



Chile 

# CHILE'S CHINO DANCE





In January 2009 Chile subscribed to the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO, through which the Chilean State made the commitment to promote and safeguard popular traditions considered important social practices for the symbolic environment of our people. Adhering to this convention constituted an important step in defining public policy measures oriented towards the safeguarding of our cultural heritage, also representing a new challenge: raising awareness of the invaluable role of these manifestations. In addition to the traditional work needed in research and documentation, UNESCO adds the need to implement safeguarding measures, where the State acts as the instrument that recognizes and provides protection for these cultural communities.

After having been a member of this convention for almost six years, the Chilean State chose to nominate the *chino* dances of Chile for the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as they represent in many aspects a profound, fragile and sensitive part of our society. These brotherhoods (*hermandades*), that have been present for over three centuries, have painstakingly adhered to their heritage, managing to spread throughout the territory, consistently adding to the sense of belonging of local communities that host these festivities and devotional practices of popular religiousness. During various periods of our history, *chino* dances have given form to the rural world by celebrating and congregating around a feeling of faith and solidarity, of class and mixed race, as well as of transcendence. Due to its permanence and incidence in the lives of hundreds of Chilean towns, the *chino* dance is intrinsically connected to the social genes of our culture and history.

For almost 350 years, *chino* dances have embodied what it means to endure, by shaping and providing a sense of continuity to human experience. The sounds of their flutes and drums together with their forms of dance send us back to our archaic and truly American origin, while the sense of Christianity in their songs reminds us that the history of all people is essentially a mixture of adapting and reforming



processes. And *chino* dances are precisely this epiphany: that of a distinctive process that has given us our identity within our continent, through devotional practices whose permanence is an expression of the relationship that these *chino* brotherhoods have maintained with everyday life.

The work that the National Council of Culture and the Arts has shared about *chino* dances is in recognition of its expressive value and of how these groups have managed to preserve these practices. Working on this presentation has been a challenge for the role of the State in the recognition and value given to practices such as these. The main lesson here has been to find within ones social structure the keys to developing public policies that safeguard these practices, since if *chino* dances have existed for over 300 years, then it is a fact that the success of the State in the management of these matters will necessarily depend on understanding the social dynamic that has led us today to bring light on a living and vigorous manifestation of heritage, when faced with a prestigious and relevant international organism that is UNESCO.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Claudia Barattini Contreras". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'C' and a stylized 'B'.

Claudia Barattini Contreras  
Presidential Minister  
National Council of Culture and the Arts

# RITUAL OBSERVANCE



## GENERAL HISTORY:

# ENCOMIENDA, INDIANS AND GOLD

February 1541 saw the founding of “Santiago de Nueva Extremadura”, The Kingdom of Chile’s first capital, and as such, marked the beginning of extremaduran Pedro de Valdivia’s conquest and colonization of Chile. Three years later Valdivia, the then Governor of Chile, ordered the founding of the Spanish Crown’s second city, La Serena; meeting ground between Santiago and the Viceroyalty of Peru. However, just like the capital, the founding of the city suffered many setbacks, especially five years later when it was destroyed by the inevitable indigenous resistance. Only after a six-month struggle were colonizers able to build the city for a second time. Once rebuilt, Serena dropped out of the news until a few years later, when a vein of high-grade gold ore was discovered in the mountain range a mere forty kilometers south west of the city. This was the birth of Andacollo, the most important mineral discovery in the North, not only for it’s wealth in gold, but also for the forging of a new culture, product of forced repopulation brought about by the mine itself. This was a glimpse into the future and the foundation for what we intend to describe here, the *chino* dance.

*Chino* from Andacollo,  
in procession to the Church.  
Photography: Claudio Pérez

The discovery of Andacollo came hand in hand with the obvious problem of a work force needed to exploit the mine. At the time, the situation with the indigenous folk of the area

was hardly favorable. During the mid 16th century, after the Indian uprising against Spanish occupation, the colonists continued to levy untold abuses and pillaged innumerable native homesteads, to an extent where the native population dwindled significantly in numbers. Be it through murder or exodus, the remaining Diaguita people were not enough to work a mine of Andacollo's size. This led to their indoctrination— now called Indians — as new subjects of the King, where they were required to pay tribute through manual labor. This was considered a pardon of sorts and the Indians were commandeered into forced labor as state retribution for the death of a soldier in his majesty's service during the invasion and conquering of the land. The contract system — which was nothing less than slavery disguised as hired service — was called *encomienda*. In this new outrage the *encomendero* was charged with converting his Indians into loyal subjects of the crown by indoctrinating them into the catholic faith. The Indians in this new system, now loyal subjects of the crown, were required to pay tribute. Destitute and lacking any assets they had to pay in labor or services, the product of which was given directly to the corresponding *encomendero*.

