The Resilient Danza de Matachines Ceremonial

This work explores ways in which multimodal, vernacular forms survive in Performance despite the corrupting influences of nationalism and imperialism. The presenter discusses the ancient roots and delves into multiple cultural narratives that surround "matachines" and its variants across the Americas and in the European past. Conclusions assert that societies are creative in the ways they incorporate outside perspectives into the performing arts, allowing for conflict and resolution. The early history of Matachines—today common in New Mexico, Mexico, and Colombia among other locations in the Americas—is shrouded in mystery in part because the documentation of vernacular street/outdoor performances was not viable in imperialist societies. Thus, the only historical versions that survive were linked to the Golden Age of Theater in Spain. The embodiment of identity through dance was common to Europeans, Africans, and Indigenous societies of the Americas and this has not significantly changed. The ceremonial Matachines, with iconographic evidence of its roots in Greece around 640 BC, is widely believed to have been imported to the Americas from Western Europe where it was used in the evangelization process beginning in the sixteenth century. The ceremonial subsequently merged with Indigenous and/or Afro-descendant rituals and dances and spread widely.

Keywords: *performance, creativity, multimodality, resistance, dance*

Introduction

In 1987 I became fascinated with the Danza de Matachines in New Mexico—which is in the US and shares a southern border with Mexico. The Danza, or ceremonial dance, was and continues to be present among various Indigenous Pueblo municipalities, as among descendants of the Spanish colonists, the self-named "Manitos" (from *hermanitos*, the Spanish for younger brothers) and also coined "Indo-Hispanos" by local scholars in the 1990s. I became aware of a symbiotic relationship between Indo-Hispano musicians and local Pueblo dance enactments. But although ubiquitous in local history and tourist magazines, little was known about its history in the 1980s. I was to learn much later that this was due to the loss of the Fiesta complex in New Mexico, and thus much of what I subsequently learned about Matachines was in Mexico and Colombia.

Descendants of the Spanish colonists of New Mexico claimed Matachines came from Spain, but this claim was challenged by others who saw the visual manifestations of Indigeneity as proof that the ceremonial dance originated in Mexico. My attention was initially called to the Indigenous New Mexican Towa-speaking Pueblo of Jemez (Hemish), where two versions co-exist—the Turquoise moiety version accompanied by violin and guitar, often termed the "Spanish" version, and the "Pumpkin" moiety or "Drum" version with traditional Hemish male chorus and drum(s). I later played the violin for the Pueblo of Jemez Turquoise moiety from 1989 – 98 but focused my 1993 doctoral

dissertation on two closely related enactments in northern New Mexico, where I lived as a child. The two dissertation sites, far from the Pueblo of Jemez, are separated by three or four miles, including the Indo-Hispano town of Alcalde, and nearby Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, where the Spanish colonists arrived in 1598, renaming the municipality the Pueblo de San Juan de los Caballeros. In 2005, the Pueblo voted to reinstitute the Tewa language name. As discussed below, this initial study was to establish a foundation for the following decades of my research into the history and significance of Matachines enactments in Spain, New Mexico, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru.

This paper begins with a brief introduction to the questions that inspired my interest in Matachines enactments in New Mexico and continues with a literature review that reflects my interest in Matachines since the 1980s, featuring New Mexican scholarship on Matachines that I eventually searched for in Spain, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru. This is followed by a summary of the ancient roots and current descriptions of Matachines enactments in New Mexico and beyond. The paper delves into multiple cultural narratives that surround Matachines and its variants across the Americas and in the European past. Conclusions assert that societies are creative in the ways they incorporate outside perspectives into the performing arts, allowing for conflict, resistance, and resolution.

