

African presence in Guatemala during the Hispanic period, 17th and 18th centuries: religious devotions and associations

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Resumen

La llegada de esclavos africanos en el actual territorio guatemalteco se encuentra documentada desde el inicio de la invasión española en el siglo XVI, algunos de sus descendientes con el pasar del tiempo lograron alcanzar su libertad y otros se fueron uniendo maritalmente a los diferentes grupos socioculturales de la época, a tal grado que durante gran parte del período hispano los mulatos fueron el sector poblacional más numeroso en algunas regiones del país. Se desconocen detalles sobre el cuidado espiritual de las personas llegadas de África así como de sus vástagos, sin embargo, se sabe que los mismos fundaron cofradías dedicadas a santos de origen africano como Santa Efigenia y San Benito de Palermo, así mismo a otras devociones como el Rosario, la Virgen del Carmen, las Benditas Ánimas y San Nicolás de Tolentino, algunas de estas agrupaciones llegaron a contar con capitales en dinero y ganado de todo tipo, llegando a patrocinar la construcción de capillas y retablos dedicados a sus patronos. Para la realización de este trabajo las fuentes principales fueron los documentos resguardados en el Archivo General de Centro América y el Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano de Santiago de Guatemala, lo que permitió identificar la presencia afrodescendiente en la vida religiosa de varias localidades guatemaltecas durante los siglos XVII y XVIII, poniendo de manifiesto la importancia que poseyeron en ese tiempo las asociaciones piadosas no únicamente en el sentido religioso

sino además en aspectos sociales y económicos de lo cual poco se conoce en el presente.

Palabras clave: Esclavos, afrodescendientes, cofradías, devociones, Guatemala.

Abstract

The arrival of African slaves in the current Guatemalan territory has been documented since the beginning of the Spanish invasion in the 16th century. Over time, some of their descendants managed to achieve their freedom and others gradually joined the different sociocultural groups of the time, to such a degree that during a large part of the Hispanic period the mulattoes were the most numerous population sector in some regions of the country. It is largely unknown about the spiritual care of the people who came from Africa as well as their offspring, however, it is known that they founded brotherhoods dedicated to saints of African origin such as Santa Efigenia and San Benito de Palermo, as well as other devotions. such as the Rosario, the Virgen del Carmen, the Blessed Souls and San Nicolás de Tolentino, some of these groups came to have capital in money and cattle of all kinds, even sponsoring the construction of chapels and altarpieces dedicated to their patrons. To carry out this work, the main sources were the documents stored in the General Archive of Central America and the Archdiocesan Historical Archive of Santiago de Guatemala, which allowed us to identify the Afro-descendant presence in the religious life of various Guatemalan towns during the 17th and

17th centuries. XVIII, highlighting the importance that pious associations possessed at that time, not only in the religious sense but also in social and economic aspects of which little is known at present.

Keywords: Slaves, Afro-descendants, brotherhoods, devotions, Guatemala.

Introduction

In 2024, the second centenary of the abolition of slavery in Central America will be celebrated, so it is necessary to carry out historical and anthropological studies that delve with scientific rigor into the ways of life and the participation that this sector had in the development of Guatemalan society during the Hispanic period and the legacy it left to posterity. Currently, in Guatemala, many people associate Afro-descendants with the Garifuna population that settled on the Atlantic coast of the department of Izabal, whose ancestors arrived in Central America at the beginning of the 19th century. However, since the beginning of the Hispanic or colonial period, there is evidence of the presence of Africans in the national territory. Although it is not clear how many people from Africa arrived in Guatemala as slaves during the years that Spain had control of the region, the truth is that, over time, their descendants joined Spaniards, indigenous people and mestizos, giving rise to the so-called "castes", where two specific groups stand out: the mulattoes and the pardos, who could access their freedom, either by concession from their masters, or by buying it themselves, of course after a life of service and suffering.

In Guatemala, there are few studies on the popular religiosity practiced by the Afro-descendant population, both slave and free. However, the mark left by people of African origin was evident throughout the timeHispanic

through their participation in brotherhoods and fraternities that had African saints as their guardians, especially Saint Efigenia and Saint Benedict of Palermo. Precisely in the temple of San Francisco in Santiago de Guatemala, a religious brotherhood dedicated to the saint from Palermo was established, which came to have considerable amounts of money, which were made available as loans to all those people, without distinction of class, who requested them, charging a certain amount of interest for it. This shows that, in addition to fulfilling religious and devotional functions, the brotherhoods also participated in the economic life of Guatemalan society during the centuries of Spanish domination.

In order to carry out the research, a temporal delimitation was necessary. Initially, it had been planned to address the entire Hispanic period (1524-1821) but, since most of the documents come from the 17th and 18th centuries, it was decided to focus only on that period. In terms of geographical space, several regions of the country were addressed, including the city of Santiago de Guatemala; the town of San Juan Tecuaco in the current department of Santa Rosa; the communities of Chipilapa and Don García in Escuintla; the valley of Salcajá in Quetzaltenango and San Pedro Sacatepéquez in San Marcos, places where evidence of brotherhoods dedicated to saints such as San Benito de Palermo, Santa Efigenia, San Nicolás de Tolentino and the Virgin of the Rosary was found.

As this is an eminently historical investigation, consultation was carried out in documentary collections, specifically from the Hispanic period, these being the General Archive of Central America, the Archdiocesan Historical Archive of Guatemala Francisco de Paula García Peláez and the Academy of Geography

and History, all located in the historic center of Guatemala City; in the Regional Research Center of Mesoamerica (Cirma), in Antigua Guatemala, Sacatepéquez; and in the General Archive of the Nation, in Mexico City, taking into account that in said enclosure various documentation related to Guatemala is kept. It was not possible to have access to the funds of the Franciscan, Dominican and Mercedarian orders, which throughout the period were related to the formation of brotherhoods and devotions practiced by Afro-descendants.

This research was justified by the few scholars that exist to date in Guatemala related to popular religiosity among the population of Afro-descendant origin during the Hispanic period.

Slavery and the Catholic Church

Slavery, understood as the deprivation of a person's freedom by another for the purpose of exploiting them for labor, is a situation that has existed in practically all human societies throughout time, including pre-Hispanic ones such as the Mayan (Ruz, 1999). One of the justifications from the Christian point of view regarding the practice of enslaving people was based on a passage from the Bible narrated in the book of Genesis, in which one of Noah's sons, Ham, observed his father naked after the latter had become drunk. Unlike his other two brothers, Ham mocked his father, which is why he was cursed by Noah, declaring him "slave of slaves" (Gen 9:18-29). Within the medieval imagination it was believed that the descendants of Noah's three offspring populated the known world, for example, Japheth populated Europe; Shem Asia and Ham Africa. It should be noted that evil was associated with the color black and, being African people of a darker skin tone than Europeans, they were considered inferior

and subject to being deprived of their freedom, as a consequence of the punishment inflicted on their ancestor Cam.

For the philosopher Aristotle (1973) slaves were considered living instruments to carry out a productive process and property of their masters. Christianity has some points in common with Aristotelian thought, which is why slavery in the Christian world was allowed to such a degree that it was not strange for archbishops, bishops, priests, friars, nuns, among others, to have slaves at their service. In the history of the Catholic Church there have been several characters who are venerated as saints and blessed who were slaves for part of their lives, among which we can mention:

- Onesimus: a native of Phrygia, in present-day Turkey, was a slave of Philemon, an influential Christian in the region. The slave had stolen from his master and escaped from justice by going to Rome, where he met the apostle Saint Paul, who converted him to Christianity and referred him back to his master with a letter in which he asked him to accept him again and see him as a brother. He achieved his freedom and dedicated himself to preaching, becoming bishop of Ephesus. He died according to pious traditions, stoned to death in Rome around the year 95, and is remembered on February 16. (Sgarbossa y Giovannini, 1996).
- Blandina: She was a young woman who lived in the French city of Lyon, martyred along with several Christians in the year 177 during the persecution of Marcus Aurelius. Her companions feared that due to her fragility she would renounce the faith, however, the slave showed courage when subjected to harsh torments, including being thrown to wild beasts who did not harm her and then sat on a red-hot chair. As she remained firm in her convictions, her torturers placed her inside a net so that a bull could attack her, which was content to shake

her. Finally she was sacrificed, some sources say that her death came from being beheaded. Her memory is commemorated on June 2. (Butler, 1965).

- Felicidad: Perpetua, a native of Carthage, now Tunisia, was a slave of a noblewoman named Perpetua, both young mothers of a family who refused to renounce their Christian faith, so they were condemned to death by being gored by a cow, which only hurt them, being finally decapitated during the persecution that was ordered by the emperor Septimius Severus in the year 202. Her life has been achieved in part thanks to the diary that Saint Perpetua wrote while in prison. Together with her mistress, they were highly venerated in the first centuries of Christianity and their memory is remembered in the Catholic calendar on March 7. (Havers, 1992).
- Julia de Córcega: A Christian born in Carthage, she was kidnapped by the Vandals in 439 and sold to the Syrian merchant Eusebius, who treated her very well, taking her on a trip to Corsica, where the young woman refused to participate in a ceremony dedicated to a local deity, so she was admonished to abandon her faith, however, she did not do so, so after several tortures she was condemned to die by crucifixion. The calendar of saints remembers her on May 22 (Butler, 1965).

Special mention should be made of the Peruvian Martín de Porres, born in Lima in 1579, son of a Spanish father and an Afro-descendant mother, who during his youth dedicated himself to hairdressing and nursing. He wanted to take the Dominican habit, but because he was born out of wedlock and because of the color of his skin, he was not accepted. However, due to the influence of his

father, he achieved his goal, dedicating himself to prayer and charity, always accompanied by a broom as a symbol of humility. During his lifetime, miracles were attributed to him and he was much loved by the people (Montes, 2001). He died on November 3 and his canonization process, contrary to that of his compatriot Saint Rose of Lima, took several years until he was finally proclaimed a saint on May 6, 1962. (Jaramillo, 1987).

