

# PRE-HISPANIC DANCE, PATRIMONIAL PUBLIC SPACES AND SYNCRETISM: INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE, WORLDVIEW AND RESPECT FOR NATURE IN THE CONSTITUTION SQUARE, MANUEL GAMIO SQUARE AND SQUARE OF THE MARQUIS

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## ABSTRACT

From ancient times, humanity has created sophisticated dance spaces phenomena, for which it did not have an expression, in the past, humanity considered dance from nature, but now actually considered as cultural or dance culture. This considered as the world for dance of expression the world appears from a very broad view from nature, the figurative representation of dance reveals the cultural dance expression, where people are the reality, meaning and life of the path.

The case of the dance emerging from the pre-Hispanic culture of the Basin of the Valley of Mexico is a clear example of the dance space expression that has been lost from the centuries and the only dance space of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that Mexico offers to the rest of the world.

In Mexico City, the Constitution Square, Manuel Gamio Square and Square of the Marquis, patrimonial public spaces of high symbolic significance and social relevance, the representation of these spaces are very much appreciated, for this work is to create the tradition and culture of the choreography as well as their relevance between both urban culture that making contemporary Mexico, where playing the role of witnesses to the choreography, which is linked to its present and past culture, with the intention of recognizing a cultural movement and its social, political and historical context.

The purpose of this proposal is to explore the origin, evolution and development and currently recognizing that the pre-Hispanic dance is part of the Constitution Square, Manuel Gamio Square and Square of the Marquis, since Intangible Cultural Heritage that considers the Movement as evidence and presents the architectural situation.

**Keywords:** Pre-Hispanic dance, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Heritage, Public Space.

## PRE-HISPANIC DANCE, WORLDVIEW AND RESPECT FOR NATURE

"The ancient history of all peoples has an ancestry, mysterious attraction, which contains the intelligence and wisdom of ancient thought with fantasy and content, even greater value it adds to the present state of humanity."

With that phrase Vicente Silva-Palacio gives the introduction to the great work prepared under his direction through the centuries originally published from 1984 to 1989. In this work he sees how the richness of pre-Hispanic culture was on the verge of disappearing due to the destruction of the conquistadors coming from a world immersed in the Middle Ages, now only remains in the villages and hills of the original Mesoamerican peoples, so they wanted to save all knowledge of these peoples by preserving their policies and historical, religious and linguistic, but also its traditions and legends. According to Silva-Palacio, what has reached our days was thanks first to those who fled for protection to the mountains and then to the clergy who arrived and saw the richness of these ancient civilizations, so they recorded its traditions and turned the writings into legends. He collected the old customs and transformed everything in stories.

This action was tremendously important, including a phonetic script, while choreography or logography represented, these served to preserve the memory and date of events themselves, for the most part, pre-Hispanic

people relied on their memory and oral tradition, where even writing based on pictographs was only a patch of support (González, 1992).

With the influence and teaching of the missionaries, the ancient Mexicans learned alphabetic writing, but they did not abandon ideographic signs. As a result, they continued to record the history of their civilization and history long after the conquest (Riva, 1999).

Although many different peoples originally settled in the Valley of Mexico and spoke various languages, after the Mexican dominion, Nahuatl became the dominant language (much like English is today). Nahuatl literature was diverse and extensive, including historical accounts, hymns, poems, religious texts, legal writings, myths, etc., which the youth in the Catholicism were taught to learn by heart. This is why, after the conquest, some Nahuatl who learned the alphabetic language brought by the Spaniards were able to translate them with the support of the missionaries. As a result, they were not devoid of the influence of the letters leading to a conversion in all areas of knowledge.

Thanks to this, we have identified a series of names that are related to the cosmology and traditions of the ancient Mesoamerican peoples. These emerged through writings (cultural writings) with Western thought but retained characteristics that had remained, the indigenous peoples and their groups, which can be observed in various places, by its presence. Among them is what was once part of the Temple Mayor Square, now known as Mainland Square located next to the Metropolitan Cathedral in the Historic Center of Mexico City.

