



Celebration and Prayers Procession for the Virgin of Guadalupe

in Guatemala City



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Banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe during the
December 12, 2002 procession.
Photograph by: Guillermo Alfredo Vásquez González.



Worshippers inside the sanctuary
December 12.
Photograph by: Guillermo Alfredo Vásquez González.



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Introduction

As previously mentioned in other studies, religious festivities in Guatemala are organized into major cycles, with three main ones being highlighted: Christmas, Lent, and Corpus Christi in June.

Similarly, every month of the year includes a large number of religious festivities that honor different saints from the Catholic calendar.

The Christmas time begins on December 7th with the well-known "**Burning of the Devil**", and concludes on February 2nd, the day of the Purification of the Virgin, better known as the **Virgin de Candelaria**. Within this time, a series of religious events take place.

During this period, religious activities intensify, with an increase in prayer gatherings dedicated to the Virgin, Christmas parties, nativity scenes, Christmas trees, and other religious expressions

in celebration of the Christmas season.

However, in Guatemala there are two celebrations closely linked to the Christmas time: the Immaculate Conception of Mary on December 8th or nearby date), and the Virgin of Guadalupe on the 12th in the same month.

This article is an ethnographic overview of the celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Guatemala City. It has been excerpted from a broader work titled "Religious, Civic, Cantonal Festivals and Prayer Gatherings on the Outskirts of Guatemala City."

Origins of the Celebration

Although it originated in Mexico, the celebration became deeply rooted in Guatemala, especially among indigenous communities, who embraced it due to the syncretic image of the Virgin—an image specifically adapted and offered to them.

The reason behind the celebration is the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe (this name was originally used for the Virgin venerated in a Spanish town called Guadalupe: Manuel Rubio Sánchez, interview in 1984), which took place on the hill of Tepeyac, now the capital Mexico City. This site has been completely absorbed by the urban expansion of one of the largest cities in the world.

According to the story, on December 9th, 1531, an indigenous man named Juan Diego was on his way to the temple of Santiago Tlatelolco to attend mass. Upon reaching the hill of Tepeyac, he heard soft music and witnessed the apparition of the Virgin Mary, who asked him to build a temple at that site. Juan Diego went to the bishop's house to tell him, but the bishop asked for proof. Back at Tepeyac, the Virgin appeared again and told him to climb the hill and bring roses in his "tilma" or cloak. Even though it was not flower season, Juan Diego found them

and brought them and was told to take them to the bishop. When he opened the cloak before the clergy, a beautiful image of the Virgin appeared, painted or woven on the fabric. In this way, the bishop and

the other clergy believed in the apparition and took the cloth to their oratory. (Buttler, Vol. IV, 1965, cited by Ofelia Déleon.)

In popular religious belief, there is often no distinction between the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Virgin de Tepeyac. The former corresponds to a light-skinned image with a clearly European conception. In contrast, the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe on the hill of Tepeyac gave rise to a different understanding: the "Virgen Morena" "who would be much more accepted by the peoples of the Americas.



Worshippers visiting the Church of Guadalupe,
December 12th, 2001.
Photograph by: Guillermo Vásquez.

The devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe, or Virgin of Tepeyac, quickly spread throughout Mexico and many parts of the Americas, eventually reaching Guatemala, where She would also be assimilated, with the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Black Christ of Esquipulas considered the most widespread devotions in the Americas.

However, there are no records describing the celebration in the capital prior to the relocation to the Valle de La Ermita. It is assumed that it was held on estates, possibly in the form of a family gathering.

Another characteristic of the celebration in Guatemala is that it does not appear to be widely observed in the interior of the country. It is known to take place only in the municipality of

Livingston, Izabal (according to informants from Livingston), and there is a smaller celebration held in Esquipulas, Chiquimula, which involves only the local population.

In the same municipality, the Virgin of Guadalupe accompanies El Salvador del Mundo on January 11; this celebration is organized by Salvadorans residing in Esquipulas in connection with the pilgrimages that occur during that month. (Data provided by the author.)

Celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe In Mexico

In this country, the Virgin of Guadalupe is considered the patroness of the nation, and as a major religious feast, it is celebrated in more than 400 localities, not including all the communities that are not officially recorded (Popular Festivals Calendar of Mexico).



