

Art in the former “Audiencia” of Guatemala

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Resumen

Este artículo presenta información sobre las obras de arte religioso que evidencian la influencia del aprendizaje desde la ciudad de Santiago de Guatemala hasta las que fueron sus provincias durante el período hispánico, particularmente las poblaciones de Ciudad Real de Chiapas, ahora San Cristóbal de las Casas; Orosi y Ujarrás, en Costa Rica; Chalchuapa, Metapán, Panchimalco y San Vicente, en El Salvador; Comayagua y Tegucigalpa, en Honduras, y León, en Nicaragua. El objetivo general fue establecer las obras artísticas ístmicas que evidencian la influencia de los creadores santiagueños, lo cual se alcanzó plenamente al analizar las creaciones que se mencionan en estas líneas. La finalidad es que los docentes cuenten con material sobre aquellos procesos formativos que favorecieron la educación de las artes en el pasado y se fortalezcan los lazos de hermandad entre los pueblos que una vez estuvieron unidos.

Palabras clave: Arquitectura, retablos, iglesias, enseñanza, artes.

Abstract

This article presents information about the works of religious art and the influence of learning from the city of Santiago de Guatemala to the ancient provinces during the Hispanic period. The influence can be found in the towns of Ciudad Real de Chiapas, now SanCristóbal de las Casas; Orosi and Ujarrás, in Costa Rica; Chalchuapa, Metapán, Panchimalco and San Vicente, El

Salvador; Comayagua and Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and León, Masaya and Granada, Nicaragua. The general objective was to establish the isthmian artistic works that show the influence of the creators from Santiago. The information gives material to teachers about the education of the arts in the past and to strengthen the connections of goodwill between the peoples at Central America.

Keywords: Architecture, altarpieces, churches, teaching, arts.

Introduction

When the Spanish conquest of Central American territory occurred, there arose the need for an administrative center to govern political, military, and religious activities for an extensive territory that was not previously integrated. Although in 1544 that center was established in the city of Gracias a Dios, in Honduras, after four years, the inefficiency of that city for the functions that officials had to fulfill became evident. As a result, the president of the *Audiencia*, Alonso López de Cerrato, moved the capital to Santiago de Guatemala in 1549. From that moment on, it became the administrative seat, after a brief period between 1565 and 1570, until the end of the Hispanic period. Due to its political importance, the city also became the seat of religious orders and a bishopric. These conditions favored artistic patronage, which was sent to provincial capitals, promoting a type of artistic education that was reflected in

works in the present-day territories of Chiapas, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

From the 16th to the 19th century, artistic monuments were built in the former provincial capitals of the Kingdom of Guatemala. This work aims to provide insight into the artistic learning of the time and the documentation of specific works in the regions that demonstrate the importance of the former capital of the Kingdom of Guatemala. It seeks to address the limited dissemination of this type of information within the Guatemalan context, which can serve as a motivating resource for educators to engage students in the protection of tangible heritage.

The general objective of the work was to establish the artistic works from the isthmus that demonstrate the influence of creators from Santiago, while the specific objectives were to determine the documentary information that allows for the identification of connections between artists from the capital and those from the provinces, and to classify the artistic currents that are reflected in the works of art preserved in the provincial capitals.

As a theoretical reference, categories on artistic teaching and learning between the 16th and 19th centuries developed by Diego Angulo Íñiguez, Heinrich Berlin, and Carlos Borromeo were utilized. These categories facilitated the analysis of the information gathered during the fieldwork phase. The transmission of artistic techniques and processes during the Hispanic period resembled a medieval model: masters teaching apprentices. The initial masters, knowledgeable about European techniques, arrived throughout

the 16th century, likely seeking different opportunities from their previous professions. This occurred where there was a demand for artistic objects, as it represented the primary source of income for those engaged in the craft, typically in cities with episcopal seats, where the works were commissioned and could then be transported to towns where only one work was acquired in an entire generation.

