

Discovery Theater

and the

Smithsonian Latino
Center

present

Celebremos Panama!

A REPRODUCIBLE LEARNING GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

This guide is designed to help you and your students prepare for, enjoy, and discuss ***Celebremos Panama!*** It contains background information, questions and activities that supports the *Celebremos Panama!* Handout. Appropriate for all ages.

This program is part of the “Panama at the Smithsonian” program series.

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Young girl in pollera

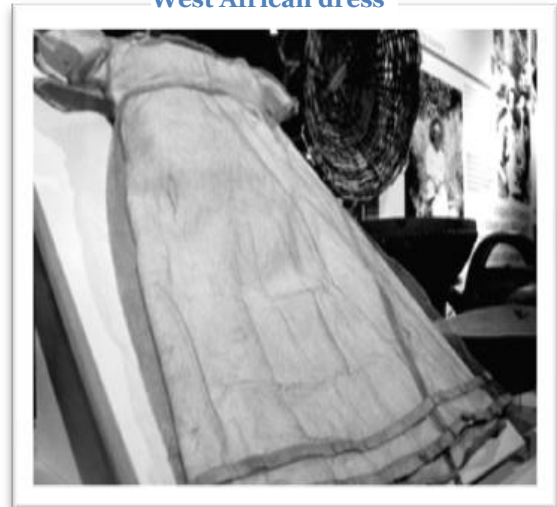
PANAMA FOLKLORIC DRESS-

THE POLLERA

The national costume of Panama, the pollera, defied social stratification when it was worn by both earlier colonial era African slaves and upper-class Spanish women; today it is characterized by its eye-catching embellishments and colors that make it one of the staple cultural symbols of Latin America's vibrant culture.

The specific origins of the pollera are debated, but Panamas' central location during the Columbian exchange hint at the international influences that came to structure the dress. In Spain women wore a similarly simple dress during the early colonial days. African slaves that were brought to Panama in the 17th and 18th centuries also displayed the inchoate pollera. The consensus amongst Panamanians, who wear the pollera on daily basis, is that it was most likely modeled after the slave's apparel.

West African dress



Different Polleras

There are three types of polleras worn according to different occasions. The formal pollera is called the “pollera de gala” “made of white handkerchief linen and ten-yard skirts embroidered in cross-stitch or appliqué of one color” (“The Pollera”). It is worn with a blouse, skirt and petticoats. It also has a neck band called the “mundillo” where the wool pompoms are placed. The ruffled skirt is ankle-length and is worn with heelless shoes made of satin or velveteen and are of the same color as the pompoms. The pollera de gala is the most elaborate and expensive dress which is worn for more ceremonial celebrations. A homemade dress may take months to years to make and can be passed down as a family heirloom.

POLLERA DE GALA



POLLERA MONTUNA



Secondly the “pollera montuna” is the casual dress that is worn on a daily basis. It consists of a “colorful very full skirts made from calico” which is paired with the montuno or “pintao” hat that is made in the Cocle province. Generally it is simpler than the pollera de gala and made only with one ruffle. Expert seamstresses are known to inhabit the Provinces of Herrera and Los Santos, but most notably the town of Las Tablas. Other types of casual clothing for

Panamanian woman include “naguas”, a type of colorful dress, and “mola” (appliqué) shirts.

The pollera that is worn for weddings is called the “pollera de boda”. It is exactly like the pollera de gala with the only significant difference being that it is completely white in color. The pompon and wool can be a pale pink or blue though. The brides wear various gold chains, amount ranging from 4 to 8, with one particular necklace bearing special interest, “la cadena chata” which is flat chain with a gold fish at the end.

POLLERA DE BODA



Tembleque/ accessories

Another trademark of the pollera dress is the headpiece called the “tembleque” named so after the quivering motion the delicate piece makes when the lady dances. The women part their hair down the middle before placing the multi-pieced tembleque. The two tight hair braids are then fitted with the tembleques with are “glittering sprays of flowerlike filigree ornaments made of gold, silver, and pearls;” (La Pollera). There are two types; one is more decorous with its gold work, “de balcon”, names after the semblance to the style of balcony railing and is places on the back and sides of the head. The other type is “de perlas” due to the pearls found in the piece, and are worn in the front of the head.

