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ESSAYS

LITERARY ORIGINS OF GUATEMALAN POPULAR THEATER

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Given the characteristics of Guatemalan *loas*, it is possible, when compared to Spanish theater, to infer the literary process from which they emerged. In this way, we may also contribute, to some extent, to the clarification of obscure areas that have lent themselves to doubtful or false interpretations in the description of the phenomenon under study. In this regard, it has been assumed that the *loa* originally functioned as a theater of conquest aimed at the Christianization of Indigenous[1] peoples. Literary sources suggest otherwise[2], and some of its features come from a period during which the colonial process was developing. These data, added with other (such as the social groups that have preserved this dramatic tradition), will later shed light on this and other questions raised by the study of the *loas*.

Spanish Theater

Lope de Vega (1568–1635), considered the creator of the "Spanish national drama," marks the beginning of the Spanish Golden Age[3] of theatrical splendor. Spain was only just beginning to form a unified identity. Meanwhile, in the Americas, the colonial process had only just begun.

Nevertheless, the conquistadors arrived already bearing a long theatrical tradition. This tradition traces back to the limited medieval Spanish liturgical drama (a scarcity resulting from the delayed introduction of the Latin rite in place of the Mozarabic one). This type of performance is attested through **tropes**, particularly the **Visitatio Sepulchri** and some **Officium pastorum**, spanning from the 11th to the 15th century.

Equally significant is the testimony of Felipe Fernández Vallejo, who in an 18th-century manuscript compiled useful memories for the history of the Church of Toledo. In his **Dissertations V and VI**, he describes two performances from the Christmas cycle. However, the most prestigious document of the dramatic tradition is the ***Auto de los Reyes Magos***, an early example of religious theater that, according to Menéndez Pidal, dates back to around the year 1150. The surviving fragment of this work suggests the existence of other similar pieces passed down through oral tradition and influenced by French sources[4]. Satirical or comic theater was represented by ***juegos de escarnio*** ("mockery plays") mentioned in the **Partidas** of Alfonso X, which also allude to the vibrant theatrical activity of the time[5].

Nevertheless, a more refined dramatic tradition begins in the 15th century with Gómez Manrique (1412–1490), author of two religious pieces: ***Representación del nacimiento de Nuestro Señor*** and ***Lamentaciones hechas para Semana Santa***, which are

more dialogued poems than fully developed dramas[6]. Spanish theater formally emerges with the prolific Juan del Encina (1468–1529), creator of eclogues, pastoral love dramas and plays that stage the Nativity, the Passion, and the Resurrection of Christ. For his shepherd characters, he selected a comic register by employing *sayagués*, a rustic dialect from the countryside of Salamanca, thereby creating a contrast with the refined language of the ducal court of Alba and the shepherd characters. His religious eclogues maintained a strong sense of contemporaneity with his audience[7].

Juan del Encina was followed by Lucas Fernández (1474–1542), author of farces and notable eclogues and *autos* of a religious nature (Autos are a short, allegorical play with religious themes, usually centered on the mystery of the Eucharist), and Gil Vicente (1465–70? –1536), who perfected the techniques of his predecessors through lyrical sensitivity, blending courtly, scholarly, popular, renaissance, and medieval elements in his plays. This made him the most important playwright of his time[8]. Alongside them, we must also mention Bartolomé de Torres Naharro (1480–90? –1531?), the first theatrical theorist and critic, who divided the comedia into two parts: *introito* and plot, and further segmented the latter into *jornadas* (day-long scenes or acts), in contrast to the classical theater's division into acts[9].

When, in the West Indies, the colonial process was already in its early stages, cultivated Spanish theater was flourishing, one of the clearest examples being Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, who died around 1549. He transformed the religious farces of Christmas and Corpus Christi into direct precursors of the *auto sacramental*. To do this, like Encina and Fernández, he used social and linguistic contemporaneity with his audience; he introduced allegory and, like Gil Vicente, combined biblical characters.

By the height of the colonial process, figures like Lope de Rueda (1510?–1565) and Juan de la Cueva (1543–1606?) had emerged. Rueda wrote plays to entertain an eager public. His plots reflected the colorful world he lived in, and he cared little for formal structure. Servants and common people were his true protagonists, thus elevating popular themes to a dramatic level. De la Cueva dramatized episodes from both contemporary and ancestral Spanish history[10].

