

K'oa jotjin ma taón jmeli 'an k'oechitje, án
How little money do you want, I will pay, I

Tjen kaona chojta nda'ñan
I am coming with capable people

Tjen kaona án xi kjoa'axin
I am coming with the person who will unveil (clear) it

Jñanga tjina ta'nio'oa án
Where I am chained

Aní k'oasin jnó tjita nai'ñan
Why do you keep me in chains?

Tonga nda'i jñan
But now I ...

Koena kjoa'xoe, kjoania jña, ti kao kjoachan kjoa'ti, tso
You will show reverence and humility to me, let the anger go

Kao kjoanda, tso
With goodwill, says

Kjoaxoe fannia, tso
With reverence and submission, says

án kotsen són, kotsen'tañan so'nde xokji
I look carefully at this world

Tso xi tsaka tio'konni chjota chingana
So it says, when our ancestors kept the vigil

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Transcription and translation by Alessia Frassani and Santiago
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Baldomero's song is unique in that it is not a night chant but rather a recollection of what his grandparents used to sing during the ceremonies. Baldomero himself has never taken mushrooms, which is not uncommon in the Mazateca despite their widespread consumption. Some people, including Baldomero, have never partaken in veladas, explaining that they have not received a calling to do so. Thus, the chant should be analyzed alongside the songs that Baldomero composes for the Day of the Dead as a tribute to the ancestors. At the same time, it clearly belongs and relates to the tradition of night chants, as several features indicate. In a manner akin to what was discussed before, the grandparents, who are the guardians of the world of the dead, and the singer, Baldomero himself, sometimes exchange roles. It is often unclear who is speaking, although it is explicitly stated at the beginning that "gold" (*el oro*) is speaking. Baldomero explained that gold is the same as cacao beans, one of the most common offerings used to communicate with the dead and the gods. Thus, in the chant, the gold-cacao is an animate intermediary that can speak and carry a message, but it is the chant itself

that brings the ancestors' message from the world of the dead to that of the living. As noted in the case of Marina, the often impersonal "says" (tso in Mazatec) conveys the idea of a message that stands on its own and depersonalized from whoever created or sent it in the first place.

However, Baldomero's night chant differs from previously presented ones in that there is no claim of supernatural embodiment. While the speaker claims at some point to be able to thunder and rumble—thus equating himself to a storm, as is often the case with María Sabina—Baldomero does not mention any animal, natural phenomenon, or god. The singer becomes angry and at times confrontational, but the chant is clearly a quest—a persistent search for someone or something that is hidden. What is out of reach and invisible, purposefully covered, sequestered, or tied in chains, is unclear, but it is explicitly stated at some point that this is indeed the *senixin*, a word composed of the term *sen* that can mean "image," such as one's double, and *nixin* (day). Alan Suárez Ortiz suggested to me in a personal communication (2022) that *senixin* corresponds to the Nahuatl word *tonalli*, which refers to both the day (hence tonalpohualli, the calendar, as the "count of days") and the character of a person (the "spirit" closely related to the day of birth; Martínez González 2006). In this light, it becomes clearer that in the chant it sometimes appears as if the speaker is the one sequestered and hidden and other times it seems that something is hidden, sequestered, and looked for. I'sen also refers to a place of clarity and knowledge, as in the expression ndosen seen in Section 1.1, and wisdom is thus equated with self-knowledge. A longing for clarity and the relentless pursuit of enlightenment and knowledge on one's destiny becomes the central issue in the following chant.

2.2.3. Leonardo Morales

Santiago Cortés Martínez and I participated in a ceremony with Leonardo Morales on July 29, 2014 in the locality of Barrio Mixteco in Huautla. The ceremony lasted around five hours and Leonardo not only prayed and sang several times but also whistled and spoke a non-existent language (glossolalia). Whistle speech is a well-known characteristic of Mazatec language, even in everyday use (Cowan 1948), and glossolalia has been recorded in María Sabina's chants (Wasson et al. 1974, XI–XII). In the case of Leonardo's, I had the impression that he was speaking Italian, given that the ceremony was directed at me and Italian is my native language.

Ngo'la'ni, koin ... koin'chaa
First, I will talk

K'ianga'ma nga'tjin'naa canto
It can be done, when we have some canto

K'ianga li'saa joxo'sin nga'tso'ba án
It is when ... this is how I am going about

Ali'me xi'tjinaa nga'tso'ba
I have no problem while I am going

To jngo sa'tse canto, nga'ma'na, nga'ba'jme
It is only a chant, because I can go

To'sa to jngo
It is only one

Un perdón de Dios, un perdón de Dios
God's blessing, God's blessing

Perdón del Cielo y perdón de aquí
Heaven's blessing and earthly blessing

Como así se comunica que ...
As it is communicated ...