Rogelio Ramos, the last great  
Cacique from Andacollo.  
Photography: Claudio Pérez

In these festivities, practices such as tarasques, masquerades, giants, flag dances and *parlampanes*, can be found; all traditional festivals from the Spanish middle ages, the only difference being the Indian, pardo and zambo dances.



**DANCING FOR THE VIRGIN:**  
A HUNDRED-YEAR-OLD TRADITION



The *encomienda* created a social environment rife with stress, oppression, abuse, and extreme and exhaustingly hard labor; a situation the Indian was previously unaccustomed to. This and many other reasons meant evangelization required a number of ceremonies through which the Indians could worship patron saints, re-imagined as spiritual entities and protectors of the location where the particular *encomienda* was situated. These patron saints made it possible for the introduction of festivities that, being somewhat against the mournful counter-reformist movement of the time, allowed for rejoicing and relaxation. In fact so much so, that they even included popular religious rites inherent to Spain's counter-reform movement. The festivities incorporated practices such as tarasques, masquerades, giants, flag dances and *parlampanes*, all traditional to the Spanish middle ages, the only difference being the Indian, pardo and zambo dances.

Among all these dances, one stood out above the rest and played a pivotal role in the creation of a new ritual: the Indian dance. The name was a generalization and had little to do with the style of dance. Rather, it was a reflection of the participants' ethnicity, and it was performed at galas, ceremonies of worship, or formed part of the jubilant processions honoring the images of saints, the cross, and various representations of the Virgin Mary. We also mustn't forget that during this crucial stage of the colonial period there was a succession of *miracle appearances*, or the discovery of holy images, with figures supposedly representing the virgin as the most common finds.

## ANTA COLLA OR THE VIRGIN OF GOLD

This was the context in 1581 when an Indian found an image of the Virgin, Our Lady of the Rosary. As it turned out, two Spaniards who had run to the mountains, fleeing from the Indian uprising that destroyed La Serena in 1549, had saved the image years earlier. The find gave rise to a Virginal cult that grew quickly, first starting the Indian dances. The dances themselves, as is known now, were always a form of worship to the image found in those mountains. Nonetheless, history and documented fact have led many to indulge in idle speculation and belief that the first Andacollean celebrations were the birthplace of the first Indian dances, the Barrera Chino Dance n° 1 being by far the oldest in Andacollo, and therefore in Chile. These theories claim that Indian dances have been around since the 16th century up until today.

But these legends and anecdotes can at times hide certain social and cultural aspects, tucking them away undetected in the shadows of history. Andacollo and its mining Virgin are iconic expressions of the new order and a new people, rising from a joining of nations and aboriginal cultures. A large part of the process was developed in folk religion, which indirectly fostered the *encomienda* system, propelled by the need to evangelize the King's new subjects, the *indians*.





# PROCESSION

In effect, the *encomienda* feudal system, among its many attributes, was singular for another aspect: it was the direct instigator of intermixing that led to the *Chino* dance. The *encomienda* allowed the master, or *encomendero*, to uproot his *indians* and move them to anywhere they were needed for up to six months of the year. Natives from the Huarpe, Promaucaire, Aimara, Quechua, Mapuche and Diaguita cultures were taken to Andacollo and put to work on the gold fields. The conditions imposed on them by the *encomendero* produced not only gold, but also an interbreeding between natives, leading to the all-encompassing name *Indian* and their mixed culture. This new hybrid culture began to manifest itself early on in the ceremonial festivities of the Andacollean virginal cult.

In that fashion, the first of the Indian dances, held at the first veneration celebrations of the Andacollean Virgin, are testament to the creation of a new people; a people whose cultural context was mainly evident through their own form of worship, a form of worship that gradually became a creature all of its own. The very first of the Indian dances was the original ancestor of today's *chino* dance, and also the first form of organized worship born from the forced coexistence of the many aboriginal tribes found across the Chilean territory; the *encomienda*.

## THE *CHINO* DANCE AND HOW IT SPREAD

Historical references to the *chino* dance in Andacollo came much later than the discovery and celebration of Our Lady of the Rosary, the Virgin. Toward the end of the 17th century we find references that corroborate and assure its existence. The date coincides with two significant historical facts: the formation of the *encomienda* and its forced labor practices; and, the arrival of an idol of the Virgin from Peru, in replacement of the original image, due to its mysterious disappearance. At that time the *indians* were the main source of labor in the mines, and constituted the new, mixed racial culture – wholly different from the Spanish and anything before their arrival – clearly represented in the *chino* dance.

