

DARK AND LIGHT in Spanish New Mexico

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Dark and Light in Spanish New Mexico

by Richard B. Stark

Alabados

Alabados (from *alabar*, "to praise"), Spanish Catholic hymns of New Mexico, cannot be understood without knowing something of the Penitente Brothers of northern New Mexico who have preserved them and whose ceremonies are rarely celebrated without them. Dr. Marta Weigle a folklorist who has written the authoritative book on the Penitentes, *Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood*,¹ was asked to write a few paragraphs about them for these notes:

Los Hermanos Penitentes, the Penitente Brothers, are members of a lay religious society of the Roman Catholic Church. Officially the organization is known as the Pious Fraternity of Our Father Jesus Nazarite. Formerly found in most Hispanic villages in New Mexico and Colorado, the Brotherhood today (1978) is strongest in rural north central New Mexico and the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado. Local chapters, called *moradas* (from *morar*, "to reside"), are governed by elected officials headed by an *hermano mayor* (elder brother). Some *moradas* are independent, but many belong to larger districts or councils, and a majority recognize the Archbishop's Supreme Council, established in the 1940s.

Locally, the Brothers act as an important welfare agency. Brotherhood membership requires a year-round commitment to mutual aid within the *morada* and to charitable activities within the community at large. Brothers tend the sick, help with heavy work, and feed the indigent or stricken. Such Christian charity was, and to a limited extent remains, a crucial factor in village survival. *Moradas* also helped maintain law and order through the supervision of their own members and a strong, though indirect, influence over non-members.

The Brothers' pious observances are centered around the Passion of Jesus and the spirit of penance. During Lent and Holy Week they worship in retreat as well as in certain public rituals that devout members of the community may join. They also sponsor funerals, burials, wakes for the dead, and wakes for the saints. Many Brotherhood rites formerly involved closely supervised expressions of a penitential spirit through self-flagellation, cross bearing, and other forms of mortification. Sometimes, in the past, a Brother was tied to a large cross during a short simulation of the Crucifixion on Good Friday. Unfortunately, these practices attracted undue attention from uncomprehending outsiders, and the Brothers were forced to alter their devotional patterns, becoming more secretive in order to protect their right to worship according to tradition.

These traditions are of long standing, and they derive from old European and especially Iberian forms of Catholicism. Furthermore, most Brotherhood rites, hymns, prayers, and sacred artifacts are strongly influenced by the Franciscans, who were the first and for over a century the only clergy in New Mexico. Although it is at present impossible

to trace the exact origins of the Brotherhood, it very likely evolved from lay (Third Order) Franciscanism sometime late in the eighteenth century when the Church simply could not provide adequate ministrations to a growing frontier province. The rugged Hispano pioneers thus elaborated lay devotions patterned after those of their beloved friars.

The first unequivocal mention of "brotherhoods of penance" is in an 1833 pastoral letter by the Mexican Bishop Zubiría of Durango. His admonitory remarks were the first of many by Church prelates throughout the nineteenth century. The relationship between Church and Brotherhood was complicated after 1851, when the French Bishop Jean Baptiste Lamy arrived in Santa Fe to establish an Anglo-American Catholic diocese. After the American occupation in 1846, then, New Mexican Hispanos had to cope with a new government, a new language, and a new Church administration with a predominantly Gallic clergy.

By the late nineteenth century, the Brotherhood had found various legal means to preserve their traditional forms of Spanish worship. They began to incorporate themselves under civil law. They also built privately or corporately owned meetinghouses, known by 1878 as *moradas*, many of which may still be seen today.

The profound feeling of sadness and loneliness of the *alabados* seems intimately related to the land of northern New Mexico and to the history and lineage of the people who live there.

This economically poor region is beautiful in its vastness but arid and with a short growing season, making it difficult for the Spanish to raise food and maintain their *ranchitos*. Though they loved it, it is a hard and lonely land.

New Mexican life, particularly in the north, developed in isolation, with only remembrances of language and custom to guide in constructing the society. In the late sixteenth century, Spain, searching for gold, sent an expeditionary force of conquistadors to New Mexico, followed by colonists; when gold was not found in any quantity, Spain turned her attention elsewhere, leaving the colonists isolated. For a brief period (1821-46) Mexico tried unsuccessfully to control the vast region and lost it to the United States, which granted New Mexico statehood in 1912 but took little notice of the area until Los Alamos and the atom bomb in the forties. When the Penitente sings of the *amarga soledad* (bitter loneliness) of the Virgin at the foot of the Cross, he is also singing of his own loneliness.

The late E. Boyd, for many years curator of the Spanish Colonial Department of the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, summed it up:

Textbooks describe the explorations of Coronado in 1540 and settlement by Governor Oñate in 1598; New Mexico's next notice is its annexation by the United States in 1846. History names generals and governors, but during the apparently blank interval of 250 years, it was the courage, endurance, and resourcefulness of simple people that kept the colony alive and

growing.²

From the Spanish Catholic ancestry of these settlers came their passionate identification with the physical sufferings of Christ, which led them not only to meditate on those sufferings but to reenact them, enduring physical pain even as their Lord did. When the Penitente sings of the *azotes* (lashes) that Christ suffered, he sings with profound understanding.

