Cultural policy
in Guatemala

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Studies and documents on cultural policies
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The purpose of this series is to show how cultural policies are planned and implemented in various Member States.

As cultures differ, so does the approach to them. It is for each Member State to determine its cultural policy and methods according to its own conception of culture, its socio-economic system, political ideology and technical development. However, the methods of cultural policy (like those of general development policy) have certain common problems; these are largely institutional, administrative and financial in nature, and the need has increasingly been stressed for exchanging experiences and information about them. This series, each issue of which follows as far as possible a similar pattern so as to make comparison easier, is mainly concerned with these technical aspects of cultural policy.

In general, the studies deal with the principles and methods of cultural policy, the evaluation of cultural needs, administrative structures and management, planning and financing, the organization of resources, legislation, budgeting, public and private institutions, cultural content in education, cultural autonomy and decentralization, the training of personnel, institutional infrastructures for meeting specific cultural needs, the safeguarding of the cultural heritage, institutions for the dissemination of the arts, international cultural cooperation and other related subjects.

The studies, which cover countries belonging to differing social and economic systems, geographical areas and levels of development, present, therefore, a wide variety of approaches and methods in cultural policy. Taken as a whole, they can provide guidelines to countries which have yet to establish cultural policies, while all countries, especially those seeking new formulations of such policies, can profit by the experience already gained.

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The opinions expressed are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect the views of Unesco.
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Introduction

This work is not intended to be a statistical survey of successes and failures, or a list of current or planned activities in Guatemalan cultural life.

Personal experience and contact with experts engaged in planning and programming cultural activities in other countries has given me a broader and better understanding of the considerable cultural diversity reflected in our country, which is perhaps its greatest asset, and our own gross ignorance and consequent neglect of the expressions and creations of our culture.

In the following pages, I shall expand upon my view that the cultural situation in Guatemala stems primarily from our ignorance of our cultural identity. Such ignorance bears upon the culture of the past, inasmuch as the works of the past are relentlessly destroyed; upon the culture of today, which goes unrecognized; and upon the culture of the future, since the lack of cultural foundations is leading to a state of general chaos.

The recent establishment of a Vice-Ministry of Culture, within the Ministry of Education, represents the first step towards the organization and definition of a cultural policy which, properly guided, will enable Guatemala to achieve a major advance in the journey towards progress.

Knowledge of our present situation, our thinking and our true needs will only be attained through a process of self-examination that encompasses our past, the raison d'être of our present.

The definition and planning of a cultural policy will enable the Vice-Ministry of Culture to ensure the effectiveness of its action.

The aim herein has been to set out at least the underlying principles of such a policy. Because of its newness, however, this body requires a reasonable period of time in which to take shape and organize itself. Since it has been in existence for only a very short period, an organizational chart of the institution and a chapter on its future lines of action have been added at the end of this work. The organizational chart was published in October, 1979 and includes a number of departments not yet set up.
Background

Geographical location

Guatemala is the largest and the northernmost of the Central American republics. It is bounded by Mexico on the north and by Honduras and El Salvador on the east. It has coastlines bordering the Caribbean in the north-east and the Pacific in the south.

The geographical position and topography of Guatemala give the country a varied climate, which is never extreme. The average temperature in the shade ranges between 15 °C and 22 °C in the highlands and 25 °C and 30 °C on the coast. The dry season and the rainy season (which occurs between May and October) form two quite distinct seasons.

One of the most attractive features of Guatemala is its varied landscape of valleys, mountains, lakes and volcanoes, which give rise to magnificent contrasts of colour and light, accentuated by the mild climate.

The great American cordillera enters Guatemala along the Mexican border and divides into two branches. The relatively low-lying Sierra Madre system runs through the south; the much higher Cuchumatanes system extends through the north of the country.

Among the mountains of the Sierra Madre lies the central plateau, a highly populous area, where the conquistadores founded most of their cities. These regions contain the major cities such as the modern capital (Guatemala City), the old capital (Antigua Guatemala), Quezaltenango, Totonicapán, etc.

The hydrographic system, determined by the orographic system, comprises two watersheds. The Pacific watershed drains to short, young rivers whose beds are now enlarging, as is generally known (rivers Achiguate and Pantaleón). From the Atlantic watershed are drawn the waters of various large, old rivers. Some of them flow eastwards into the Caribbean (Motagua); others flow northwards into Mexico and disembogue into the Gulf of Mexico (Usumacinta).

Climatic and environmental variety has contributed to the existence of
Background

remarkable flora and fauna. Plants known from ancient times for their magical uses are still in popular use and have indisputable medicinal properties. There are beautiful ornamental plants, such as our national flower, the white nun orchid, which is renowned for its beauty and perfect whiteness. Another example is our national tree, the huge, majestic ceiba (silk-cotton tree), under whose splendid boughs a wealth of products, experiences and news is exchanged at many a Saturday and Sunday market.

No less interesting is the fauna, particularly the numerous birds, such as our symbolic bird, the quetzal, the most beautiful of all. Other varieties such as the ruddy duck on Lake Atitlán or the Petén turkey are of great interest and currently protected by a conservation order.1

Historical survey

The territory of the Republic of Guatemala has varied in size at different periods of its history, having undergone truncations which have been justifiable in some cases and illegal in others. Even today, Guatemala is threatened with the loss of a further large part of its territory.

In the pre-Hispanic period, before the establishment of the present borders, the territory extended further to the north, east and west. The events which occurred in those areas form part of our history and the history of Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico. New frontiers were drawn up as a result of the Spanish invasion. The Spanish Crown created the Kingdom of Goathemala, which stretched from the present territory of the Mexican State of Chiapas in the north-east to the Panamanian border in the south-east; that is to say, it encompassed the five republics of the Central American isthmus. Hence, the history of Guatemala between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries is the history of Central America.

The history of Guatemala as a republic, within our present territorial boundaries, dates from the middle of the nineteenth century.

These territorial changes reflect the three major periods of our national history: the pre-Hispanic period, the colonial or Hispanic period, and the Republican period.

THE PRE-HISPANIC PERIOD

Archaeological investigations in Guatemala have provided evidence that vast areas of the country were occupied by human groups in remote times, and that the population was at one time larger than the present population.

Our magnificent climate and fertile land were, perhaps, the reasons for settlement and considerable population expansion. The various peoples

1. For further information, the reader is referred to the book by Frank B. Smith entitled The Birds of Tikal and various issues of the journal Historia Natural y Pro Natura (Guatemala, Museum of Natural History).
who settled here developed grandiose, high cultures such as the Mayan culture, which has been made known to us through excellent archaeological work and research. Less advanced cultures developed in the western highlands and the southern coastal plains.

Despite our limited knowledge of these cultures, there is sufficient material to support the view that they rank preponderantly among the great civilizations of the world; the known samples of their art and science afford indisputable evidence of their high cultural level.

Valuable archaeological finds throughout the length and breadth of the country point to the fact that it was once thickly populated. Going from south to north, we find, on the Pacific lowlands, high pre-Olmec and Olmecoid cultures (Las Ilusiones, Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, Monte Alto); pre-Mayan culture (Abaj Takalik) or middle and low cultures (Pipiles). As we ascend to the central plateau, we encounter very ancient cultural groups such as those in Kaminal Juyú or more recent groups showing considerable development at their ceremonial centres of Iximché, Chiutinamit, Mixco Viejo, Gumarcaaj, Zaculeu, Cajuyup, Acasaguastlán, and various other groups whose Quiché, Cakchiquel, Mam, Tzutuhil, Pokonchi, Kekchi, Pokomán and other descendants are today the authentic and worthy representatives of Guatemalan culture.

Continuing our journey northwards, we enter the Maya area, where the centre of population and cultural development in the classic period was what are today the departments of El Petén, Belice and Izabal.

