

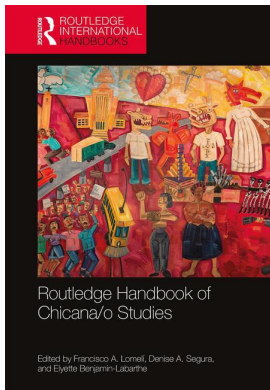
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Colonial, de-colonial, and transnational choreographies in ritual *danzas* and popular *bailes* of Greater Mexico

Enrique R. Lamadrid

Dance is one of the most visible national symbols of Greater Mexico and Mexican identity or *Mexicanidad* in all of its ethnic diversity and transnational complexity. No other representation of the Mexican nation approaches its power of signification. To more fully understand the history and diffusion of dance, this broader, borderless, more cultural sense of nation (Paredes 1995, p. xiv) must extend to pre-Hispanic times when *mexicano* was pronounced *meshicano* and was synonymous with the Aztec empire and its *lingua franca*, Náhuatl. The southern borderlands of the greater *Meshico* extended past Guatemala and into Nicaragua. The Spanish Conquest, with all of its cultural, spiritual, and political consequences, is a ubiquitous theme of *danza* or sacred and ritual dance across this entire cultural region. *Baile* refers to the many traditions of social dance that celebrate and animate the everyday lives of people.

In his surveys of Greater Mexico, Américo Paredes proposed three broad and interconnected cultural groups: the Regional, where people live in close proximity to their place of cultural roots; the Rural, when people follow agricultural cycles sometimes across borders and away from their regions of origin; and the Urban, where the magnet of city life lures all groups away from their original traditions and into a fluid and dynamic cultural milieu (Paredes 1993, pp. 3–18). To evoke such a broad panorama of evolving dance traditions, we will follow *danza* in a few specific areas north (New Mexico and Texas) and south (Puebla and Michoacán) of the U.S.–Mexico border. Since regional *danza* is so closely tied to its original contexts, its diffusion can be minimal. Through cultural revivals and movements, both *danza* and *baile* have crossed borders and diffused widely, although their meanings can vary in their host nations.

Two notable dance movements have energized the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to create and celebrate a more unified sense of Mexicanidad or national and transnational Mexican identity everywhere in Greater Mexico. They are performed in urban and rural settings all over Mexico in schools and cultural centers. They are popular in the United States in virtually every Mexican American community and school, from the borderlands north to Minnesota, and east to the cities and towns of the entire Atlantic seaboard. The *baile folklórico* (folkloric dance) movement began in post-revolutionary Mexico, attracted interest in the United States in the 1930s, and proliferated during the Chicano movement of the late 1960s and 1970s to the

present. *Folklorico* has succeeded in identifying, re-contextualizing, and staging deeply rooted regional and Indigenous dance traditions on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. It has also fostered a burgeoning interest in the regional musical traditions of Mexico, including *mariachi* (Ochoa Serrano 1994), *conjunto norteño/tejano* – northern and Texas (Ragland 2009; Peña 1985), *jarocho* – Veracruz (Loza 1992), and *banda* – brass band (Simonett 2001). Through school programs, *mariachi* has become familiar to several generations of Mexican American youth (Sheehy 2006). The most successfully iconic components of its repertoire have become symbols of the republic (Nájera-Ramírez 1989, 2009; R. Rodríguez 2009). The *danza azteca* (Aztec dance) movement was originally commissioned by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Public Education), also as a post-revolutionary cultural project of the 1920s, and has succeeded in promoting the imagined importance and continuity of pre-Hispanic traditions across borders (Ceseña 2009; Garner 2009; Huerta 2009; Tuckman 2008; Vento 1994; Shank 1974). Anthropology has also played a central role in the cultural redefinition of Mexico. Several generations of ethnographers have documented an almost bewildering array of ritual and festival traditions in their original settings, from as many as 50 Indigenous cultures and languages, and even more ethnic groups. A deep international appreciation of Mexican folkways was born (Toor 1947), and Indigenous and *mestizo* cultures were acknowledged and celebrated (Bonfil Batalla 1987; Gandert & Lamadrid 2000).

