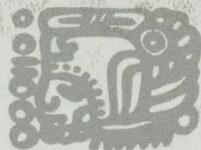


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ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4226

# MUSIC OF THE MAYA-QUICHES OF GUATEMALA: THE RABINAL ACHI AND BAILE DE LA CANASTAS



COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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1978



MUSIC LP



**SIDE I**

- Band 1 — *Rabinal Achi*  
A. Son del Quiche Achi  
B. Son del Rabinal Achi
- Band 2 — *Baile de las Canastas* (Dance of the Baskets)  
A. Son del Rey Gaspar (King Gaspar)  
B. Son del Gorrión (The Sparrow)  
C. Son del Niño, el Viejo y el Quetzal)
- Band 3 — Finale del *Baile de las Canastas* (Final Scene)
- Band 4 — *Flute Solos*  
A. Son del Rey Moro (King of the Moors)  
B. Son del Amorate  
C. Son para la Procesión (Processional Music)  
D. Descanso de los Santos (Resting Place for Saints)  
E. Entrada de la Imagen (Entrance of the Saint)
- Band 5 — *Baile del Venado* (Deer Dance)  
A. - D. Sones para el Baile del Venado
- Band 6 — *Son de Cuaresma* (Music for Lent)

**SIDE II**

- Band 1 — *Baile de la Conquista* (Dance of the Conquest)  
A. Son de Tecum Uman (King of the Quiches)  
B. Son de Pedro Albarado (Conqueror of Guatemala)  
C. Son de Zunun (Indian Noble)
- Band 2 — *Baile de Ajitz*  
A. Son de Ajitz B. Son de Pepe
- Band 3 — *Baile de la Conquista* (Dance of the Conquest)  
A. Son de Pedro Cartocarrero  
B. Son de Santa Maria
- Band 4 — *Indian Marimba - Baile de San Miguel*  
(Dance for Saint Michael)  
A. Son del Segundo Capitan (Music For the Second Captain)  
B. Son de Despedida (Farewell Music)  
C. Son de San Miguel (Music for Saint Michael)
- Band 5 — *Ladino Marimba Music*  
A. Indio Vivente (Living Indian)  
B. Son de Chorchita (Music for Chorchita)  
C. Son de Virgilia (Music for Virgil)
- Band 6 — *Son de San Gaspar* (Music for Saint Gaspar)

Recorded on location, 1945

Production Assistants: Meryl Gordon  
and  
Jennifer Sookne

Transcriptions: Jennifer Sookne  
and  
David Friedlander

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**MUSIC OF THE MAYA-  
QUICHES  
OF GUATEMALA:  
THE RABINAL ACHI  
AND BAILE  
DE LA CANASTAS**

RECORDED AND WITH NOTES BY  
HENRIETTA YURCHENCO

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET



# Music of the Maya-Quiches of Guatemala: The Rabinal Achi and Baile de las Canastas

Notes: Henrietta Yurchenco

## INTRODUCTION

Early in 1945, I interrupted my research in Mexico to record and document Indian music in Guatemala. I arrived at a most propitious time. A successful revolution had taken place, the long-time dictator Ubico and his henchman General Ponce had been overthrown, and democratic forces were in control.

Guatemala City was alive with hope and enthusiasm. President-elect Arevalo was on his way home from a long exile in Argentina; other professionals and intellectuals were also returning. In government circles I heard a genuine concern for the sufferings of the large Indian population, and a desire to understand the indigenous culture of the nation.

As I recollect after so many years, Jorge Luis Arriola, a leading scholar, and newly appointed Minister of Education, put at my disposal a truck and a chauffeur. Within a few days after my arrival Tadeo and I were on our way to Verapaz.

In our two months stay, we recorded music in several Indian areas. The most important discoveries, however, came from Rabinal in the Eastern Section, and Chajul in the Western Highlands. In both locales first recordings were made of dance-dramas of the pre-Columbian period—the Rabinal Achi from Rabinal, and the Baile de las Canastas from Chajul.

Our first destination was Rabinal and other points in Baja and Alta Verapaz. For a few weeks we bumped along the unpaved roads leading to Quiche villages off the main roads. Although accustomed to Indian Mexico I was overwhelmed by the color and variety of textiles and costumes, for which Guatemala is justly famous. As the research proceeded, I became aware of how tenaciously the Indians had fought through the centuries to live as Indians, rather than as carbon-copies of Europeans!

