpa in the beginning of February 2014. The corn stalks have been left on the ground to dry.



Figure 46. Making adjustments to the roof of the hut that stands at the milpa in February 2014. Because of the dry weather during this period of the year, the complete roof can be taken off.

50 Tozzer (1907, pp. 106, 117-150) mentions that among the Lacandones in Chiapas, items that are important to the community, such as ceramic incense burners, are renewed during February and March. After the renewal has been finished, the milpa can be prepared.

Celebrations

In December, the most important festivities of Momostenango are the Holy Day of the *Virgen de la Inmaculada Concepción* (8th of December), during which only a minor procession takes place, and Christmas. The first is conceived as a preparation to the latter, which marks the end of the harvest. Christmas night is anticipated nine days before: during the nine evenings prior to the birth of Christ, the images of Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary stay overnight in different houses where visitors come to pray. An important Mass is held at night on 24th of December. On 25th of December, several images of the baby Jesus are passed from house to house, an event known as *recorrido del niño*, from eight o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock at night. The presence of the baby in the houses brings a special blessing. Usually the babies are not left long at the same house as they try to visit as many houses as possible on a day.

Although Christmas celebrations are important in Chichicastenango as well, they are overshadowed by the Patron Saint feast of Santo Tomás. As Bunzel (1952, p. 50) mentions, the festival of Santo Tomás – celebrated on the day of the winter solstice, see below – marks marks the end of harvest season. This is similar to Christmas in Momostenango. The same occurs in the Ch'orti' area (Wisdom, 1961, p. 501).

The first of January is the moment that the indigenous authorities of Momostenango, in the four *barrios* and the fourteen *aldeas* change (see Chapter II). This is the usual date to change authority in most indigenous communities in Guatemala and the south of Mexico (La Farge, 1994, p. 197; Siegel, 1941, pp. 71-74; Vogt, 1970, p. 79; Wagley, 1949, p. 109). The next Holy Day that is widely celebrated in Guatemala and beyond is that of the Black Christ of Esquipulas, on 15th of January. On this date, people go on pilgrimage to Esquipulas, in the eastern part of Guatemala, near the border with Honduras, during which they make offerings at the sacred mining tunnels and at the sacred *piedra de los compadres* ("the stone of the godfathers"). In Momostenango, the *Cristo negro de Esquipulas* is the Patron Saint of barrio Pa Tz'ite, which is not celebrated on the usual 15th of January, but on 30th and 31st of January, which coincides with the Nadir passage of the sun.

The Nadir passage occurs when the sun is at the Zenith on the diametrical opposite side of the globe. As such, the nadir passage also occurs twice a year: around the 9th of November and around the 29th of January. As nadir passage is not observable at the horizon and it is not measured with any device, nobody that I have spoken with was aware of the astronomical event. However, its effects are noticeable meteorologically, because around the moment of the first nadir passage the clouds of the ITCZ have disappeared completely from the Guatemalan Highlands, coinciding thus with the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the harvest period. Meteorological effects of the second nadir passage are not as strongly experienced as the first: mostly noticeable are the easing down of the cold winds and the gradually warming up of the weather.

The following Holy Day that is widely celebrated in Guatemala is that of the *Virgen de la Candelaria* on 2nd of February. The primary place for this celebration is in Chiantla, in the department of Huehuetenango, where people from all over the country come to visit. It is widely known that the church of Chiantla is built on top of a sacred precolonial structure, which is, according to local experts, the reason for the interregional recognition of this celebration in Guatemala. The Holy Day is also celebrated in Rancho Candelaria, on the road between San Francisco el Alto and Momostenango.

The festivity of the Virgen de la Candelaria in Chiantla used to be for Momostenango the moment that the communal rain petitions began. Beginning on 2nd of February and running through the dry months of March, April and May, special Masses were organized to petition rain. These used to be performed by the *Ajq'ijab' rech tinamit*, the calendar priest for the town. The first petition used to be performed on 2nd of February in Chiantla, the second ceremony took place on the day Ajpu (preferably 8 Ajpu) at a place called Kajb'alch'uy at a sacred altar named Ajpu, the third petition was in the center of Momostenango on the sacred hill Paklom, and finally the last petition was during a special Mass in the *calvario* at the cemetery of Momostenango. Today, however, the *Ajq'ijab' rech tinamit* are criticized for not performing these rain petitions anymore[51] and for thus being one of the reasons for the late arrival of rain each year.

51 The exact reason for not performing these rain petitions anymore is not clear to me.

In the month of February, the *pa job'* takes place on an adequate day Kej or might be extended on the following day Q'anil (see Chapter II). *Pa job'* is the moment that the indigenous authority of Momostenango, whose members had taken their burden in January, passes by and asks for a five-quetzal support from each family to buy candles in Antigua. These candles are the year supply of candles for the Catholic Church and are brought on Holy Tuesday by the community in a long procession from the entrance of the town to the Catholic Church, while also passing through the town hall and the office of the indigenous authority.

Carnival, which can fall on the 1st of February at the earliest and on the 9th of March at the latest, is mostly celebrated by children. On this day school children make the park and main plaza unsafe as they gather here and throw eggs and flour on people who pass by. Whereas during the year any kind of food is treated with much respect, this is the only moment when it is wasted. In 2014, there was no running water for three weeks and, because of a heavy drought, rivers only carried little water, as well. Although this made it extremely difficult to wash oneself or one's clothes, it did not deter children from completely dirtying their clothes and hair while celebrating Carnival.

THE PREPARATION OF THE MILPA AND SOWING

Seasonal Characteristics

Around the beginning of March, slightly before the equinox, the cold period gradually comes to an end and a warmer period begins, during which there is not much wind or storm, lasting from mid-March until the beginning of May. In this period, temperatures in the Highlands can reach 25 degrees Celsius during the day and stay around 18 degrees at night. The temperature does not drop at night as it does in December and it is not necessary to cover against the cold as much as before.

March and April are the months in which the milpas are readied for sowing. This involves the clearing of the weeds, inspection of the grooves, and sometimes the burning of *zacate*. On fieldwork, I noticed the differences between the burning of the *zacate*, the dried corn stalks and weeds, in Yucatan (2013), where this is practiced abundantly, and in Momostenango (2014, 2015, 2016), where this is not common. Today in Momostenango, the burning of the *zacate* is often seen as a damaging activity that contributes to loss of fertility because the ashes are taken away by the wind. Furthermore, only few people know how to control a fire. After many incidents in which fire spread out of the fields into residential areas, most people have stopped burning the *zacate*.

In Yucatán and other regions where the burning of the *zacate* does take place, the timing is crucial: if one waits too long, the first rains may moisten the *zacate* and as a result there will be fewer ashes to fertilize the milpa, which could again affect the harvest negatively (Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934], p. 132; Tozzer, 1907, p. 51). The timing often coincides with specific dates of the liturgical year. In the Ch'orti' region, for example, the period for burning the zacate is set between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday (Wisdom, 1961, p. 415) and in Yucatán the burning takes place shortly before the Day of the Holy Cross (Figure 49). In general, this is done in the warm and dry period that runs from mid-March until the zenith passage of the sun, around the very end of April.

In Momostenango, the sowing of the milpas takes place around the end of April or beginning of May after the first rains have fallen. In general, the milpas can be planted after a couple of heavy rains have penetrated the earth and moistened it. According to several specialists in the Momostenango area, the moisty earth prevents the birds from stealing the seeds, protects the seeds against drying, and makes the planting and digging easier. The exact moment of planting is usually set in accordance with days of the *chol q'ij*, the rain, moon phases, and the week. Choosing a day for planting depends on the person, but the best days for planting in Momostenango are generally the days Q'anil, Imox or Aj in the K'iche' calendar, in combination with a waxing moon and a Monday or Tuesday in the week calendar, after the first two heavy rain showers close to moment of the sun's zenith passage. The seeds that will be planted are always selected on a day Q'anil, a couple of days before the planting day. Carlos Pérez Acabal explains about the selection of seeds:



Figure 47. The milpa arranged in the hills is ready for planting.



Figure 48. Sowing in Momostenango on the 27th of April 2015.



Figure 49. Sowing on the peninsula of Yucatán on the 3rd of May 2013.

> *Since a long time, since the time of our grandfathers-our fathers, we preserve our corn seeds. The seeds that we conserve are special seeds. The seeds that we sow are selected ones. But a lot of people have the tradition to do it [to conserve them] in different ways or through a different process. In our case, we have seen that our ancestors, our grandfathers, our fathers, conserved the seeds one to three days before sowing in a container with water with the aim to make it easier for the seeds to sprout* – Carlos Pérez Acabal, 24th of August 2016.

During my fieldwork in 2015, I participated on Monday 27th of April 2015 (on the *chol q'ij* day 3 No'j) with Carlos in the planting of don Rigoberto's milpa (Figure 47 and Figure 48). Because don Rigoberto would join me to the Netherlands for a short visit to the Leiden University, we had to plant before the first rain had fallen. According to don Rigoberto, the heat that had been affecting the town in the preceding couple of days was an indication that the dry season was at its end and that rain would fall quickly. Three days later, the first heavy rain fell. Although the day No'j is not the preferred day in the *chol q'ij* for planting, it was the best option at the moment due to the waxing moon, the coincidence with a Monday, and the zenith passage, and also because other preparations were planned for the rest of the days that we would spend in Guatemala before leaving for the Netherlands. A divinatory consultation with his *tz'ite* seed indicated that this was a good day for planting.

Sowing activities require specific prescriptions and behavior. On the day of sowing one can only consume white atol with *suchile* (the pit of the zapote) and *kuchun* and *pol ik'* (sauce of black beans). This atol is usually prepared the day before the planting by the wife of the *milpa* owner. Drinking coffee on this day is forbidden as it would result in *mazorcas* turning into dust. Sexual abstinence of three days is also required before the day of planting.

The seeds that we planted on the milpa of don Rigoberto were maize, red bean (*kiaq kinaq'*), black bean (*q'eq kinaq'*), and squash (*achuitle*). Carlos and I worked together, each taking on a single groove. First, we made one hole by scraping the loose earth

until we reached a harder humid layer which we loosened by chopping it softly. After, we threw the seeds in the earth and covered them with about ten centimeter of earth after which we proceeded to make another hole about half a meter away. Exactly six maize seeds were dropped in every hole, usually accompanied by one or two bean and *achuitle* seeds. Each maize stalk gives one *mazorca*[52] (only very fertile ground it will grow two *mazorcas*), so each hole would be good for six *mazorcas*. If the seeds are planted too close to each other, crops will turn out small.

Celebrations

From February until the end of March, roughly during the period marked by Carnival and Lent in the Highlands of Guatemala, attention is concentrated on the selection of seeds that will be sown in the next period. For example, in Chichicastenango, the *bendición del maíz* takes place from mid-January until the beginning of March. During this period, the Tzijolaj (an important image with divine powers; see appendix E) is brought to the *aldeas* of Chichicastenango. At the religious centers of these *aldeas* people come to receive the blessing of the Tzijolaj and to regenerate the corn. On Sundays, the Tzijolaj returns back to Chichicastenango in a procession. In Momostenango, the blessing of the seeds takes place on a later moment in the dry season, a couple of weeks prior to planting. This is celebrated both in the Catholic Church in the center of the town, and at the house altars on the day Q'anil.

The period of Lent extends between Carnival and Holy Week. The Cristo Acapetagua[53], an image of the crucified Christ, figures prominently in the ceremonies during this period and is commemorated on Fridays (Figure 50). On the first and second Friday of Lent, he is commemorated in the *aldeas* Tierra Blanca, Tzanjón, and Pizal, which venerate Cristo Acapetagua as patron. The third Friday of Lent, he is commemorated in Chuijoyan and the fourth Friday of Lent is celebrated in both Momostenango and the *aldea* Patzuk. Finally, on the fifth Friday, he is commemorated again in Chuijoyan. On the sixth Friday of Lent, a ubiquitous commemoration of Cristo Acapetagua takes place.



Figure 50. The image of Cristo Acapetagua in the *calvario* of Momostenango.

On each Friday of Lent, the *via crucis* take place in Momostenango. These processions, which commemorate the passion of Christ, integrate the entire town as on each Friday the procession starts in a different part of town and leads towards the main church in the center. The first procession starts at the sport fields of *barrio* Pa Tz'ite, the second leaves from the *barrio* Santa Ana, the third starts at the exit towards *aldea* Tierra Colorada, the fourth *via crucis* begins at the *calvario* at the cemetery of Momostenango, the fifth leaves from Santa Isabel, and finally the sixth begins near the entrance of Barranquito, at the border of town. Finally, on Good Friday the last *via crucis* takes place. Community members take up the burden of organizing the *via*

52 Spanish for "maize cob".

53 *Acapetagua* is a term from the Nauatl language (*acapetlahua*), which can be translated as "Owner of the Reed Mat". The term Mat (Pop in ancient Maya) may be understood as an index of rulership. Possibly this is a reference to the divine power of Christ.

crucis in their barrios and aldeas. On an adequate day during Lent, the members of the cofradías of Momostenango wash the clothes worn by the Saints. The preferred days are 9 Ajmak, 7 Ajmak, or 10 Ajmak, because Ajmak is an appropriate day for pardoning sins. The clean clothes will be changed during Holy Week so that the Saints start the year fresh and all sins have been washed away.

As discussed above, the period of Carnival and Lent is the season for preparing the *milpa*. Holy Week and Easter, of which the date may vary between the 22nd of March and the 25th of April, marks the beginning of the period of finalizing the fields and preparing for the arrival of rain. The death and resurrection of Christ coincide with the ending of the dry period and the beginning of the period of sowing, which will lead to new life on the milpa. In the section of case studies in this chapter, I will discuss how Holy Week in Momostenango separates two periods of time and gives meaning to them. In those regions where the *zacate* on the milpa is burned, this is usually done around Holy Week (Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934], pp. 132-133; Tozzer, 1907, p. 161; Wisdom, 1961, p. 514). Prior to this event, special rituals are performed to ask the wind for its help in burning the field, but against the uncontrolled spreading of fire (Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934], p. 132; Wagley, 1941, p. 32).

The day Q'anil is the best moment to select the seeds for planting the *milpa* and to perform a protection ceremony for the seeds, which takes place twenty days before sowing. The day 8 Q'anil of the 260-day count is the day that commemorates the *milpa* and the seeds of the *milpa*. However, as this day shifts in relation to the astronomical year, it may fall at any moment in the agricultural cycle. Therefore, previous to planting, another day Q'anil is chosen which will substitute the day 8 Q'anil of the 260-day count at the right moment in the astronomical year. The day 8 Q'anil is therefore celebrated twice in the year: (1.) on the day 8 Q'anil in the *chol q'ij*, and (2.) prior to planting in the astronomical year.

THE RAINY SEASON

Seasonal Characteristics

Rainfall truly arrives around the time of the zenith passage, in the end of April or the beginning of May. As the sun stands straight above the ground, the periods surrounding the zenith passages are characterized by extreme heat, drought, and lack of wind. The water that vaporizes from the ocean moves towards the ITCZ, creating usually a clear sky at the place where the zenith passage takes place. After this period of heat, the rain starts slowly: in the beginning of May a light rain may fall for one or two hours in the afternoon, while the rest of the day remains dry. Sometimes the rain lasts several hours. The last five years have been extremely difficult as the rainy season arrived later each year, while still ending at the beginning of November. The rain period is thus shorter, resulting in smaller harvests and worries for future food supply.

However, by the end of April there is a palpable expectation for heavy rains to arrive. These bring new life to the *milpa* but they are also considered dangerous. The rainy season is a period in which inundations, floods and hurricanes might cause damage in and around the community. Heavy rains can destroy the same maize plants that they nourish. In Momostenango, a phenomenon called *uwaja'*[54] ("el cresciente" or "the crescent one") occurs with the first rain, or at any moment when heavy rain falls. Doña María Hernández explained me that the water from the rain will cause the rivers to swell up and that the waves become a dangerous snake that can devour humans. If you look at the river, it will grab you and you will die. This phenomenon is also known in other towns of Guatemala. For example, among the Ch'orti' near the border with Honduras, the sudden flooding of rivers is caused by the *chicchanes*[55], giant snakes, that run down from the hills (Wisdom, 1961, p. 446).

Animals and insects, in particular, are very clear indicators of rain. One of the main indications of the soon-to-arrive rainy season is the appearance

54 *Uwaja'* derives from *U-wach-ja'*, "his face of the water".

55 Spanish: "serpiente rey"; Ch'orti': "Ah tcix tcan" (Wisdom, 1961, p. 444). The chicchan is a huge version of a normal snake. Sometimes it has the upper body of a man and the lower body of a plumed serpent. Some tell that the chicchan is an enormous man that presents himself as a big snake in front of people. Some people say he has four horns on his head, two big golden horns on the front, and two smaller ones on the back. The female version, known as "Chicchán de la gran agua", is a woman on the upper part and fish on the lower part of her body. But in general, the chicchanes are perceived as big snakes (Wisdom, 1961, p. 444).

of a specific type of beetle, known in K'iche' known as *malin*. This large beetle can be seen flying around ten to five days before the first rain. Additionally, a night prior to the first rain, *zompopos*[56] (flying ants) make their first appearance[57]. Large quantities of these insects are drawn to the light, fall down, and leave their wings behind. In the first few weeks after the rainy season has started, zompopos keep on appearing. Another announcer of the rain is the flea. A week prior to the first rain, fleas begin to spread, especially at night, when they crawl in the bed covers to reproduce. According to doña María Hernández, extreme drought and heat prior to the rain makes the fleas come out of the earth and announce the rain. As soon as the rain falls, fleas disappear.

Several birds indicate that the rain is coming. For example, the migration of Swainson's hawks called *Torol jab'* ("openers of rain") is an indication of the beginning of rainy season, as already noted by Barbara Tedlock[58] (1992, pp. 186-187). The hawks fly south right before the beginning of rainy season. At the beginning of the dry season, they are to be seen again as they fly back north. Another bird that announces the rain, but does not migrate, is the *Ti'a tzi* ("Police"). This bird announces when the rain is about to fall by singing loudly, as if it has water in his throat and makes bubbles. Throughout the entire rainy season, the *Ti'a tzi* is the announcer of the arrival of the water and of the growing *b'ulb'ux*, the wells, which will swell up because of the rain.

Frogs, and serpents in particular, are noticed more often after a rainfall. The frogs are especially noticed during the night, when their croaking sound can be heard. Whereas during the dry season serpents remain close to wells and other sources of water, in the rainy season they can be seen anywhere. Serpents appear especially in October, when the rain can continue for days. During this period, a red snake, called *kiaq b'elej*, is most commonly seen.

Maize plants start sprouting roughly fifteen days after sowing (Figure 51). If not all maize seeds sprout, the milpa will be planted again twenty days after the first sowing on those spots where seeds failed to sprout. The first planting is done with a shovel but the replanting is done with a digging stick so that the sprouting corn is not destroyed. Forty days after sowing, if rainfall is abundant, the *milpa* has grown and needs to be cleaned of the weed. During this first stage of the *milpa*, there is a high concern for the damage caused by small animals that eat the sprouting plants, hungry after a long season of drought.



Figure 51. Sprouting corn plants on the 10th of May 2015, thirteen days after planting.

The sprouting of maize plants cause ants to appear, which can possibly damage the crops. Chemicals are used today in the early stages of the plant growth to keep these insects away. Chickens and turkeys are also carefully watched as they often pick the planted seeds from the *milpa*. At night, rats may eat the maize plants. When the maize has grown into a young *elote*, the squirrels become a danger for the harvest. As one squirrel can eat up to six elotes per day, they can cause much damage to the field. Once the corn has fully grown, however, there are not many animals that threaten the harvest.

A second cleaning of the weed of the milpa takes place twenty days after the first cleaning. As such, weeding usually takes place on the same day of planting in the K'iche' calendar, but with a different number. During the second weeding, the small hills on the milpa are heightened, so that the maize plants

56 Fray Francisco Ximénez (1967, p. 127) also mentions in his *Historia Natural del Reino de Guatemala*, written in 1722, that the zompopos appear every year in May when the first heavy rainfall has started.

57 According to several narrations, ants or flying ants were involved in bringing the first maize from Paxil to the humans, thus becoming announcers for the planting season (see Valladares, 1989, pp. 28-30; Wagley, 1941, p. 20).

58 Tedlock (1992, pp. 186-187) calls the migration of Swainson's hawks torol *k'älaj* ("openers of rainy season") when they pass in April, and torol *sak'ij* ("openers of dry season") when they migrate in October.



Figure 52. Corn stalks thrown down by the wind.

stand more stable. After July, the corn stalks have usually grown so high that weed cannot affect them badly. After July, therefore, clearing becomes less a priority. Throughout this whole season of growth, there is a high concern for fertility, abundance, and protection against excessive rainfall, wind, and hail (Wagley, 1941, p. 39).

From June onwards, rains become more intense. While in the morning there is usually a clear blue sky, around midday the sky has already clouded over, followed by intense rain showers that last more or less from 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon until late in the evening. In July, when the oceans are warmed up by the constant sun, the hurricane season starts. From June until October the rain is sometimes accompanied by strong winds that can damage the *milpa*. Carlos Pérez Acabal from Momostenango told me while we were planting the *milpa* in 2015, that during strong storms a powerful being passes over the *milpa*, leaving behind a track of broken maize reeds (Figure 52). When one goes the next day to the *milpa*, one can see its path through the field. According to don José Angel Xeloj, this is *Usanta'il kaqiq'* (Storm God) who passes as the whirlwind over the *milpa*. Don Rigoberto mentions that the wind that passes over the *milpa* is Juan No'j, the Wind-aspect of K'iche' calendar day 1 No'j:

> *About the one that breaks the maize… well, we have learned that there is this personage called Juan No'j… It would be the day No'j that passes around visiting and checking the milpa, and for some reason something does not appeal to him: he might not sense the offerings, there are no offerings for him. So he leaves and he pushes his way through the milpa, which breaks the milpa* – Don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, 10th of August 2016.

At another moment, he explained more characteristics of Juan No'j to me: he is a little, old, fat man dressed in old clothes. He visits the houses when men are not around and starts bothering the women, trying to seduce them and have intercourse with them. When the woman rejects him or when the husband throws him out of the house, he goes angrily to their *milpa*. With both arms open, he walks through the *milpa* and throws it down. It seems that Juan No'j is the embodied aspect of the wind and of the *chol q'ij* day 1 No'j ("Wisdom"). During ceremonies for the protection of the *milpa*, it is usual to ask for the winds not to destroy the *milpa*. As don Rigoberto explains, it is important to leave offerings and commemorate the wind, 1 No'j, so that he will not pass over the *milpa*.

Similarly, in Chichicastenango one of the saints that figures "prominently in agricultural ritual is Santiago. Here, as in Spain, he is the patron of horses, who tramples the corn. As destroyer of the *milpa* he is vaguely identified with Jurakán, the god of tempest, who has been baptized under the name of Manuel Lorenzo"[59] (Bunzel, 1952, p. 57). In the Ch'orti' area, the wind gods bring the clouds up to the sky where chaacs ("rain gods") can break it. Just as Santiago in Chichicastenango, they ride on horses (Wisdom, 1961, pp. 448-449). As in Momostenango, if no offerings are made to the wind gods, they might destroy the young plants by whipping them with a hard wind (Wisdom, 1961, p. 449). The wind gods are also the ones that give first breath to the new born, and take the last breath of air of the ones who die. The forces of wind and water are therefore delicate in that they are both givers and takers of life.

Celebrations

The first of May is in Momostenango the day of San Felipe, the *Ajtz'ib'* of the Patron Saint Santiago. On this day both San Felipe and Santiago are taken around town in procession. On 1st of May it is usual in Momostenango to raise a cross in the center of the *milpa*. This cross or *takalib'al* protects the maize plants against the wind that might throw them over during the rainy season, Juan No'j (1 No'j). Two days later, on 3rd of May, is the day of the Holy Cross[60]. This day is the day of the entombed Christ, the *señor Santa Cruz*, who lies in the *calvario* of Momostenango. As the festivity for San Felipe has just passed, however, there is no big celebration on the day of the Holy Cross in Momostenango. Both celebrations are timed around the important moment of the sun's zenith passage and the arrival of the rain. This is also the day of the masons, who raise crosses on their constructions. Furthermore, the day of the Holy Cross is the day of the water in Momostenango:

> *Here in Momostenango, the custom is that the 3rd of May is the day of the water. The day of the water is the day that God is thanked. God is thanked for the water and, above all, for the necessary attention for this sacred liquid […] On this day, on the 3rd of May, the day of the Holy Cross, Mass is organized in the church […] Those who have springs on their territories can bring their offerings: flowers or candles. And they can thank God for the springs or for practically any place where there is drinkable water* – Carlos Pérez Acabal, 24th of August 2016.

The 3rd of May marks the zenith passage of the sun[61] in the Gregorian calendar and this is generally the proper day for rain petitions in the Maya area and in Mesoamerica in general[62]. Sometimes it is celebrated slightly before the zenith passage such as for example among the Ch'orti' of Jocotán, in the department of Chiquimula, who petition rain on the feast of San Marcos, the 25th of April, and perform a ceremony for sowing on the 11th of May (Wisdom, 1961, p. 493). In the case studies below, I discuss in more details how the day of the Holy Cross celebrates the change in seasons.

Forty days after Holy Week is the Feast of the Ascension. This is only celebrated within the family, by eating and sharing *pan mojado*, a special dish

59 Juraqan (*jun raqan* means "one is his foot"), as it can be understood from the Popol Vuh, is storm deity that can cause both bad and good. He is a creator god but can be destructive when people do not acknowledge him. The English word hurricane likely derives from *jun raqan*, although other suggestions for a Taino origin have been made (Keegan & Carlson, 2008, p. 10).

60 See for comparison with the importance of this celebration in Mixtec culture the dissertations of Liana Ivette Jiménez Osorio and Emmanuel Posselt Santoy (forthcoming).

61 The zenith passage usually occurs in Guatemala between the 29th of April and the 3rd of May.

62 See Broda (2001); Bunzel (1952, p. 418); La Farge (1994, p. 158); Redfield and Villa Rojas (1964 [1934], p. 134); Siegel (1941, p. 73); Termer (1957, pp. 150, 181); Villela (1997).

of bread soaked in sugar cane liquid. There is no procession or any other big festivity related to the ascension of Christ. The moment is important, however, as by now both the maize plant and the weeds have grown. As the seeds are usually planted shortly after Holy Week (depending how early or late Holy Week falls in the year), the ascension of Christ marks the period of the first weeding, around 40 days after planting.

Corpus Christi, which takes place between 23rd of May and the 25th of June, is celebrated in Momostenango with a minor procession, differently from the rest of the Maya area where it is widely celebrated (Wagley, 1949, pp. 119-121). At this moment, the maize has recently sprouted with the first rain, which is cause of great celebrations (Bunzel, 1952, p. 50). As one of the specialists that Ruth Bunzel worked with states: "on the day of Corpus Christi there are ceremonies in the hills, for the dead and for Our Lord in Calvario, to give thanks for the *siembras* already in the earth" (Bunzel, 1952, p. 57). Corpus Christi is celebrated twenty days after the ascension of Christ and sixty days after Holy Week, and follows thus the agricultural cycle of planting and weeding. In Momostenango, Corpus Christi marks the second moment of weeding and the hilling of the milpa, sixty days after planting. The celebration of the Eucharist possibly mirrors the perception of the maize as a living being, which sacrifices itself to provide life for the humans. The minor celebration of the Sacred Heart of Christ in *aldea* Los Cipreses follows a week after Corpus Christi.

Although not celebrated in Momostenango, the feast of San Juan, on the 24th of June, falls closely together with the summer solstice of the northern hemisphere, when the sun rises and sets at the most northern point at the horizon, and is greatly celebrated throughout the Highlands (Bunzel, 1952, p. 418; Vogt, 1970, p. 79; Wisdom, 1961, pp. 504-505). Bunzel (1952, p. 57) states that on this day similar ceremonies as on the 3rd of May and Corpus Christi are performed at sacred places in the hills. People give thanks to the earth and especially thank for the lambs (Bunzel, 1952, p. 418).

THE CANÍCULA AND THE SECOND PERIOD OF RAIN

Seasonal Characteristics

The second zenith passage in August marks the beginning of a second heatwave in Guatemala. This is often referred to as the "summer in the winter"[63], the *canicula*, or *saq q'ij* in K'iche', "white sun" or "clear day". As the sun stands straight above the ground again, it produces similar conditions to the first zenith passage. The period of heat and drought that follows the second zenith passage usually lasts for twenty days. If the drought lasts longer, as it has occurred more frequently in the past few years, crops are destroyed and entire families are left without food. During my fieldwork in 2016 the *canícula* persisted for almost two months, which caused a lot worries for the harvest in Momostenango. Therefore, the *canícula* can be, if it extends too long, a dangerous period.

By mid-August the *canícula* has normally passed. Although the sun is on its way northward, it continues to warm up the oceans, causing destructive weather. Hurricane season starts usually around the end of May but it intensifies from mid-August onwards when the high temperatures of the water in the ocean cause quick evaporation, resulting in hurricanes and tropical storms. Given the tilt on the earth's axis, hurricanes move westward in the northern hemisphere. This causes the months of September and October to be extremely wet and stormy, which is very good for the *milpas* (Figure 53 and Figure 54). On the other hand, this creates concerns regarding one's own safety and that of the milpa.

According to Maria Hernández Ajanel of Momostenango, earthquakes are more common during rainy season. Maria Teresa López of Concepción Chiquirichapa agrees: due to the heavy rainfall Mother Earth needs to accommodate herself more often and moves around, causing earthquakes. Similarly, in the Ch'orti' region earthquakes are related to water, as they are caused by the chicchanes, the water snakes, which move inside the mountains and hills (Wisdom, 1961, p. 446).

63 The rainy season is often called "the winter period" because the sun is blocked by the rain clouds. In dry season is often called "summer" because there is a clear sky and the sun can heat up the surface of the earth.



Figure 53. The marzorcas around the end of August.



Figure 54. By the end of August, the corn stalks have reached their maximum height.

In Momostenango, thunderstorms during rainy season are caused by San Miguel Árcangel, who chases a dragon and tries to kill it. The light reflecting on his slashing sword whenever he hits the dragon causes lightning directed to earth. The sounds of the thunder are provoked by the saint flying over the clouds while chasing the dragon. When lightning hits a tree or a house, it is a sign that the dragon has entered the place. A candle can be lit to stay safe during heavy thunderstorms:

> *It is very much recommended to light a candle in the house when heavy rain and storm begins, because it is very dark! And bad things like the darkness. While if you light a candle, it will not enter [your house]. San Miguel Arcangel is hunting the dragon. He follows it! If it enters in the house he will hit it with lightning. But when there is light, the dragon will not come it. It goes away, outside. It will go in the woods* – Don José Angel Xeloj, 17th of August 2016.

Redfield and Villa Rojas (1964 [1934], p. 115) and Wisdom (1961, pp. 447-450) have given elaborate descriptions of the perception of rain among Lowland Yucatec and in Highland Ch'orti' peoples. Both describe how four Chaacs[64] live in the sky and are responsible for the rain to fall. In the Ch'orti' area the *chicchanes* are responsible for vaporizing the water while the four Chaacs in both regions break the clouds with their axe or machete creating lightning and bringing rain (Redfield & Villa

64 Wisdom (1961, p. 447) writes about "*hombres trabajadores*" (working men). Although he does not document the Ch'orti' name, it is reasonable to assume that he is referring to the *Chaacs* as in most Maya languages the word chaac means 'work' or, depending on the prefix, 'worker'.

Rojas, 1964 [1934], p. 115; Wisdom, 1961, p. 447). Similar to Momostenango, in the Ch'orti' region the lightning is a punishment from the Chaacs, who try to kill *chicchanes*, the water snakes, with it. In Yucatan, Redfield and Villa Rojas describe that each of the chaacs "holds a gourd vessel containing the waters of the rain" (1964 [1934], p. 116). San Miguel Arcangel leads the Chaacs and has here the role of guiding the Chaacs in the sky to ensure rain fall.

In Momostenango, as in many other regions (Tax, 1964a, p. 129; Wagley, 1941, pp. 28-30), the end of September and beginning of October are famous for the harvest of *elotes* (green *mazorcas*). This period of harvest is usually a very celebrated moment, because the first maize is tasted and the time of major harvest is approaching (Wagley, 1941, p. 39). This moment, which marks the completion of the agricultural cycle, is celebrated in Momostenango with a special *atol de elote* and tortillas made from the *elotes*.

Celebrations

The feast of Santiago is the patron saint feast of Momostenango. Whereas this feast is important in many communities and it is usually celebrated on 24th of July, in Momostenango the feast takes place from 30th of July until 1st of August (see below). In Momostenango this day is related to the wind and the procreative and destructive powers of Santiago (Cook, 2000, p. 24). Hurricane season is becoming heavier at this moment. The celebration of this Patron Saint feast in Momostenango is explored in more detail below in the section of case studies.

Wisdom (1961, p. 505) mentions that the feast of Santiago is regarded in the Ch'orti' area as an important moment as it coincides with the maturing of the maize and beans. Also, in Chichicastenango ceremonies are performed at shrines in the mountains and petitions are made to protect the cornfields, at a moment in which the corn has already flowered (Bunzel, 1952, p. 58). Among the *Mam* speakers of Santiago Chimaltenango, this day is important because it coincides with the flowering of the maize fields of the first harvest (Wagley, 1941, p. 29). Furthermore, this day "is to ask pardon of Santiago that the *milpa* may not be blown down by the wind. On the other hand, we ask horses of Santiago, and ask pardon of him that the bat may not eat the horses, and that we may not fall into the hands of thieves at night" (Bunzel, 1952, p. 58).

The period around mid-August is widely celebrated in the Highlands of Guatemala. Around this moment, the second zenith passage of the sun occurs that marks the end of the *canícula*. The expectation and concern over the end of this short dry season trigger a cycle of the celebrations. The Assumption of Mary on 15th of August, for example, is celebrated in many towns in Guatemala (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 169-171; Wisdom, 1961, p. 510). While the period of mid-August is not celebrated in Momostenango, the town of San Bartolo Aguas Calientes and the *aldea* Pologua celebrate the feast of Bartolomé el Apostel from 21st until 24th of August and the feast of San Antonio de Padua from the 24th until the 27th of August, respectively. For those who live in Momostenango, both celebrations mark of the period of intense rainfall:

> *It is difficult… that is the situation… and the lack of rain is what is harming us most. There just isn't any! And there is so much heat these days… For example, the celebration in San Bartolo during these days is the time of the rain: the entire day it should rain! The entire day rain, the entire day and night… But now it isn't* – Carlos Pérez Acabal, 24th of August 2016

The feast of Pologua celebrates the patron San Antonio de Padua, whose image is usually kept in the church of Momostenango. The image of San Antonio is that of a small child, and was found in the 16th of 17th century in a cave near Momostenango (Cook, 2000, p. 64). The small image of San Antonio, that in the church of Momostenango stands next to Santiago, is also called *el niño dios*. The image leaves the church ten days before the feast, on 14th of August when the feast of Santiago finishes, and the cofradía brings it to the altar of Alajsab'al, dedicated to San Antonio de Padua, where people come to make offerings. After a few days, the indigenous authority of *aldea* Santa Ana brings the image to their *aldea*, where it remains for a couple of days. After a few days the indigenous authority of Chininab'e brings the image to their place, and finally the indigenous authority of Pologua comes to Chininab'e and brings San Antonio de Padua to Pologua, where it will remain

for only four days. When the feast of Pologua is over, the saint visits first Cholajab' and again Alajsab'al, before finally returing to Momostenango on 30th of August. According to Cook (2000, pp. 64-72), the ceremonies that take place throughout are related to the earth and fertility. I think that these ceremonies are also forms of rain petitions, which have to be continued throughout the rainy season to ensure rain:

> *Well, often, the lack of continuity of, in this case the petitions [is the reason for the lack of rain]. When it starts to rain one forgets to continue the petition. It is a problem because I think that it is necessary to continue. It is necessary to give continuity to the petitions* – Carlos Pérez Acabal, 24th of August 2016.

In the Ch'orti' area, maize ripens from mid-July or the first of August (Wisdom, 1961, p. 501). Among the Tzotzil, the feast of San Lorenzo (August 10th) marks the period when most of the heavy work on the milpa is done. After this celebration, there is no more weeding and there is plenty of fresh corn and fruit for consumption (Vogt, 1970, p. 89). In Santiago Chimaltenango, in the department of Huehuetenango, the period running from the feast of Santiago (July 24th) until the 9th of August is celebrated with the performance of the *baile del torito* (Wagley, 1949, pp. 105-107), while in other communities this is done for the commemoration of the Assumption of Mary, the 15th of August (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 51-53; Earle, 1986, p. 159).

The end of August and the month of September and October are characterized by strong winds, rain and hurricanes to which fully-grown maize stalks are especially vulnerable. During this period, it is therefore very important to petition protection against rain and wind (Wagley, 1941, p. 39). On 29th of September in Totonicapán San Miguel Arcangel is celebrated as the patron saint. As he is also the patron of thunderstorms, offerings and prayers are made to him so that he protects the houses and *milpas*. In Momostenango the day of San Miguel Arcangel is not publically celebrated, but protection ceremonies are made on a personal account. The whirlwinds mentioned earlier can destroy the elotes that are usually ripe around mid-September and the squirrels might eat the harvest. The Ajq'ijab' and Chuchqajawib' of Momostenango perform many ceremonies at family altars around this time of the year:

> *We have our milpa, but hopefully no wind comes. We hope that the water will not bring hurricanes, or that it will bring whirlwinds; we hope that the worms and the chickens do not harm our milpa; we hope that the squirrel and the opossum do no throw over our milpa* – Don José Angel Xeloj, 15th of August 2016

In September, the first elotes are usually ripe. There is no specific communal celebration for this in Momostenango. However, it is customary to bring a basket of the first harvest to Santiago and San Felipe, to thank them for the crops. These offerings are left for a time in the church, after which they are divided among the poor people of Momostenango, who do not have a *milpa* or whose harvest failed. In other places, around mid-September the celebration of elotes takes place (Wagley, 1941, p. 43; Wisdom, 1961, p. 501). The harvest of elotes is usually celebrated with special food and drinks, just as the harvest of the frijoles, the chilacoyotes, and squash (Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934], p. 143).

Finally, October is characterized by the commemoration of the Virgen del Rosario. The most important day for this commemoration is 7th of October. However, the entire month is dedicated to her: every day, novenas are held during which one prays in the main church from five until six or seven o'clock in the afternoon. The Virgen del Rosario coincides with the final stage of the milpa during which the last protection of the maize plants is needed as they are now fully grown but need to mature. Harvest can still fail during this month.

THE TIME OF HARVEST

Seasonal Characteristics

Between September and November, depending on the region, the *mazorcas* mature. During this time the *milpa* is carefully watched to protect it from squirrels and other rodents (Tax, 1964a, p. 129; Wisdom, 1961, pp. 67-68). During this time, full-grown maize stalks are more vulnerable to the wind, as well. In contrast

to other regions, in Momostenango the cornstalks are not bent[65] after the *mazorcas* have ripened. In 2014, Guatemala was hit by extreme drought during what should have been the rainy season. As a result, the *milpa* needed more time to mature with the late rains and the harvest also occurred later. The *milpa* was harvested that year in Momostenango around the 9th of December.

The timing of harvest depends on the region. For example, harvest in Momostenango usually takes place during the month of November and the end of December, while in the Lowlands of Chiapas the cornfields are ready for harvest in October (Vogt, 1970, p. 51). The first beans are usually ready for harvest in the beginning of October, but the harvest might be extended until December (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 51-53; Wisdom, 1961, p. 62). In Momostenango, black beans, chilecayote, and maize are usually ready for harvest at the same time, between the beginning of November and mid-December, although some people might harvest them in October already.

Rainfall begins to diminish by the end of October and, finally, around the time of the nadir passage of the sun in the beginning of November, rain has stopped completely. This is also the moment when temperatures drop in the Highlands of Guatemala. At night especially, thick blankets are needed to stay warm, as cold winds tend to enter the house.

Celebrations

Among most Maya communities, All Saints Day marks the end of the rainy season (Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934], p. 203; Vogt, 1970, p. 52; Wisdom, 1961, p. 69). Whereas in most regions the ancestors are commemorated on 2nd of November, in Momostenango this only occurs on 1st of November. The 1st of November is the equivalent in the Gregorian year of the *chol q'ij* day 8 Ajpu, which is the day for the ancestors. In Momostenango it is usual to place food for the ancestors on the house altar. The door of the patio is left open so that the ancestors will be able to enter the house. The ancestors are embodied by bees, which on this day can be seen finding their way to the food only to disappear soon afterwards. Furthermore, it is usual to visit the ancestors at their graves beginning early in the morning, and spend the day with them:

> *On this day everybody will gather there at the cemetery to visit the deceased ones, their relatives that have already passed away. They bring them flowers, candles, and often it is the custom to bring some food so that they come down to eat at the tombs of those that have already passed away. According to our belief it is like a way of sharing with them. The form of celebrating might even include music*
> – Carlos Pérez Acabal, 24th of August 2016.

Whereas the rainy season has now officially ended, the maize needs time to dry. The second week of November, the *mazorcas* are ready for harvest. This moment coincides with the nadir passage of the sun, which cannot be astronomically observed but can be experienced by meteorological changes such as the clearer skies and colder winds. In Momostenango, the period of harvest is marked by the patron saint feast of *barrio* Santa Isabel that takes place on 19th of November, followed by the patron saint feast of *barrio* Santa Catarina, which commemorates Santa Catarina de Alejandría on 23rd, 24th and 25th of November. During these festivities, the history and origin of Momostenango is commemorated, when the Patron Saint of the town, Santiago Mayor, and his *Ajtz'ib'*, San Felipe, return to Pueblo Viejo, the old location of Momostenango[66] where Santiago Mayor appeared for the first time:

> *That is where the village began, there in* Pueblo Viejo. *But they say that Santiago Apóstel did not want to stay there, and he came here, to stay here at the place [of Momostenango]. They came to bring him back and they put him there again. And the next day he appeared here at sunrise. So that is when it was decided to make the town here*
> – Don José Angel Xeloj, 25th of August 2016

Generally, in Guatemala harvest takes place between All Saints and Santo Tomás, which marks

65 In other communities the cornstalks are bent prior to harvest so that the corn cobs can begin to dry already and so that no moister, which may cause rotting of the corn, will remain in the leaves.

66 The place where he lived is known as his "old house", which according to some specialists, was an ancient church.

the winter solstice on the 21st of December (K'iche': *uk'ex ub'e*) (Bunzel, 1952, p. 53; Wisdom, 1961, p. 501). In Chichicastenango, the feast of San Martín, "the vegetative aspect of the earth" (Bunzel, 1952, p. 57), is celebrated at the mountain shrines on the 11th of November and marks the moment of harvest.

After harvest, when all *mazorcas* are collected, it is usual to perform a thanksgiving ceremony, which varies in each household. Usually after harvest, the *mazorcas* are left on a heap in the house. An Ajq'ij, ritual specialist, may come to perform a ceremony for thanking or the family may light a candle on the house altar or in the church to give thanks for the harvest. Others attend a special Mass in the Catholic Church. Whatever form is favored for thanking, it is customary to be conscious and grateful about the harvest that has been given. Another moment in the year to commemorate human dependency on the earth and nature is on the day of the seeds, 8 Q'anil (see Chapter I). For devote Catholics, it is common to bring a basket with freshly harvested *mazorcas* to the local parish priest.

CASE STUDIES

The following section discusses some of the ritual celebrations that take place on dates set by the astronomical or Gregorian calendar. The goal of this discussion is to elaborate on the celebrations and to analyze how these rituals separate one time period from another, and how they thus guide behavior. The focus is on the separation of agricultural periods, as tending to the fields still remains one of the most important cycles.

The discussion follows a loose chronological order. As the timing of Holy Week depends on the cycle of the moon it can take place before and after the burning of the dried plants on the *milpa* (around March and beginning of April). However, I discuss the ritual for burning the *zacate* first, followed by the celebration of Holy Week, the day of the Holy Cross, the Feast of Santiago, and the Solstice in December. Because not every single community can organize a big festival for each scheduled celebration, it is to be expected that only some are celebrated in any given location. Therefore, I discuss the celebrations as they are carried out in different towns that I was able to visit. In chronological order these are: Calcehtok in Yucatan, Mexico, for the burning of the zacate; Momostenango in the department of Totonicapán for Holy Week; Amatitlán in the department of Guatemala for Holy Cross; Again Momostenango for Santiago; and finally Chichicastenango in the department of El Quiché during the winter solstice.



Figure 55. The caves of Calcehtok.



Figure 56. The *chaltun* serving as an altar in the cave of Calcehtok during the ritual for the burning of the fields.

The Ritual de la Quema

On 5th of May 2013, during a short fieldwork on the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico, I participated in the *ritual de la quema* in the caves of Calcehtok, also known as the caves of Xpukil (Figure 55). This ritual was performed by *maestro* Miguel, *j-men* (priest) from Calcehtok, in order to ask protection and guidance



Figure 57. Maestro Miguel performing the ritual for the burning of the zacate.

during the burning of the dried plants on the *milpa*. The hot temperatures and lack of wind indicated that the rain would arrive soon. Most people had already performed a *ritual de la quema* and were already planting the milpas since 3rd of May. However, today many people do not continue to plant on 3rd of May, but rather choose a day that suits them best by taking into consideration other commitments (e.g. work schedules, Protestant rules, and meteorological cycles). Therefore, it was still possible to perform the ritual for those who had not burned their fields yet, while at the same time protection for the entire community was also petitioned. It was asked for the plants to be burned, but for the fire not to spread dangerously. Fertility and good crops were also petitioned in the prayers.

Today the caves of Calcehtok are a minor tourist attraction. However, the place is sacred for many people in the communities surrounding it. Archaeological remains such as potsherds and building stones are scattered on the floor of the caves and suggest that this has been a sacred place for a long time (Bonor Villarejo, 1987). At the entrance of the caves stand the remains of an ancient wall. One of the guides at the entrance told that around eighty *chaltuns* (artificial cavities made to collect water) have been documented in the caves[67]. Maestro Miguel used one of the ancient *chaltuns* as an altar for the ritual.

The *ritual de la quema* took place in one of the largest rooms of the caves, known as *la capilla* ('the chapel') because of the high circular ceiling. In the center of the room was a round flat rock, enclosed by low rocks and stones, on which the *chaltun* stood (Figure 56). The most important feature in the *capilla* was a stalagmite which was said to represent an image of the Virgin Mary. According to the oral narratives, when the first Spaniards entered the cave, they placed a statue of the Holy Virgin next to the entrance of *la capilla*. Over time, the water dripping on the Virgin converted her in a stalagmite, which still stands there today. The altar was directed towards the Virgin and maestro Miguel was facing her directly most of the time. According to maestro Miguel, this cave had been the last refuge of an important Yucatec priest when the Spaniards arrived. Rather than collaborating with the Spaniards, he refused to live without freedom, and decided to enter the cave of Calcehtok and take his own life.

67 A *chaltun* (*chal* = water; *tun* = stone) collects sacred water that drips down from the stalactites that is eventually used in rituals such as the petition for rain (Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934], p. 139).

Maestro Miguel was assisted by his younger brother in preparing an altar with many offerings on the *chaltun*. During the ceremony, maestro Miguel knelt and chanted loudly in Yucatec to the divine beings. He petitioned guidance and help in the coming period. After the chanting, the participants had to come one by one to the platform for a ritual cleansing with incense and to share a drink with the divine beings to whom they offered the drink[68]. As the divine beings invoked during the ceremony are ambivalent, each participant and the assistant had to be cleansed of any negativity.

Maestro Miguel also drank the same beverages and chanted again after the participants had joined the cleansing and drinking. He sang and poured on the ground some *xtabentun* behind the altar. He then smoked a cigarette and blew the smoke in half a circle through the room, starting at his left and ending at his right side. Finally, he knelt down again and resumed chanting (Figure 57). To close the ritual, Miguel took some sips of *xtabentun*, which he spat around in the same manner as he did with the cigarette smoke.

For those who had participated and the communities that they belonged to, the ceremony marked the moment to burn the land and fertilize it. It signaled that the dry season was ending and that rain was arriving. By commemorating the divine beings such as the wind, the j-men guided the community to prepare for rain by burning the fields, selecting the seeds, and planting. The period devoted to the preparation of the *surcos* and reparation of the houses was now over.

Holy Week

Holy Week is a ritual moment, which emphasizes the concerns for the fertility of the *milpa* in a broad region. In the Ch'orti' region, for example, the period from Domingo de Ramos until Domingo de Pascua marks the burning of the *zacate* just discussed (Wisdom, 1961, p. 514). This is the preparatory, fertilizing step before sowing, which takes place in that region on 3rd of May. Also in Momostenango the concern for fertility of the field before planting can also be noted during Holy Week. Chapter V discusses how specific symbolism that appears during Holy Week relates to fertility and rebirth. In the short section here, however, I confine myself to discussing a very explicit relation between Holy Week and fertility.

On the night from Holy Thursday to Good Friday, many people of the community of Momostenango work together to make large, colorful sawdust carpets over which the Holy Week procession will pass on Good Friday. On Friday afternoon, as soon as the carriages with Jesus and Mary have passed over the carpets, people hurry to collect the sawdust in plastic bags and bottles (Figure 58 and Figure 59). The bed of sawdust over which the deceased body of Jesus Christ is carried on Good Friday afternoon has received a special blessing, which will enhance the fertility of the milpa and bring abundance to the field. The sacrifice and death of Christ endows the sawdust with fertility and the sawdust is taken to the *milpa*, where it will provide an abundant harvest.

A similar relation between the death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus Christ and fertility has been documented in Chichicastenango:

> *There is a belief that if one wishes to have the best ayotes and chilacayotes, one should take a handful of each kind of seed and place them under a table, and on the table place a glass of white honey. And one uses this honey during Holy Week. The whole family drinks this honey, and one must do this on Holy Thursday in the night, and on the morning of Good Friday. And when one goes to see the procession in the afternoon (on Good Friday), one takes these seeds with one wrapped in a napkin. And whenever they put down Christ to rest in the course of the procession one takes out these seeds, wrapped in the napkin, and places them under the table on which they place Our Lord for His rest. And one does this as often as Our Lord rests throughout the whole course of the procession. When one returns, one puts these seeds aside carefully until the time of planting, and then one plants them. The belief is that in putting the seeds under the honey the ayotes and chilacayotes will turn out fruitful; for there are many heads of people around Our Lord, and so the fruit of the ayotes and chilacayotes will also be many* (Bunzel, 1952, p. 55).

68 The first drink was a full cup of *pozol* with honey and the second drink was water mixed with three spoons of cacao. The third drink was a full cup of *xtabentun*, a sweet liquor made of honey.



Figure 58. The procession of Good Friday which takes the Holy Sepulchre through Momostenango.



Figure 59. After the Holy Sepulchre has passed, the sawdust is collected and taken to the milpa.

The timing and symbolism of Holy Week in the Gregorian calendar is meaningful for the agricultural calendar of Mesoamerica[69]: the arrival of the rain is soon to take place and the timing of the rebirth of Christ announces the rebirth of the maize on the field. An oral narrative from Chichicastenango, documented by Sol Tax in the 1930s, is very explicit on the relation between the sacrifice of Christ and the rebirth of the milpa. A short excerpt of the narrative:

> *Finally they came to the spot, and they crucified Jesus. While nailed to the cross, Jesus miraculously turned around completely, exposing his back, and from his back came maize -white, yellow, and black- and beans and potatoes and all the other food plants. Then Jesus died. Jesus was buried. But three days later, a little before 3 A.M. (when the roosters crow) Jesus was resur-rected and he went to heaven. There was a large stone over his grave, and Jesus stood on it and with one foot "took off" for heaven. There remained his footprint on the stone* (Tax, 1949, p. 127).

According to La Farge:

> *I suspect that the [commemoration of the] death and the resurrection [of Christ], which arrive at the time that approximately corresponds with the period between sowing and the first sprouting of the corn, is affected by a more ancient rite* (La Farge, 1994, p. 124; translation mine).

In many towns in the Highlands of Guatemala it is tradition to display an image of Judas Iscariot on public places during Holy Week (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 223-224, 414; La Farge, 1994, pp. 120-125; Siegel, 1941, pp. 71-74; Termer, 1957, p. 229). This life-size puppet is often conflated with San Simón and Maximón, Highland Maya deity-saints, although the role of the Judas image during Holy Week is very much the same as in orthodox Christian communities (Carabott, 2011, p. 13; Liata, 2007, p. 163; Sidneva, 2012, p. 267).

From Holy Wednesday until Good Friday, the life-size puppet of Judas is placed in front of the Catholic Church of Momostenango. Since 2015, however, a second similar image is placed at the top of the stairs of the Calvario at the cemetery (Figure 61). This image is called by different names, such as Maximón or San Simón, but for many he represents Judas, the traitor of Jesus. In front of him is a table with a variety of objects: old rubbish, pills, and fruits (Figure 60). Just like the well-known San Simón and Maximón from Santiago Atitlán, he likes to smoke cigarettes and cigars, and one can offer *quetzales* or cigarettes to him. He remains on these public places, assisted by cofradía members, until 3 o'clock in the afternoon on Good Friday, when it is taken to the cofradía house. Here they undress him until only the dry bunchgrass that forms the body is left, and this is finally burned. Bits of the ashes are



Figure 60. Judas is a white man who wears a tie, suit and sombrero. He is seated under a few branches that the cofradía of San Simon has placed here to represent a tree. He carries a mask of a white person with a moustache and blue eyes, and has a whip and a red towel.

69 See Chapter V for a detailed discussion of the synergy of Christian and Mesoamerican symbolism in Holy Week.



Figure 61. Judas or San Simon sitting at the top of the stairs of the *calvario* at the cemetery of Momostenango.

carried to the *milpas* where it, just as the sawdust, enhances fertility. Garrett Cook (2000, p. 183) has interpreted the image as a K'iche' vegetation deity and suggests that burning him marks the moment of transition from a dry period to a period of new life.

Another important ceremony in Momostenango immediately following Holy Week is the blessing of the water. While 3rd of May is the day of the water, Easter Sunday is the day to bless the water (*agua bendita*). On this day, those who want to receive the blessing bring water, either spring or tap, to the church. According to doña María Hernández Ajanel, the blessing of the water used to take place on Holy Saturday but was changed to Easter Sunday at the end of the 20th century. During a large part of the past century this event took take place at the fountain in the Mercado Número Uno in the center of Momostenango. Each of the four *barrios* of Momostenango would form separate lines while the Catholic priest blessed each container of water. The indigenous authorities of the four *barrios* guided the ceremony and carried whips to control any pushing, fighting, or other disorderly conducts. Today one can bring his water to the church before Mass on Easter Sunday. The priest blesses the water and after Mass, one can pick up the *agua bendita*.

The *agua bendita* is usually kept at the house altar and it is used in case someone falls sick. The water is also left at the graves of the ancestors and is sprinkled at the corners of the *milpa* for protection and fertility. As has been suggested before (Bunzel, 1952, p. 224), the blessing of the water might be related to the arrival of the rain.

In Chapter V the relationship between Holy Week and pre-Columbian symbolism will be discussed in more detail. However, here it is already possible to conclude that Holy Week marks the final preparation of the *milpa*. These activities include, similar to the previously discussed *ritual de la quema*, the burning of the *zacate* or the fertilizing of the land. Furthermore, it prepares the community mentally for the coming

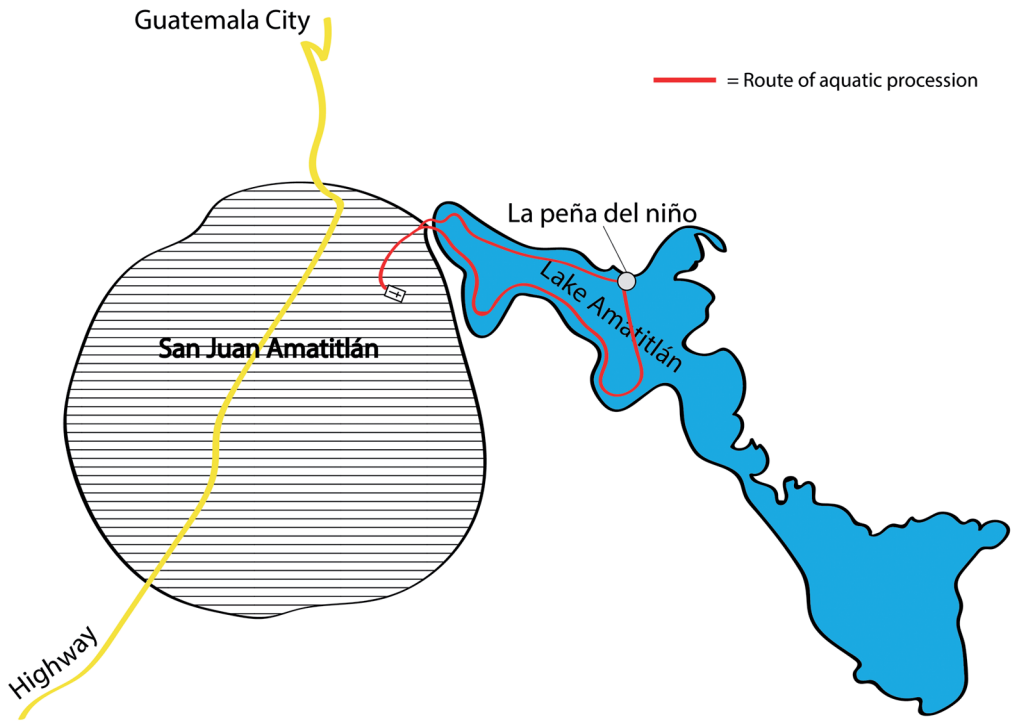


Figure 62. Route of the boat on the lake of Amatitlán.

period of rain and emphasizes their dependency on it. As such, in the period following Holy Week the community keeps alert for cloud formation and the arrival of rain, which enables sowing.

