SCHOOLS AND ARTISAN SOCIETIES IN GUATEMALA CITY (1871-1898)

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Introduction

This study is an effort to understand the forms that artisan organization took during the liberal governments of Miguel García Granados and Justo Rufino Barrios (1871-1885), Manuel Lisandro Barillas (1885-1892), and José María Reyna Barrios (1892-1898), as well as an analysis of the interest and support these governments gave to the artisans of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción.

After the artisan guilds of Guatemala were abolished by the General and Extraordinary Courts of Cádiz by decree on June 8, 1813, which liberalized trade, allowing the establishment of factories and industries and repealing the ordinances that governed and regulated the mentioned guilds, a period of intense confusion and disorganization ensued for the artisans.

The doctrines of economic liberalism of the 19th century gained prominence among the intellectual circles of Guatemala and influenced the determination of measures unfavorable for the artistic and artisanal development of the country, including: freedom of trade and industry, the promotion of foreign immigration, and the introduction of machine production as a substitute for manufacturing. In short, the onset of industrial capitalism began.**1**

From independence onwards, the economic policy of the legislators neglected aspects related to guild institutions. The main interest was primarily in the industry. Between 1824 and 1840, the State granted some licenses to establish factories to both nationals and foreigners. There was a special interest in importing cotton gins, spinning machines, and looms. However, the Guatemalan economy remained fundamentally based on agriculture, and the constant civil wars throughout the last century prevented the realization of industrialization in Guatemala.**2**

Although artisan groups lacked legal and economic support, workshops maintained the hierarchy and division of labor inherited from the colonial era: masters, journeymen, and apprentices. However, over time, many artisans, mainly from the capital, began to feel isolated and gradually saw the need to organize into groups.

Probably the first artisan association in the post-independence period was the Society for the Promotion of Industry, created on July 16, 1833, but little is known about its effectiveness, and it probably lasted only a short period.

Then, during the conservative period, the Economic Society of Friends of the Country was the institution that somehow undertook activities in favor of the artisans.

Despite the little attention the city's artisans received from the authorities, they continued to work actively. During the liberal governments, the School of Arts and Crafts for Men and a less important one for women were founded in the capital, as well as the Society of Artisans and the Night Schools for Artisans. There were also groups of artisans who remained outside all these associations, but we will deal with their study in another space.**3**

The purpose of this work is precisely the description and analysis of the organization and operation of these schools and societies as elements of support and reproduction of crafts and popular arts. We also aim to observe how the economic policies of the government of the time affected the development of artisans, particularly in Guatemala City, which was the center where most imported products, that unfairly competed with national production.

1. Economic Situation Surrounding the Artisans

> "...but with agriculture alone, towns cannot progress, or if they do, it is not with the speed and promptness required by the current conditions of our century. It is necessary and indispensable to turn our attention to industry."

During the period in question (1871-1898), cochineal declined as Guatemala's main economic export due to the discovery of chemical dyes (aniline) introduced to the country by Germany since the late 1850s. Coffee then took a predominant place in the Guatemalan economy. There was not much interest nor was it expected that manufacturing would occupy an important place in the export framework.

The Consulate of Commerce, as an institution responsible for the administration of commercial justice and the supervision of trade for nearly one hundred years (1793-1871), had prioritized the interests of large merchants and landowners over the interests of the nation.**4**

The Economic Society of Friends of the Country (1794-1881) encouraged farmers, small traders, and artisans to produce other non-traditional items, even founding an Agricultural School supported with private funds. The Economic Society also published an important newspaper ("La Sociedad Económica," and later, "El Amigo del Pueblo"), which disseminated "useful knowledge" and instructed on how to cultivate coffee, cocoa, cotton, sugar cane, flax, hemp, olive, and vine; as well as the exploitation of silkworms, cochineal, and apiaries. The same publication provided information on how to perform various manual trades such as spinning (textile industry), varnish preparation, and others. Additionally, the Economic Society promoted music, drawing, painting, and architecture and founded a workshop in Salamá (Baja Verapaz) for the production of palm hats.**5**

The Society sponsored contests for new products and organized collections of agricultural and artisanal objects for various exhibitions, including those in Santiago, Chile (1875), the International Exhibition in Paris (1878), and the national exhibitions of 1869 and 1878.**6**

Of the crops and activities promoted by the Society, only coffee and cotton, and somewhat later, sugar, were successful. Within the artisanal sphere, only wool clothing and carpentry had significant weight. The former was prominent both internally and externally, while the latter was only significant internally.

The production of wool clothing was profitable for artisans in the Highlands, members of the middle classes who did not have access to coffee or cochineal exportation, activities exclusive to the social and economic elite of the country.

In 1881, the liberal government abolished the Economic Society of Friends of the Country, considering it superfluous and a competitor to the Ministry of Development. It is worth noting that the latter was a liberal version of the old Consulate of Commerce, aimed at promoting economic development and modernization of the country. This ministry undertook many public works, but its focus was on supporting large-scale coffee production and constructing roads to export the product.**7**

During the liberal period, many communal lands of the indigenous people were handed over to private individuals, relegating them to the status of "free" workers and forcing them to work on coffee plantations. Neither industry proper nor crafts and popular arts could have progressed much in the absence of genuine protective legislation that would safeguard and promote them simultaneously. Many newspaper

pages were dedicated to continued complaints that foreign manufactures and goods unfairly competed with local production, preventing its progress.

Despite governing in the late 19th century, the liberals still maintained a colonial mentality that made them disdain manual labor and entrepreneurial talent within the national society and favor the foreign sector, mainly North American and European, to which they granted great facilities: loans, low taxes on machinery and goods imports, among other factors.

