

The *Centro de Estudios de las Culturas en Guatemala -CECEG-* of the *Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala* was created on July 8, 1967. Like life and society, science is constantly changing and developing. The *Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala* to respond to the new challenges of multidisciplinary research on cultural dynamics, on July 24, 2019, begins a new stage of that center, since its mandate, which the Honorable University Superior Council approved in the "SECOND point, Item 2.1 Sub-item 2.1.1 of the Minutes No. 18-2019 of ordinary session held on July 24, 2019", has as its finality to study culture from a holistic, dynamic vision, in constant construction and as a basis for the development of Guatemalan society, in a contemporary context, characterized by the global interrelation of the different cultural manifestations. finality realizes it by potentiating all the traditions inherited from the studies called "folkloric" in the previous era and responding to the need to understand and study the interweavings of the current cultural dynamics.



# Heritage architecture in the *Cementerio Municipal of Mixco* Aníbal Chajón Flores

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## Resumen

El tratamiento que se da a los seres amados que han fallecido es una de las manifestaciones culturales más relevantes en todas las sociedades. De esa cuenta, en Mixco, desde 1832, se ha utilizado como necrópolis el espacio adyacente al templo del Calvario, construido en 1819, y convertido en Cementerio Municipal en 1888. Así, se han levantado en su interior mausoleos y panteones en estilo historicista, especialmente neoclásicos y algunos con elementos neogóticos, así como aquellos que deben su valor a la antigüedad que poseen. A través de recopilación de datos en documentos conservados en el Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano, así como en libros, revistas y periódicos se pudo recopilar esta breve monografía histórica. Mientras que, para la clasificación de las obras se hizo una inspección física, para tener un registro fotográfico de las obras patrimoniales con que cuenta el Cementerio. Es tarea de todos los mixqueños conservar y poner en valor ese importante legado, parte de la identidad de los habitantes.

**Palabras clave:** cementerio, Mixco, mausoleo, panteón, arte.

## Abstract

The treatment given to loved ones who have died is one of the most relevant cultural manifestations in all societies. From that account, in Mixco, since 1832, the space adjacent to the temple of

*Calvario*, built in 1819, was converted into a Cemetery Municipal in 1888, has been used as a necropolis. Thus, mausoleums and pantheons in historicist style have been built inside, especially Neoclassical and some with neo-Gothic elements, as well as those that owe their value to the antiquity they possess. Through the collection of data in documents kept in the Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano, books, magazines and newspapers, this brief historical monograph could be compiled. While, for the classification of the works a physical inspection was made, to have a photographic record of the heritage works that the Cemetery has. It is the task of all Mixqueños to preserve and value that important legacy, part of the identity of the inhabitants.

**Key words:** cemetery, Mixco, mausoleum, pantheon, art.

## Introduction

Since the pre-Hispanic period, the treatment of the remains of the deceased has been of the utmost respect. With the introduction of Catholicism by the Spaniards, burial patterns changed, creating the concept and space of the cemetery. However, the academic information received in the 18th and 19th centuries encouraged the establishment of necropolises in the outer parts of the towns, especially in the form of legislation from 1832 and 1871. Therefore, cemeteries have been built in all towns

as is the case of the city of Mixco, which has buildings of heritage value that need to be documented and safeguarded.

Since the 19th century to the present, funerary monuments have been erected in the *Cementerio Municipal*; however, the oldest edifications are in the process of alteration or destruction, due to the needs of the relatives of the deceased. Because of this, the documentation of the pantheons and other funerary monuments is proposed to leave data on the works and promote their conservation.

The treatment given to human remains is extremely complex and is related to the cultural concepts that the living have of death. In this sense, the study of each cemetery is of relevance to understanding what the bereaved perceive towards the departure of their loved ones. On the other hand, mourning can manifest itself in architectural works of patrimonial value, some of which are located in the *Cementerio Municipal of Mixco*, with the unfortunate risk of damage or destruction to which they are exposed. For this reason, their documentation is considered relevant.

