# Jutiapa National Livestock Fair. History and tradition.

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Fairs are an expression of exceptional markets; they are almost always cyclical and settled in open spaces. Due to the temporality with which they are carried out, their manifestation turns out to be planned, expected, attractive and of relevant importance. On the days when they are held, the market of various items brings together, displays and sells products made regionally, nationally and sometimes even internationally.

These events have been collective social manifestations of great significance in the history of humanity. Although their importance in European culture has been known since previous centuries,[1] in the Middle Ages, with the authorization and support of the King or the Feudal Lord, they achieved great development and reflected the rise of the economy of the time. The 11th and 13th centuries are considered by medieval historians and economists to be the heyday of fairs[2].

The appearance of medieval fairs occurred in strategic places, often next to small urban centers, established on the outskirts of cities on the banks of feudal castles or near monasteries. Since those years, fair markets, in addition to selling agricultural products, offered merchandise made in an incipient manufacturing process.

Fairs have a motive around which the commercial movement that defines their character is built. In some societies, the central axis has been the most relevant product of the region, in others, however, a saintly patron figure and in still others, a highly significant date, generally historical. These references express the economic, cultural elements and even the sociopolitical hierarchy of the people.

Throughout the history of humanity (fairs, as well as other cultural expressions), have been conceived as a symbol and practice of *civilized peoples*. The qualification of *civilized* must be understood in relation to the fact that its execution not only requires an organization, but also reflects the complex social, political and economic

1 It should be noted that in the year 600 B.C. there were already fairs in Europe. In classical civilizations, Greece and Rome expressed the great development of their commercial centers.

2 Some of the most important medieval fairs were: those of Champagne, Flanders, Languedoc, Paris, Antwerp and in Castile, those of Blorado and Sahagún, on the Way of St. James. Due to the importance for American culture, it should be mentioned that from the 13th century, with the emergence of new commercial centers and the expansion of the reconquest, other international fairs originated in Seville (1254), Badajoz (1258) and Talavera (1294). CHORDÁ, Frederic, MARTÍN, Teodoro and RIVERO, Isabel. Dictionary of historical and related terms, Madrid, Istmo, 1995. 128 p.

structure that societies that experience them have achieved.

In different communities and times, fairs have been a symbol of well-being and progress of people, they have also shown the losses and decline of the economy and, consequently, of society. Fairs have diminished or disappeared in cultures that have suffered the consequences of plagues, wars, natural disasters or other disastrous events.

On the American continent, during the so-called *pre-Hispanic* era, societies met in squares to carry out religious rites, political and cultural activities, without missing the exchange of products. Then, at the beginning of the Hispanic period, the celebration of fairs allowed empires to control the trade of their colonies. With the aim of expanding and improving production, in the 18th and 19th centuries associations of farmers and ranchers emerged in America, who needed a space in the market (or their own market to offer their products), and fairs were an appropriate place to do so.





## Background

The beginning of livestock farming in the eastern region of Guatemala gave rise and perfectioned an entire culture of spawning and breeding. Little by little, the need for exchange made it possible (even with geographical difficulties) to develop a breeding cycle that lasted almost all year round. From time to time the specimens were sold or exchanged through barter, with this the breeders acquired essential goods for the spawning of material life.

The internal mobility of livestock expressed the importance of the local and international market. The following quote illustrates significant national demand: “The San Andrés Itzapa fair was eminently livestock farming. The large consignments of cattle that were purchased at the Jutiapa fair were taken there, that market was first class.” (Salguero López, *El Imparcial*, 09-13-1982:4). At the international level, in 1953, for example, the visit of Mr. Federico Sagastume describes: “At the recently held fair, cattle arrived from the herds of the departments of Jalapa and Chiquimula, as well as the same department, and from Honduras and El Salvador. This year a large number of horses arrived from El Salvador and were sold by, as it was said; some gentlemen of Arab nationality” (Sagastume, *El Imparcial*, 11-20-1953: 3). Regarding the fairgrounds, he indicated having observed “a large number of beautiful, tall, white-skinned peasant women in colorful costumes who accompanied their relatives in the sales of their animals (...) also (...) many young, good-looking peasant men with their insignia of good Catholics who were buying spirited colts" (Sagastume, *El Imparcial*, 11-20-1953). Among the people of the town came: “Don Basilio Orellana and Francisco Heliberto Rivera (...) graduate Eugenio Valentín López selling and buying livestock. (...) doctor Rodolfo Menéndez (...) graduate Mardoqueo Morán, who likes to have good horses..." (Sagastume, *El Imparcial*, 11-20-1953: 3).

Since ancient times, the abundance of cattle and horses made it possible for different equestrian activities to be carried out during the fairs held in some towns[3]: the owners of farms and livestock showed off and rode their best horses, performed riding, dressage, horse races, races in

which ducks and roosters fought, bullfighting and without fail, a funny coincidence with the Spanish San Fermines, when some brave bull broke free from the ropes and ran through the streets at pedestrians.[4]

Some articles published about the Jutiapa Fair make special reference to the 1930s, the time of the liberal government chaired by Jorge Ubico Castañeda[5]. Without a doubt, the beginnings of the festival are linked to a sacred figure, in this case *San Antonio de Las Pescaditas*, whose celebration occurs during the month of November[6]. Its progress is also related to the celebrations that were held in honor of the birthday of the then President.

Reproducing the scenario of colonial culture, the Jutiapa fair was held in the square of the historic center, over time it was changed to the fair plain, today a market and bus terminal. According to José Rafael Salguero López "in the plain of Jutiapa, from the Tejada gorges to the Salado River; from the Escuela Práctica [Practical School] to the Cerro Colorado, the immense carpet of all kinds of livestock: cattle, horses, donkeys, goats, etc., and there, sellers and buyers. Small and large transactions, which made the old banknotes run in heaps." (Salguero López, El Imparcial. 09-13-1982:4). In another document the same author indicates: "That fair was held, in part, in the Central Park itself, as is still done with the festival of San Cristóbal. The park was surrounded by all kinds of sales and the surrounding halls became *zarabandas* [social events where people dance and drink] in which the sweet music of the moment was danced to tirelessly: Cielito Lindo, Loca, Adolorido, Cuatro Milpas, etc.; and there on the plain of Cerro Colorado, was the arena of Monk bulls, fought by skilled locals; at one time we saw Don Arturo Soto take more than one chance at the bullfights, while we were circling the barrier in our gait trainers…" (Salguero López, El Imparcial. 09-13-1982:4).

Currently the event takes place in the space popularly called "*Los Campos de la Feria* [The Fields of the Fair]", located east of the city of Jutiapa and, exceptionally, it was held possibly for the only time on the land that the Valle del Sol neighborhood occupies today[7].

In Jutiapaneca society, one of the anecdotal stories that has circulated was recovered by a recently published

3 Jutiapa is a producer of dairy and breeding cattle, an important detail already mentioned by architect Derick Raúl Véliz Montúfar is that in general in its rural population, each family owns a cow. VELIZ, Derick. Campos de la Feria Nacional Ganadera de Jutiapa. (Thesis, Faculty of Architecture, USAC). Guatemala, 1998: 23 p.

4 The reader interested in the cattle fairs during the colonial era can consult: "The Guatemalan merchants, the government and the provinces", by FLOYD, Troy in: Economía de Guatemala en los Siglos XVIII y XIX, Editorial Universitaria, Guatemala, 1974. 1-20 p.

5 The interested reader is recommended to consult: CASTRO, Carlos, La Feria de Noviembre. MARTÍNEZ, Manuel, Feria Ganadera Nacional in Revista Evolución (18): 5,7. Jutiapa, November, 2004. 5 and 7 p. CASTRO, Luciano. Crónicas de la Ciudad (I), Jutiapa, Studia Publications, 1999, 29-31 p. Historia de la Feria in Hola Juventud (2): 3. Jutiapa, November, 2003. 3 p.

6 "(...) there is information that the Indians of the Jutiapa encomienda are very devoted to Saint Anthony, who accompanies them in the mountains when they go to the Gulf or to the town of Sonsonate, patron of that town," CASTRO, Luciano. Crónicas de la Ciudad (I), Jutiapa, Studia Publications, 1999, 29 p.

7 An important contribution is the preliminary design project for the Livestock Fair fields, carried out by VÉLIZ, Derick in his work entitled: Campos de la Feria Nacional Ganadera de Jutiapa. (Faculty of Architecture, USAC), Guatemala, 1998.

magazine, referring to President Jorge Ubico, verbatim, the source indicates: "(...) he met a beautiful Achuapaneca lady with whom he had a romance, and whom he loved very much, and it was a tradition to come to celebrate his birthday in Jutiapa, which was on November 10, for this reason, he ordered in all the municipalities of the department, the streets be decorated and his birthday be celebrated greatly." (Martínez, *Evolución* 18, 2004:7).

Reviving the manifestation of the fair in a vigorous poetic version, the following fragments written by Eduardo Sánchez Grijalva in 1943, recreate the atmosphere of the time:

"Now that you hear the joyful bells of your party calling for joy; now that the Creole spirit rises in enthusiasm at the foreboding of your next November fair, I feel you so close, in my own interior, because you are a living presence in my memories.

Thus, between my being and you there is no distance, because I am part of yourself and you are part of my heart… In the green blanket of the plain, the development of your cheerful November fair is a truly colorful picture: shouts of celebrating peasants, bustle of the town, original dances, lament of music in which the guitar plays its main role; clapping of the peasants in the preparation of the Creole tortilla, cattle that graze patiently being the basis of unsurpassed commercial transactions and other many motives, makes us feel in the environment part of the laborious life of the eastern countryside…" (Sánchez Grijalva, *El Imparcial*. 11-6-1943: 4).

Finally, it can be stated that the current National Livestock Fair of Jutiapa reproduces - among others things - certain elements of the Mexican charreadas (celebration and competition of the daily chores of a ranch: roping, taming animals, etc.) and of the cowboy activities of the Old American West, which were expanding at the end of the 19th century. (Véliz Montúfar 1998:4). In previous decades, with the arrival of television there was also a notable influence of Mexican films, which brought back rural life, reaffirmed its advantages and tried to retain migration to the cities. Currently, with technological and computer expansion, the media (mainly cable television), by broadcasting rodeos and incorporating distractions such as the mechanical bull, have modified the traditional practices of jaripeo.

**THE YEARS OF THE REVOLUTION (1944-1954)**

Starting in the 1940s, the influence of the revolutionary governments was evident in cultural manifestations, including the Jutiapa Fair. The democratic opening was expressed in the modern spirit that vitalized society. The support and encouragement to develop an independent economy was accompanied by actions such as the emergence of organizations, the promotion of education, science, freedom of expression and even a taste for art. These were some of the aspects that were crystallized in the Pro-Fair Committee, whose organization was carried out - in some way - with popular criteria, since the authorities, mainly the Mayor, proceeded to convene people who, with some recognition, stood out for their qualities or for some participation in the

benefit of Jutiapaneca society. Every year a special session was scheduled to propose and elect new members.

In 1946, the committee was constituted as follows: Commissioner Colonel Javier Coronado, deputy commissioner Carlos Cáceres, Spokesmen: Colonel Guadalupe López Ochoa, gentlemen: Jesús García, Eduardo Sánchez, José Antonio Castillo, Graduate Reginaldo Menéndez, treasurer and secretary, Pablo Ruano. Each of the members proposed their collaborators: José Antonio Castillo to Colonels Rafael Menéndez, Gabriel Santizo, Captain Rubén Acuña, Professor Blanca Estela de García, Guillermo Sandoval, Gilberto Recinos and Santiago Villanueva. Colonel Guadalupe López Ochoa, in charge of sports, proposed Byron Díaz, Guillermo Sifontes, Gregorio Chiu, Felix Orozco, Antonio Esquivel, Alfonso Polanco, Oliverio Chinchilla and Gilberto Recinos. Jesús García, in charge of the Treasury, to Margarito Ariza (son), Amulfo Paniagua, Elba Marina Morán, Angélica Cámbara and Alicia Marchorro. Mr. Pablo Ruano, treasurer of the Committee, proposed Efraín Polanco and Arístides Abelardo Henández (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 1-2). Eduardo Sánchez, propaganda spokesman, proposed Oscar Paredes, Javier Fong, Reyna Flores and Carlota Barillas. Mr. Reginaldo Menéndez, responsible for contests: Simón R. Oliva, América de Pellecer, Alberto Carranza, Dolores Sandoval, Moisés Guerra, Francisco Ralón and Julio Drago (son). Mr. Rafael Pellecer, designated in exhibitions: Pablo Martínez, Pablo Díaz, Alfonso López, Ramón León de León and Rafael Sandoval[8].

The different Pro-Fair Committees frequently requested support from organizations, entities, public figures and commercial houses. The Chinese colony residing in Jutiapa collaborated with the decoration commission and made a significant donation of fireworks. The Jutiapanecos residing in the capital[9], grouped together in the Asociación Fraternal de Jutiapa [Fraternal Association of Jutiapa]. This organization participated in advance in programming activities and promoting the program. In 1946, partner Eliseo Zelada Martínez provided a unique collaboration, manifested in different cultural activities. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 2, 3).

To raise funds, various activities were planned: social dances, sometimes offered by Mr. Pedro Vásquez and Mr. Gregorio Chiu Fuentes, and lottery games. The collaboration of the Polish lottery, called *La Guatemalteca*, owned by Mr. Genaro Cóbar and some circuses that offered their performances was contemplated in later years. With the efforts of the Governor and other authorities, the Ministry of Agriculture provided bulls, pigs and other livestock, so that the committee could hold raffles. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946:6,7,10,11,28,29,65).

The project of the revolutionary Government that promoted culture at all

8 Please note that the names of these people are proposals, since some of them did not accept the positions. Libro de Actas de las Sesiones del Comité Pro- Feria Departamental [Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book], 1946, 2, 3 p.

9 Documents from the period frequently use the terms "Jutiapanense" and "Jutiapas" interchangeably.

levels influenced the activities of the fair by holding literary contests in which writers participated and were awarded trophies. This manifestation reiterated that the advancement and progress of the people was, not only in the material work and the external world, but in the intellectual formation, in the sphere of the spiritual world. One of the people in charge of organizing this event was Mr. Eduardo Sánchez Grijalva. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 8,9). In this regard, the following initiative of the Pro-Fair Committee indicated verbatim: "An attentive Letter must be addressed to the President of the Republic, explaining that for the next fair there will be Literary Contests, which will lead the people of Jutiapa to advancement, and to please provide his valuable help to defray the expenses incurred for this reason" (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 8).

The colonial architecture of the historic center of Jutiapa was the setting in which the candidates and the queen presented themselves. Involving the people in the coronation and investiture of the winner, the event took place in the old kiosk located in the center of the park. With elegant special invitations that circulated in the most well-known sectors of society, authorities, personalities and members of distinguished families attended the social dance that took place on November 10, sometimes in the municipality building and other times in the government office.[10] The Chinese colony collaborated with fireworks.

In addition to establishing the bases for choosing Queen of the Fair[11], those that would regulate the Ugly King contest were formulated. This last figure was incorporated as one of the novelties that opened a space for the direct participation of the gentlemen through their presence and prominence on stages, as well as with the content of their speeches.

The Queen's election process had a popular character, the candidates were proposed by recognized organizations, social groups or important entities. Jutiapanecos participated through with their votes, and the final scrutiny was done publicly in the municipal building.[12]

Some of the regulated requirements for the election of Queen of the Fair were the following: being single, between fifteen and twenty-five years of age, originally from the department or residing in it, of recognized honorability and culture; it was also established that the cost of the vote was two cents. As Professor Telma Esperanza García y García, Queen of the Departmental Fair in 1950, points out, "The candidates had to have not only physical beauty, but also preparation, knowledge, a certain level of culture, good social relations and moral principles"[13].

10 The places where the fair activities were planned and sometimes carried out were: the assembly hall of the Escuela tipo Federación "Salomón Carrillo Ramírez" [Federation-type school], the Perla Theater, and the Casino on Zona Vial No. 2. 1946, 34, 61 p. VALENZUELA, Víctor . Personal Diary, November 10, 1968.

11 The interested reader can see that the election of the Fair Queen replaced the figure of the "muchacha bonita [pretty young lady]" Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946, 5 p.

12 Some of the young ladies who have been crowned queens are: Martina Carbonel (1935), Yolanda Amaya, Carmen Arriaza, Telma Esperanza y García (1950), Lesbia Marina Trejo Pineda (1954), Aldina Cantorral (1956), Raquel Ruano (1957), Alma Salguero (1958), Haydee Mejia (1959), Mari Bran

***Traditional designs continue to have significant demand in the Jutiapaneco market.***



(1962), Miriam Lastenia Mazariegos, Mirna Figueroa (1966), Silvia Frinee Rojas Salguero (1975), Patricia Moran (1979), Luz Rudibia Pereira (1979), Ana Mariela Boteo (1982), Kristi Tobar (1984), Evelyn Cerna (1992), Zoila Maria Morales (2000), Melida Leonor Mendez Castellanos (2001), Julieta Urritia Chang (Queen of the Jutiapa Fair and Miss Guatemala 1984) and Claudia Renata Rivera (2004). Magazines: Impulso (3) 19, Asunción Mita, July, 1997, Evolución (18) 15, Jutiapa, November, 2004, Oral interview with Professor Telma Esperanza García, Jutiapa, 12-29-2004.

13 Telma Esperanza García has had a significant role as Director of the Adult School, teacher at the former "José Milla y Vidaurre" Boys' School and founder of the "Salomón Carrillo Ramírez" Federal School. Her academic training was carried out as a boarding student at the Belén Central Normal Institute for Young Ladies, when the Catalan doctor Carmen María Solá de Sellares was the director. She studied at the University of San Francisco, United States. Her solid and disciplined academic training has been transmitted to different generations of the Jutiapa society. Oral interview with Professor Telma Esperanza García, Jutiapa, 12-29-2004.

Similarly, the election of the Ugly King was a whole process and the candidates had to meet the requirements contained in the following bases: Be of twenty to one hundred years of age, single, widowed, married or cohabiting; it does not matter whether he is wearing shoes or barefoot, nor his private life. Origin or residence, heaven, earth or hell, being included in the ranks[14] of white or dark skinned, tall, toad, fat or skinny. It was established that the cost of the vote would be five cents. The sovereign took a tour of the main streets accompanied by an entourage mounted on spirited horses. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 5, 8).

According to the Minutes dated October 31, in 1946, as candidates for the election of the Queen of the Fair, the following ladies participated, among others: Daisy Menéndez, Telma Valladares, Marina Morán, Amanda Sandoval, Reina Flores,

Marina Chicas, Dora and Estela Chiu, Dolores Sandoval, Alicia Marchorro, Gilda Agreda Samayoa, Yolanda Gálvez, María Trinidad Godoy and Elsa Barrientos. The winner of the event was Daisy Menéndez. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 14).

In the same year, the following men participated in the election of the Ugly King: Raúl Ríos, Arturo Paiz, Cleofe Paredes, José Antonio Castillo, Genaro Santa Cruz, Guadalupe López Ochoa, Angelo Martínez, Mariano Micheo, Nicolás Sarceño, Felix Ayala Sacón, Antonio Arteaga, Aquilino Rodríguez, Colonel Javier Coronado and Graduates Reginaldo Menéndez and Oscar Nájera-Farfán. Mr. Reginaldo Menéndez was crowned, who obtained a total of 530 votes. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946:14).

As part of the fair's activities, the parade lead by the departmental authorities was contemplated. The Queen, on an elegant and creative carriage, toured the main streets of the city.

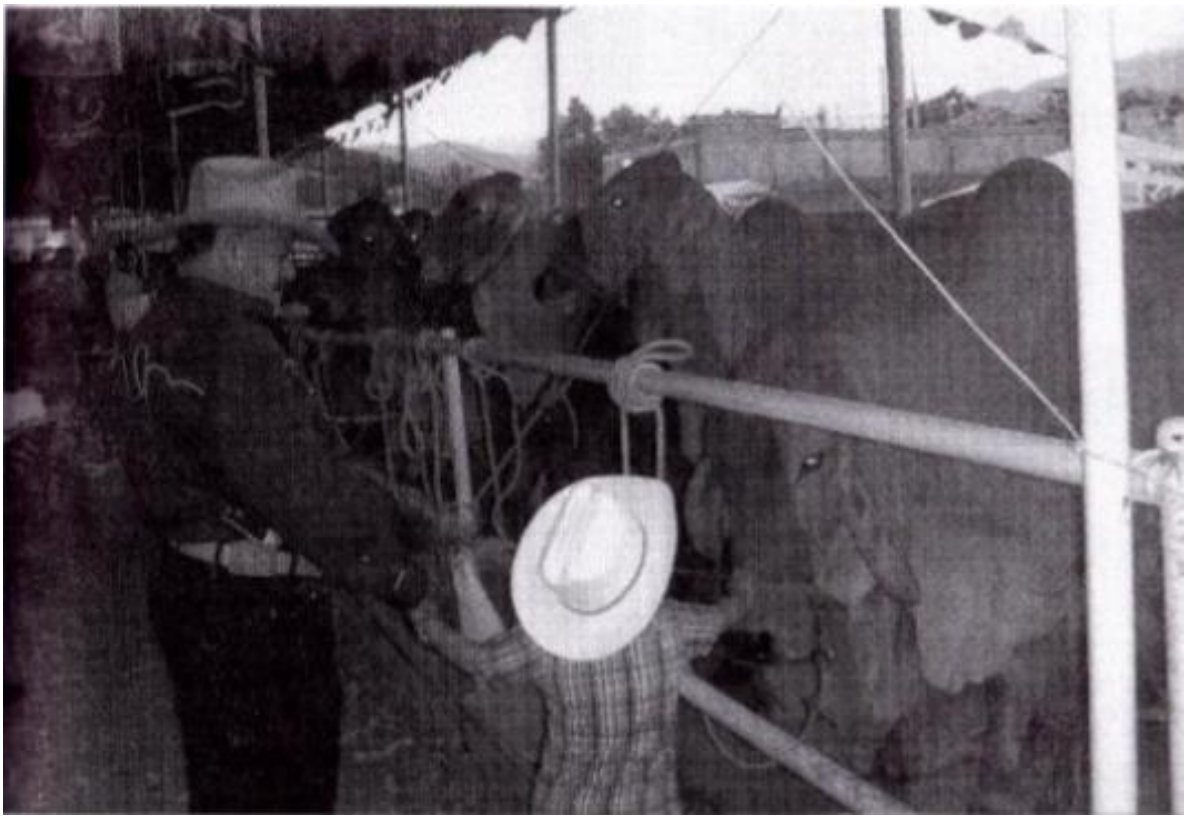
Below, the project for the construction of the carriage, proposed and approved in 1946, is reproduced verbatim: "(...) simulate a jewel box and in the center a large ring and let the Queen represent the stone on the prong instead. On the inside of the lid of the box, a sign that says: "Jutiapaneca Jewelry" the maids of honor will sit around the box pretending to be holding it." (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 8).

The party atmosphere was completed with the ornaments that the streets wore; A proposal from the time indicated that the special decoration contemplated the houses of Ramón León de León, Juan Sam, Gilberto Recinos, Roman, Corona Paiz, the chapel, Tejada, Abelina Recinos, Juan Recinos, the entrance to the Cóndor and the adjacent entrances to the hospital. In later years it was planned to place an arch in the street with the legend "welcome". (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 8, 62).

**THE YEARS OF LIBERATION (1954-1957)**

The forms of organization and the experience acquired by the Departmental Pro-Fair Committee had continuity in the following years. In the Minutes dated September 27, 1954 it was argued "(..) it is necessary to organize the Departmental Pro-Fair Committee of Jutiapa, since it is necessary that this year, in which the political situation of Guatemala has changed completely and an era of peace and tranquility is expected, we must (…) work so that our festivity has all the splendor it deserves, even though the time that remains is very short to collaborate with the Municipality to carry out a magnificent festivity". (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 21). The new committee was integrated as follows: President: Municipal Mayor, Mr. Nicolás Salguero Cámbara, Honorary Presidents: Departmental Governor Colonel Domingo Rosales and Colonel Agustín Moreno Aldana, Commander of the third military zone. Spokesmen: Sports, Clodoveo Mejía; Decorations, Ramón León de León; Treasury, Augusto Ruano Caniz (later replaced by Margarito

14 "Being included in the ranks..." is a personal inference.



***Since ancient times, the internal mobility of livestock has meant the importance of local and international markets.***

Ariza Polanco); Advertising, Colonel C. Armando Alemán Bolaños; of Contests: Doctor Rafael Sardá; of Exhibitions, Ricardo Osmundo Marroquín Fernández; of Horse-riding, Carlos Nájera García; of Festivities, Mrs. Adela Sierra and of Amusements, Second Lieutenant Ramiro Marroquín. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 22).

The Pro-Fair Committee, in its attempt to integrate the majority of the social sectors that make up the Jutiapaneca society, agreed to name the indigenous community as collaborators and also approved the proposal of José Alejandro Mardoqueo Morán Chinchilla, who argued that, since the fair was a departmental expression, it was necessary to request the collaboration of the municipalities and mayors. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 22).

Among other sponsors was Comercial Aseguradora S.A., which sent its soccer team. Graduate Manuel Menéndez Ríos, as a tribute to his father, awarded the most honored worker with the "José Dolores Menéndez" prize consisting of thirty-five quetzales (Q.35.00) in cash. In October 1955, Mr. Menéndez Ríos together with Mr. Héctor Nájera Sazo, representing the *Asociación Fraternal Jutiapaneca* [Fraternal Jutiapaneca Association], expressed the intention and desire to carry out various activities among which they mentioned: exhibitions, transfer of sports groups, including the Aurora team and present multiple shows: performance of the National Choir Guatemala, Ballet

groups, typical dances and film screenings, (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 36-37).

In 1955, Mr. Oscar Alfonso Vielman, entrepreneur of a bullfighting show, offered bullfights for the days of the fair. For this purpose, he presented to the members of the Committee a detailed description of its significance[15].

In the same year, Mrs. Lesbia Marina Trejo Pineda, member of the Pro-Fair Committee, was commissioned to draft the rules of the contest for the Queen of the Fair. Among the new proposals, it was contemplated that the election would be of "Miss Jutiapa", emphasizing physical, moral and intellectual qualities, giving participation to the municipalities, and it was argued that the election would be made by a jury consisting of nine people, four ladies and five gentlemen. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 30-31).

In 1956, with Mr. Héctor Alfredo Gudiel García as Mayor, the Pro-Fair Committee agreed to create the propaganda, culture and tourism subcommittee (from these years on, many of the other subcommittees merged). As part of the activities to be carried out during the days of the fair, the United States Embassy in Guatemala was asked to send cinematographic equipment for nightly performances. Also, the local cinema of businessman Ernesto F. Dardón Gálvez, projected trending films of the time. The Ministry of Education collaborated with the puppet show for children and theater group performances, which were held outdoors. The Jutiapa Shooting Club offered a social dance center; the military zone offered musical concerts. Colonel Mario Manuel Gatica, in charge of the subcommittee of Culture, proposed the publication of a Fair Magazine, the holding of a contest of Floral Games and an exhibition of paintings made by national authors[16].

Publicity and advertising was done by means of posters that were sent to the Tabacalera Nacional [National tobacco company]. In addition, the collaboration of the press and radio was requested, through *Nuevo Diario del Aire, Revista Nacional del Aire, T.G.W*. "*la Voz de Guatemala*" and *Radio Continental*[17]. In the same year, at the initiative of Colonel Gatica, the Committee agreed to approach Aviateca, S.A. so that during the main days of the fair (November 14 and 15), the planes would visit the departmental capital carrying passengers and making local



15 There is no record wether the show was really executed or not. Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946; 34.

16 The Floral Games have been significant: in 1950 the poet laureate was Mr. Enrique Villatoro Alvarado, author of "Laurel de ensueño para su ternura", "Medalla de Oro para su cabeza" and "Gran Cruz de bronce para su heroísmo" among others. In later years the bases contemplated the participation of Guatemalan poets and writers in the ranks of prose and verse, the first referring to a regional story and the second to a free theme. In this regard, the Committee agreed that the words of greeting to the Queen would be offered by the winner in the verse branch. According to the writer Alvaro Enrique Palma, the literary contest or floral games were a creation of the Asociación Fraternal de Jutiapa. Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946; 51, 52, 56, 58, 67, 77. Alborada 12, 13, november, 1950. PALMA, Alvaro. Cincuentenario de Jutiapa, Oriente y sus Anhelos, El Imparcial, 6-2-1971; 3 p.

17 A document from that time stated that Radio T.G.W. would collaborate with some concerts prior to the fair. Offered by the Maderas de mi Tierra and Valles de Oriente marimbas, the repertoire was to include six pieces by authors from Jutiapa. Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946; 64.

flights for the entertainment of the general public. (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 27-30, 36-37, 46, 55, 58).

The collaboration of national political figures of these years was manifested through Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, President of the Republic of Guatemala (1956), with the offer of 200 quetzales to defray the expenses of the fair. Mr. Mario Sandoval Alarcón promised to provide the trophies for the sports events and the medals for the literary contest of the Floral Games (Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946: 63, 67).

In the following years, the presence of the wandering gypsy women, also called *sajorinas* in Jutiapa, was also a singular spectacle. These women of white complexion and light eyes wore unique outfits: Frilled blouses, long skirts and colorful scarves that were complimented by jewelry made by precious metals. To carry out their show, they rented small rooms or venues close to the fairgrounds, there, with a special decoration they placed in the center the crystal ball, with this spherical expression they guessed the future of the fairgoers. The demand of the attending public, made - the reading of the hand, the throwing of cards and other games of chance necessary to predict the future. (Oral interview with Armida Valenzuela de Torres, Jutiapa, 3-2-2005).

The film screenings were also very well attended. Taking advantage of the darkness of the night, different films were projected outdoors and on a giant screen, generally with themes for all audiences. These singular expressions were a great novelty at the time (Oral interview with Armida Valenzuela de Torres, Jutiapa, 3-2-2005).

**DECADE OF THE 70'S**

During these years the activities continued to reproduce the elegance, attentions and special treatment to the sovereigns. Mrs. Silvia Frineé Rojas Salguero, Queen of the Fair (1975-1976) recalling the era, expressed: “in 1975 I represented the departmental capital after being elected as Miss Jutiapa representing the Military Zone of this department (...) the carriage holds the most significant memory for me, it was made by the Military Zone, it was the barracks that today is the headquarters of PNC [National Civil Police] and where the clock is on a crown, there I went”. (*Hola Juventud* Magazine (2): 4, Jutiapa, 2003). Among other attentions, from early in the morning a vehicle and a gentleman were waiting for the queen to drive her to all the events of the fair. She also describes that the election in which she participated took place in the military casino, recently the office of the Military Reserves. The coronation was held in the atrium of the church. In the same act the winners of the Floral Games were awarded, since it was the queen who gave away the gold medal to the winner of the first place, at that time awarded to Graduate Eliseo Zela (*Hola Juventud* (2):4, Jutiapa, 2003).

On October 29, 1997, by means of Legislative Agreement Number 47-97 of the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala, the Jutiapa Fair was considered the 'National Livestock Fair'[18].

18 In this regard, various articles clarify that the correct date of the Agreement is October 29, 1997 and not November 7, 1987. The interested reader can consult: Historia de la Feria, Hola Juventud (2); 3, Jutiapa, November 2004.

## PROGRAMMING OF ACTIVITIES OF THE JUTIAPA FAIR

The various activities that have been programmed by the fair committees over time vary according to the interests and motivations of the committee members. However, some of the oldest ones continue to be the same, such as the Floral Games[19], the election and crowning of the queen and the gala party. In 2004, the inter-municipal soccer matches were held, among others, with the participation of national teams as special guests.

The event included a presentation of the classical ballet from the "Armonía" Dance Academy, rodeos, exhibitions, and parades, including a karate championship. (Programme of the VIII National Livestock Fair of the Department of Jutiapa, 2004).



## THE PALENQUE

***In the History of Humanity, the essence of cockfighting has not changed***

[Palenque, in this instance, referring to the arenas where cockfights take place].

The lovers, fans and keen connoisseurs of this art, sport or entertainment, in addition to admiring in each specimen: strength, form, treachery, brilliance and sleekness of the plumage, recognize its biological roots, genetic perfection, skills, passionate, disciplined and progressive training, balanced nutrition and the requirement of veterinary sports medicine care.

***The art of cockfighting is an essential part of the identity of the people of Jutiapa.***

Cockfights, also called *lidias*, a sport of the beak and spurs (because they are two key pieces in the development of a fight) and a sport of gentlemen, acquire singular importance during the days of the fair. These events, currently organized by the brothers Sergio and Edwin Salguero, have a great influx of fans and are held in the Palenque Chiltepe, located in the village of the same name, jurisdiction of the municipality of Jutiapa.[21]

Mr. René Salguero, father of the brothers Sergio and Edwin, started cockfighting in the village of El Chiltepe about forty years ago. Over time, the Salguero family acquired more knowledge and adapted the necessary material conditions, which currently allows them to be creators of different breeds.

19 Floral games are defined as poetic contests that aim to recognize and reward the best compositions in the various literary genres. Its history dates back to the beginning of the 14th century, in the Academy of Toulouse, founded by the troubadours in the year 1323.

20 The origin of cockfighting is very ancient. In Egypt, it was one of the favorite pastimes, in Greek and Roman cultures the fighting cock was associated with the Gods Apollo, Mercury and Mars. During the so-called Middle Ages, especially in France, the game was very popular, although it has declined due to state prohibitions. In Spain, it arrived through the Phoenician voyages and the occupation of the conquering Moors; currently, it is a popular sport in Bilbao, Oviedo, Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia. In different times and cultures, these birds have been admired, considered sacred, of religious worship and have been greatly respected by man. The livestock dedication of the eastern region of Guatemala allows cockfighting to become a complement to daily life, presenting an entertaining spectacle that also allows for gambling. Peleas de Galllos available at: http://www.linktopr.com/gallos.html, (online document cited 10-03-2005) Gallos de Pelea available at www.edufuturo.com9/educacion.php?c-954-26k- (online document cited 10-03-2005).

21 For decades in the city of Jutiapa, cockfights have been held in different palenques.

At the 2004 fair, as on previous occasions, the Palenque was attended by renowned national and Central American cockfighters who came with their teams.[22]

Among the participants were: Morales (Izabal), Zacapa, Barberena, San Pedro Pinula, San Jose La Arada, Jalapa, Santa Catarina Mita "los catochas", Horcones, El Progreso, Monjas, Pasaco, Pedro de Alvarado City, Ipala, San Rafael las Flores, Jalpatagua, Asuncion Mita, Los Cerritos, Conguaco, Pasaco, Moyuta, Los Tres Cerros, las Trancas, Ipal Mataquescuintla, Jalpatagua, Laguna de Pereira, Atescatempa, Quesada, as well as other teams from the Department of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. (Oral interview with Edwin Salguero, El Chiltepe Village, 29-12-2004).

Representatives of the cockfighting tradition included, among others, the following gentlemen: Elio Estrada, Edmundo Lima, Fausto Colocho, Salvador Polanco, Oliverio Pedrosa, Mario Godoy and the Salazar brothers.

According to Edwin Salguero, breeding the roosters requires knowledge, experience and care, combining (with a high degree of perfection) the genetics of the trios, watching over the incubation, protecting the chicks, giving them vitamins, deworming them and creating the necessary conditions for their growth. This care implies not only having knowledge, but also preparing people who dedicate a large part of their time to this job. (Oral interview with Edwin Salguero, Aldea El Chiltepe, 29-12-2004).

22 The teams are named and recognized according to their origin or by the name of their owner.

The preparations for the cockfight during the days of the fair, begin weeks before, since each of the invited teams transports their roosters at least fifteen days in advance, so that they can acclimatize. The transfer of the animals is done in special boxes made of wood. The nutritional care is the responsibility of each team and the necessary conditions for their stay, to a large extent, are provided by the palenque.

The sport of cockfighting requires large investments, the price of each specimen ranges between 300 and 1000 quetzales. Bets are made with cash, reaching up to 3000 quetzales per bet. Generally, bettors are experts who risk their money based on the saying: "the word of a cockfighter is the word of a gentleman". During the fight, the specimens of equal weight and size (although some may have slight differences) face each other, the breeds may be different, Spanish cocks, turns, etc. Before the bet and to ensure their bet, the expert bettors observe from the size of the spur to the hardness of the skin.

In Guatemala, cockfighting is more common in the center and east of the country, although its expression in the western region is not ruled out. The participation of teams shows a strong communication in the area and as Edwin Salguero states, there is knowledge of cockfighters from the west but there has not been much contact with them.

**THE TINWARE SALE**

These pieces are made by tinsmiths from different parts of the eastern region. At the Jutiapa Livestock Fair, these articles have and have been in great demand among the rural population, who wait for this festivity

to buy them in specialized stores, which offer a great variety at favorable prices.

According to Mr. Samuel López Sandoval, originally from the New Village of Santa Catarina Mita, (Jutiapa) and owner of a tinware sale, these objects are made from very thin sheets of tinned iron on both sides. The latter is bought by caliber, and is selected and worked according to the piece to be made. Among the articles in greatest demand are: combos, pots, skillets, saucepans, bowls and jars; the unions of each of these pieces are made with putty. The final shine is achieved with egg white, this last ingredient, in addition to making them brighter and more attractive, makes them more resistant.

Tinware sales also include handcrafted iron objects. Among the most sought after are grills, tongs, barbecue tongs and horseshoes.

Although for many years the sale of tinware coexisted with pewter, in recent decades these crafts have been displaced by plastic items.





**CRAFT MADE BY *JARCIA***

In Jutiapa, the work made by skilled artisans from *pita* (fiber made from maguey leaves) is called *jarcia*.[23] The most common and most in-demand items during the fair are nets, bags, *arganías* (double bags that are placed on the horse's back), hammocks, horse girths (which hold the load) and sling bags. Prices vary according to the quality of the *pita* (single or double) and the weave (according to the language of the region, thick or light). Each piece is decorated with simple and attractive designs, with vertical bars predominating in accordance with the structure of the fabric in green, pink and purple colors.

***Since some decades ago, metal utensils, specially made of tin, have coexisted with the artisan clay production.***

The sale of these goods comes from the municipality of Comapa; there the articles are made by the family unit. Each family combines agricultural tasks with artisanal work, the latter requiring few people and simple tools. Without distinction of age or sex, all members are involved in the work; at the end of the process, a merchant from the region buys the production of the family unit and resells it in stores selling various items.

23 The interested reader is suggested to consult: DARY, Claudia and ESQUIVEL, Aracely. Las labores del jarcia en Comapa, Jutiapa. La Tradición Popular (41), Guatemala, Folklore Studies Center: 1983.

According to Mr. Lucilo Vásquez Ramírez, originally from the village of San José, in the municipality of Comapa and a fairground worker, for this work it is necessary to have a simple handle and small carts (reeds). Although he indicates that in the past, the rope was twisted by hand, on the leg; that is, it was turned on itself, squeezing it and making it take a helical, plump shape.

**Traditional toys and piggy banks**

For years, the main street that gives access to the fair sales has been characterized by gathering *champas* (houses made of perishable materials) that have different merchandise, in which the traditional toys and piggy banks that come from the west of the country stand out. The owners of the premises on this street have known each other for a long time, since they also The participate in other fairs. The collaboration and solidarity of the group has allowed the places of each business to be respected.

Originally from Totonicapán, three generations of the Hernández family (grandfather, Mr. Trinidad; son, Cristóbal de Jesús; and grandson, Eduardo Hernández) have been present for consecutive years at the Jutiapa Livestock Fair, offering a variety of toys: wooden trucks in their traditional yellow, red, green and purple colors, guitars made by Huehuetecan artisans [artists from Huehuetenango], countless piggy banks with animal figures: (pigs, rabbits, cats, owls and chickens), not to mention the traditional clay whistles, cicadas (toys that produce a sound), juggling clowns (made of wood that perform dexterity and balance exercises), little drums, *capiruchos*, clay and tin dishes, little wardrobes and other furniture for dolls. In

***Sales of traditional toys gather, expose and offer cultural diversity in the national sphere.***

***Many people wait for the fair to purchase a "good hat", since they are an essential piece of clothing in the daily attire of the jutiapanecos.***





addition to these items, there are glass bowls, fine little boxes to store jewelry, baskets, purses and hanging wallets. (Oral interview with Eduardo Hemández, Jutiapa, 11-13-2004).

These crafts are made by artisans from Totonicapán, San Marcos, Huehuetenango, San Pedro Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango. They are transported in packages that allow for long journeys.

**CANDIES, JELLIES AND PRESERVES**

Sales of sweets are abundant. These small shops, in an attractive and artistic way, display to the public preserves of all traditional flavors (coconut, sapote, pineapple, grapefruit, etc.), orange and apple jellies, honey marshmallows, milkshake candy, *alborotos*, *manías garapiñadas* [caramelized peanuts], *pepitoria* [pumpkin seeds], sesame seeds, *chancaca*, and milk candy and canes, guava *colochos*, *espumillas* [meringues], panela rosaries [candy shaped like rosaries made with unrefined brown sugar] and even snacks (candy). Some include, in a separate space, *chilacayotes* [caramelized squash], oranges, figs, *cocadas* [coconut cookies] and sweet potatoes.

Currently, one of the oldest candy stores is that of Mrs. Juana Morales, originally from Comalapa. According to Mrs. Morales, for years, until the earthquake, her father-in-law Bernardo Cush attended the fair with a similar stand. She also indicates that one of the peculiarities of this business is that it brings together and offers a great variety of candies made in different regions of the country, the *espumillas*, from the Municipality of Guatemala, preserves, panela candy

rosaries and snacks from Esquipulas, mazapan caramel from Amatitlán, sweet potatoes, *chilacayotes*, oranges, figs and *cocadas* from La Antigua Guatemala.

