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One-handed flutes in Latin America

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Part I. Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia



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Introduction

The instruments commonly described as "one-handed flutes" belong to an instrumental pairing consisting of a flute — usually a duct flute — with three finger holes, and a membranophone: a drum or tabor of varying size. Both are played by the same musician, who normally holds and fingers the flute with the left hand while using a stick in the right hand to strike the drum. The drum may hang from the left wrist or hand or, in the case of a large instrument, from the left shoulder. With few exceptions, this pairing is performed by a solo musician. The music generally accompanies various kinds of dance, many of them ceremonial.

The practice of playing a duct flute and drum simultaneously survives in Europe, from the British pipe and

tabor to various Iberian pipes and whistles; the drum may also be replaced by another instrument, as in the case of the *chicotén*. In Latin America, a single performer's simultaneous use of wind and percussion instruments forms part of Indigenous musical cultures across the continent: flutes and maracas in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, panpipes and large drums in the southern Andean highlands, and many others. The archaeological and ethnographic records, however, contain relatively little evidence for three-holed duct flutes played together with membranophones. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that Iberian traditions, which were widespread during the colonial period, exerted a decisive influence. Even so, it cannot be stated with certainty — as some authors have done — that Latin American one-handed flutes derive directly from European instruments. The distinctive features of many of them point to a substantial underlying pre-Hispanic component.

Today, one-handed flutes are found in Chile's Norte Grande, northwestern Argentina and southern Bolivia,

the Bolivian-Peruvian Altiplano, the central Peruvian Andes, northern Peru, Ecuador, and several parts of Mexico. The following sections briefly describe the instruments of the southern Andean highlands — northern Chile and northwestern Argentina, the Bolivian highlands, and southern Peru — and the sociocultural contexts in which they are played.

Part 1. Northern Chile

The *Baile del Torito*

Chile's only surviving one-handed flute tradition is found in the north of the country, in the cultural region of the Lickan Antay, or Atacameño, people — more precisely, in the area surrounding San Pedro de Atacama, in El Loa Province, Antofagasta Region (Urrutia Blondel, 1967; Cervantes, Garrido, and Santander, 2008).

The flute and drum are used exclusively to accompany the *Baile del Torito* ("Dance of the Little Bull"), a traditional religious dance performed during the feasts of St John (24 June) and St Peter and St Paul (29 June). A different form of the same dance, bearing the same name, is found across the Andes in the Argentine province of Jujuy.



According to local oral tradition, the dance originated in San Pedro de Atacama. Testimonies indicate that it appeared in the *ayllu* of Séquitor, a community 3 km from San Pedro, at an unknown date and was copied in 1937 by the *ayllu* of Sólor, 5 km from San Pedro. In 1958, after the tradition had disappeared from Séquitor, it was revived there in a more modern form. These movements between communities have prompted intense debate over where the dance originated and how long it has existed in the region.

Local accounts relate that the dance was created by muleteers who, together with a lead bull, survived a snowstorm that killed the rest of their herd as they crossed the Andes from Argentina. When they reached San Pedro, they offered the animal to St John, the saint of cattle, in gratitude for his protection (SIGPA, n.d.). The choreography symbolically represents this offering.

Image 1.

Niño mayor.

[Photo: <http://www.dedaldeoro.cl/>].



Images 2 to 4.

Niños mayores.

[Photos: Cervantes, Garrido y Santander (2008)].

It is a ceremonial dance performed by men and built around five roles: four costumed dancers and a musician.

The central figure is the *torito*, or little bull, from which the dance takes its name. As in other Latin American traditions involving this animal, the bull is represented by a square frame of lightweight wood covered with dark cloth — the *Torito Negro*, or Black Bull, of Sólor — or yellow cloth — the *Torito Amarillo*, or Yellow Bull, of Séquitor. A wooden head covered in cowhide and fitted with a pair of real horns is attached to the frame.

Two *caballitos*, or little horses, accompany the bull. Half rider and half horse, they escort the central figure. Each dancer wears a circular wooden frame around the waist, fitted with a small horse's head and reins, together with a knee-length cape and a straw hat. The dancers continually shake small bells resembling cattle bells.

