

The Center for the Study of Cultures in Guatemala -CECEG- of the University of San Carlos de Guatemala was originally created on July 8, 1967. Science, like life and society itself, is in constant change and development. The University of San Carlos of Guatemala to respond to the new challenges of multidisciplinary research on cultural , dynamics on July 24, 2019 begins a new stage of that center, since its mandate, which was approved by the Honorable University Superior Council in the "SECOND point, Item 2.1 Sub-item 2.1.1 of the Minutes No. 18-2019 of ordinary session held on July 24, 2019", aims to study culture from a holistic, dynamic vision, in constant construction and as the basis for the development of Guatemalan society, in a contemporary , context characterized by the global of the different cultural manifestations. interrelation This purpose is achieved by strengthening all the tradition inherited from the studies called "folkloric" in the previous era, and responding to the need to understand and study the interweaving of the current .cultural dynamics



Celso Lara: His Legacy to Guatemalan Traditional and Popular Literature

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"Celso Lara was one of the pioneers in giving scientific value to Guatemalan folklore and the initiator of the objective concept of valuing our culture".

Miguel Álvarez, chronicler of City.Guatemala

Summary

Celso Lara was one of the researchers and scholars of traditional oral literature in Guatemala, co-responsible for achieving the autonomy of the History career of the Faculty of Humanities to create the School of History; his contributions served as the backbone for the organization of the Anthropology career, both at the University of San Carlos de Guatemala. He was a columnist for the newspaper La Hora, creator of several articles on Guatemalan culture, customs and tradition, which were published in different magazines, newspapers and books. The figure of Celso Lara impacted academic studies that relate the systematization of field work, through the testimonies and narratives of different people, to then give it a scientific meaning. This article shows a brief review of Celso Lara's contributions to Guatemalan academia, with opinions of professionals who in some way worked with him.

Key words: Celso Lara, contributions, academy, oral tradition, folklore.

Abstract

Celso Lara was one of the researchers and scholars of traditional oral literature in Guatemala, jointly responsible for achieving autonomy in the History discipline of the Facultad de Humanidades to create the Escuela de Historia, his contributions served as a backbone for the organization of the anthropology career, both at the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. He was a columnist for the newspaper La Hora, author of several articles on Guatemalan culture, customs and tradition, which were published in different magazines, newspapers and books. The figure of Celso Lara impacted the academic studies that relate the systematization of field work, through the testimonies and narratives of the people, to later give it a scientific meaning. This article shows a brief review of Celso Lara's contributions to the Guatemalan academy, with opinions from professionals who somehow worked with him.

Key words: Celso Lara, contributions, academy, oral tradition, folklore.

Introduction

Celso Arnaldo Lara Figueroa was born in 1948. Historian by training, anthropologist by vocation, connoisseur of popular poetry and lover of academic music, he was the author of articles and academic essays gathered in various collections and published in Guatemala, America and Europe. Based on anthropological and historical works carried out in Spain, Mexico and South America, he highlighted the value of the Guatemalan oral tradition, which is why he was associated with the mythical beings of this oral literature, making contributions to literature and social sciences. The newspaper *La Hora* published a review summarizing his books:

Lara was the author of... "Cuentos y consejas populares de Guatemala", "Leyendas y casos de la tradición oral de la ciudad de Guatemala" or "Leyendas de misterio, amor y magia". Lara Figueroa, in his book *Por los viejos barrios de la ciudad de Guatemala*, left a study on folklore and the relationship of this with people in their daily lives, and that sought, in a scientific way, to find the influence that legends on Guatemalans and their family (Redactor, 2019, par. 3).had

These works and others are stored in the documentation center of the former Centro de Estudios Folklóricos (today Centro de Estudios de las Culturas en Guatemala). To these works are added other articles published by Lara together with a hemerographic collection of articles published in the newspaper *La Hora*, since, since the early 1980s, he was in charge of the Cultural Supplement of that newspaper, during Holy Week and Christmas, as well as during other important periods, such as the Independence and the Revolution

In addition, weekly, it published fragments of the lives of some European academic authors, with data taken from books published by the Spanish publisher Parramón.

