



The formation of the Guatemalan nation and its exclusionary character: 1808-1821

CARLOS RENÉ GARCÍA ESCOBAR



Commentary to the article:

**“THE FORMATION OF THE
GUATEMALAN NATION AND ITS
EXCLUSIONARY CHARACTER: 1808-
1821”**

Author: Ricardo Danilo Dardón Flores¹

Respected authorities of the School of History, coordination and editorial board of the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Antropológicas y Arqueológicas, distinguished public, good evening to all.

In this opportunity I will share with you a brief commentary on an article of historical content that is part of the volume of the Estudios 2004 Magazine. Written by Master Danilo Dardón Flores, Principal of the School of History whose title “Enlightenment and political discourse: The formation of the Guatemalan nation and its exclusionary character: 1808-1821” faithfully reflects its content.

Before I want to indicate that in order to encourage potential readers in the incursion of a work, there is nothing better than to provoke them and for this I will leave open and inconclusive questions that, subsequently generate motivations for their reading, although undoubtedly the academic quality of the rhetorical and reflective discourse, is achieved without the need for preliminary announcements.

Referring to the subject matter, I will deal with three levels of analysis that are presented in ascending order according to their level of complexity.

1. The Master Dardón Flores incorporates to the historiographic legacy a significant contribution from the perspective of the history of ideas and intellectual history. The books and works that we commonly read about this temporality and historical fact (although as always there are exceptions) do not express, as our author does, a complex vision of the intellectual conception of the protagonist subjects, their dynamics and the temporal dimension of the past that situates them. By this I mean that the effort and intellectual concern are directed to the serious interpretative recovery of the above-mentioned phenomenon.
2. As for the content, it is coherently structured in three sections that guide the reader through a fascinating world that, without neglecting other elements, privileges the evolution of

¹ Textual excerpts from the commentary to the article by Master Ricardo Danilo Dardón Flores: “The formation of the Guatemalan nation and its exclusionary character: 1808-1821”. Read by Artemis Torres Valenzuela, on the evening of October 13, 2005, at the 2004 Editorial Delivery Ceremony, organized by the Coordination of the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Antropológicas y Arqueológicas -IIHAA-.

thought. Here Master Dardón displays his creative and innovative capacity and with care and elegance in the writing not only exposes the enlightened ideas that influenced or identified the local groups, but also merges them with the most significant thoughts of the European enlightened. With his thesis he explains in a direct and solidly argued way the intellectual world with projects such as the Republic of Letters.

In this regard, I can not pass up the opportunity to express my interest and pleasure with respect to the constant dialogue that the author makes with the contributions of universal thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Emmanuel Kant, from whom he retakes specific definitions and links them to the understanding of concepts and categories understood in their epochal dimension.

From another facet, the author presents the discourse that supports the construction of the Guatemalan nation through terms such as: State, Nation, nationalism, peoples, sovereignty, homeland, patriotism, social pact, citizenship, equality, modernity and others, inviting us to reflect, that prior to a conscious political practice, these arise as an elaborate mental abstraction. This contribution acquires greater relevance when the terms that are common in this and other American particularities are explained with acuity.

On the other hand, the recovery of the way of thinking that characterized the first quarter of the 19th century is important, because it not only shaped the collective imagination, but also because it went beyond the simple knowledge of the

conceptual contents (somehow proposed by Pedro Molina); to make an attractive reflection about the nature of these contents (Let us remember the thought of the wise Valle) it invites us, as Kant once said, to *sapere aude*, to dare to think.

From another area that again highlights my particular academic interests, I consider it appropriate to indicate that another of the contributions (contrary to traditional history) is to conceive the contradictions manifested at the time, stripping them as much as possible of exclusionary value judgments. In this respect, the work includes a section dedicated to the dialectics of enlightenment. Its understanding refers to the knowledge that, appropriated by a small sector, excludes the majorities, fundamentally indigenous. For the author, this contradiction goes further when we understand that the enlightened knowledge that is "somehow" promoted by the Spanish crown and taken up by the local groups that use it, were important elements of their own "liberation". In other words, the Enlightenment, synonymous with reason, contradicts the efforts of human aspiration crystallized in the practical idea of equality and freedom or, as Master Dardón puts it: "The domination of minorities over majorities is part of the Enlightened reason, of its dialectics".

Continuing my commentary on the content, I can affirm that it is an orderly narrative exposition that does not limit itself to summarizing and paraphrasing a bourgeois philosophy, but on the contrary, it recovers it, understands it in its time, interprets it and applies it, understanding and identifying its contributions on the level of ideas for the ideas themselves,

to then situate them in the Guatemalan particularity, objectively recognizing the creativity of its intellectuals and the unfair nature of their usefulness and application.

3. The condition of historian of Master Dardón Flores, committed to science, is also manifested in the methodological aspect, and I say methodological and not method because the combination of ways of historicizing that makes the work incorporates approaches and therefore the ways of approaching reality, of creating the discourse, without neglecting the theoretical guide that privileges ideas, thought, academy and intellectuality. In this way he recognizes that “Creole thought” is accompanied and linked to other elements that combine economic, social, political and cultural history, among others.

After these appreciations, let us move on to the sources that support the statements, books, documents of the time such as: laws, articles, pronouncements, theses, bulletins and even the wealth of literary expressions such as poems, show the construction of history-science that recovers without any discrimination, a total history that in a more acute and elaborated level transcends the knowledge of social dynamics, to the analysis of human sensibilities and from these to the construction of ideas and interpretation of thought.

Finally, as a historian, I would like to invite all the attendees to enjoy this reading, which undoubtedly not only opens the possibilities of knowing but also

of making history. And as a professor I suggest to my dear colleagues and students to incorporate in the educational activity this valuable didactic resource whose contents will update the formation of our future professionals, who in a wider sense will contribute to the transformation of the current Guatemalan reality.

Artemis Torres Valenzuelaz

“THE FORMATION OF THE GUATEMALAN NATION AND ITS EXCLUSIONARY CHARACTER: 1808-1821”

Immerse yourself in the reconstruction of the threads of history in a exciting work and a great responsibility of the historian. The historiographic discourse, in addition to describing reality, needs to explain it.

As a history teacher I have repeatedly noticed a certain incomprehension of our independence process and national construction. That problem becomes greater when one notices the contradiction between what we ordinarily, we would say customarily, and not very profoundly, call enlightened thinking and the process of national construction, which of course includes independence. Finally, when the contradiction between the revolutionary and liberating lack of the Enlightenment theory and the conservative and excluding nation built by the Guatemalan enlightened is confronted. This situation is evidence of what in history we call "problem subject" and is an example of modern historiography in terms of problematizing history, posing questions that lead to explanatory answers.

The problem posed, calls us to reflection in terms of observing the phenomena in a total and dialectical way, with the purpose of understanding them. The phenomena have besides their positive moment a negative one. Everyday life provides us with easy examples of the dialectical condition in which we live. A candy can be appreciated by many, but in the mouth of a diabetic it is a poison.

To understand the contradiction between theory and practice of the Guatemalan enlightened in national construction requires a dialectical analysis, and that is the intention of this work: **“Enlightenment and political discourse: the formation of the Guatemalan nation and its exclusionary character: 1808-1821”**.

Three chapters are included. The first one answers the question What is illustration? In order to do so, it resorts to the classical conceptualization and highlights its essential characteristics, which include the perspective of its "good" side, we could say, its revolutionary and liberating character, associated to the independence struggles. It also addresses how it manifested itself in the Guatemalan enlightened and recalls the negative side of modernity. In short, a chapter that addresses the phenomenon in its dialectic, that is to say, its positive and destructive moments.

*From Revista Estudios. Anuario 2004. Págs. 5-50.

Chapter II includes a review of the terminology used by the Guatemalan enlightened, at the time of independence. The exercise aims to identify the connotation, in our nation's educators, of those abstract concepts typical of modernity. How did they understand them? What was the accepted revolutionary content? To what consequences were they willing to go? Etcetera. In conclusion, reviewing the theoretical itinerary of enlightenment in the Guatemalan enlightened allows us to identify the extent to which they intended to carry it out, that is, it identifies the revolutionary limits at the moment of building the nation.

Chapter III shows the moment when theory is intertwined with reality: when the nation is thought and invented. In addition to recalling the exclusionary character of the Guatemalan nation, it explains from the enlightened theoretical instruments, why despite the accepted revolutionary character of modernity, of which the forgers of our nation were followers, they consolidated the Ladino-Creole homeland and excluded the majority indigenous sector.

CHAPTER I

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Associated with libertarian struggles and born with a revolutionary spirit, the Enlightenment spread throughout the world raising the banner of "freedom" from the eighteenth century. Let us remember that the Latin American independence struggles are largely explained by the Enlightenment.

In view of the above, an initial question arises, what is Enlightenment? Emmanuel Kant gives us an answer. "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another".²

Interpreting Kant, we would say that enlightenment consists in freeing oneself from intellectual slavery. The philosopher exhorts us, according to the enlightened postulates, to think for ourselves, an effectively revolutionary characteristic. It is important to remember

that in our country many of the ruling elites would even prefer that the masses do not think, much less for themselves.

Enlightenment, in theory, aims to liberate man from himself. That is to say, from his fears and prejudices, a situation which, as Kant maintains³, is more difficult than overthrowing personal despotism in order to put an end to economic or political oppression.

Kant defined his time as one of enlightenment, not enlightened, he explained that people are not in a position or disposition to use their own reason safely and profitably in matters of religion.⁴ Kantian reasoning would lead us to similar conclusions about our time in Guatemala. An enlightened political objective inherent in nation building is the formation of a republic of letters, because this would create a society with common political concerns about it. The focus of the Enlightenment ideas paradoxically for the Spanish Empire, came from Spain, in whose diffusion had particular importance some officials who came to America, was the case of Jacobo de Villaurrutia in Guatemala.

In 1794, Villaurrutia participated in the founding of the Sociedad Economica de Amigos del País together with Dr. José Felipe Flores, Dean Antonio García Redondo, Engineer José de Sierra, Juan Antonio Barrios and Francisco Barrundia. They were joined later by Fray Antonio Liendo y Goicoechea, professor and dean of the University of San Carlos and Pedro Garci-Aguirre, artist and note engraver for the mint.⁵

² Kant Emmanuel, *Filósofo de la historia*. Colección Popular, Fondo de Cultura Económica, cuarta edición, año 1992. p.25

³ Ibid.p.27.

⁴ Ibid.p.34

⁵ *Historia General de Guatemala*. Guatemala: Asociación de Amigos del País. Fundación para la cultura y el desarrollo, 1995. p.248.

It is important to note that one of the main roles of that Society was the creation of the *Gazette of Guatemala*. That newspaper was a means of dissemination that had as a limitation the high degree of illiteracy. Few readers meant a reduced literary public space, consequently a narrow Republic of letters. The Republic of Letters is in fact a constellation of diverse societies united by common elements, rather than by their belonging to a group defined by socio-economic criteria or even by adherence to philosophical doctrines. Xavier Guerra highlights among those elements: the same tastes, seeking the same pleasures, reading the same books and speaking the same language.⁶

Humberto Samayoa Guevara⁷ highlights the enlightened mentality as rationalism: cult of reason, faith in uninterrupted progress, confidence in science to achieve human happiness. He adds the banishment of ignorance, superstition and fanaticism, the extension and propagation of the enlightened mentality, the study of nature, economy and society. John Tate⁸, for his part reminds us of some of his postulates:

- a. Man is not depraved by nature.
- b. Man is capable, guided by the light of reason and experience, of perfecting a happy life on earth.
- c. By relying on their senses and experimenting, men could free their minds from the bonds of ignorance and superstition and their bodies from the

arbitrary oppression of their authorities.

The enlightenment makes evident a series of characteristics, among others:

- a. It considers progress as the destiny of humanity by its nature. Here it is important to point out that although the Enlightenment defends scientific thought as opposed to dogmatic thought, the previous postulate became a belief, we could say that a faith in progress was defended.
- b. Individualism. Enlightenment, Kant explained, means the decision and courage to use one's intelligence by oneself and without the tutelage of another. Thus, he exhorted: Have the courage to use your own reason! Here is a sample of individualism.
- c. The novelty of the sovereignty of the people as a principle of legitimacy. In this case it is the people who delegate their power to representatives chosen by them by means of the vote.
- d. The existence of written constitutions. Founding acts of societies that are thought to be unpublished.
- e. The emergence of systems for transferring the sovereignty of the people, whether electoral or otherwise, to those who exercise authority on their behalf.
- f. Appearance of men and groups specialized in political action: politicians and political parties.
- g. Use of an abstract political language full of moral connotations, e.g.,

⁶ Guerra, Francois Xavier. Modernidad e independencias, Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas, Madrid: editorial MAPFRE, 1992.p.101.

⁷ Samayoa Guevara, Héctor Humberto. Ensayos sobre la independencia de Centroamérica. Guatemala: José de Pineda Ibarra, 1972.p.7.

⁸ Tate Lanning, John. La Ilustración en la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de San Carlos, 1976. p. XXXVI.

people, sovereign, nation, popular will, popular outcry, etc.⁹

- h. Freedom of choice, since the enlightened society reaches agreements through the vote.
- i. Formation of the Republic of Letters which needs to assert itself and grow at the behest of the press and the printing press. In short, to create a public space for discussion. It is considered that political radicalism is more easily expressed in low-literate societies, where there is less articulation between elites and popular culture.

