

*mous artists of the past», and «flamenco activities at Finca Espartero». In all, this edition contains eight more pages of photos than the last.*

*Each revised edition is, therefore, more accurate and complete and, I feel, better able to accomplish its mission of providing the reader with a solid flamenco foundation and direction.*

*The Author  
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*November, 1971*

*And now we have a fourth revision. More than eleven years have raced by since the 1972 edition of this book, during which period flamenco has undergone new trends and fads, and suffered to an unprecedented extent the inevitable and ever-increasing encroachment of universal sophistication. These considerations have been discussed in the appendices of this revision. From page 169 on the book has had to be completely updated and rewritten; in so doing the appendices have taken on historical, sociological and economic hues formerly lacking.*

*There has also been a shuffling of photos, some removed, some new ones added, with the dual purposes of updating, and of stressing certain points more strongly.*

*Thus, the objective stated in the last paragraph of the 1971 revision has again, hopefully, been fulfilled.*

*The Author  
Madrid  
January, 1984*

PART I  
THE PHILOSOPHY OF FLAMENCO

## INTRODUCTION

*Flamenco is not just a music of southern Spain, as is generally believed. More than that, it is a way of life that influences the daily activities of many southern Spaniards. One does not have to be a performer of flamenco to be a flamenco: a flamenco is anyone who is emotionally and actively involved in this unique philosophy. For this reason, no book is complete in dealing with the art of flamenco alone, for the art of flamenco is merely the outward expression of the flamenco way of life. The reader must also be made to understand something of its creators and perpetrators, and their philosophies, attitudes, customs, beliefs, likes and dislikes. It is necessary to understand not only what flamenco is, but why it is what it is.*

*With this objective in mind, I present the following experiences and essays as an introduction to a study of this fascinating but little understood art.*

## DONKEY BACK

We were riding donkey back along the ridge of the *sierra*, often rounding into views of a deep-blue Mediterranean, other times descending into gray-green valleys or winding our way through scented pine forests. It was slow going, but delicious and invigorating, making us glad to have broken away from the contained life of Sevilla.

The morning of the third day we cut inland into the sparsely-populated mountain country between Ronda and the sea, an area famous for its rugged beauty and its bandit and smuggler bands of the past. As the day waned, we came upon a small ranch, from the doorway of which a white-haired old man stood observing us.

«*Buenas tardes.*»

«*Buenas tardes.*»

«Can I serve you in some way?» he questioned, looking us over critically, his eyes softening a little as they took note of our two spare donkeys loaded down with provisions and belongings.

«We seek nothing but the honor of having you join us in a cup of good Valdepeñas *tinto*,» my friend answered with Spanish formality, patting one of the large leather wineskins carried by one of the donkeys.

«*Con mucho gusto.* With much pleasure,» he replied. «Do one of you play the guitar?» he asked, nodding at the donkey that was carrying the guitar.

«I do,» I said, «and my partner is an illustrious gypsy *cantaor*, famed in all of Andalucía.»

The old man's interest quickened, although he asked doubtfully. «And you, being a foreigner, know well the flamenco?»

«Of course, my friend. My mother is Spanish, and I have lived in Spain many years.»

This was my time-tested answer which puts all wrongs right. The wine flowed, and soon the old man's family returned from tending the sheep and goats and joined us. They sent for the one neighboring family, and amid singing, playing, animated conversation, and a dinner of *garbanzos* and lamb meat, we became good friends. During the

course of the evening the old man told us of a small livestock fair that was to take place in a mountain village two days distant by donkey. He was leaving for it the following day with his sheep and goats, and he invited us to join him, explaining that it was customary for the fair to be highlighted by a gypsy wedding, or weddings, depending on this year's crop of young lovers, followed by days of celebration. Gypsies traveled to this fair from considerable distance and, the old man explained, the festivities would certainly be worth the trip. He thought that we should have no trouble there, my friend being gypsy, and both of us flamencos, an unbeatable combination of door-openers for such an occasion. It sounded like a fine idea, and with a click of earthenware mugs we toasted the trip.

At dawn we rounded up the old man's flock and headed north. We passed through untamed mountain country spotted with cave openings, swooping hawks, and an occasional wild boar. It felt good to ride alongside the tinkling animals, feeling the hot sun on our backs and listening to the talk of the garrulous old man.

«*Bien*, apprentice shepherds. I hope you'll forgive me if I talk too much. We rarely have visitors in these parts, and I get lonesome for someone new to exchange impressions with.»

«How many years have you lived in these mountains?» I asked.

«I was born in the village where we are headed around 1890 — I'm not sure what year — and except for a few trips to Ronda, I've never been away from here.»

«*Ozú*,» exclaimed the gypsy, «many years! Then you must have seen a few bandits in your time?»

