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CENTER FOR FOLKLORIC STUDIES

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TRADITIONS OF GUATEMALA

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REPORTS
OF
RESEARCH

THE TRADITIONAL CORPUS CHRISTI FESTIVAL IN PATZÚN, CHIMALTENANGO

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1. Location of the Folkloric Phenomenon

1.1 Geographic Location

Patzún is a municipality in the department of Chimaltenango, located in the western highlands of Guatemala, 82 km from Guatemala City. Its altitude above sea level is 2535 m. It has a paved highway with wonderful scenery. It has several rivers: Blanco, Los Chocoyos, Los Jutes, Los Encuentros, and Nicán, and it has several buildings from the colonial era: the municipal palace, the main church, and the Calvary; from the same period, the fountain in the park is worth mentioning.

1.2 Informants

Marcos Hernández, Juliana Sipaque, Pastor Raquic (cofrade).

2. Folkloric Phenomenon

2.1 Historical Background

It seems that this town was founded before the arrival of the Spanish, as when they arrived, it was part of the Cakchikel group. The first Franciscan missionaries arrived in Patzún around the year 1540, bringing with them the image of San Bernardino, who is the patron saint of the town, and since then, his patron saint festival is on May 20th, which is celebrated with great pomp.

The word Patzún comes from Cachi Kelly and means "place of hides". It is believed that its name is due to the exchange made with the neighbors of Tecpán (then Iximché): a bell for a piece of land, whose extension would be what the hide of a cow cut into strips would cover, and the area it occupied when extended would be Patzún.

Corpus Christi has been celebrated since colonial times with great splendor. It has undergone modifications, such as the participation of brotherhoods and the dances that have been disappearing.

2.2 Folkloric Aspects of the Corpus Christi Festival in Patzún

Carpets

Formerly, they were made with pine needles and flowers, especially bougainvillea; but for more than 50 years, they have been made of colored sawdust and are placed along the entire route of the **Corpus Christi** procession.

2.2.1 How they are made

Usually, they are made by the people who live along the procession route, occupying the front of their house or two houses, but in some cases, civil associations or religious groups are in charge of them. They begin making them at five in the morning. Some are very simple, others are of great art and beauty. They must be finished by eleven in the morning, as that

is the time when the procession with the Blessed Sacrament leaves.

2.2.2 Materials used in their elaboration

- 2.2.2.1 Coarse sawdust, for the first base layer.
- 2.2.2.2 Fine, sifted white sand, as a central base.
- 2.2.2.3 Colored sawdust with which the designs are made.
Often, this same sawdust, after being used, serves as the base for the carpet on another occasion.
- 2.2.2.4 Cardboard and wooden molds for the designs.
- 2.2.2.5 Natural flowers that are part of the compositions.
- 2.2.2.6 Seeds, mainly "deer's eye", and others.
- 2.2.2.7 Plucked pine, which is sprinkled on the sides.

2.2.3 Carpet measurements

The carpets together cover an area of approximately two kilometers, which is the total length of the procession route. They measure one meter wide and ten to twenty meters long each.

2.2.4 Motifs and designs of the carpets

The carpets have a variety of designs, among the main ones are:

- 2.2.4.1 Animals:**
 - a. Birds
 - b. Butterflies
 - c. Lambs

2.2.4.2 Eucharistic motifs:

- a. Ciboria
- b. Chalices
- c. Hosts
- e. Monstrances

2.2.4.3 Geometric motifs: Used alone or in combined designs or as part of another:

- a. Squares
- b. Circles
- c. Rhombuses
- d. Triangles

2.2.4.4 Free motifs:

- a. Baskets of flowers
- b. Leaves of different shapes
- c. Books
- d. Loose flowers
- e. Human figures

2.2.5 Predominant colors

They use a wide range of colors, but the predominant ones are:

- a. Red
- b. Mustard
- c. White d. Water
- e. Green
- f. Violet
- g. Orange, etc.

2.3 Arches

They are part of the Corpus Christi decoration and have special ways of being made.

2.3.1 How they are made

These arches, like the carpets, begin to be made at five in the morning with the participation of the thirteen villages: Chipiacul, Cilio, Colobal, Chinkel, Chicoy-Alto, Chicoy-Bajo, Chetzici, Chepatón, Patzún, etc.

2.3.2 Materials used in their elaboration

- 2.3.2.1 Pine poles and rulers for the frame.
- 2.3.2.2 Pacaya leaves to cover them.
- 2.3.2.3 Laurel leaves for the same use.
- 2.3.2.4 Paper
 - a. Tissue paper, for flowers like roses or others.
 - b. Enamel paper, for star, moon, and basket designs.
 - c. Crepe paper, to be placed rolled, etc.
 - d. Cellophane, to complement the decoration.
 - e. Cardboard, for designs and also as their base.