For the analysis of the information gathered in the fieldwork, we used the concept of identity developed by the Moroccan Hassan Rachik (2006), who emphasizes the relevance of cultural elements in the construction of identity, which consists of a set of ideas that give people security to face the world around them, which is individual and group. On the other hand, the importance of the urban landscape in the development of identity has been identified by José Cabezas (2003) and José

Fernández de Rota (2001), since the abstraction of cultural spaces favors and fosters it, although each generation reinterprets the same references. Finally, for the treatment of the deceased, the Frenchman Louis Thomas (1983) identified that in all societies there is a fear of the decomposing corpse and an accumulation of feelings toward the deceased. In each individual, there is an impact on the experience of death that involves frustration, emotional emptiness, despair due to loneliness and loss, and sometimes guilt. Acceptance of one's death is related to the age of the individual but always generates fear. In the author's opinion, Western culture is the one with the greatest fear of death, due to the predominance of individuality, which has diminished the value of community. This fear is increased in the case of the suppression of religious ideas. Finally, he identified three types of fear: fear of one's death, fear of what happens after death, and fear of the deceased. Moreover, as it is a cultural behavior, it is the adults who transmit it to the new generations.

The general objective of the work was to identify the heritage architecture in the *Cementerio Municipal*, as well as its relationship with the identity in Mixco, Guatemala; while the specific objectives were: to describe the architectural and tectonic elements of heritage buildings; to record graphically the most important elements of the buildings in the *Cementerio Municipal* and to elaborate this historical monograph of the funerary works for the use of teachers and students.

To carry out the research, a bibliographic review of works related to Guatemalan history, mainly from

the 19th to the 21st centuries, as well as art history, was carried out. The available funds on the subject in the historical archives were consulted.

With this research, it is expected that cultural and artistic values will be established that will allow to value of the patrimonial works of the *Cementerio Municipal* for its preservation.

### **Pre-Hispanic burials**

The Mixco area was the seat of a Poqo-Mam group that was conquered by the Spanish and their Mexica auxiliaries in the 16th century. Subsequently, an indigenous town of that name was reduced and was the seat of a local indigenous government..

In all cultures, there have been ways to treat corpses, mainly when it comes to loved ones whose loss causes suffering to the bereaved.

In the pre-Hispanic period, it was customary to bury in family plots, so that each family plot was a residence, a place of agricultural production, and a resting place for the remains of loved ones. The elites had spaces destined for the burial of their relatives, mainly in pyramidal structures, under temples (Varios, 2017; Chinchilla, 2012).

However, the introduction of Christianity, in a manner imposed by the conquerors, changed burial patterns. In ancient Roman society, corpses were cremated with aromatic resins, such as myrrh, and the ashes were placed in urns. It is said that, for the death of an empress, all the myrrh produced in a year was consumed. For their part, the Jews buried the bodies

In tombs dug in caves and, when the process of decomposition had passed, the bones were placed in sarcophagi made of stone or other resistant material. When Christianity separated from Judaism in the first century, several Jewish traditions were preserved, including the treatment of the bodies. On that account, the Roman Christians stopped practicing cremation and used the Jewish procedure.

Since Christianity was not understood by the Roman authorities in its beginnings, the propagation of this religious belief was persecuted. This forced the early Christians to perform their rites in burial places, the catacombs so that the proximity of the remains of loved ones was linked to the ritual.

For this reason, when Christianity was authorized in the empire, it was sought that the tombs were immediately adjacent to the buildings of worship, the first basilicas. The tombs could be subway or adjacent to the churches.

This conception of the treatment of the deceased was the one brought by the Spaniards and imposed in the conquered territory. Thus, along with each Catholic church built, a cemetery was installed. It was preferred to surround the presbytery since it was the most sacred place. The people of the elite could be buried inside the churches. In Spanish cities, there were built subway under the temples. In the indigenous towns, the floor was raised and buried under the floor, but the atriums were also used.

