

Weaving and Life in Guatemala: Life and Weaving in Guatemala

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Abstract

Guatemalan women weavers today work on backstrap looms that are the same as their mothers and grandmothers used. They have passed their weaving skills to their daughters, as well as to some of their sons. Some Mayan women today wear Western store-bought clothing such as jeans and high heels. In rural areas though the woman and girls still wear their traditional *huipiles* (woven blouses) and *cortes* (long woven skirts). The Maya have historically survived as subsistence farmers. Each family would grow its own food and sell or give away what they didn't need. The *milpa* or cornfield was, and still is, especially important as corn continues to be one of Guatemala's staple foods. Today, the Maya are finding it very hard to survive on subsistence farming because they don't have enough land to support their families. This demise has required women to sell their weavings in order for their families to survive. Maya weaving has lasted throughout the centuries as a means of economic survival. It continued to exist during the collapse of Classic Maya society, during Spanish domination, political control, and during exploitation by foreign tourist markets. Life in the 70s and 80s in Guatemala was hard for the Maya. From 1978 to 1986 the Guatemalan Maya were the victims of Civil War and ethnic cleansing during which hundreds of people were massacred and their houses burned. One of the goals of the gorilla movement was to eradicate the Maya culture. The Maya are very proud of their traditional dress. Recent re-adoption of traditional dress symbolizes the Maya's continued pride, survival and solidarity in the face of terrible impediments. The voices of Maya weavers are incorporated in this paper.

Ixchel or Chac Chef is the Mayan goddess of weaving. "Mayans speak of cloth as being 'born' on the loom. The sacred Maya text, the Popol Vuh, warns the Indians against forsaking the crafts that have been handed down through the generations: abandoning those crafts will betray the ancestors." (Giantureo, P. and Tuttle, T., p. 30)

Introduction

Guatemalan women weavers today work on backstrap looms that are the same as their mothers and grandmothers used. They have passed their weaving skills to their

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daughters, as well as to some of their sons. Typically, Mayan clothing was woven of cotton. In fact, cotton cloth was worth a great deal during the Classic period. Only the upper classes could wear the beautifully woven cloth that was also used as part of the Maya tribute to the Spanish. After the Spanish introduced sheep, weaving with wool was commonly used in the mountains where the weather tends to be colder. The cotton and the wool were dyed with natural colors created from plants, such as indigo and insects like the cochineal parasite found on prickly pear cactus leaves.

Some Mayan women today wear Western store-bought clothing such as jeans and high heels. In rural areas though the woman and girls still wear their traditional *huipiles* (woven blouses) and *cortes* (long woven skirts). Many women also carry a *tzute* (ZUH-teh) on their heads. The *tzute* helps keep off the hot sun, and when unfolded, it can be used to carry a child, a bundle or as a shawl when necessary. The men wear loose pants and a shirt.

The Maya have historically survived as subsistence farmers. Each family would grow its own food and sell or give away what they didn't need. The *milpa* or cornfield was, and still is, especially important as corn continues to be one of Guatemala's staple foods. Today, the Maya are finding it very hard to survive on subsistence farming because they don't have enough land to support their families. This is because land has been distributed unequally to the Indians and the Ladinos (non-Indians). A growing population has also contributed to the demise of subsistence farming in many areas. This demise has required women to sell their weavings in order for their families to survive. Maya weaving has lasted throughout the centuries as a means of economic survival. It continued to exist during the collapse of Classic Maya society, during Spanish domination, political control, and during exploitation by foreign tourist markets.

Life in the 70s and 80s in Guatemala was hard for the Maya. From 1978 to 1986 the Guatemalan Maya were the victims of Civil War and ethnic cleansing during which hundreds of people were massacred and their houses burned. One of the goals of the guerilla movement was to eradicate the Maya culture. They smashed thousands of weaving looms and even studied *huipil* design patterns to tell which villages people came from. Women were afraid to wear their traditional dress as their village could be identified and terrorized because of the *huipil* and *corte* designs. Often referred to as the "Silent Holocaust", the campaign left 200,000 civilians dead at the hands of the military death squads with 440 Mayan villages were wiped off the map. (Global Exchange, 2005)

The Maya that moved to the capital or larger Guatemalan cities encountered social, racial, and cultural discrimination from the dominant Ladino society and they too had to stop wearing their traditional dress. A return to traditional dress styles is one of the many expressions of these movements. This has been aided in large part by the formation of weaving cooperatives that have allowed Maya weavers to recapture and continue the rural Maya tradition of wearing *traje* or traditional dress as well as to provide jobs in the production of *huipils* for sale to tourists. The Maya are very proud of their traditional dress. Recent re-adoption of traditional dress symbolizes the Maya's continued pride, survival and solidarity in the face of terrible impediments. (<http://www.anthro.fsu.edu/wovenvoices/warandup.html>)

Weaving the Heavens: Pre-columbian Guatemala (Reese, L., 1993), one of the units in the Spindle Stories World History Series, recorded the testimonials of a variety of women weavers from the Guatemalan Highlands. The following are some of their stories:

“When one has suffered discrimination and oppression, one starts to feel like they’re not important... So many people are telling you, ‘You’re not important’ you start to believe that your dress isn’t worth anything. After finding out what the colors and designs mean in the huipiles, though, you feel more Indian, more part of the culture. Learning about the designs on my dress and the colors has been the most important part of my healing from the torture this year” (Unidentified woman, 1986 p. 2).

