



Ecology and Culture of the wrapper magical in Guatemala

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The configuration of the history and culture of Guatemala is largely due to geographical characteristics and its own ecological manifestations that have led it to be a region of vast forest potential. Located in the heart of America, Guatemala presents a unique and unrepeatable geographical environment.

The republic of Guatemala is located approximately in the center of the American continent. Its Borders, to the north and west, with the United Mexican States; to the east, with Belize, the Caribbean Sea, Honduras and El Salvador; and to the south, with the Pacific Ocean. It has a territorial extension of 108,900 square kilometers and a population of just over eleven million inhabitants. Politically and administratively it is divided into twenty-two departments and its capital is Guatemala City. The official language, for the entire nation, is Spanish, but there are indigenous communities where 23 Mayan

languages are also spoken; there are also *Xinca* and *Garífuna*, the latter an Afro-Antillean language spoken on the Atlantic Coast.

The relief of the territory is very varied. There are plains whose height does not exceed two or three hundred meters above sea level; rugged regions, high mountains and volcanoes; valleys and plateaus of different heights. The coastline of the Pacific Ocean is 2,547 kilometers long; the parallel plain, which is known as the South Coast, has a maximum width of fifty kilometers and rises between zero and three hundred meters without orographic interruptions. This flat area rises abruptly until it becomes a volcanic chain, a very distinctive feature of our geographic landscape, which crosses the country from the *Tacaná* volcano, on the border with Mexico, to *Chingo*, on the border with El Salvador. The hillside region, located between the coastal plain and the volcanic chain, is known as *Bocacosta*, in the part that reaches eight hundred meters in height.

To the north of the volcanic chain extends the *Altiplano*, that is, the highland region, in which several mountain ranges and mountains are located, separated by the basins of various rivers. This is the central part of Guatemala and the most populated since before the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th century. Guatemala City and other important urban centers of the country are located there.

To the north of the highlands is another region similar to the *Bocacosta*, which also has very rich lands, favorable to the development of agriculture, such as the so-

called *Zona Reina*. Then there are the lawlands of *Petén* and those of the Atlantic coast. In *Petén* the elevations do not exceed two hundred meters, except in the *Sierra del Lacandón* and in the Mayan Mountains.

The rivers of Guatemala are divided into two large slopes: those that carry their waters to the Pacific and those that flow into the Atlantic. Those of the Pacific originate in the region of the volcanic chain and irrigate the coastal plain. They have short routes, and among them are the rivers *Suchiate*, *Naranjo*, *Samalá*, etc. The rivers that flow into the Atlantic form two slopes: that of the Gulf of Mexico and that of the Caribbean Sea. In the first, the most important river is the *Usumacinta*, which, formed by the confluence of the *Rio Negro* or *Chixoy*, *Lacandón*, *de la Pasión* and *San Pedro* rivers, enters Mexican territory to flow into the Gulf of Mexico.

This is the largest river in the stretch of the Atlantic between the Mississippi, the United States, and *Magdalena* in Colombia. The most important rivers coming from the Caribbean Sea are those that form the *Polochic-lago* of the *Izabal-Río Dulce* basin, whose mouth is in *Amatique* Bay, and the *Motagua*, which crosses the national territory from west to east from the north. from *Quiché* to the Gulf of Honduras.

There are also several lakes and lagoons in the national territory. The largest are the following: that of *Izabal*. Which has a surface area of 509 square kilometers and a maximum depth of 20 meters; The *Atitlán*, of 125 square kilometers. And a maximum depth of 324 meters, and *Lago Petén Itzá*,

99 square kilometers in extension and 140 meters in maximum depth. Others are *Amatitlán*, *Guija* and la *Laguna de Ayarza*.

In Central America it is common to differentiate climatic regions based on height above sea level and, consequently, ambient temperature. Three types of climate are determined: cold, temperate and hot land. Hot land regions are considered those that are between sea level and 800 meters high, and whose average annual temperature is 24 to 26 °C (*Celcius*). The temperate land is located between 800 and 1,900 meters above sea level, and has an average annual temperature of 17 °C. Above 1,900 meters is the cold land, where the average temperature is lower, and can drop to 0 °C. and even less.

