

2. Modernity and the indigenous in centennial celebrations of independence in Mexico City, 1910 and 1921

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In 1910, Mexico commemorated the centennial of Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla's call for independence from Spain by staging a month-long celebration before an audience of tens of thousands of countrymen and foreign dignitaries. The occasion permitted President Porfirio Díaz and his inner circle, who had governed Mexico since 1876, to celebrate Mexico's emergence as a modern nation, and to present an official narrative of Mexican history and culture through speeches, monuments, parades, conferences and museum exhibitions. In cultural-historical terms, these events presented a version of Mexican history that showcased Mexico's pre-Columbian past, embraced its Hispanic heritage and ignored its contemporary indigenous population.

The Porfirians¹ celebrated pre-Columbian civilisations, such as the Aztecs, the Toltecs and the Maya, because of their desire to establish an impressive historical pedigree. They compared pre-Columbian cultures to those of ancient Greece and Rome, and invested in reconstructing ancient cities, such as Teotihuacán, and in building a national museum to display and protect the national patrimony. Merging the indigenous with the modern, however, created contradictions that proved difficult to reconcile. Porfirians disassociated pre-Columbian cultures from contemporary indigenous peoples, believing them to be racially inferior and an obstacle to progress. Scholars and political leaders used racist explanations based on Social Darwinism to explain Natives' poverty and social degradation, a theory that ignored the negative consequences of three centuries of colonialism. Porfirians believed that Mexico's future material and social progress would be facilitated by replacing Indians in the work place with European immigrants, or by acculturating Natives into mestizos through public education and secularisation. The centennial celebration promoted mestizos as proto-typical Mexicans and celebrated independence leader José María Morelos as the quintessential mestizo hero, and liberal icon Benito Juárez as Mexico's most famous acculturated Indian. This was an important step in the formation of

1 Supporters of President Porfirio Díaz.

the idea of Mexico as a mestizo nation, a discourse generally associated with post-revolutionary governments.

The Mexican Revolution from 1910–20 swept away the Díaz dictatorship, and provided revolutionary leaders with opportunities to revise Mexico's historical narrative and national identity. In 1921, President Álvaro Obregón ordered the celebration of the centenary of Mexican independence, and this would provide an ideal stage on which to revise the Porfirian image of Mexico. Although the 1921 centenary reasserted Mexico's commitment to modernity and cultural links with pre-Columbian civilisations, in a dramatic departure from Porfirian times, it also presented contemporary indigenous culture as integral to national identity. This transformation reflected the liberating cultural-ideological impact of the revolution, and political pressure from below to fashion a more inclusive image of national culture. The opportunity for creativity was enhanced by artistic trends in Europe, particularly primitivism, which saw traditional culture as a reflection of the collective spirit of a people, and as inspiration for new artistic production.

During the 1921 centenary, impresarios drew upon indigenous culture to stage original theatrical and musical galas that proved widely popular with Mexico City audiences. These productions fused the traditional with the modern, creating a new style, and helped to launch the nascent aesthetics of revolutionary indigenismo. The centennial also included a major exhibition of contemporary indigenous artisanal ware, which drew large crowds and contributed to the commercialisation of Mexican *artesanía*. These shifts in presentation of national identity, however, did not supersede the emerging idea of the country as a mestizo nation. Instead, indigenous culture was appropriated and used by impresarios and the state to represent the traditional, natural and authentic Mexico, while the image of the mestizo nation was associated with modernity from the Porfiriato² to the present. Cultural brokers also selected what to present about the indigenous past in museum displays and in the reconstruction of pre-Columbian cities.

Centennial celebrations in historical perspective

Large-scale ceremonies and spectacles were regularly staged by pre-Columbian, Spanish and Mexican states in celebration of religious and secular holidays important to maintaining political and social hierarchies (Carrasco, 1999; Curcio-Nagy, 2004; Beezley and Lorey, 2001). Following independence in 1821, Mexico's leaders used Independence Day celebrations to advance their political agendas through associations with revolutionary era heroes. Liberals drew parallels between themselves and the populist warrior-priests, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and José María Morelos, while conservatives

2 The 35-year period from 1876 when Díaz and his allies ruled Mexico.

remembered Agustín de Iturbide, the pro-Church monarchist who briefly ruled as Agustín I (1821–2). Following independence, civil conflict between liberals and conservatives increased the propaganda value of Independence Day celebrations (Beezley and Lorey, 2001; Duncan, 1998; Thomson, 2002).

A disastrous war with the United States in the mid-19th century left Mexico vulnerable to a Franco-Austrian invasion and the installation of the Archduke of Austria as the Emperor Maximilian. He ruled Mexico with the support of Napoleon III of France and Mexican conservatives from 1862–7, when liberals led by Benito Juárez ousted the invaders and executed Maximilian. Liberal war hero General Porfirio Díaz seized the presidency in 1876 and brought political stability and economic growth to Mexico.

