



Oaxaca Times

Oaxaca's English Tourist Newspaper

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FREE

FIESTA DEL "LUNES DEL CERRO"

WHERE "GIVING" IS
WHAT WE ARE HERE FOR

Since ancient times a fiesta of fantastic beauty has taken place on a hillside just outside the city of Oaxaca in southern México. Originally its purpose was to sacrifice a beautiful maiden to one of the gods.

People came from all over bearing gifts of flowers, fruits, silks, and embroidery, and groups of dancers performed graceful gyrations before the bloody altar. The ceremony was called Guelaguetza, which in the Zapotecan language means an offering of gift. The Spanish priest permitted and encourage the Guelaguetza, forbidding only the human sacrifice, and the gifts and dances metamorphosed into acts of gratitude to the true God.

Today the ceremony, which is called Lunes del Cerro (Monday on the Hill), begins on the Monday after the day of our Lady for Mount Carmen (July 16) and lasts of a week. Groups of dancers in breathtaking costumes come from nearly every village in the state of Oaxaca bearing gifts typical of the products and handicrafts of the region. Dancers from Huautla are distinguished by their beautifully embroidered blouses. Those from along the coast sport blouses flashing with beadwork. Women from Yalalag are striking in full dresses of woven white wool with towering black turbans made from their own



MAZATECA GIRL FROM HUAUTLA DE JIMENEZ

hair twined with black yarn. Tehuanas from Tehuantepec glide about in their exotic and unusual costumes. The most popular of all the dancers who perform during the week, however, are the Plume Dancers from Teotitlan del Valle in their monstrous feather headdresses dyed all colors of the rainbow and decorated with mirrors, colored stones, and tinsel.

The Danza de la pluma, which is performed several times a year in Teotitlan del Valle, is often simplified and uses only a few plumed dancers.

When done in its entirety, it is a complicated dance-drama two or three hours long recounting the conquest of Mexico.

The fifteen to twenty plumed dancers, of course, represent Moctezuma and his

men. Small boys dressed in hideous blue uniforms and caps play the parts of the Spanish soldiers. Only Hernan Cortés and Pedro de Alvarado are permitted to wear fine plumed hats. One child represent Malinche, the Indian interpreter who helped Cortés. The dancing, interspersed with passages of narrative, depicts the arrival of Cortés, the alerting of Moctezuma and his men, several fierce battles, and the eventual submission of the Indians to the Cross.

From the beginning and up to our days, the people of Oaxaca assist every year to the majestic Guelaguetza Auditorium at the Fortin Hill to admire the magic art and sensibility of the many representatives of our ethnic groups coming from the seven regions in which the state is divided: La Mixteca, La Cañada,

Continued on page 2

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FROM
ZOCALO

A SALUTE FROM THE ETHNIC GROUPS OF OAXACA

AMUZGOS

To us, the Amuzgos, cotton is the beginning and the end of our lives. With it we weave the clothes that we use to celebrate the important events that happen to us: the birth, the marriage, and the death.

Today we have brought the best of them to tell you that we share the joy of all the Oaxacans that you may be here, and after 500 years that we may be here also with our ancestral culture and with our life plan.

CUICATECOS

By our voice you receive the greetings of the men that live in the place of song: Cuicatlan, region where the land offers us generous fruits, for that our towns continue singing life to it.

The joy that your visit gives us, we transmit to you with our chirrimas and drums.

CHATINOS

The Chatino pueblo brings you from the forests and the mountains of the south of our state, the freshness of the earth.

We desire that one listens to our word with the same force that you give to ask for peace to the sister nations, not only between your own citizens, but with all the pueblos of the world, without stepping on the rights or exploiting the resources of the poor.

CHOCHOS

We have assembled to bring you the heat of the mother earth, and the fresh air of our hills. In our pueblos the old ones guide our decisions and keep watch over the dignity of life. They advised us to come to this fiesta of friendship to bring our respect with the same dignity.

CHONTALES

We give greetings to those that recognize and respect the universality of our culture.

For those we have come with much pleasure to give you the welcome to this land where we have learned to fight against adversity and to be as our name means: men of heart.

HUAVES

The men of the sea, the sons of the wind, are here to give you a most cordial welcome to our nation.

We desire that in this place where lives the spirit of well-being, we unite our voices so that the indians of America, obtain respect for their rights and a more just and more human co-existence.

ZAPOTECOS

We live in the Istmo, the valley of Oaxaca, and the mountains of Oaxaca. We are here to greet you. We are a nation that has kept its traditions, our forms of organization, and our way of governing. We want to express our will and desire because one respects the minorities of the world, as a civilized form of co-existence.

Our traditions say that we are the men born from the roots of the land, as such from depthness we want these words and the sentiment of the Zapotecos to stay in your hearts.

Continued

La Sierra, El Papaloapan, El Istmo, La Costa y los Valles Centrales.

They offer in a festive way their music and songs, the beauty and colorful design of their vestments, the gallantry of their dance and the harmony of their ensemble well known as the Guelaguetz.

