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Danza Mexica: Indigenous Identity, Spirituality, Activism, and Performance

Jennie Marie Luna
lalunaxicana@gmail.com

DANZA MEXICA:
INDIGENOUS IDENTITY, SPIRITUALITY, ACTIVISM, AND PERFORMANCE

By

JENNIE MARIE LUNA

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Ed.M. (Teachers College, Columbia University) 2001
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Chairs: Elisabeth Rose Middleton, PhD
Jack D. Forbes, PhD

Marisol De la Cadena, PhD

Luis Urrieta, PhD

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation closely examines the Danza Mexica tradition of México Tenochtitlan as it has migrated, navigated and dispersed throughout the United States, transforming the identity politics, spiritual, and philosophical base of entire MeXicana/o communities in the process. The dissertation begins by illuminating the personal and historical significance of the Mexica dance tradition through creating understanding of its cultural/spiritual significance, as rooted in Pre-Cuauhtemoc practice and ritual.

Through historical/genealogical and contemporary understandings of the trajectory of Danza, two political/cultural/spiritual movements are examined in both Mexico City and the U.S. Southwest. These lineages cultivated the fertile ground necessary to facilitate the propagation of a trans-national Danza Mexica movement. This study examines the Mexicanidad and Tradición movements of Danza as both historical continuum and contemporary urban phenomenon. This dissertation is framed with explicit attention to the role and participation of women in the Danza movement.

The Danza "movement" is defined as both an embodiment of a physical act and a political act. The Danza Mexica tradition is but one strand in a dynamic history and legacy that has shaped how both Mexicanos and those self-identifying as Xicanas and Xicanos name themselves and their experiences, and how they reclaim and embrace Indigenous identity. Through understanding the significance of this constantly emerging movement, Indigenous (re)affirmations of identity continue to inform notions of self, homeland, spirituality, and community.

Simultaneously, this dissertation takes a critical look at how Danza circles have been sites where colonial mentality and practices have been reinforced. Despite critiques of "Indigenous revivalism and fanaticism," diverse Danza circles throughout the United States continue to demonstrate decolonization and community empowerment. While the political U.S./Mexican border attempts to control the movement of people, ideas and beliefs continuously permeate. My work examines not only the migration of people, but of culture, spiritual traditions, and identity. This dissertation demonstrates the profound links between Danza and Xicana/o identity, which have been utilized for decolonization, social justice, and liberation of the Xicana/o community.

~Ometeotl~

Dedicated to all my ancestors
To my abuelito José Manuel Luna & my Tio Guillermo Luna

To my Mother, Gloria Luna

Mi Maestra, Señora Cobb

My Mentor, Jack D. Forbes

Dedicated to all danzantes
We don't need a drum to dance, the drum is our heart, our feet are our instruments, and the sonaja is our voice.

¡Mexica Tiahui!

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PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Miac Tlazcamati

With a heart full of gratitude, I honor and acknowledge my ancestors for creating the path and leading me to this beautiful prayer and tradition of Danza. *Noyolo nemi huayya inmohhuantin*.

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With a humble heart, this dissertation belongs to all my gente.

Who has said we come to Earth to Live?
We only come to dance
We only come to dream
-Nezahualcoyotl

Nochi nomecayotzin

To all my relations

-Jennie "Quiahuicoatl Meztli" Luna

SECTION I

EAST
TLAHUITZLAMPA QUETZALCOATL

Nimitztlahpaloliz. Nimitztlazcamatilia Chanehque Tlahuiztlampa. Tonatiuh quizaya yahuatzinco xochicuecuepoca.
Hueyi ni calli Chipahuac campa ichan Quetzalcoatl.
Tzotzona atecocoli. Ce.

Yo te saludo. Yo te agradezco, cuidador, Tlahuitzlampa. El sol sale en la mañana cuando abren las flores. Esta grandiosa casa, de color blanco, donde vive Quetzalcoatl.
Suenan los caracoles. Uno.

I greet you. I give you thanks, caretaker of the East, Tlahuitzlampa. The sun rises in the morning when the flowers open. This great house, the color white, where Quetzalcoatl lives. Sound the conch shells. One.

INTRODUCTION

~TLAPAHLOLIZTLI~

This dissertation closely examines the Danza[1] Mexica[2] (Azteca) tradition as it has navigated and dispersed throughout the United States, transforming the identity politics, spiritual, and philosophical base of Xicana/o[3] communities. The dissertation begins by describing notions of ancestral homeland and place, which endorsed a growing Indigenous[4] consciousness and journey of self-discovery for Chicanas/os in the 1960s. The dissertation will then illuminate the personal and historical significance of the Mexica dance tradition through tracing the cultural/spiritual significance rooted in Pre-Cuauhtemoc[5] practice and ritual.

Through historical and contemporary understandings of the trajectory of Danza, I examine two political/cultural/spiritual movements in both Mexico City and the United States Southwest that cultivated the fertile ground necessary to facilitate the propagation

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[1] Danza, recognized by many as a formal manifestation of a spiritual belief system will be grammatically capitalized in order to give reverence and respect to this tradition and cultural/spiritual expression.

[2] "Mexica"(X pronounced with a "Sh" or "Ch" sound) refers to one group of Indigenous or more specifically Nahua people residing in Central México. Mexicas are commonly referred to as "Aztec," a misnomer popularized by anthropologists (see Maiz 1995 for extensive research on this topic). The term Mexica will be used, as it is the identity that Señora Cobb and the majority of the interlocutors of my research call themselves and how the dance tradition and ceremonies are also identified from within the Danza circles. Throughout this study, the term Nahua will also be used in reference to the larger body, community, and descendants of Nahuatl-speaking peoples, which extend across Mesoamerica.

[3] The term Xicana/o, as it is spelled with an X, will be discussed further in the dissertation. This term will be the dominant term used to identify the Xicana/o community in the United States. When referring to the same community but during the particular time period of the 1960s, it will be spelled as "Chicana/o," in congruence with the same reference period of the "Chicano Movement era" or "Chicano Renaissance."

[4] This will be the term used to identify original peoples of the western hemisphere and of other land bases, interchangeably with Native Peoples, First Nations, Fourth World Peoples, or People of this Land. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains in her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, "the word Indigenous is a way of including the many diverse communities, language groups, and nations, each with their own identification within a single grouping… 'Indigenous peoples' is a relatively recent term which emerged in the 1970s out of the struggles primarily of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood. It is a term that internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some of the world's colonized peoples" (1999: 6-7).

[5] Rather than use the Eurocentric point of reference of "pre-colonial" or "pre-hispanic," which centers on the European invasion as the point of transition in history, I have instead referenced this time period as "pre-Cuauhtemoc," meaning everything that occurred prior to the leadership of Cuauhtemoc, the last Tlatoani (speaker of the people) in Mexico-Tenochtitlan.

of a trans-national Danza Mexica movement. My dissertation is framed with explicit focus and attention on the role and participation of women in the Danza movement. This "movement," which I define simultaneously as both an embodiment of a physical act (the actual movement of the body through dance) and political act (as in social movement), ultimately re-defined an "alter-Native" (Gaspar de Alba, 2003) cultural identity within both the Mexican and Xicana/o community. Through understanding the significance of this constantly emerging movement, Indigenous (re)affirmation of identity continues to inform notions of self, homeland, spirituality, and community.

This dissertation, while examining the socio-historical roots of Danza, also takes a critical look at how Danza circles have been sites where colonial mentality and practices have been reinforced. By addressing the critiques of Indigenous revivalism and fanaticism, I ask the questions: *What is the liberatory and transformative potential of Danza Mexica? How has Danza been a tool for decolonization? What are the challenges that hinder Danza from engaging in a de-colonial/decolonization process, and perhaps re-enforce a colonial agenda?* Diverse models of Danza circles throughout the United States continue to demonstrate decolonization and community empowerment. While the political U.S./Mexican border attempts to control the movement of people— various cultural and spiritual ideas and beliefs continuously permeate. My work examines not only the migration of people, but of culture, spiritual traditions, and identity. This dissertation demonstrates the profound links between Danza and Xicana/o identity, which have been utilized as an apparatus for decolonization, social justice, and liberation for the Xicana/o community.

CHAPTER 1

~CE~

LA DANZA

The tradition of Danza has survived invasion, genocide, militarized borders, and colonization. The Danza Mexica tradition is but one strand in a dynamic history and legacy that has shaped how both Mexicanas/os and those, self-identifying as Xicana/o[6] or Raza[7], name themselves and their experiences and how they (re)claim[8] and embrace Indigenous knowledge. "Danza" is a Spanish-derived term that is commonly used to identify the sacred-ceremonial Mexica dance practice. Contrary to its etymology, contemporaries use this term detached from any sort of connection to a Spanish past, but rather as a word that has been transformed in meaning to identify completely with the Indigenous tradition of sacred dance. Given the various connotations that the term "Danza" invokes, there are several Nahuatl words (Sten 1990) that have been argued as more appropriate terms that translate into the Danza tradition as it is known today. Two of those Nahuatl words are (in the very literal, extended translations): *Chitontequiza*[9],

[6] The terms Xicana/o and MeXicana/o may be used interchangeably throughout the paper, the latter referring to both Mexican (from México) and Xicanas/os from the U.S., blurring the division and demonstrating that the same people are being discussed, despite the different names in which people self-identify. In proceeding chapters I will discuss my choice in using Xicana as the encompassing designation that identifies the people, movement, and nation, which includes men and women. "Xicana" does not identify a mere geographical location, nor is it limited to the imposed political, mental, and psychological borders. It reflects an anti-sexist consciousness, political belief and strategy, an ideology and way of life. It is "mujer"(woman)-centered and honors, accepts, and respects all people who identify with being Indigenous to this continent and Mother Earth.

[7] La Raza, translated from Spanish, means "the people" and is commonly used as a broad, encompassing term for Indigenous and/or "mestizo" people and their descendants of this continent, mostly used by those from the regions within "Latin America."

[8] Often times I use brackets, "(re)claim," because it can be contested that certain beliefs, ideas, places were never "un"-claimed, therefore why would they need to be "re"-claimed. But for some, the actual re-claiming is understood as part of an important process of recognizing that which was denied or ripped from their history and memory.

[9] Nahuatl words throughout this dissertation will be italicized. Spanish words will not, unless there is a specific emphasis. Chitontequiza can also be found spelled Xitontequiza.

meaning "a jump made hastily that you will lead; and/or for chips or sparks to fly"[10] and *Mitotiliztli*, meaning "to be compelled by or said in dance; for a story to be told in an animated manner" (Aguilar 1983).

My dissertation examines contemporary Indigenous "revivalism" in Mexico City through what is referred to as "la mexicanidad." Beginning from the 1960s to the present, I explore this movement as an urban phenomenon toward social and political consciousness. Using Mexican ethnologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's (1996) concept of *México Profundo* and Cornell University Professor emeritus of International Studies, Government, and Asian Studies Benedict Anderson's (1991) *Imagined Communities*, I explore the history of the Danza Mexica tradition in Mexico City and ultimately its migration to California/United States. Anderson (1991) examines the major factors which have created and defined "nationalism" in the world, citing that nations, as "an imagined political community [are] imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). Batalla uses Anderson's notion of the "imagined community" and applies it to the ways in which México has utilized race to form their own nation and national identity (which is the imagined mestizo nation versus a pluricultural nation). The imagined Mexican nation has de-indianized its citizens and has marginalized and invisibilized the living Indigenous peoples and communities in México. Batalla further examines the ways in which root "cultures" (and on-going Indigenous cultural production) maintain the undeniable indigeneity of México and its citizens. My research is about examining Danza, as one such cultural product. Through taking a historical look at the evolution of Danza, the reader will gain an understanding of the significance of this constantly

[10] This term has also been said to mean "cosmic movement," but the above translation is the very literal translation. Chitontequiza is a word derived from classical/older Nahuatl and Mitotiliztli is the word used in contemporary Nahuatl.

emerging movement. The history of Danza in the United States spans over forty years and became part of the Chicana/o consciousness during a time of political and social movements for self-naming and reclamation.

Simultaneously in México, a Danza movement which was also a political reclamation of identity and space was occurring. The overlapping social movements are an important part of the collective understanding of identity, processes of integration, notions of citizenship/nationhood, democracy, collective consciousness and a dismantling of the "ideological state apparatuses" (Althusser 1971) such as the border. While the Chicano Movement may have romanticized or "strategically essentialized" (Spivak 1987, 1990; Omi & Winant 1986) their "Aztec" heritage, this notion provided a space for (re)claiming Indigenous identity and spiritual practices.

This project serves as just one piece of an on-going dialogue that will hopefully further the research and documentation of Danza, including the history/evolution, leadership, politics, and emergence of Danza as a social movement and consciousness, and its impact on identity and future generations. Through building upon the established Danza scholarship (both formal academic and grassroots[11]), it is my hope that connections and bridges will be made with other nations so that, as a continent, my people and all of humanity can begin to heal, and create social change. Ultimately, there is agreement inter-continentally (and one might say globally) that Indigenous Peoples are in a restoration process to rebuild and recover what was lost due to the invasion 519 years ago. This is as much a recovery process, as it is a healing process. In order to advance

[11] The concept and acknowledgement of the "Organic intellectual" as offered by Antonio Gramsci (1971) and the use of "Grassroots Postmodernism" by Esteva and Prakash (1998) both point to a strategy and a necessity of autochthonous scholarship and scholars to create deeper, more complete knowledge, which connects to practices in social justice. Acknowledging and promoting grassroots scholarship essentially captures, within academic frameworks, what those on the ground have always known.

this process, each Indigenous nation must begin with its own healing. Self-determination is the cornerstone of decolonization.

My dissertation will address the following central questions/themes/goals: I will attempt to open the academic dialogue and contribute to a new body of emerging community scholarship in the area of Xicana/o Indigenous identity. My field research will be a documentation of a broad and contemporary history of Danza Mexica in México and the United States, which covers the scope of approximately forty years. The current body of literature regarding this history is limited; therefore, my research is primarily based on oral history, interviews, participant-observation, ethnography, and auto-ethnography. This narrative is broken up into four sections coinciding with the four cardinal directions and corresponding spiritual manifestations that are honored and acknowledged during a Danza Mexica ceremony. Through the blowing of the *atecocoli* or conch shell in each direction, the ancestors are called forth to be present in the spiritual work that needs to be done. In this same way, I too am calling upon my ancestors to guide me in the work at hand. Shawn Wilson (2008) recognizes the importance of spirituality in Indigenous learning and researching. He titles his book, *Research is Ceremony*, driving home the idea that the act of research itself can be a spiritual practice. It can challenge, stretch and pull one's own spirit, discipline and understanding in multiple ways. At times, academic work can draw one closer or further away from their spirit. In my own process, this dissertation has brought me to a deeper study and understanding of Danza, but further from the practice of it. As much of my own time was spent in the research and writing, less of it was in the Danza circle. I had to find

ways to keep copal burning, or to take moments of rest and reflection to remind myself why I was writing this work instead of dancing it.

Just as in a Danza ceremony, where a sahumadora or smoke carrier creates sacred space by walking the path within the circle marking and blessing each direction, my intention is to also walk the readers though a similar path, acknowledging and marking each direction within this work. Once acknowledging the cardinal directions, the sky and earth are also given respect. It is my hope that this work acknowledges the universe and all the sacred workings that surround humanity. Each chapter is also numbered in Nahuatl to honor the language of my people and to incorporate, even in a small way, the Nahuatl language within the academic framework.

Section I sets the foundation and background of my research, incorporating an autobiographical sketch, positioning myself within the history of Danza and a comprehensive discussion of Aztlan. I discuss the theoretical grounding of my work as well as my methodology. Section II moves more in-depth into the pre-Cuauhtemoc documentation and understandings of Danza leading into the Spanish colonial period and transitions of Danza, including syncretization, Christian influence, prohibition/secret preservation and the "Conchero tradición." Section II will also examine the origins of the Mexicayotl/Mexicanidad or *cultural*[12] trajectory of Danza and how the arrival of Danza to the United States coincided with the Chicano Movement era. Section III will focus on ethnographic research with several Danza elders, leaders, and teachers, incorporating

[12] *Cultural* is in italics to symbolize that it is said in Spanish, versus "cultural" as said in English. As stated in a previous footnote, I will only italicize Nahuatl words, except in the case where a word needs emphasis. In this case, since the word is written the same in Spanish and English, it is important to distinguish *cultural,* as pronounced in Spanish and cultural, as pronounced in English. In México, there are two schools of Danza identified as either "tradición" or "*cultural*." It is not common to refer to these two schools of Danza in the English translations.

their interviews into a timeline of Danza. In this section, particular focus will be on the ethnography of Señora Angelbertha Cobb. I present a timeline of Danza in the U.S. and México and discussion on the points of convergence between Xicana/o, Mexicayotl, and Native American spiritual/cultural/political movements. The fourth and final section will explore the important question of how the practice of Danza Mexica has contributed to the (trans)formations of Xicana[13]Indígena identity and the resurgence of Indigenous consciousness. *How has Danza influenced the identity politics of the Xicana/o community?* I will explore a reconceptualization of collective identity which I label as Xicana Indígena, ending with my concluding analysis and thoughts as to the future of Danza, the relationships with other Indigenous communities, and future implications for Xicana Indígenas.

Danza has been a major influence in the reclamation and assertion of Indigenous identity. Over the last forty years, Xicana/o identity, politics, culture, and spirituality have evolved and transformed in numerous ways. While Danza has served as a philosophical/spiritual base for Xicanas/os and as a space to cultivate a sense of identity, belonging, cultural perseverance, and Indigenous consciousness, it is crucial to ask the questions: *How has Danza served to be a tool of decolonization, empowerment, and self-determination for the Xicana/o community? What ways has it reinforced colonial attitudes, internalized colonialism, misogyny, patriarchy, and heterosexism? In its efforts to strip away layers of colonialism, religion, and European influence, what parts have remained?*

[13] I privilege the word/label Xicana, yet not as a gendered label as the Spanish language would suggest. I privilege "Xicana" in resistance to the male dominance in the Spanish language and as a call for acknowledgement of women as the center of life, in line with Indigenous world views.

On a personal note, to write this kind of work is difficult because, in a sense, I am writing about my interpretation of the different traditions, identities and oral histories I have heard. I have been honored with the presence of Danza in my life for the past twenty years; it has been a transformative process in my personal journey. From the first steps I took as a danzante at the age of fifteen to having formed a Danza circle in New York City at the age of twenty-four, I have essentially grown up with Danza. It has shaped my beliefs, values, and the ways I have chosen to live my life and manifest my spirituality. I am piecing together a puzzle of a long lineage of Danza that has changed over time and colonization. With limited written "academic" sources of information, few primary sources or oral history, few organic works written by danzantes or from danzantes' point of view, and my own still-growing personal knowledge, I try to make connections between all of the strands of his/herstories that exist. "Knowledge of our past is the strongest weapon we have against colonialism" (Aguilar 1983: 3); for this reason, I write with caution and care. Writing is a teaching tool that can create politicization and raise consciousness. As an educator, I believe Danza can be a model within Xicana/o educational reform movements, helping to instill a sense of history and pride within students. The performance of Danza creates a living, on-going connection to history, demonstrating to students that "we exist." Danza serves as a marker of existence and presence within any space.

At the same time, I feel it is important to note that Danza ceremonies and dances were never meant to be studied in an academic institution such as the University of California, Davis, or any other university. Traditionally, knowledge, ceremony, and way of life are taught through first-hand experience and by those that learned traditions the same way

their “maestros” (teachers) did before them. While academic institutions historically have been bastions of exploitation of Indigenous knowledge and life-ways, Native American Studies, Chicana/o Studies, and Ethnic Studies disciplines can be utilized as a fissure in the institution where resistance, counter-narrative and liberatory praxis can emerge. The process of engaging with RE-search, RE-collection and RE-membering can be grounding methods in academic pursuits. These Ethnic Studies fields were created precisely out of a need to counter the exploitation and appropriation of intellectual property. The university, in all its contradictions, can be a site where students have access to and are able to study the archives of everything that has ever been said about their own communities and people. It is an opportunity to de-bunk and redress academic work, while writing the stories and realities important to Indigenous communities that will outlast human lives. Of course this work is not limited, nor should it be, to university students and academicians. It is my hope that I may approach this work with a “thinking heart” (Shanley 1999) versus an “analytical space.”

CHAPTER 2

~OME~

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Choosing to write about a subject that is as personal to me as la Danza requires that I position myself and tell my personal story of how Danza entered my life and has continued to be a doorway towards my own life-purpose and transformation. The story I construct comes from an insider perspective. I am a product of the Danza spiritual "movement" (drawing upon both meanings of "movement;" the actual physical moving of the body, and a social/political/cultural cause). In many ways, it was precisely Danza that led me to this academic path. Some researchers that have worked on the topic of Danza have written from the perspectives of academics arriving to this subject as academics. For me it was the opposite experience. I arrived to the academy as a danzante. It was Danza that shaped my epistemology and was the entrance not only to my own wisdom, sensibilities, and passion, but also a motivating factor towards higher education. As Emma Pérez reinforces, "Our passion should be our motivation" (1995). Danza, from the day I first stepped foot onto an institution of higher education, was part of my identity and the lens through which I viewed my academic experiences and made my academic choices. It was a factor in my motivation to pursue higher education, my major, and other academic pursuits, and Danza kept me grounded with my goals and desires. Through the twists and turns of my academic and life experiences, Danza and my related spirituality have been the stable force and foundation that have served as my guide and spiritual centeredness.

At the age of fourteen, born and raised in the Sal Si Puedes barrio of East San José, California, during a time of the United Farm Worker's grape and Safeway boycotts and highly influenced by my grandparent's migrant, farm-working, fruit-packing, and cannery experiences and stories, I was never far from understandings of struggle and resistance and its close ties to my own family history and identity. Having a firm, Catholic school education and being raised by a single mother who instilled proudly our Mexican identity (as well as, feminist ideals; setting no limits to my gender as far as educational attainments and career pursuits were concerned), I emerged with a resistance to assimilation and a desire to keep my culture and identity in-tact. I grasped onto any form of popular media that reflected my identity; my first introduction to Chicano literature through Rodolfo Anaya's (1972) *Bless Me Ultima*, or Kid Frost's hit song, "This is for La Raza" (Rodríguez, 2003). I was a young Chicanita coming of age, trying to articulate my own identity. Friends introduced me to a program on San José State University's college radio station called "Radio Aztlan," which led me to romantic notions of Chicanismo: oldies, low-riders, cruising, "Latin" freestyle/High Energy music, the noble Cholo (similar to the "noble Indian/savage" image of early American and Native American literature), and Azteca iconic symbols. These began to permeate my own understandings and ties to "Indigenismo" and "Xicanisma."

Many of my male friends who attended an all-boys Catholic school had been part of a club called "La Raza Unida," forming a brotherhood around a Raza heritage and identity. Being at the all-girls school, I similarly helped create and form an organization called Chicanas/Latinas Unidas. Through these early connections to culture and identity as tied with our religious education, many of us, men and women, formed a community

of Chicana/o Catholic high school kids from which we found legitimacy as part of "el movimiento." Despite not going to public schools, we bonded with a steadfast defiance of assimilation and resisted the stigmatized status as the brown "work-scholarship" kids. Perhaps we were not "as down" and deep in the trenches of public school struggles, but we certainly did not fit in with our majority wealthy private school counterparts. This unlikely space was exactly where our Chicana/o Indigenous consciousness emerged. It was from this Catholic school experience that a group of us, ironically, began to move in complete opposition to the Catholic Church and its history of colonization. We instead found our way to the Chicano youth movement in San José, which led, for several of us, to Danza Mexica.

My first year in high school in 1990, I became involved with an organization called *La Raza Unida Student Alliance*. This grassroots organization was formed by youth activists and organizers trying to bring together Raza high school representatives from every campus in San José to discuss issues that we were facing as youth in San José. These issues included gang violence, lack of Chicano Studies in our curriculum, police brutality, racial profiling, and the need to create spaces to promote arte y cultura (art and culture). This organization became closely tied to *El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlan* (MEChA) from San José State University (SJSU) as some of the MEChistA college students would mentor us and connect us to the larger activist movements and political struggles that were in process in San José. I came into this organization after I had attended Raza Day at San José State. Raza Day, organized by SJSU MEChA, was an effort to encourage Chicana/o high school students both to pursue higher education, and to become politicized and involved in the community. It was at one particular Raza Day

event that I first heard of a woman named Señora Angelbertha Cobb. She was the keynote speaker at the event and spoke about being an Aztec/Mexica woman and the need for all of us to stay connected to our Indigenous heritage. She stated firmly that she was "Aztec," not Mexican, not mestizo, because her people were there before "México" was a thought. Her first language was *Nahuatl* and she was raised in the highlands of Puebla. I remember very clearly going home and telling my mother about this woman and that she was an "actual" Aztec. I had learned in my own history books that they were extinct or something of the past. I knew that as a Mexican, I had "Aztec" in my blood, at least that is what I was told or understood to be true as part of "Mexican" identity. But, I had no idea that "pure" Aztecs still existed, certainly she was one of the "last ones." At that point, I had no idea that my first encounter with this woman and this entire experience would transform my entire life and path. Señora Cobb, or Mama Cobb, would become my *maestra* and a key person in my life that would open doors for me not only of Danza, but, more importantly, of the wisdom and history of Danza in the United States.

After my first attendance to the Raza Day event, I became hungry for knowledge and wanted to get my hands on anything that could tell me more about my Chicana identity. I checked out all the books in my high school library (the very few 1970s publications they owned), began writing poetry, drawing pictures, and enlarging copied pictures of Chicana/o images so that I could put them on my wall. There existed no art or posters, to my knowledge, that were accessible and reflected the images that I wanted to surround me and my space. I was attending high school from 1990-1994, a time period that was rich with awakenings of *Indigenismo*, globally. I was fortunate to be emerging

into my own identity during a time that many people were arriving towards a conscious need to (re)claim and (re)assert their identity. The year 1992 marked 500 years of the invasion of Cristobál Colón, which resulted in the largest holocaust in the history of the world. Indigenous peoples all over the western hemisphere were rising up in protest to the celebrations of Columbus. It was that same year that I was accepted to the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project conference in Sacramento, California.

This conference was a unique statewide youth conference that chose only a select 120 students to participate. The theme of the Eleventh Annual 1992 Conference was, *Nuestra Historia: The First 500 Years*. The conference program cover displayed an image of the entire Western Hemisphere as a land mass without borders, exposing me for the first time to the idea of what it meant to be an Indigenous person of this continent and the deconstruction of borders. While the conference theme infers that Chicana/o history began in 1492, the actual program of speakers promoted that Chicana/o history stems further back to the history of Indigenous ancestors. At this conference, I was exposed to prominent Chicanas and Chicanos (professors, politicians, activists, cultural workers, writers), many of whom addressed the significant and critical moment of 1992 as marking a time of change, action and restoration. The most important messages I came away with from that conference were: 1) I needed to go college, and not just any college, 2) I needed to keep learning about my history, and 3) Whatever I did in life, my work had to stay connected to helping my community. The youth conference was unquestionably the key catalyst of my own awakening, which created a critical moment of social consciousness in my youth and development of a new perspective of the world and society. One year later, after this radical transformation, I found myself entrenched in

local youth movements. The year 1993 marked an important time for youth in the Bay Area. Massive walk-outs and mobilizing efforts were being planned all over to protest the lack of Chicano Studies in our schools, California anti-immigrant legislation (proposition 187 and 227) and the need for social justice in our communities. Then, in 1994, the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, México, created solidary movements and consciousness for a whole new generation of Xicanas/os organizing around an Indigenous agenda.

My involvement in this organizing since 1990 led to my involvement with Danza. Fellow youth organizers began going to the local Emma Prusch Park where a Danza practice was taking place with el Maestro Gerardo Salinas. To my knowledge, there were only two or three Danza groups that existed in San José at that time (today there are approximately a dozen groups, as new groups are constantly created or faded out in the community). Going to Danza, for many of the youth in my cohort, was the first step to reclaiming our communities through going back to what was "ours." I had been invited by several friends to check out the Danza group, but it was a friend from my high school that finally convinced me that, if we learned, we could dance at our school's Cinco de Mayo event to represent the few Xicanas at our school. I reluctantly went to the practice, thinking that Danza was similar to Ballet Folklórico. While my memory is not sharp as to the first time I attended Danza, what I do remember clearly about that day is hearing the drum and feeling a need to be there, as if it was where I had always belonged. This experience, of what I now understand as a manifestation of "genetic memory" (Lopez 2011: 274; Esteva/Prakash 1998), is shared by all of the other danzantes that I have asked about what drew them to Danza. The sound and feeling of being near the drum is the central force.

Of all the many youth activists that started in Danza during this time period, several of us (two of us being from the brother/sister Catholic schools) eventually began our own Danza circles, splintering off from this initial group. Many of us also continued on to college, as merely a place where we could extend our political and social organizing while attaining our education. Coming from a very strict mother, while I was in high school I was not allowed to go to Danza or to any event that was not "school-related." I literally had to sneak out to go to Danza or MEChA meetings. Going to college meant a new level of freedom that I wanted to use toward becoming more involved in Danza and in the movimiento. I lived at Casa Joaquín Murrieta at the University of California, Berkeley and became involved in the MEChA de U.C. Berkeley chapter. At the "Raza Bienvenida" at U.C. Berkeley, the event was opened by *Danza Cuauhtonal*, led by Carlos Rios. As soon as the danzantes finished, I approached him to ask if they were open for others to dance and learn. I soon found myself taking the bus to go to Danza two times a week. On that same bus, I met another person that was also making the same route to Danza practice. This compañero de Danza and fellow U.C. Berkeley student, Otto Cocino, would later travel with me throughout Mexico City in our study abroad program, exploring different Danza circles and attending several ceremonies, including our first time in *Ixcateopan* (see Appendix 11), where the *Cuauhtemoc* ceremony is held.

With time, a new group splintered from that initial Berkeley group, forming *Danza Cuauhtli Mitotiani Mexica*. I began to attend this group led by a woman and junior high math teacher, Adriana Betti. My participation and dedication to this group for the duration of my undergraduate college years was the experience where I would learn the most. It is with great appreciation to Adriana Betti and the youth of West Berkeley that I

acknowledge the ways in which my own spiritual growth was nourished by *Danza Cuauhtli Mitotiani Mexica*. Whereas other Danza groups gave me the impression that they were not interested in teaching women to play the drum or taking the time to really teach beyond the model of "follow and learn the steps of Danza," this maestra, Adriana, was open to teach all of us whatever we wanted to learn and welcomed it. Also during this time, I would go home to San José and visit the many Danza groups that were emerging. When I would visit my first Danza group, Gerardo Salinas' *Xipe Totec*, I began to notice (especially since my Chicana Studies classes were exposing me to Xicana Feminist theory and critical thinking) the patriarchal manner in which this group operated and the privilege that was given to men and women who were complacent in this patriarchal structure. I noticed this because my own cousin, a male, who I had brought into the Danza, was now given special privileges, regalia, and access to certain parts of Danza that I know I would never be nurtured into if I remained in this group. In addition, this group, focused on "el esplendor Azteca," was centered on the performance piece, rather than the spirituality of the Danza. While I consciously never returned to this group, I remain thankful for my initial first steps of Danza that were made there, and I also acknowledge the important history and origin of this group which is demonstrated further in this dissertation.

As my hunger for knowledge and love for Danza amplified, I would find time to attend any and every practice I could find in the Bay Area. Living at Casa Joaquín led me to like-minded Xicanas/os that also went to Danza and sweatlodge with the Whitehawk group in Watsonville. Participating in a sit-in at the admissions office at U.C. Berkeley, I found myself sitting next to Roberto Castro, maestro of *Danza Izcalli* in Morgan Hill,

California (a group and familia that is now my extended familia of Danza). Participating in MEChA put me in places where, because of my involvement in Danza, I was called to lead sunrise ceremonies[14] or deemed to have a connection that gave me authority to guide others. Being part of MEChA and taking on leadership positions led me to be a student advocate of Chicano Studies. Being a danzante led me to participate and organize locally in the Peace and Dignity Journeys in 1996. This participation and cohort of danzantes, friends, and activists led me to various ceremonial spaces and places within Canada, Danza ceremonies all over California, Bear ceremonies, McDermitt Sundance, and Danza at the ceremonial sites all throughout México.

My U.C. Berkeley Study Abroad program allowed me to live in México for almost a year. During this time, I studied at UNAM, attended various Indigenous ceremonies and some of the largest Zapatista protests in the history of México. I conducted field research in La Mixteca Baja in Oaxaca, living and working with Mixteca women and the Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional, even teaching Danza Mexica to the community at the Casa de la Cultura. Upon completion of my field research, I stayed in Mexico City, spending several months living with two very important and influential Danza/Nahuatl women maestras in Mexico City; Axayacatl (see Appendix 11) and Temitzin Solórzano. These teachers introduced me to other danzantes/maestros, and took me to sacred sites, and to important ceremonies such as Chalma, the Cuauhtemoc ceremony in Ixcateopan, Summer Solstice in Teotihuacan, and others. Following hours of platicas (conversations) and coming to thorough knowledge of Mexico City and the

[14] This was the case at the First MEChA National Conference held at U.C. Berkeley. When no one arrived to lead the sunrise, I was looked upon as capable of creating a circle and sharing "palabra" in the same way I had learned through Danza. When the ceremony leaders finally arrived, they brought me into the center of the circle and offered me the opportunity to join them in what would be my first pipe ceremony, as a way to thank me for helping to create the circle that morning.

various Danza groups, I returned to Berkeley a much stronger danzante, with new connections and understandings.

Throughout the political activism and organizing on campus and in the community, my Danza teachings helped me and others to always ground our work in our spirituality. My participation in the 1994 Campenile Tower occupation against the passage of Proposition 209 (through chaining myself to the tower), the short-lived creation of the Xicano Garden on the U.C. Berkeley campus, and as a lead organizer in the 1999 Third World Liberation Front hunger strike for Ethnic Studies were all political movements that were, for the most part, women-led (by the female leadership of MEChA) and were centered around an understanding that all of these activities had to be guided by a spiritual foundation. This element, which always included the presence of Danza, elders, the Chanupa, copal, sage, and ceremony, was markedly different than the movement of the earlier generation of the 1960s (Muñoz 1989). I believe it was the overlapping of all these experiences (Danza, MEChA, college, and community activism) that (trans)formed[15] me personally and defined the social movements of the 1990s. Ultimately, I am a product of the overlapping Danza, student, youth and Indigenous movements of the 1990s. It is these movements that inspired me profoundly and gave me a feeling of responsibility to pursue my education and seek out what my contributions would be to my community.

In 1999, when I began my Masters in Education Program at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City, I had no idea that my time in New York would also mean the beginning of a new journey in Danza and working with a new transnational

[15] These movements and moments not only changed me ("transformation"), but also were a critical part of my "formation" as a human being, critical thinker and organizer.

Mexican Indigenous community of New York City. With the help of Juan Esteva, my colega and friend, we began the first Danza group in New York, *Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Quetzalcoatl in Ixachitlan* (Group of the Four Direction in the East Direction of the Continent). This group, which recently celebrated its eleventh anniversary, is testament to the impact that the diaspora of Danza has had for people and communities across the United States.

In conclusion, my desire to write about the impact of Danza in the Xicana/o community stems from its impact on my own life. Danza and the Xicana/o Movement was/is the turning point and moment of transformation that gave me purpose, a sense of pride, self-esteem, voice, empowerment, and belonging. It is impossible to separate the many linked and intersecting movements, moments, and political/spiritual acts that define me and my experiences that have led me to this moment in time, to this palabra, and to this dissertation. *Ometeotl*.

CHAPTER 3

~EYI~

METHODOLOGY

Historically, and unfortunately still in contemporary cases, research has been used to objectify Indigenous people and to utilize their knowledge, with no real benefit to their communities or lives. A blatant historical example is the study of Ishi by anthropologist Alfred Krober (T. Krober 1961). Ishi, who Kroeber inaccurately labeled as "the last" of his Yahi-Yana people, was locked in a university basement for observation. After his sad death, which some say was of loneliness or a broken heart, his brain was kept in a jar for further observation (Starn 2004). This remained the case, until the still very recent (1990) passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Following NAGPRA, Ishi's brain was returned to the nearest relatives of his community and he was finally laid to rest in a proper ceremonial way. Like Ishi, other Indigenous peoples' lands and human rights have been violated and colonized in the most violent way, until the only thing left to colonize was our bodies (alive or dead).

This colonization of the body is occurring today through the human genome project and the unethical usurpation of Indigenous genetic material (Harmon 2010). In *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2002), Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains how research can be equivalent to colonization of Indigenous peoples. Research, in the manner that it has been conducted, has created an extreme amount of distrust and suspicion. For example, not only have artifacts been stolen, but information and knowledge have been appropriated as well, in order to benefit the researcher or to support hegemonic beliefs. Most research stems from the perspectives of the West and perpetuates the history of the colonizer:

how they came to power, how they keep power, exert their power and continue their domination over people's lives. Smith has put forward in her book a call for scholars to engage in research that is "decolonizing." She first reaches out to Indigenous scholars and expresses the necessity and urgency for Native scholars to do work in their communities. The methodology or framework she proposes privileges Native sources. Smith's framework replaces oppressive points of view with Native world views and epistemologies. For example, she uses storytelling as a powerful tool of resistance and oral tradition as oppositional to the written histories that have neglected crucial parts of Native history. Similarly, in *Clearing a Path* (2002), historian Nancy Shoemaker claims that oral history and oral tradition are oppositional methods that not only debunk or redress master narratives of Native history, but can augment the collective history as a whole. In this way, Native people begin to take ownership of research and center their concerns from their own perspectives and for their own purposes. Shoemaker writes specifically for Indigenous researchers that may be conflicted with current research paradigms and are seeking new ways to define and carry out their work. This work must be rooted in a paradigm of healing and social justice.

In her article, "Recent Ethnographic Research on North American Indian People," anthropologist Pauline Turner Strong (2005), discusses the need for more ethnographic work within Native communities. She reinscribes this work of connecting history, language and culture (the traditional/conventional areas of research that are conducted within Native communities) to issues of domination, resistance, self-determination, self-representation and social justice, considering the contemporary threats of neoliberalism and globalization. In this work, she believes we must use critical race theories and Ethnic

Studies approaches. Jack Forbes (2006) sites a method he calls a hunter's method, where a researcher does not go to the center of the circle, but rather circles around the edges and knows the borders and terrain. In conducting ethnographic work with the Maestra Señora Angelbertha Cobb and several other Danza teachers, I look at the microcosm, in order to hopefully find patterns at the macro level of Danza. Putting the goals of the community before the goals of the researcher is the first priority according to both Strong and Smith. Community based scholarship, which either stems from the needs and desires of the community itself or from autochthonous wisdom keepers from within a community, is the keystone of a decolonizing methodology. Strong believes that ethnographic work that is collective and collaborative (conducted jointly by researchers and community members jointly) will give researchers a better opportunity to hold community based scholarship at the forefront, yielding control/ownership of the research to the community, especially if the researcher is an outsider. Swisher, in *Natives and Academics* (1998), takes a more radical approach arguing that, if the academy truly wants to empower and advocate for Native-centered research, then its members (academics) need to step back and stop researching in Native communities unless they are asked to do so. Research in Native communities should be mutually agreed upon. In her essay, "The Story of America: A Tribaliography" (2002), Leanne Howe calls the ethnographic research model, "tribology." This concept privileges Native knowledge and oral histories as scientific knowledge with a greater possibility of arriving to truth. Taiaike Alfred (1999) calls such Native-centric truth-seeking, "warrior scholarship."

Given the historical problems with and gaps in (as expressed by the above Native scholars) Eurocentric and neo-colonial research models, there is a need for Indigenous

scholars to do this work, whether it be through ethnographic or other collaborative methods; there are numerous responsibilities we must take on as Native researchers. It is only through agreed collaboration with the community that a researcher can come to understand accepted norms and protocol, furthering legitimacy to the outcome of qualitative research.

I would now like to present both the issues with subjectivity and positionality and the issues I face as an Indigenous scholar situating my own subjectivity and positionality. The power that knowledge has is related to the power that the knower has (in other words, my "power") and my position of privilege in academia puts me in a role that Smith (2002) calls insider/outsider. This position is constantly being negotiated and lived simultaneously. In *Black Feminst Thought* (2000) Patricia Hill Collins calls this location the "outsider within," as she is constantly drawing upon both her experiences as an academic and a Black woman. Vietnamese scholar/filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) in her book, *Woman Native Other*, calls this position the "inappropriate other," meaning that the "other" (in this case Indigenous Peoples) refuses that position to speak/act as the subject is expected to. The inappropriate other opposes the self/other dichotomy and refuses to "behave correctly" in order to serve the desires of the West. Rather, the inappropriate other has the purpose and agency to decide for him/herself how to speak, what gets said, and how to be. These and many other perspectives (The Latina Feminist Group 2001; Lorde 1984; Anzaldúa 1987; Cordova 1998) address the many ways in which scholars of color have had to deal with the contradictions and sometimes painful decisions that confront them as both academics and as members of a community.

As Indigenous researchers, sometimes we must enter the historical wound of colonialism (Cordova 1998; Fanon 1963; Nelson 1999; Duran, et.al. 1998; Duran 2006; Duran 1995). As we go inside, through our research, we also become subjects in our own research.[16] We begin to acquire meaning for ourselves in the telling of stories and the "thinking through" of what we are doing. We may even be able to learn about ourselves as social beings in this research as we interact and live within our field work. For traditional/conventional scholarship, researchers who are "too close" to their research have been deemed unable to be objective or unbiased. This is a major critique of "insider" position. In actuality, objectivity is only relative to who a person is as a socialized, cultural being. Academic knowledge is relational and will affect the "filters" one uses to take pieces of information and the ways it is interpreted. Everyone is situated someplace. Situated knowledge (Haraway 1988) is always produced by positioned actors working in/between various locations. The difference is that while some scholars explicitly claim and state their positionality,[17] others will remain detached for the sake of presumed/claimed objectivity. In *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, Colonization* (2003), Walter Mignolo uses the example of western cartography to reveal the falsehood of it being an objective representation of the world. Rather, it is more correct to describe western cartography as a supremist representation of

[16] This "historical wound," expressed by the various authors as a "wounded soul," "intergenerational trauma," or "internalized oppression" refers to the trauma of colonialism and genocide which is physical (often times associated with the war and invasion of Europeans on the Western Hemisphere and the Indian Holocaust, as well as the continuous social, economic and political oppressions imposed today), emotional, psychological and spiritual. These notions refer to unresolved grief, pain and a legacy of chronic trauma manifested in destructive behaviors, high rates of depression, and poor health conditions. Engaging, entering, and re-visiting that trauma means the researcher must confront and bring to the surface many emotions that perhaps were buried. While painful, this work also can be part of the healing process.

[17] An example is Sandy Grande's *Red Pedagogy*, in which she inserts a preface to discuss her own identity, reclamation of her Quechua identity, and her position as a scholar activist. This practice has become more common as scholars will state explicitly their position, class, ethnicity, identity and how this affects their research, perspectives, and interpretation.

political efficiency. Europeans imposed their perspective on the organization of the globe as they expanded economically, simultaneously, subjugating Indigenous intellectuals and their representations of space. According to Dorothy Holland (1998), un-reflexive claims to objectivity are hollow and self-serving. Researchers must be critical, not only of themselves, but of sources that would appear to be objective, such as maps, following Mignolo's example. Self-awareness is key whether one is an insider or outsider.

In *Intercultural Utopias* (2005), Joanne Rappaport writes about the differences between Indigenous and mainstream scholars. According to Rappaport, Indigenous scholars tend to work collectively and sometimes leave their pieces un-authored rather than sole-authored, as is the norm among mainstream scholars. The use of ethnography and auto-ethnography is politically motivated. These methods promote collective, qualitative research and insertion of the self as an active participant in a collective process. Indigenous researchers feel a responsibility to social justice frameworks and utilize an "intercultural method." Rappaport uses the term "intercultural" versus multicultural, because multicultural refers to multiple backgrounds engaged with only one system of knowledge, while intercultural refers to multiple backgrounds engaging with multiple systems of knowledge, which can include mainstream and Indigenous knowledges simultaneously. In sum, doing research within one's own community can be powerful and challenging. It can allow the researcher to reclaim decolonizing methods of work and new tools to transform how research is done and accepted in academia. According to Cook-Lynn, *Natives and Academics* (1998), writing history from within can be liberating not only personally but for a community.

For insider researchers, there must be constant reflexivity, as the demands of both one's community and the academy can be difficult to negotiate. As a researcher, there are limitations to what one is allowed to see/know. In that sense, as an insider, there may be more possibility to enter spaces that an outsider would not have access to. The specific protocols or dynamics of a community may be understandable to an insider more so than an outsider. Silent understandings and culturally-specific phrases will not need interpretation, and non-verbal answers/expressions may be more clearly understood by an insider than an outsider. There is a definite distance between the outside researcher who is studying a community and the inside researcher who lives and breathes the community. The difficulty is that, unlike the outsider, the insider will live with the consequences of their process/research; they will have to continue living with their family and community. For that reason, insider research is a humbling, long term, if not a life-time, commitment.

As a Xicana Indígena, danzante, researcher, I am constantly insider/outsider simultaneously. I am insider depending on which Danza circles I am within, and an outsider in other Danza circles. I am an insider because I became a danzante first and researcher second (versus other examples of people who have entered the Danza circle and become dancers for research purposes, which is viewed as unacceptable and disrespectful of the tradition). However, I am also an outsider because I am writing about/documenting an area of work that perhaps was not meant to be studied in an academic institution such as a university. I am constantly conflicted and negotiating what can and cannot be said. I am fearful of opening up cans that should not be opened or airing dirty laundry that is privileged information. Yet, as an academic, I need to dig for the information that is below the surface. As an academic and as a member of my Danza

community, I must be critical even when it risks judgment. I risk harsh critique from both the academy and the community. As a danzante, I am given access to spaces and people that perhaps others would not. My relationship with Señora Cobb, for example, stems from a long history. I am certain that if we did not have the long history and deep relationship of trust, she would not have given me such special permission to learn ceremony and learn about her life and family in the deep ways that I have. I fear that once I write this work, I will be questioned as to my motives. Was I genuine in my relationship prior to my research or was I only working my way in? I hope that my intentions throughout this work are clear and present the genuineness that I wish to convey. As Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) affirms, "the personal is political" and often times courage is needed to speak truth with compassion. Needless to say, all of these questions, contradictions, and negotiations are extremely difficult.

I approach the interview process and documentation of oral histories and oral tradition with vigilance. In a similar vein, Anthropologist and Danza scholar Dr. Enrique Maestas (n.d.) discusses his own challenges with the interview process. He notes that many of the Danza leaders he interviewed were also heavily involved in political activism during the Chicano Movement. As a result, insecurities existed with respondents as they expressed their fears and lived experiences with the FBI counter-intelligence-program (Cointelpro). He states that one of the tactics of the Cointelpro was to use spliced tape recordings to create sectarian propaganda. Access to these tapes had to have come from recorded materials that were either lost or sold. This brings to my own attention the necessity for vigilance in safeguarding materials and being respectful to the experiences of my own respondents that also had similar activist involvement.

As a participant-observer, I am clear in declaring my positionality, identity, personal origin, and purpose with this work. I make no claims to authority or possession of this knowledge, but rather affirm that I am just one person engaging in a collective process of knowledge gathering and sharing. As with everyone, feelings that are evoked through research are culturally determined. As a danzante, I am compassionate to the dancer that has approached Mexica knowledge in a serendipitous way, demonstrating their hunger for knowledge that has long been denied to them. As a researcher, I might be critical of the dancer that believes they are able to teach knowledge only after a short time of learning. In that sense, despite the challenges and constant reflexivity that is needed to conduct this work, I know that my feelings of connection to this work are deeply rooted. The contradiction is that, while I am doing this work to deepen the ties to my community, the participation in the academy has pulled me further away from that very community. The time and commitment required to survive within the academy has taken away my time and energy reserved for Danza and ceremony. Finding balance has been challenging. Danza and my Xicana Indígena identity and spirit are foundational to the life I breathe and live every day. They are intimately connected to my being. In that sense, my commitment is life-long and I have been meticulous and careful to ensure that my approach is liberating and decolonizing to my own community, while I also personally allow for self-transformation to occur through this work.

As outlined above[18], my research is primarily based on individual oral interviews, focus groups, and observations of public events. I have spent a total of three summers doing field research and writing in México. I spent one summer in Mexico City, funded by the Hemispheric Institute on the Americas Research Fellowship, where I conducted

[18] And approved by the Internal Review Board Exemption process.

multiple interviews and transcribed them over the course of four months. One of my interviewees was with Miguel Angel Kuauhkoatl Mendoza, who, during the final stages of this work passed away (August 10, 2011). I was fortunate to have spent several days of interviews during his last year of life. He was one of the founders of *Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtiloyan*, a key organization that was the core think-tank behind the *mexicanidad* movement in Mexico City. He was also the author of the only published work that I was able to find on the "contemporary" history of the Danza movement in Mexico City. With his assistance and that of other interviewees, I was able to locate other valuable texts, published books, and grassroots resources that continue to be critical in my research.

During my time in Mexico City, I was also able to participate in several Danza ceremonies in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas and in Teotihuacan, and various Danza ensayos or practices of various circles/groups. In addition to Mexico City, I was also given a small travel grant to conduct a key interview in Tampa, Florida with an important Danza teacher, Axayacatl Solórzano. I have also spent the past two summers at the Institute for Teaching and Learning in Ethnology at la Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas. Funded by a Foreign Language and Area Studies Grant through Yale University and Duke University, I participated in an intensive Nahuatl Language course. This course increased my philosophical understanding of the language, and enabled me to conduct individual research on the language, and to undertake translations of individual dances and documents. I was also afforded the opportunity to do comparative research with local Danza/Indigenous traditional practitioners, and to interview Nahuatl native speakers and instructors, both of which enriched my own understanding of my research.

During my time in México, I lived with a family and practiced Nahuatl language, and was also able to participate in Nahua ceremonies in the region of La Huasteca. The week-long ceremony of *Chicomexochitl* introduced me to a new expression of dance and the sacred paper-cuttings (which are the origins of what is known as "papel picado," a more contemporary art form of intricate paper cutting in tissue paper) that the *Tepahtiquetl* or healer uses to call in the spirits. The *Chicomexochitl*, which translates to mean "seven flowers" actually represents multiple entities such as the sacred family (composed of sacred elements such as earth, sun, water), seven colors of corn, and seven flowers or directions representing all of the universe (four cardinal directions, sky, earth and the self). There is one main *Chicomexochitl,* which is a paper cut-out in the form of a person that is dual in nature, male and female, mother and father, daughter and son. This main paper cut-out is a manifestation of the Great Spirit, which is given life through corn, as corn *is* life and sustenance. While all the other paper cut-outs remain on the various altars and three main altars on the foot, middle and top of the mountain, the main *Chicomexochitl* remains in-tact and under the care of one of the chosen members of the community, to be brought out every year. There is another set of paper cut-outs, also in the shape of people, which are dressed and left on the top of the mountain. They are dressed, given food, drink and tobacco to smoke. At the ceremony, myself and another compañera, Elizabeth Villa, were given the distinct honor of being the godparents of the *Chicomexochitl* for that year's (2010) ceremony. We were asked to dress and adorn the sacred family and I was to carry them in the basket on my head up the mountain on the final day of the ceremony. Special care is given to the *Chicomexochitl* because they are living beings. The ceremony, as all spiritual practices, begins in the home as the prayers,

flowers and other sacreds are prepared. This ceremony, which included many elements similar to Danza, has a universal intention for the successful growth of corn, and the fertility of Mother Earth, but also allows for each individual to pray for their own needs at the altars. Through the offerings and various stages of the ceremony, dancing is a constant element. To dance is to wake up Mother Earth and give her the offering of our energy and joy. This experience, as a participant/observer, was distinct from traditional research, as my own participation did not allow me to embody the "researcher" role; all of my energy had to be very focused on the prayer and tasks at hand. It was only weeks after, when I had spiritually returned (detached myself from the ceremony, which does not happen immediately), that I could reflect and analyze what had taken place and draw the comparisons to Danza Mexica.

While in Veracruz, I also conducted research in Papantla, Veracruz in relationship to the Danza del Volador (Dance of the Flyers). Traveling about and talking to community people, I came to meet what would seem like "ordinary" people, such as taxi drivers or tourist guides, but who were actually deeply rooted with the Volador tradition. Many could trace the knowledge of the dance for generations and were now teaching their children. I encountered young girls that were also beginning to learn this dance, breaking the male dominance in the tradition. I met vanilla growers who would re-tell the oral tradition of the cosmological significance of vanilla and were maintaining Tutunaku (more commonly known as Totonaco) language, music, dance, dress and traditions. Some were even able to recount Tutunaku historical and contemporary understandings and relationships with Nahuas. The networks and resources that were made available to me in Veracruz were instrumental in my own personal growth/transformation, allowing

me to expand my own ideas and pursuits in this research and future research endeavors. Drawing deeper comparisons/similarities of Danza Mexica with the *Chicomexochitl* and Danza de los Voladores and the participation of girls and women in these ceremonies would be included in these future endeavors. Of the one Honors Thesis, one Master's Thesis, and one PhD Dissertation that I was able to locate about Danza Mexica, the Master's Thesis and the PhD Dissertation were both written by a former participant in my same Nahuatl Language course, Mario Aguilar, also an important historical figure in the Danza movement.

In addition to my time in México, I also undertook much of my participant-observation in California, mostly in Northern California (San José, Berkeley, Gilroy), as well as in Los Angeles, California. I have spent several interview sessions with Señora Angelbertha Cobb of Sacramento, California and other Xicana/o participants in Danza from throughout California, Arizona, and New York. I traveled to several ceremonies and events with Señora Cobb throughout various cities in the states listed above. Sometimes, I was placed in leadership positions in the ceremonies because I was obligated to do so by Señora Cobb. I have been given primera palabra[19] in circles where I was a guest. With Señora Cobb's guidance, she would position me in a way where I could also represent her teachings through my actions and the carrying out of tasks. This role, of leading various Danza ceremonies, adds a unique methodological element to the insider/outsider theory. Often times in this role, the primera palabra is given the authority to establish the protocol or give instruction as to what is acceptable or not acceptable in the ceremony. Having a long-enough history in Danza, I am not viewed as a researcher or academic

[19] Primera Palabra is literally translated into "the first word," but essentially is the leader of the ceremony. The duty of this role is to carry out the ceremony and to ensure that every element that is required is conducted. It is considered a great responsibility and a great honor.

when I am inside the Danza circle or ceremony, nor do I view myself in that way. Yet, my academic accomplishments have been honored within Danza circles or "in a Danza-way" on several occasions. I am viewed as a role model for other danzantes to encourage higher education. They see me as one who is carving a path of access for others to enter the academy in order to improve social conditions for our communities. From the danzante perspective, I am an insider that is managing to survive the outside world of academia, which coincides with the fact that I do often feel like an outsider in the world of academia. Ultimately, from either the insider or outsider perspective, writing about the personal or my own role in ceremony can be challenging especially when the value of humility must be respected (meaning: not talking about one's self). Further, it is challenging when I must be the one to determine what is too sacred to be discussed or written.

My personal, political work with *La Red Xicana Indígena*, a network organization of Xicanas in the United States, often also overlapped and informed my research. My membership with La Red Xicana Indígena and subsequent participation in international conferences such as the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples, the World Conference Against Racism in South Africa, and the Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Américas (see Appendix 12), played a significant role in my field research, and particularly in the expansion of concepts of identity, Indigeneity and political participation of Danza in these forums.

Through the use of participant observation, field observation, and interviews, this project documents some of the active players with significant historical roles in the Danza tradition. Participants were asked to describe their role in maintaining and

preserving Danza as an artistic/dance/spiritual practice. Drawing on rich ethnographic data from these interviews, my work explores visions of the activists, spiritual leaders, and participants in Danza ritual performance and practice. Participants identified their own personal connection/link to Danza and the ways in which it impacted their own sense of identity and "Indigeneity." The intent of this project is to arrive at a more complete documented history of this tradition, which spans approximately only 40 years in the United States, and connect it to the longer trajectory of Danza which existed in México far before the Cuauhtemoc era.

CHAPTER 4

~NAHUI~

THEORETICAL GROUNDING AND PERSPECTIVES

Native American Studies, as an academic inter-multi-disciplinary field was born out of social, political, and historical intersecting movements. The Third World Liberation Front (twLF) and consequent student strikes of 1969 at San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley were the political actions that forged the demands of Native American activists (and other students of color) with the western academic model in order to create Native American Studies within the university system. The concept "third world" identified parallel colonial and racial experiences of students of color throughout U.S. history: genocide of Indigenous people, enslavement of Africans, and the passage of Asian immigration exclusion. Native people have gone further to identify this experience as "fourth world" (Manuel 1974). The twLF was aware that the real issues were racism and inequality, which could not be solved by student protest alone. Developing Ethnic Studies departments (Native American, Chicano, Black/African American, and Asian American Studies) was seen as a tangible, proactive solution that would contribute to solving larger social problems, and help to level the playing field for people of color in the university.

The goals of Native American Studies were clear—to create a relevant, political, reflexive, and radical shift in education, while at the same time producing Native scholarship, and Native scholars capable of transforming society. Despite the academy's contradictions and often oppressive framework, Native American Studies has continued

to survive within the institution for over forty years. As a student/product of this still growing/developing field, I am part of an ongoing movement to debunk and redress the distorted colonial, master narratives that still plague the mainstream academy. I am committed to Native American Studies because of my belief in this discipline and my responsibility, as a Xicana Indígena, to return to the academy and carry on the Ethnic Studies tradition. By returning to the academy as an Ethnic Studies scholar, I defy the further colonization of our minds, and assert the continued legitimacy of my field. Mainstream academia continues to control and marginalize the experiences and issues of Native Peoples. In essence, Native American Studies has "chosen to disregard those disciplinary boundaries, in order to be able to explore issues that do not adjust to them and cannot be grasped except by breaking the prison of academic disciplines" (Esteva/Prakash 1998: 8). Native American/Ethnic Studies disciplines, contrary to mainstream academic disciplines, do not strive to make students conform to mainstream ideology. Rather, these disciplines work to create students that will transform society. I contribute my voice as an Indigenous woman both affected by and responding to the institutionalized hegemonies that permeate every facet of our society and our lives. Beyond "thinking" and seeking truths, Native American Studies is a call to action with a broader agenda of educational equity and social justice. Knowledge is not power until it is utilized.

The Native American Studies Department at U.C. Davis uses a hemispheric/intercontinental approach to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous struggles. This conscious move expands the possibilities from which the discipline can more fully encapsulate the commonalities that unite Native peoples in the north, central, and south

of the continent, while still honoring each nation's autonomy and sovereignty. This inclusive aspect is crucial to my approach in Native American Studies. In *Origins of Indigenism* (2003), Ronald Niezen broadens the hemispheric approach and argues that the realm must be global. Through his research within the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples, he notes that the international movement of Indigenous peoples is an emerging form of political resistance that cannot be ignored.

> The study of Indigenous identity is, in a sense, an ideal way to approach the formation of new categories of thought, social reformation, and the human sense of self—ideal because the term itself is relatively new, actively used for only the past few decades, yet it invokes people's sense of permanence and their ability to survive and stay close to their cultures and homelands despite almost insurmountable odds. With this paradox as its starting point, indigenous identity reveals itself to be a quintessentially modern phenomenon (Niezen 2003: xi-xii).

This Indigenous internationalism is both a product and agent of this social convergence. What Niezen (2003) calls, "sociohistorical autopsies," are revelations of consistent patterns of conquest, genocide, ethnocide and political marginalization on a global scale. Looking at Indigenous peoples from a global perspective expands Native identity by connecting ideas and issues, all of which are grounded in evidence, testimony and collective memory. Migration patterns of Indigenous peoples did not only occur within the continent, but also overseas or culturally through audible linguistic patterns[20] or through the animal and plant life that made its way by air and sea.

[20] An example can be found in the Uto-Aztecan language family which includes Nahuatl, Hopi, Shoshone, Huichol and many other languages. Another interesting example is the traces of African languages in Gullah Geechee (see film "The Language We Cry In").

With a background in education,[21] I am deeply influenced by the work of Paulo Freire and his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). During my Masters work in the Philosophy of Education, I looked toward Freire as a model of how to put theory into praxis with my own teaching of both high school and college levels of education. Working at a transitional high school in Brooklyn, New York with youth exiting incarceration, the urgency of creating a liberatory pedagogy became much more crucial. Freire examines the critical questions that parallel those of Native American Studies: how have we been taught to desire forms of domination that are even against ourselves? How is it that we embrace an educational system that is designed to denigrate or be indifferent to culture and other his/herstories? What is the essence of the human condition? If we did not construct our educational system, how can we change it? While all of the above questions are complex and loaded, Freire offers hope and insight for the educator who is in pursuit of a liberatory pedagogy:

> The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation (Freire 1970: 36).

In essence, liberation is the pursuit of what is real. It is the process of deconstructing mainstream, and often oppressive, ideologies and systems that have been used to indoctrinate the disenfranchised of society. Through achieving an awareness of these systems at play, one is able to make the distinction between manufactured/fabricated

[21] My Masters in Education (Ed.M.) from Teachers College, Columbia University, was in Philosophy of Education with a concentration in Cultural Studies and Urban Education. My research engaged Xicana Indígena epistemologies in order to create new models of education K-12.

realities and those based in truth and knowledge. Native American activist and singer/songwriter, John Trudell speaks to this idea of understanding and differentiating illusions and reality within the context of power:

> In the course of evolution there needs to be a time when the children of the Earth re-identify and re-recognize one another. That is the collective consciousness being created. Real power comes from our relationship to the Earth and life. The illusions of power come from our relationship to the predator. They tell us money is power but it is not; it is a piece of paper. It represents greed. They tell us guns are power, but they are not. They are instruments of violence and brutality. They tell us political systems are power, but they are instruments of manipulation. If we believe these things are power, it is because we don't control those instruments. We have to re-look at things with our own perception. The real evolutionary change that must take place is going to come from the people with Earth consciousness. These are the people who will have the best opportunity because they are connected to what is real. Our spiritual relationship to life is much stronger than we really understand (Trudell 1993: 10).

Recognizing the socialized concepts and norms that have been adopted, internalized, created and perpetuated is the first step. Acknowledging what Althusser calls the "Ideological State Apparatus" is the first move toward "consientización" (Freire 1970) or "consciousness." According to Althusser, contrary to the "repressive" state apparatus which exerts overt repression through violence, the "ideological" state apparatus functions covertly and can be concealed or encoded within symbols and dominant epistemologies that remain ubiquitous and systematic (Fanon 1963; Takaki 1993). Mainstream education has constructed spaces where self-forgetting is invited and spaces of oppression and assimilation are promoted. Part of consciousness-raising and recognizing memory is connecting the present with the historical forces. Things are not serendipitous. Lived reality must be placed in historical context (Memmi 2000).

Once engaged with historical context, people begin to view their situation(s) with new lenses of information. This information creates consciousness and the will to put knowledge into action. Similar to Freire (1970), Frantz Fanon (1963) speaks to the colonized, to those of the third world, the most marginalized and oppressed peoples, and calls for revolutionary socialism all together and everywhere. Memmi (2000), Fanon (1963) and Freire (1970) view the colonizer as dehumanized, and although each has different methods in mind, it is their ultimate wish to humanize all people. In order to do this, they believe, it must begin with the colonized. Only the strength of a revolution stemming from the oppressed could be strong enough to free both oppressor and oppressed. But they depart in their ideas as how to begin the revolution; Fanon advocates for armed struggle and Freire sees education as the strongest weapon. According to Freire, revolutionary pedagogy always requires action, or putting theory into praxis. This is achieved with education. Native American Studies can be used as a tool and/or weapon towards the same liberatory ideas. Rather than put our bodies on the line of armed revolutionary struggles, we put our bodies in the academy to engage in an intellectual exchange of ideas and strategies to achieve and sustain revolutionary social changes.

Sandy Grande (2004) takes Freirian principles even further and expands them in relationship to Native peoples through her philosophical/theoretical approach, which she coins *Red Pedagogy*. According to Grande, the majority of the social sciences concern themselves with Indian cultural representations, identity, and the politics of representation, and do not focus enough on the social, political, and economic realities required to create radical social transformation. Further, she discusses that Native

American Studies has concentrated on "restorative projects" in particular communities, including sustaining language projects, cultural knowledge, and intellectual history. Emerging Native scholars over the past three decades have tended to engage with applied areas (social work, education, law, etc.) versus academic areas (philosophy or economics).[22] Resistance to engage in theory stems from the idea that it is Eurocentric and elitist. Grande demonstrates with her book that as Native people, we can engage positively in theory and articulate our own.

While theory is not inherently healing or liberatory; the delving into one's own theoretical traditions can be healing/liberatory. It is the duty of Native intellectuals to create the space where education and knowledge is in fact revolutionary and an exercise in self-recovery and social transformation. *Red Pedagogy* is an attempt to theorize the complexity of "Indian-ness." Grande incorporates and intersects aspects of feminist theory, but also challenges western feminism's Eurocentric biases. She, like Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Audre Lorde (1984), and Ana Castillo (1994) have all reconfigured and renamed feminism as relevant to women of color. Grande coins Indigenous feminism as a theory of "Indígenista;" a theory that "retains the notion of woman as warrior, woman as 'Mother,' and woman as spiritual leader" (Grande 2004: 127), explaining the ways in which the concept makes sense in one's own tradition. Anne Waters (2004) also discusses the "Red Roots of Feminism," a concept developed by Leslie Marmon Silko, and questions the gaps in study and attention given to the Eurocentric ideology/language that wants to deny and/or control a women's place in the world. The concept of gender,

[22] The earliest goals of Ethnic Studies (such as those cited in the *Plan de Santa Barbara* (Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education 1971)), were to utilize higher education not only for social mobility, but as an avenue toward direct service to the community through the various fields mentioned. The initial goals did not necessarily include creating academic, intellectual, or theoretical paradigms.

from an Indigenous perspective, can be malleable; not fixed across cultures (Silko, 1996; Roscoe 1988). Grande believes that transgression (the moving beyond or above a limit) is the root of emancipatory knowledge, and emancipatory knowledge is the root of revolutionary pedagogy. Ultimately, she desires to "extend the spaces of Indigenous intellectualism" (Grande 2004: 5). Indigenous ideas, concepts, and life-ways are not static or relegated to limited paradigms, but rather, are constantly in process of expanding, with the potential to grow and change in multiple ways.

Maori Scholar-activist Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002) advances similar ideas of Indigenous intellectualism as emancipatory in *Decolonizing Methodologies*. Specifically, Smith puts forth new theoretical perspectives which model the ways in which Native scholars/researchers can do more than deconstruct western scholarship, but actually create real, substantive change and take the idea of a decolonizing paradigm much further. This book removes Indigenous peoples from the margins and places them in the center of research, theory and methodology. Giving epistemic privilege to a group that has been historically oppressed or underrepresented actually gives everyone a broader view of the whole and an understanding of the most marginalized perspectives. When a group has been positioned in the margins and has been left and ignored in that place due to institutional racism, the strategy, historically, has been for marginalized groups to re-position themselves in the center in order to bring attention, awareness, and action around the issues facing their group (Smith 2002). This "centering" can be demoralizing, as each "movement" can be met with stark resistance from the status quo. At the same time, it can be an empowering experience as the "centering" of a community's issues gives new perspectives; no longer viewing the world from the margins, formerly marginalized

community members place themselves as the center of concern and offer a broader view of how to create necessary change. This is clearly reflected in contemporary Danza circles. Danza circles and individual danzantes consciously choose to participate and/or be on the forefront of social/political activities. Wearing full regalia, including long, visible feathers, and dancing to the strong beat of the drum, danzantes call attention to the center of their circle and thus, bring attention to the larger cause.

Smith speaks of the hard political and social realities of Indigenous peoples and the urgent necessity for Indigenous scholarship to be more than simply "deconstructive" or "giving voice." Rather, Indigenous scholarship must be grounded in a real possibility, vision, and plan for social change and transformation. Research was/is a tool to colonize and to reinforce the status quo and the powers that be. According to Smith, current models of research such as Post-colonialism do not do justice to the current colonial reality experienced by Indigenous peoples. When we are able to connect the extermination and domestication practices of historical and contemporary imperialism to current social reality, researchers will begin to understand the dehumanizing process and work to reverse it. Smith does not claim that we must have a total rejection of all theory, research, or Western knowledge, but rather, "it is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes"(Smith 2002: 39). Smith believes that "we must live simultaneously" (2002: 39) as insiders and outsiders in both mainstream and Indigenous/traditional systems. As an Indigenous researcher, there is a constant battle and negotiation of being an outsider/insider. Xicana discourse labels this experience of being "ni de aquí, ni de allá," not from here nor there, as a state of "nepantla" from both

or in a place of limbo or simultaneously acting as a bridge (Anzaldúa 1987; Anzaldúa 2000; Moraga 1993; Castillo 1994). This "bridge" is a positive re-articulation of a space that can often be difficult and painful. There is a constant negotiation and identity shift that takes place within the Indigenous researcher; a constant crossing of borders.

While Smith's approach is to critique and debunk western theories as essentially irrelevant to Native peoples, Esteva and Prakash (1998) re-appropriate the western theoretical perspective of post-modernism by calling it *Grassroots Post-modernism*. In so doing, they prove that it is possible to speak about Native concepts, terms, theoretical perspectives, methods and paradigms within the framework of post modernism once it has been radically transformed to fit the needs of Native peoples. The idea of "grassroots" post-modernism is the people's search for new strategies for survival and life beyond the era of modernity. Modernization, for Indigenous communities in particular, has wreaked continued colonization and destruction. The authors are attempting to remove terms such as "modernization," with their connotations of western superiority, from the academy and place them within different social and political spaces. This replacement and re-contextualization may make such terms relevant to the very communities that were marginalized by them. Esteva and Prakash suggest that if any social change or movement is to come about, it must be at the local level. By deconstructing the ideas of "global thinking," "universality of human rights," and the "myth of the individual self" the authors challenge the readers to think and act locally. For example, in the *Mandato de Cuauhtemoc* (Mendoza 2007: 252-254), Cuauhtemoc tells his people to maintain traditions in private, at home, with the faith and a prophesy that someday the people will once again be able to practice beliefs publicly. It was that

very localized act of resistance, of practicing traditions in the home, which served to defeat a system that sought to obliterate those ways. Because of this resistance, many Native traditions still exist and are practiced today. This, of course, is the foundation of Native belief systems which teach that we must live life thinking of the next seven generations and that "our desirable society also has women at the center" (Esteva/Prakash 1998: 66). Through acting locally, either in the home or in community, there is assurance that Indigenous life-ways will continue, and often the passing down of tradition begins with women. Grandmothers and Mothers are the matrilineal links to sacred medicines and life-ways. In this work, I am reflective of these principles: using collective memory to create a path from which future generations can build upon, and keeping women at the center/heart of my theoretical/research foundations.

The authors represented in the anthology *Natives and Academics* (Mihesuah 1998) also develop compelling arguments regarding methodologies and ethics applied to research about Native peoples. Overall, there is a call to Native scholars and mainstream academics to revisit the scholarship produced about Native Americans. The authors challenge the lack of Native voice, Native oral histories, and overall Native presence in the research and analysis. *Natives and Academics* is not only a call to revisit and debunk certain ideas or images that have perhaps been accepted by the mainstream, but also to encourage the development of Native intellectualism. The argument proposed by Cook-Lynn, within this text, is that intellectual sovereignty begins by writing our own history and developing our own thoughts and opinions, not only about Native issues, but about global/worldly issues (1998: 111). Other scholars in the anthology focused on analyzing the images that have been fed to the American public and that white mainstream society

now refuses to relinquish. Miller refers to this white, mainstream historical tendency of both manufacturing racist imagery and coopting Native symbology for their own purposes, as "licensed trafficking and Ethnogenetic engineering" (Mihesuah 1998: 100). The practice of trivializing, essentializing, and sensationalizing Native images continues today (Mihesuah 1996).

Donald Fixico also makes a tribute to Indian intellectualism in his book, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World* (2003). The main argument that Fixico presents is the fact that Native Americans have a distinct value system that views the world very differently than the white European way of thought. Native people value a very circular and cyclical way of learning about, sharing, and viewing the world. Building and sustaining relationships to humans and non-humans is fundamental. Indian thinking is visual and circular in philosophy and includes both physical and metaphysical realities. The circle of life, and all of creation as within this circle, acknowledges the relationships that each living thing (including what western thought labels as inanimate, such as rocks) has with other living things. According to Fixico, "Indian genius and the American Indian mind is all about understanding relationships"(xiii). Gregory Cajete (in Waters 2004: 45-57) also takes this approach and looks at science through the human relationships to the natural world, the cosmos, and time/space. He argues that Native science is built upon thousands of generations of human experience.

Native science is comprised of mind, body, and spirit. The physical, cognitive, and emotional orientation of Indigenous people is like a "map" that is carried in our heads and transferred through generations. This is often referred to as "collective memory" or "genetic memory" (Esteva/Prakash 1998). Knowing the origins of one's

people and place are essential. These landscapes/maps are contained in the creation/origin stories (Silko, 1996). According to Anne Waters, "Native science attempts to understand the nature or essence of things. This does not mean the exclusion of rational thought, but rather the inclusion of heart and being with rational perceptions to move beyond the surface understanding of a thing to a relationship which includes all aspects of one's self" (2004: 55). For Native people, cosmology and deeply rooted understandings of the universe pre-date all human structured expressions, including religion, and social/political orders:

> Their cosmology, a people's deeply rooted, symbolically expressed understanding of 'human-ness,' predates all other human-structured expressions, including religion and social and political orders. The first cosmologies were built with the perception that the spirit of the universe resided in the earth and things of the earth, including human beings. A people's understanding of the cycles of nature, behavior of animals, growth of plants, and interdependence of all things in nature determined their culture, that is, ethics, morals, religious expression, politics, and economics. The people came to know and to express a 'natural democracy,' in which humans are related and interdependent with plants, animals, stones, water, clouds, and everything else (Waters 2004: 46).