Juancito is the bull's owner. His mask portrays a wealthy, fair-skinned muleteer with a gold tooth. He wears baggy

Image 5.
Niño mayor.
[Photo: Urrutia Blondel (1967)].





trousers and boots with gaiters and carries a distinctive lasso coiled around one hand. His role is to lasso the unruly bull and compel it to pay homage to the patron saint.

The fifth figure, the *Niño Mayor*, is the musician who plays the flute and drum.

The flute is a typical Andean *pinkillo*. Pinkillo — also *pinkullo*, *pinguyo*, *pinqayllo*, or *pinkhuyllu* — is an Andean term, probably derived from the Quechua *pinkullu*, used generically for vertical duct flutes regardless of the material from which they are made — cane, wood, or bone —, the number of finger holes they have, or whether they are played solo or in an ensemble. Qualifiers are often added to the term, as in *toro pinkhuyllu* or *pinkillo mohoseño*, to distinguish particular types or regional variants.

Image 6.

Detail of flute.

[Photo: San Pedro de Atacama (Etnomedia)].

The flute used in the *Baile del Torito* is made from a slightly curved, cylindro-conical piece of wood or cane about 45 cm long, with three finger holes on the front. A wooden plug inserted into the proximal end forms the mouthpiece and internal windway; the mouthpiece is normally cut square. To prevent splitting, the body is reinforced with rings made from thin strips of animal sinew — as on other northern Chilean flutes, including the *lichiguayos* — and/or with tape. The finest instruments were reportedly made in Bolivia.

The accompanying drum is a type of *caja chayera*, a membranophone with a long history and a broad distribution throughout the Andes. It appears in early colonial vocabularies and documents under the Quechua name *tinya*, still used in Peru, and Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala depicted it in the hands of subjects of *Tawantinsuyu*, the Inca Empire, in his *Nueva crónica y*

Image 7.
Caja chayera.

[Photo: Cervantes, Garrido y Santander (2008)].



buen gobierno ca. 1615). Across the Andes, the *caja* assumes many names, sizes, and proportions. Although construction materials vary by locality, it generally has a wooden shell about 40–45 cm in diameter and 10 cm deep, with two hide heads, usually taken from different animals or from different parts of the same animal. The heads are sewn to hoops of wicker or willow, or to wire rings, and joined to one another by rope or leather lacing that zigzags around the shell. Loops in the lacing allow the heads to be tensioned.

Like most drums of pre-Hispanic origin, the *caja* has neither counterhoops nor a vent hole. A *bordona* or *chirlera* (snare) is stretched across one head: traditionally a thin cord of horsehair, although wound cord is now more common. Its vibration under the impact of each stroke adds a characteristic buzz to the drum's low resonance.

In northern Chile, the drum hangs from the same wrist that supports the flute, usually the left, while the other hand holds the beater.

The melody unfolds over the slow rhythmic foundation



Image 8.
Niño mayor.
[Photo: YouTube].

supplied by the drum and the bells of the *caballitos*. It is a simple, repetitive tune, probably rooted in Lickan Antay musical heritage. The choreography, known as the *beña*, includes several movements or figures. The celebration comprises a ceremony in the home of the "patron" family, dancing through the streets of the town,

the presentation of the offering to the saint, and the symbolic "butchering" of the *torito* (see Tradiciones de Atacama, 2013).

Part 2. Northwestern Argentina and Southeastern Bolivia

The *kamacheña*, or *camacheña*, is made from a segment of giant reed (*Arundo donax*) or a similar bamboo-like cane. A section 30–35 cm long is cut between two nodes. The natural partition at the distal end is left intact, while the one at the proximal end is removed and the embouchure carved with a knife. This consists of a semicircular notch, similar to that of some pre-Hispanic Andean *quenas*, flanked by two carefully cut "wings." These wings are unique to the instrument: the player places them inside the mouth in order to blow. Pitch is controlled through three or four finger holes on the front of the tube.