No culture is better known or more closely studied than the Maya culture, which is each day the subject of new discoveries. It reached its peak in the years A.D. 250–900.

The mathematical system, astronomical observations and writing of this period evidence considerable maturity and an ability to solve questions which Western man has only solved and understood in relatively recent times.

Scientific advance has made it possible to evaluate this culture, which the European invader failed to understand and therefore despised and wantonly destroyed. It may actually be said that our country was invaded by barbarian peoples and that we were made to share in their backwardness.

Since the Mayan hieroglyphics have still not been completely deciphered, direct study of their history and cultural development has not been possible. Our knowledge of the Maya is derived from architecture and artefacts and from dealings with the present-day descendants of the Mayan people. However, the distinct culture of the Maya has lost much of its original richness, since certain traditional aspects have been superseded by easily assimilable cultural patterns, which have in one way or another destroyed their distinctive spiritual and cultural values.

Investigation of our historical and cultural foundations has led to the discovery of valuable documents from this obscure, forgotten period, concerning the Indians' claims to the lawful possession of their lands.

These documents date from the earliest years of Spanish occupation and
Background

give an idea of the rights possessed by the Indians from very remote times. They provide facts which the Spanish chroniclers or historians did not know or disregarded. This is the history of our aboriginal culture.

In due course, it will be possible to form a picture of the pre-Hispanic history of Guatemala, as a result of the collection of archaeological, ethnological and documentary data and the strictly scientific approach of the historian.

With respect to our particular traits, beliefs and indigenous mythology, the Popol Vuh, the holy book of the Quiché people, has enabled us to understand and know our roots. In addition to this remarkable document, there are others such as the Memorial of Tecpán Atitlán (Cakchiquel Annals) or the Rabinal Achi (Quiché drama) which give us an indication of the richness of the thought and creativity of our forebears.

**Colonial Period**

The adelantado, Pedro de Alvarado, arrived in the territory of Guatemala in 1524. At that time there were serious divisions among the Indian kingdoms. These divisions were exploited and facilitated the subjugation of the Quiché and Tzutuhil kingdoms. The hostility of the Cakchiquel kingdom towards the invader prevented the firm establishment of the city of Santiago de Goathemala. Although this city was founded on 25 July 1524 in Iximché, the capital of the Cakchiquel kingdom, it was only firmly set up in 1527, in the Almolonga Valley, at the foot of the Agua Volcano. In 1541 it was abandoned following serious flooding caused by swollen streams rushing down from the volcano. The city of Santiago was moved to the Panchoy Valley in 1543. Spanish development attained the peak of its splendour in this period.

Santiago de Goathemala was the cultural, economic and social centre of the Captaincy General of the Kingdom of Goathemala. It was here that the illustrious Bishop Francisco Marroquin founded the first schools and took the first steps in connection with the foundation of a university. This process culminated many years later in the foundation of the Royal and Pontifical University of San Carlos de Borromeo in 1676.

Although frequently shaken by earth tremors and partly destroyed by various earthquakes, the capital was only abandoned in 1773 after the Santa Marta earthquake. It was moved to the Valle de la Virgen in 1776. Even today, Antigua Guatemala retains the magnificence of an eighteenth-century South American metropolis.

The new Guatemala de la Asuncióón (which is still the name of the capital city) was built in the neo-classic style. The city witnessed central American independence in 1821.

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1. The *adelantado* was the most important official in the newly acquired territory, who usually held the title of governor until the arrival of the viceroy.
It is important to observe that, during the years of Spanish dominion, the religious orders entrusted with the task of converting the Indians to Christianity were a source of cultural influence. These orders were assigned to clearly defined geographical areas and made a substantial contribution to the consolidation of the Spanish conquest. The peaceful conquest of the Tezulutlán kingdom, for example, was a significant accomplishment, showing the importance of the religious orders in this process. Tezulutlán was inhabited by the Kekchi, one of the most tenacious of the Indian peoples, whose cultural influence on the city-dweller is still in evidence today. Verapaz, as it has been called since the conquest, is the only region in Guatemala where the ladino\(^1\) learnt the vernacular in order to be able to communicate with the Indian.

This peaceful conquest was carried out under the leadership of the Dominican, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. It was possibly this experience and his direct contact with the Indians which gave him a knowledge and appreciation of these peoples, for he became a champion of the defence and protection of the Indian.

The most outstanding leader of the Kekchi kingdom was Juan Matalbatz. This Christianized chief was invited to visit King Carlos V at his Spanish court. Matalbatz was perhaps the only New World king to make a courtesy visit to a king of the Old World.

Cultural contributions from Spain were numerous and had considerable impact. Such ‘cultural baggage’ shaped the cultural values of the greater part of the urban population of Spanish America. A particularly significant example in this respect is the printing-press, which was brought to Guatemala in 1660 and gave rise to a literary output that, at the beginning, was eminently religious in character. The chronicles are a valuable form of documentation concerning the development of Spanish culture in Guatemala. Fray Francisco Vásquez Ximénez, Fray Antonio de Remesal, Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán and Domingo Juarros were important chroniclers.

The first newspaper, La Gaceta de Goathemala, appeared in 1729. It included contributions from prominent men of letters such as Simón Bergaño y Villegas, Antonio de Liendo y Goicoechea and Pedro Molina.

The Latinist poet and Jesuit priest, Rafael Landívar, who was born in Antigua Guatemala, was one of the most significant literary figures in this period. Fray Matías de Córdova and Rafael García Goyena, writers of fables, are also worthy of special mention. Poetry was the most widely practised of the literary genres.

The doctors Narciso Esparragosa y Gallardo, Manuel de Avalos y Porras and José Felipe Flores did very valuable work in the field of science and scientific research. Esparragosa made extremely valuable contributions in the field of obstetrics; Avalos carried out some of the early demon-

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1. Europeanized Guatemalans of predominantly Spanish origin.
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Striations of the circulation of the blood, which involved blood transfusions between dogs. Flores made valuable contributions in the fields of optics, food preservation and the application of hydraulic power to ships.

In art, the pre-Hispanic tradition provided both skilled artists and a creative awareness, characterized by clearly defined ideas and aesthetic appreciation. On such a basis, the interpretation of European art gave birth to work of singular excellence.

Builders, religious sculptors, silversmiths, engravers and painters organized themselves into guilds, which assured the single-minded and disciplined cultivation of the arts.

The splendid architectural achievements, scattered throughout the country, speak of the variety of Guatemalan baroque, which is dominated by the ‘Antiguan’ style. The unsurpassable range of religious statuary was characterized by a great wealth of form and dynamic movement, set off by quilted materials remarkable for their richness and colour. Silver filigree adorned statues, churches and homes. Although painting and engraving were practised less widely than the other arts, our few masters in these fields produced excellent work.

Post-Independence

The country achieved independence from Spain in 1821. This independence was purely political, since ideological dependence on the motherland continued for a good many years.

Furthermore, Mexico was ambitious for power and, through Agustín de Iturbide, took advantage of the uncertain, chaotic situation in Central America to incorporate this territory into the empire which was then in the process of formation.

This annexation was unanimously opposed by our peoples who, at the constituent assembly held in 1823, declared themselves to be independent from Spain, Mexico and ‘any other power, whether in the Old World or in the New World’.

The decision taken at this constituent assembly, on 1 July 1823, embodied the principle that a federal government should be set up for the ‘United Provinces of Central America’. Its first president was the Salvadorian liberal, Manuel José Arce. However, this organization did not last very long; the lack of tax revenue and the consequential shortage of resources was one of the main reasons for the failure of the federal republic.

Furthermore, the presence of liberal and conservative groups in the government of each state gave rise to internal struggles, which prevented the consolidation of the system. In 1831, for example, Dr Mariano Gálvez was elected Head of State in Guatemala. He was a liberal with very advanced ideas, and carried out important social and economic reforms. The refusal of the conservative group to accept his decisions led to his
downfall and, indirectly, to that of the President of the Federation, the Honduran Francisco Morazán.

