

Historical dramas are performed in a number of Indian communities in highland Chiapas during the fiesta of Carnaval which precedes the Lenten season, Good Friday, and Easter. The association of ethnic conflict with the Carnaval season is not fortuitous. In highland Chiapas the fiesta of Carnaval coincides with the short five-day "month" at the end of the Maya year called the "lost days" (*č'ay k'in*). In the Yucatan peninsula this five-day period, designated as *uayeb* or *xma kaba kin* (*š ma' k' àab'a? k'in*, "nameless days"), was regarded as unlucky or bad (Tozzer 1941: 134). The fiesta of Carnaval is regarded as a "bad" fiesta in highland Chiapas, an occasion for license and evil (Bricker 1973b). Furthermore, both attempts to conquer Chiapas took place during the weeks prior to Easter (Díaz del Castillo 1904:II, 217-218; Remesal 1932:I, 378-379), and the first efforts to suppress the cult that provided the inspiration for the revolt in Cancuc were made during Lent in 1712.³ It is fitting that an event as disruptive as the conquest be commemorated at a time of year which was traditionally regarded as unlucky.

Most of my data on the Dance of the Conquest and its variant, the Dance of Moors and Christians, come from the townships of Zinacantán, Chamula, and Chenalhó.⁴ In Zinacantán dramatized versions of the myth of ethnic conflict are performed during two fiestas, Carnaval and San Sebastián. In Chamula and Chenalhó they are performed only during the fiesta of Carnaval.

The Dance of Moors and Christians

The dominant theme of the fiesta of Carnaval in Zinacantán, Chamula, and Chenalhó is the Passion of Christ. The religious sponsors of the fiesta are called Passions (*pašyon*). In Chamula and Zinacantán, the Passions are Christ impersonators, as their role name implies. In those communities, Jew impersonators pretend to harass the Passions during Carnaval. In Chenalhó, where the Christ impersonators are called Crossbacks (*hkurus pat*), it is they, not the Passions, who are the objects of harassment. Their names are obviously related to the fact that they have white crosses painted on their backs; red annatto and yellow ocher circles on their naked torsos and limbs symbolize wounds. In Chamula and Zinacantán during this fiesta, the Passions and their assistants make pilgrimages to the various cross shrines in the town centers. Because the

³Archivo General de Indias (hereafter cited as AGI), Sevilla, Audiencia de Guatemala, Legajo 293, "Apariciones de la Virgen," folios 1-5.

⁴Zinacantán, Chamula, and Chenalhó are three Tzotzil-speaking Maya communities in the hinterland of the city of San Cristóbal Las Casas. Vogt (1969) has published the definitive ethnography of Zinacantán. Chamula has been described in two monographs, one by Pozas (1959) and the other by Gossen (1974). Chenalhó has been described by Guiteras-Holmes (1961). The ethnographic data on which this paper is based were published in my comparative study of the ritual humor of highland Chiapas (Bricker 1973b).

ultimate destination of the pilgrims is a hill called Calvary (*kalvaryo*), the cross shrines probably represent the Stations of the Cross, and the pilgrimages commemorate Christ's progression from Pilate's house to Calvary Hill (Alston 1912:569).

At first glance, then, the historical drama in question seems to be a version of the colonial Passion Play, which was one of the dance-dramas introduced by Spanish friars in highland Chiapas (Nuñez de la Vega, pp. 146-149). But the Passion of Christ is only one of many historical events commemorated during the fiesta of Carnaval in Chamula, Zinacantán, and Chenalhó. Other events are referred to in prophecies recited in advance of the fiesta each year in Chamula and Chenalhó to foretell what will be dramatized during it. The announcement of coming attractions is made one week before the fiesta in Chamula and during the fiesta of San Sebastián (January 20-22) in Chenalhó, about one month before Carnaval.