The *kamacheña* is played with the left hand while the right strikes a *caja chayera*. It is reasonable to suppose



that the instrument's unusual side wings were designed to facilitate one-handed performance. Aerophones played in this way are generally duct flutes, whose mouthpieces allow musicians to grip the proximal end with their lips — or even, when necessary, their teeth — thereby stabilizing the instrument and maintaining a continuous airstream. With the *kamacheña*, such a grip is possible only because of the wings; without them, pressure against the lips alone would not keep the instrument in the correct playing position.

The *kamacheña* is made and played in the eastern parts of Jujuy and Salta Provinces — particularly around Iruya, Santa Victoria, and Orán — in northwestern Argentina (Vega, 1946; Pérez Bugallo, 1996), and in the northwestern part of Tarija Department in southern Bolivia (Cavour, 1994; Goyena, 1997). In Argentina, it bears

numerous names, including *flautilla de Pascua* ("little Easter flute"), *cuello de llama* ("llama neck," probably a mistranslation of the Quechua *llamasencka*, "llama nose"), *quenilla* ("little *quena*"), and *flautilla jujeña* ("little Jujuy flute"), although *quena* is the preferred name. Pérez Bugallo (1996) suggests that it may be related to archaeological aerophones such as those found at Inca Cueva in Jujuy, dated to around 2130 BC. He also describes it as Argentina's only Indigenous flute with a *quena*-type embouchure, since the instrument now known as the "standard *quena*" was introduced into the country from farther north relatively recently, around the mid-twentieth century. In Bolivia, *quena* and *quenilla* are also used, although the flute is now better known as *kamacheña* or *camacheña*. This name probably derives from the place-name Camacho, one of the principal waterways of Tarija's central valleys.

Image 9 [prev. page].
Kamacheña.
[Photo: E. Civallero].

The drum, which supplies the rhythm and pulse beneath the *kamacheña*'s melody, resembles the Chilean *caja*. In this case, however, the flute is played with the left hand, while the membranophone hangs by a loop or handle





Image 14.
Detail of *kamacheña*.
[Photo: E. Civallero].

Images 10 to 13 [prev. page].
Details of *kamacheña*.
[Photos: E. Civallero].

Images 15 and 16.
Kamacheñas.
[Photos: Instituto Nacional de Musicología, Argentina].





from the performer's right wrist. The same hand holds the *guastána* — from the Quechua *waqtana*, "that which strikes" — the mallet or beater used to mark the rhythm.

Following the traditional seasonal practices of the southern Andes, which restrict the use of musical instruments to particular times of year, the *kamacheña* belongs to the dry season, or *awti pacha*, extending from Carnival to All Saints' Day. It is heard, for example, during the feast of St Roch in mid-August, the All Saints observances in early November, and Carnival in February or March.

By striking the drum and blowing the *kamacheña*, the musician—traditionally a man, since women are barred from playing it — accompanies circle dances known as

Images 17 and 18.

Kamacheña and *flautilla chaqueña*.

[Photos: Instituto Nacional de Musicología, Argentina].



ruedas. A dozen or so dancers form a ring, hold hands, and move around the flute-and-drum player, known in Argentina as a *quennero*. *Coplas* are sometimes sung during the dance, usually by women, whose vocal style is highly distinctive. *Kamacheñas* are also used to perform *tonadas* or *puntos*, instrumental pieces played outside the choreographic context and sometimes modelled on the melodic lines of well-known *coplas*.

Closely related to the *kamacheña*, from which they probably derive, are the *flautillas chaqueñas* ("Chaco little flutes") used by many Indigenous peoples of the phytogeographical region known as the Southern Chaco, which encompasses northeastern Argentina, southern Paraguay, and southeastern Bolivia. These peoples include the Qom (Toba), Pi'laqá (Pilagá), Yofwaja (Chorote), Nivaklé (Chulupí), and Wichi (Mataco).

Image 19 [prev. page].
Kamacheña and *caja chayera*.
 [Photo: E. Civallero].

