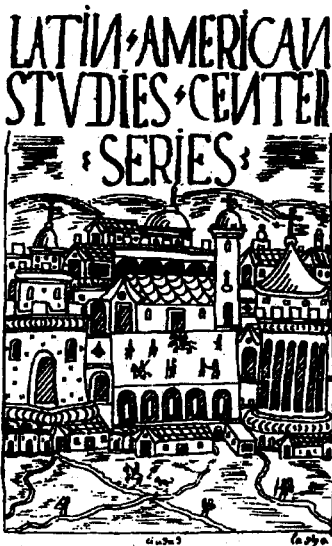


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*1991-92*

*Mexico and the Royal Indian —*  
*The Porfiriato and the National Past*



*No. 8*

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## Mexico and the Royal Indian —

### The Porfiriato and the National Past

Countries with long colonial experiences often face enormous problems in creating a new sense of nationality and identity once they become independent. Mexico furnishes a good opportunity to look at this phenomenon since it has been quite successful in maintaining its national identity, despite the fact that it shares a 2,000 mile border with the United States, the strongest power of the twentieth century. Therefore, it is instructive to look at how Mexicans constructed their national history once they achieved independent status.

As Benedict Anderson has pointed out in his seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, the colonies of Spain and Portugal faced a vastly more complicated set of obstacles in creating independent identities than did the former colonies in Southeast Asia. Not only did the sons and daughters of the European conquerors born in Latin America speak the European mother tongue in preference to any indigenous language, but they practiced the same religion as well. Given that they wished to maintain these commonalities, how then were the leaders of the new nations to distinguish themselves from their former masters once independence had been declared?<sup>1</sup> The situation was additionally complicated given that the ruling classes in Latin America had no desire to separate themselves permanently from European culture and style.

It is a pity that Anderson did not draw on the Mexican case for answers because its example is particularly instructive. No one would deny that Mexico has had a fascinating history beginning with the Olmecs probably before 800 BC to the present day. At the time of the Spanish conquest of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan<sup>2</sup> (present-day

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London/New York: Verso, 1991), chapter 4. I would like to thank Professor Vincent C. Peloso for alerting me to this work.

<sup>2</sup> In keeping with current thought, I have chosen to render pre-Columbian indigenous names without accent marks.

Mexico City), there were over 200 distinct indigenous societies in the area subsequently to be ruled by Spain, speaking some 50 distinguishable languages. This remarkable past would provide fodder for dealing with an equally remarkable experience after independence.

Despite frequent assertions to the contrary, the Spanish conquistadores and the Catholic missionary friars did much to preserve information about what they certainly regarded as the heathen and diabolical "religious" practices of the indigenous peoples they encountered. In some cases, also, they encouraged the development of what would come to be known as the *mestizo* by marrying Indian princesses to Spanish military men.<sup>3</sup> As Lockhart's work shows, the transformation of the Nahuatl people who inhabited the central valley of Mexico into Spanish-speaking Christians took centuries to evolve.<sup>4</sup>

Equally complex was the mental transformation by which the descendants of those who had conquered the land for the Spanish Crown together with those Europeans who immigrated there subsequently would come to link themselves with the pre-Columbian past of that territory, separate and apart from Spain and Europe. From the perception of the prior rulers of this realm as devils at the outset of the Conquest they would come to adopt the pretense at least that its previous inhabitants were their cultural, if not blood, kin, while, at the same time, maintaining a genuine and fierce loyalty to Spanish and European culture as well.

The reevaluation of the Aztecs began in New Spain in the seventeenth century notably with the research of the Jesuit Manuel Duarte (previously attributed to Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Mexico) on the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl. In his writings, Sigüenza y Góngora contrasted the noble Aztecs with the royalty of the Greco-Roman world, and even connected them with the Hebrews, the Egyptians, and the Christians. Further, he conceived the idea that the god Quetzalcoatl was really Saint Thomas

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the case of Emperor Moctezuma's daughter Isabel as told in Donald Chipman, "Isabel Moctezuma: Pioneer of Mestizaje," in Sweet and Nash, eds., *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 214-27.

<sup>4</sup> James Lockhart, *The Nahuatl After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

the Apostle. The Enlightenment rediscovered the Aztecs as part of a scholarly search for past civilizations. After King Charles III expelled the Jesuit order from New Spain in 1767, the homesick priests now living in Italy wrote substantial treatises on the Aztec past. Key among these men was Francisco Javier de Clavijero. In 1780 he published *Historia antigua de México* in Bologna, which fleshed out the new view of the Aztecs, even though he never accepted Sigüenza's belief in the Quetzalcoatl-Saint Thomas identification. Clavijero thought that God had permitted the Spanish to conquer the Aztecs as punishment for their sins, but at the same time he stressed that Aztec polytheism was superior to the Greek or Roman varieties.<sup>5</sup>

When the creoles identified Quetzalcoatl with Saint Thomas, they effectively distanced themselves from the "motivation" and "gift" of the Spanish Conquest—the conversion of the Indians to Christianity. If it were true that Saint Thomas had indeed come to the New World after the Resurrection and been remembered or referred to as Quetzalcoatl in Mexico, Viracocha in Peru, and other pre-Columbian deities elsewhere in the region, then the New World had received the word of Christ centuries before the coming of the Spaniards. And if He had been revealed as the Savior at such an early date, it put the Western Hemisphere on equal terms with Spain and was poignant evidence of creole equality with *peninsulares* at home and in Europe.

The Spanish authorities in New Spain apparently did not consider this rediscovery of the Aztecs to be as subversive of the colonial power structure as it would later become. Indeed, prior to the resurgence of Spanish immigration to the New World following the *Visita General* of José de Gálvez in 1764, creoles and their peninsular cousins lived in relative harmony, secure of their cultural superiority over the lower orders of society. But as creoles were replaced in both business and government by Spaniards, tensions within the family exacerbated. In 1790, Viceroy Revillagigedo ordered that the recently-excavated Stone of the Sun (sometimes known as the Aztec calendar stone) be placed in a corner location in the Cathedral in the Central Plaza of Mexico City.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 1971), pp. 192-93, 292-99.

<sup>6</sup> Ignacio Bernal credits this decision to the enlightened attitudes that King Carlos III brought to Spain. See Ignacio Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archeology* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p. 81.

Yet, only few years later, in 1794, the Dominican Fray Servando Teresa de Mier would deliver a sermon that would change the nature of the debate considerably. In his pronouncement, he connected the miraculous appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe with the missionary work of Saint Thomas. In 1813, while in England, he published his *Historia de la revolución de Nueva España, Antiguamente Anahuac*, which explicitly contended that Spain had contributed nothing to Mexico.<sup>7</sup> At last, Mexican creoles had found a way to distinguish themselves from their peninsular rivals and create a polity independent from the Spanish homeland.

