

TO BE OR NOT TO BE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERFORMANCE OF
IDENTITY IN GUATEMALA

by

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DEDICATION

To James without whom there would be no commas.

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ABSTRACT

**TO BE OR NOT TO BE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERFORMANCE OF
IDENTITY IN GUATEMALA**

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This thesis analyzes the ways in which identity is used in Guatemala by both the Maya and Ladinos in light of the rise in ethno-tourism following the civil war. The use of ritual and costume dances is discussed as a leading way by which the Maya and Ladinos are creating identities in relation to one another. The construction of both identities are discussed in relation to the Maya revitalization movement and Maya efflorescence. This thesis is primarily based on library research and a short visit to Momostenango in 2011. This thesis should be a resource on the understanding of the creation of identity through dance for the Ladinos and the Maya.

INTRODUCTION

In the town of Momostenango, in the highlands of Guatemala, there are two main groups: the Maya and the Ladinos. Ladinos emerged historically as the children of Spaniards and the Maya. Through time a racial hierarchy emerged with the Spain elite on top, the Ladinos in the middle as minor power holders, and the Maya on the bottom with no governmental power. From independence to 1930, the government of Guatemala favored large land holders and allowed the United Fruit Company to own the majority of land and influence government policies. In 1944, a democratically elected leftist president, Juan José Arévalo, was elected together with a leftist coalition. The government began overturning land protections for the United Fruit Company in order to begin nationalizing the land. In 1954, the United States, in order to protect the interests of the United Fruit Company, led a coup which instituted a military dictatorship in Guatemala. In 1960, a leftist movement, largely led by the Maya, led a revolt against the government beginning the civil war with the Maya and landless Ladinos on one side and the Guatemalan government in conjunction with the funding and support from the United States as well as landholding Ladinos on the other. The Guatemalan government used disappearances, civil rights repression, and terror as tactics in their war against the Maya, while the Maya fought with guerrilla targets, largely hiding in the mountains and coming and attacking specific targets before running back to the mountains due to the disparity in

resources between themselves and the government. After the civil war, from the 1960 until the 1990s, which resulted in the death of over 200,000 Maya, Guatemala began recognizing the cultural and political rights of the Maya. This transformation in policy resulted in a restructuring of the political hierarchy in the region.

In the 1980s and 1990s, foreign scholars and non-governmental organizations became aware of the civil war and ethnic-genocide occurring in Guatemala which resulted in external pressure for the conservation and protection of the Maya. During this time, as a result of globalism and ethno-tourism, foreigners began traveling to Guatemala in order to experience Maya culture and began donating and supporting the Maya directly instead of through Ladinos or the Guatemalan government. In light of this external pressure the Guatemalan government established policies which protected Maya spiritual sites and the performance of Maya rituals, such as ritual dances. The ethno-tourism has resulted in the commodification of Maya identity and the necessity of performing identity as the socio-economic gap between middle class Maya and Ladinos is shrinking with more Maya holding well-paying jobs and speaking Spanish. The struggle to create Ladino identity in opposition to Maya efflorescence gave rise to the development of Ladino costume dances.

This thesis will focus on how Maya ritual dances and Ladino costume dances are used to establish identity in the highlands of Guatemala, specifically in Momostenango. The main focuses of inquiry are: the people who perform such dances, how the rituals are adapted to suit the needs of the participants, and how the use of these rituals are perceived by other indigenous and non-indigenous people in the area. This research

assumes that the processes and reasons behind emphasizing Maya identity are varied and complex. In order to understand these tensions, this study will look at the various modes of adopting a Maya identity including: indigenous dances, clothing choices, learning indigenous languages, and performing traditional Maya ceremonies. This study begins with the assumption that the Maya use Maya identity in order to create political power for the poor, and establish a group within the government that recognizes Maya as a distinct group in order to prevent another genocide; that they use Maya identity in order to distance themselves from the Ladinos while educating children in the native languages and practices of the Maya. The Ladinos, on the other hand, are also using dances to celebrate and acknowledge Maya culture, while simultaneously distancing themselves from the Maya and celebrating their connection with Western culture. In this way, the Ladinos are confronting the established racial hierarchy, yet simultaneously are attempting to maintain their political control and create their own identity in light of the Maya efflorescence movement.

Among the questions that will be explored are the following: How has the end of civil war in Guatemala changed the ways in which Ladinos perceive Maya identity? How has increased contact between Ladinos and Maya changed the ways in which dances are performed? How do the people performing the rituals conceptualize their own identities? How do ritual practices contribute to the structuring of these identities?

Literature Review

Identity

This thesis will utilize both essentialist and constructivist perspectives on identity. Maya and Ladino identities are tied to heritage and historically treated as separate races within the state. Charles Hale (2006) uses racial formation theory in his explanation of the creation of Ladino and Maya identity. Racial formation theory looks at “how race is constitutive of the social order; how particular racial meanings congeal to represent the common sense of the movement; how these structures and meanings gradually fade, giving way to new ones; and how this change both conditions and is propelled by political struggle” (Hale 2006: 208). Racial formation analysis emphasizes the “structured relations of political economic power and... how people signify these inequalities” (Hale 2006: 208). In analysis of Chimaltenango, he encountered a situation in which “racial categories were both ubiquitous and absent, where racial meanings saturated social relation in routine (often highly normalized), ways but also disrupted those relations” (209). One woman, when working with the local government, self-identified as a Ladina and due to her appearance was questioned by the clerk as to whether she was a Maya (Hale 2006: 79). As the Maya have gained political power through the Maya efflorescence and education, the socioeconomic distance between Ladinos and Maya has shrunk, however it remains a factor in the racial hierarchy in Guatemala and the ways in which “material inequality is experienced, contested, and reproduced” (Hale 2006: 209). Ladinos agree that racism should be eliminated, but these same people are concerned about Maya efflorescence and what the subsequent changes to the social order will mean for them (Hale 2006: 11). In order to reject racism, Ladino instituted and state-endorsed multiculturalism acknowledges indigenous cultural

differences yet also constitutes an effort to control the rights given to the Maya. Thus while officially denying racism, Ladinos maintain hegemonic power over the Maya by defining cultural difference (Hale 2006: 49). This hegemony, in combination with a neoliberal economy, encourages cultural recognition for the Maya while simultaneously creating formidable barriers to a reconfiguration of the social order.

At the same time, as there are few physical differences between Maya and Ladinos, a large part of their identity is socially constructed through their respective clothing choices and language. According to Rhonda Taube, “the line between these groups is often porous, externally determined and flexible” as it is not possible to determine who is Ladino and who is indigenous based on looks alone (Taube 2011: 62). The term Ladino is “inextricably tied up with notions of race, class, skin color and education and linked to social practices” and affects relationships, income, social status and social mobility of the people to which the term is applied (Taube 2011: 62). Ladino also implies progress, modernity, decency, and cleanliness, while the Maya tend to be considered “almost irredeemably backward” (Taube 2011: 62-63). However, in reality there are not stark differences between Maya and Ladinos. For example, in Chimaltenango, there are some “gang members from poor neighborhoods—who refuse both sides of the Ladino-Maya binary that guides official efforts to determine who is who” (Hale 2006: 3). However, using Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of *habitus*, Ladinos tend to be cleaner, walk more upright, and are generally taller than their Maya counterparts (Hale 2006: 4). The Maya can also be identified in the ways that they treat *milpa* (corn fields). Maya cosmology emphasizes balance and an interconnection between people and

the world around them. For example, when planting their corn seeds the Maya pray to land and thank the earth for providing them the substance needed for life (Fischer 1999: 479).