Witnessing the great penitential processions in Seville during Holy Week and hearing the passionate songs (*saetas*) to Christ and the Virgin, one suspects that the New Mexican *alabados* are echoes from penitential Spain (one has to read only a little of the writings of St. Theresa of Avila to enter vividly the sixteenth-century Spanish world of penance expressed through self-mortification). Could it have been that once they were sung in Spain and that their memory persisted in New Mexico even up to 1940, when these recordings were made? Spanish priests and musicians and folklorists with whom I discussed the New Mexican *alabados* in 1973-74 agreed that they were of *abolengo español* (Spanish lineage) but also agreed that there was nothing like them in Spain today, nor could any of them say what there was like them from Spain's past.

There is a religious song called *alabado* in Spain, but, unlike the New Mexican *alabado*, it is always sung to the same text:

Alabado sea el Santísimo Sacramento y la Inmaculada Concepción de la siempre Virgen Maria Nuestra Señora, concebida sin mancha de pecado original en el primer instante de su ser. Amen.

(Praised be the Most Holy Sacrament and the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, our Lady, conceived without the stain of original sin from the first moment of her being. Amen.)

Sometimes a choirmaster will compose an elaborate musical setting of these words, but generally, unlike the New Mexican *alabado*, the Spanish variety is always sung to the same melody. Also, the Spanish *alabado* is only sung during a particular moment in a religious service (the Benediction), in which the Blessed Sacrament is adored by the congregation. There is no direct connection between the New Mexican and the Spanish *alabados*.

There is speculation that the New Mexican *alabados* may be related to music of the Spanish Jews, or Sephardim; that they may be like the thirteenth-century Italian *laudi spirituali* (spiritual songs of praise inspired by the lauds of St. Francis of Assisi) sung during processions by penitents who lashed their bodies to rid their souls of sin; and so on. But no one at this time knows for certain the origin of the *alabados* of New Mexico.

Tracks 1-7 were recorded in Cerro, New Mexico, near the southern Colorado border, by Juan B. Rael, who was then professor of modern languages at Stanford University but who was a native New Mexican and had grown up in Arroyo Hondo, a village near Cerro. Rael was particularly interested in the texts of the *alabados* and in 1951 wrote a book about them³ based on his travels in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, where he recorded six members of the Penitente Brotherhood singing *alabados*. We have chosen two, Luis Montoya and Ricardo Archuleta, neighbors in Cerro. They were both seventy years old in 1940 and so would have been part of the New

Mexican Penitente tradition as it flourished in the nineteenth century.

In 1969 I found several members of Montoya's family living in Cerro. A daughter-in-law, Pina Montoya--a kind woman and a wonderful cook--spoke affectionately of him. She remembered two things especially: he was "*muy catolico*" (very Catholic, deeply devout), and he was "*muy alto*" (very tall; he was well over six feet). She had an old photo that showed Montoya to have a powerful jaw, a large and strong nose, and bright eyes--blue, I think she said. She knew little of his ancestry except that he came from Los Sauces, a tiny village in southern Colorado, and that he thought his parents came from Spain but he didn't know from where, or she didn't remember his saying where. She also said that he was a good reader, with good understanding of Spanish, which was very unusual in those times, and that he was known for his singing of the *alabados* and for being a member of the Penitentes, who helped people in the community with various problems.

Little could be learned of Archuleta except from neighbors who said that he also was a Penitente; that he was a hard worker--a carpenter and rancher--and that he was loved in the community as a singer with deep feeling for the *alabados*. Juan Rael said that he remembered him well as a "gentle man" and referred to him as "Don Ricardo Archuleta."

Rael divides the New Mexican *alabados* into several categories, according to their texts. Besides those about the Passion, there are those in praise of the Lord and in praise of the Virgin. There are *alabados* sung at Holy Communion and those sung at *velorios* (wakes for the dead and celebrations honoring saints). But no matter what the text, the music and the style of singing make the New Mexican *alabado* a song of sorrow.

When one first hears these *alabados* (which were recorded with unsophisticated equipment), he may be puzzled by the strangeness of the songs and the performance style. But as one listens carefully to them and studies how well they are made--the result of a musically sensible people refining the melodies over the years--he gains a great respect for this music, the people who made it, and the people who remembered it.

THE RECORDINGS

The *alabados* on tracks 2-7 were recorded August 7 and 9, 1940, in Cerro, New Mexico. Juan B. Rael Collection of Folk Music and Texts. Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe.

Track 1

Al Pie de Este Santo Altar

Luis Montoya, vocal; Vicente Padilla, *pito* (flute) (recorded July 14, 1952, in Santa Fe; J. D. Robb Collection of New Mexico Folk Music; Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe)

The *alabados* are sung without accompaniment, but occasionally the *pito* is played between stanzas. The *pito* is said to represent the wailing of Mary and is often used with a hymn such as this, which depicts Mary at the foot of the Cross.