From the very beginning of its life as an independent republic, Mexico had at least two contrasting schools of thought about how it should regard both its culture and its colonial past. During the first decades after independence, many like Lucas Alamán tried to rehabilitate the Spanish heritage, attempting to glorify failed Emperor Agustín de Iturbide as the hero of independence in preference to Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and his Indian and mestizo followers. But creoles proved largely unresponsive to that approach because it demanded both the acceptance of European cultural domination as well as a state-sanctioned cult of Iturbide.

The other course promised intellectual independence not just from Spain, but from all of Europe. It required, however, that Mexico construct a viable alternative to the Spanish-dominated colonial past. It found its contrasting metaphor in the Aztecs, a genuine power that had predated the Spaniards and with whom the vast majority of the population had some physical resemblance, if not historical tie. The government approved the establishment of a National Museum on March 18, 1825, shortly after the promulgation of the republican Constitution of 1824. At that time the Museum contained botanical gardens and objects of natural history as well as artifacts from pre-Columbian civilizations including the famous statue of Coatlicue and the Stone of Tizoc. But the museum was only open on Tuesdays and Thursdays and then only with the permission of the director.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Keen, *Aztec Image*, pp. 317-20.

<sup>8</sup> Luis Castillo Ledón, *El Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, 1825-1925* (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, 1924), pp. 10-12. Bernal points out that it was Lucas Alamán who should be given credit for the establishment of the Museum and who played a leading role in its



Santa Anna reopened the controversy by seeking to link himself with Iturbide, rather than Hidalgo. During his monumental period, October 10, 1841 to September 7, 1844, during which the President ostentatiously buried the leg he had lost during the defense of Veracruz against the French in 1838, Santa Anna commissioned a statue in honor of "Independence and Liberty." The distinguished Spanish architect Lorenzo de la Hidalga (1810-1872) won the competition with a design that planned to feature such subjects as the Grito de Dolores (Hidalgo), the Grito de Iguala (Iturbide), the Entrance of the Triumphal Army (Iturbide), and the Battle of Tampico (Santa Anna). Santa Anna approved the statue on August 23, 1843 and assigned Pedro García Conde, later of US-Mexican boundary survey fame, to supervise its construction. It was never built because the President was removed from office the following year.<sup>9</sup> The battle between the Hidalgo and Iturbide factions continued and exacerbated following the conclusion of the war with the United States when Lucas Alamán redoubled his efforts with the publication of his *Historia de Méjico* (1849-1852).<sup>10</sup>

The controversy continued because while Hidalgo, who conveniently suffered a martyr's death, had his lack of imperial pretensions in his favor, the Aztec component of the equation presented a variety of complex problems. The pre-Columbian rulers of the Valley of Mexico had practiced human sacrifice and forced their vanquished foes to pay oppressively high tributes. Small wonder more Indians fought *with* Cortés than against him. Nevertheless, the Aztecs had dominated the regional seat of power, the Central Valley, built the forerunner to Mexico City, Tenochtitlan, and offered a convenient and legitimate, if messy, counterweight to the claims of European culture.

The French Intervention into Mexico finally settled the issue. The liberal Emperor Maximilian brought a European perspective to Mexico and tried, perhaps almost unconsciously, to show his new subjects how to inculcate a sense of national identity and pride within a modernizing

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evolution. That is not particularly inconsistent with his emphasis on the Spanish colonial past; to preserve artifacts is not necessarily to venerate them. See Bernal, *Mexican Archeology*, p. 136.

<sup>9</sup> Justino Fernández, *El arte moderno en México* (Mexico City: Antigua Librería Robredo, José Porrúa e Hijos, 1937), pp. 115-16.

<sup>10</sup> See Charles Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 11-38.

framework.<sup>11</sup> During his brief reign, he initiated efforts in two major directions and promoted a third that would strongly influence Mexican history and culture to the present day.

Beginning almost immediately after his arrival in the capital, the Emperor revamped Mexico City, devised plans for statues affecting the perception of Mexican history, and fostered archeological expeditions to explore the national pre-Columbian past. For example, he decided that he would make Mexico City a more efficient capital by constructing an avenue that would run directly from his Alcázar de Chapultepec to the Palacio Nacional downtown. He named his new road the Calzada de la Emperatriz in honor of his wife, the Empress Carlota. Although many have suggested that he constructed the new thoroughfare to create a version of Paris in Mexico, evidence suggests that he was merely seeking his own personal convenience.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Maximilian also planned to place a monument in commemoration of Christopher Columbus on the calzada. King Leopold had originally promised to present such a statue to Mexico, but after his death, Maximilian selected Pedro Vilar to design it and Ing. Ramón Rodríguez Arangoity to supervise its construction. In this project, as in other similar ones, Maximilian insisted on Mexican artists and Mexican materials.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, Maximilian decided that Mexico needed a statue commemorating its independence. In June 1864 he asked Joaquín Velázquez de León, translator of *Historia de la arquitectura* by Javier Cavallari, to supervise its construction and the Emperor laid its first stone in the Zocalo on September 16 of that year.<sup>14</sup> Finally, the French Empire promoted interest in Mexico's pre-Columbian past. On February 27, 1864, even

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<sup>11</sup> The brevity of this essay precludes my discussing how he promoted Mexican industry. For more on that subject, see Barbara A. Tenenbaum, "Humboldt's Heirs," unpublished paper comparing the attitude toward industrialization during the Juárez regimes and the French Empire.

<sup>12</sup> For more on this see Barbara A. Tenenbaum, "Murals in Stone: the Paseo de la Reforma and Porfirian Mexico, 1873-1910," in Sánchez, Van Young, and Von Wobeser, eds., *La ciudad y el campo en la historia de México*, t. 1 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1992), pp. 369-79.

<sup>13</sup> See Justino Fernández, *El arte del siglo XIX en México* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1983), p. 170.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120; "Columna de la independencia," in *Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México*, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1964), p. 366.

before Maximilian had arrived, Napoleon III established a Commission Scientifique du Mexique, resembling that which Napoleon I had organized for Egypt which had unearthed the Rosetta Stone. The group who went to Yucatán included French archeologist Désiré Charney, Counselor of State José Fernando Ramírez, and the Empress Carlota herself. In keeping with this interest in the pre-Columbian past, the Emperor granted the Archeology Museum space in part of the Palacio Nacional in 1865.<sup>15</sup> Yet, no matter how enlightened and pro-Mexican the Emperor showed himself to be, he had been forcibly imposed on his subjects by European soldiers in an effort to re-colonize them. No other country in the Western Hemisphere suffered such a fate; even Brazil with its "foreign" empire, managed to naturalize its rulers when Dom Pedro II ascended the throne. Mexican creoles, in general, wanted to be independent and rule their own destinies. Consequently, thanks to its unique imperialist past, Mexico would develop its independent identity sooner and more forcefully than any of its neighbors, including the United States.