However, one of the places where this celebration is most vibrant is the Mexican capital (Mexico City), which takes on a festive atmosphere on December 12.

As a preparatory activity, starting in November, pilgrimages to the Basilica of Guadalupe are organized by religious groups, brotherhoods from other parishes and churches, as well as groups from across the country. These groups walk several blocks on foot, carrying their distinctive banners. (Observation in Mexico City)

On the main day, a procession is held in which an image of the Virgin on cloth is carried. Homes and businesses decorate their facades, and at every corner especially near the basilica and mariachi music can be heard.

One aspect that has somewhat reduced the exuberance of the celebrations in Mexico

is the ban on fireworks and any explosive materials within the city limits. (Elías Rodríguez)

Celebration in Guatemala City

In El Valle de La Ermita, the Guadalupe sanctuary was indeed built, which is currently

Tents are set up, selling popular foods and a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional items.

The procession of the Virgen de

Guadalupe leaves the sanctuary at 2:00 p.m., making its way through the northern part of the Historic Center; however, one of the most notable points along the route is the entrance to Barrio Moderno, in Zone 2, where it is joyfully received by the residents, who create carpets in her honor, and a

large amount of fireworks is set off, and some "toritos" are offered as the procession passes in front of certain homes. The rezado is accompanied by "bailes de moros" (Moorish dances), which include their own marimba.

The Virgen of Guadalupe is also celebrated in various outlying areas of the capital,

where the festivities are possibly more vibrant than in the city center, such as in Villa of Guadalupe or the Espíritu Santo parish in Las Charcas.



Rosary of the Virgin of Guadalupe through the Historic Center of Guatemala City.
December 12th, 2001.

Photograph by: Guillermo Vásquez.

It is a branch of the Parroquia El Señor de las Misericordias. It is customary to dress children in indigenous costumes in memory of Juan Diego, making a visit to the Virgin. Around the Sanctuary,



Villa of Guadalupe

As is known, it developed as a settlement independent from the capital, according to data from the *Diccionario Geográfico*, around 1794, apparently founded by people who were scattered throughout the surrounding areas,

which were not yet accepted in the indigenous towns. It should be noted that the main square of the settlement is believed to have been located near the current parish area. For this reason, these traditions developed a distinctive form of religiosity.

Both the prayers to the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Holy Week processions are believed to be at least

two centuries old. According to Manuel Rubio Sánchez (interview), the prayers likely began around the time the settlement was founded.

When it was still an independent town, the Villa of Guadalupe was separated from Ciudad Vieja by the road now known as Calle Real de la Villa, or Diagonal 6 in Zone 10.

The main square of the settlement is believed to have been located near the current parish area. The oldest church burned down about 91 years ago, along with many of the images it owned. It was rebuilt several times until it reached the current structure in

1986. (Members of the parish).

Although much of Cantón 21 has been overtaken by condominiums and residential areas, there is still a good portion that fully embraces the celebration of Guadalupe, creating arches, carpets, and organizing chants. Additionally,

in this area, the procession visits the churches located in Zone 14.

It is always accompanied by a music band, as well as a traditional dance group made up of residents from Cantón 21, who perform versions of the Dance of the Moors, especially the Hermit.

In 1988, the group was led by Don Victor Ramírez, who has passed away, leaving some young people in



Image of the Parish of the Virgin of Guadalupe.
September, 2001.

Photograph by: Annabella Barrios.

1986. (Members of the parish).

The prayers are one of the most vibrant celebrations held in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe. They begin on December 11th each year at 2:00 p.m., returning to the church at midnight. The route covers the Villa of Guadalupe, Oakland, and Cantón 21, with the latter being the area where the majority of expressions of popular tradition are observed.

charge. Another person who put great enthusiasm into the celebration was Dr. Luis Felipe Valenzuela, who was sadly murdered. (Field notes from the time)

In the Villa of Guadalupe, the Virgin receives confetti and flowers, as well as other tributes from the local residents. Some carpets are also made, and a few loas (devotional performances) are organized.