His life

He was the son of Celso Lara Calacán and Jesús Figueroa Villagrán. Lara Calacán was a musician¹, so he transmitted that taste to his son, as Lara Figueroa himself commented in an interview with journalist Rodrigo Arias:

My father, who was a maestro de capilla. The last great maestro of the Metropolitan Cathedral before Vatican II came to disrupt the musical culture of the entire Latin American world. My dad was the maestro who was appointed to handle this issue and I helped a lot. My dad, my fundamental profession was music. He taught me a lot to work with the piano. My father would wake up me at 3:00 .m. and with that I would go to the piano to study. He would have breakfast and he would already hear what I was doing right and what I was doing wrong. That was before I got ready to leave for school; I studied all my life at San Sebastian. I could say that I have been involved in this work from a very early age. At a certain moment, I was moved by all these precious manifestations in Guatemala and I started to investigate, but I did not know how to do it, then I was very young, I was not even 15 years old (Arias, 2017, para. 4).

This shows the beginning of his love for Celso Lara's music, the closeness and the bonds created with his family, especially with his grandmother and father. On the other hand, being a neighbor of the neighborhood of La Recolectión, in the Historic Center of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, marked the

Lara's life and work. This neighborhood inspired Lara to write his book *Por los viejos barrios de la ciudad de Guatemala*, a book with three chapters that compiled legends repeated by word of mouth by the neighbors, who exchanged stories in gatherings, alleys or in the corridors of the houses, with which he felt identified since his childhood and that configures the features that delineate the Guatemalan being. He studied history at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of San Carlos de Guatemala. Celso Lara spoke with Rodrigo Arias about this experience in this interview:

When I arrived at the Faculty of Humanities, I already knew that I wanted to be either a writer or a historian, there I found the fundamental support in this wonderful adventure that has been rescuing and preserving and currently sowing the oral traditions that have become the essence Guatemalan culture (Arias, 2017, par. 6).

At that time, as Lara himself told the author of this article, he suffered with General Studies, especially mathematics. Until he explained to the authorities that he did not plan to study engineering or physics, but rather a career in the humanities. Once on the faculty, he was one of the student leaders in favor of separating the History department from the Faculty. This event led to the creation of the School of History. As anthropologist Olga Pérez Molina, who was married to Lara, relates

Due to Celso Lara's leadership, it is possible for the Universidad de San Carlos to as part of offer a degree in its academic offerings Anthropology, thus establishing the study of the imagination within anthropological studies. He was one of the great historians that has had

Guatemala, such as Luis Luján and Josefina Alonso de Rodríguez, among others (Pérez, 2019).

Another fact that Lara shared with the author of these lines in 2012 was that he studied history, folklore and anthropology at the Universidad Central de Venezuela. His vocation for music, which had been encouraged by his father and his studies at the National Conservatory of Music in Guatemala, was strengthened during his stay in Venezuela when he took classes at the José Ángel Lamas School of Advanced Musical Studies in Caracas, specializing in organ and harpsichord

Professional tour

Because of his dedication to study, the historian Roberto Díaz Castillo (1931-2014), invited Lara to join the small group of researchers of traditional and popular Guatemalteco culture at the Centro de Estudios Folklóricos, CEFOL, co-founded by Díaz in 1967. Thus, Lara joined CEFOL in 1973 (Déleon, 2019). It was practically his only place of work, as retired, by a disposition of the university authorities, in February 2014. At CEFOL he served as director on several occasions, the last one being between 1998 and 2013.

He was also recognized for being the founder of ethnomusicology, musicology studies and organology in the Faculty of Humanities and of the university program in Culture, Thought and Identity of the Guatemalan the General Directorate of Research. Thanks Society of to Díaz, he traveled to Caracas and met former Latin American experts who connected him with institutions such as the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History. Because of his experience in

oral tradition, he was invited to participate in documentaries sponsored by the Organization of American States and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Unesco. In the 1980s, the communicator Rita María Roesch invited to narrate legends in a series of documentaries produced for Channel 5, at that time him of cultural and educational . transmissionThis gave Lara a media space that no other historian had before. It was also at that time that he was invited to write for the evening newspaper La Hora. His first notes were about the Carrera Theater (later called Colón) and, due to friendship with the director of the newspaper, he continued to collaborate until 2013. For all , in the 1990s he was invited as a commentator, when morning programming on open television channels in Guatemala. began Once a week, Lara had a brief participation, from 20 to 30 minutes, which gave him a very wide , .projectionwhich he shared with the also historian Miguel Álvarez The communicator Mario David García, owner of Crónica Magazine, in its second period, invited Lara to share a weekly , with the same subject matter that he handled in La Hora, in 1999. Thus, during the government of Alfonso Portillo (2000-2004), who felt admiration columnfor the oral tradition and for Lara's , he received support for some projects. It can be said that the most important period for studiesLara was between 1990 and 2005, since he maintained a projection in written media and televised that no other professional of the hu- manities had before or since.

