Guelaguetza or “Mondays of the Hill” of Oaxaca, Mexico

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Outline

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Significance of Study

• After attending several times events of the celebration of Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hills I wanted to learn what was the meaning of this celebration.

• What was the meaning of this majestic folkloric event of the state of Oaxaca?
Research Questions

• What does Guelaguetza mean?
• What is Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hill?
• Why Guelaguetza is considered a symbol of identity?
• When Guelaguetza started and why it is important to the Oaxaca state?
Abstract

• This research explains the origin and evolution of the Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hills as a factor of identity adapted to the political, religious, cultural, and economic aspects of the state of Oaxaca throughout the years.
• The Guelaguetza was originated in the during colonial period, but it preserved its pre-Hispanic essence and it’s considered the result of the religious and cultural syncretism from the Spaniards to the indigenous people.
• Also, this research explains the changes of Guelaguetza during the Mexican Revolutionary and Post-revolutionary era, when the indigenous peoples were consider a social problem and how the indigenous heritage became a national symbol after the failure of Mestizaje.
• The “Racial Tribute of 1932” was the pioneer of the folkloric event presented in the hill named “Fortín,” where the modern Guelaguetza is still performed.
• Finally, this research explains how this maximum folkloric Guelaguetza “Oaxaqueña,” went from a religious to a commercial event by adopting new cultural and commercial activities presented in the modern Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hills.
Definition of the Zapotec word Guelaguetza

• Guelaguetza from the Zapotec dialect Guelaguezza.
  – means reciprocal exchanges of gifts and services among the community.

• “…refers to the mutual aid system, cooperation or service among the members of a community…it requires reciprocity” (Quijano 210).
History and Origin of the Pre-Hispanic Guelaguetza

• XIII Century: Zapotecs, Mixtes, and Mexics celebrated a ritual to Centéotl Goddess of corn to ask for an abundant harvest.
  – Guelaguetza---Zapotec name for the new ritual.
  – Ritual took place on a hill, known as “Fortin.”-- tradition introduced by the Mixtecs-- God of rain--- Nuhu Savi.
  – Mexicas introduced the ritual to their Goddess of the corn, Centéotl
    • Human sacrifices to receive an abundant harvest.
--Huaxyácac is formed
Guelaguetza: Colonial Period
XVI-XIX Centuries

• New religious Guelaguetza celebration resulted from the imposition of the Catholic beliefs over the pre-Hispanic or indigenous’ religious beliefs—syncretism.
  • Dominican and Franciscans prohibited the ritual rendered to Centéotl—
  • Destruction of Teocali- the Centéotl Goddess temple— Built the Virgin of Carmen Alto church.
    – The Guelaguetza continued being part of the new mestiza society.
Guelaguetza: Colonial Period XVI-XIX

- The similarities among the Indigenous ritual to Centéotl Goddess and the Virgin of Carmen Alto.
  - New elements to the Guelaguetza.---New Identity.
  - Huge lanterns in the shape of human beings represents the knew Mestizo society.
Guelaguetza: Revolution-Post-revolution Era
1910-1950

• Some politicians considered indigenous people a social problem.
  – Indigenous people were considered despicable and ignorant.
  – An obstacle to industrialization and development of the country.
Guelaguetza: Revolution-Post-revolution Era 1910-1950

• Theories to include the Indigenous people into society.
    • Racial Mestizaje, education, and speak only Spanish
  – Philosopher, Jose Vasconcellos: Synthesis “Cosmic Race.”
    • Practice Catholic religion, education, speak only Spanish to homogenize society to make it Hispanic.
The failure of Mestizaje Synthesis

- Reevaluate the indigenous to be incorporated to the nationalism.
- Nationalism main purpose was to “initiate the community as the author of their own, after the interpretation of their own heritage (Quijano, 85).
- The community attempted to publicize their new heritage “their new identity and valorize their own culture, refusing and distinguishing from the foreign” (Montfort, 180).
A racial tribute to the indigenous in 1932, celebrated during the IV Centenary of Oaxaca as a city.

– “the pre-Hispanic past and the typical crafts were reevaluated and considerate elements to be proud of” (Montfort, 90).

– The election of Mss. Oaxaca to represent the Indigenous.
  • Margarita Santaella was Mss. Oaxaca. She misrepresented the indigenous people because she belonged to a rich family who paid for her campaign.
  • Only the art crafts were typical.

– This racial tribute was the pioneer of the modern Guelaguetza.
Guelaguetza: Contemporary Era touristic event 2011-2012

• In 1950, Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hills
  – The Mixtec would walk up to “Fortin” hill to perform a ritual to their God of rain the Nuhu Savi.
    • Offering flowers, prayers, dances, a celebration that lasted for two weeks.

• The name of Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hills is “the folkloric event with pre-Hispanic roots presented by the eight regions of Oaxaca” (Quijano, 210).
Guelaguetza: Contemporary Era
Touristic Event 2011-2012

• Since 1960, the new cultural and commercial events satisfied tourism.
  – Cultural events: Starting the second Monday of July.
    • Saturday: La Princesa Donaji, The representative of the Centéotl Goddess, a parade of eight delegations, La Bani Stui Gulal (a play where the pre-Hispanic life of Huaxyácac).
    • Monday: the presentation of dances which represents the evolution of the Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hill.
“Los Jarabes Mixes:” Ritual to their God Nuhu Savi
Los Valles Centrales la Danza de la Pluma: The Conquer Dance
La Costa: “Chilenas” a dance introduced by sailors from other continents
Guelaguetza: Contemporary Era touristic event 2011-2012

- Cuisine Fairs:
  - Mescal (agave alcohol beverage), Tepache (pineapple beverage), Tejate (cacao flower beverage) and corn based dishes.
    - The corn “is the grain essential to Mesoamerican men…Also in the cosmic vision, the corn is what the Goddess used to make men…” (Acevedo, 362).

- UNESCO
  - Declared Oaxaca’s gastronomy World Heritage
Guelaguetza: Contemporary Era Touristic Event 2011-2012

- SECTUR: Secretary of Tourisms declares that in two weeks (Guelaguetza event).
  - 2011 cultural tourism brought in to Oaxaca state an 80% increased revenue in the hotel and gastronomic industries.
    - Approximately, 180 million pesos in profits.
  - 2012 the Governor of state, Gabino Cue
    - 3,700 temporary jobs
    - Hotel industry earned a 90% in revenue.
      - This is approximately 200 million pesos in profit.
Conclusion

• The origin and evolution of the Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hills is a factor of identity adapted to the political, religious, cultural, and economic aspects of the state of Oaxaca throughout the years.

• The Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hills was originated in the colonial period, but it preserved its pre-Hispanic essence and it’s considered the result of the religious and cultural syncretism from the Spaniards to the Indigenous people.

• The maximum folkloric Guelaguetza “Oaxaqueña” went from a religious to a commercial event by adopting new cultural and commercial activities presented in the modern Guelaguetza or Mondays of the Hills.
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Thank you!

• Any Questions?