



## PARLAMENTO DEL PUEBLO XINKA GUATEMALA

Km. 57.5 Carretera a El Salvador, San Juan de Arana,  
Ciudad de Cuilapa, Santa Rosa, Guatemala  
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# XINKA PEOPLES

Prior to the arrival of the Spanish colonizer, the Xinka political and territorial organization extended from the Guatemalan Pacific coast to the mountains of Jalapa.

One of the first historical references to the Xinka region is found in the second letter written by Alvarado to Cortes on July 28, 1524. In it, Alvarado establishes that he made contact with the Xinka after sealing off the Michatoya River and entering the town of Atiquipaque. "His desire to penetrate the land in order to rule over and that the majesty had more land, I determined that from that point in the town called atiepac (atipaque) where I was received by people from another language".

There were six thousand men, including indigenous auxiliary troops, in the Spanish army. There were two fierce battles against the Xinka defenders. In one such battle, Alvarado, in a death trance and with his horse injured, was forced to dismount and fight body to body (Fuentes y Guzmán Recordación Florida: tomo II pág. 115).

According to Franz Termer, the Xinka's were the only people in Guatemala that used bows and lances with venomous tips.

Briton believed the Xinka territory was very populated and that its structures were made of wood, not stone. Its inhabitants were notable warriors that formed small, independent tribes that were united in a type of confederation called "the head of the indigenous lordship".

There are also historical references to the existence of the Xinka people, for example, in the **Sololá Memorial**. The **annuals from the Kaqchiqueles include text that confirms the existence of the Xinka people, saying:** "Later they came down from Chol Amag and Zuquitán. It was certainly difficult to understand their language; only barbarians understood their language. We interrogated the barbarians who were called Loxpin and Chupichin...The Chol Amag were surprised when we spoke to them in their language, they were afraid, but they responded with good words."

Many people cast doubt on the existence of the Xinka people due to the lack of large architectural works characteristic of the Mayan people. This has a simple explanation: the Xinka were a people that were more interested in



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spirituality and their natural skills of body to body combat during the period of the Spanish invasion. Thanks to ambassadors that were located in land that is now Mexico, they knew the invasion was coming, and dedicated themselves to combat strategies, leaving no time to dedicate to architecture.

Alvarado was unable to win either of the two great battles against the Xinka people, injuring in his leg during battle (an injury would later lead to his death). Given this, he designated Juan Pérez Dordón to conquest the Xinka people.

The High Command of Juan Pérez Dardón was made up of Herán Carrillo, Fernando de Porto Carrero and Fernando Chávez.

The Spanish were confident in their armor and equipment, which included, shell plates made of metal, helmets, leg guards up to the knee, shields, cannons on wheels pulled by indigenous Mexicans, which is to say they were already using gun powder, something that was completely unknown in the Americas at that time.

The Xinka, on the other hand, covered their bodies with shields made out of animal pelts hardened with natural elements to make them less heavy, bow and arrows, and poison-tipped lances.

The Xinka People employed various forms of combat to defend themselves from the invasion.

All of the operational tactics worked perfectly well for the Xinka People. According to the letters and confirmed by historian Cesar Morales de la Rosa, the Spanish did not find submissive people in Xinka territory, rather they encountered the only peoples in the region that was never defeated in combat.

Unable to defeat the Xinka in combat, the Spanish used the strategy of negotiation, which allowed them to deceive the Xinka and enslave them in order to exact revenge on the Xinka for the humiliations that the Spanish suffered on the battle field. Indeed, Spanish pride was most deeply hurt by the Xinka. The Spanish declared the Xinka People rebels and forced them to leave behind and forget their spirituality.



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The Xinka people remained enslaved for more than nine years, which was the time that it took them to build the Los Esclavos (the Slaves) bridge. When construction was complete, the Spanish liberated the Xinka, but forced them to buy back their land.

The Xinka continued living under great repression; their spiritual practice was met with cruel punishment.

Today, many of the stolen lands that were bought back from the Spanish during this time period are still administered under communal tenure, by Xinka's own local government organized through directive boards. The boards are elected by the population that gathers in general assembly and to elect this maximum authority of the community. This is the case, for example, in the communities of Jumaytepeque, Santa María Xalapán, Las Lomas del Pajal Chiquimulilla, Quesada, Jutiapa, Yupiltepeque, San Carlos Alzatate, Buena Vista, among others.

Since 1575, the Spanish crown prohibited the Original People from conserving their culture. Jean-Loup Herbert affirmed this saying: "It is sufficient to open any colonial chronical of Guatemala, with very few exceptions, to find an abundance of derogatory terms to describe the indigenous society, including "animal", "savage", "barbarian", "polytheist", "pagan", "not civilized", and grouping all together as "indigenous". This situation was used principle to displace people from their land and the gradual hispanization of the population.

From the 1870s to 1930s, there were numerous waves of harsh repression against the original population, forcing them to leave behind their spiritual practice and their language. When caught speaking their language, Xinka elders and parents were tied to posts located in front of the municipal building and were punished with 100 lashes. All of this is part of a racist and discriminatory system that has penetrated our education system and contributed to the fact that today Xinka people continue to be made invisible and, on occasion, to have their existence questioned. Despite this, we can say that today we are alive and that we have survived all of the humiliations and assaults to emerge stronger every day.

### **NATIONAL CENSUS 2002 AND 2018:**

According to the National Statistics Institute (INE), in 2002, 16,216 people identified as Xinka in the departments of Jalapa, Jutiapa and Santa Rosa.



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However, in the most recent census in 2018, 264,167 people identified as Xinka. This represents 1.77% of the guatemalan population.