Rafael Carrera came from the highlands and was known as the 'caudillo worshipped by the people'. Under his leadership, the conservatives took over key positions in the Guatemalan Government, and caused even further disorder in the young federation. In 1838, Morazán, its president, was forced to decree that each state should organize its affairs in the way it judged most suitable. This provided the opportunity for each state to withdraw from the federation; Guatemala was the last to do so in 1848.

The Government of Rafael Carrera is known as the 'Thirty Years' Government', since the Conservative Party stayed in power for that length of time. Among the significant features of its administration are the fact that the university reverted to being governed by its former colonial statutes, the search for identification with Spanish customs and traditions, and the return of the Catholic Church to the power which it had lost under the Liberal Government.

During this period, the United Kingdom decided to take firm control of the territory of Belize. This question was discussed with the United Kingdom in 1869, when consideration was given to the possibility of ceding the territory of Belize to that country if the latter undertook to build a road linking the capital with the Atlantic. Almost one hundred years later, the Guatemalan Government built the desired road.

Conservative dominance ended with the death of Rafael Carrera. The year 1871 saw the triumph of the Liberal Revolution, led by Miguel García Granados and Justo Rufino Barrios. This political movement was one of the factors which made it possible to establish, for the first time, the foundations of a national cultural identity.

Unfortunately, subsequent governments (some of which were both tyrannical and tenacious) failed to provide an opportunity for the city-dweller to assert such an identity. On the contrary, their eagerness for prestige drove them on in attempts to emulate European countries, thereby contributing to an accentuation of the chaos which already reigned. Other governments came and went without showing any great concern for education and culture, until such time as it was possible to establish the principles of a cultural and political organization in which national identity was the key aspect in the planning of government affairs.

Although subsequent governments did not play their part in the definition and protection of culture, they did not completely undo the advances achieved by the government of Dr Juan José Arévalo. One of these advances was the establishment of the Directorate of Fine Arts and the Institute of Anthropology and History, which have had the task of safeguarding culture.

The present government has created a Vice-Ministry of Culture. This is the first constructive step to be taken in many years, and it will provide a basis for organizing and supporting those institutions responsible for the protection of Guatemalan culture.
Guatemalan culture: a statement of the problem

Culture: conceptual framework

Tylor\(^1\) defines culture as that complex totality which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, custom and all other abilities and habits which man acquires as a member of a society.

Culture is made up of a series of factors, objects and attitudes brought together during the passage of time that give it its specific features which form the basis for its values, objectives and outlook on the future.

In our country, the cultured person has traditionally been someone who has received a longer and ‘better’ education. The word ‘better’ here refers to the type of educational institution attended. It is still not realized that the person who really deserves to be called a ‘cultured person’ is one who identifies his cultural origins, knows who he is and where he is going, one who recognizes his ‘cultural identity’.

Culture is objectively composed of a series of characteristics which man acquires from the world around him. It should not be forgotten that, while every culture presupposes a society, not every society presupposes a culture.

This point is worthy of consideration since our nation comprises a variety of societies with their own cultures. These societies are firmly tied by economic circumstances to others which, while not completely lacking in culture, possess it to a far lesser degree. Conscious of their urgent need of acculturation, such societies plunder—with the aid of their economic resources—our culture (art objects) and destroy our values (through the mass media), without any attempt being made, in many aspects, to prevent this happening. In some cases, such indifference is due to ignorance of the cultural identity of our nation and, therefore, to the lack of a cultural policy.

Guatemala is currently experiencing a crisis of values, which arises out

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of ignorance of its culture. This uncertainty leads man to behave aggressively and create conflicts as he demands something which he cannot define yet suspects belongs to him.

This crisis may be overcome in so far as education is provided within the context of a relevant culture, since it is primarily and ultimately concerned with helping human beings to live in accordance with the norms of their own culture. In Guatemala, unfortunately, education is not provided in a suitable context, because it essentially reflects other cultures and thus each day contributes further to the loss of our identity. The poorly guided mass media have to shoulder a large share of the responsibility for this process of destruction, in view of the fact that they have an impact on an uncultured people.

Bearing in mind the various points already mentioned, it is significant, and seemingly contradictory, to maintain that the most cultured group in Guatemala is the group which is lacking in education. ‘Education’ in this context means attendance at school premises and systematic instruction since, strictly speaking, these people certainly receive an education, which has reference to their own cultural background. Unfortunately, this traditional, home-centred education does not embrace reading and writing a foreign language (Spanish), which would induce a degree of outside contact and faster cultural development.

The growing illiteracy of this group is understandable.

**Cultural development**

Cultural development has been defined by Unesco as the harnessing and promotion of all those factors which enhance the cultural life of the population as a whole and the different cultural groups in each country.

In Guatemala, we may distinguish an urban culture, which has evolved and developed without following any particular pattern, resulting in a group which is culturally featureless in the sense that its behaviour reflects North American, Mexican or European trends that reach us through the mass media.

On the other hand, rural culture is formed by the mosaic of Indian cultures and the ladinos who have preserved the traditional culture practically unchanged down through the years. This culture is beginning to be distorted with positive benefit to no one but industry and commerce.

**The culture and cultural values of Guatemala**

When we identify ourselves as Guatemalans, we basically refer to the demarcation of the territory that we occupy in Central America. Guatemala is multicultural. Our small territory is characterized by one of the most
complex of cultural mosaics, even though at first sight it would seem to be composed of merely two cultural groups, namely the ladino and the Indian. None the less, certain common traits unite us and it is therefore necessary to explain our identity and present situation as the inhabitants of Guatemala.

The human groups

Lemus Dimas\(^1\) defines the fundamental population groups in Guatemala as follows:

The group that ‘belongs to the land’, that forms part of the land, that is of the land in terms of its overall conception, so much so that the life, mentality and traditions of the land are completely woven into its culture, while the latter is, for its part, woven into the characteristics of the land, environment, history and needs of the group.

The other group, while physically belonging to the environment, has certain doubts as to whether it forms part of the overall body of people who represent its native land; it even repudiates itself and the community which it forms. ‘Men who are dissatisfied with what they are, who are unsure of where they are and where they belong as a social group.’

The first group forms the majority of the population and inhabits the rural areas. The second group makes up the smaller urban population. The first group includes the Indians and also, it should be noted, the rural ladino (of Spanish descent) who has preserved various Spanish traditions, including an archaic language, and whose settlements are in many cases completely surrounded by Indian communities.

As economic potential and political power are concentrated in the second group, composed of the urban ladinos, social welfare, legislation and government are conceived in relation to this minority. This second group, which is culturally amorphous, structures the institutions for purposes of its various activities which are similar to those of many other cultures, yet alien to Guatemalan culture.

The great social and economic problems faced by the majority of our people arise from the disparity between their cultural needs and characteristics and the measures which are taken at the institutional level.

Values specific to the indigenous cultures

The Indian communities are eminently traditionalistic. They are tied to their deeply rooted mythical origins, which have given them belief in the

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validity of their behaviour and way of life to such an extent that they
have preserved intact their basic cultural features, despite the constant
onslaughts of urban culture.

Lemus Dimas\(^1\) refers, \textit{inter alia}, to the following features:

‘Their culture relates to their tradition, the people themselves, the way
they live, feel and think . . .’

‘Their attitude—that of the members of the group—is based on an intimate,
personal knowledge of their environment.’

They ‘possess an intimate sense of their place in their community’.

There exists ‘an attitude reflecting a personal, direct relationship with the
divinity, the invocation to the father by the son at all times of
distress . . .’.

The group has its own language.