They were followed by Lope, Tirso, and Calderón, along with their brilliant dramatic cycles. Religious theater would take shape in the *autos sacramentales*, immature in Lope's hands and reaching baroque splendor with Calderón. Meanwhile, the Kingdom of Guatemala had become "*La patria del criollo*" (the homeland of the *criollo*.)

The conquistadors, the first settlers, and the *chapetones*[11] (peninsular Spaniards who arrived later) were, in general, not cultivated individuals. Rarely did they have access to the palaces where the above-described dramatic tradition took root. That theatrical process was, rather, the domain of regular clergy and priests who came to the Americas. It was Lope de Rueda and religious authors like Sánchez de Badajoz who brought great theater to the rough populace. They prepared the people to become the audience of the *Siglo de Oro* (Spanish Golden Age). Soldiers and adventurers, preoccupied with wealth, who arrived in these lands, were only familiar with popular theater.

By the mid-16th century, collections of anonymous religious dramatic pieces began to appear. The most well-known of these compilations is the *Códice de Autos Viejos*[12] (Codex of Old Autos), which includes ninety-six one-act plays, a product of the medieval tradition moving toward the baroque. These are likely the works of clerics interested in teaching and entertaining the public rather than seeking personal fame, hence the anonymity.[13]

The collected plays cover a variety of themes: from the Old and New Testaments, Marian themes, hagiographies, and Eucharistic themes. These topics are treated in various ways: historically (in the style of mystery plays), allegorically (like moralities), or in a combined manner[14]. The works mix theological and satirical motifs, cultivated and popular elements: biblical characters alternate with allegorical figures and others taken from popular farces.

These plays were written to be performed during religious festivals and were aimed at an uneducated audience with the intent to teach and provide religious instruction, but, above all, to entertain. They were "popular theatrical spectacles through which religious lessons were delivered both through sight and sound." [15] For this reason, they reveal a desire to conform to popular taste, "introducing plebeian elements, rustic humor, scenes of everyday life, or updating religious content to align with popular sensibilities."[16]

This was the religious theater known to the conquistadors. Their descendants would later attempt to reproduce it, as we shall see. Spanish theater, like its European counterparts, began in the temple: hieratic and liturgical, and gradually moved into the streets, though later than in other European nations[17]. By the 16th century, the two dramatic currents that would enrich the Spanish Golden Age had become clearly defined: religious theatre, an extension of liturgical drama, and secular theater.

The development of the religious current is deeply tied to the evolution of *autos sacramentales*. These originated in 1355, eighteen years after the Corpus Christi feast was established in Valencia, when the roques first appeared: groups of statues representing scenes from the **Old Testament** or saints' lives, carried on *andas* (religious platforms) in the Corpus procession.[18] Later, these statues were replaced by actors, and by 1400, the entire scenes became wagons outfitted with choirs and decorations. Following a rapid transformation in 1517, these roques became full dramatic mysteries.[19]

The grand form of Spanish religious theater, the *auto sacramental*, was truly born in Andalusia and Castile. It was not until 1454 that the first Corpus Christi procession took place in Seville, featuring one of these *roca*[20]. By the 16th century, Corpus dramas were being performed inside churches, eventually becoming an "elemental type of *auto sacramental*."[21] In 1599, due to an accidental circumstance, the drama moved to the western portico of the cathedral. From there, after several years, it transitioned to public squares. This development in Seville coincided with the growth of sacramental plays in Málaga, Valladolid, and Madrid.[22]

This theater was performed on **wagons** of two types. One type consisted of stages mounted on wheeled axles that moved through the streets. The other type was a fixed stage

erected in the location of the performance. The term *carro* (wagon) obviously came from the one mentioned first.[23]

The performance of these religious pieces took place in a festive and boisterous setting. Between 1450 and 1471, for example, **masquerades** were a favorite pastime among nobles. Constable Miguel Lucas de Iranzo mentions one he witnessed on December 28, 1463, in which "the triumph of a group of Christian knights over part of the Moroccan king's escort was enacted in a *juego de cañas* (mock tournament)."[24]

These kinds of amusements were part of the atmosphere in question. Though in this case it involved nobles' games, they were part of a religious celebration and give us a sense of the prevailing conditions. The religious plays of Juan del Encina and Gil Vicente must have been performed within such entertainments.