The owners and vendors know the manufacturing processes, this facilitates the creation of techniques for their adequate transportation and proper conservation[24].

## ARTICLES FOR CAVALRY: SADDLES

At the regional fair, the demand for saddles has allowed specialized producers and owners of saddlery workshops to offer high quality and competitive products. Originally from Taxisco, Santa Rosa, Chiquimulilla, Santa Rosa, Escuintla and La Democracia (Huehuetenango), these artisans exhibit fine saddles on trestles made of mangrove wood.

According to Mr. Oscar Rubén Alva Díaz, a fairgoer[25] originally from Huehuetenango, the making of each saddle combines leather and woodwork, the shaft is a single piece made of walnut or mango wood.[26] In each of the sales, saddles from Mexico and Honduras are also offered, as well as saddle pads (pads or thick felt covers covered with leather), bronze rings, whips and belts. The creativity of the artisans is shown in the different designs or details that can be given to the pieces, as well as in the engravings on the leather, and for more demanding tastes, also on the wood.

The most popular chairs are those called "*de campo*" (country chairs), these are plain, without drawings, designs or color, their price is approximately 500 quetzales. The costs of each piece vary according to the finishes, which respond to the tastes of knowledgeable clients; for example, the use of thicker or finer leather (from pig, sheep or goat, whose textures and colors define its durability), the pyrography designs, the perfection of the stitch, the quality of the thread, the symmetrical cuts and the shapes of the apples (knobs or horns that can be wide, flattened, round). The price range varies between 500 and 2000 quetzales, although there are always exceptions that can exceed 5000 quetzales.

In these shops selling equestrian items, accessories are also sold: headstalls, horse whips made of rawhide, horse harnesses, girths, bags, sheaths, hats and even special riding pants made of leather.

## PONCHOS FROM MOMOSTENANGO

The people of Jutiapa wait for the fair to buy ponchos and quilts from Momostenango and Totonicapán. For some time now, these stalls have been located on the street that separates the "El Cóndor" Urban National School and the facilities of the Livestock Exhibition. According to Mrs. Elsa Noemí Siquinajay, a fair worker, the greatest demand is for ponchos (also called sleeves). These fine

24 The transportation and conservation of different products requires special packaging: thermal packaging, cellophane paper bags and wooden boxes, which also protect from dust and flies. Oral interview with Juana Morales, Jutiapa, 11-13-2004.

25 Please note that due to the particularities of the language of the region, each part of the chair may receive different names.

26 Those who work the shafts are generally artisans from the hot lands. Up to twelve can be made from one mango tree. Transporting the chairs requires great care in their handling, especially the shafts, which are very delicate. They must be placed one on top of the other to avoid damage. Oral interview with Oscar Rubén Alva Díaz, Jutiapa, 11-13-2004.

***The making of each saddle combines leather and woodwork, the shaft is a single piece made of walnut or mango wood.***





fabrics made from goat wool offer very peculiar characteristics: they are warmer, softer in texture and long-lasting. In traditional sizes, they are made with special dye and designs are made with few variations, mostly simple silhouettes of dolls, puppets, letters and short legends (Guatemala, Momostenango, etc.). Prices vary between 140 and 180 quetzales. Along with national artisanal production, ponchos manufactured from Mexico are also sold.

**MECHANICAL GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS**

The Jutiapa fair, like other local fairs, includes a unique space for games, which are mostly demanded by children and youths, not that they are no longer frequented by adults and the elderly who enjoy observing the behaviors that result from playful moments.

As in every game, the practice or challenge of winning and losing is one of the attractions of the recreational exercises or actions, which in turn are subject to certain rules. Thus, in each of the amusements, the fairgoers experience the defiance of winning and losing. The skillful and juggling abilities are expressed in target shooting, bowling, mini football, darts and dice. There is no shortage of games of chance or luck, such as fishing, roulette, lottery, *chivo*, betting and hoops.

The so-called *ruedas* [ferris wheel] occupy a significant percentage of the fairgrounds; among young people and adults, the most popular are the *Chicago* and the *Remolino* wheels; for children, several carousels of

horses, manual wheels of carts and flying chairs are built. Recently, newer games with large, modern metal structures, such as those at Play Land Park, have been added to the fair.

**Attractions that offer rarities through tricks and magic**

Hidden, rare, reserved, secret and magic shows have been present at fairs around the world: the woman who is split into pieces, the one who remains frozen in ice, the one who disappears, the human who turns into a monster and many others. These are short shows that take place in improvised huts with dark walls, large mirrors, dark curtains and a dimly lit stage. Added to these details is the importance of the speech of the person who invites you to come forward and narrates the moments of the show with appropriate language. Observers are generally people of different ages and social strata who like to experience fear and dread by expressing emotional distress. There are also those who wish to unravel the trick and understand the logic of the visual phenomenon. For several decades, this type of show has been presented at the Jutiapa fair, of which the most notable are "Yongo, the monster", "the woman split into pieces", "the woman preserved in ice" and "the tarantula-woman", among others. In recent years, "Xiomara, the girl who became a snake for disobeying" and "Maricandunga, the hairy woman" have debuted. To help the reader's imagination, the show is described and the latter is reproduced verbatim: "Maricandunga the hairy one. No drunks, no cameras, no smoking, no weapons", during which it is narrated how out of nowhere and by the work of evil spirits, the young lady becomes a monster and a hairy beast, her human appearance changes, claws and fangs appear, then she comes out of her cage and approaches the public, finally located in the starting place, the attendees observe the process of her returning to a normal human state[27].

**The Chicago Wheel**

20 meters tall, with 26 seats, and a diesel engine, the wheel was built approximately ten years ago in the workshop of Mr. Daniel Guadalupe Fuentes Pérez (originally from San Marcos), who together with his wife, Mrs. Teresa Sucup Sánchez (originally from Alta Verapaz), are the current owners and managers. At that time, the investment was approximately 170,000 quetzales; since then, its maintenance has been in charge of the same owner.

As owners of other wheels for several years, this family goes to the Jutiapa fair. According to Mrs. Sucup Sánchez, during the month of November, the air that characterizes the town is one of the inconveniences for which a larger wheel, which is 22 meters tall, is not built. In addition, she indicates that for greater safety, the screwing is verified every day by dismantling each one of the seats.

Finally, these amusements continue to be a profitable business. However, there have been declines in the last seven years due to the presence of wheels from El Salvador. (Oral interview with Teresa Sucup Sánchez, Jutiapa, 13-11-2004).

27 Information obtained directly from the show.

## CULINARY DETAILS

During the days of the fair, the people from urban and rural sectors demand popular tastes and flavors: tacos, enchiladas, bread stuffed with chicken salad, turkey and beans; tamales, roast beef, sausages, chorizo, pork rinds, *garnachas quetzaltecas* and, recently, Mexican tacos and pizza. The most requested drinks are eggnog, natural soft drinks and smoothies. To taste during the walk: churros, plantains, caramel apples covered in honey, cotton candy and *pastelitos* (small corn tortillas folded with chopped potatoes), among others.

In previous years, other food stands offered by Mrs. María Silva, Nayita de Peña, María Virula y Lucas Barillas have offered stewed meat and beef broth. Mrs. Francisca Flores' cafeteria, "Doña Paquita" is also very well known. (Barillas, Evolución (18):5, 2004).

### Livestock exhibition

The international projection of the fair stands out due to the importance of the livestock sector. In 2004, in the "galera" (currently located between 2ª. Calle and 3ra. Avenida corner, zone 3, El Cóndor neighborhood, Jutiapa), the following owners exhibited their best specimens.

Hacienda El Pensamiento, Jalpatagua, Jutiapa. Founded in 1906. Owner: Ivan Nájera-Farfán Ríos and sons. The most awarded cattle ranch in Central America.

Hacienda El Pensamiento is one of the most important ones in the region. It was founded by Colonel Salvador Nájera García to satisfy the demand for panela [unrefined brown sugar] and candy; at first it produced sugar cane. In the following years it was managed by Oscar Nájera-Farfán. From 1950, its production focused on cattle ranching and in 1955, they began registering cattle. When Graduate Nájera-Farfán passed away, the ranch was inherited by his son Graduate Iván Nájera-Farfán Rios,[28] who currently, together with his children, dedicate their knowledge and efforts to the breeding of gray and red

| Estate - Hacienda | Location | Owner | Type of livestock-breeding | Other sales |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| El Pensamiento | Jalpatagua, Jutiapa | Mr. Iván Nájera-Farfán R. | Grey and red Brahman Registered Cattle, Thoroughbred, Quarter Horses and Racehorses. | Sperm material, others. |
| Estate Gabriela | Cantón San Marcos, Jutiapa | Humberto de Jesús Méndez B. | Red Brahman, Swiss Brahman and Jersey, Spanish Horses. | |
| Santa Clara | Guatemala | | Red and white Indobrazil, red and grey Brahman. | |
| J.T. Morales Livestock | | | Grey and red Brahman, Swiss Holstein, Brahman, bullocks and heifers. | Semen. |

Brahman registered cattle,[29] thoroughbred horses, racing horses and quarter horses.

According to the owner, in the last 44 years Hacienda El Pensamiento has been present with notable specimens. They have been declared the best breeders and exhibitors of the breed in the Central American market for the past 20 years. In 1991, in the United States, the American Brahman Breeders Association named them the best breeders of the breed.

Hacienda El Pensamiento has exported specimens to the United States, Central and South America. Their stallions have been created by themselves, in artificial insemination centers located in the United States. In their quest to seek excellence and improve livestock, they also offer sperm material to the market. Regarding the work carried out on the farm, in a recent interview, Mr. Ivan Najera-Farfan Rios said: "We are proud to be from Jutiapa and although many people believe that the lands of the east are not suitable for raising cattle, they have been shown that with tenacity and zootechnical knowledge we have created specimens that are of great interest to cattle breeders from all countries of America." (Oral interview with Mr. Ivan Najera-Farfan Rios, 14-11-2004).

Finca Gabriela. Cantón San Marcos, Jutiapa. Owner Humberto de Jesus Menendez B. and sons. Breeders of Spanish horses, red Brahman and Jersey cattle[30]. J. T. Morales, Livestock. Gray and red Brahman; Holstein, Brahman and Swiss Brahman bulls and bullocks registered for sale. Semen sale.

Santa Clara, Guatemala. Breeders of red and white Indobrasil, red and gray Brahman.

In addition to national exhibitors, there are also exhibitors from El Salvador and Honduras. During the days of the fair, the livestock sector mobilizes about 20 million quetzales through auctions, exhibition of dairy, beef and breeding specimens. As part of the activities, awards are given to the best exhibitors, fireworks are shot, and a thanksgiving mass is held[32].

28 Zootechnician graduated in Texas, United States, and great collaborator in the development of livestock in the region.

29 The Brahman or zebu is an animal with a nervous but docile temperament, with great resistance and strength, it supports the enormous amount of humidity and the internal parasites to which it is exposed. Normally, it is more developed than many of the European breeds and particularly the British ones. In Central America this variety was very well received since it is one of the most important that exist for the tropics. Originally from India, it arrived to the American continent through Brazil, where crosses began to be produced to improve it, from there came the Indobrasil, a dual-purpose breed. www.magfor.gob.ni/tematica/pecuaria.html _ 25 k (online document cited 04-04-2005).

30 The Jersey cattle raised in the east of the country is the result of various crossings, which have adapted it to the climatic peculiarities of the region. In its purest origins, this breed is native to the island of the same name, located in the channel between England and France. It is one of the smallest in Europe, and although the cows are not very suitable for meat production, they are characterized by their capacity for milk production with high butterfat content. The specimens (cows and bulls) have prominent eyes and inwardly curved horns. The coloration varies from light brown to dark mahogany. In the western region of Guatemala, this type of cattle supplies milk and its derived products - especially cheese, cream and different varieties of butter - not only to the local market, but also to regionally and nationally. www.detidiyboicity.com/producciones/vacas.htm - 14k - (document cited online on 03-10-2005).

31 The Holstein breed is originally from Europe. Its development took place in the northern provinces of Holland, from where it spread to other parts of the continent. For a long time, this ancestral breed was strictly selected to breed dual-purpose animals. Due to its milk production capacity, it was used to refine breeds. With the discovery of America and the migration of Europeans to the New World, milk production and markets developed. According to some sources, in the first decades of the 17th century, Danish colonizers brought the first specimens to the United States. The genetics of these animals determine their character: large, stylized, vigorous and rustic. The head is clean cut, proportional to the body; wide muzzle with wide nostrils, strong jaw, large eyes, wide and slightly concave forehead, straight nose bridge, medium-sized ears and good alertness. Like the Jersey, the crossing of this breed with other stronger breeds gives rise to a resistant animal, with greater capacity for milk production and adapted to the particular climate of the East. With its production, the urban centers of the Jutiapa department are supplied and the demands of the national market are satisfied. Holstein Association USA, in Agricultura, AgroInternet, Sector Pecuario, Ornamentales. www.agricultura.com.mx/CGI-BIN/modules.php?name=News&file-article&sid-305 - 38k - (online document cited 03-10-2005).

32 "Feria Ganadera mueve millones", in Prensa Libre, November 11, 2004, 44 p.

33 In previous decades, there was an important cowboy hats factory in the city of Jutiapa; with its production, the owners, Mr. Herman Rodolfo Jo and Mr. Lesbia Trejo de Jo, supplied the demands of the local market.

34 Equestrian activities have been carried out for some time. The organization of an official pro-fair committee designated a spokesman of the equestrian movement, on some occasions. This position was assigned to Mr. Margarito Ariza Polanco, Mr. Carlos Polanco Quiroz and Mr. Ezequiel Cambara Barrera. Departmental Pro-Fair Committee Minute Book, 1946; 28, 31, 34.

35 The Jutiapa Equestrian Club was created by the initiative of several Jutiapa residents and interested persons, among them: Mr. Cornelio Lazo, a United States Marine, owner of Hacienda El Oasis, located in the village of Cerro Gordo, Jutiapa. His work required legal advice, and he also made arrangements to found the Jutiapa cattle ranchers' association. His initiative and efforts were joined by the work of Mr. Leonel Salguero, Carlos Rafael Pellecer and Jesús Chicas, among others. Oral Interview Carlos Rafael Pellecer, Jutiapa, 11-14-2004.

At the exhibition, there are also specialized sales of articles for livestock breeders, machinery, equipment, special cars and fine cowboy attire: boots, buckles, belts and hats,[33] the latter imported from Bolivia, Peru and Mexico. For the different equestrian disciplines, saddles, brushes, straps and numerous leather crafts, without forgetting the offer of bank loans for rural development.

**HORSE PARADE**

The horse parade is one of the most important activities at the fair.[34] It is currently organized by the Club Hípico de Jutiapa [Jutiapa Equestrian Club].[35] In the morning it starts at the Estación de Bomberos Voluntarios [Volunteer Firemen Fire Station], goes through the main streets of the city and ends at the "Salomón Carrillo Ramirez" Federal School. (Programme of the VIII National Livestock Fair of the Department of Jutiapa, 2004).

According to the information provided by the rancher Humberto de Jesús Menéndez B., in 2004, the participating stables and their representatives were the following: Fraijanes stable, Gustavo Diéguez and Marco Tulio Meda; Jalapa stable, Mario Estrada and Gustavo Lemus; Moyuta stable, Eddy Aguilar; Teculután stable, Zacapa, César Adolfo Casasola; Chiquimula stable, Carlos Pinto; Cuilapa stable, Mario Morales; Barberena stable, Oscar Urtarte and Jalpatagua stable, Pablo Peñate. (Oral interview with Humberto de Jesús Menéndez B. Jutiapa, 14-11-2004).

According to the President of the Jutiapa Cattle Ranchers Association, Colonel Germán Chicas, owner of the Hacienda El Renacimiento[36], for some years now the

parades have been promoted by the cattle ranchers: Messrs. Colonel Germán Roberto Chicas, Rafael Pellecer (father and son) and Jesús Menéndez, among others. (Oral interview with Colonel Guzmán Chicas. Jutiapa, 14-11-2004).

The streets of the city are also adorned with fine and noble Andalusian, Peruvian and Spanish horses, owned by Mr. Carlos Rafael Pellecer[37], Eddy Aguilar (Montana Ranch, Moyuta Jutiapa), Luis Arturo Monterroso Lemus (Farm Los Tres Hermanos, Jutiapa), Raymundo Teo (Monjas), Otto Monterroso (Fraijanes) and Wotsbelí Castillo (Quesada).

**THE FAIR, AN ABSOLUTE SOCIAL PHENOMENON THAT GOES BEYOND SIMPLE BUYING AND SELLING**

Like other markets, the fair is a total social phenomenon that has the purpose of exchanging goods. However, this event also expresses other sociological and cultural connotations, through which one can delve into the knowledge of the Jutiapa society. According to Mr. Manuel Molina, quoted by architect Derick Véliz, "The Livestock Fair has visitors from Honduras, Mexico and El Salvador. It is estimated that at least 25,000 people visit it." (Véliz Montúfar, 1998:1).

In some way, the fair manifests the cycle of life and rationalization of the day that the different social groups reproduce in their daily lives. For example, for the farmer sectors, the concept of life (inseparable from time) is reflected in the planning of the day, which begins very early. This explains their presence in the fairgrounds in the morning, until shortly after midday. The farming demand gives rise to improvised sales, where one can find, among many things: cattle, horseshoes, files, iron handicrafts, ribbons, seasonal fruit: quinces, passion fruit, chico, sapote, etc. In the early afternoon, the farmer families return to their places of origin.

The family visit makes it possible to experience the satisfaction of grandparents when sharing moments of fun together; the satisfaction of a good purchase made by the children; the joy and happiness of the kids and adolescents enjoying the games and, the acquisition of toys so long awaited by the children.

In the afternoon the fair is frequented by the population of the city. The space is also used by the power groups, who, by making their presence, reproduce the social structure affirming their hierarchy.

The experience of the Jutiapa Fair allows us to know and analyze it, through the interpretations that different specialists

36 The Hacienda El Renacimiento has fine specimens of Peruvian and Andalusian crosses. These are trained at the school of Mr. Ambrosio Lima (from Ayarza) and other master trainers who visit the properties. (Oral interview with Colonel Germán Chicas, Jutiapa, 11-14-2004).

37 The Pellecer family have distinguished themselves by breeding high-school horses on their properties, Hacienda La Primavera, located at kilometer 105 Río de Paz, Quezada and the annexes: Las Ilusiones and El Regalar. According to José Rafael Pellecer, the family owns mules, quarter horses, Andalusian, Peruvian and Ibero-American horses, these are trained with Spanish steps, lateral passages, kneeling postures, viafes, lying down and resting. Several experts participated in the training, including Mr. Humberto Trujillo, Mr. Ambrosio Lima and Mr. Mario Ordóñez. Oral interview with Carlos Rafael Pellecer Arias and Mr. José Rafael Pellecer, Jutiapa, 11-14-2004.

have made about it.[38] Néstor García Canclini cited by Ofelia Déleon (Déleon, 1991:6) in her study, classifies the festivals into rural and urban. According to his contributions and disagreeing with some of his arguments, we can affirm that the Jutiapa Fair is a popular festival that is characterized by the following:

a) It is a festival that brings together and expresses rural and urban culture.

b) It has been held in geographic areas, within the urban space or in surrounding fields.

c) It is an individual and collective event, largely rooted in livestock production.

d) For some time now, the cycle of its celebration (commercial logic) has been determined by the agricultural rhythm, since for reasons of season - pasture and fattening -, it is the best time to buy and sell livestock.

e) Of rural origin, many of the artisan products express the domestic family unit, the life cycle and productivity.

f) It manifests the social division and individual and collective behaviors, both in rural areas and in the city.

g) The family relationships typical of urbanity are crystallized in actions observed during the fair.

h) It is a spectacle that - to some extent - is influenced by the image created by the media.

To the above descriptions, we must add that during the recreational space of the fair -and as in other popular festivals-, it is very common that its execution is a moment or parenthesis of social articulation, where the conflicts and discrepancies of the different sectors tend to be tolerated, disappearing resentments and increasing behaviors that, based on identity elements, are manifested in collective attitudes of solidarity, good treatment and courtesy. These collective behaviors include competitive individual expressions that, distanced from virile and racist excesses, crystallize in positive attitudes of achievements and personal improvement.

## THE FAIR A SPACE TO SHARE MORE SOCIAL VALUES THAN RELIGIOUS

Currently, the social relations that are expressed during the fair, unify society reaffirming more its civil values than religious ones. The local authorities, depositaries of political power and the livestock sectors, incorporating peasant groups, establish and determine to a great extent the character of the festival.

On holidays, collective behaviors: mutuality, solidarity, fraternity and respect, among others, respond more to a religious morality than to the influence of a social structure that reproduces a world of values that privileges the human condition.

38 Currently, various authors have provided different classifications of fairs based on many criteria. One of the proposals emphasizes that nowadays, fairs with characteristics similar to those of the Middle Ages are only held in rural areas. Using the deductive process, this proposal includes the following titles: 1. Traditional fairs: patronal, titular, rural (livestock/agricultural). 2. Modern exhibition fairs: demonstrations and international exhibitions (livestock/special). (VELIZ, Derick, 1998: 4).

Social values are also reproduced through emotional relationships, which manifest belonging to the group, through the return and massive presence of Jutiapa residents, who have emigrated to other regions of the country, especially to the capital city.

However, we must take into consideration that the reproduction of civil values does not remain outside the providential position, that rural unity and cohesion is based on predominantly religious values and principles.[39] This explains how in the fair, currently the scarce presence of the religious element is the effect of high rural religiosity.

Finally, the Fair of the Department of Jutiapa is one of the sociocultural events that continues with great validity, fulfilling among numerous functions, that of cohesion and hierarchical reproduction of society.

39 The following are the patron saints that are celebrated in the different municipalities of the department. In the month of January: Aguablanca, Los Santos Reyes; February: El Progreso, Our Lady of Lourdes; San José Acatempa, El Progreso, La Virgen de Lourdes; San José Acatempa, La Virgen de la Piedad; Pasado, San Francisco de Asís; Zapotitlán, San Miguel; March: El Adelanto, San José; Moyuta, San Juan Bautista; Jerez, San Nicolás Tolentino; July: Jutiapa, San Cristóbal; October: Yupiltepeque, San Lucas; November: Atescatempa, San Francisco de Asís; Santa Catarina Mita, Santa Catarina; Quezada, Santa Catarina; December: Comapa, Virgen de Concepción; Asunción Mita, Virgen de Concepción, Coguaco, San. Pedro and Jalpatagua, Saint Thomas. In these festivals activities are planed and carried out based on the sacred character. Calendario de fiestas titulares de la República de Guatemala Indígena (2): 150, Guatemala: 1962. Directorio de Fiestas, Guatemala (without data). Evolución (6): 14, 17. Jutiapa, December 2002. Evolución (20): 17, Jutiapa, November 2004.

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# Photography, Radio and Cinematography in the Traditions of Lent and Holy Week in Guatemala

**FERNANDO URQUIZÚ**

Much has been discussed about the loss of values and artistic expressions due to the advance of science and technology over ancestral customs that explain and modify the way of life, making them less competitive compared to the alternatives offered by the advance of commerce and industrial products, which in turn end up transforming and gradually absorbing them.

However, in our environment, the advance of technology and science in favor of capitalism managed to coexist in balance with certain festivals and religious commemorations such as the Holy Week processions, which could not be absorbed because they were managed to be incorporated into the social function in the 20th century. During this time, religious education expanded in aspects such as providing a free spectacle for the people. While it did not abandon its devotional background, as its purpose was to recapitulate aspects of Christian doctrine related to the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, it fostered a sense of unity around its manifestations. Photography, radio, and cinema played a fundamental role in these events, which will be analyzed in this essay.

A precedent of the use of photography in the images of the Passion during Guatemalan Holy Week can be found in the paintings from the period of Spanish domination (1524-1821), which reproduced the most devout images in the region. An immediate example would be the painting of *Jesús Nazareno* [Jesus of Nazareth] from La Merced Church, housed in the same temple, which could be compared to others, like the one from the Carmen Temple in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico.[1]

It is evident that these images came from the need to reproduce a devotion similar to that which occurred around the Virgin of Guadalupe in New Spain during the same period when numerous copies of the original painting were made. Some of these, like Francisco Cabrera's painting in the Metropolitan Cathedral and Juan Correa's in the Villa de Guadalupe Temple in the capital, came to the former Kingdom of Guatemala. These early forms of

1 See illustration No. 1, Photography of *La Consagrada Imágen de Jesús de Nazareno de la Merced* in 1996, donning the same tunic that appears in his portrait made in the 18th century, located on the west wall at the entrance of the Chappell. Said painting is reproduced in illustration No. 2.

***Illustration No. 1, Photography of* La Consagrada Imágen de Jesús de Nazareno de la Merced *in 1996, donning the same tunic that appears in his portrait made in the 18th century. Taken by Investigator Walter Gutierrez.***





increasing local devotion required immediate reproduction of the image, with the portrait emerging as a product of a specific need.

In the 18th century, the engraving technique also developed in the former Kingdom of Guatemala. In the case of the Passion images used in Lent and Holy Week processions, they were used to graphically illustrate the patents granted to the members of the brotherhoods. These images were still devoid of detail and sensitivity, likely because they served more as documents than as attempts to faithfully capture the brotherhood's devotional image.[2]

This trend continued until the late 19th century when the first photographs of the processions emerged with the character of a *Cuadro de Costumbre* [A description of popular behaviors, customs or habits.] in which we can detect an interest in capturing the entirety of the procession rather than simply portraying the images.[3]

In the early years of the 20th century, a photographic collection of the most venerated images of Lent and Holy Week

2 See illustration No. 3 that shows a print of the *Cofradía de Jesús de Nazareno de la Santa Cruz*.

3 See illustration No. 4 Photography of the procession of *El Santo Entierro de Santo Domingo*, probably from 1908.

***Illustration No. 2. Photography of the portrait of* Jesús Nazareno de la Merced de la Nueva Guatemala *that can be found on the west wall at the entrance of the Chappel. Taken by Investigator William Cameros.***

in Guatemala was made available to the faithful in churches, with a devotional intent that allowed devotees to have portraits of the images in their homes. [4]

The final prints were far from faithful to the originals. As can be seen when comparing the previously mentioned body of research, this was likely because the photographs were illuminated to enhance the beauty of the images, or the engravings were retouched due to the lack of precision in the photographs that served as the basis for later lithographs that were very evidently produced in a distant country at a time when there was little visual material on hand to guide or provide artists with more information for recreating the master artworks.

This type of altered portrait extended to other engravings, such as the one used to reproduce the Señor Sepultado [Entombed Lord] from the Santo Domingo Temple, created in the Lemepoier Workshops in Paris, France, commissioned by Fray J. Raymundo Riviro in 1902.[5]

In 1906, a Dominican priest named Miguel

***Illustration No. 3 Print with engravings of the* Cofradía de Jesús Nazareno de la Santa Cruz *from the city of Santiago de Guatemala. Printed from the collection of the National Museum of History.***

4 See illustration No. 5. Illuminated picture of *Jesús Nazareno de la Merced* that became the base for the reproduction of prints as the ones made by House L. TURGIS & FILS Paris. Edit Prevost Despalangues & Tardif. Reproduced in illustration No. 6

5 See illustration No. 7.

***Illustration No. 4. Photography of the solemn procession of* El Santo Entierro de Santo Domingo *of New Guatemala, probably from 1908. Picture from the National Museum of History.***





Fernández Concha wrote an unpublished manuscript titled *"Liber Aureus,"* located in the archive of the Basílica Menor of Nuestra Señora del Rosario, former Santo Domingo Temple in New Guatemala. This manuscript was illustrated with a very interesting collection of photographs that provide an early attempt to document the Passion images in our environment, serving as material evidence of an ancestral history relayed in great detail.[6] In his work, the author mentions the importance of the Holy Week processions that started from this temple.

The growth of processions in the old neighborhoods of the capital paralleled the 20th century, with each jurisdiction having a procession assigned to a special day during Lent and Holy Week. These events gradually came to represent the identity of the inhabitants, who competed to improve the presentation of their processions for the rest of the city's residents. Thus began a healthy competition for the best presentation of the images during these commemorations, which included even the smallest details, from the Lent altar to the decoration of the streets on the day of the procession.

6 See illustration No. 8. Photography of the devotion, reproduced similarly to the ones on Miguel Fernandez Concha's LIBER AUREUS. Guatemala, 1906. On pages 15 to 27, he discusses the history of the procession of El Santo Entierro de Santo Domingo, illustrated with pictures.

However, the ephemeral nature of these commemorations drove the creation of annual photographic collections, sponsored by the brotherhoods, to document the proper organization of the sacred parades by their leaders. This led to the creation of the remembered *Salones de las hermandades* [Brotherhood Halls], where photographs documenting these religious events were displayed. Over time, these photographs fell victim to natural disasters or ended up in the hands of sacrilegious individuals who saw them as objects to sell to collectors. Fortunately, some negatives were preserved in photographic studios, providing a valuable source of knowledge for the study of processions today.

***Illustration No. 5. Illuminated photography de* Jesús Nazareno de la Merced de la Nueva Guatemala*. Used as base for the reproduction of prints as the ones made by House L. TURGIS & FILS Paris. Edit Prevost Despalangues & Tardif.***


***Illustration No. 6. Print of* Jesús Nazareno de la Merced *made by House L. TURGIS & FILS Paris. Edit Prevost Despalangues & Tardif.***

During this period, the written word became the primary source of information for the general public, and newspapers of the time reflected this situation. They became the main reservoirs of information about itineraries, musical premieres, and other changes to processions in urban areas. In the departments of the interior of the country, these manifestations continued with less perceptible changes in their organization, except for La Antigua Guatemala, which, due to its interconnection with the capital, emulated its practices.

The careful examination of these sources of hemerography and photography allows us to understand the transition from the use of the *anda* [processional platform] as a means to transport an image, to its evolution into a support structure for a portable altar, decorated with artificial flowers to prevent them from wilting during the procession. Later, scenes from the life of Jesus began to appear as part of the adornments on the platforms. These scenes gradually became enriched with symbolic representations of the triumph of Christianity over atheist doctrines in Roman-style decorations. Over time, intricate gospel messages were incorporated into the designs.


***Illustration No. 7. This type of altered portrait overcame other engravings as the one that was used as the one that was used for the printing of* Señor Sepuñtado del Templo de Santo Domingo *Made by the Lemepoier Workshops in Paris, France, commissioned by R. P. Fray J. Raymundo Riviro in 1902. As suggested by the notes on the turns to carry the procession of Good Friday in 2000.***

The Passion images were housed in chapels and altarpieces within churches. For the special days of Lent and Holy Week, these images were placed outside their usual settings on special seasonal altars or under a canopy. It is important to note that these altars were distinct from funerary tumuli and commemorative altars. The former were used for funerals, memorial services, and visitation, while the latter were created in honor of special Church or State festivities, such as the coronation of a new monarch or the advent of a Dauphin.

As the 20th century progressed, the altars and the use of canopies as seasonal thrones for the Passion images were enriched with scenery that depicted scenes from the Passion of Christ. This led to the inclusion of the *andas* as part of these ornaments, which were later used as didactic tools for teaching the gospel.

This raises the question: What caused such sudden changes in the traditional altar-making school, leading to such the successful removal of the images from their traditional environments into innovative settings that captivated the public? And to the extent that People no longer attended just to visit the images as part of a religious belief, but also to admire the surprising and magnificent decorations displayed on the altars and andas?

*Illustration No. 8. Photogrfaphy of the devotion, reproduced similarly to the ones on Miguel Fernandez Concha's LIBER AUREUS. Guatemala, 1906. Picture of particular devotion.*



*Illustration No. 9 Frame from the film recently discovered in Guatemala with the Spanish title of* **"La Flagelación"** *by the brand Pathé Fréres , Paris. Frame taken from the original duly curated by Specialist Historian Edgar Barillas.*

***Illustration No. 10.*** **Jesús Nazareno** ***from*** **Parroquia de la Santa Cruz** ***of New Guatemala on his platform for the procession of Monday of Holy Week, whose presentation of the image includes inspiration from the movie*** **La Vida de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo** ***by Pathé Fréres. Taken by Investigator Juan Alberto Sandoval Aldana.***

The explanation given by the elders was that the deep devotion to the various Passion images by the devotees and altar-makers inspired artists to use their material creations to bring faith back to the churches and processions, a faith that was being lost due to the support of liberal governments and the development of impure science, which displaced moral values and belief in the divine.[7]

This idealistic explanation should not be dismissed, but it is also important to examine the factors that influenced the altar-makers and the leaders of the brotherhoods in choosing the decorations and messages for the Holy Week altars and processions.

First, we must consider that the urban context of churches and processions was not the same as what we perceive today. This context has been severely altered by formal and informal commerce, which has polluted the original urban landscape.

Let us imagine the old neighborhoods as clean places where churches were important buildings, as they served to reproduce the system of moral ideas and individual and social behavior. Next to these buildings were convents and religious schools, most of which were confiscated during the Liberal Reform of 1871.[8]

7 It was also frequent to hear this kind of explanation at my house coming from the elderly that lived their adolescence and youth in the first decades of the 20th century.

8 The decree of extinction of the religious orders and confiscation of their properties took place in Guatemala on July 31, 1872. Under the commands of interim president General Justo Rufino Barrios, cited by Antonio Villacorta Escobar. *HISTORIA DE LA REPUBLICA DE GUATEMALA*. Tipografía Nacional. Guatemala. 1960. Pp. 414-418.

Said constructions were converted into public schools, parish schools, and private institutions, where the inhabitants of the old neighborhoods learned basic literacy. Despite the secular education provided in these schools, their proximity to the churches meant that the ideological dominance of Catholicism was not entirely severed.

In the more elegant neighborhoods of the city, such as Santo Domingo, San Francisco, and El Sagrario, there were halls for social events and some theaters where concerts and performances were held to entertain the public and reflect on the way of life. However, as the 20th century and the city grew, new halls emerged for the projection of moving images as an alternative form of entertainment. In the specific case of Holy Week, it was positively impacted by the dramatic epic genre, which included the presentation of films on classical and biblical themes.

In this context, the earliest reports about the exhibition of films related to the aforementioned themes were found in advertisements from the *La República* newspaper in 1907. The paper announced the upcoming screening of a "perfected Cinematograph collection of views of the Birth, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Divine Redeemer of the World" [sic]... stating that “it was presented on Good Friday of this year before His Holiness Pope Pius X, who was completely satisfied and moved by the natural beauty of its magnificent scenes." The presentation was

***Illustration No. 11.*** **Jesús Nazareno** ***from church*** **La Merced,** ***New Guatemala, shows the traditional presentation his garments of Hispanic descent. Picture from the National History Museum.***

*Illustration No. 12. Scene from the film Ben-Hur, showcasing details from the ornaments perceptible in illustration No. 13. Pay attention to the imperial eagle in relief at the back, behind the actors. Frame taken from the film's web site.*

overseen by businessman Felipe Coronado B.[9]

Further information about the film was expanded upon in another advertisement from the same newspaper, which added, on the occasion of a new showing at the Salón Europeo, that the renowned collection of scenes came from "the Pathé Fréres factory in Paris, 3,250 feet long, and entirely in color, titled The Birth, Life, Passion, and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ." The ad also mentioned that it had been shown in major European cities and New York.[10]

The presence of these advertisements coincides with the recent discovery of a film on the same theme, provided by the chronicler of New Guatemala, Miguel Álvarez Arévalo, to cinematography and national film expert Edgar Barillas, who shared his insights, images, and information about the film, raising the possibility that it may be the one previously mentioned, which merits further analysis regarding its impact on Lent and Holy Week traditions.[11]

9 La Republica N. 4607, July 19, 1907. P 4.

10 La Republica N. 4614. July 29, 1907. P 5.

11 See Illustration 9. Frame from the Film recently discovered in Guatemala, duly curated by Specialist Historian Edgar Barillas.

Film projections of these themes continued to grow throughout the century, gaining particular importance during Lent and Holy Week. This can be inferred from an announcement in the Nueva York Theater on Friday, March 26, 1920, promoting the grand and sensational premiere of The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, a "modern film in color accompanied by organ and marimba music".[12]

The presence of cinema must be considered a key factor that broadened the knowledge of brotherhood members, altar-makers, and the general public on themes related to the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. Originally, this knowledge was only acquired in church and enriched through religious readings in schools and homes. However, cinematography reached both literate and illiterate audiences, thus universalizing the knowledge even further.

***Illustration No. 13. Photograph of* Jesus Nazareno de la Santa Cruz *of Nueva Guatemala on his procession float during the Holy Monday procession in 1930, showing behind the image of the Lord the Roman banners, where the influence of the film Ben-Hur is evident in their finials. Compare this with illustration No. 12, after reading the caption. Original photograph by researcher Juan Alberto Sandoval Aldana.***

Additionally, the citation provides a valuable detail about the early fusion of technology and tradition, as it advertises the projection of a silent film accompanied by an organ soundtrack, while also using the marimba to attract people to the event. The marimba, which is now considered a symbol of national unity, demonstrated even back then its adaptability to any social gathering.[13]

This evidence is further supported by the reference to two processional marches premiered during Holy Week in 1923, composed by maestro Felipe Siliézar: *Quo Vadis Domine*? and *Lágrimas*.[14] The title of the first one clearly refers to the novel *Quo Vadis* by Henryk Sienkiewicz, which

12 Diario Excelsor No. 137, Thursday, March 26, 1920. Page 4. See illustrations Nos. 23 and 24.

13 As my father, Hector Urquizú Calito (1911-1983), a musician and resident of Nueva Guatemala, revealed to me, it was very common during his childhood and adolescence, in the era of silent films, to find a marimba ensemble at the doors and entryways of movie theaters to attract the audience. Once the screenings began, they would move inside to provide musical accompaniment for the films, utilizing the chromatic capacity of the film and the musicians' skill to improvise according to the scenes presented to the audience.

14 The known works of Maestro Felipe Siliézar can be consulted in the book *NUEVAS NOTAS PARA EL ESTUDIO DE LAS MARCHAS FÚNEBRES EN GUATEMALA* in Guatemala by Fernando Urquizú. USAC, Guatemala, 2003. Pages 184-185.

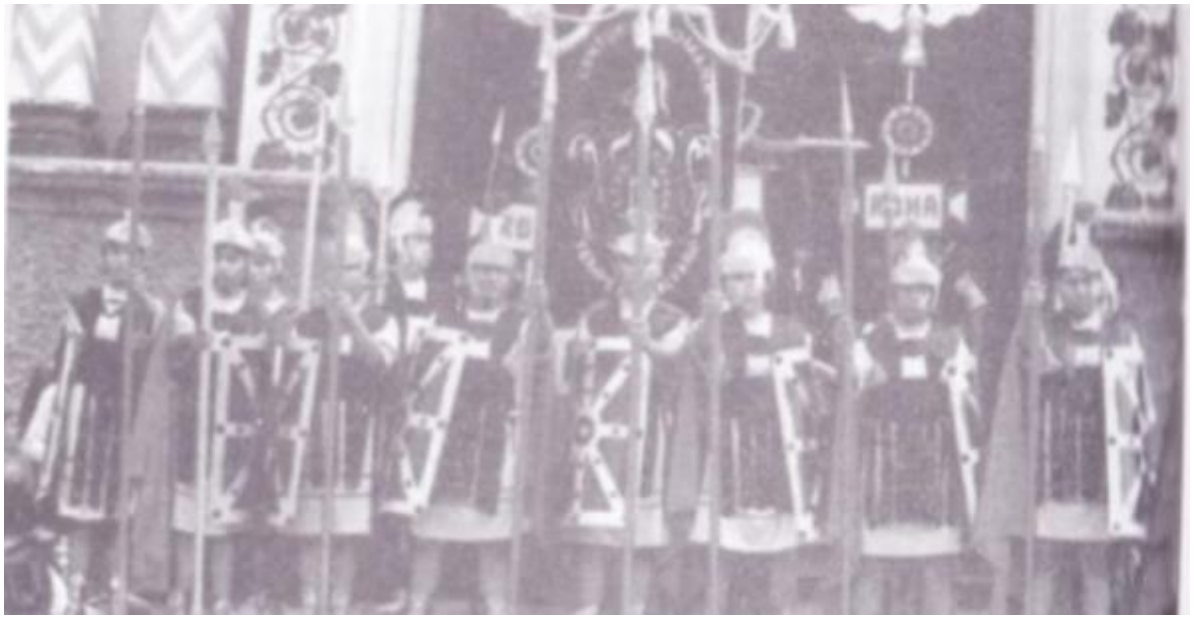

***Illustration No. 14. Photograph of the Roman Squadron from the Holy Burial procession at the* Calvario *Temple in Nueva Guatemala on Good Friday of the year 2000. The influence of the costumes from the 1925 film Ben Hur is evident. Compare this with illustration No. 12. Photograph by Edwin Castro.***

was adapted for the screen in 1912 by director Enrico Guazzoni.[15] The premiere of the composition demonstrates the relationship between new technology and tradition; although it should be noted that the march premiered in a Holy Week procession was likely composed to accompany a silent version of the aforementioned film, as Bands were also used to accompany silent films. It's worth noting that even back then, combined versions of marimba and band existed, called "Marimba Band," which eventually evolved into "Marimba Orchestra."

The city's commercial scene was significantly altered during this season, as confirmed by advertisements for various products offered by stores, ranging from clothing to the most exotic table items. Moreover, the brotherhoods displayed their new acquisitions for the processions, as revealed by the same sources. For instance, in 1929, "El Paso" was showcased in life-sized figures of "Jesus and the Cyrenean," which premiered for the *Santo Entierro* [Holy Burial] procession at Santo Domingo on Good Friday of that year. The display took place at "La Paquetería"[16], which was, at that time, the most exclusive store in the city, located on 5th Avenue and 11th Street in Zone 1, near the largest movie theaters in the country. In their lobbies, the so-called *attraction boards of films* were set up in the middle, displaying small sequences of

15 Argos. Editorial *LAS BELLAS ARTES*. Tomo II. Barcelona, 1970. Pp. 25. Take into consideration that Maestro Siliézar saw the written and cinematographic versions of “Qou Vadis?”.