Literature Review

Since my research has been slow to evolve due to other professional obligations and personal circumstances, I have searched for literature for four decades in Spain, New Mexico, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru. I found that little was available in libraries in Spain and concluded on further study that Matachines, typically seen as street performance, had not been considered important enough to study and document in scholarly literature until Matachines enactments were included in theatrical entertainments. Various musicological studies were conducted on Matachines theater contexts by musicologist McDowell E. Kenley, and these and others are listed in my 2025 extensive entry article on Matachines published in *Oxford Bibliographies in Latino Studies Online*.

The bibliography, in English, includes online publications and media in English and Spanish from New Mexico, Mexico, and the Andes of Colombia and Peru and is organized as follows: Visual Overviews (including a critical Greek iconographic source); Music; Dance/Danza History; Theater/Teatro; Folklore and Musicology Studies; Performance Ethnographies; Festive Culture, Fiesta and Carnival Studies; and concludes with Reference Works—all with Subsections. Because of the great variety of writings that bear on Matachines, the following citations are primarily monographs, with notable exceptions, but numerous journal articles and websites can be found in the published article.

The early history of Matachines danzas—common in New Mexico and Mexico—is shrouded in mystery in part because, as mentioned above, the documentation of vernacular street/outdoor performances was not viable in

imperialist societies. In addition, connections with Arabic culture were largely erased from Spanish history books by the 1650s. In Mexico, where thousands of Matachines and Matlachines troupes still dance, the Spanish conquistadors burned the libraries of the ruling Mexica (Aztecs), erasing possible Mexican antecedents. Such enactments often had to do with obedience to religious edicts, although resistance to the social order was both implicit and explicit via parody and burlesque built into dramatic scenes and characters. This reached its height in the Golden Age of Theater in Spain, where Matachines danced in interludes or to finalize a drama. Drama, i.e. storytelling, appears to have always been a mainstay of Matachines enactments. Differing narratives have attached to different community enactments.

In the 2010s I became aware of scholarship on the Chigi vase from Greece in 640 BCE and I have since based my hypothesis about the early movement of Matachines enactments on the its iconography and the scant scholarship that Harry Anastopulos provides online in "Archeologies of the Greek Past, Chigi Vase." (Joukowski Institute for Archeology and the Ancient World, Brown University. Providence, RI. Anastopulos describes narrative warrior enactments, which are seen on the Chigi Vase as two lines of warriors in procession, accompanied by a musician playing the Greek *aulos*. This is discussed further in my forthcoming monograph on Matachines.

The first scholarly writings on Matachines originated with professional folklorists and dance ethnologists, including Gertrude Kurath by the 1940 and 50s. With tradition bearer Antonio Garcia, Kurath published a chapter on Matachines in *Music and Dance in the Tewa Pueblos* in 1970. The first complete monograph, however, did not appear until 1983 with dance teacher Flavia Champe's *The Matachines Dance of the Upper Rio Grande: History, Music, and Choreography,* focused on the Matachines in the Tewa-speaking San Ildefonso Pueblo of New Mexico. This was followed in 1984 by English folklorist John Forrest's *Morris and Matachin, A Study in Comparative Choreography*. My doctoral ethnomusicology dissertation, "Matachines Music and Dance in San Juan Pueblo and Alcalde, New Mexico: Contexts and Meanings" appeared in 1993, closely followed in 1994 by Adrian Treviño and Barbara Gillis's controversial 1994 article "The Dance of Montezuma" (New Mexico Historical Review) and in 1996 by New Mexican Anthropologist Sylvia Rodríguez's monograph, *The Matachines Dance*. In 2001, Claude Stephenson published his doctoral dissertation, "A Comparative Analysis of Matachines Music and Its History and Dispersion in the American Southwest."