The Enlightenment is understood as the era of modernity, the time of modern societies as opposed to the ancient regime. The social actors of both temporalities present very different characteristics. The social groups of the ancient regime, explains Xavier Guerra,¹⁰ are governed by custom, law or regulation of the body. The bonds they have are personal, man to man, with reciprocal duties and rights of a *pactista* type and ordinary, unequal and hierarchical. Societies constituted by social actors of the ancient type were thought of as a set of estates, corporations and diverse political communities. They were therefore a set of juxtaposed, overlapping and overlapping groups, each with their specific rights and duties, with their own privileges and laws, which define their situation in relation to other groups and to the State. They were therefore a set of juxtaposed, superimposed and overlapping groups, each with their specific rights and duties, with their own privileges and laws, which

define their situation in relation to other groups and to the State. The individual, alone, without his belongings, was hardly thinkable. Very different are the actors of modern societies, in them we find associative ties but these associations draw their legitimacy from the will of the associates, since they are the ones who define it and can, at least in theory, redefine it at any time. Here are highlighted the bonds founded on the basis of the individual. He belongs to gatherings, literary societies, Masonic lodges, academies, academic societies, etc., because he wants to, he has the freedom to decide. These forms of sociability group men together regardless of their membership in different bodies or estates. It follows that the bonds are seen as egalitarian.

Enlightened manifestations in Guatemalan society: getting to know the face of sovereignty.

There is no doubt that many of the Guatemalan elites of the independence era were enlightened. Such a characteristic, as John Tate¹¹ has demonstrated, is not precisely the result of their education in Europe, but rather in the University of San Carlos in Guatemala. In the Republic of the Enlightenment, ideas had an institution for the diffusion of knowledge, the generation of spaces for debate and the putting into practice of knowledge, they materialized in the University, the Gazette of Guatemala, the society *Económica de Amigos del País*, the Gatherings, etc. Life itself gave the possibility to the peninsular Spaniards and Guatemalans of the time of

⁹ Guerra, Francois Xavier. *Modernidad y nacionalismo.*, Op. Cit. Pp., 86-89.

¹⁰ Ibid. Pp. 89-90

¹¹

independence to experience the enlightened theory as an experience, in that sense objectified. Let's take for example the case of sovereignty experimentation. Recall that Spain at the end of the 18th century was an empire ruled by a monarchy that held sovereignty in the person of the King. However, in 1808, with the Napoleonic invasion, the government was left acephalous when the monarchs were imprisoned by the French army. Locally the population organized itself to confront the invasion, declaring war on each province independently. Those events propitiated the emergence of local and provincial boards, some of them acquiring a great importance, reason that led them to be called "supreme". The one in Seville called itself Supreme of Spain and the Indies. By virtue of that political dispersion, a "Central Board" was established to unify the government; thus, the Supreme Government of the Kingdom presided over by Floridablanca was created. At first the organization excluded the Americans, but on January 22, 1809, a decree granted equal status to the American colonies. That decree ordered the representation of deputies and their form of election. On April 30, 1809, what were intended to be the "first popular elections" in our history were organized.¹² From among three persons, José Aycinena, Antonio Juarroz and Manuel Pavón, St. Pavon was chosen. With the abolition of

the Central Board and the appearance of the Regency, the election did not take effect. On May 22, 1809, a decree was issued that summoned the Cortes, although they should be integrated on January 1, 1810, it began on May 1.

The previous events made live the electoral experience, the act of voting, citizenship, political gatherings, thinking about the nation, freedom, elaborating constitutions, etc., propitious aspects of political modernity, of the enlightenment. The political events in Spain and America, propitiated that sovereignty became an attribute of the people, that the enlightened Americans overcame the experience of inventing a new Spanish nation (the deputies to Cortes would live that experience), understand themselves as a nation and therefore, be obliged to preserve and protect by law civil liberty, property and "other rights of all individuals", as stated in Article 4º. of the Spanish Constitution of 1812.

Enlightenment and Independence in Guatemala

One of the events that led to the spread of the Republic of Enlightenment was the French Revolution. Alejandro Marure visualizes that event as a prodigious conflagration that starts from the center of France, advances throughout Europe and spreads regenerative doctrines.¹³ In

¹² Those elections were not popular. Although the instructions for the election of deputies to the Cortes of 1810 consigned the "popular" process; however, the election was carried out only by the members of the town councils of the provincial capitals. The difficulties of time to go to the Cortes, the long journey by ship, the lack of means of transportation to Spain due to the war, etc., associated with the short time to carry out an election act of such magnitude never done before, combined to force a change in the form of election. For

more information read Dardón Flores, Ricardo Danilo, "Historias de las elecciones en Guatemala, modernidad y evidencia documental: el caso de las Cortes de Cadiz. 1810-1814" Research information submitted to the IIHAA. School of History, USAC, 2002.

¹³ Marure, Alejandro. Bosquejo histórico de las revoluciones de Centroamérica. From 1811 to 1834. Guatemala. Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública. Tomo 1, 1960, p.42

America, Marure adds, it put in ferment the spirits and soon Argentines, led by Castelli, Valcárcel and Belgrano raised the banner of insurrection; Quito, Santa Fe and Cartagena are moved; the homeland of the great Bolívar (Caracas) proclaims its independence and other provinces also follow suit. In New Spain, the Allende, the Hidalgo, the Avasolo, the Aldama and other illustrious people give the cry of Dolores. In Guatemala, they tried to hide these movements or false narratives were made, the promoters of independence and the names of the insurgents were typified as monsters and heretics.

In search of useful knowledge, Locke and Condillac, Bacon, Voltaire, Newton, etc., contributed observation and experimentation as methods of enlightenment. Guatemalan enlightened applied those methods in the search for useful knowledge to solve what they considered to be problems, for example, the agrarian problem, the Indian, commerce, etc. In the above context, the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, in the pre-independence era, should be understood as debating on the reform of agriculture, commerce, customs, education, medicine, etc. Also, the proposals on "how to convert the Indians into ladinos".

Spain has been criticized as a bastion of ecclesiastical obscurantism, which is interpreted as unenlightened and even contrary to the Enlightenment. Contemporary historiography tells us exactly the opposite, John Tate¹⁴, for example, demonstrates that the literary spokesmen of the Spanish Enlightenment were sensitive to the foreign point of view

and that is why the Archivo de Indias, one of the largest documentary archives in the world, was created. Such an act is understood as a rational response to the criticism of Spanish actions in the Indies. The response included the monumental effort of ordering and classifying documentation in an archive for the purpose of sustaining defensive discourse with documentary evidence. In short, the use of reason to justify actions was an enlightened enterprise. Of course, Tate confirms the enlightened character in the University of San Carlos de Guatemala before and after independence.

Spanish policies in the Indies such as the Bourbon Reforms, the Regime of Intendancies, the creation of Economic Societies, the publication of Gazettes, the organization of contests to "civilize", the realization of Censuses and Geographical Relations, etc., are proof of the enlightened character of the Spanish monarchy at that time. All of the above are considered essential means for progress.

Included in that intellectual movement, Tate argues¹⁵, the Spanish crown invested nearly a million pesos in botanical stations and expeditions throughout the empire. It went beyond botany and dealt with natural history and any phenomenon of nature. To know in order to make a good government is here the enlightened principle to be emphasized.

The Spanish Crown, in the middle of the 18th century, according to enlightened principles, implemented a series of changes aimed at improving the colonial administration, Samayoa Guevara¹⁶ highlights:

¹⁴ Tate, John. Op. Cit. P. XXXVI.

¹⁵ Tate, John, Ibid. P. XXXV

¹⁶ Samayoa Guevara, Héctor Humberto. El régimen de intendencias en Guatemala... p.51.

- a. Governments in accordance with rational and scientific principles
- b. Reforms in the economic and social structure of the nation.¹⁷
- c. Promulgation of laws of freedom of trade between peninsular ports and the overseas dominions and various colonies among themselves.
- d. Foundation of San Carlos Bank.
- e. Foundation of numerous trading companies
- f. Agrarian reform projects.
- g. Foundation of hospices and old people's homes.
- h. In the academic field, the curricula of schools and universities are reformed.¹⁸
- i. Academies of Science and Fine Arts were founded.

Censuses, natural¹⁹ and geographic studies, etc., provided valuable information on the human, natural and economic potential of the Spanish domains, which were used by the crown to consolidate the empire, in that sense the enlightenment became an instrument of subjugation. Despite the above, the founders of the Latin American nations also promoted their independence from an enlightened perspective. That knowledge

that serves to oppress also liberates and vice versa, is part of what we will address below as the dialectic of enlightenment.

The fundamental shift toward 20th century medicine, Tate explains, was the work of graduates from the University of San Carlos in the Enlightenment. Avalos y Porres taught the circulation of the blood in an experimental way. Flores claimed as his own the creation of the first anatomical wax statues, which could be disassembled, and Esparragosa provided the scissors woven with whale baleen to make elastic forceps that he perfected.²⁰

The history of medicine in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Guatemala clearly shows the enlightened modernity. Guatemalan doctors debated the development of medical sciences in the world, finding in Europe that their knowledge in that “science” had nothing to be desired to the doctors of the old world. It is important to note that Dr. Narciso Esparragosa y Gallardo, also wrote a book called “Método sencillo y fácil para el conocimiento y curación de las viruelas”, work that was published in the capital of Guatemala in the year 1815. Esparragosa, after receiving the intravenous sent from Veracruz by Mr. Ignacio Pavón y Muños, on May 16, 1804, inoculated the first six

¹⁷ John Lynch argues that the Bourbon Reforms generated greater opportunities for social mobilization. The pardos, free blacks and mulattos were admitted into the militia and were also able to buy their legal whiteness with thanks to the taking out. Lynch, John, *Los orígenes de la independencia hispanoamericana*, in Leslie Bethell, e.d. *Historia de América Latina*, p.24, vol. 5. (Barcelona: Crítica 1990)

¹⁸ One of the university teachers, Dean Antonio García Redondo, wrote in 1811 “Lecciones de Aritmética y Álgebra”. Volume 1, of 140 pages, printed in Guatemala at the printing house of Ignacio Beteta. That work began to be sold in sheets on March 28, 1810 at 1/2 real each one. The second booklet, “Lecciones de matemáticas” comprising elements of geometry, plane trigonometry

and sphere, was announced for sale in the Gazette on June 23, 1812. He also published “Instrucción del Ilustre Ayuntamiento de Guatemala a su diputado en Cortes” in 1811.

¹⁹ According to Dr. Carlos Martínez Durán, the first naturalist expedition sent by the Spanish crown took place in 1797. Integrated by Joseph Longinos Martínez and Joseph Mociño, the expedition was very beneficial for Guatemala, as it provided a considerable amount of knowledge about its natural features. After the investigation in one of the halls of the palace, the Museum of Natural History was concluded on December 9, 1797. Martínez Duran, Op. Cit. Pp. 411-418.

²⁰

Guatemalan children: Magdalena Sosa, Eulogio Villa Urrutia (son of the dean judge Mr. Jacobo de Villa Urrutia), Francisco Rivera (son of the General Manager of Alcabalas), Alfonso Wading, son of the accountant, Dolores Valenzuela and Vicente Salazar.²¹ Esparragosa was dedicated to the maintenance of the fluid and vaccination, which from that moment on, he emphasizes, became massive.

The enlightened spirit, the atmosphere of discussion, debate, experimentation and inventiveness within the medical profession of that time, led to the formation of medical societies, the first of which was the "Sociedad de Medicina y Cirugía", its first president was the elderly Dr. Pedro Molina, in the year of 1847. That society published the first medical magazine that existed in Guatemala, it was called "Mensual de la Sociedad de Medicina de la República de Guatemala", dedicated to the Sciences, Arts, Industries and Agriculture, as a monthly publication began to circulate in the month of November 1847.²² The scientific attitude of that brilliant doctor, Narciso Esparragosa y Gallardo, was also put at the service of ophthalmologic health. On November 22, 1797, he performed the first three operations to remove cataracts in Juan José Alvarez, 18 years old, and Anaclea Arias, 40 years old. Patients recovered their sight after years of blindness.²³

The Spanish crown implemented a series of changes with the purpose of improving the colonial administration, aiming to consolidate the empire.

Centralizing, standardizing and rationalizing the government of the Spanish monarchy were the objectives of the Regime of Intendancies. The Creole elites would see their interests affected by those policies, they were displaced from the colonial administration, they lost political weight so necessary for private commercial negotiations, they lost the forced trade of goods called Repartimiento, etc. Faced with such a situation, those elites soon used enlightened knowledge, first to denounce their "unjust" situation considering their merits as descendants of conquistadors and then to justify their separation from Spain. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the knowledge gained from censuses, natural and geographic studies, etc., were identified by the Creole elites as potentialities that would allow the colonies to become independent nations.

Enlightenment, as Tate Lanning²⁴ points out, is a term used to identify a period or epoch characterized by the climate of opinion or the exaggerated intellectualism of eighteenth-century philosophers. Indeed, the intellectual movement that began with Descartes (1596-1650) and Locke (1632-1704), given the above characteristics, was called the "Age of Enlightenment".

That climate of opinion and intellectualism transcended the academic sphere and was also embraced in the social one. Thus appeared the so-called "Gatherings", spaces of sociability in which groups of enlightened people shared

²¹ "Juventud Médica". Article published by Dr. Wellington Amaya A., in the Revista trimestral de la Asociación. La juventud Médica. Guatemala: Year 72, Epoch V, No. 24 April 1970. p.14-15.

²² Ibid. P. 605.

²³ Ibid. P. 434

²⁴ Ibid. P. XXVII.

ideas, concerns, scientific and political approaches, etc.

The gatherings were conceived as social meetings of elitist groups, who, evading the strict political control, used the pretext of the party, tea and wine, to discuss the future of science, political status, etc. When the times were favorable, they were called "Patriotic Gatherings", also "Patriotic Meetings". After the independence of September 15, 1821, the capital city of Guatemala, Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, would see the proliferation of several of them.²⁵ The deterioration of the political stability of the newly independent Guatemala manifested in the struggle between liberties and conservatives led the Provisional Consultative Board, in session No. 64, held on December 1, 1821, to approve a decree of good government in which patriotic Gatherings and meetings were prohibited.²⁶

The Dialectics of Enlightenment

At the time, the Enlightenment was seen as a revolutionary current of thought, since it was considered as a liberal foundation to free man from oppressions, especially intellectual oppressions. This situation has not been effective and the opposite has been observed.

