

Musical ethnography under Spanish colonial power: an anthropological look at gathering musical history

by **Joaquina Labajo**

The addition of a historical dimension to Western ethnomusicology has permitted the birth of a new kind of research. This focuses on the authors of what one might call an "integrated and unpremeditated ethnomusicology", a kind of research engaged in the colonial project for three centuries or more during the modern period. My purpose is to emphasize the complexity of thought manifested by travelers from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. Far from restricting their own worldview to the conventional notions of this period, some of them left accounts remarkable for the plurality of their convictions and methods, as well as the irreverent doubts they express about their culture and way of looking at the world. Such a wide diversity of attitudes problematizes the extent to which the view of the observer is conditioned by his or her time and place.

1. The observation of musicological behavior as a survival and conflict resolving practice

Levi-Strauss once suggested that "like mathematics or music, ethnography is one the rare vocations that we can discover in ourselves without its having ever been taught to us" (1955-57). If we agree with this proposition, we might perhaps take the research activities of travelers in various cultures as an example. Nevertheless, it is also true that there are many problems in considering these experiences as precedents for what we understand now as the anthropology of music or ethnomusicology. A wide time span separates us from them and their methods. But there are other problems, in particular the pronounced contextual conditioning of their observations, manipulation of discourse, deliberate omissions, and, in general, a culturally and historically specific mode of thought. Most specifically, one cannot avoid a certain hostility to the idea that this kind of historical research might be used to justify theories defending the birth of these sciences as a logical development of Western colonialism (1989 : 57) [\(1\)](#).

One cannot, indeed, deny the relationship of these sciences with the colonial project. Western history has been incapable of eradicating its colonial past, making it impossible for us to distinguish the colonial project from its epistemological structure. However much we try to understand the world in which we live, we are still unable to explain our existence, in a broader sense, without reference to the politics of colonial expansion (Popper, 1973).

The isolation of the specific study of music from other musicological and ethnographic sciences at the time of Guido Adler (1885:14) does little to justify his approach to the colonial project. On the contrary, one could say that controversy over the mutual complicity of ethnography and colonialism has permitted the development of new and more critical methods of study. In this

regard today, some Latin American researchers, coming from a background in which the shattering impact of Spanish colonization is keenly felt, rightly articulate the need for a specific disciplinary convergence: a new "*anthropology of music*" (Grebe Vicuña 1993) or an "*integrated musicology*" (Waisman 1993) that will enable them to re-establish the intimate link between the whole of their musical repertoires and their respective social, economic and cultural milieus, not only in their present but also in the past (Merino: 1976).

The fact that colonial narratives concerning musical behavior argue that music cannot be isolated from other customs does not allow us to regard them, even from an evolutionist standpoint, as a 'primitive' stage of knowledge, nor indeed to interpret them as the direct result of a 'scientific impulse', as this moment in Western history is habitually understood.

In the history of anthropology, as James A. Boon points out, comparisons between periods are irrelevant and unnecessary, just as anthropologists can, for the same reasons, dispense with discriminating comparisons between cultures. The fact is, however, that the motivations that drove certain missionaries, traders, soldiers, or scientists and musicians to enter into their unavoidably prejudiced observation of colonized cultures, complimented specific and practical interests intended to ensure control over other nations (conquered or merely visited), as well as their own survival.

Under circumstances of inappropriate and, to a large extent, forced linguistic exchange, speech, song, gesture, bodily posture, and dance, were assessed by these navigators as essential channels of information for their personal survival, no different in kind from knowledge about which kinds of birds foretell the proximity of dry land. In this sense, an interest in what is nowadays called a "soundscape" assumed a sharp focus for these men, and, indeed, those they subjected. On the watch-out, when at sea, for the soundscape of birds that directed them about the lands they skirted, Columbus' companions on his first trip listened day and night to birds, identifying species and flight routes.

"There came to the vessel two gannets and after a while one more; that was a sign that we were close to dry land. They took a bird in their hands, that was like a "garjao" ; it was a river bird, not a sea bird, and its feet were like those of a seagull. At dawn, two or three small birds came singing and later, before sunrise, they disappeared. After came another gannet, from the northwest and heading southeast, which was a sign that it was coming from dry land, because these birds sleep on shore and in the morning they go to sea for food and they do not fly farther than twenty miles" (Colón 1995:103) (2).

This feeling of dependence experienced by men from different cultures (including the Western one) towards birdsong, a feeling which organized myths and rites around their existence (as Feld has discussed elsewhere; see particularly Feld 1994), is recurrent in these navigators, for whom, of course, certain species of birds known in the mother country were not devoid of meanings either (Labajo 1984). There is nothing strange then in the interest taken by the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún in the omens of the "oacton" or of the various genera of owls among the Indians of New Spain (1990, 313-318). Likewise, observation of songs and the coordination required by certain native dances of the southern islands performed on their arrival, were not

minor matters for those, like Fernández de Quirós, who made use of this knowledge to appraise the organizing capacity, and thus defensive capacity, of his hosts: "... and morning and afternoon, all together, they made a loud and concerted sonorous murmur that echoed in the gorges, and they answered each other with screams" (1989: 79) (3). In spite of the distortion that observation from a distance entails, travelers and natives did not have many choices. The Nahuatl Indians of New Spain attempted to understand the first Franciscans, who arrived at Tlaxcala in 1524, through the sounds they made during prayer: "These poor people must be diseased or insane, notes the local chronicler Muñoz Camargo (Muñoz Camargo, 1981: 165). Let these wretches shout; let them be, to pass their disease as they could, do them no harm... and look, have you noticed how they shout and cry at midday, midnight and a quarter before dawn?" (4). Hence one might infer that an overall concern for sound gestures, both for visitors and visited, was one of the first, most significant and most detailed sources of reciprocal knowledge.

