



Guatemala's Intangible Cultural Heritage

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GUATEMALA

This name designates a Republic located in the American continent in its central zone, as for the origin of the name of our country there is controversy among the different scholars who have tried to elucidate it over time, however, the most popular convergence among Guatemalans is offered by Adrian Recinos who interpreted the name, after rigorous studies as “place of forest or wooded place”. The word was taken from the ancient Mexican language from where it transcended to the Spaniards and served to identify a new kingdom that they incorporated to their empire in 1524, becoming independent together with the rest of the Central American territory in 1821 from where the now Republic of Guatemala was detached in 1847.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The current Republic of Guatemala covers an area of 108,900 square kilometers and is geographically located between 13° 45' and 17° 50' north latitude, and 88° 46' and 92° 15' west longitude, in Central America. It is bordered to the north and west with the Republic of Mexico, to the east with Belize, the Antilles or Caribbean Sea and the republic of Honduras,

El Salvador; and to the south with the Pacific Ocean. In administrative and political terms, it is divided into 22 departments and its capital is Guatemala City.¹

POPULATION

The country has more than 10 million inhabitants, the majority of whom are indigenous descendants of the ancient peoples who settled in the area before the arrival of the Spanish in 1524 and make up approximately 60% of the population, which also includes the Xinca people of indigenous origin but of a different culture than the others. In addition to these groups, the mestizos are the result of the union of Spanish Indians and other Europeans, who make up 40% of the population, which also includes a minority of about 5,000 native Garifuna descendants of black African slaves who arrived on the Atlantic coast of Guatemala in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, fleeing from those who exploited them.

The official language of the country is Spanish, but in the indigenous communities there are still 20 languages of Mayan origin, and the Xinca and Garifuna have their own.

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE VILLAGES OF GUATEMALA AND THE CREATION OF TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE.

The history of our country covers three periods in its evolution: pre-Hispanic, Hispanic and Republican; each one of them has fructified in the creation of a tangible and intangible cultural heritage that reflects the living conditions of each moment that we must



¹ Data taken from the book HISTORIA SINÓPTICA DE GUATEMALA. Ministerio de Educación. Guatemala, 1999.

examine carefully to understand the origin of these manifestations and detect the threat they face for their survival.

THE PRE-HISPANIC PERIOD

The pre-Hispanic period covers from about 7000 thousand years before Christ until 1524, when the Spanish occupation took place. The current territory of our country is included in the region identified by Paul Kirchhoff as Mesoamerica,² a cultural zone that extended beyond the current limits of the Republic as a result of the coexistence with other ancestral indigenous peoples of the area.

The history of these villages is subdivided into four stages: archaic, pre-classic, classic and post-classic. In order to explain their relationship with the topics that concern us now, it is convenient to break them down and thus locate the origin in time and space of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage they contributed.

ARCHAIC STAGE

The first stage is known as it could range from 10,000 to 1,500 years B.C. and includes the life of the first human beings who arrived in the area with a nomadic life dedicated to hunting and food gathering, whose way of life and location in the national territory has been possible thanks to the existence of a large number of tools and other utensils that can be observed today at the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala City, forming this valuable collection as the oldest human material legacy that those ancestors have left us.

PRECLASSIC STAGE

The Preclassic stage is subdivided into three phases: Early Preclassic, Middle Preclassic and Late Preclassic. It comprises from 1,500 B.C. to 300 A.D.

The vestiges of the early preclassic formative phase (1,500 to 900 B.C.), include the creation of paintings and sculptures on stones, rocks and caves where the identification of man in space and in the passage of time can be seen. This led to the identification of this first form of art as: “pre-Hispanic rock art”³ whose vestiges of this type of culture can be seen in several villages in the country today, such as San Juan la Ermita and Monte Si n, in the departments of Chiquimula and Amatitl n, among others.

In the second phase of this stage (900 to 400 B.C.), agriculture was systematized, which led to the creation of the foundations of the first villages in our country in sites such as: Oc s and other villages on the current southern coast of the country.