Díaz forged a dictatorship based on authoritarianism, state-sponsored capitalism, secularism and spectacles that reminded the public of the Liberal party's patriotic struggle against imperialism. Díaz cleverly brokered political compromises with his conservative opponents, such as the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and businessmen, and crushed those who threatened the *pax Porfiriana*, including the rebellious Yaqui Indians, striking workers and the pro-labour Partido Liberal Mexicano (Hu-DeHart, 1984; Cockcroft, 1976; Anderson, 1976; Gonzales, 1994). Díaz also promoted a liberal, secular state by creating national holidays honouring Hidalgo, Morelos and Juárez. Such annual celebrations linked these patriots together in a historical narrative that privileged liberal contributions to Mexico and largely ignored its Catholic and conservative heritage (Gonzales, 2002, ch. 1; 2007). Díaz also embellished the narrative by staging lavish state funerals for deceased liberal war heroes and politicians, which fashioned a hegemonic relationship between the state and the people (Esposito, 2010).

In an international context, Mexico's commemoration of secular heroes and events also reflected a trend in western Europe and its former colonies to mark political and cultural events through spectacles and new national holidays. This became popular following the French Revolution as republican governments and nationalist movements promoted their agendas through the commemoration of revolutionary and cultural icons. Such events also established secular heroes and holidays that competed with saints and religious holidays as markers of national identity, a policy advocated by the French positivist Auguste Comte and the Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle (Quinault, 1998; Gildea, 1994; Simpson, 2005; Rearick, 1974; 1977).

The 1910 centennial celebration in Mexico City

Díaz and his associates used the centenary to present a historical narrative that credited liberals with transforming Mexico into a modern nation. The government welcomed thousands of visitors from the countryside and

foreign dignitaries from Europe, Asia, Latin America and the United States, and provided them with continuous entertainment during September 1910. Porfirians proudly displayed their capital city, which featured a grand avenue (the Paseo de la Reforma), a large park in the city centre (the Nuevo Bosque de Chapultepec), electric tramways, and upscale suburbs with modern plumbing, streetlights and manicured gardens. Their blueprint for a modern Mexico City was based on Haussmann's remodelling of Paris. The money for modernisation came primarily from the exportation of minerals and commercial crops, facilitated by a network of railroads built during the Porfiriato. The centennial celebration also featured exhibitions of natural resources designed to encourage more foreign investment (Gonzales, 2007; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a).

Material progress based on natural resources, science and technology made the case for Mexico's acceptance as a modern nation, and urban beautification demonstrated a cosmopolitan flair. In addition, elites captured essential elements of Mexican history and culture in monuments, museum exhibitions, parades and ceremonies. For example, monuments of historic figures decorated roundabouts (*glorietas*) along the Paseo de la Reforma, providing a historical narrative for passers-by. Those honoured included Cuauhtémoc, the Aztec ruler who resisted the Spaniards, King Charles IV of Spain, and independence heroes (Tenenbaum, 1994).

Porfirians compared Mesoamerican pre-Columbian civilisations with famous cultures of the ancient world, including those of Greece, Rome, Egypt, China and Persia. As Christina Bueno shows, leading up to the centennial celebration the government charged the National Museum's director, Leopoldo Batres, with expanding the collection. The museum was a symbol of national patrimony and identity, and also served to protect Mexico's antiquities from collectors in Europe and the United States. At the request of the government, local collectors donated antiquities, and construction crews in Mexico City regularly unearthed Aztec treasures and sent them to the museum. An ambitious Batres also organised expeditions into the countryside to collect artefacts (Bueno, 2010).

Indigenous people, however, sometimes resisted Batres's attempts to remove pre-Columbian objects from their communities. For example, in Tetlama, Morelos state, villagers prevented Batres from removing a monumental carving of a female figure they worshipped as the goddess of marriage and equated with the Aztec mother of gods, Tonantzín. Villagers made offerings to the goddess, referred to as 'La India', to help women find suitable husbands. When Batres attempted to move 'La India' to the national museum, community members hid the massive carving in the village church, and defended their cultural and religious beliefs. The use of the local church as a hiding place suggests the cooperation of the local Catholic priest, and his tolerance of religious practices rooted in paganism.

Batres and Mexico's leaders valued pre-Columbian objects as part of the national patrimony and Mexico's historical and cultural identity. However, the study of pre-Columbian cultures was still in its infancy, and Batres and his staff were learning on the job. The curators' lack of knowledge led them to exhibit objects from different cultures together in a haphazard way, and to present inaccurate interpretations of indigenous symbols and script. Displays also reflected the interests of curators and the state, and ignored the meaning and function of the objects for their communities of origin. In this way, the artefacts' importance to the indigenous communities' cultural and historical identity was sacrificed to the state planners' desire to link modern Mexico with its pre-Columbian past (Bueno, 2010).