According to the Nahuatl tradition, the ancient Mexicans believed in four signs or aspects about their existence as a race, which they referred to as four suns. According to their tradition, in each of these aspects, humanity perished, with only one couple surviving to perpetuate the race. The first sun was the sun of water, *Atlacatl*, where a couple survived inside an obsidian tree. During this event, “the gods” died. The second sun was the sun of air, *Ucaxatlacatl*, and according to the allegories, there also appear to be representations of rain, leading some to consider it may refer to an air sign. The third sun was *Ucaxatlacatl* on the sun of fire, also called *Ucaxatlacatl* on sun of fire. In both the second and third suns, the surviving couple took refuge in caves. The fourth sun is *Ucaxatlacatl* on the sun of earth. Unlike the first three suns, which represented catastrophes that affected the Nahuatl people, the fourth sun seems to represent only a change of era. In the Vatican Library, the goddess *Xochiquetzal* is depicted (the same goddess descended to the earth) (Riva, Fajardo, 1999).

The four suns are related to the four chronological signs of the Nahuatl:

1. *Atl* = water that grows in water; 2. *Ucax* = fire, referring to winds that cut like fire; 3. *Ucax* = human, which is where the fourth sun is born; and 4. *Ucax* = spirit, located at the north.

These four signs also apply to the seasons of the year, the four cardinal points (cardinal directions), and the four elements. It is worth noting that both the order and application of these four signs differ among themselves, so this is just one interpretation.

Table 1. Interpretation and Application of the Four Signs

|      | East  |      | West  |      | Season        |
|------|-------|------|-------|------|---------------|
|      | Water | Fire | Water | Fire |               |
| Atl  | Water | Fire | Water | Fire | East, Spring  |
| Ucax | Water | Fire | Water | Fire | North, summer |
| Ucax | Water | Fire | Water | Fire | West, autumn  |
| Ucax | Water | Fire | Water | Fire | South, winter |

Source: Developed by Margarita Cárdenas based on Riva Fajardo (1999).

Even though the culture mentions four suns, the Nahuatl signs writing in the Valley of Mexico believe they are living under the fifth sun, *Nahuatl* (Nahuatl), which translates to “five movements.” This can also be interpreted as an earth sign. The glyph “*uilli*” is represented alongside the four signs and the other mark in the central part of the Aztec Calendar.

For the ancient Mexicans, the origin of all beings including the gods, stemmed from a central deity that accompanied both feminine and masculine aspects in one entity, known as *Chimacatl*. This deity resided in the highest region of the Aztec, called *Chimacatl* (Riva, 1999). However, according to González (1992), given that all their deities were dual, he believes that alongside *Chimacatl*, there was *Chimacatl* as a divine deity from which all creation emerged (González, 1992). From this, *Chimacatl* became more visible, followed by the creation of *Chimacatl*, the earth.

<sup>1</sup> *Ucaxatlacatl* sometimes the name of water, “*Ucax atl*” or “*Ucax water*,” which leads some to suggest it as the fourth sun called *Atlacatl*.

They also believed in love circles for the deceased. Chachikoomach for deceased children, where a tree's branches dripped with milk to nourish them. Mochik for those who died of natural causes, and who had to traverse a long path guided by a dog called *moosik*. Teloos for those who died in accidents and *Shachik-Tomach*, where those who died in war or were captured by their enemies would go.

Mayan philosophy is deeply intertwined with their religion. Their duties were closely linked to the natural world, for instance, Yillar represented sun and Chachikobich represented moon for men and labor. The earth also deified it as benevolently administered (Diaz, 1988), as their primary gods were associated with celestial bodies like the sun, the planet Venus, and the moon. In fact, the concept of Nuhul Uluu, or the birth of the hills was associated with the necessity of blood to set it in motion. This is the rationale behind the idea involving human sacrifices. "Nuhul is a sacred duty contrasted with the sun and a necessity for the good of humanity itself" (Soustelle, 1986). Thus, the role of humans is primarily to provide sustenance to both the earth (the mother) and the sun (the father).

From all of this way of thinking, a series of rituals, rituals, and ceremonies emerged with the purpose of maintaining balance and avoiding any catastrophe like those that had occurred in previous ages. Considering that everything is in constant motion, these rituals are important forms of working, maintenance of their gods, and celebration of their harvest. The laws that ancient Mayans had for justice, wars, and slaves were evident in various aspects of their lives. For them, slaves were more than just a commodity or thing; it was also a way to earn the favor of the gods, "honoring and pleasing them . . . [with the heart and the sweat of the body]" (Soustelle, 1986).

The difference between Mayanization and Western thought becomes evident, as for the former, the human being, as part of a constantly moving universe, is responsible for giving back what they consume and for maintaining the balance of nature. In contrast, in Western thought, nature is often seen primarily as a resource for human use.