*Sí*, many of these caves hereabouts were hideaways for them. The bandits were like everyone else, some good and some bad. It was always necessary to watch one's women, and to carry a gun when tending the animals, but generally they would leave us poor people alone. They used to make raids on the rich folks in some of the bigger towns, or on the stages on the Ronda road, and then come down here to hide. Fortunately they usually had money and women with them. It became more dangerous when the *Guardia* started to clamp down as they could not raid successfully and they had to come to us for food and wine. I remember when they got drunk they would sometimes have knife fights to the death over a woman, or an insult, or merely for the desire to fight. They were dangerous people, put basically like everyone; some good and some bad. And *coño!*, *qué flamencos.*»

When conversation fell off, the gypsy would improvise *cantes*, usually humorous, about the animals, making the old man glow with warmth. He was truly an animal lover, treating the animals as humans, recognizing their needs and moods through long years of looking after them.

*Ay qué burro, qué bueno es;  
A ese burro de punta, tanto le gustan las borriquillas...*

*Ay what a donkey, how good he is;  
That one leading the line, who is so crazy about girl donkeys...*

«I've never heard that one before,» said the old man, laughing.

«Of course not. I just made it up. At least part of it,» the gypsy replied, pleased with his creative success.

«*Oye*, Tumba,» I said, calling the gypsy by his nickname. «tell me, what is so extraordinary about a gypsy wedding? Does it differ so much from a *payo* (non-gypsy) one?»

«*Caray*, is it different! A gypsy wedding is the most exciting thing you'll ever see. And what a celebration afterwards! We're the only people in the world who know how to marry properly. It begins with the *novio* (fiancé) and his friends 'kidnapping' the *novia*, usually with her consent, and carrying her off to the house of his parents. Then emissaries are sent to contact the girl's parents, to obtain their consent. If it is given, the date is set, and all of the relatives and friends of both families converge on the chosen spot, abandoning all of their pursuits for at least three days, the minimum length of a respectable celebration. Often several marriages are arranged for the same time and place, with the resultant celebration being something barbarous.» The gypsy's eyes shown with enthusiasm, obviously remembering distant pleasures. «The test of the girl's virtue is in effect the marriage ceremony; the white silk handkerchief is inserted, and if it becomes stained with the blood of the girl, the ritual of celebration begins. The girl is covered with a deluge of flowers from all directions, and then the ceremony of the adoration of the bride is effected by the parents of the couple falling on their knees around the girl and dancing a dance of the upper torso and arms. The bride and bridegroom are then taken into the bedroom and the *alboreás* (1) are sung. They are truly fine and gay. This is later followed by the bride performing a marriage dance in the middle of a circle of gypsies, who heap upon her showers of almond blossoms. This is usually the last of the rituals, and from then on it is every man for himself until he is too exhausted to continue celebrating.»

We were climbing continually into a green splendor of cascading streams and snow white clouds. There had been a heavy rainfall that spring, which had caused the slopes to blossom with a rash of wild flowers and small animal life. Far below us to the west a little white village nestled in a valley, its houses like mushrooms against the green valley floor. The air felt fresh and clean.

(1) See *Alboreás* in the Part III Encyclopedia for a more complete description of this ceremony.



«Dios, qué bonito!» breathed the old man. «I've lived here 70 years and have never gotten over the beauty of spring in this *sierra*. Wait until you see the village where we go. It is out of a fairy tale. It has no roads, and is only accessible to donkey caravans and with great difficulty donkey carts. There are only cobblestones and flowers and wild grass for streets, the houses have red-tile roofs and are newly white-washed every year, there are plants and flowers in every window and balcony, and there is a man dedicated solely to picking up the litter in the village. And there is a beautiful clear stream that runs along the eastern edge, lined with willows and poplars.»

That night we camped on a level spot on the side of a steep, pine-sprinkled slope. A nearby stream swirled downhill, mixing its persistent gurgling with the crackling of our fire. We were content and above worldly preoccupations. The old man made us a steaming-hot mountain drink, a real *quitapenas*, consisting of red wine, cognac, lemon, and a little sugar. Two other donkey caravans had joined us, spotting us from across the narrow valley, and an interesting discussion was launched concerning the gypsies and their niche in life. Some (arguing in the Spanish way, not necessarily out of conviction but out of the desire to prolong the discussion) argued that the gypsies are a «blot» on society, while others maintained that the gypsies led the only plausible way of life (referring to the true gypsies as yet untainted by modern civilization).

«That they have no ambition, that they refuse to work?! And you consider these failings? *Hombre*, don't you realize that this «ambition» that you praise is the greatest motivating evil the world has known. One must have principles *or* ambition, as these two forces are instinctive enemies and are constantly at each others throats. Woe on the man who has both, for he will have a raging turmoil inside his person. For ambition, in the modern sense of the word, is the desire to 'get ahead', and it is a rare man who can 'get ahead' without sacrificing his integrity and his principles. And this other thing that you consider a fault: the refusal to work in some hated job that the *payo* takes merely to make money, or gain prestige, or 'get ahead,' or what have you. This rejection of work is the greatest of gypsy virtues! We refuse to prostitute our integrity in this way. We prefer to obey our natural instincts, although we may suffer more and work harder in obeying them than we would taking a soft *payo* job and wasting away our lives. Besides, who has the superior intelligence; he who works unhappily within the System, or he who pursues his own interests and remains above the System?» This speaker was a dark-skinned young gypsy with considerable reputation as a poet.