During the 16th and early 17th centuries, European masters were frequent, such as the sculptor Quirio Cataño or the painter Pedro de Liendo. However, as the Hispanic period progressed, masters were sought after for their talent, regardless of their origin, as there were indigenous, mestizo, and mulatto individuals who could take on apprentices from any group, including Spaniards. Naturally, artists often became masters to their own children, as was the case with Pedro de Liendo and his children Francisco and Sebastiana, both painters. Furthermore, due to demand, some members of the workshop accompanied the masters to carry out works in the regions dependent on the city of Guatemala. Architectural learning also occurred in a guild-like manner but required a different process. Apprentices had to collaborate on construction projects in which the master was involved. This made the process much more costly and less frequent because investment in buildings was not easy. Seismic activity often necessitated repairs or rebuilding, but construction processes required many years.

The most important family of architects in the kingdom was the Porres family. The first of them was Joseph de Porres (1635-1703), classified as mulatto, the son of a Spaniard and an African descendant. It's likely that the father's resources allowed the young man to learn such a costly trade. From the request he made in 1687 to the city council to appoint him chief architect, it is known that he learned from Juan Pascual (circa 1609-circa

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1. Angulo, D. (1956). *Historia del arte hispanoamericano*. Tomo III/ Angulo, D. (1981). *Repercusiones andaluzas en el arte americano. Primeras Jornadas de Andalucía y América*. Tomo I. / Berlin, H. (1952). *Historia de la imaginación colonial en Guatemala*. / Berlin, H. (1965). *Artistas y artesanos coloniales de Guatemala. Notas para un catálogo. Cuadernos de Antropología*, No. 5, 5-35. / Borromeo, C. (2010). *Instrucciones de la fábrica y del ajuar eclesiásticos*.

1666), also a mulatto, while they were constructing the churches of San Agustín and San Pedro in Santiago de Guatemala, now Antigua Guatemala, around 1650. In turn, Juan Pascual had learned from his father, Andrés Francisco, starting from approximately 1625. Joseph, on his part, taught his son Diego (1677-1741). Consequently, Diego trained his sons Felipe (baptized as Guillermo, 1698-1759) and Diego José (1707-circa 1767). It is likely that Manuel de Porres, who was constructing the church of Chiquimula, Guatemala, in 1790, was the son of Felipe and was trained by him around 1745 when he built the sanctuary of Esquipulas, also in Guatemala. In León,

Nicaragua, after Diego José's death, the cathedral was overseen by Agustín Porras in 1777, probably his son, who would have learned from Diego José around 1750².

For the achievement of the objectives, a bibliographic review of works related to the history of Guatemalan and Central American art from the 16th to the 19th centuries was conducted. Additionally, documents preserved in the *Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano y General de Centro América* in Guatemala City were consulted. Furthermore, digital consultation of the General Archive of the Indies in Seville was also carried out.

Results

The results of the investigation are summarized in the following table:

| Table 1. Religious Constructions in the Old Kingdom of Guatemala | | |
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| Temple | C.A. year | Information |
| Ujarrás, Costa Rica | 1693 | Doctrine Architecture in New Granada. Currently in ruins. |
| Orosi, Costa Rica | 1766 | New Granada Doctrine Architecture. Sculpture of San José, Guatemalan, 1766. Paintings, circa 1797, and altarpieces, circa 1805, influenced by the Panamanian San Francisco de la Montaña and Parita. |
| Guadalupe, Granada | 1626 | New Granada Doctrine Architecture, 1706: Starting point for evangelization in Costa Rica. Facade altered in 1945. |
| La Merced, Granada | 1740 | Reconstructed and altered in 1862. |
| San Francisco, Granada | 1756 | Reconstructed in 1862. Use of padded pilasters inspired by those of Santa Rosa de Santiago de Guatemala, by José Manuel Ramírez, from 1755. |
| Asunción, Masaya | 1726 | Use of Serlian pilasters, as used by Diego de Porres in Santiago de Guatemala circa 1715. |
| Cathedral, León | 1780 | Planned by Diego de Porres around 1740; executed by Diego José between 1747 and 1767; completed by Agustín Porras. Cordovan choir: sent from Spain in 1780, rococo style. |
| La Merced, León | 1755 | Connections with the church of Santa María Chiquimula, Guatemala: five aisles, fluted columns, circa 1750. |
| La Recolectión, León | 1786 | Constructed based on the model of La Merced de León. |
| Sutiaba, León | 1760 | Also with a rear facade following the model of La Merced de León. |