In addition to his work at CEFOL, Lara taught several courses at the School of History, such as Anthropology of Religion and

Anthropological Thought of Latin America and Guatemala, which kept him close to students for four decades. In his subjects, he emphasized the relevance he gave to authors such as the Romanian-American comparative scholar of religions Mircea Eliade; in addition to classical authors, among them the Argentine-Venezuelan Isabel musicologist Aretz (1909-2005); the Brazilian folklorist Paulo de Carvalho Neto (1923-2003) and the Chilean Tomás Lagos.

Publications

Among Lara', he s publicationswrote for the Boletín Informativo de la Comisión Guatemalteca de Cooperación, Unesco, in which he described theoretical notes oninvestigation of popular culture in Latin . AmericaThere, he emphasized the importance of research, promotion and dissemination of culture, to manage its historical , characternot to distort or transform it, to preserve folk art, traditional crafts (Unesco, 1988, p. 9).

One of his first publications was in the magazine Estudios Anuario de la Asociación José Joaquín Pardo, in 1971, where he made notes in consideration of the *Testimonios de la Re- forma Liberal* together with Miguel Alberto Paredes, in which he took into consideration his extensive knowledge in the collection of testimonies and analysis of oral ; transmissionwith these stories they construct history from the field of oral , .historythereby providing other ways of understanding an important historical event at the national level

Celso Lara published an article entitled El (The Estudio Study de of la Historia History en in GuatemalaGuatemala un : A análisis Analysiscrítico Critical) . in Estudios , magazinenumbers 6, 1975Such a summary is presented in the inaugural lecture

of the 1975 academic year of the School of History of the University of San Carlos de Guatemala, dictated on February 27 of the same year.

In 1990, a contribution was published in the journal *Estudios del Órgano de divulgación del Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Antropológicas y Arqueológicas (IIHAA)*. This publication takes into consideration the *Notes on the specificities of the Popular Culture of Guatemala*, in which he describes the need to:

To analyze the culture of Latin America and southern Mesoamerica. With the case of Guatemala, it is not an easy thing, because, in one or another, the analysis can be distorted if it is not taken in its right historical measure. Moreover, the approach of the V Centenary of the Discovery of America in 1992 exacerbates tempers and makes us lose objectivity. Hence our concern to address the meaning of the traditional popular culture of Mesoamerica in its true social . historical facet. In this regard, we start from a basic premise. The current Guatemalan popular culture and therefore its literature and music of traditional , characteris a historical , product with a deep historical time incorporated that makes it valid, its sources of origin in the fundamental substratum that articulates it (Lara, 1990, p. 11).

As a lover of popular music Guatemalan , Celso Lara contributes to the study of traditional music played on the national instrument, with his article "Acotaciones Teóricas Metodológicas para el Estudio de la Marimba en Guatemala" (Theoretical and Methodological Notes for the Study of the Marimba in Guatemala):

Starting from the general assertion that Guatemala is multiethnic and pluricultural, so that approaching its cultural problems becomes an important step in the process.

of its own complete. To a greater or lesser degree, Guatemalan culture is mestizo par excellence and brilliantly creative in all its manifestations, which is why, before addressing the subject, we will try to define what we mean by culture (Lara, 1995, p. 29).

This article was published in the *Revista Estudios, Revista de Antropología y Arqueología e Historia* supported by the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Within the popular and traditional field, in 1995 he published a sample of mestizo folktales from eastern Guatemala, including *Los cuentos de los tres conejos*, *Juan Arador* and *El premio de los tres consejos* (Lara, 1996). One element to re-emphasize is that in several of Celso Lara's works he did not name the informants or collaborators, possibly because in those times the figure of the collaborator was not so much emphasized; knowledge was centered on the stories and the way of compiling literary texts.

He also published in different institutions outside the Universidad de San Carlos, such as the Universidad Rafael Landívar through the *Revista Cultura de Guatemala*, where his research work led him to review *Los tejidos tradicionales de Guatemala* (Lara, 1980). This article defends the traditional weavings as a fundamental part of the material heritage of the Mayan culture since time immemorial, using the analysis of some chronicles such as the *Popol Vuh*, the *Chronicles of Don Juan Rojas*, the *Annals of the Cakchiqueles* and the *Title of the Lords of Totonicapán*. His articles were always in the direction of defending traditional culture from a scientific perspective and not merely superficial such is the case in his

