SEEING THROUGH SPECTACLES: A TEMPORAL COMPARISON OF URBAN
IDENTITY PROJECTS IN MEXICAN HISTORY, 1540-1600 AND 1876-1910

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The Mexican Renaissance (1540-1600) and the Porfiriato (1876-1910) were both periods in Mexican history when a strong, centralized Creole elite class held vast, but challenged power. Their influence and control allowed them to sponsor massive programs to construct a shared Mexican identity that unified the population underneath their authority. To demonstrate these identities, the elites relied on public performances of unity in the urban landscape of Mexico City. Through a temporal comparison of public, urban spectacles in the Mexican Renaissance and the Porfiriato, this thesis argues that Creole elites constructed and presented idealized versions of Mexican identity to consolidate their own power, and that these symbols of identity were engrained into the urban landscape as lasting icons of the imagined community.
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Thank you.
Dedication

To my wife, Kristin, who now knows much more about

Mexican history than she ever wanted to.
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Seeing through Spectacles: A Temporal Comparison of Urban Identity Projects in Mexican History, 1540-1600 and 1876-1910

Chris Muscato
Introduction:

“The Soul of Mexico is very old. Whoever claims to know it is either a liar or a fool.”
-Cormac McCarthy, The Crossing

In Mexico City, in 1566, a great spectacle occurred. The Spanish sons of the conquistadors dressed themselves as Aztec warriors and marched into Mexico City’s central plaza behind the powerful don Alonso de Avila, costumed as the Mexica emperor Moctezuma. Upon reaching the house of Marques del Valle de Oaxaca don Martín Cortés, “Moctezuma” crowned don Martín and proclaimed him to be the true ruler of Mexico. This was not a spontaneous moment, but a re-enactment of a mythical transference of authority from the Mexica lord to don Martín’s father, Hernán Cortés, that was recreated in the middle of intense factional rivalry in Mexico City.¹ Three hundred and forty-four years later, Moctezuma and Hernán Cortés met once again in the central plaza of Mexico City, and the Mexica lord again crowned Cortés before throngs of spectators. In 1910, Mexico was an independent republic under president Porfirio Díaz, and the event was part of the centennial celebration of Mexico’s independence. Yet Mexico was again divided, partly due to the almost forty-year presidency of the liberal dictator who had recently announced plans to run for another re-election. Even though Mexico City in 1910 was vastly different from 1566, Cortés and Moctezuma reappeared, invoked by creole elites to sway the masses.

¹ Anthony Pagden (“Identity Formation in Spanish America” in Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World 1500-1800, ed. Canny and Pagden, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987) has observed that the moment of Moctezuma crowning Cortés was fictional, but already held a prominent place in cultural memory of Mexico City by the mid sixteenth century. It was based on accounts from the conquest that were misinterpreted and aggrandized by the conquistadors and grew into an important symbol of conquistador legitimacy.
In both 1566 and 1910 a class of educated, ruling Creole elites faced threats not only to their power, but to their vision for Mexico. Both groups had crafted an idealized Mexican identity intended to unite the middle and lower classes under their respective power. The elite-sponsored dramatization of Moctezuma awarding Mexico to Cortés appeared in both time periods as a crowning event of decades of public, urban performances that grafted history and identity onto Mexico City’s urban landscape, and communicated a strong, if fictional, message of a unified Mexican people. This thesis does not argue that these eras, termed by historians the Mexican Renaissance (c.1540-c.1600) and the Porfiriato (1876-1910) were identical, nor that the actors involved sought parallel goals through identical actions. It does, however, argue that in times of political crisis, these strong groups of centralized, Creole elites turned to common themes of historical memory and the urban landscape to perform a Mexican identity that embraced their legitimate authority. Supplementing programs of politics and economics, the vehicle Creole elites chose to convey their power was a cultural identity that was engrained into Mexico City, as a visual assertion that their social and political ascendance would last as long as the city itself. Furthermore, they communicated something that was monumental in either time; that Mexico was unified, and that it was unified under the administrative power of the Creole elites.

In the end, both festivals prompted public spectacles of their own. The 1566 baptism celebration was met with exiles, torture, and the execution of ten men on a charge of treason to the Spanish crown. The 1910 Centennial was the last demonstration of an administration that was ousted by violent revolution within a year. Although neither group of elites found immediate success in their campaigns to foster a unified
Mexican identity, their performances grafted many of the symbols and messages of that identity onto a Mexican consciousness that lasted long after the power of the Creole elites had faded. Mexican citizens chose to embrace symbols of unity as their own, separating the images from their elite creators and elevating them into the Mexican imagined community.

The spectacles in 1566 and 1910 prompt an intriguing comparison of two moments in Mexican history separated by over three hundred years. These events were both constructed by analogous classes of educated elites who were on the verge of losing power, authority, and their lives. Both moments involved dramatic public spectacles within an urban landscape that was historically rich and already filled with symbols of conquest, power, memory, and tradition. Both of these groups were also historically isolated; the customs and traditions they embraced were not perpetuated across the three hundred and forty-four years that separated them. Instead, each group developed its own distinct vision of a Mexican identity it sought to impose. The lower classes were often forcefully and violently forced into submission to the state, but for the elites who often looked down on the masses with condescension, this identity was a gift to the people. To the elites, even violence could be a benevolent act when unifying the Mexican people.

Many of the central analytical terms used in this thesis are those used by historians, not by the historical actors themselves. The word “Creole,” for example, was a politically and socially charged word that had vastly different connotations across Mexican history, at times both embraced and banned by Creoles across Mexico. In the Mexican Renaissance, Creole meant having a mixed noble heritage and being born in New Spain. In the Porfiriato, Creole meant being of European ancestry but being
Mexican in birth and heritage. In this thesis, it is used to describe actors in both eras in the sense that historians use it; being “Creole” indicated a level of self-recognition as Europeans born in, and inherently belonging to, Mexico. Even the word Mexico was not consistently used by inhabitants of the area in different time periods; the terms New Spain and the Republic of Mexico held vastly different connotations about citizenship and responsibilities. Although Mexico had different boundaries and limits of power for each group, the Creole elites in both eras operated within Mexico City as a centralized state that reached into the peripheries. Mexico City was Mexico. Overall, what holds these disparate groups of historical actors together is their devotion to an imagined community based in Mexico City and their use of public urban spectacles to present this vision of a unified people under their authority.

The Mexican Renaissance (1540-1600) and the Porfiriato (1876-1910): Historical Context

The Mexican Renaissance and Porfiriato were vastly different time periods, and those differences are significant factors in how symbols of Creole power were generated, performed, and received. The term “Mexican Renaissance” largely owes its existence to historian Serge Gruzinski, and roughly corresponds to the years 1540-1600. The defining features of the Mexican Renaissance were the coming-of-age of the first generation of sons born to conquistador fathers and either Spanish or indigenous mothers in the New World, the influx of Italian humanism to New Spain, and the hybridization of European and indigenous cultural forms, particularly in art. ² The

Spanish born in New Spain, called Criollos (Creoles), were in fierce competition for control of the colony against the Spaniards born in Iberia, called Peninsulares, or Peninsulars.³ The conquistadors imagined New Spain as an autonomous kingdom within the greater Spanish empire, and wanted their sons to rule it, but the riches of Mexico and changing European politics caused Spain to tighten its colonial grip and retain complete control.⁴ At the heart of this struggle was the encomienda, a feudal system of labor that subjected indigenous workers to Spanish lords as little more than slaves. In return, the Spaniards swore to protect their laborers from enemies and bring them into the Christian faith. The Creoles lived lives of great excess from the tributes they amassed from their encomiendas; encomiendas were their source of power but also their connection to noble Castilian traditions of the landed aristocracy. As Anthony Pagden has observed, the Creole elites were so defined by their encomiendas that they would rather become noble vagabonds than take work below their hidalgo status.⁵

Emperor Charles V of Spain, or Carlos I, granted the encomiendas but never intended to allow New Spain autonomous government. When he abdicated the throne in 1566, he left his son Philip II with the task of ending the encomienda. Carlos and Philip, both of the Hapsburg royal line, were not from Spain but from the Netherlands. They brought Northern European Renaissance customs to Spain, which viewed New Spain as purely a colony, and the medieval traditions of earlier Spanish monarchs as outdated.⁶ Ending the encomienda meant limiting Creole power and maintaining imperial control

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³ For the sake of this thesis, the English translations of these terms will be favored.
⁵ Pagden, “Identity Formation in Spanish America”, 56.
to Philip II and the Peninsular administrators. To the Creoles it meant the end of their authority over their own land, won by conquest, and the end of their way of life and existence as a social class. This bitter dispute consumed Mexico City in the sixteenth century, and provided the impetus for the dramatic spectacle surrounding the 1566 Cortés Baptism Ceremony.

After the baptism masquerade, the Crown stripped most of the remaining Creole elites of their encomiendas, increased imperial pressure and administrative control, and the Mexican Renaissance ended around the turn of the century. Spain maintained control of Mexico for three hundred years until, in 1810, a fiery priest named Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla ignited the sentiment for independence. Mexico became an independent empire in 1821, and a liberal republic in 1824. Although Mexico was a unified state, a body of government, it lacked any sense of national cohesion. By the time Porfirio Díaz became President of Mexico, by military victory in 1876 and election in 1877, Mexico had survived near-civil war, war with the United States, and incursion of French imperialists, yet it still lacked a unified national identity. Díaz held office until 1880, ruled behind the scenes for four years, and then returned to office in 1884, and held it until the Mexican Revolution forced him to flee in 1911.

This period (1876-1910), termed the Porfiriato by historians, was defined by the expansion of Mexican economy, politics, culture, and society due to the dictatorial control held by Díaz, but also institutional oppression and violence. To maintain control, Díaz relied on a massive cast of educated, elite administrators known as the científicos.

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The científicos were political, progress-minded liberal elites who performed the government’s vision of the ideal Mexican citizen, and were directly linked in power and image to the president’s power and authority. Their very name espoused the scientific liberalism of the Porfiriato, which championed progress, order and the rational ordering of society. The científicos sought to modernize Mexico City in terms of infrastructure, government, and self-recognition. The científicos were tasked with the administration of Porfirian policies and their cadre permeated every sector of government. Díaz unified the científicos under him partly by elevating political leaders and founding figures in liberal rationalism to top administrative positions in his government. For example, the political father of the científicos, José Yves Limantour, was Díaz’s Secretary of the Treasury from 1893 to 1910. Díaz also embraced the científicos in a more intimate way. One of the other foremost figures of the científicos was Manuel Romero Rubio, Díaz’s Secretary of the Interior from 1884 until 1895, and also his father-in-law after 1881. Mexico in the Porfiriato was defined by the científicos.

Not everyone celebrated Díaz’s successful domination of Mexico. There was always an opposition voice in Mexico that Díaz was never able to completely silence, in part because he owed his legitimacy to liberal tenants such as some freedom of press. The opposition was growing stronger in the early twentieth century, and the divisions were becoming fiercer. In 1908, the opposition paper El Diario de Hogar attacked the Díaz-subsidized paper El Imparcial as trying to “distract” the Mexican people from the

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9 Burton Kirkwood (The History of Mexico: Second Edition New York: ABC-CLIO, 2009) defines the científicos as upwardly mobile intellectuals wrapped in a scientific rationalizing of politics and society, and identified with Díaz’s liberal Secretary of the Treasury José Yves Limantour. Brian Hamnett (A Concise History of Mexico New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) adds that the power of the científicos rested upon Díaz’s favor, since their actual place in Mexican politics and society was as bureaucratic administrators.

real problems of an abusive government.\textsuperscript{11} That same year, Porfirio Díaz stated in an interview with American journalist James Creelman of Pearson’s Magazine that Mexico was “ready for true democracy”, and that he would not run in the next election.\textsuperscript{12} “I have waited patiently for the day when the people of the Mexican Republic would be prepared to choose and change their government…I believe that day has come,” Díaz remarked to Creelman.\textsuperscript{13} The opposition took Díaz at his word and began preparing for the election. By 1910, however, Díaz had announced that he would be running again for president and the opposition was being imprisoned daily, including his primary opponent, Francisco Madero. While serving that sentence Madero began drafting the Plan de San Luis Potosí, which called for a popular uprising in November of that year. By the time Mexico was about to celebrate its Centennial in September of 1910, the idea of revolution was already beginning to circulate.

\textit{Urban Spectacle and Temporal Comparison}

That the Creole elites of the Mexican Renaissance and those of the Porfiriato often chose to communicate their constructed identities through public urban spectacles is a major point of comparison in this thesis, which explores the creation, presentation and reception of public, urban spectacles by Mexican Creole elites in times of political crisis. Spectacles in the urban landscape connected elites to the other classes in ways that presented unifying symbols but maintained distinctions between performers and spectators. This juxtaposition allowed for the development of shared identities

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11} “Distrito Federal: ‘El Imparcial’,” \textit{El Diario de Hogar} (Mexico City: 9/16/1908). 2
\end{flushleft}
underneath a common authority. Additionally, by continually performing their symbols and witnessing the audience participating in their events, elites consumed their own constructions and reaffirmed their own legitimate authority.

The devotion of Creole elites to this method of social control in vastly different periods of Mexican history demonstrates a longevity of form; each ritual built upon previous events and together built massive lexicons of visual symbols of power that connected leaders in ancient trajectories of power. Through a historical comparison of major moments in the colonial and national eras, Mexican festivals appear as important means of top-down communication between ruling classes and the people. Each of these festivals deeply interacted with the urban space to impart their symbols onto the cityscape and preserve them in concrete, visual form. Thus, these festivals were collaborative efforts that spanned generations to create Mexico City as a symbolically-rich and historical stage for performance.

To examine Creole elites’ use of festivals to impose a constructed identity in times of crisis, this thesis relies on a method of historical comparison. The Mexican Renaissance and the Porfiriato were not inherently connected, nor were they identical in problems or responses. However, in each period a group of elites looked to spectacles performed in a historically vibrant urban landscape to demonstrate that the city was united under their guidance. Latin American historiography is inherently comparative, both in time and space. Historians from Anthony Pagden to Florencia Mallon have found comparison to be a useful tool that draws out major trends and distinctions between experiences in Latin America. For this thesis, comparison shows how symbols of power and identity became part of an urban landscape that developed a collaborative
network of images that long outlasted its creators. Festivals built upon festivals, reusing and recreating the same landscape and thus continually breathing life into symbols that had been placed there long ago.

Theory and historiography

Public spectacles in Mexican history have to be first understood in terms of spatial location. Yi-Fu Tuan’s theory of space and place outlines the process by which abstract location becomes interpreted through individual experience. For Tuan, to experience is to learn, so the landscape is a place that is filled with symbols that are grafted onto the consciousness. Similar to this notion is Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Habitus is an epistemic system of individual interpretation, a structuring mechanism of a matrix of perceptions that makes possible the diverse actions of a functioning person. Bourdieu’s habitus is integrally tied to another concept, the field, or the space of perception and existence. Bourdieu states that field and habitus are only useful in relationship to each other and that field structures habitus, which is itself the embodied necessity of field.

For all its complexity, habitus is useful in a number of ways. First, habitus rejects the dualistic ontological interpretation of agents and fields; the structure that gives meaning to objects is not opposite to the actor that interacts with the objects. These concepts are linked through complex relationships and perceptions, through

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habitus, which means that elite actors in the Mexican Renaissance and the Porfiriato can appear as simultaneously part of the structure of the state and be influenced by it, as part of Mexico’s population and separate from it, without these being contradictory. Tuan also states that knowing a place can be direct/intimate, as in knowing a home, or indirect/conceptual as in knowing the nation. I will argue that spectacles drew on both of these to publicize their notions of identity and power.\(^\text{18}\)

The urban landscape helped the Creole elites communicate symbols of power and identity. Benedict Anderson has demonstrated that such ideas could be reconciled within an “imagined community,” a shared belief in the existence of unity.\(^\text{19}\) While Anderson is referring specifically to the existence of the nation, the notion that identity can be unified under symbols of solidarity is applicable in both Porfirian nationalism and the early modern identity of colonial New Spain. For these symbols to have any potency they required visibility. The public spectacles of both the Mexican Renaissance and Porfiriato were designed to present an image of the ruling elites as legitimate, and their authority as natural or organic. As Michel Foucault has demonstrated, ritual and ceremony are empty without reception. This creates a reciprocal symbiosis between performer and spectator in which, by necessity, the performer must recognize the power

\(^{18}\) Tuan, *Space and Place*, 68.

\(^{19}\) Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York City, NY: Verso, 1983), 6. Anderson states that all communities are “imagined communities” since in no society larger than a small village can every member personally know every other member. What connects them is not personal or intimate shared experience but the knowledge that they are within the same group and the belief that this commonality unifies them. This is certainly applicable within the nation, a community of thousands to millions of people who, especially in places like nineteenth-century Mexico, will never have the opportunity to see the entire nation, let alone meet all of its inhabitants. Because the nation is inherently limited, due to the fact that nation-states must have boundaries at which another nation-state begins, there can be a perception of similarity between people within the zone of a single nation.
of the viewer to accept or reject the spectacle.\textsuperscript{20} Since habitus also allows for actors to be “reasonable without being rational” their actions are interpreted as never occurring as a mechanical reaction without agency and yet they are not exclusively the deliberate pursuit of “rational consciousness.”\textsuperscript{21} Therefore peasant participation in the elite-sponsored public spectacles that communicated social hierarchy is not interpreted as conscious submissiveness. Their participation is interpreted through their habitus as part of the cumulative experience that internalizes the necessities of interacting in their environment, what Bourdieu calls their “disposition”.\textsuperscript{22} By considering the rational nature of both performers and observers, this thesis can study elite actors, without composing an elitist history.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first two examine maps, space and the urban landscape as indicators of how Creole elites self-identified and constructed a Mexican identity. Chapter one identifies the three major elite factions of colonial New Spain, (indigenous nobles, Creoles, and Peninsulars), and argues that each used the same urban landscape to communicate their own power in a battle of symbols and performance. These symbols appeared in the forms of traditional Nahua paintings for humanist priests, colonial maps for Philip II, and building projects that infused the urban landscape with a visual lexicon of imagery. Each faction had its own distinct worldview, their own vision for New Spain, and the fight for those agendas became so intense that they became struggles for the survival of each class.

\textsuperscript{21} Bourdieu and Waquant, \textit{An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology}, 122, 129.
\textsuperscript{22} Bourdieu and Waquant, \textit{An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology}, 13.
The second chapter parallels chapter one in examining the importance of maps, space, and the urban landscape during the Porfiriato. This chapter explores how científicos recreated the urban landscape with their own symbols of power and authority. Mexico City under Díaz was rebuilt with European-style houses and streets and modern infrastructure. The científicos used the interplay of modern and historical to create an ideal version of the Mexican republic in microcosm, one that owed its existence to Díaz and imagined the nation as a modern people who deserved a place in global economies and cultures. By transforming the urban landscape the científicos created daily symbols of proper Porfirian attitudes, symbols that were greatly heightened during times of celebration. In Porfirian spectacles, elites often anthropomorphized the city itself as a participant in the events, not just a backdrop.

These two chapters lay the spatial foundations for spectacles that relied on the existence of a rich urban landscape to visibly interact with a wide set of symbols of power and identity. Chapters three and four examine the spectacles themselves. Chapter three revolves around the Cortés Baptism celebration of 1566, in which Creole elites displayed their authority in New Spain by reenacting the transfer of power from Moctezuma to Cortés. By using the urban landscape to locate issues of power within history and memory, elites asserted the existence of a unified Castilian-style Creole Mexico under their leadership. This chapter also examines the response of the Peninsulars through their own public spectacle, public torture and executions.

Chapter four returns to the Porfiriato as Cortés and Moctezuma met again in Mexico City in another state-sponsored program that connected the origins of true Mexican history to the ruling class. The message of the 1910 festivities was that, one
hundred years after Hidalgo’s *Grito*, Mexico had finally achieved a national identity. Unity and stability under the wide-reaching administration of Porfirio Díaz was highlighted by an extensive celebration of state-sponsored parades and processions. This chapter explores the symbols of these festivals as they were presented by the científicos to non-elite citizens of the republic. The political opposition to Díaz, which had been growing, simultaneously accepted and rejected the symbols of the Centennial. That Díaz was the legitimate ruler of Mexico was outright rejected; revolution forced him from office by 1911. The symbols of a Mexican national identity, however, were not so easily dismissed. Many of the symbols, rituals, and even language of Porfirián national history and identity lasted long beyond the Mexican Revolution and became staples of *Mexicanidad*.

Throughout Mexican history, Creole elites in positions of state and cultural power used public spectacles to access the symbols of power embedded in the urban landscape by decades of ritual. Performing these symbols allowed the elites to create versions of Mexican identity that affirmed their own legitimate authority and united people underneath their power. A comparison of the Mexican Renaissance (c.1540-c.1600) and the Porfiriato (1876-1910) reveals that this method of social control became a major agenda for Creole elites in times of political crisis to attempt to stabilize their dominance over Mexico.
Chapter One:

Constructions of Competition: Colliding Worldviews and the Urban Landscape of Sixteenth-Century Mexico City

During the 1540s, a Mexica man in Mexico City named Francisco Gualpuyogualcatl was creating a history of Tenochtitlán. In traditional Nahua style he drew the buildings of the city, notably the palace of the former emperor Moctezuma, and denoted significant ideas, people and places with glyphs. Then, he labeled each piece again with Latin numbers (see Figure 1).23 Gualpuyogualcatl’s work had been commissioned by the new viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza, for the royal official to both understand his city and to establish himself as a patron of the arts. Mendoza was not simply adhering to elite fashions of patronage but was actively seeking to establish his authority in Mexico City by writing himself into the city’s history, and by so doing disrupting other claims to authority. Gualpuyogualcatl was in the center of an intense power struggle between competing factions of elite intelligentsias, artists, and politicians over the direction of Mexico City and New Spain as a political, economic, and cultural entity. This was not a fight for one part of New Spain, but for the colony in its entirety. Throughout the Mexican Renaissance (approximately 1540-1600), the tension between colliding worldviews in New Spain culminated in physical assertions of different perspectives and claims to authority that were focused around Mexico City’s urban landscape.

23 Francisco Gualpuyogualcatl, Tenochtitlán in Codex Mendoza, 1540s, pigment paints on paper. VAULT Ayer MS 1824. Newberry Library, Chicago, IL.
Mexico City in the mid- to late sixteenth century was a place of intense rivalry between major competing interests of highly educated, wealthy elites and patrons of arts and building projects. This era, termed the Mexican Renaissance, was defined by the arrival of Italian humanist ideals into New Spain in the 1530s-40s, and the composite artistic and cultural innovations that resulted from the creative synthesis of active Mexica and Spanish intelligentsias. Although relatively brief, it coincided with the adulthood of the first generation of Spaniards born in New Spain (roughly 1540-1600), which was an important moment in early Creole identity-making as these elites attempted to rationalize their place in the world. The Mexican Renaissance introduced a hybridization of indigenous and European forms that signified a distinct identity centered in Mexico City.

The composite style of the Mexican Renaissance was due to the strong presence of three distinct elite factions within the city during the mid-sixteenth century. The Mexica nobles, who had administrated the urban empire since pre-contact, were an active political and cultural faction during the Mexican Renaissance. Yanna Yannakakis has demonstrated that the indigenous elite of New Spain very successfully navigated the sixteenth century by acting as intermediaries for the Spanish empire. The indigenous elites already functioned as intermediaries for the Aztec empire, and as Hernán Cortés rebuilt Tenochtitlán into Mexico City after his conquest of the empire (1519-1521) he

25 Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 3. According to Yannakakis, the colonial order rested heavily upon the ability indigenous intermediaries to negotiate cultural compromises between Indians and Spaniards, a balance that ultimately failed in the seventeenth century as imperial demands worsened.
kept noble lineages intact to stabilize his new administration. In the sixteenth century, baptized Mexica nobles were built into the foundations of the new bureaucracy, particularly in Mexico City. Elite indigenous daughters were married to Spanish conquistadors, and sons were raised in Catholic schools to be educated in Latin and Spanish, and taught classical European learning. Their power rested upon cultural compromises that blended a noble indigenous heritage with the assimilation of Spanish lifestyles. Above all else, the Mexica elite fought for survival. Many elites, such as Fernando Ixtlilxochitl, commissioned their own histories of the conquest that specifically emphasized the role of their city, or even their personal soldiers, in overthrowing the Aztec empire for Spain. By demonstrating his loyalty to Spain, Ixtlilxochitl hoped to maintain his place in the new empire. The neighboring city of Tlaxcala, a chief rival of the Aztecs and major supplier of indigenous soldiers to the Spanish during the conquest, used similar histories to dialogue with the Castilian legal system and enter a feudal relationship with Madrid. Tlaxcala received its own charter as a Spanish city, including a coat of arms, and passed the sixteenth century with near autonomy.

The second faction was composed of the sons of the conquistadors, the Spaniards born in New Spain. This first generation conceptualized their mixed heritage in a historically unique way; while later Mexican Creoles thought of themselves as

26 Gruzinski, Painting the Conquest, 104.
27 Anthony Pagden, “Identity Formation in Spanish America” in Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800, ed. Canny and Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 68. Ixtlilxochitl is an effective example here because his report on how he, and his city, aided the conquest is one of the few remaining codices from the time period. It was influential in his own time period, Pagden states that it earned Ixtlilxochitl political recognition in the Spanish empire, and has been an influential source for historians.
Europeans born in Mexico, this generation actively imagined themselves as the confluence of noble Mexica and Spanish lineages. The Mexica royal lines were therefore part of their own lived heritage, and it was upon this premise that they claimed the right to govern Mexico. These *criollos* (Creoles) understood themselves to be related to, but different from, the Spaniards in Spain. Anthony Pagden has proposed that a distinct Creole identity partly arose as a response to the invasion of immigrating Spaniards who were sent by Charles V to return New Spain firmly under imperial control. The educated, elite Creoles situated their worldview as being the heirs of two of the greatest civilizations in history, and used this to claim that they, not the purely indigenous community, were the rightful heirs of Mexica authority. The Creoles also maintained a distinctly Castilian vision of their heritage that was often at odds with Hapsburg Spain and new Flemish customs. Creoles in New Spain dressed in Castilian fashions and maintained the speech patterns of early sixteenth-century Spain until the end of the Mexican Renaissance. This was an intentional act; most of the Creoles were raised for some time in the royal court in Spain and were well aware of contemporary fashions. J.H. Elliot has argued that this generation constantly compared themselves to

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29 Jorge, Cañizares-Esguerra, Jorge, “Creole Colonial Spanish America” in *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory* ed. Charles Stewart (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press Inc., 2007), 33. Cañizares-Esguerra also claims that this racial mixing was only acceptable for the elite class because it built on Castilian imperial traditions of uniting noble lines.

