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Latin American Nationalist Narratives in Transition:

Museums of Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica

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An Abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Art History Department
2007

ABSTRACT:

The national museums of Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica offer insight into Latin American initiatives for creating unified nations from diverse populations. Mexico has allocated substantial sums for the construction of numerous national museums to promote an Aztec identity for all Mexicans, even though very few people in Mexico can claim ancestry to the Aztecs and the majority of remaining indigenous people in the country descend from enemies of the Aztecs. Perhaps a faux Aztec façade has been easier to provide for a public image than a solution to the poverty and disenfranchisement of most Mexicans and especially of native groups. In contrast, Guatemala's governments vacillate between progressive and conservative, and advances at its national museums are evident only during progressive administrations. In both, however, the viewpoints of the Maya, half the population, are essentially overlooked. Alternatively, university- and private-run museums in Guatemala involve Maya in exhibition planning, perhaps offering a more viable answer to uniting the divided nation. In contradistinction to both Mexico and Guatemala, Costa Rica's image as a peaceful, democratic, tropical paradise is well known to tourists. Unfortunately, the intended image is obscured through outdated displays at the National Museum. Meanwhile, through newer, more interactive exhibits, the Gold Museum and the Jade Museum in Costa Rica provide fresh perspective on Costa Rica's ancient cultures. However, no Costa Rican institution presents a clear image of reality there, a reality of government controlled primarily by agro-industrial elite, of seemingly unstoppable destruction of the environment and ancient tombs, and of the growing presence of international corporations and First World immigrants. The public narratives of the national museums of these three Latin American countries are stories of questionable veracity, which aim to unite groups who otherwise might protest. These narratives are but thin nationalist veneers under which social tensions remain.

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INTRODUCTION

A museum presents through its architecture, displays, didactics, public programs, and publications a particular narrative it wishes to promote. In the case of national museums, the museum can be seen as a vehicle for promoting a history the government wants inculcated in its citizens and available for consumption to its foreign visitors. This history presents a tradition invented or imagined by curators and government officials from the "top down."[1] Their planned visual narrative can perhaps be considered initially as the national museum's "master narrative." What one might conceive of as the museum's "sub-narrative," or underlying story, is the tale of how the museum came to be, who founded it, when, where, and why, and its subsequent historical trajectory within the broader history of the nation. This hierarchy of "master" and "sub-" narratives is discernible in museum publications.[2] According to texts written by museum authorities, the history of a museum as an institution is less important than the history presented within its walls for its visitors to learn. However, investigations into national museums appear to reveal the reverse. The stories of the museums' architects, curators, and visionaries, often allied very closely with contemporary politicians, may inform us of the histories of these nations in a more complete manner than the tale spun by museum

[1] The idea of an "invented tradition" applies specifically to nation-building in the work of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, while an "imagined community" is the phrase Benedict Anderson uses to describe nations in the process of constructing their identity.
[2] Tony Bennett, author of *The Birth of the Museum*, calls these two narratives the "public" narrative,

leaders. An analysis of the primary national museums in the Latin American countries of Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica illuminates how the two narratives can function together to provide a clearer understanding of cultural identity and identity politics in Latin America.

In the case of Mexico, the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City is a prime example of a building constructed to fulfill a nationalist mission, that of uniting the diverse peoples of Mexico through a mythologized shared past, which privileges the heritage of a small group within modern-day Mexican society, that of the Aztecs. Among several reasons for this, to be discussed below, perhaps the key one is that the history and identity of such a (relatively) minor group (in the grand scheme of Mexican history) can be appropriated through the state's top-down approach with greater ease than that of a culture group whose current population exceeds, or is at least equivalent to, the population of the group in power, as is seemingly the case in Guatemala.

In Guatemala, the tradition of establishing national museums has been adopted, but only half-heartedly, by an ever-changing government, a government oftentimes more interested in placating its bureaucrats personally than in pacifying its people through visual messages museums can transmit.[3] The benefits of museum educational missions are instead valued only by a few patriotic museum workers, local and international scholars, and corporations who see museums as venues for promotion of their products and of the tourist industry in Guatemala, a potentially big business. The views of the

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presented by the museum's curators and scholars, and the "political" narrative, the concurrent (but usually untold) story of the government's and the museum's behind-the-scenes activities.

[3] Paredes-Maury, Sofía personal communication 2000-present; Aguilar, Hector personal communication 2000. See also the second footnote in "The Case of Guatemala."

Maya, who represent approximately half the population of Guatemala,[4] are often difficult to ascertain by museum officials considered *ladino* (mixed Spanish and indigenous) or *criollo* (creole, American-born of Spanish descent), who feel a class and cultural divide between themselves and their indigenous countrymen. It is possible to argue that the government of Guatemala is not willing to prioritize its resources to represent/appropriate Maya culture for its museums, archaeological sites, and the tourist industry because it is fearful of the anger of a group who might feel used and misrepresented at such venues, a group who in the late 20th century garnered international attention for its treatment by Guatemalan officials and the military (Nelson 1999). As a counterpoint, private museums in Guatemala, funded through international organizations, foundations, and wealthy patrons, seem to be free from government bureaucracy and some societal tensions and better able to present indigenous beliefs and creations than government-run facilities. Their working relationships with indigenous Maya provide for the beginnings of "bottom-up" approaches to national identity, as opposed to the purely "top-down" messages of government-run institutions.

The efforts of Mexico and Guatemala in nation-building, particularly through national museums, seem almost at completely opposite ends of the spectrum, while the case of Costa Rica appears to lie halfway between and, therefore, makes a useful comparison. In Costa Rica, its citizens seemingly have accepted the idea of a shared unified national heritage, due to the theory of *blanqueamiento* ("whitening"),[5] promoted by the elite over the last century and a half. This theory has been presented in the

[4] See Diane Nelson's book *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala* (1999) for estimated indigenous population numbers and the U.S. Department of State website (http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2045.htm) for the latest estimates.
[5] This term is used throughout Latin America and is cited extensively in Diane Nelson's book *A Finger in*

National Museum in San José, where the visitors' path leads from the "first peoples" of Costa Rica, dating to several thousand years before the common era, through pre-Hispanic cultures to the Colonial period and then on to the present with each culture represented as a continuum of the last, concluding with the current "white" society. The natural history of Costa Rica has been interwoven with the nation's cultural history along this path, providing visitors with a sense of balance between humans and the lands they occupy and share with the flora and fauna. This purported peacefulness of Costa Rican society and its harmony with its environment, as propagandized in the press surrounding the small Central American nation, lead one to believe in this easy historical trajectory created by the National Museum through a "top-down" approach. However, a closer reading of Costa Rican environmental, cultural, and political practices breaks down the façade presented at the museum and perhaps reveals a sub-narrative suggesting where the government is weakest at influencing its populace. To counter the nationalist top-down propaganda of government-run museums, several indigenous groups in Costa Rica, chief among them the Boruca, have created small museums to present a "bottom-up" view of Costa Rican identities.

THE HISTORY OF MUSEUMS AND THEIR USE IN NATION-BUILDING

These three Latin American nations are by no means the first to use state-run museums to promote a nationalist or political agenda. The world has a long-standing history of such practice. Before the national museum came into being, beginning in ancient Greece, temples to deities housed collections of votive offerings, art objects

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the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala (1999).

esteemed first by the Greeks themselves and later the Romans. The term "museum" (Latin) or "mouseion" (Greek) came into use first with the Greeks who designated it for "sanctuaries dedicated to the muses, to philosophical academies or institutions of advanced learning…" (Bazin 1967, 16). By the Renaissance the word had come to connote a collection of works of art that inspired philosophy. During the Renaissance, collections of antiquities were formed by the wealthy, and many in the nobility installed in their residences a *wunderkammer*, a wonder room or "cabinet of curiosities," a site of awe for spectators, a room filled with exotic objects from world travels (fig. 1). Napoleon's exploits on his war campaigns provided such objects for the Louvre in Paris.

The Louvre Museum, France's first national museum, displayed examples of French art (fig. 2) and other art from the French Empire under Napoleon, the first patron of the Louvre (Bazin 1967, 41-53; Pevsner 1976, 111-138; Bjurström 1996, 42ff; McClellan 1996, 29-40). According to Napoleon's vision, all subjects of the French Empire were to feel united as one French people. What better way to create such a feeling than through the visual emphasis of a shared heritage? Contemporary French paintings and art objects of the French people's supposed ancestors, Egyptians as well as Greeks and Romans, were displayed in the National Museum's grand halls (fig. 3), open to all French citizens.[6] These artworks became symbols for a common origin, tangible objects each leader could point toward and each citizen could look to as proof of "Frenchness." As Andrew McClellan has noted in an essay on "Nationalism and the Origins of the Museum in France":

[6] According to curators at the Louvre Museum, the Egyptian objects acquired by Napoleon from 1798-1801 were not displayed in the early years of the Louvre. These pieces were taken by the British as "spoils of war" and installed in the British Museum, e.g. the Rosetta Stone. Pieces collected by soldiers with Napoleon in Egypt were only donated to the Louvre years later. Egyptian objects on display in the first

> Public art museums in the West serve the cause of nations in two ways. First, they foster feelings of collective belonging by providing a space dedicated to shared enjoyment of treasures in the public domain and in which equality of access renders citizenship transparent. Second, through their contents and strategies of display museums identify the nation-states that sponsor them as heirs to Western civilization and adherents to the modern tradition (1996, 29).

Objects collected around the world or made in the homeland soon were transformed from objects of awe and wonder to prized possessions indicative of their owner's power (Bazin 1967, 41-53; Pevsner 1976, 111-138; Bjurström 1996, 42ff). Still they were often arranged in a haphazard fashion, helping to give them their name, "cabinets of curiosities" (fig. 1, 4) (Bennett 1999, 78 fig. 2.4).

In the later 1800s with the rise of Darwinism an ideology of social and evolutionary order arose that dictated the arrangement of museum objects into hierarchies that supposedly proved Western supremacy over "uncivilized" humans around the globe, the "other." A.H.L.F. Pitt Rivers, of England, seat of the largest world empire of the 19th century and home to Darwin, was one of the first museum organizers to display objects in such an evolutionary taxonomical fashion (fig. 4) (Clifford 1988, 227).

Alongside the development of museum displays has been the development of the architecture of museums. In Europe and the United States museum architecture, especially for earlier museums, replicated the form of an ancient Greek temple or a Renaissance palace, both supposedly symbolic of pure and philosophical ideas and used for the meditation of artworks and their uplifting qualities (figs. 5, 6). Carol Duncan has effectively argued that the supposed secularization of art museums through the choice of ancient Greek or non-religious Renaissance forms does not preclude the ritual focus of the space. One must remember that the Greek edifices were in fact originally viewed by

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years of the Louvre's history were from royal collections (Louvre Museum 2006).

large numbers of people to worship a particular god or goddess, often displayed in oversized effigy form in the building (Duncan 1990; Duncan 1995). The use of a public museum as a place of "worship" for the nation is but one strategy which nation-states in Europe and in North America employed to gain faithful adherents to their causes, particularly that of nationalism.

The evolutionary taxonomical design and meditative architecture of early museums reveal the nationalist aims of these institutions. Many museums were developed by burgeoning nation-states not only to subjugate the "other" but simultaneously to advance the culture considered primary by its founders, their own culture, be it that of France, England, etc. As Andrew McClellan in his article "Nationalism and the Origins of the Museum in France" has stated,

> In Europe the museum age corresponds directly with the emergence of nationalism after 1820. By the end of the nineteenth century, no self-respecting Western nation...was complete without its own national museum. One hundred years later the same may be said of the world at large. Typically located in the nexus of government buildings at the heart of the capital, national museums have become necessary ornaments of the modern state (29).

Eric Hobsbawm stated in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* that the criteria for establishing nationhood generally includes the following factors: "language or ethnicity or a combination of criteria such as language, common territory, common history, [or] cultural traits" (Hobsbawm 1990, 5). Within a national museum all of these factors can be brought together to synthesize national unity. Signage can be created in only one "common" language. Maps encompassing the national territory can be recreated in large and small form for visitors or even made into dioramas. The approved common history is displayed for all to see, and transmitted not only to museum visitors in person but also in

the last few years on the web or through educational outreach programs such as teacher training. The museum is an excellent propaganda machine for nationalist causes. The noted Australian cultural studies expert, Tony Bennett, refers to the museum as a "machine for progress," but the question is—what kind of progress? In the case of a national museum, progress has meant acceptance into modernity and promotion of a unified people.

Since the late 19th century, museums have evolved to use essentially two display styles. First is the "aesthetic," in which individual works are set off from others and lighted in a dramatic fashion to bring attention to the artistry of the work itself and to decontextualize it. The other style is the "educational," in which objects are surrounded by other culturally-related works and by didactic materials or faux cultural settings, as one often sees at natural history museums (Duncan 1995, 12-18). These two styles can, of course, be combined in one museum (as in the cases of several of the museums discussed below). Thus, national museums have at their disposal two display styles with which to communicate the claim of an evolutionary hierarchy of the civilized, united nationals over the "others," be they foreigners or subjugated groups within the nation-state's boundaries or both. The national museum's goal is to present this message of unity over/within diversity, often in the midst of serious social upheaval.

THE CASE OF MEXICO

Mexico's primary national museum, the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, was intended by its creators, Adolfo López Mateos, then-president of Mexico, and Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, the Museum's architect, to provide Mexico with a

beautiful structure that would give Mexicans the sense of being "Mexican." The Museum was created in the 1960s as a showcase of Mexican cultural identity for the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. The government that commissioned this building and hosted the Olympics, the games of world peace, was run by the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or in English, the Institutional Revolutionary Party), by all accounts a fairly corrupt party by mid 20th century, and one under intense scrutiny by academics in Mexico by the time of the Olympics.

On October 2, 1968, just ten days before the opening ceremonies of the Olympics in Mexico City, the same government that created the National Museum of Anthropology, a monument to Mexican unity, massacred an estimated 500 of its own people. The massacre is commonly known as "Tlatelolco." On that autumn date, at Tlatelolco, also known as the Plaza of the Three Cultures (Plaza de las Tres Culturas), site of the last serious resistance against Mexico's conquistador Hernando Cortes by the Aztecs, approximately 4,000 people gathered to protest the Mexican government's use of police brutality, incarceration of political protesters, and expenditure of exorbitant sums on the Olympics (presumably including the creation of the National Museum of Anthropology). The protesters had been calling for a forum with the government since the location of the Olympic games had been announced. The government had refused such an open discussion of its governing and political tactics. The crowds at Tlatelolco that night were listening to speakers critical of the PRI-run government when its riot police swept through the crowds swinging clubs and chains at the demonstrators. The crowd turned against the officers, who then opened fire on the citizens. The student National Strike Committee, fearing just such an attack by the police, had placed snipers

in nearby buildings to pick off the white-gloved policemen. The police vacated the scene and were replaced by soldiers in armored vehicles. From approximately 7:00 p.m. until 4:00 a.m. shots were fired by government guns at anyone who moved in the vicinity. It is estimated that at least 500 persons were killed on site, while an untotalled number died later from injuries received that evening (Johnson 1978, 4-6; Padgett 1976, 315).

How could a country so seemingly composed and unified in the eyes of the world suffer such an outbreak of horror just days before it was to host the Olympics? Architecture Historian Lawrence Vale's observation that the "line between national identity and governmental insecurity is a fine one indeed" finds poignancy here. The land identified as New Spain under the Spanish from the 15th through the 19th centuries, and as Mexico under independent leadership beginning in the 19th, has witnessed several struggles for its control. In the last two centuries, its unification under one governing body has engendered much propaganda (sometimes backed by military action) to contain the various factions.

Since the birth of nationalism in the late 1700s and Mexico's emancipation from Spain in the first decades of the 19th century, the government of Mexico has been in line with nationalist efforts around the world. Its republic, founded in 1821, established in 1825 a national museum at the Universidad de México. Two of three recently discovered Aztec stone sculptures (figs. 7-9), found under Mexico City's main plaza in 1790, were featured in the new national museum. As Mexico had looked to France for inspiration in fighting its war of independence from Spain, the new nation also looked to France for its nation-building projects, such as its national museum, the Louvre. As discussed above, Louvre museum designers organized their space to present a unified French identity for

citizens far and wide. Likewise, Mexican national museum designers determined they needed a theme to unite Mexican nationals.

The Mexican leaders selected one group as their primary focus for a shared Mexican heritage, the Aztecs. The focus on the Aztecs was fitting. The fledgling nation had just broken away from its mother country, Spain, and needed a separate identity from New Spain. The name Mexico had already been in use during the Colonial period, but its origin gave it added significance: "Mexico" comes from the name some of the Aztecs called themselves, the Mexica, and the name of their capital city, México-Tenochtitlan. Early conquering Spaniards established their capital at this same city but shortened the name of the city to "Mexico," and the name has persisted.[7] Also, the Aztecs/Mexica were the first people in Mesoamerica to fight the Spanish, and although the Mexica failed to maintain their independence from the Spaniards, their struggle became symbolic to the leaders of the new, 19th-century Mexican nation-state. As the "modern" Mexicans had just battled against Spanish forces in their own fight for independence, so had their adopted ancestors, the Aztecs/Mexica. The fortuitous discovery of the three Aztec sculptures in the few years before Mexican independence helped cement the identification of the infant nation with the Aztecs.

By mid century, further fervor in Mexico for the nation's independence once again involved the French. However, by this time, French interference in Mexico's affairs was viewed as an unwelcome imposition. The French under Napoleon III tried to colonize Mexico in 1862 and by 1864 had named "Emperor" Maximilian, the archduke of Austria, as the sovereign of Mexico (Johnson 1978, 28). Mexican nationals won a

[7] Mexicans do not refer to their capital as Ciudad de Mexico. They either call it simply México or El D.F. for the Distrito Federal or the Federal District, comparable to the term D.C. used by U.S. citizens to refer to

battle at Puebla, Mexico on the fifth of May, 1862, a date now celebrated as "Cinco de Mayo," and eventually ousted Maximillian as well. During his brief tenure, however, Maximilian had relocated the national museum to an old palace on Moneda Street by 1865 (fig. 10), where the national collections remained for the next hundred years through the corrupt, aristocratic Porfirio Díaz regime of the late 19th century, the Mexican Revolution of the early 20th century, and the first few decades of one-party rule by the PRI (Bernal 1968, 8).

With changes in the government in Mexico from 1821 onward, the National Museum witnessed transformations as well. Since national museums are excellent propaganda tools for the modern nation-state, which tries to control a varied population through relatively peaceful measures (at least initially or superficially), the changes in the national museums that take place at times of internal turmoil or during transfers of executive power are an informative measure of how much government leaders value the national museum as an effective tool for influencing the opinions of the nation's subjects and visitors. After Maximillian's removal, Mexico's National Museum continued to expand and fill the walls of the old Moneda Street palace until the 1960s when Mexico had committed its nation, its capital, and its people to a grand presentation of Mexican unity and modernity. The nation-state had won the bid to host the Olympics and saw the need for a new national museum building. The government believed that modern facilities with a Mexican flair would be needed to impress Mexico's citizens and the citizens of the world for the 1968 Olympic Games.

Those who had pushed for the Olympic Games to be held in Mexico were members of the nation's ruling party since the Revolution, the PRI. In the half century

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the District of Columbia, the capital of the U.S. (Fisher et al. 1999, 270).

after the Revolution, this party had engineered a huge political machine that promoted the idea that the Revolution had been fought for the lower classes. They claimed also that the elite were no longer benefitting from international trade in such nefarious ways as they had under the late 19th-century dictator Porfirio Díaz, a point challenged by Mexican liberals by 1960 (Johnson 1978, 24ff). By that time, PRI-led public schools had sprung up across the nation. The universities in Mexico City had produced politicians, businessmen, teachers, artists, and architects who accepted the PRI's ideas and spent their lives spreading them further. The Escuela Mexicana (Mexican School) of muralists, including Rivera, Orosco, and Siqueiros, were renowned worldwide for public art that promoted socialist aims and anti-Yanqui (Yankee, i.e., U.S.) sentiment (Scott 1999, 203-207; Rochfort 1994). The PRI also decided to utilize the nation's museums to promote the party line of a Mexican populace satisfied and unified under its leadership. This was especially important to the PRI on the eve of the Olympics because the party knew the world's eyes would be on Mexico and the party's presentation of the country. The PRI also knew that the liberal intelligentsia of Mexico were becoming increasingly displeased with its rule. After almost 50 years of PRI political domination, the party's high-handed tactics in fixing elections were no longer well-received by liberals (Johnson 1978, 92ff; Needler 1971, 15ff; Padgett 1976, 187ff). To ensure its political survival, the party needed to create a pro-Mexico and pro-PRI campaign of Mexican unity for its nationals and the world.