Saints are all those people who have led a pious life, consecrating it to the service of Christ and their fellow men. Many have been granted gifts such as bilocation, levitation, stigmata and especially miracles, becoming the link between heaven and earth (Sandoval, 1997). All individuals who have achieved sainthood are set as an example for the devout, whose lives according to Christian canons are worthy of emulation, which is why it is not surprising that several have been slaves, which could be transmitted as a message to those who lived the same situation of accepting their destiny according to divine designs.

With the rise of African slavery in the 15th century in Spain and Portugal, prisoners sought the protection of various saints born in Africa, establishing brotherhoods and other religious institutions in their honour. These practices were transferred to the Hispanic and Lusitanian territories in America, where they soon gained popularity, especially the devotions to Saint Efigenia and Saint Benedict of Palermo, as well as to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, of whom some biographical sketches are presented.

- Saint Efigenia or Iphigenia: according to pious traditions, Efigenia was an Ethiopian princess, daughter of the kings Egipo and Eufenisa, who lived in the first century. She was converted and baptized to Christianity by the apostle Saint Matthew, who was

evangelizing Ethiopia. The young woman consecrated her virginity to God, which caused her problems, especially when Hirtaco, who succeeded his father on the throne, tried to marry her. When he did not succeed, the scorned suitor ordered Mateo to be killed. Later, he tried to burn down the place where Efigenia lived with other consecrated virgins, but the intercession of the apostle prevented this. Hirtaco contracted leprosy, dying some time later, so the people chose Efronio, brother of the saint, as their monarch, who governed for 70 years, building several churches in his country (De La Voragine, 2004). Efigenia, after receiving the sacraments, died in peace and serenity. She is considered the liberator of Ethiopia and is invoked as a protector against fires (Colmenero, 1754). The Carmelites consider her one of their saints and began the propagation of her cult in Portugal and Andalusia, especially in Seville. It later spread to America, mainly among the enslaved and free African-descendant population. The calendar of saints remembers her on September 21, one day after the memory of Saint Matthew.

- Saint Nicholas of Tolentino: Born in the Italian town of Sant'Angelo in Pontano, in the Marche region in 1245, his parents attributed his birth to the intercession of Saint Nicholas of Bari, which is why they gave him his name in gratitude. At a very young age he joined the Order of Saint Augustine, devoting himself for several years to itinerant preaching in various places in Italy. In 1275 he moved to the Augustinian convent in Tolentino, where he led a life dedicated to prayer and helping the needs of others and his religious community. He also practiced severe disciplines, even going so far as to sleep

with a stone for a pillow. He died on September 10, 1305 and several miracles soon occurred through his intercession. He was canonized on June 5, 1446 and his memory is remembered on the day of his death (Miró, 2004). Saint Nicholas is a saint associated with the souls in purgatory, since it is said that a friar appeared to him begging that masses be celebrated for the souls suffering from the purifying fire, a request to which Nicholas agreed (Aranda, 2017). Several penitential brotherhoods were founded in his honor, both in Spain and in America, some of which were made up of people of African descent.

- Saint Benedict of Palermo: the son of Ethiopian parents (some sources refer to them as Moors) who were enslaved, he was born in San Fratello, province of Messina, Italy, around 1526. He was illiterate and educated in Christianity, distinguished by his kindness and charity towards the needy. As a young man he was a shepherd, although his desire was to enter a religious order but, due to his origins and skin colour, he thought he would not succeed. On the initiative of the Franciscan Jerónimo Lanza, he sold his livestock and distributed the money among the poor, retiring to live in a community of hermits governed by the religious. Later Benedict was accepted into the Franciscan convent of Santa María de Jesús in the city of Palermo and then moved to that of Santa Ana Juliana, where he led a solitary life, practising prayer, penance and adoration of the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary and the Passion of Christ. He held various positions in the convents in which he lived, including cook and master of novices. He had supernatural gifts and several miracles were attributed to him both in life and in death. He died on April 4, 1589 and was proclaimed protector of the city of Palermo.

Pope Benedict XIV beatified him in 1743, while Pius VII declared him a saint on May 24, 1807 (Pérez-Simón, 2001). He has been considered the protector of people of African descent and, in Spain, Portugal and America during the 17th to 19th centuries, brotherhoods were founded in his honor.

The case of Saint Benedict of Palermo is extremely interesting because, according to Catholic canons, no person who has not gone through a formal process of beatification and canonization can receive public veneration. By reviewing the life of the saint, it can be confirmed that he was contemporary with several events that occurred in America, including the wars of conquest, the beginning of colonization, the establishment of Christianity as a religion and the beginning of African slavery, which is why it is striking that a few years after his death in countries such as Mexico and Guatemala brotherhoods were being founded in his honor, although it seems that the efforts for his sanctification had not yet begun. From the above, it could be inferred that the figure of Saint Benedict of Palermo was seen as a media figure in the face of the mass arrival of African slaves to America, in order to erase their magical-religious practices preserved from generation to generation.

Some notes on African slavery and the presence of Afro-descendants in Guatemala

In Latin America, after the Spanish invasion of the Caribbean islands at the end of the 15th century and beginning of the 16th century, the indigenous population began to be enslaved, especially the Caribs and Arawaks. However, the mistreatment and diseases brought from Europe undermined the health of the slaves, causing a large number of them to perish. Faced with this situation, the Dominican priest

Bartolomé de las Casas recommended the importation of Africans to take the place of the Caribbean natives (De las Casas, 1986). This also coincided with the development of the slave trade by Portugal with some African regions. Thus, several African slaves participated in the conquests of the American continental territories. It is known that one of them, belonging to Captain Pánfilo de Narváez, was the one who introduced smallpox to Mexico and therefore to Mesoamerica. (Guerra, 1988).

Regarding the origin of the Africans who came to America as slaves, it is known from historical studies that many came from the territory known as the Slave Coast, which corresponds to the current countries of Benin, Togo, Nigeria and part of Ghana, a place from which it is estimated that over the course of the 16th to 19th centuries more than two million people were taken to the American territories as slaves. Another contingent of prisoners came from the Gulf of Guinea and Angola, the latter of which became a territory under Portuguese rule. (Law, 2001).

In the Guatemalan case, it is known that the first African slave to arrive in the country came on the Conquista expedition of Pedro de Alvarado (Aguirre-Beltrán, 1972). This can be seen in the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan, which is a 16th century codex in which the Quauhquecholteca Indians, originally from the current town of Huaquechula, Puebla, Mexico, expressed their own vision of the Spanish conquest of several towns in Guatemala. An African slave appears drawn on it, which shows that he arrived during the process of the Spanish invasion of the country (Asselbergs, 2010). Over time, slaves were introduced to the various territories that formed part of the Audiencia de Guatemala. For example, on January 4, 1543, the president Alonso de Maldonado sent a letter to the city council of

Santiago de Guatemala where he indicated the arrival on the Honduran coast of two vessels; one was carrying several Castilian women and the other 150 "pieces" of African slaves of both sexes (Pardo, 1944). Many of the captives had El Salvador as their final destination, where they worked in the indigo mills. (Cabrera, 2017).

About the origin of Africans in Guatemala, little is known, however, based on some documents kept in the General Archive of Central America, it is assumed that they came from Angola and Guinea. Over time, their descendants joined with Spaniards, indigenous people and mestizos, giving rise to the so-called castes, where two specific groups stand out: the mulattoes and the pardos, who could access their freedom, either by concession from their masters, or by buying it themselves, after a life of service and suffering. Many of the slaves in Guatemala worked in domestic service, others as foremen on the farms and women as wet nurses, while those who achieved their freedom dedicated themselves to artisanal tasks and the sale of basic products, including meat.

There is not much data on the process of evangelization of the Africans who came to America and therefore to Guatemala. For the religious who were in charge of this task, it was surely more arduous than with the indigenous people, taking into account that those who came from Africa spoke a variety of languages, contrary to the native American peoples, who were generally taught doctrine in their communities taking into account their customs and traditions, including their mother tongues. However, the Spanish kings issued laws for the indoctrination of African slaves and their descendants:

We order and command all persons who have slaves, blacks and mulattoes, to send them to the church or monastery at the time appointed by the prelate, and there they will be taught Christian doctrine; and the archbishops and bishops of our Indies will take very particular care of their conversion and doctrine, so that they may live Christianly, and the same order and care that is provided and enjoined by the laws of this book, on the conversion and doctrine of the Indians, will be put into it; so that instructed in our Holy Roman Catholic Faith they will live in the service of God our Lord. (Corona de España, 1841, folio 4).

These types of provisions arose during the reign of Charles V and Joanna the Mad in 1538 and were ratified by their son Philip II in 1549.

During the Hispanic period, the largest concentration of Afro-descendants, whether slaves or free, was the city of Santiago de Guatemala, where they served in the homes of the elites and in the convents, including that of Concepción, of which the last of the chroniclers of the Hispanic period, Domingo Juarros (1999), came to say that at a certain time it had up to 700 people who attended to the nuns, most of them slaves.

An interesting fact is the story of María Florida, a resident of Chiquimula, a free Afro-descendant woman who in 1605 wrote her will in Nahuatl by her own hand (Chajón, 2018). It is possible that, since this language was the one commonly used by the indigenous population in some regions of Guatemala, African slaves and their descendants also learned it to communicate with each other, taking into account that they came from different regions where different languages were spoken.

In 1611 the president of the Audience of Guatemala, Antonio Pérez de Ayala Castilla y Rojas, reduced a group of free Afro-descendant population that was scattered throughout the

region, he founded the town of La Gomera in the district of Escuintla and was placed under the spiritual patronage of the Franciscan Saint Diego de Alcalá. (Luján, 2001).