In the next phase (400 BC to 300 AD), agriculture intensified and cities such as Abaj Taklali, Kaminaljuy  and Escuintla were fully developed as administrative and guiding centers, which brought with it the specialization of work. The knowledge that could not be fully explained acquired a magical sense and was used in a religious way to achieve social stability.

These appreciations allow us to take into sight the appearance of civilization in the environment and therefore we can fully identify from this stage a material and immaterial cultural heritage. The material expressed in elements that encompass the appearance and development of cities where architecture plays a fundamental role as a work of art capable of



² For further information on the subject, see Ob. Cit. NO. 1. Page 28 to 31.

³ The discussion on this topic can be consulted with specialists in the branch of Archaeology of the School of History of the University of San Carlos de Guatemala, who have participated and organized various academic activities to discuss and publicize their approaches.

containing in its interior and exterior the plastic manifestations of man such as painting, sculpture and others, while it constitutes a fundamental stage for the execution of rhythmic arts such as music, theater and dance, human manifestations that make evident the intellectual development achieved.

We can identify the intangible heritage in the knowledge that indigenous peoples began to develop as a result of their social contact in a common geographical environment that led them to master nature, which they began to put at their service on a large scale, achieving pioneering knowledge that still has influence to this day in specific aspects such as the knowledge of edible plants of high nutritional value: corn, beans and squash.

The large-scale agricultural production made necessary the exchange of tools that were made from a special stone, called obsidian, due to its sharpness, typical of the central area of Guatemala, turning Kaminaljuyú into an important meeting point for the exchange of this raw material. This led to an exchange not only of products, but also of ideas, as evidenced by the resin burners with the effigy of the ancient god of fire whose images can be seen in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala City. This evidence brings us closer to the idea of ideological unity present in the area as a reflection of similar living conditions and production relations, a fundamental aspect in the development of a mythology that is still evident in the descendants of these villages that show a deep relationship and respect for the natural elements that surround them and that are the basis of a belief system that has evolved over the centuries and that can now be identified as intangible cultural heritage.

THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

It encompasses from 300 to 900 AD. The development reached by the agriculture and the specialization of the work caused a distancing between the groups of direct work on the land, the crafts and the construction and the intellectual group expressed in priests in charge of directing the harvests and the production in general who, happened to administer independent cities supporting the government of great lords who were in charge of the government of theocratic order. The great lords consolidated their power supported by the priests by means of marriages, alliances and wars extended their dominions in new territories. This period is composed of two phases called: early classical and late classical.

The early classic period spans from 300 to 600 A.D. During this period, Tikal gradually extended its dominance over other neighboring villages in northern Guatemala, becoming the maximum political and religious power in the Mayan world with extensive contacts that included Teotihuacan in the central region of present-day Mexico to the southern coast of Guatemala.⁴

The importance of this site is evident in its monumental constructions, whose existence is made clear by the punctuality of the dates on its monuments where the first artistic portraits of its rulers, whose power has been gradually reconstructed, until the full establishment of dynasties, which makes the site unique in its genre.



⁴ For more information about Tikal, please consult the works GUATEMALA CORAZON DEL MUNDO MAYA (GUATEMALA HEART OF THE MAYAN WORLD). By Ricardo Mata and Oswaldo Chinchilla. INGUAT. Guatemala, 1994. and OBRAS MAESTRAS DEL MUSEO DE TIKAL. Various authors. Institute of Anthropology and History. Guatemala, 1994.

The care of the site began when it was declared a National Park in 1955 and later acquired the rank of National Monument for its extraordinary cultural richness and immense variety of flora and fauna species. Later on, UNESCO added it to the World Cultural Heritage List in 1979. Subsequently, it was assigned the category of core zone within the Mayan Biosphere Reserve, an extensive region in northern Guatemala dedicated to the protection of Mayan nature and archeological sites.⁵

The deep content of the intangible heritage present in these monuments must be confronted through formal studies to understand its presence in the oral teachings present in other times and places of the country. For example, we all know the sacred book of the Quiches called “Popol Vuh”, written in the Quiché language with Spanish characters in the 16th century, located in the town of Chichicastenango in the highlands of the country. However, recent discoveries can associate the presence of the so-called *perfect twins* in plates and vases from the Tikal region, as well as other objects that may refer to the sites mentioned in that work, which makes rich an intangible heritage that is gradually taking shape, as new specialized studies advance in relation to the subject that now concerns us.