Due to the region's great number of ritual Danzas, in Mexico a number of Spanish language monographs appeared that did not focus entirely on Matachines. A focus on dance as resistance appeared with Pedro de Velasco Rivero's 1987 monograph, *Danzar o morir, religión y resistencia a la dominación en la cultura tarahumar.* A monograph on the importance of dance as a symbol of the enactment of power in precortesian Mexico appeared with María Sten's 1990 *Ponte a Bailar, Tú que Reinas, Antropología de la danza prehispánica.*In 1998 Miguel Olmos Aguilera's monograph, *El sabio de la fiesta, Música y mitología en la region cahita-tarahuara* explored the relationships

between ritual Danzas, including Matachines, and Indigenous Tarahumar (Rarámuri) cosmologies. Most recently, studies have appeared that focus on the importance of the precortesian Danza de Moctezuma, in Jesús Gonzalo Camacho Jurado, Camilo Raxá Camacho Jurado, and María Eugenia Jurado Barranco's 2023 "La pervivencia de un patrimonio histórico: *La Danza de Moctezuma"* in E. Fernando Nava L., Edmundo Ricardo Camacho Jurado, Camilo Raxá Camacho Jurado, Coords. *Danza de Moctezuma, Homenaje al arpista nahua Joselito Hernández (1932–2019)*. Numerous articles have recently appeared online, among them Sabino Cruz V.'s 2024 "Matachines o matlachines: una revisión del constructo." In *Imágenes*, February 27, 2024 (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico).

In Colombia, early studies were largely written by folklorists and some include descriptions of Matachines choreographies and narrative sequences. Two excellent examples are Luis Fernando Duque's 1988 "Tres Coreografías del Tolima" in *Nueva Revista Colombiana de Folclor*,1(3) (Bogotá, Colombia: Patronato Colombiano de Artes y Ciencias), and Alberto Londoño's 1998 *Danzas colombianas* (Medellin, Colombia: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia). A strong Cultural Studies scholarship on Matachines has developed around studies of Fiesta and Carnival in an international network. Colombian "scholars of the Master's in Interdisciplinary Research in the Humanities at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas in Bogotá created a collaborative research network "Red Internacional de Investigadores en Estudios de Fiesta, Nación y Cultura" (REDRIEF) to encourage regional and international studies of festive culture in the Americas" (Romero 2025). Among the anthologies they have published is Marcos González Pérez's 1998 compilation, *Fiesta y Región en Colombia.* Other anthologies extend beyond Colombia, as in Marcos González Pérez's 2014 *Carnavales y Nación, Estudios sobre Brasíl, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba y Venezuela.*

Methodology/Materials and Methods

I began to study Matachines in 1984 in the John Donald Robb Archives of the University of New Mexico, where I was beginning a year as a Graduate School Challenge Grant recipient assisting with cataloging the Robb Collection and conducting research on New Mexican music and culture. Working in the Archives meant getting acquainted with the actual taped performances of the thousands of songs Robb had collected and first published in a hefty volume in 1980. I met Adrian Treviño, who was working as a volunteer in the archives, and whose work cataloguing and labeling tape recordings of individual songs that Robb had collected, made my own work in the Archives feasible. Treviño introduced me to matachines repertoires that Robb had recorded, and he told me about the version at the Pueblo of Jemez, where a "Spanish version" precedes a "Drum" version. I gravitated to Jemez after that, although I was unable to include ethnographic research on Jemez in my doctoral dissertation, other than the musical sequences I had transcribed.

I didn't claim to be a fiddler, although I played for the Pueblo of Jemez Matachina (their name for the Danza) for 9 years before coaching my successor, the grandson and great grandson of the old fiddlers, each of whom played for Matachines in Ponderosa, New Mexico, and Matachina at the Pueblo for decades in each generation. I did this in part because it was a role that Indo-Hispano musicians had occupied roughly until the 1990s, when more Pueblo musicians began to play the repertoire themselves. I was the first woman to play for the Danza at Jemez, if not in New Mexico. Today in New Mexico there are a few young women playing for the Danza.