“I am 12 years old... I used to go to school. But I don’t go to school anymore. I must help my mother do laundry for the plantation owner’s family, because we need the money... Our water comes from a stream, about a mile from home. Everyday I go there with my friends, and we carry water back in large water jugs, balanced on our heads. Many afternoons, the girls in my community get together in the shade of a huge tree and do our weaving. We talk and weave, and our grandmothers sometimes join us to tell stories” (Janita Tzul, 1992, p. 3).

“I used to weave and sew all of the clothes for my family but thread is very expensive now. Sometimes I have to buy clothing made in Taiwan or El Salvador. I did make my huipil, and I have worn it everyday since I married 30 years ago. I teach the young girls how to weave and that makes me very happy to see them carry on our traditional patterns.” (Juanita Tzul’s grandmother, 1992 p. 3).

“I can’t get accustomed to taking off my traditional clothes. I can’t adjust to putting on other clothes. I can only wear other clothes for an hour or two I can’t leave my dress, it’s part of me. Without my dress I don’t feel calm inside, I feel like I’m missing something, something from me...” (Reese, L. 1993, p. 2)

San Antonio Aguas Calientes, a popular tourist destination, lies about four kilometers southeast of the city of Antigua. It is a twenty-minute bus ride to the small weaving town. Tourists spend the day shopping in the market and the weavers’ cooperative, taking advantage of the *huipiles* of the village that are best known for their tight two-faced weave or *Brocado* technique that produces an identical image on the front and back. The textiles of San Antonio Aguas Calientes are often considered to be the finest in all of Guatemala. The Guarán family is one of the most prominent weaving families in San Antonio Aguas Calientes. They are a family of six siblings, four women and two men. Their mother, an internationally known weaver, died in March of 2006. The following interviews are with three of the Guarán sisters, Carolina, whose textile store and small collection of ancient textiles is at the entrance to town; Dolly, who travels to markets such as the one in Chichicastenango and other small village markets to sell her weavings; and Álda, who owns the Museum of Ancient Textiles in Antigua and sponsors the Asociación Primal de Artesanos de Guatemala. Here are their voices:

Carolina

I know that your mother recently died. Can you tell me something about her or describe her?

Yes, I can describe her. I can tell you that she was a woman who worked very hard. She always dedicated herself to textiles, that is, something of a heritage for us, yes, because here everyone has to teach their daughters to weave. But, because this is like the future for our lives, because before in the village we didn't study. You have to know how to weave. It's something that parents worry about. Like in the case of my mom, she worried a lot about us so that we learned to weave. But there is a very special case like the one of my brother Marines because he weaves. Now in the village there are something like eight men who weave. But this is something strange, well, for our village. But for us, well, weaving is very important. Then we have a good memory of my mom who taught us many good things, that is work. It is something that we have preserved and we love it will all of our heart...I love it a lot, not for money, yes money is important, but more than anything is love of your work. I have many good memories of weaving.

The traditional dress you are wearing, Is it the dress of San Antonio?

Yes, it's the dress of San Antonio.

What things define your identity?

Like my dress and the pride in being indigenous.

How are your indigenous beliefs and your Christian beliefs affected?

Are there any problems between the Christian and indigenous values?

No, nothing. Here we live in the village. There are Catholics, Evangelists, there are different beliefs...everyone lives in peace.

Do you still believe in the Maya beliefs such as the natural gods?

We believe that they existed but we don't believe in them.

Are there any programs supported by the government to conserve the language?

I think that maybe a little bit. Now in the national schools there are many bilingual teachers because there are many villages in which the children do not speak Spanish. Then there are bilingual teachers. It is necessary to have bilingual teachers. Yes, the girls go to school now. Before it wasn't important. They have to learn to study, to have a career. It has been very important that they study. My daughters are also professionals. Yes, they are teachers and they know how to weave very well. I am very content to be able to give this to my daughters who know how to weave. This is very important for me...and that I always wanted them not to lose our culture...it is something that I think that within a few years it is going to disappear. It will be lamentable because it is a very important culture. I have small collection of *trajes* back here. It is very nice for us, well, work. I am enchanted with the ancient pieces.

Do they teach weaving in the schools?

No, it has been very difficult. But one of my daughters has a school. The teachers don't want to teach weaving to the girls because it requires a lot of patience.

Dolly

Can you describe or tell me about your mom?