That process reignited when Benito Juárez triumphantly returned to Mexico City in 1867 to begin the period of the Restored Republic, one of the most remarkable, and least studied, epochs in Mexican history. In his opening statement to the Mexican people, he telegraphed the reorientation of Mexico inward and away from Europe and the eventual design of its official history and culture. According to the poet, playwright, and official chronicler of Mexico City Salvador Novo, when President Juárez returned to address his countrymen on July 15, 1867 from the capital he had been forced to leave in 1863, he rode in an open carriage down to the Palacio Nacional, whose way was strewn with wreaths and flowers from the grateful populace. And he said:

Mexicans: The national government returns today to take up residence in the Mexico City it had left four years ago. It remained true to the resolution to never abandon the fulfillment of its very sacred duties, no matter what the nature of the

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<sup>15</sup> It resided in "the beautiful house" in Calle de Moneda, part of the Palacio Nacional, until 1964 when it moved to the magnificent structure it occupies today. Maximilian organized the new museum so that "our country be raised to the stature she deserves." Bernal, *Mexican Archeology*, p. 139, and Castillo Ledón, *El Museo Nacional*, p. 69.

national conflict [...] The good people of Mexico have succeeded, fighting alone, without any help from anyone, without even the resources needed to fight a war. They have spilled their blood with sublime patriotism, accepting every sacrifice before permitting the loss of the Republic and liberty [...] Confident of its fighting men, the government fulfilled its duties without a single thought of making any promise at home or abroad which might prejudice either the Independence or the sovereignty of the Republic, the integrity of its territory, or the respect owed to the constitution and the laws.<sup>16</sup>

This address illustrates the attitude of the Mexican government as it emerged from years of struggle. That posture would be reflected in the decision taken by the Juárez regime soon after to disavow much of the foreign debt and not make payments on the rest for years to come.<sup>17</sup> For the first time in its independent life, Mexico had decided to tend to its own internal needs, before dealing with foreign concerns.

Soon after, Mexico would begin codifying its history. Scholars can trace the process beginning with the unveiling of a bust of Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec emperor, on the Paseo de la Viga on August 13, 1869, the anniversary of the fall of Tenochtitlan to Cortés. In the customary tributes given on that occasion, the speakers followed the standard themes of what would come to be called “official history” linking Cuauhtemoc to Hidalgo. Those patriotic pieties emphasized the Aztecs as representative of the entire Mexican nation, Cuauhtemoc as hero (and Cortés as villain) of national history, and the last Aztec ruler as the beginning of a continuity that would end with Hidalgo.<sup>18</sup>

Despite public support for the cult of the Aztecs, such ideas about the pre-Columbian past, the Conquest, the colonial regime, and the independence were by no means universally accepted even by 1869.

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<sup>16</sup> Salvador Novo, *La ciudad de México del 9 de junio al 15 de julio de 1867* (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, S. A., 1967), pp. 18-19.

<sup>17</sup> See Barbara A. Tenenbaum, “Liberal Finance and Foreign Intervention in Mexico, 1867-1880,” in Peloso and Tenenbaum, eds., *Liberals, Politics, and Power: State Formation in Nineteenth Century Latin America*, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, forthcoming.

<sup>18</sup> See *Discursos pronunciados el día 13 de agosto de 1869 en la inauguración del busto de Cuauhtemotzin erigido en el Paseo de la Viga* (Mexico City, 1869).

Vicente Riva Palacio, who would become the leader of the campaign to create official history spoke out against the rulers of Tenochtitlan as late as 1871, describing them as “monarchs, who without more law than their caprice, bloody and terrible most of the time, governed the ancient people of the Americas, and fell to the energy of the soldiers of Cortés.”<sup>19</sup>

During the rest of the presidency of Benito Juárez, Mexico concentrated on rebuilding national life *adentro*, symbolized by the recognition and repayment of the internal debt.<sup>20</sup> However, with the death of Juárez in 1872 and the subsequent presidency of Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, that position began to change. Although Lerdo de Tejada was careful to court the Juárez faction, he was not as worried about the disadvantages of economic development as his predecessor had been. Indeed, the new President was very interested in two major economic development projects—the completion of a railroad line from Mexico City to Veracruz and the further enhancement of Maximilian’s Calzada de la Emperatriz renamed the Paseo de la Reforma.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, the railroad and the creation of the new Mexico City would become inextricably linked thanks to the activities of Antonio Escandón, the entrepreneur behind the construction of the railroad, and a strong counterweight against the creation of an official Indian past. Escandón was the youngest brother of the notorious moneylender Manuel Escandón, who championed the idea of a railroad from Veracruz to Mexico City and claimed to have invested over a million pesos of his own money in its development.<sup>22</sup> After Manuel died in 1862, Antonio spent the years of the French Empire combing the capitals of Europe

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<sup>19</sup> Vicente Riva Palacio, *Discurso cívico pronunciado en la Alameda de México en el aniversario del glorioso grito de independencia el día 16 de septiembre de 1871* (Mexico City, 1871), pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> Barbara A. Tenenbaum, “Manuel Payno y los bandidos del erario mexicano,” in *Historia Mexicana*, no. 173, vol. XLIV, julio-setiembre, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> For more on Lerdo de Tejada, see Laurens B. Perry, *Juárez and Díaz: Machine Politics in Mexico* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1978), chapter 7.

<sup>22</sup> Manuel Escandón, *Breve exposición al público sobre el negocio del camino de fierro entre Veracruz y México* (Mexico City: Imprenta de Andrade y Escalante, 1858), pp. 14-15 as quoted in Margarita Urías Hermosillo, “Manuel Escandón: de las Diligencias al Ferrocarril, 1833-1862,” in Ciro F. S. Cardoso, ed., *Formación y desarrollo de la burguesía en México. Siglo XIX* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1978), p. 29.

looking for funds to finish the railroad.<sup>23</sup> He had very definite plans for the capital of the newly restored Mexican Republic as well. For example, he believed that the Paseo de la Reforma needed many *glorietas* or intersections with other important thoroughfares like the *étoiles* which characterized the Champs d'Elysées. He thought they would provide new commercial space and prepare Mexico for its entrance onto the world stage.

In 1871 Escandón decided to fulfill the plan of Emperor Maximilian and give Mexico City a statue of Christopher Columbus as a commemoration of the opening of his railroad. He commissioned Rodríguez Arangoity who submitted a design featuring Columbus rising from a base composed in part of four friars from the colonial past—Pedro de Gante, Bartolomé de las Casas, Juan de Torquemada and Bartolomé de Olmedo. Escandón apparently accepted and paid for the work, but the statue he contracted in 1873 from French sculptor Charles Cordier turned out to be significantly different. Cordier, in consultation with Escandón's nephew the poet Alejandro Arango y Escandón, substituted friars Juan Pérez de Marchena, Diego de Deza, and Toribio de Benavente (Motolinía) for the original group, retaining only Bartolomé de Las Casas. The statue was shipped to Mexico in 1875 and unveiled two years later in August, 1877 in the second of the glorietas of the Paseo de la Reforma, the precise spot Maximilian had had in mind.<sup>24</sup>

The new statue's design emphasized the Spanish contribution to Mexican history as Escandón and his nephew finessed the issue of the Conquest by concentrating on the life of Columbus and the benefits of the Christianity he had presumably brought to the New World with him. Two of the new figures, Friars Pérez de Marchena and Deza belong to Columbus' life before his voyages. The two that relate to Mexico both emphasize the humanist aspect of Spanish evangelization by honoring

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<sup>23</sup> See Barbara A. Tenenbaum, "Development and Sovereignty: Intellectuals and the Second Empire," in Camp, Hale and Vázquez ed., *Los intelectuales y el poder en México* (Mexico City/Los Angeles: El Colegio de México and UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1991), pp. 77-88.