²⁵ On October 1, 1821, neighbors of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción asked the government to authorize a patriotic gathering, the request was signed by about 80 persons. On November 3, neighbors of the San Sebastian parish requested permission to form a patriotic Board, 60 persons signed, a similar situation occurred with neighbors of the Los Remedios neighborhood, who on the same day made a similar request, approximately 52 persons. Boletín del Archivo de Gobierno, Tomo 4, p.148.

²⁶ The action was justified by an event that occurred on the night of November 30. The report of that event recorded the outcome of two deaths, after a surveillance

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno,²⁷ argue that enlightenment, from the dialectical perspective, observes the processes that gave rise to modernity and are now about to overcome it without bringing about its moments of truth. Enlightenment proposes to liberate man by reason, but by reason he may also fail to do so. Dialectics, say our noted philosophers, involves either realizing the Enlightenment or destroying it.

Thinking the Enlightenment dialectically forces us to take into account its condition as a positive thought as well as its destructive moment. The history of humanity, wars, Neo-colonialism, interventions of powerful countries in the internal affairs of others, etc., are living examples of injustices, subjugation, plundering, oppression, etc., that have been carried out in the name of reason. This "tragic history of humanity" led Horkheimer and Adorno to reflect on the Dialectic of Enlightenment and Critical Theory, in 1944 they argued that not only has no progress been made towards the realm of freedom, towards the fullness of the Enlightenment, but rather we are going backwards, sinking towards a new kind of barbarism.

As historians we must necessarily ask ourselves: why? how can this be explained? The answers must be sought

patrol opened fire on a crowd of citizens who were members of the "Junta Patriótica de la Universidad". The dead were Mariano Bedoya and Remigio Milla, of liberal ideas, who made proclamations against the mayors and aldermen of the city, members of the great Guatemalan families, conservative and pro-annexationist to Iturbide's Mexican empire. Boletín del Archivo de Gobierno. Tomo 4, pp. 319-320

²⁷ Horkheimer Max and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialéctica de la Ilustración. Fragmentos filosóficos*. Traductor Juan José Sánchez: Editorial Trotta, cuarta edición, 2001. p.10.

using an open and dialectical thinking, remembering that in the case of the Enlightenment, in addition to the good that it represents or wanted to represent for humanity, it brought with it a contradiction, its negative moment: to oppress.

Horkheimer explains that the negative character of the Enlightenment lies in its origin: "in man's eagerness to dominate nature".²⁸ The philosopher continues and explains that from this it is inferred that the Enlightenment has dominion as a fundamental factor, without aspiring to knowledge, to truth. Enlightenment takes power that subjugates nature, likewise, it does so with man, it proceeds as a dictator.

Europe, the manager of enlightened thought, evidences a history with a dehumanized face. What happens then in countries like Guatemala? Our country where the Enlightenment also took root without the accompaniment of positive aspects such as a hard work in education, participatory democracy, etc. Based on the above, it is logical to look for the way in which enlightened thought has been understood and applied to explain some of the characteristics of our nation, for example, its exclusionary character towards the majority social sector of the Guatemalan population: the Indians.

A characteristic aspect of the Enlightenment is the use of double discourse or double standards. Kant,²⁹ for example, defends the possibility of a public and a private use of reason. One free and the other restricted. The free one is the one that the individual makes in a personal

way, according to his reason. The restricted one is made as an official, it is not his judgment but the opinion of the institution he represents. In this way an individual can make two speeches, one as an individual and the other as an official, in addition to a double standard. This characteristic explains, in part, enlightened priests and pro-independence revolutionaries, despite the limitations of the church.

Although we will address the analysis of enlightened policies and discourses in Guatemala at the time of Independence later on, we will mention below some aspects inherent to the dialectical character of the Enlightenment:

With an enlightened character, José Cecilio del Valle³⁰, issued a political discourse that upheld the enjoyment of rights, freedom under a protective government, equality before the law, no regulations in the choice of work, nor oppression in the enjoyment of its products. Those aspects of the government that Valle imagined for Guatemala did not fully apply to the Indians. When their implementation was enforced, rights were soon abolished and limited, their freedom restricted, equality before the law was used more to the detriment of, for example, Latinization, acculturation, etc. Forced labor continued to be implemented more efficiently and rigorously and the Indian was also removed from positions of local power. Language was also part of the Valley's concerns in the national formation.

Dr. Jorge Mario García Laguardia argues that the Creoles were struggling

²⁸ Ibid. p.12

²⁹ Kant, Emmanuel, Op. Cit. Pp. 28-32.

³⁰ Cazali Avila, Augusto. Pensamiento de la Independencia. Guatemala: Imprenta de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. 1968. p.227.

with a profound mental contradiction between their affinity with the new ideas and their inability to carry them through to their ultimate limits. This political generation adds to be able to understand its psychology because it coincides with that of an "intellectual elite of our time", which sympathized with the inspiring ideas of the Revolution and was horrified by its consequences.³¹ Clearly, an elite accustomed to privileges, to exploit and serve themselves of the other groups and the fear of losing them, made them look for justified reasons to preserve that status. Enlightenment would have to provide them with those reasons, after all enlightenment becomes a subduing power. In this regard, the following speech is illustrative:

*“The equality of the nation should not confuse the hierarchies and thus the noble American should be received in Europe and kept in personal privilege, and the same for the European in the Indies. The general state in its own privilege, and the commoner the same here as there. And there is to be no slavery, every man being naturally free by natural right”.*³²

At the time of the Cortes of Cádiz, when the sanctioned constitution establishes the equality of the nation, the equality of citizenship and therefore the quality of citizenship of the Indian, discourses such as the above begin to proliferate among the elites. The reasoning of the Guatemalan Creole elite is clear: the Indian should

remain an Indian. The deputations, representation before the courts, equality and other rights, are for the American Creoles as equals in the Spanish homeland. All other things being equal. Of course, the Creoles saw their dream of being equal in that Spanish homeland frustrated, they would later swear their own and invent them.

The oppressive reasoning was implemented by the Creoles in many facets of life in those times. An interesting case was that of the defense of the repartimiento. As will be recalled, the Viceroy of New Spain, Mr. Francisco Xavier Barregas, on May 26, 1810, decreed the exemption of the tribute to the Indians, extended to the castes of mulattoes, blacks and others who remained faithful, also included the grace of repartimiento of the lands of the Indian villages was not extended to the castes and *prohibits the justices from abusing trade in the district of their respective jurisdictions under the title of repartimientos*.³³ The regulations were extended to the other Spanish colonies. It intended to remove political flags from the independence movements and to avoid the participation of the Indian in them.

Those policies aimed at eradicating the independence movements placed Spain in positions contrary to the interests of the Creole elites and generated responses. One of the responses was the defense of the repartimiento, which thus became an example of the enlightened reasoning that subdues:

³¹ García Laguardia, Jorge Mario. Centroamérica en las Cortes de Cádiz, México. Editorial Fondo de Cultura Económica. 1994, p. 17.

³² AGCA. B.1. Leg 4, Exp. 77.

³³ AGCA. B. 1.5. Leg 5, Exp. 165

*“The repartimientos serve to provide for the poor, circulate the money and when they are made with the community funds, the towns will have known benefit and being managed by administrators with profit, they will be able to maintain homes for the elderly and orphans, and a hospital in each party, and will enjoy real benefits that are lacking...”*³⁴

Of course, the case of the abolition of tribute is also illustrative. In Guatemala, suspiciously, the two copies sent from Spain, containing the royal decree abolishing the indigenous tribute, were lost. It was not until May 1812, when a copy was made. Although poor, the justifying reasoning of the Creoles of Comayagua was not long in coming, and they questioned the crown: ..., from where would they pay the priests for the doctrines for the exemption...?

It is important to note that the use of arguments to delay that benefit of the indigenous population, led to discontent and in 1820, when it was restored generated many actions of rejection, in Guatemala is highlighted the movement led by Atanasio Azul and Manuel Tot, in Totonicapán. Undoubtedly, equality before the law and economic freedom are the foundations of the Enlightenment, but

its dialectic led to the use of reason to the detriment of what it postulated: freedom.

CHAPTER II

ENLIGHTENMENT, DISCOURSE AND NATION

Terminology and political discourse in the Guatemalan enlightened 1808-1821

The role of political modernity is fundamental to the understanding of the functioning of today's nation-states, since the replacement of the ancien régime brought about changes in the daily life of our peoples and shaped the character of the nation. It must be remembered that when a new regime is built, it does so in contradiction with the old one. In part this explains the attack on indigenous communities and their institutions, which were defined as traditional and resistant to change.³⁵ Thus, the corporative character of the old regime had to be destroyed, a situation that was convenient to the interests of the Guatemalan elites.

A characteristic of enlightened thought, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is the use of abstract political language, for example: State, Nation, people, sovereignty, homeland, patriotism, social pact theory, etc. The recognition of those categories as instruments that were

³⁴ AGCA. B.1. Leg. 4. Exp. 77

³⁵ It is important to point out that to this day the supposed closed character of the indigenous population, reluctant to change, is being revalued, considering that all cultures have received contributions from other cultures. Therefore, to maintain that there are closed societies is contradictory. The revaluation consists in the understanding that acculturation assumes its particularities in each society and in the case of the

indigenous peoples, they observed an extraordinary capacity to reinterpret and adapt the European culture in their own way. In this sense, we share the approach of Sonia Aida, in CONTINUIDAD Y RESISTENCIA: LA COMUNIDAD E INDÍGENA EN GUATEMALA DURANTE EL PERÍODO COLONIAL, article published in Memoria, Creación e Historia, Luchar contra el Olvido. España, Universidad de Barcelona, 1994, sobre revisar la redefinición de comunidades indígenas como cerradas y corporativas de Erick Wolf.

used for the construction of the new Latin American nations and in particular the Guatemalan one, are fundamental because in this way we will obtain some conclusions about the collective imaginaries that were present in that foundational act.

That terminology was present in the Guatemalan intellectuals of the time of independence and, of course, evidenced in its use the modern character of enlightened thought. Let us recognize some of them:

State and Nation

State, at the time of independence, was an ambiguous term. In some cases, it was used with a sense equivalent to that of nation. In fact, both terms were considered synonymous. In short, according to José Carlos Chiaramonte³⁶, it was used to allude to the sphere of jurisdiction of governments. On the other hand, Nation was understood as a human group, defined by its subjection to the same government. The Gazette of Buenos Aires, in 1815, adds Chiatamonte, pointed out that "A nation is nothing more than the gathering of many towns and provinces subject to the same central government and the same laws".³⁷

The People

Many political speeches of that time were directed to the people, an abstract and homogeneous entity, José

Maria Castilla, for example, emphasized in one of his speeches the following:

*"People of the earth: enlightened men, who, versed in history, have traveled through the nations, and have witnessed the metamorphosis of governments, the perilous transition from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom".*³⁸

Castilla speaks to the people. But let us ask ourselves. What people? Because his speech was not for all the inhabitants. The people, that abstract entity imagined by Castile, were the enlightened men. To be enlightened is the characteristic that homogenizes the category of the people. From this account we observe the characteristics already mentioned about the State: abstract and homogeneous category. Let us remember that society, different from the canon's conception, is nothing but pure diversity.

The above political categories are instruments used by the intellectuals who are building the nation. To this end, they construct myths, the myths of the nation.³⁹ One of them is that of the homogeneity of the people. The logic is simple, the objective is clear: if there is homogeneity (thinking alike, having similar customs, the same language, etc.), the possibility of living together as a nation is greater. Contrary to the previous myth, we all know that society is pure diversity and that even those nation-states that were taken as models present the diversity inherent to all societies. Today, that thinking is tending to

³⁶ Chiaramonte, José Carlos. *Ciudades Provincias, Estados: Orígenes de la nación*, Argentina, 1800-1826. Buenos Aires: Ariel Historia, 1997. P. 116-117.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 116.

³⁸ Ministerio de Educación, *Discursos Patrióticos*. Guatemala: Editorial José de Pineda Ibarra, 1970, p.26.

³⁹ Discourses are a rational construction of their authors. They include their vision of the world, group interests, etc. These particular interests, in some cases, lead to discourses that confuse reality with fiction, i.e., they construct myths.

change. In our country the change is slow, however, after the Peace Agreements in 1996, Guatemala is recognized as a multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural nation. Of course, there are also several intellectuals who see social diversity as part of the richness of our nation and not as an obstacle.

At present, the category "people" refers to the set of individuals abstractly considered in terms of political equality. However, as Chiaramonte points out, the Spanish political tradition in force at the end of the American colonial period and prolonged for a long time after Independence, preserved the organicist and corporative attitude typical of the society of the old regime. The people was conceived not in atomistic and egalitarian terms, but as a conglomerate of estates, corporations and territories, with the corresponding relations of a society that politically enshrined inequality rooted in the economy.⁴⁰

The term "people" was synonymous with city. That is why for the Central American independence they spoke of the sovereignty of the towns or sovereign towns to refer to the different cities that had assumed their sovereignty as a consequence of the events in the Iberian Peninsula. "People" were not just the group of rural and urban inhabitants of a region, as we interpret it today. Rather, they were understood as the cities politically organized according to the Hispanic guidelines. By virtue of them, the inhabitants of the countryside did not exist politically if they did not possess the quality of neighbor and fulfill the conditions of such: married, with property

and open house in the city. The people referred to by those enlightened intellectuals were not the Indians, nor those poor and raggedy ladinos.

The sovereignty

Another modern, enlightened political phenomenon is the case of the "sovereignty of the people". Sovereignty is understood as the power that grants the power to govern. Sovereignty of the people is then, the power that by right belongs to the people and that they delegate to a representative to govern. The previous conception is a feature of modernity, indeed when the news about the French Revolution was known in Guatemala, according to John Tate, intellectuals defended the thesis of the sovereign pre-eminence of monarchs, however, in the colonial twilight, it was accepted in a categorical way that sovereignty emanated from the people.