In the nineteenth century, the popular dances and music of Europe were imported to the court of Emperor Maximiliano and spread north with the liberal cultural programs of President Benito Juárez. Social *bailes* including the waltz, polka, and schottische were naturalized and Mexicanized as the *valse*, *polca*, and *chotiz* (Kun 2005; Loeffler 2008). The *mariachi* tradition emerged in the same era and fashioned its dances around the hybrid Afro-Indo-Hispanic *son* (danced song), with its vigorous *zapateado* (shoe-step) dancing. Lively, syncopated rhythms of the *son* drive and animate the foot stamps, which are not entirely of southern Spanish origin, as many assume. Large foot drums with wooden planks set over resonating trenches were found in the plazas of many pre-Hispanic archeological sites (Ochoa Serrano 1994). Later in the nineteenth century, the restrained and stately *danzón* and lyrical *bolero* were born in Cuba, flourished in Vera Cruz, and took the world by storm. Both are related to the *contredanse* style of partner dancing in 2/4 time, whose syncopation creates the opportunity for erotic and stylized foot and hip movement (Cashion 2009).

In the twentieth century, urbanized Mexican Americans played and danced to U.S. and Latino Big Band music, and after World War II played a formational role in the development of Rock n' Roll (Reyes & Waldman 2009). A new wave of immigrants crossed the border and their children participated in several dance crazes, including *quebradita* (Mexican “little break” dancing) and *duranguense* (Durango style), which add stoops and stomps to existing polka and waltz dancing (Hutchinson 2007). The exploding transnational popularity of *banda* (traditional brass band music) music from Sinaloa, Oaxaca, and Michoacán has had a significant influence on dance as well (Simonett 2001). Many other international music and dance fads such as the Colombian *cumbia* have been adapted and naturalized (Ragland 2003). In the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Chicano rock musicians such as Carlos Santana and bands such as Los Lobos and Ozomatli incorporated and transformed traditional genres in their music (Reyes & Waldman 2009).

The Chicano movement fomented a sense of cultural pride in all of these traditions, styles, revivals, and fads, which resonate transnationally into the twenty-first century. From a broad and complicated cultural landscape, several linked narratives emerge that can help create a panoramic rather than encyclopedic overview of dance across Greater Mexico. Mexicano and Chicano musicologists and dance ethnographers offer detailed analyses of the metrics of choreography

and music, with attention to context, performance, transmission, and gender (Aldama, Sandoval & García 2012; Madrid 2011; Nájera-Ramírez, Cantú & Romero 2009; Ybarra 2009; Sevilla, Rodríguez & Camara 1985). Documentary accounts are framed by the dynamics of tradition, innovation, and recovery. Cultural analysis draws from the ideas of imagined community (Anderson 1983), invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983), “orientalism” (Said 1978), differential oppositional consciousness (Sandoval 2000), and border performance theory (Aldama, Sandoval & García 2012). In popular as well as ethnographic discourse, performance traditions range from *baile* – or social, secular dance – to *danza*, which is synonymous with sacred, ritual dance.

For nearly five centuries, the Native and *mestizo* peoples of Greater Mexico have exercised their remarkable talent for celebrating and dramatizing their cultural perseverance and historical memory in festival and ritual display. Conquest, resistance, and cultural synthesis are recurring themes in the intangible cultural heritage of a vast region, from Central to North America. Victory plays, religious celebrations, and social festivities all utilize dance to embody cultural selves and others. Christian, Muslim, and Indigenous religious traditions fall into sharp contrast. Ethnic groups and races, including Indians, Spanish, and Blacks, are all represented in the fiestas. The process and dynamics of *mestizaje* or cultural hybridity is a salient theme as well. Alterity, hybridity, and identity are negotiated in plazas, theaters, and in the cultural imagination. To read cultural narratives and metaphors more deeply, we must follow them beyond the documents of history and metrics of sociology into choreography, costume, ritual, and song. Collective memory is profound in still-contested regions at the centers and edges of successive empires, where conquerors are conquered in turn, and where discourses of power morph into discourses of survival. Indo-Hispano-Mexicano cultural knowledge and expression have much to contribute to a global conversation on colonialism and liberation (Lamadrid 2010b).

What is known about pre-Hispanic dance is the little that Spanish chroniclers mentioned during and after its extirpation. Hernán Cortés, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Motolinía, Fray Diego Durán, and others took note of both religious and satirical representations, which combined music and poetry with dance (León Portilla 1997, p. 123). The obviously religious celebrations were prohibited, but the celebrations that appeared more social or supportive of Christianity were tolerated as *mitote*, a Náhuatl term referring to popular manifestations, including dance. The documentary team of Fray Bernardo de Sahagún provided the most comprehensive and annotated account of pre-Hispanic theology, ritual calendar, history, art, and literature. One of the signature pre-Hispanic *danza* traditions to survive the conquest and continuing to evolving are the spectacular *voladores*, the pole flyers who spiral down on ropes from the tree of life like birds descending to earth to honor Quetzalcóatl (the plumed serpent or god of creativity) and other deities (Stresser-Peán 2012, Jáuregui & Bonfiglioli 1992). This *danza* is also sacred to the Mesoamerican corn god, whose names and stories are revered in at least five languages from Central America to the Huasteca region in Mexico, the homeland of the Teneks or northernmost Mayas, not that far south from the U.S. border. Since the Quetzalcóatl and corn god were the principal Mesoamerican deities to assume human form for the redemption of humanity, they were easily syncretized with Christ. The most famous *voladores* or flyers are from the Papantla area of Veracruz, who perform across Mexico and the United States, reframing the sacred dance as folkloric spectacle.

