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THE BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: A STUDY OF THE YUMBADA DANCE THROUGH DREAMS IN QUITO, ECUADOR

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a theoretical review of the Yumbada dance from multiple perspectives on this cultural manifestation to the most recent research, exploring territorial, religious, and economic issues that have shaped and defined the existence of the Yumbo people, focusing specifically on the urban parish of Cotocollao in Quito, Ecuador. An ethnographic approach is adopted to conduct an in-depth analysis of the dancers, aiming to identify key elements of knowledge and subjectivity central to the topic. The study seeks to elucidate how the dance is structured around concepts such as spirituality, sacredness, ritual, and the Andean worldview, particularly in relation to the realm of dreams, thus exploring how dreams influence the Yumbada and its participants, interweaving various aspects of the tradition. Finally, the study focuses on comprehending the resilience and continuity of this intangible cultural heritage in northern Quito, whose presence and strength have endured over time.

KEYWORDS: Worldview, Dreams, Ritual, Spirituality, Yumbada Dance, Ethnography, Ecuador, Cultural Heritage, Critical Analysis, Yumbo People.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over two decades ago, Frank Salomon published the works *The Yumbos, Niguas, and Tsáchila or "Colorados" during the Spanish Colonial Period: Ethnohistory of Northwestern Pichincha, Ecuador* and *"La Yumbada": A Quichua Ritual Drama in Quito*. These studies represent some of the earliest research on the Yumbada dance and Yumbo culture, exploring how this culture became established in Quito, Ecuador, and how its dance represents a reinterpretation of urban cultural spaces. The Yumbada is presented as a ritual of profound symbolic richness, which not only serves as a historical legacy of ancestral practices across various neighborhoods of the city but also stands as a performative expression of the traditional nature-culture relationship. This ritual reflects a holistic worldview that has persisted over time (Salomon, 1997).

Salomon's studies on specific aspects of the dance, such as the ritual of sacrifice, expanded the spectrum of knowledge regarding this cultural manifestation, paving the way for subsequent research from various perspectives across seven distinct locations in Quito. For example, Freddy Simbaña conducted an in-depth study of a Yumbada in southern Quito, detailed in his work *The Dance of the Yumbada*, focusing on La Magdalena neighborhood. This study explores the dance through its ethnic, cultural, and religious interactions within the urban context, conceptualizing it as a distinctive way of understanding life in the city (Simbaña, 2018).

A study of this manifestation has also been conducted from a geographical and urban organization perspective, as detailed in the book *Not Just Dancing for the Sake of Dancing: A Critical Analysis of the Living Landscapes of San Isidro del Inca* by Karina Borja. This work examines the configuration and urban transformation throughout history from the perspective of Andean cultures, including the Yumbos and their role in constructing a dichotomy between tradition and modernity (Borja, 2022). Another study that analyzes this dance from a descriptive perspective is *Return of the Yumbo: The Caminata from Amazonia to Andean Quito*, authored by Norman E. Whitten, Jr., Dorothea Scott Whitten, and Alfonso Chango. This work primarily investigates the dance's relationship with shamanism and other defining characteristics of Yumbo culture before integrating into the urban context (Whitten, 2003).

However, relatively few studies and articles have focused on Cotacollao, the urban parish where the Yumbada analyzed in this study takes place. Among them is the thesis by Katic García for FLACSO University, which explores elements such as culture,

nature, and territory, providing a symbolic analysis of the specific characteristics of the dance in this location. Similarly, Mauricio Ushiña's thesis on the cosmological practices of the Quito Cara explores the Yumbada in this area through the visual narrative of ecstatic dance. In addition, several articles have addressed this manifestation from diverse theoretical perspectives. For instance, Giomara Valdivieso analyzes the dance as a form of survival in her work *The Yumbada of Cotacollao: A Space of 'Survival' for Popular Culture in Quito*. She also investigates the gender perspective in *Soy Yumba: Remembrances of the Presence and Action of Women in the Yumbada of Cotacollao*, where she examines the transformations and changes the dance has undergone in relation to women. This evolution is closely connected to the dream world, a central focus of the present study (Valdivieso, 2015).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Yumbada, as a cultural manifestation, has been the subject of scholarly study for several years, beginning with the research of Frank Salomon and continuing with more recent works and articles. However, most existing studies focus on socio-economic, symbolic, educational, or neighborhood-related issues within an urban context. In the specific case of Cotacollao, no study has yet examined this manifestation from a subjective perspective. Such an approach would involve analyzing how this practice, along with its underlying elements, contributes to shaping and structuring the social order of its community. Specifically, there is a need to explore intimate and deeply significant elements, such as the dream world, energy centers, and the supernatural, which are crucial for guiding decision-making processes and restructuring the participants' ways of life.

It is essential to provide the academic community with a subjective perspective on the Yumbada, aiming to problematize a perception that profoundly influences the identity and traditions of the Yumbos in contemporary society. This approach involves analyzing the elements that shape their social order, such as spaces of power and dreams, as well as examining how seemingly fortuitous or abstract events can become decisive factors in the continuity or transformation of their community structure. Notable examples of such changes include shifts in leadership and the inclusion of women in a dance that was initially exclusive to men.