She was a decisive woman. She tried to make, dealing with weaving, everything she presented and also she tried to make very different things than those that they wove in the garden. She was very creative, had a lot of imagination, and she created her own designs.

What values did she pass on to you all?

We come from an Evangelist Christian family. And that was the major heritage that they could give us...yes because actually in the world there is a lot of violence, a lot of disorder, yes, worldwide...But, thanks to god, all six brothers and sisters believe in one god. We come from a Evangelist Christian family and that is the success of our lives. I, being the youngest, God has blessed me a lot in relationship to work...Everyone is involved with folk art and we are a family that the parents never gave us money to begin our businesses. All of the six brothers and sisters began to go forward ourselves. It was like support from our parents, but not economic support, moral support instead.

For you, what does it mean that your heritage is Maya?

We are Mayas, but we don't share in their traditions, because they adore/pray to a wooden god. And we adore/pray to an earthly god. That is the big difference. We don't practice rituals or other situations outside of our beliefs. I like the Maya beliefs a lot. I have studied them, yes. They have a place where they go to have their ceremonies. They bring their firewood and dance around the fire. You transfer a pride in being Maya because we have a lot of tradition, a lot, eh, of knowledge.

Are you doing anything to pass on your skills and values to the next generation?

I don't have daughters, only sons. But I give work to many children and young people that want to work with me. There are many children who don't know how to weave. In the first place the economic situation, the material is very expensive now and they don't have the possibility of buying material. Then, what I do is to make them a loom and teach them to weave. My idea is to never stop doing this. Now we have a serious problem. We can't find the thread to make their looms. It is cotton thread. But the problem is that we can't find the material...there is some thread that is of inferior quality.

Álida

Can you tell me about or describe your mom?

First I believe that I give thanks to god, yes, for giving me such a special mother. She was my life, my company during my fifty years. She traveled a lot with me...not only my mother, but my father also. They guided us to a good life, especially recognizing that there is one true god according to them...They taught us the path to follow and later to work. They said 'he who works eats and he who doesn't work, doesn't eat. Well we learned a lot about work from her. I believe that we learned a lot from her. Yes, They are important values for the rest of our lives. And I was a very special

woman, a very intelligent woman who guided us as women and men...I believe that she was a woman who taught us not only to work but also how to sell our products. And, of course, we learned a lot from her.

When did the girls in your family learn to weave?

I began right away...yes, speaking of me, I didn't live the life before, yes, before my two sisters. My two older sisters. I can't tell you ...that is in my life I learned to weave at six years old. I remember I was under my mother's loom playing and bothering her, not helping her, yes, I played. When she was weaving the photo of some presidents on the loom, I was busy cutting threads.

For you what does your Mayan heritage mean?

Well first of all I feel appreciative to God for letting me be born in such a relevant culture. I believe that it is a culture that it is among the five great cultures. And it is something very special to have been born with Maya heritage. I feel that many times we are discriminated against...but we have had a life of discrimination here in Guatemala, yes...I believe that the discrimination isn't important because I have achieved, yes, eh, to be where I am, but I have transmitted this to a lot of people, to many more women...eh, yesterday at an event that we had many women came from around Guatemala. They were women from the Guatemalan villages. Exactly four years ago in 2001 I founded Asociación Primal de Artesanos de Guatemala. We began with 300 women in order to support them, yes, in the selling of their products. Between 2001 and 2006 we have 900 women who belong to our network...Last night I shared with the President of the World Bank the work we have accomplished without any support from anyone because a lot of times it becomes too political. Yes, when they want to politicize a project and the information doesn't get to the people who need it...Well it has been difficult but it hasn't been impossible because the important thing is when we meet. We meet with a lot of people and we share...it's something very important in our lives. I believe I have achieved this.

What things define your identity?

I think that I am a woman created by God...I continue being a Maya woman and I believe that I am a woman with a great deal of human potential.

What does wearing your traditional dress mean to you?

Well, it is my identity. Yes, it's my identity. That's why my mom was always telling us that she didn't want us to wear another *traje* from another village but that we should appreciate our *traje*. It is the only one we should wear. Well, my *traje* represents my identity. I believe that is the most important thing about where I go, they know where I am from. I only wanted to say that yes, we need any manner of support here in Guatemala. I often see, yes, people and they don't give the necessary support.

"When she was eighty-six my mother told me, 'Weaving is the only thing you will inherit. Sometime, it will make you money.' Those were her last words." (Olivia Asij, as cited in Giantureo, P. and Toby Tuttle, p. 28)

Olivia Asij of Santo Domingo Xenacol, Guatemala is known as the best weaver in town. She has been chosen to participate in a project sponsored by the Ixchel Museum

in Guatemala City. The museum provides the *cuyuscate* (natural cotton) in neutral colors to the project weavers. She weaves on her backstrap loom on the cement of the courtyard of her home. She laments that men, weaving on foot looms brought by the Spaniards, can weave their cloth more quickly and sell it for a higher price.