article on the importance of Studies Popular and Traditional Culture . This article was first published in the Centro de Estudios Folklóricos and later compiled by the Revista Encuentro of the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica (Lara, 1989). When looking at s published works Celso Lara'within the Center for Folkloric Studies (Cefol) it is undoubtedly that these articles were taken for other academic journals, this with the purpose of promoting both Cefol and Lara's research. Celso Lara's compilation works are recognized by the Ministry of Culture and Sports where ,through the Revista Antropología e Historia de Guatemala, in 2000, he published a compilation of stories of oral tradition in Guatemala (Lara, 2000). Lara pays special attention to festivities popular , religious with the main purpose of analyzing the social dynamics of the Guatemalan people. For Celso Lara the festival was a starting point to analyze stories and other popular expressions, as he proposed in his article on Palm Sunday in Guatemala, related to the sale of blessed palms in the atrium of the temple of San Miguel de Capuchinas after the procession of Jesus de la Borriquita, He also described certain elements of the festivity such as the standard bearers and cucuruchos in the procession of Jesús del Consuelo from the church of La Recolección in Guatemala, along with some elements of Holy Week such as the carpets and altars in front of private homes (Lara,).2004, p. 11 11). This article was published by the Revista de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala. For the field of anthropology these articles became a reference to analyze other festivities. The students obtained a

This made s work Celso Lara'an indirect part of formation of future generations.

He also collaborated with several publications in the Revista del Festival del Centro Históri- co, such as his collaboration with the article El origen de los viejos barrios de la Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, where he narrated the history of the formation of the city's neighborhoods. With this article he promoted the identity of the Historic Center and its inhabitants (Lara, 2004). Not only did he contribute to the dissemination of oral , he traditions also covered the study of a culture in its general expressions as in the case of the articles published by the Magazine sponsored by the newspaper Prensa Libre and the Banco del Café (Bancafé) in issues 8 and 9. These articles were dedicated to the traditions and customs of the mestizo, Garifuna, people Xinca and Mayan , specialized on dance, music, gastronomy and studies clothing.

In collaboration with Carlos García, they published an article entitled "La Cultura guatemalteca en el IV Encuentro de Investigadores de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala", directed by the Consejo Coordinador e Impulsor de la Investigación, Conciusac, and the Dirección General de Investigación, , DIGI in 1996; together with the proceedings of the III Encuentro Nacional de Historiadores of 1997.

Celso Lara's name was also printed in several magazines sponsored and edited by the G & T , Foundation the articles in he collaborated are of various , titles giving importance to Guatemalan , customs and traditions which were from cultural expressions

oral , traditionsfestivities, among other topics, not forgetting that the focus of his articles was on Guatemalan culture.

Contributions to research and teaching in Guatemala

For his publications, says historian Ofelia Déleon, Lara's colleague Cefol:

Celso's greatest contribution to the academy Guatemalan was thanks to the compilation of oral , tradition literaturespecifically in folk tales, a work he did with the help of José Ernesto Monzón. For this work, after the compilation, it was necessary to transcribe the material, so he had the help of Vilma Fialko, Anantonia Reyes and Claudia Dary. The main objective was to bring the academy closer to popular , knowledgeso their contributions to the systematization of fieldwork were very valuable for Guatemalan scientific (Déleon, 2019).knowledge

Déleon focuses on the main idea that Lara's main objective in his research was to bring closer theoretical knowledge and put it into . For Lara, giving value to popular knowledge was of vital importance. As Déleon recalls in a personal anecdote he shared with him:

We traveled together with Celso and Ida Bremme de Santos to the city of Cuenca, in Ecuador. From the city of Quito to the city of Cuenca, by plane, it was a trip of approximately one hour; but by bus it was almost 15 hours. Celso convinced us to travel by bus. Those rural buses to travel to our final destination. It was a long trip, but what was interesting and what Celso enjoyed was to .observe the scenery

and listen to what people were talking about, although they made fun of us for doing such a tour, Celso did not mind because he enjoyed the trip (Déleon, 2019).

This anecdote describes Lara's enthusiasm for traveling the roads and absorbing the wisdom of the place she visited. The trips could be intense, but he did not mind because in the end he enjoyed and was passionate about having contact with people and listening to what they had to say. In the words of Ricardo Sáenz, professor at the School of History of the University of San Carlos:

Celso Lara's contributions to the Guatemalan academy are numerous. In the first place, he contributed to consolidate a theoretical and methodological current that studied and theorized popular culture from a Gramscian perspective, in which culture expressed so many elements of domination, resistance and liberation of the peoples. In this sense, he did not idealize culture, but identified its contradictions and its asystematic nature. Secondly, Celso Lara was decisive at the time in the design of the curriculum of the Anthropology program. This, in part, explains the relative weight that the study of folklore had at that time. Lara also promoted the scientific approach to the study of religious . phenomenaThirdly, Celso was a public intellectual, in the sense that his knowledge about cultures popular made him a reference expert for the understanding of these phenomena and his books on oral literature in prose were part of the readings of generations of Guatemalans who, through these texts, approached the urban popular of Guatemala (Sáenz, 2019).culture