#### Herbert A. Simon, Joseph A. Schumpeter, and the Economics of Heritage

Heritage public spaces are areas for everyone to consult collectively, not devoid of conflict, negotiation, or disagreements among different individuals as well as parts. They constitute the common and primary purpose of a city. Therefore, they are an inherent part of great importance, relevant for their historical, cultural, and artistic significance, which are part of a community's heritage. They must be preserved for future generations to ensure sustainability, not only for them but for all living beings on this planet. This should be pursued through an environmental approach that refers to the common good.

From the Mayanist or worldview, the common well-being not only refers to the use of things necessary for a well-being in this world, but for the intention to have a comfortable and abundant life that leads to happiness and tranquility. It also refers to the state of those human beings to which they become aware of the proper functioning of their organic, mental, emotional, and spiritual activities. In this sense, heritage public space is an economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, essential to guarantee the survival of a culture like it came from the individual, where the emotional element is crucial in its connection with identity, culture, and values in history, or peace with respect to the community to achieve a good life. Because we only truly live well when all of us, the humans of the community and all other living beings in the universe, are living well together.

From this perspective, heritage public space is a historical-cultural-natural legacy from our ancestors that must be preserved and watched in accordance with the common well-being of all living beings that inhabit the planet. It is meant to be passed down to future generations not for them to exploit, but for them to act in communion with it. This is achieved through its resolution as part of management processes grounded in traditional knowledge, technological change, and sustainable management of these usually reclaimed assets as part of an ecosystem. In this way, the quality is not an inert object but a dynamic one, continuously evolving, where each of which produces multiple effects. It combines tangible cultural heritage with intangible cultural heritage, meaning the set of intangible physical assets, both artificial and natural on one hand, and those that only exist in practice, such as traditions and customs, as well as in symbolic and emotional form, including historical urban landscapes. This is consistent to the name of the human urban landscape as conceptualized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2003).

Material-based heritage can be movable, immovable, or both. Movable assets encompass physical objects of cultural heritage that have witness to human creation in the evolution of nations. They hold a certain historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, or technical value and can be moved or transferred (Intangible Heritage, 2003). This category includes items like archaeological remains, paintings, posters, photographs, sculptures, films, books, documents, libraries, among others.

On the other hand, immovable assets refer to physical objects of cultural heritage that cannot be moved or transferred. This category includes architectural works as well as historical sites, archaeological zones, objects, events, traditions, customs, among others. It also encompasses elements like natural glass windows, murals, sculptures, and tapestries, which, as integral parts of immovable cultural heritage, must be preserved in relation to the original structures and environment in which they were designed (Declaration Institute of Historical Heritage, n.d.).

Urban space encompasses both movable and immovable items, as well as historical/cultural landscapes, public spaces like urban parks, squares, and gardens. They also include urban images, heritage conservation areas, and all elements and spaces that, even if not formally cataloged, warrant protection or their preservation and conservation, according to the Development and Territorial Planning Directorate's Office of Mexico City (DUE) (p.4).

In this sense, movable, immovable, and urban space have in common that they are physical objects owned by humans collectively. Hence, they are also classified as cultural products, as they hold a social meaning that values them as tangible heritage. This tangible heritage interacts with another aspect, classified as intangible cultural heritage. This term was introduced by UNESCO in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, defining it as follows:

"Intangible cultural heritage" refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills, along with the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces that are associated with them, recognized by communities, groups, and in some cases, individuals, as an integral part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups based on their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history. This entails a sense of continuity, thereby contributing to the promotion of respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, only intangible cultural heritage that is compatible with existing international human rights instruments and with the obligation of mutual respect between communities, groups, and individuals, as well as sustainable development, will be considered (UNESCO, 2003).

One aspect to consider is that heritage is socially constructed and historically dimensioned by a specific community. This community selects a cultural product, practice, or symbolic representation based on its authentic values, cultural identity, and/or historical/creative properties from a range of options from the past. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that tangible and intangible heritage are not truly separate; they must be understood in relation to one another. They have should be placed on the historical and cultural meanings by which they are valued as heritage, as well as their implications for the notion of heritage and how it should be preserved.

