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One of the most notable features of saint's-day and Christmas celebrations in New Mexico is the *danza de los matachines*. Its cryptic pantomiming, exotic costumes, and unusual musical style have intrigued folklorists and anthropologists for the past hundred years. Those who have conjectured about the history and origins of the dance have tended to conclude that Spanish soldiers, missionaries, or colonists brought it from Europe to the New World and modified it for evangelizing purposes. Evidence frequently cited for this view includes the tall headdress used in northern New Mexico, which bears some resemblance to a bishop's miter; the dance's mock combat, which is presumed to derive from a Spanish folk drama (*moros y cristianos*); the name "matachines," which is variously assigned a Spanish, Italian, or Arabic etymology; the music, often harmonized and played on violin and guitar; the existence of entertainers in Renaissance Europe who were known in Spain as los matachines; and the overall similarity of the various *morisca* dances of Europe to the New World matachines dance.[1]

Some New Mexican oral traditions, however, claim a Mexican Indian, or at least Native American, origin for the matachines dance. These traditions seem to be strongest among the Pueblo Indians. In the predominantly Spanish-speaking towns, these traditions have been disappearing and are all but gone. This is partly because of the dissemination of the European-origin hypotheses, which have encouraged people to reject what little oral tradition remains. This can be seen in the following account by folklorist Cleofas Jaramillo, who grew up in northern New Mexico around the turn of the century.

Adrian Treviño has been studying and collecting the music of *la raza* since the 1940s. He has written several monographs and has presented numerous lectures on the music and dance of the southwestern United States. Starting with his debut as a matachin at the age of seven, he has participated in and observed a wide variety of matachines dances in Mexico and the United States.

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> This aboriginal dance was brought from Mexico. Some say that it is an Aztec dance; others believe it to be of Spanish and Moorish origin. My mother told me that it was the dance danced by the Aztecs when they went to meet Montezuma on his visits to the different pueblos. The writer feels the Spanish and Aztec blend most likely, as evidenced by the names *Malinche* and *Monarca*. The name *Matachines* has been traced back to an Arabic word, meaning "maskers," suggesting that the dance drama was brought from across the sea.[2]

The writings of an earlier Hispanic New Mexican, Rafael Chacón, reiterate the view that the matachines dance was Aztec in origin: "Before the arrival of the Americans, the customs of the populace of New Mexico were very sane and sober. . . . Sometimes they danced *Los Matachines*, an Aztec dance offered by Montezuma to the Spanish at Cortez's conquest in 1519."[3]

Among the Pueblo Indians, there has been occasional ambivalence concerning the matachines dance's origin and especially concerning its means of arrival among the pueblos. Those who subscribe to a Spanish origin naturally associate the dance with colonial subjugation; the understandable result is a loss of enthusiasm for performing it.[4] On the whole, though, Pueblo Indian concepts concerning the matachines dance, as expressed in numerous variants of the same basic legend, involve an American Indian origin and ethos. Anthropologist Edward P. Dozier of Santa Clara Pueblo has summarized these concepts: "These ceremonies are believed to have been introduced by a mythological figure from the south; this was an Indian god who wore European clothes, foretold the coming of whites and suggested cooperation with them, but also advised the Pueblos to retain their customs and ceremonies. The god is often identified with Montezuma."[5] Pueblo Indian legends telling of Montezuma's participation in the matachines dance, and of him urging indigenous people to continue to perform it, have been amply documented.[6] These legends' identification of the matachines dance as the dance of Montezuma may help us determine its history.

We look first to Sonora, a state in northwestern Mexico. There, some Indian communities still perform the matachines dance in a style similar to that of northern New Mexico. Their version of the dance may have some connection with a Sonoran dance that Ignacio Zúñiga described in 1835 as a historical dance that commemorated "the passage of the Aztecs, and the coming of Moctezuma, whom they await as the Jews await the Messiah."[7] The reference to the coming of Moctezuma invites comparison with Pueblo Indian legends concerning the return of Montezuma.[8]

Matachines dance at San Juan Pueblo, probably during the 1930s. The *monarca* is at the right, sitting in a chair reserved for him. The other dancers are battling with *el toro* (the bull), a symbol of Spanish aggression and power. El toro's final undoing will be at the hands of the masked *abuelos* (grandfathers), clownish but authoritarian ancestral spirits who guide and protect the dancers. Photographed by T. Harmon Parkhurst. Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, negative number 3877.

Another description of a Sonoran dance was written by Ignaz Pfefferkorn, an eighteenth-century Jesuit missionary. The "Motezuma" dance bears a definite resemblance to the matachines dance.

> The Motezuma dance is solemn and majestic and originated with the Mexicans, after whose last monarch, Motezuma, the dance is named. . . . Each dancer carries in his left hand a bouquet of flowers, and in his right hand a thin short wand, fastened to the end of which is a little hollowed-out bottle gourd containing some pebbles which make a rattling sound when shaken. . . . Both rows begin to dance simultaneously, each person in his place. All move their feet together with the precision of soldiers marching in ranks. They advance slightly, retreat,

> turn to the left, and sometimes turn all the way about, keeping the most exact unison in these evolutions. All the while they beat time together with the gourds, which, sounding in rhythm with the music, create a not unpleasant harmony.[9]

The dance ended with a maypole braiding, as do present-day matachines dances in various localities, including the Yaqui communities of Sonora.[10]

