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TRADICIONES DE GUATEMALA



UNIVERSIDAD DE SAN CARLOS DE GUATEMALA
REVISTA DEL CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS FOLKLORICOS

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GUATEMALA TRADITIONS

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THE ANCIENT CUSTOMS OF SAN PEDRO LA LAGUNA, SOLOLA

Luis Batz

1. The Homes

In the past, the population of San Pedro was made up of small straw-colored *ranchitos**, with their beards trimmed and a layer of mud on their crowns to prevent rainwater from seeping through.

These humble dwellings constituted a danger and for that reason the neighbors of San Pedro lived in fear, because a spark in one of the little ranches would be tremendous, since they were made of materials that were especially susceptible to fires. It was necessary to sit on the earthen floor in order not to choke from the smoke. The same grinding stone served as a small table, each member of the family stretched out his hands to clean his tortillas or to smear them with food deposited on the stone. The grinding stone itself served as a table, each member of the family stretched out his hands to clean his tortillas or to smear them with food deposited on the stone.

Family statistics reported that, in each dry season of the year, hundreds of small shacks had turned to ash; the melancholic chime escaped from the ancient bell tower: tan... tin ton..., etc. They were nights of sad remembrance; the flames and smoke reigned over the humble shacks, the heart-rending cries of the inhabitants lamenting the loss of their belongings; the rustling of rats surprised from their burrows, releasing the smell of rotten meat; cats driven wild by the smoke; the fluttering of a mother hen seeking the bonfire; dogs tied to the fences were hanged before being burned; pigs boiling in pure fat; the occasional plump pig getting between the rescuer's legs.

2. The Catholic Temple

Its walls were made of thick, compacted mud and stone, a yard and a half wide. One of the earthquakes brought down its baked tile roof. Provisionally, a roof was made tied with quilamul vines (a tangle that

served as a mooring line). Some long, thick, round poles (they called them *boloj ché*) served as clotheslines and also as scissors. The ribs were crossed over the beams (they called *cuchub*). Each member of the brotherhood contributed one of these poles, which were small in diameter but long, tied with *saj-ché* (tree bark to tie the cane over the *cuchub*). The *ajsajbá* were the people in charge of forming the skeleton of the construction and on its back, since it resembled a quadruped with two sides, hence the remains of the paste to prevent the thatched roof from rotting. After the seismic movements were forgotten for a while, the roof was again built with clay tiles.

This time was very confusing. The indifferent indigenous people clung to their ancient rites. There was some resentment toward the whites' new faith, despite the indoctrination they carried out, and there were very few natives who half-understood the European language, despite the missionaries' efforts to speak the complex Tzutuhull language. As a consequence of the desecration of the temple, it was the sinister event of the last century.

2.1 The Sinister

Salquil, the witch doctor of San Pedro, took his pupils to officiate before the town's patron saint. He began his acts by placing candles at the feet of several saints and lit a giant candle of pure beehive wax in front of the cross. It was an ancient custom that after the crucifixion, they would wrap the cross in mats and tie it with *cibaque* until it was unrolled for the next Holy Week. Rites and walked before the images, greeting them while raising their cups of pure *chicha*.

The great tragedy was about to be consummated, as if the effects of drunkenness and the greetings and libations of the sorcerer weakened the gigantic candle at the foot of the cross, and it fell where the wrapping began and in a matter of seconds it licked the entire flammable sheath and a great mushroom of fire and black smoke rose with great fury to the roof. The stunned wizard ran with his jug to spray the saints, shop windows, urns, and high and low relief paintings. Saints of the first and second rank were lavished and sprinkled with *chicha* drippings as a final farewell to greet the imminent demise, which was closing in on the art of that tragic night. Finally, he went to the gate, which was a beautiful baroque door, to also pour in the remains of his jug.

All the colonial-era art objects in the Church of San Pedro were destroyed in the massive fire. It's a great shame that these 18th-century artistic treasures were lost, reduced to ash.

Tongues of fire advanced inexorably. When the town awoke, the fire had reached its peak and no one was allowed to enter. The great beams were still falling on what remained inside, and balls of fire rose to great heights, extinguishing themselves in the sky, finding no nourishment in the space. Hours later, only sparks like fireflies emerged from everywhere. The intense heat and the great illumination of the town had ceased. Everything began to fall silent again and plunge into the same darkness of that fatal and painful night for a future generation, which lost contact with the artistic culture of a brilliant era of humanity.

The magnitude of the tragedy was perhaps not understood by our ancestors due to their poverty. What they lamented most was the voluntary construction of another roof that began at the dawn of the present century.

If some images were saved, they were those that were in the baptistery, because it is the same tower that goes to the bell tower or because the same witch tried to save some, for example, the patron saint of the town.

But it was a great pity because he couldn't save the one on the throne, but settled for taking the second, smaller one. In any case, he was left quite damaged by the intense heat and smoke, thus disfiguring the only survivor of the great tragedy. Despite everything, against all odds, he continued to carry the saved figure in the patron saint processions; his body was both very delicate and disfigured. When he was carried on a stretcher, the pieces of the image rattled.

A gallery was built and some saints were lent so that the interior wouldn't be left completely empty. After the church was rebuilt, Don Juan Chavajay donated an image of Saint Peter, which, despite its medium size, was very heavy.

Years later, some Pedranos traveling to *San Felipe Retalhuleu* discovered an image of Saint Peter at the inn. After pleading and begging the owner, they brought it. This is how the survivor of the disaster was rescued.

Mr. Manuel Cortez ordered the construction of the throne that for a long time was occupied by the image of San Felipe.

Mr. *Diego Televario* donated four images to the church: Saint Dominic, Saint Andrew, Our Lady of the Rosary, and Saint John the Apostle. Mr. Nima-Achí did the same. Later, he purchased an image of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. The number of saints in the church gradually increased.

Then, the town's patron saint, the one who came from *San Felipe Retalhuleu*, was given a touch-up. This time, none of the leaders dared to climb up to where the patron saint was, and only one of the many did. He

said, "Come on, you bald old man, today I'll dethrone you so you can come down to the ground and suffer a little cold there with the others." He took off the wide sash from his waist and hugged the patron saint, carrying him down, but in one of the awkward moments, the saint lost a finger. The porter was deeply impressed, but let his lack of respect pass, as his other co-workers perceived it.

Time passed. One day this man was coming down the mountain at a step-by-step pace and knocked down a large ravine. His body was barely recovered, and everyone confirmed that the tragedy was due to his lack of respect for the patron saint when he knocked him off his throne.

3. The Religions Brotherhood

3.1

A Castilian word deformed in *Tzutuhil* (*martomá*). The stewards were responsible for cleanliness and ensuring the highest level of discipline in their religious brotherhoods.

There were seven people who made up this legally constituted body. In hierarchical order from the first Lord S to the fifth. Brother, followed by the Judge and from there the five stewards.

Here I will only talk about the way in which the brotherhoods' actions developed, which perhaps were not even the intention or purpose of their founders.

What happened here was the resurrection of ancient laws and customs mixed with the new faith of Christianity.

It was an opportunity for the indigenous people to vent their passions and practice their customs, adulterating and confusing Christianity and ancient rites.