Existing approaches primarily focus on urban territoriality in relation to culture and identity, social negotiations, family dynamics, inequality, and

poverty, in contrast to the asymmetries of power and institutional structures. However, limited attention has been given to factors that transcend tangible and observable reality, which play a decisive role, alongside other conventional elements, in shaping ritual practices and, consequently, the structure of the Yumbada dance. It is essential for both the academic community and the Yumbo people of Cotacollao to engage with an alternative theoretical framework of their worldview. Such a framework would facilitate the elucidation and affirmation of these subjectivities, which may initially seem insignificant to those who focus solely on the external and visible manifestations of this tradition.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Manuel Espinosa Apolo, writing in the context of the late 19th century, provides the following description of the Yumbos: The term referred to Indigenous people from the western region of Quito, located on the slopes of the Andean Mountain range. These individuals typically transported tropical products cultivated in their region, such as bananas, cassava, oranges, and pineapples, to the city markets. They wore their hair long and dressed in a sleeveless tunic reaching down to their thighs, referred to as "tambas" or "bayetas." These garments were brown and striped, fastened at the waist with a yellow belt. They walked barefoot and carried large "canas" (baskets) on their backs to transport their goods (Espinosa, 2003, p. 16).

The Yumbo people originated in the northwestern region of Pichincha, inhabiting areas extending from Mindo to Toachi. Their primary economic activity involved the trade of goods between the highlands and the coast, with prominent products including cassava, maize, plantains, avocados, oranges, pineapples, and a wide variety of other fruits. Game animals associated with this culture included peccaries, guans, pacas, and fish. The peccary holds a significant role in the Yumbada's ritual of slaughter, symbolizing not only the dynamic between hunter and prey but also the interconnected relationship between humans, animals, and nature — a subject that will be examined in greater detail later (Salomon, 1997).

This pre-Inca culture from the northwestern region was culturally and linguistically connected with the peoples of the northern highlands, even before the conquest. Their interactions were influenced by differences accentuated by Inca policies, which sought to establish "politically defensible" yet economically permeable borders. Following the formation of the Tawantinsuyu and

the Audiencia of Quito, a process of shared development emerged among the northern tribes. Within this context, the Yumbos gradually integrated into the history of Quito, remembered as both exotic and familiar figures who frequented the city's markets and neighboring towns, where they exchanged goods (Salomon, 1997, p. 12).

"It is known that the Yumbos of the early colonial period frequented the 'tianguéz,' or indigenous market of Quito, to exchange tropical fruits for manufactured goods such as 'chaquirillas' and tools" (Salomon, 1997, p. 19). This commercial system remained active from the colonial period until the early 20th century. Their geographical location and dynamic lifestyle across regions positioned them as diplomats and mediators between the highland and coastal chiefdoms prior to the Spanish conquest. Following this significant event, the Yumbos were compelled to cede territory and maintain a low profile, although they continued their commercial activities (Jara, 2006).

The Yumbos were perceived as both "exotic and familiar" figures in the markets and public spaces of Quito, where they traded their products daily. However, they were particularly recognized and associated with shamanism, magic, healing practices, and supernatural qualities. They were connected to the Niguas and Tsáchilas, with whom they shared familial ties and an integrated regional economic system, which allowed them to exert influence in regional interactions. In this context, the term "Yumbo" is derived from the route linking the tambos between Cotacollao, near Pisulí, and "the royal road that leads to Yumbo" (Salomon, 1997, p. 20).

"The Country of the Yumbos" was the name assigned to the territory of this group during Spanish rule. This region includes what is now the archaeological site of Tulipe, situated in the western mountainous area near Quito. Although its boundaries were not geographically defined, it encompassed an extensive territory. Consequently, it remained outside the jurisdiction of Quito, as well as that of the Tawantinsuyu and the Spanish. However, by the mid-16th century, institutional impositions on the Yumbo peoples became inevitable, with encomiendas and forced labor being implemented, particularly in the northernmost settlements (Salomon, 1997).

Similarly, according to Quijia (2006), another related Indigenous group that developed in the area now occupied by the modern city of Quito was the Kitu Kara people. For this group, as for other ancestral cultures, the nature-culture dichotomy did not exist. Instead, both dimensions were perceived as

a single, balanced space in which individuals understood themselves and everything within Mother Earth as parts of a unified cosmic identity. Consequently, reciprocity and respect—among individuals, groups, and with nature—were fundamental principles of community coexistence.

This characteristic is prominently observed in this culture, as well as among the Yumbos. The author states:

"It must be understood that being runa is not about being pure. There is no point in identifying as Indigenous, Native, or by any other term if, in daily life, one lives, thinks, and consumes like a Westerner; if social relations prioritize individualism and there is no respect or connection to nature, the community, or our rituals" (Quijia, 2006, pp. 38, 59).