<sup>24</sup> José María Marroqui, *La ciudad de México*, 3 tomos (Mexico City: Tip. y lit. "La Europea," de J. Aguilar Vera y Cia., 1900-1903), t. 1, p. 647; Fernández, *El arte del siglo XIX*, pp. 170-71; Luis García Pimentel, *El monumento elevado en la ciudad de México a Cristóbal Colón. Descripción e historia* (Mexico City: Imprenta de Francisco Díaz de León, 1889).

Fray Toribio de Benavente ("Motolinía"), and Las Casas, both remembered for their respect, love, and defense of the Indians. The statue takes a strong position in the debate over the respective roles of Spain and the pre-Columbian Indians in the history of Mexico.<sup>25</sup> As García Pimentel pointed out, the statue is meant to honor not individuals but

the Catholic faith, the religion to whose influence is owed not only a new world, but the greatest enterprise of all time. Catholics were the ones who invested in the discovery of the New World and it is to the religious zeal of Marchena and Isabel I, who thought only in adding to the already extensive conquests of the Cross, that America owes its saving beliefs, its civilization, and its liberty.<sup>26</sup>

The statue indicates that some aspects of "creole nationalism" had already taken root by the 1870's among Conservative supporters of the Empire like Antonio Escandón and his nephew, who had been educated in Europe and had spent much of his life there. Even for them, the Conquest was too controversial for statuary. Nevertheless, they insisted that Mexicans recognize that they owed their Catholicism to Spain, thus denying a central tenet of independence ideology.

Even though the Calzada de la Emperatriz later the Paseo de la Reforma had originated, like most of this process, with Emperor Maximilian and the Conservatives, the Liberals following the death of Juárez recognized its potential as well. In part that reflected a growing sophistication among the Mexican political and cultural elite, many of whom had spent time in Europe. They felt Mexico should begin the task of modernization and the fulfillment of its natural promise to transform itself into a great nation with a suitably great capital, like Paris. For example, Ignacio Cumplido, founder of the Mexico City liberal daily, *El Siglo XIX*, had visited "the City of Lights" in 1848, and again in 1860 after Baron Haussman had directed its reconstruction under the watchful eye of Emperor Napoleon III. In 1873 when he became the

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<sup>25</sup> For more on this see Barbara A. Tenenbaum, "Streetwise History — The Paseo de la Reforma and the Porfirian State, 1876-1910," in Beezley, Martin, and French, eds., *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1994, pp. 127-50).

<sup>26</sup> Luis García Pimentel, *Cristóbal Colón*, pp. 5-6.

member of the ayuntamiento in charge of boulevards, Cumplido took advantage of the opportunity to ensure that the area on both sides of the Paseo would be lined with trees in stated emulation of the Champs d'Elysées.<sup>27</sup>

With the victory of Porfirio Díaz in the Revolution of Tuxtepec in 1876, the elaboration of the Aztec past as the focal point of Mexican history prior to independence began in earnest. In part this was due to the naming of Vicente Riva Palacio as Minister of Development. Riva Palacio came to the position with a distinguished lineage and background. He was the grandson of independence war hero and assassinated President Vicente Guerrero, and the son of the governor of Mexico State, Mariano Riva Palacio. He had founded several newspapers, fought in the war against the French, and composed its anthem, "Adiós Mama Carlota." Following the war, Riva Palacio wrote a series of historical novels specifically dealing with the social problems of the Church in the colonial period. After losing his position on the Supreme Court because his rival had the backing of President Lerdo, Riva Palacio founded an opposition newspaper in favor of Díaz; as a reward Díaz named him Minister of Development on November 29, 1876.<sup>28</sup>

While in this post from 1876 to 1880, Riva Palacio embarked on an ambitious program to beautify Mexico City in general and the Paseo de la Reforma in particular. In his view, the new Paseo was to educate Mexicans about the nature of the national past complete with its Aztec forebearers. His emphasis on the creation of such a past fit in very well with Díaz' plans for the country; the new President realized that

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<sup>27</sup> Cumplido wrote to his friend León Ortigosa, September 5, 1851, "I wish that in your trip through Europe, you take advantage of the time as you please and enjoy the magnificent spectacle of the (Paris) Exposition and how much more those truly civilized countries present," *Correspondencia de Ignacio Cumplido a León Ortigosa en la Biblioteca del Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey* (Monterrey, 1969), p. 44. According to Salvador Novo, it was Cumplido who ordered the planting of trees, but I have yet to find corroboration of that fact since it would appear that the ayuntamiento of Mexico City did not publish a *Memoria* for 1873. Salvador Novo, *Los paseos de la ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, Testimonios del Fondo, 1980), pp. 35-36.

<sup>28</sup> Clementina Díaz y de Ovando, "Prólogo," in Vicente Riva Palacio, *Cuentos del General* (Mexico City, 1968), pp. ix-xx. Vicente Riva Palacio was instrumental in the design of official history and deserves a full-length modern biography.



inevitably Mexico would have to open itself up to foreign capital to realize much needed infrastructural development.

In 1877 Riva Palacio opened a competition for the best "monument dedicated to Cuauhtemoc and the other leaders who distinguished themselves in defense of the nation in the period." He planned two other monuments for the *glorietas* in the avenue—one to honor Hidalgo and the other heroes of the Independence, and the second to pay homage to Juárez, the other patriots of the Reform, and those who distinguished themselves during the War against the French (called "the Second Independence"). Eventually Riva Palacio changed his mind and divided the third statue into two—one for Juárez and the Reform, the other for Zaragoza and the heroes of the War against the French.