The singer ornaments a simple but well-constructed melody in Mode 2 of the Gregorian church

modes. (The Church recognized eight modes, each determined by the dominant note, the final note, and the range of the chant. Only seven notes, corresponding to the white notes of a keyboard, were used; sometimes, to avoid the forbidden interval of the tritone--known as *diabolus in musica*, "the devil in music"--F became F sharp or B became B flat.) It has been suggested that since some of the *alabado* melodies are in the old Church modes they may have been modeled after certain Gregorian chants, but so far this has not been established.

Looking at this *alabado* in 1974, Spain's foremost authority on Spanish folk music, García Matos of the Royal Conservatory in Madrid, said that it was of Spanish lineage but had no characteristics that would enable him to recognize it as being from one province or another.

Arcadio Larrea, a research scholar for Radio Nacional de España, thought both text and melody were "*claramente misional*" (clearly missional) and dated from no earlier than the eighteenth century. He thought it was likely that it was composed in Mexico, New Mexico, or perhaps Latin America.

The recording of the *pito* was made by William R. Fisher, who wrote the following in a paper for the honors program at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, in 1952, under the direction of Professor J. D. Robb, dean of the Fine Arts Department:

Each *Pito* is an individual instrument having its own peculiar series of intervals; this is due to the fact that each *Pito* is made by hand without knowledge of spacing the holes to obtain the diatonic scale. In the cases of the two *Pitos* [that Fisher had studied], the fingering holes are spaced relatively evenly, thus yielding a fairly consistent series of intervals; however, the intervals differ in the two instruments, one yielding a series of whole tones and the other a series of tones which are approximately half-tones. The playing of the *Pito* is done by a fingering formula (a sequence of finger movements) rather than by an attempt to play a given sequence of tones. . . . [Demonstrating the *pito*, Vicente Padilla] began with all tone holes open and played his individual fingering formula using the first two fingers of each hand. In the second case, however, he held the first finger of the left hand covering the first tone hole, and with the second and third fingers of the left hand instead of the first and second, and with the same fingers of the right hand as before, played a similar sequence of finger movements. Because of the difference in the effective fingerings of the two versions, the second beginning one step lower than the first, the characters of the two melodies were entirely different, though the sequence of fingerings was practically the same. Both of the melodies seemed equally pleasing to Vicente. . . .

The *Pito* melodies are undoubtedly of local origin. The melody used by each *Pitero* is his own individual possession, as it were. The style of *Pito* playing may have originated with the use of some simple basic melody (perhaps a Psalm tone) along with a number of embellishments for the purpose of accompaniment of songs.

*Al pie de este santo altar,
la Virgen quedó llorando
por Jesús, su Hijo divino,
y en su pasión contemplando.*

*En su santísimo llanto,
clama y dice: "¡Ay, mi Jesús!
¿Qué haré sola en este mundo?
¿Quién lo baja de la cruz?"*

*Ya murió el Padre Divino
y comienza a lamentar:
"En este amargo camino
no lo van a acompañar."*

*Hincada al pie de la cruz,
alza los ojos y ve.
"¡Ay, mi Dios! ¡Ay, mi Jesús!
¿En qué te amortajaré?"*

*"¡Ay, Jesús, Hijo de mi alma!
¡Ay de mí! Mas ¡ay de mí!
También me falta un sepulcro
en que sepultarte a ti."*

At the foot of this holy altar
the Virgin stood weeping
for Jesus, her divine Son,
in contemplation of His Passion.

In her most holy sorrow,
she calls out and says: "Ah, my Jesus!
What am I to do alone in this world?
Who will bring Him down from the Cross?"

The Divine Father has expired,
and she begins to lament:
"On this bitter road
no one is going to accompany Him."

Bowed down at the foot of the Cross,
she raises her eyes and looks.
"Ah, my God! Ah, my Jesus!
How am I ever going to get Thee back?"

"Ah, Jesus, Son of my soul!
Woe is me! Woe is me!
I don't even have a tomb
in which to bury You."

Track 2

Considera, Alma Perdida

Luis Montoya, vocal

In *The New Mexican Alabado* Juan Rael writes:

The most important ceremonies of the [Penitente] fraternity take place during the Lenten season. Each Friday in Lent, the Stations of the Cross are recited in some chapel, church, or *morada*, or during a procession from the *morada* to Calvary. Anyone may attend this devotion.

"Considera, Alma Perdida," with a stanza for each of the fourteen Stations of the Cross, is one of the *alabados* sung when the Stations are celebrated (only three stanzas are performed here). The Stations represent incidents of Christ's Passion, beginning with His condemnation to death and culminating with the Entombment. They are disposed, either graphically or sculpturally, along the nave walls of many Catholic churches; when the Stations are celebrated there are prayers, hymns, and meditations in front of each depiction.

The melody of "Considera, Alma Perdida" seems to reflect the words as it struggles slowly to reach the high note in each phrase, then drops away with diminished energy. The singer repeats the first two words at the beginning of each fourth line, probably for emphasis. It is in a minor key but has modal characteristics.

*Considera, alma perdida,
en aqueste paso fuerte
dieron sentencia de muerte
al redentor de la vida.*

*Alvierte [sic] lo que le cuesta,
ingrato, a tu Creador,
pues, por ser tu redentor
cayó con la cruz a costas.*

*El que a los cielos creó
y a la tierra le dió el ser,
que por su amor quiso caer
al tercer paso que dió.*

Consider, lost soul,
in this horrendous scene
they gave sentence of death
to the redeemer of life.