The Day of the Holy Cross

On 3rd of May 2015 I joined in the festivities of the Day of the Holy Cross in Amatitlán. Although the Patron Saint is San Juan the Baptist, commemorated on the 24th of June, one of the major religious celebrations of the town is for the *Niño Christo* on 3rd of May, the day of the Holy Cross. Many visitors from Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador come on pilgrimage to Amatitlán beginning on 25th of April until 4th of May. In 2016, around 15.000 visitors were expected according to the national newspaper *La Prensa Libre*. As discussed above, the day of the Holy Cross marks in a broad area the zenith passage and the arrival of rain. The case of Amatitlán is a peculiar one, as this is celebrated in an industrialized area, only twenty-five kilometers south of Guatemala City where today not many people live from subsistence farming. The celebration was, however, originally celebrated in the 17th century by Pokomam-speaking people in the area (De Fuentes y Guzmán, 1882, libro 17, capítulo XIV). While societal composition has greatly changed over the centuries, the celebration continued as a reminder of the past.

The festivities in Amatitlán last around a week and mainly center around the Mass for the Niño Dios and related market sales. From 1st until the 3rd of May, the Niño Dios is accompanied by the *niños visitantes*, divine images of children from neighboring communities. On third of May, an image of Niño Dios is taken out in a long procession that continues as an aquatic procession in the lake of Amatitlán. The image that is taken on the aquatic procession is known as the *Zarquito*. The original image remains in the church for several reasons:



Figure 63. The carriage on which the *Zarquito* was brought to the shores of Lake Amatitlán.



Figure 64. The *Zarquito* is brought to the boat for the aquatic procession.

fear that the original Niño Dios might be stolen[70], the original Niño Dios is too heavy for transport, and, finally if the original *Niño Dios* was taken in the aquatic procession, many people who come on pilgrimage to Amatitlán would not be able to see the divine image.

According to oral narratives, the little boy is the owner and guardian of the lake of Amatitlán (Deleon Melendez, 1980). He was found on a rock that emerged from the deepest part of the lake by fishermen, who saw a light coming from this point. They decided to bring the image to their town. The veneration of the image of a boy at the lake of Amatitlán was already mentioned by historian Fuentes y Guzmán at the end of the 17th century. He mentions that in the town of Pampichí or Pampichín, which is currently the *aldea* Belén of Amatitlán, the *santo niño de Belem* was venerated (De Fuentes y Guzmán, 1882, libro 17, capítulo XIV). As the image's popularity grew, it was transferred by boat to Amatitlán on 3rd of May 1789, where and when the festivities take place today.

The procession of the Niño Dios starts after Mass on 3rd of May at the Church of San Juan in the center of Amatitlán. In 2015, the *Zarquito* was carried on a heavy wooden construction, on which two lions dragged a carriage with the *Zarquito* on top of it (Figure 63). Behind the wooden construction followed a music band. The procession moved through town over the carpets made of flowers, sawdust and pine needles to reach the shores of Lake Amatitlán, where it stopped in front of the docks. The Catholic priest lifted the image and showed it to the people who had gathered at the shore, and then transfered the *Zarquito* to a richly decorated boat, where he stood on the top of the roof of a small house that had been built for the occasion (Figure 64).

At 12 o'clock the boat starts its aquatic procession along the coast (Figure 62 and Figure 65) along with a retinue of five *lanchas* 'boats'. Right behind the boat of the little boy Jesus, is the boat with the music band. Following the shore of the lake, they go to the southeastern tip of the first bay of the lake, where the town Pampichí or Pampichín, currently known as Belen, lies. This is where the boy was first venerated before he was moved to Amatitlan. When they reach the southeastern tip of the lake, the aquatic procession sets course directly to the sacred rock where the little boy was discovered, in a place called *la silla del niño*, the boy's chair. *La silla*, also known as the *peña del niño,* the boy's rock, is a conspicuous rock formation at the northeastern part of the lake (Figure 66). During the day *lanchas* full of visitors come to see the boy at his rock. At six o´clock, the image is put on the boat again and taken to the shores of Amatitlán, where the procession continues on land towards the church where it arrives around 11 o´clock at night.

While the *Zarquito* is at the *peña*, pilgrims visit the church, which faces west towards the massive

70 The image of Niño Dios was indeed stolen once in 1964. However, within a month the image was returned to the town.



Figure 65. The boat carrying the *Zarquito* is followed by a boat with musicians and several boats with visitors.



Figure 66. The rock of the *Niño Dios*. The image will remain here until six o'clock.

volcano Agua. The image of the boy Jesus can be found at the altar in the apse of the church, facing the exit and the volcano Agua. The boy stands in a niche, roughly 8 meters above the ground, surrounded by an image of Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary. The *Niño Dios* stands with his left foot on a skull and with his right foot on the world. Behind him stands a wooden cross. The niche is placed within a larger painting that represent the sun surrounded by clouds and angels. One by one, visitors walk up the stairs built for the occasion, covered with a brown cloth and decorated with plants right in front of the boy (Figure 67). At the top of this construction, which seems to represent a mountain, visitors pray to the Niño Dios.

While in many communities the 3rd of May marks the moment when the elders go up to the mountain tops to petition rain, this practice is recreated on a smaller scale in the church of Amatitlán. The visitors climb symbolically up the mountain, which mimics the volcano Agua, to make petitions to the little boy Jesus, who is placed as the center of the sun. The fact that the boy stands in the center of the sun is important because, as discussed above, 3rd of May can be taken to commemorate the fixed day of the sun's zenith passage. The altarpiece that mimics the volcano opposite of the church is very similar to the altarpiece of Santiago Atitlán that symbolizes the sacred volcano San Pedro at whose sides a young and an old ritual specialist climb for the petition of rain (Christenson, 2001b, pp. 9, 72-82). Similar to Amatitlán, the church in Santiago Atitlán faces directly the sacred volcano.

The relationship of the festivity and water is very clear in Amatitlán as the aquatic procession to the *peña del niño* in the lake is a crucial part of the celebrations. Local historian Manuel Guerra suggests that "probably the veneration of the *Niño de Amatitlán* replaced the prehispanic cult dedicated to the tutelary spirit or the *nawal* of the lake"[71]. Recent archaeological excavations have found prehispanic aquatic depositional offerings at Lake Amatitlán, which might indicate a long continuation in the perception of the lake as sacred (Deleon Melendez, 1980, p. 8; Mata Amado, 1999).



Figure 67. Inside the parish church of San Juan Amatitlán the visitors climb symbolically up a hill towards the image of the *Niño Dios*.

These observations suggest that the celebration of 3rd of May in Amatitlán mirrors rain petition rituals that take place on this date over a larger area. However, the religious celebration in Amatitlán is never mentioned as a rain petition ceremony. I suggest that due to the industrialization since the 19th century, subsistence farming and thus the dependency on rain, have become less important in the region. Whereas the date and symbolic ritual practices have continued to be repeated, the main concerns have changed: petitions for rain might have changed for petitions regarding the concerns of a more industrialized society, such as, for example, petitions for jobs, health, and protection against violence. Those who visit and do have a *milpa*, however, will certainly mention their concerns regarding the year's rain and harvest. So, while the celebration used to mark the beginning of a period of rain, with all its related activities and concerns, the ritual moment continues today as a moment to petition for other aspects that are important in a drastically changed environment.

71 *Prensa Libre*, 2nd of May 2004, republished in the *Prensa Libre* on the 2nd of May 2016: http://www.prensalibre.com/hemeroteca/el-dueo-del-lago Accessed on the 11th of November 2016, translation mine.

The Patron Saint Feast of Santiago

Cook and Offit, have previously investigated and documented the patron saint feast of Momostenango in detail (Cook, 2000, pp. 107-141; Cook & Offit, 2008b). Therefore, I restrict myself here to shortly summarizing the main public events I witnessed in 2016 and to discuss on how this feast separates periods of time.

The festival for Santiago Mayor officially begins on the 24th of July and ends on the 13th of August. The main days of the feast are the 30th of July until the 1st of August. The feast is preceded by the feast for Santiago Menor in the town of San Cristóbal Totonicapán on the 25th and 26th of July. Preparations of the feast of Momostenango, however, take place long before the actual event. One of the preparations is the raising of a pole for the *baile del venado*. Cook (2000, pp. 107-118) identified the raised pole as an *axis mundi* around which the festivities for the patron saint take place.

During the feast for Santiago Mayor distinct religious events involving the patron saint are organized by the *Cofradía* of Santiago and by the parish church of Santiago (Figure 68). Furthermore, dances form a substantial part of the festivities. Cook and Offit (2008b) documented in detail the *baile de la conquista* in Momostenango in 2007. Shortly after they documented it, the organizer of the dance passed away and since then it has not been performed again. The dances that were performed in 2016 were: the *baile de los mexicanos* (also known as *los vaqueros*), *los convites*, and a special variant of the *baile del venado*. The *baile del venado* tells about an old couple, Pedro and Catalina, who help a group of Spaniards in a deer hunt (Cook & Offit, 2008b, pp. 81-84). In 2016, however, there were no Spanish personages in the dance and the storyline was very hard to follow (Figure 70).

In Momostenango, the *baile del venado* is accompanied by an event that takes place on the raised pole located in front of the façade of the church. While the *baile del venado* continues on the ground, a dancer dressed as monkey or tiger enters the left tower of the church and climbs on its top from the opening at the church bell. He crosses the front of the façade to the other tower and climbs on the roof of the church. In the middle of the roof he embraces the cross for a while, after which he



Figure 68. Santiago Mayor is taken out of the church for a procession. Santiago holds a sword in his hand and his *Ajtz'ib'*, San Felipe, holds the bible.

continues over the roof to the viewer's left. He climbs up the wooden pole, which is attached to the church, and balances on it for a minute, leaning with his belly on the pole and spreading both his hands and arms (Figure 69). He then slowly glides down the rope that hangs from the top of the pole to the center of the square, where don Benancio Sambrocio[72] is playing the marimba. While gliding on the rope they move to show their agility as monkeys and tigers (Figure 71).

The timing of the raising of the *axis mundi* in the center of Momostenango coincides with the second zenith passage. In the case of Momostenango, due to the zenith passage of the sun the raised pole will cast no shadow in the days around 4th of August. The pole is erected on 22nd of July at noon (Cook, 2000, p. 109), the hour of the day suggests that the position of the sun is indeed important in relation to the pole. Cook (2000, p. 24) already suggested that the celebration of Santiago in Momostenango marks the period of hurricanes. He rightly mentions that around this time the hurricane season intensifies and that the maize plants have grown and are therefore more vulnerable to the heavy winds. Furthermore, during my fieldwork I noticed that around the feast of Santiago worries regarding the duration of the *canícula* grow and private prayers or ceremonies for rain, which

72 Don Benancio Sambrocio is the same musician as in the *baile de la culebra* (Chapter IV & V).



Figure 69. A dancer balances with his entire body on the top of the raised pole before he begins his descent.

should arrive around mid-August, increase. While there is a clear coincidence in the timing of zenith passage of the sun and the raising of the pole for the feast of Santiago, just as I will discuss later about the celebration in Chichicastenango, none of the specialists that I worked mentioned a relationship with the zenith passage. As I will discuss for the feast of Chichicastenango, the raising may be related to older astronomical calendars or sun calendars which are not recognized as such anymore but still continue because of their canonical role in ritual practices.

The Solstice

The patron feast of Santo Tomás in Chichicastenango is famous in the Highlands of Guatemala. From all regions people visit to participate in the celebration. I joined the festivities when I visited Chichicastenango in 2014. Although the festival starts on 16th of December, the main public activities, such as the *baile de los toritos* and *palo volador*, take place from the 18th until the 22nd of December. The principal day of the celebration is the 21st of December, the day of Saint Thomas. Although the feast is well known, it has been the subject of only two major ethnographic studies at the beginning of the 20th century (Bunzel, 1952; Termer, 1957). The celebrations of Todos Santos and Santo Tomás are the biggest and most religious events of the town, which mark the beginning and the end respectively of the period of harvest in Chichicastenango (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 46-48; Termer, 1957, p. 237).

Termer (1957, p. 237) was the first to notice that the elaborate celebration of Santo Tomás takes place exactly during the winter solstice and he suggested that this might be a continuation of prehispanic Maya traditions. Although there is much to discuss about the activities during the feast, I will limit myself to the relation between the feast and the winter solstice. I will do so by focusing mainly on the event of the *palo volador*, a ritual activity in which dancers climb on top of a pole and descend while tied to ropes (Figure 72). This event is a widespread practice in Mesoamerica, where it takes place on different dates throughout



Figure 70. The *Baile del venado* is performed at the central square of Momostenango.



Figure 71. One of the dancers hangs on a rope above the public and performs tricks.



Figure 72. The monkeys swirl down from the *palo volador*. The *calvario* can be seen in the background. Photo taken at the top of the stairs of the church of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango.



Figure 73. Close-up of the *Tzijolaj*. The image is richly decorated with coins and underneath the horse hangs a ball with fire crackers which is lit during the festivities.

the year[73] (De Fuentes y Guzmán, 1882, Tomo II Libro XVI Capítulo V). The *palo volador* is very likely of pre-Columbian origin (Nájera Coronado, 2008). Today the patron feast is celebrated more elaborately once every two years. Therefore, only once every two years the *palo volador* takes place. I had carefully planned my visit to coincide with the feast of Chichicastenango in 2014.

All cofradías in Chichicastenango participate in the feast of Santo Tomás by holding daily processions from early in the morning until late at night. Images of San Sebastian, San José, and Santo Tomás figure prominently and always accompany these processions. *Tzijolaj,* a sacred image of a horse with a horseman on top (see appendix E), is also very prominent in the feast. Carried and danced around by one of the cofradía members, he presides over each important event. Because he is the patron of firework, he often carries a ball of firecrackers that are eventually lit on the stairs of the church. One of the most sacred events of the feast occurs when *Tzijolaj* is attached to a rope and dances from the base of the *palo volador* to the top of the church of Santo Tomás while the firecrackers explode (Bunzel, 1952, p. 207; Termer, 1957, p. 236). He is the messenger of the people in charge of delivering their prayers to the sky.

Several dances are organized around the *palo volador*. The *baile de los toritos* consists of a mimicked bullfight in which the torero dies rather

73 The disappearance of the dance in Guatemala is possibly related to its prohibition in some communities in the 1920s due to fatal accidents (Termer, 1957, p. 223). According to Termer, the dance was sometimes still performed in the 1920s in Nahualá. Until 1917, it was performed in Santa María Chiquimula, in Chiché it was performed until 1919, and around Totonicapán and Quetzaltenango it was performed a little longer (Termer, 1957, p. 223). For an extensive overview of the performance of the *palo volador* in Mesoamerica see Nájera Coronado (2008).



Figure 74. The *Tzijolaj* goes from the base of the *palo volador* up towards the roof of the church and back again. Photo taken from the top of the main church in Chichicastenango.

than the bull. The *baile del tzijolaj* is the dance in which a cofradía member dances with the sacred image. The *baile de los sargentos* or *Ajib'* (reeds) is a dance in which those who are responsible for the firework (the *sargentos*) dance in a circle in front of the church with bundles of reed, to which firework is attached. After this dance, the reeds are one by one fired in the air. Additionally, the usual *convite* dance takes place during the feast, during which men and women cross dress, taking one another's role.

The *palo volador* is one of the most characteristic events of the feast in Chichicastenango. Preparations of the dance begin already in February (Bunzel, 1952, p. 424). Just as in the *baile de la culebra* (see Chapter IV and V), it is necessary to perform ritual preparations. The tree that is used for the dance is cut in October and carried to the center of Chichicastenango twenty days before the beginning of the feast (Bunzel, 1952, p. 424; Termer, 1957, p. 225). The cutting of the tree involves ceremonies similar to those discussed for the *baile de la culebra* in Chapter V. Offerings are left in the hole where the cut tree would be planted.

In 2014, the firework construction and the large amount of people on the plaza on Sunday, 20th of December, did not allow the dancers to slide down the pole and a smaller performance was therefore only performed right underneath the pole. The music could not be heard, either, because of three competing *zarabandas* that dominated the plaza. The dance was not performed on Monday the 21st of December, either, as the dancers failed to arrive. So eventually only on Thursday, Friday and Saturday the dance was performed in and around the pole and related ceremonies.

The dance starts in the morning and lasts until around four o'clock in the afternoon, with a break between twelve and one o'clock. Right before the dance begins, two dancers bring in the ladder to climb up the pole. This ladder is taken away when the

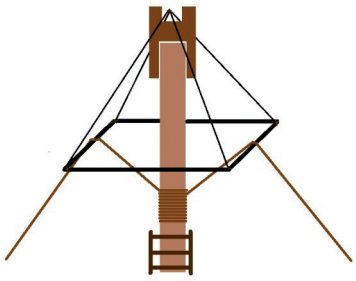


Figure 75. Reconstruction of the wooden construction on the top of the *palo volador*.



Figure 76. This photo is taken at 08:23 in the morning on December 20st 2014. The lowest ladder is placed at the pole at the moment that the shadow cast by the church disappears from the ladder above it.

dance has ended so that nobody climbs the pole when the dancers are not present. When musician begins to play marimba music, the dancers begin the dance. In the *baile del palo volador* of Chichicastenango, six performers dance underneath the pole in the center of the town. On top of the pole is a square wooden construction from which two long ropes hang, which can turn around (Figure 75). Two of the dancers are dressed as jaguars[74] while four are dressed as monkeys. During the dance, one of the participants climbs up the pole and rolls up the ropes around the wooden construction. Once done, a second dancer climbs up. They attach themselves to the ropes and slowly swirl down the pole in a counterclockwise direction. The music that accompanies the dance is played on the marimba.

74 Neither Bunzel nor Termer mentions dancers in a jaguar costume, which may indicate that this costume was introduced after 1934.

One of the jaguar costumes was yellow with black spots, while the other was orange with stripes. One of the monkeys, the dance leader, carried a whip in his hands. He had 45 years of experience in the dance and was the father of the dancer impersonating the yellow jaguar, who had been participating for 18 years. All costumes are elaborately decorated with mirrors that reflect the light of the sun creating a blinding effect on the spectators, especially when the monkeys go up the stairs placed on the east side of the pole mirroring the rising sun. When the dancers turn spirally downwards, the lightning created by flashing mirrors all over the bodies of the dancers is reflected to the public.

It is widely known in Chichicastenango that the *palo volador* represents the passage of time around a central point or *axis mundi*. According to the Yellow Jaguar, the square construction on top of the pole is related to the four cardinal directions. He explained to me that the central point where the four wooden bars join and are attached to each other represents the center of the world. Ajq'ij Miguel Chan from Chichicastenango adds that, as the cardinal directions are related to the year bearers, the counterclockwise turning of the four directions represents the movement of time.

The 21st of December is an important moment in time as this is when the sun rises and sets in the southernmost point in the horizon. From this moment on, the sun will move again to the north. This is shortest day of the year and it also marks the beginning of the coldest period of the year when cold winds sweep through the highlands. From this moment onwards, seen from the surface of the earth, the sun moves again towards the northern direction during the following six months, and the days will grow in length again. Furthermore, the winter solstice is an indicator that the rainy and harvest seasons are completely over and dry-season activities can begin in Chichicastenango.

The beginning of the dance is marked by the church's shadow falling on the pole. I noticed that on the morning of 19th and 20th of December, the shadow of the church cast on the plaza by the rising sun stood directly in line with the pole of the *palo volador*. This was best observed from the stairs of the church. The first monkey dancer climbed up the pole while the pole was still in the shadow, but

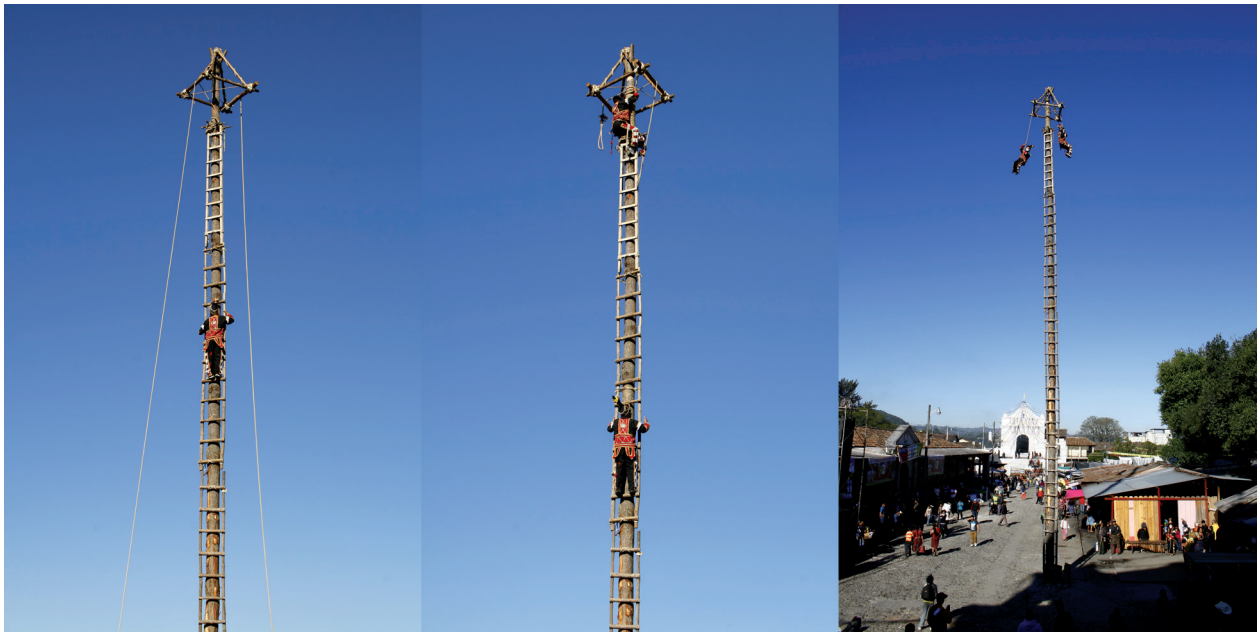


Figure 77. All three photos are taken on 20st of December. Photo A: the first dancer climbs the pole and roles up the ropes at 08:30 in the morning. Photo B: the second dancer climbs up at 08:51, when the ropes are completely wound up. C. The dancers start to descent at 08:55. While the dancers swirl down for the first time in the morning, the shadow of the church of Santo Tomás withdraws from the ladder that is attached to the palo volador.

as he rolled the ropes upward around the pole, the shadow gradually moved away from the pole. Once both monkey dancers began to descend from the pole, the shadow was almost completely gone. Once they touched the ground, the pole was already in the sun. The progressive disappearance of the shadow can easily be observed from the square because of the wooden ladder placed on the pole towards the church. The wooden ladder marks the gradual rising of the sun in distinct and countable steps.

On Figure 76 it can be seen that as soon as the dancers arrive to the central square, the lowest part of the wooden ladder (the piece that is taken away to prevent people from climbing the pole during the night) is brought to the *palo volador* right at the moment that the shadow cast by the church leaves the ladder above it. As such, the placement of the ladder enables a "count down" of the moment of the sunrise behind the church, measurable in countable steps of the ladder. The placement of the ladder takes place at 08:15 in the morning. The first dancer climbs at 08:30, when the shadow has lowered two steps (Figure 77). The second one climbs at 08:50, when



Figure 78. Photo was taken on 20st of December. During the descent of the dancers, the shadow of the church has dropped several steps. The shadow has almost completely disappeared from the ladder as the dancers arrive back on the ground at 08:58 in the morning.

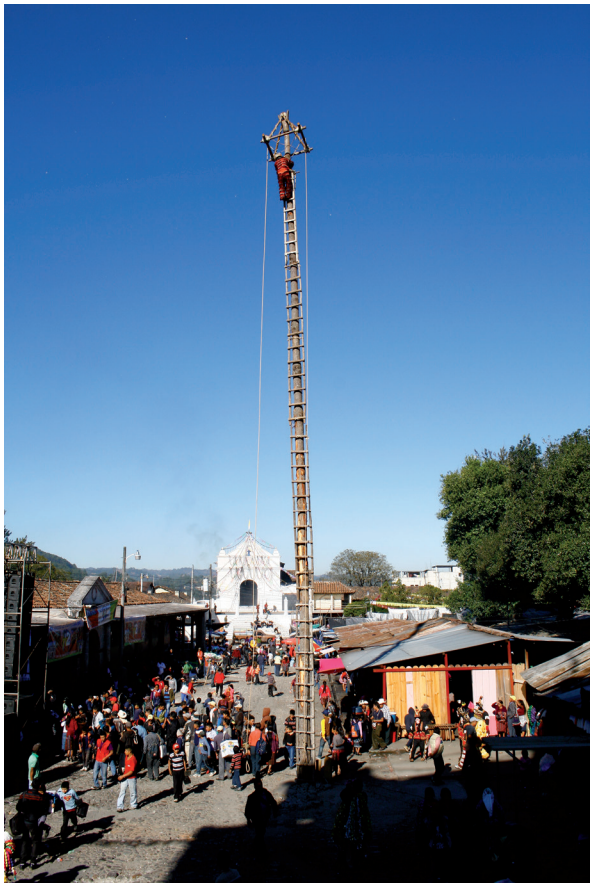


Figure 79. At 09:01 in the morning, the second dancer climbs up in the pole to wind up the ropes for a second time and the shadow of the church disappears completely from the ladder of the *palo volador*.

the shadow has lowered five and a half steps. Both then start descending at 08:55, when the shadow has dropped eight and a half steps. Finally, they reach the ground at 08:58, when the shadow has dropped ten steps and only two are left in the shadow (Figure 78). At 09:01, the shadow has left the pole completely and the next dancer climbs up, rolling the rope and repeating the ceremony (Figure 79).

The shadow the church cast on the pole is characteristic for this time of the year only. At any other moment the shadow would have been somewhere else as the sun would have been further to the north. In the reconstruction below, I mapped the center of Chichicastenango in relation to time. While I was careful to reproduce the measures based on photographs, what really matters is the relative position between the palo volador and the church. It should therefore not be taken as a cm precise reconstruction. I used photos I took on the 20th of December to place the *palo volador* at the location where the church was casting the shadow at the exact moment that the photos were taken. The reconstruction is a model to show how the rising sun moves throughout the year and how the shadows of the church are cast on the plaza as a result of its movement.

In the model it can be seen that the only period that the shadow of the right wall and tower of the church (from frontal view) stands in line with the *palo volador* is at the time of the winter solstice (Figure 80). As the sun moves to the north after 21st of December, the shadow of the church moves to the south on the other side. The turning point will be eventually reached on summer solstice, which is celebrated in Chichicastenango with a big feast for San Juan on 24th of June (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 46-48). As such, the sun, the church, and the *palo volador* form a sun clock. The shadow, moving through the steps of the ladder, counts down and marks the sunrise behind the church of Santo Tomás at an extreme position of the sun at the horizon, marking an important moment in time. It is reasonable to assume this, as the pole is related to the passage of time in the form of year bearers and cardinal directions swirling counterclockwise around a central point (Figure 81).

Due to the cyclical movement of the sun during the year and during the day, the sun will rise each year on the day of the winter solstice at the same hour. Therefore, the timing of the dance, which may have been marked by the disappearance of the shadow, is now indicated by the clock: it is not necessary anymore to look at the pole to decide when to start, as the time is set on the watch. The timing of the dance has probably continued because it is a canonical part of the respected tradition which the ancestors started. I did not have the opportunity to discuss my observations with any of the participants or organizers of the dance during my fieldwork.

The first round on the *palo volador* thus coincides with the rising of the sun at the horizon behind the church of Chichicastenango. Both on 19th and 20th of December, as soon as the first dancers touched the ground and the shadow left the pole, a procession of the cofrades of Chichicastenango passed between the *palo volador* and the church. In both cases



Figure 80. Photo A: shadow on the pole on 20th of December 2014 at 08:57. Photo B: shadow on the pole on 20th of December 2014 using ©SketchUp.

they were accompanied by Tzijolaj. On the 19th, they came from the north side of the plaza moving south. On the 20th, they came again from the north but this time they went inside the church and came out again while carrying three colorful carriages decorated with mirrors and feathers. These were then taken in processions to the cofradía houses of San Sebastian, San José and Santo Tomás to pick up the saints at their respective cofradía houses and to bring them back to the church. The disappearance of the shadow of the pole coincided with the moment on which the three saints were taken in a procession through town by the cofrades.

In sum, it is clear that the *palo volador* marks an important moment in time. Not only are the four sides of the wooden construction at the top the related to the four cardinal directions and year bearers, the pole in itself functions as a solar clock in combination with the church of Chichicastenango. The timing of sunrise coincides with the first dance of the *palo volador* and also marks the beginning of the processions. Everybody

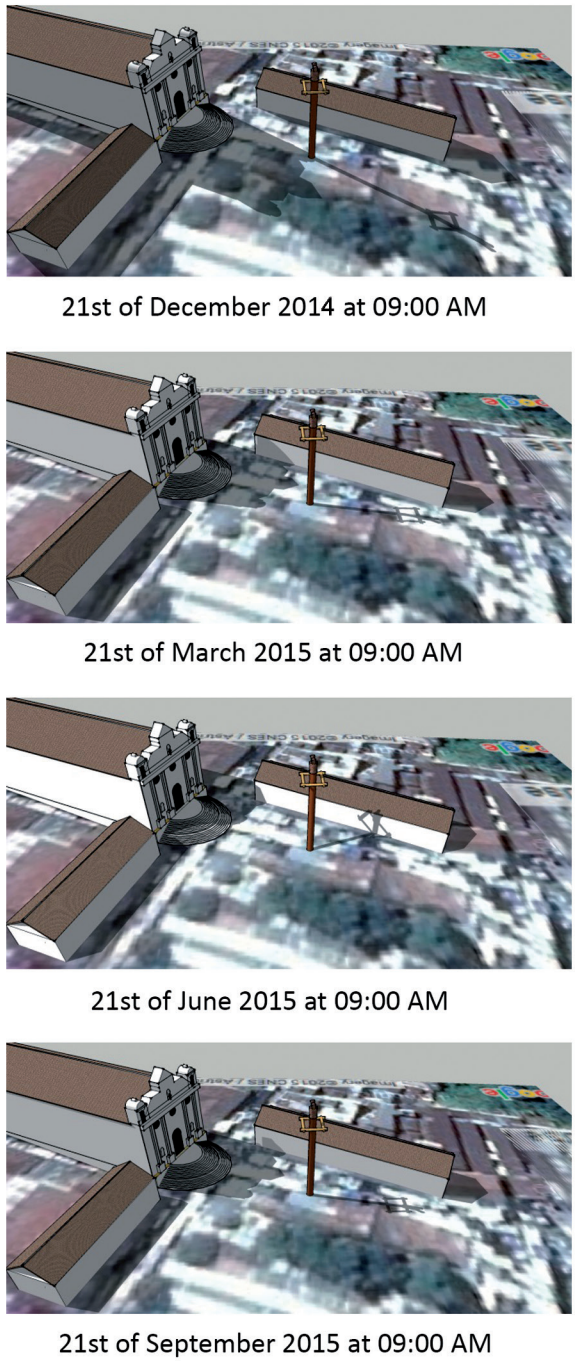


Figure 81. Because of the movement of the sun in relation to the landscape, the shadow cast by the church shifts throughout the year, making the shadow that is cast on the 21st of December a unique event.



Figure 82. A hole in the ground was found at the archaeological site of Iximche' in the Highlands of Guatemala. According to local Ajq'ijab', a pole placed in this hole in combination with the surrounding architecture used to serve as a device for determining the equinox of March.

in Chichicastenango is aware that underneath the church lies a platform of a Maya temple, which dates from the Precolonial era. This, in combination with pole holes at the center of archaeological places, makes one wonder if these forms of time measuring were present as well in ancient times (Figure 82). On the other hand, the solar clock in Chichicastenango calls to mind the sun dial at the center of the Saint Peter's square in the Vatican, Rome, where the shadow of a massive obelisk marks the solstices and equinoxes thoughout the solar year. It is therefore also possible that the *palo volador*, though operating in a slightly different way, is an adaptation and recreation of the sun dial at the Saint Peter's square – the center of Catholic power – and, if so, it may show an attempt to equate European cosmovision in the Highlands of Guatemala. However, further research on the history of solar clocks in Mesoamerica and the exchange of knowledge regarding these forms of time reckoning during the Colonial and Independent Period is needed before any conclusive statements can be made.

A CYCLE OF FEASTS

In the previous chapter, I already briefly discussed the cycle of *veintenas* in the colonial 365-day count and pointed out that the names coincide with stages in the agricultural cycle. Diego de Landa (1966, Chapter XXXIX-XLI) mentions that in relation to the *veintena* cycle specific feasts were celebrated. Such a relationship between agricultural celebrations and specific *veintenas* has similarly been documented in Central Mexico (De Sahagún, 1950-1978, Book II, Chapter I-XXXIIX; Duran, 1967, Historia..., Tomo II, El calendario antiguo). However, as the *veintenas* seem to have been fixed in the 365-day count, the timing of the *veintenas* shifted gradually in relation to the solar year, the latter which, as discussed above, regulates meteorological and agricultural phenomena. This means that after 80 years, the timing of a *veintena* has shifted already twenty days in relation to the seasonal phenomena of the solar year. Therefore, if specific agricultural rites were fixed in the *veintenas* that carried the name of that specific agricultural stage, the ritual activities would quickly be displaced in relation to the time periods that they marked. This would lead, for example, to a celebration for sowing at the time of harvest.

It is therefore unlikely that the ritual celebrations that marked and divided seasonal periods and their relative activities were fixed in the *veintena* cycle. The Italian researcher Boturini (1746, pp. 57-59) proposed already in the 18th century that the astronomical cycle in prehispanic Central Mexico may have been a cycle, additional to the 260-day and 265-day count, for setting ritual performances. Continuing on this idea, Anders, Jansen, and Reyes García (1993, pp. 61-65) have proposed that the cycle of festivities may have been based on agricultural phenomena. I suggest that it is possible that in the Maya region a similar cycle of ritual celebrations independent of the 365-day count or *veintenas* formed a significant part of the Maya calendar.

I argue that the celebrations that mark and separate today distinct periods in the Highland, often fixed in the Christian liturgical calendar, should be understood as such a cycle of feast. As I have shown throughout this chapter, the intersection of meteorological phenomena (such as rain, drought, the winds, the *canícula*, frost and heat), agricultural phenomena (such as sprouting of seeds, hilling of the milpa, harvest, the cleaning of the milpa, and the selection of seeds), and astronomical phenomena (such as the equinoxes, zenith passages and solstices of the sun) is the basis for timing important celebrations in the Highlands in the Guatemala. I have not been able to document the active practice of astronomical observations in the Highlands and specialists have not mentioned the direct relationship between celebrations that coincide with astronomical phenomena neither. However, I think that the observation of astronomical events has been replaced by the Gregorian calendar: astronomical events tend to occur around the same Gregorian date every year, which makes the actual practice of astronomical observations unnecessary. As I have shown in the case of Chichicastenango, however, remnants of the old practice of astronomical observations are still kept in the canonical part of religious celebrations.

As I have shown in this chapter, the actual timing of a specific ritual celebration may differ per community, which indicates that the feast cycle is flexible and easily adaptable according to the affordances and necessities of each community. Furthermore, not every community is able to perform a huge celebration for each moment on which seasonal phenomena intersect, as these celebrations require a lot of energy, money, food and attention. Therefore, most celebrations in a community are celebrated on small scale, while only several events are celebrated abundantly. As such, different communities elaborate on different feasts. The division of elaborate feasts among the communities of the Highlands of Guatemala has two main effects: (1.) the communities share the burden of performing elaborate feasts, and (2.) visiting the feasts of other communities leads to an integration of the Highlands of Guatemala on a regional level. As such, the movement of elaborate ritual celebrations through the communities of the Highlands of Guatemala forms a calendar cycle, comparable to the *trecena* cycle of Momostenango (see Chapter I), during which members of different communities move through the landscape. The feast cycle has the same effect on a regional scale as the *trecena* cycle has on a local scale: the integration of the Highlands of Guatemala and a decentralization of space.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The cycles of the environment in the Highlands of Guatemala, which have been discussed in this chapter, are changing. These changes are not only experienced in the Highlands; they seem to be a structural phenomenon of climate change and ecological degradation (Juarez, 2002). In Momostenango the lack of rain has been the cause of much concern:

> *And the harvest now, Paul, it is very limited. It is not like it used to be. I remember that before, the mazorcas that grew at my father's milpa were huge, now they are like this small […] It is because of the climate and because of the chemical fertilizer. Before it used to be all-natural fertilizer… My father had cows and bulls, and he put the manure on the milpa. [The future will be] much more complicated, much more difficult. If we are suffering already now, I can already imagine how we will be in another ten or fifteen years from now. For example, with my father we used to harvest* ayotes *and we would get these huge* ayotes. *Enormous! And peas and green beans! And now we do not get any of that […] It is so difficult… what happens is that the milpa does not give (fruits) anymore. Before, it did give a lot! I remember that my older sister, María, she would sell baskets full of green beans. And now? Nothing! Nothing. And she would also sell the peas, but now there is nothing anymore […] Yes, it is difficult, that is how the situation is now… and the lack of rain is something that is also causing us even more suffering: there is just no rain. And there is so much heat these days. For example, the celebration that takes place in San Bartolo these days is the time of the rain: it should rain the entire day!* – Irma Hernández Ajanel, 24th of August 2016

A recent study (Hidalgo et al., 2013) predicts that if climate change continues in the same line, Central America will be dramatically affected. Estimations are that severe drought will increase in the period from 2050-2099 (Hidalgo et al., 2013, pp. 108-110). The lower part of Central America (Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, and a part of El Salvador) will experience a decrease in precipitation of 5% to 10% while northern Central America (Belize, Guatemala and a part of El Salvador) will experience a drop in the amount of precipitation of 10% to 30% (Hidalgo et al., 2013, pp. 108-110). Apart from the decrease in rain, more extreme weather patterns will be experienced in Central America. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns:

> *Many impacts of climate change will be realised as the result of a change in the frequency of occurrence of extreme weather events such as windstorms, tornados, hail, heatwaves, gales, heavy precipitation or extreme temperatures over a few hours to several days* (IPCC, 2007, p. 605).

The region from Central Mexico up to Costa Rica is extremely vulnerable for the effects of climate change. ICCP mentions that especially "Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, children and women living in poverty" (IPCC, 2014, p. 1516) are the most vulnerable groups exposed to the effects of climate change. The most food insecure country by percentage of the population in Central America is Guatemala (30.4%), and this amount has been increasing in the last years (IFAD, WFP, & FAO, 2012). Furthermore, there is a great concern regarding the lives of subsistence farmers:

> *In terms of food security,* a significant number of smallholders and subsistence farmers may be particularly vulnerable to climate change in the short term, and their adaptation options may be more limited. *Of particular concern are farmers in Central America, where drying trends have been reported, and in the poorer regions of the Andes* (IPCC, 2007, p. 605; emphasis mine).

The proposed adaptation models suggest that "[g]enetic advances and suitable soil and technological management may induce an increase in some crops' yield despite unfavorable future climate conditions" (IPCC, 2014, p. 1530). Agricultural companies are indeed already waiting to sell their genetically modified organisms (GMO's) in Guatemala (Grandia, 2014, p. 97; Klepek, 2011, p. 573). It seems therefore that climate change will push subsistence farmers into a new economic system. In this new system they would need to buy the patented seeds of a company. In order to buy the seeds, they are forced to make profit, which contrasts strongly to the traditional form of subsistence farming. The structural transformation of the rural economy will probably also include a strong increase of migration to urban regions as the rural marginalized zones do not have enough available work to provide food (IFAD et al., 2012, p. 35).

In sum, climate change will have a dramatic effect on the lives of the indigenous and local communities in the Highlands of Guatemala. Economic systems and climate change are pushing the indigenous communities and local populations into a marginalized chokehold, where the options are very limited. The indigenous diaspora will probably increase during this century and those who remain in their community might see themselves forced to change to genetically modified seeds and to participate in the global neo-liberal economic system and the spiritual relationship with the earth will therefore likely change.

PART TWO:
EL BAILE DE LA CULEBRA

IV. Ritual Memory and History

For writing this chapter, I am greatly indebted to don Leonso Lol, Francisco Lol, Luiz Lol, don Rigoberto Itzep, don José Angel Xeloj, Gregorio Itzep, Carlos Pérez Acabal and all the Tz'ulab' from Momostenango for the knowledge that they shared with me. Errors that might appear in the contents of this chapter are my fault alone. If such errors or any misrepresentations appear, I would like to apologize beforehand to the community of Momostenango.

INTRODUCTION

Whereas the previous chapters discussed the cyclical perception of time in the form of the *chol q'ij*, the *junab' q'ij* (Chapter I and II) and the synergy of Catholic and K'iche' calendars (Chapter III), in this chapter the discussion on the perception of time is directed towards the engagement between the past and the present. This is done through an analysis of the *baile de la culebra* ("Serpent Dance"), a ritual dance performed in several indigenous communities in Highland Guatemala. Although the importance of the dance is generally recognized in academic research, it has not been well researched (Looper, 2009, p. 204).

The *baile de la culebra* is not a mere spectacle or theatrical performance. Similar to precolonial Mesoamerican dance (Taylor, 2004), the *baile de la culebra* is a ritual, which uniquely blends the ancient past, recent history and the individual experiences or concerns of the performer(s) today. I will be using Carlo Severi's theory of *ritual memory*. In short, as discussed in the introduction, *ritual memory* is a form of memory in which historical experiences are embedded in ritual practices. As such the Serpent Dance can be analyzed as a process of engagement with history on the part of the K'iche' community. The main research question in this chapter is therefore: how does ritual memory in the *baile de la culebra* transfer knowledge and experience about the past. This approach questions the Eurocentric view dominant in the study of World History and argues that there are plural histories, many of which are so far not rightfully recognized by scholars (Hobson, 2012; Kanth, 2009; Said, 2003). Studying the ritual memory in the *baile de la culebra* and the narratives that accompany it in Momostenango and in other Highland Guatemala communities can thus contribute to the recognition of K'iche' history, a constituting element of identity, and an important element in the processes of the Maya movement and struggles for indigenous rights.

The organization of this chapter is as follows: the first part contextualizes the dance broadly, by giving a short definition of the dance, its temporal and spatial characteristics, the terminology and the costumes. The following section discusses the fieldwork experience in 2014 and 2015. The last part focuses on the narratives that accompany the dance and analyzes how ritual memory and history are expressed in the dance in Momostenango and other communities. The discussion of the dance continues in Chapter V where I will discuss parallels with prehispanic symbolism. I will begin here, however, with a short definition of the *baile de la culebra* and with a contextualization of my fieldwork research on this dance.

A DEFINITION OF THE *BAILE DE LA CULEBRA*

The *baile de la culebra* is performed in towns and small communities scattered throughout the Guatemalan Highlands. I define the *baile de la culebra* as a cluster of symbols that come together in the dance. This cluster of symbols is shared among

the variants of the *baile de la culebra* performances in the Guatemalan Highlands. The dance is an unfinished product in a constant "process of becoming" (Ingold, 2011). As such, specific concerns that were shared by community members have, over time, been incorporated in the performance and are today expressed in the dance. Therefore, the dance and the narratives that accompany it differ slightly from town to town. The basic shared characteristics, or symbols, of the dance are as follows.

The dance takes place near or at important places in the community, although the nature of their importance may vary greatly in each community. The music that accompanies the dance is usually played on a marimba (a wooden percussion instrument similar to the xylophone). However, there are indications that the *chirimia* (a type of oboe music instrument) and drum were used before as well. Several dancers participate in the performance, usually dressed in old rags. Usually one dancer impersonates a woman in the dance, and in a few instances, several female characters are present. The female character, impersonated by a man, is seduced or sexually harassed by the other dancers during the dance upon which severe punishment ensues. In many cases the female character enjoys the attention that she receives from the other dancers. In most cases, the harassers are hit with a whip by a man who impersonates the woman's husband. It is also possible that the woman herself punishes the seducers by throwing them on the ground. After being punished, however, the dancers continue to harass the woman undeterred. The woman and her husband are always characterized as *ladinos*, i.e. a Guatemalan person of Spanish descent. Living, wooden or stuffed-toy snakes are used during the dance. When living snakes are used, they are caught days or weeks before the event with the help of a ritual specialist and in the company of dancers who will impersonate the husband and wife in the dance. After the performance of the dance, the snake is released back in the woods where it was found. Whether wooden snakes, toy snakes or living snakes are used, they are carried by the dancers in their hand. All conversations are improvised in K'iche' and there is no singing involved. There is no use of a memorized script[75] but the dancers improvise according to a general storyline or narrative. The different narratives of the dances are discussed in a later section in this chapter.

Certain characteristics of the *baile de la culebra* are shared with other dances in some communities, such as in Joyabaj where there are bull fights, akin to those performed during the so-called *baile de los toreros*. Certain features can be present in other dances as well, for example the promiscuous behavior towards women (Wagley, 1949, p. 117; Wisdom, 1961, p. 508). At times, the borders between the *baile de la culebra* and other dances might appear vague as they may share similar symbolic elements. Unique to the *baile de la culebra*, however, is the presence of snakes in combination with the above-mentioned features. To my knowledge, snakes, whether real or ersatz, are not used in any other dance in the Highlands of Guatemala.

DOCUMENTATION OF THE DANCE

My fieldwork experience between 2014 and 2015 forms the basis of this chapter. In 2014, I met the dancers and organizers of the dance for the first time, on Holy Saturday. I experienced the dance that year from the sidelines and did not participate personally. In 2015, I was again introduced to the dancers and organizers. This year the organizers of the dance (in Spanish "autores"[76]), don Leonso Lol, Francisco Lol and Luiz Lol, formally invited me to join them on the fourth Friday of Lent and the two days prior. On the fourth Friday of Lent I participated in the ceremonial cutting and preparation of the tree that would be used for *palo encebado*. I joined the authors and Tz'ulab' (dancers) again during Holy Week 2015. During those Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, I had the opportunity to participate as a dancer, a fact that was greatly appreciated by the Tz'ulab' and authors. Apart from greatly enjoying it, this participation provided insights into the dance that would have been impossible to grasp by standing outside the group. Moreover, the

75 Both Mace (1967, p. 116) and Hutcheson (2009, pp. 873-874), respectively working in Rabinal and Joyabaj, believe that there was a written script with the storyline and dialogues of the dance. Neither of these authors has been able to see the original document though.

76 *Autor* is an honorary title for those who take on the burden of organizing a dance.



Figure 83. Don Leonso Lol, the first author of the dance, poses as Xinula in front of the marimba.



Figure 84. Francisco Lol, the second author of the dance.

interview and many casual talks with don Leonso (Figure 83), Francisco Lol (Figure 84), Luiz Lol and don Rigoberto Itzep were very important for my understanding of the dance. In 2016, I was not in Guatemala at the time when the dance should have taken place, but I later heard that the dance had not been organized that year. That same year I visited Santa Cruz Quiché on the 18th of August, in order to assist to the *baile de la culebra* in the community. I was able to appreciate the differences in the way the dance is performed. On the 27th of August, I furthermore visited Pologua, a small town near Momostenango where, according to the organizers of Momostenango, the dance takes place at the end of August, in the hope of seeing the dance. Unfortunately, I met a former dancer who told me that the dance had not been performed in the last couple of years.

BROADER CONTEXTS

Temporal and Spatial Contexts

Indigenous dances in general were not often documented in the Highlands of Guatemala during the Colonial period and therefore it is not surprising that there is no mention of the *baile de la culebra* during this period (Looper, 2009, p. 191). During the 20th century, however, the performance of the *baile de la culebra* was widespread in the Highlands of Guatemala, especially in the region of Momostenango (Termer, 1957, p. 217)[77]. The dance took place in the following towns: Momostenango, Santa Cruz Quiché, San Bartolo, Pologua, San Andrés Sajcabajá, Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, in and around Totonicapán, Chuisuc, Santa Lucía Utatlán,

77 The first ethnographer to recognize the importance of the dance was Franz Termer. Before his research in the 1920s, the dance had not been described in detail.

Place	Date	Religious celebration
Momostenango	Between1st of March and the 9th of April	4th Friday of Lent
Momostenango	Between the 22nd of March and the 25th of April	Holy Week
La Esperanza	Between the 22nd of March and the 25th of April	Holy Week
San Adrés Xecul	3rd of May	Day of Holy Cross
San Andrés Sajcabajá	8th of June	Celebration of the day Ajaw
Rabinal	Between 23rd of May and the 25th of June	Corpus Christi
San Miguel Chicaj	Between 23rd of May and the 25th of June	Corpus Christi
San Andrés Sajcabajá	Between 23rd of May and the 25th of June	Corpus Christi
Santa Lucía Utatlán	Between 23rd of May and the 25th of June	Corpus Christi
Joyabaj	10th-15th of August & +/- 22nd of August	Santa María de la Asunción
Santa Cruz Quiché	from the 12th until the 19th of August	Santa María de la Asunción
San Andrés Sajcabajá	15th of August	Santa María de la Asunción
San Bartolo Aguas Calientes	21st until 24th of August	San Bartolo
Pologua	25th until the 27th of August	San Antonio de Padua
Chichicastenango	+/- 3rd of October	The Virgin of the Rosary
Chichicastenango	1st November	All Saints

Table 13. Chronological overview of the performance of the *baile de la culebra* in the Highlands of Guatemala.



Figure 85. Location of the towns mentioned in the text.

Cubulco, Rabinal, Joyabaj, San Miguel Chicaj, San José Chiquilajá, Olintepeque, in the aldea of La Esperanza in the district of Totonicapán, and in San Andrés Xecul[78]. The degree and detail to which the ritual dances have been described varies greatly. Most studies mention the dance only in summarized form and only few have attempted an interpretation (Cook, 2000; Hutcheson, 2009; Looper, 2009). As far as I am aware, the dance continues to be performed today in the following towns[79]: San Bartolo, San Andrés Sajcabajá, Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, Pologua, Rabinal, La Esperanza, Chuisuc, Momostenango, Joyabaj, and Santa Cruz Quiché.

The timing of the performance of the ritual dance differs in each community (Table 13 and Figure 85). Although the exact date of some of the performances has not always been mentioned in ethnographic words, the dance always takes place during the rainy season or immediately before it,

78 See Bunzel (1952, p. 426); Hutcheson (2009, p. 880); Looper (2009, pp. 204-206); Mace (1967, pp. 95-139); Ordoñez (1970); Saquic Calel (1970); Schultze Jena (1933, pp. 204-213); Termer (1957, pp. 212-219).

79 According to Dr. Raúl Macuil, Nahua historian and native speaker, a similar dance known as *la danza de la culebra* is performed in Tlaxcala, Mexico, during the festivities of Carnival.

when the *milpa* is prepared for planting. This is probably why many researchers who have done research on this dance mention that it is related to a stage in the agricultural cycle (Cook, 2000; Looper, 2009, p. 206; Mace, 1967, pp. 107-108; Schultze Jena, 1933; Termer, 1957, p. 219).

The first yearly performance of the *baile de la culebra* in the region takes place in Momostenango on the fourth Friday of Lent and the two days prior. As this is a variable date, the moment of performance can vary between the 1st of March and the 9th of April. During Holy Week, the dance is performed again in Momostenango, on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. Also in the La Esperanza, an aldea of Totonicapán, the *baile de la culebra* takes places during the last three days of Holy Week culminating on Easter Sunday. Easter, and thus also the moment of performance of the dance, varies between the 22nd of March and the 25th of April. In San Andrés Xecul the dance used to be performed during the patron saint feast on the 3rd of May (T. García, 1993, p. 86). Both the communities of Rabinal and San Miguel Chicaj perform the dance during Corpus Christi festivities that fall between 23rd of May and the 25th of June (Mace, 1967, pp. 107, 122). In Santa Lucía Utatlán, the dance also takes place during Corpus Christi (Saquic Calel, 1970). The communities of San Andrés Sajcabajá performs the *baile de la culebra* on three occasions: (1) for a six-day period during the Corpus Christi processions, (2) on the 8th of June during the celebration of the creator *Ajaw*, and (3) on the 15th of August, when the members *cofradía* of the Assumption of the Virgin change authority (Looper, 2009, p. 204).

The dance is performed in Joyabaj during the festivities of the patron Santa María de la Asunción, 10th-15th of August, as well as one week after the Sunday mass of the patron saint feast[80] (Hutcheson, 2009, p. 873). Also in Santa Cruz Quiché the dance is linked to the celebrations of Santa María de la Asunción and is performed from the 12th until the 19th of August (Termer, 1957, p. 214). The performance of the dance follows directly in San Bartolo Aguas Calientes on the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 24th of August (Cook, 2000, p. 171) and from the 25th until the 27th of August in Pologua, where the dance takes place at the Chapel of San Antonio as part of the celebration of the patron San Antonio de Padua, a saint related to the period of the mating of sheeps and of harvest (Cook, 2000, p. 171). Finally, in Chichicastenango, where it is no longer performed today, the dance used to take place during the celebration of the Virgin of the Rosary (*Rosario*) around the 3rd of October and again during the festivities of All Saints on the 1st of November (Bunzel, 1952, p. 426).

Comparing the table above with the important stages in the agricultural cycle, discussed in the previous chapter, it becomes clear that the *baile de la culebra* is performed at important moments in this cycle. The performance of the dance begins in Momostenango during the preparation of the *milpa* (burning and planting) and ends in Chichicastenango at the moment of harvest and commemoration of the ancestors. Interestingly, the average moment for the earliest performance of the *baile de la culebra* is the 20th of March, which coincides with the spring equinox (see Chapter III). The duration between this moment and the last performance on the 1st of November is 227 days. Important stages in between the beginning and end are the celebration of Corpus Christi, which coincides with the sprouting of the first plants, and Santa María de la Asunción and other celebrations at mid to end August, which coincide with the end of the *canícula* and beginning of the second period of rain. In summary, the performance of the *baile de la culebra* in the Highlands of Guatemala coincides with, and marks, significant stages in the cycle of the *milpa*.

The link between the work in the *milpa* and the dance was also emphasized in an interview I had with the organizers of the dance in Momostenango. Don Leonso told me that the dance was borne out of necessity, as a dedication to the ancestors and as a petition for protection against the animals that damaged the *milpa*. The *baile de la culebra* takes place in Momostenango twice per year: (1) on the days leading to the fourth Friday of Lent and (2) at the end of *Semana Santa*, on *Sábado de Gloria* and *Domingo de Pascua*. Garrett Cook (2000, p. 172), who did research in Momostenango during *Semana Santa* in 1974 and 1976, stated that the *baile de*

80 According to J.M. Ordoñez (1970), however, the dance in Santa Cruz Quiché took place on the 18th of August while the preparations and rituals related to the dance started on the 15th of August and continued until the 19th.

la culebra is performed on every Friday of Lent, and during Holy Week from Wednesday until Easter Sunday. Martin Ordóñez (1968, 35) mentions that the dance is performed on the fourth Friday of Lent. The *autores* of the dance in 2015, however, told me that the *baile de la culebra* is only performed on the days leading to the 4th Friday of Lent and Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday; they emphasized that this had always been the case. When asked about the other Fridays of Lent, don Leonso, the oldest of the three *autores*, told me that when he was a child there were horse races organized in Momostenango on those occasions. Accompanied by the marimba and trumpets, the horse drivers would race to one end on the main road and back to the beginning again[81]. Of these festivities, he said, only the *baile de la culebra* has remained.

Terminology of the Dance

The *baile de la culebra* is known by different names in the Highlands of Guatemala. This section discusses the various names of the dance and the various interpretations given by the scholars. The last part discusses the names of the characters specific to the dance in Momostenango.

Franz Termer (1957, pp. 204-210) noted in the 1920s that the dance always consisted of two separate performances: the *patztah* and the *baile de la culebra*. Although they were clearly separate in each of the three communities he visited, they were never performed individually, but always in conjunction with one another. The same dancers participated in both dances, but the moods were quite different. The first dance to be performed was always the *patztah*, which included the harassment of the woman and the whipping of the perpetrators. In the second dance, the *baile de la culebra* proper, according to Termer, the dancers were respectful of one another and danced one by one with a living snake. As I experienced during my fieldwork, today the two dances seem to have merged into one in both Momostenango and Santa Cruz Quiché. There is no clear separation nor a change in the general mood during the dance, and the harassment/whipping and the snake dance are carried out at the same time. However, don Leonso, the author of the *baile de la culebra*, told me that the way the dance is performed today differs from the original. He explains that the dance as we see it today is a later version of the one that Termer described:

> *Formerly, they played with the snake, they played a different type of dance which is not just that what we are doing today; formerly it was much more of a dance. This [what we do today] is the second dance, because we don't teach anymore how the dance was before: previously they danced with the snake, all of them played with it* − Don Leonso Lol, 31st of March 2015.

To discuss the dance in general I will use the generic term *baile de la culebra*. This name emphasizes the importance of the snake in the dance, which is present in each town. According to don Rigoberto, the dance is called the *baile de la culebra* because of the snake that the woman impersonator carries in her hand and because of the movement of the group in procession, which mimics that of a snake. Sahagún mentions in the Florentine Codex the performance of a "Serpent Dance" during the religious festivals related to the veintenas of *Toxcotl*, *Uey Tecuilhuitl*, *Tlaxochimaco*, and *Panquetzaliztli* (De Sahagún, 1950-1978, Book II, Chapters XXV, XXVII, XXIIX, XXIX and XXXIV). Similar to don Rigoberto's explanation, he describes this Serpent Dance as a dance in which the participants form lines and parade in a serpentine, sinuous manner, mimicking the movement of a snake.

The name Tz'ulab' will only be used to refer specifically to the dancers in Momostenango because this is a term that I have only come across in relation to the Momostecan variant of the dance. The word Tz'ulab' has been translated in various ways. Cook (2000, p. 171) translates it as "foul-mouthed tricksters". The dancers indeed swear constantly and insult heavily whoever crosses their path. Termer notes that the *baile de la culebra* is the only dance in which the dialogue is kept in K'iche'. According to him, in all other Highland Guatemalan dances the K'iche' dialogue had been replaced by Spanish already thirty to forty years prior to his visit to the Highlands (Termer, 1957, p. 210). Today, the only dialogue that is present during the *baile de la culebra* in Momostenango is improvised and consists of swearing, insults, and jokes that the dancers

81 This activity is possibly similar to the horse races organized in Todos Santos on the 1st of November.

scream at each other and at the public. There is no strict memorized dialogue or script of the dance. I do not know whether the swearing is the dialogue that Termer refers to or if at that time there was a different dialogue between the dancers that has been lost since then. During the performance of the dance in Rabinal, for example, a chant or prayer is recited three times. A lot of improvisation and normal dialogue in K'iche' also takes place during the dance, but at specific moments the dancers switch to the recitation of the prayer in K'iche' (see Mace, 1967, pp. 134-139). On the other hand, swearing during the dance has not been explicitly documented in Rabinal.