For Riva Palacio, as for Maximilian, statues performed certain important civic functions. As he noted in the *Memoria del Ministerio de Fomento, 1877-1878*:

Public monuments exist not only to perpetuate the memory of heroes and of great men who deserve the gratitude of the people, but also to awaken in some and strengthen in others the love of legitimate glories and also the love of art, where in those monuments one of its most beautiful expressions is to be found. To create recreational areas or boulevards, is to distract members of society with licit diversions within reach of all and allow them to mingle while avoiding the isolation and the vices which are common in populations which lack those means of communication.<sup>29</sup>

The winner of the competition, Francisco M. Jiménez y Arias, noted in his proposal:

no style of architecture would be more suitable than a rebirth which would include those beautiful details which today are seen in the ruins of Tula, Uxmal, Mitla, and Palenque, conserving as much as possible the general character of the architecture of the ancient inhabitants of this Continent,

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<sup>29</sup> *Memoria de Fomento, Colonización, Industria, y Comercio 1876-1877*, 3 tomos (Mexico City, 1877), t. 3, pp. 353-54.

architecture which contains richness and detail so beautiful and appropriate that they can be borrowed to develop a characteristic style which we can call the national style.<sup>30</sup>

While the Cuauhtemoc statue, signifying the codification of official history, was being built, Mexican leaders resolved an equally important issue, this time concerning the nature and extent of national sovereignty. The issue was highlighted with the reestablishment of relations with France unofficially on July 21, 1880, its announcement in both houses of Congress on September 16 of that year,<sup>31</sup> and the reception of respective ministers in November.<sup>32</sup> That matter gives important context to a seemingly academic discussion concerning government approval for the export of archeological artifacts.<sup>33</sup> On October 28, 1880 the Chamber of Deputies met to rubber-stamp the official sanctioning of a recommendation from the Treasury and Development committees that Mexico permit Désiré Charnay, the French archeologist,

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<sup>30</sup> *Memoria de Fomento 1877-1882*, vol. 3, pp. 332-33.

<sup>31</sup> Curiously it was Vicente Riva Palacio himself who read the announcement in his role as President of the Chamber for that day. See Sesión del 16 de Setiembre, 1880 in *Diario de los debates de la Cámara de Diputados* (Mexico City: Tipografía Literaria de F. Mata, 1880), t. 1, p. 156. The announcement of the renewal of relations came after news of the reception of ambassadors from the United States and Central America, a consul from Argentina, and a Spanish invitation to participate in Naval Law conference.

<sup>32</sup> See Lucía de Robina, *Reconciliación de México y Francia (1870-1880)* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo Histórico Diplomático Mexicano, Segunda Serie, no. 16, 1963) for a complete account of the negotiations. The Mexicans clearly wanted to keep this matter as low-key as possible and did not sign a treaty of recognition. That explains why scholarly accounts give 1880 rather than an exact date for the re-establishment of relations. Further, no one has yet examined Mexican popular reaction to the news.

<sup>33</sup> Clementina Díaz y de Ovando, *Memoria de un debate (1880). La postura de México frente al patrimonio arqueológico nacional* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1990). I would like to thank Professor Leonor Ludlow for alerting me to this work. Curiously when Díaz y de Ovando presented this very important debate, she neglected to mention the reestablishment of relations with France. This significant omission highlights the problems associated with specialization making it increasingly rare that historians interested in cultural questions would concern themselves about political and economic ones. I was able to fit these two important events together having just finished researching a paper concerning Manuel Payno and his role in creating Mexico's debt policy during the Restored Republic. It pleases me to think that Payno, novelist and economist, would have appreciated the way I came to this juxtaposition.

to export some of the artifacts he had discovered while excavating its pre-Columbian sites.

The republic had never been oblivious to its indigenous past. As noted before, the Mexican republic had quickly established a national museum. In 1877, immediately following Riva Palacio's statue competition, the Museum started publishing its first series of *Anales* and that same year President Díaz ordered that the largest room of the museum become the "Hall of Monoliths." Still, the collections, alas, remained out of view.<sup>34</sup> Up until that time, few Mexicans had had the wherewithal to excavate national ruins, and none possessed the minimal training available at that time to investigate sites systematically.<sup>35</sup> So when the Treasury and Development committees of the Chamber of Deputies routinely approved Charney's plan to ship the artifacts he had discovered back to France, no one expected that an obscure deputy from Mexico State, Gumesindo Enríquez, should raise any objections. Instead, he contested the authority of either committee to make such contracts; he reminded his fellow deputies that Charnay had come to Mexico originally as part of an Imperial expedition to Yucatán; he pointed out that Article 856 of the Civil Code explicitly stated that archeological treasures belong to the nation.<sup>36</sup> A member of the Commission of Powers, Antonio Carbajal, answered that Mexico *had made* a contract, that Charnay had spent money, and that Mexican museums were also enriched by his work. Enríquez remained unconvinced; he countered that such arguments showed little faith in Mexico's future as a great nation and that the government should devote some of its resources to

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<sup>34</sup> Castillo Ledon, *El Museo Nacional*, p. 24; Bernal, *Mexican Archeology*, p. 139.

<sup>35</sup> That does not imply that Mexicans had left their sites in a state of nature. For example, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645-1700), mentioned previously, had begun this process. According to Lorenzo Boturini, *Idea de una nueva historia general de la América Septentional* (Madrid, 1746) as cited in Bernal, *Mexican Archaeology*, p. 50.

I had a map made of the pyramid (of the Sun at Teotihuacán) which I have in my collection and on circumambulating it I observed that the celebrated Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora had attempted to breach it with drills, when he met with resistance; the center is known to be hollow (p. 143).

<sup>36</sup> For the entire debate see Sesión del 28 de octubre de 1880 in *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados* (Mexico City: Tipografía Literaria de F. Mata, 1880), t. 1, pp. 61-89 or Díaz y de Ovando, *Memoria*.

support national excavations; Juan A. Mateos, a venerable liberal representing the state of Hidalgo, seconded Enríquez' objections.

Never once did anyone dare mention the obvious—that Mexico was opening itself up again to the hated invaders, that it would need to protect itself from their inevitable encroachment, and that this was a relatively painless, yet meaningful, way of objecting to the reestablishment of relations with France.<sup>37</sup> Eventually the debate turned on a simple, but momentous, set of questions about the nature and extent of Mexican nationality and its effect on sovereignty. These were life-and-death issues as the republic began to rejoin the world after its self-enforced exile. Mexican politicians understood that the nation would soon have to resume diplomatic and economic relations with the even-more-fearsome England, but they had yet to elaborate acceptable terms for the new relationship. Clearly, Mexico would no longer accept overt colonial status. But what safeguards did it need to erect—overtly and covertly, consciously and unconsciously—to guard against future conquest, a perennial and legitimate fear for Mexicans that still resonated quite strongly.

Two of the most important figures in Mexican intellectual life during the Porfiriato took up the debate. Justo Sierra Méndez, known as a Young Turk and benevolent toward foreign influence, argued that his native state of Yucatán could be fairly characterized as the Mexican Egypt and that its ruins were only known because of the work of European archeologists. He posited an appeal to what he termed "enlightened patriotism" and tried to make the distinction between overt imperialism and universal cultural property by stating, "Sr. Charnay did not come to conquer us, not in the name of France, nor that of the US, nor to plant here an enemy flag. Who has told us that our best antiquities should remain our exclusive property?"