The centennial celebration provided the perfect occasion to draw attention to Mexico's pre-Columbian heritage. Visitors were encouraged to visit the National Museum, and President Díaz posed for a publicity photograph before a massive Aztec sacrificial altar curators incorrectly identified as the 'Aztec calendar'. In addition, Minister of Education Justo Sierra opened the International Congress of Americanists, which included scholarly papers on pre-Columbian cultures, and hosted a tour of the recently reconstructed Teotihuacán, where guests heard lectures on ancient Mesoamerica by eminent anthropologists Edward Seler and Franz Boas. Following the Congress, Boas remained in Mexico and served as the first director of the government-sponsored International School of Anthropology (García, 1911, pp. 225–35; Gonzales, 2007, pp. 523–4).

A 'Desfile Histórico', or historical parade, was a marquee event of the *centenario*. It presented a visual history lesson understandable to both illiterate Mexicans and educated observers unfamiliar with Mexican history. As a performance, it had kinship with spectacles and ceremonies used by both indigenous groups and Spaniards for centuries to convey politico-cultural messages (Taylor, 2003; Hellier-Tinoco, 2011; Curcio-Nagy, 2004), and also resembled the Porfirians' use of lavish state funerals to celebrate their ideological and political legacy (Esposito, 2010). In 1910, centennial organisers Guillermo de Landa y Escandón and José Casarín designed the Desfile Histórico to present three historical events which would encapsulate Mexican history from the Spanish invasion until independence: the encounter between Hernán Cortés and the Emperor Moctezuma in 1519, symbolising the Spanish invasion; the 'Paseo del Pendón', a colonial ceremony that commemorated the military defeat of the indigenous peoples; and the entry into Mexico City of the army that ousted Spain in 1821. Thus, the parade emphasised the subjugation of the indigenous by the Spanish, and the winning of political independence from Spain.

The parade unfolded through the heart of Mexico City in three separate acts. In the first act, 809 performers representing Aztecs and conquistadors marched in period costumes and weaponry. Moctezuma's entourage included Native lords, priests, warriors and servants, while Cortés's force consisted of Spanish cavalry, infantry, crossbowmen, musketeers, Tlaxcalan allies, Catholic priests and Malintzin (also known as La Malinche and Doña Marina), Cortés's Indian mistress and translator.³ In the second act, the Paseo del Pendón, several hundred performers recreated an annual colonial ceremony commemorating the Spanish Conquest of Tenochtitlán. In the final act, performers costumed as independence leaders and their troops marched into the central plaza. The parade also included allegorical carriages dedicated to the memory of Hidalgo and Morelos and floats that commemorated rebel victories (*El Diario*, 16 Sep. 1910; García, 1911, pp. 46–50; Gonzales, 2007, pp. 512–13; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, pp. 98–9).

The organisers of the Desfile Histórico staged a spectacle, which, from their ideological perspective, was historically accurate, didactic and inclusive. They outfitted performers in period costumes and recruited Indians to march in Moctezuma's entourage, and lighter-skinned Mexicans to play Spaniards. Envoys recruited Natives from the provinces and the National Penitentiary to march in the parade, but encountered resistance in some areas. For example, Indians from the state of Morelos refused the invitation to participate, expressing concern that they might be conscripted to suppress a civil conflict in San Luis Potosí (Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, p. 99, n. 81). Distrust of Díaz's government ran high in Morelos, where rural communities would rise in rebellion against the regime in the months ahead (Womack, 1968).

Indians, mestizos and Spaniards

For the moment, the federal government ignored the simmering tensions in Morelos and concentrated on staging their gala centennial celebration of independence. The carefully orchestrated event addressed in speeches, monuments and ceremonies the complex historical relationship between Spaniards, Indians and mestizos. The celebration commemorated the military victory over imperial Spain and the creation of Mexico, but it also presented an opportunity for reconciliation between the former mother country and its

3 An iconic and controversial figure, Malintzin was a young slave girl from Coatzacoalcos, given to Cortés by Indians, and had two children by him. Her skills as a translator, working in conjunction with the Spaniard Jerónimo de Aguilar, helped Cortés defeat the Aztecs. For many Mexicans, she is cast as a 'shamed' woman who symbolises the violation of the Spanish Conquest and is referred to as 'La Malinche'. Some historians, however, have attempted to understand her choices within the context of the time, place and circumstances for indigenous women. For a fascinating discussion see Townsend (2006).

rebellious colony. Spain's delegation presented Porfirio Díaz with the Real y Distinguida Orden de Carlos III, the highest honour that Spain could bestow on a foreign dignitary, and Mexico's Spanish émigré community arranged for the return of José María Morelos' uniform. By 1910, many Porfirians had drawn closer to their Spanish cultural roots, and had embraced the modernism of Enrique Rodó and Rubén Darío, who celebrated Hispanic culture and criticised American materialism. For the centennial celebration, the Porfirians acknowledged their Hispanic heritage by dedicating a monument to Isabel la Católica (García, 1911, pp. 1–32, 70–1; *El Imparcial*, 18 Sep. 1910; Gonzales, 2007, p. 511; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, pp. 101–2).