The history of the matachines dance among other peoples of northern Mexico might be expected to parallel that in Sonora. In particular, the Rarámuri (Tarahumara) Indians of Chihuahua, who perform the matachines dance in a style similar to that of both Sonora and New Mexico, have been dancing in that style for well over two centuries. An eighteenth-century Jesuit missionary, Matthäus Steffel, made these observations:

> Seven or nine young men, wearing shoes, red hose, an apron, a loose shirt, their hair bound with a variety of scarves across their foreheads, and a large crown of feathers on their heads, a three-pronged wand of feathers in the right hand, and in the left hand a small gourd mounted on a small stick, containing small pebbles, and with deer-hoof clappers on their ankles, position themselves in two rows. One of them, the lead dancer or one of the row leaders, positions himself at the front. When the musicians, playing a small lute and violin, sound the first beat of the music, the lead dancer begins, and by the third beat all the dancers are in motion. They make a rattling noise with their gourds on each beat; and at the same time, by attractive movements with the wand of feathers in their right hands, they make perfectly synchronized swings almost over the head, almost to the ground, without creating chaos.[11]

The Rarámuri matachines no longer wear the feather headdress, although they still wear brightly colored stockings. Both of these items are features of another style of matachines dance, which we will designate the Chichimecan style. Whether the dance as first introduced to the Rarámuri included these features, or whether they represent a temporary or localized borrowing, we cannot say for certain. We do know, from a missionary's brief notation in 1752, that the Jesuit mission at the Rarámuri settlement of Norogachi had outfits for nine "matachines" dancers; these outfits included stockings and shoes. Another brief notation from the same mission, made in 1736, inventories the components of four "matachines" costumes, including stockings, shoes, lace, head scarves, and feathers.[12]

Our search for an earlier dance of Montezuma takes us across the Atlantic Ocean, to the cathedral of Seville. There, the choirboys known as *seises* still dance in front of the altar during Catholic holy days. The seises have been dancing in Seville at least since 1508. In 1693 they performed a "dance of Montezuma."[13] What would have inspired the invention or re-creation of a dance of Montezuma in such a traditionally European ecclesiastical setting? Perhaps somebody from Seville had seen one of the Indian dances performed by the native students at the Colegio de San Gregorio, a Jesuit school in Mexico City. One dance in particular was "of a novelty that has given pleasure to many persons of high degree, including Nobles and Archbishops who have come from Spain to see it performed." It was so popular that a prominent ecclesiastic of Nueva España, Andrés Pérez de Ribas, saw fit to describe it in detail.

> I shall tell here of a particular festival which is most attractive, as well as novel for persons coming from Spain or other countries, which is called the Dance of the Emperor Moctezuma. This dance, once performed for the pagan people, now is dedicated to the King of Kings, Christ our Lord.
>
> The most singular feature of this festival is the manner of dress and adornment of the dancers, this dress being in the style worn by the ancient Aztec Princes. . . . On the heads of the dancers are placed pyramid shaped diadems covered with gold and precious stones, in the manner of those worn by their Emperors. . . . In the right hand they carry what is called by them an *ayacaztli*, which is a small brightly painted gourd filled with pebbles, which when shaken produces an agreeable sound. . . . A small drum which in their language is called *Teponoztli* . . . guides all the music and dance. . . . To the instruments above described the Spaniards have added some of their own. . . .
>
> Those participating in the central dance are usually fourteen in number, besides the dancer who impersonates the Emperor Moctezuma. . . . The appearance of the Emperor is heralded by music and singing. The song translated runs somewhat like this: "Appear, Mexicans; dance Tocontin, for we now have with us the King of Glory." The three syllables of the word To–con–tin are sung to the rhythm of the beating of the drum. For this reason the entire dance is sometimes given the name of Tocontin.
>
> The remaining dancers appear in two rows. . . . The movement of their dance is always slow and dignified, including not only the feet, but arms and hands, always waving in the same motion the long clusters of plumes and shaking their ceremo-

Matachina dancers of Cochiti Pueblo performing at the 1920 Santa Fe Fiesta. The monarca has just completed the *levantada del monarca* (awakening of the king), which represents the return of Montezuma. In the next part of the dance, he will summon the kneeling dancers to arise and join his ranks. Photographed by H. C. Tibbetts. Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, negative number 52719.

nial gourds with rattles. The object which they wave may be either of feathers, or of branches covered with aromatic flowers.

At the end of this group dance each dancer takes his position to await the coming of the Emperor. The person representing the Emperor then advances with majestic dignity to take his place on the throne, while all others maintain the rhythm of the dance. . . .

After the dancers have performed for a little time, the Emperor arises to perform a dance.[14] . . . Meanwhile all the others remain stationary in their positions, bowing down to the ground. And as he passes between the two files, each one in turn, as a sign of humility, applies to his feet the instrument that he holds in his hands, all the *ayacaztles* ceaselessly keeping up their rhythm for him. . . . The two choruses continue with new dance steps; and although these are not very different from the others, all of them are very pleasing and not tiresome.[15]

The *danza de los matachines* at a Spanish-speaking community in the Taos area, ca. 1910. The matachines are performing the *ofrenda de la palma* (offering of the dance wand) in honor of Malinche. This version of the ofrenda is similar to the *brincada de las palmas* (stepping over the dance wands) performed by the matachines of San Ildefonso Pueblo and by the matachines of the nearby community of El Rancho, in which the monarca steps over the palmas held out toward his feet. Photographed by Royal A. Prentice. Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, negative number 110557.

Those who have seen the matachines dance in northern New Mexico will have recognized numerous characteristics of that dance in the preceding description, both in individual detail and in overall pattern. It seems highly likely that the *tocontin* performed by the San Gregorio students is an ancestor of the present-day matachines dance.