In relation to the owner of sovereignty, John Tate⁴¹ highlights three moments in the evolution of political thought in the Guatemalan political process at the end of the eighteenth century:

1. Sovereignty emanates from the monarch (the King)
2. Sovereignty emanates from God (an advance considering that the source of that power was not the King).
3. Sovereignty emanates from the people.

Tate's approach is based on the study of theses carried out by undergraduate students at the University of San Carlos, in

⁴⁰ Chiaramontes, Op. Cit. P. 114.

⁴¹ Tate, John. Op. Cit. Pp. 475-476.

Guatemala. In this regard, he highlights the following:

1. Thesis of Ignacio Avila, Guatemalan student, directed by Professor López Rayón in 1791. The thesis holds that secular princes have the right to condemn laws that bind the conscience.
2. Thesis of José Ramón Zelaja, 1801. The thesis holds that the church can establish laws that constrain conscience.
3. Thesis of Buenaventura Quiroz, in 1821. The thesis holds that the supreme powers can issue laws that compels the conscience.⁴²

The Enlightenment conception of sovereignty was an intellectual tool used to justify the independence of the Spanish colonies. José Cecilio del Valle uses it and gives it the character of a legal basis. The intellectual held that the Constitution of Spain declared the sovereignty of the nation, where the moral sovereign was all the peoples that formed the monarchy, therefore, if the Americans pronounced their will to be free, it should be respected. In conclusion, Valle argued that Spanish law thus granted independence to America.⁴³

In Valle the conception of the sovereignty of the people is clearly observed, the representatives of the people, they argued, are the ones who should form their constitution: only they have the right, only they can decree laws.⁴⁴

Similarly, José Francisco Barrundia highlighted that:

*“A sovereign people is the collection of all the citizens that form the nation, it is the whole people that concur by itself or by its representatives to give itself the fundamental law, to establish its government, to form all the laws that best suit it”.*⁴⁵

The Enlightenment conception of the category "sovereignty" was used as an instrument of independence and the next step: Nation building. Similar to the speeches justifying the independence of Guatemala City, the intellectuals of the sixth Central American state, "Los Altos", also used it to separate from Guatemala. The proclamation to the other states of the union, on October 10, 1848, included among others the argument of the manifest will of the people to "separate" and "free" themselves from domination.⁴⁶

Homeland and Patriotism

One of the discursive resources used to obtain loyalty and political cohesion of the inhabitants, subjects or citizens, as the case may be, is the call to love the homeland. That action puts us in contact with two political categories, the homeland and the love one has for it: patriotism. The old notion of homeland referred to the place of birth. The place where I was born and where my parents were born. In that way patriotism, that is to say, the love of one's homeland was

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Cazali. Op. Cit. P. 214.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Cazali. Op. Cit. P.244.

⁴⁶ Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Selección de Documentos de la vida independiente. Guatemala: editorial universitaria, 1974. pp. 67, 68 y 69.

understood as loving the place where one was born. Therefore, *criollismo* is understood as the feeling of the creole's homeland.

The modern, enlightened meaning of homeland is different, it refers to the condition of citizenship of its inhabitants, to an environment where there is civil liberty, a political constitution, laws, equality of rights before them, etc.

In this regard, Pierre Vilar states that the meaning of homeland, which was fought against in 1810 in Spain, is the one that recognizes it as the place where one was born. He illustrates the above by quoting the text of Marí Cruz Seine, which in the *Redactor General*, August 10, 1811, literally states:

“Roughly would be deceived who only by residing in the place where he was born, among the objects to which his first glances and stammering words were directed, would believe that he was in his homeland taken this voice of the sublime sense that corresponds to it... There is no homeland, in the meaning of public law, where there are no citizens, and these would exist only where there is civil liberty. There can be no civil liberty without a political constitution, and no citizens without their participation in the establishment of laws, and without equality of rights before them... as well as any territory where men move who in society maintain their civil concept, there where they live

in their homeland, when their native habitat is a place of impurity and servility; in the same way, lacking the civil concept, any place is nothing more than the enclosure where herds of cattle or slaves are gathered, driven at the mercy of the overseer to the task or the slaughterhouse with the whip or the sling”.⁴⁷

He continues quoting Cruz Seoane and adds:

*"Homeland is not exactly that town, province, or state where we were born; rather, it is that society, that nation, where under the protection of just, moderate, and recognized laws, we have enjoyed the pleasures of life, the fruits of our labor, the benefits of our industry, and the unalterable possession of our imprescriptible rights."*⁴⁸

A speech published on December 11, 1820, calls for patriotism. The homeland, highlights:

“To love it as it deserves, each person must conform their particular will to the general will, to public reason, to the law of duty. True love for the homeland consists in doing it good; contributing to its freedom as much as possible. If this love existed in the everyone's heart, the state would be a single family”.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Vilar, Pierre. *Hidalgos, amotinados y guerrilleros. Pueblo y poderes en la historia de España*. Barcelona CRITICA, Grupo Editorial Grijalbo, 1982. p.218.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 219.

⁴⁹ Ministerio de Educación. Op. Cit. Pp. 15 y 16.

Noble City Council of Goathemala (Guatemala), dated November 12, 1811, stated:

*“I do not forget, nor will I ever forget, that although I was born in Ciudad Real, I am a son of Goathemala to whom I owe my education and many other benefits”.*⁵⁰

Mr. Robles exemplifies the modern enlightened thought of homeland, to which we have been referring. He loves Guatemala, not because he was born there, he was born in Ciudad Real. He loves Guatemala because of his education and other benefits such as being a citizen and congressman.

The social pact theory

The social pact theory, that is, the alliance and union between the nation and the government, originates from the French and American revolutions, as well as the Spanish independence. From authors such as Grotius and Althusius, Locke and Rousseau. The Spaniards and inhabitants of the Spanish colonies had a first glimpse of the constitution as a notion of social pact between government and its governed, prompted by the Constitution of Bayonne, despite its rejection. In this regard, it pointed out the following:

“We have decreed and decree the present Constitution, to be kept as the fundamental law of our States

*and as the basis of the pact that unites our peoples with Us, and Us with our peoples”.*⁵¹

The Constitution of Cadiz was for Spain and its dominions, the first written text of laws, made by representatives of the peninsula and the colonies, which limited the power of the monarchy. Here the social pact imposed despotic government. That constitutional pact, whose purpose was to preserve the unity of an empire in crisis, did not achieve that objective. Despite the granting of greater autonomy, the longed-for Creole equality with the metropolis was not achieved.

Citizen representation

The construction of the Nation State required a permanent effort to transform the heterogeneity of social actors into a unity of opinion, interest or general will. This required the appearance of politicians, people specialized in this function, whose purpose was to obtain legitimacy from the sovereign: The people. Politicians and their umbrella organizations, the political parties, present themselves as the representatives of the people who, in the exercise of their powers, have delegated their sovereignty to them. An illustrative case is provided by a speech delivered by Canon José María Castilla. In a speech delivered on September 23, 1821, the day of the swearing in of the Independence of the capital city of Guatemala, he expressed the following:

⁵⁰ AGCA. B. Leg. 4. Exp. 74.

⁵¹ Constitución de Barnoya. WWW.Constitución.rediris.es/revista/unno/ce.12htm.-101k.

*“I am not afraid to profane this throne of truth when I am the organ of a people who gather today in the Sanctuary to pour out their hearts around the altar of the God of Christians. I do not believe that I am failing the sacred evangelical ministry when I play the role of interpreter of the healthy feelings of a people recognized for the blessings of their God”.*⁵²

The enlightened, modern character of the previous discourse can be seen in the accreditation that the canon confers on himself as the interpreter of the people's sentiments. This verifies the system of transferring sovereignty from the people to someone who exercises it on their behalf.

Another interesting example is that of Canon Antonio de Larrazábal, who as a congressman in the Cortes represented the City Council of Guatemala City. Remember that the city councils are the ones that in the process of independence will assume sovereignty and in the Guatemalan case will pronounce themselves one by one in relation to it.

Citizenship and equality

In a national state its members are citizens, free men who live under the protection of the law with duties and rights. At the behest of the law, the State converted social heterogeneity into homogeneity, considering its members to be formally equal persons.

In his article “Delirios Patrióticos” he expressed the type of society that his enlightened imagination demanded:

*“... adequate infrastructure to develop commerce and industry, roads, ports, river navigation and canals. A thriving commerce, abundant and cheap in all places, men and women dressed in Spanish style without oppression of the Indian, with public instruction, libraries, recreation”.*⁵³

Bergaño's speech was a dream, a "delirium", unreal but longed for. His immediate conclusion was forceful: What a sad situation of the colonial! It was all a dream.⁵⁴

The elimination of the oppression of the Indian continues to be a dream, a delirium, a revolutionary and dangerous idea, therefore, still persecuted and ignored.

The Creoles, before the independence, made speeches and demanded equal rights for Americans from the Spanish government. They argued that the native of Africa differed in no way from those of Russia, Germany, and others. Pedro Molina, for his part, disavowed slavery and argued the incongruity of denying citizenship to blacks. In addition, I criticize as improper, the caste division. The division, he argued, should not be according to skin color, but according to merit, talent and virtue.⁵⁵

After independence, those Creoles who demanded equality for Americans from Spain, soon began to reduce it and deny it to the majority indigenous and poor ladino sectors. Let's ask ourselves: what was the reason for that change, was it a change in political thinking? Larrazábal,

⁵² Ministerio de Educación. Op. Cit. P.25.

⁵³ Cazali Avila, Augusto. Op. Cit. Pp. 107 y 108.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 109.

⁵⁵ AGCA. Sig. B. Leg. 4, Exp. 78.

one of the enlightened Creoles of the time of Independence, wrote in 1811: "With the declaration that the castes do not enjoy the right of citizenship, the number of deputies in America has been reduced to a great extent".⁵⁶

Considering the restriction to the category of citizen that was implemented after independence, it is logical to maintain that a pragmatic spirit, that of having greater representation in the Cortes, forced the Creoles to pronounce themselves in favor of equality of citizenship in the Spanish constitutional nation. Neither can the change in discourse be categorized as a change in political thought. In both cases, it shows the use of reason in service of domination.

Inventing the nation

Nation building is a difficult task. Valle clearly in his time exposed some concerns, doubts and fears:

*"We are at the most dangerous point of the race: we are in the critical period of the States. We are going to form new institutions, to make new laws, to create everything anew... Will a heterogeneous population, divided into so many castes and scattered over such vast territories, be able to unite its votes on the Government to be built? Will those who have emerged be rational enough not to exceed their demands?"*⁵⁷

Valle's concerns were part of the problem in the construction of the new

State. To create a nation required, according to the Enlightenment theory, to convert that social heterogeneity into homogeneity. Also, the search for consensus in a region accustomed to impositions.

In the end, Valle's concerns were justified and history would prove him right. As for his questions more than a century and a half later, we can answer that policies were implemented to homogenize the population. Some of them were taken to extremes, as was the case of assimilation and social whitening policies, the exclusion of the Indian, etc. As for consensus, unfortunately, the Guatemalan State has taken the path of authoritarianism and dictatorships. Consensus was relegated by imposition. Responding to Valle we would say that the classes that have "enjoyed" as he calls them, have not been fair enough to divide their "enjoyment" with others. The gap between rich and poor in our days continues to widen and one of the biggest problems that the Guatemalan State has is the unfair distribution of wealth.

Guatemala is today, as in Valle's time, a region rich in resources, but that wealth is enjoyed by very few. As a consequence of that unjust economic structure and the scarce spaces of political participation for the oppressed sectors, the political history of Guatemala from independence to the present day shows the face of a society full of conflicts, revolts and revolutions. We are a Republic with a weak State where the nation does not end up consolidating itself. In order to consolidate itself, the nation needs to convince its members that they share

⁵⁶ AGCA. Ibid.

⁵⁷ Cazali Avila, Augusto. Op. Cit. Pp. 230-231.

certain characteristics that make them members of the nation and therefore have a common historical heritage and future. They are imaginaries, intellectual creations, which, because they are shared by a national community, are called "collective imaginaries of the nation".

The different national histories contribute to the construction of the collective imagination of the nation. They present the members of the nation as heirs of a distant and immemorial historical past. In our case, the historical Mayan past was vindicated, detached from the current indigenous people. Those histories were recovered by the creole, then by the mestizo as an argument of legitimization. Guillermo Bonfil explains, they converted the Indian past into a common past to which all Americans had a right. That past expropriated from the Indian became a fundamental reason for the independence of Latin American countries.⁵⁸

Guatemalan Creoles strove to incorporate the glorious elements of the pre-Columbian past, drawing on a history that was not their own. Some historians point out such attitude as incongruent, however, the incongruence is not in the fact of using that glorious past of the original peoples as a myth and national imaginary. Benedict Anderson argues that this is part of the imagined community.

⁵⁸ Bonfil Batalla, Guillermo. *Identidad y pluralismo cultural en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Editorial del Cehass, Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico. Pp. 165-166. José Cecilio del Valle, justified independence by appropriating the history of the Guatemalan Indian, adduced the natural geographic separation, by two oceans; the presence of the conquest, of free, equal and lords of the properties they possessed, the sufferings that began in America when Spain sent the conquerors, etc. The conquest of the Indian, Valle replied, meant subjecting him to a condition of eternal ignorance, "perpetual pupilage", making evident the condition of injustice and therefore, the right to liberate himself, as

The incongruity is manifested in the fact of constructing a myth and excluding from the nation the direct heir of that glorious past.

Indeed, the Creoles considered the nation, the land and the Indians as theirs. For them, colonial life consisted of suffering the experience of having their rights usurped. In this respect, the decree of absolute independence of the provinces of Central America is illustrative:

*"...the arbitrariness with which it was governed by the Spanish nation and the conduct which it constantly observed since the conquest, excited the people to the most ardent desire to recover their usurped rights..."*⁵⁹

Nationalism, heroes and symbolism in nation building

Nation, according to Benedict Anderson, Arturo Taracena⁶⁰ points out, is a community imagined as inherently sovereign. Community, he goes on to explain, because the nation is conceived as something to be shared in a profound way, despite inequality and manifestations of exploitation. Imagined, because no matter how small it may be, its members cannot know or interact directly with the majority

Spain did with France by resisting its aggregation under the slogan expressed in the courts: "faith is not right". In Augusto Cazali, Op. Cit. Pp 213-214. Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Selección de Documentos de la vida independiente. Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria. Op. Cit. P.27.

