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GUELAGUETZA

FROM CAMINOS DEL AIRE MAGAZINE BY MARY LOU DABDOUB. TRANSLATED BY STEVEN JOHN. REVISTA CAMINOS DEL AIRE

They come from all corners of the state of Oaxaca to the hill at El Fortín; Mixtecs, Zapotecs, Popolocas, Triques, Chontales, Chinatecs, Mazatecs, Mixes and members of other ethnic groups. Their festive clothing makes a multicolored tapestry on the slopes of the hill. And this is a festive day. But it's not any old holiday, we're talking about Guelaguetza, an ancient ritual practiced by the ancestors of the people who come to El Fortín. Guelaguetza, in the Zapotec language, means "mutual aid" or "offering" and represents high social consciousness since it involves giving one's fellows the product of one's labor and artistic efforts.

Guelaguetza or Monday of the Cerro (hill) is celebrated in the foothills of El Fortín in the city of Oaxaca, on the two Mondays following the 18th of July - the anniversary of the death of President Benito Juárez. Today, it is the state's most important folklore event. In attendance at the celebration are representatives of Oaxaca's seven regions- the Sierra, the Ravine, Tuxtepec or Papaloapan, The Mixtec region, The Coast, the Isthmus and the Valleys- who present local authorities and distinguished guests with gifts or offerings: coffee and hats from the Coast; totopos (crispy



tortilla pieces) from the Isthmus; palm-leaf place mats from Huajuapán de León in the Mixtec region; mezcal from the Valleys... But their biggest gift is artistic: with unparalleled enthusiasm they perform dances and songs from each of their regions.

THE ANCIENT FESTIVAL

The origins of this festival are to be found in pre-Hispanic times. The Zapotecs and

Mixtecs - who were distinguished by their heroism in battle-performed a yearly celebration in honor of a supreme god (creator of all things) as well as other deities such as Zaagui (the Mixtec God of Rain and Fertility) and Pitao Cozobi (the Zapotec God of Corn). At the time of the flowering of the corn, both ethnic groups organized a festival in which they paid homage to their divinities in dances and songs, executed with art and skill.

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DAY 1:

From the Zocalo go north 1 block on Valdivieso St. To Alcalá St. which is closed to vehicular traffic. One block up on the left Corner is The National Pawn shop (Monte de Piedad)

Walking Tours

where there is all kinds of jewelry and other items for sale. Across the street on the opposite corner

is the Government library which is a lovely old colonial building. Of equal interest is the State Museum of Oaxaca which is right next door. Farther up the street on the right is the Historic Church of Santo Domingo with it's adjoining museum with a 1000 pesos entry fee. Across the street is the Graphic Arts Museum, Free admission. Return to the Zocalo.

DAY 2:

From The zocalo go south on Flores Magon St. to the

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HOW TO CHOOSE A LANGUAGE SCHOOL

In the summertime there seem to be a lot of schools offering classes to foreigners. Beware! Many of these schools are out to make a fast buck. Low prices do not necessarily mean quality education. When choosing a school, be sure to select one where the teachers are university trained to teach Spanish as a second language. In México university degrees are very much a status symbol, but having a degree in Foreign affairs, Chemistry or Anthropology does not qualify one to teach Spanish. The Instituto de Comunicación y Cultura meets all the requirements for quality education at a fair price. Please contact us at 6-34-43 or visit our school at V. Guerrero 311.

TOURISTIC PRECAUTIONS

Welcome to the state of Oaxaca. You have chosen without doubt one of the most exciting tourist destination México has to offer. Oaxaca is famous for its charming people, its culture and colorful tradition. However a word of caution must be given. Like anywhere, if you act carelessly you'll probably end up crying on the shoulder of your consular representative, complaining bitterly. Here is a little advice to help avoid most of the common problems a tourist encounters in these latitudes. Take note and enjoy your vacation.