Many deputies must have discounted the arguments of *tal imberbe*; others saw them as simply disingenuous. Born in 1848 and the son of the famous Yucatecan patriot Justo Sierra O'Reilly (1814-1861), the younger Sierra had lived in Mexico City since he was a teenager. In fact, he was representing the state of Sinaloa, not Yucatán, at the

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<sup>37</sup> Historians have long recognized that the most important pieces of data go unrecorded and that imagination and life experience are vital tools in uncovering the past. Perhaps that is why historians improve with age while those who use abstract concepts, like mathematicians, generally do their best work before age 30.

sessions, and he had attended the Liceo Franco-Mexicano during the Intervention. Yet, even more important, unlike many sitting in the room, Sierra Méndez belonged to a generation that had been too young to have won glory on the battlefield and was determined to push those veterans out of the way. What better way could be found than to champion a new openness toward former enemies and a less self-protective vision of Mexico's future.<sup>38</sup>

Vicente Riva Palacio, the man who only a month before had announced the reestablishment of relations with France, came from an even more distinguished lineage than Sierra Méndez. Unlike that youngster, Riva Palacio, born in 1832, was a war veteran whose life and reputation had been forged by the Intervention. He felt comfortable playing on the fears of deputies like himself whose memories of foreign masters and the war they brought was still all too fresh and provided its survivors with considerable status. He appealed to their emotions by proclaiming, "I love science, but I am savage about patriotism. I would prefer perishing in flames before foreign domination. They say that Enlightenment and liberty permit export, I just don't believe it." He was seconded by another great Mexican literary figure, Guillermo Prieto, who had served as a Juarista deputy from Guanajuato during the Intervention. Pointedly rebuking Sierra, Prieto ran down a long list of great Mexican archeologists —Clavijero, Gama, Alzate, Mendieta, José Fernando Ramírez, Vega, Navarro, and Orozco y Berra. The question was called; the vote was tallied at 114 against with a mere six in favor of Sierra's new vision; Monsieur Charnay left Mexico without his antiquities.

That decision would prove decisive for the future of the Mexican republic as well as for its archeology. It was the product of a special period in Mexico, when memories of an European invasion were still very painful in the national psyche, but whose leaders were determined to follow a course of modernization that required massive infusions of foreign capital. Nevertheless, it settled an important issue in national history as Riva Palacio firmly established for the second time the clear and indisputable identification between the Mexican nation and its pre-Columbian past. In a sense, that decision gave Mexico an edge in the

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<sup>38</sup> For much more on Justo Sierra Méndez and his generation see Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

struggle for national self-identification among the countries in the Western Hemisphere. Unlike immigrant nations that had virtually destroyed their Indian populations such as the United States and those of the Southern Cone, the Mexican republic managed to retain control over those still viable Indian communities that link it to its pre-Conquest history and legitimate the construction of an identity apart from European civilization. Since that time Mexico alone among the nations of Latin America with major Pre-Columbian sites has consistently explored its ruins without frequent resort to major foreign expeditions, such as those which uncovered Tikal in Guatemala or the vast majority of those in Peru.<sup>39</sup>

Ironically, Mexico seized exclusive control over its past as it was relinquishing absolute control over its future. In December 1880 Manuel González became President of Mexico and for a time Porfirio Díaz served as Minister of Development. Unlike Don Porfirio, the new President evinced little interest in the pre-Columbian heritage; González was born and raised in the town of Matamoros, on the US-Mexican border in the north-eastern state of Tamaulipas, hundreds of miles from the nearest pre-Columbian site while Díaz had grown up in Oaxaca, next door to the wonders of Monte Alban and Mitla. But González found himself very interested in Mexico's future for during his presidency the policy begun by Matías Romero and Manuel Payno in 1867-68 of not paying foreign debts finally gave way to the reality that Mexico needed the things that only the outside world and its financial capital could provide such as railroads, banks, telegraphs, gas and then electric lights, and, particularly in Mexico City, a modern drainage system. In November 1883, the Treasury assigned foreign bonds 5 and 10% of the import duty collections. By the end of his Presidency in 1884, 85% of Mexico's income was mortgaged to pay debts and

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<sup>39</sup> Curiously it was not until May 11, 1897 that Mexico passed a law declaring all archeological monuments property of the nation and forbidding their sale, although Bernal points out that laws protecting artifacts and the sites themselves are not well enforced. Bernal, *Mexican Archeology*, pp. 140-41. Nevertheless, the Mexican government even today treats its archeological treasures already housed in museums with utmost care; President Salinas himself had to sign the authorization permitting Olmec treasures to be shipped to the Denver Museum of Art for an exhibition in 1992.

Mexico had reestablished relations with Great Britain.<sup>40</sup> In addition it had come within a hair of approving a settlement of the foreign debt, rejecting the idea only when mobs of Indians and students had flooded the streets screaming "Death to González" and other equally menacing slogans.<sup>41</sup>

One month later, in December 1884, Porfirio Díaz returned to the Presidency. He quickly suspended payment on the foreign debt while at the same time the Ministry of Justice and Public Instruction named 32 year old Leopoldo Batres the first Inspector of Archeological Monuments for the Museo Nacional. On June 11, 1885 Batres was named Interim Collector and Assistant to the Archeological section of the Museum. During that time he set about excavating Teotihuacan, the ruins 20km outside Mexico City. In that year as well, the great Aztec Calendar stone was moved from the Cathedral of Mexico where it had rested since 1790 to the Museo Nacional. During a five year period, Batres and his team explored the Pyramid of the Sun, and other buildings, and others the length of the Street of the Dead, the Temple of Agriculture, and the Temple of the Priests.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile the monument to Cuauhtemoc was finally unveiled on August 21, 1887 amid modest festivities organized by the ayuntamiento of Mexico City. This "festividad cívica" was dedicated "to the memory of the heroic defender of the capital of Mexico during the conquest, the Immortal Cuauhtemoc, last ruler of the Nation, who valiantly preferred to see homes destroyed before he would accept a peace with the opprobrium of slavery."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> For more on this see Donald Coerver, *Porfirian Interregnum: The Presidency of Manuel González of Mexico, 1880-1884* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1979), chapter 6.

<sup>41</sup> See *El Monitor Republicano*, November 20, 1884 and Coerver, *González*, pp. 256-64.

<sup>42</sup> Batres remains a controversial figure in Mexican archeology. When recently asked for an opinion about Batres' work, Arq. Roberto García Moll publicly stated that he was no worse than others excavating at the time. Ignacio Bernal, however, almost dismisses him altogether. See Bernal, *Mexican Archeology*, pp. 149-50; Castillo Ledón, *El Museo Nacional*, pp. 24-25; *Diccionario Porrúa*, quinta ed., pp. 325-26; *Cuenta del Tesoro Federal 1889* (Mexico City: Tip. "El Gran Libro de F. Parres y Comp., Sucesores, 1889), p. 328. At that time, Batres was earning \$2,400 while the Director of El Museo Nacional was receiving \$1,500.

<sup>43</sup> *El Monitor Republicano*, August 20, 1887, p. 3.