Tomás Gage, a Dominican religious man born in Ireland who was in the country in the 1630s, being the parish priest of Mixco, Pinula and Petapa, left several references about the presence of Afro-descendants in the country. For example, he mentioned possible slave mutinies that alerted their owners in the city of Santiago de Guatemala. He also mentions the bravery they possessed, shown in facing and killing wild bulls and crocodiles (lizards) in the rivers (Gage, 1997).

Gage also mentions that the mountains on the way to Golfo Dulce were the refuge of two or three hundred slaves who had escaped from their masters mainly due to mistreatment and were known as cimarrones. With bows and arrows as weapons they attacked the muleteers from whom they stole wine, salt, clothing and weapons without causing them any harm. All those slaves who joined the group of fugitives were well received, given that:

They are very glad to meet them, because they are of the same colour and are in the same state of servitude; often this serves as an opportunity for them to follow their example, and join them in order to become free, even though they are forced to live in the forests and mountains. (Gage, 1997, pág. 42)

The Irish priest, who later converted to Protestantism, spoke of a former slave who had a ranch in a place called Agua Caliente, which had cattle of all kinds and provided the city of Santiago de Guatemala with the best cheese in the region. It was believed that his fortune was due to a hidden treasure that he had never explained to the authorities however he claimed

that his wealth was due to the generosity of his former master and what he had saved to buy his freedom and acquire a house, and he counted on God's favor to increase his wealth. (Gage, 1997).

By the 18th century, mulattoes were dispersed throughout various regions of the country. For example, in 1740, 2,570 mulattoes lived in the neighborhoods that formed the city of Guatemala, although the number of slaves was not reported (Martínez, 1935). While in that same year, 1,420 mulattoes were reported in the towns that formed the valley of Guatemala, approximately 100 "blacks" as slaves in the sugar mills of the Dominicans, Augustinians, Mercedarians and Jesuits, as well as in that of Joseph de Arrivillaga in the territory of Petapa. (Martínez, 1935).

By 1740, Alonso Crespo, chief justice of the province of Escuintla, which at that time was made up of municipalities from the current departments of Escuintla, Santa Rosa and Jutiapa, indicated that the 36 towns that formed part of its jurisdiction were inhabited by 12,543 people, distributed as follows: 10,147 indigenous people, 111 Spaniards, 173 mestizos, 1,979 mulattoes and 143 "blacks", who were indoctrinated in Castilian, Mexican and Xinka. The places where Afro-descendants predominated were Villa de la Gomera with 250 mulattoes; Chipilapa, where the 30 inhabitants were of African origin; Texcuaco, Don García, populated entirely by descendants of Africans; Santa Ana Mixtán, Masagua, Cuilapa, Los Esclavos and Jalpatagua. In Chiquimulilla, which was the most populated town, there lived 503 mulattoes and 52 "blacks" (Crespo, 1935).

The western region of the country was the one with the smallest number of Afro-descendant population in 1740, for example, in Chiantla and Totonicapán there were seventeen families

of mulattoes respectively, while in Huehuetenango five mulattoes were reported and in the Sija valley a family nucleus of "blacks" (De Olaverreta, 1935).

Pedro Cortés y Larraz, the third archbishop of Guatemala, made a pastoral visit to his diocese between 1768 and 1770. He was most likely in the Verapaz region in 1769. One of the places he visited was Salamá, the current capital of the Baja Verapaz department, which was run by the San Jerónimo sugar mill, belonging to the Dominican religious. Over time, the mill or hacienda became a town and is currently one of the eight municipalities of the aforementioned department. The prelate reported that more than a thousand people lived in the community, of which approximately 700 were slaves and were dedicated to various jobs, including masonry, cart-making, carpentry and metal smelting for boilers. (Cortés, 1958).

Regarding the education given to the slave population of the San Jerónimo sugar mill, Archbishop Cortés indicated that it was received in Salamá and was reduced:

Music, where slave girls from the San Gerónimo sugar mill are taught, and I do not doubt the master's skill over that of the students, who sing little tunes and theatrical plays to perfection. The priest says that ecclesiastical singing is learned; and he will call it ecclesiastical, because these girls go to sing with male musicians in the church choirs. It seemed very bad to me, as I believe it will seem to any man of judgment, and I considered it full of dangers in slave girls who seemed to me to be vain about the art of music and who have their school in a house where, as I understand, the master who teaches them lives. (Cortés, 1958, pág. 297)

The above description is interesting, as it demonstrates in a certain way the social

prejudices norms of the time, in this case that the young slaves became proud people for knowing how to sing perfectly what the teacher taught them. Also noteworthy is the opinion shown by the prelate regarding the students having relationships with male musicians and the school being the mentor's house, which could be interpreted as a concern about possible sexual abuse.

Continuing along the geographical route of the areas occupied by Afro-descendants, a fact appears in which, in 1789, a land title was granted to 460 blacks and their brown descendants from the population of Gualán belonging to the district of Chiquimula de la Sierra, who had left the gulf seeking conversion to Christianity, and who were known as "chinamites" (Dary, 1995). Meanwhile, at the end of the century, Domingo Juarros (1999) indicated that Masagua in Escuintla was a mulatto population like Amatitlán, where the majority of its inhabitants belonged to this sociocultural group.

From the above it can be concluded that by the 18th century, Afro-descendants, especially mulattoes, had a strong presence in the city of Santiago de Guatemala, in the Valley of Guatemala, in several towns in the south and southeast of the country; in the Dominican sugar mill of San Jerónimo in Verapaz and in Gualán, a current municipality in the department of Zacapa. Without a doubt, they did not predominate in the western highlands due to it being an eminently indigenous region and the scarcity of sugar mills and refineries.

Heinrich Berlin (1952) refers to several artists of African origin, who were creators of religious images and altarpieces during a large part of the Hispanic period, among whom the main architect Diego de Porres stood out, in some sources referred to as a mulatto, to whom we owe the realization of important works, among them the temples of La Recolección, Santa

Clara, Escuela de Cristo and Capuchinas, as well as the Real Palacio, all built in the city of Santiago de Guatemala, today La Antigua Guatemala.

The mulattoes became a large group within the Guatemalan colonial society (Lutz, 1984), which is why it is not surprising that they were present in various aspects of daily life, including those related to devotional practices, grouped into brotherhoods and fraternities, as will be known below.

Brotherhoods of African descendants in Guatemala during the 17th and 18th centuries

Once we have learned about various aspects of African slavery in Guatemala during the Spanish domination and the way in which their descendants gradually became present in various aspects of life at the time and spread throughout various regions of the country, we will proceed to address the various religious institutions in which Afro-descendants had influence. It should be noted that this situation occurred in practically all the territories conquered by Spain and Portugal as a way of evangelizing the slaves, but the latter also found, through the brotherhoods and fraternities, a way of preserving aspects of their original cultures adapted to Christianity, that is, a religious syncretism.

As mentioned above, both Saint Efigenia and Saint Benedict of Palermo were the two saints of African origin most venerated by the slave population, both in Spain and Portugal and in their dominions in America. Guatemala was one of the regions in which both characters came to have brotherhoods, for example, in documentary research it was found that under the patronage of the Ethiopian virgin two groups were founded, one in San Pedro Sacatepéquez, San Marcos, and another in the

valley of Salcajá, Quetzaltenango, while four images were dedicated to the Franciscan monk, one of them in the temple and convent of San Francisco in the city of Santiago de Guatemala; another in San Juan Tecuaco, Santa Rosa; one more in the town of Don García, currently La Democracia, Escuintla, a town founded by mulattoes, and another that existed in a sugar mill in the region of Chipilapa, also in Escuintla. Regarding the presence of Santa Efigenia in the temple of La Merced in the old metropolis, there was no access to the Mercedarian archives, so it is not possible to know if there was any brotherhood that had her as its titular, what is known is that it had an altarpiece in which the effigy was found and paintings related to the life of the young woman, all this set can still be seen in the church of La Merced in the Guatemalan capital.

Another saint who was especially venerated by African descendants in America was the Augustinian Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, who in Guatemala had brotherhoods in various regions of the country, highlighting the one founded in the convent of San Agustín in Santiago de Guatemala and the one in the Arrivillaga sugar mill in the territory of Petapa, both dating back to the 17th century. However, it was also found that the Virgin of the Rosary and other devotions and saints came to be venerated by descendants of Africans, who founded brotherhoods for them in some communities, of which the only one that survives to the present is that of Morenos de Mixco, although its members are mestizos.

It should be noted that, while it is true that during its beginnings the brotherhoods of which details will be known later were founded by descendants of Africans, with the passage of time and with cultural mixing they became multicultural spaces through the presence of

Spaniards, Creoles, indigenous people and mestizos, even becoming in some cases the majority groups and, therefore, those who controlled the associations, occupying the highest hierarchical positions as stewards and mayors.

In order to present the data found on the various brotherhoods, the chronological order was implemented, in some cases approximate, since, as explained, the documentary funds consulted only conserve some files and, as for the collections of the religious orders, it was not possible to have access to them, which would have been a fundamental source to write a more complete history on the Afro-descendant presence in the Guatemalan popular religiosity of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary of Morenos, Santo Domingo temple, Guatemala City

The third brotherhood founded in Guatemala was that of Our Lady of the Rosary, which took place on November 1, 1559 on the initiative of Bishop Francisco Marroquín, with the Dominican convent and church as its headquarters. The devotion spread rapidly throughout the city to such an extent that two more brotherhoods were established, one of indigenous people and another of African descendants, which came to have their own chapels within the Dominican temple.

And the blacks and mulattoes in Santo Domingo, and these two have excelled greatly, so that it is one of the most frequented of the entire Order; mainly on the day of San Blas, because of the altar of this glorious martyr that is in it. (De Remesal, 1966, pág. 1533).

Remesal wrote before 1617, so it is possible that the first religious association who admitted

Afro-descendants were the Rosario brotherhood, to which the title of Morenos was added some time later. At the end of the Hispanic period, the three brotherhoods (of Spaniards, indigenous people and Afros) were merged into one. (Juarros, 1999).