Bear in mind what it cost Him,
ungrateful one, your Creator,
in order to be your redeemer

He fell with the Cross on His shoulders.

He who created the heavens
and gave to the earth its being,
who out of His love was willing to fall
at the third step He took.

Track 3

Venir, Almas Devotas

Luis Montoya, vocal

The *alabados* generally are composed of four melodic groups each. Most *alabados* seem to be in triple meter, though this is difficult or, in some of the almost improvisatory *alabados*, impossible to ascertain. The range is never more than one octave.

"Venir, Almas Devotas" is a simple *alabado* with four melodic groups of two measures each and three beats to the measure. It uses only four main tones, is in a major key, and contains few subtleties of rhythm or ornamentation. It seems to be a very late nineteenth-century melody.

Luis Montoya employs a *trino*, or sob-like shake of the voice, often heard in this style of singing.

*Venir, almas devotas,
venir, venir, venir,
y a la más triste madre
ayudarle a sentir.*

*Al pie de un verde leño,
que es mata de carmín,
como tortolita triste,
yo me contemplo allí.*

*De noche lo prendieron
como ladrón y a mi.
¿Cómo quedaría yo
al verlo andar así?*

*Con golpes y empellones
lo pasearon allí,
le ataron sus santas manos.
¡Qué dolor para mí!*

*Al cuello le pusieron
una cadena así,
tan gruesa y tan pesada,
¡qué dolor por ti!*

Come, devout souls,
come, come, come,
and join the most sad mother
in her sorrow.

At the foot of a green bough
stained with red,
like a sad turtle dove
I see myself there.

They took Him at night
like a thief (and also me).
How can I stand
to see Him taken away thus?

With blows and shoves
they pushed Him on the way,
they tied His holy hands.
What sorrow for me!

They put around His neck
a chain
so thick and so heavy,
what sorrow I feel for Thee!

Track 4

Dividido el Corazón

Ricardo Archuleta and Luis Montoya, vocals; Vicente Padilla, *pito* (flute)

There are various religious ceremonies in Spain in which *pitos* are used, but the Spanish *pitero* plays well-defined melodies while the New Mexican *pitero* plays little melodic formulas that seem to depend on fingering formulas. The closest to New Mexican *pito* music in Spain is the piping of the *afilador* (knife sharpener), who announces his trade by playing short melodic formulas on his panpipe of wood, metal, or plastic. An *afilador* who often came through the narrow streets of the old Jewish quarter in Seville played a melodic formula that even sounded like this *alabado*, with a constant reiteration of do re mi up and down and then an ascent of five notes, la ti do re mi. A musicologist in Seville agreed that this *alabado* was like the music of the neighborhood *afilador* and said that it was vaguely familiar to him, like something remembered out of his childhood in Galicia. (The Galician town of Orense was formerly the only place where pipes of this kind were made.)

Arcadio Larrea thought it was musically and textually one of the earliest New Mexican *alabados* he had seen and dated it from the eighteenth century. According to Juan Rael, this *alabado* is sung during the Penitente processions on Good Friday at the moment when Christ and the Virgin meet.

Ricardo Archuleta and Luis Montoya are singing essentially the same melody, but each sings with his own particular kind of pathos.

(Ricardo Archuleta)

*Al sepulcro va a llorar
Por su dulce hijo María,
A contemplar su dolor
junto de la losa fría.*

*¡Ay, llora mi soledad!
¡Ay, Jesús del alma mía!
¡Ay! ¿quién me acompañará
junto de la losa fría?*

*Mi corazón traspasado
y también el de María
al dejar a su Jesús,
junto de la losa fría.*

Mary goes to the sepulchre to weep
for her beloved son,
to meditate on his pain
beside the cold grave.

Ah, my desolate soul weeps!
Ah, Jesus, soul of my soul!
Ah, who will remain with me
beside the cold grave?

My heart is pierced through
as is the heart of Mary
as she takes leave of her Jesus,
beside the cold grave.

(Luis Montoya)

*Herido el corazón,
llora María sin consuelo,
la noche pasó en desvelo,
contemplando en la pasión.*

*En amarga soledad,
sospira [sic] vuestra paloma
por ver si acaso se asoma
de mi Dios la claridad.*

"En una noche tan triste,

*mi Dios, me has desamparado,
sola y sin ti me he quedado.
Hijo mío, ¿ónde [sic] te fuistes [sic]?"*

Brokenhearted,
Mary weeps without consolation,
the night passed in sleeplessness,
in contemplation of the Passion.

In bitter loneliness,
your dove sighs
to see whether
the light of my God will come back into Him
again.

"In this night so sad,
my God, Thou hast abandoned me,
alone and without Thee I have
remained.
My Son, where hast Thou gone?"

Track 5

Tened Piedad, Dios Mío

Luis Montoya and Ricardo Archuleta, vocals

This *alabado*, also known as "El Miserere" (a prayer for mercy), is a hymn "in praise of the Lord," according to Professor Rael, and is generally sung at funerals:

The wakes for the dead take place in the house of the deceased person. These begin, like the other vigils, with the recitation of the rosary, after which the singing of *alabados* continues till daybreak.