«Claro está,» spoke up an obviously respected old man, the leader of one of the newly-arrived caravans who gave the impression of being some sort of tribal wise man or witch doctor, «it is clear that the

gypsies have outlived their age. God meant for us to live off the fat of the land, moving from place to place feeding on wild fruits and fowl and abundant animal life, never abusing as the *payo* does, never depleting our sources like fools, never causing the extinction of entire species of animals, never exploiting, but merely taking what we needed. But now, through a complex puzzle of cause and effect not even understood by the *payo* himself, all the lands have fences, the fruits and domestic animals owners, and the wild life is disappearing because of its exploitation by the so-called 'civilized' people. The gypsies should have been cut up for steaks along with the rest of the wild life, because we no longer belong. If we wish to follow our natural instincts, to pursue our way of life, to retain our integrity, we have no other recourse but to steal our daily food and to camp on the property of others. The fool *payo* does not understand that we are the last of God's children, and they are merely slaves to a system which reduces their lives to insignificance. Their instincts are moved when we come into sight, they momentarily realize the purposelessness of their existence, and they are beset by envy and longing. But instead of joining us, they chose to hate us. We have always been a threat to their serenity, we have always made them see the absurdity of their lives, and they have chosen to drive us away, to banish us from their lands and their minds as one will banish a wrong from his conscience.» The snow-white hair and nearly black face of the speaker gave him a primitive appearance in the firelight sharply belied by his words. «We are the symbol of everything that they lack; integrity, individualism, freedom. They cannot permit the gypsy to be the constant reminder of the ball-less void of their lives, so they have humiliated us, attempted to break our spirit, banished us to city slums... they have truly sinned by denying God's children their intended existence.»

«One has but to think of the impertinence of the *payo*,» said our old man, himself a *payo*. «They 'discover' lands that have been inhabited for thousands of years by several civilizations, and they proudly plant their flag and claim the land for their country. Not a thought is given to its present inhabitants, unless the 'discoverers' try to soothe their consciences during their plundering, murdering, and exploitation by deceiving themselves and the world into believing that they are committing their crimes in the names of Religion, the State, and Progress.»

«You are right,» the poet replied vengefully. «It is that mankind is consumed with greed, lust, and a doltish possessiveness. Why can they not leave the lands free, as God intended? How do they have the impudence to place a price on God's real estate? To me, all of civilization paints a bile-retching picture of the strong abusing the weak. Ambition, egoism, and violent stupidity invariably are triumphant over integrity, principles, and goodness!»

Christ, I thought, can these be the ignorant, immoral gypsies that my Spanish friends and acquaintances are constantly belittling? Gypsy reasoning may be innocent and impractically honest, but next to these people my cunning friends have little to feel superior about.

The gypsies talked on, of the trials of their lives, their difficulties and disappointments, and as they talked, they became more and more depressed. Their depression became profound and directionless and morbid, almost like an orgy of despondency. They sank into the black and bottomless, but one could sense that, like all depressives, they were spurred on by a certain unconscious pleasure in their very suffering.

Talking was no longer enough. Their expression, as always at such times, turned to poetry and song. I began playing a slow, melancholy *siguiriyas*, and the poet stood up by the fire and dramatically recited one of Lorca's *cante jondo* poems, describing a *cantaora* singing to a dancer robed in long, black trains of silk, symbol of death.

*Lámparas de cristal  
y espejos verdes.  
Sobre el tablado oscuro  
la Parrala sostiene  
una conversación  
con la muerte.  
La llama,  
no viene,  
y la vuelve a llamar.  
Las gentes  
aspiran los sollozos.  
Y en los espejos verdes  
largas colas de seda  
se mueven.*

*Crystal lamps  
and green mirrors.  
Upon a dark platform  
la Parrala sustains  
a conversation  
with death.  
She calls,  
death does not come,  
and she calls again.  
The people  
are enveloped by her sobs.  
In the green mirrors  
long trains of silk  
move.*

Desolate *cantes* followed, each further fomenting the dejection of the impressionable gypsies. Moments such as these incite the *jondo* in men, and the miracle of the *duende* occurs; for the *duende* is the exposure of one's soul, its misery and suffering, love and hate, offered without embarrassment or resentment. It is a cry of despair, a release of tortured emotions, to be found in its true profundity only in real life situations, not in the make-believe world of theatres and night clubs and commercial caves as a product that can be bought and sold and produced at will.