Several of the Afro-descendant members of the Rosario brotherhood were people with certain economic resources, for example, in 1613 it was reported that the spouses María Rodríguez and Bartolomé del Corral owned houses in the Santo Domingo neighborhood of the city of Oaxaca in Mexico, as well as in the valley of Guatemala City, also counting between 3,000 to 3,500 sheep, whose meat was sold in the butcher shops of Santiago de Guatemala (Falla, 1994). Another case is that of the free mulatto Magdalena Carlos, who made a will in 1641, indicating that she owned three salt mines and a fishery on the Pacific coast. (Falla, 1996).

Some devotees of the Virgin of the Rosary of Morenos bequeathed to the brotherhood in their wills images and various objects, both cult and ornamental, as well as money, among them: a carpet by Marina de Vargas in 1648; a harp donated by the free mulatto Juan de Alvarado in 1661 (Falla, 2006); 50 pesos left in 1679 by Francisca de Ávila (Falla, 2015); two images of the Child Jesus, a quarter of a meter high, with their wooden bases donated by Catarina de Lira y Cárcamo in 1700. (Falla, 2015).

The members of the brotherhood were in charge of the care and veneration of an image of Christ known as "humility and patience", which was venerated in the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary of Morenos (Hidalgo, 1733). It is known that the brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary of Morenos took out a procession on Holy Monday, which was interrupted for several years as a result of the damage caused to the city of Santiago de Guatemala by the earthquake of 1717. However, the stewards requested in 1726, the authorization

to do it again, which was granted to them (De Palencia and Arrivillaga, 1726). There is news that in this activity an image of Jesus of the Column was processed, which could possibly be the one referred to above as humility and patience. The Virgin of the Rosary did not come out in the procession, but its members were praying and carrying the aforementioned sculpture. (Ubico, 2000).

As for the chapel as a burial place, there is already evidence that burials were taking place in 1613, since on May 22, Magdalena Pérez made a will asking to be buried in the enclosure that was indicated to be new (Falla, 1994). Various people of African descent throughout the 17th century were buried in the chapel of Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Morenos, including: Juana de Zavallos, a free black woman in 1617 (Falla, 1996); in 1622 the mulatto Marina de Orozco (Falla, 2001); Diego de Monzón, a free mulatto in 1623 (Falla, 1996); the member of the confraternity Magdalena Carlos, a free mulatto (Falla, 1996); the spouses Juan de Ayala and Francisca Dávila in 1666 (Roxel, 1666) and in 1691 the ensign and free brown man call Ramón de Molina. (Falla, 2007).

It is not known when the brotherhood became extinct, but, already in Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, the professor of medicine Francisco Antonio Naxera requested on September 28, 1809 that it be reestablished (Martínez, 1809), for this purpose, proceedings were carried out taking testimonies from older people, who indicated that they knew of the existence of the group, however, the request did not progress.

Archaeological investigations carried out in the ruins of the temple of Santo Domingo nowadays Antigua Guatemala demonstrated the existence of the chapel of the Rosario de Morenos, it is a small space, one account with two altars where surely the tutelary image and that of San Blas were placed; in addition there are evidences of the

burials that were carried out there, since the ground at the time of the works presented alterations (Girón, Menéndez, y Axpucac, 2007).

Brotherhood of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, convent of Saint Augustine in the city of Santiago de Guatemala

The fifth convent established in Santiago de Guatemala was that of the Order of Saint Augustine, whose origins date back to the early years of the 1610s, since in 1615 they were given the land that had once been occupied by the Catherine nuns. Among the devotions practiced by the Augustinians, that of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino stands out, which is why it is not surprising that on January 27, 1622, Juan Varela, Francisco Manso, Anton de Zalcedo, Juan de Carranza, Mateo Rodriguez, Juan Garrido, Pablo Pacheco, Pedro Maldonado, Tomas de Barahona, Lorenzo de Colindres, Tomas de la Cruz, Blas de la Cruz, Alejo de la Cruz, Jerome de la Cruz, Mateo Hernandez, Francisco de Medrano, Alonso de Zamora, Andres de Mestanza, Alonso Garrido, Bartolome Miranda, Pedro de Miranda, Francisco Pereyra and Jorge Gutierrez, all identified as black and mulatto, asked the Augustinian friars Gabriel de Ribera, Luis de Morales, Jerome de Ocampo and Baltasar de Robles to create a penitential brotherhood dedicated to the aforementioned saint. (De Estrada, 1622).

The Augustinians granted the request of the Afro-descendants, agreeing to sell for 500 tostones the entire site under the choir of the church that was being built, where the brothers would make an altar and have private burials for themselves. The price of the site for the chapel would be paid in the following manner: 200 tostones within a year from that date, another 200 tostones the following year and the rest three years from the same date (De Estrada, 1622).

It was stipulated that the brotherhood should celebrate San Nicolás de Tolentino on the Sunday of the infraoctave after September 10, the date on which he is remembered, time in which the Augustinians had to officiate with music and great solemnity, saying vespers, sung mass and bell ringing; for the festivity the brothers would pay 20 tostones (De Estrada, 1622). The infraoctave of All Saints was also commemorated and the following day a sung mass, vigil and responsory were held, giving eight tostones in payment. (De Estrada, 1622).

Among the obligations of the brothers and the religious were: to order a mass sung for the living and deceased brothers every Monday, paying three tostones for it, and the convent had to provide the wax; the Augustinians had to give confession and help the sick to die well, assisting them in their homes and without charging them for their services; when the founders died, the bells had to be rung and they were buried near the altar of San Nicolás de Tolentino. (De Estrada, 1622).

In 1661, the mayor of the brotherhood of San Nicolás de Tolentino was Juan de Ávila, identified as "moreno" (of African descent), who agreed with the master silversmith Juan de Morales to make a silver lamp with four burners to place crosses, as well as four others to be installed on the altar of the saint located in the church of San Agustín. For this work Morales had initially received 24 silver marks and 60 pesos for the labor. (Falla, 2021).

As it was a penitential brotherhood, they took out a procession every Wednesday during Lent with the image of San Nicolás de Tolentino. The brothers had to wear the insignia and provide the religious with wax (De Estrada, 1622). As time went by, people from various sociocultural groups joined the group, to such an extent that in 1698 the majority were Spanish and Creole,

year in which the stewards Joseph del Castillo and Francisco Xavier de Pas requested to remove the effigy of the Lord of the Arrest during the processional procession (Ubico, 2014).

Several Afro-descendants requested to be buried in the chapel of San Nicolás de Tolentino of the Augustinian temple in Santiago de Guatemala, among them María Berrios, identified as a "free parda," widow of Sergeant Josephe Rodríguez, who apparently had a certain economic position since she had brought as a marriage dowry some houses that had been inherited by her father Fernando Berrios, as well as a slave. It could be that the applicant had also been a devotee or member of the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo, since she asked to be buried in the Franciscan habit. (Falla, 2021).

Unfortunately, during the documentary review, there was no further information available about the brotherhood of San Nicolás de Tolentino, called in some sources San Nicolás de la Penitencia, which could have allowed us to learn more about its development during the 18th century and the intercultural relations that were practiced there, by including among its members not only Afro-descendants but also the rest of the sectors that made up the colonial society of the time.

Brotherhood of the Rosario de Morenos of Mixco

One of the oldest references to the presence of the Virgin of the Rosary in her Morenos invocation is the description made in the 1630s by the parish priest of the town, the Irish Dominican Tomás Gage, who indicated that Mixco was a place "where the Spanish have established a rich brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary and the blacks another." (Gage, 1997, págs. 49 y 50).

There is little documentation about this brotherhood during the Hispanic period, for example, in the Archdiocesan Historical Archive of Guatemala City only two references were found, both from the 18th century. During the pastoral visits carried out by bishops and archbishops, the existence of the brotherhood was not reported, possibly because, when brotherhoods dedicated to the Rosary were founded in the country, based on the interpretation of "custom, privilege or other constitution, several Dominican religious did not present the accounts of the groups." (Chajón, 2020).

By 1758 there was still a presence of Afro-descendant population in the brotherhood and the feast of the Virgin was celebrated with great pomp, a space in which some events occurred that were not well regarded by the ecclesiastical authorities, in this regard:

Disorders and offenses against God that arise from the annual gathering in this town under the name of *tabal* at the festival of the Rosary of Morenos, His Most Illustrious Lordship thus orders the priest to ensure that the said morenos make and celebrate their festival with all the solemnity that their devotion dictates, but prohibits, under penalty of excommunication, gathering at night in the houses or squares of said town under the aforementioned name of *tabal*, which becomes a profane abuse and offense to God. (Roser, 1758, f. 204)

From the above description it can be intuited that the *tabal* was a kind of dance enlivened by drums, which was performed at night and in which alcoholic beverages were probably consumed, which altered the mood of the participants, giving rise to disorders and offenses to God, very similar to those that occurred in the *zarabandas* practiced among the indigenous populations and also denounced by religious people, including Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz (1958) during his pastoral visit to his diocese between 1768 and 1770.

The other reference to the brotherhood of the Virgin of Morenos of Mixco, found in the Archdiocesan Historical Archive of Guatemala, is a record from 1797 in which it is mentioned as a group of *ladinos*, founded in 1697 and approved in 1734 by Bishop Juan Gómez de Parada. At the end of the 18th century it had 434 and a half pesos in wealth, which were in the possession of the stewards, who had agreed to increase it every year at a rate of five percent (Villegas, 1797). It is interesting that apparently by that time there was no Afro-descendant presence in the brotherhood, since its members are defined as "*ladinos*", possibly the result of the union of Africans with other social groups. Similarly, although Thomas Gage in the 17th century indicated that the group already existed, it is striking that the previous information sets the year of foundation as 1697. It may be that it declined in the years following the stay of the Irish religious in the town, reestablishing itself on the date already indicated.