In the Yumbada dance, the profound connection with nature and animals is reflected in the symbolic interpretation of the mountains. A more specific example within the dance is the monkey, which represents symbolic bodily transmutation. In this context, "If there is a particularly universal notion in Amerindian thought, it is that of an original state of indistinction between humans and animals, as described by mythology" (Viveiros de Castro, 2014, pp. 40-41).

Regarding myth, Viveiros de Castro (2004) states that the mythical framework of a narrative integrates elements such as name, form, and behavior into a network of human and non-human characteristics, thereby creating an "intra-human" space:

Myth, as a universal foundation of perspectivism, describes a state where bodies and names, souls and actions, the self and the other interpenetrate, all immersed in a unified pre-subjective and pre-objective medium. This medium, specifically, is what mythology aims to narrate (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, p. 41).

According to Jara (2006), the Church's indoctrination was implemented with relative ease, as Christian doctrine—rooted in "transcendence, redemption, and humanism"—quickly aligned with elements of Yumbo ritual practices. For instance, water and baptism, associated with purification, naturally resonated with the symbolic significance of this element within their worldview. To some extent, the sacred elements of Andean cosmology seamlessly integrated with the sacred aspects of Catholicism. Due to these similarities, Christian symbolism was accepted and incorporated into Yumbo rituals; however, the essence and fundamental purpose of their rituals and manifestations remained intact, underlying and aligned with their primary

cosmology.

In this regard, Karina Borja asserts that, according to the earliest records of religious and official celebrations, Indigenous festivals were portrayed as a "representation of the exotic and wild," intended to entertain and amuse the non-Indigenous population, and were characterized by their playful and spectacular nature. These celebrations were gradually transformed and adapted to align with Catholic festivities, leveraging similarities in dates and symbols, such as those between Inti Raymi and Corpus Christi. The result of this religious syncretism was a Yumbada that, through its characters, conveys, on the one hand, a connection to the wild and nature and, on the other, a relationship with good and evil (saintly and devilish figures), a dichotomy that, initially, did not exist in Andean cosmology (Borja, 2021).

In these dances, the hunting and capture of the peccary were celebrated in various communities surrounding Quito (circum-Quito communities) and in areas of the central and northern highlands. The dates of these celebrations were associated with seasonal changes, solstices, equinoxes, and agricultural cycles. However, the Church altered these events to align religious festivities with Indigenous ones. The Yumbadas of northern communities, including Cotacollao, Calderón, and San Isidro del Inca, share similarities in ritual, attire, and symbolism. Specifically, the Cotacollao dance was revived after thirteen years of inactivity and, in the process, incorporated elements from the Yumbada of San Isidro del Inca. Moreover, it partially detached from Catholic religious practices and initiated a process of revitalizing traditional and ancestral elements. With the support of the municipality, which acts as the priest, Cotacollao Square was designated as a permanent urban space for this ritual event (Borja, 2021).

In the context of the 1992 Indigenous liberation movement, understood as a cultural, political, and economic resurgence after 500 years of domination and subjugation, Norman E. Whitten examines the Indigenous mobilization from the Amazon to Quito. This movement sought to present Ecuadorian leaders and the general population with a modern and radical alternative regarding state power, territorial rights, and the reforms necessary to establish the country as a multicultural state. According to Whitten, the core of the organizational process for this event was embedded in ritual dramas; that is, organizational processes rooted in the imaginaries of the tropical forest, mountains, and spirits. The most significant ritual performed as the mobilization

entered Quito was, precisely, the Yumbada (Whitteen, 2003).

According to the author, rituals such as the Yumbada can convey a connection between the past, present, and future in relation to the historically significant regions involved. Moreover, they serve as a social and ethnic antithesis to Ecuadorian life.

In northern Quito, as in other areas of the Ecuadorian highlands, the Yumbada is preserved by individuals who strongly identify as both Quiteño and Indigenous. During the festival, the emblematic figure of the "Quito-Runa" (Indigenous person of Quito) emerges. This figure challenges the hierarchical polarity of white over "Indian" and white over Black, while also rejecting the notion of mestizaje as a form of redemption (Whitteen, 2003, p. 377).

The principal dance of the Yumbo people has undergone transformations throughout various historical events, leading to modifications that have ensured its preservation to the present day. One notable adaptation is its association with Christian religious celebrations, which, through religious syncretism, allowed it to remain relevant and avoid repression as a pagan practice over an extended period. In recent years, however, this cultural manifestation has sought to reclaim values and symbols that remained hidden for decades, reflecting not only the essence of the dance itself but also the ancestral worldview it represents.