Olivia tells the interviewers/authors that when she was a child, women didn't use cottons (*chemises*) because the women only owned one *huipil* (blouse). "When we washed it, we tied on dinner napkins for modesty." (p. 29) She describes other changes she witnessed, "I remember wearing sandals made out of car tires. I remember the days before fertilizer when we couldn't grow enough corn for tortillas, so we bought bread, four pieces for five cents. And I remember when we used to get ten cents a day for working five square yards of land. That's what my husband made when he was doing farm work." (p. 29). She describes that back then marriages were arranged. "I didn't know my husband-to-be, so I was scared and resisted for years while my father insisted I marry this man...my father explained that if I did not marry his choice I would be disowned. So I got married at twenty-five." (p. 29) When her husband died five years later Olivia was responsible for the care and education of her two sons. She began selling her weavings in Antigua, Guatemala City, and other smaller market villages.

Albertina Patunayche and Irma Bajan are "superstar" weavers from the village of Patzun. Albertina is worried that the weaving tradition in Guatemala may eventually be lost. "Some women don't know how to weave; they buy used *huipiles* from other villages instead of making their own in Patzun style. A few women even buy Western clothes. Some mothers want to teach their daughters to weave, but the girls must do homework instead. Men use to wear the woven shirts and pants their wives made, but not now" (p.30). Having learned to weave on a child-sized backstrap loom when she was seven Albertina has been practicing her craft for a long time. She was very happy to sell her first piece for thirty-two cents. She made enough to buy ribbons for her hair.

Albertina's four children go to primary school. The school expenses are hard on her as she is a single mother. "School expenses are thirteen dollars a month. I can barely give the children money for anything except school...When Albertina can't afford books, supplies, and uniforms, her parents contribute." (p. 31). Her daughters already know how to weave at ages seven and nine. "For fun they pretend that they have orders. They cut leaves into strips and weave the pieces together."

Halfway up Albertina's hill is Irma's house. She has three daughters, Irma Leticia, Gladys Maribel, and Brenda Lorena. They live in a one-room home without windows. The furniture in the house includes a cabinet and two beds. At four in the morning Irma starts her day. She and two of her daughters buy eggs at the market, visit the girls' teacher, fetch water from the town spigot and place the striped plastic water jugs on their heads for the walk home.

Eusevia Guerra lives in the village of Pachay Las Lomas. She has been weaving since she was twelve. At age eighteen she sold her first *huipil* for \$50 dollars. "It took six months to make that *huipil*. Today that much work should bring a hundred and fifty dollars." (p. 42.) Eusevia also begins her day at four in the morning. She makes coffee, then

tortillas, washes the dishes, straightens the house, and, finally, begins to weave. Her boys come home at eleven o'clock. They eat lunch and go to the fields to help their father. Eusevia goes to the mill in the afternoon to have her corn ground. She does the laundry and the dinner dishes and goes to bed with the darkness, as there is no electricity in the village. When asked what makes her happy, Eusevia answers, "Having weaving to do. What would we do without work? If you don't have money you can't eat."

"I have returned to the Mayan religion. My family is both Mayan and Catholic, so they understand—we have never lost our Mayan beliefs." (Francisca cited in Gianturco and Tuttle p. 46). Although Francisca does not weave anymore her daughters María and Soila are still weaving. Francisca is a healer who also is the leader of the weavers. "When we are ready to deliver our work, we all go out and buy incense to make a ceremony so that our weaving will sell." (Francisca cited in Gianturco and Tuttle p. 46). She and the other weavers sell their work at a store called Colibri in Antigua. She has been told that their work "flies out the door the minute they bring them into Colibri—they sell like hotcakes." (Francisca, cited in Gianturco and Tuttle p. 46).

Weaving has been the mainstay for many Guatemalan women through time. It has allowed them to support their families and define their identities as weavers. Many of the weavers were widowed during the terrorism of the 1970s and 1980s. Their weaving became their identities and their way out of poverty. The weavers work hard to care for their homes and their children. Weaving happens when the women have a little time to spare in their busy domestic schedules. The weavers are passing their skills down to their own children, as well as other children in the neighborhood who don't know how to weave. The high price of materials though, is making weaving into a very expensive endeavor for the weavers to buy the cotton thread. The three Guarán women all talked about what they are doing to preserve the older textiles, as well as how they are helping the girls in the community learn to weave. They wear their *traje* proudly and go on with their busy lives of weaving and selling their work, of meeting with other weavers and sharing their stories and of making ends meet as they provide for their families. There is hope for a peaceful time in Guatemala now and for a resurgence of the traditional arts that support a way of life that has been going on for centuries.

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Unit Introduction:

This unit on Guatemala was written for a 4th grade class taking Spanish as a second language. Students in 4th grade are ready to look beyond their families and neighborhoods and expand their knowledge to other countries in the world. The rich Guatemalan culture provides many ways in which the students can work with geography, history and culture of the Maya, cultural similarities and differences, and defining identities—a perfect 4th grade topic. The students are asked to research some of the topics suggested in the unit.