From what has been discussed thus far, it follows that by the first half of the 16th century, Spanish theater was performed either in the street or in the temple. In both cases, it was tied to an indiscriminate audience. However, it was during this same period that kings and nobles began to open their salons to theater, thereby automatically curating their audiences. Yet, this was also the moment when Spanish theater's populist vocation was confirmed in the creation of the first ***corrales***, public venues for performance where Spanish theater would free itself entirely from the Church. This is how venues like the *Corral de la Olivera* in Valencia came to be, followed later by the famous *Corral de la Pacheca* in Madrid.[25]

Referring to the festive atmosphere that surrounded dramatic performances, Ruiz Ramón cites ***La Farsa del Santísimo Sacramento*** by Sánchez de Badajoz: the shepherd Juan says he has seen:

Spanish

Las danzas, bailes y sones,
las músicas muy perfectas,
las cortinas, las carretas,
las banderas, pabellones,

las carátulas, visiones,
los juegos y personajes,
los momos y los visajes,
los respingos a montones.

English

Dances, moves, and rhythms,
perfectly played melodies,
curtains, wagons,
flags, pavilions,

masks, apparitions,

games and characters,
mimes and grimaces,
somersaults in great numbers.[26]

Thus, the popular religious theater of the Iberian Peninsula was included within a whole marked by joy, merriment, and vital richness, an environment that gave it meaning and function, and where it was likely not the central focus of attention.

It is important to note that the Spanish theater brought by the conquistadors and missionaries was composed in verse, with few exceptions: Lope de Rueda and certain popular customs, such as a play found in the aforementioned codex, used prose. ***La Representación del Nacimiento de Nuestro Señor*** by Gómez Manrique is composed in octosyllabic couplets,[27] while other plays maintain a certain polymetry, as was traditional in medieval theater: "*coplas de pie quebrado*" (stanzas of nine verses divided into quintillas followed by redondillas and a double quintilla). The same verse forms are employed by Juan del Encina and Lucas Fernández. The latter, in particular, favored the nine-line stanza. Notably, both playwrights rejected polymetric tradition and adopted monometric consistency within each work.[28]

Gil Vicente used both eight- and twelve-syllable lines, with or without broken foot, in a broad range of monometric stanzaic combinations. Nevertheless, the diversity of forms comes from medieval tradition. Torres Naharro uses "*arte mayor*" stanzas in some of his plays, and in others, the octosyllabic *copla de pie quebrado*, as in **Comedia Trophea**, or other octosyllabic combinations, as in **Himenea** or **Jacinta**.[29] Sánchez de Badajoz, more conservative metrically, relied almost exclusively on double redondillas, occasionally using quintillas, though his **Farsa de la salutación** is a noteworthy innovation in which the angel and the Virgin speak in quintillas, while the shepherds speak in double redondillas.[30] Lope de Rueda, as a rule, writes in prose. However, his verse pieces: ***Discordia y cuestión de amor, Prendas de amor,*** and ***Diálogo sobre la invención de las calzas***, are written in quintillas. Juan de la Cueva already employed Italian verse forms in his theater.

For its part, the ***Códice de Autos Viejos*** relies almost exclusively on the quintilla. Only one play includes the **ottava rima**. Twenty works diverge from the quintilla, using other more or less traditional forms: *coplas reales, coplas de pie quebrado,* double redondillas, and rhymed (not assonant) romances.[31]

In conclusion, the 16th-century Spanish theater was characterized by increasing rigidity in verse, adopting monometric structures in contrast to the flexible verse of medieval comedy.