With the arrival of information resulting from the European Enlightenment, it was considered dangerous for health to bury people in places

so close to the residences and workplaces of the living, so cemeteries were created on the outskirts of towns. In the case of Guatemala, this measure was applied until 1832, during the liberal government of Mariano Gálvez in Guatemala and Francisco Morazán in Central America. With the return of the conservatives, between 1838 and 1871, the use of temples was authorized again, but trying to reduce their use, for the same hygienic and health considerations. Therefore, the cemeteries on the outskirts of the towns continued to be used and maintained their importance.

Later, with the arrival of the second liberal era, beginning in 1871, burials in churches were prohibited, with the exception of some very prominent people in the capital's Cathedral (Rivera, 1998). This led to more work in the cemeteries, in addition to the influence of the European artistic style of romanticism, which stimulated the creation of highly decorated pantheons and mausoleums.

Thus, it has been possible to classify the funerary works built in Guatemalan cemeteries into four types and five different stages (Chajón and Morales, 2011). The types are: single-person sepulchers, when they were built for a single person; pantheons, when they are built for two or more persons; and mausoleums, when they are monuments erected for a single person with a commemorative and collective character, and the last one is the columbarium, which consists of niches for graves placed one next to the other along rows built for the purpose. In the capital city, the columbaria of the *Cementerio General* had a covered gallery supported by pillars. Because of the earthquakes of 1917 and 1918

these roofs collapsed and the columbaria were left without protective vaulted ceilings, but the buildings continued to be called galleries.

The five stages are: neoclassical, when the architectural forms refer to Greek and Roman models; historicist, when the formal characteristics allude to a cultural past, such as Gothic, Romanesque, Egyptian, Chinese, or other; the third is modernist, from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where phytomorphic decoration predominates, as it was understood in Europe at that time; the fourth is Art Deco, built from 1925 onwards and where geometrization of forms prevails, to emphasize elegance as understood in Europe and the United States in the first half of the 20th century; the fifth is functionalist, which prevailed from 1950 onwards, which took as a model the architecture developed in places such as Brazil, France and the United States (Chinchilla, 2000; Coll, 1991; Esqueda, 1986; Fontbona, 1988; Ramallo, 1989; Reyero, 1988).

## Historical data

The first cemetery of Mixco was at the back of the parish church, administered by the *Dominicos*. According to the city chronicler, Osberto Gómez (2019), even before 1976 the remains of the perimeter wall could still be seen and, in the part of a house built on the property, the original entrance, which communicated the atrium with the cemetery, is still preserved.

## Calvario

In the 18th century, the Calvario church was built. As in other towns, the friars identified that one way to get

the active participation of the inhabitants in the ceremonies was outdoors, in processions and Via Crucis. Thus, the *Calvario* was established..

In 1819, work was done on the Calvario Chapel, known as the new one. The cost of this intervention was 99 pesos. In 1826, a repair was reported on the plastering and roofing of the dome, for 61 pesos and 2 reales. Meanwhile, in 1828, the roof was repaired again (Andreu, 1810) and it was reported that the building was ruined (Cofradía de Ánimas, 1801).

The church was probably also damaged by the battles fought in the town in 1829. In 1858, it was reported that the building needed to be rebuilt. That year the new work was begun and, by 1860, more than 3,000 pesos had been spent, not only on the chapel but also on the construction of columbaria for burials (Chinchilla, 1858 a). The presence of the cemetery next to the Calvario can be explained by the fact that, since 1832, burial had been prohibited inside the towns.

By 1860 the cemetery was quite advanced, but not completed. This was reported to the Archbishopric by the then parish priest, Sabino de León, in that year:

*Cementerio General* that has been built and has not yet been entirely completed in the *Calvario* cemetery, rising on the collateral sides of the church at the entrance two walls of medium height. In them, a competent number of niches have been built for the burials of both adults and infants to the right of the entrance for adults and the left for infants (p. 7).