The original ritual context of the dance was richly illustrated in ethnographic film in Huehuetla, Puebla for the annual festival of San Salvador, the Holy Savior (Lane 1976). A large tree is selected, blessed, cut, bound with vines for climbing, and erected in front of the church. A carved wooden spool, painted with the symbols and colors of the four directions, is taken to the top of the tree trunk and wound with ropes. Then brilliantly dressed flyers with conical hats

dance around the tree, climb it, bind their feet to the ropes, and fling themselves upside down off the pole. The 13 rotations times the four flyers mark the numbers of the sacred calendar. The leader stands erect on top, dancing while playing a flute and hand drum. Since the Totonac natives allied with the Spanish in the conquest of the Aztecs, it is not surprising to see the leader dressed in a ruffled colonial shirt, doublet, and boots, performing a *zapateado* atop the tree of life to honor the four sacred directions. When the tradition went into deep decline, Bruce “Pacho” Lane, the same film maker, documented its revival more than three decades later (Lane 2009). These core themes of tradition, innovation, and cultural recovery are at the heart of Mexican *danza* as well as *baile*.

Matachines and *Morismas* are twin choreographic traditions that emerged from the Conquest of Mexico and portray it to this day, performing on patronal feasts, often consecutively, on the same day. Dancers, soldiers, and equestrian display provide people with a continuously evolving narrative and critique about their origins, their identity, and their future. Where *Morisma* narratives are rich with scripted texts, *Matachines* dances and the patronal saints days overflow with choreography and a kinetic play of symbols. Words become contextual and hover at the edges of the festivals. Dramatic actions described subsequently conspire to contest and dismantle the colonizing visions of subordination and submission (Gandert & Lamadrid 2000). *Matachines* is the tradition of ritual *danza* that dramatizes the interactions of Christianity and Native religion across Greater Mexico in a family of dances called *Moriscas* (Kurath 1949), part of the “culture of conquest” (Cohen 1993; Foster 1960). Some scholars trace the tradition to Europe (Romero 1999), while others insist on its Indigenous origins (Treviño & Gilles 1994). The *Matachines* or *danzantes* are spirit warriors, 10 or 12 in number, said to represent the Disciples of Christ or the tribes of Israel or Mexico. Their dance is accompanied and animated with distinctive *sones* of violin and guitar. Their costumes include a headdress decorated with saints, hung with *flecós* or fringe to hide the face, festooned with ribbons down the back, and shaped like a bishop’s mitre. The term for it is *cupil*, the Náhuatl word for crown, for it is constructed not like the mitre but like the crowns that Aztec nobles wore, as pictured in the codices. The *guaje* or gourd rattle they carry in the left hand is another word of Náhuatl origin, further evidence of cultural hybridity. In the right hand dancers carry a *palma*, literally a palm frond or trident sword said to represent the Holy Trinity, which they swirl in elegant arabesques. In traditional iconography, the palm is also a symbol of martyrdom.

In the dance itself, two lines of *danzantes* interact with allegorical characters, including *Monarca* the king, the grotesque *abuelos* or ancestral guardians, and *la Malinche*, the little girl who represents the first Christian convert, an angelic figure who is thought of as the wife or even daughter of *Monarca* (Harris 1996). In the north, for the Pueblo Indians, he is associated with the Aztec king Moctezuma, who represents the beginning of historical times and was the first teacher of the dance. The various movements of the *danza*, as many as nine, are named for choreographic elements or for the main character featured. *La entrada* or entry is the first movement, and *La cruz* features the dancers in a cross formation. *El Monarca* focuses on the animated dancing of the king, while *La Malinche* highlights her crisscross journey between the lines of dancers. *El Torito* (the little bull) enacts the demise of the bull. Early in the dance, while the dancers kneel, as if dead or in another dimension, a seated *Monarca* lends his *palma* (hand) to Malinche who passes it in mysterious circular motions around his outstretched hands in a moment often called *La conversión de Moctezuma* for the moment of his conversion to Christianity. The distinctive northern style features the pursuit, death, and castration of *Torito* in the performances of the upper Río Grande valley (Champe 1983; S. Rodríguez 1991; 1994; 1996).