Some argued that Guatemala's national industry could not prosper if imports continued: "the great products with which nature has favored us are wasted, where nothing is invented nor worked with zeal, but everything is asked from abroad, believing this benefits the country, but it does nothing but vegetate and establish few work habits." The anonymous author of these lines, published in the Diario de Centro América in 1882, also attributed the lack of industrialization to people's laziness, "indolence," and "lack of entrepreneurial spirit".**8**

During the period from 1872 to 1883, for example, import taxes were reduced. The strongest import category at this time was textiles and threads. In 1874 alone, Guatemala imported 1,632,606 pesos worth of textiles. Most of these products came from Great Britain. Raw materials, manufactured goods, and household items also constituted strong import categories. Monthly, clothing, crockery, lamps, ornaments, toys, food, and liquor arrived at capital city warehouses from France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and other countries.

Indeed, just to cite a few examples, at José Díaz Durán & Cia. (7a. Ave. Sur, 2), one could purchase English jerkins, Irish linen fabric, stockings, handkerchiefs, tablecloths, hemp, and cotton drill, ribbons; at H. Donner & Cia. (opposite the central market), candlesticks, musical instruments, tableware, threads, and clothing. In the store of Hockmeyer & Cia. (8a. Calle Oriente, 4), wealthy residents bought fine glassware and crockery, and at Walter C. Lambert (at number 7 of Calle Real), kerosene lamps and tubular lanterns. Additionally, Valentine and Bros. (opposite the Grand Hotel) was famous for its variety of mechanical toys, and Schulitz & Payens (8a. Ave. Sur, 4) for its fine tableware, glassware, fabrics, and haberdashery. Lime hats, wicker furniture, and basketry could be bought at Vasconcelos & Silva (on 7a. Ave. Sur). Also, in the warehouses of Eyssen and Becker, Rivero & Cia, Edmundo Descamps, Rafael C. Sinibaldi, Bernardo Beltranena, Emilio Rosenberg, Bertrand & Cia, Kuhsiek and Callmeyer, Gustavo Sempé, and many other wealthy foreigners and Guatemalans, all kinds of imported goods could be purchased.**9**

During Manuel Lisandro Barillas' government (1885-1892), the country remained in a state of political turmoil, relegating material progress and support for local economic institutions to the background.[10] The economic emphasis continued to be on coffee. German investment in Guatemala was also promoted through the 1887 Trade Treaty signed by the governments of Guatemala and Germany. Following this treaty, Germans began acquiring land in Alta Verapaz, displacing the indigenous Kekchies from their lands. Additionally, Germans brought a large quantity of machinery and manufactured products from their country, which they sold in their stores; thus, by the late 19th century, there were 40 German commercial houses in Guatemala with 15 departmental agencies.

During General Barillas' presidency, many taxes were abolished, free competition existed in a small market, so foreign products from capitalist countries ended up dominating.[11]

During the presidency of José María Reyna Barrios (1892-1898), the national treasury was poorly managed. By 1897, the country was economically ruined to the extent that in May of the same year, Reyna Barrios borrowed one and a half million pesos from the banks to pay the public employees' salaries, which had not been paid for five months. [12] It was during this time that the School of Arts and Crafts was temporarily closed, as we will see next.

2. The School of Arts and Crafts for Boys

2.1. The Spirit of the Institution

> "The School of Arts and Crafts is a powerful lever for the working class, bringing great advantages to society, especially to those less fortunate..."

The practical schools founded during the government of Justo Rufino Barrios are examples of how liberal ideology had been influenced by the positivism derived from the writings of Auguste Comte. However, the motto "order and progress," fundamental within this order of ideas, was understood in Guatemala only by an educated elite. This philosophical current fostered some attempts at modernizing public education, not only in Guatemala but in all Latin American countries with liberal programs.[13]

For Guatemalan liberals, agriculture was the main source of wealth and therefore had to be encouraged and promoted.[14] When referring to industry, they

alluded to both mechanized and manual production. Generally, no significant conceptual distinctions were made between industrialized and artisanal products. It was taken for granted that to "progress," machinery had to be introduced (steam machines in artisanal workshops). It was not conceived that the country could produce items with its own characteristics; rather, it was intended to produce objects similar, if not identical, to European and American ones, which were considered the optimal example to follow. When they talked about "our industries," they referred to various productive branches: footwear, tailoring, ceramics, basketry, and others.

In a very subtle way, the liberals started from the fact that Guatemalan society was divided into social strata and that, therefore, an important sector of the population did not have access to basic education, let alone higher or university education. The rulers of the time recognized that the country's economy was based on agriculture, but in an effort to guide it towards industrialization within the capitalist production process, it was necessary to open other educational possibilities in line with this process.

But the educational problem in Guatemala was not always understood in its real dimension as an economically backward country. It was still thought that some people were naturally incapable of exercising highly specialized professions and that it was better to guide them to opt for manual trades: "it has finally been understood that not all men are born, nor are they called, to exercise purely scientific professions, and efforts are made to open new paths for the talent of the people, so that by exercising their natural faculties, they promote the progress of the country.**15**

This reflection motivated the government to establish practical schools, especially the School of Arts and Crafts for Boys, which indeed was an efficient measure to create jobs for people in the middle and lower strata of society.

The government supported the development of the most utilitarian activities: tailoring, shoemaking, blacksmithing, tin working, and carpentry. The liberal government hoped that the arts and crafts establishments would contribute to the country's economic development. An anonymous writer in the Diario de Centroamérica commented in 1883 that "if commerce and agriculture deserve special protection, so do the arts and crafts, which provide real services and have incalculable utility."**16**

Another reason explaining the government's relative interest in local production of both artistic and utilitarian objects was the concern caused by the excessive incursion of foreign products: "It is necessary to promote them (national products)

because the arts and crafts produce benefits that no one can ignore, because it is necessary to compete with foreign products..."[17] Despite the apparent interest in stimulating local production, the government did not protect it from foreign competition, as it neither reduced imports nor increased taxes or tariffs on foreign-produced products.[18]

The general objective of the School of Arts and Crafts was to train workers in different branches of production, but the spirit that motivated its foundation was still paternalistic: "To make true industrialists who thoroughly know all the rules of the art, honest craftsmen who appreciate the value of good work..."