Miners, who were later joined by poor farmers, almost exclusively performed the *Chino* dance. The participants belonged to a wealthier segment of the population though still considered of low class or social import. In short, the new Indian work force labored the hardest mines in the area. These men were for the longest time considered pariahs, a fact not to be ignored, making them easily recognizable due to their own *chino* dialect; a language of Quechua–Aimara origin, alluding to people of low social standing, simple workers, or beasts of burden. This meant that to speak of the *chino* dance was to speak of a social class composed of a mix of proto-proleta-

A *chino* dance typically performs two complementary rituals: to accompany the idol of worship in procession, dancing to a particular style of instrumental music involving flutes and drums; and to pray, give praise, greet and say goodbye in a capella chants similar to prayer responses, with responses being usually in four-line or ten-line stanzas, either memorized or improvised.

riat workers. But the *chino* dance in itself is more than merely its humble social beginnings: the *chino* dance represents a cosmogony and theology whose sense and values have constantly been expressed with pristine clarity in its ritual observance and its relation to the numinous.

From the end of the 17th century until the mid- 18th century the existence of the Andacollean *chino* dance and its role in the celebrations of the Rosary were irrefutable. Its weighty presence in the ritual and its growing autonomy were cause for concern for the local clergy. How could it not be? The style and ritual participation of the *chino* dance became an organizational model for other ceremonies in far away locations. In fact, all the Indians in the *encomienda* system were forced to work in Andacollo for a season, and once they returned home they would swiftly implement what they had learned from the mining ceremonies. With the *encomienda*'s abolishment, the *chino* dance became a presence and indeed, central protagonist, breaking free of its origins as a religious dance. To top it all off, large territories – from whence came the Indians in the *encomienda* system and where they would return once indoctrinated – began to reproduce the ritual model of the Andacollean *chino* dance. For that reason, well into the 18th century, the clergy looked upon the ritual's

expansion and its ever increasing popularity with real concern. Therefore, in 1752 the religious powers that be, began a new form of ritual worship: the Turban dance of La Serena, or, as it was also known, *the Bishop's dance*. Despite this initiative, and the forming of yet a third dance called *Danzantes* in the 19th century, far from diminishing, the importance of the *chino* dance grew to previously unsuspected popularity. It would seem that the preponderance of the dance grew as the mining class consolidated: not in an effort to belong to a class of any kind, but born of a desire to distance themselves from a ritual and culture represented by the hegemony.

In other words, the *Chino* dance became a model for highly efficient territorial management, promoting a strong sense of cultural union within the confines of a specific territory. When we discuss efficiency, what we really want to say is that the *chino* dance was by no means a form of ritual exclusion and was by no means antagonistic toward the pillars of Catholicism. It was concomitant, parallel and to a great extent autonomous and merely existed, and was expressed, in juxtaposition to the official religious rites of the clergy. Although the *chino* dance was brought into being by the evangelization of the indigenous people, it was singularly unique in its creation. It possessed elements, structures, and purpose entirely of its own, and weaved diverse expressive elements into its very fabric that today we consider genuine and exclusive to this part of the continent.

This ability to symbolize and give meaning to the land spread the dance to the furthest reaches of the kingdom where the indians had once roamed. That's why today the *chino* dance is present in the regions of Atacama, Coquimbo, Valparaiso and even the Metropolitan Region. Its distribution has been a long and drawn out process full of transformation, where each territory has developed its own unique style of the dance. Even Tarapaca, once annexed into Sovereign Chile – an area that had belonged to the Viceroyalty of Peru for several centuries – wasn't immune. The popular pampa culture, iconic of the saltpetre mines, formed its own identity through a *chino* dance for Our Lady of Mount Carmel (the patron saint of Chile) with a style thoroughly its own, but modeled on the dances from Andacollo.

*Chino* dance Hermanos Prado,  
Virgen de Lourdes festival.  
Photography: Agustín Ruiz Z.







# FLUTE AND DRUM



## EXPRESSIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHINO DANCE: MUSIC AND DANCE

However, one might ask what exactly is the *chino* dance? Strictly speaking it's a collective composition involving both family and neighbors whose main purpose is to celebrate with several dances and multiple attendants, the ceremonial rights of a patron saint. As its name implies, a *chino* dance is an unfolding of steps and movements, a repertoire that doubles as worship of a patron saint, the Virgin Mary or any other symbol of the Catholic Church. The dance consists in forward or side steps, spinning in place or moving forward, jumping on one foot or both longitudinally or laterally, squats or other physically demanding leg movements. In some cases there were collective choreographies such as square dancing and crosses. In a few limited cases there were even contra dances.