People mostly watch in silence or laugh at the antics of the *abuelos* (the grandparents). They also make observations about the struggle between good and evil, said to be represented by the

bull. Occasional comments can be poignant and hint at deeper meanings, such as this comment a child made to his father at the Alcalde, New Mexico *Matachines* festival in 2009:

Papá, ¿por qué le cortan los huevos (Dad, why do they cut the balls
al torito, si ya está muerto? off the little bull if he's already dead?)

No response. It is obvious that the normal practices of animal husbandry do not include the castration of animals after their death. There are symbolic dimensions here, since the bull is the totem animal of Spain brought during the conquest and associated with the conquest in the Native imagination. The choreographic narrative and “hidden transcript” of the *Matachines* is complex indeed, representing spiritual encounters and the coming of Christianity (Lamadrid 2010b).

The *Chichimeca* or southern style known also as *Danza de la flecha* or Dance of the Arrow is found in many regions south of Las Cruces, New Mexico (Sklar 2001) and further south along the Río Grande valley, and into northern Mexico (Cantú 2009; 1992). Dancers wear reed-laced skirts and grotesquely masked ancestral *viejos* interact with multiple Malinches. The cast features fewer characters, less complicated choreography, and lively, more frenetic music with loud drums and occasionally a violin (Cantú 2009; 1992). The *danzantes* are brightly dressed, usually in red, with distinctive *naguillas* or kilts, hung with reeds that jangle with the movements of the dance. The Virgin of Guadalupe is often embroidered on the back of shirts or vests, or present on *paños* or kerchiefs worn from the shoulders. A gourd or metal rattle marks the tempo, along with the *flecha*, a stylized clacker that resembles a bow and arrow and is aimed and shot, although the arrow is fixed and never takes flight. Headgear is either a headband or stereotypical plains-style feathered war bonnets. Dance leaders are called *capitanes* or sometimes *comanches*. Young girls also dressed in red or other bright colors play the Malinche, with as many as three or four in a dance. The ancestral *viejos* or old men of the dance wear terrifying simian or monster masks, carry whips, interact with Malinches and the crowd, and are overpowered and “killed” by the dancers. The movements of the dance are varied, often named after animals, and are combined in varied ways, depending on the symbolism or iconography of the feast day. Crowds watch in silence or laugh at the *viejos*. Side comments are often revealing. While watching the *Matachines* at the Feast of San Juan in San Juan del Valle, Chihuahua, on 24 June 24, 2009, an audience member observed how and why particular movements of the bows resembled wings beating:

Hacemos la danza del gavián (We do the dance of the dove hawk
para honrar el águila de San Juan. to honor the eagle of Saint John.)

The symbolism of the dance is not esoteric, but is not always so specifically articulated. The totem animal of San Juan the Evangelist here is called up to honor San Juan the Baptist on his feast (Lamadrid 2010b).

Also widely dedicated to San Juan and Santiago, the warrior patron saint of Spain, the *Morismas* are the dramatic and dance pageants of *Moros y cristianos*, the Christians and the Moors from Spain that have been enacted in Greater Mexico from the sixteenth century to the present (Harris 2000; Baumann 1996; Díaz Roig 1983). Three of the largest in history were staged in 1539 in Mexico City, Tlaxcala, and Oaxaca to celebrate the Conquest of Rhodes and other good news of key military victories against the Ottoman Empire. The righteous Christian armies were represented by thousands of costumed Indian warriors. They had not celebrated the customary *guerra florida* or ceremonial War of the Flowers for more than a decade. The key roles of the invading Moors were played by the Spanish. In Tlaxcala, Hernán Cortés himself played the

Gran Sultán, a dramatic irony not lost on the natives. The settlement of New Mexico by Juan de Oñate in 1598 was celebrated on several occasions by skirmishes of *Moros y cristianos* (Lamadrid 2003, pp. 20–26). Originally, conquest dramas were meant to impress the natives in an emphatic “theater of persuasion.” *Morismas* in modern times are now an expression of cultural resistance and militancy. The New Mexico *Morisma* is still an equestrian spectacle while *La morisma de Bracho* in Zacatecas and its vast host of participants can no longer accommodate horses. Both northern *Morismas* are thoroughly scripted and choreographed. Both are staged in close proximity to *Matachines* dances, which is spelled *Matlachines* in Zacatecas.