Prophecy and History in Chamula

The text of the prophecy that predicts what will happen during the fiesta of Carnaval in Chamula is written in Spanish and is read by a crier (*avito*, from *av*, "shout"). At certain points in the recitation, the audience interjects a "hurrah" (*viva*). Below is one informant's remembered version of this text in Tzotzilized Spanish:⁵

primero soltaros	The first soldiers
vino mehiko	came to Mexico City
kon sus tampoeres	with their drums,
kon sus korneta	with their trumpets.
si ?ultima kabanyera	The last horseman.
?i viva	And hurrah! (audience)
?este maryano ?orteka	This Mariano Ortega
vino mehiko	came to Mexico City;
vino tušta	he came to Tuxtla [Gutiérrez]
čapa	and Chiapa [de Corzo].
vino kon sus vantera	He came with his flag,
kon sus tampoeres	with his drums.
?este hwan kutyeres	This Juan Gutiérrez
vino mehiko	came to Mexico City;

⁵Other versions are published in Pozas (p. 176) and Gossen (pp. 145-147). Pozas gives only a grammatical Spanish version of the prophecy, and my translation does not conflict with it. Gossen, on the other hand, interprets *viva ?el mehiko* as *vino de México* ("came from Mexico City"). I have glossed *vino mehiko* as "came to Mexico City," in agreement with Pozas's *vino a México*, because *tal*, the Tzotzil verb root for "come," also means "arrive [here]" (Laughlin 1975:330) and does not require the preposition *ta* "to" to indicate "come to."

vino tušta
 čapa
 hunto van ?a ?ir
 kon senyorita
 nana mariya kokorinas
 lekreso konvyento pamasakiles
 vino kon ?el vantera
 kon los kornetas
 ?ultimo kabanyero
 viva
 sčamula loko pebrero
 ?anyo 1969
 vino soltaro
 vino mehiko
 vino tapačulas
 vino tušta
 vino čapa
 kon las vanteras
 kon las tampores
 kon las kornetas
 ?ultimo kabanyera
 viva
 sekunto kabanyera
 maryano ?orteka
 vino mehiko
 vino vatemala
 vino tušta
 vino čapa
 vino kon ?el vantera
 vino kon se tampores
 vino kon se korneta
 ?ultimo kabanyera
 viva
 ?es hwan kutyeres
 vino mehiko
 vino vatemala
 vino tušta
 vino čapa
 kon su senyorita
 nana mariya kokorina
 si van hunto
 korkorbyanto lo monte
 lekreso konvyento merkuča

he came to Tuxtla [Gutiérrez]
 and Chiapa [de Corzo].
 They are going to go together
 with their mistress,
 Nana María Cocorina.
 They return eating candied squash.
 He came with the flag,
 with the trumpets.
 The last horseman.
 Hurrah! (audience)
 Chamula! Crazy February
 1969.
 A soldier came.
 He came to Mexico City;
 he came to Tapachula;
 he came to Tuxtla [Gutiérrez];
 he came to Chiapa [de Corzo]
 with the flags,
 with the drums,
 with the trumpets.
 The last horseman.
 Hurrah! (audience)
 The second horseman,
 Mariano Ortega,
 came to Mexico City;
 he came to Guatemala;
 he came to Tuxtla [Gutiérrez];
 he came to Chiapa [de Corzo].
 He came with the flag;
 he came with his drums;
 he came with his trumpet.
 The last horseman.
 Hurrah! (audience)
 This Juan Gutiérrez
 came to Mexico City;
 he came to Guatemala;
 he came to Tuxtla [Gutiérrez];
 he came to Chiapa [de Corzo]
 with his mistress,
 Nana María Cocorina.
 They go together
 frolicking in the bushes.
 They return eating toffee.

lekreso konvyento pamasakiles	They return eating candied squash.
?ultimo kabanyero	The last horseman.
viva	Hurrah! (audience)