Generally speaking, the *chino* dance was organized into two parallel columns for flutes, and a central body for percussion between both columns. However, in some of the dances found in the area of Illapel drum formations are placed at the head of both columns, before the first *chino* flute player or point man. Standard bearers and flag dancers usually stand at the forefront. In the *Chino* dances in Valparaiso – where the flag bearer is called an *ensign* – a kettledrum closes the formation at the very back. In this formation the *chinos* sing or dance, depending on the part of the ceremony.

Participants in a *chino* dance typically perform two complementary rituals: a) accompany the idol of worship in procession, dancing to a particular style of instrumental music involving flutes and drums; b) pray, give praise, greet and say goodbye in a capella chants similar to prayer responses. The responses are usually in four-line or ten-line stanzas and are either memorized or improvised. Whichever the ceremonial procedure, the *chino* dance creates lyrical or instrumental music, functioning in a way that is both different and complementary.

When a dancer salutes the idol or image, he or she approaches to make a prayer, or alternatively does so when leaving the procession, while chanting the predominant form of said prayer. At the chosen time the flag bearer or ensign sings stories from sacred histories or passages from the bible, or they may question the idol for the purpose of saluting or saying goodbye, and may ask for a blessing or gratitude for a favor granted. In the region of Valparaiso the ensign follows strict formality. He chants a number of four-line or ten-line stanzas. In addition to singing memorized verses, it is customary among ensigns in the region to sing improvised stanzas as they are moved by the moment. In the same fashion, it is common for greetings between *chino* dances to take the form of improvised songs called *payas*. Flag bearers in Coquimbo and Atacama also sing, but do not adhere to metrics or predefined rhymes. Nonetheless, just like in Valparaiso, the song has the same purpose of acting as intermediary between the worshiper and the venerated deity.

If there's any salient feature of the *chino* dance, it is its instrumental music and dance, two forms of expression that are inseparable from each other. The *chino*, dances and plays their flute or drum to the same rhythm. This means that the sound and their gestures are in absolute harmony with the steps and choreographies, following along with the rest of their fellow dancers. Among the plethora of religious dances that exist here in our country, the *chino* dance is the only one of its style and characteristics, the only one where the dance is inseparable from the music of flutes and drums. A common denominator for all the *Chino* dances is the two-column formation

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of flute players, each column playing both together with and alternately from the opposing column, forming one sound in staggered intervals. For their part, the drums mark the beat for the flutes and the speed at which the columns alternate depends on the speed of their dance. This way the sound of a *chino* dance depends on several factors directly related to the flutes, and is supported by the rhythmic base of the drums. We will delve still further into its organic properties later on.

## CEREMONIAL EXPRESSION IN DIFFERENT REGIONAL STYLES

The *chino* dance is a ritual expression of worship that has remained as popular and important as ever over these past three hundred years. Thanks to its great versatility and ability to adapt, the dance has reinvented itself and responded to economical, historical, and contextual changes. In fact, this particular type of religious group has coexisted with many other institutions and economically productive and socio-cultural groups that today no longer exist. Where adaptation is concerned, the dance has gone through profound changes over and over again in its three hundred year history, and it has survived until this day thanks to its autonomous nature and capacity for change. The adaptations have no doubt brought about reiterative and recurring modifications that have manifested in different ways; some of them related to participation, others with organization, and still others with how the music and dance is expressed.

Given its long history with the mining industry, the *chino* dance has been an exclusively male dance, so much so that the very music composition and dance are considered expressions of virility. It should be noted that the dance in some areas of the region of Valparaiso has become highly competitive and ritualistically confrontational. Up until the mid-20th century there was a pervading military environment to

Manuel Silva, drummer in the  
*chino* dance from Cay Cay.  
Photography: Agustín Ruiz Z.

The standard-bearer or ensign typically sings with an untrained voice, using the throat, charged with dramatic tension. It is a voice lacking affectation or projection, tending to be bright and usually in the upper reaches of the vocal range.





# FLAG-BEARER

the dance; the dancers were possessed of iron-willed determination and discipline. In fact, some dances had captains with no other function than to maintain order in the ranks by lightly correcting the dancers with a quick cane to the legs. Nevertheless, in the last decades the scene has changed and women have begun to participate, forming part of the columns of dance and music.