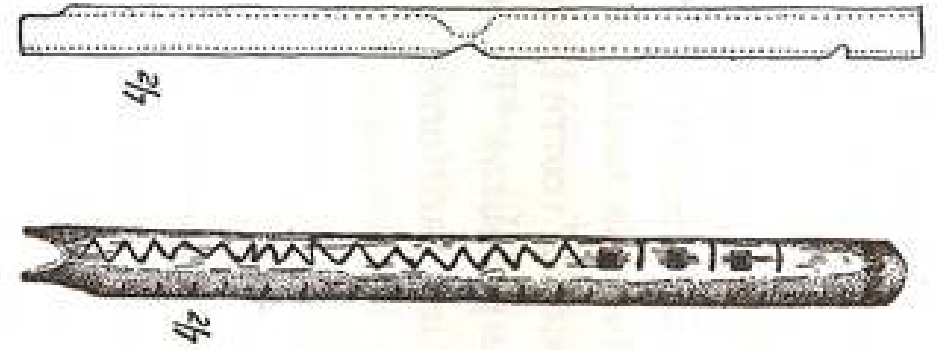


Image 20.
Flautillas chaqueñas.
 [Drawing: Métraux].

This second group of aerophones shows considerably greater diversity in the type of cane used, length, diameter, ornamentation — which is often abundant — and the number and arrangement of finger holes on the front of the tube. Older examples generally had three holes; contemporary ones, perhaps influenced by the flutes of the Ava, or "Chiriguano," have six and are played with both hands.

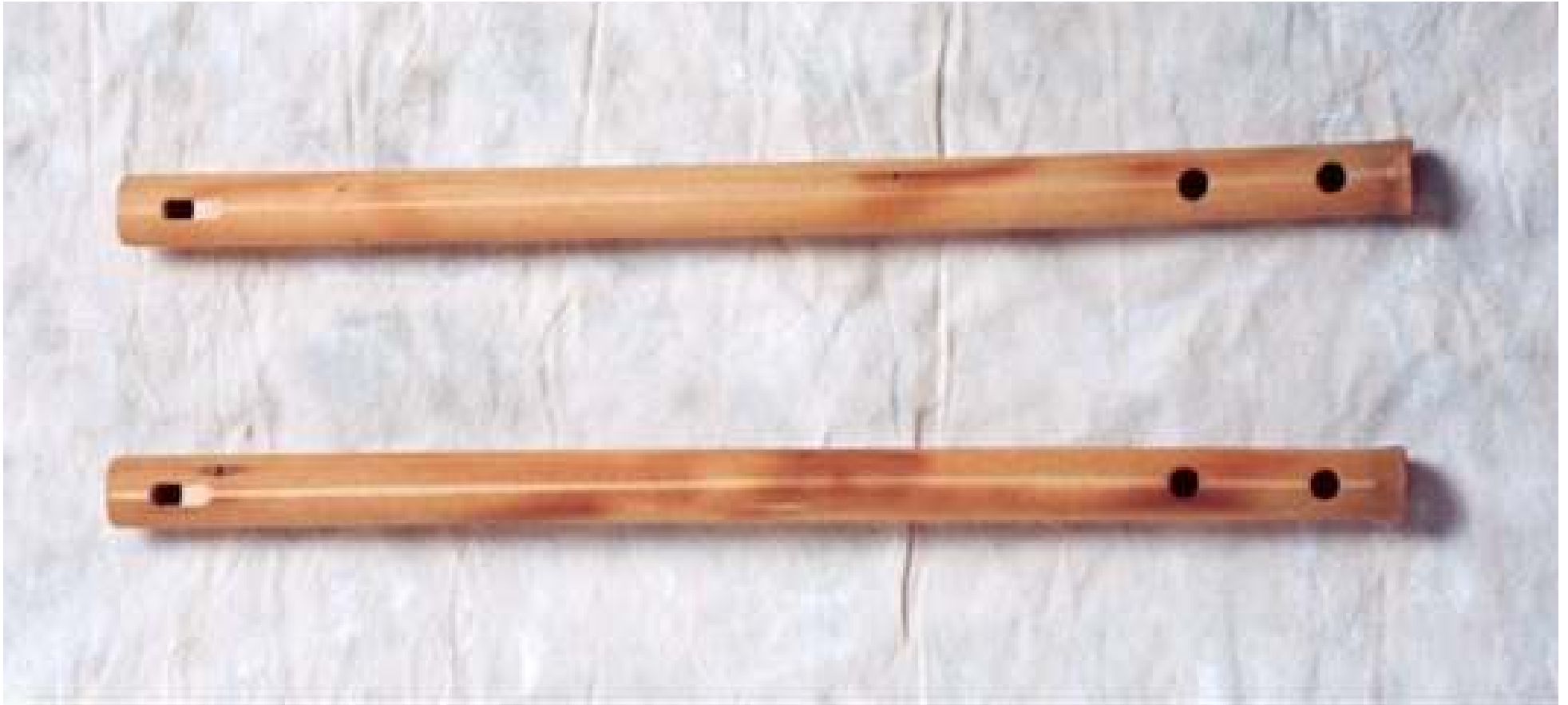
These are secular instruments played by men and carry

