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## Dance as identity, resistance and power : danza indigena de La Huasteca, Mexico

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**DANCE AS IDENTITY, RESISTANCE AND POWER**

**DANZA INDÍGENA DE LA HUASTECA, MÉXICO**

**Janet Rachel Johns**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Education  
California State University, Monterey Bay  
December 2002

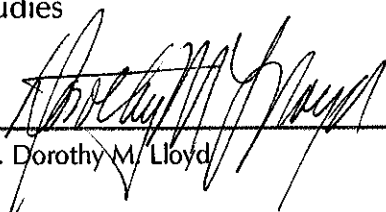
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# DANCE AS IDENTITY, RESISTANCE AND POWER

## DANZA INDÍGENA DE LA HUASTECA, MÉXICO

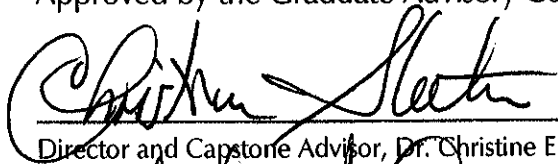
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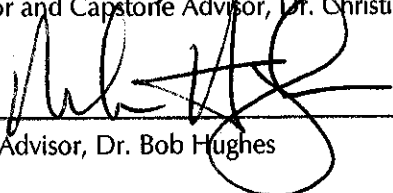
  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I wish to thank Dr. Christine Sleeter and Dr. Bob Hughes for their continuous support and faith in this project and their leadership in guiding me through the process. Thank you for encouraging me to take the risk to follow my passion and choose research close to my heart.

This research was only possible due to the guidance, knowledge, insight and direction provided by both Prof. Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Prof. Cándido Hernández Navarrete, who were instrumental in the initiation and accomplishments of the *Abriendo Caminos* project in 1997-1998 and to the continuation of the work to this day. Their commitment and compassion of the indigenous dance communities of the Huasteca has served as the foundation and has provided the rationale for this study.

I send the warmest appreciations to the *danzantes*, elders and musicians of the indigenous dance communities of the Huasteca who have so generously accepted us into their homes and shared the beauty of dance and music with us, enriching our lives and broadening our understanding as dancers, teachers and human beings.

My friend and colleague, Ruby Ann Vásquez, has been an important part of this research throughout its duration. Her insightfulness and humanity have been

vital to the direction of this research in honoring and preserving the culture of the *indígena*.

My son Gabriel has been the greatest gift in my life and has been by my side throughout every adventure to the Huasteca. His creativity and imagination opened up many doors to the Huasteca.

I am proud of the accomplishments of Esperanza del Valle and value the commitment and talent of each dancer who skillfully and respectfully represents the indigenous dances of the Huasteca with such reverence and grace.

Thanks to Rosa Isela Gonzalez for always being there to help with editing, formatting and graphic design making the final product shine.

Finally, I want to thank my parents Joseph and Mildred, my sister Corinne and her family, and my extended family, *comadres*, especially Graciela, and friends who have always encouraged me in my work as a teacher and dancer. I dedicate this work to all of you with love and respect

## ABSTRACT

### **Dance as Identity, Resistance and Power** ***Danza Indígena de la Huasteca, México*** **Janet Rachel Johns**

**“...the medium of exchange in which education is conducted – language – can never be neutral...it imposes a point of view not only about the world to which it refers but toward the use of mind in respect of this world.”**

Jerome Bruner  
Actual Minds, Possible Worlds

This research imposes a point of view that contradicts a history of conquest and the eradication of culture. Throughout the centuries the voices of marginalized groups have been silenced. Through this research the voices of the indigenous dance communities of the Huasteca are heard and their messages of identity, resistance and power communicated through their dance. Many of the ancient indigenous dance traditions of the Huasteca are in danger of being erased due to political, economic, religious and social pressures. This study is an attempt to rescue and preserve these traditions in order for them to be passed down to future generations.

This action research documents the traditional indigenous *danzas* of five communities of the Huasteca region of Mexico and investigates the importance and significance of these traditions to the *indígena*. The facilitators, elders, musicians and *danzantes* of the Huasteca, who are part of this research, communicate important messages through their *danzas*. Their message is one of hope, respect and understanding – a sharing of their *indígena* culture through dance and music.

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## FOREWORD

Ruby Ann Vásquez, my son Gabriel and I have traveled together to the Huasteca during each journey since 1997. Our passion and commitment to this work motivated us to return to the Huasteca each year to deepen our understanding of the indigenous dance traditions and to take what we've learned back to those who served as our teachers and guides on this journey. It is appropriate that my friend, colleague and fellow researcher share her story as the forward to this thesis. With great admiration and respect, I thank Ruby for the tremendous contribution she has made to this research.

**Janet Rachel Johns**

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*Todavía tú no nacías cuando yo ya te soñaba, cuando yo ya te soñaba todavía tú no nacías. Iban pasando los días mi corazón preguntaba, mi corazón preguntaba que donde te encontraría. Mujer te estoy adorando más que a mi madre querida, más que a mi madre querida, mujer te estoy adorando. Pero me está condenando porque ella me dio la vida, porque ella me dio la vida y tu me la estás quitando. Al amanecer el día, 'prendí que era un homenaje, 'prendí que era un homenaje al amanecer el día. Entre mi Dios y María formaron este paisaje, formaron este paisaje la Huasteca tierra mía.*

(Lyrics to traditional song "Las Canastas" performed by Trío Camalote)

### **Following Old Paths & Seeking New Ways**

**Ruby Ann Vásquez**

The journey began, when as a young child I would hear the high-pitched falsetto voices sing of places/pueblos bearing names that I could barely pronounce.

The songs, blaring from the speakers of the long hi-fi wooden stereo that stood in our

living room, spoke of common life experiences. Travels, elements of nature, romantic conquests, lost loves... were often the themes that were addressed. Combining the clever use of language with the "cries" of the violin, jarana and huapanguera, the music "sang to me". It wasn't until I was an adult that I was able to make the connections; identify the ties that linked my world to that which I heard sung about as a child.

My father's stories of La Huasteca, his childhood experiences, began the unfolding of the winding roads of curiosity in my mind. Little did I know that it was the *conocimiento*/knowledge of my father's recollections of his native San Luis Potosi, Mexico and my mother's dedicated commitment to drive my two sisters and me to folklórico dance class once a week, that provided the early "clearing of the path" to the roads that I would later travel as an adult through the project *Abriendo Caminos*. It would be through this project that I would be able to travel to the communities and experience a way of living that I had only previously heard about through stories or spinning off the vinyl LP's, that were kept in the wooden console; my treasure chest containing musical maps that to this day, continue to guide me on this journey.

As a Chicana growing up in the United States it has always been a challenge to identify who I am. Unable to use Spanish, the native language of my grandparents, the challenge was made more difficult. Without the words to speak, many questions were unasked, creating gaps and confusion in my development as a person. Early in my life, dance became a vehicle in which I was able to travel, via music, movement, history, lyrics, etc, to those pieces of myself that had been left by the road side, in my

great grandparents, grandparents and parents struggle to survive in the United States. As an adult, I now understand my parents, and other parents, decisions to consciously or unconsciously leave behind the culture, customs, traditions and language that define one's reality. The original motto of this country, that of being a "melting pot" sent loud messages that continue to be echoed today. As a result many people abandon their true self, due to the fear that they will not fit into the mainstream of this society.

In regards to multi-cultural/lingual realities, it is clear that the major institutions in the US, established to serve the needs of the people, now ignore and/or erase the identities of those who are "different". For instance, as a child going through the public educational school system, very little was taught about my culture, history and contributions that my ancestors gave to our existence as human beings in this world. Any teaching on the subject was done in a very "deficit" way. To this day, much of what is taught about other cultures is done in superficial activities that do not allow teachers and students to go beyond stereotypical images of self and others. The "whole" person (cultural/spiritual/linguistic/political etc.) remains undeveloped, preventing a true understanding of oneself and prohibiting the ability to create critical connections with others. My involvement with dance became the lessons I did not receive in school. Dance has provided me with the opportunities to learn about the interpersonal ties that exist with other cultures, permitting a deeper understanding of myself, as a Chicana, mestiza, Mexican individual. This in turn cultivates an

understanding of bonds that exist between people and allows for transformation to occur.

Opening new roads and unblocking others, the *Abriendo Caminos* project uprooted old thoughts and beliefs and broke ground to new ideas and change. Visiting the Huasteca region, of Veracruz, Mexico, returned me to images and places that have been nurtured in my soul in form of song and story. The experience reminded me of the indigenous part of my heritage and how easily that part becomes erased from our minds when religious institutions eradicate spirituality/ways of believing and governments eliminate ways of living/languages spoken/communities of people. *Abriendo Caminos* took me back... took me to communities of people who graciously welcomed us into their daily living, sharing with us, that which has been most essential to their existence; food, drink, music, *danza*, *palabra* and *ceremonia*.

Exploring "new roads", *Abriendo Caminos* presented me to a part of myself that until that experience I had never known. In Veracruz I was introduced to another root of my *mestizaje*, the African root which has fortified and brought forth new growth in Mexican culture for centuries. Until these travels, this knowledge had been buried deep, kept under cover, hidden from me by both Mexican and US mainstream society. Along with much historical information about the African presence in Mexico, one *danza* in particular, that we've been studying, demonstrates the important role that African people have had in Mexican culture. *Danza de Los Hue Hues* (which translated from *Náhuatl* means *Los Viejos*, *Los Ancianos*, *Los Antepasados*, The Old Ones) in it's more original style requires that one man wears a

black painted mask. In our “scratching the surface” attempt to understand this dance, it seems logical that the black mask represents the African existence as an important element in the region. Important in that *Hue Hue*/elder/wise one equals “ancestor” and thus places the African root as part of my heritage, something I had not known about until this project.

Through *Abriendo Caminos* I had the honor of meeting great master teachers of dance and music who have dedicated their lives to learning, restoring and promoting the culture of the Huasteca. They have reinforced the reality that there is no separation between culture (dance, music, clothing, language, celebrations, ceremony etc..) and politics (government, religion, education, media, social class, etc..). They fight to preserve tradition, wanting to assure that those who “live” the *danzas*, are recognized and validated as the true “artist”, as opposed to those who “perform” the dances on stage. Yet they understand that to share the knowledge about their culture with others, presenting it as a staged performance is necessary, so they demand that it’s done with integrity, respect and honor towards all elements of the dance (movement, outfits, music, style etc.). After all, as we have been told many times, “it’s more than just a dance, it’s a way of living.”

My participation with Esperanza del Valle, and in particular with *Abriendo Caminos*, has been a crucial element in my evolution as a teacher, dancer, Chicana/person. No longer is the Websters dictionary definition of dance adequate, “*To move rhythmically to music using improvised or planned steps and gestures.*” (Websters, 1999). Dance now impels me to “move” politically/culturally; using

responsibility and integrity in “what” and “how” information is presented, in either written, spoken and danced forms.

I continue to listen to my father’s stories and I’m thankful to my mother’s commitment, instinctively they knew that stories, music and dance offered more than just entertainment. I continue to listen to the voices of singers, only now I understand the passion of the musicians and the essence of the words they sing. Hearing the songs, I continue to use them as musical maps, following the melodies, I find pieces of myself as I travel down old roads and venture to open new ones.

## CHAPTER ONE STATEMENT OF PROBLEM & BACKGROUND

In these difficult times where ignorance of different cultural traditions and languages is prevalent in our society, breeding hatred and violence, it is vital that opportunities are created for people to build an awareness and acceptance of many cultures. In Pajaro Valley, the majority of our students from different regions and states of Mexico have been told indirectly to “leave their culture and language at the school house door.” (Cummins, 2001) In many instances teachers have not encouraged students to bring their experiences and knowledge, or those of their families, into the classroom setting. Students may even feel embarrassed to share any ties to an indigenous community in México, associating those differences as “deficits.” The parents of our children have also been silenced through propositions and school policies that eliminate language and culture from our academic programs.

It is critical for our students, especially those of Mexican descent, to learn and embrace their indigenous roots as well as their European and African roots and to learn about the rich, cultural traditions that exist through Mexican dance. As a Mexican dance company, performing for over twenty-three years in the community and schools of Watsonville, Esperanza del Valle’s mission has been to provide multiple opportunities to share the rich, traditional dances of Mexico. Like most performing dance companies in the United States, our repertoire of dances focused solely on the *mestizo* dances of the culture for many years, ignoring the indigenous roots which are the foundation of Mexican folkloric dance.

The *Abriendo Caminos* project has made it possible for us to learn more about our children and ourselves as artists and teachers, by honoring language, cultural traditions and the arts in the indigenous communities of México. Through the traditional indigenous *danzas* of the Huasteca, we learn more about the rich cultural traditions of Mexico in order to build a sense of pride in our students and community.

### **Statement of Problem and Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the indigenous *danzas* of the Huasteca region of Mexico and to discover the importance and significance of these traditions to the *indígena* of the Huasteca and the messages that are communicated through the *danzas*.

What are the benefits of maintaining and preserving the indigenous dance traditions in the Huasteca? What messages are communicated through the *danzas*? How does dance help a community deepen its own identity? These questions will be addressed in this study as well as other elements that emerge out of the research.

The action research proposes to document the traditional indigenous *danzas* of five communities of the Huasteca region of Mexico and to provide opportunities for local artists and community members to collaborate and develop a plan for disseminating this knowledge to local schools and universities, and in the community at large. A document containing the monographs of the various *danzas* in this research will be returned to the participants of this study and will serve as a resource for other artists in Mexico and in the United States. The monographs are part of a



separate project that includes a photo journal to be completed by the summer of 2003.

### **Rationale**

No research has been located which is written using the voices of the indigenous people of the Huasteca. Due to widely publicized events in Chiapas, Mexico with the uprising of the Zapatistas in the 1990's, there has been newly published literature that has focused on the current conditions of the indigenous people in Mexico and their struggle for liberation. Many indigenous cultures have disappeared through a violent history of cultural genocide. The ancient traditions of the Huasteca may someday cease to exist without the acknowledgement of their true value and importance in shaping the Mexican culture.

This study will contribute to the literature in many ways. First of all, this research provides a unique insight into the indigenous dance communities of the Huasteca and explains the importance of the *danza* from an emic point of view incorporating the voices of the indigenous people of the region. Secondly, two professors and experts of Mexican regional dance have participated in this research from its beginning and throughout its duration and add a wealth of knowledge and experience to the literature. Finally, this study documents the indigenous *danzas* of five different dance communities of the Huasteca in order that these traditions may live on indefinitely.

## Background

This research is grounded within a larger study that began in October 1997, with Mexican folkloric dance company, Esperanza del Valle (EDV). The *Abriendo Caminos* project, funded by the U.S.- Mexico Fund for Culture, opened a new, exciting opportunity of collaboration between the dance community of Watsonville and the indigenous dance communities in the Huasteca. My colleague, Ruby Ann Vásquez and I first met both Professor Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Professor Cándido Hernández Navarrete as our dance instructors at an international folkloric dance conference in July, 1991 in Xalapa, Veracruz. A seed was planted at that conference: a desire to someday go to the Huasteca and to experience first-hand the indigenous dances during the celebration of *El Día de los Muertos*. Six years later this dream became a reality. We would make our first trip to the Huasteca, with an EDV team ready to document and collect data guided by both maestros, to begin an investigation of the *danzas indígenas* in multiple indigenous communities, October-November, 1997.

As the artistic director and founder of Mexican dance company Esperanza del Valle, it has been my goal to strive for authenticity in choreography and style. One way to encourage authenticity is to work directly with the masters of the dance. Traditionally, we invite master teachers from Mexico to work with our company as a whole. The *Abriendo Caminos* project provided us with the unique opportunity of traveling directly to the Huasteca to learn and observe the *danza* in its natural environment. This first hand experience moved those of us directly involved in the

study to a new level of knowledge and provided opportunities for dissemination in the Pájaro Valley.

This research is close to my heart as well. I have dedicated over 25 years observing, learning and teaching Mexican folkloric dance to children and adults in our community. This research will enhance the preservation and dissemination of traditional Mexican dance and will provide direction in sharing this knowledge with others. Joseph A. Maxwell (1996) explains that "the researcher is the instrument of the research." (p. 27) Through this research I have discovered more about myself as an artist, teacher and learner.

### **Beginning the Journey**

I can still envision the images of the Huasteca in my dreams. I can see the faces of those who graciously received us into their homes as guests. I hear the musicians singing out their verses and blending the sounds of their instruments with such joy and satisfaction. I smell the lush green vegetation through the pouring rain covering the hills and mountains, one upon another, that push out endlessly in every direction. I hear Maestro Gabriel's stories over and over in my mind as we traveled over rocky and rugged unpaved roads. I continuously desire to relive the mystical and spiritual experiences of our journeys. The Huasteca calls each of us in a very unique way. I knew when we arrived there for the first time - I would return again and again.

The opportunity to travel to the Huasteca unfolded unconditionally before us. It began with the building of new relationships and *confianza* - trust. We were invited

to embark on a journey that would teach us about ourselves by learning from others. The indigenous communities that we visited in the Huasteca would become important landmarks in our lives, and the experiences, vivid memories to be relived over and over again.

It almost felt as if we were each chosen to be part of this journey by a force greater than ourselves. Yet if that were the case, why would I have been chosen, as an Assyrian woman? How did I become involved with Mexican folkloric dance and music? How can I explain my passion and commitment to the mission of our work in the community?

Dance has always been an important part of my life and culture. I grew up dancing the traditional Assyrian dances brought down from generation to generation. I was born into an Assyrian-American home and raised in San Francisco, surrounded by our language, cultural traditions and extended family. Assyrians, like many language minority groups, settled largely in the city or the valley where work was readily available, in close proximity to one another. My father's family emigrated from Iran and settled in San Francisco and my mother's in the San Joaquin Valley largely due to agriculture. I grew up in a tight-knit family that honored our grandparents, great aunts and uncles.

I was surrounded by the Assyrian language, music and dance throughout my life. Although my sister, cousins and I soon lost our ability to speak the Assyrian language, we were quite active in traditional Assyrian dance. We attended Assyrian dances at the state and national conventions annually with our parents and to this

day continue to dance together on special occasions. As a child, I would invite friends over to our family parties, proud to share our dances and music with them. This passion and respect for ethnic dance and music has greatly influenced my love for traditional folkloric dance of México.

Many immigrants have assimilated into the American culture, at the expense of their own culture, in order to find their place economically and politically in the New World. Our family was no exception. Yet, my parents tried to instill in us a sense of pride in being American, as well as Assyrian. Yet, for me being "American" has meant an inevitable cultural genocide of our language and identity as a people. As our elders pass on, there are very few left who truly possess the funds of knowledge of Assyrian culture and language to pass on to future generations in the United States. I am saddened that I cannot speak the language of my grandparents nor can I pass on these important elements to my son. Perhaps I have latched on to the Mexican culture and language due to this deep sense of personal loss.

I was first introduced to Mexican folkloric dance in my first year as a student at San José State University in an international dance class. I was drawn to the music and to the challenging footwork and was later invited to attend the university folklorico group's rehearsals. I quickly became an active member of the dance group and dedicated long hours to learning and refining my skills as a *folklorico* dancer. I haven't stopped dancing since I began twenty-nine years ago. Once I graduated from the university with my teaching credential, in 1978, I moved to Watsonville and started my career as a bilingual teacher. My friend and I started teaching *folklórico*

dance to teachers in our district, and soon after, Esperanza del Valle was born. Our folkloric dance company began with a group of bilingual teachers who wanted to learn dances to teach to their students. Twenty-three years later, our dance company is still alive and very active in our community as an established arts organization dedicated to the preservation of Mexican cultural traditions through its dance.

The arts have become a political focus in my life since I became a dancer and a teacher. Today, I see my work with other colleagues in the indigenous communities of the Huasteca region of México, as a way to reverse what continues to occur in many cultures such as my own. As the agents of enculturation attempt to change and erase many of the traditions of the *indígena* in México, I have had the opportunity to join forces with other artists and educators to reverse this trend by bringing the traditions and dances of the indigenous communities to our own community in Watsonville.

As educators serving a vast majority of migrant families from Mexico, it is important to instill a sense of pride in our students about their cultural heritage. Becoming “American” in this culture historically means “stripping away one’s language, traditions and cultural identity.” Our students have not been encouraged to research their roots in public schools. The traditional school calendar tends to limit ethnic pride days to certain times of the year, such as Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day. Students may be invited to perform regional Mexican dances at the school site for these special occasions, but little or no emphasis is given to the historical roots of the dances performed. At the same time, students are given a

strong message that their home language is not valued in school. These limited opportunities will not develop and nurture cultural identity.

The majority of the Mexican folkloric dance companies in the United States present a repertoire of regional dances and music developed during the colonial period in Mexican history. Few dance companies include indigenous *danzas* as part of their performance repertoire. Our dance company prior to 1997 was no exception. Upon meeting both maestros and learning about the rich heritage of *danza* in the Huasteca, we knew that someday it would be our goal to go to the region and experience these traditions firsthand.

The purpose of the *Abriendo Caminos* project was to bridge two cultures and dance communities; teachers and dancers with Mexican Folkloric Dance Company, Esperanza del Valle, and the indigenous dance communities of the Huasteca region of Mexico, guided by Prof. Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Prof. Cándido Hernández Navarrete of Veracruz. It was our hope as educators, to go to the Huasteca region, to learn, observe, and document traditional *danzas* and *sones* that have existed in these regions for hundreds of years. It has been Esperanza del Valle's mission, over the past twenty years, to serve our community, by instilling a sense of cultural pride through performance of traditions, music and dance of Mexico. Our mission has been to honor not only the European roots of the Mexican culture, but the African and Indigenous roots as well. The *Abriendo Caminos* project gave our dance company an opportunity to research and bring back indigenous and *mestizo* dance traditions to our community that have never been seen outside of their community of origin in

Mexico. Our purpose was to broaden the image of Mexican culture by sharing dances that have existed throughout the centuries of rich, cultural traditions.

### **Opening New Roads – *Abriendo Caminos***

The *Abriendo Caminos* project allowed us the opportunity to travel to Huasteca region in the northern part of the state of Veracruz, to observe and learn *danzas*, which are still presently part of the daily lives of the indigenous communities. This project enhanced EDV's mission, validating the contributions of the indigenous communities in Mexico, and bringing new art forms and traditions to our community.

Our project, entitled *Abriendo Caminos* "opening roads," consisted of four Phases supported by the grant:

**Phase I** was the initiation of the project two weeks in October and November, 1997. The EDV team traveled to the Huasteca during *Día de los Muertos* to investigate the traditions and dances of various indigenous communities. Our team of seven included a tour manager, researcher, choreographer, photographer, videographer, seamstress and dancer. Every member of the team was an Esperanza del Valle dancer, except for our seamstress and videographer. Each of us went with a specific job to accomplish for the project. We visited many communities in the Huasteca to initiate our research of the dances. The main purpose for this first visit was to document and observe the dances in the communities and the traditions during *Xantolo*, or *Día de los Muertos*. Professor Gabriel Mendoza Torres served as our project director in the Huasteca and took care of all of the travel arrangements and activities during our stay. Professor Cándido Hernández Navarrete served as the



project manager in México and arranged for our transportation from Veracruz to the Huasteca and helped to bring the project to the community of Watsonville.

**Phase II** brought Prof. Hernández to Watsonville for two weeks in April 1998 to work with the entire EDV company. He helped to teach and choreograph the dances from the Huasteca for our performance scheduled for the fall of 1998. The community was invited to an open studio to see and experience the work in progress.

**Phase III** took a smaller EDV team back to the Huasteca at the end of July 1998, for two weeks to continue the research and to learn the dances from the *danzantes* of the various dance communities being investigated: *Danza San José*, *Tepecmecaxochitl* or *Danza de las Mujeres*, *El Tigrillo*, *Danza Moctezuma*, *Danza de los Chules* and *Danza de los Viejos*. We invited the elders and some of the dancers from the communities to specifically teach us the steps, movement and choreography of each of the *danzas* being investigated. All sessions were videotaped. Our grant funded a special recording of the music from the communities. Musicians and dancers from each community were brought to Tantoyuca to record their music for the project. Both Maestro Gabriel and Maestro Cándido guided our team in purchasing needed *vestuario* or clothing and other materials necessary to perform the dances. The women's hand-embroidered blouses and skirts were ordered at this time.