In present-day Mexico, there are isolated instances of the terms tocontin and tocotin to designate various dances that are more or less similar to the matachines dance. The terms were more commonly used in previous centuries, as evidenced by the number of early descriptions that are extant. Francisco Clavijero gave this short description in the late eighteenth century: "The Indians of Mexico still have an ancient dance, popularly known as the tocotin, very attractive, decent, and dignified, which is performed in the fiestas at the Catholic churches."[16]

A seventeenth–century British ecclesiastic, Thomas Gage, made the following observations:

> There is no town in the Indies great or small (though it be of twenty families) which is not dedicated thus unto Our Lady or unto some saint. . . . Before this [saint's] day cometh, the Indians of the town two or three months have their meetings at night, and prepare themselves for such dances as are most commonly used amongst them. . . . They are that day well apparelled with silks, fine linens, ribbons and feathers according to the dance; which first they begin in the church before the saint, or in the churchyard, and from thence all the octave, or eight days, they go from house to house dancing. . . .
>
> The chief dance used amongst them is called *toncontin*, which hath been danced before the King of Spain in the Court of Madrid by Spaniards, who have lived in the Indies, to shew unto the King somewhat of the Indians' fashions; and it was reported to have pleased the King very much. This dance is thus performed. The Indians commonly that dance it (if it be a great town) are thirty or forty, or fewer if it be a small town. They are clothed in white, both their doublets, linen drawers, and *aiates*, or towels [scarves], which on the one side hang almost to the ground. Their drawers and *aiates* are wrought with some works of silk, or with birds, or bordered with some lace. Others procure doublets and drawers and *aiates* of silk, all which are hired for that purpose. On their backs they hang long tufts of feathers of all colours, which with glue are fastened into a little frame made for the purpose and gilded on the outside; this frame with ribbons they tie about their shoulders fast that it fall not, nor slacken with the motion of their bodies. Upon their heads they wear another less tuft of feathers either in their hats, or in some gilded or painted head–piece, or helmet. In their hands also they carry a fan of feathers. . . . Their music and tune to this dance is only what is made with a hollow stock of a tree. . . . Thus they dance in compass and circle round about that instrument, one following another sometimes straight, sometimes turning about, sometimes turning half way, sometimes bending their bodies and with the feathers in their hands almost touching the ground, and singing the life of that their saint, or of some other.
>
> This *toncontin* the chief and principal only of the town do dance it; it was the old dance which they used before they knew Christianity, except that then instead of singing the saints' lives they did sing the praises of their heathenish gods.[17]

Aztec dancing during the rule of Moctezuma II. The drum on the left is.a teponaztli; the one on the right is a huehuetl. The eagle and jaguar costumes are identical to costumes that were worn in battle. After an illustration by a native artist in Diego Durán's *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España.*

A similar acknowledgment of the tocontin as an indigenous dance appeared in a book by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, one of the leading scholars of seventeenth-century Mexico. He described a huge procession, at the end of which was an elaborate triumphal float bearing an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe:

> All about this triumphal float the Indians were dancing one of the famous, royal *toncontines* of the ancient Mexicans. If their costumes in such ceremonial festivities were lavishly colorful in the days of their monarchs, how much more they would be on so auspicious an occasion as this one![18]

Several important aspects of the tocontin show up consistently in the above accounts: it was reputedly indigenous in origin; it was performed primarily by Mexican Indians; it was tolerated by ecclesiastical authorities at Catholic religious festivities; and it was quite popular. One

more description that confirms these aspects is of particular interest in that it contains a clue to the origin of the tocotin. The excerpt that follows is from a *novela pastoril* by Francisco Bramón, published in 1620.

> Many richly dressed youths in traditional Mexican Indian costume came out with flowers and instruments in their hands in an orderly and concerted manner and making profound reverences to the throne of the Virgin, which was unveiled. Afterwards, six principal *caciques,* who are nobles of fine lineage, emerged wearing extremely precious and highly embellished clothing. And after them, the Mexican king so richly dressed with a cape made of feathers and gold, extravagantly ornamented. . . . They brought out a variety of instruments that are used in this dance, among which one called the *teponaztli* is the most indispensable. . . . In concert with these instruments, the group of seven began an attractive dance that the Mexican Indians call *netotiliztli*, which in our own vernacular is known as . . . *tocontin*; for which the written word cannot convey the grace and elegance revealed by those who dexterously delight in it with their pleasing turns, reverences, entrances, crossings, and passings, as they were performed so marvelously by those seven Mexican Indians. . . . During the dance, some clever musicians sang to the sound of the instruments. . . . To much enthusiasm and approval by the observers, they finished the beautiful dance, making a profound reverence to the Virgin.[19]

Now we have another name, *netotiliztli*, by which to continue tracing the history of the matachines dance. The following netotiliztli description, by Francisco López de Gómara, has obvious parallels with the tocontin descriptions above. At the same time, it establishes the netotiliztli as a prehispanic dance connected with Moctezuma II.