Some liberals observed the experiences of arts and crafts schools in other countries and advocated for the Guatemalan school to be less theoretical and more genuine; more concrete, realistic, and practical.[19]

It was precisely this practical spirit in education that led to the inclusion of the important topic VIII of the First Central American Pedagogical Congress held in Guatemala City in 1893: "Practical utility of manual work. Means to implement it successfully."[20]

This practical sense of education initiated during the Barrios government continued with Barillas, Reyna Barrios, Estrada Cabrera, and extended to the Ubico regime.

2.2. Organization and Functions

On April 2, 1875, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Public Instruction issued Decree 137, establishing the School of Arts and Crafts for Boys, conceived as an institution where young men who had graduated from the House of Mercy could continue their manual training and theoretical studies. In that house, orphans and mentally delayed children could learn tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry, and candle making. However, there was an urgent need for an institution where young artisans could specialize in a specific trade and have the necessary tools and materials. It was for this reason that the president of the Board of the Hospice, Manuel S. Ayau, requested General Barrios to establish the Escuela de Artes y Oficio “School of Arts and Crafts”, which operated in the former convent of the Beatas de Belén.[22]

At the aforementioned school, whose first director was Salvador Augusto Saravia, orphaned or non-orphaned young boys could study starting from the age of

twelve as external, partially internal, or internal students. External students received free instruction, while the others had to pay a pension.

There were two branches of education at the mentioned school: theoretical and practical. The theoretical branch included classes in writing, Spanish grammar, Guatemalan history, geography, arts-related mathematics, physics, mechanics, chemistry, linear drawing, ornamentation, machine drawing, brush and wash drawing, and gymnastics. For the practical branch, workshops were established where adolescents applied their theoretical knowledge. The workshops varied over the years depending on the institution's resources: tools, materials, and prepared workshop masters. At the time of the school's founding in 1875, the workshops included carpentry, cabinetry, mechanics, shoemaking, tailoring, foundry, and blacksmithing. By the 1880s, bookbinding, paper ruling, coppersmithing, and coach building were added.

The following details the work done in each workshop in 1880:

- Bookbinding Workshop: Books were bound, blank and ruled books for accounting, plantation payrolls, invoices, receipts, and others were made. The school's bindings were notable for their carefully decorated covers and counter-covers with beautiful neoclassical vignettes. All cardboard works were also made in this workshop.

- Tailoring Workshop: All kinds of clothing for men and boys, kepis, and military uniforms were made. The workshop produced attire for various educational institutions in the capital.

- Coach Building Workshop: Carts, velocipedes, and carriages were made and repaired.

- Shoemaking Workshop: Footwear for ladies, gentlemen, and children was manufactured.

- Foundry Workshop: All kinds of machine parts, letter copying presses, door knockers, tailor's irons, iron wheels for carts, wheel rims, 40-50 pound bells, and pillow blocks were cast. This workshop had a steam engine powering two large lathes, a small lathe, a fan, a grindstone, and an iron planer. For a time, the workshop was directed by French masters.

- Blacksmithing Workshop: Horses were shod with American horseshoes.

- Coppersmithing Workshop: Copper pots of all sizes and various copper and tin works were produced.

- Hat Making Workshop: Fine and intermediate reed hats were made.

- Machinery Workshop: Iron and bronze parts were turned.

- Carpentry Workshop: All kinds of cabinetry and carpentry work were handled. The establishment had a good stock of wood for these works. The workshop also had a planer, a saw, and a chisel. During its early years, the workshop was directed by an Italian master.[23]

By 1889, additional workshops for tin smithing and masonry[24] were mentioned. Hand weaving, lithography, and chromolithography workshops were opened later, probably in the 1890s. The largest and most important of all these workshops was always the carpentry workshop. Painting, modeling, and sculpture were considered "higher" arts according to 19th-century ideology and were therefore not taught at the School of Arts and Crafts but at the National School of Fine Arts. Ceramics, cordage, and goldsmithing remained outside institutionalized teaching during the period discussed.

In addition to these workshops, the mentioned school also produced ink for writing and tree fences for the promenades, products that were sold at the establishment.[25]

Students at the school were divided into apprentices and workshop officials, a scheme inherited from the colonial era. The former received no remuneration, while the latter were paid if the workshop master deemed it fair and convenient.

Between 1876 and 1879, the school had 137 students, 125 of whom were government-funded scholars, and twelve were pensioners paying eight pesos a month.

By the late 1880s, the number of students had decreased. In 1889, there were 118 apprentices and eleven workshop masters.[26]

The School of Arts and Crafts was funded by the same sources as the Hospice and money collected from the sale of products made in the workshops. Interested buyers could pre-order specific products from the school director. Theoretically, the money earned from sales was distributed as follows: 40% for the student, 10% for

the workshop master, and 50% for the school to reinvest in workshop tools and materials.

Annually, at the end of the school cycle, an artisanal exhibition showcased students' manual and artistic skills, and objects produced throughout the year could be purchased at low prices.

Upon completing their training, students received a diploma certifying them to practice their trade publicly. To encourage young artisans trained at this school, contests and competitions were held, rewarding outstanding students with tools and materials for their trade.

By 1884, the School of Arts and Crafts showed signs of neglect: the classrooms and workshops were very deteriorated, lacking tools and materials, and the workshops needed reorganization with more experienced masters to maintain the quality of commissioned works. Thus, in March 1884, certain repairs were made to the institution. Director Santos Toruño ordered a new arrangement of classrooms and workshops. The classrooms in the first courtyard were designated for theoretical classes, those in the second courtyard for tailoring, saddlery, shoemaking, and bookbinding workshops. The last courtyard was assigned to blacksmithing, foundry, coach building, and copper smithing workshops.**27**

In 1887, the Ministry of Development issued an agreement requiring all state secretariats to prioritize the School of Arts and Crafts workshops when they needed any work or product in the school's branches. This agreement was important as it served as a means of protection for the school against commercial competition.**28** For example, in March 1888, the National Treasury paid the school 522 pesos for an iron door made for the School of Law and Notary.**29**

By an agreement on July 12, 1887, the school came under the supervision of the Ministry of Development, considering that the Central Society of Artisans, which had managed it for some time, had not administered it well. Alfredo Alvarado was appointed as interim director.