Although two centuries separate the bellicose attitude of the 'Conquest of the Indies' from the 18th century 'scientific expeditions', more 'diplomatic' in spirit yet just as imperialistic in their ultimate goals, this concern remained an important means of negotiating colonial encounter, to the extent of inducing the Spanish every now and again to respond and participate in particular events. Thus, during an expedition led by **Malaspina**, an Italian navigator at the service of the Spanish Crown, after a similar skirmish to the one that put an end to Captain Cook's life in the Sandwich Islands, the chronicler recounts: "the folks of both corvettes agreed to sing peace, like the natives sang from the shore, producing what in Malaspina's opinion was a pleasant clamour repeated on both vessels and on the beach, not devoid of certain harmony and accompanied by the eloquent attitude of stretched out arms" (5).



Tomás de Suria, Retirada del cuarto de círculo en el puerto de Mulgrave

Tomás de Suria, a landscape and portrait painter who accompanied the expedition, contributed to this cooperative gesture "against his own will", evidencing genuine fear for his lives in a potentially dangerous situations resolved by this kind of "distant-participating" attitude. "They made him sit (after he had tried to dance in the circle they had made around him) and by force obliged him to sing their song, making faces at him and ridiculing him. Suria, forgetting about reality, yelled louder, imitating the native's contortions and gestures; this pleased them much and so he cunningly won their sympathy" (6) (Fernández, 1936: 10). Undoubtedly this account cannot be understood without referring to a whole literary legacy converging on the creation of the archetype of the "savage" of strange and dangerous ways. This induced Europeans to act in relation to a complex and vaguely defined cultural imagery, that took shape in Malaspina's orders to his men to observe extreme caution whenever in the presence of "immediate natives" (7).

Taking the analysis of the attitudes evidenced by these accounts as a starting point, it would be worth reconsidering various issues. Since observation cannot be regarded as a behavior pattern adopted irrespective of preconceptions (each culture, epoch and individual have their own), just as knowledge is not always an act of willful curiosity, we can ask ourselves whether people do not experience, under given circumstances, what might be described as an 'emergency apprenticeship', prevailing over these preconceptions.

In this sense, it is clear that there is no urge for knowledge of musical behaviors that one can separate from the politico-economic nature of the voyage, neither in the written accounts of the first conquerors, nor in those of the later expeditions of commercial colonialism. Nevertheless, the colonists scrupulously recorded their observations of the characteristics of indigenous musical performance as a means of appraising the natives' general attitude to the Spanish. The first conquerors use the term 'son' (sound) to identify by one single vocable the concept of musical expression of emotions as well as those of attitude and gesture. Suria later tried to describe the singing of the inhabitants of Port Mulgrave in an attempt to translate their inner feelings in a similar way (8).

The care exhibited in describing musical events was of no specific use to the first conquerors from the point of view of security, even if it was to become essential, later, to the missionaries and other colonists settling in the Americas. But the use of such information was clear to the voyagers of the Enlightenment who, while not settling in any place any longer than the first conquerors, tried to obtain data that might yet prove vital to traders who will come to those lands (9). It is not by chance that most of the musical notations recorded that have reached us are related to the repertory of hymns of peace or chants of hostility towards foreign rule.

The image of the ancient fight of Orpheus against Dionisus, by which Fubini described most of the history of European music (1976), seems to resist application in this context. The obsession for world control through the testimony of words, both in the ceremonies of possession in Europe's conquest of the New World (Seed: 1995) and in the compilations of vocabularies by Enlightenment scholars, show a recurrent feature of European identity. This obsession proves, however, of little use in subduing a brawl. Most intimidation between indigenes and navigators take place at the latter's arrival at harbors or shores, where sound expressions are undeniably more effective than spoken language. In this way, it becomes obvious, in view of the navigators'

journals, that the inhabitants of some of the coasts most visited by Europeans, at least in the 17th century, had established specific diplomatic practices.

Account taken of the few musical expressions of collective use that Europeans had to present to other cultures such as those of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, one can easily understand that references to music in such cases had to develop basically around the repertory of the residents. The set of objects prepared as presents to start hosting or data gathering relationships could not replace other external signs that could somehow illustrate the spirit of respect towards the men and the land in which they found themselves.

Since the construction of oral and written memories tends to be based on the unusual rather than on the usual, it is interesting to note how often dangerous incidents and peace making are recorded in the accounts referring to the musical expression of the "other". While they acknowledged its relevance in cultural dialogue, their interpretative doubt as to its meaning drove the Western voyagers to try analogous, if hastily improvised, responses based on popular songs (10). The unusual nature of the native's gestures explains their presence in the navigator's journals. The introduction of new attitudes in musical behavior, as a consequence of their traveling experience, evolved in proportion to the amount of time spent far from their homes. Another history is inscribed in the cultural space of a paradoxical European diaspora depending on and subordinated, in its discourse and political representation, to the Crown's schemes, but where transgressions and transformations of attitudes are discernible in the search for individual experiences and survival in a new context.

