



## Identification and Style of Traditional Music of Nonoava, Chihuahua

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**ABSTRACT:** In the state of Chihuahua there are musical expressions that achieve identification with their society and culture. Such is the case of the musical style Nonoava, which for more than one hundred years emerged in the Sierra of Chihuahua, and which is still in force. The purpose of this work is to rescue and promote the musical identity mountain region of Nonoava. The musical identity of this town will be revalued through a historical-cultural research work, through the reflection of the regional literature review and interviews with renowned Chihuahuan historians and musicians. It's assumed that it is in the town of Nonoava, Chihuahua, where crystallization of the musical aesthetics formed in the Mexican Revolution is achieved. However, the diffusion of Nonoava's music has been scarce. This first approach aims to find key pieces of this music.

**KEYWORDS:** Traditional music; folk art; traditional cultures; oral tradition.

## Identificación del estilo de la música tradicional de Nonoava, Chihuahua

**RESUMEN:** En el estado de Chihuahua existen expresiones musicales que adquieren una identificación con su sociedad y su cultura. Tal es el caso del estilo musical Nonoava, que desde hace más de cien años surgió en la sierra de Chihuahua, y que sigue aún vigente. Este trabajo tiene como finalidad el rescate y promoción de la identidad musical de la región serrana de Nonoava. La identidad musical de dicho pueblo será revalorada a través de un trabajo de investigación de corte histórico-cultural, a través de la reflexión de la revisión de literatura regional y entrevistas con historiadores y músicos chihuahuenses del estilo. Se tiene como supuesto, que es en el pueblo de Nonoava, Chihuahua, donde se logra una cierta cristalización de la estética musical formada en la Revolución Mexicana. Sin embargo, la difusión de la música de Nonoava ha sido escasa. Este primer acercamiento pretende encontrar piezas claves de esta música.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Música tradicional; arte popular; cultura tradicional; tradición oral.

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### HOW TO QUOTE

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## Introduction

Throughout our history, Mexico's traditional music has been disadvantaged by the dominant hegemonic class. Many of the musical expressions have been retained at the service of various actors for their own interests. Through decades, and even centuries, traditional music is perpetuated in the Mexican unconscious, which helps us to remember our roots, who and how we are in relation to other cultures. In the state of Chihuahua there are some musical expressions that over time have become true traditional expressions. One of them was born in the Sierra of Chihuahua, in the mountain town of Nonoava. This musical expression will be our object of study.

Nonoava is located in the Sierra Madre of the state of Chihuahua. Its territory is made up of mountains, ravines and creeks. Nonoava was founded as a Jesuit mission in the mid-17th century by Father Francisco Arteaga under the name of *Nuestra Señora de Monserrete de Nonohaba*. For many decades the town had little contact with other towns due to some issues related to electricity, as well as the construction of the bridge that crosses the river, the latter was built until the late twentieth century.

Former Jesuit mission from the third quarter of the 17th century. Unfortunately, the origin of the word Nonoava is unknown. It is between the *Concho* or *Rarámuri* languages where its meaning will have to be rescued before it disappears in this dispute of grammatical entanglements. This place is located in the southwest of the state of Chihuahua and is particularly unique for having a unique style of music that, it could be said, is located between *ranchero* and *norteño* (which means northern) (Quezada, 2014). Dozens of Nonoavan people have emigrated to dedicate themselves to music as an alternative to their profession. In turn, an equal number of locals have provided other activities for their survival.

The historical context in which the musical spectrum is generated in this town must have been crucial to the constitution of its characteristic style. It is evident the life situation of the Nonoavan people at the beginning of the 20th century. We're talking about a subject rural population, before, during and until the culmination of the Mexican Revolution

(Quezada, 2014). Chihuahuan society was prone to the ups and downs and social uncertainty during times of war.

On the other hand, in Mexico, the 19th century was one of constant wars, both internal and external. This led to new musical styles being imported into the Mexican repertoire. The wars of Independence brought with them the triumphant reappearance of outlawed rhythms and the appearance of European rhythms. This gives us an idea of how music can be altered or fused as those involved are also changed or modified. It clarifies how a musical expression, which at the beginning may be uncomfortable for a certain sector of society, due to different reasons, can be adapted after a certain period of time. Something similar happened with the European dance rhythms of the 19th century, since, depending on the time, they were discarded and adopted later, depending on who or what social class they represented.

Mexican music in the 19th century was influenced by the echo of European fashions. Estrada clarifies and mentions that a subtle conquest of the sentimental area emerges (Estrada, 1984, p. 12). In this way the foreigner, besides conquering us physically or territorially, also conquers us psychologically and culturally. A clear example is through their imported cultures. The colonist or conqueror imposes through his art the dominant aesthetics. In addition, the winner aggravates the expressions of the most disadvantaged social classes: indigenous and black people. Thus, when we can understand that European music was first imposed, and then assimilated and adopted by the Mexican people.

Estrada tells us that the only moments in which our cultures are linked to their own origins are those of mestizo nationalism and, with greater emphasis, those of indigenous nationalism (Estrada, 1982). The first attempt to nationalize Mexicans through artistic expressions was made by the government formed after the Independence. As it is known, the 19th century was full of wars, both internal and with other nations, so the process of having a generalized identity failed, giving way to regional identities. When the 20th century arrived, and with it the Mexican Revolution, indigenous people raised their voices by force of arms and managed to obtain certain freedoms. The Mexican artist managed to internalize certain musical aesthetics produced during the wars. During the revolutionary

period, in the north of the country, in Chihuahua, a particular style was created in the way of making music. This style is still alive to this day; however, it remains in a certain oblivion: uninformed and biased.

It is necessary to know the traditions of the people of Chihuahua in order to provide an identity and culture in the community. Understanding our history will allow us to conceive that the new direction is a necessity that we can forge from the renovating reflection of the past and the duty of our present action (Estrada, 1982). The people of Chihuahua find themselves in a stage without a solid musical identity, resulting in a lack of sense of belonging. Chihuahua is in a dichotomy of identity as a consequence of its geographic location of belonging to the border with the most influential country in the world and being part of Mexico, a *third world country*. On the other hand, there are few serious studies on the identity of Chihuahua's music. Therefore, Chihuahuan people are in a constant disorientation with their identity and their musical culture.