Manuel Lisandro Barillas' government showed some concern for improving the school by allocating 500 pesos for the purchase of uniforms and supplies for the students through an agreement issued on June 23, 1887. Another agreement on July 29 of the same year allowed the Ministry of Development to obtain funds from the National Treasury to repair the school's building and workshops.**30**

In the memoirs of the period of the administration of General Barillas (1885-1892), the interest that this government had for practical schools is summarized as follows: "Special education has been equally favored. The Schools of Arts and Crafts in this capital, Quetzaltenango, and Totonicapán, and the one recently founded in the city of Huehuetenango, have received support and protection from the Government, regretting not being able to do more, because it was always willing to expand these centers where future artisans acquire useful knowledge necessary for the good performance of tasks that will provide for their comfort and increase the strength of national industry."[31]

According to Victor Manuel Díaz and González Orellana, during the presidency of General Reyna Barrios in 1892, the School of Arts and Crafts was closed due to economic reasons that prevented the maintenance of workshops and payment of fees.[32] However, in the 1894 Directory of the Capital, a general guide to the Republic of Guatemala by authors Sánchez Gómez Flores, it is mentioned (through an advertisement) that the school continued to operate. According to this guide, the institution had added other theoretical and practical classes. The theoretical subjects numbered around 15, and the workshops of weaving, lithography, and chromolithography, which were not mentioned in 1880, had been opened. Additionally, the school at that time had telephone service.

Nevertheless, on May 23, 1895, the Secretary of the Department of Development, Manuel Morales Tobar, approved by orders of President Reyna Barrios, a contract by which the "National Workshops of Belén," with all their tools and dependencies, were leased for three years to Jesús María López, for the monthly sum of 300 pesos during the first year, 350 during the second, and 400 during the third, which would be delivered to the treasury of the School of Arts and Crafts for Boys.[33] Thus, we see that the government, unable to continue maintaining the mentioned workshops, decided to lease them to a private individual. Subsequently, the school was restructured during the presidential period of Manuel Estrada Cabrera and appears under the name Practical School for Boys.

3. The School of Arts and Crafts for Women

Since the 1880s, there was interest in founding a school of arts and crafts for women similar to the one for men. However, the idea of female education at the time was very different from that of males. Contrary to the School of Arts and Crafts for Boys, conceived for men to learn different productive trades necessary for the economic growth of the country, the women's school was designed for trades to be an element of distraction and entertainment. The intention to provide a means of

dignified subsistence that, to some extent, would make women independent from men was secondary.

Despite being an era imbued with liberal ideology, very traditional and closed notions about women still persisted. Some believed that knowledge served to "adorn most young ladies." However, some commentators acknowledged that women could perform in the service, artistic, and technical sectors.**34**

The School of Arts and Crafts for Women was founded on May 19, 1891, 16 years after the boys' school. One of the fundamental objectives of the establishment was to remove girls and adolescents from the hands of Catholic education. Female instruction did not exceed the limits of what was customarily classified as trades concerning the "weaker sex." In this establishment, students could perfect their knowledge in the work that women learned in the home environment.

The school was economically and administratively dependent on the Ministry of Public Instruction and had J. Adelaida Chévez de Pineda as its first director. From the moment of its founding, it had 50 students funded by the government. The fundamental objective of the school, according to Chévez de Pineda, was "to save a group of girls" who were orphans or daughters of very poor parents from idleness and its harmful consequences.

The school operated as a boarding school where systematic knowledge of domestic tasks, as well as some artistic skills, could be learned. Domestic economy, home arrangement and cleaning, personal hygiene, dining service, laundry, ironing, and cooking were the elementary classes of the school. Additionally, there were three sewing workshops. The first was preparatory sewing, which included the making of socks, darning, and mending. The second workshop was for cutting and sewing clothes for women and girls, and the third was for embroidery. The latter was perhaps the most interesting and complex of all, as students learned to embroider with silk, silver, and gold threads. One of the most famous works of this school was the map of Guatemala City entirely embroidered by the students. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of this map are unknown, and it appears that it was never photographed.

Culinary arts were taught from the school's inception, and a very interesting aspect of the cooking classes was candy making, as they taught how to prepare "dulces de perol," which included crystallized fruits, jellies, marmalades, fritters, and other sweets. They also taught "candy arts," where, in addition to traditional candies, they learned to create artistic figures made with refined sugar using the pastillage technique. Another artistic branch of the school's teachings was the creation of

artificial flowers. The education of the young women was completed with classes in writing, reading, arithmetic, morality, and singing.

The School of Arts and Crafts for Women was important from the perspective that it trained dressmakers who later found their own means of subsistence. However, this school never had the economic or social impact that the men's school had. And in the artistic field, it was significant in fostering traditional embroidery and candy making.[35]

4. The society of artisans

> "Our artisans, understanding the advantages of association, which is a source of progress, have organized an important society that, with the efforts of its members, should develop and produce better results each day, benefiting the workers in particular and the country in general."

The Society of Artisans, sometimes also known as the **Central Society of Artisans**, was a secular and non-profit association of artisans. It was established in 1878 at the initiative of José Francisco Quezada, with the support of General Justo Rufino Barrios, who appeared as a co-founder.