Currently, the brotherhood of *Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Morenos* in the city of Mixco is conceived as an organization made up exclusively of *mestizos* with a certain purchasing power. The main day on which the patron saint is celebrated is the last Sunday in January, when a procession goes through a large part of the town. It is said that she is commemorated in that month because the African slaves who founded the brotherhood in October were working in the harvests, which is why they did not have time to attend the various religious activities, not so in January, a time when work had already ceased (Velásquez, 2006). The Morenos festival was declared the titular festival of Mixco in 1937 and is the second most important after the patron saint festival in August, dedicated to Santo Domingo de Guzmán. (Molina, 2020).

Brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo, convent and temple of San Francisco, city of Santiago de Guatemala

Despite being the most important brotherhood founded and made up of Afro-descendants in Santiago de Guatemala, during the documentary review the date on which it arose could not be found, but it is possible that it was at the end of the 1630s, since on January 25, 1640 Gregoria del Castillo asked to be buried in the chapel dedicated to San Benito de Palermo in the temple of San Francisco (Falla, 2001), so it is deduced that there was already devotion to the Palermo saint and probably with it a brotherhood dedicated to his cult.

On February 2, 1648, the prior of the brotherhood dedicated to San Benito de Palermo, Friar Alonso Maldonado, together with brothers and members of the brotherhood, among them the deputy stewards Andrés Martín and Mauricio de Guzmán, as well as the mayors Marcos Vélez and Domingo de Siliezar, agreed with the master Juan Roldán de Vega to gild the blank wooden altarpiece dedicated to the patron saint, as well as to gild two images in relief, which were to be placed in the aforementioned piece of furniture that was in the chapel of the Franciscan temple. Roldán would be paid for his work 1,200 silver pesos of eight reales, distributed as follows: 200 in cash and the rest during the following five months, during which time he agreed that, if he could not finish it, it would have to be executed by another person and he would have to return the money paid by the members of the brotherhood. (Muñoz, 1648).

The brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo was also penitential and during the Lenten period they took blood in procession on the third Friday, wearing the insignia of the group. This activity generated expenses, which is why the brothers requested permission from the highest ecclesiastical authority to collect alms, it is so that

On April 17, 1674, Bishop Juan de Santo Matía Sáenz de Mañozca y Murillo granted them the above. It is mentioned that at that time the brotherhoods of Ecce Homo and Ángel de la Guarda of the temple of San Francisco were attached to the brotherhood of the saint from Palermo, and had to take out the effigies and insignia of their patron saints in the processional cortege. (Vejarano, 1674).

An interesting fact that demonstrates the participation of Afro-descendants in the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo is what was indicated in 1674 by the Franciscan monk Álvaro Rodríguez when he mentioned that those who came to the group with more affection and devotion were the black slaves *ladinos* and *bozales*, the first of the terms refers to the fact that they spoke Spanish, while the second is an allusion to the fact that they still retained the use of their mother tongues. Many of these devotees were outside the city of Santiago de Guatemala and, due to their quality of life and suffering, they could not travel to the capital to contribute alms for the support of the brotherhood, so the friar requested that they be allowed to collect in the sugar mills, *trapiches* and places where they resided. (Rodríguez, 1674).

By 1677 the brotherhood had its constitutions and ordinances which contemplated the election of a prior (Calvillo, 1802), that is, the person in charge of directing the activities of the group.

A character who had relevance within the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo was Captain Juan de Fuentes, who was also a master gilder. His mother Francisca Deza asked to be buried in the chapel of the Palermo saint in the Franciscan temple (Falla, 2015). He was married to Cecilia de Morales or Arriola, both identified as free *mulattoes*. De Fuentes carried out several works for the Franciscans of the city of Santiago de Guatemala, for example, he

gilded, painted and upholstered the altarpiece of the main altar of the temple of the aforementioned order, as well as the altars of Saint Anthony, the Immaculate Conception, Saint Diego de Alcalá, Saint Peter of Alcántara, Saint Rose of Lima, Our Lady of Sorrows and Our Lady of the Poor (Berlin, 1952). Juan de Fuentes and his brother-in-law Juan de Ocampo, also a mulatto, husband of his sister María, became stewards of the aforementioned brotherhood (Bonney, 2021), which is why on July 19, 1709, in the company of other brothers, including the mayors Martín de Gálvez, Dionisio de Velasco and Juan Antonio Mejía, they hired the master assembler José de Morales to make a blank collateral and two small ones that were to be placed in the chapel dedicated to said saint in the temple of San Francisco. Morales received 410 pesos as payment, of which 50 had already been advanced to him, and he agreed to deliver the work within six months (De Ulloa, 1709). It may be that at that time the sculpture of the saint that is currently preserved in the Franciscan temple in Guatemala City was commissioned.

Always continuing with some data on Juan de Fuentes and his role within the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo, which, according to researcher Baptiste Bonney (2021), was the richest and most influential of all those that were made up of mulattoes, he highlights the fact that in order to elect the different positions that the members of the brotherhood could access, including major stewards and mayors, they had to do so through a secret vote, however, on some occasions the news was not spread, resulting in some influential families monopolizing the brotherhood, as happened with the Fuentes and Ocampo families, who remained in the group until their deaths in the 1720s. Fuentes' sister and Ocampo's wife, María, managed to continue maintaining the

control, since she was named elder sister, remaining in the position until her death in 1736. According to Bonney, all of the above was obtained due to her rank within the militia, as well as the family reputation achieved through religious evergetism, the latter understood as the generous practice in which the rich and notable members of a certain community gave their assets to carry out various public actions, such as the restoration of streets or buildings (Zaccaria, 2014) or for pious works.

The members of the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo during the Christmas cycle carried out the "demands", an activity that consisted of collecting alms on the streets of the city of Santiago de Guatemala in order to obtain resources to cover the expenses that the celebrations were going to cause. By 1711 the competent authority granted the brothers a license for this task, indicating that they should go out carrying the images of the Mystery (Ubico, 2020), that is, of the Holy Family, a situation that is reminiscent of the current New Year's Eve inns.

Pope Innocent XIII on February 19, 1723 granted indulgences by way of suffrage to all those secular or regular priests who officiated mass in the chapel of San Benito de Palermo in the temple of San Francisco in Santiago de Guatemala, in memory of the deceased brothers and sisters. (Cabeza de Vaca, 1724).

The blood procession that took place every third Friday of Lent, and which was apparently approved during the ecclesiastical government of Bishop Agustín de Ugarte, who governed the diocese between 1632 and 1642, was suspended after the damage caused to the city of Santiago de Guatemala by the earthquake of 1717, which is why in 1726 the participants requested the corresponding authority take it out again in the

date on which it was traditionally done (Ubico, 2014).

As was customary in several of the brotherhoods in Santiago de Guatemala that had a chapel for the burial of members and devotees, the San Benito de Palermo Franciscan temple also had its own and, throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, several people belonging to the different sociocultural groups of the city asked in their wills to be buried in it. For example, between 1671 and 1742 several free mulatto and brown women requested to be buried in the aforementioned chapel, among them Clara de la Candelaria (Falla, 2006); Leonor de Toledo y de la Cruz (Falla, 2022); Juana Bernal (Falla, 2007); Paula de Coronado, who had been a member of the brotherhood for many years (Falla, 2015); Josefa Criado de Castilla (Falla, 2007) and María de la Concepción Espinosa (Falla, 2021). It is striking that all the petitioners are women, which does not rule out the possibility that men were also buried,

but it is possible that the books containing their requests have disappeared.

After the Santa Marta earthquakes of 1773, the Franciscans moved to the valley of the Hermitage, where they were assigned land to build their temple and convent. Apparently, several devotions and brotherhoods continued to be practiced in the new location, including that of San Benito de Palermo.

There is a document from 1789 detailing the expenses incurred annually by the brotherhood, among which it stands out that there were black collectors (Afro-descendants) who constantly delivered the money collected to the brothers, also receiving payment for their services. In February of that same year the tutelary image was retouched, with the person in charge and the eyes being changed (Trujillo and Ávila, 1789). Regarding the funds disbursed for the festivity of San Benito de Palermo, the following stand out:

Table 1. Expenses for the festival of Saint Benedict of Palermo, May 1789	
Expense type	Amount in pesos
Alms for the novena masses	9
For the feast of the saint they were given to the Franciscan convent	20
Sermon on the day of the feast	6
Decoration of the altar of the saint	18 and four reales
Music for the novena and the main day	34
Wax used during the novena and Saint Benedict's day	15 and two reales
Wax used during the novena and Saint Benedict's day	4
Rockets and ball burned on the main day	12
Half a pound of incense	4
Gratuity to the sacristans	12 reales
Incarnation of the saint's head that served for the festival	5 reales
For the hut (ranch) that was placed at the church entrance for the demand	8 reales
Pine tree that was watered in the church	10 reales.
Total	122 pesos and 41 reales

Source: Trujillo y Ávila (1789). Expenses for the San Benito de Palermo festival.

Relevant data stand out from the table above, firstly that the saint's festival took place in May and not in April, this because Holy Week fell in the latter month mentioned; secondly, the presence of elements such as music, fireworks and pine trees, which to this day are still used in the patron saint festivals of temples and towns in the country; and, finally, the cost of what was

invested in the festival, a somewhat expensive figure, which shows that the brotherhood had significant funds, many of them requested as a demand by Afro-descendants.

By 1790, the expenses incurred by the festival of San Benito de Palermo, which continued to be held in the month of May, were similar to those of the previous year, in this respect:

Table 2. Expenses for the festival of Saint Benedict of Palermo, May 1790

Expense Type	Amount in pesos
Novena, low masses, sermon and alms to the convent	35
Music of the novena and main day	32
Drums of the eve and main day	3 and 6 reales
Rockets and other fireworks	12
Decoration of the altar of the saint	18
Wax and decoration of the novena	18
Pine and incense	1
Gratuity to the sacristans	4 reales
Total	119 and 10 reales

Fuente: Trujillo y Ávila (1789). Expenses for the San Benito de Palermo festival.