A moving *soleá* by a wild-eyed gypsy from Jerez:

*Por ti abandoné a mis niñas,  
mi mare de penita murió;  
ahora te vas y me abandonas,  
¡no tienes perdón de Dió!*

*For you I abandoned my little girls,  
my mother died of sorrow;  
and now you abandon me...  
may you be eternally damned!*

A chilling *fandangos de Triana* by Tumba:

*Una mujer se moría  
sus hijos la rodeaban  
y el más chico la decía  
Mamá, mirame a la cara  
no te mueras todavía...*

*A woman was dying  
her children surrounded her  
and the smallest said to her  
Mama look at my face  
don't die yet...*

A forlorn *playera* of a loved one lost:

*Detrás del carrito  
lloraba mi madre:  
no lloraba agüita,  
que lloraba sangre.*

*Behind the funeral cart  
sobbed my mother:  
she didn't weep tears,  
she wept blood.*

As the gypsies sang, the campfire caused fleeting visions, now flickering on a rock, now on a tree, of the black-robed, dancing figure of death reigning over her terrible domain: the tragedies of unfortunate love; a dying mother surrounded by her horrified children; the cart of the dead rumbling its burden to the grave, a stricken mother stumbling blindly behind... The singing carried long into the night on the side of that lonely mountain, far from civilization, and finally an indescribable feeling surged to the surface; the moment arrived when mature men could weep cold, grim tears, lamenting the twisted fate of their lives, their race, and all mankind.

\* \* \*

The village was as the old man had described. It smelled of grass and flowers and animals, and it exuded an enchanted feeling of the past, before there were machines or fallout, when the stars were still a mystery and the moon romantic, and when each region of the world had its own personality. People were arriving by horse, mule, and donkey back, many with their flocks of animals to be sold or bartered, others solely to participate in the wedding celebrations.

The old man, Tumba, and myself, together with our new friends of the previous evening, set up camp in a select grove bordering the rushing stream. We noticed that it was ideal for flamenco, having a level clearing in the middle of the grove. We hung the still brimming wineskins on trees, dug a barbecue pit and set up a spit, put the animals to graze, and settled back to watch the activity. Everyone was in the state of fine spirits always caused by the anticipation of a good time. The few gypsies with horses were prancing about with their women balancing effortlessly on the rumps of the horses. Others were in groups talking animatedly, and still others, like ourselves, were resting up for the big blast. There were going to be no less than three weddings, and the competition between the celebrants was expected to be fierce. Who could have a better time longer, drink more, sleep less!?

Our camp was unexcelled for popularity. We had much to offer: two skins full of good *tinto*, an outstanding singer, renowned gypsy intellectuals, and phenomenon of phenomena, a «*guitarrista americano*». The old man, as was his yearly custom, had singled out two of his best sheep for roasting, and everyone was invited to partake of the sizzling, smoke-flavoured meat. This was, as he explained, his once-a-year fling, and there wouldn't be many more. He was having an absolutely delightful time, half-tight at all hours, and rollickingly gay. Most of the celebrants were old friends of his, and with each he insisted on sharing remembrance cups of wine and of showing off his flamenco friends.

«*Anda, primos, the bulerías,*» he would urge, and when we started

off he would jump into the clearing and begin dancing. When tight the old man was a natural comedian, and he would have all of us roaring with laughter. Hearing the *jaleo*, other people would run up, and the old man always managed to select as his dancing partner the prettiest *gitana* in the crowd, whom he would set about «winning» with more antics. Then Tumba, with a wink, would dance in and sing to the *gitana*, pretending to woo her away from the old man, who would respond with sham indignation and stage a mock battle with Tumba; all in perfect time to this difficult rhythm. The gypsy girl, entering into the spirit of the dance, would flirt unabashedly with them both, and then, with a flip of her head and a saucy turn of her body, leave them and dance back to her boyfriend. Other gypsies would soon be dancing and singing and playing their guitars, competing, outdoing each other, and the mountain seemed to vibrate with joy. The *bulerías*, the *alboreás*, the *rumba*, the *tangos*, the *chufas*, all of the merry *cantes* and *bailes* were sung and danced. The weddings took place in the manner that Tumba had described, and for four days the celebrating continued; four days of laughing, loving, love-making, the gypsies driving themselves to a wild frenzy, tearing at their clothes, but always good-humored and staying within certain gypsy limits and laws regardless of their delirious drunkenness.

The whole village took part in the celebrations. Small children and old women danced gaily in the streets, old men sang with cracked voices, and gnarled working hands played antique guitars. Wine could not be purchased. It was everywhere, and it was free. The simple village houses were open to all. Romance was natural and without complications, and strangely innocent and clean. Pacts were made, promises were whispered, only to be forgotten with the next day's adventures. For four days and nights our campsite played host to the composite caprices of wine, love, flamenco, and gaiety.

On the fifth day it happened. No one knows quite how or why. A flash of knives in the village bar, and a gypsy, unknown to us, fell with his heart punctured. The celebration died with him; the craziness filtered away and left the bedraggled remains of four tumultuous days and nights. The knifed man was buried further down the mountain, and the wailing of a gypsy song of mourning carried eerily to our campsite. A weariness and depression settled over the village like a dense fog as the voice from downstream, raucous and miserable, sang of death, hopelessness, the futility of life:

*Con las fatiguitas de la muerte  
a un láito yo me arrimo;  
con mi arma destrozé  
sufro mi sino...*

*With the weariness of death  
I creep to one side;  
with a soul void of hope  
I suffer my destiny...*

After a time the voice stopped, and the oppression began melting away before an overpowering fatigue that could no longer be ignored. Senses were numb and minds blank with tiredness as the tempestuous gypsies fell to the ground, exhausted. The celebrations and the mourning had finally ended.