This group had as its ideals the perfection of the arts, the progress of society in general, and the professional and economic improvement of both the collective and the individual. To fulfill these ambitions, the institution relied solely on the dedication and effort of its members and the sponsorship of republican institutions. The fundamental objective of the organization was "to raise the spirit of the working class and address their social interests," while also "protecting and promoting the work and education of its members."[36] The organization of artisans had also set other more specific objectives: obtaining land for poor artisans—the Barrios and Elena cantons were formed by donations from the president to the Society—the formation of a savings bank to provide loans to artisans in need, thus avoiding the suspension of their artistic work. It also pursued the importation of good quality and low-cost tools and materials, the establishment of a large store where artisans could acquire materials for their respective professions, as well as daily consumables. The society also aimed to establish a bazaar for capital artisans, set up artisanal exhibitions, a library, and night schools for artisans. These and other objectives

aimed at the economic and guild defense of artisans' interests against merchants, primarily importers of industrialized goods.**37**

Throughout its existence, the Society of Artisans had several headquarters. It seems that the first one was in a room of the National Mint House, at 4th North Avenue and 6th West Street. It was later moved to a building next to the Central Telegraph Office, in front of the National Institute (9th South Avenue).

The weekly sessions of the board of directors were held at the Society's headquarters (it was there where members could consult the library). The board of directors was composed of a president, a treasurer, a secretary, a pro-secretary, and thirteen members. Additionally, there were the male members of the group, who had different professions: blacksmithing, carpentry, tin smithing, tailoring, shoemaking, saddlery, silversmithing, carriage making, and others. The Society's income was limited to the collection of membership fees, governmental and private donations, and commissions from the Bazaar.

The consulted documents do not indicate exactly all the names of the artisans who were part of the Society. However, we have been able to identify some of them: José María Chinchilla (coppersmith), Viviano Salvatierra (painter), José María Villalobos, Rodolfo Mendoza, Antolín Cáceres (silversmith), Gregorio Aguilar, Francisco Guerrero (cabinetmaker), Aquilino García (carriage maker), Francisco Monterroso, Mateo Ayala (professor of modeling and marble work at the School of Arts and disciple of Juan Bautista Frener, the famous engraver); Baldomero Yela (marble worker), Manuel María, Prudencio de Eván, Manuel Hernández, Francisco Sandoval, Vicente Ramírez, Félix Rojel, Basilio Barrera, Cipriano Dardón, Julián Salazar, and Pio Antillon.**38**

It could be said without fear of error that the artisans' bazaar, the Society's newspapers, and the 1883 Artistic-Industrial Exhibition were the three great achievements of the institution.

The "Artisans' Bazaar" or "General Commission Center for the Sale of Artistic and Industrial Works" began operating between 1884 and 1885. The Bazaar was established with the purpose of marketing the work of artisans and industrialized and semi-industrialized objects, which it also administered and subsidized with the Society's funds. The artisans received the full value of the sold items and had to pay an annual registration fee. The Bazaar also charged a 4 percent commission for each item sold, which was equally divided between the Society's fund and the Bazaar; from 5 to 6 percent was allocated to the artist.

On some occasions, the Society subsidized artisans so they could produce the works that would later be sold in the Bazaar. After an item was sold, the artisan repaid the initial amount lent to the Society's fund.

The foundation of the Artisans' Bazaar and the establishment of subsidies benefited the artisans when they made objects that lacked immediate demand. The service provided by the Society prevented artisans from pawning their products at pawnshops, where, in addition to charging high interest rates, they did not guarantee the integrity of the objects deposited there.

Additionally, having a central and accessible location for the exhibition and sale of their works was another advantage that stimulated them.

The Bazaar featured a wide variety of objects, with a predominance of carpentry and cabinetmaking items: wardrobes, dressers, tables, beds, desks, mirror frames, corner cabinets, washstands, vanity tables, sofa sets, armchairs, Austrian chairs, and wicker chairs. Additionally, there were mannequins for seamstresses, footwear, toys, plain candles, turned candles, wax, sewing machines, and other items.

In the 1880s, the Bazaar was located at the Society's headquarters, on 9th Avenue South, in front of the National Institute. In June 1892, it was moved to the alhóndiga on Jocotenango Street.**39**

For over twenty years, the Society of Artisans published a biweekly newspaper. It apparently began circulating in 1879 under the name “El Industrial”, and in 1889 it was known as El Eco del Trabajo. The director of the latter was the well-known marble worker Baldomero Yela. In 1897, the newspaper adopted the name El Derecho Electoral, but it had different characteristics from the previous two.

The primary objective of the Society's newspaper was to promote the interests of artisans by publishing articles on Guatemalan and foreign arts and industries. The newspaper featured commentary on the economic, social, and cultural situation of artisans, as well as literary articles, moral content, obituaries, and onomastics of artisans. It also published notices and advertisements.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the newspaper was the directory of artisans that appeared in the last pages, which is now very useful for knowing the names and trades of the most well-known artisans in the city during the last two decades of the previous century.

“El Derecho Electoral” (1897) appeared during a time of political fervor, as the presidential elections for the 1898-1904 period approached. No longer were there writings about the progress of arts or artisans, except for some isolated notes. The newspaper instead played the role of a spokesperson for the "castillistas," the supporters of presidential candidate José León Castillo. At that time, the Society began to sideline the importance of manual labor, showing growing interest in industrialization and referring to the "working class."**40** “El Derecho Electoral” definitively reflects the split among artisans between castillistas and cabreristas.

Another successful activity of the Society of Artisans was the "Artistic-Industrial Exhibition," held from December 8 to 30, 1883, at the National Institute's headquarters. The most important precedents for this type of national activity were the national exhibitions of 1869 and 1878, organized by the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País at its headquarters, in which some members of the Society of Artisans participated.**41**

The 1883 exhibition was initiated by Francisco Guerrero, a cabinetmaker and one of the founding members of the Society. At the same time, the director of the National Institute, Santos Toruño, had the idea of holding an exhibition of the students' work at the end of the school year. Thus, the Society and the Institute joined efforts. To this end, they requested government support, obtaining one thousand pesos, five hundred of which were allocated for prizes (medals, diplomas, and money) and the other five hundred for the expenses of setting up the exhibition.