Saint True Cross, the Immaculate Conception, Saint Nicholas, Our Lady of the Rosary, Saint Anthony and the Blessed Sacrament.

They divided the days of the week and a brotherhood attended the church to attend to any eventuality, for example, a deceased to bury, a drowned person to search for, assisting the sick, etc. It was at the same time an aid to the community.

Each brotherhood had a different symbol and they carried it on a banner when they went out to ask for alms, and they collected whatever the neighbors gave them: corn on the cob, chili, coffee, money, etc., etc.

3.2 For the deceased

The brotherhood on duty was in charge of opening the grave where the body would be buried and at the appointed time of. They arrived at the funeral with their tragic banner (El cam'bal Animá). It was a macabre picture, a bald head with a long neck and a masterfully painted skeletal body, carrying a large black canvas on either side or a white cross in the center.

The banner represented the kingdom of Saint Pascual, Justice and Prince of Darkness. He was in charge of inviting the spirit of the deceased to leave the earthly home and go to the other that awaited him according to his works.

Sunday was a special day, and the six brotherhoods would appear. From birth to death, the San Pedro resident was deeply connected to religion. From childhood, he joined the office of weekday worshipper. Weekday worshippers were responsible for cleaning the church, sweeping the courtyards and surrounding streets, dusting the furniture, and dusting the images. They observed strict traditions, such as not blowing dust on the saints for fear of dislodging their teeth; they called for mass from the bell tower and rang the bells for the dead, etc.

3.3 The chajales

A word that was shortened, because in ancient times it was "*chajil quiej*" (stable keepers). These were single young men who, for one reason or another, were not looking for home company. They were given this position of taking care of the beasts that were used for the missions.

4.4 The Pixcar

A Castilian word, *zutuhilizada* (meaning "prosecutor"). It was the last office to be held. Very few elders reached this position, where they brought an end to an entire activity, both religious and civil, with a flourish. They were in charge of caring for the church and were also the leaders of the weekly workers and the *chajales*.

The civil religious life began with the weekly and little by little one was climbing to the hierarchical positions, alternating all the *ad honorem* services, such as bailiff of the municipality, then steward of the religious brotherhood of Holy Cross, the Virgin Mary of the Rosary, Saint Nicholas, Saint Anthony, and the Blessed Sacrament, until they became judges of the brotherhoods. From then on, they were entrusted with a brotherhood. Thus, they rose through the ranks until they reached the rank of Brother of the Most Holy Sacrament. By then, they would have held various positions in the Chapter, such as first mayor, councilor, trustee, and finally, municipal mayor, with their respective image of Saint Andrew.

From then on, he was respected and beloved within the community; they kissed his hands and feet. Thus, he joined the ranks of the village leaders and councilors. He carried the ceremonial zute over his left shoulder with great honor and dignity.

There will be a break from his activity, and finally he will be named *Pixcar*. When the ailments of old age become more prolonged, he will retire to his home.

Religious and civil authority were closely linked. The man who occupied the mayor's chair came from the ranks of the leaders. All appointments came from there, except for the sheriffs, which was the only privilege they had to name their successors.

At that time, no one was spared, even with valid excuses. Once appointed by the council of elders, the municipality forced them to fulfill their obligation to receive the brotherhood in their home. If they didn't have a home, they could borrow or rent one. If they refused, they were summoned to appear before the mayor, who also acted as justice of the peace. He would hear the defendant's plea by simple legal requirement and send them straight to jail. Even after accepting the appointment, he would let them go home, after the crowd had already

spoken loudly against the rebel. If they persisted in their refusal, they were sent to a busy road and, under the guard of a bailiff, he would beat stones, while groups of passersby thrashed them from head to toe, reproaching them for their disobedience in refusing to accept a brotherhood or some position in the religious hierarchy.

3.5 Texeles

A compound word, half dialect and the other deformed Castilian (**Te**: mother; **Xel**: jealousy = Wardens of the religious brotherhoods).

They were all single women and were also the ones who prepared the drinks that were taken in the brotherhoods, for the different religious festivals: such as saying, **Matz** (spicy dough gruel), **Kutuj**, a drink that besides being spicy has other condiments such as alucema, cumin, pepper powder); the **Sakáya** (pinol), ground corn with **pataxte** seeds; the **Chaqui "j'yá**, ground corn with cocoa, different from chocolate; and **Kaj** (flour), ground corn with chan.

During the pompous processions of the great **Nimakij**, the wardens walked upright behind the different saints of their brothers, proudly displaying their giant, artistically turned candles.

3.6 The castor bean

Both the stewards and the Texeles harvested the fruit from the fig tree, and on a special day, all the Texeles undertook the difficult task of grinding the roasted fruit, from which they extracted a thick, infernal resin. After straining it, they poured it into bronze lanterns. With a small wick, they lit the bluish, perpetual flame that burned at the feet of the church's saints.

3.7 Stewardship

The founders' intention may have been something else: to draw closer to God through good works, in addition to raising funds for the church itself.

Nowadays, all people aged 55 agree on having heard the great oratorical pieces of Tioxine, but as they were from the last, they have already learned them. The oldest excuse themselves for having

forgotten all the range that made up the old words, they only utter a few phrases of the old customs.

Phrases of old customs seven characters made up this religious body: the brother, the judge and the five stewards, from the first to the fifth.

The brother gives orders to the judge, who then passes them on to his stewards. The judge only visited the brotherhood on weekdays, as well as on Sundays and holidays, which were usually very abundant.

The majordomos arrived daily at the confraternity at three o'clock in the morning, with a jar of water on their backs. They would clean the house of the Hermitage: wash vases, change the pine carpet, sweep, and place flowerpots, change the saints, etc. At 6:00 a.m., the llamaban would receive a big ***tzimay*** (morro) from ***Kutuj*** and retire to their homes.

For the day of the shift, everyone was expected with the same routine. The judge arrived at 6:00 a.m. and was received by the 50th steward, who kissed his hand and uncovered his head. He then led him into the Hermitage, where the other stewards reverently rose to kiss his hand. If for some reason the member of the brotherhood had to be absent that day, he would dictate the pertinent orders to his judge and say:

"At-qui-ni-mal (*You are the main one of them, they are your servants*). ***E-ru-bí AK-a E-ru-bí a guakán*** (*They are your members of feet and hands*). *Take them to the church and at lunchtime bring them all in a handful, so that not one is left behind.*

It was customary for the brotherhoods to serve only Kutuj for lunch, with a basket of tortillas. What a coincidence: spicy masa atole with tortillas! In other houses, they served beef, but it would be the brother's pleasure to make such an outlay, since the custom was only Kutuj for lunch. On Sundays, beef was served with vegetables, and for dinner, beans, etc., etc.

3.8 Yaconem: raised, reminder

The stewards had arrived well in advance from house to house of the main lords and councilors of the town to invite them to these festivities.

The invitations were not simple and woolly like any other B . . . invitation. They were made in strict observance of faithful customs and the judge and the first steward were in charge of pronouncing the famous *tioxinem* (This was an invitation to the sacred gathering, a pleasant gathering between mortal apostles and saints of the church).