30 For more on the origins of Creole New Spain, see Pagden’s “Identity Formation in Spanish America” in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987). Pagden argues that the conquistadors expected New Spain to be an essentially autonomous kingdom in the Spanish empire, much like Naples or Milan, and that they would rule it without Imperial intervention. This was part of the impetus to marry into royal bloodlines.

the greatness of their fathers and that they sought to emulate them in their customs and worldviews.\(^{32}\)

The third elite faction competing in Mexico City was the peninsular Spaniards. Upon their arrival, starting around 1535, the \textit{Peninsulares} were immediately at odds with the Creoles, and that tension defined most of the sixteenth century. Peninsulars were purely colonists who came to New Spain to govern and to exploit the colonial economy, which greatly annoyed the Creoles. In fact, in 1597 a Creole council formally complained to the crown that too much money (especially silver) was leaving Mexico in Peninsular hands.\(^{33}\) The crux of Peninsular/Creole tensions, however, was in the \textit{encomienda}, a feudal tribute system of indigenous labor that provided the wealth of Creole lineages. Charles V had always intended to end the system, and his son Philip inherited the task. Creoles were also under increased pressure from church officials, notably Bartolomé de las Casas and Jerónimo de Mendieta, to dissolve the encomiendas due to the slave-like treatment of Indian workers. Fray Mendieta commented that the only reason Indians could survive in New Spain was because the priests saved them from the Spaniards, but that they (the Creoles) only complained about losing their slaves.\(^{34}\) For the Creoles, the loss of the encomienda meant the loss of a culture based on hereditary honor and medieval knighthood; to them it was a direct attempt to eliminate the Creoles as a social class.\(^{35}\)


\(^{33}\) Pagden, “Identity Formation in Spanish America”, 92.


\(^{35}\) Pagden, “Identity Formation in Spanish America”, 54.
It is important to note that these three factions did not compose the entire population of New Spain, or even Mexico City. Poor indigenous laborers in the country and city were major portions of the population. Cities were filled with Spanish merchants, artisans, and working families. Also, African slaves were a notable feature of colonial society; Herbert Klein and Ben Vinson III have estimated that many Spanish colonial cities had up to 3,000 African slaves by the 1550s. That these peoples do not feature prominently in this chapter is not a reflection of their value. Simply, this thesis focuses on elite actors who had the time, resources, and clout to develop and project a vision of Mexican identity that affirmed their own power. The non-elite members of Mexican society played an important role in this as the spectators with the power to accept or reject elite performances of power. However, to understand how and why these spectacles were created, this chapter focuses on the elites.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the competition between the elite factions of Mexico City for cultural, economic, and political power, and for the survival of worldviews that were uniquely their own. This struggle was centered within Mexico City’s urban landscape, which held special significance to each group. Both the Aztecs and the Spanish had centralized, urban empires, and rationalized their perspective of space around the cityscape. Spain’s long Reconquista (718-1492), the military campaign to recapture Iberia from the Moors, set definitive urban precedents and established the city as the center of Spanish culture in an unstable military frontier. To the Spaniards in the conquest of Mexico, the city meant civilization. In his account of the conquest, Bernal Díaz del Castillo remarked several times on the urban nature of Mesoamerican

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peoples, and openly compared these cities to ones in Europe. He stated that the indigenous city Cocotlán “much resembled Valladolid,” the capital of Spain until 1561. Of Mexico City itself, Díaz claimed that it was “as large as Venice,” and that “those who had been to Rome and Constantinople had never seen the like.” Hernán Cortés also elaborated on the urban nature of Tenochtitlán, again comparing it to European cities in his letters to Charles V. “The city is as large as Seville or Cordova,” he wrote, “the streets are wide and straight…the bridges are of great strength and well put together…one public square is twice the size of Salamanca.” The city was the common ground between the elite factions of Mexico City, and they demonstrated their claims to power by adding to or interacting with the urban landscape. In so doing the competing elites made their worldviews visible, physical, and tangible.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the collision of worldviews in New Spain as a viceroyalty, and how those perceptions emerged into physical form through paintings and maps. This section focuses mostly on indigenous elite painters, who were some of the foremost producers of Mexican Renaissance images throughout New Spain. In most of the viceroyalty, outside of major administrative and trade centers, indigenous peoples outnumbered Spaniards for most of the sixteenth century, and local elites and caciques maintained positions of power. Their documents provide an opportunity to view the changing senses of perception as indigenous elites searched for cultural compromises to preserve their power and cultural heritage.

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37 Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España, 1568 (Oxford: Oxford University, 1795), 90.
38 Bernal Díaz del Castillo, 146.
The second part of this chapter looks specifically at Mexico City, where there was a much more equal demographic among the three elite factions. Also, as the political, economic, and cultural center of New Spain, Mexico City was the ultimate urban environment in which to assert authority. Elites from each faction used the city to create tangible demonstrations of their worldview and attempted literally to build their perspectives into the city, and therefore into Mexico.

Theory and Historiography

Mexico City’s urban landscape was filled with symbols of power and identity as a place of ritual that affected how various historical actors perceived it. Yi-Fu Tuan has described the perception of geography in the duality of “space” and “place.” Space is the abstract location, pure physical geography free of human interpretation, and place is location interpreted through experience. Tuan argues geography is never understood outside of personal and sentimental relationships, and to experience a place is to learn. This is a critical idea in understanding sixteenth-century Mexico City, where different perspectives of space and place were colliding within the same landscape. The Mexica, Creoles, and Peninsulars each rationalized physical space and place in different ways that situated them within a complex worldview. Tuan’s framework of space and place helps to locate logic in each faction’s development of a unique perspective of Mexico City. By building into the urban landscape, each group (or individual) sought to give physicality to an abstract space and thus control the personal experiences through which the people interpreted the city. Tuan also states that architecture seeks visibility, it

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naturally is made to be seen or experienced, and so interacting with the city in this way helped diverse worldviews rise in prominence over other, less visible perspectives.\footnote{Tuan, \textit{Space and Place}, 172.}

The ability to create symbols of power in architecture, and in art, was crucial to the success of each faction. Tom Cummins and Joanne Rappaport’s use of “visual literacy” in the colonial city helps to frame this motif. Visual literacy was a system of referentiality in which the “literate” were taught to read the symbols, images and constructions of another group.\footnote{Cummins and Rappaport, \textit{Beyond the Lettered City} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), expand upon Angel Rama’s art term of visual literacy, which expressed a symbolic literacy in art, by applying the idea to symbols in the lived environment. Of course, in the context of the Mexican Renaissance, Rama’s original use is also applicable, as the Mexica paintings were filled with hybrid symbols that only an elite cadre could understand. The ability to mix symbols from different cultures into a new perspective was one of the reasons that the Mexica elites were successful in the sixteenth century.}

Cummins and Rappaport refer specifically to the way that indigenous populations in colonial cities learned to interact with the Spanish system of urban space.\footnote{Tom Cummins and Joanne Rappaport, \textit{Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes}, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012, 22.} In Mexico City, all three factions had to navigate a physical landscape full of symbols from other cultures as the city became a hybrid of Mexica, Creole, and Peninsular constructions.

The importance of the urban landscape in colonial New Spain is a topic often addressed by scholars. Ida Altman has claimed that Mexico City was unique in how rapidly Spanish society developed there, a fact she largely attributed to the existing urban society and the Creole usurpation of indigenous heritage.\footnote{Ida Altman, “Spanish Society in Mexico City After the Conquest”, \textit{The Hispanic American Historical Review} 71, no.3 (1991): 443.} William Connell has also noted the existence of parallel republics in Mexico City, an idea that has been persistent in the scholarship, of Spanish and Mexica sharing physical space but existing as separate groups. As Connell has demonstrated, indigenous urban layouts were kept
but given Spanish names (the *tecpan* became the *cabildo*), which was a large part of Creole attempts to strip the city from the Mexica and assume that heritage themselves.  

No author has been more influential in studies of the Mexican Renaissance than Serge Gruzinksi. The Mexican Renaissance was a time of creativity and patronage, and left behind a distinct set of sources, and Gruzinksi has identified them as evidence of a new way of seeing and thinking, an entirely new perspective, as opposed to a simple case of poor attempts to copy other cultures. Several codices full of paintings by Mexica artists and documentation of indigenous life are therefore amongst the most prominent examples of sixteenth-century thinking. Gruzinksi has called them a “transformation of a way of seeing,” and his approach to dealing with these sources is foundational to this chapter.  

The other major influence on this chapter, historiographically and methodologically, is Barbara Mundy, whose work on the *Relaciones Geográficas* maps is unmatched. Colonial maps offer direct access to how artists constructed and rationalized their lived environments. As Mundy has suggested, maps arise out of a cultural understanding of space and the construction of reality.  

Like Gruzinksi, Mundy saw the creation of these documents as evidence of the emergence of new worldviews, and not cheap copies of European styles. Building upon Mundy and Gruzinksi, the competing perspectives in New Spain, and especially in Mexico City, are seen as forging new worldviews in an emerging global age.

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46 Serge Gruzinksi, *Painting the Conquest*, 12.
Daily Negotiations of Worldviews in Colonial New Spain

In New Spain, the sixteenth century was a time of unprecedented confluence. The mixture of people, the Columbian Exchange, and the conversion of the Aztec empire to the Spanish empire spelled out a traumatic collision of cultures.48 Surviving Maya and Nahua peoples, immigrating Iberian Spaniards, and Mexican-born Creoles all touted diverse views of New Spain and its place in the world. Within these competing cultural systems were different perceptions of reality as both tangible and intangible space; during the Mexican Renaissance, intellectual elites exploring these competing narratives developed them as distinct, composite worldviews. New Spain became a battleground of perceptions in the mid-sixteenth century and the constant negotiation of worldviews was an almost daily feature of existence. The results of these intellectual debates impacted the lived realities of people in the city in covert and overt ways. Most directly, the constant performances, displays of art and building projects were consistent features of urban life. Within these spectacles were symbols that encouraged people to conform within the worldview of one group or another.

The competition between varied perceptions and representations of reality was, at its most basic, a competition for survival, particularly for indigenous Mesoamericans, although Spanish Creoles who were faced with the loss of their encomiendas certainly felt their lifestyles threatened. Inga Clendinnen has demonstrated that the first decades of Spanish occupation were dominated by the systematic destruction of indigenous

48 For more on the Columbian Exchange, see the foundational text by Alfred Cosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1972).
knowledge and culture in an effort to purge heresy from Spain’s newest holdings. This was partly due to Carlos V’s position as the Holy Roman Empire, and the obligation of his imperial forces to convert their subjects to Christianity (called the requerimiento), in order to legally and morally justify their conquests. Of course, it is hard to deny that the physical and emotional subjugation of indigenous peoples were useful tools of colonial domination as well.

For Mayans and Mexica, the arrival of humanist-trained friars in the mid-sixteenth century presented a chance to create a tenuous balance between the burning of idols and the highly controlled preservation of indigenous culture. The missionary persecution of paganism did not subside, if anything the actual practice of indigenous religions was condemned more harshly than ever before. Fray Diego de Landa’s famous inquisition, torture, and execution of Mayan pagans occurred in 1562, well into the Mexican Renaissance. “They have made many idolatries and ceremonies in accordance with their ancient customs,” said Landa in August of 1562, who claimed the goal “to identify the guilty ones so they might be punished and castigated each one according to the guilt of his transgressions.” Similarly, Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta’s Historia Eclesiástica Indiana, written between 1571 and 1596, praised the destruction of idols and temples and stated that “the infidels, seeing their principle temples laid to waste, lost heart in their idolatry, and from that time forward the way was open to demolish what

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49 Inga Clendinnen gives a full account of the campaign against Mayan culture and religion, including the destruction of Mayan writings, in Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
50 Patricia Seed’s Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492-1560 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), provides excellent historical context from the Reconquista of Iberia that established the legal and moral grounds for Spain’s empire.
remained…” Nevertheless, as long as they were not practicing pagan religions, indigenous artists were able to save parts of their heritage through the new European zeal for recording and cataloging. Indigenous artists and Friars developed a tenuous compromise. What began as a project to learn indigenous religions so that the Friars could locate covert paganism grew into a new desire to preserve pre-colonial life before it was extinguished completely. Under the eyes of Friars, native artists documented facets of Mesoamerican languages, history, customs, and daily lives. They were recorded not as aspects of a living people, but as the preserved memories of a now-extinct culture. Thus, one major form of negotiation in sixteenth-century New Spain was between indigenous artists and Spanish priests for the survival and representation of pre-contact cultures.

In collaboration with Spanish friars, Mexica artists began preserving aspects of their culture in lengthy codices. The artists, called Tlacuilos in Nahuatl, were a venerated and highly educated elite group predating the Spanish conquest. Traditionally, tlacuilos trained as apprentices under a master and then moved under the patronage of a lord or city, and thus had established professional and artistic networks in place by the arrival of the Spanish. These networks, along with the respect and elite status that tlacuilos maintained amongst indigenous communities, made them ideal intermediaries for colonial priests to translate Christian doctrine into Nahuatl. Tlacuilos were trained extensively in Latin and Spanish, and learned about European history and art. Most often they were assigned/commissioned/etc. to paint religious scenes in churches, which

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53 Gruzinksi, Painting the Conquest, 57.
54 Gruzinksi, Painting the Conquest, 14.
friars used as visual aids to a sermon. A manual written by the Archdiocese of Mexico City in 1556 attested to both the acceptance of indigenous artists and their level of training by stating that “neither any Spaniard nor Indian will paint images in any church,” unless they understood what they were painting, were licensed, and the image was approved by church judges.\(^{55}\) Interestingly the passage also stated that no sermon should be given in the “language of the Indians,” even though tlacuilo artists often blended native symbols into their ecclesiastical paintings to help Mexica churchgoers understand an image. This would either suggest that such symbols were integrated without the awareness of local priest, or simply that the priests did not apply the prohibition against “indigenous language” to images.

Images held different places in Mexica and Spanish culture. Nahuatl had a pictographic orthography, in which concepts were expressed through single glyphs (see Figure 2). Thus, translating Christian texts into Nahuatl glyphs and vise-versa, as well as the Romanization of Nahuatl, meant a paradigmatic shift in the perception, construction, and representation of reality. Since there was no direct translation available to the Tlacuilos of the Mexican Renaissance to interpret this shift, their solution was to create an alternate system distinct from both Mexica and Spanish forms that incorporated elements of each. These images were recognizable to most viewers, but only those who were fully literate in both cultural systems could derive the entire significance. After the conquest, noble Mexica families used personal histories to demonstrate their legitimate claim to power through both documenting their support of the Spanish conquest and

\(^{55}\) Archdiocese of Mexico City, *Constituciones del Arzobispo y provincai de la muy insigne y muy leal Ciudad de Tenoxtitlán, México, de la Nueva España* (Mexico City: Juan Pablos, 1556), 22.
demonstrating cultural and linguistic multi-literacy; the Spanish often kept such families in noble positions to solidify the legitimacy of their own domination.\(^{56}\)

Figure 1 depicts the founding of Tenochtitlán. It is Nahua in the use of glyphs for the names of places and people and to signify events (at the bottom the warriors represent distinct battles of Colhuacan and Tenayucan), the abstract use of space, and the calendar-border.\(^{57}\) However, Latin letters are used to label the glyphs. The paper is European, not Mexica. This image is from the Codex Mendoza, commissioned in 1541 by the first viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza (r. 1535-1550). It was created by the head of Mexico City’s painters’ guild, the baptized Mexica noble Francisco Gualpuyogualcatl who used Latin and Nahuatl both to construct the image.\(^{58}\) As part of his personal claim to authority the viceroy commissioned histories of the city, into which he could eventually be written. As the first viceroy of Mexico City, Mendoza was immediately at odds with the conquistadors who had ruled as de-facto kings since 1521, and whose power he was sent to restrict.\(^{59}\) Mendoza ensured that the line of legitimacy flowed from the Aztecs to Iberian Spaniards, and not to the conquistadors themselves, through a series of actions that, like the Codex Mendoza, wrote Iberian authority into Mexican history. In 1538 Mendoza appointed Diego de Alvarado Huanitzin as the new governor of Mexico. Huanitzin was a direct descendant of the royal line interrupted by Cortés’s execution of Cuauhtémoc in 1525. By re-establishing this line under Spanish authority, Mendoza undermined the Mexica leader installed by Cortés, and made the

\(^{56}\) Gruzinski, *Painting the Conquest*, 105.
\(^{57}\) Gruzinski, *Painting the Conquest*, 104.
\(^{58}\) Gruzinski, *Painting the Conquest*, 107.
\(^{59}\) Altman, “Spanish Society in Mexico City After the Conquest”, 418.
distinction that to follow the royal family was to follow Iberian Spain, not the conquistadors. ⁶⁰

Another tlacuilo-generated painting in a Spanish book, Figure 3, shows three images detailing Mesoamerican culture. The top two are Nahuatl glyphs, however the bottom image is rendered with European-style figures that interact with space realistically. Although the glyphs look different, they combined to present a holistic image, in the tradition Nahua way that glyphs interacted. The top two glyphs represented times in the Mexica calendar; the text above states that “from the tenth house it rose…those born in it would be happy.” The glyphs for dates, representing the best times of year for children to be born, interact with the realistic drawing of the mother and infant, presumably born in the best month. The two glyphs required interpretation by the scribe, contrasting with the third that was recognizable to any reader as two human figures and a child. Even so, only those like the Tlacuilo who were fluent in both cultures could understand the image as a whole. This contrast demonstrated the separation between parts of Mesoamerican cultures that were extinct, Nahua calendars and superstitions, and parts that survived, in this case the human actions of child-raising and literally the Nahua people. This image is from the Florentine Codex, an encyclopedia of pre-contact Mexica culture that was organized by Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún between roughly 1545 and 1600. The text surrounding the images is bilingual; Spanish is in the left column and Nahuatl (written in Phoenician letters) is in the right.

Texts and images such as these indicate the unspoken negotiations of power and identity in sixteenth-century New Spain. ⁶¹ Nahuatl images were used to uphold family

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⁶⁰ Connell, After Moctezuma, 17.

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lineages, preserve traditional modes of perception, assist in the conversion of indigenous heretics, and legitimize one faction of Spanish rulers over another. For Mexica tlacuilos, the threat of watching their entire pre-contact culture be destroyed was very real, and the codices offered a surprising compromise. By learning to blend European styles into their artwork, the tlacuilos connected Mexica culture to European classic antiquity. If Christian Spaniards once had a pagan past, in Greece and Rome, that was revered, then the Mexica could be as well. The priests stopped destroying Mexican cultures as long as they could be preserved like the classical civilizations in Greece, and thus Spaniards and Mexicas could glorify a sophisticated, urban society while ignoring the pagan element. Mexica deities were thus assigned strict roles, images, and genders, none of which had existed in the pre-contact cosmology, and organized into Greek style pantheons, making them static figures of antiquity.

The re-conceptualization of Mexica deities as Greco-Roman figures is seen in Figure 4. Titled “Tlaloc god of rain” in the Codex Ixtlilxóchitl, it shows a masterful mixing of traditions that exemplifies the mindset of educated, native artists of the Mexican Renaissance. This codex is attributed to Fernando de Alva Cortés Ixtlilxóchitl, a respected native historian who was heir of both the kings of Texcoco and Cuitláhuac of Mexico (whose 80-day reign included the noche triste), and was composed around the

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61 It is difficult to distinguish between the terms “text” and “image” in the time period, since they were one and the same to Mesoamerican cultures. As Barbara Mundy has illustrated (The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas Chicago, Il: University of Chicago Press, 2000), even the Spanish lacked vocabulary to distinguish text-writing from glyphic-writing. By the late-sixteenth century, however, the Romanization of Nahuatl and stigmatization of glyphs as the language of a defeated empire were beginning to create the distinction of all paintings purely as images. The attempts to preserve Nahuatl language through glyphs ended with the Mexican Renaissance around 1600 with the resurgence of colonial power and elimination of many administrative posts for Mexica nobles.

62 Gruzinski, Painting the Conquest, 73.

63 Ignacio Osorio Romero, La Enseñanza del Latín a los Indios (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1990), p.1

64 Gruzinski, Painting the Conquest, 65.
year 1600. The figure of Tlaloc, composed near the end of the Mexican Renaissance, is very European in its shading, realism, and posture. However, the deity has no relation to perspective space and is drawn atop a glyphic representation for clouds. For the Mexica elite this compromise glorified their heritage, which reinforced the authority of culturally bilingual Mexica nobles over the existing Indian population and strengthened their roles as intermediaries. At the same time, it established the elite artists as belonging within a European system, and demonstrated that purely traditional Nahua culture was extinct.

The sixteenth century, and the dawn of global empires, reinvigorated the desire for universal knowledge and the impetus to organize that knowledge into rational categories. This included the humanist cataloging of native customs, but extended to European people and territories as well. People of power in Europe, from kings to bishops, sought to know about the areas under their control, to rationalize it, and also to record that knowledge. Books like the 1570 *Instruciones para obispo de Mejico* indicated that understanding demographic information was seen as vital to the success of sixteenth-century leaders. The *Instruciones* was written by the Archbishop don Alonso de Montufar for his successor. In it, Montufar outlined what he indicated were important things for the next archbishop to know, divided by city, from Texcala and Cacango to Mexico City. For each city Montufar listed the resources and people, indigenous languages, locations of churches and parishes, and events. On Mondays, Montufar noted, the Spaniards paid him a peso to pray for souls in purgatory.⁶⁵ He warned the new Archbishop that the “Mexican language” was alive amongst Indians. Montufar also observed the tension between Creole and Peninsular Spaniards and stated, “we have

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⁶⁵ Alonso de Montufar, *Instruciones para obispo de Mejico* (Mexico City, 1570), 134.
The encomienda was a constant point of contention between Creoles and Peninsulars, and Montufar described the tribute in detail and listed the encomenderos by name. In Mexico City, Montufar also noted the ethnic diversity of “Spaniards, mulattos, mestizos, and Africans.” The Archbishop did not describe these things idly; these were the conditions of daily life that he felt were integral to understanding New Spain. The diversity and conflict he encountered were an important part of the colony.

When Philip II ascended to the Spanish throne in 1556, he brought Renaissance desires to understand his empire, and especially to envision the geographic delineations of his holdings through scientific and detailed mapping projects. Maps were the modern method of rationalizing space into place in a tangible fashion that could be shared and displayed. For Philip, maps displayed a place as his empire, and thereby encouraged others to incorporate Philip’s control into their understanding of places. As Tuan has indicated, maps altered the experience of space as it was interpreted as place. By 1558, Philip had commissioned Jacob van Deventer to produce drawings of towns in the Netherlands, and Anton van den Wyngaerde and Pedro de Esquivel to map out Spain. According to David Buisseret, Philip was very attached to these maps and kept them in his chambers. In New Spain, the cartographer Alonso de Santa Cruz was working on a world map that placed the Americas in relation to Spain. Unable to

66 Montufar, Instrucciones, 33.
67 Montufar, Instrucciones, 130.
68 Mundy, The Mapping of New Spain, 1.
69 David Buisseret, Monarchs, Ministers and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 130.
physically see his empire, Philip surrounded himself with visual depictions that connected him to his world.\textsuperscript{70}

In 1577, a cartographer named Juan López de Velasco began a new mapping project for Philip, which was designed to be a comprehensive historic atlas of New Spain, entitled the \textit{Relaciones Geográficas}. To complete this, Velasco sent out a fifty-item questionnaire to approximately seventy local colonial leaders with instructions on how to fill them out. These questions, which had been printed, sought to illuminate the Crown on everything he felt was important to know about the cities of New Spain. The first question, the name of the city, was immediately followed by a question about by whom it was discovered and conquered. The questionnaire did not indicate any need to know the history of each city before it became a colony of Spain. Philip seemed to only be interested in what the Spanish colonizers had done with the territories, and what potential they had for development. Question thirty-five asked about the establishment of churches, and other questions inquired about urban development and Spanish infrastructure.\textsuperscript{71} The questionnaire was clear about what Philip wanted from his colonies. While he extended the humanist-leaning recording of history and customs to New Spain, questions thirteen and fourteen asked about the language, dress, and customs of the indigenous population. The majority of the questions prompted the exploitability of the land, resources and people. The only truly human elements to appear in the questions were about the Indians, their language and customs, and were not substantial. Velasco never inquired about the daily lives of colonial Spaniards. The merchants, artisans, urban and rural workers, slaves, and even administrators are absent

\textsuperscript{70} Mundy, \textit{The Mapping of New Spain}, 9.
\textsuperscript{71} Relación Geográfica of Coatzocoalcos, 4/29/1580. Relaciones Geográficas Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, JGI XXIV-2, F.2, UT Austin.
from the fifty-question account of each city. Velasco did ask about every usable resource, including forests, natural herbs, wild animals, salt deposits, the quality of beaches, and rivers. The questionnaire indicated that Spain was uncertain as to how it could best use New Spain, but it did demonstrate that the colony was strictly a resource for the crown. Thus, the questionnaire was silent on issues of local government, leaders, or areas for political growth.

As part of this, Philip was interested in the geography of each city, and Velasco wrote several questions concerning both natural and constructed landscapes. A few questions, however, had the additional component of asking for a visual depiction. Question ten asked for a description of the site upon which the town was founded, and requested a map of the “town, its streets, plazas, and other features, noting the monasteries… show[ing] which part of town faces south or north.” Question forty-two requested an accurate map of the coastline. Question forty-seven asked for a map of islands along the coast with a written description of soil, trees, animals, and resources.72 The colonial officials filled out the questionnaires, and did so very precisely. A response sheet from don Juan Gutiérrez de Liébana, of Guaxtepec, exactly mirrored the wording of the questionnaire in his answers; not only did he re-state the original question in the form of an answer but started every single response with the word “primeramente”, just as the questionnaire did.73 Gutiérrez, like almost every other colonial official, also signed his name frequently to the answer sheet. While the Spaniards took pride in their completion of the written works, most of the maps (which Velasco called pinturas,  

72 All three of these questions come from the Relación Geográfica of Coatzocoalcos, 4/29/1580. Relaciones Geográficas Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, JGI XXIV-2, F.2, UT Austin.
73 Juan Gutiérrez de Liébana, Relación de Guaxtepec, 9/24/1580. Relación Geográfica Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, JGI XXIV-3 F.3, UT Austin.
meaning paintings or landscapes) were delegated to tlacuilo artists. Since images were still associated with indigenous systems of knowledge in New Spain, the written word belonged to Spaniards, and the realm of figures was left to tlacuilos.74 The tlacuilos were trained in European forms and blended their styles into their mural and codices, but the making of a map was a direct reflection of their perceptions of space and place.