Returning to Guatemala City I made preparations for the journey to the Western Highlands. One day, Edith Hoyt, an American painter familiar with Guatemala, engaged me in conversation. "You must go to Chajul", she said, "to see the Baile de las Canastas (Dance of the Baskets). I have never seen such a spectacle, nor heard such strange music!" Upon investigation I found that the dance was unknown to anthropologists and folklorists. My curiosity aroused, I resolved to go, with Edith as guide.

The truck sped towards magnificent Lake Atitlan, then on to Chichicastenango for Holy Thursday and Good Friday. At Santa Cruz de Quiche the road descends to sub-tropical Sacapulas where papayas grow in the plaza, and huge salt deposits line the river bed. Near Nebaj, the road twists up and around the mountains into cool country. A turn in the road and grassy pastures, dotted with grazing sheep, stretched out before our eyes.

We were now in Ixil country, our second destination. Here we recorded the music of the Baile de las Canastas and returned a second time with rented costumes from Totonicapan. The entire dance was performed, and a special crew sent from Guatemala City filmed it in color. Unfortunately, the film disappeared years ago.

Recordings were also made in the districts of Solola, (the Lake area), Totonicapan and Quetzaltenango among Kekchi, Kakchiquel and Zutujil speaking Indians. As this was the first comprehensive recording expedition in Indian Guatemala, an overall survey was made of various musical styles rather than an in-depth study of any one locale.

Most of the music was instrumental; the few songs in the collection came from Chajul. During the actual performance of the Baile de las Canastas the trumpeter (who was the musical leader) described many songs, but few were actually sung on that occasion. Although the written text of the Rabinal Achi clearly specifies vocal music for the dancing and singing of part of the text, only instrumentalists showed up for the recording.

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What happened to those songs? Were they forgotten because of the church bans? We can only speculate!

During the trip I faithfully kept a diary and took many notes, which I consulted in writing these liner notes. Inevitably there were missing details about instruments, playing techniques and cultural meaning. I supplemented my data with published material, listed in a separate bibliography at the end of this booklet. Unfortunately, there was little reliable information of music, so the reader will have to be content with the information given here, until such time when new material is available.

I did not see all the listed dance-dramas, but merely recorded the music for them. Lacking specific data, I have therefore given general background material, which I hope will be useful to the reader of these notes.

### RABINAL ACHI

The town of Rabinal in Baja Verapaz, was founded in 1524 by missionaries, probably assistants of Fray Bartolome de las Casas. Rabinal in 1945 had become a fairly large Indian town with a small ladino population. An important trading center, famous for its oranges, it has earned distinction because of the Rabinal Achi.

The Rabinal Achi is one of the few pre-Columbian literary works to survive the Conquest. After the initial destruction of Indian civilization a handful of brilliant Spanish clerics began an inquiry into indigenous languages, religions and arts. Although their true motives (like that of the Conquistadores themselves) was to facilitate subjugation of the Indians, their research yielded a mass of data so striking in scope and detail that even today it remains a fundamental historical source on American civilization of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Fray Francisco Ximenez, one of those illustrious men, lived in Rabinal for ten years. He compiled a Quiche dictionary (whose value is now hotly disputed), and wrote down the Popol Vuh, the great Quiche "sacred book" of myth and history. Yet, in all his published works, there is no mention of the Rabinal Achi. Possibly, it was not staged during

his stay there inasmuch as laws passed in 1625 prohibited the performance of pre-hispanic works in native languages. There is no question, however, that the Rabinal Achi was performed during the long colonial period, either openly, or, more likely, in secret, as subsequent events proved.

In 1855 Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg (1668-1729), a French Abbe and ardent Indianist, was appointed ecclesiastical administrator of Rabinal. Soon after his arrival he was informed of the Rabinal Achi by a native Rabinaleño, Bartolo Ziz, who had learned it from his father. In 1855 the Abbe, assisted by several Indians, wrote the drama down in Quiche, using latin letters. Since then, it has been translated into French (Raynaud, 1928), and into Spanish (Cardoza y Aragon, 1929).

The story takes place in the twelfth century when the Quiches of Gumarkaaaj (the present site of Santa Cruz del Quiche) and Rabinal fought over the domination of the region around Zamanab, the principal city. Rabinal Achi, prince of the ruling house of Rabinal, defeats Quiche Achi, prince of Cunen and Chajul, after a long and bitter battle. Quiche Achi is captured and condemned to be sacrificed.

The drama describes the honor which the Prince of Rabinal bestows upon his royal prisoner, granting him every privilege, every luxury, except one: that he be allowed to return to his native land for two hundred sixty days and nights before going to his death. Quiche Achi performs the final dance before the throne with the priests, the twelve Eagles and twelve Jaguars who form the royal bodyguard. Then after gazing farewell in the direction of his homeland, he ascends the high altar - and is sacrificed.