The new monument evoked the same sentiments expressed at the unveiling of the bust of Cuauhtemoc in 1869, but it had much more to say on the variety of subjects that Emperor Maximilian had first raised. For example, Francisco Sosa, Riva Palacio's successor as leading proponent of official history, explicitly extended the archeological definition of nationalism. Whereas in the 1880 decision to prohibit Charnay's export of antiquities, all pre-Columbian civilizations were considered equal for scholarly purposes, the Aztecs were by August 21, 1887 permanently enshrined as the first among equals. In his pamphlet written on the occasion of the unveiling of the monument to Cuauhtemoc, Sosa noted "our government is paying a debt of gratitude owed by the Mexican people for over three centuries by inaugurating the magnificent monument which will honor permanently the last of the Aztec emperors to whom goes the credit as the first and most illustrious of the defenders of the nationality founded by Tenoch in 1327."<sup>44</sup>

He did not mention that the Porfirian government was manipulating this public commemoration of the Cuauhtemoc cult for its own benefit. The original design had called for two additional statues of Cuitlahuac and Cacamatzin, but Porfirio Díaz, as Minister of Development in 1880, changed the plans for "budgetary reasons." The revised version left a single figure, Cuauhtemoc, on top of the substantial pedestal, significantly altering the meaning of the statue itself.<sup>45</sup> The Porfirians were determined to complete the work envisioned by Emperor Maximilian and use the statue to inculcate an official liberal "national" history and create public support for their domination of Mexico's present and future.

The design of the statue itself, like that of Columbus, has a very important story to tell. The monument was formed by a replica of the pyramid of the sun from Teotihuacan, topped with designs from the Zapotec and Mixtec buildings at Mitla in Oaxaca. The middle portion contains a structure designed to resemble the Temple of the Inscriptions at the Maya site of Palenque in Chiapas, but supported by columns meant to look like those from Tula in the state of Hidalgo, thought to be the Tollan the Aztecs believed was the center of the Toltec empire.

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<sup>44</sup> Francisco Sosa, *Apuntamientos para la historia del monumento de Cuauhtémoc* (Mexico City, 1887), p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Memoria de Fomento 1877-1882*, vol. 3, pp. 332-39.



The column formed by these structures made the pedestal for the statue of Cuauhtemoc on top, draped in a garment concocted from the pictographs in the codices, but which could easily have passed for something Socrates might have worn. The statue vividly proclaims the government's decision that Mexico would officially identify itself with its pre-Columbian Indian past. This message is strongly conveyed as well in the bas relief carved into one side of the base by Gabriel Guerra known as "the torment of Cuauhtemoc," depicting how the Spaniards truly put his feet to the fire. Thus Cuauhtemoc is national hero and martyr to be permanently linked in the public mind with his successor, Miguel Hidalgo.

The statue also telescoped the Porfirian intention to assert that the rulers of Mexico City-Tenochtitlan would henceforth represent the entire Mexican nation. Although the statue does include elements from other Indian groups—the Zapotecs, the Mixtecs, the Maya, the Toltecs—these are shown as mere forerunners or supporters of the Aztecs, the pedestal from which the latter triumphantly rose. Through this identification specifically with the Aztecs, the Porfirians, the then-current rulers of the Valley of Mexico, positioned themselves as heirs to their predecessors' imperial legacy. Their official version of Mexican history was to play itself out neatly down the Paseo de la Reforma as exemplified in the proposed statues, as Cuauhtemoc flowed into Hidalgo into Juárez into Zaragoza into, of course, the then-current occupant of the recent renovated Chapultepec castle, Don Porfirio Díaz, another hero in the war against the French and clearly its triumphal product.

The Porfirians not only used the symbolism of the Aztecs to validate Díaz' stewardship of the country; they also intended to harness the monument to Cuauhtemoc and the official veneration of the Aztecs to reconfirm the power of Mexico City itself and its right to rule the nation by inheritance. Memory of Aztec tyranny was to be expunged as Cuauhtemoc became the legitimate personification of Mexican identity and Mexico City-Tenochtitlan, its permanent seat of power.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> That fact is still resented by descendants of other indigenous groups. When I was touring monuments in Oaxaca in 1982, my Zapotec guide complained that all the best artifacts from local sites automatically went to the Museo Nacional in Mexico City, that the Aztecs had been disgusting in comparison with his own forebears, and did not deserve to represent Mexico. His remarks alerted me to the emphasis on the Aztecs to the exclusion of other groups and steered me toward this topic.

The Porfirians had fiscal goals in mind as well. By identifying with the Aztecs, they asserted their rights over state revenue as their predecessors had once taken them by force. The statue thus delivered the symbolic *coup de grace* to political and fiscal federalism and proclaimed the primacy of the central state as embodied in and ruled by Mexico City.<sup>47</sup> It served notice that the Porfirians planned to make centralism part of liberalism now that its former conservative proponents were either dead, thoroughly discredited, or active collaborators in the new order.

Although no editorials appeared discussing the government's motives for building this expensive monument to Cuauhtemoc, neither were the Mexicans apt to read any *indigenista* messages in its design. Mexicans of European descent or those who wished they were, were hardly interested either in venerating Indian culture themselves or in promoting the idea that Indians living at that time could once again be strong, intelligent, leaders of nations like Cuauhtemoc. The adoption of the royal Indian occurred at the very time living Indians and their mestizo descendants were losing their lands and independence through increased use of the Reform laws, new legislation, and economic development. Therefore, the Greek details on Cuauhtemoc's costume and his white features are quite deliberate, as were the drawings which appeared in newspapers looking equally white, if not more so. And it is hardly accidental that the "descendant" of Cuauhtemoc is the creole priest Miguel Hidalgo.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The Porfirians reopened the war on the state *alcabala* (sales tax) in October 1877, two months after Riva Palacio announced the proposed construction of the monument to Cuauhtemoc. The struggle heated up in 1883 when state governors met in Veracruz to discuss the issue. They concluded that the *alcabala* continued to supply up to 68 percent of state revenue, most of which went to the major cities. The issue dragged on until May 30, 1895, when Minister of Finance Limantour finally abolished the *alcabala* and made states dependent on funds from Mexico City. This helps explain why Mexico City contains 22 million people today while its nearest rival, Guadalajara, has but five. Daniel Cosío Villegas, *Historia moderna de México*, 9 tomos, *El Porfiriato. Vida económica*, t. 2 (Mexico City: Editorial Hermes, 1972), pp. 904-18, 1234.