Here, the novice stewards feared that their ears would babble from their lips upon seeing and hearing the spring of water and words springing from the lips of their older companions.

Meanwhile, the chief speaker remained attentive from inside his house, and the *tioxinel* redoubled his voice so he could dominate the entire house from outside. If the old man to be invited remained silent until the oratory ended, it was a sign that the *tioxinel* had concluded happily. But on the contrary, if the old man pretended to be grumpy, it was a sign that the speaker had to conclude, before allowing the old man to get up from where he was and appear at his door to reprimand the *tioxinel*.

Usually, in the I dialect, admonitions are placed, regardless of whether a Castilian word was mispronounced with a Tzutuhull homologue, such as *jaraganta* (lazy), *zacor* (lazy, in Tzutuhull). This happens to you when you do not take seriously the responsibility that your elders have entrusted to you, you are a simple beggar, which distances you from the essence and permanence of our sacred language. You beg for your origin and betray your elders, paraphrasing terms not accepted or discussed in the council of elders.

And the unsuccessful orator, crestfallen, would withdraw, in company or with the others, from the place of the main man. The reprimand would be taken to the heart of the brotherhood to give the *tioxinem* more repression.

3.9 Tioxinem

Religious gathering to converse and share in a spiritual atmosphere. YACONEN and SILONEM (to move, to lift). In the tzutuhíl, metaphor and hyperbole flow:

"My lord and master have commanded me to stir you up and raise you up (yaconem silonem). Your mind and heart will be devoted solely and exclusively to your material tasks.

Sak-abí (your hair is white) Sak-a-metz (your eyebrows are white) your forehead is furrowed with wrinkles and at the same time you are a witness to yesterday gone and lived, of many moons and suns being born and dying".

"My lord and master, knowing your virtues, cannot ignore your name, already recorded for merits in the historical journal of present and future generations".

Magal-tá-achí (your lips are not childish) ***Magal-tá-wach*** (your eyes of experience). Both are witnesses of a glorious past.

"So many days from now, my master and lord wants and longs for you to be present, punctually at the gate of the church, there he will send his servants for you and they will take you with him to the seat of honor where mass is held for you. Once the holy services are over, all of you will go together to the house of the Hermitage, where my reserved person, either in front or on his right, will offer you the holy master. My lord, brother, has something to offer you"

"From now on, you are a guest of honor. If new invitations come in the future, tell them that you are already engaged to my master and my lord".

The Tioxinem

It was distributed among the brotherhoods. For the town's patron saint's day, the brotherhood in charge of making the *yaconem* and *silonem* was the Blessed Sacrament Brotherhood. After reaching an agreement with

their judge, they gave authorization to the first steward. Together with the others, they went to the homes of the town's leaders and councilors:

"Your lordship".

Sak-Abí

Sak Ametz.

I come to fulfill my mission, I am an ambassador of the brotherhood of the Most Holy Sacrament and I bring the order from the lords of my brotherhood, that twenty days from the date, you rise and come to kneel and bow in the bosom of the Holy *IXOCJAU IG LESIA*.

Ixokajau (Female Owner of the ceremony)

E-Moquen-te-ebi (all unanimously together, may no one be left behind).

E-Moquen ta e-wach

Maxta ti pu'kan jun

(Let not one be left out, and let not another be distraught, but all, curdled, may come to the invitation).

Here the principal responded, thanking them for the privilege they had given him and saying that he would make an appearance punctually on the appointed date. "Taking into account the commitment that binds us to our customs and traditions. Tell your lord that I will gladly respond to his invitation and that he has not sent you in vain and your words have not been in vain but have moved my whole being, from today I will review my most urgent needs, so that on the day and at the time you have asked me I will be free of any worry".

3.10 For the Holy Week

Those in charge of the invitation were those from *Santa Vera Cruz* and they made the *yaconem* and *silonem* to the authorities.

<i>"At ka'jau</i>	<i>(our owner)</i>
<i>At achi</i>	<i>(Man)</i>
<i>Alakaben</i>	<i>(you are stretched out)</i>
<i>A moquen</i>	<i>(you have us in a single handful)</i>
<i>A golon</i>	<i>(you have saved us)</i>

Even among them, there were lifelong positions, such as the first, second, and third principal, followed by the others. Only in cases of force majeure would they call for one of them to be promoted to key positions, whether due to illness, which made the incumbent incapacitated, or death.

The Nimaki'j

They were four distinct days. First was the cam-sabal chicop (cattle slaughter). And molob tiox, the gathering of all the saints from the church's brotherhoods.

Those in charge of the committee were welcomed into the brotherhoods with tzimay de matz (spicy corn gruel), but what was most abundant was the guaro, because this didn't fill them up. Here everything was enlivened with drum and *chirimia* music.

On the other hand, the molob xojj (the gathering of all the dancers) took place. They would go with the smallest dancer until the dance was complete, whether it was Conquista, Micos y Venados, or some Mexican dances. For the musicians, hot chocolate and bread were plentiful; the drink was given to busybodies who hung around the dancers for no reason, living off of parasites. On the other hand, the musicians would tipple the guaro, and for the bread, they carried blankets where they poured until they overflowed.

When the musicians of both rituals were already quite drunk, the drummers sometimes lost their aim with their sticks and hit the bearers in the ribs; the dancers went from one place to another with their pieces all out of tune.

At night, the **guaran koj** (or mask candle) was customary. At the house of the Hermitage of San Andrés, large mats were laid out where the entire dance arsenal was displayed.

The great diviner **zahorí** would make an appearance, holding a cane to invite the saint to the dance. If he was a member of the Monkeys and Deer family, the angel Saint Gabriel the Archangel would be invisibly invited that night.

On the eve, the stewards' line was made from the church gate, uncovering the heads of the principals and councillors and kissing their hands. Others led to the seat of honor.

Once the mass was over, the stewards had already taken the garments to the town hall and in chorus extended the invitation to all the leaders to accompany them for a moment to the municipal hall.

All the guests were seated in a circular arrangement on antique furniture with wide backrests.

The first shipment of silver trays arrived, filled with hundreds of glasses of liquor.

No sooner had they sat down than the toasts began to the beat of the sounds played with four drumsticks...

The old men, now a little "in the mood," stood up one after another, breaking the rhythm of the music with their steps and dancing in a circle around the entire large hall. All the men were impeccably dressed in their new clothes.

The premiere: a black sack of Momostec slang with straps of the same fabric on their backs, with their respective distinctive traditional zute, first on their shoulders and finally tying their heads.

They uncorked bottles of liquor, depending on each person's physical constitution, to the extent they could endure.

When it was late in the evening, when they saw someone who was quite drunk, the procession would leave and between the chirimia and the drum he would be taken home and if he was no longer able to do it on his own, then they would throw him "a tuto" (a kind of "tuto"), so as not to trip over his feet or hurt himself or be left lying like a "nobody" in the streets.

The stewards were rewarded by the relatives of the chief with glasses of guaro and thus, with greater pleasure, they returned for others, taking them to their homes.

For Easter

Another way was followed. The stewards each contributed five quetzales exclusively to purchase liquor; they also bought a chompipe (a type of beer) and delivered it to the brotherhood's religious household.