Among the documents surviving from the Mexican Renaissance, colonial maps offer the purest representation of competing perceptions of place and space. Figure 5 is the now famous woodcut map from Hernán Cortés’s second letter to the emperor. It shows Tenochtitlán with a very European sense of spatial organization in which the image and background relate to each other. It is also noteworthy that the houses have European red-tile roofs; such was the tendency to project European ideas onto indigenous forms. This map looks clearly different from the history of Tenochtitlán in the Codex Mendoza, (Figure 1), which also served as a map of the city. The map in the Codex Mendoza illustrates a Mexica understanding of place, in which space and time were directly related. The map divided the city into four neighborhoods, each represented by a founder of that district whose heirs populated it. The map was therefore a social as well as geographic map that merged lineages, social groups, history and space together.75

The Relaciones Geográficas were a compilation of both indigenous and European perspectives. Barbara Mundy has called the Relaciones Geográficas the best examples of local responses to the collision of two worldviews.76 No two maps were the same, and reflected a diverse reaction of local artists to competing systems of spatial

74 Mundy, The Mapping of New Spain, 58.
75 Mundy, The Mapping of New Spain, xvi.
76 Mundy, The Mapping of New Spain, xviii.
perception. Figure 6 is the Relación of the city Cholula, assigned to a local indigenous artist by mayor Gabriel de Rojas in 1581. The map is laid out in European rational spatial organization, with even lines separating street and images of the major churches. Yet, over the block where the ancestral pyramid stood is an image of cattails, not the pyramid. The town’s full name, Tollan Cholula, meant cattails and that glyph was a place-name for the city in Nahuatl. The indigenous artists used the glyph to draw indigenous heritage into this now European city, creating a map that was geographically Western but also carried Nahua connections between time, place, history, and heritage.

Another Relación, given to an indigenous artist by mayor Juan Gutiérrez de Liébana in 1580, shows Guaxtepec (Figure 7). In this beautiful map, drawn in oranges, purples, blues, greens, yellows, and reds, churches were used to signify towns. In Nahua maps, a pyramid was often used for that purpose, but here the image of a distinctly Spanish, colonial institution replaced the pyramid while still being used for the same purpose. The substitution of indigenous symbols with Spanish equivalents demonstrated the horizontal ubiquity of colonial domination, but also suggested a superficiality to the acceptance of European over indigenous forms. Additionally, the buildings showed perspective, space, and shading but had no relation to the landscape of abstract, Nahua-rendered rivers and glyphs for city names and locations. This map looks especially indigenous in form when compared to the Relación from Espiritu Santo, Figure 8. This map, which the text describes as focusing on the mouth of a major river, has hatching, shading, clear geographic features, and even a compass rose. Each of these maps represents the myriad forms that arose as indigenous artists and their Spanish instructors combined competing notions of perception. Without texts from the artists it is
impossible to know their individual motivations or thought processes, but the question remains as to whether they used European forms to please royal officials, or because that was how they saw themselves, or both? The maps reveal the double-consciousness of a native elite artist in sixteenth-century New Spain, who was both a colonial leader and an indigenous leader, and the fulcrum of contested visions of New Spain between Peninsulars, Creoles, and natives.

Building Competing Worldviews into the Urban Landscape of Mexico City

New Spain in the sixteenth century was the location of daily negotiations of colonial power and identity between diverse factions throughout the viceroyalty. In every colonial city, native elites and colonial officials balanced the colonial order on tentative compromises that eventually led to the emergence of compounded worldviews from the artists of the Mexican Renaissance. In Mexico City, the center of colonial New Spain, these struggles for power, identity, and survival were most intensified. While most colonial cities were disproportionately populated by Nahuas, Creoles, or Peninsulars, Mexico City had major populations of each into the early seventeenth century. The urban landscape was central to each faction’s perception of space, and so to establish their claim to the city each added to it through building projects, reorganization, or other methods of urban and social control. In this way, sixteenth-century leaders tried literally to build their views into the city. The urban landscape of Mexico City was the heart of colonial power, and thus the example for other cities to

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77 Barbara Mundy poses this question in *The Mapping of New Spain*, page 71, and adds that since most native elites of this generation were educated and raised in monastic schools, they would likely have self-identified along at least some European terms.
emulate, and it became the battleground upon which struggles for power and survival were fought.

After the conquest of Mexico was officially completed in 1521, the Spaniards and Mexica nobles who had become loyal to Spain set about rebuilding Tenochtitlán. The decision to build the Spanish capital on the remains of the Aztec capital was a bold move by Cortés to tie the legitimacy of his Spaniards directly to the authority of the past rulers, as Jacqueline Holler describes it, usurping rather than denying indigenous sovereignty. From the beginning, Cortés rebuilt Tenochtitlán as a European city, but using the stones and people of the Aztec empire in order to maintain the functioning tribute system. This meant that the new Mexico City was inherently a hybrid space. Cortés had Alonso Garcia Bravo lay the Spanish grid-plan or traza over Tenochtitlán, and centered the main plaza exactly over the central Zócalo plaza of the Mexica. The Mexica temple was replaced with a Catholic church, the conquistadors placed their homes where Mexica lords used to live, and Cortés had his palace built on top of the ruins of Moctezuma’s. The message was clear: the empire was meant to continue as a functioning system of tribute and authority, but now under the rule of the Spaniard leaders and institutions. The Spaniards communicated continuity not to present themselves as the new Aztecs, but to preserve the system of the empire through the memory of indigenous authority.

Not only did Cortés rebuild the city with stones of the old empire, but with people as well. To create a more seamless transition, the Spaniards permitted many

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78 Holler, “Spatial Contestation in Sixteenth Century Mexico City”, 107.
Mexica leaders to retain their administrative positions, but under new Spanish titles.\textsuperscript{80}
This was meant not only to demonstrate the rewards of working with the Spanish but also to maintain popular trust in the government. Cortés laid so much faith in the indigenous leaders that when he left in 1523 to suppress the Olid uprising in Honduras, he placed indigenous leaders in charge of rebuilding and governing the city in his absence. The privilege and responsibility of rebuilding in particular was given to Captain General Tlacotzin. Tlacotzin, by cooperating with the Spanish, had maintained the title he held under Moctezuma, \textit{Ciguacoatl} (Lieutenant to the King), as a means to preserve his authority.\textsuperscript{81} Tlacotzin was like the city himself. He was Mexica, in both ancestry and power, but wore Spanish clothes, carried a sword, and even earned the right to ride a white horse, a deeply important symbol of masculine honor to Spaniards that was only permitted of a Spanish nobleman.\textsuperscript{82} In the first generation, Mexica nobles and elites received a special treatment that would not last into the second half of the century. As Mexico City became more Spanish, Mexica families had less to gain from their traditional titles and adopted continually more Spanish customs.

An important part of this rebuilding project was the relocation of Tenochtitlán/Mexico City’s indigenous, non-elite, inhabitants. In the Aztec empire, the city was divided into four neighborhoods. Cortés kept those neighborhoods as indigenous districts, and relocated all the Mexica from the plaza, which he kept for Spaniards only, to those outlying areas.\textsuperscript{83} Indian \textit{barrios} had their own municipal council to handle internal affairs, a system designed by Pedro de Gante in the 1520s that further

\textsuperscript{81} Connell, \textit{After Moctezuma}, 14.
\textsuperscript{82} Connell, \textit{After Moctezuma}, 14.
\textsuperscript{83} Holler, “Spatial Contestation in Sixteenth Century Mexico City”, 111.
isolated indigenous people from the central politics of the main plaza. Since the Spaniards were inheriting the legitimate place of the Aztecs, surviving non‐elite Mexica no longer had any claim to that ancestry and were marginalized to the urban peripheries. The elites were only able to hold tenuously onto their positions because Castilian customs recognized baptized nobles, who married their children to Spanish families, as almost Spanish. In this way, the conquistadors began the process of building themselves into Mexico City as its rightful rulers. Bernal Díaz del Castillo elaborated on the rights of the conquistadors to rule Mexico by demonstrating how they not only rebuilt, but improved the city along European lines. Díaz stated that Cortés first set aside land for churches, then monasteries, then public buildings and squares; in all, Díaz asserted that there was “no better built city in Christendom.” He later stated that hospitals were erected, new roads were built, and the city was as populous by 1530 as it had been before the conquest. The conquistadors were determined to demonstrate their legitimate claims to Mexico City to both indigenous and European audiences, and did so in terms of the urban landscape.

The relative autonomy enjoyed by the conquistadors in Mexico City did not last long. From 1521 until 1526, Cortés micromanaged the city, even personally appointing all members of the cabildo city council, a process usually done through election. In 1526, however, the Spanish Crown appointed two members to the council, and by 1530 all appointments had to be directly approved by the Crown. The ultimate assault on

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84 De Gante’s idea originally proposed the creation of two republics, one Indian and one Spanish, in Mexico City that would coexist without intermixing. More on this can be read in The Colonial Spanish American City: Life in the Age of Atlantic Capitalism by Jay Kinsbruner (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005).
85 Díaz del Castillo, Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España, 327.
86 Díaz del Castillo, Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España, 386.
87 Altman, “Spanish Society in Mexico After the Conquest”, 416.
conquistador autonomy arrived in the form of a royal viceroy, Antonio de Mendoza, in 1535. Anthony Padgen has established that the conquistadors expected Mexico City to function as a quasi-autonomous kingdom in the Spanish Empire, much like Naples or Milan, and saw themselves as equal to those other cities.\textsuperscript{88} Charles V and Philip, however, did not treat New Spain as anything but a colony.

From 1530 through the end of the century, the Creole sons of conquistadors and the peninsular Spaniards emigrating from Iberia were engaged in struggles of power that were written onto the urban landscape. Anthony Pagden has observed that the first generation of true Creoles developed a cultural conservatism that maintained the values and ideas of their fathers.\textsuperscript{89} This greatly revolved around the fight to maintain the \textit{encomienda} system, but also continued adding to the city as part of their continued claims to that contested landscape. For Creoles in the mid-sixteenth century, the grandeur of Mexico City was a demonstration of their right and ability to rule the city; in 1553 the Creole elites even founded the University of Mexico to prove that Mexico City had its own intelligentsia independent of Europe.\textsuperscript{90} Creoles built their authority into the city and used the urban landscape to display their heritage, but Peninsular Spaniards also used the city to promote their own agendas.

Although royal officials had their own houses and offices built in the central plaza, the most striking example of their contributions to the cityscape was the 1560 Imperial Tomb. In 1558, Charles V died from malaria in the remote Spanish monastery to which he had retired two years earlier. To mourn him, the viceroy of Mexico, don Luis de Velasco commissioned a giant monument in Mexico City, which was dedicated

\textsuperscript{88} Pagden, “Identity Formation in Spanish America,” 64.
\textsuperscript{89} Pagden, “Identity Formation in Spanish America,” 88.
\textsuperscript{90} Pagden, “Identity Formation in Spanish America,” 86.
in 1560. The monument, the Imperial Tomb, was housed in the St. Francis monastery a few blocks west of the central plaza, and featured a prominent image on one side of Hernán Cortés under the arm of Charles V, described in a contemporary text about the monument by Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, represented Cortés “venturing forth for Carlos V, and conquering the world in his [Charles’s] favor.” This less-than-subtle reminder that everything the conquistadors accomplished was for Spain was built into the city as a massive monument. The book, *Túmulo Imperial de la Gran Ciudad de México (Imperial Tomb of the Great City of Mexico)*, was dedicated on March 1, 1560 by Viceroy de Velasco, written by Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, and published by Antonio de Espinosa, all three Peninsular Spaniards. It was written as a companion to the monument, and together composed part of the newest artistic movements in Europe as the first manifestation of Mannerism in New Spain. In style as well as composition it reminded the viewer that Charles was not beholden to Castilian customs but was more aligned with greater European trends. In the book, Salazar referred to Charles only as “Caesar,” invoking his title as Holy Roman Emperor, greatly built upon the imagery of Charles as an Emperor, a reminder that New Spain was his colony. Ironically, the book which served as Peninsular propaganda was printed in Mexico City on the local printing press. In another example of misunderstandings, the Creoles touted the presence of the modern printing press as proof of the advanced nature of Creole Mexico, while the Peninsular Spaniards simply saw it as part of colonial infrastructure.

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91 Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, *Túmulo Imperial de la Gran Ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Antonio de Espinosa, 1560), prologue.
92 Salazar, *Túmulo Imperial de la Gran Ciudad de México*, 9.
93 Stephanie Merrim, *The Spectacular City, Mexico, and Colonial Hispanic Literary Culture* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012), 300.
The contradictory origins of *Túmulo Imperial de la Gran Ciudad de México*, printed in Mexico City by Peninsulars who saw Mexico as inferior, highlighted the contested and confusing nature of power relations in Mexico City in the sixteenth century. The various factions that tried to build permanent symbols of their authority into the urban landscape were competing for power, for identity, and for survival. The Creoles sought to construct an urban landscape that demonstrated their right to rule, and their pride in their Creole heritage, based on a legacy of conquest. They used symbols of continuity with the Mexica past and the power of their encomiendas to assert their rightful authority over Mexico City. Peninsular Spaniards, conversely, sought to maintain the city and therefore the viceroyalty as purely subject to the Spanish crown, and to limit the power and delusions of autonomy of elite encomenderos. They added symbols of colonial authority to the urban landscape and reminded inhabitants that the conquistadors, and their heirs, were subjects of Spain. The remaining indigenous cohort balanced the tenuous compromises and negotiations of the colonial world from the periphery as they fought for their survival. In blending together ancient Mesoamerican images with Spanish symbols of power the indigenous elites presented a hybrid Mexican identity based on cultural multi-literacy. The factions of New Spain were all prominent in Mexico City, the economic, religious, political, and cultural capital of the viceroyalty, and in this center of power they built physical, tangible constructions of their competing worldviews.
Concluding the Mexican Renaissance

Throughout the sixteenth century, the urban landscape of Mexico City was the center of a complex fight for power between factions of Mexica, Creole and Peninsular elites. To demonstrate that they held legitimate authority over the colony, each faction built symbols that connected their image to the memory of the Aztec empire as heirs, conquerors, or inheritors. As the center of the colony, and the seat of both the Aztecs and the Spanish, Mexico City was the heart of New Spain, and so the competing factions altered, added to, and reimagined the urban landscape to build symbols of not only their power, but presented Mexico City as unified under their leadership.

Under these rigorously competitive terms, there was room for only one power, so each faction was constantly fighting for their very survival. From roughly 1540 to 1600, Mexico City was able to sustain these three elite groups. The Mexican Renaissance was a period of great creativity and exploration in the hybridization of forms and development of identity. Eventually, however, colonial Peninsular power began to overshadow the others. The violent response of Peninsular judges to the 1566 Cortés baptism ceremony, while officially condemned by the next viceroy, provided the impetus to begin limiting Creole power. In 1573, Philip II signed the *Leyes de Indias*, Laws of the Indies, which were 148 ordinances for the establishment and maintenance of purely colonial Spanish cities in the New World. These laws codified the form, style, and function of colonial cities, which simultaneously allowed the Peninsulars to limit Creole expressions of power in the urban landscape, and created a new visual lexicon of a strictly colonial urban landscape. To be literate, to function in the new cities, meant that even Creoles had to accept and interact within imperial symbols of power. The laws
were largely motivated by the pragmatics of an efficient colonial town, (waste removal, defenses, access to ports) however some, such as Ordinance 126, directly challenged Creole urban systems. Ordinance 126 stated that no lots on the plaza would be assigned to individuals, but would go to administrative and religious buildings first, then shops for merchants, and the remainder would be given by lottery to settlers. The elaborate houses of the plaza were where the Creole elites lived, operated their huge estates, and spent their time spending the wealth in a display of power. The plaza was the center of Mexico City, where Mexica lords had ruled their empire, and for the Creoles it was a symbolic place of their birthright from their conquering fathers. Ordinance 126 placed the plaza under the strict control of Peninsular elites, and issued lots to incoming colonial settlers, not to Creoles.

Throughout the colonial period, the urban landscape of Mexico City never lost its symbolic potency, and imperial powers continued to use it to display their power. As late as 1793, seventeen years before Mexico declared independence from Spain, the viceroy was still demonstrating imperial control through improvements to the urban landscape. Figure 9, a map from 1793 entitled “View of the main Plaza of Mexico, Reformed and Beautified by the Viceroy,” shows Mexico City near the end of the eighteenth century, right before Viceroy Juan Vicente de Güemes Pacheco de Padilla y Horcasitas (r.1789-1794) was removed from office by the Mexico City Ayuntamiento city government. Mexico City was dirty and unmaintained when the Viceroy assumed office, and the map indicated a clean, orderly, and updated city improved by the

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Viceroy. This map also indicates that the plaza of Mexico City was still being used to represent all of New Spain into the very late colonial era. The map showed only the central plaza of Mexico City, but represented the reforms and improvements of the Viceroy across New Spain. As the colonial era came to a close, maps and the urban landscape maintained potent symbols of power and identity that were carried into the republic.

When Francisco Gualpuyogualcatl created the Codex Mendoza in the 1540s, he was unknowingly creating a piece of national history. This codex, along with other items of the Mexican Renaissance, were given new meaning under the presidency of Porfirio Díaz (r.1876-1910), who tried to build a national identity for Mexico around a shared history. The Codex Mendoza came to reside in the National Museum of the Mexican Republic as an icon of national unity and identity by its membership amongst a collection of artifacts that were elevated into the imagined community of the republic.97 Like the Mexican Renaissance, the Porfiriato was a period that used the urban landscape of Mexico City to display a vision of Mexican identity, focused under the power of an elite, Creole faction. The symbols of the Mexican Renaissance were reimagined and reused, but remained ingrained within the urban landscape as the foundation upon which to build a national identity.

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97 Anales del Museo Nacional de México (Mexico City: Ignacion Escalante, 1882), 47. This text, and the period of the Porfiriato, are further discussed in Chapter 2.
Appendix A:

Images for Chapter 1

Figure 1: Francisco Gualpuyogualcatl, *Tenochtitlán* in *Codex Mendoza*, 1540s, pigment paints on paper. VAULT Ayer MS 1824. Newberry Library, Chicago, IL.

Figure 2: The eagle glyph in Gualpuyogualcatl’s map in the *Codex Mendoza* was both a place-name for Tenochtitlán and a symbol of Mexica mythology.

Figure 3: Unknown artist, Image from *Florentine Codex*, compiled by friar Bernardino de Sahagún, 1545-1600, pigment paints on paper.

Figure 4: Fernando de Alva Cortés Ixtlilxóchitl, *Tlaloc god of rain* in *Codex Ixtlilxóchitl*, c.1600, pigment paint on paper. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Figure 5: Hernán Cortés, “Cortés’ 1524 Map of Tenochtitlan”, Woodcut. Nuremberg Germany (Public Domain).

Figure 6: Unknown artist, *Relación Cholula*, overseen by mayor Gabriel de Rojas, 1581, paint on paper. JGI XXIV-1, Relaciones Geográficas Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 7: Unknown artist, *Relación Guaxtepec*, 1581, paint on paper. JGI XXIV-3, Relaciones Geográficas Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 8: Unknown artist, *Relación Espíritu Santo*, 1581, paint on paper. JGI XXIV-2, Relaciones Geográficas Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 9: 1793 Unknown artist, *Vista de la Plaza Mayor*, 1793. ES.41091.AGI/26.17//MP-MEXICO, Archivo de las Indias, Spain.
Figure 1: Francisco Gualpuyogualcatl, *Tenochtítlan* in *Codex Mendoza*, 1540s, pigment paints on paper. VAULT Ayer MS 1824. Newberry Library, Chicago, IL.
Figure 2: The glyph of the eagle on the cactus represented not only the place-name of Tenochtitlán, but the story of its founding which connected rulers to their mythic past. This has remained a potent symbol in Mexico, and currently ornaments the national flag.

Detail: Francisco Gualpuyogualcatl, *Tenochtitlán* in *Codex Mendoza*, 1540s, pigment paints on paper, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL.
Figure 3: Unknown artist, Image from Florentine Codex, compiled by friar Bernardino de Sahagún, 1545-1600, pigment paints on paper.
Figure 4: Fernando de Alva Cortés Ixtlilxóchitl, *Tlaloc god of rain in Codex Ixtlixóchitl*, c.1600, pigment paint on paper. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
This woodcut, based on drawings by Cortés, presents a very different perspective of Tenochtitlán than Figure 1.
Figure 6: Unknown artist, *Relación Cholula*, overseen by mayor Gabriel de Rojas, 1581, paint on paper. JGI XXIV-1, Relaciones Geográficas Collection, Nettie Lee Benson,
Figure 7: Unknown artist, *Relación Guaxtepec*, 1581, paint on paper. JGI XXIV-3, Relaciones Geográficas Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
Figure 8: Unknown artist, *Relación Espíritu Santo*, 1581, paint on paper. JGI XXIV-2, Relaciones Geográficas Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
Figure 9: 1793 Unknown artist, *Vista de la Plaza Mayor*, 1793. ES.41091.AGI/26.17//MP-MEXICO, Archivo de las Indias, Spain.
Chapter Two:

Ceremonies of Commemoration: Maps, Sacred Space, and the Urban Landscape during the 1910 Centennial

In September of 1910, Mexican President Porfirio Díaz met with the French ambassador in Mexico City to dedicate a monument to chemist Louis Pasteur in celebration of Mexico’s Centennial independence celebrations. The events drew crowds of Mexican journalists, throngs of spectators, and foreign dignitaries. Pasteur’s monument formed a part of Díaz’s elaborate program of public spectacles, which also included newly commissioned monuments to German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt and George Washington. Díaz was not giving Mexico City to foreigners, nor had he forgotten of which country he was president. Monuments honoring liberal heroes of other nations embodied the Porfírian project of rebuilding Mexico City as a modern city, and reimagining Mexico as a progressive, global nation. By building foreign influences into the urban landscape, Díaz presented a commitment to foreign diplomats, as well as to the Mexican people, that the Mexican nation had earned a place in global economies and cultures.

Mexican elites in the late nineteenth century consciously shaped the physicality of Mexico City. Throughout the presidency of Porfirio Díaz (r.1876-1910), the elite cadre of educated men who called themselves the científicos rebuilt and reimagined Mexico City, and other major cities, to create a tangible representation of the republic’s place in a global world and instruct citizens in that identity. The científicos were also a

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98 These events are captured in the Genaro Garcia Photographs of the Nettie Lee Benson collection in Austin, Texas.
Creole elite, however they understood this term very differently than Creoles of the Mexican Renaissance. In the liberal republic, Creole meant being of European decent but born in, and organically connected to, Mexico. However, due to the increased attention that Porfirián elites placed on the archeological heritage of Mexico, Creole identity distinctly rationalized a Mexica heritage during the Porfiriato. An 1882 survey of important artifacts that contributed to Porfirián national identity, entitled *Anales del Museo Nacional de México* (Annals of the Mexican National Museum) began the section of Mexica architecture by describing “the Mexica nation, of which we are descendants and successors.” Since Porfirián power rested upon a long line of authority passed down across Mexican history to Díaz, these distinctions were necessary, although in practicality the Creole elites saw themselves as European Americans with nothing indigenous about them.

One of the científicos’s foremost projects was to rebuild Mexican urban centers, particularly Mexico City, as visible representations of Porfirián liberal policies for both citizens and visitors. Mark Overmyer-Velázquez has observed that Porfirián elites established a hegemonic vision of a modern, ordered, and progressive republic through interconnected systems of innovative urban planning, class segregation, and disciplinary and hygienic practices that reorganized the city and its people. For the Porfirián científicos, constructing the Mexican nation had literal connotations; rebuilding cities and infrastructure helped physically shape the nation along modern, progressive ideals. As Michael Matthews has illustrated, Porfirián elites adopted a paternalistic attitude

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towards plebeians; elites believed that the poor had to be led to modernity through visible example.\textsuperscript{101} The city also connected the científicos to urban elites in Paris or New York and allowed them to re-imagine the nation along European models; Díaz rebuilt Mexico City along Parisian models with wider roads and modern industrial techniques.\textsuperscript{102} The connection to a global world was important for economic as well as cultural reasons; one of the hallmarks of the Porfiriato was an increased reliance on foreign trade and economic influence. In fact, Díaz was the first president since Mexican independence to open the country to foreign investors, and científicos would partially measure progress and modernity by economic and cultural continuity with the global market.\textsuperscript{103} As a result, Mexico saw its first balanced budget as a nation in 1895, but also became deeply reliant on foreign influences.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore Porfirian elites’ efforts to create an idealized Mexico by remaking and reimagining Mexico City’s urban landscape. In terms of performance, Mexico City was far more than a location for spectacles like parades and festivals; it was an integral dimension of any public event. By creating the city as an idealized model of the republic, the científicos engrained symbols of power, authority, and self-awareness into both daily and festive urban geography.

This chapter relies on a variety of sources that demonstrate how certain historical actors envisioned their national past, present, and future. Maps, which Raymond Craib has described as the relationship between modes of representation and material practices

of power, directly reflect how elites envisioned physical space as part of a national agenda. Photographs indicate the significance of something as worthy of preserving and carried Victorian-era connotations of authenticity, science, and truth. Newspapers communicate the interaction of performers and spectators within the city and provide insight into the thoughts and reactions of contemporary Mexicans. The papers, edited by Mexican elites, served as a platform to both present their symbols to the masses and allowed the elites to consume their own symbols and thus reaffirm their authority. All of these sources reveal a complex era of change and construction under the presidency of Porfirio Díaz as his científicos attempted to re-imagine Mexico.