> Another pastime of Moctezuma's much enjoyed by the court and even by the whole city (because it was very good, long drawn out, and open to the public), was a dance performed after he had dined, either at his command or [voluntarily] by the townspeople for his service and pleasure. It was called *netotelixtli* [sic], a dance of rejoicing and merriment. . . . The songs are joyful and merry, or they are ballads in praise of past kings, reciting their wars, victories, deeds, and the like. . . . When the time comes to start, . . . the dancers come on, dressed in rich mantles woven of many colors, white, red, green, and yellow; in their hands, bunches of roses or plumes, or fans of feathers and gold. . . . At the beginning the dancers sing ballads and

Sixteenth-century Aztec dancing, with some European influence evident in costuming. The sashes and tunics of the two dancers at the left can still be seen in many matachines groups, as can some of the prehispanic elements such as the capes, gourd rattles, and headdresses. After an illustration by a native artist in Juan de Tovar's *Relación del origen de los indios.*

> move slowly, playing, singing, and dancing quietly and with much gravity; but as they get warmer they sing popular ditties and gay songs; the dance is livelier, and they move quickly and vigorously. . . . At times also the buffoons come out, mimicking other peoples in dress and speech, playing the drunk, the fool, or the old woman, to the vast entertainment of the spectators.[20]

The description of the buffoons could serve as a description of the *abuelos* and *paragundias* at present-day matachines performances.

One additional feature that López de Gómara mentions is a double circle formation. This feature has been preserved in some matachines performances in Mexico and in some of the other religious dances of Mexico. Other descriptions of the netotiliztli mention the two straight lines that dominate the New Mexican formations. The Florentine Codex discusses an Aztec spring festival, *Tlacaxipeualiztli*, at which the characteristic double-line formation appears in the dancing. Moreover,

Moctezuma himself appears as the lead dancer. The line dancers are from Tenochtitlán and Tlatelolco, the two localities that provided professional dancers for Aztec festivities.[21]

> The Tenochca [and] the Tlatelolca joined, paired. The Tenochca formed two rows; also the Tlatelolca formed two rows. They went facing each other. Very slow was the dancing; very much in harmony went the dancing ["netotiliztli" in the original Nahuatl text]. Then there was emerging through the palace entrance; there was stopping. Montezuma brought them forth; he went dancing.[22]

Another source, Francisco Hernández's *Antigüedades de la Nueva España*, confirms that Tlacaxipeualiztli was one of four annual Aztec festivals at which the rulers participated in the netotiliztli. Hernández gives some additional information on the netotiliztli.

> Sometimes songs in praise of the king were sung, and sometimes songs praising some hero or chief, and occasionally praising the god in whose honor the festival was being celebrated, and in other songs they extolled their victories. . . . What can be said of the Cuextecayotl, in which they imitated the style of dancing, the ornamentation, and the appearance of the Huastecans, and acted out the war in which they were conquered, with highly appropriate noises and martial commotion? Or the Chichimecayotl, in which they commemorated the origin and early history of the Chichimecans. . . . The Huexocincayotl, that is, song of the Huexocincans, in which they celebrated the victory in which they prevailed over those people . . . Likewise the Otoncuicatl, Cuitlatecayotl, Michoacayotl, Tlaxcaltecayotl, Coyxcayotl,Tlacahoilizcuicatl, Cempoaltecayotl, Temazcalcuicatl, Anahoacayotl, Cozcatecayotl, Oztomecayotl, and others that give an honorable account of their triumphs over, and of the practices of, those people who are indicated by their particular names.[23]

All of these names for netotiliztli variants end in either *ayotl* or *cuicatl*. These suffixes also show up (in slightly different transcriptions) in the Florentine Codex, in a passage describing an Aztec festival.

> At that time the ruler determined and requested the kinds of song [*cujcatl* in the original Nahuatl text] to be intoned—perhaps after the manner of those of Cuextlan [*cuextecaiotl*], the

The coronation of Moctezuma I. The headdress that he is receiving is a *copilli*, a symbol of Aztec nobility. After an illustration by a native artist in Diego Durán's *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España*.

> drunkards of Cuextlan [*tlaoancacuextecaiotl*]; or of Huexotzinco [*vexotzincaiotl*] or Anahuac [*anaoacaiotl*]; or the merchants [*oztomecaiotl*]; or those of Nonoalco [*nonooalcaiotl*], or Cozcatlan [*cozcatecaiotl*]; or of the Tenime [*tenjcaiotl*]; or those of Tepetlan [*tepetlacaiotl*]; or the Chichimeca [*chichimecaiotl*]; or those of Metztitlan [*metztitlancalcaiotl*]; or the Otomi warriors [*otoncujcatl*] or of the Quaquata [*quatacujcatl*].[24]

The last-named people, the Quaquata, are discussed elsewhere in the same codex. They lived in an area known as Matlatzinco, and so they were also called Matlatzinca.[25] The second version is of interest to us because of the form the word "matachines" takes in central Mexico: "matlachines," which could also be transliterated as "matlatzines." The Matlatzincans were noted for their physical strength and for their agility as displayed in acrobatic dances.[26] There may have been some connection between them and the *juego de matachines* mentioned by several early colonial writers as having been a favorite entertainment of Moctezuma II.[27] The juego de matachines acrobats formed a human tower or pyramid. They then danced while still in this formation.