In Mexico, racial definitions could be socially constructed and racial identity was a tricky business. In 1910, the national census estimated that Indians constituted a third of the country's population, but this proportion increased to half if one included Central Mexico's large bilingual population. Most Indians closely identified with their communities of origin, and there did not exist among Natives a sense of pan-indigenous identity, nor a consistently clear identification as Mexicans (Knight, 1996).

By 1910, land consolidation had forced thousands of Natives from the countryside into cities in search of work (Johns, 1997; Piccato, 2001). This trend alarmed municipal authorities who arrested migrants as vagrants, and passed ordinances that required indigenous men to exchange loin-cloths for trousers, sombreros for felt hats and sandals for shoes (Johns, 1997, pp. 53–6; González Navarro, 1957, pp. 396–7; Piccato, 2001, pp. 13–50; Gonzales, 2007, p. 510). Porfirians considered Native peoples to be primitives, and scholars accepted racist theories based on Social Darwinism and phrenology. For example, scientific papers presented at the International Congress of Americanists attempted to understand Indians' racial inferiority through bone measuring and the anthropometry of their skulls (Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, p. 100). In polite society, indigenous features created anxiety among influential mestizos, including Porfirio Díaz who sprinkled powder on his face to appear whiter (Lomnitz, 2001, p. 51).

Porfirian public intellectuals identified mestizos as the country's most important social-ethnic group, and mestizaje as the solution to Mexico's so-called Indian problem. For example, Andrés Molina Enríquez wrote that: 'The fundamental and unavoidable basis of all the work that in future will be undertaken for the good of the country must be the continuation of the mestizos as the dominant ethnic element and as the controlling political base of the population' (cited in Knight, 1996). Justo Sierra, the Minister of Education, added that: 'We need to attract immigrants from Europe so as to obtain a cross with the indigenous race ... for only European blood can keep the level of civilisation that has produced our nationality from sinking, which

would mean regression, not evolution' (cited in Buffington, 2000, pp. 146–7). When mass European immigration to Mexico failed to materialise, Porfirians focused on promoting mestizaje through acculturation of the indigenous. This strategy relied on public education to teach Spanish, science, history and national identity.

The centennial celebration, selecting certain national heroes with particular qualities, paid special attention to José María Morelos, the mestizo independence leader. The fallen hero's uniform, returned to Mexico by Spain, received the equivalent of a state funeral by being placed in an ornate carriage guarded by a contingent of troops and led by an honour guard, which carried an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's Indian patron saint and symbol of the independence movement. The cortège marched from the Spanish Embassy to the central square, where President Díaz presided over a ceremony that included the ringing of cathedral bells, performances by military bands and a flag raising that reportedly left everyone in tears (*El Diario*, 18 Sep. 1910). In his address to the nation, Díaz praised Morelos as Mexico's 'greatest hero' and 'most famous man', and described the opportunity to hold Morelos's uniform as 'the most satisfying event in my life' (*ibid.*). At the same time, other dignitaries praised Morelos in print as the quintessential mestizo national hero. Genaro García, a prominent public intellectual, wrote, for example, that 'Morelos is the legendary figure par excellence. He is also the mestizo who symbolises the new race with all the greatness of the others, and, for this reason, Morelos is the genuine representative of Mexican nationality' (García, 1911, p. 70). Moreover, Isidro Fabela, scholar and future revolutionary, praised Morelos as the greatest independence hero and 'the genius of our race' (*ibid.*, pp. 53, 67–8).

Another hero particularly highlighted during the centennial celebration was Benito Juárez, an architect of the liberal 'Reform' of the 1850s, and famous for authoring the 'Juárez Law' that abolished ecclesiastical courts and for enforcing the confiscation of Church estates. Juárez was also celebrated for his mid-century defeat of conservative insurgents, and for ousting the Austro-French imperialists and Maximilian. Juárez's pivotal role in saving Mexico earned him the titles 'Benemérito de las Américas' and the 'Mexican Moses', and the Porfirians created a national holiday in his honour (Esposito, 2010).