The root-word *Tz'ul* is also used in relation to the dance in the community of San Andrés Sajcabajá, where the dancers are called *Ajtz'ul*[82] (Looper, 2009, p. 204). According to Cook (2000, p. 171), a *tzul* is a person with "a bad mouth", but, as he points out, Edmonson (1965, p. 136) documented that *tzulun-ik* means "making love to", which could be related to the sexual overtones of the dancers' behavior towards the woman. In Momostenango, the Tz'ulab' strike the woman with their whip in between her legs and try to seduce her as part of the dance. This suggests that Tz'ul could be related to sexual intercourse with somewhat negative connotations. At times, they also make explicit gestures mimicking sexual intercourse with the woman.

Cook (2000, p. 144) suggests furthermore that Tz'ulab' could also mean "the contraries". In Momostenango, however, the dancers that I worked with and other acquaintances translated Tz'ulab' as "those who are dressed in rags". I am not sure, however, if this should be taken as a direct translation or rather as a general description due to the absence of a direct translation. Among the Spanish speaking Momostecans, the dance is also called *el baile de los gracejos* (the dance of the clowns), which probably refers to the laughter caused by the punishments and explicit sexual bahavior, which coincides with the K'iche term *Ajtze* ("makers of laughter") that Lothrop documented in relation to the dance in the end of the 19th century (Termer, 1957, p. 215). Termer does not mention the use of the term Tz'ulab', as it is now used in Momostenango. Finally Cook (2000, p. 213) and Looper (2009, p. 211) suggests that the word Tz'ul is related to a dance mentioned in the Popol Vuh, the Ixtzul (the "centipede dance"). This dance consists of the self-sacrifice and resurrection of the Hero Twins in front of the Lords of Death in Xibalba (Christenson, 2007, p. 169).

Although there are references to laughter, both in K'iche' and in Spanish, the dancers take the dance very seriously and do not seem to consider it a satire. When I saw the dance, I noticed that people in the public smiled and on some occasions laughed – especially when one of the Tz'ulab' would make explicit jokes – but in general there was a respectful atmosphere, especially when the Tz'ulab' were whipped. Termer (1957, p. 213) also described the public's attitude as always very respectful towards the dance because it was understood to be a part of their religious culture. About the *baile de los gracejos*, he states that "even in the most obscene *baile de los gracejos* with pantomime representation of sexual orgies, I have never seen spectators laugh at them" (Termer, 1957, p. 213; translation mine).

The term *baile de los gracejos* ("dance of the clowns") is used as a generic name for dances that make people laugh. Some of these names have occasionally been mentioned by ethnographers from the first half of the 20th century (La Farge, 1994, p. 111; Siegel, 1941, p. 72), but without any descriptions of their characteristics. As it is not clear if we are dealing with such a case with the *baile de la culebra* as defined in the beginning of this chapter, I will not take dances without description into consideration in my discussion about the *baile de la culebra*.

Lothrop (1929, p. 5) documented the name *patzcarin* for the dance, which he translated as "those who are transfigured". He also documents a name which he spells as *esalguach* and translated as "may things be remedied"[83]. The word *patzcarines* is also used in La Esperanza (Totonicapán). Cook (2000, p. 171) mentions that some people refer to the dance with the word *patzcar* which is also the term currently used in San Andrés Sajcabajá (Looper, 2009, p. 204). He could, however, not establish a translation of this word. When I asked for the meaning of *patzcar* in Momostenango, only one of the dancers recognized the term and told me that the dance was called *patzca* in another town far away. Termer (1957, p. 215), however, documented the K'iche' term *patztah*

82 *Aj* is an agentive prefix.

83 Frauke Sachse (2017, personal communication) suggests that esalguach should be read as *esa-l-wach*, which, in a literal translation, means "the one who brings out a face".



Figure 86. Xinula is presented by her husband at the central square of Momostenango.



Figure 87. According to the Tz'ulab', the black mask was originally the only mask used in the dance.

in the region of Momostenango in the 1920s. He also received the term *patztan* from someone in San Bartolo Aguas Calientes, but he notes that this could be a local variant or a misspelling. He interprets the term *patztaj* as meaning "the corn stalks are bent" or "to bend the corn", which is an important activity in the field before harvest. At the same time, it might also refer to the damaging effect of the wind, which sometimes breaks the maize reed during the rainy season. It seems that the name *patzca* is used in Rabinal for the dance, in which snake scepters are used to call for the rain clouds to come (Mace, 1970, pp. 80-83). Patzca means, according to Mace, "the ones wrapped in blankets" (in Spanish: "chamarrudos") because they have *chamarras*, wool blankets, wrapped around their legs. Thus, in Rabinal, the dance is called after the dancers' attire, which seems to be the same for the term Tz'ulab' in Momostenango. In both dances, the traditional dress was in woollen clothing (see quote Francisco Lol below).

From all these different terms and names for the dance, I have chosen to use the term *baile de la culebra* because this is the most used name today in Momostenango. Although, as is apparent from the discussion above, the root "patz" seems to have been a widespread term for the dance in the Highlands of Guatemala. It is no longer in use in the region of Momostenango and therefore I prefer the term *baile de la culebra*. To refer to the dancers of the *baile de la culebra* I will use the term Tz'ulab', which is the usual term for the dancers in Momostenango.

Costumes Used in the Dance

The attires used in the ritual dance are very distinctive, although they may vary in each community. This section discusses the variation and similarities in dance

costumes. Due to my own fieldwork observations in Momostenango, the discussion will largely focus on this town. Furthermore, this section also examines the use of alcohol in this ritual dance, which, as I will argue, plays a role in the transformation of the participants into the characters of the dance.

The *baile de la culebra* costumes are most elaborate and formal in Joyabaj (Hutcheson, 2009). The masks and costumes are rented for the occasion from a *morería* – a workshop that makes and rents out masks – in Chichicastenago and are as elaborate as the costumes of the *baile de la conquista* (Hutcheson, 2009, pp. 875-878). In Rabinal the nine or ten male characters have to be "dressed in rags and old clothes," in a similar manner to the Tz'ulab' of Momostenango (Mace, 1967, p. 110). One male dancer impersonates a woman, known by the Spanish name Lola and by the K'iche' Ajmuy, whose meaning is unclear. She wears the traditional dress from Coban (a Q'eqchi' town in the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala), a beautiful mask, and a handkerchief. She is in the main focus of the dance and behaves flirtatiously towards the other male dancers, waving at them with her handkerchief. The beautiful dress and mask of the woman contrasts with that of the men. Four participants, known as the "Chuy" ("to bother") (Christenson, 2001b, p. 32), carry the snake-canes and wear bigger masks than the others, with enlarged goiters. The other four or five dancers wear smaller masks with smaller goiters and are dressed in shawls. These dancers are known as the Patzcá. All the masks worn by the participants in Rabinal have an open mouth and appear to be suffering from some illness.

In the Momostecan version of dance, several men (the Tz'ulab') are dressed in old rags and wear masks while they dance around a white woman with blond hair, known as *Xinula*[84]. She is protected by her ladino husband, called *Nab'e mu* ("first ladino") (Figure 86). The role of the Nab'e mu shifts constantly: none of the participants is dressed as a *ladino* but each takes turn in impersonating the husband. When a Tz'ul tries to seduce Xinula, he is dragged forward by the Nab'e mu and hit with a whip several times. The Tz'ul shouts and then runs back to his group.

Francisco Lol told me that long ago, in the first years of the dance in Momostenango around a hundred years ago, no masks were used. Xinula did not wear a white mask, either. All the dancers covered their face with a cloth bound in the front. "They say that from long ago onwards, the woman dressed in a black dress, a red *huipil*, and a hat, and she did not use a mask; she used a red cloth to hide her face and she was well covered" (Francisco Lol 2015, interview 31st of March 2015). A friend of Franz Termer who lived in Momostenango in the beginning of the 20th century, don Abel de León, also mentioned the red cloth covering the face of the woman in a letter to Termer but further states that all other dancers did wear masks (Termer, 1976, p. 307). According to Termer (1976, p. 307), as soon as masks became available, however, they were quickly incorporated in the dance, a fact that was also confirmed to me by don Leonso. At the time that Franz Termer visited the region in the 1920s, all dancers used to wear masks. Martín Ordóñez (1968, p. 35) mentions that in 1968, the dancers wore masks made of leather or cardboard.

In 2014, don Rigoberto was formally asked to assist in the organization of the *baile de la culebra* because he used to participate in the dance when he was young and, therefore, knew the dance very well. Because not all of the dancers owned their own wooden mask, some used plastic or rubber masks. Don Rigoberto therefore travelled to Chichicastenango a couple of weeks before the dance to buy wooden masks for those who did not have them. Disappointed by the high prices, which had risen lately because of the tourist industry, he could only afford to buy masks that were made of the cheapest wood and not *pino blanco* ("white pine"). Among the masks that he was able to buy with the money of the Misión Maya, don Rigoberto's Maya K'iche' regeneration organization, several dancers pointed out to me that the black one with the moustache was the most traditional (Figure 87). This confirms what Franz Termer (1957, p. 215) describes for the places where he saw the *baile de la culebra* (Santa Cruz Quiché, San Bartolo Aguas Calientes and Pologua) where black masks were used. In all of the dances, he saw there was always one person dressed as a woman, while all the others were males. All wore a black mask, except for the Lady,

84 Allen Christenson (2001b, p. 146) translates Xinula as "(n) Spanish woman or dresses like one; girlfriend". According to Garrett Cook (2000, p. 171) this word means "*ladina*". Frauke Sachse (personal communication, November 2014), however, recognized that the word Xinula is basically a K'iche' derivation from the Spanish word *señora* in which the "s" is replaced with an "x" and the "r" with the "l", as usually happens with Spanish loanwords in K'iche'.

who wore none, and the Spaniard, who wore a mask with a light skin and a moustache. He states, however, that in contrast to all other performances, the *baile de la culebra* dancers made their own mask (Termer, 1957, p. 205) and did not buy them as is the case today. The Lady character is always a ladina, dressed in an indigenous dress. He describes, furthermore, that in Santa Cruz Quiché all dancers except for one were dressed as Maxeños (people from Chichicastenango) and only one dancer was dressed as a Sololoteco (coming from the Kakchiquel town Sololá) (Termer, 1957, p. 217). The Sololoteco was continuously whipped and insulted, which Termer interpreted to be rooted in the old rivalry between the K'iche' and the Kakchiquel people. He mentions furthermore that in the region of Momostenango the dancers would decorate their bodies with fruits in the shape of a phallus or breasts (Termer, 1957, p. 219). Both Termer (1957, p. 219) and Lothrop (1929, p. 9) mention furthermore that in the region of Momostenango *chichicaste* plants, poisonous plants with thorns, were used instead of whips. This decoration seems distinctive of the Momostecan tradition, as it persists today, with the only change being the use of the whip in place of the *chichicaste*.

In the 2014 and 2015 *baile de la culebra* in Momostenango, all the dancers wore old clothes except for Xinula. The clothes that they wore, however, seemed to be randomly picked old clothes. The *autores* regretted that the traditional clothing had been lost:

> *Those that used to participate in this regional dance of the* gracejos *a long time ago, very long ago, were only the ancient people who used woolen trousers. Everything was made of wool, their suits were of wool and they wore* huipiles *of a red color. According to the traditions there was no use of luxurious clothes like suits, nothing like that! Only sandals like the poor people wear. So these were the people that participated mostly in this dance. It was not a luxurious dance*[85]*, but a traditional dance* – Francisco Lol, 31st of March 2015.



Figure 88. Don Rigoberto Itzep pours one of the Tz'ulab' a shot of *aguardiente*.

The organizers try to continue the tradition of dancing with wooden masks but the popularity of other dances such as the *convites*, communal dances based on Hollywood-inspired themes (R. Taube, 2009, pp. 97-117), may take the dance into a different direction. In Santa Cruz Quiché this already happened: today the dancers wear masks and costumes inspired by movie characters or actors. In the performance of the dance in Momosenango in 2014, one dancer joined the group when the dance had already started, wearing a mask typical of Mexican wrestlers (*lucha libre*). This was for the organizers a point of heated discussion: they were against the penetration of popular culture masks in the dance of the ancestors but on the other hand, as there were only a few dancers, every dancer that wanted to join was appreciated. Therefore, they agreed to let the dancer participate.

85 He refers to the fact that there are several dances in the Highlands of Guatemala for which the participants have to save a lot of money and need to be from wealthy families in order to be able to rent the costumes from the *morería*.



Figure 89. Don Leon is helped to change in the local female dress of Momostenango. Photo taken in the *calvario* of Momostenango.



Figure 90. The third organizer, Luiz Lol, binds the mask of a Tz'ul before entering the dance.

Like several other dances in the Western Highlands of Guatemala, drinking alcohol is an integral part of the *baile de la culebra*. Not all dances include the consumption of alcohol, however. According to Mace (1967, p. 122), for example, in Rabinal the *baile de la culebra* is the only dance in which alcoholic beverages form an essential part. The Tz'ulab' of Momostenango explained me that the drinking is necessary to be able to withstand the beating from the whip and to endure the pain. As such, a high degree of intoxication is preferred for this dance. I saw a similar high consumption of alcohol among the dancers in the Patron Day Feast of both Chichicastenango and Santa Eulalia.

During the dance, drinking becomes an important part of the ritual in the sense that the participants enter into an altered state of consciousness (ASC). The rhythmic dancing and chanting contributes to this ecstatic state, during which the body is capable of enduring more pain than usual. The consumption of alcohol, herbs, tobacco, mushrooms, or other substances are used as a path to enter the ASC in rituals all over the Americas (Furst, 1976, p. 28). Franz Termer (1957, p. 212) mentions that in the highlands of Guatemala the dancers often wrap their heads in cloths behind the masks and attach strings of garlic to it. The smell of garlic, he was told, has a stimulating effect and protects the dancer against tiredness. Today, in the case of Momostenango, alcohol is used to prevent the dancers from feeling tired[86] and to assist them in their impersonation of the characters (Figure 88). The dancers change physically and mentally into an altered state of being: they become the Nab'e mu, the Tz'ulab', or the Xinula (Figure 89 and Figure 90).

History of the Dance

During the Colonial period, indigenous Highland Guatemalan dances were not often documented by Spanish chroniclers (Looper, 2009, p. 191). It is therefore difficult to trace the *baile de la culebra* in a different way than through the oral tradition. However, there have been attempts by scholars to connect the contemporary dance to Colonial Central Mexican dances. Termer (1976, pp. 310-311), for example, suggests that the *baile de la culebra* is related to

86 The use of alcohol in order to curb tiredness was explained to me by the Tz'ulab' and by some of the dancers of the *baile de los toritos* in Chichicastenango.

Atamalqualiztli ("Feast of the Water Tamales"), the Aztec celebration for rejuvenation and abundance of corn that used to take place every eight years. He argues that putting snakes underneath the cloths in the dance symbolizes the eating of snakes which Sahagún described as part of the Atamalqualiztli feast in the Nahua speaking region. Mace (1967, pp. 96, 127-130), on the other hand, relates the dance to the Aztec feast Tepeilhuitl, which Sahagún and Torquemada describe as a rain dance in which the dancers carry canes in the form of snakes and in the form of human heads. Termer and Mace suggest that these religious activities were introduced in the Maya communities due to the prehispanic migration of Central Mexicans into the Highlands of Guatemala. However, neither Mace nor Termer offers any convincing proof that the dance was introduced from Central Mexico apart from the argument that a similar symbolism was present there. However, as there was intense intercultural contact between Central Mexico and the Maya for a very long time prior to the Spanish conquest, it is not surprising that specific symbolism and elements of worldview are present across the whole of Mesoamerica.

Due to the absence of the *baile de la culebra* in colonial documents, I restrict the discussion of the history of the dance to the knowledge that don Leonso and don Rigoberto shared with me. All dancers agreed with eachother that the importance of the dance lies in the fact that it was founded by the ancestors. Don Leonso also added that the dance was related to the day *Kan of* the *chol q'ij*:

> *This is because according to the Maya tradition, we have days Kan, we have days Kej… So it is that we have the day Kan, which is the snake. So the days Kan are most fond of the snake, because this is the indicated animal. Previously, the dance was celebrated on a day Kan. We have taken this in consideration and we are thinking to bring new life to this tradition to celebrate it on the day Kan because it is very beautiful. But this entire dance came into being because of the necessity of our grandfathers, our ancestors: they made this dance out of necessity. It is not that they wanted to do this dance just to enjoy themselves, no! This dance emerged out of necessity and for this reason we are doing it until today* – Don Leonso Lol 31st of March 2015.

According to don Rigoberto, the *baile de la culebra* was originally performed on the day 9 Kan of the *chol q'ij*. He told me that when the Spaniards invaded the region, the dance was always performed on that day. However, at some point the day 9 Kan fell together with the Catholic Holy Week. Therefore, the Spaniards decided to fix the performance of the dance in the Gregorian calendar, and to incorporate it in the festivities of the Holy Week and Easter. Similar to the days of the *chol q'ij*, Holy week is not based on the solar year and thus shifts in relation to the year. According to don Rigoberto, this made the incorporation of the dance in the Christian calendar easier.

Don Leonso shared a different narrative about the history of the dance in which he explained that the dance began 100 years ago to keep destruction away from the *milpa*:

> *This regional* baile de los gracejos *first began in front of the ancestors. It began in the year 1915 because of… It is said that formerly predatory animals, such as the coyote and the mountain cat, entered [Pueblo Viejo] and caused much damage to the people there: they ate all the animals and started to make a lot of damage. So the grandfathers, the great grandfathers, came together and said that burning places*[87] *should be constructed to help the village because what was happening was a judgement, something was going wrong. So therefore they constructed several burning places, so that they could burn. And this is where the idea behind the regional* baile de los gracejos *was born* – Don Leonso Lol, 31st of March 2015.

Martín Ordoñez (Ordoñez, 1968, p. 37) states in 1968 that the dance has been performed for at least 100 years. I think that the 100 years should not be taken strict as "only 100 years" as I think it rather symbolizes that the dance already existed in the time before the current participants existed. A period of 100 years bridges the gap between those who live and perform the dance today and those who have died and participated in the dance before us (Assmann, 2011, pp. 45-49).

87 *Quemaderos* is a Spanish term often used to refer to the altars ("place where one burns").

A similar history to that of don Leonso was given by Marcelo Díaz from Rabinal whose knowledge was documented in an unpublished manuscript from 1943 written by Sr. Ayala with the title "*Colección de bailes, loas, sainetes y pastorelas*". According to Marcelo Díaz the dance was performed out of necessity, to protect the community from death and destruction. In his account he explicitly mentions the role of the dancers as mediators with the Divine Beings in order to bring rain to the milpas:

> *So now there is this certain tradition and this is what this old indian man from Rabinal, called Marcelo Díaz, says about it: "these were a couple humble workers who lived in a hamlet and who planted their milpas. But then it happened that during a specific epoch it stopped raining for a long time. It was so extreme that the seeds dried up in front of their sights and they managed to go heaven and beg God to send water to them, which they managed to do. This is the history that we repeat". And this same Marcelo Díaz continues, when he is not given any alcohol, he says while almost fighting: "all say, those [guys] wrapped in wool… but these were the angels that arrived in front of God and this is why it rains". To stop this gibberish they give a drink of liquor to the known Marcelo* (Mace, 1967, p. 108; translation mine).

In another account, Mace (1967, p. 123) relates that Patzcá dancers came from Jerusalem; they tried to lift the Blessed Sacrament but because of the weight their goiters burst out. Not knowing what to do, Lola and the Patzcá dancers started dancing and crying. In another version, the dancers where actually the only ones that could carry the weight of the Blessed Sacrament in its first procession in Rabinal and to commemorate that they always accompany the procession. Mace (1967, p. 126) suggests, similar to don Rigoberto, that the *baile de la culebra* was displaced in time by the Spanish missionaries who incorporated it in Rabinal in the festivities of Corpus Christi.

Although it seems that the *baile de la culebra* is a widespread and shared activity in Central Mexico and the Highlands of Guatemala, the origin of the dance can at the moment of writing, due to the lack of historical documentation, not be ascertained.

THE *BAILE DE LA CULEBRA* IN MOMOSTENANGO

During the 2014 fieldwork season, I was introduced for the first time to the organizers of the dance, don Leonso (first *autor*), Francisco Lol (second *autor*) and Luiz Lol (third *autor*), and the marimba player don Benancio Sambrocio on Holy Saturday during the performance of the dance. Francisco and his brother Luiz (both between 30 and 36 years old) decided to organize the dance that year but they needed the help of an elder who had the experience in organizing the dance and could teach them. They invited their relative don Leonso, an elder of around 65 years old, to become the first author of the dance, because he had organized the dance several years before and because of his extensive knowledge of rituals and religion as Chuchqajaw. He knows about the history of the dance and knows how to properly organize it. Don Leonso took the role of Xinula in the dance. He explained me that this role always had to be performed by a Chuchqajaw.

The Momostecan *baile de la culebra* is tied to the commemorations of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. It is performed on the fourth Friday of Lent and the two days prior to it, and then during the consecutive days Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. Each Friday during the period of Lent, which runs from Ash Wednesday until Good Friday, is marked by a *via crucis* procession which commemorates the path of Jesus Christ on his way to the Mount Calvary to be crucified (see Chapter III). The Fourth Friday of Lent in Momostenango revolves around the whipping of Christ during this path. On this day, the whipping in the *baile de la culebra* takes place before the *via crucis* but forms part of the Christian complex of Lent and the specific commemoration of Christ's suffering. As soon as the dance ends on the Fourth Friday of Lent, the procession of the *via crucis* departs from the *calvario*. Similarly, on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, the dance forms part of the Catholic celebration of Holy Week and Easter Sunday and overlaps with the processions.

The dance is dedicated to Cristo Acapetagua[88] – a representation of Jesus Christ on the cross, located in the center of the *calvario* at the cemetery of Momostenango – and to the Holy Sepulcher. Cristo Acapategua has a blueish grey color and holds flowers in both hands. Behind him, in a chapel that Garret Cook (2000, pp. 164-165) identified as an artificial cave, lies the *Sagrado Entierro* (Holy Sepulcher). The image of Christ in the coffin is completely wrapped in cloths and cannot be seen. On top of the coffin lies a bundle in which bloodstained cloths of Jesus Christ are kept and in front of it lies a box for the offerings to the Santa Cruz. In 2015, the authors of the dance had invited me to join them the whole day on the fourth Friday on Lent, beginning early in the morning. I spent the whole day with the authors and dancers and participated in the preparations as any other member of the group. I had, therefore, the chance to talk in detail about the dance with the performers and the *autores*. During lunch, I joined the *autores* in the town center where we discussed the dance in detail.

The following section discusses the *baile de la culebra* as it unfolded chronologically during the year. First, I will describe the days leading to the fourth Friday of Lent, which due to the unexpected passing away of Francisco Lol's child, did not take place in 2014. Second, an overview of the performance on the fourth Friday of Lent in combination with the preparation and performance of the *palo encebado*, also based on my fieldwork experience in 2015. These days coincided in the year of 2015 with the Gregorian dates 11th (Wednesday), 12th (Thursday), and 13th (Friday) of March. Finally, I discuss in detail the performance of the dance on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. In 2014, I saw the dance for the first time on Holy Saturday and I was introduced briefly to the organizers of the dance. The following year, however, I fully participated in the dance.

88 The crucified Christ. Cristo Acapetagua derives from the Nahuatl word *acapetlahuac*. *Aca(tl)* means "reed", *petla(tl)* means "petate", and *hua-* "owner" and *-c* place name suffix. *Acapetagua* can be translated as "the place of him who sits on the reed mat (throne)", a possible reference to the divine power of Christ (Raúl Macuil 2015, personal communication). Ordóñez (1968, p. 36) states that on the Wednesday and Thursday before the fourth Friday of Lent, the dance was performed at the house of the *cofradia del Señor de Acapetagua*. Since the 70s, however, the cofradías in Momostenango have decreased in members and resources, which in turn resulted in financial and logistical difficulties in organizing ritual dances (Cook and Offit 2008, 49-50). This is possibly the reason why the cofradía is no longer actively involved in the dance.

THE RITUAL PREPARATION

The *baile de la culebra* is a very delicate dance that requires proper (ritual) preparation. The authors of the dance are responsible for petitioning protection and for thanking the ancestors and divine landscape where they reside through ritual. The burden of organizing the dance requires a nine-year commitment to the ancestors[89]. The three current authors started to organize the dance together in 2008. In 2015, don Leonso had participated in the organization of the dance for over ten year and his promise was therefore fulfilled. However, he took the burden to teach the new generation of dancers. Francisco and Luiz were organizing the dance for the seventh year in a row and had to continue for at least two more years. Failing to fulfill the promise, or even doubting about it, leads to severe repercussions:

> *When one promises somethings and says "I am going to do it", he has to do it. But I saw my time becoming very limited, so I repented and said "it is better if I don't do it". And as a result, as a consequence for not doing it or for not participating on the fourth Friday of Lent, well, one of my sons died, he was my new born baby. Therefore, it is very delicate to promise things. What we do is not a game – it looks like it is something beautiful but if one promises, one has to follow up on it. I organize the dance because I feel that it will hurt me, that it will cause me big difficulties, if I don't realize it.*
>
> *Three or five years ago the same thing happened to me. I repented and asked myself: "shall I do it, shall I not do it, I do it, or I don't?" And at the moment that we performed I let myself fall on the pole. "Bamm!". I don't know if I told you a bit about the time that I went "Bamm!": I fell completely down to the floor! But thank God nothing happened to me, I did not break anything, because the pole was full of fat, full of wax. "Bamm!" All the way down. And I did not have anything to hold myself, just imagine! So those are the consequences when one decides to organize the dance and afterwards repents, or if he*

89 See also Ordóñez (1968, p. 37) who emphasized the nine-year period as well.

doubts to do it or not do it. One has to do it with faith. You don't gain anything by doing this, but you have to do it with faith; this is all an act of devotion. So it has to be done with faith, there may not be any repentance, because I have repented twice. As I repeat, my only relief when I told myself that it was better to not perform the dance, was that my wife survived. But my son died. And everybody, my grandmother, my grandfather, all of them, scolded me and told me "well, this happened to you because you promise something and then you don't do it". They know the custom of this, of the gracejos; it is a game but when you make the promise it becomes a very delicate thing – Francisco Lol, 31st of March 2015.

Each year thirteen ceremonies or *costumbres* have to be performed during the period that the dances are performed. The first and the last ceremonies are the opening and the closing ritual, respectively the *entrada* and *finalización*, which mark the whole period of the dance as a ritual period. As discussed in Chapter I, the sequence of thirteen rituals symbolizes the completion of a cycle, while the burden of nine years relates to the ancestors. Just as important, the number thirteen is a male number, while the number nine is a female number (see Chapter I). The numerology suggests that the dance is performed for the female and male ancestors, the first mother-fathers, and is a full completion of the wisdom that they left behind for future generations. In the ceremonies, the ancestors are asked for guidance during the dance. They are petitioned to prevent fights or injuries when climbing the *palo encebado* and guidance when the dancers return to their houses drunk or tired so that nothing will happen on the road and that none of them will faint or become sick[90]:

Every day we perform ceremonies, [burn] candles, everything! Day after day. We also buy the guys[91] that dance with us. We do not just tell them, we do not just invite them to dance, no! Each time when we mention them during each ceremony, we buy them. We say "well, that they may come, that they may participate, that it may appear in their dreams, that those who have the desire will join us". And finally, 15 days before we will begin to dance, each of us that participate in the dance receives a personal sign: our back begins to itch. It makes us want to… I don't know… as if they grab us there and as if we have received [whippings]. So it are signs that we receive, which indicate that the moment that we will be given whippings is approaching. Because the ceremony is well done, well performed… Because if one does not do the ceremony, does not do anything, then nobody will be joining us: nobody dances. Because there are only a few that are willing. There are many people that admire this: "how come you endure this?". We endure this because it is all costumbre*, it is all because of the well performed ceremony; it has its candle, it has everything of that, for its protection. So for the same reason, those that participate are only few: we do not reach a quantity of twenty or eighteen persons because there are only few that can bear this. Sometimes people come and say: "No, not even one [hit]!". But we are there with twelve or ten elements, but we are there very well protected. We put there their candles, all of it. But always when we invoke them in the ceremonies, we invoke them with their names, their protections, so that that may not happen anything when we are responsible for them. During each game, for example on Saturday and Friday, each of the participants that starts dancing with us is under our responsibility. We do not want that anything happens to them. Of course, outside the activity, each person goes his own way. So it requires a lot of responsibility. This game requires a lot of responsibility* – Francisco Lol, 31st of March 2015.

90 Similar protection rituals are documented by Mace (1967, p. 111) in the *baile de la culebra* in Rabinal. The night before *Corpus Christi*, the dancers go with the ritual specialist to the door of the church and the cemetery to perform protection rituals.

91 Humans are owned by the earth. If anyone needs participants for an event, as in the case of the *baile de la culebra*, they can be ritually bought from the earth. The payment will occur in the form of offerings deposited in the ceremonial fire. After the participants are bought, the earth will give the participants signs from which they will understand that they have to join the dance performance.

The day before the first day of the dance, the organizers invite all dancers to join in a ceremony in which they pray to request that nothing bad will happen during the dance. Apart from the ceremonies, the dancers need to follow the moral rules in order to secure protection. For the well-being of the whole group, all the participants are required to observe sexual abstinence during the days of the dance. If the sexual abstinence is not respected, serious accidents may occur.

According to don José Angel Xeloj, Ajq'ij and elder from Momostenango, it was customary for the dancers and the musicians to go to the forest to find a snake for the dance on Holy Thursday[92]: the sound of the instruments would call the snakes and would make them appear from underneath the stones and out of the caves. Once a snake was caught, the musicians would play marimba music to it to calm it down. On Good Friday, the snake was fed and the musicians continued to offer their music to it. During the dance on Holy Saturday, Xinula, the Lady of the dance, used to carry the snake in her left hand and a rattle in her right hand. The rattle would hypnotize the snake and prevent it from harming Tz'ulab'. On Easter Sunday, after the dance, the snake was released at the place where it was caught by the dancers and the musicians. According to don José Angel, however, the snake would not survive its release. The other snakes that live in the forest would not recognize the snake anymore because the food, the music, and the dance had given the snake a human *nawal* and the other snakes would therefore immediately kill it.

Don Leonso and Francisco Lol explained me in detail how the snake was borrowed from the forest:

> *The ancestors bought the snake purely through performing* costumbre*: they mentioned it, they burned [offerings], and before the dance they say that one has to keep abstinence for forty days, one refrains from any sin, nothing, nothing, nothing. And they say that the woman and the man are the ones in charge of buying the snake. And the woman is in charge of bringing that what we call mulul, jícara in Spanish. The woman brings this and they go together with the Chuchqajaw, the spiritual guide, to buy [the snake]. He is the one who guides us, and the woman and man from the dance go with him to buy the snake. They go to buy the snake, and the snake appears by performing* costumbre. *A big snake comes out. The woman receives it: she puts the* jícara *there and the snake, "shhhhhii", goes inside of it* – Don Leonso Lol, 31st of March 2015.

> *One month or 15 days before the snake is actually bought, the buying begins. When the right moment arrives, when they need it, they go to pick it up and the snake will appear dancing. The marimba is also there and the snake starts dancing with its little head. The snake only takes its head out of the* jícara *and begins to dance on the music of the marimba because it is correctly bought. As they say, when one has not done anything, has refrained [from specific food and sexual intercourse], has protected himself, – because it is a dance one has to take care of himself – the moment of truth has arrived. So they take the snake out and they put it like here, and the snake begins to dance, it does not cause any harm to anybody. But normally if one has not taken care of himself, if one did not pay attention, then the snake will bite him and cause harm. For this we have a punishment. The punishment for if the snake bites you is twelve whippings. To close the history of the dance, it is said that after the dance they go to leave the snake there where it appeared. And there it disappears. It is brought back; it was only in loan. This is the history of the dance* – Francisco Lol, 31st of March 2015.

The form in which the *baile de la culebra* is performed today is probably a blend of the two separate dances that were noted by Termer and mentioned by don Leonso. Today the living snake is replaced by a stuffed animal of a green snake (Figure 91). The last time that the Tz'ulab' danced in Momostenango with a living snake was around 30 years ago[93]. Francisco Lol told me, however,

92 I do not know if the same preparations took place for the fourth Friday of Lent.

93 The reason why the living snake is replaced with

that they hope to "buy" (with ceremonies) the living snake for the ritual dance in the future. He hopes to reintroduce the form of dancing as it was done long ago and to reintroduce the snake that the woman will carry in her *jícara* ("gourd").



Figure 91. A close up of the snake and masks used in the dance.

In the 1920s, similar ceremonies took place in Momostenango before the dance, during which a ritual specialist petitioned for the dancers to remain strong (Termer, 1957, pp. 218-219). Then, three days before the dance, the dancers would go with the Chuchqajaw to the forest or milpa for a second ceremony after which the specialist showed them where they could find living snakes for the dance. The next day the dancers returned to the same place to take the snake that the earth loaned them. Both poisonous and non-poisonous snakes – the *mazacuata* (*tolopón*), the coral snake, and the *cantil* – were used in the dance (Termer, 1957, p. 219). The mouths of poisonous snakes were sown, or in some communities the fangs are torn out, so that they cannot cause any harm during the dance. Immediately after the animals were received, they were put in clay vessels in which they were kept until the dance. These vessels with snakes were kept at the house of the person who would impersonate Xinula.

The preparations of the *baile de la culebra* in Chichicastenango in the 1930s were very similar:

> *About three weeks or a month before the dance they go to the mountains to catch the snakes and they bring them back in gourds in their bags, bound up fast. They give them* chichi *and the snakes take it. When they go to their recitals, they come out with the animals, and they do not bite. There are ceremonies, of course, when they go to get the snakes; they make their payments in the World that they may find the snakes, and that nothing may happen to them. During this time the men who are taking part must not quarrel in their houses or with their companions in the dance* (Bunzel, 1952, p. 426).

Leonard Schultze Jena (1933, pp. 204-211) transcribed the conversations in K'iche' between the ritual specialist and the husband and wife impersonators in the dance who set out to borrow the snake[94]. On the day 10 I'x, while the ritual specialist performed the ceremony to *Juyub'-Taq'aj* ("Mountain-Valley", or "the world") petitioning snakes, they appeared. The participants caught them and put them in a vessel together with a piece of meat while they used their rattles to keep them calm. After performing the dance, the participants return to the same place for a thanking ceremony and to release the snake.

AROUND THE 4TH FRIDAY OF LENT

The performance of the dance is very similar on the fourth Friday of Lent (and the previous two days) and on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. The location of the dance is different, however. On the first occasion, the cemetery is the main locale for the dance. The *calavario*, located inside the cemetery, is the main base for the dancers to gather and change clothes. On Thursday, this is also the place where lunch is consumed. Due to the preparations of the *via crucis*, on Friday lunch has to be eaten while sitting in between and on the surrounding graves.

a stuffed animal is not completely clear. It is very likely, however, that the Armed Conflict played a role in this. During the 1980s, it was dangerous to go into the mountains or forest to perform rituals as one could be found by the guerilla or the army, which used hide in the hills between Momostenango and San Francisco el Alto. Since the end of the armed conflict, violence and robberies are frequent in isolated places and it is still dangerous to go to the forest in small groups.

94 They use the expression *qoxloq'o*, meaning "we buy" (Schultze Jena, 1933, p. 210).



Figure 92. The Tz'ulab' dance in front of the entrance to the cemetery.



Figure 93. The husband of Xinula grabs a Tz'ul by his testicles.

Although the cemetery is the main setting for the dance these days, on Wednesday the dancers depart from the cemetery and go down to the center of Momostenango, where the market takes place at that moment, to dance and announce the imminence of the dance. The Wednesday is only for this announcement, so on this day the dance takes only place from nine o'clock in the morning until lunch time. On Thursday, the dance is performed throughout the whole day, from nine o'clock in the morning until sunset, around half past five in the afternoon. Around noon, there is a one-hour break for lunch, which is prepared by the families of the organizers. Because of the preparations of the *palo encebado*[95], the *baile de la culebra* takes place on Friday after lunch, only after the pole of the *palo encebado* has been planted. I noticed that during lunch, some of the dancers were so excited about the dance that they continued to whip each other inside the *calvario* or between the tombs at the cemetery. Xinula, and some of the workers at the cemetery, also voluntarily received strokes during lunch.

In 2015, on Wednesday and Thursday early in the morning, the Tz'ulab' and other organizers met in the *calvario* where the dancers changed clothes and the organizers finalized the schedule. Xinula, impersonated by don Leonso, changed into the Momostecan dress and put on the mask and wig. Some of the dancers already whipped eachother while changing clothes. As soon as everyone was dressed, the group left the *calvario* and started the dance immediately at the entrance of the cemetery, some 100 meter away from the *calvario*, while don Benancio Sambrocio[96] played the marimba (Figure 92). There were 12 dancers participating on the three consecutive days. As soon as the music started, the dance began. The majority of dancers were the Tz'ulab', who seduced, harassed and abducted Xinula. Sometimes the Tz'ulab' used the handle of the whip as a phallus by holding it with one or who hands in front of their genitals, and on some

95 The K'iche' name for the *palo encebado* is *che' ki kasaj ki puaq* ("the tree with grease and money").

96 The marimba player is the only participant that is paid for his services. Usually, he is paid around 250 quetzales per day. Don Benancio is a well-known virtuoso musician of about 80 years old. He knows many marimba melodies and is often invited to play on the patron feasts in highland towns. He is also the marimba player for the the *baile del venado* during the Patron Saint feast in Momostenango.

occasions they pressed it against Xinula's back or front, or slip it underneath her dress (Figure 94). On other occasions, a dancer carried Xinula away on his back and would hide her from her husband. Usually Xinula plays along with the male seducers, dancing with them and hiding together with them (Figure 95). She would jump on the back of the Tz'ul with her arms around his neck. One of the dancers, the husband of Xinula, hit the other dancers as punishment for their behavior. As soon as Xinula was found, hiding behind a wall, car or house, the abductor was punished. Sometimes the attackers of Xinula were apparently dragged by their butt and testicles (Figure 93).

One by one the husband dragged the Tz'ulab' to an open spot on the street and hit them two or three times with the whip (Figure 96). The number of strokes depends partly on who is being hit: in some instances the dancer shouts that he wants more, while on other occasions the dancers tell the husband beforehand how many times they want to be hit. It is important for them to show that they are strong and that the strokes do not affect them at all. After being whipped, the dancers usually take a victorious stand, raising their hands, mocking the husband, and then walking away. Sometimes, however, a dancer falls down on the floor and remains lying as if he were dead (Figure 97). After the third day of dancing, some of them have sore and bloody wounds on their waists. According to several Tz'ulab', the alcohol makes the pain more bearable. Others, however, do not drink any alcohol, but endure the pain nonetheless.

During the dance, the role of the husband is passed from one dancer to another. Xinula is the one who decides whose turn it is to become the husband. Don Rigoberto and the authors told me that during the dance Xinula is also the one who points out those who should be whipped. The authors agree and emphasize that Xinula is the leader of the dance. As a spectator, however, it seems as if Xinula is a passive participant, a victim of the men around her. Later, when I had the opportunity to participate in the dance on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday in 2015, I noticed indeed that Xinula keeps track of everything that happens. She holds a firm grip on her seducers and does not let go until she decides that it is time for a Tz'ul to get hit. She makes sure that the dancers are well. When she notices that one of them is weak because of the alcohol, the long hours spent dancing or the whipping, she tells the Nab'e mu to whip one of the other dancers. If he continues to drag the weak participant away from Xinula, she will hold this dancer tight as if protecting him. Sometimes the dancers get in a fight and she is the one who keeps them apart. Xinula has thus the most responsible role in the dance as she takes care of the participants. She is acts as the authority for the other dancers.

THE GREASED POLE

The celebration of *palo encebado* always takes place on the fourth Friday of Lent. It is a separate event from the *baile de la culebra*. Usually, the dancers gather at sunrise at the entrance of the cemetery to go



Figure 94. A Tz'ul holds his whip in front of his genitals to make it resemble a penis.



Figure 95. Xinula is hiding behind a car with two Tz'ulab'.



Figure 96. The husband of Xinula whips a Tz'ul for harassing Xinula.



Figure 97. A Tz'ul lies on the ground, acting to be dead or severly wounded.

up the cemetery hill, located on a steep slope at the north-east side of the town, where they will cut the pine tree for the event. In 2015, however, the authors and several of the dancers met around 8 o'clock in front of the *calvario* to attend the mass for the fourth Friday of Lent in preparation to the *via crucis* that would take place immediately after the dance.

After the mass, around nine o'clock in the morning, we opened the hole in the ground where the pole would later be planted. This hole is located roughly eight meters south of the cemetery entrance and it is used over and over every year. Once we emptied the hole, we climbed to the top of the cemetery where we met with the sixteen leaders of the four *barrios* of Momostenango (Santa Isabel, Santa Ana, Santa Catarina, and Pa Tz'ite). The organizers of the dance had previously asked their permission to cut a tree at the cemetery for the *palo encebado*. As representatives of the community of Momostenango, the barrios leaders support and watch the activities of the Tz'ulab'. Once the tree was cut, the *Ajtz'ib'*, or secretary of the communal authority, wrote, as it is customary, an official act stating that this event took place with permission of the communal authority. The act was signed by the authors of the dance, the Ajtz'ib, and me.

Don Benancio Sambrocio was already playing marimba when we arrived at the hill of the cemetery where we would cut the tree. He was standing between two graves at the edge of a small ravine at whose bottom was the pine tree that would be cut. The tree that is used for the *palo encebado* is always taken from the cemetery and is usually selected a couple of days before by the Chuchqajaw and the authors of the dance. Don Benancio stood on a higher section of the hill, facing the middle of the tree and played the music towards it, with his back towards the communal authority. Meanwhile, Chuchqajaw don Leonso Lol, the impersonator of Xinula, performed a fire ceremony in front of the tree, in which he asked for guidance and protection during the dance (Figure 98). Furthermore, he asked the ancestors – out of whose body the tree has grown – and *Juyub'-Taq'aj* ("Mountain-Valley", diaphrastic kenning for "the World") permission to cut the tree and pardon for hurting it. Trees are alive, and cutting a tree for any purpose has to be done with respect. While permission and pardon rituals used to take place any time one would cut a tree, or damage something in nature, now these ceremonies are only carried out during specific ritual events such as the *palo encebado*. During the ritual, don Leonso carried the whip as a snake over his neck and shoulders and passed it around the trunk of the tree two or three times on a few occasions. Near the end of the ceremony, he danced with the tree on the music of the marimba by placing his two arms around the tree and moving his feet and upper body to the rhythm.

The marimba music stopped immediately when the ceremony came to an end, and the dancers started discussing the strategy for cutting down the tree. The tree stood among the graves, so we had to be cautious not to let the tree fall on the graves of the ancestors. One of the youngest dancers started to prepare the tree by climbing it and cutting off the branches. Meanwhile, don Leonso started cutting the tree with an axe and when he got tired, other dancers took over. Once a big part of the base of the tree was cut, the dancer that was in the tree came down and we pulled the tree with the rope that had been placed around it. This way we were able to direct its fall. While we were pulling the tree, a woman involved in the organization of the *via crucis* collected the pine needles of the branches that were cut off, to be used for the procession later that evening. Immediately after the tree fell, the secretary read the official act in Spanish stating that at 09:30 am of Friday the 13th of April, 2015, the authorities oversaw and approved



Figure 98. Don Leonso performs a ceremony for asking permission to cut the tree at the cemetery of Momostenango.

the cutting of a pine tree, to be used in the *baile regional de los gracejos* that afternoon, at the cemetery of Momostenango.

The tree was cleared of all its branches except for a thick one at the top, which would later be used by one the participants in the dance to sit on, once one would reach the top. We carried the tree down the hill of the cemetery with a rope pulled by six persons at a time. Once the tree started moving, we ran down the slope of the cemetery. One of the dancers was behind us and hit the tree several times with the whip. This is done in order to ensure that the tree behaves well and that all negativity is taken away. Whenever we stopped to take a break or shift turns, the marimba reached us and the musician played to the tree. The tree is finally left on the ground close to the hole at the entrance of the cemetery[97]. The tree was constantly watched over, in case someone would step over it, which is considered a very disrespectful and a dangerous thing to do.

While the organizers and I went to the center to buy some things, the Tz'ulab' took off all the tree's irregularities and the bark. When we returned to the cemetery's entrance, all bark had been cleared off the tree and we rubbed wax and pork fat on the pole to make it greasy and slippery (Figure 99 and Figure 100). Before raising the pole, the dancers and authors began the ritual planting of the pole by walking around it, one behind the other, following the Chuchqajaw who carried a whip. The whip was, on this occasion, a sign of the Chuchqajaw's authority. Accompanied by the marimba music, the group walked two and a half times counterclockwise, and subsequently the same amount of times clockwise. Each time a dancer reached the end of the tree, he would bend over and touch it with his hands while both arms were

97 According to all the participants, the tree was "planted" ("sembrar") in the hole.



Figure 99. The Tz'ulab' clear the tree of its bark.



Figure 100. Pig fat and candle wax is used to grease the pole.



Figure 101. Around midday the pole is planted next to the entrance to the cemetery.

crossed. Finally, the Chuchqajaw whipped the tree nine times proceeding from the base to the top, and another five times when walking from the top to the base.

Finally, the Chuchqajaw attaches a prize ("*premio*") to the top of the tree. This prize consists of a basket filled with candy for the kids that will gather around the pole and an envelope with money for the person who is able to reach the top. The money has been donated by the municipality and none of the dancers knows the exact amount. If nobody reaches the top, the money is divided among all participants. Once the prize is attached to the top of the pole, the tree is lift up and planted in the hole[98]. Because the pole is covered in grease, this is a difficult and risky undertaking. Some push the tree up from the ground while others pull a rope connected to the top of the tree standing against the wall of the cemetery. To make it stable once planted, the hole is filled up with clay and stones (Figure 101). Once the tree is secure and standing, it is time for lunch in between the graves of the cemetery. An hour later *baile de la culebra* starts (Figure 102).

The event of the *palo encebado* started at four o'clock. The place of performing the *baile de la culebra* moved towards the raised pole and the dancers continued dancing here. While the *baile de la culebra* continued, the dancers took turns in trying to reach the top of the greasy pole. When I assisted in 2015, it seemed that there was too much wax and pork fat on the tree so nobody was able to climb to the top.

Around 5 o'clock it was decided that nobody was able to reach the top. They pulled a rope over the last branch of the tree and Luiz climbed up to get the prize, which was later shared among all dancers. Luiz, at the top of the tree grabbed the

98 No offerings of any kind were deposited in the hole before planting the tree.



Figure 102. Don Benancio plays the marimba.

candy and threw it to the children, who eagerly ran and jumped to collect as much candy as they could. Once the prize was taken from the tree, the dancers went back to the entrance of the cemetery where they continued dancing until six o'clock in the evening. Towards the end of the dance, many people to came to the cemetery and *calvario* for the following *via crucis*. The *baile de la culebra* usually finishes at sunset and immediately after the *via crucis* procession leaves the *calvario*.

HOLY SATURDAY AND EASTER SUNDAY

The dance that takes place on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday is also dedicated to the Cristo Acapetagua and the Sacred Sepulcher. As during the fourth Friday of Lent, the dance starts in the *calvario*. The dancers, organizers and musician meet at the stairs and enter the *calvario* together to prepare. Don Leonso, who impersonated Xinula in 2014, was not able to reprise his role in 2015 due to family matters. Therefore, the role of Xinula was up taken by don Leon, an elder with years of experience in the dance. As Don Leonso kept his clothes, mask, and snake at his house, we had to put together the costume anew, which caused some delay. The costume used by Xinula in 2015 was therefore slightly different from that previously used in 2014; Xinula now wore a rubber mask and a reddish brown wig, and holds a wooden snake. Before the actual dance began, the dancers started to take turns and whip each other. I accepted the offer of one of the Tz'ulab': I would whip him twice and then he would whip me twice in return (Figure 103). After being whipped, don Leon, who was already dressed as Xinula, taught me how to dance with Xinula at the top of the stairs of the *calvario*. This marked my initiation into the group and from that moment, I would be invited several times by the authors to join in the dance. My participation seemed very much appreciated by the dancers and organizers, who made sure that I was part of the group and always checked on me after each whipping.

When all the dancers were dressed, and had their masks on, we went to the *calvario* to pray before Cristo Acapetagua, kneeling in the space between



Figure 103. The author is whipped by a Tz'ul between the graves in front of the calvario.



Figure 104. Prior to the dance, the Tz'ulab' pray before the image of Cristo Acapetagua.

the Sacred Sepulcher and Cristo Acapetagua[99] (Figure 104). While we were inside, don Benancio played outside on the top of the stairs of the *calvario*. According to don Rigoberto, after the prayer in 2014, the dancers shouted and insulted the Cristo Acapetagua, blaming him for the pain inflicted by the whip. As I was not part of the group that year, I did not witness that. In 2015, however, nobody swore to the image of Christ. Once everybody was ready we left the *calvario.* Xinula first danced with her husband in front of the *calvario* and eventually all the other dancers formed two lines, with the marimba player closing the line behind all the dancers and continuing to play the marimba while walking. We headed towards the town center, while the group danced in walking-pace (Figure 105). Two assistants carried the marimba so that don Benancio could play while following the group. The dancing

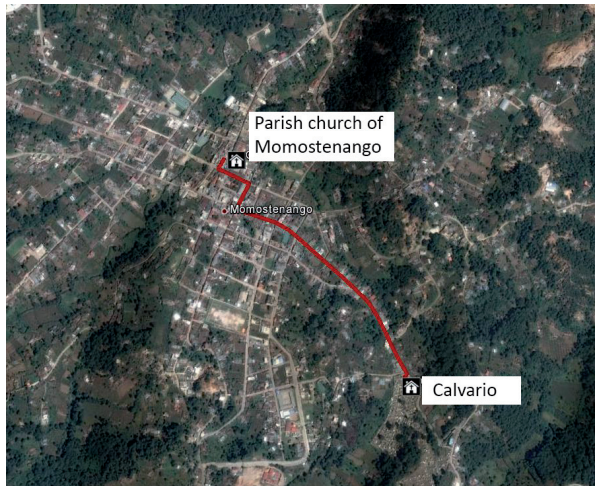


Figure 105. The route of the ritual dancing procession from the cemetery to the main plaza of Momostenango.

99 The Holy Sepulcher is taken out of the cave for Holy Week.



Figure 106. The Tz'ulab' move as a snake through Momostenango while they go from the cemetery to center of the town.

procession moved, in don Rigoberto's words, as a snake through the town: from the cemetery to the central square of Momostenango.

Xinula walked on the right side at the front of the group. Some men carried a whip in their hands or over their shoulder (Figure 106). From time to time a man cried a howling "woohoo" after which the others repeated the shout. The group followed the main road through town towards the center and stopped a few times to ask for donations from the spectators or shop owners. Luiz Lol wrote in a notebook the names of all who donated and the amount given. In the meanwhile, the dancers began to whip each other. The dancers volunteered to whip or get whipped: at this time, Xinula is not yet harassed and it is not yet clear who is the husband.

The dancing procession continues to move until it reaches the square in front of the Catholic Church, in the town center, where the dancers take a short break. Meanwhile, the organizers officially announce in the town hall that the dance has begun and ask for police support in making sure that no drunken spectators disturb the Tz'ulab'. Unfortunately, in either 2014 and 2015, no police support was given so the authors and their assistants[100] had to take on that responsibility.

After this short break the dance continues. In 2015 there were fifteen dancers participating, while in 2014 the dancing procession from the cemetery to the city center was performed by twelve dancers. However, when the group reached the square in front of the Catholic Church, four more men, who heard the announcements on the local radio *La Princesa Ixmukane*, came and joined the group[101]. The dancers usually position themselves in two lines facing each other. The woman then dances with one of the men, the Nab'e mu ("first *ladino"*), and together they walk forward in between the two lines of dancers

100 The assistants are older men who have participated in the dance since young age.

101 Cook (2000, p. 181) states that the dance is usually performed by twenty dancers. Don Leonso told me, however, that there is no fixed number of participants.



Figure 107. The *baile de la culebra* performed at the central square of Momostenango.

towards the marimba player. Here they shortly bow and continue to the right. After the husband and wife have presented themselves, the dancing men do the same and present themselves in pairs to the marimba player. When the dancers have formally presented themselves, the dance continues with the stealing of the wife and the whipping of the assaulters, just like on the fourth Friday of Lent and the two days prior to that: Xinula is the center of attention of all the dancing men. Just as on the Fourth Friday of Lent, they all try to touch her, dance with her, or carry her away on their back (Figure 107, Figure 108, and Figure 109).

Around one o'clock, there is a lunch break of one and a half hours. In previous years, each dancer would go and have lunch by himself. However, because this resulted in some dancers leaving the dance altogether, the authors decided beginning 2014 that they would organize a common lunch instead. In 2014, the cofradía of San Simón offered food and shelter for the dancers to rest. This was very uncommon because usually the *baile de la culebra* is organized without any involvement of the *cofradías*. Lunch was organized in 2015 by the family of don Rigoberto, and the director of the *Casa de la Cultura* of Momostenango offered a room. However, usually some of the dancers are too intoxicated or exhausted to eat lunch and pass the lunch break sleeping.

After lunch, the dance continues for around two more hours. During the dance, Francisco Lol invited me to dance several times. He always first asked me if I was willing to participate and then introduced me to the public. I danced with Xinula and was subsequently dragged by the husband to receive the whippings. Prior and after the whippings, the Tz'ulab' made explicit sexual comments and jokes in K'iche'. Don Leon (as Xinula) and Francisco Lol always made sure that I was doing fine during my dance. After several turns, I was appointed as Nab'e mu by Xinula and I dragged the other Tz'ulab' forward. The public was visibly entertained by my participation: a foreigner playing the role of a foreign person (the Nab'e mu).



Figure 108. Xinula is harassed by the Tz'ulab' on the central square.

The dance usually ends between five and six o'clock in the afternoon. The dance might become very unstructured towards the end, as it happened in 2015. The most intoxicated dancers took off their shirts to get hit on the bare skin, producing bloody wounds. Many of them hit each other at the same time and no longer paid attention to *Xinula*. On *Sábado de Gloria* (Holy Saturday) 2014 the end of the dance was rather quiet instead: at 5 o'clock the marimba player stopped and each dancer went home.

The next day, Easter Sunday, there are usually less Tz'ulab' participating in the dance because of the pain and the general physical distress from the previous day. In 2015, only one dancer did not return, but another one joined the group. The main difference from the Holy Saturday dance is that in the morning of Easter Sunday the dance begins at the central park, in front of the municipal office. After lunch break the dance continues on the central square again, but this time straight in front of the church, behind the altar *Kokoch* (Figure 110), whereas on the afternoon of Holy Saturday the dance is performed on the southern side of the plaza.

The reason for performing the dance in front of the municipality building on Sunday morning is simply because the square in front of the church is occupied by the weekly market. Around two o'clock in the afternoon the market winds down on the central square and there is enough room for the Tz'ulab' to perform there. However, the procession of the Resurrection also takes place in the morning and passes exactly on the same route of the dance. Therefore, the dance usually starts late on Easter Sunday, more or less after ten o'clock in the morning. In 2015, the group met in the *Casa de la Cultura* and waited for the procession to pass. Don Benancio, however, was still inebriated from the day before and was not able to play the marimba in the morning. The



Figure 109. Some of the dancers take of their shirts in the afternoon of Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, and are whipped on their bare skin.



Figure 110. On Easter Sunday the *baile de la culebra* takes places straight in front of the parish church of Momostenango.

first session of the dance was therefore cancelled and only the afternoon session took place.

We began the dance at two o'clock and ended at exactly six o'clock in the afternoon. On Easter Sunday 2014, the dance ended very disorderly. Some of the dancers took off their masks and thick jackets and were whipped on their bare skin. Though the strokes visibly produced bloody wounds and red scores on their sides and back, they still told the husband that it did not hurt and immediately ran back to the woman. Once the dance was over, each of the dancers went back home and would not come together as a group until the following year, two days before the fourth Friday of Lent. After Easter Sunday, on an appropriate day in the K'iche' calendar, don Leonso performed the finalizing ceremony, thanking the ancestors and the *Juyub-Taq'aj* ("mountain-valley, world) for watching over the dance and protecting the dancers.

After two days of dancing, the participants have deep and sore wounds on their sides. A specialized healer treats the dancers and cures the wounds by rubbing and massaging over them. The dancers are also sent to the thermal baths of Payaxu, just outside of Momostenango. Payaxu (derived from *pa ja' chu* which means "the place of smelly water", in reference to the smell of sulfur from the thermal bath) is the most popular public bath in Momostenango. Due to the curing qualities of its water, Tz'ulab' are sent there especially for recovery. There is also a separate bath for pregnant women and *comadronas* (midwifes) at Payaxu. The sulfur in the water has a healing effect on the damaged skin and within a few days, the participants are already feeling better.

VARIETY IN NARRATIVES

In each place where the dance is performed, it is accompanied by one or several narratives or it enacts a specific narrative. These narratives are in essence similar to each other and follow the outline described in the beginning of the chapter. Each contemporary narrative, however, provides insights in the message that is transferred during the ritual. Furthermore, many narratives show the K'iche' attitude towards the oppression endured under Spanish rule, first, and their *ladino* descendants, eventually. In this section, I will shortly discuss the different narratives that accompany the ritual dance. As a conclusion, I will discuss how the narratives or ritual storylines constitute indigenous historical accounts.

Momostenango

The general narrative that accompanies the dance in Momostenango is short and concrete. The Nab'e mu, or Spaniard, has a wife, known as Xinula. Xinula has the physical features of a Spanish lady, but is dressed in the local Momostecan dress. According to some people, the Nab'e mu is the brother of Xinula. The role of Xinula is always played by a *Chuchqajaw*, while the role of the Nab'e mu is played by the different Tz'ulab'. According to some, the Tz'ulab' represent the K'iche' people who attempt to seduce the wife of the Spaniard. They sexually harass her and steal her from the Spaniard as an act of defiance. The Spaniard whips each seducer in an attempt to protect his wife. According to Ordónez (1968, p. 36), the narrative tells about the negative consequences that result from engaging with an adulterous woman. The Tz'ulab' do not surrender. Even though the Tz'ulab' suffer and appear to die, they resurrect and continue their fight, they do not surrender. According to the *autores*, the dance is an account of the colonial oppression of the K'iche' people by the Spaniards and a resistance against them. There is no formal ending of the narrative, the resistance and punishment continues until the *autores* decide that it has been enough and the dancers go home.

