OREMOS, OREMOS

NEW MEXICO MIDWINTER MASQUERADES

Detail of a photograph *Abuelos, Amalia, New Mexico, December 1986,* by Miguel Gandert,

By Peggy Beck

This is a revised and updated text of the original catalog for the multi-media exhibit, *Oremos, Oremos: New Mexico Midwinter Masquerades,* for which Peggy Beck was the curator. The exhibit, along with performances featuring artists, musicians, and poets associated with northern New Mexican midwinter traditions, took place at the Millicent Rogers Museum (MRM) in Taos, New Mexico, November 7, 1987 through January 31, 1988. The project, which entailed interviews, research, photography, and construction of dioramas was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts: Folk Art Division. The quotations in this book and the original catalog are direct translations of interviews conducted by Peggy Beck in Spanish and in English. Recordings of the interviews are collected in the Library of Congress. Some documents are also archived in the Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections at the University of New Mexico. A film of the abuelos in Amalia, New Mexico, is archived at the MRM. New material copyright by Peggy Beck.

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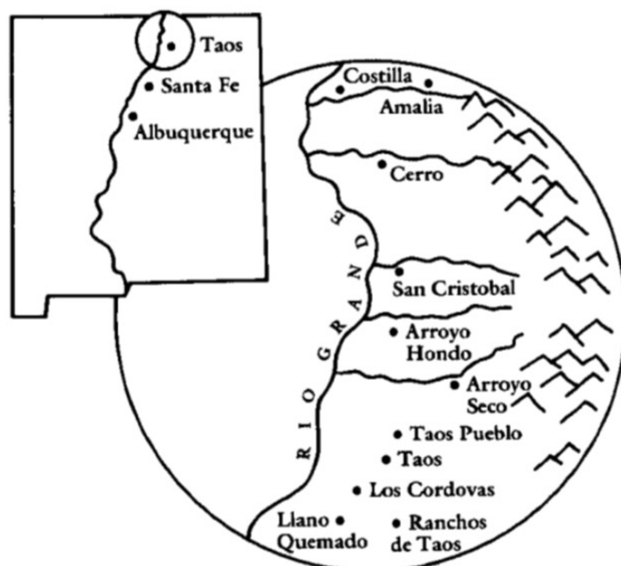
OREMOS, OREMOS: NEW MEXICO MIDWINTER MASQUERADES



Introduction

Winter solstice rituals and midwinter masquerades take place throughout the northern hemisphere. They are celebrated at that point in the year when the positions of the sun and earth create the longest night of the year, and when in the days before electricity, after preparing for long months of darkness, cold, and snow, people came together to celebrate the lengthening of the days ahead.

All midwinter masquerades feature some combination of frightening masked ogres who carry sticks or whips; bonfires and torches; dances; and groups of people going door to door chanting or singing for treats. In the Spanish villages of northern New Mexico, midwinter masquerades that took place well into the twentieth century incorporated all of these elements, borrowing elements from ancestral Spanish and Basque pre-Christmas and solstice rituals as well as from winter dances and ceremonies that Pueblo cultures in New Mexico have been performing for thousands of years.

The midwinter masquerades performed in the villages of northern New Mexico over nine nights in December were, "*La Fiesta de los Agüelos,*" (The Festival of the Abuelos);

"*La Fiesta de las Luminarias*" (The Festival of Lights and Bonfires); and the "*Oremos*," ("Treats or Tricks").[1]

The *agüelos* who appear in all of the different midwinter fiestas, are the half-beast, half-human ogres who carry whips and live in caves in the Sangre de Cristo mountains that rise above the communities nestled in the valleys of the upper Rio Grande watershed. In the old days these creatures were called agüelos in the Spanish dialect of the north, but in modern times they are commonly known as *abuelos.* The word a*buelo* in Spanish means "grandfather," but when referring to an "abuelo" in December, in anticipation of La Fiesta de los Abuelos, the word takes on a different and special meaning. Perhaps also the use of the word "agüelo," instead of abuelo, invokes its kinship with *Tsa-bai*-yu, the abuelo figure who appears for three days at Taos Pueblo during the Matachines dance, or the ogre, *Tsaveyoh* at Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, and the ogre katsinas, *Chaveyo* and *Soyoko* who are the sacred disciplinarians at Hopi Pueblo.[2]

The *Fiesta de las Luminarias* began around the 10th of December when people in the northern villages waited for the agüelos with a mixture of fear and excitement. In anticipation of the abuelos' arrival they cut pitchy-pine logs to construct *luminarias,* carefully fabricated bonfires that would light up the village plazas and the yards around houses. On the 16th of December the mysterious agüelos, attracted by the fires, came down from their caves in the mountains. Appearing in the smoke and flames they called for the children, threatening to take them away in their sacks to the mountains; they threatened everyone by cracking their huge whips called *chicotes,* ordering the adults and children to kneel and pray. There was dancing, chanting, drumming, teasing and running, and finally a spread of food and drink for everyone.

Oremos literally means, "Let us pray," from the verb, "*orar*" which means "to pray." *Rezar* is also a word for pray, but unlike rezar, oremos at Christmastime in northern New Mexico also became the word for "gifts" or "goodies." To prepare for the coming of the agüelos and the Oremos people made special edible gifts with ingredients from the harvest season which they had stored in their root cellars and preserved in many different ways—treats such as *empanaditas,* stuffed mincemeat, squash, or meat pastries; and *pasteles,* prune pies.

On Christmas Eve, the final night of La Fiesta de las Luminarias, groups of children, teenagers, and adults calling themselves "*angelitos,"* "little angels," often accompanied by the mysterious abuelos, would go from house to house to ask for "oremos". When they arrived at a house they would chant a special rhyme that demanded treats and threatened chaos if they didn't get them. In the end, ogres, whippers, dancers, and masqueraders were invited to come inside to feast from tables laden with food and drink or sent on their way with treats. Like people everywhere who celebrated the lengthening hours of daylight, northern New Mexican families “opened their doors” to the strangers, compelling the darkness to give way to light.

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[1] See the **Glossary** beginning on p. 26. The first time a word In Spanish is used it will be in italics; after that it will not be italicized.

[2] See **Origins and Connections**, p. 21

Hidden in Plain Sight: The Inquisition, The Conversos, and The Crypto Jews

In northern New Mexico there is also another theme that is played out in the midwinter abuelo masquerades, like a once-used code that is not talked about, perhaps because it is still a secret, or perhaps it has been kept secret for so long that its true meaning has been forgotten. This drama, hidden in plain sight, is the reenactment of the fear unleashed by the Spanish Inquisition, the brutal suppression and extermination of Jewish people which began in Spain in 1478 and did not officially end until 1834.

The Inquisition was a group of church and government authorities in Spain that terrorized non-Catholics, especially Jewish people and Muslims, ordering them to renounce their religion and convert to Catholicism. If they refused to convert, the inquisition expelled them from Spain or murdered them. The Jewish people who converted were called *conversos* because they converted to Catholicism in order to avoid persecution even though they secretly kept their old identity. Some of the conversos, hoping to avoid persecution and start a new life, crossed the ocean from Spain to Mexico, settling in Mexico City as well as other regions of Mexico.