2. Considerations on the gathering of data

The first musical ethnographers realized that a certain "mediation" and contextual conditioning are implied in the data collection process and that situations of risk affect the appraisal of facts, stories directly heard or documentary sources. This drove these scholars in many instances to compare opinions, descriptions and documents, a fact which is often confirmed in their work (Ixtilxochitl 1985: 85) (11). If, however, in the reconstruction of the past, the comparison of oral and written sources does not rid the historian of the need to create a personal and deliberate discourse to fill in the gaps left by the collected data (Levi Strauss 1988: 169), the observation of the present creates even more gaps.

During this period, the speculations of the researchers on the questions concerning the process of data collection concentrate heavily on their own inadequacies as regards fieldwork. Among these we can mention a poor knowledge of the language, the short time dedicated to data gathering and the lack of a sufficient degree of trust in local populations.

To analyze a text, **Umberto Eco** suggests that the "*intentio operis*", may include also the author's intention to incite the potential reader to develop multiple interpretations (1997). This perspective may be applied to "action language" (communication by signs), widespread among conquerors and expedition travelers, thus emphasizing a broader range of options on which to weave the meaning of the message.

Moreover, the energy invested in obtaining information is not always rewarded with positive returns. Consequently, questioning is simplified and direct observation and listening are favored over any efforts to communicate, and deduction by intuition widens their regular areas of query as well as its complexity. The navy lieutenant, F. J. de Viana, during his stay on the Vavao Islands in June 1793, witnessing a song performed by women in the voyagers' honor, wondered whether the song was ancient or improvised; a difficult question, no doubt, for someone who has no words to express it. So he resorted to his own references and wrote: "Judging by the ease with which the choir sings the same voices, we could infer this is not a new composition" (Viana 1993: 216).



Bambrila, Aguada de las corbetas en Vavao

The problems over which Malinowski pondered at the beginning of the 20th century, centering on the imperfections of pidgin-English as a medium of communication (1995: 22), had already been elucidated by Garcilaso, el Inca, who in turn assumed the words of Fray Maestro Blas Varela: "*The way our Spanish had to write the [native's] stories was by asking the Indians whatever they wanted to know in Castilian ..., the worst side of it all was the little notion and the great need that each had of the language of the other to understand one another in asking and replying ... In such great confusion the inquirer took according to his taste and liking what he thought closer to what he wanted to know, and what he thought the Indian had meant to say.*" (1990 : 58).



Dance music from Tonga: Me' etu'upaki

(wav file: 342 kb)

In the case of the Enlightenment members of the **Malaspina Expedition** (1789-1794), time was organized according to the political imperatives of the sponsoring country. Certain crew members felt that ethnographic 'depth' was being sacrificed. "*Not being able to remove from our minds the idea of the little time we can spend on the location of our observations, we inquire about a hundred different objects at once and, as is natural, we end up by knowing little with exactitude about none.*" (Cevallos, 1793: 16). While the Expedition remained in Manila for over six months, it only spent ten days in Tonga.



Bambrila, View of the English colony by the harbour of Sidney where the two schooners of the Malaspina Expedition were anchored

Between the humanistic traveler and the expedition scholar, the difference is not one of essence but degree. Histories of these voyages teach us that cross-cultural 'understanding' is made up of superficial views, *naïvetés*, blunders, invasions and indiscretions - Jean-Didier Urbain pointed out (1991: 85-86). Observing the enthusiastic musical expressions of the non-Christian Indians, the Franciscan Motolinía states that it there is almost "no memory of all the past" (Benavente 1971: 384); the Dominican Diego de Durán (1967: 122) only sees the deceitful and wicked adaptation of ritual forms: "I say that ... seeing that one that understands them is coming, they change their chant and sing the hymn they composed for Saint Francis with alleluia and all, to cover up their wickedness and, the monk gone, they return to the theme of their idol" .

The diplomacy, patience and ingenuity displayed by the visited, observed or conquered peoples to insure their physical and cultural survival exposes the limits of the conquerors, humanists or scholars efforts to gain the colonized people's trust. Garcilaso de la Vega, El Inca, in the middle of the 16th century, was well aware of this fact: "when I resolved to write down this history, I wrote to my fellow students ... [who] conveyed my intentions to their mothers and relatives who in knowing that an Indian, a son of their motherland, wanted to write the events referred to it, brought out of the repository the accounts they had of its stories and sent these to me" (1990: 35) (12). On the contrary, when Malaspina's men asked to see the women's dance of the Vavao they had to admit their blunder in gentlemanly terms, even though the painter, Ravenet, chose to idealize the scene: "Vuna ordered the women came out ... but even if a dozen of them gathered to dance, this was done with such coldness and fright that we wished for nothing more that to see the end of it and to take our leave to return on board" (Pimentel, 1994: 218).



Ravenet, Borrador del baile de mujeres en Vavao

What can be expected from observations made in an atmosphere of mistrust on the side of the observed, people who, in Malinowski's view (1995: 62) consider the investigators as an encumbrance or a necessary evil? "They have no secrets for me" - stated the interpreter Máximo Rodriguez in the foreword to his journal in Tahiti in 1774 (1995: 52). Although he reveals his negative response to invitations to participate in various rites and ceremonies, he nevertheless describes them (13).