The intertropical location of the territory does not allow four seasons in the year, but only two: the rainy season, which is called "Winter"; and the dry season, known as "Summer". The duration of these seasons is not uniform throughout the territory due to the mountainous relief. But it can be said that Summer extends from November to April, and Winter from May to October.

The average rainfall per year is variable, and ranges from 500 mm, in regions such as the *Llano de la Fragua*, to 6,000 mm in some areas of the *Zona Reina* and the *Bocacosta*. The geographical location, different climatic

conditions, elevation and the time of the soils determine and extremely varied vegetation that includes thousands of species dispersed in the formation of forests. The location of Guatemala in the tropics determines that the majority of the forests are tropical and subtropical; However, its characteristics vary with changes in temperature, associated with variations in altitude— from sea level to more than 4,000 meters—and with rainfall patterns. These variations form the diversity of natural regions that exist in the country, to which the inhabitants of this magical envelope have to adapt.

Countries and continents rest on tectonic plates, portions of the Earth's crust that move and collide with each other, forming geological faults capable of causing earthquakes of different intensity. Guatemala rests on two continental tectonic plates (the North American and the Caribbean) and one oceanic (the Cocos), which have formed several faults that cause the many tremors that are recorded in the country. Guatemala is therefore, a seismic region, a characteristic that its inhabitants should always keep in mind, with the consequent taking of precautions to avoid major misfortunes caused by earthquakes.

From all of the above, we can glimpse the forestry vocation of Guatemala, which has developed high natural charms where man lives in full convergence with nature, and where, despite the development of the forces of capital, much of the beauty of the environment has not been lost. The same name of Guatemala (quatylimayan: *Place of tres, Woods and rivers in Náhuatl* [*Lugar de árboles,*

bosques y ríos en Náhuatl]; and ancient languages) has emphasized its arboreal vocation since pre-hispanic times.

There are various explanations about the meaning of the word Guatemala. Thus, it has been said that it derives from *Coctemalán*, which means “milk stick”, or that it comes from *quautemali*, which means “rotten stick.” According to Walter Krickberg, the origin of the term is found in the word *Cuauhtemallan*, which means “Piles of Wood”, although for others it means “wooded place” or “place covered with wood”, and could also mean “forest place” or “wooded site.” We can say, therefore, that there is no agreement on this issue.

According to one of the theories that exists about the origin of the name of Guatemala, the Mexican indigenous people who accompanied Pedro de Alvarado as auxiliaries during the conquest of our country called the capital of the Cuauhtemallan or Quautemalla, a name that the Spanish converted into Guatemala. This word appears written for the first time in the letters that Alvarado sent to Cortés in 1524 recounting the incidents of his conquest voyages in Guatemala and Cuscatlán (El Salvador). Here, the name Guatemala appears written as it is today. In Alvarado's second letter, dated July 28 of the aforementioned year, Alvarado indicated that he had returned from Cuscatlán, due to the harsh winter, and that he was already in "this city of Guatemala", where "he made and built in the name of the Majesty a city of Spaniards that is called the city of Lord Santiago, because here is the kidney of this land. Since then, the

name Guatemala began to acquire an increasing geographical significance. First, only the city of *Santiago* was called that, then the entire "province" conquered by Alvarado and, finally, the entire Kingdom, Audiencia and General Captaincy, which included within its borders from the current Mexican State of *Chiapas* to *Costa Rica*.

This was the case during the three centuries of the colony, but in 1823, after Independence was declared, the Congress of the new republic decreed that the territories that made up the former Kingdom of Guatemala would be called *Provincias Unidas del Centro de América*. The historical name Guatemala was retained only to designate the State that on March 21, 1847, became the current Republic of Guatemala.

The name Guatemala, therefore, is the Castilianized form of the Mexica word *Cuauhtemallan*. In the years of the conquest it was common for existing indigenous cities, which had Mayan names, to be renamed with names of *Nahuatl* origin, which were almost always the translation of the original *Quiche*, *Cakchiquel* or *Tzutujil* names.