This chapter first explores the urban landscape as a daily zone of symbolic interaction. By rebuilding the city along “modern” terms, Díaz and the científicos created a model for the future of the entire republic. Porfirian Mexico was centralized in Mexico City, and Díaz sought to perfect the capital in order to disperse that influence to the rest of Mexico. By rebuilding the physical landscape of Mexico City, Diaz and his científicos inundated the city’s inhabitants in a constant flood of symbols to instruct them in proper Porfirian self-awareness as modern citizens of a modern republic.

The second section of this chapter analyzes connections between Mexico City’s urban landscape and the public, state-sponsored spectacles held there during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The city served as a daily backdrop for Porfirian life, but during times of spectacle those symbols were elevated into special prominence. These events were not simply performed in Mexico City; they were

106 Overmyer-Velázquez, Visions of the Emerald City, 6.
integrally connected to the city. Geography connected the symbols of identity in the
festivals --- from the glorious indigenous past to a progressive European present --- with
physical and tangible examples of Porfirian modernization in the city, like electrical
lighting. The city was a lived, experienced place that enriched the symbolic nature of
a festival. By evaluating Porfirian efforts to rebuild the city in both mundane and
elevated moments through maps, photographs, and newspapers, this chapter argues that
understanding the spatial dimensions of Porfirian identity projects reveals that the urban
landscape was filled with elite-constructed symbols of Díaz’s ideal republic.

**Theory and Historiography**

The científicos rebuilt the urban landscape of Mexico City with new symbols of
modernity and Porfirian ideals so that through daily interactions with the city,
inhabitants learned these symbols. As Tuan would say, they continued to influence the
perception and experience of place. This is echoed by Tom Cummins and Joanne
Rappaport’s notion of “visual literacy.” Visual literacy is a system of referentiality in
which the “literate” were taught to read the symbols, images and constructions of
another group. This could be as simple as learning to properly navigate the larger,
European streets or streetcars of modern Mexico City. By building Porfirian symbols
into the city, the científicos created a visual guidebook for inhabitants to successfully
negotiate the elite’s vision of Mexico. The literate, those who learned the symbols and

107 Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions of the Emerald City*, 43.
109 Tom Cummins and Joanne Rappaport, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes*
110 Cummins and Rappaport, *Beyond the Lettered City*, 22.
adopted them, became models of proper behavior and modes of self-awareness. The ideal “literate” population was the elites who treated Mexico City like a global, European metropolis and for whom the symbols of modernity were intuitive. Other groups, such as working urbanites, foreign diplomats, or visiting peasants could learn the symbols of Porfírian modernity, and display their understanding by redeveloping their own understandings of the city, the nation, and themselves.

The urban landscape was a daily space of living, but was also a festive, sacred space. “Sacred”, in this context does not mean holy or related to religious practices, but instead refers to a time of ritual where symbols assume greater potency due to the extraordinary nature of the moment. Eric Hirsch states that landscape is a cultural process reflecting the relationship between actuality (present time and space) and potentiality (potential future space). In Mexico City this meant the relationship between the actual city and its inhabitants, and the ideal, modern future city of Díaz’s ambition. Potentiality was only actualized through ritual; landscape transformed from a “taskspace,” the zone of daily living, into sacred space. According to Hirsch, the urban landscape was no longer background during rituals, but was an active participant in the event. Tuan echoes that idea and argues that architecture seeks visibility, and that public rituals enhanced the visibility of a building, section, or city.

112 This is a combination of Hirsch’s argument that landscape is only potentially sacred until actualized through ritual, in “Between Place and Space”, and Tim Ingold’s “taskspace” from “The Temporality of Landscape”.
114 Tuan, Space and Place, 172. The assertion that background landscape can become foreground in rituals is echoed by Eric Hirsch in “Landscape: Between Place and Space” Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space ed. Eric Hirsch and Michael O’Hanlon, 1995.
Many scholars have noted the importance of the urban landscape to Porfirian Mexico and observed that it was a crucial dimension of state-sponsored festivals in late nineteenth-century Mexico. Overmyer-Velázquez stated that administrative actions to rebuild or reorganize the city were attempts to make it more “legible”. Similarly, Emily Wakild has argued that the Porfirian modernization strategies relied on the controlled manipulation of nature through city parks. Like the rest of the urban landscape, parks were carefully ordered and controlled as examples of proper behavior to “reformulate” Porfirian Mexicans.

Steven Bunker dramatically added to the scholarship of Porfirian modernity and the urban landscape through his study of Mexico through the lens of consumer culture. Bunker demonstrates that the transformation of the urban landscape during the Porfiriato had a distinctly commercial tone, and that ideas of modernity were directly connected to consumerism. According to Bunker, Mexican consumer culture, centered around department stores, modern marketing techniques and industrially-created products, allowed both private and governmental groups to participate in rebuilding the city and that proper models of consumer behavior were performed by elites to demonstrate modern attitudes.

115 Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions of the Emerald City*, 54.
Rebuilding and Reimagining Mexico City

Throughout the Porfiriato, the urban landscape of Mexico City played a continuous and important role in allowing científicos to rebuild and reimagine the nation. Massive public works projects, centered around the capital city, conspired to create an ideal version of Mexico that was physically accessible to the city’s inhabitants. By restructuring places of daily interaction, the Creole elites developed a visual lexicon of symbols that encouraged Mexicans to see themselves as modern, global citizens of a national republic.

Once the Creole elites had imagined a modern Mexico, the first step was to physically alter the urban landscape. Colonial-era buildings were often torn down and new structures were erected that communicated Mexico’s place in the modern world such as theaters, government buildings, or even mansions for exemplary elites to demonstrate the value of good citizenship. The efforts Porfirian elites placed into urbanizing the republic resulted in the growth of Mexico City. From 1895 to 1910 alone Mexico City doubled in population, and the seventeen largest cities in the country all increased in size by 30%. This was coupled with a declining rural population.

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120 Overmyer-Velázquez, Visions of the Emerald City, 52.
121 John Mraz, Photographing the Mexican Revolution: Commitments, Testimonies, Icons (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012), 18.
122 Bunker, Creating Mexican Consumer Culture, 7.
The Sanborn Fire insurance maps of 1905, created by the New York Sanborn Company for fire insurance liability, illustrate the changes occurring in Mexico City (See Figure 1). Neighborhoods were color-coded by fire resistance, which demonstrated the modern materials being used to rebuild Mexico City. New and prominent areas on the map showed stone fronts. Government buildings and important businesses, such as post offices and the downtown Mutual Life Building, were marked “fireproof construction” and indicated metal frameworks with modern wiring and access to fire hydrants. These buildings were flanked by noticeably wider streets, an indication that these zones were part of Porfirian modernization. Only a few areas of the major downtown were still coded with wooden framework but were surrounded with buildings undergoing construction and renovation. New and modern buildings were important to Porfirian elites. The periodical *La Voz de México* included a weekly directory of businesses, as did many papers, which listed the most modern buildings of every conceivable category, including lawyers, notaries, shops, crystal shops, chocolate stores, drug stores, dentists, factories, cigar factories, photography studios, hat stores, shoe stores, restaurants, theaters, and hotels. Even the grocery stores listed were captioned with “new” and “modern.” Not coincidentally, most of the places listed are on the same several streets. Streets like the Avenida Juárez, Avenida Cinco de Mayo, and Avenida de la Independencia intersected in the most modern districts and directed passengers towards modernized commercial and cultural zones. Figure 2, a larger-scale Sanborn map of Mexico City, shows the location of the streets and the major Porfirian zones in the early

twentieth century. *La Voz* and other periodicals directed readers to the most modern, and therefore most exemplary parts of the city.

Rebuilding Mexico City was not a simple act of aesthetic preference. Since colonial times Mexico was centralized in Mexico City, but in the Porfiriato this center was built tremendously as an example for the periphery to emulate.125 Thus, Mexico City represented, as best of the científicos could produce, their ideal version of the Mexican republic in microcosm. As Michael Matthews has illustrated, Porfiran elites often utilized a “monkey-see, monkey-do” methodology of converting non-elites into proper, modern citizens.126 Porfiran elites did not simply live properly; they performed proper behavior. For the Creole elites, these ideas were closely intertwined; elites were consciously in a state of perpetual performance intended to instruct plebeian Mexicans in how to act.127 They believed that by acting, and being seen acting, as modern, that the peasantry could follow their example, and begin to see themselves as a modern people. Conspicuous modernity also helped the elites see their own class as successfully modern as they consumed their own symbols of Mexican identity. The nineteenth-century belief that people could be improved, genetically, meant that to Porfrians, modern hygiene and technology were literally making better Mexicans.128 Thus, places of social

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125 Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions of the Emerald City*, 6. As Overmyer-Velázquez has demonstrated in his study of Oaxaca, an old colonial city and important hub of commerce and culture, municipal leaders actively rebuilt and reimagined their own urban spaces to align their cities and politics with the Porfiran center. Modernizing urban space and improving urban hygiene were not only performed but also celebrated; the opening of train stations signaled the completion of Porfiran modernization in a peripheral city and was greeted with elaborate ceremonies.


128 *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America* (ed. Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Rosemblatt, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003) demonstrated that scientific principles like hygiene were connected directly to other ideas like eugenics, and the creation of better people. Richard Graham (*The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010) further illustrated that these
visibility, such as parks, were especially cleaned and manicured to appear as orderly and modern as possible. Postcards from early twentieth-century Porfirian Mexico show public parks that consist of manicured, ordered natural areas broken up by statuary. One undated postcard, labeled “En la Alameda, Mexico,” illustrates the aesthetic of Porfirian modernity; the fountains are classically styled figures with nothing obviously Mexican about them (see Figure 3).\textsuperscript{129} That these postcards appear in both Spanish and English is a reminder that gentrifying the city was for the comfort of foreign visitors, and foreign money, and not just Mexicans. In these social, public places elites could display their modernity to the world. As observed by an American guide to Mexico, walking the paseos (paths) of the parks was done “for the sake of seeing and being seen.”\textsuperscript{130}

This is not to suggest that Porfirian elites believed in social mobility. A Mexican peasant was essentially locked in their status, but the elites did seem to see them as capable of at least recognizing civility.\textsuperscript{131} New hygiene laws also meant the displacement of people deemed unclean by the elites from proper, modern areas. An American guidebook to Mexico, by Philadelphia historian and author Thomas Janvier, described an event in 1885 when the “pressures of public opinion” compelled the removal of a shantytown from the Plaza del Seminario, one of the parks being gentrified along Porfirian standards of modernity.\textsuperscript{132} Porfirian modernity meant order, and order

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\textsuperscript{129}En la Alameda, Ciudad de México (Mexico City: Early twentieth century), LJ Postcards, Nettie Lee Benson Collection, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{130}Thomas A. Janvier, The Mexican Guide (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1886), 216.
\textsuperscript{131}Michael Matthews (“De Viaje”, Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos 26, no. 2 2010) has demonstrated that part of elite performance of proper Porfirian ideals was the idea that the poor could be instructed in this behavior. If the poor understood the need for progressive modernization, they, and their children could begin the process of elevating themselves. Matthews also illustrates that elites felt their only responsibility to the poor was to demonstrate behavior, and not to assist the poor in any other way.
\textsuperscript{132}Janvier, The Mexican Guide, 212.
\end{flushright}
meant legislation that segregated the city and Mexican society along lines of gender, race, and class. Only through proper behavior, and appearance, were the segregated granted social access into modern spaces, a clear metaphor for access to opportunity in the Porfiriato, which was deeply conditional upon loyalty to Díaz when it existed at all. Therefore, changing the urban landscape was not a matter of taste as much as it was at attempt to instruct Mexican citizens to change how they saw themselves.

Rebuilding the city, and therefore reimagining the republic, instructed Mexicans to strive for modern styles of behavior, but also encouraged them to think of themselves as Mexicans in a nationally unifying way. Throughout the Porfiriato, Díaz and the científicos filled Mexico City with monuments, statues and names that affirmed the existence of a national history.133 Urban planners transformed plazas into manicured gardens, complete with statues of heroes and streets renamed after the liberal leaders of independence.134 Major social, administrative, and commercial centers were filled with visual indicators that certain people and events were highly important to Mexico and that others, by their exclusion, were not. The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps demonstrate how early twentieth-century Mexico City was reimagined in specifically nationalist terminology (see Figure 2). The wide streets bore nationalist names like “Avenida Cinco de Mayo,” “Calle de la Independencia,” “Avenida Juárez,” and “Hombres Ilustres.” Even the Zócalo Plaza, center of the city for Moctezuma, Cortés and Díaz, was renamed “Plaza de la Constitución.”135

133 A full account of Díaz’s program to consolidate a national history is given in chapter four. For the sake of this chapter, it is only necessary to understand that the urban landscape was filled with visual symbols of national heroes and important dates, such as Cinco de Mayo or Dieciseis de Septembre.
134 Overmyer-Velázquez, Visions of the Emerald City, 51.
Porfirian Maps demonstrate how the científicos rationalized space. Figure 4, the *Plano de la Ciudad de México*, made in 1907 by the Compañía Litográfica y Tipográfica of Mexico City, presents the city with newest cartographic technologies. It is clearly a modern map, demarcated into quadrilateral sections of latitude and longitude, sectioned by sequential letters and numbers. The newest areas appear and perfectly delineated, with perfectly straight roads and walkways around the major parks. Additionally, the map shows several modern additions such as major train stations, wider roads in the central areas, and controlled natural space for public parks. This is not just a modern map; it is a modern conceptualization of Mexico City. There are no indications that this was ever the seat of the Aztec empire, nor the medieval home of Cortés. Mexico City was as modern, ordered, and rationalized as any proper place in the world still defined by Victorian standards. The map also indicates the Porfirian obsession with control through bureaucracy; the authors ensure the reader in the title section that this map used the most recent official data, was under the direction of public works, and that it was “assured” to conform to copy laws. The *Plano* represents a Mexican state that wanted to be understood in modern terms of ordered control and administrative authority.

Modernization in the Porfiriato was characterized by a massive influx of foreign investment and influence as Díaz freely opened the country for the first time, and became quickly associated with aligning Mexican and European consumer practices. Thus, rebuilding and reimagining Mexico City was not only performed by the government, but was also privatized. Department stores visually transformed the urban

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landscape and Mexican consumer consciousness through private money. These massive buildings of consumer space, equal in size to those of New York or Chicago, redefined the cityscape with a distinctly capitalist edge. They were named things like *Palacio de Hierro* (Iron Palace) or *Ciudad de Londres* (City of London), and connected Mexican consumers to other modern peoples in the United States and Europe through the act of purchasing similar goods in a similar manner. Advertising also became an aesthetic of the modern city, and ads appeared in newspapers and across the city. Ads for department stores promised the latest modern fashions. Figure 5, an ad for *El Palacio del Hierro* that appeared during the Centennial celebration on September 15, made no attempt to suggest that its fashions were distinctly Mexican, but advertised “Fashions of Paris.” Through fashion and consumerism Mexican elites aligned themselves with other elite consumers in the global market. The Moctezuma Brewery used advertising space to encourage national pride and product loyalty, reminding readers that it was the only beer (the modern alternative to lowly pulque) made in Mexico, and therefore the beer that most directly contributed to the progress of Mexico. Advertising and consumerism became so engrained with Porfirian symbols of nationhood and modernity that during the Centennial celebration of independence in 1910, ads became a way to participate in and commemorate the celebrations. The Mexico City newspaper *El Diario* featured ads for silver collectible spoons as a souvenir of the Centennial.

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Steve Bunker has observed that the collective experience of consumption created a shared vocabulary of images and practices in urban culture.\textsuperscript{142} This added to the visual literacy of the urban landscape constructed by Díaz and the científicos. Messages and symbols spread ubiquitously across the city instructed viewers to reimagine the city along Porfírian terms of modernity and order, and therefore to reimagine themselves in the same manner. The elites of Mexico participated in this by demonstrating full literacy in Porfírian symbols. In the September 14, 1910 edition of \textit{El Imparcial}, a periodical subsidized by Díaz, elites demonstrated their fluency in modern thinking by expressing concern about the fire codes of the ancient Chapultepec castle. The article, “Alarm in High Society”, compared the castle to more modern “social centers”, like the Jockey Club, and stated that these concerns could affect the success of the ball to be hosted there by Díaz.\textsuperscript{143} A subsequent article interviewed a public official, Comandante Solache, who assured readers that the installation of new lighting was compatible with the materials used in the interior ceiling of the castle ballroom.\textsuperscript{144} The concerns of Porfírian elites were modern concerns, and through consumption of print media they displayed their fluency in the symbols of Porfírian modernity.

\textit{The Urban Landscape in Public Spectacles}

Mexico City was a visual representation of the científicos’ ideal republic. Modern, ordered, and progressive, it was a daily place of consumption and of models of proper, Porfírian behavior. However, while the urban landscape of Mexico City held an

\textsuperscript{142} Bunker, \textit{Creating Mexican Consumer Culture}, 55.
\textsuperscript{143} “Alarma en la Alta Sociedad,” \textit{El Imparcial} (Mexico City, 9/14/1910), 1.
\textsuperscript{144} “El Sr. Comandante Solache opina sobre la combustibilidad de la Tela de Salón de Baile en el Palacio Nacional,” \textit{El Imparcial} (Mexico City, 9/14/1910), 1.
important place in the Porfiriato on a daily basis, it assumed an even greater role during festival times. Porfirio Díaz and his científicos hosted dozens of elaborate, state-sponsored festivals throughout the presidency, and the urban landscape was an integral part of these celebrations.¹⁴⁵

When Díaz and the científicos hosted a public spectacle, such as secular parades or state funerals, the first symbol of transition from daily life to a moment of national significance was often the alteration of the city. Public officials, as well as private business owners and citizens decorated Mexico City in bright ornamentation or hid buildings in solemn drapes, depending on the mood of the event, which constantly served as an emotional cue card for spectators. For example, on October 3, 1895, Porfirio Díaz’s father-in-law and a political father of the científicos, Manuel Romero Rubio, died of old age. Two days later, on October 5, he received the largest state funeral of the Porfiriato. Streets adjacent to the Romero estate were asked to decorate their houses in mourning colors. The national casinos and prominent Jockey Club of Mexico City closed their doors and draped their buildings in black. The chamber of commerce obliged local businesses to close.¹⁴⁶ In a single day, the entire city was covered with the colors of a state funeral; black for mourning was trimmed everywhere by the national colors of red, white, and green, a reminder that the man died as a servant of the nation, and also of the president’s authority to bury him.

¹⁴⁵ Chapter 4 explores in greater depth the processes and meanings behind the creation of state-sponsored public spectacles. This chapter is primarily concerned with the location of events, not the events themselves.

When the newspapers elaborated on the grief of the Mexican people, they framed it in terms of the urban landscape. *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* described the draping of the city in black as the buildings themselves being in mourning and doing their part to assist in the funeral. The city thus emerged as an indicator of the significance of this funeral; it was so important to the nation that even the buildings wanted to participate. By anthropomorphizing the city, the científicos communicated a strong message about participation in Porfrián festivals that appropriated the interpretation of places. To working urbanites, Mexico City was home, and if the city grieved or celebrated, then they should as well. The urban landscape of the Porfiriato did not just hold public events; it was the first participant, greatest patriot, and icon of proper sentiment for all spectators to observe and emulate.

As a historic and symbolic landscape, and fueled by the elites, Mexico City was an important participant in all Porfrián state spectacles, and it played a greater role in relation to the significance of the event. Therefore, during Mexico’s 1910 Centennial celebration, the urban landscape was both a conscious reflection of Mexican development, and also an object of anthropomorphized ornamentation. The city acted at times as a backdrop to events, and at times the city was the event; dedications of urban works, statues, and new buildings and technologies were major components of the Centennial celebration that drew sharp focus onto the urban landscape.

*Building Monuments and International Relations in Mexico City during the Centennial*

Díaz invited ambassadors, businessmen, and dignitaries from around the world to witness the one hundred year anniversary of Mexico’s wars for independence from

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Spain. These foreign visitors all had financial interests in Mexican products or access to trade routes. For Díaz, maintaining healthy diplomatic relationships with foreign nations was critical, and representatives from each nation were welcomed to Mexico by the president, most receiving an exposition-like pavilion built by the científicos where cultural events, including a national “fiesta” day for each group, were held. During the cultural celebrations, Díaz confirmed the importance of each group to Mexico, and pledged continued relations, through the ceremonial dedications of statues, monuments, and streets. Monuments, like those to Pasteur, Humboldt, and Washington, built images of these nations into Mexico City, and thus connected the national identities of foreign nations to Mexico’s.

The dedication ceremonies of the Centennial were enormously important and highly attended. They were some of the only events in which Díaz himself consistently participated, rather than observing from on high. They also occupied pages and pages of newspaper space; the German fiesta and dedication ceremony occupied El Imparcial and El Diario de Hogar (rival papers with opposite political agendas) four days in a row in the midst of the greatest spectacles, from September 13 through 16, independence day. Mexican newspaper editors and journalists consciously tied dedications, and their addition to the Mexican landscape, to international relationships. On September 14, for example, Díaz partook in the dedication of a statue of George Washington with

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149 The Genaro García Collection of the Nettie Lee Benson archives at the University of Texas, Austin provides dozens of examples of these pavilions, including ones for Germany, Argentina, Cuba, Chile, Brazil, Spain, USA, France, Italy, Japan, China, and Turkey. They will not be elaborated on here, but should be remembered throughout this chapter.
ambassadors from the United States.\footnote{Ramos, “Dedication of State of George Washington, 9/14/1910,” Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.} In the corresponding coverage of the event in \textit{El Diario de Hogar}, a journalist lauded the intention of the American Secretary of State, Philander Knox (1909-1913), to proclaim September 16 “Mexico Day” in the United States. The article commended the American devotion to the success of Mexico, and simply proclaimed Mexico Day to be a “beautiful idea”.\footnote{“Los Estados Unidos en Nuestro Centenario,” \textit{El Diario de Hogar} (9/14/1910), 1.}

For days, Díaz jumped across Mexico City dedicating monuments and parts of the city to foreign nations. In the French Pavilion, Díaz laid the ceremonial first stone in the monument to Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), the French scientist whose discoveries helped shape modern germ theory.\footnote{Ramos, “Laying First Stone in Monument to Pasteur,” Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.} France and Mexico had a deep economic and cultural relationship with many important figures, but the monument was dedicated to Pasteur, a man associated with the modern concepts of hygiene embraced by Porfírian urban planners, representing Mexico’s rebuilding along French ideas of modernity.

Figure 6, a photograph of the stone-laying ceremony, displays the pomp and seriousness of the event. Notably, Díaz sat in the center of the event, directly below the name of Pasteur. In these ceremonies, Díaz kept his personal image closely connected to the foreign heroes being worshipped by the Republic, as a reminder that it was Díaz’s authority that stabilized foreign relations.

In the Italian Pavilion, the first stone was laid in a monument to Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882), an Italian liberal freedom fighter in South America and one of the fathers of the independent Italian Kingdom whose popularity was easily comparable
to that of Juárez. Spain’s dedication, however, was different. Mexico owed more to Spain, in terms of ancestral cultural heritage, than any other nation, and so the dedication was to a shared figure, Queen Isabel la Católica (1451-1504), unifier of the Spanish kingdoms and patroness of Columbus’ voyages. This dedication ceremony also laid the first stone in a monument, but more significantly included the renaming of a prominent street in Mexico City “Avenida Isabel la Católica”. Figure 7, a photograph of the street capture the juxtaposition of ancestral and modern; the Avenida Isabel la Católica, while dedicated to a historical figure from Mexico’s colonial past, boasted modern stores including the Mexican Light and Power Co., and was packed with people and trolleys. The message was that Spain, which had helped found the city, would be involved in the future direction of the republic as well.

Each dedication ceremony was important, as various nations were literally built into the city, but none captured the national imagination as much as the dedication of a statue to Alexander von Humboldt during the German fiesta. Humboldt (1769-1859) was a Prussian geographer and explorer who created detailed maps of Latin America right before the republics declared their independence. Mary Louis Pratt has argued that by eliminating human, and therefore political, presence Humboldt reduced the Americas to pure nature, and provided a level of ancestral depth and scientific legitimacy to the new governments, thus preserving his name as a national hero across Spanish

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153 Ramos, “Laying the First Stone in Monument to Garibaldi,” *Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection*, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
154 Ramos, “Avenida Isabel la Católica,” *Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection*, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
America. In Mexico specifically, Humboldt’s works tied the genius of Mesoamerican civilizations to the natural beauty and abundance of the area, thus legitimizing them through geography, and also firmly concluded that those groups were dead by declaring them subjects of archeology. That notion was absorbed by early nineteenth century Mexican liberals as a way to connect the new state to an ancestral, but extinct, Nahua past. Humboldt’s legacy was still felt during the Porfiriato. The Piedra del Sol, the circular Aztec calendar stone, was one the most prized archeological treasures of the republic (even Díaz had himself photographed with it). Humboldt has seen this artifact and written extensively on it; he both analyzed it scientifically and also noted that it was amongst the “Mexican antiquities which interest the intelligent traveller.” A published catalog of the Museo Nacional de Mexico, written by a collection of científicos, began the record of the Piedra del Sol by stating that Humboldt was still undoubtedly the most respectable author to have written on the subject.

The dedication was accordingly extravagant. Photographs show crowds of people gathered around the statue of Humboldt as Díaz and the German ambassador concluded the ceremony. As part of the ceremony, both the Mexican and German national hymns were sung, a German marine choir performed, and lecturers from the Mexican Geographic Society and National Geographic Institute gave lectures on

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156 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 131.
158 *Anales del Museo Nacional de México* (Mexico City, Mexico: Imprenta de Ignacio Escalante, 1882), 21.
Humboldt’s importance to Mexico.\textsuperscript{160} The newspaper \textit{El Imparcial}, one of the only periodicals to have photo printing thanks to government subsidies, included several pictures of Díaz with the statue and the ambassador, and claimed that the name of Humboldt was recorded in Mexican hearts and memory.\textsuperscript{161} An article two days later about the event concluded that Mexicans had always thought of Humboldt “not as a knowledgeable explorer…but a glorious name, very much ours.”\textsuperscript{162} Like Queen Isabela, Humboldt’s contribution to Mexico was seen as so fundamental that his dedication ceremony also occurred outside of any foreign pavilion. Humboldt’s statue was placed in the courtyard of the national library, a tribute to the place he held in Mexico’s scientific past. For educated, progressive, liberal científicos the national library was a building of importance to Mexico. This alone attests to the value of Humboldt, and newspapers went so far as to claim that the statue actually improved the library, stating it would “adorn” (\textit{engalanar}) the outside of the building.\textsuperscript{163}

The dedication ceremonies of Mexico’s Centennial demonstrate the transformation of Mexico City into a sacred space of potent symbols of identity during times of great celebration. To illustrate successful economic and cultural relationships with foreign nations, Díaz and the científicos built their foreign partners into the urban landscape. The action communicated to both foreigners and to Mexican citizens that Mexico was a modern, global republic that merited international investment. They symbolically declared that these nations had influenced the construction of the modern Mexican republic through economic and cultural support, but also that Mexico had

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\item \textsuperscript{160} “Inauración del Monumento al Barón de Humboldt,” \textit{Diario de Hogar} (9/14/1910), 1.
\item \textsuperscript{161} “La Memoria de Humboldt Corporiza en una Bella Estatua,” \textit{El Imparcial} (9/14/1910), 1.
\item \textsuperscript{162} “Humboldt,” \textit{El Imparcial} (9/16/1910), 10.
\item \textsuperscript{163} Inauración del Monumento al Barón de Humboldt,” \textit{Diario de Hogar} (9/14/1910), 1.
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earned its own place amongst the civilized nations, and demonstrated that they would continue to build a global community together.