Juárez, a Zapotec, was Mexico's only indigenous president. Aged 12, he left his village and walked 41 miles to the capital of Oaxaca, where his older sister found him lodgings and work in the home of a Franciscan lay brother. The Franciscan helped Juárez pay for his schooling, and he later graduated from law school and rose through the ranks of the Liberal Party to become president. For the Porfirians, Juárez's remarkable life and career epitomised the possibilities of indigenous acculturation through secular education and the rejection

of Catholicism. For the centenary, organisers commissioned the erection of a massive marble monument to honour him as a national hero. Located in the heart of downtown, it depicted Juárez seated on a throne with a gardenia crown on his head (to evoke a stoic philosopher), and flanked by two beautiful women representing Glory and Mexico. Created in classic style, the structure included Doric⁴ columns framing the subjects, and two bronze lions at its base. Representing Juárez in pure, white marble also conveyed a visual impression of an Indian being transformed into a mestizo (*The Mexican Herald*, 25 Sep. 1910; García, 1911, p. 174; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, p. 97).

The 1910 centennial celebration drew impressive crowds and high praise from the national and international press. Ironically, however, the *centenario* was Díaz's final gala (Gonzales, 2007). Following the president's fraudulent reelection in 1910, Mexicans rose in rebellion over accumulated grievances, particularly the loss of land and local political autonomy. Díaz resigned after a few months of fighting, but revolutionaries could not form a viable government and different factions waged war on each other for another ten years at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives. The group that emerged victorious, the Constitutionals, favoured moderate social reforms, a strong executive, limited democracy and material progress. However, they also recognised that building a revolutionary state required the development of popular support and political legitimacy, which could be facilitated through image-making and public spectacle. It was within this context that President Álvaro Obregón announced plans to celebrate the centennial of Mexican independence (Gonzales, 2002; 2009).

The 1921 centennial celebration

This major event presented an image of Mexico as a modern nation with a populist social and cultural agenda. But it also occurred at a political juncture that elicited divergent views from unofficial circles about Mexico's historical, cultural and racial identity. The centenary commemorated the ousting of Spain by a rebel coalition led by Agustín de Iturbide, who represented conservatives angry over liberal reforms in Spain. In 1921, conservatives remained influential in business, Church and civic organisations, and they published newspaper articles that celebrated Mexico's Hispanic culture, the Catholic Church's importance in Mexican history and Iturbide's legacy.

The Obregón government, despite its revolutionary pedigree, was more committed to material progress than to social reform, and used the centennial to reassure investors that Mexico was open for business. The celebration included a commercial parade composed of floats designed by businesses, including

4 Doric refers to an ancient Greek architectural style characterised by its simplicity of form.

major foreign multinationals, and a 'Commercial Exposition of Airplanes' that showcased the new technology. Military parades and pledges of loyalty by the army to the government also reassured investors that the fighting was over and that political stability reigned. In this regard, the *Obregonistas* had much in common with the *Porfiristas* (Gonzales, 2009).

The 1921 centennial, however, also included a variety of cultural events of interest to the general public. For example, committees of worker-residents organised 'popular functions' in their neighbourhoods that included films, plays, dances and sporting events. Widespread screenings of Mexican film testified to its emergence as a popular art form. Besides local theatres, special showings were held in correctional facilities, hospitals, poor houses and the asylum for those with mental illness. The centennial committee organised additional cultural activities of popular interest, including bullfights, circuses, soccer matches, baseball games and air shows. The enthusiasm for baseball and aviation indicates shifts in popular culture influenced by proximity to the United States and a growing interest in new technology (*El Universal*, 23, 24, 29 Sep. 1921; *El Demócrata*, 4 Sep. 1921).

The centennial commission and newspapers also reminded the audience of Mexico's pre-Columbian heritage. For example, cabinet members hosted dignitaries for a luncheon and tour of the ancient ceremonial centre of Teotihuacán, and on 1 September 1921 the newspaper *El Universal* published new songs by Alfonso Cravioto based on Aztec themes, including 'A Cuauhtemoc', 'El Calendario Azteca' and 'Porfesía de Papantzin'. The most prominent invocation of pre-Columbian memory, however, linked the Aztec patroness of artists, Xochitlquetzalli, with the revolutionary government's recent creation of a national park at Xochimilco, the site of the famous floating gardens. A gala event featured elaborate floral decorations of ancient temples, and Indian musicians and dancers performing before a large audience that included President Obregón. For the grand finale, in a simulated ceremony, a beautiful maiden was sacrificed to Xochitlquetzalli to evoke the importance of human sacrifice among the Aztecs,⁵ which suggests public familiarity with the practice (*El Universal*, 24, 29 Sep. 1921).