In the past, there was a confraternity responsible for organizing the prayers; nowadays, committees and

as an old settlement within the jurisdiction of the Las Charcas estate, owned by the Piñol family.

In the Villa of Guadalupe, the Virgin receives confetti and flowers, as well as other tributes

brotherhoods have taken on that role. The image used in the procession is 1.20 meters tall and dates back to the early 20th century. It replaced the original image that was lost in a fire. This image is not kept in the parish permanently, as the entire year it is taken on visits to homes in the neighborhood.

It was carved from wood, with a metal halo and dark complexion. The artist is unknown. In the procession, it is accompanied by an image of Juan Diego, which measures approximately 1.10 meters.

The festivity of the Villa of Guadalupe is a tribute to the patroness of the area, formerly a town, and now fully

absorbed by urbanization processes as well as by many residential areas.

Espíritu Santo, Las Charcas

The place itself is mentioned in the Geographical Dictionary,



Banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe during her prayers.
December 12th, 2001.
Photograph by: Guillermo Vásquez.

Apparently, it gets its name because there were several small ponds in the area to collect rainwater. One was located until a few years ago where the fields of the Ciudad Vieja University Center now stand, about five hundred meters from the core of the estate. (Luis Grimaldi;

from the local residents. Some carpets are also made, and a few loas (devotional performances) are organized.

However, the first owners of these lands were the Mercedarians, between the years 1568 and 1778. They arrived a few years after the conquest, founding a temple and a convent in Antigua Guatemala. But since they didn't have space to raise livestock for their sustenance, Friar Tomás García turned to the then Inspector and Judge, Licentiate Francisco Briceño. Between 1589 and 1591, 7 more caballerías were added to the lands considered to be unclaimed plains. (Grimaldi; Ibid).

In the year LTS, the priest Don José Solórzano sold the Las Charcas estate to José Piñol y Salas for 1,400 pesos. The estate covered 14 caballerías of land, with the understanding that if the agreed amount of land was not met, it would be completed with other lands from the El Incienso farm, which belonged to the seller. (Grimaldi, Ibid).



From 1778 to 1981, the Las Charcas estate was owned by the Piñol family. (Grimaldi)

The 1880 Population Census describes "Las Charcas" as a small settlement in the Department of Guatemala. It fell under the jurisdiction of the capital and belonged to Don Tadeo Piñol; 233 inhabitants resided on the estate.

In the "Political Demarcation of the Republic of Guatemala," Office of Statistics, 1892, it is also mentioned as a finca (estate). (Geographical Dictionary)

In 1883, the government purchased part of this land from the owners in order to expand the city to the south. As a result, the 1892 maps already show the Cantón Las Charcas.

An older event was the retreat of Guatemalan armies in 1829, during the invasion by Francisco Morazán's troops. The Guatemalan soldiers took refuge in the Las Charcas estate, apparently in its old church, which were among the few places respected during times of war. (Notes for the course History of Guatemala)

Currently, the estate has been completely dismantled and divided into several neighborhoods, with only the original core remaining.

The Mercedarian friars built an oratory in 1580, which, until just a few years ago, was still in use with the same altar and the same piedra de Arra along

with the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe that they brought from Mexico. According to Piñol family tradition, this was the first carving similar to the one in Mexico. (Grimaldi, *Ibid*)

According to the testimony of Archbishop Mariano Rossell y Arellano, a canon from the Basilica of Guadalupe came to Guatemala specifically to look for the image, guided by references in the Basilica's archives, which stated that the Mercedarians had taken it to an estate located to the east of Antigua Guatemala.

Such elements suggest that the celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the area is more than four centuries old.



Currently, the rezado begins at 1:00 p.m., following a long route that includes the areas known as las Rancherías, as well as the Comunidad sector in Mixco, returning through the streets of Ciudad San Cristóbal, as well as the surrounding areas near the church, to which it returns at midnight.

Virgin de Guadalupe in a framed image; Parish of the Villa of Guadalupe.

September, 2001.

Photograph by: Guillermo Vásquez.



During its route, the procession is accompanied by a group performing the traditional Moros dance, made up of people from neighboring areas (now heavily divided into lots); likewise, each sector adds its own unique touch.