On Holy Thursday and Good Friday, there was great revelry. First, what the STEWARDS had brought was served on the table. The men ate lavishly, with exaggerated clay bowls from which they served large quantities of broth, huge portions of turkey, vegetables, and baskets of tamales.

This did not end there, because the host did not want to be left behind and returned to the charge of serving, only in slightly smaller portions, and the same diners were forced to "make an entrance" so as not to offend or belittle the host.

The six judges ordered stuffed chicken, fried fish, and large loaves of bread decorated with sugar flowers, which was served at the convent on Holy Thursday. The apostles were given a taste of it, only to sniff it; then they left for their own suppliers.

The ***nima-ajtij*** (the great master) was in charge of celebrating all these liturgical acts.

Each steward would go out with his tanatío of meat, which they called coch (gift), and take it home. In the morning, the stewardesses would pass by, neatly combed, crossing in different directions, carrying two morritos (matz tzimay) in the palms of their hands, covered with impeccably white napkins, matching well with the black color of the morritos. These gifts went to those who for one reason or another had had direct participation in the festival, such as those who played the tambourine, the shawm, some other main players, etc., etc.

Coch was practiced in all TAS Tiesta, since the food was very abundant and each steward always carried his napkin to be ready, and take in it, what others called the **colonel** (or the leftover) and thus treat his own.

The members of the brotherhood's household took great care and pains to ensure that the stewards were happy and that no rumors were heard in the street that the menu was a little sparse. This would have serious repercussions within the religious brotherhoods.

3. 12 the Mocana

At two in the morning, the great crowd was heading toward the Santa Cruz brotherhood house. It was a commotion that shook the earth. Hundreds of matraqueros were going to the brotherhood to drink matz, and on the way back, with the same noise, they brought the urn to the church, where the crucified person was placed.

3.13 The relentless Arroy

During Lent, all the townspeople had to observe excellent conduct, be blameless, not cause any incidents, and walk carefully, because it was the time when the satyrs took advantage of the situation to overwhelm offenders.

During Holy Week, the bailiffs would make their Maximón. They gave him a more familiar name and called him Arroy, a humorous character.

They tricked everyone by saying, "What are they looking for?" or "Are they calling you?" and when they answered, "Who?" they would reply, "Arroy." They would seat the character in the corridor of City Hall, but due to the way he was presented, the neighbors already knew in advance that Arroy was surely going to imitate so-and-so.

It could be an incident that was still lingering, such as: a woman stole a chicken; a boy stole bread; a man stole corn on the cob; another kidnapped a girl; one escaped from the barracks; a woman committed adultery, etc., etc. The constables were true artists at squeezing, rinsing, and twisting the fallen with the doll.

After midday, they would throw the dummy from a high window in the church and it would remain suspended with the body of the person it was imitating.

After 3 p.m., the devotees appeared with all solemnity from the gate, joining the afternoon procession. The curious were settling into the church's large courtyard.

3.14 The Cumuc

It was a monument with circular steps, made of carved stone, crowned with a metal cross.

For the festival, this monument was adorned with the brightly colored clothing of the Pedranos, who sought lodging on these famous steps to comfortably watch the events of the festival.

From the high window all the satyrs, tied with safety ropes in the company of the god Bacchus, were busy ridiculing and deforming people and things.

From below the crowd whistled, laughed, and cried as they saw their characters suspended from the top.

When the procession returned to the church, they dropped the satyr doll, and the hysterical public tore it into a thousand pieces, while the other bailiffs fought to seize the remains of the doll. This was the end of all activity. **Arroy** would be reconstructed and taken to the town jail accused of capital crimes:

1. He bribed the priests by wanting to return the thirty pieces of silver, which he had received when he sold his master.
2. For attempted suicide by hanging, punishable by the law.
3. For the ridicule of important people of the town.

From this hour on, absolute silence began to reign in the town, all activity was suspended, and the streets were deserted. Great respect and resignation, everyone saddened because Christ has died and is buried, the heavenly gates have closed, and there is no contact between the world and heaven. This silence lasted until Saturday, when suddenly the bells rang, a sign that glory had opened its doors and all the people shouted with joy and rejoicing. This euphoria turned into persecution.

All those of legal age carried something in their hands with which to whip the others. The worst victims were the children, to whom they added all their mischief of the year and “without misery” it rained on them everywhere. To those who did not grow up, he practiced the secret of shaking them and then he would trample them from head to toe. The trees that did not set fruit were “cut down” with a machete; honey was poured on their bark. Meanwhile, poor Arroy, Maximo’s doll, who caused a ruckus, was finally sentenced for scandals and tied to a post. He was mercilessly whipped until he was broken and split with a whip.

After this activity, they headed to the brotherhoods, where the marimba group was ready and the grand sarabande began. Here, men and women gathered until they couldn't remember each other's names. The men, with the greatest pride, shouted, boasting of their services *ad bonorem*, both in the brotherhoods and in the municipality.

3.14 Delivery of the Religious brotherhood

When the delivery time was approaching, they called it *Xy-colaj ru-zamaj*, meaning "to finish the custom." For this activity they did what they called *Guaran-tiox* (the image's evening). Every night the atmosphere was enlivened with the famous *bon, boron, bon; ten telen*, ten of the drum accompanied by the shawm and people came to eat the so-called *kaj* (corn flour with *chan*). This took eight nights.

After the week of rituals, the stewards and their textiles prepared to wash the saints' clothes. One pleasant morning, the textiles would come forward, carrying on their shoulders bunches of tubers of the *uleuf chipac* (earth soap), similar to onions. They would use this material to wash the clothes, leaving them much cleaner than with the chemicals.

The transfer of a crown into new hands is often pompous. This is where the outgoing figure's economic potential was displayed to be seen, admired, and coveted. A point with the greatest number of people was agreed upon where the transfer would take place. The crowd watched the parade of flying bomb carriers that made the sky thunder. A blouse made of lace and lace. The *ixokajau* (*ixocajau* woman: owner), that is, the wife of the brotherhood member, who received or delivered ceremonially in the company of her textiles, premiered. The saint of the brotherhood's devotion and the minor saints who were in the brotherhood keeping the saint of Devotion Company also wore new vestments. The brotherhood member wore a new felt hat, a jasper shirt or "turquoise *chemiz*", and a *sacabli* (trousers) embroidered with little birds.

3.15 Transfer of civil power

The leaders, in a permanent session, elected the most suitable man to fill the high office. These were deliberations to select the most dynamic and honorable man, the one who had risen fairly through the ranks, the man capable of leading his people. Opportunists, friends of prominent figures, and ambitious charlatans who offered to build a bridge across the lake were ignored.

They were people of peace and work to produce. The elections were held to fulfill a requirement, since the people knew in advance who was going to occupy the first magistracy of the town and without remuneration, but simply free service, as a good neighbor, to fight for two years, practicing all kinds of customs that demanded a regular economic position to confront them.

3.15.1 First Act

Upon taking possession of the high office, he was given a mahogany-colored staff with a silver handle and ferrule of the same metal; the cane was a symbol of authority and lordship.

At the event he also received a round metal tube and inside it was kept nothing less than the title of the town, according to a royal decree from colonial times.