Está dando de todo nuestro Señor
Our Lord is giving us everything

Da gracias a Dios Padre Todopoderoso
Thanks to our Lord, almighty

No más tengo un canto
I only have a song

Jí ni'jñe, nga jí ni'jñe, nga jngo kjoanda xi'tsi
You, you are you, your blessing

Nga jí, jí, jíi, nga jí, jí, jíi, nga'i nga'jo'nga'sin tsó'ba nda'i
Because you are you, the reason why I am going around now

Nga jí bix'kiee, nga jí *santa*, nga, nga jí, nga jí, ngo kao jíni,
kao jí nga nda'i
Because you read, you are saintly, you are unique, with you
in this moment

Jí bix'kiee, nga jí *santa*, j'e ... chakaonai'ña, nga i'tso'ba, nga
i'kjoe'e
You read, you are saintly, but talk to me, because I am
wandering around here, I arrived here

Nga ngo kjoanda, ngo kjoanda, ngo kjoanda sije'lee nda'i
A blessing, a blessing, a blessing is what I am asking for at
this moment

Ti'se'kao'na'iña, ti'se'kao'na'i jí
Help me, help me

Nga jí mamá, nga jí nga nda'i
Because you are the mother, because you are you in this moment

To jngo nga jí, to jngo nga jí, to jngo ni'nda'i
You are the only one, the only one, the only one in this moment

To jngo nga'jaoo, nga i'tso'ba, nga i'jo'nga, ngo kjoanda xi'tsi
It is only a hole, because I am wandering around here, because
here is your blessing

Ngo kjoanda, nga kao nga jí nga kao josin tso'ba
A blessing, I am truly going around

I'so'nde xo'chón, i'so'nde xo'chón
On this world, on this world

Jíni nda'i, ngojí ni nda'i, nga jngo kjoanda
You are, you are now a blessing

Jíni, jí, ngojí ni jí, jí nga'nda'i
You are you, because you, you are at this moment

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Transcription and translation by Santiago Cortés Martínez
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This chant is rather different from Marina's and María Sabina's and seems more akin to Baldomero's. While both women claimed to have greater powers and become animals and supernatural beings, neither Baldomero nor Leonardo made such claims. The insistent and even threatening requests for clarity and knowledge in Baldomero's chant are absent in Leonardo's. He repeatedly and rather plainly states that he has a chant and is singing it. A term that Leonardo often employs is *kjoanda*, which can be translated as "blessing," although the word has other meanings: offering, ceremony, grace, bounty, or something good in general. The same meaning applies to the word *perdón* (forgiveness) that Leonardo uses in the Spanish portion of the text. If so, the entire chant is about asking a supreme spiritual authority (the Virgin or the Father) for a blessing. Leonardo's chant revolves around singing for its own sake without any explicit message or contents. The impersonality of the utterance, which was suggested in previous chants through the use of direct quotation with an implicit subject, becomes the central theme developed by Leonardo. Consequently, the text is full of deixis (i.e., terms that can only be understood in a relational context), such as "you," "here," and "at this moment," which refer to a context without explicitly describing it. The place where Leonardo finds himself is only suggested but cannot be clearly identified. Although he directly addresses the Father and the Virgin, he may not be in their presence but rather longs for them. Leonardo never describes a situation that he sees or something that he hears.

Leonardo relied on the rhetorical and ontological trope of the *mise en abyme* to sing about himself singing. Caught in a labyrinth of his own construction, he disappeared into it. In a separate discussion, he compared chanting to the voice of a radio, which, unattached to its speaker, can rapidly move around and allow everyone to hear and enjoy it until the radio is turned off and the chant returns to where it originated (which I believe is God). In this light, we can also understand Leonardo's glossolalia: words in a chant do not refer to anything but rather express the process of creating language itself (Munn 1973).