**Phase IV** brought Prof. Hernandez back to Watsonville to rehearse and mount our final production, entitled "*Abriendo Caminos – Music and Dances of the Huasteca*" in October of 1998. Prof. Hernández brought all of the masks, clothing

and props on order for completion from the Huasteca. EDV's seamstress completed the *vestuario* or the shirts, pants, skirts and blouses needed for the final performance. The dances, with full *vestuario*/clothing, props and headdresses, were presented to our community at the Henry Mello Center for the Performing Arts in Watsonville. The final performance was documented on local television. A donation performance was offered one evening for the families of the community.

**Phase V and Beyond:** Our research has continued since the termination of the grant in 1998. My colleague, Ruby Ann Vásquez, my son Gabriel and I have returned to the Huasteca to continue the work with both maestros Gabriel and Cándido during the summers of 1999, 2001 and 2002. The summer of 1999, we took copies of the original photos and raw video footage that was shot during Phases I & III of our project back to the communities of the Huasteca. Both Maestros Gabriel and Cándido have remained committed to the ongoing investigative research that we are conducting in the Huasteca even without the support of the grant. Our performance in October of 1998 was successful in its mission – to present dances of the Huasteca in full costume with authentic choreography and music – and fulfilled the requirements of the grant. Yet our work was far from complete.

### **The Unfinished Journey**

After five years of consecutive visits and an informal gathering of collected data, the need to document this project into a formal research study became apparent. The decision to make this research my action thesis would guarantee that the work would finally be documented. Initially, both maestros invited us to the

Huasteca so that we would have firsthand experience to compare and contrast the knowledge that we already had and to go further and develop a deeper understanding of the indigenous dance cultures of the region. This research reflects a knowledge base that has grown and changed, with each new experience in the Huasteca.

Although the researcher has the important task of writing up and analyzing the data gathered, many voices have been part of this journey. Without the knowledge, support, insight and experience of both Maestro Gabriel and Maestro Cándido, this project would never have been realized. The *indígenas* opened their homes and hearts to us and have taken the risk to be formally recognized in this study and have requested that their identities be revealed as an important part of the documentation. Both maestros agreed that identifying the participants and the communities to which they belong is important in disseminating this research and in giving proper credit to the elders, *danzantes* and musicians. My colleague and fellow researcher, Ruby Ann Vásquez, has been by my side in the gathering of the data and has brought an important perspective to this work as a female Chicana, educator and artist. The gathering of the data has been a collective process.

The following *danzas* and indigenous communities are part of this study:

- *Danza El Tigrillo* – Mata el Tigre
- *Danza San José* – Tepexocoyo
- *Tepecmecaxochitl* or *Danza de las Mujeres*– Tepexocoyo
- *Danza Moctezuma* – Taxtitla
- *Danza de los Chules* – Tantoyuca & Ozuluama
- *Danza de los Viejos* – Mata el Tigre, Tepexocoyo, Tempoal, Tantoyuca

## Conclusion

The research in the Huasteca uncovers the social, economic and political context of the dances in the indigenous communities of the Huasteca. It attempts to confront the oppression and reveal the messages communicated through the dance and provide a relevant, historical context in order to bridge a deeper understanding. This is a collaborative effort, established through relationships and commitments with those who hold the keys to the funds of knowledge in the indigenous communities of México and those who are learners, committed to transfer this knowledge to their own community.

The research of the indigenous dance traditions of the Huasteca seeks to answer the following questions: Why is it of vital importance to retain the arts and traditions of indigenous cultures and to disseminate this knowledge within our community at large? Should there be a steadfast commitment towards the struggle to preserve/conservate traditions of the indigenous dances in Veracruz and other areas in México? How do a history of conquest and the “hidden transcript” of resistance become relevant themes to understanding the messages and purposes of many indigenous dance forms? What are the benefits of preserving these traditions for the people of the Huasteca? What messages do they communicate through their *danzas*? How are these *danzas* essential to the ongoing identity of the community from which they come?

Greenwood and Levin (1998) insist that action research “aims to alter the initial situation of a group, organization, or community in the direction of a more self-

managing, liberated state.” (p. 75) This research becomes participatory when the members of the community have an opportunity to participate fully and have an effect on the outcome. The participants have requested that the indigenous dances in the Huasteca communities that are part of this study will be documented in written form. The information gathered through observation, interview and literature will become a written document and photo journal to be given to each of the communities. The dance communities that are being researched in this study will receive written monographs on the dance performed in their community.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Abriendo Caminos:** Spanish translation for “opening roads,” title for U.S.- Mexico Fund for Culture grant which initiated a collaboration between a local folkloric dance company in the U.S. and the indigenous dance communities of the Huasteca

**Aguardiente:** Strong alcoholic beverage or “firewater” produced from raw sugar cane and used in ceremonies by indigenous communities

**Capitán:** The leader and teacher of an indigenous dance

**Copal:** A transparent resin burned in religious ceremonies

**Conquista religiosa:** Religious conquest of Mexico with the arrival of the Spaniards and the Catholic religion

**Costumbres:** Music and dance used during special rituals and ceremonies in the indigenous communities before the religious conquest

**Danza:** Religious and ceremonial indigenous dance (used interchangeably with **dance** for the purposes of this document)

**Danzante:** Dancer, usually associated with religious events

**El Día de los Muertos:** The Day of the Dead celebrated on October 31<sup>st</sup> through November 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Huasteca

**Huasteca:** The Huasteca is an ample region of Mexico, made up of approximately twenty-seven thousand square kilometers, spreading across many states of Mexico: Veracruz, Hidalgo, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas, Puebla, Queretaro and Guanajuato

**Huasteco:** A *teenek* or a person born in the Huasteca region and the language spoken by a native person of the region

**Huehuetlacatl:** Healer, shaman

**Indígena:** People native to a particular place, original inhabitants prior to colonization

**Ixtle:** Natural fibers of the sugar cane plant used for making bags and other handmade crafts

**Jacal:** An indigenous home made of palm and wood

**Jefe:** The leader and teacher of an indigenous dance

**Lavamanos:** An indigenous ceremony, the “washing of the hands”

**Maestro:** Teacher

**Manta:** Unbleached cotton fabric

**Mestizo:** The blending of three principal ethnic groups due to colonization of the Americas: African, Indigenous and European

**Monograph/ Monografía:** Written documentation of a folkloric dance

**Nahual:** A healer or person who had the capability to be able to transform himself into an animal

**Náhuatl:** One of the indigenous languages of the Huasteca spoken by *nahuas*, *náhuatl* or *mexica* people

**Palo de las siete flores:** Carved wooden stick of the seven flowers used in the women’s dance of Tepexocoyo

**Penacho:** Headdress usually decorated with brilliantly colored paper and ribbons used for indigenous *danzas*

**Sonaja:** Hand instrument made out of a dried gourd and filled with seeds for a percussion sound, much like a rattle

**Sones:** Mestizo dances during the colonial period

**Teponaxtli:** A sacred ceremonial instrument; a small wooden hollow drum carved out of the trunk of a tree, with slits on the top and hit with a wooden stick to produce various sounds

**Tigrillo:** An ocelot, currently in danger of extinction within the Huasteca region

**Velaciones:** Special candlelight vigils or ceremonies

**Xantolo:** Translation in Huasteco for the Day of the Dead or *El Día de los Muertos*.

### **Limitations**

This study will be limited to the needs and concerns specific to the indigenous communities of Mata el Tigre, Tepexocoyo and Taxtitla and the municipalities of Tantoyuca and Tempoal of the Huasteca region in the state of Veracruz. The data includes *danzantes*, elders and musicians of the indigenous communities and the two facilitators of the study. The research is grounded within a larger study that began in October of 1997 and has been conducted over a six-year period. The findings may be applicable to these particular communities in the Huasteca but may not apply to all indigenous communities of Mexico.

The results of this study may be of interest to those interested in Mexican dance and culture. Educational institutions as well as arts institutions may be able to use the information from this research to improve and build more inclusive community arts programs that recognize the contributions of indigenous peoples of the world, namely the people of the Huasteca.

Information given via interviews and observations may be inadvertently influenced by the researcher's position as dance director of a folkloric dance company in the United States and as an outsider to the indigenous communities of the Huasteca. While attempting to provide an emic perspective into the research by taking into account the voices of the people of the region, the researcher still remains an outsider and can only analyze the data collected from that etic point of view. The researcher has continuously checked the findings for accuracy with her colleague in the study by bringing the data back to the Huasteca year after year for revisions. This study may still require further revisions and recognizes that this work is an inert process.

### **Overview of Action Thesis**

As has been previously stated, the purpose of this study was to investigate the indigenous *danzas* of the Huasteca region of Mexico and to discover the importance and significance of these traditions to the *indígena* of the Huasteca. Chapter Two provides a review and analysis of the supporting literature relevant to this topic. Chapter Three will describe the methodology and procedures of this study. In Chapter Four an analysis of the data gathered through interviews will be presented and discussed. Chapter Five, the final chapter of this study will offer a summary of findings, discussion, implications for practice and suggestions for future research.



## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

This chapter presents a brief overview of the related literature and the views and findings of several scholars on *danza indígena*, indigenous dance, in the Americas historically and in modern times. It begins by defining and introducing *danza indígena* and discusses the important role that this art form plays in the lives and communities of the *indígena*. It synthesizes research studies that take place in México and the Americas and demonstrates the significance of the dance in the lives of the indigenous people. Multiple literacy sources are cited from which many themes emerge; dance as conquest, dance as resistance, and dance as identity and power. The last part of this chapter weaves together the various themes of the study and provides a theoretical foundation of critical pedagogy and the importance of dance as a form of literacy in “reading the world,” (Freire and Macedo, 1987) incorporating the voices of the indigenous people of Mexico today.

### **Defining *Danza Indígena* /Indigenous Dance**

Modern dance and classical ballet choreographers rarely, if ever, use the word “rescue” when asked why they make their art. But that word constantly comes up in interviews with the directors of two Mayan dance groups in Guatemala:

The European conquerors of South America, beginning in the fifteenth century, imposed Christianity on indigenous populations and exploited them as a steady supply of labor. But Mayan culture, despite oppression, did not disappear. Traditional clothing, agricultural techniques, closeness to nature,

social and family organization, and dance persist to this day. (Hanvik, 1994, p.40)

In fact, according to W. Richard West Jr., director of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., "Dance is the very embodiment of indigenous values... (and) reflects the vast capacity of native people to endure culturally." Indigenous peoples of the world have had to struggle to "rescue" and preserve their cultural traditions and art forms in spite of conquest, colonialism and the threat of eradication of language and culture. (West in Hanvik, 1994, p. 40)

*"La danza es el género artístico cuyos elementos principales de expresión son el movimiento corporal, el ritmo y la música; en la historia de México, la danza ha sido una manifestación cultural relevante, asociada a tradiciones religiosas y a movimientos artísticos y sociales."* (Tapia,1998, p.75) *"Danza is an artistic genre whose principal elements of expression are physical movement, rhythm and music; in Mexico's history, danza has been a relevant cultural manifestation associated with religious traditions and artistic and social movements."* (Translation) Many indigenous dances in the Americas have survived the conquest, the assimilation and manifestation of European culture and religion, but not without tremendous physical, emotional and psychological suffering.

*En cierto modo la escasez de estudios acerca de la danza prehispánica se explica por la falta de interés de los testigos europeos que llegaron a México en el siglo XVI. Los que podían ver, describir, investigar, como fueron los primeros frailes franciscanos, dominicos y agustinos, vieron en las danzas de los antiguos mexicanos una obra de Satanás.* (Sten, 1990, p.9) On one hand the scarcity of studies of dances before the conquest can be explained by the lack of interest on the part of the first Europeans who arrived to Mexico in the

sixteenth century. Those who could see, discover, investigate as if they were the first Franciscan, Dominican and Agustín friars, looked upon the dances as works of Satan. (Translation)

Before the conquest, *danza* was part of all festivities; it was a ritual act, honoring the gods in appreciation of their benevolence. To be prohibited from dancing was considered a great punishment. Spies would try to discover how their enemies danced, since dance provided a wealth of information. To err during a dance could be punishable even by death. (Translation of Sten, 1990) Indigenous dance reflects human culture, behavior and thought. The anthropologist must look at *danza* as a reflection of the social and cultural structure and must understand the role and status that each dancer has within that society and how he relates to other human beings and their reciprocal relationships. (Translation of Sten, 1990) Dance is an important manifestation of human culture. Dance was an important social and political phenomenon with the Aztecs. It was an honor to dance, especially next to the nobles, and to glorify the gods who also danced.

Many of the indigenous dances that existed before the conquest had common goals and purposes. Many danced to receive the "gods' graces" to both personal and social ends. Through dance one could ensure the fertility of the earth and receive an abundance of corn, legume, chili and other plants. The *danza* prevented drought. It assured victory in war. Belonging to the dance was an honor and social class determined one's role. The dance signaled the hierarchy of the society and

constituted a school of discipline within the community. (Translation of Sten, 1990)

Tapia (1998) agrees with the purpose of *danza* during the colonial period stating:

*La danza en la actualidad se practica con un fin determinado y con un sentido tradicional, especialmente religioso. Generalmente se ejecuta en honor al santo patrón, y es frecuente que se baile en el atrio de los templos católicos. Vehículo de comunicación entre los hombres y las deidades, se propone invocar favores (pedir lluvia, por ejemplo) o agradecerlos (una buena cosecha).* (p.76) *Danza* is actually practiced with a traditional and religious purpose in mind. Generally it is executed in honor of a patron saint and is frequently danced in the courtyard of Catholic churches. It is a vehicle of communication between men and gods to invoke special favors (rain, for example) or to offer thanks (for a good harvest). (Translation)

Dr. Susan Cashion, (1983), professor of dance at Stanford University, states that:

The expressive dance culture of Mexico has kept the *campesino/indio/mestizo* together in periods of slavery and misery; it has stood as a statement of ethnic identity and legitimacy throughout periods of political and cultural segregation. It is one of the last markers in a segment of the Mexican population that is increasingly bombarded by national and international values. Dance is one of the nuclear experiences in maintaining social activities and relationships of the group. The festival dances of Mexico are a point of view, a way to know and transmit a type of society and culture. They allow the villagers to organize, identify, and confirm their existence. (p. 292)

Therefore, the western view of dance differs greatly from indigenous dance.

Cashion (1983) affirms that "Mexican dance is more than just a collection of steps and costumes; it is a nonverbal, symbolic system for communicating deep cultural beliefs and values." (p. 293) Indigenous dance is ritualistic and ceremonial in nature and tells a story imbedded within the culture that it represents. The following studies of selected indigenous dance communities reveal the importance of these traditions passed on from one generation to the next and the messages being communicated both publicly and internally.

## Historical Context of *Danza Indígena* in México and the Americas

There have been multiple research studies on indigenous dance in Mexico and in the Americas. The sources gathered are grounded within traditional and conservative studies dating back to the early 1900's. More recent studies, from the 1990's provide different interpretations and deal with the current situation of dance within indigenous communities today, while drawing on the findings from past references. This review focuses on a variety of themes that have emerged in recent literature focusing on indigenous dance in similar communities throughout Mexico. The following studies have been selected as primary sources for this literature review, quoted by other researchers in the field as well. Recurrent themes have come out of the research studies listed below. These and other studies will be reviewed through the themes of conquest, resistance, identity and power.

Jeffrey Cohen (1993) in "Danza de la Pluma: Symbols of Submission and Separation in a Mexican Fiesta", examines the *Danza de la Pluma* (feather dance) in the Zapotec village of Teotilán del Valle in Oaxaca, México. The *Danza de la Pluma* is a folk dance that retells the story of the conquest of México. Young people of Teotilán del Valle take on the roles of Moctezuma (king of the Aztecs) and his chiefs (as a group called the *danzantes*), *Caras Negras* (ritual clowns wearing black masks), the Spaniard Hernán Cortés, his soldiers, and the Malinche (Cortés's consort and translator.) Through the *danza* and the *fiesta*, Cohen explains how the *Teotitecos* construct a dramatic and multivocal statement of hope, identity and self-confidence. Within the historical setting of the conquest, he shows how the *indígena* has come

out victorious and has turned history around by presenting the *danza* as a dance of resistance and power.

Max Harris (1997) in "The Return of Moctezuma," identifies the most common theme of traditional folk performance in Mesoamerica is that of conquest and reconquest. Through his research of Oaxaca's *Danza de la Pluma* and New Mexico's *Danza de los Matachines*, Harris illustrates the interplay of "public and hidden transcripts" in the traditional folk performances. The study identifies the central characters of the dances, Moctezuma, and La Malinche.

In "Moctezuma's Daughter: The Role of La Malinche in Mesoamerican Dance," Harris (1997) identifies the Malinche of indigenous Mesoamerican folklore and offers multiple examples of the dances in which she appears. Again through *The Dialogical Theater: Dramatizations of the Conquest of Mexico and the Question of the Other*, Harris (1993) communicates the same message as in his previous studies, that the conquest was a lie, and that the true message is one of resistance.

Hanvik (1994) explains the importance that Mayan dance has had in retaining and "rescuing" and preserving Mayan culture. These above-mentioned studies clearly demonstrate how indigenous dances of Mexico and the Americas represent, not only dances of conquest as earlier scholars believed, but dances of resistance, identity and power as well.

### **Dance as Conquest**

Scholars have referred to many indigenous dances as dances of conquest in both political and religious terms. The Spanish conquest of the Americas, established a new political order and power and imposed a new religion as well. Cohen (1993) examines how the *Danza de la Pluma* retells the story of the Conquest, from Moctezuma's first knowledge of the Spaniards, through the destruction of Tenochtitlán (México City). Harris (1997) agrees that the most common theme of traditional folk performance in Mesoamerica is that of conquest and reconquest. As Nathan Wachtel has observed: "The trauma of the Conquest still reaches the Indians of the twentieth century; the past remains deeply imprinted on present mental structures. The persistence in the collective consciousness of a shock felt more than four hundred years ago is demonstrated by present-day Indian folklore." (Wachtel, 1977 in Harris, 1997, p. 106) Wachtel has in mind the widespread folk dramatizations of the Spanish conquest of indigenous America.

Forero (1998) writes about Christopher Columbus and his crew's arrival to the new land he named America. "*No sospecharon que existían cerca de 40 millones de nativos, con esplendorosas culturas...*"(p. 19) "They didn't realize that there already existed more than 40 million natives with splendid cultures." (Translation) Forero goes on to note:

*En tiempos de la Conquista, encontramos danzas que formaban parte de las grandes fiestas dedicadas a deidades masculinas: Huizilopochtli- dios de dioses; Páinal-dios ligero y rápido de la guerra-; Tezcatlipoca- sembrador de discordias; Tláloc- dios de la lluvia-; y Quezalcóatl- dios de los vientos-. También adoraban, festejaban y danzaban en ofrecimiento a diosas como: Cihuacóatl- mujer de la culebra-; Tonánzin -nuestra madre-; Chicomecóatl- diosa de los*

*manjares-; Temazcalteci –diosa de los baños-; Chalchiutlicue – diosa del agua-; y Chicomecóatl –diosa de la sal-. (p.20) During the time of the conquest, we find dances that formed part of the great festivities dedicated to masculine and feminine deities. (Summary translation)*

Yet Forero (1998) goes on to explain how this amazing empire of strength and power was transformed during the conquest. *“Es decir, que la danza de los nativos mexicanos fue transformada en la danza de la muerte por la sangre y el sadismo de los conquistadores.”* (p. 20-21) The dance of the native Mexicans was transformed into a dance of death for the blood spilled by the conquistadors. (Translation) The Spaniards were obsessed with riches and the evangelization of the natives and brought with them to the Americas “their trauma of invasion and armed resistance.”

For nearly 750 years, the Moors had occupied parts of Spain. Large-scale *fiestas de moros y cristianos* were brought to the Americas by the conquistadors.

(Warman Gryj, 1972 in Harris, 1997)

*Según Bernal Díaz del Castillo en 1531 tuvo lugar en la Nueva España la primera representación de moros y cristianos. Pronto comenzaron los relatos de la milagrosa aparición de la Santa Cruz o del Apóstol Santiago combatiendo al lado de los conquistadores contra los indios. Fueron los españoles, todavía ebrios con la victoria y expulsión de los moros de España los que trasladaron estas leyendas a las tierras conquistadas. According to Bernal Díaz del Castillo in 1531 the first representation of the Moors and the Christians took place in New Spain. Quickly the news spread about the miraculous apparition of the Holy Cross or the Apostle Santiago combating on the side of the conquistadors against the Indians. The Spaniards, still ‘drunk’ with victory having expelled the Moors from Spain, transferred these legends to their conquered lands. (Translation) (Aceves, 1988 p.12)*

The Spaniards proceeded to implant their culture and religion in the new land. They implanted their European forms, but on the other hand, indigenous and



African elements were "mixed-in" as well. "*Por otro lado, aun cuando se cristianizaron las antiguas danzas rituales, aplicándoles una temática apropiada a las exigencias de la nueva religión siguieron, en el fondo, conservando su antiguo simbolismo.*" (Smith, 1975, in Valencia, 1998) Although the ancient dance rituals were Christianized, applying new themes that came out of the new religion, deep within, they (the *indígenas*) conserved their ancient symbolism. (Translation)

James Scott (1990) in *Dominance and the Arts of Resistance*, develops a theory that explains the power relationships between the dominant and the subordinate groups:

"I shall use the term *public transcript* as a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate. *Public* here refers to action that is openly avowed to the other party in the power relationship, and *transcript* is used almost in its juridical sense of a complete record of what was said. This complete record, however, would also include non-speech acts such as gestures and expressions." (p. 2-3)

The indigenous dance throughout Mexico and Latin America have been greatly influenced by the Church and its doctrine. We will see later how certain historical figures emerge out of the dance and how the Christian doctrine plays out in indigenous dance. The "public transcript is the safest and most public form of political discourse is that which takes as its basis the flattering self-image of elites." (Scott, 1990, p. 18) The *indígena* performs his or her dance presenting an interpretation that is made "public." Yet, the literature reveals that the *indígena*, though converted to the new religion, secretly maintains a "hidden" culture of rebellion and resistance against the conquistadors and the new culture of domination.

## Dance as Resistance

Recent studies agree that the indigenous dances of the Americas do not represent dances of the conquest, as once believed, but in fact, dances of resistance. In his study of the *Danza de la Pluma*, in Oaxaca, Cohen takes us through the stages of the dance, during the festival that takes place in Teotitlán del Valle every July. Although it represents a folk dance that retells the story of the conquest of Mexico, it becomes clear that Moctezuma and his chiefs battle against the Spaniard Hernán Cortés and his soldiers. The story of the conquest unfolds through the daylong enactment. *Danzante* and soldier pair off and face one another to fight mock battles following the pattern of *Cristiano y Moros* folk dance. (Royce, 1968)

In the *Danza de la Pluma*, the finale of the dance and the banishment of Cortés are a metaphor through which the people of Teotitlán del Valle construct an alternative world. This is not a world where the *indígena* is subordinate to *mestizo*, nor is it a place where *indígenas* are thought of as relics of an indigenous, ancient past, generated from the success of the *danzantes*, this new world is Zapotec, with Teotitlán del Valle as its center. "The Mexican state (signified by Cortés and his men) is—at least for a moment—banished. The world is purified and returned to its indigenous glory." (Cohen, 1993, p.149) He goes on to explain how Teotitlán del Valle is a forum for the articulation of the community's submission (metaphorically framed in an identity as Indian and marginal) to the state (Mexico), and equally of the

community's resistance to its subordination (symbolized in the *danzantes'* reconquest of Mexico and the expulsion of Cortés)."