In twentieth-century performances of *Moros y cristianos* in Alcalde and Chimayó, New Mexico, after a furious battle with “50,000 soldiers” represented by about 20 mounted actors, nobody is killed. The Christian King Alfonso refuses to pay ransom for the cross that the Moors have stolen and wins it back, along with the soul of the Sultán after the battle. In this wishful scene, he has had many names across the centuries, including Boabdil, Ozman, Suleiman, Selim, and more lately Sadaam and Osama. The Sultán embraces the cross and pleads for mercy:

Cristiano, ya tu valor
me tiene a tus pies postrado,
te pido por vuestra cruz
y por tu Dios venerado,
que me des la libertad
que ya estoy desengañado,
que solo tu Dios es grande,
Mahoma todo engaño.

(Christian, your valor
has me prostrate at your feet,
I ask you by your cross
and for the God you venerate
that you give me my liberty,
for I have seen the light
for only your God is great,
Mohammed all deception.)

(Lamadrid 2003, p. 23)

He repents, renounces Mohammed, and is welcomed as a new convert to Christianity. The “official transcript” in the minds of the settlers is all about the propagation of the faith. The “hidden transcript” in the minds of the Indian audience is more practical: embrace the cross and your lives will be spared. By modern times, Moroccan cultural historian Anour Majid reminds us that we are all still *moros y cristianos* (2009).

In contemporary performances of *La morisma de Bracho*, a quite distinct performance of *Moros y cristianos* is celebrated. The *Cofradía* or lay religious organization de San Juan Bautista in Zacatecas, which numbers over 15,000 members, stages a *sangre y fuego* (blood and fire) production, the metaphor for military campaigns of no quarter. The performance of *La morisma* takes place during three days, involves 8,000 costumed participants, and culminates on 28 August, the feast day of La Degollación de San Juan, the martyrdom and decapitation of John. The voluminous script begins with Charlemagne, Roland, and the Twelve Peers of France, and ends eight centuries later with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Battle of Lepanto. Rivers of blood flow, clouds of gunpowder smoke hang over the battlefield littered with “corpses” after each engagement. In the last scene, within the last 15 minutes, Sultán Argel de Ozmán is defeated in battle by Armando de Guzmán, repents, converts to Christianity, is baptized, and is then beheaded. In a triumphal procession, his head is paraded around the battlefield impaled on a lance. The iconographic counterpart in the fiesta is the severed head of John the Baptist displayed in niches in local churches (Lamadrid 2010b).

Why are the two *Morismas* so different? In Zacatecas the emphasis and the official transcript is on suffering, victory, and martyrdom. There seems to be no “hidden transcript” because there are no Indian viewers. The population of Zacatecas is almost entirely *mestizo*, since the local Indians were eliminated in the Chichimeca wars of the sixteenth century. In New Mexico, where

there were and are Indians present, a different aspect of San Juan is observed with his patronal feast on 24 June, where the Baptist saint presides as the lord of the summer solstice, a solar feast common to all religions. In recent years, the New Mexican *Moros y cristianos* has been celebrated on the feasts of Santa Cruz (the Holy Cross) and Santiago. What began as a triumphalist display of power in colonial times has evolved into a discourse of resistance for Nuevo Mexicanos, reclaiming the Spanish language and expressing pride in culture and homeland now dominated by Anglo Americans. Across the valley in San Juan Okeh Owingeh Pueblo, the saint is honored with ritual bathing, processions, and Summer Buffalo and Comanche dances.

In other Mexican performance traditions, such as the *Chichahuales* skirmishes of Aguascalientes (Lamadrid 2010b), the battles between Moors and Christians have no spoken script. *Chichahual* derives from the Náhuatl “strong and determined,” and are the whiteface masked soldiers of Santiago. The moors there are simply called “*moros*.” In the celebration of the *Tastoanes* fiestas in Jalisco, Zacatecas, and Aguascalientes, the Moors are replaced by Indigenous Tastoanes, an adaptation of the Náhuatl word *Tlatoani*. These Indigenous leaders or wisemen are the opponents of the Spanish saint and warrior patron, Santiago (Nájera-Ramírez 1997). In other Mexican regions such as Michoacán, pageants and battles give way entirely to *danza*, where music replaces text entirely. The sumptuously costumed *moros* and their trained horses synchronize their steps to highly orientalized *banda* music (González 1928). In the central Mexican district of Milpa Alta near Mexico City, the *Santiagueros* festival honors Santiago with dance, highly scripted pageant, and stylized battle (Socolov 1994). Most of these traditions celebrate Santiago on his feast day of 25 July, and the cultural and political transformation of Santiago from ferocious warrior to ally and protector of Indigenous people is complete. The Keres Pueblos of New Mexico also celebrate Santiago as the ally of the Indians in their dances (Lamadrid 2010a).