During this period the conversos pretended they were Catholic but continued to secretly practice Jewish customs and religious observances. However, they never felt safe and always feared they would be discovered, a fate which would result in prison or death. This fear forced the conversos to migrate north, away from the headquarters of the Spanish inquisition in Mexico City. Following the ruthless commander, Juan de Oñate, the conversos eventually crossed into what is now New Mexico. They were part of a contingent of Spanish explorers and their soldiers who followed the Rio Grande northward into what is called the middle Rio Grande valley, where the settlement of Santa Fe became the hub of Spanish and Mexican government officials as well as officials of the Church.

During this migration that took over three centuries many Spanish settlers lived among the indigenous Pueblo people who had long inhabited the fertile lands along the Rio Grande. Over time the conversos [3] adopted various Pueblo customs, some intermarried, and they added indigenous words to the Spanish language.

The soldiers of the *conquistadores* brutalized and murdered thousands of Pueblo people during their "conquest" and colonization of the region. The bearded Franciscan priests were an important part of the colonization efforts. Enforcers of the Inquisition, the Franciscans wore long robes and were known for their harsh punishments with whips, lashing people often to death who disobeyed or refused to convert to Catholicism. The Pueblo people, like the conversos, were forced to disguise their customs or "go underground" to hide the sacred ceremonies that allowed them to thrive and were essential for their survival.

Although the Pueblo Revolt which began in August, 1680 forced many settlers to flee back to the south near the border with Mexico, twelve years later, after the "reconquest," people returned

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[3] The term "Crypto-Jew" is now used to identify New Mexicans who generations ago were *conversos.* Articles in magazines and scholarly journals began appearing in the 1990's describing "crypto" or secret Jewish populations in New Mexico. These discoveries led many northern New Mexican families to reveal their own memories and family histories that linked them to a Jewish heritage. See for example, *To the Ends of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico.* Stanley M. Hordes (NY: Columbia University Press, 2005)

from exile. Upon returning many continued further north, following the Rio Grande to the isolated mountain valleys of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado.[4]

For the Spanish settlers this was a landscape like the Extremadura region of Spain, the land many of their ancestors who had been sheep herders and farmers were forced to flee centuries before. The area where they settled had been inhabited by the Tiwa people of Taos Pueblo for hundreds of years and also frequented by people from other Pueblos as well as by Ute and Comanche traders, hunters, and raiders. But even though the new settlers faced the unknown, the most important thing was that this land was far from the church authorities in Santa Fe.

Knowing the history of the crypto-Jews who settled in the far northern New Mexican villages helps us recognize that the horrifying agüelos with their whips and their harsh commands not only share the characteristics of Pueblo and European ogres who traditionally appear around the time of the winter solstice, but they also represent the dreaded Church inquisitors and whip-wielding Franciscans who colonized New Mexico. The blizzards in these mountain valleys were fierce, the snow was waist deep, and in the early days when all travel was by foot or horse, the villages were inaccessible to the outside world. Because of this, the masquerades that might reenact harrowing events or celebrate secret Jewish customs could take place without fear that the authorities of the Catholic church in Santa Fe would see what was going on.

Rudy Mascareñas of Amalia recalled that even in his lifetime, when cars and trucks were the modes of transportation, the deep snow prevented the priests in Taos from driving to Amalia and other villages to celebrate mass for several months during the winter. He was one of many people who hinted that the absence of priests in midwinter was a factor that made the masquerades not only possible but special.

By creating masquerades with their unique dances, songs, dramas, and food out of memories and knowledge handed down through generations, the people forced to flee Spain centuries ago figured out how to chase away their fear and turn haunting images into midwinter fiestas. And although strictly Jewish customs changed or their meaning became lost over the centuries, a vibrant mix of cultural traditions combined with sacred customs from long ago created unique midwinter masquerades that everyone who shared these memories agreed were the most anticipated and cherished events of the year.

Los Agúelos

As soon as the cold north wind began to blow storm clouds over the Sangre de Cristo mountains, ogres living in caves deep in the *sierra* awoke and looked down at the villages below where smoked curled out of chimneys and villagers stacked wood near the houses. When the middle of December arrived something changed, there was an eerie feeling in the air. The children knew. The abuelos were coming!

[4] The map on page 3 shows the towns and villages where the majority of participants in the Oremos museum exhibit lived. However, midwinter masquerades took place in every village and town in northern New Mexico.

They lived in the sierra. Long before the Christmas season parents would start telling the kids, trying to scare them, that they'd better start being better children because, 'Next month the abuelos are going to come down from the mountains and if you're not a good kid, if you don't do your prayers, they're going to take you to the caves up in the mountains where they come from.' (Onofre Baros, Arroyo Seco)

Who were the abuelos? People say that they were ugly, deformed, animal-like, hairy, horned, pig-faced, painted, raggedy creatures. They didn't talk like human beings, they talked "funny" in high, otherworldly voices, their rough, short sentences squeezed between long, drawn out vowels. "Oooooo ooo," they howled.

They were very badly dressed, the worst possible. Patched and raggedy and horribly painted—black with soot. They had beards. Sometimes they wore a sheepskin. And they wore ugly old hats. (Eufelia Romero, Costilla)

And some of the hats were made out of animal skins, they might have a hat from sheepskin. And they used old clothes. Pretty much everything they had on their bodies was pretty ragged, very, very ragged. Scary, in other words. (Onofre Baros, Des Montes)

They had a lot of hair, all real ugly. They would have long beards. They looked part like an animal, scary. They would scare you very easy. They would scare anybody. Some were dressed in big, fur coats with long hair; they looked like a gorilla. Some of them would have horns like a ram. (Levi Mondragon, Los Cordovas)

You could hear the abuelos coming from a long way off because they would crack their *chicotes,* the whips that looked long and menacing to a little child.

They carried big, long whips—chicotes. They'd traquear, 'pop' them because at the tip of the chicotes they used to have a *pajuela,* soft deerskin. If you cut some of this and put it on the tip of the chicote and crack it, it would pop like a firecracker. (Levi Mondragon)

The pajuela would make the chicote sound like a rifle. That's when you'd hide. (Candelaria Torres, Costilla)

You were scared three or four days before they got there; you knew they were going to make you do something like pray or sing. They lived in the mountains. You'd figure, 'What if they take me up to the mountains, I'll never come back!' And here you are all shaking. (Mike Lucero, Amalia)

The children believed that it was true, that those abuelos came from the mountains. When we saw an abuelo for the first time we thought that he had come down from the mountains for sure. (Emestina Sanchez, Cerro)

The appearance of the abuelos was a deliciously frightening time for children. Adults used the threat of abuelos to make children behave. They would tell the children that if they were bad the abuelos would steal them, stuff them in the sack they carried over their shoulders, and take them back to their mountain caves to eat them. Parents looked forward to the abuelos because they knew that their children would be well-behaved—at least for a few days.