Luis Montoya and Ricardo Archuleta sing together, as was often the custom. The congregation would have answered in chorus, repeating the first stanza after each stanza sung by the soloists.

Musicians in Cádiz said this melody sounded like a *saeta*, a type of religious song performed during their Holy Week ceremonies. A *saeta* is a kind of arrow, and the song, they said, is like an arrow soaring through the night carrying its message to Christ and the Virgin.

Arcadio Larrea was asked about the possible connection between this New Mexican *alabado* and a *saeta* from southern Spain. He wrote out the scheme of such a *saeta*, which included a three-note rise, do re mi, in the first phrase, as though rising to the reciting tone in Gregorian chant, proceeding to sol but ending on fa in the second phrase and, in the third phrase, culminating on the reciting tone mi. "Tened Piedad, Dios Mío" generally follows this scheme, with one main exception: the second phrase rests on re, the tone below the reciting tone, rather than on fa, the tone above it. García

Matos thought this *alabado* curious in that it is similar to the *saeta* yet has a distinctly different character. He suggested Mexico as a more likely source than Spain for this kind of *alabado*.

*Tened piedad, Dios mío,
suma bondad eterna,
de mí, según la grande
misericordia vuestra.*

*Según la muchedumbre
de tus piedades tiernas,
borra, Señor, mis culpas
del libro de la cuenta.*

O eternal Blessed One,
have mercy on me,
according to Thy great mercy.

According to the abundance
of Thy tender mercies,
blot out, O Lord, my sins
from the book of accounts.

Track 6

Buenos Días, Paloma Blanca

Ricardo Archuleta, vocal

According to Professor Rael:

Alabados are sung not only at the religious feasts . . . but also in many humble homes as part of the day's routine. This custom, of course, is not general; but in homes where it is observed, hymns are sung at dawn, at noon, and at nightfall.³

The words of this hymn of praise to the Virgin show the kind of tenderness always manifested toward Mary.

Rael writes that some of the *alabado* texts are of Spanish origin "at least in part." Others he says come from Mexico. "Still others must be in part if not entirely local and could have been written by native poets." In his book he includes a Mexican version of "Buenos Días, Paloma Blanca" very similar to this one.

The music for the first stanza is in Mode 1 of the Gregorian church modes. The second stanza begins as though it were in a major key, then returns to Mode 1.

When an official at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica in Madrid heard this *alabado*, he immediately identified the melody as like some of the *coplas Sefardies*, songs of the Spanish Jews, and suggested

looking at a collection in the institute's library. This collection, dating from 1932, was indeed of Sephardic songs, but arranged for piano and voice in nineteenth-century art-song style by the musician who collected them in Rhodes and Turkey. Without hearing field recordings or seeing notations before the arrangements were made, one was helpless to know if there was any possible connection between them and the *alabados* of New Mexico. Arcadio Larrea, who dated this *alabado* from the eighteenth century, thought that none of the New Mexican *alabados* he knew resembled any Sephardic music he had encountered in his research.

*¡Buenos días, paloma blanca!
Hoy te vengo a saludar,
saludando a tu belleza
en tu reino celestial.*

*Eres madre del Creador
que a mi corazón encanta;
gracias te doy con amor.
¡Buenos días, paloma blanca!*

*Niña linda, niña santa,
tu dulce nombre alabado,
porque eres tan sacrosanta,
yo te vengo a saludar.*

*Reluciente como el alba,
pura, sencilla y sin mancha,
qué gusto recibe mi alma.
¡Buenos días, paloma blanca!*

Good morning, white dove!
Today I have come to greet you,
celebrating your beauty
in your celestial kingdom.

Thou art the mother of the Creator
who has charmed my heart;
I give thee thanks with love.
Good morning, white dove!

Beautiful maiden, holy maiden,
thy sweet name be praised,
because thou art sacrosanct,
I come to greet thee.

Resplendent as the dawn,
pure, innocent, and without stain,
what joy my soul receives!

Good Morning, white dove!

Track 7

Dulce Esposo de Mi Alma

Luis Montoya and Ricardo Archuleta, vocals

This final *alabado* is another in praise of the Lord, like "Tened Piedad, Dios Mío." The two old men sing of Christ as part of their inmost being, as sweetest friend, as the most beautiful lily, and look forward with intense anticipation to their reunion with Him.

Though very simple, the music is well made and reflects the yearning of the singers. The melody begins on the first tone of the natural minor scale, stretches to the fifth tone above, then moves gently down step by step until it reaches the first tone again. In the second melodic group there is a gentle rise from the first to the third tone. In the next group the melody gathers energy, pushes up to the fifth tone again, with a flourish touches the note above it, descends quickly to the tone below the first tone, pauses for breath, and in the final group ascends once more step by step, but only to the fourth tone, as though its energy were diminishing and curiously raising the third tone on the ascent, then drops quietly, and rests on the final tone, which was the one on which it began.