The theory of the Italian Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) sought to include knowledge or social movements in the structures of the State with oftheaim

to recognize minorities, these objectives were achieved by forming ideas in reading, in club spaces where discussion as student associations, that is, to spaces could be generated discover the power of social scientific knowledge within minorities (Cruz, 2013). This was the course followed by Lara, from her participation in the Student Association of the Faculty of Humanities as forming book clubs. Thus, the anthropologist and former student of Lara, Xochilt Anaité Castro states:

During the time I was s assistant Celso Lara', he strongly encouraged reading, specifically club on topics of traditional culture. With the help of Carlos René García, they form spaces discussion to train the following generations and keep them up to date (Castro, 2020).

Castro recalls motivational words given to him by Lara:

I know how to recognize good wood, I know you will do a good job. Celso Lara supported research from various spaces, thus generating an interesting work dynamic, having individual projects without forgetting the projects within the Center for Folkloric Studies (Castro, 2020).

Lara supported students in forming their own knowledge, and also guidance from the provided classroom to train new generations in the field of cultural, traditional and scientific research. As Sáenz recalls:

In teaching, Celso showed not only a mastery of the subjects of his specialty, but a true passion for the study and knowledge of Guatemalan culture. In this way,

He was particularly identified with the study of oral literature in prose, with the characters of legends, and with the neighborhoods of downtown Guatemala City (Sáenz, 2019).

Celso Lara supported the transmission of Guatemalan culture in various spaces, not only in the classroom or in his publications, but also took advantage of the print media to give his opinion on important and relevant issues in events traditional Guatemalan, as journalist Brenda Martínez recalls:

Celso Lara was always ready to any journalist who consulted him, either personally or by telephone, for topics related Guatemalan history, religion and traditions any kind. His collection was incalculable and he would gladly pass on his knowledge so that we could write our reports on the topics he mastered, which were many, as he considered them a living encyclopedia (Martínez, 2019). to us

After the signing of the peace agreement in Guatemala in 1996, Lara supported the change of name of the Center for Folkloric Studies because the concept had been changed into a paternalistic sense for indigenous peoples, which could be used with pejorative intent. That is why in April 2001 one of the first activities to restructure was carried out the Cefol, which the anthropologist and former student of Lara, Deyvid Molina, remembers:

I arrived at the Center in April 2001 and one of first requests was to support teachers Carlos García and Celso Lara in the process of restructuring the institution. One of main objectives was to change the name, because the was used to refer to the term "folkloric" "folklore"

was pejorative for indigenous peoples, at that time the name Center was suggested. for Popular and Traditional Cultures It was a process that lasted a year with the support of Dr. Óscar Cobar, who at that time was the director of the General Directorate of Research (DIGI). assigned as support staff by José Osorio and Dr. Carmen Yolanda López . were DIGI Meetings were held every Monday. The first meeting was held in Antigua Guatemala at the Spanish , Cooperation Center then the weekly meetings were held at DIGI with the participation of all the researchers and research assistants of that , such as Anabella Barrios, Julio Tracena, Fernando Lopez, Enrique Anleu and research , Magda Cifuentes, Xochitl assistants Castro, Lisa Chaulon and myself. With the only incumbent of those times, Aracely Esquivel. Another of the main reasons for changing the name of Cefol was due to the criticism received from different social sectors and, unfortunately, in the 1990s, the tourism sector promoted the term folklore as something exotic and exploitative without recognition of the Guatemalan indigenous peoples. Celso Lara was of the opinion that tourism had negatively impacted traditional Guatemalan . folk culture However, due to the bureaucratic administrative processes of the University, the restructuring was not supported, much less the change of name, the idea was taken up again until 2017 and 2018 at the initiative of the directors and research staff and authorized by the University Superior Council until 2019 (Molina, 2019).

Celso Lara sought to transmit new theories of application to terminology scientific research , to achieve the recognition of research cultural as an important part of the search for scientific knowledge, to recognize the true protagonists, respecting

The work within the social sciences was also necessary to train new professionals in the field of research. It was also necessary to train new professionals in the field of research. To mention another contribution, Molina mentions:

Celso Lara tried to train new generations of researchers, unfortunately this was not continuous due to the lack of support in allocating economic resources for hiring research assistants. Among the first professionals trained were Anantonia Reyes, Vilma Fialko, Claudia Dary, Carlos René García and Alfonso Arrivillaga, in the mid 1980s. In a second phase were the auxiliary researchers Magda Cifuentes, Lisa Chaulón, Xochitl Castro and myself. At present the last two still continue within the Center (Molina, 2019).