Across the clearing village lamps blinked out one by one, and an occasional dog challenged the infringing darkness. Small night sounds crept stealthily about as the campfires flickered low, and the gypsies succumbed to a deep, unmoving sleep.

## J U E R G A

The *juerga* (flamenco session) began at my place at about 10 p.m. I had an ideal set-up in the Barrio Santa Cruz, the picturesque old Jewish quarter in Sevilla where summertime flamenco can be heard issuing from surrounding plazas. Of course, outdoor *juergas* are against the law now, but they go on just the same, reminding the old-timers nostalgically of the gay, wide-open Sevilla of thirty years ago.

«*Leche,*» they confide, «how you would have enjoyed Sevilla in those days. Down by the *Siete Puertas* (1) every building had a bar, and every bar flamencos. Sevilla had the reputation of being the gayest town in Spain. It was a kind of tonic; people came from all over Spain to escape their lives and problems in the activity of Sevilla. Now they prohibit singing, dancing, and even the guitar in the bars. It is truly a changed, sad city.»

But this particular *juerga* was anything but sad. It was one of the many that we had at my place, which were the scandals of the neighborhood. Inappropriately, that romantic tangle of old crooked passages and hidden gardens is inhabited by traditional families with their noses to the social grindstone. They greatly disapprove of gypsies and flamencos in the neighborhood, and more so of people who entertain them.

The *juerga* was one of the good, serious ones. The artists and the audience were few, and carefully chosen for their ability, knowledge, and compatibility. There were two *cantaoras*, a *bailaora*, and a guitarist, four of Spain's non-commercial best, and five listeners, all devout *aficionados*.

We started out with good Jerez wine, olives, fried fish, *chorizo*, and conversation, encouraging the old-timers to reminisce about legendary flamencos, and the merits of contemporary ones. They would illustrate their points by singing, or playing, passages of former greats, often comparing them with present styles.

A discussion of two of flamenco's legendary *cantaoras* arose, and one of the singers, Juan Talega, expounded an interesting comparison:

«Antonio Chacón, of course, was a far superior singer, but Manuel Torre, when in the mood, *era único* (was in a class by himself). His

(1) The *Siete Puertas* (Seven Doors), formerly also called La Europa, is a bar which still exists in Sevilla, and which used to be the center of Sevilla's flamenco life.



*cante* struck straight at the heart in a manner that was unbelievable. Chacón, also, was capable of evoking great emotion, but Torre had a *duende* that only one in a million possesses. The trouble with Torre was that unless he was moved he could not sing at all, while Chacón always sang beautifully.»

Then Juan, who had been a personal friend of both, demonstrated the differences in their styles and approaches to the *cante* in a manner that would be invaluable in a good anthology.

As the wine took effect faces became illuminated and gaiety paramount, and *cantes por bulerías* irrepressibly bubbled forth, intermixed with a maze of gypsy guitar *falsetas* (passages) and an occasional dance. The *juerga* was soon in full swing, and the music and dance flowed, seriously or lightly as moods changed, into the early hours of the morning. How dawn arrived so quickly no one could explain, except that in a good *juerga* hours seem to pass as minutes.

Finally we became restless, and the *juerga* began developing into good-natured hell-raising. We decided to go out to a neighboring village, a famous outpost of flamenco, for coffee and *aguardiente* and whatever adventures might arise.

Upon arriving we installed ourselves in a local *taberna*, and before long were joined by the cement factory workers who began dropping in for their early-morning *copitas* (eye-openers). (By the time they had both eyes open more than one decided that work could wait, and joined in).

And the *juerga* carried on, and grew, and grew; we soon outgrew the little *taberna*, and spilled up the street to a larger, more central *café* where we were joined by still more of the local flamencos.

The town was up and about by now, which added color to the festivities. Groups of *chiquillas* hazarded by to the accompaniment of devastating flattery (so we thought) and irresistible flamenco. We were the shameless recipients of dagger-like stares thrown by indignant, Mass-bound women in black. The old fellow from the hardware store down the block closed shop and joined us. A few bankers, lawyers, and doctors embarrassedly skittered in, supposedly out on business calls. The festivities became such that even the eternal domino game broke up when an apprentice bartender leaped on the table and danced until he went tumbling, table and all.

The proceedings were becoming a bit scandalous, a local *guardia* pointed out, in view of which one of the more enthusiastic *aficionados*, a local bull breeder, prudently suggested we move out to his *finca* (ranch); we did, en masse.

By this time the *juerga* was developing into a town *fiesta*, and we were joined by many of the village adventurous. In the corral of the *finca* the breeder broke out one of his *uteros* (young fighting bulls), which proceeded to inflict minor injuries on wine-reckless *afi-*

*cionados*. After a few such one-sided encounters, the town hopeful finally jumped in and showed us how to fight, passing the bull time and again with serious *naturales* and *manoletinas* to thunderous shouts of «olé»!

«Another Manolete,» his admirers claimed.

«Veremos. We'll see,» replied tough old-timers, who had too often seen young flashes wither away.