⁵⁹ Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Selección de Documentos de la vida independiente. Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria. Op. Cit. P.27.

⁶⁰ Taracena, Arturo. *Etnicidad, estado y nación en Guatemala, 1808-1944*. Guatemala: Nawal Wuj, 2002 p. 25.

of their fellow citizens, but in their minds, each one will live the image of their national communion and will be united around it. Thus, he adds, according to Ernest:

*“A brotherly group becomes a nation when its members mutually and firmly recognize certain duties and rights by virtue of their membership in a State”.*⁶¹

Hence, Taracena⁶² explains, nationality results from a process of social learning and habit formation. In conclusion, the above is evidence that the desire to build a nation comes before the nation. In this process, the State plays a fundamental role as a generator of habits and social teaching.

Part of the social learning and habit formation by the State consists in the promotion of hegemonic nationalism. The love of the nation, which is generally achieved by the States with the image of heroes of the nation. In the Guatemalan case, a hegemonic nationalism that included popular heroes emulated by the popular classes was not created. Although the figure of Tecún Umán was intended to be imposed as such, this was late and the discussion about its popular character remains open. In this regard, the Costa Rican case is interesting, with the role of the not so anonymous hero, since the Guatemalan military threat together with an appropriate discourse generated a nationalist sentiment that would drive them to sacrifice lives for their nation. The war, absent in the independence of Central American nationalist emergence and the

fratricidal struggle between the Central American states after independence, gave birth to and increased localist nationalism.

On February 28, 1885, Justo Rufino Barrios declared the Central American Union and his desire to realize it by force in case the other republics did not adhere to his decree. In the first days of March, when the Tico State was planning the popular mobilization against the Guatemalan threat, the Costa Rican newspaper published an article written by Alvaro Contreras called "Un héroe anónimo". Curiously the hero was not anonymous, his name was Juan Santamaría, a humble soldier who in the battle of Rivas (1856), volunteered to burn down the war inn from where Waltez's army was decimating the Tico army. His attempt was a success, but he lost his life. That juncture and that hero's story, gave the opportunity to the Tico State to solve two central problems for the establishment of hegemonic nationalism: the question of what he calls the imagined origins and the constitution of a prototype national subject for the emulation of the subordinate classes. In Guatemala, these constructions were, as already mentioned, late. In fact, there is no hero of popular extraction, who made the popular classes participate in the national constitution.

The Guatemalan State has been inclined to use coercion rather than consensus for the consolidation of the national State. In this it has also adopted a conservative attitude. The heroes and images of Guatemalan national devotion were sought after among the social elites. It is important to remember that in 1820, Mariano Aycinena and José Venancio

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 26.

⁶² Ibid.

López presented on August 18 a motion to have the name of Antonio Larrazábal inscribed in gold letters. They were looking for heroes for their nation, so they explained that:

*"In free or educated countries it has been a maxim of political expediency to always appreciate the merit and virtue of the citizens."*⁶³

Unlike Mexico, Guatemalans do not experience a religious and cultural symbiosis like the Virgin of Guadalupe, although they did push for the canonization of Brother Peter of Saint Joseph de Betancur, a Spaniard from the Canary Islands.⁶⁴

The use of icons as a public instrument of patriotic consolidation was used since colonial times in Guatemala, however, in the early nineteenth century, the symbology began to tend to the function of the Creole homeland and then

the Ladino nation. In 1812, for example, the new political situation imposed the elimination in America of the Royal Standard and the monuments of conquest, which were customary in those countries. The proclamations and oaths were also urban acts tending to obtain the adhesion of the population to political projects. Thus, were commemorated the Proclamation of 1812, its restitution in 1820, the Independence of 1821, the Absolute Independence of 1824, the creation of the Republic of Guatemala in 1847, etc.

The civic festivities were full of symbolism: allusive medals,⁶⁵ emblems,⁶⁶ parades showing the established social and political order, speeches, etc.

Economy and Enlightenment

From Pedro Molina's perspective, "There is no wealth that is not the work of labor, nature and man". A thought according to his time and also to the

⁶³ Boletín del Archivo de Gobierno, Tomo IV, No. 1. 1938. pp. 763 y 74.

⁶⁴ AGCA. B1. Leg. 4. Instrucciones del Cabildo a Larrazábal.

⁶⁵ Marure points out that on the occasion of the patriotic celebration of independence "a medal was minted with the following emblems: on the obverse, in the center, is placed the story in the figure of a matron dressed in a talar tunic and tunicela, with a hammer in her hand and a chisel in the other, in an attitude of sculpting in the epedesta of the pyramid, the inscription that recalls the memorable September 15: making mention also of the Spanish governor who helped to facilitate this great enterprise, as noticed in the legend it has, and reads: September 15, 1821. General Gainza, in front of him has a figure, placed on the ground, a roll of paper and a book, symbol of the general history of all countries; the pyramid that has been mentioned, and is the one that occupies the first term, means the monument of the triumph that Guatemala achieved on that day, and that is why it is decorated with his arms. The other pyramids that can be seen in the distance are the monuments of the same triumph, obtained in the other American states or republics, for which reason their bases are marked with

the initials of the names to which they correspond, like the M. of Mexico, the L. Lima, etc. In the border it contains the following motto: Guatemala, free and independent. On the reverse side, a winged figure is seen in the center, representing the genius of American liberty, crowned with laurel, girded with a feathered tahali, with a carcaz on its back, separating with both arms and the greatest effort, the two worlds, disunited the hands that made the new one dependent of the old one; but at the same time he offers to this one his friendship and peace by means of the olive branch that he presents to him in the same hand that separates him; and to that one the prosperous abundance by the horn of fertility that he pours on him, in manifestation that the obstacles that impeded him have ceased: the legend of the border is conformed to the emblem that it represents: the free one offers peace but the servant never." In Alejandro Marure, Bosquejo histórico de las Revoluciones en Centroamérica Guatemala: editorial José de Pineda Ibarra, 1970. pp. 67 y 68.

⁶⁶ In a session of the city council of Guatemala City it was decreed "that a flag be formed with three colors symbolizing liberty, equality and justice". In the Boletín del Archivo de Gobierno. Tomo IV. P. 132.

French Physiocratic influence that stated that the wealth of a nation is not in the accumulation of precious metals, but in the agricultural production.

From the Physiocrat perspective the only production that increased wealth was agriculture. It is not surprising then that institutions such as the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País were interested in improving it and of course persons such as Bergaño and Villegas proposed the need for an agrarian reform, restructuring land ownership. In this regard, he denounced that:

“...On the coasts, there are individuals who own estates of eight, fifteen and even thirty leagues, with no other interest than the foolish vanity of owning them to the considerable detriment of the public good.”⁶⁷

Bergaño proposes that with the poor and vagrants of the city, colonies be founded on the northern and southern coasts of Guatemala.

The economic thought of that time vindicated two needs:

1. Improvement of agriculture (techniques, labor, crops, etc.). The Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País sought the introduction of new crops as well as the improvement of existing ones. In this regard, it is important to highlight some of the work that was done at that time, for example: “Memoria sobre el foment de las cosechas de cacao, y de otros ramos de la agricultura”, by Dean

Antonio García Redondo, “Tratado de Xiquilite o Añil de Guatemala”, by José Mociño.

2. Freedom of trade. In this regard, serious demands were formulated to the Spanish government, in which they stated that:

“...the formation of the constitution that this Town Council addressed to your lordship shows that all state monopoly or private rights offend natural law.

By this right the sovereign is truly the sole trader in this branch, depriving his vassals of the traffic that they could make more advantageous to their benefit, and of the state, leaving the trade free to direct and speculate in this matter”.⁶⁸

Intellectuals, owners and merchants of the independence era practiced economic liberalism. The liberal petitions contained in the instructions that the city council of Guatemala City gave to its congressman in cortes are illustrative:

- a. Freeing up trade.
- b. Abolish the state monopoly of tobacco.⁶⁹
- c. To establish fiscal contributions that do not demand more than what is necessary to meet the needs of the State.
- d. Enable the nation's ports: The Golfo, Iztapan and The Motagua for navigation.

⁶⁷ Cazali Avila. Op. Cit. P. 109.

⁶⁸ AGCA. Sig. B1. Leg 5. Exp. 76.

⁶⁹ The City Council of Guatemala City pointed out the following problems generated by the tobacco market for its harvesters and the State: 1. By restricting tobacco cultivation to certain areas, people from other places are

excluded from the benefits of tobacco cultivation. 2. The prices paid to harvesters are very low. 3. It generates high bureaucracy. A salary of 894,010 pesos 2 1/4 reales is paid and the business produces 1,516,662 pesos 1 real. This means that more than half of the income is spent on salaries.

- e. Payment sufficient to meet the worker's needs.
- f. Prices established according to the political economy.
- g. Economic diversification.
- h. Promotion of agriculture.
- i. Establishment of low interest loans by the State.

It is important to note that liberalism was always an aristocratic doctrine, which preached "the power of the best". In this regard, Wallerstein clarifies that liberalism certainly does not define "the best" by their birth status, but rather by their educational achievements. The best do not come from the hereditary nobility, but from the beneficiaries of meritocracy. The best are still a smaller group than the general public. Therefore, liberals seek the aristocratic power of the best to avoid the power of the whole people, democracy.⁷⁰

CHAPTER III

THE NEW GUATEMALAN NATION

The Napoleonic invasion of Spain exacerbated the political problems of the metropolis and its colonies. The colonial system was shaken from its roots because that event, besides showing the weakness of Spain, generated the questioning of the legitimacy and legality of the colonial government. The Creole aristocratic elite viewed those events with suspicion, doubts and fears, but they were also clear that it was a juncture that offered them

opportunities to obtain political benefits and seek independence.

Simón Bergaño y Villegar describes the situation of the Kingdom of Guatemala in a letter sent to his friend Mr. Agustín Pomposo Fernández:

"The people know that they are without a king and nothing is given to them as the number of Europeans does not exceed 100 to 150, only they are the ones who could have done something, because the Creoles are generally selfish, inert, poltroons and disloyal, without the slightest attachment to the mother country, and only desire to change the system without considering the benefits they owe and that they had a king who, far from harming them, without taking a single real in Guatemala, has granted them a thousand favors in agriculture and commerce; He has built more than 20 temples in this new city for them, brought them water from over 3 leagues away, and sends them 300 pesos every year as a supplement because the revenues are not enough to cover expenses. I assure your grace that this troubles me, and I am afraid there might be a noisy altercation as soon as any Creole clashes with a Gachupin. The Indians of the province of Quetzaltenango, informed by the Creoles about what happened in Spain, have refused to pay the tribute. I fear that the other provinces will imitate them, that

⁷⁰ Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Agonías del Capitalismo*. Op. Cit. p. 4.

they might commit some offense against any Mayor: that it will be necessary to leave them unpunished: that they will gain confidence, and finally that everything will culminate in a Sicilian Vespers, in a revolution whose results must be fatal. I fear everything, and everything will happen if things do not take a good turn in Spain. The government, with a profound silence, does not allow the publication of a gazette, except for a few loose papers, copies of those from Madrid.

The odious and unfounded antipathy that was inflaming there between Creoles and Gachupines, but fortunately calmed down, continues to reign here as well. Just as they stood like statues when they should have filled the air with cheers for Fernando, they now remain silent due to a lack of energy; they act so enervated, so subdued, and live, or rather vegetate, with such parsimony that I do not believe there are people more foolish under the sun than these. Ah! if God would take me out of it, how many thanks I would give Him! But it is necessary to render them for everything...”⁷¹

The political differences between the Guatemalan elites and the Spanish government have been growing ever since. In 1815, Ferdinand VII, already released

from captivity, heard about the instructions that the Guatemala City Council gave to his congressman Larrazábal. This document catalogued him as seditious arguing that:

“...many propositions of the National Assembly of France are copied to the letter, and it is this that has kindled in these countries the fire of discord and caused the revolution of some provinces...”⁷²

By agreement of King Ferdinand VII, those Creoles became seditious.⁷³

The monarch thus placed as political opponents of the monarchy the most powerful group of the kingdom. Other measures of that decree ordered: to erase from the portraits of Aycinena, Larrazábal and Pavón all the inscriptions to their representations, leaving only their bodies, coats of arms and others that do not oppose the agreement of August 22, 1815. Finally, the instructions were ordered to be burned in a public square in December of the same year.

The Guatemalan Creoles were looking for more political space and their attitude was vindicating their interests. On October 7, 1820, they asked their congressman to the Cortes, Julian de Urruela, to congratulate the Galician and Navarrese representatives for their generosity and justice in claiming from the King the unequal representation of the Americans in the aforementioned Congress. They also ask their

affected Creoles from their posts. Boletín del Archivo de gobierno, Tomo IV. P. 77, notes that the Captain General "... removed Peinado from the Government and Intendancy of San Salvador, Polomo from the Chancery of this Audiencia, and from all his Council offices and other jobs he held."