The traditional music of Chihuahua has been marginalized and has subsisted in some traditional dances of few towns and *rancherías*, as well as in certain taverns of the capital city. In the Nonoavan style, there is an interesting and original musical aesthetic, for which it is necessary to study diverse musical and social elements for its clarification. Unfortunately, this study is against the clock, as this style is constantly influenced by music from other regions.

This study includes a historical literary review, interviews with historians and musicians of the style were made, as well as personal reflections on how a musical aesthetic of brass music was born in Chihuahua from the mid-19th century until the beginning of the Mexican Revolution. Due to the scarce research and serious publications on the subject, we work with insightful key links, among the historians of regional renown are the master Jesús Vargas Valdés, professor Humberto Quezada Prado, the latter a native of Nonoava, as well as musicians active in traditional Nonoavan music such as Urbano Fuentes, Faustino Villalobos, among others.

A work on Nonoava's musical identity becomes pertinent when it is revalued through a historical-cultural research work. Revealing the richness of traditional music,

reformulating a representative system of the past and with it, the understanding of our present. Given the above, this study intends to identify the musical aesthetics, still in force in the town of Nonoava, Chihuahua. As an assumption, it is proposed that the Nonoavan style emerged or was based on the music that was played just before and during the Mexican Revolution.

### Music in Chihuahua before the Mexican Revolution

In Mexico, during the 19th century, the recently created government worked on the first attempt to integrate its culture, and with it, its music. The military band was an encourager of nationalism with its works awarded to heroes, as well as potpourris, suites and songs (Torres, 2002). The military band, a well-organized institution, began having presentations at the city centers, which resulted in the creation of a musical culture throughout the country. Likewise, this musical influence affected the already-existing musical traditions, which started to gradually mix with the new imported musical aesthetics.

Over time, different European musical styles were adapted to Mexican culture. The wars of Independence brought with them European rhythms such as *mazurkas*, *polkas*, *cracovians* and *redowas*, as well as Italian opera (Monsiváis, 1978). In the north, these rhythms gradually became part of the popular repertoire of the people. This type of rhythms merged with the music of the region, such as the song, the *huapango*, the *waltz*, among others, resulting in a new way of making music.

The musical heritage in Mexico was vast. Estrada explains the musical influence of other regions of the world on the American continent during the 19th century:

Popular and religious colonial music of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian descent, covering almost the entire continent; black music from mainly western Africa, also spread in northern, central, and part of southern America; music from Holland, Ireland, England and France located in the north of the continent; French, Austrian, and Polish music, which came to Mexico with the invasion of Napoleon III; Italian opera music and European ballroom music; imported by the bourgeoisie of the XIX century... (Estrada, 1982, p. 23).

This quote gives us a clearer idea of how great the musical influence in Mexico is, since the musical currents were very different in the various regions of the country due to the fact that in some areas they already had an established musical tradition, which had been molded since the conquest, so the European musical influence of the 19th century had perhaps not such a prominent effect on them. On the contrary, in regions where a style and identity had not yet been defined, it was this music imported from Europe that had the greatest influence on their culture. In northern regions, for example, where the conquest was a longer process than in the south, and perhaps for that reason did not adopt a strong musical tradition, the influence of European rhythms and pieces had a predominant weight in their regional musical expression during this time. This musical influence would not have been possible without the help of the popular grouping of the time: the brass band.

Military music and its groupings had a great impulse at the end of the 19th century thanks to the attempt of nationalism, as well as its brass instruments. Although it is true that there were already solid expressions of musical aesthetics in different regions of the country, it was the brass band, through the federal government, which helped the first attempt at national identity. Thanks to its sonority and versatility, the military band was in constant contact with the Mexican people in different regions of the country. Another important point is that, due to the new technologies in that century, it was easier to build brass musical instruments, which became popular throughout Europe. At this time, there was a great development in brass and woodwind instruments, which had a considerable impact on the military band (Torres, 2002). The brass band became the preferred format for military music, popular and not so popular. It did not take long for this grouping to have an impact in Mexican culture.

In the 19th century, bands could be great groupings for musical dissemination in all societies; however, it was difficult to listen to music, it could only be heard live by means of musical instruments, which were scarce. Some of their performances were serenades, which could be heard in squares, promenades and public gardens (Torres, 2002). The band was of great importance in the dissemination of music, of both cultured and popular character. In Chihuahua, there already existed this type of presentations called serenades.

Chávez (2016) comments that during the 19th century Chihuahua had a considerable number of military bands, whose most relevant presentations, in addition to serenades, were at important events, on significant dates or on official dates at national level. We can get an idea of how people started to find the brass band to their liking. The brass band represented the important sounds and celebrations of the time. It was not long before the people themselves began to create their own popular bands, taking the military band as a model.

During the Reform period, the people began to express themselves musically through the sound of brass music. In the time of Benito Juárez, the formation of civilian bands started, which were rather much smaller (Cortés *et al.*, 2010). It is possible to think that the people were acquiring a taste for this band sonority. The army was made up of the people themselves, which leads us to speculate that if a musician deserted the military band, they could seek employment in the small popular brass bands. However, at that time, there were already musical expressions and characteristic sounds coming from the 18th century and further back, that had been formed in the center of the country, mainly with stringed instruments.

In interviews with historian Jesús Vargas, he mentioned that in Chihuahua, at the time of President Juárez, the existence of brass music groups was still scarce or had little importance. For example, Torres (2002) gives us a piece of information: the ceremonial cry of President Juárez, cornered in Chihuahua, was truly sober, as they only got a drum and a violin (Torres, 2002). We understand why in Chihuahua, at least at this time, music was somewhat limited and lagged behind other places in the south of the country. Still, music was important in both social celebrations and civic events. Before brass music, there was certain music with stringed instruments.

In Chihuahua, in the mid-19th century, it was common to use stringed instruments, such as the violin, guitar and harp, in dances and performances of all kinds. In the interview with historian Jesús Vargas in 2016, he commented that [...] in Tomochi, Jesús María, Parral, in Guerrero, we had very nice photos of musical groups that have diverse instruments. They can be guitars only, they can be mandolins and guitars, a harp can

appear there. This observation gives us a glimpse of what musical life was like during that time in Chihuahua: reduced, with instruments, especially stringed, usually found in mining towns, and whose social function was still moderate.