Joyabaj

The sexual interplay between the male dancers and a female personage is central to the performance of the *baile de la culebra* in Joyabaj as well. The dance, performed in the center of town, is set on an imaginary cattle plantation, whose owner, Juan Antonio, is a *ladino* and his wife is a Maya shepherdess (played by a man) (Hutcheson, 2009, p. 873). The wife is assisted by two people, a black cook and a domestic servant (see Hutcheson, 2009, pp. 875-876), while Juan Antonio has two administrative *ladino* assistants: a labor boss of the plantation and a secretary. Several K'iche' *vaqueros* attend the bull, a personage dressed as a bull. Furthermore, there are two clowns that entertain the bull, and two young shepherds (played by young children). Finally, there is a person known as the *Maxeño* (inhabitant of Chichicastenango), who is a diviner and healer.

The plantation owner suggests to his assistant to make a celebration with dance and music in honor of the patron saint (see Hutcheson, 2009). After consuming a ceremonial meal and drink, the plantation owner suggests to the *vaqueros* to organize a bullfight, but before that they have to go and find snakes. The K'iche' *vaqueros* find several snakes and dance with them, but once they hand one to the plantation owner he is bitten and dies on a woven mat. Meanwhile, the plantation secretary runs away with the wife of the plantation owner (in other occasions she runs away with any other helper of the plantation). The Maxeño brings the plantation owner back to life by letting him confess his sins and by letting another snake bite him. When he resurrects, he goes after his wife and the plantation secretary adulator. With the help of the Maxeños divination, he searches for them in the four corners of the town square until he finds them and punishes them. Before the final comical bull fight, the secretary passes by each *vaquero* to register their names to work on a sugar cane plantation on the coast, as used to be done in the past. With the bull fight the dance comes to an end.

San Andrés Sajcabajá

In San Andrés Sajcabajá, the dance is performed by twelve to eighteen dancers who represent distinct characters (Looper, 2009, pp. 205-206). Most of the dance is based on improvisation between the dancers. Here the men fight with each other to be with the women. Usually there are two to three seducing women who tease males in the public and the dancers. There are several dancers that impersonate

the character of the *Mam* ("grandfather"), a character with a long moustache, at the same time. A couple of persons are known as the Barbuas. The Barbuas have a white mask and big sunglasses, and sometimes carry a gun. These persons seem to represent Spaniards. They hunt and shoot the Ajooj, a character that has grains of corn around the mouth, indicating, according to the specialists of San Andrés Sajcabajá, that they represent animals that eat the maize plants from the *milpas* (Looper, 2009, p. 206)[102]. Sometimes several dancers hold snakes in their hands, and in the past they used to whip eachother with bundles of grass. There does not seem to be a husband to the numerous women dancing in San Andrés Sajcabajá.

Rabinal

The dance in Rabinal is an account of suffering from goiter or malaria, brought to the dancers by the mountain gods that bring rain and wind (Mace, 1967, pp. 96-97). During the dance, the performers continuously scream that they are suffering[103] and that they need a remedy or medicine, a reference to a sip of *aguardiente* (Mace, 1967, p. 112). The dancers perform around a woman named Lola, who teases and seduces them. She is known as the mother of the male dancers, nevertheless, there is a clear erotic play between her and the dancers. The men also make sexual gestures to the public. Lola throws the men on the ground, causing them pain, but then she helps them up again. The woman was possibly accompanied by her husband in earlier performances. According to Marcelo Díaz, the director of the dance, the men are the angels that bring the rain (Mace, 1967, pp. 107-108). According to Mace, the dance represents the ability of earth to inflict pain and suffering on the people in case they lack respect.

Chichicastenango

Currently the *baile de la culebra* is not performed in Chichicastenango. Both Schultze Jena and Bunzel have documented the dance here, however. There were two groups and a woman participating in the serpent dance in Momostenango (Bunzel, 1952, p. 426). One group was that of the Spaniards or *Kaxlan Winaq*. They carried swords and white masks. The other group was that of the *Mam* or *Viejos* ("the grandfathers"), which represented the K'iche' people. The dancers danced with the snakes, inviting first the woman to dance with the snake in her neck after which the Spaniards did the same. The K'iche' put the serpents in their clothes and let them pass along their bodies until it came out again. After this first part, the *Mam* tried to steal the woman from the Spaniards and sexually assault her. The Spaniards tried to defend her by punishing the *Mam*.

San Bartolo and Pologua

According to Termer (1957, pp. 217-218), the dance in these two villages was almost the same. He writes the following: "the argument of the dance consisted only of the scene of the indigenous woman who got stolen by the *gracejos*, which stood out in sexual aggregation and was very obscene. One after the other engaged in sexual intercourse with the woman while exchanging impudent gestures and phrases with her. Finally, the dancers made jokes with each other through the performance of perverse sexual acts" (Termer, 1957, p. 217; translation mine). After this first part, the dancers lined up in two lines, screaming and shouting, and started hitting each other with the whips. After this, they dropped on the ground where they remained for a while, acting as if dead. In Pologua, the dancer would dance in the second part with the living snakes.

Santa Cruz del Quiché

According to Termer, the dance emphasized in Santa Cruz del Quiché distinct ethnic identities. In the beginning of the 20th century, one dancer impersonated a woman while the rest of the dancers were divided into two groups: one group was dressed in rags and the other wore the local dresses from Chichicastenango and Chiché (Termer, 1957, p. 216). In this last group, there was also a male dancer dressed in the Sololá dress, from the Kaqchikel speaking region. Although dressed in local costumes, one performer represented a European person, who danced with the woman, while the other dancers – the Old Men – attempted to steal her from him. Meanwhile the groups from Chichicastenango-

102 As I discuss below, according to the first author of the dance in Momostenango, Don Leonso, the *baile de la culebra* began in Momostenango when the ancestors needed protection against animals that were destroying the milpas.

103 "Oh, now it's beginning! Now it's hot, and now it's cold!" (Mace, 1967, p. 112).

Chiché and those dressed in rags fight with each other with whips. Termer mentions that there is a lot of improvisation and sexually explicit jokes between the Lady, the European, and the Old Men. The perfomer in Sololá clothing is especially made fun of. After the fights, a jar with snakes is brought forth and the dancers dance with a snake.

While on fieldwork in 2016 I attended the performance of the *baile de la culebra* in Santa Cruz del Quiché on the 18th of August during the festivities for the patron saint Santa Elena de la Cruz (12th -19th of august). The dance was performed next to the stairs of the church in the main square of the city. Two large groups of around fifteen dancers each stood opposite of each other. There was one dancer dressed as a Spaniard, wearing a mask with a moustache while dressed in a *conquista* outfit. There were also two women played by two men, one belonging to each of the groups. Both women wore the indigenous dress and had *ladina* faces. Furthermore, each group had a person that impersonated a *cofradía* member from Chichicastenango (one had a white face, the other had a black face). Both groups tried to provoke each other by harassing the lady that belonged to the other group, and tried pull eachother on the ground in a fight. The Spaniard is not much involved in this.

A living snake is still used in the performance of the *baile de la culebra* in Santa Cruz del Quiché. At times that the dancers are not harassing the lady or fighting with each other, one of the organizers brings the snake in and it is slipped under the clothes of some of the dancers (Figure 111). As I was not as involved in the dance as in Momostenango, I could not see clearly what led to the introduction of the snake in the dance, or for what reason the snake was taken away again. After the snake had been taken away by the organizer, the dancers continued to harass each other and the women. After a while, they lined up and circled in a counter clockwise direction, one behind the other, over the plaza. This marked the end of the dance for the morning. Later in the afternoon the dancers would continue again but I was not able to assist at that moment.

Santa Lucía Utitlán

The *baile de la culebra* in Santa Lucía Utitlán is documented by Saquic Calel (1970) according to whom more than sixty dancers were involved in the dance. The main protagonists were a woman and her husband. Similar to the dance in Momostenango, the woman was dressed in indigenous clothing but her mask was that of a foreigner. The husband was a foreigner, a Caxlanwinaq. Furthermore, there were over fifty cowboys and another twelve dancers that impersonated bulls. The masks were made of black leather and had a beard and eyebrows made of white wool. The apparent storyline of the dance is similar to that of Momostenango: cowboys try to steal the wife of the foreigner who punishes them for this with a whip.



Figure 111. A snake is pulled from underneath the shirt of one of the dancers of the *baile de la culebra* in Santa Cruz del Quiché.

HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES IN RITUAL DANCE

Hutcheson argues that the dancers in the *baile de la culebra* are "reproducing different elements of historical and social practice within a story line that has all but been forgotten, so that the elements themselves stand forth as abstract and decontextualized cultural tokens" (2009, p. 872). In contrast to him, I argue that the meaning of the *baile de la culebra* and the historical lessons that it teaches are very well understood by both the dancers and

the public. The form in which history is presented, however, is different from the Western tradition, which makes it difficult for researchers to recognize it.

In all the communities where the dance is performed, the *baile de la culebra* stands as a performance of the history of the ancestors and the community. However, the ritual dances do not tell data and dates in a chronological fashion. As these dances are rituals, they have the ability to incorporate those parts of history whose impact have been so traumatic that it should never be forgotten (Severi, 1996). By pointing out shared historical trauma, the ritual contributes to the mutual identification of members in the community and emphasizes the shared hope of overcoming the trauma, in this case the processes of colonial oppression, in the future. The ritual memory embedded in the dance is updated to the current situations lived in the communities and their members at each performance (Rappaport, 1999). Therefore, it is not surprising that each dance has a slightly different twist, narrative or emphasis from the other, and that elements such as Hollywood masks become incorporated.

Similar to a Catholic priest who recites a part of the Bible during mass – and not the entire biblical story – the *baile de la culebra* emphasizes particular experiences and memories of the community's past together with social conventions such as morals and taboos. Doing so, the dance relates the past with current social concerns at stake within the community, bridging the gap between the ancestors and the living descendants. Ritual memory in the *baile de la culebra* is a tool to overcome the lack of a direct link to the past or access to first person testimonies of it due to the inevitable death of those who lived and experienced historical processes (Assmann, 2003). The never-changing aspect of the ritual enables the performers to transfer the message of the ancestors to the future generations (Rappaport, 1999, p. 187).

Therefore, the *calvario* and cemetery are such important places for the performance of the dance in Momostenango: this is where the ancestors who lived this history lay. Whereas their experience can only be reenacted in ritual, the ritual dance itself can, and should, be performed time after time. Whoever wants to organize the dance needs to be accompanied by one or several elders who have participated in the dance and who can pass on their knowledge directly to the new generation of authors. In Momostenango, Don Leonso was the elder who ensured the right passing on of knowledge, assisted by Don Rigoberto. Thus, while events of the past cannot be re-experienced in daily life, the direct transfer of knowledge on how to perform the dance prevents the memory of the past from disappearing. Furthermore, it ensures the experience of a shared past, which contributes to the feeling of belonging to a community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The meanings of a dance – as there is no singular meaning – differ per person as during life each person learned different skills to interpret its given meaning (Ingold, 2011). However, the authors who organize the dance have a particular set of intentions or ideas that they are conveying, and the narratives about the dance that circulate within the community ensure that specific meanings are revealed to all spectators.

As some of the narratives show, Christian history plays an important part of the history of the communities. In Rabinal, for example, "the first dancers got goiter centuries ago when they came from Jerusalem to carry the Blessed Sacrament, and it is because of this belief that the Patzcá dancers lead the Corpus procession" (Mace, 1967, p. 126). The process of Christian and pre-conquest historical traditions becoming integrated and part of the same traditions can also be noticed in indigenous manuscripts dating from the Early Colonial period. For instance, in the *Título de los señores de Totonicapán* – an early colonial K'iche' manuscript that was probably written in 1554 – the sacred origin place Tulan[104] from which the K'iche' ancestors have migrated to the Highlands of Guatemala is transpositioned to have been located in Israel (Carmack & Mondloch, 1983, p. 213).

In Momostenango, the dance commemorates the suffering of Jesus Christ as the Christo Acapetagua. The performance of the *baile de la culebra* falls together with celebrations of the fourth Friday of Lent and Holy Week, which remember the whipping of Christ and his crucifixion. According to the authors, the *baile de la culebra* reenacted the suffering of Christ and the sacrifice he made for all the people in the world.

104 The concept of Tulan was originally adopted from the Central Mexican traditions where it refers to the capital of the legendary Toltecs.

The strong identification with Jesus Christ among the indigenous peoples of Latin America might be due to the fact that both lived in an oppressed situation in which they were not allowed to follow their own worldview (Frassani, 2017). The ritual dance is an expression of a history of oppression and suffering which came with the colonization of the Highlands of Guatemala. Everywhere the *baile de la culebra* takes place the punishing person is a *ladino* or *ladina*, a foreigner. In Momostenango, for example, the Tz'ulab' dancers are said to represent the K'iche' people. Dressed as poor people, with old and ragged clothes, they are whipped by the male protagonist who represents the colonial Spaniard. He protects his wife from the K'iche' people who try to steal her from him. The whipping seems to be a reminder of the whipping punishments that were introduced by the Spaniards at the time of colonization and were applied for public punishments (Chuchiak, 2000, p. 239). The Kaqchikel document *Memorial de Sololá*, a 17th-century indigenous document that registers the Kakchikel history before and after conquest, shows for example an increasing documentation of public whippings on the central square on Sundays from 1590 onwards (Recinos, 1988, p. 139). The whippings in the dance call to mind, at the same time, the whipping of Christ who continued to resist an oppressive regime, and finally had to pay the ultimate price. In the experience of contemporary Highland communities, the ancestors have also died in resistance, fighting for the rights of their people. The dance incorporates the social memory of these events. Although the current participants did not receive the strokes from the Spaniards during their lifetimes, the characters that they impersonate did feel the whip. In this sense, the Tz'ulab' embody memory of the suffering of the K'iche' people; while the impersonators have a restricted life time and will pass away in the end, the Tz'ulab' will continue to exist as long as the elders share their knowledge with the next generations. By dressing as a Tz'ulab', the ritual dancers engage with history and transfer the experience of the suffering during the Colonial and post-independence period.

The history of suffering and resistance to oppression in the *baile de la culebra* is indeed not restricted to the Colonial period. In Joyabaj, the dance is performed in the center of the town, but the setting is a plantation, a place that has played an important role in the history of many Highland Guatemala communities (Pozas, 1952). After the independence of Guatemala, the K'iche' people and all other indigenous peoples of Guatemala continued to live in a situation of internal oppressive regimes (Schlesinger & Kinzer, 2005). People from the highlands were forced to move to the coastal areas to work on cattle farms and coffee, banana, rubber, and pineapple plantations (Carmack, 2001, p. 55). The forced temporal resettlement of Highland communities to Guatemala's Lowlands plantations at the end of the 19th and throughout the 20th century resulted in an enormous loss of knowledge and traditions (Termer, 1957, p. 59; Wagley, 1941, p. 30). This history does not only live on in the memory of the K'iche' people but is shared among many other peoples in Guatemala. According to a calendar priest in the Ixil region of Nebaj, for example, a "grave break in the old traditions […] took place when the people were sent in great numbers to the coastal plantations. This first happened in 1894" (Lincoln, 1942, p. 116). Money earned on the plantation could only be spent at the plantation shop, and alcoholism, triggered by suffering under extreme circumstances, caused many workers to fall into debt and never be able to emancipate from the plantation owners (Burgos, 1985, pp. 54-64). Furthermore, today, many accounts of sexual abuse on the part the plantation owners and their assistants continue to be told in the Highland communities.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the memory of the plantations has continued in and outside of ritual in the indigenous communities. The dance in Joyabaj reproduces the plantation hierarchy – including a ladino boss, his indigenous wife, a black cook, a domestic servant, a ladino labor boss for the plantation and the ladino plantation secretary – which after the death of the boss completely dissolves.

The form of suffering that stands central in the dance of Rabinal is that of deadly diseases. Although diseases were present in precolonial Mesoamerica, the indigenous historical documents mention explicitly these diseases that were introduced by the Europeans. This could have been because of a political statement, to highlight the destructive effect of the conquest, but recent studies indicate that the effects of newly introduced diseased were

indeed horrible (George Lovell, 1992; Guerra, 1986; Roberts, 1989). The exact numbers are highly contested but the introduction of new diseases caused the total population to diminish tremendously (George Lovell, 2001, pp. 58-60; Whitmore, 1991). This means an almost complete destruction of a continent. The *Memorial de Sololá* mentions for example the first arrival of plague between 1519 and 1520, when the Spaniards had just set foot on Mexican soil (Recinos, 1988, p. 95). After that, several waves of diseases followed, resulting in an extremely traumatic experience:

It was the [twenty-]fifth year[105]
When the plague began, oh my children
They first got sick with coughing
Then they became sick with blood and yellow urine
It was truly horrible, the death that came by at that time
When the Lord 6 Ajmak passed away
We were close to the arrival of the great darkness
The great night
Over the heads of our ancestors
Over our heads, oh my children
When they got sick of eruptions
[…]
How bad was the stinking smell of the dead people
When our grandparents died
Half of the people were thrown in the canyon
Where the dogs and vultures ate the people
It was a terrible death, how your grandparents were killed
(Recinos, 1988, pp. 95-96; translation mine)

It was not only the plague that caused epidemics of sickness and death. The *Memorial de Sololá* mentions a certain disease that caused eruptions among children and led to high rate of child mortality in the 16th century. In 1601 there was an epidemic of a throat sickness that caused many deaths among men and women, and left many orphans behind (Recinos, 1988, p. 154). Diego de Landa describes a similar suffering by outbreaks of the plague on the Yucatan Peninsula (De Landa, 1966, pp. 19-20). The ritual memory of the *baile de la culebra* in Rabinal expresses the concerns about these sicknesses. The experience of the ancestors, who died or who have seen people dying of these diseases, is embedded and transferred in the ritual. Although goiter is not a disease that was introduced by the Spaniards, its prominent presence in the dance is probably a reminder of the epidemics that the ancestors had to suffer. Although the disease is the main reason for suffering of the dancers in Rabinal, the element of punishment is still present: the *ladina* throws the sick dancers on the grounds and mocks them for their suffering.

Although the dance clearly expresses the unequal power relations between the K'iche' people and the ladinos, it does not portray the K'iche' people as a victim. The *baile de la culebra* rather tells a history of resistance. In Momostenango, each attempt to oppression by the ladino is followed by resistance of the Tz'ulab'. As they are not in power to whip the ladino, the Tz'ulab' perform other rebellious acts to resist the power of the ladino. They steal his wife and treat her as, according to the histories told in the Highland communities, how the ladino treated the indigenous women on the plantations: they sexually assault her[106]. Many times the woman joins the Tz'ulab' willingly, preferring the "guys dressed in rags" over the fancy ladino. The ladino becomes a person who is pathetically trying to keep control over something that is outside of his power. While he drags one Tz'ul away from his wife, she is being attended by at least two others. He punishes the Tz'ulab' by whipping them but they resist it, they ask for more. And if the husband refuses to whip them more, they ridicule him in front of the public. For the public, it is a mystery how the Tz'ulab' can

105 This means the 25th year after the rebellion by the Kaqchikel people against the K'iche' people, which is in the *Memorial de Sololá* the main reference point for discussing the recent past. The 25th year coincides with the Gregorian year 1521 (Recinos, 1988, p. 95).

106 Rape and sexual dominance over "the Other" is an instrument of power and oppression is currently still applied in warfare and invasions (Card, 1996). The symbolic sexual assault to oppressor's wife during a ritual dance seems to be a reaction on the reality of life on the plantations or as a maid in the city, where, according to what is generally told in the Highland communities, many women have been raped by the man of the house. In the baile de la culebra the representation of sexual harassment might be a form of showing that they are actually in control over and dominate the ladino. On the other hand, however, the sexual harassment in the dance is also likely to be an expression of the very dominant machoism present in the Highland communities themselves, where flirting women are generally considered to be guilty for being raped (R. Thompson & Hanamaikai, 2005, pp. 126-137) and where cases violence against women, rape, and femicide are increasing each year (Morales Tujillo, 2010, pp. 127-137; Muñoz, 2016).

endure so many whippings but the dancers show no pain or fear, even though their wounds are bleeding and swollen. Receiving the strokes willingly shows the determination of the K'iche' communities to resist the colonial oppression, no matter if this would lead to death. Therefore, some of the dancers symbolically die after the strokes, while pursuing the collective goal of the K'iche' communities: resistance against the colonial oppression. It is a sacrifice for the survival of the future generations. The *baile de la culebra* shows that the K'iche' peoples are not victims of history, but rather a group with clear intentions that rejects the supposed power of the invaders by working collectively.

Here the dance connects again to the history of Jesus Christ, who not just suffered but also resisted the dominant powers. Similar to the K'iche' ancestors, he had to pay for his resistance with his life. Because of that, he was never a victim; it was his choice to fight for his ideals and sacrifice his own life for that of the future generations. The K'iche' People live in a similar context where they are marginalized for, among other reasons, having a different religion or religious practices from those who are in the government. The identification with Christ is therefore not just based on the shared fate of suffering but maybe even more on the resistance, which is both commemorated in Momostenango on the 4th Friday of Lent and Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The Tz'ulab' emphasized many times that they hit each other to commemorate Jesus Christ. In essence, it is therefore similar to the Christian flagellation practices that imitate the passion of Christ, but it commemorates each community's own history.

Apart from oppression and resistance, on some occasions the dance indicates the social relations between different indigenous communities. For example, in Joyabaj the one who plays a person from Chichicastenango represents what Chichicastenango is mostly known for: keeping the knowledge of the ancestors. Ancestor communication and revival through ceremonies are examples of this knowledge. During the 20th century there were three indigenous communities represented in the dance of Santa Cruz Quiché: the two main groups wear the dress from Chiché and Chichicastenango, and another individual represents a Kaqchikel neighbor from Sololá. In the region it is well-known that Chiché and Chichicastenango used to celebrate the feast of their patron saint Santo Tómas together but split because of disagreements and fights. The dance mimics the old feud between the two villages. The Kaqchikel impersonator is especially the victim of cruel jokes and harassment, which probably refers to old tensions between the neighboring linguistic groups (Termer, 1957, p. 216). These tensions are addressed in several Colonial period documents written by indigenous hands such as the *Memorial de Sololá: Anales de los Kaqchikeles* (Recinos, 1988, pp. 78-97) the *Título de los señores de Totonicapán* (Carmack & Mondloch, 1983, pp. 197-200) and the *Popol Vuh* (Christenson, 2007, pp. 257-267), and also continues today in the Highlands of Guatemala, despite the efforts of the Maya Movement to unite all Maya communities and linguistic groups. Today, however, the *baile de la culebra* in Santa Cruz Quiché has incorporated many new dresses and it is not clearly discernible what towns they represent. Rhonda Taube, who did research on the incorporation of Hollywood-inspired elements in traditional dance, has shown that these dances are continuously updated and made relevant (R. Taube, 2009, pp. 97-117). By doing this, they continue to be appealing for new generations while, to a certain extent, still being able to tell the history of the ancestors.

In summary, in each community where the *baile de la culebra* is performed, important experiences of history are incorporated. As the dance coincides with agricultural moments these histories are told within the context of the agricultural cycle. Don Leonso explained to me that the ancestors started the dance in Momostenango a long time ago because they needed protection against the insects and animals that came to eat the *milpa*. The dance was performed for the ancestors and divine beings that watch over human life and over the *milpa.* The narrative of San Andrés Sajcabajá clearly expressed this concern as one of the protagonists, *Barbua*, tries to shoot the one who eats the corn, the *Ajooj*. The *Ajooj* has pieces of food around the mouth of his mask, showing his activities at the *milpa*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the *milpa* is of vital importance for the survival of the Highland communities. Ceremonies and dances such as the *baile de la culebra* protect the *milpa* against plagues, rain, wind and droughts.

V. Symbolism and Continuity

For writing this chapter, I am greatly indebted to don Leonso Lol, Francisco Lol, Luiz Lol, don Rigoberto Itzep, don José Angel Xeloj, Gregorio Itzep, Carlos Pérez Acabal and all the Tz'ulab' from Momostenango for the knowledge that they shared with me. Errors that might appear in the contents of this chapter are my fault alone. If such errors or any misrepresentations appear, I would like to apologize beforehand to the community of Momostenango.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues on the *baile de la culebra*. While the previous chapter explored the incorporation of history in this ritual, this chapter examines possible lines of cultural continuity in the dance. I am aware that the *baile de la culebra* is the outcome of processes of cultural interaction and that the dance, as we see it today, is a colonial product (see Looper, 2009, pp. 207-212). However, I am interested in knowing how the Maya people may have possibly adopted tools introduced by the Spaniards to give continuity to cultural values that remained relevant in the colonized environment. To what extent can the *baile de la culebra* be understood as a colonial reinterpretation of precolonial cultural heritage? The main aim here is to contribute to the understanding of the process of transmission of cultural values – the ethical guidelines for living life in a sustainable way in relation with the environment – which have been established and encoded in symbolic elements by the ancestors. Therefore, this chapter is geared towards a first explorative step of tracing the symbolic antecedents of the dance in prehispanic iconography.

The methodology that will be used for tracing possible prehispanic antecedents of the meaning embedded in the *baile de la culebra* is based on what has been called the ethno-iconological approach. This approach has its roots in the work of Karl Anton Nowotny (1961, pp. 272-275) who compared ethnographic data regarding the ritual practice of counting bundles for offerings among the contemporary Tlapanecs – documented by Leonard Schultze Jena (1938) – with a selection of prehispanic central Mexican codices known as the Borgia Group, and was able to prove with this analogy that these codices were used as mantic instruments. Nowotny's focus on connecting the cultural heritage of contemporary indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica with ancient objects and prehispanic visual culture was continued by his student, Ferdinand Anders, who examined continuity in the practice of paper making in the Otomi community of San Pablito in the Sierra de Puebla (Anders & Jansen, 1986). Maarten Jansen – student of Ferdinand Anders – and Aurora Pérez Jiménez developed this methodological approach further into what they coined "post-colonial hermeneutics" by incorporating the goal of restoring the broken ties in social memory in current day indigenous communities (Jansen, 1988, 2012; Jansen & Pérez Jiménez, 2011, 181-216). Post-colonial hermeneutics builds on the ethno-iconological approach but proceeds to "reconnect the images of the codices to on-going cultural traditions, in the wider context of the struggle of indigenous peoples for emancipation, dignity and cultural rights" (Jansen, 2012, p. 82).

The methodology of post-colonial hermeneutics is an adaptation of Erwin Panofsky's iconological approach to the interpretation of art which consists of three levels namely the descriptive level, the level of thematic clusters and the level of deeper meaning (Van der Loo 1987; Oudijk, 2008). The first level is the identification and description of symbolic elements that appear in a cluster. Before any meaning can be extracted from a visual

representation, distinct elements need to be analyzed and described. The second level has a thematic focus and analyzes how clusters of symbolic elements constitute a specific meaning in a visual representation. In the ethno-iconological approach, the meaning of ancient visual culture is explored by making diachronic and synchronic analogies.

Analogies between past and contemporary societies have been criticized for not taking into account the dramatic effect of colonization: while a symbol may continue over a long time, its meaning may actually change. This fact has led George Kubler (1961, 1981) to argue that analogies between the past and the present cannot be used as a tool for interpreting Mesoamerican visual representations.

Henry Nicholson (1976) and Peter van der Loo (1987) have shown, however, that analogies of societies separated in time are both possible and valid. Peter van der Loo (1987, pp. 9-26) argues, for example, that a careful analysis of the historical processes and "thematic units" – clusters of symbolic elements – enables analogies as tools for producing valid interpretations of visual representations. In analogies, the thematic unit of a known context is used to understand another, similar, thematic unit in a less known, but comparable, context (Oudijk, 2008, p. 126). In this chapter, the known context is the context in which the *baile de la culebra* is performed today whereas the lesser known context is the context in which similar thematic units appear in the prehispanic Maya culture and, to a lesser extent, in other Mesoamerican cultures. While the contexts are separated in time, they are comparable in cultural and spatial terms. The analysis of similar thematic units is important in the process of interpreting as the meaning of a visual representation is constituted by a web of meaningful relations between the symbolic elements in the thematic unit: when specific elements reappear in a similar conjunction as they did before, it is likely that the representation has the same meaning. However, if the time span between two comparable thematic units increases, then the possibility that the meaning of these units has changed also increases. Therefore, in order to come to a sound and valid argument it is necessary to include the historical processes into the analysis as this enable insights in the possible changes of the meaning of the thematic units.

The third level of the ethno-iconological approach is the level of the "the deeper meaning", which relates to the social, historical, and ideological context of a visual representation. This level analyzes what the representation means in relation to broader social aspects of the society where it is displayed or, in the case of a dance, is performed. Similarly, the broader significance of having a group of similar representations at a particular moment in society can also be discussed on this level of interpretation. For example: what does it mean that these dances are performed today within this particular social context?

While this methodology is actually developed to produce interpretations of specific pictographic and iconographic representations, I use the post-colonial hermeneutics approach to discuss the symbolic meaning of a dance. Because dance is a performance and not a static object, it has the capacity to change and incorporate new elements, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, similar to pictographic representations, the dance that I discuss in these chapters consists of specific symbolic elements that enable its identification as the *baile de la culebra*. This means that the thematic unit is shared and recognized on a regional scale. While a dance performance is a different medium than, for example, a codex, I argue that thematic units on different media are comparable on the second-level analysis. A painting sequence on which the passion of Christ is depicted has, for example, on this level a meaning that is comparable to the physical reenactment of the passion of Christ during Holy Week. However, on the third level of analysis, which discusses the meaning of a visual representation within its social, political, historical, and ideological context, the medium that transfers a certain message can be indicative of specific social processes.

In this chapter I explore the meaning of the *baile de la culebra* by looking into some of the core symbolic elements that constitute the thematic unit. These elements are: sacrifice, the snake, death and rebirth, and the female protagonist and her husband. I also take into account the element of time, which is implicitly present in the timing of the dance performances in the Highlands of Guatemala, and which hints at underlying elements related to the agricultural cycle, the sprouting of the maize, and

the need for water. I discuss the conceptualization of each of these elements as well as the internal relationship between the different elements within the *baile de la culebra* to come to an understanding of the symbolic meaning of the *baile de la culebra*. Furthermore, the contemporary connotations of each of the elements are compared to similar prehispanic and colonial connotations and conceptualizations through a discussion of colonial sources and prehispanic iconography. While the iconographic material is extensive, I have restricted myself in each case to discussing only specific illustrative examples that clearly show similarity in conceptualization.

In the last part of the chapter, I compare the thematic unit that constitutes the *baile de la culebra* with thematic units that appear in two iconographic cases from the late postclassic and late classic Maya culture, respectively the Dresden Codex page 74 and the codex style Snake Lady vessels, suggesting that the contemporary dance may contribute to the interpretation of these depictions. The analogy that I draw is not conclusive, as a more in-depth analysis of the historical processes is needed. However, the following discussion should be taken as a first explorative step towards the identification of possible prehispanic symbolic antecedents of the dance. More research on the topic will definitely be needed.

Finally, at the end of the chapter, I suggest on the basis of the previous analogies a hypothetical name for the female protagonist of the *baile de la culebra* and discuss the meaning of the dance within its current social, historical, and ideological context. In this third-level analysis I go into questions such as: why is the dance performed? Why is it performed in different communities at different moments in time? How does the performance of the dance show the underlying philosophy of sharing a burden? And how does the dance relate to the *chol q'ij* calendar?

DANCING AND WHIPPING

In the previous chapter I explored the whipping during the dance as a form of punishment. Several of the dancers, however, emphasized that the dance is also a sacrifice for Jesus Christ and the ancestors of the community. This section examines the symbolic meanings of whipping within the dance and it explores its relationship with precolonial sacrifice.

Dance as Sacrifice

Participating in the *baile de la culebra* is, according to the organizers, a form of offering or sacrifice. The Tz'ulab' dedicate themselves for a period of nine years to dancing for the ancestors and for the benefit of the community. The financial costs associated with this dance are relatively low in comparison to other Highland Guatemala dances, wherein the participants have to rent elaborate masks and costumes from the *morería* (a workshop that makes and rents out masks and costumes for dances). This aspect has possibly contributed to the survival of the dance in many communities. Still, each of the dancers of the *baile de la culebra* has to forego their work to participate in the dance. Although almost all the dancers have little material resources, they nevertheless take the burden of the dance and skip work on the days that the dance takes place. The authors carry the responsibility of conducting the ceremonies and preparing the food for the rest of the participants. Both obligations are a sacrifice for them as both the ceremonies and the preparation of the food costs time and money. Before 2014, the dancers would bring their own masks to the dance. This is still allowed, but the organizers realized that many masks had been lost over time, which resulted in fewer people participating in the dance. Don Rigoberto therefore took the burden in 2014 to buy new masks in Chichicastenango and to keep them at a central place (the Misión Maya). The dance itself is also a physical offering. During two or three consecutive days, the participants dance for hours in the warm sun wearing heavy dresses. Furthermore, for weeks after the dance, the sore bodies and bloody wounds caused by the whippings will remind the Tz'ulab' of the strokes they had to endure (Figure 112).

Until quite recently, whips were used on many occasions in the Highlands of Guatemala. For example, doña María Hernández Ajanel told me that when she was young the leaders of the four *barrios* of Momostenango would watch over the blessing of the water on Holy Saturday. Everybody had to stand in line and those who would push or cheat would be whipped by the authorities. Whipping was a tool for punishing or disciplining a person. On the same day, still today, children are whipped with branches of a tree by their parents to take away their *mak* ("sin") or *awas* ("taboo"). Throughout the year, parents keep

track of the behavior of their children: if they use many swear words or behave improperly, they will be whipped.

Ruth Bunzel elaborated several times on the use of the whip during her fieldwork in the 1930s in Chichicastenango. According to her, children would also be whipped on Holy Saturday to make them grow faster (Bunzel, 1952, p. 224). Also on the first day of the new Gregorian year "[…] they whip the boys who do not grow, and then the trees that do not give fruit. If I have an orange tree that does not give fruit, I buy a basket of oranges, with their stems, and hang them on the tree that the tree may take note, and one whips the tree" (Bunzel, 1952, p. 423). She especially mentions whipping in relation to sins (Bunzel, 1952, pp. 96, 293, 326). For example, sins can play a part in problems during childbirth and whipping sets free these sins (Bunzel, 1952, p. 96). In all these cases the whipping is a form of penitence. This practice is very reminiscent of the Colonial period Spanish Holy Week during which sins were publically whipped away so that after Easter everybody could have a new start without sins (Gage, 2000, Chapter XV). As Looper (2009, pp. 207-212) has pointed out, the *baile de la culebra* certainly has an element of disciplining and liberation of sins, as it coincides with Holy Week and the passion of Christ. However, the organizers are very keen on the fact that the dance is a sacrifice.

Blood sacrifices occur occasionally in the Highlands of Guatemala. Today in Santiago Atitlan bloodlettings are performed by the *cofradía de San Nicolás* with an obsidian blade which is kept in a chest together with a sacred bundle dedicated to María Castelyan and two or three gourd cups that are used to gather the blood from the bloodletting ritual (Christenson, 2001b, p. 112). After the bloodletting ritual, the blood is left at places that are related to the entrance of the underworld. Franz Termer (1957, p. 191) describes a case of bloodletting in Santa Eulalia which he documented during his fieldwork (years 1925-1929) in Guatemala: rituals specialist gather at a sacred cave for an entire day and night without drinking or eating anything. They rub their chests with a ball of wax mixed with glass splinters until they bleed. While practicing the auto-sacrifice, they are able to foresee problems concerning harvest, hunger, drought, and politics. La Farge elaborates



Figure 112. A Tz'ul dancer showing proudly his bloody wounds in the *calvario* of Momostenango.

on the auto-sacrifice in Santa Eulalia in relation to rain. For example, before important dances the participants would whip themselves or eachother with leather belts into which pieces of glass were attached to petition that no rain would fall during the event (La Farge, 1994, p. 113). Later on he elaborates on the role of whipping and bleeding in the petition of rain:

> *The rite of* Txaij *is performed to bring the rain and it can be included in any praying routine. The* Alcaldes Rezadores *whip themselves in front of the crosses with belts in which pieces little pieces of glass,* txaij, *are glued with bee wax. Their assistants wash their backs with water so that the blood can run more freely and to induce heavy rainfalls, represented by the streams of blood.*

> *The flagellation can of course derive from ancient Catholic practices but the use of glass fragments that have the ancient name for obsidian suggests that this is a survival from an ancient and well known Maya practice. Applying the glass with the whip rather than through direct application with the hands can be a Christian influence* (La Farge, 1994, p. 155; translation mine).

The importance of sacrifice is very well verbalized by Diego Chávez, a woodcutter from Santiago Atitlan (in Christenson, 2001b):

> *[L]ife cannot exist without sacrifice. Maize must be crushed on a grinding stone before it can be made into tortillas. The wheat in the sacramental Host must also be ground and baked. The sun can only rise in the east after it has been buried in the west". He pointed out that anciently the Maya sacrificed people, but now they offer deer, turkeys, chickens, incense, or maize, "but it is all the same thing." Gods and sacred animals give their lives so that new life can emerge:* "Tortillas, the Host, Jesus Christ, and the sun give life because they are first killed. Tortillas and bread result from the death of maize and wheat so that they can give us life. They are therefore gods" (Christenson, 2001b, p. 110; emphasis his).

Apart from physical sacrifice, symbolic sacrifice is very common in Highland Guatemalan dance. In the *baile de los toritos* in Chichicastenango, for example, one of the main dancers symbolically dies after a struggle with the bull. As I witnessed during my fieldwork in 2014, his mask is taken off and carried around as a symbolic form of decapitation and with his head covered in a red cloth he is taken around in public. Whereas the dance in itself is already a sacrifice, the final decapitation is a climactic act of submission. But also in the *baile de la culebra* Termer (1957, p. 218) and Cook (2000, p. 177) noted that in some instances the dancers would symbolically die after being whipped: they would lay on the floor appearing to be dead. Only through mimed sexual intercourse were they brought back to life by the other Tz'ulab'. Today the symbolic death is reduced to falling on the ground, lying still for a few seconds and getting back up to harass the Lady once more.

Bloodletting in the Past

In the entire region that we know today as precolonial Mesoamerica, self-sacrifice or (symbolic) sacrifice of another person seems to have been an important ritual act. From the archaeological and iconographic record is known that blood sacrifice was not uncommon in the precolonial Maya culture (L. Schele, 1992, pp. 175-208). For example, in Figure 113 we see a depiction of communal blood sacrifice in the precolonial Maya document known as the *Madrid Codex*. Four gods, or ritual specialists that impersonate gods, stand at the four corners of a temple structure while passing a rope through perforated genitals to draw blood as sacrifice (Vail, 2013, p. 61). In Figure 114 we see a drawing of Lintel 24 from Yaxchilan on which Lady Xoc pulling a rope through her perforated tongue as part of a royal ritual (L. Schele, 1992, p. 177). In both cases, the participants use ropes as ritual paraphernalia to draw blood. The ropes were used to draw blood through perforated wounds rather than whips.

In the *Popol Vuh*, the early colonial K'iche' creation account, the first human ancestors are called the "bloodletters and sacrificers" (Christenson, 2007, p. 190). This title refers to the act of auto-sacrificing blood, a ritual practice in which one would offer his or her blood to the gods, and it shows that this practice was considered to be a core element of the human tasks and responsibilities ever since the creation of the human being (D. Tedlock, 1996, p. 291). Bloodletting was performed to give some of the vital force of life back to the life-giving cosmos, as an act of reciprocity (Christenson, 2007, p. 190).

In the Colonial period, forms of bloodletting self-sacrifice continued, although in secret because of Spanish persecution (De Fuentes y Guzmán, 1882, Parte I Libro I Capítulo V). In Yucatan, Fray Diego de Landa, who had probably never witnessed these practices with his own eyes, describes self-sacrifices in his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* (De Landa, 1966, p. 49). He describes how parts of the body were perforated to draw blood as an offering to the gods and how in some cases ropes were pulled through



Figure 113. Madrid Codex page 19: four personages perform bloodletting sacrifices with ropes around a temple structure.



Figure 114. Lintel 24 of Yaxchilan: Lady Choc making a bloodletting offering by pulling a rope through her perforated tongue.

the perforated body parts. 17th-Century chronicler Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán writes in his *Recordación florida* that similar public forms of sacrifice took place in the Highlands of Guatemala on important Holidays or for ritual petitions:

> *They went through the cruel barbarity of taking out their own blood from the nose, ears, arms and legs to offer it. The preparation of this activity involved public penitence and general fasting and the intimidation of the town by the priests of the idols, called Ajq'ijes […] Part of these infamous and strange sacrifices was a very long and heavy procession, which was performed with measured pauses and extensive movement (which substantiated the weight) leading to the place of sacrifices while the most authorized personages and the Ajaues of the republics carried the horrible idol on their shoulders* (De Fuentes y Guzmán, 1882, Parte I Libro I Capítulo V; translation mine).

While blood sacrifices continued to be performed, the extirpation of native practices by the Catholic authority led to public whippings as a form of punishment on the part of the friars and church authorities. These extirpatory campaigns focused on

eliminating the indigenous religion, which included the calendars and religious practices such as blood offerings (see Tavárez, 2011). Idolatry could lead to trials and public punishment, the most common punishment being public whippings (Aguilera Barchet, 1993, pp. 334-558; Escandell Bonet & Pérez Villanueva, 1993).

As I have shown throughout this work, time is an underlying principle for the organization of a society and therefore, in order to have an impact, the punishments had to be performed at a meaningful moment in time. For the Catholic missionaries, of course, this had to be an important moment in the Christian calendar. It seems that there were two specific moments during which the idolaters would be publicly punished with whippings: on Sundays and at the end of Holy Week (John Chuchiak personal communication, November 2014). These whippings were performed publicly to create a system of social shame and control, and to scare others that had been doing similar rituals in secret; they could be next[107]. Sundays were important days for the public whippings because all the people from the villages would be in town and failing to participate in the mass may be taken as a sign of sin. In Yucatán, idolaters would be whipped on these days in front of a big crowd in front of the main church (Chuchiak, 2000, pp. 235-238). An even better and more significant moment in time was on Easter, at the end of Holy Week: the idolaters would be punished for their sins with Easter so that after the resurrection of Christ they would be able to continue their lives as good Christians, free from sin (Aguilera Barchet, 1993, pp. 334-558). Also on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter Sunday, the *procession de la sangre* was performed at several places, which involved self-flagellation. Thomas Gage, an English Dominican missionary who lived in Guatemala from 1625 until 1637 briefly mentions the punishments in his book *Nueva relación que contiene los viajes de Tomás Gage en la Nueva España*:

> *The Spaniards did not only teach the indians to do these ceremonies and representations, but also [taught] the way of disciplining during Holy Week; in this they do not only imitate but they exceed a lot in the severity with which they punish men and women. So I have seen some of them that did not only faint but even died in the church for having been disciplined heavily* (Gage, 2000, Chapter XV; translation mine).

As we have seen in Chapter III, Holy Week and Easter are also crucial moments in time in modern Mesoamerica. This period marks the preparation of the milpa and the arrival of rain. It is a time in which the human dependency on the uncontrollable forces around us is most pronounced. In ritual, the consciousness of such dependency is expressed through a bodily gesture of submission (Rappaport, 1999, p. 142). This important ritual moment in time became after conquest the occasion for public whipping as punishment. At the same time, it is plausible that the whipping as a form of punishment or penitence during Holy Week was perceived differently by the indigenous peoples of Highland Guatemala than by the Spaniards. Christenson notes (2007, p. 190) that Fray Thomas Coto (1983, pp. 502-503) documented the term *k'ajb'* for "human sacrifice" in his extensive Kaqchikel dictionary from around 1650. Christenson relates this term to the verb *k'ajij* ("to wound the knee") and suggests that both "likely refer to auto-sacrificial rites whereby a person's own blood is offered to deity" (2007, p. 190). He notes, however, that Ximénez translates *k'ajb'* to "punishment" (Christenson, 2007, p. 190). The difference in the translation of *k'ajb'* – as sacrifice or punishment – shows that the Spaniards reinterpreted the Maya concept of self-sacrifice within their Catholic understanding of "penitence" and "punishment", given also their proclivity to condemn native practices.

I suggest that the meaning of punishment for idolatry, as the missionaries understood it, was possibly negotiated by the K'iche': they may have understood it as bloodletting, i.e. as self-sacrifice. If so, the sacrifice was made for continuing the activities that the ancestors had established, for petitioning guidance and abundance in the period

107 Interestingly, the Guatemalan government used the same strategy during the climax of the Civil War in the 1980s. Guerillas, presumed guerillas, and people who would openly criticize the government were occasionally executed on the central plaza of their villages or towns to send a message to those who were against the government (Falla, 1992, p. 45).

of rain and shortly before. Where the Catholic missionaries hoped to demotivate the Maya People by punishing them with bodily punishments, Maya People actually underwent a sacrifice, a form of bloodletting institutionalized by Catholic missionaries. The blood of punishment was at the same time the blood of sacrifice.

Sacrifice for the Community

Sacrifice is thus still an essential component of the *baile de la culebra* in Momostenango. At this important moment, the Tz'ulab' undergo whipping as a form of self-sacrifice through which they petition, as don Leonso already explained in the previous chapter, protection against animals that eat their crops, or against anything that could damage the *milpa*. The *baile de la culebra* enables the dancers to enter a liminal stage in which they become mediators between the ancestors at the cemetery, Jesus Christ, the *Juyub'-Taq'aj* ("the World"), and everything else that is divine and sacred. As discussed in the previous chapter, the monotonous sound of the marimba, the pain inflicted through whipping, the repetitive dance steps, the consumption of alcohol, and finally the dressing as a Tz'ul or Xinula enable the participants to truly become their personage. All these elements help the participants to physically and mentally enter a state in which they can communicate with the ancestors and Divine Beings.

Whereas in Momostenango nobody refers to the Tz'ulab' as angels, their function is similar to that of the dancers in Rabinal who were identified by Marcelo Díaz in the 1940s as angels that petition rain: as a sacrifice for the well-being of their community they went up to the sky to talk directly to God[108]. Similarly, the interpretation of the dance in Rabinal by Father Narciso Teletor mentions that the dancers are mediators between the surface of the world and the sky:

> *The account is completely in [native] language: they go around complaining about goiter and sometimes they do not support the pain any longer and ask the spectators a cigarette and they smoke it; they go in circles around the Muy [Lola] and* they believe they are the forerunners of the wind and the rain, who constantly call the clouds, the hail, and the wind, so that the water that generates harvest of corn and fruit will fall on the earth (Mace, 1967, p. 109; emphasis and translation mine).

Regarding human sacrifice in Central Mexico, Sahagún mentions that those who were to be sacrificed were "eagle-men", who would go as messengers to the sun in the sky (De Sahagún, 1950-1978, Book II, Chapter XXI). Also, Bartolomé de las Casas describes that the Totonacs in their petition for the rebirth of the Sun around the solstice of December would send humans as messengers to the sun (De las Casas, 1909, pp. 462-464). This means that the concept of sacrificed messengers or "eagle-men" that would go upwards to the sky to deliver the messages of the people was widespread in the at least the Nahua region at the time of contact. A process similar to the synergy between angels and the Yucatec Gods of Wind (Bricker & Miram, 2002, pp. 85-88) may possibly have led to the equation of the concept of eagle-men to that of angels with the advent of Catholicism.

In sum, at the moment when the *milpa* is being prepared and the arrival of rain is crucial for the survival of the community, the *baile de la culebra* is performed. The whipping in the dance is both a symbolic punishment and a sacrifice. By participating in the dance, the participants become mediators between the people and the divine, which is an important responsibility for the well-being of the community. Commemorating Jesus Christ, the ancestors and the *Juyub'-Taq'aj*, they petition for rain and fertility.

THE CYCLE OF LIFE-DEATH-LIFE

One central aspect of the *baile de la culebra* is its reference to the cycle of life-death-life, which Clarissa Pinkola Estés (2008, p. 30) defines as a omnipervasive flow of life, death, and rebirth that constitutes the world. The dance as a ritual practice stands for the end of a period and the beginning of

108 During the Patron Saint Feast of Santo Tomás in Chichicastenango, the sacred and living image of Tzijolaj goes with a rope from the base of the pole of the *palo volador* to the top of the church to deliver the messages and prayers of the Maxeños, the people from Chichicastenango (see appendix E).

a new one. I will discuss here how the theme of death and resurrection constantly reoccurs during the dance. However, first I will briefly explore the general K'iche' perception of death. The perception of death in K'iche' communities can be best understood through a discussion of the *chol q'ij* day *Kame* (see Chapter I, and appendix B). Directly translated, *Kame* means "Death". However, Kame does not stand for an end or a final stage; it is a new beginning. *Kame* is the closing of one period and the beginning of a new one, without *Kame* nothing can exist. *Kame* stands for change, which explains its crucial importance in the Mayas conception of time. I will give an example related to a personal anecdote:

One morning in Momostenango on a day 6 Kame I woke up from a dream in which a deceased relative of mine tore down the wallpaper in her living room, behind which a dome with stars appeared, and telling me that she would leave for not being appreciated anymore. When I shared my experience with an Ajq'ij, he told me that my relative represented my old ideas and my old self. The day 6 Kame taught me that I needed a change in my life. Based on our conversation the Ajq'ij interpreted that my life was out of balance by the lack of religion and the strong presence of academic thinking; these two clashed with each other. Rather than marking death, the deceased relative and the day *Kame* showed that it was time for a change. Death is therefore not an end but rather a point of reflection, change, and continuity.

Considering the cycle of life-death-life, the timing of the dance in Momostenango is important. The fourth Friday of Lent is the preparation of the actual Good Friday, which commemorates the death of Christ. Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, on the other hand, celebrate the resurrection of Christ. As elaborated in Chapter III, this moment coincides with the preparation of the *milpa* and the arrival of rain, which enables the growth of corn and other crops. The death of Jesus Christ and his subsequent resurrection play an important role in the rebirth of the *milpa* (see Chapter III).

In precolonial lowland Maya cosmovision the cycle of corn was perceived as a journey of the Maize God between the place of death and the place of life. The Maize God, who died and was reborn each year, travelled through the watery underworld to trick and defeat the Lord of the Dead each time again to assure his way back to the world of the living (K. Taube, 1985, pp. 171-180). The end of the rainy season and the subsequent harvest is the death of the Maize: the maize plants are decapitated by cutting the *jolom* ("head", maize corn), which is carried in cloths to the house and stored (Carlsen & Prechtel, 1991). The death of Maize gives, as Diego Chávez explained (above), life to humans: in order to live we have to kill the Maize. Then when the first three rain showers have passed, the humans give life to the Maize by planting it. The sprouting of the first maize seeds is the rebirth of the Maize God.

Death is related to change, rather than to a definitive end. However, before change can happen the past needs to be revisited. In the case of the dance, this means that although the maize will be planted again and the rain will come, the change can only occur when the community engages with its past or roots – such as the ancestors – and physically or mentally revisit what the ancestors have left behind[109]. This explains the conscious effort of the organizers to perform the *baile de la culebra*, a dance established by the ancestors, and to perform it in the way that the ancestors did it. Furthermore, the dance takes place in a landscape that is pregnant with the past, where ancestors have left their marks. The two most important places for the performance of this dance in this landscape are the cemetery and the central square of Momostenango.

The cemetery is the place where the ancestors are buried. The *calvario*, which is a central point for the dancers on the fourth Friday of Lent and on the morning of Holy Saturday, is surrounded by the ancestors. In the Highlands of Guatemala, the *calvario* is an important place for ancestor communication (Bunzel, 1952, p. 8; Cook, 2000, pp. 164-165). Close-by the calvario of Momostenango lies one of the most important altars in which communication with the ancestor takes place: Tz'aqb'al b'aaq[110] ("wall

109 This could be the reason for the construction of Mesoamerican codices in which lineages are treated. Often they were part of a ceremony of taking power. Before this change in status could happen, the one who took power would have to be remembered of its roots. Often a physical pilgrimage was also needed, these are documented in the codices.

110 *Tz'aqb'al b'aaq* means "Wall of Bones". *Tz'aq* means as a verb "agregar" or in English "to complement", "To build", "to fabricate" and as noun it means "wall of stones" or according to Christenson "monument". The ending "-b'al" is a



Figure 115. The ossuary *Tz'aqb'al b'aaq*. Bones found at the cemetery are deposited in the structure through the small window that can be seen on this photo.



Figure 116. Fire ceremonies for the ancestors are performed in front of *Tz'aqb'al b'aaq*.

of bones"). This sacred place is an ossuary situated in between the graves (Figure 115 and Figure 116). In front of the burning place stands a small square house with small window and on top of it a dome. When workers at the cemetery find bones from an unknown grave at the cemetery, they deposit the bones through the window in the ossuary. This sacred place is thus where the bones of the ancestors have accumulated, and is seen as *uk'u'x* ("his/her heart" or "his/her essence") of the ancestors. Especially on days Ajpu (the days of the ancestors) ceremonies are performed here, but also on the day Kame or the Gregorian weekdays Monday and Thursday. According to don José Angel:

> *This is the place to give thanks and here protection is petitioned: "why am I suffering like this, in this way that never stops, that there is no one [else]… Why?". This is where the bones of our deceased, our grandparents, are. This is where the grandparents are* – Don José Ángel Xeloj 15th of August 2016.

Whereas the cemetery is the main center for the dead, the church plaza is *uk'u'x* of life, the heart of the living people: the center of Momostenango is the busiest place in town. Especially on the market days Wednesday and Sunday the liveliness of the town center is noticeable. The plaza not only is the most visibly vibrant place in town, but it is also its heart. During the festivities for Santiago, the patron of the town, an *axis mundi* is raised here by the dancers of the *baile del venado* (Cook, 2000, pp. 107-118). Similarly, the dancers of the *baile de la culebra* plant an *axis mundi* in the form of a greased pole at the entrance of the cemetery on the fourth Friday of Lent (see Chapter III and IV). In daily activities in Momostenango, the attention between the cemetery and the center of the town shifts as, in the Gregorian calendar, a market day in the center of Momostenango (Sunday and Wednesday), is always followed by a day to visit the ancestors at the cemetery (Monday and Thursday).

instrumental or locative suffix. We find this word back in the altars of Alajsab'al and Nimasab'al, which both derive from Tz'aq-b'al. *B'aaq* means "bone". Mind the parallel with the *tzompantli* walls such as the one of Chichén Itzá and Central Mexico. In the Mazatec region this concept is known as *xoa nindaa* ("Wall of Bones").

While the cemetery, *uk'u'x* of the dead, plays a central role during the fourth Friday of Lent, the center of town, *uk'u'x* of the living, is the place for the performance in the afternoon of Holy Saturday and on Easter Sunday. The dancing procession that takes place in the morning of Holy Saturday moves from *uk'u'x* of the deceased in the southeast of the town in northwestern direction towards *uk'u'x* of the living in the center of town. This movement from death to life coincides with the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Holy Saturday (commemorated the following day with the Easter procession). It seems therefore that the dance moves symbolically from the domain of the deceased towards the domain of the living, a similar path that Jesus Christ, the Maize God, and the Hero Twins from the Popol Vuh have to follow between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Therefore, the dancing procession of the *baile de la culebra* likely symbolizes the transition from death to rebirth[111]. In the ritual dance we see the cycle of life-death-life also in the symbolic death of the dancers and their subsequent resurrection through sexual intercourse or, in the variant of Joyabaj, the death of the ladino through a snake bite and his subsequent revival (Cook, 2000, p. 177; Hutcheson, 2009, p. 883; Termer, 1957, p. 218).

Another element that stresses the symbolism of life-death-life is that of the pine tree for the *palo encebado*[112]. The tree used for this event is always cut at the cemetery and so it is materially and symbolically nurtured by all the generations of ancestors that are buried there (Figure 117). The tree has literally fed itself from the ancestors and has grown out of their bodies. The symbolism of new life in the form of plants or trees emerging from the bodies of the ancestors is an ancient symbolism and is shared across an extensive region. For example, in Palenque in the Maya Lowlands, the sarcophagus of the Late Classic period lord K'inich Janaab' Pakal I is elaborately decorated along this theme. On the side of sarcophagus his ancestors sprout up from seeds planted in a watery earth in the form of fruited trees (Carlsen & Prechtel, 1991, p. 34). On the main tableau K'inich Janaab' Pakal I is depicted as he is falling through the mouth of the Earth, which indicates his death (L. Schele, David Freidel, Joy Parker, 1993, p. 78). Out of his body, however, grows the central tree of life. Christenson (2001a, pp. 102-107) discusses in detail how in the contemporary Tz'utujil community of Santiago Atitlán trees are related to the center of the world and to renewal of life. Regarding funerary practices and beliefs he states, furthermore, that "[o]nce placed in the grave, Atitecos raise a small mound of earth over the body and plant a tree on top which represents the soul of the dead reborn to new life" (Christenson, 2001a, p. 206).



Figure 117. The tree used for the event of *palo encebado* grows at the cemetery of Momostenango and feeds of the bodies of the ancestors.

111 Garret Cook (2000, p. 214) came independently to this same conclusion.

112 The palo encebado is another phenomenon that is widespread in Mesoamerica. In the Codex Borbonicus, an early colonial Aztec manuscript executed according to Aztec conventions, we see that the palo encebado formed part of the feast of *Xocotl uetzi* ("the fruit falls"), another name for the feast celebrating the dead ancestors, Huey Miccailhuitl (Anders, Jansen, & Reyes García, 1991, p. 206). The feast took place in the tenth veintena of the year and is one veintena (twenty days) before the feast of *Ochpaniztli*, which I will discuss further below. *Xocotl uetzi* is a feast that usually took place around August in the Gregorian calendar and commemorated the deceased children and was performed for the Gods of Water, Seeds and Reed (De Sahagún, 1950-1978, Book II, Chapter XXIX).



Figure 118. Dresden Codex page 3a: a tree emerges out of the body of Hero Twin Junajpu.