Celso Lara also faced many times bureaucratic processes that prevented him from seeing many of his research plans come to fruition, due to the lack of support in the allocation of courses. But he had the opportunity to work with many of the assistants he trained himself.

Awards

He received numerous national and international awards for his work, among which stands out the free access page dedicated to the publication of articles related to culture, sports, politics, science, technology, economics and public health an article dedicated to Celso Lara in which he describes the national awards and international that were granted during his lifetime (Ecured, 2019).to him

- In 1984, the Municipality of City Guatemala , in recognition of his work, to him. dedicated the XIV Municipal Book Fair

- In 1988 the College of Humanists of Guatemala declared him an Outstanding Humanist.
- Vicente García de Diego Award in Tenerife, Spain, for his contribution to the study of the traditions popular of Ibero-America, 1990.
- In 1997 the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala awarded him the distinction of Outstanding Researcher of the USAC, for his contribution to the development and consolidation research at that university.
- In 1998, the National Symphony Orchestra dedicated to him for the Main Concert of the Symphonic Season his valuable contribution to the musical art in Guatemala.
- In 1999 he was awarded the Medal Distinguished University Teacher
- The Golden Quetzal for the best book of the year published in Guatemala in 1974.
- 1999 Humanist Medal to the Distinguished Teacher awarded by the College of Humanities of Guatemala.
- Verapaz 1999" Prize awarded by the Instituto Guatemalteco de Cultura Hispánica, Guatemala.
- International Prize for Demoethnoanthropological Studies "Giuseppe Pitre Salvatore Salomone-Marino, 1999", of the city of Palermo, Italy.
- Pan American PAIGH-OAS Award, of Human Rights (PAIGH-OAS1999, awarded by the Pan American Institute for the Protection and Promotion), 1999.
- Geography and History, a specialized organization of the OAS, during the XXXIV Meeting of the Pan American Directing Council, November 12, 1999.
- Orden Nacional de Protección del Patrimonio Cultural, awarded by the Presidency of the Republic of Guatemala and the Ministry of Culture and Sports, "for his high merits in the conservation of cultural heritage" July 2, 2000.
- Joaquín Güichot Award from the University of Andalusia, Spain, "for his invaluable contribution to the rescue of American oral traditions of Andalusian origin in Guatemala and Mesoamerica". June 14, 2001
- Gold Gear of the Rotary Club of the Valley of Guatemala, "for his work as a poet, essayist and musician, having contributed to disseminate the National Folklore and enhance the name of Guatemala "15April , 2002.
- Honorary Professor Emeritus of the Colegio de Humanistas de Guatemala July 25, 2002
- Illustrious Historian of Guatemala. Tribute. Ministry of Culture and Sports and the National of History, "for his outstanding contribution in the field of History in Museum Guatemala" on the occasion of the National Day of History. October 16, 2002
- James Russell Lowell Prize, Modern Language Association, New York, "for originality of literary work" 2003.

- The Golden Kalevála of the Academia Scientiarum Fennica of Helsinki, Finland, "for his contribution to the enrichment of the world's oral tradition" 2004.
- Distinguished , NeighborHeritage of the New Guatemala de la Asunción by the Very Noble and Illustrious City Council of Guatemala City, 2004.
- Ambassador of Tourism of Guatemala for the Guatemalan Institute of Tourism, IN-GUAT (2004).

This list recognizes Celso Lara's contributions to research and preservation cultural throughout his academic life.

Opinions

Several intellectuals expressed particular ideas about the life of Celso Lara, which were compiled and shown as a way to reconstruct the figure of Lara as the journalist Gonzalo Marroquín Godoy wrote:

Few people are as multifaceted as Celso was: historian, anthropologist, . writer -and poet-, as well as musician. He did not like to talk about topics in a superficial way. That is why he investigated everything that would be the subject of a study, book, essay or journalistic writing, but I believe that his great passion was the legends of Guatemala, about which he wrote books and journalistic fascicles that can be consulted by anyone who wants to know that cultural part of our country (Marroquín, 2019, para. 2).

Marroquín highlighted Lara's interest in music, combining his personal tastes with his academic , life to which he always gave a special importance.

special preference. Julio David Menchú dedicated a particular article about Celso Lara in which he wrote a personal anecdote highlighting the figure of the collector of legends.