This raises a debate about heritage public space that goes beyond the study of the past and history, as well as the material attributes of an object and place. The aim is for current generations to use heritages in order to pass it on to future generations, forging a sense of common identity. However, this must be done while considering how values evolve through a series of issues such as sustainability, religion, class, wealth, gender, and personal heritage. The validity of each heritages depends on the observer's situation in space and time (García López, 2005, p. 23).

In this sense, the meanings of these heritage public spaces interconnect physical objects with their contents, interpretations, and representations. They also incorporate the functions of memory, uses, and customs constructed in the present. This gives rise to cultural and/or historical values, among others, which explain why they are chosen to be preserved from all the options from the past. These options are based on values that are part of a collective imagination and a shared notion of heritage, as defined by Words García López (Ibid), involving diverse producers and users.

This shared notion of heritage takes into account multiple producers and users. They have interpretations with different purposes within any culture and time period, as well as between cultures and across time (García López, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, these selected values are linked to collective memory, which requires patterns of behavior conditioned by the cultural environments created around tangible heritage assets. Some of these patterns can be appreciated in the present as part of intangible heritage, practiced and symbolically represented, and constantly revised.

When this cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, results from the coexistence of elements from heterogeneous origins within the same culture, it refers to syncretism. This is a product of processes that lead to an amalgamated blend developed and expressed in different proportions through formal attributes, sometimes driven by regulatory movements that occur under authoritarian or revolutionary conditions. It is, in fact, a phenomenon that promotes diversity, thanks to the cultural exchange it entails as a result of various factors. However, this hybridization highlights the presence of different identities and roots, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the geographical context being analyzed. In fact, these components assume varying levels of prominence according to each territory (Legido-Lozano, 2000).

In heritage public spaces, this coexistence gives rise to a continuous process of fluid and reciprocal exchange, in which identity boundaries are preserved, and local cultures are enriched. This occurs both in the biological sense of inheritance as the production of phenotypes from genetic recombination, and in a cultural sense. This is evident in the blending of habits, customs, traditions, beliefs, and ways of thinking. This synthesis is the result of processes of physical, symbolic, and emotional appropriation, which have reconfigured the heritage to merge and blend it with the local. Nonetheless, it incorporates different worldviews, through which the legacy selected from ancestors is valued.

Such is the case with public squares, known, which is currently predominant in some heritage public spaces like the Constitution Square and Manuel García Square. These are the construction of the Congress of Mexico from 1928 to 1932; these spaces were located at the Central Bank of the Temple Mayor, and the Square of the

Margen. The latter is interconnected with the former because it contains various cultural products and practices of post-Spanish origin.

**Constructing Postcolonial Space and Temporal Memory in the Constructed Squares, Market, Games Square, and Squares in the Margen.**

In Mexico, post-Spanish urban space is an interpretative tool for Mexicanization, concealing an integrative sense of respect for nature and the preservation of cultural identity. It is practical in heritage public space, unlike resistance and appropriation for second spatial choice. In the present and historical sense, which can be attributed to construction as a characterization of cultural amalgamation, whether voluntary or involuntary, the Constructed Square stands out as the postcolonial heritage public space. It represents identity and shapes how the Mexican nation is represented and perceived by both nationals and foreigners.

Constructing the constructed space is often used to refer broadly to the space that explicitly encompasses the "plaza del pueblo de la Ciudad de México" (People Square) and its surroundings. However, it is necessary to clarify that the architectural urban complex, which is often simplified as a single semantic terminology, is composed of other complementary and autonomous spaces. These spaces had a multidimensional relevance as high as the main space they are associated with. Two special cases that deserve history recognition for their high symbolic representativeness are the Market Square and Square of the Margen.

To understand the significance of the squares addressed in this study, it is necessary to provide a historical and cultural context for their origin. In ancient times, especially during the post-Spanish era, the geographical area now recognized as the Constructed Square and its surroundings was dominated by the imposing Constructed Pyramid of the Temple Mayor, thus also being the ancient headquarters between nations.

According to documented history, the heritage vision of this present dates back to the year 1523 when the Spaniards founded the city of Valladolid on the central side of the region. This was a result of the contemporary interpretation given to the vision presented by the rulers and priests from their god Huitzilopochtli.