A close examination of these objects also reveals new contributions about other manifestations of intangible heritage that should be added, such as the recipes for atoles and other sacred drinks and foods present in the vessels from these sites, whose recent studies carried out by experts in the decipherment of the Maya hieroglyphs present in them, testify to the ancestral culinary tradition of our people.

This is a first outline of what this part of the history of our tangible heritage can offer in

relation to the research of intangible heritage and what remains to be done in this regard.

The classic period was included between 600 to 900 A.D. It was characterized by the flourishing of agriculture and increased trade in the so-called Maya lowlands of Guatemala, and it was when sculpture reached its peak in Tikal, duly identified through writing. This situation extended to another site in the valley of the Motagua River called Quiriguá, which also had an intimate cultural relationship with the city of Copán, an archaeological site located in the current Republic of Honduras.

Quiriguá achieved great cultural preponderance due to its strategic location on the banks of the Motagua River, which was already navigable in those times, being of vital importance for the circulation of goods to the central and southern areas of present-day Guatemala. The chronological complex is composed, according to the description of historian Haroldo Rodas,⁶ by twelve zoomorphic sculptures and thirteen large stelae, the largest measuring 34.78 feet high. They were executed in sandstone and their greatest apogee was between 700 and 850 A.D., giving birth to the style known as the Motagua School, which influenced the entire Mayan region of Copán, Honduras and Belize.

The sculpted monuments at Quiriguá are true sermons carved in stone, containing dated hieroglyphic inscriptions, some of them still



⁵ More information about the recognition of Tikal as patrimony of our country and of humanity can be consulted in ICONOGRAFÍA PARA LAS NUEVAS DENOMINACIONES MONETARIAS DE GUATEMALA. Various Authors. Bank of Guatemala. 2002

⁶ Haroldo Rodas. EL PATRIMONIO MUNDIAL DE GUATEMALA. Special article of Ob. N° 5.

undeciphered, which refer to social, political and historical events that have made it possible to reconstruct a large part of the Maya past. The unique and special character of this archaeological site earned it a place on the World Heritage of Humanity list in 1981.

In this sense, it is worth mentioning that studies of hieroglyphs (epigraphy) are currently being developed and have made it possible to relate these monuments to the ancestral beliefs of the Maya people that have managed to survive after the Spanish occupation.

An aspect that can be particularly interesting in the sculptures of this period of Tikal and Quiriguá, in this sense, is the symbolic use of feathers present in stelae, paintings and other arts to enthrone and identify the great lords of these ancient cities. As time went by, the use of feather crowns in the images of the enthroned lords was substituted by Christian images in times of the Spanish domination from 1524 to 1821, reaching the symbolic use of the bird feather until the second half of the 20th century, when it began to be abandoned as a result of the rupture of knowledge from generation to generation caused by the internal armed conflict that affected the country from 1962 to 1996.

It is important to clarify that the coexistence of these two archaeological sites already included in the World Heritage inventory is neither unique nor isolated; there are other sites duly identified and already proposed to enrich this list.⁷

THE POST-CLASSICAL PERIOD

This period can be characterized by the development of interdependent communities of a military nature in which social groups are directly dominated by force and not by religion, which provoked material changes that can be

clearly seen, for example, in the construction of walls for the protection of the cities.

It comprises two stages: Early Postclassic from 900 to 1200 when most of the centers in Petén collapsed and the Toltec influence expanded in the Maya area, and the Late Postclassic phase from 1200 to 1524 when the centers of the Altiplano of present-day Guatemala flourished under the influence of the Aztecs.

It was these villages that the Spaniards encountered in their invasion of this territory. After reading them the “El Requerimiento”, a document that explained their presence in their lands, which invited them to surrender them, as well as to renounce their ancestral beliefs, warning that if they did not do so, they would be declared infidels to Christianity and would therefore become enemies of the Spaniards.