The conquistador and the missionary, then, arrived with ears attuned to the use of minor art verse on stage, a popular tradition coming from ballads and kept alive by conservative authors like Diego Sánchez. It is also worth noting that during the period in question, it was common for cultivated dramas to incorporate lyric poetry in popular forms: letrillas, romances, etc. Many plays, religious or pastoral, ended with traditional *villancicos (*a poetic-musical form), as seen in ***La Representación del Nacimiento de Nuestro Señor*** by

Gómez Manrique, which concludes with the popular *villancico* "***Callad fijo mío chiquito***."[32] Juan del Encina made it a custom to conclude Christmas plays with a *villancico*.[33] This practice corresponded with the tradition of ending every religious festivity with a popular *villancico*. The importance of these popular pieces at the end of dramas is such that Pedroso suggested that when such *villancicos* were Eucharistic in nature, they may have driven farces to evolve into *autos sacramentales*.[34] In the ***Códice de Autos Viejos***, the final *villancico* is a constant feature.

The Spaniards came to America laden with this ancient theatrical legacy, which they transplanted into their colonial domains. The theater they revived carried clear popular reminiscences from the peninsula in its verses, rhymes, characters, and performances.

Both in the metropolis and in the Americas, a parallel dramatic development would ensue. However, due to the peculiar social context of the continent, the brilliance of cultivated Spanish theater was not replicated. When a notable author did emerge, he often migrated to the court, as in the case of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón. the elusive "Hispano-American" playwright. In the Americas, theater would follow a primarily populist path, first as a tool of colonial consolidation through catechesis, and later as a popular tradition: a legacy reinterpreted and reimagined by the dispossessed classes. Cultivated theater in the colonies produced few works of value comparable to those of the Spanish Golden Age.

Guatemalan Popular Theater

The *loa* can be characterized as a short religious play performed on a fixed stage during a procession. In terms of content, it praises, amuses, and instructs. Its characters are drawn from daily life, hagiographic narratives, and the Bible. The situations represented may be everyday, fantastical, or a mixture of both. Formally, most *loas* are composed in rhymed octosyllabic verse, often including traditional *alabados* or *sones* dances, with which the piece typically concludes.[35]

The traces of Spanish theater, both popular and cultivated, are thus evident. Nevertheless, we will briefly examine two specific examples.

Loa to Celebrate the Virgin of Conception

This loa, edited by the Ortiz-España printing house at the beginning of the century, may be summarized as follows:

> *An indigenous man rushes in because he is late to light a firework for the Virgin (whose anda is likely already stopped in front of the stage), while his wife is making tortillas. The man grabs a burning ember, lights his firework, and immediately dances a "son". The woman asks him to come in and eat. At that moment, the devil enters disguised as an indigenous person, urging them to worship him in exchange for gold. The people are frightened and call upon the Virgin and then upon Saint Michael. The*

archangel enters to cast out the devil, after arguing with him about his actions. The angel departs. Then the indigenous woman thanks the Virgin for having removed the temptation. The man lights a "torito" and a "buscaniguas" (traditional fireworks). The woman exits and returns with liquor so the man can take a drink. They dance a "son" to shake off the scare and in honor of the Virgin of Conception. The woman bids farewell to the Virgin, throwing flowers and promising a better celebration next year. The man bids farewell to the crowd, to "tanta oje bonite" (so much pretty eyes), to "risueñes" the (smilies), and says goodbye with a "besite" (little kiss). The indigenous woman wishes for the women in the audience to get husbands like hers, cheers for the Virgin, and they dance another "son". Both address the audience, speaking to the joy of the night. Then the devil runs in, chased by Saint Michael, and falls down as Saint Michael steps on him.

This *loa*, known popularly as an "indio" (Indigenous person), was until just a few years ago performed in the streets of Guatemala City (which explains why it is printed). We have found it among the "originals" (handwritten copies) provided to us by informants in *Ciudad Vieja*. It exhibits clear traits of Spanish theater and no influence from pre-Hispanic drama.