I have a very present memory: when I was a child - imagination in childhood is a tool powerful - I used to listen to the radio, watch TV, I enjoyed the cartoons of "3"; but always I was by attracted the programs that talked about history, about the society "before", as the grandmothers used to say, about the people who told how it was when there was no TV; how people used to go for a walk in the streets - going out to "sextear", it was fabulous-. Near where I live I heard stories of when they appeared: El Bulto, La Llorona and La Siguanaba (I live in the Santa Marta neighborhood, formerly called Canton Barrios, right next to Canton Barillas). One of the clearest memories I have was once I heard Celso Lara Figueroa speak on some radio program about the history of the city; but I remember perfectly something he explained - that although it is true that one must remember the history of the grandparents, this should not be disconnected from the national reality. This phrase resonated with me for many years (Menchú, 2019, par. 1).

Another example of the professionalism and versatility that Lara possessed was reflected in a small compilation of testimonies by journalist Brenda Martínez (2019) given by his former students. In particular, historian Fernando Urquizú recalled:

Lara's father was Celso Lara Calacán, the last chapel master of the Cathedral of Guatemala, so he had a deep knowledge of musical traditions. He played his 's transcriptions and loved it. He had special taste for funeral . marches. He was a scholar and

participated in Catholic traditions. He would go to see the processions, especially the praying of the Immaculate Conception of St. Francis on December 8. (Martinez, 2019, par 9).

Journalist Hector Salvatierra wrote:

Lara Figueroa was not a story, but a law that frightens ignorance and motivates love for what is ours. He was an apprentice and also a master. For him, history is in every alley, it runs and is found because, no matter how incredible a feat may sound, the truth is magical and Guatemala is great for its popular traditions (Salvatierra, 2019, para. 10).

This demonstrates what is expressed in 's work Celso Lara, his interest in the compilation fieldwork of traditional Guatemalan literature. In a few lines we can know s Lara', to purpose walk and compile the oral tradition. In addition, his passion for music was known by all the people who knew personally. him They affirm that when he liked a special melody or a record he would buy several copies to listen to them in different places.

Anecdotes

For those who had the opportunity to meet him, they remember several positive or negative anecdotes. This article highlights three that can give a general idea of Lara, as commented by communicator Lucrecia Choy:

We worked with don Celso on several nationalist projects for Prensa Libre, he was definitely passionate about traditions, he had a great love for what he did. I have several anecdotes to tell, but the one that I always tell, because that's how I remember him was that whenever

I would see him enter the office in the afternoon with a bouquet of roses that he would bring to his wife. He would usually stop by for meetings or to review pending projects when he was on his way home (Choy, 2020).

Anyone who worked with Celso Lara got to see him with a bouquet of flowers that he brought daily to his wife, with this gesture he showed the human being who could be able to admire and love another person, in this case his life partner. Ricardo Sáenz also remembers as a trait of his personality "his hurried walk through the corridors of the School of History, to get to his classes" (Sáenz, 2019).

His greatest frustration, as Deyvid Molina (2019), was that he was never able to experience a supernatural event to be able to write about it. That is why following lines comment that they relate a brief experience within the walls of the place that for many years was his work area.

It was the month of October 2019, almost two months after Celso Lara's departure from this world, a new guard arrived at the offices that the teacher had occupied for many years. Without knowing the place that Celso occupied at night, he heard a typewriter typing non-stop. Frightened, he made a tour, not finding the person still working. Very surprised, he returned to his resting place almost drowsy, he heard again the typewriter typing very fast. Dazed, he tried to ignore the noise, the next day he complained to the employees who came to work in the morning, and commented that they did not let him sleep. Concerned, some of his colleagues ask him to show where he heard the sound of the typewriter, he obeys and shows them where he heard it

the office occupied all his life by Celso Lara (Molina, 2019).

In the end, Celso Lara became a being he admired and wrote about so much. The figure of Celso Lara not only remains in the memory of the Guatealtecos, now he will also be part of the collective imagination that he studied and safeguarded so much.