They have a ‘sense of security—their dependence on themselves, their
work and their own effort’.

Among these features, spiritual values take precedence over material
values. Hence, the superfluous considerations or outward appearances
which concern urban man to such an extent are not given any special
importance among the Indians. This aspect is clearly evidenced by the
equality which is displayed in dress, housing, personal adornment and
implements.

Each indigenous culture also possesses its own specific values which
give it a certain singularity and enrich the cultural heritage of Guatemala.
Various anthropological studies have been made of these cultures, par-
ticularly through the Seminar Centre for Guatemalan Social Integration.\(^2\)

\section*{Common values of Guatemalan culture}

\textbf{Material values}

Food: agriculture is the traditional source of work in Guatemala. Agri-
cultural products make up the basic elements in our diet, especially black
beans and tortillas made from maize. This diet is supplemented by other
food products such as coffee, banana, potato and yucca, although these
are by no means so popular as black beans and tortillas.

Dress: the urban Guatemalan dresses in the Western style. The \textit{ladino}
peasant in Guatemala wears simple clothing made from industrial textiles,
which rarely varies in style. The Indian weaves his own cloth and wears
traditional dress, which is quite unrelated to foreign styles of clothing.

Indian dress has created a sense of national identity, which has, perhaps,
recently come to be valued by the urban population. With certain modifi-

1. Lemus Dimas, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 130–1.
2. A short bibliography on these aspects is appended to this study (page 47).
Guatemala culture: a statement of the problem

cations, Indian garments are now worn with some pride by practically everyone. This attitude may indicate a rapprochement and, perhaps, the beginning of an acculturation on the part of the ladino in relation to the Indian, which could lead to better mutual understanding and the endorsement of a common cultural identity.

SPIRITUAL VALUES

The unifying aspect of Guatemalan culture lies in our Indian origins, which are essentially the natural element underlying our sense of nationality. Although we share various beliefs, ideas, traditions and customs, the segregation of the Indian has been so extreme and so discriminatory that such beliefs and traditions are not recognized as being the same.

There is currently a greater awareness of our origins and the Guatemalan feels proud of them. This process of conscientization and rediscovery is beginning to lead to a greater understanding and the possibility of union between various groups that make up the population of Guatemala.

Language: the official language is Spanish, which is spoken in the cities and is the second language for a large number of bilingual Indians in the rural areas. The various Indian peoples have their own languages, which are mostly derived from a common Mayan linguistic stock.¹

The interchange of words and idioms which has taken place between Spanish and our indigenous languages, has given birth to a Guatemalan language containing words, turns of phrase, expressions, idioms and forms of pronunciation taken from them and forming what is known as the ‘Chapín’ language. For his part, the Indian has borrowed words from Spanish, which are used in his everyday speech.

Religion: although the Catholic religion does not have an official status, it is the religion of the majority of the population in the rural areas and the cities.

Its liturgy and rites have taken on particular traits as a result of intermixture with the purest Indian traditions practised since ancient times. Although many of these rituals have fallen into disuse in the cities, owing to the complexity of urban life, some very special traditions, myths and beliefs are preserved in certain districts and small towns.

SOCIAL VALUES

The family: the Guatemalan family is organized along the same lines in the city and in the rural areas, among the ladinos and among the Indians. Although it is organized around the father, members of the family have the

1. The following languages are currently spoken in Guatemala: Quiché, Cakchiquel, Tzutuhil, Central Pokoman and Eastern Pokoman, Jacaltec, Kanjobal, Chuj, Aguatec, Ixil, Uspantec, Pokomché, Kekchi, Chorti and Carib.
Guatemala culture: a statement of the problem

utmost respect and consideration for the mother. Love and respect for one's elders, particularly one's grandparents, is a notable feature of family life, and the family unit of grandparents, parents and children is thus maintained intact.

Religious festivals: although they are closely linked to religion, these festivals are more social in character. The most important and most common festivals are those commemorating Lent, Holy Week, the Feast of the Patron Saint, All Saints' Day, the Burning of the Devil (7 December) and Christmas.

Religious celebrations are accompanied by entertainments such as firework displays and popular dances (zarabandas), family or public gatherings and the preparation of special dishes. For Holy Week, these consist of turnovers made with milk, herbs or fish. For All Saints' Day, they consist of cold meats, pumpkin, preserved mombins and custard, which make up the so-called cabecera. Buñuelos, batidos and punches are served on 7 December, and black or coloured tamales at Christmas.

Family celebrations: major family events such as baptisms, weddings, communions, fifteenth birthdays or puberty rituals, etc., are celebrated with great rejoicing. Coloured tamales, pine decorations, marimba music and fireworks are essential features of these celebrations.

Markets: trading goes on in every Guatemalan town. The open-air markets are held on fixed days of the week. They are colourful social occasions and are extremely important since, apart from the interchange of products (through buying and selling), they provide an opportunity for gatherings and the exchange of a wealth of news, gossip and comment, which is an exceedingly important element of community life.

Handicrafts: popular arts and crafts have developed out of the need that implements and objects for personal and family use should reflect traditional standards and be suited to the environment. Men, women and children make a great variety of objects, ranging from simple wooden tools and ceramic pots to complicated textiles characterized by the richness and intricacy of their designs.

1. Buñuelo—fried cruller or tortilla with sugar and cinnamon.
2. Batido—a kind of corn gruel beaten up with chocolate and other ingredients.
3. Tamal—a cornmeal dough roll with various fillings, cooked in corn husks.
Foundations of a cultural policy

The broad lines of a cultural policy are set out in the Constitution of the Republic, which states that ‘The State has a fundamental obligation to promote and disseminate all expressions of culture’.\(^1\)

In Article 99, the University of San Carlos, an autonomous State institution, is assigned the task of ‘promoting, by all the means within its power, scientific and philosophical research and the dissemination of culture’.

In Article 106, it is stated that archaeological and anthropological research is of national importance, and in Article 107 it is laid down that all the archaeological, historical and anthropological wealth of the country forms part of the cultural treasure of the nation and shall be protected by the State. It shall be prohibited to export or alter it, except in such cases as provided by the law. The State shall ensure the restoration and preservation of the national monuments.

These fundamental principles have been implemented only in part, possibly owing to the series of implications which, at the time the law was enacted, were not known and consequently not taken into account.

The state and culture

In Guatemala, the development and promotion of cultural activities is primarily entrusted to the Ministry of Education, basically by reason of the similarities between the fields of education and culture. This arrangement is implicit in the sense that the ‘fundamental provisions’ of the Ley de Educación Nacional (Law concerning National Education) do not mention ‘culture’, although it is implied in statements such as ‘education is a

Foundations of a cultural policy

permanent process of human development and advancement', or 'education is a means of achieving individual and social development'.

The educational aims referred to in that document include the provision of 'a scientific and humanistic education with emphasis on the ethical, aesthetic and civic aspects'; and the training of the Guatemalan 'to play an active part in the cultural, economic and social development of the country'. Other paragraphs deal with similar matters in more detail.

Cultural planning in the strict meaning of the term has never been undertaken. Cultural activity has at no time been included in the national development plan, the aims of which have centred around education, science and technology.

The Vice-Ministry of Culture was established in May 1979. This unquestionably important step will make it possible to define clearly the areas of cultural action and development, alongside the various fields of education, without relegating them to second place. Since May 1979, cultural activity has begun to be accorded its rightful place, even though the cultural policy which will be followed has not yet been formulated.

Administrative organization
of the Vice-Ministry of Culture

Although no official document has been published concerning the organization of the Vice-Ministry, it has been established that, by analogy, those bodies which were formerly devoted to cultural activities now come under the Vice-Ministry, while it is planned to create various new institutions.1

THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
OF FINE ARTS

The body responsible for artistic activity, within the Vice-Ministry of Culture, is the Directorate-General of Fine Arts.

