



The Transmission of the Cultural Inheritance in Education

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Abstract

The migrations in mesoamérica continue being at this time at service of the day, the state of Tamaulipas, is located to the northeast of the Mexican Republic; have through its history this problematic one for diverse reasons. Nevertheless, today more than ever a problematic exists that is not mentioned and that is not contemplated within the governmental programs, the traditional cultural manifestations in risk of extinction due to the migration of its inhabitants; however, the new programs of basic education have a space to preserve the traditions and the popular culture, so young people may have the opportunity to know and to maintain their traditions.

The study presents the form to give support to the programs of basic education through the digital materials that are the results of the ethno musicological research and that all may have to use at class. The Facultad de Musica of the Universidad Autonoma of Tamaulipas, through the project "Rescue and Preservation of Alive Music and Dance in Tamaulipas" realized these digital publications to contribute to the propagation, promotion and maintenance of the traditions, because with the increasing progress of the globalization in which we are involved it corresponds to us like university teachers to carry out tending actions to the fortification of our cultural identity, regional and national.

Main text

To the northeast of Mexico, is the state of Tamaulipas and here, as in many other regions of the country, migration is a current concern. This longstanding problem has economic, social, cultural, and musical repercussions.

In the present work we will approach the struggle of a community called Palmillas to conserve its identity through its traditions and customs, as represented in the music and dances of its religious celebrations.

The people of this community want to preserve these practices in spite of the distance and continuous changes generated by migration. Although few know the origin of many of their customs, it does not matter to them, the important thing is to carry them out and to participate in them in some manner. Although distance and employment circumstances may prevent some from attending, especially those who have migrated from the area, even these people send economic contributions to support the celebrations so that they can happen as it should, with music and dance.

We show here only an initial study; more research is needed. Also our time here is limited and will not permit the full analysis that the subject merits. This initial work remains important because there is nothing written about this community or its traditions.

Palmillas is located in the region of the Eastern Mother Range known as the Sierra Madre Oriental or Sierra Gorda (Fat Mountains) to the southwest of the state in the fourth district.

It is located in a semi-arid land, where the predominant climate is moderately warm and sits at an altitude of 1,293 meter above sea-level. The wind direction is generally of the southwest in summer and the north in winter. We learned from our interview with village elders that when the wind changes, so does the music that people play.

Today migration has further devastated this zone already desolated by the drought that has brought extreme poverty. Seeking daily sustenance, for themselves and their families, workers have left the region. They have moved to the interior of the republic in waves of internal migration. Sometimes the regional migration is a temporary or seasonal move to Victoria City, the state capital, or to Tampico, or



Monterrey. In other instances workers have left for neighboring countries to the north; some are contracted by North American companies with the promise of better pay.

The oldest settlers of Palmillas were indigenous people known as pames, who inhabited the southwest of the villa, the place where we can find traces of the life they brought. Their religious ideas, practices of cultivation, social organization and homes, belong to the first stages of sedentary life.

Palmillas was founded as a mission in 1627 by Friar Juan Baptista de Mollinedo, in a place known today as Old Town. The resident Indians were the pames and the pisonos. In the year 1651 the mission moved to its present site. The church of Our Lady of the Snow, shown here, was built from 1745 to 1777. It is the oldest church in the state. Palmillas was founded as a mission in 1627 by Friar Juan Baptista de Mollinedo, in a place known today as Old Town. The resident Indians were the pames and the pisonos. In the year 1651 the mission moved to its present site. The church of Our Lady of the Snow, shown here, was built from 1745 to 1777. It is the oldest church in the state.

Once the country obtained independence, the town was supported by the government of Benito Juárez. Under the government of Porfirio Díaz, the economy of the town of Palmillas prospered, however during the Revolution of 1910, most of the inhabitants participated as revolutionary soldiers and in the fight the archives of the population disappeared.

The community of Palmillas is one of so many in the country that today is semi-abandoned due to the constant migration of its inhabitants. The sociocultural structure is shaped by an economy challenged by climate and geographical factors as well as by educational and political concerns.

Despite such problems, inhabitants resist losing what little they have: their culture, traditions, values, and religion. There exists, however, no institutional support for what is most precious to citizens: their identity.

It is extremely stimulating to experience the traditions that the inhabitants of Palmillas struggle to maintain, as they transmit to their children a taste for the music and dances of this region. The community has a cycle of celebrations comprised by three celebrations: 1) the celebration of Santa Cruz, the main one; 2) the celebration of the Virgin of the Snow (La Virgen de las Nieves), and 3) the Celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

In these celebrations the residents present music and dances that the community calls sones a pie: foot dance-songs or sones a caballo: horse dance-songs. These sones, are accompanied by guitar and violin. These sones are also heard in religious celebrations throughout the fourth district. They are used to venerate the saints, virgins and to make other religious invocations.