PRE-HISPANIC PERIOD AND TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Based on the above, we can conclude that the tangible and intangible heritage created by the indigenous societies of Guatemala in this stage was the result of the evolution of agricultural work, whose knowledge, now identified under the name of intangible heritage, evolved from the magical religious sense of the pre-classical societies to a religious belief directed by priests in the classical stage, where the dominance of an intellectual group over the rest of society was accentuated. Thus, a new group developed, which was neither dedicated to agricultural production nor to the cultivation of



⁷ There are extensive studies on the subject carried out under the sponsorship of UNESCO, see the report LISTA INDICATIVA DE PATRIMONIO CULTURAL Y NATURAL DE GUATEMALA, coordinated by Dr. Juan Antonio Valdés. UNESCO. Guatemala 2001.

knowledge, represented at that time by the priests. This armed group specialized in internal and external struggles took over the leadership of the communities in the post-classical military stage, a stage of social development that the Spaniards found upon their arrival in 1524 in the midst of internal conflicts among the villages that inhabited the area at that time and that they took advantage of through alliances to divide them and shorten the process of subjugation.

The material heritage of the indigenous people was practically plundered by way of pillaging, while the immaterial heritage was ignored as a danger to the expansion of this new system of ideas. At this time, beliefs constituted a refuge of memories for the defeated and a faith in the future for the victors. The advance of the Spaniards continued in a bloody way in a warlike stage of conquest and subjugation of the other villages they encountered in their path.

THE HISPANIC PERIOD

The Hispanic period covers from 1524 to 1821. In it, we can notice two stages in relation to the creation of a new local cultural heritage: a first stage of warlike conquest between 1524 and 1542 and another one of ideological incorporation from 1542 to 1821.

THE WAR CONQUEST STAGE

This stage comprises a first encounter between the indigenous villages of Guatemala and the Spaniards. It was of a military type characterized by a bloody assault against the local villages reduced to slavery. In this circumstance it is possible to notice a destruction of the material and immaterial indigenous cultural patrimony initiating a violent miscegenation between the two cultures; the indigenous one that tried to survive and the Spanish that ruthlessly invaded all the possible

scopes of the culture declaring outlawed all the beliefs and indigenous customs.

The first invaders of the area acted with good investment of their resources under the patronage of the Spanish crown and the blessing of the Catholic Church, reason that moved them to take all the indigenous goods as main spoils of conquest but the amount of gold and precious stones that could be recognized as goods of treasure or exchange value in Europe was limited, so then they saw in the land a second option of wealth, however, to be recognized as owners of the same they had to remain some years working on it, therefore the indigenous became a reason for another spoils of war to take advantage of their labor force.

The first Hispanic settlement was founded in Central America on July 25, 1524, by Pedro de Alvarado, in the ceremonial center of the ancient court of the Cakchiquels dominated by Iximché, which was moved by Jorge de Alvarado to the site called Almolonga or Bubulxá on November 22, 1527.⁸

The foundation of this village served as a military beachhead to direct the plundering of the local indigenous kingdoms. The importance of this place grew with the founding of a bishopric in 1534,⁹ when the village was officially recognized as a villa and elevated to the rank of city, formally establishing a cathedral. While people of higher intellectual level with



⁸ Manuel Rubio Sánchez. MONOGRAFÍA DE LA CIUDAD DE ANTIGUA GUATEMALA. Volume I Guatemala Collection, Volume XLIX, Francisco Vela Series. National Typography. Guatemala, 1989. P.7.

⁹ Agustín Estrada Monrroy DATOS PARA LA HISTORIA DE LA IGLESIA EN GUATEMALA. Volume I. Society of Geography and History of Guatemala. Guatemala, 1972. P. 47

positions as royal and ecclesiastical officials emigrated to the New World, they realized that the incorporation of the New World could yield better results for the crown and the church if, instead of a policy of annihilation and excessive abuse of the indigenous villages, a campaign was undertaken to incorporate them into the Spanish productive process.