16 Various Authors. *APUNTES HISTÍRICOS DE LA HERMANDAD DEL SEÑOR SEPULTADO DEL TEMPLO SANTO DOMINGO*. No Editorial. Guatemala. 1992. PP. 171. Shows a report of purchase from El Paso, additionally confirms the exhibition that took place in the most prestigious storage room at the time in the capital city.

photographs from films—mostly epic dramas—during this season. These spaces were appropriately decorated with altars and other exhibits from the brotherhoods, such as newly embroidered tunics, jewels, and more.

This environment undoubtedly influenced the directors and altar-makers, whose ideas were enriched in some way by a combination of photography and cinematography. The movie theaters became key social hubs, fueling creative processes in the design of altars and the decorations of the andas for the processions. They drew inspiration from the set designs of films, but employed local materials and techniques, along with an unmistakably Guatemalan touch[17], adding the local popular sentiment. In this way, the images became the main actors in the boards, as we will demonstrate later.

The artistic explosion reached new heights with the cinematic exhibition of the film Ben-Hur, starring Mexican-born actor


***Illustration No. 15. Promotional ad of the Ben-Hur film from 1925. In its composition we can appreciate the graphic design that combines photography, calligraphy and color that influenced the design of Pregones and turns in our country. Frame taken from the Ben-Hur film web site.***

Ramón Navarro in 1925. This film's local influence lasted until 1960, when the new version of the movie, released the year before, premiered in Guatemala. The impact of this film not only affected the internal and external decorations of Lent and Holy Week, but also led to the inclusion of Roman characters and costumes in the processions. These changes updated the traditions for the time, making them more attractive to the public.[18]

Thus, squads of cavalry emerged, roaming Antigua Guatemala and publicly announcing *The sentence of Jesus* from the early hours of the morning at strategic locations around the city, prior to the procession of the Señor Nazareno of La

17 The so-called "Toque chapin" of Guatemalan touch is an interpretation made by local artists of the scenography taken from films. This affirmation is evident on the costume and hair of Jesus Nazarene *de las tres potencias* after the year 1907, when the first version of The life of Our Lord had already been presented in moving pictures. See illustration No. 10. This contrasts with the presentation of Jesus Nazarene *de la Merced* of New Gautemala, that presents traditional costume designs of Hispanic descent. See illustration No. 11.

18 See illustration No. 12. Photographic scene from the film Ben-Hur presenting the details of ornaments that are perceptible in illustration No. 13 and evident on the costumes of the Romans of the procession of the Santo Entierro of the Calvario temple of New Guatemala. See illustration No. 14.

Merced. This blend of reality and fantasy enchanted the public from the early 1930s, coinciding with the signing of an initial contract between Pan American Airlines and the government of the Republic, which positioned Guatemala as an important tourist destination.

The impact of the film Ben-Hur can also be seen in the printed color lithographs, ranging from the well-known advertising posters, referred to locally as *Pregones*, to the turns.[19] To understand this influence, let us compare the promotional poster for the 1925 film Ben-Hur with the turn for Jesús de Candelaria from 1934.[20] We can observe the use of artistic photography, matching fonts, and the strategic use of color in both cases, serving as propaganda for the film and the image, respectively. This comparison reveals an early use of images and typography with a sense of graphic design, influenced by cinematography.


***Illustration No. 16. Turn to carry Jesus Nazarene of Candelaria, 1932. In this document, the graphic design that reached these manifestations of faith trough cinema is evident..***

During the 1930s, the third dictatorship was established in Guatemala, which was later overthrown by the revolution of October 20, 1944. This period was characterized by the government's use of force to maintain political power. However, there was material growth in the country, which supported a coherent program for the preservation of the Cultural Heritage which led to the beautification of New Guatemala with constructions never seen before for their grandness and magnificence, including the National Palace, the Palacio de Correos, the Palacio de la Policía, and the Palacio Nacional de la Tipografía, among others, in what is now the Historic Center.

The construction plan also included the restoration of major monuments in what is now Antigua Guatemala, aiming to shape a new, yet untapped source of wealth for the country: tourism. These factors are essential to understanding the positive reinforcement of Lent and Holy Week

19 Turns. Small standard-sized cardboards of 12x8 cm, that displayed the site and number of blocks of the procession that corresponded to carry the anda to each penitent that participated.

20 See illustrations No. 15 & 16.

commemorations in Guatemalan society, as this dictatorship saw them as a key element for maintaining social cohesion. These commemorations took place amidst impressive palaces that enriched the city with a neo-Californian style, which the people understood as colonial. These constructions served as a perfect backdrop for the processions.

The work on these buildings and monuments was completed with the restoration of churches that had been damaged by the 1917 and 1918 earthquakes and had not been repaired due to a lack of funds until this period. This national reconstruction effort required the development of the first explanatory pamphlets detailing the origins and locations of the historical heritage that had been preserved from the ruins of Antigua Guatemala and transferred to the new capital. This led to the emergence of the first tourist guides. As part of this development, the work *Las Bellas Artes en Guatemala*, written by journalist Víctor Miguel Díaz, saw the light in 1934 with the support of the government and printed by the National Typography.

This publication presents, for the first time, a formal historiographic vision of the most venerated Passion images in the country, enriched with photographs. The engaging and interesting exposition of its content won over readers, who found in this work a source of explanation for their devotion. This was convenient at the time for the dissemination of knowledge about Guatemalan traditions, which was starting to spread via radio, achieving national

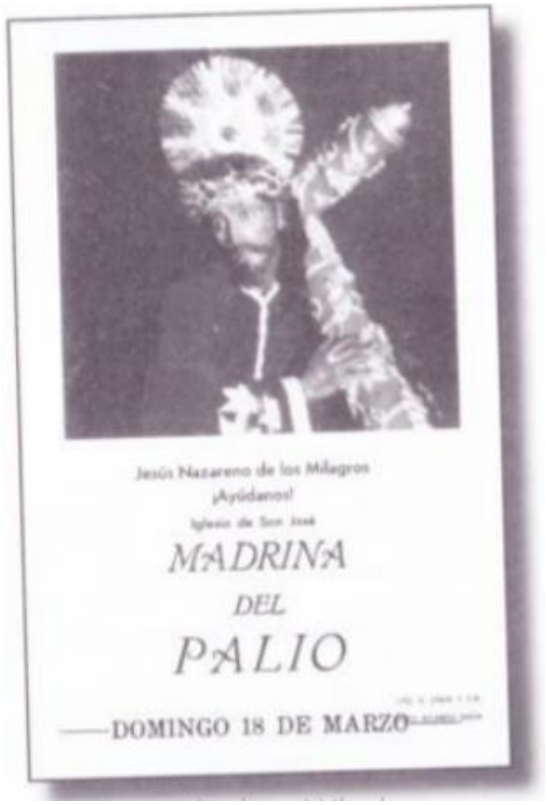


***Illustration No. 17. Commemorative card in the form of a Jevis Nazareno shift from the temple of Señor San José de la Nueva Guatemala. Printed in Lithography by D. Zadik and Co. Year 1958. It shows a color artistic photograph of a passion image taken by Ricardo Mata.***

reach.

In the 1940s, a new visitor arrived to stay in all Guatemalan homes: "the radio receiver", which became a prominent presence during Lent and Holy Week.

Programs were created to promote the religious activities of the brotherhoods and confraternities of churches in the neighborhoods of New and Antigua Guatemala. The transmission of these programs gradually expanded to include new segments about the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Our Lord, some of which were reproduced and recorded from shortwave broadcasts of XEW *La Voz de América Latina* from Mexico.


***Illustration No. 18. Hand programs of Funeral Marches for Jesus Nazarene of La Merced, performed in the traditional Reseña procession on Holy Tuesday in the years 1966 and 1974. These documents established the repertoire of marches for the processions within popular faith.***

The memorable voices of great Mexican film artists like Roberto Cañedo, Silvia Berves, and Carmen Montejo brought each day of Lent and Holy Week to life in these radio segments through their well-remembered radio dramas that, with their poetic and elegant Spanish, captivated the sensitivities of an audience that encompassed the entire republic.[21] According to some credits, the script for these programs was written by Manuel Canceco Noriega, while the narrator of the stories was broadcaster Manuel Bernal.

The influence of these two figures extended even further within the national tradition, as their deeply realistic radio dramatizations were used as theatrical backdrops for ceremonies such as La Crucifixión, El Sermón de las Siete Palabras, and El Descendimiento, preceding the procession of the Santo Entierro of the Church of Calvario, to the point where the Mexican broadcaster's voice became associated with the image of

21 In our country there are numerous copies of that sequence of programs that are utilized religiously and that to this day are still relevant within the religious ideology.

the Lord Buried from that temple.[22]

These recordings were utilized alongside theatrical sets, actors, religious images, live music, and special effects to convey a message that quickly drew large crowds to the El Calvario temple. These representations combined a religious message with a first-class, free spectacle that the public eagerly embraced.

This theatrical sense was also present in reverse, with the first Spanish-speaking sound films from Mexico in the religious genre being shown in Guatemala. Dr. Carlos Navarrete[23] recalls one in particular titled *El Mártir de Góngola*, starring Argentine actor José Cipriani, who lived in Mexico. Navarrete recounts: "For the screenings of this film during Lent and Holy Week, the ticket sellers and ushers in the cinema were dressed as *cucuruchos* [penitents], and the theater was decorated with pine carpets, adorned with seasonal flowers, and incense was burned in the venue".

His description demonstrates the fusion between the new art of cinematography and popular tradition, creating a delight for a unique audience with deep religious emotions.

The re-release of religious epic films in the 1950s immediately sparked a renewal and modernization of the Passion processions in Guatemala, which had grown considerably alongside photography, radio, and cinema. By then, these media were already being used for both religious and commercial purposes.

We can observe the development of artistic photography of Passion sculptures, used to capture their beauty as works of art and attract the faithful to their expressions of faith. In this regard, the use of the oxced

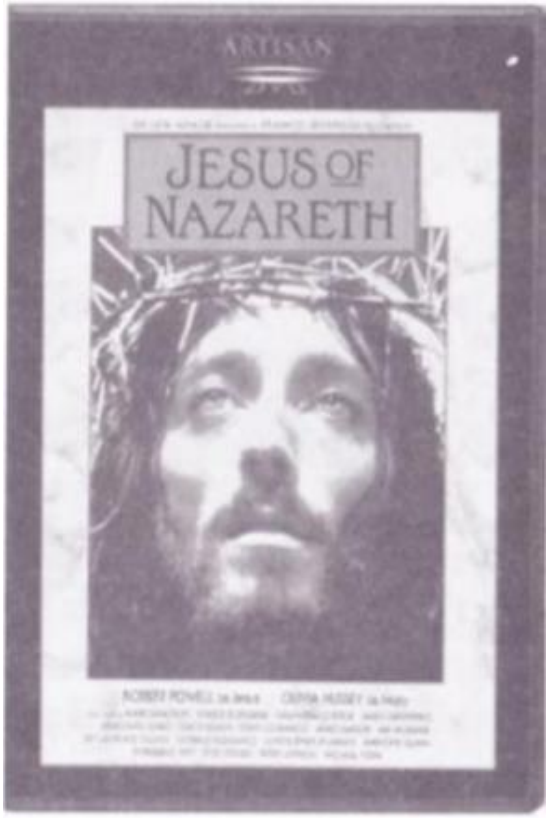


***Illustration No. 19. Publicity ad from the film* "Jesús de Nazaret". *Shows the renewed spirit of the films touching the subject of The Passion of Christ.***

22 Some elderly recounted that the Mexican radio presenter's voice was even linked to the image of El Señor Sepultado del Calvario. Back in the day, panic attacks, passing out and other emotional types of distress were frequent, because of the profound realism that the Good Friday ceremonies at the Calvario temple possessed. Using the actors' recordings, images and cinematic effects.

23 Guatemalan doctor Carlos Navarrete. Teacher and investigator at UNAM, of 23 years of age and neighbor in Mexico City. Interviewed February, 2004.

printing technique played a crucial role.[24] This method allowed for the quick and clear production of color photographs, making colored portraits of devotional images accessible to the public, thereby fostering a sense of unity around special devotions.

This photography and printing technique also contributed to the emergence of music handouts for the processions, helping to preserve this heritage in two key ways. On one hand, it recorded the names of musical compositions and their authors; on the other, it mentally linked the images to the special repertoire dedicated to each, enhancing overall knowledge of this material heritage, which was used temporarily during these commemorations.[25]


PROGRAMA GENERAL DE LOS ACTOS DE

Cuaresma y Semana Santa

Parroquia el Dulce Nombre de Jesús

Recolección

*Illustration No. 20. Photograph of the program of religious events that would take place in the Recollection Church during Lent and Holy Week in 1975, with graphic design influenced by the advertising poster cited as: Illustration No. 19.*

In this period of renewal, the first high-fidelity recordings of Holy Week music were made, further embedding this type of music in the minds of the faithful and the general public. One notable example is the album *Semana Santa en Guatemala* L.-4, produced by Casa Avelar and recorded by Tikal, Guatemala in 1955. Its cover features an artistic photograph of Jesús Nazareno de San José, and the back includes poetic commentary on each of the marches recorded, as well as the name of the maestro who directed the band ensemble. Over time, other albums, now considered classics, were released, enriched with histories of the brotherhoods and artistic photographs of the images to which the albums were dedicated.

The experience gained from all this work led to the development of new radio programs, featuring local voices presenting the traditional segments, which had originally been taken from Mexico's XEW *La Voz de América Latina*. These

24 See illustration No. 17. Commemorative card of a turn of Jesus Nazarene from the Señor San José temple, New Guatemala.

25 See illustration No. 18. Hand programs of of Funeral Marches for Jesus Nazarene of La Merced, performed in the traditional "Reseña" procession on Holy Tuesday in the years 1966 and 1974. These documents established the repertoire of marches for the processions within popular faith.


***Illustration No. 21. The front page of the informative pamphlet released by INGUAT. 2003. Advisor: Fernando Urquizú, presenting another angle of knowledge about the processions for the general public, not just the Catholics.***

broadcasts now had bits of local flavor, incorporating excerpts from *Las Bellas Artes en Guatemala* by Víctor Miguel Díaz. Over time, this type of content satisfied the public's thirst for knowledge, creating myths that are now difficult to dispel.

Díaz, drawing on documents and interpreting others, constructed an artistic history that blended reality and fantasy, which served as sufficient evidence for brotherhoods to organize grand commemorations, such as the Fourth Centenary of Jesús Nazareno de Candelaria, or to propagate an idyllic history of the Lord of Santo Domingo's burial. In these narratives, popular faith and empirical storytelling played a more prominent role than a conscious examination of a research corpus. These narratives were reproduced by radio, which by then had proven its effectiveness in influencing the masses, since the counterrevolutionary invasion of Guatemala, orchestrated from the Republic of Honduras in 1954.[26]

The live broadcasts of the processions represented an extraordinary contribution, as they brought an imaginary experience to those who could not attend for various reasons. The audience in hospitals, prisons, and homes expanded once again; the audience for these radio broadcasts even included people who avoided the crowds around these events and preferred to listen to them in this way.

This factor was later reinforced with television broadcasts, and new films continued to renew the vision of Lent and Holy Week processions, updating the image of Jesus, as can be seen when comparing the photographic presentation

26 In the year 1954, the participation of the Radio Broadcast "*Radio Liberación Nacional*", was decisive. They managed the contra revolutionary propaganda, influencing the general public as part of the logistics used on the Invasion to Guatemala.

techniques in the posters for the film *Jesus of Nazareth* and the processions of Jesus Nazarene from the Recolección Temple, dating back to the 1970s.[27]

It is important to understand that in the early 21st century, processions are also seen by another sector of the population as income sources at all levels, covering everything from small street vendors offering all kinds of products, such as souvenirs, toys, food, and more, to the tourism industry, which presents them as a manifestation of our culture, with photography, radio, and other individual and mass media playing a key role.[28] The surge in these sacred manifestations in our country should lead us to produce not only devotional texts or tourism brochures but also to enrich our history of sacred art with serious studies that examine the process that has led these manifestations to the forefront of the world's cultural heritage.

Science has further enriched the means of disseminating knowledge on this subject with the development of computers, which allow us to directly transmit messages about our traditions. Various websites now feature this content. With this new approach, the author currently advises the academic area of Art History for the site semanasantaenlinea.com as part of a new project reaching different parts of the United States, with an audience eager to participate in and learn about these manifestations.

The academic results have not yet been quantified, as the expansion of the site was launched on February 28, although the site itself has existed for ten years with a solely religious focus.

We hope that revisiting these topics from a different perspective will be well received by the public, opening up a new path for studying these manifestations of Guatemalan sacred art. This has been strengthened by new knowledge that broadens research sources previously unexplored, now enriching the history of our Passion processions.



27 See illustration No. 19. Shows us the publicity ad for the film Jesús de Nazaret, and compared to illustration No. 20, shows us the front page of the religious activities programed for Lent and Holy Week on the La Recolección Temple, 1975. Demonstrating a certain familiarity with the type of shot and way of presenting the image of the Lord. Sai presentation took ass base the pattern from the film and its publicity.

28 This pamphlet was made by various specialists and typifies the utilization of artistic photography by means of informing on propaganda, as well as showing another perspective on processions targeted to a not necessarily religious nor national audience.

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**ANNEX**

During the course of this work, a new corpus of research was located in segments of radio programs from *XEW "La Voz de América Latina"* of Mexico. No date was provided, but it is likely from the 1930s or 1940s.

Local films related to the research topic, "The Passion of Christ," were identified, including:

*"Vida, Pasión y Muerte de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo"*, made in 1988 by the Tacaná music group and Canal 31. Coordinator: Dorian Zunún. Based on a theatrical script. *"Judas"*, produced by Claudio Lanuza, filmed on location at Cerrito del Carmen and the National Palace. *"El Cristo de los Milagros"*, undated, directed by Rafael Lanuza.

The chronicler of Guatemala City provided a fragment of the *Pathé Frères* film, which may belong to the title *"El nacimiento, La Vida, La Pasión y Muerte de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo"*. This film was premiered in Guatemala in 1907 and was given to the specialist in film analysis

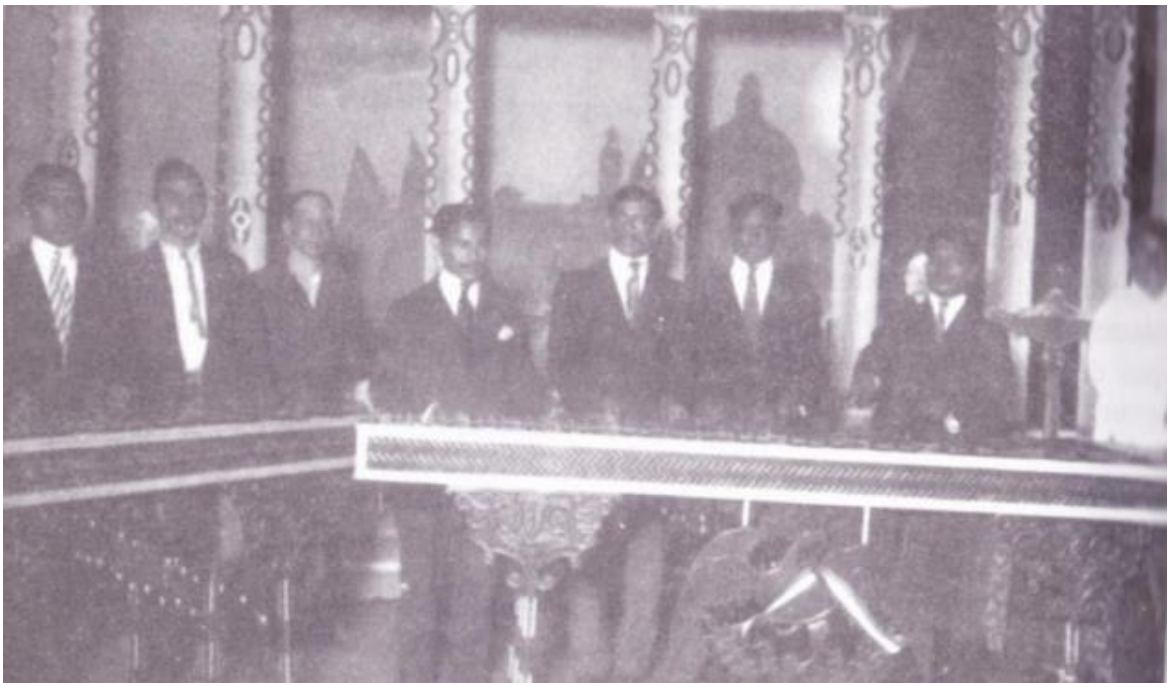

***Illustration No. 23 Photograph showing the participation of marimba groups enlivening movie screenings in Mexico City, whose presence is also noticeable in our country, as we can deduce from the following advertisement next to the organ. Photograph taken from the book: CINEMA AND SOCIETY IN MEXICO 1896-1930. UNDER THE SKY OF MEXICO VOL. II. 1920-1924. By Aurelio de los Reyes. Institute of Aesthetic Research. UNAM. Mexico City, 1993. p. 296.***

and preservation, historian Edgar Barillas, who shared footage as part of this research.

**INFORMANTS**

Dr. Celso Lara Figueroa, Dr. Aurelio de los Reyes García Rojas, Maestro Luis Alberto de León, Dr. Carlos Navarrete, Architect Eduardo Andrade, Dr. Mario Felipe Martínez, Miss Michelle Pinsker, Professor Bernabé Tuc Tuc.

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***Illustration No. 22. Facsimile of an advertisement for Adolfo Biener's Large Store of Photography Supplies and News that introduces us to the photography materials and techniques of the first decade of the 20th century. Facsimile taken from the newspaper LA REPUBLICA. Year XII. Period II. No. 4634. Guatemala, October 10, 1907. p.3.***


***Illustration No. 24. Facsimile of an advertising section of the "New York Theater" announcing the showing of the film THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST. Modern version with marimba and organ. Facsimile taken from the newspaper EXCELSIOR. Year I. No. 139. Guatemala, March 27, 1920. p. 8.***

# Traditional Guatemalan Culture in Formal Education (Second Part)

ANIBAL CHAJÓN

Faced with the need to determine how the application of traditional culture becomes a useful element for the new generations being trained in classrooms, and at the same time, how it meets the requirements that teachers face regarding the education of their students in a world that has become smaller due to globalization, this research was conducted. Due to space limitations in CEFOL publications, the first part of this article appeared in *Revista Tradiciones de Guatemala* No. 62, 2004, from pages 93 to 116, which includes a description of the traditional Guatemalan

**TABLE 11: SECONDARY LEVEL GRADUATE PROFILE**

| Dominance | As a person | As a citizen |
|---|---|---|
| Cognitive | 2. Recognize, preserve and transform their natural, social and cultural environment.<br>6. Analize critically the cultural, social and economic historical evolution of their country and the world. | |
| Affective | 4. Respect religions and ideologies.<br>8. Manifest tolerance towards other people's ideas. | 5. Identify with their culture and ethnicity.<br>6. Respect the dignity and worth of every human being, without distinction of race, nationality, economic and social status.<br>7. Appreciate the national identity formed by many ethnicities and cultures. |

Source: Ministry of Education (1987), Spanish Language Program Guide, Guatemala, 29 p.

culture at preschool and primary levels. Below is the conclusion of that article, so it is suggested to complement the previous reading with the current one.

**SECONDARY LEVEL**

At the secondary level, as previously mentioned, a review of the content is still ongoing, so the Programmatic Guides developed between 1987 and 1989 are currently in use. These Guides are conceived as orienting documents for teachers' work, aimed at facilitating the creativity and initiative of each instructor. In the terminal profile of students graduating from the general secondary education cycle, without occupational orientation, it is expected that they have achieved certain objectives, described in Table 11.

The subjects established for the secondary level, without occupational orientation, are: Spanish Language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Studies, Home Education, Industrial Arts, Fine Arts, Music Education, Physical Education, English Language, Basic Typing, and General Accounting.

- In the Spanish Language subject, only the contents listed in Table 12 are related to traditional culture.

**TABLE 12: SPANISH LANGUAGE**

| Year | Contents |
|---|---|
| First | 4.1 Poetry.<br>- Verse and prose<br>- Common and uncommon language<br>- Natural and figurative language<br>• Simile<br>• Metaphor |
| Second | 4.1 Narration<br>- Concept<br>- Structure<br>• Presentation<br>• Climax<br>• Resolution<br>- Elements<br>• Characters<br>• Plot<br>• Frame<br>• Point of view |

Source: Ministry of Education (1987), Spanish Language Program Guide, Guatemala, 29 p.

- In the Mathematics subject, only the contents appeared in Table 13 are related to traditional culture.

**TABLE 13: MATHEMATICS**

| Year | Contents |
|---|---|
| First | II. Numerical units.<br>2. Numerical systems<br>- Positional:<br>… mayan… |

Source: Ministry of Education (1987), Mathematics Program Guide, Guatemala, 36 p.

- In the Natural Sciences subject, no topic is related to traditional culture.

- In the Social Studies subject, there is a greater relationship with traditional culture. A fundamental point of the subject is to help students understand that humans are the result of an uninterrupted process of development, which occurs in society, as well as to foster in individuals the acquisition of a comprehensive view of social, economic, and political events, providing them with an understanding of their role as members of society. In the terminal profile of the student, emphasis is placed on the affective aspect, meaning the formation of values, rather than on cognitive achievement. In the first unit of each grade, the goal is for young people to engage in social science through research, to develop mental processes that enable them to acquire more information independently. The events they observe around them should be studied from the perspectives of the social sciences: sociology, anthropology, politics, economics,

**TABLE 14: SOCIAL STUDIES: CONTENTS**

| FIRST YEAR | SECOND YEAR | THIRD YEAR |
|---|---|---|
| **First Unit**<br>Introduction:<br>• Social Sciences<br>• Study Techniques<br>• Bibliographic investigation techniques | **First Unit**<br>Introduction:<br>• Social Sciences<br>• Study Techniques<br>• Bibliographic investigation techniques | **First Unit**<br>Introduction:<br>• Social Sciences<br>• Study Techniques<br>• Social investigation techniques |
| **Second Unit**<br>Guatemala, Level 1:<br>• Family<br>• Community<br>• Municipality | **Second Unit**<br>Guatemala, Level 2:<br>• Family<br>• Community<br>• Department<br>• Educative region | **Second Unit**<br>Guatemala, Level 3:<br>• Family<br>• Community<br>• Country |
| **Third Unit**<br>Guatemala in relation to Central America | **Third Unit**<br>Guatemala in relation to America | **Third Unit**<br>Guatemala in relation to the world |

Source: Ministry of Education (1989), Social Studies Program Guide, Guatemala, 48 p.

history, human ecology, and others. In the second unit, great importance has been given to the national context, because young people need to identify with Guatemalan society, which is "pluricultural and multilingual" (sic), in order to value, appreciate, and defend it. This identification will strengthen national identity and enable students to appreciate the cultures of the rest of the world in their proper context. The third unit focuses on historical aspects to explain the current reality by analyzing the most significant historical events. The programs are structured as shown in Table 14.

The Programmatic Guide establishes objectives, of which those related to the knowledge of traditional culture are described in Table 15. It is worth noting that the authors of the Programmatic Guide did not take psychomotor skills into account.

Secondly, the Social Studies Program Guide lists the objectives and content to be developed. Of these, those related to traditional culture are listed in Tables 16, 17 and 18.

**TABLE 15: SOCIAL STUDIES: OBJECTIVES**

| Primero | Segundo | Tercero |
|---|---|---|
| **Cognitive**<br>2.1.6. Know the country's ethno-linguistic groups.<br>2.1.7. Know the different artistic, artisan and cultural manifestations produced in the country. | **Cognitive**<br>2.1.5. Preserve their social, cultural and natural environment.<br>2.1.7. Know the country's ethno-linguistic groups.<br>2.1.8. Know the different artistic, artisan and cultural manifestations produced in the country. | **Cognitive**<br>3.1.1. Know the relation that exists between being, nature, society and culture.<br>3.1.6. Preserve and transform their social, cultural and natural environment.<br>3.1.7. Take advantage and use adequately the natural and economic resources of their community. |
| **Affective**<br>2.2.6. Identify with their ethnicity and appreciate their culture.<br>2.2.7. Appreciate the national identity conformed by a variety of ethnicities and cultures.<br>2.2.8. Appreciate, value and criticize the different artistic, artisan and cultural manifestations produced in the pluricultural frame of the country.<br>2.2.11. Appreciate in the right dimension that the Guatemalan society is a product of the past and the ethnic and cultural plurality and that its current behavior is the result of that same past. | **Affective**<br>2.2.7. Identify with their ethnicity and appreciate their culture.<br>2.2.8. Appreciate the national identity conformed by a variety of ethnicities and cultures.<br>2.2.9. Appreciate, value and criticize the different artistic, artisan and cultural manifestations produced in the pluricultural frame of the country.<br>2.2.12. Appreciate in the right dimension that the Guatemalan society is a product of the past and the ethnic and cultural plurality and that its current behavior is the result of that same past. | **Affective**<br>3.2.7. Identify with their ethnicity and appreciate their culture.<br>3.2.8. Appreciate the national identity conformed by a variety of ethnicities and cultures.<br>3.2.9. Appreciate, value and criticize the different artistic, artisan and cultural manifestations produced in the pluricultural frame of the country.<br>3.2.12. Appreciate in the right dimension that the Guatemalan society is a product of the past and the ethnic and cultural plurality and that its current behavior is the result of that same past. |

Source: Ministry of Education (1989), Social Studies Program Guide, Guatemala, 48 p.

**TABLE 15: SOCIAL STUDIES: FIRST YEAR OF SECONDARY LEVEL**

| 3. Objectives | 4. Contents |
|---|---|
| First unit: Introduction<br>1. Numerate and conceptualize the disciplines that make social sciences.<br>2. Appreciate the social sciences for the relation that they have with themselves and their social, cultural and natural environments. | 1. The social sciences (among others: Anthropology: Man, culture, ethnic groups) |
| Second unit: Guatemala, Level 1<br>6. Distinguish the different characteristics that exists between an indigenous family and a non-indigenous family. | 1. Family |
| 8. Define the concepts of ethnicity and culture.<br>9. Identify and respect their ethnicity and its cultural values.<br>10. Support the national identity that is made up of a plurality of ethnicities and cultures.<br>11. Describe the artistic, artisan and traditional cultural expressions produced in their community and municipality.<br>12. Value the artistic, artisan and traditional cultural expressions produced in their community and municipality. | 2. Community<br>2.1. Community organization<br>2.1.1. Population<br>2.1.2. Ethnicities (Ladino, Indigenous and Caribbean)<br>2.1.3. Economic activities: agriculture, livestock, industry, commerce, crafts, among others.<br>3. Municipality<br>3.6. Cultural characteristics: art (music, painting, dance, theatre, among others); customs (food. Beliefs, colloquialisms, utilization of natural resources, dress, among others) |
| Third unit: Guatemala in relation to Central America<br>1. Analize the anthropological, sociological, and historical characteristics of the current Guatemalan society.<br>2. Value the anthropological, sociological, and historical characteristics of the current Guatemalan society. | 1. Current Guatemalan society<br>1.1 Anthropological and sociological Characteristics<br>1.1.1. Demographic problems (demographic explosion and pluricultural and multilingual relationships) |
| | 2.1 Mesoamerican culture (Mayas)<br>2.2. Geographical, social, political and economic importance of the discovery of America<br>2.3. Socioeconomical environment during the colonial era<br>2.4. Governing organisms in the colonial era in Central America |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11. List the anthropological, social and historical characteristics of the Central American countries. | 3.2. Anthropological and sociological Characteristics of the Central American population<br>3.5. Analysis of convergence and importance in current Central American society, the most significant of the following historical events<br>3.5.1. Colonization: founding of the first cities. Political and economic organization<br>3.5.2. Encounter of two cultures: Indigenous and Spanish<br>3.5.3. Role of the Church in the colonial era |

Source: Ministry of Education (1989), Social Studies Program Guide, Guatemala, 48 p.

**TABLE 17: SOCIAL STUDIES: SECOND YEAR OF SECONDARY LEVEL**

| **3. Objectives** | **4. Contents** |
|---|---|
| **First unit:** Introduction<br>2. Value social sciences as a factor to help them respect, serve and appreciate all the elements of their social, cultural and natural environment. | 1. The social sciences (Anthropology) |
| **Second unit:** Guatemala, Level 2 | 1. Family |
| 8. Identify with the reality of the department they belong to.<br>9. Argue in favor of the national identity that made up by the different ethnicities and cultures.<br>10. Identify the artistic, artisan and cultural manifestations of their department<br>11. Support and promote the artistic, artisan and cultural manifestations produced in their department. | 2. Departmental community<br>2.1. Historical and political aspects, and human ecology<br>2.1.4. Archaeological remains<br>2.2. Sociocultural aspects<br>2.2.1. Population distribution. Ethnicities that correspond to the population.<br>2.2.2. Cultural characteristics: art (music, painting, dance, theater, among others); customs (food. Beliefs, colloquialisms, utilization of natural resources, dress and others)<br>2.2.4. Religious aspects (brotherhoods) |
| | 2.3. Economic aspects<br>2.3.6. Touristic places in their department |

Source: Ministry of Education (1989), Social Studies Program Guide, Guatemala, 48 p.

**TABLE 18: SOCIAL STUDIES: THIRD YEAR OF SECONDARY LEVEL**

| 3. Objectives | 4. Contents |
|---|---|
| **First unit**; Introduction<br>2. Act respectfully towards themselves, towards all human beings and towards the elements of the social, cultural and natural environment, as a consequence of the study of social sciences. | 1. The social sciences (Anthropology) |
| **Second unit:** Guatemala, Level 2 | 1. Family |
| | 2. The national community<br>2.2.4. Major ethnolinguistic groups: geographic location and cultural traits of each<br>2.2.5. Concept of national identity that unites the<br>identities of all the ethnos of the country<br>2.2.6. Cultural traits at the national level; music, from all times and places; authors, instruments Painting: existing trends. Popular and modern dances. Theater: popular, modern and avant-garde. Costumes by region. Customs: food by region, oral tradition, religious beliefs, colloquial forms of speech. Crafts: with various materials |
| | 2.3. Economic aspects<br>2.3.4. Tourism |

Source: Ministry of Education (1989), Social Studies Program Guide, Guatemala, 48 p.

In the subject of Home Education, some aspects related to traditional culture appear. The terminal profile of the student includes as an objective of the affective domain:

Valuing and taking advantage of textile resources and national labor. The contents related to traditional culture are found in first and third grade, as seen in tables 19 and 20.

**TABLE 19: HOME EDUCATION: FIRST YEAR OF SECONDARY LEVEL**

| 3. Objectives | 4. Contents |
|---|---|
| 1. Manifest attitudes of respect and appreciation for the customs and traditions in dressing.<br>4. Value the regional textiles as part of the sociocultural Guatemalan heritage. | 2. Basic family needs<br>2.1. The dress (1)<br>2.1.1. Sociocultural importance<br>2.1.5. Regional textiles |

Source: Ministry of Education (1988), Home Education Program Guide, Guatemala, 36 p.

**TABLE 20: HOME EDUCATION: THIRD YEAR OF SECONDARY LEVEL**

| 3. Objectives | 4. Contents |
|---|---|
| 1. Manifest attitudes of respect and appreciation for the customs and traditions in dressing.<br>4. Value the regional textiles as part of the sociocultural Guatemalan heritage. | 2. Basic family needs<br>2.1.1.7. Table services:<br>… Traditions and customs. |

Source: Ministry of Education (1988), Home Education Program Guide, Guatemala, 36 p.

The Industrial Arts subject covers the areas of: Technical Drawing, Wood, Metals, Electricity, Graphic Arts and Crafts, so there are several topics related to traditional culture. The contents related to the topic are presented in tables 21, 22 and 23.

**TABLE 21: INDUSTRIAL ARTS: FIRST YEAR OF SECONDARY LEVEL**

| 3. Objectives | 4. Contents |
|---|---|
| 2. Conceptualize industrial arts. | 6. Areas that make up the Industrial Arts<br>6.6. Crafts |
| 1. Identify popular arts in each region of Guatemala.<br>2. Take advantage of the natural resources of each region in the development of each project.<br>4. Describe different evolutionary processes of popular arts at their beginning. | Unit V: Crafts<br>1. Concept of crafts<br>2. Popular arts in Guatemala.<br>3. Most commonly used materials in the area of crafts |

Source: Ministry of Education (1988), Industrial Arts Program Guide, Guatemala, 32 p.

**TABLE 22: INDUSTRIAL ARTS: SECOND YEAR OF SECONDARY LEVEL**

| 3. Objectives | 4. Contents |
|---|---|
| 1. Elaborate projects representative of other regions of the country.<br>2. Identify characteristics of popular ceramic arts.<br>3. List the different stages of popular arts in Guatemala.<br>4. Describe artisans' products belonging to regional and national festivities. | Unit V: Crafts<br>1. Regional crafts<br>2. Concept of ceramic crafts<br>3. Historical evolution of crafts<br>4. Artisans' activities |

Source: Ministry of Education (1988), Industrial Arts Program Guide, Guatemala, 32 p.

**TABLE 23: INDUSTRIAL ARTS: THIRD YEAR OF SECONDARY LEVEL**

| 3. Objectives | 4. Contents |
|---|---|
| 1. Value the economic and cultural projection of popular arts.<br>2. Identify repetitive demonstrations of different historical periods of ceramics.<br>3. Make value judgements on the quality of Guatemalan popular arts, regarding the popular arts in other countries.<br>4. Take advantage of waste materials to develop representative projects of the region. | Unit V: Crafts \|<br>l. Economic and cultural importance of handicrafts<br>2. Classification of ceramics by historical periods<br>3. Comparison of national popular art with that of other countries<br>4. Crafts made from waste materials |

Source: Ministry of Education (1988), Industrial Arts Program Guide, Guatemala, 32 p.

The subject of Fine Arts includes, in the student's terminal profile, among the objectives of the cognitive domain: Identifying one's multicultural wealth in situations of social life, and, in the affective domain: Valuing national identity, identifying with one's culture and ethnicity. The only topic related to traditional culture is found in third grade, as can be seen in Table 24.



**TABLE 23: FINE ARTS: THIRD YEAR OF SECONDARY LEVEL**

| 3. Objectives | 4. Contents |
|---|---|
| 3. Value Guatemalan crafts | Unit VII: Volume<br>3. Guatemalan crafts:<br>3.1 Tin smithing<br>3.2. Saddlery |

Source: Ministry of Education (1988), Fine Arts Program Guide, Guatemala, 34 p.

In the subject of Musical Training (Ministry, 1988: 34) there are two cognitive domain objectives related to traditional culture:

Becoming aware of the function of musical art in its various manifestations, as an element of expression, cohesion and creation, in accordance with the Guatemalan identity.

Evaluating the various Guatemalan musical manifestations within the context in which they arose so that they identify with their ethnicity, culture, region and nation.

On the other hand, in the subjects of Physical Education, English Language, Basic Typing and General Accounting

there is no subject related to traditional culture.

In addition to the basic cycle without occupational orientation, there is the basic cycle with occupational orientation. Among the occupational orientations offered, those that have subjects related to traditional culture are those summarized in Table 25.

**TABLE 25: BASIC CYCLE WITH OCCUPATIONAL ORIENTAION**

| 3. Objectives | 4. Contents |
|---|---|
| Computer sciences | Social Studies I, II and III; Industrial Arts or Home Education |
| Bilingual double sessions | Universal and Mayan Mathematics I, II, III, IV, V, VI; Social Studies and Social Economy I, II, III, IV: History of Mayan Culture I, II; Universal and Mayan Music Education I, II, III; Universal and Mayan Fine Arts I, II, III; Mayan Cultural Identity I, II; Mayan Worldview I, II; Natural Sciences (Fundamentals of Mayan Science) |
| Occupational Orientation | Social Studies I, II, III |
| Experimental Music | Social Studies (2) |
| Weekend Sessions | Social Studies I, II, III, IV; Industrial Arts or Home Education I |
| Basic Education Cycle for Adult Students | Social Studies I, II, III, IV |

Source: Sum Cahuex, Pablo and Felix Borrayo (1988), *Recuperación de prensa, Carreras de Educación Media*, Guatemala, Ministry of Education, National Human Resources and Curricular Adequation Improvement System. 122 p.

So far the description of the application of traditional culture at the basic level, now it will be described at high school level.

**HIGH SCHOOL**

The Ministry of Education has approved a total of 70 technical careers. For comfort, they have been classified in these tables, grouped by high schools, education teaching, expert and secretarial courses. In Tables 26, 27, 28, and 29, we can see the subjects that can be related to traditional culture.

