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To: The Chair of LUTSF

Award recipient: Flavia Chevez-le Messurier

Name of Project: Zapateo Criollo

Dates: 1/8/2006 to 1/9/2006

Places visited: Various locations in Peru's coastal region, including Lima, Chincha, Cañete, Huaral (Aucallama).

Purpose of project: To study the Zapateo Criollo (Peruvian tap-dance) through the taking of classes, and the interview of various practitioners of Zapateo, and also other people closely involved with its diffusion and preservation. The intention on this trip was to concentrate on the provinces, where it is generally agreed that the Zapateo Criollo originated.

This goal was achieved and I consider the trip to have been a considerable success.

Plans to share knowledge with others: I aim to make a DVD of the many performances and interviews, which I will seek to make available to interested parties. In the meantime I aim to introduce the teaching of Zapateo into my dance workshops, which are now given weekly, and open to the general public.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the LISA ULLMAN TRAVELLING SCHOLARSHIP FUND for providing much-needed assistance in the realization of this project.

Report:

Report on research undertaken into the ZAPATEO CRIOLLO, or Peruvian tap-dance, in Peru by Flavia Chevez-le Messurier in August 2006.

The first interviews that I made took place in Lima, with various individuals and also members of a family dance group. I also continued my classes in Zapateo Criollo (afro-peruvian tap-dance) and participated in the 5th INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP in THE TRANSMISSION OF TRADITIONAL FORMS INTO CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE, given at UNIVERSIDAD RICARDO PALMA.

The interviews were made with people directly involved with the practice, diffusion and teaching of Zapateo Criollo. Interviews were also conducted with people connected with a broader spectrum of Afro-Peruvian art and culture. This has given me a deeper insight into the motives that drive these individuals to continue the conservation, diffusion and teaching of their dances and traditions. I was also able to observe that not everyone whom I interviewed (individuals and groups) share the same perceptions of exactly what are the elements that ought to be conserved. Many of them are guided by a more personal set of criteria and are, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by the commercialization which is never far behind this genre.

This can only be considered the start of an ongoing investigation, given the sheer breadth and variety of approach found in the practice of ZAPATEO.

PART A - INTERVIEWS IN LIMA

LUIS 'LUCHO' VASQUEZ

Professor of Zapateo; son and grandson of two key members of the Vasquez family, one of the most important families in the diffusion of afro-peruvian music and dance. As a child he learned Zapateo from his grandfather and patriarch of the Vasquez clan, DON PORFIRIO VASQUEZ, the teaching of which was accompanied on guitar by Luis's father VICENTE VASQUEZ (son of DON PORFIRIO, who was, and is still considered to be, the greatest exponent of the guitar style which is the foundation of musica criolla). These days, Luis dedicates himself to the teaching and performance of Zapateo.

THE ZEBALLOS FAMILY ('GRUPO JIZA')

This family, originally from Ica, a large 'county' some 150 km south of Lima, is composed of close to fifty members of close kinship, all of which participate in the diffusion of Zapateo, which they learn at a tender age irrespective of gender. Many, if not all, play Cajón (box-drum) and perform 'teatro costumbrista', a kind of theatre which depicts ordinary life in a series of acted 'vignettes', often humorous and with close attention to popular traditions and customs. The name 'Jiza' is derived from the initials of the group's founder Sr Juan Iraidó Zevallos Arenaza, who has transmitted the art of Zapateo to his children and grandchildren. The group has been in existence for roughly 10 years, and the group is run by the husband-and-wife team of Gabriel Zevallos and Rosa Ramirez, with whom most of the interview was conducted.

RAFAEL SANTA CRUZ

Musician, writer, actor, professor and descendent of another one of the most distinguished families in the conservation, preservation and diffusion of Afro-Peruvian culture and traditions. Rafael was kind enough to grant me a clear and concise interview in which he explained the process of change that this dance form had undergone, not only musically and dance-specific, but also with reference to the changes that had come about in the daily lives and realities of the Afro-Peruvians.

ADOLFO ZELADA

Musician, composer, arranger, who at the age of 84 still continues as active professor of guitar at the Universidad la Católica and also at the Escuela Nacional del Folklor. With more than 60 years of uninterrupted practice and diffusion of afro-peruvian and coastal music, he was able to demonstrate and elucidate on, all of the oldest and most traditional 'toques' for guitar that were used to accompany the Zapateo, and how these had evolved to present day interpretation.

PART B – INTERVIEWS IN THE PROVINCES

1) CAÑETE

Cañete is a province about 2 hour's drive to the south of the capital, although it falls within the Department of Lima. Like Ica, it has been the home of an Afro-Peruvian community for many generations. My enquires led me to the town of San Vicente del Cañete to meet the next interviewee.

JUAN CARLOS MENDEZ

Musician, composer, singer and director of a juvenile Zapateo group. The group has been in existence for about 3 years, and is dedicated to the practice and performance of Zapateo, in the style of Cañete. After the interview I was able to observe an impromptu performance by the group.

2) CHINCHA

Situated 3 hours drive to the south of Lima, Chincha province is part of the forementioned Department ('county') of ICA. In Chincha province I went straight to the town of EL CARMEN, which proudly self-proclaims itself 'CRADLE OF AFRO-PERUVIAN CULTURE' on a hoarding at the entrance to the town!