- 1.- Don't accept invitations lightly, however tempting they might appear.
- 2.- Don't deal, carry or consume any kind of drugs. Mexican jails are notoriously known to assure you the worst time of your life. Stay away from anyone who tries to sell drugs to you, those Zócalo boys, as they are known, are also informants. Dealing with that kind of persons is your first step into trouble.
- 3.- Don't leave valuables unattended. It takes only a second to turn your vacation into a nightmare. Make copies of your passport, visa and if you carry travelers cheques, keep a record of the numbers and report any loss as soon as possible.
- 4.- When confronted with an attempt of robbery, don't resist. Valuables can be replaced, not so your health.
- 5.- If taken to prison, don't despair. Insist of seeing your consular or your embassy representative. They will send someone over to see about your rights.
- 6.- Don't walk around the beaches during the evening, not even company. This goes especially for ladies. This is something you should not forget, ever. This is serious.
- 7.- Don't trespass on any property and by no means shoot pictures close to military installations or of persons who resent pictures taken.

BEYOND THE CITY

Attractions are listed according to their direction from Oaxaca.

MONTE ALBAN: 10 km. (6 mi) west, on an artificially flattened mountaintop. One of the most important archaeological sites in México. Large ceremonial plaza surrounded by the ruins of religious and public buildings. Small museum, cafeteria, shops, Tues-Sun. 8 am - 6 pm Admission \$950 Mex., Sun. and hols free.

SANTA MARIA ATZOMPA: (Or Atzompa) About 8 Km (4½ mi) northwest, a short distance off Hwy. 190. The village produces a green-glazed pottery and unglazed pottery figures. Note: Here, and at other craft-oriented villages, stop at any home or shop that gives indications that the craft is practiced within, or simply ask the way to artisans' homes

CUILAPAN DE GUERRERO: About 14 km (9 mi) southwest on the Zaachila road. Contains what was once the Dominican Monastery of St. James the Apostle, begun in 1555 but never finished. Much of the structure stands roofless. Daily 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Admission \$470 Mex. Sun and Hols. Free.

ZAACHILA: 5 km (3mi) beyond Cuilapan, Zaachila was the Zapotec capital when it fell to the Spanish in 1521. Little of the archaeological zone has been explored, but a palace and 2 tombs can be visited. Daily 8 am - 6 pm. Admission \$700 Mex Sun and hols. Free.

SAN BARTOLO COYOTEPEC: (or Coyotepec) About 15 km (9½ mi) south, on Hwy. 175. The village is famous for its potters and their black pottery. Valente Nieto, the son of Doña-Rosa, who is credited with having originated the black pottery, still practices the craft and gives demonstrations for visitors Fri. 9am-2pm.

SANTO TOMAS JALIEZA: About 10 km (6 mi) beyond Coyotepec, off Hwy. 175. A center for the weaving of cotton belts, sashes, table runners, place mats, and other items. The products are sold from a central location across from the village church.

OCOTLAN DE MORELOS: About 17 km (10 mi) beyond Coyotepec on Hwy. 175. Market town and the home of the Aguilar

SPECIAL NOTICE

Tickets to the Guelaguetza on Monday, July 17th are available at all tourist offices. The best seats are in sections A & B priced at 40 & 60,000 pesos. Please note that all banks and mayor businesses will be closed on this day.

Family, producers of clay figures painted in bright colors.

SANTA MARIA DEL TULE: About 14 km (8½ mi) east-southeast of Oaxaca on Hwy. 190. Its main attraction is a gigantic Ahuehete, or Mexican cypress, in front of the village church. The tree is estimated to be about 2,000 years old.

TLACOCHAHUAYA: About 23 km (14 mi) east-southeast of Oaxaca, off Hwy. 190. Sixteenth-century Church of San Jerónimo, decorated by native artists, Admission \$550 Mex.

TEOTITLAN DEL VALLE: 2 Km (1½ mi) beyond Tlacoahuaya, about 3 km (2 mi) from the highway. Main wool weaving center of the area. Local crafts people produce ponchos, rugs, and tapestries in traditional and modern designs.

LAMBITYECO ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE: About 2 km (1½ mi) beyond the Teotitlan turnoff the site contains the ruins of various structures, including 2 tombs.