Our parents used to tell us that if we didn't behave the abuelos were going to show up. And sometimes, you know how children are, they were acting in a bad way so they used to 'settle' them by telling them that the abuelos were going to take them. And we used to behave. And they sure did come around at night and they'd talk in a real funny way. My grandma and grandpa would ask them, 'Where did you come from?' And they would tell them that they came from high in the mountains, from the *rincones*, the far, hidden places. (Levi Mondragon)

They would come near the house saying, '*Dónde estan los muchachitos?*' Where are the little kids? We're going to carry them to the mountains if they've been bad. *Somos agüelos de la sierra*! We are the abuelos from the mountains! And we were so scared because our parents would threaten to call the abuelos when we were bad, so that they would take us away. And that scared us because we really believed that they were abuelos from the mountains. You could see that they had big beards, lots of whiskers to protect them from the cold. So of course we really believed that they lived up there in the mountains. (Candelaria Torres)

Adults anticipated the arrival of the abuelos and the abuelas (men dressed as women) because their burlesques were the high point of the year in villages where entertainment depended on peoples' creativity, skill, and imagination.

It was very beautiful. It was like fiestas. 'It's almost time for the fiestas of the abuelitos,' they would say when it got to be that time of year. (Ernestina Sanchez)

The Luminarias

The Fiesta de los Agüelos began with the the Fiesta de las Luminarias, or the Festival of Lights. The powerful memory of lighting candles during the Jewish nights of Hanukkah, one candle on the first night of Hanukkah, two on the second, and so on for eight nights, or nine candles, resurfaced in multi-staged masquerades that combined theatre, dance, song, games, and special foods.

It was something to think about during the holidays that you were going to get prepared for. We knew it was coming and come the month of December we were ail getting ready to build the luminarias. (Cleo Rivera, Costilla)

The abuelos were attracted by the luminarias, small bonfires constructed by cross-hatching short squared-off pieces of pitchy *ocote,* ponderosa pine.

We would use a horse and cart to go get the ocote because in those days there were no four-wheel drives, no chainsaws. We would get big logs and then cut them up with a saw so that we could make the pieces for the luminarias. That ocote was dry pine, nothing but pitch. How nice the fire took off. (Rudy Mascareñas, Amalia)

Amalia is a community of several homesteads in the Rio Costilla river valley. In the old days families used to build luminarias in front of their houses, beginning with one luminaria and adding another luminaria each night of the nine nights before Christmas until there were nine luminarias burning on Christmas eve lighting up the valley and filling the starry sky with their sweet smoke. Beginning on the 16th of December bands of roving abuelos appeared each night at family homesteads, emerging out of the shadows, howling, their whips cracking.

We would go outside by the luminaria and call, 'Abuelitos, vengan pa'ca! Abuelitos come here! Ooooooooo,' sounding like the abuelos. The abuelos would suddenly come to the luminarias and they'd say—in their funny voices— ' *Rezen! Canten***! 'Pray! Sing!' They would make us kneel down and pray Our Father and Hail Mary. If they knew someone could sing they would make them sing Christmas carols or any song because they knew who could do this and who could do that. (Rudy Mascareñas)**

Little children might scream and run back in the house but for older kids the fun had just begun. Some of the more daring kids would tease the *abuelas*, singing, "Jingle Bells, abuelos smell. . . ." Then, the abuelos, feigning a frightful anger, would crack their chicotes and cry, "*Baile, Baile!"* Dance! Dance!

We would start in a line around the luminarias and they'd be popping their chicotes to see if we were doing it right and not to be bad or mischievous with them. They'd chant: '*Baile la paloma del turun tun tun!* **TUN TUN, TUN TUN TUN!' They'd pop their whips, POP POP!, 'Baile La Paloma del turun tun tun' . . and we'd be jumping around the fire. And then someone might make funny verses out of it. We were trying to make fun of the abuelos but at the same time they would whip us and that was the fun of it. (Rudy Mascareñas)**

I remember them dancing "La Paloma" by the luminaria . . . 'Baile La Paloma del turun tun tun' . .The biggest abuelo would chant and the others would dance. They'd lift one leg and then the other, marching in a circle, the big abuelo in the lead and the littler ones behind. (Candelaria Torres)

Nobody seems to know where the song “La Paloma,” ("The Dove,") comes from, but the "tun, tun, tun," was the sound of drum beats. In Costilla, five miles west of Amalia, some longer verses of “La Paloma" have been preserved. Built in a fort-type style of adobe houses around a plaza in order to protect Costilla citizens from Comanche and Ute raiders, but virtually empty since World War II, the *“plaza arriba*” (the upper plaza) of Costilla was once the home of many families. Each night beginning around the 10th of December one huge luminaria would be built in the center of the plaza and all the children would gather to meet their fate at the hands of the abuelos. Cleo Rivera remembers a scene in the 1940's:

Everyone got together and took pieces of wood from the forest and made a great big old bonfire. The bigger the better because you could see all the houses around the plaza there. All the neighborhood kids would gather around. There were a lot of kids at that time. Four or five of the biggest boys were dressed as abuelos. The biggest was the meanest and he would have a chicote. We’d go around the fire and say: 'Baile La Paloma de Juan tun tun; Saca la porra y la bailes tu!' (Dance the Paloma de Juan tun tun. Take the drumstick and you dance with it!') The “*porra*” was something like a ball wrapped in leather with a handle.[5] So you’d dance around the fire and if I happened to stop right in front of somebody then I’d give that thing to them and they’d get it and sound it like the Indians used to do. 'You, bailes la paloma now!' the abuelo would say, sounding mean.

Eufelia Romero, 75, of Costilla can still sing a verse that only she remembers:

They danced around the luminarias, large, beautiful fires. 'Baile la paloma de Juan tun tun …' they sang and they’d go dancing around the fire those nights before

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[5] *La porra* is a type of traditional Pueblo-style drum stick used for beating a stretched leather top wooden hand-held drum.

Christmas—'Baile La Paloma de Juan tun tun; *Vuelca el atole y veraste tu!'* **(Dance the paloma de Juan tun tun; Spill the hot corn meal and you'll see!')[6] There were little abuelos and the big abuelo. Oh they were bad. And if you didn't dance the Paloma they'd crack that chicote at you . . . POP! Oh it was a lot of fun.**

The community of Cerro, fifteen miles south of Costilla is named after a small, piñon covered hill or *cerro,* which rises behind the *cordillera***,** the road along which Cerro's families' homes are built. Cultivated fields and sagebrush grasslands slope down to the edge of the Rio Grande gorge a few miles to the west. There is no central plaza, the *placita* of Cerro is essentially the cordillera lined with houses. Ernestina Sanchez, who grew up along the cordillera, remembers:

We started to make luminarias the 16th with one luminaria. We would begin at one house and light them from house to house; one on the first day, two on the second day and so on until there were nine luminarias. The placita of Cerro was a cordillera and they would go all the way down one side and up the other. It looked so beautiful that last night with all the luminarias burning. And the closer the houses were the more beautiful it looked.