From Aguascalientes south, the use of masks in ritual dance is more prevalent. In the *Matachines* tradition, only the monstrous *viejo* or *abuelo* ancestor character wears a facemask, although the faces of dancers are transformed by handkerchiefs and hanging fringes. The *moros* of the *Chichahuales* have grey masks and the Tastoanes have masks as beautiful as they are grotesque and terrifying. In Michoacán, the dignified *Negrito* or “black” dancers have idealized blackface masks. Said to represent the Three Kings dancing for the feast of the Epiphany, the *Cárpites* dance of the mountain villages features elegant and beautiful whiteface masks. The dancers typically are young, unmarried men reconnecting with their village identities before returning to their transnational lives in California and Chicago (Bishop 2009).

The most famous whiteface dancers of all are the dancers from Michoacán. Their frenetic and thunderous *zapateado* (foot-stomping) with canes and wood-soled *huaraches* has electrified national and international audiences since the 1920s (Hellier-Tinoco 2005; 2011). A young Tarascan (Purépecha) *campesino*, Nicolás Bartolo Juárez, traveled from his native island of Jarácuaro to Mexico City in close collaboration with two ethnomusicologists working for the Secretaría de Educación Pública, with the idea of adapting and reviving the ancient Indigenous tradition of the masked ancestor dances for a wider audience. He is responsible for establishing the choreography for the dance. The basic narrative is the mediation function of the ancestral spirits. With their comic, wrinkled white faces, they seem to be satirizing the Spaniards. They are actually mediating the Conquest, the process of *mestizaje* itself, modernization, the coming of the railroad and highway, and the contradictions of tourism. All of these subjects are addressed in the pantomime movements of the dance set to the syncopated rhythms and string band instrumentation of the *son michoacano*. Other dances have been added to the set, according to the ambitions of the *viejitos* dance groups. One of many *viejitos* group from Jarácuaro is dedicated to the goals of Alcoholics Anonymous. All of the members were young, recovering alcoholics who owed their lives to the *viejitos*, since alcohol is an occupational hazard for musicians and

dancers in traditional fiestas. The humor that makes the dance so appealing emerges from the extraordinary energy of the dancers, who are apparently crippled old men. Based on historic old-face ancestor masks, the *viejitos* dance was tailor made for the broadest nationalistic purposes and cultural goals of the *folklórico* movement. By 1955, every grade school student in the Southwest and beyond had seen and learned about the dance even though few had any idea where they came from. Back in Michoacán, villagers fell in love with the *viejitos* and adopted them into village ritual festival contexts. The dance has benefitted them economically and spread the fame of the traditional culture and folk arts of Lake Pátzcuaro far and wide. In 1937, President Lázaro Cárdenas invited the *viejitos* to the capital to perform on the stage of the Palacio de Bellas Artes. In the 1980s, presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, his son, organized a series of national and international tours called “Fiesta Michoacana” to consolidate his cultural credentials as a populist (Hellier-Tinoco 2005; 2011).

The lesser known *huehues* of Huehuetla, Puebla is another dance of the elders that dramatizes the production of Indigenous knowledge about the sociocultural process of *mestizaje*. Like the *viejitos*, the *huehues* use comical whiteface masks, but dress in exaggerated Western-style clothes. They dance a provisional *zapateado* as they dramatize their story through pantomime, explained in the film *Tree of Knowledge* (Lane 1983) by a *mestizo*: “As they travel through a forest, a group of Totonacs find a house inhabited by *mestizos* who teach them by means of symbols, how to live in harmony with nature and benefit from European culture without sacrificing their own native culture.” The teachings, fully choreographed, and the dance are performed on the same feast day as the *voladores* (pole flyers), the Quetzal dance, and the *Santiagueros*. The film contrasts Native pedagogy with public schooling, which utilizes an institutionalized notion of *mestizaje* that discourages Native culture and language and promotes integration into national culture. Indigenous traditional *danza* is discouraged and uniformed students march on national holidays, salute the flag, and participate in “typical” *folklórico* dances from other regions of the nation.

The wisdom of the elders, the *huehues*, the *abuelos*, the *viejitos* is invested in ritual *danza* across all of Greater Mexico, north and south. Recognized by UNESCO as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage, the *Güegüense* dance drama of Nicaragua features an eighteenth-century satirical play originally written in Nahuatl-Castellán, the bilingual lingua franca of Spanish colonial times. As his name implies, the main character or *Güegüense* is an Indigenous elder who outwits Spanish colonial officials with humor and subterfuge. Dance is completely integrated into the action. Curiously, the masked dancers are all *machos*, which translates into “mules with male parts.” Their leader is *Macho Ratón*, meaning the “mule who is dark colored like a mouse,” the satirical symbol of *mestizaje*. According to pre-scientific race theory, miscegenation between human “races” was believed to produce similar results as the equine union of a mare and a burro. Mules are suitable for hard work, a metaphor for slavery, but they are sexually barren. Some Nicaraguan Americans celebrate the *Güegüense* in the United States, but like other Mexican ritual dance dramas, they do not transplant very successfully, since the meanings they generate depend on cultural contexts that produced them.

