

PRE-HISPANIC AND ROYAL ROAD AT THE EAST OF NUEVA GRANADA POPULATION, PRODUCTS AND CATHOLIC EVANGELIZATION DYNAMICS ON MUISCA TERRITORY

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The Royal Road located at the Nueva Granada's eastern Viceroyalty, connected its administrative centre in Santafé with the one of Caracas in the Captainship of Venezuela and was constructed over the long way of roads and footpaths of pre-Hispanic origin that related the four great Muisca chieftainships (Cacicazgos) of the Eastern Andean Mountain chain, and the territories of Guanés in Santander and Teguás in the Piedemonte of the oriental plains, with whom they maintained an intense commerce of raw materials and manufactured products. They developed relationships through tributary payments, political subjection and a permanent cultural interchange.

The definition and study of the Cultural Itinerary that is configured from the permanence of sections of the royal road, are formulated as a stage on which daily life and peoples relationships runs from the pre-Hispanic time throughout three centuries of the administrative presence of the Spanish Crown. It was used also by the Liberation Army during the Independence fights in the first half of 19th century and was frequently used during the first decades of the Republic consolidation.

There is no doubt that the geographic conditions of the region that is pretended to be studied, make evident the contrast between linear straight corridors like the Cundiboyacense Plateau of easy transit and the mountainous or dense forest regions and the rainy plateau of Piedemonte of the oriental plains, which constitute isolated enclosures in which only the Camino allowed the interchange. The geographic difficulty and the isolation of the human enclaves, still made useful the Royal road even in the 20th century, when gradually the national railroad project was consolidating which in turn was replaced by the highways projects that frequently were constructed over the old historical Camino.

Pre-Hispanic period

The nature of the pre-Hispanic route was not homogenous, and its recognition is obtained through the histories of the Spanish chroniclers which stated that sometimes the

journeys went on by ample ridges that lead to some of the ceremonial Centres, of which Sogamoso is an example, or lead to regional markets like Turmequé in Boyacá or Aipe in Huila. But the histories also refer difficult mountain paths hardly identified and used only regularly by natives. Some of them were crossed by the troops of Don Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada following the route of El Dorado, when they decided to leave the path of the Magdalena River and began to climb to the high mountain and forest areas like those of the Opón.

In addition to the chroniclers' stories, the research done in recent years by anthropologists and archaeologists should be considered. They have presented results that show passages of Indian roads excavated by them and subtle marks that are only observed through the aerial pictures. They constitute an important tool to recognize networks to footpaths or deep marks of continuous lines that connect neighbour towns in a spatial system.

Then, roads, stations, towns, market places and ceremonial centres, constitute an important part of the pre-Hispanic material heritage of the Cultural Itinerary of the Royal road of the East, until the Spanish presence initiated a process of cultural hybridization on densely populated regions. Later on they will face a process of mixing races, languages, religions and ideas.

Colonial period

The paths of the Indian roads were followed by the Spaniards starting from the Caribbean cities and to enter the territory following, first, the path of the Magdalena River to La Tora, climbing the Eastern Mountain chain and finally arriving at the lands of the Plateau where they began to establish colonial cities like Santafé (Bogotá) and Tunja in 1538 and 1539, respectively. The settlement process in the region was active for more than hundred years, and it just ended with the establishment of Duitama and Sogamoso over old Indian towns.

Therefore, the network of Indian footpaths served to delineate and build sections, that sometimes overlapped, which were ordered by the Spanish Crown administrators in

América. They constitute the road system that was denominated Royal road of the East and acquired an specific appearance and concreteness in the XVIII century, under the rule of Viceroy (1730-1810), when the colonial administration undertook a process of profound recognition of the conquered territory two centuries before, with the purpose of obtaining larger benefits and productivity.

During the Colony, the royal road continued fulfilling its function of carrying people, products and ideas and articulated the market places, the Indian towns and white people's cities, as well as the old ceremonial centres, sometimes abandoned; and the new places of catholic celebration which last until today. In addition to the pre-Hispanic manifestations of the Cultural Itinerary, material items of Spanish origin and other fundamental components gave a homogenous character to the territory. Besides they conform the immaterial part of the Cultural Itinerary. They are: profession and expression of catholic religion, imposition and generalized usage of castellan language and use of constructive earth techniques, which were mixed with the methods of native construction and inhabitation, leading to a rich cultural tradition that still lasts in the farm areas and in small urban nuclei, among others.

Republican period: 19th and 20th century

During the 19th century, the old Royal road of the East, served to the Liberation Army during the period of battles that lead to Independence, to the establishment of the bolivariano project of the Gran Colombia and to the founding of the Republics of Colombia and Venezuela.

Travellers stories has recorded in words and images, the routes of the old Royal road, with its large sections and their mountain footpaths, and made evident its permanence and importance until the beginnings of the 20th century. In this way people, pianos, beds and all kinds of objects travelling from the fluvial Honda harbour continued their way to the Mountain chain finally arriving to Bogotá or Tunja.

Care of roads, at the time called National Roads, the opening of new routes and the building of the first railways, added to steamers navigation on the Magdalena River, in order to break gradually the isolation of regions and was a way to try to get a form of government and administration of all the Colombian territory. But the geographic characteristics and other structural problems of the country; make difficult the administrative unification of the national territory, even now.