Mariano Ortega (historically Juan Ortega) was a political reactionary and an advocate of the privileges of the clergy in the middle of the nineteenth century during the time that Mexico (including Chiapas) was embroiled in a struggle for power between Centralist (conservative) and Federalist (liberal) factions (Cáceres López 1962; Corzo 1943:109; López Gutiérrez 1963:130-228). The people of San Cristóbal Las Casas sided with the Centralist cause, while those of Tuxtla and Chiapa supported the Federalists. When the French invaded Mexico in 1862, Ortega declared himself in favor of the Empire and attempted a military takeover of the state of Chiapas (ibid., pp. 150-151; Trens 1957:657, 675-677). On May 7, 1863, he invaded and occupied San Cristóbal Las Casas, which he held until January 24, 1864 (López Gutiérrez, p. 155; Paniagua 1870:650). As a result, Chamula, which at that time belonged to the Department of San Cristóbal Las Casas, fell under Ortega's domination (*El Baluarte de la Libertad*, 27 August 1869:4; Trens, pp. 469-470). It is clear that Ortega's presence was felt in the Indian countryside, for he forced Indians to build fortifications in San Cristóbal Las Casas, and Chamula Indians are known to have assisted Federal troops sent by Juárez to drive out the Imperialists (Paniagua, pp. 626, 635; Trens, p. 684).

Ortega is also identified with the boundary dispute between Mexico and Guatemala because many of his troops were recruited from Central America and because he used Guatemala as a base for his attacks on the towns of Chiapas. The border dispute concerned the Soconusco region of Chiapas, which Guatemala claimed on the grounds that it had been first pacified by Alvarado in 1524 on his way to conquer Guatemala (Orantes 1960:60). Mexico's claim rested on a decision made by the Spanish Crown in 1790 to incorporate the Soconusco area into the Intendancy of Chiapas (ibid., p. 60; Trens, p. 440). Tapachula became the capital of Soconusco in 1794 (Gerhard 1972:133).

Juan Gutiérrez (historically Joaquín Miguel Gutiérrez) was a champion of Federalism and local autonomy for the state of Chiapas during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1830 Gutiérrez became the Governor of Chiapas, and during the next eight years he led Federalist troops in raids throughout Chiapas, including an attack on the conservative stronghold of San Cristóbal Las Casas (Orantes, pp. 56-58; Trens, pp. 287-425 passim).

Nana María Cocorina, also called Spanish Lady (*šinolan ?ané*), is characterized in the prophecy as the mistress of both Juan Gutiérrez and Mariano Ortega. The Passions sometimes take the role of Juan Gutiérrez

or Mariano Ortega in the sexual joking which is part of their performance in the fiesta (see Bricker 1973b:116-122).

The prophecy recapitulates the movement of troops during the French intervention and the border dispute with Guatemala. President Juárez sent Mexican troops to help suppress the Imperialist cause during the French intervention, and Mexican soldiers fought Guatemalan troops in the border dispute of that period.

The prophecy does not mention the Passion of Christ, which is another event dramatized during the fiesta. Nor does it refer explicitly to the conquest of Chiapas during the first part of the sixteenth century. It does, however, summarize the movements of the Spanish conquerors, beginning with Hernán Cortés's victory in Mexico City (then Tenochtitlan) in 1521, followed by Pedro de Alvarado's journey to Guatemala through the Soconusco region of Chiapas in 1524 (Mackie 1924:14-15), and culminating in the conquest of Chiapas by Luis Marín in 1524 and Diego de Mazariegos in 1528. Marín conquered the Chiapanecs near what is today Chiapa de Corzo and then moved into the highlands, where he confronted the Indian tribes in the vicinity of what is now the city of San Cristóbal Las Casas. Chamula was one of the last tribes to be subdued in 1524 (Díaz del Castillo, pp. 220-223). Marín was eventually forced to withdraw from Chiapas (Pineda 1888:27). A few years later, Mazariegos led another expedition to Chiapas. He stopped in Tuxtla and Chiapa before establishing a town on the present site of San Cristóbal Las Casas (ibid., pp. 33-35; Remesal 1932:I, 382-386).

The prophecy could also refer to the Cancuc revolt of 1712 and the Chamula uprising of 1867-1870. Guatemalan as well as Chiapanec soldiers were involved in putting down the rebellion in 1712 (Trens, p. 193). Troops were brought in from Tuxtla and Chiapa in 1869 to reinforce the small garrison in San Cristóbal Las Casas (Pineda, pp. 104-105; Corzo, pp. 142-143).

