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## **Immaterielles kulturelles Erbe, kollektive Identität und Bildung in der Ixil-Region, El Quiché, Guatemala**

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## English Summary

This dissertation examines the diverse processes of collective identity formation in the Ixil region, located in the department of El Quiché, Guatemala. The analysis focuses on examining the effects of socio-economic problems and historical ruptures from the civil war on the construction of collective identities within the communities. The analysis considers the following thematic areas: intangible cultural heritage, the construction of collective identities, the impact of an Ixil cultural movement, and formal state as well as innovative, non-state indigenous education.

The ethnographic material collected during field research between 2007 and 2010 provides insights into the everyday lives of the communities in the municipalities of Chajul and Nebaj, and includes elements of intangible cultural heritage. These are expressions of cultural resilience and testify to a conscious, selective approach to individual components. For example, the 260-day calendar forms the basis for ritual practice and divination. Moreover, it plays a role in the preservation of cultural memory and the transmission of values and knowledge related to cosmogony and cosmology from one generation to the next. Intangible cultural heritage is subject to constant change, as individual elements can be added or neglected. Religious specialists play a crucial role in this process. They incorporate cultural norms, oral traditions and divination into their daily lives. They lead ceremonies, are familiar with ritual procedures and language, have special access to higher powers, and demonstrate great flexibility in the face of adversity and change. The civil war had a particularly significant impact on life in the Ixil region. Destruction and violence forced the Ixil to keep elements of traditional religion, such as rituals and divination, hidden. In addition, social cohesion was severely disrupted by the civil war and the actions of the civil patrols. Social cohesion broke down and the *comunidades* went through a crisis. For the *kacholpom*, the practitioners of the traditional religion, rituals structure both relationships within the group and between individuals and their environment. Sacred places, such as the cardinal points and mountain peaks associated with the year bearers, are bridges between the past and the present and connect the material with the immaterial side of cultural heritage. The *kacholpom* preserve the appreciation of the sacred landscape and the associated ideas of interactions between time, eternity, death and life.

With regard to the construction of collective identities, the division of communities due to the civil war and, in particular, the deliberate destruction of social cohesion plays a special role. The prevailing categorisation into "perpetrators" and "victims" prevents solutions for restoring social cohesion. In this study, local strategies for constructing a mnemonic community were presented using the example of the resistance villages of the Sierra (*Comunidades de Población en Resistencia de la Sierra, CPR-Sierra*). The relationship between humans and the environment played a prominent role in this.

During the field research, Fundamaya, a cultural and social organisation, was active in various areas of action in the Ixil region. In addition to land rights, resource use, remembrance work, tourism, and municipal administration and politics, they were also involved in education with the establishment of the Universidad Ixil. This work analyses the role of Fundamaya in constructing a collective Ixil identity and memory. The examples demonstrate agency among indigenous stakeholders and the decolonisation process, illustrating the complexities involved in forming a collective identity. In addition, the New Year's ritual highlights the connection between political activities and religious aspects of public life. The ritual documented in 2009 combines the religious ceremony with the formal inauguration of a new, additional sacred site and educational work on the extraction of raw materials.

Teenagers and young adults in particular lack equal opportunities in rural areas on the periphery of Guatemala, including the Ixil region. Formal education can only contribute to overcoming institutionalised inequality in isolated cases. Furthermore, indigenous young people must master the difficult task of preserving the traditions of their ancestors and being part of a

marginalised group in society, while at the same time navigating the expectations and opportunities of the modern world. Genuine opportunities must go beyond "Western" values and structures. It is also crucial that ethnic attributions such as *Ladino* or *Indígena* have no influence on educational success. Different perspectives must be heard, as must the memories of the civil war that have been passed down within families. A culture of intercultural and tolerant discussion, both in classrooms and at the community level, could realise Aleida Assmann's ideal of a "dialogical culture of remembrance" and contribute to overcoming social divisions. In theory, school education could seize the opportunity to focus on contradictory historical narratives and their relationship to truth and power, thereby enabling discourse at the community level. Globalisation does not necessarily mean deterioration; it is also an opportunity. In order to end "ethnic oppression" and think beyond ethnic boundaries, a reform of the education system is necessary. The focus should rather be on holistic personal development, supported by education and upbringing, and based on various aspects of Ixil culture. The Universidad Ixil is an example of how decolonised, independent academic education can be put into practice and bridge divisions in communities.