Through the data acquired, it is suggested that until the Porfiriato, there was no musical expression in Chihuahua characteristic of the region. Vargas himself tells us that the dances were performed with a guitar and a harp: If someone knew how to play the guitar and the harp, the dance was performed, even with only one instrument, and people were not so demanding (Vargas, personal communication, May, 2016). The state of Chihuahua, being far from the capital of the country, lags behind in terms of artistic expressions during the 19th century, since the towns were small and distant. The people of the communities were mainly dedicated to mining, farming and agriculture. Only the mining towns and their main routes, having more *circulation*, would have the possibility of acquiring certain luxuries, such as the musical instruments mentioned above. This artistic expression was performed mainly with stringed musical instruments, which would change a few years later, with the beginning of the Porfiriato.

Since 1877, during the Porfiriato era, musical expression in Chihuahua underwent a change. During this regime, the marching band assumed a crucial role in Mexico's music culture. Torres (2002) mentions that the golden age of bands in Mexico was during the Porfiriato, when there was a certain sense of social calm. There was social stability during the last quarter of the century and the first decade of the following one, where the band musical activity was developing. Some of these factors were those that thrived in the state of Chihuahua.

In Chihuahua, during this period of history, brass music began to flourish little by little. There are records, around 1886, of what can be considered the first music band that depended on the municipality, under Professor Perches y Porras. They were asked to play Thursday and Sunday afternoons and nights at Paseo de Santa Rita<sup>1</sup>, as well as in the main square (Chávez, 2016). These first approaches of music, in strategic points of the city, enabled the people to start having a taste for this brass music aesthetics in general.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, the Paseo de Santa Rita is 1º de Mayo Street and part of Paseo Bolívar Avenue.



Another important event, without a doubt, was the construction of kiosks throughout the country. In these kiosks, popular music began to be presented, such as brass music, which also encouraged dancing. The kiosks started being built towards the end of the 19th century. For example, the one in Lerdo Park, in the state of Chihuahua, was installed in 1894 (Torres, 2002). It is located in the center of the city and was used as a cultural forum for a society in need of art. It is important to mention that the presentations were performed without social distinctions of any kind. Thus, this musical expression became rooted in the Chihuahuan community, and not only in a social sector; it reached the point of obtaining a high cultural value for society, and little by little the love for brass music was born.

In Chihuahua, musical activity gained vital importance at the beginning of the 20th century. In different spaces dedicated to entertainment, music became essential in the life of the people of Chihuahua. The military bands were in charge of the acculturation of Chihuahua. The bands that performed in the city were the 13th Regiment and the 5th Battalion (Torres, 2002). The bands that performed in Lerdo Park were the 3rd Cavalry Regiment and the 12th Infantry Battalion. To complement, the Garrison band also figured in the musical affairs of that year, as well as the band of the 18th Battalion, in 1908 (Chávez, 2016). It is understood that brass music had a very active role, with a weighted taste in the common and social life of Chihuahuan people. In addition, the presentations were outdoors, for the general public, so this music managed to influence in a collective and general way.

It is important to mention that in Chihuahua, not having a popular music as deeply rooted as in other regions of the country, it is possible that brass music was adopted in a more natural way and without many complications of adaptation. Unlike the feeling of loss that accompanies the feeling of "Mexicanness", the *north-central* zone suffers less conflict in identifying with this musical expression due to the collective reminiscence of mestizo traditions of a post-conquest and pre-Revolutionary Mexico. The north, being very distant from the center of the country, remains distant from the important events of the conquest and the multiculturalism with the Spaniards. In the 19th century, the expressions of brass

music started to become popular, so that, when it arose in Chihuahua, brass music obtained a certain preference, adapting itself easily in the social life of Chihuahuan people. Certain elements of this music are adapted to a new and representative style.

Band music became popular among all social classes and became the identity of the Chihuahuan community. These bands brought to society a musical repertoire that otherwise would have been impossible to hear (Torres, 2002). As the years went by, the musical band, consumed by society in general, started to form an important part of the life of the people, an image of their identity and an important part of their culture.

With all this information, it is possible to understand how band music plays an important role in the acculturation of Chihuahua. This region, without cultural expressions of great weight in its past, was able to emerge from brass music as a form of expression that identified them. Another factor that helped was that the state of Chihuahua is characterized by its extensive flatlands, where brass music can travel great distances, attracting more listeners from nearby towns and ranches. This is how the brass band gained strength in this northern region of the country. With all this background, it will be possible to argue how during the Mexican Revolution brass music was of vital importance in the social life of the revolutionary soldier. The brass bands will have a new value within society since they will be in charge of giving an additional force to the revolutionists. This expression becomes a moral, spiritual and identity aid, as well as entertainment within the 1910 conflict.

### **Music during the Mexican Revolution in Chihuahua**

The Mexican Revolution was marked by identity events of the oppressed people. In this social conflict, art did not take long to manifest itself. The new music emerges from its pre-Hispanic origins, in the popular song and its folklore. The Revolution inherited from the Restoration, the sense of collective identity in the social and cultural aspects. The scarce Creole population gave way to the mestizo and indigenous population that grew in the country, a transition towards revolutionary indigenism. For the first time in the history of Mexico, the indigenous people had a voice and influence after centuries of having their

rights and liberties violated. From this historical humanization, new multicultural aesthetic expressions will emerge, based on several centuries of miscegenation.

From 1910 onwards, the Mexican nation will defend a specific culture. Mexicans will promote a way of being and thinking, which will contribute to rebuilding the country from a new perception of its reality (Miranda & Tello, 2011). A new national project will begin, in which the ways of seeing the Mexican will be altered. The brass band will travel alongside the armies, singing their battles, helping the spirit of the soldiers and immortalizing an entire era. With this, the revolutionary era will surpass the barrier of time. It is in this stage where the assumption that a preference for a type of music could arise in Chihuahua is formulated: the brass band. After the end of the revolutionary war, the advance of the media, such as the cinema and the radio, will make the military band give way to other musical genres that will assume their place as spokespersons of the Mexican people.

Mexican bands continued to follow the aesthetic models of the European bands of the time. The bands played a repertoire of opera arrangements, symphonic music, *waltzes*, *quadrilles*, popular repertoire, marches, hymns and other martial music (Torres, 2002). We can get an idea of the extensive musical repertoire they performed. Brass music provided society with a true acculturation, which started being part of their daily lives. But, in addition, the repertoire began to merge: Mexican popular music with European rhythms and melodies, which provided a new musical expression that would come to represent an entire era.