By understanding these background situations, we can correctly interpret the dual attitude of the first bishop of Guatemala, Francisco Marroquín, who defended the indigenous people but did not hesitate to grant absolution to Pedro de Alvarado, conqueror and founder of the new kingdom, when in life he would have made them slaves with the aggravating circumstance that he had marketed them as cattle, including women.¹⁰

The new trend of denouncing the bad treatment of the indigenous people in order to incorporate them into the productive process of the 1530s by the royal and ecclesiastical peninsular authorities, would have provoked a concern in the Bishop when he began his defense and indoctrination to continue as a leader in his position. This was reinforced with the presence of the Dominican priest Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, with whom he initiated a first crusade to incorporate the indigenous people to Christianity using catechisms that were composed in local languages, until the arrival of the catastrophe of September 10, 1541, when the Spanish city that was already emerging as a thriving city was destroyed by a flood.¹¹

The destruction of the city determined a new move to a safer valley. The site called Panchoy was chosen, and the move began on December 4, 1541, and Juan Bautista Antonelli was responsible for its design.¹² The splendor and state of conservation achieved by this city

made it worthy of being included in the list of World Heritage Sites since 1979.

For the subject that concerns us now, it is necessary to refer to its development between 1543 and 1773 as the head of the ancient kingdom of Guatemala, since from it emanated the patterns of material construction and intellectual conduct for the rest of the area, the second point of support in the constitution of the material and immaterial heritage of our nation.

THE STAGE OF IDEOLOGICAL CONQUEST

The struggle of the crown and the church to recover their hegemony in the new territories incorporated to Spain began with the recognition of the indigenous people as human beings capable of assimilating Christian doctrine, an aspect endorsed by Pope Julius III by means of the Papal Bull "*Sublimis Deus*" that served as a starting point for the issuance of the "*Ordinances of Barcelona*" or "*New Laws*" of 1542, which recognized all the indigenous people of the New World in the Spanish territories as vassals of the Crown, freeing them from all slavery,¹³ but in their new status they had to pay tithes to the Catholic church for their services of teaching and maintenance of the Divine cult, whose religion they had already voluntarily accepted and imposed on the crown as part of a new social organization.



¹⁰ Severo Martínez. LA PATRIA DEL CRIOLLO. EDUCA Editorial. Costa Rica, 1985. Pages. 61, 62.

¹¹ Manuel Rubio Sánchez. Ob. Cit. P.8

¹² Annis Verle. LA ARQUITECTURA DE ANTIGUATALA 1543-1773. GUATEMALA 1543-1773. University of San Carlos. Guatemala, 1968. P. 4

¹³ José Mata-Gavidia. ANOTACIONES DE HISTORIA PATRIA CENTROAMERICANA. ED. Cultural Centroamericana, INC. Guatemala 1953. Pages.150,151,152.

The Indians were organized in communities apart from the Spaniards in the so-called “*pueblos de indios*” with local municipal authorities coming from their own people, under the political care of Spanish governors and the spiritual care of Catholic priests, originally from the orders of preachers of San Francisco and Santo Domingo, who had proven their effectiveness in the conversion of heretics and those disaffected with the Spanish ideology in the war of unification that had culminated in 1492 with the capture of Granada and the expulsion of the Arabs from southern Spain. These religious also played a valuable role in North Africa in mediating problems with those disaffected with Christianity.¹⁴

The Dominican friars led by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas began a process of *peaceful conquest* in the ancient kingdom of Tezulutlán in northern Guatemala, making meticulous studies of what could be an antecedent of social anthropology, learning the indigenous languages, making catechism in their languages and employing the Hispanic works of art and musical instruments that they used as didactic elements in the teaching and propagation of their ideas, taking advantage of the knowledge and abilities of the young intellectual group represented in the children of the old lords, caciques and priests, whom they would have educated in their convents, while others of their relatives converted to Catholicism governed the new villages.