## TABLE 26: HIGH SCHOOL

| Specialty | Subject |
|---|---|
| Arts and Sciences for Adult Students | Social Sciences V, VI |
| Arts and Sciences | Social Studies (2) |
| Industrial and Expert in a specialty | Social Studies I |
| Industrial and Expert in a specialty (Mazatenango) | … |
| Construction | Social Studies (1) |
| Marketing | … |
| General Mechanics | Social Studies (1) |
| Arts and Sciences, Nocturnal Session | Social Studies (2) |
| Computer Science | Social Studies |
| Tourism and Hotel Administration | Geography and Guatemalan History; Guatemalan Culture; Anthropology |
| Electricity | Social Studies (1 semester) |
| Administration and Expert in Electricity, Construction Drawing, and Electronics | … |
| Construction Drawing and Construction (Grades) | Social Studies (1 semester) |
| Construction Drawing and Construction (Semesters) | … |
| Arts and Sciences and Expert in Aviation | Social Studies (2) |
| Arts and Sciences and Bilingual Secretary | … |
| Industrial and Expert in the Specialty of Electronics | Social Studies I |
| Industrial with Specialty in Industrial Couture and Cooking | … |
| Industrial and Expert in Digital Electronics and Microprocessors | Social Studies I |
| Hospitality and Home | Social Studies I, II |
| Industrial and Expert in the Specialty of Computer Sciences | … |
| Tourism | Anthropology; Guatemalan Culture I, II, History of Guatemala |
| Communication Sciences | … |
| Bilingual Science and Humanities | Social Studies (2); Anthropology |
| Technical Bilingual | … |
| Philosophy and Technology | Social Studies I, II, III; Anthropology |

Source: Sum Cahuex, Pablo and Felix Borrayo (1988), *Recuperación de prensa, Carreras de Educación Media*, Guatemala, Ministry of Education, National Human Resources and Curricular Adequation Improvement System. 122 p.

**TABLE 27: EDUCATION TEACHING**

| Specialty | Subject |
|---|---|
| Preschool (Toddlers) | Aesthetic Education: b) Introduction to children's dance and rounds, Children's literature and stage practice, Educational games and rounds |
| Preschool with Orientation in Bilingual Education | Aesthetic Education I: b) Initiation to children's dance and round, Mayan Culture I, II, Educational games and rounds |
| Urban Primary School | Social Science I, Language Integrated into Latin American and Guatemalan Literature, Didactics of Social Sciences |
| Home | … |
| Technical Home Specialties | (TEXTILES) Women's handicrafts, Men's handicrafts, (HANDICRAFTS) Socioeconomics of Popular Arts, Leatherwork, Candlemaking, Floristry, Toys, Pottery and Ceramics |
| Bilingual Primary School Mam-Spanish | Teaching Social Studies, Mayan Culture, Universal and Mayan Children's Literature |
| Physical Education | … |
| Experimental Primary School | Social Studies I, II, III, Industrial Arts or Home Education I, II, III |
| Musical Education | … |
| Bilingual Spanish-Mam with Orientation in Environmental Development | Cultural Anthropology, Philosophy of Intercultural Education |
| Santiago Institute Primary School | Mayan art, Teaching of Social Studies, Teaching of Plastic Arts and Popular Arts, Educational and Indigenous Anthropology, Mayan Thought. (Occupational Area: 14): Weaving, Tailoring, Bakery and Pastry, Carpentry, Blacksmithing |
| Rural (Totonicapan) | … |
| Bilingual Preschool K'iche' (Totonicapan) | Mayan culture I, II, III, Mayan-Western aesthetic education (2), Dances, rounds, educational games, Introduction to Western Mayan Philosophy, Children's literature and Mayan-Western performing arts practices |
| Children's Bilingual Intercultural | Mayan and General Philosophy, History of Guatemala and Mesoamerica, Mayan and Universal Mathematics, Intercultural Bilingual Education, Artistic Expression I: dance, theater and its teaching, II; Musical Education and its teaching, III: Plastic arts, arts of the cultures of Guatemala and their teaching, Mayan, Ladino, Xinka and Garifuna literature, Social and Natural Environment and its teaching, Socio-cultural reality (culture, identity and human rights), Formal and Non-Formal Education |

| | |
|---|---|
| Children's Intercultural | Mayan and General Philosophy. History of Guatemala and Mesoamerica, Mayan and Universal Mathematics, Bilingual Intercultural Education, Artistic Expression I: Dance, theater and its teaching, II: Musical Education and its teaching, III: Plastic arts, arts of the cultures of Guatemala and their teaching. Mayan, Ladino, Xinka and Garifuna literature, Social and Natural Environment I, II and its teaching, Socio-cultural reality (culture, identity and human rights), Formal and Non-Formal Education |
| Bilingual Intercultural Primary School | Mayan and General Philosophy, History of Guatemala and Mesoamerica, Mayan and Universal Mathematics, Intercultural Bilingual Education, Artistic Expression and Dance, Theater and its Didactics II: Music, Audiovisual Arts and its Didactics, II: Plastic Arts, Arts of the Cultures of Guatemala and its Didactics, Mayan, Ladino, Xinka and Gurífuna Literature, Social and Natural Environment, Didactics of Social Sciences, Socio-cultural Reality (culture, identity and human rights) |
| Intercultural Primary School | Mayan and General Philosophy, History of Guatemala and Mesoamerica, Mayan and Universal Mathematics, Bilingual Intercultural Education, Artistic Expression I: Dance, Center and its Didactics, II: Music, Audiovisual Arts and its Didactics, III: Plastic Arts, Arts of the Cultures of Guatemala and its Didactics, Mayan, Ladina, Xinka and Garifuna Literature, Social and Natural Environment, Didactics of Social Sciences, Socio-cultural Reality (culture, identity and Human Rights) |

Source: Sum Cahuex, Pablo and Felix Borrayo (1988), *Recuperación de prensa, Carreras de Educación Media*, Guatemala, Ministry of Education, National Human Resources and Curricular Adequation Improvement System. 121 p.
Ministry of Education, Ministry Agreement No. 3378, December 28, 2001: Pensum de Estudios de Educación Infantil Bilingüe Intercultural, Magisterio de Educación Infantil Intercultural, Magisterio de Educación Primaria Bilingüe Intercultural y Magisterio de Primaria Intercultural.

**TABLE 28: EXPERT**

| **Specialty** | **Subject** |
|---|---|
| Public Adminstration | … |
| Business Adminstration | … |
| Business Adminstration | … |
| Dental Higiene | Social Studies IV |
| Dental Higiene Nocturnal Session | Social Studies IV |
| Accountant with Orientation in Small Businesses Administration (Tiucal, Asunción Mita) | … |
| Optometry | … |
| Marketing and Advertising | … |
| Industrial Specialization | … |

| | |
|---|---|
| Industrial, Technical Institute for Women | … |
| Accountant Nocturnal Session | … |
| Accountant Weekends Session | … |
| Accountant with Orientation in Computer Sciences | … |
| Accountant Morning Session | … |
| Communication Sciences, with specialization in the branches of Tele-Radio-Communication, Tele-Radio-Operation, Tele-Radio-Production and Journalism | Social Studies I, II |
| Administrative Management | … |
| Bilingual Accountant | … |
| Corporate Public Relations | … |
| Telegraph and Postal Administration | … |
| Environmental Sciences, Quetzaltenango | Introduction to Anthropology |

Source: Sum Cahuex, Pablo and Felix Borrayo (1988), *Recuperación de prensa, Carreras de Educación Media*, Guatemala, Ministry of Education, National Human Resources and Curricular Adequation Improvement System. 121 p.

**TABLE 29: SECRETATIAT**

| **Specialty** | **Subject** |
|---|---|
| Office | … |
| Bilingual Spanish-English | … |
| Office with Juridical Orientation | … |
| Bilingual Spanish-English | … |
| Office Night Session | … |
| Office Weekends Session | … |
| Bilingual Weekend Session | … |

Source: Sum Cahuex, Pablo and Felix Borrayo (1988), *Recuperación de prensa, Carreras de Educación Media*, Guatemala, Ministry of Education, National Human Resources and Curricular Adequation Improvement System. 121 p.



Due to the specialization of several of the diversified courses, the need to incorporate information about traditional culture is becoming less and less necessary. It is a requirement in several teaching and high school courses and is omitted in expert and secretarial courses.

**COMMENTARIES**

Traditional culture was gradually adopted as a useful tool for formal education. Between 1987 and 1989, several traditional aspects were required, such as crafts and oral tradition. Later, between 2002 and 2004, new requirements were incorporated at the pre-primary and primary levels, which should make it one of the most used tools in all areas of knowledge.

The inclusion of traditional popular culture in formal education has occurred because culture is essential for the formation of self-esteem in individuals and because of the cultural diversity that the country experiences. In educational planning, this type of teaching has been incorporated in the first levels to encourage the new generations to grow in an environment that includes the presence of home culture in the academic world and there is no longer a separation between what students experience in their homes and communities and what they learn in educational centers.





According to this criterion, learning becomes increasingly complex and more integrative in the two cycles of primary education, which is why the knowledge of the peoples is integrated in each area of knowledge, in each content and in each competency to be developed. It is of special interest to the Area of Productivity and Development, because it revalues traditional culture while promoting modernization in the business attitudes of the new generations: total quality, customer service, satisfaction of needs, the union between teaching and the community and environmental ethics. As was pointed out in the first part of this article, the scope of world standards is the only one that can make the young population competitive and this is what the educational modification is about, which is expected to be achieved, precisely, with the inclusion of traditional culture.

The basic level is still a reason for work for the sectors involved in the educational transformation: teachers, family leaders, school authorities and ministerial personnel. However, the possibilities for the application of traditional culture are varied, as allowed by the current program guides, especially in the subjects of Social Studies, Pure Education, Home and Industrial Arts. It should not be forgotten that according to the design carried out between 1987 and 1989, what is promoted at this level is the affective domain: that students investigate for themselves and develop values. Especially that adolescents who go through a specific vital stage, strengthen their identity with their own culture, while respecting and valuing others. This is one of the most important aspects for the full development of people. It has been established that the only way to ensure that the individual does not feel overwhelmed by the immensity of globalization is to have strong spiritual roots. This is only achieved when people

value their own culture. On the other hand, based on respect for other cultures, it arises from the appreciation of one's own and this has become one of the essential requirements for the working world of the 21st century.

As we have seen before, education today is one of the great opportunities for the development of Guatemalan society. Therefore, it must respond to the needs of students to enter the labor market, and therefore it must satisfy the needs of globalization of cultural tolerance, development of emotional intelligence and the agility of the person to learn to learn. In all this, the inclusion of traditional culture in formal education is one of the best measures that could be taken, especially for the incorporation of the knowledge of the people. This is valid, as we have seen, for the pre-primary and primary levels and in the training of new teachers. On the other hand, among the specialized diversified level careers, the attention to traditional culture is evident in those that envision a future for the new generations in the productive areas related to tourism. In conclusion, for the Research Line on Traditional Popular Culture and Guatemalan Popular Culture Applied to Education, these curricular innovations are a challenge because, as stated in bold in the first part of the article: teachers "both in scientific and technological knowledge, as well as in pedagogical technique, must stay up to date and continue learning to improve their practice." Thanks to the incorporation of popular culture in the formal educational environment, new applications, new research, greater depth and revitalization of links with the Guatemalan teaching world are required, so that traditional culture is not forgotten, but is seen as an ideal tool for preparing new generations for the globalized world, where efficiency, technology and communication prevail, since both, globalization and traditional culture, are not antagonistic but complementary and each occupies its own space in human reality.



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# Traditional Guatemalan Cuisine during Lent and Holy Week

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Undoubtedly, one of the most significant historical events of Judeo-Christian faith in Guatemala is the cycle of Lent and Holy Week. Throughout this period, the splendor of traditions is evident: incense, myrrh, candles, and flowers evoke the religiosity of this devotion, while food, drinks, and games represent material integration. The symbolism expressed in all these signs is intertwined with religious beliefs, syncretized through the fusion of various cultures. This is why this manifestation, along with its surrounding elements, plays an important role in our society.

The perspective from which it is viewed allows for various interpretations, whether festive, cultural, or social. In fact, the celebration of Lent and Holy Week is added to two other major permanent religious manifestations in our culture: Christmas, and All Saints' Day and the Day of the Dead. These three multicolored, fragrant, and culinary expressions demonstrate that Guatemalans give a very solemn touch to customs. Thus, the scents and colors of flowers and fruits add to the atmosphere of this celebration, in which food becomes another significant element of traditional expression. In addition to having festive, cultural, and social connotations, food holds intrinsic value for Guatemalan gastronomy.

Explaining how food, in all cultural contexts and particularly in Guatemalan culture, becomes a marker of identity, and how the food represented is transformed into one of the key symbolic elements of our material culture, involves recognizing its ability to unite society. Even more so, starting with raw materials from our natural environment, Guatemalan cuisine establishes a unique ethno-naturalistic relationship, blending with ancestral traditions that are part of our cultural heritage.

López García has said, “Food is one of the most radical ways to transform the universal into the particular, and therefore, a tremendously effective source to highlight identity: cuisine, unlike other alchemies, has the ability not only to identify others but, above all, the power to attract and move, as well as to deceive, enchant, and stigmatize.” (López García, 1998:145)

Anthropologists, leading a variety of other disciplines, have deeply explored the topic of food as a social phenomenon, as its symbolic richness speaks volumes about the cultural identity of each festive-religious expression. In the traditional event of Lent and Holy Week, food profoundly reflects the rich symbolism it carries within the framework of food anthropology, linked to the sacred dimension. This theoretical contribution supports anthropological work in distinguishing nuances regarding the topic at hand. We should also emphasize that, within the religious prominence, the culinary aspect, both in the physiological sense (taste) and the semiotic sense (symbolism), is closely tied to this cultural manifestation.

López García continues by saying that it is “very interesting to understand how the natural and individual act of eating dissolves into the social act of dining, where food is expressed as a prayer through the blessing of meals, (and thus) transforms the individual into an 'us', avoiding the antisocial potential of mere consumption. This suggests the need to explore other cultural strategies that also counteract the individualism of eating,” which we believe could be encouraged by religious conceptions different from Catholicism. “The attempt to probe the logic of identity in the sensory and symbolic values of meals is an important concern for culture. The culinary act not only transmits ideas about ethnic or community identity but also about personal identity, and even the essence of humanity.”

When our visual, gustatory, and tactile senses come into play, the first to act serve as channels for transmitting cultural values. In this case, sensory communication through food is conditioned by culture. Classen (Classen, C., 1993) exemplifies this when stating that “it is characterized by strict bodily asceticism accompanied by a rich sensuality of the spirit, where the divine is

conceptualized and experienced mystically through a profusion of sensory symbols."

If we start from the idea that these social codes can reflect human behavior at any time, food tells us a lot about these actions. Consequently, cultural construction becomes significant, as food generates sensations and strengthens social bonds. Traditional dishes during Lent and Holy Week are an essential part of the religious event being celebrated. The multi-social meanings of food transform the cultural expression during this celebration, ritualizing it by gathering around a table with family and friends. The seasonal foods become sacred, blessed, and ritualistic as they form a duality in the "nature-culture" environment. It's also important to highlight that food, as a link that describes any event, becomes inseparably identified as a cultural source, illustrating the extent to which culture influences a social group. Because food, the moment it comes into contact with our senses through sight, taste, and palate creates something unique. In the ritual moment, food becomes a crucial point in our culture, a link to the sacred from a profane dimension.

It is not an ordinary moment when you are gathered around a table with loved ones, enjoying a meal. Now, surrounded and imbued by its own sacramental atmosphere, food becomes a transmitter that communicates, merges, and fosters brotherhood. The signs and symbols of communal eating unite the individual from any perspective of our belief system, therefore, at that moment, food becomes blessed, there's rich array of dishes surrounding it, taking the smells, flavors, and appearances that tradition has endowed them with, making people unconsciously feel the intense spirituality that revolves around them.

This is the context that encapsulates traditional Guatemalan cuisine during the season. The most popular dishes and foods include fish, dried or fresh; *garbanzo en miel* (chickpeas cooked with unrefined sugar); special bread for the occasion: *torrejas* (Panajachel); *molletes* (San Juan Sacatepéquez); pickled vegetables, especially pickled onions, which are frequently consumed (in Chiquimula, the preference leans towards pickled hearts of palm); plantain mole with chocolate; chocolate, and stuffed chiles. San Juan Sacatepéquez has an exclusive dish, deeply rooted as traditional among the

wealthy indigenous population, consisting of white beans cooked with dried fish. Certain fruits are also traditional: the highland towns consume *pataxte* and aromatic peaches, brought from the neighboring Pacific coast. Like in its origins, cacao pods are carried from the same coast to enjoy their bittersweet pulp, the most ancient known method of consuming chocolate's raw material (in 2005, Panajachel's popular market sold cacao from Suchitepéquez plantations).

Despite its widespread popularity throughout the country, certain subtle preferences can be observed in specific localities. For instance, while *torrejas* are favored in Panajachel and neighboring towns, they are replaced by *molletes* in San Juan Sacatepéquez and Mixco, where *torrejas* are not customary. In San Juan, the traditional ladino sweet is *garbanzo en miel*, while the indigenous one is *pan de recado* smeared with white honey, but in the Kaqchikel region of Sololá, both are consumed interchangeably. In San Juan, *mole* is typical of the occasion, whereas in other towns, it may not be. Also in San Juan, *chiles rellenos* are not a Holy Week tradition but are reserved for the feast of the town's patron saint. Guatemala City, being a cosmopolitan hub, is a vast blend of culinary customs, though very conservative neighborhoods and prominent families maintain traditional Lent gastronomy during their gatherings.

Few of these dishes are based on the use of native ingredients, but the adaptation of their recipes, preparation methods, and consumption styles give them a remarkable uniqueness. A good example of this is the dried fish dishes, whose smell mixes with that of *corozo* to elevate the spirituality of the meal. These dishes are prepared in two different ways. The first, the more traditional, involves wrapping pieces of fish in beaten egg, then cooking them in a watery *chirmol* made by roasted tomato and onion, along with slices of carrots, tender green beans, and peas, and served hot. The second is a gourmet recipe, now a custom: *bacalao a la vizcaína* [Basque-style cod]. With the notable exception of this latter dish and certain reserved meals in specific localities, these foods are also consumed at other times of the year. However, the flavor, aroma, and appearance they attain in the spiritual atmosphere of Guatemalan Lent and Holy Week make them truly unique.

**ETNOBIOLOGY OF LENT CUISINE**

In terms of traditional cuisine, during Lent and Holy Week in Guatemala, there are cultural expressions of a marked blend of pre-Hispanic and colonial elements. In this context, a gastronomic practice has emerged that, while not excluding other groups, is more prominently seen among *ladinos*. The most likely source of this background is that the celebration, with Judeo-Christian roots, as previously mentioned, was brought by the Spaniards who reached this territory, bringing with them their beliefs, customs, and supplies, including their preferred foods.

Once an adequate level of ethnological fusion was achieved between the peninsular vanguard and the Mesoamerican peoples, the syncretism in the spiritual dimension accomplished the miracle of viewing the sacred through an mix of expressions from the profane world, one of which was gastronomy. From this new mixed cuisine arose aromas, flavors, colors, and protocols that form a unique identity. Today, the characterization of Guatemalan Lent cuisine requires considering native cultural elements, imported ones along with the Spanish way of life, the incorporation of a once-foreign festivity, the existence of local foods, the creation of concoctions rich in symbolism, as well as the methods of preparation, the way they are served, and the moments when they are eaten.

A peculiarity of Lent cuisine, including that of Holy Week, is the apparent contradiction between the principle of dietary austerity, fasting with sacramental overtones, and the abundance of dishes derived from the richness of recipes and the time available for good eating. This results in the exaltation of Lent aromas (*corozo* from the Pacific, *pataxte* on the cob, peaches, wet sawdust), the season's colors (the golden flowers of *chilca*, the violet in *jacaranda*, *estaticia* and *Nazareno* flowers, the soft pink hues of *matilisguates*, and the kaleidoscope of bougainvilleas, etc.). The fragrance of incense burners filled with burning *pom* and storax mixes with the steaming plates of dried fish, accompanied by a variety of pickled vegetables, pickled onions, stuffed chiles, and chickpeas in panela syrup, along with aromatic and delicious hot chocolate, *pan de recado*, and abundant honey.

The ethnobiology surrounding the capture, commercialization, and preparation of fishing products is part of this rich environment. For instance, the sunset at the main pier in Livingston, a corner of the Caribbean Sea, can be particularly interesting. There, amid seagulls, terns, and pelicans, the small crews that had ventured out to sea return with their prized catch: dozens of fish caught in the warm waters of the sea. Large quantities of jacks, snappers, sea bass, and pompanos are eagerly awaited by people who will soon send them to a different fate: the kitchens and dining rooms of many Guatemalan homes, with a considerable number of them destined for *tapexcos* [drying racks] where, through the force of salt and sun, they will be turned into dried fish.

Thus, on the Caribbean *tapexcos*, a cycle begins in the traditional expression of dried Lent fish in Guatemala. Meanwhile, in the distant port of San José, located on the central Pacific coast, the old iron pier, which still bears witness to the connection between the port and the sea, serves as a hub for another group of people driven by a similar desire: to meet the products of the sea.

From Livingston to San José, there are only about 300 kilometers in a straight line. The first, located at the mouth of the mighty but slow-flowing Río Dulce, has different landscape, ecological, and cultural conditions than the second. The latter, located at the watershed divide of the Achiguate and María Linda rivers on the vast coastal plain of the Pacific, has its own unique characteristics. Both are home to experienced fishermen with weathered skin and similar, though not identical, fishing techniques. The ancient fishing trade has established subtle differences. In Guatemala, contrary to what its name suggests, the Pacific is more violent than the Caribbean. The former has a steeply sloping platform, while the latter is dominated by shallow waters. The fish schools in the Bay of Amatique and the Gulf of Honduras, part of the Caribbean system, are strongly influenced by the adjacent coral reefs, a situation that does not exist on the sandy southern coast.

For their purposes, the vessels used in the Caribbean are generally larger, suitable for continuous and extended fishing trips. The boats of the fishermen from San José, which greatly resemble those from other towns along the same coast, tend to be only

between 18 and 25 feet long and powered by small outboard motors.

In the Pacific, gill nets, colloquially called *trasmallos*, are about 50 fathoms long (approximately 150 meters). If deep-sea species, such as sharks, are being sought, the nets are set about 30 fathoms (a little over 50 kilometers) from the shore. If deep-sea fishing is not being practiced, the nets are cast along the coastline itself.

In general terms, there are two types of dried fish: one made from small species, such as those scientists call *Atherinella*, *Poecilia*, and *Poeciliopsis gracilis*, prepared and consumed throughout the year. The other, made from larger species, is quintessentially a Lent dish, using any of the coastal benthic or pelagic fish as well as some freshwater species. Due to its culinary versatility, abundance, flavor, and market acceptance, some of the Pacific species include *robalete* (Centropomus robalito), *sierra* (Scomberomorus sierra), *pargo* (Lutjanus guttatus), *sábalo* (Chanos chanos), *bluefin tuna* (Thunnus thynnus), *barracuda* (Sphyraena), various species of catfish, *machorra* (Lepisosteus tropicus), and the common shark (*Carcharhinus limbatus*). According to the fishermen, the shark has become "scarce" due to the intensity with which it is hunted. It is a beautiful animal, just over a meter long, and is not a "man-eater"; it mainly feeds on squid, rays, and smaller fish. It is now considered an endangered species.

From the Caribbean coast and sea come snappers (*Centropomus undecimalis*), jacks (*Caranx hippos*), and groupers (*Lutjanus spp.*). In Livingston, the fish are dried on *tapexcos*, while in San José and Monterrico, they are dried on zinc sheets. In Monterrico, shark pieces are known as "*cecina*," and in San José, pieces without skin are called "*cherla*," regardless of the species of skinned fish (*cherlada*).

Regardless of the different names or recipes, this glorious dish comes from Guatemala's natural resources. There are many recipes, ranging from the typical peninsular "*pescado a la vizcaína*" to a simpler fry, or the possibility of fillets wrapped in egg and complemented with *chirmolitos* of tomatillo. The aromas... oh, the aromas are of Lent and Holy Week!

One of the most traditional drinks, ancestral and of ritual identity, is hot chocolate. It is the customary breakfast drink on Holy Thursday in towns that still maintain this tradition, particularly in the western highlands. Morning never passes

without the aromatic brew, accompanied by sliced *pan de yema* [Egg yolk bread] spread with honey. Sometimes it is paired with *garbanzo en miel*, chickpeas cooked with *panela*. The tradition also includes preparing a small basket with bread, a bottle of honey, a jar of *garbanzo en miel*, and homemade chocolate tablets.

The pickled vegetables and *curtidos* have a special flavor during this season. It all becomes part of an identity full of symbolism, where European and American elements come together in a cuisine that is impossible to resist, even though the season calls for more fasting. But... who can resist?



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# Ethnobotanical Contributions to Traditional Guatemalan Popular Cuisine

**LUIS VILLAR ANLEU***

## FROM HERBIVORY TO TRADITION-BASED CUISINE

Throughout human history, Nature's resources have satisfied multiple needs, including food. Humanity has conceived them as "materials that can currently or potentially be used to its benefit," and for this reason, they are called natural resources. This definition may seem somewhat inadequate, as it arises from an anthropocentric viewpoint that sees Nature as nothing more than an inexhaustible storehouse providing elements of economic or utilitarian value, or resources that can simply be taken at will because they are considered below humans in the hierarchy of the biosphere.

For many, this is a valid position; for others, it is not. In the latter case, arguments are based on high philosophical and even ecological values. Such arguments lead to the conclusion that when humans discover something in their environment that is useful, they take it and incorporate it into their needs. Over time, this usage becomes custom, and customs eventually establish social behavioral norms. By integrating these customs into their world of symbols, people "identify" with the product of the earth, considering it part of their "collective natural heritage" and, through this, reaffirm their connection with Mother Nature. This binding relationship is ethnobiology. Ethnobotany is one branch of ethnobiology, focused on the green world of plants; another is ethnomycology, which deals with relationships with fungi. Traditional cuisine par excellence is that which incorporates ethnobiological elements into its ingredients.

Where and with whom does ethnobiology begin? Without a doubt, with our most primitive ancestors. Based on fossil records, it is only possible to sketch potential scenarios and place some of our ancestors within them. However, the record is fragmented, and as a result, knowledge faces limitations when trying to identify the earliest humans. Perhaps identifying ancestral hominids is an elegant way out of the problem. A good reference among the forerunners of the human lineage is the essential and peculiar feature at the start of our evolutionary path: bipedalism. We are primates. A bipedal creature from this group could be a strong candidate to be among the first

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animals in the human family tree, dating back to when we separated from apes.

Some argue that such a creature can be dated to around 6 to 7 million years ago. A skull recovered in the Republic of Chad, in the Sahara of north-central Africa, and made known in 2002, shows a mix of ape-like anatomy with humanoid features. It was named *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*.

The most reliable record of what could be the first hominid is 5.6 million years old. It comes from Lothagam, south of Lake Turkana Basin in Kenya, East Africa. Fifty kilometers farther south in Kanapoi, another species was recovered, 4.1 million years old; and in Allia Bay, to the east of the basin, another, 4 million years old, was unearthed. These three records correspond to ape-like creatures that walked upright. Further data come from fossils of the unique group of dartians, primates of the *Australopithecus* genus, which have deep ties to the human genealogical line. The oldest is around 4 million years old (*Australopithecus anamensis*, soon after *Australopithecus bahrelghazali*). In Hadar, Ethiopia, the incomplete skeleton of Lucy (*Australopithecus afarensis*), a female dartian dated to 3.9 million to 3 million years ago, was found. A famous dartian, *Australopithecus africanus*, discovered by Raymond Dart, lived between 3 and 2.3 million years ago. Other examples include *Australopithecus aethiopicus* (2.6 to 2.2 million years), *Australopithecus robustus* (2 to 1.2 million years), and *Australopithecus boisei* (2.6 to 1 million years).

Around 2.3 million years ago (or possibly 2.5 million), a bipedal, upright creature began roaming the Earth: *Homo*, the human. Contemporary with the dartians, *Homo* may have derived from them, not by transforming from one to the other, but by reaffirming the close genetic connection that links them. *Homo* coexisted with at least *A. africanus*, *A. aethiopicus*, *A. boisei*, and *A. robustus*. The human lineage is rich and diverse, including several species that lived at the same time, in an era when upright-walking ape-like dartians competed for survival with more than one species of *Homo*, who, though still somewhat ape-like, were more graceful and slender.

The first human is believed to have lived in Africa between 2.3 million and 1.6 million years ago. This species was classified as *Homo habilis*. With a small overlap of 100,000 years, another African species, *Homo ergaster*, lived from 1.7 million to 600,000 years ago. During this same time, but from 1.5 million to 50,000 years ago, *Homo erectus* lived, the first to disperse beyond Africa, reaching China and Indonesia. Around 500,000 years ago, *Homo heidelbergensis* appeared in Europe, also of African origin. *Homo neanderthalensis*, the European Neanderthal, lived from about 250,000 to 28,000 years ago. Our species, *Homo sapiens*, according to the oldest known fossils, two adults and a child from Ethiopia, date back 160,000 to 154,000 years. From this lineage, we, the contemporary *Homo sapiens*, are descended. There is no linear sequence; rather, it is a web of human species evolving independently of one another.

The environments in which they lived must have been rich in social complexity. Groups of australopithecines and various types of humans likely devised ways to survive by developing physical abilities,

communication, and high levels of ingenuity. A beautiful melting pot where food likely played a crucial role in strengthening bonds between individuals, creating and consolidating group and family hierarchies, driving the exclusivity of specialized tasks, and pushing the old model of food gathering towards agriculture, technology, and cooking.

Judging by their dental wear patterns, similar to those of today's vegetarian primates, australopithecines and early hominids likely fed on plant products, fruits, tender foliage, and succulent roots. In a world where the fight for food meant the difference between life and death, the journeys to harvest food likely offered the undeniable advantage of staying close to the den, while also requiring short trips and undoubtedly some division of tasks within clans: vigilance, defense, gathering, and caring for offspring. Because of this, groups may have developed some organization and communication codes. The conditions of life and herbivorous diet created low-energy models, with diets low in calories, a close dependence on known plants, and struggles with predators. This contributed to the emergence of less mobile social groups.

Most paleoanthropologists believe that *Homo* later became scavengers. They fought for remains with other scavengers, especially hyenas and saber-toothed tigers, which made food procurement difficult. This possibly led to a grim variation of scavenging: cannibalism. While it may never have been widespread, it allowed for access to a different type of remains relatively easy to obtain but sporadically available. A more advanced stage involved killing for food and incorporating fresh meat into their diet, like other predators. With food rich in calories and animal protein, their mobility and strength increased, leading them to prefer hunting prey much larger than themselves. To achieve this, they had to craft weapons, stalk, and surround their targets. Group coordination was maximized, a logical language developed, and effective hunting and protection strategies were devised.

Our distant ancestors created behavioral patterns born from their relationships with their ecological environment. It is likely that their habits evolved in harmony with increasingly elaborate levels of group organization, more precise communication codes, greater development of abstract thinking, a stronger sense of clan identity, and, without a doubt, the development of stronger individual-to-individual bonds. This complex evolution, spanning eras of gatherers, scavengers, predators, hunters, and hunter-gatherers, reached higher levels when humans became farmers and technologists. Groups expanded from one or a few families, perhaps in harems, to increasingly large and organized clans. Social humans transitioned from spontaneous behaviors to more elaborate conduct.

Acting as a gatherer is itself a titanic task. The simple act of discovering food that is safe to eat is an admirable feat. Even without going back to ancient times, we can imagine what happened to the unfortunate person who, upon finding a bush with striking red berries, took some, ate them, and discovered a burning sensation… chilis! Not all discoveries could have come from imitating what other animals ate, because not everything that is good for their metabolism is suitable

for humans. For example, no one would imitate a deer eating grass, its daily food, since for the delicate human mouth, its leaves would be abrasive and indigestible.

The situations that followed were not necessarily easier to understand or assimilate. Once a succulent root, a juicy tuber, or a nutritious sprout was found to be good, the spontaneous (or perhaps preconceived and conscious) transmission of that knowledge from generation to generation set the standard and marked it as food, essential for the development of logical thinking. Thus, without taking the argument to extremes (from ecologist to structuralist), considering the entomobiological aspect to enrich the cultural environment is never far-fetched.

**FROM THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT TO THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

It is well known that Mesoamerica, with Guatemala at its heart, is one of the three primary centers in the Americas where agriculture was discovered. It is a major area for the domestication of plants. Other key regions in the Americas include central Mexico and the Andean highlands of Peru and Bolivia. Over 10,000 years ago, significant crops were developed in Mesoamerica, such as the hard variety of corn, *piloy* and tepary beans, cocoa, *güisquil*, *güicoyes*, *pepitoria*, chilis, and various herbs and weeds, to name a few.

In Guatemala, much of the food consumption is linked to the country's natural production core. The essence of this center of origin and diversification of food species is tied to Guatemala's role as a center for developing culinary identity. It is crucial to understand how the territory gained its distinction as a center of origin and diversification, which in turn leads to exploring the geological substrate that created and sustained these particularities.

Guatemala's physical history began in the Devonian period, some 370 million years ago, a time nearly 80 times longer than the span between the dawn of humanity in the Lake Turkana basin and the present day. When the dominant vertebrates were lungfish, corals thrived in warm shallow seas, mollusks reached high levels of evolution, and terrestrial plants had very primitive characteristics, somewhere on Earth, the land began to rise. Millimeter by millimeter, slowly, over millions of years, long and tall mountain chains were formed. At the southern tip of one of them was the first land of what would become Guatemala. These changes, only perceptible on a geological timescale, coincided with the distribution of continents on the planet’s moving tectonic plates, subsidence and uplift, crustal adjustments along deep faults, erosion by wind and water, changes in geography, and modifications of the climate in the Caribbean region, which we are part of. All these processes shaped the territory that would eventually be known as Guatemala.

Once outlined, the territory continued with intense physical activity that reshaped and readjusted it, reoriented its mountains, underwent intense volcanism, and reached its current relief. The volcanic activity became so intense that it covered parts of the country with tons of igneous materials, particularly evident south of the Motagua and Cuilco rivers. The volcanic chimneys were surrounded by lava, rocks, and mud that formed conical mountains, some with almost perfect shapes, which today are

classic features of the Volcanic Cordillera. In the meantime, Guatemala sank twice beneath the sea and reemerged each time. During the first submersion, dinosaurs roamed the continents, though not Guatemala. From this period, limestone rocks remain, forming strata that now cover northern areas, which eventually became key in defining the karstic landscape that dominates the region. The second submersion, not as widespread, left gypsum and marl deposits in Petén and other locations.

The constant erosion reduced mountains to plains, carved canyons, and shaped broken mountain chains, while the chemical dissolution of limestone created a maze of caves, sinkholes, and underground river courses in the northern departments. The final result is the Guatemala that all Guatemalans know—a land that only needed to be populated with plants and animals, create its ecosystems, build its biodiversity, and allow its people to discover and establish the ways to prepare their most characteristic dishes.

## A LABORATORY FOR EVOLUTION

Just as a blade of grass seems to sprout spontaneously from a small pile of virgin soil, thousands of plants began to grow on the primordial land. Along with them came microorganisms, algae, and fungi. Animals populated the fields, establishing ecological relationships, and natural communities distributed themselves according to spaces suited to their forms and lifestyles.

Because the territory, due to its geological origins, was once the southern tip of North America, its wildlife was native to that region. South America was still separated, and Central America had not yet completed its formation as an isthmus connecting both halves of the continent. The ancient forests contained pines, firs, oaks, cypresses, sweetgums, and willows; the animals were raccoons, coyotes, deer, and weasels. When Central America's southern region emerged and the land bridge was consolidated, a wave of southern vegetation moved northward. From their ancestors, zapotes, acacias, and ceibas were able to grow, and tapirs, coatis, hummingbirds, wild boars roamed the land, while monkeys, howler monkeys, toucans, and parrots inhabited the forest canopy.

The miracle was taking shape: the multitude of places created by geological forces gave rise to the existence of various microclimates. In them, the intense ecological drama arising from all the life forms that coexisted in the space forced a fierce struggle for survival, with capacities slowly emerging in each wild population. There were explosions of variability. Wonderful living beings, like the quetzal, the white nun orchid, and the Atitlán grebe (now extinct), marked evolutionary milestones as species unique to a territory that, ecologically and later culturally, became part of that surprising region known as Mesoamerica.

The best was yet to come, in a very recent time, measured in just a handful of thousands of years, perhaps only a bit more than 10,000. Another immigrant arrived, a hairless mammal that walked on two legs, organized in groups with complex communication, possessed great manual skills and extreme adaptive capabilities. Man arrived. It's exciting to imagine how he lived in his time, in a

Guatemala almost entirely covered by forests and teeming with wild and aquatic animals. Gathering plant products, hunting, fishing, or catching small invertebrates to eat. How about keeping some of these foods near the dens?

Amazing! From the violence of cataclysms emerged a biological world full of unique life forms, and later the ancestral Guatemalan selected and cared for them in his backyard. And there's one more detail in this delightful story; cultivated fields, from the beginning and until today, are filled with weeds. Herbs and shrubs that grow spontaneously, persistently, and to which the cultivator must pay attention. Many weeds belong to that unique group we call Mesoamerican, whose species are native to the region. Some persist as such and are known by their colloquial names like nightshade, amaranth, *chipilín*, *miltomate*, *loroco*, and *tomatillo de culebra*, to name just the most well-known.

Had the relationship between man and nature been different in this land of vigorous ecology and surprising ethno-cultural diversity, such weeds might have been eradicated. But no. They were incorporated into traditional diets, culminating in fragrant and delightful dishes, delicate, true delicacies for the Guatemalan palate, which invariably are of great nutritional richness and sometimes also medicinal. The extreme profusion of local culinary expressions stems from an ancient consumption of foods that affirm them, and testify to the knowledge and applications derived from the variability of species with food value. Today, besides being the inventors of their own agriculture, Guatemalans remain gatherers of weeds that are turned into food, or of native fruits that are eaten and enjoyed with total delight: *anona*, *caimito*, cherry, *chicozapote*, *injerto*, *matasano*, chamomile, *nance*, *paterna*, *pitahaya*, *zapote*, *zunza*. This relationship extends to spices and seasonings and exquisite products from the undergrowth, such as *pacayas* or *badú*.

The diet of a Guatemalan is a gastronomic pattern based on the consumption of species and varieties of plants from his ecosystems, evolutionary lineages alongside subtle domestication processes that have transformed them into native crops. With culinary techniques rooted in the flow of millennia, tastes defined by such foods, and identification with the people, the most Guatemalan meals we know emerge.

The persistent fury of the planet remains in the country when its tectonic plates collide, and when its volcanic cones vomit lava and magma. In the same way, the grandeur of life is displayed in the icy atmosphere of a dark cloud forest, in the rugged solitude of the thorny *chaparral* in the interior valleys, in the magic of the Caribbean coast, or in the barren highlands of the ancient mountain ranges. And the final magnificence comes when biological species become resources, when they provide raw material for a popular cuisine that soon becomes traditional.

## DOMESTICATION OF WILD LINEAGES AND CULINARY ART

In this essay, the field of discussion revolves around two mutually linked elements. On one hand, there are the cultural patterns in the diet of Guatemalan human societies; on the other, the

ecological realm in which these societies and patterns are inscribed. Although we can speak of a human ecology or an ecological sociology, something is still missing to achieve a synthesis between the two domains. There is an old controversy that derives from the conceptual conflict between practice/presence, use, and existence in the environment. It links utilitarianism with the availability, discovery, and accessibility of Nature's goods that can serve as satisfiers in performing acts according to particular lifestyles.

It has been said that Guatemala, the core of Mesoamerica, is "the heart of a primary global center of plant diversification."[7, 9] There are eight such centers around the Earth. Its ecosystems have been laboratories where natural selection has produced a considerable number of wild varieties, which at some point the inhabitants took, improved, and now we benefit from. Some varieties are still wild lineages. We continue with the culture of gatherers when we collect weeds of food interest or fruits from the natural communities of the territory. In Guatemala, species incorporated into social eating obtain prominent places in material culture, with ceremonial cultivation and culinary art affirmed as part of identity. They merge into social culture when language, festivals, and ceremonies are articulated with them, and they become part of spiritual culture when they are integrated into myths and legends, religious rituals, dances, and beliefs, when there are traces of divine origin.[12] Fontana has pointed out that plants represent the cycle of life (fertility, death, and rebirth), and that many are considered sacred, either for their medicinal properties or because they evoke links between gods and men.

An ethnobiological complement to traditional Guatemalan cuisine is the open-air markets. These popular social conglomerates, where daily transactions are carried out, where community communication is established, where people converge to satisfy some of their ancient cultural identifications, imbued with unwritten hierarchies and norms. Are these spaces, so well-known from an anthropological perspective, significant from an ethnobiological perspective? Indeed, they truly are. They can be identified as the major centers for the collection of native wild lineages, whether more or less domesticated or still part of an untamed, wild, and fertile Nature. If a social scientist, geneticist, biologist, or naturalist is interested in knowing the local variability of foods, as raw materials that underpin traditional popular cuisine, in a market, they will find vast opportunities for study. Almost always placed strategically in artisan baskets made of cane, within sight of potential buyers, they will find impressive quantities of chilis from most of the coveted varieties: chocolate chili *zambo*, bell pepper, *serrano*, *chamborote*, *siete caldos*, *trompa de burro*, *guaque*, *jalapeño*, dried, *morrón*, habanero, *chiltepe*, *diente de chucho*, *pico de gorrión*. Many times, they are placed side by side, as if displayed more to be admired and analyzed than purchased. And alongside them, an almost infinite range of black, white, red, bush, and pole beans, *piloyes*.

Not to mention that baskets overflowing with *bledo*, *quiletes*, *chipilines*, *hierba-mora, lorocos*, *jocotes*, *nances*, cherries,

papayas, *cujes*, *pataxtes* are everywhere. In short, the foods of the country. In Guatemala, a nation naturally multicultural, the ethnobiological facts related to traditional eating are found everywhere, as part of the cultural expressions of its diverse peoples. The discovery of the relationships that bind Guatemalans to their own Nature can bring enormous benefits to society and to the ecological environment that nourishes it.