This dance highlights the transformations that have occurred among groups of inhabitants over time, as well as the neighborhood relationships, challenges, and contradictions that emerge within a constantly changing urban context. It serves as a manifestation that reflects collective memory and, to some extent, a living legacy of ancestral times. This dance also recalls the relationships, exchanges, and bartering between the lordships of various regions with which the original Yumbo people traded. In the context of the San Isidro del Inca dance, participation seeks to revive the "symbolic events where the contradictions born from the combination of the familiar and the foreign" become evident, that is, the interplay between the modern urban environment and its traditions. The ritual space transcends imposed territorial boundaries, enduring through the evocative power of ancestral traditions, which were an integral part of the life of this community (Borja, 2021).

According to the plural notion of landscape, which encompasses characteristics, qualities, and emotions, both individuals and groups inhabiting it actively construct the landscape while

simultaneously constructing themselves in a reciprocal relationship between the environment and life. Within this dynamic interaction, active experience generates harmonies and disharmonies, shaping a habitat of growth, chaos, and order that evolves as if it were a living organism. The living landscape embodies the synesthetic perception of a part of the city as "a unified whole," integrating a network of spatiotemporal, sociopolitical, economic, cultural, affective, identity-related, symbolic, and communicational relationships. This space gains significance through its connection to the history of communities, transforming it into an environment that is both "significant and meaningful" (Borja, 2021).

This appropriation of urban spaces and their subsequent integration into traditions by a community that had to adapt and assimilate into urban dynamics over time introduces the discourse on identity proposed by Patricio Guerrero (2002). Guerrero suggests utilizing available cultural resources to create a process of differentiated self-construction; that is, internalizing a sense of belonging to delineate what is similar and what is different. In this context, collective identity first establishes its place, builds its values based on social affiliation, and finally integrates experiences into the constructed framework.

Memory, history, and heritage constitute the foundational components in the construction of identity, while the incorporation of other cultural forms represents a complementary aspect. Together, these elements contribute to the democratic discourse of diversity (Kigman, 2004). In this context, the Yumbada of Cotacollo stands as a diachronic manifestation that carries a series of symbolic elements inherited from its ancestors and the Yumbo culture, which serves as its origin. Simultaneously, it reflects processes of modernization, evident in transformations such as changes in transportation and mobility, as well as the incorporation and ongoing adaptation of new elements in its dance, organizational structures, and technologies. Consequently, this practice is expected to continue evolving over time, retaining only those aspects deemed relevant by new generations. As Cuesta observes, "the repositories or sites of memory, associated with events or eras, evolve and take on new meanings over time and through new events" (Cuesta, 1998, p. 206).

This study does not seek to emphasize the variability of culture or its ability to adapt to new global contexts, although this characteristic is reflected in the Yumbada and likely in other practices

that have been driven to transform under the pressure of globalization. Instead, the focus is on addressing the elements of interest deemed significant in this manifestation, particularly highlighting the importance of memory, subjectivity, and nature. These are understood in this context as a static or minimally altered legacy that reflects the forms shaping the lives of the Yumbos beyond the tangible or formal world. An apt definition of heritage to elucidate the roots of the Yumbo legacy is provided by Pratts (2005), who describes heritage as a sacred cultural externality, symbolic relics of the past that, while adaptable, change very little or remain practically immutable. This includes specific elements of Yumbo culture that are deeply embedded in the dance, such as the mountains, spaces of power, and the characters represented in this cultural manifestation.

The spiritual component plays a fundamental role in this manifestation, as it constitutes not only an organizational element of the dance but also a cornerstone of life in general. According to Guerrero (2011), spirituality represents the highest form of political consciousness, as it establishes a connection between societies and their internal search. It serves as a tool for making sense of the world through feeling, thinking, and the interaction between humans and non-humans. In this context, spirituality facilitates the understanding and experience of the sacred from a perspective rooted in transcendence. This dimension acquires a political character by transforming existence into a horizon while simultaneously shaping individual and collective subjectivities to foster a new way of life within society.

Spirituality refers to a cosmoexistence centered on life as its principal axis, understood as a semantic integrality embodied in the term *Sumak Kawsay*, used by Amerindian cultures to describe this holistic perception of existence. In an interview with Javier Herrera, a dancer in the Yumbada, Guerrero documents the following statement: "The Yumbada is a matter of the heart; it is something deeply lived through feeling. For this reason, a Yumbo is a warrior of the heart" (Guerrero, 2011, p. 32).

This act of *corazonar*, understood as a spiritual and political strategy, has enabled the Yumbo people to reclaim their voice. In its early stages, this dance was subjected to significant constraints stemming from religious acculturation during the periods of conquest. This process gave rise to a form of pagan religious syncretism that, until a few decades ago, was associated with Catholic elements such as Corpus Christi or the Mass, as previously noted.

Furthermore, *corazonar* has facilitated the recovery of diversity within the dance, as its association with Catholic celebrations initially altered the composition of the Yumbada, restricting participation exclusively to men. The reintegration of ancestral elements inherent to the dance has partly contributed to the re-inclusion of women and children, as was the case in earlier times.