It is possible that European audiences saw these performers. Cortez is reported to have taken eight acrobats to Spain, where they and other Mexican Indians performed for royalty; they also traveled to Rome to perform for Pope Clement VII.[28] By the second half of the sixteenth century, European street, court, and theater entertainments included acrobats and battling pantomimers known as matachines, matassins, mattaccini, and the like.[29] The juego de matachines, going by various names, has survived to this century in some of the small towns of Europe, in connection with dances that bear some resemblance to the matachines dance, or its prototype, in the New World. Perhaps, then, we can partially reconstruct the early dance performances by examining one of the European juego de matachines survivals. In the 1930s, folklorist Rodney Gallop visited a town in Portugal and observed an enigmatic dance–drama that ended with a pyramid formation. The dance–drama essentially involved a mock battle between a group of savage ruffians and a group of men wearing ornamented headdresses similar to those worn in the northern New Mexican matachines dance. The well–headdressed group vanquished the savage ruffians and then formed the pyramid, apparently as an expression of triumph.[30]

Aztec chronicles record a major military victory over the Matlatzincans in the fifteenth century.[31] The text of one sixteenth–century Aztec song commemorating this victory is extant in a manuscript collection entitled *Cantares mexicanos*. The title of the song is *matlatzincayotl*.[32] Judging by the title, this is a netotiliztli text. Nahuatl scholar John Bierhorst believes that all ninety–one songs in the Cantares manuscript, including the matlatzincayotl, are probably various kinds of netotiliztli.[33] Bierhorst has analyzed the *Cantares mexicanos* texts and sees them as part of what he refers to as the Aztec ghost–song ritual.

> Basically, the Aztec ghost song may be described as a musical performance in which warrior–singers summon the ghosts of ancestors in order to swell their ranks and overwhelm their enemies. In the more elaborate examples the full ritual seems to have assumed the proportions of a mock battle, where singing, dancing, and drumming were equated with martial deeds. In response to the music, ghost warriors from paradise, led by ancestor kings, supposedly came "scattering," "raining," "flying," or "whirling" to earth.[34]

Several of these elements invite comparison with the present–day matachines dance. A whirling or turning motion of the body is characteristic of matachines dancing in the Southwest and in Mexico. So is a highly stylized mock battle, a feature that has led many scholars to confuse the dance with the European moros y cristianos pantomimes. As

for the ancestor kings, the main character in the northern New Mexican dance is the monarca, Montezuma. Moreover, the New Mexican matachines wear a style of headdress that emulates that worn by Aztec nobility, including Moctezuma I and Moctezuma II, and that was known as *copilli*. This headdress is known in northern New Mexico as a *cupil*. The term is simply a variant of the classical Nahuatl copilli.[35]

But where are the Matlatzincans? Both lines of dancers wear the headdress of the civilized Aztec nobility; none of the dancers are identifiable as members of a remote tribe. Perhaps the designation "matlatzin" was borrowed for other varieties of netotiliztli. Some variants would probably have been quite similar to the matlatzincayotl. Just as the matlatzincayotl commemorated a victory over the Matlatzincans, other kinds of netotiliztli also dealt with a past or anticipated victory over some enemy or rival. "Matlachines" may thus have become a generic term used in connection with any netotiliztli or netotiliztli–derived dance that involved Aztec warriors from the past. Perhaps a play on words was in operation here, as "matlatzin" can be construed in Nahuatl as "honorable warrior" or "spirit warrior."[36]

Throughout the texts of the *Cantares mexicanos*, it can be seen that these Aztec warrior spirits had an important mission. "Waves of incoming Mexican revenants, it is hoped, will establish a paradise on earth in which Mexicans, while embracing Christianity, will enjoy superiority over Spanish colonists or at least rise to equal status."[37] In the *Cantares mexicanos*, these warriors are sometimes called Chichimecans, apparently in reference to the bravery and ferocity of that tribe. At the same time, these passages may be glorifying the legendary Chichimec ancestry of the Aztecs.[38]

Various religious dances in central Mexico are known collectively as *las danzas chichimecas*, or individually by such names as *danza chichimeca* and *danza de los chichimecas*. While some "Chichimecan" dance groups wear Aztec–style costumes, other Chichimecan groups wear outfits decorated with several rows of short reed segments that form a sort of fringe. This style of costume is also worn by the matachines dancers of Coahuila, Zacatecas, Nuevo León, Aguascalientes, and parts of Chihuahua. These dancers customarily carry bows and arrows, which were associated with the Chichimecans in the sixteenth century.

The foregoing suggests that the matachines dance and a variety of other religious dances of Mexico stem at least partly from the version of the netotiliztli known as the *chichimecayotl*. According to Hernández, the chichimecayotl depicted the early history of the Chichimecans. There seems, however, to be much more to it than this. The text of one chichimecayotl preserved in the *Cantares mexicanos* urges a return to pre–Hispanic customs and ways of life. While the text is thick with the

kind of esoteric metaphor that concealed the ghost songs' meaning from Spanish authorities, the identification of Montezuma with the Chichimecans and as a leader in the resistance against the Europeans is clear in the opening lines.

> Turquoise gems as flowers, on this eagle mat of flowers. It's my prince, the Chichimec: it's Montezuma, whirling holy songs. Are they [Mexican ancestors] still in the Dead Land? *Yes*, in precious snares they're weeping at the Sacred Shore [paradise].
>
> Before your eyes he's sprouting jades, he's leafing out as plumes, he's blossoming as golden flowers: he's my prince, *my* Chichimec: he's Montezuma. *Are they still in the Dead Land? Yes, in precious snares they're weeping at the Sacred Shore.*
>
> Move out! Remember where arrows lay in the streets—in Barge Street, where plume drapes waved, in Blue Skirt's midst [Tenochtitlán]—where Chichimec lords were pitiable and grieving.
>
> "Ah! It's just for this that I've been born, that I've been brought to life—I, the Chichimec Montezuma."[39]

Montezuma's role in ghost song ideology is strikingly reminiscent of his role in Pueblo Indian legends. Besides being identified with the matachines dance, Montezuma is presented in these legends as a champion of the indigenous ways, who will return at some future time of need.[40] It would seem that Moctezuma/Montezuma, as a symbol of cultural survival, cultural resistance, and cultural affirmation, became established as such in the Mexican Indian dances of the mid-sixteenth century, and retained that significance throughout the development of the matachines dance and its dissemination northward.