John Weber, *Muchachas de Tahiti bailando*

This non-participative attitude is a common feature of the observer during this period, but this cannot be applied to all voyagers, at least if we go by their writings. However, all of these constraints seem to lead, on the one hand, to accept the theatrical nature of the musical ceremonies with which indigenes and aliens honored each other: Viana tells us that, during his stay in the Mayorga Archipelago, when the time of the performances came, the troops of the Spanish expedition paraded and marched and even parodied a battle firing their guns against the sea, but not without a forewarning to the locals, lest the women be frightened. To reciprocate, the Vavao people also performed a war dance and to prevent alarm "they replaced their clubs by short rows or other sticks" (Pimentel 1993: 222). On the other hand, the difficulties in understanding the language, restrictions of time, and their ignorance of the social systems in which they found themselves, made the researchers feel on more secure grounds when collecting musical instruments (14), notating songs, or describing ceremonies.

The trend adopted in later centuries to quantify and formally describe forms of musical expressions seems, from this standpoint, to have been more the result of the restraints that fettered earlier travelers than the natural evolution of deliberate and sedentary investigation. If a decontextualized study of the European folklore focused, during the most of the 19th and 20th centuries, in cataloguing the cultural heritage that in the hands of choral societies would contribute to the rise of nationalism (Labajo 1989), its methodical application to non-European musical manifestations was a consequence of lack of adequate fieldwork, a lack of understanding of the obvious, the taken for granted, which was passed over in silence because of the very

immersion of observers in the civilization under scrutiny. This objectivising approach to its forms, undoubtedly contributed to the creation of new cultural stereotypes.

3. Discourse as an ideological postulate

Written discourse is a basic element in the elaboration of the Western colonial concept. But, as in almost all of its ideological elements, it is not free of profound contradictions (Bancel and Blanchard 1997: 7). Discourse on people, their cultures and music not only depends, among other factors, on human subjectivity and contextual conditioning during "fieldwork", but also on the ethnographers' preconceptions when they began the task, the transformation they cause, their own political evolution during the time they spent away from their home country and, more especially, on their relationship to their potential readers.

Unquestionably, the wide historical time span considered here, specifically centered on 16th century conquerors and humanists and 18th century scholars, takes into account multiple epistemologies. Nevertheless major differences within this period appear not as a result of some evolutionary process, but in matters relating to the peculiar circumstances and intentions affecting research. My interest in considering this period as a whole resides precisely in our being able to set specific attitudes against a general discursive background, one that seems to spill over the conventional borderlines that mark the beginning contemporary Western history.

One can consider the following annotation as an example of one of the attitudes we may find among researchers:



[Annotation in the text of Canto de alegría in Malaspina's journal relating to the relationship with Macuina in Nootka](#) (jpeg file 272 kb)

"When the time to close the establishment came, he [the chief] was offered the house that was being built, and the rest was to be distributed to the other chiefs. Macuina [Maquina] reciprocated by giving assurances of his friendship that was another way of saying that the Spanish would always be the owners of the location they were occupying on that day, singing repeatedly the following song." (Tova Arredondo, 1791, b) [\(15\)](#).

When French members of La Perouse's voyage arrived in 1786 at Lituya Bay on the coast of Alaska, their journal enthusiastically records the musical sung or danced events organized around them. In a study comparing La Perouse's version of the encounter with that of the native Tlingit people, Mary Jane Lenz shows that the latter made no reference to the ceremonial aspects of the encounter (1989: 134) in which La Perouse (according to his own account) accepted the offer to buy Cenotaph Island. During Malaspina's stay in Nootka in 1791 and among the incidents that brought Britain and Spain on the verge of war, there is no question of purchase, or of taking possession by the Spanish party. One cannot fail to be struck, however, by the deep silence surrounding, in the various versions of the voyagers' account, the description of the musical exchange logged in the journals, such as the promise of chief Maquina to the Spanish of the "location they were occupying", and the song performed on the occasion. Maquina was described as a man of "*a shy and suspicious disposition*", who had excused his lack of interest in meeting the Spanish and his displeasure on account of having to move his household to Tahsis. His song is entered in more than one of the Westerns versions (!) (16).

What is missing in journals, stories, and *memoires* that would make comprehensible to us their message today? Asking questions the text does not suggest (Booth 1979: 243) or recognizing the silences latent in the stories may be a valuable means of identifying the real intent of discourse around music. Why do 18th century scholars concern themselves with recording Maquina's song, while they systematically avoided gathering of data during the rest of their voyage? Or, beyond this particular case, why are the descriptions of musical practices so abundant and irregular among scholars and practically nil among conquerors? Could this perhaps be suitably explained by the Enlightenment mode of thought? Why is it that they are both interested in the interpretation of the significance of the events they witness, while they exhibit little curiosity about its transformations?

Why do Dominican friars, on the contrary, take an interest in the ceremonial past of the American Indians, making comparisons with the significance of these musics in their own time? The "non-dit" of the discourse gets us back to the interpretation of the context. The historical circumstances in which their attitudes developed do not contribute to the construction of the imagery of a historical evolutionism, but to the realization of their own relativity.