Scott (1990) explains "a second and sharply contrasting form of political discourse is that of the *hidden transcript* itself:"

If a subordinate discourse in the presence of the dominant is a *public transcript*, I shall use the term *hidden transcript* to characterize discourse that takes place "offstage," beyond direct observation by powerholders. The *hidden transcript* is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the *public transcript*. (p. 4-5)

As Nathan Wachtel has observed: "The trauma of the Conquest still reaches the Indians of the twentieth century; the past remains deeply imprinted on present mental structures. The persistence in the collective consciousness of a shock felt more than four hundred years ago is demonstrated by present-day Indian folklore." (Wachtel, 1977 in Harris, 1997, p. 115)

The *Danza de la Pluma* and the *Danza de los Matachines* are both ritual representations of what Wachtel called "the trauma of the Conquest." The public transcript of each dance narrates in a manner flattering to the conquerors and their descendants the triumph of Spanish Catholicism. The Hispanic Catholics of Bernalillo have accepted this public transcript as the true and only meaning of the *Danza de los Matachines*. But the Zapotecs of Teotitlán have insinuated into the *Danza de la Pluma* a hidden transcript, evident only in performance, in which the Indians gain both a clear aesthetic victory and a more discreet military victory. In the Native American pueblos of New Mexico, the *matachines* dance retains a thin veneer of its Catholic public transcript but displays more confidently, albeit without textual explanation, the hidden transcript of indigenous victory. (Wachtel, 1977 in Harris, 1997, p.115)

Through indigenous dance, Harris explains how the public transcript represents the conquest of Moctezuma and his soldiers by the army of Cortés, such

that the dance is called simply the *danza de la conquista*. "The hidden transcript reverses the outcome. The dance may be read as a promise of Moctezuma's final victory over the invaders. Many of the indigenous dances within the Mesoamerican tradition of folk dramatizations of conquest and re-conquest and both offer a "public" Catholic reading and a 'hidden' indigenous reading of the armed encounter between native and invading forces." (Scott, 1990)

Harris goes on to suggest that this dance does not tell the story of the conversion of Moctezuma to Christianity, but may have in fact been "instituted by Moctezuma that the descendants of his race might have the pleasure of mocking their conquerors." Harris (1997) leads to another possibility, by identifying the *Danza de la Pluma* as:

a dance whose public transcript appeals to the Catholic faith of the conquistador's descendants while simultaneously enacting a hidden transcript in which Moctezuma rises from the dead to lead indigenous ghost warriors to victory over those descendants is a splendid vehicle for discreet mockery of the Indians' conquerors. (p. 115)

Through his research of various *danzas* and folk theater traditions, Harris (1997) concludes that the "dance itself had offered no hint of indigenous conversion to Christianity." Scott (1990) points out instead that a "garbled" and therefore "innocuous" public transcript is a necessary cover for a coherent hidden transcript. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott (1990) says the "hidden transcript" of the subordinate group "represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant," and that of the powerful represents "the practices and claims of their rule

that cannot be openly avowed." (p.164) The literature confirms that *danza indígena* has prevailed throughout a history of violence and colonialism, surviving through "hidden" resistance.

### Dance as Identity

*¿Qué es la identidad? La manera de danzar, bailar, comer, vestir, hablar, aprender, curar y pensar, por citar algunos ejemplos, dan a cada grupo humano un carácter distintivo a sus usos, tradiciones y costumbres, cuyos símbolos crean un código perfectamente entendible entre sus integrantes.* (Ortiz and Hernández-Santana, 1998) What is identity? The ways in which a person moves, dances, eats, dresses, talks, learns, heals and thinks, citing a few examples, gives each human group, a distinct character of its own; its uses, traditions, and customs whose symbols create a code which is perfectly understood by the members of that group. (Translation)

The dance ritual unites and becomes the identity for the indigenous community. It provides a political, economic and social structure for its members. "Through the *danza* and the *fiesta*, Teotitecos construct a dramatic and multivocal statement of hope, identity and self-confidence...rooted in their history, commenting on the present and reaching toward the future." (Cohen, 1993, p.157) "*Los teenek comunican su historia y su relación con el medio a través de la danza.*" "The *huastecos* communicate their history and their identity in the world through *danza*." (Mercado, 1944, p. 21)

Wachtel reads the dances of the conquest as evidence of an unequivocal resentment still felt by the indigenous peoples of Latin America against the violent disruption of their world by the Spanish conquistadors. (Wachtel in Harris, 1993) But Mercedes Díaz Roig, pointing out that at least in Mexico the performers are often

*mestizo* and Catholic, has suggested that the attitude of the dancers is more complex. This dual focus creates 'grave problems' for the dancer. On the one hand, he feels himself to be part of the native world, not so much by blood...but on account of a historical consciousness of three centuries of Spanish domination...For the Mexican, the Spaniard is the *conquistador*, the enemy, the one who subjugated him and from whom liberty had to be won by force of arms. On the other hand, the dancer is aware the 'the light of the gospel' was brought by the 'oppressor'. The encounter between two worlds dramatized in the *Dances of the Conquest* is not, therefore, external to the performer, but internal: his *indigenismo* and his *catolicidad*; neither one nor the other can be conquered. (Díaz Roig, 1983, in Harris, 1993 p.104)

Sahagún began his encyclopedic *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* with the certainty that "these people are our brothers, proceeding from Adam's stock even as we ourselves; they are our neighbors whom we must love as ourselves."

(Sahagún, in Harris, 1993, p. 129) But Enrique Dussel has pointed out in his *History of the Church*:

The cultural conquest of other peoples has likewise been represented as the extension of 'the Self.' The conqueror or the pedagogical dominator controls by force of arms, and then by violence imposes upon another human being (such as the Indian, the African, the Asian, the masses, the worker, or the defenseless) the conqueror's civilization, religion, and deified cultural system in its ideological Totality. (Dussel in Harris, 1993, p. 129)

To establish "dominion over another by controlling his or her analytical horizon's to love another only in so far as he or she becomes like oneself." (Harris, 1993, p.129)

In his book, *Endangered Cultures*, León-Portilla talks about the conflict of acculturation and how forced change “had wounded the very values and foundations of the indigenous world.” He explains the trauma of *nepantlism*, or the state of remaining in the middle, one of the greatest dangers of culture contact ruled by the desire to impose change. The indígenas found themselves *nepantla*, “in between” the dominant culture and the new religion and the traditions and beliefs of the past. (León-Portilla, 1976) The history of conquest and resistance which created *nepantlism* for the indígena was transcended through cultural traditions such as dance.

What are the identities of some of the ‘key players’ we find in the indigenous dances of conquest and resistance? Central characters emerge repeatedly through the literature representing important figures during the conquest.

### **La Malinche**

One of the more intriguing and widespread characters in traditional Mexican *danzas* is that of *La Malinche* or, as she is sometimes known, *La Maringuilla*. “The principal deity the Spaniards brought to New Spain, the Virgin Mary, for both María and Marina become Malinche as they are translated into a hispanicized form of Náhuatl...her Christian name was then rendered in Náhuatl as Malintzín.” (Harris, 1996, p.171) In “Moctezuma’s Daughter,” Harris identifies the *Malinche* of indigenous Mesoamerican folklore:

The character of *La Malinche* in traditional Mesoamerican dances does not represent, as scholars too readily assume, Cortés's indigenous mistress and translator of the same name. She is instead, the wife or daughter of a semidivine and messianic figure named, like the Aztec ruler against whom Cortés fought, Moctezuma.

(Harris, 1996, p.149) "Malinche is the name given to Moctezuma's wife." (Gillmor, 1943 in Harris, 1996) "Malinche is often said to be Moctezuma's daughter." (Harris, 1994, p.158) "La Malinche brings Moctezuma back to life...and joins in the battle against European dominance." (Treviño and Gilles, 1994, in Harris, 1996) "Malinche of the dance has more to do with indigenous mythology than she does with the narrative of the conquest." (Harris, 1996, p.152)

"A female character, La Malinche is often represented by a male dancer." (Harris, 1996, p.149) She is traditionally described, "the violated Mother...a figure representing the Indian women who were fascinated, violated or seduced by the Spaniards" (Paz, in Harris, 1996) or independent, active translator, who searched for the right words to bridge the gap between two cultures," and as a "remarkable woman with personal strength of character, intelligence and beauty." (Cypess 1991:151, in Harris, 1996, p. 151) "When all is said and done, the Indians of Mexico have a certain amount of respect and admiration for Malinche because of the power she had with the Spaniards." (Cordry, 1980, in Harris, 1996, p.) Many have "linked her to Cortés's mistress and translator..." (Harris, 1996, p.150) Historically speaking in multiple sources of literature, she has been severely criticized for having defected to the side of the enemy. Yet, it is interesting to note that her character



receives reverence in *danza indígena*: "Almost all Mexican Indian dances have a Malinche or Man-Woman, but nobody seems to be able to explain the exact role played by this figure." (Harris, 1996, p.149) "It is tempting to note in passing that sexual ambiguity (male inside, female outside)..is an important aspect of the Aztec mother-earth deity" (Gillespie, 1989:61 in Harris, 1996), and to wonder if this partially explains the tendency to have a male dancer in female clothes represent Malinche." (Harris, 1996, p.155)

While we may never know the precise origin of Malinche's name in the dance, we are at least freed to equate her, because of a common name, with a historical character to whom she makes only incidental reference. According to Harris, "The Malinche of the dances emphatically does not represent Cortés's mistress and translator." (Harris, 1996, p.174)

### **Moctezuma**

The literature does not describe Moctezuma as the Aztec ruler who was conquered and defeated by Cortés and his men, as the history of conquest might suggest. Within the tradition of indigenous dance, a distinct, more powerful figure emerges. Gillespie (1989) assumes that:

Moctezuma represents the messianic king. Within this interpretation, Malinche signifies the necessary queen, embodiment of the mother-earth goddess, who will provide Moctezuma with his legitimacy. And Cortés connotes whatever foreign power the future Moctezuma will defeat. (Gillespie in Harris, 1996, p.160)

“Common to all versions is a cast of characters consisting of the *monarca*, who is said to be Moctezuma; 10 to 14 *danzantes*, who represent his ‘soldiers’; and Malinche.” (Sinclair 1980 in Harris, 1996) It is interesting to note that it is Moctezuma and not Cortés who comes out victorious in the dance. His brilliant costume and complicated choreographical movements outshine the simple costume and steps performed by Cortés and his soldiers. (Cohen, 1993)

Within the *Danza de los Matachines* performed in both Hispanic and Native American communities in New Mexico, Harris describes and interprets the choreography:

After several minutes of dancing, Moctezuma moved backward between the two rows of *danzantes* and each pair knelt as his passed...the kneeling position of the *danzantes* appeared to signal the death of his warriors.” (Harris, 1996, p.165) Malinche then wove her way through one line of *danzantes* after the other. As queen of the spirit realm, according to Treviño and Giles (1991:12 in Harris, 1996), Malinche was thus purifying and uniting the warrior spirits who had died honorably in battle...the circling motion of La Malinche’s extended arm (brought) Moctezuma back to life.” (Harris, 1996, p.166) “Moctezuma arises and begins the journey back to the world of substance. The revived Moctezuma called on the ghost warriors to join him in battle. Two by two, the *danzantes* rose from their kneeling position to perform ‘the whirling motion that indicates travel between the spirit world and the world of substance.’ (Treviño and Giles, 1991, in Harris, 1996, p.166)

Clearly through this dance, Moctezuma has not been defeated. The *Danza de los Matachines* is read as a “victory of indigenous ghost warriors” led by the valiant Moctezuma. (Treviño and Gilles in Harris, 1996, p.163)

### **Dance as Power**

Dance as an expression and practice of relations of power and protest, resistance and complexity, has been the subject of a number of historical and ethnographic analyses in recent years. (Reed, 1998, p.505) Through the literature we understand how *danza* has served as an instrument of 'hidden' power for the *indígena*. Trevino and Giles refer to Moctezuma as the "messianic" leader, interpreting the *danza* as dramatized victory of the *indígena* over intrusive "foreign cultures." (Treviño and Giles, 1991 in Harris, 1996) Gillespie affirms this interpretation identifying Moctezuma as both the past ruler and or the "messiahlike figure" who will "defeat the Spanish and initiate a new Indian hegemony." (Gillespie, 1989 in Harris, 1996), and that Malinche is commonly his "wife" or "daughter" who leads him to victory.

Indigenous dance has survived the conquest to this day through resistance and power. "More than joyful excess, rituals are complex events that allow the creative restructuring of history, social relations, economy, and power." (Harris, 1996, p.157) *Danza* is a powerful medium through which the *indígena* reinterprets history and comes out victorious.

In some colonized areas, dance practices posed a genuine threat of political resistance or rebellion, particularly in societies where dance was a site of male collective performance, in which a sense of unity and power was heightened, potentially spawning uprisings against colonial rulers or slave masters. (Reed, 1998, p. 505)

It is worth noting that many cultural dance traditions throughout a history of conquest have survived. In many cases, as stated earlier, the hidden transcript of the dance

was only understood by the insiders. The public transcript masked the true message communicated through the dance ritual to the outside world. Reed, in "The Politics and Poetics of Dance" describes how indigenous dance in Peru also survived through a history of persistence and power:

While Andean dance was forced to work within the space of Catholicism and the church, where it was largely conceptualized as an acceptable "devotional" practice akin to Christian church dances, for the Andeans, the dance retained much of its significance as a means of gaining individual status and power. (1998, p. 507)

Therefore, "for the study of power relations, this perspective alerts us to the fact that virtually all ordinarily observed relations between dominant and subordinate represent the encounter of the public transcript of the dominant with the public transcript of the subordinate." (Scott, 1990, p.13)

Historically, there has been a tremendous effort on the part of the dominant group "to abolish or control autonomous social sites where the subordinates could possibly generate a hidden transcript." (Scott, 1990, p.124)

The development of a thick and resilient hidden transcript is favored by the existence of social and cultural barriers between dominant elites and subordinates. It is one of the ironies of power relations that the performances required of subordinates can become, in the hands of subordinates, a nearly solid wall making the autonomous life of the powerless opaque to elites. (Scott, 1990, p.132)

Through *danza* the *indígena* has successfully used simple codes to insinuate meanings accessible to one intended audience which are opaque to another. It may even be possible that the dominant audience understands the subtle message being

communicated through the dance ritual, but finds it difficult to react because that “sedition is clothed” in innocent terms. (Scott, 1990, p. 158)

The studies reviewed in this chapter explain what Scott (1998) refers to as the “hidden and public transcripts” of marginalized people and their survival in the western world. Scott’s theory in his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* is effectively used to explain the hidden and public meanings of indigenous dances communities by the research studies reviewed in this chapter.

### **Dance as Literacy in “Reading the World”**

According to Paulo Freire literacy is not limited to the traditional western view of reading and writing, but encompasses one’s culture and language as well. As an essential part of culture and identity, dance is defined as an act of knowledge and literacy. Since the acquisition of knowledge is not neutral, the survival of the ancient indigenous dance traditions represents a political act of resistance and power. When those who are oppressed break the silence and explicitly teach and pass down traditional dance and music forms to future generations, they are communicating a strong message of social justice. Dance is an important key to one’s cultural identity and knowledge.

#### **Dance as an act of knowledge**

Paulo Freire says, “Literacy and education in general are cultural expressions. You cannot conduct literacy work outside the world of culture because education in itself is a dimension of culture. Education is an act of knowledge.” (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p.52) He goes on to explain:

Any people who can courageously break the chains of colonialism can also easily read the word, provided the word belongs to them. Their new leadership fails to recognize that in the struggle for liberation these people were involved in an authentic literacy process by which they learned to read their history, and that they also wrote during their struggle for liberation. This is a fundamental way to write history without writing words." (p.56)

The critical pedagogues believe that cultural expression and knowledge is true liberation. We have seen earlier how a history of conquest and oppression has attempted to eradicate the people's knowledge and ability to "read the world." (Freire and Macedo, 1987) By retaining and reclaiming their identity through the ritual and dance, the *indígenas* have maintained an important part of the foundation of their culture. This knowledge is then passed down from one generation to the next. "Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world." (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p. 35)

This research is driven by the notion that traditional and ceremonial dance is an act of knowledge. The elders are not only the leaders of the dance, but the respected leaders of the communities as well. They retain the knowledge that must be passed down throughout the generations.

### **Dance as a political act**

The literature suggests instead that we consider the history of conquest and resistance in order to understand the role of education and who has been handed the keys that open the doors to literacy. Education is not neutral. How literacy is defined becomes a political act. One has only to compare and contrast the political history of the dominant and subordinate cultures in order to further one's

understanding of dance as a political act and to acknowledge indigenous dance as a legitimate form of knowledge. This acknowledgement in itself is political.

...As much for the educational process as for the political act, that one of the fundamental questions arises; *in favor of whom and what* (and thus *against whom and what* do we promote education? And *in favor of whom and what* do we develop political activity? The more we gain this clarity of understanding through practice, the more we perceive the impossibility of separating the inseparable: the education of politics. We can understand, then, that it is impossible to even think about education without considering the question of power. (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p. 38)

The literature has shown how difficult it has been historically to maintain and preserve indigenous dance and culture. As marginalized people, the *indígena* has struggled to survive politically, socially and economically throughout the Americas. This study asserts that the survival of indigenous dance to this day is a political act. As previously mentioned, even though its survival may be due in part to a “hidden” message of conquest, its ultimate message is one of political resistance and power on the part of the indigenous communities.

### **Dance as literacy**

Freire speaks of the concept of the “popular library” which recognizes the contributions and knowledge of the people and the authentic manifestations of the culture. *Danza indígena* should become part of the popular library.

The popular library, as a cultural and learning center, and not just a silent depository of books, is a fundamental factor for the improvement and intensification of a correct form of reading the text in relation to the context...which would constitute a living part of the history of the area. With this wealth of material, pamphlets could be published using the language, syntax, semantics, prosody – of those interviewed. These pamphlets and the recorded tapes could be used in the library itself and would be material of

unquestionable value for literacy and postliteracy courses, as well as other activities in the same area. (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p. 45)

The popular library is a way to preserve and validate the contributions of indigenous culture and dance and to acknowledge those who hold the funds of knowledge of the community. The data collected, transcribed and analyzed in this study, along with the monographs of the indigenous dance communities will become an essential component of the popular library of the indigenous communities of the Huasteca.

### **Dance as social justice**

These ceremonial dances still exist today in many indigenous communities, after five hundred years of conquest and oppression. Their mere existence is representative of a culture of resistance, identity and power with a clear message of social justice. William Ayers (1998) says:

To teach consciously for social justice...is teaching that arouses students, engages them in a quest to identify obstacles to their full humanity, to their freedom, and then to drive, to move against those obstacles...We find ourselves living in the midst of cruelty and oppression; we uncover a long story of domination, oppression and catastrophe; we come to believe that we can become makers of history –not merely the passive objects of the great human drama, but actors and catalysts and full subjects in the action.

He goes on to say, "No teaching is or ever can be innocent –it must be situated in a cultural context, an historical flow, an economic condition." (p.xvii)

Freire adds:

Understanding resistance leads to appreciating the "astuteness" of the oppressed classes as a way to defend themselves against the dominant. This astuteness is explicit through the use of their language, artworks, music, and even in their physiology. The oppressed body develops immunization to



defend itself against the harsh conditions to which it is subjugated. Though highly artistic and thus aesthetic, they are also a political act. (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p.137)

Educational practice must also address the "school's hidden curriculum" which "gradually incites rebelliousness on the part of the children and adolescents." (Freire and Macedo, 1987) Freire goes on to suggest that:

Students are reacting to a curriculum and other material conditions in schools that negate their histories, cultures, and day-to-day experiences...That is, the refusal to read the word chosen by the teacher is the realization on the part of the student that he or she is making a decision not to accept what is perceived as violating his or her world. (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p.123)

When curriculum designers ignore important variables such as social-class differences, when they ignore the incorporation of the subordinate cultures' values in the curriculum, and when they refuse to accept and legitimize the students' language, their actions point to the inflexibility, insensitivity, and rigidity of a curriculum that was designed to benefit those who wrote it. (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p.124)

Recognizing and preserving the funds of knowledge of subdominant cultures such as that of indigenous people of the Huasteca and the Americas, through art forms such as dance, is a step toward "emancipatory literacy." (Freire and Macedo, 1987) Freire clarifies:

Emancipatory literacy, in which literacy is viewed 'as one of the major vehicles by which 'oppressed' people are able to participate in the sociohistorical transformation of their society...Literacy, in this sense, is grounded in a critical reflection on the cultural capital of the oppressed. (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p.157)

And finally,

Literacy can only be emancipatory and critical to the extent that it is conducted in the language of the people. It is through the native language that students "name their world" and begin to establish a dialectical relationship with the dominant class in the process of transforming the social and political structures that imprison them in their "culture of silence. (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p.159)

### **Voices of the Indigenous People in Mexico Today and Tomorrow**

Throughout a history of conquest and oppression, the voices of the indigenous people of Mexico and the Americas have been continuously silenced. Yet recently, many new publications and politically-charged summits are educating the western mind drawing world attention to the plight of the indigenous people of Mexico.

Speaking on behalf of the indigenous people of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Tom Hayden (2002) asserts that:

These were armed guerillas like no others. Not simply fighting for their cultural identity or negotiating for a niche in the modern state, they seemed to be fighting by using their identity as a weapon itself, challenging the government and Mexican society to think, see, feel, and respond to indigenous identity. They wanted to heal the modern world not by overthrowing or smashing it, but by a cultural re-Conquest of Mexico and the modern world. In this re-Conquest, they seemed to say, the indigenous in everyone, the indigenous in every culture and nation, would overthrow its guards of forgetting and re-emerge as a source of wisdom. (p. 84)

It is precisely this "wisdom" that must be preserved and passed down, in order for these cultures to survive. The plight and suffering of the indigenous communities in the Huasteca parallel those of their brothers and sisters in Chiapas, as well as in other areas of Mexico. It may be worthwhile to note that the voices finally being heard in Chiapas reflect those voices of all indigenous people throughout the world, including those in the Huasteca. Hayden (2002) goes on to explain:

While I offered support to indigenous struggles all over the Americas, I too assumed that the 500-year war was in its final stages, that the Conquest had succeeded, that extinctions would continue their grisly toll until the end. We who cared for endangered cultures and species were only able to work within the parameters of the Conquest itself, the Conquest we now called the modern world, salvaging what we could of tribal cultures and fragmented ecosystems... When Marcos and the Zapatistas showed, if only for a moment, that there was an alternative, that the Conquest itself could be challenged one more time, it electrified those like myself who believed, with Carolyn Forché, that "everywhere and always, go after that which is lost." (p. 83)

In the "Fourth Declaration" of January 1996, Marcos and the Zapatistas say:

The flower of the word does not die, although our steps walk in silence. In silence the word is sown. So that it may flower shouting, it goes quiet. The word becomes a soldier in order not to die in oblivion. To live the word dies, sown forever in the womb of the world. Only those who surrender their history will return to oblivion. (Marcos and the Zapatistas, 1996, in Womack, 1999)

This study hopes that the history and cultural traditions, namely the dance traditions, of the *indígena* communities of the Huasteca, do not "die out" and "surrender." This research aims to preserve and pass on these traditions for generations to come before they are "lost" forever. The elders of the Huasteca have requested that these traditions of music and dance be passed from their communities and beyond in order to assure their survival in society.

The purpose of this research is to validate the contributions of the indigenous communities through their dance and to acknowledge the importance of preserving these traditions as a way to preserve indigenous culture and values. As Mexican folkloric dancers and educators in the community, this study provides an avenue for the voices of the *indígena* to be heard and their dance traditions acknowledged and disseminated beyond the Huasteca and valued in other dance communities.

## CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

### **Research Design**

This action research is a case study of various indigenous dance communities in the Huasteca region of Veracruz, México. The research utilized ethnographic methods as described by Fetterman, (1998), as well as, qualitative design as detailed by Maxwell (1996). I used the grounded theory approach and qualitative coding of themes explained by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995).

This qualitative study is an inductive approach that focuses on specific people (Maxwell, 1996). Maxwell states that qualitative studies, such as this one, focus on understanding the meaning, for participants in the study, of the dances they are involved in, and the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences. They focus on understanding the particular context within which the participants act, identify the unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generate new-grounded theory about the latter. (Maxwell, 1996, pp. 19-20)

Fetterman states that "the most important element of fieldwork is being there – to observe, to ask seemingly stupid but insightful questions, and to write down what is seen and heard." (Fetterman, 1998, p.9) Information gathered in the field- included field notes, memos, and observations. Formal and informal interviews were conducted, audio taped and intermittently videotaped. I observed and participated in the dances with the community members as well as with our facilitators. These ethnographic methods were used to engage the voices of the indigenous dance

communities of the Huasteca - the elders, dancers, musicians and facilitators – in order to understand the benefits of maintaining and preserving the indigenous dance traditions and to understand the meaning and value of dance for the community.

Entering the indigenous communities of the Huasteca was only made possible through our relationship with our facilitators, Prof. Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Prof. Cándido Hernández Navarrete. As *huastecos* and people trusted by the members of the communities, they invited and accompanied us during every visit. Prof. Mendoza explained that it is not only dangerous to enter these areas unaccompanied, but virtually impossible to enter without being stopped and questioned by the Mexican police, who rarely allow few outsiders passage. Not until our second trip to the Huasteca, did I discover that Prof. Mendoza registered us as his guests with city officials in Tantoyuca during each of our visits.

Both professors spent lots of time preparing us initially, before we entered the indigenous communities. They challenged us to recognize our biases and beliefs in order to remain open to recognizing and respecting different belief systems and life styles that we would discover in the setting. (Fetterman, 1998, p.23) It was a personal challenge to accept the role that the women play in the indigenous communities. Maestro Gabriel confirmed that women had no participation in *danza autótona* or pre-Colombian dance, conserved in its original form, and it wasn't until after the religious conquest that the women began to have a role in the dance community.

It was difficult to find women who were willing to participate in the research due to their passive role in their community. There was a sharp contrast between *huasteco/teenek* and *náhuatl* or *nahua/mexica* women. The *huastecas* would hide from us and cover their mouths to hide their smiles. Only the *nahuas* would actually speak to us. As an outsider, it became essential to return to the Huasteca many times to establish trust and rapport with the participants and the community at large. Once that trust was established, it was easier to find willing and eager participants to interview.

This research used “purposeful sampling,” (Patton in Maxwell, 1996 p.70) “in which particular people are selected deliberately in order to provide important information” for the study that only they can provide. I have avoided what Maxwell calls “key informant bias” by selecting, not only the elders of the dance communities, but dancers and musicians as well that “are representative of the group as a whole.” (Maxwell, 1996 p. 73) With the help of our facilitators, Prof. Mendoza and Prof. Hernández, it was possible to invite a diverse group of participants into the research.

### **Setting**

The Huasteca is an ample region of Mexico, made up of approximately twenty-seven thousand square kilometers, spreading across many states of Mexico. Traditionally this region is referred to as the “three huastecos” encompassing the states of Veracruz, Hidalgo and San Luis Potosí. This assumption is incorrect, since the Huasteca region also includes substantial area within the states of Tamaulipas, Puebla, Queretaro and Guanajuato as well. (Jimenez in Vazquez, 1991) Prof.

Mendoza refers to the Huasteca as one region, not divided by state lines. The largest population of *huastecos* currently resides in the northeastern part of Veracruz and San Luis Potosí, with smaller numbers along the bordering zones of Tamaulipas and Hidalgo. A large number of *huastecos* live within the municipalities of Tantoyuca and Tempoal. The *nahuas* of Veracruz live in the northern region, with the municipality of Chicontepec being one of the largest. The Huasteca is a mountainous region surrounded by tropical forests and a rich variety of rivers and fauna. The climate is very humid and tropical, with intense rainfall during the summer months.

The economic base of the region is agriculture, with corn, squash, beans and sweet potatoes cultivated for consumption. Sugar cane, peanuts, and rice are more recent crops, including coffee, which is commercially produced. The entire region produces *zapupe* and palm, fibrous plants used for making baskets, bags, hammocks, hats and many other articles.

The setting for this research began with the *Abriendo Caminos* project in 1997 in the cities of Tantoyuca and Tempoal, Veracruz - the homes of Prof. Mendoza and Prof. Hernández. During each visit to the Huasteca, our home base was Tantoyuca, the largest city closest to the indigenous communities, with a population of 94,829, twice as many people as the City of Watsonville. We stayed at Posada San Javier, one of the only hotels in the area about two miles from the home of our key facilitator, Prof. Gabriel Mendoza. Whenever necessary, this hotel served as a meeting place to hold meetings, dance rehearsals and musical recordings.

Most of the dances in this study are located in the state of Veracruz; although one of the dances crosses state lines into Hidalgo. All of the communities belong to larger municipalities that are governed by the state and federal government. Yet the elders of each community are given special reference and respect by the members. Whenever there is a dispute to be resolved, the elder is called upon for advice and direction. In most cases, the elder of the community is also the leader - *jefe* or *capitán* - of the *danza*.

The following dances and communities are part of this research:

- *Danza El Tigrillo*, executed in the *huasteco* community of Guayal Mata el Tigre, is located within the municipality of Tantoyuca.
- *Danza de San José*, executed in the *mexica* or *náhuatl* community of Tepexocoyo, is located in the municipality of Chicontepepec.
- *Tepecmecaxochitl* or *La Danza de Mujeres*, executed in the *mexica* or *náhuatl* community of Tepexocoyo, is located in the municipality of Chicontepepec.
- *Danza de Moctezuma* or *Malinche*, executed in the *mexica* or *náhuatl* community of Taxtitla, is located in the municipality of Chalma.
- *Danza de los Chules* is danced in the municipalities of Tantoyuca and Ozuluama, Veracruz.
- *Danza de los Viejos* or *La Viejada* is executed in many municipalities in the region, including Tantoyuca and Tempoal. The more traditional



form of the *danza, Cuanegros*, is performed in individual indigenous communities.

### Research Participants

The research participants represent diverse ethnic groups within the Huasteca region. It is important to distinguish between the *indígena* and the *mestizo*, both representatives of the Huasteca culture. The *indígena* is the person born into the indigenous culture, and whose language, culture and values are representative of the community in which he or she lives and works. The *indígena*, for the sake of this study, speaks either *huasteco* or *náhuatl* and makes a living in agriculture and the production of hand made crafts. The living conditions for these people are generally very difficult and poor due to political, social and economic oppression.

According to Cashion (1983), the *mestizo* represents a “new race developing in México in the eighteenth century of Spanish-Indian mixture.” Without a doubt, the history of the region includes the African culture as well. It is difficult to speak of a pure, indigenous culture in Mexico, since there have been many ethnic groups who have immigrated, intermarried, and settled in the region.

It seems clearer to define the words *indígena* and *mestizo*, by focusing on social, political and economic status rather than ethnicity. Both facilitators in our study, are representative of the *mestizo* culture. They speak Spanish as their first language, have university degrees, political clout and are for the most part, economically stable, representing Mexico’s middle class. The elders, *danzantes* and musicians of the indigenous communities, speak *huasteco* or *náhuatl* as their first

language, and live under poorer economic conditions. Political decisions made from those in positions of power at the city and state level, affect the conditions in which they live. They struggle to maintain their lifestyle, language and cultural traditions. For the most part, their children receive a primary education in Spanish, but tend to drop out at the secondary and rarely attend the university. Many young people go to the bigger cities to find work, especially young girls, working as housekeepers. The elders have expressed the difficulty in passing on the dance traditions to their youth, when the young people no longer live in the communities. As mentioned earlier, all of the participants of the study gave their permission to be identified to assure proper authenticity and authority in relation to the indigenous dance traditions of the Huasteca.

### **Facilitators**

Both facilitators, Prof. Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Prof. Cándido Navarrete Hernández, identified themselves as *huastecos* and *mestizos*. They see themselves as *huastecos* since they were born and raised in the Huasteca region and have ancestral roots that trace to the indigenous ethnic groups of the region. They identified *mestizo* since they represent a mixture of indigenous, African and European blood. They were both interviewed formally and informally and their interviews and conversations were audio taped and later transcribed. The same interview was prepared and orally given to each facilitator.

Prof. Gabriel Mendoza Torres of Tantoyuca, Veracruz served as the key facilitator in this study. He works as a professor at CESER (Centro de Estudios

Superiores de Educaciones Rurales) in Aceseca, Veracruz, a teacher training university for rural education. His students are prepared and required to do their student teaching placement in an indigenous community school and to conduct research on one of the indigenous dances as well. He has served in governmental positions in Tantoyuca, Veracruz. This position gave him the opportunity to initially travel and learn about the Huasteca, meet the people of the communities, establish rapport and trust, build lasting relationships and finally, become their ally and government representative.

He is a founding member of the Folklorico of the University of Veracruz and the Folklorico of the Tourist Industry. He served as president for the Instituto de la Investigación y Difusión de la Danza Mexicana, A.C. Prof. Mendoza has dedicated over thirty-five years to the preservation and dissemination of the indigenous dance and cultural traditions of the Huasteca through his teachings, work and life. He has served as the director of the *Abriendo Caminos* project in Tantoyuca and the indigenous communities of the Huasteca since its inception in 1997.

Prof. Cándido Hernández Navarrete originally from Tempoal, currently resides in Cardel, Veracruz. He is a middle school teacher at the Escuela Secundaria Francisco and is principal of Escuela Secundaria Armando Cardel. He was one of the founding members and lead dancers in the Folklorico of the University of Veracruz. He is a member of the Instituto de la Investigación y Difusión de la Danza Mexicana, A.C. He has served as the coordinator of the *Abriendo Caminos* project in Mexico

since 1997. He has made three trips to Watsonville, California as guest artist/instructor for Mexican dance company, Esperanza del Valle.

The elders, *danzantes* and musicians of each of the communities were given an interview of twenty questions developed by my colleague, Ruby Ann Vásquez and I. Prof. Mendoza reviewed the questions, gave his input and then approved them before we administered the interview in each community. Either Prof. Mendoza or both professors accompanied us and often participated in the interviews.

### **Elders**

Three elders in three communities were interviewed on three or more occasions. They represent different ethnicities and dance communities and serve as the leader of the dance and governance in their community.

Camilo del Angel Vidad, elder of the community Guayal Mata el Tigre, located in the municipality of Tantoyuca is also the *huasteco* or *teenek* leader of the *danza El Tigrillo*. He learned the dance from his grandfather and began dancing at the age of twenty. He plays the flute for the dance and has been the leader of the dance and his community for the past thirty-five years.

Lorenzo Vicente Vacilia, born and raised in the *náhuatl* or *mexica* community of Taxtitla, in the municipality of Chalma, Veracruz, is the *capitán* or leader of *Danza Moctezuma* or *Malinche*. Don Lorenzo, now 82, began dancing when he was twelve years old.

Gilberto Hernández Gómez, the *Capitán Central Coordinador de la Danza San José*, resides in the *náhuatl* or *mexica* community of Tepexocoyo in the

municipality of Chicontepec, Veracruz. He began dancing at age twelve and was named *capitán* when he was twenty years old. He is the instructor of the dance and leader in his community.

### **Danzantes**

All of the elders are also considered *danzantes*. Though there were other *danzantes* who participated in some of the interviews conducted, only one was formally interviewed. The only female interviewed was Francisca de la Cruz Bautista, wife of Gilberto Hernández Gómez, from the *náhuatl* or *mexica* community of Tepexocoyo in the municipality of Chicontepec. Francisca has participated in the women's dance, *Tepecmecaxochitl* for twelve years and has had many roles in the dance. Her voice is important in this study since hers is the only female voice.

### **Musicians**

José de la Cruz Francisca, father to Francisca de la Cruz Bautista, has been playing the violin since he was eight years old. He is sixty-five and resides in the community of Tepexocoyo in the municipality of Chicontepec, Veracruz. He plays the music for the women's dance *Tepecmecaxochitl*. His interview brought a unique perspective and included his personal experience as a musician.

## **Data Collection**

This research extends a larger study that began in October 1997, with Mexican folkloric dance company, Esperanza del Valle's (EDV) *Abriendo Caminos* project, funded by the U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture. The purpose of that earlier project was initially to visit the indigenous communities of the Huasteca during the

*Día de los Muertos*, guided by Prof. Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Prof. Cándido Hernández Navarrete to observe, document and learn the indigenous dances of specific communities with the intention of EDV dancers performing these dances for our community in Watsonville. The grant supported a team of EDV members and other contracted artists to go to the Huasteca in October, 1997 and July, 1998. The project culminated with a two-hour performance in Watsonville's premiere Mello Center for the Performing Arts in October of 1998 with a special appearance by Prof. Cándido Hernández Navarrete.

Since then, EDV's dancer, Ruby Ann Vásquez and I (EDV's artistic director) have returned to the Huasteca each summer following the termination of the grant. It was in the context of this earlier work that we came to know members of the community and formulated our questions that this proposed research is based on.

My colleague, Ruby Ann Vásquez and I both speak Spanish fluently and conducted all interviews in Spanish with those interviewed in the Huasteca during the summers of 2001 and 2002. All formal interviews with the facilitators and community artists were audio taped and transcribed. The elders of the communities speak Spanish as a second language, therefore Maestro Gabriel Mendoza Torres assisted us with translation-interpretation whenever necessary. In addition, I took notes during the interviews. Samples of the interview questions formulated for the facilitators and for the community artists are included in appendices A and B.

Ruby Ann Vásquez and I returned to the Huasteca this past summer in order to check our findings with the participants to assure validity and accuracy of the data

collected. The transcriptions of the interviews that I transcribed from July, 2001, as well as the first drafts of monographs I had written were shown to the participants for additions, omissions and corrections before publishing. Photographs taken throughout the duration of the project were also shown, in order to assure proper identification. Prof. Mendoza sat in during these sessions and assisted with the corrections. These follow-up interviews were audio taped and transcribed as well. Changes were noted on the printed monographs and transcribed interviews and corrections were made once I returned home from the Huasteca. Further follow-up clarifications were made on the phone to both facilitators.

Through triangulation we were able to get closer to the emic perspective – understanding “the insider’s perspective of reality.” (Fetterman, 1998, p.20) The participants of the communities provided an important perspective, triangulated with the facilitators’ perspective as well as with the available literature, such as unpublished monographs. Our experiences, observations and participation with the dances and other activities and traditions in the communities provided an additional perspective to this research. We had multiple opportunities to learn the dances from the participants accompanied by their musicians. These experiences illustrate the principle of “triangulation: collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods.” (Denzin, 1970 in Maxwell, 1996, p. 75)

### **Data Analysis**

The main categorizing strategy that I used in my qualitative research design is what Maxwell refers to as coding. (Maxwell, 1996, p. 78) The data were coded

according to prevalent themes in each of the interviews. The patterns in the unpublished monographs were coded, comparing and contrasting the dances in the different communities of the Huasteca. First, themes were identified in each individual participant's data and then themes were identified across each group: facilitators, elders, *danzantes* and musicians. Finally, themes were categorized across the four groups of participants. Repetitions, consistencies and differences were noted.

There were seven formal interviews coded as primary data: two with the facilitators, three with the elders, one with a dancer and one with a musician. Interviews with the facilitators differed with those conducted with the community artists. Their opinions about the importance of preserving the indigenous dances were requested as well as their role around the work of rescuing and preserving these traditions. It was vital to triangulate the information gained from the artist's interviews in comparison to that of the facilitators.

The interviews with the artists focused on their personal experiences and perceptions about the importance of the dance of their community in their lives. Questions focused on the details of the dance: its meaning, history, symbolism and importance. The questions often led the participants to include other information that became vital leading to new discoveries. The emerging themes were coded and compared with those of the facilitators.

The analytic practices presented in this research draw heavily from methods taking the "grounded theory" approach to analyzing qualitative data. (Emerson, et



al.,1995) "Grounded theorists give priority to developing rather than to verifying analytic propositions." (Emerson, et al.,1995 p. 143) Rather than try to answer the research questions that I proposed in my study, the data helped me "discover" original theories. Multiple themes emerged out of the data that consisted of over one hundred pages of transcribed interviews.

Finally, Prof. Gabriel challenged me to explain the title of this research. During our interview, he asked me why I chose to use the words identity, resistance and power to describe the indigenous dances of the Huasteca. I talked a little bit about the research findings, as describe in the literature, but also the themes that emerged from the data. He was pleased to know that these themes were implicit in the findings once themes were coded and analyzed, as the next chapter of this study will reveal.

## CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS

Imagine being woken up at 4:30 in the morning by Maestro Gabriel and Maestro Cándido, waiting outside your hotel door, ready to take you on your first journey to the indigenous communities of the Huasteca, to meet the participants of your study. You are exhausted, with only a couple hours of sleep, after an all night bus ride from Cardel to Tantoyuca in the Huasteca region of Veracruz. Your fellow researcher, Ruby, seamstress Sra. Jauregui and son, Gabriel, prepare quickly for the unforeseen adventure. The other members of your team, photographer, videographer, dancer and manager, are already dressed and anxious to begin.

Although today you and your team are headed for the *náhuatl* or *mexica* community of Tepexocoyo, Chicontepec, each day you will make similar journeys to other *huasteco* and *náhuatl* communities to observe and learn about the *danzas* you will be researching. At this time you do not realize that this will be the first of many visits that you will make each year to the Huasteca. What you experience during these two weeks will change your life forever.

The highway travel is fairly smooth, although in the darkness you can't distinguish exactly where you are going. Ruby, Gabriel and you travel with Maestro Gabriel, who is driving quickly and talking a hundred miles an hour. Following behind are Maestro Cándido and the rest of the team. Once off the main road, you follow the road signs to Chicontepec. You have read extensively about this mystical place, and the pictures of the faces and colors of the picture books fill your mind.

As the day dawns, you arrive to the crossroads and the end of your journey by car. Maestro Gabriel has arranged for a special open-air road vehicle to take you to the community of Tepexocoyo, nestled in the hills of Chicontepec. The unpaved road is full of rocks and potholes and as you bounce from side to side for almost two hours, you see the lush vegetation, and feel the mist of the morning dew on your face. You finally arrive to the small community of Tepexocoyo, expecting some sort of greeting, after such a long journey, but the place appears deserted, except for the sounds of roosters and the curious dogs, peering out at you.

You jump off of the vehicle, and follow Maestro Gabriel across the only paved area of the community, which serves as the recreational basketball court for the primary school. The rest of the community is unpaved and the homes are characteristic of traditional thatched-roof *jacales*, made of wood and palm. One by one people come out to greet Maestro Gabriel and the rest of us with *-¡Hola, Compadre! ¡Les estábamos esperando desde las cinco de la mañana!*- "We've been waiting for you since five this morning!" It's now about 8AM and you wonder how you could have woken up any earlier that day!

You remember Maestro Gabriel's words, "Out of respect...eat and drink anything that is offered to you." You remember this as you are handed a coca-cola first thing in the morning by Francisca de la Cruz, the wife of the *capitán* of the *danza*, Gilberto Hernández Gómez. He and the maestro speak quickly in Spanish about the day's events. You sit on a small wooden chair in the *capitán's* home, gazing from corner to corner from the small altar with the Virgen, to the small kitchen

table with an assortment of plates, glasses and a transistor radio. A lit light-bulb hangs from its cord from the ceiling of wood and palm. A small wooden bed is off to the side of the ample room covered with hand-made embroidered quilts and blankets. You wonder where everyone sleeps, as you observe many small children, one hanging on to Francisca's legs, who is pregnant with her next child.

With Maestro Gabriel's permission, both the videographer and photographer begin to make their way around the community, learning and discovering on their own. The rest of us join Maestro Gabriel on a walking tour of the community. You watch the men carving what they call the *palo de las siete flores* and the women stringing an assortment of flowers together into a necklace. You end up at the home of musician, José de la Cruz Francisca, joined by two other musicians. You sit for over an hour outside on the porch, mesmerized by the sounds of the violin, jarana and huapanguera, and are later told that these traditional songs are part of the *costumbres*. An older woman wearing a beautiful, hand-embroidered blouse serves you fresh papaya. Something inside you tells you that today will be a miracle and you feel a sense of peace.

You are finally led back to the paved court where the women and men of the community are dressed and preparing a special ceremony in your honor. You are directed to stand at one end of the court with the other members of your team. Your five-year old son is off somewhere in the community surrounded by curious children, completely entertained by the baby chicks and a wide assortment of rocks and sticks. The three musicians, who played earlier, are now dressed in *manta*, wearing

*huaraches* and hats made of palm. As they begin to play, the women dancers emerge, dressed with elaborately embroidered blouses, and satin skirts moving gracefully in their bare feet, carrying baskets full of flowers.

Within minutes you realize that you are part of the ceremony, and as the women dance past you, you are blessed with the gifts of flowers; the first being a carved wooden stick of seven flowers, the second, a necklace of freshly picked flowers, and last, you are sprinkled from head to toe with fragrant petals of flowers. You can no longer contain the tears and the emotion bursts from inside you. You feel transformed for the moment and can't speak. You look at the women's beautiful humble faces, into their eyes, which have been looking down throughout the duration of the *danza*, and you are thankful for this special blessing.

As the women exit the area through their dance, they leave petals of flowers behind. As you turn to embrace your team members you realize that they, too, were overtaken with emotion, as they wipe the tears from their eyes. Their heads and shoulders are covered with the blessing of flowers and are each holding the *palo de las siete flores*. You and Ruby move toward Maestro Gabriel and bury your faces into his embrace and begin to cry. He laughs but appears satisfied by your emotions and informs you that this is only the first of many *danzas* that you will experience that day. Next, you will observe the men's dance, *Danza San José*, led by Capitán Gilberto, the women's dance to the Virgen of Guadalupe and finally, the *Danza de los Viejos* or *Cuanegros* in the community of Tepexocoyo.

By dusk, you congregate with the others, where your journey began, at the home of Capitán Gilberto, for food, drink and celebration. As the director of the dance company, Esperanza del Valle, you are invited into private discussions with both Maestro Gabriel and Capitán Gilberto. You listen carefully and only speak, guided by Maestro Gabriel, who is now asking Capitán Gilberto's blessing for your dance company to learn the *danzas* presented today. Capitán Gilberto agrees to prepare the *penachos* or headdresses needed for *Danza San José*, and allows you as the director to take one as a gift from a *danzante*. He will arrange to make the *sonajas* and his wife will have the women's blouses made. This will all take a year to complete.

As you prepare to leave the community, one of the dancers who offered you his headdress, will tell you that he will never see you again; that you will never return to Tepexocoyo. You promise that you will, and you keep your word.

### **Overview of the Findings**

What are the benefits for the indigenous people of the Huasteca of maintaining and preserving their indigenous dance traditions? What messages are communicated through the *danzas*? How does dance help a community deepen its own identity?

This chapter provides an analysis of the themes that emerged as a result of both formal and informal interviews with the facilitators, *danzantes*, musicians and elders of the indigenous communities, conducted during the summers of 2001 and 2002, four years following our initial visit to the Huasteca. Each participant's data

were analyzed individually and then compared and contrasted with members across their group. Finally, the data were analyzed, identifying common themes and differences across all of the groups represented in the study. For the most part throughout the chapter, direct quotations are used and translated. A summary explanation of the quotation is used whenever direct translation is not appropriate or necessary. An overview of the findings will first be provided, summarizing the main themes that came out of the data. Individual themes will be elaborated in detail one by one.

The most prominent theme throughout the interviews with both facilitators was the importance of maintaining authenticity in the art form and disseminating the truth about the dance and the community to which it belongs. It was important, therefore, for the study to begin with the indigenous roots and culture and to listen to and value the voice of the *indígena*. Authenticity would only be valid if the researchers traveled to the region of study, making validity checks of the data with the participants of the study. It would be important for all of the participants to see the researchers return many times to the Huasteca in order to establish trust.

