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## The Establishment of the Mexican Archaeological Heritage as a Tourism Resource in the Second Half of the XIX Century

**ABSTRACT:** The objective is to understand the process by which archaeological heritage, before being intervened for consumption, became a fundamental tourist resource to build the image of Mexico as a travel destination. This occurs in the exploration stage of the Tourism Area Life Cycle, in the second half of the 19th century, through the reinforcement of the formal values and the visitor experience and its social construction as distinguishing values and capacity visitor attraction; and participants internal and external actors from the development of discursive strategies and actions that will be analyzed, through the kind of nationalism fostered in that period, the public actions related to the development of archeology and accounts of North American travelers, in order to identify the distinguishing observed qualities in the heritage and with different scope that position it as a tourist resource and justified its transformation into a tourist attraction.

**KEYWORDS:** Archaeology; nationalism; tourism; cultural history.

## La construcción del patrimonio arqueológico mexicano como recurso turístico en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX

**RESUMEN:** El objetivo es comprender el proceso mediante el cual el patrimonio arqueológico, antes de ser intervenido para su consumo, se transformó en un recurso turístico fundamental para construir la imagen de México como un destino de viaje. Esto ocurrió en la fase de exploración del ciclo de vida de un destino turístico, en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, a través del afianzamiento de los valores formales y la experiencia de visita y su construcción social como valores diferenciadores y capacidad de atracción de visitantes; y participan actores internos y externos mediante estrategias discursivas y acciones que serán analizadas, como el tipo de nacionalismo construido en este periodo, las acciones públicas vinculadas al desarrollo de la arqueología y relatos de viajeros norteamericanos, para identificar las cualidades diferenciadoras que observaban en el patrimonio; y que con distintos alcances lo posicionaron como recurso turístico y justificaron su transformación a un atractivo turístico.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Arqueología; nacionalismo; turismo; historia cultural.

### HOW TO QUOTE

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## Introduction

In the last few years, Mexico has been among the ten most visited destinations in the world; in 2018 it ranked sixth, for the reception of 41 million international tourists (OMT, 2019). The tourism development in the country responds to global and local political, economic, social and cultural conditions, but its basis is a differentiated and diversified offer that builds its image as a tourist destination and allows the practice of tourism as an act of consumption.

Archaeological heritage is a fundamental attraction to build Mexico's tourist image; proof of this is that in 2019 the archaeological sites administered by the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (National Institute of Anthropology and History) (INAH) were visited by nearly 16 million people (INAH, 2020). This resulted from a historical process, because before being a tourist attraction susceptible to commodification, it was constructed as an object of multiple meanings, being at the same time a discursive element of collective identity and memory and of the otherness and exoticism of the spaces, which made it an interest for tourism, before its massification in Mexico, in the mid-twentieth century.

In the first decades of the XIX century, the country was visited by Prussian, English, French and North American travelers, such as Alexander von Humboldt, William Bullock, Frances Erskine Inglis, Desiré Charnay or John L Stephens. In the second half of the century, travelers were more frequent, especially North Americans, who in the first decade of the twentieth century represented the largest tourist market in Mexico. (Anonymous, 1909a).

The increase of North American visitors responded to their economic, political or leisure interests, which motivated them to move from their places of origin; but also because of their interest in the Mexican past. In this regard, it could be assumed that the archaeological heritage was a tourist resource that served to build the country's image as a travel destination, and therefore had an impact on the development of tourism through the creation of the first public actors involved in the construction of tourist attractions, before there was an institution specifically dedicated to the promotion of tourism and when it was just beginning to develop in America.

To understand the relationship between archaeological heritage and tourism development in Mexico, we use the "life cycle model of a tourist destination", proposed by Butler (1980), which considers six stages of tourism development in a territory, determined by changes in the growth of visitors, the consequent infrastructure and the participation of public or private actors, "who can affect or are affected by tourism activities [...] and who have the ability to influence the destination and print guidelines on [its] peculiarities" (Morales and Hernández, 2011, p. 896), and the social ones, visitors or tourists, who influence the development of the destination but do not define its management.