If the name is what underlines the life of a nation, this vocation of the Guatemalan forest ecological niche, added to the axes of culture and history, allowed a clear coexistence with nature and, even more, the creation of mythical figures specificities that force the man of the interior lands of Guatemala to conserve nature: its animals, its water sources and, above all, trees as sources of life. Finally, Guatemala, as the magical

envelope that it is, it is intertwined with the mythical beings of nature and ritualizes it in every sense. That is the special feature of this piece of Paradise.

However, the enchanted places, the spells of nature have developed magnificently: such as hotels, hostels and paved or dirt roads unite these wonders in the cold of the western highlands, in the suffocating heat of the South Coast, in the blue mountains, in the impenetrable jungles of the north and in the unspeakable beauty of the east of the country, full of stones, scrubby vegetation and the intense sun that burns these lands. The variety of climates and vegetation leads to the multiplicity of social life, of the life of Guatemalan men, probably one of the most original human configurations in Latin America.

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE MAGIC GUATEMALA: THE SPELLS OF THE WRAPPING

Within a multiple social context, due to its own history and ecology, Guatemala, due to the very spells of nature, has become an authentic magical envelope. It must be understood from the depth of the oldest Mayan poetry to the present day: a country where everything is a spell, where time has stopped, where the temples and sacred places refuse to fall despite the earthquakes, the constant tremors and the little appreciation that Guatemalans have of their own identity - something quite understandable for having its so close by – everything has

survived wrapped in this magical fabric that its rivers, its volcanoes and its inhabitants weave.

Land in which the spirituality of the *Popol Vuh* still prevails; enchanted lakes where the forces of good and evil still differ the life of man; mythical beings that tiptoe through paths and villages, through hamlets and cities, no matter how cosmopolitan they may be.

Guatemala, wherever you want to see it, continues to be that envelope from which magic and magic emerge in spurts. Life. Guatemala is exclusive, complex and beautiful like a suspended column in the temples of *Antigua Guatemala*. But magical Guatemala is multiple, and its enchantment does not lie in the technology it can develop or in its problems that it solves step by step. Its authenticity, its true value, sinks and resurfaces in the spells that the magical packaging has created since ancient times. immemorial: unique ways of counting time, syncretized Pre-hispanic deities and Christian saints who walk through forests and lakes without flinching, who greet men as their brothers.

Unique foods in Latin America that everyone shares between the dead and the living, enchanted hills that speak and mystical, legendary characters that slide in this unique, unrepeatable land, full of mysteries, that seems frozen in time, giving it a very slow turn. to the calendar called by the Mayans Tzolkin, but also challenging the future. These spells, these original creations of the four peoples that inhabit Guatemala, They

make up the tips of the wrapper that bend it like a leaf of Young corn, and whose irrefutable presence makes Guatemala a land of mystery, love and magic, perhaps only created in the most intense imagination of the fantastic literature of JR Tolkien, of HG Wells or in the mythical arcana of the golden life of the people. The profile of the Guatemalan is defined by these magical interstices, these forms of their culture. These are the magical elements that daily surround the lives of the people who inhabit Guatemala. Here is the unfathomable spell that makes this land a mountain rumor, an unmistakable mystery in Latin America. The *Tzolkin* calendar, an immutable and perennial wheel, counts the days of the Guatemalan Mayans from the creation of the world until today.

THE PROPHETIC BECOMING FROM THE PACKAGING MAGICAL: TO THE STARS FROM THE FUTURE.

This magical envelope that is Guatemala, although full of history, full of traditions and almost unfathomable spells, is a nation that walks towards the future, as history itself determines. Few countries in Latin America contain such a diversity of climates, fauna and flora in such a small geographical area; of rivers, volcanoes, lakes and mountains. In a few spaces, life grows like the spells and spells of the Lirioley flower, the seven-colored bird and the magical horse of the ancestral sea.

Guatemala is not only the past, traditions that could be considered obsolete, the cry of Nazarene and crucified saints; It's not

only syncretized pre-hispanic divinities that still, ritualized between dances and millenary dances, between incense scrolls, are still sung to the sound of the *marimba*, the *chirimilla* and the drum. A Guatemala emerges step by step from the immense problems, the great *Kaprakán*, the San Gilberto earthquake of 1976, the internal armed conflict that devastated lands and valleys for more than thirty-six years of the 20th century, decimating populations and sowing hatred among brothers, with social problems inherent to every small third world country. Guatemala has the skein of the promising future that its history itself offers and also an account of luck, of magical tzites of the divinatory tree of life, with many forms that will make it arrive and definitively achieve the expected course.