The campaign culminated with great success when the new province of Verapaz was incorporated on October 30, 1547,¹⁵ proving Fray Bartolomé de las Casas and his group of preachers the effectiveness of their methods that avoided bloodshed and ensured “*true peace*” convenient to the Spaniards, since it ensured the voluntary incorporation of the population to a

new work system that gave them a relative autonomy, but that did not free them from direct exploitation under different modalities such as: the encomienda, the repartimiento and others; In which they had to provide personal services to the crown, who ceded them to individuals and local authorities, on the other hand, this did not free them from heavy tax burdens that they paid in favor of the Catholic Church and the State.

In this decade began to be built in the capital of the kingdom, the City of Santiago de Guatemala, public and ecclesiastical buildings, following the Renaissance model of Roman checkerboard, taking as epicenter a square plaza of approximately 60 x 60 meters, from where land of similar shape and magnitude, divided by streets separated by streets of approximately 15 meters east to west and north to south. The Cathedral was located on the east side, on the west side the Portal de Panaderos, on the south side the Royal Palace and on the north side the local City Hall, and the land next to these buildings was allotted for the construction of the religious orders and the main Spanish families.

This same design pattern was repeated with slight alterations throughout the kingdom, while a campaign was launched to also achieve an “*ideological unity*” through the Catholic religion, which had already proven its effectiveness in new peaceful conquests that incorporated new tributaries to the power groups.



¹⁴ To understand more closely the work of the Religious Orders mentioned above, I recommend reading the paper entitled EL ROSARIO EN EL ARTE GUATEMALTECO. Fernando Urquizú Memory of the IV National Meeting of Historians. Papiro Editions, INC. Guatemala 2002. Pages 223 to 240.

¹⁵ IDEM P.226.

THE HISPANIC PERIOD AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Ideological unity was achieved in the ancient kingdom of Guatemala through the Catholic religion, which proposes as the main purpose of life the “salvation of the soul” to live eternally after death, in a perfect kingdom governed by God, where other supernatural beings such as the angels, the Blessed Virgin and the saints occupy a preponderant place and whose exemplary lives on earth should serve as an inspiration for humanity.

The earthly power of men had to be accepted as a product of divine will and for this reason the Crown became the main sponsor of the Catholic Church, to whom it delegated the teaching of the origin and interpretation of society by means of dogmatic knowledge that no one could dispute, adding to its functions the reproduction of the system of life and the general control of society.

The primary knowledge was recapitulated at the official level by means of masses, prayers, processions and other manifestations of public faith in churches; at the private level in private residences by means of prayers and novenaries. The perfect figures that served as an example to humanity were Jesus in the masculine sphere and the Virgin Mary as a feminine model, who presented themselves to the material world surrounded by a celestial army composed of the angelic militia, followed by the doctors of the Church, a considerable pantheon of saints and blessed, who had specific qualities that the human being had to take advantage of to imitate them by developing their natural qualities. Here a man attended in the first instance to the qualities of Christ, the main one being “obedience”. This maxim of life obliged him to accept his inexorable destiny in the social scheme, just as Christ, being the son of God, had

accepted his death on the cross. On a second level, a common man in the Kingdom had to fulfill a specific job in society. If he was an intellectual, he would be identified, for example, with the life of St. Augustine, St. Thomas or another sage of the Catholic Church, and if his work was manual, there were guilds of craftsmen with a local patron. A typical example is St. Joseph as the patron saint of carpenters.

This scheme of ideas and teachings that came from the churches throughout the kingdom also determined individual and social reactions such as the search for the virtues of the Virgin Mary in every woman, such as: purity, honesty, dedication to the family and other basic points that spread throughout the kingdom to achieve order and social stability.

The Catholic Church counted on the liturgical calendar that marked the religious festivities to order the recapitulation of knowledge about the above mentioned. Thus, the Patronal Feasts, Lent and Holy Week, Saints' Day and Christmas presented a constant pleasant way of learning through manifestations that included the handling of all the arts, where the space was used to launch messages not necessarily religious as the one identified in the dance of the “*Conquest*” that is made between Moors and Christians. The essential message of the representation was to make clear the ideological and warlike hegemony of Spain over any other kingdom in the world. These manifestations also took advantage of the knowledge and skills of the indigenous people that were gradually merged with the Spanish ones according to the particularities of each population, forming each town descending from the ancient Mayas its own material and immaterial cultural space.