On the 3rd page of the late postclassic *Dresden Codex* similar symbolism is depicted (Figure 118). The Hero Jun Junajpu lies on a sacrificial stone while a Tree of Life emerges as *axis mundi* out of his body (Grube, 2012, p. 74). In the four cardinal directions around him are priests or Divine Beings that perform ceremonies. Such symbolism is also known from the early colonial account of the Popol Vuh. After the defeat of the hero-twins, protagonists Jun Junajpu and Wuqub' Junajpu, by the Lords of Death, the skull of Jun Junajpu is buried in the fork of a fruitless tree in Xibalba (the Place of the Dead). Here it stimulates the tree to produce fruits in the form of skulls: the calabash (D. Tedlock, 1996, pp. 96-106). When the daughter of one of the Death-Lords came to see the tree Jun Junajpu spit in her hand and impregnated her with his children who became the next generation of hero-twins: Junajpu and Xbalanque. Before he does so, he speaks:

> *My saliva, my spittle, is merely a sign that I have given to you. This head of mine no longer functions, for it is merely a skull that cannot work. The head of a truly great lord has good flesh upon his face. But when he dies, the people become frightened because of his bones. In like manner, his son is like his saliva, his spittle. He is his essence. If his son becomes a lord, or a sage, or a master of speech, then nothing will have been lost. He will go on, and once more become complete. The face of the lord will not be extinguished nor will it be ruined. The warrior, the sage, the master of speech will remain in the form of his daughters and his sons* (Christenson, 2007, p. 117).

Later on, in the Popol Vuh the second generation of Hero Twins is able to go back to Xibalba to defeat the Lords of Death who had killed their fathers. Dressed in rags and acting as ugly and poor orphans they are invited to Xibalba to perform their dances. In one of the dances they sacrificed and revived each other:

> *So then they sacrificed themselves, Hunahpu was sacrificed by Xbalanque. Each of his legs and arms was severed. His head was cut off and placed far away. His heart was dug out and placed on a leaf. Now all these lords of Xibalba were drunk at the sight, as Xbalanque went on dancing. Arise!" he said, and immediately he was brought back to life again. Now the lords rejoiced greatly. One Death and Seven Death rejoiced as if they were the ones doing it. They were so involved that it was as if they themselves were dancing* (Christenson, 2007, p. 173).

Finally, the Lords of Death propose that the Heroes sacrifice and revive them as well in their dance. The twins trick them by sacrificing them and then refusing to revive them. Junajpu and Xbalanque finally rise up to heaven to become the moon and the sun. By doing so they give life to the maize plant, which is about to sprout at that moment (Christenson, 2007, pp. 177-178). While this history was written down in the Latin alphabet in the Early Colonial period, there is iconographic evidence that the Hero Twins were also related to the birth of the God Maize (Figure 119) (K. Taube, 1985, p. 175).

In summary, the dance marks a period of change and continuation. In order to have the rebirth

of the *milpa*, the dancers need to revisit the practices of their ancestors and to continue what was started before them. They are the generations to which their ancestors gave life, and it is their responsibility to transfer the knowledge of the ancestors to the generations that will follow. By symbolically sacrificing and resurrecting eachother the dancers of the *baile de la culebra* guarantee the arrival of the rain and the rebirth of the maize and the survival of the community, while remembering the ancestors they guarantee the integration of the community.

SNAKE SYMBOLISM

The snake is an important element in the performance of the dance, and it is this element that gives its name to the dance. During the Momostecan dance, an impersonated woman dances constantly with a green snake in her hands. Furthermore, the dancing procession from the calvario to the church mimics, according to don Rigoberto, the sinuous movement of a snake. Therefore, in this section I discuss the perception of snakes in contemporary Highland Guatemala communities. Furthermore, I explore prehispanic representations of snakes that suggest a similar perception.

The Guatemalan Highlands and Mesoamerica

Both elders involved in the dance, don Rigoberto and don Leonso, agreed that the dance has a very strong connection to the day Kan. The characteristics of the day Kan ("Snake") revolve around justice (see appendix B):

> *[Kan] is the* nawal *of the creation of man and woman. Kan is the right day to ask solutions for any kind of problems or necessities. This day carries the energy of any kind of justice, not only social justice but also biological and psychological justice. On a day Kan a person may ask to do justice for the unfair treatment by the energies and forces that surround life or when somebody is punished with sickness for no particular reason* – See Appendix B.

The relationship between the dance and (social) justice has already been explored in the previous Chapter. On the one hand, the dance expresses a concern for social justice in the form of overcoming the colonial situation caused by the Spanish occupation; on the other hand, it deals with justice inasmuch as those who engage in immoral behavior are punished. One of the mnemonic words (see Chapter I and Appendix C) related to the day Kan is *ri k'ulel* ("the enemy"). Don José Angel Xeloj[113] explained to me the relationship between Kan, justice, and enemies. If a person becomes ill or encounters problems in his life on a day Kan, it is likely that someone has been envying him or her. As he explains, Kan is the Day-Lord that whips, the day that hits. The Day-Lord Kan can be called upon for doing justice with its whip, whipping harm into the life of the one who has been caused the problems (the enemy). One of the ways of countering envy is by petitioning that snakes enter the body of the enemy, which will result in a sickness known as *kumatz* ("snake illness": cramps in the body). In the dance, justice and envy are personified by the husband who whips those who envy him for having a beautiful wife and try to steal her from him.

The Day-Lord Kan shares the aspect of whipping with a specific snake from the Highlands of Guatemala, the *raxakan* ("green snake"). This green



Figure 119. 8th century ceramic plate: The Maize God emerges from the turtle-shaped earth flanked by the Hero Twins.

113 Don José Angel Xeloj 24th of August 2016.

snake is very poisonous and fast and it whips with its tail. When it feels threatened it can jump meters ahead to attack and it can chase people. It usually only attacks people who have done something wrong or who have not performed a ceremony for the snakes. Other snakes such as the *kiaq b'elej* ("red nine", a red serpent) and the *mor kumatz* ("grey snake") have, in contrast, the tendency to leave when encountering a human[114]. According to don José Angel the *raxakan* whips humans who cross his path:

> *It is green and of this size… One and a half meter, two meter… They are like this thick[115], or sometimes bigger. As there is a variety of them, there are small ones and there are big ones. Green, green, green like lime. And these are the ones that fly. "Shhhh", they go through the air. They jump up in the air and they move a long distance. And this is the one that whips! Yes, I have seen it several times!* – Don José Angel Xeloj, 17th of August 2016.

Snakes are in most Maya communities related to water (Mutz, 2010, pp. 34-36). The *raxakan* is the *nawal k'u' ja'* ("nawal of the water") and the *uchajinil* ("the guardian"); it is the one who watches over the water. Any spring, well, river, or lake[116] has its *raxakan*:

> *[The raxakan] is the guiding spirit of the water. I belief the day Kan is the* nawal *of the water wells. There is still a lot that needs to be understood Pablo[117], because it is said that the water is* limox. *And the snakes appear as guardians in the water wells. Not all of the snakes are in the wells: they can also be in the rivers, they can also be in the lakes, and in the springs. They can also be seen in a little stream, anywhere where there is water. But it is certain, that the Raxakan is the green snake […] Someone told me that the day should not be Kan but K'an, which means "angry". This might be the case because snake is angry when it bites someone* – Don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, 10th of August 2016

The *raxakan* is usually only found near or in the water. During the dry season they tend to retreat to the wells where they go make their *ollita* ("pot") in the earth and wait until the rainy season. They are more commonly seen during the rainy season, when there is a surplus of water. And they announce that rain is coming. From the first rain onwards they come out of their pots in the earth but especially during October there are many green snakes.

In Momostenango, snakes are important *nawales* and guardians of the town. Doña María Hernández told me that there are three types of guardian snakes in Momostenango: the snake of the wells, the snake of the rivers, and the snake of the warm waters. Each of them is responsible for what happens at these places. At Payaxu, the warm water springs of Momostenango, there is one specific spring which people call *el borbollón* because of the boiling hot water that emerges from the earth. Payaxu is a thermal bath, split in two sides by a river that runs through it, and it is used by the Momostecans to bathe. Because of its curative qualities the dancers of the *baile de la culebra* are sent there after the dance to recover. This spring is guarded by a snake referred to as *kasachik ri wolqot* ("the guardian of the hot springs"). According to oral narratives the snake has a head of at least 30 centimeters wide and lives on the other side of Payaxu, where there are three more wells (of which one especially for pregnant women and midwifes), across the bridge that connects different wells on the two sides of the river. If someone were to kill the snake, the *borbollón* would disappear and there would be no more warm water. Similarly, in Rachoquel (a hamlet belonging to the village of Xequemeyá within the municipality of Momostenango) and the neighboring town of San Bartolo Aguas Calientes, oral narratives tell about big snakes of a few meters high that live within the territory of the villages and are the guardians of the water. These snakes should not be killed, because that would cause great harm to the towns.

Snakes that are the guardians of water is a widespread phenomenon (Peña Sánchez, 2013, p. 85). For example, the guardian of the volcano Santa

114 The *kiaq b'elej* ("red on the road") is a red snake which is usually found on roads and paths. The *mor kumatz* ("grey snake") is a grey snake which is usually encountered on the *milpas* and in the natural waste of the milpa.

115 Don José Angel Xeloj shows the size of a tea cup.

116 The *raxakan* is not related to the sea.

117 The author.

María near Quetzaltenango is also a giant snake, which lives inside the volcano together with the ancient K'iche' kings (Termer, 1957, p. 189). Until the mid-20th century, the most important Ajq'ijab' would climb to the top of the volcano to petition water on the 3rd of May (Termer, 1957, p. 150). Similarly, Charles Wisdom (1961, p. 439) notes that in Ch'orti' region serpents[118] resemble the serpent deity of the rain, Chicchan. According to him, it is said that more serpents are seen after heavy rainfall then at other moments, and increase in rainfall is explained as a result of the appearance of snakes that come out of the earth to provoke the rain. In contrast, hardly any serpents are seen during the dry seasons as during this period the Chicchanes are living in the inside of the hills.

As the snake is the *nawal* of the water, it is common to perform a ceremony, petitioning that the water will not cause harm that year. Tedlock (1992, p. 111), for example, mentions that the day 9 Kan is a very important day on which people gather at a waterfall altar at "*nueve sillas, nueve mesas*", an altar also known by the *chol q'ij* calendar date *9 Tz'i'*, in the neighboring town of San Francisco el Alto. According to don Rigoberto the day for performing the ceremony at this altar was also the day on which the *baile de la culebra* was originally performed.

In Chapter III it was already mentioned that water may be both life-giving and destructive. For example, the *uwaja'*, which is described by some people as a giant snake, might bring destruction as it runs down the rivers swollen up from the fresh rain. *Uwaja'* derives from *Uwachja'* (*u-* 3rd person pronoun; *wach*, "the face"; *ja',* "water", "his/her face of the water"). Although the *uwaja'* is often described as a snake, it can also take the form of a wild boar that puts its snout in the water and lifts it up, or a bull that comes running down the river with its horns up. In other occasions the *uwaja'* manifests itself as an enormous human with its head being the face of the wave and its hands held up high, grabbing around it. When doña María Hernández was young she and her sister secretly went up the hill together to see the *uwaja'*:

> *The* uwaja' *is a* nawal i*n the form of a person. A person is the* nawal *of the water. When it would come, we would not go out [of the house]. My father says it has its* nawal*. It grows because of the rain and the growing river becomes like this, look… It turns, it turns and turns. And it is purely black, black, black when it comes. But my father says that it has a face, it has a face of a person. Its hands go [up] like this… One day, when my father was not there, we went to see it. What would the* creciente *do? We were above it, we went to see it; together with my sister we went to see. And it is true what my father says. It is purely a huge growing river, it does like this… It has one hand like this, and an enormous face! Its hands [were] like this! And my father told me: "you went to see the growing river". "No, no", we told him. "No", he said, "the neighbor has told me already. You were standing over there". "Yes, dad, we came [to see it]. It is true what you say, it has a face at the front". "Yes, it is its* nawal*", said my father, "if you are standing close-by it will pull you in. Its spirit will pull you". It pulls like this, with its hands. And it is big. Such a huge face! Huge, huge!* – Doña María Hernández Ajanel, 17th of August 2016.

However, not everybody will be dragged away by the river. Those who live a life respectful of the surroundings and the ancestors are safe from the *uwaja'*. The *uwaja'* usually takes the lives only of those who are behaving improperly. In many cases the ones who are dragged away by the water are people who have desecrated or disturbed Maya altars in the community. For example, some people convert to evangelic churches and decide to remove the sacred altars on their property. As don José Angel explains, the *uwaja'* will do justice for the ancestors and the community:

118 The chicchanes are giant snakes that are the guardians of the water. Chicchan is also the Yucatec Maya name for the day that in the K'iche' region is known as Kan. The chicchanes of the earth are responsible for most earthly events. They can live in any well or bit of water (Wisdom, 1961, p. 445). During rainy season they live in the rivers and during dry season they live in the hills (Wisdom, 1961, p. 446). Just as in Momostenango, when the rainy season starts they rush down from the mountains, making the water swell up with their bodies. If many chicchanes join in the same river, the river will overflow and cause inundations; when a chicchan leaves the river to go to another one it will cause mudslides and landslides; when they leave from one watery place to the next they destroy everything on their way and provoke hurricanes (Wisdom, 1961, p. 446).

There is this case here, I don't remember in what year it happened, it was in the barrio *Santa Ana. Somebody died. The daughter in law of the man who had died was evangelist. So she entered the house and she saw that there were [sacred] burning places on the territory of her father in law. So then the woman said "we are going to take all of these things out, they don't serve for anything, it is not worth anything". So she, her sister in law, her mother in law, and another young girl, took everything out. It were four women that went there. And one Sunday they went to throw away the tiles [of the burning places] in the ravine. It was a Sunday, around more or less this hour, when they came from the market and went to the river around eleven o'clock or at midday to wash clothes there. And they did not realize it… Here [in the center] it was possible to see how the sky, coming down from Pologua and from Xela, was turning black. Around twelve o'clock in the afternoon it was very well visible here, but they did not realize it… They went to the river to wash. And so the water came, like this! So they protected themselves in a cavity there in the river bend. They went into the corner to protect themselves against the water. And when the enormous creciente came it took them along. There were the four of them. It took along all four of them. One of them was dragged until here in Rachab'aj, the other was dragged until there at Kotzokul. I went to see them, [there were] so many people. That is how it went, it were four persons. We went from the house to the river, there is this river that passes through Pala Grande, that time we went… Exactly… The other one was dragged until there. It were four women. This was the consequence of taking away the altar. If one has an Maya altar on his terrain, then this is the place to petition that "I hope I will not be taken away by the creciente, by the storm, please protect me". That is it. But, as they did not like to see it, this happened* – Don José Angel Xeloj, 17th of August 2016.

The arrival of rain in Momostenango is usually accompanied by clouds and thunderstorms. As discussed in Chapter III, the lightning that accompanies the arrival of rain is related to a special kind of snake: the dragon that is being hunted by San Miguel Arcangel. In Yucatan, San Miguel Arcangel is the leader of the Chaacs, and in the Ch'orti' area the Chaacs punish the water-snakes by throwing down lightning (Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1964 [1934], pp. 115-116; Wisdom, 1961, pp. 447-450). Similarly, in Momostenango, the lightning is caused by the reflection of the sword of San Miguel Arcangel who hunts down the dragon. Usually rain falls down during this hunt. The chase of the dragon by San Miguel Arcangel is thus related to rainfall.

Finally, as the guardians of water, snakes are important for the fertility of the *milpa* (Termer, 1976, p. 309). Without water the seeds will not sprout and the people will not have food to survive. Therefore, in many communities throughout Mesoamerica snakes are related to fertility and sexual activity (Peña Sánchez, 2013, p. 86; Wisdom, 1961, p. 439). As already mentioned, there are many explicit sexual gestures towards the woman carrying the snake in the dance. Although some of these sexual gestures might be an expression of machoism, it is also likely that, in the case of a ritual dance performed in a context of rebirth and the ancestors, that the sexual gestures relate to the fertility that ensures rebirth. This is, for example, quite explicit in the case when deceased dancers are resurrected through mimed sexual intercourse.

In summary, the symbolism of the snake refers to the ending of the dry season. Soon there will be rain and plenty of water, brought by the *raxakan*, the guardian of the water. Throughout the rainy season the dance is performed in different communities, so that the burden of the dance is distributed and shared throughout the Highlands. Each community dances respectfully with the snake, the symbol of water, fertility, and justice. The water will enable the new life that is petitioned through sacrifice. However, for those who do not follow the morals of the ancestors, the *raxakan,* might bring destruction with water. As I discussed in Chapter III, rain petitions and petitions for protection against water are not only important prior to the rainy season but also during it.



Figure 120. Snake dance on Lintel 4, Site R (Grube, 1992).

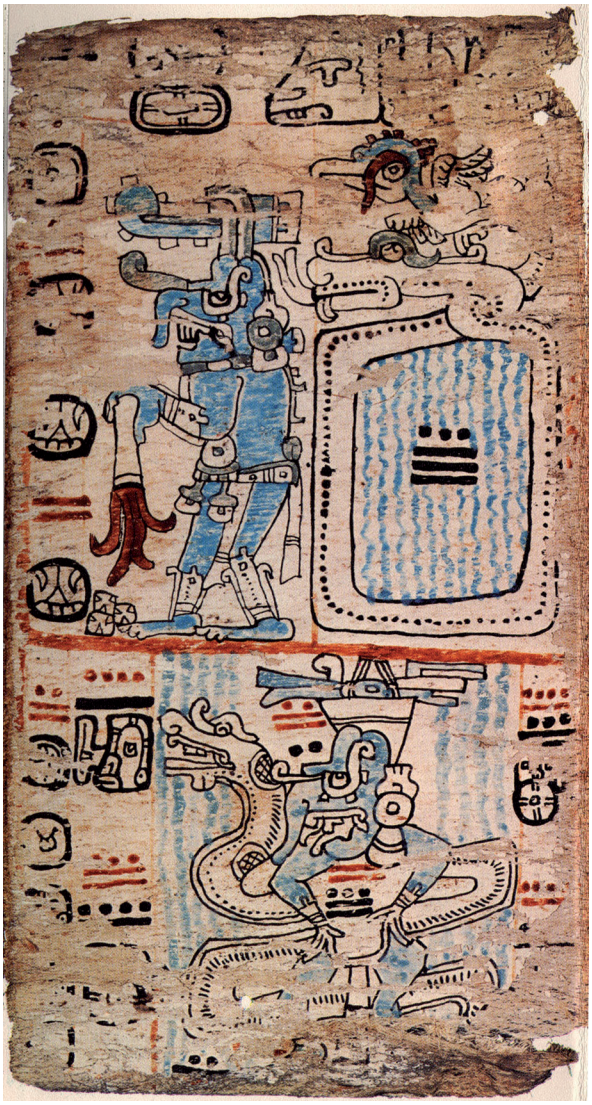


Figure 121. Madrid Codex page 4a: a snake encircles a watery place. Page 4b: a snake is wrapped around the rain-god.

The loss of traditions and the changes in the way that the ancestors did their rain petitions have caused much drought in the last years. The timing of the *baile de la culebra* shifts according to the community in the Highlands, so during the period of rain each community where the dance is performed contributes to the continuation of sacrifice for rain, fertility, protection, and growth. As such, the Highland communities share the burden of performing the dance during the entire rainy season. The slow disappearance of the *baile de la culebra* in several communities, however, disrupts the continuation of rituals and coincides with the current climate change that has caused drought for several years. The loss of tradition accompanies the loss of ancient morals, which teach about, among other things, the respect for water. The loss of the teachings of the ancestors therefore coincides with climate change and other forms of destruction in the environment and disintegration of the community.

Serpent Symbolism in the Past

Snake symbolism in ancient Mesoamerica was related to liminality, engagement with the ancestors and water. As snake symbolism is widely present in prehispanic Mesoamerican iconography, I will restrict myself in the following discussion to those examples that speak to continuity with the *baile de la culebra*.

Although few, there are indications that snakes were also used in dance. On lintel 4 from a place called Site R, the ruler of Yaxchilan, Bird Jaguar IV, is depicted in a dancing position in front of a male underlord, both engaged in what appears to be a snake dance (Figure 120). Both persons hold snakes in their hands. According to Nikolai Grube, who identified the T516 "to dance" glyph on this stela, the translation of the text shows that on the date 9.16.16.12.2 11 Ik 15 Mac (15th of October 767) "they dance with the sky snake" (Grube, 1992, p. 212). Karl Taube (1989, pp. 371-372) has suggested that the Dumbarton Oaks panel from the Palenque area and a silhouette carving at the site of Telantunich also represent snake dances, and he relates them to the Highland Guatemala *baile de la culebra*. Although it is far from certain that the snake dance mentioned on this lintel is exactly the same as the *baile de la culebra* in the Highlands of Guatemala, Grube argues that "[b]eing the medium rather than the message, dances often were able to survive the Spanish conquest and Christianization, even though the original messages and situations in which they were performed had changed" (Grube, 1992, p. 201). Dance, as he points out, has thus the potential to survive by being adjusted to the new landscape. In order for a ritual dance to continue after the colonization it must have been important to remain relevant in this new landscape and just incorporate some of the changes, while maintaining those aspects that continued to be important. In the case of the *baile de la culebra* I propose that its relationship to agriculture, a temporal



Figure 122. Rain God Chaak and Mother Goddess Chak Chel poor rain down from vessels.

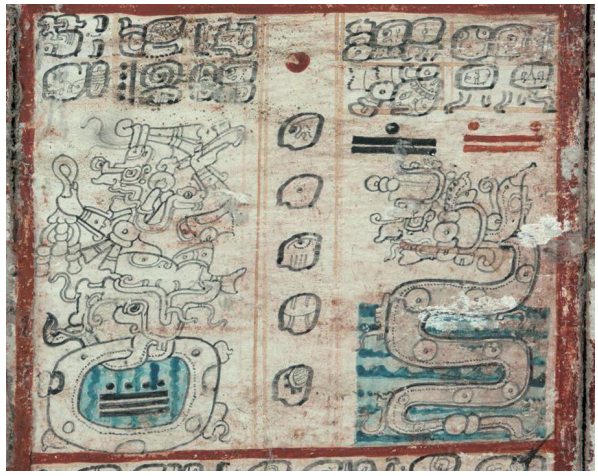


Figure 123. Dresden Codex page 35b. On the left side, the Rain God Chaak emerges out of the mouth of a snake, which is depicted as the embodiment of the cenote. One the right, a snake with the face of Chaak emerges out of the water.

cycle that is difficult to colonize, made it to continue the cluster of symbols embedded in the dance and constituting the messages of the ritual.

Furthermore, postclassic Maya codices show a clear relation between blue snakes[119] and the rain. On all the rain almanac of *Codex Madrid*, the snake plays an important role. For example, on page 4a, a snake stands next to the rain god Chaak (Figure 121). The snake encircles a rectangular box filled with blue lines. These representations are generally understood to be water springs or *cenotes*, natural underground caves filled with water (Vail, 2013, p. 29). Possibly the snake is here portrayed as the nawal or guardian of the bodies of water, as it is today in many Maya communities. In the lower section of the same page the snake is wrapped around the body of the Rain God while rain falls down. On page 30a (Figure 122), two deities closely related to rain, Chaak and Chak Chel, stand atop a snake while pouring rain down from vessels (Vail, 2013, p. 89). On *Madrid Codex* page 14b, the snake itself is pouring down rain from the sky (Figure 124) (Vail, 2013, p. 51). In the Dresden Codex we find similar iconographic representations of the snake and water. For example, on page 35b snakes are similarly depicted as the embodiment of places of water (Figure 123) (Grube, 2012, p. 138).

119 The word for blue and green is the same, *yax* 'grue'. Possibly the blue snake refers to a green water snake such as the *raxakan*.

THE GUARDIAN OF THE EARTH

The protagonist of the dance is Xinula. While the many Tz'ulab' are dressed similarly and take turns in being the husband, Xinula stands out for her gender, her dress and mask, the snake that she carries, and her role in the dance. Impersonated by an important Chuchqajaw, she is the one who directs the dance and is in charge of what will happen. Her connection to the snake is noticeable today, as she is the only one who carries it with her, but this relationship was more explicit in the past. After the ceremony performed to find the snake, as told by don José Angel and don Leonso, the snake shows itself to the *autores* some days or weeks (according to don Leonso 15 days to a month) before the dance begins and enters the *jícara* that the Xinula-impersonator holds in his hands. In the following days or weeks (depending on the narrative) the snake is kept at Xinula's house where it is fed with music and food. In Joyabaj the snakes that were caught before the dance where not guarded by the woman-impersonator, but by pregnant women (Mace, 1970, p. 105).

As documented by Franz Termer and confirmed by don Leonso, the *baile de la culebra* was comprised of two parts. Termer (1957, p. 219) writes that on the day of the event, the woman-impersonator would carry the jar with the snakes to the place where the dance would be performed and

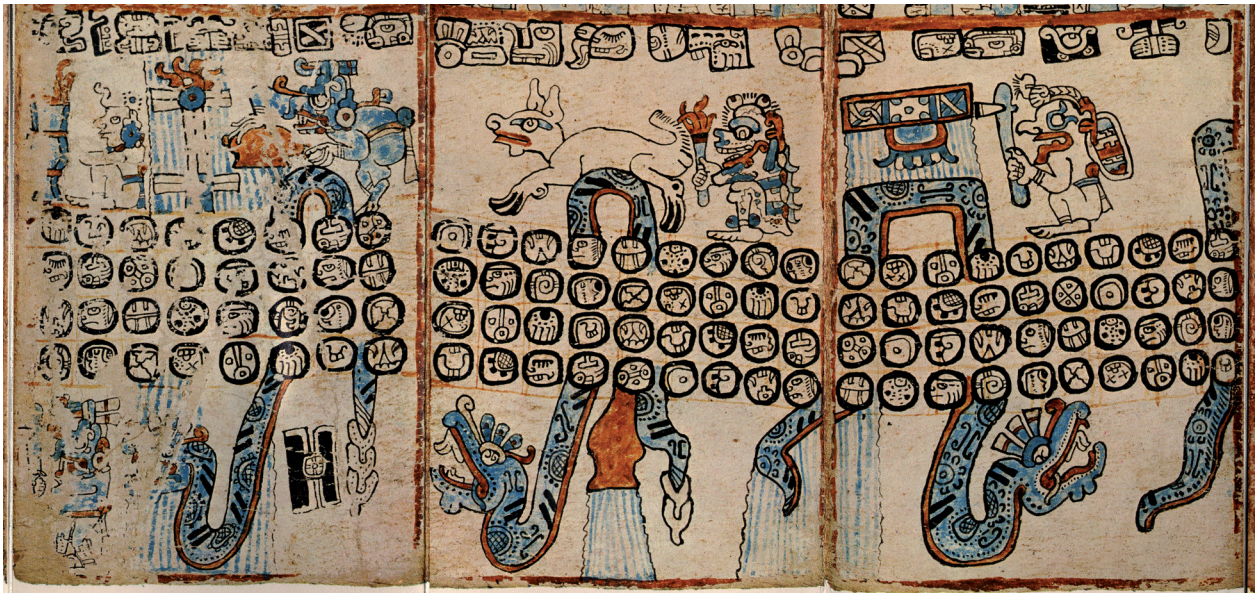


Figure 124. Madrid Codex pages 13b, 14b, and 15b. A section of an almanac that continues for 7 pages. On each of the pages a blue snake related to rain crosses the almanac. On page 14b the snake seems to *turn around a vessel* from which water pours down.

there it would be placed next to the marimba where the snake enjoys the music. The jar is closed off with a piece of wool on the top. A description of the jar that is carried by the woman is given by a friend of Termer from Momostenango, don Abel de León[120]:

> *The woman brings with her a jícara of around ten to twelve centimeters tall and eight centimeters wide at the widest point. Its extremes are more reduced in size* (Termer, 1976, p. 308; translation mine).

On some occasions Xinula dances with each of the male dancers while holding the jar with the snake inside and in other performances of the dance the male dancers dance one by one with the jar alone[121]. After dancing with the snake, Xinula empties the jar on the ground while surrounded by other dancers and the dancers dance one by one with the snakes. In another article, Termer (1976, p. 306) describes that Xinula is the last one to put the snake in her *huipil*. While the snake is underneath her clothes, all the dancers, but most noticeably the one dressed as a very unsightly and old dancer, make the most explicit sexual gestures around and over her. In Santa Cruz del Quiché, he relates that a ceramic jar that was placed next to the marimba during the first part of the dance was brought to the center of the scene by Xinula. Here too the jar was closed with a piece of wool cloth and after a small break she would empty the ceramic jar on the ground; a snake, roughly half a meter long, would come out of it (Termer, 1957, p. 217). Each of the dancers would then dance respectfully with the snake. When the event was over, the snakes would again be released outside the village (Termer, 1957, p. 219).

Xinula and her husband are present when the snake is called upon during the ceremonies and she is the one who watches over the snake at her home. She was the one who carried the snake to the dance and released it from the jícara or jar onto the floor. Mace and Termer state respectively that the snake was taken care of by pregnant women and that the explicit sexual gestures increased when the snake was underneath Xinula's huipil. Xinula goes along with the sexual

120 Abel de León is also the only one who mentions the participation of a bull-dancer in the *baile de la culebra* (Termer, 1976, p. 308).

121 Dancing with a sacred object is one of the most important forms of showing respect. For example, the Chuchqajaw who performs the ritual in front of the tree of the *palo encebado*, dances with the tree during the ritual; on the arrival of the new *Mam* the organizers, husband and wife, dance together with the sacred food, the *tayuyos*; on the occasions that the *tz'ijolaj* is taken out in processions in Chichicastenango, the person who carries it has to dance continuously with the image.

invitations of the other dancers as she dances and runs away with them, which led Garret Cook (2000, p. 181) even to call her an "active lust woman". The day on which the dance originally took place according to don Rigoberto, 9 Kan, is a day related to both the snake and to femininity, as all Ajq'ijab' that I worked with agreed that the number 9 is a female day (see Chapter I). This seems to suggest that Xinula is the guardian or handler of the snakes.

Xinula is a K'iche' derivation of the Spanish word *señora* (lady), but the fact that she has a white skin does not mean that she is thought of as Spanish. Namely, in the prayer recited during the dance in Rabinal that was documented by Mace (1967, pp. 135-139) the First Father and First Mother are invoked during the dance. Interestingly they are described as persons with white hair and white heads:

> *They are on top of the summit, they are below the great boulders,*
>
> *They are at the shores of the great depths, at the shores of the great foam,*
>
> *Where the Mountain God – the Valley God remains*
>
> *They are inside the great road, the great place of garbage*
>
> *Oh Our First Mother, Oh Our First Father*
>
> *They are from the seat of the sun, they are from the seat of clarity ("whiteness")*
>
> They are our fathers and our mothers,
>
> They are beings of white hair, they are beings of white heads,
>
> *They are beings of the yellow flower, they are beings of the white flower,*
>
> *They are beings of incense, they are beings of candles*
>
> *They gave thanks underneath the foot of Holy Mary,*
>
> *They cried, they screamed,*
>
> *Where our father died, where they put one nail, two nails, three nails*
>
> (Mace, 1967, pp. 138-139; emphasis and English translation mine)

The color white, *saq* in K'iche', has many connotations. It refers, to wisdom and purity, to a stretched and straight plain, and it refers to correctness, the right way of doing things and being unspoiled. Possibly the foremothers and forefathers in the prayer documented by Mace are white as a metaphor of having some of these beautiful and precious characteristics. Their subsequent titles as "yellow flower" and "white flower" connects to the first mother and first father of the Lacandones in Chiapas, who were two flowers *tšaknikte* (*Plumeria rubra*) and *šaknikte* (*Plumeria alba*) (Tozzer, 1907, p. 93).

However, it is also not uncommon to see that Divine Guardians, or *dueños*, in the Maya area have incorporated features that relate them to historical power relations (Siegel, 1941, p. 67; Vogt, 1970, p. 6; Wagley, 1949, pp. 55-60), similar to what was discussed in Chapter IV. Many mountains and volcanoes have a guardian. By earlier ethnographers, the Guardian of the Mountain is often described as a powerful and malevolent ladino with light hair and a white skin (Siegel, 1941, p. 67; Wagley, 1949, p. 56; Wilson, 1999, p. 57). In Santiago Chimaltenango, in the department of Huehuetenango, the guardians are protectors of the village, of one's personal life, and of the wildlife on the mountain. Inside the mountains the guardians have enormous coffee plantations. They trick or test the morals of people in the surrounding communities by, for example, lending them money which they know that they cannot repay (Wagley, 1949, p. 60). Similarly to the Spanish hacienda owners, for centuries after their death they let the people work for them on their coffee plantations inside the volcanoes to pay off their debts (Wagley, 1949, p. 60). Just as the Spaniards, their appearance in villages announces death through sicknesses such as smallpox or typhus (Wagley, 1949, p. 60). In Zinacantan in Chiapas, the guardian of the earth is a ladino who rides a deer which he whips with a snake. "He also owns all of the waterholes on which the Zinacantecos depend for household and livestock water; he controls the lightning and the clouds that are believed to emerge from caves, rise up into the sky, and produce the needed rain for crops; and he controls all the products of the earth that the Zinacantecos use" (Vogt, 1970, p. 6). In the Q'eqchi' region, where from 1885 until 1943 two-

thirds of the coffee plantations were in the hands of German migrants, the guardian of sacred places often has German characteristics (Wilson, 1999, pp. 35, 57). Therefore, similar to the discussion in Chapter IV, the characteristics of the guardians of sacred places are constantly updated and are therefore able to incorporate traces of historical experience.

Guardians can be both male and female and are generally neither purely benevolent nor malevolent. A narrative from Colotenango – a *Mam* speaking community in the department of Huehuetenango – tells that a long time ago humans did not have maize and were close to dying of starvation (Valladares, 1989, p. 28). The humans knew that near the town of Nebaj there was a mountain where the *dueña* ("divine owner") had great amounts of maize plants growing on her fields. The humans, led to despair by hunger, first sent out the crow to steal maize seeds from Paxil[122], and bring them to the humans. But the animal was discovered by the *dueña*. Second, the *zompopo* (flying ant) was sent. He succeeded, and the humans could grow their own corn from that moment on. But the *dueña* found out and she grabbed the *zompopo* furiously, pinched him in the center of his body, and told him that she knew that he had helped the people. Once she saw the hungry humans, however, her mother instinct grew and she decided to let the humans have their *milpas* and that she would take care of them like a mother; she became K'txú, "Our Mother" (Valladares, 1989, p. 29). The *zompopo*, who still has the pinched middle body after the *dueña* grabbed him, became the announcer of the planting period ever since. The evenings before the first heavy rain showers the *zompopos* fly around in the houses, advising the people to prepare for the planting season (see Chapter III). The *dueña* continues to live at this mountain today: her name is Paxil and she is the embodiment of the mountain top named Paxil which has several deep cracks where the maize was once stored (Valladares, 1989, p. 30). Her husband is a rocky mountain near Chimiche known by the name of Sakwo'j or *Peña blanca* ("white peak"). Today, Paxil is an important place to perform rituals before the planting season and for the petition of rain (Valladares, 1989, pp. 45-46).

122 Paxil is also the place, mentioned in the Popol Vuh, where the first maize comes from. Paxil means "broken, split, or cleft" and refers to the split mountain where the maize was first stored (Christenson, 2007, p. 181).

The knowledge that the earth and the corn is the mother of the people is shared across a large area (Siegel, 1941, p. 66). It teaches that the earth gives life to everything around us. As long as it can be remembered in the indigenous communities of the Western Highlands, the earth takes care of human beings like a mother. She nurtures them with her crops that grow on the *milpas* (the agricultural fields) and watches over them for protection[123]:

> *Some of the pregnant mothers of Concepción Chiquirichapa go to the fields to leave the lunch for their husbands. When they see that the maize has grown, they take the leaves of the maize plant, place it on their stomach and talk to the maize. "Mother", they say, "I am happy to see you and to know that the sacred rain and sun are making you grow. We ask you to provide enough food this year for this baby, please, we want more* mazorcas*, we want more maize, we want you to be in good health. Because now you have another commitment which you will have to nourish" they say to the maize. So the little children are already listening in the belly of their mothers and they are connecting it with the maize* – Don José Arturo Cabrera Aguilar, 9th of May 2014.

In the performance of the *baile de la culebra* in Rabinal, the female protagonist in the dance is said to be the mother of the male dancers. However, she is probably not the literal mother of the dancers. I suggest that the female protagonist in the *baile de la culebra* is possibly the mother in the sense of a *dueña*, a sacred guardian, who takes care of the humans like a mother who takes care of her children. She is in control of the dance, and she decides about fertility, death, water and rebirth. The Tz'ulab' sacrifice themselves to be with her, so that she gives life to the corn. The snake in her hand is the guardian of the water with which she controls rain and rivers. Calling the snake, keeping it in her house or in the house of pregnant women, and feeding it might be the proper preparation of the rain. Finally, when she pours out the snake from the jícara or jar during the

123 A similar relationship with the earth extends well into the region of Central Mexico (see Macuil Martínez, 2015; Reyes García & Christensen, 1976, p. 57).

dance, she releases the water, just like in the region of Rabinal where seven mountain angels release the water and clouds from their golden gourds (Mace, 1970, pp. 21-22). The timing of the dance coincides in Momostenango with the arrival of the rain while in other regions it continues into the rainy season. The performance of the dance does indeed intensify in mid-August when it takes place in Pologua, San Bartolo Aguas Calientes and Santa Cruz Quiché. This is probably related to the ending of the *canícula* and the fear for persistent drought (see Chapter III): the return of the water for the second part of the rainy season is crucial for a successful harvest. The penitence and sacrifice that lies at the heart of the *baile de la culebra* is likely performed for Xinula, the First Mother, to ask her for abundance through fertilization and water and protection against storms, floods, animals, and wind; to take care of the people that she watches over as a mother. The dance emphasizes that the earth is our mother, that we depend on her, and that without her we cannot live. Possibly her husband, the *ladino* who whips the Tz'ulab' for their immoral behavior, is the male dueño of the earth. His characteristics of plantation owner or rich Spaniard, as discussed in the previous chapter, seem to coincide with the descriptions of the male *dueños* that I just briefly mentioned. Being the husband of the Xinula, it is likely that he is the First Father.

THE PREHISPANIC COMPLEX OF MOTHER GODDESSES

Xinula, and her commemoration as it is performed in the *baile de la culebra*, has its roots in prehispanic Mesoamerica[124]. The transformative aspect of the Mesoamerican deities, who share iconographic attributes of each other on different occasions, seems to suggest that there was a complex of gods and goddesses related to the earth (K. Taube, 1992, p. 105). The Mesoamerican mother goddess complex includes several female deities, among which Ciuacoatl, Tlazolteotl, Xilonen, and Chicomecoatl in late postclassic Central Mexico, Chak Chel and Ixchel in postclassic Yucatan, and Xmukane in the colonial Highlands of Guatemala (Christenson, 2007, p. 54; Jansen et al., 1991, p. 208; K. Taube, 1992; J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, p. 83). These are different manifestations of the divine female force that controls life, death and rebirth (Pinkola Estés, 2008, pp. 70-127). These Mother Goddesses share a relationship to death, life and rebirth, and fertility. In prehispanic iconography they often appear as the patronesses of female activities such as weaving and giving birth.

Central Mexico

In Central Mexico, for example, a female deity related to the earth was *Chicomecoatl*, the patroness of tender maize plants. In Central Mexican iconography she is often depicted as a woman with young maize cobs in her hand. Her name *Chicomecoatl* is a calendar day, Seven Snake, which in the K'iche' calendar would be 7 Kan. She played a central role in the feast of *Ochpaniztli*, dedicated to *Tlazolteotl* ("Our Grandmother") who was the patroness of weavers, of sexuality, of the earth and of ritual cleaning (Jansen et al., 1991, pp. 209-214). This feast took place at the end of the agricultural cycle, to thank the mother



Figure 125. The celebration of *Ochpaniztli*: *Chicomecoatl* stands at the top of a pyramid with priests on both sides. Around her a fertility rite takes place as men hold imitation penises made from paper in front of their genitals. From her headdress new plants sprout.

124 I have recently discussed the complex of Mother Goddesses before in the book chapter *Madre Milpa, Modified Maize, and More: Conflict and transnational colonialism in the Highlands of Guatemala* (Van den Akker, 2017, 137-147).

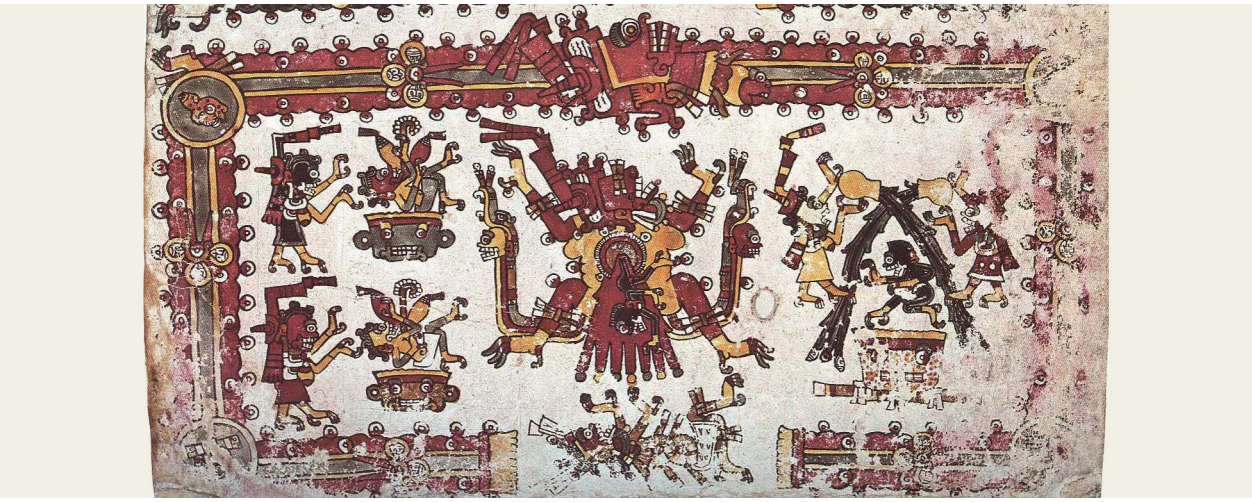


Figure 126. Codex Borgia page 31b: Inside the temple of the Aztec Goddess Ciuacoatl. The goddess sits in the position of giving birth and gives life to a black being through an act of bloodletting (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez, 2017, 462-466). On the right side, this being is washed by Ciuacoatl priests with skull heads and on the left side crops are sprouting from women lying in supine position, who were dedicated to the Goddess (Anders, Jansen, & Reyes García, 1993, pp. 197-199).

of the earth and the people for the harvest. During her feast, depicted in detail on page 30 of the early colonial Central Mexican Codex Borbonicus, a high-ranking male priest becomes the female earth by symbolically wearing the skin of a woman (Figure 125)[125]. She can be seen standing at the top of a temple in the center of the page: from the elaborate headdress new maize plants and maize cobs sprout while in her hands she also carries maize cobs[126]. She is the new skin of the earth, the new life that sprouts from the earth evidenced by the full grown agricultural fields at the time of her celebration (Jansen et al., 1991, p. 211).

Another Central Mexican Mother Goddess related to snakes is known by the Nahuatl name *Ciuacoatl*, meaning "Lady Snake" whose day of commemoration was 13 Quauhtli ("13 Eagle"; 13 Tz'ikin in the K'iche' calendar) (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, p. 83). In the Mixtec region, which neighbors the Nahuatl region, this same goddess was known by her calendric name 9 Grass (9 E' in the K'iche' calendar). This Goddess was related to earth, fertility, death and (child-)birth, and ancestor communication (Figure 126). She is usually characterized by the snake in her hair or headdress (Anders et al., 1991, p. 41; Jansen & Perez Jimenez, 2017, 364-375). Her jaguar paws symbolize her power and strength. She often has an unfleshed lower jaw, which indicates her special characteristic of ancestor communication, and wears a skirt with crossed bones depicted on it, which relates her to death.

In Figure 127, the Goddess Lady 9 Grass, the Mixtec version of Ciuacoatl, sits in front of her skull-and-bones temple, the place for ancestors' veneration. This temple is similar to *Tz'aqb'al b'aaq*, the ossuary at the cemetery of Momostenango: both are built on top of bones and are therefore good places for ancestor communication. The Goddess advices Lady 6 Monkey on her marriage, after which the latter makes offerings of precious objects. An important aspect of the ritual is a dance in which Ciuacoatl, Lady 6 Monkey, and other (divine) protagonists dance on the rhythm of the *teponaztli* in the center of the upper page. This is followed by a ritual bath. Similarly, in the *baile de la culebra* we see that the dance is preceded and ended by rituals in which offerings are made and the dancers go to the thermal baths in the days that follow the dance. In the codex Añute, the ceremonies are performed as a preparation

125 Interestingly, just as that *Ochpaniztli* takes places one veintena (20 days) after the feast of Xocotl uetzi in which the *palo encebado* plays a crucial role, the *baile de la culebra* on Holy Saturday takes place one *veintena* after the 4th Friday of Lent on which the *palo encebado* was organized.

126 In Momostenango the dancers used to decorate themselves with fruits and vegetables (Termer, 1957, p. 219) just as Goddesses do in the codex Borbonicus.

for a marriage. However, the similaries in the ritual pattern in the Central Mexican codex and the *baile de la culebra* shows that the sequence of ritual activities in the *baile de la culebra* was not unfamiliar in prehispanic Mesoamerica. Furthermore, similar to Chuchqajaw don Leonso who impersonated Xinula, in the Aztec empire Ciuacoatl was impersonated by the most important priest of the Aztec Empie (and second commander-in-chief):

> *And this is how he entered the city on another day with the celebrations and ceremonies mentioned in the other chapters, except for that before entering the city on this day the King Motecuhzoma painted his entire body in yellow polish which they call* axin *and he put his earspools and nose and mouth decorations.* And the prince, his cousin, dressed in the clothes of the goddess Ciuacoatl, which were female clothes, which they called "the clothes of the eagle". *This is how they entered the city and arrived to the temple where Motecuhzuma did his usual blood sacrifice of his ears, his flesh, and his shin and he gave thanks to the god Huitzilopochtli for the favor of victory* (Duran, 1967, Historia..., Tomo I, Chapter LVI; translation and emphasis mine).

The Maya Region

The Lowland Maya parallel of the Central Mexican Mother Goddess complex includes the postclassic goddesses that have been identified in the academic literature as Goddess O and Goddess I (K. Taube, 1992, p. 103; J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, p. 83). While Schellhas (1904, p. 38) and Zimmermann (1956, p. plate 7) originally identified the two deities as separate female goddesses, Thompson (1960, p. 83) suggested that the two are the younger and the elder aspect of the same motherly creative force. Research on the Mother Goddess in the prehispanic and colonial Highland Guatemala is still very scarce. Allen Christenson (2007, pp. 54-55) and Dennis Tedlock (1996, p. 32) argue, however, that the grandmother Xmukane is likely the K'iche' variant of the Mesoamerican Mother Goddess. Milbrath (1999, p. 138) goes a step further and suggests that Xmukane and Lady Ixkik' are respectively the aged and the younger aspects of the Mother Goddess.



Figure 127. Codex Añute/Selden p. 7-8, reading sequence is from the lower right corner towards the left and then from the upper left corner towards the right.

When the Goddess appears in the young form in precolonial Lowland Maya depictions, scholars usually call her Ixchel, after the name that Diego de Landa documented in Yucatan (De Landa, 1966, p. 58). There is no clear indication, however, that this name was also in use in the Classic or Postclassic periods (K. Taube, 1992, p. 64). Diego de Landa says that she is the patron of medicine and childbirth, and that during the month of Uo, which was dedicated to the first diviner and father God Izamná and the mother Goddess Ixchel the dance *chan-tun-yab* ("snake-stone-?") would be organized especially for Ixchel (De Landa, 1966, pp. 58, 93). Goddess O is the aged variant of Goddess I. Her name is often written with the T109 prefix *chak*, which means "great" or "red" followed by the glyph *chel*, meaning "end" or "rainbow" (K. Taube, 1992, pp. 99-101). Usually written as T109.145:612, her name reads *Chak Chel* (Kelley, 1976, p. 69; J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, p. 83) which probably relates to the goddesses *Chakal Ixchel* and *Zacal Ixchel* that are mentioned in the 16th-century Ritual of the Bacabs (Roys, 1965, pp. 53-54; K. Taube, 1992, p. 99).

The main glyph of Ixchel's (or Goddess I's) personal name is the head of a young or aged female with a *caban* curl (glyph for "earth") placed on her temple. The caban sign also appears in De Landa's syllabary in combination with the sound for *u*, which stands for the moon (De Landa, 1966, Chapter XLI; Milbrath, 1999, p. 138). Usually her name glyph carries the prefix *sak* ("white") (K. Taube, 1992, p. 64). The *sak* sign in her postclassic name has generally been interpreted as a reference to the whiteness of the moon (Milbrath, 1999, p. 140; K.



Figure 128. Madrid Codex page 30. Upper section: The Rain God and Chak Chel pour rain out of a vessel while standing on a snake. Lower section: Water emerges from the body of Chak Chel.

Taube, 1992, p. 68; J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, p. 83). However, in the K'iche' Highlands there are many connotations to the word *saq*, as, for example, the stretched earth. An aldea of the K'iche' town Cantel, for example, is called Pa Sak, meaning "place of the stretched earth", a metaphor for the long valley in which the aldea lies. This shows that *saq* does not necessarily need to refer to the white moon. While Seler (1904, pp. 50-52) and Thompson (1972, pp. 47-48) relate the Goddesses to the moon, because the young Goddess is occasionally portrayed seated in the shape of the moon, holding a rabbit, there is no consensus about the relationship between the moon and the Goddesses in the Classic period. As Taube (1992, p. 64) points out, the goddess should only be identified as Moon Goddesses when she is portrayed with clear attributes that indicate such a relationship.

Apart from the aged face and other characteristics of an elderly age, such as the wrinkled body, humpback, hanging breasts, and missing teeth, the young and old Goddesses have the same attributes. Therefore, I follow Thompson (1960, p. 83) who suggested that these Goddesses are different aspects of the same motherly creative force. In the codices, the Mother Goddess has often claws and fangs and wears a skirt with crossed bones and other death-aspects, while in her hair she wears a snake. On some occasions the snake is not in her hair but she carries the snake in a belt around her waist. Sometimes her body is skeletonized, indicating her relationship with death. She often has two cotton spindles in her hair and in the codices she is often portrayed together with male gods (Milbrath, 1999, p. 140). She is often portrayed while weaving.

Thompson (1960, p. 83) notes that the Young and Aged Mother Goddesses are patrons of the *chol q'ij* day Men of the Classic period Yucatec calendar (that would be Tz'ikin in the K'iche' calendar). The Mother Goddesses are patrons of weaving, birth, death, fertility, medicine and sexuality (Miller & Taube, 1997, pp. 60-61; Manning, 1993, 61-62; K. Taube, 1992, p. 101; J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, p. 83). They are furthermore strongly related to the agricultural cycle, the soil and the crops, and to the water that brings the rebirth of the plants. They are often depicted in the vicinity of water in the form of a *cenote* or the rain and accompanied by the God of Rain, Chaac or God B. Occasionally they are depicted in the younger aspect, carrying young creatures as mothers on their back. One explicit shared characteristic is the snake, whose symbolism I have discussed in a previous part of this chapter.

In some depictions in the Maya codices water flows from the body of the Mother Godess and in other depictions she turns a vessel with water over,

creating a flow of rain (Figure 128 and Figure 129). For example, on the famous page 74 of the Dresden codex, the Goddess Chak Chel is hanging from a stream of water that originates out of a band that is a stylized depiction of the sky[127]. The sky band ends on the left in the shape of a snake-like reptilian with front legs, from whose mouth water runs down. In the lower part God L crawls while holding an *atlatl* and arrows in his hand. Chak Chel turns the vessel that she holds in her hands around and water pours down, an event that is related to day 4 Eb every fifth year (Grube, 2012, p. 174).

The act of pouring water down and creating rain calls to mind the part in the *baile de la culebra* in which Xinula would pour the snake out of the *jícara*. As discussed previously, the snake is currently the patron of the water and the dance coincides with the rainy season, which in its arrival appears as appears as the *uwaja'* (the life giving – life destroying force of water). This leads me to suggest that the pouring of the snake in the *baile de la culebra* may represent a similar act as the scene that can be seen on page 74 of the Dresden codex, and that is represented on several other pages of the Madrid and Dresden codices. If so, the reading of Dresden Codex page 74 should actually be more nuanced than that it is interpreted today. Whereas most interpretations consider this page as announcing a destructive flood (Förstemann, 1906, p. 266; Grube, 2012, p. 174; K. Taube, 1992, p. 101), it might, at the same time, suggest that the rainy season will bring an abundance of water and food security.



Figure 129. Dresden codex page 74: Chak Chel pours water down from a vessel while hanging from the sky.

THE SNAKE LADY VASES

Looper (2009, p. 219) and Taube (1989, p. 372) have suggested a relationship between the *baile de la culebra* and depictions on a series of painted vases from the classic Maya area (K0719, K1079, K1081, K1198, K1382, K1813, K3202, K3702, K3716, K4485, K5164, K5230, K5862, K6754, K7838). On all of these vessels, also known as the Snake Lady vases, a snake is peacefully wrapped around the body of a young lady[128]. The head of

127 I have recently discussed an iconographic comparison of page 74 in the Dresden Codex and the *baile de la culebra* elsewhere (Van den Akker, 2018, accepted).

128 The Snake Lady vases form part of a distinct

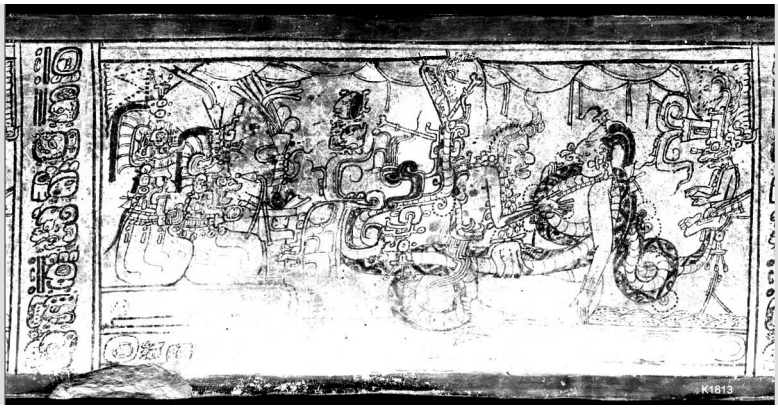


Figure 130. Kerr vase K1813: an old man emerging from the mouth of a serpent touches the breasts of a young lady. The scene appears to occur inside a palace in front of god figures wrapped in bundles.

the snake is twisted towards the woman and out of the mouth emerges an old person that approaches the woman and touches her in a sexual manner[129] (Figure 130 and Figure 131). The Old Man shows characteristics of both God N and God K (Milbrath, 1999, p. 153; Robicsek & Hales, 1981, p. 107). In most of the vessels, the snake emerges out of the leg of K'awil, also known as God K, who has elements of several gods incorporated in his figure. It is very likely that the Old God, similar to the depictions of the Mother Goddess, is one of the many aspects of the Old Father Gods (Adams, 1971, p. 113; Robicsek & Hales, 1981, p. 113; J. E. S. Thompson, 1970).

The woman has been interpreted by Susan Milbrath (1999, p. 153) as a version of the Mother Goddesses. On the majority of the vessels, the event takes place in front two bundled Gods (either the God of Self-Sacrifice, the Patron of the Month Pax, G7 of the nine Lords of the Night or Chaahk) who sit at the top of a platform (Lopes, 2005, p. 1; Robicsek & Hales, 1981, p. 110). The scenes seem to take place at a palace or place related to the earth, as on several vases *caban* ("earth") signs, the same as we find on postclassic Mother Goddesses, appear. Although the texts have not yet been completely translated, they usually mention a date, a birth event, and the names of the gods involved (Lopes, 2005).

The general interpretation of the scene on these vessels – which is still far from conclusive – is that the depiction shows the birth of Gods (Lopes, 2005; Milbrath, 1999, p. 153; Robicsek & Hales, 1981, p. 107; K. Taube, 1994, p. 664). The apparent sexual interaction between the elderly god, that emerges from the mouth of the bearded snake, and the lady is interpreted as a scene of fertility. The presence of both the young aspect as the old aspect of the same male god suggests some form of ancestor communication and rebirth (Robicsek & Hales, 1981, pp. 107-113).

In the discussion of the vases that show the Snake Lady, the vase K2772 is never mentioned. This vase has a similar configuration as the previously discussed vases, but has also striking differences. In Figure 132 we see the image depicted om vase K2772. On the left side stands the Rain God Chaak with elements of God K'awil, holding an axe in his hand. His foot transforms into a snake that is wrapped around a structure that is decorated with mirrors and earth-glyphs, the same *caban* glyphs ("earth") that are sometimes found on the Mother Goddesses (K. Taube, 1992, p. 64) and enters the building through

group of Maya artefacts known as the codex-style ceramics – named after the postclassic Maya codices because of their stylistic similarity (Coe, 1973, pp. 91-103; 1978, pp. 1-51; Coe & Kerr, 1982, pp. 102-107; Robicsek & Hales, 1981). Interpretations of the iconography and epigraphy displayed on these ceramics has been hindered due to the lack of contextual knowledge as most of them have been excavated by looters (Hansen, Bishop, & Fahsen, 1991, pp. 225-227). These vases have been produced in the Late Classic period (A.D. 550-850) in the northern Petén region and southern region of Campeche. Especially the sites of Nakbé, El Mirador, and Calakmul seem to have been main players in the production and distribution of these types of vessels (Hansen et al., 1991; Reents & Bishop, 1987). The iconography and epigraphy of the vases, while not yet completely deciphered, contain both mythological and dynastic information (Martin, 1997, pp. 847-867).

129 It has been suggested that the couple figurines from Jaina might be showing the same goddess together with an elderly god N (Milbrath, 1999, p. 153; K. Taube, 1989, p. 372). Concluding evidence is however missing.

a cleft in the roof. The head of the snake is turned towards the wall of the structure and from its mouth emerges the head of the Old God who approaches and touches the wall exactly like he does with the Lady in the previously discussed vessels.