A person perceived to be Maya can “become” Ladino by learning Spanish and no longer wearing traditional Maya clothing (traje). Being Maya is generally based on socioeconomic status, speaking Maya languages, modes of production, and the creation and use of traje (Hale 2006: 75). The Maya tend to be agriculturalists, usually working on the farms of wealthy Ladinos during the dry season and returning to their own land in the highlands in the wet season to grow what crops they can before returning to the lowlands (Menchú 2010: 5-6). They tend to be poor and the women wear traditional dress, while men tend to wear “western” clothing. In contrast, Ladinos tend to live in cities, have a higher socioeconomic status, and wear western clothing. Since the difference between Maya and Ladino is a cultural construct, any indigenous person who becomes educated and gets a high paying job may potentially no longer be perceived to be Maya and becomes Ladino (Hale 2006). These distinctions are based largely on the context and the persons with whom the Maya interact (Hale 2006: 16). The number of Maya intellectuals is also increasing, causing further complexity to intrapersonal relations; these Maya intellectuals speak Spanish and typically hold well paid jobs; however, they consider themselves to be Maya and work to further the socio-political objectives of the Maya (Hale 2006: 121). Despite years of conflict and racism in Guatemala, Ladinos “now affirm respect for indigenous culture, agree that racism should be eliminated, and that the principle of equality should reign, echoing the Guatemalan state’s endorsement of

‘multiculturalism’. Yet these same Ladinos also harbor deep anxieties about the prospect of Maya ascendancy, anxieties that condition their resolve, and undermine the very egalitarian principles that in another register, they heartily endorse” (Hale 2006: 11). One way that the Maya and Ladinos construct their identities is through the use of ritual dance.

Dances

Both the Maya and Ladinos perform dances on ritual occasion. These dances serve as a means both to enact and construct ethnic identity. One prominent dance performed by the Maya is the Monkey Dance. Cook and Offit (2013) understand the Monkey Dance to be a representation of culture versus nature, an oppositional structure mediated by *Costumbre* (custom) both by the offerings understood as payments to nature deities and the knowledge left by the *primeros* (souls of the dead dancers) that provides the descendants with the power both to control nature and internalize and use the powers or spirits of the animals to enhance individual courage and personal strength. The dancers gain this power within the liminal period marked by repeated respectful human visits to the altars and appropriate payments to the *nawales* (spirits) who own them and dispense their powers. The return to earth, and eventually the return to unmediated human existence, is a return to conflict. It is the center period or liminal period of the ritual that is most dangerous, as the participants may not return to society. In the same vein, the liminal period when Monkey Dancers are imbued with the strength of the *nawales* on the rope above the town square that is the most dangerous. It is the time when the dancers, removed from society, are inhabiting both the profane world of being human and the

sacred realm of the *nawales*. The Monkey Dance is a trip to the other world, enacted as a combination of magical and divinatory encounters with the patron saint, earth spirits and *primeros*. The dances offer insight into Maya culture, religion, and are also an excellent analytical tool with which to understand the complexity of Maya identity and its construction. Turner argued that ritual action aids in building *communitas* both for the performer and for the audience. The Maya dances, largely passed along through oral tradition and performed through service in *cofradías* (religious brotherhoods), act as social commentaries on the political issues and conditions. The performance of these ritual dances is partly a consequence of ethno-tourism and the performance of identity for foreign consumption.

Ladino dances borrow the form of Maya dances while emphasizing their connection to Western culture through the use of costumes based on characters from movies and television shows in the United States. By borrowing the form of Maya dances, the Ladinos intentionally compare their dances to the ones performed by the Maya. It is the emphasis on the difference of characters and narrative forms that gives Ladino dances their meaning. Their costumes emphasize a focus on leisure time and the consumption of international entertainment rather than ethnic history, thus linking them to modernity while simultaneously implying that the Maya are linked to the past through their practice of ancient dances and narratives. However, Ladino dances are performed in the same contexts as Maya dances. This means that they also utilize the presence of ethno-tourism in order to perform and construct their own identity in contrast to the

Maya. As such, Ladinos may also be creating social solidarity with the Maya through their performance of ritual dances.

In other parts of the world, there is evidence of different groups coming together for ritual dances in order to show solidarity for their regional counterparts while also emphasizing distinctions between the groups. For example, J. Clyde Mitchell's work in Africa reveals and attempts to explain a paradox that dances tend to gather people from different tribes. While emphasizing tribal differences, the commonalities in the dances tend to submerge tribal differences (1956, 9). Mitchell's work shows that ritual dances are a way to redefine sociocultural relationships and categories between groups; "he also shows that ethnicity and tribalism are not primordial identities but take on contrastive significance in the inclusive fields of "modern" migrant life" (Mendoza 2000: 38). In other words, the importance of the "field" is the structure and context in which these performances transpire.

As we will see, the ritual dances in Momostenango are used to define Maya and Ladino identity in relation and opposition to each other through the emphasis on different symbols and narrative forms. The Monkey Dance communicates the connection the Maya have to the past, as they claim this dance has been performed since the Popol Vuh was written. The Ladino dances communicate a connection to modernity through the characters portrayed in the dances. Veit Erhlmann showed that performing cultural forms attempts to create a symbolic space and are used by the performers "shape to and attempt to control their past, present, and envisioned future" (Mendoza 2000: 40). The Conquest Dance performed by the Maya shows the struggle between the Spanish conquistadores

and the Maya, ultimately resulting in the Maya Daykeeper escaping into the mountains to survive which, in light of the civil war, is both a social commentary and predicts the Daykeeper returning from the mountains and eventually conquering the Spanish.

These same dynamics of constructing and performing identity are explored in Zoila Mendoza's work in the central Andes. Mendoza shows that the *Avelinos* danza "has proved to be a powerful medium through which migrants from the Mantaro valley have explored the meanings associated with the relationship between powerless and powerful local groups as well as between guerilla bands in the region and the national state" (Mendoza 2000:41). The ritual dances in the Andes are used in San Jerónimo to redefine and form gender, class and ethnic identities (Mendoza 2000: 41). Dances have also been used by national and regional forces to maintain the social order and create stereotypes about subjugated groups yet "through this folklorization performers such as *comparsa* (dance group) members have gained new spaces and recognition for their creative efforts, providing them the means to rework and contest social values and stereotypes promoted by such elites." (Mendoza 2000: 48). Mendoza found that Quechua-speaking peasants perform "mestizo" dances during their festivals to gain prestige and celebrate their indigenous status, while Spanish speaking Cusqueños perform "indigenous" dances in urban settings to preserve the indigenous identity and traditional forms (Mendoza 2000: 70).