2. Luján, L. (1982). *El arquitecto mayor Diego de Porres, 1677-1741*. / De Ugalde, J. (1777). *Certificación*.

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| San Miguel (Cathedral), Tegucigalpa | 1765 | Guatemalan architect José Gregorio Nacianceno Quiroz designed the building with cushioned pilasters similar to those by José Manuel Ramírez, and archangels reminiscent of those at Santa Clara de Santiago de Guatemala. The main altarpiece, crafted by Guatemalan artist Vicente Gálvez in 1765, bears similarities to the main altarpiece at San Agustín Acasaguastlán, and features paintings by Honduran artist José Miguel Gómez. Other works throughout the building were produced by the workshops of both artists. |
| Dolores, Tegucigalpa | 1732 | Altarpieces dating from 1710 to 1732, adorned with paintings by Guatemalan artist Blas de Mesa. The facade, completed in 1815, bears similarities to the facade of Quetzaltenango, circa 1775. The temple underwent modifications in the 1950s. |
| Cathedral, Comayagua | 1711 | Among the builders were Nicolás de Arzila and Tomás de Reyes. Similarities with the Cathedral of Santiago de Guatemala: sunken arches and arabesque ornamentation. The main altar, dated 1703, with sculptures by Francisco de Ocampo from 1620, as well as a Guatemalan-made tabernacle from 1808. The Rosary altarpiece, from Vicente de la Parra in 1708, The Salamé altarpiece, with a sculpture by Andrés de Ocampo from 1619, and the Sagrario altarpiece of 1711, featuring sculptures by Francisco de Ocampo from 1620. |
| San Sebastián, Comayagua | 1584 | Altarpiece adorned with paintings by Guatemalan artist Blas de Mesa, circa 1730. |
| El Pilar, San Vicente, El Salvador | 1769 | Concave pilasters, ringed columns on the side portal, similarities with Santa María Chiquimula, circa 1750, and similar arabesque ornamentation to San Cristóbal Acasaguastlán, 1752. |
| Huizúcar, El Salvador | 1689 | New Granada doctrinal model. Solomonian altarpiece predating 1733; the rest in ultra-Baroque style, circa 1764, with three displaying Rococo influence, similar to that of Santa María de Jesús, Guatemala, circa 1770. |
| Panchimalco, El Salvador | 1742 | Cristóbal Rendero's facade, influenced by Santa Catarina Mita, Guatemala, from 1740. Altarpieces from 1720, Solomonian in style; ultra-Baroque from 1740 to 1780, with one displaying Rococo influence. |
| Chalchuapa, El Salvador | 1681 | Similarities with Jutiapa, Guatemala. Angels, cupola, and sculpture atop inspired by the Cathedral of Santiago, from 1680. Altars from the time of priest Nicolás del Zarraga, 1723, one gilded by Rafael Cárdenas, and another from 1782. |
| Metapán, El Salvador | 1683 | Similarities with San Juan Ermita, from 1687; San José La Arada, from 1687, and San Juan Camotán, from 1742. Mural painting circa 1776; altarpieces circa 1780. |
| Cathedral, Ciudad Real de Chiapas | 1699 | Similarities with the Cathedral of Santiago: sunken arches, arabesque ornamentation, representations of the Fathers of the Church and apostles. Repairs were carried out by Guatemalans Laureano Gálvez and Sebastián Rivas Rivera in 1808. |
| San Francisco Javier, Ciudad Real de Chiapas | 1698 | Management of the College by Guatemalan Alonso de Arrivillaga. Similarities with San Pedro de Santiago, by Joseph de Porres, and Patzún. Solomonian altars from 1708 with similarities to those of San Juan del Obispo, probably by Agustín Núñez. |
| La Encarnación, Ciudad Real de Chiapas | 1677 | Tower with an arch on the street from 1677. Facade with Serlian pilasters similar to those by Diego de Porres, circa 1737. Side portal from 1764. |
| La Caridad, Ciudad Real de Chiapas | 1717 | Second level with side Serlian pilasters, similar to those by Diego de Porres from 1715 at La Recolección in Santiago de Guatemala. Solomonian main altar circa 1722. Lateral section from 1790, featuring Novohispanic pilasters and Serlian pilasters. |
| Santo Domingo, Ciudad Real de Chiapas | 1741 | Solomonian inspiration of the altarpiece of La Caridad, finish with Serlian pilasters and arabesque ornamentation. Solomonian altarpieces, circa 1735. Interior nave panels from around 1760. |