A rigorous inventory of the Santo Andrés was taken, loaded by minor bailiffs, consisting of the first batch of antique chests filled with clay vessels, fine, impermeable porcelain, antique ceramic vessels, and tableware of various shapes: deep plates, flat plates, pure silver serving dishes, pitchers, pots, pans, knives—everything necessary for a perfect kitchen.

3.15.2 Second Act

Delivery of beautiful tablecloths with embroidered, small tablecloths laced with Aboriginal art, made of antique-colored threads; special mustaches; the traditional zute woven in bright red "maxento" with black stripes, to cover the heads of important people during ceremonial events and to carry on their shoulders through the streets.

3.15.3 Third Act

Delivery of farming tools, consisting of: picks, axes, spades, shovels, hoes, chains, hammers, nails, etc., sufficient to set up a hardware store.

3.15.4 Fourth Act

Pure lace clothing in different colors and sizes, for changing the saints; ruffle curtains, large mosaic canvases imitating the cosmos by day and night, in short, these were the saint's belongings, delivered into good hands and guarded with a good heart.

The first and second constables arrived, highly coveted positions in the hierarchy by those below. The great hall of the Hermitage was decorated, all the flowers, herbs and fragrant leaves were sought to impregnate the enclosure with their aromas. The smell of resin and ripe fruit of peach, grapefruit, and pataxte could be felt. The lintel of the Hermitage's house, artfully adorned with everlasting flowers, the freshly shed pine carpet, and the silver incense burner wafting over the saints' noses, placed on the main altar, giving off its unmistakable aroma, making the Hermitage a true Piedras pagoda.

3.15.5 The pixabinem for the bailiffs

Pixab: eruption, throwing out all the good and the bad of the lived experience, advice, testimonies, exhortation by the elders to the young servants of their community. They were told of the strict obedience that they must observe to the custodians of the authority of the town, from the mayor, his councilors, the elders, to the bailiffs of a little more rank than the beginners.

The obedience consisted of greeting his elders: **A-wach-tá:** (how is your lordship), and kissing his right hand, taking off his hat if he was entering and putting it on if he was leaving, and if he had to be accompanied, the bailiff took his long, well-polished wand with his respective chamey sign and went with the mayor or one of the councilors, taking a step ahead, hitting his wand on the ground and taking them to the place of destination.

3.16 The silonem

It was simply the summons that the bailiffs made to the neighbors. In the **pixab** the old man made them see that they would only go "on errands", since people used to force the constables into confessions, saying: "What do they want me for? They've only summoned me, who else?" Then they had to keep the authority secret: "I know nothing, they've only ordered me to present yourself now." "Without going to see and spy in the corners of the huts, without peeking too much into the **tzapines** (a door made of cane, with a twisted rope in the center, from where a round stick was jammed horizontally inside). In our past there have been shameful experiences. More than one errand boy has fallen into total repudiation and hatred before the town because, taking advantage of his position as constable, he has peeked right into the **tzapines** and finding only the girl, he struggles with her and then the great scandal caused by the constable. He had to be stripped of his immunity and sent tied to the headboard. That's why it was said: "In the face of all these outrages, I ask the youth who serve their people to vertically observe the line of conduct, which will be the greatest reward you will achieve in this ascent that you begin to climb by steps until you reach the summit where the good sons of Saint Peter are, now with their heads full of gray hair, their foreheads wrinkled, their hands trembling, but on their chests they bear the seal of pride and the satisfaction of an unwithered laurel."

"At three in the morning you will arrive at your Hermitage houses, carrying the cura (the well-potbellied male jar) on your back, you sweep your Hermitage, as well as the patios and streets of your lord and his nearby neighbors, and before the sun rises over the hills, the streets should smell of wet earth, as well as the water container of your lord's mistress will be overflowing with liquid; once a week you will contribute with a load of split firewood, whether oak wood, tzunuj ché, prixik ché, strong alma sticks, nothing to be subtracted cbiribiscos, weak sticks or rotten your cargo i5 out possible must be of your height, so the neighbors will admire you as an excellent worker in your community"

"In the morning you will accompany your lord from the house of the Hermitage to his office, where you will discover him. When he gets up from his seat, you will wait with your hat in your hands to cover his head. Only when he appears through the door will they go home. Always observing the custom, when you arrive, take his hat and take him to your Hermitage. Immediately after lunch, you will head to the beach for another trip by water. Afterwards, you will ask for the keys from the iroja to shell the corn for the nixtamal the next day. Around 3 pm, you will return to the office. Until here, the bailiff can sit on a rustic bench where he will dedicate himself to twisting

pita and more pita over his bare muscle to make the matate de maguey head. You will place his hat in its place."

Number of regular constables: the first and second for the mayor; the third and fourth for the deputy mayor; the fifth and sixth for the trustee; three for the first mayor and three for the second mayor.

The days of the week were divided, and only one bailiff served the lords. The changeover took place on Sunday at 6:00 pm. Those from the outgoing week laid out the reports. The third bailiff of the major was in charge of fetching his lord's sleeping clothes, consisting of a mat and a jacket placed on a roll tied with a bow. Before 8:00 pm, the bailiff would move two benches together to hang his lord's mat and leave his jacket neatly folded at the head of the mat. This happened every night, and in the morning he would roll up the mat and hang it on the wall until the following Sunday. The same bailiff would return with the major's "tujas" to hang them in the "customary house." They would remain there all week without being part of the major's bedding.

A lot of staff was needed for a change of this nature: five councillors remained seated at the mayor and deputy mayor were also responsible for administering justice. It was a team effort, in addition to the municipal trustee, who also sat alongside them. There were ten other junior councilors. These were headed by the first councilor, who oversaw lake activities, which consisted of transporting passengers to Santiago Atitlán daily.

The money they collected was used for travel expenses when they were called to the departmental capital, as well as for other commissions to the capital city, or to hold local parties, sancochos on the beaches, buying liquor, etc., etc.

The minor councillors were obliged to leave another vessel built at the end of their terms. There were two majors, who were the chiefs of all the constables. They carried thick, well-polished rods. Each major had three constables at his service.

For the patron saint's festival, the municipal authorities would gather in the Hermitage house, where the statue of Saint Andrew was located. This statue did not belong to any of the six brotherhoods; rather, it was the exclusive privilege of the first mayor to have it in his house, decorated with all the customs required by tradition. From the mayor to the lowest council member, they would contribute a member or an element to carry out the dance, whether it be the bull, the conquest, Mexican

vaqueradas, the deer, the flying pole, etc., etc. And there was no shortage of private groups that did the same to add more color to the June festivities. Thus, for the day alone, three or four different groups would be dancing.

The first through fifth councilors had no bailiffs at their service. Therefore, they hired assistants, who would come for them when they had some commission at the mayor's office. The ikal-yal porter would arrive very early in the morning to wake up the household to prepare what was necessary for a trip of this nature. At a predetermined time, they would set out across the waters, sailing toward the Jaybal. The mayor's place was at the tip of the boat, where he could comfortably indulge in the early morning sleep. Upon reaching their destination, they would drag the belly of the enormous boat, park it next to the shore, and the assistants would throw themselves onto the giant pita bags (called devez) and head uphill toward Sololá.