Concluding remarks

The East Royal road constitutes a historical axis that crosses and relates several geographic regions of the country that through its path, finally got into a significant cultural region of the country, in which the testimonies of the cultural hibridization and mixing of races form an important registry of the material and immaterial historical legacy of the Andean tradition.

Abstract

The eastern Nueva Granada Royal Road, connected the cities of Tunja, Vélez and Pamplona in the way of Capitanía of Venezuela, and was constructed on the long footpath of pre-hispanic origin that related the main four Eastern Andean Muisca Cacicazgos with Piedemonte towns with which, the muisca maintained an intense cultural interchange. The Colonial Route continued fulfilling its function for the traffic of people, products and ideas, and also integrated market places, indigenous towns, cities as well as old ceremonial centers and the new catholic cult celebration sites, that exists until today. At the 19th century, the Road was the way of the Liberty army, during Independence Period and Republic consolidation time.

Therefore, the dirt Road constitutes an historical axis that goes through one of the most significant cultural area, the Cundiboyacense Plateau, where there is an important material and immaterial heritage registry that shows the complexity of the Andean tradition.

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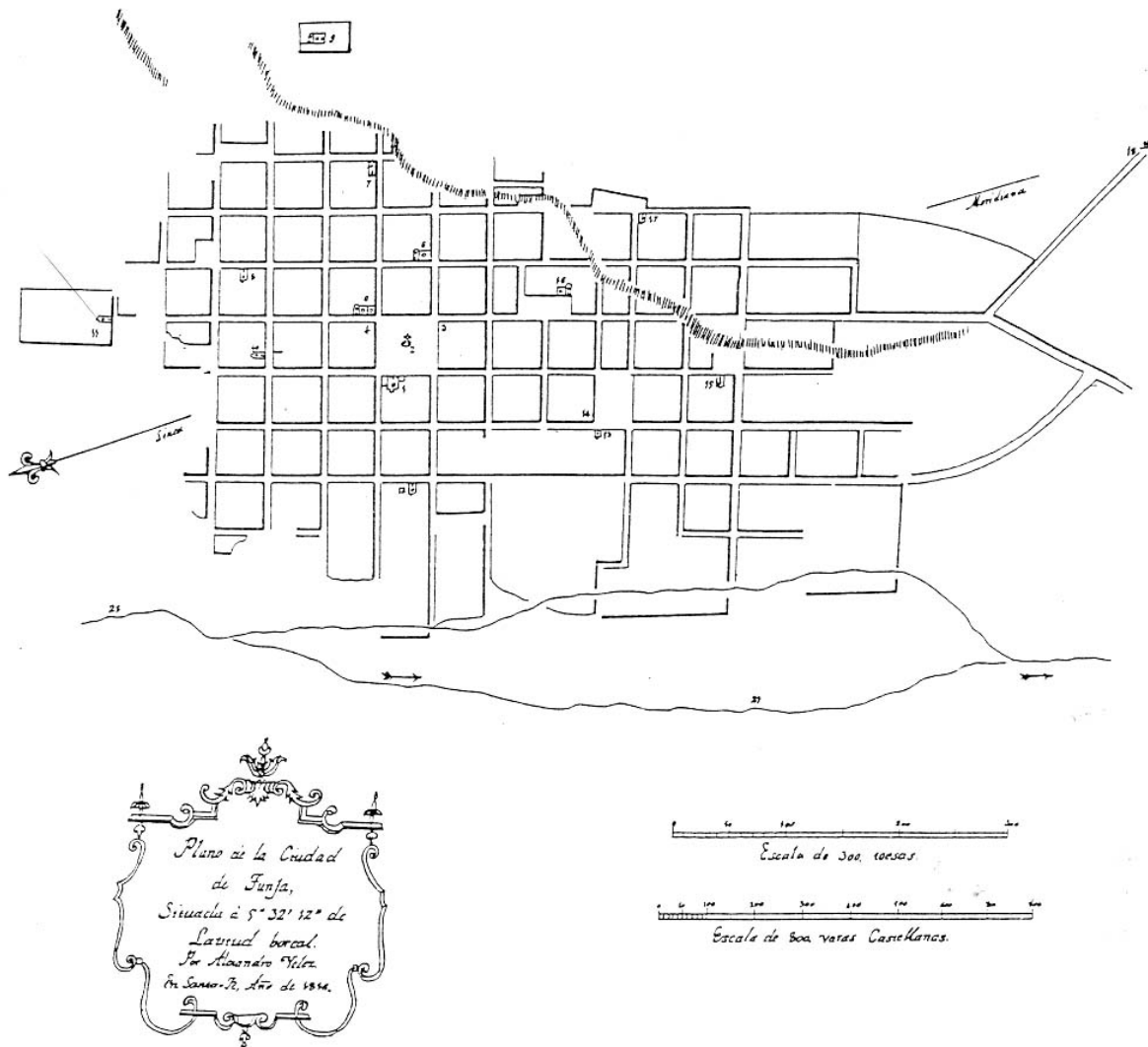


Fig. 1 Fundational chart TunJa



Fig. 2 Colonial city. TunJA



Fig. 3 Indian Town monquiRA