*Building a Mexican National History during the Centennial*

Adding to and altering the urban landscape was an important part of Porfirian public spectacles that communicated the continual growth of the nation. Although building foreign heroes into the city was an important part of the Centennial celebration, the científicos also devoted massive time and effort into national monuments. These dedications affirmed the Porfirian values of Mexico as a modern nation, built upon Díaz’s cult of national heroes and encouraged Mexican citizens to see themselves within the imagined community of the nation.

On the twelfth of September 1910, Díaz presided over the dedication of a monument to José María Morelos (1765-1815), revolutionary leader in Mexico’s independence wars.\(^{164}\) *El Imparcial* indicated clearly that the dedication carried nationalist implications: “Before the name of Morelos may we discover ourselves…[and] give admiration and gratitude to the great warrior.”\(^ {165}\) Newspapers expressed similar sentiments for the dedication of a monument to Mexico’s highly popular liberal president Benito Juárez, who served five terms between 1858 and 1872. The científicos placed the monument in the Alameda park, one of the oldest and most significant social spaces in Mexico City (see the Figure 2 map), where the American guidebook had mentioned that so many elites passed their time displaying proper

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\(^{164}\) Ramos, “Dedication of Monument to Morelos, 9/12/1910,” Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.

\(^{165}\) “Morelos,” *El Diario de Hogar* (9/12/1910), 2.
Porfirian behavior. The centrality and visibility of the monument were a testimony to Juárez’s significant place in Mexico’s history. The dedication to Juárez coincided with the “fiesta estudiantina” and the dentistry students of Mexico City helped dedicate the monument. Díaz’s progressive, modern, liberal agenda relied on previous liberal leaders like Juárez, and moments such as this connected the liberal tradition to a modern republic as represented through modern hygienic sciences.

National monuments added to the urban landscape could commemorate ideas as well as people, since they represented intangible realities such as the nation and not direct ones like foreign economic trade. During the Centennial celebrations Díaz dedicated the enormous statue “Apotheosis de los Heroes” amongst choir performances and speeches about national heroes. The monument, a giant eagle (the symbol of Mexico) atop a marble tomb emblazoned with the word “Patria”, represented the deification of those who contributed to building the Mexican nation, see Figure 8. One of the científico projects of the Porfiriato was to establish a national past that could unite the republic under a single, teleological history that legitimized Díaz’s perpetual presidency. This monument reinforced the work of nearly forty years of nation building and added the national past itself to the urban landscape and the ideal republic.

On September 16, the actual anniversary of the Grito de Hidalgo and the move for independence, Díaz dedicated the Monumento a la Independencia in the intersection of the Paseo de la Reforma and Florencia road, major streets that traversed Chapultepec to the Zócalo central plaza. This monument to independence featured Padre Miguel Hidalgo, José María Morelos and Vicente Guerrero --- three of Mexico’s most iconic

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166 “Juárez,” El Imparcial (9/16/1910), 13.
167 Ramos, “Apotheosis Heroes,” Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
heroes from their independence struggles of the 1810s --- underneath the Roman winged deity Victory. *El Imparcial* dedicated an entire page to a photograph of the massive monument and stated that it was “not a monument to this hero or that hero but to Independence.” ¹⁶⁸ (See Figure 9) The monument represented the ideals and goals of independence, and *El Imparcial* was sure to connect these ideals to the Porfirian agenda of modernity. “It [the monument] is not Greek or Roman but modern with something neoclassical,” says the article, “it is in the middle of a modern street, surrounded by modern constructions.”¹⁶⁹ By ceremonially adding this monument to the urban landscape, Díaz transformed a normal space of work and transportation into a sacred space of nationalist value that directly connected the entire history of the republic, starting with independence, to the Porfirian rebuilding and reimagining of Mexico.

Monuments and statues were not the only additions to the urban landscape during the Centennial. On September 15, major buildings in Mexico City were illuminated with thousands of strands of electrical exterior lighting to spectacular effect. Important streets, including the Calle de Orizaba and Avenida Juárez, were canopied with lights from end to end.¹⁷⁰ The Avenida Juárez was described in *El Pais* as having almost every building lit up “with good taste.”¹⁷¹ The photograph of the Avenida on this night (Figure 10) shows the width and length of this modern road. The nationalistic name of the street, named for President Benito Juárez, and the strands of lights that covered it, presented a vision that this sort of technological modernity is what liberal leaders like Juárez had fought for. At the end of Calle de Orizaba a Roman triumphal

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¹⁶⁸ “Monumento a la Independencia,” *El Imparcial* (9/16/1910), 17.
¹⁶⁹ “Monumento a la Independencia,” *El Imparcial* (9/16/1910), 17.
¹⁷⁰ “Avenida Juárez, 9/15/1910,” *Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection*, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin. See Figure 2 Map for location of these streets.
The combination of Hidalgo and triumphal arch communicated a message of wartime victory, juxtaposed by the illuminated Spanish word for peace. Although Mexico had won its independence through violence, the republic was an entity of peace for the people, at least in official Porfirian promise that did not always align with dictatorial practice.

Buildings of national importance were illuminated; the Cathedral towers were lit, as was the Palacio Municipal. Both were emblazoned with the words “Libertad” and “Progreso”, ideological tenants of Porfirian liberalism. Again, the technological modernity of the electric lights was directly tied to Mexican national goals of liberty and progress; a modern nation was a better republic. The Palacio Nacional was specially illuminated on both the outside and inside, and Díaz was photographed proudly from the balcony of the National Palace overlooking the Plaza de la Constitución. Figure 12 displays Díaz dwarfed by the monumental feel of the National Palace illuminated at night. Díaz was an important figure in this spectacle. Like on the Calle Orizaba Arch, the National Palace had an illuminated portrait of Hidalgo, and also one of Díaz. According to El Imparcial, Hidalgo’s portrait was meant to represent “Libertad”, and “Díaz symbolized the word Progress.” In the backdrop of modern electrical illumination, Díaz’s progress was clearly indicated to be successful.

172 “Calle Orizaba, 9/15/1910,” Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
174 “El Presidente, 9/15/1910,” Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
The other buildings to be illuminated were businesses that were especially important to the republic. While national buildings draped their facades in lights that highlighted the architecture, these commercial buildings used lighting to create luminous signs and words to ensure that their names were visible throughout the Centennial. In fact, *El Imparcial* stated that the lights actually obscured the architecture of these buildings, making them pure structures of light, and that the event “erased” the non-illuminated buildings from the urban landscape. The nighttime illumination afforded the científicos a unique opportunity to temporarily remove unwanted buildings from the sacred space of the urban landscape, and dramatically highlight their favorites. The Compañía de Petroleo demonstrated its value to the republic with the illuminated the words “Productos Nacionales”, and a silk factory highlighted its name, “Gran Sedería”. Mexico City’s greatest department store, La Ciudad de Londres, illuminated its façade, as did the Mosler Building and other stores that housed foreign businesses. The Jockey Club lighting was “elegant and simple” according to *El País*, which also stated that the Compañía Bancaria de Fomento inspired reflection on the use of national colors, and described the entire city as resembling jewels, flowers and stars. One of the most dramatic buildings was the Luz and Fuerza office, a Mexican electrical power company supported heavily by Díaz to provide electricity to the Valley of Mexico, which featured the Mexican iconographic eagle and cactus outlined in lights. Besides the motif of 1810-1910, it also took the opportunity of increased visibility to advertise:

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177 “Gran Sedería, 9/15/1910,” *Genaro García Photograph Collection*, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
179 “Luz y Fuerza, 9/15/1910,” *Genaro García Photograph Collection*, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
“Service at Any Time” was lit up as well. The Catholic periodical *El País* stated that it was considered to be the best building on the Avenida Juárez, one of the city’s busiest streets, and that the entire city was a “marvel of light.”

Mexican newspapers focused lots of attention on the preparation of this spectacle. Three days before the city was illuminated, *El Diario de Hogar* published a story that the inspectors Peña and Zabaila had been too lackadaisical in their inspection to ensure that the lights on the Cathedral towers were ready and that the public was outraged. The article stated that the men behaved “reprehensibly” and ensured readers that letters were being written to both city and church officials to resolve the matter.

After the illumination, *El Imparcial* declared that the most beautifully lit building was the very modern jewelry department store La Esmeralda, and included a photograph to substantiate their claim.

In Porfírian-style anthropomorphization, *El Imparcial* described the city as “transforming itself into something marvelous that had all eyes wide-open with wonder.” Porfírian spectacles recreated daily space as sacred space that increased the visibility of constructed symbols, and this was the most dramatic example. The symbols of Porfírian power were overtly illuminated across the urban landscape, and areas that did not conform disappeared in the obscurity of darkness. It was a chance to present the symbols of the urban landscape without competing distraction. By illuminating the city, the científicos transformed the urban landscape in a way that had never been done in

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182 “El Edificio Más Brillantemente Iluminado,” *El Imparcial* (Mexico City, 9/16/1910), 19. Due to the print quality of digitized nineteenth century newspapers, that photograph is not included in the appendix to this chapter.
Mexico. The nighttime skyline highlighted only the most “important” buildings in Mexico City, which were those that espoused the Porfrian qualities of national value and modernity. The científicos encouraged Mexican citizens to see these buildings in a new light, literally glowing as beacons for the future of Mexico.

Conclusion: The National Urban Landscape and the Mexican Centennial

Throughout the Centennial, Díaz used the urban landscape to communicate his vision of the ideal republic and inflate places with nationalist significance to reimagine them as models for the aspirations of Mexico. The dedication of monuments recreated urban space as sacred space, rich with the potential to give new meaning to a location or to draw upon old symbols of power. By adding foreign and domestic heroes into the city, the científicos presented a Mexican nation that was global, progressive, and solid to both citizens and visitors.

The official program of dedications was only one part of the overall efforts to improve Mexico City during the Centennial celebrations. Administrative groups who were not associated with the formal program mirrored the official dedications through their own ceremonies in specific parts of the city. El Imparcial stated that several of the districts of Mexico City held their own ceremonies on both September 15 and 16. For example, District 1 celebrated by planting a “Centennial Tree” in front of the district commissary, and District 3 laid the first stone in its own monument to “Fray Bartolomé [sic] de Sahagún, benefactor of the Indians,” the Mexican Renaissance-era Spanish priest responsible for compiling the Florentine Codex. The planting of the Centennial Tree mirrored Porfrian ceremonies such as the Monument to Independence; they were

ideological tributes that both enhanced the beauty and symbols of the urban landscape and thereby, in nineteenth-century thinking, literally improved the Mexican people. The monument to Sahagún complimented official dedications to heroes of Porfrian national history and affirmed that the district had not only embraced Díaz’s national identity but was also actively implementing it in their jurisdiction.

In both the Mexican Renaissance and the Porfiriato, the urban landscape served to hold important symbols of power, and more importantly, of identity. Mexico was centralized, by different styles of government, in Mexico City. As both a colonial and national center, Mexico City allowed the ruling elites to reimagine Mexico as unified under a shared identity that recognized their legitimate authority. By transforming the urban landscape into a sacred space of festivals and ceremonies, the elites deposited and encouraged symbols of Mexican identity that became crucial pieces of massive public performances of power.
Appendix B:

Images for Chapter 2


Figure 3: “En La Alameda”, Postcard, c.1900. Lawrence Jones Postcard Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.


Figure 5: “Las Fabricas Universales,” *El Diario* (Mexico City, 9/15/1910), 5.

Figure 6: “1a Piedra del Monumento a Pasteur,” 1910, photograph. 1-110 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 7: “Avenida Isabel la Católica,” 1910, photograph. 1-80 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 8: “Apoteosis de los Héroes,” 1910, photograph. 1-380 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 9: “Monumento a la Independencia,” *El Imparcial* (9/16/1910), 17.

Figure 10: “16 de Septembre…Avenida Juárez,” 1910, photograph. 2-405 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 11: “16 de Septembre…Arco de la Calle de Orizaba,” 1910, photograph. 2-403 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 12: “16 de Septembre…Palacio NAcional,” 1910, photograph. 2-431 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.
These areas are the post office (left) and Mutual Life Insurance building (right). The brown color on the map indicates that they are amongst the more updated, fireproof buildings of the section. Blue coded areas were being updated, but were not quite fireproof.

Neon green rectangles demarcate some of the major streets in the Porfirian Mexico City. They were generally wider streets and framed areas that were undergoing modernization efforts. Prominent businesses and government buildings were usually located along these sorts of streets.
Figure 3: “En La Alameda”, Postcard, c.1900. Lawrence Jones Postcard Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
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Figure 11: “16 de Septiembre…Arco de la Calle de Orizaba,” 1910, photograph. 2-403 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.
Figure 12: “16 de Septiembre…Palacio Nacional,” 1910, photograph. 2-431 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.
Chapter Three:
Revelry and Rebellion: The Cortés Baptism Celebration and Public Performances of Factional Power in Sixteenth-Century Mexico City

Mexico City in August of 1566 was full of confusion and shock as two of the most influential members of the Creole elites, brothers Gil and Alonso de Avila, were led through the Central Plaza to be executed by beheading. They were accused of conspiring to kill the Peninsular judges of Mexico City and instate a Creole ruler as King of Mexico. The brothers never attempted a coup, nor did they enact any direct violence against the Peninsular factions. Their crime was in organizing a massive festival to celebrate the baptism of Marques del Valle de Oaxaca Don Martín Cortés’s twin sons. This spectacle included all of the Castilian-style pageantry possible as the brothers declared Cortés the rightful ruler of Mexico by re-enacting the famous meeting between their conquistador father and Moctezuma in the heart of Mexico City, all within eyesight of the Royal offices. The brothers were not the first, nor the last, to use public spectacles to enhance the symbols of power engrained within the urban landscape of Mexico City. Throughout the Mexican Renaissance (c.1540- c.1600), performance, ceremony, and ritual served competing factions of Creoles, Peninsulars, and Indigenous nobles to draw out their own symbols of power and attempt to impose them upon the cityscape and the collective consciousness of the people in Mexico City.

185 Historians of this event generally concur that the Avila brothers did intend to present don Martín as the rightful ruler of Mexico, although not all historian agree as to whether or not they were planning an actual rebellion. Anthony Pagden (“Identity Formation in Spanish America”, in Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800 ed. Canny and Pagden, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), has argued that crowning Cortés reflected on the rightful authority of all Creole elites. Jacqueline Holler (“Spatial Contestation in Sixteenth Century Mexico City,” Radical History Review 99, no.1, 2007, 107-120) claimed the event was an act of rebellion.
Factional divisions within Mexico City were at their height during the Mexican Renaissance of the mid- to late-sixteenth century. Carlos V abdicated his throne in 1556, naming his younger brother, Ferdinand I, the Holy Roman Emperor and making his son, Philip II, the King of Spain. Philip II inherited, with his title, his father’s goal of ending the *encomienda* system that had sustained the wealth and power of the conquistador class, the Creole elites. The struggle over the survival of the encomienda was at the heart of Creole/Peninsular tensions throughout the Mexican Renaissance as each group fought not only for power but also to symbolically unite the people of New Spain under their authority. This struggle was intensified in 1564. Viceroy Luís de Velasco, who had been in charge of enforcing the Royal Mandate of 1542 to limit the encomiendas, died suddenly in office without an immediate successor. The Peninsular *oidor* judges of Mexico City became the default leaders of New Spain. To add to this, the last hereditary *Tlatoani* governor (the heir of the last Mexica emperor, serving as a colonial official) died in 1565 and was replaced by election, not genealogy, effectively ending real indigenous power in the city. The Creole and Peninsular elites clashed fiercely in the power vacuum to secure the future of New Spain. The Creole *cabildo* council of Mexico City petitioned the Crown to remove the office of the Viceroy entirely, and not replace de Velasco, but instead to allow don Martín Cortés to rule Mexico as Captain General. As tensions escalated, rumors spread that the Creoles planned a violent rebellion to take New Spain by force, a rumor aided by a massive

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188 Flint, “Travesty or Treason”, 28.
sword fight that erupted between Peninsular and Creole factions in 1565 over whether Cortés or a Viceroy should govern Mexico City.\textsuperscript{189}

Each of the competing factions in Mexico City sponsored construction and art projects that built the symbols of their rightful power into the urban landscape itself, and attempted to write themselves into the emerging identity of New Spain as rulers. The urban landscape therefore became a potent and constant battleground of symbols, in which competing factions publically performed rituals of power. These events displayed the different worldviews of each faction and demonstrated an ideal vision of Mexican identity as either subjects of a Peninsular Empire, or subjects of a Creole-governed, Castilian New Spain. Public festivals and spectacles in the Mexican Renaissance used the interplay of landscape and performance for dramatic assertions of power, authority, and identity. Mexican Renaissance spectacles of the Creoles asserted the existence of a distinct Mexican identity that was different from Peninsular Spanish and united under the encomienda-owning elites. One such festival was the Cortés baptism ceremony of 1566.

This chapter is focused around public performances of power in sixteenth-century Mexico City. The Cortés baptism ceremony, sometimes called the Cortés conspiracy by historians, was one event within this greater context of factional struggles across colonial New Spain. Mexico City was the center of authority in the colony, and the center of Mexico City was the Central Plaza, the \textit{Plaza Mayor}. As Jacqueline Holler has demonstrated, spatial centrality was deeply important to both Creole and Peninsular...
elites in New Spain.\textsuperscript{190} Being in the center meant power and authority, literally to be the center of New Spain.\textsuperscript{191} The Plaza Mayor was the former home of the Mexica lords, including the palace of Moctezuma, and after 1521 it held the homes of the Creole elites and the colonial offices of the Peninsular elites. It was among the most important landscapes in New Spain, and this chapter will focus exclusively on the performances in that place. Additionally, this chapter revolves around a specific public spectacle, the 1566 baptism of don Martín Cortés’ twin sons. This event was a climax of Peninsular and Creole power struggles through ritual performances in the urban landscape. It was also the breaking point in these tensions. Festivals and symbols sometimes seem like arbitrary moments of jubilation, and their significance is often limited to release-valve moments of carnivalesque transgressions.\textsuperscript{192} 1566 demonstrates just how seriously the elites took the performance of power, and the baptism celebration was contentious enough to yield very real violence in Mexico City. Although a major public festival, this was not a moment of carnivalesque transgression; the role of leaders was carefully guarded by the Creole elites who used this celebration to demonstrate their power in Mexico City. This particular event is the height of Mexican Renaissance performance identity due to the gravity of its reception. This two-fold spectacle included a public presentation of power by the Creole elites in which Cortés was shown to be the true ruler


\textsuperscript{191} Yi-Fu Tuan (\textit{Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience} MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), has argued that the city was the ultimate “place” where the meanings of symbols were exaggerated, emphasized by the height and dominance of urban constructions that dominated the visible horizon.

\textsuperscript{192} Carnivalesque transgressions, according to Mikhail Bakhtin (\textit{Rebelais and His World}, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), relieved social tensions by offering a limited space for peasants to criticize the ruling class. Teofilo Ruiz (“Elite and Popular Culture in Late Fifteenth- Century Castilian Festivals: The Case of Jaén” in \textit{City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe} ed. Barbara Hanawalt and Kathryn Reyerson, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) has demonstrated that carnivalesque transgressions were an important part of traditional Castilian medieval festivals. Creoles and Peninsulars alike would have been aware of these moments in the sixteenth century.
of Mexico City, and a response from the Peninsular judges in the form of public executions.

This chapter is composed of three sections. First, it examines a series of public performances in Mexico City in the early Mexican Renaissance that visibly demonstrated the competing worldviews of Creole and Peninsular elites. The Creoles sponsored a distinct set of Castilian-style festivals that were in stark contrast to the Hapsburg-style processionals of the Peninsular elites, and each used their specific style to display their authority over the colonial city. Within this, the 1566 baptism celebration was one of the grandest, and by far the most contentious, event of the era. The performance and staging of this festival are explored in section two, followed by the response by the Peninsular judges in section three. Across the urban landscape of Mexico City, a complex program of performance and ritual emerged, contextualized by architectural symbols and power and authority. The Mexican Renaissance, and the movement towards a Creole-governed Mexico, was stinted by increasing colonial power after the violent reception to Cortés’ baptism ceremony. The era lasted throughout the remainder of the sixteenth century, and then fell dormant. Like the Porfiriato, this brief but vibrant period of creation, experimentation, performance, and critical analysis of Mexican identity was a mixed failure and success. It was terminated by violent rejection, but the symbols of Mexican identity and unity lasted long beyond the Mexican Renaissance and into the republic.
Theory and Historiography

The theory surrounding public spectacles begins with the notion of visibility. Urban spectacles commanded a specific sort of visibility defined by the distinction between performers and audience. Spectacles required the presence of an audience, or else the symbols within them would be meaningless. Michel Foucault has explored the complex relationship between performers and observers, in which performers become forced to recognize the power of the audience. In Mexico City this was a dangerous balance, as the competing faction of Peninsular Spaniards gained receptive power along with the audience during Creole public spectacles. As Foucault demonstrated, the audience had the ability to reject the performance, and could do so violently. Foucault also addressed the spectacle of public execution, which was crucial in 1566, and stated that executions gave physical implications to an injury against the King that could only be symbolically healed through corporeal punishment. Through a similar spectacle that drew sharp distinctions between performer (the executed) and observers, the Peninsulars “healed” the offense against the Crown committed by Creole Mexico. The focus on the visibility of the body and how that body was being seen, either as a ruler or a criminal, was a central aspect in the spectacles of both Creole and Peninsular factions that demonstrated their competing worldviews.

As pointed out by Steven Mullaney, ritual and spectacle are not spontaneous but orchestrated manifestations of power, authority, and community. Barbara Hannawalt has also argued that public spectacles were designed to impress events on a collective

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Not only were they meant to be seen, they were meant to be seen with the purpose of indicating significance and engraining moments into a collective consciousness. Through ritual and spectacle, elite factions in Mexico City attempted to perform symbols of authority that tied themselves into the Mexican population. Hannawalt has also observed that ceremony had an appropriate place; parade routes and execution squares were generally kept separate from each other to maintain the symbols of each event. In Mexico City during the Mexican Renaissance, the Central Plaza was the undisputed place of performance, and how each group used that landscape to conform, or break, with traditional performance areas became a significant factor in how they communicated with themselves and others.

The struggle in Mexico City to assert one specific worldview over another displays what Jens Andermann has referred to as the “optic” of the state, or a distinctive way of seeing that naturalized the state as an organic entity. In the challenging views of authority in New Spain, each group encouraged a way of seeing that privileged their own symbols of power as natural. The Peninsulars developed symbols of colonial authority, while Creoles built upon symbols that reflected their connection to New Spain through birthright and heritage. Teofilo Ruiz has also demonstrated the changing optics of Hapsburg kings, namely Philip II, who began to see his territories along early versions of the nation-state as they also reimagined, with his prompting, the sovereign along early modern, rather than medieval, definitions. This change was the basis of

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the break between the Medieval, Castilian mindset of the Creoles and the early modern, Hapsburg worldview of the Peninsulars.

Diversions and Distinctions Between Factional Powers in Mexico City

By the mid to late sixteenth century, Creole and Peninsular Spaniards were beginning to operate within different sets of cultural norms, and they were aware of the disconnect. 200 Anthony Pagden has observed that the Spanish language being spoken in Mexico City by Creoles as late as the 1590s was almost identical in structure and usage to the Spanish spoken in Madrid in 1500. By contrast, Peninsular Spanish in the late sixteenth century was evolving into a language with less metaphor and rhetoric, and more along Northern European standards. 201 While the Creoles in Mexico conserved Castilian cultural norms, Spain was embracing the Flemish customs brought by Charles V. Charles V was the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, the unifiers of the Spanish kingdoms. He, however, lived in Flanders and had practically never been to Spain until he went for his coronation on February 2, 1519, where he was greeted with a Castilian reception and theatrical performance. This ceremony, and the rest on his trip, was soon interrupted because Charles had brought his own entertainment, an entire chapel choir from Flanders to provide the music for his trip. 202 The quiet, subdued, and contemplative nature of Flemish music was exemplary of the sort of festivities preferred by Charles and his son, Phillip. 203

The Hapsburgs were an Austrian family with no experience in the Reconquista, the period of Spanish military campaigns to recapture the Iberian Peninsula from Islamic forces (718-1492), and the driving force behind Spanish culture, law, and economics for centuries. The Spanish conquistadors, on the other hand, witnessed the end of the Reconquista in 1492, and their Creole sons were born into a city rebuilt and restructured along militant Castilian terms. Historically, the Castilian monarchy and nobility used festivals and spectacles for social control very effectively, up until about 1500 and the rise of the Hapsburgs. In one famous event from 1463, the constable of the Castilian city of the military frontier-town Jaén, don Miguel Lucas de Iranzo, hosted an epiphany-season banquet in which one hundred knights marched through the city dressed as Moors and challenged the Constable to a joust. The “Moors” included a mock Mohammad holding the Koran, fake Muslim doctors of law, and a pretend King of Morocco. The people of Jaén were treated to a joust, in which Christian knights defeated and then baptized the Moors in the town fountain, followed by a massive feast that lasted eleven days. The event occurred in a time of great instability as don Miguel Lucas de Iranzo was not only fighting Moors in the Reconquista but political and social factions within his city as well. Castilian festivals were a hybrid of society, a playground to mix private and public, high and low culture, that united people underneath the authority of a single, benevolent figure.