After finishing their chores, they returned to stay in the hospitable little town of San Jorge. There, the attendants cooked meat, giving themselves the task of eating until they were full. Late at night, they all slept in the same room and got up very early in the morning and set sail for *San Pedro*.

Sometimes the mayors wanted to liven up the atmosphere better. So they would bring along the "rebajados" (low-class musicians). These were musicians who were in the service of the municipality and as a reward for their services, the municipality did not require them to perform other works, much less pay their fees.

Wooden instruments cheered the lake travelers, from the bowels of the enormous trunks that majestically broke the surface of the lake, propelled by the strength of the muscular men of corn with wide backs and iron arms.

The responsibility of steering rested on two helmsmen, who carried the braking force of ten burly men in each row. Even at a distance of twenty kilometers and at night, the helmsmen sometimes lost control. When the mist covered the surface, it was when they put their experience and skill into play, juggling their shiny oars, breaking the waves on edge that threatened to crash against the sides of the boat.

By nature's treachery, the surface would suddenly rush before their eyes in a certain direction, and they would be violently swept away. The lake would turn into a mighty river, like the so-called alfaques of the seas, or violent storms would break out. Then all the helmsmen would roll up their sleeves to their balls, tie up their heads to better withstand nature's fury, and give themselves up to win or die. The only thing to be heard was the hissing and creaking of the waters as their paddles clashed, and the encouraging cries of the two brequeros: **jo-dey, jo-dey** (let's go, let's go); **juná-tá, juná-tá** (gather your strength, man).

The crew members considered themselves victorious when they crossed the hill of Ru-kul-ak (Rooster's Neck). Indeed, the hill is shaped like the reeds that form the rooster's neck. Others say they have heard a rooster crow there at certain times.

3.17 Since the beginning of the religious brotherhoods

Even before then, it was customary to give coins, whether ancient or those in circulation at the time. This was perhaps in keeping with the biblical passage about the man who, after leaving ten talents to each servant, left and upon returning, demanded an accounting, condemning the man who had buried the talents. The brotherhood members then gave these coins, whether silver or gold, to their stewards so that the steward could increase what he had received. At the end of the period, they would give an account to the lord brother, thus quintupling the treasure. There were bags made of brightly colored hemp, with drawstrings, where the coins were kept, according to their denominations. When they took an inventory, even if it was from memory because they didn't keep notes, they would place the bags on a mat made of several sheets, which simultaneously formed a treasure for the church.

The religious brotherhoods had their insignia, which were carried in solemn processions by the members. They were large discs, and in low relief, the images of the members' devotion could be seen. All these symbols were made of pure silver. The town's high-ranking leaders and dignitaries also carried banners with religious symbols, also made of silver.

The town's patron saint wore a thick, circular necklace of silver coins around his neck, extending from the length of his neck to his chest. In his hand, he also carried a rooster made of the same material as the coins. The author of the Nimajuyú cross speaks extensively of the indigenous people's disobedience and lack of respect toward the priests and of their constant complaints to the higher authorities. This resulted in these towns being left without a priest for a long time. Only sporadically did some attend special masses. However, when the priest arrived at the beach, the bells were rung and they would immediately escort him up to the convent in a special procession.

On one occasion, when the north winds were blowing hard, one of these visits was scheduled to arrive, but the rowers couldn't cross the lake and were swept away and thrown onto the beaches. The next day, a commission of chieftains came out to apologize for the delay, but the priest wouldn't listen and kept them on standby for half a day, reproaching them for their disobedience and lack of respect.

During General Barrios's government, orders were issued that the municipalities should not directly intervene in the affairs of the brotherhoods. This

relieved the residents somewhat of the burden of custom. However, since this whole range of traditions was well-rooted, very few people filed complaints with the authorities of the town. The majority continued with their duties.

By the 1950s, the long-standing vacancies were filled. The path had been smoothed, customs had become entrenched; there was no way back. The new pastors of the church were left feeling quite contemptuous of such profanations. But what was behind all this? "Who told the brotherhood member, like the members of the municipality, that folk dances, incense burning, pom, and candles were a requirement for salvation?" the priests asked. Then a war broke out between the convent and the religious brotherhood members.

4 Extinction of the religious brotherhoods

The brotherhoods awaited "the coup de grace" from the new pastors of the church. The previous religious members constantly cited in their documents the use the members gave to the holy things and concluded that they were wasting them in the excessive drunkenness they were accustomed to.

Others claim that the new trends undermined the foundations of the brotherhoods, and many became Protestants to avoid the brotherhoods' customs. However, they were not freed from civil customs with the municipality.

In reality, it was the economic factor that most contributed to their capitulation, because the owners' expenses were excessive. A member of the brotherhood had to have a good-sized granary to be able to cover his expenses throughout the year.

The drunkenness was excessive, each member of the brotherhood had the luxury of buying cases of liquor, and they were large pachonas with volcano labels, which filled the premises. For the brotherhood celebrations, they hired marimbas for several sets, and the sarabands were endless. Men, women, and children "stirred up their bodies." Some ended up bruised, others in jail, etc.

During this period of semi-ancient and Christian fervor, many "'gave their package' in front of neighbors, but the reality was different, since in the end they had sold their properties and finally emigrated to the coast with their hands crossed.

4.1 Telepathy between members of the town council

Cortez lived near the pier. One sleepless night, he heard the voice of his accomplice, Cosme, on the retaining wall of his house. Then he imagined that Cosme had undoubtedly returned from Sololá and had bought a small casket at the market, since he heard his assistant say: "Take the bottle out of the casket, not that

full one, let's finish the one we started." The man's mouth was dry, his glands weren't secreting saliva, but the strange thing was that when he reached the wall, he heard the same conversation a little further up the same street. The man moved forward, and when he reached the spot, he heard the conversation around the corner. When he got there, he heard that they had always been on the same topic. The mysterious voice led him, and without realizing it, he reached the old man's house, which was far from his own. He saw the door half-open and the light from the candle illuminated his assistant: "It's better if we finish the bottle already started, and fill it up for another occasion." Cortez told his experience to the old man, who replied: "I'm not surprised, the same thing has happened to me, liquor has a mysterious power, since whoever is possessed by it is taken to remote corners until they achieve their goal. Do you see tonight? We haven't even moved from our site, here I am in my hammock, sheltering from the cold and giving orders to my assistant to bring me the opened bottle, and it's not a lie, there in the chest there is a bottle full of pure good liquor.

4.2 The mayor dispenses justice

The chini-ma-jay (the great corridor) continues to this day, even though not a single ember remains of the large tiled house with a mud brick floor. This was the corridor of the old San Pedro School.