Indigenous populations in the Andes and in Guatemala both use social, cultural and economic resources to transform existing power relations. Dance is a primary means of accomplishing this. In addition to expressing key indigenous values, practices and

social relationships, it is also a mechanism that is articulated with the growing ethno-tourism sector, thus creating possibilities for indigenous populations to obtain economic resources and cultural recognition.

GUATEMALA

Guatemala, during the Spanish conquest, was relatively unoccupied and did not suffer the intense acculturation at the hands of the Spaniards that other regions experienced. For that reason, at the beginning of the twentieth century, indigenous Maya practices were still largely intact. There are two main groups of people in Guatemala: indigenous people who represent the twelve Maya languages that were spoken in the area at the time of the conquest, and Ladinos (westernized Guatemalans). According to Rhonda Taube, “the line between these groups is often porous, externally determined and flexible” as it is not possible to determine who is Ladino and who is indigenous based on looks alone (Taube 2011: 62). The term Ladino is “inextricably tied up with notions of race, class, skin color and education and linked to social practices” and affects relationships, income, social status and social mobility of the people to whom the term is applied (Taube 2011: 62). Ladino also implies progress, modernity, decency, and cleanliness, while Maya implies indigenous peoples who are “almost irredeemably backward” (Taube 2011: 62-63). However, in reality, there is not a stark difference between Maya and Ladinos in some regions. For example, in Chimaltenango, there are

some “gang members from poor neighborhoods—who refuse both sides of the Ladino-Indian binary that guides official efforts to determine who is who” (Hale 2006: 3).

This thesis focuses on ritual dances performed in Momostenango, which is situated in the highlands of Guatemala at 5,000 feet above sea level. The land was primarily populated by K’iche’ speaking Maya, prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the 1500s. The K’iche’ Maya sustained their culture despite adversity and they have changed to accommodate new political systems, modes of production, and technology (Taube 2011: 64). From the 1960s until the 1990s, a civil war took place during which time the Maya were hunted down and killed for being guerrillas and threatening the regime. According to Beatriz Manz in *Paradise in Ashes* and Rigoberta Menchú’s *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, (2000) in the highlands before the civil war, there was little education for the indigenous peoples. Most Maya could not read until they were trained by the Church as catechists. Working in *fincas*—plantations—was common with long days, illness, death, and no money, so children were often malnourished and died (Menchú: 4). Ladino landowners of the *fincas* owned *cantinas* (similar to a company store) in which the workers would spend most of their wages and become indebted to the landowners, thus forcing them to continue working on the *fincas* (Menchú: 25). The Maya became guerillas for many reasons but especially because of their loss of land, the repressive structures to which they were subject, the difficulty of peaceful change, peer pressure, escalating military violence, and the impact of liberation theology taught by the Catholic Church. Villagers hid in the forest in order to avoid the army. When soldiers came upon women and children hiding, they were shot and killed. The army tortured villagers in order to

obtain information on the guerrillas. The guerrillas were then forced into helping the army by engaging in such acts as burning the *milpa* (corn fields): burning *milpa* is usually associated with anger and guilt as the corn crop is considered a sacred plant and burning it is equivalent to strangling the source of life (Manz 2004). Corn is sacred, as it is the main food source for the Maya and their animals, the planting and harvesting of maize includes prayers to God and the earth for the gift of life in the form of food (Menchú: 64). Approximately 200,000 Maya were killed or disappeared during the civil war. Given the extraordinarily high number of Maya killed during the civil war, the majority of the population is currently under twenty years old and many scholars consider the civil war equivalent to genocide targeted at the Maya.

In the 1970s, Momostenango, Guatemala, had a population of 40,000 people that was almost equally divided between *Costumbristas*—practitioners of *Costumbre*, the syncretic religion of the 260-day calendar, with worship of earth lords, ancestors, Jesus Christ, saints, and a cult recognizing seats of alternating mayors of the solar year as four sacred mountains—and the Ladinos (Cook and Offit 2008: 45). San Simón, who is the patron saint in Momostenango, “in his cosmological as opposed to his sociological guise, is preeminently the personification of a season in the agricultural cycle, and as an aspect of personification he is the *dueño* (owner) of wild vegetation, of the snake-infested coast jungle and the desolate highland *cumbre* (summit)” (Cook and Offit 2000: 183). Each year for his festival there is “an offering of incense, copal and candles accompanied by an hour or so of invocations and prayer...these offerings are done for the *cofradía* and the entire town, and reflect the shamanic form of *Costumbre* in which individuals

representing larger groups make offerings of prayer, incense and candles (Cook, Offit 2008: 51).

Cook and Offit contend that by the end of the 1970s, Costumbre was in danger of being lost, especially in relation to the traditions and rituals concerning San Simón (such as the changing of his clothes or the dances associated with him). These customs and beliefs were necessary in order to keep the religion intact, and an attempt to preserve them was implemented in order to “protect their [Maya] status and heritage within the increasingly pluralistic religious organization of Momostenango” (Cook and Offit 2000). The revitalization of these traditions was also adopted to obtain supernatural benefits for devotees and the community by “invoking, honoring, and entertaining the souls of the dead founders of the traditions and the spirit of San Simón” (Cook and Offit 2008: 51).

Between 1975 and the 1990s, the brotherhoods that sponsored festivals for the saints were restructured and mandatory service in them was eliminated during the civil war. This resulted in a decrease in participation and power of the *cofradías*. In order to maintain the saint cults, Costumbre returned to a traditional K'iche' pattern of privately owned saint images which attracted local and/or regional visitation and provided “a steady income through cash offerings donated at the shrine, but more importantly, through sales of beer, wine, liquor, candles, cigarettes and incense” (Cook and Offit 2008: 52-53). These private shrines were one adaptation to the economic and social realities in Guatemala since the government revoked mandatory participation in the *cofradías*. During the late 1980s, there was a national movement to modernize the indigenous workforce, resulting in indigenous men being forced to stop wearing

traditional clothing and prevented from performing *porob'al* (incense burning) ceremonies in daylight or public (Hutcheson 2009: 891-892).

In the wake of this discourse and ideology of modernization, the cults of Catholic saints began to be seen as witchcraft, and active efforts to repress them were taken. As a result, the conservators of Maya rituals attempted to preserve them by “reproducing the *bailes* (dances) and their related rituals precisely and without error” (Hutcheson 2003: 89-97, 105-18). Despite years of conflict and racism in Guatemala, Ladinos “now affirm respect for indigenous culture, agree that racism should be eliminated—that the principle of equality should reign, echoing the Guatemalan state’s endorsement of ‘multiculturalism’. Yet these same Ladinos also harbor deep anxieties about the prospect of Maya ascendancy, anxieties that condition their resolve, and undermine the very egalitarian principles that in another register, they heartily endorse” (Hale 2006: 11).