The Lady is now represented in threefold, sitting on a platform on the right looking towards the knelt God of Sacrifice and another God, who appear seated and not as bundles, below her. The earth-glyphs surrounding them indicate that they are inside (a place dedicated to) the earth. The crack in the roof through which the snake enters might represent, as Taube (1992, pp. 77-78) has suggested in other cases, the rebirth of the maize. The configuration of the Chaak-K'awil, the snake, and the old man mirrors exactly that of the earlier discussed vessels. Whereas in those depictions the old god was sexually approaching a woman, he touches the earth-structure in K2772 in a similar way. This might suggest that the woman, around which the snake is draped in the above discussed vases, is the incarnation of the earth-structure; possibly she is the guardian of the earth. The depiction on K2772 shows her seated in threefold in her place of earth, which is likely to be a similar concept as Paxil, the split mountain top mentioned in the colonial Popol Vuh (Christenson, 2007, p. 181) and in the oral narrative documented in the contemporary *Mam* community of Colotenango (Valladares, 1989, p. 28).



Figure 131. Kerr vase K5164: The young lady has a snake wrapped around her half naked body and is being approached by an old man that emerges from the mouth of the snake.

In both the vessels and the dance, the woman has a evident relationship with the snake and she is intimately approached by a(n elderly) man. In both cases the event takes place in front of the ancestral deities, and is related to earth and water. Rebirth seems to be both the topic of the vessels as of the *baile de la culebra*. Dr. Alessia Frassani, working in the Mazatec region, pointed out to me (personal communication, 2017) that the medium for depicting the Snake Lady should be included in the analysis. The fact that the medium is a vessel, which in the *baile de la culebra* was used for storing the snake, fits the general cluster of symbols found in the *baile de la culebra*.

As Looper (2009, p. 221) has pointed out, the coincidence in symbolic representations in the Snake Lady vessels and the contemporary *baile de la culebra* is not necessarily a case of direct inheritance. One clear argument for this is the difference in medium: one transfers the message through ritual dance and the other transfers it through iconography on a vessel that was likely used in



Figure 132. Vase K2772. At the left: the old man emerging from the mouth of the snake approaches an earth structure in the same way as how he approaches the woman in other vases. At the right: the young woman is depicted in three fold and the two bundle gods that appear on other Snake Lady vessels appear here in their anthropomorphic form.

ritual contexts. However, similarity in symbols and their configuration suggests that within a cultural system, similar underlying canonical messages are transmitted. I suggest that the *baile de la culebra* shows the effortful continuation of a concern or a cultural value, by clustering symbols that make up the canonical message transmitted in an act or performance. The concern for rebirth, fertility, and rain has always been present in Maya society, as in any other agricultural society, which makes it likely that this concern has always has been expressed through different practices (e.g. reading, telling narratives, dance, and ritual) which use a specific cluster of symbols. The fact that today the *baile de la culebra* is performed in Highland Guatemala communities, shows that respect for the environment is recognized by the organizers as an important cultural value that contributes to the rebirth of the *milpa* and the survival of the human being.

LADY 9 KAN

Each of the prehispanic Mother Goddesses that I have discussed above was related to a specific day in the 260-day count. The day of the Nahua goddess of the young maize cobs, Chicomecoatl, was the day 7 Snake in the Nahua calendar. The day of the Nahua goddess related to the ancestors, Ciuacoatl, was 13 Eagle in the Nahua calendar. In the Mixtec variant, the day of this goddess in the Mixtec calendar was 9 Grass. The day of the Yucatec Mother goddesses Ixchel and Chak Chel in the postclassic Yucatec calendar was Men (the exact Day-Number is, to my knowledge, not certain). Don Leonso, the eldest organizer of the *baile de la culebra*, told me that the actual day for performing the dance was the *chol q'ij* day Kan (see Chapter IV). Don Rigoberto added to this that the specific day in the *chol q'ij* was the day 9 Kan (9 Snake). As I discussed in Chapter I, the number 9 of the *chol q'ij* is a feminine number. As such the date 9 Kan is a female aspect of the day Snake.

Comparing the attributes and characteristics of Xinula with those present in the complex of Mother Goddesses in early colonial and precolonial Mesoamerica, and taking into consideration that these were impersonated during important ceremonies by highly respected male priests, I suggest that Xinula in the *baile de la culebra* is possibly a local variant of a Mother Goddess. Similar to the above discussed Mother Goddesses, who were each related to specific days in the Mesoamerican calendar, Xinula seems to be related to the day 9 Kan. Taking the Nahua Chicomecoatl (Lady 7 Snake) and the Mixtec Lady 9 Grass as examples, I propose to identify Xinula ("señora") as Lady 9 Kan.

The *chol q'ij* day 9 Kan is not fixed in the astronomical calendar and thus shifts in relation to the solar year. However, as I discussed in Chapter I and as Ruth Bunzel (1952, p. 301) has pointed out before, specific *chol q'ij* dates are also celebrated at specific moments in the Gregorian solar calendar. For example, the day 8 Q'anil, the day of the *milpa* and the day to bless the seeds, is not fixed in the solar calendar. Therefore, the blessing of the seeds, which has to be done before sowing, takes place in Momostenango on another adequate day Q'anil prior to planting, which at that moment substitutes the day 8 Q'anil. Later (or earlier) in the year when the day 8 Q'anil arrives, ceremonies for the blessing of the *milpa* and the seeds are again performed at the *winel* by the ritual specialists of the lineage.

Similarly, I propose that the day 9 Kan is a day to petition water and fertility. While the day 9 Kan may occur during the dry season, the need for water and fertility is most relevant during the rainy season and the period just prior to it when the *milpa* is being prepared. I suggest therefore that the *baile de la culebra*, as a ceremony for water and fertility, is fixed in the rainy season and the period of the preparation of the *milpa*. The performance of the *baile de la culebra* in different communities in the Highlands of Guatemala takes place on distinct moments in the rainy season. These moments, as I have discussed in Chapter III, coincide with important stages in the agricultural, meteorological and solar cycle. These stages have, in colonial sources, been documented as the names of the *veintena* periods, which, as a product of synergy, are now celebrated on Christian Holidays (see Chapter III). In contrast to Mace (1967, p. 122) and Hutcheson (2009, p. 883), who respectively worked in Rabinal and Joyabaj, and argue that the *baile de la culebra* is a seasonally displaced fertility rite, I argue that the dance is purposefully performed on these significant moments in the cycle of the *milpa*.

As discussed in Chapter III, one of the reasons that droughts are currently experienced in the Highlands of Guatemala is the lack of continuation in the petition for water. Rain petitions in Momostenango include at least five ceremonies, each at a distinct place. However, as soon as the rain has arrived, giving thanks and petitioning should not be stopped as the rain needs to continue falling until the beginning of November. Furthermore, Chapter I shows that there is no central place where ceremonies are performed in the cycle of the *trecenas*: ceremonies have to be conducted at four different places, spread over the territory of Momostenango. Similarly, the ceremony for the *Mam*, the *alcalde* of the New Year, described in Chapter II, is performed each year at a different altar in one of the four cardinal directions of the town (which repeats after a four year period).

The organization and performance of the *baile de la culebra* is a heavy burden, both financially and physically (the whipping and dancing is extremely exhausting), and cannot be performed every month by each separate community throughout the Highlands of Guatemala. I propose therefore that, similar to the other aforementioned cycles, each individual performance of the *baile de la culebra* is a contribution to the shared burden to continue the petition for rain and fertility throughout the rainy season, which is carried by several communities in the Highlands of Guatemala. Thus, over time the dance moves through different communities. As discussed in Chapter IV, the average period for performing the *baile de la culebra* in the Highlands encompasses 227 days – close to a complete *chol q'ij* cycle – as it starts around the equinox of March and finishes on the 1st of November, at the end of the dry season. This means that it is quite likely that the day 9 Kan will fall somewhere within this period.

In summary, I suggest that the *baile de la culebra* is a burden that is carried by several Highland communities. Central to this dance stands Lady 9 Kan, a mother goddess related to earth, life, death and water. I argue that the dance is not to be performed at one singular moment in time. Instead the dance has to take place at different important moments in the agricultural cycle, over a period that encompasses a complete *chol q'ij* cycle, to give a constant continuity to the petition for water and fertility. As such, the *baile de la culebra* binds together the communities of the Highlands of Guatemala through the intersection of the Christian Calendar, the *chol q'ij*, and the *junab' q'ij*.

Discussion

The intimate relationship between the K'iche' calendar and the landscape has been a recurrent theme in this study. The *trecena* cycle in Momostenango promotes the movement of ritual specialists throughout town, thereby decentralizing spatial and religious power. The ruling *Mam* and his *Ajtz'ib'* shift, in a similar manner, every year to a different cardinal direction where they are received by ritual specialists. As such, the town of Momostenango lies at the center of a ritualized space around which time turns. This same movement of time turning around a central axis can be found in Chichicastenango, where the circular movement of the dancers that swirl down the *palo volador* represents the passing of time. As I have pointed out elsewhere, however, ongoing processes of neo-colonization threaten to alter this social space and landscape irrevocably, which in turn will lead to a dramatic loss of ancestral knowledge in the Highlands of Guatemala (Van den Akker, 2017, 137-147).

Patron saint feasts and other religious celebrations also promote a ritual movement on both the local level, within each municipality, and the regional level throughout the Western Highlands of Guatemala. This cycle of festivities contributes to a regional cohesion as community members usually pay a visit to important feasts in neighboring towns or aldeas. Furthermore, in the case of specific ritual performances, such as the *baile de la culebra*, I have argued that the burden of performing the rituals over a period of roughly 260 days – from the preparation of the *milpa* until the beginning of the harvest season – is carried by several communities on a regional basis. Each community is responsible for continuing the dance according to the kind of performances, number of participants, and general resources it can afford and finds suitable.

Landscape is summoned in the ceremonial discourses expressed by the Ajq'ijab'. Addressing specific sacred places, geographical features, and towns during a ceremony situates the participants centrally in the landscape and reminds them of the extensive region to which they belong. These ceremonial discourses also invoke the ancestors by name and lineage, as well as other deceased people. This further contributes to situate the participants in time and history. Rituals performed at specific lineage altars in Momostenango contribute to the commemoration of the lineage ancestors and to the identity formation of the living members. On a larger scale, community altars in Momostenango serve the commemoration of communal ancestors. Rituals performed at lineage and community altars intertwined on specific days of the *chol q'ij* and strengthen the internal social cohesion of the community by emphasizing shared roots, cosmology, and social conventions.

The K'iche' calendar contributes to the formation of a community by bringing groups of people together at specific moments in time, by creating a shared frame of temporal reference, by synchronizing activities and by reinforcing the communal social conventions. Rituals that are set by the K'iche' calendar reiterate the shared roots of a community and, as such, contribute to emotional security and a sense of belonging.

Community altars are perceived as an authority, related to the Day-Numbers 1, 6, 8, and 9 of the *chol q'ij*. The altar related to the Day-Number 9 is the leading authority, the *presidente mundo*. Similarly, the first day of the year, the *Mam* or "Grandfather", is an authority for the 365 days of the solar year. Each *Mam* has his own *Ajtz'ib'*, "Secretary", who serves as his assistant. The *Mam* is a living being who, when the authority changes at

the arrival of the New Year in the K'iche' calendar, sits down with his successor to contemplate upon the past year and to give advice for the following year.

Each individual day is also guided by an authority of days, known as *Ajaw Job*'. This is formed by a group of five days, each representing a partition of fifty-two days of the *chol q'ij*. The leader of this authority of days is the actual day in the *chol q'ij* (e.g. on the day 9 Ix, the *Ajaw Job*' is led by the day 9 Ix). Each day that constitutes the authority of *Ajaw Job*' is alive and has a specific personality, the *wachaq'ij* (face of the day), and the combination of the five personalities influences the events of that day. Five-day partitions are also known from almanacs in prehispanic Maya manuscripts and colonial documents, but were considered lost. This research, however, documents the ongoing use of these "almanacs" in a ceremonial discourse. It has been suggested in this study that, in addition to the accepted interpretations of these almanacs as divinatory tables, colonial and prehispanic almanacs may have been also used as mnemonic tools for discursive performances (i.e. to produce extensive ceremonial discourses).

The hierarchical organization of time and space is duplicated in the social organization of Momostenango. The authority for indigenous affairs is the *auxiliatura*, whose members are chosen by the elders of the community and have the responsibility for the well-being of the indigenous population of the town for a year. Similar to the *Ajaw Job*', the combination of the different personalities of the members of the *auxiliatura* will have a specific effect on the community for that year. The taking of office is a gradual process: after the initial selection, a period of training follows that coincides with New Year in the Gregorian calendar and leads to the initiation of the new authority. The previous *auxiliatura* members continue to train the new authority after the initiation until they are deemed completely independent and capable.

The change of authority is a gradual process that can be observed also in the perception of time. Each day seems to begin one day prior and to fade slowly the following day. This can be noted in ritual activities, which often begin the day prior and are finalized the day after the actual day. As one day gives rise to the next day, in ceremonial discourses the day of the ritual performance is therefore addressed in a sequence that also mentions its preceding and succeeding day. The three days together represent the past, the present, and the future. Very important days, such as 8 B'atz' or the day of the *Mam*, start entering several days before the actual day.

The past, present, and future are considered an inseparable unity. In the house, the grandparents (the past), their children (the present), and the grandchildren (the future) live together. Similarly, in the *auxiliatura*, the elders and the former authority represent the past, the new *auxiliatura* is the present, and the younger community members are the future. Accordingly, the past guides the present, and the present paves the road for the future. A link between the three generations is crucial for the continuation of knowledge and cultural values related to the life of the community and the environment in a sustainable way.

I have argued that ritual practice is an important tool in maintaining the link between the past, present and future. In my discussion of the *baile de la culebra* I have shown how the dance bridges the gap between the ancestors and the present-day generations, by incorporating traumatic historical experiences in the ritual, and relating them to current social concerns within the community. As such, lived experiences of the ancestors are incorporated in the identity of the participant and serve as a lesson for the future. Each community where the dance is performed has incorporated its specific historical processes or emphasizes historical experiences that community members identify with. Altogether, the dance tells about the experience of the colonization at the hands of the Spaniards, physical punishment, sexual harassment, life on the plantations, feuds between towns and different linguistic groups, diseases, and resistance against oppression. All the dances transmit the experience of suffering inflicted by the Spaniards and emphasize the unequal power relations following the colonization. By pointing out a shared historical trauma, the dance contributes to a mutual identification among community members and emphasizes the shared hope of overcoming colonial oppression in the future.

The European invasion and subsequent colonization of the American continent has caused, however, severe tears in the link between the present

and the past of the indigenous peoples. I have argued that archaeologists and anthropologists have the social responsibility to contribute to the restoration of these links in collaboration with the indigenous communities, and to support the process of cultural healing and spiritual recovery. This research has traced several lines of continuation in practices in the hope to contribute to this process.

As this research has shown, cultural continuation is a dynamic process that involves conscious choices and effortful decisions regarding what practices are affordable and desirable to continue. The Ajq'ijab' (calendar specialists) have an active role in this process of continuation and in the transmission of cultural values, because they carry the social responsibility to guide the community in an ever-changing environment. I have furthermore explored how the Gregorian and Christian liturgical calendars have offered opportunities for continuity in the perception of time under oppressive circumstances. The Gregorian calendar has taken on mantic qualities in the Western Highlands of Guatemala that are similar to, but less extensive than, those of the *chol q'ij*.

Furthermore, important days in the *chol q'ij* find their counterpart in the Christian liturgical calendar. As I have pointed out, it is likely that the astronomical basis of the Gregorian year is the reason for the duplication of specific *chol q'ij* dates in the Christian liturgical calendar, because specific solar events and meteorological phenomena tend to occur around the same date in the Gregorian calendar each year. The day 8 Q'anil, the day to commemorate the milpa and to bless the seeds, is an illustrative case. As this is a *chol q'ij* day, it constantly shifts in relation to the astronomical, meteorological and agricultural year. At the same time, the day of 8 Q'anil is also celebrated at a moment that the community relates to in the solar year, which is prior to planting the milpa, giving rise to a duplication of the celebration of the day at two occasions. As both the *chol q'ij* and the agricultural cycle are native to the region, it is possible that the duplication of *chol q'ij* days in the solar year may even be a prehispanic phenomenon of the K'iche' calendar.

This research has shown that currently in the Highlands of Guatemala the different periods of agricultural and social activities are mainly distinguished by Catholic celebrations. While the astronomical movement of the sun plays an important role in the determination of ritual moments, the use of the Gregorian calendar has replaced the actual observation of the movement of the sun. However, as I have shown in the discussion on the feast of Santo Tomás in Chichicastenango, in some instances solar clocks continue to play a role in the festive activities. I have therefore argued that celebrations in the Gregorian year should be considered part of the K'iche' calendar.

The timing of the Christian celebrations, which define periods of specific social activities in the agricultural calendar, coincides with the names of the *veintenas* documented in colonial sources. I have argued that repetitive celebrations based on the astronomical solar year form an additional cycle in the K'iche' calendar and that this cycle has, in comparison to the *chol q'ij* and *junab' q'ij*, not received much scholarly attention yet. Furthermore, I have suggested that in the prehispanic Maya calendar this cycle of celebrations may have worked independently of the 365-day count and the *veintena* cycle, which shift in relation to the astronomical solar year. In order to come to a better understanding of the precolonial *veintena* cycle of celebrations, future research should focus on the interaction that occurred in the Colonial period and on processes of synergy between the Christian and the K'iche' calendars.

Finally, this research has discussed the continuation of cultural values through symbolic performances that take place on ritual moments in the K'iche' calendar. The analysis of the *baile de la culebra* has shown that current symbolism of the dance finds strong parallels in prehispanic Maya and pan-Mesoamerican cosmology. I have argued that the female protagonist of the dance is the guardian of the earth and the patron of the cycle of life-death-life by controlling rain and the rivers. Suggesting that she is a local variant of the pan-Mesoamerican complex of Mother Goddesses, often associated to a specific day in the 260-day count, I have proposed to identify her by the name of 9 Kan in the *chol q'ij*.

Similarities in the symbolic configuration between the *baile de la culebra* and prehispanic Maya cases, such as a group of vessels representing the Snake Lady as well as Dresden Codex page

74, seem to suggest that an underlying canonical message continues to be important and valuable to contemporary Maya since ancient times. However, before any conclusions can be made it is necessary to conduct more in-depth research on the historical processes of change and continuity in the meaning of the cluster of symbolic elements that can be found in both the *baile de la culebra* and prehispanic iconography.

By taking the effortful decision to perform this dance throughout the rainy season, organizers of *baile de la culebra* from several communities in the Highlands of Guatemala transmit the cultural values embedded in it to the future generations. These cultural values emphasize the idea that everyone should be thankful to previous generations for their life and will in turn pass it on to the next generation. Furthermore, they stress that a human being is dependent on the forces of nature for its creation, survival, and death, and that damaging the environment will results not only in personal suffering, but also suffering for future generations.

The teachings transferred in the *baile de la culebra* and depicted in the ancient books and vases are not restricted to the Maya area. The cultural values and morals that have been discussed apply to social and environmental concerns in a globalizing world where increasing individualism goes hand in hand with severe changes in the environment. Moral changes have led to a dominant mindset wherein persons are disconnected from the past and the future, and separated from eachother. The cultural values embedded in and expressed by the *baile de la culebra* teach us to think about ourselves as a bridge between the past and the future and to reflect on our position in the environment and in time.

Beyond the results of this study, there are still questions to be addressed in future research on the Maya calendar. I have not been able, for example, to extensively document astronomical knowledge because astronomical observations are no longer practiced in the town of Momostenango. As has been pointed out by archaeologists[130], however, astronomical events played an important role in prehispanic cosmology and some of this knowledge may still be kept by some specialists. Furthermore, future investigations should explore the relationship between the *Ajaw Job*' and the colonial and prehispanic almanacs in further detail, as this may bring new insights in the prehispanic conceptualization of time and the use of ancient codices. Additionally, more research is needed on the cultural interaction in Colonial period Highland Guatemala, especially on the synergy between a regional cycle of ritual celebrations and the Christian liturgical calendar.

It should furthermore be explored in more detail how the calendrical elements relate to practices and beliefs in the cultural complex of Mesoamerica, to gain a deeper understanding of the differences in calendar use on the local, regional, and Mesoamerican scale. In general, future research should focus on the link between past and present practices with the aim to go beyond a mere reconstruction of the past, by enabling contemporary Maya people to restore and rediscover the broken ties of cultural memory.

130 See the recent study of Manuel May Castillo (2014) for a review of the significance of astronomical events in prehispanic Maya cosmology.

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Appendix A. Transcription of a Ceremonial Discourse

This ceremony was performed by don Rigoberto, Chuchqajaw from Momostenango, at Rax Amolo for the participants of the Flower House (a center for spiritual education of Europeans and North-Americans) on February 28th, 2014, Day 9 Ix, Year 2 Kej. The altar of Rax Amolo is located on the road that leads from the Panamerican Highway to Santa Clara la Laguna, in the department of Sololá, a couple of kilometers before entering the town. The ritual was a thanking- and closing-ceremony in which the divine beings were thanked for their guidance in the lives of the participants and with which the participants would bring their visit to Guatemala to a close. Although the participants were clearly not K'iche', the ceremonial discourse and the course of the ritual was similar to the ones that don Rigoberto performs in Momostenango.

Don Rigoberto combines, at some points during the ritual, two different discourses: one is directed at the divine beings and the other one addresses the participants. In the cases where the two discourses appear I have written, for matters of convenience, the discourse that is directed at the participants in italics. For the orthography of the transcription I am using the spelling proposed by the Academia de las lenguas Mayas de Guatemala. The main dictionary used for the translation of the ritual discourse is the vocabulary of Allen Christenson, available on famsi.com, because the dictionary is composed around Momostenango and the translation of words will therefore stay close to their intentional meaning. Don Rigoberto has incorporated sections of the Popol Vuh in his ceremonial discourses. In the translation of the ritual discourse, however, I have chosen not to translate the names of the divine beings that are also mentioned in the Popol Vuh, as the available translations do not necessarily resemble don Rigoberto's perception. The translation of this ceremonial discourse was done with the help of Gregorio Itzep and Dr. Frauke Sachse.

The opening and closing discourse is widely used in the Highlands of Guatemala. It is often called the *oración del amanecer* ("the prayer of the dawn") and is based on a quote from the Popol Vuh. This particular section of the Popol Vuh is expressed by the ancestors of the K'iche' people while they are waiting for the first sunrise (Folio 35 Recto lines 15-30 in K'iche or 61-74 in the Spanish translation of Ximénez).

Opening Prayer:

¡Oh! tú Tz'aqol, B'itol[131],

¡míranos!, ¡escúchanos!,

no nos dejes, no nos desampares.

!Oh! Ajaw, que estás en el cielo,

danos nuestra descendencia,

nuestra sucesión,

mientras camine el sol.

[Que] haya claridad,

que amanezca,

que llegue la aurora.

Da[nos] el buen camino.

Que los pueblos tengan paz,

y mucha paz.

[Que] sean felices.

Da vida.

¡Oh! tú Jun Raqán,

Ch'i'p Kaqulja',

Rax Kaqulja',

Nanawoq,

Junajpu,

Abuela de la luz,

Abuela de la claridad,

que amanezca en la aurora.

Oh you Tz'aqol, B'itol,

look at us, hear us,

do not leave us, do not forsake us.

Oh Lord, you who is in the heaven,

give us our offspring,

our succession,

while the sun walks,

May there may be brightness,

may it dawn

may the aurora arrive.

Give [us] the right way.

May the Peoples be in peace,

and a lot of peace.

May they be happy.

Give life.

Oh you Jun Raqán,

Ch'i'p Kaqulja',

Rax Kaqulja',

Nanawoq,

Junajpu,

Grandmother of the Light,

Grandmother of the Brightness,

who rises at dawn.

131 When don Rigoberto speaks in Spanish, he addresses the divine beings both in the formal and the informal form. I have chosen to keep this unchanged in the transcription of the ceremonial discourse. In K'iche' he addresses them always in the formal manner.

Transcription:

1.	Ajaw saqarik,	Good morning Lord,
2.	Uk'u'x ri cho',	Heart of the Lake,
3.	Uk'u'x ri palow.	Heart of the Sea.
4.	Ajaw,	Lord,
5.	Tew Kaqiq',	Cold Storm,
6.	B'elejeb' Ix,	9 Ix,
7.	Maltyox.	Thank you.
8.	Oj k'o chiwach anim[132],	We are here now,
9.	kaqaqasaj,	we put it down,
10.	kaqajach jin[133] multa,	we deliver one fine,
	jin tojonik,	one payment,
	jin kotz'ij,	one flower[134],
	jin xukulem,	one penitence,
11.	maltyoxinik.	we thank.
12.	Kech'aw qajil at kepe Estados Unidos,	They speak to you [about] a price, they come from the United States,
13.	kin maltyoxij,	I thank,
14.	kinkikotik.	I am happy.
15.	E k'o chi pa ri tinimit,	They are here in the village,
16.	chi pua[135],	this place,
17.	chiwach cho'.	in front of the lake.
18.	E k'o chi,	They are here,
19.	chi q'ij,	this day,
20.	chi saq.	this light[136].
21.	Are wa' pa ri tinimit San Pablo,	This is in the town of San Pablo,
22.	e k'o chi pa Santa Clara,	they are here in Santa Clara,
23.	pa wa' Rax Amolo[137].	this place Rax Amolo,
24.	loq'alaj juyub',	Sacred Mountain,
25.	loq'alaj tanab'al.	Sacred Altar.
26.	Kech qatit-qamam[138] kiyon kanoq,	Our ancestors left it behind to remain,
27.	maltyox.	thank you.
28.	Kinkoj ri ch'ab'al pa kaxlan tzij,	I use the language of the Spanish word,
29.	ri' kita ut[z],	[so that] they understand it well,
30.	ri' kaqab'ij, Ajaw,	[what] we say, Lord,
31.	Uk'u'x Kaj,	Heart of the Sky,
32.	Uk'u'x Ulew.	Heart of the Earth.
33.	¡Oh! tú Tz'aqol, B'itol,[139]	Oh you Tz'aqol, B'itol,
34.	¡míranos! ¡escúchanos!	look at us, hear us,
35.	No nos dejes, no nos desampares.	Do not leave us, do not forsake us,
36.	¡Oh! Ajaw que estás en el cielo,	Oh Lord, you who is in heaven,
37.	danos nuestra descendencia	give us our offspring,

132 *Anim* means literally "quick".

133 He uses *jin* instead of *jun* ("one").

134 "Flower" is a metaphor for "offering".

135 *Pa* is expressed as *pua*.

136 *Q'ij-Saq* is a driaphrastic cause that is also used in the *Popol Vuh*.

137 Rax Amolob ("the green fly"): the sacred altar place in between Santa Clara La Laguna and Solalá where the ceremony took place.

138 The usual expression is *qamam-qatit*, but don Rigoberto changes the word order here.

139 The prayer of the first dawn, inspired on the quote from the *Popol Vuh*.

38.	nuestra sucesión,	our succession,
39.	mientras camine el sol.	while the sun walks.
40.	[Que] haya claridad,	May there be brightness,
41.	que amanezca,	may it dawn,
42.	que llegue la aurora.	May the aurora arrive.
43.	Da el buen camino.	Give the right way.
44.	Que los pueblos tengan paz,	May the Peoples be in peace,
45.	y mucha paz.	and a lot of peace,
46.	[Que] sean felices.	May they be happy.
47.	Da vida.	Give life.
48.	¡Oh! tú Jun Raqán,	Oh you, Jun Raqán,
49.	Ch'i'p Kaqulja',	Ch'i'p Kaqulja',
50.	Rax Kaqulja',	Rax Kaqulja',
51.	Nanawoq,	Nanawoq,
52.	Junajpu,	Junajpu,
53.	Abuela de la luz,	Grandmother of the Light,
54.	Abuela de la claridad,	Grandmother of the Brightness,
55.	que amanezca en la aurora.	who rises at dawn.
56.	Maltyox, qamaltyoxij,	Thank you, we thank,
57.	che ri elb'al q'ij,	to the place where the sun comes out,
58.	salida del sol, el Oriente.	place of sunrise, the east.
59.	Gracias abuelo,	Thank you grandfather,
60.	nawal del Oriente,	*nawal* of the east,
61.	B'alam Aq'ab'[140],	Jaguar Aq'ab',
62.	Abuela Chomija,	grandmother Chomija[141],
63.	gracias.	thank you.
64.	Nawal de la mazorca roja,	*Nawal* of the red mazorca,
65.	salida del sol,	place of sunrise,
66.	gracias,	thank you,
67.	te miramos,	we look at you[142],
68.	gracias.	thank you.
69.	Pueden ver en el Occidente también, ayúdenme.	You can look at the west as well, assist me.
70.	Gracias, al Occidente.	Thank you, the west.
71.	Gracias Corazón del Cielo,	Thank you Heart of the Sky,
72.	miramos al Occidente,	we watch to the west,
73.	saludos desde los cuatro puntos cardinales.	greetings from the four cardinal points.
74.	Hemos hecho sonar el caracol,	We have blown the shell,
75.	invitando a la naturaleza, los animales,	inviting the nature, the animals,
76.	el espíritu del Aire, del Fuego, del Agua y de la Tierra.	the spirit of the Air, of the Fire, of the Water and of the Earth[143].
77.	Dales este regalo,	Give them this gift,
78.	esta expresión,	this expression,
79.	a los hermanos que vienen de Estados Unidos.	from the brothers that have come from the United States.
80.	Deles bendición,	Give them blessing,
81.	deles sus deseos,	give them their wishes,
82.	Ajaw,	Lord,
83.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
84.	Madre Tierra, sagrado encanto,	Mother Earth, Sacred Charm,
85.	Rax amolob,	Rax Amolob,
86.	de nuestros abuelos que dejaron este sagrado recuerdo,	from the ancestors that have left this sacred [place of] memory,
87.	gracias Ajaw.	thank you Lord.

140 The K'iche' lords in the beginning of the Popol Vuh are B'alam Aq'ab, B'K'iche'alam Ikim, B'alam Kitze, and B'alam Majakutaj. They and their wifes are related to specific cardinal directions.

141 The four K'iche' lords are accompanied by their wifes: Chomija, Kaja Paluna, Qakixaja, Tzununja. They are the primordeal ancestors of the current K'iche' people and they are often referred to as *abuelo* or *abuela*.

142 At this moment don Rigoberto raises his hand to the sky and then brings it to his mouth to kiss it.

143 Reference to the four directions of the world. The air or wind is connected to the North; The fire is connected to the East; The water is connected to the South; The earth is connected to the West.

88.	Abuelo B'alam Kitze,	Grandfather Jaguar Kitze,
89.	Kaja Paluna,	Kaja Paluna,
90.	segundo abuelo,	second grandfather,
91.	segunda abuela, gracias,	second grandmother, thank you,
92.	te saludamos.	we greet you.
93.	Invocamos los veinte días,	We invoke the twenty days,
94.	también los nawales.	also the *nawales*
95.	Saludamos el Norte,	We greet the north
96.	nawal del Aire,	*nawal* of the air,
97.	de donde viene el aliento.	from where the breath comes.
98.	B'alam Ikim,	Jaguar Ikim,
99.	Kan Kixaja,	Kan Kixaja,
100.	el tercer abuelo,	the third grandfather,
101.	la tercera abuela,	the third grandmother,
102.	de maíz azul,	of blue corn,
103.	de maíz blanco,	of white corn,
104.	de maíz rojo,	of red corn,
105.	de maíz amarillo,	of yellow corn,
106.	de maíz blanco[144].	of white corn.
107.	Gracias Ajaw,	Thank you Lord,
108.	te saludamos,	we greet you[145],
109.	los cuatro puntos.	the four points.
110.	Saludamos también el cuarto abuelo,	We also greet the fourth grandfather,
111.	nawal del Agua,	*nawal* of the Water,
112.	mazorca amarilla,	yellow mazorca,
113.	el sur, abuelo Majakutaj,	the south, grandfather Majakutaj,
114.	Abuela Tzununja,	grandmother Tzununja,
115.	del gorrión, gracias.	of the sparrow, thank you.
116.	Hemos venido a saludar,	We have come here to greet,
117.	esta ofrenda, las flores, el aroma,	this offering, the flowers, the aroma,
118.	el aroma del *pom*,	the aroma of *pom*[146],
119.	que se eleva al Ajaw.	that is being taken up to the Lord.
120.	El aroma de las flores,	The aroma of the flowers,
121.	que se eleva al Aire.	which is being taken up to the Wind.
122.	Gracias, estamos presentes acá,	Thank you, we are present here,
123.	descendiente del sagrado Fuego.	descendant of the Sacred Fire.
124.	Uk'ux Kaj, Uk'ux Ulew,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
125.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
126.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
127.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
128.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
129.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
130.	Chuwachla,	In front of you,
131.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
132.	Qajach,	We deliver you,
133.	kinkich'aw,	they speak to me,
134.	kinkib'a.	they do to me.
135.	Kech'awik,	They speak,
136.	ketzijonik,	they talk,

144 The four colours of maize are related to the four directions of the world. Red is related to the East; Black, or in this case blue, is related to the West; White is related to the North; Yellow is related to the South.

145 Don Rigoberto kisses again his hand.

146 *Pom* is incense.

137.	chuxe raqan Ajaw,	under the foot of the Lord,
138.	Uwach Ulew,	the Face of the Earth,
139.	che wa' jun q'ij.	on this one day.
140.	E k'o cho Guatemala,	They are in Guatemala,
141.	chanim wa' tinamit.	right now [in] this town.
142.	K'o kan wa' jun nutzij,	There is to remain this one [my] word,
143.	k'o kan wa' jun ofrenda,	there is to remain this one offering,
144.	k'o kan wa' jun regalo,	there is to remain this one gift,
145.	gracias Ajaw,	thank you Lord,
146.	Corazón del Cielo,	Heart of the Sky,
147.	las energías de los veinte días.	the energies of the Twenty Days.
148.	Vamos a ofrecer a los nawales,	We are going to offer to the *nawales*,
149.	los veinte días,	the Twenty Days,
150.	este sagrado *pom*,	this sacred *pom*,
151.	sagrada ofrenda,	sacred offering,
152.	gracias Ajaw,	thank you Lord,
153.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth
154.	Creador y formador.	Creator and Former.
155.	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,
156.	Jun Junajpu, Tojil,	Jun Junajpu, Tojil,
157.	Ab'ilix, Jakawitz,	Ab'ilix, Jakawitz,
158.	Ixmukane, Ixkik',	Ixmukane, Ixkik',
159.	nawal del Aire,	*nawal* of the Air,
160.	nawal del Agua,	*nawal* of the Water,
161.	nawal del Fuego,	*nawal* of the Fire,
162.	nawal del Aire,	*nawal* of the Air,
163.	nawal de la Tierra.	*nawal* of the Earth.
164.	Cada uno tendrá sus nawales,	Each one will have his *nawales*,
165.	voy a invocar los veinte días,	I am going to invoke the Twenty Days,
166.	el nawal B'elejeb' Ix[147].	the *nawal* 9 Ix.
167.	Hoy es el nawal del encanto,	Today is the *nawal* of the enchantment,
168.	el nawal de la sangre,	the *nawal* of the blood,
169.	el nawal del espíritu,	the *nawal* of the spirit,
170.	el nawal del corazón.	the *nawal* of the heart.
171.	Vamos a invitar a estas energías,	We are going to invite these energies,
172.	estas fuerzas que nos rodean,	These powers that surround us,
	que nos acompañan,	that accompany us,
	que no vemos,	that we don't see,
	[que] no tocamos,	[that] we don't touch,
	qero que están acompañándonos.	but they are accompanying us.
173.	Han venido con nosotros,	They have come to us,
174.	nos han llamado acá.	they have called us here.
175.	Gracias a cada uno de los hermanos de Estados Unidos,	Thanks to each of the brothers from the United States,
176.	de diferente ciudades,	from different cities,
177.	bendígalos Ajaw,	bless them Lord,
178.	deles sus inquietudes,	give them their concerns,
179.	deles fuerza,	give them strength,
180.	deles harmonía,	give them harmony,
181.	deles equilibro,	give them equilibrium,
182.	deles paz,	give them peace,
183.	asegura su trabajo,	secure their job,
184.	y su familia,	and their family,
185.	y con todo lo que les rodea,	and with everything that surrounds them,
186.	gracias Ajaw,	thank you Lord,

147 The day of the ceremony is the day that should be invoked first during a ritual. After that day is invoked the other nineteen days will also be called.

187.	B'elejeb' ix,			9 Ix,	
188.	te invocamos esta mañana.			we invoke you this morning.	
189.	*Voy a invocar a Ajaw Ix,*			*I am going to invoke the Lord Ix,*	
190.	*para que después cada uno de ellos,*			*so that after that each one of them,*	
191.	*va a invocar los veinte días.*			*will invoke the twenty days.*	
192.	*Ellos van a pasar la sahumación,*			*They are going to the incense smoke,*	
193.	*van a pasar sus ofrendas.*			*they are going to pass their offerings.*	
194.	*Expresen lo que sienten*	*a la flor,*		*May they express what they feel*	*to the flower,*
		al romero,			*to the rosemary,*
		al azúcar,			*to the sugar,*
		al incienso,			*to the incense,*
		a las candelas,			*to the candles,*
		al ocote,			*to the ocote*[148]*,*
195.	*gracias Ajaw,*			*thanks to the Lord,*	
196.	*Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,*			*Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,*	
197.	*Creador y formador.*			*Creator and former.*	
198.	B'itol, Tz'aqol[149],			B'itol, Tz'aqol,	
199.	Tepew, Alom,			Tepew, Alom,	
200.	Ixpiyakok, Ixmukane,			Ixpiyakok, Ixmukane,	
201.	O Tojil, Ab'ilix, Jakawitz,			Oh Tojil, Ab'ilix, Jakawitz,	
202.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,			Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,	
203.	Nim kaqul ja',			Grand Thunder,	
204.	Rax kaqul ja',			Green/First Thunder,	
205.	Ch'i'p kaqul ja',			Small Thunder,	
206.	Tepew, Qukumatz,			Tepew, Qukumatz,	
207.	gracias Ajaw.			thank you Lord.	
208.	Are wa' cho ri nim q'ij,			This is in front of this large/abundant day,	
209.	are wa' cho ri alaj q'ij,			this is in front of this small day	
210.	are wa' presente cho wa'	nim q'ij,		this is present, in front of this	big/important day,
		nik'aj q'ij,			mid day,
		utzalaj q'ij,			very good day,
		raxlaj q'ij,			green day (metaphor for "fresh day day"),
		kowilaj q'ij,			powerful day,
211.	B'elejeb' Ix,			9 Ix,	
212.	chom Q'ij,			Fat day[150],	
213.	B'elejeb' Ix,			9 Ix[151],	
214.	B'elejeb' Tijax,			9 Tijax,	
215.	B'elejeb' Iq',			9 Iq',	
216.	B'elejeb' Kame,			9 Kame,	
217.	B'elejeb' Tz'i',			9 Tz'i',	
218.	Q'ij Hora.			Day Hour[152].	
219.	Chok'ow la, Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,			Pass to the front You, Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,	
220.	Creador y Formador,			Creator and Former,	
221.	maltyox.			thank you.	
222.	Ajaw Jun Ix,			Lord 1 Ix,	
223.	Ajaw Kyeb' Ix,			Lord 2 Ix,	
224.	Ajaw Oxib' Ix,			Lord 3 Ix,	

148 *Ocote* is the burning wood.

149 In the *Popol Vuh*, where this title is taken from, these words are turned around in position: Tz'aqol, B'itol.

150 Fat day, or leading day.

151 According to Gregorio Itzep, the son of don Rigoberto Itzep, this sequence of five days is known as the *cinco principales*. Later in the ceremonial discourse this sequence is also mentioned as Ajaw Job'.

152 Probably diaphrastic kenning for "Time".

225.	Ajaw Kajib' Ix ,	Lord 4 Ix,
226.	Ajaw Job' Ix,	Lord 5 Ix,
227.	Ajaw Waqib' Ix,	Lord 6 Ix,
228.	Ajaw Wuqub' Ix,	Lord 7 Ix,
229.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' Ix,	Lord 8 Ix,
230.	Ajaw B'elejeb' Ix,	Lord 9 Ix,
231.	Ajaw Lajuj Ix,	Lord 10 Ix,
232.	Ajaw Julajuj Ix,	Lord 11 Ix,
233.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj Ix,	Lord 12 Ix,
234.	Ajaw Oxlajuj Ix.	Lord 13 Ix.
235.	Q'ana q'ij,	Yellow day,
236.	oxq'ij	third day (Tuesday[153]),
237.	Ix.	Ix.
238.	El nawal Ix,	The *nawal* Ix,
239.	cada uno de ellos tiene su energía.	each of them has his/her energy.
240.	Día Ix, algunos de ellos tiene su energía.	Day Ix, some of them has its energy.
241.	Gracias, Ajaw Ix,	Thank you, Lord Ix,
242.	dele iluminación a cada uno,	give enlightenment to each one of them,
243.	los aquí participantes,	the participants here,
244.	Ajaw Ix.	Lord Ix.
245.	El nawal Tz'ikin,	The *nawal* Tz'ikin,
246.	es el nawal de la moneda,	is the *nawal* of the money,
247.	nawal del dólar,	*nawal* of the dollar,
248.	nawal del euro,	*nawal* of the euro,
249.	nawal del quetzal,	*nawal* of the quetzal,
250.	nawal del peso.	*nawal* of the peso.
251.	Es nawal de todos los dineros sobre la superficie de la tierra,	It is the *nawal* of all the money on the surface of the earth
252.	sin el dinero no podemos hacer nada en la vida,	without money we cannot do anything in life,
253.	no podemos vivir sin el sagrado dinero.	we cannot live without the sacred money.
254.	Por eso daremos al sagrado dinero una moneda, un billete, un cheque, una tarjeta,	Because of that we give to the sacred money a coin, a bill, a cheque, a card[154],
255.	gracias Ajaw,	thank you Lord,
256.	que has bendecido a estos hermanos,	you who has blessed these brothers,
257.	recibí la bendición de sus centavos, de sus ahorros.	I have received the blessing of their cents, of their savings.
258.	Han venido aquí a la Madre Tierra,	They have came here to the Mother Earth,
259.	Ajaw, piden una penitencia, una devoción,	Lord, they ask for a penitence, a devotion,
260.	lo están haciendo ahorita,	they are doing it now,
261.	están concentrados,	they are concentrated,
262.	están meditando,	they are meditating,
263.	pues están presentando sus ofrendas, sus expresiones.	so they are presenting their offerings, their expressions.
264.	Se inspiran con voluntad, con amor, con fe, y con respeto.	They get inspired with volition, with love, with faith, and with respect.
265.	Recíbelo, bendígalo,	Receive it, bless them,
266.	que se multipliquen sus ofrendas.	may their gifts multiply.
267.	Ajaw Jun Tz'ikin,	Lord 1 Tz'ikin,
268.	Ajaw Kyeb' Tz'ikin,	Lord 2 Tz'ikin,
269.	Ajaw Oxib' Tz'ikin,	Lord 3 Tz'ikin,
270.	Ajaw Kajib' Tz'ikin,	Lord 4 Tz'ikin,

153 The day of the ceremony was a Friday, so "third day" might refer to something else.

154 The copal (incense) offerings represent coins and are payments to the Day Lords.

271.	Ajaw Job' Tz'ikin,	Lord 5 Tz'ikin,
272.	Ajaw Waqib' Tz'ikin,	Lord 6 Tz'ikin,
273.	Ajaw Wuqub' Tz'ikin,	Lord 7 Tz'ikin,
274.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' Tz'ikin,	Lord 8 Tz'ikin,
275.	Ajaw B'elejeb' Tz'ikin,	Lord 9 Tz'ikin,
276.	Ajaw Lajuj Tz'ikin,	Lord 10 Tz'ikin,
277.	Ajaw Julajuj Tz'ikin,	Lord 11 Tz'ikin,
278.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj Tz'ikin,	Lord 12 Tz'ikin,
279.	Ajaw Oxlajuj Tz'ikin,	Lord 13 Tz'ikin,
280.	Nawal Tz'ikin.	*Nawal* Tz'ikin.
281.	El nawal Ajmak, Jun Ajmak,	The *nawal* Ajmak, 1 Ajmak,
282.	nawal de la reconciliación.	*nawal* of reconcilliation.
283.	Corazón del Cielo, coraz…	Heart of the Sky, Heart…
284.	Que no haya debilidad para…	That there may not be weakness for…
285.	Ajaw Ajmak.	Lord Ajmak.
286.	Ajaw Jun Ajmak,	Lord 1 Ajmak,
287.	Ajaw Kyeb' Ajmak,	Lord 2 Ajmak,
288.	Ajaw Oxib' Ajmak,	Lord 3 Ajmak,
289.	Ajaw Kajib' Ajmak,	Lord 4 Ajmak,
290.	Ajaw Job' Ajmak,	Lord 5 Ajmak,
291.	Ajaw Waqib' Ajmak,	Lord 6 Ajmak,
292.	Ajaw Wuqub' Ajmak,	Lord 7 Ajmak,
293.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' Ajmak,	Lord 8 Ajmak,
294.	Ajaw B'elejeb' Ajmak,	Lord 9 Ajmak,
295.	Ajaw Lajuj Ajmak,	Lord 10 Ajmak,
296.	Ajaw Julajuj Ajmak,	Lord 11 Ajmak,
297.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj Ajmak,	Lord 12 Ajmak,
298.	Ajaw Oxlajuj Ajmak,	Lord 13 Ajmak,
299.	Nawal Ajmak,	*Nawal* Ajmak.
300.	Fuego Sagrado,	Sacred Fire,
301.	disuelve lo negativo que hay dentro de las energías,	dissolve the negativity inside the energies,
302.	externamente, internamente,	externally, internally,
303.	Ajaw Tijax[155].	Lord Tijax.
304.	Ajaw Jun Ajmak[156],	Lord 1 Ajmak,
305.	Ajaw Kyeb' Ajmak,	Lord 2 Ajmak,
306.	Ajaw Oxib' Ajmak,	Lord 3 Ajmak,
307.	Ajaw Kajib' Ajmak,	Lord 4 Ajmak,
308.	Ajaw Job' Ajmak,	Lord 5 Ajmak,
309.	Ajaw Waqib' Ajmak,	Lord 6 Ajmak,
310.	Ajaw Wuqub' Ajmak,	Lord 7 Ajmak,
311.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' Ajmak,	Lord 8 Ajmak,
312.	Ajaw B'elejeb' Ajmak,	Lord 9 Ajmak,
313.	Ajaw Lajuj Ajmak,	Lord 10 Ajmak,
314.	Ajaw Julajuj Ajmak,	Lord 11 Ajmak,
315.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj Ajmak,	Lord 12 Ajmak,
316.	Ajaw Oxlajuj Ajmak.	Lord 13 Ajmak.
317.	El nawal No'j,	The *nawal* No'j,
318.	la sabiduría,	the wisdom,
319.	el nawal del conocimiento,	the *nawal* of knowledge,
320.	nawal de la memoria,	the *nawal* of memory,
321.	nawal del talento.	the *nawal* of talent.

155 Mistake: he should actually invoke the day No'j at this moment.

156 Don Rigoberto Itzep repeats the Ajmak sequence. Probably he was confused for a second, as after Ajmak he invoke Tijax, while actually No'j should be invoked.

322.	Ajaw Jun Ajm… No'j!	Lord 1 Ajm… No'j!
323.	Ajaw Kyeb' No'j,	Lord 2 No'j,
324.	Ajaw Oxib' No'j,	Lord 3 No'j,
325.	Ajaw Kajib' No'j,	Lord 4 No'j,
326.	Ajaw Job' No'j,	Lord 5 No'j,
327.	Ajaw Waqib' No'j,	Lord 6 No'j,
328.	Ajaw Wuqub' No'j,	Lord 7 No'j,
329.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' No'j,	Lord 8 No'j,
330.	Ajaw B'elejeb' No'j,	Lord 9 No'j,
331.	Ajaw Lajuj No'j,	Lord 10 No'j,
332.	Ajaw Julajuj No'j,	Lord 11 No'j,
333.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj No'j,	Lord 12 No'j,
334.	Ajaw Oxlajuj No'j.	Lord 13 No'j.
335.	El aroma del Fuego, el aroma del humo,	The aroma of the fire, the aroma of the smoke,
336.	alimenta las nubes,	feeds the clouds,
337.	alimenta nuestra atmósfera,	feeds our atmosphere,
338.	alimenta la riqueza.	feeds the richness.
339.	Perfuma nuestra…	Perfume our…
340.	El aroma de *pom* alienta el espíritu del Agua, del Fuego, del Aire, y nuestra Tierra, y nuestros abuelos, y nuestros antepasados, que están alrededor de nosotros, nuestra energía, los veinte días.	The aroma of the *pom* gives strength to the spirit of the Water, of the Fire, of the Wind, and our Earth, and our grandparents, and our ancestors, who are around us, our energy, the Twenty Days.
341.	Ajaw Jun No'j,	Lord 1 No'j,
342.	Kyeb' No'j,	2 No'j,
343.	Oxib' No'j,	3 No'j,
344.	Kajib' No'j,	4 No'j,
345.	Job' No'j,	5 No'j,
346.	Waqib' No'j,	6 No'j,
347.	Wuqub' No'j,	7 No'j,
348.	Wajxaqib' No'j,	8 No'j,
349.	B'elejeb' No'j,	9 No'j,
350.	Lajuj No'j,	10 No'j,
351.	Julajuj No'j,	11 No'j,
352.	Kab'lajuj No'j,	12 No'j,
353.	Oxlajuj No'j.	13 No'j.
354.	El nawal Tijax:	The *nawal* Tijax:
355.	Jun Tijax,	1 Tijax,
356.	Kyeb' Tijax,	2 Tijax,
357.	Oxib' Tijax,	3 Tijax,
358.	Kajib' Tijax,	4 Tijax,
359.	Job' Tijax,	5 Tijax,
360.	Waqib' Tijax,	6 Tijax,
361.	Wuqub' Tijax,	7 Tijax,
362.	Wajxaqib' Tijax,	8 Tijax,
363.	B'elejeb' Tijax,	9 Tijax,
364.	Lajuj Tijax,	10 Tijax,
365.	Julajuj Tijax,	11 Tijax,
366.	Kab'lajuj Tijax,	12 Tijax,
367.	Oxlajuj Tijax.	13 Tijax.

368.	Nawal del	*chay*[157],	*Nawal* of glass	sherds,	
		piedra,		stone,	
		cuarzo,		quartz,	
		pedernal,		flint,	
		del cuarzo.		of the quartz.	
369.	Nawal de los chayes, de la obsidiana,		*Nawal* of the sherds, of the obsidian,		
370.	nawal de la medicina,		*nawal* of the medicine,		
371.	nawal de la comunicación,		*nawal* of the communication,		
372.	nawal de todas las ciencias de la comunicación.		*nawal* of all the sciences of communication.		
373.	Ajaw Tijax,		Lord Tijax,		
374.	Jun Tijax,		1 Tijax,		
375.	Kyeb' Tijax,		2 Tijax,		
376.	Oxib' Tijax,		3 Tijax,		
377.	Kajib' Tijax,		4 Tijax,		
378.	Job' Tijax,		5 Tijax,		
379.	Waqib' Tijax,		6 Tijax,		
380.	Wuqub' Tijax,		7 Tijax,		
381.	Wajxaqib' Tijax,		8 Tijax,		
382.	B'elejeb' Tijax,		9 Tijax,		
383.	Lajuj Tijax,		10 Tijax,		
384.	Julajuj Tijax,		11 Tijax,		
385.	Kab'lajuj Tijax,		12 Tijax,		
386.	Oxlajuj Tijax.		13 Tijax.		
387.	¡Despierta virtud!		Wake up virtue!		
388.	¡Desarrolla virtud! para cada uno de los hermanos brothers present.		Develop virtue for each of them here, the aquí presentes.		
389.	Aquí tiene cada uno	su don,	Each of them here has	his/her gift,	
		su facultad,		his/her capacity,	
		su virtud,		his/her virtue,	
390.	de la medicina,		of medicine,		
391.	de todas las artes,		of all the arts,		
392.	de todas las vocaciones,		of all vocations,		
393.	de todos los oficios.		of all offices.		
394.	Ajaw Jun… Tijax… Imox….[158]		Lord 1… Tijax… Imox….		
395.	Ajaw Kawoq,		Lord Kawoq,		
396.	nawal de la maternidad,		*nawal* of maternity,		
397.	nawal de las comadronas,		*nawal* of the midwifes,		
398.	nawal de los hospitals,		*nawal* of the hospitals,		
399.	de los hermanos hospitalizados que no tienen quien los visite,		of the hospitalized brothers, who do not have anyone who visits them,		
400.	los hermanos encarcelados, deles un aliento,		the jailed brothers, give them breath,		
401.	los hermanos que están en la calle, deles una bendición,		the brothers who are in the street, give them a blessing,		
402.	todos nuestros hermanos que están en la calle,		all our brothers who are in the street,		
403.	los niños que padecen hambre,		the children that are fatigued by hunger,		
404.	no reciben ni un vaso de agua,		they do not receive not a glass of water,		
405.	ni un vaso de pan:		not a glass of bread:		
406.	bendígalos Ajaw.		bless them Lord.		
407.	Corazón del Cielo, corazón de…		Heart of the Sky, Heart of the…		
408.	Ajaw Jun Kawoq,		Lord 1 Kawoq,		
409.	Kyeb' Kawoq,		2 Kawoq,		
410.	Oxib' Kawoq,		3 Kawoq,		
411.	Kajib' Kawoq,		4 Kawoq,		

157 Sherds of glass.

158 Don Rigoberto confuses the days here.

412.	Job' Kawoq,	5 Kawoq,
413.	Waqib' Kawoq,	6 Kawoq,
414.	Wuqub' Kawoq,	7 Kawoq,
415.	Wajxaqib' Kawoq,	8 Kawoq,
416.	B'elejeb' Kawoq,	9 Kawoq,
417.	Lajuj Kawoq,	10 Kawoq,
418.	Julajuj Kawoq,	11 Kawoq,
419.	Kab'lajuj Kawoq,	12 Kawoq,
420.	Oxlajuj Kawoq.	13 Kawoq.
421.	Jun Wuqub Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,
422.	que te convertiste en sol,	That you converted into the Sun,
423.	[es lo] que dice nuestro libro sagrado.	[that is] what our sacred book speaks about.
424.	Jun Junajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,	Jun Junajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,
425.	que te convertiste en maíz,	that you converted into corn,
426.	[es lo] que dice nuestro libro sagrado.	[that is] what our sacred book speaks about.
427.	Corazón del Cielo, Ajaw.	Heart of the Sky, Lord.
428.	Todos los difuntos abuelos,	All the deceased grandparents,
429.	que no hay quien les invoca,	[for whom] there is nobody who invokes them,
430.	que no hay quien les llama.	[for whom] there is nobody who calls them.
431.	Ajaw Jun Ajpu,	Lord 1 Ajpu,
432.	Ajaw Kyeb' Ajpu,	Lord 2 Ajpu,
433.	Ajaw Oxib' Ajpu,	Lord 3 Ajpu,
434.	Ajaw Kajib' Ajpu,	Lord 4 Ajpu,
435.	Ajaw Job' Ajpu,	Lord 5 Ajpu,
436.	Ajaw Waqib' Ajpu,	Lord 6 Ajpu,
437.	Ajaw Wuqub' Ajpu,	Lord 7 Ajpu,
438.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' Ajpu,	Lord 8 Ajpu,
439.	Ajaw B'elejeb' Ajpu,	Lord 9 Ajpu,
440.	Ajaw Lajuj Ajpu,	Lord 10 Ajpu,
441.	Ajaw Julajuj Ajpu,	Lord 11 Ajpu,
442.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj Ajpu,	Lord 12 Ajpu,
443.	Ajaw Oxlajuj Ajpu.	Lord 13 Ajpu.
444.	El nawal Imox,	The *nawal* Imox,
445.	el nawal de la humedad,	The *nawal* of humidity,
446.	nawal de los océanos,	*nawal* of the oceans,
447.	nawal del mar.	*nawal* of the sea.
448.	*Algunos de ellos tienen nawal Imox?*[159]	*Any of them have the nawal Imox?*
449.	Que ama la naturaleza,	Who loves the nature,
	los animales,	the animals,
	la creatividad.	the creativity.
450.	Propia de la medicina, de la telepatía.	Part of the medicine, of telepathy.
451.	Ayúdales, algunos [tienen] instintos,	Help them, some [have] instincts,
	algunos tienen cuarzo,	some have their quartz,
	algunos tienen visión,	some have their visión,
452.	ayúdales, por favor.	help them, please.
453.	Ajaw, te ruego, te suplico bondadosamente,	Lord, I beg you, I request you kindly,
454.	a eso vienen,	this [is what] they come for,
455.	es la razón de la ceremonia, es la intención,	it is the reason of the ceremony, it is the intention,
456.	pedir virtud,	to ask for virtue,
457.	pedir don,	to ask for a gift,
458.	pedir energía,	to ask for energy,
459.	pedir contacto.	to ask for contact.

