YOUR STRUGGLE IS YOUR GLORY

Songs of Struggle, Huayno & Other Peruvian Music

COLLECTED BY JOHN COHEN
Because of their expulsion from work and from their homes, the miners have come to the city to bring their case to the government and the public. The miners, with the support of the public, are singing in the streets. Their spokesperson says: "Perhaps I could clearly explain the problem of the miners who have been working in the mountain town of Ayacucho for many years. They are ordinary people, coming from one universe in the Andes, to another in the city. But they carry the mountain culture with them. On a Sunday afternoon, they perform a social dance for families from across Lima, and together, for an afternoon this Ayacucho Community is reunited. The scissors dance is performed here and at other community festivities in Lima and the mountains. The Peruvian writer Angaradas loved this dance and its music because it revealed to him an inner meaning of Andean life. The scissors are held in the hand of the dancer and keep a rhythm that is reflected precisely in the steps he is dancing. The fiddle and harp also keep this exact rhythm. There are endless variations and changes within the dance. The dancer has prepared for this all his life, the fiddler's response is also not tightly joined. With his fingers through the handle loops, the dancer clicks the blades and makes them play. Even as the dancer dances his own ritual death, the scissors keep on. The life of the scissors is the life of their culture. The dance also becomes a competition between performers who are shamans from different villages. A complete performance of the scissors dance may be seen on videocassette at the Library of Congress [Naizca Library, along with the rest of the footage of the film Mountain Music of Peru.]

A-3 & 7: FIDDLE & HARP DUET / FIDDLE SOLO

The fiddler for the scissors dance is Maximo Damlin Humani, a well-known musician from Ayacucho. He plays at other community functions as well. One of these melodies is specially for the death of a baby. Some of his tunes are identical to those used by the miner's children. This regional music serves the people in many ways:

Side B: B-1, 3, 4, 6, 8 & 10:

In Lima, Huayno music is played day and night on radio stations that specialize in the mountain sound. It is the emigrants from the mountains who listen. If Huayno music developed in the mountains and has spread to every part of Peru. Forty years ago it was predicted that the modern music of Lima would dominate Peru. Instead, Huayno music is heavy and popular everywhere today. The music industry of Peru sells more Huayno records than other types of music combined.

Farther back and higher up into the Andes—one gets closer to the aboriginal source of this music. Q'eros lies 14,000 feet above sea level. Only 60 miles away from Cuzco, but a three-day journey by truck and horseback, the final range of the Andes has isolated the Q'eros from many outside influences. Their music, their daily life and their ceremonial are intertwined with the forces of nature. The Q'eros live in high mountain valleys just below the snow line. The flocks of alpacas and llamas are the focus of their lives. Although the flocks are large, each animal has its own specific role. The Q'ero music to the generation of the alpacas, referring to them as "mother," for this lineage has paralleled their own survival over the centuries. [An analysis of Q'ero music by John Cohen will be available in Billie Jean Isbell's book An Andean Kaleidoscope.]

B-2: PALCHA SONG

During the season when the animals are mating, the red Palcha flower which grows in the high mountain pastures above 15,000 feet, is an annual ceremony in the mountain spirits, celebrating the fertility of the alpacas. The special songs and flute tunes about the Palcha flower are sung throughout the year. The music reaches great intensity during the ritual for the animals in their corrals [see the film Mountain Music of Peru for documentation of this]. The Q'eros address the mountain gods as "Huaman."