In Spanish Viceroyalty's Monumental Chronicle, there is an account of Huitzilopochtli's intervention in planning the urban city, emphasizing the establishment of Tlachitapan as the base corner of the north, dividing the city into two large areas: the sacred and the secular. The sacred area was occupied by the city's main square and the temples to its gods, with the highest and most important being the Temple Mayor dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, along with the incorporation of Tláloc. Outside the sacred area, in the secular area, the four initial neighborhoods or districts were established as places of residence for the natives and the general population.

During the post-Spanish era, the described organization was preserved. Particularly, the current Constructed Square of the Aztec Square served as an open space for trade and social exchange within the so-called sacred zone of the city. As far as we are aware as Market Games Square, it encompassed the southern side of the great mouth of the Temple Mayor and its Compound, an ornamental architectural wall formed by sculptures of eagles. Regarding the post-Spanish Square of the Margen, it is reported that there was an important natural spring which during the night herbivores of the time, was used by citizens as a space of symbolic relevance due to its association with lost-time deity.

Following the surrender of the last Spaniards, Cuauhtémoc, on August 13, 1521, and recognizing the economic and cultural significance that the sacred area of Valladolid held for the Mexican-Tlaxcaltec people, the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés decided to establish the new capital of the Spanish colony in the valley city, later known as New Spain.

In 1524, thanks to the urban plan devised by the master builder Alonso García Bravo, the new Mexican Square already featured a rectangular layout in the European style, with streets and avenues laid out in a grid pattern while still respecting the square's identity as the center of economic and political power. During the 17th century, the Mexican Square continued various modifications, ranging from floods, with one of the most significant occurring in 1629, to the fire caused by the war of the Franco-Spanish in 1697. This event marked a turning point for the square, as authorities decided it would be appropriate to completely clear the square to make way for the Plaza Market, a collection of wooden shops located in the southwest corner of the square used to trade goods brought in as gifts from Tlaxcala and Aztec. As for the Market Games Square, it was given a cultural-religious purpose when it was determined that this space would be part of the new cathedral of New Spain. However, its appropriation ultimately ended up being the system that of houses owned by the Catholic Church. Regarding the Plaza del Margen, it was during this time that it assumed the name it still bears today. The main reason for this was the extension of Hernán Cortés private property to include this space. Although Cortés never actually lived there, having left the valley side of Margen of the Valley of Chiapas, it was the people who honored the name in the space.

Over the next four centuries, the three heritage spaces discussed essentially maintained their sense of appropriation. They were characterized as highly relevant public spaces that were primarily conducive to social interaction and cultural exchange among the different social strata converging in the city center. Additionally, there were heritage expressions that took advantage of the nature of the area to show one part of their identity.

In the case of the Mexican Square, there were various modifications initially driven by government decisions. After the independence movement, it was given a focus that prioritized the well-being of the local population.

through the construction of recreational spaces and amenities like parks with proper infrastructure and transportation systems. As for the Manuel Gama Square, it became part of the historical-cultural landscape that was known at some point in the 18th century as "Paseo de las Calles" (Alonso Pruneda) by the early 19th century, after serving as a site for street vendors and various entertainment practices, the prominent Mexican architect Manuel Gama, born in 1856, discovered the potential base of the Templo Mayor at the corner of Avenida and Escobedo streets in 1913. Regarding Square of the Monjes, also a couple of residential neighborhoods by the afford of the rise in Gama's former domains, a religious sense of appreciation was discovered when a small chapel was erected. This chapel later gave way to a forest market that would be preserved until the mid-20th century.

Today, as will be addressed in the following section, the same spaces under analysis are part of a historical-cultural landscape where the resistance is evident. The historic center of Mexico City is a magnificent example of this, showcasing a considerable diversity of identity expressions that strengthen the national heritage from the perspective of legitimacy and singularity. It allows for the equal appreciation of Indian and highly significant buildings, as well as practices with a high symbolic interpretative content, such as the original dances of the first peoples settled in the Valley of Mexico.

#### The *Neotomismo* Discourse and the *Pre-Hispanic* Dance: A New respect with an Ancient Practice

The tradition of dance as a form of worship towards the gods or *pre-Hispanic* deities that was preserved through a religious ceremony, where the essential practices of the ancient indigenous religions merged with the Christian faith. Thus, in public festivals, especially in native villages, dances are included inside the temples, in the atrium area. While initially during the colonial period, these large atriums were used for religious education and worship for those who had not yet been baptized (which is why they considered inside the temple), today they have actively expanded the capacity of the temple and also as spaces for activities like dances.