Complexity theory argues that there are some things in our universe where the pieces are so large that they cannot be analyzed (Peroff 2006). Therefore, it presents science with a certain difficulty because deductive reasoning is not possible. For scientists this creates a conflict, but for Indigenous peoples it represents what is referred to as the Great Mystery or the Great Spirit. Ultimately, the universe is continually unfolding and as human beings we have the choice to be active and creative participants.

In the book, *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays* (2004), Waters creates a compilation of articles/essays written by Native Philosophy scholars. Like Fixico's *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World* (2003), Water's anthology is an

attempt to challenge mainstream, Western philosophy while augmenting the field in order to include and understand "American Indian Philosophy." The authors in this book, rather than simply critiquing Western Philosophy and pointing out its downfalls and inapplicability to Native Peoples, have accomplished the goal of developing a philosophical base that is somewhat uniquely Native. While the authors challenge western ideas of philosophy, they still generally adhere to the terminology, language, and concepts that are used within western philosophy. Terms such as epistemology, metaphysics, ontology, etc. are maintained, but the usage of such terms is expanded in order to encompass Native ideas and being. As such, the possibilities for how such mainstream philosophical notions are used are increased. In his contribution to this text, Vine Deloria argues that the challenge of American Indian Philosophy today is that it is mostly comprised of several generations of Native people who have "popular notions" of what Indian Philosophy might have been within the Western Philosophical enterprise. "Things 'Indian' have become more fantasy than real" (Waters 2004: 5). Indians today are highly influenced by popular social representations, therefore complicating the possibility of an organic Native Philosophy. According to Deloria, what makes a Native philosophical approach unique is the following: attention to experiential knowledge (including dreams and visions), belief in spirits/ancestors, adherence to animal intellect, a strong resistance to human arrogance, the identification of a Great Spirit/Great Mysterious Energy (comparable to the energy fields of physics), responsibility as a chief virtue, and, finally, the notion that all philosophical concepts must arise from a need or a concrete situation; that is, a body of knowledge must be useful to the people and the world they live in (Waters 2004: 3-11).

Brian Yazzie Burkhart (2004) in his article, "What Coyote and Thales Can Teach Us: An Outline of American Indian Epistemology," defines and compares the difference between a western approach and Native approach to epistemology. He argues that, unlike western philosophy, Native philosophy understands that certain things should not be known or questions do not need to be answered to justify an initial claim. Creation stories are privileged knowledge and perhaps do not need physical evidence to validate them. "For American Indians, Knowledge is Knowledge in experience" (Waters 2004: 20). In other words, knowledge is lived, versus western knowledge which is propositional. Knowledge in experience allows people to function in the world, to carry on daily tasks, and to generally live their lives; it is an embodied knowledge. The collective experiences of Indigenous communities create knowledge in the same vein. In contrast to individualist western ideas, such as, "I think, therefore I am," a Native collective way of thinking would state, "We are, therefore I am" (Waters 2004: 15-26).

Waters (2004), Smith (2002), and Grande (2004) all reinforce the notion that Native scholarship/philosophy/theory/research must continue to move in the direction of promoting work that is for and by Native people. It must be meaningful and beneficial to Native people, signifying that the experience does not marginalize, but rather has healing potential. Authority must be privileged to those that are living and breathing the culture. In this sense, my work in my community is deeply affected by the idea that it must have healing potential and be a site for social change and justice. I endeavor to practice what Waters (2004) terms "insurgent scholarship." Mihesuah (2003), in her book *Indigenous American Women*, articulates the specific issues that Native scholars, particularly women, face in the academy, not only with institutional discrimination, but with personal

motivation and issues that tug Native people in many directions. Pursuing research within my own community is a contribution to the fight for political, cultural and intellectual sovereignty. If we do not (re)claim our intellectual sovereignty, we risk it being crushed and parts of ourselves becoming broken.

Part of liberation is in naming our reality or lived experience (Freire 1970; Anzaldúa 1987; Smith 2002; Grande 2004; Waters 2004). As I work to articulate the experiences of my community, one thing is certain; we all need resistance to create change because resistance is still interaction. To resist oppression one must engage in it, just as we must engage with our physical world. Humans will always need obstacles in order to fight, strengthen, and grow. At their cores, the disciplines of Ethnic Studies and Native American Studies still hold the spirit of being a channel for social change. We do not experience the institution in a completely paternalistic way. In many ways, the discipline of Native American Studies "indigenizes" the academy, (Mihesuah/Wilson 2004) the institution, and systems of thought and ideology. Our ways of being and ways of knowing are multi-layered, multi-faceted, complex, and dialogical with the mainstream Eurocentric status quo. Incorporating our ways of knowing is an aspect of ideological resistance or "ideological warfare." In order to truly change the system, people must first change their ways of thinking. Laws or policy may change, but if people continue to believe and think in a racist or colonizing manner, deep radical change is not possible. In that way, Native scholarship cannot be ignored, but must be incorporated into all facets of our educational system and epistemologies. We have influenced/impacted "them" as much as they have "us," even if the colonial enterprise disregards or is in denial of that impact. The revolutionary, humanistic spirit of all those

that began the struggle has never died. It lives, for example, in the contemporary youth who have also chosen the more difficult path of not only working to demand knowledge of their own history, but working to change the course of history. This is a conscious, emancipatory move to change established patterns of thought and being. In the spirit of the large body of Native/Xicana scholar activists before me, it is my privilege and honor to dialogue and engage with their theories and ideas, which have guided and transformed my own ways of "theorizing," thinking, knowing, and writing this work.

CHAPTER 5

~MACUILLI~

ESTABLISHING BACKGROUND: IDEOLOGICAL/REGIONAL LOCATION OF RESEARCH

Oral tradition and stories expressed in the sacred codices/books or *amoxtli* have passed down the story of a people originating from the seven caves, *Chicomoztoc*,[23] who were told by the guidance of elders and Great Spirit that they were to follow the path of *Huitzilopotchtli* (spiritual manifestation of the hummingbird, complete balance, will power, and representative of the south direction). The people of the seven clans left the seven caves and the land they called *Aztlan* and began the migration south to seek a new homeland upon which to build their community and legacy. They left with the knowledge of a prophesy that one day they would return to Aztlan (Anaya and Lomeli 1989; Maiz 2004). This oral tradition has been referenced by many contemporary Native and Xicana/o writers, including Leslie Marmon Silko (1996) and Cherrie Moraga (1993). Jack Forbes, in his book, *Aztecas del Norte* (1973) created a significant piece that was the first of its kind to make an unyielding claim toward "Chicana/o indigeneity." Through the reclamation of Aztlan, Forbes argues that Chicanas/os have an inalienable right and obligation to (re)claim Indigenous identity, culture and spirituality.

According to Ángel Julián García-Zambrano (2007), during the early Spanish Colonial period in México, descendants of any land base could demonstrate their

[23] For an excellent synthesis of the complex understanding of sacred landscape (Chicomoztoc, Aztlan and Culhuacan), as expressed in a number of codices, colonial manuscripts and pictorial sources, and its connection to origin stories of the many Nahua pueblos of Mesoamerica, see Ángel Julián García-Zambrano, "Ancestral Rituals of Landscape Exploration and Appropriation among Indigenous Communities in Early Colonial Mexico" in *Sacred Gardens and Landscapes: Ritual and Agency*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington D.C.: Dunbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection), 2007.

"Primordial Land Title" by simply demonstrating their knowledge of the migration history, sacred landscape and sacred rituals that tied them to the land. He states:

> Often during the colonial period, vice-regal land surveys (*Vistas de Ojos*) were conducted to confirm indigenous land rights. In many of these surveys, indigenous groups performed a ritual walking around the communal property. This included traveling through the ravines and gorges that connected to the town's main cove. At times, Indian towns were required to demonstrate legal possession of the land they occupied. For this purpose they were prepared to show their Primordial Land Titles. These documents included descriptions of the rituals that were periodically executed by community leaders and elders to commemorate the process by which they arrived at the settlement site. The ceremony was performed on the stage provided by the cove and its landscape tokens, tracing the primordial origin of the ethnic group as well as its migration sequence (216).

It will be argued in this paper that Xicanas/os have been in process of (re)claiming and (re)recognizing their own "Primordial Land Titles" in a very similar fashion. Through the practice of sacred rituals, dance, ceremony, oral traditions, and documentation of contemporary sacred traditions in-the-making, Xicanas/os have been detailing their own migration sequence since the 1960s. This migration sequence is coded in the Danzas, art, poetry, music, and, some may argue, in the academic/scholarly work of contemporary Xicana/o thinkers. The diaspora of Xicanas/os throughout the United States and the constant and universal reference to "Aztlan" as homeland, continues to trace a "ritual walking" and expansion of those boundaries in order to declare "Primordial Land Title" to a place that was never disinherited. According to Chicana/o Studies Professor Gaspar de Alba (2003): "The notion of home (or homeland) is among the most important preoccupations for diasporic communities residing permanently in the United States" (65). La Danza is, in effect, the act of performing ritual to demonstrate the process at which Xicanas/os arrived to our contemporary homelands.

The 1960s was a time of self-discovery for Chicanas/os. The idea of Aztlan served to further this transformation and sparked the cultural and spiritual imagination of many Chicanas/os. The notion of Aztlan, which has erroneously been referred to as "mythic," carries substantial evidence to confirm its existence as a sacred landscape encompassing geomorphological features that represented ancestral origins of many pueblos throughout Mesoamerica, including that of many Indigenous Pueblo peoples throughout the Southwestern United States. Therefore, the understanding and commonly understood knowledge of "Aztlan" as a "place of emergence" or "homeland" is not under contention. In fact, according to García-Zambrano (2007) it can be interpreted that there were many places throughout Mesoamerica known as "Aztlan" or possessing the geomorphological features that characterized Aztlan. These characteristics resembled a "bowl" (in Nahuatl language, *teocomitl*: "sacred bowl or gourd"). The concave shape of the bowl "represented the subterranean aquatic realm where humanity was believed to have gestated" (195). Aztlan was only one of a three-tiered structure that reflected the "pasaje sagrado" (sacred passage) that made up the spiritual ideology of land, origin, and home. *Chicomoztoc* (place of the seven caves) (see Appendix 1), the second tier was the place where, once emergence occurred, it was through this passageway of the caves that humanity could begin a journey to populate the Earth through migration. *Culhuacan* (also translated in Nahuatl as *Acolhuacan*, meaning, "arm from which a fountain came forth") was the third tier, represented by a mountain structure (see Appendix 1). Often times, this mountain is twisted or bent as an iconographic motif, which also held the meaning of a bent-over back, symbolizing age or an elder bent over due to age.

Each of these, Aztlan, Chicomoztoc, and Culhuacan, were spiritual/sacred landscapes that were necessary and ideal features that had to be revealed in order for a people to settle and create a community/town or *altepetl* (in Nahuatl, this literally translates into water and mountain). Essentially, in order for a people to create a town, the natural setting had to mirror any of the three elements of their ancestral origin: Aztlan, represented by bowl/body of water, place of origin; Culhuacan, the mountain, or back of the elders; or Chicomoztoc, the caves, the liminal places in-between the water and mountain.[24] The presence of any of these sacred landscapes was key in the decision to settle in a specific place. Understanding this basic principle helps one to decipher whether or not certain places are indeed ancestral communities or more contemporary Indigenous communities throughout Mesoamerica. This could also be indicated by the name ascribed to the community and whether or not it reflected any one of the "pasajes sagrados" (sacred passages). The main point in this discussion is to assert that "Aztlan" is an actual understood geographical marking of place. The notion of *one* "Aztlan," located in a non-specific or unknown location in the U.S. Southwest, emerged in the 1960s (Forbes 1973; Valdez/Steiner 1972). This "mythologized" Aztlan was understood as the ancestral origin place of all Chicanas/os. In reality, the many oral histories and written/drawn manuscripts that pinpoint the location of Aztlan in the U.S. Southwest (F. Waters 1963), simply point to one of the many ancestral homelands and sacred landscapes which encompassed the much broader, geographical characteristics of Aztlan (bowl/body of water).

[24] Interestingly, each of these tiers also reflects each of the stages of human life: birth/emergence, existing in-between, and the stage of becoming an elder on the journey toward the spirit world.

World renowned Hopi elder Thomas Banyacya,[25] now in the Spirit World, was designated by his nation to carry on an oral tradition and copies of rock drawings that reinforced his ancestors' knowledge of a sacred place understood to be Aztlan or the place of origin of neighbors and relatives of the Hopi. I personally met Thomas Banyacya in 1995 at Casa Joaquín Murrieta, Berkeley, California. In my personal notes, I retained photo copied images of the rock drawings. Using these images, he explained their meaning and how they related to Xicana/o homeland--Aztlan. His demonstration of Aztlan as surrounding Hopiland, the spiritual center, is often interpreted to mean that Xicanas/os, in their (re)claiming of Aztlan, must always remember to protect the spiritual centers of the Hopi and Diné. Xicanas/os have also interpreted his teachings to mean that Xicanas/os have an important role in protecting and often times interpreting, both literally--as in-between Spanish and English language, as well as spiritually--as people who live in both the mainstream world and spiritual world. My brief encounter with Thomas Banyacya sparked an understanding that sacred land bases and places of origin can be held sacred by many nations; there is no need for conflict. Aztlan is sacred to many people/nations and called by different names. It is possible to "claim" (not in a "zionist" or Eurocentric colonial model) homeland and origin to a place shared by other nations and this can be done in a respectful, mutual manner.

Thomas Banyacya, who had studied the importance of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in relationship to Native Peoples, presented a map to Xicana/o columnists, Patrisia Gonzalez and Roberto Rodríguez. As a result, they produced a series of articles which explored possible specific locations of the "Chicana/o origin place" of

[25] Guillermo Rosete states that he also heard this elder speak and teach about a prophesy "that there would be a nonviolent cultural revolution. This would force the world to work with Indigenous issues" (Maestas, not dated: 54).

Aztlan. In close examination of this 1847 *Disturnell Map,* which was the map used in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Gonzalez and Rodríguez, in their 1998 *Column of the Americas* article, identified a marked place on the map labeled as the "antigua residencia de los Aztecas" (ancient residence of the Aztecs). Since, they have reproduced the map and continue to present extensive research and study on the question of Aztlan; specifically its location and meaning for Xicanas/os and Indigenous peoples. Through the study of the Disturnell Map, Gonzalez and Rodríguez have created a documentary film (2005), an exhibit, and numerous articles, broadening the dialogue (within Xicana/o communities and with other Native, specifically Pueblo,[26] communities) about places origin, homeland and migration.

Many opinions and claims exist as to the "location" of Aztlan. Alfredo Figueroa (2002), grassroots researcher and community activist, asserts in his self-published book, *La Cuna de Aztlan: Ancient Footprints of the Colorado River,* that the cradle of Aztlan is in Blythe, California. He claims that the birth of the "Aztec" civilization took place in the mountains of Blythe. Others have argued that Aztlan is located in Utah (Gonzalez/Rodríguez 1998). Xicana/o college students continue to claim Aztlan in every city or state, often times re-naming or "Nahuatl-izing" their homeland: CalifAztlan, TejAztlan, UtAhztlan, Watzlanco (Watsonville), Manhatitlan,[27] and Aztlan in the

[26] In September 2009, I attended a community forum in Española, New Mexico, sponsored by a collective of Chicana/o grassroots community organizations who invited Pueblo tribal representatives and Tewa Women United to share in a dialogue about homeland and sacred sites, including Aztlan. In discussing land and water rights, there was agreement that jointly Chicana/o and Pueblo communities can work together utilizing different political strategies to protect mutual sacred sites.

[27] This term was first popularized by Felipe Galindo's animated film, *The Manhatitlan Chronicles*. The film juxtaposes popular Mexican icons with popular New York icons, symbolizing the ways in which new communities become part of the landscapes (physical, cultural and otherwise) and incorporate themselves and create home. The renaming of Manhattan, New York, also called, Puebla York or NezaYork, simply reflects the new populations that struggle to stay connected to homeland while creating and adopting a new homeland.

Bronx.[28] While I neither wholly agree nor disagree with the grassroots research on the origins/location of Aztlan, one point is universal: the fact that Aztlan is not a "mythical" or "imagined" place. It is real in minds and hearts, and for some, in specific geographic space. It is clear that overwhelming archeological evidence proves that interaction between Indigenous people throughout the territories now known as México and the United States occurred and that Aztlan is large enough (both geographically and ideologically) to encompass all Indigenous descendants of the areas understood to be part of the ancestral lands of Aztlan. These lands can be called by different names relevant to different Indigenous Nations.

Politically, it should be noted that, internationally, "Aztlan" has been identified and recognized as a nation. In 2006, Xicana/o artists, musicians and activists, hosted at the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City, were given a declaration by the ambassador that Cuba recognized Aztlan as a sovereign Xicano Nation.[29] Further, work presented at the United Nations (prior to and after the formal creation of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) has been grounded in Xicana/o ancestral land claims to Aztlan (Niezen 2003).[30] Ultimately, the idea/concept/place of Aztlan is not about an exact geographic location. Rather, it is a process upon which to understand the complex relationship of people to land, and the inter/intra-relationships of Indigenous peoples. The argument, therefore, is not whether or not Aztlan existed/s and is an origin place of the

[28] An exhibition entitled "Aztlan Today: The Chicano Postnation" was held at the Bronx Museum of Art April 12-September 9, 2001. Having attended this exhibition, it was impossible not to connect the reality of the growing Mexican presence in New York City and the presence of a "Nueva Aztlan" in the Bronx.
[29] Article found at http://sandiego.indymedia.or/en/2006/10/119691.shtml
[30] Much of this documentation can be found on the propaganda and information disseminated at the United Nations Permanent Forum by the Arizona-based organization, Tonatierra. (Some of the documents are cited in the bibliography)

Mexica and/or Nahua peoples, but rather how did Aztlan come be known as the origin place/homeland of Xicanas/os?

Alurista[31] in his defining piece, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan* (in Forbes 1973; Valdez/Steiner 1972), became a manifesto for all Chicanas/os and defined a generation of Chicanas/os that would base their identity on the essentialist and often romanticized notion that all Chicanas/os are descendants of "Aztecs." *El Plan* became a driving force for Chicanas/os to reclaim not only their physical place in the U.S. Southwest, but also their spiritual identity. Aztlan, as expressed in *El Plan*, was both an idea and a place. This is crucial because it sets the ideological location from which Danza, and the gravitation towards it, and other spiritual/ceremonial practices emerge.

García-Zambrano's (2007) article, which deeply explores the ancestral landscapes of Aztlan, was not typical of the kind of critical research being produced during the Chicano Movement period. Had this article existed during the Chicano Movement era, quite possibly the idea of Aztlan embracing all descendants of Nahua peoples or as part of the migration sequence of Mesoamerica might have held some ground. However, definition of Aztlan as a sacred landscape or a shared ancestral homeland with other Indigenous peoples, was not critically formed during that time. Rather, Aztlan (and the descendants of Aztlan) were based on the romanticized embrace of Jose Vasconcelo's notion of *La Raza Cosmica* (1925) and the idea that Chicanas/os were all of "Aztec" descent. The acceptance of the "mestizaje," albeit part of the Spanish colonial caste project, was an attempt to do away with the shame and conflict of identity or schizophrenia expressed in Corky Gonzalez's (1972) *I am Joaquín*. It was a way to

[31] Roberto Hernández (2005) argues that Alurista was originally born and raised in Mexico City and therefore had a deeper understanding of the Indigenous/Mexica knowledge, which he brought with him to the U.S. and to the Chicano Movement.

embrace and accept all parts of the Chicana/o experience, framed with a strong (yet, patriarchal) resistance narrative of the "powerful and mighty Aztecs" (Gaspar de Alba 2003).

More contemporary understandings of Aztlan break away from the essentialist notions and limited confinement to "Aztecs," and instead opt for a broader understanding of Aztlan, not as a defined place, but as an idea. Similar to the 1960s Native American occupation of Alcatraz Island, wherein Alcatraz was more than an "island," but an idea,[32] Aztlan was the impetus to begin a movement for social change. It was less about the actual physical (re)occupation of a land/space, but more about the raising of consciousness. The idea that, "Aztlan is everywhere I've ever walked,"[33] (Rodriguez 1997) moves away from "zionist" notions of Aztlan as located in one particular dwelling and needing to be reclaimed. Rather, Aztlan becomes a spirit that is carried inside those who believe in social consciousness and liberation (coupled with a deep reflection on origins, history and spirituality) no matter where one is physically located.

For the work that I have conducted under the aegis of Native American Studies, the designation of a "geographical area" or "region" for my subject matter poses a problem. It conveys the outdated idea that Chicanas/os are a "landless people" or "a people without a country" (Valdez and Steiner 1972). It was, in fact, those early beliefs promoted by Chicana/o scholars in the 1960s that led others to debunk the absence of space and place and look toward Aztlan as the answer for Chicanas/os that felt without a home or land. The "ni de aquí, ni de allá" (not from here nor there) dichotomy (not being from México nor the United States) or the state of "Nepantla," the in-between place

[32] As expressed in the 2001 documentary film, *Alcatraz is Not an Island*.
[33] Anonymously quoted on the back cover of the book, *X in La Raza*.

(Anzaldúa 1987; Gaspar de Alba 2003) is a continued subject matter of Xicana/o scholarship. *Aztlan* was the response to the "go back to where you come from" racism directed at MeXicanos. The declaration of Aztlan as homeland claimed an Indigenous origin, relationship, and tie to other Indigenous communities, as well as connection to the land and a history of migration. The declaration of Aztlan responded to narratives of placeless-ness with the assertion, "I *am* where I come from. I cannot be an immigrant in my own land. We didn't cross the borders, the borders crossed us."

The complexity of place and origin for Xicanas/os, complicates my work. The principle geographical focus of my scholarship within Native American Studies is the territory now known as "North America," stretching from the territories renamed by colonial settlers as "Canada," the "United States," and "México." Yet, as the hemispheric/intercontinental approach in Native American Studies suggests, the imposed political borders that divide the land are arbitrary. While borders are a lived experience, they can also be considered "ideological state apparatuses" (Althusser 1971) that divide the continent in more mental than physical ways. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) clearly identifies borders as "not" absolute, but rather as figments of imagination, artificial boundaries that do not represent true reality. If one was to grab a handful of dirt from the "U.S. side" of the border and throw it over to México, does that handful of dirt all of a sudden transform into "Mexican" dirt? How would one distinguish that handful of dirt from the rest of the dirt? The land itself has no concept of finites, boundaries, or space. The land cannot be divided by clear-cut lines in order to completely define the land. The river banks also remind people that borders are artificially structured. There is no way to

pinpoint a distinct border when the waters in these banks are constantly flowing and moving and the banks themselves are changing location over time.

The border has become a state apparatus which is used to increase political power for a select few and to subjugate others with a feeling of "not belonging." As Althusser explains, "The state apparatus secures by repression the political conditions for the action of the Ideological State Apparatuses" (1971: 150). As such, the Repressive State Apparatus is the physical violence and oppressive power that is imposed upon the people crossing the "border." The Ideological State Apparatus is the systematic, imposed notion that a "border" even exists. The idea that there is a defined line or separation in the land becomes embedded mentally and socially, so that our individual identities are also formed by this imaginary social construct. We become U.S. citizens or living upon U.S. territory because we have been told and made to believe and accept that there is a line that divides one land from another. Further, the Ideological State Apparatus maintains a belief that those crossing the border from México to the U.S. are less than human and of less value. This justifies the spending of millions of dollars on equipment and labor to build walls in order to create a militarized zone and treat human beings like animals in a cage. In this post-9/11 era, television commercials continue to use loaded language that refers to people as "illegal aliens" or "terrorists," engaging the idea that certain people are not even considered lawful or from this world. To restate Althusser's sentiment, the U.S. government uses repression, violence, and other extreme measures at the border in order to create the political conditions necessary to uphold and implement the Ideological State Apparatus. If the general public sees the extreme measures being taken to prevent people from crossing a border, then the people will believe that a problem really exists and those

measures must be taken for a reason. The general population will make their assumptions, opinions, and perceptions based on what is shown to them; i.e., if a people must be treated like animals, it must be because they are animals. Further, not only are people deemed as sub-human, but the land, that is a life-force, is reduced to a commodity.

The idea that the land is disposable and dispensable arrived with the Europeans who brought a foreign concept of complete extraction and exploitation of the land (Weatherford 1988). As Winona LaDuke states, "We have a problem of two separate spiritual paradigms and one dominant culture—make that a dominant culture with an immense appetite for natural resources" (2005: 14). This essential raping of the land occurred in multiple ways, either for gold and silver, or for the exploitation of sacred plants to make distilled liquor or drugs. This destruction affected not only the land, but the Indigenous people. The people, being so intimately linked to the land and viewing themselves as reflections of the land, experienced this rape as well. The experience of violation was both physical and spiritual. They experienced the rape and violation as it was occurring to the land and physically as women were also victims of rape and torture. In **"**The Jurisprudence of Colonialism," Steve Russell (in Waters 2004) opens his piece with the poignant words, "Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated!"(217). This statement is disturbing and meant to be facetious, but it is accurate as to the sentiment and action imposed by European colonizers. The ultimate goal was assimilation, including a complete obliteration of Indigenous values, beliefs, and attachment to the land. For example, the Requerimiento of 1513[34] was a declaration that secured papal blessing for Indian massacres and imposed religion and law. It essentially gave consent

[34] These papal bulls which gave sanction to the Doctrine of Discovery have never been revoked and are still living documents today (see Tonatierra documents cited).

to the theft and exploitation of land for the benefit of the Church and Europe. Russell comments that the difference between Europeans and Native people is that Europeans had "orthodoxy" and Natives had "Orthopraxy" (Waters 2004). Meaning, Native people actually practiced their beliefs, whereas Europeans preached one entity and practiced an absolutely different entity—killing people with papal blessing. By citing specific legal cases throughout Native history, Russell proves that European constructs of "religion" and the law have continued to be dependent on one another to further the colonization of Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples universally have always thought of this continent as *one land and one people*. "Borders," in the manner which they are implemented today, and the rampant abuse of land could not possibly subsist from an Indigenous perspective. It is *the people* who belong to the earth, not vice versa. The land is sacred; never something to be bought, sold, desecrated or divided. People and land can never be separated, nor can the land be fragmented; it is whole and interconnected to the rest of creation. In "Crippling the Spirit, Wounding the Soul: Native American Spiritual and Religious Suppression," Maureen Smith (in Waters 2004) furthers this understanding and Native negation of the Bering Strait Theory in the following statement:

> All elements of the Earth and the people's relationship to them were seen as holy, a sacred relationship which necessitated a sacred responsibility. Most tribal religions were land-based, with their cosmologies founded on land, water, sky, and all of creation. Religion was geographically bound to sacred spots integral to spiritual practice. Most tribal people have origin stories that depict how they arrived in their place. They were put in locations like North America or Turtle Island by the Creator to live and worship there. Few if any, tribes have stories of migration that tell of crossing large land or ice masses. The Creator placed them, and there they were to stay. Therefore, Native religion and nationhood were tied to specific geographical places (117).

M. Smith, as most Native scholars, privileges origin/creations stories as legitimate claims to place and history. The basic concepts of respect and dignity, fundamental to Indigenous philosophy, contrast with Eurocentric notions of human arrogance justifying occupation and ownership of the land. Turtle Island, Abya Yala, and Ixachitlan are Indigenous names that identify this land as a continent, a continent that defies the notion of borders. They are names based on creation stories and on prophesies that identify the continent as one land and one people. The re-naming of land and people by European colonizers is an act of imperialism.

Jack Forbes refers to the historical and contemporary actions of imperialism and colonialism as the "Wétiko" disease. He defines the Wétiko disease as "the disease of aggression against other living things and more precisely, the disease of the consuming of other creatures' lives and possessions" (2004: 9). He further elaborates on the experience of the Wétiko disease: "Imperialism, colonialism, torture, enslavement, conquest, brutality, lying, cheating, secret police, greed, rape, terrorism, they are only words until we are touched by them. Then they are no longer words, but become vicious reality, which overwhelms, consumes, and changes our lives forever" (2004: 9). This definition of the Wétiko disease is further exemplified by Winona LaDuke (2005) in her book, *Recovering the Sacred.* She describes many examples of the ways in which this disease continues to plague Native communities: from savage and unethical methods of information gathering and illegal extraction of human remains, to coal mining on Hopi land, to the genetic engineering and subsequent contamination of the organic wild rice grown on LaDuke's land in Minnesota. Despite the seemingly hopeless battle against the Wétiko disease that plagues society, Forbes and LaDuke manage to insert narratives of

resistance and reminders that the one instrument or "weapon" Native people possess is spirit. While bodies can be killed or tortured, spirit is what lives on and can be even more powerful than human presence. If Indigenous people are to survive, they/we must reclaim and assert spiritual spaces. Indigenous movement(s), including the discipline of Native American Studies must have a spiritual base.

Marilyn Notah Verney (Waters 2004) states in her article, "On Authenticity," "To understand American Indian philosophy one must first understand our spiritual relationship, our connection with the land, with Mother Earth" (134). Verney claims that Native American Philosophy is simple—it begins with the land. It is through the spiritual/metaphysical nature of reality and relationship between mind and matter, including the connection with Mother Earth, that one is able to teach about communal living amongst all creation in the universe. She calls the Native belief of interdependency a "metaphysics of respect." Native philosophical ethics are based on kindness, caring and sharing. It is inconceivable to have a system of ownership that does not enable sharing, cooperation and mutual respect. Verney believes that, once Native ontology is understood and accepted, Native people will be able to reintegrate their identity and ways of being in this world.

Native understandings of "area" or "region" and their human relationships with land must be considered. In addition, historical facts demonstrate that migration, trading, intermarriage, exchange of goods, ideas, and language make it difficult to identify any place as absolute. This, of course, does not disregard Native claims to certain spaces as places of origin. For many Indigenous nations, their origin or creation stories give them authority, or the role as caretaker for a particular place identified as sacred, be it a

mountain, river, or cave. At the same time, place and location may shift in regards to people and their understandings of land/territory and identity. For some Native Nations, the traumatic experiences of displacement and relocation have caused them to create new notions of home and land base.

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), passed in 1978, aimed to ensure that religious freedom also applied to Native people, despite the fact that Native spiritual traditions were not institutionalized in the same way as other religions. According to LaDuke, "While the [AIRFA] ensured that Native people could hold many of their ceremonies, it did not protect the places where many of these rituals take place, nor the relative elements central to these ceremonies…" (2005: 13). Therefore, it makes no sense to "claim" to protect the beliefs of Native people, when these beliefs are closely connected to a land that is still fair game for exploitation. As LaDuke explains: "The challenge of attempting to maintain your spiritual practice in a new millennium is complicated by the destruction of that which you need for your ceremonial practice" (LaDuke 2005: 15). Those needs include the land and the sacred areas that are the foundation of a nation's creation story and spiritual practice. Land, Earth, and Creation are at the heart of Native epistemologies and ontologies:

> I can lose my hands, and still live. I can lose my legs and still live. I can lose my eyes and still live. I can lose my hair, eyebrows, nose, arms, and many other things and still live. But if I lose the air, I die. If I lose the sun, I die. If I lose the earth, I die. If I lose the water, I die. If I lose the plants and animals, I die. All of these things are more a part of me, more essential to my every breath, than is my so-called body. *What is my real body?* (Forbes 2004: 151)

Land defines a people's existence, culture, and origin. Sovereignty, political justice and cultural preservation are crucial to any discussion of land (Alfred 1999). The land is teacher and provider—central to Native identity.

For many nations, their place of origin is the center of the universe. The name "Cuzco," the old capital city of Peru, stems from the Quechua word meaning bellybutton, or the center of the universe. Similarly, a theory exists that the origin of the word "México" stems from the combination of Nahuatl words meaning "bellybutton of the moon," referring to the center of the continent (Maiz 1995). Linguistically in Nahuatl, this theory does not hold true, as the Nahuatl translation/meaning of the word México, is unknown. However, the idea still lends itself to an interesting discussion of how people understand their place in the universe. The Hopi referred to their "center of the universe" as Túwanasavi, the center from which Hopi country extended to the four directions (Waters 1963). Most Indigenous nations have a concept referring to the four cardinal directions or seven directions (including the center and axis running vertically north and south of the center). According to Vine Deloria in *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, sacred centers and the expanse of land surrounding them define Native peoples' history and identity:

> The vast majority of Indian tribal religions, therefore have a sacred center at a particular place, be it a river, a mountain, a plateau, valley, or other natural feature. This center enables the people to look out along the four dimensions and locate their lands, to relate all historical events within the confines of this particular land, and to accept responsibility for it. Regardless of what subsequently happens to the people, the sacred lands remain as permanent fixtures in their cultural or religious understanding (1994: 67).

In the south of the continent, Tawantinsuyo refers to the four directions of the Andean land base: Antisuyo, Collasuyo, Chinchaysuyo, and Contisuyo. In the north, many

nations share the concept of the four directions represented by different colors that also represent the different peoples of the world: Red, White, Black, and Yellow. Honoring of the four directions and the Father Sky and Mother Earth is the first order of ritual during a Danza Mexica ceremony. One cannot begin spiritual work without first honoring the ancestors and every place of the universe; one must first ask for permission from all directions and relations in order to proceed.

To reiterate, the question of geographic region/location can be complex and limiting, not only for Xicanas/os but for all Indigenous people. To give a contemporary example, for the upcoming United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples (UNPFIP), there has been informal discussion between the "north" and "south" of the continent. A potential proposal may be put on the table to remove México from North American regional caucus and place it in the Latin American caucus.[35] Within Native American/American Indian Studies, anything having to do with México is still referred to as "south." While directionally, México is south of the United States, the reference to it as "south" is still a marker of "difference" and "other" and re-enforces the U.S./Mexican border as the reference point of those directions, putting colonial structures at the center. The Indigenous concept of the four directions becomes tainted by the creation of a north/south dichotomy, which distorts the Indigenous beliefs of this continent as one land, and the emotional and spiritual connection to the cardinal directions. This distortion allows political and colonial ideas and the competition for resources to create a dissention

[35] I am aware of these conversations because of my personal involvement and organizational leadership within La Red Xicana Indígena, an organization and member of the ENLACE Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Américas, an international arm within the UNPFIP. Currently, within the ENLACE, México is a separate region from the U.S. and Canada.

between nations, pueblos, and peoples, forcing them to put aside traditional beliefs and adopt existing realities which further perpetuate divisions.

The shift for a more Hemispheric approach in Native American Studies challenges and re-thinks regional definitions that have been imposed upon Native people since the arrival of Europeans. The hemispheric approach expands the possibilities rather than limits them. Linguistic patterns that cross all boundaries and borders demonstrate that Native relations were complex and migratory throughout the continent. To limit ourselves to geographic boundaries such as the U.S., chooses to ignore the fact that the Diné (Navajo) people have relations to the Dene people of Canada or that the Zunis believe themselves to be related to Quechua people in Peru and the Hopi people have identified themselves to be related to the Nahua people of México (Waters 1963).

Oral traditions of how people encountered each other or shared history together are a common trait amongst Native peoples. According to Stefano Varese's work with the Campa-Ashaninka of the upper Amazon region of Peru, reciprocity comprised the foundation of every "exchange of goods, services, labor, tributes, and gifts" (2004: 33) He quotes Gustave Ver Der Leeuw's analysis of sacred trade among the Ashaninka: "To give is to establish a relationship…; it is to become part of another person through an object, which, strictly speaking, is not just an object but a part, a piece of myself. To give is to put into the other's existence a piece of myself so as to establish a solid link that ties us" (Varese 2004: 33). This exchange amongst people creates a relationship that bonds communities and creates a shared history. It is for this reason that it is significant to find turquoise stones in the sacred sites of México, such as La Quemada/Chicomoztoc or Alta

Vista/Chalchihuites[36] in Zacatecas or to find Macaw feathers as an important part of the oral tradition and sacred ceremonies of the Zuni in New México. These examples serve as illustrations of the deep exchanges of spiritual and material wealth that took place amongst people who came to value and adopted certain important stones or feathers into their own cultural and traditional repertoire. The important point is that, ideally, the struggle and mission of Native American Studies as a hemispheric discipline is to promote and advocate for intercontinental exchange, sharing, and unity, while respecting each individual nation's right to autonomy and sovereignty. This idea falls in line with the shared prophesy of the eagle and condor[37]—the vision that the North and South of the continent would reunite; the eagle representing the north, and the condor representing the south.

While some may have wanted to locate my work of the Xicana/o Indígena community in México, others have wanted to locate it in the United States. Neither geographic location defines the space Xicanas/os occupy. Therefore, the region/geographic area that I would like to argue as my place of research is that of Aztlan. For the reasons that I began to unfold in the initial part of this section, I further explore Aztlan as an undefined physical location and I argue that it is an ideological/spiritual center and claim for an origin and for a "belonging." Claiming Aztlan as my geographic/regional location is more than significant in my discipline, as it goes against the grain of what is considered a region, even in my revolutionary

[36] In my personal travels to these sacred sites and ceremonial places of my own Caxcan ancestors, I have seen first-hand the turquoise pieces that came from the Pueblo ancestors of the region now known as the U.S. Southwest. Both locations are said to have been major merchant centers of trade, connecting the trade routes for these precious stones. "Chalchihuites" in Nahuatl, translates into jade, turquoise, or precious stone. The main plaza kiosk is covered entirely by a mosaic of jade stone found from this area. It is also area site where major pieces of turquoise jewelry are found.

[37] Much information about this prophesy is cited in the literature and propaganda of the Peace and Dignity Journeys.

department/field. It is my hope to expand the boundaries and challenge them as Renya Ramirez (2007) contends in her description of "urban Native hubs." Ramirez argues that "hubs" are spaces where a sense of belonging is created, despite the fact that they are away from the geographic center considered home. She describes the urban Native experience as a transnational experience, not unlike the experience of urban MeXicanas/os.

This knowledge that Nahua peoples, or specifically Mexica peoples, co-existed with other Native people in the area of the Southwest and had a prophesy to return north is supported by Hopi prophesy and history. In the *Book of the Hopi* (1963), Frank Waters explores several theories that connect Hopi ancestry to that of Mexica and Mayan people.[38] The idea of Túwanasavi,[39] mentioned earlier as the "center of the universe," was not meant to represent the "geographic center of North America, but the magnetic or spiritual center formed by the junction of the North-South and the East-West axes along which the Twins sent their vibratory messages and controlled the rotation of the planet" (137). In other words, it was the center from their vantage point and based on their relationship to the axis of the Earth and creation stories. F. Waters further explains that the southern axis, comprised of various Hopi clans, migrated north from México or Central America to form the balanced symbol of the cross or four directions. In other words, the Hopi have a clear understanding that part of their origins stem from Mesoamerica; evidence of the Hopi language deriving from the Uto-Aztecan language

[38] He also links the Hopis to other Mexican Indigenous groups such as the Toltecas, Chichimecas, Yaquí/Yoeme, and Tarahumara/Raramuri.

[39] As an interesting note, "Túwanasavi," which identifies the center or area where the four directions begin, sounds very similar to "Tawantinsuyo," the Quéchua word which essentially has the same meaning. The Hopi word "Táwaki," meaning "sun house" is also similar to "Tawantinsuyo." I am simply making an observation that raises the possibility of further connections.

family proves this. In addition, this migration also moved south, as F. Waters sites the Popul Vuh: the "Mayan ancestors originated in the seven-womb caves or ravines, left Tulan Pa Civan, and crossed the sea on stones placed in a row—similar to the stepping stones by which the Hopis crossed the Sea" (142). F. Waters makes further connections to the Mexica/Azteca origin story of Aztlan and the place of the seven caves:

> Without a doubt the Hopis were once part of this great complex…it is no exaggeration to say that among the Hopis of today we find living traces of this great Pre-Columbian culture. The myths and traditions of the Aztecs and Hopis are similar in many respects, and modern Hopis still carry on many of the same religious rituals observed by the Aztecs. Moreover, abstract symbols and pictographs carved on Mayan stelae and temple walls have been readily interpreted by our Hopi spokesmen in terms of their own migration legends…The Hopis believe that the early Mayas, Toltecs, and Aztecs were aberrant Hopi clans who failed to complete their fourfold migrations, remaining in Middle America to build mighty cities… (144).

While the 1960s concept of Aztlan was more symbolic, as it was identified as the "mythic homeland of the Aztecs" (Barrera 1988; Valdez and Steiner 1972; Anaya and Lomeli 1989), this evidence from the Hopi Peoples further affirms that Aztlan is not mere "myth" or symbol, but an actual sacred place of origin and history.

Still, in the 1960s, the concept of Aztlan provided a much needed symbol that gave Chicanas/os a sense of place and Indigenous identity. According to Luis Leal:

> The symbol is a sensory image which represents a concept or an emotion that cannot be expressed in its totality by any other method. The symbol expresses, with that sensory image, the significance of the spiritual. The image that we see reveals to us or makes us aware of the existence of something beyond the material. In other words, the sensory image or symbol is associated with a concept or an emotion (Anaya and Lomeli 1989: 7).

Resurrecting images/symbols creates a connection and a cultural spiritual awareness. In a sense, it is the oldest language we have. Symbols are doorways to new philosophy and

new ways of thinking; they are an Indigenous right to cultural expression to remain sovereign. Aztlan, and the subsequent Aztec imagery that permeated the Chicana/o imaginary, allowed for a doorway to be opened toward a new Indigenous consciousness.

Jack Forbes'1972[40] tour de force, *Aztecas del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlan,* created the foundation for many Xicana/o scholars and artists to expand the notion of "belonging" and explore Xicana/o Indígena identity and roots. His work opened the door to explore the idea that perhaps Xicanas/os did indeed belong to a homeland. This idea was further expanded by Chicano poet Alurista in *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan* (in Forbes 1973; and Anaya/Lomeli 1989). This plan outlined several goals for the Chicano Movement, all based in the fundamental knowledge that Aztlan was the spiritual homeland of Chicanos. It was a political act of self-naming (Noriega and Belcher 2004).

In my argument for Aztlan as my theoretical, regional and ideological location, I hope to move "beyond Aztlan" (Barrera 1988) as mere symbolism, beyond the association of "Chicano nationalism" with definitive boundaries in the U.S. Southwest, and beyond the romanticism of Aztec-centrism. I choose to define Aztlan as an idea, a spiritual belief, an experience, a state of mind that defies foreign, politically defined boundaries. I choose to align myself with Cherrie Moraga's (1993) defining essay calling for a *Queer Aztlan,* expanding boundaries ideologically and politically though gender and sexuality. I choose to recognize the continuing migration patterns of ancestors as a constant, un-ending cycle. Those born in the U.S. return to find a cultural and spiritual center in places such as México-Tenochtitlan, while those born and living in México

[40] It is noted in *Aztecas del Norte* that a manuscript with the title, "The Mexican Heritage of Aztlan (the Southwest) to 1821" was distributed in 1962-63 by the Movimiento Nativo-Americano to Chicanos in California and the Southwest. "As far as it is known, this is the first use of the term Aztlan to refer to the Chicano homeland" (17).

struggle for survival by migrating north to a place that was once the origin of their ancestors:

> It is no use; borders haven't worked, and they won't work, not now, as the indigenous people of the Americas re-assert their kinship and solidarity with one another. A mass migration is already under way; its roots are not simply economic. The Uto-Aztecan languages are spoken as far north as Taos Pueblo near the Colorado border, all the way south to Mexico City. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the indigenous communities throughout this region not only conducted commerce; the people shared cosmologies, and oral narratives about the Maize Mother, the Twin Brothers, and their grandmother, Spider Woman, as well as Quetzalcoatl, the benevolent snake.
>
> The great human migration within the Americas cannot be stopped; human beings are natural forces. I was reminded of the ancient story of Aztlan, told by the Aztecs but known in other Uto-Aztecan communities as well. Aztlan is the beautiful land to the north, the origin place of the Aztec people. I don't remember how or why the people left Aztlan to journey farther south, but the old story says that one day, they will return (Silko 1996: 123).

Leslie Marmon Silko, Pueblo writer, recognizes that *the people* are returning; it is a natural part of a cycle of migration that cannot be broken. Migration and movement are part of Indigenous survival, resistance, maintenance of ceremony and ways of life; they are part of the history of the land and of the original people. The oral history and prophesy of Aztlan and how it is understood and manifested today is important as it informs my project to unfold the complex history of Danza Mexica.

At the same time as I promote my theoretical region to be Aztlan, I am cautious not to reinforce nationalist, domineering, and perhaps "zionist" notions that Xicanas/os must "take back" Aztlan. I prefer the notion that Aztlan is a spirit that one carries inside; a belief, a value, a recognition that, as Indigenous people, Xicanas/os belong to this land/continent. Their/my story is connected intimately and in profound ways to this land and to the people that co-exist on the land. Aztlan is an idea of respect and dignity

towards the land and all those that share this space. The name "Aztlan" could perhaps be interchangeable with Abya Yala, Tawantinsuyo, or Turtle Island—names which other Indigenous people designate in their language or understandings of the same land/continent and identify as the center or place of origin/home. I choose to maintain Aztlan as the term to define my region because it still carries a historical, political, revolutionary yearning for connection to this land. It identifies the beginning of an evolution of identity and search/(re)clamation of self. This journey was/is an important part of Xicana/o history. While the analysis of Aztlan continues to be in process of peeling away the layers of meaning, some of which I have provided here, it may still leave itself open to critique as "Mexica-centric" or holding vestiges of romanticism. The term, as it has been used historically, for many connotes outdated ideas that all Xicanas/os are of Aztec descent and originate from a unilateral place called Aztlan. In contrast, I believe that Aztlan continues to be re-defined and transformed in meaning by the people and community.

For many Xicanas/os, Aztlan or even the term Xicana has evolved from solely identifying as "Azteca" in origin, and has since come to have a broader philosophical meaning. Both Aztlan and Xicana identify an experience of removal from original lands, from either side of the U.S. – Mexican Border. Xicanas/os, descendants of Indigenous people forced to migrate north, south, east and west either because of social, economic or political oppressions, find themselves in a unique position of being simultaneously privileged, yet oppressed, and powerful, yet disempowered. By expanding the study of Mexican, North/Central/South American migrant and multi-generational experiences and multi-gendered experiences within an Indigenous context, the discipline of Native

American Studies (with American broadly defined as all of the Americas) can begin to insert a new lens that challenges romantic notions of the past and of state-imposed national identities, and examines fully the commonalities and tensions that exist throughout this continent. Rather than isolate Xicana/o experiences, the discipline can begin to connect and link them to entire continental or even global movements of Indigenous people. Xicana/o Indígena identity politics crosses issues of ethnicity, gender, borderlands, body and spirit politics. My work will attempt to unravel only a few layers of this identity, which embodies notions of spirituality, resistance, land, sovereignty, and self-determination. In essence, I view Xicanas/os as "in diaspora." Aztlan is less about a specific locality, such as been expressed by the work of Roberto Rodriguez and Patrisia Gonzales (1998; 2002; n.d.; Maiz 2004), but more about the ideas also expressed in their work about "going back" and "becoming human" (1998; 2002; n.d.; 2005).

"Claiming Aztlan" is not the physical claiming of land, but of claiming an idea of reconnection to Mother Earth and realizing that we come from her breath of life. It is a reinterpretation of history. It is looking at the Earth and remembering who our people are. It is claiming our names, what we have done, and how we have lived. It gives a name to our existence and acknowledges our displacement and our desire to re-connect. While some Xicanas/os know where their abuelos (grandparents) come from, many do not. Xicana/o identity is a way of acknowledging that we are pan-Indigenous peoples in diaspora. Xicana/o identifies a community/pueblo and if one knows (or is in process of re-connecting to) their direct lineage, whether it be Mixteco, Zapotec, Purhepecha, Caxcan, or Mexica, that is an extension to the term Xicana/o. One does not have to be

one or the other; one can be both. Rather than limit identity, Xicana/o is an opportunity to expand identity. Indigenous bodies have been constantly subjugated to removal in order to benefit the state. As soon as one leaves their land (either forced or voluntary), they are no longer considered "Indian." For Xicanas/os, this issue is crucial because we must be able to hold on to our Indigenous identity no matter where we are or where we have been pushed. History continues to shape our politics. Therefore it is urgent that we reclaim and redefine ideas for the survival of our people and our identity.

Defying foreign, politically defined boundaries, Indigenous people of this land are following the migration patterns of their ancestors. These patterns are often circular and cyclical, moving back and forth throughout the year. Many MeXicana/o migrants move seasonally, returning to their ancestral homelands for the important community festivals and ceremonies. Those that cannot return home create the festivals and ceremonies in their present places of residency. This can all be related to Xicana/o danzantes, who either recently and/or inter-generationally became disconnected or unable to return to their ancestral homelands, and are now required to create their ceremonies and traditions in a new homeland. But, like the Tortuga (turtle), home is carried on their backs, and is with them where ever they go.

SECTION II

WEST
CIHUATLAMPA XIPE TOTEC

Nimitztlahpaloliz. Nimitztlazcamatilia Cihuatlampa Chaneque. Hueyi ni calli chichiltic, campa ichan Xipe Totec. Yahualli tlatlanqui. Tzotzona ayacaxtle. Tzotzona atecocoli. Ome.

Yo te saludo. Yo te agradezco, cuidador, Cihuatlampa, lugar de las mujeres. Esta grandiosa casa, el color rojo donde vive Xipe Totec, nueva vida. La noche ha ganado. Suenan las sonajas. Suenan los caracoles. Dos.

I greet you. I give you thanks, caretaker of the West direction, Cihuatlampa, place of women. This great house, the color red where Xipe Totec, new life. The night has won. Sound the rattles. Sound the conch shells. Two.

CHAPTER 6

~CHICUACE~

PRE-CUAUHTEMOC DANZA: PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

The Danza Mexica (commonly referred to also as Danza Azteca) tradition is but one strand in a dynamic history and legacy that has shaped how both Mexicanos and those self-identifying as Xicana/o name themselves and their experiences and (re)claim and/or continue to claim and embrace Indigenous knowledge. Contemporary Danza movements have served as a collective voice of self-representation and self-determination. It is part of the restoration process to rebuild and recover what was lost due to the invasion over 500 years ago. This is as much a recovery process, as it is a healing process (Middleton 2010; Duran 1995; Duran 1998; Duran 2006; Brave Heart 1998.).

What is known about la Danza Mexica prior to 1519 is that this Nahua[41] tradition was an established, complex philosophical belief and practice. Unlike today, "religion" (or spirituality) and science were not separate opposing entities. The approach to both science and spirituality was holistic, incorporating mind, body, and spirit. According to Jack Forbes:

> The life of Native American peoples revolves around the concept of the sacredness, beauty, power and relatedness of all forms of existence. In short, the ethics or moral values of Native people are part and parcel of

[41] While Mexica refers to a very specific people of Mexico, Tenochtitlan, the term Nahua (Nahua meaning Nahuatl-speaking or of the Nahuatl regions) peoples may be used interchangeably to encompass other surrounding pueblos/peoples that were not necessarily "Mexica" but still followed a very similar way of life and tradition. All the traditions of the many communities living in or around Mexico, Tenochtitlan, whether Tlaxcatecas, Totonacas, or Otomi (Nahñu), influenced one another and/or shared experiences.

> their cosmology or total world view. Most Native languages have no word for 'religion.'
>
> 'Religion' is, in reality, 'living.' Our 'religion; is not what we profess, or what we say, or what we proclaim; our 'religion' is what we do, what we desire, what we seek, what we dream about, what we fantasize, what we think—all of these things, twenty-four hours a day. One's religion, then, is one's life, not merely the ideal life, but the life as it is actually lived. (2004: 25)

In this same way, Danza is a philosophical, spiritual and cultural base derived from the observation of natural life cycles of the universe, as manifested through the study and practice of agriculture, astronomy, science, dance and ceremony. It is an approach to the sacred, natural world. It is one expression of many that Nahua peoples carried as part of the ceremonial practice and manifestation of their life ways. In "Philosophy of Native Science," Gregory Cajete (in Waters 2004) describes the role of ceremony as "both a context for transferring knowledge and a way to remember the responsibility we have to our relationships with life. Ceremony is associated with maintaining and restoring balance, renewal, cultivating relationship, and creative participation with nature" (54). Danza is ritual dance and ceremony that puts into practice the ideals of balance, harmony and veneration of the world/Earth on which we live. Yolanda Broyles-González discusses the deep connections between Teatro Chicano and Danza:

> The objectives of these and most other ritual dances are similar. In general, ritual dance seeks to promote a cosmic integration of the cosmic planetary movement, the individual, and the immediate and larger human community. Dance is felt to constitute a harmonizing force; humans expend force or energy on the representation of a particular dimension or understanding of human and planetary life and situate themselves within that understanding. Each dance representation manifests an understanding or blueprint of life dynamics or a dimension of life dynamics. Numerous Conchero dances, for example, are named after particular deities or 'myths' that represent not individuals but relational complexes and principles pertaining to life and creation. Dances constitute vessels of

> indigenous scientific thought concerning all movement in the cosmos (1994: 117).

According to Clara Sue Kidwell's, "Ethnoastronomy as the Key to Human Intellectual Development and Social Organization," the structures that demonstrate the observations of the sky or patterns in nature are our historical records (Grounds, Tinker, Wilkens 2003: 7). Danza is a historical record, similar to oral tradition, and must be respected as a sacred evidence of a people's existence, experience, science and knowledge. Kidwell further states:

> In an intellectual sense, there are two sources of knowledge—esoteric and individual knowledge, available only through dreams, visions, or initiation; and common knowledge, available to all people through everyday experience. …Although Indian cultures are deeply spiritual, they are also pragmatic…Because knowledge of spiritual beings is personal, much of the intellectual life of Native People is grounded in emotional experiences. Dreams and visions are sources of personal knowledge. Initiation rites are sources of esoteric knowledge, generally gained through experiences that involve physical pain to inspire a different emotional understanding of events (Grounds, Tinker, Wilkens 2003: 8).

According to my interview with maestra Temitzin, from the beginning of one's life till the end—the goal is to achieve *conocimiento*[42]--understanding, knowledge and wisdom to achieve balance; to "desarollar a nosotros mismos*"* or evolve as human beings. Danza, as part of that evolution and acquisition of knowledge, involves a certain level of physical pain, whether it is blisters on the feet or the soreness of the body, or the exercise of fasting before a ceremony. This is viewed as part of the offering and prayer to arrive at a deeper sense of understanding. The physical experience of Danza becomes individual knowledge as well as the transference of esoteric knowledge. In order for mainstream science or academia to accept Danza as knowledge, there would need to be a radical shift in the empirical understanding of what constitutes knowledge. This is an ongoing battle

[42] I am responsible for all my Spanish to English translations in this dissertation.

for Native American scholars and scholarship, but the issues, histories, and stories are important enough that they continue to be told or, in this case, danced.

Danza is an on-going practice of respect and reciprocity to the universe. The dance embodies movements particular to life cycles and stories, and, simultaneously, the body itself experiences communication to the cosmovision. This "cosmovision" is a particular view or understanding of the world, time, and space. Its ritualized representation is enacted by danzantes and the desire to move in harmony with the rotation of the universe is communicated through movement. In these ways, Danza represents the values that inform the daily lives of MeXicanas/os. For most Indigenous peoples, dancing is one way that humans can achieve a full sense of self; it is the essence within the soul. Mainstream interpretations have often incorrectly asserted that the dances were for "the gods," when in actuality, the term "gods," in reference to a polytheistic belief system, is misconstrued. In fact, all evidence from my research and interviews points to a common understanding that there is one Great Spirit or Creator and multiple manifestations and reflections of the Creator and the life forces which exist in our universe. The dances and ceremonies are not for "gods" but rather for beings, spiritual and cosmic forces that are alive and are important enough to be loved and thanked. For example, the sun is energy; food comes from the sun, therefore, it only makes sense to give the sun some credit. Maiz or corn is a powerful, staple food in Mexica culture because it creates the flesh of the body. The beings that care for humans, feed and sustain humans, such as Mother Earth, deserve to be "worshiped." By "worshiping" these beings, practitioners are simply acknowledging that they are worthy of respect. Danza is part of and a reproduction of the complex web of life forces that

exist; it is a way to maintain traditional knowledge systems. The human movement of the body and act of ceremony is a reflection of the earth, and, in order for humans to maintain connection to the earth, they must know the earth as they know their bodies.

Cajete discusses the Chaos Theory and the "butterfly effect" as relevant to ceremony (in Waters 2004). He explains that, over time, even small things can have large-scale effects. He describes the weather patterns and the sometimes dramatic or unpredictable shifts in the weather that are called the "butterfly effect." This butterfly effect can be called chance, but really it is the cumulative influence of a small change in the system. Cajete claims that this small chance could quite possibly be the effect of a Native prayer, song, dance or ritual to bring rain. Similarly, the movements and formations in Danza Mexica are highly mathematical and calculated with scientific meaning and metaphor, meant to both imitate and affect the natural world. The dances tell stories which explain natural phenomena. For example, the Danza of *Cintli* or corn uses a movement that represents the wind to show how pollen is spread, and how each step represents the life cycle of the corn and its growth process. The Danza of *Tlaloc* or rain demonstrates through movement the entire process of a storm beginning from the quiet, slow movements that represent rain, and then progressive quickening to represent a rising storm. The body then forms in a movement that resembles the jagged shape of a lightning rod. This rain dance both represents the rain and communicates to the "spirit of rain." This dance represents a scientific explanation of how rainfall can develop into a storm. Being an agriculturally based community with the major cultivators being corn, beans, squash, and chile, Indigenous Mesoamerican economic and gastronomic sustenance depended on the right amount of rainfall to uphold their daily life. Nature's

extremes, such as flood and drought, caused instability and required that humans collectively honor and make "ofrendas" (offerings) to Mother Earth. It was necessary to intercede with the spirits of the natural forces; one of the forms of intercession was Danza.

While to some, these dances might seem to be mere aesthetic, in actuality they represent the scientific and the spiritual simultaneously. Cajete discusses the power of individual and collective creativity and its subtle power to influence the world: "This is the basis of the precept of Native Science that a single individual's vision may transform a society, or that a rain dance done properly, with one mind can bring rain" (Waters, 2004: 49). In examining the practice of Danza, one must look its totality, the effects of Danza not only through the actual practice of it, but also its impact on the daily life and everyday moments of the individual. While perhaps the agricultural basis of life for the Mexicas prior to 1519 was the motivating factor of the dances, these dances for rain or corn are still needed in contemporary times when environmental sustainability, traditional farming and biodiversity practices are threatened. As a colonized people, MeXicanas/os have raised the question of guardianship to land and have made reclamations of the historical legacy and relationship MeXicanas/os have to the land. For many urban Xicanas/os, Danza has provided a doorway to reconnect culturally and spiritually to the earth. While a rain dance (*Tlaloc*) may have had a pragmatic purpose for ancestors during a particular time period, the same dance in contemporary times still has the potential for real transformative possibilities while taking on new meanings and purpose.

Of all the many spiritual, artistic, and musical traditions of the Nahua/Mexica people, Danza not only has endured, but flourished. These prayer, ceremonial, and social

dances reflect a language from which ancestors of the past can communicate with generations of the future (Aguilar 1983). Danza is movement and human expression of natural and cosmic phenomena, creating consciousness and a connection between participants themselves and with the delicate balance, equilibrium, and harmony of the earth and universe. Danza was viewed as a science of human movement, a bodily expression of cosmic philosophy/theory, and a form of spiritual empowerment.

According to Garner (2009), in the 1940s there were approximately 5,000 individual danzantes in Mexico City and, by the 1990s, this number had increased to 10,000-15,000 in Mexico City and 50,000 in the Valley of México. According to Gabriel Estrada, "There are about fifty to one hundred thousand danzantes in the United States and México, a reflection of the 1,319,848 fluent speakers of Nahuatl and the large portion of tens of millions of Mexican Indians who maintain aspects of the Chichimec-Nahuatl roots" (Gaspar de Alba 2003: 44). Anthropologists estimate that the number of Mexica dance circles or whole groups has grown from fewer than two dozen before 1992 to several hundred today in Mexico City alone. In 1996, a study showed that in the United States, the number of participants/dancers went from several hundred in 1991 to more than 10,000 nationwide, mostly in urban areas such as New York, Boston, and Minnesota (Schrader,1996: 2). This number is probably significantly higher today. In Northern California, there are approximately a dozen Danza circles and perhaps double that number in Southern California. The Danza movement continues to grow. I assert that, similar to the U.S. census spike of the Native American population in the 1970s, the increase and steady rise of population in Danza is not due to the rise in numbers of people (i.e., births), but, rather, due to the rise of an Indigenous consciousness. In the 2010

census, there was an explosion of respondents of "Latino descent" who identified themselves as "American Indians," tripling from 400,000 in the year 2000, to 1.2 million in 2010 (Decker 2011). According to the 2010 census, "Seventy percent of the 57,000 American Indians living in New York City are of Hispanic origin, according to census figures. That is 40,000 American Indians from Latin America—up 70 percent from a decade ago" (Decker 2011: 1). In some ways, one can view this as part of an urban Indigenous social movement and the replication of rural notions of belonging in the urban setting (Ramirez 2007). This represents a "raised awareness among native Latinos who believe their heritage stretches farther back than the nationalities available on the census form" (Decker 2011: 2). Danza, in its fundamental beliefs and practice, has become a tool for decolonization and profound spiritual healing for the Xicana/o community. When one compares the values that confront society today, such as sexism, heterosexism/homophobia, capitalism, individualism, and human arrogance, they are in stark contrast to the values that Danza, in its origins, serves to promote and instill. This does not imply that those issues do not exist in contemporary Danza circles or in the lives of individuals/danzantes, but Danza creates a forum and community within which these issues can be addressed and dealt with.

For the outside observer, the practice and act of Danza may be perceived as purely visceral. Yet, below the surface of the performance of Danza, the colorful regalia, copal incense, drums and instruments, and visual stimuli, the extreme level of commitment and need for leadership and organizing skills to create the final presentation of Danza is complex. The time and dedication necessary to prepare oneself physically (physical endurance and memorization of dances) and aesthetically (through the creation

of regalia, earning of feathers, and other necessities) extends far beyond the ceremonial, cultural, and educational formal presentation of Danza. Beyond the actual dancing, Danza is understood as ubiquitous in everyday life. Danza has provided moral and cultural codes for many Xicanas/os raised in urban environments who are seeking a connection with their Indigenous identity or deeper Earth consciousness.

In order to understand the contemporary Danza movement in California and the greater U.S., and its influence on Xicana/o Indígena identity and life-ways, one must also understand the context and movement from which Danza survived in Mexico City. According to David Carrasco (2000), Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a historian and member of Hernán Córtez's crew, documented ritual dances performed for Moctezuma, producing the earliest ethnographic accounts of Danza. María Sten's *Ponte a Bailar, Tú que Reinas: Anthropología de la Danza Prehispánica* (1990)[43] indicates otherwise and points out that the "codices" can provide the earliest documentation. Her book demonstrates that the observations of Danza in the sixteenth century, documented by the early Catholic friars, must be coupled with analyses of Mexica books/amoxtli/codices, and the colors and paintings of certain "idols," clay figures, and stone carvings. She expands upon images presented in a wide array of codices that clearly depict Danza in its many forms, using Spanish chronicles to augment and piece together a comprehensive picture of Danza pre/post-Cuauhtemoc. She argues that analysis must also incorporate the architecture and temples because sacred sites were "monumental structures reproducing the world of Mexica myth on earth" (Pendelty 2004: 15).

Spanish interpretations and written testaments, influenced by Spanish religious views, perceived the dances as satanic or pagan rituals honoring the devil (Sten 1990).

[43] Translation: *Dance, You that Reigns: Anthropology of Prehispanic Dance*

Some dances were considered "highly improper" as noted the biased Friar Diego Durán, describing a dance of love and sexual expression called *Cuecuechcuícatl*, "the ticklish dance." He also refers to the "snake dance" as suggestive, and the sacred rites of passage into marriage as a sort of "erotic choreography" (Pendelty 2004: 14). Rather than rely solely on these European chronicles, Sten gives a comprehensive view and analysis of Danza, incorporating Mexica renderings of Danza in the text. From an anthropological interpretation, she describes Danza as an expression of the human body that not only exposes emotions, but movements that have the possibility to demonstrate, interpret and give insight to the social, economic and political context of the daily lives and experiences of Mexica-Nahua peoples prior to the invasion (10). Danza itself was an extension of society that expressed spiritual belief systems, work, power, sex, and social orders and cohesion. In the introduction to Sten's text, she quotes Confucius: "Muéstrame la danza y la música de un pueblo, y te diré su estado de salud, de su moral y del gobierno de este pueblo./ Show me the dance and music of a people and I will tell you their state of health, morals, and the government of this community" (1990: 8). This quote, as applied to Danza Mexica, is relevant as a deeper analysis of Danza, demonstrating its dynamic complexity. Danza is a reciprocal reflection of the social and cultural structures of Mexica society and the role of individuals. Social life affected Danza in as much the same way that Danza affected society, as both product and producer of culture, spirituality, art, science and relationships.

In Mexica/Nahua society, schools of song and dance were located next to the temples (Sten 1990: 23). To move or to dance was in essence to live, and life was guided by spiritual and natural elements. To dance was a spiritual obligation: "Pero bailar, era la

tarea de todos los miembros de la comunidad, desde muy temprana edad. Aprender a bailar, era como para el niño occidental de nuestros tiempos, aprender el alfabeto./ But to dance, was the work of every member of the community, from a young age. To learn to dance was like, for western children of our time, to learn the alphabet" (Sten 1990: 31). The Calmecac, one form of the school institutions, "drilled in the physical skills required of warriors, the mental disciplines necessary for social leaders, and the spiritual beliefs that would unite them. At night the students' sleep would continually be interrupted for impromptu lessons. There were various levels of attainment, from the entering students who were forced to clean temples to those who became cantors and priests assigned to the service of specific deities" (Pendelty 2004: 13). Danza and ceremonies also served as a way to channel and "redirect potentially rebellious power of youth" (Pendelty 2004: 13). According to Mark Pendelty's *Musical Ritual in Mexico City: From the Aztec to NAFTA,* the observations of Friar Diego de Durán assert that young people had to undergo rigorous musical and religious training and "…took great pride in their ability to dance, sing, and guide others in the dances" (2004: 14).

Social, political, economic, and spiritual lives were intertwined; "ritual *was* life to the Mexica" [emphasis mine] (Pendelty 2003: 12). There were also regional dances and songs that varied from community to community. Danzas were conducted to honor and receive the yearly seasonal changes, such as the equinoxes and solstices, as well as for human daily life occurrences including child birth. Pendelty states, "Life in Tenochtitlan involved constant ritual performance, from daily rites in the domestic household to massive affairs of the state." He goes on to describe "smaller-scale rituals marking birth, marriage, death, and other community events" as peaceful affairs (7).

> Ritual allowed the Mexica to experience myth [creation stories/spiritual belief] as practice. While carrying out their daily lives, people would be much less likely to experience the world of myth in that way or enact the mythical principles prescribed in their culture's metanarratives. Ritual performance allows myth to become actual practice, if only for a moment. Sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound combine to make myth manifest. In no culture is the world of myth fully incorporated into daily profane existence. That is one of the reasons for ritual. During the ritual act, we can at least approximate the world of myth. We can feel it in a visceral way, through the heightened sights, sounds, smells and movements that define the ritual experience. Like the cathedral of New Spain, the Zócalo of independent México, and the mass-mediated spectacle of the twentieth century, the Great Temple was a place where the world of humanity could be projected onto a cosmic plane and reflected back in ritual (Pendelty 2004: 16).

As Pendelty states, ritual performance, such as Danza, touches upon all the senses and makes manifest the memory of a people, creating meaning and purpose. Once one learns the dances, they no longer have to recall the steps or patterns. The memory is in the body and the dance becomes a meditation. The dance becomes a microcosm of the human journey in life. For some contemporary danzantes, they refer to Danza as exactly that—the dance of life: "It is a feeling inside, when captured, the movement is ours. One doesn't think about it, you become one with the movement; it is the movement of life, it is the dance of life…it goes beyond the circle, to the home; it is total commitment, it is total sacrifice; it is nourishment that is purely spiritual" (Vento 1994: 61). There are moments where rituals are natural integrations of daily life and there are other moments, set aside from the mundane, to pay special homage, and/or to mark new cycles and changes. For example, the Mexica concept of a century was based on fifty-two years. Every conclusion of a fifty-two year cycle, a new fire ceremony was performed. "All fires were extinguished, producing darkness," then a new fire was lit in the sacred temples of the city and "the new fire was then spread throughout Tenochtitlan… atop the

torches of young runners, in this way, each end was also viewed as a beginning—not of a new era, as in the Judeo-Christian sense of time, but of another movement in the ongoing cycle of existence" (Pendelty 2004: 9).

La Danza was deemed as a reflection of the universe. It was believed that the planets and the sun (our solar system) rotated, moved, or "danced" constantly, as well as the spirits and all animal creatures, in order for life to continue. They danced, in the same way as humans danced, to honor the higher power, Creator, "Great Spirit" or "Ometeotl"[44] that kept the universe and time moving. The rotation of the planets, moon, and sun represents the movement of time; the changing of days, months, and years can only continue as the cosmic forces continue. For this reason, Danza was a critical element of the spiritual and cultural life of Nahua societies. When birds or butterflies are flying, it could be said that the spirits are also dancing. It was believed that even at death, the spirits would dance (Sten 1990: 38-39). From birth to death, Danza was a part of life.

Like the solar system, Danza was conducted, for the most part, in a circle, although sometimes the Danza would move in the form of a serpent. When conducted in a circle, each danzante, like each planet, would dance and rotate in the circle, careful to move in balance and in duality. For example, if one movement began with the left foot, the next movement would begin with the right foot. Each dancer symbolizes a planet that is constantly in motion and exercising its influence on the entire solar system (Poveda 1981). For that reason, when a person is leading a Danza, they are like the sun and the rest of the danzantes circle that danzante and should follow the lead danzante in exactly the way they are executing each step. Even if the leader makes a mistake, the rest of the

[44] Literally translates to mean "dual energy." This a Nahuatl terms used to identify the Creator/God which is both energies/forces to create life; meaning both female and male in one being.

danzantes should duplicate the steps exactly as the leader. Like the sun and moon, which influence the entire solar system, the lead danzante influences the entire circle.

The Danza circle, which symbolizes the solar system, simultaneously represents an atom which contains positive protons and negative electrons constantly seeking balance and circling the center/nucleus (Poveda 1981). The duality of life, both negative and positive, and the constant need for balance is present in one atom. In essence, the Danza circle represents both the "gran universo," the vastest part of the cosmic existence known to humans, and the most basic element of our being at the same time. The presence and honoring of the four sacred elements (fire, water, air, and earth), which also correspond to the four cardinal directions, are the basic elements that compose our earth and are the same chemical elements that compose our human body. As Andrés Segura explains:

> Nosotros buscamos la armonía cósmica. Ofrecemos nuestro esfuerzo, nuestro trabajo, nuestro sacrificio, nuestros sudores, nuestros cantos, nuestros rezos, y nuestras peticiones a esa conciencia cósmica, para que dentro de nosotros, dentro del núcleo que constituímos los que estamos danzando, en esta localidad de Austin, en Texas, en los Estados Unidos, y también entre los que están afuera, y en los demás países del mundo exista esa armonía cósmica. Estó es por lo que danzamos./ We are looking for cosmic harmony. We offer our strength, our work, our sacrifice, our sweat, our songs, our prayers and our petitions to that cosmic consciousness, so that within us, within the nucleus that those of us that are dancing constitute, and also within those that are outside, in this locale of Austin, Texas, in the United States, and within all the other countries of the world, may that cosmic harmony exist (Poveda 1981: 296).

Danza is a constant reflection of life and our relationship to the Earth. As humans existing in this universe, we are constantly surrounded by divine, intelligent beings (stars, planets, moon) and therefore it only makes sense to ask for protection and permission from these beings that are obviously stronger forces than humans (Poveda 1981). At the

same time, it is important to acknowledge the intelligence throughout our body. Every cell has decision making power that allows for humans to live and breathe without conscious thought. Danza is a journey toward cosmic consciousness and harmony amongst all that exists.

The circle of danzantes would surround the "ombligo" or bellybutton/center, which would consist of a fire (an actual fire pit or a smaller fire consisting of hot charcoals that burn "copal," a tree resin/sap that creates an incense smoke).[45] A sahumadora, or "woman smoke carrier" is responsible for maintaining constant copal smoke and upholding the harmony of the circle. This fire/smoke represents the sun, center of our solar system and giver of life. The center was considered the altar, which could also be a tree. From the moment that the Danza begins, sacred space is created: "Before the dance commences, the space in which it is to occur has to be purified and permission asked of the four winds (*los cuatro vientos*) and of the souls (á*nimas*) by means of songs and prayer. The dancers then spread out, men and women, taking alternate places in the circle" (Rostas 1991: 7). No matter where people danced, inside a temple, in front of it, around the fire or tree, or in a public plaza, that space becomes sacred in that moment, in that time and space, as the Danza ceremony is carried out. Dancing around the altar, fire or tree was in effect a way to connect to the divine, to the sun, heavens and creation. Sten (1990) makes the Mexica comparison with Huichol and Raramuri conceptualizations of space:

[45] According to Señora Cobb, the copal comes from the "pirul" tree, also known as "pepper tree." There are also other trees known as "Copal" trees from which people gather sap to create the sticky resin- rock that, once broken up, can be sprinkled on the hot coals to create an incense smoke. In 1996, during my first trip to México with Señora Cobb, when we arrived at Teotihuacan, she made me notice the many pirul trees that surround the sacred sites in the area. In pointing this out to me, the lesson she wanted to impart was that when we burn the copal, the smell of the smoke takes us back to the sacred places of our ancestors. It does not matter where we are located (i.e., the United States); burning the copal would allow our historical/spiritual memory to take us back to our ceremonial centers.