Don Carmelo Sólis Rodríguez, *sacerdote archivero canonigo* of the cathedral at Badajoz, heard a familiar ring to this *alabado*, as though it might have come from his region of lower Extremadura, the arid and austere land--so like New Mexico--that supplied so many colonists to the New World. Certainly, he said, the way its last group of notes ascended to the fourth tone and returned to the final, was a melodic formula used often enough in his area to be called the "Extremeñian cadence."

It is almost impossible to substantiate that this melody came from that region of Extremadura, but it is tantalizing to speculate that some devout colonist carried it with him to the New World, and that somehow it was conserved in a little village in New Mexico up to 1940.

*Dulce esposo de mi alma,
mi Redentor, Jesucristo,
Hijo del divino Padre,
Dios eterno y en finito [sic].*

*Esposo de mis entrañas,
dulcísimo amigo mío,
a mis ojos más hermoso
que el fresco cárdeno lirio.*

*Dime, esposo de mi alma,
tengo de verme contigo,
ha de llegar aquel día
de tan grande regocijo.*

Sweet bridegroom of my soul,

my Redeemer, Jesus Christ,
Son of the divine Father,
the eternal and infinite God.

Beloved of my inmost being,
my sweetest friend,
to my eyes more beautiful
than the fresh radiant lily.

Tell me, bridegroom of my soul,
that I am to be with you,
that the day of my great rejoicing
must come.

BAILES

The music of the *alabados* is as different from the music of the *bailes*, the social dances, as the dark is from the light. It is like two sides of a people's character, one side obsessed with suffering and death, the other delighting in the dance.

Anita Gonzales (Mrs. T. L.) Thomas, a native New Mexican who has long had an interest in Spanish New Mexican folk life, says that social dancing was a great pastime in New Mexico among the Spanish. Her parents, whose ancestors were original settlers of the little village of La Cienega, south of Santa Fe, always danced, she said, as did their parents, as did *their* parents, and so on. In "Traditional Folk Dances of New Mexico," Mrs. Thomas gave a general background for the *bailes*:

Dancing as a pastime has been an integral part of the lives of the Spanish people of New Mexico since the earliest times. Isolated by great distances from the mother country and beset by the hardships of making a home in a hostile land, the colonists turned to their inborn Spanish love of dancing to lighten their spirits.

Bailes were held in every town or village, in salas, halls, with whitewashed walls lit by tallow candles. Before 1850 most of the salas had hard-packed clay floors with wheat straw scattered over them to keep the dust down.

On a table at one end of the sala were chairs for the músicos, who played violin and guitar. Often, before the dance, the músicos would ride in a wagon through the town and adjoining villages on a convite, an invitation for everyone to come to the dance.

The large homes of the ricos, the rich, always had a sala for the bailes celebrating preñorios, engagements, bodas, weddings, cumpleaños, birthdays, and other events to which family and friends were invited. Sometimes in order to be assured of having another dance soon, some couple was preñado or amarrado, actually tied with a handkerchief, and not untied until someone would promise to give a baile de desempeño to redeem them.

For the bailes there was a bastonero whose duty it was to keep order, direct figures, and call the name of the next dance. He carried a bastón, cane, as his sign of authority. When the sala was small he also had the duty of choosing those who would dance, making sure that everyone had his turn.

The tonada, tune, was usually in two parts, the first being the distinctive tune of that particular dance, and the second, la vuelta, the return, usually a waltz or polka tune. This series was repeated again and again.

Dancing was such a common pastime in New Mexico's early history that there is no mention or description of bailes in the Spanish documents, but references abound in the nineteenth-century reports of the Anglo traders, explorers, and soldiers who came to New Mexico. The cultural and religious backgrounds of these men often led them to misunderstand the customs and culture of New Mexico, but, nonetheless, all were impressed by the dances they observed.⁴

Here follow two of many references cited by Mrs. Thomas:

Nothing is more general throughout the country, and with all classes, than dancing. From the gravest priest to the buffoon--from the richest nabob to the beggar--from the governor to the rancharo--from the soberest matron to the flippant belle--from the grandest señora to the cocinera--all partake of this exhilarating amusement.⁵

It was not anything uncommon or surprising to see the most elaborately dressed and aristocratic woman at the ball dancing with a peon. . . . And such disparity of ages! On one occasion I saw at a ball given by Governor Armijo an old man of eighty or over dancing with a child not over eight or ten. I could not help the reflection that it was a dance of the cradle and the grave. They do literally dance from the cradle to the grave.⁶

The violin music on this record is played by Melitón Roybal (1898-1971), who lived in El Rancho, New Mexico, a tiny Spanish farming community near the San Ildefonso Indian pueblo on the road to Los Alamos. Reed Cooper, another violinist from El Rancho, made the tapes from which this record was taken. In a letter to the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, Cooper wrote:

Last summer [1970] I made the acquaintance of Melitón Roybal, who is 72 years old, a relative of a neighbor of mine, and an excellent violin player. We have gotten together from time to time to play informally for friends or just by ourselves. He is a very warm, open person, happy to allow me to record his playing and pleased that I want to learn to play his music. His playing of the music of this area, more than any other I have encountered, really arouses my musical curiosity, as well as my interest in tradition. . . . Neighbors who heard him play for weddings 50 years ago say he used to be one of the best. I would say that even at 72 his musicality, tone, intonation and rhythm are excellent.