TLACOLULA DE MATAMOROS: About 6 km (3½ mi) beyond Lambityeco. Principal attraction is the 16th-century Church of Our Lord of Tlacolula.

YAGUL ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE: About 3 km (2 mi) farther along Hwy. 190 and 1½ km (1 mi) off the road. Large archaeological zone. Includes a large ball court and the Palace of the Patios. Daily 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Admission \$700 Mex. Sun and Hols free.

SAN PABLO VILLA DE MITLA: (or Mitla) about 5 km (3 mi) beyond Yagul along Hwy. 190, Then 4 km (2½ mi) down a turnoff. A center for lightweight woolen and cotton weavings, which are sold in a large market area behind the church, and for the production of mezcal, an intoxicating drink distilled from the leaves or the maguey plant. Also in Mitla.

MITLA ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE: Remains of a large Zapotec population center that had been influenced by the Mixtec culture by the time of the Spanish conquest. Of several groups of ruins, the most interesting are the Group of the Columns across the street. Group of the Columns open daily 8:30 a.m. - 6 p.m. Admission \$950 Mex. Sun and hols free.

17.- The present going (subject to change) rate for visits to Monte Alban, Mitla, or Yagul. . . Is 20,000 - 25,000 pesos per person. Min 5 to 6 persons Tlacoahuaya, Dainzú, Teotitlan del Valle, Lambityeco

GUELAGUETZA

In 1495 the Zapotecs and Mixtecs were conquered by the Aztecs. Nevertheless, their rituals did not die out but instead gained importance, since the Aztecs adopted as their own the deities Centótl (God of Agriculture) and Xilonen (Goddess of the New Corn), making their own offerings to these gods in the form of songs, dances and festivals in the eighth month of their calendar, which was called Ney Tecuilhui-huitl. The Aztecs' festivities merged with those of the Oaxacan peoples, and thus began the yearly celebration of a great festival in honor of the goddess Xilonen, bringing together the valley's important personages at Daninayaolany Hill (known today as El Fortín).

When the Spaniards arrived, they tried to suppress these pagan rites; but it was not easy task convincing the Indians to abandon them: they continued gathering on the slopes of the hill. In 1700 Carmelite missionaries decided to build a church on the site where the natives celebrated their festivals, attempting to replace these rituals with Christian rites in honor of the Virgin of Carmen on the 16th and 24th of July. But from the first of these "new" celebrations, the Indians, after paying tribute to the God of their evangelizers, took to the streets in a veritable pagan masquerade. They danced



to the beat of the teponaxtli (Indian percussion instrument) as one hundred young men, some dressed as Spaniards and others as Indians, marched in a parade, followed by La Tarasca—a huge, fantastic papier-mâché serpent. Things went on this way every year until 1741, when bishop Tomás Montaña decreed "because of the fear inspired by the serpent", that it be replaced by mammoth puppets representing the races of humanity. These "giants", as they were called, appeared for the last time in 1882.

THE 20TH CENTURY'S THE FIRST FESTIVAL

For fifty years the festival on the hill was reduced to a simple fair with an infinite variety of local foods and snacks. But in 1930, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the proclamation of the city of Oaxaca, an attempt was made to revitalize the fiesta, organizing first the festival dancers from all seven regions of the state of Oaxaca. While the date of the celebration has changed, the state government of Oaxaca has continued its efforts to promote it. During the presidency of Luis Echeverría an open auditorium was built on

the slopes of El Fortín, and that is where the festival is now held. It begins with the choosing of the young lady who will play the part of Centeocihuatl (the Goddess of Corn); a female representative of each region, dressed in regional costume, gives a speech—sometimes with the aid of a translator—about her area, and a jury elects the most "authentic" of the representatives. In the dancing plaza near the Iglesia de la Virgen de la Soledad (Church of the Virgin of Solitude), the history of Guelaguetza is presented; the Zapotec, Aztec and Hispanic eras through which the celebration has passed. Then comes the parade of the marmotas (giant paper dolls), the dragon, the zancudos—which dance on stilts as much as six feet high. Last but not least, are the dances and songs of each of the seven regions. The festivities are capped off with a fireworks display. Today, tourists from around the world come to the festival of Guelaguetza. Nevertheless, the dancers and singers continue to maintain the mysticism of their traditions, and in their dark smiling faces one can see the tenderness, gentleness and wisdom of their peoples.