The organization of the dance generally centered on the direct and extended family, among which there was an autocratic figurehead – almost always an older man – who ruled the dance based on their wisdom and precepts. Today, *chino* dances are still a family affair, but the majority of them incorporate neighbors and friends from other areas. The way it is governed has also changed: many dances today have elected a governing body that makes all the decisions, with the leader remaining in charge of the ritual aspects of the dance. This way the ceremonial aspects have been separated from the administrative affairs commonly revolving around money and logistics. In this same context many *chino* dances now have legal status and maintain relationships with municipalities and even the State.

But change is far from new where *chino* dances are concerned; the fluidity and dynamics of change are most notable in ceremonial expression, in other words, music, and dance. If a traveller were to observe the religious festivities that take place between Copiapó and Valparaiso, they would see for themselves the difference in styles as they travel through each territory. Each style, down to the smallest of details, carves out a space for itself. Despite the dance originating in Andacollo, it spread its influence several hundred miles north and south, and even east across the Andes to the province of Cuyo in Argentina. The result? At least five very different styles of dance.

These styles also belong to ecological niches, organized and established around watersheds and limited by the highly complex mountain ranges. Their physical location is relevant when attempting to understand how each dance evolved.

Alfárez Juan Cisternas and the  
*chino* dance from Petorquita.  
Photography: Agustín Ruiz Z.

In the same way rivers have marked cultural development and communications between the valleys, the mountains have always been a barrier of sorts, isolating the valleys and communities found within. So, as a result, each local style has developed differently within the realm of rituality, made possible by each ecological niche. In observing these influences it is clear to see how Copiapó and Huasco (in the region of Atacama) have their own style, just as Elqui and Limari (in the region of Coquimbo) have theirs. In Choapa and Quilimari (in the region of Coquimbo) there is yet another style different from those mentioned previously, and there is still a greater variety of dances from Petorca, San Felipe, and Los Andes (in the region of Valparaíso), which, given their proximity, are the most similar to the *chino* dances of the Quillota and Margamarga provinces (in the region of Valparaíso). The process of stylistic differentiation covers costume and clothing, from dance to music, though they all have, generally speaking, common elements.



## THE INSTRUMENTS:

# VOICE, DRUM, AND FLUTE

The instruments used in *chino* dances are at their roots, three. The first is the dancers voice. The standard-bearer or ensign typically sings with an untrained voice, using the throat, charged with dramatic tension. It is a voice lacking affectation or projection, tending to be bright and usually in the upper reaches of the vocal range. They usually sing with an open throat and primarily use head resonators. To put it simply, the flag bearer sings in a voice heard throughout the width and breadth of Chile at local fairs and markets as the carnies and stallholders call out their wares. However, there is a second vocal element sung by the choir as they respond to the flag-bearers stanzas; the choir generally mimics the flag-bearer's cadence and repeats the verses they sing. In the *chino* dances in the Region of Valparaíso it is common for the choir to jodeln on a few syllables, similar to the Apline yodelers of Europe.

Another fundamental instrument is the drum, which basically comes in two forms. The most archaic is the drum with fixed straps, cylindrical body, and double leather membrane with no bass string. Its diameter varies between 20cm and 30cm, with its height varying between 8cm and 12cm. This drum hangs from the left hand attached to a leather bracelet, with the right hand carrying a rustic wooden drumstick

with which to strike the membrane. The drum is key in leading the dance, since the drum indicates the different steps and *mudanzas* that the dancers must carry out. It is important to state that in this part of the continent the described drum has pre-Incan precedent. This type of drum is used in all previously mentioned *chino* styles of dance, with the only exception being the Andacollino style of dance.

A second type of drum is, consequently, the drum used in the Andacollo style of dance. This is a drum with movable straps where the tension can be adjusted. This drum corresponds to an instrument that was introduced in America, either through Spanish musicians or afro-descendants, and it is even more curious to find a foreign drum within the context of the oldest ceremonial style. In effect, this is a very different drum to those described previously, since it has a removable frame that allows one to easily adjust the tensions of its two leather membranes. It is approximately 35cm long with a 25cm diameter. When playing the drum, the drummer must hold it in his left palm, securing it through a set of tensors while using a wooden drumstick to play the drum with the right hand.