The expenses incurred during the festival of San Benito de Palermo in 1790 give an overview of the way in which devotees honored the memory of their saints, which began with the novenas, followed by masses and there was no shortage of music and wax, the latter being a fundamental element in every religious celebration of the time. At that same time, when people linked to the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo died, the brothers paid four pesos as alms to the Royal Hospital for burial (Trujillo and Ávila, 1790), taking into account that the temple and convent were still under construction in the new settlement of Valle de la Ermita and, consequently, did not exist. the chapel dedicated to the saint nor the designated burial site.

By 1791, the members of the brotherhood were José María Trujillo, José María Arroyo, Andrés Minera, Esteban Estrada, Vicente España, Calixto Montúfar, Manuel Girón and Mariano Minera (Calvillo, 1802) and, although it is not specified to which sociocultural group they belonged, it is possible that some of them had Afro-descendant affiliation. Vicente España may be the sculptor to whom Heinrich Berlin (1952), following Víctor Miguel Díaz, refers as the author of the image of the Lord of Mercy that is currently highly venerated in the parish of the same name in zone 1 of the capital (Molina, 2011), as well as of the set of the Piedad that forms part of the assets of the temple of El Calvario in the city of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, sculptures that all date from the last third of the 18th century.

During the last years of the 18th century there are documentary references about the prosperity of the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo, which came to play a role as a lender to several

residents of the city, who came to her in search of funds paid with interest to carry out certain tasks.

Table 3. Loans granted by the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo 1791-1800			
Date	Applicant	Amount in pesos	Reason for loan
November 25, 1791	Domingo Betancur	500	Home repair
October 20, 1792	Esteban Yudire	2500	Mortgage payment for the estate La Chácara
December 1, 1792	Mariano Izaguirre	500	Not specified
November 13, 1793	José Arroyo	500	Not specified
October 16, 1795	Luciano González	300	A lot of houses
May 17, 1797	Pedro Nolasco Estrada	135	Extension of your house
June 6, 1798	Joaquín Arroyo	400	For his use
June 1798	Manuel González Cerezo	400	Trade
August 6, 1800	Juan Enrique Ortiz de Letona	400 and some pesos	Not specified
July 17, 1800	Nicolás Corona	400	Not specified
August 3, 1800	Petrona Pinillos	400	Not specified

*Source: Diocesan Fund/Office of Ecclesiastical Government (1802). Capital grants belonging to the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo from the years 1791 to 1802

It is interesting to note that when the applicants made their requests to the brotherhood, they referred to the fact that they had news that the coffers had the amount of money they needed to carry out their duties, which shows that people knew of the commercial importance that the institution had, possibly it was one of the most prosperous in the city of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción and for this reason they resorted to making loans. In relation to the way in which debtors should comply with the brotherhood, it is enough to cite the case of Manuel González who promised to pay it in two years, contributing 5% interest on it (Calvillo, 1802). Apparently the

brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo in Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción survived during the first decades of the 19th century and may have become extinct when the religious orders were expelled from the country in 1829.

Currently, in the temple of San Francisco, located in the historic center of Guatemala City, a sculpture of San Benito de Palermo is venerated, which, according to the Ministry of Culture and Sports (2015), is a carving from the 18th century measuring 120 centimeters high by 60 centimeters wide. It is made of wood, glass and gold, and represents the Franciscan religious figure standing with slight twist of the body on his left,

he holds a book and is dressed in the habit of his order in blackish blue and gold trim in floral designs. For much of the 20th century, the sculpture, which was in a place accessible to devotees, was hung with silk ribbons of various colors as a sign of gratitude, a practice that was also common in Mexico, where they tried to ensure that they were not black, since they represented that someone was asking for the death of another person, which is why they tried to place the saint in a high seat so that he could not be easily reached (Talavera and Monterrosa, 2002). It may be that something similar to the above has been observed in Guatemala and that is why the niche where San Benito was venerated was covered with glass. In 2022 the image was moved to the chapel of the Lord Sepultado, but it seems that it no longer has devotees and the characteristic multi-colored ribbons were not placed on it.

Brotherhood of Nuestra Señora de la Esclavitud, convent and temple of La Merced, city of Santiago de Guatemala

Despite the name of the brotherhood, it did not arise as an association of African-descended slaves, but is an allusion to the charisma of the Mercedarian order, which among its functions was to rescue Christian captives captured by Muslims (Labarca, 2004). This organization was founded by the tailors Simón Fernández Suero and Joseph de Bolaños, who donated 400 tostones for this purpose. It had its origins on March 17, 1640, the date on which the commander and the religious of the convent of Our Lady of Mercy in the city of Santiago de Guatemala gave up the place where the chapel would be erected in which the main activities of the brotherhood would be carried out, which at first was known as the Slaves of the Mother of God of La Merced. It was contemplated that,

although the majority of its members belonged to the sartorial guild, they could enter all those who wanted it, regardless of their sociocultural group (Ramírez, 1640).

According to architect and historian Mario Ubico (2006), the brotherhood of Nuestra Señora de la Esclavitud was a solid institution mentioned in documents from the 17th and 18th centuries, however, most of its books are lost. The Virgin of Slavery came to have a splendid altarpiece in the Mercedarian temple of Santiago de Guatemala made in 1758 by Francisco Javier de Gálvez (Berlin, 1952), which is currently in the church of La Merced in Guatemala City and corresponds to the one known as the Holy Family (Avalos, 1997). Apparently the tutelary image of the brotherhood was venerated with the title of Mercedes (Ubico, 2006) and is currently kept in the sacristy of the temple of La Merced in La Antigua Guatemala. (Gutiérrez, 2015).

Several of the brotherhoods established in Guatemala during Spanish domination were penitential, meaning that their members during Lent and Holy Week had to participate in the so-called blood processions, in which the penitents, all men, went with their faces covered and their torsos naked and flagellated themselves as a way of mortifying the flesh, to prepare themselves spiritually to commemorate the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. The brotherhood of Our Lady of Slavery was of the type described above, apparently leaving before 1677 every fourth Friday of the Lenten period (Ubico, 2014). Spaniards, mestizos, indigenous people and Afro-descendants who were dedicated to tailoring participated in this pious act. However, the former had to go at the front of the procession because they were the founders of the brotherhood. (Morales, 1677).

In some notarial protocols corresponding to the 17th and 18th centuries, it can be established that several people who were probably members of the brotherhood of Our Lady of Slavery requested to be buried in the chapel assigned to them in the temple of La Merced in the city of Santiago de Guatemala. For example, between 1661 and 1686 the free mulatto women Teresa de Morales (Falla, 2006), María de Monterroso (De Souza, 1669), María Pasquala de Villegas (De Zavaleta, 1674), Dominga de la Cruz (Agreda, 1678), Leonor Martínez (Palacios, 1680), Gracia de Ochoa (Falla, 2015) and Luisa de Miranda (Contreras, 1686), asked to be buried in the chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Esclavitud. The widow María de Santiago did the same, although it is not specified whether she was a free mulatto or a slave (Palacios, 1686). Indigenous people such as Diego Pablo (Gallegos, 1644) and Crespina de los Santos (Palacios, 1685) were also buried in this enclosure, as well as Spaniards, Creoles and mestizos, which shows that the objectives of the founding of the brotherhood of accepting people from all sociocultural groups were met.

As explained above, there are few documents available about the brotherhood of Our Lady of Slavery and therefore about the people who were part of it, which is why the information provided is partial, but it provides an overview of the fact that it was an organization that brought together various sectors of Guatemalan colonial society, giving it a sense of interculturality.

Brotherhood of Nuestra Señora de Masagua

As previously indicated, in several documents from the Hispanic period, reference is made to the fact that the population of Masagua was predominantly mulatto, reaching the point of

founding in the 17th century, a brotherhood was founded under the patronage of the Virgin Mary. The sources are confusing as to the Marian devotion to which it was dedicated, since some refer to it as the Rosary and others only as Our Lady, however, the original patronage of the town is of the Virgin of Candelaria. (Chaulón, 2013).

There is a document kept in the Archdiocesan Archive of Guatemala City which mentions that in 1655 the free mulatto Ignacio de los Reyes was the steward of the brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary of Masagua, who together with the Spaniard Pedro de Salcedo, deputy of said association, requested the ecclesiastical authorities of Guatemala City not to charge them more than 24 tostones for the patronal festival, this because they lacked ordinances that governed them since the book where they were written had been destroyed in a fire nine years before. Judging by the above data, the brotherhood could have been founded at the end of the 1630s and it is striking that it was an institution made up of Afro-descendants and other groups, however, the power was exercised by the former, as shown by the fact that the person in charge was a mulatto. (De Varona, 1655).

In 1705, the couple José de Santa María and María de Loaiza, both free pardos, requested a license to collect alms for the construction of the Masagua temple, since they had a special devotion to the Virgin kept there, having had permission for this purpose since 1698. The applicants stated that it was their intention to collect funds throughout Guatemala City until reaching Nicaragua. Finally, the request was granted. (De Agreda, 1705).

Brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo, San Juan Tecuaco

During the Hispanic period, San Juan Tecuaco depended on the parish of Santa Isabel Sinacantán (in the present village of the municipality of Chiquimulilla, department of Santa Rosa) in religious matters. It was an indigenous area whose inhabitants spoke Xinka, so the existence of a brotherhood dedicated to San Benito de Palermo is curious, although there is also evidence that in the ecclesiastical jurisdiction at certain times in history there was a presence of Afro-descendants (Crespo, 1935). Apparently the brotherhood was founded in 1660, since in the community church there was an altar and image of the saint, as indicated by José Zaballos, a free mulatto representing all the devotees of the Palermo friar:

There is an altar with the aforementioned image of Saint Benedict of Palermo and we have discussed and agreed... that it be founded and made into a brotherhood. I ask and beg Your Lordship to grant us permission to found said brotherhood, sending us, together with them, the ordinances and statutes that are kept in the brotherhood of Saint Benedict that is founded in this city [Santiago de Guatemala], so that we may govern and be governed by them, designating the day in which alms must be asked for. (Zaballos, 1660, s/p).