The earrings come in various styling, whether large or small, of gold or silver and with pearls or corals.

The following is a list of terms associated with the pollera:

VOCAB of the “Pollera”

Arendela: Ruffles on the blouse, trimmed with insertion and edging laces.

Botones de Enaguas: Solid gold buttons used on the waistband of the skirt.

Botones de Filigrana: Gold filigree earrings shaped as buttons.

Cabestrillo: Gold chain adorned with numerous coins.

Cadena Bruja: Gold chain with "Z" shaped links.

Caden Chata Abierta: Same as the cadena chata except it is not closed. Each end has a dome-shaped tassel with thin, tearshaped pieces placed around the lower edge.

Calados: Neddlework used in the polleras in which the white background threads are removed and designs are worked around the open places.

Coca: Refers to the section of hair, tied in a bun behind the ears.

Cola 'e Pato: Gold necklace having wedge shaped links overlayed to make a thick cord.

Cuerpo de Camisa: Body or lower section of the blouse.

Cuerpo de Pollera: Upper tier of the skirt.

Dolores: Small gold squares, circles, half-moons, or shamrocks placed over the temples.



Dormilonas: Earrings.

Escapulario: Gold scapulary necklace.

Gallos: Ribbons placed at the center front and back of the waistband.

Guachapali: A fragile chain having thick gold links; it is said the links are shaped like seeds from the guachapali tree which grows profusely in Panama.

Guarda: The area covered with needlework on the blouse and skirt.

Media Naranja: A gold necklace having links simulating orange slices.

Melindre: Edging lace made locally on the mundillo.

Mosqueta: Gold and pearl rosette made as earrings, tembleques, or a pin worn in the front pompon of the blouse.

Monedero: Coin purse knitted from silk thread tucked over the waistband.

Mota: Wool pompoms placed over the front and back neck openings of the blouse.

Mundillo: A small padded wheel set on a wooden stand used for making pollera laces.

Pajuela: Hair ornament shaped like a palm leaf.

Parches: Same as the dolores, small gold placques placed over the temples.

Peacillo: Narrow insertion lace made on the mundillo.

Peinetas de Balcon: Turtle shell combs having a gold border, sometimes decorated with pearls and other gold work.

Pelotas: The hair buns which are secured behind the ears.

Pepinos: Another name for the pelotas.

Picarona: The ruffle sewn around the lower edge of the montuna skirt.

Pretina de Boca: The neck binding in the blouse.

Puntada de Bolillo: Rolled hem stitch used for gathering the ruffles.

Rosario: The rosary, usually made in gold filigree.

Salomonica: A heavy, twisted chain having the same form as the columns on Solomon's temple.

Sombreada: Talco en sombra, white material applied on the wrong side of white cloth.

Solitaria: A long thin necklace resembling a tape worm.

Susto: The lower tier of the pollera skirt.

Talco: Applique needlework.

Tapabalazo: The lower section of the blouse yoke to which the ruffles are sewn.

Tapahueso: Black ribbon or ribbon-like gold chain fastened around the base of the neck to which is suspended a cross, medal, coin, or locket.

Tapa-oreja: Tembleques that cover the ears.

Tapa-pelota: Large tembleques used to cover the buns in the hair.

Tembleques: Hair ornaments made of wires and beads, resembling artificial flowers.

Zarcillos: Earrings.