The women would stay at home. They would say, 'Now it's time to pray the rosary'. Outside a gang of kids would gather at the luminarias and the abuelos would arrive with their chicotes. They wouldn't let you stay by the fire, they scared everyone so that they ran away. But if they caught you they would say, 'Rezen! Pray'! with a crack of their whips—they'd change their voices so no one would know who they were—and you'd kneel down so they wouldn't hit you and you would pray. Kids didn't even care what they were praying, it was a game they played. The abuelos seemed to come from everywhere, they wanted to be mean and keep the kids running around. Then all of a sudden they would disappear. And just when you had forgotten about them, while you warmed up by the fire, they would appear again cracking their chicotes, waving their whips at the kids who would run from the fire again. Sometimes you'd see a bunch of boys kneeling, praying so the abuelos wouldn't hit them and other kids farther away watching from the shadows. They'd dart out when the abuelo's back was turned and run towards the fire. That was the fun they had. They used to tease each other. They had a lot of fun running around although the *chicotazos* **(whip lashes) burned. Then the kids would grab one of those burning**

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[6] The noted folklorist, Aurelio Espinosa wrote an article, ("Los Agüelos de Nuevo Mejico," *Boletín de la Bibloteca de Menéndez Pelayo,"* Santander, Spain, 1945) in which he related how he heard this verse in the 1930's when he was collecting folktales in the village of Peralta, south of Albuquerque. He found that people attributed the verse to an incident where someone threw *atole* (hot corn meal cereal) at an abuelo. At Hopi Pueblo in Arizona, there is a midwinter ritual skit that is performed by sacred clowns in a plaza in which ogre kachinas (masked sacred spirit figures) make menacing gestures as the clowns burn themselves with atole.

sticks from the fire and go to another house to light the luminaria there. And so they'd go along the cordillera.[7]

The Dancing Abuelos

For a week before Christmas they'd go out. It was very beautiful to hear the drum from faraway in the plaza and the people shouting, 'Here come the abuelos, here come the abuelos'! (Bemabe Pacheco, Arroyo Seco)

In the communities of Arroyo Seco and El Salto across from Taos Pueblo land, and in Los Cordovas bordering the southern edge of the Town of Taos, abuelos and abuelas accompanied by one or more drummers, danced at peoples' houses a week or nine days before Christmas. Their night visits included humorous impromptu theatrics, special foods offered by the people of the house, and playing hide and seek with supposedly naughty children.

In Arroyo Seco the abuelo and abuela brought their "children" to dance. The "children," painted black and white, were called *chufunetes,* the Spanish pronunciation of Taos Pueblo *chupuna,* "Black Eye" clowns. Preparations for the dances began early in December; a "dancing room" was swept and cleaned, special foods were prepared, and children planned their hiding strategies.

They would empty one room so that the abuelos could dance; they called it the *zaguan*, the hall, or the *sola*. They would wet their adobe floors—very few people had wooden floors—and pack it down so that it wouldn't make any dust while the dance was on. (Onofre Baros, Arroyo Seco)

Amalia Duran of Arroyo Seco who is in her 90's remembers:

They would put themselves to sweeping the floor and then they sprinkled it with water. We, my cousin Emma and me, knew then that the abuelos were coming, that they were going to come and dance that night. And my aunt said to me, 'Why are you laughing?' 'Because the abuelos are going to come and so we're going to hide', I told her. 'They're not coming', she said and she told us that she was just sprinkling water on the floor so there wouldn't be any dust. But we knew they were coming. They would come with screams, sounding their chicotes.

Every child began thinking about where they could hide. Behind the stove? Behind a door? The women cooked, the dance floor was prepared, and most of the men disappeared.

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[7] The Hanukkah *menorah* or candle holder, has nine branches. It holds eight candles for each night of the holiday, plus a 9th candle called the *shamash* or helper, which is used to light the others.

The abuelos would start coming around the houses for the *baileditas*, around the 10th of December. In the evening we waited for them, the little ones peeking out. (Maria Inez Baros, Arroyo Seco)

The people knew when the abuelos were going to come and the room was made ready. You could hear the drum getting louder as they neared the house: turun turun turun turun. (Joe D. Archuleta, Arroyo Seco/Taos)

Then someone would knock on the door and ask the owner in a high voice, 'Queria una bailedita'? Would you like a little dance?" And my grandmother would say, "Éntrense, pásense, Come in, come in." And they would come in and dance. (Maria Inez Baros)

The abuelos who appeared each night wore a deerskin leather mask painted around the eyes and mouth. They might also wear a cloth mask but they always had a big beard made out of sheepskin. On their heads they'd wear a bandanna or an old black "stetson." They wore ragged, patched pants, an old torn coat, and *tewas,* moccasins. Some abuelos wore clothes made out of *guangoche,* burlap gunny sacks, with burlap fringe on the sleeves and shirt and a braided burlap belt. The abuela wore a large *tápalo,* shawl, colorful *naguas,* skirts, and layers of *naguitas,* petticoats.

They began fifteen days before Christmas. Every night you'd hear, Tan, tan, tan from the *tombé*. "*Alla vienen los chufunetes !* Here come the chufunetes," the people inside the houses would call, because the abuelos were singing, 'Hey hey hey.' They wouldn't say anything until the door was opened, then, 'Hey hey hey', right away.

A man played the *tambor*. He would beat that hard leather drum-skin like this: tun, tun tun tun, and they would sing 'Hey ya hey ya hey ya hey ya'. The abuelo and the abuela would dance with their "family," rest for a minute, and begin another dance. The abuelo danced on one side and the abuela danced on the other with the chufunetes in the middle, and the abuela would lift her naguitas high in the air and twirl around while they beat the drum. 'Hey ya hey ya hey ya', they'd sing while the chufunetes with their painted, striped faces jumped and danced. The little bells that they were wearing would ring—*toque y toca* the bells sounded, and how they danced! (Casimira Madrid, Arroyo Seco)

Only the adults knew that the chufunetes were younger boys belonging to members of the abuelo's and the abuela's real families. Children however, believed that if they did not know their prayers or teased the abuelos past their limit they would be "kidnapped" and made to dance like those poor boys with their bare legs and feathers.

A mother would say to her children, "Look at those little boys. Because they were bad and misbehaved they were taken and made to dance. And that's what they'll do to you too." But the abuela she was like a peacock, all made up with her many-

colored naguas. She was covered with a tápalo and had many naguitas pleated at the waist and wide at the bottom. Even though she was a man you could tell she was a woman with her long braids, little glasses, and so made up with rosy cheeks and a very white face. The abuelos would talk and say things to make the people laugh but the abuela wasn't supposed to laugh, she was very formal. To be an abuela you had to have somebody with a bit more talent; she was supposed to be very naughty. Not everyone wanted to be the abuela. It was rare to find someone who had the desire to be an abuela. There were only certain people who would take these roles. (Casimira Madrid) [8]

Sometimes people would try to guess who the abuelos were by looking at their shoes or their hands. Today people say they still don't know who some of the abuelos were. For the children who were hiding and peeking out at the dancing abuelos, the worst was yet to come.