A tragic story of epic proportions, the Rabinal Achi, like other pre-hispanic dramas employed song, dance, mime, masks, and declamation.

Most of the play consists of long speeches by the princes and other important personages. The dialogues are performed antiphonally: one person speaks, then the second in turn repeats part of the lines given by the first person.



During a performance given in its entirety in 1856, the music for the Rabinal Achi was written down by two musicians, the leader of the Church Choir of Rabinal and his best pupil, Colash Lopez. It was published as an appendix to the work itself. Later, in 1921, Jesus Castillo, the Guatemalan folklorist and musician, wrote it down again. I recorded it in 1945 with the same musicians who had played for Sr. Castillo.

The instruments used were the same in the three versions - two metal trumpets and a tun - but the written and recorded versions are substantially different. Sr. Castillo, whose notation I have never seen, claims his was exactly like the transcription of 1856!

The original Brasseur de Bourbourg version, and one transcribed from the recording are given below. The Bourbourg version appears to be a Westernized approximation of the performance. The regular 3/4 rhythm, the perfect alignment of instruments and the conventional melody are in sharp contrast with the recorded example.

Unfortunately, we do not have the full musical score on records or in notation. The two examples given on this recording are a partial document: in the written drama there is specific mention of music for flutes, choral singing (for the dances), declamation, and singing of the text, but it is probably lost forever at least in its original form.

### THE IXILS

One of the branches of the Maya-Quiche, the Ixils, live the towns of Nebaj, Cotzal and Chajul of the Western Highlands. There is evidence that a luxurious civilization once existed there. Nearby ruins and tombs yielded beautifully crafted objects of jade, alabaster and gold, carved stone monuments and hieroglyphic writings. Once powerful, the Ixils were renowned for achievements in science, architecture and the arts.

The arrival of the Spanish Conquistadores signaled the end of Mayan civilization. The ensuing destruction of temples, and the annihilation of the noble and priestly classes probably never would have happened had there been unity among the indigenous peoples of America, and the will to fight the common enemy.

Although the Indians were defeated by military might, they did not entirely surrender their way of being, or their way of thinking. For hundreds of years the Quiches sporadically fought both Church and State. In the fifteenth century Nebaj was razed to the ground and Chajul captured. The victory proved temporary. The Ixils were so hostile that the Spaniards dared not live there. Even Fray Bartolome de las Casas had to establish his mission seventy-five miles away in Sacapulas.

Gradually Christianity was accepted but not as completely as the Spaniards had wanted. Despite torture and killing, the Indians continued to practice their ceremonies in secret. Forbidden by law, they regulated their daily lives by the old Mayan calendar, sacrificed animals to appease their gods, and sought out their shamans when they were sick. The Christian saints were added to rather than substituted for the roster of pagan deities.



Reed flute



The Ixils still tell stories about their former power and their hopes to regain it, as can be seen in the following legends told by a Nebaj balbastish (Ixil Priest):

Below the "Cerro del Alcade", (The Mayor's Hill) is the "Cueva del Encanto" (Enchanted Cave). In ancient times it was the home of the guardian of Nebaj who appeared from time to time to guide the people and administer justice. One day the principal balbastish lost the key to the cave and inadvertently locked himself in. The Indians are confident that when the key is found Nebaj will again be powerful.

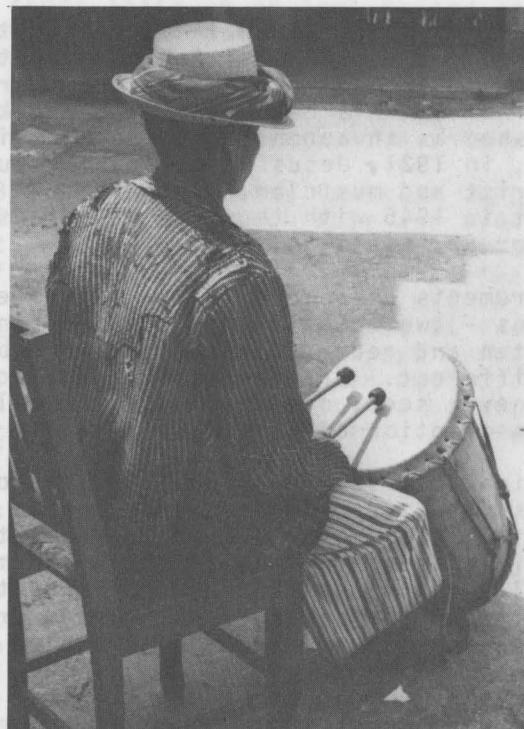
The other legend tells that at the height of Nebaj's power, the town's idol was hidden in a sacred tree whose trunk is made of "palo de pito" wood (used also for masks), and its branches are from the various trees of the region. Apparently the Mexicans found out about the idol, stole it in the dead of night, and then burned down the sacred tree. The Nebajeños are certain that this disaster caused their downfall.