2.3.3 Measurements and quantity of arches

They are placed along the entire procession route, totaling 100 arches. They measure approximately three meters wide by three meters high.

2.3.4 Design motifs of the arches

They do not have a special design; it changes every year. They can use: baskets with flowers, combinations of stars and moons, ciboria, etc. They are placed on poles along the entire length of the

arch, at the ends of the street; they begin assembling them a few days before the celebration.

2.3.5 Colors used

Basically, few colors are used:

- a. Gold
- b. Silver Enameled
- c. violet Enameled
- d. green
- e. Pink
- f. Red

2.4 Attire

They can be listed according to the category of the person.

2.4.1 Common man

Wears white drill pants, with a light blue woven shirt with linear designs in blue, red, and yellow, tucked into the pants; a checkered black and white poncho called a *rodillera*, all held by a long belt of colored lines in blue, red, green called a *pas*; a black jacket, *caites* (sandals), and a hat.

2.4.2 Ordinary woman

Wears a skirt called a *morgan*, black with white lines forming large squares. The *güipil* (blouse) is red with few embroideries on the neck and cuffs, held by a black and white woven belt. They wear the *güipil* tucked into the skirt, which they wrap around themselves; they wear three strands of light blue pearl necklaces and silver earrings with pendants. They twist their hair and form a circle on their head held in the front by a knot; the *sut* is the red cloth they place folded on their head.

2.4.3 Cofrade (Brotherhood member)

Wears white drill pants, black wool over-pants, open at the sides, called *istameño*; shirt the same as described and belt; black jacket, without a hat, and *caites*.

2.4.4 Texel (Female cofrade)

Wears the same as described, but with the *güipil* outside the skirt. For ceremonies, she carries a *paya*, which she uses to cover her head, made with wool and silk embroidery. This *paya* is related to the Holy Spirit and is only used for **Corpus Christi**. Currently, the attire has undergone modifications.

2.5 Procession

It is of great importance and interest to a large number of people. It is divided into two: Ladino and indigenous.

2.5.1 Ladino Procession

In this procession goes the Blessed Sacrament carried by a priest under a canopy. In front marches an individual or acolyte carrying incense. The people form two rows, men on one side and women on the other. The Blessed Sacrament visits four altars that have been prepared along the route; at these visits, prayers are said and sacred hymns are sung, both traditional and non-traditional, including the following: ***Panis Angelicus, Tantum Ergo, O Salutaris Hostia***, etc... When the procession is about to reach an altar, those in charge of it come out to meet it with a censer in hand and approach to form a line. A band ensemble accompanies the procession, adding to its solemnity.

2.5.2 Indigenous Procession

The 6 current brotherhoods of Patzún are represented and the images of Jesús Nazareno (Child), the Virgin of Concepción, San Bernardino, the Cross, San Francisco, San Nicolás, and the **Corpus Christi** brotherhood (this is what they call the image that has the face of Jesus Christ without a body, but dressed in a chasuble) march. In front go the drums and a whistle (***tzijolaj***) and a chirimía (shawm); then come the lower-category ***texeles*** with a censer in their hands and the ***sut*** on their heads; the images, and before the image of **Corpus**, the higher-category ***texeles*** with their ***payas*** and large candles, covered with mountain leaves called ***chicheac***, tied with a ribbon; this candle must serve them until they die, at which time it is placed inside the coffin; afterwards come the cofrades with their brotherhood staff, which they call a shield or ***cum***, and finally, the rest of the town.

When the Ladino procession enters an altar, the indigenous procession stops and the ***texeles*** sit down to rest. They then perform the censer ceremony, stoking the fire and changing the ***chicheac*** leaves if needed.

After the procession has passed, the children gather to collect all the sawdust from the destroyed carpets. Along the way, the people sing praises to the Blessed Sacrament.

2.5.3 Altars

These are the stations where the Blessed Sacrament stops along the route. Liturgical rites are performed there and sacred hymns are sung. These altars are built by families and have biblical passages as their theme, decorated with many natural flowers, preferably white, hangings, and candles; they use incense at the time of prayer. There are four altars in total.

2.6 Music

Throughout the **Corpus** ceremonial, different musical performances are heard; ensembles of harmonium, violin, and cello, sometimes flute, and a soloist who can be a tenor, baritone, or soprano who enlivens the moment at each altar as well as the final act of the procession.

In the indigenous procession, the ensemble consists of: the *tun*, the *tamborón* (large drum), the *chirimía*, and the whistle or ***tzijolaj***. At the end of the procession, *sones* are performed, such as ***Flores, Mi Bella María***, etc.