Prophecy and History in Chenalhó

A similar proclamation, in Tzotzil instead of Spanish, presages some of the events commemorated in the fiesta of Carnaval in Chenalhó:

ha? ša heč yepal k'ak'al kečel čkom	Many days still remain unfinished,
makal čkom	remain closed.
ničimal 'ab'tel	Beautiful work,
ničimal patan	Beautiful contribution
sk'in	of the festival,
spasku	of the holiday,
htotik hesus	of our father Jesus,
htotik lasareno	of our father the Nazarene.

lah ša yil ta sat
lah ša yil ta yelov
mi heč ša šil ta sat
k'alal ta lahuneb' šča'vinik
k'ak'al ta šhelov

ti sk'ine
ti spaskuae
ta stani 'o ta hb'eh pukuk
ta hb'eh k'a'ep

ta šoral
ta yamak'
ti htotik 'apušto
ti htotik santa krus

'avil tana
li' tana
li' k'alal ta hun 'u
ta štal skotol k'usitik

čon
b'olom
mu ša me 'epuk šasa' 'amulik
ta štal skotol k'usitik
ta šlok' tal li' k'alal ta hun 'u

ha' ti ta šlok' hka'b'enal
ta šlok h'ik'al
ta šlok' hkurus pat
ta šlok' h'ekal
ha' ti malkiario ta šlok' yu'unik
čava'i 'un

tana ta štal peligro
ta štal čopol
ta štal turko
ta štal pranses
h'ik'al

ta štal skotol čopol k'usi ta štal
k'alal ta lahuneb' šča'vinik k'ak'al
ta štal turko 'o
pranses skotol
ha' ti člok'an ta maš
člok'an ta ka'b'enal
ta šak'b'e hb'eh 'elov
ta šak'b'e hb'eh lo'il
ta šak'b'e hb'eh še'eh

He has seen it in his eyes;
he has seen it in his face.
Will he still see it in his eyes
after thirty days have passed,

of his festival,
of his holiday?
He strews a bit of dust,
a bit of rubbish
on the roadway,
in the plaza,
of our father apostle,
of our father holy cross.

Look now!
Here now!
Here in a month's time
everything will come!

Animals!
Jaguars!
Don't go looking for too much trouble!
Everything will come!
They will appear here in a month's
time!

Lacandons will appear!
Blackmen will appear!
Crossbacks will appear!
Abductors will appear!
Evil creatures will appear,
you see.

Danger is on its way here.
Evil is coming!

The Turks are coming!
The French
and Blackmen are coming!
Every possible horror is coming
in thirty days time!

The Turks are coming, with them
the French, everything!
Monkeys will appear!
Lacandons will appear!
They will offer a little entertainment;
they will offer a little joking;
they will evoke a little laughter,

ta šoral
 ta ʔamak'
 ta spasi sk'in
 ta spasi spasku
 htotik hesus
 htotik lasareno

on the roadway,
 in the plaza.
 They will celebrate the festival;
 they will celebrate the holiday,
 of our father Jesus,
 of our father the Nazarene.

The word *hʔik'al*, which I have glossed as "Blackman," could also be translated as "Moor" or Negro." It may refer to the wars between the Moors and Christians in Spain. It could equally well refer to the Cancuc revolt of 1712; fifty-four Negroes and one hundred mulattoes were part of the army that put down the rebellion (Ximénez 1929-31:III, 296-297). Chenalhó was deeply involved in that revolt, and after Cancuc was captured by the Spaniards, the principal leaders of the rebellion took refuge in Chenalhó for a time.⁶

Turk (*turko*) is synonymous with Blackman in Chenalhó (see below).⁷ The reference to the French probably recalls the French intervention of 1862-1867 (see below).