⁷¹ Agea. Sig. B. 27 Leg. 31 Exp. 771 Fol 95 al 96, vuelto

⁷² Boletín del Archivo de Gobierno, Tomo IV. P. 34

⁷³ The head of the colonial government, Bustamante, ordered the instructions to be burned by executioner in a public act and removed the

congressman to protest and energetically claim their rights. The congressman Urruela, for his part, informed the City Council of the failure of his presence in the Cortes "because his ideas and individual desires are worthless if they are not founded, or if they are supported according to the general system".⁷⁴

Thus, if the Cortes had been seen as an opportunity for equality for the Creoles, in 1820 they were convinced of the opposite and the Spanish nation was no longer their interest. The following paragraph by Vizcardo y Guzmán is illustrative in this regard:

*"The interests of our country, being none other than our own, its good or bad administration necessarily falls upon us. It is evident that the right to oversee it belongs solely to us, and that only we can fulfill its functions, to the mutual benefit of the homeland and ourselves".*⁷⁵

On March 9, 1821, Gabino Gainza took possession of the colonial government. Marure describes it as follows:

*"Suitable for governing in those circumstances, susceptible to the impressions they wanted to give him, his naturally unstable character followed the direction given to affairs by the regulators of opinion in Guatemala".*⁷⁶

Thus, Marure adds, the situation was practically decided. The men who had influence in business agreed to proclaim independence, the people were also in agreement, and they differed only as to the means of execution.⁷⁷

By 1821, the independence process had intensified, the political discourse was fierier and more direct. Homeland, freedom, citizenship and the end of despotism were part of a common terminology. In short, on September 15, 1821, the Creoles, particularly the elites, the monopolistic merchants, achieved conservative independence. In this sense, they projected the continuity of the colonial situation without the Spanish government, thus recovering what they considered usurped: the government of those lands.

The form of independence preferred by the Creole elite was explained in the Guatemala City Council on September 4 of that year, 1821. Integrated by Saturnino Campo y Ariza, Antonio Robles, José Antonio de Larrave, Pedro José Valenzuela, Romualdo Quiñónez, Manuel Stez. De Perales, José Petit, Pedro Sologastua, José Jerónimo Cladera and Mr. Isidro del Vale y Castricciones, the municipal corporation stated:

*"...the current revolution in North America does not have a character similar to the previous one: there have been no abhorrent hostilities, humanity has been respected, and the rights of man have not been violated".*⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 104-105

⁷⁵ Cazali Avila, Augusto. Pensamiento de la Independencia, Op. Cit. pp. 17 y 18.

⁷⁶ Marure, Alejandro, Bosquejo Histórico de las Revoluciones de Centroamérica. Cit. p. 60.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Boletín del Archivo de Gobierno. Tomo IV. P. 124.

Valle shared the idea of that "peaceful revolution". Revolutions, he argued, occur as a reaction of freedom against oppression and generally produce blood, crime and revenge. Therefore, he continues, he advocates a prudent reaction to oppression. Not a physical reaction but a moral one. He maintains that any variation, revolution, made by the people can only be happy when indicated by them, is executed by the government itself. In the end he concludes that "What is needed is to transform the government, not to destroy it".⁷⁹

The new nation assumed a conservative character, for example, in the text of the Act of Independence, the words liberty or republic do not appear even once. In stating the above, Andrés Townsend affirms that the separation of Guatemala was consumed by the skillful and timely conversion of its leading and privileged sectors, as a prudent antidote to radical proclamations.⁸⁰ In addition to the Act of September 1821, the above can be seen in the Bando of September 17 of Gabino Gainza, which declares the full validity of the previous law and order. It is worth saying that the colonial structure remained intact internally: a colony without a King.

Valle highlights the conservative strategy to build the new nation. Not allowing crimes to be committed in its name. He advocates pacifism, moderation, tranquility and the power of opinion. According to him, it was the power of

opinion that brought about the proclamation of independence in peace and quiet, without deaths. He therefore emphasizes the need to direct opinion.⁸¹

Valle was clear about the need to create the imaginary of national belonging. That opinion of the individuals who compose it that consists of feeling part of it for reasons that were also oriented to them. That of course would be a task of the new Republic, of the new State and the task would have to be the construction of the Republic of letters.

The Republic of Letters

One of the enlightened ideals in relation to the nation consists in the establishment of the Republic of Letters. As explained in the first chapter of this work, it aims to unite the various societies that make up the nation through common elements: tastes, pleasures, reading and language, political thought, etc. The Republic of Letters is a formative commitment to be assumed by the leaders of the nation, using the educational system and the different vehicles for the transmission of ideas.

In Guatemala the project of the Republic of Letter has been very weak, the current illiteracy rate is a fact that confirms this statement, as well as the deficit of educational coverage at the national level.

At the end of the colonial society, the University of San Carlos of Guatemala⁸² played an important role in training intellectuals with a high academic

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 204

⁸⁰ Townsend, Andrés. Fundación de la República. Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública. Tomo I, 1958. p. 16.

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 205

⁸² In accordance with the enlightened spirit of the Bourbons, Charles III implemented an academic reform in which he sought to: defend the privileges of the crown, replace scholasticism with the scientific method and establish a taste for the simple life instead of the pompous. Those changes will place the University of San

level. Those, John Tate argues, in addition to signing the Act of Independence, took the reins of the new government.⁸³ San Carlos graduates were part of the founders of the nation, of those who imagined, thought and built it. As Tate states, they knew the paths that led to Newton and embraced the cause of popular sovereignty. The University was not a revolutionary focus;⁸⁴ however, it formed people with the necessary intellectual tools that allowed them to exercise political leadership. The intellectual conception of the cause of independence was, to a great extent, gestated at the University.

In short, the delegates who assumed the responsibility of declaring Independence on September 15 were mainly sons and daughters of the University of San Carlos.⁸⁵

That university was for the privileged, especially for the Creole elite, despite the fact that in 1812, as a result of the establishment of the Spanish Constitution, it was decreed that Spanish subjects of African origin could be admitted to universities, seminaries, take the habit of religious communities and receive Holy Orders.

Among those who asked to build the Republic of Letters, voices were heard that expressed the "need" to instruct the Indian, José Cecilio del Valle was one of those voices. In this regard, he expressed that "If the Indian is ignorant and the Spaniard is wise, the latter should enlighten the former, do him good, teach him his rights."⁸⁶

Son of his time and representative of a privileged social sector, Valle,⁸⁷ in exhorting that work, also made visible the prejudices that those of his class had about that exploited and marginalized subject: the Indian is ignorant, stupid.

The time of independence was a time of the enlightened ideal: to free human beings from their intellectual slavery so that they could reason for themselves. The enlightened of those times knew it and would try to educate their children in that way. Simon Bergaño y Villegas⁸⁸ explained how he would educate his children. If he had them, he writes:

"I would impose on them the fundamental principles of religion, persuading them of what they should believe, and why cause

Carlos de Guatemala as one of the most advanced of the Spanish colonies in America, at the forefront of the academic movement.

⁸³ Tate, John. *La ilustración en la Universidad de San Carlos*. Editorial Universitaria. Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 1976. P. 471.

⁸⁴ Although the University was not a revolutionary focus, on April 30, 1810 it was ordered to close along with the other colleges. This measure lasted almost a year because on April 16, 1811 it was revoked.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 515.

⁸⁶ Cazali Avila, Augusto. *Op. Cit.* p. 214.

⁸⁷ José Cecilio del Valle (1870-1834) is credited with the drafting of the 1821 Independence Act, the responsibility for clauses limiting the triumph of more progressive ideas, the maintenance of colonial authorities, etc.

However, his erudition, talent and dedicated services to the nation and its construction should be highlighted. In his newspaper, *El Amigo de la Patria*, he promoted ideas on free trade, economic development and the political progress of the American nations. He was twice candidate to the presidency of the Central American Federation, in 1825 and 1830, but lost to Arce and Morazán.

⁸⁸ Simon appears in 1804 as director of the *Gaceta de Guatemala*. Poet and journalist, he published several articles. In 1806 he was denounced before the Holy Office by the archbishop, who accused him of publishing articles contrary to the faith, morals and political stability of the Kingdom. He was condemned in 1808 for promoting division between Americans and Spaniards. After being deported to Havana, he died in that city in 1812.

*them to stop at the explanation of faith, because they are subject to the reason of its foundations.”*⁸⁹

The intellectuals who were building the nation were familiar with the enlightened ideal of the Republic of Letters, some efforts made in function of it, particularly in the training of its kind. There was also some concern for educating the indigenous. An illustrative example is the point made by the city council of Nicaragua that the happiness of a Republic is reduced to its customs and its major obstacles are its vices. Its enlightened character can be seen in the preponderant role assigned to public education, which is referred to as "the best arbitrary". That corporation also expressed its concern for the ignorance and dejection of the Indians, considering it necessary to educate them. Along with their intentions, which revolved around building the Republic of Letters, two of the prejudices that the elites had about the Indian, being alcoholic and lazy, are also observed. For this reason, his speech explained that the proliferation of "liquor stalls" was the greatest obstacle to the improvement of customs. The Royal Treasury, they explained, "earns money, but loses because drunkenness harms agriculture and commerce". It should be remembered that this same Nicaraguan town council claimed the need for the repartimientos and other personal services as a necessity and resource to avoid idleness and vices, after they had been suppressed by the Spanish government.

As for the intentions of the Nicaraguan City Council, a contradiction can be distinguished: on the one hand, it

supports the education of the Indians and on the other hand, it intends to keep them as forced laborers, in addition to forcing them to accept repartimientos. Is this a contradiction in its enlightened conception? It could be argued that one cannot be enlightened for one thing and not for another. However, we must remember that the Enlightenment, in its dialectic, has both a positive and a negative aspect as an instrument of oppression. Therefore, the pragmatic conclusion is understood regarding the consequent benefits of the continuation of that reality of material and spiritual poverty for the oppressed sectors. That conclusion did not benefit national consolidation, but rather the selfish interests of the elites. In summary, the enlightened essence manifests in the use made of reason, and its dialectical nature shows the instrumentalization of thought for subjugation.

Freedom of the Press

An essential element for the strengthening of the Republic of Letters is the freedom of the press. Intellectual debate through the written word in different media (press, books, poems and even pasquinades) represented a fundamental right for enlightened intellectuals. Free speech was a manifestation of their sovereignty.

Freedom of the press was a right included in the Spanish fundamental law, the Constitution of Cadiz, as a factor of first order for civil liberty. At that time, Spanish journalism was already a tradition, as the *Gazeta de Madrid* had

⁸⁹ Cazali Avila, Augusto. Op. Cit. p. 114.

begun to be published at the beginning of the 18th century, followed by those of Peru and Mexico. Finally, the *Gazeta de Guatemala* began to be published by Sebastián Arévalo in the year of 1729.

The troubled times of 1820 led the Spanish government to establish a Supreme Board of Censorship,⁹⁰ however, prominent Guatemalan liberals participated in it, who knew how to allow the circulation of ideas without major mishaps.

The printing press, Alejandro Marure argued, "was a powerful aid in carrying out the important plan of emancipation."⁹¹ Dr. Pedro Molina,⁹² together with Barrundia, Montúfar, Castilla and Zabadúa began publishing the Constitutional Editor,⁹³ which embraced the idea of patriotic awakening. It defended the rights of the American and criticized the vices of the colonial administration. At the same time, the *Amigo de la Patria*⁹⁴ appeared, which included articles on scientific subjects, the advantages of civilization, etc. It was also a tribune where Molina's ideas were debated. The divergences between Molina and Valle, Marure points out, were due to their party militancy. Valle belonged to the Gazista or Baco party, formed by European Spaniards and the aristocratic

class. Molina, on the other hand, belonged to the Cacos, a party made up of noble families and most of the so-called independents.⁹⁵

The circulation of enlightened ideas became normal in the colonies. John Tate refers that Ignacio Beteta mentions the contamination brought by La Condamine, Mutis, Humboldt and Boupland. Indeed, according to Tate, there was an "intercolonial intellectual phenomenon". Mutis, for example, corresponded with Guatemalans and published articles in the *Gazeta de Guatemala*. In addition to scientific expeditions, the circulation of revolutionary enlightened ideas was considerable due to the large number of Frenchmen who came to settle in these colonies.⁹⁶

Political catechisms that taught the interpretation of constitutional ideas also circulated. Ignacio Beteta published "Catecismo politico para la instrucción del pueblo español". Its cost was 2 ½ reales. The publication was published in the *Gazeta de Guatemala* on April 6, 1810.⁹⁷

Spaces for sociability: gatherings

The dissemination of ideas led to the generation of spaces for their

⁹⁰ The Supreme Board of Censorship was composed as follows: In the ecclesiastics' class, Dr. Juan José Batres, city priest, Dr. José María Alvares, university professor; in the seculars class, Dr. Pedro Molina, Mr. José Barrundia and Mr. Venancio López; alternate, Dr. Pedro Ruiz de Bustamante, Lic. Francisco Xavier Barutia and Mr. Felipe Neri del Barrio.

⁹¹ Marure, Alejandro. *Bosquejo de las Revoluciones en Centroamérica*. Op. Cit. P. 58.

⁹² Pedro Molina, physician graduated from Universidad de San Carlos. He was a member of the first triumvirate of the United Provinces of Central America, deputy to the Federal Constituent, Head of State of Guatemala and participated in several legislatures. He wrote

Philosophical-Political Thoughts, Memoirs and essays on International Law.

⁹³ It was founded in 1820 and its post was biannual, with annual subscriptions. Its cost was of 4 pesos 4 reales in the capital with a surcharge out of it.

⁹⁴ On October 16, 1820 the newspaper "El Amigo de la patria" was founded. It was sold in Guatemala City for 1 real and would be added to the shipping cost for other places.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ John, Tate. Op. Cit. pp. 487 a 489.

⁹⁷ Medina, José Toribio, *La Imprenta en Guatemala*. Guatemala: Editorial José de Pineda Ibarra, Tomo II, 1960. p. 489.

realization. They are called spaces of sociability. Depending on the political conditions of the kingdom, those discussions were held in private, in the intimacy of the houses, the cell of a monk, or the lodging of a student, as gatherings. In the gatherings, like-minded people met for friendship and culture. In that intimacy, explains Xavier Guerra, they sought freedom of relationships and words that they did not have in public places.⁹⁸ In Mexico, highlight Guerra, cafes and grocery stores were under surveillance, as they were considered spaces conducive to insurrection. In Guatemala, an interesting example is that of the barbershops. In this regard, the legal process followed by the barber Vilchez⁹⁹, accused of being a popular leader, Bonapartist agent and disseminator of revolutionary ideas, is interesting. Of course, public spaces were unavoidable when the enlightened sought to spread their ideas, build public opinion and gain followers for their cause. Thus in 1820, a person in the variety section of the *Editor Constitucional* wrote:

*“One of these days, amidst a large crowd of people and amidst the din of drums, acclamations, music and fireworks, celebrating the publication of our famous Constitution, I found myself in a cone of several people listening attentively to what a student was saying”.*¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Guerra, Xavier. Op. Cit. pp. 94 y 95.