Finally the boy turned his back on the bull and stalked to the corral wall, displaying by his coolness his complete domination of the bull. His followers could contain themselves no longer; up on their shoulders he went, to be paraded about the *finca* in heroic confusion.

By now countless local *aficionados* were dancing and singing in large groups about the patio, and the din of boisterous singing, laughing, and shouting began to make our heads throb. During the proceedings some gypsy girls chanced along, and one of the singers proposed that a group of us escape to the tranquility of his place in Alcalá. He is a very fine singer, but one of the non-commercial, non-prosperous breed, and his «place» is a cave cut into a hillside overlooking the river Guadaira, just below the ruins of an old Roman castle. Who could resist the idea.

On arriving we lounged about at the entrance to the cave, sipping *fino* and feeling mellow and somehow exalted after our night of *juerga*. Below us women washed clothes in the river, and nude children played blissfully in the high grass along the edge. A donkey stood picketed nearby, watching us with ancient eyes as God must watch fools in their folly. I began stroking the guitar softly, lazily, and the girls sang romantic verses in low, caressing, gypsy voices...

*La luna es un pozo chico,  
las flores no valen nada,  
lo que valen son tus brazos  
cuando de noche me abrazan...*

*The moon is a little well,  
flowers are worth nothing;  
what is of value are your arms  
when at night they embrace me...*

As the music blended with faraway sounds, an overwhelming sense of peace pervaded the group. For the moment we were all brothers, differences forgotten, prejudices dissolved...

Across the river distant olive groves simmered in the afternoon sun, and time, and the *juerga*, droned contentedly on...

## FLAMENCO AND THE BULLFIGHT

Flamenco and the *Fiesta* (spectacle of bullfighting) are deeply related. This connection is undeniable, and vital for an understanding of either. Both stem basically from the common people, and they stir the same basic emotions and passions. Both are given flashes of erratic genius by gypsies, and a sense of indomitable steadiness and responsibility by the Andalusians. And they have in common another important factor: they are the two most probable ways that the commoner can break out of his social and economic level.

This relationship has been dealt with often, but is still little understood. The guitarist Sabicas has tried to capture it on his record «Day of the Bullfight». The poet García Lorca wrote inseparably of flamenco and the bulls. González Climent dedicated an entire book to the psychological and physical ties between the flamenco dance and song, and the *Fiesta*. My brief contribution follows, spiced with the fabulous poetry of García Lorca:

Late in the afternoon on bullfight days the sun slants menacingly against the irregular geometry of Andalusian villages, illuminating the stark-whiteness of humble houses crowding haphazardly about churches, Moorish ruins, and, symbols of Andalucía, bull rings.

On these days the air is charged with excitement, anxiety, fear... and a source-less undercurrent of a flamenco guitar, sounding at first slowly, clearly, profoundly, and then growing louder and raspier and cruel as the blood of man or beast spills to the sand...

*A las cinco de la tarde.  
Eran las cinco en punto de la tarde.  
Un niño trajo la blanca sábana  
a las cinco de la tarde.  
Una espuerta de cal ya prevenida  
a las cinco de la tarde.  
Lo demás era muerte y sólo muerte  
a las cinco de la tarde.*

*¡Que no quiero verla!  
Dile a la luna que venga  
que no quiero ver la sangre  
de Ignacio sobre la arena (1).*

*At five in the afternoon.  
It was five sharp in the afternoon.  
A small boy brought the white sheet  
at five in the afternoon.  
A basket of lime was already prepared  
at five in the afternoon.  
Everything else was death, and only death,  
at five in the afternoon.  
I can't stand to see it!  
Tell night to fall;  
I don't want to see the blood  
of Ignacio on the sand.*

The eternal guitar plays on, and its *duende* seeps into *aficionados*, the walls, the wine, everywhere, and makes the village vibrant and explosive. It does not subside until long after the bullfight and the inevitable *juergas*, and even then never completely disappears.