The correct interpretation of the ordinance and the presentation of these messages

to the population of Spanish and indigenous descent, was reinforced with the obligation to fulfill the *Sacraments* in order to keep a bureaucratic record that allowed the Church and the Crown to keep a correct detailed control of the inhabitants of the old kingdom, from their birth to their death. Here we find another point of reference for the understanding of our immaterial heritage because the system of beliefs brought by the Spaniards when exposed to the natives was absorbed, but they also had a wealth of knowledge exercised by their ancient polytheistic religions that were declared outlawed although they did not die because sometimes, New churches were built over the old worship places, merging other ideas about the existence of the world, very typical of Guatemala, while the Catholic liturgical calendar was congregated with the old Mayan calendar, presenting very peculiar characteristics according to each Indian village that was separated, one from the other, to avoid as far as possible their internal communication and prevent indigenous rebellions.

The appearance of a local ideology can be noticed from the second half of the 17th century, in the social group of the descendants of the Spaniards in the exhibition of the work “*La Recordación Florida*” by Francisco Antonio Fuentes y Guzmán,¹⁶ who already manifests in his new discourse, some appreciation for a new territory, its inhabitants and its culture. In a more concrete sense, we can deduce it from the creation of the Image of Jesus of Nazarene of the church of La Merced in New Guatemala around 1655 by the artist Mateo de Zúñiga where he moves away from the European engravings sent by Spain to idealize the figure of Christ as the main source of physical beauty and moral intellectual model to be followed in the old kingdom. The artist took into account a new canon of artistic creation to a “*criollo*” (son of

Spaniards born in the kingdom), laying the foundations of a local sculptural school that moves away from European models to identify with local values that soon became more specific in new sculptures such as Jesus Nazareno de Candelaria that reflects indigenous beauty and Jesus Nazareno de San Jeronimo that presents a canon of mulatto beauty; Thus materializing a sense of local identity, which was born in the neighborhoods of the capital of the old kingdom from where it spread to the city level and in the case of Jesús Nazareno de la Merced to the provinces of the old kingdom. The local catholic religious unity constitutes a basic aspect for the conformation of a *Material and Intangible Cultural Heritage with its own characteristics that had a considerable contribution in the sculptural school in the old kingdom of Guatemala*.

The system of teaching and recapitulation of the Catholic religious precepts were the same for Spaniards, Indians, mestizos and blacks, the latter entered the kingdom as slaves and are not the same as the Garifuna people, who entered through the Atlantic coast later. The doctrine was directed from the religious facilities and in the streets by means of processions that were acquiring a very particular nuance according to the place where they were carried out at city or rural level and the type of population that gave life to it manifesting itself with the materials and knowledge that they had in sight and that arrived to them by means of literature that each town was interpreted and directed by their priests who, following the Mexican Councils of the XVI century, were reorienting the knowledge and abilities of the indigenous people in order to standardize their



¹⁶ Francisco Antonio Fuentes y Guzmán. *RECORDACIÓN FLORIDA*. Biblioteca de autores españoles. Madrid, 1969.

thinking by means of the Catholic beliefs that, when merged with the ideas of each of the existing peoples in the environment, were forming a “*particular ideology*” within a “*common universal ideology*”.

The Catholic beliefs were joined by the popular Spanish and local mythology, expressed in their own modalities of the same characters that enriched the collective ideology of the kingdom such as, *La Llorona*, *La Ciguanaba* and an endless number of characters reinterpreted by the culture of each of the towns of the kingdom, with the purpose of contributing to the maintenance of an order of individual and social behavior that was not disapproved by the Catholic Church, since its moralizing or sinister messages contributed to maintain a touch of threat over the population, increasing its dominion over it.

The customs and habits of daily life and the need to dominate the environment gradually created a material heritage expressed in churches, monasteries, convents, seminaries, schools, buildings for public administration and private houses, reaching its maximum splendor in the City of Santiago, today the old Guatemala, a world heritage city that was semi-destroyed by a violent earthquake on July 29, 1773, moving the town to a new valley, founding the New Guatemala de la Asunción on January 1, 1776 and starting its construction from the foundations.