IXCATECOS

As the last survivors of the seven Ixcateco pueblos, we bring a brotherly greeting.

Of common accord with our customs we have brought together stones y we have put on top branches and fresh flowers so that the tiredness of your path might disappear. Also we put fresh flowers so that our cultures will last through the centuries.

TACUATES

When we want to fortify the friendship with other pueblos, we visit and talk with them, for this we rejoiced when we found out that others want to talk with us. The old ones of our communities advised us to say that we desire to unite strengths with the pueblos abroad to fight for justice, for respect to nature and the unity of the pueblos of the world.



MIXES

We have our music as a companion inseparable of our life. We know by our older ones that like the music, men must live in harmony because if there is understanding there is peace and if there is peace there is progress. We bring our tunes to greet our visitors.

NAHUAS

We share with the rest of the Mexican a history and many hopes. History of fighting for the respect of our rights and hopes because indians and non-indians see each other as brothers and because the new generations of the world, know the greatness of our cultures.

Los Nahuas, descendants of the Mexicas, give greetings and invoke the Sun God to guide your path.

TRIGUIS

Many generations ago we lived in the highest of the Mixteca mountains, and therefore we learned to love lastingly, to manage to pull up without diminishing the fruits of the land, to take from the Father Sun the colors of our clothes. The Triguinacion receives you with joy, because we know that the intention has: the recognition of the equality of the pueblos and the respect to choose your path and your history.

ZOQUES

We bring to you warm greetings. We originated from a region where we lived in harmony with our forests, our rivers, and our animals, we know that in other latitudes people like us, cannot enjoy of which pertains to them; for them we make a call to the governments and the large corporations to not abuse the weak or to underestimate the knowledge of the pueblos.

CHINANTECOS

The Chinanteco territory is a natural vigor where our dead, our children, our history, and our hopes lie.

We will fulfill the obligation of working for unity and the well-being of our pueblos.

MAZATECOS

The men of the land of deer, with the music of the orange tree we give greetings to the sister nations to whom we ask for guidance with judgement the destiny of your pueblos to keep the liberty, the justice, and the peace.

CULTURAL EVENTS

Cultural activities in the Flores Magon

Center 302 Alcalá St.

- 18 12 noon Zapotec activities from Juchitan.
- 20 6 p.m. Finals of the dance contest "Danzon"
- 21 7 p.m. The opening of the art show by Juchitan artists.
- 22 7 p.m. Lecture on traditional holidays of Juchitan.
- 28 6:30 p.m. Lecture on los "Lunes del Cerro"
- 23 - 24 7 p.m. Mexican Dances
- 29 - 30 8 p.m. Latin American Music.

STATE SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

- 17 12 noon Exhibition of art in the Government Palace
- 18 10 a.m. Opening of the seventh event of the regional Desserts" of Oaxaca.- Inthe 200 block of Alcalá.
- 19 10 a.m. The election of the goddess Centeotl (same park)
- 20 6 p.m. Dances in front of the Cathedral church.
- 22 Biannual competition of art called "Rufino Tamayo" at the museum of Contemporary Art
- 24 6:30 Dances from the Sierra Mountains in front of the cathedral church.
- 26 5 p.m. Mexican Popular Songs-In front of the Cathedral church.
- noon-Zapotec Concert in the Zocalo

Special Events of the Month

- 19-26 Bani Stui Gulal-Spectacular Fiesta-8 pm. Plaza de la Danza
- 20 & 27 GUELAGUETZA "Lunes del Cerro" 9 a.m.- Take hats purified water and snacks.

ANCIENT USES OF APHRODISIACS

"The Zapotec Indians, who before falling to earth were brightly colored songbirds, told a few secrets to Gonzalo de Balsalobre for the Indians, herbs speak, have sex, and cure. It is little plants, aided by the human word, that pull sickness from the body, reveal mysteries, straighten out destinies, and provoke love or forgetfulness."

EDUARDO GALEANO IN MEMORY OF FIRE.

The study of aphrodisiacs or substances that stimulate genetic functions (such as erection or ejaculation) is extremely restricted. Actually, any need for aphrodisiacs is usually attributed to physical or nervous disorders and the thought of alleviating suffering by their use is said not to exist. In the past, however, remedies included Spanish fly, essence of mint or garlic, and others that were ineffective.

In making a study of the uses of stimulants for the sexual appetite in El Valle de Tlacolula, we found that aphrodisiacs were reported to be non-existent among those interviewed. Invariably, response to our questions was that a friend, relative or neighbor told them about something to stimulate sexual desire (They never needed it).

Surely no one would use aphrodisiacs except perhaps as a guarantee of extramarital success. They are not used for conjugal relations. We were told good health assures good sex. "You're not going to believe this but when I was potent and ate well, I had my wife six times at night. But that was if I 'Tenfa Vacas', a little of raw milk early and another at night made it good for me."