Some of the dances commonly performed to mark transition in different phases are the so-called "*conquest*" dances, which transferred the teachings brought by the Spaniards into indigenous-style dances. One example is the "Dance of the Moon and Christian." Originally depicting the confrontation between Mexico and Christianity, it shows an different characteristic in Mexico where one side of Christianity condemns the Moon (carrying snakes and characteristics of the native groups of Mesoamerica), representing the struggle between the forces of the Holy Faith and the earthly. Another example is the "Dance of the Phoenix" (Fuentes Navar, where scenes of the conquest and the victory of Christianity, which was the vehicle for the spiritual conquest of the indigenous people of Mesoamerica, are represented.



Fig. 3. Mexican and Christian Dances at the Valley Dance Festival at Tepic, Jalisco, Mexico (Mexico). Photographed by the Magazine College, August 13, 2021

Others include dances like the Dance of David and Goliath, in Toluca, the Dance of the Twelve Trees of France in San Miguel Aguascalientes, or Serapio against Plague in San Felipe Island.

On these dances, it can be said that their symbolic function around the sexual has been diluted, remaining more as a spectacle of the Indian tradition or as an independent show, as is the case with the Garifuna in Orizaba.

However, one of the dances that has tried hardest to preserve the tradition of the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica is the "Dance de los conejos." In it, the most diverse and ancient symbols coexist: the Virgin of Guadalupe and the national hero San Juanico; the Aztec deity the Eagle and the Catholic cross and the cross-staff. [...] for the "conejeros," agriculture has become a symbol of victory (González, 1996). – the triumph of Mexican culture that permits under other symbols, to which the religious character taught by our ancestors is attached (Chavira in González, 1996).

The distinctive features of the "conejeros" is their attire. Men typically wear breechcloths, preferably knee patch breeches and a ribbon or sash adorned with geometric or pre-Hispanic motifs, while women incorporate Christian motifs according to their professions. Women often wear wrought-iron crowns with ribbons on the sides, although in some groups they have adopted the same ribbons as the men. Everyone wears white bells and other further symbols or pre-hispanic. Men, in particular, wear large headpieces made from feathers of turkey, crane, parrot, and/or phoenix.

As you can see, the attire for these groups is less "Spanish-influenced" and they can be it to be more indigenous or to live with the traditions of the Mesoamerican native peoples. However, this does not prevent them, in some cases, from using sequins as an element to add a more contemporary touch to their clothing.

These groups have not limited themselves to performing their dances only during national holidays or commemorative occasions. Many of them seek to preserve and showcase pre-Hispanic culture by performing their dances in public spaces. This is the case with the groups that gather in Manuel Gamarra Square, located beside the Metropolitan Square. This place holds a dual significance: on one hand, it is home to the main Catholic temple, the Cathedral, and the Metropolitan Museum. On the other hand, it is a library of the primary pre-Hispanic temple of the Great Tenochtitlan, the Templo Mayor. In fact, the square is named after the anthropologist and historian Manuel Gamio, who discovered the remains of the Templo Mayor in 1938.

In this square the dances and the music of the south and the traditional dress accompany the word of capital, which has over the "cleaning" of this public space and for those who with its presence it, either out of curiosity or to "show their strength" in the ancient tradition, they often dance in a circle, allowing for "occasional dances" with other visitors.



Fig. 3. Dance groups dancing in the Manuel Gamarra Square.  
Photographs taken by Diego de la Cruz on September 15, 2020

Anthony González (1996) explains that the success of the conejeros lies in their bonding relations that is not limited to a single community. It's not just one group, but several groups that can come together to form larger assemblies. The number of dancers is variable, and often they consist of individuals who have a relationship other through blood or ritual. Each group operates as an autonomous entity, allowing for creative expression, while other dancers that represent colonial culture is highly controversial aspect.

As for religious symbolism, it's important to note the role played by the Spanish language in their identity, as it is associated with Quechualist thought. The pre-Hispanic element is significant part of a collection as well, where

It not only introduces the four cultural groups but also represents the four ages of wisdom, the four materials of the cylinder, and the four vital elements (fire, water, air, and earth) discussed in the first section of this article. The call of the four winds primarily aims to balance between heaven and the cosmos (21). The significance of this strategy is mentioned in the “greeting to the four winds” with regard to a papacholli and the sound of the maracas used as a ritual process to invoke a deity.