#### BAILE DE LAS CANASTAS

According to the principal balbastish (Ixil priest) of Nebaj, the Baile de las Canastas originated in the mountain area called Vi-Tzunun-Cap (Cumbre del Dulce Gorrion) or "Peak of the Sweet Sparrow", situated between Chajul and Nebaj. Since the disappearance of the Nebaj tun (sacred Mayan drum) many years ago, the Ballet is given only in Chajul. The people who originated the dance, according to local historians, disappeared centuries ago and the passage of time has brought many changes in the music, dance, and even the legend.

The Baile de las Canastas celebrates the change from a semi-nomadic hunters' society to an agricultural civilization. Today it is performed as a series of set scenes using masks, dance, music, dialogue and mime, a form similar to other pre-hispanic works for the theatre. It is richly costumed, and visually exciting principally because of the tall baskets worn by the dancers. The

legend on which the Ballet is based is as follows: Long ago the Ixils were starving because of the scarcity of game. Desperately their leaders looked about for a way to save the people. Finally they



Drum

discovered that the seed of the maize-plant was concealed in the womb of a young maiden named Mariquita, the daughter of Matagtanic, an old sorcerer. He kept the girl hidden behind locked doors so that the seed would not be fertilized. The townspeople held a meeting and commissioned Tzunun, a semi-god living in their midst, to steal Mariquita away and fertilize the seed. Tzunun, who could appear as man, sparrow or quetzal bird, then organized the Baile de las Canastas to entertain the old sorcerer. His friends and village girls participated. The dance distracted the old man and Tzunun entered his house, won the confidence of the girl, and was able to have relations with her. When Matgtanic discovered the crime, he killed Mariquita and called on the gods to curse Tzunun, but the corn grew luxuriously and abundantly and thus saved the Ixils from starvation.



In Chajul, however, the musical director explained each scene as it was performed, and interpreted the actual performance as follows:

A hunter named Matagtanic, accompanied by other hunters and his daughters, Malinches and Mariquita, goes to the mountains to hunt the quetzal bird, known as Oyeb, a semi-god who assumes the shape of man, a sparrow, or a quetzal (the Guatemalan national bird). Finally cornered by the hunters and shot with bows and arrows, Oyeb utters cries of the quetzal to show that he is alive. The girls hear him and tenderly bring him home. He makes love to Mariquita. The old hunter on discovering the bird's true identity calls upon the gods for help, and finally kills him. Life returns to normal.

A resume of the various sections of the dance follows:

First Son. Je Que bel Son (No translation). Girls dance in a meadow; the hunters dance in a ring. From time to time they cry, "e, eh," imitating the cry of a quetzal. The Malinches gently wave their handkerchiefs to encourage the hunters to enter the forest.

Second Son. Son de las Doncellas (The Maidens) The girls mingle with the other dancers and all enter the woods. The old hunter follows them brandishing his sword (a substitution probably either for a bow and arrow or sling shot). The Indians called the hunter a tirador (archer), or cerbatanero (sling shooter).

Third Son. Son del Gorrion (The Sparrow). Oyeb waves a handkerchief to represent a bird, dances and bounds about, crossing the path of the hunters, meanwhile uttering cries to imitate the quetzal as it flies from tree to tree.

Fourth Son. Son de la Niña, del Viejo y el Quetzal (The Girl, the Old Man, and the Quetzal). The Malinches act as spotters as the old man pursues the quetzal into the woods. He misses three times, but on the fourth try he fells the bird. Mariquita, on her father's orders, runs toward the bird before it is devoured by animals. Oyeb, however, cries, "eh, eh," the call of the Quetzal, to show he is still alive.

Fifth Son. Baile de las Malinches en Torno del Quetzal (Dance of the Malinches Around the Quetzal). After taking the bird home, the girls dance around him and sing "que lindo", a song praising the bird. The text is as follows:

<u>Jun cap tzunun</u>	sweet bird
<u>Jun cap mazat</u>	sweet deer

Oyeb answers them and receives a promise of love from Mariquita.