First, we must understand that this is ladino (non-indigenous) theater.[36] The presence of indigenous people on stage denotes a satirical intent rooted in racial prejudice.[37] Much like Juan del Encina's shepherds, rustic characters are used to provoke laughter through disjointed attitudes and language:

Parato un poque tu son
vas comer corriendite,
tu chile tu tortillite
y tu picude pischtón. (p. 2)

Similarly, as in the Spanish models of Encina and Sánchez de Badajoz, the play achieves immediacy through direct references and the staging of daily life (the home, food, etc.). Above all, it reflects a description of the celebration of the festival:

Vive el pieste Concensión
vive el Santa Maríe.
vive nuestre divoción
qui celebrames este díe.
(…)
verdad mis compañeres
hombrecites y mujeres
quiestuvo alegre este noche. (p. 8)

The celebratory setting is also shown in the decorations: "The setting represents a ranch adorned with banana plants" (p. 1); or in the fireworks; or in the food: "...*tu buñuele el batide mistamal di pure coche*" (p. 2); and in the music, with the *sones* played by the band that follows the procession: "*Tocalos pues musiquere*." (p. 7).

As in Gil Vicente, biblical figures are combined, here Saint Michael and the devil, are mixed with uneducated characters, a contrast emphasized through their speech:

Spanish

Sin hablar, sin hablar,
sin crujir un solo diente,
que esta espada puedo doblar
sobre tu cuerpo indecente. (p. 5)

English

Without a word, without a word,
without grinding a single tooth,
I can bend this sword
upon your body, foul and blind. (p. 5)

From the Spanish popular theatre, represented in the *Códice* and some cultivated traditions, the piece inherits the theological theme of temptation and the power of prayer to overcome it. It portrays specifically the intercession of Mary and the saints. The motif of worship-for-gold represents evil and is borrowed from the gospel, from the temptations of Christ.[38] However, reworked by popular tradition, it acquires a unique scenic conception and a humorous resolution at the devil's expense:

Spanish

Sal de aquí Satanás,
sal de aquí batahola,
sal de aquí Barrabás,
sal de aquí Luzbel con cola. (p. 4)

English

Begone, Satan himself,
Begone, batahola,
Begone, vile Barrabás,
Begone, Luzbel con cola. (p. 4)

As in the *Códice* tradition, the performance is held during a religious celebration, as the text indicates. It aims to educate by offering models of behavior, providing religious instruction (specifically, how to resist temptation), alluding to intercessory power, and even evoking the fate of the wicked with phrases like "*Luzbel con cola.*" Ultimately, it entertains—just as the *Códice* plays did in the 16th century.

In terms of form, this piece also inherits traits from both cultivated and popular Spanish theater (Gómez Manrique's octosyllables, the rhymed romance of the Códice, and the monometric verse of Encina, Fernández, and Vicente). The entire piece is written in

octosyllabic verse. However, it contains some uneven lines of nine or even ten syllables with consonant rhyme that forms redondillas.

Loa to the Garden of Flowers

Another exemplary piece is *El jardín de las flores*, also edited by the Ortiz-España printing press, like the previous one. According to our informant Rosalina Ortiz, it was once performed in Sumpango, Sacatepéquez, within the last thirty years.[39]

This *loa* features "eight girls, each dressed to resemble a flower: rose, violet, carnation, lily, dahlia, daisy, thistle, and pansy" (p. 1). The plot may be summarized as follows:

> *The Rose enters and, in honor of the "Queen Empress María," invites the flowers to celebrate "this glorious day" (p. 1). She introduces herself and praises her qualities. Then the Violet enters, presents herself, and enumerates her virtues, especially her humility. The Carnation follows, then the Lily, who notes she is a symbol of purity, and so on, with the Dahlia, Daisy, Thistle, and Pansy each presenting themselves. The Pansy claims to have "intoxicating eyes, so fragrant and alight they illuminate the heart" These are the very virtues of the Virgin, whom she continues to praise. In the end, all the flowers kneel and sing the alabado* ***"A humble soul."***

Here we have a piece distinct from the previous one. The language is *ladino*, the rhythm rather static, and the content lyrical rather than narrative. This *loa* aspires to a more refined tone, which is evident in the elaborate metaphors and similes used to address its subject:

Spanish

Protectora primavera
aquí me tienes presente,
soy la rosa del Oriente... (p. 2)

English

Protecting Spring,
I stand before you,
I am the rose of Eastern hue… (p. 2)

Spanish

Dalia soy
coronada de rocío
que engalana el estío... (p. 4)

English

I am the dahlia,

crowned in the morning dew
that graces summers view. (p. 4)

Still, neither the audience nor the performers are non-popular; they are, however, ladino. Thus, we find some uneven verses and elements of distinctly popular origin, such as the *alabado* and the meaning attributed to the flowers.