no ceremonial meaning. Pérez Bugallo (1996) records the following names: *nashiré koktá* among the eastern Qom and the Pi'laqá; *nahaidé* among the western Qom; *wosók sisé* among the Yofwaja; *vat'anjantché sisé* among the Nivaklé; and *kanohí*, or more rarely *tanowhós*, among the Wichi.

Part 3. The Southern Altiplano

The highlands covering much of western Bolivia and southern Peru form part of the southern Andean Altiplano and are inhabited primarily by Aymara people. Aymara musicians make and play half a dozen varieties of one-handed flute. Perhaps the most widespread is a type of *pinkillo* known as the *waka-pinkillo*, a name translated as "bull *pinkillo*" or "bull flute."

The instrument is made from a segment of *suqusa* or *sokhosa* cane and has three finger holes, two on the front and one on the back. The distal end is open, while the proximal end is closed with a wooden plug, called a *tapatira* or *qallu*, which forms the windway. From the hand used to hold and play the flute hangs a *wank'ara*, a double-headed membranophone considerably larger



than the *cajas* found farther south. It is generally fitted with counterhoops and a *chirlera* or snare: a string bearing thorns, cane splinters, or small wooden rods, stretched across the unstruck head to produce a buzzing sound.

Image 21.
Waka-pinkillos.
[Photo: Unregistered source].

Unlike most one-handed flutes in Latin America, and in keeping with a deeply rooted Andean tradition, the *waka-pinkillo* is played communally. It is performed not by soloists but by ensembles of flute players, each equipped with a *pinkillo* and *wank'ara*. Following a widespread Andean musical pattern, *waka-pinkillo* ensembles include two sizes of flute: a large instrument about 60 cm long and a smaller one about 40 cm long. Both use the same scale, with their melodies sounding approximately a fifth apart (Cavour, 1994; Olsen and Sheehy, 2008).

These ensembles consist of between 10 and 30 musicians who perform two parallel melodic lines a fifth apart. The resulting vibrant sonority is highly valued within Aymara musical aesthetics.

The instrument accompanies a family of dances known collectively as *wakas*, including the *waka waka*, *waka tinti*, *waka tinki*, and *waka thuqhuri* (GADLP, 2012; Sigl, 2009a, 2009b, 2012). *Waka* refers to a bull, while *thuqhuri* — and its variant spellings — means "dancer" in

Aymara. The terms *tinti* and *tinki* appear to be onomatopoeic, derived from the "tin tin tin" produced by the dancers.

According to Sigl, local informants themselves are unable to differentiate clearly among the four *waka* "dances" or identify features exclusive to each. They are therefore usually regarded as regional variants of a single dance with the same general meaning.

The *waka-pinkillo* was also formerly used in the now-extinct *caballo tinti* dance.

All these dances are practised in the Bolivian provinces of Aroma — especially in Umala, Collana, Caquiaviri, Sica Sica, Colquencha, and Corocoro — Omasuyos, Los Andes, General José Manuel Pando, and Gualberto Villarroel, in La Paz Department. In Peru, they are found in the districts of Puno, in Puno Province, and Conima, in Moho Province, both in Puno Department.

Some authors have described the *waka* as a satirical



dance that ridicules Spanish bullfighters and bullfighting. This mocking tone, however, belongs only to the dance's modern urban form, normally accompanied by brass bands and performed at Bolivian festivals and folkloric processions known as *entradas*. In rural areas, it is primarily an agricultural dance: an offering to Pachamama and a celebration of sowing, symbolized by the bull, the animal that opens the furrows. Its performance season varies from one community to another. The variant known as *waka thuqhuri* is generally danced in September, during the dry season and sowing period, especially for the Feast of the Lord of the Exaltation. The *waka tinki* is performed both in October, for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, and in May, for the Feast of the Cross.