Because dance ethnologist Gertrude Kurath had implied Arabic roots when she circulated the idea that the term Matachines came from the Arabic for "to face each other" (1957), I had taken special care to notate the ornaments to see if the music could have come from the Middle East. To prepare for this I had taken a seminar on Middle Eastern music and played the violin in the Near East ensemble during my graduate work in ethnomusicology at UCLA. The transcriptions discount possibilities that the music was originally Arabic. The fringe over the eyes in the face covering one sees in New Mexico was another link to the Middle East, but I eventually came to believe this was left over from versions in Portugal and Spain that emphasized the conversion of jihadists, or *mudawajahin.* This is a term that could easily have been corrupted to the Portuguese *machatin* and the Spanish *matachines.*

I have since applied ethnomusicological methodology to my research on Matachines. That means that thick descriptions are based on fieldwork and scholarly research. Today that research extends to the internet, as many Matachines enactments are now posted online by members of communities of practice, in stark contrast to the 1980s when I began to study Matachines.

After completing my doctoral dissertation on Matachines in New Mexico in 1993, I studied for nine months in Mexico as a CoMexus Fulbright García-Robles research scholar in 2000-2001. During that time, I learned of Matachines in Colombia and began to conduct fieldwork in Riosucio-Caldas Department in 2007 and Neiva-Huila Department in 2009. In 2011 I received a Fulbright Colombia scholarship that allowed me to conduct further library studies in Bogotá-Cundinamarca Department, and fieldwork in Neiva.

In Mexico in 2012 I was invited to present my work in a Conferencia Magistral ("Master Lecture") for the Primer Coloquio Nacional de Etnocoreología, "Del Movimiento a la Palabra" (First National Colloquium of Ethnochoreology, "From Movement to Words"), held at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP), Mexico. My work was presented yearly until the final colloquium in 2024 as a Ponente Destacado/Conferencia Magistral (Distinguished Presenter/Master Lecturer) at the Séptimo Coloquio Internacional y Décimosegundo Nacional de Etnocoreología (Seventh International and Twelfth National Colloquium of Ethnochoreology). In addition, I was invited to participate in a transcultural research study on Matachines and, together with distinguished folklorist Norma E. Cantú, we conducted fieldwork in Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri I also conducted fieldwork in Aguascalientes with Dr. José Luis Sagredo Castillo and other members of the BUAP Ethnochoreology faculty. This

allowed me to work closely with insider (scholarly and community of practice) perspectives on the Matachines. Finally, I spent four years compiling the entries for the 2025 Matachines article for *Oxford Bibliographies Latino Studies Online.*

Results

After 39 years of research and study of Matachines in transcultural contexts, I have answered the questions for which I sought answers—questions that seemed endless over time. It is my hope my contributions may help future scholars finetune my work. I am now completing a monograph that is tentatively titled *Los Matachines, Creativity and Renewal in New Mexico and Beyond*.

Discussion

This paper takes a close look at Matachines variants in New Mexico that parallel the Danza's dissemination throughout the Americas, where Matachines continue as reinterpretations that reflect the resilience of local beliefs and *mutualismo* within Catholic contexts. This is particularly true because the tradition in New Mexico continues among Indo-Hispanos only due to the efforts of volunteer community members who offer their time as a form of prayer for the community's happiness and well-being. In contrast, in the Indigenous Pueblos the Matachina enactment is incorporated into a ritual calendar, and organized by an appointed "War Chief" in each moiety.

Colonization brought many hardships to non-Europeans in the so-called "New World," now termed "the Americas." In New Mexico, as elsewhere, a saving grace came in the form of the Catholic ritual calendar, which assigned patronal saints and their feast days, *las fiestas*, to each Indo-Hispano village and Indigenous Pueblo, and on days commemorating Advent and Lenten events as well. Fiestas became common throughout the year as transcultural celebrations that attracted music, theater, and dance practitioners, vendors, and extended friend and family gatherings. In Colombia Matachines are contextualized primarily during Advent and especially in the pre-Lenten Carnival, which did not flourish in New Spain (Mexico). As a result of Carnival's suppression, in present day New Mexico Matachines ceremonial Danzas survive on feast days and around Christmas. Further, in comparison to fiestas in Mexico and Carnival in Colombia, the fiesta complex has largely declined in New Mexico except in some Pueblos, among them the Towa-speaking Pueblo of Jemez where I played the violin for their Matachina between 1989-1998.