On the way to the Community, the image is greeted by other religious statues; along the route, there are also arches and small carpets, with a few simple marimba groups participating as well.

In the area that connects San Cristóbal with Las Charcas, flower and pine needle carpets are made, and neighbors set up altars where the procession stops. In some of these, they burn "toritos" (firework bulls) or offer a large amount of fireworks.

In this prayer procession, loas are still organized which can be seen while walking along with the procession. It is accompanied by a marching band, and sometimes by a marimba that plays for the dancers.

Around the church, there is a fair-like atmosphere,

Stalls selling popular food and drinks are set up. Inside the church, liturgical acts are celebrated

Its entry and exit times, like any other prayer procession, are accompanied by the notes of the religious march.

Our Lord of Esquipulas, Mariscal.

This parish is the main center of veneration of the Black Christ of Esquipulas in Guatemala City, located in the Mariscal neighborhood in Zone 1

As previously mentioned, during the festivities in January (see Religious and Civic Festivals), the first church was built around 1942 using recycled wood; later,

in 1949, it was built with bajareque (wattle and daub), until the current structure was completed in 1954, with a solid construction.

On the Saturday before December 12th, the procession of the Virgin of Guadalupe leaves the parish, following the streets of the Mariscal neighborhood, and then walking to Zone 12, to the Reformita sector, where it receives the greatest reception.

In this sector, many expressions of joy and homage to the Virgin can be observed. The neighbors create full-block carpets, build arches, and set up altars for the procession's passage.

The Virgin is accompanied by two traditional dance groups,



Parishioners on the visit to the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Zone 1.
December 2nd, 2001.

Photograph by: Guillermo Vásquez.



as well as a marimba and the music band.

The procession makes stops at different points due to the fireworks set off along its path,

path, and at night, "toritos" can be seen.

It is one of the prayers in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe that most strongly evoke the community's participation and expressions of popular culture, just before Christmas.

Santa María del Tepeyac, Guajitos.

So far, no data has been found indicating the age of the village. It appears in several demarcations, completely linked to Guarda Viejo, or the canton of La Paz, as it was later called. Currently, it is completely invaded and absorbed by urbanization, surrounded by neighborhoods.

Its patronal feast is dedicated to the Virgin of Tepeyac, and the parish is called Santa María del Tepeyac. It belongs to the Order of Friars Minor.

The main day of the festivity is December 12th, with a procession in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe. It leaves the temple at 3:00 PM, touring the streets of the village.

According to the informant (Maria Elena Campos de Herrera), the prayer procession is so ancient that the older people refer to it as something very distant for them.

Although the temple was not previously considered a parish and therefore did not have a priest, the neighbors say that the procession would take place and it was a grand celebration with many activities.

Likewise, during these days a fair-like atmosphere prevails, and the committee organizes social activities.

The image of the patron saint, who goes out in procession, is dark-skinned, corresponding to the devotion of the Virgin of Tepeyac.

Acatan, zona 16

Its origin is quite recent, since the hamlet did not

have a church, and it has not yet been fully completed. Its name is the Virgin of Guadalupe, a branch of Our Lady of the Precious Blood in Santa Rosita, the village to which Acatán belongs as a hamlet, now completely overtaken by housing developments and condominiums.

as well as the Vázquez, Morse colonies, and other nearby areas.

The prayer procession is organized by the Brotherhood of Jesus the Nazarene, in collaboration with the neighbors who join in a committee for the duration of the festival



Virgin of Guadalupe, Parish of Our Lord of Esquipulas,
Mariscal neighborhood, Zone 11; image featured in the prayer procession on December 12.
Photograph by: Annabella Barrios.



However, despite the recent origin of the procession, the community shows great enthusiasm, participating in various activities.

The procession takes place on procession, the community shows great enthusiasm, participating in various activities.

It is possible to see carpets, many of them made with pine needles, flowers, and branches from the trees that still abound in the area, along with a large amount of fireworks.

The activities are organized by a committee of local residents, who also take care of the church throughout the year.