ATAJO DE NEGRITOS

Director: SRA. MARGARITA CORDOVA

Co-ordinator: WILLY NAVARRETE MARCOS

The group ATAJO DE NEGRITOS consists of about 30 participants, all of them zapateadores. Their principal outings take place in the month of December until 6th January where they are used to begin the region's yearly celebrations. The dance is divided into 10 parts, each part having a specific name. The participants come from El Carmen, as well as from neighbouring towns in the region. Of particular note is the musical accompaniment to the Zapateo here, which is violin. Willy Navarrete informed me that, in colonial times, there had been a considerable migration of people to the neighbourhood from the Andean region ('Sierra'), and that these migrants had brought the violin and the harp with them. Of these two instruments, the violin had 'stuck', and was now almost inseparable from the dance. Further evidence of Andean influence is heard in one of the songs used to accompany the 'Atajo de Negritos' – "Serrana Vieja", which alludes to an Andean woman.

GUILLERMO MARCOS SANTA CRUZ, Musician, Violinist, Zapateador.

Guillermo began dancing at 9 years of age, continuing up until the age of 20 in 'Atajo de Negritos', at which time he decided to dedicate himself more to music, and took up the violin to accompany the zapateo (this use of violin to accompany the Zapateo is something of a tradition, found only in Chincha). Guillermo's violin teacher was one of the best known of the time, Sr. JOSE LURITA. At present Guillermo is first violin in the group 'Atajo de Negritos'.

NIÑOS DE LA CALLE (child street-dancers)

These children generally work in groups of between 4 and 6 members, and are generally aged between 7 and 11 years. They 'work' the main square in El Carmen, dancing for visitors for tips and invariably have a routine which alternates sequences of Zapateo between the members of the group. After viewing several of their performances, and asking them questions, I observed that they have little concept of the origins of their dance, and while some of them are extremely adept and skilful dancers, they seem to know little or nothing about the history of the dance.

3) AUCALLAMA

Aucallama is situated about 3 hours drive north of Lima, in the province of Huaral, known as 'El Norte Chico'. In this settlement there were formerly a large Afro-Peruvian population, now considerably reduced, due to various migratory patterns that have greatly affected the coastal area of Peru over the last few decades. The towns that I was able to visit were Aucallama and San Jose. I decided to visit Aucallama because I knew it to be the hometown of the celebrated VASQUEZ family (see Luis Vasquez, 1st interviewee), and also of SR. ERASMO MUÑOZ, who, with the publication of his book containing the story of his life and the Decimas (poetry) he remembered from his youth, brought about much-needed recognition for the Afro-Peruvians. I was surprised to learn that there was not a single zapateador living in the town, that the only ones seen here were from other places who would come only for the town's festivals. However, I did interview 5) SR HERNAN ALZAMORA SANCHEZ, an elderly Afro-Peruvian, who informed me of the history of the town, of the many zapateadores that he saw dance as a child, and of the hopes and concerns of the people for the future of their town. Afterwards he called his grandchildren, nieces and nephews, who gave a demonstration of the Afro-Peruvian FESTEJO dance, accompanied by one of the youngest members of the family on cajón.

SRA. VILMA UBILLAS

Vilma was elected 'Queen of Festejo' for the year 2006 in the town's festival. She told me she had been interested in dance since childhood, and that there were several dancers and musicians in her family. She also referred to the talks she gives to the young people of her town about their own culture and the importance of not losing these traditions.

PART C

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

This study has enabled me to considerably broaden my knowledge of the Zapateo Criollo, and of the variants that exist, even within one given area or region where it is danced.

ORIGINS OF THE ZAPATEO. While it is true that some of the informants had little or no knowledge of its origins, and among those who did profess to know something, there was a variety of interpretation of the scant evidence that exists. Two main strands emerge:

1. The first interpretation holds that, although no precise dates were known, Zapateo arrived with the Spanish settlers in the time of slavery. As Andalucians were a predominant group among the colonists, it has been reasonably assumed that the percussive use of feet in Flamenco music and dance was central to the planting of the initial seed.
2. The second is that a form of tap-dance existed in West/Central Africa, and was brought over by slaves who subsequently mixed it with, and adapted it to, the Spanish zapateo.

DEVELOPMENT. There was general agreement among the informants that the development of Zapateo Criollo into its hybrid forms took place largely in the agricultural coastal region to the south of Lima, between Chincha and Cañete, and that this took place on the

large Haciendas (Plantations where cotton, sugar cane, tobacco and other crops were cultivated on a large scale). Zapateo's development was able to take place owing to large groups of slaves living and working together and (occasionally when their masters permitted it), entertaining themselves. It should be added, however, that it was also practiced in the northern part of the coastal strip in the province of Huaral and in the towns of Aucallama, Boza etc, but that these areas were less important to its development than the southern coastal region, where there was a greater concentration of black labour.

STYLE and FORM in ZAPATEO CRIOLLO

During the time that I was conducting the interviews I was also taking one-on-one classes in Zapateo. Combining the knowledge and insights gained from both of these areas of study I was able to observe the following with respect to style and form :

Four main styles:

- i) Zapateo 'de Salon'
- ii) 'Competition' Zapateo
- iii) 'Bare earth' Zapateo (formerly, and still occasionally danced barefoot)
- iv) 'Ceremonial' Zapateo

Three main forms that any one of the above will invariably use:

- i) foot sequences (where only the feet are used)
- ii) hand sequences (feet and hands, where the hands can be used to strike the feet, other parts of the body and even the floor, extending the rhythmic-percussive palette of the dancer.
- iii) acrobatic sequences.

The Zapateo requires many hours of practice in order to attain even a basic performance level, demanding an excellent musical sense, particularly rhythmic, and a great deal of creativity.

CONCLUSION

I am very happy to have been able to undertake this study, even though there remains much more to learn, as well as having to fully digest the material gathered in this trip. I am very grateful to all the informants, interviewees and participants, from the academically erudite through to those who told me stories and anecdotes – all of this has played a part in my appreciation of the bigger picture.

Lastly, and by no means least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the LISA ULLMAN TRAVELLING SCHOLARSHIP FUND for providing much-needed assistance in the realization of this project.

Flavia Chevez-le Messurier