This unit could be adapted for younger or older students by asking the students to complete simplified or more advanced tasks.

Preguntas Esenciales

- ¿Dónde está Guatemala? (Where is Guatemala?)
- ¿Cómo es Guatemala? (What is Guatemala like?)
- ¿Dónde vivían los maya precolombino? (Where did the pre-colombian Maya live?)
- ¿Cómo eran las ciudades? (What were the cities like?)
- ¿Qué profesiones habían? (What professions were there?)
- ¿Cómo eran/son los mercados maya? ¿Qué venden? (What were/are the Mayan markets like? What did/do they sell there?)
- ¿Cómo definen su identidad los maya? ¿Por qué era/es tan importante el tejer en la vida de los maya? (How did the Maya define their identities? Why was/is weaving so important in the lives of the Maya?)

Lesson 1: ¿Dónde está Guatemala?

[Where is Guatemala?]

- Divide the class into pairs.
- Print out the two maps and write the names of three or four different countries on each map [Belize, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica on map A and Guatemala, Honduras, Panama on map B. Give each partner either an A or a B map of Central America [Appendix A]
- Write the following phrases on the board or on chart paper: *El Salvador está al sur de Honduras. Panamá está al sureste de Costa Rica. Honduras está al sur de Guatemala.* Etc. [Teach the cardinal directions if necessary.]
- Ask the students to give their partner a clue about the location of a country using one of the phrases above or their own phrase, and to write the name of each country on the map.
- Give the students some TPR commands, such as *toquen Costa Rica en el mapa. Tracen Guatemala en el mapa. Colorean Belize azul en el mapa.*
- Ask students to write different commands to give their peers.

Standards:

1.1 Communication:
Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information when they tell each other where certain countries are.

3.1 Connections: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of geography through the foreign language.

Language Functions:

- *Describing* the location of countries on the map: *El Salvador está al sur de Honduras. Panamá está al sureste de Costa Rica. Honduras está al sur de Guatemala.* Etc.

Lesson 2: ¿Cómo es Guatemala?

[What is Guatemala like?]

- Look at a map of Central America such as the one at: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/centralamerica_ref01.pdf
- What physical features do you see on the map? Draw the physical features on your copy of the map of Central America. Make a key to go with the features.
- Ask the students to compare the features on the map of Central America with physical features where they live. Use the following sentences for the comparison: In *New Mexico* there are *mountains* and *volcanos* and in *Guatemala* there are *mountains* and *volcanos*. *Central America* is surrounded by water but *Colorado* is surrounded by other states. Etc.
- Ask for volunteers to present some of their sentences to the class.

Standards:

1.1 Communication: Students compare physical features of Guatemala with those of their own State.

3.1 Connections: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of geography through the foreign language

Language functions: Students compare physical features in Guatemala and in their state:

- *En Nuevo Mexico hay montañas y volcanos y en Guatemala hay montañas y volcanos. América Central está rodeada de agua pero Colorado esta rodeada de otros estados.*

Lesson 3: ¿Dónde vivían los maya precolombino?

[Where did the pre-colombian Maya live?]

- What was the ancient city of Tikal like?
- Have the students research the precolumbian site of Tikal in Peten, the Northern Jungle of Guatemala. Go to: <http://www.travelsinparadise.com/guatemala/tikal/pictures/pb030098.html> to see a recreation of what Tikal looked like many, many years ago.
- Also take a virtual trip though Tikal at: <http://www.destination360.com/tikal/guide.htm>
- Ask each student write the interesting information about what s/he has learned about Tikal in a Tikal journal. They can write in Spanish if appropriate or in English. Have pairs of students tell each other which part of Tikal is the most interesting to him or her. Divide the class into groups according to their interests. Have each group share their information with each other and then have one student from each group form another group (a jigsaw activity). Ask each student in the mixed group to summarize her or his information into one or two sentences and then have the group read their summaries.

Standards:

1.1 Communication: Students obtain information about the ruins of Tikal in Guatemala.

2.1 Cultures: Students demonstrate an understanding of the products and practices of the Guatemalan culture.

3.1 Connections: Students learn about the ruins of Tikal in Guatemala.

1.1 Students obtain information and write a summary of it (in English or Spanish) in a Tikal journal.

2.1 Cultures: Students create a 3D map of Tikal using boxes and other materials.

Lesson 3 (Continued)

The students could also add an illustration to their summary.

- Using the map of Tikal at: <http://www.travelsinparadise.com/guatemala/tikal/pictures/pb030098.html>
- Have the students use different sizes and shapes of boxes to make their own diorama of Tikal.
- Give the students the following information about professions the ancient and modern Maya practiced. Ask them to make a list of the professions below and other professions they learn about in their research. Have them compare the Maya professions to professions of their parents or people in their towns using a T-chart. Are any of the professions the same for the two groups? *Los maya eran chicleros y tejedoras pero la gente en California son bomberos, abogados, maestros, etc.*
- The girls helped their mothers grind corn, pick herbs, care for the younger siblings. The boys fetched water, watched the live stock.

