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Title: **The Chamula *maxetik* – transformers of historical violence through ritual animation.**

Abstract [287 words]

This paper offers a Girardian view of the Maya Tzotzil Chamula *maxetik* in the highlands of Chiapas, México. A “max” (pronounced “mawsh”) is a “monkey,” someone who performs “remembrance” within the traditional community. Through imitation, appropriation, and creative re-presentations the *maxetik* play with culturally meaningful tensions between sacred and secular expressions of ethnic identity. At every major festival these monkeys pray in a sacrificial, long-suffering manner, even as they play, pan and pillory the complex truths of their people’s sojourn, thus revealing how an oppressed Indian majority negotiates its co-existence and differentiated life-ways with an oppressive Ladino (non-Indian) minority. Dressed to resemble early 19<sup>th</sup> century European military, *maxes* make music with drum, harp, guitar and rattle, and for several days will run, shout, and amuse, as they dance with the sacred banners (flags) of the Saints. Without the *maxetik*, there really is no true festival; for it is they who open the sacred time of feasting and it is they who preside over its closure with spiritual authority. The ritual commitment of the *maxetik* maintains remembrance of centuries-old social violence but also serves to re-member the Chamula as a people. This ritual interaction re-configures historical injury through *mimesis* (as appropriation and re-presentation) and reflects an intuitive attempt to manage conflict by harnessing its “sacred” power to transform social reality. “Ethnogenesis” gives rise to many cultural forms, including “animation” that both gives and conceals evidence of violence and violation. Using fresh ethnographic data from four Chamula rural communities in Chiapas, this paper presents a assesses the *max* religious role, who in clown-like fashion will “play” during fiestas to both provoke profound religious sentiment while also exposing to critique their collective experiences of suffering under both church and state.