The narrator's shifting and often ambiguous position in all the chants discussed underscores a specific feature

of the language employed. As in daytime divination (e.g., the reading of maize), the wise person seeks signs and clues for a client, but only during night ceremonies do they embody the signs, the gods, to themselves become divine agents. Their ability to speak to the gods and invoke them is taken a step further, and the performer becomes the god and claims their powers. Such a transformation occurs when the curandero simultaneously describes a situation that they participate in and see themselves from the outside as if a spectator to the story. The ability to enter, inhabit, and then leave the attributes of a certain god or supernatural being increases their power. Although I was able to participate in a limited number of ceremonies and, in even fewer cases, to record and eventually study the texts, two aspects stood out in the chants. On the one hand, the chant is a search characterized by feelings of longing, solitude, hopelessness, desperation, and anger at times; on the other hand, there are moments of communion and even transformation into gods, whose powers and knowledge are claimed by the performer.

2.3. Colonial chanting

Some of the features highlighted in modern Mazatec chants can also be found in the few examples of colonial texts that reproduce chants and songs either in their entirety or in short excerpts. The performer's consistent use of the first person and the conflation of several identities are frequently found in the so-called incantations collected in the early seventeenth century by Ruiz de Alarcón, as are exhortations from the singer, who sometimes angrily pled with the gods (Andrews and Hassig 1984). Ruiz de Alarcón gathered his material from several Nahuatl communities in the modern states of Morelos and Guerrero with the intention of creating a manual to extirpate enduring Mesoamerican ceremonial practices. The texts that he transcribed constitute an important historical source for the present study because the original context of their production and execution seems to be very similar to those of modern Mazatec divinatory and curing chants or prayers despite being considerably shorter, perhaps because they were collected as samples. In the incantation for fortune telling (Andrews and Hassig 1984, bk. 5, ch. 2), the text reads as follows:

Ca niman aman. Nohmatca nehhuatl.
It will indeed be I, immediately at this moment.

Nohxomoco. Nicipactonal. Nicmati huehue, nicmati ilamah
It is I in person. I am Ohxomoco. I am Cicipactonal. I know Old Man, Old Woman.

Nimictlanmati, nitopamati
I am knowledgeable about Mictlan, I am knowledgeable about Topan.

Nohmatca nehhuatl. Nitlamacazqui. Ninahateuctli
It is I in person. I am the priest. I am the nahualli-lord.

(Andrews and Hassig 1984, 151)

The priest claims to be both Oxomoco and Cicipactonal, the old diviner couple, and immediately follows by saying that they know them, seemingly because they have visited Mictlan and Topan, the otherworldly realms that surround the terrestrial plane. Thus, the “I” in the sentence shifts position and apparently indicates different identities and enunciators. As a result, the attributes of both the ancestral couple and the man-god (*nahualli-lord*) diviner are conflated, creating a complex image previously seen in the discussion of the primordial couple of the Codex Vienna in Section 1.2.

Around eighty years before Ruiz de Alarcón, Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún collected another important corpus of sacred texts (Sahagún et al. 1997, 128–129). They are referred to as *cuicame* (sing. *cuicatl*, song) and are formally different from Alarcón's incantations. Despite the early date of Sahagún's “sacred hymns,” as they have been called since Garibay (1958), their current form and context of production may have been influenced by early modern European poetry, as Tomlinson (2007, 9–27) suggested for another corpus of poetic texts, the *Cantares mexicanos*. In other words, it would appear that Sahagún's *cuicame* were an early attempt to normalize Nahuatl ceremonial chants according to the canons of European poetry, as discussed in the Introduction. I do not think that it is coincidental that the songs were attached as an appendix to the second book of the Florentine Codex, which is dedicated to the *veintena* ceremonies, the most important ritual cycle of Nahuatl communities. In the same appendix, Sahagún discusses the temples, their rituals, and their gods. Thus, the songs are an aspect of the cult that is more directly related to activities within the temple, a divine manifestation akin to the image of the god itself. They are only indirectly related to the public aspects of the cult, which are presented in the main part of the second book, and are more accurately described as part of secluded activities within the temples, where the image of the god usually resides.

In *Primeros Memoriales* (Sahagún et al. 1997, paragraph 14, ff. 279r–280r), the chant performed during *Atamalqualiztli* (the Feast of the Water Tamales), a ritual that involved fasting with water and unseasoned tamales, begins with an invocation to the mother goddess *Tlazolteotl* before switching to a description of *Tamoanchan*, the paradise of abundance, where the corn god *Centeotl* is said to have been born. Then, the setting seemingly changes to a marketplace on the earthly realm (*tlalpan*), and the verse reads as follows:

Oyatlatonazqui tlavizcallevaya
The sun has come forth, the morning has dawned

inan tlachichinaya nepapā quechol
And sundry red spoonbills sip nectar from flowers

xochitlacaca yyātala, yantata, ayyao, ayyave, tililiyao, ayyave
oayyave