One man well-versed in promoting PRI ideology through architecture was Pedro Ramírez Vázquez. He began working for the government in the Ministry of Education in 1944, where he designed public grade schools which taught the PRI view of Mexican

history (Gutiérrez 1999; Ostler 1996). His modern, cost-efficient designs for these schools (fig. 11), as well as other projects, were respected by government officials, and he was assigned the post of president of the Olympic organizing committee to ensure the new structures built to advertise Mexico to the world during the Olympics were in keeping with Mexican ideology (Ostler 1996, 64-65). Ramírez Vázquez's primary commissions in preparation for the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City were the national museums, from the Gallery of History to the National Museum of Modern Art (figs. 12, 13) to his crowning achievement, the National Museum of Anthropology (figs. 14, 15). These three national museums are located at the site of collective memory[8] most loved by Mexicans, Chapultepec Park in western Mexico City (figs. 16, 17) (Fisher et al. 1999, 295). The focus of these museums was clearly on presenting the unity of Mexico's diversity.[9]

The Gallery of History

Of the three national museums in Chapultepec Park, the first to be completed was the Gallery of History,[10] known affectionately by Mexicans as the Museo del Caracol (Museum of the Snail) for its spiraling design (figs. 18-20). It was constructed with curving walls in the shape of a shell, reminiscent of the modernist work of Frank Lloyd Wright at the New York Guggenheim (Carl Good personal communication, November

[8] For more information on the concept of "collective memory," see the Christine Boyer text cited in the bibliography.
[9] An earlier draft of this thesis presented the National Museum of Modern Art as well as Pedro Ramírez Vázquez's later, post-1968 National Museum commissions, but for brevity's sake these have been cut. This earlier analysis points to similar strategies by the architect at all his national museums.
[10] The Gallery of History (Galeria de Historia) was designed with the help of sculptor José Chávez Morado and museographer Julio Prieto (Pizarro Corcuera and Schroeder 1989, 56).

2000; Burian 1997, 143ff).[11] Modern architectural structures were the signature of Ramírez Vázquez's previous work designing grade schools for the Mexican government, but with these national museums he had the opportunity to create structures that did more than shape young Mexican minds. His buildings were intended to influence the minds of adults, Mexican and foreign. With that mission, Ramírez Vázquez combined in the Gallery of History the modernist snail shape with visual references to pre-Hispanic edifices. His spiraling snail design also provided a specific nationalist path for visitors to follow, a path that could shape their perception of Mexican identity (*mexicanidad*).

While the round structure mimicked in-vogue, modernist, mid-20th-century architecture, it was simultaneously intended to refer to two other famous round structures in Mexico: "El Caracol," the circular observatory at the Maya site of Chichén Itzá on Mexico's Yucatán peninsula (fig. 21), and the round pyramid at the pre-Classic site of Cuicuilco outside Mexico City (fig. 22). The effect of the skylight at the top of the Gallery of History perhaps was also intended to be similar to that of the shaft of light that, when the sun crosses the Tropic of Cancer, enters the Observatory Cave of the pre-Columbian site of Xochicalco outside Mexico City (fig. 23).[12] The building's architecture itself, then, is a product of mixed European and pre-Columbian cultures; it embodies *mestizaje* itself by sending the message of the blended Mexican identity it overtly promotes. All of Ramírez Vázquez's buildings were designed with careful consideration of every detail, outside and inside; thus, such dual references are unlikely to be accidental or fortuitous.

[11] Wright was indeed an influence on Mexican architects of the 20th century; see the recent volume *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico* by Burian, 1997. It should be noted also, though, that Wright himself was highly influenced by ancient Mesoamerican architecture! (Braun 1993).
[12] Geocities 2006.

Inside the Gallery of History, the spiral path promotes a calculated trajectory for visitors to traverse through its halls in order to teach a decidedly PRI-approved Mexican history (figs. 24, 25).[13] Indeed, in museum design it is easier to create a single, unified message if visitors are presented with only a single route. The importance of a purposeful path in a museum is discussed by Carol Duncan in her book *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*:

> I see the totality of the museum as a stage setting that prompts visitors to enact a performance of some kind, whether or not actual visitors would describe it as such (and whether or not they are prepared to do so...[A]rt museums appear as environments around specific ritual scenarios (1995, 1-2).

The idea that a museum's architect and/or exhibition designer (in some cases they are the same) is leading visitors on a certain path is crucial. The "performance" Duncan mentions is an ambulation through certain controlled spaces with very specific images and texts intended for visitor consumption. Not all viewers will absorb every message, but certain ones will be unavoidable. The message intended in the Gallery of History by Ramírez Vázquez and his designers is unquestionably *mexicanidad*. The immense popularity of the beloved "El Caracol" with patriotic Mexican citizens today seems to suggest the effectiveness of the design.[14]

The story presented at the Gallery of History includes the struggle for a Mexican identity among such a diverse population, formed not only from the vast number of different indigenous groups within Mexico's borders but also from African slave populations, Spanish colonizers, and other Europeans who settled in Mexico from the

[13] Pedro Ramírez Vázquez was not the museographer for this project, but, as lead architect, he hand-picked each member of his architectural teams, including museographers, for every project (Pizarro Corcuera and Schroeder 1989, 215).
[14] A visit to Mexico City's Chapultepec Park will attest to this popularity (personal observation 2000).

1500s onward. The visual and textual didactics of the Museo del Caracol (entirely in the national language of Spanish)[15] are intended to shape Mexican identity through a contrast to several "others," especially Mexico's northern "Yanqui" neighbors/enemies and the invading French.

The displays begin with reproductions of pages from native Nahuatl[16] codices and models of Aztec markets encountered by Cortes and his men, accompanied by the first text panel, which was not flattering to the invading Spaniards. This text panel focuses on the plight of the indigenous, the "Old World" diseases brought over by the Spanish that decimated their populations, and their repopulating efforts, as well as the contributions of African culture in Mexican history. Reproductions of *casta* paintings hanging on the Museum's walls explain the strict social stratification of the Spanish Colonial period: each painting depicts and labels one of the combinations of indigenous, African, and/or Spanish blood (fig. 26).[17] The Mexican struggle for independence from Spain is documented in texts, paintings, reproductions, and dioramas (fig. 27), and followed by a continuing narrative of a united Mexican people, freed from Spanish ideas of identity, and set against invading "others," non-Mexicans. The first "other" is the United States in the 1840s when it conquered Mexican territories throughout what had been northwestern Mexico (and became California, Nevada, Utah, Texas, and parts of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming).[18] The next "other" is France in the 1860s when Napoleon III

[15] At present 62 indigenous languages are recognized by the government of Mexico, but Spanish remains the national language (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, 2006b, "Languages of Mexico," *Wikipedia.org,* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Mexico (accessed August 23, 2006).
[16] Nahuatl is the language spoken by the Aztecs and a number of other Central Mexican groups, perhaps dating back several millennia and spoken today by nearly one million people in Mexico (ibid).
[17] For a full explanation of *casta* paintings, such as those reproduced at the Gallery of History, see Katzew 2004.
[18] Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, 2006c, "Mexican-American War," *Wikipedia.org,* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican-American_War (accessed August 23, 2006).

established the Austrian Maximillian as ruler of Mexico. The path continues on to explain the strength of Mexican unity, exemplified by the founders of the PRI, who are depicted as ridding the country of elitists in the Mexican Revolution.

Finally, the spiralling path ends with a shrine to the Constitution of 1917, bathed in light from a round, amber-tinted, sun-like window in the roof. Hovering between the skylight and the enshrined document is a sculpture *of an eagle with a serpent on a cactus on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco in the Valley of Mexico* (to understand the prophetic nature of this scene, imagine this phrase being spoken by an oral historian in Nahuatl, the Aztec language, in a repeated chant) (fig. 28). This sculptural ensemble encapsulates the Aztec origin story into a lifelike and life-sized, fully three-dimensional emblem. The scene is also depicted as a flat, two-dimensional icon on the Mexican flag, which hangs near the sculpture in this nationalist shrine.[19] The Aztec origin story recalls that the wandering Aztecs were told by their god and mythical city founder, Huiztilipochtli, to look for an eagle with a serpent perched on a cactus on an island in the middle of a lake. Once the nomadic Aztecs reached the islands of Lake Texcoco they discovered this prophesied natural scene. At this lake they established their empire's capital, and from this city in the lake they fought against the Spanish. This founding myth is quickly recalled in the two representations of the origin story which share the central, sacred space of El Caracol with the Constitution of 1917. A teacher's guide to the gallery describes the space:

> In this singular room, located in the interior of the tower, with walls made of *tezontle*,[20] eight meters in diameter and fifteen meters high, one

[19] The Gallery's name for this space is "recinto," which translates to "enclosure" in English, but it seems "shrine" is more fitting.
[20] The Nahuatl word for a red, porous volcanic material found in Mexico and used in building materials (Leibsohn and Mundy 2005).

> encounters a glass-covered altar that houses a reproduction of the Constitution of the United States of Mexico, ratified in 1917.
> The tour concludes here, presenting the public the great document that constitutes the corner stone on which the Mexican nation was built.[21]

The Gallery of History path begins with reproductions of Aztec texts and models of the Aztec world. It establishes the various original contributors to modern Mexican identity from the indigenous peoples (subsumed under the rubric "Aztec" although most native Mexicans are not Aztec descendants, instead their ancestors fought Aztec imperialism) to Africans to Spaniards. It unites these varying groups into Mexicans who fought the Spanish overlords, U.S. invaders, French encroachers, and purportedly unfair aristocrats in what was supposed to be a democratic late 19th- to early 20th-century Mexico.[22] It ends with a shrine to constitutional democracy swathed in "Aztec/Mexica/Mexican heritage." Ramírez Vázquez and his designers surely realized the cultural parallels their design for the shrine expressed: the epiphanal light seen by the Mexica upon finding their prophesied homeland (on the island in the middle of a lake with an eagle and a snake atop a cactus) and the revolutionary enlightenment embodied in the first Mexican constitution, formed from 18th-century European ideals of enlightenment and new beginnings with new leadership. The Mexican national government formed in 1821 was intended to replace corrupt Spanish Colonial rule, as Mexica claim to their prophesied island homeland provided autonomy to this cultural group in a hostile second-millennium Central Mexico.

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[21] "En esta singular sala, ubicada en el interior de un torreón con muros de tezontle, de 8 m. de diámetro y 15m. de altura, se encuentra un altar vitrina que alberga una reprodución de la Constitución Política de los E.U.M., promulgada en 1917. [paragraph break] Concluye así la visita, presentando al público la carta magna, que constituye la piedra angular sobre la que se ha edificado la nación mexicana (Galéria de Historia n.d., 23; my translation).

[22] For Aztec resistance see Clendinnen 1991, 267-273. For later rebellions from the revolution of the early 19th-century through the Mexican Civil War, see Needler 1971, Padgett 1976, and Johnson 1978 respectively.

By extension, PRI rule also continued this pattern: according to PRI ideology, the party reestablished Mexican nationalism and government with the early 20th-century Mexican Revolution, freeing the people from the oppressive, dark Díaz regime. The Constitution of 1917 symbolized the success of this struggle by the PRI. It reestablished the Aztec/Mexica claim to the land of Mexico and helped cement a conceptual conflation of ancient "Mexica" and modern "Mexico" for Mexican citizens -- a wordplay that the PRI used to its advantage in propaganda about the nation and particularly in the National Museum of Anthropology, as we shall see. The message encoded in the sculpture and the Mexican flag displayed above the enshrined Constitution of 1917 reads the same as the printed word of the document: enlightened freedom and autonomy from encroaching enemies or overlords, whether other warring Central Mexicans, Spaniards, or 19th-century aristocrats. The PRI believed their efforts in achieving this freedom deserved to be enshrined and venerated in the new national museums they were erecting in the nation's and the party's honor and conflated with those of the Mexica. The Gallery of History was the first completed example of such a structure, and it epitomized the party's goals for nationalist museum design, but Ramírez Vázquez intended the National Museum of Anthropology to be his masterpiece and the premier promotional tool for Mexican nationalism. Within these museums the PRI made overt parallels between their efforts at rebelling against Spain and those of the Mexica. These analogies furthered the conflation of PRI and 20th-century Mexican identity with the Mexica.

The National Museum of Anthropology

In the National Museum of Anthropology Ramírez Vázquez saw his opportunity

for merging ancient Mexican or "pre-Cortesian"[23] identity with over four hundred years of Spanish cultural heritage in Mexico. Whether subconsciously or not, he chose a building design familiar to all Mexicans, the Latin cross-shaped Catholic church structure (fig. 29). Within that basic structure he introduced architectural references to pre-Cortesian edifices, but throughout the Museum, the path and focus belie a Catholic heritage (fig. 30). The architect has denied intentional syncretic design. In his writings and in interviews about the building, he emphasizes the Aztec, Maya, or Mixtec influences. But through a close reading of the building, the Catholic design, with specific emphasis on the Aztecs as the mostly highly venerated pre-Cortesian culture, is unmistakable. Ramírez Vázquez's syncretic design for Mexico's most important national museum has served to instill a religious fervor about *mexicanidad* in Mexican nationals since the building opened, maintained even in the recent 2002 renovations (intended primarily to present more recent archaeological discoveries).

When Ramírez Vázquez was given the commission for the National Museum of Anthropology, the Secretary of Education, Jaime Torres Bodet, brought him before Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos and asked

> 'Mr. President, what directions do you give to the architect on what that museum should achieve?' The response was: 'That on leaving the museum, the Mexican feels proud to be Mexican.' …And when we were leaving, the President said: 'Ah, I also want it to be so attractive that people say "Did you get to the museum yet?" the same way they say "Did you go to the theater yet?" or "Did you go the movie theater yet?"' (as cited in Canclini 1997, 132).

With that mission, Ramírez Vázquez set out to create a truly Mexican building that would incorporate ancient, Colonial, and modern Mexican identity into one unified and proud

[23] Mexicans prefer the term "pre-Cortesian" to "pre-Columbian" when referring to the art and cultures in Mexico before the arrival of Spaniards in 1519, because Hernando Cortes was the specific Spaniard who

mexicanidad.

To achieve this mission the architect began with the setting, equally modern and ancient -- a concrete and steel structure nestled in the woods (fig. 31), much like a Frank Lloyd Wright mid-20th-century masterpiece (Braun 1993, 136-183), or akin to an ancient Mesoamerican city-state in the jungles of Chiapas, Mexico (fig. 32). The site of the National Museum is, in fact, located on the grounds of what once was an Aztec royal retreat, known as Chapultepec, or place of the grasshopper. Beyond setting, the architect looked for design inspiration not only in the familiar Catholic cross-shaped church form but also in the concrete, glass, and steel fabrications of modern buildings and in the structures of some Mesoamerican temples. Because Aztec architecture was unknown in the 1960s, having been discovered under Mexico City only in the 1970s during subway construction, [24] Ramírez Vázquez was not able to utilize Aztec pyramidal or plaza forms. His primary architectural reference to the Aztecs is seen in the façade's low-relief stone sculpture depicting the Aztec creation story. For architectural forms he was forced to look to Maya structures within Mexico's borders, such as those in the Yucatán (Ostler 1996, 62). These non-modern structures were necessary for the modern juxtaposition of "civilized" European or, in this case, modern Mexican culture (meaning of Spanish descent) over the culture of "uncivilized" or lesser "others."

As with national identity, modern art and architecture is often shaped by influences from an "other" (Goldwater 1986). The "other" is needed as a "straw man" to

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entered Mexico that year with his crew and not Christopher Columbus.

[24] In 1978 a major Aztec stone sculpture of Coyolxauhqui, sister of the Mexica war god Huitzilopochtli, was accidentally discovered at the Zócalo, or main plaza of Mexico City. Immediately, the PRI-led government began excavations that revealed original Aztec buildings, specifically the "Templo Mayor" (major temple) and its surrounding structures. The PRI commissioned Pedro Ramírez Vázquez to build the Templo Mayor Museum, completed in 1987. The Museum's mandate was to preserve the excavated buildings in situ as well as house and display excavated artworks.

show the "better," "progressive" style of the modern artist or architect or of the modern nationalist (Canclini 1997, 129ff). Within the building and its surroundings Ramírez Vázquez skillfully combined European modern, Spanish Catholic, and "other" pre-Cortesian environments, architecture, and aesthetics to create a Mexican national museum.

Once visitors enter Chapultepec Park and approach the National Museum of Anthropology, they are dwarfed by Ramírez Vázquez's museum entrance, which immediately makes reference to the Aztec heritage of Mexico (figs. 14, 15). At the entrance he placed the Mexican national flag directly in front of the façade, which is decorated with a low relief carving akin in carving technique to an Aztec sacrificial stone, such as the famous "Calendar Stone" (see below). As at the Gallery of History, Ramírez Vázquez's precursor to the National Museum of Anthropology, the flag and sculpture depict the Aztec origin story. Both the flag and façade depict an eagle with a serpent perched on a cactus on a tiny island in the middle of a lake.

After passing the nation's banner and walking under the carved stone entrance, visitors enter the lobby, where they are directed to the right to purchase tickets (free to Mexican students only, ensuring there are no economic barriers to inculcating Mexico's youth with the national message). With tickets in hand, visitors enter the large, open central plaza of the Museum. The arrows on the floorplan, the location of the ticket booth to the right of the lobby, and the guards in the Museum lead visitors to the right side of the plaza and require that they return to the lobby through the left side (see "entrance" and "exit" on either side of the "orientation room" and "lobby" on the floorplan, fig. 30). Because it is open after this point, there are a number of possible routes. In the first

official catalogue for the Museum, its director, Ignacio Bernal, stated that there was no particular path expected of visitors (Bernal 1968, 11). Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, in a 1996 interview, likewise asserted that there is no intended route for museum-goers (Ostler 1996, 69-70). However, there are certain Aztec-oriented elements inherent in the architectural design, Aztec-centered messages in museum displays, and there is a particular space, the "Mexica Hall," towards which the entire museum is focused.

Immediately upon entering the plaza for the first time (or the hundredth time perhaps too), visitors are struck by the incredible concrete covering suspended for approximately one-half of the plaza's length, known as the central "umbrella" (shaped somewhat like a mushroom, a plant sacred to ancient Mesoamericans) (fig. 33). The openness of the center of the Museum, its plaza, was intended by the architect to be similar to ancient Mesoamerican plazas, such as those found at the Maya site of Uxmal on Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula (fig. 34) (García-Bárcena and Castañeda 1999, 9; Ostler 1996, 62).

Another reference to ancient Mesoamerican architecture is the abstracted serpents of the concrete slats, or geometric grill, lacing the second-floor gallery windows (fig. 35). These are loosely based on the second-storey stone mosaic decoration of the Uxmal building known as the Governor's Palace (fig. 36). As second-floor museum visitors look through this grill, their eyes are led to the far end of the Museum, where the Aztec Calendar Stone is tantalizingly visible. The second-storey windows covered by a grey, stone-like material also reference the clerestory of a cathedral, where a privileged few would walk and survey the central space and the altar area (fig. 37).[25] This visual cue of

[25] This idea of surveillance also resonants with Tony Bennett's assertion that the museum in its inception mimicked correctional facilities of the 1800s; visitors were expected to self-survey for security reasons as

the clerestory would be familiar to many Mexicans, the vast majority of whom are raised in the Catholic faith since birth.

The lower-storey galleries also are designed to tempt visitors to continue on to the Aztec gallery, known as the Mexica Hall. Every two downstairs galleries are joined together so that visitors may traverse a couple of halls at one time, but after two, museum-goers must reenter the plaza, each time bringing visitors closer to the Mexica Hall, much as the side chapels of a Catholic Church allow for brief spiritual visits but the main altar of the church is the primary goal of church-goers. In fact, the counter-clockwise circumnavigation, suggested to visitors by Ramírez Vázquez's catholic church design and the explicit directions of the guards, mimics a Catholic processional at Mass.[26]

Just before the entrance to the Mexica Hall lies a large pool glowingly visible beyond the shadow created by the suspended roof (fig. 38). The effect is that of "the light at the end of the tunnel." The visitors see their goal: to get to the Mexica Hall. From the pool, all eyes are led through glass entrance doors to an expanse of sumptuous Aztec stone sculpture, with the focus the Aztec calendar stone, here a virtual altarpiece (fig. 39). The Aztec calendar stone, believed by scholars to have been a sacrificial stone installed flat, or horizontally, in pavement before a major temple (Smith 1996), is here installed upright, or vertically, as if it were a central altar sculpture in a Christian church. This sculpture and the other Aztec masterpieces are displayed in an aesthetically sensitive manner, highlighting their artistry with dramatic lighting and little text (figs. 40-42). This

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well as for acquiring "civilizing" habits (1995, 46).