In the 1990s, indigenous political movements began to gain ground in “promoting public, cultural and political identity through self-representation and as a means of social transformation” (Macleod 2013: 449). In the beginning, the indigenous movement was seen from a Marxist perspective as a rural proletariat movement in which culture was treated as a reaction to political oppression and economic exploitation. In the 1980s, the Maya movement was “part exuberant movement for civil rights, part defensive (even semi-clandestine) struggle for survival in the shadow of a repressive state. By the late 1990s, Mayas had established themselves as subjects of collective rights—however limited and contested—and as political actors” (Hale 2006: 14). The movement is no longer understood in terms of socio-economic class, but rather in terms of ethnic identity.

The Maya today are promoting ethnic pride and reestablishing their cultural practices, and nowhere is this truer than in the K'iche region of Guatemala in the town of Momostenango.

Maya culture is now considered to be hybrid or “pluricultural” which helps to explain how Maya identity has persisted in a transcultural world (Cook and Offit 2008: 46). This emphasis on pluriculturalism focuses more on the resistance and commodification of culture and religion, in that Maya culture is performed for tourists in contrast to syncretism, which melds Maya religion with Catholicism. The term transculturation was created by Francisco Ortiz as an alternative to acculturation in order to explain a “syncretizing process that maintains and strengthens selected indigenous institutions by adopting accommodative external forms (Cook and Offit 2008: 48). Today religious pluralism includes Costumbre, with the costumbristas opposing a change to their practices, “as their central tenet is to reproduce the hallowed institutions they inherited” (Cook and Offit 2008: 47). As practiced within the cult of the patron saints, Costumbre should be practiced to renew the world by “replicating the prototypes left by its founders”, as the present world order is continuous with the past (Cook and Offit 2008: 48). Costumbre is an orthodox movement which seeks to maintain the current rituals and traditions (Cook and Offit 2008: 49). The Christians in Momostenango object to Costumbre and label it pagan due to the deification of ancestors and animistic aspects. On the other hand, some Mayanistas reject Costumbre due to its Catholic elements. They believe that religious training and Maya identity are better conveyed through a guild of religious practitioners rather than individual specialists (Cook and Offit 2008: 49). This

movement, now called Maya Spirituality, is a part of Pan Maya activism that uses the Popol Vuh¹, a conquest era text, and seeks to rid Maya religion of Spanish and Catholic elements, such as candles and Spanish invocations, as they claim that the world order since the Spanish Conquest is oppressive and should be rejected (Cook and Offit 2008: 47, 49). The anti-syncretic movement of Maya Spirituality, which seeks to return to pure Maya rituals, nevertheless has ended up adopting some behaviors and forms from Western culture, and is trying to change the way in which Maya religion is practiced, such as attempting to make Maya religion relatable to current issues through booklets.

Maya religion has been central to the activist movement, yet the Maya cosmovision “has become a contested terrain in terms of how Mayan activists themselves understand, include, or reject its presence in cultural politics. It is further disputed through the ways in which the state, tourist industry, and other actors such as nongovernmental organizations and aid agencies have appropriated or engaged with Maya culture” (Macleod 2013: 448). After the civil war in Guatemala, “foreign donors gave over \$2 billion to Guatemala’s peace process and the flood of aid energized hopes; employed thousands of people; and supported reforms in health care, education, Mayan revitalization, human rights, refugee resettlement and the environment” (Nelson 2012: 218). Current projects of Maya organizations are the teaching of indigenous languages in schools, with particular interest paid to Mayan numbers, and efforts to resist exploitation of natural resources (Macleod 2013: 450).

¹ The Popol Vuh is a conquest era text that was originally transmitted through oral tradition of the K’iche’ Maya. It is primarily made up of myths and epic tales. Thought to be a description of the K’iche’ Maya tradition prior to contact with the Spanish

Currently there are many *ajq'ijabi'* (daykeepers) in the Maya movement that are drawing upon traditional texts and beliefs in order to provide meaning and guidance for the communities, as well as trying to determine how Maya understanding of the quality of life compare to the western paradigms of development. These Daykeepers act as cultural brokers, allowing for Maya concepts to become more accessible to scholars, social movements and organizations, and aid workers; as well as allowing their worldview to be understood. Globalization has led to Daykeepers gaining new age practitioners, academic, international aid agencies, and Ladino clients resulting in an increased tourism (Macleod 2013: 457). One tool used by the Daykeepers in their political discourse is their practice of ritual dances, and the ways in which these dances are understood. These dances are used by both the Maya and Ladinos in Momostenango in order to establish an ethnic identity in opposition to the other.

SAINTS DAY DANCES

This thesis argues that the costume dances performed by both Maya and Ladino dancers in Momostenango, Guatemala, are enacted in order to establish and recreate Maya and Ladino identities. As previously noted, the differences between the Maya and Ladinos constitute a permeable boundary largely based on socioeconomic status, as well as language. Consequently, a more enduring identity must be formed through alternative means, such as the performance of traditional and modern costume dances. These dances take place in the town square during Saint's Day festivals. The Maya perform traditional dances that have elements of pre-Colombian, Spanish, and French dances, all infused with Mayan spiritualism and folkloric traits, while the costume dances performed by the Ladinos use elements of traditional Maya dances but with characters taken from Western culture. The dance performed by Ladinos showcase contemporary characters to show how the Ladinos are "contributing to national progress while the Maya are obsolete, committed to tradition, and incapable of combining their outdated customs with new technology" (Taube 2011: 63). The Ladino performers also portray the Maya as backwards and use North American and national symbols in order to subordinate Maya themes and knowledge in their dances. The Maya on the other hand, dance the same

dances every year at these festivals in order to signify a commitment to, and recreation of, Maya traditions. The Maya dances create inclusion and community bonding through shared experience and understanding of the main themes, while the costume dances of the Ladinos show the social difference between the Maya and the Ladinos (Taube 2011: 65). The costume dance then is a result and representation of the power struggle in the region over Guatemalan identity. By performing costume dances, Ladinos simultaneously preserve and sanitize Maya forms of public festival and dance. Both Maya and Ladinos “adapt the costume dance to their own interests, and the tension between them is evident in the different types of costumes they rent and purchase for dances” (Taube 2011: 77-78).

Dances are uniquely capable of constructing and emphasizing identity as cultural performances. Cultural performances are not “magical mirrors of social reality: they exaggerate, invert, re-form, magnify, minimize, dis-color, re-color, even deliberately falsify” yet they are reflective and are capable of making one self-aware (Turner 1988: 42). The true value of cultural performance, though, is that there are actors and an audience. The actors in cultural performances are only “those who feel strongly about their membership in such a group” (Turner 1988: 46). The Maya perform ritual dances focused on religious penitence as each “solo choreographic circuit is regarded as a *devoción* [devotion], an act of sacrifice and prayer on the part of the featured dancer” (Hutcheson 2009: 878). Through the performance of these dances, dancers give specific form to these identities, allowing all fiesta participants to explore, under the frame of

ritual and dance, the paradoxes and ambiguities of such ethnic/racial reality and giving new meaning to it (Mendoza 2000: 11).