The data showed a clear distinction between the *danzas* before and after the religious conquest and during the colonial period in Mexican history. Before the conquest, there was an important connection between the *danza* and indigenous philosophy and the agricultural cycle. The *danza* was sacred and a few were considered pagan and magical. After the religious conquest, the Catholic Church had a tremendous influence on the indigenous dance cultures. All of the elders, dancers

and musicians made reference to the Church when they were asked about the prerequisites for participating in the dance as well as the calendar dates when the dance was performed. It was difficult for most of them to remember what the dance had been like before the religious conquest. Only the elders spoke of the traditions that existed before the Church's influence on the dance. All of them spoke of the changes and substitutes in the *vestuario* or dress and other elements that had changed over time.

Each *danza* was very important to the community. All of the participants agreed that it was a special honor to participate in the dance. The dance brought meaning and joy to the community. In most cases, due to economic, political or social conflicts, there was a danger that the *danza* may not continue to exist. This created a lot of tension and concern amongst the participants. They saw the dance as an essential part of the cultural identity of the community.

Participants shared how the *danzas* represented dances of resistance. The fact that many of them survived political, religious, economic and social pressures demonstrated the power behind each *danza*. Unfortunately, there was also a real need to "rescue" the dances from possible future extinction. Two out of five of the dances being investigated had already experienced tremendous hardships. In one community, the participants shared that the dance was no longer in existence due to religious and social pressures.

As explained in the previous chapter, the data has been gathered from two different groups of participants, the two maestros and the five *indígenas* from the



dance communities. Some of the themes that follow are informed by the interviews with the maestros, while others are informed by interviews with the *indígenas*. However, a majority of the themes are informed by interviews with both groups of participants.

### **Authenticity and Value of Indigenous Roots and Culture**

Both facilitators of this study, Prof. Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Prof. Cándido Hernández Navarrete, dedicated many years of their lives to the work of preserving and disseminating the indigenous dance traditions of the Huasteca. At an international dance conference in Xalapa, Veracruz, they invited a group of Esperanza del Valle dancers to go to the Huasteca region to discover firsthand if what we had been taught was actually authentic. The *Abriendo Caminos* project opened new roads to the indigenous dance communities of the Huasteca. Professor Mendoza Torres insisted:

*El propósito principal fundamental de ustedes es verificar si el material que aprendieron en Xalapa es real. No puede difundir algo como institución si no tiene la certeza que es una realidad...que es cierto, lo que están haciendo.*  
The fundamental purpose of your project is to verify whether or not the material that you learned in Xalapa is real. You cannot promote and institutionalize anything until you are certain that it is a reality...that what you are doing is authentic.

Their desire was for us to go beyond the experience that we had in Xalapa, taking dance classes. Both maestros invited us to the Huasteca so that we would have firsthand experience to compare and contrast the knowledge that we already had and to go further and develop a deeper understanding of the indigenous dance cultures of the region.

In traditional Mexican dance, the majority of the dance companies both in the United States and in Mexico present the colorful and exciting *mestizo* dances and culture. Yet according to Maestro Cándido:

*En México hay una gran cantidad de danzas, de bailes que no se conocen, la riqueza dancística de México es muy basta. En la región donde voy, sobre todo en Mesoamérica...lo que es la región donde se ubicaron los principales grupos étnicos, prehispánicos. Hay mucha costumbre, mucha cultura que no se conocen.*

In México there are a great number of *danzas*, of dances that are unknown, the rich dance culture of México is vast. In the region where you go, Mesoamerica, the region where the first ethnic/prehispanic groups arrived. There are many customs and cultural knowledge that many are not familiar with.

Both maestros agreed that it is important to start with the indigenous roots, the foundation of the Mexican culture.

*Hay que buscar la verdad...lo más apegado a la realidad, de lo que está manejando el indígena.*

You must search for the truth...that which is connected to reality, and driven by the *indígena*.

*Tienen que hacer una buena investigación. ¿Con qué vamos a comenzar? Vamos a comenzar con las cuestiones indígenas. ¿Qué estados tienen cuestiones indígenas? ¿Qué estados están conservando más o menos un 50% en la autoridad en que estamos? Veracruz tiene todavía un porcentaje alto de conservar su tradición.*

In the above quotation, Maestro Gabriel explained that good research begins with the indigenous roots. The state of Veracruz has continued to preserve over 50% of its indigenous traditions to this day, but not without sacrifice. There have been political, economic and social hardships that have made it difficult for the *indígena* to live and work in their communities, making it extremely difficult for the survival of the indigenous dance culture as well.

They talked about the importance of returning to the Huasteca again and again to conduct validity checks of the data collected. Both maestros felt that it was important not to gather data solely from them, but to go out and ask the *indígena* and to acknowledge their word as the truth.

*Precisamente, no te puedes basar no más a la primera información, a eso me refiero, hay que caminar si, hay que caminar si, ó sea, tienes que ver aquí, tienes que ver acá, observen, observen. Yo les puedo decir a ustedes, vean, es lo que tienen que hacer, ó sea, yo les digo, esto no se los dice Gabriel, ustedes ya lo vieron, ya anduvieron, tienen que verlo, hay que checarlo.*  
Precisely, you can't simply base your facts on initial information gathered, what I'm referring to, is that you have to walk, you have to walk, you have to look here, to look there, observe, observe. I can tell you, look, this is what you have to do; but it's not just what Gabriel has said, you have already seen, you've already walked, you've seen for yourselves and checked for yourselves.

Both maestros valued the leadership and knowledge of the elders of the communities. Maestro Gabriel described his relationship with Camilo, elder of Mata el Tigre.

*A Camilo, le doy su lugar. Tiene que dar el lugar al indígena. Cuando la gente indígena tiene una representación, hay que respetarlo.*  
I give Camilo his place. You have to give place to the *indígena*. When the *indígenas* have representation, that leadership must be respected.

Maestro Cándido explained how important it was to establish rapport and trust with the *indígena*. He said that the *huasteco* would give you his heart, the shirt off his back, once you've earned his respect. Yet the moment you betray that trust, the doors will be shut. You simply can't return. He went on to explain that if you say you will return and never do, the trust has been broken and you will not be invited back.

*El huasteco da el corazón, se quita su camisa con tal de ofrecerla, pero siempre y cuando no haya una, una traición a lo que él está haciendo, sí. Si en un momento dado, una persona que recibió el apoyo de ese grupo o de otra persona, lo traiciona, es muy difícil e inclusive hasta... es muy grande las molestias y pudieran cerrarles las puertas a ustedes, saben que ya no pueden venir por acá, sencillamente... Si hay quien va una vez y dice que va a regresar y ya no vuelve nunca, entonces a esa persona no la vuelven a tomar en cuenta.*

Clearly, there have been people, according to both maestros, that have gone into the indigenous communities and have taken what they need for personal interest without giving anything in return. This has made the *indígena* very cautious and selective about who will be invited into the community.

*Ellos tienen temor de relatar todos sus secretos porque toda la gente se ha aprovechado de eso. Por eso tienen que tenerte la confianza poco a poco. Es una cuestión de años, no es una cuestión de un día o de dos. Uno no puede llegar con una cámara.*

They are afraid to relate all of their secrets because they have been taken advantage of many times. Because of this, they have to build trust in you little by little. It's a question of years, not just a question of one or two days. One can't simply arrive with a camera.

It is also vital to enter the indigenous communities with someone that the elders have approved and authorized to be their interpreter and confidant. Maestro Gabriel has dedicated thirty years of his life to the preservation of the traditions and *danzas* and has won the respect of the people he has served.

### **Challenges in Maintaining and Preserving the Indigenous Dance Traditions**

The survival of the indigenous dance traditions has been extremely challenged by political, economic and social pressures. Many of the *danzas* were in danger of disappearing due to these hardships. The *danzantes* expressed a real need to preserve the *danzas* and to continue to teach these traditions to the youth.

*Mientras que los jóvenes te están apoyando; debes de participar con ellos hasta que cuando vemos que ya estás muy enfermo muy en agonía entonces.*  
While the young people are supporting you, you must participate with them in the dance until that day when you are ill and in agony and not able to continue.

The elders of various indigenous communities have confronted many roadblocks that prevented them from passing on these dance traditions to young people. In all three indigenous communities, participants shared a similar story of economic survival. Due to financial necessity, the young people had to leave their education and community behind to go to the capital to live and work as servants. Francisca de la Cruz explained the plight of young women in her community, who have had to sacrifice their education, in order to help support the family.

*Antes no había tantas que se fueron a trabajar en México. Pero yo también me había ido. Tres o cuatro años estuve allí trabajando. Yo cuando era chiquita yo no danzaba.*  
Before, there weren't as many who went to México City to work. Yet I, too, had to go. I was there working for three or four years. When I was small, I didn't dance.

The dance for the young women in the community of Tepexocoyo had already ceased to exist for many years, due to economic pressures. Francisca explained the situation facing the young women in her community.

*Pues si ellas ya no quieren seguir. Mi esposo les decían que los vaya a enseñar otra vez. Tienen ya las naguas para que participen ellas. No más las hayan dejado. Ya no quisieron porque terminando la escuela ya se van todas. Entonces ya no quieren participar porque ellas quieren salir a trabajar.*  
Well, many of the young girls don't want to continue. My husband tells them that he will teach them once again. They even have skirts for their participation. They have just left them. They no longer want to dance, because once they complete elementary school, they all leave. They no longer wish to participate because they'd rather leave to go work.

The influence of other religions into the region has also greatly affected the survival of the indigenous dance traditions. Due to a recent conversion to another religion, one of the musicians for *Danza San José* is no longer playing for the *danza*. Since there is no other musician capable of replacing him, the dance is no longer being performed. Both maestros expressed their concern for the inevitable extinction of many of the *danzas*.

*Quieres que apreciar adecuadamente ¿qué es lo que necesita, qué es lo que quieren? Sea, en la actualidad, por ejemplo, hay comunidades ya que están completamente destruidas. Hay comunidades que conservan, digamos, un poco su entorno cultural...Allá lo están viviendo. En Tepexocoyo, por ejemplo, cuando ustedes vinieron, ¿cómo estaba? Ahora, esta danza ya no existe. La danza está destruída.*

One must adequately determine, what is it that they need? What do they want? For example, some communities are completely destroyed. Yet, there are those who conserve a little of their cultural pride. They are living it. In Tepexocoyo, for example, when you first came, what was it like? Now, the *danza* no longer exists. The *danza* is destroyed.

Maestro Gabriel explained that the musicians are those who usually hold the keys to the dance traditions of the community. Historically, an apprentice would be trained, beginning at the age of seven, to carry on the musical traditions of the master. In the case of *Danza San José*, no one else was trained in the music.

*Dentro del aspecto político de México, es uno de los objetivos principales porque al momento que se les quita su arraigo, entrando la comunidad, se les quita sus creencias ancestrales, que se les quita su música y su danza, automáticamente la comunidad está completamente dividida. Está confundida, y es cuando se puede hacer para allá, para acá, se manipula fácilmente.*

In the above quotation, Maestro Gabriel explains that one of the principal objectives of Mexico's political system, historically, has been to enter the indigenous

communities, erase their ancestral beliefs, music and dance, and thus, divide the community. Once divided and confused, it became much easier to manipulate the people and introduce new systems of governance and religion.

It has been a challenge for the *indígena* to maintain his or her dance traditions. With economic pressures, young people are forced to leave the community to find work to help support their families. The youth are influenced by social pressures to leave their traditions behind. Influences and conversions to other religions have caused an increasing danger of extinction many dance traditions. Finally, Mexico's political system has continued to perpetuate the effects of conquest and colonization, greatly affecting the survival of the *danza* in its truest and authentic form.

### **The Importance and Significance of the *Danza* in the Life of the *Indígena***

The elders, *danzantes* and musicians explained why the *danza* was important and meaningful in their lives. They all agreed that the *danza* brought them great joy and satisfaction.

*Es importante porque trae alegría.*  
It is important because it brings happiness.

*La danza es un elemento importante para instruir tanto para la comunidad.*  
The *danza* is an important element; that guides the community.

*Una danza es bailar, bailar a los santos.*  
*Danza* is dancing, dancing to the saints.

*Es como una promesa participar en la danza.*  
It's like a promise to participate in the dance.

The participants explained why the dance was important to maintain and preserve. The *danza* represented the culture of that community and the voice of its members.

*Para que no se pierda la cultura...que ésta siga viva.*  
So that the culture will not be lost, so that it continues to live on.

*Para los niños es importante. Es importante para que la gente no esté callada... para que la comunidad esté alegre.*  
It is important for the children. It's important so that the people are not silent and that the community is happy.

*Más antes empezamos a bailar porque se quedaron satisfechos porque habían matado el brujo.*  
Long ago we began dancing because the people were satisfied that the sorcerer was killed.

*Danzas* such as *El Tigrillo*, *Danza San José* and *Tepecmecaxochitl* were only performed by the members of that one specific community. In a sense, these dances became the identity of the community and formed an integral part of the culture and governance. Those leaders of the *danza* were the leaders of the community as well. The *danza* held the community together and served its members during important ceremonies and celebrations. The leaders or *jefes* and *capitanes* expressed the importance of their role:

*Tengo la responsabilidad de trabajar la danza. Soy el capitán o maestro de la danza.*  
I am responsible for rehearsing the dance. I am the captain or teacher of the *danza*.

*Por ejemplo cuando hay un problema se presenta entre los danzantes yo me enfrento. Voy a resolver el problema con los danzantes, para que no se queden con dudas.*



For example, I confront the dancers when there is a problem between them. I go to resolve the problem with the *danzantes*, so that they are no longer confused.

*Pues hay unos que a lo mejor se desaniman. Cuando se desaniman soy responsable de buscar otros para que no termine la danza. Es el trabajo que tengo que hacer yo para que la danza no se termine.*

Well, there may be a few who lose interest. When they lose interest, I am responsible to look for others, so that the dance never ends. It is my responsibility to make sure that the dance never ends.

*Yo tengo la responsabilidad para ensayar. Yo enseño como hacer los pasos.*  
I am responsible for the rehearsals. I teach them how to execute the steps.

All of the elders stressed the importance of the *danza* to the community's identity and purpose and how vital it was to continue the tradition that have existed since they were very young. Many of the elders began dancing at an early age and have continued dancing since that time. Camino del Angel, of Mata el Tigre, now sixty-one, became the *jefe* of *El Tigrillo* at the age of twenty. Gilberto Hernández Gómez, of Tepexocoyo, the *capitán* of *Danza San José*, started teaching the *danza* at fifteen. Don Lorenzo Vacilia of Taxtitla, now eighty-three, began dancing when he was twelve. They recalled how their ancestors referred to the *danza* as part of what they called "*costumbres*." It was difficult for them, as Catholics, to recall what the dance was like before the influence of the Church.

### ***Danzas Before the Conquest – Época prehispánica***

In this section the participants share their beliefs about how the dances existed before the religious conquest. The pre-Colombian *danzas* were performed in ceremonies, grounded within an indigenous philosophy and connected to the natural elements. This section explores how the *indígena* viewed the dances before the

influence of the Church, and how they were performed. The dances were considered sacred and ritualistic, and were often pagan and magical in nature.

### **Indigenous Philosophy**

During the pre-Colombian era before the religious conquest and the influence of the Catholic Church, the dances evolved from the indigenous cultures and were grounded within their own philosophy. Both maestros, Gabriel and Cándido expressed the importance of understanding indigenous philosophy to better understand the *danzas*.

*Dentro de la cultura indígena, el músico era el que se quedaba con todo. Era el que estaba obligado a transmitir todo, la filosofía indígena, la música, todo. Para ser músico tenía que empezar a trabajar, a ir caminando. ¿Por qué siete? A los siete años decían- Éste va a ser músico-. Los viejos observaban a los niños. Decían,- Ésta es la fecha; éste es el elegido-.*

Within the indigenous culture, the musician is the one who “stays with everything.” He is obligated to transmit all of the knowledge, the philosophy, the music, everything. In order to be a musician, you have to work...to walk. Why at age seven? That age is the beginning. At seven, the elders determine that he will be a musician. The elders observe the young boys. They say....this is the time...he is the chosen one.

The musicians were instrumental in passing on the traditions from one generation to the next and were chosen for this important role.

Musician and elder of Tepexocoyo, José de la Cruz Francisca, clarified that these *danzas* in the past were known as the “*costumbres*.” They were performed during special ceremonies, such as the “*lavamanos*” within the presence of a healer.

*Era pura costumbre. Aquí hay costumbres durante el tiempo de cosecha, una boda. Son ceremonias. Muchas cosas.*

They were *costumbres*. Here we still have *costumbres* during the harvest, a wedding. They are ceremonies. Many things.

*Es bonito...lavamanos es para echar agua en su mano – porque a un compadre o una comadre están medio calientes sus manos porque tiene tantos ahijados o porque ha adoptado tantos ahijados. Muy fuerte. En esta fiesta te están pidiendo dos velas – te quema y así en su mano y por dentro y vienes para acá aquí sale la vela emprendido y luego para acá el sol es su luz...así siempre este gustamos. Entonces no me acuerdo cuantas veces mete la vela para acá. Pero así haciendo el 'huehuelatlatl.'*

The *lavamanos* is a tradition of washing the hands, since the hands of the godparents were so “warm because they have so many godchildren that they have adopted.” He explained that this tradition is strong, powerful, and not connected to the Church. Maestro Gabriel said that the *sones* played during the *costumbres* differ from the *sones* performed in the *danza* today that follow the calendar of the Catholic Church.

*La iglesia por ejemplo fue adecuando la música de ambos para ellos, la iglesia Católica. La costumbre es otra cosa completamente diferente.*  
The Church, for example, began adjusting their music for their use, that is, the Catholic Church. The *costumbre* is something else completely different.

Although the Church's influence greatly affected and changed the *indígena's* way of thinking, some of the deeper beliefs and customs are still practiced to this day. Many important elements are still part of the *danza*. The firewater or *aguardiente* is consumed before, during and after the dance. It's part of the ceremonial ritual of the past that is still used in the *danza* to this day.

*El indígena toma licor y dice voy a purificar. Con el licor se purifica.*  
The *indígena* drinks liquor and says “I am going to be purified.” With liquor, one is purified.

*Nosotros echamos tabaco y el tabaco sirve para orientarnos. Y el aguardiente sirve para purificarnos...nuestra alma. El copal es para transportarnos.*  
We throw tobacco that serves to orient us. And firewater is used to purify us, our souls. *Copal* is used to transport us.

Maestro Gabriel related the importance of indigenous philosophy in order to understand its influence on the *danzas* today. In most of the *danzas*, there are twelve men or women who perform. He explains what these numbers represent:

*El indígena va a decir que bailan 12 por los doce meses del año. ¿Y número 13 por qué? Número 13 es el capitán, el sol. Es el capitán que mueve porque tuvo el movimiento del sol. Tú tienes que leer e investigar la filosofía indígena, náhuatl. Todas las filosofías indígenas del mundo coinciden. Su música, su danza, su magia empieza principalmente con los elementos naturales.*  
The *indígena* will say that twelve people dance, representing the twelve months of the year. And number thirteen, why? Number thirteen is the captain, the sun. The captain follows the movement of the sun. You have to investigate indigenous philosophy, *náhuatl*. All of the indigenous philosophies of the world coincide. Their music, dance, magic...begin with the natural elements.

Similar to other indigenous philosophies is the belief that the "*indígena* *regresa a la tierra lo que le da*"- what the *indígena* takes from the Earth, is returned. During the ceremonial *danza El Tigrillo*, the *danzante* first pours the *aguardiente* onto the ground and the instrument, or *teponaxtli*, before consuming any of the firewater. Out of respect, the *indígena* first gives "drink" to the Earth and the hollowed-out drum, made from the Earth. With the arrival of the Spaniards, many of these elements changed. Substitutes representing the original elements were added to the *danza*. Maestro Gabriel stressed the importance of knowing which were substitutes replacing the original elements.

*Cuando llegaron los españoles, trajeron la caña. Son sustitutos. El aguardiente es un sustituto de una bebida que mareaba. El copal ha existido a través de la historia. La marihuana ha existido a través de la historia, que también es un purificador. El cigarro viene siendo un sustituto. Tiene que entenderle como un sustituto y conocer la historia. Aquí la marihuana y el tabaco, por ejemplo, lo mechan el aguardiente, y que brota, con ella, ¿verdad?, y te estás*

*ahuyentando los malos manos. Todos los curanderos lo usan, la marihuana y el tabaco.*

When the Spaniards arrived, they brought sugar cane. They are substitutes. Firewater is a substitute for a drink that causes dizziness. Copal has existed throughout history. Marijuana has existed throughout history as a purifier. Yet the cigarette is a substitute. You must understand those elements which are substitutes historically. Here (in the Huasteca) marijuana and tobacco, for example, are mixed with firewater to produce something that drives away the evil spirits. Every healer uses marijuana and tobacco.

These elements, produced from the natural environment, continue to be important in the *danzas* today. A recurrent theme that came out of the interviews with Maestro Gabriel, was how the *danzas* were tied to the agricultural cycle. He said that even with the Church's influence, and the establishment of a new calendar of important events, the *danzas* were still performed during important agricultural seasons.

### **Agricultural Cycle**

Maestro Gabriel explained below that historically, the *danzas* were used in rituals. In past eras, they danced during important agricultural seasons throughout the year, connected to their religious calendar as well. To this day, the *indígena* still dances before the planting season, during the planting season and the harvest, all part of the agricultural cycle.

*Antes de la llegada de los españoles, estas danzas se usaban en rituales. En épocas posterior se seguían bailando en fechas agrícolas pero ya dentro del calendario religioso. Ellos siguen bailando, por ejemplo, antes de la siembra, en la época de la siembra, que es la velación, es un ciclo agrícola en la época prehispánica.*

He affirmed that the *danzas* have always been performed in special ceremonies to honor the natural elements, tied to the agricultural cycle.

*Históricamente, las danzas eran para elementos naturales; siembra, época de lluvia. Todo estaba hecho por ellos para los elementos naturales. El calendario estaba establecido. Bailaban para los elementos naturales.*

Historically, the dances were for the natural elements; the sowing of the seeds, the rainy season. All that they did was for the natural elements. The calendar was established. They danced for the natural elements.

Maestro Gabriel shared that many of the *danzas* represented dances of “fertility- the sowing and the harvest” which the Church easily adapted to fit with its religious calendar. Yet other dances were completely pagan, performed, for example to honor death, such as *la Danza de Viejos de comunidad*. According to Maestro Gabriel, these dances were difficult for the Church to accept and conform to their doctrines.

### **Pagan and Magical *Danzas***

Evidently the dances considered pagan and magical, such as *El Tigrillo*, and *Danza de los Viejos*, were in danger of being eliminated by the Church. Maestro Gabriel explained that although the essence of these dances was still present, their ritualistic ceremonies were slowly being lost:

*Todavía hay 90% de pureza en la danza. Pero ya en el ritual, ya no hay, por ejemplo, el bautizo del teponaxtli, el bautizo del nuevo danzante, del nuevo músico. Todo esto ya se perdió. Matando el pollo como lo manejan que es pagano completamente. Hay que conservarlo.*

The *danza* is still 90% pure. But in ritual, there no longer exist, for example, the baptism - of the drum, of the new *danzante*, of the new musician. Everything is disappearing. The killing of the chicken is completely pagan. It's important to conserve this tradition.

Maestro Gabriel defined what he meant by “magic” *danzas*:

*Mágicas quiere decir de curanderos, de curación, de velación, de brujería, de hechicería. Para mí son danzas fálicas porque son de fertilidad.*

Magic refers to the healers, healing, candlelight vigil, witchcraft, enchantment. To me these are phallic dances because they are dances of fertility.