The exhibition served as a cultural dissemination instrument with a broad educational character. Its purpose was to showcase to Guatemalans, primarily those residing in the capital, the wide variety of objects produced in Guatemala, as well as to spread agricultural, artisanal, and industrial knowledge. For José María Izaguirre, a member of the auxiliary board of the exhibition, its purpose was "to unite the people, promote peace, blend social classes, stimulate work, and ignite imagination."

The event was divided into four branches: arts, industries, agricultural products, and fine arts. Most of the Society members participated in the arts branch, and others in the fine arts branch. It is noteworthy that all Society members participated in the exhibition.

Wardrobes, chairs, living room furnishings, desks, hall hat and umbrella stands, easels, mirrors, washstands, tables, and bookcases made of cypress, mahogany, and walnut were presented by the capital's cabinetmakers: Leonardo Cruz, David

Castillo, José Maria Betancourt, Juan Leal, Pablo Solis, Carlos Castro, and Bernardo Gómez. Florencio Castillo made a facsimile of the cathedral with fine woods.

In the carriage section, Javier Vassaux presented a carriage, and Aquilino García presented American-style wooden wheels. Angel Paz and Nicolás Alonzo represented the saddlery branch, and Nazario Rivera and Eufrasio Guzmán represented the tin smithing branch. Mariano Solares showcased his excellent bookbinding work, and Emilia Petrilli and Pierina Pirelli demonstrated how to extract silk from silkworm cocoons. These two women, residing in Guatemala but of Italian origin, were also famous for making fans. Luz Zea de Córdova and Antonio María Fernández shone with their samples of bleached wax, and the renowned capital jewelers Antolín Cáceres, Ramón Iriarte, and Carlos Bravaix did not fall behind.

Rebozos or shawls, cortes, bedspreads, sheets, tablecloths, rugs, towels, huipiles, and handkerchiefs were presented by the capital's weavers: José María Gálvez, Ciriaco Beteta, Florencio Bobadilla, Francisco Valdez, and Mercedes V. de Milla.

Musical instruments, cooperage works, shoemaking, tailoring, hat making, basketry, rope making, and blacksmithing were also exhibited.

The importance of this exhibition lies in the participation of a large number of artisans, not only from the capital but also from the departments. Additionally, the occasion was opportune for giving lectures on the importance of artisans in the country and for holding literary and musical soirées.**42**

Apparently, neither the tool and daily consumption product store nor the imports of instruments and materials worked as expected. Some newspaper pages were filled with complaints and lamentations about the neglected state of the Society in the 1890s.**43** Commentators attributed this situation to the lack of enthusiasm among Society members, others to the lack of financial means, and others to the split among members due to political differences that occurred in 1892 when José María Reyna Barrios assumed the presidency.

The Society of Artisans declined considerably between 1892 and 1894. On October 12, 1894, to commemorate the Fourth Centenary of the Discovery of America, a new Society of Artisans was founded, this time adding the name "El Porvenir de los Obreros." The new society still included some of the former members, such as Antolín Cáceres, the famous silversmith and vice-president of the board that year. The institution's most important objectives were now the

establishment of a savings bank and the promotion of reading. The rest of the objectives were rather vague. This time, there was no mention of the improvement of the arts; nor was there any mention of artisans, but rather of the working class.**44**

By 1898, an anonymous commentator from the Diario de Centro América nostalgically remembered the old Society of Artisans founded during the time of General Barrios. From this document, we infer that by that year, the society had been forgotten, as the author proposed the formation of a central society of artisans in the capital and others in departmental capitals, as well as the establishment of bazaars, exhibitions, a savings bank, a library, and a reading room. The anonymous author also proposed that the government hand over the supervision of the School of Arts and Crafts for Boys to the Central Society of Artisans and that a home for elderly artisans be founded to care for them in their old age.**45**

I infer that the Society declined significantly in 1899 due to economic and political problems. It should be noted that by that year, there were two or three associations derived from the old Society of Artisans that met separately under different names but with similar objectives.

On March 22, 1899, the institution reappeared under the name Central Society of Artisans and Mutual Aid.**46** The new headquarters of the Society was located to the left of the Parroquia church.

The Society had over 100 members from different trades, mainly carpenters, from the moment of its reopening. Among them were former members of the previous associations, such as the historian and writer Ramón A. Salazar, the marble worker Baldomero Yela, and the copper worker Rafael Chinchilla.

This new Society had a Cabrerist orientation. In the minutes of the inauguration of the board members, President Manuel Estrada Cabrera is mentioned as its creator. Additionally, he was named an honorary member, and the institution constantly sent him diplomas, serenades, and congratulations.

The new Society of Artisans recovered some of the achievements of the one founded in 1878 and added new ones: it obtained land for the poorest artisans from the government, reestablished the Artisans' Bazaar, and appointed Javier Mendoza as its administrator.

The Society offered some benefits to the artisans: it lent money for burials and to subsidize the production of objects.

The Society established five workshops—shoemaking, tailoring, saddlery, carpentry, and weaving—whose operation and administration were under its control. One of the workshops that thrived was the shoemaking workshop, which the Society had bought from Jesús Morales. Additionally, the government ceded the materials and tools that had belonged to the School of Arts and Crafts to the Society.

The Society of Artisans thus survived into the 20th century and apparently continued throughout Manuel Estrada Cabrera's tenure.

5. Night Schools for Artisans

Since the 1840s, the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País had established free classes in mathematics, linear drawing, and painting for the artisans of the capital. These classes were held at the Society's headquarters three times a week, starting at seven in the evening.**47**

The Society also made significant efforts starting in 1867 to promote fine arts, improving classes in lithography, drawing, painting, and wood and jasper sculpture. There was a constant endeavor to ensure that artisans learned linear and ornamental drawing.**48**

The night schools for artisans were conceived by the liberal government of Justo Rufino Barrios. Thus, on August 9, 1877, the Ministry of Public Instruction established five night schools for artisans in the capital, and on November 20 of the following year, awarded prizes to artisans who attended these schools and excelled in their studies.