Sixth Son. Son del Cerbatanero (The Archer). Matagtanic becomes aware of Oyeb's real identity and consults the spiritual head of the village (represented by the trumpeter) who tells him how to destroy Oyeb.

Seventh Son. Son de la Muerte del Quetzal. (Death of the Quetzal). The spiritual chief laments Mariquita's seduction and sings an invocation to the gods to destroy Oyeb. This is also a song of farewell to Oyeb. Matagtanic gives Oyeb's body to the trumpeter and then goes to the hills for five days.

Eighth Son. Son del Saludo al Viejo (Salutations to the Old Man). The girls ask their father's forgiveness, and he embraces them.

Ninth Son. In this final "son" everyone dances gaily. Justice has been done and life proceeds as before.

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The costumes for the Ballet, rented from Totonicapan, a costume center, were made of velvet and shiny satin and were decorated with mirrors, gold braid and multi-colored ribbons. Indeed a luxurious setting for this epic of the Ixil people!

But, the most startling aspect was the baskets. Attached to the top of long wooden poles, they are made of thirteen wooden sticks arranged equidistant in a circle; the bottom half of the baskets is covered with red cloth.

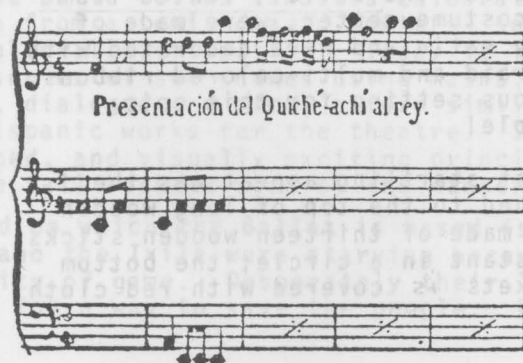
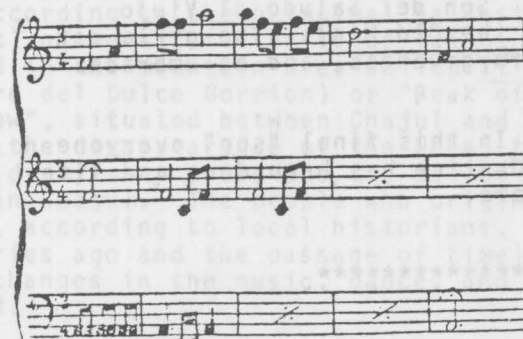
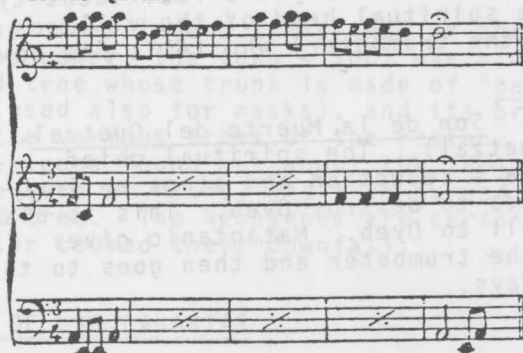


Little bells inside tinkle when the dancers move. The poles are inserted into plaques carved with human figures and attached to the backs of the dancers. They represent hunters' baskets used to catch birds.

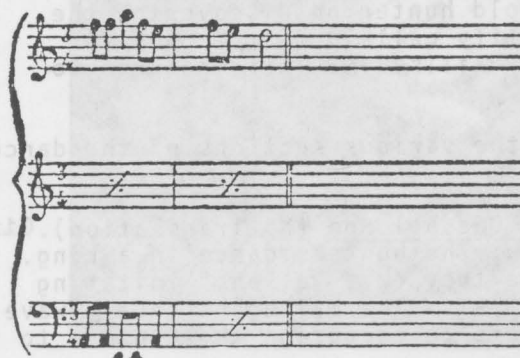
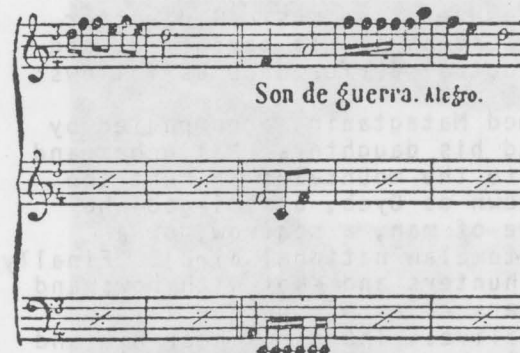
The number probably refers to the thirteen month Mayan year. Unlike the costumes, the baskets are made by the Ixils themselves, and are kept in Chajul.