<i>Los maya</i>	<i>Los norteamericanos</i>
chicleros	bomberos
curanderos	abogados
abejeros	maestros
tejedoras	artistas
futboístas	

“My family cultivated honey. Honeycombs, brimming with bees, hung from the trees outside, and from them we would get honey. At first we had a big tree trunk full of honey. A queen bee in charge of the other bees was in the trunk.” (Menchú, p. 44).

“If I were ill, my mother would force me to drink herbal teas made from the wierdest plants. If I couldn’t fall asleep, I’d be given a drink of chipilin, a sweet-tasting plant. If I had a stomachache, she’d make me a hot broth from the altenxa plant. Soon my stomach would stop hurting... My mother inherited this plant knowledge from her grandparents.” (Menchú, p. 29)

Does anyone in your family use herbs to cure stomach aches, sore throats, etc. What happens in your family when you are sick?

Standards: (Continued)

1.1 Communication:

Students obtain information about Tikal and the ancient and modern professions.

4.2 Comparisons: Students compare professions in Tikal with those in their towns using a T-chart.

Lesson 3 (Continued)

“Ballcourts are found in the center of nearly every Maya city. As in soccer, players had to keep the ball in the air without using their hands. The ball was solid rubber and weighed eight pounds or more (that’s at least eight times a soccer ball)... Although it was played for sport, the game was also a mythic struggle. It reenacted contests of life and death, war, and sacrifice.”

Have students go to: <http://www.ballgame.org/main.asp> to see an animated, interactive ballgame

Have the students go to: <http://www.ancientworlds.net/aw/Thread/124709> to read information and take the quiz about the Maya ballgame.

How is the Maya ballgame the same or different from the game of soccer (fútbol)?

Chicleros collect *chicle* or chewing gum from trees in the Northern jungles of Guatemala.

Chicle gum is the tree latex of the *chico zapote*, *chicle*, or *sapodilla* tree (*Manilkara zapota*). Traditionally, the Mayan Indians of Mexico and Central America chewed the raw *chicle* latex, but more recently it is used as the elastic ingredient for chewing gum.

“The *chicle* tree is the most abundant in the jungle of Petén. In some places it is possible to find over 30 trees in a single hectare. *Chicle* harvesters or *chicleros*, collect the latex during the rainy season from July to February because the latex flows more easily. Using a sharp-edged machete or small pocket knife, *chicle* collectors make zigzag cuts from the base of the tree trunk up to its first branches. The latex drips down these grooves and is collected in a bag attached to the tree at the bottom. Tapping wounds are generally placed at 16-inch (40 cm) intervals, and usually require between two and five years to heal.” (<http://www.tve.org/ho/doc.cfm?aid=890>)

What do you think is added to *chicle* when it is sold as chewing gum in the USA? What kind of gum that sounds like *chicle* is sold in the USA today?

Lesson 4: ¿Por qué era/es tan importante el tejer en la vida de los maya? [Why was/is weaving such an important part of Maya life?]

- What is a *huipil*?
- What symbols were used in weaving designs in pre-Columbian as well as present times?
- Give the students the following paragraphs to read:

“A huipil is a blouse or loose dress that consists of three lengths of cloth woven on a backstrap loom. The lengths are stitched up, leaving one hole for the head and the sides open for arms.” (Reese, L. 1993, p. 23).

“In Guatemala when a weaver pulls on her huipil and settles it on her shoulders, she walks around surrounded by woven designs revealing her world. The designs and colors announce her village, her social standing within the village, and her skill as a weaver. They also may reveal her work and spiritual beliefs. For example, the image of a certain kind of bat indicates a link to the moon goddess. A woman wearing a huipil with these designs is most likely a midwife. Although a woman’s huipil has certain shared elements with others in her village, her own designs, her ‘signature,’ make the weaving very personal to her.” (Reese, L. 1993, p. 1/Designs tell a story).

- Have the students research *huipil* designs and use the designs in Appendix B to design their own *huipiles*. They could also design their own symbols for their *huipiles*. Ask them to write a description of the design on an index card. Put the designs up around the room. Then read the descriptions to the class and see who can match the design with the description.
- Show the students how to make a cardboard loom. They can warp the loom with cotton thread and begin a weaving project by weaving yarn over and under the warp. They can also use grasses and flowers and other materials found outside.

Standards:

- 1.1 Communication: Students obtain information about *huipiles* and symbols used in weaving.
- 2.2 Culture: Students demonstrate their understanding of weaving by making and using a cardboard loom.

Lesson 5: ¿Cómo definen su identidad los maya?

[How do Mayan people define their identities?]