As the Statutes setting out the objectives of this body have not yet been reformulated, reference is made to the Ley Orgánica de Educación (Organic Law on Education) in connection with this Directorate.

Organization and aims: 'The Directorate-General of Fine Arts shall be responsible for the organization, management, promotion and co-ordination of the various cultural and artistic activities undertaken in the country.'

These activities are carried out through specific departments.

The directorate is organized into eight departments. Four of these promote, co-ordinate and undertake the different forms of artistic activity; the National Institute of Fine Arts is responsible for specialized artistic

1. See Appendices 1 and 2.
Stairway with hieroglyphic inscriptions (detail).
Dos Pilas site, Sayaxché, beginning of late classic period.
[Photo: Rafael Morales.]

Maya temple, Tikal.
Middle of classic period, A.D. 700. [Photo: Unesco/R. Garraud.]
The Cathedral of Antigua, the old capital of Guatemala. The only building to have escaped the earthquake. [Photo: Unesco/Albert Raccah.]
Statue of the Virgin (wood).
Height 40 cm; eighteenth century
[Photo: Carlos Mendoza.]

Ecclesiastical silver work.
Eighteenth century.
[Photo: Carlos Mendoza.]
Kekchi women at prayer. El Calvario, Cobán, Alta Verapaz. [Photo: Carlos Mendoza.]

Evening class in progress outside Guatemala City. [Photo: Unesco/Yvonne Tabbush.]

Guatemala City. The monument to industry, 1961. [Photo: Unesco/P. Almasy.]
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education; two departments are engaged in folk arts research and the publication of literary works, while another department supervises public entertainments.

**Visual Arts Department**

This department is responsible for organizing, promoting and setting up exhibitions in the national gallery of the School of Visual Arts. It also supports similar activities in conjunction with private institutions and arranges travelling exhibitions in the provinces on request and when the necessary funds are available. With other departments, it organizes the annual ‘15th of September’ Central American Permanent Competition.

**Music Department**

This department supervises and co-ordinates the activities of the National Symphony Orchestra and the National Choir. It organizes and promotes the orchestral season and engages important international artists.

**Drama Department**

As the country is currently without a national theatre company, the department co-sponsors, within the limit of its resources, performances by Guatemalan and foreign companies. It collaborates in the Guatemalan Theatre Festival, organized each year by the People’s University.

**Dance Department**

This department runs two official dance companies, the Ballet Guatemala and the Ballet Moderno y Folklórico. Both companies have an official season and also give occasional performances in the interior of the republic and even abroad.

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS**

This institute was established under the government resolution of 1 March 1968, with the object of ‘training professional artists and research specialists in all forms of artistic expression’ and also of ‘carrying out research into our folk art with a view to its use in artistic creation’.

Existing art schools were incorporated into the institute; the door was also left open for the ‘establishment of new art schools’.

The statutes of the institute provide for a specific curriculum for each course. For various reasons, it is still not possible to implement every aspect of these curricula.

Almost all the schools of the Institute of Fine Arts are concentrated in the capital. Apart from these schools, there is only a School of Visual Arts and a School of Music in the departmental capital of Quezaltenango.
THE INSTITUTE OF ANTHROPOLOGY
AND HISTORY

This institute, founded in 1945, is responsible for carrying out archaeological and historical research, and has undertaken a certain amount of cultural promotion at national level.

The institute is in charge of Guatemala’s handful of museums, which are, in fact, a poor reflection of the magnificence of our culture.

The various departments which make up the institute have specific functions. Mention should be made, more especially, of the functions of the Department of Pre-Hispanic and Colonial Monuments; the Registry of Archaeological, Historic and Artistic Property; the Programme for the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, together with specific projects concerned exclusively with the preservation of important archaeological sites, such as Tikal, Quiriguá, Iximché, etc.

This institution has an excellent specialized library, which is used by its own research scholars and by other Guatemalan and foreign research workers in need of information.

SEMINAR CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION

This is a centre devoted to political, social, economic and historical research. It gathers research material on our peoples, and functions as a specialized publishing house. The centre has the following objectives: to foster a better knowledge of the social reality of Guatemala, as an essential basis for a better approach to the various social, cultural and economic problems and for their solution; to encourage research projects in the social sciences; to publish studies conducted by Guatemalan or foreign scientists (one of the fundamental aspects of the work of the seminar centre); to foster interest in the social sciences; to co-ordinate social research projects promoted by Guatemalan or foreign scientific bodies; and to maintain and extend the exchange of publications, with a view to gaining a knowledge of developments in the social sciences in other countries and providing information on Guatemalan achievements in the same field.

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
OF CULTURAL DISSEMINATION
AND EXTENSION

National Library

The National Library was founded in 1879 and took over the books and documents which had made up the libraries of the Sociedad Económica de Amigos, the University of San Carlos and the Polytechnical School, and the libraries of the various extinct religious orders.
Foundations of a cultural policy

Since 1950, a Directorate-General of National and Subsidized Libraries has been in existence. It is responsible for fifty-four libraries located in different parts of the republic. The Directorate lacks adequate financial resources and operates under conditions which leave much to be desired.

National Newspaper and Periodicals Library

The National Newspaper and Periodicals Library was formerly a section of the National Library, from which it was detached in 1960. It currently functions directly under the Directorate-General of Fine Arts.

Radio Faro

This is the state-owned radio station which broadcasts exclusively cultural programmes. However, its range is fairly limited. The station has recently been incorporated into the Ministry of Education, having formerly been owned by Aviateca, the national airline.

Directorate of the Cultural Centre of Guatemala

The National Theatre complex, which is known as the Cultural Centre, was officially opened in June 1979. It has been built at the Civic Centre of Guatemala City, on a small hill which is the site of a nineteenth-century fortress.

This centre comprises a large theatre, a studio theatre, an open-air theatre, the School of Visual Arts and the National Exhibition Gallery.

The Cultural Centre has begun to organize official seasons of state ensembles (orchestra, ballet) and other similar activities, such as presentations of Guatemalan writers.

The Cultural Centre comes directly under the Vice-Ministry of Culture and is administered and co-ordinated by a special committee.

It is planned that in the future the Centre will serve as a nucleus of activities aimed at bringing about the establishment of regional cultural centres.

Other state institutions

Bank of Guatemala

The Bank of Guatemala is the central bank with responsibility for issuing national currency. It has also been called the ‘Bank of Culture’. Its premises house an art gallery in which exhibitions are periodically arranged, and an excellent picture gallery which contains works by the most outstanding
Foundations of a cultural policy

contemporary Guatemalan artists. It has a central library linked to a network of libraries in the different suburbs of the capital and most of the departmental capitals.

Municipal cultural activities

Most of the cultural activities supported by the state or by private enterprise are concentrated in the capital. In the departamentos and municipios, the municipal councils are responsible for promoting and implementing the various activities, either directly or through special committees. Main activities: the cultural centres.

Many municipal councils support and subsidize such institutions which, in some cases, house museums, lecture-rooms and concert halls and organize courses on different aspects of the arts. Their activities are sometimes centred around festivals connected with patron saints, when literary, musical and art competitions are organized.

An excellent example of such cultural centres is the Quezaltenango cultural centre, which is supported by the Quezaltenango municipal council. This centre has established a regional museum, a public library and a school of visual arts. It has recently set up a Committee for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage, which is the first such committee organized in the interior of the republic on an institutional basis.

The metropolitan city council organizes an extraordinary range of cultural activities. It supports an open-air Sunday art school, a theatre with its own company, and a library; it has also published books and pamphlets of a literary nature.

Arts education and cultural training

The universities

Under the Constitution of the Republic the Autonomous University of San Carlos has the responsibility of promoting and disseminating culture. However, the university does not fulfil its task, for it would seem that culture is interpreted at the university as being synonymous with education. Such an interpretation enables the university to disregard Guatemalan culture and its development and promotion.