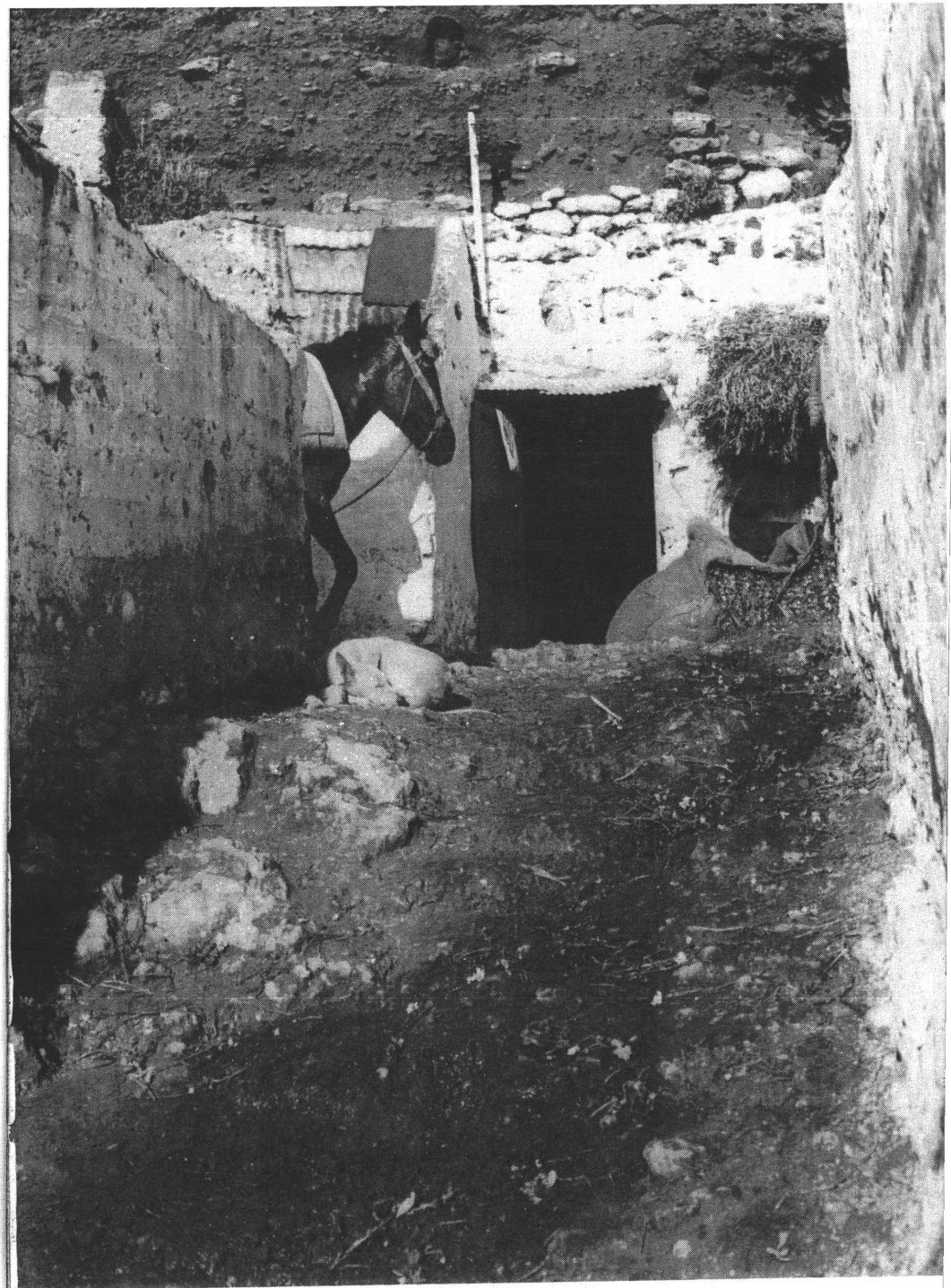
For this guitar is the soul of flamenco, the soul of bullfighting... the timeless essence of Andalucía.

*Empieza el llanto  
de la guitarra.  
Se rompen las copas  
de la madrugada.  
Empieza el llanto  
de la guitarra.  
Es inútil callarla.  
Es imposible  
callarla.  
Llora monótona  
como llora el agua,  
como llora el viento  
sobre la nevada.  
Es imposible  
callarla.  
Llora por cosas  
lejanas.  
Arena del Sur caliente  
que pide camelias blancas.*

(1) From «Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías», by Federico García Lorca.

*Llora flecha sin blanco,  
la tarde sin mañana (1).*

*The cry  
of the guitar begins.  
The crystals of dawn  
shatter.  
The wail  
of the guitar begins.  
It is useless to silence it.  
It is impossible  
to silence it.  
It cries monotonously  
like water cries,  
like wind cries  
over frozen peaks.  
It is impossible  
to silence it.  
It bemoans  
distant things.  
It is the hot Southern sand  
craving white camellias.  
It is an arrow without destination,  
the afternoon without tomorrow.*



*Photo: D.E. Pohren*

*Breeding places of flamenco.* Many flamencos lived in Andalusia's caves, such as the one above, hollowed out from the base of the Roman castle in Alcalá de Guadaíra, near Sevilla.

(1) «La Guitarra», by Federico García Lorca.





Photo: Ira Gavrin

*Breeding places of flamenco.* Nearly everyone sang in Andalusia before the noise of mechanization and the haste of progress took their toll. The muleteers, for instance, invariably sang away the boredom of their long treks.

## GYPSIES

*That which is Gypsy  
is found in the surge of blood  
and in the grooves of bands...*

SOLEARIYAS

The gypsies in Spain have various class distinctions and ways of life. There are those who have entered wholeheartedly into the «civilized» *payo* (non-gypsy) way of life. Others have accepted some *payo* customs, but remain on the fringe. And others, a small minority, have remained true to their traditional way of life, and have thus far rejected *payo* society.

Those who have accepted the *payo* way of life wholeheartedly have done so to the extent of actually working steadily, and even opening their own businesses. These people are a relatively respected element in their communities, and in the process have had to sacrifice many of their gypsy instincts and drives.