THE MONTUNO



In the same way the pollera dress is the quintessential attire for the Panamanian woman, so is the montuno hat for the men. The hat is of simple structure, it is about 6 inches in height and is flat or raised depending of the hat maker and the location. The fibers are from the palm tree's shoot and are called "bellota". The trees cultivate in the mountains of Cocolé and Veraguas. The main hat makers in Panama are the "cholos", demographically similar to the mestizos. The women must weave the hats at a very specific time for the bellota to be pliable enough to use. They usually work between 4 and 8 am when the moisture is most optimal for the montuno hat's fiber. About 15 strands of split bellota go into a single hat. Just like the pollera there are variations of montuno hats. The first style hat, the "ocueño", is made of white fiber with a small black strip running lengthwise. Secondly, the "pintao" hat is made by interweaving black and white strands. The actual patterns on the hat reflect each maker's personal style, making the possibilities endless. Aside from the hat's basic function, it plays a key role in the costuming for Panama's national dance the 'tamborito'.





PANAMA FOLKLORIC MUSIC-DANCE

Panama's strong African influences illustrate themselves in its music tradition just as in its trademark attire. 'Tamborito' is the national dance of Panama in which the women wearing pollera dresses and the men in montuno outfits dance to the beats of drums, the vocals of the 'cantalante' and the rhythm of the clapping chorus called the 'estribillo'. The songs are composed in quatrains whose subjects often deal with universal human experiences : love, loss, jealousy etc, etc. The female dancers group around the summers in a half-circle. A man will step out of the group and beckon a partner from the group of ladies. The man will then make his way into the center of the circle, with lady in tow, with a series of head nods and hand gestures. They then perform 'Los Tres Golpes' in which they take three step backwards followed by a twirl and the man will often be on one knee in reverence to the woman. The lady will then extend her pollera skirt lengthwise in a move called 'El Escobillo' and will repeat this several times through the dance, while her partner imitates her escobillo and jumps, kneels and bellows. The whole performance is concluded with a final tres golpes in which moment both dancers return to the half-circle.

Other prominent traditional music and dance forms include: Saloma & Mejorana, Cumbia, puntos, pasillos, congo, salsa, calypso and jazz.



INSTRUMENTS

Panama's vivacious dance performances would not be possible without its equally intriguing selection of instrument, most notably the drums. Below is a brief description of some of these typical Panamanian instruments.

- The Mejoranera is a five-stringed guitar which is used to play mejoranas and torrentes.
- The churuca/ guiro is a percussion instruments created from hollowing a gourd and carving parallel notches on its exterior to provide the friction to create the ratchet-like sound found in cumbias.



The mejoranera



The churuca



The accordion

- The rable is a three-stringed violin which is also used to play cumbias along with puntos and pasillos.
- The accordion is a box-shaped instrument which is played by pressing on both sides and letting air pass through the bellows. It has been incorporated into Panamanian music as another example of European influence in the country.
- The conga drum is essential to producing the infectious beats in many of Panamas dances. It originated in western Africa and is another model of the Afro-Cuban influences in culture. Before it was made out of hollowed logs but nowadays is made out of fiberglass shell and is used in Salsas and Merengues.



The rable



The conga

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ABOUT THE SMITHSONIAN LATINO CENTER

The Smithsonian Latino Center (latino.si.edu) – The Smithsonian Latino Center is dedicated to ensuring that Latino contributions to art, science, and the humanities are highlighted, understood, and advanced through the development and support of public programs, scholarly research, museum collections and educational opportunities at the Smithsonian Institution and its affiliated organizations across the United States. "Panama at the Smithsonian" is program series that includes exhibitions, educational activities, and public programs that bring national and international attention to the history, land, and cultural expressions of the people of Panama. For more information, please visit www.latino.si.edu.

ABOUT DISCOVERY THEATER

Discovery Theater (DiscoveryTheater.org), the Smithsonian Institution's theater for **children**, has been dedicated to offering the best in live performing arts for young people since 1979. Each year, more than 50,000 Washington-area children and their adults visit DT (now located in the Smithsonian's S. Dillon Ripley Center on the National Mall in Washington, DC) to explore American history and cultures, folk tales from around the world, and exciting, accessible science and math programs in the company of puppeteers, storytellers, dancers, actors, musicians and mimes. For details, call (202) 633-8700 or visit www.DiscoveryTheater.org.