In 1972 the Art School was established at the university. In its short period of activity, it has been engaged solely in the training of secondary teachers, out of a concern to bring art and culture to Guatemalan youth. Only two of the four existing private universities offer programmes which are in any way aimed at providing artistic education and cultural training and promotion. In general, university education is seen as technical and scientific training.
Foundations of a cultural policy

Similarly to university education, primary and secondary education in Guatemala tend to concentrate on training technicians and scientists, without any concern to provide cultural training. In fact, this kind of training is only provided at the Art School.

THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL OF EDUCATION

In this section, we are particularly interested in the Directorate of Arts Education, which still retains its former name and organizational structure.

Directorate of arts education

The range of activities of this Directorate includes the visual arts, musical training and dance. It is mainly concerned with supervising the work carried out as part of the systematic curriculum in the state and private schools of the republic at pre-school, primary and secondary levels.

In addition, a highly significant aspect of the directorate's work has been the organization of a series of refresher and training activities for teachers, particularly art teachers, with the aim of improving their work and achieving the objectives of this branch of education.

It has also arranged festivals of poetry and dance and school drama festivals, which have given practical encouragement to children and young people to become actively involved in these arts. Unfortunately, these activities are not yet carried out on a systematic basis, since they are not fully accepted or adequately supported by the authorities and heads of schools, possibly because of the prevailing cultural ignorance which continues to ensure that artistic expression is regarded merely as a recreational pursuit for which no time can be set aside.

Cultural heritage

The different aspects referred to in this study give an idea of the great wealth of the Guatemalan heritage. Each of the country's cultures has contributed elements which, taken together, form our greatest national asset. Its protection and restoration has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education which, for practical and economic reasons, has channelled all its energies into education and all but disregarded culture. The recent establishment of the Vice-Ministry of Culture gives grounds for expecting changes in this respect. If nothing else, the Vice-Ministry will be an authority that is specifically responsible for the protection and preservation of culture.

Paradoxically, greater attention began to be paid to the cultural heritage in 1976, the year in which the earthquake disaster profoundly
affected every aspect of life, including the cultural heritage, over a vast area of our territory.

The Organizations of American States and Unesco joined forces to safeguard cultural property. The establishment of a national technical unit (URPAC) made it possible to embark on a long-term state programme aimed at the preservation and restoration of cultural property.

The Institute of Anthropology and History had previously attempted to implement similar programmes without any great success, owing to a shortage of funds and qualified technical personnel. Nevertheless, a certain amount of success has been achieved by a number of private institutions, such as the Tikal Association, an institution established, organized and funded on a private basis.

A similar private institution has recently been set up, known as ARPAC, which is the acronym of the Asociación de Rescate del Patrimonio Cultural (Association for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage) and its aim is to protect cultural property in collaboration with the State. The first project planned by the association is the safeguarding, restoration and presentation of the archaeological site of Kaminal Juyú near Guatemala City.

Although legislation designed to protect the cultural heritage has been in force since 1947, it is recognized that there is an urgent need to enact laws that are of a more specific and practical nature.

**National Council for the Protection of Antigua Guatemala**

This decentralized institution was established in 1969 with the specific aim of protecting and preserving both the artistic and the natural and environmental heritage of Antigua Guatemala and the surrounding area. The council, composed of five members who represent various state bodies, is presided over by the mayor. The city curator is responsible for implementing the decisions of the council.

**Museums**

In addition to the various state museums, a number of private museums have recently been established.

*State museums*

These museums come under the authority of the Institute of Anthropology and History and are as follows: The Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology: this museum holds the most valuable collections of pre-Hispanic art and archaeology and typical costumes.
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The Museum of Fine Arts: this museum houses a valuable collection of paintings and sculptures by Guatemalan artists, dating from the nineteenth century onwards.

The Museum of Popular Arts and Crafts: this museum contains examples of the remarkable variety of craftwork currently being produced by Indian communities throughout the country. Its exhibits include ceramics, textiles, gold and silverwork, articles made from paper, basketry, etc.

The History Museum: this museum has a small collection of objects relating to the history of the republic.

The Natural History Museum: this museum houses a small collection of fossils, and samples of Guatemalan flora and fauna. These items are kept in a special room where they may be viewed for educational or research purposes.

The Colonial Museum (Antigua Guatemala): this museum contains a collection of colonial works of art (statuary, painting) from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.

Santiago Museum (Antigua Guatemala): this museum has a collection of works of art and handicrafts from the colonial period.

The Museum of Old Books: this museum holds a collection of Guatemalan printed works from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

Private museums

The Ixchel Museum of Indian Costume: this museum contains the most comprehensive collection of old and modern Indian textiles. The name of the museum refers to Ixchel, the Mayan goddess of weaving.

The Popol Vuh Museum: this museum was recently donated to the Dr Francisco Marroquín Private University. It holds a comprehensive collection of pre-Hispanic ceramics as well as important items of colonial silverware.

The Fray Francisco Vásquez Museum: this museum is attached to the church of San Francisco in Guatemala City. It contains important exhibits of colonial art, which have come from the church or from its ruined convent. It also contains part of the old Franciscan library.

The Palencia Museum: this original museum exhibits a series of potsherds and lithic objects, of pre-Hispanic or uncertain origin. Its location and the presentation of the items make it a very exceptional museum.

Private initiative and culture

Generally speaking, it could be said, until very recently, that the state alone was concerned with culture, even though in a very limited way. Concern for the preservation and development of culture has currently
increased, primarily in response to pressure from an interested sector of society, which has achieved a small measure of success.

In Guatemala City, culture and art are essentially aimed at an elite, which has the financial resources to finance cultural activities and enable them to survive.

INSTITUTIONS IN GUATEMALA CITY

The first private institution to devote itself to the dissemination of culture and art was the Sociedad pro Arte Musical (Society for Musical Art), which was instrumental in bringing outstanding performers to Guatemala and for many years carried on an activity which imparted new life to the Guatemalan musical repertoire. The institution is no longer engaged in this kind of activity, although I believe it is still in existence.

The precarious situation of the School of Visual Arts, its transfer to the cultural centre and the shortage of the funds needed for it to operate in the new building all contributed to the birth of a movement among its academic staff and similarly interested persons, aimed at setting up a foundation which would provide funds to cover immediate needs and, in the future, furnish the school with the resources needed to improve its effectiveness. Such is the background to the establishment of the Patronato de Bellas Artes, which is currently engaged in a series of activities connected with all forms of artistic expression. The most notable of these activities is Inter-teatro, which encourages play production and helps actors through award schemes. The 'Opus' award has been made for a number of successive years.

The Patronato also sponsors dance performances and concerts given by Guatemalan and international artists. Moreover, it has a museums committee, whose aim is to collaborate in the establishment and improvement of these institutions, which are so necessary to culture.

There are a number of other organizations such as the Círculo Musical Antigua. However, these are exclusive, specialized organizations, which do not have any national influence outside their limited sphere of action.

All these institutions organize or sponsor exhibitions, concerts, recitals and, occasionally, art auctions.

Various foreign governments support cultural institutions1 which organize activities connected with the arts, such as exhibitions, theatrical productions, round-table discussions and short courses.

Ultimately, the private institutions create the socio-economic context of art and cultural activity in Guatemala, since, for a variety of reasons, the persons who join them also make up the public who attend the various programmes.

Cultural activities in the city are aimed at this public. This situation

1. Prominent among such institutions are the Instituto Guatemalteco Americano (IGA), the Alliance Française, the Instituto Italiano de Cultura, the Asociación Alexandro Von Humboldt and the Instituto Guatemalteco de Cultura Hispánica.
Foundations of a cultural policy

is justifiable in the sense that if the state cannot finance and promote culture, then somebody has to step into the breach and there is no one better equipped to do so than those who have the necessary financial resources.