In order to clarify why *El Tigrillo* was considered a dance of fertility, Maestro

Gabriel and jefe Camilo del Angel, explained the legend believed by the community:

*La leyenda dice que en los tiempos ancestrales en la región Huasteca, en una comunidad llamada Mata el Tigre, existía un nahual, un nahual que es un curandero o una persona que tiene la capacidad de poderse transformar en animal.*

The legend told during ancient times in the Huasteca region, told of the existence of a *nahual* in the community of Mata el Tigre – a *nahual* is a healer or person capable of transforming himself into an animal.

The legend goes on to explain that this person transformed himself into a *tigrillo*, or ocelot and began to bring harm to the community. He kidnapped young women, stole agricultural products and animals. The community finally decided that they had to find him and kill him to put an end to all of his bad deeds. Finally the elder of Mata el Tigre called together the four healers or elders of the surrounding communities to follow and observe the ocelot in order to figure out how to put an end to him. Maestro Gabriel continued:

*El nahual era muy difícil de matar. Pero únicamente se transformaba en tigrillo o ocelote. Entonces los curanderos llegaron a un acuerdo...estudiar las costumbres y los movimientos del tigrillo. Y al estar estudiando se dan cuenta que el tigrillo no más tiene una etapa donde se descuida por completo, es cuando lo pueden matar. Es en la época de celo o la época de apareamiento. Entonces, por eso cuando se dieron cuenta de eso, hicieron la danza.*

The *nahual* was very difficult to kill. It was only possible when he transformed himself into an ocelot. So the four healers came to an agreement...to study the movements of the ocelot and discover the only time he was careless...when he could be killed. It was during the mating season. This is what the dance represents.

According to both maestros and Camilo this was a dance of fertility performed by two men, one representing the male and the other the female ocelot. Maestro Gabriel explained that even the instruments used in the *danza* are shaped in the form of the male and female organs:

*Hay que mencionar que la forma que tiene dicha boquilla, es la forma de un pene o miembro masculino. Así es. Y la boquilla viendo lo que sea el útero. Es por eso que le llama la danza fálica, la danza de fertilidad.*

It's important to mention that the mouthpiece (of the flute) is shaped like a penis or the male organ. That's what it is. And the mouthpiece comes from what is considered the uterus. This is why the *danza* is called a phallic dance, a dance of fertility.

Maestro Gabriel insisted:

*Este es completamente pagano. Y lo estás viendo desde los instrumentos. Son completamente prehispánicos. Son danzas mágicas.*

The dance is completely pagan. You can see it in the instruments. They are completely pre-Colombian. These are magical dances.

According to Maestro Gabriel dances, such as *El Tigrillo*, were not accepted by the Catholic Church. Camilo said that he didn't understand why the Church no longer requested their presence during religious services:

*Pues, ya tiene años que no nos avisan.*

Well, they haven't called us for years.

Yet Maestro Gabriel reminded Camilo that in fact the Church had never called them to perform *El Tigrillo*:

*Ya te voy a decir ¿por qué?...porque es una danza mágica.*

I'm going to tell you why they've never called you...because it's a magical dance.

Camilo wondered if it was because they just didn't like the dance and finally agreed that the *danza* had never been requested by the priests.



## Dance is Sacred

The dances before the religious conquest were performed in ceremonies.

Maestro Gabriel spoke of the dances and their elements as being sacred. Referring to

*El Tigrillo*, he warned of a mysticism surrounding the *danza* and its instruments:

*Es sagrado. Teponaxtli es sagrado, por eso yo les decía, tengan cuidado, acuérdense que se los dije, tienen que darle el valor que tiene, o sea, un teponaxtli es, o un instrumento de cuero que no tenga nada de tipo europeo, es muy valioso, son instrumentos sagrados, son instrumentos ceremoniales. En todas las étnias de México, todos los instrumentos prehispánicos, son instrumentos ceremoniales.*

It's sacred. The *teponaxtli* is sacred. That's why I told you to be careful, remember that I told you. You have to give it the respect that it deserves. The *teponaxtli* is not in the least bit European. It is extremely valuable. It is a sacred, ceremonial instrument. Within every indigenous group in México, all of the pre-Colombian instruments are ceremonial instruments.

Maestro Gabriel shared his concern and stressed the importance of the dance to the community:

*Para ellos la danza es algo sagrada, algo que los une. Todos están desapareciendo. Está participando mucha gente en su destrucción; el gobierno, el cacique, etc.*

To them the *danza* is sacred, what unites them. They are all disappearing. Many people are participating in their eventual destruction; the government, the representatives, etc.

Before the conquest the *danzas* were performed during special ceremonies to honor the natural elements and the agricultural cycle. Considered sacred to their communities, these *danzas* were rituals, many pagan and magical in nature. During the religious conquest, the *danzas* would experience tremendous change and to this day, struggle for their survival.

## **The Religious Conquest and Colonization**

*Tiene que hablar "a partir de la Iglesia Católica" porque son danzas de conquista, pero de conquista religiosa. La Iglesia Católica no les permite extrapolar hacia atrás. Solamente permiten extrapolar hacia adelante. Deben estar conscientes de esto cuando hacen su investigación. Solamente les van a platicar de la época católica. Para atrás es muy difícil.*

You must refer to the time of "the arrival of the Catholic Church." These are dances of conquest, but of religious conquest. The Catholic Church will not allow looking back. They only allow looking forward. Be conscientious of this during your investigation. They (the *indígenas*) will only talk about the time period of the Catholic Church. It is very difficult to go backwards in time.

In the above quotation Maestro Gabriel explained why it was difficult for the *indígena* to speak about the dances before the influence of the Catholic Church.

Even though the elders had knowledge about the earlier customs and traditions, as practicing Catholics, it was difficult for them to speak of the dances apart from the Church. Don Lorenzo, eighty-three of Taxtitla agreed:

*¿Cómo vamos a saber si no lo vivimos? No podemos decir si no sabemos.*  
How would we know if we didn't live during those times. We can't speak about what we don't know.

Unlike the magical and ritualistic dances such as *El Tigrillo* and *Los Viejos*, *Danza Moctezuma* or *La Malinche* represented a *danza* of religious conquest. The friars used dances, such as *Danza Moctezuma*, as a way to evangelize the indigenous communities. Historically Malinche was a symbol of acceptance for the Spaniards and their religion. Maestro Gabriel explained how the Spaniards and the friars were successful during the religious conquest, by changing the instruments and music into a different form that won appeal from both the Spaniard and the *indígena*, which he called a synchronism.

*Posteriormente, danzas que tomaron los españoles o los frailes para hacer la conquista religiosa, cambiando los instrumentos al otro tipo de música que le ha gustado tanto al español, como el indígena...es un sincretismo.*

The instruments themselves also represented a particular era:

*Al momento ya a la danza tenga violín, jarana y guitarra, ya es de la Colonia hace acá. Cuando no tiene violín y estos instrumentos de cuerda, - de viento, de flauta, lo que sea, es prehispánico.*

The moment the dance introduces the violin, jarana and guitar, you have entered the Colonial era. When the violin and other stringed instruments are not present – but instead, the wind instruments, such as the flute, it is the era before the Conquest.

The instruments used in *El Tigrillo*, the bamboo flute and the *teponaxtli* were created before the arrival of the Spaniards. The other *danzas*, although, many originally performed with the wind and percussion instruments, have changed with the introduction of the stringed instruments, such as *Danza de los Chules*. Yet, *Danza Moctezuma* represented a dance of conquest, since it came out of this time period in Mexican history, performed with the jarana and the harp, both stringed instruments.

As explained in an earlier section by Maestro Gabriel, the *danzas* were originally performed in special rituals connected to the natural elements and agricultural cycle. During colonization the Church aligned these ritual *danzas* with the Catholic calendar that has continued to this day. The *indígenas* affirmed with Maestro Gabriel that the *danzas* were always performed during special Catholic celebrations such as the Day of the Virgin, Holy Week and in honor of the patron saint of the community.

*La Iglesia empezó a incorporar las danzas a las fechas de los santos patronos a las poblaciones. Se pusieron el nombre de San José para la danza porque el*

*santo patrón de allí es San José. Así les van poniendo los santo patrones a las comunidades. Es una estrategia de control, más que nada.*

The Church began to incorporate the *danzas* with the dates of the patron saints of each community. They added *San José* to the dance in honor of the patron saint of the community, *San José*. So they began using the patron saints of each community for each *danza*. It was a strategy of control more than anything.

Maestro Gabriel added that the *indígena*, as a converted Catholic, had justified the dance and music to fit in with the Catholic calendar. He continued saying that the Church achieved its objective:

*Pero el indígena está justificando la música y la danza indígena al calendario católico. Ya la iglesia en la actualidad, logró su objetivo.*

To this day when the Church requests that the *danza* be performed for special celebrations, the community is obligated to appear and perform.

In a conversation with Don Lorenzo, Maestro Gabriel shared a problem that the Church had with certain indigenous *danzas*:

*Es que el problema, Compadre, es por ejemplo, mira, son cuestiones que no se llevan bien con la iglesia. La iglesia dentro de la religión no les permite que bailen, por ejemplo, el Tigrillo.*

Compadre, the problem is - these are questions that are not accepted by the Church. Due to the religion, the Church does not permit them to dance *El Tigrillo*, for example.

Although Maestro Gabriel claimed to be a devout Catholic himself, he recognized the role that the Church had played in the life of the *indígena*.

*Es necesario ver cuando empieza la religión Católica a chingar. Es muy difícil en las étnias indígenas que exista que te lo digan, porque la iglesia se encargó de borrarlos.*

It's important to know when the Catholic religion started to destroy everything. It's very difficult for the indigenous groups to recognize and admit that there had been changes (due to the religious conquest) since it has been the goal of the Church to erase these cultures.

Maestro Gabriel explained the Church's response in its struggle with the magical and pagan danzas like *El Tigrillo*:

*Sí sabe (la Iglesia), por eso lo está destruyendo. Por eso, la danza, nunca se ha bailado en la iglesia. Es una pendejada que ellos bailan en la iglesia, es una mentira. Últimamente lo quieren llevar. Pero nunca se ha bailado en la iglesia. Pues, yo nunca la he visto en la iglesia.*

Yes, the Church is aware of the *danza* and is attempting to destroy it. For this reason, the *danza* has never been danced in the Church. It's a lie that they have danced in the Church. Ultimately, the *danzantes (El Tigrillo)* would like to perform. But they have never been invited. I have never seen this *danza* performed in the Church.

According to both maestros, the religious conquest is still in progress. They felt that it's necessary to inform the *indígena* of the importance of conserving and maintaining the true essence of their dance traditions. While the Catholic Church continues to adapt and influence the traditions, Maestro Gabriel insisted:

*Tenemos que decir a la indígena – Haz lo tuyo. Haz la danza como debe de ser. Manifiesta la danza como debe de ser. Quítense estas imágenes. Pon el tuyo.*

We have to say to the *indígena* – “Do your thing. Perform the *danza* the right way. Manifest the dance the way it should be. Take away the Church's images. Put back your own images.

It has been a constant struggle for the *indígena* to preserve and pass down the *danza* from generation to the next. The next section will examine why the participants view the survival of these *danzas* as a form of resistance.

### ***Danza as a Form of Resistance***

Both maestros agreed that the *danzas* have survived religious conquest and colonization due to a silent perseverance on the part of the *indígena*.

*Se le diga su mensaje en silencio.*

They communicate their message silently.

Despite the religious conquest and the attempt to erase the *indígena* religious and cultural traditions, the ceremonial *danzas* continued to flourish within the indigenous communities. The mere fact that the *danzas* still exist to this day supports the theory of resistance. According to Maestro Gabriel:

*El conservar su música, conservar sus tradiciones, es una manera de poder resistir, a lo que les está tratando de imponer, a lo que les están tratando de introducir, a las cosas que quieren destruirlo completamente, o sea, por ello, ellos ponen una resistencia pero cultural. La fortaleza del indígena ha sido su cultura o sea, toda comunidad que ha conservado parte de su cultura, no ha sido destruida, sigue viva, ¿me entiendes?, vaya, y lo esta diciendo en silencio, porque no lo grita, no lo dice, hay que intuirlo.*

Conserving their music, conserving their traditions – is a form of resistance, putting up a resistance to what others are imposing, introducing, or completely destroying... The *indígena* puts up a cultural resistance. The fortitude of the *indígena* has been cultural. Every indigenous community that has conserved part of their culture, the part that hasn't been destroyed, that continues to live...has been communicating their resistance in silence. They don't shout it, or say it...you must listen intuitively.

Maestro Gabriel said that it was important to return many times to the communities. Due to their silent message it would take time to really hear, listen and understand what the *indígena* was communicating in the *danza*. He remembered that when he first started going out to the indigenous communities there were no religious images, such as the pictures of the saints now used in *danza El Tigrillo*.

*Deben de tener la habilidad de estar con ellos no una vez, pero un chingo de veces. Yo cuando empecé a ir a la comunidad no había imágenes religiosas.*

Both maestros acknowledged the tremendous struggle it has been for the *indígena* to maintain what is left of the traditions that they have. Many of the elders, such as Camilo del Angel, are left silenced by the Church. As Catholics themselves, it

is difficult to speak of the *danza* and how it existed before the images and messages of the religion were incorporated into the ritual. Yet Maestro Gabriel affirmed that Camilo retained vital information about the *danza* and its original purpose. The elders of the communities, such as Camilo, still hold the funds of knowledge for the *danza*.

*Para mí las entrevistas son importantes de Camilo. Por mí están demostrando, vaya, los cuidados que ellos tienen, el temor que ellos tienen y la lucha que ellos están haciendo. La lucha es seguir dejarte confundido. Si te confunden, ¿qué pasa? Piensan que no puedes destruirlos. Es lo que están haciendo ellos. Es una resistencia. Entonces, nosotros seguimos luchando con ellos.*  
To me the interviews with Camilo are important. To me they are demonstrating, how they protect themselves, the fear that they have and their continuous battle. The battle is to continue to leave you confused. If they are successful at confusing you, what happens? They believe that you can no longer destroy their traditions. This is what they are doing. It's a resistance. And we are fighting with them side by side.

Elder and musician of Tepexocoyo, José de la Cruz Francisca, affirmed that the ancient ceremonies or *costumbres* of his community are still in existence, even though the members do not wish to talk about them. He assured us that these ancient *costumbres* would never disappear:

*Los dejaron las costumbres, y ya no los quieren hablar. Pero nunca se van a acabar las costumbres - pues las costumbres antiguas.*

Perhaps this becomes another example of silent resistance on the part of the *indígena*.

In dances such as *Danza Moctezuma* the important figures are represented by the leaders of the *indígenas*, *Moctezuma* and *Malinche*. Don Lorenzo of Taxtitla affirmed that the Spanish soldiers, represented by *danzantes*, kneeled to Moctezuma

and Malinche out of reverence and respect. Maestro Cándido explained that many of the changes and substitutes added to the *danzas* over time were selected and controlled by the *indígena*:

*Pueden ser por imitación o por burla a los españoles, o puede ser por asimilación de la cultura. Muchos elementos culturales indígenas han desaparecido y han sido sustituidos por elementos de los españoles, que fueron los que lo conquistaron. Esa mezcla cultural- la está manejando los grupos indígenas y eso hace que sea de ellos.*

Perhaps to imitate or make fun of the Spaniards, or due to cultural assimilation these elements were added to the *danza*. Many indigenous cultural elements have disappeared and some have been substituted with other elements brought by the Spaniards. Yet, this cultural "mix" is being driven by the *indígenas* and comes from them.

He added that the *indígena* was not a passive victim of the conquest and concluded that:

*El indígena se resistió todo el tiempo a ser conquistado, porque no crean que entregaron así tan fácil su libertad, pero bueno, si ya después de que fuiste sometido, tu seguiste siendo, sigues haciendo tus tradiciones, tus costumbres, y además observas lo que esta haciendo el que te conquistó, entonces hay algunas danzas, como unos, no sé, algunos Matlachines, que son pues de tipo guerrero, algunos son ceremoniales.*

The *indígena* always resisted being conquered. Don't believe that they gave up their freedom so easily, but instead resisted. As an *indígena* once humbled and forced to acquiesce, you continue your traditions, your customs – you observe your conqueror – and therefore create changes in some of the *danzas*, such as the warlike *Matlachines*, while others remain ceremonial.

Due to a silent message of resistance, the *danzas indígenas* in many communities of the Huasteca have continued to exist. The *indígena* has continued to use the *danza* in ritual and ceremony, mixed within the traditions of the Church. Although the *danza* has been continuously threatened with extinction, it has retained an important role in the community. Other challenges and institutions have inflicted



or attempted to inflict changes in the *danza*. The next section explains the current condition of *danza* in the communities.

### **The Current Condition of Indigenous Dance**

After centuries of conquest and colonization, the *danzas* have undergone many changes, while upholding the underlying theme of resistance. In the past, the *danzas* were controlled by the community leaders and were performed for rituals and ceremonies. With the influence of the Catholic Church and its doctrination, the *danzas* became part of special holidays and celebrations. In an effort to “rescue” the indigenous cultures from eventual extinction, the Mexican government funded institutions to preserve and conserve the indigenous dance traditions throughout the republic. Maestro Gabriel expressed his disgust of a few of these organizations and mistrusted their intentions:

*Yo estoy en contra, por ejemplo, del INI, del IVEC. INI es Instituto Nacional Indigenista. IVEC es Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura. Tienen presupuestas muy grandes y son presupuestas que no hacen llegar a los verdaderos poseedores de los valores culturales que tenemos aquí en México. No llega nada a las indígenas.*

I am against groups like INI and IVEC. INI is the National Indigenous Institute. IVEC is the Cultural Institute of Veracruz. They have large proposals and purposes that never serve the true possessors of the valued cultures that we have here in Mexico. Nothing is given to the *indígena* in return.

These organizations have infiltrated every indigenous community in the Huasteca and have successfully changed many elements within the dance traditions. Instead of conserving and maintaining the traditions as they found them, they added new elements. Maestro Cándido further explained what these organizations have done:

*Ahora ya, algunos organismos gubernamentales como el INI, ha intentado...uniformar las diferentes danzas...Hasta cierto punto han desvirtuado el vestuario de los danzantes. En lugar de ponerle el rebozo de bolitas, le pones la capa, como de terciopelo. Están desvirtualizando lo que es la esencia del baile*

Today, government organizations like the INI have intended to uniform the different *danzas*. To a certain point they have lessened the value of what the *danzantes* traditionally wore. Lessen the value...for example, they have replaced the woven shawl or *rebozo*, with a cape of velveteen. They have devalued that which is the essence of the dance.

Maestro Gabriel refused to accept the dress or costume that had been institutionalized by not only the governmental agencies, but also the universities pretending to disseminate authentic dance traditions of the Huasteca.

*No metemos el vestuario que tienen los demás como el organza, el organdí porque son telas españolas cuando aquí no tenemos este tipo de materiales. El tipo de material que usamos aquí es el algodón. Ustedes se fueron a ver los telares; Soy capaz de llevarles hasta ver las señoras haciendo la tela. Y no son bordados aquí. Son bordados de acá. Son diseños ancestrales para la región. We would never use fabrics such as organza and organdy because they are Spanish fabrics and here we never had this class of material. The fabric that we use here is cotton. You saw the looms. I am capable to take you to the communities where the women make their own cloth. They use ancestral designs.*

Maestro Gabriel stressed the importance of understanding which elements had been instituted as substitutes, such as the blue pants now worn by the *danzantes* in *Danza Moctezuma*, replaced by *manta* or cotton muslin pants.

Even Francisca de la Cruz did not understand why her hand-woven skirt or *nagua* had been replaced by yellow and blue satin skirts by the INI:

*Pues, este no sé porque nos mandaron así una fila de color amarilla y una fila de color azul. Antes usaban una camisa bordada y las naguas también bordadas. Tengo una nagua bordada pero ahorita no sé dónde va a estar. Well, I don't understand why they demanded that one row of women wear a yellow skirt, and the other row, blue. Before we wore a hand-embroidered*

blouse and hand-woven and embroidered skirts. I used to have a *nagua*, but now I don't know where it is.

Don Lorenzo of *Danza Moctezuma* agreed with Maestro Gabriel when asked about the pants worn in the *danza*:

*Antes mi abuelito bailó descalzo, con puro pantalón de manta. Se baila descalzo. No había zapatos, puro huarache.*

Before my grandfather danced barefoot, with pants made of cotton. He danced barefoot. Shoes didn't exist, just *huaraches*.

Francisca de la Cruz shared that when the INI requested that the women perform out of town, they couldn't refuse. They had to go. The INI paid for the transportation to get them to their destination, but didn't cover any other expenses, nor the wages lost for missing a day of work:

*Tenemos salir. Nos pagan el viaje. Llevamos la ropa que compraron ellos. No nos pagan el día del trabajo.*

This was the obligation that the dance community had toward the INI as payment for the *vestuario* or costumes provided.

Maestro Gabriel has dedicated over thirty years of his life to undo the damage caused by the Church and government institutions such as the INI and IVEC in the indigenous dance communities of the Huasteca. In his work with his university students and groups such as Esperanza del Valle, he has helped to restore the original elements of the *danzas*. At national and international dance conferences, Maestro Gabriel has presented the *danzas* of the Huasteca authentically, giving full credit to the *indígena* and the community. His desire is to continue to teach the truth about the *danzas*:

*Hay mucha gente que le gusta el folclor que conoce, gente que se puede destapar el engaño porque vamos a llevar Los Chules que no parece Los Chules de la universidad. Vamos a llevar, por ejemplo, Danza San José, que no conoce. Vamos a llevar la Danza de Mujeres que tampoco conoce. Vamos a llevar Danza Moctezuma o Malinche con la música de un arpa que la mayor parte de la gente no conoce. Vamos a llevar El Tigrillo que es una de las danzas que debe de estar por excelencia con cualquier grupo folclórico. No la tienen. ¿Qué va a pasar? Se desaparece del esquema que tiene la universidad en el escenario. ¿Cuál tiene más valor? Nos tienen miedo. Por eso, bloquean.*

There are a lot of people who appreciate folkloric dance. These are the people who will see the truth and will no longer be fooled because we will show them *Los Chules* that doesn't look like *Los Chules* performed by the university. We will present *Danza San José* that they've never seen. We will present *Danza Moctezuma* or *Malinche* accompanied by the harp that the majority of people have never seen. We will bring them *El Tigrillo* that is one of the dances that should be performed and conserved by every folkloric dance company. Nobody has seen it. What will happen? We will break a pattern in the cycle of the university. Which has more value? They are afraid of us. That's why, they block us.

Maestro Gabriel explained the importance of being available to support the indigenous communities in time of need. Gabriel's political position within the Huasteca region allowed him the opportunity to establish deep relationships with various indigenous communities. Over the years, Gabriel deliberately maintained his political position so that he could continue to protect and provide assistance to the communities within his governance area. He understood how vital it was to preserve and maintain the traditions and *danza*, and that these were the key to the identity and power within the community itself. Over a thirty-year period, Gabriel established trusting relationships with the people of many indigenous communities.

*Bueno, no tiene que pensar en toda la problemática que vive una comunidad indígena. Si no jamás vas a entender, digamos, lo que ellos quieren expresar con la danza. Sí tú quieres investigar una danza en una comunidad, tienes que involucrarte en la vida diaria. Sea, conocer lo que son los problemas de ellos. Sea el problema de tipo social, de tipo económico, de tipo político...Pero más*

*que nada de la pérdida de la dignidad, de la pérdida de su entorno cultural... Ellos no pueden hablar. Ellos no lo pueden decir.*

To truly investigate the dance of the community, it's vital to become involved in the daily lives of the people, understanding the problems and offering solutions. Otherwise you will never understand what they are expressing in the dance. You must understand what the problems are, be it social, economic or political. Above all, it may be a loss of dignity, or a loss of cultural pride. They cannot talk. They cannot say.

Maestro Gabriel advocated for the people of the Huasteca and continued his work to help "rescue" and disseminate these traditions within the region and beyond.