Maya Dances

The Maya dances are performed during week long ceremonial festivals, involve a group of dancers in addition to the Daykeeper, and require large amounts of resources and time in order to be performed correctly. The dances are "a hybrid expressive form, elaborated across multiple generations. The *bailes* borrow liberally from both Spanish colonial and pre-Christian native forms of festival diversions and entertainment, straddling the twin domains of ritual practice and popular entertainment" (Hutcheson 2009: 866). Most of the dances have been passed down through oral traditions and largely do not follow a plot that is easily understood from a Western perspective, yet the dances carry "forward complex references to history, ritual and cultural knowledge, all segmented and transformed, cross-referencing one another and continually intercut with disruptive, ludic humor" (Hutcheson 2009: 867). Before the dances are performed there is "an obligatory cycle of porob'al sacrifices, in which copal incense, candles, tobacco, and other material are burned by a formally trained *ajq'ijab*, or ritual prayer maker, who initiates the troupe's preparations and accompanies their successive rehearsals" (Hutcheson 2009: 869). While the dances are scripted, each one is unique in how it is performed, and therefore is seen as a cultural artifact instead of as a text. Maya theater often "exhibits a concern with mimetic reproduction as a means of re-instantiation, wherein familiar, well-known theaterworks are once again brought out within the festival

space in acts of renewal and return” instead of being represented through drama (Hutcheson 2009: 870).

The narrative of the dance is of little importance to the dancers. Instead, the focus is on the form and the reality of their involvement. The actors “are not concerned with telling a story, but with fulfilling a ritual obligation to properly enact each portion of the dance”; the act of dancing is regarded as devotion and is the main concern of the participants. (Hutcheson 2009: 870-871). Dancers are required to be ritually pure in order to perform. This purity comes from abstaining from sex for 40 days prior to the dance and for 20 days after (Hutcheson 2009: 882-883). The *baile de la Culebra* is “a multi-layered work of intercultural parody and ritual play, a social farce that represents or reproduces the familiar events and activities of the patron saint’s day festivals wherein it is enacted” (Hutcheson 2009: 872). This type of performance can be traced back to the Popol Vuh, in which twin heroes Hunapu and Xbalanque disguise themselves as acrobats and entertain villagers.

The lack of attention to narrative structure is not a byproduct of apathy nor literacy, but rather “the cultural construction of time itself, or better put, the way one’s place in time is conceptualized through correspondences and likenesses, rather than through anamnesis and narrative emplotment”, as “western models of causality and explanation rely strongly on narrative, but the traditional divinatory practice of the highland Maya stresses a patterned correspondence between time, temperament and fate” (Hutcheson 2009: 890). Divination and fate are considered to be the expression of identity rather than the result of consequences, which foils a linear understanding of the

past (Hutcheson 2009: 891). This patterning can also be seen in the mnemonic devices used by the Daykeepers in divining practices, as well as counting the days of the ritual calendar, as they are puns and metaphors for ritual practice instead of references to myths (Hutcheson 2009: 890). Hutcheson suggests that the lack of narrative in highland Maya theater may be a result of transculturation, in which Maya ideals and structures have been applied to linearly developed literary forms.

The costumes worn by the dancers are also symbolically and culturally relevant when determining how these dances establish a Maya identity. The dancers wear antique masks and traditional costumes, and are the “conservative curation of the social conventions and ceremonial Costumbre that accompanies their enactment” (Hutcheson 2009: 868). These costumes allow for the spirits of the deceased ancestor dancers to enter the living dancer and keep him safe during the dance while performing dangerous tricks. One of the most dangerous dances performed is the Monkey Dance.

The Monkey Dance, as described by Cook and Offit (2013), is an example of a traditional Maya dance that is still performed in July in Momostenango and is used to celebrate and embrace Maya identity. The festival sponsors, dancers, and shaman visit the cemetery to the east of town as well as Spider Monkey Rock, located three miles south of Momostenango. Traveling from altar to altar is a ritual, an initiation which involves physical danger and exhaustion. The altar is first swept in order to purify it, followed by a blessing of the costumes, and then a veneration of the masks. Invocations are performed in K'iche', occasionally interrupted by Catholic chants and songs, after which the powers are invited to come and be present at the ceremony and to accept

offerings before sunrise. God, Jesus, Mary Santiago, San Felipe, San Gabriel, San Rafael and the mountain altars are all addressed and asked to come and partake of the offerings. A fire is started at the *Puerto Joyam* altar, which is adorned with candles, sugar, and crosses. Copal is offered to the deceased members of the patrilineages of the dancers in order to ask for the health of the dancers, as well as rest for the ancestors. Fire is the central ritual symbol, as it is the only way to call the powers--invocations serve as invitations to a feast. Fire provides sustenance in the form of consuming wax candles and incense for the dead. At the end of an individual's blessing at the fire, if it burns brightly, consumes the offering, grows, and swirls, then the offering is acceptable. However, if the offering smokes out or dies down, it shows a problem with the offering, requests, or preparation of the dancer. If the ceremonies are working, the dancers feel the strength or force of the animals whose mask they don. This shows that the invocations, offerings, and all *Costumbre* of the dance over the last eight months were effective. For a blessing, each person brings a bundle of wax candles, a packed of a dozen copal incense, and ask for forgiveness and acceptance. They kiss the candles three times, after which the shaman feeds the candles and copal into the fire. Sponsors are blessed with more offerings after the dancers are purified in rank order with scented water on a rosemary sprig, brushing away from the body toward the extremities beginning with the body, then the arms and legs. The shaman cleanses himself before cleansing the dancers. At the shrine, *C'oy Abaj*, the ceremony closes with the singing of Catholic litanies in Spanish asking for forgiveness. Prior to the ceremonies, each dancer has fasted, prayed, cried, and slept at the altar for forty nights of *Costumbre* before the first rehearsal in January. After months

of rehearsals, the dancers cut down a tree in the cemetery east of town and whip it to domesticate it. A rope is then connected to the Church in the town square and the pole. The dancers climb the pole in the dance while imbued with the power of the *nawales* (spirits), and perform tricks on the rope. A safe passage across the rope indicates that the dancers are favored by the *nawales* and the ancestors.