During the Mexican Revolution, as it was a war scene, some of the songs composed tell the exploits of great revolutionists. The *corrido* highlights the qualities of war incitement, making clear the communication between this *chanson de geste* and the military realities. But there were also musical pieces with different uses: for parties, for funerals and, above all, to encourage the soldiers on the battlefield. The Revolution was naturally responsible for the irruption of musical nationalism and vernacular song (Monsiváis, 1978). It is in this period, where Mexican popular music starts expanding throughout the country, that band music exposes the expression of the repressed people.

Military band music started to become an everyday part of the life of the people of Chihuahua. Despite the restrictions due to the hectic times, the city of Chihuahua had five bands of up to 30 or 40 members each, which remained active (Chávez, 2016). Music functioned as a unified identity component, which made the difficult military life more tolerable; in addition to this important music, great activity with brass music is also present in the capital of Chihuahua. The military band was synonymous of identity within the people, a group that represented them through its repertoire and that would serve as a supply for the bands that would emerge within the revolutionary ranks.

Revolutionary music would serve as an identity among the soldiers, both on the military and revolutionary sides. The regents were well aware of the influence of music for the morale of their people, and of the role the band had in the simple life of the towns. Being a musician in revolutionary times had its advantages and disadvantages. The musician starts a dangerous stage, since he will be strongly linked to the troops, with their wars and their conquests.

The musician began to be an object of war, since he could be taken prisoner to follow the victorious troops and accompany them wherever they went. Such is the case of the Nonoavan musician Eliseo Lozano Sandoval, as told by his great-grandson Urbano Fuentes (personal communication, 2016). In 1913, his great-grandfather was captured by the *villistas* to be executed, but when they knew he was a musician, they forced him to play for three days and nights. To his good fortune he was rescued by two of his brothers and his son, and was able to flee.

When a revolutionary commander had a considerable number of soldiers, it was necessary that he also had his music band. This was recruited when passing through the villages; if the band interested the commander, he enrolled it to his forces. However, the easiest way was to take the enemy's band; for example, the *villista* general Maclovio Herrera, when he subdued the 3rd Cavalry Regiment of the Federal Army in Santa Rosalía, he forced the members of the music band to join his forces (Torres, 2002). They began to mix both military and popular musicians, which resulted in a musical mixture where the most important thing was to narrate the events, and of course, to stay alive.

In particular, the Northern Division was always characterized by its great bands, since great musicians of both national and international recognition passed through them. It is said that General Villa enjoyed music, so he began to request bands for his army. The general gave the order not to shoot the musicians and to provide them with protection. This placed the musicians in a kind of state of salvation, as long as they agreed to play for the new victorious troops. Don Salomé organized the Northern Division Band; for this purpose, General Villa designated him 15,000 dollars and sent him to New York to buy the required instruments (Chávez, 2016). This piece of information is interesting, as it shows us the real importance that Francisco Villa gave to his bands. Villa did not spare money to send don Salomé to New York; furthermore, Villa would look for the best quality in musical instruments, musicians, directors and composers. That is when the bands began to multiply.

Throughout the Revolution, numerous bands were formed among the revolutionists. One of the most famous was that of the Northern Division, directed by Rafael Ordóñez (Cervantes, 2010). There were musicians of great quality. Although there are no recordings of those bands, it is possible to understand, from the above mentioned, their great musical quality. In addition to their directors, there were also several musicians who transcended their time.

The musicians of the revolutionary ranks were renowned for their high artistic quality during and after the Revolution. Torres speaks of Genaro Vázquez, born in Chihuahua at the end of the 19th century. He joined the band of Villa's *Estado Mayor* troop in 1914; he also became director of the band of General Álvaro Obregón's *Estado Mayor*. Another was Candelario Huízar, from Zacatecas, who joined the band *Municipal de Jerez* in 1892, where he played the saxophone. In 1914, when the *villista* forces took Zacatecas, Huízar joined the ranks of Pánfilo Natera and later as a musician in the command of the Northern Division, led by Master Carlos Withman (Torres, 2002). Here Torres gives us other interesting names, one of them with a foreign name. Unfortunately, as with the aforementioned people, there are no well-founded documents to help us learn more about these important figures in revolutionary music.

What we can affirm is that in the bands of the *villista* forces there were excellent musicians, with national renown. Vargas mentions: Villa always brought military bands in his armies, they played in the plazas wherever they went. So I can think that those bands brought saxophones, tubas, flutes, clarinets (Vargas, personal communication, 2016). Over time, the Chihuahuan's taste for certain instruments became more defined. Villa continued with the process of acculturation through music, but this time modifying the message towards the revolutionary movement.

The music that was being forged, besides being created within a transcendent social historical period, was under professional musicians with certain renown. Many times, the *villista* forces practically kept these musicians as some kind of hostages. Let's remember that, in the Revolution, being a war, the whole society was in imminent danger. However, it was convenient to know how to play a musical instrument. Even if you didn't find total freedom, at least you could stay alive longer, like the aforementioned Eliseo Lozano, who was apprehended and detained for several days, but instead of being executed, they made him play day and night and, by a twist of fate, he managed to escape from the *villistas*. Even with all the wrongs committed against the musicians, they were able to capture the revolutionary social movement in their music, recreating new aesthetic and artistic elements.

With the culmination of the war, many musicians began to look for work in military, popular or formal government bands. According to Torres (2002), the main artistic period for military bands was from 1917 to 1920. Mexican art began to flourish as in no other era. Nationalism was nourished by all the traditional and folkloric currents of the people, turning them into a national identity. Bands continued to play throughout the country with a certain new repertoire; however, a few years later, a sudden halt in Mexican culture took place. The new government starts tampering with the arts, which leads to a broken and disturbed culture. The new culture will choose expressions that provide control over the masses and that help to exalt the new government. As the years went by, the military band diminished its presence in the towns.

What is remarkable about this stage, is that in Chihuahua a predilection for a certain type of music arose. Vargas says that it was after the Revolution when groups that used the saxophone, which became popular, began to appear and he proposes the hypothesis that the military bands influenced the use of brass instruments (Vargas, personal communication, 2016). At this time, perhaps nowhere else in the country were there so many military bands as in Chihuahua, so their impact on the taste of the Chihuahuan people had to be representative. These expressions were pushed aside by the newly formed hegemonic political current.