Many refer to being in good condition because of morning "espirituales" two raw eggs beaten in a cup of chocolate, "with my wife everyday she gives me my inspiration and I never fail". Also another preparation called "pollas" is two raw eggs in sherry or consecrated wine. If there is some opportunity during the day (instead of the night with



my wife) I quickly have prepared two raw eggs in a coke; then victim beware.

Some think taking tejate (cocas, corn meal and sugar) daily gives energy and even the elderly don't fail. One or two glasses of tejate mid-day is for energy and aphrodisical qualities; another choice is a raw onion with food or eaten alone with lemon juice a 90-year-old told me that his mother who years ago cooked for some Spaniards who ate a lot of onions told her even if it's dead, it revives and there is an erection.

Some say warm poultry broth make them feel potent. Others believe in young goat testicles, called "Criadillas" because "you see, the young goat is very hot.", and whenever people can they have it because it's nothing really special to prepare.

One curious stimulant is dust obtained from a mepallic green fly that is dried, pulverized and taken in small quantities but any excess causes near-fatal sickness; oddly they call it Spanish fly. Spanish fly being a coopterion from Europe. Dust from a black species that lives in excrement, above all cow dung, is more similar to the coleopterion and is

used in the same manner. Another source is the badger, caught by mountain hunters in search of deer. One hunter recalled his boss O.D.ed and although dead, his penis was still erect.

Most people interviewed said they never used or believed in the existence of aphrodisiacs and believe that when the time comes, age, malnutrition or sickness put an end to potency. As one old man put it, you might as well forget it.

None of the interviewed know of any method of contraception other than the rhythm method or coitus interruptus and until 20 years ago had between 10 and 20 children. Now 95% of the young marrieds, after 1 or 2 children will consult a doctor for birth control advice even if their own parents had more than 10.

Some women say they limit pregnancy with fasting and only 3 lemons daily or a lemon water duche right after coitus. Others applying vaginal prevention often suffer inflammation and illness. An unwanted pregnancy provokes some women to take infusions of bark or cinnamon tea to produce an abortion. Carrying heavy things or pounding their stomachs is sometimes successful but others hemorrhage and die.

As we pointed out at the beginning, the subject is delicate and people do not like to talk about it. This discretion is natural and little ancient testimony exists in this Zapotec pueblo, but the investigation will continue.



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HECHO EN MEXICO

I cannot remember the first time I went to Mexico. Those memories are clustered together into a single impression of noisy streets, greasy food and tourists. This is exactly how I and countless other gringos regarded our sister nation. Until the first time I travelled to the heart of Mexico, I had not realized how strong were my misconceptions. I still do not understand how I could have been so blind.

In the summer of 1988, I travelled to Mexico City via train with a friend of mine who had family there. That trip made me see Mexico with new eyes. The ancient blended with the modern to create a strange harmony unlike any in the United States. Oddly enough, it was like going home to an old friend after a long absence. Everywhere I went, the people told me that their house was mine. In the United States, this is often an empty gesture. In Mexico, it is a sincere promise.

This first excursion to the depths of Mexico sparked a fascination within me that has never died out. However, during the journey, I felt frustrated and restrained by the fact that I could not speak Spanish. I know that the country held mysteries that I could not discover until I spoke its language.

I finally received the opportunity to study Spanish in the summer of 1990. I had no idea what to expect as I arrived in Oaxaca. All I knew was that I was a *juerita sola* and no one was going to be speaking Spanish for me.

I was nervous about meeting the family that would be sheltering me during my stay. My nerves were calmed even before the introductions were over. I could not have asked for a more hospitable family. They were warm and welcoming, and they truly made me feel a part of their home. At my school, El Instituto de Comunicación y Cultura, the people were equally nice. I was the youngest member of the advanced class, which proved to be a terrific exercise on my brain. My instructors combined language and culture in a way that made me finally understand some of the mysteries I had longed to discover.

One year later, I began to fully appreciate everything I had learned in Oaxaca. I took a volunteer position in the office of my Congressman in Washington, D.C. Surprisingly, I received many opportunities to practice my Spanish and utilize my knowledge of Mexico. I

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by Nancy Zey

was also becoming increasingly homesick for Mexico, as I was going to travel there one week after my position ended. This compelled me to research various aspects of the country to help prepare me for my trip.

Working for the government, I was able to peel away the many layers of media and bureaucracy that surround it. It alarmed me to learn that Mexico, a nation vital to the American economy and defense, is severely underrepresented in my country. Mexico receives neither the consideration nor the respect it deserves.

I have always known that I wanted to work in the field of international relations. I just was not certain in which area I should concentrate. Even though this is still technically undetermined, I have identified a problem that I would like very much to solve. It amazes me that in crossing the border I have embarked on a path that could one day prove to be my life's work.

There is one thing of which I am certain. I have learned many valuable lessons outside the United States. Although my nationality lies in that country, I know that there will always be a part of me that is "hecho en Mexico".

VIAJES XOCHITLAN

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