When they finished dancing the abuelos called all the people in the house and asked them if they knew how to pray, threatening with their chicotes. They would investigate, find out who could pray, and the little ones would cry. 'Bring the kids here!' they would order the parents in their funny voices. 'Rezenl Pray!' they commanded the children. Poor things. (Casimira Madrid)

They danced for a while and then one of them said, 'You! Let's see if you've been bad . . . Ooooooooo' I was hiding in the corner and I looked at them with pretty big eyes. Like a clown the abuelos entertained people, but they scared you. (Joe Archuleta)

Amalia Duran vividly remembers one night before Christmas:

They danced in that kitchen that my aunt had swept and there was a bed there. So when they came in me and my cousin Emma hid under it. The abuelos came close but we were well hidden under the bed. 'Don't be scared!' I whispered to my cousin. Then the abuelos called, 'Donde está la muchachita? Where is the little girl?' So my aunt said to them, 'I guess they're not here,' adding, 'THEY ARE NOT UNDER THE BED.' Well, then of course they knew we were there. They began to peek down and they stuck their heads in. They pulled us out from under the bed and made us pray. We knelt down and we were crying but we prayed anyway; if we hadn't they would have whipped us.

After the abuelo and abuela and the chufunetes had danced two or three dances the people of the house threw pennies and nickels at the chufunetes and gave *dos reales,* a quarter, to the abuelo. Then they filled a big sack the abuela was carrying with empanaditas, bizcochitos, and pasteles.

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[8] An abuela is portrayed in the painting on the front cover.

The people of the house had prepared empanaditas de carne or calabaza and gave the dancers sweets and piñon nuts. When they were finished dancing they would go to the place where they had gathered at the beginning and divide things up. (Bernabe Pacheco)

In Los Cordovas a tradition of dancing Comanche dances has been passed from one generation to another since the time of the Comanche/Spanish wars in the 1700's. Comanche dancing on New Year's Day and appearances by abuelos before Christmas have endured up to the present, preserved by a handful of artist practitioners. Levi Mondragon, 52, who is a Comanche singer and maker of hand-painted leather-topped drums that are played by the dancing abuelos and the comanches, relates memories from when he was little.

The abuelos used to go from house to house and dance before Christmas. 1 remember seeing about twenty abuelos. It was real nice. They used to dance in all the houses; they danced the Comanche songs. And one of the big abuelos would carry a big sack with him. He looked like a giant. He carried a big sack and he danced and had a big whip.

There was an abuela with long hair like a lady but she looked real old. Her face were formed in a lady's face and she had a long nose. She had a mask out of sheepskin with some red material sewn like cheeks on it, and a big mouth painted with lipstick. She had big petticoats and pleated skirts. She'd wear an old shawl and stuff a pillow or something in front.

The other abuelos would leave the man and wife abuelo and abuela by themselves. The drummers would play for them and let them dance and, oh, he wouldn't turn her loose! And the other abuelos would try to grab her and he would swing her away from them and keep dancing. There were some abuelos who were real comical—they really had the talent to play the lady's part. They leave big memories.

Drawing by Levi Mondragon

The cover painting for this book by Frederico Vigil, depicts Cerro, New Mexico the way Ernestina Sanchez remembers the last night of the Fiesta de las Luminarias when all the people who lived along the cordilliera lit their ninth luminaria.

After eight nights of luminarias it was Christmas eve. It was then that they made chufunetes. They painted the chufunete's face black, so black that only his eyes and teeth were shining white in that black face. The chufunetes wore their jackets inside out too so you couldn't tell who they were, and they wore their cachuchas with the flaps down.

After they had gotten dressed they began at the first house where the people had lit nine luminarias. The people could hear the racket they made and the neighbors shouting, "Here come the chufunetes!" so they would know to light the luminarias.

The abuela, the abuelo, and the chufunetes arrived at the house making a lot of noise. The abuela in her squeaky voice knocked on the door and asked, 'Here I come bringing my children. *Me permite que mis hijitos bailen aqui?* **''Would you permit my children to dance here?' And the person inside answered, '***Pues, Porqué no***!' 'Well, why not!' and opened the door, and they all came in with people following along from other houses.**

When they got in the house the abuela cried, '*Bailen mis hijitos, bailen!***' 'Dance my children, dance!' The abuelo and others started to beat on pails and cans and the chufunetes danced. They made a circle in the room for the chufunetes to dance in, and they sang, 'Hey hey hey hey.' They hit their pails and sometimes they brought sheep bells that made a lot of noise. The chufunetes wore little bells. They danced and made the people laugh in the house.**

The Oremos

In the northern villages of New Mexico Christmas cvc was celebrated as the culmination of La Fiesta de las Luminarias—the ninth and final night of the drums, the dancing, the whip-carrying agüelos, chufunetes, and outdoor merrymaking. In Amalia, as well other communities throughout northern New Mexico, Christmas eve was also the night that masked young people, and in some cases, abuelos, roamed the towns and countryside to ask for *oremos.*

Drawing by Frederico Vigil

Most people who were teenagers in northern New Mexico in the 1950's or before know about the Oremos. The fun of the Oremos for older kids and young teenagers was collecting what people refer to as "goodies." And sometimes on this night kids were initiated by the abuelos, which meant that for the first time they would wear homemade masks and costumes in the style of los abuelos.

Christmas eve was the big night for abuelos and it was also the night that the older ones would go to the houses to *pedir oremos.*[9] Sometimes we went out to hear the oremos coming. You could hear it, it sounded so pretty echoing from over on the other side of the river, "Oremos oremos . . you'd hear them coming closer. We were so excited when we heard them. (Candelaria Torres)

Abuelos, as we have seen, appeared in their own fiesta masquerades. The Oremos was a separate fiesta. But in Amalia the Oremos and abuelos have always been combined as far back as people remember.

On Christmas eve all the older kids from this side of the valley would get together and decide who the abuelos were going to be. The *otra banda,* another bunch was on the other side of the valley. As soon as it got dark we would start the oremos. (Rudy Mascareñas, Amalia)

Older children, carrying a 5 or 10 pound lard pail for pies and empanaditas, and a 25 pound flour or sugar sack for candy and nuts, would join the group. We would start at a house and every house we'd pick up somebody to go with us. We'd travel miles—from one end of the valley to the other—on foot. And everywhere we went they had a luminaria, and if they didn't have one we'd ignore that house. (Mike Lucero, Amalia)

When Oremos groups came to a house they would stand outside the door and chant the magic words:

Oremos, oremos, angelitos semos,
Del cielo venemos, á pedir oremos
Y si no nos dan oremos
Puertas y ventanas quebraremos!

We pray, we pray, we are little angels
From heaven we've come to ask for gifts
And if you don't give us gifts
We'll break your doors and windows!

[9] Pedir oremos means "to ask for treats."

This version of the oremos verse is the one most people in northern New Mexico remember chanting. However, there are different versions, which suggests that the verse may have been part of a longer song or recitation. Narcisso Arellano, 93, of Arroyo Hondo remembers when the word for an oremos gift was *aguinaldo*, a word few people in northern New Mexico recognize today. [10] The verse that Señor Arellano would chant with his friends sends an ambiguous message to the householders. He explains,

On Christmas eve groups of boys would go from house to house asking for aguinaldos and oremos. They would come to a house and sing outside the door,

Á la nacida del niño, á los señores caseros
Aguinaldos nos darán, si fuera su cariño.
Oremos; oremos, del cielo venemos
A pedir oremos;
Y si no nos dan, los retiraremos!'