It seems that the devotees of San Benito de Palermo in San Juan Tecuaco had been setting up a brotherhood dedicated to the saint for ten years with their own funds, fulfilling their duty to give alms, officiating a sung mass every month for which they paid three tostones, and also celebrating the main festival for which they were charged six pesos. The indigenous people of the town had given the members of the group four caballerías which had vacant lots. The

petitioners asked that among the ordinances to be approved, the holding of 12 sung masses for the living and the deceased, as well as another for the brothers who died and a blood procession on Holy Tuesday be stipulated. (De Catachola, 1660). The request was accepted and by 1669 the brotherhood was mentioned in a document in which the indigenous people of San Juan Tecuaco entered into litigation with the priest of Ixhuatán, Bartolomé Bran, requesting that three of the five brotherhoods existing in the town be suppressed, including that of San Benito de Palermo. In that year Sebastián Sepeda was the councilor and Miguel Díaz (Cano, 1669) the steward. By 1690 the brotherhood does not appear among those existing in the town, there are only references to the existence of those of Santa Vera Cruz, Natividad, del Carmen and San Nicolás Tolentino. (Fernández, 1690).

By 1731, the existence of the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo de San Juan Tecuaco was reported, which had sixty-four cattle of all ages among its assets (Rico, 1731). During the pastoral visit of Archbishop Pedro Pardo de Figueroa to the parish of Santa Isabel Sinacantán, the group had 67 cattle and seven horses as capital (De Sandoval, 1740). In the 1770s, Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz indicated that the brotherhood did not have capital. (Montes, 1977).

Apparently, by the end of the 18th century, the date on which the brotherhood was founded had been lost. It was stated that all the existing ones in San Juan Tecuaco were so old that they would have existed for more than a hundred years. At that time, all the groups paid for a sung mass a month, for which they gave 12 reales; their patronal festivals were celebrated with vespers, mass and a procession. The way in which they were integrated was organized in the following way: a steward, a mayor, two captains and three or four assistants known as tenances, who were elected for one year. All the towns that made up the parish of Santa Isabel Sinacantán owned

churches covered with straw, since the poverty in which the indigenous people, who were the majority population, lived did not allow them to build better quality buildings, so they were exposed to the elements. "In 1775, lightning struck the church of Tecuaco, which is the largest town in this parish, not even leaving the altars that were not reduced to ashes" (Palacios, 1784, f. 91). Surely one of the altars destroyed was that of the brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo, although it was not indicated what happened to the sculptures and other goods that existed in the temple.

Brotherhood of San Nicolás de Tolentino, town of San Juan Tecuaco

This brotherhood seems to be contemporary with that of San Benito de Palermo and among its members there was a population of African descent. It also entered into litigation with Father Bartolomé Bran (Cano, 1669). However, it did not become extinct since, in 1690, together with those of Santa Vera Cruz, Natividad de Nuestra Señora and del Carmen, they owned a ranch with 60 cattle of all ages, as well as two horses (Fernández, 1690). During the 18th century there are several references, although its members were indigenous. Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz said that the brotherhood did not have capital, that is, neither money nor other assets (Montes, 1977). In 1784 it was mentioned as one of the two brotherhoods that existed in the town and that in all probability its altar had been destroyed along with the thatched temple by a lightning strike in 1775 (Palacios, 1784). At that time, the majority of the town's inhabitants were indigenous, surely Xinka speakers.

Brotherhood of Ánimas, town of Chipilapa

Chipilapa was a community located in the province of Escuintla, which at times was the head of the parish on which the annexed towns of La Gomera, Don García, Texcuaco, San Juan

Ruatán and Santa Ana Mixtán depended, places with a strong presence of Afro-descendants. In this town, the founding of a brotherhood dedicated to the Souls was requested by the Spaniards Marcos de la Paz, Antonio Fernández, José de Espíndola, Miguel Enríquez, José Enríquez and the mulattoes Marcos Flores, Antonio Donis, Nicolás de Santa María, Bartolomé Martínez, Francisco de Villalba and Miguel Álvarez. The desire to create the brotherhood was due to the need to help the suffrages to enjoy the blessings in favor of the souls in purgatory, which is why, with the permission of the local priest, they decided to found it in the town church, and they also obliged themselves to say a low mass every Monday. The request was accepted by the highest ecclesiastical authority of Santiago de Guatemala on May 9, 1667. (Ximénez, 1667).

In 1679, during the visit to the region by the bishop of Guatemala Juan Ortega Montañes, it was reported that for about two years the then-called brotherhood of the Blessed Souls of Purgatory had not celebrated mass or collected alms, nor did it have an altar in the local church but only a painting or canvas of the patron saints (Sáenz, 1679). From this it follows that the active life of the brotherhood was temporary, which may have been due to several factors, including the migration of inhabitants to other regions, illness or lack of financial support for the group.

Currently Chipilapa is a neighborhood that is part of the municipality of La Gomera in the department of Escuintla.

Brotherhood of San Antonio de Padua, Jutiapa

On April 2, 1671, Nicolas de Salazar, Sebastian de Godoy, Marcos Hernandez, Antonio Moran, Cristóbal de Chaves and Diego Ramírez, all free

mulattoes from the town of Jutiapa, requested the ecclesiastical authorities to found a brotherhood dedicated to Saint Anthony of Padua, which was granted (Valdes, 1671). The brotherhood was one of the most prosperous and is referred to in various pastoral visits, for example, by 174 it had 23 calves, six foals and 119 reales. (De Palencia, 1764).

Brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo, pueblo de Don García

In 1679, the existence of a brotherhood dedicated to San Benito de Palermo is mentioned in the hermitage of the estate of the chief lieutenant García de Aguilar, belonging in the ecclesiastical branch to the parish of San Pedro Chipilapa in the Escuintla district (Sáenz, 1679). Apparently, it is in this territory that a population was founded in 1708 with the name of Don García (Municipal Council of La Democracia, Escuintla, 2019), taking the Palermo saint as patron.

The first data of the brotherhood of San Benito already constituted as a town of Don García is from 1734, year in which it had 12 pesos of capital (Rico, 1734). By 1740 it was reported that it had fifty pesos as capital (García, 1740). In 1775 the brotherhood had no capital or assets. (Montes, 1977).

For a long time Don García was a town attached to the parish of San Pedro Chipilapa, but by order of Archbishop José de Figueredo y Victoria, who governed from 1752 to 1765, the capital was moved to Don García. The decision was made due to the decrease in the indigenous population and the increase of the mestizo population (Cortés, 1958), possibly with an Afro-descendant presence. The brotherhood of San Benito de Palermo continued to be active for much of the 19th century. Currently, Don García is a municipality of La Democracia in the department of Escuintla and celebrates its patronal festival on April 4 in honor of San Benito de Palermo.

Brotherhood of San Nicolás de Tolentino, ingenio de Arrivillaga, Petapa

Around 1643, brothers Juan and Domingo de Arribillaga Urdinso arrived in Guatemalan territory from Guipúzcoa, Spain (Llarena, 1969), invited by their uncle Captain Esteban de Zabaleta, one of the most important merchants of the Kingdom of Guatemala. Upon Zabaleta's death, the Arribillagas inherited a sugar mill in the jurisdiction of the territory of Petapa, and over time they expanded it by establishing a sugar mill that they named under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In this place in 1656, Domingo founded the Arrivillaga estate, the only one of its kind in the entire region. (Asociación de Amigos del País, 2004).

Slaves of African origin worked at the Arrivillaga sugar mill, who established a brotherhood dedicated to San Nicolás de Tolentino in the chapel towards the end of the 17th century. For example, in 1681, the mayors Juan de Coronado and José Calvario, as well as the stewards Juan de los Santos and Lorenzo de Arrivillaga, requested permission from Bishop Juan de Ortega y Montañez to acquire a black chasuble and frontal for the mass of the deceased brothers, a penitential image of the saint for the processions, a bell, banner and veil for the altarpiece, for which they had the necessary resources, a request that was granted. (De Uribe, 1681).

It is known that in 1688 the slaves of the said sugar mill requested alms for the maintenance of the brotherhood (De Coronado and De Los Santos, 1688), it seems that it was in force during a large part of the 18th century and it is unknown when it became extinct.

Brotherhood of Santa Efigenia, San Pedro Sacatepéquez

San Pedro Sacatepéquez was an important town in the west of the country, so much so that it was the capital of a parish,

having among its annexes the San Marcos neighborhood, current capital of the department of the same name. It is interesting that, being a town of Mam origin, it had a brotherhood dedicated to Santa Efigenia, which is mentioned in several pastoral visits of the 18th century. Surely the above was due to the fact that the region was evangelized by the Mercedarians, who apparently were devotees of the Ethiopian saint, coming to have in their temple in Santiago de Guatemala an altarpiece dedicated to her.

In 1740 it was mentioned as a brotherhood and had 300 tostones as assets (Gómez, 1740). In the Relation of the brotherhoods and fraternities of this archbishopric of Guatemala, sent to Spain in 1775 by Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz, it was mentioned that the brotherhood had 127 pesos as assets (Montes, 1977). By 1781 it had 170 pesos as capital, there is no mention of the existence of an image dedicated to the saint in the parish church (Carro, 1781). In 1783 it was mentioned as a brotherhood and was in charge of celebrating the days of San Lorenzo (August 10), San Agustín (August 28), San Mateo and the day of the titular (September 21). It had 55 pesos as capital. (Clérigo, 1783).