In Victor Turner's work, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967), he established that dominant ritual symbols are meaningful as they convey multiple meanings simultaneously, they often condense polar meanings, and they are used across multiple rituals. Turner also argues that rituals are a means of recreating and critiquing social relations. He found that as social instability increases, so does the presence of ritual. Cook and Offit (2013) understand the Monkey Dance to be a representation of culture versus nature; as an oppositional structure, mediated by *Costumbre*, both by the offerings understood as payments to nature deities and the knowledge left by the *primeros* (souls of the dead dancers). This provides the descendants with the power both to control nature, and internalize and use the powers or spirits of the animals to enhance individual courage and personal strength. The conflict is resolved in the dancers, within the liminal period marked by repeated, respectful human visits to the altars, and appropriate payments to the *nawales*, who own them and dispense their powers. The return to earth, and eventually the return to unmediated human existence, are a return to conflict. This liminal period during the rituals was originally observed by Turner (1967), in which he postulated that rites of passage consist of three main categories that participants go through: 1) The participants are removed from their

existing social structure and categories (separation); 2) they enter a transitional period (liminality); 3) and finally they are reincorporated into society with a new status. The liminal period is the most dangerous in the ritual, as the participants may not return to society and the rules of society do not apply in the liminal stage. In the case of the Monkey Dance, when the dancers are imbued with the strength of the *nawales* on the rope above the town square, and when the dancers, removed from society are inhabiting both the profane world of human beings and the sacred realm of the *nawales*, is the most dangerous and liminal of moments. The Monkey Dance is a trip to the other world, enacted as a combination of magical and divinatory encounters with the patron saint, earth spirits, and *primeros*. As the dancers become imbued with the powers of the *primeros* they are able to enter into the sacred realm, similar to the Huichol in their Wirikuta ritual in which the peyote hunters symbolically become supernatural (Myerhoff 1978: 110). In this way the Wirikuta ritual, in the same way as the Monkey Dance emphasize the difference between the supernatural and humanity while also showing that the two are connected (Myerhoff 1978: 113). Dancers provide insight into and function as an analytical tool for understanding the complexities of Maya culture and religion.

The Monkey Dance, and other dances performed by the Maya during Saints' Days and other festivals, are sponsored and performed by *cofradías*. The *cofradía* system is "a hierarchy of ranked offices that together comprise a community's public civil and religious administration" (Chance and Taylor 1985: 1). *Cofradía* positions are elected positions that usually last for one year. The higher the position held, the greater prestige for the individual and the family; however, each cargo entails a financial burden (Chance

and Taylor 1985: 1). Cook and Offit (2013) deconstruct the Maya festival system, viewing it as a way to maintain internal equilibrium by building community, reducing class differentiation, and insulating the community from external forces. Chance and Taylor, however, found no evidence that the *cofradía* system provides an effective defense of the communities (1985:3). Instead, the ways in which the community was reconstructed was by draining off extra resources and keeping the Maya indebted to their Ladino patrons, forcing them to provide labor to pay off what they spent on the festivals. The “colonialist” perspective of the Maya festivals claims that it is a stagnating force, a consequence of colonialism that keeps Maya villages isolated and encourages individuals to seek patrons rather than building communities based on a common cause, thereby reducing the prospect of a Maya uprising. The *cofradía* system may have been implemented as a way for the Spaniards to maintain control over the Maya. At the same time, however, ritual dances are a way for the Maya to resist Ladino power and construct a Maya identity without becoming an overt threat.

While the *cofradía* system may have been implemented by the Spaniards, the Maya have appropriated the performance of dances as a means of reinforcing their own identity. In David Guss’s *The Festive State* (2000), he argues that rituals need to be understood as cultural performances in the context of the power relations in which they unfold. Cultural performances are not stable practices, but are rather “important dramatizations that enable participants to understand, criticize, and even change the worlds in which they live” (Guss 2000, 9). Victor Turner shows how rituals are used to create an anti-structure that allows people, through ritual, to express their discontent and

point to social problems in a way that is culturally acceptable and prescribed. However, ritual performances may not simply act as “safety valves” for social discontent: they are also a mechanism by means of which national and local power structures reconfigure symbols to create and reinforce identity. Guss argues it is important “that cultural performances be recognized as sites of social action where identities and relations are continually being reconfigured” (2000, 12). The Monkey Dance, emphasizing the struggle between nature and civilization, is a metaphor for the struggle between the Maya (symbolized by nature) and Ladino (symbolized by civilization). In the ritualized struggle, nature wins. Similarly, the Dance of the Conquest, performed yearly alongside the Monkey Dance, shows the Spanish conquering a Maya deity and the Maya Daykeeper surviving by hiding in the jungle. This mimics the civil war when the Maya who fought the Ladinos were killed, and the Maya who hid were able to survive. Turner argued that ritual action aids in building *communitas*, both for the performers and for the audience. The performance of the Monkey Dance creates a community of Maya in Momostenango, connects the dancers to each other, to the past, and helps in celebrating Maya identity and traditions.

The costumes are usually rented from a shop that specializes in dance artifacts. One such shop designs and manufactures costumes for their indigenous and Ladino clients, allowing new identities to be constructed through these dances (Taube 2011: 78). The costume shop owners in the region are partly responsible for producing the social meaning of these performances as, according to Jean Baudrillard, meaning does not reside within an object, but rather in the way the object is used. The customer shop

owners create the characters they wish to see in the costume dances, however they much choose characters that the dancers and audience recognize so that there is the connection between the dances and the consumption of foreign entertainment. The costumes have identity value as “it is only through the dance that these foreign images acquire local-social meaning” (Taube 2011: 67). This ability to create new characters allows for different understandings of acceptable ritual practice among the Maya, as well as Ladinos. In addition, it allows for Maya identity to confront the Western culture they encounter. According to Pierre Bourdieu, “consumption is ultimately a material and symbolic act of communication, referring to social position, financial resources, and cultural capital.” Thus, the costumes used in these dances become a public display of access to entertainment and leisure, which separates those who consume Western culture from those who do not (Taube 2011: 65). By recreating images from Western culture the costume makers allow “the dancers and spectators [to] consume the images but not the commodities themselves, detaching them from the economic system that produced them” which created multiple layers of meaning in the costumes and it through the use of these images in dances that gives them local meaning (Taube 2011: 67).

Ladino Dances

Ladinos perform costume dance during Saint’s Day festivals dressed as characters such as Freddie Kruger, cartoon characters, Osama bin Laden, and Darth Vader. These dances are expressive of identity and local cultural logic, but also represent Guatemalan identity politics and provide insight into Maya-Ladino relation. They also showcase the effects of neoliberalism and transnationalism on Guatemala in their use of Western

characters and the commodification of costume dances. Ladinos borrow the form of Maya dances. Yet through the differences in the subject of the dances and the symbols they incorporate during the dances, Ladinos negotiate their role and position in the social, economic and political spheres of the area. While Ladinos got the form of costume dances from the Maya, the costumes worn by the Ladinos “through their emphasis on contemporary characters and original concepts of design, help perpetuate the myth that the Ladinos are contributing to national progress while the Maya are obsolete, committed to tradition and incapable of combining their outdated customs with new technology” (Taube 2011: 63). The Ladinos are, through the process of folklorization, simultaneously celebrating Maya tradition by performing similar dances and establishing their superiority over the Maya by associating themselves with Western culture and modernity. For Ladinos “the display of dance costumes provides a very public site of discourse regarding leisure, entertainment, and liberating pleasure, separating those who participate in a commodified society from those who do not” (Taube 2011: 65). The costume dances emphasize social difference between Ladinos and Maya as the costume dances draw parallels between themselves and the traditional Maya ritual dances.