[26] Tony Bennett in *The Birth of the Museum* cites the comparisons drawn in the 19th century between "public exhibitionary institutions of the time and cathedrals" (55). Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, being an excellent student of architecture and a professed specialist in educational and public architecture, surely was aware of these parallels. Beatriz de la Fuente in a talk at the Metropolitan Museum of Art conference "West by Non-West" in fall 2000 also stated that she believes the National Museum of Anthropology was generally designed in the abstract shape of a cathedral.

gallery is the centerpiece of the Museum. It is where visitors want to be.[27] Once museum-goers arrive here, they revel in the large hall, mesmerized by the glowing light reflecting off intricate gold and obsidian artworks and bathing large stone altars and statues. The darker, smaller spaces of the side galleries/"chapels" pale in comparison to this enlightened Aztec space.

But the contents of the side galleries/"chapels" lead visitors mentally toward the Mexica Hall, as meditating on a particularly miraculous saint in a side chapel would prepare the penitent for approaching the main sanctuary altar with the image of Christ or the Virgin Mary at the central altar. They reflect a view of Mexican history that is made particularly Aztec. The first gallery on the right (fig. 43) is an explanatory room designed to educate visitors in how to study and interpret anthropological materials and to understand the current findings regarding human evolution. Following this gallery is a summation of the peopling of the Americas with Mexico and its native peoples highlighted in comparison to lands and peoples of other continents. This space changed in the 2002 renovations. Originally, the Ramírez Vázquez design was a two-fold space with one half dedicated to a "Mesoamerican Hall," in which the history of Mesoamerica was traced from pre-Classic through Classic to post-Classic with a strong emphasis on Central Mexico, and the second half to the peopling of the Americas (figs. 44, 45).[28] (The 2002

[27] The Mexica Hall was not significantly altered during the recent renovations to the Museum. See the website for a panoramic experience of the space.

[28] These first two galleries were recently updated to include the latest anthropological findings on human evolution, now in the first gallery, and the most current information on the settlement of the Americas, with particular emphasis on Mexico, in the second gallery. See the National Museum of Anthropology website, (http://www.mna.inah.gob.mx/muse1/mna/muse1/muna/mna_ing/main.html), particularly Curator Enrique Serrano Carreto's text, "An Introduction to Anthropology" in the Collection section, which explains the renovations to the early humans gallery, and Curator Jose A. Pompa's text "America's Settlement," also in the Collection section, which explains the tentative nature of the didactics in the second gallery. See also the Multimedia section of the site for a panoramic view of the new installations, quite different from the old.

updates are less Mexica-focused but rather emphasize Mexico's peoples within the context of the world at large.) The remaining right side galleries are dedicated to the purported Central Mexican precursors to the Aztec heritage (according to Aztec documents): pre-Classic Central Mexican cultures, Teotihuacan, and the Toltecs (figs. 46, 47).[29] Thus, "the main road leads to the Aztecs."

This tendency to subject all Mesoamerican cultures to the Aztec point of view is also seen in the grouping of non-Central Mexican cultures along the other side of the Museum, the often overlooked left wing. These other peoples within the Aztec world, such as Oaxacans and the Maya, were subject to Central Mexican groups throughout time, although this was a very late, and in the case of the Maya, very sketchy subjugation (figs. 48, 49). The culture today considered the Mother Culture of Mesoamerica, the Olmec, is not given its own gallery but is clumped together with other Gulf Coast peoples in a left side gallery (fig. 50).[30] One of the final galleries on the left side, dedicated to "Northern Cultures" (fig. 51), barely hints at the actual origins of the Aztec people in these lands, perhaps due to the considerably less monumental art and architecture of these regions as compared to that of the Aztecs' proclaimed Central Mexican predecessors.[31]

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[29] Revisions to the Preclassic (also called Formative) gallery in the early 21st century do give more prominence to the Olmec than the previous installation; see the text by Curator Patricia Ochoa Castillo, "Preclassic Central Mexico" in the Collection section of the National Museum of Anthropology's website. The information regarding Teotihuacan also places less emphasis on Aztec use of Teotihuacan culture; see the text by Curator Clara Luz Díaz Oyarzábal on Teotihuacan in the Collection section of the website. The Toltec gallery was also updated to include the most recent archaeological information; see Federica Sodi Miranda's text on "The Toltecs and their Period" in the Collection section of the website.

[30] During the 1960s the initial predominance of the Olmecs was not as accepted by scholars in general and especially Mexican scholars due, in part, to the Aztec texts and to poor archaeology in the wet, tropical lands of the Olmec. The new installations of 2000/1 give much greater prominence to the Olmec and the contributions of other pre-Hispanic Gulf Coast peoples. See the text "Cultures of the Gulf Coast" by Curator Marta Carmona Macías in the Collection section of the website.

[31] The revised 2000/1 galleries do offer some archaeological, linguistic, and cultural connections between the Northern Cultures and the Aztecs, but there is no strong emphasis on actual Aztec origins in the Mexican hinterland far from Central Mexico; see the texts for "Northern Cultures" by Curator Ernesto González Licón in the Collection section of the website.

The other closing gallery on the left, "Western Cultures," presents up-to-date discoveries regarding the West Mexican cultures primarily from the states of Jalisco, Colima, Nayarit, and Guerrero, distant regions in antiquity and the present (fig. 52).[32] This side is, in general, visited less due to time constraints of museum-goers, who have already visited the pinnacle of their museum experience, the Mexica Hall. Thus, if a culture was considered peripheral by the Aztecs, then Ramírez Vázquez's museum design makes that culture peripheral to the museum-goers' experience. By the same token, if the culture supported the Aztec worldview of Central Mexican heritage, it was elevated to near-Aztec status on the right, supporting side of the Museum.

More peripheral still and in opposition to the elevated status of the Aztec art works and other archaeological pieces displayed "aesthetically" in the lower galleries, the original upper-storey ethnographic displays of the 1960s tended to fall into the category of "educational" exhibits (figs. 53-55), with mannequins of *indígenes* of different cultural groups shown in dioramas of their homes or village settings. Individual objects created by living indigenous peoples were not represented as autonomous artworks in early displays of the National Museum of Anthropology.[33] The living indigenous people were not valued as highly by the 1960s Mexican government as were the deceased indigenous

[32] See the text "Western Cultures" by Curator Dolores Flores Villatoro in the Collection section of the website. The 1960s space seems to have been current for its time.

[33] If there were no cultural biases in the Euroamerican mind of superiority of civilized, white persons over primitive brown people, the use of mannequins to show activities of indigenous peoples would be acceptable. But because these prejudiced beliefs exist and are difficult to stamp out even with current efforts at teaching tolerance, the use of a brown mannequin in a display objectifies the people being represented, reminding us that 19th-century and 20th-century Euroamericans did indeed consider the "savage Indian" collectible and brought home shrunken heads, brains, other body parts, and even living humans to display in circuses, freak shows, and the like. To display merely the art produced by autochthonous peoples elevates their achievements to the level of those of Westerners. If the sociocultural biases of the Darwinian era become overshadowed enough by a respect for indigenous peoples (their human rights revered, their property protected, their work given fair market value), perhaps then displays using mannequins and dioramas again would be useful, but these displays would need to be accompanied by similar installations for Euroamerican activities. Presentation would need to be equal.

peoples, particularly the heralded Mexica (Canclini 1997, 129-132; Bennett 1995, 1-2, 59-88) and their mythological Central Mexican ancestors. However, recent renovations have updated the upstairs displays to be more "politically correct" with presentations highlighting the artistry of living native Mexicans, whether Nahuatl speakers or one of the over sixty indigenous groups within the country's borders.[34]

In sum, for an image of modernity, based on Enlightenment principles of progress, to function well in a society such as 20th-century Mexico, the nation needed a "less progressive other" to which it compared its "civilized" self. The National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City did just that. The Aztecs were the original Mexicans with whom the Spanish bred in order to dominate the "other" restless natives and infiltrate Aztec political hierarchy and in the process create a new race, the *mestizo*. The modern Mexican has progressed in the 20th century from the heralded Aztec of an earlier age to a technologically advanced citizen of the modern world. The Museum brilliantly combined the Aztec/Mexica/Mexican and the now "secondary" other indigenous groups of Mexico with Spanish Catholic traditions in an ultra-modern building constructed just in time for the 1968 Olympics as a showcase of Mexican modernity for the world. However, the living indigenous people were relegated to an almost offlimits clerestory where visitors rarely go. Their presence and that of the poverty and inequality their presence represents, although not completely erasable, was minimized in Ramírez Vázquez's and the PRI's design for Mexico's main national museum.[35] The building's message has been hailed as successful continuously over the last four decades, in spite of

[34] See the website for panoramic views of the new ethnographic installations.
[35] Pedro Ramírez Vázquez was well connected in the PRI, was a member of the party, and served as both the Secretary of Human Settlements and Public Works and the Minister of Press and Propaganda for the party during the 1970s. In his biographies, he downplays his role as political activist as compared to his

immediate bloody 1968 protests against the PRI at Tlatelolco and recent losses in Mexican elections for the PRI, perhaps due to periodic updates to the galleries, the most recent of which reflect concessions to 21st-century ideas.

In 2000 the PRI lost its first presidential election in seventy years (Dutrénit and Valdés 1994, 11ff). Concordantly, such strong nationalist messages have been losing favor in museums in recent years. Multiculturalism is emphasized more by current governments around the world, including Mexico. This change in emphasis also means more consideration is given to the ideas of living indigenous peoples of Mexico (Burian 1999, 53ff; García-Bárcena and Manrique Castañeda 1999, 181ff). The National Museum of Anthropology altered its exhibits at the turn of the 20th-21st centuries to express a more inclusive view of Mexico in keeping with contemporary global ideas. However, even though other groups are spotlighted in the new displays, the Aztecs remain revered as central to *mexicanidad* in that the flow of the space was not altered. The effectiveness of the PRI's long-term efforts to create a national Mexican spirit of unity can be seen in the continued Catholic-style adoration of the Aztecs even in light of global insistence on multiculturalism and new findings of non-Aztec pre-Cortesian groups, such as the explosive new decipherments and excavations for the Maya in Mexico and particularly Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras (Fields and Reents-Budet 2005). The PRI message of *mexicanidad* or *mestizaje* (of Spanish and Aztec) was for many years not only the party line but the educational emphasis nationwide:

> In 1925, after stepping down as Minister of Education, [José] Vasconcelos published a book entitled *La Raza Cosmica* (The Cosmic Race). In it, he argued that the *mestizo* represented the true essence of Mexican nationality. He went on to argue that because of their fusion of pre-

role as an architect, but the former cannot have been irrelevant or uninfluential to the latter. See Ostler 1996 and Pizarro Corcuera and Schroeder 1989 for a history of the architect.

> Columbian and European ancestry, the *mestizos* would become the chosen race of the future, the fifth great race of humanity, a final synthesis distilled from all the great races that had gone before them. By putting forward such theories on the nature of Mexican identity, Vasconcelos and his theoretical predecessors helped to legitimize the political and ideological framework within which the *mestizo* was seen as embodying national consciousness (Rochfort 1994, 83).

This national consciousness became the subconsciousness of later generations, who today believe Mexicans are a mixture of pre-Columbian and European cultures, particularly Aztec and Spanish. This belief still influences decisions by curators and researchers in Mexico who continue to teach in Mexican universities and design museum spaces. They take great pride in what they conceive of as their heritage, and one scholar has even said that she believes the National Museum of Anthropology to be the perfect example of the Mexican identity of combined Spanish Catholic and pre-Cortesian (primarily Aztec), as seen in its Latin cross shape and the exhibits.[36]

Although Mexican scholars continue to express the pride initially ordered by President Mateos, one may question the ultimate effectiveness of the national museum's message of unity in diversity. As is customary, the primary national museums are located in the capital, and not all of Mexico's citizens can or will travel to the capital.[37] The museums have extensive teacher training programs and other educational outreach programs. However, the question remains as to how accepted these messages are by people who may feel as if their voice is not being properly presented. If Mexican museum

[36] Beatriz de la Fuente, when she spoke on the topic at the "West by Non-West" conference (2000), was adamant about the pride she and her colleagues have in Mexico. She did not see a need for critiquing the National Museum of Anthropology for being too religious or for presenting an unbalanced combination of Catholic and Aztec or pre-Columbian traits because she believes the ideas of Spanish Catholicism and pre-Columbian ideology do make up the Mexican. Beatriz de la Fuente is professor emeritus and investigator at the Instituto de Investigaciones Esteticas and the Colegio de Historia de la Facultad de la Filosofia y Letras, UNAM, and of the National System of Investigators, Mexico.

[37] There are Mexican museums dedicated to specific archaeological sites or locations of cultural heritage,

officials are primarily *mestizos* or *criollos*, then the indigenous groups seem not to have been a part of the decision-making process regarding representation of native art and cultures.[38] The choice of a group such as the Aztecs, who are practically nonexistent today,[39] as the central focus for the nation's identity presents less of a threat or challenge to living indigenous groups and, therefore, less of a problem to the government. Mexicans can unite under their Aztec-emblazoned flag and not fear the anger of actual Aztec descendants at their culture's (mis)use by a modern nation-state in its imagined identity. The government can rest assured that its right to rule will not be challenged by any upstart groups (as is the case with the Maya of Guatemala, victims of genocide at the hands of the Guatemalan government). The Aztecs, because they were either destroyed or intermarried and/or produced offspring with Spanish overlords, were rendered "neutral." Promoting them as the only national ancestors excludes the over sixty non-Aztec indigenous groups in Mexico and pushes these people into the category of the "other."

The Mexican national identity of *mestizaje* is based on the idealized mixture of Aztec and Spanish, but in reality Mexico is composed of varied ethnicities, hierarchically arranged both economically and politically. At the bottom are indigenous groups of very low economic and political status, in the middle and at the top are upper classes of mostly Spanish descent with an exceedingly small number related directly to Mexica royalty. A USDA study shows that poverty is greater among indigenous groups in Mexico and ranges from region to region with "a low of 21 percent in Baja California to a high of 63

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but the museums considered of highest import to the nation are those in the capital.

[38] This "top-down" nationalist trend (see Anderson 1982 for theory here) seems to be changing with the 21st-century changes to the building and the Museum's approach to displays and education. See the "Boruca Museum" section below for more on "top-down" versus "bottom-up" approaches to national identities.

[39] There are thousands of Nahuatl speakers in Mexico, but this language, spoken also by the Aztecs, is believed to have been an ancient language in Central Mexico, not new to the region as the "upstart" Aztecs

percent in Oaxaca," a region with a large native presence (USDA 2000). As a result of this high rate, approximately 42% when averaged nationwide, people in poverty in Mexico often move to Mexico City or immigrate to the United States for work. The crime rate in Mexico City varies, but the city usually maintains the distinction of having the second highest crime rate in Latin America (Tayler 2004). These social tensions may be masked by nationalist efforts and sometimes even ameliorated by national and local efforts at education (AP 2004), but they are not obliterated. The myth of *mexicanidad* purportedly provides a sense of unity for Mexico's citizens, yet indigenous peoples who do not identify themselves with the Aztecs are marginalized and made "other." The false sense of unity in diversity in Mexican *mestizaje* alienates native groups and merely masks social prejudices against these groups as well as those of mixed race (but not of Aztec descent), primarily the nation's poor.

From the Gallery of History with its Aztec/Mexica/Mexican "shrine" to the National Museum of Anthropology and its Aztec "sanctuary and high altar," the Mexican government seems to have utilized its national museums as almost sanctified spaces dedicated to spreading a religious-like, top-down, nationalist fervor of Aztec/Mexica/Mexican identity among a diverse population, large numbers of which actually experience high rates of poverty and crime. Throughout the history of the nation of Mexico, leaders have utilized national museums to influence public opinion and subdue societal stresses, as well as to educate its populace, but a closer reading of the master versus sub-narratives of Mexico's main national museums reveals continued struggles within society and equivocation by researchers and curators regarding how to present indigenous groups past and present.

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were in the few centuries before Spanish Invasion.

THE CASE OF GUATEMALA

Ladino[40] officials in Guatemala have witnessed the development of the national museums in Mexico with an envious eye.[41] According to Diane Nelson, author of the 1999 book *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, Guatemalans have looked to Mexico and its overall nationalist program as an "Ego Ideal" (Nelson 1999, 111 n. 41). Like Mexico, Guatemala's goal has been to manage its diversity, ostensibly through peaceful measures such as education. The civilian governments Guatemala has had in its tumultuous history as a nation-state have considered cultural avenues for accomplishing such a goal. The government has used a variety of outlets, such as public schools, museums, the National Palace's galleries, archaeological sites, and its tourist agency, INGUAT. However, Guatemala's national museums are in shambles, and efforts by the government to teach indigenous peoples tend to be mistrusted by the Maya, the primary indigenous group in Guatemala and one that constitutes approximately half the population of the country.

Like Mexico, Guatemala gained its independence from Spain in the year 1821 and soon established its first national museum, albeit a few years later than its neighbor, in 1831 (Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes/Instituto de Antropología e Historia n.d.2). For the first century of its independence, Guatemala's history was similar to Mexico's in some respects. The *criollos*, Guatemalan-born persons of Spanish descent, wrested control of the government and land from the crown and the church in the first quarter of

[40] Essentially the Guatemalan version of the word *mestizo*.
[41] Throughout this paper I will paraphrase the ideas of museum officials or former museum officials from Guatemala or U.S. archaeologists working in Guatemala, but rarely will I use specific names so as to protect the privacy these individuals requested.

the century. Like the Spanish Colonial overlords before them, the *criollos* continued to force the *ladinos* and indigenous peoples to work the land, particularly on coastal coffee plantations (*fincas*) after 1871, when coffee farming was emphasized by the newly-elected president, Rufino Barrios. This system of exploitation expanded to the Central American banana monopoly of the United Fruit Company, an American venture that had been backed by Jorge Ubico, president from 1931-1944. Not until a series of violent protests forced the resignation of Ubico did the country begin to see a change. After his deposition, Guatemala's democratic revolution began.

In 1945, a teacher, Juan José Arévalo, won the presidential election with 85% of the vote (Nelson 1999, 23; Eltringham et al. 1999, 287ff). His administration immediately passed reforms to legalize unions, improve education, and introduce literacy programs throughout the country. Unfortunately, these liberal ideas were not to find acceptance for long in a land dominated by the United Fruit Company, a powerful corporation that would not let its profits be "stolen" by free-thinking reformers in the U.S.'s "backyard." When the president who succeeded Arévalo in 1950, Jacobo Arbenz, attempted to turn over half the United Fruit Company's land to Guatemala's peasants, the U.S. supported a military coup to overthrow the democratically-elected, liberal president.

For over a quarter of a century after the demise of democracy in Guatemala, the people fought a brutal, bloody guerrilla war against each other and the government. Attempts to end or at least mitigate the fighting were proffered by the likes of U.S. President Jimmy Carter in 1977 and in the 1980s Riós Montt, an evangelical army officer from Guatemala's own ranks. The first legitimate elections since 1950 took place in 1985, when the country ratified a new constitution.

Since 1985, the country has grappled with finding peace and stability within its borders (Eltringham et al. 1999, 287ff). Guatemalan government and guerrilla leaders worked with other nations who aided the two sides in agreeing to sign the 1996 Peace Accords in Oslo, Norway. The peace has not been easy: several shocking murderous crimes have been committed after the accords (Nelson 1999, 23ff; Eltringham 1999, 287ff). The president from 1996-2000, Alvaro Arzu, was considered by *ladino* museum officials to be fairly progressive, but the following president, Alfonso Portillo, elected in December of 1999, proved to be less than scrupulous (United States Department of State 2005b; personal communication with several Guatemalan government employees, July 2000). Elections for a new president were called for in 2003, and the current administration of Oscar Berger Perdomo, elected in November 2003, took over in January of 2004. His efforts at governing seem to be an improvement over the graft of Portillo.

The few civilian, more liberal governments in Guatemala's history have found national museums to be beneficial to their cause of creating a national image without violence, while the military or tyrannical regimes either did not find the institutions helpful to their missions, because they had other means of keeping the people in line, such as the threat of force, or, being preoccupied with war, they did not have time to dedicate to such building projects. Periods of civilian rule can be detected by changes in the museums. For example, during the education-focused Arévalo presidency, the national museums were relocated and centralized in Aurora Park in Guatemala City (fig. 56), where they were housed in several Colonial buildings (fig. 57). The primary Guatemalan national museums in Aurora Park are the National Museum of Modern Art,

the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, and the National Museum of Natural History. From 1950 through 1985, during the years of civil war, the national museums were mostly neglected until the new constitution was ratified in 1985, at which time the National Museum of Natural History was renovated and expanded. Since then further governmental changes have dictated declines or improvements in the national museums, while private individuals and corporations have increased funding for several private university museums in Guatemala City and other galleries outside the capital, perhaps permitting these institutions to present more progressive views of native art and culture and allowing native peoples some voice for a bottom-up understanding of Guatemalan identity.