Like Jaén a century before, Mexico City by the late sixteenth century was in political and social crisis as Peninsular and Creole elites fought over encomiendas and

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206 Ruiz, “Elite and Popular Culture”, 301.
the governing of New Spain. The competing factions of Mexico City used public spectacles to demonstrate power and unity for their own purposes.\[^{207}\] In the late 1530s, the newly arrived Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza hosted a series of festivals that recreated colonial space under Peninsular authority. To celebrate the 1539 Franco-Spanish peace, the Viceroy transformed the central plaza into an enormous forest in which Indian performers hunted and danced.\[^{208}\] This re-creation of a pre-contact indigenous ceremony used the memory of Mexica sovereignty to further solidify Peninsular authority.\[^{209}\] By sponsoring indigenous festivals, Mendoza built upon actions to unite the Indian population under Peninsular rule, such as recognizing the authority of Mexica nobles. Spaniards of both factions relied on the method of embracing indigenous institutions to legitimize their authority over the native population; the Creole elites also sponsored similar festivals and recognized the power of other native elites, those who supported Creole power. In another example, the festival of San Hipólito featured a procession of royal officials that started in the central plaza, the center of culture and politics in New Spain, and circled the city back to the plaza.\[^{210}\] As Teofilo Ruiz has demonstrated, this style of authority-via-visibility was a very Hapsburgian style of power consolidation.\[^{211}\]

The Peninsular Spaniards of New Spain often used formal processions in their public spectacles. When Charles V died and the Viceroy erected an imperial tomb for him in Mexico City, it was dedicated with a large processional that drew direct attention to the

\[^{207}\] Ruiz, “Elite and Popular Culture”, 295.
\[^{208}\] Holler, “Spatial Contestation in Sixteenth Century Mexico City”, 112.
\[^{209}\] Chapter One of this thesis discussed how both Creole and Peninsular interests attempted to create themselves as the proper inheritors of the Aztec empire, which meant that Spanish sovereignty largely rested on the memory of indigenous sovereignty.
\[^{210}\] Holler, “Spatial Contestation in Sixteenth Century Mexico City”, 111.
\[^{211}\] Teofilo Ruiz, A King Travels, 68. Ruiz argues that the Hapsburg spectacle, focused on visibility, were in line with early concepts of the nation-state, while Castilian festive traditions were still distinctly medieval.
presence of the monument. To start the dedication ceremony, the banner of the city entered the ceremony site alongside the royal insignias, and then the crowd (described in Salazar’s description as “a large part of the city”) followed it to the town hall. The public spectacle of the processional was a significant part of the dedication, and of building Charles V’s memory into the city.

The Creole elites, however, sponsored different sorts of festivals, marked by the retention of Castilian pageantry and celebration in which the sponsor bridged social gaps as both a spectator and participant. In New Spain, Creole-Castilian festivals centered largely around the larger-than-life figure of don Martín Cortés, Marques del Valle de Oaxaca and son of Hernán Cortés. Don Martín was born in Mexico but educated in the royal court in Spain. He was raised in full awareness of Hapsburg customs, even participating in the joust at Philip’s 1554 wedding to Mary Tudor in England. Nevertheless, when don Martín returned to Mexico in 1562, he returned to the customs of Castilian nobility. Rather than the subdued Hapsburg style, don Martín was known for his excess, lavish wealth, fancy clothes and extraordinary parties. One account of don Martín Cortés stated that the Marques “was dressed in livery of rich silk and fabrics of gold and silver that were very expensive” upon his return to New Spain. The arrival of don Martín into Mexico City in 1563 was recorded by Juan Suárez de Peralta, a self-

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212 Francescó Cervantes de Salazar, Título Imperial de la Gran Ciudad de México (Mexico City: Antonio de Espinosa, 1560), 83. For more on the Imperial Tomb and Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, see Chapter 1.
213 Hernán Cortés actually had two sons named Martín. The first-born was the illegitimate son of Cortés and Doña Marina (La Malinche), sometimes known as Martín el Mestizo. He was later legally legitimized and received the title of Don. The second Martín was Hernán’s first legitimate born son, who later received his father’s title of Marques. When this paper refers to “don Martín”, it is referring to the Marques.
214 Lanyon, The New World of Martín Cortes, 102.
216 Juan Suárez de Peralta, Tratado Del Descubrimiento de las Indias (Mexico City, Mexico: Don Juan Suárez de Peralta, 1589), 112.
identified citizen (vecino) and native-born (natural) of Mexico City.\textsuperscript{217} He stated that the arrival of Cortés “gave great (grandisismo) contentment to the land,” and that another natural, Hernán Gutierrez Altamirano, hosted a massive party for the Marques.\textsuperscript{218} Shortly after, don Martín received a second party that Peralta only described as having been given to him “by the City of Mexico.”\textsuperscript{219} There was no mention of processional. The Creoles of New Spain continued Castilian festive traditions at the same time that Peninsular Spaniards were adopting new practices, and both became visible declarations of the disunity in sixteenth century New Spain as each faction performed their claims to authority and visions of identity throughout the urban landscape. The excess and raucous celebrations of the Creoles certainly did not go unnoticed; in the instructions for the new Archbishop to Mexico City, the former leader warned “we understand that in días de las fiestas many people occupy themselves in vices, games, dissolutions and other menial things.”\textsuperscript{220}

\textit{Performance and Protest in the Martín Cortés Baptism Celebration}

The colonial urban landscape was full of symbolically potent acts of performance. However, one festival stood above the rest in terms of extravagance, and escalating Creole/Peninsular tensions. The 1566 baptism of Marques del Valle de Oaxaca don Martín Cortés’ twin sons in Mexico City was one of the greatest spectacles

\textsuperscript{217} Juan Suárez de Peralta, \textit{Tratado Del Descubrimiento de las Indias}, Introduction. Anthony Pagden ("Identity Formation in Spanish America" in \textit{Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800} ed. Canny and Pagden, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), states that the term natural originally meant an indigenous person, but around the 1560s-1580s came to signify the Creoles. Peralta, who was born in Ávila, Spain, used this term to describe himself, signifying its transition away from the former use.

\textsuperscript{218} Peralta, \textit{Tratado Del Descubrimiento de las Indias}, 110.

\textsuperscript{219} Peralta, \textit{Tratado Del Descubrimiento de las Indias}, 110.

\textsuperscript{220} Archdiocese of Mexico City, \textit{Constituciones del Arzobispo y provincai de la muy insigne y muy leal Ciudad de Tenochtitlán, México, de la Nueva España} (Mexico City: Juan Pablos, 1556), 22.
of the Mexican Renaissance, and one that carefully used the urban landscape to generate a historically-rooted claim to authority over New Spain.

In June of 1566, the Marques and his wife baptized their twin sons in Mexico City. Cortés had been known for his kingly behavior in dress and manner, and so the baptism of twin sons must have inspired hereditary confidence in Creole leadership for at least some members of the city. It was certainly celebrated with as much pomp and circumstance as a royal event. After the ceremony, don Martín Cortés hosted a massive banquet for the city. Juan Suárez de Peralta, the vecino of Mexico City, recorded that the baptism celebration included lots of music and festivities and was a great “spectacle.”

The entertainment, the food, and the decorations were all funded by Cortés as a magnificent display of his wealth and power. This was not out of character, as Cortés was known in Mexico City for his wealth, lavish spending, and fancy clothes. This wealth was supported by his encomienda, and in the context of Creole/Peninsular fights for the survival of the labor system, it is hard to mistake this demonstration as anything but a declaration of commitment to the encomienda.

To kick off this festival, don Martín Cortés and his family paraded around the city displaying their affluence and wealth. As Peralta described, from the Iglesia Mayor, where the baptism was held, Cortés traversed a path that was “blooming” with flowers and “triumphal arches” that had been created for him, supposedly by the brothers Alonso and Gil de Avila. The path paraded the kingly Cortés around the central plaza, combining the sight of the regal Marques with an urban landscape that represented ancient authority over the Valley of Mexico. All eyes were on Cortés. Teofilo Ruiz has

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221 Peralta, Tratado, 122.
223 Peralta, Tratado, 122.
argued that in sixteenth-century Spain the concept of visibility took on new significance as a way for kings to consolidate power and demonstrate their authority; Phillip II was well known for his travels across Iberia. 224 As the leader of creole-authority factions in Mexico City, Cortés was embracing this new “optic” of the state.

The guests involved in witnessing Cortés celebrate the continuation of his hereditary line in Mexico City were diverse. The creole sons of the Mexican Renaissance, both Spanish and Mexica elites, were present to watch their factional leader display his power. The jealous and anxious peninsular oidor judges were also present. Additionally, Indian tribute laborers from the Creoles’ encomiendas came from across New Spain to witness the spectacle (it is unclear whether they were brought by their encomenderos or by their own free will). 225 Nevertheless, the Indian tributes received special attention from Cortés. Each group arrived with a banner representing their village, which was posted in a giant forest in the plaza. This forest was later used for a hunting ceremony in which the Indians participated, much like the Royal festival of the 1539. Jacqueline Holler has stated that such festivals recreated colonial space through the memory of indigenous institutions like hunting ceremonies. 226 These events permitted indigenous memory, but only with the reminder that colonial power allowed it to exist. However, while the 1539 festival had been sponsored by Peninsulars as a royal festival, the Creoles reclaimed this spectacle as their own in 1566. Shortly before, around 1564, they had petitioned Spain to allow Mexico self-government by the Creoles,

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225 Holler, 115.
226 Holler, “Spatial Contestation in 16th Century Mexico City”, 112.
not the Peninsulars.\textsuperscript{227} When that was denied, they fell back on a Castilian legal tradition that declared Phillip II was a tyrant for trying to end the encomienda, and that therefore he forfeited their loyalty.\textsuperscript{228} In this context, Cortés was displaying himself as a better ruler to the Indians than Phillip; he fulfilled the medieval reciprocity of a lord to his subjects by hosting festivals for his subjects. Cortés also connected his authority to the urban landscape by recreating earlier festivals that generated a transition between ancient Mexica lords and creole Spaniards. The hunting ceremony was allegedly well received; one peninsular judge later claimed to have been overwhelmed by the affectionate response of both Creoles and Indians towards Cortés.\textsuperscript{229}

The baptism festival was far from over and, in fact, the most contentious moment had yet to arrive. At the height of the ceremony, Alonso de Avila (Cortés’ friend and encomendero Creole) marched into the central plaza dressed as the Mexica emperor Moctezuma, followed by dozens of Creoles dressed as Aztec warriors. Avila approached Cortés and crowned the Marques and Marquessa with laurels, recreating a mythic moment in which Moctezuma handed the empire over to Hernán Cortés.\textsuperscript{230} Martín Cortés played the role of his father in this event which, amidst the baptism of his sons and the lordly banquet he sponsored, created a dramatic claim to the legitimate authority over Mexico. At the following banquet, Avila presented the Marques and Marquessa with a set of chalices engraved with the letter “R” for Rey, King.\textsuperscript{231} Attached was a small

\textsuperscript{227} Flint, “Travesty or Treason”, 32.
\textsuperscript{228} Padgen, “Identity Formation in Spanish America”, 54.
\textsuperscript{229} Flint, “Travesty or Treason”, 40.
\textsuperscript{230} Pagden, “Identity Formation in Spanish America”, 54.
\textsuperscript{231} Peralta, \textit{Tratado}, 122.
placard bearing the inscription “No temas la caída, pues es para mayor subida;” fear not the fall, it will only raise you higher.232

This dramatic event illustrated the Creole position during the Mexican Renaissance. Moctezuma did not hand Aztec sovereignty to Carlos V but to Cortés. Cortés was a subject to Carlos V, however through his unjust actions Phillip had lost that loyalty, and thus New Spain rightfully owed allegiance to Cortés’ son, to whom Moctezuma literally handed authority in this festival.233 Shirley Flint has identified this moment as a celebration by the Creoles of their historic right to the encomienda.234 Jacqueline Holler adds that it represented a nostalgia movement by the Creoles promoting a return to the immediate post-conquest order, in which the conquistadors autonomously ruled Mexico City for nearly fifteen years, until the arrival of Viceroy Mendoza in 1535.235 Throughout this public spectacle, the symbols of the urban landscape created a dramatic backdrop that enhanced the meanings of the event. Avila entered the plaza dressed as Moctezuma along the same route that Cortés supposedly had entered, and the ritual of handing over the Aztec empire was performed in front of Cortés’ house, which itself had been placed directly atop Moctezuma’s palace. The plaza was a tangible and concrete assertion of the creole claim to be the inheritors of Mexica power in New Spain.

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232 Lanyon, The New World of Martín Cortés, 163.
234 Flint, “Travesty or Treason”, 39.
If the Creoles wanted Cortés to be seen as the kingly sovereign of New Spain, they were successful. On July 16, 1566, all of Hernán Cortés’ sons, both Avila brothers, and eighteen other men were arrested for conspiracy to commit treason. While the Creoles had intended to demonstrate that there was no need to replace Luís de Velasco with a new viceroy, but instead to allow them to govern New Spain, the judges saw rebellion. The charges were that the men involved in the festival had intended to murder the Peninsular judges and instate Cortés as the king of Mexico, which all involved fervently denied.\textsuperscript{236} This paranoia came from a vague rumor that had arisen earlier, the year after Viceroy Velasco died and left the judges in charge of the city, that the Creole elites intended to seize Mexico. In addition, the massive number of people who had participated in the baptism celebration, their affection towards the Marques, and the arrival of loyal Indians waving banners convinced the judges that a violent rebellion was actually possible.\textsuperscript{237} To counteract the potent messages of the baptism ceremony, the Peninsulars responded with a public spectacle of their own that reasserted royal power over New Spain: the public execution of ten men.

First, the Peninsular authorities arrested several men involved. The Marques was arrested first, in secret. Next, the Marques’ brothers were arrested, along with the Avila brothers. These men were paraded across the busy central plaza from their homes to the judges’ offices in chains, as crowds of people watched in shock.\textsuperscript{238} Not long before, they had paraded through the Plaza dressed as Aztec warriors in a symbolic celebration of their hereditary right to govern Mexico. Now they were being shown as prisoners to the

\textsuperscript{236} Lanyon, \textit{The New World of Martin Cortes}, 171.  
\textsuperscript{237} Holler, “Spatial Contestation in Sixteenth Century Mexico City”, 115.  
\textsuperscript{238} Lanyon, \textit{The New World of Martin Cortes}, 166.
Peninsular judges. The Marques was questioned on July 18 in the presence of the oidor judges, where he was asked if he knew the other accused men. Cortés replied that he did.\textsuperscript{239} What followed was a detailed account of every recent social interaction between the Marques and the Avilas, as well as other Creole elites. The judges asked with whom he had met, in whose house they had met, and if they were planning treason. Cortés answered each question and denied wrongdoing; at one point the anonymous recorder wrote that the “confessant” was “scandalized” by the questions.\textsuperscript{240}

After being arrested, Alonso and Gil de Avila were assigned lawyers, and then given only a week to prepare a defense, which was highly unusual.\textsuperscript{241} The lawyers petitioned for more time to prepare, and were awarded a few extra hours. On August third, eighteen days after they were arrested, the Avila brothers were sentenced to be beheaded, a sentence that was carried out that same night. That day, in his cell, Alonso de Avila received confession from the Dominican Friar Juan de Bustamante, which was recorded and notarized by the lawyer Sancho López. To his last, Avila denied the plot to commit treason.\textsuperscript{242} The executions that night were the first of ten, and were the Peninsular judges’ first major public response to the baptism ceremony.

While the usual spot for the execution of heretics and prisoners was outside the city, for this the judges had scaffolding constructed in the center of the central plaza.\textsuperscript{243}

\textsuperscript{239} Confesión del Marqués del Valle, Archivo de las Indias, http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas/servlets/ImageServlet?accion=41&txt_id_imagen=3&txt_rotar=0&txt_contraste=0&txt_zoom=10&appOrigen=&cabecera=N
\textsuperscript{240} Confesión del Marqués del Valle, Archivo de las Indias, http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas/servlets/ImageServlet?accion=41&txt_id_imagen=3&txt_rotar=0&txt_contraste=0&txt_zoom=10&appOrigen=&cabecera=N
\textsuperscript{241} Lanyon, The New World of Martin Cortes, 173.
\textsuperscript{242} Confesión de Alonso de Avila, Archivo de las Indias; http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas/servlets/ImageServlet?accion=41&txt_id_imagen=3&txt_rotar=0&txt_contraste=0&txt_zoom=10&appOrigen=&cabecera=N
\textsuperscript{243} Lanyon, The New World of Martin Cortes, 174.
Not only did this directly place their public spectacle in competition with the baptism ceremony, it challenged the other symbols of Creole power in the urban landscape. The execution happened within sight of Cortés’ home, the Avilas’ homes, and the mansions of the other Creoles, all of which had been built atop the residences of Mexica lords. Across the Plaza from Cortés’ mansion were the royal offices of the judges. The executions shifted the focus away from the Creole sections of the plaza as the center of power in Mexico and redirected it to the judges’ offices. Like many Peninsular spectacles before it, this one recreated colonial space by challenging other symbols of power with royal, Peninsular dominance. The Creole elites used the central plaza to connect their power to the memory of the Mexicas, and the Peninsulars responded with a reminder that it was colonial power which violently suppressed the Aztec empire and subjected Mexico to Spain. By using the same urban landscape as the Creoles, the Peninsular judges usurped the perception of place and interjected their own symbols over those of the Creoles.

The urban executions were very effective as a public spectacle, partly because the violent symbols of power were directly enacted upon the bodies of Creole elites. As indicated by Michel Foucault, public execution revealed the nature of a crime as being enacted against the sovereign leader, and that through corporeal punishment the ruler was healed of their symbolic injury.²⁴⁴ It was a definitive assertion of power over Creole symbols that was written into the urban landscape through the hundreds of witnesses present at the execution. Seeing these powerful men executed was traumatic for the citizens of Mexico City; they were reported to have cried and wept with shock upon

seeing the Avila brothers executed. Alonso de Avila, apart from being popular, was also a very powerful man as a regidor official on the Creole municipal council.

The success of the executions is also visible in Suárez de Peralta’s account of the entire series of events. This was the only record published in Spain, and spent a great deal more time on the executions than it did on the baptism ceremony. In Peralta’s book, the executions far overshadowed the Creole festivals; they made a serious impression on both Creole and Peninsular Spaniards. There is one detail, however, in this account that indicated a level of resistance. Peralta described the dress of Alonso de Avila as he was executed. Alonso wore “very rich breeches,” along with a doublet of satin and damask linen, a cap with gold and feathers, a gold chain around his neck, a tawny shawl, a locket, and a rosary of white beads with the Virgin Mary that was given to him by a sympathetic nun. Wealth and excess were the definitive features of the encomendero Creoles, and Avila chose to die dressed as one.

In the two years over which the trials occurred, eighty-six people were arrested for treason, including two clerics who were sympathetic to the Creole elites. Ten people were executed, fourteen were banished from the Indies for life, twenty-nine were banished from Mexico City for anywhere from one to thirty years, and six were sentenced to serve as slaves in galleys or stationed on the Spanish military frontier in Oran, Algeria. Marques don Martín Cortés was banished from Mexico City for thirty years, don Martín Cortés el mestizo was banished from the Indies for life, and don Luis

245 Lanyon, *The New World of Martin Cortes*, 175.
246 Confesión del Marqués del Valle, Archivo de las Indias, http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas/servlets/ImageServlet?accion=41&txt_id_imagen=3&txt_rotar=0&txt_contraste=0&txt_zoom=10&appOrigen=&cabecera=N
248 Flint, “Treason or Travesty”, 35.
Cortés was sentenced to serve on a galley for six years, a sentence that was commuted from the original sentence of execution. New Spain received its new viceroy, don Gastón de Peralta, on October nineteenth. After four months of trying to rein in the power of the oidor judges he returned to Spain. A formal investigation by Spain was later launched against the judges, who were found to have acted without cause and were exiled from New Spain. Although the investigation found no signs that a rebellion had ever been planned, the symbolic damage was done, and Creole power would not resurface for over a century.

The brutality against the Creole elites signaled the end of the half-century long battle over the encomiendas. After the baptism celebration the encomendero class lost its credibility and trustworthiness in Spain. Phillip used the event as an excuse to strip most of the Creole elites of their encomiendas and severely limited those that remained. The encomendero class, like the Mexica before them, crossed from the realm of real power to the memory of an extinct and romantic legacy, and after the late sixteenth century appeared only as characters in romantic novels in Spain. Phillip continued to assert royal power in New Spain by selling government posts to wealthy Iberians, offices that by 1606 were sold in perpetuity, thus ensuring that they remained in Peninsular hands. Phillips also limited the ability of Creoles to alter the urban landscape and redistribute their own symbols into the city. In 1573 he issued a set of Ordinanzas, ordinances, which codified building and urban space in colonial cities.

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249 Lanyon, *The New World of Martin Cortes*, 185.
250 Flint, “Treason or Travesty”, 44.
252 Flint, “Treason or Travesty”, 44.
including Mexico City. The Ordinanzas reflected Philip’s humanist education, indicating a concern for the wellbeing of citizens through waste management and commons, but also stated that no lots on the main plaza could be held by individuals.\textsuperscript{255} Prior to this, building permits were awarded by status, so the wealthiest (the encomendero Creole elites) had the most prized positions on the central plaza. This centralized visibility was a source of pride for the Creole elites, but after 1573 the central plaza was given to merchants and selected by lottery. In doing this Phillip dispersed and decentralized the remaining encomenderos, again marginalizing them just as the earlier Mexica lords had been displaced. This action removed any vestiges of symbolic power that tied the Creole elites to the centralized power of Mexico, or the urban landscape, and substituted it with purely royal power.

\textit{Conclusion: The Urban Landscape and Colonial Power}

Performances of power were an important part of the urban landscape in sixteenth-century Mexico City. Ceremonies, such as the 1566 Cortés baptism ceremony, ritually enhanced symbols of power in the urban landscape. Both Creoles and Peninsulars used this to communicate their power over the other faction, and over Mexico writ large.

The most dramatic example of urban performances in the Mexican Renaissance was centered around the Cortés baptism ceremony in 1566. The Creole elites in this event reenacted the creation of creole Mexico at the moment when authority was transferred from Moctezuma to Hernán Cortés the conquistador. In doing so they presented a visual reminder of their legitimate authority as heirs of both the conquerors.

\textsuperscript{255} Kinsbruner, \textit{The Colonial Spanish American City}, 25.
and former nobles in whose places they resided on the plaza. The Creoles were, in their minds, connected to Mexico City in a way that Peninsular Spaniards were not; the Creoles belonged to Mexico while Peninsulars simply lived there.

Just as the Creole elites held performances of power in Mexico City’s urban landscape, so did the Peninsular Spaniards. Peninsular spectacles asserted the power of the Crown over the conquistador class in a reminder that the Creoles served the Spanish emperor and that royal power was absolute. In response to the 1566 Cortés baptism ceremony, the Peninsular Spaniards responded with a dramatic public spectacle that tied new images of violence and domination into the urban landscape. The public execution of ten Creole elite men demonstrated convincingly that the power in Mexico City was still held by Peninsular factions. After this event, the Creole elites slowly declined in both power and prestige, and Philip II increased the measures to reduce encomiendas and other symbols of conquistador wealth and honor. By the end of the sixteenth century, Creole power was effectively subjugated and imperial interests controlled New Spain. The paintings, books, and spectacles that experimented with hybrid forms and creole identities faded, until later intellectuals renewed these ideas in preparation for independence, and the Mexican Renaissance came to a close.

Although the Creole elites were violently suppressed, banished, and even executed, the Mexican Renaissance was anything but a failure. The spectacles and symbols of this era were preserved in the urban landscape and repeatedly called upon throughout Mexican history to critique Mexican identity. In times of political crisis, such as the end of the Porfiriato, the urban landscape was again filled with dramatic spectacles of performance that utilized the complex, symbolic nature of Mexico City to
present a constructed version of a unified Mexican identity. In both the Mexican
Renaissance (c.1540-c.1600) and the Porfiriato (1876-1910), public spectacles in the
urban landscape helped creole, elite intellectuals demonstrate their power and legitimate
authority over Mexico.
Chapter Four:
Parades and Power: Mexico’s Centennial and the Performance of Mexican National Unity in Porfirian Mexico City

On September 15, 1910, Hernán Cortés and Moctezuma met again in the streets of Mexico City. Mexico was celebrating its Centennial anniversary of the independence wars from Spain and, under the leadership of President Porfirio Díaz, the capital city hosted weeks of elaborate festivities. One of the pinnacle events was a Desfile Histórico, a costumed parade of historical figures. In this spectacle, unnamed actors dressed as Cortés and Moctezuma, accompanied by their armies of costumed conquistadors, Aztecs, priests, and guides, marched through the ancient streets of Mexico City. The parade reached its conclusion in the central Plaza de la Constitución, in the shadow of the National Palace. The National Palace sat atop the site that had once housed the palaces of both Moctezuma and Cortés, a less than subtle symbol of the authority of the President. Here, in elaborate costumes and spectacular performances, the two men who represented Mexico’s twin and contested heritages met once again to recreate the inauguration of Mexican history.

The symbolic reunion between Cortés and Moctezuma was not an accident, but a conscious effort on the part of a specific group of people to construct a national identity for Mexico. Throughout the Porfiriato, the científicos designed festivals and spectacles for the state in order to create a national history based on the elevation of heroes. The liberal científico leaders of Mexico trained generations of new intellectuals to think and serve Porfirian Mexico in specific terms of service to the state that emphasized complete
management of Mexico in every aspect. This included national identity. Their intention was to develop a version of Mexican identity that promoted their own power and authority, as defined by the ability to both unite Mexico culturally and bureaucratically and lead it through order and progress. This was a critical action in 1910 because the administration was under increasing anti-reelection pressures that were teetering on open revolution. The public, urban spectacles of the Centennial communicated to domestic and foreign observers the idea that Mexico was a unified nation with a strong, liberal heritage that had resulted in the presidency of Porfirio Díaz.