In a bold decision evocative of revolutionary indigenismo, the centennial organisers also staged an arts programme that presented contemporary indigenous culture as integral to national culture. As Rick López shows, in a dramatic departure from Porfirian norms, a 'Noche Mexicana' and an 'Exhibition of Popular Arts' presented Native art as meritorious, inspirational and uniquely Mexican. Alberto Pani, the director of the centennial committee, entrusted the organisation of these events to progressive artists who had lived in Paris during the revolution. Their work would reflect the influence of European cultural trends, particularly primitivism, Mexico's indigenous cultures and

5 On human sacrifice see Clendinnen (1991), pp. 2–4, 73–5.

the revolution's liberating spirit (López, 2001; 2006; 2010). Artistic styles and forms had been exchanged among Native cultures for centuries, and indigenous and European art had commingled since contact. Examples taken from contemporary indigenous art would now inspire the creative process and influence the emergence of revolutionary aesthetics (Hellier-Tinoco, pp. 65–7).

Pani had envisioned the 'Noche Mexicana' as a garden party that would showcase recent renovations at Chapultepec Park (like electric lighting and paved sidewalks) as signs of material progress under the revolution. He entrusted the organisation and staging of the event to Adolfo Best Maugard, granting him creative license. Best Maugard's innovative theatrical production reflected his belief in cultural relativism and popular traditions as carriers of the collective spirit. Stages erected in the downtown park featured singers and dancers from the provinces in regional attire performing songs and dances of indigenous origin or inspiration. Examples included Maya troubadours from the Yucatán and Yaqui deer dancers from Sonora, as well as performers dressed in *charro* and *china poblana* costumes originating from the colonial period and widely associated with rural Mexico (López, 2006).

The 'Noche Mexicana' also featured the Mexican premiere of a new ballet, *Fantasia Mexicana*, inspired by the *jarabe tapatío*, a dance from colonial-era Jalisco that had been frequently performed regionally and as a vaudeville act. Conceived by Best Maugard, it was choreographed by Anna Pavlova of the Ballets Russes and scripted by Katherine Anne Porter, a leading fiction writer from the United States. First staged in New York City in 1920 as an avant-garde production, *Fantasia Mexicana* was redesigned for the 'Noche Mexicana' to include hundreds of dancers (López, 2010, p. 70).

In staging a ballet adapted from a regional colonial dance, impresarios used indigenous art in altered forms for stage designs or as props. For example, Ruth Hellier-Tinoco observes that in an early production designers painted a huge *jícara*, a type of gourd or flat wooden dish from Uruapan, Michoacán, on the stage curtain to underscore the ballet's indigenous inspiration. Hellier-Tinoco also notes that *jícaras* were subsequently used as props in Ballet Folklórico performances in Mexico and the United States, and as dishes to serve indigenous food during the 'Noche Mexicana' (*El Universal* erroneously identified them as originating from the Lake Pátzcuaro region, Hellier-Tinoco, pp. 64–7). The 'Noche Mexicana's' grand finale was divided into two stages. First came a performance by hundreds of regional dancers, dressed as *tehuanas* (indigenous women from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec), accompanied by a 350-piece orchestra. Then, a replica of the volcano Popocatepetl erupted from the lake in the middle of the park, illuminated by special lighting and pyrotechnics and a fly-over by military planes emitting multicoloured flames (López, 2006).

The productions comprising the 'Noche Mexicana' have been described as postcolonial aesthetic forms that were both modern and national in nature (López, 2010, p. 72). The core of their inspiration came from regional indigenous culture, enhanced by the inclusion of Native performers. Influenced by primitivism, the impresario Adolfo Best Maugard presented indigenous culture as national culture (López, 2006), although the staging process modified traditional forms to create new art for a national spectacle. The 'Noche Mexicana' drew as many as 500,000 spectators over a three-day period (*El Demócrata*, 27 Sep. 1921), and its popularity suggests that indigenous cultural expressions resonated within the memory and experience of urban residents and visitors from the countryside. The creative imagination of Best Maugard and his collaborators helped to shape indigenismo and an image of national culture that distinguished revolutionary Mexico from its Porfirian predecessor (Gonzales, 2009, pp. 263–4).

Other centennial events contributed to the appreciation, popularisation and commercialisation of contemporary indigenous art. As Rick López shows, Roberto Montenegro, Jorge Enciso and Gerardo Murillo (also known as Dr Atl) organised an 'Exhibition of Popular Arts' to showcase Native arts and crafts – textiles, ceramics, woven straw mats, leather goods, paintings and more – as examples of popular art reflective of the national soul. The artwork was displayed in a two-storey building downtown and decorated to capture the ambience of curio shops in a rural market. This created the right aesthetic effect for an urban audience, without the sights, smells, sounds and people of a village market. The exhibition appealed to many visitors, who included President Obregón, cabinet members and other dignitaries. The event's success also increased interest among Mexicans and Americans in collecting indigenous arts and crafts (López, 2001, pp. 100–01; 2006).