Once the armed struggle was over, the country began its restoration stage. With this, began the selection of what would represent the new Mexico to the world, and the music produced during the Revolution was left out. At a cultural level, populism and nationalism were imposed. The composers of the Porfiriato era will be perceived as Europeanizing by the spokesmen of the new musical nationalism.

Let us remember that a lot of the music of the Revolution was based on European rhythms. These, in a certain way, evoked the Porfiriato era, so they were condemned as such and forgotten by the nationalist composers. It seemed that the government wanted to erase any expression that represented the Revolution. It is then that brass music groupings began to be forgotten to give way to the creation of other musical groups, which, although they were part of popular culture, were modified for the convenience of some people in power, such is the case of the *mariachi*.

In the first half of the 20th century, the interpretation of Mexican culture was expanded by an official nationalism and a sacralization of everything that had to do with the Revolution. Culture was now subdued by the new government, with the help of the media. The progress of the cinema and the radio made the military band give way to other genres as representatives of the Mexican sound. These representations were expressions arising from Mexican folklore, but they were also tampered by the media as they pleased. This brought about a distortion of the primary message of traditional music. Such misrepresentation would have great effects on popular culture, as well as on the way Mexico was perceived from abroad. In Chihuahua, however, especially in ranches and

towns, there remains a taste for a type of music made up mostly of brass music. This expression managed to survive in some mountain regions of the state, despite the fact that the media proposed a general aesthetic for the whole country.

### **Nonoava, preserver of revolutionary music aesthetics**

It is in the town of Nonoava where the musical aesthetics formed during the Mexican Revolution, an expression of brass music with popular European rhythms of the 19th century and with melodies to encourage dancing, joy and social dispersion, somehow manages to survive. Known as the Nonoavan style, musical elements similar to those of the Mexican Revolution still prevail to this day in this type of music. There is evidence, which will be discussed later, that the first master musicians who arrived in the town shortly after the Revolution, started learning music through scores of popular brass music repertoire, as Urbano Fuentes recounts of his great-grandfather, Eliseo Lozano Sandoval, who was part of the revolutionary bands, and that when the Revolution ended, he came into town and formed a brass band. The Lozano lineage is still active in the Nonoavan style. In this now traditional repertoire, they still use European rhythms such as *polka*, *redowa*, *schottische* and *waltz*, among others. Rhythms that were commonly used in the revolutionary bands. It is for this reason that the Nonoavan style is an object of study and, for this reason, characteristic elements of its music are presented.

In spite of the fact that until the last quarter of the 20th century, Nonoava was a town without communication routes to the bordering regions, an interesting and unique musical aesthetic sprouted there. The style generated by the musicians of this town was able to be preserved over the years from other trending musical genres. This has turned the Nonoavan style into an element of artistic export. This style has unique musical aesthetic elements, such as its instrumentation, repertoire and phrasing, in the way of playing and interpreting northern rhythms, which makes it culturally valuable.

In rural towns, living needs exceed personal chances of triumph in other areas, which is why it provokes an inertia in cultural expressions (Quezada, 2014). Throughout the years, rural communities have maintained their customs and traditions with few



modifications due to their deep-rootedness and, at the same time, due to a stagnation in their communications and roads as opposed to more industrial cities. The residents of rural communities do not have a consumerist way of thinking nor do they aspire to materialism like most of the people in big cities. Their ideology is of a simple life, work and health. It is then those pure cultural expressions emerge without further additions. The artists begin to express their experiences through art, and don't seek profits, recognition or any other purpose. It can be said that traditional music emerges from the communities of people, where art has the opportunity to grow in due time and finds the purity of expression and tradition of its community.

At the beginning of the 20th century, in Nonoava, a musical study started that would later become what today is a musical tradition and a musical style of its own. The musical study that took place in the town of Nonoava started thanks to the arrival of some actors who knew how to play brass instruments, and who knew how to read music scores. Moncayo (2000) tells us that one of them was professor Jesús José Bustillos. He began to teach music to some families in the community the way it is known: *by notes*. Soon the families began to have musical roots that still prevail to this day. Three family orchestras of music tradition were formed: *The Lozanos*, *The Ochoas* and *The Tabachines*, groups that became known by the advertising the same people gave them. Thanks to this, a style of music that was different from any other northern group from any other region started to grow. With instruments such as the saxophone, the banjo, the euphonium and the flute, their music began to be heard in a unique way.

On the other hand, Quezada says, in an interview from 2016, that there are those who say that around 1900, or shortly before, a man named Eliseo Lozano Sandoval entered Humariza, who arrived carrying a saxophone: I am not sure if it was a saxophone or if it was some other instrument (Quezada, personal communication, 2016). What is certain is that it was a brass musical instrument. Eliseo Lozano began to convince the locals to form a musical group. There is evidence that a musical grouping was formed in the year 1933 or 1934, of which he has a photograph and talks about it. It had five, six members: Inocencio, Inocente, Eliseo and Teófilo Lozano Molina, four brothers, and then a fifth member, who

was Cristín Díaz. Humberto met the latter in town: I did know Mr. Cristín Díaz, he died in town. I don't remember the others, I don't remember meeting them (Quezada, personal communication, 2016). From these two stories, the names of the pioneers of musical education in Nonoava are different. It is agreed that the Lozano family was a pioneer among the musical groups in Nonoava.

From 1936 to 1937, the musical activity was suspended due to the Cristero War, which was a Christian movement, in its second stage. During that time, there was no musical movement. The instruments seen in a photo owned by Professor Quezada are a saxophone, apparently an alto saxophone, a transverse flute, a clarinet, a *bajo sexto* and a *tololoche*. Also, there is someone who does not have an instrument. With the arrival of master musicians to the town at the beginning of the previous century, the history of the music of Nonoava begins; they start teaching brass music, *by notes*, thus the first groups were formed. It is possible that these first teachers had a musical career. They knew the popular brass music. They took from it the various musical instruments, some rhythms and popular repertoire.