More interesting are the fringe gypsies, by far the largest group. These are the people who have been lured, or driven, from their natural life on the open road to a life of squalor in urban slums. The exceptions to this are the talented — the bullfighters, flamenco artists, literary people, etc., whom, if they are willing to work commercially, can make enough money for the essentials. But the others, the non-talented who cannot find work (gypsies are not known as good employment risks), or who are convinced that the gypsies are above ordinary work, and should live by their wits alone, usually fare badly on the fringe. Other than work they have only two alternatives: to go hungry, or to become con men. The latter explains the gypsies roaming all large Andalusian towns who approach tourists with offers of women, contraband, and what have you. Fast fingers and basic begging are also common.

The gypsies who most excite the imagination are Spain's nomads. They are the aristocracy of the gypsies, and feel an unconcerned scorn for their «contaminated» brothers and their *payo* ways.

In modern times these nomad gypsies band together in families



or clans, rarely consisting of more than fifteen or twenty members. These people live basically the same life that they have lived for centuries. They are still constantly on the move. They still talk a form of *Romani*, the gypsy language that was derived from the Indian Sanskrit. And they are still one of the few races that can honestly claim a degree of true liberty.

These nomad gypsies travel from natural campsite to natural campsite, doing what they can to provide for their basic essentials. They have an admirable lack of respect for material things, and all they really need is enough food, drink, and clothing to survive. To obtain these essentials they perform, tell fortunes, sharpen knives, trade in horses and antiques (buying useless looking objects from house to house and reselling to antique dealers), and so forth. (Some nomad families even consider these part-time activities «undignified»). Their performances are generally of flamenco, acrobatics, sundry musical instruments, and trained animal pets, and are given in the streets or in taverns for tossed coins. During hard times they are not above raiding chicken coops, orchards, and clothes lines, and they have fame of sometimes stealing for pleasure. They are usually dirty, ignorant of *payo* ways (as we are ignorant of theirs), superstitious, violent, clannish... and at the same time clever, funloving, faithful, tender, proud, individualistic, and (virtue of virtues) free.

I recently talked to one such nomad family that was overflowing a wooden cart drawn by two donkeys. They were twelve and multi-talented. The parents are *cantaores*, and most of the ten children perform flamenco and acrobatics. Before coming to Spain some fifteen years ago, the parents had roamed Italy, France, and the Slavic countries, and seemed to speak six or seven languages more or less fluently (including *Romani*, *Serbio*, Spanish, French, Italian, and Yugoslavian). The father claims to come from an aristocratic Yugoslavian gypsy family that lost its wealth during World War II. He is obviously educated, and talked intelligently and clearly of their life and philosophy. After chatting awhile, I asked him why he preferred his rootless existence (typical *payo* phraseology) to a normal *payo* life.

He replied with a dissertation.

«*Hombre*, do you realize what it is to live with nature, to amble alongside this old cart in the sun and sleep under the stars, to have no ties and do exactly as I damn well please? When we desire entertainment we travel to gypsy reunions and *fiestas*, where there is always plenty of food, drink, and good times. When we need money we perform in town plazas and taverns — what we earn in a week of performing carries us over for a month or two. You see, I have no need for *payo* necessities or luxuries. I have no desire to own a house, or a car, or to go to work everyday like a halfbrain. It seems to me that the *payo* works all of his life for things that he does not

really want or need. He sits in a closed office dreaming of open fields and mountains and beaches, and when he finally is allowed a vacation he travels to a resort area milling with people and pushes his way around for two weeks and spends his savings. He lives in fear and anxiety of his employer, a possible depression or war, old age, and a thousand other things either completely beyond his control or not worth the effort. But we, in our simple existence, have everything that we need to be happy. I have a wonderful, talented family. If we feel like spending the summer on a beach, or in a mountain forest, we do so. We have friends and relatives in all parts of Spain. Of course, there are hardships — the rain and cold, occasional hunger — but the life of no one is perfect. *En fin*, as long as we are left alone, we can't ask for anything more. You look like you understand what I am trying to say. *Verdad?*»

«Yes, I'm afraid I do, only too clearly,» I replied, adding in a soft undertone, more for myself than for the old gypsy, «that's the problem.»

## PROGRESS

Apart from their music, the traditional flamencos are natural actors. Their preferred life is in the streets and *cafés*, where they can see and be seen, admire and feel admired. They enjoy being nattily dressed, and they have an indestructible attitude of being somebody unique. Armed with these assets, and a glass of two of *aguardiente*, they strut like cocks, being at once expansive, authoritative, friendly, condescending, formal, dignified, and, above all, individualistic. They are not ambitious, and are capable of living happily with only the basic necessities. The concepts and developments of progress are incomprehensible to them. They scorn the rat race and its participants, together with such obnoxious modern phenomena as demanding traffic lights, motor-cluttered streets, shining stainless-steel *cafeterías*, and grim, unseeing civilization bustling to no destination.

Inevitably traditional flamenco philosophy will give ground to progress. Materialism, life insurance, grave sites on installments, and pressing demands will take their toll, and self-confident flamenco faces will cloud with doubt and insecurity.

This is progress as it affects flamenco.

## PART II

# THE ART OF FLAMENCO