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# TRADITIONS OF GUATEMALA



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# MUNICIPAL INDIGENOUS ELECTION IN JOYABAJ

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The election of the mayor and members of the indigenous building corps in Joyabaj, El Quiché, takes place on the first Sunday of December each year. At 5 pm in the mayor's office, the members of the Brotherhood and the main ones (who have previously served as members of the Brotherhood) begin to gather. The first and second mayors and the secretary sit at a table. On one side are the six rulers (rixtor), eight auxiliaries, and three majors (mior) with their bailiffs (achmiyan). On the other side sit the brothers carrying their shields, and also the main ones.

Behind the mayor's desk (alcalté) is a crucified Christ, on a sleeping mat (pop) glued to the wall. Three bars adorned with purslane (pixlac ron jip) frame Jesus. A table is arranged in front and on the surface has four attached candlesticks. To the right of Christ is a cross. The rods of the auxiliaries, rulers, elders, and bailiffs, when they are in session held in their hands, they are 86 cm long and have on top a silver ornament, and at the bottom of that ornament, have a hole where two black wool tassels are secured. The rod of the elders terminates in a wooden cross and is 89 cm. long before they had 2 meters.

Not lacking any of those who must be present, the Mayor has the initial words to express to the attendees that the invitation he has made is because his time of service is coming to an end and that as their ancestors have established the custom of electing new authorities every year, the election must take place at that time.

It adds that the elect may be the present or any person, provided that they meet the qualities required for these cases. The voting order is: first mayor, second mayor, elders, rulers, auxiliaries, and bailiffs. Of the latter, only 10 are chosen for each major, since after the elections, the major appoints the remaining 15. If the person who was elected to the office of mayor, etc., is not present, the outgoing party is obliged to pay him a visit to make known the appointment made to him. Mayors are given two bottles of moonshine. Elections end at midnight.

On December 31, those who leave the job at 17 o'clock meet again in the premises of the Mayor's Office to begin the ceremony. The first mayor, followed by a crowd, heads towards each of the incoming mayor, carrying one of his companions a small tambourine announcing to the people that they have begun to gather the new authorities.

The mayor is holding a bouquet of leafy verdolaga leaves to be handed over to their replacement upon arrival at home. It is customary that at the moment of arrival, the door must be closed, thus demonstrating that to occupy the office is by the will of the majority. From the outside, the serving mayor says good night (*socsan aap*) with a plea to let them in. The one inside answers the greeting and opens the door. At once, the visiting mayor says: "Dispense, we have come with you to show you that the day has come when the new authority and therefore I put of your knowledge that as first mayor you will go with us" (*Cacuy kmac: xoj petec aguc kbij chagiié chi xu maj ij chi coc cac atbaltzij rmalle kincoj chacux chi comxatelec Nabé Alcalté cat vec cuc oj'*). At the end of these words, he hands over the bouquet he carries; the authorities enter, except for the bailiffs who stay outside with the curious. The outgoing mayor requests a bailiff to distribute brandy *guacalitos* to the crowd, beginning with the Incoming mayor. Women, sons, daughters, sons and daughters-in-law of the mayors, as well as

their respective witnesses (chintal), who bear witness to everything performed at the ceremony, which constitutes a serious commitment for the person receiving the post.

At the end of the call, the outgoing and incoming leave together, followed by the procession towards the mayor's office, suddenly sounding the tambourine. They are lit with ocote torches, even if there is a full moon or street lighting. Every two blocks, he resists walking and, with the familiar supplications and the offer of another guacalito of moonshine, agrees to continue the march.

The whole time spent in the inauguration, the outgoing mayor stood and as soon as he relinquished office, left alone and went to his house. The same procedure applies to all other authorities.

The mayor's role is to administer justice by making sure that the parties are in harmony to reach reconciliation and not lack warnings for those guilty. By not beingqueathing an expert, they are referred to the Ladin mayor for proceeding following the law, warning that he will never impose fines on indigenous mayors. Cantonal assistants are required to come every Sunday to receive orders. The rulers accompany the bailiffs when they make a summons, for greater seriousness, because there are cases in which only the mayors give their orders through them.