> El patio preparado para las danzas, es parte esencial de todas las fiestas…No se canta ni baila el *rutubúri* en otros lugares…El patio es algo más que un simple lugar para bailar. Es el único sitio sagrado o religioso que los tarahumaras reconocen con las sola excepción de la iglesia…El patio circular representa el mundo y los cuatro puntos cardinales son sus entradas, y todo lo que se utiliza en el patio debe ser dedicado a ellos…El patio recibe el nombre de *awilatei* (de awi, bailar y latei, sufijo de lugar.)…Es allí donde se empieza la comida para que los dioses pueden participar.
>
> The courtyard which is prepared for the dances is an essential part of the celebrations…One cannot sing or dance the *rutubúri* in other places…The courtyard is something more than a simple place to dance. It is the only sacred or religious site that the Tarahumaras recognize with the only exception being the Church…The circular courtyard represents the world and the four cardinal points are the entrances, and everything that is used in the space should be dedicated to them [spirits]…The courtyard is called *awilatei* (awi meaning 'to dance' and latei, 'the place')…It is there where one begins the food so that the gods can participate (60).

In the space or circle, the Danza/danzantes were intrinsically connected to the music/musicians. The musicians and dancers were tied together by the spiritual lasso which was linked by the four cardinal directions (Sten 1990: 51). Different colors represented each cardinal direction and those same colors carried different energies. For example, in the West direction, red, the color of blood, represented life and could be perceived as a happy color, but also the color of death and a color of protection. For this reason, even in contemporary Danza, red bandanas or "*ixcuahumecatl*" (literal translation: sash around the forehead) and a red "faja" (sash or belt) worn around the waist, is used for the spiritual protection of one's thoughts/prayers of the mind and to protect the area of the bellybutton, where humans first receive sustenance from the mother and where, if not protected, energy can enter.[46] Through understanding the notion

[46] Wearing the red bandana around the head not only protected the place that contains our thoughts and ideas, but it is also the first area of the body (for most people) that enters the world at birth. The sash around the waist protects the bellybutton, as well as the centrifugal force where all bodily movement begins.

of creating sacred space and the corresponding colors used by the Mexicas, one can also begin to understand how they constructed the universe:

> El universo fue concebido geométricamente, y se dividía en trece pisos celestes y nueve pisos de inframundo, habitados por diversos dioses y seres sobrenaturales. Todas estas fuerzas eran benévolas y dañinas a la vez, ayudándole al hombre y destruyéndole al mismo tiempo. 'La superficie terrestre estaba dividida en cuatro segmentos. Al centro, el ombligo se representaba como una piedra verde preciosa, horadada donde se unían los cuatro pétalos de una gigantesca flor, otro símbolo del mundo terrenal. En el Altiplano Central, el Norte tenía el color negro, el Oeste era blanco, el Centro verde, el Sur azul-verde, y el Este rojo: los cuatro colores: rojo, negro, blanco y azul-verde son los colores fundamentales en la cosmovisión mexica, y éstos son los que ligan en la mente de los antiguos mexicanos, tanto como los puntos cardinales, a ciertos fenómenos de la naturaleza…
>
> The universe was conceived geometrically and divided into thirteen celestial levels and nine levels of the underworld, where different gods [spirits] and supernatural beings lived. All of these forces were benevolent and harmful at the same time, helping mankind and destroying it at the same time. The surface of the land was divided into four segments. The center, the bellybutton, was represented by a precious green stone, pierced in what unified the four petals of a giant flower, another symbol of the earthly world. In the Central High Plains, the North, had the color black, the West was white, the Center green, the South blue-green, and the East red: the four colors: red, black, white, and blue-green are the fundamental colors in the cosmo vision of the Mexica, and this is what binds, in the minds of the ancient Mexicans, the cardinal points with certain natural phenomena (Sten 1990: 72).[47]

In essence, the Danza circle mimicked the universe itself. It was a microcosm of the workings of the universe. Just as the universe rotated in a circular fashion, so did the movement within the Danza, paying careful attention to maintain the flow of dancers in an agreed-upon direction. Beyond Danza, even the cities were constructed using a street grid that corresponded with the cardinal directions and with the cosmic movement of the

[47] In some teachings, the East is represented by the color white and the West is red; in many teachings the center is also red, the place of the sun/life. But, as stated in Sten (1990), it is possible for the colors to be interchangeable. Some colors can be part of other essences of the other directional points because they are essentially all interconnected as well. For example, in the fire, we can see blue, yellow, and red.

universe. The construction of society was based on balance and equilibrium with the cosmos, giving people the ability to witness the movement of stars, the sun, and moon in their own cycles of time (Pendelty 2005). The circle represented eternity and time. The calendars that measure time, whether they are solar (such as the Mexica Sun Stone) or lunar (as with the Coyolxauqui) are circular in form. The measurement of time is circular and cyclical, representing the cosmic movement of time and its relationship to the earth. Just as the universe dances to honor the Creator, so do the danzantes. Danzantes move with the rhythm of the day and night and with the seasons "con el deseo de ayudar al mundo y al tiempo para que sigan su marcha hacia el futuro/ with the desire to help the world and time so that it continues its march toward the future" (Sten 1990: 116).

According to Sten (1990), there were certain ceremonies and times that women would dance only with one another and men were not allowed. The same was the case for men. In addition, there were also times when Danza ceremony was mixed with both men and women, organized around the circle in that order: man-woman-man-woman, to create balance (see Appendix 2*)*. The dances could either be social or ritual. Sten (1990: 121) categorizes the significance of the Danzas in the following manner:

> 1) Conquistar el poder de las persona u objeto encerrado en círculo;/
> To win-over the power of the persons or object within the circle;
>
> 2) Proteger a la persona u objeto de las influencias nocivas que se encuentran al exterior del círculo;/ Protect the person or object from negative energies that might exist outside the circle;
>
> 3) Tratar, por medio del círculo de los danzantes, de transmitir el poder a la persona u objeto encerrados en él;/ Try, through the circle of danzantes to transmit power to the people and objects inside the circle;
>
> 4) Obtener por medio del círculo el poder del árbol—símbolo de la vida y de la fecundidad de la naturaleza; y finalmente/ Acquire from the circle, power from the tree—symbol of life and fertility of nature; and finally

> 5) El círculo (rueda) puede reflejar las relaciones sociales dentro de la comunidad./ The circle (spins) can reflect the social relationships within the community.

These are examples of some of the purposes for which Danza was practiced and performed. There are also multiple ways in which the dances were conducted, for example, some dances simulated the movement of a serpent, representing Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl, depicted as a plumed serpent (the conjoining of the earth, water and sky) was a symbol of knowledge and wisdom. It was also a symbol of fertility and new life as a snake sheds its skin to create a new one. As an agricultural people, it would make sense that some Danzas would follow the movement of a serpent to pray for the continued fertility and new life of the crops.

The symbol of Quetzalcoatl and that of a serpent has circulated throughout many cultures in Mesoamerica. It also "points to a Mesoamerican practice of improvisation, innovation, and adaptation" (Garner 2009: 418), which is the very essence of Danza. The image/idea of Quetzalcoatl has circulated and been transformed in its rendering and depiction through multiple cultures in Mesoamerica. Similarly, the practice of Danza has also circulated (and continues to circulate) through multiple cultures, not only in Mesoamerica, but throughout North America. Contemporary Danza groups have made their way into various U.S. Native ceremonial/social circles such as Sun Dances and Pow Wows, and have interacted with non-Indigenous people as well. Naturally, this circulation and interaction with multiple cultures has led to transformations in Danza, and new interpretations, understandings, and connections to symbols and meanings. This is the natural process that occurred even in pre-Cuauhtemoc time periods; ideas, symbols

and philosophical beliefs traversed through different communities and, as a consequence, produced different or even more elaborate renderings.

Danzas often have a purpose to "imitate" or "mimic" the natural world or to tell a story, such as explaining the process of corn, imitating the hunting of an animal (Danza del Cazador—Dance of the Hunter), or depicting the battle between the eagle and jaguar (Danza Aguila Blanca/ White Eagle Dance).[48] Some Danzas have a purpose to invoke certain animal spirits. Danzantes might camouflage, convert, or submit themselves to the spirit of an animal. A danzante will wear the animal's skin, feathers, or make regalia in the form of the particular animal. Then, from the moment they wear it, they will begin to imitate the movements of the animal, make the sounds of the animal and, ultimately, become the animal.

Before an individual Danza begins, one must first ask permission, through a smaller "danzita" (little dance) that is known as the "permiso" or the permission. This small dance consists of marking the four directions with one's foot and stamping the earth as a sign of "waking up" or "greeting" the earth and all its directions, letting them know that one is present to make an offering. After dancing this permiso, the danzante then proceeds to begin his/her ofrenda of the dance they wish to offer, calling in certain energies, spirits, or meanings through the chosen dance. For this reason, it is crucial for one to know the meaning of the dance because it represents certain dynamics that one may or may not want to call. For the danzante, "the feet" in dance make contact with the earth and call up her energy. Each danzante or leader of a group is given the opportunity to lead a dance for the whole circle. At this time, the danzante will be invited to enter the

[48] This Danza represents the struggle between night and day. The eagle represents the sun and the jaguar's spotted skin represents the night sky.

center of the circle and lead a dance in front of the altar. Each danzante, while remaining true to the steps and meanings of the dance, may still incorporate their own unique style or rendition, "younger dancers in particular tend to add embellishments or make changes to the basic steps" (Rostas 1991: 9). As one danzante (personal interview[49]) mentioned, "the word dance is in 'guidance.' It is too difficult for two people to lead, therefore, allowing one person to lead allows for all to flow with the beat of the drum. And before the word 'dance' is G-U-I. I think of this as God, U and I dance." In Danza, there is an understanding that when one leads or offers a dance, the lead danzante is dancing with and for all of creation, joining all the danzantes in the circle for this same purpose.

One aspect of the Danza is the mirror-image effect. If one is observing a dancer on the opposite side of the circle, they must pay careful attention to reverse his/her movements. If the opposite dancer is kicking with his/her right leg, then the danzante must make sure they are kicking with their own right leg, not the left, mimicking the exact leg opposite of them. This is also a metaphor for Danza being a reflection of life; while it seems as though one is moving in the opposite direction, in actuality, one is just on the other side of the circle, doing the same steps and moving in identical direction. As such, perhaps they are not in opposition, but merely at a different point of the circle of life. Danzantes are, in effect, dancing to create harmony and balance, striving for all dancers to be in sync. Even though they are in a circle, it does not mean they are the same: "Every dancer is for himself, within his place" (Kurath 1946: 389). Each danzante still maintains his/her autonomy, as demonstrated through the inclusion of his/her own particular style or flair, while still following the exact steps for each dance. According to

[49] The majority of my "personal interviews," which are cited in the References, were multiple interviews with my interlocutors (including phone, email, and in-person conversations) conducted during the research period.

Inés Hernández-Ávila, Danza "offers an exemplary model of social organization to honor both individual autonomy (each dancer chooses the dance he or she is to lead, and each dancer has the right to offer his or her thoughts during the moment for speaking) and collective autonomy (each "mesa"[50] recognizes its own discipline and respects the right of other mesas to govern in their own way)" (2005: 369). Essentially, the circle itself is autonomous in its moment of ceremony and there are also autonomous circles/groups within that larger ceremonial circle, and the individual danzantes themselves are autonomous.

While some Danzas are meant to imitate the natural world, others are abstract, with a sole purpose to enable danzantes to transcend the human body and elevate into a spiritual realm. In some instances, the purpose of the Danza is to reach a certain point where one releases him/herself from the material/physical world and arrives at a point of euphoria through the Danza. Sometimes this is only achieved after four days of fasting or bathing in a sacred water source to cleanse one self. The Danza might begin at sundown or at the beginning of night, or the marking of a new day or new era, and continue on until sunrise, or throughout several days. The use of sacred medicines might take place during the ceremony by elders or leaders of the dance in order to allow for a deeper entrancement into the Danza and the supernatural powers that exist (Sten 1990: 48-49).

Danza was/is[51] used for practical purposes as well. It represented the internal spiritual battle we all face, but also was used during real battles when people were at times of war. La Danza was used in preparation for fighting, and to pray for the outcome.

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[50] "Mesa" or table refers to a large body of danzantes. This concept will be discussed further in the dissertation.

[51] In this chapter I move from past to present tense because I am distinguishing the perceptions and views of Mexicas pre-Cuauhtemoc, but these same views are also, for the most part, relevant and maintained in the present, making it difficult to be consistent in one tense.

In contemporary times, Danza has been used as a method for young people who might be at odds, have fought or exchanged negative words, to make amends through the offering of a dance together within the Danza circle. Danza might be used as a prayer for healing, either for a physical illness or for emotional healing. Danza "manifest[ed] a process of religious healing that is not only collective and individual, but also earthcentric yet cosmic" (Hernández-Ávila 2005: 359). Danza in the pre-Cuauhtemoc era was also used as a social marker. One's role or social position in Danza could be determined by his/her birth sign or *Tonalamatl*, the date and time of birth. Their Tonalamatl could foresee the danzante's destiny and aptitude as a danzante. Danza was such an important part of one's identity and spirituality that "prohibiting" someone to dance was viewed as a punishment, social humiliation, and disgrace. This was used when someone broke the natural or civil laws.

The material elements of Danza included musical instruments such as the *huehuetl*[52]/drum, *teponaztli* (hollowed wooden marimba-type drum), *ayacaxtli* (hand-held rattle), various types of flutes, and seed pods worn around the ankles, known as *ayoyotes*. The drum, placed in the center of the circle, was a "symbol for the center of the world; its beat is the heartbeat for the world…All the rhythms of the danza are already in the drum" (Vento 1994: 62). Special regalia or "trajes" were worn for certain occasions or celebrations, including jade necklaces, jewelry made from sea shells (representing the sacred waters),[53] facial and body paints, and macaw or other types of feathers. The regalia would represent the different elements of the natural world or emulate a particular animal.

[52] Huehuetl also translates to mean elder.
[53] Water, being life in itself, is also the essence of giving life to the food and plants.

If one imagines the complete picture of the Danza ceremony/circle, one would see a human theater mirroring the universe and the circle of life, including the sun/fire in the center, represented on an altar that may be a tree or constructed of flowers (see Appendix 3). The drums in the center are made of wood and represent the trees. The tree, which represents the spirit of Mother Earth reaching toward the spirit of the heavens, was also the vehicle which the spirits could use to climb up or down to be present with those danzantes that circled it.

Each danzante would be wearing a traje exhibiting the images of nature and/or animal spirits. As Gabriel Estrada notes,

> …medicinally, the human body, like the universe, it is divided by a great horizontal plane that separates primarily by the duality of femininity/masculinity that all of us have in our being—as women and men we are masculine and feminine at the same time—and over this division exist extremely complex structures (in Gaspar de Alba 2003: 46).

Similarly, the circle represents the cycles of life from youth to elder; and both the feminine and masculine energies, and the union of all four directions and all relations that exist in the universe (see Appendix 4).

CHAPTER 7

~CHICOME~

COLONIZATION TO SYNCRETISM: LA TRADICIÓN CONCHERA

Not unlike many Native American ceremonial practices in the United States during the early colonial era, after the arrival of the Spaniards in México, the practice of various Indigenous Danzas and ceremonies was prohibited and severely punished.[54] As mentioned in the previous chapter, what is known and/or documented about spiritual and ritual beliefs of Danza was corrupted; written under the hand and censorship of Spanish friars and soldiers, who depicted Indigenous complex knowledge systems as "savage," "pagan," and "evil." According to Aguilar (1983), the Spaniards' interest in collecting data was to be able to define the "heresies" of the Nahua people. Within these documents, friars such as Sahagún, Molina, and Las Casas also showed an "awed respect" and, at times, compassion for the Indigenous people. "For this reason, and for fear of reawakening the spirit of the Indian nations, most of these writings were hidden in the vaults and libraries of Madrid and the Vatican" (Aguilar 1983: 14). Even today, various sites in Europe (including the Vatican) continue to withhold artifacts and documentation from the Indigenous communities to whom they belong. There have been various international efforts to repatriate documents and items to their communities of origin. For example, there is a movement in Austria to demand the return of the original *copilli* or headdress of Moctezuma back to México.

From the beginning of what is labeled, "La Conquista" (The Conquest), or, more appropriately, "the Invasion," an incredible effort took place on the part of the Spanish

[54] This is an understatement, as punishment often constituted death or even massacre of people.

clergy and soldiers to obliterate any sign of Nahua "religion." Through the burning of irreplaceable, precious documents or codices, the knowledge base of a whole civilization was deliberately destroyed by Juan de Zumarraga (Vento 1994). Arnoldo Carlos Vento calls this an "intentional cultural and religious genocide" (1994: 60). Not only were people killed en masse, through disease and extermination, the culture and belief systems of those that survived were also condemned. Mario Aguilar (1983) details the observations of Hernán Cortez, who witnessed 3,000 dancers in a great circle in honor of *Quetzalcoatl*: "The Spaniards were awed at such tremendous show of precision, dexterity and endurance. The spectacle they beheld caused great fear in them." (Aguilar 1983: 12) As Aguilar continues, the Spaniards massacred the unarmed danzantes using swords, cannons, cross bows and guns, all weaponry powerful and unknown to the Nahua peoples of México. From the Nahua worldview, complete and total extermination via war and massacre with unequal levels of weaponry were unfamiliar and cowardly; as well as undefeatable. Vento (1994) argues that the Spaniards attempted to re-create medieval Europe in the Western hemisphere through imperialism, exploitation, and rule by the wealthy, the state, and the Church. Violence and expulsion would be executed in the same way on these new "infidels" as was committed on the Moors in Spain. He further lists the following aspects of medieval Europe that impacted the Americas:

(1) concubinage
(2) machismo
(3) low esteem of women
(4) vertical concept of life with God and the Pope at the top; serfdom society on the bottom
(5) imperialism as a double-edged sword (Spain and the Catholic Church)
(6) the caste system
(7) idea of plunder and booty, so characteristic in 300 years of crusading

> (8) the idea of privileges to the nobility class
>
> (9) truth interpreted by the theologians and dogma of the Church as the law of the kingdom
>
> (10) all major institutions in society controlled by the monastic orders of the Catholic Church (records, education, law, baptism, matrimony, medieval concept of funerals, etc.)
>
> (11) "might is right" concept enacted and used by the plutocracy
>
> (12) human sacrifice in the name of the *Santo Oficio* (Inquisition) claiming millions of innocent persons. (1994: 63)

Of striking interest in this concise list of colonial effects is that, contrary to the western, Euro-centric, and anthropological obsession with Aztec human sacrifice, rarely is Spanish human sacrifice mentioned. According to Fray Bartoleme de las Casas in his exposé entitled, *Brevisima Relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, over 25 million Natives perished due to the Spanish invasion (Vento 1994: 63). Had Aztec human sacrifice even occurred,[55] the claimed numbers could not equate with the brutal human sacrifice committed by the Spaniards (Forbes 2004).

In 1520, Spanish invader Pedro de Alvarado ordered the slaughter of all danzantes during their ceremony of *Toxcatl*, honoring *Huitzilopochtli*, divine hummingbird, symbol of will power. As Mexican scholar Miguel León-Portilla chronicles:

> In fact, the Noche Triste, the 'Sad Night' when the Spaniards were routed out of Tenochtitlán, was set off by the violation of a ritual act. Pedro de Alvarado, left in charge while Cortés was on the coast, violently disrupted a ritual honoring *Huitzilopochtli*. The surviving Mexica told Friar Sahagún that 'when the dance was loveliest, and song was linked to song, the Spaniards were seized with an urge to kill the celebrants' (León-Portilla 1990: 74).

The documentation continues, stating that conquistadores quickly moved to the center of the ceremony, "forcing their way to the place where the drums were played" (1990: 74).

[55] There is much evidence that argues the contrary. See, for example, Peter Hassler's work (1992).

Once there, they cut off the drummers' arms. The Mexica, outraged by the Spaniard's violent interruption of their most sacred ceremony, drove them out of the city.

The experience of this cultural genocide and holocaust on entire civilizations ultimately led to the military defeat of México-Tenochtitlan in 1521. The last leader or *Tlatoani* (speaker of the people), Cuauhtemoc, declared surrender, offering his last mandate to the people[56]:

> Our Sun (Age) has left us.
> He has left us in the shadows.
> We know he will return
> To illuminate us once again.
> While he dwells in the house of the departed,
> Let us be passionately united.
> Let us open our hand
> While concealing in our hearts all that we treasure.
> We must destroy our temples,
> Our places of meditation;
> The streets we shall leave deserted.
> We shall lock ourselves in our houses
> Until the New Sun (Age) shines upon us.
> There in our houses, fathers and mothers must teach their children
> That they may teach their children's children.
> How, one day we shall rise reunited,
> Gaining strength from our new Sun (Age)
> To fulfill our destiny. (Vento 1994: 62)

This mandate, while acknowledging a military defeat, clearly outlines that, although the people can no longer resist militarily, they must resist spiritually. This mandate instructs survivors to preserve their ways, to teach their children, and to go into hiding so that they, ultimately, will survive as a people. Cuauhtemoc leaves a prophesy for future generations that one day a new era or time will open up the possibility to once again live in the ways

[56] This "Mandato de Cuauhtemoc" has been translated in different forms and in different documents, but all with the same message. It is recognized as a prophesy kept through oral tradition by elders.

that were left by the ancestors. By including Cuauhtemoc's mandate, I insert myself and my feelings of hope and realization that Cuauhtemoc's living prophesy has come to be. As a danzante, I fulfill the dream of Cuauhtemoc that one day the people would return, no longer in hiding or being persecuted, but bringing our ways of life to the light. For many danzantes, this prophesy is a sacred bond to the wishes and desires of the ancestors. It serves as a reminder that we are living in that era.

Shortly after Cuauhtemoc's mandate, it can be inferred that many keepers of the sacred dance and spiritual ways were forced into hiding to survive culturally. Mario Aguilar (1983) calls the result, "a network of underground worship." If found practicing spiritual ways, individuals could be burned alive at the stake. Other upper class members of Nahua society assimilated into Spanish nobility or were bought into the dominant society's hierarchy, leaving their traditions behind (Aguilar 1983). Therefore, sacred ways were maintained by the agrarian or lower classes in Nahua society—in the home and within families—leaving long lineages of Danza and ritual practice that some, even today, can still link to a particular pre-Cuauhtemoc lineage.

It is at this point, after the Spanish invasion, that many Nahua spiritual ways become known as "traditions" or "traditional." What is today called traditional dance or Danza is linked to colonial origins. It was through that moment of interaction and resistance (as resistance was/is still an interaction with the oppressor or colonial powers) that what was once simply understood as "mitotiliztli," "sacred dance," or "way of life," became viewed and identified as "traditional" or "Indian/Indigenous." It becomes viewed as "of the other" or in opposition to the dominant. This notion of "traditional" is often times used in contrast with "folkloric" to infer "authenticity." While "folklore"

incorporates aspects of "tradition," it is recognized as holding stronger elements of invention and imagination (Krystal 2007). This idea of tradition is important, as post-Cuauhtemoc Danza, undergoes a significant transformation and accommodation to become known as "la tradición.[57]" This understanding of "la tradición" or tradition is directly understood to mean the Danza post-colonization, syncretized and linked with Christian/European/Catholic lines. Today, when one refers to la tradición, it is still understood to mean a very particular tradition; one linked to its post-colonial origins.

Danzantes, as a result of colonization, had to find ways to maintain their life ways. For some, it meant continual resistance and uprising. Given their mistrust of the Spaniards, danzantes either had to rebel, run away to the south, or accept death. The killing of friars and the failing project of religious conversion allowed for some negotiation. Through syncretism or synergistic methods (either the domination of one belief system influencing another or the equal blending of the two), Indigenous people were able to clandestinely maintain their spiritual belief systems, songs, dances, and prayers under the guise of Catholicism. According to Yolanda Broyles-González, "Historically, today's profession of 'Catholicism' by Mesoamerican peoples is an appropriation process born from resistance to colonial violence" (Cantú/Nájera-Ramírez 2002: 126). This process of syncretism, both culturally and ethnically, was still a painful process with lasting effects. The hacienda and encomienda systems and European control of metropolitan centers of México relegated and segregated Indigenous peoples into isolated enclaves and communities/barrios where they still co-existed and shared life spaces together. Since the Spaniards only cared that they had a steady labor force,

[57] Throughout this paper, I use the word tradition/traditional, as it is understood to mean "spiritual life-ways," still conscious of the fact that it can be a problematic concept. When I use the term, "la tradición," I am referring specifically to the Conchero dance tradition.

Indigenous peoples could continue to reproduce themselves and conduct their lives as they wished; separate from the dominant powers in control. This allowed Indigenous people to exist, persist, and continue their ways in secret, within a community, and inside the home.

As Indigenous peoples were pushed into the margins of society and literally into the margins of the city, these same enclaves would maintain themselves to be the barrios of today's Mexico City. Within these barrios, such as Tacuba or Tlaxcala (two contemporary barrios in Mexico City) many Indigenous people remained, and so did their knowledge of sacred ways and spiritual wealth. Therefore, it is no coincidence that many of the Danza teachers of today have origins in some of these barrios in Mexico City. At the same time, it must be remembered that, in these barrios where Indigenous people were marginalized, they were left to survive on their own. These same neighborhoods would remain the most disenfranchised and impoverished communities. So while these areas may have held generations of spiritual people and knowledge, they have also become the most marginalized areas, bearing the consequences of poverty, including crime, lack of education, violence, and lack of basic resources. Some of these communities have become infamous for being "dangerous" spaces lacking security and rampant with crimes of poverty. Today, the scarcity of water and denial of other basic services still plague the disenfranchised communities. Locals continue to fight for access to water.[58]

[58] One of my interviewees (Xiuhmetzin) discussed the current struggles of her community in Tlalpan, Mexico City and their on-going battle to get access to the main water supply. For years, the city and local government refused to open access and often times the water is shut off for hours at a time. This water is not potable and must be boiled.

This correlation between poverty and Indigenous communities, formed through a process of colonialism, becomes important when I examine the praxis of contemporary Danza teachers that came from these neighborhoods. Often times, while the danzantes from these barrios are very adept dancers and drummers, knowing the steps and meanings of Danzas like no others, they simultaneously deal with issues of alcoholism, domestic violence, and abuse. These social ills infiltrate their way into many Danza circles, often times perpetuating patriarchy, misogyny, and imbalance. Because of the lack of resources or jobs, one may see these Danza teachers focused on the economic benefits; the selling of culture or profiteering of Danza to make a living. I will discuss this further on, but make the point that this exploitation of Danza has deep connections to and reflections from a colonial past and the marginalization of people. While Nahua peoples, during the Spanish colonial era, were relegated to certain areas and pushed out into the periphery, only to be used as a slave labor force, this relative isolation allowed for the maintenance of Nahua food sources, life ways, and social organization, such as the tequio/mita.[59] The life ways of Indigenous peoples also influenced the Spaniards, who adopted, adapted or appropriated Indigenous concepts/ways[60].

Much of the literature claims that Danza originates in 1521 after the arrival of the Spanish, but, clearly, the dance itself predates Spanish contact. Similarly, much of the literature, rather than give a comprehensive history which displays continuity, only focuses on limited aspects of Danza or certain conduits of Danza, assuming that all are

[59] The tequio and mita systems, which are still in place today in many Indigenous communities, specifically the Mixteco communities in Oaxaca, are tribute systems. When a project that benefits the community is being constructed, everyone must contribute. To not contribute your labor or monetary contribution would be considered socially shameful. Today, if someone in the community needs to build a home, everyone in the community is obligated to contribute in the labor or through food. The Spaniards appropriated this tribute system and corrupted it to only benefit themselves in acquiring gold or other resources.

[60] For example, Spaniards appropriated the tequio concept as a tribute system to benefit themselves. They required labor and/or gold, not for the benefit of the community, but for themselves.

the same. Often times, the available literature adheres to a very mainstream interpretation of Danza that, similar to the Spanish colonizer's interpretation, remains within the confines of a colonial world view, avoiding the deeper nuances and remaining only on the surface. Arnoldo Carlos Vento makes an interesting footnote:

> Due to the imperialistic and cultural genocidal motives of the 'medieval' Spanish and Inquisition, one must invalidate all interpretations concerning culture, science, and religion…To allow Sahagun and other Spanish chroniclers' version of the Aztecs is equivalent to accepting the Nazi version of Jews during Hitler's times (1994: 63).

According to much of the literature, Danza is a "product" of the invasion, a syncretic blending of both Indigenous and European/Catholic belief systems. In actuality, it is a product of a much longer trajectory of Indigenous world views and cosmology. The Danza one sees today is both a recording of the painful history and reality of colonization, and a renewed rejection of that colonization.

Nevertheless, the literature suggests that anything that came forth post-Spanish colonization was an accommodation and is still a direct result of that colonization. This Danza product is often referred to as "Conchero." The Danza Conchera is called such to refer to the mandolina/small guitar-like instruments that were made with the shell (in Spanish: concha) of an armadillo (see Appendix 5). These "conchas" or mandolina instruments replaced the drum, which was prohibited by Spanish dictators. Since the Church did not allow the Indigenous people to continue playing flutes or drums (viewed as instruments of the devil), the people used a process of subterfuge. Being talented musicians, they were able to learn to use the new instruments in order to preserve their own songs, rhythms and sacred knowledge (Poveda 1981). The Spaniards viewed the new stringed instrument (a Spanish adaptation) as acceptable. The mandolina or concha

became the instrument upon which Nahua peoples were able to remember and preserve the original beats of Danza rhythms. While this European-influenced instrument may have replaced the drums, it became the only way that songs and beats were recorded in the memories of danzantes. In effect, danzantes still took control of the stringed instrument, making it their own. Through using the shell of the armadillo, they were able to maintain its integrity as an Indigenous instrument, honoring the animal life, in the same way that the drum honored the tree life. Through using an instrument acceptable to the Spanish, they were able to appease them, while preserving the songs and beats for future generations to continue Danza today.

According to Arnoldo Carlos Vento in his article, "Aztec Conchero Dance Tradition: Historic, Religious and Cultural Significance:"

> …There are two schools of thought regarding the authenticity of the conchero tradition: (1) Those who see it as syncretic, as a process of colonialism, and (2) Those who see it as a spiritual and sacred tradition with hidden meaning, interpretation and symbolism (1994: 59).

One can find many symbolic similarities that made it possible for Indigenous people to overlap Christian symbolism with their own. For example, la cruz/the cross was also an Indigenous structure and symbol representing the four cardinal directions, making it very convenient to transpose the Catholic cross with the Indigenous cross. Rostas affirms that, "the religiosity of the Concheros is syncretic, like that of most present day indigenous religions. It consists of a fusing of Catholicism with various autochthonous traditions: possible remnants of the practices of the Mexica" (1991: 5-6). In contrast, some argue that today's Danzas are mere invention and the authenticity of the Danzas having any relation to "pre-invasion" ties does not exist. González Torres argues that all "original" Danza disappeared, and what people do today is basically all a new invention (1996).

Every danzante I interviewed (and I have never met a danzante who would agree completely with González Torres) claims that Danza does have a pre-Cuauhtemoc origin and continuity. For danzantes, it is strongly believed and accepted as fact that the Concheros preserved these dances. Garner also argues that "Aztec ritual dance was never fully eradicated. Rather, practices and symbols were revitalized and re-circulated via the processes of adaptation, innovation, and improvisation" (2009: 418). An early study in the 1940s examined the musicality, beats, dance steps and style of Danza and compared it to other Native American dance traditions in the U.S. According to this study:

> The style is utterly Indian in the forward tilted, bowed torso, and in the special quality of emphasis. The latter is typified by the prevalence of the stamp, which is absent only when replaced by a heel brush or knee bend. Several steps are highly characteristic of Sioux and Pueblo Indian dances alike—the skip with back pull, the limping slide, the grapevine, the toe touching. In the last—a jump, tap hop—there is one distinction. The northern Indians touch simultaneously with the hop, in even beat; the Concheros alternate hop and tap in iambic metre. Examples are the Sioux War Dances; the Hoop Dance of Standing Rock, North Dakota and of Taos, New México; the Horse Tail and Eagle Dances of Tesuque; the Zuñi Harvest Dance (Kurath 1946: 397).

Kurath's study attempts to answer the questions of "authenticity," whether the steps are vestiges of ancient ceremonies, a cross-pollination of various Indigenous traditions, or highly influenced by Europeans. This study is able to conclude that, unlike the "mestizo" creations of el zapateado or the jarabes of Jalisco charros, which demonstrate influences of Spanish dancing, the Concheros demonstrate no traits of such footwork or embellishments. At its core, the Conchero dance is still distinctly Indigenous in its footwork and movements, with European accommodations remaining in the periphery, such as the adaptions of certain instruments.

Rather than lose their ways of life altogether, Indigenous peoples, as a way of resisting colonization, appropriated European Christian ways and made them their own. Concheros gave the appearance of compliance with the colonizer, "while sharing amongst themselves the meanings and symbols that are essential to cultural continuity. In other words, traditional dances are occasionally a place of safe sharing…" (Krystal 2007: 73). Krystal (2007) calls the overlapping of Christian and Indigenous ways a form of "hidden transcripts." Disguising their spiritual ways with Christian icons and beliefs allowed them to maintain their sacred traditions, while making the friars believe that they were in fact being converted or "conquered" by Christ, therefore avoiding violent persecution. In essence, Indigenous people responded to clergy by being compliant, accepting whatever was told to them, not arguing, and doing as they were told, all while knowing in their minds and hearts that they would continue to believe and interpret the Christian religion in their own ways. They were both fighting for their own survival and resisting complete colonization.

Spiritual traditions helped Indigenous communities to reinforce and maintain the concepts of communal living, mutual cooperation, duality, reciprocity and balance with the natural world and creation; all concepts in stark contrast to those that Europeans brought to this continent. Elders were respected and sought for their knowledge. Different communities contributed various materials such as flowers, food, feathers, attire, and gifts in order to contribute to a ceremony or fiesta. In order to compensate for the loss of these life-ways, Nahua peoples reconstituted the same traditions, but juxtaposed them with the Catholic tradition. Mesas or "cofradias" were developed historically as a form of resistance to Spanish domination and as an attempt to hold onto the communal and

kinship form of organization. Cofradías in Europe were known as fraternal orders dedicated to the protection of the patron saints of a community. Subsequently, during the colonization, the Catholic Church introduced the concept of the fraternity and the cult of saints to this land. Native people transformed this system to work to their advantage as a way to maintain spiritual practice of giving ofrendas/offerings to these sacred guardians, overlapping their own notions of spirits/energy with that of the Spaniards' saints. The convergence of Catholic powers with Native teachings can be viewed as a form of "liberation theology," where one could "liberate the spirit even in the most adverse circumstances" (Cantú/Nájera-Ramírez 2002: 129). The fiestas and public ceremonies were a front so that elders and communities could make sure the animas/souls of ancestors were honored, and that the old ceremonial calendar would continue.

As a result, Nahua peoples appropriated the Spanish system of cofradias/mesas or social organizations to take the place of the calpulli (Nahua social organizational structure and notion of "group" as in a Danza group/calpulli) and designated a saint as the symbol of the mesa. The saint would replace the original Nahua symbol, as was often done by Spaniards, who destroyed massive temples and cities only to rebuild them as Catholic Churches. Often times, because the Spaniards could not stop the Nahua peoples from returning to sacred ceremonial sites, they would simply build a Church on top of those same sites and name it after a saint. These same Churches are still in existence all over México. Interestingly, it was only after the arrival of the Spaniards that apparitions of the Virgin Mary and saints began to occur in 1530, "coincidentally" all on sacred sites. One famous apparition occurred on September 14, 1531[61] during what is known as the

[61] I have found conflicts of the actual date and story. In Poveda (1981), he cites the date of this battle as July 25, 1531 and holds a slightly different version of this battle even from the maestro he interviews.

"Battle of Calderón Pass," when the Chichimecas laid down their weapons in a battle against the Spaniards. This event would lead to the Concheros' mantra of Conquista, Conformidad y Unión/Conquest, Conformity and Union. According to Yolotl González Torres:

> At sunset there were still no victors or vanquished. Before the sun went down the horizon, darkness fell, and on high, in heaven a white and shining cross appeared, and at its side the apostle Santiago riding on a white horse. Astonished to see such wonder the combatants put down their arms and between embraces, they made a peace covenant and to the shout of 'Él es Dios' (he is God), the Indians recognized the Christian cross as a symbol of their new faith, performing a dance as a proof of their veneration (1996: 20).

According to Andrés Segura (Poveda 1981), this supposed apparition of the bright cross of light occurred in 1537 and was a battle between the Chichimecas, not against the Spaniards, and when they saw this cross in the sky they interpreted it to mean the arrival of a new change. For the Chichimecas, the cross of light was not symbolic of the arrival of Christ, as others have interpreted it, but was rather the Indigenous symbol of the cross of life, or the four directions of the universe. This cross of life contrasts the Christian cross, which represents death as sacrifice for eternal life. Segura believed that the cross, rather than viewed as a syncretism with Christianity, was actually a re-encounter with Indigeneity and the universal symbology that existed already:

> La historia de los concheros está escrita en nuestros cantos. Somos la continuidad de la tradición indígena que se conserva a través de un fenómeno que se puede llamar sincretismo, aunque yo personalmente le llamo reencuentro/ The history of the Concheros is written in our songs. We are the continuity of Indigenous tradition that is conserved through the phenomenon called syncretism, even though I personally call it re-encounter (Poveda 1981: 284).

Santo Santiago (also known as St. James, the patron saint of Spain) is a common saint that is venerated in many Indigenous communities, including my own, the Caxcanes. A

similar battle is recreated in a traditional dance called the "tastuanes," said to come from the Nahuatl word "tlatoani" (speaker/leader of the people). This dance takes place annually in Juchipila, Zacatecas and transnationally in Hollister, California, coinciding with the July feast day for Santo Santiago. As a result of the Battle of Calderón Pass, Concheros continue to say the words, "Él es Dios" in ceremony, to acknowledge someone or to begin "palabra," word/prayer at the end of a ceremony.

Danzantes continue to return yearly to Querétaro to commemorate the "Battle of Calderón Pass" on the day and in the place where it occurred. Querétaro continues to be considered the place where the root of the Conchero tradition began and where the Danza began to present itself inside the Churches. In addition to Querétaro, five other sacred, obligatory ceremonies form part of the annual pilgrimage ritual that all danzantes make at some point in their lives, if not yearly. The five sites are sacred Nahua sites that circle the Valley of México, marking a sacred geography of the center, and the four surrounding directions. The locations of these sacred sites are also places where "apparitions" occurred and Churches were built, making these places sacred not only to danzantes, but to Catholics as well (Garner 2009; Aguilar 1983). According to Gertrude Prokosch Kurath, as participants in a Danza de Promesa/Dance of Promise, "the members vow participation for life, to avoid some catastrophe, and often go on arduous pilgrimages in fulfillment of this vow" (1946: 387). These pilgrimages also facilitated the encounter of various danzantes with one another, contributing to the metamorphosis and further development of Danza; both the movement of Danza and the actual steps of Danza, which would allow for more artistic interpretations. Garner (2009) details each of these pilgrimages and sites. Oftentimes the dates coincided with Catholic holidays and/or near

Nahua significant days. They include, in order of pilgrimage: 1) Tlaloc/El Señor de Sacromonte (Christ of the Sacred Mountain) located in Amecameca in the East direction, occurring in February; 2) Tezcatlipoca-Oztocteate/Christ of Chalma located in Chalma in the South direction, occurring in late May/early June; 3) Xipe Totec/Tlaltelolco-Plaza of Three Cultures located in the center of Mexico City, occurring July 25-26; 4) Mayahuel/Our Lady of Los Remedios (remedies) located in Naucalpan, in the Southern direction, occurring September 10th; and 5) Tonantzin/La Virgen de Guadalupe located in Tepeyac, the Northern direction, occurring December 12th. Sacred images, stories of miracle healings, sites of apparition, and locations of historical events all form a pilgrimage center important to both Mexica and Catholic cosmologies: "[T]he travels …of people to their shrines were meant to broadcast sacred energy from its dwelling places as well as to concentrate it there" (Taylor 2005: 968). Beyond the ceremonial purpose, often times these pilgrimages were places where one could build networks between groups. A group could send a representative to a ceremony to establish kinship with others.

The apparition of saints facilitated the conversion process, renaming pueblos from their Nahuatl names to the feast day of their own saints. Nahua peoples then chose to adapt and transpose their own meanings to the saints. La Virgen de Guadalupe, whose said 1531 apparition occurred on the mountain of Tepeyac, the same location where women energies and fertility were venerated, became known or understood as Tonantzin Tlalli—Our Mother Earth. El Santo Niño de Atocha,[62] or baby Jesus, became known as el dueño del cerro—a mountain guardian. The image of the Santo Niño holds a staff,

[62] See Hernández-Ávila (2005) for a comprehensive description of the Santo Niño de Atocha, its iconographic origins and philosophy.

associated in the Christian faith as a pastoral staff for God's lambs. However, in Nahua tradition, a staff is known as the bastón de manda (the staff that mandates); a symbol of authority and respect. Holding it gives permission for one to speak without anyone interrupting them, and gives a direct connection to the spirits of that staff, connecting the person holding it to the heavens or to the universe. Nahua peoples would return to these sacred sites, even if a Church had been built atop them, because people knew that, below the Church floors, continued to be the sacred, ceremonial site or mountain with a special, venerable meaning. Even when Spaniards tried to destroy a site, people continued to return, leaving offerings.

Danza groups, also known as *Calpullis*, would carry a *pantli* or banner/pennant with a Nahua symbol representing their community or insignia, the mesas Concheras would do away with the pantli and instead carry an "estandarte" (standard), similar to those carried by Spaniards when they arrived to México. These estandartes carried the image of a Virgin Mary or of a saint that was meaningful to them or connected them to their own Churches or cofradias back in Spain. They often times would "conquer" Indigenous people in the name of whatever saint they carried. Nahua peoples used the estandarte in the same way as the *pantli*, but placed on it a patron saint which would mask an ancestral spirit or being (see Appendix 6). The estandarte would be a symbol of a particular group's lineage/Danza genealogy and patron saint.

For example, contemporary Danza group Xitlalli, from San Francisco, California, carries an estandarte with El Santo Niño de Atocha. They describe their estandarte in the following way:

> [The estandarte] is complemented by an Aztec child deity, Pilzintecutli, also called Xochipilli, evoking both the solar and wind forces. On the

> edges of the volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, the mushroom which is held sacred is lovingly called 'apipiltzin,' the little child of the waters…
> The figure of the Holy Child of Atocha originated outside of Madrid, Spain and was once accompanied by La Señora de Atocha, a Black Madonna. During the 17th century, this figure was used by missionaries to stamp out the image of Pilzintecutli…El Niño de Atocha, dressed in hat and cloak, with sandals, staff and water gourd represents a pilgrim, like the danzantes, he is on the road of life, 'el camino de la luz'[the road of light]…
> This infant is a legacy from our jefes de Danza who resisted the imposition of European values by absorbing and reconstituting the image of a powerful magical child. (Xitlalli 1995).

As evident, the symbol of the baby Jesus became devoid of overt Catholic meaning and instead was completely "reconstituted" to evoke Indigenous meaning and representation (Hernández-Avila 2005). In order to appease the clergy, in México's early colonial period, danzantes would tell the priests that they were indeed dancing for the saints. Content with this negotiation of conversion, danzantes were allowed to continue dancing, but only inside of the Church. Since this was not necessarily the norm everywhere, much of the Danza traditions still remained in private. The Churches that did not condemn Danza tolerated its practice under certain conditions. The all night ceremonies for the spirits became "velaciones" or vigils held by candles lit for the saints where alabanzas (songs of praise) could be sung. Velaciones are solemn times, but were also used as a time for networking, and for sharing resources and information. This is still the case today, where at any velación, one will see people greeting each other and "catching up;" a sort of reunion.

Because danzantes were allowed to dance in the Church, the atriums or altars of Mexico City Churches are some of the largest in the world because there had to be room to allow them to dance (Atlauhxiuhtik, personal interview). The original Mexica regalia,

or trajes, had to be changed in order to conform to Christian conservative norms, meaning that no flesh could be seen. Long skirts, leggings, and high collared shirts for men made up the traje/suit of the Concheros. According to Señora Cobb, "even if the Concheros were pobre [poor], they had new trajes every year, made with expensive velvet. Their trajes were still complex, decorative and used much more material. Their huaraches [sandals], hecho de madera [made of wood], with metal taps. They were forced to wear the taps to keep track of them. Nos enseñaron respeto hacia los trajes [They taught us the respect we should give our regalia" (personal interview). There is a distinct difference between trajes Concheros and Mexica: "The Mexica have adopted a still stricter aesthetic, and predominately use only natural materials, such as skins for the men's loin cloths and pheasant or other naturally coloured feathers for their head dresses" (Rostas 1991: 13-14). Concheros employ ostrich feathers and clothing that covers most of the body, while Mexicas used more minimal clothing.

From 1521 to 1810, prior to Mexican independence from Spain, the state/military regime and the Catholic Church were one and the same. The Catholic Church held complete power over politics and the defense of self-proclaimed sovereignty. The Church needed the military to enforce its power over Indigenous subjects. Therefore, the lines between religion and military structure were blurred. The Spanish soldiers that raped and killed Nahua peoples did so under the estandarte of la Virgen María. The same militaristic structure that the Catholic Spanish military used became the same organizational structure that would eventually govern la Danza Conchera. For the most part, that structure remains in place.

La Danza Conchera also became known as La Danza de la conquista and came to be viewed as a metaphor for guerra/war. This war was a spiritual war, and the instruments (conchas/mandolinas) were the arms/instruments of battle. Each danzante was a "soldier of the light" (Garner 2009: 423). The idea of "conquest" is not meant to correlate with the Spanish "conquista" or subjugation of Indigenous people/danzantes. Rather, it is viewed as a counter-conquest or spiritual conquest; to "conquer" new people into the Danza tradición:

> Where American Indians in the United States associate conquest with European and Euroamerican dominance, conquest has a more nuanced and complex meaning for Aztec dance participants. In La Danza, conquest is a metaphor for valued qualities, in particular reciprocity and submission; it is conquest of a different sort (Garner 2009: 416).

The discourse of "conquest" can be conflicting and contentious to other Native communities, but for Nahua people, it was an attempt to survive. They believed that conforming to European terminology would be sufficient for their own survival. Ultimately, below the surface of those terms, it would be impossible to erase their own deeply-held world views and spiritual beliefs. Therefore, it did not matter what terms or names were used, the core beliefs and values would remain the same.

The idea or concept of "conquista" comes from the Spanish Requerimiento document which gives justification for Spanish invasion upon Indigenous people:

> As the requerimiento articulated it, the physical, political, and economic subjugation of the indigenous people of the area was not enough for the Spanish; their conquest must also be one of religion as well. This declaration of the Catholic Church drew its charge and legitimacy from a sacred genealogy. The king and queen of Spain and the pope were designated as the final human authorities because they were the chosen descendants of the one true God, Creator of Heaven and Earth. Declaring the land to be under divine dominion, the conquerors expected all its inhabitants to surrender without resistance to this supremacy (Garner 2009: 417).

This conquest was viewed not only as one of people or lands, but also of spirit. For danzantes, using the term conquista was to merely subterfuge the idea; to turn it around and use it for their own benefit. Even though la Danza de la conquista defines itself as opposed to the colonial structure, it still uses the same idea of conquering hearts, but instead of for Catholicism, it is for Danza.

In addition to holding firmly to the term "conquista," la tradición also uses military terminology to define its structure. The leadership within the Danza group are labeled, "alferez" (the person who holds the estandarte—a term originating in Spain to a high ranking magistrate to the King), "capitanes/captains," "sargentos/sergeants," and "generales/generals." There is also a smoke carrier, often referred to as "La Malinche." La Malinche, in México, is often referred to as a traitor and has long held a negative reputation, sometimes referred to as a whore. La Malinche, or Malintzin/Malinalli was the translator for Hernán Cortez and later bore him children, who are referred to as the first "mestizos." Contemporary Xicana feminist scholars have reconfigured "la Malinche's" historical rendering and have re-claimed her image to be one of survival, not betrayal (Gaspar de Alba 2003; Pratt 1993). This same reaffirmation has taken place in Danza, where women hold the place in the center as the smoke carriers. While I choose to hold onto the positive re-interpretation of Malinche's memory, it should be noted that her role of "servitude" to the soldiers falls in-line with the military construction of the Danza Conchera hierarchy of positions. The Malinche role in Danza most likely did not embrace the positive Xicanista adaptation of Malinche, but actually existed to concede to the idea that they (the danzantes) would also be in servitude to and in accordance with the Spaniards. In a sense, they were honoring La Malinche because she assisted the

Spaniards, sustaining their power. It re-enforced their subjugate role as Indigenous people and their goal for cultural survival.

Today, while many Danza groups continue to hold onto the hierarchical military terminology, some Danza groups have re-named the hierarchical positions with Nahuatl terminology or will simply say that one has "palabra," meaning they have given their "word" to carry on a duty within the group or within a ceremony. Some Danza groups have done away with the entire idea of hierarchy; rather than have a "Capitana" of a group, the leader is simply referred to as la maestra/teacher or cabeza/head of a group. Some groups strive to keep an organizational structure, while letting go of the rigid military subtext that is associated with war, violence and conquest—all painful parts of the history of colonization for Indigenous peoples. La Malinche is usually called Malintzin or sahumadora (woman smoke carrier) and has been re-interpreted to represent women as the center of the circle, like the sun, giver of life. She is a reminder of the matriarchal and matrilineal origins of Nahua peoples and reclaims her space and her role that was subjugated upon Spanish arrival.

Along with the imposition and absorption of a Spanish military hierarchal structure in Danza, danzantes also adopted the Catholic notion of disciplina/discipline, sacrifice and punishment for sins. The idea of Conquest was also used to mean conquering "the lower self" or personal vices, weaknesses, and sins. Through adopting and incorporating Christian views of punishment for sins, the idea of conquest became part of the practice of Danza and ceremony for Concheros. Still today, many Mexican Catholics will crawl on their knees for miles to a Church to offer up their own sacrifice to the saint or Virgin Mary. Dancing barefoot until feet blister and bleed was viewed as part

of that sacrifice or offering. Mimicking the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, having been whipped and brutally hung on a cross, Concheros also began to incorporate whipping and long pilgrimages atop mountains. "Suffering" came to be viewed as part of the Danza de la Conquista. Even if hurting or in pain, a danzante had to be disciplined and not leave the circle for any reason. The use of corporal punishment continues as part of Danza in some places. This is a direct lineage of both the Spanish military and Catholic belief systems: "It is said that 50 years ago the dance was much more disciplined. No one was given permission to leave even to relieve themselves, and those who broke the discipline were castigated, often with the sergeant's whip" (Rostas1991: 10). According to danzante scholar, Mario Aguilar, at one point in time:

> …Whippings and public humiliation were accepted punishment for persons who did not respect the sacredness of the danza. Today, LA LEY DEL HIELO, (the Rule of Ice) is a more appropriate form of discipline. This rule means that the person became invisible to the danza circle. They become a 'man without country,' receiving no spiritual support from the others. In the eyes of the dance circle, they have ceased to exist (Aguilar 1983: XIII).

Today, while "discipline" is still viewed as important in Danza, different tactics are used. Some groups might "reprimand" someone for arriving late to practice, but through the demanding of squats. While suffering, sacrifice, punishment or redemption for sins was the origin of disciplina in Danza in the early colonial period, today disciplina is understood as a personal goal to be a strong dancer; to have patience, respect, will power and compassion. It would not make sense to punish a small child who cannot stay in the Danza circle because they have to use the bathroom. For adolescent teens that are clearly being lazy or disrespectful during a Danza practice, a maestra might tell them to leave or have them do squats to think about their actions and to teach them to be a stronger dancer

and human being. Ultimately, “to discipline” in the way it was used during the early colonial period is a very different notion today, but in some instances, disciplina can still carry colonial residue and/or attitude in its enforcement.

It has been established that, during the early colonial period of México, Danza ceremony and spiritual practice was either kept inside the home or practiced in the Church under the Catholic/Spanish military guise. This came to a halt as new reforms were being made after Mexican Independence from Spain in 1810. Reforms to create a separation of Church and state did not come to fruition until the presidency of Benito Juarez in 1858. The struggle between the liberal reformists and conservative elites, closely tied to the wealthy Catholic Church, led to a second pursuit of Danza. This time, Danza was not being penalized by the Catholic Church as had been the case in 1519. Rather, Danza was forced to once again go into hiding because it was associated with part of the Catholic Church that was now under fire as anti-clerical sentiments ruled the day. To be a danzante was once again a punishable crime. Liberal reformists sought democracy, expropriation of Church lands, and the creation of an army under civilian control. Anything that was perceived as pro-Catholic Church was then viewed as anti-democracy.

Following nearly 300 years of colonial rule, repression, and pseudo-protection under the Church, after several generations danzantes only knew the syncretic ways of Danza. Many no longer knew how to function or to carry la tradición outside of the Church. At the same time, it cannot be denied that Catholicism in México had been

Indigenized; Mexican Catholicism today is still very distinct.[63] The 19th century attack on Danza (and its association with the Catholic Church) was simply a matter of being caught in political crossfire. In addition, danzantes, coming from the poorest and most disenfranchised communities, suffered more of the effects of wars, political instability, American imperialism, and economic repressions, all part of the ongoing history of México. Ultimately in the 19th century, secularism triumphed, leaving Danza in a state of limbo.

Fearing punishment and persecution, danzantes were forced to return into hiding and would not re-emerge into the public eye until the regime of Porfirio Díaz in 1876. The dictatorship of Díaz would neither assault nor protect the Church. Ironically, this Mexican dictator (who concealed and was ashamed of his Mixteco origins and was known for his veneration of European and American elitism and ideology, and for his attempts to reproduce these in Mexican society) encouraged Danza to emerge from a place of hiding and no longer associated it with criminal activity (Atlauhxiuhtik, personal interview). Others still continued to practice the Danza ways in secret and in hiding, passing on the tradition only within the family. The constant need to protect Danza and to keep it only "from within" stems from the historical trauma of being persecuted for practicing Danza. This sense of secrecy or unapproachability would continue to direct the ways that Danza, even in contemporary times, may be very closed off to outsiders. According to one interviewee, Porfirio Diaz and his wife had sympathy for the "Indio" dancers and acknowledged their devotion to the Church. Under Díaz, Danza groups or families were given oil metal tubs for drums, ostrich feathers to wear, and their regalia

[63] In Mexican Catholicism, La Virgen de Guadalupe (or the divine feminine) is often placed as the central figure, rather than Jesus or the holy trinity. This correlates with Indigenous practices holding women as the center of life.

was to continue fully covering their bodies in a respectful manner. Being a military man, Diaz also reinforced the militaristic structure of Danza and allowed for it to remain in the public eye, still only through the Catholic Church.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 brought hope and devastation simultaneously. The Mexican Revolution sought a re-Mexicanization of México. The struggle for Indigenous land rights and agrarian reform meant a reawakening of people to take up various types of weapons—guns and paintbrushes. The cultural renaissance following the revolution pulsated with a new appreciation and recognition for Indigenous resistance and critiques of modernity. The devastation of war, loss of life, and mass migration of Mexicanos northward also created new dilemmas for Mexican society as the country attempted to rebuild and maintain the revolutionary fervor. A new tide of Marxist-socialist beliefs began to condemn and even reject the Catholic Church. From the dictatorship of Díaz to the Cristero War of 1926, Danzantes would still be condemned as associates of the Catholic Church. The ritual practice of Danza would continue to retreat back into the safety of the private sector; the home. The only Danza that would be glorified was the "authentic" Danza tied to a Pre-Cuauhtemoc/ "Azteca" past; the same imagery promoted in the works of Diego Rivera.

Although Danza was no longer a punishable crime, as Indigenous people, danzantes were still deemed inferior and their dance was referred to as mere folklore, rather than as an actual complex spiritual practice and history directly connected to México's Indigenous identity. Danza would not be viewed as part of popular culture or discourse until the era of Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). During this time, significant political and ideological transformations were given birth to in regards

to Indigenous Peoples. Cárdenas was regarded as compassionate to the rights and history of Indigenous people and campesinos, offering them land and semi-autonomous rights and sovereignty. Native Americans from the United States noted this, and several Native individuals and communities moved to México during this era, asking Cárdenas to accept them as Mexican citizens because they felt that Indigenous people were treated with more respect in México than in the United States (Crum, 2001-2002). The infrastructural development of roads into mountain communities created mutual contact between Indigenous communities and mainstream society. Through government sponsored programming, Cárdenas facilitated the invitation for Indigenous communities in the mountains of México to bring their language, culture, and dances to the cities in an effort to honor México's history and present. The glorification of Indigenous México no longer had to be only something of the past, because Indigenous people were still alive and thriving, despite having been one of the most ignored sectors of Mexican society.

Danza teacher and respected elder Angelbertha Cobb from Sacramento, California, is a product of Cárdenas' efforts to bridge México to its Indigenous identity. She was a child from the mountainous and isolated region north of Cuetzalan, Puebla and was part of a project to bring traditional regional dances to the city. In our interview, she laughingly retold a saying that is often stated in a stereotypical, pejorative context, "Cuando dicen que bajaron los Indios a tamborazos del cerro, es cierto./ When they say that the Indians came down the mountains with the sound of a drum, it's actually true" (personal interview). Cobb, as a Nahua woman, literally came down from her community in the mountains with the purpose of dancing to the drumbeat of her traditional Danzas.

The 1930-40s saw a renewed effort to build a national Mexican identity, one that glorified the Aztec and Mayan past, while acknowledging and recreating it as a dominant part of the present. Many Danza groups were subsidized by the government (Poveda 1981) which changed the discourse of Danza and the reconstruction of Aztec identity. Many film projects and documentaries, such as the film *¡Que Viva México!* (Eisenstein/Alexandrov 1930) focused on nationalistic themes adoring the Indigenous past, and connecting it to the people of the present. Many foreign (American and European) scholars found a new interest in ancient Aztec and Mayan texts and the Nahuatl language, inciting a renewed interest among Mexicans as well. These scholars, anthropologists and archeologists shed light on historical Indigenous artifacts and documents propelling Mexican youth, including danzantes, to study the findings and relate them to their contemporary Indigenous revivalist movements, unveiling new understandings and interpretations of ceremonial practices. The Cárdenas administration began to not only invest in the arts through the commissioning of films and public mural projects; it also began to invest in education, reaching out to the marginal communities.

Florencio Yescas (see Appendix 9), a danzante from the barrio of Tacuba[64] in Mexico City and the first danzante noted to bring Danza Mexica to the United States, in his early years, was part of a project to outreach to Indigenous traditional dancers in the rural parts of México. Even though he was a "traditional" danzante, he used his skills as a dancer to make a living through ballet Folklórico. He became the dance partner of the renowned Amalia Hernández, widely acknowledged as responsible for the diffusion of ballet Folklórico throughout México and the world. Hernández, a famous choreographer,

[64] Tacuba was one of the three cities that fought alongside Tenochtitlan against the Spanish in 1520. It is now a barrio with a deeply rooted history of Indigenous resistance.

is the propagator of folkloric dance, making it rooted among México's artistic traditions. Yescas worked close with Hernández, also arranging theatrical dance scenes representing Indigenous themes, stories, and creation ethos. One such creation story entitled, "Los Cuatro Soles," or the four suns, incorporates many of the messages and beliefs represented in Danza Mexica. Yescas, Hernández and others formed "La Academia de la Danza" (Dance Academy) of Mexico City and created notoriety for themselves as leaders in dance in México. As such, teachers from "La Academia de la Danza" were chosen to find and recruit other dancers from rural Indigenous communities such as Cuetzalan, Puebla. Once in the Nahua community of Cuetzalan, the dance teachers chose various Nahua dancers to be representatives of their Indigenous traditions in Mexico City. This is the first time Señora Cobb (see Appendix 8) met Florencio Yescas.

Yescas came from la tradición, meaning that he was a direct descendant of danzantes that were traditional keepers of the practice through the Conchero tradition. Danzantes in Mexico City at this time were still only allowed to dance inside the Catholic Churches and follow strictly their rules of conservative dress, slowed dance movements with bowed heads, and dances only to saints and within the bounds of Catholicism. Yescas, who eventually broke away from la tradición (and was often criticized and de-legitimized by other Concheros for doing so), created a different Danza path that focused exclusively on re-creating and authenticating Danza to a way he envisioned as more cultural and closely replicating pre-colonial Mexica ways of dance. This became later referred to as "La Danza Azteca," "Esplendor Azteca," "La Danza Mexica," or "Mexicayotl/Mexicanidad"[65] (sometimes used interchangeably). Those that chose the

[65] According to Señora Cobb (personal communication), the term *Mexicayotl*, later translated into Spanish as *La Mexicanidad*, was coined by Dr. Ignacio Romerovargas Yturbide in the 1960s. He was one of the

Conchero path meant they would support Catholic events and syncretism. According to Guillermo Rosete, many people remained or chose Conchero tradition because they saw themselves and the Conchero way as a Mestizo construct (Maestas, n.d.). The inability or perhaps shame of embracing a sole "Indigenous" identity or lived experience as culturally Mestizo, may have influenced many danzantes to remain and/or claim Conchero tradición. In contrast to the Concheros, which were very closed to new membership, the Azteca/Mexica danzantes (a new emerging identity or branch within the spectrum of Danza) were very open to anyone who wanted to learn Danza. Danzantes Mexicas viewed Catholicism as the "conqueror" and wanted to do away with the notion of being "conquered." Those that supported a Mexicayotl path supported cultural events, without religious affiliation. This meant studying the codices and creating regalia more closely designed to original forms, which were ornate and unashamed to show the body. Modern innovations, such as using plastic beading and sequence in the Danza attire, became part of the Mexica repertoire: "If our ancestors had seen these shiny materials they would have wanted them too" (Maestas, n.d.: 93). The actual dances were faster to the beat of loud pounding drums rather than only stringed instruments. Eliminating *la religión*, Catholicism, and dancing outside of the Churches meant that danzantes no longer had to dance for the saints, but could return to the ceremonial centers and sacred sites of the Mexicas. Peeling away the vestiges of colonialism meant moving toward an entire opposite spectrum and embracing (oftentimes romanticizing) an Indigenous Mexican identity that existed prior to the arrival of the Spaniards.

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original founders of el *Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtiloyan* in Mexico City. He was the first to write about and popularize this term and concept. María del Carmen Nieva López (1969) was also an original founder of *Zemanauak* and extended the use of the term/idea through her book entitled, *Mexicayotl: Filosofía Nahuatl.*

This new era of Danza, which was on the horizon, coincided with the 1950s, economic development, rise in the tourist industry and wider interest in the "archeological" sites of México. According to Aguilar (1983), this led to economic opportunities for danzantes to perform for entertainment at various tourist attractions. For the first time, Danza was not a social barrier, but an economic advantage. This phenomenon occurred not only for Danza Mexica, but for other traditional dances throughout México, such as the Voladores de Papantla, Veracruz (see Appendix 13). This new economic opportunity, rather than viewed as positive, was seen as exploitative by some danzantes. Danzantes became divided and some saw it as the selling out of sacred traditions, meant only for ceremony. Others thought it was an opportunity to turn around the still "savage/backward image" imposed upon Indigenous people. Many believed that, through re-claiming Mexica regalia and performance, the docile, weak Indian etched in the minds of mainstream society would transform into an intelligent, strong, beautiful Mexica image. The regalia, feathers and ornate accessories were meant to invoke spiritual power, and not only provide the underpinnings of dramatic effect. Society would no longer ignore, nor mistakenly perceive Indigenous people as of the past or "extinct," but instead would view them as alive, part of the present and part of the identity and history of all Mexicanos.

While a new generation was open to breaking away from what was viewed as the continued chains of oppression and social and ideological control, it was a difficult undertaking for those who only knew *la tradición* and felt there was no contradiction nor need to abandon what they had been practicing for hundreds of years. They had become closely linked to the Church, and exiting the Church was like abandoning a sacred site.

Many believed that the Concheros, in terms of Danza and tradition, were much closer to the "pre-conquest" era than any of the new "folklore imaginings" that were emerging. The new Danza Mexica/Azteca groups viewed themselves as more "cultural," negating the religious aspect associated with the Church. In fact today, danzantes will distinguish themselves as either "tradición" or "cultural." Tradición inferred Catholic/Conchero ties while *cultural* inferred a closer rendering to pre-contact societies. Concheros began to look at the *culturales* as reclaiming, but still incorporating invention, therefore they were not as "traditional." This of course could be viewed as paradoxical because this was coming from danzantes with strong Catholic ties, therefore, how could they be perceived as the more traditional?

Today, there are three large Danza congregations, associations, or mesas, each composed of individual mesas and groups that have their autonomy and their own calendar of celebrations/ceremonies, as well as several obligatory ceremonies that the whole mesa is required to attend and dance. In 1980, Andrés Segura estimated that in all these mesas/regional areas there could possibly be up to a million or a million and a half danzantes (Poveda 1981). These three large mesas are known as the congregation of Tlaxcala (which also includes the area of Puebla), the congregation of Altos y Bajíos (which includes the areas of Querétaro, Guanajuato, Jalisco, parts of Michoacán, San Luis Potosí, Durango and Zacatecas), and the congregation of La Gran Tenochtitlan (which includes the areas of the State of Hidalgo, state and city of México, Morelos and Guerrero). All of these large Mesas come from the same tradición de Danza, yet with different leadership and variations of how they carry out the Danza. Some Danza circles

may be from small pueblos or only within families. All of them have capitanes that meet in a council to discuss issues.

Following the Lázaro Cárdenas administration and the 1950s boom in the Mexican tourist industry, by the 1960s a clear split occurred between those steadfast *Conchero* tradición dancers and another new camino/path of Danza, identified as *cultural, Mexicayotl* or *la Mexicanidad* (translated to mean "Mexicanist" or more clearly meant to say a resistance to colonial imperialism through the embracing of a Nahua/Indigenous México). In the early stages, this trajectory was called "Danza Azteca," which was meant to be distinguished from "Conchero." To say, "I am a danzante Azteca" inferred that one was not a Conchero. The label "Danza Azteca" was viewed as the more radical approach to identify the new path in Danza. It identified the regalia, fast-paced Danza and form emerging. Florencio Yescas identified his group as *Danza Esplendor Azteca*. With time, new terms and understandings were developed such as cultural or Mexicayotl to describe this trajectory. Mario Aguilar describes this new expression of Danza as a form of the Ghost Dance, "in which we call the spirits of our ancestors to guide us and give us strength in the struggle of life today" (Maestas, n.d.: 64). For a new generation who saw this deviation from la tradición as one with liberatory potential, the older generation saw it as a threat to "tradition." Although staunchly resented and criticized by traditionalists (of *la tradición* of Danza), Florencio Yescas, and others that followed suit, some identifying themselves as part of the Mexicayotl/Mexicanidad movement, essentially opened the door of Danza to outsiders. This meant that *anyone* could learn and participate in Danza; not only those who were direct descendants of Concheros or carried pre-Cuauhtemoc Danza lineage, as it had

always been. Opening the doors meant more capacity building and a wider Mexican Indigenous cultural movement. As Rostas affirms, "These groups were closed at first with restricted membership, as were the provincial ones, but during the course of this century most have gradually opened up, admitting dancers more freely and gradually becoming more socially heterogeneous" (Rostas 1991: 4-5). Had this new movement not prospered, Danza would not have become the vast practice it is today in México and the United States. Although the tensions and differences of approach to Danza continue to exist between those that identify as *tradición* or *mexicanidad*, these differences only stand to reveal the growth and transformation of Danza over time. Eventually both paths of Danza have had mutual benefit, as all have witnessed the growth of Danza and the attraction towards it. The Mexicanidad sector of Danza created an ideological shift in Danza which called for a movement to decolonize and *mexicanizar a méxico mismo*—Mexicanize México. This shift is parallel to Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's concept of *México Profundo* (1996). Batalla discusses the idea that México's Indigenous people have been systematically ignored and denied by the "imaginary México" created by those in power. He calls this "México Profundo" (profound México) because, although majority sectors of Mexican society do not recognize themselves as being Indian, they still organize their cultural life on the basis of an Indigenous origin. The *mexicanidad* shift in Danza was a call to recognize, self-determine, and self-identify as Indigenous, albeit dominantly a Mexica identity.

Part of the transformations that occurred within Danza had to do with urban influence. Danzantes moved from the rural to urban society, coinciding with the mass urban migration of many Indigenous peoples moving to the cities for work and

opportunities. Modernity and social mobility revealed itself in the new, educated classes of danzantes that began to take leadership. Rostas (1991) believes that most of the Danza groups today are not rural/community/pueblo based, but rather city-based, which leads to a larger participation of "middle class mestizos." Rostas describes these middle class members as people that are involved in the mainstream arts: teatro, painting, or professional dancing. An example of this would be Andrés Segura, who was professionally trained in modern dance. Rostas believes that these "mestizos" are "people of mixed blood, who, by means of the dance, are seeking to create for themselves an indigenous identity" (1991: 12). While many danzantes might fit into the mainstream, imposed definition of mestizo, in its colonial caste context, many of them do not identify as mestizo. In her article, Rostas calls the participants of Danza "mestizos," despite the fact that, in this same article, she states that the people call themselves "Indigenous." Accepting the idea that identity is/should be self-ascribed (rather than state defined and imposed), Rostas still negates peoples' own claims to their indigeneity, and imposes her own frame of reference (coinciding with the state) as to what constitutes authentic Indigenousness. In doing this, both Rostas and the state deny people a right to their self-determination, even as Indigenous Mexicans are taking a critical look at the state cultural nationalism project which promoted a mestizaje identity. This mestizaje project essentially did away with individual claims to indigeneity; even if a parent or grandparent was "Indigenous" (meaning they spoke their language or self-identified as part of a pueblo), the state imposed a mestizo identity. To be Mexican was to be mestizo; Indigeneity was over, it was a finished part of history. The new, modern México was a nation of mixed race people, a cosmic race comprised of the best civilizations of the

world, Aztec and European (this idea will be discussed further in the dissertation, chapter 11). While perhaps urban realities and imposed cultural nationalist notions were the dominant experiences of participants of Danza, to assume a lack of "Indigenousness" or to deny one the opportunity to self-identify and claim his/her roots, is inherently problematic.

While both Concheros and Mexicayotl claim Indigenous ancestry and/or identity, there remain clear distinctions between the Conchero and Mexicayotl paths of Danza. Mexicas did away with the mandolina, using primarily percussion/drums to guide the dances with a much faster rhythm, while Concheros may choose to use only the mandolina and dance much slower. Some Mexicayotl dance barefoot, wear elaborate feather head dresses called *copillis* and:

> Each dancer dresses up in what he or she or the group considers to be appropriate. In some groups all the costumes [regalia] are identical, while in others, for example…each dancer is free to use the designs, colours and materials that he or she pleases, within certain over-riding parameters (Rostas 1991: 10).

The Concheros continue to wear long regalia that reveal very little flesh and often use humble materials such as *manta,* a very plain, basic cloth in contrast to the often ostentatious fabric used by the Mexicayotl. The Conchero style of dress is changing. Today, self-identified Conchero groups have started to adopt more Mexicayotl aesthetics of trajes/regalia, while the Mexicayotl have developed even more elaborate and new styles that they are incorporating in Danza. The Mexicayotl trajes are typified to be "guerrero/warrior-like" while the Conchero trajes strive to maintain their humility. There have been many internal disagreements about regalia that continue within many groups in California. Vento (1994) notes comparisons of Danzantes from México and those from

the U.S. The danzantes from the U.S. have added paint on their faces and additional steps. According to Andrés Segura:

> …Los concheros de Austin, no podemos introducir cambios en la tradición…Las pequeñas variantes entre unos y otros serán nada más de estilo, porque, aunque todos hacemos los mismos pasos, cada quien tiene su propio estilo/…The concheros of Austin, we cannot introduce changes to the tradition…The small variants within one or the other should be nothing more than a style type, because even though we all do the same steps, each one has their own style (Poveda 1981: 291).

Similarly, while the movements do not ever change, over time, the dress has. Even within the Mexicayotl, there are conflicts that deem some trajes as bordering inappropriateness with the amount of skin/body being shown. There is a struggle between creating a new artistic rendering with dress/trajes and disrespecting the Danza through over-sexualized versions of trajes that only serve to reinforce the hyper-sexualized colonial imagery still popularized in México, especially regarding Indigenous people (Gaspar de Alba 2003). Señora Cobb reveals that in her observation and experience, it has often been sexist men (and women who have internalized this sexism) that allowed and even encouraged inappropriate trajes. She believes "it is an excuse to prostitute women's bodies. They are saying that God made women only for them to be to be looked at" (personal interview).

According to Arnoldo Carlos Vento, in his article, "Aztec Conchero Dance Tradition: Historic, Religious and Cultural Significance," Andrés Segura objected to "the idea of 'making tradition'" (1994: 61). Rostas (1991) asserts on the contrary that "the dance of the Concheros as a religious tradition [is] linked to popular culture that has constantly undergone invention" (3) and is being used today by MeXicanos to form both social and ethnic identity. According to Señora Cobb:

> It is not wrong to make changes if you are trying to make improvements that are positive. If our ancestors had access to some of the materials we have, they may have used them too. Just don't change things out of ignorance, keep the meanings, and know why you are changing it and do it consciously (personal interview).

This would become the root of disagreement between la tradición and Mexicayotl; whether or not "making new tradition" goes against tradition. There is a fine line between "inventing" and/or simply "living tradition," which means that tradition is alive and has transforming potential.

The Conchero groups with older membership, or originating in smaller towns or rural communities, tend to be much more Catholic. For example, according to Rostas:

> [While] many Concheros are practicing Catholics…those who are not happy to continue in the loose relationship that they have with the Church; they have no interest in rejecting it. The Church acts as a useful foil to their religious activities, a re-ligio, a rejoining, that is linked to the land in which they live (Rostas 1991: 15).