At the birth of the baby Jesus, to the people of this house
You will give us gifts, if this be your wish.
We pray, we pray, from heaven we come
To ask for gifts
And if you won't give them to us, we will take them away!

Pilar Trujillo, 90, from El Valle in the mountains southeast of Taos, remembers the masqueraders singing a verse with a similar mixed-message:

Oremos oremos, angelitos semos,
Del cielo venemos, a pedir oremos.
Dénos si nos han de dar,
y si no, puertas y ventanas lo pagarán!

We pray we pray, we are little angels;
From heaven we come, to ask for gifts.
Give if you will give,
And if not, your doors and windows will pay for it!

But Rudy Mascarenas explains that threats were not the objective, treats were. Oranges, which were rare in the old days, were a special surprise.

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[10] In Central and South America, an aguinaldo is a New Year's gift or a bonus a person gets at work; and In Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, aguinaldos are Christmas songs that are sung by groups serenading from house to house.

We'd sing the oremos a couple of times, then the people of the house would open the door and we'd go in. The first thing the abuelos would make us kids do is kneel down and pray and sing Christmas carols. Then we'd dance the "Paloma." The abuelo and the abuela took the people of the house and danced with them too. They could be really scandalous even though the abuela was supposed to be a respectable lady. This was the tradition, to laugh at the adults and to have fun in that house. The abuela and the abuelo had to be pretty daring to dress like that and the people would have lots of fun with them. We'd spend about fifteen minutes in each house. Then the people would fill our sacks with whatever they had—oranges, apples, sweets, pies, empanaditas, bizcochitos, you name it.

Rudy's sister, Candelaria Torres, tells about what happened to Rudy and their sister Dolores:

After the abuelos danced we had to do what they said. Once they told my little brother and sister to kneel down and sing a song. My brother turned to my sister and whispered, "You begin!" "No YOU!" she answered. Back and forth they whispered, so scared that the abuelos were going to take them away to die in the mountains if they didn't sing well. So my brother began a song, 'Al Dolorido', in a little voice and my sister joined him. But instead of 'dolorido' he would say, "lololilo," and by the time the song was finished the abuelos were trying hard not to laugh. My brother and sister were very brave for singing.

And who would envy Pilar Trujillo of El Valle:

My family had a big room with a fireplace ablaze with burning wood where they awaited the abuelos. There was a bed in that room. It was in that bed that we, my little brother, my cousin, and me, decided to hide from the abuelos. We got in and pulled the covers over us. Well, the grown-ups sat right down there, with us under those covers. And the abuelos came and danced, jumping and hopping and cracking their chicotes. They joked around and had a good time and there we were all shriveled up under the bedcovers. I don't know what those abuelos were doing except that I could hear them laughing a lot and calling, "Ooooooooo" the way they do. But our parents didn't try to help the abuelos find us, they just laughed and talked. There they were sitting on us and having a good time. And they must have had fun and eaten a lot because when the abuelos left we were just about drowned. When I got out from under there my long hair was wet from sweating.

Before leaving a house the *abuelos* usually hunted down the children who had hidden. For some children the threat of being taken away in a sack became a reality—the abuelos *did* take them away—but not in a sack—they took kids to initiate them into their world which, it turned out, was not so bad after all.

We were small, we were scared, and we hid. Sometimes you'd find a good hiding place and they wouldn't find you until your dad pointed to it. And then, being a bad kid for hiding and if you were old enough, they'd take you with them. This time you'd really be scared—going out in the open with them. Because you didn't know who they were; that was the whole idea.

There was always four. They'd have two in the front and two in the back and the kids in between. Everywhere you went they gave you goodies so that gave you a little more spirit to go on. We kids carried a five gallon lard bucket for pies and a regular gunny sack for candy.

After they went house to house they'd bring us all back to a place where they made a big bonfire. There they'd share all the goodies with the kids. And after they were done they would take off their masks. Wow! I couldn't believe it was them! (Mike Lucero)

In Costilla, another kind of initiation into the Oremos masquerades took place. Cleo Rivera explains:

The night that we went out for the Oremos everyone would have their faces painted. The abuelos were the ones that did everything with the soot and the lipstick—we were just their possessions at that time, our faces were up to them. We would meet at the luminarias and they would paint our faces. The big abuelo, I don't know who he was, would say, 'OK, you are going to carry the bag tonight for the goodies, and you're going to be responsible for the money,' and they'd show us. The younger ones had to get prepared for the following year to do the same thing. They knew that their time was coming the following year. It was a task they would have to fulfill as they were growing up.

The Fading of Midwinter Masquerades

Midwinter masquerades in Northern New Mexico started disappearing in the early part of the 20th century. In the 1920's people began leaving their lands because of a combination of drought and deterioration or loss of grazing lands. The "old ways," typified by many generations living together in villages where an agricultural/pastoral economy defined the parameters of life, was replaced by the "Anglo" economic system in which cash was required instead of bartering and trading for goods and services. This caused a stream of emigration, especially by men, to places where they could get jobs. When young men from New Mexican villages were drafted as soldiers in World War II that stream became a river.

Folk dramas and masquerades require people to act in them and an audience to respond and participate. When people can't make a living and leave, or major events cause major changes to families and communities, folk dramas disappear. Cleo Rivera from Costilla, sadly explains:

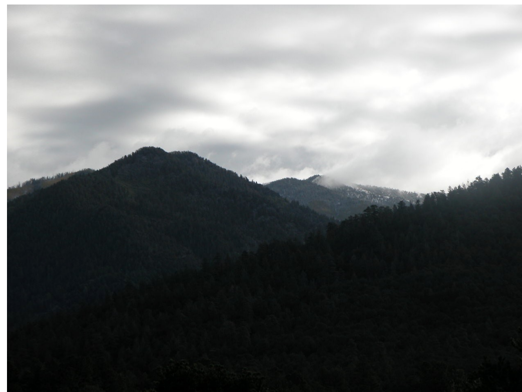
A lot of people moved away and there were not as many kids around to get the Luminarias and Oremos going. There's only three families living where we used to

light our luminarias. People started coming back when the sawmill started, then it went off again and everybody starts leaving again. People started coming back because of the Moly mine, a lot of them were getting jobs there. But they shut down too, so there it goes. And there's nothing to look forward to over here. (Cleo Rivera, Costilla)

As the "old ways," have lost their meaning or disappeared, new ways have taken their place. The Oremos changed with anglo influences and the commercialization of Christmas; instead of asking for "oremos" when they went house to house, children asked for "*Mis Chrismis,*" ("My Christmas"). More recently Halloween has absorbed the Fiestas de los Abuelos and the Oremos by combining masks, costumes, and going house to house for treats.

These days an abuelo or two might be seen during *Las Posadas,* a folk drama with roots in medieval Europe which the Franciscan friars brought to the Rio Grande valleys in the 1500's and used as a way to illustrate Christianity to the indigenous population to help convert them. In some communities Las Posadas is performed nine nights before Christmas when the abuelo masquerades used to take place. In Los Cordovas, for example, abuelos accompany Las Posada processions. This custom has replaced the tradition of abuelos dancing around luminarias or going from house to house before Christmas. "There's no respect anymore," a lot of older people say. "Parents would probably sue you if you dragged a kid from under a bed," says a former abuelo. During a Las Posadas procession in the late 1980's an abuelo lamented, "I can't crack my chicote, they'd beat me up. Three teenage girls jumped an abuelo the other night and tried to pull off his mask!"