In those years, a new social group began to make itself felt in the environment, which burst into the cities, rejected by the Indian towns for not having ethnic affinity with them and seen in an inferior sphere of the social status of the cities for representing a threat in number to the same Spaniards and groups of power related to them. The ladinos who were engaged in the trades of artisans, builders and some other

occupations, began to have access to land, which determined their growing economic power.

INDEPENDENT LIVING AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

In the 19th century, the construction of the New Guatemala of the Assumption continued under an alliance between ladinos and criollos that determined the political independence from Spain in 1821. However, the regional political and social differences between the provinces that rivaled the capital, together with religious fanaticism, prevented the strengthening of a sense of nationalism at the Central American level, dismembering almost immediately from the Central American Federation.

It was not until the 1840s when a stable government was formed in the State of Guatemala that allowed the foundation of the Republic of Guatemala in 1847 during the government of General Rafael Carrera. The local intangible heritage began to be formally enriched with the development of the enlightenment that manifested itself in the strengthening of intangible manifestations with a non-religious character, which reached its peak with the inauguration of the Carrera Theater.

The religious services such as the *Te Deum* for the independence were completed with civic parades, gala dances and other related manifestations that are part of the popular festivities that survive in our environment and that were consolidated after the Liberal Reform initiated in 1871, which even led to exacerbate these manifestations and to mythologize the local leaders who were dressed with a halo of greatness.

The liberal triumph also marked a process of change in the ideology that was transmitted to the citizens, immediately reflected

in the models of inspiration of the art that changed from a religious tone to an earthly one, where a fundamental role was played by: La Patria Guatemala and its dearest children expressed in the national heroes, taken to be the maximum center of expression of the models to be extolled and followed.

Other non-religious values were added to the new national ideology, such as local civism, recapitulated in messages expressing the new ideology, such as the National Anthem, which transmits the liberal ideals in the environment and tries to provoke a feeling of national unity. A typical example is also the flourishing of the marimba as a national instrument that was used in all the popular and cultured parties in the first half of the 20th century.

The spread of liberal culture allowed the massification of education through the schools that replaced the old Ecclesiastical Colleges with a secular and compulsory character in urban centers, while in the old Indian villages they proceeded to dispossess them of their lands, considerably altering the ownership of the Material Heritage and changing the framework of the country's Immaterial Culture. This further divided the urban and rural spheres.

However, the local immaterial cultural manifestations gradually merged, achieving their coexistence and in some special cases remained quite intact, such as the special case of the dramatic dance "*Rabinal Achi*", even allowing them to be documented by the advance of science, since the appearance and development of photography and cinema made it possible to record the national heritage in general.

In the 20th century, the full identification of the country's Material Heritage was also achieved, even achieving worldwide recognition,

as in the case of the pre-Hispanic centers of Tikal and Quiriguá, adding La Antigua Guatemala, which dates from the Hispanic culture period 1524-1821, and recently the Garifuna population; which gives us an idea of the efficiency in the investigative and legislative field that exists in the environment, regarding the conservation of our Heritage, which given its richness in the case of the immaterial one, is still alive.

This same richness allows museum pieces that are very similar to objects of religious worship or means of identity to still be alive within our national ideology. For this reason, it is necessary to formulate new models of interpretation of the pieces that allow their correct location within this ideology, to be able to be revalued in its right dimension and achieve a better scope of knowledge generated by the general or specialized collections.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

For reasons of space, it is not conveniently cited but it can be consulted in the catalog of publications of the Centro de Estudios Folklóricos of the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala.



Illustration 1. Pre-Hispanic and Hispanic beliefs merged and gave birth to the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Guatemala. Photograph of Maximón and his cofrades. Santiago Atitlán, 2003, taken by Fernando Urquizú.



Illustration 2. The Intangible Cultural Heritage of Guatemala is a set of knowledge that is often expressed in ephemeral works of art that creates the coexistence between generations, thus allowing its transmission through time (Photograph Fernando Urquizú, 2003).