## TOWARDS A FRAME OF REFERENCE

Let's begin with an example: A short publication[1] on food customs noted that the main goal of its dishes "is the communication between two worlds (the living and the deceased ancestors) and the preservation of the balance between sacred and profane elements." The statement contains points of interest, some regarding the spiritual aspect in which it is framed, others concerning human actions when projected onto culinary practices and food consumption. It highlights the existence of a communication component and the fact that it constitutes a means to connect the dimensions inherent in culture. Food, as a form of communication, has its code of signals, signs, and symbols that define a singular pattern of social identity.

Continuing with the example: in that work, two classic ingredients of this cuisine are identified, ayotes and jocotes. For this essay, they provide sufficient pretext to introduce the biology of food into the anthropology of eating. From the biological field, criteria emerge to strengthen the understanding of how food helps shape a people's identity, to support the interpretation of symbolism in various dishes of traditional cuisine, and to justify a philosophy of conservation of both natural and cultural heritage or, to use Classen's[10] same judgment, to search in the native lineages that nourish us and identify us, for explanations about how our societies create and shape a culinary world with meaning.

A useful concept to facilitate reading this essay is that of *germplasm*. It dates back to 1885, when the embryologist August Weismann identified "germ plasm," the substance in all living beings capable of continuing life, protected by somatoplasm, the body. In genetic terms, it represents the totality of genes in a species, variety, or race, its unique and characteristic genetic code. Chili peppers, *Capsicum annuum*, a popular condiment, are a particular germplasm. So are its varieties within the species: chocolate chili, costeño, guaque, mulato, dried chili, bell pepper, serrano, ulute, zambo. The seeds of chocolate chili will always produce chocolate chilis, just as guaque seeds will produce guaque chilis, and bell pepper seeds will only produce bell peppers. The species is one, *Capsicum annuum*, although it has at least the nine varieties we've identified, which represent nine different lineages or germplasms. This condition is called genetic variability. Many species in Guatemalan cuisine possess great genetic variability (for example, squashes, beans, chilis, *ayotes*, and *jocotes*).

It is not difficult to link the biological concept of germplasm to the anthropological field. But to give it the precise dimension, let's reduce it here to just the assessment of botanical varieties of food interest that constitute natural lineages. Then we'll extend this conception to discover the diet of

Guatemalans, the elaboration and preparation of their dishes (gastronomy) based on them. Those who have already worked on the anthropology of food find that the rich body of knowledge accumulated to craft traditional dishes and the sociology of consuming them (and enjoying them!) are just two of the many aspects contained in the wonderful universe of traditional cuisine. Now is the time to say that our intention is to strengthen the hypothesis that native lineages define a unique, Creole cuisine, which becomes a symbol of cultural identity.

## THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF FOOD

A significant group of social scientists has devoted extensive commentary to explaining the meaning, symbolism, characteristics, and conditions of the culinary fact. This essay is not another attempt to fill gaps in that field, as there may be few (if any). Instead, it seeks to provide biological data of local relevance, particularly those related to the origin, variability, domestication, use, and coexistence of humans with native plant species to enrich the understanding of symbolism in food. We do not aim to support a vision of eating as a mere animalistic act. The idea is to give new dimensions to the desire to stop seeing food as a simple obligation to eat to live, and more as a signifier of cultural identity.

Although our most distant relatives on the zoological paleo-scale, the first Homo species, had to develop extreme connections to their ecosystems and struggle to maintain them as an unintentional survival strategy, their diet must have been only a biological necessity. It evolved into a ritual within groups where animality still dominated humanity. We assume that a preference for certain foods became ingrained in the subconscious, gradually embedding itself in the clans that gave rise to the first settlements of bipedal apes with hairless skin. These individuals, in the order of Nature, are the prelude to wise humans, *Homo sapiens*, beings who later would eat according to particular, unconscious semiotic codes.

Gastronomy is not just about cooking and eating; it also involves respecting an unwritten series of behavioral guidelines that give meaning to a people's identity. It is likely that the same identity must be claimed for the biological species humans consume, because in the end, we are nothing more than consumers in a world where the difference between eating and being eaten becomes a law when it comes to ecological relationships between animals. The essence of this essay is to show the existence of other values, those of the plant species that feed us through a millennia-old culinary ritual, in a context that emphasizes the fact that we, the producers and consumers, have been born and evolved in the same biogeographical space. Recognizing the value of wild biota in this way highlights the magnificence of traditional food and enhances the national culinary identity.

Dishes, concoctions, viands, stews, and ingredients in the traditional cuisine of the Guatemalan people are pieces of a significant part of the nation's cultural heritage, largely derived from native species that constitute its natural heritage. To speak of them, and to complementarily link the biological component of the matter to its anthropological dimension, we begin by considering that the origin and

nature of food is a crucial element in interpreting its symbolism. The premise, fundamental from an ethnobiological perspective, transforms into the belief that food was initially chosen for being "good to eat," later for being "good to think about," in terms of the Lévi-Straussian school of thought, and then incorporated into cultural patterns when it transcended the purely animalistic function of eating to survive.

This should not even be seen as an attempt to defend a supposed functionalism of food, from which we distance ourselves with the conviction that the food we eat today represents a form of identity. Before this identity was achieved, the gathering phase put humans face to face with their food sources, but with magical relationships, through the conception of links between plants and gods or between plants and themselves. The identity in *social eating* must have slowly solidified until food, the person eating it, and the processes that connect them became a single cultural pattern. This can be reasonably deduced from the study of foods with broad biogeographic distribution and strong cultural attachment, or from the culinary attachment to foods where the area of ethnicity and food distribution coincide.

When adaptations to social eating and food consumption relate to the primary centers of natural production, this is not a denial of the symbolic value of food but rather a reinforcement, based on facts stemming from the origin of the edible lineages. Thus arises another premise of this essay: the identification of *primary centers of origin and diversification* goes hand in hand with the recognition of *centers of development for culinary identity patterns*. Enriching the knowledge of how to identify and select foods, what to cook, the art of preparing meals, gathering around food, eating, making it a daily or festive practice, also enriches the possibility of logically or unconsciously identifying a social structure through its culinary processes, as many of Lévi-Strauss's disciples would continue to argue.

In addressing this, López García[17] added that “food, in all cultural contexts, has served to define oneself in relation to others; it has been and continues to be not only an immediate but also one of the main markers of identity. But far beyond exclusively representational identifications, food becomes one of the most important symbolic foundations in the construction of cultural identity and in the genesis of correlations that make social ideologies more intelligible.” Echoing what has been suggested here, we believe that among the various ways of entering the vast world of typical gastronomy, the incorporation of ethnobiological relationships is perhaps one of the least explored, yet one of the most enriching. A necessary clarification is that the term "typical" is taken in its real meaning of characteristic, traditional, and symbolic.

Now let us agree that symbols, as Fontana[13] has said, are deep expressions of human nature, where in the inner world, one of them can represent some profound intuitive knowledge. Food is not exempt from this context. Paraphrasing Fontana, we must acknowledge that man's direct experience with Nature had a powerful influence on early societies, for whom plants, being part of their daily lives and their very existence, represented the cycle

of life (fertility, death, and rebirth), and food also came to suggest abundance and celebration. The belief that food connects humans with sources of vital energy arises with unusual force. The act of eating is no longer just about filling the stomach. There is something magical in this wonderful act and in the equally extraordinary act of sharing food.

**(GENETIC DIVERSIFICATION CENTER)**

In the first quarter of the 20th century, a contingent of Russian scientists spread across the world studying crops where significant genetic variation, the presence of wild populations, and cultivar diversity could be determined. Based on this natural wealth, their vital areas could be interpreted as centers of origin and dispersion of germplasms. The lead scientist, botanist N. Vavilov, coordinated the work of the research teams, one of which was in the Mexico-Guatemala area, Central America, northern South America, and the Caribbean islands between 1925 and 1927. The group working in the country was led by S. M. Bukasov on an expedition organized by the then Soviet Institute of Applied Botany. Their results, published in Russian in Leningrad in 1930, revealed the vast regional genetic wealth.

At the end of this monumental work, Vavilov identified eight primary centers of genetic diversity, considering the Mexico-Central America region as one of the most important in the world. The others are in the Andean region (from Colombia to northern Bolivia). Three centers of secondary importance are Malaysia, Chile, and Brazil-Paraguay. While the political boundaries of the Mexico-Central America area can be defined with some accuracy, the ecological borders are indefinable. A geographical entity that brings together the political and the natural is the concept of Mesoamerica, a region stretching from central Mexico (the escarpment of the Pánuco and Santiago valleys) to almost the northwest of Costa Rica.

For us, it is highly significant that the country is at the center of Mesoamerica because it places us at the core of this diversity center (Vavilov Center). We find reasons for this pleasant privilege because the country possesses great geographic variation and, consequently, a lot of ecosystem variability. These have been laboratories where evolution has produced a considerable number of botanical varieties that ancient inhabitants once used, improved, and we now benefit from. It is worth mentioning that of 104 species of crops considered native to Mesoamerica, 50 are found in Guatemala, 48% of the total. Since it is impossible to name them all, in subsequent sections, we will highlight a few, chosen at random without any selection bias.

Thus, we occupy an exceptional agricultural hub. Not the only one, but certainly one of the most excellent, as it was here that the domestication of plants, which existed profusely in local ecosystems, was invented and developed, along with efficient soil and crop management systems. What is of particular interest at this moment is that a *complex technology was forged in the preparation of native foods*. The transition from gathering plants to agriculture was so momentous that the domestication of some species had a far-reaching impact on all of humanity. This can be exemplified by

corn, beans, squashes, chocolate, avocados, and chilies, which the entire world now enjoys.

The development of highly efficient agriculture tied the Mesoamerican peoples to their lands, an attitude that persists among most members of communities who "identify with their land" through the subconscious management of affectionate ties to their Nature, which provides them with plants of irreplaceable interest. The history of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican civilizations reveals biological traces that testify to our ancestors' relationship with their environment.

In this essay, we more energetically address plant-based nutrition. Over the span of a little more than two million years, during which humans transitioned from gatherers to farmers, botanical species linked to human tastes began to form a regular and distinctive group. Today, botanical geneticists classify them into categories that help describe and understand them: wild populations, wild relatives, primitive populations, crops, and advanced populations. Nomenclature and definitions come mostly from the CATIE/GTZ[9] Genetic Resources Program at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), in partnership with the German Technical Cooperation Society (GTZ), in Costa Rica. The categories imply the appropriation of use, determined between the initial gathering and the later, more or less elaborate agronomic manipulation. The essence of the evolutionary path from gathering to agriculture is the *domestication of wild lineages*.

Some of humanity's great leaps forward have been related to food practices, including identifying foods, selecting what to eat (whether directly or to be taken to the kitchen), the art of preparing food, the protocol of sitting before it and eating it (whether around a table or a fire), distinguishing between everyday and ceremonial cooking, etc. The symbolism in such aspects, and the cultural identity that arises with unimaginable force, are tied to the nature-culture duality we now seek to understand. Thus emerges a third premise: truly Creole cuisine identifies a people with a culinary pattern based on the consumption of species and varieties of plants that arose in their ecosystems, after millions of years of evolution parallel to that of humans. In the study of their symbolism, this is of utmost importance, because misunderstanding the origins and nature of foods has led some to propose incorrect symbolisms in Guatemalan cuisine.

In general, crops are defined as plants that have been planted to grow optimally and yield the greatest benefit. This term also applies to plantations exploited through appropriate care and labor. In geneticists' terms, plantations are known as "cultivars."

For the aforementioned CATIE/GTZ Program, *wild populations* include species that grow freely. There are two basic forms, identified as primitive types and weeds. Primitive types "descend directly from ancestral types from which cultivated varieties also derive, as is the case with fruit trees such as sapotes, chicos, and others still found in the forests." Weeds "descend, like cultivated varieties, from a common ancestor now extinct, but they

were not selected by farmers and grow spontaneously in environments affected by human occupation."

In regions with great richness of edible species, such as Guatemala, human crops have *wild relatives*, which are species closely related to cultivated species. They are usually classified in the same botanical genus or in very closely related genera. Although they are distinct species, they maintain the ability to crossbreed and produce more productive or resistant hybrids, a potential that farmers have intensely exploited. Some grains fall into this category. Primitive populations are "varieties of a cultivated species that farmers have selected and maintained without subjecting them to genetic improvement programs." This category includes native corn, various types of beans, and almost all native fruit trees. Synonym: primitive cultivar.

*Advanced populations* (or advanced cultivars) refer to hybrid varieties that humans produce through controlled crossbreeding or by inducing drastic changes with radiation or physical or chemical agents. The hybrids with the desired characteristics are then selected. Advanced populations that reproduce by cuttings or other asexual means are called clones (this also applies to those derived from primitive cultivars or varieties).

## ETHNOBIOLOGY AND GERMPLASM

The intimate relationship between genetic theory applied to edible plants and the anthropocentric practice of making use of them cannot be more significant than in cases where their use involves cultural identity. It is clear that domesticating certain crops required a prior process of identifying and selecting edible plants. Then came a more complicated process of identifying useful propagules, discovering the germination power of seeds. Additionally, a deep knowledge of climate changes in recurring annual cycles was required, along with an understanding of plant seasonality and the possibility of appropriating them through the collection of other parts with germinative potential, such as tubers, cuttings, or roots.

It would be incredibly illustrative to delve into deeper details regarding the dependence on useful weeds and controlled harvesting, which has even carried over into modern times. Tolerating weeds in cultivated fields has been a mutual advantage. If we analyze the case, we see that it is much more intense than one might initially think. From plants like these, many products are obtained that are closely tied to Guatemalan cuisine, such as the miltomate, the tomatillo or "snake tomato," chipilín leaves, black nightshade, amaranth, pericón, and many more.

To uncover the depth of ethnobiological relationships as they relate to food, it will always be of great interest to approach market anthropology. Something has already been mentioned in the introductory section, but it must be remembered that this is a parallel universe where symbols, signs, and identities spontaneously emerge. Connecting the social behavior revolving around culinary practices with the matter of germplasm, it will be highly beneficial to observe those endless, rich, and multicolored baskets with serial samples of all imaginable genetic lines, particularly those linked to the tastes and preferences of the Guatemalan population.

But there's more: if not in homes, it is in markets where the most genuine traditional popular dishes, undeniably of Creole origin, can be found for sale.

Sometimes traditional cuisine has a very narrow scope, tied as it is to the distribution of germplasm associated with it. This is why there is an extremely deep-rooted connection with loroco flowers, frequent in the markets of Guatemala and El Salvador, where the fondness for their peculiar flavor and aroma is proverbial. The same happened with pito flowers, or *tzité* from the Popol Vuh, which was once a widely consumed food but is now rarely seen in markets. It is evident that genetic lines with restricted geographical distribution possess this characteristic not only for ecological reasons but also because humans impose it through active participation in their life cycles, whether through agricultural practices or other cultural fixations.

Now, given the nature of this essay, when talking about exotic foods incorporated into our diet, their nature and character will be pointed out precisely. Exotic is understood as foreign, imported, non-native. These foods are also important in Guatemalan cuisine because, as will be explained, they generate the culinary syncretism that elevates traditional food. Many popular products and crops, such as garlic, onions, fruits, and a good portion of spices, are exotic, having coexisted with our dishes for centuries. They transcend not only due to the type of dish they contribute to but also because of the methods the native cuisine had to invent to incorporate them and later preserve them to maintain their essence.

Even with an exposition that we have reduced to a few points (only food from plants, with an emphasis on native germplasm, only traditional popular cuisine and typical dishes, with a special focus on Creole cuisine), the possibility of strictly culinary analysis diversifies in unimaginable ways. A delicate example is the meals based on the consumption of *Sechium edule*, the chayote. Its foliar shoots ("chayote vines"), the fruits, consumed as vegetables, and the roots (ichíntales) have many applications in Creole cuisine. Each part has countless culinary variations, as shown by recipes that have spontaneously passed from generation to generation. We find that the tender vines are prepared in soups, in combined fries, or added to a pot of beans or piloyes. Chayotes can be boiled with their skin, either alone or with corn or "tamales" to give them other flavors and aromas. As vegetables, they accompany any dish, and their preparation can be salty or sweet, and in salads and desserts, they are a delicacy for the palate. The ichíntales are normally served as vegetables and can be served simply boiled, but also in sauces, soups, or "wrapped in egg." They have been rediscovered as healthy food, high in fiber, and good for people with cardiovascular problems. In addition to being a staple in everyday cooking and of dietary interest, it is also found in magical-religious, spiritual cuisine, such as in the "head table meal." And kitchens can still select the appropriate or preferred varieties, as there are many: small-fruited (perulero), medium or large, with spiny or smooth skin, white, cream, or green in color; watery or dry in texture, even with some described as having a "potato flavor."

Upon closer examination, the case of *güisquil* is common among most species that we will later address. Furthermore, it often happens that a dish results from the combination of several species. A delicious example is “string beans in iguashte.” This dish consists of tender bean pods (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), cooked and mixed with a stew featuring the unique *pepitoria* (seeds of *Cucurbita argyrosperma*), squash seeds, and *miltomate* (*Physalis philadelphica*) or tomato (*Lycopersicum aesculentum*). Sometimes, *chile zambo* (*Capsicum annuum*) is added, and garlic is incorporated as an exotic seasoning. From this arises a fourth premise: the evidently vast diversity of dishes prepared from native species attests to the antiquity of their consumption and highlights the knowledge and applications derived from their inherent variability.

We are already introducing the use of scientific names, and in the following section, we will continue to do so. Scientific names cannot be overlooked if we aim for precision in identifying the plants being referenced. The use of popular names alone is insufficient, especially for three reasons: the same species may have multiple names in a single region; one species may be called different names across various regions or ethnolinguistic groups; and distinct species can share a common name.

For the purposes of a text like this, only scientific nomenclature can resolve such issues. Through it, we can learn about the distribution and origin of species, nutritional content and value, life form, native habitat, properties, and cultivation requirements. With such an array of information, we can achieve a certain rigor when describing their relationships with humans and their ethnobiological value. In the case at hand, we can consider a few basic rules, such as that scientific names are essentially binary, either in Latin or Latinized; the first part is always capitalized, the second part is not, and both are written in italics or underlined.

**ON THE SPECIES WE EAT**

When culinary art and dietary behavior intersect in an ethnobiological relationship, the time comes to name the plant products involved. It is nearly impossible to list all the useful plant species in Guatemalan cuisine, given the nature of this essay and the limited space available. Other authors have partially covered this, though from perspectives different from ours (see, for example, Azurdia 1995 and 1996, Bukasov 1981, Pöll 1984). We, standing at the indistinct threshold separating traditional cuisine from other popular foods, focus on the former by linking it to native germplasms or practices that sanctify it, while recognizing the value of the latter as means that affirm cultural identity, which they represent as one of its most significant manifestations.

It is helpful to distinguish between "food" and "meal" according to the connotation we assign to each term here. We call "food" the product that serves as the raw material for meals or is eaten directly. Fruits are a good example of the latter case. To their value as native plants and their high demand, we add the appreciation Guatemalans have for them and the styles and methods of provision that have been preserved for centuries, especially in terms of gathering and harvesting from wild

populations. We are more interested in foods made into meals, those that have been processed into cooked dishes. These have the added value of the procedures required to prepare, season, cook, serve, share, eat, or sanctify them, methods that are almost always centuries old. We emphasize our traditional meals.

Yet more challenges arise in this outline, as the number of wild plants eaten in Guatemala is unimaginably vast. Lists can reach several hundred species, making it a Herculean task to discuss each one. Much ethnobotanical analysis remains to be done to undertake the delightful task of addressing them one by one, identifying the recipes that incorporate them, and enjoying their modes of consumption. With this in mind, we embark on a quick tour of the kingdom of a few native lineages in the Guatemalan region, the best-known in *criolla* cuisine. The few species listed are arranged alphabetically by their most commonly used names. Each entry includes the following descriptors: Common name, *scientific name*, life form (if wild population: WP; if cultivated: C; if wild relative: WR; if primitive cultivar: PC; if advanced cultivar: AC). Original distribution area (we are interested in Mesoamerica; if it is larger, it will be detailed in notable cases, such as that of maize). Original habitat. Uses.





**Aguacate [Avocado]**. *Persea americana*, *Persea schiedeanaeselchuctey*, *Persea tolimanensis*, the monkey avocado; *Persea nubigena*, and *Persea steyermarkii* are confined to Cerro Miramundo in Jalapa. The last three are endangered.[19] WP, C, WR, PC. A tree native to Mesoamerica, with two lineages recognized by geneticists one developed in Mexico and the other native to Guatemala. Originally a species of forests and jungles, with highland and lowland varieties; currently, many cultivated varieties exist. The edible part is the fruit: in one of its oldest forms, it is eaten inside the same shell with tortillas, "tamalitos," or bread; when mashed, the pulp becomes guacamole, a widely popular preparation accompanying many dishes; it is used in salads; chunks of pulp can accompany soups, meats, and other dishes; it is rarely used to make drinks and ice cream; the tree is also used as coffee shade; it has industrial, medicinal, and nutritional applications.

**Anona.** *Annona diversifolia*, *Annona purpurea*. WP, WR, PC. The first species is native to the area between southern Mexico and El Salvador, the second from southern Mexico to Panama. In forest ecosystems, it grows as a medium-sized tree. *A. diversifolia* is found in lowlands and has smaller, green-skinned fruit. *A. purpurea* is the highland variety, with larger, dark-skinned, soft fruits. The edible part is the creamy, aromatic, juicy, sweet-tasting white pulp. Other species known in the country include *Annona squamosa*, *Annona reticulata*, *Annona cherimola*, and *Annona muricata* (the soursop), although it is now well known that these were introduced pre-Hispanically from South America.[9]

**Ayote [Squash].** *Cucurbita moschata*. WR, C, PC. A species native to Mesoamerica. A creeping plant that has been highly domesticated, with no wild populations. Its genetic variation is so vast that precise designation of the botanical species remains difficult. Some suggest that its native form in Guatemala is closer to the *güicoy* (*Cucurbita pepo*), somewhat

like the pumpkin (*Cucurbita maxima*), and with traits from three other cultivated species.[5] It is an important pre-Hispanic crop mentioned in ancient indigenous texts.[3] A widely consumed form among the ladino population is in the form of a sweet dish (the pulp of the fruit is cooked with panela); the flowers are more appreciated than those of *güicoy*, especially in the Verapaces and the east of the country, where they are prepared as a dish of flowers "wrapped in egg" served with a light chirmol. In Purulhá, the flowers are prepared in a soup called *utzuuj'kum'*. The leaves can be eaten in various ways. The seeds, called "*pepita de ayote*", are an essential ingredient in many dishes, although they do not replace "*pepitoria*", which comes from *Cucurbita argyrosperma* and has its own distinct dishes.

**Badú**. *Xanthosoma violaceum*. WP, WR, PC. A lineage from Mesoamerica, locally also known as ox, macal, or quequexque. It is an herbaceous plant from the Araceae family with large leaves, typically found in very humid or even rainy forest ecosystems in tropical regions. The edible part consists of the underground stems, or corms, which can be cooked as a substitute for bread or tortillas or eaten in stews with other vegetables. Its consumption is more localized in the Caribbean region. Similar to badú, but often confused by the less knowledgeable, are malanga (*Colocasia esculenta*), yampí, and yams (various species from the genus *Dioscorea*), though there are clear differences between them. It is known that malanga, yampí, and yams were ancient introductions from the Antilles and South America, and they now grow wild in Guatemala, especially malanga.

***Bejuco de agua*, paac', mountain grape**. *Vitis tiliifolia. S.* Mesoamerica to Colombia and the Antilles. A herbaceous, climbing plant that can grow over 15 meters tall, thriving in forests and not very humid or dry jungles below 1,500 meters of altitude. It produces numerous blackish or purple fruits that resemble grapes and have an intensely acidic taste, which some find unpleasant. Nonetheless, there are those who consume them. If cut, the stem exudes a copious amount of fresh liquid, as if that were all it contained. Those who know this, when journeying in the forest and lacking water, drink it eagerly. There are stories of people who have survived dehydration thanks to this wild resource.

**Bledo [Pigweed]**. *Amaranthus cruentus, Amaranthus caudatus, Amaranthus dubius, Amaranthus hybridus, Amaranthus hypochondriacus, Amaranthus polygonoides,* and *Amaranthus scariosus*. WP, C, WR, PC. A group of species from Mesoamerica, they are herbs highly valued in popular cuisine and diets since pre-Hispanic times, having an exquisite taste and being very nutritious. They are commonly found in local markets, sold in bundles at prices accessible to almost all social strata. The edible parts are the leaves and seeds, although in comparison, the leaves are far more preferred. Seed consumption has rapidly declined. The Guatemalan diet, which overwhelmingly favors the foliage, includes soups, stews, or stir-fries complemented with tomato, onion, and garlic. Guatemalans' fondness for bledo is consistent with its ancient consumption. It is a very nutritious food, rich in protein, fiber, iron, calcium, and other essential elements, and very low in fat. Most of the harvest comes from plants allowed to grow

as weeds. Cultivation is low-intensity, contrary to its high demand.

**Cacao**. *Theobroma cacao.* WP, C, WR, PC, AC. In Maya hieroglyphic writing, stone engravings, pictographs on vases and murals, and archaeological evidence found on ceramics, we can appreciate an ancient relationship between Guatemalans and cacao. It was first consumed as a fruit, and later underwent a complex process of seed transformation that turned it into chocolate. Its early consumption was the privilege of rulers, priests, nobles, and warriors. The exclusivity of its use as a beverage had the ritualistic characteristics of a divine matter. Hence, it is curious that in 1753, Carl Linnaeus named it *Theobroma cacao*, literally "cacao, food of the gods" (from the Greek *Theos* = god; *bromus* = food), a name that aligns well with the spiritual significance of the species. It is said that before the Europeans arrived, the cacao lineage was wild in tropical America, but in cultivation, it was only known in the area between Guatemala and southern Mexico.[9, 11] Our cacao is a small tree from humid ecosystems of the Atlantic slope, which later expanded significantly on the Pacific slope and is now planted in all tropical humid regions of the world. It is likely that the original consumption was of the bittersweet pulp surrounding the seeds. Therefore, it is interesting that in the popular market of Panajachel during Holy Week 2005, alongside its relative pataxte (*Theobroma bicolor*), ripe cacao pods were sold, and older people bought them to eat as they once did! Chocolate, as a drink, required the discovery of a complex process involving critical stages of fermentation, drying, roasting, shelling, and grinding the seeds. Fermentation removes the outer pulp and initiates a deep chemical transformation that reduces the amount of astringent substances. Sun-drying and roasting on a griddle further these changes, and once ground, the seeds have undergone enough transformation to make chocolate, which was foamy as it was preferred in ancient times. Chocolate was not the only form of cacao consumption as a drink. Several types of ceremonial drinks mixed cacao and maize, sometimes flavored with orejuela flower, another tree linked to traditional popular culture. Maya women had a prominent role in the cultural act that connected us to chocolate. Engravings depict women pouring the liquid from one vessel to another from a height, a deliberate act believed to be aimed at creating foam. It is undeniable that the liquid being transferred is chocolate, as chemical analysis of the remains proves it. The noble traditional Guatemalan cuisine incorporated chocolate as the main condiment in other dishes, with *tamales negros* and plantains in mole being notable examples, while gourmet cuisine used it for delicate desserts, pastries, and ice cream. Additionally, medicinal properties have also been discovered in chocolate.

**Caimito.** *Chrysophyllum cainito.* WP, WR, PC. A tree native to Mesoamerica. It is a species of lowland tropical forests, whose fruit is highly valued. The pulp is sweet and is the juiciest of all sapotaceae. It is cultivated with very low intensity as it is a large tree. Most of the fruits are harvested from the wild.

**Camote.** *Ipomoea batatas.* WP, C, PC. A native species of Mesoamerica and the Antilles. Our country is a secondary center of origin, but in the extensive Flora of

Guatemala, 60 species of the *Ipomoea* genus are recorded. The high genetic variability, which combines purple and yellow flesh forms and purple or yellow skins that do not necessarily match, constitutes a phylogenetic richness of great importance, as well as the presence of primitive congeners such as *Ipomoea tiliacea*, *Ipomoea trifida*, and *Ipomoea triloba*. The edible part is the tuber flesh, which provides a very calorie-rich diet due to its high carbohydrate content. There are many ways to consume it, either cooked as a vegetable or in a wide variety of sweets and desserts. It is a fundamental component of Caribbean tapado, included in "vegetable stew," to which it imparts a very particular flavor, and traditional Guatemalan sweets also incorporate it.

**Cereza [Cherry].** *Prunus capuli.* WP, WR, PC. A tree restricted to the Guatemala-Mexico area. In the country, it is a forest species of temperate highland forests, often associated with oak and pine forests. It produces small fruits that are green, red, or very dark purple, with a unique taste; production is seasonal, and consumption is concentrated in the highland towns. The small fruits are consumed as they are, but a very Guatemalan preparation in mountain communities is a dessert of peaches in honey with cherries.

**Chan.** *Salvia chia, Salvia polystachia, Salvia columbinae.* WP, C, WR, PC. Mesoamerica. The seeds are added to some drinks (to lemonades currently); after a few minutes in contact with water, they release a mucilaginous substance with a very special taste. It is suggested that several species are found both in cultivation and in the wild: in the Guatemala-Mexico area, cultivation is pre-Hispanic. Its consumption is very traditional, although it has been gradually declining, more in some places than others; it is reputed to have medicinal properties, and historically the oil it produces was used in the craftsmanship of *morros* and *jícaras*.

**Chaya, xaq'tix, chatate.** *Cnidoscolus chayamansa* and *Cnidoscolus aconitifolius.* WP, WR, PC, C. Northern Mesoamerica. A euphorbiaceae shrub or small tree, between 3 and 5 meters tall, from humid tropical forests. Wild *C. chayamansa* is common in the northern region of Petén and in Alta Verapaz, Chiquimula, and in the very humid slope of the Volcanic Mountain Range towards the Pacific; now planted throughout the country. The cooked leaves are eaten (cooking removes the stinging hairs). It is a well-known edible species. In Petén, its dishes even acquire the rank of very typical and popular. Here, one of the most common forms of preparation is in broths. There is also a fried dish of chopped leaves mixed with eggs. Still in Petén, one of the most distinctive foods is a type of dough in which chopped chaya leaves are added. Due to its high nutritional value, ease of preparation, and appeal, it has been taken outside its area of origin to other countries and regions of Guatemala. It is artificially propagated by cuttings. There are many reasons to believe it is a pre-Hispanic food.

**Chicozapote.** *Manilkara achras.* WR, PC. A typically Mesoamerican tree. It is a species native to lowland tropical forests, well-known to the ancient Maya who utilized its hard, durable wood with high aesthetic properties, and undoubtedly also the latex obtained from cuts in the trunk.

The fruit, with a delicate and highly valued flavor, is widely consumed and can be found in any market in the country; the latex is the raw material for making chewing gum.

**Chilacayote.** *Cucurbita ficifolia.* WP, C, PC. A lineage of Mesoamerica. An herbaceous plant with sprawling habits, developed in highland ecosystems in the center of origin and diversification Guatemala-Mexico. In Guatemala, it is now cultivated more intensively in the Quiché and Cakchiquel regions, though it is also grown in other parts of the country. The fruits, flowers, leaves, and seeds are consumed. The fruits are very large, oval organs, generally green or marbled with cream tones, which are the most preferred part; the most common preparations are as semi-crystallized or soft sweets, in drinks, or roasted pieces sprinkled with some sugar; the flowers and leaves are similar to those of *ayote*, and the seeds are used as a substitute for pepitoria.

**Chile [Chili].** *Capsicum annuum.* (See below for more details in "*El Señorío de las Especias* [The Dominion of Spices]"). WP, C, WR, PC. Mesoamerica.

**Chipilín.** *Crotalaria longirostrata, Crotalaria vitellina.* WP, WR, PC. Well-restricted to the area from Mexico to El Salvador. It has come to be classified as a weed in maize and bean crops; it is a small shrub with yellow flowers, particularly in lowland ecosystems (up to about 1,600 meters in altitude), whose foliage has been incorporated into Guatemalan cuisine; it is also attributed with medicinal properties (sedative). Along with *bledos* and *hierba-mora*, it forms the trio of pre-Hispanic foods most rooted in the Guatemalan diet, a triad that shares a great nutritional richness due to its high content of protein, fiber, iron, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, sodium, vitamin A, and other essential elements. Chipilín soup, either alone or with chicken and rice, is a very popular dish. The "tamalitos de chipil" to which it has been added result in an exquisite taste due to the flavor and aroma they impart to such dishes; it can also be added to cooked beans; its consumption in Guatemala is notable because it is surrounded by two unique characteristics: it is as native as the restricted area of the species, and Guatemalans have a great appetite for its taste and smell.

**Cuajilote.** *Parmentiera edulis.* WP, WR, PC. Southern Guatemala and Mexico only: it has been taken to other regions, and is now also found in Cuba. A small tree of the bignoniaceae family that can reach about 8 meters tall, more frequently between 3 and 6 meters. It grows in semi-open, warm-humid ecosystems, partially shaded; it is very adaptable to a variety of ecological and edaphic conditions, which is why it has been planted in several locations outside its original area (northern lowlands). It produces long fruits, 10 to 16 centimeters in length, with a sweetish flavor, pulp with a high fiber content, and many small seeds. The fruits are eaten raw, but a common way to consume them is by steaming them along with corn. The latter is a very appreciated method among rural people. Another way to prepare them is to stuff them, like stuffed peppers, with a fine mixture of meat and cooked vegetables.

**Cuje.** *Inga edulis.* WP, WR, PC, C. Tropical America. It grows locally from sea level up to about 1,800 meters in altitude. The pulp of the fruit is eaten, a

large green legume that contains seeds completely covered by a white, cottony-looking pulp that is eaten raw; it is aromatic and very refreshing. It is frequently planted as shade for coffee. Similar considerations apply to *paterna*, *Inga paterna*, which has larger fruit and more pulp.

**Frijol [Bean].** *Phaseolus vulgaris.* WP, C, WR, PC, AC. Great diversity in Mesoamerica, the Antilles, and the Andean regions of South America. A herb, sometimes climbing, with a small stature. The grain contained in pods about 15 cm long is consumed, which can be black, white, or red; when cooked, it allows for great culinary variations. The cultural preference of Guatemalans has leaned towards the intense consumption of the black variety; the tender pods (ejotes) are eaten with great enjoyment. It has become a fundamental part of the Guatemalan diet, and as a crop and food, it is found almost everywhere in the world. The greatest diversity of forms of *P. vulgaris* and *Phaseolus coccineus* is in Guatemala and Mexico, suggesting it is their center of origin. *P. coccineus* is the piloy, originating in Guatemala-Chiapas and now cultivated from Mexico to Costa Rica, WP, C, WR, PC. *Phaseolus acutifolius* is the ixcomite or tepari bean (WP, C, WR, PC), distributed from Mexico to El Salvador with indications that the center of origin is Guatemala; wild populations have been found in dry habitats in Jalapa. Other local germplasms of interest in the diet include *Phaseolus lunatus* (ixtapacal, WP, C, WR, PC) and *Phaseolus dumosus* (botil, C, WR, PC). In addition to popular dishes of simply cooked beans, there are also many of great tradition and rooting, such as "*la piloyada antigüeña*," white beans with backbone, red beans with chicharrón, or the indispensable "*maletas de frijol volteado*," cooked beans with *apazote*, or the typical cooked beans with chili from the *q'eqehi* area.

**Guayaba [Guaba], ikieck, cak, ch'amxuy, pata'h, p'ox.** *Psidium guajava, Psidium friedrichtalii.* WP, WR, PC. The aromatic fruits, with juicy pulp, are abundant and contain many seeds, eaten raw or prepared in various forms. They are a rich source of vitamins and minerals. Although it is native to the country and widely distributed, the area of origin of *P. guajava* is uncertain. Some think it is Mesoamerica, while others point to northern Amazonia. *P. friedrichtalii* is much more restricted to the area between Guatemala and Costa Rica. Thirteen species of the *Psidium* genus have been described in Guatemala. The Mesoamerican variability is a good reason to believe there is a center of origin here. *P. guajava* is the most abundant and widely consumed as fruit or for making typical sweets, such as the famous "colochos de guayaba" and also jellies, jams, nectars, and other desserts. With *P. friedrichtalii*, which is rare in the country, refreshments are prepared. It has medicinal applications as an antiparasitic, oral anti-inflammatory, for diarrhea, stomach cramps, fevers, and "*mal de orín*," among others.

**Güisquil [Chayote or Mirliton].** *Sechium edule.* PC, C. Mesoamerica. An almost completely domesticated species, it is a very ancient, pre-Hispanic crop achieved by the Maya and Toltecs; judging by the wide genetic variability it exhibits in its territory, the Guatemala-Mexico area is postulated as the center of origin. Three sections of the plant are edible, always

cooked: fruits, shoots (tiremos), and tubers (*ichintal*). In line with the antiquity of the crop, it is known for its great culinary versatility, as savory or sweet food, everyday or ceremonial: of incalculable value as a dish for soft or low-calorie diets but with an acceptable nutritional level (a quality that is unjustly denied); *ichintales*, particularly if cooked alone, constitute a high-fiber, low-fat diet with few carbohydrates, recommended for controlling triglycerides and bad cholesterol and, therefore, useful in preventing hypertension and cardiovascular problems; the tender shoots, colloquially called *güisquil* tips, are rich in protein, fiber, vitamin A, and essential minerals. Cooked *güisquiles* are a staple food, while *ichintales* wrapped in egg and smothered in a light sauce are a very typical dish, as well as a soup of *güisquil* tips.





**Güishnay**: *Spathiphyllum phryniifolium*. WP, WR, PC. Mesoamerica. A plant from the araceae family, found in humid understories; the southern slope of the Volcanic Mountain Range offers abundant conditions for its spontaneous growth. The edible part is the floral spathe, a cylindrical structure, softly aromatic and sweet in taste. It is added to stews and meat dishes, particularly pork, imparting a delightful flavor. It is a very traditional food.

**Güicoy**: *Cucurbita pepo*. WP, C, PC. Guatemala-Mexico. A sprawling plant in an advanced state of domestication, of which no wild populations are known. It is a very ancient pre-Hispanic crop, from which both young green fruits and mature fruits are eaten; sometimes, the consumption of flowers can represent a very significant custom. The variety of dishes prepared from *güicoy* is astonishing, ranging from simple boiling of green fruits to the complex making of cakes, through a wide variety of forms and styles.

**Hierba-mora, mahcuy or quilete**: *Solanum americanum and Solanum nigrescens*. WP, PC, WR, C. The species *S. americanum* is found from southern Mexico to El Salvador, while *S. nigrescens* ranges from southern Mexico to Costa Rica; in Guatemala, the first grows at altitudes between 350 and 1,500 meters and can reach a size of between 0.5 and 2 meters, while the second grows between 1,500 and 3,900 meters and averages about a meter in size. An abundant herb throughout the country, it grows as a weed in milpas, among beans, thickets, and vacant land; it is cared for in family gardens and home patios and even grown in pots. Its consumption is very high, especially among the indigenous population since pre-Hispanic times, with greater intensity in the central highlands. Very nutritious due to its high content of protein, fiber, iron, calcium, other essential minerals, and vitamin A. It is often recommended to combat anemia and is advised during convalescence; it is reputed to have many medicinal properties. Its main forms of consumption are in soups, fried with eggs, or stewed.

**Izote**. *Yucca elephantipes*. C, WR, PC. Mesoamerica. This large, herbaceous plant is widely used for live fencing, as an ornamental plant, and as a source of fiber for common uses. This fiber is derived from the leaves, which are torn lengthwise into thin strips, becoming a popular binding material colloquially known as *chiyutes*. In Guatemala, the flowers, which

are creamy white, are cooked to make a very traditional dish with a mildly pleasant bitterness. They are prepared and served on their own, fried, scrambled with eggs, in sauces, or added to tamales, *chuchitos*, and buns.

**Jocote, jobo**: *Spondias purpurea, Spondias mombin*. WP, WR, PC. There is controversy regarding the region of origin of jocotes; Central America, Brazil, and the Antilles have been cited; based on the principle formulated by geneticists that the existence of many varieties of a genetic line in a region links it as its center of origin, Mesoamerica north can be considered the homeland of *S. purpurea*. Bukasov[7] noted the variability in Guatemala, evident today, although it is likely that ancestral lines arrived from the Amazon phytogeographic domain about two million years ago. Subsequent diversification occurred in Mesoamerica. The line *S. mombin* appears more primitive, related to a larger space that includes the entire tropical region of America. Currently, the *purpurea* fraction is the most well-known and cultivated, represented by varieties with red, sweet fruits ("*de corona*"), while *mombin*, with yellow, tart-sweet fruits, is the wildest and capable of spontaneous growth in humid tropical jungles. Ximénez[27] commented that it is "a fruit that is commonly considered a great gift in this land... There can also be counted more than twenty differences, and they abound greatly in hot lands, and there are wild ones that only animals eat." *S. purpurea* can grow up to 1,800 meters in altitude, while *S. mombin* usually does not exceed 600 meters. The edible part is the fruit and tender leaves; the first is mainly eaten raw, although some varieties are used to prepare syrupy desserts; the leaves can be used to make salads.

**Loroco**: *Fernaldia pandurata*. WP, C, WR, PC. Guatemala-El Salvador. Initially a weed, loroco is on its way to domestication. It is a climbing herb whose flowers are a greatly valued ingredient in Guatemalan and Salvadoran popular cuisine, limited to these regions. It is a highly liked condiment due to its characteristic smell and flavor. In Chiquimula, it is enjoyed raw, chopped with ripe tomato and other herbs; in Zacapa and El Progreso, it is prepared in thin corn tamales (locally called "*ticucas*"), while in the central and southwestern highlands, it is mixed with dough to flavor tamales, *tamalitos*, and *chuchitos*, or added to central stews.