### ***Rescatando* or "Rescuing" and Disseminating Indigenous Dance Traditions**

Although the *indígena* sacrificed a great deal throughout the centuries to pass down ancient dance traditions generation after generation, the participants felt a desperate need to "rescue" and disseminate these *danzas* to others in order to assure their survival in the years to come. Maestro Gabriel reminded us how important the survival of the *danza* was to its community and the important role that we play as dancers in the United States:

*El foro que ustedes tengan, aprovechen. Díganlo. Es necesario de rescatar o conservar el entorno cultural de varios grupos indígenas en México. No, no más en la Huasteca, en México. ¿Qué podemos hacer a poderlo hacer?*  
Take advantage of the forum that you have. Spread the news. It's necessary to rescue or conserve the cultural pride of various indigenous groups in Mexico. Not only in the Huasteca, but in all of Mexico. What can we do?

All of the participants from the indigenous communities, the elders, *danzantes* and musicians, expressed their desire for the dance traditions of their communities to live on. They were honored that their *danzas* were being disseminated outside of their communities. Camilo del Angel shared the pride he felt because *danza El Tigrillo* was being passed down to future generations:

*Todavía, en gracia de Dios, todavía seguimos. Estamos enseñando los muchachos que comprenden también, como tocar la flauta y el tamborcito para que no los pierdan.*

Still, thanks be to God, we are still continuing. We are teaching the young men how to play the flute and the drum so that the tradition is not lost.

Both maestros also appreciated the work that had already been disseminated by Esperanza del Valle through the *Abriendo Caminos* project, but requested that this work continue. Since the first phase of the project was funded by a grant provided by the U.S. Fund for Culture, Maestro Gabriel requested that the second phase of the project take place to continue the collaboration with Esperanza del Valle and the indigenous dance communities of the Huasteca.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the many themes that emerged out of the data that confirmed the importance of maintaining the *danza* in the indigenous communities. The *danza* was the identity of the community tremendously valued by its members. Political, economic and social pressures have challenged the future existence of these dance traditions. The history of the *danza* was explored before, during and after the religious conquest, surviving under extremely challenging conditions. Finally, the participants unanimously felt a need to rescue and disseminate the *danza* to future generations.

Chapter Five will explore ways in which this dissemination of the indigenous dance traditions will continue. The participants' voices will guide the recommendations for the action research of this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION

*La danza es arte en movimiento, desde sus inicios la danza ha demostrado tener características propias que ponen de manifiesto la necesidad de comunicar un mensaje, y así, por este procedimiento va cubriendo tanto la función social de registrar hechos cotidianos relevantes y de interés común, como de heredar a las generaciones futuras la sabiduría contenida en cada expresión dancística.*

Danza is art in movement - since its beginnings dance has demonstrated that it possesses characteristics that manifest the need to communicate a message – it serves to reveal daily social functions and common interests, while offering future generations the opportunity to inherit the wisdom contained in every danced expression.

Anonymous Monograph of Danza Moctezuma  
Taxtitla, Veracruz

#### **Summary of the Findings**

What are the messages being communicated through the *danzas indígenas* of the Huasteca? How is wisdom being passed down throughout the centuries through the indigenous dance traditions? The purpose of this study was to validate and identify the contributions of the indigenous communities through their *danza* and to acknowledge the importance of maintaining these traditions in order to preserve indigenous cultures and values. The data revealed that the dancers, musicians and elders of the indigenous communities of the Huasteca and the facilitators of this study recognized the importance of these *danzas* to the identity of the community and the need to pass down these traditions from one generation to the next. Although both groups of participants agreed that the *danzas* were being challenged by political, economic, social and religious pressures, they approached these challenges from

different points of view. Both groups varied in their knowledge about the historical context of *danza indígena* and the current context in which the *danzas* found themselves within the traditions of Catholic religion.

The literature supported the findings of the data and revealed the desperate need to “rescue” the *danzas* from possible extinction. Although historically these *danzas* survived the religious conquest, today they confront political, economic, social and religious pressures that threaten their existence. The literature confirmed the significant role that *danza* played in the life of the *indígena* and referred to dance as a means of identity, resistance and power. Finally, *danza* was defined as a form of literacy that valued the voice of the *indígena*. This chapter will examine and analyze the findings of the data and will provide recommendations for future action.

### **The Voice of the *Indígena***

In this study the voices of the *indígena* were represented by elders or leaders of the *danzas*, *danzantes* and a musician. As *danzantes*, they all cherished their dance traditions and spoke passionately about their role in the dance and the importance to pass on the traditions to future generations. They spoke of the pure joy and commitment that they felt as participants in the *danza*.

They unanimously agreed that many elements, such as the costumes and calendar of performances, had been changed by institutions like the INI (*Instituto Nacional Indigenista*), IVEC (*Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura*), and the Catholic Church. Unlike the *maestros*, they didn’t speak negatively about these institutions. They did complain, however, that whenever called to dance by one of these



institutions, they were obligated to miss a day's work without any compensation. Other than that, it was difficult to understand if their silence represented a silent resistance, as the literature and data from the two facilitators revealed.

Two of the elders admitted that the *danzas* that were once performed for rituals and ceremonies, were now being performed according to the calendar set by the Catholic Church. Yet they did not deny that the *danzas*, such as *El Tigrillo* and *Los Viejos*, were magical and pagan dances that the Church couldn't accept. Rather than agree with Maestro Gabriel during the discussion, Camilo del Angel, elder of *danza El Tigrillo*, remained silent. Maestro Gabriel later commented to us privately, that as a converted Catholic, Camilo has become "mute." It would be a sin to speak of the *danza* as a phallic, magical dance instead of one that glorified God. He instead listened and nodded in agreement with Maestro Gabriel's comments, admitting that the *danza* was still used in ceremony and ritual.

Clearly for the *indígena*, these *danzas* represented dances of identity and power. They felt it important to pass these traditions down to the next generation and feared for the lack of interest on the part of the young people in the communities to join the *danza*. They expressed how economic and political pressures were further complicating the continuation of teaching these dances to the young men and women of the community, with many of them leaving to go work in the large cities.

### **The Voice of the Facilitators**

Both facilitators of this study, Professor Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Professor Cándido Hernández Navarrete felt an urgency to assist in conducting this research to

assure that the information gathered would provide accurate documentation of the *danzas indígenas* of the Huasteca region. After dedicating many years to the dissemination of the indigenous dance traditions of the region to their students, they expressed the importance of searching for the authentic roots of the culture. This meant giving voice and honor to the elders of the indigenous communities, the *jefes*, *capitanes* and *capitanas* as well as the musicians, who held the keys to the funds of knowledge. The *danzas* represented the foundation of the Mexican culture and within the dances remained the power and identity of the indigenous people.

As historians, they told of the *danzas* and how they existed during the pre-Colombian Era, before the conquest. These sacred *danzas*, many pagan and magical in nature, were used in ritual and ceremony to honor the natural elements. Prof. Mendoza spoke extensively about the significance of indigenous philosophy in the indigenous *danzas*. To this day, the maestros affirmed that many of these dances have retained these traditions through what are called the *costumbres*. Yet, they stressed how the Catholic Church and its religion have changed many aspects of the dances, through the introduction of new elements and, in some cases, have attempted to erase the elements as well as the dances that conflict with their way of thinking. Both maestros fear for the eventual extinction of these dance traditions forever.

### **The Voice of the Researchers**

Maestro Gabriel told us long ago that once you go to the Huasteca, your life may never be the same. "It's a magical and mystical place with a power of its own."

After six years of traveling to the region, I finally understand the meaning of his words. The Huasteca has repeatedly called us back many times. Both Ruby Vásquez and I have felt responsible to see this work through to the end. Once we made a promise to the people of the indigenous communities and to the maestros, we knew that we would have to follow through. The interesting piece about this research for me is that the more I learn through our travels, interviews and experiences, the less I really know. To truly understand the indigenous dance cultures of the Huasteca would take years and years of continued study and research, and even then, as an outsider, one would never truly know what it means to walk the same path as the *indígena*. It is with this premise that I share some of our thoughts as researchers.

Fetterman (1998) refers to the experience of conducting fieldwork for the first time as “adolescence.” (p. 138) He goes on to say “the fieldworker must learn a new language, new rituals and a wealth of new cultural information.” This has been very true of our research project in the Huasteca. We have learned through our mistakes and initial misconceptions. During our initial visits we had multiple opportunities to observe the *danzas* being performed in the communities of study. We spent countless hours in the indigenous communities of Mata el Tigre, Tepexocoyo and Taxtitla, as well as in the cities of Tantoyuca and Tempoal. These first visits were about watching and observing the *danzas*, learning the choreography, documenting the *vestuario* or dress and recording the music with the purpose of reproducing these *danzas* in our own community of Watsonville. It was during the later visits during the summers of 2001 and 2002 we started to formalize our interviews and with the

guidance of Maestro Gabriel probe deeper into the meaning, significance and importance of the *danza* to the *indígena*.

What became clear immediately during our interviews was the hesitation on the part of the *indígena* to speak against the influence of the Church or the other cultural institutions that have gone into the communities and changed or added elements in the *danza*. Confirmed by both maestros Gabriel and Cándido, it was difficult for the *indígena* to speak freely about the cultural traditions that were passed down by their ancestors and elders before the influence of the Catholic Church. Most of the responses to our questions were answered in reference to the Catholic religion and its role in the *danza*. Ethical issues arose when the researcher attempted to move beyond the influence of the Catholic Church and ask questions that caused internal conflicts around issues of religion and spirituality. It apparently would be “sacrilegious” for anyone to speak of the dance out of the context of the Church. We had to “dig pretty deep” to hear how the dance existed before the religious conquest. At that, it was difficult for the *danzantes* to admit that these changes were detrimental to the authenticity of the dance tradition. They appeared very complacent about the changes, yet that silent resistance emerged through their actions.

Before *El Tigrillo* was performed, the *danzantes* knelt before the small altar, with a picture of a Catholic saint. Yet they also blessed the earth and the instruments with *aguardiente* and drank themselves many times during the duration of the *danza*. Often the *danzantes* drank to the point of inebriation. The first time that we observed the *danza* performed in their community, Mata el Tigre, we witnessed the

killing of the chicken and the draining of its blood. Maestro Gabriel confirmed that these were pagan rituals that the Church condemned and was attempting to eliminate. Clearly, the *indígena* retained his *costumbres* in silent resistance.

There is also the government agency, the INI or *Instituto Nacional Indigenista*, whose mission is to preserve the indigenous dances in the indigenous communities throughout the republic of Mexico. This organization is supposed to support the communities financially to assure the continuation and survival of the traditional dances. Yet the data revealed how the INI has gone in to each community and has made changes in costume or materials in order to make the dance “look better.” For example, the women of Tepexocoyo, used to wear an embroidered *nagua*, *enredo* or skirt while performing their *danza* that the INI changed to silk skirts of bright blue and gold. These materials were not traditionally worn when their ancestors performed the *danza*.

We also experienced the work of the INI firsthand during one of our travels to the Huasteca region in the city of Huehuetlán in state of San Luis Potosí with the maestros. We arrived minutes before the governor of the region was to pay a visit to the city. Beautiful *indígena* women of the region were lined up in regional dress to greet the government officials. Yet they were placed in a line behind the *mestiza* women dressed in indigenous dress, wearing western make-up and jewelry. Later a large feast was set out for all to enjoy – all except the *indígenas*. They were gathered around the plaza observing the crowds eating the deliciously prepared mole and tamales of the region accompanied by musicians of the area.

My colleague, Ruby, approached one of the official INI representatives and inquired why the indigenous people, invited to greet the officials, were not invited to partake in the feast. Obviously unprepared for this question, he quickly summoned someone to announce over the loud speakers that everyone present was invited to come to the tables to eat. I'll never forget the look on the faces of the *indígenas*. They were at first very confused and hesitant, but once they understood the meaning of his words, they slowly made their way to the tables to sit and eat. By then, most of the *mestizos* had finished eating and left the tables. I also observed Maestro Gabriel from a distance. He refused to come near the tables and had that look of distrust in his eyes. Yet, there was also a sense of satisfaction that he must have felt watching the *indígenas* partake of the food, most certainly prepared by them but not meant for their consumption.

Finally, the state of the *danza* of each community visited and interviewed constantly was in a state of change due to economic and political instability. The *indígena* expressed how the new government under the leadership of Vicente Fox has severely affected the economic condition of living. There were new taxes that the community would soon have to pay. They were feeling very devastated economically at our last visit. This affected the *danza* of the community in serious ways. Those *danzantes* who normally would be able to make a living off the land in order to sustain their families, were now forced to go to the capital, Mexico City, to find work. Many of the members of the *danza* were now living and working outside of their community. In the community of Tepexocoyo, Capitán Gilberto Hernández Gomez

explained how they lost one musician and are worried that they would not find a replacement. They will not be able to perform the *danza* without this important musical element.

As above mentioned, initially we thought that our goal was solely to document, learn and represent the *danzas* of the Huasteca here in the United States – to transfer some of these dance traditions to our community in Watsonville. The *Abriendo Caminos* project provided a bridge from one dance community to the other – a one-way bridge, with little coming back to the *indígena* from our side.

Before our trip to the Huasteca during the summer of 2002, I interviewed Ruby to learn about her perspectives on the work in the Huasteca. We reflected on the material that has already been gathered over the last five years. I asked Ruby what the missing pieces were that we still had to research and document.

I think that for me a big missing piece has been to explain why we are doing this. We're calling this a collaboration or an *intercambio*, but it really hasn't been. It's been about us going over there and taking things, in a good way, in a respectable way – and in a way that we've been given their permission. But, we haven't done any exchanging of what we've learned throughout this whole process with them.

We take back copies of every photo, videotape recordings, school supplies and other gifts for each of the communities each time that we return. Yet, what Ruby is talking about here is much deeper:

I mean they've given us essences, pieces of themselves and we can't even begin to convey what it all has meant to our lives. How to do we reciprocate? Things have to be reciprocated. I think that's how real learning and real growth and transformations occur, through that whole process of reciprocity.

Reflecting upon the issue of reciprocity and the positive influence of our presence in the communities, both Ruby and I remembered important events that have come out of this work:

The other interesting thing that I look back on was how even our presence over there brought groups of people together that don't normally come together, like the people from Mata del Tigre and the people from Tepexocoyo. Remember when we went out to the *mercado* to eat and everybody sat in their own different little groups, which was, you know, cool. It was very evident to me that even us being there was also a way of bringing people together. Thinking about how do we reciprocate...can't we call another opportunity for people to come together and we can engage in a conversation, not just about technique and steps, but more of a special gathering...maybe I'm thinking in a real western way. I'm just thinking it would be powerful if they had each other to bounce those ideas off why *danza* is important and be able to talk like that in a group.

The participants, both *indígenas* and *mestizos* of the Huasteca will ultimately inform the action of this research for their communities. The action will differ in terms of how it will serve folkloric dancers and the community of Watsonville.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The ancient dance traditions of the Huasteca may someday cease to exist without the acknowledgement of their true value and importance in shaping the Mexican culture. One could debate that these *danzas* have survived on their own accord through determination and resistance and therefore will continue to survive. Yet, the literature and data have revealed a current trend leading toward the extinction of many of these traditions that hold tremendous value for the indigenous communities.



The plight of the *indígena* in Mexico and throughout the Americas paralleled with five hundred years of conquest is a well-known theme in our history. Most are familiar with the historical tragedies and the unjust acts that many native people have suffered throughout time. Our fourth graders today learn about the cruelty of the Spanish missionaries and how the *indígenas* suffered at the hand of their conquerors while converted to a new religion and way of life. Few realize that the conquest is still in progress and that many elements of indigenous cultures are continuing to disappear.

As teachers and folkloric dancers we must create opportunities for others to discover and value the indigenous *danzas* of Mexico.

### **Action Research**

#### **Action within the Indigenous Communities of the Huasteca**

The *indígenas*, representing three different communities, all desired published monographs that would include the information that they shared during the interviews. They also requested that their music be professionally recorded on CD and returned to the communities. They understood the importance of documenting their *danza* and valued the finished product that would remain in their possession.

They not only requested the monographs and photos of their own *danza* but requested that the published document include all of the indigenous dance communities of this study. Maestro Gabriel saw this as an essential part of the action:

*De todas. Para que se den cuenta ellos mismos la lucha que están haciendo todos los demás.*

Provide the monographs of all of the communities so that each of them realizes the same battle that they are all making for the survival of their dance traditions.

The action of this study empowered the *indígena* to decide how this information would be used and distributed. They gave their sacred trust to have revealed their identities for the purposes of disseminating this information about their *danzas* in order to have them documented in written form and published.

### **Carrying the Message Outside of the Huasteca**

Maestro Gabriel stressed the importance of this research as a way to rescue the indigenous dance traditions from possible extinction. Although his students have gone into the indigenous dance communities and have written monographs of various dances, he felt it necessary to go many steps further. It would be important to acknowledge foremost, the voice of the *indígena* in the written monograph accompanied by photographs of the *danzantes* and community. He desired a compact disc of their music professionally recorded. He dreamed of a possible international dance conference, similar to the national conference that he organized, with a focus on the indigenous roots of Mexican folkloric dance:

*Cuando se hizo el congreso de nosotros aquí en Tantoyuca, ha sido el mejor congreso nacional porque hicimos que la gente se involucrara con la gente de aquí. Se quedaron en varias casas. Yo era el coordinador. Siempre había buenos congresos cuando era el presidente porque dimos autoridad a la gente indígena.*

When the national dance conference was held in Tantoyuca, it was by far the most powerful, in that we involved the indigenous people from here. The conference participants stayed in our homes. I was the coordinator. While I was president we always had great conferences because I gave authority to the *indígena*.

Maestro Gabriel praised the photographs and the information that had been gathered as a result of this research. He proposed that they be published along with the monographs of each *danza* in the study and carried back first to the participants of the study and finally outside of the region.

Although the monographs, photo journal and CD recordings won't be included in the thesis, they are part of the action and on-going work following from the research in this document. The written monographs will be revised and published during the summer of 2003 and copies will be distributed to the participants of this study and to the indigenous communities to which they belong.

### **Abriendo Caminos Project Phase Two**

How will this action thesis lead to change in the local arts community? Greenwood and Levin (1998) insist that action research "aims to alter the initial situation of a group, organization, or community in the direction of a more self-managing, liberated state." This research becomes participatory when the members of the community have an opportunity to participate fully and have an effect on the outcome. The members of Mexican dance company, Esperanza del Valle, have a vested interest in this research and a strong desire to impact on the outcome of this work. The twenty-five members of Esperanza del Valle represent a cross-section of the community of Watsonville, as workers in education, business, politics and social service and as college and university students. The search conference will be used as "a methodology for participatory planning and design." (Greenwood and Levin, 1998, p. 155) Greenwood and Levin affirm that "the aim of search conference

techniques is to allow for collective planning and design of actions aimed at solving problems directly relevant to the people involved.”

The search conference will provide direction for the dissemination of the information gathered in the research of the *danza indígena* of the Huasteca. Perhaps one result will be submitting the second phase of the *Abriendo Caminos* project:

*Ojalá se pueda conseguir algo, ojalá pueda venirse algo, un buen fideicomiso, para hacer un buen trabajo, tenemos grandes mascareros, tenemos grandes artesanos...que te hacen instrumentos musicales, tenemos grandes danzantes, tenemos grandes músicos, que tenemos que recuperar y conservar y hacer talleres para que le enseñen a las demás gentes, para que esto se conserve, es lo que tenemos que hacer que buscar y a ustedes les hemos dado todo esto para que hemos visto que les ha interesado vaya, tanto así que vemos que quieren hacer una maestría. (Mendoza Torres, 2002)*

I hope that you will submit and receive another grant that will enable you to continue to disseminate our traditions. We have great mask-makers, great artists, instrument makers, great dancers, great musicians – we have to rescue and conserve these traditions and provide workshops to teach others. We have seen your interest to the point that you have made this research the work of your thesis

Perhaps as Maestro Gabriel desires, part of the action will result in community classes, presentations and performances and a plan for initiating change. Perhaps the information will be disseminated into the schools and community through presentations and performances. The search conference will ultimately result in the desired actions for change and will become an on-going change agent to provide culturally responsive arts in our schools and community.

Maestro Cándido is proud that these traditions have already reached the community of Watsonville through the work of Esperanza del Valle and would like to see it continue:

*Bueno, le ayuda a que su cultura se conoce en otros lugares. Saber, saber..... por ejemplo, decimos, hay grupo "Esperanza del Valle", tiene una presentación en San José, en Monterey, donde sea, no. Van a presentar danza de "San José Tepexocoyo". Allí están conociendo que en México hay un lugar donde se baila esa danza que se llama "San José". Entonces, eso le sirve a la comunidad, porque posiblemente, entre el auditorio hay alguna persona que quiere venir a México y que pueda conocer esa comunidad, una parte de difundir, no, la existencia de esos lugares, en otro país o en otro lugar, no.*

Well, it helps one to know that your culture is known in other places. To know, for example, that Esperanza del Valle will perform in San José or Monterey an indigenous *danza* called *Danza San José*. This serves the indigenous community from where the dance originates. Perhaps an audience member will watch the dance performed by Esperanza del Valle and will desire to go to Mexico and ultimately to the indigenous community. This is a way to disseminate the traditions and the places of origin of the *danzas indígenas* of the Huasteca.

Maestro Cándido praised Esperanza del Valle for the work that they have already produced and performed in Watsonville, disseminating the *danzas* of the Huasteca.

He encouraged the dance company to continue their good work:

*Pues, me encantaría que, presentaran...bueno ya lo vi, el trabajo realizado y sé que el trabajo que realizaron fue muy bueno, ya lo observé. Que mantengan esa técnica, ese ritmo de trabajo, esa presentación de los elementos culturales, tal y cual se les están dando, sí. Que si por alguna situación de estenografía, de espacio, requieran cambiar algo, bueno, lo cambien, pero la esencia la tenga. Eso es importante.*

I was please with what was presented...I was there and experienced the work by the dance company. The work was excellent, I observed it. Maintain this technique, this rhythm of work, this presentation of cultural elements as you have initiated. Even though you had to change the *danza* to fit on the choreographed stage, you were sure to maintain the essence of the dance. This is what's important.

### **Conclusion**

The research in the Huasteca will always be a work in progress. As we uncover more "truths" and compare and contrast these findings with former conclusions, we will consistently change and adapt our understandings. We also

come with our own set of ideas and experiences, shaped by our racial, social, political and economic background. These elements cannot be overlooked since they determine for the most part what and how the findings will be interpreted and written.