Santo Domingo la Chacara

This neighborhood is located in a hollow in

The northern part of the La Chacara neighborhood, Zone 5, which in turn is part of the subdivision made on the former La Chacara Hacienda. Its patron saint is Saint Dominic of Guzmán, who is celebrated in the month of August.

Independently of the church, the Committee of the Virgin of Guadalupe operates, organizing a celebration for this day. The venerated image belongs to a neighbor from the northern sector of the neighborhood.

The owner of the image is known as Don Mundo.

Los Angeles Settlement

It is located in the ravine, at the end of the Los Angeles, in Zona 6

of the city. Although the neighborhood celebrates Our Lady of the Angels as its patron saint, the settlement adopted the Virgin of Guadalupe as its patroness.

On a mural in the church, and on the path down to the settlement, the Virgin of Guadalupe is painted. She is venerated on December 12.

Feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Cipresales neighborhood, Zone 6.

It is a private celebration, organized by a local resident (Don Mario Bolaños), owner of a cement warehouse.

It takes place on the Saturday closest to December 12; the main altar is set up in Don Mario's house. he covers

the expenses for the drinks, as well as for the fireworks, including firecrackers, colored lights, "toritos," and other pyrotechnic devices.



Virgin of Guadalupe, Parish of Our Lord of Esquipulas, Mariscal neighborhood, Zone 11; image featured in the prayer procession on December 12. Photograph by: Annabella Barrios.

It is celebrated with a Mass on December 12th at 10:00 A.M. Throughout the day, various activities take place, and in the evening there is a vigil that includes different events, among them the crowning of a queen.



Likewise, a platform is set up where a "loa" (religious play or praise) is performed. For this day, some food stalls offering traditional dishes can be seen, as well as a few mechanical rides.

Santa Maria Goretti, neighborhood Santa Fe

Both the Santa Fé neighborhood and the Libertad sector belong to Zone 13 of the city and are located on the village of La Libertad,

,formerly known as Hincapié.

However, the neighbors agree that around the 1950s, the lots on the Santa Fé side were sold; the urbanization work was carried out during the municipal administration of Álvaro Arzú, between 1986 and 1991.

The main celebration is in July, in honor of the patron Saint Maria Goretti, and the parish is named after her.

From this temple, a procession in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe takes place on December 12th. It travels through the streets of the Santa Fé and La Libertad neighborhoods.

For the procession's route, the neighbors make small carpets, decorate the fronts of their houses, and set off a large amount of fireworks. In some parts of the route, small bulls are burned.

Another celebration to the Virgin of Guadalupe takes place at the church in the El Carmen neighborhood, zone 6. On this occasion, a novena is prayed, and a large amount of fireworks are set off. The celebration is fairly recent; sometimes a Christmas play (pastorela) is offered to her.



Virgin of Guadalupe, Parish of Our Lord of Esquipulas,
Mariscal neighborhood, Zone 11; image featured in the prayer procession
September 2001.

Photograph by: Annabella Barrios.



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FIELD INFORMATION

A- Forms from the Center for Folklore Studies, designed to identify parishes, inventory images, and detect manifestations of popular religiosity (currently in use).

B- Interviews with members of brotherhoods, church caretakers, priests, parish priests and assistants, secretaries, and those in charge of temples.

C- Interviews with people knowledgeable about their area; long-time residents of their respective neighborhoods; Members of committees or collaborators.

A- Licenciado Fernando Aguilar, resident of the hamlet Valle del Rosario Las Vacas and originally from the village of Santa Rosita.



Canvas of the Virgin of Guadalupe.
 Photograph by: Guillermo Vásquez.





b- Brother Norman, member of the San Juan Bautista Parish, Jardines de la Asunción, Zone 5.

c- Parish priests of Santa María Goretti, Santa Fé neighborhood, Zone 18.

d- Luis Alberto Martínez, resident of Santo Domingo la Chácara and person in charge of the neighborhood church.

e- Presence at some celebrations and participation in processions.

f- Itinerarios y programas de distintos rezados, procesiones y celebraciones de los sectores mencionados,

g- Field journal of the author.





Virgin of Guadalupe
2001
Vásquez González.



Image of the Virgin of Guadalupe during her procession
December 12, 2001.
Photograph by: Guillermo Alfredo Vásquez González.

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