This development has evidently prompted the consideration of subjective elements that had gradually been marginalized, with one of the most significant being dreams. In this regard, Guerrero states:

"The Kitu Kara people, understanding from their hearts and following the call of their dreams, that spirituality makes possible a reunion with nature and the cosmos, convene a meeting of the heart and the word so that, for the first time, within a representative democracy that transforms nothing, the voice of the people can be heard" (Guerrero, 2011, p. 34).

The concept of *corazonar* is, therefore, a fundamental component of the lives of the Yumbos of Cotacollao, rooted in a spiritual foundation that reaffirms their identity as a people. This political spirituality has facilitated the revival and reinforcement of ancestral values. As the author states: "letting the word walk with intention..." (Guerrero, p. 32).

In an interview with Fanny Morales, Medina and Pazmiño (2022) concluded that the connection between the Yumbos and the mountains is of paramount importance, a bond that is reinforced through the participation of dreams. In this process, the mountains facilitate healing and reconciliation with spiritual energy, enabling individuals to achieve both physical and mental harmony. When the Yumbos dance for the mountains, they acquire a distinctive strength that allows them to attune to nature. In this context, dreams function as a spiritual guide and should be carefully considered when making significant decisions.

The last Yumbada, following a series of consecutive rituals for which limited information is available, was presented to the public in 1988 under the leadership of Gonzalo Leines. Subsequently, it disappeared from the public sphere for several years, during which families privately conducted the rituals to preserve the tradition. However, it was not until 2003, under the leadership of Pedro Morales, that the dance tradition was revitalized and regained strength (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2021). Since then, under the leadership of Fanny Morales, Pedro's granddaughter, elements previously lost and

characteristics that once made this dance unique have been reintegrated, with particular emphasis on the inclusion of women and children. Notably, many, if not most, of these decisions, whether regarding leadership, composition, or structure, were guided by the "council of the mountains," a form of communication between the Yumbos and the spirits of the mountains that occur through dreams.

In an article on the Yumbada of Cotacollao as a space for the survival of popular culture in Quito, Valdivieso (2015) emphasizes that this dance provides a framework for understanding political, economic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions, all of which are continuously evolving and being revitalized. Within this context, the inclusion of younger generations in the dance plays a pivotal role in sustaining its revival. Moreover, transformations in hierarchical structures, decision-making processes, and active participation have significantly contributed to the survival and preservation of this cultural tradition.

From a gender perspective, Fanny's role has been a transformative element in the dialectic of her community, serving as a custodian of the memories, histories, and legacies of her ancestors. Simultaneously, she assumes the responsibility of redefining tradition and assigning roles to each new member who joins the group. The revitalization approach adopted by the new governor of the Yumbos can be characterized as a return to spirituality, a reconnection with a transcendent realm capable of fostering transformation (Valdivieso, 2015).

Dreams, therefore, represent a key element in interpreting the present through the lens of past knowledge. Despite existing in a different temporal dimension, the connection with ancestors, mountains, and spirits enables the transmission of information that is premonitory, definitive, and regulatory. Historically regarded as a transformative cultural tool, the significance of dreams diminished under the imposition of Church doctrines. However, dreams have recently regained prominence as a guiding and restorative medium, facilitating individuals' connection with the sacred (Ushiña, 2020).

4. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the dreams of the Yumbos of Cotacollao as a key element of their worldview, particularly in their organization within the dance and as a community. The specific objectives are to describe the fundamental elements of the Yumbos' cosmology, to

identify the significant aspects of dreams in their decision-making processes, and to document the transformation of the Yumbada dance to ensure its continuity as an urban intangible heritage.

To achieve these objectives, the methodology is structured as follows:

The approach of this study is strictly qualitative, as it explores an intimate aspect of the dancers: their dreams. This methodology fosters close interaction with participants, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the dance as the focus of the study. According to Mata (2019), a qualitative approach emphasizes the meanings of human actions and social life, considering multiple contexts within a subjective, dynamic, and complex reality. This approach enables a reflective and comprehensive analysis of the meanings associated with the studied reality.

Regarding methodological design, this study is rooted in ethnography, as its foundation involves engaging with participants and analyzing significant aspects of their culture and worldview through various theoretical approaches. According to Murillo and Martínez (2010), ethnographic research focuses on the observation and interpretation of society from multiple perspectives, aiming to develop models, hypotheses, and theories about the studied reality.

The data collection tools used in this study are participant observation and in-depth interviews. Participant observation enables a critical examination of the concrete reality under study, which, in this case, is the dance itself. In-depth interviews provide access to the intimate and personal knowledge of participants through their subjective experiences. Achieving this requires a non-restrictive, personal mode of communication, allowing participants to share information naturally and flexibly.

Participant observation, as a research tool, is defined as:

"A data production technique that enables the ethnographer to observe the practices or 'actions' that social agents perform in the 'natural settings' where they occur... while simultaneously participating in the development of those practices in various ways and to varying degrees, ranging from actively intervening in their execution to simply being present in those settings" (Jociles, 2010, p. 7).