With each visit to the indigenous communities of the Huasteca more and more knowledge is gained. As maestro Gabriel explains, "You have to learn for yourself. I won't tell you the answers to your questions. You have to go out and find the answers yourself. You must come back to the Huasteca to continue to learn. What you learn one time, may be contradicted the next." Maestro Gabriel has dedicated his life to preserving the dance traditions of the indigenous people of the Huasteca. "It's a mystical place. Once you come to the Huasteca, your life will never be the same." (Mendoza Torres, 2001)

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview questions for dancers, teachers and musicians of indigenous dance *Preguntas para la entrevista para los danzantes, maestros y músicos de danza indígena*

1. What is your full name? What is your native tongue (home or primary language)? *¿Cuál es su nombre completo? ¿Cuál es su lengua natal?*
2. Have you lived here all of your life? How long have you lived in this community? *¿Ha vivido aquí toda tu vida? ¿Cuánto tiempo ha vivido en esta comunidad?*
3. What is your role, title or responsibility in the dance? *¿Cuál es su papel, título o responsabilidad en la danza?*
4. For how long have you participated in the dance? *¿Cuánto tiempo ha participado en la danza?* When did you begin? *¿Cuándo empezó?*
5. Why did you want to participate in the dance? *¿Por qué quería participar en la danza?*
6. What is your first memory (of the dance) as a child? *¿Cuál es su primer recuerdo de la danza como niño o niña?*
7. What are the requirements for participating in the dance? Have there always been requirements? *¿Cuáles son los requisitos para participar en la danza? ¿Siempre había?*
8. Why is this dance important for the community? *¿Por qué es importante esta danza para la comunidad?*
9. What does the dance teach us and what does it mean? *¿Qué es lo que enseña o significa la danza?*
10. Is this dance important for the children? Explain why yes or no. *¿Es importante para los niños? ¿Por qué sí o no?*

11. What do you want to transmit to the children in this community through this dance? *¿Qué quieren transmitir a los niños o a la comunidad por medio de la danza?*
12. When do you traditionally perform the dance and during what occasion? *¿Cuándo se ejecuta la danza durante el año y para qué ocasión?*
13. What are important elements in the dress and what do they represent? *¿Cuáles son los elementos importantes en el vestuario y qué significan?*
14. What is important to know about the steps, style or choreography of the dance? *¿Qué es importante saber de los pasos, estilo o la coreografía de la danza?*
15. Who are the important characters represented in the dance? What is their role? *¿Quiénes son los personajes principales en la danza? ¿Qué son sus responsabilidades?*
16. Describe what you remember or heard about the dance and how it was performed before the religious conquest. *Describe lo que se acuerda de la danza y como estaba ejecutaba antes de la conquista religiosa.*
17. What was the dance called and when was it performed? *¿Cómo se llamaba y cuándo se ejecutaba la danza?*
18. How has the dance changed after the religious conquest? *¿Cómo se ha cambiado la danza después de la conquista religiosa?*
19. What role does the INI (*Instituto Nacional Indigenista*) play in the dance of your community? *¿Cómo está la INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista) involucrada en la danza de tu comunidad?*
20. How is the dance important to the identity of the community? *¿Cómo es importante la danza para la identidad de comunidad?*

## APPENDIX B

### Interview questions for Prof. Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Prof. Cándido Hernández Navarrete

#### *Preguntas para las entrevistas con los profesores Gabriel Mendoza Torres and Cándido Hernández Navarrete*

1. What is your title, role, background?  
*¿Cuál es su cargo en la danza? ¿Cómo participa usted en ella? ¿Cuáles son sus antecedentes en el baile?*
2. What has been your involvement in folkloric dance?  
*¿Qué experiencia ha tenido en baile folclórico?*
3. How has your view of dance changed throughout your life? What brought about these changes?  
*¿Cómo ha cambiado el modo en que ve a la danza a través de su vida?  
¿Qué es lo que lo ha hecho cambiar su visión de la danza?*
4. How has dance been important in your work? Life? Teaching? Governance? (work in politics)  
*¿Cómo ha influido la danza en su trabajo, en su vida en general, en su enseñanza, en sus opiniones políticas?*
5. How did you become involved in the preservation of indigenous dance?  
*¿Cómo se involucró inicialmente en la preservación en la danza indígena?*
6. Describe your background and personal connection with the indigenous dance communities.  
*Describa sus antecedentes y su conexión personal con las comunidades de danzas indígenas.*
7. What work have you initiated to help keep the dance traditions alive? Why is this important?  
*¿Cuál ha sido su labor para ayudar a mantener vivas las tradiciones dancísticas?  
¿Por qué es importante esta labor?*
8. What has been the impact of your work? Have you met resistance? Explain.

*¿Cuál ha sido el resultado de esta labor? ¿Ha encontrado oposición a su labor? Explique por favor.*

9. Why is it important to share the indigenous dances outside of the indigenous communities of the Huasteca? In México? And abroad?  
*¿Por qué es importante compartir sus danzas con las demás comunidades indígenas de la Huasteca y las del resto del país e incluso en el extranjero?*
10. How do you see the work with Esperanza del Valle as valuable in preserving and disseminating these dance traditions?  
*¿Qué valor ve usted en el trabajo que desarrolla Esperanza del Valle para preservar y diseminar estas tradiciones dancísticas?*
11. How does the dissemination of this knowledge benefit the indigenous dance communities in México and abroad?  
*¿Cómo beneficia la diseminación de estos conocimientos a las comunidades indígenas de danza en México y en el extranjero?*
12. What desired outcomes would you like to see come out of this work?  
*¿Para qué le gustaría que sirviera esta investigación?*
13. Would you describe these danzas as dances of identity? Resistance? Power? Please explain.  
*¿Describiría usted éstas danzas como danzas de identidad, como danzas de resistencia, como danzas de poder? Explique por favor...*

## APPENDIX C

California State University Monterey Bay  
**Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects**  
**Consent Form**

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Dance as Identity, Resistance and Power**  
*Danza indígena de la Huasteca, México*

**Janet Rachel Johns, candidate for the degree of Masters of Arts in Education**  
**Center for Collaborative Education and Professional Studies**

I have read the following material and I understand the nature of this study. I have agreed to participate in the study and to share my experience and my knowledge with the researcher. I understand that by signing this form I am giving my permission to use the information that I have shared in this study. The results of this study will be used in a Master's thesis and will be catalogued at the library at the California State University Monterey Bay. My input as an artist, dancer, teacher or community member will be the basis for documenting the indigenous dances of the Huasteca.

#### **PURPOSE**

I am being invited to participate voluntarily in the *Abriendo Caminos* research project. The purpose of this project is to maintain, preserve and educate others about the indigenous dances and traditions in the Huasteca region of México.

#### **SELECTION CRITERIA**

I am being invited to participate because I meet one of the following criteria:

- I am a dancer and/or musician of the Huasteca and I participate in the traditional dance/s of my community.
- I am a dancer and/or musician of traditional Mexican dance either in the United States or in Mexico.
- I am an artist or teacher of the ethnic arts in México or the United States.

#### **PROCEDURE(S)**

If I agree to participate, I will be asked to consent to the following:



I will be asked to participate in an interview. I will be asked no more than 20 questions. I will give my consent whether I agree to be video or audio taped. The interview will not exceed two hours. Any statements that I make are to remain confidential and the researcher will not use my name in reporting the information, unless I otherwise indicate. All transcriptions of interviews will be provided so that I may omit or add any information before being published in this research.

I will choose whether I give my permission to be recorded, photographed or videotaped during a performance. I will receive copies of the recordings, photos and videos and have the right to delete anything I do not want included in the study.

I will have the opportunity to read and approve the final draft of any comments or descriptions of my participation in this study before publishing.

### **POTENTIAL RISKS**

Interviews, places, and names will be kept confidential in the final publication of this research. It will be up to me to decide whether or not I wish my name to be identified in relation to the dance of my community. If I choose to be identified, I can be assured that the researcher will give my community and I proper credit in monographs, photographs and videotapes.

### **BENEFITS**

I will receive payment when my participation causes me to miss work. The researcher will pay me the equivalent cost a day's wages whether I choose to continue the interview or not. I will receive monographs of the dance/s of my community, copies of each photo taken, and videotapes of the dances recorded.

The indigenous dances in the Huasteca communities that are part of the study will be documented in written form. The information gathered through observation, interview and literature may become a written document and photo journal that will be given to each of the communities if I so desire. The dance communities that are being researched in this study will receive written monographs on the dance performed in their community. Interviews, places, and names will be kept confidential in the final publication of this research unless I give the researcher my permission to use my name, photographs and to identify the dance and the community to which it belongs.

Educational institutions as well as arts institutions will benefit from this study as a model for school/community partnerships in the arts. Schools will be able to use the information from this research to improve and build more inclusive community arts programs that recognize the contributions of indigenous peoples of the world, namely the people of the Huasteca.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I understand that all information will be kept confidential in the final publication of this research unless I otherwise indicate. The researcher will not identify me as the participant and will assure that nobody will be able to trace particular information to me as the informant if I so desire.

All audiotapes, videotapes, and negatives will be kept in a locked file by the researcher. Transcriptions of the interviews and the questionnaires will also be kept confidential in a locked file. Only the researcher and her professor will have access to these records.

With my approval, the information gathered for the study will be shared with the local school and arts institutions. Monographs, photographs and videotapes of the dances and artists in the Huasteca will be shared as well if I so desire.

I have the right to review and edit audio and videotapes to assure their accuracy. The photographs, audiotapes, videotapes and monographs will only be used for educational and artistic purposes outside my community in the Huasteca only with my approval.

## **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

I may withdraw my consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of my participation in this research study. If I have questions regarding my rights as a research subject, I will contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Linda Rogers at California State University Monterey Bay, 100 Campus Center, Bldg 1, Seaside, CA 93966; 831-582-5012.

## **AUTHORIZATION**

I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I AM OVER 18. BEFORE GIVING MY CONSENT BY SIGNING THIS FORM, THE METHODS, INCONVENIENCES, RISKS, AND BENEFITS HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME AND MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. A COPY OF THIS SIGNED CONSENT FORM WILL BE GIVEN TO ME.

Please choose from the following options:

I agree/do not agree to participate in an interview of no more than 20 questions that will not exceed two hours.

I will/will not give my consent to be videotaped during an interview.

I will/will not give my consent to be audio taped during an interview.

I will/will not give my consent to be photographed during an interview.

I agree/do not agree to give permission for the use of my name in association with the dance of my community.

I will/will not give my consent to be videotaped during a performance.

I will/will not give my consent to be audio taped during a performance.

I will/will not give my consent to be photographed during a performance.

I give/do not give my permission to use the photographs, audiotapes, videotapes and monographs for educational and artistic purposes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Type or PRINT Full Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT choice of name

**INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT**

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who is signing this consent form understands clearly the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation and his/her signature is legally valid. A medical problem or language or educational barrier has not precluded this understanding.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX D

Universidad Estatal de California-Bahía de Monterey  
**Comité para la protección de sujetos humanos**  
**Forma de consentimiento**

*La danza indígena de la Huasteca como medio de identidad,  
resistencia y poder*

**Janet Rachel Johns, candidata para el grado de Maestría en Artes de la Educación  
Centro para la Educación Colaborativa y Estudios  
Profesionales**

Declaro que he leído el material siguiente y que comprendo la naturaleza de este estudio. He consentido en participar en el estudio y en compartir mi experiencia y mis conocimientos con el investigador. Entiendo que al firmar esta forma estoy otorgando permiso para usar la información que he compartido en este estudio. Los resultados de este estudio serán usados en una tesis de Maestría y serán catalogados en la Biblioteca de la Universidad Estatal de California de la Bahía de Monterey. Mi aportación como artista, danzante, maestro o miembro de la comunidad será la base para documentar las danzas indígenas de la Huasteca.

### **PROPOSITO**

Estoy siendo invitado a participar voluntariamente al proyecto de investigación Abriendo Caminos. El propósito de este proyecto es mantener, preservar y educar a otros acerca de las danzas y tradiciones indígenas en la región de México conocida como la Huasteca.

### **CRITERIO DE SELECCION**

Estoy siendo invitado a participar porque cumplo con uno de los siguientes criterios:

- Soy un danzante y/o músico de la Huasteca y participo en la danza tradicional de mi comunidad.
- Soy un danzante y/o músico de danza tradicional mexicana ya sea en Estados Unidos o en México.
- Soy un artista o maestro de artes étnicas en México o en Estados Unidos.

### **PROCEDIMIENTOS**

Estoy de acuerdo en participar, y se me pedirá mi consentimiento para lo siguiente:

Se me pedirá participar en una entrevista. Se me harán no más de 20 preguntas. Daré mi consentimiento para permitir que se me grabe en cinta de video o de audio.

La entrevista no excederá de dos horas. Tendré a mi elección el permitir o no que se use mi nombre en asociación con alguna danza o comunidad en particular durante las entrevistas. Si solicito que cualquier declaración hecha por mí permanezca confidencial, el investigador no usará mi nombre al reportar tal información. Toda transcripción de entrevistas me serán proveídas de modo que yo pueda omitir o añadir cualquier información antes de que sea publicada en esta investigación.

Será mi decisión el dar mi permiso para que se me grabe en audio o video, o se me fotografíe durante mi actuación. Recibiré copias de las grabaciones de audio y video y de las fotografías y tendré el derecho de eliminar cualquier cosa que yo no quiera que sea incluida en el estudio.

También tendré la oportunidad de leer y aprobar la versión final de cualquier comentario o descripciones de mi participación en este estudio antes que sean publicados.

### **RIESGOS POTENCIALES**

Las entrevistas, lugares y nombres van a permanecer confidenciales en la publicación final de esta investigación. Yo puedo decidir si deseo o no deseo permitir el uso de mi nombre en relación a la danza de mi comunidad. Si deseo ser identificado, puedo asegurar que la investigadora me dará crédito a mí y a la comunidad indígena, en las monografías, fotografías y videos.

### **BENEFICIOS**

Recibiré retribución económica cuando mi participación cause que falte a mi trabajo. La investigadora me pagará el equivalente a un día de salario, aún si decido no continuar con la entrevista. Recibiré monografías de las danzas de mi comunidad, copias de cada fotografía que se tome, y cintas de video de las danzas filmadas.

Las danzas indígenas de las comunidades de la Huasteca que son parte del estudio serán documentadas de forma escrita. La información recopilada a través de observación, entrevista y literatura se convertirá en documento escrito y colección fotográfica que serán otorgados a cada comunidad, si así lo deseo. Las comunidades de danzantes que están siendo investigadas en este estudio recibirán monografías escritas de la danza ejecutada en su comunidad. Las entrevistas, lugares y nombres permanecerán confidenciales en la publicación final de esta investigación a menos que yo le doy permiso a la investigadora usar mi nombre, las fotografías e identificar la danza y la comunidad a que pertenece.

Instituciones educativas y artísticas se beneficiarán de este estudio como un modelo de asociación artística entre escuelas y comunidades. Las escuelas podrán usar la información en esta investigación para mejorar y construir programas comunitarios

más inclusivos que reconozcan las contribuciones de los pueblos indígenas del mundo, en este caso, el pueblo de la Huasteca.

### **CONFIDENCIALIDAD**

Entiendo que toda la información permanecerá confidencial en la publicación final de este estudio a menos que yo indique de otra manera. La investigadora no me identificará como el participante y se asegurará que nadie pueda rastrear hasta mí como informante ninguna información particular, si así lo deseo.

Todas las cintas de video, audio y negativos serán conservados en un archivo bajo llave por la investigadora. Las transcripciones de las entrevistas y los cuestionarios serán conservados como confidenciales en un archivo cerrado. Solo la investigadora y su profesor tendrán acceso a esos archivos.

Con mi aprobación, la información reunida por este estudio será compartida con la escuela e instituciones artísticas locales. Las monografías, fotografías y cintas de video de las piezas dancísticas y los artistas de la Huasteca serán compartidas también, si así lo deseo.

Yo tendré el derecho de revisar y editar cintas de audio y video para asegurar que sean atinadas. Las fotografías, cintas de audio y video y las monografías serán usadas con propósitos educativos y artísticos afuera de mi comunidad en la Huasteca solamente con mi aprobación.

### **DERECHOS DE LOS SUJETOS DE INVESTIGACION**

Puedo retirar mi consentimiento en cualquier momento y discontinuar mi participación sin represalia alguna. No estoy renunciando a ninguna reclamación legal o derecho por participar en este estudio de investigación. Si tengo preguntas acerca de mis derechos como sujeto de investigación, me pondré en contacto con el Jefe del Comité de Sujetos Humanos, Linda Rogers en la Universidad Estatal de California en la Bahía de Monterey, 100 Campus Center, Bldg 1, Seaside, CA 93966; 831-582-5012.

### **AUTORIZACION**

RECONOZCO QUE TENGO MAS DE 18 AÑOS DE EDAD. ANTES DE DAR MI CONSENTIMIENTO AL FIRMAR ESTA FORMA ME HAN SIDO EXPLICADOS LOS METODOS, INCONVENIENTES, RIESGOS Y BENEFICIOS Y MIS PREGUNTAS HAN SIDO CONTESTADAS. SE ME DARA UNA COPIA DE ESTE CONSENTIMIENTO FIRMADO.

**Por favor, elija una de las dos opciones cada una de las siguientes preguntas:**

Yo acepto/no acepto participar en una entrevista de no más de 20 preguntas que no excederá de dos horas.

Yo doy/no doy mi consentimiento para ser filmado en video durante la entrevista.  
Yo doy/no doy mi consentimiento para ser grabado en audio durante la entrevista.  
Yo doy/no doy mi consentimiento para ser fotografiado durante la entrevista.  
Yo acepto/no acepto otorgar mi permiso para que se use mi nombre en asociación con las danzas de mi comunidad.  
Yo doy/no doy mi consentimiento para ser filmado en video durante mi actuación.  
Yo doy/no doy mi consentimiento para ser grabado en audio durante mi actuación.  
Yo doy/no doy mi consentimiento para ser fotografiado durante mi actuación.  
Yo acepto/no acepto otorgar mi permiso para que se usen las fotografías, cintas de audio y monografías para propósitos educativos y artísticos.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre completo a máquina o a mano

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Sujeto de Investigación

\_\_\_\_\_  
Escriba nombre elegido

**DECLARACION DE LA INVESTIGADORA**

He explicado en detalle al sujeto la naturaleza del proyecto arriba mencionado. Certifico que hasta donde mi conocimiento me lo permite, la persona que firma este consentimiento entiende claramente la naturaleza, demandas, beneficios y los riesgos que su participación envuelve y que su firma es legalmente válida. Ningún problema médico o barrera de lenguaje o educativa ha impedido su comprensión.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma de la investigadora

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

## APPENDIX E

### *Libreto para explicar la participación y protección de sujetos humanos para el estudio*

#### **La danza indígena de la Huasteca como medio de identidad, resistencia y poder por Janet Rachel Johns**

La primera vez que nos conocimos, durante el día de los muertos del año 1997, vine con miembros de mi grupo folklórico, Esperanza del Valle para conocer y observar, de primera mano, las danzas de varias comunidades de la Huasteca con nuestros guías, Maestro Gabriel y Maestro Cándido. Este proyecto se llamaba *Abriendo Caminos* con el propósito de mantener, preservar y educar a otros acerca de las danzas y tradiciones indígenas en la región de México conocida como la Huasteca.

Ruby, mi hijo Gabriel y yo, hemos regresado cada año para aprender más de ustedes y de la danza de su comunidad. Ahora estoy trabajando en una Maestría en Artes de la Educación en la Universidad Estatal de California-Bahía de Monterey para documentar las danzas indígenas de la Huasteca. La universidad requiere que cada participante que está de acuerdo participar en el estudio tiene que dar su consentimiento por escrito y grabado. Yo quiero explicar más de lo que significa dar su consentimiento.

Como capitán, jefe, danzante o músico, usted está invitado a participar voluntariamente en este estudio. Usted últimamente va a dar o no dar su autoridad de participar en este estudio. Si está de acuerdo en participar, usted decidirá si vaya a participar en una entrevista de no más de 20 preguntas. Durante esta entrevista usted daría o no daría su consentimiento para permitir que se le grabe en cinta de video o de audio. La entrevista no excederá de dos horas. Puede dar su consentimiento o no usar su nombre en asociación con la danza o comunidad en particular durante las entrevistas. Usted va a decidir si yo uso su nombre o si quiere permanecer anónimo. Usted va a tener la oportunidad de revisar la transcripción de la entrevista para que pueda omitir, cambiar o añadir cualquier información antes de que sea publicada en esta investigación.

Será su decisión dar o no dar el permiso para que se le grabe en audio o video, o se le fotografíe mientras está danzando o tocando. Recibirá copias de las grabaciones de audio y video y de las fotos y tendrá el derecho de eliminar cualquier cosa que usted no quiera que sea incluida en el estudio. También usted tendrá la oportunidad de leer y aprobar la versión final de cualquier comentario o descripciones de su participación en este estudio antes que sean publicados.



Otra vez, si usted desea permanecer anónimo como participante o que ciertas afirmaciones, lugares, conversaciones permanezcan confidenciales, esta confidencialidad será respetada por mi como la investigadora.

Yo prometo, como investigadora, entregarle una copia del estudio de las danzas documentadas de forma escrita y recibirá monografías escritas de la danza ejecutada en su comunidad una vez que todo el trabajo está completo. Usted recibirá copias de todas las fotos y grabaciones también. Todas las cintas de video, audio y negativos serán conservados en un archivo bajo llave. Las transcripciones de las entrevistas y los cuestionarios serán conservados como confidenciales en un archivo cerrado. Solo la investigadora y su profesor tendrán acceso a esos archivos.

Sí usted está de acuerdo, la información reunida por este estudio será compartida con las escuelas e instituciones artísticas locales. Las monografías, fotografías y cintas de video de las piezas dancísticas y los artistas de la Huasteca serán compartidas también. Si usted lo acepta, su nombre, título y su comunidad serán nombrados para asegurar que se da crédito a la persona responsable de la pieza dancística.

Con toda confianza, sí hay alguna duda o algo que puedo aclarar o contestar, me lo puede preguntar ahora. Quiero que sepa que es muy importante que usted como participante se sienta bien compartir en este estudio y que me tiene la confianza de decirme si quiere participar o no. Usted puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento y discontinuar su participación sin represalia alguna. Yo estoy, y siempre estaré agradecida por todo lo que me ha enseñado y compartido de su vida, experiencia y de la danza, si decide participar en este estudio o no.

## APPENDIX F

### **Script to explain the participation and protection of human subjects for the study *Dance as Identity*,**

#### ***Resistance and Power* - Danza indígena de la Huasteca**

**by Janet Rachel Johns**

The first time that we met, during the Day of the Dead in 1997, I came with members of my dance company, Esperanza del Valle to learn and observe, firsthand, the dances of various communities of the Huasteca with our guides, Maestro Gabriel y Maestro Cándido. The purpose of the project entitled, *Abriendo Caminos* is to maintain, preserve and educate others about the indigenous dances and traditions in the Huasteca region of México.

Ruby, my son, Gabriel and I have returned each year to the Huasteca to learn more about you and the dance of your community. I am now working on my degree to receive a Masters of Arts in Education from California State University Monterey Bay to research and document the indigenous dances of the Huasteca. The university requires that each person who agrees to participate in this study, give his or her consent to participate in the study both written and verbal. I would like to explain more about what it means to give your consent in order to participate in this study or not.

I am inviting you as the leader, dancer or musician to participate voluntarily in this study. Ultimately, you will decide whether or not to give your consent to participate in this study. If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an interview. You will be asked no more than 20 questions. You will give your consent whether you agree to be video or audio taped. The interview will not exceed two hours. Any statements that you make are to remain confidential and I will not use your name in reporting the information, unless you otherwise indicate. All transcriptions of interviews will be provided for you so that you may omit or add any information before being published in this research.

You will choose whether you give permission to be recorded, photographed or videotaped during a performance. You will receive copies of the recordings, photos and videos and have the right to delete anything that you do not want included in the study. You will have the opportunity to read and approve the final draft of any comments or descriptions of your participation in this study before publishing.

Again, all information will be kept confidential in the final publication of this research unless you otherwise indicate. I will not identify you as the participant and will assure that nobody will be able to trace particular information to you as the informant if you so desire.

As the researcher, I promise to give you a copy of the study of the dances documented in written form and copies of the monographs, photos and audio/video recordings once all of the work is complete. I will keep all audiotapes, videotapes, and negatives locked in a file. Transcriptions of the interviews and the questionnaires will also be kept confidential in a locked file. Only my professor and I will have access to these records.

With your approval, the information gathered for the study will be shared with the local schools and arts institutions. Monographs, photographs and videotapes of the dances and artists in the Huasteca will be shared as well if you so desire. You will decide whether you would like your name, title and community to be identified with the dance in order for you and your community to receive proper credit.

If you have any doubts or if there is anything that I can clarify or answer, please ask me with total confidence. I want you to know that it is very important to me for you as a participant to feel comfortable with this study and that you can trust me enough to tell me whether you would like to participate or not. Please remember that you can withdraw your participation in this study at anytime without any consequences. No matter what you decide, I want you to know that I will be forever grateful to you for everything that you have taught and shared with me about your life, experience and dance.