With both progress and regression during the 18th century, as a result of the negative experience of its overseas undertakings and for the economic collapse of the Spanish crown, many in Europe became increasingly convinced that colonization at large scale, as in the Americas, was becoming a costly enterprise for the sponsoring nations. The issue became one of following the Phoenicians' example and not that of Columbus. In other words, they had to replace their policy of conquest by a commercial one.

The attitude towards the natives had therefore to be changed, at least as far as the rules of conquest were concerned. The instructions of the voyagers were to try as far as possible to avoid confrontations that could jeopardize the enterprise. Besides the evaluation of the natural resources of the land - a task that the naturalists embraced enthusiastically - they also started compiling vocabularies and other cultural data on its inhabitants that might be used in various ways in the future.

As regards Spain specifically, other goals were to be added: control by the state of its old colonies (one cannot forget that this is the time of the famous Tupac Amaru insurrections), and the claim to the right to commercial hegemony in geographic areas close to former settlements, according to the new principle of the 'cultural unit'.

Scientific proof, in this case, was to be sought by analogy with languages, or, failing this, of ceremonial forms based on the comparative study of their musical expressions. From this viewpoint, the interest in conflict musics and "musical analogy" gains an ideological weight far removed from the apparently innocent discourse which often characterizes the Enlightenment thought. It is not by chance that the major notations listed by Thadeus Haenke (17) during the Malaspina expedition are songs of a political or "subversive" nature, such as "El negrito Casto de la Sierra" gathered in Casapacta.



Portrait of Haenke and his transcription of *El negrito casto de la Sierra*

In addition, these vocabularies served in various circumstances to justify prior Spanish claims to colonial control before those of other European powers. In the case of the inhabitants of the Pacific, the Philippine Islands were put forward as a unified cultural dissemination center for

these populations, in opposition to James Cook's thesis, which defended the idea of numerous mother tongues (Bustamante 1989: 84). According to Enlightenment theories on the origin of languages, song, rhythm, verse, and word have no boundaries, allowing Cevallos to conclude his analysis by emphasizing certain connections between the songs collected in the Friendship Archipelago with Spanish medieval metrics [\(18\)](#) (Cevallos: 1793).

Comparisons with the mother country may, however, have more than one interpretation. The comparative method is not to be found amongst authors who deny the encountered peoples any cultural value, while it is employed specifically amongst those who attempt to produce in the Spanish reader some kind of familiarity with these other cultures by comparing the local people's ways and customs to those of the mother country.

The undertaking is not new, even among humanists such as Sahagún [\(19\)](#) or mestizos such as Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca [\(20\)](#). Significantly, and for these very reasons, it is hardly ever to be found among the first 16th century conquerors.

"One day, during a gathering with English and natives, Quicomashia heard seguidilla songs and once these were over he asked about their theme: I replied that the absence of a lady. In turn other Spanish and English men sung their ballads and the encounter concluded with a most beautiful "anacreontica" performed by a young Irish man; the Thais asked me about the meaning of the piece. The first two only tell about love - I answered - and the one you just heard is an eulogy to wine. To this he replied: Don't the Spanish and the English have a god ... ? Thais of Nootka only sings to praise Quautz and ask for his help" (Mozziño: 1791). [\(21\)](#)



["Seguidillas majas" from El majo y la italiana fingida by Blas de Laserna \(wav file 236 kb\)](#)