The National Museum of Modern Art

Guatemala's National Museum of Modern Art[42] resides in one of the Colonial structures in Aurora Park. While once beautiful, the current state of the building is rather dilapidated and ill suited to use as an art museum. The display capabilities of the National Museum of Modern Art consist of a large rectangular space subdivided by temporary walls, on which paintings are hung for both permanent and temporary display. The entrance doors remain open throughout the day, precluding the proper regulation of temperature and humidity (considered crucial in the preservation of works of art, particularly paintings and works on paper). On the other hand, the windows at the upper stories of the edifice have been painted over to filter direct sunlight from damaging the pigment or surfaces of the artworks.[43]

[42] Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno.
[43] The lighting was so poor in this museum that I was not able to take any photographs to document it.

The artworks selected for exhibit in the National Museum of Modern Art are primarily by Guatemalans, but the collection is sometimes supplemented by works of other Latin American artists. Rudy Cotton, the artist featured in a one-man show in the special exhibition space during summer 2000, has exhibited his work all around the world, from his home country of Guatemala, to Mexico, Japan, El Salvador, Italy, France, and Spain. The primary theme of his artwork is "globalization and identity," evidenced in the promotion of his own identity on the Internet: "rudycotton@guate.net," as inscribed on his works. Rudy Cotton paintings are provocative, questioning conservativism in Guatemala and the world. His paintings are laced with the words, "costumbres religion libertad humanismo eutanasia hedonismo censuro tolerancia democracia demogogia" (customs religion freedom humanism euthanasia hedonism censure tolerance democracy demogoguery). Other artworks of the permanent collection also deal with contemporary issues, such as abortion in a Catholic nation. The Colonial-style architecture of this museum does not align itself visually very well with the artworks inside. In many ways the artworks protest the conservative ideas such a cavernous, imposing, Colonial-style edifice implies. They do battle against the conservativism still present in the country and evident in the government's choice of home for the National Museum of Modern Art. It is clear that the director of the Museum is willing to challenge the ideology of conservatism still present in Guatemala through such exhibitions as the Rudy Cotton show and the Museum's permanent collection, in which there are only a handful of idyllic landscapes of a tropical Guatemalan paradise, among a majority of confrontational paintings addressing cultural taboos, such as abortion and lasciviousness. As would be expected, the director's efforts in exhibiting these works are made difficult

through minimal funding provided by the government for its cultural institutions.

The National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

Facing the National Museum of Modern Art, housed in a very similar Colonial structure, is the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology,[44] touted as "the best of" the state-run museums in a baedeker to the region (Eltringham et al. 1999, 301). Upon entering the Museum, a product of the more recent democratic regimes of Guatemala hovers above. A 1989 mural by Dagoberto Vázquez, with a left-to-right progression from Maya priests to the Spanish to doves of peace, immediately emits a message of necessary cooperation between the Maya, the Spanish (who were overlords of the Maya for 500 years), and the *ladino,* the illicit offspring of the Maya and the Spanish. This national museum would be the primary vehicle for promoting such cooperation, as it is the museum of archaeology, the study of the indigenous past, and of ethnology, the study of the indigenous present, carried out by persons who identify themselves almost exclusively with European culture by calling themselves *ladino* and who deny having any indigenous blood.

However, the state of this institute should be and is an embarrassment to these *ladinos*.[45] The exhibits appear to have been in place as many years as the building has been used as a national museum. There are new banners with sponsor logos labelling each gallery (fig. 58), but the texts (only in Spanish) are flaking off the wall. A few clean

[44] Museo Nacional de Antropología y Etnología.
[45] Over the summer of my investigations in Guatemala (2000), several *ladino* officials expressed frustration regarding this museum. It should be clarified that, of course, no *ladino*s are the same. Some wish to promote education through the museums while some wish to hold a government post merely to have access to funds they would not have otherwise.

object labels with texts only in English are donations from a Duke University Museum of Art exhibition which borrowed several of the Guatemala Museum's objects (personal communication July 2000, Dr. Dorie Reents-Budet, curator of the Duke exhibition). Dust coats many of the objects. The painted and fabric-covered displays in many of the cases are so faded that much of their original color is gone. There are holes in the windows papered over to reduce light contamination (fig. 59). The central courtyard is a respite of beauty, but the stone stelae (large standing slab sculptures typical of Mesoamerican and particularly Maya state art) surrounding the fountain should not be so openly exposed to the elements (fig. 60). Of course, conditions inside the building are not much different, because the doors, as at the National Museum of Modern Art, are open during operating hours, precluding any control over the temperature or humidity levels or of the air pollution from Guatemala City's extreme exhaust problems.[46] Guards try to prohibit flash-photography and children from running amuck throughout the galleries, but there are not enough guards to patrol the entire facility. Roving teenagers' destruction of plaster replicas of important architectural elements from Guatemala's premier archaeological sites, such as Uaxactún, is inevitable and quite evident.[47]

The visitors' guide, manufactured in-house and available only in Spanish, does not provide a floorplan of the building but merely textual descriptions for each gallery. The predetermined path through the exhibits is primarily chronological and then geographical, beginning with the advent of humans in the Americas, noting several different theories. Visitors then proceed through galleries covering pre-Classic, Classic,

[46] An initiative by the Archaeological Institute of America to help fund archaeologically-related projects around the world has provided aid to Guatemala's National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology to convert their storage space at least into a modernized, climate-controlled facility (Waldbaum 2005).
[47] At least this damage is to a replica and not an original work of art. Perhaps this was an intentional

and post-Classic Maya periods in different regions of Guatemala. At the end they enter the central courtyard filled with the aforementioned large limestone stelae from throughout the present-day borders of Guatemala.

The second half of the Museum is the Ethnographic Gallery. Mannequins dressed in or wearing *traje* (indigenous dress) and dioramas of indigenous women weaving and coastal Maya fishing fill this gallery. The Ethnographic Gallery walls are decorated with more murals by the same artist represented in the lobby of the Museum. These depictions of Maya at work in diorama and mural formats make indigenous persons objects for display rather than allowing for the products of their labor to be the objects on view, as occurs across the way at the National Museum of Modern Art. Rudy Cotton, a *ladino*, is not reproduced in mannequin form to demonstrate how he creates his paintings. This idea would be absurd to many museum directors, while the concept of only displaying the textiles or pottery or stone carvings of an *indigene* has seemingly not occurred to the director of the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala yet, or if it has, the effort to make such a change cannot be realized at this time due to lack of funds.[48] The National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography is a weak expression of the 1940s efforts to overhaul the country, the late 1980s attempts to recognize the need for *ladino* and indigenous cooperation, and late 1990s minimal corporate sponsorship.

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decision on the part of the officials knowing the harm would be irreparable to an original.

[48] I was not able to interview the current director because there was a major archaeological conference underway for which she was partially in charge. Also, she and my primary informant, a friend and colleague of many years, were in competition for the directorship of the museum. Thus, I felt a sense of

The National Museum of Natural History

Behind the National Museum of Modern Art and the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography lies the National Museum of Natural History,[49] founded on July 4, 1950. The Museum's collections expanded greatly under its first director, Professor Jorge A. Ibarra, from the 1950s through 1996. Under Ibarra's almost half-century tenure as director, the collections were exhibited in a "cabinet of curiosity" style similar to those in the European museums of the 1800s (Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes/Instituto de Antropología e Historia n.d.2). Within this style of museum display, the objects were categorized according to type and housed in drawers or shelves in cabinets within a museum. This style lends itself to a very scientific, taxonomical view of the natural world, a rather Western view of nature. In 1985 a new building in the modern style of unornamented concrete (but for a coating of green paint on the exterior), glass, and steel, with floor tiles similar to the typical U.S. public school was attached to the existing Museum in order to house this collection, while the original edifice was converted into a library. The exhibits were rehoused in the new building in cabinets with Latin names defining each specimen but lacking historical or geographical contextual information to accompany the pieces or the galleries. The Museum's educational mission was seemingly lost on visitors not previously taught these scientific typologies. A guidebook to Guatemala written in the late 1990s aptly described the Museum as "the most neglected of the trio, featuring a range of mouldy-looking stuffed animals from Guatemala and elsewhere and a few mineral samples" (Eltringham et al. 1999, 302).

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complicity in asking to interview her. Instead I spoke with others who knew her and her plans, and this last concept was not a known plan.

[49] Museo Nacional de Historia Natural "Jorge A. Ibarra."

The director of the National Museum of Natural History from 1996-2000, Dr. Hector Aguilar, worked diligently with several national and international foundations[50] to elevate the Museum to international museum standards, such as regulated humidity and temperature controls (especially important with a collection of natural history specimens), and easily legible educational displays, presenting evolutionary theory, the solar system, and Guatemala's environment. The Museum's mission has been to focus on preserving nature within Guatemala's borders and educating its populace as well as international visitors about its natural heritage and the importance of conservation in Guatemala and the world. To support this mission, Dr. Aguilar invited experts from the American Museum of Natural History in New York City to his museum to update the displays. Displays within the recently renovated museum include low-cost, brightly colored, eye-catching graphics either created by hand, such as painted murals, or on a desktop computer. Textile banners throughout the Museum, not made in-house, are a little more visually sophisticated and overtly include sponsor logos. Trained guards and desk attendants advise visitors as to how to visit the Museum and provide brochures and personalized tours (all in Spanish).

The new exhibits set a trajectory for visitors that leads from the formation of the universe and the planet earth (fig. 61) through galleries of geology to paleontology to biology and botany, with a butterfly garden at the heart of the Museum. These are followed by exhibits of Guatemala's most important natural habitats, a history of the Museum, and then to displays dedicated to the protected areas of Guatemala and its endangered regions. Finally, visitors are led to the new Educational Department and

[50] The Comité Operación Quetzal (COMPZAL), the Fideicomiso para la Conservación en Guatemala (FCG), the Fundación de Bosque Tropical (Tropical Rain Forest Foundation, Florida, U.S.A.), the Banco

Environmental Communications Center. The path is certainly one designed to teach visitors the importance of conservation and to allow them to leave armed with information on how to conserve Guatemala's natural heritage as well as how to spread the word to others. Dr. Aguilar has been praised by other Guatemalan museum officials for revitalizing his museum and enhancing its educational component, not only through the new exhibition spaces but also through brochures, a website, and an environmental library located on the second floor of the Museum.

Unfortunately, Dr. Aguilar decided to resign from his post in August 2000 due to political infighting among his donor institutions as well as the corruption of the Portillo government. Guatemalan national law states that no government-run museum may accept cash donations from private institutions of any sort, be they non-profit or for-profit. Only donations of educational materials, office supplies, or time are deemed acceptable. The governmental division which presides over the Museum, the Ministry of Culture and Sports (oft-maligned in Nelson 1999), provided the equivalent of $2,000 per year to each national museum for its operating expenses, excluding salaries. The salaries, although budgeted separately, have been equally insufficient. In order to support themselves, museum officials must either live with family or be retired from a previous post from which they receive retirement benefits, as was the case with Dr. Aguilar. While the salaries are poor, the operating expenses debacle are a travesty for the nation and the collections themselves. The utility costs per month can come near the ceiling of the budget for the entire year for one museum. Museum directors have to implore the power company not to turn off the electricity. In order to acquire display materials, the Museum has to request a gift-in-kind of a lending institution. Unfortunately, these institutions are

Central American de Integración (BCAI), and the International Union for Conservation.

led by individuals territorial about "their" beneficiary museums. As a result of this territoriality, directors find themselves in the precarious position of trying to petition for funding from one donor while not offending another.

During the Arzu administration Q250,000 (roughly US$30,000) were set aside for the National Museum of Natural History to work with one particular lending institution[51] to improve the Museum. However, the Portillo regime siphoned off any excess funds for the museums to line the pockets of its government officials. In high-handed fashion the Portillo government replaced some museum officials with its cronies[52] so that any plans previously scheduled for realization at the beginning of the 21st century or in the coming years were halted due to not only a transfer of officials within the museums but also to a lack of funding for these institutes. The current Perdomo regime has problems with poverty and drugs, inherited from the Portillo legacy, which consume much of its time, leaving the National Museums and their collections at Aurora Park to deteriorate in their Colonial homes with no foreseeable changes to this path except for the hope of aid from international or foreign institutions.

The National Palace

Under the Arzu administration there were also plans to transform the National Palace[53] (fig. 62) into an "interactive museum of the history of Guatemala" (Eltringham 1999, 299). The palace was built under the Jorge Ubico regime of the 1930s with monies

[51] COMPZAL.
[52] One of my primary informants resigned in spring 2000 from her post as sub-Director of anthropology for the nation, a position entrusted with preservation of all archaeological sites as well as their on-site museums. She felt she could not work under the new director, an artist-friend of the new president who worked approximately four hours per day, who had replaced a very well-qualified, highly motivated, hard-working director of anthropology.
[53] Palacio Nacional.

gained through Guatemala's exploitative fruit industry. Ubico's "dreamhome" is a composite of several Castillian styles realized in local grey stone from Totonicapán and green-colored cement, a less expensive alternative to greenstone. Pilaster capitals throughout the palace are decorated with numbers denoting key years in the history of the Americas and Guatemala: 1492, 1776, 1821, and 1871 (fig. 63).

Whether the displays at the National Palace are truly interactive is debatable, but the National Palace's several sparse exhibits are open to the public. They include a collection of contemporary art from around the world, a series of models and graphics on the Maya city of Tikal from the University of Pennsylvania, and two galleries dedicated to recording the series of meetings, beginning in 1987, that led to the 1996 Peace Accords. The displays are solely in Spanish (except for the donated exhibit from the U.S. university) and, although elegant, not easily legible. The photographs of Guatemala and sites around the world, installed in glass stanchions on patios surrounding the Palace's two large courtyards are very difficult to view in their narrow passageways. The artworks are accompanied only by a title, date, artist (if known), and an ethnicity for the artist; nothing descriptive or explanatory or historical is presented, as one might expect from an "interactive museum of the history of Guatemala."

In the first Peace Accords gallery, costly glass displays (fig. 64) with white vinyl lettering detail the dates and attendees of each Peace Accord meeting. However, they are almost imperceptible because the room is lit by chandeliers and tall windows that permit glaring light to bounce throughout the gallery off the glass panels as well as off the large, central glass "Paz" ("Peace") display (figs. 65, 66). The less attractive (and certainly less costly) posterboard and photograph exhibits in the second Peace Accords gallery

memorialize visually, as opposed to textually, persons and places involved in the Civil War and its conclusion (fig. 67). This display is intended to educate Guatemalans and foreigners about the country's efforts to bring together and manage its diverse populations.

The National Palace is free and open most days, but the tales of the human rights atrocities carried out in backrooms of the five-storied structure during the Ubico regime perhaps do not help to create a space of collective memory conducive to attracting large crowds.[54] "A finger in the wound" is the image that comes to mind regarding Guatemala's history. Diane Nelson used this analogy for her analysis of Guatemalan history: "[t]his metaphor suggests that the wound afflicts a body politic, a nation that exists but is not whole or complete" (1). It seems Guatemalan government officials, *ladinos* or *criollos*, are unsure how to heal this wound and some feel that discussing Guatemala's history openly or "interactively" will cause more harm than healing. Hence, they ignore the problem and divert funds intended for the National Palace gallery renovations, among other museums, to other causes, possibly their own.

Site Museums

By bypassing current political strife and Colonial tensions Guatemalan archaeological sites can be considered ideal locations for addressing/dressing the wound of the 500-year-old conflict, as they can be construed as repositories of positive collective memory of the modern indigenous identification with the ancient Maya and as remnants

[54] Personal communication with a *ladino* family regarding the history of the national palace, July 2000, in which the family expressed the sentiment of "If those walls could talk..." and stated that the atrocities were so extreme that no one in the country wants to discuss them much less to spend time in that building for celebratory events.

of the lives of its first peoples. There have been small museums at some sites for several decades, but they have contained scant information or have been used primarily to hold original artifacts from the site excavated by archaeologists, e.g., the open-air "museum" at Tikal (figs. 68-70), reminiscent of an "Indiana Jones" slipshod set-up. Sofía Parédes-Maury, the former sub-Director of Anthropology for the Guatemalan government in the late 1990s, intended to raise funds to build more elaborate and comprehensive site museums at Guatemala's Tikal and Iximche sites, similar to those at Mexico's Teotihuacan, the Aztec Templo Mayor,[55] and Chichén Itzá, with the ultimate goal of establishing site museums at all the nation's archaeological sites. At the turn of the 21st century, however, these plans fell through due to her resignation in protest of the Portillist Director of Anthropology. Parédes-Maury received her training in anthropology in Guatemala, but she studied in the United States at both the Duke University Museum of Art, as a Fulbright Scholar, and at New York University, where she obtained an M.A. in Museology. She purposefully attended U.S. universities in order to acquire the skills and expertise necessary to manage up-to-date museums and utilize Internet-based and other technologies for record-keeping, education, and publications. The Guatemalan government of the late 1990s under Arzu hired her to do just these things, but the Portillo administration's lack of support for enhancing these sites of collective memory and disregard for using them to educate Guatemalans led her to abandon her hope of working in Guatemala in such a capacity. After her resignation, she worked at the Honduran national museum at the site of Copán. The Honduran government has supported an incredible effort to excavate and preserve its national treasure, Copán, and to build an on-

[55] The museums at Teotihuacan and the Aztec Templo Mayor were described and analyzed in an earlier draft of this thesis.

site museum there to rival those of Mexico. Since the fall of the Portillo administration, Parédes-Maury has been hired as a consultant (for very little pay) by Guatemalan's Museum Planning division of the Ministry of Culture to design the site museums she had envisioned previously. The Site Museum of Quiriguá opened in December 2003 and the Site Museums of Mixco Viejo, Iximché, and Tikal are in the planning and implementation stages. However, their progress remains hampered by reduced funding due to Portillo graft that continues to drain Guatemala's budgets.[56]

As these examples from national museums to the national palace to national archaeological sites attest, *ladino* officials who have worked for the government in the hopes of "modernizing" their country's national museums have felt compelled to leave their posts when conservative administrations have been in power in Guatemala. They have left for the private sector or worked for other nations, whether due to lack of funding for their salaries or for the institutions for which they are in charge, or because they are laid off by the government. Some have accepted teaching posts at universities or curatorial positions in other countries. Others were hired at the private museums of Guatemala, such as the Ixchel Museum, the Popol Vuh Museum, the Children's Museum, or the Lake Museum of Lake Atitlán. At present, under the more forward-thinking adminstration of Oscar Berger Perdomo, well-trained museum officials are once again working to change Guatemala's national image. However, previous problems faced by the museums of Guatemala, under the Portillo government and the threat of a reversion under a similar future administration, still signal the need to create and secure adequate centers of investigation and exhibition of the art and ideas of Guatemalans past and

[56] Personal communication 1992-present.

present.[57] For a stronger national narrative to emerge, the current administration and those that follow will have to continue to commit resources to national cultural projects.

The Ixchel Museum

Two private museums, the Ixchel Museum of Indigenous Textiles and Clothing and the Popol Vuh Museum,[58] both on the campus of the Francisco Marroquin University in Guatemala City, have begun to fill the gap in the need for acceptable sites for the research and display of Guatemalan culture. The Ixchel Museum of Indigenous Textiles and Clothing was founded in 1973, named after the Maya goddess of weaving, Ixchel. It was relocated to the University in 1993 and housed in a modern structure especially designed for the display of textiles (fig. 71). The exterior brickwork intentionally mimics a geometric textile pattern in relief. The textiles within are displayed "aesthetically" as works of art, often free of mannequins. The traditional *traje* (clothing) exhibits are complemented by several other exhibitions.