<sup>48</sup> See also Antonio Peñafiel's design for the Mexican exhibit at the Columbian Exhibition held in Madrid in 1892, which looks like an ersatz Grecian temple in Bernal, *Mexican Archeology*, p. 153. The attempt to bleach skin tone runs throughout Mexican culture and can appear in the strangest places. For instance, photographers lit studies of Mexican prostitutes in the 1920's so that women with even the most recognizable Indian facial features appeared white. See Ava Vargas, *La Casa de Citas en el Barrio Galante*

With the unveiling of the monument to Cuauhtemoc, the complicated process of creating a national identity was at last complete. Mexicans had a viable official national past such that they could easily distinguish themselves from Europeans and Americans. They were finally free to open themselves up to any and all aspects of other cultures.<sup>49</sup> The year after the monument was inaugurated, Mexico finally settled its foreign debt and received huge new loans from abroad. At the same time, Leopoldo Batres was made Inspector and Conservator of Archeological monuments at a salary of \$3,000 per year, a post he would hold continuously until 1911.<sup>50</sup>

Ultimately, of course, Mexican official history formed part of the contradiction between nationalism and a Porfirian modernization financed with foreign capital. No reputable historian would contend that the official veneration of the Royal Indian and government sponsorship of archeological excavation played a *substantial* role in the Mexican revolution, but the two are indeed interconnected. The Porfirian “mother to foreigners, step-mother to Mexicans” approach to development could hardly last in a rapidly progressing and more nationalistic country with at least two generations hungry for power and millions of dispossessed. After the Revolution, Mexico retreated back to the attitudes toward national sovereignty characteristic of the Restored Republic and secondarily initiated a government-sponsored *indigenismo* that it grafted onto official history.

Nevertheless, by basing Mexican identity on heroes like Cuauhtemoc and Hidalgo, both of whom protected the nation against “illegitimate” foreign conquerors, official historians during the Porfiriato fit their countrymen and women into a philosophical and developmental strait-jacket. Given that Mexican history in the fifty years since independence included four invasions, one civil war, and the loss of over one half of national territory, it is hard to fault its creators for constructing an image designed to promote self-protection. Yet, although they created a strong sense of *mexicanidad*, they left virtually no room for its growth and expansion. The official history still inculcated in

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(Mexico City: Grijalbo [Camera Lucida], 1991).

<sup>49</sup> For more on this see William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

<sup>50</sup> *Diccionario Porrúa*, quinta ed., p. 325.

Mexican schools today continues to reflect the needs of a powerless country battered by decades of war and skeptical about its future. Those days are long gone. Perhaps now, as it approaches a new century, Mexico can finally revisit its past.<sup>51</sup>

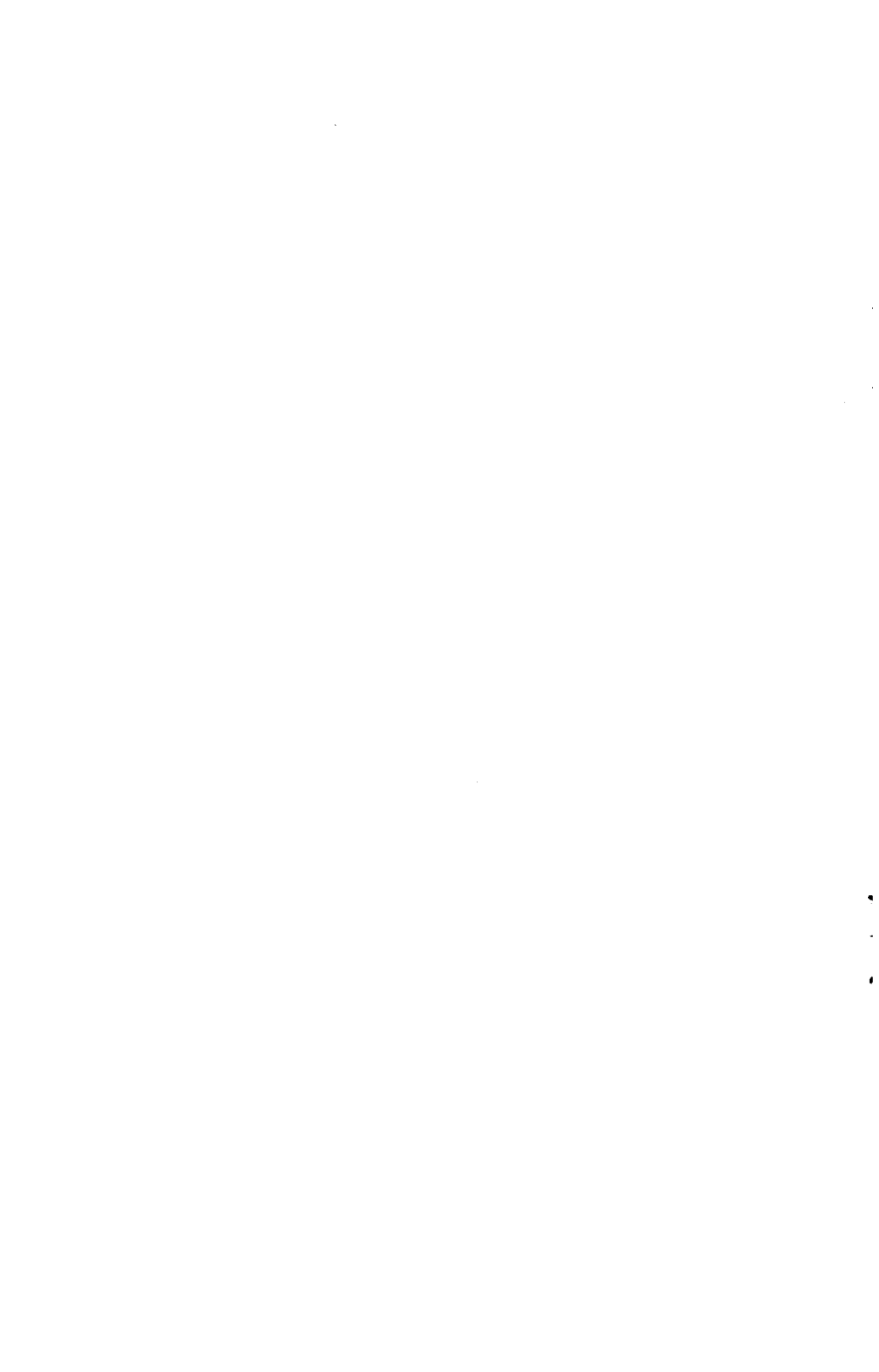
### Concluding Note

This essay was finished in December 1993. On January 1, 1994, guerrilla forces in Chiapas, Mexico, calling themselves the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) staged an uprising against the Mexican government and specifically against the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or Tratado de Libre Comercio (TLC) scheduled to go into effect that day. Once again, Mexicans used official history to protest opening up to the outside world. As of December 1994, however, the EZLN has yet to spark full-scale revolution or even to expand its influence much beyond Chiapas.

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<sup>51</sup> During an interview in September 1992, a reporter from *Excelsior* responded to my mention of Emiliano Zapata, one of the nation's greatest heroes, with "that's ancient history." Although painful to a historian's ears, her response bodes well for Mexico's future. In 1992-1993, the Ministry of Education twice tried to change the history textbooks for grades four through six. The first attempt raised an intense public controversy prompting a second effort which also failed.





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