

Reviews



CLAUDE FERRIER. *Navidad en los Andes: arpa, comparsas y zapateo en San Francisco de Querco, Huancavelica.* Instituto de Etnomusicología, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú y CH-EM Swiss Society for Ethnomusicology. 2008. 160 pages. Bibliography, musical transcriptions, black and white diagrams and photos, maps, DVD.
ISBN: 978-603-45070-2-9.

It is such a pleasure to review a book that I can recommend without reservations. Based on extensive research and written in a style that is accessible and informative, *Navidad en los Andes: arpa, comparsas y zapateo en San Francisco de Querco, Huancavelica* by Claude Ferrier is an important addition to the ethnographic series published by the Instituto de Etnomusicología, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, and to research on the Andes more generally. In this book, Claude Ferrier delivers incisive observations and analysis of Peruvian festival practices at the intersection of the Christian tradition of Christmas and the pre-Hispanic Qhapaq Raymi, observed throughout the central Peruvian Andes. *Navidad en los Andes* centers on a representation of the Christmas tradition in Querco, in south-central Peru, and offers a critical portrayal of historical continuity and change of the *fiesta*. The narrative oscillates masterfully between past and present via historical information and contemporary ethnographic observation, allowing Ferrier to expose syncretic processes centered on the convergence and simultaneity of shared symbolism in the festival. Among the book's many strengths is Ferrier's sensitivity to performance aesthetics and his attention to a conceptual framework that brings together musical analysis and Andean symbolism to reveal persistent elements of Andean cosmology reflected in musical technique, melodic lines, and rhythm of the festival repertoire. Ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, historians, and a variety of humanities and social sciences scholars will surely find *Navidad en los Andes* a useful book for continuing research and classroom implementation. I look forward to an English translation that will extend readership of this important study and allow for a broader integration of Ferrier's analysis in scholarly debates.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first few chapters situate Querco within the physical geography, history, and community politics of

the Andean highlands and offer a description of the Christmas tradition and a detailed perspective on the musical technique and choreography of the event. Latter chapters contextualize the fiesta within the social dynamics of Querco and consider recent changes the tradition has undergone because of mass migration to the coastal town of Ica and other factors that have influenced performance aesthetics.

Helpful photos, maps, figures, and musical transcriptions accompany the text. I appreciated the full transcription of song lyrics and recitations throughout the book, and musical transcriptions in the appendix, which I think scholars will find useful for comparison to other Andean musical traditions. Perhaps one of the most important complements to the book is the accompanying DVD with footage of field recordings that capture the music and dances within the context of community decision making, participation, and social interaction. Beyond illustrating examples referenced in the book, the DVD provides glimpses into other important aspects of the culture not necessarily articulated in the narrative—for instance, the ways by which children are socialized into participation in the tradition and the aesthetics of the dance from a very early age; the subtleties of interaction among the genders and generations; extended interviews with locals regarding their experiences and memories of Querco and of the celebration as it was observed in the past; and rich details of the way people enter and exit, participate, and perform within the festival space. Clips on the DVD, moreover, are a perfect length for use in classroom contexts. Ferrier's bibliography is also worthy of attention since it brings North American, Latin American, and European scholarship into productive dialogue.

Ferrier tells us that Querco receives little tourism and that the Christmas tradition has typically been a production for locals by locals, although in recent years things are changing. Readers are situated immediately within a complex political hybrid system and organization where Quechua and Western systems coexist. Those working in other parts of the Andes will recognize the structure of authority Ferrier describes, though titles vary depending on region. Understanding this social and political organization is integral to appreciating the significance of performance patterns, which follow a complementary binary division and a quadripartite division of mirror opposites along a gendered conception of space. Building on Peter Baumann's studies in Peru and Bolivia and Nan Volinski's important work in the Ecuadorian Andes, Ferrier demonstrates, for instance, the ways by which musical instruments map onto this dual/quadripartite geography as a married pair, with the harp representing the feminine lower moiety known as *hurin*, and the violin the masculine upper moiety known as *hanan*. Ferrier traces these reciprocal relationships in detailed diagrams of the spatial arrangement, direction, and movement of the *comparsas* or dance troupes.