One of the complementary exhibitions is hung in the spiraling lobby of the Museum, paintings by Andrés Curruchich, a Maya-Kaqchikel man, that depict Maya wearing *traje* in various settings (fig. 72). On the lower level of the lobby is an exhibition of works by Monica Torrebiarte, fabrics silkscreened with images of clothes (fig. 72). These silkscreened fabrics hang on clotheslines within the lower lobby and create a playful commentary on the concept of clothing and of cloth as a canvas for particular messages, a very apropos theme for a museum dedicated to the study of indigenous

[57] Some of these ideas worked out in a discussion with North American and Guatemalan archaeologists (Virginia Fields, Sofía Parédes-Maury, and Dorie Reents-Budet) in Guatemala during a break in the Maya archaeology conference, July 2000.
[58] Museo Ixchel del Traje Indigena and Museo Popol Vuh.

textiles, textiles used by the Maya for several reasons, but chief among them, to send messages resisting Spanish control.[59]

Once visitors digest the messages of the lobby textiles and paintings, they move to the second floor which houses the permanent collection. The displays are arranged chronologically with the first, smaller galleries introducing evidence of the importance of textiles in ancient Maya times. The following galleries lead from the Conquest through the Colonial period to the 20th century, the latter providing the majority of materials for display, as textiles do not survive long in Guatemala's tropical climate unless expressly preserved in a highly regulated environment such as that of the Ixchel Museum.

The final gallery holds a collection of watercolors by Carmen L. Patterson, a European woman who lived in Guatemala for many years and recorded the traditions of *traje*-wearing by the Maya in her art.[60] Once on the lower level again, where visitors are directed after viewing the Patterson watercolors, the bookshop, cafe, and children's education center/playroom beckon. The children's area includes samples of *traje* the children can put on to experience wearing indigenous clothing, as well as a wall display of 112 miniature *huipils* (the traditional dress of Maya women) that replicate the clothing of 82 Highland communities of 13 different language groups. These were all handwoven by Olga Arriola de Gengó between 1980-85.

All graphics within this Museum are in Spanish and English, suggesting an intended local and global audience. Guided tours of the Museum are also available in Spanish or English, provided one makes an appointment in advance. The Museum publishes a biannual newsletter and produces educational packets for teachers and

[59] These lobby displays were on view in 2000. See also the publications Nelson 1999; Museo Ixchel enero-junio 2000.

students. The head curator, Rosario de Polanco, received training at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on a Fulbright scholarship. Through her efforts the Ixchel Museum received a grant from the Getty Foundation to catalog and conserve all the objects in the collection. The Ixchel Museum officials work very closely with Mexican and U.S. textile scholars and conservators. The Museum is an excellent example of a modernized facility in Guatemala that represents the art of its indigenous people as art and not as novelty, nor does it display the people as opposed to their products. However, the officials and employees at the Museum are not Maya, even though they do sometimes engage Maya women weavers for curatorial advice and a bottom-up point of view. Perhaps it is still too early in Guatemala to expect extensive Maya cooperation in a country that only a decade ago signed Peace Accords between the *ladino* and indigenous populations.

The Popol Vuh Museum

Adjacent to the Ixchel Museum on the campus of Francisco Marroquin University is the Popol Vuh Museum, a repository for ancient art that illustrates the Popol Vuh, the Maya "bible," and a complement to the collection of more recent textiles in the Ixchel Museum. Like the Ixchel, the Popol Vuh Museum (figs. 73-75) employs scholars who have been trained in North America and Europe and who work very closely with North American and European archaeologists and art historians. Likewise, the displays in the Popol Vuh Museum are designed with aesthetics, conservation, and education in mind. Each gallery contains a large map situating its objects in a geographical context for the viewer, as well as a large wall text historically contextualizing the works. Objects are displayed in climate controlled cases with proper light levels. Descriptors accompany

[60] Again, on display in 2000.

each object, even though some provide only scant information. Luxurious catalogues to the collection are also available for sale at the exit to the galleries. The Popol Vuh Museum is very similar to the Ixchel Museum, and the same praise and criticisms can be said for it.

The Children's Museum

Deemed "The Funnest Museum" by *Revue, Guatemala's English-Language Magazine,*[61] the Children's Museum,[62] also located in Aurora Park, is a smorgasbord of learning activities for kids, primarily scientific. The Museum, which opened in January 2000, is funded by Pepsi, Pollo Campero, Bancafe, and Maderas el Alto (Biskovich 2000, 7). The institution is privately-run but receives aid from the government in transporting children in public schools to the Museum for tours (Biskovich 2000, 92). The Museum is seen by other museum officials as an asset to the complex of museums at Aurora Park, even if it might deter some museum-goers from visiting some of the older museums. Although its much steeper admission, Q35 (over US$4) compared to Q3 (less than US$0.40) per person at the archaeology museum, might balance the numbers. The focus of this particular museum does add a new dimension to the museums of Guatemala City, but it was one that had to be imported from the north. The design for the Museum comes from the same firm that designs Six Flags Theme Parks, The Kelloggs Museum, USA, Legoland in England, and the Volkswagen Park in Hannover, Germany (Biskovich 2000, 7).

[61] Bell et al. 2000.
[62] Museo de los Niños. I was unable to visit this museum inside due to time constraints when in Guatemala

The Lake Museum at Lake Atitlán

Outside of Guatemala City, two entrepreneurs opened two separate private museums at Lake Atitlán, a popular resort site for Guatemalan and international tourists: the Lake Museum and the Textile Museum. The Lake Museum[63] in the town of Panajachel on the shores of the lake, depicts the story of the area's geologic formation (figs. 76-78) as well as its cultural history, as told through objects found in the lake's waters. This museum was hurriedly designed to accommodate the desires of the architect. Curatorial expertise was neglected in favor of design, providing a sharp contrast between the earlier, curatorially-sensitive galleries on geology and the aesthetically glamorous but educationally vacuous displays in the last galleries (fig. 78). The first galleries devoted to geology are well organized and very educational, in contrast to the later ones which present erroneous information on the process of underwater archaeology as well as mislabeled, decontextualized art objects excavated from the lake. There are no explanations of stratifigraphic archaeology or of how the objects have come to look they way they do (many have changed color due to years of preservation in soil and sand deposits under the water). Tellingly, the man who excavated the ceramic art objects from the lake was an amateur, untrained in underwater archaeology. His imprecise techniques failed to provide crucial information for reconstructing a stratigraphic story of the lake's history. Thus, the Lake Museum represents a case of private efforts gone awry, not that the government would necessarily have provided more competent officials for such an excavation, but presumably it might have, as Guatemalan museum officials are required

in summer 2000.
[63] Museo Lacustre.

by law to have advanced degrees, a reason many study in the States.[64]

The Textile Museum of Santiago Atitlán

Across the lake from Panajachel and the Lake Museum is the other privately-run museum at Lake Atitlán, The Textile Museum,[65] in the town of Santiago Atitlán. The Museum, more aptly termed a gallery with workshop, sells the products of its primary workers, Tzutujil Maya women who weave hats, purses, and other items of clothing on traditional backstrap looms in the workshop beyond the gallery. The Cojolya Association of Maya Women Weavers, under the executive direction of North American Candis E. Krummel, provides a display of "the development of Tzutujil backstrap loom weaving from the simple to the complex." This small museum and atelier is a private, non-profit organization begun by a North American woman who employs approximately 90 Maya weavers throughout the Highland region. Through their work at the Museum, the women are able to support their families. The Museum is located in a small Colonial structure connected to several other similar stores along a narrow street in the town of Santiago Atitlán. It admittedly is not a modern structure nor does it have a broad-reaching educational mission, but its mission to include indigenous workers and provide some bottom-up perspective is laudable. Several Maya are the desk attendants, greeters, and tour guides, as well as the artists. The Museum might be a small start, but it can been seen as a viable solution to indigenous involvement in a museum -- through it the Tzutujil Maya help modernize their industry, backstrap loom weaving, and sell their work at

[64] The assessment here of this museum is based on an examination of the displays and background information from a colleague associated with the original plans for the Museum.
[65] Alternatively known as the Textile Museum & Shop of the Cajolya [sic] Association of Maya Women Weavers (Bell et al. 2000) or the Cojolya Association Weaving Center & Museum

competitive prices that earn them living wages. The Museum is probably successful partly because the societal tensions are less between the Maya and a museum director of foreign origin, as opposed to a *ladino* official, who would be a constant "finger in the wound" -- a reminder of the disparity between the two main groups in Guatemala, the Maya and the *ladino*.[66] It may be that a dualistic opposition, a diversity of two, is more difficult to unite than of many, as in Mexico or Costa Rica.

In sum, the greed of some *ladino* government officials, particularly those closely tied to the Portillo administration, created a void in Guatemala's museum world so that well-meaning *ladinos* who want to create a unified image of their country and educate their people, along with equally well-intentioned Euroamericans and consumer-focused international corporations, have stepped in to fulfil the duties normally assigned to the national government. The question arises as to who has the right or the duty to represent Guatemala's cultural heritage: the *ladino*-run government, private individuals, corporations like Pepsi Cola, or indigenous groups?

The architecture of these varying museums tells the story of the government's positioning versus private participation in the representation of Guatemala's image. Government-run museums are either symbolic relics of the Colonial era (the National Museums of Archaeology and Ethnology and of Modern Art), an extravagant palace of a tyrannical, corrupt U.S.-backed president of the 1930s (the National Palace), throwbacks to jungle barracks of early explorers (Site Museums), or an abandoned attempt at a modern museum (the National Museum of Natural History). Generally, only the private

(http://www.cojolya.org/museum/index.html).

[66] In a lecture at Emory University, John Peel discussed a similar situation in Nigeria, in which the modern Evangelical Christian or Muslim Yoruba do not feel comfortable reviving traditional Yoruba artistry because of their closeness to the situation, yet Europeans can work with artists to create traditional

museums throughout Guatemala constitute institutions established on up-to-date international museum practices within modern facilities.

Perhaps one positive outcome of the lack of concern for the national museums by Guatemala's presidents and administrations is that a one-sided view of Guatemalan history is not presented to the people. However, from this neglect arises the possibility for too much corporate involvement in museum presentations. If one wants this component of modernity, the national museum, to work in any country or to achieve its stated mission of unifying the nation's people, then the voices of all the people will have to be heard. For Guatemala this includes the Maya. The U.S. has come to this conclusion and has funded the African Voices hall at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, the new National Museum of the American Indian, and the newly-named African-American Museum also to be built on the Mall in Washington, D.C., although the question remains as to whether these are the most successful museums. Only thorough critiques in the coming years will tell.[67] Within these new U.S. national museums, the groups being represented are speaking for themselves in museum design inside and out. Perhaps the lesson for both Guatemala and Mexico is that to represent a people their voices should be part of the representation. It can be argued that their heritage should not be coopted to create a national identity of which they are not, in reality, a part. Inclusivity will require more outreach on the part of museum officials.

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sculptures or art inspired by traditional Yoruba culture (2006).

[67] The current director of the new National Museum of the American Indian, Rick West, in fact discussed this very issue in his presentation at the 52nd International Congress of Americanists in Seville, Spain, July 17-22, 2006 (personal observation).

THE CASE OF COSTA RICA

The history of Costa Rica's economical, political, and social relations differs considerably from that of Mexico or Guatemala. The small country was not a major Colonial seat for the Spanish crown. Bellicose native Costa Ricans and the tropical environment detered Spanish settlement, except in the more arid Central Valley, from which indigenous peoples fled, settling to the east and south, where many remain today. The two groups, Spanish and indigenous, have tried to remain separate over the centuries, and there have been no major conflicts between the two since early Colonial days; for example, the Boruca have their own independent nation within Costa Rica. However, with the rise in European immigration to Costa Rica in the 1800s and the concurrent growth in the new agriculture of coffee, "white" Costa Ricans of Spanish, Italian, German, and English descent moved into what had been indigenous territory in search of land for coffee plantations. Perhaps partially to ease tensions and assuage guilt or perhaps merely in keeping with 19th-century antiquarianism, these Westerners established the National Museum of Costa Rica at the close of the 19th century. They and their descendants used it to promote *blanqueamiento*, a view of Costa Rica as "white," with indigenous groups utilized as the "other" in typical 19th-century Social Darwinian fashion. The museum was also used for the research of and promotion of the coffee business, making it essentially a tool of business, a function the National Museum has maintained through varying industries over the last century.

Over time, power in Costa Rica changed hands from the original coffee elite to new families and new industries, and today the country seems to be rapidly emerging as a prime location for multinational corporations. The National Museum of Costa Rica has

struggled in recent years to present more politically-correct views of indigenous groups, living and dead, and move away from the "white legend." Unfortunately, perhaps because the national government has focused its efforts on courting global corporations, attention to needs relevant to the National Museum and indigenous cultures are mostly overlooked by the government. This lack of governmental support for the National Museum is evident in the displays and workload of the staff. The Gold and Jade Museums and the Costa Rican Center of Science and Culture, supported by wealthier, semi-autonomous divisions of the government, have more resources to change displays as attitudes and ideas evolve and, in the case of the Gold Museum, to address questions of value regarding indigenous versus Spanish cultures in the 21st century. The Gold Museum has also collaborated directly with indigenous groups to give their contemporary artists equal voice in the Museum. Also, one indigenous group, the Boruca, has started its own small museum, Museo de la Comunidad Indígena, although without government financing.[68] Throughout its history, Costa Rica has been known for its entrepreneurial spirit and efforts to preserve its cultural and environmental heritage, but funds there are not always efficiently or sufficiently allocated to such ends, even though the agro-industrial elite have allowed higher taxes for social programs than can be found in neighboring countries.

As a case in point, the wealthy of Costa Rica have openly characterized the Guatemalan aristocracy as "greedy" and have suggested that Guatemalan *ladinos* and *criollos* deserved the civil wars of their country (Paige 1997, 352ff). According to the Costa Rican elite, Guatemala's aristocracy did not know how to treat its "proletariat," its

[68] This "one-room museum" (Jamison, ed. 2005, 319) had been destroyed by a storm before I arrived with a university group in 2005 and was quickly set-up for our group under another structure by the curator-artists,

indigenous or peasant farmers, well enough, which led to the current state of tension and a "never-healing wound." To the Costa Ricans, Guatemalan *finca* owners kept too much of the profits of such crops as coffee and sugar; they have not shared their wealth. Costa Rican coffee and other agro-industrial elite, on the other hand, claim that Costa Rica's more peaceful past transpired so because the Costa Rican elite knew how to share its wealth with the little farmer. According to political scientist Jeffery Paige, the coffee elite claim that since Colonial days the penchant for small farms led to a society with yeoman farmers and very few aristocrats. Supposedly, all shared the land and the profits it produced (ibid).

During the 19th century, Costa Rica experienced the same liberation movements as the other new nation-states of Latin America, breaking free of Spain's control in 1821.[69] However, Costa Ricans continued to battle internally and with their northern neighbor Nicaragua over lands and trade routes, perpetuating instability in the region until the latter part of the century.[70] Throughout the century and into the 20th, the largest numbers of indigenous peoples, of the Boruca, Bribri, Cabécar, Teribé, and Guaymí cultures,[71] were living in eastern and southern Costa Rica, on lands established as reservations by Costa Rica's Euroamerican government officials as a continuance of Spanish Colonial agreements with these peoples. The country's population increased during the age of nationalism, but not from within, rather through immigrants escaping embattled European nations. Italians, Germans, and the British, in particular, settled in

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Marina Lázaro Morales and her friends and family.

[69] Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, 2006a, "History of Costa Rica," *Wikipedia.org*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Mexico (accessed September 1, 2006).

[70] ibid.

[71] Many of the extant peoples at the time of Spanish conquest either died out due to epidemics of European diseases or warfare between each other and/or with the Spanish, or some moved to the Talamancan mountains, away from the primary Spanish settlement in the center of the country, and blended in with the

this small tropical country and married into Spanish conquistador families, primarily in the Central Valley.

The new European immigrants prospered in the coffee industry utilizing very efficient methods of production. Soon several Germans, Italians, and Englishmen were interested in developing a national image for Costa Rica, together with the *criollos*, or as they call themselves *ticos,* Costa Ricans of supposedly pure Spanish blood (*ticos* never refer to themselves as *mestizos*). This nascient national image was based in a natural history approach, in which the native peoples and their ancestors were thought to fall into the category of natural history specimens as a result of their evolutionary status as "savage," a categorization well within then-current European theories (Bennett 1995, 59-88; Gomez 1973, 183). This categorization allowed white *ticos* to place Costa Rica's *indigenes* into the role of "other."

The first instance of the formation of a Costa Rican public image was the young nation's participation in Costa Rica's First National Exposition in 1885, followed by a showing at the universal exposition of 1889 in Paris (San Román Johanning 1987, 15ff). The objects that represented Costa Rica at these fairs, stone and ceramic archaeological objects and preserved flora and fauna of Costa Rica's unique environment, received a permanent house in the first national museum established by the small nation's president, Bernardo Soto, on May 4, 1887, and located at the Universidad de Santo Tomás in San José (ibid) (fig. 105; San Román Johanning 1987, 21).

existing groups of that region (Salazar 2002; Abel-Vidor 1981, 93-103; Coates 1997, 137-240).

The National Museum of Costa Rica

This first National Museum of Costa Rica,[72] established by European immigrants and their *criollo* compatriots in the coffee industry, housed a small collection of ancient art objects (fig. 79) from the collection of José Rojas Troyo (fig. 80) and a growing collection of plant and animal specimens. The first years of the Museum's mission focused more on the flora and fauna with intensive research of the natural history collections, fueled by commercial interest in streamlining coffee cultivation (Gómez and Savage 1983, 1). The founders of the Museum were also interested in keeping up with national museums in Europe. The collections of the National Museum of Costa Rica were arranged similarly to the quintessential Social Darwinist layout of the Pitt-Rivers Museum in England (fig. 4), i.e., taxonomically and typologically. Indigenous artworks and artifacts were categorized by culture group and medium and displayed as curiosities, allowing white *ticos* to examine them as inferior, primitive artifacts, unequal to the scientific tools the *ticos* were using to study the booming coffee industry. In 1896 this focus on the natural sciences brought the Museum to its second home at the gardens of the Labyrinth,[73] an elite sector of San José (fig. 81) (San Román Johanning 1987, 25).

By the 1910s, the National Museum was not a high priority for the government, perhaps due to the coffee elite's (at that time functionally the government's) interest in promoting itself and its wealth rather than a nationalist image for all citizens (Paige 1997, 80). Non-elite citizens were deemed irrelevant. However, with the Great Depression and the growing unrest of the people, their opinions became more important to the coffee elite who feared Communist unrest, as in Russia and China. During the 1930s and 1940s,

[72] Museo Nacional de Costa Rica.
[73] El Laberinto.

some coffee aristocrats decided that the best way to avoid a revolution would be to promote socialist agendas in order to receive support from the small farmers and workers and thus maintain power in the country. The coffee elite began working with small farmers, and as they tell it, each coffee-processing baron was like a father figure whose door was always open to the son/small farmer. There was a purported rapport between the elite families who processed the coffee cherries and the coffee-growers (Paige 1997, 139ff).

In 1940, Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia, a coffee aristocrat but also a Social Christian in the National Republican party, was elected president. He instituted a social security program, a social bill of rights, and the Labor Code for workers' rights. Calderón allied himself with Rafael Manuel Mora Valverde, a leader of the Costa Rican Communist Party, a move that angered other coffee aristocrats and incited the "self-made" José Figueres Ferrer, founder of the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN, or in English, National Liberation Party), to ally with some of the coffee elite against Calderón. Mora was a socialist but staunch anti-Communist. Figueres challenged the results of the suspicious 1948 election that reelected the incumbent, and Figueres staged a "40-day civil war" overthrowing Calderón and instating himself initially and later the actual candidate, Otilio Ulate. As a socialist, Figueres quickly passed reforms including a 10% tax on the wealthy, the nationalization of the banking system, government regulation of the electrical industry, and the abolition of the national army (Paige 1997, 133-152). Significantly, the announcement of the last reform was made at the new site of the National Museum, the Cuartel Bella Vista (fig. 82). Thus, again the National Museum served as visible symbol of governmental change based on revised economic, or business,

policies.

The dedication of the new museum on December 1, 1948 in the Cuartel Bella Vista, built in 1917 to replicate a Spanish Colonial fortress (Abel-Vidor 1981, 12), was a day of celebration for the newly liberated country. On this day, Figueres disbanded the military, a symbol of previous conflict in Costa Rica, and converted the Cuartel Bella Vista, a site of positive Costa Rican collective memory, into a cultural and educational institute for the renewed republic. Within two years the building was renovated to house the archaeological and scientific collections that had been slowly expanding through excavations and expeditions since the Museum's original opening in 1887 (figs. 83, 84).