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

This university was founded in 1945 by the Government of the Revolution with the aim of promoting literacy training. Although this programme has not been abandoned, it did not meet with the anticipated degree of success. However, artistic and cultural activity, which was subsequently encouraged by this institution and embodied in the Academy of Dramatic Art and its theatre company, succeeded in bringing a popular theatre to the Guatemalan public. This success is partly due to the fact that it has been aimed at the widest possible public, on the basis of an analysis and knowledge of the interests of its audience, without any attempt to be exclusive. Furthermore, this institution has a nursery of talent the like of which no other arts company has succeeded in forming. Currently, the most important theatrical activity is the Theatre Festival co-ordinated by the People's University and organized by the actor Rubén Morales Monroy.

A characteristic aspect of this activity is the fact that in 1977 more than one hundred performances of *Torotumbo* were given both in Guatemala City and in various departments. The People's University has run this festival for a number of consecutive years, and has been able to define a cultural policy in relation to its activities, something which has not been achieved in any other group or activity.

The Academy of Visual Arts, which functions in the university, is also engaged in a variety of laudable activities.

ART GALLERIES

The practice of establishing exhibition centres, which is so widespread in the major cities of the world, has recently been introduced into Guatemala. There are at present some eight to ten private galleries. They are engaged in a variety of activities, and periodically put on one-man shows or group-shows of works by Guatemalan and foreign artists. These galleries have boosted artistic activity and given painters, in particular, greater promotion and sales opportunities.

THEATRES AND AUDITORIUMS

For many years, the same halls were used for film shows and theatrical performances. As a result of the increase in theatrical activity, premises have been built or converted for use specifically as theatres.

There are currently ten theatres in Guatemala City and at least one in each *departamento* of the republic. Theatrical activity has expanded
considerably and at any time of the year at least five different plays may be seen. There are no state theatre companies. A number of these theatres also serve as auditoriums. There has been an increase in musical activity, and concerts are given regularly in the capital.

Musical activity is fairly limited in the departments. The main musical ensembles are the National Symphony Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of the Conservatory, the Santiago Concert Band, the Military Band, the Orchestra of the Antigua Music Circle and the Youth Orchestra. The University Orchestra of the Art School of the Autonomous University of San Carlos has been recently founded.
Artists come from all walks of life, although in Guatemala it is most common for them to come from the lower-income groups.

Artists receive their academic or technical education at the National Institute of Fine Arts, the State art school, which primarily offers courses in the visual arts, music and dance. Actors have been able to choose between the People’s University, the University Art Theatre and the National Theatre School, or have been trained at a particular theatre.

The visual arts and drama are the most dynamic from the point of view of change and the variety of their subjects and forms of expression. We find that works in these arts display dissimilar trends, and so provide a particularly rich experience for both the spectator and the artist himself, who is able to discover points of comparison.

The field of music is characterized by repetitive programmes, which introduce little change and are confined to a fairly limited circle. Some avant-garde work has been done in action-music and has evoked a positive approach from young people, but the audiences have been very small. Most musicians have certain musical biases which shut them off from change and prevent their musical development.

While a few dancers have achieved national and international recognition in the field of classical ballet, folk ballet has had a far greater impact, since it is, naturally, more readily identified with our culture, and attracts and penetrates more effectively all cultural levels and groups.

Guatemalan artists are both assiduous and ambitious. They do not attach themselves to any single form of expression, but experiment and change in a constant search for improvement. Unfortunately, this search for improvement in many cases goes hand in hand with a legitimate aspiration for financial betterment, which conditions and stereotypes the artist, encouraging him to gear his output to the tastes of the paying public.
Cultural policy

Every State has a programme of action in which it defines and sets out priorities for development, investment and promotion: situations which will match the direction that the government in power wishes or is able to impart to its activities.

In the Spanish American countries we have been bedazzled by the technology of developed cultures, which mould taste, thought and action with a view to obtaining secure profits through consumption assured by a buyer who knows neither what to buy nor why to buy it. The mass media are manipulated to this end and guide the masses in a single direction.

The dominant 'cultural policy' in these consumer societies seeks the elimination of creative thought, since, with 'an education which equips man for a frank discussion of his problems, which alerts him to the dangers of his time, so that, aware of them, he will acquire the strength and courage to struggle, instead of being dragged along to the point of losing his own self, in compliance with alien demands', the consumer society for which they have programmed us would be doomed to failure. Such a situation leads these societies to give an impetus to and support institutions which turn man into a technician and destroy him in the sense that they mechanize him and divest him of any human value.

A society that is conscious of this situation tries to chart a cultural policy that strikes a balance between creative activity and 'technicalization'. No such balance has been struck in Guatemala. We are traditionally a creative people, whose creativity remains latent and flourishes in the most diverse circumstances and fields of action. However, as our creative action lacks continuity, we find ourselves drawn into a position which differs little from our original situation, recalling with pride, but without being able to explain, the presence of creative talents of the first magnitude.

Cultural policy

The state of Guatemala does not have a cultural policy; our governments have displayed an utter lack of culture, to the point of not even reflecting on the need for cultural activity.

At the present time, we could compile a list of the cultural activities carried out in Guatemala, which would include a variety of activities such as the season of symphonic music, the season of classical ballet, the season of modern ballet and folk ballet, the sponsorship or contracting of foreign artists, festivals of art and culture, the training of artists, etc.

If we analyse the purpose of cultural activity, in terms of the various achievements and the activities themselves, we see that it tends to centre around the recreational aspects, the employment of artists and other aspects which, naturally, could form the subject of a cultural policy, although such a policy would have little real usefulness.

Cultural policy, when analysed and planned in relation to the expressive needs of a people, is an essential feature of national unity enabling the individual to find more effective solutions to his present problems, plan his future and, above all, feel himself worthier in the knowledge and identification of his abilities.

The existence of a cultural policy leads the people to engage in forms of artistic expression that are not intended as ‘art for art’s sake’, but as the expression of a need to be and to experience; an art which gives the people a new force, enhances their belief in themselves and encourages them to improve themselves.

Cultural policy should be formative. This aim is attained through education based on awareness of and identification with a culture. Such identification is achieved by means of programmes designed with this end in view and applied from early childhood onwards.

Future lines of action
of the Vice-Ministry of Culture

As a result of the establishment of a Vice-Ministry of Culture it is possible to consider a significant change in cultural administration, promotion, organization, preservation and training.

The first measure to be taken has been a study of our environment and its cultural activities and needs. It was unquestionably such a study which prompted the establishment of the Vice-Ministry as an immediate solution to the problem of safeguarding our culture, which is under threat from so many external and internal factors.

The cultural conscientization of both officialdom and the general public will provide a basis for bringing culture to every part of our country and giving everyone an opportunity to share in our cultural wealth.

Collective participation will bring about a rapprochement among all sectors, each of which will contribute its own positive cultural features.
Cultural policy

This will make it possible to obtain a better knowledge of these features and lay more rational foundations which unquestionably enjoy a broad measure of acceptance, for the formation of a cultural policy which embraces even the most neglected elements of our communities. This cultural policy will enable nationalistic feeling to grow and be underpinned by objective, solid foundations.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE
OF THE VICE-MINISTRY

National Board of Culture and Fine Arts: an advisory body of the Vice-Ministry. It has the task and responsibility of planning and disseminating culture, with a view to the cultural integration of the Guatemalan nation, in an endeavour to preserve and exalt our most characteristic values.

Directorate-General of Anthropology and History: this title has been given to the Institute of Anthropology and History, which will be responsible for all matters pertaining to the cultural heritage and its protection, preservation and restoration. It is likewise responsible for historical and anthropological research.