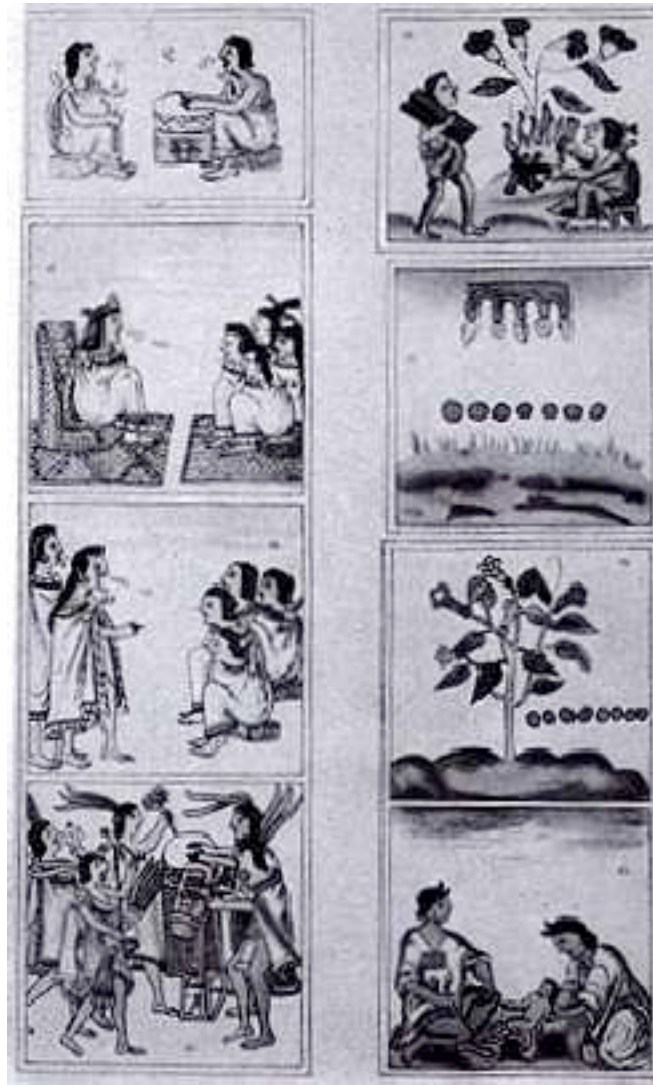


Suria, Baile en la Playa de Nutka

The friars belonging to the *humanista* school (represented in Spain mainly by the school of Salamanca) tried to censure the brutality of the conquest and used comparison as an impartial and 'unprejudiced' method of forwarding particular causes. "Before the wars they celebrated their festivals in freedom, large villages gathered in three or four thousands and more to dance. After the conquest, only half, and this number went on declining and lessening." (Benavente 1971: 383). "They used golden bells, which are now the same, only made of wood. They used tortoise-shaped shells made of gold to play on; now, they use the natural shell of the tortoise" (Sahagún 1990: 573) (22).

The acculturationist and assimilationist perspectives upon which Bernardino de Sahagún and other religious humanists imbued with the theories of the "right of the people" at the school of Salamanca in the 16th century based their studies, served more ambitious goals. The detailed richness of Sahagún's 'accounts-inventions' of the ritual festivals in the territories of New Spain; his interest in dignifying with precise data their past and present musical practices; his care to isolate the natural goodness of the Indian from his acts of idolatry; the harshness of his narrative when referring to the most bloody episodes of the conquest; and his decision to have this material published both in Castilian and Nahuatl languages - an exercise rarely repeated and often replaced by what Malinowski called the "*active hunter who drives the prey into the trap and who chases it into its most inaccessible lairs.*" (1995: 26) - brings us to another goal of colonial research. This was a utopian politico-religious project: the creation of an Indian Republic, autonomous yet formally tied to the Crown, and effectively ruled by Franciscan friars and by Mexican officers chosen from a number of native civil servants. The investigation of pre-

Columbine culture was for them, just as for the neo-Spanish historians they instructed in their classrooms, a means of dignifying the past, justifying their self-governing capacity and officially integrating both cultures.



Sahagún, Flower: symbol of musicians and dancers



Sahagún, *Slaughter of Indians during the festival of Uitzilopuchtli (... "And those who were playing had their hands cut off...")*

In the idiom of the missionaries, who conquered the lands of the Americas with their music (Turrent 1993), the musical expression of the Indian only exists in subordination to the project of a Christian empire. Their interest in the apprenticeship of the Indians and their pride in the results achieved was not capable of imagining other concerns or considerations apart from the dynamics of their setting: *"I have heard that there is a teacher in Mexico who plays the "vihuela de arco", and they have made already the four voices and have started playing; I am sure that within a year the Indians will know as much if not more than their teacher."*(Benavente 1971: 238) (23).



[Guaracha: Convidando está la noche by Juan García de Zéspiedes](#) (wav file 228 kb)

Past and the present exist only as modulators of the future, the future of a New World that under Boecio's "virtus" (Pagden 1997: 46) would erase political, cultural and religious divisions in a united Christianity. Contradictory and fragile, this unstable thesis is obliged to integrate the figure of the "Other", deemed responsible for the chaos, to safeguard its own logic. The natives of the "Siècle des Lumières", whose musical manifestations are "guided only by instinct" (Didier 66), failed to endorse Enlightenment theories of "imitation" (24). English and Europeans in general elicit only defiance and insincere demonstrations of respect from the "natives". The flutes of the Indians of New Spain cannot be tuned under the Pythagorean fifth system, and the Spanish colonists teach the Indians 'indecorous' songs.



[El cañutero, New Mexico](#) (wav file 279 kb)

The "ethnomusicological" discourse of the Modern Age allows us to appreciate the complex ways in which ideology obscures the obvious in particular contexts. Thus we must ask ourselves whether the musical behavior of the people described actually were the representation of a real 'Other'; or, rather a static and imaginary discursive object onto which Europeans could project their intellectual, commercial and transformative power, in order to mark their own reciprocal political distance?

4. *Conclusion*

The consideration of the methods of observation and what I have called the 'mediatisation' of ethnomusicological discourse enables us to review our own observations, methodologies and discourses from an epistemological point of view. If we disown any relationship with our scholarly forefathers with respect to the study of a distant and historical "other", punishing them for their problematic preconceptions and impure political, religious or commercial agendas, we are faced with serious problems of historical and scientific method. By reviewing history purged of its stereotypes, one can discover the diversity of attitudes and connectedness of its particular modes of knowledge through a dialogue with the present. Is it possible for us today to abrogate our responsibility for debating knowledge as a means of power, to search for new possibilities of multicultural cohabitation, to interrogate its relation with the opening of new commercial markets and of ethnomusicological discourse as a privilege of Western travelers?

The sheer variety of scholarly work today seems to indicate that the threads of history, diverse and contradictory as they may be, are not entirely severed, and that the new sciences cannot be explained exclusively in relation to the second colonial expansion of the last third of the 20th century. Going back to history enables us to initiate a necessary exercise in reflexive speculation.