The *Mexican* Catholic Church in many ways is still a binding factor that allows for the continued legitimization of Concheros and unity with the larger Mexican mainstream society. Some Concheros, both historical and contemporary, do not view the Church as an oppressive force working to undermine their belief systems, but actually see Catholicism as simply another belief system that could only double their own spiritual power (Poveda 1981). In contrast, the Mexicayotl generally overtly reject and criticize the Catholic Church. Mexicayotl danzantes have connected their spiritual work with the political work that is needed to fight against the state authorized oppression and dehumanization of Indigenous peoples and pueblos. Whereas, "Concheros resist this role and see their conformidad as existing only for religious reasons" (Rostas 1991: 17),

Mexicayotl see Danza as a tool that can be employed to resist further colonization and oppression.

For the outside researcher, the distinctions between these two factions may not be apparent. Much of the literature will refer to both of these groups as "Conchero" or confuse both Danza branches as merely folklore. Part of this confusion is that outsiders may have difficulty deciphering the concealed juxtapositions within Danza:

> While it can be argued that *Conchero jefes* (or heads) do not like to share with outsiders any religious aspects of their *Danza*, nonetheless, without any understanding of the purpose for its existence, it is reduced to performance-based activities that rest of folklore and Christian accommodation (Vento 1994: 59).

Relegating Danza to folklore posits it as merely a result of modernity and transnationalism, ignoring its deeply rooted resistance to colonialism as a living Indigenous theory (Krystal 2007: 61). As Andrés Segura affirms, "La danza no es pegar de brincos, sino por lo que se brinca. La danza es una ceremonia/ Danza is not just about jumping around, but rather about something for which one jumps. Danza is ceremony" (Poveda 1981: 287). In other words, one should not view Danza as a series of arbitrary movements or jumps, but rather, as a practice that is built around a divine feeling of joy; of being in harmony with the universe to the extent that one must jump in dance.

Rostas' article (and others including Gonzalez Torres 1996) depict the contemporary Mexicayotl danzantes as ignorant and almost buffoon-like, as they are supposedly searching for a utopia and re-invention of Aztec traditions. This may be true for some, as culture-vultures and new-ageism does not discriminate against traditions/belief systems, but it is uninformed to generalize and assume that this applies to all. It does, however present a real danger of false perception by outsiders as well as

misappropriation by insiders. While many danzantes are serious in their attempt to investigate, research, and promote their Indigenous roots, there are individuals, as in any group/culture, that could perhaps (mis)represent varied extremes or have self-serving agendas. Rostas describes the Mexicayotl danzantes as "misfits in mainstream society. It is among this group of dancers that the most unemployed people are probably to be found…Although some do have jobs, many scrape together a living selling their artesanias, particularly head-dresses and leg rattles to other Concheros" (1991: 14).

I would argue that what Rostas perceives as misfits, are actually "contra-corriente" or counter-current, meaning that they are actually in process of creating an oppositional culture that resists mainstream culture. Based on my interviews, many danzantes that are selling artesanía in the central plazas view this work as part of the informal economy that supports the goal of self-determination. It is difficult work that requires dedication and discipline. For some, it allows them to promote their artistry while providing needed materials for danzantes. It allows them to do what they love and deem as important while promoting culture and providing a service to the growing subculture of Danza. They are conscious of their marginality and cognizant of their urban Indian identity and reality. Rostas simplifies and limits danzantes' perceptions of themselves and participation in Danza: "The dance of the Mexica is more clearly a conscious search for a social identity grounded in a largely invented Mexica past, which they attempt to live in the present" (Rostas 1991: 15). In a nation that has worked hard to invent its own mestizo racial project and erase its Indian past/present and identity, danzantes wanting to embrace a contemporary Indian identity, one that is considered backward, dirty and shameful, should not be condemned or ridiculed, but viewed as part

of a relevant cultural resistance. Rostas does concede in a small way when she states: "For some groups, the dance has become a conscious way of reasserting an Indian identity in a country, especially in and around Mexico City,[66] that is increasingly in danger of forgetting its indigenous past" (Rostas 1991: 13). Claiming a "glorious Mexica past," does not mean danzantes want to live in the past; rather they want to live in the present being fully aware of and embracing their roots. They are not claiming to equal the lives and realities of rural Indigenous communities; instead they are re-defining their own urban Indigenous realities, still in dialogue with those other realities.

In the 1960s, many Mexicanos living in Mexico City and other major urban areas found a renewed interest in re-connecting to something that was their own. By rejecting political, social, and religious systems that were rooted in the historical oppression of Mexicanos, there was a need to build a new philosophical and spiritual base upon which to stand. On the other hand, Rostas adversely describes Mexicayotl danzantes in the following way: "Many Mexicas are learning Nahuatl, the language spoken by the Aztecs, and when you talk to them they will present a jumbled version of the Aztec/Mexica cosmology. According to today's Mexica, the Aztec era was a utopia destroyed by the gachupines, and they are consciously trying to 'reinvent' it" (Rostas 1991: 14). While I do not want to argue that this perspective unequivocally does not exist, I do want to challenge the broad-sweeping generalizations that this statement could possibly create. Like many oppressed peoples that have acquired a taste of consciousness and enter a serendipitous transformation, they begin to hunger for more knowledge and continued enlightenment. The feeling of being born-again and having peeled away the layers of domination, can create a sense of "revivalism" that can be perceived as extreme and

[66] I would also argue within the United States.

dogmatic. In contrast, this can be a normal process of identity formation and *concientización* (Freire 1970), or critical consciousness. To re-iterate, in México, embracing indigeneity has not been the popular current since the Spaniards arrived in 1519. Therefore, "wanting" to learn Nahuatl and Danza and recovering an Indian identity is the work of decolonization.

CHAPTER 8

~CHICUEYI~

MEXICAYOTL/MEXICANIDAD AND THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

The 1960s-70s saw a renewed interest in México's Indigenous past. Third-world, social/political movements coincided in multiple sites throughout the world. The 1968 Mexican government massacre of student protestors in Tlaltelolco demonstrated ongoing oppression. The 1968 Olympics in Mexico City created a global stage that displayed Black resistance and solidarity through the raising of the fist by Tommie Smith and John Carlos. Similar to the outcry that occurred during the violent suppression of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and activists, Mexican civil society also questioned government response. Any political gains from these social movements were a result of the politics of pity, rather than a politics of true justice. The rise of social/political consciousness caused young people throughout the world to question economic systems that put money ahead of people. This consciousness caused people to question themselves, their role in these systems of oppression, and their own colonial history; one based on domination and on-going power struggles. In México, the cultural renaissance, which resulted from the post-Mexican Revolution period, left a legacy of art and imagination that critiqued modernity and affirmed the massive economic and social gap between the rich and poor, and between Indigenous peoples and Spanish descendants. In many instances, "the political and cultural currents of the 1930s and 1940s certainly encouraged [art] forms like folkloric dancing. In particular, Mexican indigenist policy emphasized assimilation of Indigenous groups while appropriating selected elements of their culture for new, unified national identities" (Krystal 2007: 68). While this state affirmation of Indigeneity

contradicted its manner of implementation (the unsolicited usurpation of Indigenous culture), it still contributed to contemporary notions of Mexican identity.

While the armed battles of both Mexican independence (1810) and the Mexican Revolution (1910) were devastating economically, as well as in terms of the cost of human life, intellectuals, artists and academicians began a new cultural struggle. The new Mexican government, especially under the administration of Pro-Indigenous President Lázaro Cárdenas, commissioned artists such as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, José Alfaro Siqueiros, and Frida Kahlo to create new anti-European aesthetics which reflected an emphasis on Mesoamerican history in order to restore nationhood. The mural or fresco tradition promoted public art as a form of popular education that belonged to the people and contradicted the "high art" that was elitist and inaccessible to the masses. Taking inspiration from Mexica and Mayan antecedents who also painted in bright colors on their public spaces and ceremonial places, these artists used Indigenous iconography and the paintbrush as their weapon for social change. Criticizing the colonial art of Churches and government plazas, Mexican artists no longer painted Spanish aristocrats, but instead focused on the lives of every-day Indigenous peoples and campesinos. This cultural renaissance which continued into the 1950s became a platform for promoting socialist ideals, inferring that the values of México's Indigenous past were the ultimate goals for evoking a true and renewed México.

This cultural/social movement, paired with the political movements of the 1960s, generated a new social imaginary that found its way into the Danza movement in México and eventually in the United States. According to Mario Aguilar, "Any political movement that tries to exist without spiritual strength and purpose is doomed to fail.

Rhetoric, weapons and money can only carry it for so long. The faith and the hope of the people are the strongest tools for change" (Aguilar 1983: 42).The Chicano Movement in the U.S. Southwest was also deeply examining its own colonial history of invasion: "Political action must bring with it critical reflection and constructive strategy" (Grounds, Tinker, Wilkens 2003: 102). The hunger for knowledge and connection to an Indigenous history from which they had been deprived, became the focal point for Chicana/o youth in the 1960s, especially those that took to the streets in the East Los Angeles Blowouts. Each of these cultural/social/political struggles intersected and cross-pollinated in multiple ways, manifesting themselves within Danza.

In México, Danzantes began to question the role of the Catholic religion within Danza. According to Rostas:

> Recently a number of Concheros have made a conscious move to reformulate certain aspects of the dance and have begun to call themselves the Mexica. They reject everything that could be conceived as *Gachupín*, as they tend pejoratively to call the Spanish. The *concha* [mandolina], which has always been central to the tradition, has been abandoned because its strings indicate that its origins must be Spanish (1991: 3).

Danzantes began to re-imagine themselves through peeling away the aesthetic vestiges of colonialism and looked toward the Rivera popular images of Aztecas/Mexicas, as well as the ancient codices, as guides toward recovering Danza in its pre-invasion form and aesthetic. Danza was no longer restricted to the Church, therefore, danzantes began to question why they continued to only practice this tradition under the jurisdiction of the Church.

Danzantes also began to question the popular images of Indigenous people through what was labeled as "Ballet Folklórico," a popular dance form which was developed by and credited to Amalia Hernández (Krystal 2007). Folkloric dance in

México, which was also a result of the Mexican cultural renaissance, combined Indigenous life and modern dance form with choreography and costume. Amalia Hernández, who also worked with traditional Mexica danzantes, including Florencio Yescas and Angelbertha Cobb[67] (Cobb, Personal Interview), founded Ballet Folklórico de México in 1952, which was sponsored by the Department of Tourism. This popular cultural dance form made its way into the mainstream and was defined outside of Mexican cultural perceptions. After the 1950s, various folklore dance groups began performing in the U.S. and beyond. Ballet Folklórico became viewed as an essential part of Mexican identity and was adopted as such by Chicanas/os in the 1960s, who looked toward ballet Folklórico as a means of achieving cultural knowledge. According to Norma Cantú and Olga Nájera-Ramírez, "while some of our traditions [folklórico] may enjoy 'official status' in México or within their circumscribed community group, north of the border and within the context of the larger cultural panorama of the United States, they are reduced to minority status" (2002: 2). Laura Gutíerrez also supports this idea and further analyzes that Chicanas/os were simply reinforcing dominant cultural notions, which would further pull them away from achieving a genuine experience with a deeper self-identity:

[67] Señora Cobb makes the clear distinction that she worked for Florencio directly, not Amalia Hernández. According to Señora Cobb (personal communication), Florencio Yescas, Manuel Pineda and Antonio Arroyo were all in charge of the "costura," or sewing of regalia/trajes for Amalia Hernández. When Hernández needed help with the costuming for the Danza Mexica pieces in her Ballet Folklorico exposition, she called on the above three danzantes as experts. Cobb notes that Yescas was a skilled tailor and made some of the most remarkable, detailed trajes. Cobb also notes that it was la familia Anaya (Señora Anaya, specifically) that first lent Hernández long pheasant feathers for her presentation. The long feathers drew much attention to the theatrical costuming in her stage presentations, but also other danzantes were drawn to the feathers and also wanted to add the long pheasant feathers to their own regalia. Señora Cobb clarified that all the above mentioned danzantes that helped Amalia Hernández in her early career, each belonged to their own Danza groups/mesas/familias, but were revered for their knowledge and skills. Cobb notes that the son of Señora Anaya was the danzante that first renewed La Danza del Fuego/The Fire Dance and re-introduced that dance to contemporary danzantes. This particular dance was also incorporated in Hernández's Ballet Folklorico repertoire.

> The performative subject (re)examines the prevailing image of México in the Chicana/o imagination. Traditionally México has been the authentic culture that all Chicanas/os inherit, and it is the mythical homeland that they should look towards in order to forge their sense of self, a sense of self that has been historically denied in the dominant United States discourses. However, this so-called mainstream culture has also congealed-México 'south of the border' and has used the nation-state of México in order to alienize the Mexicans from within; Chicanas/os are excluded (as they are made to be foreigners) and thus prohibited from participating collectively in the United States sociohistorical processes. As these performers conclude, contemporary México is 'suffering' different types of Americanization due to the economic restructuring in the globalization process (Gaspar de Alba 2003: 64).

Ballet Folklórico, which was part of a state-endorsed "mainstream" Mexican culture, became an oppositional culture once it was utilized by Chicanas/os in the United States. For Chicanas/os, Ballet Folklórico aligned them with oppressed peoples, not with an elite culture, as was the case in México. Gutíerrez attempts to deconstruct notions of "authentic Mexicanness" because:

> She cannot cling to any 'nostalgic images' of México because these images contradict the realities that she witnesses. Moreover, she has lived with images of México, an idealized past that no longer exists. In other words, modernity, technology, and neoliberal marketing strategies have transformed México and its culture (in Gaspar de Alba 2003: 69).

Gutierrez argues that [Ballet Folklórico] performers were simply perpetuating a romanticized image of México, created and desired by the Chicana/o imaginary but, in fact, fictional. The desire to gaze toward México to achieve some form of "authentic culture" is problematic for Chicanas/os on two levels: first, Chicanas/os are deemed foreigners in México and in the U.S.; and, second, the romantic México Chicanas/os are searching for is actually a globalized México being invaded by Americanism. As Gutierrez asks: "Up to what point do Chicanas 'cling to nostalgic images of the other side'? What happens when the 'other side' has negated you as a historical subject?"

(Gaspar de Alba 2003: 68). In the 1960s, Chicanas/os in the U.S. were still unfamiliar with Danza Mexica as a living practice. For them, Ballet Folklórico filled a void and contributed to their own Indigenous identity formation.

In contrast, Danzantes of México began to criticize folkloric dance as imbued with appropriation and misrepresentation. The Yaquí deer dances, re-interpreted by Amalia Hernández, for example, could be deemed offensive to the community itself. Some of these dances served to only reinforce stereotypes and invisibility of the actual living people, through portraying them as something of the past. There was serious issue with outsiders coopting discreet ceremonies and incorporating them into choreographed routines without truly understanding the historical/cultural context. Krystal explains that, in contrast to "traditional" dance, which wants to preserve and hide these dances from further exploitation, "Folklórico wants to exploit them and create a unique sense of heritage that is deeply rooted" (2007: 73). Danza Mexica would categorize itself as "traditional" by this definition, distancing itself from folklore. Folklórico dance becomes mass produced, rather than the localized ritual meant to occur moment to moment. Regalia, rather than made by the individual, becomes identical to others. It becomes "costume" rather that one's "traje" or suit, meaning a special dress that is worn for certain ceremonial purposes. In a sense, memory disappears:

> Depersonalized experiences like these evoke a strong sense of disconnection [and disassociation] from people, places and objects. We are, however, creatures that need meaning and we seem to prefer to get and express meaning in local, personalized connections. In other words, life in large-scale, complex, and anonymous societies compels many to seek experiences that feel 'authentic.' (Krystal 2007: 75).

What Krystal argues is that the large scale performance of Folklórico, while seemingly de-personalized, in actuality lures the viewer to desire to know and accept the "authentic"

or real-lived people. For others, these dances, in essence, became a form of symbol trafficking, where financial opportunities were being gained through the appropriation of Indigenous sacred dances, symbols and spirituality. While the discourse of Ballet Folklórico is expanding and changing, and still criticized, there remains an on-going engagement with it as a symbol of national pride and a promotion of Indigenous contributions to society and culture. So while some view it as cultural appropriation, others view it as recognition of Indigenous identity. In response, Amalia Hernández never made a claim that Ballet Folklórico demonstrated an accurate representation of Indigenous culture, but rather, was only inspired by it (Krystal 2007: 78). For Señora Cobb, the only "bailes [of Amalia] mas o menos autenticos son de Chiapas, Yucatan y Oaxaca [dances sort of authentic are from Chiapas, Yucatan and Oaxaca]. Amalia may have learned from teachers, but she totally distorted it, sterilized it, and took away the Indigenous. And today, si no bailas como Amalia, no sabes bailar [if you don't dance like Amalia, you don't know how to dance]" (personal interview).

While danzantes of México were criticizing colonial interpretations of Indigenous sacred dance and practices, they would also face similar critiques as Danzantes began to expose themselves to the mainstream eye. In the same way, danzantes would also re-create and incorporate traditional Danzas into the repertoire, but, rather than present it as folklore, would instead present it as living tradition. Danzantes escaping the colonial residues within Danza, including the Church, wanted to re-emerge in the public spaces of México and in the sacred sites that were being uncovered and protected as archeological sites throughout México. This new generation of danzantes began leaving the Conchero tradición, which remained closed to outsiders, and began opening themselves to new

ventures and opportunities. The justification toward shifting Conchero tradición dress, dance, and ways into something deemed closer to pre-Cuauhtemoc era is best described in the following way: "What is now traditional was, at some point, innovation. Moreover, the notion of an unchanging, timeless society is an illusion, perhaps imagined in the mind of the moderns in order to have in the world something permanent, a place to escape rapidly changing and anonymous modernity" (Krystal 2007: 79). In other words, change is continuous, tradición is not meant to remain static. Change is inevitable and a new generation of danzantes who splintered away from the Conchero path began to reinvigorate a new identity: one that was labeled as "cultural" (pronounced in Spanish) or la mexicanidad, and in Nahuatl, the Mexicayotl.

La Mexicanidad was a new movement within Danza that saw itself as part of a larger struggle to Mexicanize México. This Mexicanization was more accurately an Indigenization of México. Cultural workers and intellectuals worked together to recover what was lost due to European invasion and utilized both preserved (codices and sacred sites) and living Indigenous knowledge as the basis for re-building a new cultural identity. While some viewed this new leaning as an attempt to re-invent an Indigenous past, Mexicanists saw it as simply returning to and acknowledging an already lived reality. Rather than being an object of shame, this Indigenous reality would become an identity of pride. La Mexicanidad, translated as the Mexicayotl in Nahuatl, can be closely compared to the Native American concept of the Red Road. As Mario Aguilar describes Mexicayotl:

> …Trying to live a clean, honest, humble life, walking the spiritual path on a daily basis…it means trying to live a god-loving, god-fearing life which dedicates itself to harmony with the spirits of Mother Earth, the spirits of the ancestors, and the spirits of our fellow creatures. It means respecting

> our elders, those who have struggled with the same conflicts we are now facing and survived (Maestas, n.d.: 67).

As such, the Mexicayotl was a path toward living a spiritual way of life that rejected colonization in all its forms. It was a way of thinking and being. Some viewed this new movement as mere performance of "authenticity." Ronald Niezen (2003) discusses how Indigenous people at the United Nations Permanent Forum wear their regalia as a way to fulfill the expectations of those in power as to what they perceive as the "authentic Indian." People in the mainstream do not see Indians unless they see feathers because Indians have been stereotyped in that way. Further, people have accepted and/or internalized these stereotypes (Deloria 1998; Mihesuah 1996; Garroutte 2003). Niezen argues that they do not wear this clothing on a regular basis, but do so only at this forum to receive legitimization and acceptance by the dominant powers. Problems of perception are deeply centered on politics, particularly at the United Nations. While the dominant society may only "see" Indigenous people when they replicate and mirror the common imaginary (or fantasy) of what real Indians should look like, some will argue that the Indigenous representatives at the United Nations are representing themselves and their communities in their best regalia and traditional clothing.

The same has been argued, on both sides, with the Mexica dancers. According to Anthropology Professor and Danza scholar, Enrique Maestas:

> These groups do not formally recognize the Catholic influence in their ceremonies and make a conscious effort to distance themselves from both *Los Concheros* and *La Conquista*; nevertheless, many MEXIKA still claim lineage to recognized leaders from both groups of *Los Concheros* and *La Conquista* (Maestas, n.d.: 12).

This was definitely the case, for example with Maestro Florencio Yescas, who was the first to introduce a particular style in Danza commonly referred to as *esplendor*. The

Mexicayotl danzantes have done away with humble regalia and have instead chosen long feathers and ornate, colorful regalia that show the body unashamedly. When Yescas came to the U.S., he became exposed to other Native clothing and styles. He saw longer feathers and began to use them and brought them to México. The cross-pollination of cultures played an important role in the shift in style, forms, and regalia. Some argue that Yescas' dancers are only fulfilling the fantasy of what Aztecs may have looked like, while others claim that the feathers and flash are not about vanity and ego, but rather a way to diminish the Indian image of piety and humility. According to Señora Cobb, when danzantes arrived in the U.S. and saw U.S. Native Americans proudly wearing their hair long and in "trenzas" or braids, MeXicanas/os were inspired. Whereas, trenzas were deemed as a negative marker of Indigeneity and backward-ness, "estando aquí en los estados unidos, vieron que gozan de más libertad que en México. Algunos hasta empezaron a usar pelucas por que querían tener su pelo largo./ being here in the United States, they saw that [Indigenous people] enjoyed more liberty than in México. Some even went as far as using wigs [men and women] because they wanted to have long hair" (personal interview). Danzantes were re-conceptualizing notions of beauty. Whereas long hair and braids (for both men and women) would be targets for extreme discrimination in México, during the 1970s American Indian Movement, it was a marker of pride. Danzantes, wearing wigs to make it seem as if they had long hair, was a way of also embracing and shifting new ideals of beauty, which were markedly Indigenous. The Mexicayotl danzantes believe they should always be in full uniform, ready to dance; they should always look their best, not meek or plain, but with splendor so that people will look and feel awe-inspired by the ancestral people and traditions. Yescas wanted to

preserve the integrity of the cultural context of Danza while promoting the showmanship and performance aspect of Danza. These two perspectives can often conflict. Despite the aesthetic differences, the beats and steps of the Danzas are similar enough to "integrate each other's members into the respective ceremonies and styles of performance. This inevitably results in influences that travel across political borders and boundaries of ideological difference" (Maestas, n.d.: 12).

While the 1960s demonstrated a rise of Indigenous and political consciousness in México, simultaneously, Indigenous consciousness was also growing in the minds and hearts of Chicanas/os all over Aztlan. The 1960s Chicano Movement renaissance produced artists and grassroots intellectuals that would write manifestos and paint murals that helped shape an "Aztec"-descendent Chicano identity; albeit romanticized, patriarchal, and essentialized. In hindsight, contemporary critical Xicana feminist tools of analysis have continued to dissect the Chicano Movement period, revealing the oftentimes sexist and heterosexist notions perpetuated in multiple facets of the movement. While it is imperative to be critical of the "essentialisms" created during this time period, it is equally important to understand the effect and role these ideas played in notions of power and identity. Gayatri Spivak (1987) coined the term and idea of "strategic essentialism;" which explains that the essentialisms created in the particular context of the Chicano Movement were actually needed to mediate claims to space (i.e., to "Aztlan" as the Chicano homeland, Indigenous origin, and historical migration). Solidarity around the creation of an essentialist Aztec origin/history was a strategy that united a community under an Indigenous claim to identity and facilitated Chicanas/os to re-think their own identity and self in order to mobilize toward social action. This, in

turn, allowed Chicanas/os to carve spaces where growth and critical ideas would then be allowed to transpire and emerge. While clearly not all Chicanas/os are descendants of Aztecs, during the Chicano Movement era claiming a romanticized (and in retrospect, problematic) Aztec identity was the impetus for Chicanas/os to develop critical understandings of colonization and further explore their identity and indigeneity. According to Enrique Maestas in his article, "Danza Azteca: Xicana/o Life Cycle Ritual and Autonomous Culture":

> Danza Azteca is growing in Mexicano-Chicano-Indio communities throughout México and Aztlan and reflects the cultural and spiritual autonomy of Chicanas/os, Mexicanos and Indios who migrate and inhabit both regions. A culture emerging from this social historical context is increasingly being integrated into the life of Chicanas/os in ways observable in life-cycle rituals (Maestas,1999: 63).

For Chicanas/os, the arrival of Danza created a sense of autonomy, not only among the larger trans-societal context, but also within the Xicana/o community. Indigenous spirituality, as expressed in Danza, is much older than the Catholic belief system within the MeXicana/o community. The growing participation in Danza signals a community in need to revitalize and seek origin of self and history.

The adoption or re-emergence of Native spiritual beliefs by MeXicanas/os in the 1970s was due to how those that adopt or maintain these beliefs identify themselves within a larger society. If a given person sees themselves as part of a larger mainstream, and believes that their best interest is served by mainstream ideology, then there is no reason for that person to ever question what they have been taught in educational and religious institutions or through the media. It is only when some series of events culminates in a re-evaluation (key word being "value" or looking at values) of the colonizer world view, and only when one comes to the conclusion that to continue within

this belief system does more harm than good, that one will have the motivation to seek new belief systems. The Chicano Movement and Danza led to a social transformation of the political, spiritual and cultural spectrum of the Xicana/o community and the range of attitudes within these categories. Danza has provided a space where one can reconstruct the past in order to survive the present. In its fundamental beliefs and practice, Danza has also provided a tool for decolonization, critical (re)thinking, and profound spiritual healing for the MeXicana/o community. When one compares the values that confront society today, such as sexism, heterosexism/homophobia, capitalism, individualism, and human arrogance, they are in stark contrast to the values that Danza, in its historical origin and present day potential, serves to promote and instill. This does not imply that those issues do not exist in contemporary Danza circles or in the lives of individuals/danzantes, but Danza creates a forum and community within which these issues can be addressed and dealt with.

Many Xicanas since the 1970s have questioned and challenged the role of the Catholic Church, in particular toward the role of women and the social repression of the MeXicana/o community. The growing numbers of Xicanas rejecting the Catholic Church and adopting Indigenous spirituality quite readily speaks to the indifference many feel toward the Church and institutionalized religions. In her essay, "Los Espíritus Siguen Hablando: Chicana Spiritualities" (in Trujillo 1998), Lara Medina argues that Xicanas have been disillusioned and repressed by the Catholic Church and Christianity and, therefore, have sought another way to manifest spirituality. The Church's unwillingness to address the economic/political struggles of Xicanas, and the embedded sexism, heterosexism/homophobia, and racism in Catholic doctrines, have pushed Xicana

feminists to reject the belief systems that were often inherited from their parents and grandparents. In returning to "an Indígena-inspired spirituality, [they] have learned to trust their own senses and bodies, recreate traditional cultural practices, and look to non-western philosophies—all of which offers us a (re)connection to ourselves, our spirits, and to the ongoing process of creating nuestra familia" (Trujillo 1998: 189). In resistance to patriarchy, many Xicanas decided for themselves the images and rituals they would choose to value and carry. Xicanas have returned to women-centered beliefs passed down through *curanderas* (healers) and grandmothers. At the same time, the Chicano Movement paradoxically embraced the support of the Catholic Church and liberation theology within political spaces such as the United Farm Workers Movement. Comparable to *la tradición* movement, which essentially "used" the Catholic Church to maintain Indigenous traditions and ways, civil rights movements and farmworker struggles carried Christian prayers and the banner of la Virgen de Guadalupe to give spiritual/religious credence and protection to their political beliefs.

Despite the fact that many Xicanas/os are geographically far away from México, there has been a continual resurgence of Xicanas/os identifying closely with their roots and ancestral homelands. According to Maestas, "The primary purpose of Danza is to recreate a traditional form of ceremony that acts as a focus for a 'culture of resistance'" (Maestas 1999: 72). I do not believe that developing a "culture of resistance" is the primary purpose of Danza; rather, the primary purpose is to honor ancestral spirits, Earth, and to connect the mind, body and spirit towards a higher spiritual level. However, Maestas continues to describe the important functions Danza has served; for example, Mexican Catholics, through Danza and other means, were able to honor important feast

days or Indigenous-origin holidays that many mainstream Catholic Churches did not adequately celebrate or acknowledge. As Maestas further states: "In these ways, Danzantes execute alternate and autonomous ceremony to meet spiritual and social control needs of Chicanas/os and the Indigenous communities of Aztlan and México" (Maestas 1999: 72). Some examples are Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos), Rites of Passage, or coming of age ceremonies, or Tonantzin (Virgen de Guadalupe). Danzantes in the U.S. have also created transnational Danza ceremonies that replicated the same ceremony occurring in the México on the same day. For example, danzantes that cannot travel yearly to México to dance at the Ceremonia de Mayahuel (also known as la Virgen de los Remedios or Virgin of Medicines/healing), can go to San Francisco, California to honor this ceremony that honors the guardians of the sacred Maguey plant.

By the 1970s, Danza Azteca/Mexica soon became part of the vernacular of the Chicano movement. The ideas of Aztlan and a new assertion of Indigenous identity influenced greatly the vision of Chicano youth and educational/cultural programs across the southwest. Danza also influenced the later, 1990's concept of "Xicana, " an evolution of the term "Chicano," which represented a new resurgence, revitalized movement, and a reclamation of identity that replaced the Spanish language "Ch" with an "X," symbolizing a renewed declaration of an Indigenous identity and nation. Danza has and continues to serve as a philosophical-spiritual platform for the Raza community at large. It has become standard to have a Danza invocation open any Xicana/o cultural event, or to have a Danza group lead any political march or present at a protest or rally (see Appendix 7). By including and making it customary to incorporate Danza at Xicana/o gatherings and events, the community makes a statement that Indigenous origins and

ancestors must always be acknowledged, and that the community at large must always be reminded and called upon to regenerate and preserve Indigenous knowledge.

While Danza has been critiqued for instilling romanticized designs of spirituality, or creating Mexica-centric idealized notions of indigeneity amongst Xicanas/os, it has also served as a foundation or tool for the decolonization of Raza from all backgrounds.[68] According to Mexico City Danza maestro Sergio Ocelocoatl Ramírez, "People no longer believe in the systems of outsiders. They have experimented with them and they have been disappointed. They are tired of promises, so they are returning to what is theirs" (Schrader 1996: 2). Danza has provided a much-needed connection in this regard; bringing a community closer to what is theirs/ours—which may mean something different for each member of the community. For a Salvadoreña, Danza may bring her closer to her Lenca origins and an exploration of Indigeneity in El Salvador. For a Xicana, it may mean an exploration of family roots and Caxcan origins from Zacatecas. The main point is that Danza maintains a resistance toward assimilation and indoctrination, which is a central component of the decolonization process. Whereas the majority sectors of society, including the educational system, may have discouraged or even forcefully deprived Xicanas/os of their birthright, culture, identity, and history, Danza provides a vital space for Xicanas/os to feel acceptance and even encouragement and admiration for holding onto Indigenous origins and belief systems.

[68] An example of this is that there are Danza groups led, not by Mexicanos, but Salvadoreños, and participants in various groups that are not of Mexican origin, but from other places such as throughout Central/South America and the Caribbean. Danza has been broadened to encompass not only "Mexicas" or Mexicans, but also those that identify as Indigenous and choose to embrace Danza as a way of life.

SECTION III

NORTH
MICTLAMPA TEZCATLIPOCA

Nimitztlahpaloliz. Nimitztlazcamatilia ni Mictlampa Chaneque huan hueyi ni calli ni yayahuic campa ichan Tezcatlipoca. Tlaehecaya tequititoc huan tonaya. Tzotzona ehecatl. Tzotzona atecocolli. Eyi.

Yo te saludo. Yo te agradezco, cuidador, Mictlampa, lugar de los muertos y esta grandiosa casa, de color negro, donde vive Tezcatlipoca. Comienza el viento. Ya trabajo. Ahora sale el sol. Canta el viento. Suenan los caracoles. Tres.

I greet you. I give you thanks, caretaker of the north, Mictlampa, place of the dead and this grand house, color of black, where Tezcatlipoca lives. The wind begins. It worked. Now the sun arrives. May the wind sing. Sound the conch shells. Three.

CHAPTER 9

~CHICNAHUI~

ABBREVIATED GENEAOLOGICAL SKETCH AND TIMELINE OF DANZA

The following genealogical sketch and timeline is provided to summarize major events and moments that influenced, catalyzed, or were a product of Danza. In this chapter, I break from the conventional dissertation writing structure and provide a rich timeline of events. I incorporate this within the document, rather than as an appendix, because of its significance. Attempting to design a genealogical sketch is a complicated and confusing task given the multiple narratives, opinions, and memories of sources. To document this in narrative form would be challenging. Therefore, I have chosen this method (timeline format) to incorporate all the narratives and crucial events in order to walk the reader through this history. The first timeline focuses on Danza in California, specifically, although it was necessary to incorporate other places and events not necessarily California-specific. It closes with the formation of my own Danza group in New York City, *Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Quetzalcoatl in Ixachitlan,* which was founded by two danzantes from California. This section provides another layer of Danza history, specifically focused on the formation of my Danza group. The third and final timeline is focused on contemporary Danza in México and the formation of a Mexicayotl intellectual think tank, which also influenced the Danza movements in California and within the entire United States. It is my hope that the reader will be able to use these timelines to understand the complex, overlapping, and intersecting events the influenced each other and this dynamic Danza history.

Many of the following events precipitated the arrival of Danza Mexica in California, and thus the United States, and the trajectory of the Mexicayotl Movement in México. These important moments (in)formed[69] identity, culture, and Indigenous consciousness, all woven within a fabric of Danza history. Further, this chapter also describes the points of convergence, where Native American, Xicana/o and Mexicayotl movements overlapped and/or impacted/influenced each other. This history is intended to be a sketch in progress, which attempts to condense and capture information gathered from my interviews, oral narratives, and the literature. I realize there may be gaps; this narrative is meant to be built upon and expanded by future scholarship. It is my intention to only begin a comprehensive historical timeline and genealogy of Danza. I apologize in advance if the reader finds pieces of this history incomplete. I reiterate my intention to begin the conversation and documentation with the hopes that it can become a collective, on-going process of building this documentation of a shared Danza history.

[69] Both "formed" and "informed."

DANZA IN CALIFORNIA AND THE UNITED STATES

1937-1948

Angelbertha Cobb becomes a professional dancer under the instruction of Florencio Yescas in Mexico City.

1948

Florencio Yescas arrives for the first time in the United States.

1953

Florencio Yescas was living in Las Vegas, Nevada and was practicing Danza.

1955-1957

Señora Angelbertha Cobb performs Danza in México under the direction of Maestros Florencio Yescas and Polo Ometecpatl Rojas, touring the Mexican Republic, Puerto Rico and Spain (Cobb, personal interview).

1962

Florencio Yescas began working with Dr. Haskell from the University of California in Santa Barbara to help him with some of his investigative work on Indigenous history.

1963

Señora Angelbertha Cobb moves to Sacramento, California and forms the 1st dance group in Otay, California (Cobb, personal interview).

1967

Señora Angelbertha Cobb begins Ballet Folklórico Quetzalcoatl and Danzas Folkloricas de Sacramento, which later became Folkor Mexicano

de Sacramento. This dance group was dedicated to Ballet Folklórico, but incorporated, not only various regional dances, but her own teachings of Danza Azteca. This is one of the earliest Mexican Folklore Dance groups in the United States (Cobb, personal interview; Barrera 2011). Instead of closing any folklore presentation/performance with the customary zapateado, she chose to always close with Danza Mexica.

1968

A gathering of elders is held in San Diego, California. This gathering initiates a movement which eventually leads to the fight for Chicano Park in the Logan Heights Barrio (Maestas, n.d.).

Señora Cobb begins to introduce several ceremonies/cultural events to the Sacramento community that continue today: Colores (honoring the very young, newborn), Xilonen (rites of passage for young women), Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), and Tonantzin (Sacred Mother Earth also referred to as La Virgen de Guadalupe). She also begins creating bridges and relationships with California Native and other Northern Indigenous communities (Cobb, personal interview).

1969

Florencio Yescas was living in Bellflower, in the Los Angeles area.

1970

In 1970, Florencio Yescas' mother dies. He returns to México where he became alcoholic. Emma Pulido, folklore dancer and his student, helped him and put him in rehabilitation. Following this is when he came to U.S.

Chicanos (including Guillermo "Yermo" Aranda) in San Diego occupy the Ford Building and eventually negotiate with the City of San Diego for the "water tank," which would become El Centro Cultural de La Raza.

El Centro Cultural de La Raza open its doors in 1970 in San Diego, California, directed by a collective of artists and writers calling themselves *Toltecas en Aztlan*. The Centro promoted cultural and political events for the advancement of the Chicano Movement.

Yermo Aranda was chairmen of Toltecas en Aztlan from 1970-1972 and was the first official director of El Centro. Yermo and his wife Ana-i divided their paychecks from their paid positions to create new jobs to involve more people (Maestas, n.d.).

1971

Artist Guillermo Chavez Rosete attends a workshop in San Juan Bautista sponsored by Teatro Mascarones. Here, he first witnesses Andrés Segura's Conchero Danza group, *Xinachtli* (Maestas, n.d.).

The Unity Caravan, led by Mad Bear, is invited to El Centro Cultural de La Raza in San Diego in 1971, with the purpose to unite Indigenous people in solidarity (Maestas, n.d.).

1972

Andrés Segura presents Danza Azteca to Chicano Park in San Diego, California.

1973

Florencio Yescas arrives to the Tijuana/San Diego area, coming from Mexico City with a group of danzantes, on their way toward Los Angeles.

(Maestas, n.d.).[70] The other dancers who come with him are (names or nicknames given): José Noyola, Juan Salinas, Gerardo "Cerillo" Salinas, Alejandro "Conejo" Ramirez, Andrés "Piolin" García, Omar Medrano Rafael "El Pato" (?), Carlos Novoa, Lázaro Arvizu, José Luis "El Pichi" Lizalde, and Mario (?). Only Cerillo, Lázaro, Andrés, Conejo, and Florencio make it to Los Angeles. The others eventually turned around and went back to México (Maestas, n.d.). Yescas eventually returns to San Diego where he connects with El Centro Cultural de La Raza. This Centro was a powerful resource for Chicanos all over the U.S., influencing significant cultural shifts which focused on Indigenous language, culture and identity. According to oral narrative, Tecihtzin Herminia Enrique (Maestas, n.d.), who was a founding member of El Centro Cultural de La Raza and Director of the Ballet Folklórico en Aztlan, Florencio Yescas arrived to the Centro three days before they were to present a program on dance. They had hoped to have a Danza group from Baja, but when that fell through, coincidentally, Yescas showed up to the Centro; Tecihtzin did not know how he arrived there, but on the day of the program he performed with his group, Esplendor Azteca. He began to use El Centro as a resource to teach classes and to earn money both in the Centro and in schools. Only Tecihtzin's daughters (Veronica Bernice, Claudia Belen, and Vivianna Cossette) attended his first class at El Centro.[71] Eventually, members of Teatro Mestizo and the Ballet Folklórico en Aztlan, both housed under El Centro, became key participants in Yescas' workshops. These early danzantes went under the title of Toltecas en Aztlan, a previously-established artist's collective. Because many of them were also artists and silk screeners, they were able to disseminate information about Danza. The Toltecas en Aztlan played a crucial role in the promotion and diffusion of Danza and ceremony in the U.S. During Yescas' time

[70] According to Ana-i Aranda, she remembers Yescas being in San Diego before 1973 because her son was born in September 1973 and Yescas was there before (Maestas, not dated: 89). Therefore, Yescas either arrived in San Diego a little before 1973 or early 1973.

[71] Simply making an interesting point that the first students of Yescas were all women.

working with El Centro, he was housed and supported by Alberto Urista (more commonly known as Alurista) and Geronimo Blanco. Ramón "Chunky" Sanchez would provide Yescas and his group with transportation after they crossed the border with a coyote in San Ysidro (Ramirez, personal communication). Simultaneously, Yescas taught Danza at Southwestern College, where the MEChA chapter formed the short-lived (1-2 years) Grupo *Naui Ollin*. Yescas also taught Tony Vasquez who formed *Grupo Tonantzin*, still active (Maestas, n.d.). Juan Felipe Herrera (the well-known Chicano poet/writer) became director of El Centro at the time and supported the Danza. Due to a shift in leadership and misunderstandings and miscommunication over booking, money and payment issues, Yescas eventually severed his ties with El Centro (Maestas, n.d.).

According to Señora Cobb (personal interview), Danza, under the direction of Florencio Yescas, presents for the first time at a Pow Wow, in Morongo in 1973.

In August of 1973, A Caravan of Broken Treaties arrives in Hopiland. Here, a group of inter-tribal Indigenous young men, including members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and Chicanos Guillermo Rosete and Tupac Enrique, enter into an Adult Warriors Society Pact led by Richard Oakes (Maestas, n.d.). Rosete and Enrique agree to represent the San Diego Xicano community of Toltecas en Aztlan and El Centro Cultural de la Raza. Tupac began to research and write about the legal and political aspects of the Chicano Movement, including the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, land rights, sovereignty, and human rights violations, extending these findings to all Indigenous peoples.

1974

In November of 1974, Aguilar (1983) states that he witnessed Florencio Yescas and twelve other danzantes (according to Cobb, these danzantes are commonly referred to as "los discipulos/the disciples" because there were 12 of them) dancing for donations in a parking lot in Tijuana. A month later, Aguilar met Florencio Yescas:

> Later, in the middle of December '74, I went to the home of Alurista, (S.D. poet-UCSD) where at the time my friend Juan Felipe Herrera and the Teatro Mestizo were living. It was a rainy evening and as I entered I saw seven persons sitting near the fireplace. This was the first time I met my Maestro, Florencio Yescas, and Lázaro Arvizu, later to become my compadre (40).

While Yescas, and the dancers that stayed with him, were in Los Angeles, they began touring Danza to different places such as San Antonio, Chicago and New México. Eventually Tomás Salinas and his family settled in Florida and maintained the Danza within their family. They have danced at the Schemitzun Pow Wow (Simon 1999), the largest Pow Wow on the East Coast and at the Epcot Center. (According to Cobb, Yescas, Gerardo Salinas, Lázaro Arvizu and maybe Virginia Arvizu had also previously danced in Epcot, first opening the door.) Gerardo Salinas and Lázaro Arvizu both formed their own Danza groups named Xipe Totec in San José and Los Angeles respectively.

In 1974, Señora Cobb forms a dance and theater group at DQ University, which was chosen to participate in ceremonies that year in Teotihuacan.

Between 1974 and 1976 Señora Cobb forms the first Ballet Folklórico group at the University of California, Davis, named Aztlan-Davis.

In 1974, Mario Aguilar, member of Ballet Folklórico de Aztlan and the musical group, Servidores de la Vida (which created Chicano music including a revival of alabanzas, songs used in Danza ceremonies) travel to Mexico City for a teatro festival and witness Don Pedro Rodríguez and

Andrés Segura dancing in Popotlan. Don Pedro would become the jefe/teacher of leading groups in San Francisco, California (Maestas, n.d.).

1975

The White Roots of Peace arrives to El Centro Cultural de La Raza in 1975. White Roots of Peace was a coalition of Indigenous artists, dancers and speakers from throughout the Western Hemisphere working to encourage Indigenous people to rediscover their heritage (Maestas, n.d.).

Also in 1975, Guillermo Rosete moves to Los Angeles to dedicate himself to Florencio Yescas and the Esplendor Azteca. Mario Aguilar also dances with Yescas between January and March. By May 5th, Felipe Esparza joins the group. In August, Aztleca joins, as well as Ricardo Medina, who is the only one that did not continue with Danza into the present (Maestas, n.d.). Most of the Chicano danzantes were members of Toltecas en Aztlan. In August, Tupac and Momé Enrique live behind Yermo and Ana-i Aranda's house, which created a gathering point and community for the San Diego Chicanos, who unknowingly, were beginning a historical movement. At this point, the danzantes of Toltecas en Aztlan (aside from Yescas) know the most about Danza in the U.S. When Yescas was traveling and eventually left San Diego, the Danza Group, calling itself Toltecas en Aztlan, began holding ensayos/practices and danced independently. Toltecas en Aztlan, which was originally a collective of artists, poets, muralists, and musicians, slowly transitioned to being known mostly as a Danza Azteca group exclusively. The Danza group was made up of Mario Aguilar, Guillermo Rosete, Felipe Esparza, Aztleca, Momé Anowos, Ricardo Medina, Tupac Enrique, and others from the Enrique family. From 1975 to 1980, the group would grow significantly. As other groups formed, such as Señora Cobb's group in Sacramento (also one of

the earliest Danza groups), danzantes would begin to meet one another and dance together, or host events and invite each other.

Between 1975 and the 1980s, Chicanas/os begin to move to and live in Red Winds, an area near San Luis Obispo, California, that was off-the-grid, with no electricity. Red Winds was a foundation/project to create a self-sustaining land reserve/community for all Indigenous nations. There, many people learned Danza (see Appendix 15) and other Native spiritual ceremonies/ways and how to live off of the land. Teachers from México came and shared their Danzas, including Florencio Yescas who gave palabra to Ana-i there at Red Winds. (Aranda, personal communication)

Ana-i and Yermo Aranda (artist/muralist), who came out of the Toltecas de Aztlan in San Diego, became the maestros of the Red Winds Danza Group. When Yermo, who had been the leader of Toltecas en Aztlan, left El Centro and San Diego to move to Red Winds, the leadership of Toltecas was left to Mario Aguilar. Ana-i and Yermo later formed a group in Watsonville, California called White Hawk/ Iztatutli.

Señora Cobb visited Red Winds along with her students, such as Chuy Ocelotl Ortiz, to whom she gave palabra and who also became the cabeza of his own group, *Danza Quetzalcoatl Citlalli de Sacramento*. Chuy had also danced with Florencio in Los Angeles and San Diego. Chuy continues to open doors as a sun dancer, sweat leader, and as one who works closely with California Native communities.[72]

In 1975, the New Fire Ceremony is held in Mexico City for the first time since 1513. Florencio Yescas participates in this ceremony. As part of

[72] On a personal note, I have had the opportunity to travel with Chuy to various ceremonies in the U.S. and Canada. He has been an invaluable teacher and friend.

this reinvigoration, he conducts fire ceremonies in Chalma, Tasco, the pyramid of Quetzalcoatl in Teotihuacan and many other places.

At this time, Tlakaelel, "a former general in the Mexican Army turned spiritual leader" (Maestas, n.d.: 47), claimed part of the leadership of the New Fire Ceremony. He begins representing a new organization called 4 Arrows, and begins preaching about Mexica spiritual ways. In 1975, he travels to Red Winds and tells them to build a pyramid. Guillermo Rosete is reluctant to comply with Tlakaelel and warns Chicanos and danzantes against following his plea. Yescas, on the other hand encourages the building of a pyramid in honor of the New Fire (Maestas, n.d.). According to Señora Cobb, it is with the group, 4 Arrows, that maestro Macuil Xochitl and Don Pedro Rodríguez arrive to the U.S.

In 1975[73], Florencio Yescas invites people at Red Winds to participate in La Caravana Teponaxtli. This caravan of danzantes and other Chicanos attended the Congreso Internacional del Quinto Sol in Mexico City, which gathered to discuss contemporary issues of Indigenous cultural survival. This Congress wanted to have an exchange with Indigenous peoples from the U.S. involved in Danza. This caravan was also organized by Señora Cobb (Maestas, n.d.). Chicanos traveled through northern México, many for the first time, and held ceremonies along the way. They carried with them 52 (a sacred number and Mexica calendric symbol of a century) sticks which symbolized fire. Eventually they arrived to Querétaro[74] where the caravan met the Mesa Central de la Gran Chichimeca, one of the oldest and largest confederations of Conchero Danza, led by Don Margarito

[73] This date conflicts with oral narrative by Mario Aguilar who dates the caravan in 1978 (Maestas, not dated: 61) and the oral narrative of Ana-i and Guillermo Aranda dates the invitation to this caravan in 1977 and the actual caravan leaving November of 1978 with 25 people.

[74] According to Ana-i and Yermo Aranda, their VW van was the only one vehicle that made it to Querétaro, the others could not get past the border or broke down along the way. In this van, Florencio, Ana-i, Yermo, Señora Cobb, Ed Galindo, and Bea Parko arrived in Querétaro.

Aguilar, Otomi Native, curandero/healer, and leader of a campesino/farm worker community in Querétaro (Maestas, n.d.). According to Maestas:

> Florencio told Don Margarito about the strikes that were being led by César Chávez, as well as the activity of the Chicano Movement. This was very interesting to him [Don Margarito] because of the similarity it had to what he was doing in his own community (Maestas, n.d.: 48).

This is interesting point, as it demonstrates the connections and overlapping political, cultural and spiritual struggles within the Chicano community, demonstrating the intimate links and on-going trajectory of these links within Danza. Don Margarito welcomed the caravan, wrote down all the names of the Danza groups in Aztlan (U.S.), and went to his altar and prayed for them in his language (Maestas, n.d.). This moment was significant as the Danza in the U.S. was recognized and unified by and with the Danza tradition in México. According to Guillermo Rosete, When Yescas entered the oratory/prayer room,

> A white butterfly flew off of his black hat and landed on Don Margarito's wife. This white moth had gone inside of his hat when they had stopped at Casas Grandes (ancient city ruins). This had great meaning for some of the Danzantes present because the white moth was IXTAPAPALOTL (the white butterfly), which is the little butterfly from the north coming down to Querétaro in the south. The color white is the symbol of the purity and potential of the sacred children and a butterfly is the symbol of rebirth and beauty. This omen blessed the coming of the Danzantes from AZTLAN and Florencio's bringing them to México for recognition (Maestas, n.d.: 49).

Two other Danza leaders present at this encounter were Capitán General Campos (leader of two groups) and Capitán Eladio León. All three leaders, who did not always work together, were in favor of what Yescas was doing in the U.S., and wanted to support the danzantes from Aztlan. Again, according to Maestas:

> This historical interchange served in opening the door for Danzantes from AZTLAN to establish relations with these

> groups in México. The continuous and growing interchange between Danzantes in México and AZTLAN is the most important thing Florencio did for all of Danza (n.d.: 50).

Interestingly, although it seems that Yescas was moving toward a Mexicayotl trajectory of Danza, the fact that he encouraged danzantes from Aztlan to go to México to become recognized by the Conchero tradiciónes, demonstrates his internal struggle to completely disassociate from those roots. He still recognized the importance of their palabra, which essentially was his also. This can be perceived as a sign of respect for these roots, but some have also speculated that he wanted this recognition to dispel the rumors that he was using Danza only for money. People in México were aware of the ornate regalia, long feathers and intricate designs that he was wearing and promoting and many of them lost respect for Yescas. By taking Chicanas/os to La Mesa, he wanted to prove that he was in fact carrying on the tradition, but in Aztlan. According to Señora Cobb, it was always his intention to plant *both* traditions of Danza. For this reason, some groups that learned from Yescas have Conchero influence, while others completely did away with Christian remnants.

During the Caravana Teponaxtli, the danzantes and a group they met in Mexico City, El Centro Cultural de Preamericana,[75] received permission to spend the night in Teotihuacan. Here, they would have a council meeting and draft a petition to present at the Congreso del Quinto Sol. The history of Danza ceremony was discussed at the meeting, and one of the main points of the petition was to demand the right to have ceremony in sacred places without fear of harassment of federal officials (Maestas,

[75] El Centro Cultural de Preamericana was a school based on the teachings of Maria del Carmen Nieva and el Maestro Domingo Martínez Paredez, the famed Nahuatl and Mayan (respectively) scholarship (Maestas, not dated; Nieva López 1969). The centro also began to teach Danza Azteca. The Danza was taught by Maestro Antonio Arroyo (who lived in the same building as the Centro). After Arroyo, the Danza was taught by el Maestro Polo Ometecpatl Rojas.

n.d.). As a result, Danzantes have had (and in most cases continue to have) ceremonies at the sacred sites (pyramids) throughout México.

1977

According to Pablo Poveda's interview with Andrés Segura (1981):

> En 1977 el capitán de conquista D. Andrés Segura Granados fundó el grupo 'Xinachtli de Aztlan' en Austin, la capital del estado de Texas, entre las filas de los jóvenes nacionalistas chicanos de ambiente universitario y pensamiento indigenista./In 1977 captain of conquest, D. Andrés Segura Granados founded the group 'Xinachtli de Aztlan' in Austin, the capital of Texas, with the groups of young nationalist Chicanos coming from the University and from Indigenous thought. (Poveda 1981: 282)

According to Maestas (n.d.), Segura also founded a group in San Juan Bautista, California and became very involved as a mentor and spiritual guide for El Teatro Campesino in San Juan Bautista. His influence was significant in the formation of Chicano theater as an artistic and spiritual medium (Broyles-González 1994). Maestas (n.d.) presents a different date; he notes that in 1968 Andres Segura's group *Xinachtli* was already in formation in San Antonio. There has been on-going debate as to who was actually the "first," to bring Danza to the U.S., with students of each maestro claiming to be part of the initial group. Although others (mainly danzantes from Segura's group) may disagree, Señora Cobb (personal interview) affirms that Yescas was indeed the first to plant Danza and expand the teachings to Chicanas/os. This debate is senseless, as both teachers played a critical role in the foundation of Danza in the U.S. regardless of the actual dates, especially given the close proximity of this time frame. However, it is important to note that Yescas and Segura planted very different trajectories in Danza (Mexicayotl or "esplendor" and Conchero, respectively). This continues to create divisions in contemporary Danza groups. Oftentimes these conflicts or divisions stem from egocentric or self-serving claims to "authenticity"-- i.e., the "true

danza" or the "first danza," etc. However, these divisions only further groups/danzantes away from the spiritual development that is central to Danza. With the arrival of other maestros from México, who subsequently formed groups, such differences and divisions between groups expanded. In my work, I hope to convey that all of the "ramas" or branches of Danza in the United States have overlapped, touched, or interacted, engaging with and influencing each other; ultimately, we all come from one tree rooted in the Danza.

On December 7, 1977, Florencio Yescas and others organize a gathering in Teotihuacan where people from all over the continent come together, including the National Congress of American Indians. This gathering led to future encounters and a base for a movement in Mexico City that became even stronger into the 1980s through the *Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtiloyan* (see Appendix 10) (Mendoza, 2007; Mendoza, personal interview).

1978

Florencio Yescas gives Yermo Aranda a "manda" (or obligation) to be a messenger of the sacred fire, and gives Ana-i a manda to be the keeper of the fire. Both were initiated during the trip to México (part of the Caravana Teponaxtli) as danzantes to el fuego sagrado/sacred fire. At this time, they stayed in Tacuba, Mexico City, for several months, with family and neighbors of Florencio to continue learning.

1979

Tlakaelel begins a Danza group in Phoenix called La Danza *Ixta Kuauhtli* (White Eagle). Tlakaelel gave palabra to Eduardo (Ed) Mendoza, the only man of the original five members of this Arizona group. Ed Mendoza

begins a ceremony on Lorna Mendoza's land on the Pima Reservation. Tupac and Maria Enrique become members of Ixta Kuauhtli in 1980.

1980

The *Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtiloyan* (see Appendix 10) was built by Miguel Angel Mendoza Kuauhkoatl with the intention of creating a Mexica think tank or school of thought. (Mendoza, 2007; Mendoza, personal interview).

In 1980 there is the first Mexica marriage ceremony at Chicano Park between Tupac and Maria Enrique.

Also in 1980, El Congreso del Quinto Sol is held in Albuquerque and danzantes from Tacuba, led by Don Miguel Avalos, come to the University of New México. A commitment is made to continue intercontinental/international exchanges between Indigenous peoples (Maestas, n.d.). Members of the Picuris Pueblo communities acknowledge their strong historical, cultural, and blood relationships with Indigenous peoples of México. Out of this gathering, a new Danza group emerges, Los Guerreros de Chicomoztok in New México, who had been learning from the Avalos/Tacuba group. This group (which has been called La Danza de Quetzalcoatl and La Danza de la Virgen de Los Lagos), has a history that spans over 100 years, with a lineage connected to the Vargas Family (led by Manuel Vargas) of México which holds four generations of women Capitanas (main leaders). This group and the Vargas Family had a strong influence on Los Guerreros de Chicomoztok Danza group in New México. Dorotea Martinez-Miera (of a family native to New México for hundreds of years) joined this group in 1980. Los Guerreros de Chicomoztok was one of the few groups in the United States not directly connected to Yescas or Segura (although Yescas did work with the Vargas Family in México and attended their family ceremonies).

Los Guerreros de Chicomoztok was made up of native New Mexicans (Maestas, n.d.). Dorotea Martinez-Miera eventually becomes co-leader of Danza Anahuac in Taos, New México through marriage with Guillermo Rosete (student of Yescas) in 1985. This demonstrates that even though the early New México Danza groups are seemingly distinct from Yescas or Segura, the lineages of Danza either cross, interact, or become related (in this case, through marriage) and still were very much influenced by the teachings of Yescas.

In 1980, Yescas tells Mario Aguilar to go to México to become recognized by La Mesa. He instructs Aguilar to create an estandarte, and Aguilar chooses La Virgen de Guadalupe as the estandarte's image and protector. When Aguilar goes to México to represent Toltecas en Aztlan, he becomes recognized as a Capitán by Yescas and other leaders present. However, other members of Toltecas en Aztlan become skeptical of Aguilar for going to México and divisions within begin to occur. (Maestas, n.d.). According to Señora Cobb, Yescas told her personally that Mario Aguilar was supposed to carry the Estandarte de la Danza Conchera, including the vestuario (type of dress/regalia worn by Concheros). Yescas was intentionally leaving this tradition with Aguilar. Aguilar wore the Conchero regalia for the first few years, but eventually changed to "what the old Concheros call, 'los encuerados' (the naked ones, meaning less clothing and more skin showing)" (Cobb, personal interview).

Between 1980 and 1982 Chicanas (who were activists in MEChA) in Denver, Colorado began developing a Danza Azteca group, which came to be known as Los Danzantes de ColorAztlan. (Maestas, n.d.: 9)

1981

Mario Aguilar, after leading Toltecas en Aztlan till 1981, decided to depart from this group and eventually forms *Mexi'cayotl.* He carries with him his palabra which was given to him by Yescas in México.

Guillermo Rosete forms Danza Anahuac in New México.

1982

Yermo and Ana-i Aranda, as well as most of the members of that community, leave Red Winds. Contamination of the land by neighboring land miners and internal divisions cause the break-down of the Red Winds community.

In 1982 Los Danzantes de ColorAztlan splits into two groups: *Tlaloc* and *Danza Xicano*. The latter group was led by Debora Montoya, the first danzante in Denver to search for maestros and to plant the Danza seed in Denver (Maestas, n.d.).

1984

At an ensayo with Yermo and Ana-i in Watsonville, California, a boy saw a hawk which landed on a post of the recreation center and when he saw the glare of the sun on the bird, he shouted, "white hawk" and that is how Yermo and Ana-i named their Danza group. Having lived at Red Winds for eight years, Yermo and Ana-i rejected the Catholic influence, in favor of Indigenous spiritual ways.

Macuilxochitl brought her own group from México during this time period.

1985

Florencio Yescas dies. According to Señora Cobb, (personal interview) Yescas was always dancing with snakes and a large turtle shell, used as an arm drum. One day, he scratched his arm and the gash became severely infected with salmonella, most likely from the turtle shell. When he was initially admitted, he was diagnosed with pleurisy, an inflammation of the lining of the lungs, but soon they realized it was a bacteria that attacked his blood stream. When he entered the hospital he was already very sick. In the hospital he had two strokes which made the right side of his body paralyzed. Señora Cobb wanted to take him home, but the Doctor said, he was too sick and his immune system was not responding, "he is so sick, it is as if he has AIDS" (Cobb, personal interview). People who heard this comment, and perhaps told others, spurred ongoing rumors about the true nature of his death and his sexuality. According to Señora Cobb, his death certificate confirms what he died from. She also states that she never got involved with his personal or love life, but she was very aware over the years of knowing him that he had several girlfriends, including Maria Luisa Zea, a well-known Mexican actress. Polo Rojas, Yesca's best friend and comrade who helped to inspire new forms of regalia and dance movements, experienced similar rumors after his death also. Stories surfaced regarding the nature of Yesca's and Rojas' relationship, associating it with the false AIDS rumors, perhaps because both were relatively young when they died and shared a close friendship. Rojas was well known for his skills at making trajes and choreography. His trajes, which are revered as some of the finest work, still exist. Sadly, after both the deaths of Yescas and Rojas, many of these trajes were lost; ransacked by greedy pursuers or stolen (Cobb, personal interview; Temitzin, personal interview). According to Cobb, precious quetzal feathers and jewelry disappeared. Many years later, in a strange moment of fate, Señora Cobb saw a rare jade necklace, that Yescas often wore, inside a

pawn shop. Cobb was able to rescue this piece and keeps it alongside a picture she has of Yescas wearing the exact piece.

Yescas, on his death bed, gave Señora Cobb instructions for his bastón de manda (sacred staff). He said that Cobb had to go to Tepeyac to dance and the group she sees that carries the specific symbols and colors he indicated, should care-take his staff. She was told not to give the staff to any one person, but to a group with the same colors and symbols he designated. He knew that there were many individuals (mostly danzantes in California) that would want his bastón de manda. Had he given the bastón to one individual, there would be confusion as to who he had left his palabra or designation to, which could result in conflict or envy. For that reason, he gave Señora Cobb specific instructions. He also instructed her to take his bastón and when they entered Tepeyac for the ceremonies, she should take the bastón to the first Danza group that is dancing and respect them with the offering of his bastón. On December 12th, Señora Cobb fulfilled his request. Guillermo Rosete went with her and when they entered Tepeyac, the first group dancing, was Andrés Segura's circle. Despite the fact that they had a long history of contention, according to Cobb, Yescas knew what he was doing. Through offering Yesca's bastón, there was an acknowledgment of respect and peace. Segura accepted the bastón upon entering the circle, with respect and honor. He even danced the first dance with Yesca's sacred staff. According to Cobb, she shared this mutual respect and told this story when she spoke at Segura's funeral. This moment in Tepeyac was significant because it showed how both traditions came together in that moment.

The colors and symbols that matched those that were indicated by Yescas, and would be present in Tepeyac, belonged to Juan Placencia de la Danza de Guadalajara, Zapopan. The bastón was left to him and remained in his care until his death when it was passed on to his son, Rosendo. To Señora Cobb, it made sense that Yescas' staff and plumas were left to the

Placencias because they were essentially Yescas' maestros and he was simply returning the honor through leaving him his staff.

According to Señora Cobb:

> The same week of Florencio's death, el Señor Vargas dies. His sons, Victor and Andrés were in Los Angeles at Yescas' house. Regina Ramírez, my transportation from Sacras to L.A. during Florencio's time at L.A. hospital, gave money to Victor to fly to Mexico City to attend his father's funeral. Andrés stayed in L.A. This is only part of the events. Victor is married to Capitana Rosita's daughter (personal interview).

1987

Momé Anowos and Alida V. Quiróz-Montiel, also known as Ihhuitl Tlalli-Earth Feather or Earthy, leave California and move to Phoenix, Arizona, where Earthy danced by herself because there were no other groups. Others wanted to dance with her, but not as an official group. With time, others joined, including Tupac and Maria Enrique (now founders of Tonatierra in Phoenix, Arizona).

A symposium at the Heard Museum in Phoenix occurs in September 1987. This Xicanindio gathering brought together cabezas of all groups north of the Mexican border. They shared their lineage and how they got started in Danza. Señora Cobb was in attendance and brought with her notes and oral history of her years involved in Danza. There, elders conducted a ceremony to bestow palabra (understood as a lifetime responsibility and authority to carry a Danza group) to Earthy and Momé Anowos for a new group called *Yolloincuauhtli* (Eagle Heart).[76] Señora Cobb and Cuix, a spiritual leader from México, gave guidance to the formation of their group. Eventually another group is formed through the guidance of Cuix,

[76] In 2009, at *Yolloincuauhtli*'s yearly Xipe Totec or Spring ceremony held in March at the Yaquí village in Guadalupe, I attended this ceremony and velación with Señora Cobb and although it was my first time there, I was given primera palabra at this ceremony, a great honor. This undoubtedly was given to me under the advice and guidance of Señora Cobb.

which became La Danza Cihuatlcuauhtli (Eagle Woman) in Mesa, Arizona.

Over time, members of this original Arizona group splintered off to form new groups, for example The Enrique's formed *Huehuecoyotzin.* Another group, *Atlachinolli,* originated from *Coatlicue* of Brownsville, Texas entered Tucson, Arizona. These are only examples of the ways in which groups grow, splinter, re-group in new areas, and have furthered the family tree of Danza in California and the United States.

1989

Enrique Maestas (n.d.) notes that he participated with several Danza groups including *Tezkatlipoca* in San Jose (led by David Vargas), *Teocalli* in Northern California, *Danza Xitlalli* in San Francisco, *Xipe Totec* in Los Angeles, and *Danza Mexicayotl* in San Diego. This indicates that, by the late 1980s, there were several well established groups that hosted ceremonies in California. Maestas also notes that, in 1991, he moved to Taos, New México and danced with *Danza de Anahuac*, led by Guillermo Chavez Rosete.

1990

According to the Peace and Dignity Journeys literature:

> In 1990 over 200 representatives of native nations from throughout Turtle Island (South, Central and North America) met in Quito, Ecuador to discuss, strategize, and take action on issues affecting Indigenous people...Inspired by this prophesy [eagle and condor], elders proposed Peace and Dignity Journeys as a way to realize this unification. Through spiritual running and networking, indigenous peoples as a united force, from all over Turtle Island reclaim peace and dignity by honoring Indigenous values, ways of life, and current struggles of resistance to modern colonization (Peace and Dignity Journeys, 2004).

The First International Danza Azteca Symposium is held in San Diego, California, sponsored by Danza Mexi'cayotl and the Mexi'cayotl Indio Cultural Center, both led by Mario Aguilar.

In the 1990s, various youth organizations begin to re-ignite the Chicano movement all over the Bay Area of Northern California. Various Danza groups work to influence youth onto a positive path. In a Danza ceremony, *Voz*, a political youth activist organization, is included in the palabra at the end of the ceremony. This is an honor usually only given to other danzantes, but in doing this, the danzantes gave acknowledgement to the activist work that youth were engaging with in the community.

1992

October 12, 1992 is the 500 year quincentenary of the invasion of Columbus. This becomes an intercontinental call for action and Indigenous resistance (Chabram-Dernersesian 1996). Rather than support the celebrations occurring, Indigenous people reminded the world about the genocide and holocaust that occurred on this land for all Indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere.

Peace and Dignity Journeys begins an intercontinental run beginning in Alaska and Argentina simultaneously, running toward the center of the continent. This run has occurred every four years since.[77]

The Second International Danza Azteca Symposium is held in San Diego, California sponsored by Danza Mexi'cayotl and the Mexi'cayotl Indio Cultural Center both led by Mario Aguilar.

1993

[77] I have had the opportunity to participate in this run as a runner and local coordinator in San José in 1996 and, 2004; as a runner in the southern route in 2000 and as a coordinator of an East Coast Tributary route in 2008.

Danza group *Huehuecoyotl* in Phoenix, Arizona holds a velación ceremony without any Christian symbols.

1994

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is enacted and the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) begins an armed revolution in Chiapas, México, causing an important global consciousness about Indigenous rights. The Zapatistas particularly inspired, Xicanas/os, who saw the possibility of joining the struggle—both in solidarity, and by actually going to Chiapas to learn and support the Indigenous people's movement there.

The Third International Danza Azteca Symposium is held on April 22-24, 1994 in San Diego, California sponsored by Danza Mexi'cayotl and the Mexi'cayotl Indio Cultural Center both led by Mario Aguilar.

1999

Danza group *Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Quetzalcoatl in Ixachitlan* is formed in New York City.

CETILIZTLI NAUHCAMPA QUETZALCOATL IN IXACHITLAN

Below is a sketch of the history/genealogy of my Danza group in New York City, with Juan Esteva and myself as co-founders/cabezas del grupo. A future, long term project is to create a larger "family tree" of Danza in the United States (see Appendix 16). The narratives incorporated below are part of my own documentation of the history of my group. It comes from my own personal narrative, observations, as well as notes I have taken during various conversations, personal communication, "platicas" (talks), gatherings and retreats of my Danza group.

❖

Juan Esteva

Juan began as a "freelancer" with Francisco "El Güero" Durán.

He began without "palabra" to one group, and instead, began by dancing with three groups:

- *Teokalli* in San Francisco, CA, led by Manolo "La Muerte" and Yvette Sanchez. The roots of Teokalli come from the danzantes from Tacuba, Mexico City, stemming from the teachings of Florencio Yescas.
- *Cuauhtonal* in Berkeley, CA, led by Carlos Rios under the Mesa of el Santo Niño de Atocha and Capitán Don Pedro Rodríguez
- *Xipe Totec* in San José, CA, led by Gerardo Salinas under the teachings of Florencio Yescas and Señora Rosita

During this time (1990s), there were many people that did not have only "one" group, but would dance group to group. After some time, the different teachers of Danza met in order to work together and came to the conclusion that people should not be jumping from group to group. The reason for this change was that problems were being created between different cabezas and groups, due to lack of structure and accountability. People were going group-to-group, creating chisme/gossip and drama. When Don Pedro and Señora Rosita visited the groups in the U.S. from México, they began to teach and instill the idea that danzantes must have a "palabra." The maestras/os of the various Danza groups in California/U.S. decided that each danzante needed to have a palabra with only one group to create more discipline and less chisme/gossip within the Danza groups. If anyone wanted to dance, s/he had to give palabra to that group or arrive to a Danza group with the explicit permiso/permission from the maestra/o. It was determined that one's "palabra" would be the place where one starts to learn Danza. The concept of "palabra" comes from Danza in México, but was not as strict as what was being proposed to the danzantes in California. The palabra-system, which had good intentions, then became used to manipulate or de-legitimize someone's teaching or to promote particular teaching as "the real recognized Danza."

Macuil Xochitl (Jefa de Xitlali in San Francisco, under Don Pedro Rodríguez and la Mesa del Santo Niño de Atocha) was one of the first Maestras to allow "non-Mexicans" to enter Danza. Since San Francisco has a large Central American community, many Centroamericanos began to participate in Danza.

Macuil learned from Don Pedro, who was Conchero, but also carried the philosophy that one cannot be isolated. The danza group had to be willing to work with others and the immediate community. Macuil was once married to Chuy Ocelotl Ortiz, who had learned Danza from Señora Cobb (and Yescas). The two have children who are clearly influenced by both traditions.

Tacuba, one of the oldest historical barrios of Mexico City, was home to many of the danzantes (all men) that made their way to Los Angeles and San José, California beginning in the 1970s. Later, in the 2000s, other danzantes would arrive from Nezahualcoyotl, which is a barrio only about 30 years old. The male danzantes from this barrio also formed several groups.

Juan eventually gave his palabra to *Teokalli*, which at the time was made up of mostly couples: Manolo & Yvette Sanchez, Irma & Alvaro Tellez, Irma & Miguel Alvarado, and Roberto & Laura Castro. Juan and Güero also danced with them.

The Castro Family moved to Morgan Hill and formed *Izcalli.*

Manolo and Yvette Moved to Texas and formed a group there, leaving *Teokalli* to Alvaro and Irma Tellez.

Personal and internal issues led to many people leaving *Teokalli.*

Juan Esteva was the next in line that was to carry the group, but he did not want to. Alvaro gave Juan a drum anyway before he left to New York for graduate school. Esteva was the one that had the most years dancing and experience in ceremonias, and therefore he was given the palabra or responsibility for *Teokalli*.

Soon, Güero began his own group in San Francisco, *Grupo Mixcoatl.*

Adriana Betti, a danzante who also began with *Teokalli*, later became a dancer and leader in *Cuauhtonal* with Carlos Rios. This group had influences from both the Mesa de Santo Niño and from the groups of Tacuba (Florencio Yescas). Like many groups, in the end,

they are all connected. When Betti leaves Cuauhtonal, she forms her own group, *Cuauhtli Mitotiani Mexica* in Berkeley, California.

Luis "pan louie" Gutierrez begins a group in Sonoma, *Danza Azteca Coyolxauhqui*.

David Vargas, who began in *Xipe Totec*, then *Teokalli*, eventually begins Grupo *Tezcatlipoca*

Some groups also form that are unrelated to any other group such as *Tonatiuh*, led by Fidel Tuscareño. Even though *Tonatiuh* is an independent group, many danzantes began there and emerged from them.

❖

Jennie Luna

(written in first person)

I began Danza in San José with Gerardo Salinas' *Xipe Totec* in 1991. I was introduced to Danza because of my involvement with La Raza Unida Student Alliance, a group of high school youth activists from throughout San José. The Xicana/o movement essentially introduced me to Indigenismo. Going to a Raza Day event at San José State, I met Señora Angelbertha Cobb.

In the political movements, another student also began dancing with *Xipe Totec*, Adam González (Yei Tochtli Mitlalpilli). He later left *Xipe Totec* and after several evolutions and metamorphosis of groups and mentorship, he formed his own group under the guidance of Sergio "Ocelocoatl" Ramírez, Grupo *Tonalehqueh*.

When I left San José to attend U.C. Berkeley, I met Carlos Rios at the Freshman Raza Bienvenida and began dancing with *Cuauhtonal*. Soon, I met Juan Esteva through Casa Joaquín Murrieta, Xicana/o Cooperative housing. Within the year, Adriana Betti splintered away from Cuauhtonal and formed Cuauhtli Mitotiani Mexica. I then danced with her group for the duration of my five years at U.C. Berkeley and gained a wealth of knowledge in drumming, carrying the smoke, and going to various other Native ceremonias, including within Canada.

When I would go to San José during school breaks, I would go to as many Danza practices as possible, dancing with different groups. I visited *Xipe Totec* (Gerardo Salinas), *Izcalli* (Laura and Roberto Castro), *Tezcatlipoca* (David Vargas and Lydia

Donis), *Tonalehqueh* (Mitlalpilli), *Tlaloc* (Liz Barron), *Tonatiuh* (Fidel Tuscareño), *Atlachinolli* (David Yañez) and *White Hawk* (Ana-i and Yermo Aranda).

In 1996, I traveled with Señora Cobb in Mexico City and Teotihuacan for the closing ceremonias of the Peace and Dignity Journeys.