Some of the most important elements of Christmas festival include the *tinku* (competition) and the *amistacharo* (friendly embrace after the competition) as expressions of duality, unity and complementarity of the hurin and the hanan, and equilibrium of the whole. Ferrier writes that during the eight days of the Christmas fiesta, including public rehearsals leading up to a presentation of dances as an offering to the baby Jesus, dancers, musicians, and participating public become tight knit and unified like a great family. He describes the competition as the most introspective element of the festival where, by way of a demonstration of their physical abilities in the acrobatic *mudanzas* (transitions) or *pruebas* (tests) and in the *zapateo* (described at its best as “singing with the feet” that provides a rhythmic accompaniment to the music), dancers measure their internal equilibrium. Intense repetition, physical exertion, and excess push dancers and public to the limits of their endurance. Ferrier reports, for example, the performance of 430 dances in 24 hours of competition, for which the audience remained until the very end. The intensity of the contest does not, however, compromise friendships. Both the act of “befriending one another again” performed immediately after the competition through observance of the *amistacharo* community dance and the fact that no winners are declared publically support Ferrier’s assertion that the ultimate objective of the ritual is a periodic reestablishing of collective equilibrium within a general sense of social complementarity. One of Ferrier’s salient observations regarding the criteria and expectations of the ritual is the emphasis on repetition and extended duration, which underscore the importance of time and space as defining components and central concepts in the shared Andean value of “living intensely in the moment.”

In addition to the *comparsas*, Ferrier’s analysis highlights two key participants in the Christmas event—the harpists, who play with their individual *toques* or unique styles and without whom the event could not take place, and the *caballos*, masked characters that play a central role among the dance troupes and throughout the festival.

Ferrier discusses the harp as the instrument that drives the dance. His experience as an Andean harp player himself allows him to present an impressive musical analysis that maps onto the broader Andean cosmology. He writes that principal harpists must master melodies that accompany dances such as the Adoración, Navidad, Pascuas, Pascalles, and Amistacharo, among others. Harpists demonstrate their individual styles throughout a repertoire that includes music that accompanies the acrobatic contests known as *pruebas* or *mudanzas* and the music that accompanies the much briefer solo dances of the *zapateo*, wherein individual dancers perform intricate footwork that provides a rhythmic parallel to the music. Foregrounding music as a phenomenon of transition, Ferrier traces a musical correspondence to the Andean *chakana* as a five-part cosmology that

outlines the connection among four time/spaces or *pachas* plus the center as a fifth point of juncture and transition. His review of the predominance of the horizontal melodic form of octaves and fifths, and of the pentatonic scale in the Andes exposes the significance of the number five. This number is also reflected in the sequences of notes emphasized within the musical aesthetic and in the style of playing, which alternates between active or “dynamic” and “static or hinging” fingerings. Rhythmic ambiguity between 2/4 and 3/4 rhythm also figures in the analysis, which ultimately shows how the importance of the number five in musical scales, the choreography of the dance, and the symbolism of the *chakana* extends to the division of *ayllus* or communities, the number of authorities, the number of days for the emergence of plants after seeding, and the number of days between death and resurrection.

Crucial in the traditional rendition of the fiesta is also the festival character known as the *caballo*, who plays a multifaceted role in the ritual. The *caballos* play a central function among the *comparsas* both during performances and rehearsals, determining choreography and prescribing the criteria for the dances. Ferrier writes that the *caballos* are the soul of the Christmas celebration. I noticed several parallels with the *aya uma* in other parts of the Andes in terms of the ambiguous role the *caballos* play as authorities within a particular space, keepers of order at times, instigators of chaos at others, creative improvisers, guardians of the perimeter of the festival, simultaneous transgressors of that space in terms of stepping in and out of the worlds of fantasy and reality, sacred and profane. In both cases these festival characters are ambiguously male and female, human and animal, with a dual gaze toward the past and the future. The *caballos* are judges that punish the mistakes or faults of the dancers in humorous form. Most importantly they are social and supernatural mediators, bearers of important messages each year that the public must interpret. One of the most fascinating aspects of the Quercó tradition is the transformation of the *caballos* at the end of the festival into bulls or oxen that go around the plaza simulating the plowing of rows and planting of seeds.

The centrality of the harp and *caballo* traditions along with the implication of time and space in the performances stand out in the context of Ferrier’s concluding chapters where he discusses changes including the professionalization of harp players and dancers, the diminishing role of the *caballos* to mere entertainers divested of their authority in the fiesta, shifting performance aesthetics, and the dramatic reduction in length of the event as a whole.