Although some scholars (first among them Treviño and Gilles, 1994) have argued that Matachines, or better, the Mexican Matlachines, existed prior to European colonization, recent scholarship in Mexico dates the use of the term Matlachines to 1910 (see Cervantes Montoya, 2018). Evidence also exists of the use of Matachines in the evangelization of Indigenous and Black subjects. For instance, Iberianist Rogerio Budasz, in his 2006 open access article "Of

Cannibals and the Recycling of Otherness," describes an example of the indoctrination of captive children in Brazil, stating that the Jesuit missionaries promoted syncretism and regarded colonists as a bad influence" (9). Budasz provides an especially lucid account that took place in Brazil in the mid-1500s, where the Portuguese term for *matachín* was *machatin.* Budasz summarizes what was at stake for the Jesuits, led by the colonizer, linguist, and cleric, José de Anchieta (1534–97), along the northeastern Brazilian coast:

> The Jesuits in Brazil were especially worried by the natives' "bad habits"—drinking fermented *cauim* and engaging in cannibalism,[1] polygamy, and revenge wars—that could hamper the religious and political project of subjecting them to the Catholic Church and the Portuguese monarch. In order to help convince the natives to abandon those practices—the core of their culture—Anchieta, and before him Manuel da Nóbrega, devised a form of moral theatre featuring songs and dances. Since their target public also included Portuguese colonists, these plays were often written in two or more languages (Tupi, Portuguese, Spanish, and occasionally Latin) (Budasz, 6).
>
> Anchieta's plays also incorporated Iberian and native dances, in some cases a mixture of both. In a play prepared for the day of the Virgin's Assumption, six Indians, playing the role of savages newly arrived from the jungle, are asked to dance the *machatins*—the Portuguese word for the Spanish *matachín* (*mattaccino* in Italy and *matassins* in France…). The natives probably replaced the swords and shields of the European choreography with their own clubs – the *tacapes* – and tapir-skinned shields… The choreography could maintain some features of the *machatins*—according to Anchieta—but it would require some modification in order to represent Amerindian rather than European combats (Budasz, 7-8).

Budasz's footnote to the preceding paragraph (note 21) is also particularly revealing of the colonial claim to the bodies of Native children, much like the boarding schools in the US and Canada. Budasz cites Anchieta:

> "They teach them [the native children] to sing and they have their ensemble [*capilla*] of voices and flutes for their feasts, and they perform their dances in the Portuguese fashion, very graciously with small drums and vihuelas, as if they were Portuguese boys, and when they perform these dances they place on their heads some sort of adornment made of bird feathers of various colours…" (Budasz, 8).[1]

As a result of similar processes elsewhere, matachines were typically preserved among Indigenous societies and absorbed Indigenous elements in many locations over the last five hundred years, leading to a general belief that matachines originated among Indigenous societies of the Americas. In New

[1]Among Budasz's most interesting points: "In the twentieth century, artistic and musical avant-gardes in Brazil developed the idea of 'cultural cannibalism', urging a critical ingestion of European culture and the reworking of that tradition in Brazilian terms, assuming a sort of national unconscious in which the cannibal mind is still at work, in the masticating, digesting, and rewriting of the outsider (2005:15).

[1] "Anchieta, 'Enformacion de los collegios y casas de la Companhia del Brasil.'" Évora, Biblioteca Pública, codex CXVI/1–33, fo. 39r, quoted in Paulo Castagna, "Fontes bibliográficas para o estudo da prática musical no Brasil nos séculos XVI e XVII" (MA thesis, University of São Paulo) 1991: ii. 223.

Mexico, however, local pride in things Spanish, including the language, generated a fierce possessiveness of Matachines among Indo-Hispano practitioners, while some Tiwa-speaking Picuris Puebloans believe that Matachines were brought by the last Aztec emperor, Moctezuma, on the wings of an eagle.