It follows, therefore, the long tradition going back to Gil Vicente of combining the cultivated and the popular. From the ***Códice***, it inherits the one-act structure and allegorical tendency (here through vegetal personifications). The Mariano theme and the function of religious instruction, specifically, the Virgin's powerful intercession in a lyrical way, also derive from that same source:

Spanish

Que con su belleza
alegra al mortal
les das al triste, gozo
y a las familias paz
por eso ferviente te amamos
y a tus plantas te entregamos
nuestro fiel corazón. (p. 6)

English

With its beauty,
it brings delight to the mortal,
To grieving souls, it offers joy,
and peace to family homes,
that is why we eagerly love you
and lay our faithful heart in front of you. (p. 6)

As for form, it is also monometric, though metrically uneven, composed of octosyllabic redondillas with assonant rhyme. The verse form and rhyme are also of traditional peninsular provenance, as described above.

This *loa* doesn’t seek to provoke laughter but rather to move the audience through lyrical intensity. It is relatively static compared to the dynamic jocular loas. It is therefore of cultivated intention and a reworking of the Spanish tradition.

What’s most interesting is that this *loa* ends with an *alabado* rather than a dance. Although it is common for lyrically focused *loas* to conclude with an *alabado*, there are examples of jocular *loas* that do so as well, omitting the dance. The *alabado* at the end of the piece is the exact parallel of the traditional *villancico* since the time of Juan del Encina. Like the *villancico*, the *alabado* closes religious, liturgical, or popular ceremonies with mass participation, something encouraged at the end of these pieces. Again, we find a series of characteristics of Spanish theater fulfilled in this type of *loa*.

Conclusion

As we previously noted, in the memory of the conquistador, and especially of the *chapetón*, there emerged a cultivated theater for the few educated, and a popular one for the majority. However, it is not until the 18th century that *loas* appear,[40] which gather together both the popular dramatic tradition and the cultivated *loa*, serving the Spanish and *criollo* audiences as a complement to established entertainments. These followed a process from the aristocratic to the popular: first came the promenades of the Royal Banner, such as on Saint Cecilia's Day; then, the processions sustained by the city council; afterward, the illuminations, masquerades, and procession wagons; and finally, the *encamisada* and the *loas*.[41] All of which imitates the Peninsular tradition preserved in memory.

The *loas*, which were already a reworking of the entire dramatic tradition, would themselves undergo a process of folklorization. From the inauguration of the Metropolitan Cathedral and the consecration of the sanctuary of Esquipulas in the 18th century, they would become part of religious festivals and popular manifestations, where they were already present by the 19th century.[42]

From the *auto sacramental*, they adopted the stationary wagon, transforming into the tall *tablero* (stage) on which *loas* were performed along the edges of the streets. The atmosphere surrounding these performances was always festive, meaning that, like their original models, they were not always the sole focus of the audience's attention. From the Spanish popular theater, such as that represented in the *Códice*, and from the *loas* of comedies after becoming independent from them,[43] the Guatemalan *loa* inherits the one-act structure. The themes, however, derive almost entirely from the *Códice*. And even so, the Castilian masquerades contributed chivalric themes in *loas* such as "***Los doce pares de Francia***" (The Twelve Peers of France), known to us through reference, as well as some characters from the *desafíos*.[44]

Summarizing, Guatemalan *loas* are part of the Spanish dramatic tradition, since they originate from it and uphold its characteristics, those which disappeared from elite circles but remain alive in the streets, where the people are moved by them during their annual celebrations. They are, at the same time, an affirmation of the millennial linguistic bond in contrast to the marginalized linguistic communities of this American territory.

Likewise, the connection between the *loa* and the theater of conquest and doctrine created by missionaries cannot be denied, for they draw from the same sources. However, unlike the doctrinal theater, which failed to take root in the Indigenous world. The loas persisted, though not as enduringly as the dances, which already held a pre-Hispanic tradition.