One of the traditions of the people of Nonoava were the dances. These took place in dance halls or on squares since the beginning of the 20th century. The famous *tandas* were customary that dealt with the development of the dance according to the music, which were produced in blocks of musical pieces. Here, we see how the music of Nonoava, through dances, starts to become a tradition for the people. Two forms of *tandas* took turns: one for the youngsters and one for the adults. They were diversified by the musical styles that were played in them. *Polkas* and *corridos* were played in the young people's *tandas*, and in the adults' *tandas*, *schottische*, *waltzes* and *redowas*. This reflected the differences in musical taste between generations; however, everything was done at the same party.

Music was not only for dances, since it could be enjoyed at different events in town: weddings, *quinceañeras*, baptisms, birthdays, serenades, parties, which took place in the main square (Moncayo, 2000). The musical group was located in the kiosk and the people scattered around it to enjoy the music. Some people with their beer that was carried in the

saddles of horses. With this peculiar quality in the music and the families introduced to the musical practice, Nonoava, by creating a strong tradition, would soon be known as a *land of musicians*.

The conditions of Nonoava as an end-of-pipe-town prevented it from having a strong media contamination for many years, which also made possible the consolidation and safeguarding of the style without undergoing major modifications. In 2015, the town was named by the State Congress as "Nonoava, land of musicians", which made it a cultural heritage of the state of Chihuahua. As the diffusion of Nonoava's music has been scarce, more detailed research and dissemination works are necessary for its music to be valued. To work in the rescue and revaluation of this music, for the growth and flourishing of Chihuahua's culture. This work intends to find key pieces of this music.

### Identification of Nonoavan music

Traditional music is an idea that is linked to the use of musical expressions in a social content, which has to do with a communal and non-commercial use. It could be said that Mexican traditional music arises from a process of multiculturalism that occurs in a syncretism of constant migrations, which have direct repercussions in the production of different popular expressions and that over time become tradition. In the north of the country, musical expressions are the product of its own historical and cultural experiences that distinguish them from other music of regional tradition in the Mexican territory. The north is not a specific cultural region, but several sub-regions with a particular historical and cultural development.

On the other hand, in the northwestern region, band music is the predominant identity of its population, especially the style known as *banda sinaloense*. The particular geography of the states of Sonora, Sinaloa and Baja California, located between the sea and the mountains and with communication difficulties with the rest of the country, allowed several rhythms of European descent to be maintained among the rural population. It is worth noting that in the mid-20th century, most of the towns in Sinaloa and Sonora had their own music bands. Specifically, the sound of the *banda sinaloense* was

initially similar to that of European brass bands, which led some researchers to place its origin in these regions. On the other hand, Simonett explains: [...] the first *bandas sinaloenses* were formed by people who deserted the military and municipal bands and went to live in the mountain towns, where they took up popular melodies (2004, p. 57). Thus, a very particular style of traditional Mexican music flourished in the northwestern region. However, it is important to emphasize that all northern music has similarities, as well as great differences.

The traditional music of Chihuahua has its beginnings in the music of the mid-19th century in the rural and urban areas, and this remained to the liking of the people until the 20th century. In Nonoava, a certain aesthetic of the time was preserved. Already in the eighties, the first melodies of Chihuahuan music started to become popular in the radio stations of the north of the country.

Some rhythms such as the Czechoslovakian *polka*, the Polish *mazurka* and *redowa*, the Scottish *schottische*, the *quadrilles*, the Austrian *waltz*, among others, were imported into the country through ballroom dances and in the repertoire of both national and foreign military bands. When Porfirio Díaz took power, there was a considerable amount of local compositions with elements of these styles. The composers gave it a comical and political twist, turning the rhythms to the Mexican *polka*, the *corrido*, among many others. As the Revolution spread throughout the north, both the *polka* and the *corrido* became popular musical expressions, as the mostly illiterate society could be informed more by the songs than by the written media. Likewise, couple dancing incorporated 19th century characteristics and trends from the southwestern United States, which popularized these rhythms. The Nonoavan style generated a special and different character, and also because of the people who started migrating to the United States.

The music of Nonoava has continued to have musical influences from other places, which have endured in the style and in the families of musicians. It is from the 1950s onwards when many people from Nonoava, especially men, go to the United States to work as *braceros* (Quezada, personal communication, 2016). These people return to their land with certain influences, including some musical instruments. The clearest example is

the incorporation of the banjo, an instrument from the south of the United States, used in the harmonic accompaniment of Nonoavan music. As a result, the music acquires a distinct and revitalizing character. In Nonoava, music has been performed as a source of survival, as a source of employment for families. There is talk of families that for practical reasons start to form musical ensembles. A clear example is the Lozano family.

The Nonoavan style can be distinguished from other northern styles by a few musical elements: the instrumentation, its rhythms and its original compositions. The instrumentation of a musical group is the main element, the one that produces the color of the ensemble music. During the second half of the last century, the arrangement of a musical group in Nonoava had to have an alto saxophone as the main voice and another one as the second voice, replaced in few groups by the trumpet, the transverse flute, and, at one time, the clarinet; in the strings, the guitar or the banjo; for the bass, the *tololoche* or the *guitarrón*, replaced in some groups by tuba, sousaphone, alto horn or euphonium; and for the percussion, the snare drums.

The dance rhythms most used in the Nonoavan style are the *polka*, the *schottische*, the *redowa* and the *waltz*, all of them of European descent, that in turn were adapted to the needs and tastes of its people. Some of the original music pieces still popular among the public are *Aguas del río Nonoava*, *Por mí, por mi novia*, among others. Such compositions are native to the town and are still standing today. It can be said that due to these factors in the musical composition, the Nonoavan style is an original musical expression, different from the other northern musical styles. It is a way of making music, a synthesis of the music that emerged during the revolutionary conflict.

Although it is not exclusive of Nonoavan musicians, it is common that before starting a piece or between one and another, some of the instruments will sound alone, without agreement or order. Several saxophone notes, with or without sense, can be heard. As if checking that the reed has been placed perfectly and is not damaged or simply to make their presence felt, which for the group means that the piece is about to start (Quezada, 2014). After the previous *musical calling*, the piece begins with the voice of the saxophone, immediately pulling the notes of the instrument in the second voice and so on,

the other instruments begin to join. This is an important quality of the style since the saxophone, on top of usually having the first melodic voice, also acts as a natural director of the group.