One morning people were crowded. The major, the immediate superior of the constables, was making a loud fuss in the long corridor of Chini-ma-jay. He said he had captured a group of night owls who were singing to the accompaniment of an out-of-tune guitar, disturbing the sleep of the hardworking residents with their monotonous chants, which sounded like war hymns from the time of the conquest. The major's mud whistle went unheeded and he was forced to declare war on them in times of peace. Before the lady left the ranch, he fell on them to arrest them. The only weapons the perpetrators of the scandal had were their empty bottles and the rickety guitar. Then the "molotera" (roughly-named) broke out. The men hugged each other, whizzed the containers over their heads, and they crashed like grenades on the rocks. They all fled and snuck into the huts, but the one who got the worst of it was the chief bailiff, who ended up with the stringed instrument hanging around his neck like a fine wooden necklace in the bass clef. They only managed to capture one of the bohemians. Amidst struggles and shoving, and then being carried, they took him to jail to sleep. The next day, they realized that the person they had captured wasn't that bohemian, but a woman in disguise, but they already had her confessions: who the others were; so-and-so, bring him; so-and-so, so-and-so, bring him, etc., until everyone implicated in the night's scandal arrived.

Justice began, which was serious and delicate, since the major had not taken off the musical necklace that hung around his neck and was grumbling, pacing from one side to the other.

Another, clenched his fist and contemptuously caressed the necklace, but he was carrying it around like the corpus delicti of the scandalmongers. Another of the night owls was walking around unwashed, his face covered in blood as if it had been blasted from a firecracker bomb. Another arrived with a sack cut from his shoulder and carried it as an accusation against the mayor's authority. The judge and mayor first saw the consequences of the pitched battle unfold and asked the man with the sack if he agreed with his position, "since at first glance and without any expert opinion, that sack was deliberately cut." "Yes or no, or else I'll request an investigation into the piece." He replied: "You're right," the accused replied, "but because it's current, I pulled this sack." "Well, be more careful because you could also end up in jail for slander."

Continues the confession: "Who invited you to go out to the scandalous serenade? "Them." "Write down my secret, why did you dress up?" "I felt like it or should I say they forced me?" "There is a crime on their part even though they confessed that they did it of their own free will." "Who did they ask for permission?" "No one." Because everyone was drunk and the only one looking after them was me." "He is a confessed defendant," said the judge, pounding the table, not to intimidate them but to give the case more authority. You are the one to blame for this embarrassment, because my eldest accidentally slept with the necklace, not made of precious stones but of musical notes, and thank God she has a small head and the instrument's hole fit so snugly that the pressure on it only caused slight scratches and she does not deserve hospitalization. A hoarse little bell rang. A legion of bailiffs quickly arrived and took the woman back to jail.

The sentence: twenty days of minor arrest at eight cents a day and since she is not going to get them nor will the men help her, then the most offended party will be in charge of watching her to fulfill her task of grinding lime and carrying water for the flowers.

Lucky for the elder who didn't have to swallow his muddy gurgle, since one of the members of his group was addicted to eating wet earth and when the leader wasn't looking he crushed it like roasted pork rinds between his teeth, Not so the other guy, who was slowly cleaning the packaging residue with saliva, as if he didn't want to take part in any more trouble.

A close friend of the mayor, a close friend of his, arrives, and he was being sued for committing a crime. "Friend, before I do justice, I must clarify my position: our friendship is over here. We will continue on the streets and everywhere, except in this office. I am an authority here, and I have no qualms of any kind. The defendant

burst out laughing in the office, the judge rang the bell, and no one came to his aid. After so much calling, the major came in surprised, because he had never thought what could happen to his friend, "Take this man to jail." When he understood the seriousness of the case, he apologized for his laughter. "I never thought it would be like this with me." "That's true, sir, but keep in mind that he's guilty in the lawsuit and has to pay damages, and on top of that, he comes to my office laughing his head off. What a bargain, right? My secretary, write it down: so-and-so filed a lawsuit against him in this office and witnesses came as proof to confirm the authenticity of what happened. They are honorable people and residents of this office. Their statements are not tainted by lies or bias. Therefore, he was found guilty and received the sentence, paying a fine in relation to his economic condition based on his own condition and confession when he was asked to tell only the truth, when he declared his occupation as a cattle butcher and earns an average of five to eight quetzales for each butchered piece. Minor arrest with an average of seven quetzales a day, and if he doesn't get them, then he'll break rocks on the street that leads to the beach.' 'Whateeee, me? Break rocks? Never do that, Your Honor.' There was no longer any need to pull the rope; a glance at the major was enough, who soon shouted: "Take him to jail!" They had already fallen on him when the judge attended to his last request, who ordered him to wait. "I give you two hours to make the fine effective and if in case you don't get it, know and understand that you will go to sleep in jail, the major sends you to custody because you are already a prisoner." "I will be guarded; never," he protested angrily. "Take him to the boat," concluded the mayor. Before finishing the sentence, he was already carried like a dead scorpion by a legion of ants.

The same process continued as the day before. I managed to communicate with the political leader, and he advised me to send the rebellious prisoner there to serve his sentence. "The major has already chosen the guards; we're just waiting for his blankets to be sent from home. At the same time, his family has been invited to come and say goodbye. They'll travel across the mountain range; it's only twelve leagues measured with strips of rubber." By this time, the prisoner was on his knees, begging for forgiveness and pleading for immediate release from the prisoner to go and split rocks near the lake shore. He tried to bribe them, but he couldn't, and all he was left with was this bitter experience.

Every morning people were received to file a lawsuit or to consult about a problem. The guests brought presents: money, bread, chickens hidden under their aprons, if they were women. They refused to accept all of this, "I understand that if I accept your favor, it would be to bind my authority and impartiality and at the same time you would make me an accomplice, so what would be the bargain that you once trusted me with? Just to defraud you for a simple gift, it would not be fair or correct. I will be in my office at the scheduled time and there we will discuss the matter with the affected party, without commitment to either side. He who considers himself

clean has no reason to fear justice, on the other hand, the guilty one tries to gain authority by bribing the boss and is committing a crime. I will accept the gift if you voluntarily want to give it to me, but without committing to defend you when the time comes. So it is better to bring it to me after justice has been served." Many arrived after their problems were resolved.