What are Matachines?

As hinted above, the etymology of Matachines, or Matachines Danza, is contested. Called "Matachina" among the Pueblo people of New Mexico and in some parts of Colombia, and "Matlachines" among a growing number of Mexican groups, in Spain the term "Matachín" was also associated with those who quartered beef, butchers. *Matachín* is also related to the Italian *Mattaccino,* a stock character in the improvised street theater called *commedia dell'arte*, whose antecedents began in fourteenth-century Italy. This is the basis for Matachines in Colombia, where many Italians settled. An Afro-descendant variant of Matachines also survives in Brazil in a satirical music drama that translates to *The Ox and the Slave* (see wa Mukuna, 2003).

The Matachines among Catholic Mestizos, as in New Mexico, typically tell an ancient story of the conquest of good over evil, and have traditionally been contextualized in the Roman Catholic saint day celebrations, or Fiestas; in Advent (Christmas); and in the pre-Lenten Carnival, all of which are heavily informed by folklore, music, dance, theater, and rhetoric. The *Matachines* is significant in part because it was one of a very few artistic forms allowed during the early colonial period, and thus their stamp on future dance genres was inevitable. A variety of versions abound among Mestizos, Indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendants in the Americas, among them are many re-semanticized versions in which Iberian elements are understated in favor of indigenous- and Afro-dominant cultural forms that also exist as Matachines or have taken on new names. As well, Matachines are significant because more and more Matachines troupes are performing in Mexican immigrant communities in the US, where most observers are not aware of their ancient roots and do not understand their contemporary significance.

Matachines are shrouded in myths and narratives; their roots are uncertain but the predominance of Spanish instrumental music in New Mexico and formerly in Mexico implies that early matachines genres arrived with the Spanish (and the Portuguese in Brazil) and became tools in the so-called spiritual conquest of the Americas. In New Mexico—as formerly in Mexico—the ever-present violin with guitar accompaniment remains iconic of the Indo-Hispano-rooted Matachines danza. In Central Mexico a gradual decline of violin players has led to a dynamic percussive drum accompaniment, with or without violin or accordion, and this is heard in most, but not all, Mexican versions.

The *Matachines Danza* refers to a pantomimed ritual dance-drama, a morality play the Spanish superimposed on Indigenous rituals as a means of evangelization during colonial times, as noted above. Matachines ought not be

confused with *Moros y Cristianos,* the tradition of mock dramatic conflict between Moors and Christians, although their performance contexts on feast days celebrating Catholic saints are the same. The widespread use of the term *danza* for ceremonial, religious dance, is relatively recent, an influence from Mexico, as it was not a term originally used in New Mexico or Colombia, where it was simply "Matachines." Matachines survive not only among Puebloans and Indo-Hispanos of New Mexico in the southwestern US, but also in various Mexican Indigenous and Mestizo communities, especially north of Mexico City. An interesting variant south of Mexico City, in Oaxaca, resonates with Matachines in the Andes of Colombia and Peru and these carnivalesque versions have not been known outside of their local contexts until recently. In all geographical locations, the danza represents a complex hybridity, with ancient roots that precede the contested etymologies of the term "Matachines." Although there are many variations from place to place, a drama typically takes place between two lines of *Matachines danzantes* (ceremonial Matachín dancers), after whom the danza is named.