According to Robles (2011), in-depth interviews involve exploring the private and personal world of participants to gather specific information about their lives. This process is guided by a framework that addresses general topics and is progressively developed during the interview. It is a technique

aimed at identifying the most relevant information aligned with the study's objectives.

The methodology of this study involves conducting interviews with members of the Yumbada whose dreams have been either significant or shared within the group. Specifically, between seven and ten interviews are carried out with general dancers, prioritizing those who have experienced meaningful dream-related events and are willing to share them. Additionally, an interview is conducted with the governor of the Yumbos, who serves as the group leader. The interviews are structured using a framework of guiding questions organized into three stages: opening questions, critical questions, and closing questions, aimed at eliciting information relevant to this study. Participant observation is also employed, taking place during the dance scheduled for June of the current year. The goal of this observation is to identify symbolic and role-based connections between dream-related experiences and the performance of the dance.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings are presented below in two sections: first, the participant observation conducted during the dance, and second, the insights derived from the interviews with the dancers. The dance began on Friday at 7:00 p.m. at Fanny's house. After finishing the preparation of her attire and the necessary items, Fanny picked up the other members of the Yumbada from their respective homes. Once the group was fully assembled, the dancers went to Cotocollao Square on Saturday at 6:00 a.m. to perform the *antialbazo*, a ritual in which they receive the first rays of the sun. At approximately 6:45 a.m., the group visited the first prioste at the Casa de las Comadres, located in the Mena del Hierro neighborhood. There, the group, moving with a gentle yet rhythmic pace, had breakfast and remained until 10:00 a.m. Subsequently, they departed for the Administración Zonal La Delicia, where their principal prioste welcomed them with refreshments. At this location, they danced for an hour, concluding at 11:30 a.m.

Subsequently, the group of dancers returned to Cotocollao Square to receive the midday sunrays at noon. There, they performed a brief 15-minute spiral dance before visiting the next prioste, the "Sres. Levis," where they stayed until 2:00 p.m., using this time to rest. Following this, the group visited the "comadres" once again and had lunch there. The Yumbos remained at this location for three hours, until 6:00 p.m. At this residence, they were presented with the *rueda* (a structure made of pyrotechnic

materials). When the time came to depart, they paraded with the *rueda* back to Cotocollao Square. At 8:00 p.m., the fireworks the *rueda* began, during which the participants danced under the illumination of the fireworks. Finally, around 10:00 p.m., the participants returned to their homes.

On the following day, Sunday, the dancers gathered once again in the square at 9:00 a.m., this time surrounded by a large audience. The Yumbos were joined by the *capariches* (another group of dancers participating in the celebration), the *vacas locas*, and the town band, which arrived later. Until 12:00 p.m., the dance was performed in a homogeneous and continuous circular motion. During this time, all the dancers received blessings from Fanny, their leader, and from the *mamaco* or *pingullero*. One particularly notable feature was the arrangement of the dancers in the circular dance: the "Yumbas" danced in the outer circle, moving counterclockwise, while the "mates" danced in a smaller inner circle, moving clockwise. The mass began at 12:00 p.m., and as it neared its conclusion, the Yumbos proceeded to the entrance of the church in Cotocollao. There, they emitted their characteristic whistle and carried the figure of San Sebastián to the center of the square. At this point, the sound of the drum and the *pingullo* was joined by the town band, signaling the start of the post-mass celebration. From that moment, the Yumbos performed their entrances and a series of circular steps, during which they presented offerings to the figure of San Sebastián.

After the offerings, the Yumbos laid out the *pambamesa* on a long black plastic sheet and expressed gratitude to the earth for the food received throughout the year. The *pambamesa* lasted until approximately 1:00 p.m. Following this, they continued dancing, combining smooth, sustained steps with abrupt, spontaneous movements, tracing figures in the air such as spirals, intersecting circles, parallel geometric shapes, and more. At 4:30 p.m., the ritual of the *matanza* (sacrifice) commenced, a defining feature of the Yumbada. In this ritual, the Yumbos form a small circle of *chontas* around the individual who will symbolically be "killed and resurrected." Inside this circle are also the *monos* Martín, and the *mamaco*, playing the *pingullo* and drum in a soft, steady rhythm in alignment with the ritual. The *monos* prepare and arrange the "deceased," periodically blowing alcohol over the body. Ten minutes before 5:00 p.m., another participant performs the resurrection by placing the *chonta* on the body and tossing it into the air, symbolically lifting the spirit of the "deceased," who lies motionless on the ground. After a series of these movements and

the ritual blowing of alcohol, the deceased "returns to life" and is lifted to their feet by the Yumbas and the *monos* using the *chontas*, standing upright once again. The Yumbada festival concluded on Sunday, June 18, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.

6. RESULTS

The results provide significant insights into the integration of various elements that shape the lives of the Yumbos of Cotocollao. Notably, there is a shared acknowledgment of two key concepts within their

worldview: the figure of San Sebastián and Corpus Christi. These elements represent remnants of the religious syncretism that not only transformed the Yumbada but also reshaped numerous other Indigenous ancestral festivities and celebrations, aligning them with the religious standards of the time. This transformation has endured and remains preserved to this day, with the figure of San Sebastián serving as a highly symbolic and integral component of the celebration, associated with a specific moment, space, and ritual.