The dancers dress according to the dance they will interpret: those dancing on foot wear a shirt with bands of color across the shoulders and trousers of common use, and an apron adorned with bells, and sometimes an embroidered cross. On the head the dancers wear a colorful scarf with a crown, called a compostura, adorned with flowers or bows and brightly colored ribbons, they carry a macana, or a wooden sword in cross form and a sonaja or rattle.

Traditionally the dance teams are formed by men; the leader of the dance is called the Monarca. His duty is to guide the group and to realize the complex choreography. He is an essential person to whom all, including the dancers and musicians look. He is the one who goes in the center with the Malinche, the only woman who has an official role in the ceremony. Dressed in white, la Malinche is always a girl. Another essential personage is the Old One; his role is to engage in actions and buffoonery to amuse people. The remaining participants are dancers. There must be at least 21 dancers plus the Monarca or they cannot carry out certain dances such as the dance to raise the cross. One of monarcas told us that to ensure a complete scene, teams of dancers from nearby regions are invited.

In May of the 2006, during the celebration of the Holy Cross, we observed the participation of several women invited to complete the dance teams, since some of the traditional (male) dancers are emigrants and could not return in time to participate in the celebration. Some of these women in their childhood interpreted the role of Malinche.

From a very young age, between 4 to 6 years old, children learn dance steps from adults, learning also the rhythms and attitudes to be able to participate as dancers during the processions, in the chapels and in front of the church. The women of Palmillas explained that: "The children learn that it is a great honor to be able to participate alongside one's father in one of these groups." This training takes place in ongoing rehearsals where also young girls, and single ladies dance.



The horse dance is performed by pairs of dancers. There can be 10 people, all men, wearing regular shirts and trousers and a cowboy hat. They use wooden ponies with a frame that simulates the body of the animal, covered with a blanket adorned with embroidery, mirrors and scarves of colors. The frame is generally made of smooth wood that the dancer holds to his waist to from his shoulders thus giving the impression of the animal represented. The head dancer wields a wood machete adorned with colored paper. Relatives or friends prepare the clothing for the horse dancers. Also there is a dancer who disguises himself as a bull, with the head of this animal. He and the old one form a mule in disguise, making funny movements and buffoonery to delight the public.

The dances, sones a pie and sones a caballo are alternated, in this way the dancers can cover most of the day and night during the period of celebration. During the entire celebration two male musicians (the violinist and guitarist), distinguished personages of the community and members of the same family, constantly accompany the dancers. These musicians are the sole heirs of the musical tradition, which they, like the dancers, received from their parents.

The celebration of Holy Cross is a celebration that is carried out in many parts of Mexico, and has been recorded by different investigators including Enrique Florescano, Guillermina Saldaña, Gustavo Torres Cisneros, Johanna Broda.

In the case of the celebration in Palmillas, we found similarities with the description that Enrique Florescano makes: "all the members participated in that rite carrying out their most arduous and humble tasks. The same ceremony with its diverse phases of procession, offering, song, dance, work, collective feasting, prayers, contrition, entertainments and drunkenness, were an occasion of encounter with collective identity."

At the moment each one of these phases can still be observed in Palmillas during the days of the celebration. As regards to drunkenness, we have noticed that only the musicians, and a few of the dancers, consume alcoholic drinks very discreetly so as not to be noticed; we could tell only by their breath.

The people of Palmillas conserve a system of mayordomías, group of volunteers who assume responsibility of organizing the celebrations. The mayordomías also obtain the money necessary to carry out the celebrations. The commitment can last 3 or 4 years and is transmitted by agreement of the community.

The inhabitants of Palmillas do not remember when the celebration began, nor why, but they have remained faithful to their custom, passed on from parents to children and jealously preserved.

At the present time a feeling of loss is manifested by the young emigrants who in their eagerness to maintain their identity, year after year return to the nucleus of their roots to participate in the main celebration of Palmillas. They construct their "collective identity" by clinging to their customs, traditions, dances and music, and in their prayer.

In spite of the changes and adaptations undergone with the passage of the years, the musical lineage has stayed, passing from father to son in one family. What has happened, without people realizing it, is that this may mean the end of the tradition. This family has recently had more daughters than sons, and thus, no men to whom the musical practice has passed.

The community is not only losing its traditions to migration, but also to this insistence on traditional lines of transmission. When these elderly musicians pass away, their musical knowledge will pass with them. The community has not planned for the succession of this lineage. Unlike the transmission of dance, in Mexico musical aptitude is traditionally viewed as a gift of God. The musician learns by himself. But if there is no one to transmit this knowledge, time will destroy one of the few living traditions in our state and it will be lost.

It is urgent that our society notices this impending cultural loss and takes action to support and preserve our roots and our identity.

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