Matachines are typically a masked performance complex from Brazil to what is now New Mexico, California, Texas, Arizona, and southern Colorado. It is easiest to note different types by examining the regalia, or ceremonial dress associated with each type. The oldest New Mexican Indo-Hispano version features male danzantes who wear dress shoes and mainstream trousers and dress shirts with capes and tall headdresses called *coronas* in New Mexico. Although in the past it was essential to wear black leather shoes, today it is common to see tennis shoes. The leader of each of two lines typically wears laced leggings called *polainas.* What is most important is for the danzante and or his close relatives to create an iconic Matachines attire, with noticeable personal touches that may represent symbols known only to the danzante. A mask is created with a handkerchief covering the mouth and nose and a headdress with fringe that hangs over the eyes. More so in the past, the mask resembled a desert Bedouin from Morocco, such that many early folklorists believed the danza to have originated in the Middle East. Although there is not enough time to go into detail, I have come to believe that this is true, but only because of Catholic representations of subdued Islamic warriors, *mudawajahiin* dating back to the Crusades of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. These types of regalia were more common along the borderlands between the US and Mexico in the late twentieth century than they are now. They typically featured only men; a young man typically dressed as a young woman known as Malinche who is dressed in a white holy communion dress. In contemporary times a girl enacts this part, with a few exceptions, one being among the Yaqui of Arizona where a young boy dresses in a flowered skirt as Malinche. In New Mexico the danzantes typically carry a decorated trident in the right hand and a rattle or guaje, in the left hand, typically turned inward and sometimes covered with a handkerchief, as in the Pueblo of Jemez. Of some significance, in New Mexico and a few locations in Mexico, a boy plays the part of a bull with horns who is chased by clownish *vaqueros* (cowboys), resulting in mirth and laughter, especially among children, who also chase or are chased by the bull. The music and dance sequence

featuring the bull is evocative of the bullfight, but entertainments that featured actual bulls date to the ancient Minoans and the cult of Mithra. Bovines were brought to the Americas with colonization, and thus this character helps to locate the roots of matachines in Europe. Nonetheless, resistance movements have re-semanticized many features of the danza to conform to local belief systems and integrity.

It is unclear why the color red is so prominent in the second type of Matachines—often called "Chichimecas"—seen in New Mexico is associated with Mexican immigrants from Northcentral Mexico. This version features large communal groups (see Romero, 2003), often dressed in red with *carrizo*, or cane fringe that sounds when the danzante moves. It is common to see multiple Malinches enacted by young girls in these versions, but they dress in vivid colors. The groups sometimes carry a trident, called a *palma*, and instead of rattles might carry a bow and arrow that is used to make a percussive sound. The Mexican groups in New Mexico still tend to wear red, but this is gradually changing and troupes choose other colors for their regalia, that almost always includes the *carrizo* fringe.

Conclusions

Matachines are significant because they have survived in New Mexico and the Americas since colonization in the sixteenth century, but their roots extend deep into European and Mexican Indigenous and African cultural histories. Their systematic use in processes of evangelization and domination ensured its survival and dissemination over time. Matachines continue in distinct cultural traditions that tend to borrow from other rituals and ceremonies throughout the Americas, and although Matachines troupes are performing in Mexican immigrant communities throughout the US, including large troupes in New York City, most observers are not aware of their longevity and do not understand their significance.

In the course of my research over many years, I eventually came to understand Matachines as multimodal depictions of the eternal struggle between the forces of "good" and "evil," which many scholars had previously asserted. Some scholars suggested that the choreographies had martial implications, and in my work I have noted that various terms used to describe the troupes were originally associated with military forces. For example, the Spanish term *cuadrilla* for Matachines troupes in Colombia and elsewhere suggests a squadron, the term for a military unit that is also used for dance troupes. I knew that the ancient Europeans used drums and other musical instruments in war, but that did not explain the dancing and theatricals or narratives associated with Matachines enactments. Learning about the iconography on the Chigi Vase allowed me to make connections with ancient forms of warfare among the Greeks, and to piece the puzzle into a coherent narrative, but mine may well be only one more of the many narratives that surround Matachines in the Americas. There is much more that could be said and I am working on a monograph, but to

conclude for now, I'd like to quote from the Bernalillo Matachines (see Lew, 2019):

> A lot of our traditions we've lost. The language, we have almost lost it. But this, we haven't. So I think it just shows the importance of it in the community to ensure its survival.

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