How did the matachines dance travel so far north? European-origin proponents maintain that Franciscan missionaries taught it to the Pueblo Indians. Matachines scholar Flavia W. Champe disagrees; she quotes Edward P. Dozier: "We suggest that these ceremonies were introduced by Mexican Indians who . . . came with the colonists. These Indians held no positions of authority and hence provided no threat to the Pueblos. If these Indians presented the ceremonies to the Pueblos, then it is easy to understand why the Pueblos accepted them."[41] This theory would explain how the Pueblo Indians came to associate Montezuma with the matachines dance and with cultural affirmation. We believe that the

matachines dance may have been brought to the northern provinces of Nueva España by Mexican Indian *cofradía* members.[42] Cofradías were and are Catholic religious groups responsible for organizing the observances of saint's days and other Catholic holy days. Matachines groups in northern and southern New Mexico exhibit varying degrees of similarity with the dance cofradías of southern Mexico, especially those that perform las danzas chichimecas.[43]

Cofradías became widespread in central Mexico during the seventeenth century. A concurrent development was the establishment of a number of satellite communities in the northern provinces, composed at least partly of Indians from central Mexico.[44] The colonists to northern New Mexico recruited in the Zacatecas area included people from regions missionized by the Jesuits and their Indian assistants. They may also have included cofradía members from communities that preserved the native traditions of central Mexico, including the matachines dance. We think that these colonists may have established the matachines dance in the Santa Cruz and Bernalillo areas, as well as among the Pueblo Indians.[45]

During the subsequent three centuries, the performances have inevitably changed somewhat, resulting in different versions among the various New Mexican communities that still perform the matachines dance. But in each version, we can still see Montezuma leading and teaching the Native American people, returning from the spirit world, and leading other spirit warriors to victory over European dominance.

A Postscript on La Malinche

In the matachines dances of northern New Mexico, La Malinche brings Montezuma back to life; she also joins in the battle against European dominance.[46] This role is inconsistent with the scholarly consensus that she represents Cortez's Mexican Indian ally and translator, Malinalli, who was christened doña Marina by the Spaniards. This woman was also known as Malintzin or Malinche among the Mexicans, as were other women born on Malinalli, the twelfth day of the Aztec month.

The Malinche of Pueblo Indian legends was an Indian princess who became the wife or companion of Montezuma.[47] This is also her identity in the Oaxacan *danza de la conquista* or *danza de la pluma*, which incorporates matachines–like steps and formations.[48] Might not this Malinche be a supernatural being of some sort, inasmuch as she is the companion of the supernatural Montezuma? This possibility is strengthened by ethnographic evidence from the state of Tlaxcala in central Mexico. There, some Indians pay homage to, and request favors of, a spirit known as Malinche. She is believed to reside in a large volcanic

mountain. "It is believed by the Indians that the mountain is a beautiful woman who sits in a cave and lets her long hair stream down upon her shoulders; it is she who sends the rain and dew, the hail and snow, she is the protector of all."[49]

In the sixteenth century the mountain was known as *Matlalcueye*. Spanish missionaries were aware of her. "On this sierra large clouds gather and from these heavy rains fall, irrigating Tlaxcalan and the neighboring towns. . . . For this reason, before the coming of the Spaniards, the Indians had considered this sierra a suitable place to practice idolatry. Here they came from all the surrounding land to pray for rain, offering many devilish sacrifices in honor of the goddess, called *Matlalcueye*."[50]

At the turn of this century, a traveler to central Mexico could observe a parallel to the "devilish sacrifices" in honor of a female divinity, "In the dance that the Indians preserve as a tradition of the ancient Mexican dances, Malinche is the only female and she is offered certain reverences and ceremonies."[51] And in present–day northern New Mexico, the matachines still perform the *ofrenda de la palma* (offering of the dance wand) in honor of Malinche, ostensibly the personification of Christian goodness.

The Christian symbolism is present in Yaqui Indian matachines groups, in which the malinche represents the Virgin Mary.[52] In Nahuatl, the Spanish María becomes Malía (which also means "whirling one" in Nahuatl), as Nahuatl has no "r" sound.[53] With the addition of the honorific suffix *tzin*, or one of its variants, such designations as *Xanta Malietzin* occur.[54] The Malinche of the matachines and related dances may well be a syncretized form of the Virgin Mary and one or more of the female divinities of the Nahuatl people, such as Tonantzin.[55] Whether Europeanized and Christian or pre–Hispanic and indigenous, this powerful supernatural is a worthy companion and valuable ally of revenant forces fighting for cultural survival.

NOTES

1. The European-origin writings are too numerous to cite individually in this article. They are summarized in Flavia W. Champe, *The Matachines Dance of the Upper Rio Grande: History, Music, and Choreography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 1-6. Also see p. 17 for a discussion of the music of the matachines dance in northern New Mexico.

2. Cleofas M. Jaramillo, *Shadows of the Past (Sombras del Pasado)* (Santa Fe: Seton Village Press, 1941), 50.

3. *Legacy of Honor: The Life of Rafael Chacón, a Nineteenth-Century New Mexican*, compiled, translated, and annotated by Jacqueline Dorgan Meketa (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 74, 76.