Beyond their talents as artisans, Dr Atl envisioned Natives as ideal workers essential to Mexico's modernisation. Atl believed Indians possessed innate artistic talents that made them versatile factory workers, and compared them favourably to American assembly-line workers restricted to repetitive tasks. These views contradicted Porfirian critiques of Indians as inferior workers and impediments to modernisation. Nevertheless, Atl's assessment of Natives as workers had a paternalistic ring, and Indians themselves were not consulted about their future careers in manufacturing (López, 2001, pp. 108–9; Gonzales, 2007, for Porfirian norms).

The centennial celebration also included, as a marquee event, the staging of a beauty contest for Native women, the so-called 'India Bonita' contest. Rather than being a celebration of indigenous beauty, however, the contest exposed ingrained racial prejudices against Indians and barriers to forging a national cultural identity. The idea for the contest originated with Félix Palavicini, the

publisher and editor of *El Universal*, who wanted to encourage social reforms and to increase sales of his newspaper. Palavicini offered the winner 10,000 pesos in prize money and the appointment of a godfather (*padrino*) to sponsor her education and social advancement.

El Universal encouraged interested citizens to submit photographs of attractive indigenous women to a panel of judges who would select the finalists. The beauty contest quickly became controversial. *El Universal*, a moderately conservative paper, came under attack from *Excelsior*, a staunch defender of Mexico's Hispanic, Catholic heritage. Insensitive readers wrote letters expressing their confusion over the linkage of 'India' and 'Bonita', as if they were mutually exclusive terms. This led Palavicini to publish photographs of Native women who exhibited what he considered to be ideal Indian features, such as dark skin, round face, braided hair, good teeth and a 'serene expression'. Upon reflection, organisers concluded that this combination of characteristics did not constitute beauty, and subsequently judged contestants on the basis of their ideal 'Indian features'.

As Rick López observes, the physical characteristics and demeanour of the finalists conformed to stereotypical views of Indians held by non-indigenous Mexicans. This included those who submitted photographs of entrants, the organisers of the contest and the judges, among them the prominent anthropologist Manuel Gamio. Judges privileged what they called a 'natural' appearance associated with 'primitive' Mexico, and they preferred rural, subservient women untainted by modernity. For example, they rejected contestants as unauthentic Indians if they wore stylish clothing, used cosmetics and preferred current hairstyles, regardless of entrants' genetic make-up and self-identification as indigenous. López concludes that 'this modernist and nationalist invocation of authenticity operated as a gendered discourse that limited indigenous women's control over their own bodies and self-representation' (2010, p. 42).

The winner of the 'India Bonita' contest was Bibiana Uribe, a 15-year-old from Necaxa, Puebla, who had been working as a maid in Mexico City. The runner-up lost narrowly because of her green eyes, which, in Gamio's opinion, disqualified her as an authentic *indígena*. President Obregón officially crowned Bibiana the 'India Bonita', and she was feted at lavish dinner parties, theatre performances and concerts. Nevertheless, things did not end well for Bibiana Uribe. Her appointed godfather failed to provide her with an education, perhaps after discovering that she was pregnant. She returned home and married the father of her child, with whom she eventually had six children. According to relatives, she squandered the 10,000 pesos in prize money and toiled as a maid and laundress for most of her life.

The 'India Bonita' contest revealed the difficulty of overcoming ingrained racial and gender prejudices. Natives themselves were not consulted about definitions of beauty, and there were no indigenous judges. The contest also reflected, more generally, how colonisers imposed particular forms of performance on colonised populations to address their own cultural and political agenda (Deloria, 1998). *El Universal* intended the 'India Bonita' contest to facilitate the integration of indigenous women into Mexican society, underscoring the idea of unity in diversity. The newspaper editorialised that the contest was 'as much a realization of beauty as an example of civic education, because it contributes to the current movement to affirm national unity by identifying ... with all the components of the Mexican races' (quoted in López, 2010, p. 42). According to López, in Mexico today public memory has merged the 'India Bonita' contest with the 'Miss Mexico' contest, an event reserved for contestants with European physical characteristics, thus obliterating the memory of this failed attempt to associate physical beauty with indigenous Mexicans (2002).

Indians and mestizos

The 1921 centenary, particularly the 'Noche Mexicana' and the 'Exhibition of Popular Arts', helped to launch revolutionary indigenismo. This important shift in Mexico's cultural and political landscape would be expressed subsequently in the murals and paintings of Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Frida Kahlo; the commercialisation (and appreciation) of Native arts and crafts; the appropriation of indigenous performance as examples of authentic national culture; and the transformation of the Museo Nacional de Antropología into a world-class museum. Some of Rivera's murals, in particular, depicted the indigenous from the Aztecs to the first Zapatistas as dignified, attractive and brave people who had struggled against imperialism and capitalism from the Spanish invasion until the fall of Porfirio Díaz. The acceptance of Rivera and other Mexican painters as modern masters spread this edifying image of Indians as heroic victims throughout the West.