Ferrier traces the beginning of pronounced changes in Quercó’s Christmas tradition to mass migration during the 1960s to the coastal area of Ica in Southeast Huancavelica. Although Querqueños living and working in Ica continued the Christmas festival tradition, they did so under very

different conditions. Urbanization brought with it a loss of Quechua language with implications for the traditional songs of the Adoración along with a fading appreciation for high pitched female voices. Competitions began to pit different migrant communities against one another rather than reflecting competition and complementarity within a single community, as it had traditionally been done in Querco. Judges, moreover, began to declare winners and reward them with prizes. This, in turn, influenced a privileging of the fancy footwork of the zapateo as a more visually impressive aspect of the event, with increasing emphasis on aesthetics of individualism, virtuosity, and rehearsed performance. These changes, according to Ferrier, altered the function of the tinku profoundly, transforming the ritual into nothing more than a spectacle. As those working in Ica periodically traveled back to Querco, elements like amplification, the addition of an announcer, standardization of the music and professionalization of the dance troupes, and rendering of the caballo to the role of entertainer in the festival affected the event in both locations.

Ferrier documents some of the changes he witnessed in Querco between 2003 and 2006, and contemplates the deeper consequence of shifting criteria, expectations, and performance aesthetics. He explains how the declaration of winners and losers of the competition undermined the importance of the tinku as a mechanism of gauging and reestablishing equilibrium within the community. The new criteria for judging and the practice of awarding prizes also led to the hiring of professional dancers and harpists typically not from Querco. These outsiders tended to remain peripheral to the social aspect of the ritual. The emphasis on improvisation also waned as professionals arrived with well rehearsed, standardized pieces that displayed a more “square” toque. Attentive to even the smallest details, Ferrier notes that while in the past the public would sit on shared wooden benches or on the floor, in 2006 people brought individual plastic chairs. While some claimed this was simply for added comfort, others seemed to intuit that this act of individuality might point to an implicit weakening of community ties.

The most critical change, however, returns us to the subject of time and space. In 2006 the public rehearsal time for the event—so integral to the process of generalized participation—had been condensed from five days to one. This allowed little time for dancers to build endurance (an important aesthetic of the ritual in the past) or cultivate social networks. The duration of each competition, moreover, was shortened, and the number of *amistacharo* dances—one of the most crucial elements in the ritual—was reduced from four to one. In other words, there was a general and dramatic reduction of the festival as a whole. Ferrier suggests a growing influence of western conceptions of time as linear and accelerated, forward looking. As he sees it, the disappearance of an aesthetic of repetition and extended

duration signals a reversal of time and space with the most serious of consequences for the tradition. This preoccupation resonates strongly with a broader concept of the overturning of time/space known throughout the Andes as *pachakutik*, a phenomenon that brings profound transformations. Normally the *pachakutik* is conceived of as a dramatic correction to a disequilibrium of order, time, and society, so perhaps what Ferrier describes corresponds more aptly to the erosion of the cosmological, ritual, social, and musical correlations within the festival prior to such a cosmic upheaval.

Although the author of *Navidad en los Andes* remains confident in the ability of Andean peoples to adapt and integrate new elements and foreign influences into their culture, he also cautions against accelerated change that precludes a space for reflection and gradual transformation that allows a healthy degree of continuity with the past. I found Ferrier's unpretentious narrative style refreshing, and his respect for the people and culture of Quercó heartening. As a cultural anthropologist doing research on ritual traditions elsewhere in the Andes, I would have liked to read more about the symbolism of the costumes and for the author to share a more in depth interpretation of the festival masks. I was also quite curious about the power dynamics, politics, and symbolism of performances inside versus outside of the Church. These two points are small remarks, however, in light of the rich cultural and musical portrayal Ferrier offers.

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CATHY RAGLAND, *Música Norteña: Mexican Migrants Creating a Nation between Nations*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 2009. 268 pp. Bibliography, musical transcriptions, black and white diagrams and photos, maps, DVD. ISBN: 1-59213-747-4.

During the past several decades, a few scholars have conducted innovative studies on various forms of music appreciated by Mexican Americans in the southwestern part of the United States. Ragland continues and expands this literature by focusing not on the rhythms loved by Mexican Americans in one part of the country but on the music sought out by Mexican immigrants—both documented and undocumented—working and residing in the United States.

In her new book, she provides an analysis of the evolution and significance of one particular style of Mexican music known as *música norteña*. This music, she notes, is based on the utilization of two traditional instruments—the button accordion and the *bajo sexto*, a 12-string guitar—and the use of the *corrido* song form. *Música norteña*, which originated along