Final comment

Celso Arnaldo Lara Figueroa passed into the immortality of Guatemalan memory, thanks to his different contributions to the study of legends, tales, myths and traditional poetry. Many will remember Celso Lara as that figure on television who told legends children or may also remember when he walked the corridors of the School of History to go to his evening classes, after working during the morning at the Folkloric Studies the University of San Carlos. The figure of Lara may be debatable for some of his detractors and exalted by the multiple Center of praises of different academics who defend his contributions to the Guatemalan . academy Undoubtedly the contributions of Celso Lara will remain in the memory of his students who were able to learn from him the different processes of field work systematization and then translate them into academic essays with the main objective of safeguarding and protecting the Guatemalan culture. He was the bearer of incalculable knowledge, a living encyclopedia as journalist Brenda Martínez called him; demanding, as his former student Xóchitl Castro remembers, and at the time a research assistant. What is undeniable is that Celso Lara became part of Guatemalan culture through his studies of oral .tradition literature

During his professional career he was not alone, he was accompanied by different professionals such as José Ernesto Monzón, who him to collect oral tradition, Claudia Dary professional who was one of his first research , Carlos García who supported him in different processes during his work at Cefol. Celso Lara did not work alone, he was accompanied by several professionals who in one way or another received mutual support. In the end, some agree that Celso Lara's death did not come in August 2019, but in early 2014 when he was forced to leave his functions as a researcher and teacher. Only the image of the Sombrerón, a character from Guatemalan legends that always accompanied Celso Lara, remains in his memory.

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Image of Celso Lara, interviewed at the Botanical Garden by journalist Brenda Martínez.

Photograph from the Prensa Libre archive.



Figure 3. Celso Lara sharing his experiences and professional work. Photograph from the Prensa archiveLibre



Figure 5. Celso Lara in a rarely seen photograph of his personal life, sharing with friends and family. Photograph from the professional archive of Olga Pérez.

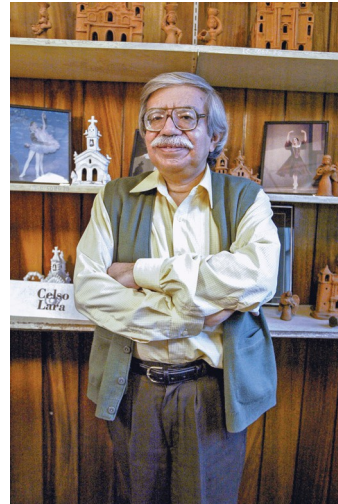


Figure 2. Celso Lara surrounded by mementos of his professional life. Photograph from the Prensa archiveLibre .



Figure 4. Celso Lara sharing with students of the School of History in field work for their professionalization. Photograph from the personal archive of Olga Pérez.

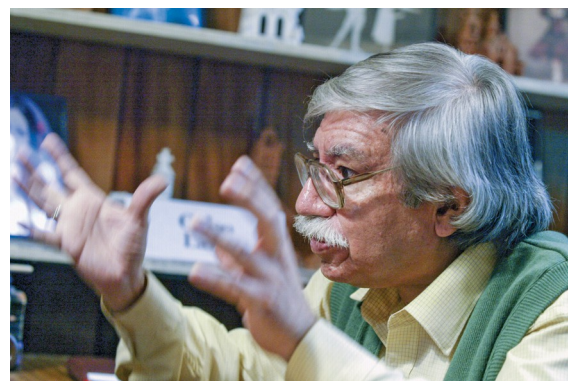


Figure 6. Celso Lara explaining to Prensa journalists Libre topics from Guatemala's oral tradition. Photograph from the Prensa archiveLibre .



Figure 7. Celso Lara on his wedding day with Olga Pérez.
Personal archive of Olga Pérez.



Figure 8. Celso Lara sharing with friends, among them Carlos García, a long-time collaborator of the Center of Folkloric Studies of the USAC. Photograph from the personal archive of Olga Pérez.



Figure 9. Celso Lara sharing with family and friends, the image shows something rarely seen of Lara, his family and friends.
Photograph from the personal archive of Olga Pérez.



Celso Lara on one of his many field trips, exchanging experiences with Rigoberta Menchú.
Photograph from the personal archive of Olga Pérez.

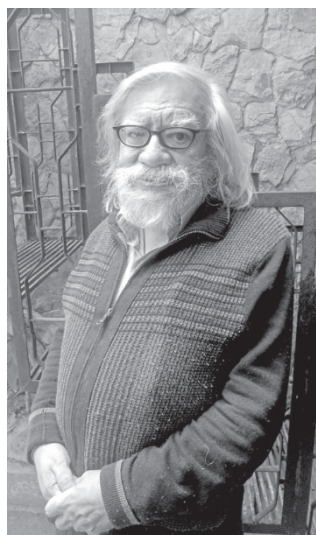


Figure 11. One of the last photographs showing the image of Celso Lara, which will remain in the collective imagination of Guatemalan culture.
Photograph from the Prensa archiveLibre .