If the drums are considered so important for the dance, then flutes are in return considered the most distinctive instrument of the *chino* dance, due to its particular sound coming primarily from the flute. The *chino* dance has two columns of various lengths. The general principal is to locate the longer flutes at the head of the column and the shorter ones at the back. In between you can find the rest, ordered from the longest to the shortest. The *chino* flutes are built following a pragmatic and old model. In effect, the *chino* dance flute has a particular sound due to the double diameter of its unique tube. This is known as a complex tube, a characteristic that was already present in ceramic flutes from the paracas culture, close to 900 years B.C. and which has stayed the same to present day. The principal of its construction consists of a longitudinal juxtaposition of two tubes, made of the same length ( $1/1$ ) but with varying diameters ( $1/2$ ). When playing these types of tubes, the unstable harmonics slightly varying frequencies generate a stimulation that is perceived in the



# MUDANZA

The drum is key in leading the dance, since the drum indicates the different steps and *mudanzas* that the dancers must carry out. The flutes are, in return, considered the most distinctive instrument of the chino dance, due to its particular and unique sound.

excessive shrillness that is produced by the beat. This design principal leads to another principal unique to *chino* dance: the aesthetic principal, that manifests against the aesthetic principal that governs the harmonic texture of western music, which can be understood as a counterculture to the hegemony of the church and the Spanish power during colonization. However, these principals, both constructive and aesthetic, are relicts from cultures prior to the Spanish and Incan invasion.

The persistence of this concept has stayed the same, including surpassing materiality, since another fact that marks change is precisely the material of the flutes. The *chino* dance flute is not a continuum but rather changes according to the style where it is used. In addition to this, it is important to add another important fact: not all styles of *chino* dances use complex tube flutes. In the area of Copiapó, it is characterized by the use of simple tube flutes, that is, tubes with regular diameters. This is also true for *chino* dances from the Cuyo province in Argentina. This does not mean – as some might believe – that these *chinos* have forgotten how to construct a complex tube flute. Rather, one must take into account the historical and ethnographic background that documents the *chinos* playing simple tube flutes. For example, when Claudio

Carlos Reyes, lead in the *chino* dance from Cay Cay.  
Photography: Agustín Ruiz Z.

Gay visited Andacollo in 1834, he observed that the *chino* dance N°1, the oldest in Chile, was played at that time with flutes fabricated from the bones of Condors, with carved fingered orifices. With this, Gay debunked another scientific myth from the last few years, which tells us that the *chino* dance has always been played using complex tube flutes.

Gay was witness to another type of flute, very different to the one currently used in these dances, since currently the andacollina area is known for using flutes made from cane. The procedure consists in joining two pieces of cane, inserting the smaller diameter tube or distal, into the larger diameter tube or proximal. In this case, a variety of yellow bamboo is used (*Phyllostachys aurea*). The sound tube is flanked by two small lateral tablets, which make the instrument more compact. These flutes are also found in a few dances throughout the region of Valparaíso. The same constructive principal is also present in the stylistic area of Illapel, only that the material varies, since they use the giant cane (*Arundo donax*). Also, the flutes have no lateral tablets, with the sounding tube being in direct contact with the hand of the *chino*.

On the other hand, in the areas of San Felipe and Valparaíso a different material and a more elaborate technique is used. Here, flutes are predominantly made from wood. A large portion of *chino* dances from this zone choose flutes made from lingue (*Persea lingue*), although some dances stand out for their flutes made from common walnut (*Juglans regia*). Avocado (*Persea gratissima*), Sauce (*Salix humboldtiana*), and black poplar (*Populus nigra*) have also been used. In these cases, the sounding tube of the flute is made by boring directly into the wood and then polishing the interior with hot metal. This also requires that the outside of the flute be carved, making it look in general, similar to a Mapuche *pifilka*, only larger.



## CULTURAL HERITAGE:

# TOWARDS SELF-MANAGEMENT

Steps taken by official organisms in Chilean society to value and preserve these *chino* dances are only just emerging. Since remote times there have been prohibitions, censorships, marginalization and even persecution from the clergy and municipal authorities, together with public force, aimed at silencing these flutes and the strength of its presence during special rituals and ceremonies. There have been many pretexts, but one is the main cause: autonomy. *Chino* dances have been in charge of replicating the devotional-ceremonial Andacollino model and through this have provided these localities with a sovereign ritual, where the presence of the clergy is, if the situation or case justifies it, dispensable. However, the *chino* dance has not become an enemy of the church. Rather, it has merely placed emphasis on the fact that this devotion is cultural heritage and a part of the community, which at one point in history was responsible for maintaining and preserving a sacred image and the patronage festivals that celebrate and use this instrument, which is typical of *chino* dances. This is the reason why the *chino* dance is built on a sense of belonging from the local scale and exists in virtue of the self-determined and inventive family, neighborhood, or community for creating, maintaining and conserving it as the expression of a local sense.