NOTES:

1 Cf. Correa G. y Cannon C.: ***La Loa en Guatemala***. Tulane University, New Orleans, 1958. pp. 11 and 29-38. See also, Mejía, Gonzalo: "*La loa, teatro popular de Guatemala*", en Estudios No. 5. Asociación José Joaquín Pardo, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Guatemala, 1972. p. 166.

2 Cf. Mejía, Gonzalo: "*Extinción de las loas a la Virgen de Concepción en Sumpango*", in Tradiciones de Guatemala, No. 4. Centro de Estudios Folklóricos, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Guatemala, 1975. pp. 125 and especially note 9, and "Acerca de la loa", in La Tradición Popular, No. 5, Centro de Estudios Folklóricos, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Guatemala, 1975. p. 7.

3 Cf. Aguado-Andreut, Salvador: *Lengua y Literatura*, Universidad de Costa Rica, Costa Rica. 1959. pp. 296-298.

4 Cf. Ruíz, Ramón: *Historia del teatro español*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1971. Tomo I, pp. 13-16.
Dalmasso, Osvaldo B.: *El teatro prelopesco*, Centro Editor de América Latina, Buenos Aires, 1968. pp. 8-10.
Wardropper, Bruce W.: *Introducción al teatro religioso del siglo de oro*, Editorial Anaya, Madrid, 1967. pp. 152-156.

5 Ruiz. Ramón. op. cit. p. 20.

6 Ibid. pp. 22-25.

7 Ibid. p. 28.

8 Ibid. pp. 45-53 and Dalmasso, op. cit. pp. 19-23.

9 Ruiz, Ramón, op. cit. p. 79.

10 Ibid. p. 105.

11 Term used in colonial Guatemala to refer to Spaniards. Cf. Martínez, Severo: La Patria del Criollo, Editorial Universitaria. Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Guatemala, 1973. pp. 661. (Nota 1 al capítulo 2).

12 The Códice was first edited in 1901, by Léo Rouanet. Cf. Wardreopper, op. cit. p. 211.

13 Ibid. pp. 212-215.

14 Cf. Ruiz, Ramón, op. cit. p. 96. Wardropper develops a rigorous classification of these works based on their allegorical treatment. The first part of this classification was developed by Sorrento:

I. Pseudomysteries
    a. Biblical themes

b. Hagiographic themes

II. Intermediate Type: “Biblical-Allegorical”
   a. Adamic themes
   b. Resurrection themes

III. Pseudomoralities
   a. Allegorical “autos” not related to the Eucharist
   b. Allegorical “farces” related to the Eucharist

Pseudomysteries I, which includes 51 pieces, is excluded from analysis due to the absence of allegory. Wardropper works with categories II and III, analyzing the degree of achieved allegory".

I. Fully allegorical pieces (20 total)
II. Predominantly allegorical (6 total)
III. Semi-allegorical (13 total)
IV. Slightly allegorical (6 total).

This classification establishes a clear link with auto sacramental plays and allows for labeling these pieces as “transitional.”. Cf. Wardropper, op. cit. pp. 220-228.

15 Cf. Ruiz, Ramón. op. cit. p. 96.

16 Ibid. p. 96.

17 Cf. Wardropper, op. cit. pp. 199 y s.s. y Dalmasso, op. cit., pp. 55 y s.s. Vestiges of this “primitive” theater still survive in the *Consueta de Elche*, performed every year during the Feast of the Assumption (August 14–15) since 1370. (See Enciclopedia UTEHA para la juventud, Montaner y Simón, Barcelona, 1955. Tomo 8. pp. 420-422).

18 Cf. Wardropper, op. cit. pp. 53 y 55.
It is worth noting that in Guatemala, during the Corpus Christi processions in some Indigenous communities, where the Church has not prohibited it, the images of the patron saints of the *cofradías* are still carried on litters in the procession. In Patzún, a community where, as in many others, the parish priests have persecuted the *cofradías*, these ones hold their own procession with the images, walking at a certain distance behind the official Corpus procession, while the ladinos remove the street decorations. (Field observation, 1974).