Unfortunately, on December 19, 1862, an earthquake damaged the entire work, so another rebuilding was necessary. In 1865 progress was reported, which included a roof for the columbarium and perimeter walls for the cemetery. In June of that year, the chapel was practically finished, with a tile roof, as ornaments began to be purchased for religious celebrations, and, in November, the doors for the cemetery were placed (Chinchilla, 1858; 1863). New extensions were made in 1870 and the door to the necropolis was changed. By then the cemetery was in full use, but in 1901 there were reports of fear of desecration of remains in the cemetery, due to its distance from the center, which consolidated the old custom of burial inside the church (Monterroso, 1899).

Finally, in 1888 the civil authorities considered the cemetery reopened, as indicated by the inscription on the main entrance to the necropolis, although, as we have seen, it had been in operation for many years.

In 1932, Antonino Alonso described the necropolis as follows:

To the east, and in the lower part of the town, is the Cemetery, with an extension of four blocks, well located, having in its perimeter the Calvario Chapel; there are many beautiful mausoleums, which show luxury and good taste in their construction, there are also many municipal niches... weeping willows and cypresses (Alonso, 1932, p. 23).

Among the people buried inside, Alonso included the musicians Indalecio Castro and his sons, Domingo, Manuel and Mariano; as well

as Pedro González Paniagua. In the list of politicians, he included Francisco Mansilla, Alberto Rivera, Rafael and Vicente González, participants in the battle of San Lucas Sacatepéquez under Rufino Barrios; as well as other Mixqueños such as Pedro Illescas, José Benito Rodríguez, Felipe Borrayo, Alberto Rivera, Daniel Penagos Córdova, Leandro Castillo, Viviano Santos, Heriberto Hurtarte.

Viviano Santos was mayor in 1916, 1919 and 1922 (Santos, 1923, p. 4). His son, Daniel Santos Córdova, was mayor in 1929, 1949 and 1959, and during his administration he had the perimeter wall built and 150 niches constructed (Juárez, 1981, p. 10).

The church of *Calvario* was the victim of a robbery in 1967. Two paintings considered very valuable were stolen because, in 1947, a representative of the Prado Museum in Madrid had wanted to buy them. The earthquake of 1976 damaged the structure, which had to be repaired, but, in 2010, a fire destroyed the work, as well as the images of Christ Crucified, Saint John and Virgin of Dolores (Gómez, 2019). The building was re-built, which is the one that can be seen today.

En In 1979, 400 niches were built, 200 for men and 200 for women, at a cost of Q68,500, by engineer Fernando Maselli Ramos of the Municipal Engineering Department (Juárez, 1979, p. 50). The following year, another 231 were reported in the part that goes out to 4th Street, as well as the planting of several trees (Juarez, 1980, p. 55-56).

## Heritage architecture

Heritage architecture is considered to be that which, due to its formal characteristics, represents one of the historical styles in force at the time of its construction. However, Guatemalan legislation, Decree No. 26-97 of the Congress of the Republic, which assigns heritage value to buildings 50 years old or older, can also be used as a reference.

The cemetery occupies most of a block that forms the old entrance to the original town and now city. It is bordered on the north by 4th Street and on the south by 6th Street, while from east to west it is bordered by 1st and 2nd Avenues, although it does not extend the entire length of the land. For its administration, it was divided into five zones, which allows for the location of properties and the collection of fees. In terms of construction, four areas have been identified. One is made up of 11 streets, parallel to 6th Street, with a columbarium that forms the perimeter wall along the entire length of the necropolis, one section of which was built between 1974 and 1978. Due to its irregular shape, to the north of this area, a triangle is formed, dedicated to ground burials, on whose limit is the common ossuary. The third area is the one that was originally formed, with diagonal streets, that is, northwest to southeast, at 45 degrees from an east-west axis and also has the oldest columbaria, forming an angle of the original cemetery property. In 2019 an extension of columbarium was built; as well as a columbarium that limits two areas for pantheons. The last one is the one that has access to the 4th street, where an elliptical street was laid out, with more recently built columbaria.

## Entrance

The access is a street that begins on one side of the old Calvario. Both sides are landscaped and have cypress trees, one of which is old and tall.