The word *kaʔb'enal*, which I have glossed as "Lacandon," is probably derived from Cabnál or Cabenal, the name of several Lacandon chiefs during the colonial period. In 1555, 1559, and 1696, the Spaniards were engaged in efforts to subdue and convert the Lacandon Indians, who were raiding Christian settlements in parts of Chiapas and Guatemala (Thompson 1970:27-38). Two hundred Zinacanteco Indians and 600 Chiapanec Indians took part in the 1559 campaign (Remesal 1932:II, 396). Indians from Chiapas (their tribal affiliation is not specified) also participated in the 1696 operations against the Lacandon Indians (Villagutierre Soto-Mayor 1933:222). One of the Lacandon leaders in 1696 was a man named Cabnál (*ibid.*, pp. 223, 241-242). According to J. Eric S. Thompson (pp. 29-30), the name Cabnál or Cabenal was assumed by Lacandon chiefs generation after generation, for Spaniards met Lacandon chiefs with that name in 1586, 1608, and 1696.

No comparable announcement heralds the fiesta of Carnaval in Zinacantán, but in other respects it is similar to the fiesta of the same name in Chamula and Chenalhó. The historical events commemorated during this fiesta in Zinacantán can be inferred from role names, costumes, and behavior.

⁶AGI, Guat., Leg. 294, folios 714-717, 767-768, 826-827; Leg. 295, 2nd Quaderno, folio 78; 5th Quaderno, folios 182, 185, 209-210; Leg. 296, 6th Quaderno, folios 5, 7.

⁷According to Louanna Furbie-Losee (personal communication), some of the Tojolabal Indians near Comitán perform a version of the Dance of Moors and Christians during the fiesta of Carnaval in which the Moors are called "Turks." She points out that *turco* "is the usual Spanish word for Arab" in parts of Mexico and Guatemala.

The Performers

A single cast of performers dramatizes the events mentioned in the prophecies of Chamula and Chenalhó. Each performer represents several roles dating from different historical periods, not all of which are mentioned in the prophecies. For example, the Passions of Chamula are not costumed as Christ, even though their role name suggests that they symbolize him. Instead, they wear red jackets and knee-length breeches trimmed with gold braid which clearly date from the period of the Spanish conquest. In some contexts they are addressed as Mariano Ortega or Juan Gutiérrez, which are names of men who lived during the nineteenth century. Thus the same performers symbolize historical personages from three different epochs.

Still another event that the Passions probably represent is the Chamula uprising of 1867-1870. On Good Friday in 1868, Domingo Gómez Cheheb, a young Indian boy, was supposedly nailed to a cross in Chamula (Pineda, pp. 76-77). It is therefore possible that the Passions represent not only the Passion of Christ, but also the crucifixion of the Indian Christ in 1868. Elsewhere (Bricker 1973a), I have recapitulated the history of this movement and have discussed its relationship to the fiesta of Carnaval in several communities of highland Chiapas.

The Passions are the consorts of the female impersonator, Nana María Cocorina. In the context of the Passion of Christ, she may represent Mary Magdalene, while in the context of the Spanish conquest, it is likely that she represents Malinche, Cortés's mistress.

The Passions are also accompanied by two men in identical red costumes who are called *ʔortinaryo* [from Spanish *ordinario*, "Ecclesiastical Judge Ordinary" (Greenleaf 1965:138)] and *komisaryo* [from Spanish *comisario*, "investigator" (Greenleaf 1969:160)]. They are associated with the Mexican Inquisition. A few weeks before the outbreak of the Cancuc revolt in 1712, the Inquisition was conducting an investigation of a saint cult in the town of Santa Marta because Spanish officials suspected that the Indians of that town had relapsed into idolatry.⁸ After the sponsors of the saint cult in Santa Marta had been arrested and their image confiscated, other Indians transferred the cult to Cancuc and used it as the focus of a nativistic movement. In addition to his Inquisitional role in the fiesta of Carnaval in Chamula, the *ʔortinaryo* is sometimes called Ortega because of the similarity between the names.

The Christ impersonators of Chenalhó (the Crossbacks) likewise have multiple associations. They are the consorts of a female impersonator called *meʔ hkaʔb'enal* ("Lacandon Woman") who, like them, has

⁸AGI, Guat., Leg. 293, "Apariciones de la Virgen," Edict of Juan de Santander, *comisario* of the Inquisition, 16 June 1712, folios 18-19.