The custom of carrying images in the Corpus Christi procession was preserved in Guatemala City well into the 20th century, especially in the Corpus processions of Santo Domingo and El Calvario. (Cf. para el Corpus de Santo Domingo, La Semana Católica, tomo IX; the second is based on information from altar-maker Ramiro Araujo, 1974).

The processions of the Immaculate Conception of San Francisco and the Cathedral in Guatemala City preserve the old tradition, already noted in ***Tiempo Viejo*** (pp. 45–48) by Ramón A. Salazar, of carrying angels on litters as allegories of virtues and as representations of the archangels. We must also not forget the mourning, weeping angels, who, bearing the instruments of the Passion, we watched in awe as children in the Holy Burial procession of Santo Domingo. These figures have since been replaced by sculptural groups made of paste, imported from Spain, which represent scenes of the Passion and are called *pasos*, coinciding with the term used in old Seville. The same tradition refers to the Passion scenes on altars by

that name. (Cf. Mejía, Gonzalo: "*Pasión y Gloria del Altarero Guatemalteco*," in La Semana, época II, No. 50, pp. 18–20).

19 Wardropper, op. cit. p. 54.

20 Ibid. p. 57.

21 Ibid. p. 57.

22 Ibid. pp. 58-59.

23 Ibid. pp. 61-63.

24 Cf. Dalmasso, op. cit. p. 56. Themes of Moors and Christians, masquerades, and jousts would later develop in America and Guatemala.

25 Cf. Ibid. pp. 57-58.

26 Cf. Ruiz, Ramón. op. cit., p. 100.

27 Cf. Dalmasso, op. cit. p. 51.

Spanish:

Tú sabes la pureza
de la mi virginidad
alumbra la ceguedad
de Josep e su simpleza

English:

You know the purity
of my virginity
enlighten the blindness
of Joseph and his simplicity

28 Cf. Wardropper, op. cit. p. 221 y Dalmasso, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

29 lbid. pp. 52-53.

30 lbid. p. 53 y Wardropper op. cit., p. 222

31 Ibid. pp. 219-223. It is worth noting that romance verse form is reserved for loas and songs in the *Códice*.

32 Cf. Dalmasso, op. cit, p. 54.

33 Wardropper, op. cit., p. 31.

34 Ibid., p. 224. He disagrees with the theory, considering it poorly supported and easily disproved that the change of a genre to another was not simple.

35 Cf. Correa y Cannon, op. cit., p. 11. Mejía, Gonzalo, "*La loa, teatro popular de Guatemala*", p. 167 y "Extinción de las loas a la Virgen de Concepción en Sumpango", p. 125.

36 Cf. Mejía, Gonzalo, "Extinción de las loas...", p. 125, note 9.

37 Cf. Mejía, Gonzalo, "A cerca de la loa", p. 7.

38 Cf. Mateo 4, (8-9).

39 Cf. Mejía, Gonzalo. "Extinción de las loas...", pp. 129-130.

40 Cf. Correa y Cannon, op. cit. p. 13 y Mejía, Gonzalo, "La loa, teatro popular de Guatemala". p. 168 y nota 12.

41 Our conclusion is based on detailed examination of: García Peláez, Francisco: *Memorias para la Historia del Antiguo Reino de Guatemala*, tomo II. pp. 181-183; de Juarros, Domingo: *Compendio de la Historia de la ciudad de Guatemala*, Tomo II, pp. 112 y 243, and documents such as the Cédula of March 10, 1566, (Archivo General de Centroamérica, Al. 2. ex. 15.134 leg. 2188, fol. 176), and expense receipts for religious festivities, tal como del Archivo General de Centroamérica. B. 78. 25, exp. 17292, leg. 738.

42 Cf. Salazar, Ramón A., Tiempo Viejo, pp. 45-48.

43 Cf. Bergman, Hannah, **Ramillete de entremeces y bailes**, Madrid, Ed. Castalia, 1970 (Colec. Clásicos Castalia, No. 21. p. 11 y s.s.)

44 *Desafíos* are *loas* preceded by a mock horseback battle, a few blocks away, between Moors and Christians. *Los doce pares de Francia* was a *loa* performed in Guarda Viejo in Guatemala City during the *rezado* of the Immaculate Conception on Epiphany. Information from Ramiro Araujo, 1974.

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