## Chapel

Inside the complex, an area was given over to a Catholic chapel, dedicated to the clergy. It was built in neo-Gothic style, in hammered concrete, to imitate the stone finish. It has a commemorative plaque stating that the promoter of the work was Bishop Joaquín Santa María and Vigil, between 1950 and 1959. The façade has a pointed arch with triple spill, flanked by two buttresses, topped with imitations of a bell tower, with empty spaces with crosses, which limit a gable. The rest of the façade consists of two buttresses that simulate as many bell towers, larger reproductions than the previous ones. Instead of a rose window, it has three pointed windows, a gable and a central cross. The interior is a nave with an ogival vault roof, although not ribbed. The altar is advanced by the space for tombs, which are made in the head wall. It has an altar of neoclassic taste, with two Tuscan columns with a frontal decorated with a rhombus, of marble aspect. It has a tabernacle and, on the sides, a predella. The head wall has three other pointed windows. Among the buried priests are Santa María Vigil, Javier Córdova, Salvador Arzú and Francisco Castillo.

## Burials site

In the necropolis there are burials dedicated to several characters and families. For this reason, the following sections are presented.

## Characters

Jorge Surqué: one elaborated by the builder, but decorated with two canvases. The most visible from the entrance is a wall that, due to its height, easily attracts the visitor's attention. However, the most relevant part is an altar with a concrete base and table imitating granite, and the section of the altarpiece is formed by a grid of three spaces that symbolizes a window to heaven, with a brick wall to support the structure. A Greek cross, topped by a flame, surrounded by laurel leaves, symbolizing the union between Christian beliefs and the typical crown of triumphs and the torch of sports competitions, was placed on this part. A small garden was added. In the pantheon are other outstanding Mixqueño sportsmen. It was built by the municipal administration between 1970 and 1974. The remains of Roberto Yantuche López, Alejandro Antonio Paz Solórzano, William Surqué, Pedro Velásquez, David García, Arnulfo Gómez, Dionicio Guzmán, Otto Culajay, Ambrosio Marroquín, Florencio Bacnes, Juan Francisco Álvarez and others rest here..

José Vicente Valenzuela: In this recently built cemetery lie the remains of one of the founders of the Volunteer Firemen's Company.

Doroteo Guamuch Flores: known by the U.S. mass media as Mateo Flores, an outstanding marathon runner who won the Boston Marathon in 1952.

Germán Chupina: former director of the National Police during the internal armed conflict, especially recognized between 1978 and 1982.



Revolutionaries of 1944: monument consisting of a simple concrete block, edified in 1974.

## Neoclassicals

Palomo: It is a construction with Doric pilasters and triangular pediment.

Illescas: It has Tuscan pilasters in the angles, entablature with the characteristic elements: architrave, frieze, cornice, merlons in the corners, with wrought iron gate, dated in 1900.

Hurtarte: It has a podium and Tuscan stone pilasters in the corners, topped with spherical merlons, with entablature of the same material. The work of the dentils stands out. The cover is in the form of pavilion with volutes in each angle, of romantic taste.

Rodríguez Illescas: Of elegant workmanship, it has a portico with Tuscan columns and Doric pilasters in the corners. Windows with semicircular arches were simulated on each of the three front walls. As in the others, merlons were placed in the corners of the work. It is dated 1899.

Noriega Castro: It is dated in 1938 and only has Doric pilasters in front, with triangular pediment proportionate to the width, although not to the height of the work.

Sicán Marroquín: Dated in 1951, it is also of simple construction, with pilasters and triangular pediment.

Schaeffer: Built in 1914, it was already used in 1908. It is another example of the neoclassic without pretensions, but with good taste..

Mansilla: It has a portico supported by four Tuscan columns, with triangular pediment, whose frieze is divided in triglyphs and metopes, as well as a denticulated cornice. It was built in 1916.

Rivera: Of great simplicity, it has a triangular pediment.

Yantuche: It is a cube with pilasters located at a distance of the angle, on which there is an entablature that breaks in the center to form a semicircular arch.

## Historicists

Ramírez: with Tuscan columns in the angles and pointed arches on the side walls, combining neoclassical with neo-Gothic. Above each arch, it has a finial that simulates triangular pediments.