⁹⁹ Traditional barbershops have been gathering places in Guatemala. In addition to discussions ranging from scientific topics to gossip and jokes, it was customary to read poems, play checkers and also the interpretation of music using the guitar or accordion, mainly. Humberto transfers in this respect a quote that literally indicates

The enlightened discussion began in private spaces, it is in the revolutionary period in France, during the French Revolution, when we begin to see how new forms of sociability are spreading to lower sectors of society. Thus, the meetings leave the private sphere to public and semi-public places, cafes, diners, taverns, grocery stores, barbershops, etc. In this way the elites can use crowds in certain acts.

In short, they are those spaces of sociability that allow the dissemination of modern, religious, cultural, scientific and political ideas. For them, their presence was fundamental for the independence of Latin American nations.

It is important to point out that from "gathering" conversations arose the idea of publishing a newspaper that would broaden the scope of the private discussion held in those days by Mr. Juan y Manuel Montúfar, José Barrundia, Marcial Zebadúa, José Vicente García Granados and others who met at the House of Canon Dr. José María Castilla. That newspaper was called "El Editor Constitucional" and was directed by Dr. Pedro Molina, with the help of Juan Montúfar and José Barrundia. That gathering of liberal intellectuals also included José Matías Delgado, all called "cacos", an allusion to thieves and cowards by their enemies.¹⁰¹

In Guatemala many gatherings were also called Patriotic Boards that began to proliferate with the arrival of the new 19th century. Among others were: the

"...Vilches used to meet frequently at the Barbería del Maestro Narciso" (Master Narciso's Barbershop). Samayoa Guevara, Humberto. Ensayo sobre la independencia de Centroamérica. Guatemala: Editorial José de Pineda Ibarra. 1972. P. 198.

¹⁰⁰ Cazali Avila. Op. Cit. p. 137.

¹⁰¹ Tate John. Op. Cit. p. 512.

University of San Carlos, whose headquarters was the main General of the building of the same, and the parishes of San Sebastian and Los Remedios. These were established by Decree of the Cortes on October 21, 1820. The main objective of these gatherings was to periodically bring people together to discuss political issues.

The concern of the Patriotic Boards during the revolutionary era in Latin America, according to Juan Carlos Chiaramonte, was political, asking questions about how to build the nation, for example: How to replace the domination of the Castilian monarchy, what form of political association to adopt, what procedures of political representation were most convenient, what limits political participation should have, what resources should be provided to politically form the subject of sovereignty, etc.¹⁰² For the rest, it must be concluded that the patriotic Gatherings were the embryonic form of the parties in the American revolutions, in Guatemala the case of the Cacos is illustrative.

The pasquinades

Political persecution, imprisonment, punishments, expatriation and death were punishments for people accused of sedition. Manifesting political ideas and criticisms against the government, the colonial bureaucracy and the powerful families of the colonies were catalogued as seditious acts, contrary to Spanish morals and good customs. In the face of such measures, anonymity was one

of the resources to evade repressive actions during the independence period. The anonymous written media par excellence was the pasquinade.

Although 1808 is a very problematic year and of Spanish political instability, for a long time it was seen how the discontent in the colonies towards the colonial situation was on the rise. The pasquinades are documents that testify to that hostile and critical environment. On March 18, 1807, there is news in Guatemala about the circulation of pasquinades in El Salvador. The document that informs about that situation to the Guatemalan authorities qualifies the situation as "very immediate time of insurrection".¹⁰³ One of the pasquinades read as follows:

*"Your pride and your haughtiness
In the world has not been seen
For to your sinister side, you bring
Him who is on earth Christ".¹⁰⁴*

In 1808 several pasquinades proliferated, one of them was pasted on the door of the house of the priest Domingo Juárez, uncle of the first Mayor of the city of Guatemala, Mr. Antonio Juárez, and stated the following:

*"The sovereign majesty of this
town or its Deputation, with
authority, demands: accusing him
with Treason in consenting the
occupation of the Government and
public Administration that
Legitimately Belongs to him today,
protesting to him to charge him in*

¹⁰² Chiaramonte, José Carlos. Ciudades, Provincias, Estados. Orígenes de la nación Argentina (1800-1826) Buenos Aires. Ariel Historia, 1997. p. 112.

¹⁰³ SIG. B2 12 Leg. 914 Exp. 41.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

due time, for not recovering in his Rights. Nobody will take away the penalty of his life.

On the reverse, it read:

*“If you think with honor, do not fear; lend the Voice of the People that does not need your arms”.*¹⁰⁵

On July 6, 1810, President Antonio Gonzalez y Saravia ordered the burning in the bonfire of the Public Square of several pasquinades. Among others are mentioned: “Proclama by José Bonaparte”, “Hablando con el alto Clero”, “Exortaciones de un Criollo español asus conciudadanos de América”.¹⁰⁶

As the political tension in the metropolis rose, so did it in the colony and with it the proliferation of pasquinades. In 1821 the alderman Larrave informed the city council "...that as a consequence of the latest news from New Spain there have been some disturbances in the neighborhood, there has been an increase of rumors and pasquinades on the walls, directed against American Spaniards as well as against Europeans and that in the shadow of this, all kinds of crimes are committed, mainly in the lower town, which is becoming more and more bloodthirsty and terrible every day..."¹⁰⁷

In relation to the pasquinades, legal proceedings were brought against several people in Guatemala City. Mr. Ramon Bengoechea, Mr. Emilio Gómez and Manuel Bolaños were accused of being the authors of pasquinades that treated religious and secular people badly. Dr.

Pedro Arrechea, Mr. Pedro José Urruela, Mr. Mariano Bedoya, Mr. Juan Bautista Poggio, Mr. Silvestre Peñaranda, parents or guardian of Jose Maria Estrada, Mr. Mariano Córdova and Mr. Lorenzo Hidalgo were warned for reading them in their homes and taking copies of them.

In conclusion, a manifestation of the political struggle of the independence era were the political pasquinades. These, in addition to the written political message they disseminated, spread rumors among the poor population, which spread like wildfire, and at the same time inflamed the spirits.

Poems, orations and political literary expressions

Poems were vehicles for conveying either political messages or enlightened ideas. Simón Bergaño y Villegas in a letter to his friend Mr. Agustin Pomposo wrote the following poem:

*“I caress her,
She caresses me,
I sigh,
She sighs,
She understands me,
I understand her,
I ignite her,
I ignite myself,
Our chests in Love...”*¹⁰⁸

That love poem, daring for the time and traditional society, loaded with religiosity and prejudices, evidences the exercise of individual freedom, an eminently enlightened trait.

¹⁰⁵ Boletín del Archivo, Tomo IV. P. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 121.

¹⁰⁸ AGCA. B 27 LEG 31 EXP 771 FOL. 95 vto. Al 96 vto.

The political discourse used orations, poems and other literary manifestations. Let's look at some of them.

Ala patria

It was intended to obtain the love to her, José María Castilla,¹⁰⁹ in this regard pointed out:

*“dulces est amor patriae;
dulce videre suos”*¹¹⁰

Francisco Miranda wrote calling for sacrifice to build the American homeland:

*“Either life forever,
or the sacrifice of all of us
for the happiness of the homeland”.*¹¹¹

José Cecilio del Valle also used the metaphor to obtain the enlightened patriotic love, that is, to love not only for having been born on earth, but also for the rights it grants. In this regard he wrote:

*“Oh, dear homeland where were born
The ones I love the most
Your rights are mine,
Those of my friends and my countrymen,
I swear to uphold them as long as I live.
I swear to say when I die:
Children, defend America!”*¹¹²

A la libertad

¹⁰⁹ José was one of the driving forces behind Central American independence. Born in Plascencia, Spain, he arrived in Guatemala in 1811, with an ecclesiastical position granted by the court. He identified himself with the Central American people and in 1820 he was already part of the patriotic gathering headed by Dr. Molina. In the meeting of September 15, 1821, he was one of the most determined to proclaim independence.

*“People of Guatemala,
You have raised today the national life:
You were once the center of oppression
You are today the center of freedom”.*¹¹³

Francisco in his Oration to Freedom expressed:

*“The people raise their voice in
Guatemala;
And it is the organ of the rights
of the new homeland.
Independence shout villages, towns,
and cities.*

*Never a stronger and more harmonious
cry
Announced to the world a national
sentiment
Nor more clearly pronounced
The will of the sovereign”.*¹¹⁴

Freedom was the end of the enlightenment. Political discourse was aimed at forming opinion as to the need to obtain it.

*“Freedom, divine gift given to men
By the Creator to ease their sorrows,
I bless you!
The Americans have erected for you an
indestructible altar,
You will wield on our behalf
The sword of justice,
And tyranny will cease to exist”.*¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Discursos Patrióticos. Guatemala: Editorial José de Pineda Ibarra, 1970. p. 15.

¹¹¹ Cazali Avila. Op. Cit. p. 45

¹¹² Ibid. p. 239

¹¹³ Ibid. Oración a la libertad por Francisco Barrundia. p. 46

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 45

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 19 y 20.

Of course, the historical moment provided themes and inspiration to the authors. The election of the congressman to the Cortes of Guatemala City prompted the following message:

*"Al derecho y al revés
No va Pavón
Nova Pavo n".¹¹⁶*

(This phrase, when read both forwards and backwards, emphasizes that Pavón will not go or be elected)

Thus, we observe the following Quintas in favor of the Mexican Empire:

"If a foolish republican
Is troubled by his doubts,
There is a noble citizen
Who firmly and steadily swears
Allegiance to the Mexican Empire.
If someone with insane judgment
Cries out for a republic,
An artisan also says,
'Swear, you cursed minds,
To the Mexican Empire.'
The man of sound mind,
Choosing the best,
Gets to work
By naming him
Emperor Of the Mexican Empire".¹¹⁷

Dialectics of the Enlightenment and the exclusionary character of the Guatemalan nation.

One of the factors that initially drove the independence movement was the fear of political mobilization by the lower classes. The fear of the dominant groups towards the dominated majority, given the characteristics of exclusion, marginalization and lack of opportunities, is a characteristic that continues to this day.

The colonial regime adopted a racist and discriminatory attitude, especially towards the indigenous people. Faithful to the colonial ideology that had relegated them to 'minority status', the Spanish crown justified protectionist policies towards the indigenous people, which, as Julio Pinto Soria argues, were aimed at control, exploitation, and alienation. After 1821, to the extent that the indigenous people entered into contradiction with the project of an enlightened nation, the discriminatory vision would be taken to other extremes. Thus, concludes Pinto Soria, as a minor, became an obstacle and adversary of progress.¹¹⁸

According to the above considerations, the national State was established, first Central American and then Guatemalan. That new sociability, understood by its builders as a vast association of individuals voluntarily united, whose whole constitutes the nation or people, defined the indigenous groups as of traditional type, with their different links and values, contrary to man and his freedom. From the perspective of enlightened modernism, a guiding line materializes, which is the struggle to make

¹¹⁶ García la Guarda, Jorge Mario. Centroamérica en las Cortes de Cádiz. México. Fondo de Cultura Económica. p. 103.

¹¹⁷ Valenzuela, Gilberto. La imprenta en Guatemala. Guatemala. Tipografía Nacional, 1961. p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Pinto Soria, Julio. "Ladinos e Indígenas en la nación criolla guatemalteca: de la colonia al régimen conservador". Guatemala Boletín No. 36. CEUR. USAC. 1998. p.28.

the social actors of the old regime disappear. By virtue of the above, it should be considered in the analysis of the construction of the national State, Central American or Guatemalan, that the policies of homogenization and racial whitening implemented to Indians and castes, were not only a manifestation of racism of the elites and forgers of the State. They were also part of the movement of the mental universe of modernity.

Enlightened, according to Kant, is man's emergence from his self-culpable minority. This means inability to use his own understanding without the guidance of another. That was precisely the status of the Indian in the new nation, that of a minor. Incapable of understanding without the guidance of another, incapable of understanding guided by reason. Thus, the Indian was outside the unity of the system. Better said, in this way they took the Indian out of the unity of the system, inventing a myth, that of his irrationality. But where did they get that irrationality from? Undoubtedly from the tangible things, the observable characteristics, from the images of those subjects who were transformed after a lifetime of colonial oppression, for example their illiteracy and their culture so foreign to the western, or enlightened. The system becomes then, a certain collective unity as an end of the acts of understanding.

Finally, the Indian was conveniently excluded from the nation's founding elites, thus fulfilling the enlightened precept that reads: "No one is different from what they have become, a useful member, successful or failed, of professional and national groups".¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Arturo Taracena, *Op. Cit.* p. 39

¹²⁰ Arturo Taracena, *Op. Cit.* p. 39

Exclusion and assimilation of the Indian

The Guatemalan state, Arturo Taracena argues, continues to consider that as long as indigenous people insist on being and behaving as an ethnic group, they will continue to be considered subordinate groups and therefore susceptible to segregation. Their assimilation is conditioned to their renunciation of their ethnicity. After this, Taracena adds, the need for domination of the minorities over the indigenous majorities is imposed. To date, the indigenous struggle for ethnicity has been taken as a rejection of nationality and nation. A situation that in the end results in what the dominant minority desires, justifying the situation of oppression and its self-preservation.¹²⁰

The domination of minorities over majorities is part of enlightened reason, of its dialectics. From that thought it is maintained that life is only possible if the status of the ruling minorities is preserved. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, this would be the reasoning that guarantees their own security with the survival of all.¹²¹ Therefore, the Creole elite had to remain in power after independence in order to guarantee the republican life of all. The Creoles conditioned its existence, perhaps that is why it failed. Then they did it in Guatemala, where they succeeded.