The *Guachinches* dance, unlike *coyote* dance (such as those previously described), where time is not value for the recovery or defense of a territory, represents cultural values with symbolic characteristics that enhance Christian and pre-Hispanic symbols in an attempt to reconcile with the ancient roots of Mexican identity (24).

Regarding this, Mrs. Alexander María Pérez González from the Nihualkub Group, who dances in Manuel García Aguayo, tells us that she started dancing at the age of 14 because she liked it, and now she is 38 years old. Although she started in another group, she currently participates in Nihualkub with her husband and children. She even mentions that her husband has been dancing for a longer time, as he started at the age of 13 and is now 44 years old. As for the reason they engage in this activity, Mrs. Alexander tells us that the main one is the promotion of culture and the preservation of traditions:

I do it for pleasure. My father didn't want me to be a dancer, but he brought me from Oaxaca many dance costumes from here [...] Before becoming a dancer, I had already learned to work with crafts, and that's how I make a living" (Mrs. Alexander, January 2013).

The two women that they are sometimes criticized for adding too voluntary contributions during their choreography, but this is because they have experience with collecting water, charcoal, smoking incense, and other supplies used in their dance. However, she says: “If someone doesn't have money, it doesn't matter because medicine is not denied to anyone.”

In addition to the choreography, they will make and make clothing (clothing needed to restore themselves at home).

Regarding spirituality, when asked the women:

Others only see dance as a cultural activity, but in the dance circle, we work with energies. There appeared to me that there is a religion, but my mom, mother Calixtina, is not. So, through dance, I found something more powerful, something more energetic that we don't see. That's why when my children ask me, “Where is God?” Well, here where I open the dance with the women around the four cardinal points, I believe that God is that, it's the earth, it's the earth, it's the air, it's the women, and I see it in that for when my children ask me, I tell them, close your eyes and tell me what you feel. They answer: the wind, that's God. And when I ask, what do you feel? The water. That's God too, we can't see it, but we can feel it through the elements. And that energy is like that. When I dance, I feel a vibration, a lot of joy. And if I'm sad, it opens up paths for me. I feel that it liberates me. For happy that I see such people and children about our culture. (Alexander, January 2013)

As we can see, these groups will be present in a place or home where the values of the Mesoamerican indigenous peoples. In some cases, this involves a religious connection with the Catholic faith, while in others it aims to restore ancient beliefs separate from the religion brought by the colonizers, as a form of resistance to Westernization and foreign cultural influence (González, 1998).

#### *Cosmological framework: the NATI, water, earth, and wind, and the sun, moon, and stars.*

Contemporary pre-Hispanic dance expressed within a heritage environment that addresses public heritage spaces like Constitution Square, Manuel García Aguayo, and Marqués Aguayo, constitutes an intangible cultural heritage. To reflect the operation of Western worldviews with Mesoamerican origins, offering a reinterpretation of this ancestral practice. This is aligned to what was seen in the Cosmological Framework of the Great Temple, and beyond its transformations, it continues to hold its meaning as an offering to the cosmos, presented to the four points of cardinalization, from the center, to create spatial and temporal relations with the environment. This allows for the absorption of ancestral knowledge that guides them, determining a conscience for action within the community.

Thus, the reconfiguration of pre-Hispanic dance has merged with these interventions in public heritage spaces, the result of a different worldview that was superimposed after the Conquest of Mexico-Conquest. They also serve as a manifestation of this reconnection, where tangible cultural heritage converges with intangible heritage, both heterogeneous and of different origins, as part of Mexican culture. Through the movement of the body in harmony with the sound and vibration of the instruments, gratitude is expressed for life, an understanding is reached with the universe, and its dimensions are comprehended. This occurs within a prescribed circle where thoughts, words, and the actual glow way to the heart, which is the true center of the human being. United hearts that align with the cosmos, entering a meditation in motion. If they can be heard, the sacred liquid of water is offered, creating a unique atmosphere characterized by its singularity, authenticity, and its ability to make the experience truly memorable.



Fig. 1. Groups of people in traditional Mexican folk costumes performing in public spaces. Photographs taken by Margarita Collado in September 2010.