Besides evoking revolutionary indigenismo, Diego Rivera's portrayals of indigenous women sometimes drew a cultural line separating the traditional from the modern. As López observes, Rivera's depiction of Mexican flappers (the liberated young women referred to as *chicas modernas*), in a mural he painted for the Secretaría de Educación Pública, mocks them as un-Mexican. However, he reserves his coarsest images for indigenous flappers who appear particularly unattractive and unnatural dressed in gaudy outfits and wearing heavy make-up (2010, pp. 56–7). These portraits can be contrasted with Rivera's many pictures of indigenous women in rural or domestic settings, where they appear attractive and dignified in Native clothing and engaged in cooking, weaving

and marketing agricultural products. His pictures echo contemporary images of women in traditional settings unsettled by modernity, and suggest the period's reimagination of indigenous Mexico as natural, authentic and dignified.

The popularity of 'all things Mexican' in the 1920s drew attention to pre-Columbian and contemporary indigenous cultures and helped to launch the tourist boom in Mexico, which revolutionary governments promoted at World Fairs, International Exhibitions and folkloric productions in local, national and international venues (Delpar, 1995; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996b; Hellier-Tinoco, 2011). Although the talents of Native artisans were recognised in this boom, most of the profits from the sale of their wares went to Mexican and foreign merchants (Delpar, 1995; López, 2010). As Ruth Hellier-Tinoco shows, beginning in the 1920s cultural brokers demonstrated great interest in indigenous dance, music and costume, which they appropriated and staged in various venues, including Mexico City and abroad. Fascination with such art also made some rural areas popular tourist destinations, including the island of Jarácuaro (Michoacán), well known for its 'Dance of the Old Men' and 'Night of the Dead' performances (Hellier-Tinoco, 2011, pp. 72–3). Outside of Mexico, pre-Columbian architectural styles captivated the imagination of Frank Lloyd Wright, who built dozens of Maya revival-style homes in California, where interest in Mexico was particularly strong (Delpar, 1995, pp. 130–1).

With the revolution, some argued that Indians could be integrated into the larger society through education and socialisation, while still retaining their cultural identity. They could acquire the linguistic, social and political skills to navigate successfully in the modern world. Others argued that this process would, in effect, transform Indians into mestizos, an ethnic category that was more socially than racially constructed. In public discourse there emerged the image of Mexico as a modern, mestizo nation that coexisted with a traditional, indigenous population. José Vasconcelos, an influential writer, educator and politician in the 1920s, promoted the mestizo as the 'cosmic race', arguing that they were racially superior to others. Vasconcelos, who wrote his book (1925) largely in response to Social Darwinism and as an expression of nationalist pride, viewed mestizos as dynamic and strong, and Indians as docile and archaic (Alonso, 2004). As Minister of Education, Vasconcelos favoured an educational curriculum that emphasised Western classics over American arts and letters, and he has been called a 'cultural elitist' who preferred European to indigenous arts (López, 2010, p. 75). Manuel Gamio, considered the father of Mexican anthropology, also promoted *mestizaje* as a means of giving Mexicans a sense of cultural and racial unity during and after the revolution. Gamio associated mestizos with the forces of modernity, including science and material progress, and advocated the transformation of Natives into mestizos through education, secularism and improvements in health, diet and material culture (1960 [1916]; 1922; Brading, 1988).

Promotion of Mexico as a mestizo nation, of course, did not originate with Gamio and Vasconcelos. Its origins lay in the Porfiriato and the writings of Justo Sierra, Andrés Molina Enríquez (1909) and others (Knight, 1996; Brading, 1988), and found expression in the 1910 centennial celebration. On that occasion, public intellectuals praised mestizo heroes (notably Morelos), referring to them as the national race, and unveiled a monument to Juárez, Mexico's most famous acculturated Indian. The 1910 centenary celebrated Mexico's emergence as a modern, mestizo nation guided by liberal elites who viewed contemporary indigenous populations as obstacles to progress.

By comparison, the centennial celebration in 1921 promoted contemporary indigenous culture as authentic Mexican culture. The national spectacle featured the 'Fantasía Mexicana', inspired by the colonial era dance the *jarabe tapatio*, a performance of women dressed as *tehuanas* dancing to a 350-piece orchestra, an exhibition of indigenous *artesanía* in a downtown building and the 'India Bonita' contest. These events and others valorised indigenous culture through new theatrical productions, while simultaneously modifying it and setting guidelines for what it meant to be an Indian, as in the 'India Bonita' contest. The presentation of indigenous culture as national culture also facilitated the integration of the Indian population into the national political imagination, an important aspect of revolutionary nation-building.

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