Table 1: Importance Of Dreams in Yumbada Culture.

Are dreams significant to you?	What elements of dreams are relevant?	Key aspects of Yumbo cosmology	Why is the Yumbada important?
Essential	The elders, the mountains, guidance, and the future.	The mountains, the water, the moon, and nature.	Tradition, ancestral legacy, reciprocity, and gratitude.
Essential	The elders, ancestors, guidance, and the future.	The earth, the mountains, and San Sebastián.	Life and daily life
Essential	Another life, memory, and guidance.	Water, rain, and the moon	It celebrates life, sexuality, prosperity, generosity, and reciprocity.
Essential	(Reserved)	(Does not apply)	It is tradition, legacy, and unity.
Indifferent	Indifferent	The mountains and Mother Earth.	Culture, tradition, gratitude, and family.
Indifferent	Indifferent	Ancestral wisdom, and music.	Family, tradition, and unity.
Somewhat important	Past and future experiences, and memory.	Ancestral culture, moon, water, and saints.	Family, tradition, and unity.
Essential	Future, guidance, and memory.	San Sebastián, Corpus Christi, water, and the moon.	"Soul, Life, and Heart"

On the other hand, while religious symbolism is present within the dance, the symbols associated with mountains, hills, and volcanoes occupy a central position throughout. The essence of the Yumbada lies in embodying the mountains through the dance, personified and internalized by the dancers as they integrate their names and identities with those of the mountains. These natural elements, in turn, form the cornerstone of a sacrality rooted in nature, particularly in water and the moon. In this context, it can be argued that the mountain, water, and the moon constitute a symbolic triangular framework that upholds the sacrality of the Yumbos of Cotocollao. This foundation supports both the religious components and the additional modern elements of the celebration, which together shape their worldview.

The worldview of the Yumbos, as reflected in their annual dance, serves as a fundamental pillar in the lives of the Yumbo people of Cotocollao. However, the dance itself is enriched by distinctive representations and characteristics that imbue it with meaning. For example, three recurring concepts emerged from the interviews: tradition, family, and heart. These three concepts were consistently highlighted when discussing the significance of the

dance for its members. In this context, all participants agreed that the Yumbada is part of an ancestral tradition handed down through generations. Its importance lies in its role as a cultural heritage that has been carefully preserved and must, therefore, be safeguarded and maintained.

Family represents the unity of traditional families that have preserved Yumbada for many years. This cohesion among its members, bound by familial ties, constitutes the foundation that sustains the Yumbada. The interconnectedness of surnames such as Morales, Simbaña, and Muquinche, among others, illustrates a generational group solidarity continually strengthened through relationships between elders and younger generations. As a result, the Yumbada of Cotocollao remains vibrant and thriving in 2023, in contrast to other Yumbadas that have gradually disappeared or diminished in relevance. The concept of family is of paramount importance to the Yumbos of Cotocollao, as it guarantees the festival continuity and empowers new generations to uphold their tradition. This continuity is facilitated through the transmission of knowledge from elders and the incorporation of innovative ideas, as exemplified by Fanny and the newer members.

Finally, the concept of "heart," the third recurring

theme associated with the significance of the Yumbada, is closely linked to the emotional and joyous nature that defines the festival. At its core, this celebration is performed as an expression of gratitude to the earth for the year's harvest. The sense of joy and jubilation surrounding the event is embodied in the phrase "dancing with the heart," a phrase used by most respondents to describe the flow of internal emotions they experience while enacting their roles in the square.

Regarding dreams, the central focus of this study, there is clear evidence of their significance. Among the eight individuals interviewed, six stated that dreams hold meaningful relevance for them and, consequently, for Yumbada. The results reveal that older individuals place greater importance and value on dreams compared to younger generations. Younger participants, except Wilson, acknowledge having dreams and recognize their significance but do not currently pay much attention to them.

Dreams, according to consensus, are perceived as a guiding force and a means of connection with nature and ancestors. For the Yumbos of Cotocollao, dreams serve as a channel for receiving messages, experiences, and memories intended to guide and enrich their lives in the tangible world, originating from an alternate reality. Dreams are regarded as bridges linking the present, past, and future within a transcendental realm, providing a foundation for decision-making across various aspects of life, particularly in the context of their dance. For Fanny, the current governor, dreams have been a pivotal element in the revitalization and strengthening of the Yumbada, which she now leads.