In constructing a national identity, the científicos relied on creole symbols like the meeting of Cortés and Moctezuma to communicate their authority and power. This moment in the Centennial celebration was the culmination of decades of contentious effort by the científicos to dictate a creole identity through an active re-imagination of Mexican history. The creole sensibility of the Porfiriato connected the authority of the científicos, who self-identified along European models, to ancient Mexica nobility. In particular they crafted a cult of dead national heroes to valorize their version of history as a teleological trajectory that legitimized Díaz’s regime above other political rivals.\(^{256}\) The crux of their success in formatting Mexico’s national identity was an elaborate system of urban, state-sponsored spectacles, including secular holidays and parades.\(^{257}\) These events were frequently, consistently, and publically performed to a class-inclusive audience, allowing their symbols and messages to become embedded in national

\(^{256}\) This thesis does not extensively explore the creation of the Porfirian cult of dead heroes; for an excellent appraisal of this history see Matthew Esposito, *Funerals, Festivals and Cultural Politics in Porfirian Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2010). Nevertheless, it is important to understand that national heroes and history were actively constructed by the científicos by elevating dead heroes through state funerals that immortalized men and women in the imagined community.

consciousness over Díaz’s thirty-four year presidency. Thus, Díaz and the científicos built a legacy of creole authority in a national past that could incorporate all of Mexico, but was only accessible to the mass population by recognizing Díaz’s authority (and the validity of his version of Mexico as European, urban, and progressive). This chapter focuses on the 1910 Centennial celebration, which commemorated one hundred years since Miguel Hidalgo’s *Grito de Dolores* and the official start of the independence wars. The Centennial was the largest, most elaborate, and most viewed event of the Porfiriato, and thus Díaz’s best chance to demonstrate that Mexico had a unified national identity under his authority. Normally, national celebrations in the Porfiriato were organized by the *Junta Patriotica*. However, for the 1910 Centennial, Díaz created a special Centennial Festival Commission.\(^{258}\) From the beginning, these ceremonies were designed to be special. The Centennial celebrations lasted weeks, and included every sort of spectacle imaginable, from expos of Mexico’s rural communities and figurines of traditional customs to garden parties on Aztec temples, and rodeos and dances in the national palace. Within a complex program of events, this chapter focuses exclusively on state-sponsored parades and processonals. These moments occurred publically with no formal invitations, and were designed to be seen by the largest and most diverse groups of spectators. The major parades drew massive crowds. As thus, they offer the best chance to explore the symbols of national unity that Díaz and the científicos presented to Mexico.

Although the national past was meant for all of Mexico, Díaz’s spectacles occurred within the limits of Mexico City, the center of Díaz’s urban-centric administration. Mexico City was a historic location where the indigenous heritage of

Mexico could remain completely symbolic, in contrast to rural and often indigenous communities outside of Mexico City. The city also connected científicos to urban elites in Paris or New York and allowed them to re-imagine the nation along European models; in fact, Díaz rebuilt entire districts of Mexico City along Parisian models with wider roads and modern industrial techniques. Public urban spectacles forced the urban poor to interact with the progressive, ordered areas of city from which the científicos wanted them to learn proper, modern behavior. As Michael Matthews illustrates, Porfirian elites adopted a paternalistic attitude towards plebeians and tried to lead them into civilization through visible example.

Reception plays a key role in understanding the 1910 Centennial, because these triumphant celebrations of mexicanidad were performed against looming social unrest and the rumblings of revolution. In 1908 American journalist James Creelman interviewed Porfirio Díaz for Pearson’s Magazine. During the interview Díaz claimed that in 1910 he would not run for reelection; “I retire when my present office ends, and I shall not serve again,” Díaz remarked to Creelman. Diaz’s opposition took the quote as a promise and immediately began opposition campaigns, many of which resulted in prison sentences. When Díaz formally announced that he would in fact run for president in 1910, the protests increased. By September 1910, Francisco Madero, the man who

259 John Mraz, *Photographing the Mexican Revolution: Commitments, Testimonies, Icons* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012), 18. As illustrated by Colin Jones in “Theodore Vacquer and the Archeology of Modernity in Haussmann’s Paris” (*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 17, no. 6, 2007, 153-183) Paris under Baron Georges Haussmann was rebuilt and became the archetype of the modern city, as capital of a modern nation-state, across the world. Haussmann was working primarily in the 1850s and 60s, only a decade before Diaz rose to power, but his model of Paris was already the standard in nineteenth-century modernity.


would replace Díaz as president of Mexico, had been imprisoned for protesting and was
drafting the Plan de San Luis Potosí that called for popular uprising in November of that
year. Even amongst the spectacular centennial celebrations the anti-reelection protests
continued; the opposition paper El Diario split the front page of its September 15th issue
between praising the parades and asking for food donations for the hundred arrested in
the previous night’s protests.262 Díaz’s regime fell within a year, and the Centennial
celebration was amongst the last-ditch efforts to confirm his authority. The 1910
spectacles reveal that the Porfiriants saw their constructed identity as having successfully
unified Mexico, but that they still felt the need to present this message to the larger
population. This indicated either an awareness of continued opposition to Díaz or a
condescending idea that plebeians had to be told they were unified, or both. The
Centennial assured the Mexican people, and foreign emissaries, that Mexico was unified
under the benevolent leadership of Porfirio Díaz.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the role of the state-sponsored public
spectacles of the 1910 Centennial in presenting the científico-constructed national
identity as authentic. Visual and textual sources help locate agency and action amongst a
diverse cast of actors as the Porfirian regime fought to maintain power against ever-
morere assertive opposition. The Porfiriato is full of contradictions of successes and
failures; the government successfully introduced symbols of identity into Mexico’s
national consciousness but could not save itself from revolution.

The científicos were accomplished in public displays of identity that, as Michael Matthews has shown, were meant to be visible examples for peasants and the urban poor to emulate. As Hilda Sabato has noted, publicity was propaganda in Spanish America, so highly visible public performances were understood to carry unspoken connotations. Presentation and critical dynamics in the acceptance of a constructed and publically performed identity as Porfirian científicos were aware.

While the performance of identity involved a diverse breadth of public actions and printed representations of them, this chapter is concerned specifically with parades and processionals. These were state-sponsored, secular events with no ties to the Church or other bodies that could complicate a purely national history. Rebecca Earle has stated that civic festivals allowed the state to present an official version of itself; the spectacle represented Mexico as a state and nation along idealized terms. Eric Hobsbawn has argued that through public spectacles leaders hoped to create “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.” Porfirian state holidays, funerals, and parades were ritually performed thematically and spatially, the repetition of themes was matched by repetitive use of the same festival spaces, and directly connected figures from Mexico’s past to the authority of the president by creating a cult of national heroes.

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265 Earle, “Padres de la Patria”, 778.
Like many countries in the Americas, Mexico gained its independence as a state without a clear national identity, and spent most of the nineteenth century imagining what the “nation” would look like.\textsuperscript{267} While the state is a body of government, Benedict Anderson describes the nation as an “imagined community,” a group of people who are connected by the very belief that they are connected.\textsuperscript{268} The “imagined community” is a widely accepted analytical tool for historians, and has been reviewed specifically by Latin Americanists. Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen argue that the early notions of Latin American nations were rooted not just in print media, as Anderson claimed, but in direct social relationships embodied and sustained by the popular press.\textsuperscript{269} The nation was a critical notion in Porfirián Mexico, and Díaz and the científicos actively sought to elevate creole symbols into Mexico’s imagined community. In doing so they embraced a new way of seeing, a new optic in the terms of Jens Andermann, which naturalized the nation-state as an organic entity.\textsuperscript{270} Notions of “authentic” and “organic” were closely tied in late nineteenth century Mexico, and the success of Porfirián spectacles was partially defined by their ability to appear natural, rather than consciously constructed.

Hilda Sabato complexifies this by stating that the press is the material incarnation of public opinion.\textsuperscript{271} Success of Porfirián festivals was not just measured by presentation but by these events’ reception by Mexican plebeians and elites, foreign

\textsuperscript{270} Jens Andermann, The Optic of the State: Visuality and Power in Argentina and Brazil. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 1.
\textsuperscript{271} Sabato, The Many and the Few, 12.
dignitaries, and businessmen. The newspapers used here consist of those supportive of Díaz as well as the opposition press, which, as Phyllis Smith has noted, was always able to maintain some presence during Díaz’s dictatorship because the President was bound to some extent by a liberal, free-press rhetoric.\textsuperscript{272} Since these papers had very different positions in relationship to the government, the similarities and differences in their responses to the spectacles is a crucial indication of the success of the events to speak to the Mexican imagined community as a whole. In 1910 Mexico was on the brink of revolution, and these sources offer a glimpse into both unity and division in the end of the Porfiriato.

Newspapers are a significant source of information in this chapter because they illuminate contemporary perspectives on the creation, presentation, and reception of state festivals. In the \textit{Diario} of September 15, 1910 the majority of the paper is dedicated to an hour-by-hour description of events, even breaking down the festivities into fifteen-minute intervals at points.\textsuperscript{273} The press was deeply involved in the reception of Porfirian spectacles and the dissemination of their symbols through print, both as forms of acceptance and opposition. Anderson states that newspapers in the nineteenth century specifically linked people and events, and through the act of reading they shared in the imagined community.\textsuperscript{274} Jürgen Habermas similarly claims that the press is the ideal institution of the public sphere in the nation-state, and Porfirian Mexico revolved around public representation.\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{273} “Festejos Para Hoy y Mañana” \textit{Diario}, 9.15.1910 p.3.
\textsuperscript{274} Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}, 33.
\textsuperscript{275} Jürgen Habermas, \textit{The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society} (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962), 8. For a full discussion of Habermas, see the introduction chapter of this thesis.
Power flowed in multiple directions during these events. The elites displayed the power to design state spectacles and to perform in them as dignified elites, not in costume. Porfirian elites strictly regulated the audience to the role of observer to prevent them from accessing power of performance. However, elite spectacles required the presence and positive reception of the audience, which challenged their limitations on popular agency. Newspapers captured the symbiotic relationship of presentation and reception.

Performing a National Unity in the 1910 Centennial

Public, urban spectacles dominated Mexico’s Centennial. They occurred frequently, and usually overlapped geographically. The state-sponsored performances and events occurred in the most European streets, the most modern plazas, and the richest districts. It was no mystery how the científicos wanted Mexico to be seen by both foreign visitors and by its own citizens. The urban landscape dramatically added to the Centennial by filling daily life with constant reminders of the festivities. Businesses and houses were adorned with Mexican flags and colors, and the papers observed this with an extra dose of patriotic flare. Chapultepec palace, for example, was described in the newspaper *El Diario* as being “decorated elaborately and beautifully”, which lauded the tricolor ornamentation as the “Nest of the Eagle.”\(^{276}\) The “eagle” was both the national symbol, and in this case Porfirio Díaz himself; Díaz called Chapultepec home. Connecting Díaz to the eagle was a significant statement since the eagle was one of the most ancient symbols of Mexico. Originally a Nahua glyph for Tenochtitlán, used by artists of the Mexican Renaissance to portray the city, it created a line of legitimacy for

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those who ruled under the symbol. By 1910, Diaz’s program to develop a national identity had come so far that he was the Mexican nation, at least in the eyes of his followers. Proving that Mexican national unity had been achieved was a major focus of the Centennial.

Although this chapter will focuses extensively on two major parades, there were too many during the Centennial to not mention a few others. Parades and processionals were the primary tool used by científicos to visually communicate what the Mexican nation was. Spectacles like the Desfile Comercio (commercial parade) presented a Mexico that was economically stable and founded on modern practices of economy and culture. The Desfile Comercio featured floats from various contributors to Mexican economic prosperity. Figure 1 features the Banking Float, complete with allegorical, Romanesque maidens around the strong pillars of Mexican banking. The photograph also shows one man leading the float dressed in a French colonial costume, invoking the great role France played in establishing Mexican banks. The Agriculture and Mining Floats each featured similar women draped over scenes of Mexico’s abundant natural wealth, from fruits and trees to silver. The “Industry Float” boasted toga-clad women with a sign that simply said “SCIENCE”; Porfrian progress was built upon a scientific rationale which, to many Porfrians, had stabilized the Mexican economy and state.

The remaining floats were mostly sponsored by private companies that were major contributors to the economy of Mexico City. As Steven Bunker has argued, consumer culture was a major focus of Porfrian elites who often measured progress by

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277 “Carro de Agricultura, Carro de Mineria,” Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
278 “Carro de la Industria,” Genaro Garcia Photograph Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
continuity with the global market. The Porfrián editor Alfonso Luis Velasco described the process of modernizing as becoming a “pueblo consumidor,” a consuming people.²⁷⁹ Thus, the private institutions that sponsored Mexico’s development of a modern consumer culture had floats alongside state-sponsored tributes to industry and progress. The Central Marketplace Float was followed by the Cognac Float, the Palacio de Hierro float, and the “Buen Tono” float. These last two were particularly important. The Palacio de Hierro, the Iron Palace, was one of Mexico City’s most prominent department stores, which Bunker observed were permanent fixtures in the urban landscape of consumer culture.²⁸⁰ Buen Tono was the most ubiquitous cigarette company of the Porfiriato, which not only sold cheap tobacco but, through modern machine-rolling techniques, was also a symbol of national progress.²⁸¹ Buen Tono cigarettes were also closely tied to Porfirián public spectacles and had floats in parades throughout the year as part of their marketing campaign.²⁸² Of course, they also released a special “Centenario” cigarette just for the celebrations as well, which was advertised in every major paper.²⁸³ Consumerism and a modern economy were closely tied in Porfirián Mexico, and in bringing together the most lucrative private business into a national parade the científicos cemented these institutions as part of Mexican national unity.

Another major theme of several parades was the crucial influence of foreigners in Mexico, both as businessmen and political leaders. Just as the científicos has used spectacles to build the foreign element into Mexico City through statues and dedications

²⁸⁰ Bunker, Creating Mexican Consumer Culture in the Age of Porfirio Díaz, 102.
²⁸² Bunker, Creating Mexican Consumer Culture in the Age of Porfirio Díaz, 30.
(see Chapter 2), they also brought them into the visual lexicon of national identity through parades. Military groups, sent by foreign nations as representatives along with the diplomats, were prominently featured as parts of the Centennial celebrations, and were often in the papers. From their arrival on September 12, the German and Argentinian Marines and cadets were in the spotlight. The papers captured the “great applause” for the Germans and Argentinians as they arrived in Vera Cruz, and shamefully the “disgrace” that the Mexican band, which was supposed to greet the sailors with the German and Argentine national anthems, was late.  

It is unclear why the papers were so fascinated with the German military; however, they actively communicated a deep sense of camaraderie and fraternalism with Argentina, the “sister nation of undeniable progress,” who were also celebrating their Centennial in 1910.

Once in Mexico City, foreign soldiers marched in most of the major parades of the Centennial. On September 14th, they were included in a parade of Mexico’s leaders and administrators, which displayed the power of the Mexican state through military alliances. The foreign military units were adopted as part of the Mexican state, and they were received warmly; El País stated that some of the greatest applause from the crowds was for the German, French, and Argentinian cadets who all marched so well. The military parade of September 16th also featured foreign cadets marching alongside the Mexican military. If foreign diplomats were part of spectacles that demonstrated Mexico’s dedication to continued relations through dedicating parts of the city to foreign heroes, then the cadets were the visual assertion that political and military alliances were also part of the Mexican national consciousness.

Científicos on Parade in the Desfile Cívica

The Centennial celebration of Mexico’s independence from Spain was more than a simple excuse to celebrate. For Díaz and the científicos, it was the greatest opportunity in forty years to present a vision of Mexican identity, one solidified under Porfirian control, to Mexico and to the world. Whereas public spectacles, particularly parades and processionals, over the course of Díaz’s presidency had been used to present idealized visions of a Mexican national identity to the people, the Centennial spectacles illustrated not what Mexico should be, but what Mexico was, declaring Díaz’s goals for Mexico to be a fait accompli. The Centennial performances were the assertions of Porfirian elites that a Mexican national unity had been achieved under Porfirio Díaz. They may not have been able to predict the impending revolution, but the científicos were aware that cultural unity was important to sustain the liberal dictatorship of the president.

The Mexican Centennial was full of processionals and parades. Throughout Díaz’s presidency, these spectacles created a special place for the científicos to perform their vision of Mexican identity. Figure 2, a photograph of the Desfile Cívica (which is discussed later in this chapter), presents a view of how a Porfirian parade was organized. The main performers, in this case científicos, marched in the middle, flanked by armed escorts called rurales. The rurales were Díaz’s special urban police force; they were often brutal and acted with relative impunity.287 As a human wall that divided Mexico into groups of active performers and passive observers they were also a spectacle themselves during these moments of ritual; the newspaper El Imparcial devoted an entire section of its Desfile Histórico coverage to photographs of the rurales enacting

287 Esposito, “Death and Disorder”, 94.
their divisional duties during this parade.\textsuperscript{288} Porfirian parades were ideal places of performance; martially divided aisles separated spectators and performers, kept all attention focused on single events, and allowed for interaction between an urban landscape that was full of symbols of power and ritual events. The Porfirian devotion to processions is evident in the program guides, printed uniformly in all major Mexico City newspapers, which indicated a parade nearly every single day of the Centennial celebrations. The guides segregated events into “official” and “non-official” categories; there were several fiestas and performances across the city that were unofficial, but every parade was listed as an official event.

As Mexico inched closer towards its centennial, the spectacles increased in both size and significance. The first of the major processionals of the Centennial occurred on September 14, 1910. The Desfile Cívica, or civic parade, featured more than ten thousand people (according to El País), all of whom where directly connected to the Porfirian government in some form.\textsuperscript{289} El Diario published that there were fifteen thousand participants in the parade.\textsuperscript{290} The Porfirian-sponsored El Imparcial reported that there were twenty thousand.\textsuperscript{291} While there is no clear reason for this discrepancy, it is clear that the sight must have been spectacular. In appearance it was a parade of thousands of civic government administrators who composed the Porfirian bureaucracy, in essence it was a parade of científicos. The first major spectacle of the Centennial was

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\textsuperscript{288} “Vimos Pasar Ayer una Epoca de Historia Nacional,” El Imparcial (Mexico City: 9/16/1910), 1.
\textsuperscript{289} “Desfile Cívica de Ayer,” El País (Mexico City: 9/15/1910), 1.
\textsuperscript{290} “Quince Mil Personas Tomaron Parte en la Gran Manifestación Cívica de Ayer,” El Diario (Mexico City, 9/15/1910), 1.
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a demonstration of the political and cultural power under Díaz’s control and a reminder of who had developed not only the festival but Mexico as well.

The procession left at nine in the morning from Alameda Avenue, followed the important modern street of San Francisco, entered the Plaza de la Constitución to the Cathedral, deposited flowers at the urn of heroes in the chapel, and returned to the National Palace where Díaz and his cabinet waited from the balcony.292 (See Map appendix for Chapter 4 for this parade route). The official purpose of the event was to lay flowers at the “Urn of Heroes,” a monument containing the ashes of several Mexican independence leaders in a chapel in the Cathedral, a large catafalque engraved with the date “1810” (See Figure 3). The flowers, carried by each member of the parade, made for a dramatic contrast to the urban landscape. El País remarked on the incredible array of colors, stating that it demonstrated the participants’ deep love of the patria.293 El Diario also noted that the “gardens of Mexico emptied their flowers before the Urn of Heroes,” a reminder that the anthropomorphic city participated in these festivals.294 In typical Porfirian fashion, the flower donations could be extravagant; Figure 4 shows one corona that was marched to the Cathedral. The photograph, obviously taken by a sanctioned Porfirian photographer who was allowed into the parade route, was simply labeled “one of the wreaths.”295

The fact that the participants represented a small minority of Mexicans was neither addressed nor hinted at in either El País or El Diario, nor in any pro-Díaz

292 “Guia de Centenial,” El Imparcial (Mexico City: 9/14/1910), 7.
295 “Una de las Coronas,” (Mexico City: Romos Fot. 9/15/1910), Genaro Garcia Collection, Nettie Lee Benson, University of Texas, Austin.
publications. The marching científicos were easily reconciled as “Mexico” in this event, and as sponsors of national sentiment. Interestingly, the elites were both framed and contrasted by Mexicans in “authentic” attire who were segregated to costumed and “allegorical” sections of the parade. The women in Figure 5 are clearly identifiable as “Mexican” through their peasant attire, complete with large sombreros, and appear as compliant members of the processional. They too carried flowers for the Urn of Heroes. This moment represented the presentation of científico-constructed identity as “authentic”. The parade simultaneously demonstrated that peasants could hold a successful place in Porfirian Mexico, through limited and controlled participation, and suggested that the heroes being honored were folk heroes with an organic, bottom-up popularity. These peasants were not a specific group, but representative of the Mexican poor who the científicos presented as sharing in the unity of Mexican national identity. The combination of Mexican bureaucratic elites and “allegorical” Mexicans in the parade, still framed by armed rurales, created a holistic Mexican nation in microcosm that was all passively submissive and ordered by the government. This meant that performers behaved as performers, and spectators did not challenge their role as spectators. One consistent theme in all of the newspapers was the remark that “todas las clases sociales,” all social classes, absorbed the parade with an emotional response; there was no challenge to the spectacle. “Our hearts are satisfied,” claimed El Imparcial. This was a major theme not just in this parade, but in all major events of the Centennial.

If the Desfile Cívica represented anything of Porfirian ideals, it was order. Díaz, like most dictators, valued an orderly society under his rule. The thousands of Porfirian bureaucrats in the parade were organized down to the individual person. El Imparcial
published that there were fifteen main groups in the parade, composed of lines of six people, with no more than a meter between the lines.296 To complete the spectacle, the ever-present rurales lined the parade route. Figure 6 shows a line of cane-wielding, top hat-wearing Porfirian elites marching towards the Cathedral, holding flowers to place on the urn, and guarded by a wall of police. The flowers of peace and the armed guards juxtaposed to create the appearance of safety and security only for those inside the parade. The presses lauded this style of spatial organization; El País stated that because of how the parade was ordered, “the civic processions were graceful, elegant, and became a testimony of our culture.”297 El País and El Imparcial both described each of the fifteen sections in detail, including the most prominent men who led their group. The Centennial Commission came first (led by científico José Sánchez of the Commission), followed by delegates from the town of Hidalgo Guadalupe, the District Superior Tribunal, the Secretary of Administration, and many, many others, in fact “too many to name.”298 Each of the fifteen sections was essentially a miniature parade within itself; each had its own band, and the effect was to visually display Díaz’s absolute control through his thousands of administrative minions that marched through Mexico’s most prominent streets.

In an interesting twist to this extravagant spectacle, the newspapers that covered this parade paid special attention to a select few groups which were listed in the same columns that detailed the Centennial Commissions and Secretaries of Administrations: teachers. Grade-school teachers had their own section, a second section was dedicated to the Secretary of Public Education Ezequiel Chávez and professors of the Law, Fine Arts,

296 “Desfile Cívico,” El Imparcial (Mexico City: 9/14/1910), 5.
Agriculture, and Veterinary schools, and a third section belonged to the directors of the national museum, observatory, patent office, and geology office. In a cast of “too many to name,” the attention to these educational leaders is outstanding, and a reminder that the científicos were so named due to their devotion to education and scientific rationalism. At one point Díaz even held a special parade, the Desfile Universidad just for recent doctoral graduates and professors of Mexico’s University and personally marched with them through Mexico City, a rarity. Image F shows the contrast between educated men and lines of armed police that formed the ever-present boundary between performers and spectators. Not only did this spectacle directly connect Díaz’s personal image to the educational progress of Mexico, new graduates suggested continuity and growth, but also to other events in the city. This parade corresponded with the Fiesta Estudiantes (see Chapter Two). Thus, the parade created a visual connection to other spectacles and built upon a web of symbols and rituals used by the científicos in the Centennial celebrations.

Not coincidentally, this focus on the prominent role of education in the civic parade sat next to announcements in El País and El Imparcial of a major “Congress of Pedagogy” which was being convened by Díaz that night in Mexico City. The congress was even listed in the Centennial program as an “official event.” Sharing the same newspaper pages were also articles on two events being held the next night. First was a “gallo” celebration, organized by Mexican students, which featured the singing of patriotic songs and was expected to be the “most enthusiastic” fiesta of the

300 “Guia de Centenial,” El Imparcial (Mexico City: 9/14/1910), 7.
Centennial. After that, the city hosted a banquet for teachers and students of the national schools, which featured a Mexican menu of arroz con carne and sopa Española, in contrast to the French menus served at most Centennial banquets. Finally, on the 18th of September Díaz hosted the inauguration of the National School of Higher Education. These articles, which appeared consistently in close proximity to the features on the Desfile Cívica, espoused an idea of progress through education, another Porfirian cornerstone that was tied closely to order. Education, for Porfirian elites, was a pathway to proper, modern behavior. Although his words and actions did not always align, Díaz was famously quoted by American journalist James Creelman in 1908 as saying that the schoolhouse was more important than the army. Education was a merit for which Porfirians desired to be recognized. Through a complex network of newspaper space and public spectacles Díaz and the científicos spent the Centennial displaying their control over Mexican politics and society, a control defined by order and progress. This was the Porfirian assertion that their project to unify Mexico was successful.

September 15: Eve of the Centennial

The Desfile Cívica was a remarkable spectacle, but it was only the beginning. September 15th was the most important day of the Centennial celebrations, and the only one labeled the “official independence day ceremony”. Although the actual day of the

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302 “Todo está preparado para el banquete a los escolares,” El Diario (Mexico City: 9/15/1910), 12.
303 “Guía de Centenial,” El Imparcial (Mexico City: 9/16/1910), 5.
305 “Guía de Centenial,” El Imparcial (Mexico City: 9/14/1910), 7.
centennial was September 16, 1810 (the date of Miguel de Hidalgo’s famous cry to war), Mexico had celebrated it primarily on September 15th throughout the Porfiriato. Enrique Krauze has argued that the annual celebration of independence, a ritual called the Grito in which Díaz repeated the 1810 cry of freedom, was celebrated on the 15th to correspond with President Díaz’s birthday. 306 Díaz frequently attempted to connect his personal image to national events as directly as possible. The Grito also built upon previous forms of celebration. Mexican newspapers from before 1876 did not mention the Grito ritual, but did state that at exactly 11 pm on September 15, the Mexican people gathered in the plaza to celebrate independence. 307 The Grito infused pre-existing moments of celebration with new rituals that connected folk ceremonies with Porfirian power.