On the far northern frontier, in the upper Río Grande region at the village of Alcalde in the Española valley, another eighteenth-century folk play is performed in association with the *Matachines* dance, complete with its playful *abuelos*. The equestrian play is *Los Comanches*, which is structurally an updated *Morisma*, and features *arengas* or battle speeches and skirmishes portraying the defeat of the famous warchief *Cuerno Verde*, named for the Green Horn headdress for which he was famous. The mythical Moors of the past are substituted with the formidable Comanche enemies of the present. Further north still, a complex of Hispano-Comanche dances is celebrated by the *Genízaro* (Hispanicized Native) community of Rancho de Taos, which includes *Llaneros*, plains traveling dances; *El Águila*, the eagle dance; *El Espantao* (frightened one),

a shield dance that dramatizes the element of surprise in combat; *El Torito*, a plains style bull dance that features sparring, rutting buffalos *El Cautivo*, the captive, and others. All of the Río Grande and Western Pueblos also celebrate the historic relations of enmity and friendship with the Comanches (Lamadrid 2003, pp. 135–178). All these examples illustrate the continuity and revival of dance tradition, but there also are many examples of invention of tradition for more ideological purposes.

In the heady days after the Revolution, when Mexico was reinventing the nation and reimaging its culture, the new cultural and educational establishment called on its workers and teachers, intellectuals and artists to explore the panorama of cultures, not to celebrate diversity, but to cultivate unity. Dance became one of the most spectacular articulations of *mestizaje* as national cultural policy. It was no coincidence that the great Amelia Hernández, the founder of the Ballet Folklórico Nacional, was the daughter of a revolutionary general. The process of identifying regional *danza* and *baile* to international stages and into the school curriculum is widely identified by critics as a kind of “hegemonic folklorization” (Hellier-Tinoco 2005, p. 49). Hernández was always clear in articulating her artistic goals and choreographing her repertoire. Inspiring national pride was more closely linked to creating spectacle rather than ethnography. She simplified and unburdened *folklórico* from its original performance contexts and used classical dance training to elevate and dignify the art of her national company.

A fascinating counterpart in the *folklórico* movement has the emergence of the *Guelaguetza*, a large festival venue in the city of Oaxaca that transcends local systems of regional feast day celebrations and brings together dancers from the entire region (Goertzen 2009). In the Zapoteca language, the term refers to the pre-Hispanic system of trade between city-states up and down the Pacific coast. It was not only economic commerce, but cultural and religious. The archeological record demonstrates a wide spread exchange of fine goods, accompanied by diplomacy and intermarriage (Pohl 2017). The colorfully costumed modern *Guelaguetza* dances are a metaphor for cultural reciprocity and exchange, a well-chosen metaphor for the lofty goals of *baile folklórico*.

When *folklórico* dances cross the U.S. border, they generate yet another layer of signification: the maintenance of cultural pride and Chicano identity. The emergent ethnographic documentation and inquiry into *folklórico* in the United States is rich with testimony and participant observation (Nájera-Ramírez 2009; R. Rodríguez 2009). All dance is a corporeal exercise in imagined community, and, for Chicanos, learning and performing their national dances fortifies their *Mexicanidad*. Russell Rodríguez has reported that a cohort of promoters and “self entitled authorities” emerged with, a kind of

policing of misunderstood, (re)created traditions or folklorizations. . . . The practice of *folklórico* within the United States has created a space for cultural transmission that is not practiced in a live fashion; rather, it is rehearsed, choreographed, and performed the same manner as musical theater. Within this approach to *folklórico*, cultural information that is often thin and lacking nuance is passed on to students without any type of critical analysis. (pp. 344–345)

Folklórico dances were so thoroughly disseminated through school curricula that practically every Mexican and Mexican American school child has some familiarity with the medley of dances chosen to celebrate the diverse dance traditions of Mexico, complete with regional soundtracks. *La Bamba* represents the lively *Jarocho* traditions of Veracruz, with regional instrumentation, and the added advantage of being a bilingual crossover Rock n’ Roll hit, thanks to Ricardo Valenzuela, a.k.a. Richie Valens. The sacred Yaqui-Yoeme *Danza del venado* secularizes