Image 22 [prev. page].

Waka tintis from Larecaja and Tambocusi.

[Photo: S. Takashi].

The dance's central figure is, naturally, the bull or ox, the *waka*. As in Chile's *Baile del Torito*, a dancer represents the animal by carrying a leather-covered frame fitted with the indispensable horns and an array of decorations. The dancers portraying the bull usually cover their faces, wear headdresses with *suri*, or rhea, feathers or *chull'us*, the characteristic Andean woollen hats with earflaps, and dress in ponchos and short overskirts, sometimes dark and sometimes brilliantly coloured. Other figures include the bull handler, known as the *q'aisilla* or *qhaisalla*, who is portrayed as a bullfighter in urban versions and is disappearing from rural ones; the *lecheras*, or *damas Manolas*, who carry small jugs and wear numerous *polleras*, or skirts; the *pastoras*, or *mama t'allas*, identified by the whips they carry; and supporting figures common to other Aymara dances, such as the *k'usillos*, or jesters, the *achachis*, and the *jilaqata*, who directs the troupe.

Another Indigenous one-handed flute of the Bolivian Altiplano is the *liku*, used in the *wit'iti*, a dance originating in Aroma Province, La Paz Department, that gives

thanks for the rains that water the crops (GADLP, 2012; Sigl, 2012). Similar to the *liku* is the *paya p'iya* — Aymara for "two holes" — played to accompany the dance of the *pacochis*, or *p'aquchis*, in Omasuyos Province, also in La Paz Department. The instrument is about 35 cm long and is played together with a drum. The *pacochis* dance is an old parody of Spanish soldiers, performed mainly for the feast of St Peter and St Paul on 29 June and at some local patronal festivals (Sigl, 2009b; GADLP, 2012).

Also worthy of mention is a curious one-handed flute that accompanies the *liberia* dance. Until recently, the dance had all but disappeared, but it has now been revived in the communities of Potolo, Sacopampa, Quila Quila, and Purunquila, near the border between Potosí and Cochabamba Departments. The instrument is a variety of *rollano*, the name given to local, markedly curved *pinkillos* made from branches split lengthwise, hollowed



Images 23 and 24.
Dances *pacochis* and *liberia*.
[Photos: YouTube].



Image 25.
Dance *jach'a tata danzante*.
[Photo: YouTube].

out, and rejoined with strips of rawhide and cattle sinew. The dance takes place in August and September and was formerly intended to promote the fertility of livestock (Sigl, 2012).

Finally, the *pinkillo camata*, a rarely documented instrument, deserves attention. It apparently originated in the

Altiplano town of Camata in La Paz Department and, according to some accounts, has only two finger holes and is more than 60 cm long. It is played with a *bombo* (bass drum) measuring approximately 60–80 cm in diameter and 30–40 cm deep, struck with a mallet called a *jawk'aña* and fitted with a *chilera* (snare), with the variant names *charlera*, *corchea*, and *jevisa*. The aerophone is played by a musician dressed as an *awila* during the dance of a figure known as the *jach'a tata danzante* or *wiraqucha* (GADLP, 2012). Popularly known as the *danzanti*, *danzante*, or *jach'a tata danzante*, the dance is performed at different times of year — including St Peter's Day, Corpus Christi, and local patronal festivals — in Omasuyos Province, La Paz Department, especially around Achacachi.

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Images

Image 01.

<http://www.dedaldeoro.cl/images/ediciones/40/4024MusTradicional.jpg>

Image 06.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjf3hr9_myg

Image 08.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YGGt8Fa4gk>

Images 15 to 18.

<http://conar.senip.gob.ar/>

Image 23.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8lvHG62-Lc>

Image 24.

<http://www.downvids.net/-quot-liberia-quot-danza-milenaria-de-potolo-chuquisaca-bolivia-624497.html>

Image 25.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zk7RPZxreTc>