With the new deeply symbolic location of the National Museum firmly established and the government in the hands of the National Liberation Party, the power of the coffee elite in Calderón's camp was reduced, and in order to survive they were forced to support some of the social democratic plans of the National Liberation Party. Figueres' economic reforms eventually displaced not only the old coffee barons but also the small coffee farmer. In their stead, a new agro-industrial elite has emerged in the fields of coffee, "rice, sugar, banana, and cattle and, eventually, in…tourism, and the 'agriculture of change' (that is, non-traditional export crops [such as strawberries and ferns])" (Paige 1997, 322-326). The new elite has continued to promote an idea of *costarricense* to maintain a peaceful nation of market-capitalism. To an extent, the idea of oneness in the people presented by the new elite can be seen in the Museum's evolving layout and emphasis on accepting each group in Costa Rican society as part of one democratic whole. Through the years, part of this oneness has involved the continuation of the idea of *blanqueamiento* or "whitening." *Ticos* do not like to consider themselves

"tainted" with too much indigenous Costa Rican blood or the blood of Africans, who either were imported into Costa Rica during the Colonial period or immigrated there in the late 19th to early 20th centuries to work in the banana industry for the United Fruit Company. *Ticos* focus on a shared belief that they are of European descent alone.[74] The placement of Costa Rica's native peoples on reservations helps to create a sense of truth to this idea, and the *ticos'* aversion to the Caribbean coast, where many African-Costa Ricans live, also keeps them feeling purely white (Paige 1997, 352ff). Because the more socialist government needed to appear democratic – for all the people – the post-1948 National Museum's displays nominally incorporate indigenous and other non-white groups, as part of the "whitening" process.

From its inception in 1887 under the original coffee elite and through its "rebirth" in 1948 under the new elite, the National Museum of Costa Rica has helped to promote the so-called "white legend." The earlier Social Darwinist displays of the 19th century until mid 20th century positioned indigenous Costa Rican cultures as inferior "others" to the *ticos*. They were forgotten by most *ticos*. The National Museum considered indigenous groups in their displays but as part of an unbroken chain of Costa Rican culture in which all Costa Ricans eventually blended together and had become "white-washed" by European immigration: from indigenous beginnings in the first gallery, the Museum displays conclude with portraits of Costa Rican "white" presidents in the last

[74] This ever-present feeling of "whiteness" in Costa Rica is well-documented in Jeffery Paige's book and confirmed in my conversations with an anthropology graduate student and a professor of the University of Costa Rica. Note too that Costa Ricans use only the terms *criollo* or *tico* to describe themselves and not *mestizo*, as *mestizo* would contradict their belief in *blanqueamiento*, but it is evident from the appearance of many *ticos* that they are in fact a mixture of indigenous and European peoples. *Blanqueamiento* also finds parallels in many Latin American nations, even ones with large indigenous populations, such as Guatemala, Ecuador, and Colombia (for Guatemala, see below and Nelson 1999; for Ecuador, Luz Maria de la Torre [Kechwa language and culture professor at the Catholic University of Quito], personal communication 2002; for Colombia, Wade 1998 and Streicker 1998).

gallery, the "History of Costa Rica." Thus, after 1502, the year the "History of Costa Rica" began (according to Museum didactics), living indigenous peoples were ignored as a viable force in the nation and find no significant place for themselves within that space and time. By the second half of the 20th century, the National Museum displays subsumed ancient indigenous art into a trajectory of Costa Rican identity: the dead *indigenes* were the "first Costa Ricans," but art or artifacts of their living descendants, far off on reservations, was not seriously displayed at the National Museum.

To this end, beginning in 1948, the Cuartel Bella Vista was fully renovated to house the new nationalist view of Costa Rica, fully operational by the 1960s. The Museum's archaeological material was moved to the first gallery, called "Costa Rica Our First History,"[75] along the eastern side of the fortress (fig. 85). In 2006, under the influence of 21st-century globalism (a move away from earlier nationalism), the name of the space was changed to the "Pre-Columbian Room" (fig. 86). Even though the name of the space was changed and the installations have been updated several times through the years to include materials from excavations, the overall layout and materials are essentially the same as the 1960s installation, designed in an "educational" exhibition style, with a few significant artworks spotlighted in a more "aesthetic" display manner.

Within this first gallery of the National Museum of Costa Rica, introductory wall texts, in the more international language of English (geared toward tourists) and in the local language of Spanish, explain the arrival of the first peoples to the Americas across the Bering Strait over 10,000 years ago. Dioramas depicting pre-Hispanic native housing and activities (fig. 87) alternate with pedestals of ancient stone and ceramic sculptures (fig. 88). Ancient ceramic vessels are reconstructed in drawings on the walls. Jade

pendants, ceramic figurines, and volcanic stone sculptures are exhibited in cases that generally replicate the tombs in which they were found by archaeologists, with one very specific installation of a tomb from La Ceiba, Guanacaste Province (fig. 89). Updates to the "Costa Rica Our First History" gallery over time, such as this specific tomb replica, underscore the importance of archaeology to the staff of the Museum. Their primary work from 1887 onward has been to dig and document Costa Rica's past. They are in a race against time to beat looters to important sites. For over a hundred years, looters have been stripping ancient tombs of the best works in gold, jade, volcanic stone, shell, and ceramic, and of any cultural information an archaeologist could have documented in a scientific excavation. These artworks are smuggled into the U.S., Europe, and Japan, where they are sold by unethical dealers to unscrupulous collectors and then loaned or given to equally morally-compromised museums. Costa Rican laws, beginning as early as 1938, specifically state that any pre-Columbian Costa Rican object is the property of the Republic of Costa Rica, and in the U.S., a primary marketplace, the Costa Rican objects are subject to the National Stolen Property Act.[76] Unfortunately, dealer, collector, and museum activities are not well-regulated in the U.S. or other market nations; so this illegal trade continues mostly unchecked.[77] For Costa Rica's archaeologists, renovating the galleries takes second place to excavations and publishing their findings. This helps

[75] "Costa Rica Nuestra Primera Historia" (see fig. 111).
[76] United States Department of State 2006, 1999; Vincent 2006; Bogdanos 2005; International Council of Museums c. 2005; Elsea and Garcia 2004; Kaye and Spiegler 2004; Cuno 2001; Bruhns 2000a-d; United States Department of the Treasury 2000; Kaye 1998; United States Congress 1987; Convention of San Salvador 1976.
[77] This argument regarding cultural property theft is applicable above in the two cases of Mexico and Guatemala, but it is not as pertinent to their stories because the Guatemalan government is not putting much money towards excavations of Maya sites (excavations in Guatemala are funded primarily by foreign institutions), and Mexico funds both its museums and excavations extensively. Costa Rica's archaeologists at the National Museum of Costa Rica have chosen to spend funds on digs rather than the galleries to combat illegal pilfering of tombs and sites.

explain the mostly outdated, dusty displays (Guerrero Miranda personal communication 2004).

Midway through the "Costa Rica Our First History" corridor, an almost surreal painted mural, imitating Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, is the backdrop to a diorama of a stuffed jaguar, vulture, snake, owl, agouti, tapir, armadillo, crocodile, capuchin monkey, iguana, and at center a "floating" *sukia*, the household ancient indigenous shrine figure of the person most prominent in ancient Costa Rican life, the shaman. The text on the glass of this display explains the role of shamans and their connections to rain forest animals in ancient Central America. National Museum of Costa Rica archaeological staff responsible for this gallery boldly yet briefly and perhaps anachronistically (with the use of a Van Gogh painting) introduced the concept of shamanism here, one foreign to Spanish Catholic traditions entrenched in Latin America. The *Starry Night* display is followed by a plethora of polychrome ceramics reflective of the influx of Mesoamerican immigrants to Central America in the years just before the turn of the second millennium C.E. The corridor concludes with the few remaining resin and wood objects dating to the years just before the Conquest.

Beyond the "Costa Rica Our First History" gallery is the "Golden Tower" (Gómez P. 1973, 183), which holds the work of native goldsmiths of the pre-Columbian era: a virtual treasure trove locked away in a dark tower so that the effect of light sparkling on goldwork is more dramatic (fig. 90). This display approach is distinctly Euroamerican in that it echoes the Spanish penchant for golden treasure. In one way the "Golden Tower" is actually the perfect link between the indigenous peoples of the eastern "Costa Rica Our First History" corridor and the predominantly Spanish Colonial and

post-Colonial cultures in the northern corridor to follow (see the floorplans, figs. 85, 86), because gold was the main item the Spanish wanted from the *indigenes* upon first contact. However, the Spaniards and ancient Costa Ricans did not perceive gold in exactly the same way, which led to one of the first of many misunderstandings between these cultures. Although the ancient Costa Ricans considered gold precious too, its preciousness was achieved when golden nuggets were transformed into wearable works of art: pre-Columbian chiefs and shamans wore large quantities of golden jewelry in the form of earrods, pendants, and armbands. These items were not, however, isolated from other objects by their indigenous owners. Gold objects were worn by active members of society during life, and in the grave the golden objects were surrounded, as the body was, by ceramic, stone, and wooden objects, also of great importance to the native populations. The Spanish desire for unworked "pure" gold alone was incomprehensible to the indigenous peoples (Hearne 1992). The Museum's separation of the golden objects from their companion pieces is a product of Euroamerican taxonomical and typological thinking, rather than social, contextual understanding and perhaps is also oriented toward tourist expectations.

Today's didactics for this gallery acknowledge the indigenous versus Spanish opinions regarding gold: a primary text, presented in both Spanish and (poorly translated) English introduces typical indigenous gold-copper alloys as "El oro social indigena" ("Indian Social Gold") and remarks that "No todo lo que brilla es oro: metalurgía precolombina" ("Not all that shines is gold"). The wall texts continue to explain that such an alloy would melt at 800°C as opposed to 1,063°C needed to melt a purer gold. Alloying made working in this medium easier because the fire would not have to be

raised to such a high temperature, a feat in a pre-industrialized land (although not highlighted as such in the gallery didactics). Secondly, alloyed gold and copper is more durable and holds patterns better than gold alone. Gold is an extremely soft metal and needs an alloy such as copper in order to maintain the delicate shapes required of ancient Costa Rican pendants, pectorals, armbands, and so forth. A circular gold sheet almost paper-thin, with designs emerging from the surface in low relief (fig. 91), is impossible to create and maintain with a high gold content (Stone-Miller personal communication 2001). The second reason is implied in the texts of the Museum's walls but not fully explained. Thus, the didactics leave the impression that the "Indians" were incapable of sophisticated technology, rather than consciously choosing to create gold-copper jewels. A lengthier text would give the public a more positive impression of the artistic achievement and social values of these pre-Columbian golden treasures and their makers.

Upon leaving the Golden Tower, museum-goers enter the northern corridor of the "fortress." In the decade of the 1950s, this corridor consisted mainly of galleries of contemporary art and educational spaces with rotating exhibits, but by the 1960s this space became a gallery devoted to the history of coffee in Costa Rica and a room for "Religious Art" (San Román Johanning 1987, 39-45), meaning until very recently Spanish-influenced Catholic art. However, as of 2001, revised wall texts, recordings of a shaman's chants, and a few pre-Hispanic incense burners for shamanic ceremonies referenced the ancient indigenous religion of shamanism. The display, however, included neither current indigenous religious practices and objects nor religious artworks of the Caribbean groups of African descent. By 2006, however, the "Religious Art" room was dismantled (fig. 86), perhaps due to difficulties in reconciling *ticos'* strongly held

Catholic beliefs with indigenous shamanism. Indeed, a Museum guard commented that he was not comfortable in that gallery (personal communication 2004).[78]

Prior to the 21st century, the remaining galleries were the Colonial House exhibit, the History of Costa Rica (for much of the 20th century meaning Spanish Colonial and post-Colonial events), and the Natural History gallery (built in the 1970s) (San Román Johanning 1987, 46ff). The History of Costa Rica space is now called "Motherland" (or "Historia Patria" in Spanish) and presents only the history of Europeans in Costa Rica since the Spanish landed in 1502 on the Atlantic Coast, with major emphasis on the Republic of Costa Rica's *tico* presidents. However, signage does list the following as the peoples of Costa Rica: Los Refugiados, El Europeo, El Chino, El Mulato, Los Negros, Mestizos, Los Españolas, El Indio, El Campesino (The Refugees, The Europeans, The Chinese, The Mulattoes, The Blacks, The Mixed Race, The Spaniards, The Indians, The Peasants). The displays do not offer much information on these groups beyond a few exhibits of African-influenced festivals, cockfights, and games, and an exhibit hailing how these varying ethnicities -- all considered *costarricense* -- banded together during the "invasion" of the small country in 1856 by William Walker of the U.S., an imperialist interested in consolidating Nicaragua and Costa Rica for northern commercial interests.[79] As was the case in Mexico, here, also, imperialist North Americans work well as an "other" for establishing the cultural unity of a Latin American nation. The primary focus in this space, however, is the portraits of Costa Rica's presidents, dominating every wall.

The final gallery, the Natural History Gallery was dismantled as a result of 21st-

[78] This societal tension is evident also in the current debate among scholars about the role and interpretation of shamanism in indigenous cultures (see upcoming *Acta Americana* volume on shamanism in the Americas, based on a symposium organized by Carolyn Tate and Rebecca Stone, from the 52nd International Congress of Americanists, Sevilla, Spain, July 17-21, 2006).

century concern with preservation of the specimens. This space paralleled the "History of Costa Rica" and was near the coffee history room. It promoted conservation of Costa Rican dry forests and rain forests and the cultivation of coffee under shade trees. In its stead, the Natural History Department now has a Butterfly Garden with living "specimens" on the southern side of the fortress. Biologists at the National Museum are working primarily to promote conservation within Costa Rica now. Costa Rica has seen its tropical forests go from covering nearly the entire country at the time of Christopher Columbus's arrival there in the early 16th century to covering only a little over half the land in 1961 to less than one-third by 1992 (Grosko and Ward 1996; Coates 1997, 123-136). Such drastic deforestation is due mainly to coffee farming and cattle ranching. The National Liberation Party under Figueres was able to affect some changes and to keep Costa Rica from experiencing the economical, political, and social turmoil of the last half of the 20th century that other Central American nations, like Guatemala, faced, but the government has not been able to control the deforestation problem even now with newer, tougher laws. Manpower to patrol deforestation operations is insufficient. The Natural History Department staff is struggling to protect the flora and fauna of the natural environment through better preservation of its specimens and through producing educational materials, but funds for these efforts are minimal. Unfortunately, poor, uneducated *ticos* continue to work illegally for lumber companies and to sell illegal rain forest hard woods to tourists and international exporters (ibid.).

Upon initial examination, the arrangement of exhibitions in the National Museum of Costa Rica gives the impression of a people trying to unite a diverse population of

[79] Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, 2006a, "History of Costa Rica," *Wikipedia.org*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Mexico (accessed September 1, 2006).

indigenous, Spanish *criollos*, and later European immigrants through an imagined shared past, "Costa Rica Our First History." However, upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that the thinking that divided the galleries in such particular patterns reflects Western upbringing and not indigenous Costa Rican concepts of their own culture. Pointedly, most non-white groups are given only a few lines in the "History of Costa Rica" gallery. Also, most native groups of Costa Rica probably never see the gallery of "Our First History" because they live on reservations relatively far away from the nation's capital city of San José. Since the 1960s, the displays have been for the *ticos* to feel a sense of united *costarricense* and democracy or for internationals to be persuaded that these exist. The name change in the 21st century from "Costa Rica Our First History" to "Pre-Columbian Room" perhaps suggests the beginning of a move away from nationalistic efforts at the National Museum to impose a unified identity for Costa Ricans, furthering the idea that Costa Rica is headed away from nationalism and towards multicultural globalism. The short-lived addition of information on indigenous religion to the "Religious Room" and the subsequent closing of that gallery imply failed efforts at reconciling internal societal differences. The 21st-century alterations at the National Museum connote continued growing pains for how to represent Costa Rica's varied population publicly.

The somewhat dilapidated appearance of the National Museum installations also begs the question of why the National Museum appears to be near financial abandonment. The galleries there have not been revamped since the '60s except for some relatively minor changes in the archaeology, religious, and history galleries, new names for the archaeology and history galleries, and the closing of the Natural History Gallery

and opening of the Butterfly Garden in its place. The National Museum falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports,[80] a governmental division with modest funding. Also, in recent years there have been changes, not without some difficulties, in the directorship of the Museum itself and the directorship of the Anthropology Department (Ricardo Vázquez personal communication 2004). These changes could account for some of the delays in fundraising to revitalize the antiquated displays. Also, the archaeologists in the Anthropology Department are working diligently on excavations throughout the three main regions of the country (in an effort to prevent looting) and publishing their results, leaving little time for them to expend on donor cultivation and gallery renovations.

The Costa Rican government is not necessarily helpless to further fund National Museum renovations and to try to prevent both of the main destructive activities that affect National Museum departments, looting to Anthropology and rainforest decimation to Natural History. The government could allocate funds for initiatives to halt this pillaging and deforestation. However, Costa Rican politics center around agricultural production and, in more recent years, tourism and courting global corporations such as Intel, Microsoft, and Lucent to entice them to move their plants to Costa Rica. Banks and the government probably see much more potential for financial growth in the agro-business, tourism, and computer and telecommunications industries than in directing funds to stop underground trade. The funds available to the National Museum of Costa Rica are currently directed by staff to scientific excavations, behind-the-scenes preservation of natural specimens, and educational programs. The outdated displays in the Museum are lower in priority. A revised website for the Museum, produced through

[80] Ministerio de Cultura, Juventud, y Deportes.

the government's business dealings with Microsoft, has presented an electronic upgrade to the image of the Museum, pointing to the high priority of government contracts with international corporations (International Campaign for Responsible Technology 1998). Yet, thus far, the National Museum of Costa Rica has not maximized corporate sponsorship for physical renovations.

Costa Rica's National Museum has experienced three main phases: 1887-1948, Social Darwinist "cabinet of curiosity"-style displays with an emphasis on white *tico* superiority over "savage" *indigenes* and the natural environment; 1948-c.2000, nationalist "educational" displays with an emphasis on subsuming Costa Rica's varying ethnic groups into a purified, white *costarricense* identity; c.2000-present, a partial move away from nationalism and *blanqueamiento* towards multiculturalism/globalism. Clearly, the National Museum of Costa Rica is still in transition to the 21st century.

The Gold Museum

Within the capital city of Costa Rica, the National Museum's primary competition for tourists are the Gold Museum[81] and the Jade Museum. The Gold Museum of the Central Bank of Costa Rica,[82] a national institution, is located in the Plaza of Culture,[83] at the heart of the commercial and cultural district and close to the prime tourist hotels. The Bank was entrusted with several large collections of pre-Columbian gold art uncovered by looters in the 19th-20th centuries (Aida Blanco Vargas personal communication 2005). These collections are now on display in this highly secured facility.

To enter the Gold Museum, visitors walk from the eastern edge of the Plaza of

[81] Museo del Oro.
[82] Banco Central de Costa Rica.

Culture down into a "hidden," vault-like space. After passing through the well-patrolled entrance, the space opens up into several levels that spiral downward into the innermost sections, devoted to pre-Columbian gold work and Colonial and later coins. But before coming to the innermost sanctum, visitors first encounter temporary exhibitions on the upper level, organized by the Gold Museum curator, Patricia Fernández Equivel and her staff. These are rotated out regularly and have varied from a 1997 exhibit from the Escuela del Sur featuring the art of Joaquín Torres-García of Uruguay to a 1999 show of images of women to a summer 2001 exhibition of kitsch to a 2005/6 show of Central American masks.[84] In recent years, the downstairs galleries dedicated to pre-Columbian goldwork have changed from a 20th-century "aesthetic" installation to a culturally-sensitive one for the 21st century. Meanwhile, what appears to be the most highly valued space in the Museum, the "Numismatic Museum," or coins gallery at the lowest level, remains mostly unchanged.

Beginning upstairs, the temporary exhibits are designed from the latest scholarship and to relate to most *ticos*, if possible. One of the earlier upstairs temporary exhibitions, on "kitsch" in Costa Rica, attempted to find parallels between modern-day Costa Ricans' affections for objects and those of ancient indigenous Costa Ricans, the "first Costa Ricans." The exhibition included baby shoes, christening clothes, gorilla backpacks, Big Bird slippers, replicas of the Venus de Milo and the Mona Lisa, assemblages of kitsch into sculptures, and other actual objects as well as artistic renderings of modern items treasured by contemporary *ticos*. From the daily life of Costa

[83] Plaza de la Cultura.
[84] See the website for the Museos Banco Central de Costa Rica (http://www.museosdelbancocentral.org/ENG/sala_exhibiciones_temporales/exposiciones_anteriores_menu.php).

Ricans and the objects they value on a regular basis (this so-called "kitsch"), the visitors' path in 2001 led them to the objects cherished most by the pre-Hispanic cultures of Costa Rica, gold-alloyed personal adornments, and then to the inner chamber of gold worked by Colonial Spanish hands into money, the thing most appreciated in the European belief system.