Changing demographics, multi media, and virtual realities have changed peoples' habits and expectations. Still, some people say that they have lost something "beautiful"—the bonfires, the scary anticipation, the freedom of walking at night, the food and music, and the total collaboration that midwinter masquerades required. Those eight or nine nights before Christmas were a source of wonder and enchantment for young and old alike. Amalia Duran of Arroyo Seco, whose father, Pablo Duran, played the drum for the dancing abuelo and abuela*,* describes the feeling of those midwinter nights. Smiling and shaking her head with the memories she says, "I don't know, it was a mystery. Like the mystery of God it was strange."



Origins and Connections

Stop crying! Go to sleep, my little boy..
That Savayo will take you if you cry.
Over there he will eat you, if you do not stop crying
That Savayo in his bag he will put you . . .
That Savayo whose teeth we all fear . . .
Over there now, on the crest of the mountains,
Those Savayo walk and they hear every sound.
(Lullaby, Okay Owingeh Pueblo)[11]

Midwinter masquerades in northern New Mexico contain elements from both Spanish and indigenous Pueblo traditions. Both the crypto-Jews and the pueblo people were persecuted by the church authorities for practicing their spiritual customs and decades of hiding and disguising sacred practices to avoid persecution created new variations within the masquerades of both groups.

For instance, the wild, cave-dwelling abuelo from northern New Mexico has counterparts among the Rio Grande (Eastern) Pueblos and Zuni and Hopi (Western) pueblos. At Okay Owingeh pueblo (called San Juan by the early colonizers) north of Española who are Tewa, the abuelo is called *Tsaveyoh (*Savayo is another way early anglo ethnographers spelled the name). The *Tsaveyoh* are the "masked supernatural whippers" impersonated during the Christmastime Turtle Dance and are said to live in caves and labyrinths in the mountains and hills around Okay Owingeh. People at Okay Owingeh were said to keep pieces of fossilized bone in their houses, bones of the original *Tsaveyoh,* the earliest inhabitants of the Tewa world.

Two days before the Turtle Dance two *Tsaveyoh* appear just before sundown to make sure the plazas of the village are swept clean. After the Turtle Dance the *Tsaveyoh* go from house to house to say farewell for another year promising to return and punish children if they misbehave. As a parting gift to the *Tsaveyoh* the women of each household place loaves of bread and sweet cakes in a sack the Tsaveyoh carry.[12]

At Hopi Pueblo, *katsinas* [13] appear from December through July in ceremonies and dances. In early February during the Bean Dance, *Tsaveyo* and *Soyoko* katsinas appear in the plaza at Old Oraibi (First Mesa). Oraibi is the village to which Tewa people from Okay Owingeh pueblo fled during the Spanish conquest in the 1500's. A century later, on the first day of the three-day

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[11] From *Songs of the Tewa*, tr. by Herbert Joseph Spinden, 1933. Pt. 1. XXI, "Lullaby of Cannibal Giants," p. 82.

[12] *The Tewa World,* Alfonso Ortiz, University of Chicago Press, 1969.

[13] Hopi Katsinas (Katsina is the Hopi word for kachina) who come down from the mountains near Flagstaff, Arizona to the Hopi mesas, represent ancestors, forces of nature, concepts of balance and harmony, and are messengers between humans' world and the worlds of other beings. They are impersonated by Hopi men wearing masks and costumes during ceremonial dances and dramas. Carvings made out of cottonwood of all the various katsinas were traditionally given to Hopi children as educational figures and are now familiar items in museums and shops in the Southwest.

successful Pueblo Revolt in 1680, the *Tsaveyo* led the Hopi warriors at Oraibi when they rebelled, killing the Franciscan priest and destroying the church that had been built on the mesa.

The *Tsaveyo* katsinas are known as the "whipper katsinas" Besides carrying a whip these grotesquely masked ogre katsinas might also carry knives, bows and arrows, and hand saws which they bang against the adobe walls to create a strange vibrational noise. Some of the katsinas also carry a sack or basket. The *Soyoko* katsina impersonates an old woman who calls out for "bad" children in an unnaturally high voice, like the agüelos who call out, "*donde estan los muchachitos?"* [14]

During the Bean Dance which lasts nine days, the katsinas roam the plaza from house to house looking for children who have been misbehaving, threatening to carry them off in their sacks and eat them unless they are given food. The children hide inside their adobe homes, but their mothers and aunties crack open the doors and plead with the *Tsaveyo* not to take their well-behaved "straight-A" children. This negotiation goes on for awhile, and only when the mothers, grandmothers, and aunts give pies and other food to the katsinas do they leave.

At Taos Pueblo, as in most of the Rio Grande Pueblos, the Matachines dance, a borrowed dance from the Spanish, is sometimes performed over three days beginning on Christmas Eve. The abuelo who appears in the Matachines dance is referred to as the *Tsa-bai-yu* in the Tiwa language, with different suffixes used to mean male or female. The Tiwa words for grandmother and grandfather are different words.[15]

In the Matachines dance there is always a male abuelo and female abuela accompanying the lines of dancers. There is also a person dressed as a *toro,* (bull). The abuelo in the Matachines dance is not a wild, monstrous creature with fur and horns, nor does he wear a home-made mask of elaborate materials with grotesque features. Instead, the matachines abuelo might wear an old coat and hat and a store-bought mask of an old man or old woman. Sometimes the whip-carrying abuelo wears an army uniform. The abuelo and the abuela clown around with each other; the abuelo may act like a Spanish matador in a bullfight and spar with the toro. The abuelo and abuela also straighten out the ribbons on the dancers' head-dresses if they get tangled. Compared to the agüelos of the northern mountain valleys or the Hopi *Tsaveyo* katsinas, the Matachines abuelo figures are not threatening but are mostly a humorous sideshow to the somber, orderly dance.

In another example of cultural mixing, a ritual which resembles the luminarias and the agüelos, was noted at Isleta at the end of the 1800's by the anthropologist, Elsie Clews Parsons.[16] She writes that "in the early spring there is a dance in which “grandfather” clowns play a prominent role. They call out to the women to sweep their yards. They make young men go and get spruce wood and return by fording the river. On the other side is a fire around which the spruce gatherers dance and sing teasing songs. Then they come into the plaza and climb onto the

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[14] See page 8.

[15] There are a number of books available with photos of various New Mexico Matachines dances, as well as articles analyzing and speculating on the origins and meaning of the dance.

[16] *Pueblo Indian Religion, Vols. I and II.* Elsie Clews Parsons. Despite her mixed reputation as an ethnographer, Parsons collected some valuable material that has been collaborated by other people.

roofs where they dress up as an old “Mexican” or “Indian” and carry a bag. They might surround an Anglo or Hispanic visitor and hold him “captive” until he has danced for them. They will also throw absent members into the river."