There are other characteristic elements in the musical interpretation, two of them are the strumming of the harmony and the marking of the end of the instrument of the main voice. Executing the guitar in the accompaniment of a *polka* or a four-beat piece leads to the obligation of dragging the strumming (Quezada, 2014). It is feasible to understand that this strumming is to complement the void left by the lack of a full drum set of percussion. The peculiar strumming of the harmony does not always go against the beat, but tries to fill musical gaps, with *tremolos* or musical scales. In addition, as it will be examined in the next chapter, the guitar or banjo accompaniment is influenced by the feel of the rhythm of American music, which is known as *swing*<sup>2</sup>.

Another interpretative component is the behavior of the leader of the ensemble, who is always playing one of the saxophones. In this regard, Quezada explains: [...] when a melody that has the same tune has been played enough, the one who carries the singing note addresses the other musicians and just with a look indicates that these are the last chords, that he is going to end the piece whilst he adorns with the well-known and repetitive *closing embellishments* (2014, p. 9). All these callings, known in many other popular music, direct the piece in performance. The *embellishments* used in this music, are original, they have been forged over the years and have been passed down from generation to generation, which makes them the norm. These musical particularities of the style are the ones that differentiate it from other musical manifestations of the north.

The elements described above give us an identification of an original and unique character within northern music. The most important is the identification of a specific musical genre, which society is able to recognize in relation to the whole range of northern music. The characteristic rhythms of European descent, the adapted and original post-revolutionary repertoire, a pair of saxophones with their *embellishments* or *callings*, a transverse flute or other high-pitched instrument that produces the second voices, the

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<sup>2</sup>A way of playing eighth notes in a *triplet*, used in different musical styles.

unmistakable shuffling style of the harmonies and embellishing between the main melodies, among others, become characteristic elements of Nonoavan music.

### Main instrumentation

Because of the variety of instruments used in the Nonoavan region, it is difficult to consider just a few as the main instruments. In this regard, Quezada (2014) helps us by proposing that at least during the second half of the last century the instrumentation of a musical group in Nonoava should have an alto saxophone as the main voice and another one as second voice, replaced in a few groups by the trumpet, transverse flute, and the clarinet at one time; in the strings, the guitar or the banjo; for the bass, in most cases the *tololoche* or the *guitarrón*, replaced in some groups by tuba, sousaphone, alto horn or euphonium; and for the percussion, the snare drums.

The main voice in Nonoava's music, the alto saxophone, which is usually the main instrument and the director of the group, is already a tradition in Chihuahua's ensembles. The saxophone has a series of elements that will help its predilection in this style. At first instance, there is the great sonority produced that competes with any other wind musical instrument. Secondly, the saxophone is designed to have the ability and speed of its predecessor, the clarinet. That is to say, it can play long phrases with great speed and fluency. The greatest quality of this instrument is that it produces a wailing sound. It is not harsh, like the sound of the trumpet or the trombone. Rather, it can play with certain detunings and attacks, which produce a rich interpretation, even reaching sounds similar to the human voice. Jesús Vargas comments about the saxophone:

According to what I have been able to study and live in a certain way, the saxophone was very attractive for the Chihuahuan people. They liked it for one simple reason: the people lived scattered, they lived on the ranches, they lived on the flatlands, and the sound produced by the saxophone is a very evocative sound, it is a very strong sound, which expands in wide spaces, and it is transmitted in a very emotional way. So the pieces that were adapted to the saxophone became popular and the people of Chihuahua started to focus their preference towards certain interpretations (Vargas, personal communication, 2016).

The sound of the saxophone helps its expression to be quite rich, so that it can interpret slow and emotional pieces as well as fast and frantic ones. The open spaces of Chihuahua allow the sound of the saxophone to reach great distances and be very pleasing to the ear. Jesús Vargas believes that Chihuahuan people find very evocative to listen to a saxophone, although he is not sure why. These types of questions are what produce a true artistic expression. In music, they produce in the listener emotions and feelings that no other life experience can give you. The sound of the saxophone has produced some of those emotions in the people of Chihuahua. In short, due to its sound and performance characteristics, the saxophone has become a favorite sound identity for the Chihuahuan public.

The instrument that is inseparable from the saxophone, the one in charge of the second voice in the music of Nonoava is the transverse flute. This instrument functions as an ornament for the main voice. As the highest pitched instrument in the group, the flute manages to compete in sonority with the other instruments. It is very common for the flute to be found playing alternate voices to the main voice, a third or sixth interval in relation to it. Although it can also be played in octave interval in relation to the saxophone. It is said that if you listen to the music of a Nonoavan group from afar, it is the flute and the banjo that can be distinguished more clearly. The flute has the same agility as its saxophone counterpart, which allows them to be a successful pairing. Even though it has a less sonorous volume than the saxophone, the flute manages to compensate by using the higher register of its tessitura, which produces a brilliant sound.

For the harmonic accompaniment, Nonoavan musicians prefer several stringed instruments. The most used are the guitar, the *bajo sexto* and the banjo. The guitar has been one of the favorite instruments for Mexican musicians. It is possible that it was a pioneer instrument in Nonoavan groupings. However, its lack of sonorous power made them look for other stringed instruments over time. For its part, the *bajo sexto*, a Mexican instrument created in the Bajío region, uses double strings, which makes it more sonorous than the guitar. The *bajo sexto* is a favorite of northern musicians because of its great



versatility. In addition to the fact that it produces a beaten, dry sound that is suitable to the northern style. However, it is interesting that the banjo is the most used instrument in the Nonoavan style, and not the aforementioned.

The banjo originated in the southern states of the United States. It was developed in the 19th century by black musicians for rhythmic and accompaniment purposes. This instrument is part of the American Dixieland and Bluegrass music. It is a representative instrument of traditional American music. Quezada (2014) suggests that this instrument was possibly introduced by a Nonoavan person who worked on cattle ranches in Texas or New Mexico, or in the central and northern part of the United States. And at the same time, it cannot be ruled out that it may have arrived from the capital of Chihuahua itself or from the center of the country. It is possible to think that someone of the many workers that moved to the United States brought this American instrument. There is no exact date for the importation of the banjo to Nonoava, but it is estimated that it was around 1950. The banjo was easily adopted in the music of Nonoava, as it is an instrument with a stronger sonority than the guitar and the *bajo sexto*.