The installation of kitsch presented an opening commentary on what is "valuable" or "tasteful" in Costa Rican society and expressed changing hierarchies of value in Costa Rica today. Although the kitsch exhibition curators did not expressly make the parallel of monetary value or market value between kitsch items and gold objects throughout the Museum, they did imply that kitsch is equivalent to art, suggesting an intended comparison between kitsch and gold objects in the entire museum. On the walls of the upper-level galleries a text read:

> "If 'kitsch' is not art, it can be said, at least, that it is the aesthetic of daily life…." -- Abraham Moles, "Kitsch, the Art of Happiness" and "The term 'kitsch' is often used to define that which is **art of bad taste** [read "value"] however, in such an era such as the present, to assert that there exists a **taste above others**, or that a certain **good taste** exists is absurd and elitist. In the present exhibition, the use of the term is left aside" (original bolding, author's brackets).

To begin the Gold Museum visitors' journey here, with these words, suggests a rethinking of the evaluations of art, the items of highest value in any society. Throughout these first galleries, commentary of *tico* kitsch owners, included in the exhibition, implied that the opinion of the curators is shared by the average Costa Rican. The following galleries of "Extraordinarias del Museo del Oro Precolombino"[85] display items used and adored by ancient Costa Ricans in ways presented as similar to the use of the kitsch items

[85] This gallery's name does not translate well into English. Its meaning is something akin to "Extraordinary Things from the Pre-Columbian Gold Museum."

by current Costa Ricans. The religious or political value of these differing objects within these ancient and modern societies has gained equivalency in the eyes of the curators of the exhibition and seemingly *ticos* too.

For example, many of the kitsch works included images of the Virgin Mary or Jesus, key figures in the present-day religion of this Latin American nation, Catholicism, while the ancient Costa Rican gold objects reflect imagery sacred to the pre-Columbian adherents of a shamanic faith. Christening clothes worn by a participant in a Catholic purification ritual compare to gold pendants donned by shamans as they cleanse clients. Shrine images of Catholic deities and saints worshipped during life by *ticos* were shown as parallel golden versions of shamanic supernaturals revered in this life and the next by pre-Hispanic Costa Ricans. Some ancient Costa Rican golden jewelry is similar to ancient pendants from the neighboring lands of present-day Panama and Colombia. To ancient Costa Ricans, these pendants symbolized trade routes and political connections between the chiefs of these distant regions (Hoopes 2005; Bray 2003; Hoopes and Fonseca Zamora 2003; Helms 1998, 1993, 1988, 1979). Similarly, a *tica* child's Big Bird slippers signal a modern-day Costa Rican connection to a foreign power, the United States.

In rethinking ideas of value, the curatorial staff at the Gold Museum decided to privilege the ideas most valued within Costa Rican society, those relating to religion, be it Catholicism in the kitsch exhibit or shamanism in the pre-Columbian gold galleries. Indeed, the gallery didactics of the pre-Columbian portion of the Gold Museum explain the objects within the shamanic religious tradition of ancient indigenous Costa Ricans. The curatorial decision to educate the museum-going public about a tradition quite

foreign to the European-based worldview gives "value" to the shamanic belief system as a legitimate force for creative and spiritual energy in the Americas. Such a tack has not been adopted by many museums around the world with collections of ancient American art, perhaps due to a lack of understanding of shamanism or a perceived tension between European-based and authochthonous American beliefs, as seen at the National Museum of Costa Rica in the closing of the "Religious Room." Researchers at the Gold Museum have delved deeply into understanding the religious complex of shamanism in order to inform themselves and their public of the original intent of the artists of the intricate gold pieces in the Museum and of the ancient peoples who wore and admired these artworks.[86] The entrance to the "Extraordinarias del Museo del Oro Precolombino" invites visitors to view a video entitled "Huellas Doradas/Golden Path," a ten minute presentation alternating between Spanish and English. The film contextualizes ancient Costa Rican gold working by introducing the underlying belief system of shamanism, connecting ancient artistic and cultural practices with those of contemporaneous indigenous Costa Ricans, and explaining that even though not everything is known about these artworks, they provide clues for scholars and the public alike to gain an understanding of the ancient native worldview of Costa Rica.

After viewing the video, museum-goers walk through the galleries leading to the pre-Columbian gold objects. These initial exhibits, with both Spanish and English labels (as almost all the didactics are), depict the daily life of ancient Costa Ricans, including textile weaving and dyeing, and the burial rituals for a deceased chief. The gold objects

[86] See Carlos Aguilar's 1996 catalogue of the highlights of the Gold Museum for a well-written and well-researched text by a Gold Museum scholar on the iconography, function, manufacture, and context of ancient Costa Rican metallurgy. His synthesis of anthropological investigations in the Diquís (southeastern) region of Costa Rica is particularly insightful.

that follow are labeled not only with basic descriptions of "plaque with Talamancan mountains," for example, but also with historical references to the possible uses of the works, such as the citation of the 16th-century Italian chronicler Benzoni, who recorded that shamans wore plaques to accompany soldiers into battle.

To further contextualize these gold pieces visually, the Gold Museum curators have borrowed culturally-appropriate ceramic and volcanic stone sculptures from the National Museum to display alongside contemporaneous gold pieces. During ancient times, shamans and chiefs wore gold jewelry daily as they walked past stone statues surrounding their houses and villages. Once the wearers of these adornments died, their golden jewelry was interred in the tomb along with stone and ceramic objects. Costa Rica's Gold Museum curators now display culturally-related items together with explanatory texts. They have worked hard to illustrate as full a picture as is currently possible regarding the pre-Columbian objects in their collection for museum-goers domestic and international.[87]

To that end, in the 2004 renovations to the pre-Columbian galleries the curators added at the entrance a small show of ancient Costa Rican body decoration, exhibiting flat and roller stamps and first-millennium ceramic effigies displaying body decoration made by such stamps. The exhibit also reconstructed precisely how the stamps were likely used on the body and the vegetal dyes employed. The show was accompanied by a catalogue for sale on the main level in the Museum store (see Fernández Esquivel 2004). Both the catalogue and the exhibit offer some interpretations of the designs, suggesting

[87] In 2004 the Gold Museum revised the Pre-Columbian galleries to incorporate even more non-gold pieces for contextualization and to reinstall the gold pieces in cases less like jeweler's cases, ones more in keeping with museum practices of safe and secure mounting. The displays also are more thematic. The only downside is that with the new displays the pieces are no longer seen in the round as they were in the earlier

their significance to ancient Costa Ricans. The curators also added two other small exhibits at the end of the main pre-Columbian galleries: one on ceramic and weaving manufacture with hands-on activities, primarily for children; and one on current indigenous populations with descriptions of the remaining groups, population estimates, and a large map of the country showing the locations of indigenous reservations. To accompany this installation and to reach out to an indigenous community, Curator Patricia Fernández Esquivel authored a small book on the artistic practices of the Boruca (or Brunka) of southeastern Costa Rica, highlighting their weaving and woodcarving, examples of which are on sale in the Museum store (see Fernández Esquivel 2003). Thus, the Gold Museum staff has tried to give a voice and a face to the descendants of the makers of the ancient artworks in the Museum's collections.

The final exhibition space in the Gold Museum is the Numismatic Museum at the architectural heart of this crypt-like museum. The galleries narrate, exclusively in Spanish in this space only, the changing currency of the Spanish Empire from the inception of "Costa Rica," the "Rich Coast," a land envisioned by 16th-century Spaniards as a goldmine. This separate museum within a museum is the most heavily guarded space of the Gold Museum. Likely this is due to the perception that even today "real money," items stamped as official currency by a modern nation-state such as Spain or Costa Rica, represent a greater value than an object of perhaps equal weight as a coin but shaped into an effigy of an ancient shaman. Even though Gold Museum curators, through their exhibitions of objects of wide-ranging times and shapes, from kitsch to pre-Columbian gold to Spanish coinage, are attempting to instill in the public an appreciation of varied

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glass mounts; so it is more difficult to see how the pieces were manufactured or if they include rattle balls at back, etc.

tastes and values, the entrenched enchantment with golden money from Colonial days onward, seems difficult to overcome. It should be remembered that the Museum's "patrons" are the government who make/mint the money and so the Museum continues to reflect its values.

The Gold Museum has indeed been fortunate to have more funds from its semi-autonomous benefactor, the Central Bank of Costa Rica. These funds have provided reinstallations, bilingual didactics, films, publications, and salaries for highly-educated staffmembers. The pride the curators and their benefactors have in their nation is evident, if still somewhat bound by a Western focus on gold as monetary wealth, a treasure to hoard. This penchant for isolating objects of perceived highest value, seen also in the Golden Tower at the National Museum, also characterizes the Jade Museum.

The Jade Museum

Several blocks from the Gold Museum and the center of downtown lie the adjoining parks Parque Morazan and Parque España, where *ticos* go to relax during the work or school day, as the noise of the commercial district is somewhat distant there. Surrounding the Parque España, on its northern edge, is the National Institute of Insurance,[88] a government institution. Inside, high on the 11th floor, is the Jade Museum.[89] The Jade Museum secures for future generations the objects revered most

[88] Instituto Nacional de Seguros.

[89] Museo del Jade Fidel Tristan. The text for this M.A. thesis was written from 2000-2003 with some updates in 2006, when it was officially approved. Prior to its formal presentation to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Emory University for the pilot progam of digitization, I returned to Costa Rica (March 2007) and visited the Jade Museum. As promised several years ago, the Jade Museum has now been renovated (as of late 2006) and relocated to the ground floor of the INS building. The new Jade Museum exhibits are theme-based and both educational and aesthetic. This renovation reinforces the focus of this section of the M.A. regarding Costa Rican advancement in the stewardship of its collections, particularly at the more fully-funded Gold and Jade Museums. As of March 2007, the Gold Museum continues to mount

highly by indigenous Costa Ricans in the first half of the first millennium C.E. Before gold working techniques from South America were in vogue, greenstone carving was the most prestigious art form. Pendants of worked jadeite, serpentinite, quartz, or any stone of a greenish hue were worn by shamans and chiefs as status symbols of their power and control over the agricultural cycles and their natural environs. Displays within the Jade Museum focus on the individuality of different greenstone jewels, originally worn by such ancient leaders, but these exhibits also attempt to place the works in their original settings.

A large three-dimensional topographical map of Costa Rica greets visitors upon entering the Jade Museum. Inset in this three-dimensional map are works of art from the differing regions of Costa Rica and its neighbors, including not only jade-carving but also ceramics and volcanic stone masterpieces. Beyond this introductory diorama, jade pendants, beads, and large pectorals as well as a few ceramic and volcanic stone sculptures find homes in aesthetically-appealing cases dotting the landscape of this upper-storey space, from which museum-goers see a panoramic view of the entire capital city. This Costa Rican museum, just as the National Museum and the Gold Museum, contextualizes ancient indigenous artworks within its displays and expresses clearly the uses of these objects by their original owners.[90] The Jade Museum administration and staff work closely with those of the Gold Museum and the National Museum to promote an accurate image of pre-Columbian Costa Rica. They lend pieces between the three museums to fill cultural gaps in the differing collections. The Jade Museums' funding

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educational and aesthetic temporary exhibits with accompanying catalogues in Spanish and English, and the National Museum of Costa Rica continues to maintain its old, dilapidated exhibitions.

[90] The Jade Museum also undertook renovations in the first few years of the 21st century, but the new exhibits do not differ much from the old. The primary difference is some updated wall texts. The Jade

from the National Institute of Insurance has provided for modest renovations and several well-researched and fairly well-illustrated publications in the last decade (Soto Méndez 1996).

Even though materials such as gold and jade were separated from stone and ceramic objects by the earliest European invaders of Costa Rica and later by looters and collectors of the 19th and 20th centuries, the museums' curators at the turn to the third millennium C.E. have been trying through integrated exhibits to recontextualize these pieces ripped from their original contexts over the centuries, but the fact that the three museums are separated primarily by media due to Western perceptions of value -- gold at the Gold Museum, jade at the Jade Museum, and primarily ceramics and volcanic stone (what looters often leave behind) at the more archaeological National Museum -- represents the underlying Western values that established these institutions.

The Costa Rican Center of Science and Culture: The National Gallery, The National Auditorium, and The Children's Museum

While the National Museum of Costa Rica appears almost neglected by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports and the Gold and Jade Museums are better funded by their supporting national financial institutions, the Costa Rican Center for Science and Culture receives funding from both the government and Costa Rican banks, as well as global corporations. The Costa Rican Center of Science and Culture houses the National Gallery, the National Auditorium, and the Children's Museum.[91] The complex that holds

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Museum website states that more renovations are currently in process (http://portal.ins-cr.com/Social/MuseoJade/ [accessed April 16, 2006]).

[91] El Centro Costarricense de la Ciencia y la Cultura: Galeria Nacional, Auditorio Nacional, y el Museo de los Niños.

all these facilities is situated on a hill above the city, a brief jaunt north from downtown. Once inside, the space feels miles away from the dirt, crime, and noise of San José. The focus of this facility is children and education, particularly science education. The complex was renovated from its former penitentiary form in 1994 through grants from Costa Rican banks and major corporations, likely intending science training to provide Costa Rica with more qualified scientists and engineers (or at least workers in such fields) in the years to come, to keep the small nation in competition with other countries or to at least attract global corporations, like Intel. This global giant, which produces computer chips, is now one of the top three exporters from Costa Rica. Intel hires Costa Rican nationals to work in its factories and relocates U.S. engineers and managers to its main location north of San José (Intel Corporation 2006; International Campaign for Responsible Technology 1998). Within the halls of this museum complex, art and corporate sponsorship are already intertwined. The Costa Rican penchant for utilizing museums as tools of business is prevalent at this public space.

The National Gallery halls, each funded by a different bank, display contemporary art from exquisite carvings in rain forest hard woods by Sylvia Lizano to a series on people's lives in mixed media by Walter Herrera to photographs by Dinorah Carballo to paintings of nature by Jorge Rojas Alfaro. Some works are thought-provoking politically or socially or environmentally, but all are examples of high quality Costa Rican art. Additionally, photographs and texts in one gallery explain the history of the building as a penitentiary, including the story of the inmates, some members of the gangs Black Scorpions or Sons of the Devil, and the history of the marijuana trade and massacres in the prison. Architecturally, the complex flows smoothly between the

National Gallery, the National Auditorium, and the Children's Museum with contemporary Costa Rican art spread throughout. The Children's Museum is usually filled with hundreds of young visitors learning interactively how Costa Rica's environment functions or about other aspects of the natural world. Interspersed throughout the galleries are banners touting corporate sponsors. It is not without design that both the Guatemalan and Costa Rican children's museums are funded by global corporations. The brightly colored banners and logos on displays in both museums will be remembered consciously or subconsciously for years in the minds of these youngsters. The corporate sponsors intend that their beneficence will be recalled admiringly and that the international corporations will begin to replace the national government and the National Museum as authority and caretaker figure for young *ticos*, who will grow up to be the corporations' workers and consumers.

Boruca Museum

On the Boruca indigenous reservation along the Río Terraba in southeastern Costa Rica, a group of mainly women, organized by Marina Lázaro Morales, a Boruca entrepreneur, has opened a small museum of ancient Boruca art (called Diquís art by archaeologists). They also exhibit and sell contemporary examples of their own work, primarily carved wooden masks, engraved gourds, and textiles woven from fibers dyed naturally in the village. The curator-artists offer demonstrations of dyeing, weaving, and carving.[92] These women enlisted the help of some *tica* women to establish their museum and have made certain it is mentioned in guidebooks to Costa Rica and by travel agents in

[92] In 2005 when I visited, the Museum was under reconstruction due to storm damage, but at our request, the Boruca women under Doña Marina Morales (a leading figure in her village) set up a temporary museum

San José.[93] The Boruca Museum receives funds from purchases by tourists and through sales at shops such as the one at the Gold Museum and galleries in San José. The presentation is based on Boruca understandings of the world and is flexible because the curator-artists answer whatever questions guests wish to ask (within reason). They welcome travellers to live in the village and learn Spanish and/or their language and customs. The Museum is not sponsored by the national government or corporations; the voice is clearly indigenous. Tensions between the indigenous government and the national government do exist, particularly with regard to native sovereignty within Costa Rica's borders and over land uses (Margarita Lázaro personal communication 2005).[94]

One would imagine that if the national government wished to represent more fully the views of "Our First People" and their living descendants, funds would be provided for the Boruca Museum as well as the National Museum and that curators from both would be encouraged to work together, as the Gold Museum curator has initiated. The "white legend," as promoted at the National Museum, has excluded natives' voices, even though until c. 2000, it had claimed to include their ancestors as the "First Costa Ricans." The idealized blending of all previous Costa Ricans into one *tico* identity, but one a typical *tico* will say is "white" or "Spanish," presents a narrative of social equality and democracy in the country, but tensions arising from inequalities in Costa Rica are evident in an assessment of the presentation of identities at the varying museums in the nation's capital in comparison to that at the rustic museum created independently by one of the

for the class with whom I was touring.

[93] Jamison 2005; Aida Blanco Vargas personal communication 2005; Fernández Esquivel 2003.

[94] Margarita Lázaro, sister of Marina Lázaro Morales, stated that the Spanish government provided local autonomy to the Boruca in the 18th century and that that tribal sovereignty was upheld in the Republic of Costa Rica constitutions. However, today there are discussions between the Boruca Association, made up of eight persons who serve two years, and the Costa Rican central government, regarding hunting rights in Boruca territory, among other disputes. The national government has attempted to administer certain rules

nation's native groups.

The National Museum's approach to presentation of indigenous cultures could be considered "top-down," and the Boruca's own "bottom-up," while those of the Gold and Jade Museums fall somewhere in between. Some historians of nationalism, such as Eric Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner, and Terence Ranger, attribute the formation of nations to leaders who invent or fabricate national identity and sentiment from the "top-down."[95] However, another nationalist historian, Benedict Anderson, has theorized a "bottom-up" approach to nation-forming. Anderson coined the phrase "imagined communities," which encapsulates his belief that nations are not the products solely of nationalist engineers who invent or fabricate a false sense of camaraderie among completely diverse groups. Instead Anderson argues that all communities are "created" or "imagined" by various groups from the "bottom-up" through their sense of sharing. Diverse peoples begin to believe they have certain aspects or traits in common with other seemingly similar folk, and they view certain media as connecting them to their neighbors near and far.[96] Early in the history of nationalism, such media included newspapers, journals, novels, and public spaces and, later, radio, television, and cinema. National museums have participated in this history from its inception. In Anderson's "bottom-up" argument for nationalism,

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or laws on Boruca land, and the Boruca are frustrated by these impositions.

[95] I am indebted to a fellow student, Daniel Slater, in a class on vernacular modernity(-ies) of fall 2000 for helping me, through a class discussion, to grapple with and eventually adopt his terms "bottom-up" and "top-down" with relation to nationalism.

[96] I refer to Anderson's phrase "imagined [or created] communities" throughout this thesis because I agree with Anderson that it reads with a particular nuance that is perhaps not evident in words such as "invented"; e.g. Anderson critiques Ernest Gellner's use of the word "invent": "With a certain ferocity Gellner makes a comparable point when he rules that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist.' The drawback to this formulation, however, is that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences [sic] that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'...Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 1982, 6). I believe readers will be impressed with the style Pedro Ramírez Vázquez imagined for Mexico.

citizens hold more responsibility for the creation of a national identity. From a "top-down" perspective of nationalism, the responsibility for inventing a national feeling falls on government officials alone. It seems more plausible that nations are formed from a combination of both of these approaches. The Boruca efforts at creating their own museum and the acceptance and promotion of their work by Gold Museum Curator Patricia Fernández Esquivel suggests the beginnings of a "bottom-up" movement at a national narrative in Costa Rica's museums. Perhaps more indigenous groups will copy the Boruca.[97] The bottom-up approach combined with a top-down message from the government seems more democratic and offers for more flexibility in a nationalist narrative and a national identity.