Directorate-General of Fine Arts: this directorate is responsible for promotion and training in all forms of artistic expression.

Directorate-General of Cultural Dissemination and Extension: this section includes institutions such as the National Library, the Newspaper and Periodicals Library, and the Radio Broadcasting Company whose task, according to the organizational chart of the Vice-Ministry, will be eminently educational. As the Directorate of the Cultural Centre is designed to administer and promote the National Theatre, it is very closely associated with the Directorate of Fine Arts. One of its most important activities is to promote and set up regional cultural centres. This is an aspect which has not been given attention by any previous government.

The Directorate of Cultural Extension comprises two departments. One of these departments is to deal with publishing, which has been greatly neglected in Guatemala. We should also mention the Department of Cultural Missions, whose activity will include cultural promotion and organization, a field in which no work has yet been done in Guatemala. Lastly, the National Youth Institute has been established to promote and sponsor sport among the large sectors of the population which, until now, have not benefited from any systematic action that would enable them to achieve a higher level of physical and social development.
Appendices
Appendix 2. Seminar Centre
for Social Integration in Guatemala:
publications (selected works)

ADAMS, Richard N. Encuesta sobre la cultura de los ladinos en Guatemala, 1956.
CALBY, Benjamin N. Ixiles y ladinos, 1977.
Economia de Guatemala, 1958.
Integracion social en Guatemala, 1956.
TAX, Sol. Economia del centavo.
WAGLEY, Charles. Santiago Chimaltenango, 1957. (Estudio antropológico-social de una comunidad indígena de Huehuetenango.)
Introduction

The recent establishment of the Vice-Ministry of Culture has, in a definitive manner, changed the overall structure of the sector and made it possible to envisage certain short-term constructive advances.

One of the first steps taken by this body was to hold the First Meeting on Cultural Co-ordination (November 1979), the aim of which was to ascertain the expert opinions of persons working in this sector in state or private organizations.

The Vice-Ministry provided the participants with three basic papers which were considered by the groups of experts, artists and technicians with a view to preparing documents that would help the Vice-Ministry to develop more effectively and achieve its various aims.

The following pages contain a summary of the most important aspects considered and the recommendations made to the Vice-Ministry by this representative group.

Cultural objectives, policies and strategies

PRELIMINARY DOCUMENT

Preliminary definitions

1. Cultural Sector. The Cultural Sector embraces all forms of expression pertaining to the arts, science, recreation and philosophy.
2. The Vice-Ministry of Culture. The Vice-Ministry of Culture is made up of the whole group of State institutions, whose essential task is to undertake activities connected with the particular forms of expression embraced by the Cultural Sector.

Context: 1979/1982 National Education Plan

The 1979/1982 National Development Plan for the Education Sector contains an explicit formulation of objectives which underpin the establishment of a body that is specifically aimed at the development of the Cultural Sector and accordingly has its own objectives, policies and strategies. As regards the Cultural
Appendices

Sector, the National Development Plan for the Education Sector contains the following general objectives, which are described below:

1. To contribute to the preservation of cultural values, the reassertion of cultural identity and the mutual knowledge of the country's cultural groups.
2. To foster a discerning attitude in regard to foreign cultural models, consumption trends and information processes which result in distorted behaviour patterns.

Objectives

The above-mentioned objectives of the 1979/1982 National Education Plan afford a broad basis for the systematic linking of the Cultural Sector with the Education and Science Sectors. However, the very fact of laying a basis for the forms of concrete action which should be undertaken in the Cultural Sector entails the formulation of specific objectives, which are as follows:

1. To enable the people of Guatemala to attain full self-realization, by providing them with broader opportunities to develop their vocational aptitudes in the arts and sciences, and to satisfy their recreational needs.
2. To contribute to the improvement of the quality of the aesthetic education provided within the educational system, so that the student may significantly broaden the range of his opportunities for artistic experience.
3. To encourage research aimed at extending and improving knowledge of the cultural heritage.
4. To safeguard, protect, preserve, restore, develop and disseminate the cultural heritage of the nation.
5. To promote the dissemination of the works of Guatemalan artists and encourage their artistic development, while respecting their creative freedom and observing the legislation which protects Guatemalan art.
6. To disseminate, using suitable means and ensuring the necessary standards, indigenous or popular forms of expression pertaining to art, crafts, festivals, language and religion, with a view to contributing to an authentic appreciation of the autochthonous cultures of the country.
7. To supervise the media, with a view to excluding from their programmes foreign patterns which may alter the cultural identity of the nation.
8. To arrange and co-ordinate international co-operation, to the benefit of Guatemalan culture.

Policies

With a view to attaining its specific objectives, the Cultural Sector will adopt a set of policies that will determine the specific forms of action to be undertaken within it, at least in 1980. These policies should therefore lay the basis for the programmes of action of the state institutions which make up the Vice-Ministry of Culture.

A fundamental policy of the Cultural Sector is to promote greater cultural participation among the economically disadvantaged section of the population. To this end, it will be necessary to increase artistic and recreational activities designed for this section of the population. It will be essential to improve the institutional efficiency of the Sector, and this entails improving and increasing its human resources, on the basis of an effective allocation from the financial resources made available to the Vice-Ministry of Culture.
Appendices

In more explicit terms, the sector will adopt the following policies:

1. To consider art and free artistic expression as a vital necessity and, consequently, a right of each citizen.
2. To promote greater participation in the activities of the Cultural Sector among sections of the population which have little access to such activities, particularly those groups living in rural areas and the poorer urban areas.
3. To increase artistic and recreational activities catering for the economically disadvantaged sections of the population, particularly by producing suitable cultural entertainments in rural areas and the poorer urban areas.
4. To give an impetus to the implementation of the programmes of the state institutions in the Cultural Sector.
5. To increase the financial resources of the Cultural Sector.
6. To organize advanced professional and technical training programmes for artists and artistic groups.
7. To organize systematic recreational and leisure programmes for children, young people and adults.

Strategies

Implementation of the policies of the Cultural Sector calls for the definition of forms of action which will give decisions the practical dimension which is essential if the Cultural Sector is to function in accordance with its stated objectives. In this context, one basic strategic operation will be the gradual administrative decentralization of the activities carried out by the institutions of the sector, so as to be able to cater, to a significantly greater degree, for the needs of the Guatemalan people. By the same token, it will be necessary to identify new alternatives and promote cultural activities, particularly with the aim of incorporating the lower-income groups into the cultural life of the country. A fundamental role is to be played in these strategic activities by the mass media and the institutions which provide technical and financial co-operation for integral social development projects, while another essential aspect is effective supervision of the implementation of the cultural and recreational programmes undertaken by the institutions of the Vice-Ministry of Culture.

Consequently, the following forms of strategic action are proposed:

1. Gradual decentralization of the administration of the specific activities of the Cultural Sector. Efforts will be made to increase the number of projects and ensure their qualitative improvement with a view to promoting participation in cultural activities among all sectors of society, particularly the lower-income groups.
2. Use of the mass media, particularly radio and television, to disseminate artistic, scientific and recreational programmes.
3. Optimization of national and international, public and private technical and financial co-operation, with a view to attaining the objectives of the Cultural Sector.
4. More effective supervision of the implementation of cultural and recreational programmes.
5. Organization of touring companies in the arts, mobile libraries and museums, with the aim of developing cultural programmes in rural areas.
6. The preparation of works designed to disseminate knowledge of the arts and the Guatemalan cultural heritage.
7. Preferential support for the establishment, maintenance and development of cultural centres, art schools, galleries and schools for the study of vernacular languages in rural areas and other institutions devoted to the promotion of culture.

8. Liaison with the advertising media, designed to ensure that advertising messages have a more cultural character, with a view to protecting the national identity.


——. Ley de Educación Nacional, 1977. (Mimeo.)


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