In 1997, I spent a year studying abroad in Mexico City and Oaxaca. In one of their visits to the U.S., I had befriended Maestras Axayacatl and Temitzin, who allowed me to live with them during my study abroad. I began to dance with Ocelocoatl and his group, Los *Zemanauaks*. During this year in D.F., I traveled to various ceremonias and sacred sites and danced with various groups in the Zócalo, including Axayacatl's grupo *Mazatl*. I attended ceremonias in Chalma, Ixcateopan, Calixlahuacan, and Teotihuacan, and many other places.

In 1999, I graduated from U.C. Berkeley and moved to New York City for graduate school where I had planned to reconnect with Juan Esteva in order to "Danzar," just him and I.

Juan had already been living in upstate New York and was teaching Dominicano and Puertorriqueño youth to dance.

In September 1999, on my first weekend in NY, I called Juan Esteva, and he invited me to bring my Danza gear to a Church to dance. I initially thought it was a Catholic Church, but it was a radical activist Church that gathered in a park in Brooklyn, led by Padre Luis Barrio. The "Church" ceremony was in honor of Mother Earth, so me and Juan danced Tonantzin while a Dominican from the drum group Pa'lo Monte helped on the drum.

After the mass, a Mapuche woman from the Church invited us to go to a "Peña del Bronx" to offer our Danza at the proceeding event. Juan and I hopped in a van with this woman and ended up at an event commemorating the Latin American Independence movements from Spain.

While we walked through the event, we came across a New York Zapatista support table where we met two women, Elvira and Hortensia Colorado, two sisters that formed the Coatlicue Theater Company. They asked how they could be part of Danza and eventually invited us to dance at a Dia de los Muertos event at the American Indian Community House in downtown New York. At this event, we encountered several native Raza New Yorkers that would join the Danza.

Although we had no intention of starting a group, people slowly began to ask Juan and me if they could learn also. Over time, a group began to form.

Other Xicanas/os from California that were studying in New York found their way to the Danza group. Other Indigenous students with roots from Bolivia and Hawaii also joined the Danza group.

Through various presentations in the city and connections with community organizers, as well as students from my work as a high school college advisor, the group expanded. There was interest in formalizing the group. Fortunately, Juan and I held similar philosophies of Danza and were both politically conscious. Our common ideologies helped us form a group that was both spiritual and based in a philosophy of social change.

Within the first years, others joined and held different ideologies, for example, around issues with money. Juan and I wanted to put any money earned in a group pot to benefit the entire group through the purchase of group feathers and materials for regalia, etc. Others, who wanted to be paid, or had different ideas of how the Danza circle should function, eventually left the group.

As a group, we decided to create a document with our norms and philosophy (see Appendix 17). Since Danza was completely new to everyone in New York, our group literally began from scratch and everyone wanted to engage in the process of creating the group and having every detail in writing. They feared that once the founding members of the group left, no one would be able to lead, and since there were no other Danza groups in the area, they relied heavily on the document to provide future members a clear guide and understanding of the vision and mission of the group. One interesting note is that in the formation of our group, we made it very clear that we were a collective and we addressed issues such as sexism and homophobia head on, so people could know exactly our beliefs, what we stood for, and our ideology. Juan and I also wanted our group to stand for social justice and the structure/framework clearly reflects all of these values. This document also laid the groundwork for our 501 (c) 3 and future grant applications. Juan and I wanted to ensure that money would never go into the hands of individuals and we promoted an open-book policy on all finances of the group. We also did not believe in hierarchical leadership and rotated responsibilities within the group. We wanted to avoid issues of power-tripping and wanted everyone to have the opportunity to lead, organize and have a voice.

While formalizing the group, I sought palabra and permission from Señora Cobb, my maestra in California, and from Axayacatl, my maestra from México. I also sought advice from Adriana Betti, The Castro Family and Temitzin.

In 2000, we invited Axayacatl and Temitzin to New York to help us in our first ceremony and to help us name our group, Cetiliztli Nauhcampa, a name they gave to us as an extension from their group in D.F. They provided us with our pantli/symbol (See Appendix 17). The group, wanting to distinguish ourselves, added Quetzalcoatl, the representation of the East Direction (since we were in New York) and then, since we represented diverse Indigenous peoples, they also added Ixachitlan, to represent that we are from the entire continent.

As a group, we were invited to share with the other few Danza circles in the East Coast. We went to ceremonias and protests in Washington DC, Boston, California and México. Any money we made from presentations and in museums or schools would go toward funding the group to participate in various trips or to send members of our group to represent the group. We also formed a 501(c)3 non-profit organization to ensure that the group would never be for-profit, but would hold a long-term vision to create a community cultural center focusing on the Mexican Indigenous communities of New York.

In 2003, I left New York to pursue my doctorate at UC Davis and began dancing with Chuy Ocelotl Ortiz in Sacramento and White Hawks of Sacramento.

Meanwhile, in NY, there were growing pains in the group as both Juan and I were no longer there. Different members stepped up to take on leadership roles. Several danzantes and drummers from Nezahualcoyotl had been participating in the group but also came from a different philosophy. They brought a much faster paced drumming style and did not share our political/social beliefs or collective process. As New York's Mexican migrant population increased, many new members came to the Danza group. Less of the membership was university students, as had been the case in the beginning.

Another group of danzantes from Mexico City began dancing in Brooklyn, *Tletl Papalotzin* under Miguel Angel Muñiz.

Some of the internal issues included machismo, Xicanas/os vs. Mexicanas/os, political and community involvement, personality differences, and different opinions of how Danza should be conducted. Some of the divisions grew and not everyone was in line with the vision that Juan and I had tried to instill. Other maestros (both from different Danza groups and from different ceremonial traditions) began imparting their own knowledge and many tried to "correct" or readjust the group so that it was aligned to their ways of teaching. For example, some of the danzantes from Mexico City wanted to incorporate capitanes and tradición hierarchy, which was not the original vision of the group. Many opinions created confusions and insecurity in the group and the way it had been established. The young Danza group was vulnerable to other's opinions, judgments, ideas, and practices. Any outside or visiting danzante that seemed to have more

experience could easily influence the group to alter the way they conducted the circle. After a succession of many small incidents, misunderstandings and personal conflicts, members of the group broke away, following the danzantes from Nezahualcoyotl who had arrived to the New York group a couple of years after Cetiliztli began. They had intentions to start their own group, so they asked certain danzantes of Cetiliztli to follow them instead and they began a new group, *Atl Tlachinolli,* which was formed as a Conchero group under the Mesa del Santo Niño de Atocha.

Juan since has established two more Cetiliztli Nauhcampa groups in Concord and Berkeley, California: Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Panquetzaliztli and Cetiliztli Nauhcampa In Xochitl in Cuicatl. I have also continued to carry a Danza circle in San José, California.

CONTEMPORARY DANZA IN MÉXICO AND THE MEXICAYOTL INTELLECTUAL THINK TANK

1910

The Mexican Revolution spurred Concheros, who were still in hiding with their traditional dance, to seek freedom also. They turned to those that were underground and were keepers of wisdom and this became the beginning of the evolution toward what is referred to as Danza Azteca/Mexica. The Concheros began to reclaim older traditions, language, and looked toward codices and ancient art to guide new styles of dress. One of the first groups to follow this trajectory was *La Danza Azteca de México*, led by Miguel Pineda and the Anaya Family (Maestas, n.d.). The Anaya family has four generations of "jefas" or women leaders including: Juanita, Rosita and Pati. Juanita Anaya and Francisco Díaz hold palabra in one of the oldest groups in México (Maestas, n.d.). Florencio Yescas comes from this long lineage of la tradición, but the direct branch/group or pantli (banner) closest to him is La Virgen de los Dolores, led by Rosita Anaya (Maestas, n.d.). Mario Aguilar states that Yescas' teachers were actually Gabrielle Rosorio and Manuel Pineda, both recognized "jefes" from Mexico City (Maestas, n.d.).

In Zapopan, Guadalajara, México, General Placencia and Florencio Gutierrez were the first to be recognized as Danza Azteca while dancing with Manuel Pineda in *La Danza Azteca de México*. They were the first group to move away from the Conchero aesthetic and practice. They broke away from *La Mesa Central de la Gran Chichimeca* (Maestas, n.d.). Gutierrez and another danzante, Manuel Lunes later helped Yescas as he taught Chicanos in Aztlan. According to Señora Cobb (personal communication), when General Juan Placencia died, his brother Rosendo took over the care of Juan Placencia' altar or "oratorio" which held the

"Bastón de Mando" or sacred staff of Florencio Yescas. Señora Cobb had been given clear instructions as to how the staff would find its caregiver after Yescas died. At a ceremony in Tepeyac, the instructions, which were more like premonitions, came to pass and the staff was given to Placencia.

1930s

Danza group *Xochiquetzal* performs at the World's Fair in New York (Maestas, n.d.). This is the earliest known public presentation of Danza in the United States. Any formalized, permanent groups, based in the United States, do not begin until the arrival of Florencio Yescas and Andrés Segura.

Don Margarito Aguilar, who was Otomi Chichimeca, was the leader of La Mesa Central de la Gran Chichimeca, one of the oldest and largest confederations of Conchero tradición of La Danza, located in Querétaro. In 1930 he was recognized by Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas and the federal government as a representative of this tradition (Maestas, n.d.). This recognition provided protection of La Mesa Central de la Gran Chichimeca's right to hold ceremonies.

1940

In November 1940, the Inter-American Indian Conference is held in Mexico City, including participation of John Collier (responsible for the Indian Reorganization Act), D'arcy McNickle (American Indian Activist and scholar), Lázaro Cárdenas, and José María Arguedas (Peruvian/Quechua activist and scholar). Part of the discussion at this gathering was to look at Indigenous people as a social class, rather than an ethnic group. The vision, at this time, was not to necessarily Indigenize México, but to Mexicanize Indians, or to assimilate them. The varying ideas and contributions present undoubtedly created for lively discussion.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Anaya family led a school of La Danza Azteca (the group related to Miguel Pineda) in order to teach the philosophy and spirituality of the dance. The Anayas also had a school of La Danza Conchera to teach the history and development of this knowledge (Maestas, n.d.).

1979

The first spiritual run occurs from Mexico City to Ixcateopan, where the remains of Cuauhtemoc are located (see appendix 11).

1980

Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtiloyan is founded as a school of thought with the goal to "recuperar lo que era/recuperate what was," (Mendoza 2007) including Nahuatl language, traditional instruments, and Danza. The ideological goal was to "Mexicanizar a México mismo," which meant to "Indigenize" México. This era began what would be known as the "epoca de oro/golden era," (Temitzin, Personal Interview) in which the organization would reach the height of its success. *Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtiloyan* was viewed as a powerful organization with the ability to mobilize thousands. According to Temitzin, "even the PRI political party wanted [their] help" (Temitzin, personal interview). The grupo mobilized food and medical distribution, and produced art and culture. This grupo began as a gathering of academic scholars and Indigenous grassroots scholars that would organize gatherings and conferences about Indigenous knowledge. They began to examine and even question their own traditional academic practices and the ways in which they gathered Indigenous knowledge and artifacts. Some of these thinkers/scholars included Romero Vargas Iturbide and Esparza Hidalgo. The long-term goal was to create *calpullis* (traditional organizations) in different zones. The movement was viewed as dual, both tradición and mexicanidad

because both branches of Danza would mutually benefit from this organization and knowledge gathering.

Grupo leaders also aspired to create a *Ciudad Ollinka* or an Indigenous University that would be a collective think tank.

1982

In August of 1982, Danzantes from both *la tradición* and *la mexicanidad* joined forces with community activists and Indigenous scholars to stage a massive occupation of the Zócalo in Mexico City. For the first time in México since the arrival of Hernán Cortez, Mexicanas/os would reclaim their sacred spaces of México Tenochtitlan. They occupied and held a Danza ceremony in the Plaza Mayor. At this point danzantes were still not allowed to dance in public or outside of the Church. People such as Maestro Felipe Aranda, Andres Segura, and Polo Rojas were a few of the important people present. Mexican officials brought in rifles and gas tanks to remove the Danza "protestors." They threatened them with violence.[78] In this sense, the agenda became not only spiritual, but political, as Danza ceremonial ways and places were under threat.

The occupation of the Zócalo in Mexico City would prove to be victorious for danzantes because of the participation of hundreds of women that took to the front lines and refused to leave. One woman, Nina Legran, according to the personal account of Benjamin Laureano Luna (Personal Interview), head of Pro-Derechos Humanos Mexicanos, remembers hearing Nina Legran shouting, "Aunque me maten, voy a seguir danzando./Even if they kill me, I will continue to dance." With those words she pushed aside a rifle and entered the Plaza Mayor with the other women as the men followed and they continued to have their Danza

[78] Danzantes as "protesters" or part of political movements would be a major trait of Xicana/o danzantes in the U.S. (See Appendix 7).

ceremony, breaking nearly 500 years of the suppression of Danza and fulfilling the prophesy left by Cuauhtemoc. For the first time in less than 500 years, the steps of Danza would once again dance in the same exact places where ancestors danced and prayed.

1985

By 1985, the Mexican Indigenous movement and its central think-tank of *Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtiloyan* had gained strength and public recognition. They came to be viewed as the centrifugal force of the urban Pro-Indigenous movement. If anyone wanted to learn, study or research issues of Indigenous communities outside mainstream institutions, this grupo became the place to go.

The 1985 earthquake centered in Tlatelolco, an area of Mexico City also known as the Plaza de las Tres Culturas.[79] This same area was the place where Spaniards massacred thousands of Mexicas during the Toxcatl ceremony (León-Portilla 1990), and the place where the 1968 massacre of hundreds of university youth in protest took place. This earthquake once again devastated a community that had a wrenching history of death and destruction. Despite this tragedy, grassroots scholar and Nahuatl teacher Temitzin (Personal Interview) interprets this event as a necessary part of the Earth's desire to create balance in the world. She believes that the Earth had in fact opened up to allow for more of our past to rise up. The fanatical interpretations of the Mayan prophesies of 2012, according to Temitzin, should not point to death and destruction in a negative way, but rather as a human surrender to the natural process of Mother Earth. In Native American Studies discourse, the term escatology is used to explain that the end of time is also a beginning. As a result of the 1985 earthquake, many historical artifacts, buried Mexica vestiges and sacred sites came to

[79] The Plaza of Three Cultures, referring to the Indigenous, Spanish and Mestizo cultures.

be uncovered. Temitzin recalled a woman who arrived to the Centro de Zemanauak with an original codex that she had found in the rubble and brought it to the Centro, knowing its importance. This occurrence was not isolated, but rather one of many. In fact, so many ancient knowledge pieces were being un-earthed and began arriving to the Centro, but they did not have the resources, or the people power to begin to take responsibility for such pieces. They, in fact, had to turn away people that had come to them for help in how to preserve and safeguard such valuable, sacred materials. The opening of the Earth initiated by the quake allowed for new knowledge and appreciation of that knowledge to emerge. It also demonstrated that perhaps historians, anthropologists, and grassroots scholars had only scratched the surface of all the possibilities that existed in understanding and knowing what really lies beneath the surface of the Earth, the only true keeper of wisdom of the Mexica peoples.

POINTS OF CONVERGENCE: XICANA/O, NATIVE AMERICAN, AND MEXICAYOTL MOVEMENTS

Social consciousness in the 1960s and hemispheric/global Indigenous politics in the 1990s all reach a point of convergence between multiple sites of Intercontinental and global Indigenous social, political and spiritual movements. According to Roberto Hernández, "the experience of Chicanas/os making community with other Native peoples, north and south, and learning different native teachings; a situation that existed prior to the 1960s yet began occurring much more so as a result of the political agitations of the period" (2005: 131). In examining the history of Danza in the U.S. and México, one observes the overlap and points of merging: "histories of oppression shared by [Xicanas/os] and Native Americans in the United States provided a basis upon which an alliance could be built" (Garner 2009: 428).

For Chicanas/os, Danza was defined through both Mexican Indigenous and American Indian Movement (AIM) lenses. In contrast, Mexicanas/os, who were focusing on Mexica knowledge, began learning from other Indigenous grassroots scholars of other Mexican Indigenous traditions. For example, the work of Domingo Martínez Paredez (Broyles-González 1994; Paredez 1960; Temitzin, personal interviews), a grassroots Mayan scholar and spiritual teacher was taking issue and refuting many of the findings of the Mesoamerican Studies establishment. His ability to speak his mother language and maintain historical knowledge of his people, created an oppositional epistemology. Chicanas/os began interacting with Mexicanas/os and brought with them the teachings of U.S. Native Americans, thus creating a cross-pollination of many understandings and

practices that is demonstrated today in both México and the U.S. Chicanas/os began carrying many influences from many nations, not unlike AIM, which was pan-Indian and Intertribal, as a result of forced relocations and urbanization. Sandra Garner discusses that danzantes were learning from other Indigenous practices "in order to refine and augment their own practices. The dancers believe that such rituals carry ancient knowledge and wisdom similar to their own" (2009: 428). Chicanas/os in the 1960s were seeking reconnection to their Indigenous identity and their closest link was to look toward U.S. Native Americans.

In the 1970s, during the travels of Lakota Spiritual Leader Leonard Crow Dog into México, he conducted ceremonies and invited people to his land, known as Crow Dog's Paradise. He invited MeXicanas/os to participate in Sundance and thus, exposed many MeXicanas/os to Lakota sacred ways. When seeking advice from various tribal elders in the U.S. and México, Chicanas/os would often be told to find their roots: "The true roots are the treasure of the tradition… 'Keep digging, just because you're over there, don't forget what's ours, our roots, and all of the people who have struggled so that our roots don't die'" (Hernández-Ávila 2005: 373). As a result, many Chicanas/os, including danzantes, began to travel to México to seek out Danza elders and medicine people: "For several decades there has been frequent and vibrant transnational movement between *danzantes* in the United States who go down to ceremonies in Mexico City and *danzantes* (and elders) from Mexico City who travel up to visit and teach dance communities in the north" (Hernández-Ávila 2005: 364). In these travels, danzantes began to make the links of the historical shared relationships and exchanges of material and spiritual goods/knowledge.

Similarly, Native communities in the U.S. were learning from Native communities in Latin America. They began to compare their histories in order to understand each other better. For example, Spain had a goal to extract and exploit, while the British wanted to expand and convert.

> European invasion initially brought greatly diminished political autonomy to the native peoples of the Americas. Weakened control or outright loss of land and marginal access to productive resources resulted in a long and continuing period of persistent material poverty. Indigenous people have faced and continue to face outright destruction, coercive assimilation and political marginality and oppression. While the colonial period ended for the non-indigenous in the late 18th or early 19th century, for the indigenous peoples of the Americas, colonialism is an ongoing and frequently brutal reality that continues into the new millennium (Krystal 2007: 77).

Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas had experienced an imposition of European language and religious conversion as well as internalized colonialism. U.S. Natives observed the ways in which Indigenous Latin Americans had functioning Indian communities versus their own impoverished reservations. In some parts of Latin America, Indigenous peoples were still managing their lands and resources, had "tierras comunales Indígenas," and still utilized a moral economy and communal tribute system. Indigenous people of Latin America were simultaneously looking toward U.S. Natives for strategies to maintain spiritual autonomy, traditional knowledge and protections under the federal government. Through interaction, both were able to learn about their struggles of resistance and survival.

Organizations were already formed in México since the 1970s-80s, such as the Council of Mexica Indians and the Consejo Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas (Maestas, n.d.). For Chicanas/os, finding one's roots would prove difficult at times because the

legacy of shame toward being Indigenous was still widespread and many Mexicanos still denied their own Indian roots, even their own families:

> While at times it has been hard for some Chicanas/os and Latinas/os to trace their indigenous blood, others have had families, who whether openly or discreetly, kept family genealogies indicating their indigenous lines. Historically speaking, however, many Chicanas/os have not always known their own lineage and have had to search through family albums and converse with relatives not always willing to acknowledge their own Indian blood. Although during the 1960s, the tendency was to romantically identify with the 'Aztec Warrior/Princess' iconography popular in México, pushed in part by the state, many Chicanas/os have since come to a better understanding of the complexities of colonization in regards to the multiplicities of native ethnic communities and cultural identity, searching further into their own family histories and learning their respective languages and teachings (Hernández 2005: 131).

For young Chicanas/os, Danza became (and continues to be) the vehicle and source of knowledge to begin this search for roots. It was also viewed as a tool that could be used to solve problems within the community, such as gang violence and drugs. Youth who were following a negative path were perceived to have been neglected and denied access to their identity, culture, history, and spiritual ways. Without rights to their own knowledge systems, these youth experienced cultural deprivation, low self-esteem, and low aspirations in life. By learning Danza and Indigenous knowledge, the youth—particularly those incarcerated or living in poverty in barrios—could begin to engage with a re-vision of their own existence and future. Danza and Indigenous knowledge was viewed as spiritual wealth with the potential to uplift a community.

For this reason, Chicanas/os in the 1960s would dance in the streets, schools, public places, and where ever Chicana/o communities might be. In New York, for example, my Danza group would show up to festivals, Cinco de Mayo street fairs, outside of the Church during the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and even inside

prisons. There was no financial motive; only to educate and offer an alternative and/or healing source in the community. As a result, many people that would see the Danza group would either want to join or invite the group to other community venues. Danzantes in the 1970s (as well as contemporary danzantes) went to the people/communities to teach and instill a new sense of pride. They wanted to shift the pre-conceived notions that to be Indigenous was to be uneducated or backward. The danzantes' method of knowledge dissemination was similar in Mexico City, where they would dance in public plazas and parks, and often speak to the community or pass out flyers, essays, or grassroots photo-copied publications that revealed the "true history of México," and/or debunked mainstream understandings of Indigenous history. It can be said that Danza has a long history of community involvement as a core value; a value that must continue. Danza groups that are insular and only interact amongst themselves in many respects defeat the purpose of this core value of community engagement.

For Xicanas/os, the continual engagement with various Indigenous communities transnationally, broached the question as to what constitutes Xicana/o traditions (Cantú/Nájera-Ramírez 2002)? In more contemporary Xicana Indígena understandings and analysis, some may argue that it is impossible to say that Xicanas/os have *certain,* defined traditions because Xicanas/os are part of a diaspora of many Indigenous nations and traditions stemming from México/Central/South America. Living in the United States and not having direct access to their own places of origin or knowledge sources made it necessary for Chicanas/os to adapt and adopt. Chicanas/os in the 1960s-70s, began learning ceremonies from Native peoples in the United States, turning to the Lakota, Hopi, Diné, Arapaho, Wintu, Comanche, and others to (re)learn sacred ways.

While many Northern Native communities kept their ways secret and closed in order to keep their culture intact, the Red Power and AIM movements of the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s demonstrated a time when that sacred hoop was being opened. Events and movements such as the Longest Walk, Wounded Knee, the Alcatraz Occupation, and the occupation and creation of DQ University, all demonstrate the active participation of Xicanas/os and their reunification with their Indigenous identities, their rejection and defiance of the political border, and their renewed relationship to Indigenous relatives further north of México. Roberto Hernández contends that there have always been:

> …'Indigenista' tendencies among the participants of the Chicano Movement. Perhaps most notably are the Aranda, Enrique and Sanchez families of San Diego and Arizona who have been involved with the Peace and Dignity Journeys, and Rocky Rodriguez and others in Colorado who were part of the Occupation at Wounded Knee in Solidarity with the American Indian Movement. There were also several young Chicanas/os in the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Area who accompanied the group 'Indians of All Tribes' in the November 1969 takeover of Alcatraz Island and others who joined Native students in creation of DQ University,[80] a Native Chicano community college near Sacramento a few years later. There are also numerous groups of people who have been involved with Danza Azteca (Aztec dancing which is itself a form of prayer) and other forms of ceremonies. These examples point to a different understanding of, and relationship to, the term 'Chicano/a' and, furthermore, the necessity to outline an indigenista conceptualization of the term Xicano/a (2005: 129).

Xicana/o encounters with diverse Native knowledge allowed Xicanas/os to arrive (or continue to be in process of arriving) to their own sacred bundles and places of knowledge. When Xicanas/os came to these traditions, memory was opened up for Indigenous people; memory can be the most powerful building block. The revival of Indigenous identity proliferated amongst the youth in the Chicano community and

[80] Such as Señora Cobb who jumped the fence to occupy the land for DQU.

represented a spirit and a return to spiritual ways. A community that was once told that they did not belong was now claiming a place on this continent (Forbes 1973). This legacy laid the groundwork for Xicana/o Indígena ideology.

Indigenous communities began to recognize the similarities and connections of language and cultural wealth: acorn mush was similar to *pinole*; the sweat lodge was like the *temezcalli*; the use of sage resembled that of *copal*; the all-night velaciones were similar to the all-night Peyote meetings. Oral traditions, dances, songs, the drum, the four directions and the circle, were all elements held in common with other Native nations: "Many of us look[ed] to the indigenous nations around us to blend into our cultural future" (Aguilar 1983: 17). Xicana/o interaction and exchange with U.S. Indigenous nations, "offered a mirror in which to see themselves connected to the north and the south, a reflection that allowed them to emerge from a categorical mestizaje to find their indigenous faces and hearts" (Hernández-Ávila 2005: 365). Xicanas/os began to recall and re-contextualize their own spiritual heritage, incorporating and interchanging elements of all Indigenous teachings in the U.S. and México. If copal was not accessible, for example, sage or cedar could be used.

This experience was reciprocal as northern Natives, also began to incorporate and learn from their southern relatives. For example, at a recent Danza event, a Shoshone keynote speaker was invited to speak. When he went to the microphone, he wanted to offer a song and asked if he could use the Danza drum. When he began to hit the drum, he did so in the same way that one would hit a big round northern Native drum. This is significant, as it shows the ways Native peoples encounter each other, and the fact that we can improvise. In a similar way, during one of my visits to a Danza practice in

Mexico City, one of the Mexica danzantes, who was also a sun dancer, entered the circle to offer a prayer during the closing palabra. Before he offered his prayer and a song, he offered tobacco on the Danza drum, in a similar manner that is done in Northern Native big drum circles. The use of tobacco on the drum is not practiced in Danza. He proceeded to play the Danza drum as if it was a big drum and sang a Lakota song. This example is telling as it shows the ability of spiritual practices to intersect. Historically, cultural goods and ideas were always traded, exchanged and interchanged across the hemisphere. Culture was never static, but active and always in transition and in process. Indigenous people were dynamic, using innovations that were most accessible and available to them. As this was the case for ancestors, it should be no exception for contemporary living peoples.

Many ceremonies such as Danza, Sweatlodge, Sundance, Peyote medicine/teokalli/tipi, have often, in contemporary times, become pan-Indigenous, incorporating different elements (such as songs) while maintaining the integrity of the ceremony. Through the invitation of U.S. Native peoples and sharing of spiritual wealth, Xicanas/os began to look toward "their own," individually and collectively. They began to re-visit their own individual family genealogy/Indigenous heritage, as well as continue participation with a collective Xicana/o heritage, history, and identity, which also interacted with(in) U.S. Native circles.

The engagement with new experiences and coming to terms with history caused the question to be raised: *Given our historical trajectory, what "traditions" exactly belong to Xicanas/os? When we represent Xicana/o in various ceremonial spaces, what exactly are we representing culturally and spiritually?* While there is not "one" spiritual

path that Xicanas/os carry, as they are a heterogeneous and dynamic community, I argue that Danza, while distinctly a Mexica tradition, became an important element that became part of the conceptualization of Xicana/o tradition. The introduction to Danza Mexica in the 1960s-70s, gave Chicanas/os in the U.S. something to hold onto and to bring to the table as their own. It became a ritual practice that was new and unlike any other in the U.S., which they could share with other Indigenous nations. It gave Chicanas/os the feeling that, despite the historical trauma and genocide of culture, there was hope to rebuild, and Danza could provide a critical philosophical base. Chicanas/os were attracted to Danza as a philosophical base because it was pre-Cuauhtemoc/pre-Invasion, anti-imperialist, and did away with European imposition. In other cases, Danza provided a familiar medium for Chicanas/os that incorporated both Indigenous and religious synergistic elements that allowed Chicanas/os to embrace other parts of themselves and accustomed experiences. It became a component of spiritual knowledge that Xicanas/os were able to contribute to the sacred bundles of collective Indigenous knowledge.

This is not to assume that every Chicana/o was or wanted to be a Danzante, but, rather, I emphasize that it became one, distinctly recognized, arm in the Chicano Movement that extended, expanded and kept the movement alive, transforming it into a distinctive XICANA movement.[81] Xicanas/os began to move and expand Danza Mexica ceremonies and practices to an even more sophisticated level, respecting and sometimes incorporating the many models presented by various Indigenous communities. For example, learning about how other nations pray to the four directions helped Xicana/o danzantes to engage more deeply with their own developing understandings of the four directions in Danza. Oftentimes inviting other nations to share their own dances during a

[81] This will be discussed more in depth in the last chapters.

Danza ceremony or requesting local Native elders to open ceremony with a prayer, became commonplace.

In contrast, Vento critiques that while they [danzantes] have a "Native American sense of reality and philosophy" (1994: 64) there is a sense of invention and the upholding of a real desire to be "authentic." He argues that MeXicanas/os only looked toward Native American traditions because they were seeking an essentialized, legitimate, authentic, and romanticized Indian knowledge. While that blanket statement is overly-broad, I argue that many MeXicanas/os had no intention of exploiting traditions, but were seeking ways for the betterment of their communities, sincerely engaging in cultural exchange to make all Indigenous peoples of the continent stronger. Similarly, Garner (2009) shows that spiritual exchanges were broad-based, seeking betterment for all of humanity. She lists inter-faith experiences such as that of July 3, 1989 when the Dalai Lama led rituals at the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan. In 1992, Tibetan monks conducted a similar ceremony in Mexico City, attended by more than 40,000 people. Lakota spiritual leader Arvol Looking Horse in 1996, led a world peace and prayer day on the summer solstice and again in 2007 by invitation of danzantes Mexicas (Garner 2009: 428). Ultimately Xicanas/os were part of this rise in social, cultural, and spiritual consciousness.

Inés Hernández-Ávila describes the historical moment when Conchero danzantes from México first traveled into the U.S. in collaboration with the White Roots of Peace, a collective of Native people from Canada, the U.S., México, and Guatemala. She states:

> The name White Roots of Peace commemorates a time in the history of the Iroquois Confederacy when the six tribes/nations buried their weapons of war at the first Tree of Peace, promising to leave dissention behind to seek the path of peace….Invasion, dispossession, genocide, and ethnocide

> broke us apart from each other, devastating our communities and shattering the coherence and integrity of our languages, our cultures, our ways of knowing and believing, and our networks for community-building (2005: 364-365).

In 1976, the White Roots of Peace passed through Texas, and when the Danza Conchera presented, it inspired a new generation of Chicanas/os to reconnect with their own Mexican Indigenousness (Hernández-Ávila 2005). The interaction of Chicanas/os and danzantes from México, facilitated through an Iroquois/Haudenosaunee spiritual concept, impacted the Chicano movement in the U.S. and "influenced the cultural, political, and spiritual expression of Chicana and Chicano cultural workers, writers, artists, and musicians in urban areas such as Fresno and San Juan Bautista, California; Austin and San Antonio, Texas; and Albuquerque and Las Cruces, New México" (Hernández-Ávila 2005: 364).

While many Xicanas/os remained solely in the prayer circles of various U.S. Natives where they began to learn, many others began to carry both. They found no conflicts or contradiction between being a Sun dancer and a danzante Mexica, but rather found them to be complementary and have commonalities. In contrast, Garner (2009: 431) states her critique of Xicanas/os conducting Lakota ceremonies, such as the sweat lodge or pipe ceremony. She believes that people viewing them might think that it is a Mexica ceremony, rather than a Lakota. She claims that Xicana/o danzantes have received mixed reception at their participation in various Native ceremonies, or at the United Nations representing their nation. Their presence in certain places, such as the U.N., and representation of ceremony have both become points of contention for some northern Natives, viewing it as appropriation or cooptation of those places/spaces deemed only reserved for "formally recognized" tribes. Garner complicates danzante

participation in Native American ceremony and "their efforts to take these rituals back to México, and the notions of appropriation and expropriation in general." She further claims that, "Aztec dance's eclectic mix of spiritual interests should be considered a kind of 'new age' practice" (416). She argues that the only reason Xicanas/os took up Lakota rituals was because they are viewed as "emblematic of Native North American Indians" (432), falsely making Lakota ways universal. She presents the dangers in this practice as making it acceptable or normalized for anyone to share or adopt the practices of others: "Such borrowings may be problematic and evoke resentment from the people whose practices are being appropriated" (432).

What Garner fails to recognize is the historical context of Xicanas/os. What she portrays as "new-age, intruders that were not welcome," is actually quite the opposite. During the 1960s-70s, "finding their way back home" to their Indigenous identity was not only occurring for Xicanas/os, but for all Native peoples across the hemisphere that had been displaced, relocated or removed. For Xicanas/os living in the U.S., the closest elders, nations and knowledge came from U.S. Native peoples. Often they would say: "You need to find your way back home. Find how your people used to pray and learn it. Until then, you're welcome to pray the Lakota way. All Indigenous people pray to the same Great Spirit, just in a different way" (May, personal communication). Northern Natives were equally re-connecting with their relatives in the south, listening to oral tradition that identified their historical migrations and relationships throughout the hemisphere. As many Xicanas/os came to learn, many of the practices were similar. For example, Mexicas and Totonacos had a similar form of Sundance around the sacred Tree of Life (see Appendix 3 and 13), and shared similar world views and practices that

utilized carrying smoke (the *popoxcomitl* and the pipe) or *temezcalli*/sweatlodge. Some Xicanas/os utilized the teachings of U.S. Natives to transition into their "own" traditions. If one is to critique Xicanas/os for using Lakota ways, then we will have to examine all traditions and their historical relationships to all peoples. What will be found is a constant historical sharing of spiritual knowledge and sacred medicines.

Danza, for many Xicanas/os, became the closest form of "tradition" that they could call their own. Even if one had Zapotec heritage, for example, rather than turn to Zapotec dance traditions that were unavailable or inaccessible, one would instead turn to Danza Mexica as a way to maintain an Indigenous connection. As a result, that Zapotec danzante Mexica might organize other Zapotecos or Oaxaqueños to create a Zapotec song to be sung in a Danza Mexica ceremony or eventually create a *Guelaguetza* (Indigenous Oaxacan dance tradition) in an Oaxaqueño-populated community within California.[82] Ultimately, MeXicanos of various origins/regions found themselves in shared spaces and experiences living in the U.S. The fact that Danza Mexica had become so accessible, because of the propagation of it through the various leaders that formed groups in the U.S., created new, transnational, diasporic communities centered on a Danza tradition and identity.

There are now nearly four decades of Xicanas/os that have been carrying traditional ceremonies in the U.S. (not limited to Danza, but including pipe-carriers, sweat leaders, road people, and Sun dancers). Garner (2009) notes in her article, "Aztec Dance, Transnational Movements: Conquest of a Different Sort," that her introduction to Danza did not take place in México, but rather at a Sun Dance ceremony at the Rosebud

[82] This indeed has become the case as Xicanas/os have started to organize around a specific Indigenous heritage or region (such as Nahua, Lenca or Mayan Salvadoreños or Mixteco, Zapoteco or Triqui Oaxaqueños specifically), rather than organize from a larger umbrella of Xicana/o.

Reservation in the Lakota Nation. She goes on to describe a similar experience that I have had at the McDermitt Sundance on the Paiute-Shoshone reservation in northern Nevada. The Paiute families that care-take that Sundance ceremony opened their doors to Xicanas/os and in turn Danza has become an annual ritual offering after the Sundance concludes. The trans-national alliances Garner discusses in her article exist not only between countries (México-U.S.) but between Indigenous nations.

As a result of the active participation of Xicanas/os in various ceremonies, Xicanas/os have had to figure out how to maneuver politics in order to protect their rights as Indigenous people—for example, their rights to carry sacred feathers and sacred medicines deemed illegal by the government. Ethnic identity and political identity are not always in sync. Ethnically or "racially," one can identify as Native, but politically, if s/he is not federally or state recognized, they are not Native, and are therefore ineligible for certain rights, such as protection of sacred sites or possession of sacred items. The politics of identity and the ways in which it intersects with the lived experiences and realities of Xicanas/os continues to be an ongoing issue. Urban Xicanas/os with no political land claims have claimed ceremonial spaces, forming what might be considered "modern sacred sites." For example, the Quetzalcoatl statue located in downtown San José has become a gathering place for Peace and Dignity Journeys and various Danza ceremonies. At the Mission Dolores Park in San Francisco, danzantes have held the Xilonen Ceremony, Mexica marriage ceremonies, Xicana Moratorium, and Mayan ceremonies. The Mission also holds the burial ground of many Ohlone ancestors, so while in history it was a site of oppression (the missionization of Native people), through

honoring the site with ceremony, danzantes have made it a sacred place upon which to honor all ancestors.

There is a collective consciousness and reawakening that MeXicanas/os are simply continuing where their ancestors left off. Part of the prophesy of the Eagle and Condor, which represents the reunification of this continent, and the *Mandato de Cuauhtemoc* (Mendoza 2007: 252), declares that a new sun will rise again. Danza has created an alternative space from which communities can practice spirituality in a way that is not regulated, mandated, or constrained: "Danza is an anti-colonial spiritual force" (Maestas 1999: 76). Danza can be one tool of the many that are needed to continue to decolonize the mind and reinforce the right of Xicanas/os to determine their own destiny. In San Ysidro, California, Florencio Yescas, along with the Toltecas en Aztlan, planted an ayoyote tree, which grows the seed pods that danzantes wear on their ankles. (Maestas, n.d.). This tree, which typically only grows in central and southern México, took root and began to grow and flower in the U.S. This became symbolic that Danza too, would survive in the U.S. because, not only had the people accepted Danza, but the land had as well (Maestas, n.d.). The prophesy of the eagle and condor is not only a literal re-unification of the Native peoples of this continent (north and south), but even more a process of waking up to each other—knowing each other and sharing our history and struggles for the future. Rather than viewing Indigenous peoples via spiritual "difference," Xicanas/os concentrated on spiritual solidarity.

CHAPTER 10

~MAHTLACTLI~

SEÑORA COBB: A LIVING CODEX

The following is derived from various personal interviews and participant observation with Señora Cobb. This narrative is a result of over fifteen years of observation, personal communication, experience, and, most recently, focused, formal dialogue for the purpose of this dissertation. Within the narrative, I will describe the methodology and established relationship with Señora Cobb.

"Dale chanza, por que ya es tiempo que la juventúd lleve el cargo"/ "*Give her a chance, it is time that the youth take on the responsibility,"* said Señora Cobb (see Appendix 8), having invited me to carry the responsibility of a certain part of the 2009 Spring Equinox Ceremony.[83] In this way, she assured Maestra Macuilxochitl that I would follow through with my *palabra* and confirm my availability to accept and complete this cargo. *"Give her a chance, because it is time that the youth carry on the responsibility." Palabra*, or one's "word" is a very sacred concept. It is sacred in the sense that it is precious and worthy of absolute respect and honor. One's palabra becomes a living entity, a manifestation of great significance that is so important; one must pay it respect and honor it.

> The circle of dance allows each individual to express himself or herself actively and gives each *danzante* the right and responsibility to lead the entire group in a dance, becoming for the moment the one in charge of the ceremony, the one who has *palabra* (the word, the authority to lead). Within this tradition, the value of everyone's *palabra* and the importance

[83] This Spring celebration, celebrated on or around the first day of Spring or Spring Equinox, is also known as "De Colores" (The Colors) or "Xipe Totec," (Nahuatl word very loosely translated to express "new life.")

> of the generations are affirmed and expressed, such that women, men, elders, and children know they have the opportunity to have their say, through speaking, singing, dancing, or taking on a responsibility for the group; it is the main way that the mesas arrive at consensus and manifest a collective consciousness (Hernández-Ávila 2005: 369).

Palabra is also synonymous with "responsibility" or "duty." It is not only a noun, but a verb. It is an action, a commitment, and an acceptance of trust. According to Jack Forbes, "human speech is the essence of our souls" (2004: 19). As such, giving palabra goes beyond oral contractual agreement; it puts one's integrity on the line. In their codices, or sacred books, the Mexica people depicted the notion of palabra as a small swirl, resembling a cloud or an image of breath that escaped the mouth. Palabra, or sacred word, was depicted as a breath of life. One's word is life. It has the power to create and the power to destroy.

This notion of palabra has played a critical role in the life and living legend that is Señora Angelbertha Cobb. Her "palabra," and the way in which she lives and manifests this understanding, has been her life-long journey and commitment--not only to Danza, but to her community and the people whose lives she has touched. Señora Cobb's story begins in the high mountains of *el Municipio de Cuetzalan* (place of the quetzal bird) in Puebla, México. Her community exists in the highest parts of the mountainous region; it takes three hours on foot to go down the mountain and another three hours on foot to climb the other side of the mountain and to her community. She describes her home place as communal: "donde todo es de todos/everything is everyone's" (personal interview). It is a place where people are able to cultivate many crops, including all kinds of citrus fruits, coffee, cinnamon and vanilla. Born in 1932 in this Nahuatl speaking community, Señora Cobb was given the name Cozomayotl Xihuatlalli, meaning Arcoiris

Mujer de la Tierra—Rainbow Woman of the Earth. She was third in line to be born with her triplet brother and sister. As she recounts the story told to her, when her brother was born, the wind was present and so he was named, Ehecatl—el Viento, the Wind. When Señora Cobb's sister came next, it began to rain and storm, so she was named Atlahuatzin--Agua Venerable—Venerated Water. Her mother then proceeded to get up, thinking that she had finished delivering twins, not realizing that there were triplets. As she rose, Señora Cobb came tumbling to the Earth. Her great great grandfather (whom she says died at the age of 144) then named her Xihuatlalli, or woman of the Earth. As the storm was ending, her mother looked out the window and saw a rainbow and then also named her Cozomayotl. From her mother, Ehecatl and Atlahuatzin would be her only siblings. At the age of six, Cozomayotl Xihuatlalli was sent to a school run by Catholic nuns in Mexico City. Her name was then changed according to her Saints' day, Santo Angel Custodio de España and Santa Bertolina, coinciding with her birthday. Having been born on the First of October, her triplet sister was given the name Bertha Angelina, her brother was given the name Angel Humberto, and she was given Angelbertha. During that time, last names were not given and one was identified by the location of their residence. For example, "de los montes" or "of the mountains" might clearly identify the exact person being discussed. "Family names" in the west came about in the 1200s as a process of acquiring family names for registrations of people. Today, human names are essential for government, bio-medical records, digitalized info, marketing purposes, and the ruthless acquisition of property (Forbes 2006). Since Cobb was not baptized, she was not given a colonial last name either. Her current last name,

Cobb, came later when she married her second husband at the age of 15, Earl Cobb, a Comanche U.S. Serviceman.[84]

Señora Cobb's personal life is very much enmeshed with Danza life, and, in many ways, is inseparable. Often times when I asked about her own life, she would deflect it back to talking about Florencio Yescas because it was important for her to preserve his story because it is one that drastically changed her life. As she recalls, during the progressive and Pro-Indígena administration of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), Indigenous communities throughout México were being invited to the city. The date, according to Señora Cobb, was March 18, 1938 and Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized the petroleum industry, Petroleo de México, which sold Petroleum to Germany and the U.S. The petroleum belonged to the nation of México, but was located on Indigenous land. In gratitude for allowing the state to use the natural resources on Indigenous territories, Cárdenas began to build infrastructure and roads into remote Indigenous communities to allow for communication and access to education, health and other necessities provided by the state (Cobb, personal interview). He also invited different communities to present their regional, traditional dances at the Capitol as a way to show respect and honor and incorporation of Indigenous people into the nation. The Cárdenas administration brought Indigenous communities to Mexico City to dance at Bellas Artes, a famous theater hall. He told them to bring their artesanias/crafts to display and sell and, in this effort, showed the nation the beauty that México offers because of the pueblos Indígenas. According to Señora Cobb, her whole pueblo came down and danced during the month of September to commemorate "Las Fiestas Patrias y el Grito." It was Florencio Yescas that personally

[84] When asked about her first husband, with whom she had her first child, she said, "olvida su nombre!" Meaning, that she did not want to remember his name, nor discuss him any further.

brought her at the age of six to Mexico City after he had observed her dance in Cuétzalan. She remembers that they stayed over three months in Mexico City at this fiesta. Florencio Yescas, Polo Ortiz, and Francisco Aguila are the names of important people she recalls meeting.

Señora Cobb was one of the young dancers that came to perform in Mexico City. According to Señora Cobb, Marcelo Torre Blanca was the representative of La Academia de la Danza (folklorica) in México, he and another dancer, Lázaro, sent Florencio Yescas to remote Indigenous communities to find various regional dances and dancers that would be incorporated into La Academia's repertoire. It was during Yescas' visit to Cuetzalan that he first met six-year-old Cozomayotl Xihuatlalli. As a young girl, Señora Cobb learned the local Danzas of her community so she was invited to represent at the Capitol, El Districto Federal. Yescas was approximately twenty-two years old. Once he saw Angelbertha, he saw her potential as a dancer. Señora Cobb remembered that he gave her the nickname "pinguica," which is a miniature apple fruit or "manzanita." He gave her this name because she was also small and, at eleven years old, she stopped growing. When Yescas first saw her, he saw how "cute" she danced, talked to her parents, and wanted to bring her to the city permanently so she could dance professionally (Cobb, personal interview). After it was agreed upon that she could stay, Yescas brought Señora Cobb to la Academia to learn Folklórico dance. At the age of six, her family allowed her to leave the pueblo to dance with Florencio Yescas.

Between 1937 and 1948 Angelbertha became a child actress and dancer under the instruction of Florencio Yescas, Amado Ballesteros, Francisco Aguila and Amelia Bell. She would charge two pesos a week to teach teachers how to dance her regional dances.

During this time, Florencio taught her Spanish and opened a whole new life and career for her. As an early teen, she hosted a radio show, appeared in Mexican movies, and, at the age of 15 met, her second husband Earl Cobb, a U.S. Serviceman. After having three sets of twins with him, she found herself, at the age of 17, as mother of seven children. Soon the Cobb family moved to San Diego, where Earl was stationed.

In the early 1960s, the Cobbs settled in El Cajon, California. Shortly afterwards, in 1964, Mr. Cobb passed away. In 1965, the young widow, Señora Cobb brought her family to the midtown, Sacramento area. She settled with a third, "common law" companion, Baltazar Valdivia Zapata, whom she notes, was a descendant of Mexican revolutionary, Emiliano Zapata. They had four children. Señora Cobb eventually became a single mother, raising a family of nineteen by herself; she somehow managed to work multiple jobs, make ends meet and still make time for Danza, culture, and community. She founded Ballet Quetzalcoatl, an Aztec and Folklórico dance group, which later became Folklor Mexicano de Angelbertha Cobb, the first Folklórico dance group in Sacramento. This group performed at events such as the California State Fair, the Camellia Dance Festival, Native American ceremonies, various schools, and festivals. In the 1960s and 70s, Ballet Folklórico was considered a revolutionary concept. It was counter to the mainstream culture and emphasized a Mexican Indigenous identity, culture, and presence within California. It contributed to the growing Chicana/o consciousness during the movement era.

In the 1970's, Florencio Yesca's dance group (which included Señora Cobb and her son Eddie) performed in the White House for President Carter. Thousands of Sacramento's MeXicana/o residents credit Señora Cobb for teaching multiple generations

about dance and culture while instilling important values such as pride in their heritage (Barrera 2011). She soon became one of the original founders for the Comité Patriótico de México de California,[85] fought for cultural recognition through public art, and took a strong stand on political issues that affected her community. While in her fifties, Señora Cobb attended California State University, Sacramento, where she oftentimes found herself challenging her professors' versions of Mexican and Native American history.

In addition to being a dancer, one only needs to look toward her numerous awards of recognition, including the 1981-1982 Woman of the Year in Sacramento, the Sacramento Regional Pride Award for the Arts, and the Eagle Award for cultural education to understand Señora Cobb's impact in Sacramento. The State President of the United Latino Political Association describes her in the following way: "This woman stands as one of the best role models that anyone could ever want" (Hubert 1994). Cobb makes time to help homeless people, mentor students, and to be an advisor to other cultural arts groups, such as the Royal Chicano Airforce, a Chicano artists collective in Sacramento. Cobb was also a bounty hunter for approximately 15 years, working on and off for well-known Sacramento bail bondsman Leonard Padilla. After knowing Padilla for many years and working with his son in public relations, one day Padilla offered Señora Cobb the opportunity to work as a bounty hunter. Her small stature and motherly appeal made her unsuspecting to criminals she sought and captured in México. According to Señora Cobb, she needed the work and when he asked her if she was scared, she responded firmly that she was not scared at all! It was Leonard Padilla that

[85] This organization planned Mexican cultural events and festivities in the Sacramento area. They established a "fiestas patrias" and "dia de la bandera." Hundreds would attend their events and Señora Cobb would perform.

eventually gave her a scholarship to go to school to receive her paralegal training certification.

Some call her Mrs. Cobb, *Maestra* (teacher), *Jefa* (the boss), or simply Mama Cobb. Although we are friends (she acknowledged me as such during a family gathering celebrating her son's birthday, introducing me to her children and guests as a friend), I call her Señora Cobb as a sign of respect to an elder. It is also the name I have always called her since I first met her. When asked why she kept her last name Cobb, versus her other husbands' last names, she responded that she liked the surprised looks on people's faces when they perhaps expected a "gringa" to appear, and she was instead an "India" (personal interview). She likes her last name Cobb; it is a name that makes her unique. I first came to know Señora Cobb when I was a high school student attending a "Raza Day" event at San José State University. The purpose of Raza Day was to educate and raise political/social consciousness amongst youth, and to encourage Raza youth toward a college education. Señora Cobb was the keynote speaker. She spoke about being a Mexica woman, more commonly understood and known as Aztec. Speaking her mother tongue of Nahuatl, she talked about her history and shared her knowledge of the importance of knowing not "his"-story but "our"-story. Señora Cobb had only come to learn Spanish when Florencio Yescas began to teach her.

In her book *Roots of Resistance* (1980), Roxanne Dunbar notes that, when the Spaniards first entered the southwest, they encountered Nahuatl speaking people and therefore brought Nahuatl-speaking intermediaries. Nahuatl belongs to the Uto-Aztecan or Uto-Nahuatl family, composed of at least fifty-three groups including the Shoshones, Utes, Paiutes, Hopi, Comanche, Yaquí, Tarahumara, and Pipil of Central America. It is

documented that Señora Cobb has spoken to Hopi elders in mutually intelligible conversation in Nahuatl (see Gonzalez/Rodríguez 2005). She makes it clear to state that she speaks a "classical" or older version of Nahuatl, but having left her Nahuatl-speaking community as such a young age and over the years of not practicing, she has lost much of her fluency.

Learning and embracing our past—our Indigenous past—as part of our present, brings us closer to ourselves as a people and a community to struggle "por lo nuestro," what is ours. Knowing our past helps envision the future. This is the message of Señora Cobb. Although I was only a freshman in high school, I remember the day I met Señora Cobb very clearly. I remember going home and telling my mother that the Aztecs were not extinct as I had been taught in school. I was so astonished to have heard this woman speak. At the tender age of 14, this moment would impact me for the rest of my life. After that day I somehow found a way to contact her and invited her to speak at other school/community events. Our paths crossed later as I grew to become politically involved in my community and socially/culturally involved in the Danza Mexica tradition. I would see Señora Cobb at ceremonies and other Danza events. I heard her speak on a number of occasions, including at events that I helped to organize as a college student and activist. Her message continues to compel me and others that have had the privilege to meet her.

In 1996, during the Peace and Dignity Journeys Intercontinental Spiritual Run,[86] I found myself stranded with two other friends in the airport of Mexico City; our ride and

[86] This is a spiritual run coordinated by Indigenous people intercontinentally. The run, which begins in Alaska and Argentina simultaneously, joins together in the middle of the continent, symbolizing the joining of the north and south nations. This also represents the fulfillment of prophecies that predicted the joining of the Eagle and Condor.

lodging had suddenly decided that they could no longer house us during the Peace and Dignity ceremonies. By some work of possible fate, Señora Cobb arrived in the airport at the same time on a different airline. When she saw our looks of despair and heard our story, she took us all under her wing and ensured us that if we stuck with her, she would take care of us and make sure that we had housing and safety. That week, she cared for us like a mother and really meant it when she said we could not leave her side. For fear of our safety, she even forbade us to attend a Pro-Zapatista protest where Comandante Ramona would be speaking, (our youthful, fearless, activist desires were disappointed). During this trip, I made my first pilgrimage to Teotihuacan and Tepeyac, both sacred sites. All along the way, Señora Cobb was a teacher and mentor. It was at this time that I learned that her way of teaching was not to simply give answers, but to force one to critically search and discover the answers for oneself. I remember arriving in Teotihuacan and Señora Cobb pointed out all the trees surrounding the sacred site. She asked us what the connection was between those trees and the sacred site. Clueless, we all sort of shrugged, puzzled by such a question. In her frustrated impatience for a response, she then told us that those *arboles de copal*, are where the copal tree resin comes from. Copal, a sacred incense/smoke used in all the Mexica ceremonies, comes from this sacred site. When we burn the copal, it reminds us and takes us back to the sacred places of our ancestors. On this trip, Señora Cobb forced us to try tacos de chapulines (grasshopper tacos) and huitlacoche, (corn fungus). This trip, my first to México, was extremely memorable, and since this time, I have maintained a close relationship with Señora Cobb, who never ceases to surprise me with new information about herself and her life.

Although it has been many years that I can consider Señora Cobb a friend and mentor/maestra, I feel I know so little about her; rather, the bits and pieces of her life that I do know about are really only a minuscule fraction of her life and work. Recognizing the important role that she had in ensuring that the Danza Mexica tradition would be planted in California, and essentially in the U.S., and my own personal spiritual belief and practice in Danza makes even a brief documentation of her life story extremely important. As I have conducted research for this dissertation, one common thread that I have found is the under-emphasis of the role of women in Danza. The historical lineage has been credited overwhelmingly to men and has perpetuated a very patriarchal hierarchy. The role of women has been relegated to the "partner," "wife," or "participant," but never the leader. According to Margarita Calderón, member of Danza Yankuitetl, she notes that it was mostly young men who began with Yescas and started out as single men, with access to a vehicle. The women were married, had children or other responsibilities. She found Danza in its earlier days to be male-centered and "cliquish [as] it became a thing (activity) of one of the guys" (Maestas, n.d.: 81). She describes these first Chicano danzantes as somewhat fanatical and over the edge and perhaps "going through a phase." Even when women have been given "palabra" or a strong leadership role, they are delegitimized or overlooked when it comes time to seek knowledge or ask questions. Señora Cobb, as one of the earliest leaders of Danza, was present during the many milestones and critical phases of Danza in California, yet her role and leadership has not been fully realized. In fact, some danzantes have even blatantly dismissed her role and have deemed her "palabra" as illegitimate.[87] The history

[87] Throughout my interviews, Señora Cobb details her personal experiences of this delegitimization. I have also personally heard danzantes discredit her knowledge or claim that she does not have "palabra,"

of delegitimization of women, not only in Danza history, but Xicana/o history in general, implicates Cobb's story and my desire to tell it.

This lack of attention or respect for Danza women leadership also became my own personal experience as the co-founder and cabeza of my own grupo de Danza. The other co-founder, my good friend, Juan Esteva, would oftentimes comment that members of the group would look towards him as the sole leader. We often discussed the contradictory nature of some danzantes that had a hard time listening to a woman or "taking my word for it." When it came to questions about Danza knowledge, he was perceived to be the "authentic" knowledge keeper, whereas I was viewed as capable of the logistics and administrative areas of keeping our Danza group in order. Much of this stems from systemic structures and belief systems in Western society that are manifested both consciously and unconsciously. When Juan left New York to move back to California, and I was left to lead the group by myself, some danzantes (both men and women) had a difficult time accepting my way of conducting the circle and my Xicana feminist ideals. This was definitely the case with some of the Mexican-born men in the Danza group, who had little experience having to follow instruction from a woman (and Xicana), that they perceived or assumed knew little about Danza. With few women in my similar position to turn to, the experience can be isolating and filled with self-doubt. This lack of respect for my leadership from some members was deeply felt on my part, and I believe part of it was due to patriarchy and sexism. This reality makes this brief synopsis of Señora Cobb's life even more valuable to me.

According to Yolanda Broyles-González, in her article, "Indianizing Catholicism: Chicana/India/Mexicana/Indigenous Spiritual Practices in Our Image," the realm of

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inferring that she is not "legit."

spiritual practices and the women who engage in these practices is the least explored area within Chicana/o Studies (Cantú/Nájera-Ramírez 2002). She states:

> Faced with the ravages and genocide of colonial power struggles for hundreds of years—and particularly in the last century—*mexicana* collective spiritual practices and faith have formed part of the bedrock of day-to-day survival for marginalized communities. Many of those most socially and economically marginalized—indigenous women—have steadfastly served as the unacknowledged high priests and healers of our working communities under siege. *Mujeres* (women) are the chief transmitters of spiritual practices in the home, and to the seven generations, while also serving as the chief mediators between the home and external religious institutions and sites (Cantú/Nájera-Ramírez 2002: 117).

For this reason, it is important that Señora Cobb's narrative and role in Danza be documented and carry the same historical weight as that of her male counterparts. She has successfully inverted and transformed cultural expressions and landscapes, under what most would consider harsh conditions, into realms of self-empowerment and Indigenous cultural survival. It is important that her impact not be overlooked, but rather given the place of significance that it deserves. While she is one of the earliest danzantes and leaders of Danza in California, many women after her have become Danza leaders and it is important that their stories, role, and contribution also be recognized. Señora Cobb states: "Sin la mujer, nada, ni nadie existe./ Without women, nothing, nor anybody exists" (personal interview). It is my hope that this work will inspire others or extend my own research to document these women Danza leaders. It is important for the Danza community to understand the challenges that women have faced and continue to face in order to receive respect and recognition as leaders, knowledge/wisdom keepers, teachers, and danzantes in this movement. This ethnographic account is merely an attempt to lay

the groundwork and scratch the surface for what I hope to develop in the future as a major ethnographic research project on Señora Cobb and other women in Danza.

Señora Cobb is identified in many ways: elder, healer, dancer, teacher, seamstress, community activist, mother, midwife, actress, and many other roles that she continues to play in her community and in my life. As women who carry palabra in the Danza tradition, it is important for Señora Cobb and me to explore this notion of "tradition." Tradition refers to an ancient life way that reflects Indigenous beliefs of a continual awareness of the inter-relationships of all life forms (Forbes, 2004). Tradition is listening, observing, and striving to live and follow the ways of praying/reflecting and practicing ceremony in the way that elders have passed down generation to generation. The traditional way of walking in life and honoring creation aims to achieve balance, harmony, and respect in all aspects of human, plant, animal, and Earth life. Tradition, of course, is a process and becomes such not through a static, unchanging evolution. Tradition develops because of the interaction, exchange, fluidity and adaptability of ideas. As such, traditions have continued to adapt and take on new shapes and forms in order to create continuous growth and new ideas.

While living and doing research (1997) in Juxtlahuaca, Oaxaca, I was surprised to encounter a community of Nahuatl speakers, so far south, in a mostly Mixteco and Triqui-speaking region. I learned that the people of this community were descendants of Mexicas that had fled south to escape the Spanish invasion. Influence of Nahua dance, culture, and language goes as far south as El Salvador and Nicaragua, where similar Danza and language traditions were/are maintained. These Danza traditions were maintained in order to create balance between the scientific, artistic, and spiritual worlds.

As Aguilar points out, "We cannot lose sight of the fact that these sciences were not developed just for the sake of scientific curiosity, but for a more important end – to properly align the spiritual communication between man and his creator" (1983: 8).

Ultimately, Danza Mexica is really a Danza of more than "Mexica" traditions only, but, to identify it as such is symbolic. The title of "Danza Mexica" serves to reclaim ownership and connection to some of the world's most impressive, grandiose spiritual centers and ceremonial sites. It has come to mean La Danza of México—the Indigenous México, el México profundo (Batalla, 1996). It reclaims relationship to an Indigenous past and to a strong, still existing community. Señora Cobb broadens the definition of Mexica to mean not only one particular "tribal or nation" affiliation, but, rather, to encompass all Indigenous nations within México. She translates Mexica to mean "Mexican" or, more specifically, an Indigenous Mexican. Even further, she reminds people that México was part of an even larger confederation of Indigenous lands and nations. She makes this conscious re-definition of Mexica because she believes that Danza Mexica should not exclude "non-Mexicas," or "non-Mexicans;" instead, it is a space that defies borders and is inclusive of those identifying with the Confederation of Anahuac,[88] or, all of the nations, communities, and pueblos existing in México (including areas of the U.S.) and Central America. Cobb's broad definition of "Mexica" is an acknowledgement that Indigenous communities do not live in isolation; they have continued historical relationships, influencing and impacting one another reciprocally. To

[88] This confederation was an ancient international system in place, similar to Tawantinsuyo in South America, which functioned as a sort of "United Nations" in pre-invasion era.

ignore that reality in any Indigenous community of this continent, would only serve to present a shallow understanding of any tradition especially in contemporary times.

There are many examples of the inter-American exchange of Indigenous traditions in San Francisco, California, there is a Danza circle that is led by a Salvadoreño family. When I was living in Mexico City, a Danza maestro who was of Mixteco descent taught me a dance he called, "la Danza Mixteca." Through his own life-long learning of Danza Mexica, he was also investigating, revitalizing and learning traditional Danzas of the Mixtecos and then incorporating them into the Danza Mexica tradition. According to Garner:

> The majority of Aztec dancers that I have met self-identify as *mestizo* (México's dominant identity), though I have met those who self-identified as members of Mexican Indigenous groups as well, such as Maya and Chichimeca. I have never met a dancer that self-identified as Aztec, and participation in the dance does not signify specifically Aztec identity. Nevertheless, dancing is described as expressing the participant's indigenous heritage, broadly conceived (2009: 416).

Many people with little knowledge of their own Indigenous identity will begin to learn Danza as a stepping stone upon which to learn of their own direct lineage. Unfortunately, it is common that all records or knowledge of direct Indigenous blood lineage is lost. Danza is a way to reconnect and to essentially adopt a broadened Mexica tradition, in order to have a place of belonging and to nourish a desire to ground oneself in Indigenous ways of life. For example, upon visiting New México, my aunt was confronted with a Pueblo resident who asked her what tribe she was from. My aunt, somewhat shocked by that question (although she phenotypically appears Indigenous, she does not overtly identify as such), had an immediate response that she is "Aztec." I found this response interesting because she really did not know how to respond, having no prior knowledge

of her direct lineage, but she also did not deny her indigeneity. Responding "Aztec," allowed her to maintain a sense of her Indigenous identity, even when she could not identify her direct lineage. This is similarly the case for many danzantes who hold on to Danza Mexica as their identity and link to their own indigeneity. Understanding the continued evolution and growth of Danza helps one to not fixate this tradition to a single time or space. Rather, Danza is neither static nor monolithic. It is dynamic, yet rooted in a foundation that transcends pure bodily motion, serving to connect people and a higher Spirit.

Señora Cobb is considered an elder of the Danza Mexica community in California and the United States. Danza traditions are said to have begun in the areas of Central and Northern México, but similar dance traditions existed not only amongst the Mexica, but within many other Indigenous populations throughout México. Because of the stringent hierarchical structure that the Conchero tradición has developed in the Valley of México, the blood lineage and cultural trajectory extending from the Conchero-recognized Danza leaders often excludes Señora Cobb as part of that particular "palabra." Within some of these structures of Danza, her palabra is not recognized and sometimes she is even discredited as being part of the history of Danza. In contrast, Señora Cobb states, "Yo tenía palabra desde que aprendí a hablar/I had palabra since I learned to speak" (personal interview). She is not "recognized" in the Danza structure because she does not come from a particular Conchero lineage from the Valley of México. She comes from her own community in Puebla, but because she left her community when she was a child, she states that not even her brothers remember her. While she maintained her connection to her pueblo of origin, she adopted Sacramento as her transnational pueblo.

The notion of lineage is extremely important in the Conchero tradition. According to Mario Aguilar:

> A common question of Danzantes in México is ¿de quien es su palabra? [With whom is your commitment or what group do you belong to or represent?] This is because 'the traditional' Danza Azteca groups of México are organized as MILITARY units. Each group is seen as a unit of warriors who are sworn to defend their people's faith and traditions against the forces of darkness and evil. Each PALABRA is set up around the person of the CAPITÁN or CAPITANA. In the area near and around México-Tenochtitlan, as well as in Jalisco, Michoacán, Tlaxcala, and Puebla, the palabra is known as the CUARTEL GENERAL. In the area north of Mexico City, in Queretaro, Guanajuato, and Hidalgo, the palabra is known as LA MESA." (Maestas, n.d.: 65)

When one accepts "palabra" or gives "palabra" to a group, they are accepting not only the life-long commitment to work with Danza, but also a pledge of allegiance to the Capitán/a and/or Mesa where they started. When one starts Danza, usually it is the first group with which one begins that they eventually must give their palabra or commitment to. Once a person gives palabra to a Danza group, they must give full commitment to that group only and follow that group's norms and/or rules. When the Capitán/a or "jefe/a" dies, they pass on the palabra to another member of the group. If any new groups are formed, they must first seek permission and recognition from the closest Capitán/a to them in the family tree/lineage of their group. Basically, a parent group must first give legitimacy before a splinter group can claim to even be a group. If the new group does not have some direct lineage or palabra from a Capitan/a, then they are not recognized and are basically prey to be being shunned or not deemed "authentic" or "true traditional" dance groups.

This has created some problems within many groups that have since formed in the U.S. Having structure and the palabra system ensures some sense of accountability and

protects Danza, as a spiritual and cultural practice, from being misused or exploited by outsiders. At the same time, this structure has also been mis-used to create a false-sense of power. In a neocolonial context, the idea of "palabra" has also been manipulated and reconfigured to de-legitimize a person's authority or knowledge, and instead create hierarchical structures that divide and create destructive power struggles that go against basic principles of respect and harmony. As such, having "palabra" can be misused as a license to claim authority and/or authenticity within Danza and over others. Many danzantes, refusing to be regulated by one Danza group, will often refer to themselves as "free-lancers" or "Danzantes independientes," or even "renegades," meaning that they are free agents, not tied to any group and therefore able to travel and practice from group to group, visiting any circle or ceremony they choose. Some have even decided to form their own groups, creating their own rules with little or no guidance or connection to elders or other teachers. This too can be dangerous, as the "free-lancers" have no accountability or responsibility to any elders, leaders, or norms of any group. On the one hand, there are danzantes that have been dancing for many years, have demonstrated their commitment to the traditions, culture, and community. However, since they learned from a group or teacher that had no "formal" recognition by a mesa, they are therefore not recognized or legitimized. This could be used as an example when the palabra-system, as it is implemented by "la tradición," does not function as it should. On the other hand, there are the other danzantes that perhaps only show up for certain events, contribute no work or effort for any group or event/ceremony, and travel amongst any group they please without having any obligations. The fact that they do not establish roots with any

group and learn the valuable lesson of accountability and commitment to a community demonstrates where a palabra-system is needed to create structure.

Structure is particularly important in instances where discipline is warranted. For example, if a danzante is disrespectful, offensive or does something that goes against the norms of a group, a maestra/o should be able to let that danzante's maestra/o know what happened so s/he can address it with the danzantes and rectify the issue. If a danzante shows up to a ceremony improperly dressed, their maestra/o should be told, so that s/he can educate the danzante on the proper way to carry oneself in a ceremony. It is the role and responsibility of the maestra/o to cultivate appropriate ways to conduct one's self. This, of course, may not work if the maestro/o does not follow these norms either (or does not respect other leaders/groups), which can be the case even if a maestra/o is "formally' recognized. They, too, may not exactly practice or teach the norms set up in la tradición, or basic morality. Señora Cobb uses the example that in the film, *The Eagles Children* (1993), a Capitán uses the sacred drum as a table to place his beer.

According to Señora Cobb, Florencio Yescas taught that to be a good danzante, "uno tenía que respetar todos los danzantes por ser danzantes, no por su lugar en la jerarquia militar./ One should respect all danzantes for being danzantes, not because of the military structure" (personal interview). Yescas believed that the titles of leaders within Danza should not be modeled after a military structure because, as Señora Cobb states: "Sometimes if I'm a capitana, I can do whatever I want. It becomes about ego y nunca vamos pa'adelante [we never move forward]. Then sometimes, some 'soldados' [soldiers] turn out to be better than their capitán" (personal interview). Essentially, Cobb (and Yescas) argues that the military structure within Danza causes confusion and

conflict. According to Señora Cobb, Yescas never used those label for himself and always identified himself as simply a "danzante." Cobb believes that the military labels of hierarchy serve only to promote individualism and ego. It makes one believe that they possess some sort of power. Señora Cobb gives an example that if a "Capitán" de Danza were to introduce himself in that manner to a traditional Indigenous community in Chiapas, no one would recognize the "Capitán" as a "jefe" or someone in charge. Their recognition as a Capitán is only here in the U.S. or within certain Danza spaces. For Indigenous people in other communities, to list off titles and mesas really means very little. It is only danzantes from the U.S and parts of México that self-imposed, created, and/or internalized these power structures. Señora Cobb believes that contemporary danzantes need to challenge these power structures and the meanings we have attached to them. The actions of a person are far more important than titles to describe a person's character and abilities.

Issues of child abuse, incest, domestic violence and sexual harassment have presented themselves within Danza and even in ceremony. For this reason (and in cases that have been brought to the public eye), the White Hawks Danza group and others (including Señora Cobb) have tried to form a council or congregation of Danzantes and elders to deal with these issues broadly. To date, there is still no solution or stable structure in place to address such problems or banish certain danzantes and/or maestros charged with such acts. Currently, the tactic used has been public humiliation though mass emails or announcements made at Danza groups warning them of certain people or issues that have come up. At that point, groups may decide to ask a danzante to leave or decide to no longer work with a certain maestra/o or group.

The endangerment from colonialism in all its forms has made its way into Danza. Synthesizing a concept by Leon Portilla, Enrique Maestas reinforces the notion that "cultures that survive…endangerment integrate experienced traumas into cultural expressions" (1999: 69). For example, Catholicism, which was so brutally imposed on Indigenous people, forced some acculturation of values and beliefs. Los Concheros are an example of how forced assimilation led to the creation of a new form of Danza. To assimilate and acculturate was a strategy to hold on to any last remnant of the past, so as to prevent its complete extinction, as has happened with so many other Indigenous people. Oftentimes, the Indigenous communities that had the greatest chances of survival were not those that resisted and rejected completely, but those that negotiated with the colonizers. Only through some compliance with western forms of state, religion, and democracy could a people be recognized and have a chance for survival.

Although Mexica/Nahua people may have assimilated into the Church, they were still on the margins of Catholicism, meaning that, even within the institution, they were not deemed worthy. Therefore, they did not receive services that elite Catholics would have received, such as the ability to enter the priesthood. Therefore, Indigenous institutions of honor, such as Danza, as an Indigenous tradition of spirituality, continued to provide for the community's needs for basic respect and dignity. Mexican Catholicism would be the product of this reciprocity of cultures and values. Whereas Catholicism, even today with missionaries, seeks to assimilate, Mexican Catholicism embodied in Conchero belief was a way to resist complete obliteration. Maintaining the palabra-system and functioning as a hierarchical structure was a tool of resistance and survival.

Both the internal critiques and internal support of this historically Conchero, hierarchical system are valid. Regarding the critiques, in some cases, this system has de-valued someone like Señora Cobb, who does not come from the lineage of la tradición, but from her own community and set traditions. In addition, some "recognized" or "legitimized" maestros of "tradición" may be alcoholics or known abusers, which pose serious contradictions to what it means to hold palabra. While Señora Cobb learned the actual Danzas and carried the historical and cultural knowledge from her community, it was Yescas that became her teacher in the structure of Danza as it is known today. Florencio Yescas carried direct lineage of Danza, but because he challenged that structure and opened up Danza to others, he has been critiqued:

> [Florencio Yescas] era Conchero como todos los antiguos, el vió que la tradición no era exacto lo que era el 'esplendor azteca.' El dejó la disciplina conchera y fue para la Azteca…El sufrió mucho por eso. Danzantes called him a malinchista/ [Florencio Yescas] was a Conchero like all the old ones, he saw that the tradition was not exactly what the splendor of the Aztecs truly was. He left the Conchero discipline and went the Azteca way. He suffered very much for this. Danzantes called him a traitor]…Concheros dance with their head down and traje covered. He made trajes 'Aztecas' and taught that way. Most concheros are not really 'traditional concheros' anymore either in that sense (Cobb, personal interview).

According to Señora Cobb, he was insulted and called "el encuerado" (the naked one) and an "oportunista" (opportunist). Cobb states that in actuality, Florencio Yescas was a Conchero that practiced the tradición in his home, with his grandmother and mother. Señora Cobb notes that "Yescas' ombligo [belly button] was buried in the fire place of the kitchen…he was a danzante desde que el nació [since he was born]. He didn't particularly align with any 'label' except for his name and as a danzante" (personal interview). Yescas broke away from the Concheros and began to dedicate himself to

making Mexica regalia and teaching Danza in a different way, without the "títulos de Capitán" (titles of Capitan). He was part of a generation that rejected the continued Catholic colonization, and was instead seeking a revival of a Danza that was centered on Indigenous wisdom and culture. Yescas wanted to return Danza to a time before European invasion when Danza was part of everyday life. He wanted a return to the sacred sites that were once prohibited by the Spaniards and to re-conquer the minds of Indigenous people, but with true "Mexica culture." Concheros may have resisted the Church through incorporation of it in their sacred life ways (through Spanish instruments and Catholic icons), but Yescas believed that era was over and Danza no longer needed Catholicism as its guise. The mestizaje was simply a result of invasion and violence.