While 1970 seems late for archival recordings, life in the little Spanish villages of northern New Mexico changes very slowly, and the style of violin playing in the earliest recordings in the museum's archives, made in 1940, is very like Roybal's in 1970. However, very few of the *músicos* play with his

sure intonation and exciting rhythmic sense.

In a visit to Melitón's brother Bernardo in autumn 1977, I learned something more of the brothers Roybal. Bernardo, eighty-two years old, bedridden and gravely ill, nevertheless listened to the tape of his younger brother's playing and verified the names of the melodies. He asked if I would like to see the violin he played for so many years, the same one on which he had taught Melitón to play in 1913. The label inside the sound box read: No. 2941, COPY OF ANTONIO CURATOLI. Bernardo's signature, BDO. ROYBAL, also appeared on the label. He said that he had ordered the violin from a Sears catalogue.

Bernardo asked to be helped from his bed to a chair, where he was supported by pillows. He took the violin and bow and began faintly to sound the melody "La Tercera de Noviembre" ("The Third of November"). As he continued, strength seemed to return to him, and he ended strongly with two vigorous strokes of the bow.

Bernardo told how he had played for the Matachines dances at the San Ildefonso pueblo for forty years, and that often Melitón would go with him and play the guitar. (Matachines is a dance drama, incorporating both Spanish and Indian elements, that portrays the encounter of the Spanish conquistadors with Montezuma in Mexico.) The brothers also played for dances, weddings, and all kinds of parties for years, Melitón sometimes playing guitar, sometimes violin.

Where did Melitón learn "Turkey in the Straw," "Listen to the Mockingbird," and "The Arkansas Traveler"? These tunes were possibly first brought by some eastern Anglos in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. But Melitón learned them from other players in the area and from the radio, he told Cooper, the same way he learned waltzes, polkas, and schottisches, which may have entered New Mexico by way of the Mexican court of Maximilian and Carlota in the 1860s.

There are some *bailes* today in northern New Mexico with the kind of music Melitón plays, but the old fiddlers and the life out of which they grew are almost gone. Some historians maintain that the Spanish colonial period lasted in northern New Mexico up to 1942 with the coming of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory. Until then it is said that if one traveled to the little Spanish villages in the north he would see seventeenth-century Spain, somewhat modified, of course, but essentially unchanged.

Most of the dance tunes in northern New Mexico today are from the nineteenth century. One wonders to what tunes the Spanish danced before then. It is probably an unanswerable question, since there are no written records of them in New Mexico, and the tunes have not been transmitted to the musicians now living. But according to the *ancianos*, the old people, one thing is certain--the Spanish were dancing.

Some Spanish New Mexicans agree (and lament) that Los Alamos ended their isolation and the kind of village life that had developed over the centuries. But a few remnants of that old Spanish rural life are still visible and audible in northern New Mexico, and Melitón Roybal lets us hear of the goodwill, warmth, and generosity of one aspect of that life.

All the *bailes* tunes are played by Melitón Roybal, violin, and were recorded in 1970 at El Rancho,

New Mexico, by Reed Cooper. These recordings are from the collections of the International Folk Art Foundation located in the Museum of International Folk Art, a division of the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe.

Track 8

El Valse (in G)

Spanish New Mexican names for some dances differ from standard Spanish: *el chotis* for *la chotis*; *el cutilio* for *el cotillón*; *el valse*, with a distinct *e* on the end of the spoken word, for *el vals*.

With few exceptions Melitón Roybal named the tunes he played by type--"El Valse," "La Polca," and so on--and by key, though the violin was often not tuned to concert pitch.

Tracks 9-12

El Cutilio (in G and C)

El Cutilio (in G)

El Cutilio (in D)

El Cutilio (in D)

El cutilio is the last part of *las cuadrillas* (square dances), a series of continuous dances, and is accompanied by many different tunes. Cotillions were apparently popular in El Rancho, judging by the number of tunes Roybal recorded for Cooper that he called "El Cutilio." Mrs. Thomas also reports of their popularity:

Other dances, besides the waltz, which are popular here in New Mexico are the schottische, or "El Chotis," and Las Cuadrillas and El Cutilio, which to be able to go through without a mistake was considered a great accomplishment when my father and mother were young.

Track 13

Turkey in the Straw

Bernardo Roybal called this tune "El Cutilio," not "Turkey in the Straw." Apparently this was another of the many different tunes played in that series of dances, *las cuadrillas*.

A curious mark of all this New Mexican music for the *bailes* is the extension of measures by one or two beats, most often at the end of phrases. One hears it in this example. It is not predictable when it will happen, but it does happen often, and the dancers are left to adjust, which they do with rarely a missed step.

Track 14

The Arkansas Traveler

This is certainly one of those tunes the Anglos imported to New Mexico. But the witty and spirited variations are Roybal's.