The prominent role of Wilson, Matías, and Mateo as young dancers is not coincidental but rather the result of a series of interpretations and knowledge exchanges centered on the dreams experienced by Fanny, Susana, and these young individuals. According to Fanny, the governor, the roles these three young dancers currently play and the responsibilities they will assume in the future are pivotal for the preservation of this cultural manifestation. Their inclusion in this balanced framework of strengthening stems specifically from the dreams that have guided their active participation. They are the ones tasked with supporting Fanny at present and, most likely, with ensuring the continuity of the Yumbada of Cotocollao in the future, since the current governor is no longer in her role.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This study arises from the need to examine and

delve into the dynamics of the Yumbos of Cotocollao, based on fieldwork conducted since early 2021 in the subtropical mountain ranges of the rural parish of Telimbela. During this time, close engagement with their festivities, rituals, and daily practices has provided valuable insights into their cultural manifestations. The investigation aims to highlight alternative mechanisms that contribute to the survival and preservation of heritage and culture, extending beyond the tangible and observable empirical resources that have traditionally dominated cultural studies on popular manifestations. Such studies rarely address the deeper layers of human interaction, and even less frequently manage to access these dimensions effectively.

Concepts such as history and memory are fundamental pillars not only for the Yumbada of Cotocollao but also for other intangible cultural manifestations. However, in the case of Yumbada, history and memory are not solely transmitted and interpreted through oral or written means by each generation. Rather, they are actively conveyed and interpreted through dreams and oral traditions. This approach ensures that the immutable sacrality defining heritage (Pratts, 2005) remains vibrant and dynamic for the Yumbos, sustained by a continuous connection between the two realms. This connection facilitates the ongoing discussion and valuation of events involving both family members and ancestors.

The heritage of the Yumbos of Cotocollao is, in a sense, constructed through a "present history" or "historical present" that redefines their understanding of identity. This identity is not limited to a framework exclusively tied to diachronic symbolic elements recorded and reinterpreted over time. Instead, it is conceptualized as a dynamic and ongoing process. Rooted in concepts clearly established throughout history, this process also incorporates contemporary judgments and values that extend beyond their immediate community. These influences include figures from a transcendent realm, a dimension experienced with a depth comparable to that of tangible reality.

The spiritual dimension is particularly significant for the Yumbos of Cotocollao, as it defines their way of being and acting in the world, permeating every aspect of their lives, most notably the Yumbada. Subjectivity, to some extent, shapes other spheres of existence, including territory, organization, politics, and kinship. The interaction between humans and nature stands as the cornerstone of the Yumbo worldview. This relationship, which imbues the world with meaning, serves as a means of

experiencing the sacred through transcendence (Guerrero, 2011).

This way of understanding and experiencing the world through dreams provides a distinct interpretation of the present, consistently interweaving with a past and a history that are preserved not only through memory and material assets but also within a unique oneiric space for each Yumbo. This research offers a more detailed validation of the perspectives proposed by authors such as Guerrero, Ushiña, and Valdivieso, who had previously identified dreams as a means of connecting with nature and the cosmos. This study further demonstrates that dreams function as guiding, regulatory, premonitory, and restorative resources for individuals, facilitating their spiritual connection with the sacred.

Salomon (1992), in his early studies on this manifestation, noted that the Yumbada represents a continuous reinterpretation of the urban cultural space in Quito. It embodies a performance of symbols, rituals, and adaptive interactions that evolve to align with changing eras. This reconstruction process allows the Yumbada to adapt sufficiently to the organizational frameworks of new generations while preserving its essence, which remains deeply rooted in the symbols and sacred elements of its worldview, as previously discussed.

The Yumbada represents a form of ancestral survival within the urban space (Valdivieso, 2015). This survival has been structured to ensure solid and enduring permanence, rooted in the components that define its essence as intangible heritage: its worldview, family, and heart. Among these, family and heart respectively guarantee the continuity of the tradition and the internalization of the celebration. Manuel Gómez's phrase, "letting the word walk with

intention" (Guerrero, 2011, p. 32), encapsulates much of the celebration's essence. It underscores how the internalization of thoughts and feelings, subsequently expressed and shared, guides collective actions that find their reflection in the dance.

The concept of *corazonar* as a strategy for engaging with spirituality is facilitated by spaces of subjective interaction that the Yumbos of Cotacollao rely on to direct their actions in both dance and life. Among these spaces, the dimension of dreams emerges as particularly significant, fostering spiritual introspection and a deep connection with nature. Dreams serve as a bridge linking Yumbo to the mountains, their ancestors, and their ancestral community. This dynamic is one of the primary reasons why the Yumbada of Cotacollao has remained active and robust in the present, unlike other Yumbadas that have declined or lost prominence, as they have failed to preserve strong elements of unity and consensus needed to address the challenges of modern times.

It can be concluded that numerous factors contribute to the preservation of this cultural manifestation as a broad, dynamic, and enduring form of intangible heritage, resilient in the face of the conflicts and challenges it has encountered over time. The selection of young leaders within the Yumbada not only represents an active and efficient organizational strategy to ensure the preservation and continuity of the dance, but also reflects an internal structure grounded in deliberations, intuitive insights, and familial bonds. This process relies on an exchange of information between this world and the world of dreams, a bridge between two realms that sustains the dance and, in all likelihood, will enable it to continue thriving in the years to come.

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