The Origin of the Marimba

There was a town named Amor. All of the people there were very religious, and all of them would attend mass with the priest. When there was too much rain, or when it was too dry, they would ask the priest to say a mass for good weather. Because of this the weather was always good, the people’s crops grew, and they had plenty to eat. One day a group of boys began fooling around with a girl in church. They would tickle her and grab her breasts. When the priest saw this behavior he threw the boys and the girl out of the church. The boys told the girl that they wanted to fool around with her, but she had another plan. She transformed herself in front of the boys into a marimba. Her intestines became other musical instruments such as a saxophone. The boys then began to play the marimba and the other instruments. When the people in the church heard the music, they left the church and went to listen to the music. Finally almost all of the people quit going to mass and spent their time listening to the marimba. At mass time only the priest and the sacristan were present. All of the people were listening to the music, drinking, dancing and fighting. Now, when the heavy rains came, or the droughts came, the priest’s prayers had no effect because the people had abandoned the church. As a result their crops failed and they didn’t have enough to eat.

El origen de la marimba

Había un pueblo llamado Amor. Toda la gente allí era muy religiosa, a todos iban a la misa con el sacerdote. Si caían aguaceros fuertes, o si había sequías, la gente pedía que el padre hiciera misas para pedir buen tiempo. Por eso el tiempo siempre estaba bien, la gente tenía buenas cosechas, y suficiente para comer. Un día un grupo de muchachos empezaron a molestar a una muchacha durante la misa. Le hicieron cosquillas, y agarraron sus senos. Cuando el padre vio el comportamiento de la muchacha y los muchachos los corrió de la iglesia. Entonces los muchachos le dijeron a la muchacha que querían jugar con ella, pero ella les dijo que tenía otro plan. De repente ella se transformó en una marimba delante de los muchachos. Sus intestinos llegaron a ser otros instrumentos musicales como el saxofón. Los muchachos empezaron a tocar la marimba y los otros instrumentos. Cuando la gente oyó la música abandonaron la misa y fueron con la marimba. Por fin casi toda la gente dejó de asistir en la misa y pasaba su tiempo escuchando la marimba. Ahora solo el padre y el sacristán estaban presentes en la misa. Los demás estaban afuera escuchando la música, tomando, bailando, y peleando. Y por eso ya cuando vinieron las tempestades o las sequías las oraciones del padre no tuvieron efecto. Las siembras se arruinaron, y la gente ya no tuvo de comer.
Project Background
The stories and rituals included in this collection were collected between 1968 and 1973. All of them are narrated in the K’iche’ Maya language of Guatemala with almost all of the narrators speaking the Nahualá-Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán dialect of that language.

Collected and recorded by
Dr. James Mondloch

Transcribed by
Miguel Guarchaj Ch’o’x and Diego Guarchaj

Funding and support provided by
The UNM Latin American and Iberian Institute and the US Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center grant.

Title page image provided courtesy of
Dennis G. Jarvis

Usage rights
Copyright © 2011 The University of New Mexico, Latin American and Iberian Institute. All Rights Reserved. You may print, reproduce and use the information in, and retrieve files containing publications or images from, The University of New Mexico’s WWW documents for non-commercial, personal, or educational purposes only, provided that you (i) do not modify such information, and (ii) include any copyright notice originally included with such information and this notice in all such copies.

Alternative formats
In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the information contained herein is available in alternative formats upon request.

Additional information about this project is available online
http://laii.unm.edu/kiche

Correspondence should be directed to
The University of New Mexico
Latin American & Iberian Institute
801 Yale Boulevard NE / MSC02 1690
1 University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico
87131-0001

Phone: (505) 277-2961
Fax: (505) 277-5989
E-mail: laii@unm.edu
Web: http://laii.unm.edu