Meindl: It has lost its original tombstones. It is a piece built with Doric pilasters that support an entablature decorated with leaves, of Mudejar taste. In the center, the entablature breaks to form a lobed arch, decorated on the inside with Mudejar-inspired leaves. This makes it an eclectic combination of neo-Mudejar and neoclassical.

Soto: Dated in 1922, it was made with neoclassical intention, with Doric pilasters supporting an entablature. However, it has a semicircular pediment with two circles on the sides, in the manner of acroteries, but of large size, which also recalls a Mudejar aspect.

## Art Deco

Rangel: Dated 1931, it was a conventional cube but the upper decoration, made in geometrical superimposed planes, links it to the Art Deco of the time.

## By Seniority

Arroyo, 1925; Juárez Rodríguez, 1922; Córdova, 1921, very altered; Girón, also altered; Yantuche, extremely altered; González, 1875; Cruz, 1949; Borrayo Iquic, altered; González, 1904.

## Single-person

In the sector of Zona 2, there is one whose identifying stone has been removed.

## Results discussion

As mentioned, tangible cultural elements are an important part in the construction of identity, and an important part of these tangible elements are the constructions that allow the creation of references for the inhabitants of a community. In the case of cemeteries, they are evidence of the way in which the deceased, most of them loved ones of the bereaved who ordered the construction of the buildings, are treated. The feeling of frustration, emotional emptiness, desperation due to loneliness and loss and, sometimes, guilt can influence the construction of works of aesthetic value. Also influencing the decision to build works is the artistic taste in vogue, in the case of the Mixco Cemetery, from neoclassicism to functionalism, as well as the intentions and academic training of the sponsors. For this reason, the cemetery's works should

be valued and appreciated, not only by the relatives of the deceased buried inside it, but by the whole community, because it is part of the legacy of previous generations.

## Final comment

The specific objectives of this work were to describe the architectural elements of heritage buildings, which was achieved in the case of each tomb described above, classifying the works by their formal elements. It was also possible to record graphically the most outstanding elements of the constructions in the *Cementerio Municipal*, although only a selection of works is offered in this publication, due to printing issues; and, finally, this brief historical monograph of the funerary works is presented for the use of teachers and students. With this, the general objective of the work, consisting of identifying the patrimonial architecture in the *Cementerio Municipal*, as well as its relationship with the identity in Mixco was fully achieved, as can be seen in the works classified and presented for the kind consideration of the reader. It remains now, as a responsibility of the *Mixqueños*, the conservation and valuation of the space for the deceased that has been erected by their ancestors, so that it can be appreciated by the generations of the future.

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## Photographs



**Image 1.** Entrance. (Chajón)



**Image 2.** Old Columbarium. (Chajón)



**Image 3.** Ecclesiastical chapel. (Chajón)



**Image 4.** Chapel interior. (Chajón)



**Image 5.** Pantheon of Surqué and athletes. (Chajón)



**Image 6.** Old section Columbarium. (Chajón)



**Image 7.** José Vicente Valenzuela Pantheon. (Chajón)



**Image 8.** Gravestone of Doroteo Guamuch Flores. (Chajón)



**Image 11.** Monument to the Revolutionaries of '44. (Chajón)



**Image 10.** South Columbarium, boundary with 6th St.. (Chajón)



**Image 12.** Internal Columbarium. (Chajón)



**Image 13.** Illescas. (Chajón)



**Image 14.** Rodríguez Illescas. (Chajón)



**Image 15.** Hurtarte. (Chajón)



**Image 16.** Palomo. (Chajón)



**Image 17.** Ramírez. (Chajón)



**Image 18.** Schaeffer. (Chajón)



**Image 19.** Mansilla. (Chajón)



**Image 20.** Yantuche. (Chajón)





**Image 21.** Modified single-person. (Chajón)



**Image 22.** Meindl. (Chajón)



**Image 23.** Rangel. (Chajón)



**Image 24.** Soto. (Chajón)