ATZOMPA

About 7 kilometers out of town is the very unattractive little village of Atzompa, where it seems everyone is involved in the pottery business. And very unusual pottery it is too.

A special green glaze is used on all kinds of figurines, planters, plates, etc., and I even saw part of a dinner service with the same distinctive color. They also make some very

intricate figurines in plain clay, unusually attractive vases encrusted with clay designs that have a rich, three-dimensional look, and clay water spouts with animal faces. These would be beautiful in a rock garden or at the end of roof rain gutters. A lot of the designs used here were originated by the late Master Potter Teodora Blanco and her tradition is now carried

on by her son, a master in his own right. Atzompa has no Zócalo, no church or fancy shops. There is a rather dingy little store with things on display and most of the houses in the neighborhood have pottery for sale if you enquire. They even take special orders. Prices are rock bottom and most everything is one of a kind. It's worth the trip.

OAXACA LANGUAGE SCHOOL CHOSEN FOR FILM



The BBC in collaboration with the Instituto de Comunicación y Cultura, filmed a segment of Spanish lessons which will be shown to the American TV public under the title "México Vivo"

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better hotels and some news stands 10:00 am (mas o menos) daily. One source, in the zócalo, corner of Trujano and Miguel Cabrera. Current price (always subject to change) 1100 pesos. If they're sold out, have no fear; un muchacho will probably visit your table at one of the outdoor restaurants surrounding the zocalo. You can bargain and end up paying 1600 pesos.

ANTHROPOLOGY & ARCHEOLOGY BOOKS

For professionals and serious students only. Private collection offered for research by Señor Cecil Welte: Mon., Wed., Friday 9:30-12:30. Centrally located on Alcala. Call for appointment.

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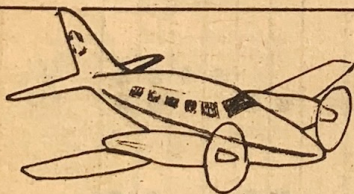
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Walking...

reach Aldama St. Look to the right. On the opposite corner of Aldama & 20 de Noviembre Sts. is the small church of San Juan de Dios where you will see a collection of 16th century religious paintings. This church forms the corner of a 2nd. market which houses mostly food and bread stalls. Continue South along 20 de Noviembre St. until you reach Zaragoza St. turn right and walk two blocks to the handicrafts market (mercado de artesanos) where you will find all kinds of handmade clothing, blankets, rugs, jewelry, etc. Return to the Zocalo.

DAY 3:

From the Zocalo, go west on Independencia St. 2 blocks to the corner of Tinoco y Palacios St. and the Church of San Felipe Neri, a 18th century baroque building where Benito Juárez, The Lincoln of México, was married. Continue west on Independencia for 2 blocks until you reach a stairway on the right hand side. Walk up the stairs to the church of The Madonna the market until you main city Market where everything from soup to nuts is for sale. You will be amazed at the colorful displays of fruits, vegetables and flowers. Walk through of the Solitude who is the patron saint of Oaxaca. Her crown is made of solid gold encrusted with 600 diamonds. Leaving the church continue up the stairs to Morelos St. there you will see the church of San José, a 17th century structure. Walk east on Morelos St. for 2 blocks to visit the Rufino Tamayo Museum, which is famous for its Pre-Colombian art. Return to the zocalo.



¡Let's go South!



We can fly you direct to Tuxtla Gutiérrez every day at noon with connections to Palenque, Villa Hermosa and Tapachula by

AVIACSA

The airline of Chiapas.
Tels: 6-27-00, 6-92-19, 6-65-22 y 5-37-03
Valdivieso # 2. Near Zócalo.