159 Text in italics because the dialogue is here directed to the participants and not the the Divine Beings.

460.	Ajaw jun Imox,	Lord 1 Imox,
461.	Kyeb' Imox,	2 Imox,
462.	Oxib' Imox,	3 Imox,
463.	Kajib' Imox,	4 Imox,
464.	Job' Imox,	5 Imox,
465.	Waqib' Imox,	6 Imox,
466.	Wuqub' Imox,	7 Imox,
467.	Wajxaqib' Imox,	8 Imox,
468.	B'elejeb' Imox,	9 Imox,
469.	Lajuj Imox,	10 Imox,
470.	Julajuj Imox,	11 Imox,
471.	Kab'lajuj Imox,	12 Imox,
472.	Oxlajuj Imox.	13 Imox.
473.	El nawal Iq',	The *nawal* Iq',
474.	es el nawal del Aire.	it is the *nawal* of the air.
475.	Pedimos al nawal Iq´ que no haya ahogamiento,	We ask the *nawal* Iq' that their may not be drowning,
476.	en cada uno de ellos.	in each one of them.
477.	Nawal Jun Iq',	*Nawal* 1 Iq',
478.	Kyeb' Iq',	2 Iq',
479.	Oxib' Iq',	3 Iq',
480.	Kajib' Iq',	4 Iq',
481.	Job' Iq',	5 Iq',
482.	Waqib' Iq',	6 Iq',
483.	Wuqub' Iq',	7 Iq',
484.	Wajxaqib' Iq',	8 Iq',
485.	B'elejeb' Iq',	9 Iq',
486.	Lajuj Iq',	10 Iq',
487.	Julajuj Iq',	11 Iq',
488.	Kab'lajuj Iq',	12 Iq',
489.	Oxlajuj Iq'.	13 Iq'.
490.	El aroma del azúcar,	The aroma of the sugar,
491.	que aromatice nuestros abuelos, nuestra genealogía.	which aromatizes our grandparents, our genealogy.
492.	Ajaw Iq', el nawal Iq',	Lord Iq', the *nawal* Iq',
493.	es el nawal del Aire,	it is the *nawal* of the Air,
494.	pedimos al nawal Iq',	we ask to the *nawal* Iq',
495.	que nos dé vida,	that he gives us life,
496.	que nos dé…	that he gives us…
497.	El nawal Aq´ab´al es la armonía y el equilibrio.	The *nawal* Aq'ab'al is the harmony and the equilibrium.
498.	El amanecer, la aurora:	The dawn, the aurora:
499.	para cada uno de ellos [pido] que amanezca, que aclare	for each of them [I ask] that that it dawns and that it clears,
500.	psicológicamente, físicamente.	psychologically, physically.
501.	Algunos tienen problemas de trauma,	Some have problems of trauma,
502.	otros tienen problemas, enfermedad moral.	others have problems, moral sickness.
503.	[Esta] es una [cosa] física,	It is a physic [thing],
504.	ayúdalos Ajaw Aq´ab´al,	help them Lord Aq'ab'al,
505.	deles la medicina.	give them the medicine.
506.	Ajaw Jun Aq'ab'al,	Lord 1 Aq'ab'al,
507.	Kyeb' Aq'ab'al,	2 Aq'ab'al,
508.	Oxib' Aq'ab'al,	3 Aq'ab'al,
509.	Kajib' Aq'ab'al,	4 Aq'ab'al,
510.	Job' Aq'ab'al,	5 Aq'ab'al,
511.	Waqib' Aq'ab'al,	6 Aq'ab'al,
512.	Wuqub' Aq'ab'al,	7 Aq'ab'al,
513.	Wajxaqib' Aq'ab'al,	8 Aq'ab'al,
514.	B'elejeb' Aq'ab'al,	9 Aq'ab'al,

515.	Lajuj Aq'ab'al,	10 Aq'ab'al,
516.	Julajuj Aq'ab'al,	11 Aq'ab'al,
517.	Kab'lajuj Aq'ab'al,	12 Aq'ab'al,
518.	Oxlajuj Aq'ab'al.	13 Aq'ab'al.
519.	Nawal K'at:	*Nawal* K'at:
520.	que no se compliquen algunos problemas, algunos compromisos, o situaciones, estudios, problemas económicos.	That there is no complication of certain problems, certain commitments, or situations, studies, economic problems.
521.	Que no haya complicaciones en ninguno de ellos.	That none of them may have complications.
522.	Ajaw Jun K'at,	Lord 1 K'at,
523.	Ajaw Kyeb' K'at,	Lord 2 K'at,
524.	Ajaw Oxib' K'at,	Lord 3 K'at,
525.	Ajaw Kajib' K'at,	Lord 4 K'at,
526.	Ajaw Job' K'at,	Lord 5 K'at,
527.	Ajaw Waqib' K'at,	Lord 6 K'at,
528.	Ajaw Wuqub' K'at,	Lord 7 K'at,
529.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' K'at,	Lord 8 K'at,
530.	Ajaw B'elejeb' K'at,	Lord 9 K'at,
531.	Ajaw Lajuj K'at,	Lord 10 K'at,
532.	Ajaw Julajuj K'at,	Lord 11 K'at,
533.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj K'at,	Lord 12 K'at,
534.	Ajaw Oxlajuj K'at.	Lord 13 K'at.
535.	El nawal Kan,	The *nawal* Kan,
536.	justicia sagrada,	sacred justice,
537.	la justicia cósmica,	the cosmic justice,
538.	justicia esotérica,	esoteric justice,
539.	justicia astral,	ancestral justice,
540.	justicia física,	physical justice,
541.	justicia biológica,	biological justice,
542.	justicia social,	social justice,
543.	justicia genética en la vida de cada uno,	genetic justice in the life of each one,
544.	problemas de salud.	health problems.
545.	El nawal Kan,	The *nawal* Kan,
546.	la Serpiente Emplumada.	the Feathered Serpent.
547.	Ajaw Jun Kan,	Lord 1 Kan,
548.	Ajaw Kyeb' Kan,	Lord 2 Kan,
549.	Ajaw Oxib' Kan,	Lord 3 Kan,
550.	Ajaw Kajib' Kan,	Lord 4 Kan,
551.	Ajaw Job' Kan,	Lord 5 Kan,
552.	Ajaw Waqib' Kan,	Lord 6 Kan,
553.	Ajaw Wuqub' Kan,	Lord 7 Kan,
554.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' Kan,	Lord 8 Kan,
555.	Ajaw B'elejeb' Kan,	Lord 9 Kan,
556.	Ajaw Lajuj Kan,	Lord 10 Kan,
557.	Ajaw Julajuj Kan,	Lord 11 Kan,
558.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj Kan,	Lord 12 Kan,
559.	Ajaw Oxlajuj Kan.	Lord 13 Kan.
560.	Esta ceremonia que se lleva en su corazón es un gran recuerdo, un gran mensaje, un gran aliento.	This ceremony that brings in its heart a great remembrance, a great message, a great breath.
561.	Que no sea en vano,	May it not be in vain,
562.	su tiempo, su sacrificio de venir aquí a Guatemala.	their time, their sacrifice to come here in Guatemala.

563.	Lleva la esencia, lleva la sustancia de la cultura Maya,	Bring the essence, bring the substance of the Maya culture,
564.	del valor, de su viaje, de la penitencia.	of the value, of their travel, of the penitence.
565.	Ajaw Jun Kame,	Lord 1 Kame,
566.	nawal de la muerte,	*nawal* of death,
567.	nawal de los cementerios,	*nawal* of the cemeteries,
568.	nawal de nuestros abuelos,	*nawal* of our grandfathers,
569.	nawal de la humildad, la sencillez,	*nawal* of humbleness, the simplicity,
570.	nawal del respeto.	*nawal* of respect.
571.	Ajaw Jun Kame,	Lord 1 Kame,
572.	deles respeto en el corazón de ellos,	give them respect in their heart,
573.	que sean respetados en todo su alrededor:	may they be respected in their whole surroundings:
574.	el principio es el respeto hacia ellos.	the beginning is respect for them.
575.	Ajaw Jun Kame,	Lord 1 Kame,
576.	Ajaw Kyeb' Kame,	Lord 2 Kame,
577.	Ajaw Oxib' Kame,	Lord 3 Kame,
578.	Ajaw Kajib' Kame,	Lord 4 Kame,
579.	Ajaw Job' Kame,	Lord 5 Kame,
580.	Ajaw Waqib' Kame,	Lord 6 Kame,
581.	Ajaw Wuqub' Kame,	Lord 7 Kame,
582.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' Kame,	Lord 8 Kame,
583.	Ajaw B'elejeb' Kame,	Lord 9 Kame,
584.	Ajaw Lajuj Kame,	Lord 10 Kame,
585.	Ajaw Julajuj Kame,	Lord 11 Kame,
586.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj Kame,	Lord 12 Kame,
587.	Ajaw Oxlajuj Kame.	Lord 13 Kame.
588.	El nawal Kej,	The *nawal* Kej,
589.	es el nawal de la aurora, del amanecer,	he is is the *nawal* of the aurora, of dawn,
590.	el nawal de Kej.	the *nawal* Kej.
591.	Traemos esta ofrenda,	We bring this offering,
592.	Ajaw nawal Kej.	Lord *nawal* Kej.
593.	Es el poder del año, cargador de nuestro año,	He is the power of the year, carrier of our year,
594.	calendario Maya.	Maya calendar.
595.	El nawal Kyeb' Kej,	The *nawal* 2 Kej,
596.	el nawal B'elejeb' Kej,	the *nawal* 9 Kej,
597.	el nawal Job' Tz'i',	the *nawal* 5 Tz'i'[160],
598.	el nawal Kab'lajuj Tz'i',	the *nawal* 12 Tz'i',
599.	su ajtz'ib'.	his secretary.
600.	Ajaw Jun Kej,	Lord 1 Kej,
601.	Ajaw Kyeb' Kej,	Lord 2 Kej,
602.	Ajaw Oxib' Kej,	Lord 3 Kej,
603.	Ajaw Kajib' Kej,	Lord 4 Kej,
604.	Ajaw Job' Kej,	Lord 5 Kej,
605.	Ajaw Waqib' Kej,	Lord 6 Kej,
606.	Ajaw Wuqub' Kej,	Lord 7 Kej,
607.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' Kej,	Lord 8 Kej,
608.	Ajaw B'elejeb' Kej,	Lord 9 Kej,
609.	Ajaw Lajuj Kej,	Lord 10 Kej,
610.	Ajaw Julajuj Kej,	Lord 11 Kej,
611.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj Kej,	Lord 12 Kej,
612.	Ajaw Oxlajuj Kej.	Lord 13 Kej.
613.	Y nuestros gobernantes,	And our governors,
614.	que actúen conforme a la ley, positivamente,	who act conform the law, positively,

160 5 Tz'i' is the secretary of the year 2 Kej. The year E' has Tz'ikin as secretary, the year No'j has Kawoq as secretary and the year Iq' has K'at as secretary.

615.	que protejan nuestra	Naturaleza, nuestra Agua, nuestro Fuego, nuestro Aire, nuestra Madre Tierra, la Naturaleza.	who protect	our Nature, our Water, our Fire, our Air, our Mother Earth, the Nature.
616.	Ya no más maltrato a la Tierra,		No more mistreatment of the Earth,	
617.	ya no más maltrato a los Animales.		no more mistreatment of the Animals.	
618.	Ajaw Kej,		Lord Kej,	
619.	hoy dominan los gobernantes del Mundo,		today dominate the governors of the World,	
620.	que entiendan,		who understand,	
621.	que respeten la naturaleza.		who respect the nature.	
622.	Ajaw Kej, ke ta rem,		Lord Kej, ke ta rem [161],	
623.	Oxlajuj Kej.		13 Kej.	
624.	El nawal Q'anil,		The *nawal* Q'anil,	
625.	nawal de la mazorca,		*nawal* of the mazorca,	
626.	nawal del semen,		*nawal* of the semen,	
627.	nawal de la vida,		*nawal* of life,	
628.	nawal Q'anil,		*nawal* Q'anil,	
629.	nawal de la creación del hombre,		*nawal* of the creation of man,	
630.	el nawal Q'anil,		the *nawal* Q'anil,	
631.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,		Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,	
632.	Creador, Ajaw Q'anil:		Creator, Lord Q'anil:	
633.	la mazorca, el alimento sagrado de la sustancia.		the mazorca, the sacred alimentation of sustenance.	
634.	Sin el pan,		Without bread,	
635.	sin la hierba,		without herbs,	
636.	sin el azúcar,		without sugar,	
637.	sin un vaso de agua,		without a glass of water,	
638.	no sobreviviríamos.		we would not survive.	
639.	Ajaw Jun Q'anil,		Lord 1 Q'anil,	
640.	Kyeb' Q'anil,		2 Q'anil,	
641.	Oxib' Q'anil,		3 Q'anil,	
642.	Kajib' Q'anil,		4 Q'anil,	
643.	Job' Q'anil,		5 Q'anil,	
644.	Waqib' Q'anil,		6 Q'anil,	
645.	Wuqub' Q'anil,		7 Q'anil,	
646.	Wajxaqib' Q'anil,		8 Q'anil,	
647.	B'elejeb' Q'anil,		9 Q'anil,	
648.	Lajuj Q'anil,		10 Q'anil,	
649.	Julajuj Q'anil,		11 Q'anil,	
650.	Kab'lajuj Q'anil,		12 Q'anil,	
651.	Oxlajuj Q'anil.		13 Q'anil.	
652.	Ajaw Q'anil,		Lord Q'anil,	
653.	no te vemos,		we do not see you,	
654.	no te tocamos,		we do not touch you,	
655.	pero estás aquí.		but you are here.	
656.	El nawal Toj,		The *nawal* Toj,	
657.	Tojil, Ab'ilix, Jakawitz, Ixmukane, Ixkik',		Tojil, Ab'ilix, Jakawitz, Ixmukane, Ixkik',	
658.	Corazón del Cielo, Tojil,		Heart of the Sky, Tojil,	
659.	me[j] tojojik pu q'ab' choj:		May angry dispute water down in the palm of their hands:	
660.	eyawal, kaqiq', accidente, eyawal, yab'il.		annoyance, storm, accident, annoyance, sickness.	
661.	Cómo salieron de sus casas, así han de regresar a sus casas,		Like they left their houses, like this they will return to their houses	

161 I have not been able to establish a correct English translation of *ke ta rem*.

662. acompáñales energía Toj. — accompany them energy Toj.
663. Aquí traen esta ofrenda, este regalo, esta reliquia, — Here they bring you this offering, this gift, this relic,
664. con todo respeto, con todo corazón. — with all respect, with all heart.
665. Han venido a ofrendar a la Naturaleza, este regalo, — They have come to offer to the Nature, this gift,
666. hacia la Naturaleza, — towards the Nature,
667. para la vida de ellos mismos. — for the life of themselves.

668. Ajaw Jun Toj, — Lord 1 Toj,
669. Ajaw Kyeb' Toj, — Lord 2 Toj,
670. Ajaw Oxib' Toj, — Lord 3 Toj,
671. Ajaw Kajib' Toj, — Lord 4 Toj,
672. Ajaw Job' Toj, — Lord 5 Toj,
673. Ajaw Waqib' Toj, — Lord 6 Toj,
674. Ajaw Wuqub' Toj, — Lord 7 Toj,
675. Ajaw Wajxaqib' Toj, — Lord 8 Toj,
676. Ajaw B'elejeb' Toj, — Lord 9 Toj,
677. Ajaw Lajuj Toj, — Lord 10 Toj,
678. Ajaw Julajuj Toj, — Lord 11 Toj,
679. Ajaw Kab'lajuj Toj, — Lord 12 Toj,
680. Ajaw Oxlajuj Toj. — Lord 13 Toj.

681. Esta sagrada ceremonia, — This sacred ceremony,
682. que hemos ofrecido en este momento al Ajaw, a la Naturaleza, a la Madre Tierra, a los Abuelos, al Calendario. — that we have offered this moment to the Lord, to the Nature, to the Mother Earth, to the Grandparents, to the Calendar.
683. Estamos invitando el Tz'i', — We are inviting Tz'i',
684. nawal del sexo, — *nawal* of sex,
685. nawal del archive, — *nawal* of the archive,
686. nawal de la escritura, — *nawal* of writing,
687. nawal de la ciencia. — *nawal* of science.

688. Ajaw Jun Tz'i', — Lord 1 Tz'i',
689. Ajaw Kyeb' Tz'i', — Lord 2 Tz'i',
690. Ajaw Oxib' Tz'i', — Lord 3 Tz'i',
691. Ajaw Kajib' Tz'i', — Lord 4 Tz'i',
692. Ajaw Job' Tz'i', — Lord 5 Tz'i',
693. Ajaw Waqib' Tz'i', — Lord 6 Tz'i',
694. Ajaw Wuqub' Tz'i', — Lord 7 Tz'i',
695. Ajaw Wajxaqib' Tz'i', — Lord 8 Tz'i',
696. Ajaw B'elejeb' Tz'i', — Lord 9 Tz'i',
697. Ajaw Lajuj Tz'i', — Lord 10 Tz'i',
698. Ajaw Julajuj Tz'i', — Lord 11 Tz'i',
699. Ajaw Kab'lajuj Tz'i', — Lord 12 Tz'i',
700. Ajaw Oxlajuj Tz'i'. — Lord 13 Tz'i'.

701. Corazón del Cielo, — Heart of the Sky,
702. el nawal B'atz', — the *nawal* B'atz',
703. nawal del cordón umbilical, — *nawal* of the umbilical chord,
704. nawal del desarrollo. — *nawal* of development.
705. El arte, cada uno de ellos son artistas, son músicos, son cantantes, son danzantes, pintores, escultores, — The art, all of them are artists, are musicians, are singers, are dancers, painters, sculptors,
706. cada uno. — each one.

707.	Deles más virtud a cada uno de ellos,	Give more virtue to each one of them,
708.	y la medicina,	and the medicine,
709.	cada uno,	each one,
710.	en su arte, en la invocación del nawal B'atz'.	in their art, in the invocation of the *nawal* B'atz'.
711.	Ajaw Jun B'atz',	Lord 1 B'atz',
712.	Ajaw Kyeb' B'atz',	Lord 2 B'atz',
713.	Ajaw Oxib' B'atz',	Lord 3 B'atz',
714.	Ajaw Kajib' B'atz',	Lord 4 B'atz',
715.	Ajaw Job' B'atz',	Lord 5 B'atz',
716.	Ajaw Waqib' B'atz',	Lord 6 B'atz',
717.	Ajaw Wuqub' B'atz',	Lord 7 B'atz',
718.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' B'atz',	Lord 8 B'atz',
719.	Ajaw B'elejeb' B'atz',	Lord 9 B'atz',
720.	Ajaw Lajuj B'atz',	Lord 10 B'atz',
721.	Ajaw Julajuj B'atz',	Lord 11 B'atz',
722.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj B'atz',	Lord 12 B'atz',
723.	Ajaw Oxlajuj B'atz'.	Lord 13 B'atz'.
724.	El nawal B'atz'.	The *nawal* B'atz'.
725.	El nawal E',	The *nawal* E',
726.	es el nawal del destino, de la dentadura, de los huesos, de la fortaleza.	He is the *nawal* of destiny, of the denture, of the bones, of the strength.
727.	Si hay alguien que tiene alguna enfermedad, los huesos,	If there is anyone who has sickness, the bones,
728.	la sahumación los va a curar.	the bath of incense smoke will cure them.
729.	Gracias Ajaw,	Thank you Lord,
730.	el nawal E'.	the *nawal* E'.
731.	Ajaw jun E',	Lord 1 E',
732.	Ajaw Kyeb' E',	Lord 2 E',
733.	Ajaw Oxib' E',	Lord 3 E',
734.	Ajaw Kajib' E' ,	Lord 4 E',
735.	Ajaw Job' E',	Lord 5 E',
736.	Ajaw Waqib' E',	Lord 6 E',
737.	Ajaw Wuqub' E',	Lord 7 E',
738.	Ajaw Wajxaqib' E',	Lord 8 E',
739.	Ajaw B'elejeb' E',	Lord 9 E',
740.	Ajaw Lajuj E',	Lord 10 E',
741.	Ajaw Julajuj E',	Lord 11 E',
742.	Ajaw Kab'lajuj E',	Lord 12 E',
743.	Ajaw Oxlajuj E'.	Lord 13 E'.
744.	El nawal Aj,	The *nawal* Aj,
745.	el nawal de la columna vertebral,	the *nawal* of the spine,
746.	nawal de la familia,	*nawal* of the family,
747.	nawal del hogar,	*nawal* of the house,
748.	nawal de todos sus trabajos,	*nawal* of all their jobs,
749.	el nawal Aj, gracias.	the *nawal* Aj, thank you.
750.	Que reproduzcan sus retoños,	May they reproduce their offspring,
751.	que haya retoños para cada uno de ellos,	may there be offspring for each of them,
752.	Ajaw Jun Aj.	Lord 1 Aj.
753.	Jun Aj,	1 Aj,
754.	Kyeb' Aj,	2 Aj,
755.	Oxib' Aj,	3 Aj,
756.	Kajib' Aj,	4 Aj,
757.	Job' Aj,	5 Aj,

758.	Waqib' Aj,	6 Aj,
759.	Wuqub' Aj,	7 Aj,
760.	Wajxaqib' Aj,	8 Aj,
761.	B'elejeb' Aj,	9 Aj,
762.	Lajuj Aj,	10 Aj,
763.	Julajuj Aj,	11 Aj,
764.	Kab'lajuj Aj,	12 Aj,
765.	Oxlajuj Aj.	13 Aj.
766.	Gracias Ajaw Aj,	Thank you Lord Aj,
767.	cada uno pasará a dejar sus ofrendas.	Each one will pass to leave his/her offerings.
768.	Ajaw Aj,	Lord Aj,
769.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra.	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth.
770.	Gracias Ajaw,	Thank you Lord,
771.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra.	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth.
772.	Gracias, U'ku'x kaj U'ku'x ulew.	Thank you Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth.
773.	Vamos a pedir.	We are going to ask.
774.	*Quién es, vamos a ver, hay alguno que tiene signo Ix?*	*Who is, lets see, is there someone who has the sign Ix?* [162]
775.	*No hay ningún Ix. Ah bueno, usted es Ix, no?*	*There is no Ix? Ah ok, you are Ix, no?*
776.	*Pase de una vez, pase… Otro Ix?*	*You may pass once, please pass… Any other Ix?*
777.	Uk'u'x Kaj,	Heart of the Sky,
778.	wa' presente,	this gift,
779.	wa' multa,	this fine,
780.	kinya' kan che ri Ajaw,	I leave it [as inheritance] to the Lord,
781.	loq'laj Corazón del Cielo, loq'laj Corazón de la Tierra,	Sacred Heart of the Sky, Sacred Heart of the Earth,
782.	Tojil, Jakawitz,	Tojil, Jakab'itz,
783.	Ixmukane, Ixkik'.	Ixmukane, Ixkik'.
784.	Cho nimalaj q'ij,	In front of the great day[163],
785.	[una] ofrenda,	[an] offering,
786.	Ajaw Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Lord Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
787.	chuwach alaj q'ij,	facing the small day,
788.	chuwach nik'aj q'ij.	facing the mid-day.
789.	*Otro, nawal Tz'ikin?*	*Another nawal, Tz'ikin?*
790.	*Nawal Ajmak?*	*The nawal Ajmak?*
791.	*Nawal No'j?*	*The nawal No'j*
792.	Chom q'ij,	Fat day,
793.	Ajaw Job',	Lord Five[164],
794.	Ajaw B'elejeb' Ix,	Lord 9 Ix,
	B'elejeb' Tijax,	9 Tijax,
	B'elejeb' Iq',	9 Iq',
	B'elejeb' Kame,	9 Kame,
	B'elejeb' Tz'i',	9 Tz'i',
795.	Ajaw Kej.	Lord Kej[165].
796.	*No'j?*	*No'j?*

162 Don Rigoberto is talking two discourses at the same time. On the one hand he is asking the participants for their day of birth, on the other hand he is expressing a ritual discourse without losing track of what he is saying. I put the discourse that he directs to the participants in the ceremony in *italics.*

163 Reference to numbers: big days are those with high numbers (9-13); small days are those with low number (1-5); medium days are those with the numbers in between the big and small days (6-8).

164 This is the name for the five principales: Ajaw Job' (Lord Five) also known in Spanish as *los cinco principales* ("the five principales"). This sequence starts with the day of today, in this case Belejeb Ix, and continues to call the following days that are four positions further.

165 The Alcalde, or Mayor, is the year bearer, in this case Lord (2) Kej.

797.	Ajaw q'ij,	Lord day,
798.	Ajaw hora,	Lord hour,
799.	maltyoxinik.	[we] thank.
800.	Ajaw Kej,	Lord Kej[166],
801.	Ajaw E',	Lord E',
802.	Ajaw No'j,	Lord No'j,
803.	Ajaw Iq',	Lord Iq',
804.	*Ajtz'ib'* Tz'ikin,	Secretary Tz'ikin,
805.	*Ajtz'ib'* Kawoq,	Secretary Kawoq,
806.	*Ajtz'ib'* K'at,	Secretary K'at,
807.	*Ajtz'ib'* Tz'i'.	Secretary Tz'i'.
808.	Ajaw *Ajtz'ib'* Tz'i',	Lord Secretary Tz'i',
809.	maltyox.	thank you.
810.	Ajaw Kyeb' Kej,	Lord 2 Kej,
811.	B'elejeb' Kej,	9 Kej,
812.	Job' Tz'i',	5 Tz'i',
813.	Kab'lajuj Tz'i',	12 Tz'i',
814.	Winaq k'o junib'al.	20 is the place of number one[167].
815.	*Ajaw, algo Tijax? Tijax?*	*Lord, something Tijax? Tijax?*
816.	*Kawoq?*	*Kawoq?*
817.	Cho wa' Ajaw Q'ij,	In front this Lord Day,
818.	Junib'al,	place of number 1 (Pa ja'),
819.	Wakib'al,	place of number 6 (Paklom),
820.	Wajxakib'al,	place of number 8 (Alajsab'al),
821.	B'elejeb'al.	place of number 9 (Nimasab'al).
822.	*Oxlajuj E'?*	*13 E'?*[168]
823.	Chuwach la nan,	Facing You [grand]mother,
824.	B'alam Aq'ab',	Jaguar Aq'ab',
825.	B'alam Kitze,	Jaguar Kitze,
826.	B'alam Ikim,	Jaguar Ikim,
827.	B'alam Majakutaj.	Jaguar Majakutaj.
828.	*Ajpu?*	*Ajpu?*
829.	*Imox?*	*Imox?*
830.	*Iq'?*	*Iq'?*
831.	*Aq'ab'al?*	*Aq'ab'al?*
832.	*K'at?*	*K'at?*
833.	*Kan? Kan? ¡Kan! ¡Pase! Puede pasar allí.*	*Kan? Kan? Kan! Pass, you may pass here!*
834.	Kamik q'ij,	Now the day,
835.	kamik hora,	now the hour,
836.	cho ok'ow la,	pass to the front,
837.	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alam q'ij,	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alam q'ij,
838.	Jun Junajpu,	Jun Junajpu,
839.	rutzil uwuch we wa' cho,	a blessing to the face of (a greeting to) this lake,
840.	Rax Amolob' divino,	divine Rax Amolo,

166 The four year bearers.

167 "20 is the place of number 1" might refer to the 20 times repetition of visiting the altar of number one, Pa Ja'. The number 1 marks the beginning of a *trecena*. When 20 *trecenas* are completed, 260 days have passed.

168 I do not know why the day 13 E' is mentioned here.

841.	jin awas,	one hearth of a ritual shrine,
842.	jin eqomal,	one burden,
843.	jun *meb'il*,	one house hold shrine/ patrilineage shrine,
844.	jin warab'al ja,	one patrilineage shrine,
845.	jun winel.	one patrilineage shrine dedicated to agricultural success.
846.	Wa' chi,	This here,
847.	kiwachaq'ij,	in front of our fate,
848.	nupatan,	my service,
849.	maltyox.	thank you.
850.	Bien,	O.K.,
851.	chu nanaxel ik'aaj chi,	from the mother *ik'aaj chi*[169],
852.	chu nanaxel q'an xetob[an]ik.	from the mother Yellow who has helped.
853.	Are wa' Tojil,	This is Tojil,
854.	are wa' Ab'ilix,	this is Ab'ilix,
855.	are wa' Jakawitz,	this is Jakawitz,
856.	are wa' Ixmukane,	this is Ixmukane,
857.	are' Ixkik'.	she is Ixkik'.
858.	*Es Imox, ¿Imox?*	*Is it Imox, Imox?*
859.	*¿Kame? ¿Quién es Kame?*	*Kame? Who is Kame?*
860.	Kame, nimaq taq juyub',	Kame, big mountains,
861.	nimaq taq'aj, Kame.	big valley, Kame.
862.	*¿Kej? ¿No sabe su día?*	*Kej? She does not know her day?*
863.	*¡Ah! puede pasar, puede, no hay problema.*	*Ah she may pass, she can, there is no problem*
864.	*Q'anil, ¿alguien? ¿Q'anil? ¿Q'anil?*	*Q'anil, someone? Q'anil? Q'anil?*
865.	Chu Uk'u'x Kaj, chu Uk'u'x,	To the Heart of the Sky, to the Heart,
866.	aquí presente chu Ajaw,	here present to the Ajaw,
867.	chu uwach ulew,	to face of the earth,
868.	are wa' kikoj[170] jin multa,	this is one fine that they place,
869.	cho ri tew kaqiq',	in front of the cold storm,
870.	altares, los encantos,	the altars, the enchantments,
871.	warab'al ja,	patrilineage shrine,
872.	*meb'il*,	house hold shrine/ patrilineage shrine,
873.	winel,	patrilineage shrine dedicated to agricultural success,
874.	awas, ch'ab'ej taj.	hearth of a ritual shrine, which are not called upon.
875.	Chok'ow la mundo,	You pass to the front, Earth,
876.	chok'ow la sutz,	you pass to the front, Cloud,
877.	chok'ow la mayul,	you pass to the front, Mist,
878.	wa' loq'laj q'aq',	this sacred Fire,
879.	wa' loq'laj kaqiq',	this sacred Storm,
880.	sachib',	[that] are made invisible,
881.	chu la mundo,	to You World,
882.	chu la tew.	to You Cold[ness].
883.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
884.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
885.	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,
886.	Jun Tojil, Jakawitz,	One Tojil, Jakawitz,
887.	Ixmukane, Ixkik'.	Ixmukane, Ixkik'.

169 I have not been able to establish a correct English translation of *ik'aaj chi*.

170 Would actually have to be *K(a)kikoj*. Or possibly the "n" is swallowed and he actually says *Kinkoj*, meaning "I place". However, it seems that *kikoj* is a Momostecan variant of "They place" (kakikoj). Several times in the ceremonial discourse the *aspect marker* is dropped. This becomes most evident when don Rigoberto at the end says "kisipaj jin nu-almuerzo", meaning "They give one mine lunch", referring to the lunch that the persons that were just mentioned in that section would pay for him on that day.

888.	Esta ceremonia, Corazón del Cielo, Tojil,	This ceremony, Heart of the Sky, Tojil,
889.	[Singing:] Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	[Singing:] Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
890.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
891.	Uk'u'x Kaj, Uk'u'x Ulew,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
892.	B'itol, Tz'aqol,	B'itol, Tz'aqol,
893.	Tepew, Qukumatz,	Tepew, Qukumatz,
894.	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok,	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok,
895.	Ixmukane, Rati't q'ij, Rati't saq.	Ixmukane, Grandmother Day, Grandmother White.
896.	*¡Pueden echar estos pastelitos! ¡pueden echarlos ya! uno por uno.*	*You can pour these little cakes, you can pour it already, one by one*
897.	[Singing:] Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	[Singing:] Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
898.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
899.	Uk'u'x Kaj, Uk'u'x Ulew,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
900.	B'itol, Tz'aqol,	B'itol, Tz'aqol,
901.	Tepew, Qukumatz,	Tepew, Qukumatz,
902.	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok,	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok,
903.	B'alam Aq'ab', B'alam Kitze, B'alam Ikim, B'alam Majakutaj,	Jaguar Aq'ab', Jaguar Kitze, Jaguar Ikim, Jaguar Majakutaj,
904.	Chomija, Kaja Paluna, Q'ankixaja, Tzununja,	Chomija, Kaja Paluna, Q'ankixaja, Tzununja,
905.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra.	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth.
906.	*Pon lo ya, el azúcar.*	*Now place it, the sugar.*
907.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
908.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
909.	Uk'u'x Kaj, Uk'u'x Ulew,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
910.	Tz'aqol, B'itol,	Tz'aqol, B'itol[171],
911.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra.	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth.
912.	¡Oh! Tojil,	Oh Tojil,
913.	fuego sagrado,	sacred fire,
914.	fuego predicador,	preacher fire,
915.	tú que agarras excelencia.	you who grabs excellence.
916.	El sur que se llama Kaja Paluna,	The south which is called Kaja Paluna,
917.	tú eres el corazón del sacrificio,	you are the heart of sacrifice,
918.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
919.	Siempre escondido en todas las cosas del alma,	Hidden in all the things of the soul,
920.	nuestro Sol.	our Sun.
921.	¡Oh! nim qatat chi kaj,	Oh! Our Great Father who is in the sky,
922.	cho ulew, koj kan kanoq,	in front of the Earth, which has been left for us,
923.	qamam taq ojer,	our ancient ancestors,
924.	Uk'u'x, ¡Oh! Dios Toj,	Heart, oh God Toj!
925.	e remelik.	they are present.
926.	Oración a la Virgen Ixkik',	Prayer to the virgin Ixkik',
927.	¡Oh! Virgen,	oh virgin,
928.	puede maltratar,	it/he/she/You can mistreat,
929.	deles bendicion, deles energía.	give them blessing, give them energy.
930.	El control y el valor que llevas dentro,	The control, the value, that you carry inside,
931.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
932.	Que todo desaparezca.	May everything disappear.
933.	Esta es su ofrenda,	This is Your offering,
934.	espíritu del cielo que está en la cima más alta,	spirit of the sky, who is in the highest Summit,
935.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de esta Sagrada…	Heart of the Sky, Heart of this Sacred…
936.	A todos los encantos…	To all the enchantments…
937.	Que tengan mun…	May they have …
938.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,

171 Here he uses the form of *Tz'aqol, B'itol* as it is mentioned in the *Popol Vuh*. Many times he turns *Tz'aqol, B'itol* around.

939.	Creador y Formador.	Creator and Former.
940.	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij.	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij.
941.	[Singing:] Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	[Singing:] Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
942.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
943.	B'itol, Tz'aqol,	B'itol, Tz'aqol,
944.	Tepew Qukumatz,	Tepew, Qukumatz,
945.	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok.	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok.
946.	*El azucár es para pedir armonía con sus familiares,*	*The sugar is to ask for harmony with your relatives,*
947.	*y con sus compañeros de trabajo,*	*and with your colleagues from work,*
948.	*y con los que ustedes se rodean, las amistades.*	*and with what surrounds you, the friendships.*
949.	*Hacer armonía.*	*Make harmony.*
950.	*Hechen cada uno, como hicieron en los…*	*Pour each one, like you did in the …*
951.	Are wa' ri Ajaw ri Kaj,	This is the Lord of the Sky,
952.	are wa' ri Ajaw ri Uwach Ulew,	this is the Lord of the Face of the Earth,
953.	Q'ana Q'ij, Q'ana Hora,	yellow day, yellow hour,
954.	Q'ana Saq, Q'ana…	yellow clarity, yellow …
955.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
956.	…	(whispering too low to understand)
957.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
958.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
959.	Uk'u'x Kaj, Uk'u'x Ulew,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
960.	Tz'aqol, B'itol ,	Tz'aqol, B'itol,
961.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
962.	Creador y Formador.	Creator and Former.
963.	Uk'u'x Kaj, Uk'u'x Ulew.	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth.
964.	Paklom,	Paklom,
965.	Nimasab'al,	Nimasab'al,
966.	Alajsab'al,	Alajsab'al,
967.	Pa Ja',	Pa Ja',
968.	Kab' Uja'il[172],	the second place of washings,
969.	Nab'e Uja'il,	the first place of washings,
970.	Kokoch[173],	Kokoch,
971.	Pukb'al[174],	Pukb'al,
972.	Kalwar[175],	Kalwar,
973.	Saqarib'al[176],	Saqarib'al,
974.	Sajkab'aja[177],	Sajkab'aja,
975.	Nim Jay[178],	Nim Jay,
976.	Cerro de Oro[179],	Cerro de Oro,
977.	Campana Ab'aj[180],	Campana Ab'aj,
978.	Pul Ch'ich'[181],	Pul Ch'ich,

172 *Pu kab' ja'il* and *nab'e uja'il* are located in Momostenango underneath the hill of Paklom. *Ja'il* is "place of water". *Nab'e uja'il* means "the first place of water", *pu kab' ja'il* means "the second place of water". There are water sources here and the river passes by.

173 In the main plaza in front of the church of Momostenango.

174 In front of the church is the *plazuela*, here was the original cemetery of the town. When the *plazuela* was constructed they excavated all the bones and put them in a huge grave which place they called Pukb'al afterwards. Here is an altar.

175 The calvario.

176 "Place of the sunrise", a sacred altar at Santa Cruz de K'iche'.

177 A sacred altar in Santa Cruz del Quiché.

178 A sacred altar at St. Jorge, Panajachel. *Nima jai* means "gran casa".

179 A sacred altar at Santiago La Laguna.

180 A sacred altar at Totonicapán.

181 A sacred altar at Las Trampas.

979.	Rax Amolob' Mundo[182].	Rax Amolob' Mundo.
980.	Nan tew kaqiq',	Grandmother of the Cold Storm,
981.	kanum la,	you are hungry,
982.	kachaqi'j chi' la,	you are thirsty,
983.	k'o cho ri jab',	who is in front of the rain,
984.	k'o cho ri tew,	who is in front of the cold,
985.	k'o cho ri kaqiq',	who is in front of the storm,
986.	k'o taj chi kach'ab'en la:	there is nobody who mentions You:
987.	utzil le wuch[183] la,	a greeting to You,
988.	kecha' wach la,	they say to Your face,
989.	utzil le wuch la, kecha'.	a greeting to You, they say.
990.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
991.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
992.	Tepew, Qukumatz,	Tepew, Qukumatz,
993.	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok,	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok,
994.	Abuela luz,	Grandmother Light,
995.	Abuela claridad,	Grandmother Brightness,
996.	que amanezca la aurora,	that the aurora may dawn,
997.	dé armonía a los hermanos de Estados Unidos, el hermano de Inglaterra, y el hermano de Holanda.	give harmony to the brothers from the United States, the brother from England, the brother from the Netherlands.
998.	Marcos y Paul, todos los hermanos aquí presentes,	Marcos and Paul, all the brothers present here,
999.	con sus nombres cada uno,	each with their own name,
1000.	Ajaw, Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Lord Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
1001.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
1002.	B'itol, Tepew, Alom, Qalojom,	B'itol, Tepew, Alom, Qalojom,
1003.	Creador Tojil,	Creator Tojil,
1004.	Creador Ab'ilix,	Creator Ab'ilix,
1005.	Jakawitz,	Jakawitz,
1006.	que sientan armonía con esta sagrada luz, este fuego,	who feel harmony with this sacred light, this fire,
1007.	Corazón del Cielo, Creador…	Heart of the Sky, Creator…
1008.	Corazón del Cielo,	Heart of the Sky,
1009.	B'elejeb' Ix,	9 Ix,
1010.	nawal del arte.	*nawal* of the art.
1011.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra.	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth.
1012.	Ajaw nab'e permiso incienso,	Lord, first permission for the/with the incense,
1013.	kikoj[184] kipresente.	they give (/use) their gift.
1014.	Uk'u'x Kaj, Uk'u'x Ulew,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
1015.	maltyoxinik,	[we are] thanking,
1016.	wa' jun q'ij Wajxakib' B'atz'oj, Wuqub' Kame, Wajxakib' Kej[185].	this one day 8 B'atz', 7 Kame, 8 Kej.
1017.	Wa' patan, wa' wachaq'ij,	This service/burden, my fate,
1018.	are wa' kek'am,	this is what they bring,
1019.	jun rutzil uwach,	one blessing to your face,
1020.	kek'am uloq,	they bring here,
1021.	maltyoxinik.	[we are] thanking.

182 A sacred altar between Solalá and Santa Clara, where the ceremony took place.

183 He uses *wuch* in stead of *wach*

184 Momostecan variant. Usually it would be *K(a)kikoj*. An alternative reading would be *kinkoj*, "I give (their gift)".

185 The day 8 Kej is the day on which the Chuchqajawib receive their second barro sagrado. Therefore they mention both 8 B'atz', the day that they got initiated as Aj q'ij and 8 Kej, the day they were initiated as chuchqajaw. Why 7 kame is mentioned here is not entirely clear to me.

1022.	Wa' Juyub' Taq'aj,	This Mountain-Valley[186],
1023.	Rax Amolob',	Rax Amolob',
1024.	kuyu qamak.	forgive our error/sin.
1025.	Ma nim taj, nipa kinpetik kinkam ri nuchaj,	It is not big, next time that I come I bring my ocote[187],
1026.	nuq'aq' in,	it is my fire,
1027.	k'o jun [ch]ela,	there is one whisper,
1028.	Ajaw, maltyoxib'al,	Lord, as a means of saying thank you,
1029.	rutzil uwuch la Ajaw.	we greet You Lord.
1030.	Rax Amolob', Juyub' Taq'aj,	Rax Amolob', Mountain-Valley ("World"),
1031.	jin utz, jin presente,	one good [thing], one gift,
1032.	kinjach chi,	I deliver to,
1033.	kinqasaj chi Ajaw.	I lower to the Lord.
1034.	Rax amolob',	Rax Amolob',
1035.	Juyub' Taq'aj,	Mountain-Valley ("World"),
1036.	oxlajuj nuchaj, oxlajuj q'aq' chuwila,	13 are my offering[s][188], 13 fires for You,
1037.	keqajik oxlajuj che', nan-tat. ("ancestors").	we descend 13 pieces of wood, Grandmother-Grandfather
1038.	Komon Itzeb'ab'[189], komon Chanchavaqib',	The community of Itzep (lineage), the community of Chanchavac (lineage),
1039.	komon Hernández, komon Ajanelab',	the community of Hernandez (lineage), the community of Ajanel (lineage),
1040.	komon chuchqajawa'ib',	the community of chuchqajawa'ib',
1041.	komon aj Santa Clara La Laguna,	the community of people from Santa Clara la Laguna,
1042.	komon aj Panajachel,	the community of people from Panajachel,
1043.	komon aj Santiago Atitlán,	the community of people from Santiago Atitlan,
1044.	komon aj San Pablo,	the community of people from San Pablo,
1045.	komon aj San Pedro,	the community of people from San Pedro,
1046.	komon aj San Juan,	the community of people from San Juan,
1047.	komon aj Santa Lucía.	the community of people from Santa Lucía.
1048.	K'o jun presente, ánima,	There is one gift, spirit,
1049.	maltyox Ajaw.	thank you Lord.
1050.	Cada uno kikoj[190] jun u-sahumación cho ri Ajaw,	Each one puts down his/her one incense smoke before the Lord,
1051.	q'ana[191] q'ij, q'ana hora,	yellow day, yellow hour,
1052.	Uk'u'x Kaj.	Heart of the Sky.
1053.	Uk'u'x Kaj, Uk'u'x Ulew ,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
1054.	B'itol, Tepew, Alom, K'ajolom,	B'itol, Tepew, Alom, K'ajolom,
1055.	Ixpiyakok, Ixmukane,	Ixpiyakok, Ixmukane,
1056.	rati't q'ij, rati't saqilal,	his/ her Grandmother Day, his/her Grandmother Light,
1057.	wakaj,	*wakaj*[192],
1058.	Tz'aqol, B'itol, Tepew.	Tz'aqol, B'itol, Tepew.
1059.	Jun Ajpu,	1 Ajpu[193],
1060.	Kyeb' Ajpu,	2 Ajpu,
1061.	Oxib' Ajpu,	3 Ajpu,
1062.	Kajib' Ajpu,	4 Ajpu,

186 Wa' juyub' taq'aj ("this mountain-valley) is a diafrastic kenning for "World"

187 Ocote is here used as a metaphor for "offering".

188 Chaj is literally "Ocote" or "burning wood".

189 This part refers to the family lineages. First, don Rigoberto mentions his own family lineages, Itzep and Chanchavac. Because these names are K'iche' the suffix –ab' follows, which relates to komon ("family"). Then the family lineages of doña María, the wife of don Rigoberto are mentioned. As the name Hernández is Spanish, it does not receive this suffix.

190 *Aspect marker* is dropped.

191 Means something like sacred day, or beautiful day. Q'an Q'ij could also mean yellow sun.

192 I could not establish a correct English translation of the word *wakaj*. Possibly the word is related to the verb *wakakik* ("to get up slowly").

193 After invoking the lineages of the ancestors, don Rigoberto invokes the Day-Lord of the ancestors, Ajpu.

1063.	Job' Ajpu,	5 Ajpu,
1064.	Wakib' Ajpu,	6 Ajpu,
1065.	Wuqub' Ajpu,	7 Ajpu,
1066.	Wajxakib' Ajpu,	8 Ajpu,
1067.	B'elejeb' Ajpu,	9 Ajpu,
1068.	Lajuj Ajpu,	10 Ajpu,
1069.	Julajuj Ajpu,	11 Ajpu,
1070.	Kab'alajuj Ajpu,	12 Ajpu,
1071.	Oxlajuj Ajpu[194].	13 Ajpu.
1072.	Ajaw Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Jun Junajpu,	Lord Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Jun Junajpu,
1073.	Tojil, Ab'ilix, Jakab'ix, Ixmukane,	Tojil, Ab'ilix, Jakab'ix, Ixmukane,
1074.	Q'ana ofrenda, saqa ofrenda,	yellow offering, white offering.
1075.	Ajaw Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Jun Junajpu,	Lord Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Jun Junajpu,
1076.	Tojil, Ab'ilix, Jakab'ix, Ixmukane,	Tojil, Ab'ilix, Jakab'ix, Ixmukane,
1077.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
1078.	Tojil, Jakawitz, Alom, K'ajolom.	Tojil, Jakawitz, Alom, K'ajolom,
1079.	Are wa' wa' ofrenda,	this is this offering,
1080.	wa' presente xalinik,	this gift was born,
1081.	xtux pa ri kanima'.	it sprouted in their heart.
1082.	Xkib'ij che ri a Marcos,	They said to Marcos,
1083.	kaqaya' jun ofrenda al Ajaw,	we give one offering to the Lord,
1084.	a la Madre Tierra,	to the Mother Earth,
1085.	cho ri wach tew kaqiq',	in front of the face of the Cold Storm,
1086.	kaqamaltyoxij.	we thank you.
1087.	Oj k'o chi,	We are here,
1088.	chela sutz mayul,	for you Cloud-Mist,
1089.	tewal kaqiq'al.	Coldness-Windiness.
1090.	Gracias Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Thank you Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
1091.	recibe este humo, el aroma del humo,	receive this smoke, the aroma of the smoke,
1092.	el aroma del fuego, el aroma del copal,	the aroma of the fire, the aroma of the copal,
1093.	que les llegue en su corazón,	may they receive it in their heart,
1094.	a los hermanos presentes.	to the brothers present.
1095.	En la vida deles salud, deles bendición,	In life, give them health, give them blessing,
1096.	deles protección a cada uno de ellos.	give protection to each one of them.
1097.	B'itol, Tepew,	B'itol, Tepew,
1098.	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok, Ixmukane,	Alom, K'ajolom, Ixpiyakok, Ixmukane,
1099.	abuela de la luz, de la claridad,	Grandmother of the Light, of the Brightness,
1100.	que amanezca, que llegue la aurora,	May it dawn, may the aurora arrive,
1101.	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij,
1102.	Jun Junajpu, Tojil, Jakawitz,	Jun Jun Ajpu, Tojil, Jakawitz,
1103.	gracias a esta sagrada ofrenda,	thanks to this sacred offering,
1104.	que hemos traído el día de hoy,	which we have brought the day of today,
1105.	agradecerte Madre Tierra.	thanking you Mother Earth.
1106.	El significado del licor,	The meaning of liquor,
1107.	vamos a mencionar al Ajaw.	we are going to mention to the Lord.
1108.	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu,	One Wuqub' Ajpu,
1109.	Jun Tojil,	One Tojil,
1110.	Jun Jakawitz,	One Jakawitz,
1111.	Jun Ixmukane.	One Ixmukane.
1112.	Nupatan, nuwachaq'ij,	My service, my fate,
1113.	we ne k'o jalum,	if there is falsehood,
1114.	k'o k'ason,	there is debt,

194 Ajpu is the spirit or *nawal* of all the deceased people. This day is mentioned again in accompany of the thirteen numbers. Because some people forget to mention the ancestors, they are now mentioned in this ceremony by invoking the day Ajpu from number 1 to 13.

1115.	k'o chuwuch k'ax.	there is facing of pain.
1116.	Nuya' toj, nuya' pena, tew kaqiq',	My giving of sorrow, my giving of trouble, Cold Storm,
1117.	xb'e chok'ow la, xb'e' k'ama la pe le b'e,	you went to pass to the front, you went guide the road[195],
1118.	xb'e chok'ow la tew, [mal]tiox.	you went to pass to the front Cold[ness], thank you.
1119.	Rax Alomob', Juyub' Taq'aj.	Rax Amolob', Mountain-Valley ("World").
1120.	Uk'u'x Kaj, Ajaw Uk'u'x Kaj,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
1121.	Ajaw Tz'aqol, Ajaw Tepew,	Lord Tz'aqol, Lord Tepew,
1122.	Ajaw Alom, Ajaw Kajolom,	Lord Bearer, Lord Kajolom,
1123.	Ajaw Ixpiyakok, Ajaw Ixmukane,	Lord Ixpiyakok, Lord Ixmukane,
1124.	maltyox Ajaw, wa' presente, wa' multa,	thank you Lord, this gift, this fine,
1125.	kajacho, kaqajach chuwach la,	You distribute him, we distribute him to You,
1126.	chuwuch la tew kaqiq'.	facing You, Cold Storm,
1127.	Kecha' wa' rajil qatz'aqat,	They say this prize, our companions,
1128.	ixoqib', achiab',	women, men,
1129.	e k'o chi,	they are here,
1130.	e remelik,	they are present,
1131.	e takalik,	they are standing straight,
1132.	cho ri Ajaw,	before the Lord,
1133.	cho ri Uwach Ulew.	before the Face of the Earth.
1134.	Keya' jun regalo,	They place one gift,
1135.	jun reliquia,	one relic,
1136.	keb'an cantar,	they do sing,
1137.	ketzijon k'ut, kexojow k'ut,	they talk and they dance and,
1138.	kechaw k'ut che ri Ajaw.	they speak and to the Lord.
1139.	Maltyox, Tz'aqol, B'itol,	Thank you Tz'aqol, B'itol,
1140.	maltyiox Tepew,	thank you Tepew,
1141.	maltyox Kajolom,	thank you Kajolom,
1142.	maltyox Uk'u'x ri plo,	thank you Heart of the Lake,
	Uk'u'x ri kaj,	Heart of the Sky,
	Uk'u'x ri q'ij,	Heart of the Day/Sun,
	Uk'u'x ri kaqiq',	Heart of the Storm,
1143.	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij, Jun Junajpu,	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Ixb'alamq'ij, Jun Junajpu,
1144.	chu wach la tat.	facing You, Father,
1145.	Maltyox tew, maltyox kaqiq',	Thank you Cold[ness], Thank you Storm,
1146.	maltyox sutz, maltyox mayul,	thank you Cloud, Thank you Mist,
1147.	Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra,	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth,
1148.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
1149.	Jun Wuqub' Ajpu, Jun Tojil, Jun Ab'ilix, Jun Jakawitz.	1 Wuqub' Ajpu, 1 Tojil, 1 Ab'ilix, 1 Jakawitz.
1150.	Are wa' Ajaw, Q'an Ajaw,	This is Ajaw, Yellow Lord,
1151.	Creador y Formador,	Creator and Former,
1152.	Tepew, Qukumatz, Alom, Kajolom,	Tepew, Qukumatz, Bearer, Kajolom,
1153.	Ixpiyakok, Ixmukane, Uk'u'x Kaj,	Ixpiyakok, Ixmukane, Heart of the Sky.
1154.	Maltyox Ajaw, Tz'aqol, B'itol,	Thank you Ajaw, Tz'aqol, B'itol,
1155.	wa' xukulem,	this act of worship,
1156.	wa' mejelem,	this kneeling,
1157.	wa' ofrenda,	this offering,
1158.	wa' kotzi'j,	this flower,
1159.	wa' maltyoxinik.	this thanking.
1160.	Kecha' wa' qajil qatz'aqat,	Our companians say this our price,
1161.	kepe pa ri Estados Unidos.	who come from the United States.
1162.	Kita'196 vida, kita' suerte,	They ask life, they ask luck,
1163.	kita' toq'ob', kita' mayij, toq'ob' chi wachla Ajaw.	they ask favor, they ask to be admired, they deserve pity of You Lord.

195 Literally: "You went to receive the road". Receiving the road, however, is a metaphor of guiding. Such as what the Kamalb'e do, the spiritual guides in the K'iche' communities.

196 Aspect marker is dropped.

1164.	Chok'ow la pa tew kaqiq',	Pass to the front You, cold Storm,
1165.	kepe pa diferentes ciudades de Estados Unidos.	they come from different cities in the United States.
1166.	Je wa' a Paul are' kaki'kotik ranima,	Like him Pablo, [that] he [may] feels happy in his heart,
1167.	jun nim ki'kotemal,	one big happiness,
1168.	jun nim kab' pa ri ranima,	one great sweetness in his heart,
1169.	pa ri urab'ixel[197].	in his roots.
1170.	Xril ri tinamit Guatemala,	He saw the people (town) of Guatemala,
1171.	xril wa' cultura Maya,	he saw this Maya culture,
1172.	xril wa' jun tanab'al loq'laj rax amolob'.	he saw this one sacred altar Rax Amolo.
1173.	Che ri q'ijol la, lal la'j Aj, lal la'j Ix, la'j Kej, la'j Toj, la'j Tz'i'	On this time[198], You, You little Aj[199], You little Ix, little Kej, little Toj, little Tz'i',
1174.	b'ij la,	You say,
1175.	k'o taj kinchi'j chela,	there is nothing that I have for You,
1176.	jun pa chik ne kink'am chi rajil qatzaq'at, companions,	next time here maybe I bring a price (offering) of our
1177.	pero qasipaj jin k'ok,	but we give one aroma (offering),
1178.	jin kotzi'j pa ri qamaltyoxinik.	one flower for our thanking.
1179.	Toq'ob' kaqata' che la Ajaw,	Mercy, we ask You Lord,
1180.	Oxlajuj q'ij, B'elejeb' Ix.	13 Days, 9 Ix.
1181.	Maltyox,	Thank you,
1182.	k'o taj xojkilo,	there was no seeing of us,
1183.	k'o ojer kojb'al,	there is old use (tradition),
1184.	kojkax, k'u, pe' ri cho', kamik,	we place down, then, at this lake, today,
1185.	maltyox.	thank you.
1186.	Kisipaj[200] jin nulimosna,	They give one mine charity,
1187.	kisipaj[201] jin nu-almuerzo,	they give one mine lunch,
1188.	pa wa'il posada,	to eat at the posada,
1189.	maltyox tat,	thank you father,
1190.	che ri wa' Marcos, wa' Nadia, wa' Sherry.	to this Marcos, this Nadia, this Sherry,
1191.	K'o kan pa ri San Pablo.	They are left behind in San Pablo,
1192.	Maltyox keki'kotik e k'o chi, maltyox,	Thank you, they are happy that they are here, thank you,
1193.	pa wa' jun ceremonia, wa jun chuq'ab', valor.	at this one ceremony, this one strength, value.
1194.	Gracias Corazón del Cielo, gracias Corazón de la Tierra,	Thank you Lord of the Sky, Lord of the Earth,
1195.	Has recibido esta sagrada ofrenda en este momento,	you have received this sacred offering at this moment,
1196.	de Marcos, de todos los hermanos que estaban aquí con nosotrose,	from Marcos, from all the brothers who were with us here,
1197.	gracias Ajaw.	thank you Lord.

197 Desde el Corazón / desde la raíz. Urab = raíz.

198 The *–ol* ending is an abstractive marker, referring to "time" rather than to "day" or "sun".

199 A series of important days are invoked in this section. Aj is the day before the ceremony, day of the family, Ix is the day of the ceremony. It is normal to thank the day of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Which should be Aj, Ix, and Tz'ikin; but Tz'ikin likely forgotten here. Kej is the Cargador del Año. Wakib Toj and Wukub Tz'i are the two days before Wajxakib B'atz'; very important days. Toj is the day of the debts: on this day the missed days are paid for by the Aj Q'ij. The Aj Q'ij should remember exactly on what days he didn't show up. Wukub Tz'i is an important day because on this day there are no debts anymore, and the year can be closed without problem. For the ones who haven't reveived their *vara sagrada* this is an important day on which the preparation of the receivement of the *vara sagrada* in their house (private). The day after on Wajxakib B'atz' they will perform the ceremonies at the five altars (public).

200 Aspect marker is dropped

201 Aspect marker is dropped

1198.	El caracol ya ha sonado,	The sound of the shell has sound,
1199.	van a traer tambores,	they are going to bring drums,
1200.	para hacer oír a la Madre Tierra.	to let the Mother Earth hear.
1201.	La fuerza, la lucha que hace cada uno por su proyección,	The strength, the struggle, that each of them has for his or her projections,
1202.	bríndeles,	provide them,
1203.	desarrolla su proyección,	develop their projection,
1204.	cada uno tiene proyectos, tiene inquietud[es], tiene deseo[s],	each one has projects, has unrest[s], has wish[es],
1205.	concédales,	grant them,
1206.	Sagrado Altar, Sagrada Penitencia.	Sacred Altar, Sacred Penitence.
1207.	Los hermanos vienen aquí a Guatemala,	The brothers come here to Guatemala,
1208.	los hermanos vienen a la ceremonia,	the brothers come to the ceremony,
1209.	con todo respeto, con toda fe han venido,	with all respect, with all faith, they have come,
1210.	gracias Ajaw,	thank you Lord,
1211.	Uk'u'x Kaj, Uk'u'x Ulew.	Heart of the Sky, Heart of the Earth.
1212.	Are wa' jun tzij,	This is one word,
1213.	kin maltyoxij.	I thank.
1214.	¡Oh! tú Tz'aqol, B'itol,[202]	Oh you Maker, Modeler,
1215.	¡míranos! ¡escúchanos!	look at us, hear us,
1216.	no nos dejes,	do not leave us,
1217.	no nos desampares.	do not forsake us.
1218.	¡Oh! Ajaw que estás en el cielo,	Oh Lord, you who is in the heaven,
1219.	danos nuestra descendencia,	give us our offspring,
1220.	nuestra sucesión,	our succession,
1221.	mientras camine el sol.	while the sun walks.
1222.	Que haya claridad,	May there be brightness,
1223.	que amanezca la aurora.	may the aurora dawn.
1224.	Da buen camino.	Give the right road.
1225.	Que los pueblos tengan paz,	May the peoples be in peace,
1226.	y mucha paz,	and a lot of peace,
1227.	que sean felices.	may they be happy.
1228.	Da vida.	Give life.
1229.	¡Oh! tú Jun Raqán,	Oh you Jun Raqán!
1230.	Ch'i'p Kaqulja',	Ch'i'p Kaqulja',
1231.	Rax Kaqulja',	Rax Kaqulja',
1232.	abuela de la luz,	Grandmother of the Light,
1233.	abuela de la claridad,	Grandmother of the Brightness,
1234.	que amanezca,	may it dawn,
1235.	que llegue la aurora,	may the aurora arrive,
1236.	maltyox Ajaw.	thank you Lord.
1237.	Xojil taj watech,	We have not seen you,
1238.	xqaremow, xqatiko,	we have watered, we have planted,
1239.	xqaqasaj jin maltyoxinik,	we have placed down one thanking,
1240.	chuwach la,	in front of You,
1241.	Ajaw, gracias.	Ajaw thank you.
1242.	Bendiga a los hermanos que vienen del Estados Unidos,	Bless them, the brothers that have come from the United States,
1243.	hemos concluido la ceremonia,	we have concluded the ceremony,
1244.	gracias a los cuatro puntos cardinals.	thanks to the four cardinal points.
1245.	Gracias Ajaw,	Thank you Lord,
1246.	B'alam Aq'ab',	Jaguar Aq'ab',
1247.	elb'al q'ij, maltyox.	place of sunrise, thank you.
1248.	Gracias Oriente,	Thank you east[203],
1249.	gracias Corazón del Cielo.	thank you Heart of the Sky.