Rabinal Achi. Version of Brasseur de Bourbourg—1856

Son del Quiché.



Presentación del Quiché-achi al rey.



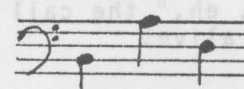
SIDE I

Band 1 - Rabinal Achi

- A. Son del Quiché Achi
- B. Son del Rabinal Achi

P. Socub, E. Xolop, and G. Hernandez, two trumpets and tun - Recorded in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz.

The tun (Aztec: teponaztli), is a hollowed-out log made from the granadillo tree and is played with two rubber-tipped drumsticks. The top side is cut to form two tongues of different pitches, and the side provides a third tone.





This pre-hispanic drum was considered sacred by both Aztecs and Mayans, and was played on all occasions sacred and secular. Even today Indians believe in its magical powers. Not so long ago, in a small village the tun was kept in the corn fields, to assure the fertility of the earth. When it became moldy and riddled with insect holes the drum was removed and placed behind the church altar, where, it is hoped, it still works its magic powers.

The two valveless metal trumpets are of European design, probably substituted for the wooden (or metal?) trumpets pictured in the ancient Codices.

These two musical fragments were recorded in a special session. The drama itself has not been performed since 1856 when Brasseur de Bourbourg wrote it down.

generally played in combination with a small drum. Manuel Aj plays at the church doors, and for dancing at fiesta time. He is paid for his services. Like most flute players he makes his own instrument.

Son del Rey Moro is one of many pieces for the post-Conquest Baile de Los Moros (Dance of the Moors). Performed in Latin American countries in countless variations, this dance dramatizes the long struggle of Spain against the Moors.

Using a non-violent approach, the Friars taught the Indians the power of Christianity by assigning roles:- Christians were good and right, and the Moors evil and wrong. The dance is a mock battle between the two forces, and the Christians always win.

# Transcription by Vida Chenoweth

3 BAILE DE SAN MIGUEL—CHICHICASTENANGO

Yurchenco Collection, Library of Congress  
Recording copied as heard, 1957

## Band 2 - Baile de las Canastas (Dance of the Baskets)

- A. Son del Rey Gaspar (Music for King Gaspar)
- B. Son del Gorrion (Song of the Sparrow)
- C. Son del Niño, el Viejo y el Quetzal (Music for the Child, the Old Man, and the Quetzal Bird)

C. and B. Mendoza, C. Rivera, tun, turtle shell and trumpet - Recorded in Chajul, Quiche.

## Band 3 - Finale del Baile de las Canastas (Final Scene)

## Band 4 - Flute Solos

- A. Son del Rey Moro (Music for the King of the Moors)
- B. Son del Amorate

M. Aj. reed flute - Recorded in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz.

The reed flute is about one foot long, three-quarters of an inch in diameter, and tapers slightly at the end. It has six holes on one side, and a wax-filled mouthpiece. It is

single-stroke rolls only



There is some evidence that occasionally the Indians misinterpreted their roles. In an early church record, along with the dates of birth, baptism and burials, there are a few lines lamenting the death of the parish priest. He taught the Indians the Dance of the Moors, but identifying themselves with the defeated Moors, the Indians murdered the priest!

C. Son para la Proce.sion (Pro-  
cessional Music)

M. Cuc, reed flute - Recorded in San Juan Chamelco.

An old hammock and rope dealer, Manuel Cuc performs on his six-holed reed flute during the processions of saints on various holy days.

Having little outside communication, Chamelco, a Kekchi-speaking town, clings to its traditional ways of thinking and doing. To illustrate: One day a votive bowl was stolen from the church. The caretaker reported the theft to the mayor and suggested the radio be asked to locate the thief. Someone had seen a little boy take the bowl and brought him to justice. However, the town still believes the radio revealed the culprit!

D. Descanso de los Santos (Resting  
Place of the Saints)

E. Entrada de la Imagen en la  
Cofradia (Entrance of the Saint  
into the Cofradia)

M. Cuc, reed flute - Recorded in San Juan, Chamelco.

Band 5 - Baile del Venado (Deer Dance)

A - D. Sones para el Baile del Venado

A. Sicaltos and F. Alvarado, reed flute and tun  
Recorded in Rabinal, Quiche

4. SON DE DESPEDIDA—CHICHICASTENANGO

Transcription by Vida Chenoweth Yurchenco—  
Library of Congress

(2 players)

The deer, a symbol of pre-agricultural life, is often identified with fertility, rain-making and curing. Each Indian group honors it with its own particular rituals, dances, and dramas. Among the Huichols of Mexico, for example, the deer is hunted ritually before the planting ceremonies begin. In peyote-induced dreams, corn and deer are closely associated. In Guatemala, the forms of celebration are varied, but many characteristics point to pre-columbian origins.