the sacred Deer Dance into a kind of muscular ballet. The colorful *Jarabe tapatío* or Mexican hat dance and its signature *son* signifies not only the region of Guadalajara but the nation. The *viejitos* are Michoacán incarnate, full of humor and wisdom. Northern states like Durango, Chihuahua, and Coahuila feature the nineteenth-century international dance crazes, including *valses*, *polkas*, *chotices*, *mazurkas*, and *redovas* (Mexicanized waltzes, polkas, schotisches, and Polish mazurkas and redovas). Every region is colorfully represented. In Mexico, the Secretaría de Educación Pública was deeply involved in dissemination of dance. In the United States, the Depression-era Works Progress Administration Writers Projects employed cultural workers to collect traditional culture across the Southwest and develop new curricula based on folk culture. Mexican folk dances were taught extensively in the schools of New Mexico, along with a local repertory of nineteenth-century dances shared with northern Mexico. Dances like *La Varsoviana* (“Put your little foot”), the *Cuna* or cradle dance, *Cuadrillas* or eighteenth-century square dances, and local variations on waltzes and polkas became the signature pieces of the Nuevo Mexicano repertory, curiously mislabeled with the Anglo initiated term “Spanish Colonial” (Sedillo 1945). There was actually some Spanish dance in the mix, due to the presence of some naturalized Flamenco families who emigrated to New Mexico at the turn of the twentieth century.

With the Chicano movement in the 1970s, another notable fantasy heritage was born with the arrival of the *azteca* dance. Although the pre- and post-conquest codices, particularly the *Florentine Codex*, richly document the ceremonial costumes of the Aztecs, very little of their original music or choreography survived. After the success of the Mexican Revolution in the early twentieth century, the Mexican cultural establishment commissioned dance groups to fill the gaps in their new cultural agenda. The *conchero* dances revived the armadillo-shell stringed instruments of colonial times and reinvented a Native tradition (González Torres 2005; Rostas 1991, pp. 3–17). A hierarchy of leadership includes *Capitanes de danza* or Captains of the Dance, who obey the *Generales*, who claim lineage and lore to before the Conquest. The *danzantes* observe a complex calendar of dances and pilgrimage. Annually, many thousands travel from far and wide to Chalma for four days of ritual and dance.

After several decades, groups of dancers broke away in search of pre-Hispanic forms without “European contamination,” symbolized by stringed instruments. The new *danza azteca* rejected strings in favor of drums and aerophones (Huerta 2009, pp. 3–18). With their frenetic movements and minimal dress, these contemporary dancers scandalized the *concheros*. North of the border, *azteca* groups created a cultural sensation for the Chicano movement. According to the participants in this cultural renaissance, their tradition dates to ancient times, well before the Spanish conquest (Garner 2009, pp. 414–437). The popularity of these revival groups erased the memory of the cultural legacy of those other Mesoamerican Natives, the Tlaxcalans and others, who participated in the exploratory and colonization expeditions to northern New Spain. The extraordinary northern journey of *danza azteca* and pilgrimage of new Chicano *danzantes* south is documented in the ethnographic film *The Eagle’s Children* (Lane 1998). One of the most hybrid moments is an *azteca* dance in San Diego’s Chicano Park with a baseball game going on in the background.

Traditions of dance in Greater Mexico are in constant evolution. The only constant in the equation of history and culture is memory, which braids all of these multiple expressive threads together. In the *presente perpetuo*, that perpetual present that we all inhabit, it is dance, movement in time that defines us. Ethnographers live and work in communities in which Indigenous, colonial, and postcolonial traditions coincide. Music and dance from the deep past remind the people of their Indo-Hispano roots, their *antiguo mestizaje* or old *mestizo* tradition. Music and dance from the present remind them of their cultural present, the *nuevo mestizaje* or new

mestiza/o tradition with even newer cultural elements in the mix (García & Lamadrid 2012). In the morning of the Bernalillo Fiesta in New Mexico, *danzantes* for San Lorenzo perform corporeal prayers to the ancient songs of the *Matachines*. That same evening at the *baile*, they dance to the Polca San Lorenzo and the latest Chicano Rock n' Roll (García 2009).

Every weekend evening, Chicano dances across the cities of the Southwest, the Midwest, and beyond follow their own grammar and syntax as musicians direct and respond to the moods and inter-cultural expectations of their dancers. Musician, scholar, and participant observer Manuel Peña writes in "Ritual Structure in a Chicano Dance" that social dance in Greater Mexico is "highly selective, expressive behavior, [and] must clearly be seen as symbolically motivated. How else can we interpret the choice of Chicano music and dance, which by their uniqueness lend identity to the group?" (1980, p. 65). Ultimately, the energy of expressive culture and the movements of *baile* and *danza* remind people who they are, where they come from, and how they can negotiate the changes the future will bring them.

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