202 The prayer of the first dawn from the *Popol Vuh*

203 Don Rigoberto kisses his hands after thanking each direction.

1250.	B'alam Kitze,	Jaguar Kitze,
1251.	Kaja Paluna,	Kaja Paluna,
1252.	Nawal del Occidente,	*nawal* of the west,
1253.	caída del Sol,	the setting of the Sun,
1254.	gracias Ajaw,	thank you Lord,
1255.	nos despedimos.	we say goodbye.
1256.	B'alam Ikim,	Jaguar Ikim,
1257.	Qakixaja,	Qakixaja,
1258.	nawal del Norte,	*nawal* of the north,
1259.	del Agua,	of the Water,
1260.	de donde viene el Agua,	from where the water comes,
1261.	gracias,	thank you,
1262.	nos despedimos,	we say goodbye,
1263.	tercer abuelo y abuela.	third grandfather and grandmother.
1264.	B'alam Majakutaj,	Jaguar Majakutaj,
1265.	Chomija,	Chomija,
1266.	cuarto abuelo, cuarta abuela,	fourth grandfather, fourth grandmother,
1267.	nawal del maíz amarillo, mazorca amarilla,	*nawal* of the yellow corn, the yellow cob,
1268.	nawal del Agua, del Aire, gracias.	*nawal* of the water, of the wind, thank you.
1269.	Gorrión[204], gracias,	Sparrow, thank you,
1270.	Corazón del Cielo.	Heart of the Sky.

204 Sparrow bird.

Appendix B. The Faces of the Days

This appendix contains an overview of the characteristics of the Day Lords. The characteristics discussed here are a summary of the interviews concerning the Day Lords with four Aj Q'ijab' from three different Highland Guatemalan K'iche' communities: don José Angel Xeloj (Momostenango), don Rigoberto Itzep (Momostenango), don Miguel Chan (Chichicastenango) and don Roberto Poz Pérez (Zunil). This overview is a general synthesis of the main characteristics of the days. However, the actual knowledge regarding the characteristic of the days, kept by the Aj Q'ijab', is much more extensive than this short overview.

B'atz'

B'atz' connotates the concepts thread, beginning and end, weaving, the feeling of unity between people and family, the veins and arteries of the human body, time (in general), development and movement. B'atz' is the *nawal* of all the arts, of the weavers and the artists. On this day a person may ask the Day-Lord to provide guidance in the creation of art. On this day beautiful works of art may be produced. It is also a suitable day to ask for a husband or wife and to resolve any problem.

A person born on the day B'atz' is very artistic. He or she has endless capacities in arts: dancing, music, poetry, painting, sculpture etc. Persons born on B'atz' are usually known for their extraordinary talent for weaving. Also in the economic sense these persons are very creative: they are very good with investing money. They are good in trading but also have a strong sense of rights. Usually persons born on B'atz' are intelligent people. Their health is problematic and they tend to doubt a lot about their decisions. When B'atz' people don't take care of themselves for a moment they get sick easily. They should try to keep their lifestyle balanced and complete in a physical, mental and spiritual sense, with emphasis on their nutrition and their actions. It is difficult for these persons to resolve their own problems and they suffer a lot from sentimental problems.

E'

E' connotates the concepts road, destiny, tooth, authority, nourishment, journeys, and projections (for the future). E' is the *nawal* of all the roads and the leaders. It is the designated day to start any kind of journey (spiritual, intellectual, but also physical). This is also the designated moment to start whatever kind of successful project or activity. In divination ceremonies, the day E' indicates a good destiny. E' is also the *nawal* of the nervous system and the cardiovascular system of the human body.

A person born on the day E' is intelligent and generous. He or she is an organizer, a hard working person, and somebody who leads a people or community to its destiny. This person is very kind, and enjoys sharing their experience with others. Persons born on this day have the gift to become Aj Q'ijab' or *comadronas*. On the other hand, the person born on E' may provoke many problems. He or she is always on the road and not often home. This person is very insecure about him or herself and cannot make quick decisions. He or she has an excellent health and will probably have a long life, even though this person is attracted to danger and accidents.

Aj

Aj connotates the concepts family, society, planning, maize, planting, domestic animals, children, home, abundance, reed, and triumph. Aj symbolizes the place of reeds that is left behind by Junajpu and Wuqub' Ajpu. This day is the *nawal* of the human

spine and also the *nawal* of the home, the family, and the children. It is therefore the right day to ask for guidance about the home and guidance about the children of the house. Aj is also the indicated day for family meetings. Sometimes brothers and sisters live close to eachother but respect each other's personal life and do not show up every day: the day Aj would be a suitable day to meet. The day carries a strong family hierarchy: father, children, and grandchildren.

A person born on the day Aj would be a good veterinarian: he or she loves nature, plants and animals. It is usually a very kind, attentive, and thankful person who helps whenever possible. The family is especially important for this person: he or she has a strong bond with their parents, he or she is fortunate and loved on the family level, and he or she maintains the links with the family's past. This person, however, does not like to do favors for others. He or she needs much understanding and often has matrimonial problems. In general, this person has a good health. He or she sometimes has the tendency to suffer or to become ill, especially a form of fragile bones. As a child this person falls ill very often.

Ix

The day Ix connotates the concepts spirituality, theology, art, mountains, plains, jaguar (strength and force), vitality, resistance, spirit, and the (female) energy. It is the *nawal* of nature. The day Ix represents the Maya altar and is symbol for the creative forces of the universe. It is the designated day to ask for physical and mental strength. This is also the indicated day to commemorate the earth.

A person born on the day Ix will be very good in trading, negotiations and music. They are an intelligent, generous, and patient person who usually makes right decisions. He or she is also a strong and practical person. However, the person is easily scared. He or she tends to get easily angry, to behave in an arrogant manner, and to constantly seek problems. His or her health is determined by his or her relation to the earth, to his or her material life, and by his or her strong, angry and irritable character.

Tz'ikin

The day Tz'ikin connotates the concepts of creativity, economy, money, wealth, good things, fortune, production, the wind or air, freedom, messenger, bird, business, fear, strength, and human fertility. Tz'ikin is the *nawal* of economic wellbeing and the *nawal* of the communication with *Uk'u'x Kaj, Uk'u'x Ulew* (the heart of the sky, heart of the earth). It is the right day to thank and ask for financial wellbeing. Tz'ikin, the bird, is related to the sacred bird *Q'uq'umatz* (Quetzalkoatl).

A person born on the day Tz'ikin is fortunate with money. He or she is a kind, analytic, intelligent person with talent for commerce. On both spiritual and material grounds this person will have a good life. He or she has the gift to sense events that will happen in the future and is in charge of his or her own future. On the other hand, however, a person born on Tz'ikin is also a very superstitious person. He or she can easily change to an envious and tricking or cheating personality. The person born on Tz'ikin will only become sick if he or she does not understand their role in life: the sickness will be born from frustration and anger.

Ajmak

The day Ajmak connotates the concepts of reconciliation, mediation, fault, pardon, sin, atheism, and gift. The day Ajmak is also the day of the grandparents, the day of the deceased. This is a good day for communication with the ancestors, to tell their history, or to explain the origin of the peoples. Ajmak is the *nawal* of all the faults; on this day a person asks forgiveness for all the errors that he or she has made. Therefore, the day Ajmak is also the indicated day to resolve any problems that you have.

The person born on the day Ajmak is a good mediator and is very good in projecting plans for the future. This person studies a lot, is intelligent, has a good memory and treats others respectfully. He/she is very analytical, has patience, and is tenacious. This prudent person is a visionary. He or she is also shy and easily commits errors. Vanity is a problem for him or her. He or she is vicious, unfaithful, and angry, and tends to lie easily. They might have problems in the house. His or her health is determined by self-destructive processes, by his or her irresponsibility, and their irate and confronting character.

No'j

The day No'j connotates the concepts of wisdom, ideas, memory, patience, spirituality, intelligence,

arts, abilities, reason and logic, positive thought, and the brain. No'j is a gift from god to mankind; it is the *nawal* of intelligence. It is the right day to ask for wisdom, talent and good ways of thinking. No'j is also the *nawal* of earthquakes and thunder. This day is a perfect day to go studying, to go to a library, or to start an investigation.

A person born on the day No'j is a wise and patient person. He or she keeps track of resources, whether they are their own or those of others. He or she is a scientist, a counselor and an ideologist who is sure of him or herself and serves the community. He or she cares about the elders and the children in the community. A person born on the day No'j tends to lose many of their possessions. He or she is curious, self-sufficient, delicate, and might be arrogant. His or her emotions are filled with sadness and fear. This person tends to get sick when his thoughts and consciousness leave their predetermined road. When his or her worries become too strong, they might develop a chronical sickness.

Tijax

The day Tijax connotates the concepts of suffering, pain, sorrow, communication, medicine, flint, obsidian knife, double edged knife, the power of the thunder and the power of the lightning. This is not a favorable day for planting crops. Tijax is the *nawal* of sudden death and suffering. It is the indicated day for *curanderos* (healers) to cut away sickness and bad feelings from their patients (*tij* = to cut out / to take out). It is also the right day to study stones and rocks. The day is highly related to the use of cutting tools and tillage.

A person born on the day Tijax is a good communicator: it is easy for him or her to talk in public. He or she would be a good doctor. This person has the capacities to cultivate medicine and help in the curing of people and animals. He or she is a collaborator, a practitioner of human love, and takes other's problems as if it were their own. He or she, however, contradicts him or herself often and insults, is gossipy and tends to provoke other people. Someone born on Tijax tend to be violent, vengeful, resentful and angry. Of all beings, this person suffers most from their health. Because of his or her angry, irritable and resentful nature this person is filled with remorse and selfishness. This person is very likely to have accidents, diseases and will suffer a sudden death. However, knowing this day, the person may be able to remove negative energies by consulting specialists.

Kawoq

Kawoq is a complex day of many meanings. The day Kawoq connotates the concepts of movement, unity, integrity, guardian, lightning, and the sacred fire. This day is related to the thunder and lightning, and is the *nawal* of the rain. Kawoq is an important day for women, for curing, for judges, and lawyers. Kawoq is the day of the staff of authority. It is also a special day related to the family. The day symbolizes difficulty, sacrifice and curses. Kawoq is the *nawal* of all sorts of fights and conflicts but is also a suitable day to cure sickness. Kawoq is also the *nawal* of the quartz stones and the *tz'ite* seeds that are used for divination. Kawoq is a very dangerous day which is easily brought out of balance: if a person is not careful on a Kawoq day, he or she might trigger suffering and other problems. Good things may also happen on this day, however. It is a day on which no fixed things can be expected.

A person born on the day Kawoq would be a good *comadrona*; this person will know a lot about medicinal herbs and plants. In general, this person is calm, equilibrated, tender and sweet. He/she has the capacities to become a spiritual guide or *comadrona*. This person will be a responsible father or mother with the vocation to cure sicknesses, especially sicknesses in women. The person born on Kawoq is, however, suspicious and does not believe people quickly. He or she suffers from alcoholism, fights and anger. People blame him or her for a loss or any kind of bad thing that may occur. The health of this person is strong and he or she does not get sick easily. When sick, he or she will heal quickly. His or her alimentation has a big impact on their character as it can turn the person violent and scared.

Ajpu

The day Ajpu connotates the concepts of hunter, lord, struggle, the sun, the house, unity, production, spirituality, vision, light, heroism, blowgunner, the energy of the sun. The day symbolizes the triumph of Junajpu over Xibalba: the triumph of good over bad. This day is related to any kind of struggle. Ajpu

is the *nawal* of the sun. It is the right day to ask for wisdom, talent and physical strength. It is the day dedicated to the deceased ancestors and the right day to seek solutions for any problem.

A person born on the day Ajpu is a hero figure; he or she is a born leader. This person is someone who struggles for a cause. He or she has the qualities of a leader: kind, wise, brave, and victorious. It is someone who walks a lot (in the metaphorical and physical sense) and will gain wisdom from that. This person is also very successful in agriculture. He or she, however, holds a grudge and tends to carry hate. He or she can be angry, revengeful, and aggressive. His or her health is fine; this person does not get sick easily.

Imox

The day Imox connotates the concepts of the ocean, nature, water, fishes, sea, madness, unrest, conflict, disorder, envy, cooperation, doubt, production and the brain. Imox is the *nawal* of the sea, the rivers, and the lakes but also the *nawal* of the rain. It is the indicated day to heal the mind and to thank and ask for rain. This day is strongly connected to the water.

A person born on the day Imox loves everything that has to do with water such as, for example, the ocean, swimming and the rain. He or she has a talent for working with flowers and may cultivate any type of flower. In general, it is a very cooperative person. A person born on Imox will be creative and artistic with the capacity to work with his hands. They will be a hard working person, who will think a lot about things. This person, however, tends to have a lot of negative qualities. He or she tends to be insecure, violent, messy, suspicious, annoying, and slow. This person gets ill constantly. The health of this person is regulated by his or her changes in temperament. He or she might go crazy after some time and lose all reason.

Iq'

The day Iq' connotates the concepts of the wind, air, energy, moon, prison, crisis, sickness, *mundo* (the world), nature, altars, and the breath of life. Iq' is the wind that brings life; it forms all the living beings. Iq' is the wind that cleans all houses and all bodies. Iq' is the *nawal* of the air, the moon, and the spirit of the human being. It is the indicated day to ward off all bad energies and sicknesses. On this day a person petitions that stress and negative powers are taken away from the environment and the surroundings.

A person born on the day Iq' will be a strong authority: a person who is very strict with laws and rules. He or she is full of life and imagination and has physical strength. Persons born on the day Iq' are often dreamers and have the ability to become merchants. This person, however, suffers from persecution and often carries a bad temper. He or she might be violent, dishonest, and negligent. When this person becomes ill, he or she could turn into an unpassionate person who, because of the dramatic emotional change, increases the illness through his or her anger. This may lead to chronical sickness.

Aq'ab'al

The day Aq'ab'al connotates the concepts of balance, equity, harmony, dawn, aurora, marriage, light and charm, new day, and the renovation of the stages of life. Aq'ab'al symbolizes the dawn, formed by the first beams of the sun that overcome darkness and obscurity. It is the *nawal* of clarity: it is the indicated day to ask the light to rise up in all sorts of things. Aq'ab'al is a very good day to resolve problems, especially family fights. This is also a special day for the healers of broken bones and for the *curanderos* who use natural plants.

A person born on this day is fortunate in love. They will also be a person with political power. He or she is a person that rises early in the morning and is a skilled traveler. Their personality is serene, strong, and kind, and this person is a good counselor. This person, however, does not believe anyone or anything. He or she is very stubborn and suspicious. In his or her life this person will be often persecuted and they are easily seduced to commit robbery and theft. This person might have an angry character and has the tendency to lie and slander. He or her health is affected by the energies of the people that surround them. His or her sicknesses are temporary and mostly consist of pain and sudden fever.

K'at

The day K'at connotates the concepts of liberty, complications, the net, network, oppression, center of existence, continuity in life, captivity, punishment, fire, disciple, and absence. K'at

symbolizes the strength and the will of the first parents to form a beautiful world. K'at is the *nawal* of the visible and invisible prisons. This is the day to petition things for the ones that are in prison and the day to tangle and untangle things. K'at is the day on which your problems may become more complex and therefore it is the right day to ask to prevent this from happening.

A person born on the day K'at likes accountancy and economics. He or she is a very good listener and a wise person. This person can become an artist, merchant, or spiritual guide. The person, however, is miserable in his or her existence. He or she does not borrow or give things to other people. In general, this person has the tendency to be angry, careless and might suffer from negative energies. It is a very unstable person who does not know what they want. These emotional changes might bring the person many illnesses. The lack of liberty together with his or her closed state brings sadness and anxiety.

Kan

The day Kan connotates the concepts of justice, astronomy, rules and laws, the feathered serpent, power and authority, balance, de color yellow of the horizon, respect, wisdom, the cycle of time, formation, work, strength, authority, and truth. Kan is the owner of all material things. It is the *nawal* of the creation of man and woman. Kan is the right day to ask solutions for any kind of problems or necessities. This day carries the energy of any kind of justice. On a day Kan a person may ask to do justice for unfair treatment by the forces that surround the human being or for when one is punished with sickness for no particular reason.

A person born on the day Kan will have a strong intuition for justice. He or she will be a great teacher or judge: a study in laws would benefit the person greatly. This person is a leader and a wise person. He or she is sincere and intelligent. On the other hand, this person can be very lazy. His character can be angry and resentful and he or she tends to be an opportunist or a cheater. His or her health is strong; this person does not get sick easily. Only strong emotions might trigger some form of suffering.

Kame

The day Kame connotates the concepts of time, the ancestors, death, the owner of darkness, happiness, serenity, rebirth, good behavior, good attitudes, contempt, fortitude, humility and obedience. This day symbolizes sudden death, patience, and rest after hard work. It is the day of the deceased. On this day it is asked to keep death away, and rest and peace is petitioned for those who are dying. Death is not seen as something bad, it is complementary to life: it is the time to rest. Kame is a good day to take away any negativity that is carried by someone. Kame is also a good day to ask something or do something for your ancestors.

A person born on the day Kame is very humble, friendly and respectful. He or she is strong, fortunate, and tenacious. This person has good capacities for work and art, and foresees good and bad events. This person has the tendency to become violent, revengeful, and angry. He or she tends to lie and cheat in their marriage. The health of this person is not very well; they can become seriously ill. The illness will escalate quickly and may lead to sudden death. He or she needs to be careful to avoid accidents. In order to deal with his or her grief, this person needs to change his or her life and become an important, kind and diligent person.

Kej

The day Kej connotates the concepts of political power, authority, governor, deer, strength, the four cardinal points, and hierarchy. This day is one of the year bearers. The day Kej is the *nawal* of all the quadruped animals, the *nawal* of religion and power, the *nawal* of the four corners of the world, the *nawal* of men, the *nawal* of the family and the *nawal* of the sacred staff of authority. The deer (Kej) is a symbol of authority and it is therefore related to the spiritual guides or *Aj Q'ij'ab'*. This is the day to ask for strength to carry our worries and pain. It is also the day to select and prepare leaders, to accept responsibilities and tell about the four directions of the world. It is a special day to have contact with nature. Kej is also related to the laws of gravity. This was the day on which the world was created.

A person born on the day Kej is a person of authority. He or she is a strong person in the physical and spiritual sense of the word. This person is a

great traveler and constructor. This confident, agile person has the ability to convince people and takes often the role of counselor or advisor. He or she is responsible, intelligent, and solidary. This person, however, can also have a very angry, annoying, and demanding character. He or she might be arrogant and vicious. A person born on the day Kej is likely to be exploited and to be caught by others. However, their health is very good. It is a strong person who does not give up easily. If this person abuses his or her power, they will become very weak and sick.

Q'anil

The day Q'anil connotates the concepts of agriculture, sowing, harvest, seeds, maize, proudness, food, rabbits, germination, life, love, and creation. Q'anil is the *nawal* of all sorts of seeds, animals, and vegetation. It is the day of fertility and harvest; if a person wants to harvest or sow his/her *milpa*, then this would be a good day to perform a ceremony. Q'anil is the indicated day to start to grow any seed or start any business. This day represents the four color of maize: red, black, white, and yellow.

A person that is born on the day Q'anil will be successful in agriculture. He or she dedicates his life to agriculture and produces all kinds of things from the ground. This person is harmonious, fortunate, responsible and hard working. He or she is patient and follows their intuition. They are an emotional person. Due to these characteristics, this person would be a very good counselor or administrator. The person born on Q'anil, however, also envies a lot and is difficult to communicate with. He or she is also often ill. This is caused by reccurring malnutrition.

Toj

The day Toj connotates the concepts of mathematics, accountancy, liberties, offerings, debts, payments, rain, illness, pain, fine, light, and balance. The day Toj is the day of the sacred fire. This day symbolizes the debts that humans have to the world and it would be a good day to offer to the world, to pay the debts, and to level justice. It is also the right day to pay any kind of debts in the community or in the family. On this day a person should be thankful for his or her possessions. Toj is a good day to give a present to someone. On any other day than Toj, the gift will not be looked after and it will soon get lost or deteriorate. Finally, Toj is also the day of psychological or moral liberties.

A person born on the day Toj will be a strong, creative and intelligent person. He or she will do everything the way it should be done according to the rules. They are a solidary, honest and dynamic person who has no problem with paying and giving. His or her character is analytic, balanced, and imaginative. People born on the day Toj are in general sincere persons. This person, however, tends to be vicious, angry and aggressive. He or she is mentally unstable. Also, his or her health is not so good; this person's life is marked by illness. Negative energies that enter the body can have bad effects on the person and it is likely that he or she ends up with a chronic and degenerative illness. In order to live in good health, they will need to offer to the *Creador y Formador* every twenty days.

Tz'i'

The day Tz'i' connotates the concepts dogs, game, friendship, authority, loyalty, guard, sexual intercourse, revenge, judge, advice, and smell. This day symbolizes equilibrium. It is the right day to resolve any problem in a tribunal. It is also the day to ask to keep viciousness away. Tz'i' is also the day of temptations and a person can ask on this day to prevent tragedies or disgraces from happening.

A person born on the day Tz'i' is a friendly, respected and balanced person. He or she knows what is correct and would therefore be a good judge or lawyer. This person is an investigator and he or she works very delicately. They are brave and fair. On the other hand, this person can be very vicious and jealous. He or she is likely to make enemies. The person born the day Tz'i' is mentally not stable and addictions are problems that can take him or her down. He or she is confused and insecure. The illnesses of this person are triggered by his or her insecurity and the sexual distress. In order to be cured and to break out of the vicious cycles, this person needs to find out their role in life. For this he or she needs help of an Aj Q'ij.

Appendix C. Mnemonics for Ritual Discourses

This appendix discusses the mnemonic expressions that are used in ceremonial discourses. In the table below I will give a direct translation of the mnemonic expressions. These expressions are, however, often metaphors and the meaning of the expression might not be directly clear. Therefore, for the cases that I was able to document it, I placed the meaning of the metaphor in parentheses behind the translation. When the expressions are clear by themselves I do not add any additional explanation.

Day-Lord	Mnemonic expression	Translation	By whom
B'atz	Kinb'otz'oj	I roll up	Tedlock
	Tz'onoj	Asking	Tedlock
	B'otz'onik	To wind up, to do a petition	Tedlock
	Kab'ätz'inik	To spin (the entire rope needs to be rolled up and stored)	Tedlock
E'	Ri b'e'	The road	Tedlock
	Ri utzilaj b'e, ri kalominaj b'e, ri nimalaj b'e	The good road, the straight road, the long road	Tedlock
	K'ama la kab'e	That we be guided on our road	Tedlock
	Xasachom ub'e	He has not lost his road	Tedlock
	Ma xasi taj nub'e	That I will not lose my road	v.d. Akker
	B'inib'al	The way of walking (to ask protection during any activity in life)	v.d. Akker
Aj	B'araj	Mixing (used in divination)	Tedlock
	Pa ri ja, pa ri k'olib'al	In the house, in the place	Tedlock
	Pa ri alaxik	In the patrilineage	Tedlock
	Aj	Reed	v.d. Akker
Ix	Jix	To withdraw, to remove, to be free	Tedlock
	Chu wa Mundo	In front of this world	Tedlock
	Ix, chat k'ix, xek'oli'k k'ix, kaki'xb'al	Ix, have shame, they were ashamed, embarrassment	v.d. Akker
	K'ol'ik k'ix, chatk'ixok	Have shame, shame you!	v.d. Akker
Tz'ikin	El pwaq	The money	Tedlock
	Oq'etalik siqu'italik	To cry / To ask for	Tedlock
	Oq'em tzíkim chi kax chuwich	To ask for Tz'ikin, that pain will happen. (someone has asked to give you pain, or you petition to be relieved from the pain that is brought to you)	v.d. Akker
	Tz'ib'unik	A (written) law	v.d. Akker
Ajmak	Sachb'al ajmak, chila' chi kaj, chuwäch ri Tiox, chuwäch ri Mundo, chiquiwach ri Nantat	Pardoning our sins there before the sky, before God, before the Earth, before the ancestors	Tedlock
	Aj mak	Sinner	v.d. Akker
	Chuwach ulew	In front of the earth	v.d. Akker
	Xanumak	Only my sin	v.d. Akker
	Inajmak, inaji	I am a sinner, I am a counter	v.d. Akker
	Taj mak	No sins	v.d. Akker
Noj	Utzilaj no'j xuchomaj, itzel no'j xuchomaj	He was thinking good thought, he was thinking bad thoughts	Tedlock
	No'jimik chomanik	To think/ meditate/ argue/ resolve/ conclude/ worry	Tedlock
Tijax	Xak'ab'al chi'aj	Telling lies/slander	Tedlock
	K'ab'anik	To conceal from one's family	Tedlock
	Ch'o'j	Fightening	Tedlock
	Tz'i'alaj tzij.	Jealous words between spouses	v.d. Akker
	Katz'ilonik	You become dirty	v.d. Akker
Kawoq	Remelik tikilik	To hold water, to plant, to set out	Tedlock
	Molom kuchum	To gather together gossip/trouble/harassment	Tedlock
	Kawoq uwuchi	In front of Kawoq	v.d. Akker
	Xuremó xutik'o	He watered, He planted (similar to the name of paklom) (meaning: the act has already been done)	v.d. Akker
	Molom taj tz'ij	Joined words that do not make sense (/do not meet)	v.d. Akker
Ajpu'	Keq'ij ri Nantat	The day of the ancestors	Tedlock
	Chiquiwach ri Nantat	Before the ancestors	Tedlock
	Ketaman ri Nantat	The ancestors already know	Tedlock

Imox	Kamöxirik	One becomes possessed or crazy	Tedlock
	Nimalaj k'ulel	A big enemy	Tedlock
	Kumatz rib'chiquiwach mam	Humble oneself before the mam	Tedlock
	Kumatz achik	A humble man	v.d. Akker
	Rumal umoxil	He rubs his ignorance (to be innocent)	v.d. Akker
	Ya' möxirinik	To go crazy	v.d. Akker
Iq'	Eyawarinak	One became annoyed	Tedlock
	Contra K'ulel	An enemy is against one	Tedlock
	Lawalo	Strong/wild/violent	Tedlock
	Ch'u'j	Frenzy/ fury/ madness	Tedlock
	Kaqiq'	Storm	v.d. Akker
	Chu k'u' pa tew pa kaqiq', wa' kax wa' nurikom	Under the cover from the cold, from the storm, this pain, this my illness	v.d. Akker
	Chu ku'wi pa kaqiq' k'o je chela wajil nutzaq'at	Under the cover from the storm, I have my price for you, my friend	v.d. Akker
Aq'ab'al	Ak'ab'il	To dawn	Tedlock
K'at	K'atik	To burn	Tedlock
	Pa chim pa k'at	In nets, in heaps ("I bring a small offering, I do not bring offerings in heaps or nets")	Tedlock
	K'asaj k'olik	To be in debt	Tedlock
	K'at uchi, k'at uwech	To burn that, to burn mine (May all bad things that someone wishes for me be burned)	v.d. Akker
Kan	Kab'an ri mesa	He is sweeping	Tedlock
	Jun ri k'ulel	One enemy	Tedlock
	K'olik k'ulel	There is an enemy (The day Kan is asked to do something against an enemy)	v.d. Akker
	Aj mesa, aj silla	Calendar priest for the Mesa y Sillas altars	v.d. Akker
	Kanoq	To remain behind (that it may come quickly)	v.d. Akker
Kame	Kamej lal rutz'il	Asking for good	Tedlock
	Kamikal	The deceased	Tedlock
	K'ulanem	Marriage	Tedlock
	Kamej	Obedience, humbleness, respectfulness	v.d. Akker
Kiej	Quejaj	Mounting	Tedlock
	Chuchqajaw	Chuchqajaw	Tedlock
	Ch'awanel	Talker (= chuchqajaw)	Tedlock
	Kamal b'e	Wise person, community leader	v.d. Akker
	Nimalaj q'ij, nimalaj ek'omal	Big day, big responsibility	v.d. Akker
Q'anil	Q'anal	It ripens / yellowness	Tedlock
	Kaq'anarik uwäch ulew	The face of the earth it becomes yellow / harvest	Tedlock
	Awexib'al tikb'al	Sowing and planting	Tedlock
	Tzukunel	Feeder	Tedlock
	Ixq'anil	Sunset, aging	Tedlock
	Yaxq'anarik	It is already mature/ripe	v.d. Akker
	Xq'anar wach	The face has become yellow (now we have food to eat)	v.d. Akker
Toj	K'asaj k'olik	To be in debt	Tedlock
	Tojonik	To pay	Tedlock
	K'äx	Illness / pain	Tedlock
Tz'i	Tz'ilonik	To be dirty/impure	Tedlock
	Tz'i'alaj tzij	Jealous words between spouses	Tedlock
	Katz'iyarik	It isn't certain	Tedlock
	Tz'i'a ruwach, tz'i'a ri iq'	Bad things in his face, (that) bad things (are taken by) the wind	v.d. Akker

Table 14. Overview of mnemonic expressions related to ritual discourses.

Appendix D. The Movement of Blood

The movement of blood in specific parts of the body gives a prognostication about a future event. In general, movements on the left side of the body are of a more negative character and movements on the right side are of a more positive character, but there is no sharp distinction between good and bad. Thus, good signs may also occur on the left side of the body. Many of the interpretations of the movement of blood depend on the person to whom it occurs. With, for example, the movement of the upper or lower mouth it depends on the person if this sign should be seen as positive or negative. The same thing holds for the movements around the eye: signs above or underneath the eye can, depending on the person, mean that sickness or death will come or that a family member or friend he or she has not seen for a long time will come to visit. A person should therefore learn to understand what the messages are that the blood is converying to him or her. There are three forms in which the blood speaks to a person: pulling, pushing, and tapping (running from one side to the other). It again depends on the person whether these signs are positive, negative, or in between. Here a short general overview of some of the signs:

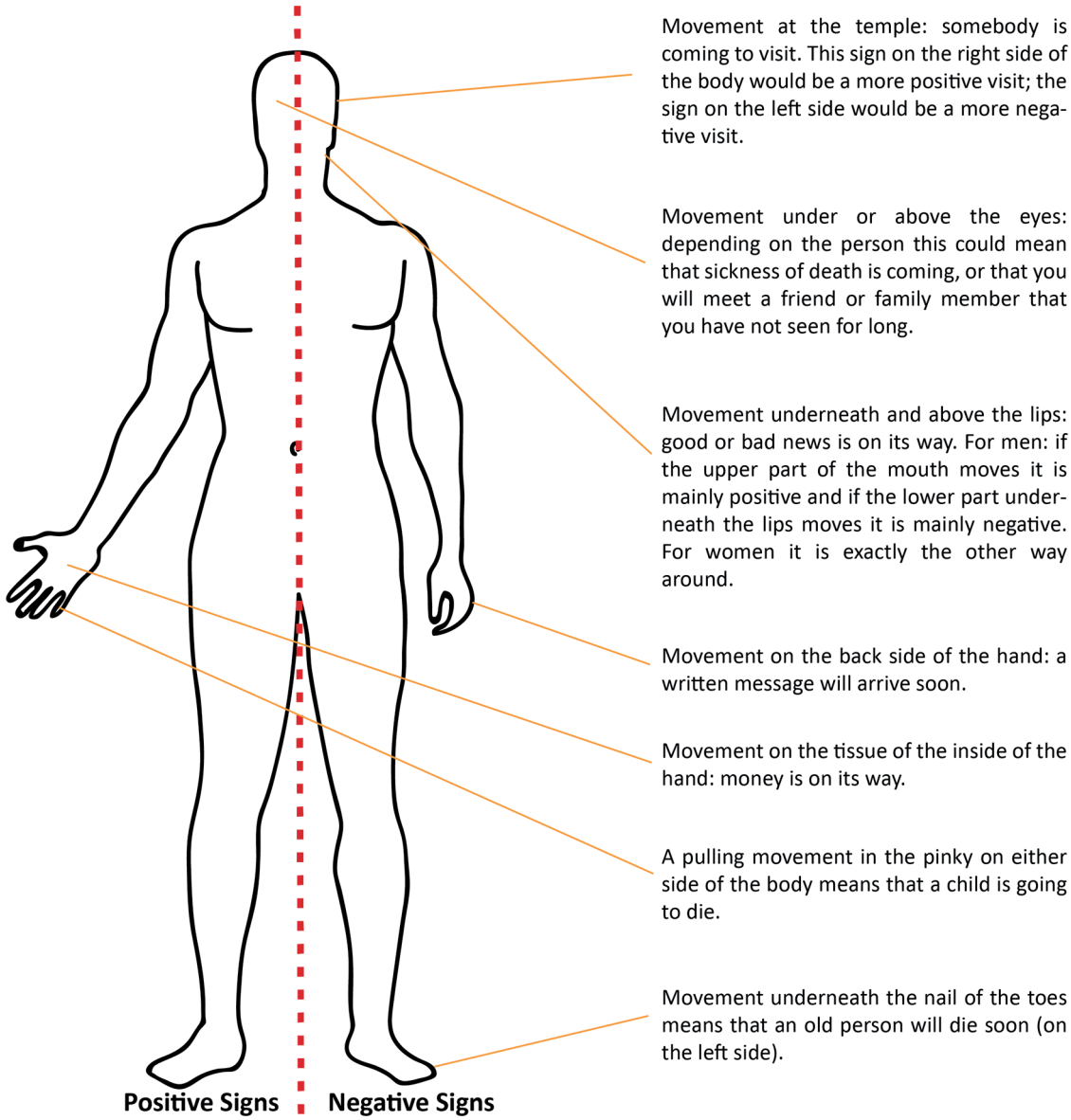


Figure 133. Movement of blood as seen from the front.

Movement at the temple means that the thing that you are thinking is good idea (right side) or bad idea (left side).

Movement in the tissue of the chest means that somebody, a friend or a family member, is thinking of you.

Movement at the triceps is a prognostication of a sickness.

An upward running movement in the spine means that you missed somebody. E.g. somebody came to your house but you just left.
A downward running movement in the spine prognosticates danger or an accident.

Trembling of the upper legs means that somebody is approaching. If the right leg trembles it means that a man is approaching and at the left side it means that a woman is approaching. If the movement goes fast it indicates that you will see this person very soon, if it goes slow it means the opposite.

Movement underneath the feet indicates that there will be a journey for you soon; you will have to travel to a place far away from what you know so far.

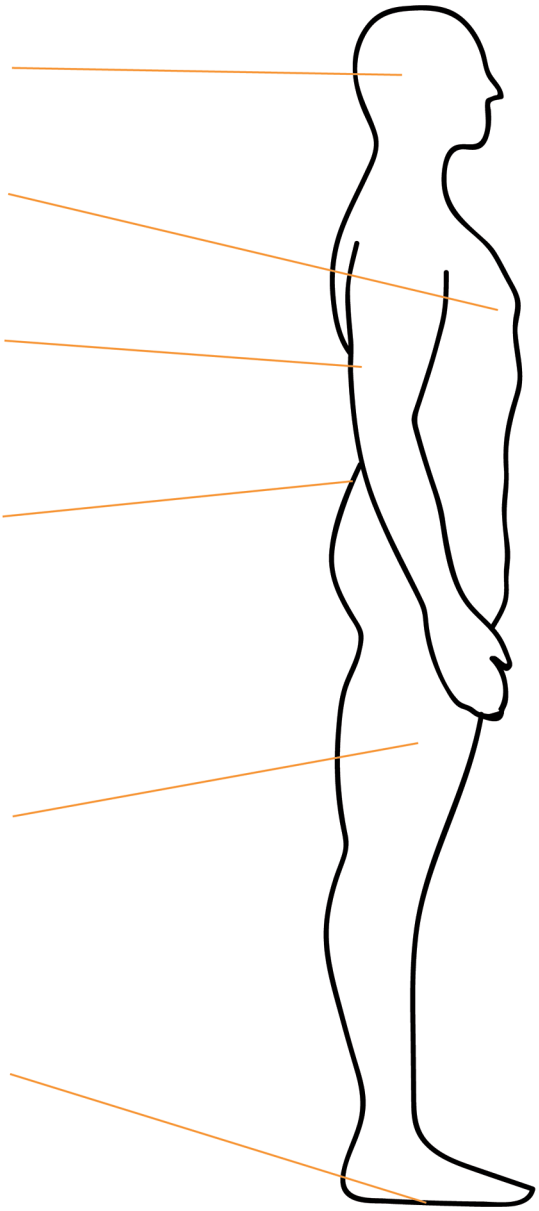


Figure 134. Movement of blood as seen from the side.

Appendix E. Tzijolaj

This oral narrative about the origin of the Tzijolaj in Chichicastenango was told to me by don Luis Ricardo Ignacio Vincente, local historian and owner of the Morería Museum in Chichicastenango, on December 22nd, 2014.

"On top of the Tzijolaj horse sits a Spanish person who came to protect the Maya people. He came to protect them. If people were sick, he would come and cured them with plants, if people were sad, he would come and bring them amusement. In case you saw the fireworks: he was the first Spaniard that brought firework here in America. Because he was the one who said: "let there be a celebration!" The strange thing is that the Spaniard always appeared to the local people in the night and never during the day. This was because the other Spaniards did not agree on him being on the side of the Maya people. But one day he disappeared, and there were no more celebrations for the Maya people. There was no more medicine, there was nothing, there was no protection. The Maya passed their time remembering him and they made a small statue of him. Here in the museum I have the statue that was made 200 years ago, the statue that represents this person. I have the piece that was used 200 years ago. The memory of this person was made here. So they made the little horse to commemorate that important Spanish man. It is not a Saint, it was a Spaniard that came to protect. That is why Chichicastenango is the only place where the Tzijolaj exists. To commemorate him, the cofradía that dances with the Tzijolaj has a ball of firework attached to it. To remember that he was an important man. But they never got to know his name! His name is not Tzijolaj! Tzijolaj is Maya! *Tzij* means "to light", *Aj* means "firework". The people continued thinking for many years: "What is his name?" We did not know. "He who lit the firework". In Maya, Tzijolaj means "the one who lights the firework", because they never knew his name and because he was the one who started the firework. That is why there was this rope hanging from the church to the ground. Because the people believe that he is a man of wisdom we give him prayers to take to the Supreme Being. Yesterday when they were pulling him up, he was taking the messages with him. It is believed that he goes up the rope because the people are praying. So this personage, the Spanish lord, brings these messages to God. This is why they bring him up and lower him while the people are praying below him. And after this fire work is lit!

They also bring him along when there is a celebration in May, when the people are beginning their celebrations: from January, February, and May they begin to sow. But in January there is a celebration for the seeds, so the Tzijolaj has to be brought there because his spirit will strengthen and help the people and the seeds. There they dance with him and they burn this [fireworks] in the aldeas of Chichicastenango. There is another aldea, very far away from here, and they ask the authorities and the Tzijolaj is also brought there! He will go to many places. This is because they know that from all the Spaniards, he was the only man that supported the Maya people. He did not like punishment, he did not like torture, he did not like anything of this. He came to help, but he did this in secret. He went out at night with his horse to support the people, and the people stimulated him. But he disappeared! I imagine that the other villages killed him… To commemorate him, after many years that the important man disappeared, they made a small horse and they danced with it. The gentleman represents the Spaniard that came to support the Maya people".

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Summary

This study is a part of the broader research project *Time in Intercultural Context*, which is directed by Prof. Dr. Maarten E.R.G.N. Jansen (Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, The Netherlands), which has received funding through an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council in the context of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement n° 295434.

This work, titled *Time, History and Ritual in a K'iche' Community: Contemporary Maya Calendar Knowledge and Practices in the Highlands of Guatemala*, analyzes ritual practices and knowledge related to the Mesoamerican calendar with the aim of contributing to the understanding of the use and conceptualization of this calendar system in the contemporary K'iche' community of Momostenango, in the Highlands of Guatemala. A total of thirteen months of fieldwork was conducted. The research presented here discusses the indigenous calendar system, forms of synergy between the Christian and the Highland Guatemalan calendar, the indigenous perception of history and continuity in time-related symbolism. The dissertation is organized into five chapters and five additional appendices.

The researcher argues that the social role of cultural anthropologists and archaeologists is to contribute to the ongoing process of cultural healing and spiritual recovery of the peoples that suffer(ed) from colonization and oppression. This study therefore places an emphasis on cultural continuity and approaches the continuation of Maya calendar practices as a possible tool for restoring breaks in social memory, which are caused by colonization. During the fieldwork, the researcher collaborated with the Momostenango-based cultural regeneration organization *Takiliben May: Misión Maya Wajshakib' Batz*, led by the local ritual specialist don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac with whom he shared similar research interests and aims.

The analysis of ritual practices is an essential step in exploring cultural continuation. For this analysis, the researcher borrows the concepts of self-referential and canonical messages developed in the *magnum opus* of Roy Rappaport (1999), to explore the role of the perception and conceptualization of time in the construction of identity and in the formation of a community on the short-term and long-term. Additionally, this research leans on Carlos Severi's (1996) theory of ritual memory – a form of memory in which historical experiences are embedded in ritual practices. The work of Tim Ingold (2011), specifically his ideas regarding the dwelling perspective and the production of meaning through interaction in a constantly changing environment, plays a central role in the approach to cultural interaction and transformation. Finally, to identify lines of cultural continuity, the researcher follows the theoretical and methodological approach of post-colonial hermeneutics (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez, 2011), which enables the researcher to make careful analogies between contemporary practices and ancient pictography and representations.

The first part of the dissertation includes the chapters I, II, and III, and deals with the cyclical perception of time. Chapter I explores the current use of the 260-day count and the social role of the calendar specialists in the community of Momostenango. This chapter contains an elaborate discussion of the perception of the calendar days, the role they play in daily life, and their participation in the creation of life. Furthermore, this chapter argues that rituals performed according to the *trecena* cycle – an important thirteen-day cycle also known from precolonial Mesoamerican manuscripts – promote a decentralization of spatial and religious power.

Chapter II explores the relationship between time and authority, and argues that the hierarchical structure of time is duplicated in the social

organization of the community of Momostenango. The perception of the *Mam* ("the year bearer") and the welcoming ceremonies for the new cycle of 365 days play a central role in this chapter. Furthermore, this chapter analyzes the continuation of a five-day partition, which was previously thought to be out of use since the Colonial Period but, as the researcher shows, is still used in contemporary ceremonial discourses. Research on this topic suggests new possible readings of the postclassic and colonial almanacs in which similar partitions can be found.

Chapter III examines the intersection between seasonality and celebrations by discussing several seasonal cycles – such as cycles of the wind, the rain, animal behavior, agriculture, and the sun – and important feasts in the Highlands of Guatemala. Apart from a general overview of important feasts, this chapter contains five case studies based on fieldwork in Calcehtok (on the peninsula of Yucatán), Momostenango, Amatitlán, and Chichicastenango. It is argued here that Catholic feasts mark important stages in the Highland seasonal cycle and that these feasts guide human behavior related to agriculture. Furthermore, as the timing of these feasts coincide with the names of periods of 20 days, so-called *veintenas*, that are mentioned in colonial sources dealing with the Highland calendar, it is argued that the cycle of Christian feasts – although introduced by European colonizers – is, after a period of 500 years, a product of synergy in which it forms part of both the Catholic liturgical calendar and the Highland Guatemala Maya calendar.

The second part of the dissertation includes the chapters IV and V, and investigates the linear perception of time in the Highlands of Guatemala by focusing on the *baile de la culebra*, a ritual dance that is strongly related to the rainy season. Chapter IV documents the history, costumes, and terminology of the dance and provides an overview of where and when the dance is performed. Furthermore, this chapter contains an elaborate description of the performance of the dance in Momostenango on the fourth Friday of Lent and at the end of Holy Week and Easter. Applying the concept of ritual memory, it argues that historical experiences are embedded in the performance of the dance across the Highlands of Guatemala. It is argued that the dance incorporates the specific historical processes that each individual town went through, and, as such, strengthens community identity.

Chapter V uses post-colonial hermeneutics to identify possible lines of cultural continuity in the symbolism of the *baile de la culebra* by comparing the dance's thematic unit with pre-colonial iconography and colonial sources. It is suggested here that these possible symbolic continuities convey cultural values that have been important in the past and continue to be important in contemporary contexts. Furthermore, it is suggested that the protagonist of the dance is possibly a variant of the pan-Mesoamerican complex of Mother Goddesses and that her name might be related to a day name of the K'iche' Maya calendar. Finally, it is argued that this dance is a petition for rain and fertility and that the communities where this dance takes place have a shared responsibility to ensure rainfall by performing this dance throughout the rainy season.

Finally, Appendix A contains a transcription and translation of a ceremonial discourse expressed by don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac. Appendix B discusses the characteristics of each of the days of the K'iche' calendar and Appendix C gives an overview of the mnemonic expressions related to each of the days of the Momostecan calendar. The movement of blood, a specialized divination technique, is documented in appendix D, and Appendix E contains the transcription of an oral narrative about Tzijolaj, a divine image in Chichicastenango.

Throughout this dissertation it is argued that time is an authority which directs human behavior in a cyclical manner through the landscape on a local and regional scale. Time is related to morality and cultural values, and a shared perception of time contributes to the cohesion of the community as it recreates and reaffirms the identity of its members by reiterating their shared social conventions and history. Finally, the conjunction of time and ritual provides a tool to overcome the rupture caused by death and to transmit messages from generation to generation over a long span of time.

Nederlandse samenvatting

Tijd, geschiedenis en ritueel in een K'iche' gemeenschap: hedendaagse Maya kalender kennis en gebruiken in de Hooglanden van Guatemala.

Deze studie maakt deel uit van het bredere onderzoeksproject *Time in Intercultural Context*. Dit project wordt geleid door Prof. Dr. Maarten E.R.G.N. Jansen (Faculteit der Archeologie, Universiteit Leiden) en is gefinancierd door middel van een Advanced Grant van de Europese Onderzoeksraad in het kader van het zevende kaderprogramma van de Europese Unie (KP7 / 2007-2013) onder de subsidieovereenkomst nr. 295434.

Dit werk, getiteld *Time, History and Ritual in a K'iche' Community: contemporary Maya calendar knowledge and practices in the Highlands of Guatemala*, analyseert rituele praktijken en kennis gerelateerd aan de Meso-Amerikaanse kalender met als doel bij te dragen aan een beter begrip van het gebruik en de conceptualisatie van dit kalendersysteem in de hedendaagse K'iche' gemeenschap van Momostenango in de Hooglanden van Guatemala. Het onderzoek is gebaseerd op dertien maanden veldwerk. Dit proefschrift bespreekt op een systematische manier de inheemse kalender, vormen van synergie tussen de christelijke en de K'iche' kalender, de inheemse perceptie van de geschiedenis en de continuïteit in tijdsgerelateerde symboliek. Het proefschrift is georganiseerd in vijf hoofdstukken en vijf aanvullende bijlagen.

De onderzoeker beargumenteerd dat het de sociale rol van archeologen en culturele antropologen is om bij te dragen aan het lopende proces van culturele genezing en geestelijk herstel van de volkeren die lijden of hebben geleden onder kolonisatie en onderdrukking. Deze studie legt daarom nadruk op culturele continuïteit en benadert de voortzetting van praktijken gerelateerd aan de Maya kalender als een mogelijk hulpmiddel voor het herstel van de gaten in het sociale geheugen die door kolonisatie zijn veroorzaakt. Tijdens zijn veldwerk heeft de onderzoeker samengewerkt met de in Momostenango gevestigde, culturele regeneratieorganisatie *Takiliben May: Misión Maya Wajshakib' Batz*. Deze organisatie wordt geleid door een lokale kalenderspecialist en intellectueel, Don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, met wie de onderzoeker vergelijkbare onderzoeksinteresses en doelstellingen deelt.

De analyse van rituele gebruiken is een essentiële basis voor onderzoek naar culturele continuïteit. Voor deze analyse leent de onderzoeker de concepten *self-referential* en *canonical messages*, welke zijn ontwikkeld in de *magnum opus* van Roy Rappaport (1999), om de rol van de perceptie en conceptualisering van tijd in het proces van identiteitsvorming en gemeenschapsvorming op de korte en lange termijn te onderzoeken. Bovendien leunt dit onderzoek op Carlos Severi's (1996) theorie van *ritual memory* – een vorm van geheugen waarin historische ervaringen zijn verweven met rituele praktijken. Het werk van Tim Ingold (2011), in het bijzonder zijn ideeën over het *dwelling perspective* en de productie van betekenis door middel van interactie in een voortdurend veranderende omgeving, speelt een centrale rol in de benadering van culturele interactie en transformatie. Ten slotte, om culturele continuïteit te identificeren, volgt de onderzoeker de theoretische en methodologische benadering van postkoloniale hermeneutiek (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez, 2011) welke het mogelijk maakt om zorgvuldige analogieën tussen hedendaagse gebruiken en oude pictogrammen en representaties te maken.

Het eerste deel van dit proefschrift omvat de hoofdstukken I, II en III, en behandelt de cyclische perceptie van de tijd. Hoofdstuk I onderzoekt het huidige gebruik van de 260-daagse telling en de sociale rol van kalenderspecialisten in de

gemeenschap van Momostenango. Dit hoofdstuk bevat een uitgebreide discussie over de perceptie van de kalenderdagen, de rol die zij spelen in het dagelijkse, sociale leven en hun participatie in de creatie van het leven. Bovendien wordt er in dit hoofdstuk beargumenteerd dat rituelen die worden uitgevoerd aan de hand van de *trecena* cyclus – een belangrijke dertien-daagse cyclus die ook bekend is uit prekoloniale, Meso-Amerikaanse manuscripten – een decentralisatie van ruimte en religieuze macht bevorderen.

Hoofdstuk II verkent de relatie tussen tijd en autoriteit, en argumenteert dat de hiërarchische structuur van tijd ook zichtbaar is in de maatschappelijke organisatie van de gemeenschap van Momostenango. De perceptie van de *Mam* ("de jaardrager") en het verwelkomen van een nieuwe cyclus van 365 dagen spelen een centrale rol in dit hoofdstuk. Verder analyseert dit hoofdstuk de voortzetting van het gebruik van een vijfdaagse partitie waarvan eerder werd gedacht dat deze sinds de Koloniale Periode verloren was gegaan. Zoals de onderzoeker aantoont, wordt deze partitie nog steeds gebruikt in ceremoniële discoursen. Aan de hand van het hedendaags gebruik van de vijfdaagse partitie stelt de onderzoeker dat er nieuwe lezingen van de postklassieke en koloniale almanakken, waarin soortgelijke partities aanwezig staan, mogelijk zijn.

Hoofdstuk III onderzoekt de intersectie van seizoenen en religieuze vieringen. Dit wordt gedaan door verschillende seizoenscycli – zoals de cycli van wind, regen, diergedrag, landbouw en de zon – en belangrijke feesten in de Hooglanden van Guatemala in detail te bespreken. Naast een algemeen overzicht van belangrijke feesten bevat dit hoofdstuk vijf casestudies gebaseerd op veldwerk in Calcehtok (op het schiereiland Yucatán), Momostenango, Amatitlán en Chichicastenango. Er wordt beargumenteerd dat katholieke feesten belangrijke seizoenen in de hooglandse seizoenscyclus markeren en dat deze cyclus van feesten een gidsende functie hebben voor het menselijke gedrag met betrekking tot landbouw. Bovendien, aangezien de timing van deze feesten samenvalt met de namen van twintig-daagse periodes, de zogenaamde *veintenas*, die in koloniale bronnen genoemd worden, wordt er hier aangevoerd dat de cyclus van christelijke feesten – hoewel geïntroduceerd door Europese kolonisten – na een periode van 500 jaar een product van synergie is geworden waarbij het zowel deel uitmaakt van de katholieke liturgische kalender als ook van de Maya kalender uit de hooglanden van Guatemala.

Het tweede deel van dit proefschrift bevat de hoofdstukken IV en V, en onderzoekt de lineaire perceptie van tijd in de Hooglanden van Guatemala door zich te concentreren op de *baile de la culebra*, een ritueel dat sterk verbonden is aan het regenseizoen. Hoofdstuk IV documenteert de geschiedenis, kostuums en terminologie van de dans, en geeft een overzicht van waar en wanneer de dans wordt uitgevoerd. Verder bevat dit hoofdstuk een uitgebreide beschrijving van de uitvoering van de dans in Momostenango op de vierde vrijdag van vastentijd, aan het einde van de Goed Week en tijdens Pasen. Door het concept van *ritual memory* toe te passen, wordt er beargumenteerd dat historische ervaringen ingebed zijn in de hedendaagse uitvoeringen van de dans in de Hooglanden van Guatemala. Verder wordt besproken hoe de dans specifieke historische processen van elk dorp in de uitvoering heeft geïncorporeerd en zodoende de identiteit van de gemeenschap versterkt.

Hoofdstuk V gebruikt de methodologie van post-koloniale hermeneutiek om mogelijke lijnen van culturele continuïteit in de symboliek van de *baile de la culebra* te identificeren door de thematische eenheden van de dans te vergelijken met prekoloniale iconografie en koloniale bronnen. Hier wordt aangevoerd dat door middel van deze mogelijke symbolische continuïteit, culturele waarden die in het verleden belangrijk zijn geweest en die op nog steeds belangrijk zijn in hedendaagse contexten worden overgedragen. Voorts wordt gesuggereerd dat de hoofdpersoon van de dans mogelijk een variant is van het pan-Meso-Amerikaanse complex van Moeder Godinnen en dat haar naam verband houdt met een dagnaam van de K'iche' Maya kalender. Ten slotte wordt beargumenteerd dat deze dans een petitie is voor regen en vruchtbaarheid, en dat de gemeenschappen waar deze dans plaatsvindt een gedeelde verantwoordelijkheid hebben om regenval te verzekeren door deze dans gedurende het regenseizoen uit te voeren.

Ten slotte bevat bijlage A een transcriptie en vertaling van een ceremonieel discours, uitgevoerd door Don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac. Bijlage

B bespreekt de kenmerken van elk van de dagen van de K'iche' kalender en bijlage C geeft een overzicht van de mnemonische uitdrukkingen die betrekking hebben op elk van de dagen in de kalender van Momostenango. De beweging van het bloed, een gespecialiseerde divinatietechniek, is gedocumenteerd in bijlage D, en bijlage E bevat de transcriptie van een orale traditie die gaat over Tzijolaj, een goddelijk beeld in Chichicastenango.

Gedurende dit gehele proefschrift wordt beargumenteerd dat tijd een autoriteit is die, zowel op lokaal niveau als ook op regionaal niveau, menselijk gedrag op een cyclische manier door het landschap dirigeert. Tijd is gerelateerd aan morele en culturele waarden, en het delen van een bepaalde perceptie van tijd draagt bij aan de cohesie binnen een gemeenschap omdat het de identiteit van zijn leden bevestigt door de gemeenschappelijke, sociale conventies en geschiedenis te herhalen. Tenslotte vormt de link tussen tijd en ritueel een hulpmiddel om de breuk die door de dood wordt veroorzaakt te overwinnen en om belangrijke kennis van generatie op generatie over een lange tijdsperiode over te brengen.

Curriculum Vitae

Paul van den Akker was born in Vlissingen, the Netherlands, on February 21st, 1989. After obtaining his VWO-gymnasium degree at the Stedelijke Scholengemeenschap Nehalennia in Middelburg in 2007, he moved to Panama to study at the National University. He stayed here from 2007 to 2008. In September 2008, Van den Akker returned to the Netherlands to enroll in the bachelor program of the faculty of archaeology at Leiden University. He specialized in Mesoamerican archaeology and participated in several archaeological and anthropological research projects organized in Mexico and Panama. In his bachelor's thesis he focused on identifying competitive and complementary schools of thought in the academic discussion on the interpretation of the Early Formative Period Danzantes group – a cluster of stone carvings from the archaeological site of Monte Alban in Oaxaca, Mexico. Van den Akker received his bachelor's degree in 2011.

In September of the same year, Van den Akker enrolled in the research master program 'Intercultural Communication' at the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University. In his research master's thesis 'Calendars, Rituals, and the Ethnographer', he explored the changing academic attitudes towards the ancient and contemporary Maya calendar over the course of history. He also conducted fieldwork among the Yucatec Maya on the Yucatec Peninsula, Mexico. From August 2012 to August 2013, Van den Akker was a student assistant of the ERC funded research group 'Time in Intercultural Context'.

In 2013, he started the research 'Time, History and Ritual in a K'iche' community' as a PhD-student of the 'Time in Intercultural Context' research group at the Leiden University under the supervision of prof. dr. M.E.R.G.N. Jansen. His anthropological fieldwork in the Highland Guatemala town of Momostenango was geared towards understanding contemporary ritual practices related to the K'iche' Maya calendar. Being interested in the interconnectedness between archaeology, anthropology and the struggle for the implementation of indigenous rights, Van den Akker has worked with several calendar specialists and has been actively involved in cultural regeneration projects during his stay in Guatemala.