A *chino* dance is a place of dialogue and social inclusion, bringing together cultural, geographic, age, and gender diversity. With its organic devotion the *chino* dance has helped capture the fundamental nature of the Chilean landscape of today: a mixed race that marches towards the recognition of their ancestral legacies, within which the *chino* dance stands out with exceptional worth.

In addition to the strictly devotional aspects, the *chino* dance is an integrative model, representing a self-identifying and socially cohesive local identity. This aspect has been a determining factor in the construction of the landscape, since for centuries these ceremonial groups have been establishing relations of reciprocity through a shared system of invitations and visits to local neighborhood festivals. When discussing these stylistic areas that have sustained particular and distinctive forms of performance, it implicitly alludes to this communicative dynamic that has defined the idiosyncrasies throughout the ceremonial design along which the *chino* dance follows, to assure the compliance towards the devotion and verbal commitments established with nearby communities. Furthermore, the *chino* dance has become even more open, willing to receive anyone that wishes to become part of the ceremonial practice groups. This is what has happened during the last few decades, where said dances have incorporated people from large cities that are looking to participate in the ritual, considered an integrating space and a way to be a part of community belonging.

The *chino* dance is, for everything that has been said, a pre-eminent testimony of the way in which intangible cultural heritage contributes towards the formation and strengthening

of values and senses found in the structure of social and collective experience. A *chino* dance is a place of dialogue and social inclusion, bringing together cultural, geographic, age and gender diversity. The *chino* dance has been doing this since before the existence of the state, meaning that its survival is the responsibility of us all.

Due to what has been already expressed, the Chilean State has placed more and more attention on *chino* dances, both on its formal aspects as its sociocultural affairs that derive from its organic workings. In 1999 the State carried out its first public and participatory register of *chino* dances, and ten years later started incorporating them under a common agreement in the Heritage Information Management System (Sistema de Información para la Gestión Patrimonial [www.sigpa.cl](http://www.sigpa.cl)), a platform through which the State fulfills what is stated in the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. Furthermore, in 2010 the State awarded the recognition award of Living Human Treasures of Chile to the *chino* dance Baile Pescador Chino nº 10, from Coquimbo, and in 2012 awarded the Cultural Heritage Conservation award to both the Las Cañas II and Baile Chino nº1 *chino* dances from Andacollo. Recently, actions oriented towards strengthening intergenerational transmission in the region of Coquimbo have also been carried out. For this, the Baile Pescador Chino nº 10 was incorporated into pedagogical programs of the public education system. In addition, the State, through competitive public funds, has financed civil society research projects related to the *chino* dance; this emerging interest has been the result of an awareness campaign and social appropriation process that the State has promoted through various resources and mediums.

Among other actions of this kind, the National Council of Culture and Arts has developed a series of intense ethnographic activities, through which it has been able to measure the dimension of demand and urgency of safeguarding and protecting these diverse groups that practice this centuries old intangible cultural practice. This activity has led to the identification of an unsuspected heterogeneity of threatening