Brotherhood of Santa Efigenia, valley of Salcajá

Although Salcajá was the first settlement founded by Pedro de Alvarado in Guatemalan territory and the first Catholic church was founded there, for much of the Hispanic period it was not constituted as a town as such, but is referred to as a valley, that is, a place with scattered houses. It was not until 1780 that it emerged as a formal population (Juarros, 1999). In most ancient references about Salcajá, it is mentioned that its inhabitants were ladinos, however, there was a brotherhood or brotherhood dedicated to the culture of the people of Guatemala to Santa

Efigenia, there is a possibility that among its inhabitants there were some of African descent who were devotees of the saint.

One of the oldest references to the devotion to Saint Efigenia in Salcajá is the pastoral visit made to the parish of San Cristóbal Totonicapán in 1740, of which it was an annex or visiting town. In that year a brotherhood dedicated to the saint appeared, also indicating that more than 180 Ladino parishioners lived in the town. (Gómez, 1740).

In the *Relation of the brotherhoods and sisterhoods of this archbishopric of Guatemala*, sent to Spain in 1775 by Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz, it was stated that the brotherhood of Santa Efigenia de Salcajá had 56 pesos and four reales as its capital (Montes, 1977). In 1780, during the pastoral visit of Archbishop Cayetano Francos y Monroy, the valley of Salcajá continued to depend on the parish of San Cristóbal Totonicapán in religious matters. During this visit, the assets of the church of Salcajá were registered, among which were some related to the then called brotherhood of Santa Efigenia, in this regard it is indicated:

There is in this church (hermitage of Salcajá), another altarpiece, which is Saint Ifigenia, the main image does not have any silver: but the small image of the float has a silver diadem, there is a saint in relief, and a crucifix without any silver and two painting panels. (Rosales, 1780, s/p)

It may be that the image described as the one on the floats was the one used in the processions that the brotherhood took out. Currently in the hermitage known as La Conquistadora there is a small carved sculpture of Santa Efigenia wearing the Carmelite habit, it could be the processional one from the 18th century or the one that presided over the altarpiece dedicated to the Ethiopian

virgin. In that At that time the brotherhood had 59 pesos as assets (Rosales, 1780).

Devotion to Santa Efigenia in the temple of La Merced, city of Santiago de Guatemala

During the phase of collecting documentary sources, no reference was found to the existence of any brotherhood or fraternity dedicated to Santa Efigenia in the temple and convent of the Mercedarians in the city of Santiago de Guatemala. What was documented was the contract that was signed for the elaboration of its altarpiece in the 18th century. Unfortunately, there was no access to the Mercedarian Archive, in which there may have been some reference to the devotion to the Ethiopian virgin.

The first reference to the altarpiece dedicated to Saint Efigenia is from July 23, 1792, the date on which Captain Leandro de la Cueva y Balladares agreed with the master Vicente de la Parra to make a blank altarpiece for the altar dedicated to the saint in the Mercedarian temple. De la Parra agreed to deliver the work in December of that same year, receiving 300 pesos of eight reales as payment, an advance of 100 was made to buy the necessary materials, while the next 100 were delivered two months after the signing of the deed and the remaining one month before delivering the final work (Coello, 1702). From the above it follows that the devotion to Saint Efigenia already existed and could have originated in the last third of the 17th century, however, it is necessary to delve deeper into that probability.

Another of the few references related to Santa Efigenia and the temple of La Merced in Santiago de Guatemala is the hiring in 1766 of the master gilder Juan Agustín de Astorga, who was in charge of gilding the altarpiece of the saint, as well as upholstering three images for

the same (Berlin, 1952). The aforementioned altarpiece is still preserved in the historic center of the Guatemalan capital, being a clear example of the country's baroque art (Ávalos, 1996). On the same piece of furniture, four paintings can be seen that narrate passages from Efigenia's life, these being: her baptism by the apostle Saint Matthew; her consecration as a nun; the miracles worked by her intercession and her death, all "possessing details of chiaroscuro, inclined lines, and together with the expression of the faces and movements, they make them closer to baroque patterns" (Rodas, 1997, p. 166). The three sculptures referred to are those of Saint Efigenia that occupies the central part, another of Saint Matthew and, finishing off the altarpiece, a small one identified as the father of the saint.

Discussion of results

Without a doubt, the brotherhoods and fraternities made up of people of African origin occupied a transcendental place in Guatemalan colonial society, since they were places that allowed the social cohesion of its members while giving them a certain status and social recognition, taking into account that they were from the most disadvantaged sectors of their time.

In these spaces they assume an important responsibility, that is, religion through the actions they carry out in the name of the saint becomes a space of symbolic compensation that helps them live, to leave a private or work sphere where they generally play a subordinate role and enter a public sphere through the organization, in this case religious, with political scope, playing a leading role. In these spaces they have a place of enunciation, their organizers occupy a leadership position, earning recognition and the respect of all residents and neighbors, thus achieving a certain status in the neighborhood. (Vera, 2015, págs. 397-398)

The above-mentioned was demonstrated by examining documents of the time in which the assets that the brotherhoods and fraternities owned were recorded, especially cash and cattle. That is why this work aims to be a contribution that contributes to the knowledge and appreciation of the African legacy in the social, cultural, economic and religious life of Guatemala during the Hispanic period.

Afro-descendants in Guatemala, whether slaves or free, resorted to the models of holiness of the time that best identified them, which is why it is not surprising that Saint Benedict of Palermo was one of them, without a doubt, his life reminded them of theirs, as two authors explained for the case of El Salvador where they added that both the skin color of the saint, as well as his life as a shepherd and farmer reminded them of the tasks they performed on a daily basis. (Erquicia y Herrera, 2012).

It is also interesting how religious figures and other Spaniards encouraged the creation of brotherhoods that had as their guardian a saint who shared characteristics in common with those of the faithful who went to worship him, in this case with people who were slaves or had a skin color similar to those of African descent. It was also intended that the lives of the saints who were the guardians of the institutions would be calm, modest, far from scandals, in order to guarantee the ideological dominance of the subordinates and avoid possible uprisings.

Knowing the origin and spread of brotherhoods initially made up of Afro-descendants is interesting since, in all probability, they were created to fulfill several purposes, the first evidently religious and pious; the second to demonstrate status and a third of a cohesive nature, where people met to honour the memory of a saint, but at the same time preserve elements of their communities of origin.

The brotherhoods originally founded by Afro-descendants are an example of the cultural fusion that was forged throughout the Spanish domination, in which, although it is true racial prejudices prevailed, there came a time when unions between the various sectors that came together in the populations became widespread, which is why at the end of the 18th century several of the associations mentioned were controlled and integrated by Spaniards and mestizos.

Final comment

This work, supported by historical sources, aims to present new information related to the expressions of popular religiosity practiced during the Hispanic period by the Afro-descendant population in different towns in Guatemala during the 17th and 18th centuries, about which much is unknown. It is also expected to become a theoretical reference for the approach to similar studies, subject to criticism and contributions from experts on the subject.

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Figure 1.
Image of San Nicolás Tolentino, temple of
San Agustín, La Antigua Guatemala.
October 2022.



Figure 2.
Consecrated image of Nuestra Señora del Rosario de
Morenos venerated in the parish church of the city of
Mixco, department of Guatemala. January, 2023.



Figure 3
Sculpture of San Benito de Palermo that is part of the assets of the San Francisco temple in the historic center of Guatemala City. September, 2021.



Figure 4
Virgen del Rosario venerated in the parish church of the town of Masagua in the department of Escuintla. February, 2014.



Figure 5
Sculpture of Saint Benedict of Palermo,
San Juan Tecuaco, Santa Rosa.
August, 2023.



Figure 6
San Nicolas de Tolentino sculpture
venerated in the parish church of the town
of San Juan Tecuaco, department of Santa
Rosa. December, 2022.



Figure 7. San Benito de Palermo, patron of the town formerly called Don García and nowadays La Democracia in the department of Escuintla. April, 2022.

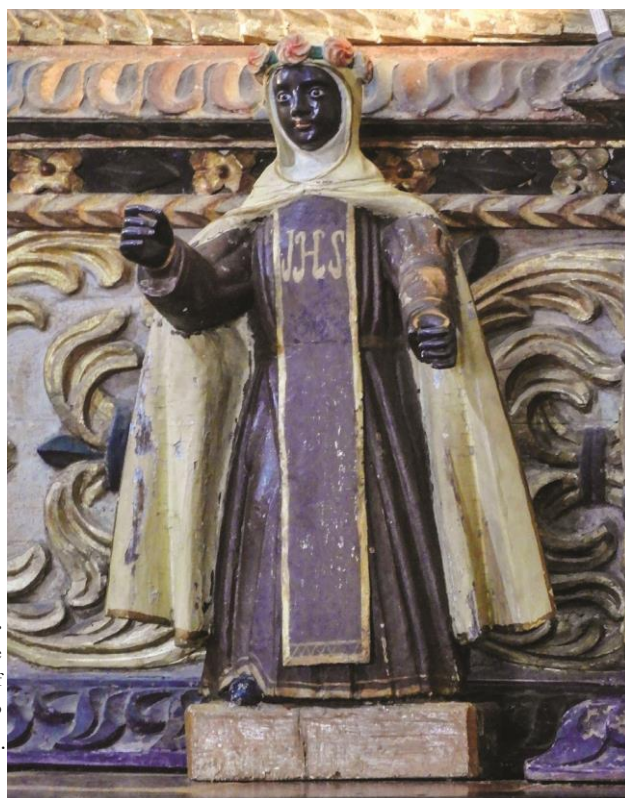


Figure 8. Small sculpture of Santa Efigenia sheltered in the hermitage La Conquistadora, from the village of Salcajá, Quetzaltenango June, 2022.



Figure 9
Altarpiece dedicated to Santa Efigenia, La Merced temple, Guatemala City. August, 2022.



Figure 10
Sculpture of Saint Efigenia venerated in the temple of La Merced, Guatemala City. August, 2022