The Yaqui people live primarily in Sonora, Mexico, although there are also Yaqui in Tucson, Arizona, and in Sinaloa, Mexico. Their settlements are on the route that the conversos traveled on their journey north. The Yaqui *Chapaiyeka* are bearded clown figures who wear helmet type masks which are covered with hair or from which horns stick out. They carry a painted wooden lance or sword and sometimes wooden dolls or stuffed animals and visit villages as beggars, enforcing regulations, punishing offenders, and doing everything backwards.

Basque and Spanish traditions have contributed ingredients to the midwinter masquerades of northern New Mexico too. In the Basque region a man and a woman, *Rasa Juan* and *Rasa André* live in cave and come down from the mountains to threaten villagers. The Basque also have a figure called the *Olentzaro*, which means “Christmas Eve,” who appears the night before Christmas, sometimes in human form, sometimes as a stuffed dummy. He is dressed in old clothes, smokes a pipe, and carries a cane. He is said to live in the mountains where he makes charcoal. *Olentzaro* comes down from his mountain home on Christmas eve to houses where specially gathered logs burn in order to accompany young men and women as they go from house to house to ask for “treats.” One of the verses the group sings outside the houses which translates as, “If you are going to give, give; if not say so," recalls Pilar Trujillo’s version of the Oremos.[17] After the group chants this line additional lines of insult arc added to complete the verse.

In the mountainous region of northern Spain called the Cantabria, folklore tells of a figure called the *Ojancana* who lives in a cave in the mountains and eats children. Also in the Cantabria region two different figures appear in midwinter masquerades: the *Zarramacos* and the *Viejanera* (Old Woman) and her “spouse,” the *Viejanero* (Old Man). The *Zarramacos* dance in groups throughout the villages wearing conical hats, sheep bells and a fur pelt around their torsos. The shabbily-dressed *Viejaneras* transport their “spouses,” the *Viejaneros* dressed in patches and tatters, on their backs. They visit each house carrying brooms and bells, where they dance and receive gifts of food.

New Mexico midwinter masquerades are unique because they are the result of weaving together musical, dramatic, and spiritual threads from many cultures over many centuries. What New Mexican midwinter masquerades have in common with other cultures' is their celebration of the turning of the year. The “old being” characters like the Abuelo and abuela are appropriate figures for midwinter, when the turning of the earth and the changing of the light vividly remind us that the cycles of the seasons mirror life from birth to death. In English the word “World” comes from the Germanic words, “Wer” (being) and “ald” (old). The “old being” abuelo portrays the world in all its guises—a masquerading world of hopes and fears, a sack of oremos, and a dance of luminous dreams. When the “old beings” dance the world makes another revolution through the seasons of life.

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[17] See page 18.

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GLOSSARY

Abuela 1) Female counterpart of the abuelo, usually a man dressed up as a woman for the midwinter masquerade dances. 2) Grandmother.

Abuelo 1) Bogeyman, ogre, half-animal, clownish masked figure who appears around midwinter. 2) Grandfather.

Abuelitos "Little abuelos." Used as a term of endearment when referring to abuelos.

Agüela, Agüelo, Northern New Mexican dialect pronunciation of abuelo and abuela. It was perhaps also originally used to differentiate the midwinter ogre from the words for grandmother and grandfather.

Agüelitos Little agüelos.

Aguinaldo An old word for an oremos gift but now forgotten. It is still used in Latin and South America to mean a gift or bonus given to someone around Christmas or New Years.

Atole Corn meal cereal.

Baile Dance.

Bailedita A "little dance."

Bizcochitos A cookie of northern New Mexico made especially around Christmas. Everyone has their own recipe, but basically bizcochitos are made of *harina* (flour), *piloncillo* (brown sugar), anis seed, *canela* (cinnamon), and *manteca* (lard) or *mantequilla* (butter).

Buñuelo Fritter.

Cachucha A wool baseball-type cap with ear flaps that boys wore in the winter and which the chufunetes wore when they danced in Cerro on the final night of the luminarias.

Calabaza Winter squash, pumpkin.

Chicote The whip made of a sturdy stick with a long piece of raw-hide tied on it that is used by abuelos to threaten people and made to "pop" in the air like a firecracker. To "*dar chicotazos*" means to give whip lashes. The origin of the

word chicote is not agreed upon; some say it is word in the Purépecha language from an area in Mexico which includes Michoacan.

Chufunetes Boys who danced with the abuelos and abuelas. In Cerro they were disguised with charcoal around their eyes or their whole face; they wore a *cachucha* on their head and a jacket worn inside-out. In El Salto and Arroyo Seco they were painted with black and white stripes on their bodies and had feathers on their heads. They wore bells on their legs. *Chufunete* is the Spanish pronunciation of *chupuna*, the "black eye" clown at Taos Pueblo who is painted with black and white stripes. Other pueblos in New Mexico and Arizona also have black and white clowns who appear during some dances and feast days.

Cordillera A village like the one in Cerro, New Mexico, where houses are built along both sides of a road rather than around a common plaza.

Dos Reales A quarter.

Empanaditas Fried, stuffed turnovers made either with *carne*, meat, or with *calabaza,* pumpkin or squash.

Éntrense Enter. Come in.

Guangoche Burlap, gunny sack material.

Juan John

Luminaria A small bonfire made by placing pieces of *ocote* (pitchy pine) in a square open cross-hatched pattern.

Máscara Mask.

Monte Mountain; variation of the word, *montaña.*

Nagua Skirt. **Naguitas**, Petticoats.

Noche Buena Christmas Eve

Ocote Ponderosa pine; pitchy, pitch pine.

Ogre Monster; human-eating creature; cruel and scary giant.

Oremos (Noun) A gift of food or "goodies." (Verb) "Let us pray," from the verb *orar*, to pray.

Rincon In the case of abuelos, *rincon* does not mean a corner, but rather a mysterious region or tucked-away place. **Rincones** "The far hidden places."

Pajuela A piece of soft deerskin tied on to the tip of a rawhide *chicote* to make it "pop."

Pásense Come in. **(**Pass yourself in).

Piñon A drought-tolerant, slow-growing conifer that grows in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. Every few years, if there has been precipitation, the trees produce cones bursting with rich nuts that are prized by people, birds, and bears. It has thick sap that coagulates on openings in the bark that is used for incense and in healing salves. Its dense wood is prized for its long-lasting fire and sweet smelling smoke.

Porra A piece of wood with a rounded end covered with animal hide used to beat a small *tambór* or *tombé.*

La Sierra The mountains

Tambór, Tombé A small drum made of hollowed-out soft wood covered with hide, like those used at Pueblo dances. Some drum-makers and leaders of abuelo groups like Levi Mondragon of Las Cordovas, paint pictures and designs on the drum skin. The front cover shows an abuelo beating a tambór with his *porra*.

Tápalo Shawl

Tewas The word people in northern New Mexico use for hand-made moccasins of deer hide. Perhaps the moccasins were given that name because the Spanish settlers learned how to make them from people living in the Pueblos of the Rio Grande valley where the Tewa language is spoken, including Nambe, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara, and Tesuque Pueblos.

Traquear Crack (a whip)

Sola A room for dancing. **(**See **Zaguan)**

Zaguán: Hall, Room in a house cleared and swept for the agüelos to dance.