For Yescas, the idea of "Captains" and "jefes" or positions of power within Danza groups came from the Spaniards and transferred onto the Cocheros and all of Danza. There were individual "cargos" or responsibilities within Mexica social structures (i.e., calpulli or escuelas del barrio), but they were not practiced in the same hierarchical way. In "Mexica Danza," everyone was equal. Notions of racism, class, and hierarchy came with the Spaniards and the caste system. Maestro Yescas was not in agreement with the jefes within the Conchero groups that sustained the militaristic system. It was his belief that everyone was ultimately a danzante, "danzantes eran/ were danzantes;" there were no categories. In this same vein, Señora Cobb has never referred to herself as a Capitana or Jefa or Maestra, rather, it is others that have chosen to refer to her as such, but never have those labels been self-imposed. Yescas had similar feelings toward the estandartes and wanting to disassociate himself from their European ideology. To carry an estandarte meant one had to be under a saint. Yescas, wanted to use traditional warrior symbols

such as eagles and jaguars instead. Because of Yescas, people began to thank *Tonantzin*, rather than the saints or Virgins. Even though Yescas was recognized by a mesa and did have "palabra," he never called himself a Capitán or a Maestro (Cobb, personal interview).

> According to Señora Cobb, when people ask:
>
> > ¿Que mesa? No se debe clavar en eso! [What mesa? You should not get hung up on that!] Traditional dancers can distinguish 'los que danzan con el corazón y los que danzan con la boca' / [those that dance with their heart and those that dance with their mouth]. Anyhow, we are not from México. Why should we worry? (personal interview)

While it is important to know where we come from as danzantes, that is not the core focus of Danza. Anyone can memorize the dances, but ultimately, it is about how one lives his/her life that matters. The practice of culture has constantly been adopted. New dances and practices are being learned from everyone, no matter what Mesa they derive from. The idea of "mesas" is important, but not crucial. In México, one might say, "you are not following the verdadera tradición, pero cual de todas?/[true tradition, but which of all of them?]" (Cobb, personal interview). Just in the Zócalo (the main city plaza where danzantes practice) there are over 5-10 traditions. Every group and every mesa will say they are "the one." Therefore, it is important not to limit oneself—for example, "I defend this pantli only" –but, rather, to acknowledge the history and the ways we have learned from everyone (Cobb, personal interview). Danza is essentially composed of different ways and different groups. According to Señora Cobb:

> *No one* carries the tradición as it was. There has been too much influence, people drinking, partying. We are human, but if we are going to llevar el camino/ [carry this path], we need to be better people. If you know you have an obligation, but you are crudo/ [hung-

> over], don't come or don't drink. Tampoco no seas fanático/ [also don't be a fanatic] (personal interview).

Señora Cobb believes that yes, there should be responsibilities and order, such as:

> …primera palabra, segunda palabra, etc. There should be people that are in charge of certain responsibilities, but capitanes, sargentos, alferez, regidores…hay un montón y eso no es tradición, pero imposisión de los españoles para mantener control/ [captains, sergeants, director/manager…there are tons now and that is not tradition, but imposition of the Spaniards to maintain control] (personal interview).

The only organization that danzantes know is what was preserved by the Concheros, but that is not the original structure of the Mexicas. Responsibilities are positions that we all carry at all times in both La Danza and in life. Different groups name those responsibilities in different ways (captain, primera palabra, for example) but the cargos/responsibilities are the same and a maestro/a or teacher is simply the person/s from whom one learns. It is not an accident that Danza is in a circle because, in a circle, everyone is equal. According to Señora Cobb, the Concheros had to be submissive because the:

> Los indios eran esclavos sin alma/ [Indians were slaves with no soul] and therefore were not allowed to look up to God. Florencio salió de los Concheros, no por arrogancia, pero para renacer la Danza Azteca/ [Florencio got out of the Concheros, not because of arrogance, but to allow la Danza Azteca to be renewed] (personal interview).

Señora Cobb teaches that "todos aprendemos de todos/ [everyone learns from everyone]" (personal interview). As danzantes, we cannot worry about comparing ourselves to anyone or looking for a false "authenticity" that does not exist. In essence, we are not breaking tradition (or doing away with it), but building from tradition. The palabra-system is not perfect, but it is a work in progress that seeks to restore some sense of protection from "culture-vultures," and from those that would only use Danza for

personal gain, either money or power. Despite the stringent structure, many, including Señora Cobb, have earned their right to carry palabra, both in words and actions.

In my initial interviews with Señora Cobb, I was not certain as to the order from which I should approach her personal life, her role in Danza, and her ideas about the present and future. On several occasions during my meetings with her, in which I had specifically expressed my intentions to interview her, the encounters never seemed to go as I had expected. In terms of recording information either written or with a voice recorder, Señora Cobb was firm in telling me not to write down anything that she was telling me. She would say, "Usa la grabadora de tu mente." –Use the recorder in your mind. Once, she wrote down a Nahuatl word on a piece of paper and proceeded to explain its meaning, and when she was done, she took the paper and ripped it up completely. During certain lines of questioning, she would say, "no te metes con eso" – "don't get involved with that." In other words, she made it clear when a question was either too personal or not necessary to divulge.

In interviewing Señora Cobb, my main concern was documenting information accurately. While Señora Cobb speaks very good English, we mostly communicate in Spanish. I can tell she is more comfortable speaking in Spanish, which allows her stories to flow more smoothly. While my Spanish is acceptable, there are moments where I struggle and worry about misinterpreting or perhaps not getting the punch line of a joke or anecdote. Having been educated in mainstream institutions, I rely heavily on writing down information, typing notes, and recording lectures. Señora Cobb was asking me to remember an extreme amount of information and detail using memory alone. I explained to her that I had purchased a small recording device so that I could transcribe word-for-

word her story. I explained that by recording her voice, I would be able to develop a transcription and could use the recorded material to make a CD of the interview for her to have, and if she so desired, the recording could be archived on the Internet or in a library. With her recorded voice or even a future video, we could develop interactive educational materials on Danza. Once I explained this to her, she said, "well, next time you come, bring that recorder." The next time I saw her, I did bring the recorder, and started to write down notes in my notebook, but was quickly interrupted when once again she snapped to not record or to write any of her stories on paper. As I thought about her reasoning, I came to my own conclusion that perhaps this was one of her lessons. Perhaps the power of oral tradition was what she wanted to teach me. I understand that the more one relies on recording devices or even writing things down, the easier it is to forget. She wanted me to force my mind to remember the stories, because once they are in the mind, they are never forgotten, similar to a song or memorized prayer. No matter how hard I try to forget the prayers or songs I was taught as a child, they will always remain in my mind. As Gabriel Estrada explains in his piece, "The Macho Body as Social Malinche," "the very word *palabra* means that dancers will need to speak to each other, as videos or writing are not the medium by which one primarily learns to dance" (in Gaspar de Alba 2003: 44). Still, in my concern for accuracy, I asked Señora Cobb if it would be okay to have her review any work that I would be submitting. Her response was more than favorable. In the final draft of this dissertation, I gave her a hard copy to review, but because of its length, she told me it was too long to read. Instead, I went to her home to read her the work in person and she made commentary/corrections along the way.

Before my first day of intentional observation, I called Señora Cobb during the week to discuss with her the possibility of beginning the interview process. As we discussed which day would work for both of us, she suggested Saturday, only if I could first take her and her son to a doctor's appointment, and afterward we could have all day to talk/interview. Saturday morning I left my house at nine a.m. and drove to North Sacramento, where she lives with her son, Guy, and her two dogs, a black Labrador named Tekpatl (small obsidian knife) and Miquiztli Xolotl (skull of the dead). Xolotl is a Xoloizcuintle breed of dog, better known as a Mexican hairless. It is the breed that was raised and domesticated by the Mexica. They are living remnants of an Indigenous past and carry with them an entire spiritual and philosophical belief. I arrived at her house and sat down as I played with her dogs. While she got her things together, she began to tell me about the conflict she was having with one of her students. This would be the conversation that dominated the entire day-visit with Señora Cobb. We decided to leave for the appointment, which was at 11 a.m. I thought the appointment was going to be nearby, but it was actually in downtown Sacramento. I drove Señora Cobb and her son Guy, who lives with mental health issues, to his appointment. Along the way, the conversation consisted only of the current situation with her student who had just moved out.

Once we were at the appointment, we sat in the office and waited. In the waiting room, a woman with three very out-of-control children sat annoyed, yelling at them at intervals. Finally, Señora Cobb turned around and said, "Give me those kids for one week and I'll have them all straightened out when I'm done with them. I raised nineteen of my own children, so I know." Then she proceeded to look directly at one of the

children and began to tell them to be quiet and sit. During this grandmotherly scolding, the doctor called her and Guy inside. As I waited, I read a magazine and came upon an article about the "ten commandments" for pet owners. I cut it out and thought Señora Cobb would appreciate it. When they were done with their appointment, we left and proceeded to a Rite-Aid to pick up a prescription. I parked right in front of the store and agreed to wait with Guy in the car while she went inside to pick up the prescription. As she approached the store entrance, she stopped to look at the rose bushes that were on sale. Then she called for me to come and look with her. She decided to get a cart and started loading about 15 rosebushes. She commented that now that her student was out of the house, she could plant and do as she wished.

As I answered a cell phone call, a woman came up to Señora Cobb and, in Spanish, asked permission to use my cell phone once I finished. In this quick conversation, Señora Cobb managed to listen to the story of this random woman who desperately needed a lawyer for her son who was in trouble. Señora Cobb patiently listened to the woman's story about a crooked lawyer who took advantage of her and her money and had now left her son without representation. In this brief moment, Señora Cobb mentored the woman and then pulled out her cell phone for the woman to use. Señora Cobb also pulled out a number of a lawyer that might be able to help. After this longer-than-expected visit to Rite-Aid and after loading all of the rose bushes into the trunk, Señora Cobb suggested that we go to lunch. I had yet to start asking any questions related to my research and thought that perhaps lunch would be a good time. I also kept in the back of my mind that Señora Cobb is diabetic and needed to eat and not feel pressured.

Lunch conversation turned out to be seemingly unrelated to the conversation I had in mind. We continued to talk about her student and she also explained to me her belief in past lives. We talked about other people and upcoming events. We were both very excited to take the freshly printed free Mexican calendars that the restaurant offered. The calendars displayed a woman with a light complexion wearing a traditional Indigenous Oaxacan dress. Señora Cobb also took an extra calendar depicting a woman wearing a typical Veracruz dress for her granddaughter, Ruby, whom she had mentioned and thought about throughout the day. At one point she called up her granddaughter just to tell her that I recommended the Toyota Hybrid as a good car to buy, and maybe she should look into it also.

After a lovely lunch and light conversation, Señora Cobb then suggested that we take a trip to the City of Fulsom to look at a store that sells beads and Native items of interest. The store, Pacific Western Traders, was beautifully decorated with traditional Native California artwork, and offered expensive books, jewelry, art, and many items of regional historical and cultural interest. Señora Cobb went straight to the bead section to look for beads worthy of the regalia she sews. As soon as we walked in, the owner (actually the son of the owner) greeted her in a solemn and stressful manner. Señora Cobb asked him how his father was doing and he replied, "not well." After he finished helping the customers, he continued to re-tell the state of affairs of his family. I began to wander in the store and admired the beautiful pieces. As I looked at the framed pictures of people, whom I assumed were important, Señora Cobb directed me to a particular wall. Amongst this wall with Native elders, living historical dignitaries, and participants in the store's activities and community events, was a picture of an even more youthful

Señora Cobb. As it turned out, she had been a long-time supporter of community events that had occurred through this store. At the age of about 50, the Señora Cobb in the photo showed off her embroidery. The fact that she was recognized on this store's wall says much about the manner in which she is respected in the local community. Although this store appeared to cater more to the needs of California Native people, Señora Cobb managed to create a space of recognition for her people. By her presence on that wall of Indigenous history, I, too, became part of that history.

When the store was seemingly empty, Señora Cobb told the distraught son that she could give him a cleansing or blessing. The man, a bit surprised, agreed and pulled out some sage and sweet grass for Señora Cobb to begin the small ceremony. In her prayers and offering to this man, she listened and offered advice. With the smoke of the sage and her practice of smudging him with this smoke, Señora Cobb offered some solace to the stressed and worried son who had been left the responsibility to care for the store. Señora Cobb promised to visit his sick father in the hospital.

On the way home, Señora Cobb mentioned that she would like to go to a fabric store to look for new material to make more dresses/regalia for Danza. She was making many *trajes* or suits for Danza in order to sell them at the next *tianguis* or market place that would most likely occur during and after the next Danza gathering/ceremony. After realizing that a full day had gone by, she instead suggested we go back to her house. On the way, somehow the subject came up that she used to be in movies. She was in a late 1970s Mexican film, *Contrabando del Paso*, filmed in Sacramento. She then also mentioned that she had been an actress in three other films in addition to that one. When we arrived at her house, she pulled out the movie and spent 20 minutes trying to locate

the exact scene where she was featured. She has also directed plays and starred in a film alongside Emilio Estevez.

During this first observational fieldwork, I did not get the opportunity to ask any direct questions. Despite this, I did gain a wealth of knowledge as I observed Señora Cobb in multiple roles, all in the span of one day. She was a grandmother, who in her age and experience, had the right to scold naughty children. She was a community resource and a kind listener to a stranger; she felt it was her duty to get involved. She was a mother who cared for her over forty-year-old son with a mental illness. She gave a healing/blessing ceremony to a man whose father was seriously ill. She was a seamstress and an actress. All of my subsequent visits would proceed similarly to this one. I would not get the opportunity to sit and just interview. Rather, I would become involved and an actor in her daily activities and practices. On one occasion, we went through photos as I helped her to locate boxes in cluttered rooms in her home. On another occasion, I attended the Cuauhtemoc Ceremony in San Francisco run by Macuilxochitl. During this ceremony, I was able to observe her in the center of the Danza circle, treated with the respect that an elder deserves. I also observed her carrying the sleeping babies and scolding children and adults if they were doing something inappropriate during ceremony. It would not be until a long-distance trip with Señora Cobb that I would be able to ask her more direct questions for my research.

According to the Mexica calendric system, March 12th is the New Year. Señora Cobb had been invited to a ceremony in Los Angeles where she was scheduled to speak and celebrate the Mexica New Year. She asked me if I would be willing to drive her. I agreed, knowing that it would be an opportunity for me to drive a long distance, be able

to talk with her along the way, and also have the opportunity to dance with a new group and experience a new ceremony. The night before, I called Señora Cobb to confirm the time I would pick her up and, when she answered, she said, "Dime (tell me), I'm waiting for you to tell me that you can't make it or you have to go to Las Vegas." A few weeks prior, she had asked me to take her to a ceremony in Gilroy. I jumped the gun and responded immediately that I could take her to the ceremony. The next day I realized that I could not go that weekend because I had already scheduled a personal trip to Las Vegas. She lectured me a bit as to what was more important, ceremony or Las Vegas, and I did feel bad having said I would take her, but the trip had been scheduled for weeks. So now she was reminding me of my "flakiness." Somehow, Señora Cobb does not let anything go and will hold something over one's head if she thinks they deserve it. For example, during the Los Angeles trip, she made a comment that I do not eat chile. She told everyone, "Jennie no come chile." When in actuality, I do eat chile, but maybe once I did not eat chile while I was with her and now it was an issue that would follow me whenever I went with Señora Cobb. Another example is whenever I invite Señora Cobb to facilitate a sunrise ceremony, she will always ask if it will be the true sunrise or a MEChA sunrise, meaning that true sunrise is at the first ray of light which could be at 4:30 or 5 a.m., but previous MEChA conferences have held their ceremonies closer to 6 a.m. or even 7 a.m., which, according to Señora Cobb is late and lazy, therefore her comment is meant as a small jab or critique.

The journey to Los Angeles was another learning experience regarding the personality of Señora Cobb. After we loaded my car with the dozens of newly-sewed regalia and our entire luggage, we headed out. On the way, she was very concerned

because she did not have time to purchase gifts or small *recuerdos* to give the groups. "But I always bring gifts," is what she said. Then, early in our trip, she realized that she had forgotten to bring her photo of the deceased Maestro Florencio Yescas. She carried a photo of him whenever she went to ceremony. Not having the photo of him upset her.

According to Señora Cobb (personal interview), Yescas first came to the United States in 1948 and thus, was the first Danzante to arrive to the U.S. He returned to México because his mother died. While in México, he began to drink and hit rock bottom. Many saw him in the streets, inebriated. His Danza students also saw him and told him that he needed to go back to the U.S. According to Señora Cobb, "Gracias a Emma Pulido, a student who saw him, le extendió la mano [extended her hand] to help him go to rehabilitation. She told him, 'your students don't deserve to see you this way. You are precious, una joya preciosa, una pluma de quetzal [a precious jewel, a quetzal feather]'" (personal interview). He returned to the U.S. in 1972. This time, he brought with him eleven other danzantes. With Yescas included, they were called "los discípulos" or the disciples. Señora Cobb states that she was considered the thirteenth. Many rumors about Yescas surfaced. Many judged him and saw him as someone who was only out for money. Andrés Segura, the other early Danza maestro who brought Danza to the U.S., heavily critiqued Yescas and his group:

> Este grupo de California no es tradicional. Este grupo se creó a través de una idea totalmente ajena y diferente a lo que es lo nuestro. Este grupo se dedica a lo que podemos llamar el *show business*. Incluso el nombre que llevan *Aztec Splendor*, ya indica lo suficiente. Este grupo lo dirige el señor Juan Pérez, quien por algún tiempo fue danzante dentro de la tradición, pero que circunstancias especiales en México lo fueron jalando hacia el teatro y más tarde hacia el cabaret. Las exigencias del espectáculo le obligaron a ir modificando la tradición. Por ejemplo, tuvo que ir mezclando los pasos para hacerlos más vistosos al mismo tiempo que reducía la duración de cada danza para

> ajustarla a los tres minutos que dura cada espectáculo. Juan Pérez tiene viente años de estar aquí en Estados Unidos, especificamente en Los Angeles, y ésta ha sido su línea durante los últimos quince años. Utiliza la danza como *modus vivendi*, y esto es justo lo contrario de lo que hacemos en la tradición. Nosotros necesitamos tener otro trabajo para poder sufragar los gastos que implica el mantener la tradición.
>
> This group from California is not traditional. This group was created from an idea totally far and different from what is ours. This group dedicates itself to what can we can call *show business*. Even the name they carry, Aztec Splendor, already indicates enough. This group is run by Juan Pérez [pseudonym], who for a time was a danzante within la tradición, but certain circumstances in México pulled him toward theater and later toward cabaret. The requirements needed to create a spectacle, forced him to modify the tradition. For example, he had to mix steps to make them more visible and at the same time reduce the duration of each dance to adjust to the three minutes that each spectacle lasts. Juan Pérez has been in the U.S. for twenty years, specifically in Los Angeles, and that has been his lineage for the last fifteen years. He utilizes danza as *modus vivendi* [way to make a living], and this is contrary to what we do in la tradición. We have to have another job to be able to support the costs of maintaining the tradition. (Poveda 1981: 290).

Many elders, such as Generala Teresa Osorio critiqued any danzante that shared La Danza for money: "May their dance be from the heart, may they not do it as a business, or out of licentiousness, or only because they like to dance, may they carry it in their hearts, these are the true roots" (Hernández-Ávila 2005: 372-373). According to Señora Cobb however, Yescas was never rich. In fact, he would often give away his trajes and feathers. He was extremely generous in how he shared Danza. Despite this, many danzantes that did come to the U.S., after him did so because they thought they too could make a fortune through Danza. According to Señora Cobb, Florencio Yescas was never harsh or forceful, or believed that people had to "conform." Rather, he was compassionate, flexible, and accommodating. Yescas taught that, in a danza ceremony when offering a dance, it was that person's moment of prayer and should not be

disrupted. He taught that the drum must follow the dancer, not the other way around (Maestas, n.d.: 94). Yescas may have made a living with danza, but he gave of himself constantly.

Yescas, having choreographed for and being the dance partner with Amalia Hernández in México, learned how one's artistic passion can also be financially sustaining. When he came to the U.S. he danced in public places and in pow wows. Yescas would dance in Los Angeles' Placita Olvera for money, a practice that came to be known as "chimalliar," which comes from using the *chimalli* or shield (a piece of regalia used in Danza) to collect money from onlookers. According to Señora Cobb, this did not provide for his survival, as he was living in a garage. For this reason, Señora Cobb believes that "just because you are a Danzante Mexica, does not mean you live without working. You must find work and get your education" (personal interview). She also acknowledges the hard work that some families endure who have made Danza, arte y cultura, their livelihood. Still, she is forthright in her critique of certain maestros that live off of Danza only, monopolize their danzantes by forcing them to only buy regalia and feathers from them, or use the danzantes to do presentations, yet keep the money only for themselves. Danza must always be carried "con orgullo y con honor/ [with pride and honor]" (Cobb, personal interview). Yescas' intention was to carry Danza in this way. While Yescas was exposing Danza to the public eye, he was also opening doors with many Native nations. He began to take Native people to México to expose them to MeXicana/o identity and indigeneity. Essentially, his actions gave credence to the claims that MeXicanas/os are Indian too.

However, in a sense, Yescas himself is also responsible for creating the divisions that still exist today within Danza groups in California. Different leaders chose to maintain different aspects of Yescas' teachings. He was a complex and dynamic human being with multiple aspects. Therefore, there are those groups that stayed close to his spiritual teachings and those that only held onto the "show/esplendor" aspect of Danza. For this reason, two groups that both come from direct instruction of Yescas may carry the Danza in dramatically different ways or even on opposite ends of the spectrum. According to Señora Cobb, Yescas wanted both trajectories of Danza. At the ceremony in Chalma, Yescas went into the ceremony as a "penitente," someone seeking penance through various forms of suffering. Stemming from a very old, Catholic ritual, Yescas, wearing a crown of thorns and a prickly nopal (cactus paddle) stuck to his chest and back, endured the ceremony in this manner. He felt that both histories and trajectories had to be respected. One should not erase the other, rather they should both exist, compliment/support each other and work together. Maintaining both means more options for all of us to live better lives (Cobb, personal interview). In understanding this knowledge, I came to understand Señora Cobb. There were various times in my travels with her that we would enter a Catholic Church, such as the Cathedral to La Virgen de Guadalupe, and she would genuflect and do the sign of the cross. This perplexed me since I knew Señora Cobb was not baptized, nor followed strict Catholic doctrine. Essentially, because Yescas taught to carry both, Señora Cobb lives by example to never forget to respect both traditions.

Señora Cobb believes there is a difference between ceremony and exhibition. She comments that today, "no son huehueteros, ahora es rompe cuero!/ [There are no

drummers, now it is about breaking skins!]" (personal interview), meaning that today's drummers are drumming so hard and loud to show off their skills, that they can no longer be considered drummers, but those that just want to break the skin on top of the drum. Señora Cobb believes that danzantes should present to the community, but always with respect and humility. If danzantes want to carry Danza in a ceremonial way, they can do that anywhere, but must also stay true to the ceremony, meaning, there should always be present the sacred popoxcomitl or copal smoke because that is a blessing for the community.

Similar to Yescas, Señora Cobb carries and teaches Danza in a Mexica way. She does not come from any *Mesa de tradición*, but rather comes from her own traditional community and represents that community by wearing her *tlacoyalli*, a special head piece made of yarn that signifies her social strata in her community. Because of this, Señora Cobb's own palabra has been questioned and her legitimacy has been shadowed with doubt by people who do not even know her. The notion of palabra has been misused by those seeking power or authority, and has created hierarchical structures to question anyone and everyone's legitimacy. This misuse of palabra has strayed away from basic principles such as respect in Danza.

During the community event in East Los Angeles, Señora Cobb gave a speech. During this speech, she gave a loud, long grito (yell) and gained the attention of everyone in the hall. Besides her words, she honored the community by offering a Danza. It was amazing to see this seventy-four year-old woman still dancing. After she offered a slow-stepped danza, she turned and told the musicians that the reason why she probably did not dance very well was because they did not play very well. Señora Cobb is full of jokes and

"indirectas" (indirect jabs). In one moment she is a fearless elder speaking her truth, and in another moment she is scolding children and teaching lessons. On several occasions, Señora Cobb would mention that she was tired of being the only one to step up and call people on their disrespect or improper protocol during Danza. She said several times that she was tired of "regañar" (scolding) and that she could not do it anymore. People were not listening and why should she have to repeat herself at every single ceremony? She did have a point. As one danzante commented, "people who live in darkness are bothered by the light; that is why they continue to live in the darkness." What is meant by this comment is that there are people who choose to live in ignorance or maintain their ignorance despite having being enlightened or taught a different way. Therefore, no matter how much Señora Cobb attempts to insert her regaños/scoldings, recommendations or teachings, some danzantes will not like it and would rather choose to live in darkness, a place that is self-serving, full of ignorance and ego.

Even though Señora Cobb gives a tremendous amount of respect and reverence to Florencio Yescas and is committed to his memory, she never denies respect and honor to the other teachers of Danza that followed him and spread the seeds of Danza throughout the United States. She acknowledges Andrés Segura, Pedro Rodríguez, Tlakaelel, Pedro España, and others as leaders that transformed the scope of Indigenous consciousness for generations of Xicanas/os. In her words, each one had their way of teaching, and thanks to them, the tradition continues and different ceremonies were established. Señora Cobb also played a tremendous role in establishing the first day of the dead, Primavera/Spring, Tlaloc, Xilonen, and Tonantzin ceremonies in Sacramento.

"Todos me dicen la vieja loca, pues hay vienen los regaños." *Everyone calls me the crazy old lady, well here comes the scolding.* It is difficult for Señora Cobb to "not" say something when she sees something wrong. Even though she may vow to stay silent, even in her silence, she is saying something. Señora Cobb's personality is such that she will easily talk to anyone. She reveals her most human side through her humor, snappy comments and wisdom. During the end of the ceremony, in what is called palabra, leaders of the groups are invited to say a few words. During our time in East L.A., she said her piece and put in a few words of scolding. I observed Señora Cobb not being given a chair to sit on, or on her knees, looking around for someone to help her get up. I saw her cold, hungry, and tired, because people were too busy to stop and make sure that she was being taken care of in the way that she deserves. It is difficult to be an elder in a society that does not know how to treat and respect elders. People like the "idea" of having an elder present, but not the responsibility that goes along with it. While she is called "jefa" by many in the circle, often times the respect is only verbal and the action does not exist.

On March 12, 2010, once again I accompanied Señora Cobb to a Mexica New Year Ceremony, but this time in San José, California, sponsored by *Calpulli Tonalehqueh* at the National Hispanic University. I picked up Señora Cobb from her house in Sacramento the night before so that she could stay at my house and we could go together early to the Sunrise Ceremony. It was difficult for her to pack and gather her things because of the chaos of clutter in her house. Once we found our way to the Bay Area, we went to dinner. She was very pleased with the restaurant I chose, which specialized in Indigenous Oaxacan food, including huitlacoche and flor de calabaza. At dinner, we

talked about the different Danza grupos, family, and about *xolo izcuintles*, the Mexican-hairless dogs. I then asked if she wanted to go with me to an ensayo in Hayward. She agreed and we went to Danza group *Ollin Anahuac*, led by long-time danzante, Francisco Durán, better known as "Güero" and a young danzante, Marisela Reynoso. Señora Cobb sat on the side and observed. At one point during the ensayo I pulled a muscle and Señora Cobb directed me to sit on a table so she could do a massage on my leg. At the end of ensayo, during palabra, Señora Cobb complimented the group.

I found it interesting that many people, as there were a majority of younger and newer danzantes, did not know who Señora Cobb was. Even the group's leader, Marisela, did not know her name and seemed to not know exactly who she was until Güero made a point to give her palabra and thanked her with great respect for being there. This only points to the fact that many younger danzantes do not fully understand the deep history of Danza and the great sacrifices made by people, like Señora Cobb, who made it possible for the rest of us to have Danza in our lives. To me, this only emphasized the importance of documenting the her/histories of our elders and the need for sharing this knowledge. Señora Cobb is a living book of knowledge, and, as danzantes, we have an obligation to learn from and respect our elders.

Despite Señora Cobb's compliment to the group during palabra, I had a feeling that, in her observations, she would tell me her assessment. Once we were in the car, she proceeded to tell me that she was critical of the way they danced Aguila Blanca (White Eagle). At the ensayo, two women were dancing this particular Danza, which is about the battle between the day and night. The day is represented by the eagle which also represents the sun. The night is represented by the jaguar which has spots on his skin,

representing the stars in the sky. According to Señora Cobb, this Danza was not meant for women to dance, but for men, so she was bothered by that. Then she amended her statement by saying that, actually, since there were not any men left, or not enough in Danza, maybe it was up to women to maintain this dance. I had a feeling she was not pleased by this because, when they were doing the dance, I looked over at her and she had a disturbed look on her face. This particular Danza (Aguila Blanca) was created by Florencio Yescas and was meant as a Guerrero/warrior Dance. It was a dance that was meant to evoke a more theatrical appeal. Interestingly, although this is a contemporary Danza, not one that is traced to pre-Cuauhtemoc period, it has become part of the repertoire of Danza and is often described as a "traditional" Danza. This shows the evolution of tradition-making and the fact that new songs or movements or various changes are added to the vernacular of Danza tradition and then become, over-time, simply tradition.

Señora Cobb's concerns about Aguila Blanca being danced by two women, express some of the tensions that continue to exist with change in Danza. Some older generations have held on to particular gender roles in Danza, which conflicts with younger generations that want to expand its meanings and roles. In particular, as people and communities have broadened their social consciousness (for example in more progressive communities such as San Francisco and Mexico City[89]) issues of gender and sexuality have been brought to Danza circles. Questions have been discussed as to whether men can also carry the smoke,[90] whether trajes should continue to be assigned to

[89] Interestingly, both of these cities have fought on the side of legalizing and recognizing gay marriage.
[90] Jesús Salas Sanchez of Sacramento, CA is the first gay male to carry the sacred fire in his Danza group, La Mesa del Santo Nino de Atocha, Danza Azteca de la Gran Tenochtitlan. He has carried the smoke for over ten years to date. Jesús, in many ways, is a path opener within Danza. He is opening a much needed

a particular sex/gender, and how to ensure that, as a Danza community, queer (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) danzantes are embraced, not excluded, and recognized as having a sacred role in the Danza circle. According to Indigenous, ceremonial traditions in la Huasteca region of Chicontepec, Veracruz, there is a Nahuatl term that identifies LGBTQ or "two-spirit." This term, *maxochitl*, can be translated literally as "flower hand." The term derives from their sacred creator/spiritual manifestation known as *Chicomexochitl* or seven flowers, who is the caretaker of all, but especially associated with the corn. The *Chicomexochitl* is represented in material form as a sacred, single paper cut-out in the form of a person that is dual in nature, both male and female. This paper-cut out is the most revered and preserved for ceremonial purposes. The term and understanding of a *maxochitl*, is an extension of this cosmogony, acknowledging that those who are "two-spirit," dual, or carry multi-gendered conceptualizations are connected to the sacred. They carry the flower in their hand or rather, *are* the flowered hand. They are connected to the divine. Currently, it can be affirmed that there is little open or "out" space for queer danzantes within Danza circles, despite the fact that there are many LGBTQ danzantes. Fostering a safe, inclusive space for LGBTQ danzantes, incorporating or embracing a more overt, special role for two-spirit/*maxochitl* danzantes has yet to be realized. For some queer danzantes, allowing them to carry the popoxcomitl/smoke and holding the prayer for the circle has path-opening potential. While Danza circles may have not created obvious spaces to discuss gender/sexuality issues or remove limitations based on gender, there is future potential within Danza for these transformations to occur, even though change can often be met with resistance.

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space for recognition of queer danzantes and their sacred role in Danza. It is important to note that his Danza group is Conchero in origin. One might assume that close ties to Catholicism would be a deterring factor from expressing gender/sexuality, but Jesús' role proves that this may not necessarily be the case.

Initially, there was resistance to changes; to new Danzas and songs being created.[91] Change is slow to gain acceptance and the old religious alabanzas hold hidden meanings, as they were a product of resistance through assimilation. In contrast, Xicanas/os declared that we no longer have to be occult, therefore, we can sing about whatever we want overtly. If we want to sing about Mother Earth, we do not have to sing about the Virgin Mary to do that, we can sing about Tonantzin. Danzantes decided to no longer rely on Christian symbols. Instead, they transposed them with Indigenous symbols and experiences which more accurately reflected the meanings. For example, Alurista created a song for El Teatro Campesino in the 1960s which is now part of the repertoire of songs that are sung in ceremony (Poveda 1981). This shows that change is possible and that culture can extend and expand. As stated previously, tradition is complex, dynamic, shifting and evolving. Traditions are not static nor monolithic, but part of an ongoing trajectory of practitioners of that tradition that must remain flexible to change and adaptation.

During the evening of our trip to San José, we were up late and this gave us an opportunity to share. Señora Cobb talked about her personal life, the men in her life, a current interest, Mr. Cobb, and a great love of her life that she lost track of. She talked about her ideal partner and the fact that she did not believe in marriage. "It is better not to get married. Have your children, but don't get married, don't lose your freedom" (personal interview). She talked about her pregnancies, being age fifteen and pregnant. Six of her nineteen children have died; a daughter at four months, a son died of an accidental electrocution and her daughter Maguey died of a horrible accident of gas left

[91] This is also the case as Xicanas/os have begun to use U.S. Native influence in their songs, taking drum beats or intonations and transposing Nahuatl words into the songs.

on from the heater. In 1992 alone, she lost three sons; one son died of cirrhosis of the liver, another son perished from two forms of cancer (Hodgkin's Disease and Leukemia) and another son was found dead in a canal in Sacramento.

She talked about the many grandchildren she has and the many she has not met, and does not have a relationship with. She spoke about this as something that saddens her; the fact that their families do not want the grandchildren to build a relationship with or to know their grandmother. Señora Cobb shared with me the misunderstandings that she has had with different people, including her son's wives. While she stayed with me, she even called one of them who lived in Hayward. During all of her stories, Señora Cobb spoke with deep sincerity, but without regret to any part of her life. Instead, she expressed acceptance and strength. When I asked her how she survived the sad losses of her children, she spoke about the Creator and always just knowing that she had to be strong and keep living. According to her, she has always had a tough skin. She figures, "why get mad, upset or live with regret and end up getting sick with cancer?" (personal interview). For that reason, she refuses to absorb other people's problems; she has enough of her own. If people have a problem with her, she simply brushes it off as their own problem, not hers.

We stayed up until 1 a.m. talking, although we had to get up at 5 a.m. to go to sunrise ceremony. We got there late, more like 6:45. When we arrived to the parking lot, she made it a point to tell the parking attendant, "I'm an elder, I should park in the front," which we did. The ceremony had already started and Señora Cobb made her way to the center of the circle to see if people would recognize her. Finally, in the circle, someone

did recognize her as an elder and gave her tobacco for the fire. She was invited to give a prayer in the center by the fire.

During the sunrise ceremony, my observations were that the speakers were very male-centric. The women were taking care of the altar and definitely played an important role but, when it came to speaking, it was mostly men that spoke. At one point, they introduced a woman maestra that came from México and, as a man introduced her, there was quite an emphasis on the fact that she was a woman and a warrior. The over-emphasis on the fact that she was a woman gave me the sense that having a female teacher was not common in this ceremony. Although she was present, the emphasis was still clearly on the other male maestro, Ocelocoatl who was leading the sunrise ceremony and would be facilitating the rest of the Danza ceremony later that day. There were many people in attendance, which made it difficult to hear and to have an intimate ceremonial experience. I found it difficult to understand the ceremony and feel like a full participant in the ceremony. At some points, it felt more "performative" and less ceremonial. The over-emphasis on the woman maestra's presence felt like over-compensation for male-centered leadership.

After the sunrise ceremony, Señora Cobb wanted to stay as long as possible for hugs, to see who was there and to receive greetings. She is definitely a social person that enjoys the attention she receives at ceremonies. At the same time, she was also concerned about the well-being of other danzantes on the road such as Adolfo and Eva, from the group *Xochipilli*. They were driving from Los Angeles and she was concerned that they had not arrived. We decided to go have breakfast and return for the later festivities. When we returned, the dancers were starting. The Mexica New Year

ceremony began by inviting the Ohlone dancers first, to honor the first people of the area, and then the Pomo dancers. Danzantes were getting ready and it seemed to be a large number, about three hundred dancers, which was short of the goal to bring five hundred dancers together for the New Year. Aside from Mexica danzantes, there were many other nations present, both as dancers and as vendors.

Prior to the ceremony, I had participated in conversations with fellow danzantes that were not sure if they would be attending, and others that directly were refusing to attend. This particular ceremony, which has grown to be one of the largest in California, has also inherited a stigma of becoming too commercial. The hosts of the ceremony garner many sponsors, some corporate, and work all year to raise funds to bring all of the various dancers and teachers. The arbor or circle where the danzantes dance is surrounded by many vendor booths, mostly selling Indigenous arts, crafts, jewelry, and clothing. Other vendors are selling food and, at the entrance, the organizers ask for a donation, which some, including my own mother, confused for a mandatory entrance fee. Not wanting to pay the fee, my mother and several others decided not to attend. As a friend of mine that wanted to sell her Oaxacan textiles explained, she was told by other former vendors that it was very expensive to have a table at the ceremony and that she would not be able to afford it. Further, she was told that she would not make enough profit to even cover the price of a vendor table. She took her textiles, hoping that she could lay out a blanket and sell them anyway, but was told that it was not allowed. She did so anyway and tried to work with another table to allow her to share and sell her goods.

For the most part, many danzantes and community members see this event as a social gathering, versus an actual ceremony. It is an opportunity for the community to gather and to learn about Indigenous cultures. It is an opportunity for exposure, not only for the community members that may have never been exposed to this heavy dosage of culture, but for other dancers that travel to this ceremony and are exposed to other teachers and dancers from other groups and cultures.

As the dances continue in the circle, there are speakers and "teach-ins" stationed in different corners of the field where people can participate in workshops about Indigenous knowledge, such as the "Aztec Calendar or Sun Stone," or learn about different traditional medicines, for example. The food menu was carefully selected to include only traditional and healthy options and to introduce the community to traditional grains such as amaranth, which was cultivated by the Mexica. Overall, there is a lot of learning taking place and the creation of various types of spaces that appeal to the various objectives of the attendees/participants.

Those that critique this ceremony as more commercial or simply performative (versus truly ceremonial), also gain from the experience. In my conversations with some of the naysayers, I found them to be thinking critically, analyzing gender perspectives and capitalism. Some referred to this ceremony as a "Mexica Pow Wow," meaning that they should refer to it not as ceremony, but rather as an exposition or commercial performance. The event was actually very different from a Pow Wow because there was no Grand Entry. Instead there was a doorway to the east from which everyone had to either enter or leave. At this doorway, everyone was blessed/cleansed with copal before entering. The ceremonial space was distinguishable from the commercial aspect of the

event, although some may argue that those two space s are still too closely combined. There was no competition or financial prizes, although there was an announcer that used the microphone periodically to introduce the next group of dancers or make short announcements.

In contrast to mainstream understandings of "commercial performance" in ceremonial Danza, it is not necessary for an audience to be present, as is the case for "staged performances." Another difference is that the Danzas and ceremonies are highly improvised, they are not choreographed and the dance abilities are varied, from older grandmas to young, agile dancers. Danza does not require an "audience" to evoke the spiritual meaning, which happens within the circle. But if an audience of outside observers is present, they too can have a role. Some are security, some pass out fruit, or some simply enjoy and participate in prayer or support on the outside by caring for children or preparing the food for after the ceremony. Therefore, Danza is not "performance" in the conventional sense and, as a spiritual practice, it is not intended to be "performance," but rather the practice of ritual or the ritual of practice. Over time, as Danza has evolved and has emerged also as part of the popular MeXicana/o culture, invitations to provide educational presentations at museums or other cultural spaces have blurred the distinction between ceremony and performance.

There is, however, a distinction between public/social Danza and ritual/ceremonial Danza. These differences, are difficult to manage for some. Ceremonial Danza, for the most part, is clear-cut; it becomes conflicting when presenting Danza to the public in a social presentation, where outsiders/non-Danzantes/non-Danza communities are invited. Questions arise of how much "ceremony/spirituality" should be

shared or divulged, versus kept on a solely cultural level. Concerns involve removing too much of the spirituality and maintaining the integrity of the practice. The presence of cameras at these ceremonies and/or performances has become contentious. Many people, fascinated by Danza and often well-meaning, often want to take pictures, but there is a sense of mis-trust as to what people will do with these pictures. There have been numerous experiences of those photos being sold, made into postcards, trafficked as lucrative symbols of Indigeneity, and generally exploited as mere art. The other reason why cameras are not allowed—and this is similar to many Indigenous communities that do not permit photos to be taken during ceremony—is that it disrupts the transcendental state that the dancers are trying to achieve. As dancers pray and try to disassociate themselves with the physical realm, the presence of a camera can disrupt that and capture a spirit.

However, at the Mexica New Year Ceremony in San José, cameras were allowed and, in fact, encouraged. There was actually a photographer inside the circle, which is disruptive to a sacred ceremony. There were designated people filming and documenting the entire day. Some of this footage is made available on Youtube. I observed some of the danzantes, speakers, and maestros posing for pictures. One maestro actually asked a photographer to come take a picture of him while he was giving a sacred staff to a woman. Sacred acts, in my own teaching, are not meant to be on film. This, in my opinion, was no longer ceremonial, but performative.

It can be argued that today in many Indigenous communities (in México and on U.S. reservations), photos are allowed for a price, but this only emerged out of a colonial context and the financial need of a community that has to depend on its own limited

resources to make a profit. I imagine the logic is that, if outsiders are going to take pictures and make money off of them, they too should have a sliver of that profit. For example, in Papantla, Veracruz, the volador dancers (see Appendix 13) perform in the museums and plazas of the town. After they perform the dance, they come around asking for donations. This has become a main source of revenue for the marginalized Totonacos. Clearly, ceremonial elements remain and the discipline and teaching that goes into learning such a difficult, death-defying dance requires ceremonial practice, but modern, societal needs and tourist opportunities have pushed this practice outside of its ceremonial context and into the mainstream. Some have used this same argument toward the San José Mexica New Year Ceremony, despite the fact that it is providing a different aspect and resource for understanding Danza and making it accessible/available to the larger community.

The fact that danzantes were dissecting, challenging, and asking questions was, in my opinion, very positive. It meant that danzantes were being self-reflexive and, in choosing to not participate or attend, they were taking a stand and creating needed dialogue. Resistance pushes ideas, which, in turn, creates a stronger voice and ultimately stronger Danza circles and norms. As the Danza movement expands and attempts to insert itself in the community and mainstream consciousness, there will be moments of distress and growing pains that will either expand the possibilities or set boundaries to the changes that are made. As in life, balance is needed to provide flexibility and caution.

Danza is as complicated as life itself, and, in the continual process of growth and transformation, there are many lessons to be learned. As danzantes, we are challenged in multiple ways—our identity and the dangers of "Indigenous revivalism" leading to

fanaticism and "neo-Mexica" invention/s of what it means to be Indigenous. In this new era, "people are fanáticos…they want todo Mexica, without knowing what they are saying or wearing" (Cobb, personal interview). While perhaps it is a natural process and Danza circles are nothing more than safe spaces where growth is allowed, Danza is also a manner in which we encounter each other as human beings. Who decides the right way to behave, practice or believe? These are questions that are still on the table with various responses because these behaviors, practices and beliefs project many messages to the world. Before we blindly deliver the wrong message, the Danza community needs to re-evaluate the bare basics. How do we respect, listen to and abide by our elders? A woman who has been walking the Danza path for most all of her life has validity. Señora Cobb serves not only as a guide, but a living, breathing codice—a sacred book of wisdom to help us on this path. Danza has provided a space where one can reconstruct the past in order to survive the present (Cobb, personal interview). Having no strong spiritual or philosophical base upon which to deal with issues of poverty, racism, sexism, and injustice, has led people and communities to seek a better way to deal with life through the practice of Danza. Danza is a reciprocal process; just as it has the power to be transformative to people, people also have the power to transform Danza. For example, the words I write re-create memories for future generations and I have the power to decide what gets remembered. This is a great responsibility and challenge. The desire to document the stories can both compliment and contradict the value I place on oral tradition.

Regardless of the response to Señora Cobb's "palabra," she is seventy-four years old. She gave birth to nineteen children and adopted others. Her life has been full of

experiences, some tragic, some remarkable. Her palabra comes not only from the fact that she learned directly from Maestro Florencio Yescas at the age of six, traveled with him and knew him intimately as a friend and teacher, but also her palabra comes from her age and her life experiences. Her long history and dedication to Danza in California gives her palabra and a special role in the Danza communities throughout Aztlan.

To capture the life of Señora Cobb, her essence, is difficult and complex. As Mario Aguilar states, "The heritage we have today as Chicanos, has had many currents and influences, each valid and correct for their time and place" (Aguilar 1983). The same can be said for Danza as a shared Indigenous tradition. Señora Cobb's life reminds us all that we cannot lose focus on the most important things in life. She will constantly refer back to the Danza circle also as teacher. Danza, which is often conducted as circles within circles (for practical reasons when there are many danzantes) does not mean that those in the center are higher in rank because they are closer to the center/altar. Rather, as each group is called upon to lead in the center, it offers all the opportunity to lead and follow. The cargos/responsibilities that are given in ceremonies have been traditionally given to those that have been in Danza the longest, but even this is changing. At the 2010 Guerrero/Jaguares (men coming of age) ceremony in Sacramento, all of the "palabras" or responsibilities were given to youth.

While Señora Cobb's signature, strong legs do not show her age, it has been well over 40 years and she is still here, an original carrier of Danza knowledge that helped disperse that seed to so many others. She continues to carry the elders' altar at many ceremonies and to be an advisor to many Danza groups including: White Hawk (Watsonville, CA), *Xochipilli* (Los Angeles, CA), *Xihuacoatl* (Meza, AZ), *Quetzalcoatl*

Citlalli (Sacramento, CA), *Poxteca Makuill Tonatiuh* (Sacramento, CA), and *Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Quetzalcoatl in Ixachitlan* (New York, NY). I have continued my travels with Señora Cobb to the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples, where she is a recognized elder with La Red Xicana Indígena. As one danzante commented, "Hanging out with her is like having a backstage pass. You get to see and do all kinds of things" (Garza 2001).

When asked, how she feels about danzantes that are changing their names to Nahuatl names, Señora Cobb responded that, first they need the "conocimiento del nombre/ knowledge of the name." She continues: "¿Se lo merecen?/ Do they deserve it? Will they give it honor?" (personal interview). The same can be said for danzantes. When one begins to call him/herself a danzante, will they honor it and give it respect? Do their lives emulate the history of Danza and are they willing to preserve it in a noble and worthy way that our future generations can be proud of? As Señora Cobb stated, "La esencia de la tierra va hacia arriba, como el arbol crece y la tierra manda mensajes./The essence of the earth goes toward the sky, like the tree grows and the land sends its messages." The tree of Danza will continue to grow and we all must be willing to listen to the messages of our elders. They are the roots.

SECTION IV

SOUTH
HUITZLAMPA HUITZILOPOCHTLI

Nimitztlahpaloliz. Nimitztlazcamatilia Chaneque Huitzlampa. Hueyi ni calli tzictic campa ichan Huitzilopochtli. Ya quizqui Huitzilopotchtli caltzintla. Tzotzona atecocolli. Nahui.

Yo te saludo. Yo te agradezco, cuidador, Huitzlampa. Esta grandiosa casa de color azul donde vive Huitzilopochtli. Ya salió Huitzilopotchtli del lado de la casa. Suenan los caracoles. Cuatro.

I greet you. I give you thanks, caretaker of the south, Huitzlampa. The house is grand, the color blue, where Huitzilopochtli lives. Huitzilopochtli has departed from the side of the house. Sound the conch shells. Four.

CHAPTER 11

~MAHTLACTLI HUAN CE~

HISTORY OF IDENTITY POLITICS & THE MESTIZO PROJECT

> *A Spaniard Prisoner given a chance to be free is a conquistador who finds himself in the so-called New World without a Spaniard woman and among conquest subjects already perceived as sub-human. He picks and chooses an Indigenous woman. He rapes her and has children. These children he does not care for as they are half-human. He beats a woman when she refuses his orders. He abuses the children when he wants to and when they get in his way. And now 502 years later the descendants of the ultimate dysfunctionalism, a blueprint for the colonized. Seven generations of psycho-illness, a people without heads, without an identity, without a direction, without an understanding, and without a connection. Torn from their mother and raped by their father. Now lost in a sea of white, they begin to recover, recognize their identity and connection to these roots, these roots that run deep, deep in the soul of our mother, deep in the soul of our mother, deep in the soul of our mother.*
>
> -From the song lyrics, "My Blood is Red" by Aztlan Underground

As exemplified in the above 1994 lyrics of this Los Angeles based, self-proclaimed Xican@ band, the unraveling of identity and grappling with the impact of history is a continuous journey for Xicanas and Xicanos. The lyrics are poignant as they articulate the ways in which Xicanas/os have defined and understood their history and internal struggle. This struggle is intimately linked to the moment of European invasion of this continent, but also strives for a deeper connection and memory to an Indigenous past in order reclaim it in the present. The division of this continent occurred vertically as invaders moved from east to west under manifest destiny. The divisions continued horizontally, from north to south, creating defined lines, borders, and countries. This constant division and demarcation of this continent created a loss of identity and

connection to the land that was held sacred. This vertical and horizontal slicing of land mapped a grid that sliced not only the physical body of land, but also the mental and psychological body of human beings. Different parts of the self being discarded, cut out, pulled in all directions and held together within one body is still very much part of the genetic, spiritual and psychological memory of Indigenous people across this continent. The displacement, imposition, and forced migration caused those living within or outside "the border" to negotiate and live in-between two distinct places and/or cultures, distinguishable by only a man-made line.

The Viceroy Enríquez de Almanza wrote a report for the Spanish crown in 1580 entitled *Republica de las Indias,* stating that there was a particular population that he believed would cause the Spanish crown the most problems. This population was quasi-Indian, a "mestizo/mulatto" people that were landless, homeless vagrants with no stable place in society. According to the vagrancy laws imposed by the Spanish, these "mestizos" were subject to be killed because they were deemed useless. They were not accepted in either society—Indian or Spanish. In some cases they were adopted into Indigenous communities, but, overall, they were rejected and often times killed. This history is tragic as I reflect on the realities of "mestizaje" and what it means to embrace and reject this identity. The notion of "ni de aquí, ni de allá" (not from here or there) began very early in the history of Xicanas and Xicanos.

From the Spanish perspective, the "pureza de sangre," or purity of blood was not associated with biological mixture so much as it was with religious affiliation. If one was not Catholic, they were not "pure." Notions of purity changed with the encounter of the western hemisphere. Hybridity and biological mixture became markers of impurity. In

1492, Spain was exiting an era of Moorish occupation and had done everything in their power to expel the Moors and Jews for the sake of "la pureza de sangre." The irony was that the Spaniards themselves had come from a complex mixture of many biological and cultural influences. Their own identity complex was carried over to this continent as they imposed a multifarious caste system, labeling themselves as the highest order of purity in their hierarchical ladder, and placing "Indio" or "Negro" at the lowest rung. This, of course, left a legacy of denial and shame in being Indian, Black, or mestizo.

The concept of deep colonialism expressed in Native American Studies discourse expresses a complete and covert penetration of the minds of the oppressed/subordinate classes, to the point of acceptance and even promotion of the dominate ideologies. As stated by Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagún, "If you want to conquer the other, you must know them." This statement is telling, as it refers to the Christian conversion of "Indians" in the "new world" as a conscious act. The deep colonialism which has been internalized in the Indigenous psyche and throughout history has proven difficult to peel away. The layers of oppression and colonization for Indigenous people are not a finished project, but rather an ongoing battle that continues. Thus, theoretical frameworks labeled as "post"-colonial seem inapplicable to Native Peoples because the colonial reality is very much alive and has not ended (Smith 2002).

It is critical to unpack this historical process of the identity politics of Xicanas and Xicanos to arrive at the relationship that Danza Mexica has played to facilitate the contemporary Indigenous consciousness and decolonization paradigm. Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have had their own names for themselves. Whether they be Diné, Ne'ue, Runa Simi, Mapuche, Inuit, or Mexica, the list goes on as one

recounts the thousands of First Nations and names that exist/ed across this western hemisphere, all ultimately meaning "The People," in their respective languages. Some names may mean "people" as related to a certain location (people of the mountainside, people near water, etc.) or as a people who follow a certain belief or spirit perhaps represented by an animal (people of the eagle, deer people, etc.). Creation stories and belief systems exist that indicate how and why Creator placed each nation in the area that they were chosen to care take. If the conditions were no longer conducive to their survival or the knowledge/prophesy of elders said they should move, Indigenous people would migrate to new territories and begin a new life. As stated in the literature of Tonatierra-Nahuacalli, an Arizona-based Xicano community organization:

> Our Indigenous families follow the ancient paths from north to south and vice versa. Paths that all species of relatives, including the deer, the monarch butterflies, the winged beings, and those that swim the oceans follow annually. These are paths that have been etched into our memories by the Creator since time immemorial (Tonatierra, "Ehecatl…": 1).

This migratory relationship and self-identity came to an abrupt halt with the arrival of Europeans to this continent. The European invasion brought destruction and genocide of land, culture, language, ways of life, and identity. The names that First Nations called themselves and their territories were erased. All First Peoples to this land became reduced to the term "Indian" or "Indios." For Mexicas, and many other nations, this was the beginning of the erasure of their own names and identities. It would be the last time that names would be self-ascribed. Henceforth, Native peoples would endure a series of imposed names, labels, and identities. It would not be until less than 500 years later that people would "trans-code" (Hall 1997) and reclaim their own identities and names while rejecting imposed terms.

As a result of Spanish colonization, hierarchical structures to categorize and classify Indigenous people were imposed. The Spaniards developed a complex caste system used to keep track of each person's bloodline because it was bloodline that determined one's worth within the new racialized colonial hierarchies. There were reportedly fifty-three complex categories within which one could be placed (Forbes 1973; Menchaca 2001; Katzew 2005). The most commonly known categories are "Mestizo,[92]" "Mulatto,[93]" and "Ladino,[94]" At the top of the ladder were the "Peninsulares," those Spaniards born in Spain, now living on the "new land." On the bottom rungs of this hierarchy were the "Indios" and "Negros." There were other obscure categories such as "Sal si puedes" (get out if you can), "No te entiendo" (I don't understand what you are) and "Salta pa'tras" (Jump backwards). The term "mulatto" translated to mean "little mule," or, in other words, a work animal. As a result of the caste system, if someone had a last of name of Moreno or Prieto (both meaning "dark"), it is more than likely that they have an African relative (Menchaca 2001; Katzew 2005).

Several of the caste categories continue to exist and define populations today. People still use the terms Mestizo and Ladino to describe different social classes or to describe their own identities. These terms were originally meant as pejorative insults equivalent to barbaric savage or half-human. These terms can be viewed as part of an on-going ethnocide to obliterate Indigenous populations, through erasure of their own identities and imposed self-deprecation. The continued usage of these classifications has caused much confusion when trying to understand the complex history of the identity and

[92] Mixed blood of Spanish and Indian
[93] Mixed blood of Spanish, African, and Indian
[94] Mixed blood of Spanish and Indian; a term parallel with "mestizo" but commonly used in Central America.

names of Indigenous peoples from the Spanish-invaded territories. The historical legacy that has been inherited from the arbitrary caste system is one of shame. Thus, a once proud population was forced into denial of an Indigenous past and began to identify with European roots (the invader) for survival and for their lives.

In the early 1800s, the nation-states of Latin America began to justify their ability to govern their own countries, through the rejection of Spanish colonial rule. As a result, nations and states of the Spanish-invaded territories have constructed their entire national identities around this notion of mestizaje for the purpose of centralizing and consolidating political power, control, and domination. Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" (1991), relates to the ways in which countries have constructed and manufactured their national identities. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1996) uses Anderson's concept to discuss the idea that México's Indigenous people have been systematically ignored and denied by the "imaginary México" created by those in power. He calls this "México Profundo" (profound México) because, although majority sectors of Mexican society do not recognize themselves as being Indian, they still organize their cultural life on the basis of an Indigenous origin. México profundo is in fact a profound México that is Indigenous. It is a colonized people that eliminated the "Indígena" and became mestizo because at least that is above being "Indio." Batalla (1996) argues that mestizaje is really an ethnocide and de-indianization of an entire population. He further states that MeXicanas/os have been de-tribalized and de-Indianized: "De-indianization is not the result of biological mixture, but of the pressure of an ethnocide that ultimately blocks the historical continuity of a people as a culturally differentiated group" (1996: 17). He believes that de-indianization is, "a historical process through which populations that

originally possessed a particular and distinctive identity, based upon their own culture, are forced to renounce that identity, with all the consequent changes in their social organization and culture" (1996: 7). De-indianization happened on the psychological level as well as the physical level through rape, torture, enslavement and violence. This historical trauma has been passed down intergenerationally. The imaginary México that is in control of power assumes itself to be the bearer of the only valid plan for the county's future (Batalla 1996). In fact, México, as well as other countries within Central and South America, constructs its national identity as derived from the mestizaje or mixing of the Spanish and Indian (Black is often excluded) to create a new "breed," a new race. The mestizaje or mixing of people is portrayed as a benevolent act, a mutual desire, when in actuality it was a violent clash and imposition of one culture/ideology over another.

In México, there is a plaza known as "La Plaza de las Tres Culturas" (the Plaza of the Three Cultures), meaning the monolithic Indigenous, Spaniard, and Mestizo. According to Carlos Aceves, in the *Tezcatlipoca Manifesto*, he believes the three cultures emerged more specifically in the following way:

> Out of the process of European colonization, three groups emerged. First, those who were able to resist the conquest by fleeing to remote areas after fierce battles with the invaders, were eventually labeled as "Indians" and today occupy the lowest social position within Mexican society. The Huicholes, Tarahumaras, Yaquís, and the other three million so-called Indians of México are the most discriminated and exploited people. Such case is no less true of the BIA recognized Indians of the United States.
>
> Those who were unable to resist colonialism had to suffer in the haciendas of the Spanish patrones. Coming from different tribes and speaking different languages as well as being forced to communicate with our white "masters," we adopted the Spanish language. Slowly we even adopted much of their religion. This master/servant relationship is the main reason why the so-called Mestizo inherited a social inferiority complex, believing

> that we are blessed with Spanish European blood and cursed with an Indian body. Because it is so painful, many of us still have not faced up to the fact that whatever mixture of blood there was, came as a result of rape and not marriage.
>
> In the meantime the third group those who thrive on their biological and cultural identity with Spain have enjoyed the ideology of Mestizaje to their advantage. By defining Mexicans as Mestizos, they are able to live among us while maintain positions of prestige and power. Yet it was these same people who were the invader in 1521 (1988: 1-2).

A true "mestizaje" would mean that Indigenous people would be speaking their own language and Spanish, and would be able to practice both their beliefs and Christianity. It would be an equal blending of both cultures. This was not the case. The so-called "mestizaje" was the domination of one people/culture/ideology over another in an attempt to erase the Indígena.

As Sociologist Stuart Hall (1997) explains in his lecture, "Race—the Floating Signifier," classification is important to human beings and a fundamental aspect of human culture, but it becomes a problem when it develops political implications and disposition of power. When one uses classification as a system of power, it serves to only divide populations, ascribe characteristics deemed normalized behavior, essentialize, fix, and exclude. Hall believes that what is needed is a critical, self-reflective end to racism; an end that is not based on genes, but based on political and historical oppression.

The legacy of the Spanish caste system continues today within Latin American society where to be fair in skin color is perceived as the standard of beauty, while to be darker is perceived as a disappointment. Within families, often times there is a saying, "hay que mejorar la raza" (we must better the race), meaning we must procreate with someone who is white or with a fair complexion so that the child can be lighter and

therefore become more aesthetically beautiful and valuable. According to Forbes (2006), "the European colonizer would like to believe they were planting their seeds and impregnating everyone, or that it was the slave's idea to improve the race, making it lighter and more civilized." This ideology, which exists because of the legacy of the caste system, attempts to fix meanings of race, ethnicity and skin color amongst descendants of the Mexican/Central/South American regions. Even the usage of the term "Latin American" unifies people around a European linguistic heritage, detached from the obvious Indigenous heritage that makes up the language and culture of the people. This articulation of race through "mestizaje" has become an articulation of the "distribution of power" (Hall, 1997). Those majority fair-complexion people visible in the mainstream media are viewed as an aspiration and perceived as having some position of power. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the few "brown" and "Indigenous-looking" people, depicted in mainstream media are often exhibited as backwards, uneducated, and utilized as comic buffoons or portrayed in subservient roles in tele-novelas/soap operas. People will call themselves "Spanish," when, in actuality, most descendants from this continent have never been to Spain or any other part of Europe. Further, since the 1800s, there has not been a steady flow of Spaniard immigrants to México, nor was there a tremendous number of Spaniards in the 1500s to evidence the myth of mestizaje that all people have an equal mixture of half Indian and half Spanish (Forbes 2006). Jack Forbes claims that "most persons of Mexican ancestry, however, are mixed bloods of predominantly 'Indian' descent. In the 300 years of colonial México not more than 300,000 Spaniards reportedly migrated to México. This was like a 'drop in the bucket' as there were well over two million [ed: probably closer to 20 million]

indigenous inhabitants in 1521 when the Spaniards began their conquest of México" (1973: 168). Essentially this notion of "mixture" is a hoax and is perpetuated because of the benefits it presents to the ruling classes.

While some were struggling to hold onto a mestizo identity in México, in California "mestizo" was still defined as "Indian." Section 394 of the California Civil Practice Act of 1850 prohibited Chinese and Indians from testifying against whites. In 1854, *People v. Hall* enforced and expanded section 394, providing that "No Indian or Negro shall be allowed to testify as a witness in any action in which a White person is a party." The Supreme Court reasoned, "The evident intention of the Act was to throw around the citizen a protection for life and property, which could only be secured by removing him above the corrupting influences of degraded castes" (Acuña 1981: 115). According to Acuña in *Occupied America*, in 1855 the California "legislature passed the Greaser Act, which defined vagrants as 'all persons who [were] commonly known as 'Greasers' or the issue of Spanish or Indian blood'" (1981: 115). In 1857, the former delegate to the California State Constitutional Convention, wealthy land owner and County Supervisor Manuel Dominguez, was barred from testifying for the defense in *The People vs. Elyea* because he was a mestizo, which meant he had Indian blood (Acuña 1981). In this case of California judicial apartheid, claiming mestizo or Indian made no difference; it was all the same. Some even considered mestizos as inferior to Indians and Africans because they were racially mixed, representing the worst of what might become of the white race if they let down their racial guard.

The rejection of an Indigenous heritage and the promotion of a Spanish heritage is a result of colonization and imperialism. Those self-identifying as Hispanos or Spanish-

American are trying desperately to divorce from the Indio and looking for a pedigree to trace their family back to Spain. According to Chief Billy Tayac of the Piscataway Nation:

> What some call mestizos, Hispanics, or Chicanos are really Indians. Governments don't like to classify these people as Indian because of paper genocide…Mexicans today with dark complexions and black hair will deny they are Indians. They will say, 'I am a Mexican.' They have been brainwashed. Because the lowest people on the ladder are Indians. Who wants to be part of that group? (Tayac 1991: 57)

There is no denial that the Spanish invasion led to inter-ethnic mixing on a wide scale both through rape or consensual acts and, with the arrival of African slaves, more ethnic mixing occurred. The key point to this discussion is that, historically, nation-states have exploited that reality in order to fulfill their own colonial agenda. The attempt of census figures and "demographic genocide" to delete Indigenous people out of existence was/is a virtual declaration of war against our presence.

By the 1900s, the notion of mestizaje/hybridity was revisited. Rather than it be a shameful piece of the colonial past, it was reconfigured to be a unifying agent in Latin American identity. The contentious history of Latin America led to a continual re-construction and re-invention of nation-states; the building of national identities became an on-going project. History, therefore, became distorted based on nationalism. In his concept of "La Raza Cosmica," Jose Vasconcelos (1925), argued that, in reality, mestizos had a mixture of the best of both worlds—the European and the "Aztec" or "Inca" (in the case of México or Peru), who also had built complex, great civilizations, not unlike the Greeks or Romans. The argument was that this cosmic race had a level of superiority and anyone who fit this paradigm, could have a greater chance of mobility. This became the

foundation of Latin American nationalist ideologies, identity, and "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983).

People on the ground consciously chose to identify as mestizo because to identify as Indigenous had not worked for them in any positive way, politically or socially. People choose to identify with imposed terminology and ideology, such as mestizaje, hoping that these would open doors to the dominant world. A colonized people are always made to feel inferior by making them identify with the colonizer instead of feeling pride in who they are (Fanon 1963; Memmi 1965). The colonized (or conquered groups) become enamored with the "conquest." Building an identity, within a mestizo paradigm, means accepting inferior status and acknowledging that the only way to survive is through assimilation and adopting mainstream identity and ideology.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those that recognize that they are not far-removed from their Indigenous ancestry. Perhaps their grandparent speaks the language, for example. It would be clearly absurd to completely "deny" "Indian" roots/blood and only claim European. While Indian blood cannot be "denied," since the markers of indigeneity through phenotype would make that ridiculous, it is still shameful for some to acknowledge. This ubiquitous shame places people in a position where they can neither deny nor admit their indigeneity.

As the political and social climates have shifted, rather than reclaim their Indigenous identity or Indigenous grandparent, many have chosen to remain tied to a "mestizo" identity. For some, to suddenly shift their identity from mestizo and claim their identity as an Indian feels opportunistic, only claiming Indian because it is now "socially acceptable" or en vogue. Reclamation, for some, might seem or feel

disingenuine. For them, "mestizo" still feels more comfortable, even if they acknowledge that it is still part of a racial project.

For example, a Xicana can grow up knowing that her grandmother spoke Zapotec, but never quite feel connected to that identity. Perhaps the grandmother never instilled this identity due to shame. For a Xicana that comes to her own Indigenous consciousness because of the social/political climate, such as the Xicana/o Movement, she might determine that it is acceptable, in fact encouraged, to re-claim and assert Zapotec as her identity. With this, she may find herself at a cross-roads; on the one hand re-claiming and re-asserting Native identity is being promoted as something Xicanas/os should be doing, yet, on the other hand, it may feel opportunistic because the reality lived (in the U.S.) is far removed from the Zapotec people, language, territory, and experience in Oaxaca. When she returns or visits that very community, she may find herself being rejected or told she is no longer "Zapotec," despite her grandmother. Therefore that person may choose to stand firm in her right to recall her Zapotec identity (acknowledging that she is a product of the historical processes of de-indianization/de-tribalization, forced migration and assimilationist policies) or she may resign to stay as a "mestiza" in solidarity with Indigenous people.

For those that feel politically more comfortable remaining within the mestizo archetype, the work of Anzaldúa (1987) is even more important, as it opens a doorway for a new definition of mestizaje. This definition does not erase indigeneity, but instead vindicates it and asserts that, through identifying as mestizo, one is still affirming and proclaiming the Indian part of him/herself. In each of these scenarios, there is no right or wrong decision; identity is personal as well as political.

The fact that Indigenous peoples exist and continue to survive in a Western-dominated, capitalist world that still practices genocide and invasion on Indigenous lands and bodies, is testament to Indigenous resistance and fortitude. In recent years under radical new leadership, countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela have taken on new constructions of national identity that place indigeneity as a central component. Asserting an Indigenous, cultural, and spiritually-based identity has transformed their political and social landscapes. The same is the case for Xicana/o communities.

The historical context and articulation of mestizaje or hybrid identities is contentious. Contemporary scholars such as Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998), who examine Chicana feminist epistemologies, have chosen to re-visit the notions of hybridity and mestizaje both as products of oppression and as tools to resist oppression. According to Rodríguez's, *The X in La Raza*, "The mestizo is one less Indian or one more Indian waiting to reemerge" (1994: 106). The 1960s resurged and embraced mestizaje as a tool of empowerment during the Chicano Movement. Popular images depicted "La Raza" as that of two faces (European/white and Indian/Red) merging together to create the brown face of the mestizo (See appendix 14). This image, albeit essentialist, was meant to inspire and recognize "lo indio," rather than to reject it. Mestizaje, as embraced in the 1960s, was a tool to come to terms with Indian identity and the historically negative association with that identity. "La Raza Bronce" or the bronze race was the idea that mestizos were neither white nor red, but a combination of both, forming a brown or bronze race.

Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) presented ground-breaking work with the notion of "borderlands" and "mestiza consciousness." Rather than the domineering manner in

which it was adapted by Jose Vasconcelos (1925), glorifying the Indian of the past while denying and chastising the Indian of the present, Anzaldúa uses mestizaje as a way to reinforce all parts of indigeneity back into Chicana/o consciousness and present-day lived reality. She refers to mestizaje or hybrid identity, not as a biological mixture, but a "cultural mixture." In contrast to Anzaldúa, Vasconcelos used La Raza Cosmica or mestizaje as an attempt to "erase" the derogatory and disparaging "Indian" from mainstream consciousness. This became the "racialized" national ideology throughout Latin America: focusing only on the idolized and imagined Aztec and Inca civilizations of the past, while denying indigeneity (and Indigenous peoples) of the present. According to Vasconcelos, the mixing of these great "races," did not lessen the value of people (as perhaps the Spanish caste system would contend), but instead made an even greater race of people. While this argument may seem to be one of redemption for the "mestizo" population, in actuality, this mestizo project became a way to reject and contradict Indian-ness of the present.[95] It was a way of saying that, "yes, Indian-ness existed, but that was a long time ago…far back in the past and those Indians were glorious, not savage like the Indians of today. The Indians of the past are the only Indians we will acknowledge as part of our 'new race' of people and the nation." The mestizo project was a way to sustain the overt racialized (and racist) hierarchies imposed by the Spanish, yet it was veiled with deception suggesting that race (and racism) did not exist. Through adopting mestizaje, "we became all one people."

Chicanas and Chicanos in the 1960s, on the other hand, were using mestizaje to reclaim, revive and reimagine Indian-ness as part of their contemporary identity.

[95] In Central America, the term ladino is used in the same way as mestizo. When one refers to themselves or others as mestizo or ladino, it is a marker to say that one is not Indian.

Chicanas and Chicanos viewed themselves through a resistance narrative. They were not utilizing mestizaje as a form of victimization nor to embrace their European ancestry, as was the case with Latin Americans; rather, they were using mestizaje to align themselves with the oppressed that fought European colonization and obliteration. To be mestizo was to be an Indian, who, by virtue of history, was a product of rape by Spanish colonizers (as became the popular Chicana/o narrative). Chicanas and Chicanos grappled with this dichotomy of identity (both colonized and colonizer), but used it as fodder to fight for self-determination and social/political power. Unlike the mestizo project of Latin America that used mestizo identity to suppress Indian-ness in order to endorse European-ness, Chicanas and Chicanos were doing the opposite; they were deconstructing their European heritage (the by-product of rape and colonization) in order to endorse their Indian identity. (Re)claiming Indigenous identity was an attempt to continue the trajectory of Indigenous resistance and to examine the on-going colonization that maintained their oppressed position in society.

While I understand the ways in which Anzaldúa (1987) and many Chicana scholars after her have appropriated "mestiza consciousness" (Moraga 1993; Castillo 1994), I remain critical of the term "mestizo." According to Jack Forbes (2006), "People in the U.S. are emotionally attached to the term Indian. I think we need to attach names that belong to us versus resurrecting colonial terms such as Indio." In this same vein, people are also attached to the term mestizo, which emerged from a colonial matrix meant to stratify people. Forbes (2006) further critiques colonial terminology and the etymology of those terms, stating, "If anyone should claim mestizaje, it is the Spaniards who are the real mestizos. They are Celt, Phoenician, Arab, etc. Ultimately, mestizaje is

a relic of colonialism designed to divide and conquer." Forbes continues with the question as to why Indigenous people of México and Mesoamerica were forced to accept the term/ideology of mestizaje, when the Spaniards, who are far more "mixed" biologically and culturally, were not. To attempt to utilize colonial terminology as a mode of ideological, social, or political empowerment seems futile, when the origins of these ideas were deliberate in their attempt to destroy people and their sense of self. Despite this, I value profoundly the early Xicana feminist thinkers (Anzaldúa 1987; Moraga & Anzaldúa 1981; Alarcón 1990) and I am cognizant of the fact that, when they identify as mestiza or label their work within a mestiza paradigm, it is deeply rooted with an anti-colonial agenda and a radical intention to be critical of their existence and identities.

While I understand the theoretical possibility "mestizaje/hybridity" creates to explain the mixture of cultures, as described in *Sounding Indigenous* (Bigenho 2002), where Bolivian Aymara music and dance practices are examined, I believe there must be other ways to describe this mixture. According to Bigenho, hybridity as a result of mixture creates the idea that it therefore becomes sterile and can no longer reproduce itself. Hybridity flattens the complexity of cultural mixture and limits its potential. Sandy Grande (2004), questions how it is possible that a human being can be a "hybrid?" She argues against this notion and states that hybridity attempts to merge and quantify varied identities into one and, in the end, ignores underlying complexities. In contrast, human beings consciously live simultaneously and within multiple identities and realities (Smith 2002; Mihn-Ha 1989; Hill Collins 2000).

The terms/ideas “mestizaje” and/or “hybridity” do not do justice to the lived experience, and limit possibilities of identity rather than expand them. Esteva and Prakash (1998) call this multiplicity “pluriverse” as an opposition to the globalization forces that want to singularize and merge people into one identity. While perhaps hybridity/mestizaje can be limiting ideas, this does not disqualify the work that has been done in this area. These categories can be building blocks of thought, such as described by Nancy Shoemaker (2002), who argues that we all need categories from which to boil down abstract matter into manageable units.