- What is a *nahual*?
- What is the Mayan *traje*?
- Have the students read this passage by Rigoberta Menchú about *nahuales*.

“Grandfather ...told us that each thing had its *nahual*, it’s shadow, its double. The earth, the tree and the mountain all have their own spirits. The earth has its *nahual*, the rocks have theirs, all people have *nahuales*, –the sun, the animals, the winds and the air have *nahuales*... That’s why you have to talk to the earth, the river and the flowers. That’s why you have to respect them.” (Menchú, p. 32)... When we are born a little creature is born with us. This creature is just like us. If we sneeze, it sneezes as well, in the forest where it lives. If we sing, it also sings, in its animal language... Sometimes that creature is wiser than we are... I know mine, but I can’t reveal it. ... You can have a tiger, a lion, a coyote or a bear as a *nahual*. You can have a puma, a wild boar or a robin redbreast.” (Menchú, p. 39)

- Ask the students to think about what their *nahuales* might be. Have each student draw a picture of their *nahual* and write a paragraph about its characteristics. Compile the pictures and paragraphs into a class book. Let students take turns taking the book home to read with their families or put it on the web for all to read when time permits.
- Maya women weavers often say that their identity is their *traje* or their traditional dress.
- Ask the students if they have a favorite piece of clothing that helps define their identities. Have them photograph the clothing.
- Hang a “clothesline” in the classroom and clip the photos to the line. Have the students practice saying the names of each piece of clothing on the line and why it defines their identities. For example: *Mi suéter azul define mi identidad porque es el color de mis ojos y es muy suave.*
- Ask the students what other interests or skills help to define their identities. For example: *Soy pianista. Me gusta esquiar. Soy alto y flaco con pelo rubio.* Etc.

Standards:

I.1 Communication:
Students obtain information about *nahuales*.

Language functions:

Students draw a picture of their *nahual* and describe its characteristics in writing.

Lesson 5 *(Continued)*

- Have the students walk around the classroom to try to find someone who has one or more of the same characteristics or skills in common. They can then report back to the class the characteristics or skills they have in common.

Lesson 6: Los Mercados Maya

[The Mayan Market]

- Go to the following websites to see some Guatemalan products.

<http://www.mission-guatemala.org/shopping/pottery.html>

<http://store.gxonlinestore.org/all-guatemala-3.html>

<http://www.artemaya.com/traje.html>

Have the students look at the pictures and decide what they will sell at their market.

- Have the students research the market at Chichicastenango and other smaller regional markets. Show them what a quetzal bill looks like and tell them how much one quetzal is worth. Ask them to bring in small boxes for the market wares and popsicle sticks for price signs. Give them blank checks to write for a certain number of *quetzals*. They will need to use Maya numbers when they write their checks.

Standards:

1.1 Communication:

Students obtain information about markets in Guatemala.

2.2 Cultures: Students demonstrate an understanding of products and practices in Guatemala.

- Students learn about Guatemalan money (the *quetzal*) and the number system.
- Students create a 3D map of Tikal.

Language Functions:

Students learn vocabulary and phrases related to selling and/or buying at the market, such as:

¿Cuánto vale/cuesta?

Cuesta 10 quetzales. Es

muy caro/barato. (How

much does it cost? It

costs 10 quetzales. It is

very expensive/cheap.)

Students role-play having a market in Guatemala.

Lesson 7

- Have the students write about or draw pictures of how they think their lives would be the same or different if they lived in pre-Colombian Guatemala.

Standards:

4.2 Comparisons: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the Guatemalan and their own.

Language functions:

Students *describe* pre-Colombian Guatemala and their own lives.

Lesson 8: Baked Plantains

- Present the following Gouin Series to the class. Use props or gestures for each sentence.

Let's make baked plantains!

- First preheat the oven to 350°.
- Peel the two plantains and cut them in half lengthwise.
- Put them in baking dish and sprinkle them with butter, sugar and allspice.
- Drizzle with the honey.
- Bake them for 20-30 minutes or until the plantains are soft and light brown.
- Serve them warm with fresh cream and more honey.
- Yum, yum they taste delicious!

1. First say the sentences and do the actions or show the pictures to the students.
2. Next, have the students do the actions with you.
3. Third, have the students do the actions and say the sentences with you.
4. Finally have the students say the sentences and do the actions on their own.

Standards:

1.1 Communication: Students obtain information about making the Guatemalan dish, Baked Plantains.

Language functions:

Students *provide information*, in the form of a Gouin series, about making baked plantains.