**Madrecacao, matarratón**: *Gliricidia sepium*. WP, WR, PC. Mesoamerica to northern South America and the Antilles. Widely distributed throughout the country, preferably in dry ecosystems below 1,400 meters in altitude. A tree that can reach about 8 meters tall and is often planted as a windbreak, live fence, and shade for coffee. It has numerous applications in folk medicine. The root is highly toxic and has been used, when mashed, as a rodenticide. The edible part is the flower, softly pink, which is added to brothy soups and used to prepare various traditional fried dishes, especially in the eastern part of the country, where it becomes a common dish.

**Matasano**: *Casimiroa edulis*. WP, WR, PC. Native to Mesoamerica, it is a tree that can grow up to 20 meters tall, thriving between 600 and 3,000 meters in altitude and whose use as an edible fruit dates back to pre-Hispanic times. The round fruits,

the size of an apple, with green or yellow skin and abundant pulp, are consumed raw and are a true delicacy. The pulp is yellowish, creamy, with a strong aroma reminiscent of some medicines but is very delicious. It is the tree that gave its name to the town of Panajachel (*pa* is a locative particle, *ahachel* is matasano).

**Maíz [Corn]**: *Zea mays*. C, WR, PC, AC. America. The nationality of maize is no longer disputed, with Guatemala, Mexico, and the Andean zone of Peru-Bolivia claiming it. It is now known to have a multiple origin from different ancestors. From the Guatemala-Chiapas area comes a lineage characterized by hard grains and great color variety, often referred to as the *indurata* group. The well-known criollo maize from the western highlands of Guatemala corresponds to primitive cultivars, where a single ear carries grains of two or more colors. In the Guatemalan-Chiapas region, there is great genetic variability of indurata maize, which is sown with particular enjoyment in San Marcos, Huehuetenango, and Quetzaltenango. Like cacao, beans, and cucurbits, it is a native crop that has gained worldwide importance. It forms a basic part of the Guatemalan diet, particularly in the form of tortillas, but its applications range from tamales to tamalitos, atoles, and desserts, passing through an incredible variety of culinary forms.

**Manzanilla [Chamomile]**: *Crataegus pubescens*. WP, WR, PC. Guatemala-Mexico. A small tree typical of highlands, where it is part of temperate forests alongside oaks, pines, peach trees, and willows. The small pomes ripen in early autumn and last until well into winter. They are highly valued locally for making jellies, jams, candies, and some beverages, including the Christmas "caliente" (a traditional hot punch from Guatemala City that does not include it). They can also be eaten raw.

**Miltomate [Green Tomato]**: *Physalis philadelphica* or *Physalis ixocarpa*. WP, C, PC. Guatemala-Mexico. There is still doubt whether the species should be called philadelphica or *ixocarpa*, although some suggest that the Guatemalan form is the former and the Mexican the latter. It is a weed, especially in cornfields, tolerated and even cared for; the *Flora de Guatemala* mentions the existence of 21 species in the genus *Physalis*, most of which are inedible. The fruits, berries that range from green to purple and are acidic, are widely used for making sauces and chirmoles, serving as the main ingredient in *jocón* and *puliques*, and the essence of recados, some of which are delightful in dishes like *panza* (strips). This is typical of Guatemalan and southern Mexican cuisine. Miltomate *chirmoles* have become industrialized and are sold in supermarkets.

**Nance**: *Byrsonima crassifolia*. WP, WR, PC. A wild small tree, it grows from Mexico to Brazil. In Mesoamerica, the fruits are consumed more than in other areas of its general distribution and are cultivated outside their natural habitat. It thrives in a variety of ecosystems in lowland and mountainous areas, preferring dry conditions. With a height between 5 and 8 meters, it develops in the shade of other trees in sparse pine forests or savannas. It is a species with significant local variability due to being a center of origin and diversification. Its fruits are globose berries, 1 to 2 centimeters in

diameter, ranging in color from yellowish-green to yellow and purple, very aromatic, with juicy pulp and a large seed. The pointed tip has soft hairs, remnants of the floral structure, known as "nance hairs". Medicinal properties are attributed to it, with all parts of the plant having more than one prescription. The use of nance dates back to pre-Hispanic times, recorded in the *Popol Vuh*[4] when narrating the story of the blowgun shot made against Vukub Cakix by the Two Youths (Part 1; Chapter 6):

"This same Vukub Cakix had a large tree, and its fruit was the food of Vukub Cakix, who went to the nance tree and climbed to the top every day to see the seeds of the fruits that Hunahpú and Xbalanqué had eaten.

"They, therefore, spied on Vukub Cakix at the foot of the tree. The two youths hid among the foliage while Vukub Cakix came to throw himself upon the nances, his food.

"At that moment, he was struck by a blowgun shot from Hunhin-Ahpd, which hit him in the cheek; he screamed loudly as he fell to the ground from the top of the tree."

This beautiful passage places the species among the fruits of the land incorporated into Guatemalan traditions. It is worth mentioning the fusion of nance in popular oral literature, as when in Guatemala, a man boasts of his incipient beard, usually sparse and scant on the chin, he is jokingly called "nance hairs."

**Ñame**: *Dioscorea sp.* (See badú). The edible portion is the corm, a subterranean stem. Consumption significantly increases in the Caribbean region.

**Pacaya**: *Chamaedorea tepejilote*. WP, C, WR, PC. Guatemala-Mexico. A small palm that grows wild as a shrub in warm, humid forests; the most sought-after edible part is the inflorescence—tender, and secondly, the apical bud. It is a daily food in Guatemala and of great tradition. The cooked inflorescence is the starting point for countless recipes (it has even been industrialized). Any of the parts can be roasted, which is a common practice among men when walking through the jungles. There is also a certain preference for raw tender shoots. A notable difference exists in the taste between cultivated and wild-harvested pacaya, resulting in a great variety of dishes. The very popular tortillas with pacaya wrapped in egg are a delicious example of its versatility, reaching the limits of a gastronomic simplicity that does not diminish but rather elevates the incredible delight of the dish.

**Papaya**: *Carica papaya*. WP, WR, PC, C, AC (AC is an advanced cultivar, with genetic improvement programs). Native to Mexico and Central America, it is now widespread worldwide with many improved varieties. Morphologically indefinable, the best characterization of the plant is as a "gigantic herb" capable of reaching nearly 12 meters in height and living around 20 years. The most popular and primitive way of consumption is by eating the fresh, sweet pulp, usually red-orange and incredibly nutritious and healthy. In Guatemala, it is an ancient custom to prepare a very tasty syrupy sweet with the pulp, enriched with cinnamon and allspice. The seeds, peels, and less so the leaves, although they have similar properties, are used to tenderize meats due to their high content of papain, a well-known proteolytic enzyme. Papaya

is also used to prepare refreshing drinks, ice creams, jellies, jams, and even homemade wines, which result in an unmatched bouquet.

**Pataxte.** *Theobroma bicolor.* WP, WR, PC. Humid jungles of the American tropics. In Guatemala, it can be found in the lowlands of the north and south, with marked abundance on the slopes of the Volcanic Cordillera. It is a fruit known since ancient times, found in many popular town markets during spring. The fruit is large, ovoid, with a hard shell marked by deep grooves. The edible part is the yellow, fragrant, and sweet pulp. As a close relative of cacao, it shares many characteristics with it. Sometimes, the seeds undergo a process similar to cacao, producing a chocolate substitute used for homemade drinks or in baking.

**Pepitoria.** *Cucurbita argyrosperma.* C, WR. Mesoamerica. Pepitoria refers to the seeds of various squash species. The seeds are dried and ground on a grinding stone into a coarse flour, sometimes toasted or fried. The seed of *C. argyrosperma* is the quintessential pepitoria, easily recognizable by its gently scalloped edges. In descending order of frequency, the seeds may also come from *güicoyes*, *ayotes*, and *chilacayote*. Whole, toasted, and salted seeds are sold in village markets to be eaten alone or with tortillas. A "refined" way of consuming them is as "*boquitas*" (snacks) alongside drinks. Ground pepitoria is an essential ingredient in traditional dishes like *iguashte*, *pepian*, and tamale sauce. It can also be sprinkled over oranges, pineapple, papaya, mango, or cucumber slices. The once popular *chancacas* (traditional sweets) are still made with pepitoria seeds cooked with panela until the liquid evaporates.

**Piloy.** *Phaseolus coccineus.* (See *frijol*). A botanical relative of the common bean, native to Guatemalan lands. Besides the famous *piloyada antigüeña*, which is actually a salad, it is eaten boiled with pork rinds, pork loin, or alone. In ancient indigenous dishes, it is boiled with herbs, including *hierba-mora*.

**Pimienta gorda [Allspice].** *Pimenta dioica.* (More details in "The Dominion of Spices"). WP, PC. Mesoamerica. A large tree found in the humid tropical jungles of lowland regions. The dried berries are a spice used for centuries in Guatemalan cuisine.

**Pitahaya.** *Lemairecereus eichlamii.* WP, CS, PC. Mesoamerica. A creeping cactus that grows in very poor soils, especially rocky ones, thriving best on cliffs. The edible part is the fruit pulp, which is globular with a red, easily removable peel. The abundant, juicy pulp is incredibly beautiful to look at with its strong, intense fuchsia color, speckled with hundreds of tiny black seeds. Beyond its beauty, it is highly palatable, a true delicacy, and very nutritious.

**Tomatillo, tomatillo de culebra [snake tomatillo].** *Lycopersicum aesculentum var. ceraciforme.* WP, C, WR, PC. Crucial to understanding Creole cuisine is the case of the "snake tomatillo" or simply "tomatillo," a native variety that grows as a weed, often encouraged by farmers or home garden owners, or at least tolerated. We know that Guatemala is only part of a secondary center for tomatoes, but its gastronomic importance is undiminished due to high demand and great genetic

variety. Tomatillo berries, unlike tomatoes, are small and acidic, yet prized for making sauces and *chirmoles*, and for incorporating into meat stews, sometimes competing with *miltomate*. Its consumption is deeply rooted in the local culture.

**Vainilla [Vanilla].** *Vanilla planifolia.* (More details in the section "The Dominion of Spices"). WP,WR, PC. Mesoamerica, northern South America, and the Antilles.[24] A rainforest orchid with succulent vine-like stems, which can grow more than 25 meters in the wild, hanging from tall trees. From its small fruits, the aromatic substance called vanilla is extracted and used as a condiment or spice. In Guatemala, it is currently found in Petén, northern Quiché, Alta Verapaz, and Izabal.

**Yampi.** *Dioscorea sp.* (See *badú*). A relative of the yam. Dioscoreaceae is a group difficult to systematize for local varieties and gastronomic considerations due to past intense imports, cultivation, and escapes into wild ecosystems. It is possible that *yampi* corresponds to *Dioscorea rifida*, *Dioscorea triphylla*, or *Dioscorea triloba*, and they may also be called yams. Another yam, corresponding to *Dioscorea alata*, is a European species introduced to the Americas that now grows semi-wild.

**Yuca.** *Manihot aesculenta.* PC, WR. Brazil. Guatemala, a secondary center of diversification, has four wild populations of the genus (*M. aesculifolia*, *M. gualanense*, *M. Iudibunday*, and *M. parvicocca*). The importance of mentioning the Amazonian yuca is that it was introduced pre-Hispanically[9], and thus represents an ancestral food that has been firmly established in some forms of Guatemalan popular cuisine.

**Zapote.** *Pouteria sapota.* WP, WR, PC. Mesoamerica. This delicate fruit comes from a tall tree in tropical rainforests, belonging to the Sapotaceae family. In Guatemala, this family includes eight genera. *Pouteria* contains many trees with edible fruits. In addition to *zapote*, other known species include *Pouteria campechiana* (canistel, WP, WR, PC), *Pouteria durlandii* (small zapote, WP, WR, PC), *Pouteria hypoglauca* (bread of life, WP, WR, PC), *Pouteria amygdalina* (small zapote, WP, WR, PC), and *Pouteria viridis* (the delicate and prized graft, native to the highlands and at risk of extinction). The *zapote* tree has been well known since pre-Hispanic times.

**Zunza, zunzapote.** *Licania playpus.* WP, WR, PC. Central America and southern Mexico. A native fruit tree known and used since ancient times. Its pre-Hispanic consumption continues in the most traditional villages of the country. The tree reaches 10 to 15 meters in height, with large, oval-shaped fruits with a brown shell, measuring between 20 cm long and 10 to 15 cm wide. The edible pulp is rich in fibers, very juicy, and sugary. It is rare for the tree to be planted; nearly all available fruits in markets come from wild harvesting.

Undoubtedly, many plants have been left out of this brief narrative, whether herbs, shrubs, or trees, whose leaves, flowers, seeds, stems, or roots nourish traditional Guatemalan cuisine or are customary foods consumed directly. But given the nature of this essay and its central aim to link cuisine with wild botanical resources, and thus understand the intricacies of our

culinary tradition within the framework of cultural identity, it is more than impossible to go further. We will find new opportunities to enrich these preliminary notes.

## A KITCHEN WITH NATIVE LINEAGES

Traditional cuisine, an exceptional and noble cultural phenomenon, is an advanced stage of popular local cuisine. It can be highly ethnic, localized in terms of eco-geographic regions, or it can derive from a blend of neighboring cuisines, born from long-standing spontaneous symbioses. It endures and has its own gastronomic styles, reflecting a strong national identity, even though it arises from a fusion of multicultural customs that can be distinguished from one another. It has a significant historical heritage, great richness, and, given its dissemination and characteristics, is undoubtedly the closest to the essence of the people.

At one point, we proposed that identifying the centers of origin and diversification of food is closely linked to the existence of centers of culinary identity development. Discussing the former gives solid grounds to explore how the identification and selection of food for consumption or cooking, the art of food preparation, the unconscious ritual of sitting around the table to eat, the act of making it part of daily life or festivities, and the ability to ceremonially share it with esteemed neighbors, all this defines cultural patterns capable of describing us as a particular social community.

The "Guatemalan identity" of this cuisine is enriched with terms from the regions where *the gastronomic style was discovered*, now integrated into popular speech beyond the purely regional context. Sometimes these terms are surpassed by Spanish words in general speech, but the fact remains that they always mark a cuisine traceable to defined regions. As will be seen in more detail later, good examples of this are the *boshboles*, *tzu'ujes*, and *quibeles* from the towns of Baja Verapaz, *patín* from Santiago Atitlán, *kaq'ik* and *suban'ík* from Alta Verapaz, *pulique* from Panajachel (especially on October 4th, the day of Saint Francis of Assisi), and ancient pinoles in indigenous towns. Other examples include "bollos" from Petén, *piloyadas* from Antigua, as well as Caribbean dishes like rice-and-beans and *tapado*.

We also brought to the table the conviction that traditional Guatemalan cuisine combines a gastronomic pattern based on the consumption of species and plant varieties from its ecosystems, wild lineages that evolved linked to the processes of domestication that have turned many into native crops. With culinary techniques rooted over millennia, tastes defined by these foods, and identification with the people, foods as distinctly Guatemalan as tamalitos with chipilín, chuchitos with loroco, and egg-wrapped dishes (güisquil, green beans, pacaya, ichintal, stuffed chilies, squash flowers), chirmoles made from miltomate and tomatillo de culebra, quilete soup, bledo soup, tepejilote soup, güisquil tips soup, boiled güisquiles, boiled corn, güicoyes, and drinks like atoles made from banana (though controversial, some consider its origin American[7]), corn, and white corn are prepared and enjoyed. Other dishes include patines, pepián, jocón, pinol, and pulique, as well as

desserts like güisquil fritters, sweetened chilacayote, candied manzanillas, guava curls, chancacas, sweetened ayote, jocotes in syrup, coyoles in syrup, plantains in mole, and plantain-filled rellenos.

The common dish of beans, with chili and tortillas (best if fresh off the comal), gathers native germplasm into one meal. In the Q'eqchi' region, boshboles are prepared for home or travel, combining corn, piloyes, pumpkin seeds, and powdered chili. In various places, the leafy shoots and flowers of pepitoria, squash, or güicoy are boiled in bean broth, either alone or with the addition of pork. Quibeles, the green fruits of pepitoria, are also incorporated into beef, chicken, or turkey soups. All of these dishes share the virtue of incorporating native Mesoamerican lineages and the almost always imagined history of relationships forged with humans.

We agreed that the great abundance of Guatemalan gastronomic expressions stems from a time-immemorial consumption and evidences the knowledge and applications derived from the biological variability of food species. In other words, the multiplicity of dishes is directly proportional to the age of the ethnobiological relationship, and based on this, we believe that the interaction of Guatemalans with native germplasm is millennial—and persistent. Guatemalans still have access to wild germplasm and still display a forager culture when they harvest products like miltomate, tomatillo de culebra, chipilín, hierba-mora or quilete, bledo, pito flowers, and lorocos, which are soon turned into typical, traditional, Creole dishes. The same goes for native fruits like annona, caimito, cherries, chicozapote, injerto, matasano, manzanilla, nance, paterna, pitahaya, zapote, zunza, and many more. We maintain a similar relationship with spices and seasonings such as pepper, vanilla, and some chili peppers. With the sole exception of vanilla, all these products are commonly found in popular markets, another expression of Guatemalan culture that has not been fully explored from this perspective.

In addition to traditional cuisine, we can also talk about "national food," a concept that embraces typical gastronomy and its traditional derivative, fundamentally pre-Hispanic. Much of what is considered national food is exotic in origin but now identifies a cuisine of its own character. Its constant evolution is accelerated to the point where adding "touches of international cuisine" or gourmet cooking is seen as progress. A large percentage of this food comes from Mediterranean styles and ingredients that arrived during the Hispanic era, influenced by Anglo cuisine established in the Caribbean (Izabal). Recipe books are a source of knowledge, even contemporary ones like *La cocina de don Fede*[25] or Copeland Marks's[18] excellent work.

This type of "typical national food" is deliciously represented by Antigua sausages, autumn fiambre in November, "cocido" [a stew of vegetables and meat], revoleado, chanfaina, chopped radish with buche, chojín, tortilla soup, panza or tripes, chopped radish, morongas, camitas, salpicón, and many more. Local values are added in the form of ingredients, preparation, serving style, and the occasion for consumption.

Let's take a brief pause to discuss a previously mentioned differentiation, distinguishing everyday food from festive food, both rich in identity and symbolism. The first, which occupies most of this essay, abounds in expressions of cultural identity. The other, though also abundant, is enjoyed in well-defined celebration cycles within other cultural expressions, particularly spiritual ones. We call it festive due to its solemn nature.

In this food, we notice that the symbolism revolves around the balance between the sacred and the profane. It is prepared, consumed, and shared during times of great social significance. It contains elements of traditional cooking as well as "national cuisine," which has incorporated elements initially foreign to Guatemalans.

Among the solemn cuisine, we particularly highlight dishes that carry the spirit of wild Guatemala. Therefore, we cautiously refer to a few meals from the three major expressions in the magic-religious culture, with its characteristic syncretism: the Nativity of Jesus, Lent and Holy Week, and All Saints' Day and the Day of the Dead. Additionally, for the sole purpose of laying the groundwork for future contributions, it is worth emphasizing the importance of foods that become festive because they have been sanctified or incorporated into socially significant events, such as patron saint festivals, changes in indigenous authorities and brotherhoods, or celebrations of births, birthdays, baptisms, social engagements, or weddings. These ceremonies are usually complete with the preparation, consumption, and gifting of dishes laden with symbolic meaning. Two examples are *pinol* and *pulique* (sometimes "pulic"), which hold great sacred significance.

Several classic examples of solemn gastronomy can be cited. All have the virtue of allowing mundane communication with the sacred universe, though some may only see them as a couple of hot drinks for Christmas or food consumed at the gravesides of cemeteries swept by autumn winds, or dishes and customs carried out amidst the springtime colors of the Holy Week season. In reality, all of this is food for general consumption throughout the year, but when sanctified, it takes on a different dimension. In this last point, if knowledge of the origin and nature of the food is added, the symbolism behind each solemn gastronomic event becomes even more valuable, elevating the spiritual consumption that transcends the merely animalistic function of eating to live.

## SPATIAL TRAITS IN POPULAR CUISINE

It becomes evident from the preceding information that it is possible to make geographic distinctions in the formulation of recipes, in the procedures for preparing food, and in the ways and times of serving it. The geographic factor is of particular importance, as it not only links gastronomy to the biogeography of the natural resources that make it possible but also to ethnolinguistic groups that have developed their particular culinary preferences based on these resources. Therefore, in certain preparations, even within more or less broad or narrow geographical spaces, identity has been consolidated in human populations that represent the culinary pattern. One of the most beautiful examples that can be

mentioned is the consumption of pinoles and the area of primary importance for corn cultivation, with a parallel that requires little explanation to make it clear.

Thus, at a national level, the *kag'ik* and *b'oj* are unequivocally associated with the city of Cobán, in Alta Verapaz. Similarly, to talk about *iguashtes* and *paches de papa* is to talk about the city of Quetzaltenango. Petén is characterized by its buns made from corn dough and its chaya broth. The city of Totonicapán is known for its tobic broth. Santiago Atitlán has become famous for its *patín de pescadito*. Yet, there are delicious additions to these culinary identity patterns, of such cultural richness that they require very little effort to be properly appreciated… Some of them are as follows.

The kaq'ik is essentially a turkey broth, a pre-Hispanic dish that is prepared and consumed throughout the country, although its origin and current identity are claimed by the Q'eqchi' people, whose population is one of the largest and commercially significant in Cobán. Their claims are justified. In a typical kaq'ik dish, the ingredients, in addition to turkey, water, and salt, include tomato, dried chili, onion, garlic, cinnamon, pepper, cloves, mint, annatto, and samat. Within the same ethnolinguistic group, there are culinary variations, and even more so outside of it, so some recipes may omit an ingredient while others may add new ones. One of the most notable changes is the substitution of samat with European cilantro, which strips away all tradition and the real ancestral touch. Some use black pepper, but if you use allspice, its original component, the dish gains in flavor and identity. Not including chili is also an alteration of the original prototype. It is accompanied by tamalitos (small tamales) made of corn dough wrapped in mashán leaves, and if possible, a bit of b'oj. B'oj isn't always the intoxicating drink it's assumed to be, but rather a traditional extract, almost ritualistic in the Q'eqchi' area. It is made from a mixture of sugar cane juice and corn dough that is left to rest for three days, after which it matures, is drinkable, and has fermented. After three days, the fermentation process becomes alcoholic, and if consumed at this stage, it can have a mildly intoxicating effect.

Among the most deeply rooted culinary prides of the Altiplano are the corn and potato tamales known as "*paches quetzaltecos*." Equally renowned are their *pepián*, *iguashte*, *jocón*, *shecas*, corn husk-wrapped cheeses from San Carlos Sija and San Juan Ostuncalco, and the famous "*caldo de frutas*" from Salcajá. *Paches* are a variation of the popular meat tamales, where the dough is mixed with mashed potatoes (without milk). The classic orange color is achieved with annatto. Other ingredients include tomato, onion, garlic, cloves, allspice, black pepper, bell pepper, dried chili, salt, and a type of meat, usually chicken and sometimes pork. A fat is added to complete the recipe. *Pepián*, *iguashte*, and *jocón* are described in a special section, and here they are just mentioned as references to Quetzaltecan cuisine. *Shecas* have gained deserved fame for their flavor and tradition; they are a type of bread to which anise is added, and they are often scented with *satico*, especially when sold in local markets rather than bakeries. Regarding the cheeses, there is little more to say than that they are a universal food, but we highlight

their artisanal nature, their sale in local markets, and their distinctive feature of being wrapped in dried corn husks. Finally, we mention the *caldo de frutas*, the "national drink" of Salcajá, which is made by maturing a commercial liquor with various fruits such as apple, pear, local cherries, plum, *mamey*, quince, and *nance*, and flavored with cinnamon sticks and sugar.

In Baja Verapaz, their own dishes, with which they fully identify, are highly valued. Some of these include *tzu'ujes*, *boshboles*, *quibeles*, *utzuuj'kum*, *pachay*, and *xut'*, which predominantly incorporate native cucurbits. *Tzu'ujes* are a very versatile food because they can be taken to the fields or eaten at home. In Spanish, they are called *tayuyos*. They are made from corn and *piloyes* (a type of bean): the corn is nixtamalized and made into dough, while the *piloyes* are cooked separately. They are then divided in half, with one half being well-ground and mixed with the other half. To this mixture, plenty of ground pumpkin seeds (the more, the better) and ground chili (such as *chile cobanero* for a mild heat) are added. The dough is shaped into a large *pishtón* (a thicker tortilla), in which the *piloy* mixture is placed in the center. The *pishtón* is closed and shaped to prevent the contents from escaping, the edges are rounded, and it is cooked on a griddle. Traditionally, it is served without sauces or stews and is accompanied by coffee or "*agua de masa*" a refreshing drink made by dissolving a bit of corn dough in water, typically without sugar.

*Boshboles* are a Creole dish with many variations across the different communities of Baja Verapaz. The recipe from Puruihá is just one example. One of the first tasks is to climb to a cloud forest on a mountaintop, where the river flows intensely. The goal is to gather leaves of the *roq rix* (also called "*pie de viejita*" or *danto* leaf). The plant grows up to three meters high and thrives in very humid ravines. Once gathered, the corn dough is wrapped in the freshly cleaned, raw leaves. Small portions are rolled up to form tamale-like bundles arranged in parallel. Everything is then cooked well. Separately, a sauce made of tomatoes and ground pumpkin seeds is prepared, which is used to top the *boshboles*, which are eaten with the leaf.

*Quibeles* are soups into which green, tender fruits are added, primarily from *pepitoria* (pumpkin seeds), or secondarily from squash or *güicoy*, to be cooked with a type of meat, which can be beef, chicken, or turkey.

Also part of the traditional cuisine of Baja Verapaz is *utzuuj'kum* (literally "pumpkin flower"), a soup made from pumpkin flowers, with other ingredients including tomato, onion, a bit of allspice, and some salt. It is a quick, economical, and popular dish, prepared and consumed when needed. *Pachay* is a fish dish typical of the towns in the Polochic River valley. Common ingredients include tomato, scallion, and ground black pepper. The size or species of fish doesn't matter, though the most common are *mojarras* and *pepescas* caught from the river. The fish is scaled and cut to allow the flavor and aroma of the ingredients to penetrate, which are placed generously on the outside. It is then wrapped in many *moshán* leaves (also known as *mashán* elsewhere in this essay) and completely

covered with hot ash, preferably still glowing embers.

*Xut'* is a traditional, sacred tamale. It consists of a corn dough base to which a *piloy* mixture similar to that used in *boshboles* is added. Instead of rolling several small tamales in a *roq'tix* leaf, it is prepared as if making a meat tamale, but without the meat, which is replaced by the *piloyes*. It is wrapped in *moshán* leaves and cooked. The sacred custom requires eating *xut'* for breakfast on the first day of corn planting in the field, and this meal is usually repeated mid-morning. Everyone involved in the planting, whether family members or hired workers, must stop their tasks and partake in the meal. At noon, a chicken broth is served in the same place for everyone, according to tradition.

The northern department of Petén is a treasure trove of unimaginable culinary richness. Not well studied, much less described, it offers a vast field for research and study on the subject. There, one can find dishes of great expressive purity, with very ancient recipes and cooking methods, intense use of local foods resulting in primitive forms of gastronomic syncretism, and the invention of very original dishes. As an example, we can mention the *caldo de chaya*, venison broth with *chaya*, palm heart broth, *bollos*, Petenero corn tamales, *ixpasá*, and *xigin'che*. (The essence of this information is owed to the kind generosity of Petenera biologist Rebeca Orellana, in an interview given in Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción on 05.26.05).

Broths, or soups as some prefer to call them, are the simplest dishes, and among them, the *chaya* (Cnidoscolus) soup is surprisingly simple but delicious. It is nothing more than a cooking of *chaya* leaves with tomato, onion, and some salt. The incorporation of meat into the diet should not be surprising in a natural environment that at one point required an improvement in caloric and protein intake. This is why the inclusion of venison in the *chaya* pot resulted in the creation of the ancient and sought-after "*caldo de Venado*" However, there are vegetarian broths with equal tradition and flavor, such as *palmito* broth (tender heart of palm). It is made by cooking *palmito* and banana cut into pieces. The banana should be ripe but not too mature, a condition popularly known as "*sarazo*." It is seasoned with scallions, tomatoes, and annatto.

*Bollos* [Buns] are a culinary entity that essentially consists of a small tamale made of corn, wrapped in banana leaves. The difference between *bollos* lies in the added ingredient. Thus, there are *bollos* of *ixpelón*, beans, *chaya*, *izote*, minced meat, and *palmito*. It's not necessary to go into much detail about each one, as their names explain them well. Perhaps it's worth mentioning that *ixpelón* refers to a large-grained variety of beans, which are added to the dough of the *bollo* as tender, cooked grains. The beans are fully mature and also cooked. The *chaya* for *bollos* is chopped, cooked, and added. The *izote* flowers are cooked and added. For the meat *bollos*, the meat, previously cooked, is finely chopped, seasoned with scallions and sweet peppers, and added. The *bollos* of *palmito* are the most suggestive: their ingredient is the solid leftover from the *palmito* broth from the day before (if there is any left).

*Corn tamales* are well-known throughout Guatemala. What distinguishes the

Peteneros is that their tamales are savory and often include meat, making them quite similar to the popular *chuchitos*. *Ixpasá* is often defined as "a black *atol*," but the process makes it more like a "sour *atol*." Black corn is *nixtamalized* and ground into a dough. It is thinned out with enough liquid, strained through a cloth to remove coarse residues, pepper is added, and it is boiled. It is then left to rest for a day to ferment partially (to become "sour") and is ready to serve. Another dish is *xiquin'che'*, which we prefer to discuss in the section dedicated to mushrooms.

In other regions of the country, some communities have fewer traditional dishes. One such area is Jalapa in the southeast. There, a well-liked dish is chicken broth with tender *güisquil* leaves. It is simply called "chicken with *güisquil* shoots" or "chicken broth with *güisquil* tendrils." A deep appreciation for *loroco* flowers has led to many dishes made with them. In fact, *loroco* is a more prominent food in the southeastern region, including El Salvador. On the opposite end of the country, in the western mountains, Totonicapán takes pride in its beef broth with potatoes, *güisquiles*, carrots, and some herbs, which has become famous as *tobie*. It is served with spicy *chirmol* and accompanied by small corn tamales wrapped in corn husks.

The *patín atiteco* from the department of Sololá is another tasty example of traditional cuisine. Although made with small *tzai'tos* fish (Poeciliopsis gracilis for biologists), its recipe includes at least four native ingredients linked to the culinary tradition: tomato, chili, *mashán* leaves, and corn (via corn husks). These ingredients are enough to justify the name of this dish. The *tzai'tos*, dried beforehand in the sun, are lightly toasted on a griddle. A thick sauce made from cooked tomatoes and chili is prepared separately. Both components are combined and then wrapped in *mashán* leaves, tied with strips of dry corn husk. It is eaten directly from the leaf.

Izabal, the heavenly corner of the magical Caribbean, has its own culinary expressions, which, in addition to seafood, make use of native edible varieties, especially plantains and red beans. Typical Caribbean dishes include *tapado*, rice and beans, and *machuca*. *Tapado* is essentially a complex seafood broth that gains its distinctive flavor from the addition of coconut milk, green plantains, ripe green bananas, and various other ingredients (annatto, oregano, cilantro, onion, pepper), as well as the particular method of temporarily "covering" the pot during cooking (hence the name). For this study, we should highlight the peculiar use of plantains, a native Mesoamerican crop, and coconut (Cocus nucifera), which, while native, has become globally distributed. Machuca is another very special Caribbean dish. It consists of a puree made from ripe green plantains, obtained by mashing the cooked fruits in a mortar made from a hollowed-out segment of a tree trunk. The pestle is also made of carved wood. Rice and beans, which should not be called "rice with beans" as some might suggest, are much more than that, carrying a cultural identity that does not allow for such a simplification. They are indeed made from rice and beans, but through a process that gives them a unique character. The beans are first cooked with some salt, tomatoes, and onions. Once cooked, rice, strips of sweet pepper, garlic

cloves, and, if desired, bay leaves are added. The mixture is simmered in coconut milk and cooked slowly, resulting in an aromatic dish fit for the gods.

## TEMPORALITY IN POPULAR CUISINE: MUSHROOMS

Just as certain characteristics can be distinguished in the geographical distribution of traditional popular foods, others depend on seasonality throughout the year. Sometimes, spatial distribution and seasonality combine, making food a wonder that depends not only on the availability of the edible resource but also on the custom of consuming it. Such is the case with a highly appreciated pre-Hispanic food due to its delicacy and nutritional richness: mushrooms. It should be noted that gourmet cuisine has not lagged behind in taking advantage of their taste and appeal. In addition to dishes featuring exotic cultivated mushrooms, there are now seasonal recipes with names as enticing as "forest mushroom stew."

The spore-bearing body, that is, the structure of the wild mushroom that allows it to spread spores for reproduction, emerges like magic from the forest floor once the late spring rains arrive, which happens cyclically in June. In close alignment with the rainy months, different species of wild mushrooms are available for cooking between June and October. Before the rains, mushrooms remain hidden from sight in the form of long, thin strands (hyphae), sometimes forming pseudo-tissues (mycelia). Hyphae and mycelia, like cobwebs, grow in the damp darkness, feeding on other organic matter, on fallen trunks and branches, among the leaf litter, in the manure left by animals, and in the soil itself. The rains cause the spore-bearing body to emerge, which people commonly refer to as the mushroom. We will continue to use this term here.

Mushrooms come in a multitude of shapes, colors, sizes, and textures, depending on the species. Some resemble the classic "umbrella" of illustrations and mental associations, but others look like trumpets, and still others resemble small, leafless trees. They come in white, yellow, orange, brown, red, blue, and even black. They range in size from many centimeters in diameter to very small, some so soft they spoil in your hands and others so hard they seem made of wood. There are edible, toxic, and poisonous varieties. Distinguishing between the last two categories requires great experience, so it is advisable to trust a knowledgeable expert if you are unsure of your own ability to do so.

Once this problem is resolved, the preparation of mushroom-based dishes culminates in watery dishes such as *recados*, *puliques*, *amarillos*, or simply boiled with a pinch of salt. Some prefer to consume them grilled, a method that results in a much more delicious product if done on a griddle. Another option is to grill them over a flame.

One of the most appreciated species is *qa'ntzuy*, or San Juan mushroom, which belongs to a species complex scientists call *Amanita caesarea*. It is a large, orange specimen that earned its Spanish name because it emerges in the month when the Catholic Church commemorates Saint John the Baptist (June 24). It is closely associated with humid oak forests that thrive above 2,000 meters in altitude, such as those found in San Juan Sacatepéquez,

Tecpán Guatemala, and Concepción (Sololá). These ecosystems are highly fragile due to the harsh ecological conditions they face and because they are threatened by incoherent forestry programs, rural parceling plans, land conversion for agricultural purposes, and the establishment of landfills. Thus, this species is highly endangered. Dishes made with *qa'ntzuyes* are among the most delicate delicacies because they combine aroma, flavor, smoothness on the palate, high nutritional values, and a tradition that spans hundreds or even thousands of years.

Another important species to mention is *Lactarius deliciosus*, commonly called *shara*. This is the yellow *shara*, one of the most common. It is found in mixed pine and oak forests, from Tactic to Cobán in the center of the country, from San Juan Comalapa to Patzún and Tecpán in the southwestern highlands, and in Huehuetenango. There are several other species of the *Lactarius* genus, including the black *shara*. Due to its color, many people are wary of it, especially because it is associated with danger. Most edible mushrooms, when in season, can be found in the popular markets of the highlands. They are also brought to the markets of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, whose cosmopolitan nature means that many people eagerly await the season to maintain a delicious culinary tradition that, without a doubt, was brought with them.

*Xigin'che'* is the name of both a mushroom and a Petén dish made with it. It is such a traditional dish that locals in Petén consider it one of their most distinctive and typical foods. This mushroom, scientifically known as *Schizophyllum commune* and called “tree ear” by Spanish speakers, grows on the trunks of *palo de jiote* trees (*Bursera simaruba*). Only the ones that grow on these trees are eaten because other similar-looking mushrooms growing on different trees cause stomach pain. Since it has an almost woody texture, the hardest parts, which are impossible to cook, are cut off, leaving only the soft sections. These are meticulously washed to remove impurities, insects, spiders, and other creatures, then dried in the sun and stored for later use. When the time comes, they are soaked to soften again and finely chopped until they resemble the texture of meat in a modern *salpicón*. A sauté is made with finely chopped scallions, *tomatillo de culebra*, habanero chili, and sweet pepper. The mushrooms are simmered in this sauté until cooked. As is common in the area where the mushroom grows, the rainiest period occurs in the last third of the year, so it is more of an autumn dish than one for other seasons.

There are so many edible mushrooms that a complete treatise could be written on them and their associated dishes. For obvious reasons, that is not possible now. Let us simply add a few names of species that have earned their place in the country’s popular cuisine and are also among the most common. *G'anxul*, or *Cantharellus cibarius*, is found in oak forests and is most abundant between July and August. The pine mushroom, *Laccaria laccata*, is available during the same season. The elongated San Juan mushroom, *Amanita falloides*, appears between June and July and grows in oak forests. Highly valued is the "pig’s trumpet" mushroom, *Hypomyces lactifluorum*, which sprouts in July on the forest floor of oak groves.

## THE DOMINION OF SPICES

Three Mesoamerican lineages are counted among the gastronomic gifts that Guatemala contributed to the world as spices: allspice, chili peppers, and vanilla. Although not exclusive to the country, they are products of the evolutionary processes that led it to become the heart of an important primary center of origin and diversification of food plant species. They are part of our contribution to international cuisine, even gourmet cooking. There is also a rich set of spices whose consumption and interest did not extend beyond the national territory but were incorporated into our traditional popular cuisine.

The well-known allspice, once also referred to as Chiapas pepper and Tabasco pepper, is the product of a wild species that grows in the tropical Caribbean forests, primarily in Petén and Izabal. It is a medium-sized tree, 8 to 12 meters tall, known since pre-Hispanic times and still subject to an intense relationship with humans, who collect its fruits from nature. Its botanical name, *Pimenta dioica*, refers to a biological property: there are trees with female flowers and others with male ones. In English, it is known as “allspice”, a term that conveys the sense of “all spices”. It was given this name because as a condiment, its flavor is reminiscent of cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg combined. The spice that much of humanity knows and uses are the fruits, small round berries between 3 and 6 millimeters in diameter, which are sun-dried before being used in cooking. From that point on, the use depends on the cuisine: dried, ground, or in the form of a derived oil. As a seasoning, it has been used for a very long time in Guatemalan cooking, which is one of the many reasons why it is included in countless traditional recipes. The leaves, which are very aromatic and rich in essential oils, have intense applications in the perfume industry. They are also reputed to have medicinal properties, and some even use them as a condiment.

Allspice has a wide natural distribution in the lands surrounding the Caribbean basin. The local variety is native to southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras, where it is not unusual to find enormous trees, up to 30 meters tall, in humid jungles (with 1,000–2,500 millimeters of annual rainfall) and warm climates. In Guatemala, there has developed a craft of pepper collectors from its natural habitat, but there are also cultivation programs. Thus, this spice continues to be among the preferred seasonings for giving a "Guatemalan touch" to traditional popular cuisine. It is one of the species tied to human societies, despite retaining its ability to survive as a wild plant. (Note: allspice is sometimes confused with black pepper; the latter, from the same myrtle family, is the species *Piper nigrum*, native to the Malabar Coast of southwestern India.)

Chili peppers are the most widely used condiment in the country. Some are sweet and aromatic, while others are extremely pungent (spicy). Between these two extremes, there is a wide progression toward spiciness, so the kitchen has much to choose from for its own needs. They are eaten raw, elaborately prepared in a multitude of stews, or as a spicy sauce known locally as *chirmol*. They are also served as a main dish, sometimes made sacred in solemn meals, such as in the case of "chiles rellenos" (stuffed chilis). There

is also a great richness and variation in industrialized presentations, for local consumption and export. The native Guatemalan species is *Capsicum annuum*, from which there is a diversity of wild, primitive, and agronomically improved crops. Guatemala is part of the central region of origin and diversification, so most cultivated lines belong to the *annuum* group, *arviculare* variety[5, 6]. The abundant diversity of common names, including *chile chocolate*, *costeño*, *guaque*, *mulato*, *pasa*, *pimiento*, *serrano*, *ulute*, and *zambo*, reflects its genetic diversity.

There is another species with much smaller fruits, as the previous ones are relatively large. This other species is *Capsicum baccatum*, which originated between Guatemala and Mexico. It is extremely spicy. Its most common Spanish names are *pico de pájaro* (bird's beak), *diente de chucho* (dog's tooth), and *chiltepe*. These are more suited to *chirmoles*, a culinary entity with great expressive richness. Some *chirmoles* are as simple as those made with just chopped onion, salt, and lime; a step further in complexity adds chopped cilantro. There is also a red *chirmol* whose base is a mash of roasted tomatoes. The *chirmoles* that reach a level of exquisite pleasure are those made with *miltomate* or *tomatillo de culebra*. The *chirmol* then flavors any dish.

Proof of the deep variability of this group is that "Flora of Guatemala", the work by P. Stanley and J. Steyermark, which is so fundamental to the knowledge of local plant diversity, recognizes 23 species of the genus *Capsicum* without delving into the number of varieties. Moreover, the taste for chili consumption is very ancient among Guatemalans, frequently incorporated into their diet. A good testimony to this appears in the *Memorial de Sololá*[3], with these words: "Our ancestors arrived later in the city of Ochal and endeared themselves to the Akajales. The four partialities arrived there... Then they left the city of Ochal, in the hot land and burning valleys; then the children of Lord Ychalcán arrived at Xepakay. They sat at the roots beneath a ceiba, but what they craved was *maloh yc*, game and fish..." *Maloh yc* can be translated as "ground chili", although A. Recinos translated it as "chili sauce".