I propose the necessity of creating “new” ways of defining and labeling the experience of cultural mixing and multiple identities, rather than holding onto the colonial matrix. In his article, “Las Identidades Tambien Lloran, Identities Also Cry: The Human Side of Indigenous Latino Identities,” Luis Urrieta discusses the danger when mainstream scholars begin to appropriate and use ideas like “borderlands” in an unreflexive way. This can be said for hybridity and mestizaje. All of these ideas and terms—borderlands, hybridity, mestizaje—have a real lived experience attached them. The violence that is experienced everyday on the border and the historical process from which notions of hybridity and mestizaje derive are historically traumatic. They connote and perhaps reveal real pain and violence. Mestizaje perhaps at surface level, without deep reflection, may seem like a mutually agreed upon mixture, yet the reality was that it was a violent clash of cultures, an imposition and domination of one over the other. Yolanda Broyles Gonzalez states that, “many critics of borderland culture lose themselves in abstract concepts of ‘mestizaje,’ ‘hybridity,’ or ‘syncretism’ because they see only the publicly visible ‘hybridity’ without regard to the contexts of cultural

genocide, resistance, and self-affirmation that produce it—without regard for the convert, unseen, and unspoken cycles of colonialism that propel the appropriation of selected colonial features" (Cantú/Nájera-Ramírez 2002: 122). Therefore, we cannot use such terms/ideas/notions without being reflexive and coming to know deeply the lived realities and historical processes that are attached to them.

I do not adhere to the notion of hybridity, nor the idea of mestizaje, but rather endorse an affinity to Bonfil Batalla's (1996) work, *México Profundo,* which calls into question the idea of mestizaje and labels it as an imagined and superficial identity/nation. I also endorse Anzaldúa's notion that the borderlands are both physical and mental and have shaped identity. In this way, focusing on the concept of borderlands can be very useful as one can view identity as a constant crossing of borders. It can mean crossing prohibited boundaries, either physically through the U.S.-Mexican border, from rural spaces to urban spaces, racial/ethnic identities, or crossing into taboo spaces of sexuality and gender. Anzaldúa illustrates the idea of being torn apart as human reflections of the land and being divided as our identities are constantly influx (Holland 1998).

Mestizaje as presented by Anthropologist Marisol De La Cadena (2000) in her book, *Indigenous Mestizos*, describes the lived reality of Indigenous people that strive to become mestizo, not through a biological process, but a cultural process. Educational attainment can be a marker that moves one from "Indigenous" into the accepted notion of mestizaje. The hegemonic belief system of Peru (and in much of Latin America) is that to be Indian has no real benefits. Therefore it is more advantageous (in terms of political, economic, and social survival) to surrender cultural markers, whether they are one's huaraches/ sandals, or traditional dress, or to attain markers of mestizaje, such as a formal

university education, in order to become more mobile in society. In fact, no strong phenotypical barriers exist between "mestizos" and "Indios." The desire to become mestizo is a conscious, political decision. Hegemony, as consensus through coercion and acceptance, is the social process by which the dominant, in order to maintain their power, coerces the subordinate to assume the ideology for something in return (Gramsci 1971; Foucault 1977). In the case of Peru, the disenfranchised populations (Indigenous peoples) had to accept education, the "great equalizer" of society. If one wanted to receive social mobility, they would have to become part of the educated class and adopt mestizo identity (by virtue of subduing their Indigenous identity) and the mainstream ideology lodged within the state educational system. Borderlands theories allow me to understand and accept the lived realities, and historical processes, while leaving open the possibilities for new ideologies and the creation of new, perhaps more critical, terms/understandings, such as De La Cadena's "Indigenous Mestizos." In order to respect local claims of identity and move deeper to challenge and think of new possibilities, De La Cadena creates an interesting perspective. She deconstructs old notions of mestizaje and indigeneity while bringing these ideas together to complicate and reconstruct a broader, more accurate notion of identity in Peru. Similarly, I promote the term of Xicana Indígena identity (which I will unpack further in this section) as an alternative to the 1980s Chicana feminist ideology of mestizaje/mestiza consciousness.

Xicana Indígena as a term and concept articulates many of the same ideas that Xicana feminist scholars have created, while doing away with the colonial label. Holding a Xicana Indígena identity chooses to name an experience with a term that comes from the community itself. Xicana is significant for a people that have historically

been named by outsiders. Identity and self-naming is crucial within Native scholarship (Smith 2002; Grande 2000 & 2004; Anzaldúa 1987, Momaday 1976) and the idea of naming the self and reclaiming and asserting Indigenous identity is more than significant.

CHAPTER 12

~MAHTLACTLI HUAN OME~

XICANA INDÍGENA IDENTITY

As presented in the previous chapter, from 1492 to the 1820s, Indigenous people lived under a staunch colonial system that removed their own self-named identities and imposed the term "Indio," as well as the complex categorical caste system. In order to fully understand Xicana/o identity and history, we must fully understand Xicana/o coloniality. Only then can Xicanas/os assert our epistemic potential toward the "vision of liberation and decolonization" (Hernández 2005: 125). Capitalism and the world economy have lasted over 500 years "built, in part, on the suppression of indigenous knowledge and spirituality" (Hernández 2005: 125).

By the early 1800s, Criollos, who were Spaniards born on the "new land," grew tired of having to answer to the Peninsulares and the Spanish crown. The 1800s marked an era of revolutions for independence from Spain. Led by a mostly Criollo leadership and a large campesino (common people) following, slowly the nations within the territories now known as "Latin America" won their liberation from Spain, only to be ruled by a new colonial class, the Criollos. This independence established the creation of borders that delineated the land and divided people. The countries, within which people resided, became their new identities. People were now referred to as Mexicanos, Guatemaltecos, Salvadoreños, Bolivianos, and so forth. The names of their countries came from their "liberators" or leaders, such as Simón Bolivar, who led the struggle for Bolivian independence; from religious names, such as the Dominican Republic, after the Domincan sect of missionaries; and hispanicized Indigenous names such as México. The

concept of borders, dividing land and people, would create more obstacles to tracing Indigenous identity, roots, and origins. Even before the borders were manufactured through the creation of walls, barbed-wires, electric fences, and border patrol, a true manifestation took place when people began to accept, internalize, and abide by these borders. This mentality manifests and perpetuates the divisions amongst Indigenous peoples themselves (Brysk 2000).

In 1810, México gained Independence from Spain, but, soon after, México would be under attack by another colonial power, the United States. By 1848, México had lost the Mexican-American War and signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty handed over a huge portion of Mexico to the U.S. These lands included all the areas known today as the southwestern U.S. For the southwest, it was only a mere thirty-eight years that they would be an independent "México," after over three-hundred years of Spanish rule. This did not leave much time for establishing identity or national culture. The people living within these lands had little power over the political decisions being made by those in control, yet, they would suffer the consequences. Even today, in places such as New México, there is a much stronger collective affinity to a Spanish identity/culture than a Mexican identity/culture. Luis Urrieta (2003) calls this the "schizophrenic self," meaning that the self exists in multiple identities and ideologies, including in a fantasy heritage.

Being part of the U.S. meant confronting extreme racism and dealing with new imposed labels. For example:

> To be publicly identified as Yaquí (or any other tribal affiliation) in the late nineteenth –or early twentieth-century Americas was an almost instant death warrant. Native forms of worship were forced to the underground of disímulo (camouflage). Even the United States did not pass a freedom of

> Religion Act until 1978. Until then, Native American spirituality (hence culture) was outlawed. It is not different in México. On both sides of the border, to be indigenous is to be displaced, hunted, sold, relocated, fleeing, or hiding behind 'Mexicanness' or nowadays, 'Hispanic' (Cantú/Nájera 2002 : 120-121).

Through the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicanos living within the U.S. became "American citizens" (only de jure, not de facto) and/or "Mexican-Americans." They were also called racist terms such as "beaner," "wetback," and "greaser." U.S. policy and history would continue to view Mexicans from the other side of the border, as nothing more than cheap labor available for the exploitation of Americans. They would be reduced to only their "arms" by being called "braceros" (made of arms). Mexicanos born in the U.S. would struggle as well, disconnected from their identity and relationship to the land. This legacy of being a product of a triple colonization, first by Spain, then by the Criollo's México, and finally by Americans, would be disrupted by the Chicano Movement of the 1960s as youth began to examine their own history and identity.

The 1960s was a time of social upheaval and Chicanos were just one strand in the many movements for political, social, and economic change. What was labeled as the Chicano Movement was the first time that Chicanas and Chicanos decided to reject imposed labels and name themselves. The concept of self-naming and identity is an important concept in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa: "She has this fear that she has no names, that she has many names, that she doesn't know her names" (1987: 43). Anzaldúa, in her concern with "names," alludes to the idea that, as Indigenous people, our many names were erased. When the invasions occurred, identities, the names that were self-ascribed, and the languages spoken, were suppressed and stifled. Before the

beginning of colonization, Indigenous people had their own identities and knew exactly who they were and what they called themselves. Yet, the names were changed, erased, or replaced with Spanish names, Catholic names, and pejorative names. As such, "language is the perfect instrument of empire" (Grounds, Tinker, Wilson 2003: 103); colonizer languages and terminology have often erased and silenced Xicanas/os and have taught shame in how they speak and what they call themselves. As Ana Castillo writes:

> White society insists that only European history and Greco-Roman civilization have intellectual importance and relevance to our society. The legacies of Amerindians from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego are considered primitive. The ignorance of white dominant society about our ways, struggles in society, history and culture, is not an innocent and passive ignorance, it is a systematic and determined ignorance (1994: 5).

Patrisia Gonzáles and Roberto Rodríguez believe that at the core of Xicana/o identity is the fact that, "we are where we came from—the entire continent" (February 22, 2002). By calling the 1960s Movement, "Chicano," the community was creating a name for itself and for the people. This very act of self-definition and self-naming was the first step toward decolonization and the belief that "this land was Mexican once, was Indian always and is. And will be again" (Anzaldúa, 1987: 91).

In returning to a connection with the land, Chicanos were returning to a connection with their people, past, and selves. They were stating: "I will not be shamed again. Nor will I shame myself. I am possessed by a vision: that we Chicanas and Chicanos have taken back or uncovered our true faces, our dignity and self-respect. It's a validation vision."(Anzaldúa, 1987: 87) It was through the Chicano Movement that Mexicanos and Central/South Americans would begin to re-conceptualize and recognize the self as Indigenous and Native to this land. They would challenge the dominant

narrative that produced shame and encouraged assimilation. Youth of color began "trans-coding" (Hall 1997) pejorative terms and concepts once meant to denigrate them. They would take an existing meaning of a word, such as an identity label, and re-appropriate it for new meanings. Black became beautiful; brown became powerful; and Indian and Chicano became badges of honor and pride, rather than markers of shame. The term Chicano emerged from the "chusma" or the common people and was a rejection of two colonial powers—México and the United States. It was a term that originally came out the language of Caló, a combination of Spanish, English and Nahuatl, popularized in the U.S. in the 1940s Pachuca/o (zoot suit) culture. The term "Chicano" originally came out of what was referred to as La Chicanada, or the people on the bottom, on the ground. It did not come out of a direct reference to Mexica people, as that became inferred later in the 1960s and through the Danza Mexica movement. As the term evolved, it eventually became an identity that transcended borders and centered on pride in Indian roots.

Due to historical identity genocide and displacement, many people cannot trace their family histories. This affects not only Indigenous descendants from México/Central/South America, but the entire western hemisphere. Often times, the lack of knowledge of one's bloodline is caused by historical amnesia, also a symptom of domination. When one begins to recall a collective memory and assert one's own identity and history, this can often be faced with repression. Memories can be both dangerous and painful. As Castillo writes:

> The repressive attitude that we have experienced is not only found in the United States but throughout the Americas and other places in the world where primal peoples reside and where white colonialism has reigned, such as with the native 'Aborigines' in Australia. The black Diaspora is a long, mournful wail reminding us of the inhumane history of European and Euro-American greed. Of the mainland United States, form the

> Aluets and Inuits north of us to the Polynesian ancestors of the native Hawaiians have also been stripped of their Ways, almost completely annihilated, Christianized, and relegated to the outposts of society to live impoverished and demoralized lives. This acknowledgment of our cultural legacies and our reclaiming of our Indigenous blood-ties, I hope, is not simultaneously an assertion that our heritage is superior to that of peoples from throughout the world. We are not the only people who have been wronged by racism and conquest, whose records have been destroyed, who have themselves, in fact, been nearly all destroyed. Learning about our Indigenismo is a way of learning about ourselves, and acceptance of oneself as an individual and of her/his people. Then we may educate the world, including our own communities, about ourselves. But more importantly, it will show us another way of seeing life and the world we live in now (1994: 7).

Through self-determining a Chicana/o and Indigenous identity, Chicanas/os were beginning to connect not only to their own history, but also the history of all oppressed and colonized peoples. Re-claiming and self-proclaiming identity was the beginning of a healing process.

In the 1960s-70s, "Chicano" (maintaining its male dominated spelling and praxis) generally represented those Mexicans born within the borders of the United States, but was not limited to "Mexicans" or to those only born within the U.S. Many other marginalized groups, such as those from Central America, also identified with the ideology of "Chicanismo," but not all people embraced the term. Some view(ed) this term as negative, mainly because it promoted an idea of rebelliousness, politicization, and Indigenismo. Some thought it to be nationalistic, limited and not representative or inclusive of larger struggles. Others viewed "Chicano" as a dirty word. Shame and denial of being Indigenous resurfaced through this word. For example, for my own grandparents, they disliked the term "Chicano" because it meant returning to a time of discrimination, which they had fought hard to put behind them. It had been their hope

that their children could assimilate so as not to experience the degradation they had experienced. Similar to a time when people would associate "Indian-ness" with "drunkeness," and no one wanted to be Indian, such pejorative meanings were also associated with the word "Chicano. Everything linked to the term Chicano at that time was viewed as negative: zoot-suit gangs, urban poverty, backward-ness, and most of all, self-identification as "Indio." Therefore, people rejected the term Chicano. In the 1960s, however, there was a re-evaluation and re-constitution of the term. Chicanas/os acknowledged the history of colonization and internalized racism that negatively framed the term. In trying to un-do the shame that "Chicano" invoked, they began to re-constitute to term to instead instill a sense of pride and empowerment. Through reclaiming the term "Chicana/o" they asserted their ethnic identity. Whereas all other labels following European invasion had been invented and imposed (including Mexican-American, Hispano, Latino, etc.), Chicano was and is the only term that was self-identified and ascribed by the people to themselves.

Frantz Fanon (1952; 1963; 2002), discusses the idea that, in order to exist and be recognized, the self needs to be recognized by the other; there needs to be a mutual recognition of one another. Each self needs to recognize and accept the other as they are, including the dimensions from which they view themselves. Yet, in the colonial system/matrix, the dominant power does not recognize subordinates, and, in fact, invisibilizes them and denies them any power. Therefore, Fanon believes that it is even more so crucial to claim and assert "Blackness." The colonizer must see the others as they are and accept them.

In the same manner, it has been crucial for Xicanas/os to claim and assert their indigeneity. Anzaldúa (2000) also presents this notion that we must reclaim and assert the parts of ourselves that have been oppressed, because, if we do not, we risk the crushing and invisibilizing of those parts of our identity and core. In *Racism*, Albert Memmi (2000) also asserts that we must recognize the colonial experience of race as a lived reality, even if it is only a social construction. The works by Fanon, Anzaldúa, and Memmi are very relevant in Native discourse and articulate the colonial matrix within which we still exist. The work in Subaltern Studies by Gaytri Spivak (1990) and what is labeled "Colonial Discourse" are also relevant points of discussion and serve as building blocks of thought in Native American Studies. At the same time, Subaltern Studies and Colonial Discourse can be problematic, as they do not substantively encompass Native world views, cosmology, ontology, and understandings. In fact, some Native scholars are working to challenge these theoretical perspectives by creating their own philosophical/theoretical frameworks. For example, Jack Forbes' (2004) theoretical frame of, the Wétiko Disease is a platform from which to view the colonizers and their actions. This disease, drawn from a Native American and Canadian First Nations concept, is the illness of power and destruction. Using examples of Native genocide, ethnocide, and ecocide, he articulates very similar ideas to those of Fanon and Memmi, including showing the colonizer as dehumanized. However, he does so through a distinct Indigenous perspective.

According to Yolanda Broyles-González (1994), in her essay, "Theater of the Sphere: Toward the Formulation of a Native Performance Theory and Practice," criticisms of Xicanas/os embracing Indigenous epistemology, have reduced it to being

mere romantic idealizations of indigeneity. Marxist-leaning, social activists of the 1960s/70s believed that Xicanas/os were using Indigenous spirituality as a way to derail the community from direct political social messages and action. In contrast, Broyles-González argues, "I would venture to say, however, that the presence of *indígena* knowledge or 'mythology' was far more than a matter of 'content.' The Teatro Campesino did not regard the cultural and mythical in any way separate or outside of the social and historical context of Chicanas/os" (1994: 120). Integrating Indigenous knowledge was not an escape from the political realities, but rather a refinement to distinguish Chicana/o Indígena political realities which began from a colonial history. For Indigenous people of the Americas, colonialism ultimately spawned capitalism, which began a social struggle for economic and political justice (Weatherford 1988; Churchill 2003). Incorporating *Indigenismo,* as was done in the Teatro Chicano movement, was a tool for empowerment with the goal for liberation. The same can be said for "Zapatismo" where maintaining Indígena politics and identity was fundamental to the movement goals. Indigenismo was viewed as having emancipatory potential. Broyles-González (1994) credits the early Chicana/o "teatristas,"[96] as the early "Indigenistas," as many of them were also incorporating Danza Mexica and its philosophical teachings into their repertoire. Broyles-González posits that many of them were responsible for creating contemporary, more critical understandings of Xicana/o Indigeneity. Still, critics believed that their lofty desires for an Indigenous spirituality disrupted their attention from the essential issues and problems –colonization and the need to unsettle the on-going patterns of such colonization. In contrast, Broyles-Gonzáles argues that in fact Indigenismo was intimately linked to decolonization:

[96] Members of Chicana/o theater

> The Teatro's militant affirmation of the *indígena* ancestral heritage can be appreciated only in the context of the Chicano movement's insistence on decolonization, and the movement's affirmation of Chicana/o cultural and historical distinctiveness. The intense reclamation of Mayan and Aztec knowledge was a direct response to the historical Euro-American institutional denigration of the Chicana/o people and the ever-present threat of cultural assimilation, at the same time it affirmed a Chicana/o axis (1994: 124).

This "axis" meant Chicanas/os were operating from their own autonomous and self-determined identity upon which they based a performance aesthetic. Performance of the self and Chicana/o history originated from Chicana/o constructions of self, rather than constant opposition to "the other" or "hegemonic and dominant white social, cultural, and political practices" (Broyles-González 1994: 82). The Chicana/o axis was constructed through Aztec and Mayan knowledge systems: "The recourse to Mayan and Aztec knowledge was also in part dictated by historical convenience: these are among the best documented of American tribal cultures" (Broyles-González 1994: 85). Therefore, the many Indigenous ancestries of teatro members would become "merged into a common process of recovery based on Mayan and Aztec knowledge" (Broyles-González 1994: 85). This also became the basis of the Chicano Movement and later constructions of the Danza movement. If a member (of teatro or Danza) arrived to such movement knowing their Yaquí or Mayo identity, for example, those said identities would be merged into one collective process of recovery that was under the umbrella of a the recovery of Mayan and Aztec knowledge. In the teatro, much of this knowledge was learned directly from Indigenous peoples that lived and breathed their cultures and communities and had direct experiences of conditions of oppression, such as Andrés Segura and Domingo Martínez Paredez (both important figures in the Danza movement). Teatro consisted of "a sustained attempt to restore 'the totality of the Indio's vision,' to affirm the submerged

collective memory while making it the foundational training for a Chicana/o pedagogy and life performance" (Broyles-González 1994: 87).

Danza Mexica served as a catalyst for this identity transformation and the emergence of a *Xicana Indígena* identity in the 1990s. It is my hope that, throughout this dissertation, an evolution of identity is clearly portrayed. The underlying path of identity, as it relates to Danza, is all part of the historical context, which includes colonization and resistance. Danza, as viewed through its historical trajectory, is intimately linked to how people view themselves and their place in the world. Danza is connected to identity and to how people have chosen, both consciously and unconsciously, to either deny their history or embrace it. The Chicano Movement opened the doors for people to challenge and question mainstream history the way it was written or told in schools and popular media.

During the 1960s-70s, questions of representation and power, or lack thereof, were central to anti-racist and social movements. These movements allowed a community to re-examine the past in order to create and live a better future. Part of that critical examination has led to expanded and new dimensions of identity. An offshoot of the Chicano Movement produced a renewed spelling of the term Chicano, using an "X"—Xicano—instead of a "Ch" (Rodríguez 1994, 1996; Maiz 1995). The "X" challenged Spanish constructions of language and pronunciation. It represented a return to the Nahuatl usage and pronunciation of the "X" and thus was an act of Indigenous reclamation. Chicanas in the 1960s-80s challenged the male-centric/patriarchal nature of the movement and also began to assert "mujerista" or womanist perspectives. Rejecting the dominantly white, Feminist Movement that often marginalized and disenfranchised

women of color, they began to configure their own concepts and ideas as related to feminism (Castillo 1994). The term Xicana, like Xicano, would be attached to a politic, an Indigenous identity and spirituality, and would assert and affirm the central role of women in the movement.

Ana Castillo (1994) popularized the term *Xicanisma* to define a unique Xicana feminism which was shaped by Indigenous ideology and spirituality. Xicana, Xicanindia, Xicanista, Xicana Indígena would all be radical reconfigurations of the same ideology: a self-identified Xicana that embraces her Indigenous/Native identity, re-placing women as the center of life. More radical adaptions looked toward Indigenous languages, namely Nahuatl (as the term itself derives from Nahuatl)[97] to acknowledge that the language is not male-dominated, as is the Spanish language. For example, identifying the Chicano Movement as solely "Chicano," which in the Spanish/European language is correct (Chicano in its male-dominated form is meant to include and encompass women), marginalizes and invisibilizes women and their role, presence, and existence. Xicanas challenged their Xicano brothers by proposing that decolonization needed to occur on multiple levels, even in our phallogocentric language and through the conscious and intentional inclusion of Xicanas. Similar to the need to assert Indigeneity as a measure to protect that part of ourselves from being discarded or crushed, Chicanas also wanted to assert their mujerismo/womanism within the community, so as not to be invisibilized.

[97] While the term Xicana derives from Nahuatl, it is important to note that the Nahuatl language existed before the Mexica migrated south into Mexico City. Therefore, Xicana is not Mexica-centric, but instead can be viewed from a broader perspective, one that embraces the larger "Uto-Aztecan" language family spoken throughout the western hemisphere. The contemporary notion that "Xicana" is only related to Mexicas (versus other Indigenous peoples within México) came about because of the Danza movement that at times inferred such a limited meaning. In fact, the etymology of Mexica/México cannot be confirmed.

Many began to make conscious efforts to be inclusive through using both Chicana and Chicano or Xicana and Xicano. For example, the National Association for Chicano Studies changed its name in 1995: "The association's most recent organizational name change took place in 1995 during the NACS annual conference held in Spokane, Washington. The membership voted to rename the association the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, in recognition of the critical contribution and role of Chicanas in the association" (website). During this meeting, I was present for the heated debate. One participant called for the complete erasure of the "o" and the "a" and a new term—"Chican." This suggestion did not go over well, as many made jokes that the word looked too similar to "Chicken." For abbreviation and space purposes, many began to write Chicana/o or Xicana/o. The critique of this was the discomfort of the "slash," which for some represented a division or a visual "border" within a text. In response to this resentment of the divisive line, many have begun to write Chican@ or Xican@. This "@" symbol was to collapse the contentious "a" and "o" into one, indistinguishable symbol that did not dominate one over the other. Some might argue that the "a," representing the feminine is in the center, while others may view it as the "o," surrounding the feminine.

Overall, each of these reconfigurations was still operating from a European construction of language. Some questioned if adding the "a" or Xicana would necessarily change or augment people's ways of thinking. Some saw it as mere tokenism, a feeble attempt to be inclusive only on paper, but not in lived realities. While in attendance at a U.C. Berkeley Chicano Studies Departmental meeting (1996), as the undergraduate student representative, I observed a lively debate amongst the professors that were

considering a name change for the department to Chicano/Latino Studies. It was proposed that it if it was going to be changed, it had to be Chicana/o/Latina/o Studies or Chicana Chicano/Latina Latino Studies. While most agreed that it was a mouthful, the debate continued as some argued that it should remain as is: Chicano. One professor argued that we had to move with the times and a progressive option would be to change the name altogether to Latino Studies. In response, one Professor (Dr. Larry Trujillo) argued that if we really wanted to be "progressive or radical" then what we should do is call it Chicana Studies and let that stand on its own. In response to the instability and variation of "a/o" or "@", etc., I also believe that a radical re-conception of our collective identity should be to call ourselves Xicana.

In writing this dissertation, I was also challenged with which terms/spellings I should use and the implications. The use of the "@" in Xican@, especially in our current technological age, feels as if it is appropriating a symbol commonly associated with email and cyberspace. For me, Xican@, while well-intentioned, feels as if it endorses notions of modernity, a sort of neo-Xican@, techie generation. I am also uncomfortable with the "a/o" both because of the acceptance of and compliance with European male dominance in language and because of the dividing slash that solidifies a separation rather than an equal acknowledgement or reciprocal relationship between men and women. At the same time, I respect Native understandings of duality. In Nahuatl, for example, "Cihuatl and Tlacatl" are the words for "woman and man," but when one refers to their "people" or nation in their language, the correct way is Mexica or Purepecha (not Mexico or Purepecho); there is no masculine or feminine distinction to the collective word for the People. One might say, Tlacatl Mexica (Mexica man), but both men and women are

Mexica. With this same argument, it could be said "Xicana man or Xicana woman," but we are all Xicana. While I personally know "feminist men" that have adopted and call themselves Xicana, overall there are very few men that would call themselves Xicana, because if said through the Spanish language and ideology, it infers that they are "women." Clearly, language and ideology complicate the use of terminology, which is only further complicated when one inserts a critical gender analysis, challenging the assumed hetero-normativity and the limiting nature of dual sex and gender constructions.

In his self-published book, *The X in La Raza*, Roberto Rodríguez lays out the linguistic, social history of terms, including the "X" in Xicano and the problems with finding "one" term that can incorporate our identity with all of its complexities. According to Rodríguez: "That still leaves us with the problem of speaking of all the groups, without using a few dozen names—without being inaccurate—every time we want to refer to all Raza in one sentence" (1994: 51). Admittedly, my Xicana feminist ideology advocates for Xicana as a symbol for the vindication of the feminine held sacred in the matriarchal and matrilineal societies of Indigenous communities. Within Danza Mexica circles, women (and in some few spaces, two-spirit/gay men) hold the position of caring for the fire or smoke in the center of the circle. It is an honored position that connects women with the sun and earth, as central forces and givers of life. It also honors the dual-duality that exists in everything. This dual-duality is the understanding that, not only does duality exist with two opposing entities (Mother Earth and Father Sky, sun and moon, water and fire), but also within a single entity. For example, within one human body there is duality (masculine and feminine energy). The same can be said for the Earth, Sky, and every element and/or entity that exists. Since the understanding of

Xicana, as an all-encompassing term with a radical leaning toward Xicanisma/Xicana feminism (acknowledging that all human beings came from a woman) or a return to a matriarchal/matrilineal foundation, is not widely accepted, it is still necessary to use both Xicana and Xicano.

For brevity and to eliminate confusion, I conceded to use the term "Xicana/o" to clarify that I am discussing an entire community, which includes both women and men. I recognize the historical and contemporary need to still assert Xicana (still living in a sexist, heterosexist, and misogynistic society), with the hope that, at some point, Xicanas and Xicanos will arrive to a collective consciousness and consensus to reconceive the way we label, view, and represent ourselves and our community and exercise or live this reality. Rather than fear the feminine, it is my hope and foresight that it will be embraced, not only on paper, but in the lived ways we honor, treat and respect women, women power, and feminine energy (in all the forms that encompasses, including how men treat women, how women treat women and how women treat themselves). It is my hope that the collective community will come to view itself through the lens and ideology of "Xicana;" a more complete view that carries memory and a call for action.

Xicanas and Xicanos adopted the "X," as not only a re-spelling of the word, but as a conscious resistance to further Hispanicization/colonization. According to Rocky Rodríguez, the reason Xicano was spelled Chicano in the 1960s-70s, was because "we were thinking in Spanish or English back then" (in Rodríguez 1994: 34). The "X" is also symbolic of a shift within the movement. The 1960s Chicano Movement focused on politics, whereas later evolutions of the movement began to recognize the need for

spiritual guidance. The X phenomena stems from the resurgence of "Indigenismo" or revival/reconnection to Indigenous roots, ceremony, and way of life:

> Many of these brothers got caught up in the same form of imperialism that they were supposed to be trying to destroy. No amount of ballet Folklóricos, mariachis, and Chicano hand-claps could make them realize that their plans did not take us to the source and focus of our true Mexican culture.
>
> Marxism versus capitalism, so-called leaders and their partisans against others, drugs, and alcohol and a lack of honesty doomed the nationalist to sitting around the tequila bottle remembering the good old days.
>
> Any political movement that tries to exist without spiritual strength and purpose is doomed to fail. Rhetoric, weapons and money can only carry it for so long. The faith and hope of a people are the strongest tools for change (Aguilar 1980: 43).

As such, the "X" in the spelling is symbolic toward the recognition of a much more profound political and spiritual grounding that moves beyond definitions that once held true in the 60's Chicano Movement. According to Activist Tupac Enrique:

> In Aztlan, a new generation –el Xicano- has revived the consciousness of our ancient indigenous identity. This consciencia is not a romantic idealization, but a process born of the relationship with the surviving indigenous nations that form the family of Uto-Aztecan languages (Enrique, 1991: 2).

The "X" symbolically recognizes and connects to Indigenous relatives that share the same language family. The use of the "X" began to re-think and re-focus the meanings of identity which had stemmed from a nationalist, geo-political, boundary-encapsulated term, and instead opted for a "non-border," philosophical, spiritual term. Xicana does not identify a mere geographical location, nor is it limited to the imposed political, mental, and psychological borders. It reflects a political belief and strategy, an ideology and way

of life. It is "mujer/woman"-centered and honors, accepts, and respects all people who identify with being Indigenous to this continent and Earth.

Having reflected upon the sexist, colonized, and homophobic behaviors that the Chicano Movement often possessed in the 1960's, the move towards a "Xicana" approach in contemporary movements is more than symbolic. According to Ana Castillo, "It is our task as Xicanistas, to not only reclaim our indigenismo, but also to reinsert the forsaken feminine into our consciousness" (1994: 12). Coming to a Xicana consciousness is a process of self-naming, and understanding. According to, "A Call to the Autonomous Pueblos of Aztlan:"

> Before any decisions are made for working towards liberation of the people we must be clear about who we are as a people and how we must maintain and defend our spiritual and cultural identity. Foremost is that our traditional spirituality and culture is the foundation for the autonomy of the Xicano Mexicano pueblo. The other is that a consensus for autonomy among Xicano Mexicanos is vital in order to strengthen the Xicano Movement in the coming decades (Tonatierra, "A Call…").

I interpret this "call" to all the Xicano Mexicano Pueblos as a plea for nation-building and a consensus of Indigenous identity.

The X is symbolic of the X in Mexica and is pronounced as the "Ch" in Chicano. Some might even refer to themselves as part of the X generation, meaning that they are in process of asserting and reclaiming their Indigenous identity (Rodríguez 1994). According to Mexican Modern Artist, Francisco Icaza:

> Hay una X que es la X de México; la X es uno de los símbolos mas antiguos y además es el cruce de dos caminos, como México que son culturas muy fuertes que se cruzan./ There is an X that is the X of México;

> the X is one of the oldest symbols and furthermore is the cross of two roads, like México that is made of strong cultures that cross each other.[98]

The X in the Chicano Movement also hearkens to Malcolm X's use of the "X" to resist further enslavement (Moraga 2011). In the Chicano context, the "X" was adopted as a symbol of Indigenous liberation. According to Rodríguez:

> [The] X could have the same value to Raza as it does to African Americans—representing the Indigenous names, the language, and the history that was taken from us. However, in addition, X to La Raza also represents recovered knowledge, wisdom, compassion and a fighting spirit (1994: 133).

Xicanas/os were in a process, not of "re-learning"—but re-membering; they were recalling memories and re-connecting and building back their communities. In order to "re-member," one had to start by going home; going back to Indigenous languages, asking families for their stories, and going back to places of family origin. As Rodríguez further states, "X is the spirit that has allowed us to persevere and seek justice. It is also the spirit that rejects oppression, conquest, exploitation and domination. X is hope and the fire that can never be extinguished and the spirit that refuses to die" (1994: 135). Essentially, the X in Xicana/o represents a spirit. Whether or not one calls themselves Xicana, it still identifies the way in which one lives and walks. It is a spirit that ultimately cannot be quantified or reduced to language or words.

Xicanas/os were beginning to adopt and look towards the Native concept of the "Red Road," as a way of life. Walking the Red Road is walking in a Native way of balance, spirituality, reciprocity, and humility. While this path opened doors for Xicanas and Xicanos to a new consciousness, it also left many with a feeling of exile. "Xicanas in

[98] This quote was found in an art exhibit at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Zacatecas, 2010.

exile" identifies the conceptual feelings and experiences of many Xicanas/os that indeed have been exiled by multiple communities. Through the embracing and assertion of an Indigenous identity, Xicanas/os became marginalized and exiled from multiple communities, including their own. Xicanas/os, already exiled from mainstream society for being "too Indian," due to colonization, racism, sexism, and heterosexism, became exiled from their own community that rejects or is in denial of its Indigenismo, and/or has internalized a colonial mentality. Xicanas/os are also exiled from other Indigenous communities that do not receive them as "fully Indian" or "Indian enough." This sentiment of "rejection" holds true and is sometimes exercised by both U.S. federally un/recognized Natives and those un/recognized Indigenous nations from México, Central, and South America. While MeXicanas/os, Central/South Americans were reclaiming their Indigenous identities, they were looked upon as "not real Indians" because they spoke Spanish and did not always know their direct bloodline or Indigenous nation.

Ethnic identity comes about through structural conditions. It is not something with which one is born. Ethnicity does not exist in true form, but rather external and internal elements affect it. With this said, Xicana/o is an ethnic term created to identify a historical community with a shared cultural and ethnic experience. Claiming Xicana/o as one's "ethnic" identity has come into conflict when Xicanas/os also claim a "political" Indigenous identity. Western concepts of blood quantum, purity, and supremacy serve to exclude and maintain social hierarchy. Blood quantum and biological determinism (as was the project of mestizaje to determine European bloodline and therefore political/social rights and land title) has also been used to *prove* Indigenous bloodline.[99]

[99] An example of this, is a recent genetic study of Puerto Rican/Boricuas that identified their DNA to overwhelmingly represent Taino/Indigenous blood quantum. (see Ramirez, Gladys Nieves, August 29, 1999)

According to Forbes (2006), DNA is being explored on the Redding Rancheria and by the Lumbee Nation and is possibly the future of determining tribal membership (Blu 2001; Hiltzik 2004) . While the historical reasons for creating a blood quantum for federal recognition and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.) served the need to have a system in place to ensure that claims to Native identity are true, it is still a problematic system that serves to divide Indigenous peoples[100] (TallBear 2007; 2009). One particular issue is that blood quantum does not address the socializing process. While someone may be registered as a "full blood," yet have little conceptualization of their identity or culture, they will be given more validity than someone who is a "quarter" blood quantum, but perhaps speaks their language and lives their traditions. Biologically and genetically a people may be Indigenous, but there is no formal system that allows for self-identify, cultural determinism, and community determinism (Garroutte 2003; Deloria 1998).

As with genetics, color of skin has little to do with the manner in which one is raised. In the U.S., the B.I.A. recognizes only those that can prove blood quantum through documentation. A person filing for recognition does not need to prove their Native language, spirituality, or traditions. In contrast, in México, one does not need to prove their blood quantum, documentation, nor even appear racially as Indigenous, but if a person knows their language, traditions and dress, they are recognized as Indigenous. By the same token, there are many Indigenous people in the U.S. (including many California Natives, such as the Winnemem Wintu), who are traditional peoples that know

[100] Currently, there is a movement for Mexica/Azteca people to be federally recognized in the U.S. In a press release (undated), it states: "Representatives of the Mexica/Azteca tribe of Native Americans have begun the process of self-determination. In a letter to the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, the group indicated the intent of the Mexica/Azteca people to formalize with the U.S. Government their relationship as an Indigenous entity. If the Mexica/Azteca tribe succeeds in the federal recognition process, it would mean a radical reconstructing of ethnic politics, especially in the Southwest." No information could be found as to the progress, validity, or response to this initiative.

their language and ways, yet are not recognized politically by the U.S. government. Ethnically, they can be recognized as Native, but politically and by the B.I.A. they are not formally recognized Native people. This status is relational to that of Xicanas/os. Ethnically, Xicanas/os may identify as Indigenous, but politically, they are not recognized as such. This may seem arbitrary, but political recognition and representation is an important piece of the Indigenous struggle internationally, as exemplified by the 2011 Collective Statement presented by the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas at the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples:

> ***Noting*** that all peoples should have the human right to be free from discrimination, unrecognized and unrepresented peoples currently do not have equal rights and protections to land, water, culture, identity, and child welfare protection as recognized indigenous peoples.
>
> ***Noting*** that unrepresented and unrecognized tribes have less than equal rights to fair judicial review, unrecognized and unrepresented peoples are more vulnerable to discrimination, especially in exercising their right to land use, practice and preservation of culture, and in turn contributes to the cultural genocide of these peoples.
>
> ***Acknowledging*** the importance of the right to equal and fair judicial review, unrecognized and unrepresented peoples cannot engage the state in legal address to their specific needs specifically related to land, natural resources, cultural custodianship, and their economic sustainability. Further noting that unrepresented and unrecognized Indigenous women experience greater levels of discrimination due to the compound effect of ethnicity, gender, class, language, and, in particular, non- represented and unrecognized status (2011).

Political recognition and representation opens the door to claim land, civil, and religious/spiritual rights, all of which pose a threat to the status quo. Blood quantum is a double-edged sword. While blood quantum ensures that direct Indigenous descendants are being recognized and afforded due rights, it can also pit people against each other who become obsessed with percentage, rather than culture. As federal and state

recognized Indigenous people compete for political and economic benefits, some will deny, negate, and/or delegitimize individual or other tribal claims to recognition, so as not to share the resources. Nevertheless, Xicana Indígenas have more recently become recognized on a larger scale through the participation of Xicanas at International forums such as the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous People in New York City.

At the UN level, people do not come because they are individuals, but rather because they come from an organization base or a Nation/council; therefore Xicanas have been in process of nation-building. Currently, La Red Xicana Indígena (national network grassroots organization) represents Xicana issues, but only on behalf of the organization, not on behalf of all Xicana Indígenas that exist. This representation is a responsibility and a trabajo/work that is taken seriously and attempts to reach as many self-identified Xicana Indígenas as possible, so they can learn and teach the tools gathered at the UN conferences and bring them back to the base. La Red Xicana Indígena simply strives to open the door for those within our community seeking justice for multiple issues, including self-determination and the ability to protect, preserve, and practice ceremonial traditions. La Red Xicana Indígena strives to keep the work simple, accessible and sustainable in order to create substantive change.

While Garner (2009) discusses that danzantes (who are often also Xicanas/os) at the United Nations have not been embraced, personal experience and that of other Xicanas/os would point otherwise:

> Dancers are only grudgingly accepted on the periphery of the global indigenous movement, which seeks human rights and social justice for native peoples. Those in the movement consider Aztec dancers to be mestizos, people who enjoy a hegemonic position in México, and there is a strong sentiment that the dancers are intruding by making claims to the

> limited resources that 'authentic' indigenous people are struggling to obtain (2009: 430).

Further, Garner claims that danzantes are viewed as not coming from an "actual indigenous community." I find this assessment limited, as it infers the existence of an "authenticity rubric." She ignores the deeper analysis of history, colonization, and its effects on the relationships between Indigenous communities hemispherically. Further, she does not address how the danzantes view themselves. At the UN, according to Niezen (2003), delegates come to the meetings with little insecurity about their own "Indigenous" status and few open doubts about the claims of others. Being part of a Danza group that has been "invited" by Indigenous organizers on multiple occasions to dance at the UN and at the receptions hosted by respected members of International Indigenous communities, my personal experience represents one of warm reception and embrace. In addition, Xicanas historically have played an important role in bringing Indigenous women from throughout the continent together during the international forums through the New York Indigenous Women's Collective. During these many interactions, there were no conflicts of interest, nor distinctions between the Xicanas and/or danzantes with any other Indigenous communities represented. Xicanas and danzantes were received as Indigenous peoples that also hold a legacy of colonization and bring with them a multitude of issues that also deserve to be addressed at the international forum. In fact, at the 2004 Intercontinental Meeting of Indigenous Women of the Americas in Lima, Peru, several Xicanas participated in the meeting and were formally recognized by the chair/organizer, Tarcila Rivera. Rivera announced at the introductory ceremonies, as she presented each country's delegation, that the Xicanas were present as a unique entity within the U.S. delegation and "represented a new reality

that we all must accept."[101] In effect, Rivera was acknowledging that Xicanas represent a reality that is occurring globally—the migration of people from various parts of the continent into the U.S. who then have children, do not return to their home territories, and must deal with the conflict of identity, assimilation experiences of racism and denial of culture within a particular "American" context. What Xicanas have been dealing with for over 150 years (since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) is the model for what other Indigenous migrants are only more recently coming to experience and understand. Xicanas serve as a positive blueprint for others to demonstrate how we can navigate our experiences and keep our identity/culture/spirituality intact despite U.S. empirical forces.

Clearly, the observation and critiques that Garner presents speak to the larger questions of identity politics:

> Indigenous representatives from México at the UN conference viewed Aztec dancers as mestizos—as members of México's dominant ethnicity. As such, these practitioners are represented as outsider to the human-rights and liberation discourse of the indigenous peoples' coalition and, in fact, are often considered perpetrators of the abuses being discussed. These accusations spread widely and are known in the Native American communities in the United States (2009: 435).

Garner poses questions of legitimacy and authenticity toward danzantes, although much of her assessment seems limited and ignorant of a fuller picture. Further, through posing questions of authenticity, Garner is suggesting that there is even such a thing as an "authentic Indian." To claim that danzantes are viewed as the perpetuators of human rights abuses against Native peoples is, in my view, completely inaccurate. I can acknowledge that there are some Xicanas/os and danzantes that have presented themselves in ways which could be perceived as ego-centric or lacking respect. Stories

[101] This information is documented in my personal notes, having been one of the Xicanas that was part of the delegation.

of danzantes at Pow Wows that went over their time allotted, or danzantes that did not give the first prayer to the people from that land are not reflective of ALL danzantes because each Danza group is autonomous, to some extent. Of course the behavior of one group still affects the larger perspective of danzantes overall. Such negative experiences may have led to miscommunication, but this can be said within many groups of people, including other Native peoples. What Garner perceives as an overall umbrella opinion of danzantes, is most likely reflective of only one group which cannot possibly represent the entire diverse body and history of Danza Mexica.

In my own personal experience, Xicanas/os are received differently by different nations. In the Southwest, for example, Mexicans are viewed as the colonizer, as they colonized and sold Indigenous lands without their consent in the mid-1800s. Therefore, the idea that Mexicans are claiming Indigenous might be confusing for a Pueblo person attached to that version of history (the alternate version being that the Mexican colonizers were Criollos also colonizing the Indigenous peoples of México). In contrast, my experience on the East Coast was different. The history of English colonization and the visible phenotypical racial mixtures with white and Black created a welcome reception toward Xicanas/os (and the Danza Mexica), who also were products of racial mixture. These examples simply point to the fact that reception to Xicanas/os or, for that matter, any other Indigenous nation, is going to be determined by their history and/or knowledge of a people. Another element that cannot be denied is that we are all living in a climate where all Native cultures, knowledge, and intellectual property rights are under attack, as are sacred sites. Experiences of cultural genocide or even scarce resources may contribute to Xicanas/os being marginalized and having unwelcome status in Native

communities. The mass migration or significant numbers of Indigenous Mexicans to the United States (such as the Mixtecos, who are now the largest Indigenous population in California) cause fear of a competition for resources, which is often a game of politics. Clearly there are critiques that are legitimate and warranted, as Xicanas/os need to be critical of themselves as well and their fostering of relationships and co-existence with other Indigenous communities. Evidence does exist of "new agers" within the Danza or Xicana/o movement that do appropriate certain traditions without permission or perhaps conceptualize spirituality as only a realm for material or superficial power and/or status, but this is also the case in other Indigenous communities as well. The question arises: how does one protect ceremony without closing it? This complex question, having no solid answer, is not only relevant for Xicanas/os but for all Indigenous peoples. As Xicanas/os engage in ceremony and invite others to participate, they risk those ceremonies being misinterpreted and/or appropriated.

While it cannot be denied that Xicanas/os possess a particular historical context with a "Mexican" identified population (thus the term MeXicana), the process/goal of reunification of all Indigenous peoples throughout this hemisphere has led to the ideological transformation of the word Xicana. Roberto Hernández (2005) discusses a new epistemic trend emerging within Chicana/o Studies which is Indigenous (evidenced in the 2004 creation of an Indigenous caucus within NACCS). The use or promotion of Xicana Indígena is meant to expand notions and meanings, rather than limit them. Xicanas are the descendants of Indigenous people that were forced to migrate out of their homelands due to economic and/or social repression. Those descendants born and/or raised in the United States experience a particular context, experience, and lived reality

that is common and shared, not just by Mexicans, but by all those that come from other repressed locations throughout the continent, be it Central or South America. Xicana Indígena refers to diaspora—the experience of displacement and economic disparity. "Xicana" describes our urban/historical experience and has functioned as a doorway to multiple understandings and epistemologies. Xicanas have opened this door in new and multiple ways. The term Xicana is important because it continues to honor the past by maintaining a connection to the historical trajectory of "Chicano," and all that the word carries. Through Xicana, that history is maintained, while opening new doorways of possibility. It affirms that our language, our words, and the terms we value *are* important and matter.

The loss, uncertainty, or suppression of identity, once arriving or being raised in the U.S. has caused Xicanas/os to form a new nation built upon an experience of displacement and search for self. The "not-knowing" of direct ancestral lineage has created the need for Xicanas to search for connections and roots to a community and identity. Often times, Xicana identity reflects an "inter-tribal" or Pan-Indigenous experience. Similar to the term Native American, Xicana is a more generalized term that is interchangeable with the direct Indigenous nation, if known (for example: I am Xicana, but I am also Caxcan). For those that do not know direct bloodline, Xicana is a term to maintain the connection to an Indigenous nation and identity. Roberto Rodríguez (1996) describes Xicana as a revolutionary "spirit" and whether or not one self-identifies with the term Xicana, it is how they live their lives that can reflect this same spirit. The same can be said for similar terms that historically were acts of reclamation, resistance, self-determination, and self-naming such as Boricua, Pilipino, or Diné (rather than Navajo).

At the same time, the term Xicana can relate to Stuart Hall's definition of the "floating signifier" (1997). Xicana does not have a "settled" definition and the definitions we have at this moment in time are really systems of meaning that are historically articulated by historical circumstances. These systems of meanings will change because history evolves, but people make history and, as such, how "Xicana" is expressed may change. The ways Xicanas carry this identity through their dress, language, and ways of being can be read on the body as a text and can signify an idea. The open notions of the meaning of Xicana will continue to take shape as it goes through the complicated process of interaction with others. Xicana exists through representation and the ways in which people interpret and present its meaning. As Frantz Fanon (2000) discusses the ways in which the self emerges and how people become conscious of him/herself, he argues that the self only emerges in a relationship to the other. In order for the self to be recognized, the other cannot tell the one who he/she is; the other needs to accept one for who they are. This recognition process does not happen in a colonial situation because the colonizer tells the colonized who he/she is; therefore, the colonized self becomes invisible and the colonized does not have the power to contest. Xicana sensibilities and notions of self became invisibilized by mainstream society that dictated the acceptable labels and identities.

For Xicanas, the colonizer has determined the names and identities of the community with the words "Hispanic" and "Latino." These terms completely delete Indigenous identity from existing: "'Hispanic is not a race,' said Mr. Quiroz, whose ancestors were the Quechua people, of the Central Andes. 'Hispanic is not a culture. Hispanic is an invention by some people who wanted to erase the identity of indigenous

communities in America.'" (Decker 2011: 3). These terms, which focus on Spanish colonial and linguistic heritages, pose a virtual war against an Indigenous presence. Therefore, these imposed, yet accepted, mainstream labels are being challenged. With Fanon, he believes that one must assert his/her "Blackness;" the part that has been denied. This belief is similar to the one underlying the assertion of Xicana Indígena. Xicanas have been denied identity and an Indigenous past, therefore, Xicanas have begun to assert their "Indigenousness" in order to demand recognition, and in the process, reclaim self.

It was inevitable that the Xicana Indígena identity, as well as Danza Mexica, should identify and become part of the political, economic, and spiritual struggle of the Xicana/o nation of people, but just as Chicanas/os were fighting for justice here in this country in the 1960s, they began to imitate their oppressors and accept values of individualism and materialism (Acuña 1981; Forbes 1973). Part of the colonization is the belief that there is no time "to think or be spiritual," because instead [we] are going through immediate, personal needs/political struggles. In contrast, political activists believed that the downfall of the Chicano Movement was due to a lack of critical thinking/analysis and a lack of strong spiritual foundation that would function simultaneously and in sync with political work (Muñoz 1989; Moraga 1993; 2011). Thus, a Movement of Xicanas/os began to take up Indigenous traditions in the hopes of both solidifying their identity, and bringing them the spiritual faith and hope needed for change. As Cherrie Moraga proclaimed, "The road to our future is the road from our past" (1993: 171).

Spirituality is part of the struggle that all people, as all people are Indigenous to some land base, must face in today's world. It would be difficult for anyone to deny the

negative state of affairs in which we find ourselves in this world. Western culture has brought destruction and war to this continent. Our society is in crisis. As people, we all struggle to find a way to revitalize and strengthen the culture of our people by means of returning to our roots. With the re-birth of pride and culturalism, more people have begun to recognize Xicanisma as a means to achieving this goal. Xicanisma is a call for a full-on "Ideological shift." As Xicanas/os in exile, it is important to not remain in exile, but rather to permeate the communities that surround us. In order to change the system, we must change ways of thinking. Through education, and even re-shaping popular culture, music, and art, we can change our communities. Still, we must begin from where we are at, in order to arrive to where we would like to be (Alinsky 1971). The resurgence of Xicanas/os identifying as such, as Indigenous, and re-connecting to our Earth Consciousness and spirituality, has become a way of life for many Xicanas/os. If the conditions in which we find ourselves are the result of a historical process, then perhaps the strength needed to bring about a solution lies also in our past, and in our most spiritual and ancient Way of Life.

The 1992 quincentennial, or 500-year anniversary of the European invasion and genocide of Indigenous people, marked a very important moment historically. Prophesies and oral histories were coming to revelation and the necessity for women to be on the forefront of political, social, and spiritual action was critical. A contemporary Indigenous, woman-centered philosophical base located in a commitment to resistance was taking formation. Throughout the continent, Indigenous leaders of various communities were gathering to strategize, mobilize, and create plans in which to organize the reunification of the continent and focus on the decolonization, resistance, and

restoration of Indigenous communities. Indigenous women took a vocal and active role in this organizing. Self-determined Xicanas living in the U.S. context took responsibility for their role in this process through full and active participation. Xicanas began to think, write, and organize within the community toward sovereign nation-building and in collaboration with other Indigenous nations within the U.S. and intercontinentally.

Aztlan and Xicanisma were ideas being reclaimed, demonstrating that we have the right to determine our destiny and our spiritual lives as a people and to seek restorative justice, respect, and righteousness as Indigenous peoples. In his article "The Indian and the Researcher," Brayboy (2000) discusses strategic ways that identities and even behaviors are appropriated in order to gain political, social power and promote an agenda of empowerment. Through the promotion of certain symbols, clothing and ideas, Xicanas were appropriating markers of indigeneity. Holland (1998), discusses "semiotic mediation" as the idea when cultural symbols are used to make, create, and teach meaning. Perhaps the notions of Aztlan and Xicanisma were used in the same way; to create meaning and symbols of Indigenous identity in order to combat racist propaganda of not belonging. According to Laura Gutierrez's essay, "Deconstructing the Mythical Homeland: México in Contemporary Performance:"

> In the process of reclaiming a social and political space within the United States, Chicana/os had to imagine (or create) a mythical homeland (Aztlan or the present-day United States Southwest) in order to explain their indigenous roots, their nomadism, and therefore their 'lack' of territorial space. Part of their territorial reclamation project points to an important gesture that needs to be highlighted here: Chicanas/os cannot be defined necessarily as a diasporic community given that conquest and annexation are part of a shared historical heritage. This is complicated by the fact that for Chicanas/os, Mexican cultural heritage has been critical in the construction of a cultural identity, regardless of their date of 'arrival' into the United States. Thus, in the Chicana/o imaginary, both Aztlan and

> México (the nation-state) signify the place of origin (Gaspar de Alba 2003: 65)

In this essay, Gutíerrez argues that it can be viewed as problematic for Xicanas to consider themselves "in diaspora" because, unlike other Latinos, such as Puerto Ricans, Xicanas do not necessarily have a place that they come from. Further, if Xicanas are claiming that they have always been "here," in the U.S. Southwest (as was claimed through 1970s Chicano nationalism), and if we are claiming a history of migration, then Gutíerrez questions, how can we be "in diaspora"?

> Chicana feminists, beginning in the sixties and seventies, had to negotiate between these two positions in relation to nationalism. On the one hand, the reclamation of a symbolic geographical space validates the existence of Chicanas/os within the United States by claiming the Southwest as the place of origin. But at the same time, Aztlan is imagined in masculinist fashion, thus excluding women and their so-called female preoccupations as valid subjects and practices. However, México is not an alternative for Chicana feminists as it is also constructed by the masculine imagination; for Chicanas, traveling (both literally and symbolically) to this homeland involves a process of deconstruction as opposed to affirmation of one's true identity (Gaspar de Alba 2003: 65).

Gutíerrez presents an interesting point and a fissure within the current definition that many Xicana Indígenas are using, but however brings us back to the place of "limbo," positioning Xicanas/os as "landless" and without an identity. While her points are valid and critical, they are also disparaging. Xicana Indígenas are identifying themselves as a people that are in diaspora, a people that have been economically deported by their governments and forced to seek new places to live, work and combat the political, social and economic repressions and oppressions left behind. Perhaps, as Gutierrez points out, Xicanas, as a people, do not come from "one" place, but the "idea/ideology" of "Xicana Indígena" does clearly stem from a geographic location of the U.S. Southwest, a place

many Xicanas/os identify as Aztlan. Xicana ideology (and identity), born in this space, began to disperse and, in effect, be in diaspora to other parts of the U.S. Further, Xicanas are restoring the feminine and claiming connection to their ancestors and ancestral places of origin throughout México, and Central/South America, and thus are identifying themselves as products of the diaspora of Indigenous peoples that left (or were forced from) their pueblos or original territories. Thus, this positionality of Xicanas (as opposed to Gutíerrez) restores a woman-centered connection to land and roots to our land bases in the many places on this continent.

Xicanas identify with this displacement and forced migration, which is a phenomenon happening globally. Studying how Xicanas deal with migration, cyclical movements, and transnational realities—through this notion of Aztlan, or creating home in new places—will impact hemispheric and global Indigenous studies. The notion of Aztlan has evolved; it can be in many places or expressed in different ways by different peoples and experiences. It begs the question: How do Xicanas/os maintain their "Indigenous identity" despite transnational migration? Whereas in México, a person may be considered mestizo or Indian, once they are in the U.S. they are identified as Mexican, Hispanic, Latino, or until 1974 they were identified as white. Returning to Aztlan or a Xicana self-identity can mean returning north or it can mean returning home, wherever home may be. It can be an experience and a belief.

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, the project of "returning" is not so much about returning land to a community in the political sense, but returning rights to the land. These rights include the ability to move about the land, to fish, and to gather foods and medicines traditional to peoples and communities. Similar

to many Native Peoples that have been displaced, removed, and relocated and have had to create new homes, intertribal relations, and still carry their memory of origin alive, Xicanas/os are living this same reality. Xicanas, just as all Native Nations of the U.S., are seeking this idea of self-determination, not in a way that oppresses others or will infringe on the sovereignty of other Indigenous nations, but collectively in a respectful, interdependent and reciprocal way.

Mohawk scholar Taiaike Alfred (1999), in his book *Peace, Power and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, writes about the notion of sovereignty as something that Indigenous people carry in their hearts and minds. In the same way, Xicanas/os have used the understanding of Aztlan as something one carries with them. Alfred identifies sovereignty as a recovery of the teachings of ancestors, not a physical sovereignty as used in the legal Indian-State relationship. According to Alfred, that type of relationship has no relevance to Indian values. He challenges the reader to detach the meaning of sovereignty from its current legal understanding within a western value system of power relationships and ethnonationalism, and instead re-appropriate it to how Indigenous peoples think. Similarly,

> [Vine Deloria] was concerned that the Indian Movement would 'get stalled in its own rhetoric,' losing its sense of historical perspective and becoming a victim of its own success. Deloria was calling for a continuing revolution. He was 'warning against making the rhetoric of sovereignty and tradition a final rather than a beginning step' for those who engage in the vindication of indigenous peoples' rights (Grounds, Tinker, Wilkens 2003: 101).

For Indigenous peoples, sovereignty and self-determination are ideas that are embodied and personal, not inherited or granted, but part of our being. Clearly, the notion of sovereignty as the ideal, to have control over lands, was a rhetorical and political strategy

by Indigenous people. But Alfred questions if this is a realistic goal; he promotes rather that Indigenous people work to create a regime of respect in the relationship between Indigenous people and the state. He believes that we must choose to either be who we are at our core, or continue to use defense mechanisms that we have adopted in the neo-colonial context.

At the international UN level, sovereignty and self-determination are not viewed as goals against the state. Indigenous people are going outside of the state, to an international forum to advocate for their rights within the state. Ronald Niezen (2003) argues that the aim for Indigenous people at the global/macro level and local level is not to seek secession from their states for the following reasons:

> 1) They have come to recognize the value of collective work and similarities of struggle with different nations and do not want to exist in isolation;
>
> 2) They would not want to sever their treaties or trusts that have been established with the state;
>
> 3) They already have International status and do not need to become their own state to have that forum and;
>
> 4) They do not have the resources or even populations to create their own state.

Indigenous peoples have always viewed themselves as nations within nations, already having international relationships. Therefore, the aim is not sovereignty and autonomy, the way it is used in legal terms, but rather, Indigenous people (including Xicanas/os) aim for sovereignty, autonomy and self-determination over "their" communities, people and their lives.

In order to understand how Xicanas/os embraced the term "Indígena," the history and meanings of this term must be unpacked. The trans-coding of the term Indian, came

from the people on the ground. Re-claiming the misnomer "Indian," meant unifying a people under a pan-tribal identifier and undoing the plethora of racist "injun" stereotypes. To be Indian became a symbol of power and pride. This symbol extended throughout the western hemisphere, especially in the late 1980s and into the 1990s with the 500-year mark of the invasion of Columbus in 1992.

In the present day, radical, grassroots movements in México and other parts of Central/South America refer to themselves as "Indianistas" (Indianists) and the movement as "Indianismo" (Indianism), meaning pro-Indian rights of the people. In contrast, "Indigenismo" (Indigenism) or an "Indigenista" (Indigenist) movement was viewed as a negative concept imposed by the government, state and/or anthropologists that studied them. The holding on to the trans-coded term Indian, meant holding on to self-determination and self-definition (even through the use of a colonial term). The term "Indigenous," which is a fairly recent term, became popularized on a global scale in order to internationalize the experiences of colonized peoples of the world (Smith 2002; Niezen 2003). From this perspective, the term Indigenous became the widely accepted term that defined the 1990s United Nation's Decade of Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples, as well as the United Nations Declaration for rights of Indigenous Peoples. According the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues:

> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.

> On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group). This preserves for these communities the sovereign right and power to decide who belongs to them, without external interference (website).

While the global definition of Indigenous is widely accepted, in certain parts of Latin America, the term "Indígena/Indigenous" still holds a negative stigma as a construct of dominant society. The same has been argued for the term "Indio/Indian," as a colonial misnomer that needs to be done away with. "Native American" often times only refers to First Nation Peoples of North America (meaning the United States and Canada and excluding México). Some view the term Indigenous as one that positively replaces "Indian." Clearly, many arguments exist for and against the various terms that exist.

While it is important to continue to create awareness and understanding around these terms, the 1980s-90s rise of global Indigenous consciousness created a global consensus to adopt and embrace the term "Indigenous." Simultaneously, Xicanas and Xicanos were also embracing a more developed Indigenous identity, doing away with the essentialist notions of the 1960s. They started identifying their movement and consciousness as "Indigenismo" and themselves as "Indigenistas." To reiterate, in México, these terms were seen as negative, but for Xicanas/os, who took a direct Spanish translation of the term Indigenous, these terms were meant to create a radical approach, conceptually aligned to what is labeled "Indianismo" in México. As Xicanas and Xicanos began to interact more closely with Indigenous peoples and movements in México, confusion from the part of Mexican Indianistas would result. Questions arose as to why these Xicanas/os were calling themselves Indigenistas, when that identified with a historically racist ideology. Once the dialogue ensued, it became clear that the

ideologies were aligned and soon Mexican pro- Indian activist began to view Xicanas/os as important allies in the movement for liberation of all Indigenous peoples on both sides of the border.

While the international Indigenous work at the UN has created a definition base to define the world's Indigenous people, it is still a "working definition." The lack of a finite definition of the term "Indigenous" presents challenges to scholarly analysis, but is preferable to a rigorous definition that would only serve to close intellectual borders. A closed/finished definition, rather than a still porous one, would be premature and futile. Debates over definition are interesting and similar to the 1960s debates of the term Chicano. There are multiple approaches to the term Indigenous, each with their own political origins and implications. The ambiguity of the term is perhaps its most significant feature. It can be defined three ways: 1) legally/analytically; 2) pragmatically/strategically (self-definition); and 3) collectively (the global in-group definition) (Niezen 2003). Indigenous people are defined as descendants from original inhabitants of a region prior to the arrival of settlers who have since become the dominant population. They have maintained cultural differences, distinct from the dominant population, and political marginality resulting in poverty, limited access to services, and absence of protections against unwanted "development." They share an attachment to subsistence economy, to a territory or homeland that predates the arrival of settlers and surveyors, to a spiritual system that predates the arrival of missionaries, and to a language that expresses everything that is important and distinct about their place in the universe. They share destruction and loss of these things and a commitment to find stability, even if it means using the very tools of literacy and law that, in other hands, are responsible for

their oppression. They seek a correction of the historical deficit and present their experiences alongside the exclusionary and incomplete accounts of states (Niezen 2003). They have deep attachments to the land in which they live, or ancestral lands from which they were removed, and seek restorative justice. The above goals and definitions apply closely to that of Xicanas/os. There is a definition, but no definition at the same time and this works for the purposes of what Indigenous people are trying to achieve. In the same way, "Xicana" is defined, but also does not have a closed, final definition. Even though the work of human rights is often slow, halting and ineffectual, there is the faint possibility that an international agency just might act with urgency and effectiveness. The UN provides mundane venues for the expression of extravagant hope (Niezen 2003). Indigenous Peoples' identity, and I would argue Xicana/o identity, is a tool of liberation, taken over and rearticulated and put to use by the people themselves.

Historical and contemporary works about Native peoples have placed them as victims, rather than active agents in their own destiny. Indigenous struggles for self-determination and sovereignty have been downplayed, ignored or written out of history. This can be compared to the work by Triollot, "An Unthinkable History" about the Haitian Revolution. The fact that Black people could revolt and be active agents in their own destiny in such a massive way was literally "unthinkable" to the west. In a similar way, Native resistance in history has also been thought of as "unthinkable" as the master narrative continues to perpetuate stereotypes (Mihesuah 1996) and notions of savagery. These stereotypes and even colonial identities/labels (i.e., Indian) are difficult to break away from, even within the Native community. The deep colonialism and legacy of colonization exists in every facet of Indigenous peoples' lives. Linda Tuhiwai Smith

(2002) also discusses the necessity for Native people to re-think and re-visit old master narratives and not only deconstruct them, but (re)build our own. In his article, "White History: U.S. Imperialism in Higher Education," Ward Churchill (2003) writes about the ways in which people believe intimately in the systems of legitimacy, such as the University. As both Althusser (1971) and Churchill (2003) promote, the Ideological State Apparatuses must be deconstructed. The work is to understand ourselves as socialized beings and products of a historical process. While Sandy Grande (2004) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002) both argue that Native scholars must move beyond deconstructive analysis and work, it is still very necessary as the master narratives are still at play. We must have a radical shift in our ways of thinking. I call this an "ideological warfare," meaning that the only way that Indigenous communities and oppressed communities of the world will make revolutionary changes is if we begin to challenge and change our ways of thinking; our thought patterns are still very much controlled by dominant society. Only in asserting our own knowledge systems and creating oppositional knowledge and perhaps alternative/ supplementary/ oppositional educational systems, can we change patterns of thought and peel away colonial layers.

Many Native scholars have made significant strides in creating oppositional works and have challenged the victimization model. In *Indigenizing the Academy,* Devon Mihesuah and Cook-Lynn (2004) examine the ways in which Native people have influenced the academy. Rather than adhering to the down-streaming model of only the dominant structures influencing Native people, they give examples of how Native people have transformed education/the academy. Cook-Lynn (1998) writes about the need for Native intellectualism. She states that we must "talk back" and write history from within.

In other words, Native people must have more control over what is written and not only be objects or even subjects of research, but actual researchers writing their own histories on their own terms.

While Churchill (2003) and Duane Champagne argue in *Natives and Academics* (1998) that Native American Studies is only a band-aid solution for a larger problem, I continue to believe in the discipline's potential and possibility as a tool for social justice and social change, either through community or activist scholarship. Native American Studies can be a site (one of many) where alternative perspectives and Indigenous Peoples movements for liberation and self-determination can be imagined and articulated. Smith's (2002) *Decolonizing Methodologies* gives twenty-five examples of projects (naming, representing, testimony, networking, reframing, etc.) as possibilities of work that can and should be done in Native communities. Indigenous people have historically resisted invasion and colonization in multiple ways: overtly by fighting back (such as in the early 1500s when the Totonacos drove Spaniards away because they were cutting too many trees, or the Mayans, who proceeded to kill all the plants and animals brought by the Spaniards in this early time period, or the 1781 revolt against the Spaniards led by Tupac Katari of Bolivia); tragically, through mass suicides (such as the mass ritual suicide in the 16th century by the U'wa in Colombia, when they jumped off a cliff in resistance to Spanish encroachment); or through syncretism (religious/spiritual practices under the guise of Christianity). These were all forms of historical Indigenous resistance.

Contemporary examples of resistance can be seen at the International level, where Indigenous people have claimed a global collective within the United Nations (Niezen 2003) for collective action on issues that affect all Native peoples in all parts of the

world. Organizing and networking on a hemispheric level has proven productive as relationships and shared histories have been encountered and people are beginning to awaken to a collective consciousness. Hegemonic ideologies that persist in the Americas are being challenged as Indigenous people are reclaiming Indigenous identity, an identity that was once rejected and denied. What was once rejected is now being considered. Indigenous peoples' claims for self-determination occur hemispherically and globally, but do not disrupt the individual sovereignty claims by each nation.

In terms of cultural practice, there is a resurgence of Indigenous consciousness, such as that noted in Jonathon Warren's *Racial Revolutions: Antiracism and Indian Resurgence in Brazil.* Warren's text discusses Indigenous Peoples in Brazil reclaiming and asserting their Indian identity. He also notes that, in Brazil, similar to the U.S. in the recent census, there was a dramatic increase in the Native population. This increase is not necessarily due to the rates of procreation, but, rather, to the rise in Indigenous consciousness and reclamation of identity. This reclamation has occurred not solely through naming, but also in practice as more people are returning to traditional ways. This experience is relevant to Xicanas/os who, through the practice of Danza and other spiritual ways, believe themselves to be fulfilling the prophesy and prayers and of their ancestors. The buffalo can also serve as a relevant example: One hundred years ago, in Yellowstone National Park, there were twenty-three bison left. Today, there are 2,500 because the prayers for their return were answered one hundred years later (Birnbaum 1998). Xicanas/os learning to maintain their sacred ways are also the answer to the prayers and hopes of our ancestors.

The Indigenous participation at the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous People is indeed promising, as Indigenous people are making collective calls to action globally. People are encountering each other and encountering themselves through a framework that is relatively new. They are no longer "class-based," as was the trend in Peru, to label Indigenous people as campesinos through Marxist/socialist analysis, but rather are embracing and claiming Indigenous identity because this claim has a real benefit on the international level. Indigenous people have found a forum upon which to speak and address their issues that are ignored even in their own geopolitical states/nations. Through this work, Indigenous people are creating and articulating new strategies from which to deal with modernity and the many threats of globalization that will ultimately affect Indigenous land, economics and culture. Native people, through the United Nations, have essentially, to the mainstream eye, been revived. They have appeared in large numbers in a space that was denied to them and have proven that they are living and breathing, thriving and surviving. Whereas Indigenous people were left for extinct by the mainstream, suddenly they have become active agents in political and social change, globally and locally.

At the 2011 ENLACE Intercontinental Gathering of Indigenous Women of the Americas in Hueyapan, Morelos, I was able to participate in a working group that was creating a document to declare what it means to be an Indigenous woman working for political and social change. I found this group to speak to the answers I was seeking, in terms of how Xicanas define themselves and their desires. In this working group, the women declared that, "to be an empowered woman means to exercise my rights, my voice, make decisions for myself, be free, be educated, love myself, know the

possibilities I have, strive for consciousness, truth, transformation, freedom, justice, and rebeldía."[102] All of these qualities are the same vision that Xicana Indígenas hold for themselves. In this working group, many of the women discussed that the men continue to represent women in political spaces, locally, nationally and internationally. Most of the social structures in place continue to be *machista*, male dominated, and patriarchal: the Church, politics, home, and the world itself are constructed by men as leaders and decision-makers. Therefore, the women declared that there were only two possibilities, to either create a new system or to change the existing system. One woman in the group stated that, as women, "we know what we need to do, but patriarchy has saturated our every state of being and place of existence, that fear keeps us from taking a stand: fear of poverty; fear of violence" (personal notes).

These fears also keep women divided. Their vision included equality for men and women, not a reverse power dynamic of women ruling over men. They demanded transparency in all levels of leadership, beginning with the home. The women also demanded that we must look at Mother Earth as someone with her own rights, and, as women, we have to speak on her behalf. In addition, our spirituality needs to be practiced, not talked about. The lessons from this working group articulated the very same desires and aspirations that Xicana Indígenas endeavor to achieve. It is impossible for any one person to decide the right way to be Xicana. The desire for a "pure or authentic moment or form" leads to "a negation of a long history of heterogeneity and failure to come to grips with that history" (Hernández 2005: 131).

Roberto Hernández argues that "the origins of the Chicano Movement was a union of multiple organizations and struggles of similar, yet by no means identical

[102] From my personal notes.

political persuasions" (2005: 125). People were using the concept of Chicano in dramatically different ways. The same can be argued about Xicana Indígena identity and Danza Mexica. There is no uniform definition, motive or practice of either. Hernández believes "it is more useful, and in fact, historically accurate, to speak of [any] such divisions as the anxiety and inability to come to terms with the wide range of perspectives that coexisted alongside an often monolithic Chicano cultural nationalism" (2005: 128). The paradigm shift in Chicano nationalism not only called for an Indigenous consciousness, but proclaimed that Chicanas/os are heterogeneous with multifarious realities. From global politics, hemispheric consciousness and the need for Indigenous solidarity emerges a new generation calling themselves Xicana/o.

There is a sense of urgency and necessity to unite with other Indigenous nations and create a stronger international force: "There is no other option available for the Xicano Mexicano people but to join the Indigenous autonomous movements of the Western Hemisphere. The government of the U.S. will not address the suffering of our people, this we must do ourselves. This is our reality! The reality that will demand discipline and sacrifice" (Tonatierra, "A Call…"). The fact that so many Danza Mexica groups have formed in the last ten years is testament to the growing interest in returning to self. This movement, which ultimately began with the youth, is being sustained by the youth: "Followers of what scholars call the indigenous movement are primarily young people searching for an ideology, a memory, a lost identity" (Sandoval 2000).

When Danza is present at a political protest or at a cultural event, either in the U.S. or México, it serves as a reminder of Indigenous identity to all MeXicanas/os. Through transnationalism, the growing population of Indigenous Mexicanas/os in the

U.S. is going to continue to change understandings of identity and spirituality: "The struggle for Indigenous identity and self-determination is a dynamic and on-going process, demanding constant self-assessment and evaluation" (Grounds, Tinker, and Wilkens 2003: 101). The shifting meanings and understandings of identity will certainly allow for new ideas/thoughts/terms to emerge. According to John Trudell, "we have to think about the terminology that we use. We must think about thoughts that go with that terminology…because if we do not think about this struggle we are engaged in, if we do not use our minds to think about the coming generations, then [the invaders] will win their psychological genocide against us" (Grounds, Tinker, Wilkins 2003: 128-129). Danza has served as a form of empowerment that has incited Xicanas/os to overcome history and/or to change historical conditions. Perhaps today many use the term Chicana or Xicana lightly, without the context that I have presented in this dissertation, but historically the call for a Xicana Indígena identity is really a call for a "compromiso" or a commitment to one's community. The terms, names, and language that Xicanas/os challenge and/or assert create new beliefs, which then create new forms of knowledge, epistemologies, and world views. "Xicana Indígena" is still in process; it is not a finished project, but, rather, constantly in flux. Xicana/o Indígena becomes more than an identity or label, but rather a social plan to combat the on-going colonialism. There is no way to get rid of colonialism. It continues to shape the legacy of identity and the economic possibilities of countries and political regimes. However, asserting a Xicana Indígena identity forces us to confront our conditions and create "lucha/fight." Part of this fight or struggle is to know our history—to really KNOW our history. Knowing our history will allow Xicana Indígenas to know themselves. For some, Xicana Indígena may seem

redundant, as the term Xicana in and of itself means Indigenous, but it serves a purpose. Stating that I am Xicana Indígena emphasizes that there are many pueblos and I am distinct but connected to many. Xicana Indígena decrees a departure from older, nationalist notions of Chicano identity and insists on a firm declaration of indigeneity. Xicana Indígena continues to be in the "(re)defining" process, as its meaning has not yet achieved a collective consensus (it exists informally, but not formally). As of yet, there has not been a national gathering where a wide representation of Xicanas have come together to discuss this. I hope that this piece inspires such a gathering (not unlike the 1969 National Chicano Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado), where Xicana Indígena women can gather and write the manifesto to create the updated political, social, and spiritual agenda for the new future of our communities. The goal would be to create a common ideological/political position. This position would transcend borders and create networks with other Indigenous peoples that share similar issues. The defense of all rights of Indigenous people would be at the forefront. I expect a similar scenario, but of course on a much larger and profound scale, for the much anticipated United Nations World Conference for Indigenous Peoples slated for 2014.