The violin he plays is an inexpensive copy of a Stradivarius. There are many such violins in northern New Mexico today. E. Boyd thought that they were probably brought to New Mexico beginning in 1878 with the coming of the railroads, which made possible large shipments of manufactured items. All the violins contain the label ANTONIUS STRADIVARIUS CREMONENTIS FACIEBAT ANNO 1716--MADE IN GERMANY.

Track 15

Listen to the Mockingbird

Roybal called this tune simply "Valse." He played it first in 3/4 time, then in 2/4 time. Cooper asked him if it was the same song both times. Roybal replied, "That's the way I play it."

"Well, what I mean is, that one is just like the first one you played. Right? Very similar?"

"No--I don't think it's the same."

"O.K."

Roybal played the tune again, in 3/4 time, and said, "It makes a difference, doesn't it?"

"O.K., it's different, but it's also similar--it's like it--a little bit."

"Oh? Maybe."

"O.K."

"We won't argue."

Track 16

La Tercera de Noviembre (El Valse)

Bernardo Roybal did not remember what the third of November commemorated. But Melitón told Cooper that he learned the tune when he was about ten from a cousin who was a violin player, "a good musician," who later died at thirty-five during the flu epidemic of 1918.

Track 17

El Valse (in A)

The following excerpts are from Mrs. Thomas' paper:⁴

In 1839 Matt Field, an actor and newspaperman, joined a company of traders who left Independence, Missouri, bound for Santa Fe. He recorded his impressions in a journal that he later expanded into a series of articles for the New Orleans *Picayune*.⁵ He reported:

All dances or balls in Santa Fe are called *Fandangos*, at least by the Americans. Scrupulously republican in their amusements as well as their dealings, the Mexicans never exact a charge for admission into the ballroom. There is generally an extra apartment where sweet-breads, Pass whiskey [from El Paso, Texas], and wine are sold at double prices, and this is the landlord's or landlady's remuneration for the use of the ball room.

. . . . With all this unrestrained freedom of manners they seldom quarrel, and the harmony of an evening's amusement is seldom broken unless by some imprudent conduct of the Americans themselves. Scarcely an evening of the week passes without a fandango in one part

or other of the town, and the same faces will be seen at every one. It would seem as if the people could not exist without the waltz.

In 1849 Captain Randolph B. Marcy led the military escort of the companies of immigrants from Arkansas to the California gold fields. They arrived at San Miguel del Vado, near Las Vegas, New Mexico, just in time for the celebration of San Juan, June 24. In his journal he says:⁸

The Mexicans waltz beautifully, and go through the Spanish dance to perfection. The Señoritas are very graceful in their movements. . . .

Every town we come to gives us a fandango, and the people treat the B'hoys well. I have attended their fandangos in this valley, and the way the native population waltz is a caution to cripples.

Track 18

La Polca (in G and D)

As for the polka in northern New Mexico, Mrs. Thomas writes:⁴

Here it is danced either by a couple or as *La Polca Suelta* where the partners dance around rather than with each other. I might add that the quick hop step is done very smoothly--"con el paso asentado"--no high jumps, as my father used to say.

Track 19

La Indita

ROYBAL: This is an *indita*. Do you know what that is?

COOPER: No. Is that a kind of dance?

ROYBAL: Indita is an Indian girl.

COOPER: Is that the name just of that song, or are there a bunch of songs? Is that a word like *valse* which means a number of songs, or is that the name of that song in particular?

ROYBAL: That's the name of that song.

A special characteristic of *la indita* is that the steps are done in a shuffling manner peculiar to the dancing of Pueblo Indian women. The music, however, has no relation to Pueblo Indian music.

Track 20

El Chotis

Cooper asked Roybal if he could dance this schottische. He said that he couldn't, that he was always too busy playing for the dances to learn to be a good dancer himself.

He plays this *chotis* with great spirit and ends with a laugh.

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Program consultant: Richard B. Stark

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HYMNS AND DANCE TUNES IN SPANISH NEW MEXICO 80292-2

Alabados

- 1 Al Pie De Este Santo Altar
Luis Montoya, vocal; Vicente Padilla, *pito* (flute)
- 2 Considera, Alma Perdida
Luis Montoya, vocal
- 3 Venir, Almas Devotas
Luis Montoya, vocal
- 4 Dividido el Corazón
Ricardo Archuleta and Luis Montoya vocals; Vicente Padilla, *pito*
- 5 Tened Piedad, Dios Mío
Luis Montoya and Ricardo Archuleta, vocals
- 6 Buenos Días, Paloma Blanca
Ricardo Archuleta, vocal
- 7 Dulce Esposo de Mi Alma
Luis Montoya and Ricardo Archuleta, vocals

Bailes

- 8 El Valse (in G)
- 9 El Cutilio (in G and C)
- 10 El Cutilio (in G)
- 11 El Cutilio (in D)
- 12 El Cutilio (in D)
- 13 Turkey in the Straw
- 14 The Arkansas Traveler
- 15 Listen to the Mockingbird

- 16 La Tercera de Noviembre (El Valse)
- 17 El Valse (in A)
- 18 La Polca (in G and D)
- 19 La Indita
- 20 El Chotis

All of the Bailes are played by Melitón Roybal, violin

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16 Penn Plaza #835
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