Exclusion and weakness of the subject

Let us remember that from the Enlightenment perspective, women bear the stigma of weakness. This weakness

¹²¹ Horkheimer y Adorno. *Op. Cit.* p.84.

renders them a minority, even where they are not numerically so. Similarly, this happens to the Guatemalan indigenous people. Horkheimer and Adorno explain that in the case of subjugated natives, inferior in organization and weaponry to the conquerors, their inability to defend themselves constitutes the legal title for their oppression.¹²² In Guatemala, this situation also occurred after independence, with the construction of the national State, particularly during the liberal era, a situation that justifies its designation as the 'second conquest'. It should be added that for the same reasons it is concluded that in Guatemala the most oppressed social sector is that of indigenous women, for being women and additionally indigenous.

Prejudices and Stigmas: The Exclusion of Guardianship

In Guatemala, Taracena argues, state-building tasks became a priority over the invention of the nation, with the added difficulty that the need to fill the void left by the colonial pact fueled tension between "ancient liberties" of pactist origin and the conception of liberty of natural law origin and the idea of constructing popular citizenship. Thus, he continues, although Latin American liberalism was more than an anti-corporate reformist movement and reversed the logic of absolutism by theorizing that without electoral representation there is no relationship between State and nation, by restricting citizenship for any of the reasons, census, educational, ethnic, political and economic, it prevented it

from developing successful national projects, as in the Guatemalan case.¹²³

In this regard, a document dated 1840 stated:

*"The District Attorney says: that the corregidor of totonicapán consults on the observance of the law 27 title 1, Book 6 of the Recopilación de Yndias relative to the privileges that the Indians should enjoy in the sales of their goods, similar to those enjoyed by minors, and for the benefit of their defenseless persons due to their condition, and lack of lights."*¹²⁴

Let us not be surprised, then, by the actions of the nation's founding elites with regard to the Indian and his exclusion from the national State. Indeed, they acted according to their enlightened formation that coincided with their class interests. As Horkheimer and Adorno make clear, in the end the Enlightenment is a bourgeois current that instrumentalizes class rule!¹²⁵

The exclusionary reasoning towards the Indian shows two faces, the first one recognizing equality as a premise to build the nation and the second one identifying the incapacity of some social sectors, especially the Indian. For example, Mr. José María Castilla, in his sermon delivered in the metropolitan cathedral church of Guatemala on September 23, 1821, said:

"There is no distinction between Ladino and Indian, between Black and White, between European and

¹²² Max Horkheimer y T. Adorno. Op. Cit. p. 155.

¹²³ Taracena, Arturo. Op. Cit. p. 29.

¹²⁴ AGCA, LEG. 3633 EXP.85338.

¹²⁵ Horkheimer y Adorno. Op. Cit. p.129.

American: may fraternity and peace, the favorite daughters of liberty, tighten our bonds more and more, and form us all into one heart, one desire, one soul".¹²⁶

We understand that the priest is merely describing the differences that were actually observed at the time of independence. His speech is an exhortation to formally eliminate them in order to build a nation. He goes on to express that:

*"America, this beautiful portion of the world, had been conquered by Spain, one of the nations of Europe. America, in the infancy of religion and civilization, had not been able to take care of its freedom."*¹²⁷

Here the canon justifies the guardianship of the Indian as being like a child.

The era of Independence favored the elaboration of discourses that justified the separation. Intellectuals argued that the poverty, health and backwardness of the Indians were a consequence of colonial dependence. After Independence was achieved, other explanations were sought, the most widely used being the presence of the Indian. In this context, the Indian became an obstacle for the nation. One task to build it was to assimilate the Indian, Latinizing him. As a hero of independence and educator, Matías de Córdova proposed the need to homogenize society based on

the Spanish model. For this he proposed cultural integration. Cultural diversity and within it, languages became obstacles for the nation: "...it is a strong wall between them and us, so pernicious that it disunites the bond of society".¹²⁸ De Córdova reflects on Latinization, Hispanicization and literacy. His imprint was so deep that Samayoa Guevara notes that in 1961, in the First National Seminar on Problems of Guatemalan Education, Development and Resolutions, concepts analogous to those expressed by Fray Matías.¹²⁹

It is interesting to recall that the study of indigenous languages was discarded from university instruction, thus, John Tate argues, the Enlightenment progressed in direct relation to the decline of indigenous languages and Latin spoken in the universities.¹³⁰ Let us ask ourselves then, how to explain the above attitude, why reject other cultures and languages? The answer is given by the totalitarian character of the enlightenment. The Enlightenment rejects contradictions "at every spiritual resistance it encounters, its strength only increases".¹³¹

Taracena Arriola affirms that since 1808, with the construction of the Spanish nation, there was already talk of assimilation of Indians and castes. To do so, they had to overcome their barbaric condition, it was necessary to civilize them. Education played a fundamental role here, enabling them to become better agricultural producers, contribute to consumption and increase the domestic market. With independence, the new states assumed republicanism, where the

¹²⁶ Boletín del Archivo de Gobierno. Tomo IV, p.160.

Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p.

¹²⁸ Samayoa Guevara, Op. Cit. p.64.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Tate, John. Op. Cit. pp. 3 y 4.

¹³¹ Horkheimer y Adorno. Op. Cit. p. 62.

civilizing process became a requirement for obtaining citizenship. Civilized meant to speak Spanish, to dress in the western style, to get out of economic isolation and to consume, to be freed from servile jobs and burdens. The states would then demand their share as agricultural producers geared in their efforts to the development of export products such as grains and coffee. The assimilation had an economic hurdle, an insurmountable obstacle, the forced labor of the indigenous people. This situation meant the segregation of the indigenous people, in spite of the constitutional laws of a universal nature.¹³²

Indigenous assimilation, Taracena points out, had to face another obstacle, the ideological discourse of "barbarians". They were designated as the product of a historic-cultural "degeneration". A conceptual charge that had taken on its own dimension in the development of the Guatemalan intellectual of the 19th century.¹³³ Indeed, Enlightenment theory, as Horkheimer and Adorno remind us, substituted fire and torture for the stigma with which it marked all irrationality as leading to ruin. In short, what is not enlightenment is irrational. Thus, he marked his stigma of barbarian, savage, lazy, reluctant to progress, irrational, uncivilized, etc.¹³⁴

Those prejudices, stigmas of the Indian, were used as justifications to implement a variety of projects and policies to "civilize" the Indian. Matías de Córdova, for example, wrote an essay on "Utilities of having all the Indians and ladinos dressed and shod in Spanish style

and the means to achieve this without violence, coercion, or command". His enlightened reasoning held the following:

"We must assume that everyone wants to dress decently. Indigenous people would cease to be men if they lacked self-esteem, by which each one values himself more than anyone else. It must also be assumed that dressing decently means dressing in the manner of men of higher rank, that is, in the Spanish way".¹³⁵

In this regard, Samayoa Guevara reminds us how in De Cordova's thinking the negative memory of the Motín de Esquilache must have been alive. That violent reaction had among its origins that of changing the Spanish national costume with coercive, violent and anti-popular measures.¹³⁶

Matias de Córdova's proposal also has an economic logic.¹³⁷ In it he identifies the benefits for economic development of the indigenous people's acceptance of Western culture. This would imply the emergence of new needs for the Indian, therefore, also the urgency of satisfiers, for example: to wear shoes, to dress in the Spanish style, to use Spanish furniture, etc. The proposal includes the intention to expand the domestic market of the kingdom, a situation that would benefit factories, artisans, merchants, road improvement, etc.

Of course, the proposal also included stigmas justifying the situation of

¹³² Taracena, Arturo. Op. Cit. 36.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Horkheimer y Adorno. Op. Cit. p. 62.

¹³⁵ Samayoa Guevara, Humberto. Op. Cit. p. 63.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ AGCA, LEG B.1, LEG. 4, EXP. 67.

the Indian: the Indian as an inferior, indecent, lazy and uncivilized subject.

John Tate, reminds us that European philosophers held the thesis of American degeneration (All American animals were in the process of degeneration and both the Indians and the Europeans in America were becoming more and more inferior mentally). The stigma of the inferior was used by the intellectuals of the time of the Independence,¹³⁸ later in the national construction.

The inability of the indigenous people was justification for the limitation of citizenship rights. Particularly their inability to elect and the sale of votes was adduced.

In 1812 there were already some concerns:

*“The lofty goals for which they are convened will not be achieved either if, by carelessly disregarding the qualities and merits of the individuals who are to be chosen, it is believed, due to a culpable indifference, that everyone is worthy and suitable”.*¹³⁹

The Rights of the State and its individuals of 1839, justified the exclusion as follows:

“Although all men have equal rights by nature, their condition in society is not the same, which depends on circumstances that no human being can level. To

*establish and maintain social balance, laws protect the weak against the strong. For this reason, in all nations, even the most cultured ones, those who are particularly protected are people who, due to their gender, age, or current lack of ability, lack sufficient knowledge to understand and defend their own rights. Therefore, since the majority of the indigenous people find themselves in this latter situation, the laws must protect them in order to improve their condition, to prevent them from being defrauded of what belongs to them both collectively and individually, and to ensure that they are not disturbed in those customs and habits learned from their elders, as long as these are not contrary to good morals”.*¹⁴⁰

The draft Constitution of 1847 stated the following:

*“...seeming more liberal by granting everyone who was not disqualified the right to vote, as if it were not easy for even the disqualified to mix with the multitude, and as if an ignorant multitude, incapable of valuing the right to vote, were not capable of selling their votes to candidates and demagogues”.*¹⁴¹

In the enlightenment what could be different was equalized. Horkheimer and

¹³⁸ Tate, John. Op. Cit. P. XXXIX a XL.

¹³⁹ AGCA, LEG B.1, LEG. 4, EXP. 67.

¹⁴⁰ Contreras, Daniel. Una Rebelión Indígenas en el Partido de Totonicapán en 1820. El Indio y la

Independencia. Guatemala. Editorial Universitaria. 1968. p. 76

¹⁴¹ AGCA. Proyecto de Constitución de 1847. Reg. 0895.

Adorno argue that identity pays the price because nothing is identical to itself anymore. For the enlightenment inequality is unjust, therefore it undoes the injustice of the old inequality, the direct detonation, but it eternalizes it by universal mediation, in the relation of everything that exists with everything.¹⁴² This is how the homogenizing character of the Nation State is understood: one language, one culture, one nation. The arguments exemplified in the previous quotes are still heard today, with similar discourses and purposes to disqualify in order to exclude. From the perspective of enlightened modernity, Horkheimer and Adorno argue, men are considered to have been given their identity, distinct from others, in order to become more securely equal. But, since that self was never fully assimilated, the Enlightenment was always sympathetic to social coercion, even during the liberal period.¹⁴³ In short, equality is repressive and manifests itself in a coercive identity. This is how indigenous identities confront the enlightened identity. The enlightened identity, as its nature demands, seeks to impose its totalitarianism and annihilate the opponent. This is how the attack on the Indian is understood. For this it uses abstraction, an instrument that behaves as a destiny that eliminates, that liquidates. It is important to distinguish here that the domination of the abstract tends to deform reality.

The national ideologies of the States do not necessarily express the thoughts of all their inhabitants, as Taracena Arriola maintains, and many times they can even be ethnical, religious,

cultural and political, however, this implies the risk of not realizing an imagined community for all its inhabitants, a situation that predominates in the Guatemalan case.¹⁴⁴

The strongest law and the subjugation of the Indian

Intellect having grown according to the principles of self-preservation, Horkheimer and Adorno¹⁴⁵ argue, it recognizes a law of life: the law of the strongest. The philosophers exemplify masterfully the application of force to achieve obedience by recalling the "History of Juliette" by the Marquis de Sade. It provides a philosophical lesson illustrated as follows: when the strong apply an injury to the weak, they are merely using gifts that they have received from nature. His oppression, violence, cruelty, tyranny, injustice, are natural manifestations, the right of the stronger. Regarding the weak, enlightened reason explains that if the weak person defends himself, he commits an error, since he is going out of the character of weakness that nature imposed on him, his fault is observed in not wanting to submit himself.¹⁴⁶ Here the illustration shows his oppressive face. Violence, oppression, cruelty and injustice are constant realities in the life of the indigenous until today, as they were with Juliette. Thus, the acts committed against Juliette exemplify the development of the secret creed of the ruling classes.

¹⁴² Horkheimer y Adorno. Op. Cit. p. 67.

¹⁴³ Ibid. p. 68.

¹⁴⁴ Taracena Arriola. Op. Cit. p.28.

¹⁴⁵ Op. Cit. p. 145.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

By way of conclusion

Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno recall, surrendered to its positivist moment. It acted in the positivist sense by never confusing freedom with the exercise of self-preservation. In the name of progress or culture, the concept of freedom was suspended, progress and culture agreed against truth, leaving the field free for lies.¹⁴⁷ Thus, the Guatemalan Creoles eliminated the rights and freedom of other social groups, to build their nation according to their interests.

Is the illustration that bad? Horkheimer and Adorno do not denounce the Enlightenment, but its perversion in instrumental, identifying and reifying reason. The Enlightenment destroys itself by its origin under the sign of its domination over nature. Thus, it ends up turning against the dominant subject, reducing its own inner nature and finally its own self to a mere substratum of dominance.¹⁴⁸

Bourgeois philosophy, as such, placed science at the service of the dominant form of production. Thus, the dominant minorities benefited, who knew how to interpret, from the Enlightenment onwards, the functioning of a stable society at the behest of the dominance of the concept.¹⁴⁹

In short, the process that led to the construction of the Guatemalan national state is a clear example that shows how the Enlightenment led to become what it fought against, because instead of liberating man it subjugated him.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 93.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 30.

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