As such, the ensemble of tangible and intangible inherited goods held by this heritage environment is susceptible to extinction based on its historical, cultural, ecological, and economic values at all levels. These must need to be preserved and transmitted to future generations of human beings and of living beings on the planet. These inherited assets must be passed down in a harmonious and respectful relationship with the community and with nature as an essential part of achieving a good life. Because we can only live well when those who live well are all of us – the humans of the community and the other living beings of the community – as part of a collective effort, rather than as individual, capitalist, and anthropocentric goals for one person live well alone, but others, like we who live well, are “not” as a result of human and nonhuman beings.

Thus, the Constitution Square, the Mexico City Square, and the Square of the Marquis, in conjunction with contemporary public space, dance and other practices, traditions, and customs of their surroundings, are appreciable components of Mexico City, the Mexican Republic, and Humanity. They express the need for all beings to be in harmony with the common good to respect values and others as part of a community, in order to make the world for all living beings.

This allows for a physical, symbolic, and emotional appropriation collectively by the community of Mexico (human) in these settings, where every movement of their bodies constitutes a harmonious and respectful relationship with nature, producing varying experiences for themselves and their children. Therefore, these public heritage spaces should be regarded as an inherited good that allows for emotional territorialization and a sense of belonging, acting towards a transgenerational solidarity and a commitment to future generations, which must be passed on as part of a much more complex and comprehensive way of thinking.

This is made possible by creating a space where a different way of life was lived compared to the present, based on the pursuit of common well-being. It highlights the need to consider a series of changes to our ways of life, which have led to a kind of socio-environmental degradation and undermine the foundations of an orderly economic sustainability related to social well-being.

Therefore, the public space dance performed in this heritage environment serves as a gateway to understanding how humans give meaning to their environment, including the concept of nature. It responds to through a dialogue of knowledge with the precolonial Western worldviews among its inhabitants. This process involves the ability to integrate tangible and intangible heritage assets resulting from human cultural diversity, the potential of the environment, equity, and democracy as values that underpin social harmony. This, in turn, should lead to the construction of a new social contract where the sustainability of all material and immaterial cultural heritages becomes a way of life.

Thus, it is demonstrated that the construction of a heritage public space is a process of historical production and social transformation, based on a dialogue of knowledge where the role of the State is vital in directing the various changes required to shape the sustainability we expect to live our common well-being. This is better known as the common good, the common value of all nature and common experiences, the heritage, or

morally and ideologically. It calls for a shift in thinking towards the commons rather than the human being as the king of creation and creator of everything around them.

This commons to shape a heritage public space where historical, cultural, and natural assets are managed through the agreement of all interested parties, based on a sense of shared responsibility and environmental belonging, rooted in the memory and attached to the community. These are associated with values: harmony with oneself and with nature, for the good of all of us, in an inclusive and diverse 'we', linked to common well-being and a good life. The commons element allows for inequality, diversity, and a harmonious relationship with the environment/nature/creation.

For this, it will be necessary to remember that the heritage public space is a legacy from our ancestors, which must be preserved and enriched for the common well-being of all living beings that inhabit the planet. It is meant to be passed down to future generations not for them to merely use, but for them to act in connection with it, to respectfully have their own use, and with a sense of responsibility, pass it on to those who come after them.

In this way, these interconnected heritage public spaces, along with contemporary pre-Hispanic dance and other cultural practices and products, reflect the connections that shaped them. They allow for the coexistence of different elements promoting a process of fluid and ecological dialogue and exchange, aiming for reconciliation while preserving individual and collective identities. This enriches the shared culture in every sense, particularly in the cultural matrix, transforming traditions and ways of thinking within a cultural dynamic that increases the strength of the society's cohesiveness.

Thus, this capacity is not only the result of processes of physical, symbolic, and emotional appropriation that have reconfigured the material elements, but also the emotional one. What one is apart is the nature of the nation and the beings, which complement each other through their differences. It becomes an integral element that can only exist through the interrelation between them and the use of the practices created on them, all the ethno-cultural elements that make up this heritage environment, together with the forms of symbolic representation and other ways of perceiving and conceptualizing it.

This heritage together with its traditions, through which this legacy is valued, is totally produced by processes. It has now been transformed by current generations, becoming both a product and a producer of a symbolic culture that has become the primary substance of Mexico.

Furthermore, these specific heritage public spaces become the hyperlinks, a part of a hologram that encompasses all of Mexican culture. They are conditioned by their institutionalisation, explicitly and implicitly, within its environment. The strength of this heritage is revealed by the institutions it encompasses. It is increasingly important to promote an action for nature that provides stability to this planet and all living beings that are part of it.

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