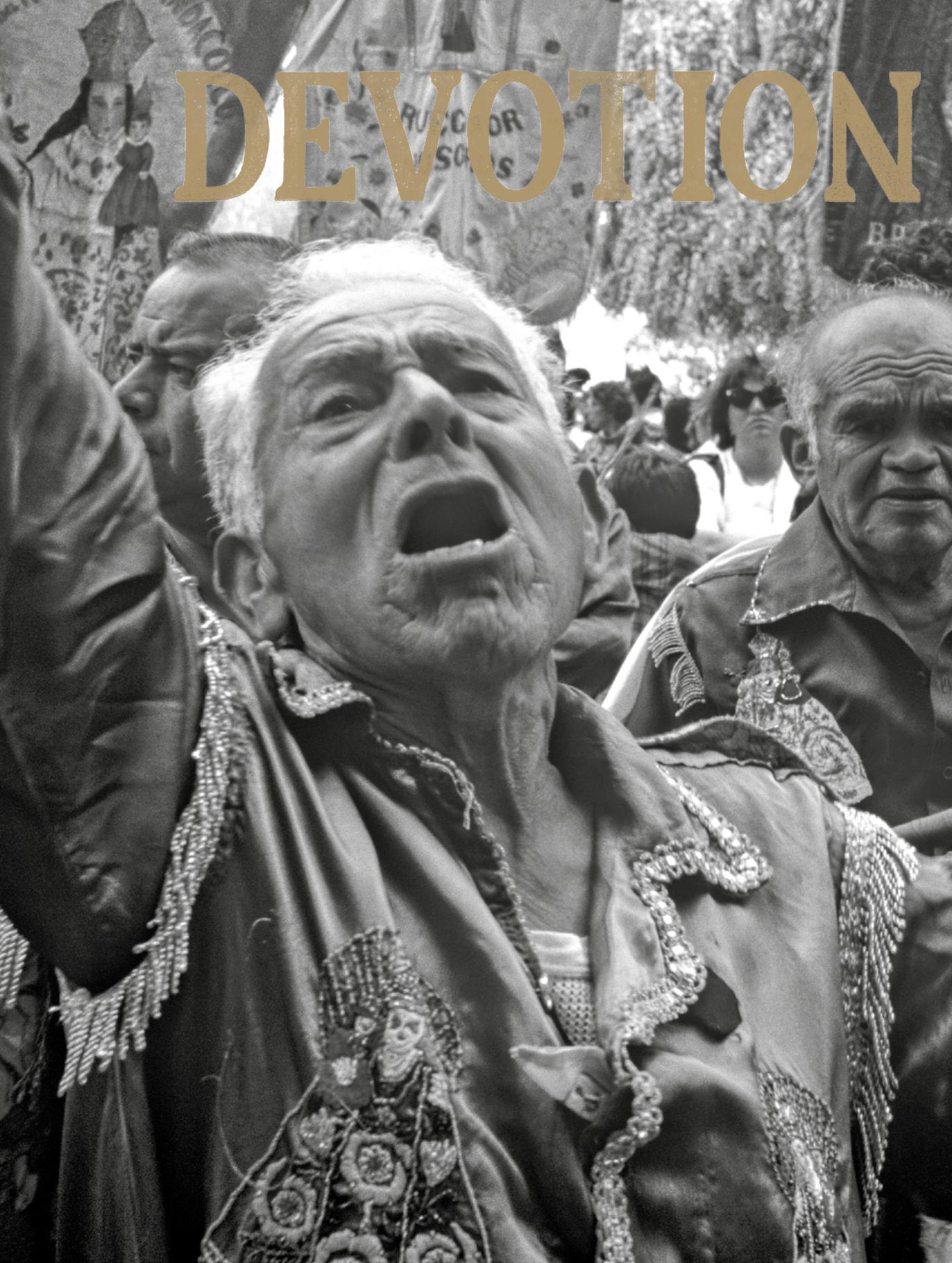
In addition to the strictly devotional aspects, the *chino* dance is an integrative model, representing a self-identifying and socially cohesive local identity. This aspect has been a determining factor in the construction of the landscape, since for centuries these ceremonial groups have been establishing relations of reciprocity through a shared system of invitations and visits to local neighborhood festivals.

situations that require palliative measures. This demand has become official, through letters in which certain dances and communities have expressed their petition; one of these has been the intercession of the Chilean State before UNESCO, to incorporate this practical ceremony in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. With this it is worth acknowledging that it has been the *chino* dances themselves that, in alliance with research groups, have led a new reclaiming process by requesting solidarity remuneration for external professionals that execute projects related to this devotion. This remuneration consists in providing consulting services related to the development of associative experiences that improve cooperative and strategic relations between the *chino* dance and the institutional administrative structure of the State. With these professional consultancy services certain *chino* dancers as mentioned earlier have acquired legal status, and through this, have acquired funding for cultural projects through public competitive funds, logistical support from municipalities, and diffusion capabilities through communication products.

All these steps are irrefutable examples of how Chilean society has made a change for the good, and different to what

happened before, today there is more attention being paid and more respect being given to *chino* dances; the commitment taken to document and publish this pamphlet is a perfect example of this. However, the effort the State and other institutions can invest in placing value on this ancestral expression is, and always will be, a secondary action that cannot replace the self-determination with which *chino* dances have fought with to prevail over time. Permanence and social validation from these brotherhoods (*hermandades*) is something that will continue to be closely linked to the jealousy and attention that the *chino* dances place in the care, devotional expressions, and natural autonomy of their dances. With almost three and a half centuries of history, *chino* dances – that greatly predate the existence of the Chilean State – have established a ceremonial model formed from both bravery and devotion, since for a number of periods throughout their history they found themselves forced to face a countless number of adverse situations, such as the number of statutory prohibitions originating from the clergy, or the oppressive persecution that took place during the 19th century. However, it has always been the dance itself that has managed to prevail, with a genuine model of both belief and being. With its organic devotion the *chino* dance has helped capture the fundamental nature of the Chilean landscape of today: a mixed race that marches towards the recognition of their ancestral legacies, within which the *chino* dance stands out with exceptional worth.

# DEVOTION



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