Very spicy species are also consumed in the country, including *Capsicum pubescens* (known as *siete caldos* or horse chili, probably of Peruvian origin and introduced to Guatemala in pre-Hispanic times), *Capsicum chinense* (habanero, of Amazonian origin and pre-Hispanic introduction), and *Capsicum frutescens* (*chiltepe*, originating in South America and pre-Hispanic introduction).

Vanilla is an orchid from humid tropical forests, a beautiful yellow-green flower that grows from a very long stem, up to 25 meters in length, which climbs and attaches itself to tall trees. It resembles a vine, and beginners often confuse it with one. The flower remains open for only one day, and after maturing, it produces a dark pod containing the seeds. The presence of pods is what gave it its name, as to the eyes of the Spanish conquerors, these were "vainillas," meaning small pods. The large, flat leaves provided another characteristic to Latinize its specific epithet, *planifolia*. Thus, the species is named *Vanilla planifolia*.

Vanilla essence, the sought-after aromatic and flavoring product, initially for cooking and later for many other uses, is extracted from the pods. The extraction process involves achieving a certain level of fermentation to develop it. The procedures may vary in complexity, but they all aim for the same result. The relative simplicity of the method was a discovery attributed to the Aztecs, although it is now well known that the ancient lowland Maya also practiced it. This is because there is evidence that both groups used vanilla as a flavoring in their sacred chocolate, which was sweetened with honey from stingless bees.

These stingless bees, known as *meliponidae*, are small wasps without stingers, though they are capable of defense through their well-developed mandibles. They produce a syrupy honey with a very delicate flavor, which the ancient Maya enjoyed in some of their foods and drinks. Their hive, formerly called *cuxpín*, is made of a special wax with various applications. Until about 45 years ago, "playing with figurines of *cuxpín* wax" was one of the most spectacular traditions of Lent and Holy Week in Guatemala. In relation to vanilla, *meliponidae* bees play a fundamental role, as they are the primary pollinators of this orchid in the wild.

The world's love for vanilla was so great that efforts to cultivate it outside its natural habitat, under proper care, were not in vain. Several Indonesian islands proved to have promising environments, as did tropical areas in Africa and South America. The stingless bees and certain hummingbirds involved in pollination were replaced by bamboo splinters manipulated by humans. As a result, nearly 90% of the world's vanilla production now occurs outside its region of origin. Furthermore, to meet growing demand, laboratories have produced artificial "vanilla" through chemical synthesis, using raw materials such as clove essential oil, sucrose (a sugar), lignin (the material that makes some plant parts woody), sassafras oil, and other substances unrelated to real vanilla. However, they can never replicate nature's natural habitat for the species or the blend of nearly fifty compounds that make up the composition of natural vanilla essence. Similarly, they cannot erase the cultural history of the original consumers, who discovered it, devised the method for utilizing it, incorporated it into their beverages, and made its consumption a tradition.

In general, spices are aromatic plant products that, used in small amounts, deeply alter the aroma and taste of food, adding distinctive smells and flavors, from sharp to spicy, or smooth and strong. These are condiments that flavor and season in intensely pleasant ways, elevating dishes to dimensions of supreme taste. Within this context are several native plants, in addition to the three already described. They have been part of Guatemalan popular cuisine for a long time. These are pre-Hispanic spices whose natural populations appear as weeds or small bushes that grow in open lots; sometimes, they are tolerated or cared for in gardens and yards, and even grown in pots. Others come from shrubs and trees. They persist in traditional Guatemalan popular dishes. Among the most deeply rooted are *samat*, *apazote*, *chucho*, *canak*, *orejuela*, *saico*, *cordoncillo*, *hierba de toro*, and *pericón*.

*Samat*, *xamat*, *scorzonera*, *culantro de chucho*, or *culantro de costa*, is a weed that grows in forest clearings or along roadsides. Many people consider it a weed, a status shared by several edible species, as mentioned earlier when discussing weeds, although some cultivate it in gardens. It is a small plant, usually less than 30 centimeters tall, with spiny structures and serrated leaves. It corresponds to the species *Eryngium foetidum*, a wild herb typical of altered ecosystems that thrives best in warm, sunny lowlands, below 1,300 meters in altitude on both coasts. It is distributed from southern Mexico to Panama, the Caribbean, and South America. It has been naturalized in Africa and Asia. Its aroma is very similar to that of Mediterranean cilantro, so intense that the plants emit it without needing to be crushed or cut. It is pleasant and imparts this aroma to the dishes it is added to as a spice, particularly broths, soups, stews, and casseroles. The leaves, which grow at the base of the plant in a rosette formation, range in size from 8 to 20 centimeters long. Its consumption is deeply rooted among the Q'eqchi', from whom it has partially spread to other groups. A dish that is not considered complete without *samat* is *kaq'ik'*, a dish that defines the culinary identity of Alta Verapaz, consisting of a traditional turkey broth. Through cultural influence, it is also added to beef stew, a dish introduced during the colonial era, which, with the addition of *samat*, is enriched with our culinary tradition. In Alta Verapaz, there is also a unique *chirmol* made with chopped *samat* leaves. In *kaq'ik'* and beef stew, the broths are expected to be boiling. At that point, the *samat* leaves are removed so they release their delicate aroma without being overcooked. The most traditional stew prepared in Petén is also made with *samat*. Gourmet and contemporary kitchens have substituted it with cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum*), one of the many Mediterranean spices brought by the Spanish. *Samat* has also been attributed with medicinal properties in traditional medicine.

The plant called **apazote** is known scientifically as *Teloxys ambrosoides* (syn. *Chenopodium ambrosoides*), a herb with a strong odor that can grow between 40 centimeters and one and a half meters tall. Its territory of origin spans much of intertropical America, where it can be found up to about 2,600 meters in altitude. It grows wild in a variety of environments, even in large cities, if there are abandoned lots or patches of soil between houses. It has medicinal properties, especially antibacterial, antihelminthic, and anti-inflammatory. However, as a seasoning for various dishes in Creole cuisine, its leaves are an irreplaceable ingredient. For example, a delicacy in preparing beans is to cook them with some sprigs of apazote, resulting in a dish that is not only considered "special" but also very healthy, alluding to the healing nature of the herb. The Guatemalan touch in fish and seafood broths, including the peculiar "*caldo de jutes* [Snail stew]" (*jutes* refer to several species of edible snails, both freshwater and from marshes), is given by apazote. Certain pre-Hispanic dishes, such as those made with edible mushrooms, also include apazote in some traditional recipes. A deeply rooted dish is the famous "*caldo de huevos* [Egg stew]", half pre-Hispanic and half colonial, which is offered to those who wake up feeling unwell after a night of heavy drinking. The soul, spirit, body, and

most blessed ingredient of the *caldo de huevos* can only be apazote.

*Chucho*, *tz'i*, or *n'abay* is a plant closely related to ginger, which arrived from southern Asia, and to cardamom, which came from Ceylon and southern India, botanically named *Renealmia aromatica*. *Chucho* is native to our lands. It grows in humid ecosystems, under the shade of jungle vegetation, where rainfall is high and relatively frequent. Its optimal habitat is between 600 and 1,500 meters in altitude. Like other Zingiberaceae, it develops underground stems or rhizomes, groups in clusters of several individuals, reaches up to two meters in height, and its flowers, in panicles, grow almost at ground level. The flowers give way to small, spherical capsules about 10 millimeters in diameter, which are the usable parts as a condiment. Its pulp is added to broths, particularly to beef stew, in a culinary practice that is on the verge of disappearing.

*Canak* is a very ancient spice, rarely valued as such, but unconsciously added to many traditional dishes with evident pre-Hispanic roots. It is popularly known by various names such as lion's hand, monkey's hand, little hand tree, *majagua*, and *tayuyo*. Its scientific name is *Chirathodendron pentadactylon*, which also evokes a curious relationship between flower and hand. The cluster of stamens, normally a deep crimson, resembles a small hand with claw-like fingers extended outward. It is a thick-trunked tree that can exceed 30 meters in height. Its distribution is very restricted to the extreme south of Mexico and Guatemala, in a strip located between 2,000 and 3,000 meters in altitude and in very humid, cloudy mixed forests. It is more abundant in Guatemala. It is believed that there was a time when it was revered and even feared by modern Maya, who surrounded it with religious meanings due to its androecium's characteristics. Some say that infusions of its flowers were used in folk medicine to treat ulcers and eye conditions. However, in gastronomy, it is now appreciated for flavoring tamales. For this purpose, and since tamales are steamed, a regular amount of leaves is placed at the bottom and top of the steamer or pot so that they release their delicate aroma and impart it to the cooking. In a more spiritually loaded variation, tamalitos (little tamales) of corn are wrapped in its leaves for cooking; these are sacred tamalitos, consumed during deeply religious festivals such as Corpus Christi in Patzún. To cover certain foods in popular markets in highland towns, canak leaves, with their copper color and velvety texture, are preferred over other covers. Because of this, in these towns, bundles of canak leaves are also sold. The ancient Maya, fond of sweet honeys, might have harvested the nectar from canak, which is abundantly collected in its floral cups. This idea circulates but remains unproven.

*Orejuela* is also a tree, known as *mucenq'egchi'* and *anona de montaña* in Spanish. It is a relative of the *anonas* but does not produce edible fruits. What is utilized are the curious flowers, elongated, hanging, and extraordinarily aromatic, so much so that their scent can be perceived from a distance. The petals of the flower resemble human ears, from which it derives one of its most popular Spanish names. The petals are typically also referred to as *orejuelas*. These petals are dried in the sun and, in considerable quantities, sold in some markets, such as

Cobán, a key city for its trade and distribution. However, since it is a species native to humid tropical lowland forests, the city is outside its altitudinal growth range of less than 800 meters above sea level. The persistence of orejuela's commercialization results from its use to flavor certain drinks and foods, especially in Alta Verapaz, where some women still use it to season *pinol*. Coe and Coe have noted that it was one of the favorite spices of the ancient peoples of northern Mesoamerica for flavoring ritual chocolate drinks. Scientists have named the species *Cymbopetalum penduliflorum* and have determined that it grows natively in southern Mexico, Belize, Petén, Tzabal, and northern Huehuetenango, Quiché, and Alta Verapaz. Published results in 1996 from an ethnobotanical study conducted by Herrera, Murray, and Johnson confirm that at that time, it was still used by Mam, *qi'che'*, *qeq'chi'*, and *pogom'chi* communities to flavor traditional drinks and foods, including *atol blanco*, *pinol*, *batido* (cacao), *atol con súchiles*, and *recado negro*.[6]

*Sambucus mexicana*, known as *sauco*, is a small tree deeply connected to various aspects of traditional popular culture among Guatemalans. Due to its versatility, it is difficult to categorize it in a single descriptive way. Its abundant fruits are made into delicious jams and homemade jellies, making it an edible species. It plays a key role in the ritual sacrifice of the chieftain Tolgom by the Seven Kakchiquel Tribes, thus it is a mythical species as described in the Memorial of Sololá[3]. It is used to mark rural boundaries and as an ornamental plant in large cities. However, what interests us here is to highlight a subtle way of using it as a food flavoring, functioning as an unimaginable spice that goes unnoticed in this role. It only leaves its aroma and taste without being consumed. In almost every town in the western highlands, a special bread is sold in local markets, transported from producing towns (San Carlos Sija, Quetzaltenango, Santa Lucía Utallán, Patzún, among others) in cane baskets. To keep the bread soft and maintain the classic aroma that makes it distinct, it is abundantly covered with fresh sauco leaves. Hence, it is called *pan de tzolo'h*, as *wzolo'h* is a Mayan term for sauco. This practice is thought to have begun during the colonial period when bread made from wheat flour started to be made.

*Cordoncillo*, or mountain anise, is a peppery herb corresponding to *Piper auritum*, which can grow to shrub dimensions, reaching up to about 2 meters in height. It thrives in the understory of humid, warm forest ecosystems, below 1,300 meters above sea level, and is quite common under such conditions. Its distribution area covers the American tropics, but not the Antilles. The leaves are heart-shaped, scalloped at the edges, slightly wider than long, and can reach up to 35 centimeters on the longer axis. Although they are not widely used today, they were highly valued as a seasoning for soups and broths. Preparing *caldo de caracoles* (snail soup) and fish broth to offer to friends or distinguished guests, or for dishes on family celebration occasions, was considered a special distinction.

*Hierba de toro*, *Ocimum micrantum*, is a herbaceous species belonging to the mint family, known for producing aromatic essential oils. This particular plant resembles European basil in appearance

and smell, although it has a much more intense aroma. It prefers warm, humid areas, growing as a weed of just under half a meter in height. Native to the American tropics, it is reputed to have medicinal properties and is intensively used in Guatemalan popular cuisine, especially for seasoning meats, stews, and casseroles.

*Pericón*, *Tagetes lucida*, while better known for its medicinal properties, also has deep applications as a spice, particularly for flavoring a type of *atol de masa* (a thick corn-based drink) that is very popular in communities of the southwestern highlands, hence it is called *atol de pericón*. For the same purposes and in towns in the same area, it is used in cooking corn. J. V. Martínez[6] considers it a species from natural populations that are dramatically decreasing day by day as a result of national population growth. A certain ethnomedical and ethnocultural value (it has roots in magical-spiritual culture when incorporated into religious rituals as incense or when invoked for magical properties to counteract the influence of evil spirits) that has been recognized in recent years tends to offset this danger by encouraging its cultivation in home gardens and family plots.

**CHIRMOLES, RECADOS, PULIQUES, PEPIANES, JOCONES, AND IGUASHTES**

There are traditional foods, like those titled in this section, whose names frequently appear in the culinary lexicon of Guatemalans. They evoke a well-established gastronomic identity, share many essential characteristics, intersect, and are extremely popular. They carry the rich blend of pre-Hispanic and colonial influences, resulting in well-defined prototypes. The Maya spirit is present not only in the ingredients they contain but also in those that are absent, such as fats, in the utensils used (griddles, clay pots, grinding stones), and in preparation methods. The Spanish influence is felt in the complex mix of Mediterranean and Asian spices incorporated, in the oily fried foods accepted, and in the substitutions imposed in the original recipes.

The first major example of this amalgamation of cuisines, from which exclusive dishes arise that cannot hide the two culinary cultures that make them possible, is *chirmoles*. They are, by nature, sauces made from tomato, *tomatillo*, or *miltomate* seasoned with onion, garlic, and a pinch of salt. This is the most primitive form. The increasing complexities come next. If it should be spicy or not, the next ingredient must be chili; for the level of pungency, the appropriate variety of chili must be chosen. Spicy *chirmoles* are often acidified with lemon or vinegar, but this is not obligatory. Some add a seasoning based on oil. For the dish they are to accompany, it will be decided whether the tomato is roasted or raw, finely chopped or mashed. An extra seasoning, such as chopped samat or cilantro, may be added. Most *chirmoles* are raw, but there are also fried versions. The choice of tomato, *tomatillo*, or *miltomate* depends on the dish they are meant to accompany. It is truly a dish of great versatility and numerous variations, so much so that it is not unusual for everyone to claim their own recipe.

*Recados* are the heart and soul of popular Guatemalan cuisine. They are the most indigenous element one can find within it and are what makes the difference between

one dish and another. They are akin to a deeply modified *chirmol*, having the basic ingredients of the first, along with their own preparation methods and the spices and seasonings that make them specific to the dishes they complement. Unlike *chirmoles*, they must almost invariably be cooked until boiling. Essential components include tomatoes (tomatillos or miltomates), onion, garlic, spices, and a thickener. Variations in the combination and dosage of these ingredients give rise to different qualities of *recados*. Just by changing between tomatoes, tomatillos, or miltomates, or mixing them, a substantial transformation is achieved. These ingredients are cooked and, in traditional *recados*, ground in a grinding stone. Many of the thickeners can also be ground. There are numerous potential thickeners: corn dough, toasted corn flour, broken toasted corn, fresh or toasted tortillas, ground squash seeds, *pepitoria*, bread crumbs, soaked French bread, wheat flour, rice flour, broken golden rice, etc. The spices and seasonings range from achiote to chocolate, including ingredients introduced during colonial times, among them fats, and native compounds. It is not risky to assert that each recipe, each procedure, each cook, and each kitchen produces an exclusive, unique, and characteristic *recado*. And since each *recado* creates a distinctive and original dish, one can understand why they are the heart of Guatemalan Creole cuisine.

Transitioning from *recados* to *puliques*, *pepianes*, and *jocones* is not too complicated if seen as what they essentially are: three distinct ways of preparing meats. The great difference among them, regardless of the type of meat, is the *recado* that personalizes them.

In *puliques*, all types of fat are omitted; the meat and the *recado* ingredients are cooked together, the thickener is masa, making it a typically pre-Hispanic dish, although it already contains some Spanish components and has been sacralized (though it is also eaten regularly); due to its relevance, we will discuss it in more detail in the next section.

*Pepianes* constitute a traditional method of preparing meats, with pre-Hispanic roots and classical procedures; incorporating various external components while prioritizing native ingredients. The meat, which can be beef, pork, or chicken, is cooked separately in water with a bit of salt. Simultaneously, the *recado* is prepared, which includes *pepitoria*, miltomate, tomato, guaque chili, pasilla chili, zambo chili, and bell pepper. Onions and sometimes garlic are added. Cilantro is optional, but the best *pepianes* are made with samat. There are brown *pepianes*, achieved by toasting sesame seeds and guaque, pasilla, or zambo chilis, or by toasting bread crumbs. There are also red *pepianes*, which are prepared with a substantial addition of achiote. Common thickeners are bread crumbs or soaked French bread, but tortillas and, less frequently, wheat flour can also be used. Many *pepianes* do not contain vegetables, and sometimes they are accompanied by rice, but some cookbooks, particularly from ladino people, include *güisquil* (chayote), green beans, carrots, and potatoes. They are always served hot, although it has become customary among some to serve it a day after preparation, ensuring that resting and reheating enhance the flavor. As with all Guatemalan dishes, different towns have different *pepianes*. For example, that of San Juan

Atitán is made with three meats and is presented as their "typical food." The evolution of the dish is so powerful that it is now bordering on gourmet cuisine. This is particularly evident with the sweet *pepián* made with beef tongue. Its basic composition is equivalent to the previous ones, but it substitutes the meats with beef tongue and adds allspice, scallions, raisins, sugar, almonds, and a mild oil.

*Jocones*, usually made with chicken or backyard hen, embody the pre-Hispanic style along with the aforementioned colonial culinary addition. They are well-distributed across all communities in the country but are more common and popular in indigenous towns. The bird has been cooked separately, sometimes with onion and always with salt. As with almost all dishes prepared similarly, the broth from the cooking serves as the base for the *recado* that completes the meal. The *recado* is green due to the miltomate base it contains; it is even common that if tomatoes or tomatillos are added, they are green. For this reason, if onions or scallions are used, both the "heads" and the "stems," the green part, are chosen, and green chilis are selected. The most traditional method of thickening is with tortillas, although ladino cuisine has no qualms about using flour. Some recipes include *pepitoria*. There can be significant differences between one preparation and another, so much so that sometimes the dish does not exhibit its characteristic color.

*Iguashtes*, made with ingredients found in the previous dishes, constitute a delicious and delicate variant that omits meat and provides a final bite of tremendous exclusivity. From our germplasm, it uses squash seeds, miltomate, green beans, and potatoes (not necessarily) and is seasoned with garlic. The miltomates and garlic are roasted on a griddle, and the squash seeds are toasted on the griddle. The green beans are cooked in water, and if potatoes are added, care is taken to ensure that each is cooked to maintain a firm texture. With the broth from these recipes, the miltomates, garlic, and squash seeds are ground to create the *recado* specific to the dish. The vegetables are bathed in the *recado* and served. When the green beans and potatoes are cooled, drenched in *recado*, and, if possible, refrigerated, they can be served as a cold salad. A simple and highly traditional variant excludes potatoes; this is the famous dish of green beans in *iguashtes*.

## TWO SPECIAL SACRED DISHES

Two meals have established themselves, backed by the profound spirituality of the peoples who prepare and consume them, as ceremonies par excellence. They are pinol and *pulique*. It might be more accurate to refer to them as pinoles and *puliques*, as their recipes, methods of preparation, occasions of consumption, degree of sanctification, and geographical areas of existence are profoundly varied. The base of both is corn, toasted and ground in the pinoles, and nixtamalized in the *puliques*. In addition to their ceremonial, sacred character, they share the fact of being pre-Hispanic dishes, although in their current form, they may incorporate some Mediterranean ingredients that arrived with the Spaniards after the conquest of the territory. Yellow corn holds the most symbolism in this type of cooking, which is why it should be used in both meals. Sometimes it is replaced, as

occurs in Panajachel, Sololá, and in Purulhá, Baja Verapaz, where it has been substituted with a variety called salpor.

Pinol is a food with the consistency of a "brothy atol," according to the apt analogy made by Carlos René García Escobar (anthropologist; interview on 22.04.05). Its origin is believed to be in the Cakchiquel[18] ethnic group, from where it may have radiated to other peoples. Known variants exist among the Mames and Achíes. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the name Pinula of three Poqomam communities (Santa Catarina, San José, and San Pedro) derives from it. One version of its probable etymology relates it to the ancient Pipiles, who may have given the roots pinolli and pinol, which mean flour, and *ha*, water. That is, flour in water, a description very close to the composition of the current dish. It possesses the particularity, inherited from ancient Mayan culinary customs, of being prepared with the exclusion of all types of fats.

One of the most primitive known forms comes from Jacaltenango, Huehuetenango. It is called pinol de chunto. The dish, extremely simple, consists only of corn, turkey (chunto or *chompipe*), salt, and water. Its preparation is equally simple. The turkey is boiled in water with a little salt. After boiling, the cooking continues on low heat. Meanwhile, the corn is toasted on a comal and then ground into flour using a stone grinder. The flour is added to the pot, stirred to homogenize, and the cooking continues until the turkey is tender. It is served together in a clay bowl, accompanied by tamalitos wrapped in corn husks.

In the Cakchiquel community of San José Nacahuil, Guatemala, the pinol is made with beef, preferably the shoulder. It incorporates Mediterranean ingredients such as onion, coriander, and Mesoamerican tomato. The basic procedure is very similar. The meat, cut into pieces, is boiled in water with a little salt. Once cooked, it is removed from the pot, where the onion and tomato are cooked in the broth to be ground in a stone grinder, thus obtaining a type of recado. The toasted corn flour and some coriander leaves are added to it. For serving, the pinol and meat are combined and transferred to clay bowls.

San Pedro Sacatepéquez, Guatemala, has a pinol very similar to that of Nacahuil. It is also made with meat but does not show a preference for shoulder cuts. Instead, it adds another Mesoamerican element to the *recado*, red bell pepper, which gives it a distinctive flavor and aroma. Another difference is that in San Pedro, although it is also served in a bowl, the meat is offered separately.

The pinol from Panajachel, Sololá, is made with native chicken, referred to as that which has been raised in the yards of houses, a condition that differentiates it from farm or commercial-raised chickens. One of the particularities of this pinol is the abandonment of yellow corn, preferring the variety known as salpor, which is a grain of greater softness due to its high starch content and, therefore, easier to grind. Very similar to that of Panajachel is the pinol of Patzún, which in local Kaqchikel is called que j. It is also made with salpor corn and native chicken, having been sanctified for the Catholic festivities of Corpus Christi Thursday, but

a well-distinctive characteristic is that it is accompanied by tamalitos made with corn wrapped in canak leaves, a spectacular variant that integrates a tree of tremendous interest within native spices and condiments into the culinary tradition.

A step of greater complexity is found in the village of Lo de Bran, Mixco, Guatemala. The sanctified pinol of the day that the Catholic liturgy celebrates the Ascension of the Lord, a movable Thursday, is served completing the ritual of the Dance of Toritos and is made with native chicken. The composition of this pinol is similar to that of Nacahuil and San Pedro, with the difference being the substitution of beef for chicken. However, the bird, once it has been cooked and separated from the broth to follow a common procedure with the other pinoles, is roasted in pieces over charcoal on a grill. In the end, García Escobar confirms, the meal is served together.

The existence of two forms has been discovered in San Juan Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. In both, the native chicken is one of the central elements. The simplest of the two consists of boiling the bird, obtaining the customary broth, and using it for the preparation, first of the type of *recado* already discussed and then of the pinol by incorporating toasted corn flour. Notable changes occur in the ingredients of the *recado*, where miltomates and garlic now appear alongside tomatoes, onions, and coriander. The coriander leaves are gathered into a small bundle, tied with a strip of husk, and thrown into the mixture. Everything is served together. The second form is more complicated, not regarding the ingredients of the *recado*, which are the same, but concerning the meats, as it also includes beef spine and beef tail in addition to the chicken. The procedure is similar until it comes to preparing and serving the chicken. The meats are left in the pinol to serve together at mealtime, but the bird has been extracted and roasted whole. In this state, it is brought to the table so that the diners must serve their respective portions once the other portion has been consumed.

In San Raimundo, Guatemala, a neighboring town very close to San Juan, pinoles closely resembling those of San Juan are prepared. There is a notable peculiarity in San Raimundo. On January 23, the day of the patron saint San Raimundo de Peñafort and therefore the main day of the town fair, pinol is sold to the attendees in the town's central park. It is brought in large pots to booths set up around the plaza, where it can be purchased and consumed. Everything is served together.

A rather strange *pinol* is found in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, San Marcos, where it is not even called *pinol* but *atol de chunto*. It is complicated to distinguish whether it is *pinol* or *pulique*, although due to its ingredients, it seems more likely to correspond to a *pinol*. In this rare variant, the initial broth preparation includes cooking the bird’s viscera: well-washed intestines, liver, gizzard, heart, and kidneys. Once cooked, they are chopped coarsely and added to the final *pinol*. This is how it is served, in a clay bowl. The well-cooked turkey is offered until the *pinol* has been consumed, providing each person with their respective portion. The ingredients include garlic, *miltomate*, and onion, roasted before grinding them to make the sauce; an irreplaceable

condiment is Chiapas pepper (the same *pimienta gorda* described in another section, which began to be called Chiapas in the 17th century; in some places, this name still persists). This pepper is used finely ground and imparts a very particular taste. It is ritually accompanied by tamalitos wrapped in leaves from the *sak'muj*, a tree native to the region. (Informant: agronomist Roberto González, 04.25.05).

There are also *pinol* variants in Baja Verapaz, such as in Cubulco and Rabinal, which complete the cycle of traditional popular dances at the beginning of May. These are local forms of the dish, differing in that the toasted corn is not ground into flour but merely broken, giving it a particular texture.

With this information about *pinoles*, which is truly limited and thus still within the range of preliminary knowledge, it is possible to see that the dish has been sanctified in communities living in the central, western, and southwestern highlands, which is precisely the area where corn cultivation is part of the culture of its inhabitants. A beautiful comparison.

The world of *pulique* is another. Recognized as a ceremonial food that, like *pinol*, is prepared and offered on very special occasions, such as Catholic church festivals, marriages, birthdays, weddings, or when one wishes to honor a special guest, etc. This is another dish based on corn, but nixtamalized and turned into dough, which is its fundamental component. Meat appears in all known recipes, but here it shows notable diversification depending on the different villages from which it originates. Among the birds, turkeys, ducks, or hens may be used; there are forms of *pulique* made with beef and others with pork, without bones, particularly pork loin.

It is a more elaborate food than *pinol*, but shares some of the basic initial steps with it, such as the primary cooking of the meats in water with a little salt, the separation of some of the resulting broth to prepare that somewhat primitive type of sauce, which includes the ingredients specific to each eco-cultural recipe, the addition of that sauce to the pot with the cooking meats, the incorporation of the corn dough, finishing cooking with whatever seasonings are necessary, and serving according to customary practice. It is a pre-Hispanic food, although most of the seasonings are Mediterranean.

Probably one of the simplest forms is the ancestral *pulique de chunto* from San Jorge La Laguna, Sololá. In addition to the turkey, which is boiled whole in water with a bit of salt, the sauce contains onion and achiote. When added to the broth along with the corn dough, it is seasoned with a few sprigs of cilantro. It is served together, with the woman of the house responsible for tearing apart the bird and distributing the portions appropriately in a clay bowl. It is accompanied by yellow corn tamalitos wrapped in corn husk, a widespread custom throughout the department.

Not long ago, two forms of *pulique* were prepared in Panajachel. One, with a large number of seasonings, was made with duck; the sauce included tomato, garlic, onion, achiote, oregano, thyme, pepper, clove, and allspice. It is still maintained, with subtle changes, in some Ladino families that have kept it as a custom for the day of San Francisco de Asís. The other Panajachel *pulique* is the classic hen with

a sauce of tomato, onion, and achiote, often with the addition of potato. It is served separately with yellow corn tamalitos.

The traditional *puliques* of Antigua are quite similar, some made with hen and others with pork. Notable changes in the latter include the occasional incorporation of *miltomate* into the sauce, which is completed with garlic, onion, and tomato. It omits the achiote, and sometimes cilantro is substituted with fresh epazote, giving it a unique smell and flavor.

In certain places, such as with the potato in one of the variants from Panajachel, other vegetables begin to be incorporated. With a base body, as has been understood, *güisquil* suddenly appears in the beef variant from Santo Domingo Xenacoj (Sacatepéquez), cabbage in the one from Santa Catarina Palopó (Sololá), which is beef and hen, and *güisquil*, cabbage, and carrot in the *chunto* from San Antonio Palopó (Sololá). Additionally, *chile guaque* is added to the ones from Santa Catarina, San Antonio, and Santiago Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. The latter is made with pork, sometimes also adding wheat flour; it includes *miltomate* and replaces cilantro with epazote.

To conclude this section, we must say that we find ourselves unintentionally in debt to our readers. The delightful subject of traditional recipe books remains unaddressed, awaiting a good opportunity to complement the brief notes we have only scratched the surface of. A culinary journey through the corners of our homeland could show us the geographical distribution of some foods, their incorporation into the corresponding ethnic groups, and in general, it would showcase the richness and identity that we, Guatemalans, possess.

**ON TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS DINING**

In Guatemala, the usual "Christmas Eve dinner" consists of tamales and *caliente de piña*, steaming and aromatic. In the mountainous western towns, the drink corresponds to the punch from Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción and other villages. However, there is a notable difference: the western *caliente* incorporates chamomile from the nearby forests, giving it exceptional flavor and aroma. The next day, Christmas, the lunch is a bowl of hen broth. Days before, the believers accompanying Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary in the sublime pilgrimage of *Las Posaditas* are offered *caliente* and *chuchitos* in the house that provides them with a temporary lodging for the night. Or a steaming cup of hot chocolate if someone prefers.

Certain contemporary additions, imposed by external opportunities for capital and marketing of the celebration, have forced the association of foreign customs, especially among a segment of society distinguished by its greater purchasing power. Tamales have been replaced with turkey (even the term denotes a loss of identity; it might be better to call it *chunto* or *chompipe*), *chuchitos* have been swapped for cake, and traditional cooking for gourmet cuisine, which also incorporates baked pork leg, fruitcake, cookies, and dried fruits. Nevertheless, the rich Christmas gastronomic tableau remains in most households, with foods that have been prepared for hundreds of years in towns, villages, and hamlets, which, like the miracle of the Redeemer,

take on flavors, aromas, and rites that exalt and sublime them.

The Nativity of Jesus, as celebrated by most Guatemalans, is based on Judeo-Christian philosophical principles. For this reason, its local origin dates back to the colonial era. Classic expressions like *posaditas*, nativity scenes, and cribs are a small fraction of the practices brought by the Castilians, undoubtedly taken from even more distant times and places. The custom of the Christmas Eve dinner did not exist as such before the Colony. Now, in its most classic form, it is celebrated with a pre-Hispanic meal. What makes local Christmas manifestations distinctive are the incorporations of the people from this land, with syncretisms born from the assimilation of previously foreign facts.

Spiritual celebrations with extra-regional roots were nourished with their own mysticism, partly expressed in foods and drinks sustained by equally indigenous procedures and ingredients. Consumed during peak moments of the cycle, including the day of the Blessed Virgin of Conception, the novena of Las Posaditas, Christmas Eve, and Christmas, their aromas evoke a Nature immersed in love and spirituality of the season. It is when homes smell of the forest because the forests smell of pine, chamomile, and moss. From the kitchens arise effluents of what is to be drunk and eaten, a cultural result of ancient culinary traditions, mixed with vapors of *estoraque*, *póm*, and incense, amid prayers, litanies, and carols.

There are elements that give character: distinctive to the celebration, a "Guatemalan character," despite the deep expressive chasms observed in tradition and custom between the capital and the towns. Even so, one cannot overlook the socio-cultural characteristics and the ethnobiological relationships of the foods and drinks. Thus, the images of the bubbling corn dough in clay pots, the sauces cooking separately, and the inevitable chatter of godmothers, neighbors, sisters, sisters-in-law, or friends gathering to participate in food preparation, including "wrapping the tamales," and then putting them to fire following procedures that are more ritual than mechanical, represent unique contributions within the context of the grand celebration.

Tamales have been wrapped in banana leaves and *mashán*, vegetables that implant their own scents to the food. They are steamed in a pot that has been lined with leaves of the *canak* tree, which is sacred in this practice and gives its exclusive aromas. Tamales represent one of the most distinctive pre-Hispanic foods in popular cuisine, whose fundamental base is nixtamalized corn, processed into dough. A sauce is added, which in the purest colored tamales is prepared with tomato, *chile guaque*, *chile zambo* (or *cobanero*), *chile chocolate*, pepper, achiote, and lard; more elaborate recipes include Mediterranean ingredients such as onion and garlic, or local ones like *loroco* flowers. A meat completes the central body. It can be chicken, *chunto*, or pork (special tamales from particular regions may include other meats, as sometimes done in Petén with *pajuil* or *tepezcuintle*). The black tamales are a sweet variant, also traditional but of lesser consumption. Sugar is added to the dough, the meat is chicken, and the sauce is made with *pepitoria*, sesame, *chile pasa*, *chile guaque*, cinnamon, tomato, French bread,

and chocolate. The black tamale is a clear example of the syncretism of the pre-Hispanic and peninsular in popular cuisine, with sugar, sesame, cinnamon, bread, and European lard completing the pre-Hispanic base of corn, chilis, tomato, and chocolate.

*Chuchitos* can almost be described as small tamales. The base is corn dough, the sauce is made with tomato, *chile guaque*, and achiote, and the meat can be chicken, *chunto*, pork, or beef. They allow for local variations, through which an effort is made to give them a more elevated character as popular food but with special significance. Two of the most common variations include the addition of *loroco* or *deizote* flowers; however, these do not appear in Christmas *chuchitos* as they are not available during the winter season. A notable distinguishing feature between *chuchitos* and tamales, besides size and the way they are eaten, is that the former are wrapped in *tusas*, the structures that cover corn cobs. *Chuchitos* are widely consumed, but there are *chuchitos* that are sacred in Christmas meals.

The drinks of the season seem to be directed not only at constituting a culinary satisfaction in the Guatemalan spiritual identity and rewarding the taste for Creole cuisine but also at combating the typical cold of the northern winter, which affects us, albeit with mitigated rigor. A classic is *caliente de piña*, whose name refers to a very ancient formula but does not necessarily represent the current composition. The drink today is prepared by boiling prunes, raisins, apple, banana, cinnamon, and pineapple. Some add pineapple peels, while others do not prefer apples. In Panajachel, Chichicastenango, and other western towns, chamomiles are added, fruits that give it very special flavor and aroma. It is sweetened with sugar.

The reference to rural culinary customs by F. J. Cajas Ovando[8] is of great interest. He states that in Quetzaltenango, "the festivity (in honor of the Virgin of Conception, on December 8) was celebrated with a novena that culminated on that date, and it was traditional to serve the classic *caliente de piña*." He refers to Las Posaditas, noting that "the hosts thank... and offer visitors refreshments consisting of *caliente de piña*, chocolate, coffee or tea, *chuchitos*, *cambrayes*, *enchiladas*, breads with meat, or meat tamales. Regarding the tradition of 'delivering' the 'stolen' child from a foreign Nativity scene, he expresses that it is accompanied by the respective food, in which tamales are once again the prominent dish. He summarizes: 'Traditional and popular drink is the classic "Caliente de Piña," served throughout the Christmas season. *Buñuelos* in honey, but the main dish of the Christmas meal in Quetzaltenango consists of the very Quetzaltenan rice tamales, whether black, red, or the classic potato *paches*. Tamales are the main dish for the midnight dinner on December 24 and 31.'"

In a related reference to the Christmas food of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, C. Lara, cited in a journalistic report, states that punch and chocolate "are traditional drinks of Guatemala prepared for the December festivities. They sweeten the palate and help to ease the intense cold of the season." He also added to the traditional foods of the season *buñuelos*, "egg-based buns that were prepared in Guatemala especially for the feasts of

Conception on December 8, those of the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12, and for the nocturnal vigils during the prayers of the Novena of the Child God, at the foot of the Nativity." In a complementary citation, he notes that punch is a colonial culinary heritage representative of the symbiosis of cultures, "as it uses not only the fruits that existed in Guatemala at the time but also those introduced by the Spanish."

One can already notice how many native botanical forms are incorporated into these foods and how European ingredients intervene in a balance of culinary symbolism and identities. We wish to highlight already mentioned Mesoamerican ingredients, such as chamomile (*Crataegus pubescens*) from the *caliente de piña*, which also appears in other Christmas ornamental applications. From the cultural fixation of the Christmas tamale, which is shaped with corn dough, seasoned with tomato and chili, packed in *mashán* leaves (*Calathea lutea*) or banana leaves (*Musa*), and flavored with *canak* leaves (*Chiranthodendron pentadactylon*). From the transformation of *chuchitos*, from being a common and popular food to acquiring a sacred connotation when incorporated into Christmas tradition. Ultimately, it is an open field to express the wonder of this cuisine.

The tradition of sharing tamales, or meat *chuchitos*, whether for the midnight dinner, for New Year's, or during the *posaditas* that precede them, is part of rituals established in the social behavior of Guatemalans. Thus, among tamales, *caliente*, punch, and the cold of the winter atmosphere, a beautiful Nature contributes to making Christmas more authentically Guatemalan. Our foods, drinks, nativity scenes, and cribs have allowed us to coexist with the species unique to this homeland, with which we forge unique cultural facts in a time of peace and love.

**ON TRADITIONAL EATING DURING LENT AND HOLY WEEK**

In terms of traditional cuisine, cultural facts manifest during Lent and Holy Week that are characterized by a pronounced mixture of pre-Hispanic and colonial elements. This has emerged from a gastronomic practice that, while not excluding other groups, is most noticeable among the ladinos. The most likely source of this background is that the celebration, with Judeo-Christian roots, was brought by the Spaniards who reached this territory, carrying with them their beliefs, customs, and preferred supplies.

Once an adequate degree of ethnological fusion was achieved between the peninsular avant-garde and the Mesoamerican peoples, syncretism in the spiritual dimension managed the miracle of perceiving the sacred through an amalgamation of expressions from the profane world manifested in various ways, including the gastronomic. From this new, mestizo cuisine began to emerge aromas, flavors, colors, and protocols of a peculiar identity. It is for this reason that the characterization of Guatemalan Lenten meals now requires consideration of several transcendent details, including native cultural elements, imported items alongside the Renaissance space's way of being, the incorporation of a foreign festive flavor, the existence of local foods, the preparation of mixtures loaded with the symbolism of the incorporated

components, as well as the manner and timing of being served.

A peculiarity of Lenten food, including that of Holy Week itself, is the apparent contradiction between the principle of austerity in food, fasting with sacramental overtones, and the copiousness of the meals derived from the richness of recipes and the time available for good eating. Consequently, the exaltation of Lenten aromas (like *corozo* from the Pacific, *pataxte* on the cob, cucurbitaceous peaches, and wet sawdust), the colors of the season (golden *chilca* flowers, violet jacaranda flowers, *estatisia*, and *nazareno*, pink velvet in *matilisguates*, kaleidoscopes of bougainvillea, etc.) is blended with the fragrance of incense burners filled with fiery *pom-estoraque* and the steaming plates of dried fish accompanied by a culinary variety of pickled vegetables, pickled onions, stuffed peppers, and sweet chickpeas with *panela*. In addition to aromatic and delicious hot chocolate, *pan de recado*, and abundant bee honey.

The ethnobiology surrounding the capture, commercialization, and preparation of fishery products is part of this rich environment. Thus, the sunset at the main dock of Livingston, on the Caribbean Sea, can be particularly interesting. Among seagulls, pelicans, and sea swallows, the scant crews that have set out to sea return with their precious cargo: dozens of fish caught from the warm waters of the sea. Abundant *jureles*, *pargos*, *róbalos*, and *palometas* are eagerly awaited by people who will soon send them to a different destination: to the kitchens and dining rooms of many Guatemalan homes, some after being taken to *tapexcos*, where, through salt and sun, they will be converted into dried fish. It is in the Caribbean *tapexcos* that a cycle in the traditional expression of dried fish for Lent in Guatemala begins, just as it occurs simultaneously at the distant Port of San José, in the center of the Pacific Ocean coast, where the ancient iron dock still testifies to the connection between the port and the sea, also serving as a hub for another group of people driven by a similar desire to engage with fishery products.

The Caribbean coast has ecological and cultural conditions different from those of the Pacific, so a good number of unique characteristics can be distinguished. In both regions, there are experienced fishermen with tanned skin and similar fishing techniques, although not identical, where the ancient trade of fishing has established subtle differences. In Guatemala, contrary to what its name suggests, the Pacific is more violent than the Caribbean. The former has a sharply sloping shelf, while in the latter, shallow waters predominate. The schools of fish in the Bay of Amatique and the Gulf of Honduras, part of the Caribbean system, have a strong influence from the adjacent coral reefs, which is not the case in the sandy southern coast.