In Momostenango, Saint’s Day dances are used by both Maya and Ladino in order to celebrate their identities as a group and in relation to one another. The dances use costumes as symbols for the sociopolitical situation in Momostenango, and the ways in which each group understands and reacts to the power structures. The Maya dances, with their traditional elements, celebrate Maya history and creates a community identity celebrating Maya tradition and religion over the oppressive Ladino government and

merchants. Ladinos, on the other hand, celebrate with connections to and identification with modernity and commodity culture, emphasizing their economic superiority over the “backward” Maya. This emphasis has become necessary in order to establish a strong Ladino identity in the face of the Maya efflorescence movement.

REVITALIZATION MOVEMENTS

In this chapter, the performance of Maya identity is examined in light of the structuring of revitalization movements. I will show the ways in which this revitalization movement interacts with neoliberalism and serves as a significant reason for the centrality of the performance of identity through Maya and Ladino dance.

Anthony Wallace's theory of revitalization movements (1970), their stages, and their functions, fits well with the development of the Pan Maya movement in Guatemala. An initial steady state existed prior to 1960, during which time the Maya were marginalized. The early transgressions of the military and the repression of Maya rituals was a period of increased individual and collective stress. The civil war itself constituted a period of cultural distortion, as the Maya joined the guerrilla movement which was an ineffectual attempt to "circumvent the evil effects of "the system" (Wallace 1970: 362). A period of revitalization began in the 1990s with the Accord on Identity and Rights of the Indigenous Peoples. The Pan Maya movement began formulating a code of rights they wanted. The movement began to spread its message to other language groups, which then organized. Once the international community began to give more money to Maya

NGOs, the Pan Maya movement began to adapt to the neoliberal economy, at which point a major cultural transformation as well as commodification of Maya identity took place.

In the 1990s, Maya indigenous political movements began to gain ground in “promoting public, cultural and political identity through self-representation and as a means of social transformation” (Macleod 2013: 449). In the beginning, the indigenous movement was studied by anthropologists from a Marxist perspective as a rural proletariat movement in which culture was treated as a reaction to political oppression and economic exploitation. However, the movement became about the establishment of cultural and collective rights such as the teaching of Maya languages and practicing rituals. Recognition of Maya rights has resulted in more Maya intellectuals and professionals. Maya intellectuals are closing the socioeconomic gap between themselves and middle class Ladinos. Thus, the revitalization movement is no longer understood in terms of socio-economic class but rather in terms of ethnic identity.

As we have seen, identity in Guatemala is both enacted and constructed through the use of ritual dances. Identities in Guatemala “have become politicized, and cultural difference has become a key idiom through which political struggles unfold” (Hale 2006: 17). To be Maya is to claim ancestral ties to the pre-conquest era; in a similar manner, to be Ladino is to ignore any Maya ancestry, emphasizing and continuing the speech and customs of the ancestors they claim. The construction of identity during the ritual dances for saints’ day festivals is self-reflexive, “because the producers of culture are also its consumers, seeing and sensing and listening to themselves enact their identity—and in the process, objectifying their own subjectivity, this to (re)cognize its existence, to grasp

it, to domesticate it, to act on it and with it.” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 26).

Neoliberalism’s “aggressive market oriented economic and state-sanctioned multiculturalism” (Hale 2006: 35) has given rise to what Jean and John Comaroff (2009) call “Ethnicity Inc.,” in which ethnicity and identity are commodified for foreign consumption.

Neoliberalism and Ethnotourism

Hale argues that Guatemala has adopted neoliberalism as a means of asserting dominance, and that the “ideology of neoliberalism paradoxically affirms cultural rights, and endorses the principle of equality, while remaking societies with ever more embedded and resilient forms of racial hierarchy” (2006: 20). Neoliberalism encourages the recognition of cultural difference as it creates distinctions between “cultural rights that deserve recognitions and those that do not” (Hale 2006: 35). Through the selective recognition of rights--determining what are and are not acceptable cultural differences--those in power are able to maintain the social hierarchy. Ladinos tend to defend the racial hierarchy within the country by defining the characteristics of “worthy” and “unworthy” Maya, as well as the acceptable and unacceptable ways of being Maya (Hale 2006:20). The indigenous movement has gained some ground. By the mid-1990s, multiculturalist policies resulted in the acknowledgement that Maya identity is worthy of respect and recognition—collective rights based on cultural difference (Hale 2006: 74). On March 31, 1995, the Accord on Identity and Rights of the Indigenous Peoples stated that the Maya have the right to express their culture in terms of clothing, religion, language, and education as well as their traditional lands for their religious activities and subsistence

(Hale 2006: 75). Although neoliberalism ensures that the Maya have gained some rights, a racial hierarchy remains that keeps Ladinos in political and economic power. Jean and John Comaroff (2009) argue that, increasingly, in neoliberal societies, ethnicity and identification with an ethnicity are becoming an industry of ethno-tourism. While identity is now being used to make money, it also has retained its social worth (27). Hale explains that “the key defining feature of neoliberalism is not strict, market-oriented individualism, as many contend, but rather the restructuring of society such that people come to govern themselves in accordance with the tenets of global capitalism” (2006:75). In the 1990s, Ladino-run NGOs lost their position as the principal intermediaries between the Maya and the global market as funding for Maya-led organizations increased for a variety of reasons (Hale 2006:76). Since the 1990s, Guatemala has encouraged ethnic tourism, emphasizing Maya culture as “pure.” The Pan-Maya movement also has cooperated with the national government and handicraft vendors dealing directly with foreign customers (Little 2004: 32, 58). Ethno-commodities, such as handicrafts, require the Maya to perform their identity in such a way as to make their indigeneity consumable (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 142). There are few male handicraft vendors in Guatemala, because the men tend not to wear the traditional clothing so tourists did not believe they were “real” Maya (Little 2004).