Ultimately, the history of identity is both parallel and overlapping with the history of Danza. Danza represents a resistance against "US and Hispanic hegemonies" (Maestas, n.d.: 97). For Xicanos, Danza was a coming home; it was a way to facilitate the reconstruction of identity and notions of nation, land and Indigeneity. It became advantageous to call ourselves Xicana Indígena on the international level and it was also important at the most localized level in the community, for it was within Danza circles that human dignity could be restored.

CHAPTER 13

~MAHTLACTLI HUAN EYI~

CONCLUSION

Danza Mexica, in its origins, was a spiritual practice, a way of life and a way to connect the mind and body to the universe. Danza has continued to provide this cultural and spiritual connection, but has expanded its purpose to encompass a strategy of decolonization and community empowerment: "'Traditional dance,' born of colonialism, continues to deal with colonialism. Dances present strategies of interaction with powerful others, models of behavior, and coded and hidden content of cultural continuity" (Krystal 2007: 77). Since the arrival of Europeans, Danza has served as a tactic to counteract cultural and spiritual genocide. For Chicanas/os that were the first to experience Danza in the U.S., it became a decolonizing agency not only for the people who learned/practiced it, but for the observers, who by virtue of watching Danza, developed new consciousness and thus a decolonized state or at least the potential to imagine a decolonial existence.

Danza was both an individual and collective experience on all fronts. Danza provided a spiritual and philosophical base that Chicanas/os were able to claim as their own. In addition, Danza provided the avenue upon which MeXicanas/os were able to re-imagine new systems of meaning and representations: "Danza Azteca itself [is] a decolonizing force, in that it engages in the semiosis, or ethnic symbol production of identity for the Chicano community" (Maestas, n.d.: 16). While other systems and institutions, such as the Catholic Church, were imposed, Chicanas/os began to construct

their own platforms that ultimately shaped and transformed their identities, politics, and visions for their communities. Danza provided a way to reclaim and/or reaffirm their Xicana/o Indigenous heritage.

Despite its epistemic potential, Danza has undergone many challenges and trials. Danza and danzantes did not remain untouched or unaffected by colonialism, but, in fact, have had a difficult time overcoming it. The effects of colonialism, the shifts from rural to urban society, modernity and living in a neoliberal world have perpetuated the seductive nature of power, fame, materialism, and social status. These effects have infiltrated their way into Danza and danzantes. For some, the shift from feeling powerless in society to suddenly finding a space where one can possess control or power, is alluring. While, for the most part, Danza has been a strategy to protect against exploitation and dominant culture, some will argue that some danzantes have in fact exploited Danza for their own profit or notions of power, creating a subordinate power structure. This subordinate power structure is ultimately fabricated as it falls completely outside the realm of the mainstream dominant state or institution. This false power, only created, exerted, and meaningful within Danza circles, has little effect on the perceptions of dominant society.

For some, this sense of power within Danza only serves as a temporary redemption from second class status treatment. Issues of gender oppression and/or exclusion, alcoholism, heterosexism, and ego are some of the forms of false power that still show their faces within Danza. A recent internet flyer advertising a community Danza practice promoted Danza in the following way: “Would you like a body like mine? Forget the smelly gyms and join Danza” (www.maclaarte.org). Below the text was an

image of a Danza instructor in her regalia posed in a seductive manner. This advertisement was problematic, as it removed the spiritual context of Danza and reduced it to an exercise workout with the potential to make one's physical body fit a mainstream standard. Danza, in this advertisement, privileged an overtly male gaze and became sexualized. It became articulated as a commercialized product that can be exploited for a superficial purpose. This plays into a real fear of Danza becoming too mainstream and becoming a similar practice like American yoga, for example, which is rarely contextualized in its historically-rooted, spiritual context.

Public perception, in all of its forms, impacts public policy and social interaction (i.e., education, politics, cultural institutions, etc.). This society suffers from a tremendous amount of misinformation and ignorance, demonstrated in school text books and obsession with sensationalized media. Overcoming the stereotypes and not further perpetuating them can prove to be difficult in a society that is comfortable with its preconceived and/or manufactured notions. Romanticization, fetishism, new agers, and hippies have also contributed to the misinformation. New agers have appropriated stereotypes of what they think Native American/Indigenous people are, with no interest in their lives as they actually are. Other issues of corruption, jealousy, and greed also permeate Danza circles and the ways that both outsiders and insiders choose to promote and/or represent Danza. All of the above issues can send conflicting messages to the world and demonstrate the ways in which external and internal issues interact and impact each other. Danza is not devoid of critique and there is a continual need for self-reflection. The external issues (corruption, jealousy, and greed) can influence the inter-personal relationships within Danza. Danza circles are viewed as "familias," and, as with

all families, there are disagreements, personality conflicts, drama, and relationships that come and go.

In response to some of these issues above, many danzantes have shifted from group to group, looking for a space/circle that fulfills their emotional needs and evades corruption. Some have left the Mexicayotl path of Danza and have gone to the Conchero path, returning to the Church and stringent structure. According to one danzante, Atlauhxiuhtik, many considered the Mexicayotl (similar to the Red Road) as too strict (by not allowing any drinking, for example) and too aligned with Northern Native ways. The Concheros, on the other hand, were not strict when it came to drinking. As an example, I witnessed Concheros drinking beer while wearing their regalia in some Danza ceremonies in México.

For the Mexicayotl, Danza was a way of life that extended into their daily habitus, or socially learned dispositions (Bordieu 1977), and the rejection of not only Christianity, but all things brought by the colonizer, including alcohol abuse. For the Mexicayotl, it was deemed important to especially separate those colonial practices from ceremonial space. According to another danzante, Tonenca (personal interview), who was once part of the Mexicayotl and had in recent years changed to the Conchero tradition, the Mexicayotl held just as many contradictions as in the Conchero groups that she was trying to escape. Leaders were having extramarital affairs and/or began selling la cultura. The lack of structure in the Mexicayotl made it easy for any danzante to start his/her own group, proclaiming him/herself as a spiritual leader with the power to seduce others into becoming followers. The dysfunctionalism and power dynamics that had begun to be displayed within the growing numbers of Danza groups led to many of them falling apart.

Tonenca had returned to the Church with the hopes of encountering something more spiritual or with more structure. According to Tonenca, at least with the Concheros, the hierarchical leadership is clear and one knows what they are getting themselves into.

All of these issues and people in search for a Danza circle are signs of people struggling to overcome colonization and the effects of it. Struggles for power (even if it is a false-sense of power or ego), have caused division and disjointedness in much of the Danza movement. Interestingly, many of the danzantes from México (the very place where Danza originates), believe that the Danzantes from the U.S. are much more united than in México and serve as a positive example of how they should all conduct themselves. Danzantes in México expressed admiration for how well organized danzantes in the U.S. are and how they are able to connect the *cultural* to political organizing for social justice, which is rare in México. Danzantes in the U.S. might differ on this opinion, as groups in the U.S. also experience their share of dysfunctionalism and look toward Mexicana/o danzantes as being geographically, and thus spiritually, closer to the culture. While Danzantes in the U.S. were looking toward Danzantes in México as an example and for teachings, Mexicana/o danzantes were doing the same with Danzantes in the U.S.

The various dysfunctional behaviors within Danza groups cannot be entirely diagnosed as byproducts of colonization, as many are due to personality conflicts, inter-personal conflicts and human emotion. Many danzantes are in search of a solid space to call their own, without drama, but rather renewal of spirit, not a further denigration of it. This does not infer that Danza should be or ever was homogenous, or that Danza should remain unchanging or static. On the contrary, Danza has a history of heterogeneity and

has demonstrated throughout history its flexibility and ability to shift in order to survive. This has been the case with many Indigenous nations across the hemisphere who have decided that, just as there are different ways to deal with the world, there can also be different ways to pray. Each Danza group can utilize the teachings in a way that works for them, while still participating in a collective path toward the same ideal.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said writes in reference to endangered cultures that "natives banded together in independence and nationalistic groupings that were based on a sense of identity which was ethnic, religious, or communal, and was opposed to further Western encroachment" (1993: 218). This is what Xicanas/os and danzantes are doing: they are banding together to resist imperialism and destruction of their identity and culture. This does not mean that Danza has escaped colonialism or the changes that resulted unscathed. Tensions within Danza continue to spur the formation of new groups, diverse ideologies and meanings. Just like Catholicism is not the religion today that it was in the 1500s, nor do people practice it in the same way; similarly, Danza traditions are not the same today nor practiced uniformly by all danzantes. At the same time, all danzantes can still come together in a common space for ceremonial purposes. Modernizing or adapting to modernization is not necessarily a sign that it is not traditional. Rather, it continues to evolve and modify to the people today and their needs.

Using the example of the Nahuatl language, there are many new words that are "Nahuatized" from Spanish. Some critique this because it is not "true" Nahuatl. The reality is that the Spanish borrowed from Nahuatl because they did not have words for many things, so, therefore, in contemporary Nahuatl, they are borrowing Spanish for words they do not have. These "prestos" (borrowings) are not bad, nor detrimental to the

Nahuatl language, they are only augmenting it and creatively expanding it. In essence, Nahuatl speakers are nativizando/nativizing language and making it theirs. This is the case with Danza; the use of modern materials and beads to create regalia, or the dancing in tennis shoes on hot asphalt, are not denigrating la cultura, but adapting to the lived realities. As a result of the juxtaposition of cultural realities, contemporary MeXicanas/os have made Danza their own. Based in Indigenous/Mexica knowledge, danzantes have created new Danzas, songs, incorporated other Native traditions, and new forms of expression and/or ritual performance. While these new forms of expression may not demonstrate evidence of having direct Pre-Cuauhtemoc lineage, the use of innovation and adaptation can still be directly connected to ancestral ways. What some may critique as inventions within Danza (either the steps/dances or materials for regalia), become less important as people search for Danza con consencia, a Danza with consciousness.

According to Jack Weatherford (1988), "América"[103] has yet to be discovered. As a modern society, we have no idea nor have we yet been able to conceive of the wisdom and knowledge of the ancestors of this continent. Through examining Danza and its trajectory, one comes to a richer understanding not only of the Danza itself, but the history of a people and the ways in which this history has impacted their identities and understandings of self. The most revolutionary act is to remember. The fact that danzantes continue to return to sacred sites and live this tradition is in itself a revolutionary act. While memory can be liberating, as history has shown, it can also be traumatic:

[103] I insert the accent, as Moraga (1993) also inserts, indicating that indeed América con acento, points to a new cultural vision of an América without borders, and without confinement to the U.S. Rather, América is an extension of the whole continent.

> The enormity of the project to colonize indigenous peoples around the globe does not cease with the body count from the physical genocide, nor with the chronicling of the millions upon millions of square miles of territory that was stripped from Indigenous peoples' homelands. Perhaps the deepest, most enduring, and least discussed is the process through which indigenous peoples have been forced to reconceptualize the universe and their place in it. This reconceptualization is virtually undetectable from the perspective of the colonizer, but it can be viscerally destructive to the colonized. (Grounds, Tinker, Wilson 2003: 127)

If ancestors survived the past and resisted in multiple ways so that future generations could now live their traditions, in the same ways, danzantes must look forward. Our ancestors have cleared a path, so rather than view the future with anger or fear; danzantes are choosing to forge ahead, not surrendering any more of our traditional knowledge systems. Through the emergence of and revival of new ceremonies, as was the case in the 1970s, and the diffusion of coming of age ceremonies and rites of passage for young men and women (Ocelotl and Xilonen ceremonies), a new generation of danzantes are being prepared through the transmission of spirituality, moral codes, values of community, and social structure in these ceremonies. When one enters the Danza circle from the East direction, there is always a prayer at the doorway. In the same way, Danzantes are entering the future and welcoming the next generation with a prayer at the doorway.

According to Vento (1994), it was the poor people in México that preserved Danza, allowing it to survive, unlike the upper classes that lost everything. This is still the case today with Danza, where the traditions are primarily sustained within urban, lower socioeconomic classes, undocumented migrants, and working class Xicanas/os. Those upper middle class Chicanas/os (or Hispanics) and/or those that have assimilated have also lost much of everything having to do with their Indigenous identity and

spiritual practice. People have chosen to hold on tightly to Danza because, for many, it is viewed as one of the last elements that has not been destroyed or taken away from MeXicanas/os. For migrants, transnational Indigenous people, and Xicanas/os, Danza has been one of the many ways to deal with the challenges of life in the United States: "She dances to help Whites better understand Latinos as much as to help Latinos better understand one another" (Krystal 2007: 77). Through the practice of Danza, meanings are negotiated, created, contested and shared.

Even within the home, the practice of Danza has influenced new ways of being and creating spiritual space. As Maestas points out, "My mother had learned from her mother the importance of constructing a household altar using Catholic symbols. Her knowledge and acceptance of these ways surfaced when we began replacing the Catholic objects with indigenous ones. The use of such things as candles and flowers existed on the altar before, but became more prominent on our family's altar as we were taught of their indigenous importance." (Maestas, n.d.: 8) There is a process of reversal taking place, where MeXicana/o families are reversing the meanings of religious symbols and incorporating Indigenous spirituality in its representation.

In this same way, as I began showing interest and desire to pray in a Mexica, Danza way, my own grandmother began to bring out her yerbas (romero, ruda, and others) to show me how she also burns and/or uses herbs. All my life, my grandmother has had an altar on the fireplace mantle where she kept candles burning twenty-four hours.[104] What Danza in my life has allowed is the permission for my grandmother to reclaim older ways that she felt "embarrassed" about. She began to share with me that

[104] My uncle (a firefighter) has tried to make my grandmother used battery-operated candles, but for my grandma, those do not carry the same essence. She will only bring out the battery-operated candles when my uncle comes to her house.

her own mother used to go to traditional curanderas/healers and use Indigenous medicines, herbs, snake powder, cleansings with an egg, agua ardiente (pure alcohol), and marijuana for her various ailments. My grandmother admitted to me that, growing up, she was confused because my great-grandmother was also a devout Carmelita, part of a Catholic prayer circle devoted to the Virgen del Carmen. My grandmother could not understand how her mother could be a devout believer in Catholicism, yet still practice curanderismo, which many believed to be a form of brujería/witchcraft. My grandmother also shared with me that for a long time she had a dead hummingbird that she held onto for protection and good luck. She had been taught that anyone who owns a dead hummingbird (a Mexica symbol of will-power) would have positive things come to them, but she eventually threw it away because she was ashamed of what people might think of her; that she was strange or ridiculous to believe in such things. As I began to encourage her that those things were indeed sacred and that there was absolutely nothing wrong with believing in these items, she then asked me to bring her back a hummingbird the next time I went to México. The summer of 2010, after a visit to the curandera areas of the Mercado in Zacatecas, I was able to find a hummingbird that my grandmother now displays on her altar on the mantle near her candles. She has also added macaw feathers, sage, and an ojo de dios (a Huichol form of yarn work) to join the holy water and saints on her altar. In *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities*, Laura Pérez discusses the ways in which MeXicanas/os use modern structures to create traditional altars. For example, she notes that television sets are often used in MeXicana/o homes to display picture frames, hold candles or other sacred or cultural items. The television, which sits in a central location in most family rooms, serves as

both a modern device and a base for a family altar. Similarly, my grandmother uses her television in the same way. In addition to the fireplace mantle and inoperable speaker boxes, also used as altar spaces, the television is used as a base which holds a series of her grandchildren's high school graduation pictures and other small, special items. During Good Friday, a Catholic Lent holiday, she covers the television entirely with a white sheet and places a crucifix on top. This signifies that it is holy day where the television will not be turned on and is converted into an altar instead. When it was suggested to my grandmother that it was time to replace her old model television, she was resistant. The newer models of televisions are flat screens and would not have a place to hold her altar of frames. She has chosen to continue with her old television.

My mother, through my participation of Danza, has also begun collecting and adorning her home with Indigenous art and iconography. She burns copal and keeps sage nearby, a practice that did not exist during my childhood, but only came about because of my own sharing of these ways. Danza has opened doorways of acceptance for my family, reversing the beliefs around practices that were once shameful or hidden, and making them normative, and part of our daily life and existence. In many ways, through me, and this generation, our embrace of Native ways and spiritual values has made it okay for our parents and grandparents to return to those ways also. That is one of the greatest gifts that Danza has given to me. It allowed my grandfather to sit with me and make my first pair of ayoyotes (ankle seed pods worn in Danza) and to share with me his stories growing up in the pueblo and rancho. He remembered extracting sweet water from the maguey plants, the use of ocote (a copal resin wood) for light, since there was no electricity, and trajes de manta (Indigenous clothing made of raw materials) that his

grandfather always wore. The stories and knowledge transmitted to me were only possible because Danza was given birth into my life, and thus sparked an opening into the hearts and minds of my family also.

Maestas (n.d.) states that "maintenance of these [Danza] groups has resulted in growth and development of Danza Azteca into a successful decolonizing agent. For this reason it has profound implications for the Chicano Movement" (20). Danza has also been a good training ground to create community development. Inadvertently, danzantes have learned skills that have made them effective organizers, which provide great implications for the future. Danzantes have acquired an Indigenous social consciousness that strives to make the links rather than be forced to fight over crumbs. Danzantes have redefined the plate, so to speak, and the ways in which we work in cooperation with multiple communities.

Mario Aguilar states, "To be a true danzante, one must struggle each day with our own racism, attitudes, angers, and fears. On person cannot overcome all of these human weaknesses. La Danza Azteca, however gives us an artistic, creative, and poetic path to developing our inner self" (Maestas, n.d.: 67). Danza brings one closer to la energia creadora, the Great Spirit, our Creator. Danza is an artistic/creative path toward personal and spiritual development. At the same time, there is a saying in Danza: "primera la obligación y luego la devoción/ first obligation, and then devotion," meaning we must also take care of our families first. Danzantes should not get too fanatical on this path, and pulled away from their familial obligations. Part of balance is also taking care of one's partner, children, and extended family. I have witnessed some people that cast aside their partners, family and children, placing ceremony (whether it be Danza, spiritual

running for months, or other ceremonies) as more important, leaving partners to carry the full financial burden or responsibility of raising the children so that they can have a personal, spiritual experience. The purpose of ceremony is to bring families/communities closer, not further apart, whereas fanaticism only serves the ego. Generally, Danza causes one to pay attention to social and moral issues:

> If a person cannot agree to live by these Mexica rules, than that person should seek another place to walk 'the path' to spiritual growth. If a person does not see Danza Azteca as a spiritual path, then they are not danzantes. They are only 'bailarines,' who dance strictly for the enjoyment or financial gains of doing something 'Mexican' or 'cultural' (Maestas, n.d.: 68).

La Danza provides "tradition" and connection to a continuity of the life on this continent. It gives one social, moral and community goals to live by, while providing a spiritual bridge for Xicanas/os seeking their roots and connection to ancestors. Activism and political organizing is viewed as a natural part of this process because borders and assimilation policies have sought to deter us from this knowledge. Political borders prevent Xicanas/os and Mexicanas/os from engaging and exchanging in ceremony, knowledge/cultural sharing, and tradition-making. In this sense, politics and spirituality intersect. In order to maintain our spiritual ways, we must engage in political resistance. In order to have successful political movements, they must incorporate spirituality. It is part of a historical legacy—not one of victimization, but one of resistance and triumph for future generations.

Danza opened the doors for other traditions; these doors opened both ways, as people reconnected to their own personal histories and to the larger intercontinental history. Xicanas/os are dynamic; and the Xicana/o search for a re-birth (of themselves and of a nation) is often misunderstood. Movements for Xicano Human Rights, the

participation at Wounded Knee, walkouts, occupations, and various ceremonial traditions demonstrate that, while Xicanas/os may have been a seemingly invisible group in many of these movements, they have emerged with a stronger sense of their own identity and purpose. Danza groups are transforming communities, identity, and challenging colonial institutions and structures. Xicanas/os (as danzantes and part of the Indigenous nations of Aztlan) are recognized in Mexico and throughout the world. According to Señora Cobb, "La danza es todo para todos! Tu eres la cultura, la historia, y tradición – lo llevas en la sangre./ La Danza is everything and for everyone! You are the culture, the history, and tradition—you carry it in your blood." The world's first peoples have survived on their lands/territories despite the upheavals of colonialism, corporate exploitation, state-sponsored genocide, forced settlement, relocation, political marginalization, and various formal attempts at cultural destruction (Niezen 2003). Xicana/o participation in Danza has re-invigorated Indigenous traditional values and world views.

Like Yolanda Broyles-González (1994), who describes the work of El Teatro Campesino as moving beyond art as performance, but more "human work," I also define Danza as participating in "human work," examining not only the artistic and spiritual efforts of Danza, but also the social conditions and realities of danzantes. Like teatro Chicana/o, ritual performance of Danza begins with the inner human work; working on the self, healing and restoring our humanity and esteem in order to manifest that same work to the community. The practice extends from the Danza circle to daily life: "It is viewed as a performance without closure, but one that extends to daily life and a continuum to be inherited by future generations" (Broyles-González 1994: 84).

For Xicanas/os, Danza has been a process of physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and human transformation (Broyles-González 1994). Alicia Gaspar de Alba talks about the reconstruction, redemption, and regeneration of urban Xicana/o communities as sites "of incipient transnational imaginaries; barrio popular culture reminds us that daily reality is full of the most extraordinary possibilities" (2003: xviii). Xicanas/os engaging with Indigenous traditional belief systems juxtaposed in urban environments, as a result, create new meanings and possibilities. Gaspar de Alba further states:

> Chicano/a culture is not a subculture, but rather an *alter*-Native culture, an Other American culture indigenous to the landbase now known as the West and the Southwest of the United States. Chicano/a culture, then is not immigrant, but native, not foreign but colonized, not alien, but different from the overarching hegemony of white Americans (2003: xxi).

Danzantes are engaged in a process to define themselves, while being careful not to essentialize their identities and ways of being. Gabriel Estrada proposes "an Indigenous methodology in which the Indigenous body circles through four directions in order to find an internal and external balance of masculinity, old age, femininity, and youth that reconcile aspects of two-spirit, Indigenous, and Xicana/o agendas" (in Gaspar de Alba 2003: 41). This dissertation attempts to show how Danza creates a collective identity and achieves meaning in the lives of danzantes, both men and women, and families, rooted in a historical trajectory. Through the promotion of cultural and historical Indigenous symbols, "radically traditional" (Hernández 2005) ideological discourses are created, specifically in regards to Xicana/o Indígena identity and the participation of women within the Danza culture.

In this process, I encourage dialogue in order to recognize the silences, the interests being served, and the meanings that danzantes generate through their interaction with Danza. Using the work of Stuart Hall, Cultural Studyist Denise Michele Sandoval explains how meanings are tied to "identification and expression:"

> 'Meaning is what gives us a sense of our own identity, of who we are and with whom we belong—so it is tied up with questions of how culture is used to mark out and maintain identity within and difference between groups…Meaning is also produced whenever we express ourselves in, make use of, consume or appropriate cultural things; that is when we incorporate them in different ways into the everyday rituals and practice of daily life and in this way give them value or significance' (in Gaspar de Alba 2003: 180-181).

The need to belong and to have a community that shares a common identity and culture is part of the human experience. Further exploration in Danza will lead me, and hopefully others, to examine the participation and representation of women specifically in Danza, the communities they create within Danza, and the ways in which constructions of gender and/or femininity is expressed or understood. I hope to explore how women sometimes participate in their own objectification and/or gender limitations within Danza. This research leaves me with questions of how women are coerced to adopt and replicate images of femininity and sexuality in Danza and/or how powerful women leaders in Danza and in larger Indigenous movements are de-legitimized when they do not fulfill a particular imaginary.

As Gaspar de Alba discusses, the Xicana/o quest for identity begins with:

> …the awareness of our own history, beginning with the history of the border. More than performing the identity of the barrio dweller, like the neo-Cholos, what we need is to embody our own history, to remember that, as the Mexican proverb warns, *el pueblo que pierde su memoria pierde su destino*: The people who forgets its past, forfeits its future. The bridge between memory and destiny, like the distance between insider and outsider perceptions of the self, is both a physical landscape and a

> metaphysical terrain in which we perform that Chicano/a right of passage, that barrio rite of identity called border consciousness (Gaspar de Alba 212).

I appreciate Gaspar de Alba's play with words; for Xicanas/os we have both a rite and right for passage to ourselves and our heritage. She emphasizes the importance of memory which leads to our destiny. This memory is created both within and outside our communities, meaning: memory occurs wherever we are located, far or near from our ancestral points of origin; and, simultaneously, memory is created by the influences of outsider imaginaries and their creation of our memories. This, of course, complicates the notion of memory, but demonstrates that all parts of it have allowed MeXicanas/os to arrive to this moment of time. As Gramsci (1971) teaches, part of liberation is overcoming human alienation, and not just domination. Therefore, danzantes forming community and coming together is not only anti-systemic, but a defiant act of their own decolonization and an expression of their firm grasp of their own liberation.

According to Broyles-González, "as a model of human liberation…we cannot wait for the big social revolution and the new society before we begin conceiving of a new humanity" (1994: 123). Similarly, Danzantes must take history and the future into their own hands, with the understanding that human liberation is possible from within the experiences of oppression. We can therefore, "maximize the potential of the collective by trying to work against human fragmentation and the degradation of work common in the theatrical mainstream and in larger society" (Broyles-González 1994: 123). Danza has provided a weapon from which Xicanas/os can combat the cultural dominance experienced daily in educational systems, media and other agencies of social control. Despite the ways in which we have been fragmented or have fragmented ourselves, Danza can and has provided a sense of wholeness and tool/method to re-connect/re-

member. Danza can "cultivat[e] human wholeness and self-awareness within the larger political struggle" (Broyles-González 1994: 124).

In many ways MeXicanas/os experienced a death of their spirit in the history of violence, invasion and genocide; Danza is an attempt to heal that broken spirit. Danza has provided new meanings to MeXicana/o historical experiences, countering the mestizaje of Latin America and instead inserting a history of resistance, defiance, and triumph. Danza has proven to be restorative, healing, and an ongoing lifetime process of self-development. It is an "alternative human education model" (Broyles-González 1994: 127). Danza defies colonization through the dancing itself. It forces danzantes to let go of ego; it is inevitable that one might miss a step, turn the wrong way, or get sweaty. One's ego and superficiality have no place in the Danza circle. The body is our most natural instrument. From our body comes cultural continuity. Danza is embodied knowledge. Our body is the written word; it is a production of knowledge to repair our historical and cultural identity. Danzantes use their bodies as an offering, a physical manifestation of time and space and a transmission of knowledge. As Anzaldúa (1987; 2000) explains, pain in the body can be an impetus for transformation. The struggles of the flesh are metaphors for struggles at the border, the struggle for life, and for existence. As our bodies shift, so does our relationship to the world. When we change our relationship to our own brown Indigenous bodies, we change and transform the world and create consciousness. This embodiment occurs in Danza. Through physical exertion and the offering of our bodies, feet, and sweat, the potential for personal and spiritual transformation occurs.

In Danza and in MeXicana/o history we acknowledge that we are fragmented, yet empowered at the same time. The clothing or trajes, worn on the body, are not costumes, but a unity and connection to ancestors. For Xicanas/os who wear the huipil or huaraches, they are creating an extension of that connection in the outside world. The body becomes the text that people in the world read and is part of Xicana/o markers of identity. There exist no tangible rewards or benefits in Mexican society for those who identify as Indian, yet in Xicana/o world view, they have found a way to create those benefits, as community, cultural, and social benefits within. Danzantes are part of a collective human journey seeking respect for their beliefs and experiences. As Señora Cobb states, "the arbol of la Danza is growing, we must be ready to receive the teachers and the danzantes with respect and honor."

SKY CREATION – OUR MOTHER EARTH

IPALNEMOHUANI – TONANTZIN-TLALLI

Namantzin niccaquí Ometeotl, Ipalnemohuani, ica tiyoltoqueh, Tloqueh Nauhuaqueh. Hueyi Tonatiuh chicahuac. Tzotzona atecocolli. Macuilli.

Ahorita escucho, Ometeotl, Ipalnemohuani, con quien vivimos. Todo cerca del universo. El grande sol es muy fuerte. Suenan los caracoles. Cinco.

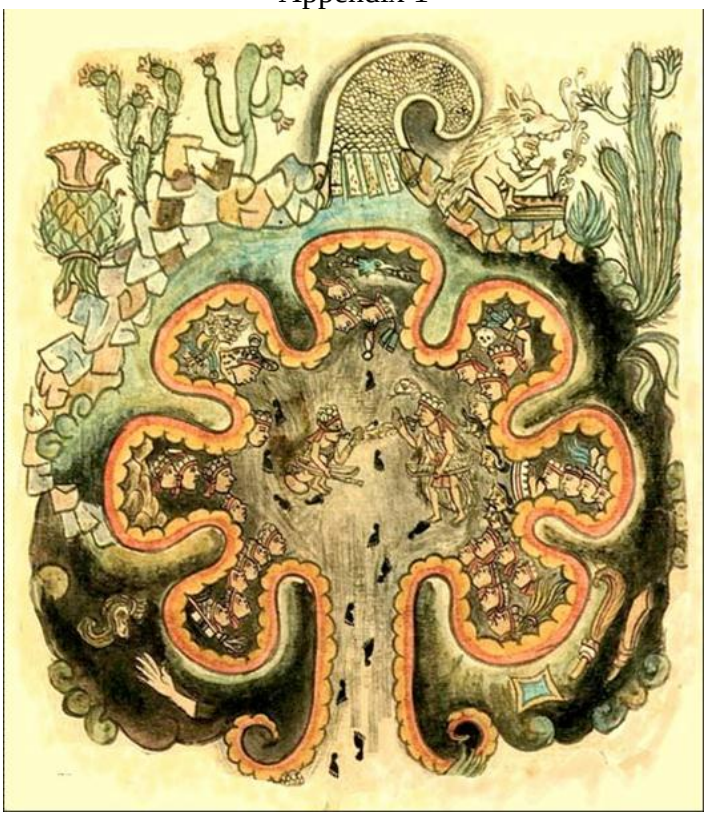
Right now I listen to the Creator, Ometeotl, Ipalnemohuani, with whom we live. Everything close to the universe. The great sun is strong. Sound the conch shells. Five.

Nimitztlahpaloliz ome iyoca Tonantzin, Tlalnantzin Coatlicue. Tlen campa tihualohui huan campa tiyohui. Mexica Tiyohui!

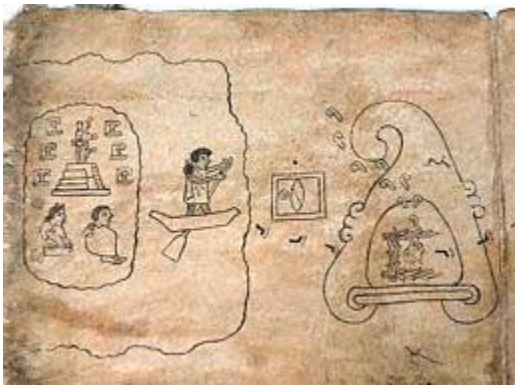
Yo los saludo, madre sagrada, tierra sagrada de Coatlicue. De donde venimos y a donde vamos. Mexica Tiyohui!

I greet both the sacred mother, sacred land of Coatlicue. Where we come from and where we will go. Onward Mexicas!

Appendix 1



This image, from the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* (Ernst Mengin, ed., Corpus codicum Americanorum medii aevi, vol. 1.,Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1942), shows an image of Chicomoztoc, place of the seven caves.



This image from the Codex Boturini depicts the journey from Aztlan to a "crooked mountain," which is the depiction of the sacred passage site of Culhuacan.

Appendix 2

Replication of image cited in Sten (1990), from the Atlas de Durán

Appendix 3

Replication of image cited in Sten (1990), from the Codice Borbonico

Appendix 4

Photo by Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie

This image is from a sunrise ceremony on Indigenous Peoples Day 2010 on Alcatraz Island, showing an intertribal gathering with the same principles of the circle and fire in the center.

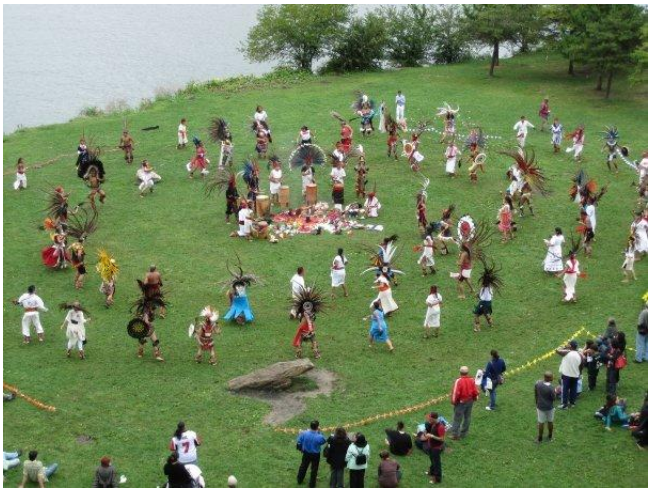


Photo courtesy of Jennie Luna

This image taken of Danza group Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Quetzalcoatl in Ixachitlan in New York City, 2009, shows the structure of the Danza circle, with the drums and smoke/ fire in the center, the colors of the four directions surrounding the circle and making the creation of sacred space.

Appendix 5

Photo by Jennie Luna, from the
Museo de las Mascaras in Zacatecas

This in an example of an original mandolina, or concha, with the shell of an armadillo.

Photo courtesy of Jennie Luna,
from the Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Danza
Ceremony in New York City 2009

This image shows several Conchera dancers who still carry the mandolina in the Danza.

Appendix 6

Photo courtesy of Jennie Luna,
from the Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Danza
Ceremony in New York City 2009

This image depicts a *pantli* or pre-Cuauhtemoc rendering of the pantli tradition which carries the insignia or symbol of the *calpulli* planted to the Danza group.

Photo by Jennie Luna,
from a Nahñu ceremony in
Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo, 2008

The above image depicts an *estandarte* from an Otomi/Nahñu ceremony honoring el Señor de Jalpan or Jesus, representing a guardian spirit of the town. On the estandarte, words are written in the Otomi language. The ceremony, outside the Catholic mass, which is led in Otomi, is conducted in a traditional Otomi manner, using copal, traditional wax art and dyed sawdust to line the street paths with the Otomi community symbols.

Appendix 7

Photo by Tonatiuh from Guerrero, México and courtesy of Yei Tochtli Mitlalpilli
May 1st March 2006, King and Story Road, San José, CA

Appendix 8

Photo Courtesy of Angelbertha Cobb

This image is her earliest passport photo. Interesting note: During one of her visits to my house, she was viewing some DVDs about Danza that I had acquired in Mexico City. Unbeknownst to her, she was filmed in the raw footage of one of these films as this same younger Angelbertha Cobb. This is the only existing footage of her dancing at approximately the above age.

Photo Courtesy of Angelbertha Cobb

This image displays a dress that Señora Cobb sewed herself, and her traditional tlacoyalli, which she wears on her head as a symbol of her community and her role in her traditional society.

Appendix 9

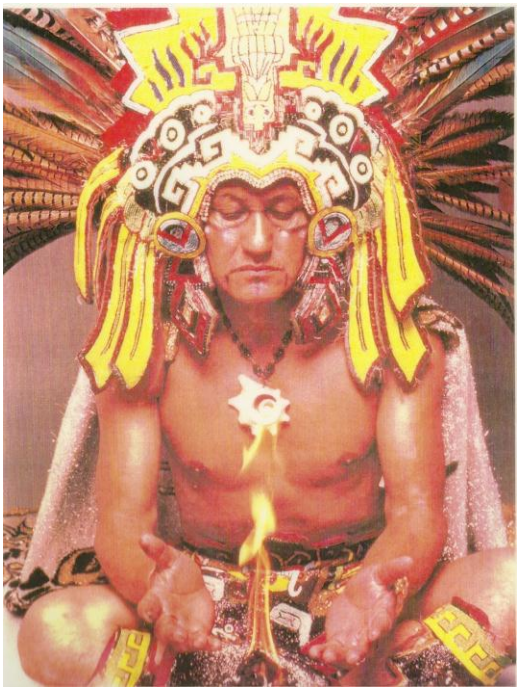


Photo courtesy of Whitehawk Danza group

Both images are of el Maestro Florencio Yescas. The first is a photo incorporated in the 2000 Calendar of the White Hawk Dancers of Watsonville, CA. The second image is a mural located in Chicano Park in San Diego, California.

Appendix 10

Photo courtesy of Miguel Angel Mendoza

This photo displays the founders of el *Zemanauak Tlamachtiloyan*: (from left to right) Maestro Leopoldo "Polo" Rojas, Dr. Ignacio Romerovargas Yturbinde, Dr. René de la Parra Palma, Miguel Ángel Mendoza, Maria del Carmen Nieva López, Domingo Martínez Paredez, Estrella Newman, Ángel Tenauatzin Valladares, and David Esparza Hidalgo

Photo courtesy of Jennie Luna

Maestro Miguel Ángel Mendoza Kuauhkoatl displaying the Pantli Mexica.

Appendix 11

Photo courtesy of Jennie Luna

This photo of Maestra Axayacatl and Jennie Luna is taken in front of the resting site of the last tlatoani of México Tenochtitlan, Cuauhtemoc in Ixcateopan, Guerrero at the 1997 ceremony honoring 500 years since his birth.

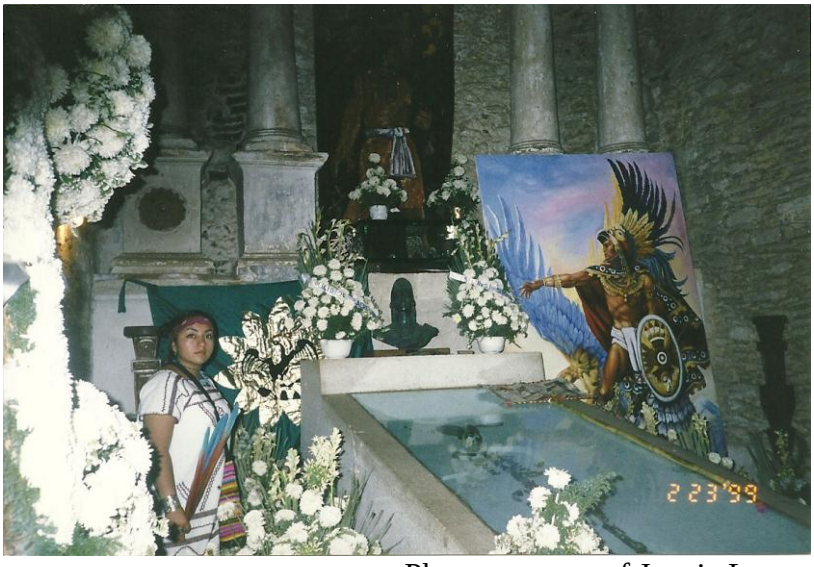


Photo courtesy of Jennie Luna

This photo displays Jennie Luna beside the tomb, monument, and altar to Cuauhtemoc in Ixcateopan, Guerrero, the location where this contemporary ceremony occurs yearly on his birthday, February 23rd.

Appendix 12

Photo courtesy of Jennie Luna

Display of intercontinental unity and work amongst Indigenous women at the 2004 ENLACE Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Americas in Lima, Peru April 2004. From left to right, the women represent the Indigenous nations of Xicana/ Mexica, Aymara (Bolivia), Mapuche (Chile), Inuit (Canada).

Appendix 13

Photo by Jennie Luna

Image of an older, traditional version of the wooden pole where the voladores would climb and "fly" to the ground.

Photo by Jennie Luna

This image displays the danzantes voladores, using a modern pole and performing in the center plaza of Papantla, Veracruz.

Appendix 14

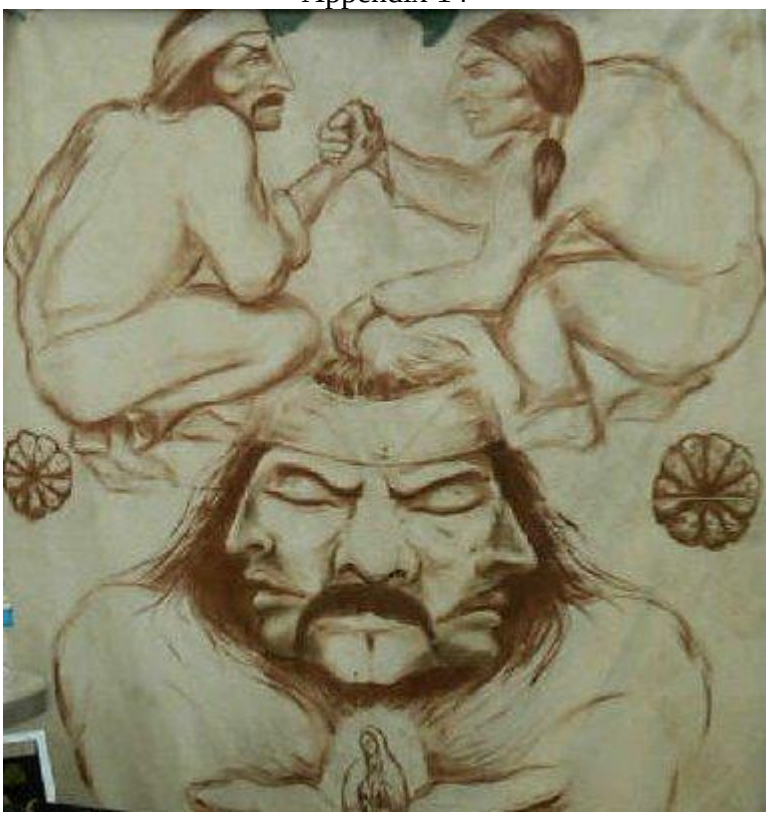


Photo courtesy of Adriana Cabrera Garcia

Iconic image depicting the two faces (Indian and European) forging together to form a new face, the mestizo. This particular image is interesting on several points. One, clearly it is male-centric, yet reinforces the mother as "virgin," depicted as the heart of the image. Second, this image shows an emphasis on the relationship between the "Indigenous Mestizo" and what is depicted as a "Northern/U.S. Native."

Appendix 15

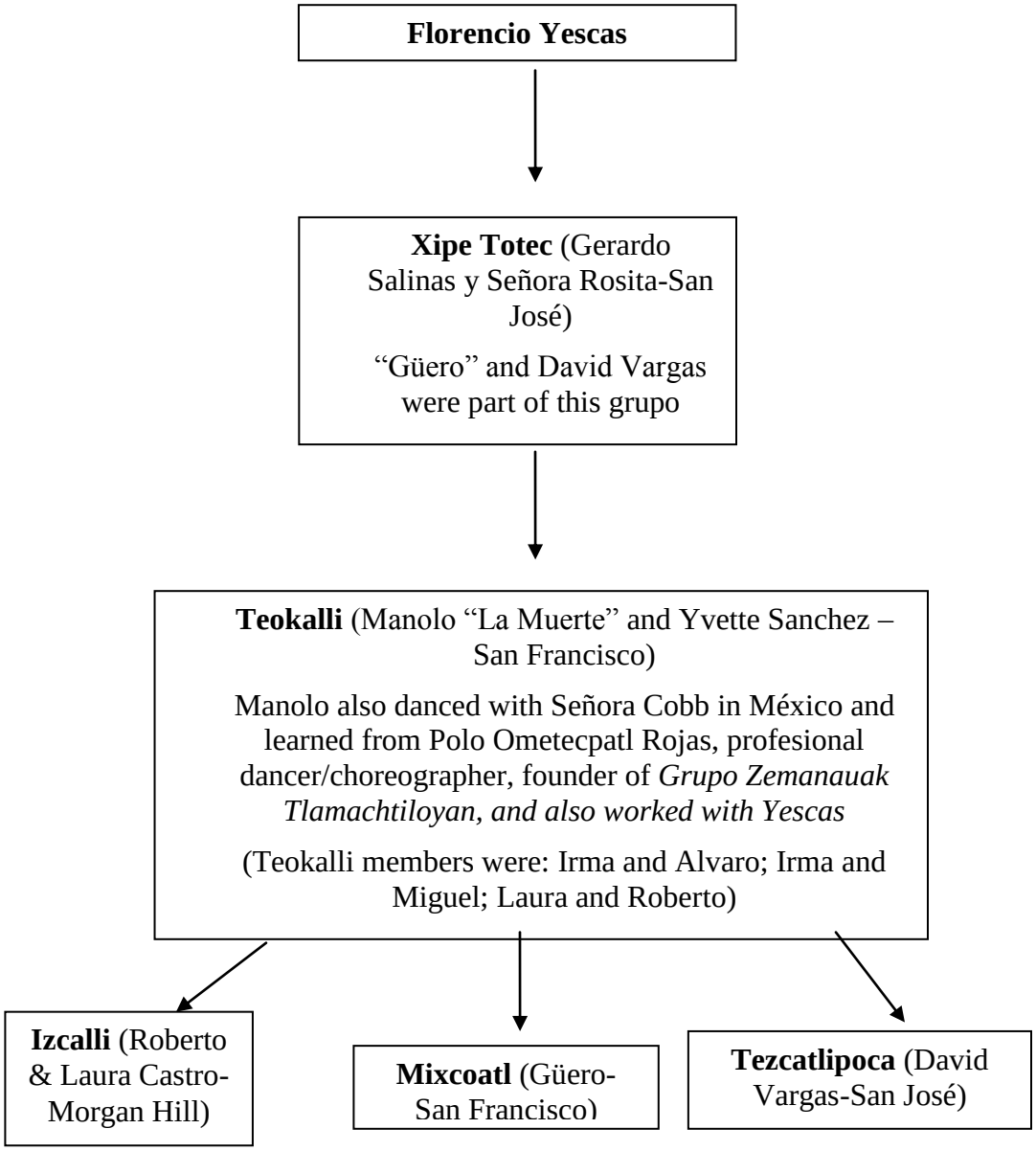
According to Señora Cobb's notes, the following list includes members of the *Danzantes Red Winds.* The danzantes came from different Indigenous nations and after dispersing from Red Wind, they moved on to various areas throughout the U.S.

Guillermo "Yermo" Aranda
Ana-i Aranda
Alida "Earth Feather" Montiel
Seliwa Montiel
Tomás Amador
Ed Galindo
Silkitwa
Bea Parco
Wintes
Pakaha
Xitima
Sparrow Hawk
Samuka
Tomolo
Akiwa
Red Bird
Lala
Momé Anowos
Dee Torres
Amuha
Ilena
Awish
Bebsiba
Nashun
Huslawa
Tanuwa
Eneke Alish
Alish

Appendix 16

Condensed Family Tree of Danza in the Bay Area

This is a very basic sketch of the earliest origins of Danza groups in the San José/South Bay Area. A future project would be to expand this diagram to include the different lineages, early maestros and the numerous Danza groups that resulted from their arrival in the U.S.



As danzantes moved to different cities, they found it difficult to travel long distances for Danza practices. Instead, they began to form their own Danza circles in their local areas. As other teachers from México arrived, more groups formed. Some members of these original groups joined these other newer groups or sought mentorship/teachings from maestros in México. For various reasons, splinter groups branched off these original and proceeding groups.

Appendix 17

The following is the vision and mission statement of my Danza group. Since the entire group communicates in Spanish, all materials are either all in Spanish or bilingual. This document is provided as an example of the structure and organization of Cetiliztli.

Visión y Misíon

Grupo Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Quetzalcóatl in Ixachitlán

La gente Mexica, igual como muchos grupos/naciones Indígenas del continente, tiene una cultura rica que viene de la creencia que una conección existe en todo. Honramos y expresamos estas creencias por medio de ceremonias y "danzas" que han sido pasadas entre generaciónes antes de la invasión y contacto europeo a este hemisferio. Nuestras danzas representan el círculo de la vida y todo lo que pertanece a la tierra y la creación. Es nuestra esperanza que la nueva generación mantenga estas danzas y manera de vivir para que la gente Indígena dentro de todo el continente, igual toda la humanidad, puede comenzar a sanarse y reestablecer una connección a cada ser y a la tierra. Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Quetzalcóatl in Ixachitlán quiere decir Grupo de los Cuatro Rumbos en el lado Este del Continente, Tierra de la Gente Roja y fue establecido en el año 1999. Los danzantes vienen de diferentes partes, pero están basados en Manhatitlán, Ciudad de Nueva York.

Los Pasos del Danzante Cuando se es nuevo es dificil, al principio, coordinar los pasos y los movimientos con los de los demás danzantes. Ne se tiene experiencia, pero poco a poco se van dominando los movimientos, la sucencia de la danza, y llega el momento en que el cuerpo se mueve, sabe qué pasos sequir ya no se preocupa por llevar el ritmo, el cuerpo sabe cómo hacerlo, ya no se requiere la voluntad del danzante. Empieza a vibrar dentro de una participación colectiva. La fuerza de todos se una forma un círculo de energia. Con la fuerza de la danza, el danzante, experimenta una nueva clase de energía, está hinoptizado, fascinado, no le importa el tiempo, el lugar, está simplemente vibrando con las fuerzas cósmicas, todo su cuerpo en armonía, en movimiento, y quizá, llegue al éxtasis. La danza es algo maravilloso. Con ella nace lo espiritual. Se danza tan profundamente que uno se olvida que está danzando y se transforma en la danza misma. Hay una entrega total. Parece como si la danza se estúviera haciendo y uno estuviera allí. La danza fluye sola, no hay que forzar nada, sólo seguirla, dejarla que suceda. Es algo tan natural como el viento que sopla, como el rio que corre. -anónimo

Metas del grupo:

Quiénes Somos?

Somos un Grupo de Danza Mexica. Pertenecemos a la comunidad de la ciudad de Nueva York. Somos un grupo de arte y educación. Creemos en la necesidad de hacer realidad la liberación de la Raza. Somos un grupo político y nos damos cuenta que es necesario involucrarnos en la política social de nuestra comunidad. Por medio de la cultura empezamos a conocer y reconocer nuestras raíces Indígenas en este continente, Ixachitlán. Nuestra base es espiritual, sin la espiritualidad, no podemos conocernos y avanzar como gente Indígena. Nosotros no reconocemos las fronteras políticas que nos han impuesto. Somos una gente de este continente, una tierra, una gente.

A Dónde Vamos?

Nosotros estamos reconociendo nuestras verdaderas raíces Indígenas. Queremos inculcar conciencia especialmente a la juventud y a los niños y niñas. Queremos aprender como trabajar en armonía entre nuestro círculo, familias y comunidad en general. Nuestro grupo nos va ayudar con el crecimiento personal y espiritual. Nuestro enfoque es respetar a las mujeres como el centro de la vida y corazón del futuro. Queremos saber como explicar toda la base de la danza, cultura, y tradición.

Nuestra Estructura

Entre la Danza, ceremonia y la parte administativa, nuestro grupo mantiene diferentes "cargos" o responsabilidades. Nosotros dividimos las responsabilidades entre todos y todas. Esto sería para estar organizados y siempre tener respeto a la tradición que nos dejaron nuestros antepasados. Manteniendonos organizados y respetando el papel y cargo de cada uno en el grupo nos ayuda a crecer como grupo, individuos, miembros de la comunidad y como un recurso importante en nuestra comunidad. Como grupo hemos decidido unas normas para funcionar mejor como círculo, pero nunca faltamos el respeto de las normas y maneras de otros grupos y enseñanzas. Para nosotros, los cargos pueden ser llevados por hombres y/o mujeres (menos la sahumadora que siempre es responsibilidad de las mujeres). Seguimos aprendiendo y siempre estaremos abiertos para aprender, crecer y recibir conocimiento acerca de los cargos y todo lo que es parte de la danza.

Cargos/ Responsabilidades entre la Danza y Ceremonia

Xochipillis (sahumadoras)—

En general, las responsabilidades incluyen:

- Preparar nuestro popoxcomitl, el copal, y el humo y cuidarlo durante toda la ceremonia.
- Siempre cuidar nuestro altar, y tener listo todos los elementos necesarios para mantener la ceremonia. Abajo del popoxcomitl siempre hay que tener una tela roja que representa el ombligo del círculo y connección a la madre tierra, Tonantzín.
- Tiene la responsabilidad de sahumar a todos, dar la bienvenida, ayudar a los heridos, y hacer el saludo a los cuartro direcciones.
- Siempre tiene que ser una mujer encargada de nuestro fuego.
- Ella empieza la palabra al final de la danza.
- Como siempre llevamos el altar/momoztli en una mochila, en esa mochila siempre llevamos un botiquín de emergencia. Es responsabilidad de la sahumadora revisar que siempre haya las cosas de emergencia.

Caracolero/as—

- Llaman al grupo para empezar cada ensayo y ceremonia.
- Saludan y despiden a nuestros ancestros, cuatro vientos y elementos sagrados.
- Llevan los caracoles y son responsables de pasarlos a otras personas si es que no pueden llegar.

Huehuetero/as—

- Nuestro huehuetl es el ritmo del corazón de la tierra, del círculo, del grupo. Hay que respetar nuestro tambor igual como todo los elementos.
- El/la huehueter@ siempre sigue al danzante y tratan de crear una armonía entre los pasos y el ritmo que se toca.
- El danzante tiene el derecho a pedir la velocidad del toque porque el huehuetero esta cumpliendo la gran responsabilidad de ayudar cumplir nuestras ofrendas, danza, y rezo. El danzante pone el tono con su permiso e inicia conección con el huehuetl.
- Los huehueteros tienen que tomar turnos o rotar quien toca para balancear en velocidad y enseñar a otros durante el ensayo, pero para presentaciónes solo debe ser uno o dos que tocan.
- Tienen que sacar y guardar el huehuetl antes y despues del ensayo. Igual tienen que determinar quien lo lleva.

Puerta— **(se puede decidir cada vez que reunamos)**

- La(s) persona(s) que cuida(n) la(s) puertas ayudan a mantener la energía y el balance.
- La puerta principal es del lado Este, donde entran y sale la gente durante la ceremonia. Todos deben pedir permiso a esta(s) persona(s) para poder entrar y salir.
- Las personas de las puertas acomodan a los que entran al círculo para mantener el balance entre los más nuevos, entre edades, género, plumas, etc.
- Asegura que todos van en dirección de la izquierda, la dirección del corazón y que no rompan la energía del círculo.

Regidor/a— **(se puede decidir cada vez que nos reunamos)**

- Llevan el bastón del grupo para pasar las danzas
- Responsabilidad de empezar las danzas/ceremonia
- Decide el orden de las ofrendas de danza. Hay diferentes formas de hacerlo. Algunos empiezan a la izquierda y pasan las danzas a cada uno, mujer y hombre o los que tienen más tiempo en la danza con los mas nuevos. El/la

regidor puede decidir. Siempre se debe dar prioridad a los invitados, visitantes, y los que vienen de lejos primero. También hay que pasar la danza a los mayores y ancianos primero.

- Siempre fijar en la hora para que quedamos en nuestro horario y para anunciar el descanso en la mitad de la danza.

Cargos Administrativos

Historiador/a—

- Colectar artículos, fotos, volantes de todos los eventos donde hemos participado o se nos ha nombrado.
- Cuidar y actualizar la página internet del grupo.
- Mantener datos del grupo para formar la história

Centro de Comunicación—

- Mantener el calendario del grupo; mantenerlo actualizado y dar copias al grupo.
- Actualizar la lista de teléfonos y la cadena de comunicación y distribuirlos al grupo.
- Empezar las llamadas si es necesario.
- Mandar los correos eléctronicos.

Coordinador/a de Capacitación/Desarrollo y Relaciones Publicas—

- Responsable de mandar las invitaciones, cartas de agradecimiento y mantener relaciones públicas
- Mantener tarjetas de presentation del grupo
- Informar a seguidores sobre eventos, presentaciones, etc.
- Tomar notas en las juntas y distribuirlas al grupo.
- Persona quien distribuya nuestras tarjetas y recaude teléfonos y contactos; dar y recibir información.

Tesorera/o—

- Cuidar todo el dinero del grupo
- Mantener los datos y cuentas
- Hacer posible ser grupo sin-fin-de-lucro
- Estar encargad@ de reembolsos, cheques, balances, depósitos y control de gastos.
- Dar un reporte mensual del dinero al grupo y mantener los libros orden.

Coordinador@ del Sitio (de Instalación)—

- Ayudar a encontrar lugares donde prácticar y tener ensayos, presentaciónes y ceremonias.
- Mantener record de donde nos hemos presentado. Estos datos servieran para el futuro y tal vez poder regresar cada año.
- Mantener la lista de asistencia de cada presentación y mantener los datos de quienes van.

Inventario—

- Mantener la lista de todo lo que tenemos.
- Responsable de estar pendiente de los artículos prestados, como los trajes, huipiles, sonajas, ayoyotes, etc. y aseguarse que sean regresados.
- Notar a quien le faltan artículos.

Entre todas las responsabilidades, también el papel de los jóvenes líderes es importante. Tratamos de ayudar a los Xilonens y Ocelotl (Jaguares) ser mejores líderes y tomar una gran responsabilidad con el grupo para ser los representantes del grupo y ejémplo para otros jóvenes.

Decisiones para el grupo

Todos los que tienen un cargo tienen una responsabilidad a todo el grupo y tienen el compromiso y responsabilidad (commitment and accountability) al grupo. Cada uno de los cargos va ser asignado por todo el grupo y todos intercambian las posiciones cuando el grupo decide que es necesario. Cada cabeza de cada cargo tiene responsabilidad de informar o juntar con los otros que llevan esa responsabilidad para cordinar lo que sea. Cuando hay que hacer una decision para todo el grupo, llamamos una asamblea general. Cuando no es necesario para todo el grupo, podemos formar comités or juntar entre cabezas para hacer decisiones, y como todos del grupo elijen quienes son las cabezas de cada cargo, todos deben apoyar, confiar, y respetar las decisiones. También tenemos derecho de preguntar o averiguar sobre decisiones. Si es una junta de las cabezas, de todos modos, siempre estarán abiertas las juntas a todos. Y si quieren ser parte de la decisión, tienen que llegar a la junta o por lo menos mandar su opinión con alguien. Decisiones del grupo se tomarán con el consentimiento o acuerdo de todos los presentes en las juntas. También para hacer decisiones rapidas o inmediatas, se forma y elige un pequeño comité de cabezas de la asamblea, y se confia que harán las mejores decisiones cuando no hay tiempo de juntar todas las cabezas o toda la asamblea. Esto es para que la decisión no sea hecha por una sola persona, pero tienen que pedir consejos, ayuda y opinion de otro/as para asegurar que si esta haciendo la decisión correcta. También,

aunque es responsabilidad de todos, estas 4 personas llevan la responsabilidad de dar la bienvenida a nuevas personas e informarles de la normas de nuestro grupo.

4 personas son:

Normas de nuestro grupo

- No se permiten alcohol ni drogas en nuestro círculo. No hay excepciónes. No deben llegar al círculo si estás drogado o alcoholizado. Eso es una gran falta de respeto a la cultura y a los abuelo/as.
- Cada quien se hace responsable de sus cosas. También respetamos a las cosas de otras personas. No se deben dejar sus cosas para que otras personas las cargen.
- Siempre deben llegar listos con su atuendo/ regalia de la danza.
- Es responsabildad de todos limpiar el lugar donde hemos ensayado o tengamos ceremonias, etc.
- No se debe tocar el altar sin respeto o sin pedir permiso.
- La punctualidad es muy importante y ha sido dificil para unos, pero todos tienen que hacer el esfuerzo de no faltar en su compromiso y llegar a la hora que decidimos. No es justo para los que llegan a tiempo. Al mismo tiempo, no hay que esperar a los que no han llegado. Los que llegan a tiempo tienen la responsabilidad de iniciar el ensayo o presentación.
- Si una persona del grupo trae un amigo/a a visitar el grupo. Es responsabilidad de esa persona informar su amigo de las normas de nuestro grupo. Igual si viene alguien que no pertenece a nadie del grupo es responsabilidad de todos hablar con esa nueva persona y darle la información basica. Siempre hay que dar la bienvenida a todos que llegan al grupo.
- Todos entran al círculo por las puertas. Para entrar de nuevo al círculo, se debe esperar que termine la danza que se está ofreciendo en ese momento.
- Cada ensayo es de dos horas de duración por lo minimo.
- Todos en el grupo tienen derecho a la palabra.
- Es importante no dejar de moverse durante la danza para no romper la energia y además es por el bien del cuerpo.
- Cada ensayo, si empezamos a tiempo, tomamos un descanso en la mitad del ensayo por 5 minutos para tomar agua. Los que se tengan que ir antes del fin del ensayo, favor de salir durante este tiempo. El Rejidor/a anuncia el tiempo de descanso. Se puede tomar agua durante el descanzo y despues de palabra, pero no adentro del círculo. Solo en caso de emergencia.
- El círculo siempre debe ser balanceado por hombre y mujer. Colocamos tambien a los nuevos miembros entre los que ya tienen experiencia. El círculo se mueve siempre hacia la izquierda.
- Para el ensayo, no es necesario que el rejidor/a haga permisos entre cada danza.

- Persona que está ofreciendo la danza, está a la izquierda o lleva el bastón. Todos en el círculo sigue a esa persona.
- Cuando empezamos el ensayo, los que tocan, deben empezar con las danzas básicas de los cuatro elementos, Tonantzín, Fuego, Tlaloc, y Ehecatl para aprender y no olvidar.
- Si quieren ser parte de las decisiones del grupo, tienes que asistir y poner atención en las reuniones.
- Todos deben quedarse para la palabra después de la danza y cuando estemos haciendo decisiones, es distrayente cuando se van unos a medias, además, si no estás para el voto, pierdes su voto/voz.
- Cada danzante recibe sus ayoyotes, sonaja, faja, y ixcuahmecatl despues de ofrecer el permiso y una danza sola/o.

Punctualidad

De ahora en adelante tendremos un horario fijo para los ensayos. La punctualidad es muy importante y ha sido dificil para unos, pero todos tienen que hacer el esfuerzo de no faltar en su compromiso y llegar a la hora que decidimos. No es justo para los que llegan a tiempo. A la vez, no hay que esperar a los que no han llegado. Los que llegan a tiempo tienen la responsabilidad de iniciar el ensayo o presentación.

Horario de Danza:

Dias Viernes

6:00-6:30 pm	Calientamiento
6:30-8:30 pm	Danza
8:30-9:00 pm	Palabra y anuncios breves
9:00 pm	Limpiar e irnos pronto

Por tiempo limitado se sujiere que decisiones grandes del grupo y platicas de filosofia, la danza, etc. se hagan los domingos.

Dias Domingos	
12:00-12:30 pm	Calentamiento
12:30-2:30 pm	Danza
2:30-3:00 pm	Palabra y anuncios
3:00-4:00 pm	Temas y decisiones si es necesario.

Reglas para presentaciones

Para poder, de verdad, compartir nuestra cultura con otros, siempe pedimos que cada presentación dure por lo minimo 20 a 30 minutos con explicación. Tratamos de ofrecer por lo menos 4 danzas que saben todo el grupo. Es importante llegar con bastante tiempo

antes de la presentación para decidir como vamos a entrar, las danzas que haremos, quien va hablar, la formación, etc. Debemos llegar por lo menos una hora antes. La persona que lo hizo el contrato tiene la responsibilidad de ser la cabeza de esa presentación y dirigir como hacerla. Esa persona tiene que organizar todo acerca de la presentación.

Asistencia en presentaciones

Cada persona que ofrece o consigue la presentación para el grupo es responsable de informar sobre la presentación a todo el grupo. Cuando comuniquen al grupo, tienen que pasar una lista y eso va ser como un contrato que sí, no, o tal vez vayan a la presentación. Esa misma persona es responsable a dar un recordatorio a los que escribieron que sí van a ir. Si a último momento una persona que ya dio su palabra o compromiso para ir a una presentación no puede, es la responsabilidad de esa misma persona conseguir otro que pueda. Es la responsabilidad también de la persona que consiguió la presentación de asignar un voluntario para cargar el huehuetl.

Tomamos una lista de asistencia de todos que van a la presentaciónes, para danzar, ayudar, or cargar el huehuetl y/o altar. Esto es para que todos hagan el trabajo y tomen su turno a contribuir. Es importante que todos lleguen a las presentaciónes cuando puedan y trabajar juntos para el grupo.

Como vamos hacer ciertas cosas en la danza

Para recibir sus ayoytes, sonaja y ixcuamecatl y faja, los instrumentos basicos necesarios, cada persona que entra al grupo y quiere hacer un compromiso al grupo, tiene que ofrecer, cuando se sienten listos, un permiso y una danza solo/a.
Queremos dividir ensayos para aprender no solo la danza, pero también la filosofía y entendimiento detras de la danza. Para poder hacer esto, queremos asignar unos ensayos para hacer talleres para aprender sobre la cultura, arte, temezcales, vientenas, etc. También en los ensayos regulares, queremos revisar por lo menos una danza paso por paso para poder danzar marcado y comprender el significado.

Diferencia entre presentaciónes y ceremonias

Entendemos la diferencia entre danza ceremonial y social. Hay ciertas cosas para los dos.

Comunicacion

- Para poder comunicarnos con todo el grupo en alguna emergencia o urgentemente, usamos un systema de caden de comunicación. En esta cadena, cada persona tiene que tener un "compañero/a cibernético/a" en caso de que no tengan acesso al correo electrónico. Así se mantienen informados de lo que se manda al grupo.
- Tratamos de mantener un calendario de por lo menos tres meses para saber cuándo tenemos presentaciónes, quien lleva el huehuetl y altar, lugar de ensayo, etc. El Centro de Comunicación del grupo es responsable de mantener el calendario.

- Nuestra forma de comunicación es a través de correo electrónico. Enviamos cualquier cosa relacionada al grupo al "Centro de Comunicación" y ella/él lo envía a todo el grupo.
- Parte de la comunicación es ser abiertos para escuchar cuando alguien tiene preguntas, dudas or problemas. Tratamos de crear un espacio en nuestro círculo para que siempre exista la confianza de hablar de cualquier tema. Todos tenemos que tratar de crear un círculo sano, abierto y espiritual. Siempre haciendo lo que es sea necessario para mantener buena energía entre todos. Si se necesita hacer un círculo de mujeres/hombres, o alguna otra cosa, debemos ser un apoyo familiar para todos en nuestro círculo.

Politica

Nosotros somos un grupo, no solo espiritual y cultural, sino tambien político. Somos un recurso para la comunidad y trabajamos para la liberación de nuestra gente y comunidad. Solo podemos hacer estó si nos involucramos en la lucha por justicia social.

Espiritualidad

Todos están bienvenidos a nuestro grupo, no importan sus creencias personales o espirituales. Sin embargo en nuestro grupo, afirmamos y enseñamos la espiritualidad de nuestros antepasados, las creencias Mexicas e Indígena de todo el continente. La creencia que todos estamos relacionados, In Lakesh. Tú eres mi otro yo.

Armonia del grupo

Nuestro grupo tratara siempre de mantener la armonia en diferentes formas, ya sea en la danza y entre la forma como tratamos a cada uno. La Danza es una forma de vivir. Llegar a la danza y decir cosas en la palabra y al siguente dia tratar a otras personas de mala manera no es armonía.

Sexismo/ Homofobia

No toleramos la exclusión o falta de respeto a nadie. Como grupo tenemos la responsabilidad de seguir aprendiendo y creciendo en conocimiento para de crear igualdad y balance verdadero en el círculo. Todos somos parte del círculo.

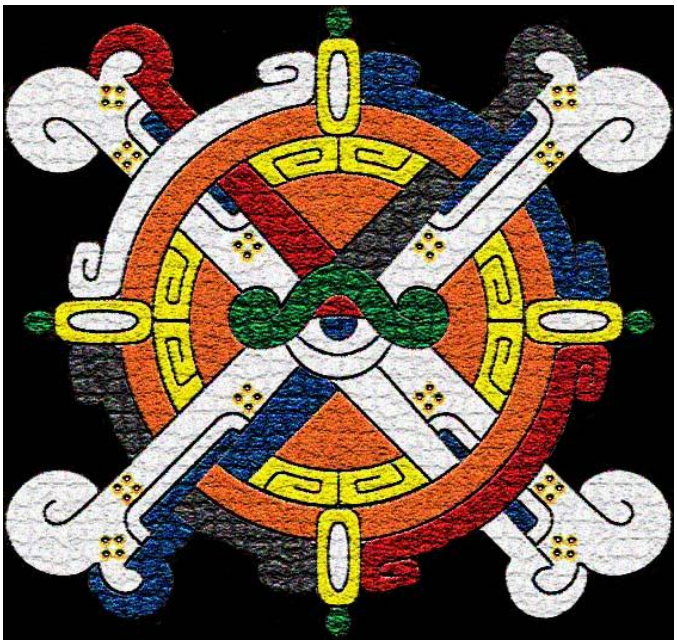
Dinero

Honorarios y dinero que sea dado al grupo no se va a repartir entre danzantes, sino todo el dinero se pondrá en un fondo comun y se gastara para el beneficio de todos. Esto puede ser en viajes, excursiones, o preparación (traer maestros o mandar danzantes a diferentes lados). El dinero ayudara con trasportación, talleres, ceremonias, rituales, retiros, temezcal, papeleo, publicidad, copias, etc. Además compraremos plumas como grupo para dividirlas entre todos y telas para hacer trajes los que quieran hacerlos.

Haremos el esfuerzo para llegar ser organización sin fin de lucro. La tesorera/o es responsible de todos los datos y finanzas del grupo.

Visitantes / (no-Indígenas)

Desde éste momento todos están bienvenidos a los ensayos. No hemos hablado o decidido como queremos recibir personas no-Indígenas al círculo, ya sea en ensayos, presentaciónes o ceremonias. Falta esta conversación. Nuestra meta es enfocarnos en el pueblo Indígena de este continente; encontrar, rescatar, y preservar lo que es nuestro--nuestra historia, memoria y reconocer la sangre que corre en nuestros cuerpos. Queremos crear un espacio seguro y un recurso positivo para nuestra communidad. Siempre pedimos respeto. Los que luchan por estas metas y que están en solidaridad, tienen muchas oportunidades y maneras de ayudar y aprender.



Danza Mexica

Cetiliztli Nauhcampa

Normas y Disciplina del Grupo

1. NO leaving the circle unless given permission by the person/s with the palabra at the puerta.
   NO se puede dejar el círculo sin el permiso de la/s persona/s con palabra de la puerta.

2. Only two people at a time will be permitted to leave the circle at a time. Please wait till the people who have gone out return to the circle. This is to not break the energia of the circle.
   Solo dos personas a la vez tendran permitido sarlir del círculo. Por favor de esperar hasta que las personas que han salido regresen al círculo. Estó es para no romper la energia del círculo.

3. All new dancers will start out wearing trajes sensillos. Everyone must demonstrate commitment to la danza and to the círculo to earn ayoyotes, sonajas, telas, plumas, etc.
   Todos los nuevos danzantes comenzaran con trajes sencillos. Todos tienen que demostrar su compromiso a la danza al igual que al círculo para ganar los ayoyotes, sonajas, telas, plumas, etc.

4. Practice begins at 5:30 pm on Fridays and at 12 pm on Sundays (times may be subject to change). Please be on time so that there can be group warm-ups and time to move chairs, etc.
   La práctica comienza a las 5:30 pm los viernes y a las 12 pm los domingos (la hora puede variar). Por favor llegen a tiempo para que como grupo podamos hacer calientamientos, mover las sillas, etc.

5. Everyone shall be respectful of each other and their personal belongings. Please ask before picking up or touching other people's things inside and outside the circle.
   Todos deben respetar a cada uno y sus bienes. Por favor de pedir permiso antes de levantar or tocar las cosas de otras personas adentro y afuera del círculo.

6. If you leave the danza circle for more than 2 months, you will be considered a beginner again.
   Si dejas el círculo de danza por más de 2 meses, seras considerado como danzante principiante al regresar.

7. Please treat people how you want to be treated. This means: no mad dogging and no criticizing. Danza practice is for learning danza and the Mexica traditions or anything pertaining to it. Please show respect for all danzantes.

Por favor de tratar a la gente como quieres que te traten a tí. Esto quiere decir: no hacer malas caras y no criticar. La práctica es para aprender la danza y las tradiciones Mexicas o cosas relacionadas. Por favor demostrar respeto para todo/as danzantes.

8. In order to dance at a presentation or special events of the group, it is important that you present at the practice before the event.
Para participar en las presentaciónes y los eventos especiales del grupo, es importante que estes presente en las prácticas que suceden antes del evento.

9. At presentations (and closing palabra) no one should leave the place where we will be dancing unless with specific permission. It is important to complete our offering and obligations to our host.
En las presentaciónes (y en la palabra final) nadie debe irse del lugar donde estan danzando, solo con previo permiso. Es importante cumplir con nuestra ofrenda y las obligaciones al anfitrión.

In brief, this explains some standards of the group in order to be fair and reasonable. As always, if someone has an idea or opinion that will help the learning process, it will be welcome and will be considered and respected.
Esto, en breve, explica unas normas del grupo para que todo sea justo y razonable. Como siempre, si alguien tiene una idea o opinion que ayudara nuestro proceso de aprender, estara bienvenido y sera considerado y respetado.

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