4. See Elsie Clews Parsons, *Taos Pueblo* (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1936), 95.

5. Edward P. Dozier, "Spanish-Catholic Influences on Rio Grande Pueblo Religion," *American Anthropologist* 60 (1958), 444-45.

6. For an example, see Aurelio M. Espinosa, "Pueblo Indian Folk Tales," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 49 (1936), 97-101.

7. Jean B. Johnson, "The Opata: An Inland Tribe of Sonora," in *The North American Frontier: Readings in Archaeology, Ethnohistory, and Ethnography*, Basil C. Hedrick, J. Charles Kelley, and Carroll L. Riley, eds. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), 182.

8. For an overview of these legends, see Marta Weigle and Peter White, *The Lore of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 69-73, 307-08, 314-15.

9. Ignaz Pfefferkorn, *Sonora: A Description of the Province*, translated and annotated by Theodore E. Treutlein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1949), 182-83.

10. In northern New Mexico, the matachines of Picurís Pueblo braid long sashes around a pole during their annual Christmas day performances. In previous years, the matachines of Arroyo Seco and of Taos Pueblo have also performed pole braidings. In southern New Mexico, at Tortugas and Picacho, the matachines groups known as *danzantes* also perform pole braidings. For a description of the *danza de las fajas* at Taos Pueblo, see Flavia W. Champe, "The Matachines Pole Dance: Christmas Day at Taos Pueblo," in *Indians of New Mexico*, Richard C. Sandoval and Ree Sheck, eds. (Santa Fe: New Mexico Magazine, 1990), 85-87.

11. Translated from Matthäus Steffel, "Tarahumarisches Wörterbuch," in *Nachrichten von verschiedenen Ländern des spanischen Amerika*, ed. Christoph Gottlieb von Murr (Halle: Joh. Christian Hendel, 1809), 345-46.

12. Notations by Bartólome Braun and Luis Gonzalez Rodríguez, respectively, as cited by Lorenzo Gera in *Tarahumara: La sierra y el hombre* (México: SEP, 1982), 146-47.

13. *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Seises."

14. Andres Pérez de Ribas, *My Life Among the Savage Nations of New Spain*, Tomás Antonio Robertson, trans. (Los Angeles, California: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1968), 245-46. Minor modifications that are in keeping with the original text have been made.

15. Continuation of the same passage as above, as translated by John Bierhorst in *Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztecs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 89.

16. Translated from Francisco Javier Clavijero, *Historia antigua de México*, Mariano Cuevas, ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Porrua, 1958), 2:281.

17. Thomas Gage, *The English-American: A New Survey of the West Indies, 1648* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1928), 266-70.

18. Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora as translated by Irving A. Leonard in *Baroque Times in Old Mexico* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 129.

19. Translated from Francisco Bramón, *Los sirgueros de la Virgen sin original pecado* (México, 1620; reprinted, with a foreword by Agustín Yáñez, México: Universidad Nacional Autonoma, 1944), 108-11. Part of this passage is discussed by Luis Leal in "El 'Tocotin mestizo' de Sor Juana," *Abside: Revista de Cultura Mexicana*, vol. 18 (1954), 51-64. Leal points out the connection that Bramón makes between the tocotin and the netotiliztli.

20. Francisco López de Gómara, *Cortes: The Life of the Conqueror by his Secretary*, Lesley Byrd Simpson, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 147-48.

21. *Florentine Codex: A General History of the Things of New Spain*, Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, trans., Book 8 (Santa Fe: School of American Research and University of Utah Press, 1954), 45.

22. *Florentine Codex*, Book 2 (1981), 55.

23. Francisco Hernández, *Antigüedades de Nueva España*, Joaquín García Pimentel, trans. (México: Pedro Robredo, 1945), 94-95.

24. *Florentine Codex*, Book 4 (1957), 25-26. A similar passage appears in 8:45.

25. *Florentine Codex*, Book 10 (1961), 181-83; Cecilio Robelo, *Diccionario de Aztequismos* (México: Ediciones Fuente Cultural, 1912), 421.

26. *Florentine Codex* 10:182; José García Payón, "Interpretación de la vida de los pueblos matlatzincas," *El México Antiguo* 6 (1942-1947), 115.

27. The *juego de matachines* is mentioned by Cervantes de Salazar, Torquemada, Durán, Clavijero, and, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Agustín de Vetancurt. The earliest reference seems to be by Francisco López de Gómara, *Cortes*, 145.

28. Francisco López de Gómara, *Cortes*, 145; Robert Stevenson, *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 89, 224-25.

29. A passage from Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Verdadera y notable relación del descubrimiento y conquista de la Nueva España*, Capítulo XCI, is occasionally cited as proof that use of the term "matachines" in Europe predates the Spanish conquest of Mexico. The underlying assumption is that Díaz's chronicle is a diary written at the time of the Conquest. On the contrary, Díaz wrote his book in the 1560s. See Irving A. Leonard's "Introduction to American Edition" in *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, A. P. Maudslay, trans. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), xvi.

30. Rodney Gallop, *Portugal: A Book of Folk-Ways* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1936), 168-69.

31. For information on the Matlatzincan campaign, see José García Payón, *Zona Arqueologica de Tecaxic-Calixtlahuaca* (México: SEP, 1936).

32. The *Cantares mexicanos* are part of MS 1628 bis, in the holdings of the Biblioteca Nacional in Mexico. The matlatzincayotl is on folio 53v.

33. Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 3, 92. Bierhorst also recognizes a possible connection between the Cantares mexicanos and the tocotin (see 88-90; also see 74-79 for an excellent discussion of the *to/co/ti/qui* drum syllable notation in the manuscript).

34. Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 3-4.

35. R. Joe Campbell, *A Morphological Dictionary of Classical Nahuatl* (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, Ltd., 1985), 79; Rudolf van Zantwijk, *Los Indigenes de Milpa Alta, Herederos de los Aztecas* (Amsterdam: Instituto Real de los Tropicos, 1960), 56; Rémi Siméon, *Dictionnaire de la langue nahuatl ou mexicaine* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1968), 111; Manuel Orozco y Berra, "Mascarada de Alonso de Avila, 1566," in *Torneos, mascaradas y fiestas reales en la Nueva España*, compiled by Manuel Romero de Terreros y Vinent (México: Editorial Cultura, 1918), 23. Regarding the transformation from *copilli* to *cupil*, cf. the occasional use of *tupil* instead of *topilli* in the seventeenth century, as noted by Hugo A. Mejias in *Prestamos de lenguas indigenas en el español americano del siglo XVII* (México: Universidad Autonoma, 1980), 95. The resemblance of the New Mexican *cupil* to the Aztec headdress has been noted by Champe, *The Matachines Dance*, 5.

36. Admittedly, these etymological speculations are highly tentative. They are presented here to indicate some possibilities for further research, and to illustrate that there are viable alternatives to the European and Arabic etymologies.

37. Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 4.

38. *Ibid.*, 29, 94.

39. Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 377, 379. Bracketed annotations are based on Bierhorst's commentary, 499.

40. Documented examples of these legends abound. For an overview, see Richard J. Parmentier, "The Mythological Triangle: Pose-yemu, Montezuma, and Jesus in the Pueblos," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 9 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979), 609-22. Basically, we agree with Parmentier's theories concerning the Montezuma legends, as far as those theories go. However, we believe that the matachines dance's symbolism and history must be taken into account for a full understanding of Montezuma's traditional role in mediating culture clash.

41. Edward P. Dozier, *The Pueblo Indians of North America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970), 187. Quoted in Flavia W. Champe, "Origins of the Magical Matachines Dance," *El Palacio* 86 (1980-81), 38.

42. For information on early Mexican Indian *cofradias*, see Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523-1572*, Lesley Byrd Simpson, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 180-82. Also see Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964).

43. The town of Bernalillo seems to exhibit the strongest parallels. See Richard Joseph Kloeppel, *Los Matachines—A Dance Drama for San Lorenzo* (Bernalillo, New Mexico: mimeographed typescript, 1968) concerning customary activities during the three days of the Fiestas de San Lorenzo. Compare with Martha Stone, *At the Sign of Midnight: The Concheros Dance Cult of Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975).

44. See Marc Simmons, "Tlascalans in the Spanish Borderlands," *New Mexico Historical Review* 34 (1964), 101-10, and the works referenced therein.

45. See Clevy Lloyd Strout, *Santa Fe Rediviva: The Muster Roll of the Juan Paez Hurtado Expedition of 1695* (Tulsa: typescript, 1978).

46. See Adrian Treviño and Barbara Gilles, *The Dance of Montezuma: Some Remarks on the Origins and History of the Matachines Dance in Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: typescript, 1991).

47. For example, see Frank G. Applegate, *Indian Stories from the Pueblos* (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1929), 174, 175; Ruth Benedict, *Tales of the Cochiti Indians*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 98 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 191; and Teresa VanEtten, *Ways of Indian Magic* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1985), 56-57.

48. Frances Gillmor, "The Dance Dramas of Mexican Villages," *University of Arizona Bulletin* 14:2 (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1943), 18; Frances Gillmor, "Symbolic Representation in Mexican Combat Plays," in *The Power of Symbols: Masks and Masquerade in the Americas*, ed. N. Ross Crumrine and Marjorie M. Halpin (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 103-04; Frederick Starr, "Popular Celebrations in Mexico," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 9 (1896), 166.

49. Frederick Starr, "Notes Upon the Ethnography of Southern Mexico," in *Proceedings of the Davenport Academy of Sciences* 8 (1899-1900), 117. For more information on the Tlaxcalan Malinche, see Hugo Nutini, *Todos Santos in Rural Tlaxcala: A Syncretic, Expressive, and Symbolic Analysis of the Cult of the Dead* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); and, by the same author, *San Bernardino Contla: Marriage and Family Structure in a Tlaxcalan Municipio* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968).

50. Toribio de Motolinía, *Motolinía's History of the Indians of New Spain*, trans. and annotated by Francis Borgia Steck (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1951), 315-16. The original Spanish text was written ca. 1540. Also see Diego Durán, *Historia de las indias de Nueva España*, Tomo I, Capitulo XXI.

51. Melchor Ocampo, *Obras Completas* 3 (México: F. Vásquez, ca. 1901), 185.

52. Muriel Thayer Painter, *With Good Heart* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 186.

53. John Bierhorst, *A Nahuatl-English Dictionary and Concordance to the Cantares Mexicanos* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 376-77.

54. van Zantwijk, *Los Indigenes de Milpa Alta*, 56ff.

55. Perhaps the most widely cited study of the syncretism of Christian and non-Christian female divinities in Mexico is Eric Wolf's "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol," *Journal of American Folklore* 71 (1958), 34-39; see especially p. 35. Regarding two-line dances performed in honor of an apparently indigenous Tonantzin, see Alan R. Sandstrom, *Corn is Our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Aztec Indian Village* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 242, 244, 282-86.

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