Source: see footnote 3

- Benavides, M. (2005). La romería a Ujarrás. / Sáenz, G. (2010). Inventarios de una Terra Incógnita. Rastros y fragmentos de la historia de la iglesia de Orosi. / Barberena, C. (2021). El arte hispánico y de tradición virreinal en Panamá. / Chavarría, E. (1996). Granada: Bienes inmuebles patrimoniales. / Luján, L. (1982). El arquitecto mayor Diego de Porres, 1677-1741. / Ortiz, A. (2019). Tres iglesias, tres expresiones del barroco centroamericano en la ciudad de León de Nicaragua. Espacios y muros del barroco iberoamericano, 223-242; Martínez, M. (1992). Cuatro centros de arte colonial provinciano hispano criollo en

Discussion of Results

As indicated in the early pages of this study, the learning of arts during the Hispanic period simply extended medieval European practices onto American soil. However, local authors imbued it with particular characteristics that make it unique, albeit closely related precisely because that learning connected people in master-apprentice relationships. Importantly, even though it served the criteria emanating from a small group of priests, it became the artistic expression that united the faithful for generations. Among the verifiable facts throughout the kingdom's territory, regardless of local differences in economics and political conditions, the tradition of building with wooden roofs adorned with coffered ceilings was maintained in Honduras, as well as in Chiapas, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. This practice kept the Mudejar taste alive throughout the entire Hispanic period. On the other hand, it is evident that the provinces furthest from Guatemala received influences from their neighbors. For instance, in Chiapas, one can observe the influence of the pilaster used in Mexico, due to the artistic sponsorship of a bishop from that region. Similarly, in Costa Rica, significant Panamanian influence arrived through commercial relationships, leaving behind works of great value for present-day communities.

Conclusions

The objectives set for this work were satisfactorily achieved. The documentary information allowed for the identification of connections between artists from Santiago and

those from the provinces, such as the use of side Serlian pilasters in Chiapas and the acquisition of works in Guatemala for Orosi, as well as the hiring of Guatemalan artists in Honduras and Nicaragua. Artistic trends embodied in the preserved artworks in provincial capitals, from the 17th to the early 19th century, were successfully classified. It was also possible to establish which isthmian artworks evidenced the influence of Santiago creators, such as the Encarnación in Ciudad Real de Chiapas, the Cathedral of Tegucigalpa, churches in El Salvador, the Cathedral of León, and sculptures in Costa Rica, although notable Panamanian influence was observed in this former province. In short, it can be affirmed that the artistic tradition and its teaching from Santiago were as effective as a true university and impacted from the capital to the provinces of the former Kingdom of Guatemala.

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Figure 1.
Cathedral of Ciudad Real de Chiapas
(currently San Cristóbal de las Casas).



Figure 2.
La Caridad, Ciudad Real de Chiapas.



Figure 3.
La Encarnación, Ciudad Real de Chiapas.



Figure 4.
San Francisco Javier, Ciudad Real de Chiapas.



Figure 5.
Santo Domingo, Ciudad Real de Chiapas.



Figure 6.
Cathedral of Comayagua, Honduras.



Figure 7.
Orosi, Costa Rica.



Figure 8.
Ujarrás, Costa Rica.



Figure 9.
Chalchuapa, El Salvador.



Figure 10.
El Pilar, San Vicente, El Salvador.



Figure 11.
Huizúcar, El Salvador.



Figure 12.
Metapán, El Salvador.



Figure 13.
Panchimalco, El Salvador.



Figure 14.
Cathedral, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.



Figure 15.
Dolores, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.



Figure 16.
Guadalupe, Granada, Nicaragua.



Figure 17.
La Merced, Granada, Nicaragua.



Figure 18
San Francisco, Granada, Nicaragua.



Figure 19.
Cathedral, León, Nicaragua.



Figure 20.
La Merced, León, Nicaragua.



Figure 21.
La Recolectión, León, Nicaragua.



Figure 22.
Sutiaba, León, Nicaragua.



Figure 23.
Masaya, Nicaragua.