Antonio Sicaltos, taught by his father, plays a six-holed reed flute. This is the only music he plays. Sr. Sicaltos owns his own parcel of land where he grows rice and beans. He earns his living, like so many musicians, by trading.



The music, not synchronized as in Western music, is typical of the style found among the most primitive tribes of Latin America south of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Also characteristic are the special introductions and endings heard here and elsewhere on this disc. Such patterns of cascading notes, surprisingly enough, are still played by contemporary brass bands in the Isthmus. (See Folkways FE4378).

The tongues of this small tun were tuned a whole tone apart. The side pitch is indeterminate.

#### Band 6 - Son de Cuaresma (Music for Lent)

C. Mendoza, trumpet, Drum and reed flute (unknown players) - Recorded in Chajul, Quiche

The Lenten season is reverently observed in a variety of ritual and drama by Guatemalan Indians, as indeed by all Christianized Indians of Latin America. The Coras of Mexico for instance cover their drums with cloth to muffle and dull the sound. Reed flutes are burned on Good Friday, and new ones made at Easter. In some areas the Passion Play is given, and the traditional roles are performed by Indians who become so emotionally involved that the play becomes real. In recent times, an Indian actor representing Christ, was stoned to death in an accident committed by an overwrought crowd.

One of the reasons American Indians were able to adjust to Christianity was the similarity of many customs and practices. The Lenten observance of the travail of Jesus, brought to the New World by the Penitentes, included self-torture, sexual abstinence, fasting, blood-letting, and covering the body with ashes. Fray Francisco Ximenez, the Spanish chronicler, reported similar practices among the Indians of Guatemala. Only human sacrifice was not done by the Europeans.

#### SIDE II

#### Band 1 - Baile de la Conquista

- A. Son de Tecum Umam (King of the Quiches)
- B. Son de Pedro Alvarado (The Conqueror of Guatemala)
- C. Son de Zunun (Indian noble)

D. Mantuj, chirimia.- Recorded in Momostenango, Totonicapan.

Written in 1542 by a Spanish priest, this version of the Conquest is presented as a battle between Spaniards and Indians in which, like the Baile de los Moros, the Indians always lose.

In 1523-24 Hernan Cortes, the Conqueror of Mexico, sent Captain Pedro de Alvarado, a cruel and ruthless man, to subjugate Guatemala. The Quiches fought the small Spanish army ferociously, but they were no match for guns

swords and horses (that terrified them). Although the most powerful empire of Guatemala, the Quiches had few allies; thousands of Indians had fought on the side of the Conquerors.

When the battle was over, thousands of Indians were dead. Utatlan, their fortress city, fell to the Spaniards. Tecum Umam, the Quiche leader, was killed in hand to hand combat with Pedro de Alvarado. It was the beginning of the end of the Quiche civilization.

The chirimia, an instrument with a penetrating sound, was brought from Spain early in the conquest. A six-holed wooden oboe, with a double reed, it has a moveable cylindrical attachment fitted into the upper end of the instrument. Although fast disappearing, it is used on religious as well as secular occasions. This chirimia was made by the player himself.

Momostenango is a town famous for its rugs and sulphur baths. Stark naked, the usually modest Indian men and women splash each other with the curative waters.



Band 2 - Baile de Ajitz

- A. Son de Ajitz
- B. Son de Pepe

E. Garnica, chirimia, B. Ziz, drum - recorded in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz.

Also performed in Chichicastenango, Ajitz represents a pre-columbian shaman who foretold the coming of the white man (like the Toltec-Quetzalcoatl) and the conquest of the Indians.

Band 3 - Baile de la Conquista (Dance of the Conquest)

- A. Son de Pedro Cartocarrero

L. and J. Ajanel, chirimia and drum. - Recorded in Chichicastenango, Quiche.

- B. Son de Santa Maria

P. Morales and J. Jacinto, chirimia and drum - Recorded in Nebaj, Quiche.

Chichicastenango, a principal highlands town and a famous tourist center, was settled in 1524 by refugees from Utatlan. Indians from miles around come to the famous church to perform both Christian and Indian rites, or a mixture of both.