2.7 Rites

Among these can be mentioned the liturgical, non-folkloric rites, such as the mass, the stations in the procession, the final blessing with the Blessed Sacrament, etc. In the indigenous procession, the change of incense and leaves for the candles, the departure with dance of the Saints of the brotherhood, the arrival of the Saint at the brotherhood, the lunch of the *cofrades* and *texeles*, and the change of brotherhood.

2.8 Dances

Unfortunately, this aspect of Corpus in Patzún disappeared five years ago. Therefore, it is part of historical folklore. However, there is a dance that is still valid and that is the deer dance based on a legend that tells how once a priest, while officiating mass, discovered that the host disappeared at the moment of consecration. Several days later, the host appeared in the mountain and was found by the tiger and the deer, who after contemplating decided to take it to the town in procession. Since then, the Corpus procession is accompanied by this dance and by the representations of these animals

2.9 Organization of the brotherhood

- a) The main cofrade, who is called K'animatata;
- b) The main Texel, wife of the cofrade, who is called C'anamatea;
- c) The mayors: first, second, third, etc.;
- d) The other texeles;
- e) The musicians.

NOTE: The student members of the team that did this work presented a folkloric projection with the dances observed in the brotherhood, as well as performed the music they collected and which was later transcribed by maestro Aníbal Delgado Requena, in the auditorium of the Center for Folkloric Studies, at the end of the course on methods and techniques of folkloric research.



Domingo Miculax (Flutist). Corpus de Patzún. (Photography: Manuel Guerra).



Making a carpet for the Corpus of Patzún. (Photography: Manuel Guerra).

Arches and carpets.. Corpus de Patzún. (Photography: Manuel Guerra).





Indigenous procession. Corpus de Patzún. (Photography: Manuel Guerra).



Cofrades (captains and principals) in the indigenous procession of Corpus de Patzún. (Photography: Manuel Guerra).

Sones collected at Corpus Christi in Patzún. Musical transcription: Aníbal Delgado Requena.

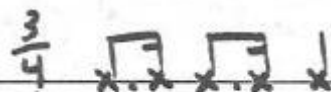
Ostinato Rítmico con
Tamborón
(Corpus de Patzún)

Tzi jola j.....

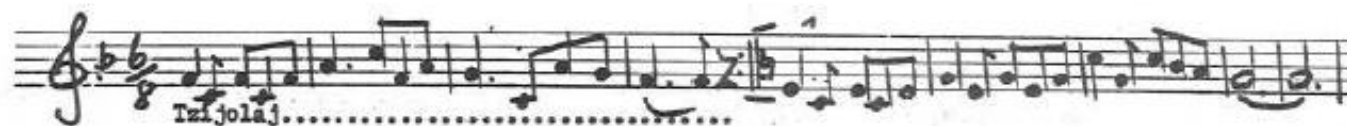
D.C.

Procesional de Patzún (Corpus 77)

Ostinato con
tamborón



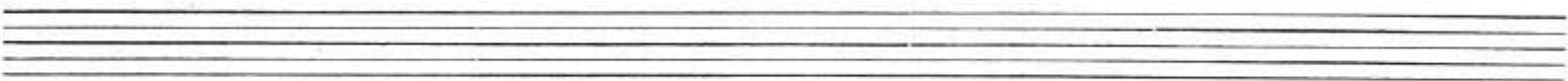
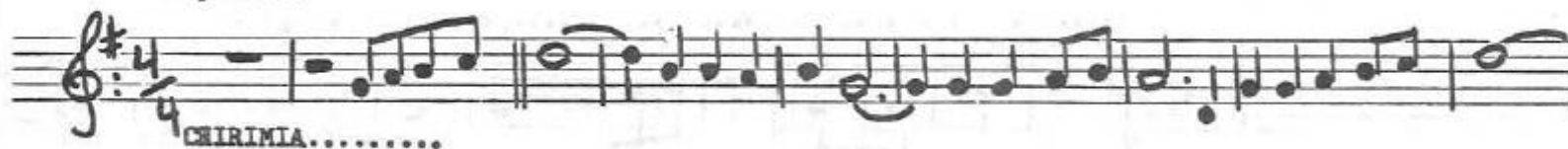
MI LINDA MARIA Son--(Pezón) Orinato con
tamborón



Música Procesional-Corpus de Patzún

Destinato con $\frac{4}{4}$ x x x x
Tamboron $\frac{4}{4}$

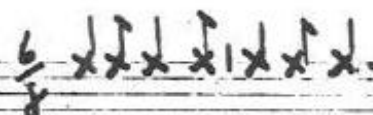
Muy Lento



EL MISHITO

Patzún

Ostinato con
tamborón



Ostinato con
tamborón

$\frac{6}{8}$

x. x. | x. x. |