Appendix A

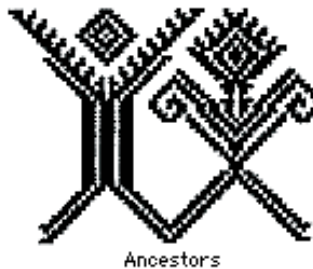
Outline map of Central America



www.worldatlas.com

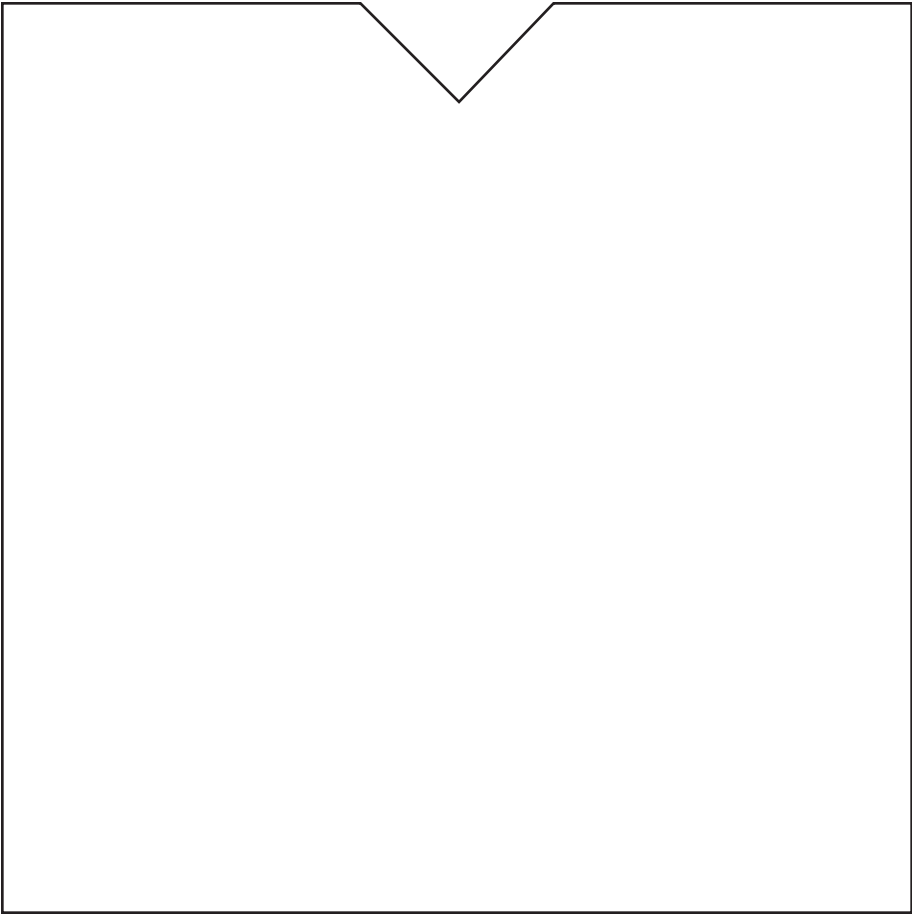
Appendix B

Guatemalan Weaving Symbols



Appendix C

Design a Huipil

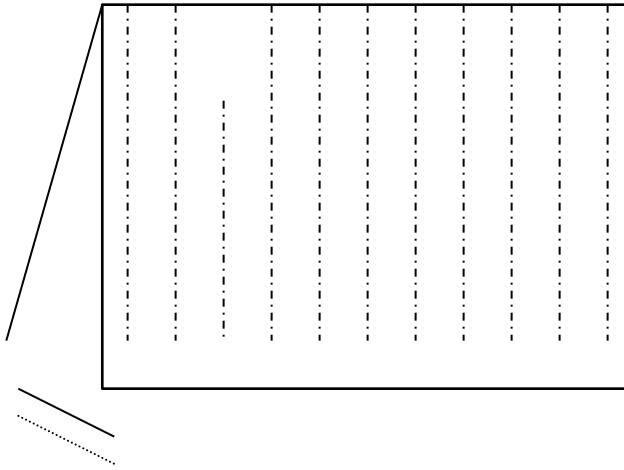


Appendix D

Make a market basket

















Fold a piece of construction paper in half. Show the students how to cut vertical lines in the folded paper, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ inch at the bottom of the paper. Ask the students to open the paper and give each student strips of multicolored paper to weave under and over through the cut lines in the construction paper. They can glue the ends of the strips to the inside of the paper.

To finish, have the students glue handles of paper or string to the open end of the bag.



Appendix E

Instead of ten digits like we have today, the Maya used a base number of 20. (Base 20 is vigesimal.) They also used a system of bar and dot as *shorthand* for counting. A dot stood for one and a bar stood for five. In the following table you can see how this works.

	●	● ●	● ● ●	● ● ● ●
0	1	2	3	4
	● 	● ● 	● ● ● 	● ● ● ● 
5	6	7	8	9
	● 	● ● 	● ● ● 	● ● ● ● 
10	11	12	13	14
	● 	● ● 	● ● ● 	● ● ● ● 
15	16	17	18	19

As you can see, adding is just a matter of adding up dots and bars! Maya merchants often used cocoa beans, which they spread out on the ground, to do these calculations.

From: <http://hrcweb.nevada.edu/museum/Education/mayaMath.html>