5. *Endnotes*

(1) The acceptance of the works of missionaries, discoverers and philosophers as a part of the history of the sciences of man has been repeatedly rejected for their faulty epistemology and

their extreme ethnocentrism. The critique of James A. Boon in 'Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' by **Margaret Hodgen** develops this thesis.

(2) "*Vinieron a la nave dos alcatraces y después uno más lo que fue señal de estar cerca de tierra. Tomaron un pájaro con la mano que era como un "garjao"; era pájaro de río y no de mar y los pies los tenía como los de una gaviota. Vinieron al navío, amaneciendo, dos o tres pajaritos de tierra cantando y después, antes de que saliera el sol desaparecieron. Después vino un alcatraz, venía del noroeste e iba al sudeste, que era señal de que dejaba la tierra porque estas aves duermen en tierra y por la mañana van a la mar a buscar su vida y no se alejan veinte leguas*" (Colón 1995: 103).

(3) "...y por las mañanas y tardes, todos a una voz, hacían un rumor sonoro y concertado que retumbaba por las quebradas y se respondían a gritos" (Fernández de Quirós 1989: 79).

(4) "*Estos pobres deben de ser enfermos o estar locos dejadles vocear a los miserables; dejadles estar, que pasen su enfermedad como pudieren, no les hagáis mal,...y mirad, si habéis notado, cómo al mediodía, a media noche y al cuarto del alba...dan voces y lloran.*" (Muñoz Camargo 1981: 165).

(5) "*las gentes de ambas corbetas accedieron a cantar la paz, al igual que los naturales que lo hacían desde la orilla opuesta, lo que a juicio de Malaspina produjo un agradable estruendo repetido en ambos buques y en tierra, no faltó de cierta armonía y acompañado de la acción expresiva de los brazos abiertos*" (Tova Arredondo 1791a: 10).

(6) "*...lo hicieron sentarse (luego de haber intentado bailar con ellos en un círculo que hacían a su alrededor) y a la fuerza le obligaron a cantar su misma canción, haciéndole gestos y ridiculizándole. Suria, desentendiéndose de la realidad, gritó más fuerte, imitando las mismas contorsiones y gestos de los indígenas, lo que les gustó mucho, y con astucia les ganó la voluntad*" (Fernández 1939: 10)

(7) In order no. 5 to the expedition, referring to contact with the Indians, it was said: "*En todo lo que sea relativo a la conservación propia y a un roce amistoso con los naturales deberán tomarse las precauciones siguientes. Las lanchas jamás quedarán varadas; todas las armas estarán cargadas cuando haya naturales inmediatos y los centinelas de las dos lanchas pasarán frecuentemente la palabra con el fin de evitar la idea de una sorpresa*" (José de Espinosa, Museo Naval, Madrid, Ms 95 f.125v; see also: Ms 575 bis f.91-92).

(8) "*Quando los españoles les suspendieron el comercio de pieles, creyeron de los indios que estaban enojados, cantaron toda la tarde y la noche de la mañana siguiente: se dividieron en tres grupos, frente a los barcos, y al terminar las estrofas, hacían un ruido que parecía risa,...xa, xa, xa, y otras veces acababan con otro como ladrido de perro. El lenguaje de los indios era áspero como si gritaran en un tono desafiante*" (Fernández 1939: 62-63). "*Su música, aún la que empleaban para pedir o denotar la paz, se resiente del carácter salvaje y es más propia para avivar las pasiones marciales que para excitar los sentimientos dulces y tiernos*" (Gutiérrez de la Concha, Ms 92 bis f.90-100).

(9) *"Si se considera...que las voces no son otra cosa sino el signo de las ideas, se percibirá que las costumbres y las opiniones de los hombres deben leerse en sus propios idiomas. Y si se añade a todo, a utilidad que puede resultar a los navegantes futuros de conocer (aunque groseramente) el lenguaje de un pueblo con que la necesidad les obligue a comerciar..."* (Cevallos, f.1)

"Observamos que cuando convenían en una permuta cantaban todos, ceremonia que excusaron pocas veces y con las que dan solemnidad a sus tratos" (Gutiérrez de la Concha, Ms 92 bis f. 90100).

(10) Moziño recounts how a canoe with Indians approached the north of Punta de Lángara, *"los marineros les cantaron el Malbroug tomando todos parte en el coro, al que acompañaron no sólo con el tono sino llevando ellos también el compás con palmadas y otras acciones que hacían con los brazos y la caveza..."* (Alcalá Galiano, f.52v-53).

(11) *"He conseguido mi deseo con mucho trabajo, peregrinación y mucha diligencia en juntar las pinturas de las historias y anales, y los cantos con las que las observaban; y sobre todo para poderlas entender, juntando y convocando a muchos principales de esta Nueva España, los que tenían fama de conocer y saber las cosas referidas"* (Ixtlilxochitl 1985: 29).

(12) *"...cuando me propuse redactar esta historia, escribí a mis condiscípulos de escuela...(los cuales) dieron cuenta de mi intención a su madre y parientes, los que sabiendo que un indio, hijo de su tierra, quería escribir los sucesos de ella, sacaron de sus archivos las relaciones que tenían de sus historias y me las enviaron"* (Vega 1990: 35).