First of all, that wonderful diversity bioecological, good managed, it is capable of providing food to the entire population in an optimal way. And a condition for this future to become a poinsettia is precisely, the return to nature, to linking man-society and nature. As the *Aj kines*, the wise elders of the Mayan people, say, "when the charms and mysteries reopen and the heart of heaven and earth comes to life again to populate Guatemala."

The Destiny of Guatemala is also found in its undeniable cultural diversity. If by browsing these pages you have perceived how culture and history collide in communicating vessels, between the ancestral and the contemporary, between the sacred and the profane, the weath of the country, the driving force of Guatemala Will undoubtedly be the youth of its

population. Guatemala is one of the countries with the youngest population in Latin America. In addition to this, the future lies in the processes of multiculturalism and interculturality between the four peoples that inhabit Guatemala. This is the sign of the times of the 21st and 22nd centuries: the mutual knowledge of cultural specificities, of the characteristics of each of the cultures, learning from each other, knowing, respecting and defending each other to reach the long-awaited national identity, based on the development and consolidation of the particular cultures of the four peoples who, at the end of time, although different, will have created so many common models that they will be able to live together in peace, with serenity, without racism, with the right measure of possibilities and a broad intercultural education that will allow the current young people of the four towns to have introjected themselves into their authentic cultures and consider themselves multiple but one at a time: Guatemalans, always preserving the diversity and richness that culture gives at all times and in every sense of the four cardinal points.

The stars of becoming, this melting pot of men who played with the stars, time and space, focuses on the return to nature and the respect and development of the multiple cultures that live in Guatemala.

The future is, then, as the tzités say about the tree of life, about divination beans, interculturality, knowing and sharing universal culture, the culture of globalization that will allow Guatemalans

in the four villages to have access to technology and life in today's world.

Guatemala does not have tomorrow and its thousand resources. only sown in history. Guatemala goes further, towards the unusual, towards the multiple in the unique. But undoubtedly the lesson can only be taught by history, teaching now, planning now, educational policies and cultural policies that allow this conservation, development and selfdevelopment of natural and social diversity. And that, although incipient, is already being carried out from the government and academic spheres.

History allows us to glimpse that the communities of the four towns are becoming aware of their own future, of their future, and that this diversity must be encouraged, respected, and turned into the face of the same national currency.

Guatemala is closer than any other country in Latin America to being a diverse whole, and that will give it all the potential necessary to conquer the future promised since the creation of the corn men. Guatemala is not as backward a country as one may believe from the statistical figures; Guatemala is at the spearhead of the future of its sustainable economic growth, in the development of its infrastructure, its towns and cities, but above all of its own, indigenous forms of its communal life converted into national life. Entire towns have emerged from the 1976 Gilberto earthquake and the armed conflict, and today they are already

making their own investments, innovating their agricultura; making generous exports to the world, especially of what they have always known how to manage the land and its thousand resources.

An infrastructure that penetrates with more and more respect into the land and into the mountains. A conscious dominant group that can develop all its potential in investments in Guatemala and in a supportive international society.

The Guatemala that Guatemalans hope for is in our abilities and that is how we are forging it. We are drawing the lines of our hand as we want, but as history has enlightened us. What can be stated is that the threads of this magical envelope are not lost in the path of the future, because they are planted as firmly as the forks of history, of its traditions and of an unusual confidence in a common future. Our Guatemala, our magical envelope, between sidereal ships and unimaginable constellations, will continue to grow as it has for thousands of years, with a plot of corn threads and a future of stars, streets of lilies and rain roofs of the country of water. Because, as the pilgrims on the holy routes of the Chicabal lagoon say, dressed in color, with a solid culture of their own, Guatemala, just as it took possession of its past, took over its future, and that is taking over EVERYTHING, it is As the poet José Luis Villatoro would say, "grasp the stars and leave Guatemala caught in the confines of the Universe."