Within the church they chant in ancient style to the saints. Outside, on the church steps they swing their smoky copal censers in honor of ancient Indian deities. Hundreds of Indian women have their babies baptized in mass ceremonies on Sundays.

Holy Week is a favorite time for petitioning the gods for good seeds, abundant crops and rain. The Indians pray to the saints and then climb the hill to a Quiche shrine, Pascal Abaj or Turcaj, where Christian crosses mingle with Mayan.

The famous Swiss priest, Father Rossbach, used to conduct mass in the church as well as at Pascal Abaj, hoping to win over the Indians from their pagan ways.

The lighted candles in the church are not for the saints but represent the spirits of the dead. Funeral processions wind through the market streets. And as their forefathers did, they bury with the body food, clothing, implements of trade, or handicrafts needed for the journey to the other world.

Band 4 - Indian Marimba. Baile de San Miguel (Dance for Saint Michael)

- A. Son del Segundo Capitan (Music for the Second Captain)
- B. Son de Despedida (Farewell Music)
- C. Son de San Miguel (Music for Saint Michael)

M. Calal, marimba. - Recorded in Chichicastenango, Quiche.

Used by ladinos and Indians, the marimba is the Guatemalan national instrument. There are two types: 1. The sophisticated urban instrument which looks like a piano keyboard with raised "black notes" is called Marimba Grande, Marimba Doble, because two marimbas are played together. Four men play the six octave grande, and three play a smaller three octave marimba cuache, or tenor.

The Indian marimba is the Marimba con Tecomates the Gourd Marimba of which there are two kinds:

A. Marimba de Arco, without legs, a bough of a cherry or birch is bent to form an arc and fastened to both ends of the instrument.

B. A similar instrument with four legs. Both are diatonic rather than chromatic, and are the closest to their African prototypes in timbre and construction.

In her book The Marimbas of Guatemala, published 1964 Vida Chenoweth traces the marimba's migration "...the gourd marimba is indigenous to South-eastern Africa...spread to West Africa and was later introduced into Guatemala probably by slaves." The marimba has been there since the seventeenth century and spread to Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador and other countries of the Western Hemisphere. (This writer saw an enormous, but partially disintegrated African marimba, in the Folklore Museum in Cuenca, Ecuador, in 1976).



All Guatemalan marimbas are made of tuned wooden slats and played with wax or rubber-tipped mallets. Characteristic of some African and all Guatemalan instruments is a slight buzz, called charleo. This sound is produced by a delicate membrane, taken from the intestine of a pig, that covers a small aperture located near the bottom of each resonator. The charleo, or sympathetic vibration, is an extension of the marimba's tone and is an integral part of its tonal quality.

Each gourd is selected with care. No one knows if it is suitable until scraped out and put in place and tested. To increase the marimba's sonority the Indians "bake" the gourds in an oven before using them.

The marimba is the favorite fiesta instrument (the gourd marimbas are fast disappearing) of Indians and Ladinos. But both play European tunes. Indian music is generally played on indigenous instruments like reed flute and drum. As our informant in Nebaj told us, "the marimba is never used for rain and planting ceremonies because it has too many 'tongues' and would betray us to the authorities."

The following transcriptions from the Baile de San Miguel, played by one person, were transcribed in 1950 by Vida Chenoweth. Observe the change of rhythm from duple to triple time, characteristic of Spanish melody, and harmony in thirds.

Son De Despedida is performed by two players, one playing the melody and the other a single-line harmony.

#### Band 5 - Ladino Marimba Music

- A. Indio Viviente (Living Indian)
- B. Son de Chorchita (Music for Chorchita)
- C. Son de Virgilia (Music for Virgil)

Marimba Band of Nebaj,- Recorded in Nebaj, Quiche

The three pieces on this band are probably the compositions of local composers, and have a strong Mexican form and flavor.

#### Band 6 - Son de San Gaspar (Music for Saint Gaspar)

Sung by M. Anay and P. del Barrio, accompanied by four guitars and adufe.

The adufe, played in many Guatemalan communities, is a square drum. Its wooden frame is covered with leather and laced together with leather strips. The player holds it by a leather handle and strikes the sides with his hands. Karl Izikowitz, in this article Musical Instruments of the Uro-Chipaya Indians (Bolivia) (published Ethnological Institute of the University of Tucuman) describes a similar instrument. He claims that except for minor features the instrument is probably pre-conquest. In Guatemala, the adufe is used for post-conquest dances.

This song from Chajul is played for dancing during the Christmas season, hence the reference to San Gaspar (one of the three oriental kings).

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