In sum, the Costa Rican government has claimed to be pro-democracy and pro-citizen. A higher percentage of the population of Costa Rica vote than citizens in the U.S. (likely because the small Latin American nation has made voting mandatory) (Hirczy 1997). Election Day in Costa Rica is on a Sunday, making going to the polls manageable for working people. There is a sense of pride associated with voting and participating in citizenship in Costa Rica (personal observation 1996-2005). Likewise, *tico* curators at the National Museum and the Gold and Jade Museums try to work together to present a democratic view of their nation, including indigenous groups. There surely has been

[97] A mostly mestizo group, calling themselves Chorotega (an indigenous northwestern Costa Rican culture formed from the blending of ancient Costa Rican Chibchan and immigrant Mesoamerican Oto-Manguean groups from 800 CE onward), has established a ceramics cooperative with workshop and small store in San Vicente, Nicoya Peninsula. This facility and the home workshops of many ceramicists between the towns of San Vicente and Guatíl are open to the public, but the Chorotega have not established a "museum." Other groups have formed cooperatives; for example, a Bribri group in northeastern Costa Rica established a cooperative for cacao production; they provide tours and open their meeting hall to visitors, where they sell some chocolate powder for making hot cocoa and some other home-made chocolate treats, but they also do not have a "museum." The Guaymí of Coto Brus, upon request, will set up a room in a community building for the sale of women's clothes they have sewn, but they do not have a "museum" or formal space for promoting their culture (personal observation 2001-2005).

some success because Costa Rica did not experience civil war when other Central American nations did during the last quarter of the 20th century, and, in fact, in the 1980s the Costa Rican President Oscar Arias led the Central American Peace Accords. However, closer examination of master versus sub-narratives at these museums and the Boruca Museum reveals societal tensions between these groups, noted particularly in the lack of funding for an indigenous-run exhibition space (as is the current trend in the United States). Comparison with the National Gallery and Children's Museum reveals another trend, more indicative of the future perhaps: sponsorship by independent financial institutions and global corporations, initiated primarily to gain access to the minds of the next generation at an early age. The new trend from nationalism to globalism is emerging in Costa Rica incrementally. Thus, it remains to be seen how a transition to a more globally connected economy will affect Costa Rica's national self-image, perhaps one to be determined from a combined "bottom-up" and "top-down" approach.

CONCLUSION

The recontextualization of indigenous artworks in these three nations has allowed for the promotion of nationalist narratives, very specific in the cases of Mexico and 20th-century Costa Rica and less so for their neighbor, Guatemala. In Mexico, the Aztecs have been seen as not only the zenith of pre-Hispanic civilization but also almost as a culture-group to be worshipped in the manner of the Catholic god by all Mexican citizens. This small group, mostly killed off by the conquistadors in the 16th century, cannot today protest their elevation to this mythic status, one that provides the foundation for a top-

down unified Mexican heritage.

In Guatemala, the opportunity to present a national narrative has not been fully exploited by the present government, perhaps due to corruption and misuse of government funds, or to the high population of indigenous descendants of the makers of the art objects inside the National Museums' walls. International organizations willing to provide aid to the Guatemalan national museums or corporate sponsors hoping to gain new customers might be the museums' main hope for object preservation, but with the switch to non-national support the messages transmitted by these museums will likely change. The Guatemalan government may be sacrificing its chance to create a stronger master narrative of nationalism, but the sub-narrative for Guatemala's museums clearly reveals the government's priorities for a nationalist master narrative are low, likely due to graft on the part of conservative administrations and continued lack of available funds under progressive governments, who work to rebuild after corrupt regimes. Or it could also be that the intense animosity between the half of the population that is indigenous Maya and the other Hispanic half is impossible to overcome for a nationalist master narrative.

In the opening chapter of her book *A Finger in the Wound,* Diane Nelson records an anecdote about a *ladino* man outraged that his culture was being overshadowed by Maya culture in the eyes of the world during the Quincentennial commemorations:

> The worst part of all this Five Hundred Years stuff is the Maya saying that the ladinos have no culture. How ignorant! I am ladino, petit bourgeois, and they tell me I have no culture! We have our literary tradition and a history of resistance! We have a valiant history. We have our own Nobel Prize winner in Miguel Angel Asturias! (25).

The feuding between these two groups has been ongoing since the 16th century and has

not found much peace from an imagined all-inclusive national identity. The Maya reject a shared history with the Spanish or their descendants, "emphasizing the violence of that 'meeting' [of Maya and Spanish], the rapes that produced the racial mixing of *mestizaje*, the appropriation of their culture (Classic Mayan ruins, indigenous ritual life, and traditional clothing) to identify Guatemala, and they question the entire logic of *blanqueamiento* (whitening)" (ibid. 12). The racial strife in Guatemala appears too great for the country to imagine a shared identity. There is no *guatemalense* or *guatemalidad*. There are *ladino* and Maya. Likely, the Maya will continue to work with foreign individuals and international organizations and corporations to promote their identity. Meanwhile, concerned government museum officials and consultants will continue to push for reforms to the national museums with modest successes, but a strong national narrative ever emerging from Guatemala seems improbable.

In Costa Rica, the artwork of the past fills the introductory gallery to the National Museum, suggesting through word and object, that the people who created these sculptures of wood, stone, and clay were not only the first people of Costa Rica but also the ancestors of the entire current population. However, their true descendants have been partitioned off to lands in the distant mountains of the small nation. The *latino* children of Costa Rica may feel they have a rich heritage from the pre-Columbian peoples, but until very recently these children have not been presented with information or artworks of the modern indigenous groups of Costa Rica. There is a "disconnect" that allows for one view of the modern Costa Rican, as a "whitened" *tico* or *tica*. The National Museum officials in San José are working to integrate the artworks of ancient indigenous groups with those of Spanish heritage, but the current arrangement of the galleries, particularly

the separate gold exhibit, would need to be rethought for a more indigenous presentation of the artworks their ancestors created. The Gold Museum is moving in this direction and working with indigenous artists. Indigenous artists are also inventing their own museums with master narratives told from their own points of view. Perhaps the Costa Rican government will find value in funding the efforts of native groups like the Boruca in presenting their own stories. Such funding would further the veracity of Costa Rica's claims of true democracy. Thus far, funding of that sort is not available.

The current trend of corporate sponsorship at the Children's Museum in a country quickly growing as a site for global corporate manufacturing suggests a move away from nationalism to globalism, as paralleled in Guatemala's Children's Museum. The 19th- and 20th-century nationalist movements and their museums may become relics of the era of nation-states. Corporate sponsors may dominate in the 21st century, offering a new, non-governmental "top-down" perspective. Simultaneously, however, indigenous groups work for themselves to voice their histories and alter false perceptions presented by "white" curators, offering a "bottom-up" approach for the new century.[98] The future of national museums is uncertain, but at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico and the Gold Museum and the Jade Museum in Costa Rica today's curators are trying to integrate respect for living native peoples into exhibits, thereby bringing their museums into the 21st century and alleviating some social tensions. The balance is extremely difficult. Adding funding problems and cultural and environmental property theft issues into the balance increases the difficulty of presenting a master narrative for Latin American nations that wish to promote unity in diversity. Current displays show that the

[98] Recent research has shown that even with intensified globalism, individual ethnicities remain strong (Appadurai 1996; Bhabha 1994).

edges are frayed literally and figuratively.

Social tensions, blanketed over at museums in their "master narratives," emerge when "sub-narratives" are examined. The sub-narrative of Mexico's national museums shows a nation absorbed in balancing Spanish Catholicism and Spanish culture with a very diverse population struggling with class and ethnicity issues. The government's solution has been to subsume all the ethnic groups into a blend of Aztec and Catholic, into *mexicanidad*, and Mexico's intense focus on *mexicanidad* has been fairly effective. Guatemala's attempts to copy their "Ego Ideal," Mexico, have been considerably less successful, perhaps due to the difficulties of blending two belligerent groups, the Maya and *ladino*, as opposed to the hundreds of different cultures in Mexico. But Costa Rica has perhaps been most successful in keeping the peace and spreading Costa Rican unity in its small nation through democratic initiatives, presented as *costarricense* at the National Museum and reinvigorated each time a Costa Rican refers to himself as *tico*. Under all of these national identities lurk societal problems, but at present these are kept in check partly by the propagandistic nationalist efforts of these Latin American national museums, even in the face of emerging globalism.

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Figures

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Fig. 2 Hubert Robert, *Project for the Arrangement of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre,* 1780s, oil on canvas (See McClellan 1996, 35)

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Fig. 7 The Aztec Sun (or Calendar) Stone (See García-Bárcena, Joaquín and Manrique Castañeda 1999, 80)

Fig. 8 The statue of the Aztec goddess Coatlicue (See García-Bárcena, Joaquín and Manrique Castañeda 1999, 81)

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Fig. 10 National Museum (Museo Nacional), 13 Moneda Street, Mexico City, built 1734 as the Colonial mint; from 1865-1964 the National Museum (See Ramírez Vázquez, 1968, 11)

Fig. 11 Rural Schools Project, 1958-. Architects: Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and Ramiro González del Sordo. Civil Engineer: Elias Macotela García (See Pizarro Corcuera and Schroeder 1989, 50-53)

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Fig. 14 Entrance to the National Museum of Anthropology, Chapultepec Park, Mexico City, 1964. Architects: Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, Rafael Mijares, Jorge Campuzano, Roberto Monter Carpio. Civil Engineer: Francisco Alonso Cue. Engineering: Colinas de Buen. Coordination of museography: Alfonso Soto Soría and Mario Vázquez (See García-Bárcena and Castañeda 1999, 8)

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Fig. 26 Attributed to Juan Rodríguez Juárez, *De mestizo y de india produce coyote* (Mestizo and Indian Produce a Coyote), c. 1715, oil on canvas (See Katzew 2004, 14 fig. 18)

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Fig. 28 Sculpture of eagle with serpent in its beak and talons on a cactus, in the "Enclosure" ("Recinto") of the Gallery of History (See Pizarro Corcuera and Schroeder 1989, 18)

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Fig. 30 Floorplan of the National Museum of Anthropology, Chapultepec Park, Mexico City, 1964. Architects: Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, Rafael Mijares, Jorge Campuzano, Roberto Monter Carpio. Civil Engineer: Francisco Alonso Cue. Engineering: Colinas de Buen. Coordination of museography: Alfonso Soto Soría and Mario Vázquez (See García-Bárcena and Castañeda 1999, 5)

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Fig. 48 Oaxaca Hall (original), National Museum of Anthropology (See Ramírez Vázquez 1968, 113)

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Fig. 52 Western Mexico Hall (original), National Museum of Anthropology (See Ramírez Vázquez 1968, 169). Note that the first image of this hall Ramírez Vázquez selected for his chapter on the space includes a Central Mexican type chacmool, rather than the more typical West Mexican ceramics.

Fig. 53 Diorama of Huastec potters, National Museum of Anthropology (See Solís 1999, 46)

Fig. 54 Diorama of a Oaxacan village, National Museum of Anthropology (See Solís 1999, 47)

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Fig. 56 Map of Guatemala City (See Eltringham et al. 1999, 294ff)

Fig. 57 Façade of the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Guatemala City (See Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes/Instituto de Antropología e Historia n.d.1, cover)

Fig. 58 Principales Culturas banner of the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 59 Broken window over map of the Americas in the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 60 Central courtyard of the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 61 Floorplan of the National Museum of Natural History, Guatemala City (See Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes/Instituto de Antropología e Historia. n.d.2.)

Fig. 62 Exterior view of National Palace, Guatemala City (See Thor Janson/Green Lightning Productions 1997)

Fig. 63 Pilasters along walkways inside the National Palace, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

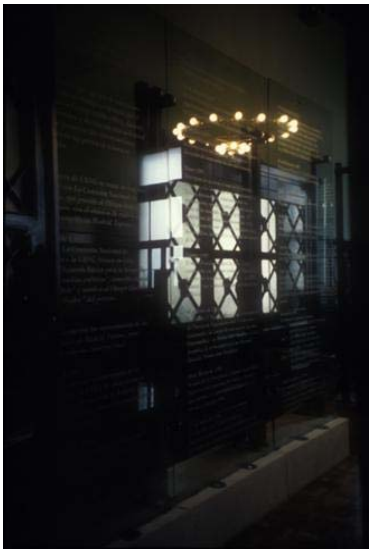

Fig. 64 Displays in the first Peace Accords Gallery, National Palace, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

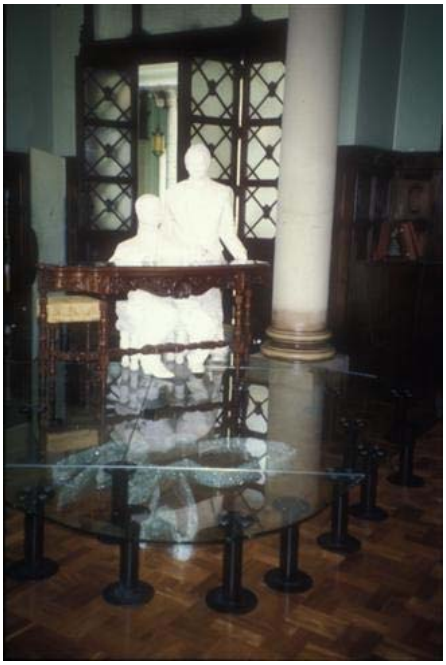

Fig. 65 “Paz” (“Peace”) display in the Peace Accords Galleries, National Palace, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 66 Detail of the “Paz” (“Peace”) display in the Peace Accords Galleries, National Palace, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 67 Displays in the second Peace Accords Gallery, National Palace, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 68 Exterior view of Tikal Museum, Guatemala (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 69 Model of the site, Tikal Museum, Guatemala (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 70 Interior of the Tikal Museum, Guatemala (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 71 Exterior of the Ixchel Museum, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

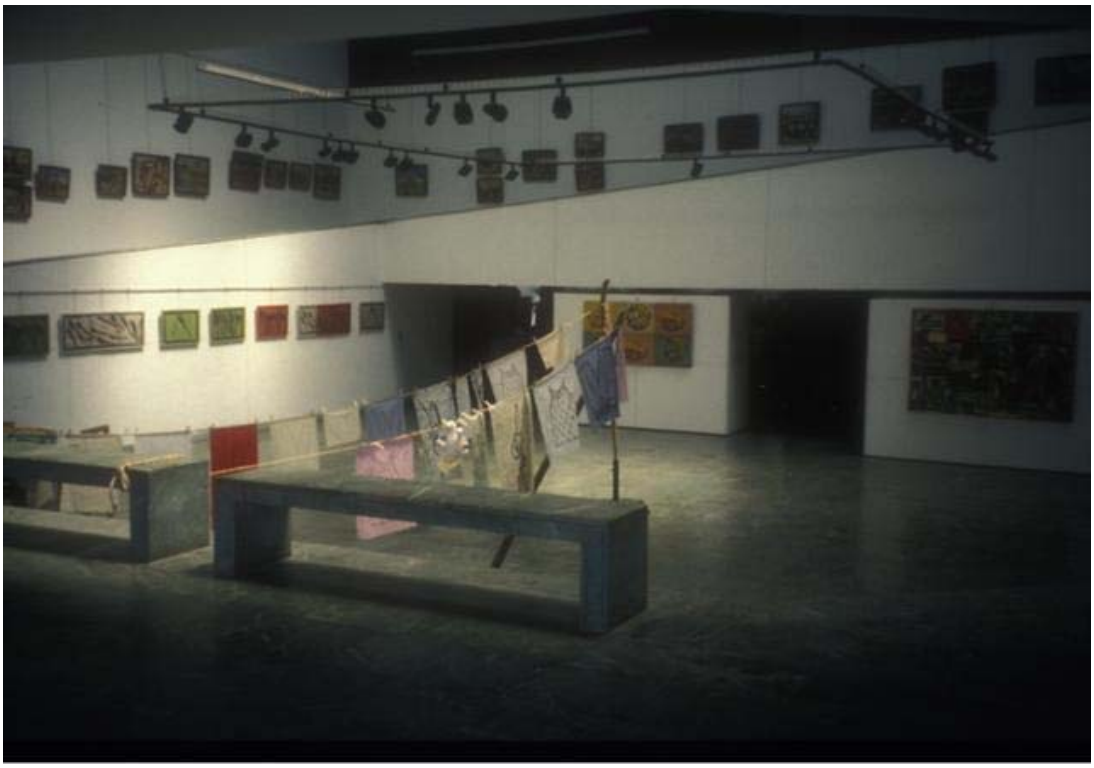

Fig. 72 Lobby of the Ixchel Museum, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 73 Exterior of the Popol Vuh Museum, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

Fig. 74 Maya stone sculpture in the Popol Vuh Museum, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

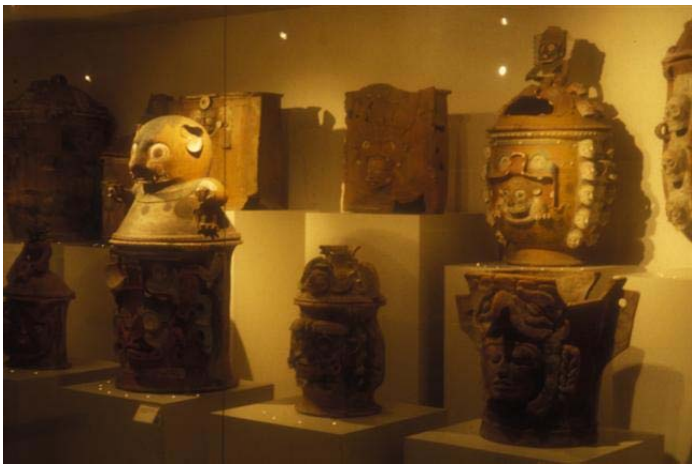

Fig. 75 Maya ceramic art at the Popol Vuh Museum, Guatemala City (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2000)

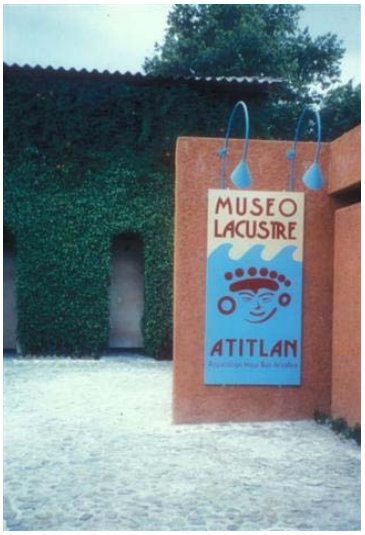

Fig. 76 Exterior of the Lake Museum, Panajachel, Guatemala (photography by Sofía Parédes-Maury, August 2000, included with her permission)

Fig. 77 Volcanic model, Lake Museum, Panajachel, Guatemala (photography by Sofía Parédes-Maury, August 2000, included with her permission)

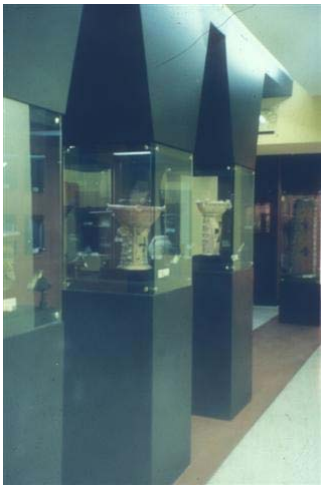

Fig. 78 “Aesthetically-designed” gallery, Lake Museum, Panajachel, Guatemala (photography by Sofía Parédes-Maury, August 2000, included with her permission)

Fig. 79 First National Museum of Costa Rica (1887-1896) (See San Román Johanning 1987, 21)

Fig. 80 Archaeological collection of José Rojas Troyo (See San Román Johanning 1987, 23)

Fig. 81 Second location for the National Museum of Costa Rica, the gardens of The Labyrinth, San José (See San Román Johanning 1987, 25)

Fig. 82 The Cuartel Bella Vista, site of the National Museum of Costa Rica since 1948 (See San Román Johanning 1987, 35)

Fig. 83 The archaeological collection in new galleries at Cuartel Bella Vista (1949-1950) (See San Román Johanning 1987, 39)

Fig. 84 The natural history collection in new galleries at Cuartel Bella Vista (1949-1950) (See San Román Johanning 1987, 39)

Fig. 85 Floorplan of the National Museum of Costa Rica (See Museo Nacional de Costa Rica 2000)

Fig. 86 Floorplan of the National Museum of Costa Rica (See Museo Nacional de Costa Rica 2006)

Fig. 87 Diorama of indigenous Costa Rican housing, Costa Rica Our First History Gallery, National Museum of Costa Rica (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2004)

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Fig. 89 Exhibit of c. 1100 CE excavation at La Seiba, Tempisque Valley, Guanacaste, Costa Rica by National Museum of Costa Rica archaeologist Juan Vicente Guerrero Miranda, Costa Rica Our First History Gallery, National Museum of Costa Rica (photography by Laura Brannen, August 2004)

Fig. 90 Display case in the "Golden Tower," National Museum of Costa Rica (See San Román Johanning 1987, 114)

Fig. 91 Repoussè Gold Disk Depicting Saurian and Mountains, on display in the "Golden Tower," National Museum of Costa Rica (See San Román Johanning 1987, 115)