In these schools, artisans who had learned their trade orally and through generations could learn from the basics up to completing primary education. The classes were aimed at masters, journeymen, and apprentices of all types of artisanal workshops in the city. The classes previously held at the Sociedad Económica were moved to public school buildings during Barrios' government. The San Francisco school had an attendance of up to 300 students. Student achievement was encouraged with prizes, usually consisting of tools useful for their respective trades. The government entrusted the Sociedad de Artesanos with overseeing the academic level of these night schools through specific commissions.**49**

6. Some Artisanal Workshops Founded by the Liberal Government

6.1. Santa Catarina Hat Workshop

> "Hats are not just a luxury item; they are a necessity for everyone, from the modest artisan to the wealthiest landowner."

Just as women in the capital could not go out without their traditional rebozo or their Spanish "de seda" shawl, gentlemen always wore a hat when leaving the house. Hats were essential for outings, shopping, bullfights, and theater. They were made from palm, reed, felt, animal hair, and in many shapes—broad-brimmed hats and flat hats. A hat spoke volumes about the person wearing it and became a symbol of social status.

Gentlemen often flaunted their Montecristi, bolero, limeño, or Jipijapa (Guayaquil) hats, which were often preferred over locally made hats, even though Guatemala produced hats of excellent quality.

Various types of hats could be purchased at Carlos Schulitz's store, Valentine y Hermanos, opposite the Gran Hotel, at Máximo Morales' store, at the Hotel Universal, and at Vasconcelos y Silva, among other establishments, mainly selling limeño hats.**50**

Palm hats made in the factories of Salamá and Izabal (both established by the initiative of the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País), and those from Chiquimula, Alta Verapaz, El Petén, Pinula, and Jutiapa were generally for local use.**51** The competition from foreign hat makers was so intense that in 1881, the government decided to improve the quality of national hats. For this, they hired Luis Ortega, a professional Mexican hat maker, to serve as the master of the Santa Catarina hat workshop in the city. This workshop had several machines, including one for preparing hair for subsequent hat was so intense that in 1881, the government decided to improve the quality of national hats. For this, they hired Luis Ortega, a professional Mexican hat maker, to serve as the master of the Santa Catarina hat workshop in the city. This workshop had several machines, including one for preparing hair for the subsequent operations in the hat-making process: blocking, beating, dyeing, and shaping. The workshop also had assistant masters who were Ortega's sons. Additionally, 20 prisoners from the city's jails served as apprentices. Together, they produced 300 hats per month.

It is important to note that for the government, the Santa Catarina hat workshop was a "model establishment that could "challenge foreign imports."**52**

6.2 Tanneries and Shoemaking Workshops

The liberal government provided a type of scholarship to young, economically disadvantaged indigenous people so they could learn a trade that would serve them in life. Such was the case for six young men from Sololá, Totonicapán, and Quetzaltenango, who were funded to learn the trade of "tanners and leather workers" under Máximo Dormitzer, director of the "Tenería de la Sierra." These apprentices were given four years of free food, clothing, and the necessary tools for their work, plus one hundred pesos each as an incentive to start their own workshops.

Additionally, twenty other young indigenous men were funded to learn the shoemaking trade with Mr. Dormitzer. These young men received free instruction and lodging for three years, plus one hundred and twenty pesos each, so they could work independently upon leaving the workshop.[53]

Conclusions

Despite the introduction of some machines and machine-manufactured materials during the studied period (1871-1898), the country remained essentially agricultural. The precarious and nascent industrialization of Guatemala during the last three decades of the past century did not pose a serious threat to the capital's artisans. However, the excessive importation of European and North American products did affect the city's artisans, especially weavers and potters.

The government of Justo Rufino Barrios economically supported the artisanal sector, hoping it would contribute to raising the country's productive level in some way. However, the emphasis remained on coffee exportation, the basis of the Guatemalan economy. The same happened during subsequent presidential terms.

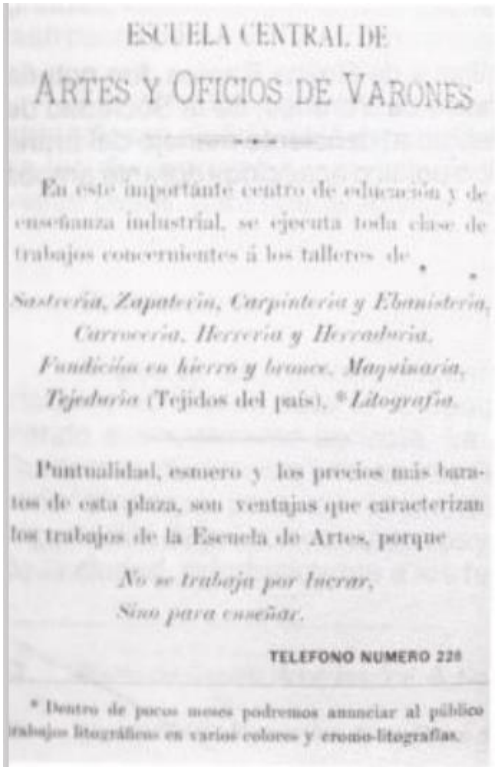
The schools of arts and trades, both for men and women, were two state educational institutions that promoted manual trades, particularly popular arts and crafts, in Guatemala City. Although the teaching of trades and arts was institutional and extra-domestic, the traditional division of labor within workshops, according to the hierarchy of masters, journeymen, and apprentices inherited from colonial times, was maintained.

Despite the use of some steam machines in the carpentry and blacksmith workshops of the School of Arts and Trades for Men, most instruments and materials were generally simple and manual.

Although intermittently, the Society of Artisans was effective in establishing communication among artisans, raising their educational and economic levels, ensuring that many associated members kept their workshops open, and marketing their production through the Artisans' Bazaar.

During the administrations of Barillas and Reyna Barrios, the decline of the School of Arts and Trades for Men, the Society of Artisans, and the Night Schools was noticeable due to the mismanagement of public funds and the political problems and conflicts that occurred during both government periods.