Tourists visiting Guatemala are encouraged to visit the western highlands to experience “living Maya culture,” where ancient traditions and practices are part of daily life (INGUAT, 2010). This type of representation evokes notions of an unchanged, anti-modern culture with no indication of the results of such tourism on the area; at the same

time, these tourist texts present a portrayal of the Maya in Guatemala as part of unified and homogenized whole, ignoring the different experiences of the various towns with the ladino world. Frame analysis is useful for analyzing how tourism media texts are constructed by cherry-picking cultural aspects to highlight while omitting others (Tegelberg 2013: 83). Maya Culture is usually framed in one of two ways: one “portrays Mayas as object of touristic desire by foregrounding authentic, timeless and mysterious qualities; the other consistently place Mayas in positions of subordination in relation to their Western counterparts” (Tegelberg 2013: 83). By placing Maya in positions of subordination in travel documents, writers develop an “us” versus “them,” with the tourists and government occupying a superior position. Commercial framings of tourism in guidebooks and other travel media “have a tendency to homogenize tourist displays by sidelining distinct political-economic, cultural, spiritual and gendered dimensions of local experience” (Tegelberg 2013: 82-83). In *Mayas in the Marketplace*, Walter Little (2004) looks at the ways in which global tourism has blurred the distinction between the local and global, developed and undeveloped, and the indigenous and Western. Current Maya activists are recreating Maya cultural imagery for tourist consumption. They are doing this by re-appropriating “dominant myths and stereotypes to advocate for and sustain local, pro-Maya development initiative; and by using online narratives to familiarize global tourists with local issues and perspectives rarely acknowledged in popular offline tourist media” (Tegelberg 2013: 91). Ajq’ijab’s are starting to charge Ladinos, foreign academics, New Age practitioners, and foreign tourists for their divining rituals and ethno-tourism events, such as Oxlajuj B’aqtun (December 21, 2012 the “end” of the

Maya calendar) (Macleod 2013: 457). The commodification of identity for foreign consumption in the form of cultural performance has also resulted in the modernization of Maya religion to address current issues faced by the Maya

Calendrics, Cultural Politics, and the Structuring of Identity

In Morna MacLeod's *Mayan Calendrics in Movement in Guatemala* (2013), she discusses how the Mayan indigenous movement used the 2012 end of the Mayan calendar in order to vie for recognition within the Guatemalan government. The Daykeepers reflect on the past to frame their future visions of wellbeing and ways to reconstruct social transformation (462). Mayan activists argue among themselves about how to use the Maya spirituality in cultural politics, yet "Mayanista intellectuals have fomented an 'imagined community' with a particular focus on the production of written and visual texts, using Mayan numbers and glyphs in their production of books, calendars, diaries and posters" (Macleod 2013: 449). Unlike many indigenous movements in Latin America, Guatemalans focused on recognition and language rights rather than class or land redistribution (Macleod 2013: 449). Urban Daykeepers and other intellectuals thus play a crucial role as cultural mediators who provide insight into indigenous worldviews as understood by living Mayas and adapted to globalization (Cook and Offit 2000: 13). As we have previously noted, assimilation efforts were less successful in Guatemala because of the extent to which the Mayas had been excluded from state structures. It is important to note that time, as conceptualized by the Maya, is cyclical and, therefore, the end of the Maya calendar was not a true end but rather an end of the current age, and it is believed that a new age will follow which is drastically

different from this one. A major problem arises when using the end of the Maya calendar to stimulate Maya culture and recognition, as the “change in era” is imagined differently depending on who does the imagining. There are two main sects of Maya thought, the *Costumbristas* (those that practice *Costumbre*) and the Maya Spiritualists. *Costumbristas* “holds that the present world order is and should be continuous with the past and that the constitutive rituals of this syncretized/hybridized world blend K’iche’ and Spanish, indigenous and Catholic cosmologies into a unified whole” (Cook and Offit 2008: 48). Maya Spiritualists (endorsed by the Pan Maya movement) uses the Popol Vuh “to understand the Conquest as founding an oppressive world over which should be rejected” aiming to create a Maya religion with Spanish or Catholic elements (Cook and Offit 2008: 49).

In addition, the day names are being reimagined by activist *ajq’ijab’* to reflect current issues for the Maya in the form of printed booklets which are then sold. One such booklet tells readers which days are best for confronting feelings about violence, *Tijax*, while environmental issues are best addressed on *I’x* (Macleod 2013: 458). In this way, the activist *ajq’ijab’* are linking Maya religion to contemporary concerns in order to keep the religion relevant (Macleod 2013: 459).

Maya revitalization movements have sparked a domestic and foreign interest in celebrating Maya identity. Through ethno-tourism and the commodification of Maya identity, the Maya have been able to “sell” their history to tourists and succeeded in having government policies implemented, protecting the rights of the Maya to their culture. This protection has given activists within the movement the ability to utilize the

accepted forms of Maya expression to modernize the religion, and expand the Maya Spirituality movement to address the problems currently faced by the Maya.

CONCLUSION

Identity in Guatemala is performed through ritual dances by both the Maya and Ladinos for many reasons. In light of the shrinking socioeconomic disparity between middle class Ladinos and middle class Maya, the performance of identity is important. With the decrease in the use of *traje* and Maya languages, the Maya are at risk of no longer existing as Maya and becoming Ladinos. Ladinos, for their part, are becoming marginalized as the Maya efflorescence movement is creating socio-economic power for the Maya who make up the majority of the population of Guatemala. As a result of these changing socio-political situations, the commodification of identity in relation and opposition to each other is being emphasized by both the Maya and Ladinos in their respective ritual dances.

Ritual dances are performed at festivals celebrating the patron saints of villages such as Momostenango. As such, during these festivals both the Maya and Ladinos perform their dances. The Maya dances, performed by *cofradías*, are often part of the Costumbre tradition in which Maya religion has elements of Catholicism. However, there is a movement within the Pan-Maya movement which seeks to reproduce dances as they were prior to the Spanish contact, without any Spanish or Catholic influences. Ladino

dances, on the other hand, borrow the form of Maya dances while re-appropriating characters from Western culture, thus differentiating themselves from the Maya whose dances reflect a connection to the past.

The influx of foreign money into Guatemala in the form of ethno-tourism and NGOs has resulted in the marginalization of the Ladinos as they are no longer the sole cultural brokers between the Maya and the outside world. As a result, the Maya, with their increased political rights and access to financial resources, have begun to gain power in local and regional politics, thus upsetting the previous Ladino hegemony. The increase in ethno-tourism has also re-legitimized the celebration of Maya religion. As such, the ritual dances, performed at Saints Day festivals, have become an important site at which the Maya and Ladinos each perform their identities in relation and contrast to each other. These dances as cultural performance are a mode by which the Ladinos and Maya comment upon the social situation in Momostenango without overt conflict. The Maya in the Monkey Dance show nature (the Maya) winning in the conflict with civilization (the Ladinos). The Ladinos on the other hand imply with their dances that they are the future of Guatemala, and that while they represent modernity, the Maya are backward and too focused on the past. It is through the performances of these dances that the Maya and Ladinos establish their identities.

Through the neoliberal policies of the Guatemalan government, with pressure from foreign tourists, the Maya have been awarded some cultural rights such as the rights to practice their religion and languages. These policies, while awarding some rights, also limit the powers of the Maya in relation to the ways it is acceptable to practice Maya

culture. The enactment of these identities has led to an “Ethnicity Inc.” in Guatemala. Tourists are encouraged to visit Guatemala and “experience” “pure” Maya culture. The creation of the “Ethnicity Inc.,” in relation the revitalization movement, has challenged Ladino hegemonic power resulting in uncertain and shifting socio-political situations in the region. As such, the Ladinos are now attempting to establish their identities in contrast to the Maya. The Maya, on the other hand, are attempting to maintain their identity in light of the new socio-economic and political power that they have so that the Maya do not become appropriated by the Ladinos.

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BIOGRAPHY

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