For their own needs, the vessels used in the Caribbean are generally larger, suitable for continuous and long fishing trips. The boats of the fishermen from San José, which greatly resemble those of other towns on the same coast, usually range from 18 to 25 feet in length and are powered by small outboard motors. In the Pacific, the gill nets, colloquially known as *trasmallos*, are about 50 fathoms long (around 150 meters). Depending on

whether deep-sea species are sought, such as sharks, they are set about 30 fathoms (a little over 50 kilometers) from the coast. If deep-sea fishing is not practiced, the nets are "cast" along the coastline.

In general, there are two types of dried fish: one, from small species, such as those scientists call *Atherinella*, *Poecilia*, and *Poeciliopsis gracilis*, which are prepared and consumed throughout the year. The other, from larger species, is primarily associated with Lent, utilizing any of the coastal benthic or pelagic fish, as well as some freshwater species. Due to their culinary maneuverability, abundance, taste, and market acceptance, among those from the Pacific are the *robalete* (*Centropomus robalito*), *sierra* (*Scomberomorus sierra*), *pargo* (*Lutjanus guttatus*), *sábalo* (*Chanos chanos*), *bluefin tuna* (*Thunnus thynnus*), *barracuda* (*Sphyraena*), *catfish* (various species), and *machorra* (*Lepisosteus tropicus*). This fish, in the words of the fishermen themselves, has become "scared" due to the intensity with which it is hunted; they mean that it is now a skittish animal. It is a beautiful fish measuring just over a meter long. It does not attack humans and primarily feeds on squid, rays, and smaller fish. It is now considered a threatened species.

From the Caribbean coast and sea come *róbalos* (*Centropomus undecimalis*), *jureles* (*Caranx hippos*), and *pargos* (*Lutjanus spp.*). In Livingston, the fish are dried in *tapexcos* made of cane, while in San José and Monterrico, they are dried on zinc sheets. In Monterrico, shark pieces are known as "*cecina*," and in San José and the rest of the Pacific, skinless pieces are referred to as "*cherla*," regardless of the species of fish being skinned (skinless fish).

On the other hand, one of the most traditional, ancestral, and ritual identity drinks is hot chocolate. It is the drink typically served for breakfast on Holy Thursday in towns that still preserve this custom, particularly in the western highlands. That dawn is marked by the aromatic and sacred beverage accompanied by *pan de yemas* (egg bread), also called *pan de recado*, sliced and spread with bee honey. Sometimes, it is served with chickpeas in honey, a dish very common in the peninsula, made with chickpeas sweetened over the fire with *panela*, which incorporates allspice that comes from the humid tropical jungles of Petén. The very traditional social behavior of sharing one's food is also notable because sharing festive dishes acquires extreme solemnity. It is a ritual custom to send family or friends, in an artisan cane basket, chocolate in handmade tablets, special occasion bread, and chickpeas, often accompanied by a bottle of white honey in many towns of the western highlands. It is a gift of great emotional significance.

The pickles and marinated foods of Lent and Holy Week are a very special reference of the season, acquiring an unavoidable visual imprint that expresses the smell of their components, spices, and vinegars that hint at a special flavor. And how could it not be so, when the preparation process has subconsciously implicit the sanctification of an act that is essentially destined for a divine purpose? While Chiquimula proudly boasts its pickles, the *palmitos* of Holy Week constitute a deeply rooted tradition there, impossible to forget.

Onions or garlic, complemented by artistically sliced carrots or tender flower buds of *pacaya*, are part of the world surrounding the pickles.

Everything turns out to be part of an identity loaded with symbolism, where European and American influences express themselves in a cuisine that cannot help but be consumed, even knowing that the season demands greater fasting. But… who can resist? Regardless of differing names or recipes, the glorious Lenten dishes can come wholly or partially from the Guatemalan nature. Then, with a multitude of recipes, from the typically peninsular "fish a la vizcaína" to simpler fried dishes, or the possibility of fillets wrapped in egg and complemented with *chirmolitos* made of tomatillo, the aromas are unmistakably of Lent and Holy Week.

**THE FOOD OF ALL SAINTS**

In a particular reference to Celso Lara[1], the important matter of special foods for All Saints' Day and Day of the Dead is addressed, highlighting the origin of some related foods. It notes the specific ritual of consuming them during times of heightened spirituality and emphasizes their symbolic significance. Thus, it is of great importance because it refers to a germplasm linked to the customs and traditions of this celebration. It states: "One of the most important desserts that comes from pre-Hispanic times is sweet squash, and in its preparation, panela was incorporated, which was brought by the Spaniards around the 16th century... this dessert fundamentally symbolizes the culinary and religious union between the ancient Mayan world with the contribution of the squash..., and the Hispano-Arabic cuisine that brings sugar."

It is an excellent example of what represents the staple food of the first two days of November. Its peculiar designation comes from the fact that it is eaten at the head of graves; it is also consumed when mourners gather at home. In another mention of Lara in the same work, he is quoted as saying that "it has two expressions: one consists of a type of dish that is not sweet, consumed in the western regions of the country and prepared with vegetables and poultry..., while in the central, eastern, and northern areas, different types of sweet dishes are prepared, which are called *cabecera* and complement the *fiambre*."

*Fiambre*... what an original dish! One of the many customs depicted by Don José Milla y Vidaurre[21] pointed out that "...(when) the moon began to spill its pale light over the graves, (the crowd) slowly moved away in search of fiambre and other dishes that custom requires the living to devour upon returning from the visit to the lifeless remains of the dead." Besides the expressive richness of Don Pepe Milla, how much symbolic wealth is reflected in this tableau. It is, as Lara Figueroa[16] emphasizes, "a symbolic food: to commemorate the Day of the Dead and All Saints in Guatemala. It is the most exquisite and exuberant food of Guatemala. Due to its baroque nature and the elaborate methods of cooking, it expresses like nothing else the worldview and way of seeing the world of Guatemalans, both mestizo and those of Mayan descent. Thus, we Guatemalans are as baroque and complex as *fiambre*."

Celso Lara's unmatched literary style and the depth of his perspectives offer us this other descriptive delight[16], always in

relation to fiambre: "In this food, the entire identity of the Guatemalan can be established: the use of vegetables and their seasoning is an evident inheritance from the pre-Hispanic world; the use of different types of meats and sausages of Spanish descent, and the use of cheeses, capers, olives, and other spices of authentic Arab heritage. Regardless of its origin, the creativity of the anonymous Guatemalan cooks from various social strata has given it its special national connotation" (We refer interested readers to the original document from which these notes were taken; it is of incredible richness).

The culinary tradition of cabecera has been celebrated since the colonial era, when the Catholic religion and its significant dates were introduced to the Guatemalan towns in the Gregorian calendar. However, the tremendous antiquity of the custom of sharing food with deceased relatives goes beyond this, surpassing our ability to pinpoint it in time. It has been estimated, and there are reports[26] that "remembering and celebrating the dead is an ancient practice in Guatemala, so much so that in the mines of Takalik Abaj, in Zapotitlán, Retalhuleu, numerous pots with food remains were discovered in a 2,500-year-old tomb."

Almost universally, cabecera food is complemented with boiled güisquiles, and boiled corn, sometimes also including boiled güicoyes. It is not unusual for these vegetables to be cooked in the same pot and thus share their incomparable aromas. As sweet dishes, there are ayotes (squash) in honey and jocotes (a type of fruit) in honey. In both cases, the "honey" is not true honey, but rather a type of thick syrup made with panela. The five vegetable varieties are native to Guatemala, which reaffirms the belief that there is a defined, albeit unconscious, cultural identity among people who consume foods that have been gathered or domesticated by themselves from wild lineages in their ecological surroundings for millennia.

A very elaborate variation of ayote in honey is its cooking in panela alongside corn. Although exotic ingredients like cinnamon, ginger, and cloves are also included in its preparation, the most special touch is achieved with some pepper berries, our native pepper. This results in the spectacular delicacy that only competes with jocotes in honey, which, while prepared in equivalent ways, is never made with corn incorporated. Both come together in a sweet exaltation of solemn traditional cuisine.

Eaten as vegetables or fruits, these four foods are evidently common. Except for the seasonality of jocotes and the exclusivity of a sweet ayote dessert, the rest seems normal to anyone. However, as long as they are cabecera food, they are sacralized within Guatemalan traditions.

And since the objective of this work is to exalt pre-Hispanic food, recognize the contributions from the Iberian Peninsula, and elevate the culinary identity of Guatemalans, we do not delve deeper into the facts that shape and characterize the anthropology of our food. Therefore, we leave for further research the customs that accompany visits to the deceased to share cabecera food with them. Such as when the *zute* is uncovered, preserving the heat of the güisquiles, corn, and güicoyes, and golden flowers of "*flor de muerto*" are sprinkled, candles are lit, prayers are said,

a part of white liquor is poured, and the other part is ritualistically consumed, along with portions of food set aside for the deceased and more for the mourners.

## A SWEET ENDING: THE TYPICAL CONFECTIONERY

A separate chapter is dedicated to the glorious typical confectionery. This expresses the full vigor of the fusion between Maya and European cultures, and although it is a constellation of sweets that began during the colonial era, it is now one of the most specialized manifestations of national cuisine. It combines the Castilian taste for sugary delicacies with the fruits of the Guatemalan land, resulting in numerous products of sublime exquisiteness. Due to its origin, elaborate preparation, and unconscious cultural incorporation, it is not surprising that the City of Santiago, now known as Antigua Guatemala, became the hub of typical confectionery. It is also not surprising that it passed from there, along with the customs and tastes of Creoles, Spaniards, and natives, to Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción. It would be a lack of seriousness not to recognize the high-quality typical sweets from other cities, such as Quetzaltenango and Cobán, but the scope of this work prevents a deeper exploration of the subject.

We do not have many data to support the widespread belief that the ancient Maya did not use sweeteners, nor that they were particularly fond of them. From the imposed importation of sugarcane cultivation, driven, according to many indicators, by the need of the Spaniards to sweeten their drinks and consume desserts with sugar, it has been deduced that for the original inhabitants, sweeteners were not a necessity. However, we cannot affirm that they did not incorporate sweet flavors into some of their beverages; less can be imagined about their food. Wild honeys were the pre-Hispanic sweetening sources, and honey from the *doncellitas* [a type of flower] is considered the main one. It is claimed that sweetened chocolate included this honey. There are strong suspicions that they were fond of the nectar from canak flowers, which held a prominent place in their spiritual culture. We can imagine them sipping from the small flowers while performing other tasks at the foot of the tree. But the confectionery arising from mestizaje (mixing of cultures) is a more elaborate stage that requires cooking procedures to achieve the final product: a typical sweet.

Guava has yielded its fruits to prepare guava *colochos*, candies of great tradition and desirability, typical wherever they are found. Additionally, jams and jellies appear on home tables to exude the classic aroma of the fruit. The manzanilla, the little tree with small, orange buds that scent the holidays, transfers the fruit sweetened in thick syrup to dried corn husks, to be admired and eaten as *manzanillas en miel*. In Guatemala City, they are colored with an edible dye called "vegetable red," but in most towns, they retain their pleasant natural color. From the chilacayote, that well-known creeping gourd in the highland towns, come sweet chilacayotes, semi-crystallized delicacies of incomparable taste, eagerly sought after. With a similar texture, the sweet preparation of sweet potato tubers is achieved, resulting in sweet potatoes in honey. Another delight for the Guatemalan palate.

The zapote, the coveted tropical fruit that is so delicate on the palate, is processed a bit more to prepare the well-known *zapotillos* and *bocadillos de zapote* [zapote snacks], unique preparations that produce unmatched delicacies in appearance, color, and flavor. Other gourds yield seeds with which *chancacas*, a rather elaborate candy, are prepared. It has a very light sweetness but is always unparalleled; somewhat more primitive are the *pepitas*, made from pumpkin seeds and panela, shaped like large coins, distributed at fairs in indigenous towns. Less popular due to being more of a homemade dessert, *chancletas de güisquil* have their own place in typical confectionery. Because homemade are the desserts prepared within households, usually syrupy to varying degrees, such as chilacayote candy, ayote in honey, jocotes in honey, coyoles in honey, and bananas in mole, as well as *rellenitos de plátano* [stuffed plantains].

Some typical sweets are based on the processing of cosmopolitan fruits, such as coconuts. *Cocadas* and different types of coconut snacks (black, white, and amelcochados) are good examples in the country. The white ones are made with sugar, while the black ones use panela. Amelcochados or “tusa snacks” are made from semi-viscous panela and are called so because they are placed in pieces of dried corn husk due to their delicate softness. In the Caribbean area, specifically Livingston and Puerto Barrios, where tradition is more connected to coconuts, the snacks are larger, different, and collectively called "coconut preserves." Also made from cosmopolitan raw materials are "*canillitas de leche*" and "*bolitas de leche*," but culinary tradition imposes Guatemalan procedures on them.

Guatemalan techniques are also applied to *nuégados* [sweet dough balls] and *polvorosas* [crumbly cookies]. They are also imposed on *rosarios de tusa*, one of the most extraordinary typical sweets produced by artisanal confectionery.

As in the best cuisine, ending meals with delicacies is an entrenched custom. Although we have only recalled them here, space does not allow for us to enjoy them.

**SUMMARY**

The immense variability in the traditional popular foods of Guatemala creates a world of great descriptive complexity. Its diversity is such that no single dish reveals a clearly defined national uniformity, nor even an ethnic one. Even those that have achieved a certain local identity have not lost the ability to forge multiple variations on the same themes. There are changes among families, within the different areas of the same town, between towns, among generations, and across social levels. This situation presents challenges for scholars of recipe collections and those who delve into the multiple facets of food anthropology. However, it opens countless doors for those who wish to deepen their understanding of customs, the strengthening of traditions, and the pathways of culinary evolution.

Popular gastronomy is saturated with notable facts that are often overlooked because they are excessively common. Thus, one of the first things that draws attention, when observed with a bit more scrutiny, is the presence of indigenous genetic lines in the most genuine Guatemalan culinary tradition. This is

what leads us to qualify the lineages that forge tradition in culinary matters as natural resources. It is worth noting that, after being discovered over the centuries, many wild species have been brought into the yards of Guatemalans and consequently transformed into cultivated crops and semi-domesticated forms.

There are many wild lineages in ecosystems, and sometimes even in agricultural systems as weeds, which in both cases include relatives of domesticated species. Many of these irreplaceable foods are threatened with extinction due to the radical transformations of natural habitats, mass contamination, poorly conceived "development plans," and, more seriously (and in my personal view, a real crime against Guatemalan identity), the loss of cultural identity and subsequent disdain for traditional values.

The extinction of wild lineages, of unique varieties from this particular center of origin of food plants that we inhabit, known as genetic erosion, poses a real danger to the lines of spontaneous growth in rugged lands. Although Guatemalans have developed an efficient agricultural culture of undeniable antiquity, which has allowed them to domesticate some lineages, the only bank of wild genes remains in the ecosystems of the ecological environment. Programs designed to conserve natural heritage, for example through the management and care of protected areas, are a good aid for the conservation of germplasm, because the conservation of these depends on the preservation of culinary identity and the ability to maintain rituals, festivities, and spiritual expressions in which certain foods are sanctified.

The lineages of food plants should not be seen as part of a unique heritage: they are natural heritage as living beings, but cultural heritage in that they are incorporated into the customs, traditions, behaviors, and actions of Guatemalan human groups. A large part of the local traditional gastronomy is nourished by native lineages originating from this country, which is central to the unique Mesoamerican space that allowed for an explosion of biological variability as well as the development of culturally rich diversity, with immense historical, behavioral, and identity significance.

The status of native species in our traditional foods has been noted by several researchers, but the final formulation of the territory as a center of origin and diversification of crops was solidified with Vavilov's studies in the first quarter of the 20th century. The rich variety of dishes in Guatemalan cuisine is a result of a relationship spanning many centuries with edible plants and their corresponding variability. Cuisine, the art of making food through the transformation of what would otherwise just be another food item, is a good way to create a cultural synthesis from a varied set of spontaneous facts shaped by social modes of preparation, incorporating them into a unique act. This leads López García[17] to state that food becomes one of the most important symbolic foundations in the construction of cultural identity.

It has been said that the symbolic value of food can be seen in the way food is prepared, in the manner in which diners arrange themselves around it, and in the

way it is consumed, and that cooking, when considered integrally, is a language in which a society translates its structure. We insist that food based on the utilization of local resources, in the form of native lineages, enhances its symbolic value and reinforces the cultural identity it constructs. Cuisine has identified us as a nation, even though there are different modalities in various places, and although different styles persist depending on the greater or lesser availability or proximity to food sources. The ethnobiology of food in the country is a superb field of study, though it is cracking due to the loss of some of its key elements.

We still have much to learn from the ancient customs maintained in villages, from the latent grandeur in the apparent simplicity of traditional recipes, and from the value of culinary identity as a way to strengthen cultural identity. We must assign sociocultural value to the extreme ceremony that involves the gift of tamales on Christmas and New Year's Eve, the bread of *recado* during Holy Week, the generous sending of plates of *fiambre* on All Saints' Day, or the *chuchitos* that are offered with sincerity only achieved when the gift is recognized as exceptional. The generous behavior expressed through meals among families or individuals with whom there are sincere degrees of high esteem and appreciation, such as when inviting someone to a "*caldo de gallina de patio*" on December 25 at noon or when sharing pinol or pulique within a brotherhood that has opened its doors to a cherished guest, is also significant. In short: the traditional popular cuisine of Guatemala is extraordinary, from which arise foods of inestimable value and high social significance.



## POST SCRIPTUM REFLECTIONS

National gastronomy has three dimensions: one is traditional Creole food, which is based on the use of native lineages and generally maintains a culturally discernible identity. The second is what is called "Guatemalan cuisine", which includes "typical dishes" that, while largely based on traditional cuisine, may incorporate foreign ingredients, recipes, and instructions; it has also been assimilated into a generalized popular identity. The third dimension is gourmet cuisine, pompously dubbed "haute cuisine," which, when trying to be more authentic, adopts and incorporates ingredients from traditional popular cuisine. The first two share the seasoning inherited from centuries of practice and the unconscious transfer of knowledge from generation to generation through procedures, recipes, modes, and serving times; in short, their cultural significance.

It is likely not very successful to attempt to completely separate traditional cuisine from what is colloquially called typical Guatemalan cuisine, and even from gourmet cuisine with Creole touches, if we base this solely on their relation to native wild lineages. In all, there exists an enrichment of cultural components, in some more than in others, but a valuation of quantities is so subjective that the limit becomes diffuse, a realm of overlaps. On the other hand, a plate of cooked pacayas seems as Creole as one of chojín or a steaming soup of bledo as a good "*cocido* [Steamed food]" In the context of this essay, the first of each pair is more genuine, simpler, and made with native foods, while the other is very Guatemalan but influenced and derived from the

culinary customs of the major postcolonial urban centers rather than from towns near the sources of useful weeds and other edible plants, characteristic of traditional food par excellence.

In this contribution to anthropology and food ethnobiology in Guatemala, we have only been able to glance at one of the many themes of native cuisine, leaving the analysis of other culinary expressions, including gourmet, for a better opportunity, all of which are of great contextual richness. We have done this based on the premise that the association with local germplasm leads to viewing traditional food as a social expression that has incorporated and maintained one or more contiguous wild lineages. A relevant characteristic is its high degree of diversification. With slight or intense variations among towns or social groups, it has maintained an identity that has withstood the test of time. Its symbolic references are found in very ancient food customs.

Placing native germplasm among the elements that enrich cuisine adds value to both. However, it is essential to go further and recognize that our maternal cuisine constitutes a high social expression, whose patterns give it identity. Discussing our native foods by exploring their biological aspects is a way to exalt the ethnobiological relationships that have been forged in the country, detail by detail, on unshakable foundations. Thus, there is a double exaltation in traditional Guatemalan popular gastronomy.

In this, the mythical character, the sacred conception, the belief in a shared common origin, or the deification of a species applied to the worldview concerning native lineages of food value are rich sources of symbolism and cultural identity. An exemplary case is chocolate, the divine cacao, discovered by the Maya and the Olmecs who preceded them in the Caribbean slopes of their tropical rainforest lands. Deified, domesticated to the point of cultivation, converted into an exclusive drink for rulers, priests, and privileged warriors, equated to currency, sacralized in ritual beverage, and thus loaded with all the spirituality contained in the cosmos of one of the most formidable civilizations the world has known, this energizing and stimulating brew that ancient Maya women eagerly served frothy, enriched with honey from wild maidens and orejuela flowers, in addition to vanilla and sometimes corn... Should it not be one of the greatest prides of Guatemalan nationality expressed in the universe of its cuisine?

Another topic worthy of mention is corn, particularly when we see it in the soul of sacred foods like pinol and pulique. Since ancient times, it has been regarded as a sacred food, capable of sustaining the being made from its substance. The Memorial de Sololá states that “only two animals knew that it existed in Paxil, the name of the place where those animals were found, which were called Coyote and Raven. The Coyote was killed, and among its remains, when it was dismembered, corn was found. And the animal called Tiuh-tiuh went to look for the corn dough for itself, and the blood of the danta and the snake was brought from the sea, and with it, the corn was kneaded. From that dough, the flesh of man was made by the Creator and the Formulator.” As food par excellence, it thus becomes flesh in man. It is preeminent in material culture as well as

in social (language, ceremonies, and festivities) and spiritual (divine origin, present in legends, beliefs, customs, myths, rites, dances, and religious rituals) aspects. The corn god holds a significant place in the Maya pantheon. In Stela 40 of Piedras Negras, it is represented at the moment of sowing the grain.

From the discussion, it can be inferred that it is impossible to point to a single food that symbolizes all Guatemalan culture and spirituality. If someone is asked to name a dish with enough attributes to represent traditional popular cuisine, they might immediately think of one related to their childhood, the family ritual of enjoying it, or the social environment in which they were raised. Then, without even realizing it, their mind will provide other factors that will complete a complex subconscious picture of descriptors to enhance their choice. If I were that someone, I would likely lean towards the humble chuchito (which, certainly, has strong competition from tortillas and a plate of black beans).

A chuchito is a food made from corn dough, seasoned with a sauce as ancient as the dough itself, and cooked covered with structures that come from the corn plant. This, by itself, is already quite enough. Additionally, it is an evidently pre-Hispanic preparation, adorned with a few Iberian nuances added during the colonial era. Thus, without losing its original essence, it is very representative of the culinary syncretism that shines throughout the country. It can be prepared with a combination of extremely simple ingredients or enriched with other native foods, such as izote flowers, chipi leaves, or lorocos. It embodies and personifies Creole cuisine, distinguishes typical cuisine, and flourishes in gourmet cooking. It can be found in remote villages, genuine enclaves of popular culinary tradition, in distinguished homes across all towns, and in upscale urban salons as a snack at luxurious receptions. No Guatemalan is unfamiliar with chuchitos, as they can be a complete meal, a snack, a casual bite, a quick food item, an inexpensive meal, a always-accessible morsel, or a generous gift to strengthen bonds of friendship or familiarity. They are well-received at any hour of the day or night and are never hard to digest. They are sold at informal food stalls, whether on a metropolitan sidewalk or in a makeshift restaurant, in popular dining halls, or in sumptuous restaurants. They pair with all available or desired beverages, from pure water to a cocktail, including chocolate, tea, coffee, milk, or soft drinks. They can be classified as everyday food, solemn, festive, or sacred, because in the latter case, their sacralization depends on the cultural fact that adopts it as such.

As one of the best examples of traditional Guatemalan popular cuisine, the humble chuchito condenses the very essence of national food culture.

Bon appétit!

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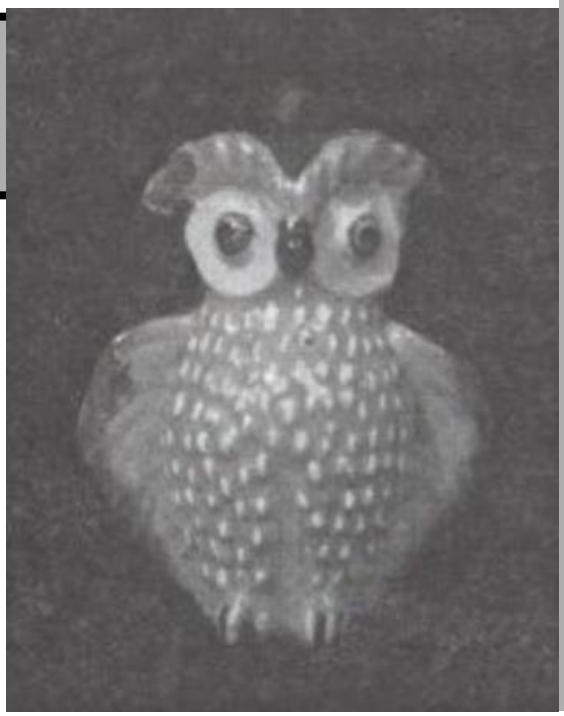

# The Story of the Plañideras [Professional Mourners]

HUGO MADRIGAL

Crying and wailing could be heard frequently at the funeral. The professional mourners had arrived from San Pedro Ayampuc, just a few kilometers from the city.

These women that were hired to cry at funerals, were part of a tradition that endured in Guatemala since colonial times. Now, in the 20th century, they are no longer seen at any funerals. This custom began to fade in the last two decades of the past century, although in some areas of the Guatemalan highlands, it still persists, with mourners occasionally attending a funeral to cry. However, the practice is now very rare, and professional mourners are almost nonexistent.

According to tradition, professional mourners were hired to cry and lament the loss of the deceased at funerals they attended. It was considered a good omen if they came to mourn and cry for the deceased, as it ensured the person's salvation in the afterlife, where they would be welcomed by good people.

**DON JORGE, THE BUTCHER**

When Don Jorge, a butcher from the Gerona neighborhood in Guatemala City, passed away, the neighbors hardly grieved for him because he was considered a troublesome man, according to people at the market and in the neighborhood.

The deceased man had been a someone who always took advantage of the kindness of his neighbors and treated people poorly at the market where he ran his butcher shop. But that's just who we are, we like being treated badly. Doña Chon recalls Don Jorge saying: "Ah, y'all are suckers for punishment!"

Don Jorge's bitterness stemmed from his youth. His dreams had been shattered when he had planned to go to the United States during a time when crossing into the country was not difficult. However, he had the misfortune of his parents dying in a tragic accident just as he was planning his trip. Being an only child, he was left devastated and never made it to the U.S. because he became so depressed that he nearly died.

Since he was good at business, he didn't lose the butcher shop his father had owned, and a few days after his parents' death, he began working there. Over time, the shop became highly popular among the neighbors, and he found a good spot in the market where he spent his later years alongside his wife and two sons, who

helped him with the business. Word spread quickly in the neighborhood and market that he had died of a diabetic coma on his way from home to the market. He had been walking alone when he collapsed on the sidewalk of a house and severely injured his brain. When his wife was notified, she tried to take him to a clinic, but it was impossible to save him. The diabetic coma was fatal for the poor butcher.

Knowing that he was not liked in the neighborhood, the family hired several women from San Pedro Ayampuc to cry and lament Don Jorge's death. The professional mourners cried and wailed with such intensity that the neighbors said the wailing of the women from San Pedro Ayampuc had allowed such a disliked man to enter heaven.





**DOÑA MECHES**

Doña Meches had a stand selling traditional sweets in front of the Santo Domingo church back in the 1960s. She was such a beloved old lady that all the neighbors would visit her to chat and buy sweets, particularly *cajeta* that she brought from Antigua Guatemala and sold almost at the same price as in the Colonial City.

A devout Catholic, she was also a professional mourner, and as she said, she did it "out of tradition -as she said- I didn't need to be indigenous to go cry wherever I'm invited when there's a deceased," she would say. She knew the history of the mourners, as many people called them. According to legend, there was a time during the colonial era when the Spaniards, still oppressing the local population, would ask the indigenous people to cry for them and lament their departure from this world so they could be accepted into heaven. As Doña Meches explained, the idea was that with the indigenous men and women crying over the body of a deceased Spaniard, the deceased would be accepted into heaven because it was believed they had been righteous.

But Doña Meches denied that they were deceiving God. "Well, you see, no one deceives God, but perhaps this act of mercy moved Him to compassion and forgiveness -who knows- though it's most likely that bad people still go to hell, even if we mourners accompany them in their grief. As for me, I only go and cry when I know the deceased was a good person."

"Well, you see, don't think we only cry for the bad people. We also mourn and lament for good people, that's the tradition. But as I said, at first, we would only cry for the bad ones so they would be allowed into heaven," and then Doña Meches would make the sign of the cross over them.

**THE CRYING WOMEN OF SAN PEDRO AYAMPUC**

In San Pedro Ayampuc, there are still a few mourners who cry and lament when there is a death, but now they only do so among the indigenous communities surrounding that municipality. In San Luis and Las Villas, there is also a group of these women who join those from San Pedro and attend the wakes. When someone dies, they are accompanied to the cemetery, and along the way, the professional mourners cry and lament, questioning why the person is being taken to the other world.

Many children who attend the funeral are frightened by the loud wails they hear from the mourners.

The crying women of San Pedro say that occasionally, *ladinos* from the capital call them to come and cry, but this is very rare now. The tradition, which was once very common in Guatemala where the deceased were accompanied by wails and laments, has been largely lost.

**QUETZALTENANGO**

Back in 1984, I was in the city of Quetzaltenango when I saw a procession of people accompanying a funeral, approaching the cemetery.

A group of indigenous women were crying and loudly expressing their sorrow during the procession. I thought to myself, what a good person the deceased must have been, to be mourned and lamented so intensely.

Since the funeral procession was nearing, I decided to wait to cross the road. I observed the mourners, and they were a "sea" of tears and wails. My companion, an indigenous leader, told me that these women were hired to cry and lament for the deceased so that they would be accepted into heaven.

# Wandering History: A Walk Along Camino Real from Guatemala to Chiapas.

## Colloquium on Camino Real

**ALFONSO ARRIVILLAGA CORTÉS**

More than a year ago, archaeologist Mario Tejada Bouscayrol announced that research on Camino Real from Chiapas from Indios to Santiago de los Caballeros was making progress. Joining a project that had started 18 years earlier in the Mexican state of Chiapas, archaeologist Thomas Lee shared some preliminary findings that eventually led to a national counterpart effort to continue the reconstruction of Camino Real. As a result of these efforts, in April 2004, in the state capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the rector of the University of San Carlos of Guatemala, Dr. Luis Leal, and the rector of the University of Sciences and Arts of Chiapas, Dr. María Elena Tobar, signed a cooperation agreement between the two universities with Camino Real as the backdrop.

As a first outcome of this series of efforts, from the 6th to the 8th of this month, with the Embassy of Mexico as host and the support of Cultural Counselor Carlos Ortega, the event **Wandering History** took place at the Luis Cardoza y Aragón Auditorium. Undoubtedly, the presence of the honorable Mexican Ambassador added prestige, but more importantly, this event was given the recognition it deserved. In a country where even many academic events are influenced by current political topics, the opportunity to focus on a subject like this, along with the thoughtful selection of participants, makes a publication on the event necessary.

While we discuss and ponder the need for a national project, neighboring states like Chiapas send high-level delegations to collaborate with us on this colloquium. They invite and play host, offering a toast and a concert. Splendid as they often are,

they now go beyond their borders. The inaugural lecture was delivered by Dr. Andrés Fábregas Puig, a Chiapan intellectual who, in recent years, promoted the most important regional meetings of thought and culture in the area. Undoubtedly well-known and remembered, as evidenced by the number of intellectuals who accompanied him during the lecture and expressed their admiration. Dr. Fábregas is a scholar who drew attention to the lack of studies on the Southern Border, a region that, until 20 years ago, received little to no attention from researchers or the state. Judging by the approach taken by this intellectual, which focuses on a more human aspect of the border and not just migration numbers, his perspective remains essential. To conclude that initial evening, the photographic exhibition "*Arquitectura del Camino Real de Chiapas a Guatemala*" was inaugurated, with Dr. Thomas Lee providing a guided tour. Two unfortunate absences were announced: Dr. Jesús Morales Bermúdez, a Chiapan anthropologist and writer and director of the Mexico-Central America Studies Center, and Dr. Arturo Taracena Arriola, an important Guatemalan historian. However, it is hoped that their presentations will still be included.

The first presentation at the event was given by anthropologist Carlos René García Escobar, with an intriguing discussion on the Paso del Manzanillo, a now-extinct traditional route. Drawing on oral sources from his family, he shared memories of his father, adding a series of details accumulated over many years of fieldwork with his students from the School of History at the University of San Carlos. The route in question, located on the path from Santiago de los Caballeros to Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, set the stage for the next presentation by the Director of the General Archive of Central America, historian Julio Galicia Díaz, an expert on the history of the relocation of Santiago de los Caballeros to Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción following the Santa Marta earthquakes in 1773. The fascinating presentation highlighted, among many other details, the role of topography in the planning and provision of services like water. The morning session concluded with Alfonso Arrivillaga Cortés's work on Camino del Golfo and the formation of that region, a study focusing on the convergence of lake and

land in "Yzabal," a town that flourished throughout the 19th century.

The afternoon session began with a presentation by sociologist Aroldo Camposeco from the Institute of Interethnic Studies, who shared part of his research on *Poptí* identity in the Huista region. This research is of great value, especially given that Camposeco is a native speaker and bearer of *Poptí* culture, providing a unique perspective rarely seen in academic practice. Mario Tejada then presented "*El corregimiento de Totonicapán-Huehuetenango: un paso intermedio en el trayecto del Camino Real de Chiapas a Guatemala*", where he engagingly shared the results of his research in the area. It is clear that his presentation involved reflections based on several field discoveries. It is also worth noting his role as a facilitator in presenting the various works. The afternoon concluded with a presentation by Chiapan historian Sergio Nicolás Gutiérrez Cruz on Chiapan Commerce in the Last Decades of the Colony via Camino Real, based on his research on the Oliachea family, settled in Chiapas in the 17th century. The Oliachea-Esponda family alliance helped consolidate a large estate under secular ownership, which was uncommon, as such holdings were typically reserved for the clergy. The cacao trade was the driving force behind the development of this family's history.

All presentations were accompanied by a variety of rich and insightful contributions from the audience, which continued the following day. The next day began with a presentation by another event and project promoter, Thomas Lee Whitting, on changes in the health of the Coxoh people during the 12th to 17th centuries in Chiapas. Lee demonstrated how the colonial authorities, after completing the conquest, forced settlement pattern changes, causing the Coxoh people to be relocated to more unsanitary places. This led to the rapid spread of new diseases from the Old World, decimating the indigenous populations, and by the end of three centuries, the Coxoh people had disappeared. Roberto Andréu followed with a presentation on Chiapan silverwork, based on an analysis of several pieces from the Franz Mayer Museum. Finally, we had the opportunity to hear Haroldo Rodas's work on "*Las evidencias artísticas de los lazos dominicos Chiapas-Guatemala*" where he offered a comprehensive take on the subject.

To close this series of presentations, two more well-crafted papers were delivered. First, Gustavo Palma demonstrated the potential of properly using digital technology. His mapping of various Colonial Roads in Guatemala provided a global view of the road networks, including the initial paths and their restructuring following the conquest processes, making a significant contribution.

As with any event, the sessions were exhausting, and time was running short. The last presentation by Matthías Stöckli focused on the historical roots of indigenous music. Using various examples of indigenous music, particularly a Latin chant from the Nebaj area and a *chirimilla* and drum performance from the Dance of the Conquest, he highlighted some of the difficulties in historiographically analyzing such topics. His presentation, accompanied by sound examples, set the stage for the closing concert.

Although the final item on the program was announced as a closing concert, performed by the Contemporary Quartet, I would venture to say that this performance also functioned as a presentation in the event. Anchored in the colonial era, the concert took the audience on a journey starting from the Cuchumatanes mountains, with the repertoire of San Miguel Acatán, then moving to Sebastián Lemoa, and finally to Santiago de los Caballeros. They presented works by Tomás Pascual and other anonymous composers, giving the audience an overview of the musical development in the time and regions discussed.

It is important to repeat this experience in a place like the School of History, which was a key participant in the event thanks to the dedicated work of Lesbia Ortiz. Perhaps, in examining *Caminos Reales*, we can find not only discoveries but also the way history is practiced, as demonstrated by this valuable experience.

# From Spain to Guatemala

## Comments on the book *The Long Twentieth Century in Guatemala and Latin America: Women, Guerrillas, and Intellectual Elites as Agents of Social Change*[1]

Guatemala City: Editorial Llerena, S.A.
2002, 123 pp.

**EDGAR MENDOZA**[2]

I would like to begin by thanking Lic. Celso Lara from the Folklore Studies Center (CEFOL, in Spanish) at the University of San Carlos of Guatemala and the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History (IPGH, in Spanish) for the invitation to comment on the book *The Long Twentieth Century in Guatemala and Latin America: Women, Guerrillas, and Intellectual Elites as Agents of Social Change*, authored by a young researcher who has a professional future in the social history of Guatemala: Dr. Patricia Arroyo Calderón.

My reading of the book is one-dimensional, focusing on the theoretical and methodological aspects where I center my comments.

Patricia's book, from a women's history perspective, consists of four historiographical essays: the situation of women in early 20th-century Guatemala, gender, citizenship, and nation in Guatemala in the 1920s, female participation during the Mexican Revolution, and the Peruvian movement of Sendero Luminoso. I will not summarize each essay, as Drs. Torres and Barrios have already discussed them.

However, the first two essays that captivated me and, in my opinion, encompass the overall analytical perspective of the book are: "Analysis of Journalistic Discourse about Women in Early 20th-Century Guatemala: *El Diario de Centroamérica*: A Case Study" and "Gender, Citizenship, and Nation in Guatemala in 1920."

Patricia references the methodological conditions under which the two essays in the book were developed, as well as their limitations.

1. Some questions that guided the essays included: What sources

1 Arroyo Calderón, Patricia, 2002. *El largo siglo XX en Guatemala y Latinoamérica: las mujeres, guerrilleras y élites intelectuales como agentes de cambio social*. Folklore Studies Center -CEFOL, in Spanish- of the University of San Carlos of Guatemala and Pan-American Institute of Geography and History -IPGH, in Spanish-.

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inform feminist thought? What influences do other feminist movements have in Guatemala? What were the historical conditions of the movement?

2. She focuses on the social sector that has access to discourse and dissemination in mass media, such as newspapers (referring to the tracking of testimonies that Patricia conducted of the 13 articles published in *El Diario de Centroamérica* between 1903-1912).

3. Attention is drawn to the risk intellectuals face when falling into the vices of biased interpretation and limiting the study to certain defined social sectors: intellectuals, female writers, poets, middle-class journalists, Ladinos, and urban residents. Patricia consciously indicates the exclusion of indigenous, peasant, and illiterate women from public debate.

4. A multifaceted investigation is presented, but with limits on the object of study and the use of the comparative method.

5. The articles from *El Diario de Centroamérica* follow a chronological order that entails a thematic order.

6. The importance of knowing the voice of middle and upper-class women in Guatemalan society in a feminist historical memory rescue between 1903-1912 in search of a national project in a public space.

7. The discourse analysis is about the incorporation of Guatemalan women into the political sphere.

8. It is observable that there is a constant reference to the bibliography of historiographical studies of women conducted in Spain and Central America, primarily Costa Rica. However, for Guatemala, despite Patricia's effort to create a bibliographic mapping, there is a notable absence of historiographical works on women in the 19th century by Licda. Beatriz Palomo de Lewin from Universidad del Valle.

9. Patricia's intellectual awareness is remarkable as she indicates that her conclusions are partial and that further research on the topic is needed. Patricia's research focused on Ladino-urban intellectual women in the capital city. Despite the study being well-defined, one should not fall into the danger of generalizations.

At this point, I want to perform a methodological exercise in women's studies. In my opinion, these studies cannot be understood disconnected from a social structure, social and cultural manifestations, historical, political factors, social class, and culturally globalized societies. Women cannot be studied without a historical-structural understanding and an economic universe. However:

- Which women are we talking about?
- Are they differentiated by ethnicity or social class?
- What social strata are we addressing: middle-class women, popular classes, or the proletariat?
- There are various levels of analysis, such as the differences

between Ladino women, indigenous women, Afro-Guatemalan women, urban women, rural women, students, housewives, single mothers, literate women, domestic workers, and elderly women. Each level possesses specificity and is organized within concrete and heterogeneous social and collective representations.

Methodologically, it is important to define our subjects of study and avoid generalizations. In this regard, Patricia does an excellent job delimiting her subject of study, which is the female elites between 1903-1912, and justifies the limits of her research. In her essays, Patricia takes us through the schools of thought that influenced the beginnings of feminism in Guatemala, such as social Catholicism, Krausism, social regeneration, hygienism, and racism through eugenics.

Patricia's conclusions indicate that intellectual women in early 20th-century Guatemala were engaged in constructing a project of nationhood, citizenship, and inclusion in public space, as well as their relationship with the media. Furthermore, the importance of women's education, wage labor, and involvement in political life is emphasized. The struggle to change stereotypes and perceptions in the 1920s, which held that women were solely biological reproducers, to acknowledge them as reproducers of moral, civic, and patriotic values, was a step towards incorporating Guatemalan women into citizenship. In the Mexican case, with the revolution of 1910, this process was faster and included greater intellectual debate, especially in the feminist congresses of 1916. In the state of Yucatán, the emergence of the "revolutionary woman" during these years changed the landscape of stereotypes.

If we consider Max Weber's theoretical construction of ideal types, we would see that the transition of women from being considered the "angel of the home" (19th century) to modern women (in this case, from the 1920s) is a search for citizenship in the political realm, not just in educational and cultural contexts.

To conclude this brief commentary, I will say that Patricia's valuable book is a historiographical contribution to reconstructing the beginnings of the feminist movement in Guatemala in the first two decades of the 20th century.