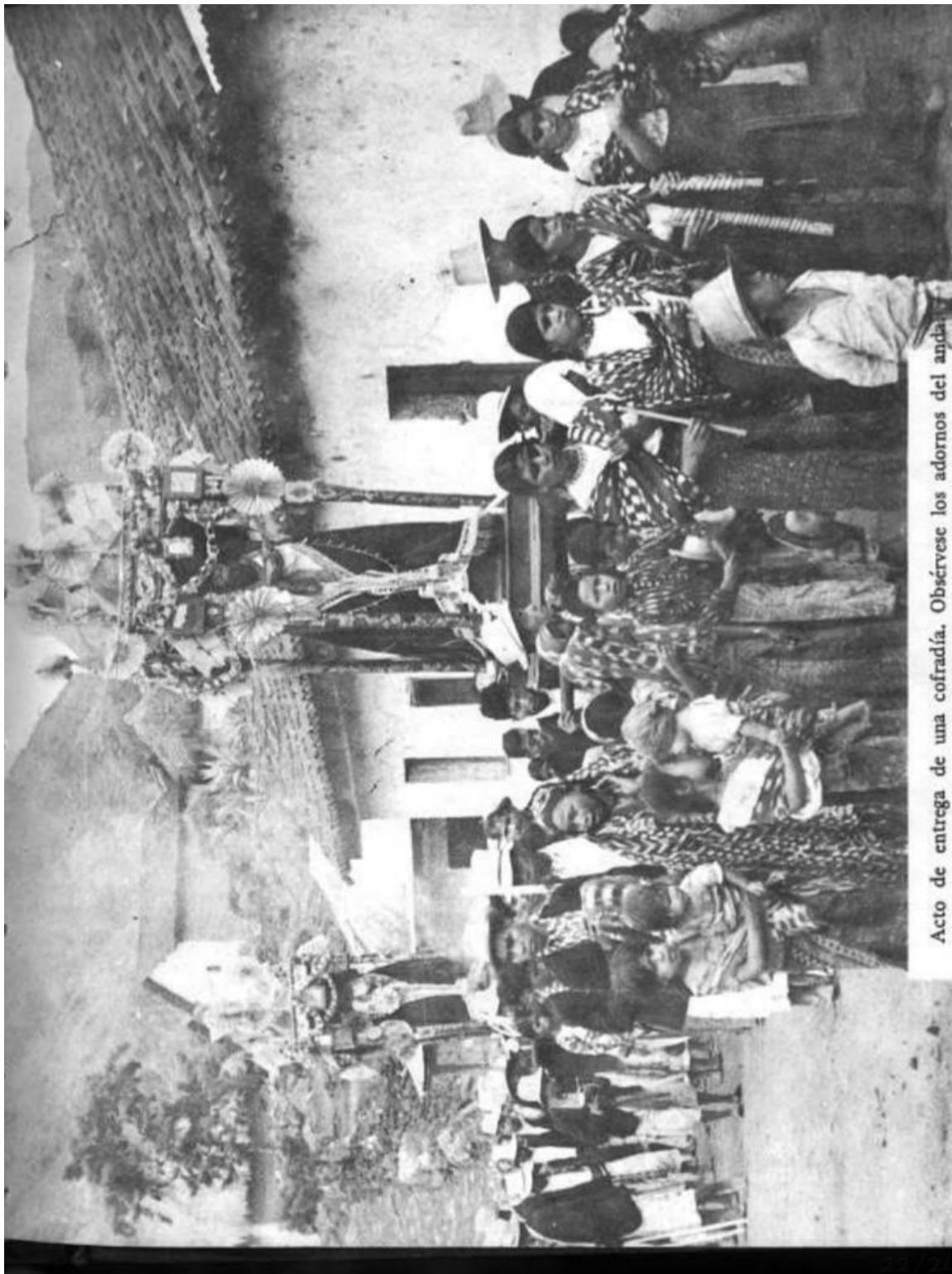
It was a lot to ask for brilliant performance from a bygone generation, and from a man who had never even sat for half an hour under a teacher's guidance, nor had he ever known a rustic bench or a thatched-roofed schoolroom. If he had even half learned to read and write his signature, it was out of pure self-interest, and everything he achieved was the product of pure empiricism.

San Pedro La Laguna



Mayors and Principals of the town of San Pedro La Laguna. June 20, 1964.

Brotherhood. Note the decorations on the float during the presentation ceremony (Photo: Luis Batz).



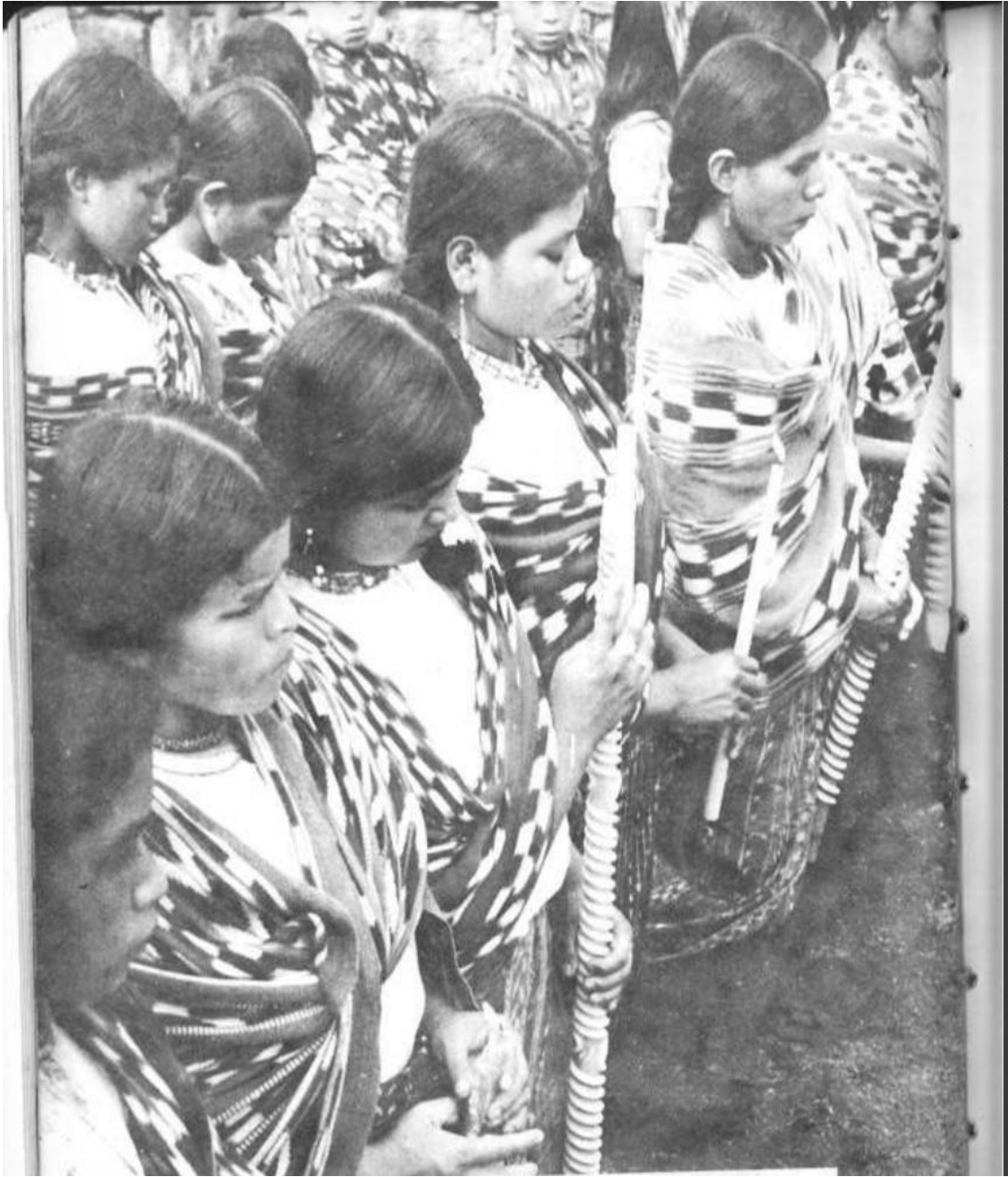
Acto de entrega de una cofradía. Obsérvese los adornos del andaluz.



Images from one of the brotherhoods of Saint Peter. Note the Nim-Ajtij (Grand Master), bearer of the sacred books.



"Steward and bailiffs build a field for the celebration of the brotherhood's sarabande. (Photo: Luis Batz).



The eighteen texels of the six brotherhoods of San Pedro La Laguna. (Photo: Luis Batz).