The official celebrations of September 16, 1910 included one large fiesta and a single speech by Díaz; September 15 was overwhelmingly the most spectacular day of the Centennial. The capstone event, the Grito, consisted of Díaz shouting “¡Viva México! ¡Viva la Independencia!” from the balcony of the national palace at exactly 11 pm, a ritual he had performed every year since 1876. This was a sacred moment in Mexico, during which “enthusiasm overflowed, patriotism vibrated in every living thing and all the world forgot their worries and their pain.” 308 The great emotional response and pride in this event was uncontested in any of Mexico’s major papers. El Imparcial called it the “glorious song of liberty”, stating that there had never been so deep an emotion as there was in the Plaza de la Constitución during that ritual. 309 It also

observed with admiration and wonder that people “de todas las clases sociales” had come together. The Grito re-enactment was one of the oldest continual rituals of the Porfiriato, and the papers in 1910 perceived the emotional response by the Mexican people as a sign of national unity.

The Grito re-enactment was an annual ritual that reached epic status during the Centennial. However, September 15th was not solely dedicated to this one spectacle. The official program of that day began with the largest and most elaborate parade of the entire celebration, which would frame the “official” centennial ceremony. This parade, called the Desfile Histórico, was a visual presentation of Díaz’s national history that literally marched through the streets of Mexico, organized by científico José Casarín.310 The Mexican national identity constructed by the científicos relied heavily on the creation of national history that connected major events throughout Mexican history to the rise of Diaz. When Porfirio Díaz literally took the office of president as a military leader in 1876, he faced questions of legitimacy, despite overall popularity. For the next thirty years his científicos tried to develop a national history for Mexico of liberal leaders, from Hidalgo to Juárez, which formed the basis of authority for the liberal presidency of Diaz. Díaz’s official historia patria of a long-dureé Mexican identity included both Spanish and Mexica histories but posited the combination of these two empires as the creation of Mexico.311

Most postcolonial states, and post-revolutionary states in Europe, were able to identify distinct moments where their national history began, generally in violence. In

Spanish America, and certainly in Porfirian Mexico, there were competing moments for the origin of national history. Francisco Cosmes, an important journalist and politician, published an influential essay in 1884 entitled “To Whom do We Owe the Fatherland?” which argued that the Aztecs had no role in developing the nation, and that Mexico was entirely indebted to Spain. This challenged Díaz’s official version, and demonstrated that a contentious intellectual debate existed over the issue of national history.

The científicos were deeply embedded in this debate, and displayed their intellectual, scientific rationing of national history through published works. *Hombres Ilustres de México*, edited by Eduardo L. Gallo in 1873 was a precursor work that featured articles from future intellectual científicos such as Justo Sierra, Francisco Romero, and a dozen others. The great men, Sor Juana was the only woman to appear, who constituted important figures in the national history were those distinguished by virtue, valor, intelligence and patriotism; these characteristics would come to espouse the científicos. The first section, by Alfredo Chavero, started with Tenoch, the founder of Tenochtitlán, defining him as a man of great heart, honor, and faith, characteristics not uncommonly used to later describe Díaz. A European name did not even appear in this anthology until the second volume (of four), and that person is Don Martín Cortés, Marques del Valle. The mixed heritages of Porfirian historia patria was a critical dimension that placed Díaz’s regime within an ancient trajectory of governance in Mexico. After the appearance of a creole Mexico, not a single purely indigenous

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312 Earle, “‘Padres de la Patria’”, 779.
leader appeared in the book. This debate formed the intellectual background for the Desfile Histórico.

The parade consisted of thousands of actors who were costumed as historical figures from Mexico’s past, including conquistadors, Aztecs, Tlaxcalans, priests, independence heroes and cultural leaders. Behind them were “allegorical” floats that represented important figures; one float featured Morelos being crowned by the angel of glory, another held a scene from the battle of Cuautla. This parade, like the Desfile Cívica, travelled in divided sections. The first section re-enacted the conquest era, the second depicted the inquisition and later colonial Peninsular Spanish figures, and the third was composed of independence heroes. Figure 8 shows “Hernán Cortés” and his “conquistadors” passing along one of the major roads of Mexico City. The presence of the historical figure contrasted with the entirely modern, Parisian architecture that was covered in the Mexican tricolor. Cortés, passing triumphantly through the modern city like a satisfied victor, presented an image that the Porfirians had fulfilled the goal of the conqueror to make Mexico a successful and modern place. Cortés, to Díaz, was the founder of Mexican national identity, and in this spectacle he looked upon his legacy and was pleased. Figure 9 shows the other major figure of the parade, Moctezuma. In this photograph, the Mexica lord was carried on a litter by indigenous-looking men through the city. The march of Moctezuma and his warriors was one of fatalist acceptance; they marched to the plaza to give Cortés their city. Nevertheless, there was no resistance from Moctezuma; instead the photograph seems to show him, like Cortés, looking upon the fate of Mexico with pride. Cortés and Moctezuma, like every

316 “Con el Desfile Historico de Hoy, Reviviran Grandes Paginas Historicas,” El Diario (Mexico City: 9/15/1910), 12.
participant in Porfirian processions, understood their place in the nation and accepted them without question.

Just as with the Desfile Cívica, authenticity played an important role in presenting the Mexican national history and identity as organic, not as constructed. The newspapers complimented the authentic costuming of the conquistadors, the priests, and the other historic figures. However, _El Imparcial_ stated that the spectators were most awed by the indigenous actors, the thousand Aztecs and the eight hundred Tlaxcalans. They were described in this article by their authentic attire and costuming, creating an almost comical distinction between the historic clothing and the actual living indigenous person. _El País_ lauded the “authenticity” of the diverse Indian costumes, and stated that the spectators were awed by seeing ancient races brought back to life. It was not their current status as Indians that interested spectators, however, but their role as extinct, civilized groups. The científicos did not feel any deep love for the indigenous population; Mexico’s “Indians” did not embrace European-style urban modernity or the national identity over ethnic distinctions. Contemporary Indians were abused like slaves, and treated with condescension. Díaz himself once stated that the Indians were not accustomed to “thinking for themselves”, and were thus unworthy of the democracy of a modern citizen. To the newspapers, the only value in the Indian actors was that they provided authentic representations of a once-glorious indigenous heritage.

The parade route, which must have been familiar to Mexicans by this point, left from Calzada de la Reforma at 9:30 am, passed along the avenues Juárez and San

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Francisco, and followed the Ave. Cinco de Mayo into the Plaza de la Constitución, and in front of the national palace (see Map for Chapter 4).\textsuperscript{321} The Desfile Histórico recreated the national palace, built on top of the former residences of both Moctezuma and Cortés, as ritual and sacred space, and highlighted the symbols of its historic significance. \textit{El Diario} set its description of the parade within a historical description of Cortés’ conquest through Mexico; both the parade and the conquest ended in the same place in the article, right at the national plaza.\textsuperscript{322} In the context of a forty-year program to develop a national history, the Desfile Histórico led, quite literally, to Porfirio Díaz. The parade encapsulated Porfírian national history in a visual, tangible sense; those in the parade were part of Mexican national identity, those excluded were not. That this was meant to serve as a national history lesson was not missed by the presses. \textit{El País} stated that the parade captured “all the great ages of our history, from the conquest to Independence”. Furthermore, the journalist claimed that the intent of the spectacle was “a resurgence of things and people…that influenced the formation of the national atmosphere.”\textsuperscript{323} \textit{El Imparcial} succinctly stated, “We saw an epoch of national history pass”.\textsuperscript{324} The papers implied the existence of a national history, not the act of creating one.

The newspapers were not the only ones to enthusiastically embrace the Desfile Histórico. Over half a million spectators lined the streets of the Distrito Federal to “witness” the parade.\textsuperscript{325} According to \textit{El Imparcial}, the turnout was greater than even

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{321} “El Desfile Histórico de ayer resultó brillante y sugestivo,” \textit{El País} (Mexico City: 9/16/1910), 1.
\item \textsuperscript{322} “Con el Desfile Histórico de Hoy, Reviviran Grandes Paginas Historicas,” \textit{El Diario} (Mexico City: 9/15/1910), 1.
\item \textsuperscript{323} “El Desfile Histórico de ayer resultó brillante y sugestivo,” \textit{El País} (Mexico City: 9/16/1910), 1.
\item \textsuperscript{324} “Vimos Pasas Ayer una Epoca de Historia Nacional,” \textit{El Imparcial} (Mexico City: 9/16/1910), 16.
\item \textsuperscript{325} “El Desfile Histórico de ayer resultó brillante y sugestivo,” \textit{El País} (Mexico City: 9/16/1910), 1.
\end{itemize}
the científicos had expected and, although people scrambled for a view against the massive crowd, their enthusiasm for the event never dimmed.  

The crowds were so great and enthusiastic, that El País had to inform readers that the police had dozens of lost children, and to please contact them immediately for a child lost at the parade. The historical characters were received with tremendous enthusiasm as they entered the Plaza. Cortés especially was greeted upon his entrance into the Plaza with thunderous applause “in frenzy” as people threw flowers at his feet. Following Cortés was Doña Marina on a palimpsest with “noble Indian women”. El País indicated the ambiguous place that this woman held in Mexican history; it stated her effect was “surprising”, and that the people threw flowers and trinkets at her feet while cheering enthusiastically.  

Doña Marina, sometimes called La Malinche, was Cortés’ translator who made the conquest possible and also mother to Martín Cortés el mestizo, and thus was both a mother and traitor to Mexico. In the Porfirian version of history, however, she was only a hero, and was treated as one by the spectators of the parade.

The climax of the spectacle occurred after Cortés had entered the Plaza de la Constitución. Cortés rode up to the National Palace, and waited. Soon, Moctezuma and his men joined him. It was eleven in the morning, exactly twelve hours before Díaz gave the Grito. The two figures waited until the entire parade had filled the plaza, until all of Mexican history was sharing one physical space, and both dismounted “right in front of the main balcony of the National Palace.”  

In a reenactment of a famous, and mythical moment, Cortés went to embrace the Aztec emperor but was stopped by Moctezuma,
who removed a gold collar from his own neck and placed it over the head of Cortés. Since colonial times, this moment had been misinterpreted, aggrandized, and fictionalized as Moctezuma passing legitimate authority over Mexico to Cortés, and according to legend, it happened in nearly the same spot where the two actors stood on September 15, 1910. Díaz and the científicos presented this spectacle, which interacted with the historically-vibrant urban landscape of Mexico City, a massive timeline of national history that directly connected Mexico’s first leaders to its current president, Porfirio Díaz. The Porfirian national history campaign built upon moments and dead heroes that directly contributed to the liberal presidency of Díaz, building a teleological foundation that legitimized the government. In the Plaza, all of Mexican history stood directly below Díaz as he watched from his balcony. He was the culmination of every hero and every battle in the parade. For the científicos, the project to develop a national history was complete. Just as importantly, the parade was a visual statement, as Mexican stability was on the verge of collapse, that Díaz had fulfilled the liberal promises of independence.

It was important for Díaz to demonstrate his power as more than political, but cultural as well. Like the Creole elites of 1566, the científicos of 1910 needed Mexico to be unified because it was on the edge of violent turmoil. Only a week after the Torchlight Processional, Mexico had a “free election” with the strongest opposition party yet; Díaz had reported to James Creelman in 1908 that Mexico was ready for true democracy. On the same day, Díaz arrested his primary opponent, Francisco Madero, and overwhelmingly won the election under suspicious circumstances. Within the next

331 “Vimos Pasas Ayer una Epoca de Historia Nacional,” El Imparcial (Mexico City: 9/16/1910), 16.
332 This is also roughly the location of the Cortés/Avila masquerade which reenacted the same mythic moment.
month, Madero issued the *Plan de San Luis de Potosí* from prison, which called for a revolution against Díaz. Porfirio Díaz fled Mexico forever on May 31, 1911. The parades and processionals of the Centennial drew focus on the breadth of power that Diaz had over Mexico, and presented Mexico as a unified nation. *El Imparcial*, the official newspaper of Diaz’s regime, was quick to assert that Diaz had personally unified Mexico. On September 15th, the day of the “official” Centennial ceremony, *El Imparcial* featured a front-page story called “Porfirio Díaz”. “Tonight, a heroic figure descended from the most glorious pages of national history will raise the flag of the *Patria,*” it began. “This man, who has known to secure liberty, *ha hecho Patria.* He has made the Fatherland.” This less-than-subtle statement continued with specific reference to the Centennial celebration, “Happy is the Republic that can unite in the celebration of one of the most glorious days in the worldly consecration of this man!”

The Centennial of Mexico and the power of Diaz were, to the *Imparcial*, synonymous. As it stated the next day, on September 16th, while discussing the *Grito* spectacle of the day before, “The President Receives Unanimous Congratulations! One hundred years of the life of the *Patria!*” Diaz assumed mythic proportions in these accounts. *El Imparcial* described the *Grito* thus, “Not everyone could hear the voice of General Diaz, but everyone, absolutely everyone, felt it vibrate in our hearts”. The day before the article Diaz had compared him to Moses, leading Mexico through the desert to the “promised land”, and stated that “the ancient one of Dolores” called him

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“my son!” Not only was Díaz immensely praised, but it was inclusive language of unity, solidarity: us. As Mexico teetered on revolution, the Centennial was a show of unity. The praise in *El Imparcial* was not unsubstantial; the opposition paper *El Diario de Hogar* noted that almost no independence papers had been granted press passes to the parades, and listed nine opposition papers who were unable to cover the events. Positive reception was clearly important to the científicos.

*El Imparcial* was highly biased, to say the least. However, while it was the paper to most extensively praise Díaz, it was not the only paper to praise the Centennial celebrations. In fact, most papers seemed to accept the parades, processionals, and other public spectacles that the state sponsored without question. For example, the Catholic newspaper *El País* greatly applauded the Desfile Cívica and Desfile Histórico, and also published information on plans and demonstrations of anti-reelectionist groups, a prominent feature of the Centennial that *El Imparcial* continually neglected to mention. *El País* respectfully represented the opposition parties, but also never directly challenged Díaz.

*El Diario de Hogar*, however, was one of the strongest opposition papers of Mexico City. In this paper the complex relationship between Díaz’s celebrations and Díaz’s government is notable. *El Diario de Hogar* headlined its papers with protests against the Porfirian government. For them, rejecting parts of the Centennial equaled a rejection of the administration, demonstrating that Díaz’s image was linked to these public spectacles across urban society. In an article entitled “Victims of the Centennial”, the author stated that while the rich got drunk in memory of our heroes, the people died

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of hunger.\textsuperscript{339} Like the Peninsular judges who responded to Cortés’ baptism with their own public spectacle, the opposition party responded with their own anti-reelection parades around the city.\textsuperscript{340} The September 12\textsuperscript{th} issue described a major opposition rally at La Glorieta, a large statue in a central street, in which the people began to sing the National Hymn in the face of the police, before being attacked.\textsuperscript{341} At the same time, the journal published articles praising the illumination of the city, and the dedication of statues like the one to Humboldt. The paper also closed on September 16\textsuperscript{th} so their employees could participate in the festivities and celebrate.\textsuperscript{342}

\textit{Concluding the Centennial}

On September 19, near the end of Mexico’s Centennial celebrations, the city hosted a final major parade. The Torchlight Processional was a solemn event, as people marched quietly though the city at night in candlelight, from the Avenues Juárez and San Francisco, to the Palacio Municipal, and then the Palacio Nacional where Díaz presided from the balcony. After that, the processional left up the Avenue Cinco de Mayo, and then the crowds dispersed and brought the candlelight back to their own districts. This event was announced in the papers for days before it occurred, it was “very important to the Comisión del Centenario” because all of Mexico was invited to participate.\textsuperscript{343} Anyone, \textit{de todas las clases}, could bring the light of Mexico before the gaze of Porfirio Díaz and then distribute it throughout their neighborhoods. The

\textsuperscript{339} “Las Victimas del Centenario,” \textit{El Diario de Hogar} (Mexico City: 9/13/1910), 3.
\textsuperscript{340} “La Manifestión Anti-Reeleccionista,” \textit{El Diario de Hogar} (Mexico City: 9/13/1910), 1.
\textsuperscript{341} “La manifestación independiente de ayer disuelta á caballazos,” \textit{El Diario de Hogar} (Mexico City: 9/12/1910), 1.
\textsuperscript{342} “No se publicará los días 15 y 16 ‘El Diario de Hogar’,” \textit{El Diario de Hogar} (Mexico City: 9/14/1910), 1.
\textsuperscript{343} “Procesión de Antorchas,” \textit{El Imparcial} (Mexico City: 9/15/1910), 4.
ceremony represented a national identity that was unified under Díaz, and then assumed by the citizens of the republic themselves. The Centennial had demonstrated that a Mexican national identity had been solidified under Díaz. Here, at the end of the Centennial, that identity was symbolically passed from the government to the people. This did not mean that the people were given the freedom to redefine or question Porfirian-constructed national identity, but the ceremony did Mexican citizens give the responsibility to disseminate the symbols of the nation.

The Centennial celebrations in Mexico City in 1910 were deeply patriotic, and deeply committed to the nationalism of Díaz and his científicos. The strong rhetoric of heroes, progress, order, modernity, and unity filled the urban landscape with a visual lexicon of symbols that presented a complete Mexican national identity to Mexicans and foreigners alike. Like the Cortés baptism celebration of 1566, these events communicated the existence of a common identity that united the people under a strong, central figure and his cohort of educated elites. While the masquerade of the Mexican Renaissance demonstrated the distance between Creole and Peninsular Spaniards, the parades of the Porfiriato asserted that a Mexican national unity had finally been achieved.

The newspapers revealed mixed reception of Porfirian events. *El Diario de Hogar* rejected performances of civic power, the administrators in the Desfile Cívica were described as “those arrogant figures”, but accepted the Mexican national identity based on liberal heroes. 344 In a tribute to Miguel Hidalgo, the paper stated “we have constructed a nationality”, and indicated that this should be celebrated during the

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Centennial, but the government had “stained” the occasion. It is true that figures like Hidalgo were heroes without Díaz’s prompting; he did not create their fame from scratch. However, even if subconsciously, *El Diario de Hogar* framed their devotion to the liberal heroes in the terms of the Porfirian national history that the científicos had developed over the past thirty-four years. “Our land is fertilized with the dust…and sanctified with the blood of our heroes and martyrs,” stated *El Diario de Hogar*, in the nearly identical language of the Porfirian cult of heroes and martyrs.

The Porfiriato, like the Mexican Renaissance, never recovered from the brink of collapse. However, the symbols of the Porfiriato and the national identity that the científicos had created for Mexico survived, at least in parts. After the Mexican Revolution, Mexico turned away from Porfirian ideas of progress and modernity and experimented with nationalizing products and land distribution. Nevertheless, symbols and rituals of the Porfiriato persisted. To this day, every September 15th the Mexican president delivers *El Grito* from the national palace. The greatest success of the elites was to create, through nearly forty years of urban spectacles, a Mexican national identity that appeared almost organic. The Mexican population was able to accept the cult of heroes, the national history, and the belief in the existence of a national identity, even as they rejected the Porfirian government.

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Appendix C:

Images for Chapter 4

Figure 1: “Desfile de Comercio- Carro de los Bancos,” 1910, photograph. 1-263 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 2: “Desfile de Comercio,” 1910, photograph. 1-2431232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 3: “Urna que Guarda los Restos de los Héroes de la Independencia,” 1910, photograph. 1-200 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 4: “Una de las Coronas,” 1910, photograph. 1-198 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 5: “Procesión Cívica al Catedral,” 1910, photograph. 1-192 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 6: “Entrando al Catedral,” 1910, photograph. 1-193 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 7: “Desfile de Doctores de la Universidad,” 1910, photograph. 3-571 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 8: “Desfile Histórico- Hernán Cortés,” 1910, photograph. 1-224 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 9: “Desfile Histórico- El Emperador Motecuhzoma,” 1910, photograph. 1-222 1232 M638 LAC-Z, Genaro García Photograph Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

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Chapter Four: Map

Conclusion:

Mexico: As Seen Through Spectacles

At 11 pm on September 15, 1922, the president of Mexico appeared at the balcony of the National Palace and recited the ritual of the Grito: ¡Viva la independencia! ¡Viva México! However, the man performing the ceremony was not Porfirio Díaz. In 1922, Álvaro Obregón was president of Mexico (1920-1924), at the head of the first remotely stable administration since the Mexican Revolution began in 1911. The paper *El Universal* recorded “massive enthusiasm” for the ceremony as spectators counted down the seconds until the Grito, and stated that no amount of rain (the weather was apparently poor that year) could dampen the “enthusiastic patriotism” of the spectators.347 Even after the Mexican Revolution’s violent rejection of the Porfiriato, the spectacles and ceremonies of Díaz and his científicos survived. In fact, as of September 2013 the Mexican president, Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-present), was still performing the Grito at exactly 11pm on September 15th. From the Mexican Renaissance, to the Porfiriato, and into the twenty-first century, public celebrations of Mexican history in the urban landscape have persisted as powerful symbols of unity and identity. Although separated by time and memory from their elite creators, the efforts of creole elites in the Mexican Renaissance and the Porfiriato constituted dynamic features of modern Mexican identity.

The Mexican Renaissance (c.1540-c.1600) and the Porfiriato (1876-1910) were both relatively short lived, lasting only approximately half a century each, and both terminated in violence and loss of power by Creole elites. However, during these

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periods, some of the deepest and most lasting symbols of Mexican national identity were forged by analogous classes of Creole elites who were seeking to preserve their own political power. These were not the only historical actors in Mexico’s past to have added unifying symbols to the imagined community, but a temporal comparison of these moments reveals that much of Mexican iconography was generated specifically to present the idea that the people shared a common identity as Mexican, under the enlightened guidance of Creole elites, as a way to unify the population.

In the Mexican Renaissance of the sixteenth century, the Creole elites were enmeshed in legal, political, and cultural battles with Peninsular Spaniards for control of New Spain. To demonstrate their legitimate authority, the Creoles engaged in public spectacles that were connected to the historic urban landscape of Mexico City, particularly festivals in which they enacted their “natural” place in Mexico, contrasted against the foreign nature of the Peninsulars. Their spectacles promoted their inheritance of Aztec sovereignty by right of Spanish conquest, and the unification of the Mexican population under that power. As the Crown limited Creole power, tensions mounted and eventually broke; the violent reactions of Peninsular Spaniards to Creole performances of identity, such as the 1566 Cortés baptism ceremony, resulted in the eventual end of an era of artistic and intellectual achievement centered on creolized forms.

During the Porfirato of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Creole elites attempted to consolidate a national identity by constructing a trajectory of Mexican history that culminated in the presidency and person of Porfirio Díaz. The frequent and ritually-performed urban spectacles of the Porfirato presented a vision of Mexico as a unified nation. Events like the 1910 Centennial celebration asserted that the Mexican
identity of the científicos was completed, and that it was genuine. Although the Creole elites could not convince the population that unity under Díaz was enough of a hallmark of national identity to prevent the Mexican Revolution, the population accepted the symbols of identity in these festivals and preserved them after the revolution. By maintaining a creole identity of a unified Mexican people while rejecting the government, those who had been spectators under Díaz severed the symbols of unity from any memory of the Porfiriato and elevated them as organic icons of Mexico.

The Mexican Renaissance and Porfiriato were different eras in Mexican history, but the political climate, elite dominance, relationship to the indigenous past, innovation, experimentation, and even oppression in each offers import points of comparison. The Mexican Renaissance built foundations of Creole identity into the urban landscape that Porfiriots later built upon. To do this, the Creole elites used Mexico City as more than a backdrop; they anthropomorphized it, ornamented it, and celebrated it as a willing participant in spectacles of identity. These events were both urban and public because their power was in controlling the visibility of elite leaders to create symbols of authority. The elites chose to rely on cultural authority, rather than purely political or military power, to demonstrate their legitimacy, which meant that these spectacles required a level of popular acceptance by the lower classes the elites sought to unite. Identity spectacles in both time periods recognized multi-class agency that was limited, but nonetheless accepted as part of the symbiotic nature of identity formation.

One of the important results of Mexican identity spectacles in the Mexican Renaissance and the Porfiriato was the formation of symbols of Mexico’s imagined community, preserved and accessed in the urban landscape through ritualized public
spectacles. Through the process of performance and reception, elites and lower classes together created the foundations of Mexican identity with people and events that connected citizens of Mexico City across time. Even as elites in both eras constantly wrestled with the place of their indigenous past, especially in relation to contemporary Indians, they built a historical foundation for Mexican identity that required and rejected native ancestry. In the 1873 book *Hombres Ilustres Mexicanos* (Illustrious Mexican Men), Mexica lords constitute a major presence in early Mexican history, and the first person of any European descent was the Marques don Martín Cortés. The short biography, by científico Agustín González, confidently claimed that Cortés’s friends were trying to proclaim him King of Mexico in 1566, and called the Peninsular reaction the terrible “proceedings of tyrants.” González also stated that the suffering of the Creole elites imparted their memory onto the “hearts of so many who love the autonomy and liberty of Mexico, for which they sacrificed themselves.” Don Martín, and by extension the other Creole elites, appeared in this text as foundational figures who paved the way for the liberal republic. After this entry, purely indigenous figures no longer appeared.

The efforts of the Mexican Renaissance became part of Porfrian national history, and reflected how colonial symbols were appropriated and reimagined in the republic. An 1882 catalog of the Museo Nacional listed the Codex Mendoza as one of its prized holdings. Nevertheless, although the catalog showed an appreciation for the codex, some of the original meaning had been lost. The catalog described it as “this

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book, or rather, this collection of paintings…” indicating that the hybrid form of image and text in the Mexican Renaissance was no longer appreciated. It was valued by the científicos as a piece of national history, an early history of Mexico that confirmed Porfirian versions of Mexican history.

The symbols of Mexican identity in the Mexican Renaissance and the Porfiriato had specific meanings to their creators, which they sought to impose upon spectators. However, the life of these symbols was not limited by the Creole elites. They were appropriated, reimagined, and preserved by Mexican peoples across centuries and in this way became icons of Mexican national identity. Although their creation was artificial and self-serving, the presentation through urban spectacles connected them to crowds of spectators. Popular acceptance severed symbols of unity from the elites and allowed them to assume an organic nature. In this way major symbols of Mexican identity were formed, all originally seen through spectacles.
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