Courtyard of the Ministry of Development During the Era of General José María Reyna Barrios



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ARTES Y OFICIOS DE VARONES

En este importante centro de educación y de enseñanza industrial, se ejecuta toda clase de trabajos concernientes á los talleres de *

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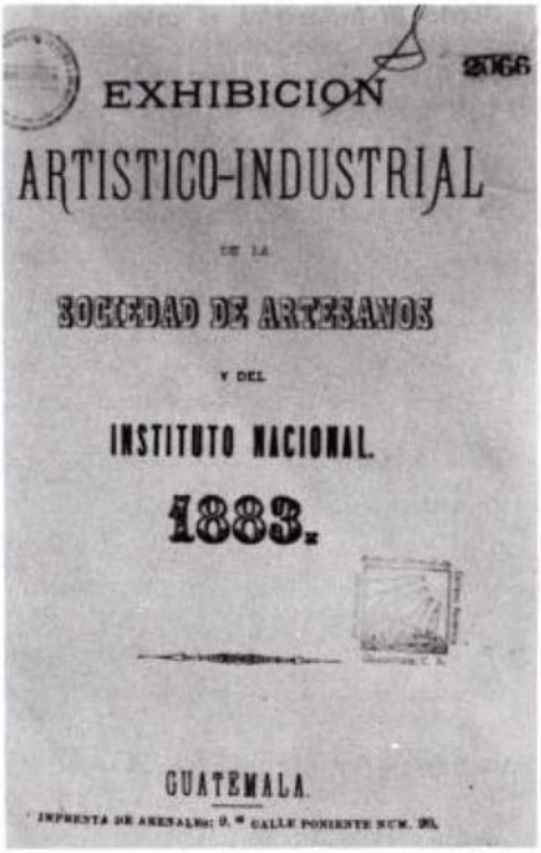
Puntualidad, esmero y los precios más baratos de esta plaza, son ventajas que caracterizan los trabajos de la Escuela de Artes, porque

No se trabaja por lucrar,
Sino para enseñar.

TELEFONO NUMERO 220

* Dentro de pocos meses podremos anunciar al público trabajos litográficos en varios colores y cromo-litografías.

Announcement of the School of Arts and Crafts for Men Appearing in the Directory of the Capital and General Guide of the Republic of Guatemala of 1984, by the Authors Victor Sánchez and Emilio Gómez Flores



2066

EXHIBICION

ARTISTICO-INDUSTRIAL

DE LA

SOCIEDAD DE ARTESANOS

Y DEL

INSTITUTO NACIONAL.

1883.

GUATEMALA.

IMPRENTA DE ARTESANOS: 2.ª CALLE PONIENTE NUM. 20.

Announcement of the Objects for Sale at the Central Society of Artisans' Bazaar, Appearing in El Eco del Trabajo, the Society's Informative Organ

Cover of the Catalogue of the Artistic-Industrial Exhibition of 1883

EL INDUSTRIAL.

PERIODICO QUINCENAL.

ORGANO DE LA SOCIEDAD DE ARTESANOS DE GUATEMALA.

"EL INDUSTRIAL."

"El Industrial" Newspaper, the First Publication of the Society of Artisans of Guatemala, Released in 1879

ANUNCIOS.

KLUSSMANN & KOELLING

GUATEMALA

IMPORTADORES

DE

Ferreteria, Cuchilleria, Merceria

Y TODA CLASE DE ARTICULOS

PARA

ZAPATERIA.

"BAZAR EL AGUILA."

"EN EL BAZAR CENTRAL

DE

ARTESANOS".

9.ª Avenida Su, frente al Instituto Nacional.

Gran almacen de muebles. Armarios, Cómodas, Mesas, Camas, Escritorios, Espejos, Rinconeras, Lavadores, Neseseres, Juegos de Sala, Sillones y Sillas Austriacas y de bejuco, Mármoles para lápidas, Maniquíes para modistas, calzado muy barato, juguetes para, cera elaborada en candelas de 3 y 4 en libra, candelas tormentas, Máquinas de coser etc.

TODO A PRECIOS REDUCIDOS

A LOS ARTESANOS

que carezcan de un local céntrico, apropiado y decente, en donde realizar los productos de sus talleres, se les ofrece este Establecimiento á donde pueden remitir sus obras, seguros de que serán bien tratadas y mejor realizadas mediante el pago de una insignificante comisión.

EL ECO DEL TRABAJO

PERIODICO QUINCENAL

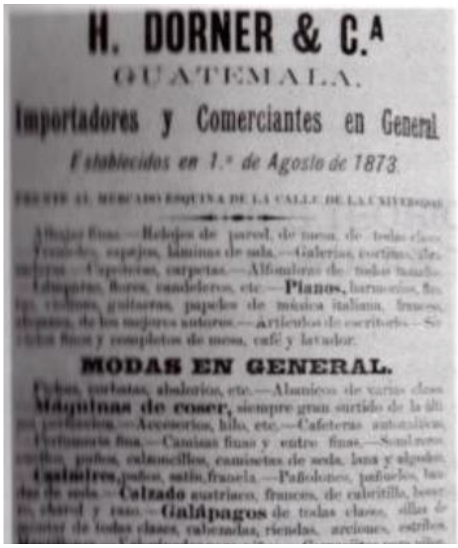
ÓRGANO DE LOS INTERINOS DE LA SOCIEDAD CENTRAL DE ARTESANOS

AÑO I. Guatemala, Setiembre 3 de 1880. NUM. 3.

"EL ECO DEL TRABAJO."

EXHIBICION NACIONAL PARA 1880

Front Page of "El Eco del Trabajo," the Biweekly Newspaper of the Central Society of Artisans



Advertisement for a Foreign Commercial House, Appeared in the 1881 Directory of the Capital City. Note the Large Quantity of Imported Goods.

Advertisement for a Foreign Commercial House, Appeared in the 1881 Directory of the Capital City. Note the Large Quantity of Imported Goods.

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