The banjo functions as a sound key for Nonoavan style. Nonoavan music is probably the only one that uses this instrument in all of Mexico. With this, the banjo provides a new and unique sound to the Nonoavan musical expression. On one end, it uses woodwind instruments as its backbone. And on the other, the surprise and original factor: the banjo in the harmony. In this arrangement of sounds, only one instrument is missing for the bass sound.

For the low register, the most commonly used instruments are the *tololoche*, the *guitarrón* or some kind of tuba. Certainly, the traditional and most used instrument in Nonoavan music has been the double bass or the *tololoche*. The latter was dragged through out the towns for the parades. If they had to go to other ranches, it was carried tied to a horse or mule. On the other hand, it is known that the priests of the town's church brought the *guitarrón* from some part of Jalisco. This instrument became popular among Nonoavan musicians due to how easy it was to transport, since the sound it produces is sweet and doesn't have a great sonorous force. Another weakness of this instrument compared to the

*tololoche* is that their strings cannot be *slapped* in a simple way, a very used technique by bassists to add percussive notes. The last of the basses used in Nonoava would be a brass instrument.

The tuba, the euphonium or the alto horn started being used in the same way in Nonoavan music. It is unknown how these brass instruments were introduced. Their use was very successful among musicians due to its great sonority, besides the fact that it is more practical to transport than the *tololoche*. With the tuba, the Nonoavan musician could take part in parades without problems, in addition to providing great rhythm support by competing with the sonority of the saxophones. Today, many of Nonoava's most traditional groups still use some sort of tuba among their instruments.

With slight appearances in time, several musical instruments have been incorporated and become obsolete to Nonoavan groups. The most outstanding ones are the clarinet, the accordion and the violin. All of them disappeared very soon mostly due to sonorous causes. The accordion is rather unique in northern music, especially in Nuevo León and Tamaulipas.

The accordion has been a most emblematic instrument in the culture of northern Mexico. In the last fifty years, this instrument has quickly become popular in northern Mexico and in the south of the United States. Jesús Vargas explains that the accordion is a recent instrument in Chihuahua's culture, which started to become popular in the state around the seventies. In Mexico, particularly in the northeastern region, it started becoming popular between the 1940s and 1950s. It came through Tamaulipas and Nuevo León, brought from the state of Texas. From there, it expanded to the rest of the country; however, in Chihuahua the saxophone is more widely used (Vargas, personal communication, 2016). The accordion has a sound that doesn't have much sonorous projection like other brass instruments, for that reason it was not present in most Nonoavan groups. The sound projection of the accordion could not compete with other brass instruments, especially the saxophone.

A woodwind instrument that has been characteristic in both military and popular bands is the clarinet. It disappeared over the years, making place for the transverse flute or

the use of a second alto saxophone. Vargas (2016) tells us that from 1940, until a few years ago, music ensembles using saxophone, sometimes clarinet and flute, were predominant among rural people and towns. This instrumentation of woodwinds in charge of the melody of the pieces is really interesting. First, because they are high register instruments, so the voices between them could be handled in a brilliant and captivating way for the audience. Secondly, as they belong to the woodwind family, all three instruments are agile, which allows the melody to be played at high speed without serious complications, such as in *polkas* for example. Finally, this type of woodwind instrumentation, along with the tuba, gives us an idea of how close the groups were to military bands. It could be said that this type of groups would be a summary of what is a great revolutionary band.

The trumpet, also an instrument of the brass family, of military character, with a strong sound that stands out and matches that of the saxophone, has been left behind by the woodwind instruments; however, it is still used by a group of Nonoavan musicians based in the capital city of the state (Quezada, 2014). It is possible that the trumpet has become obsolete due to how hard it is to play in a fast pace when compared to the saxophone. It should be noted that a large part of the Nonoavan repertoire are *polkas*. These are played at fast speeds, with elusive passages for most instruments. It is then understandable why the trumpet has lagged behind in Nonoavan music with the passing of time. When it comes to this instrument, its problem is not of sonorous character, but of technical difficulties.

## Conclusions

The instrumentation of Nonoava was mainly due to its practicality, its wide sonority and the public's taste. Nonoava, lacking good communication routes, forced its groups to travel on horseback when they were hired in other towns, so they needed instruments that would facilitate their mobility. They would have to be mainly brass instruments, which have more sonority because of their nature. Adding to this the banjo, a stringed instrument that somehow can compete with brass instruments. It was easy to carry a flute, a saxophone, a

snare drum, a banjo, and a medium-sized tuba, instruments that would also provide the required sonority for the dance or celebration.

In Chihuahua, during the 19th century, there was no strong musical expression of identity. The emergence of brass music filled this gap, as it was adopted by Chihuahuan society. This is how the brass band gained strength in this northern region of the country. The brass bands had a new appreciation within society. They were in charge of providing an additional force to the revolutionary soldier. It is in Chihuahua, during the Revolution era, where the preference for a certain type of music arose. At this time, there was nowhere else, perhaps in the whole country that had as many military music bands as in Chihuahua, so their influence on Chihuahuan people's tastes had to be representative.

It is in the town of Nonoava where the musical aesthetics formed during the Mexican Revolution somehow managed to survive. Known as the Nonoavan style, this type of music—even to this day—comprises musical elements similar to those of the Mexican Revolution, such as its main instrumentation and the rhythms used. This style is mostly made up of brass instruments. In its traditional repertoire, European rhythms such as *polka*, *redowa*, *schottische*, *waltz*, among others are still used.

The Nonoavan style can be identified from other northern styles by certain musical elements. The instrumentation of a Nonoavan style group must include an alto saxophone as the main voice, and another one for the second voice; transverse flute; guitar or banjo; *tololoche*, substituted in certain groups by tuba or euphonium; for the percussion, the snare drums. The instrumentation of Nonoava was chosen mostly by the practicality, by its wide sonority and the taste of the public.

Some elements that characterize Nonoavan music are the dance rhythms of European descent, the adapted and original post-revolutionary repertoire, a pair of saxophones with their embellishments or callings, a transverse flute or other high-pitched instrument producing second or octaves voices, the unmistakable shuffling style of the harmonies and ornamenting between the main melodies. It can be concluded that the Nonoavan style is a musical expression different and original to other northern musical

styles. A way of making music that keeps aesthetic elements of the music that emerged during the revolutionary conflict.

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