(13) Máximo Rodríguez in his journal repeatedly refers the reader to an "excerpt" describing the ceremonies, that he later reports lost in Lima during the elaboration of the foreword.

(14) During the American conquest, there were more musical instruments introduced than native ones sent back to the mother country, that are preserved up to now. In the case of the voyagers of the 18th century, Jorge de Persia mentions two rattles acquired by the Malaspina Expedition at Port Mulgrave and Puffin-Alaska, and two drums from Tonga (Persia 1984: 140-141) to which we must add, although with some reservation, those swapped in Nootka in 1774 by Juan Pérez (Cabello 1989: 63-64).

(15) *"Se le ofreció , para cuando se retirase el establecimiento, la casa que se estaba haciendo y que las demás se repartirían entre los otros jefes. Macuina correspondió a esta oferta asegurando su amistad, que los españoles serían siempre dueños del sitio que ocupaban en el día, entonando varias veces la siguiente canción"* (Tova Arredondo 1791b) (15).

(16) In addition to Tova Arredondo's personal notes to his journal, we must mention the handwritten annotations by Moziño, Bauzá, and the notations transcribed by Thadeus Haenke.

(17) Francisco de Viana recounts his stay in Chiloe: *"... se juntan en numerosas asambleas a que llaman bebiendas, donde ... con unas canciones en idioma guiliche a que llaman Pe-rù, lamentan ya con llanto, ya con furia la época en que rindieron el cuello a ajena dominación: estas perniciosas asambleas que son generalmente nocturnas están justamente prohibidas, pero*

sin embargo suelen ser demasiado frecuentes" (Viana 1849). About Thadeus Haenke see also: C. Henckel, "Las actividades del naturalista Tadeo Haenke en la expedición de Malaspina", *Rev. Universitaria Chile*, 42 (1957): 131-139; J. V. Polisensky, "Tadeás Haenke a krize spanelské kolonialní Ameriky", *Sborník, Národního muzea v Praze (Acta Musei Nationalis Pragae)*, 25 (1981): 49-76; M. V. Ibañez Montoya, *Trabajos científicos y correspondencia de Tadeo Haenke, La Expedición Malaspina 1789-1794*, vol. 4, Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa and Lunwerg Editores, 1992.

(18) *"En los bailes del 23 y 25 pudimos percibir dos clases de metros, los unos cuya cadencia casi responde a la de nuestros versos Anacreónticos, y otros de la misma medida que nuestros versos conocidos con el nombre de arte mayor, desterrados de la poesía moderna...Fuífua, Facola y Feyleguüia que comieron a bordo el 24 cantaron otros géneros de versos cuya correspondencia a los nuestros no me atrevo a señalar"* (Cevallos 1793: 137).

(19) *"De la fiesta y sacrificios que se hacían en las calendas del nono mes, que se llamava tlaxuchimaco: "... también en esta dança entraban mugeres, moças públicas, y ivan asidos de las manos una muger entre dos hombres, y un hombre entre dos mugeres a manera de las danças que haze en Castilla la Vieja la gente popular"* (Sahagún 1990: 140).

(20) When referring to the noble dance of the Inca people, giving every possible particular, he comments: *"Salían todos juntos; daban tres pasos en compás, el primero hacia atrás y los otros dos hacia adelante, que era como los pasos que en las danzas españolas llaman dobles y represas"* (Vega 1990: 379).

(21) *Oyó Cantar Quicomashia un día unas seguidillas en cierta convivencia que tuvimos con los ingleses y naturales, y concluidas me preguntó cuál había sido su asunto; a lo que le respondí que la ausencia de una dama; cantaron después otros españoles e ingleses sus respectivas tonadas dándose fin a la tertulia con una bellísima anacreóntica cantada por un joven irlandés; El Tais me preguntaba siempre por la significación de la pieza. Las primeras contienen puramente amores -le dije- y la que acabas de oír es un elogio al vino. A lo que replicó él: ¿No tienen dios los españoles ni los ingleses...Los Taises de Nutka no cantamos más que para alabar a Quautz y pedirle su socorro"* (Moziño 1791).

(22) *" Antes de las guerras, cuando celebraban sus fiestas con libertad, en los grandes pueblos se ayuntaban tres mil y cuatro mil y más a bailar. Después de la conquista la mitad, hasta que se fue disminuyendo y apocando el número"* (Benavente 1971: 383) (*"Usavan unas sonajas de oro, y las mismas agora usan de palo. Usavan de unas conchas de tortuga hechas de oro, en que ivan tañendo; y agora las usan naturales de la mesma tortuga"* (Sahagún 1990: 573).

(23) *"He sabido ahora que en Mexico hay un maestro que sabe tañer la vihuela de arco, tienen hechas ya las cuatro voces y han comenzado a tañer. Estoy seguro de que antes de un año sabrán tanto o más los indios que su maestro"* (Benavente 1971: 238).

(24) In his book *De la musique considérée en elle-même* (1785), Chabanon writes: "[Dans] les chants des sauvages ... le chant de guerre ne diffère pas du chant de mort: l'un c'est ni vif ni

bryant, l'autre, ni triste ni lent. Ainsi tandis que l'instinct de l'homme le porte à rendre les premiers essais de la parole imitatifs, il ne fait entrer aucune intention d'imiter dans les premiers essais du chant" (Didier 1985: 66).