The stages of the model are: "exploration", "involvement", "development", "consolidation" and "stagnation", with the possibility of "decline or rejuvenation" of the tourist destination. The "exploration" stage is characterized by the development of an incipient tourism infrastructure and the arrival of the first travelers, who are attracted by the cultural or natural qualities of the destination, that is, by its tourism resources, understood by Navarro (2015), as cultural or natural assets that due to their formal values are relevant for their visit, and therefore acquire a functional value to be offered and visited. The second is the "involvement stage", in which, before the arrival of the first visitors, the tourism stakeholders will be defined through deliberate actions to condition the tourism resources for their enjoyment or usufruct and transform them into tourist attractions (Sánchez, Vargas and Castillo, 2017), which will define a tourist destination.

In the "development stage" the destination is fully recognized and the tourism infrastructure and the range of services and demand for tourists increases rapidly, but local control of tourism decreases, and there will be problems that require public intervention to regulate them. The "consolidation stage" is when the destination reaches record levels of demand (Sánchez, Vargas and Castillo, 2017); but as it begins to decline, it stagnates and may decline if actions are not taken to rejuvenate it.

In the second half of the XIX century the country could have been in the "exploration stage", because the consolidation of the archaeological heritage as a tourist resource occurred, which justified the transition to the "involvement stage", when the public actors began their intervention to transform it into a tourist attraction susceptible of being

inserted in an incipient commercial circuit; therefore, these two stages will be the ones that will be dealt with in this study.

The purpose is to understand the cultural historical process that made easier the recognition or strengthening of the formal qualities of the archaeological heritage or others discovered through the experience of visiting and its social construction as differentiating values, on which its capacity to attract visitors was based and which conditioned its functional value; in such a way that it is related to the governmental actors and to the visitors or tourists. In order to understand this process, two intertwined dimensions will be analyzed. The first is discursive and supports the qualities of archaeological heritage as a tourist resource, in its construction internal and external actors are involved; the second is determined by the strategies of internal actors to position the heritage as a tourist resource and by the action of external actors of the trip and its registration; that with different scope also position it in their places of origin.

The discursive level was basically energized by nationalism, an identity process from which arises “a collective perception of a ‘us’ [...] in opposition to the ‘others’, based on the (self and hetero) recognition of shared characters, marks and features” (Giménez, 2005, p. 90). 90), whereby it is constructed dialogically between internal and external actors; and results in the symbolic-expressive appropriation of space to create “a correspondence of politics, culture and territory as a single entity” (Gutiérrez, 2012, p. 26).

The type of nationalism particularly promoted during the *Porfiriato*<sup>1</sup> period facilitated the consolidation of archaeological heritage as a tourist resource, because it was built as an identity element to present itself to the outside world, permeating internal and external actors. The internal actors carried out actions to strengthen its formal and symbolic values internally and externally, which promoted the visit of travelers, and their travel records express the imaginaries of archaeological heritage in which the qualities or

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<sup>1</sup> This period is named for the continuance in power of Porfirio Díaz; his long presidential administration was characterized by a pacification project, which required, among other strategies, the promotion of a national identity, modernization through industrialization and the development of railroad infrastructure, and the country's economic growth. However, to achieve this, the use of force was used to repress any expression of social discontent and to favor foreign investment and the strengthening of capitalists, which caused profound social inequalities.

values that are constructed as differentiating and that conform its capacity of attraction can be identified, which consolidated it as a tourist resource and justified its transformation as an attraction.

### Methodology

The study is qualitative and is based mainly on the analysis of travel literature, books written by travelers and notes from Mexican newspapers, related to the archaeological heritage and its visit. This type of literature will be considered as a product of cultural history (Pérez, 2006) and as a record of exoticism, of “the strange, singular and by extension as ‘strange to the observer’” (Lacarrière, 2016, p. 119), which generates and reproduces the encounter with the other and its territory; and shapes tourist imaginaries understood by Hiernaux-Nicolás (2002) as:

[...] a set of beliefs, images and evaluations that are defined around [...], a space, a period or a person (or society) [...]. It is a social construction -individual and collective in permanent remodeling-, [...] constructed in part from the fantasy interpretations that the individual expresses about the imagined subject (p. 8).

According to Illades (2009), travel literature is a double translation, linguistic and sociocultural, in which what is looked at is translated into the vocabulary of the traveler and his subjectivity. The observer relates the exotic to what he knows or imagines his readers know. He recreates his experience and the scenery traveled through word or image by means of scientific interpretations, personal reflections and fictional elements, which converge in space and time; and become a device to incorporate new positive or negative elements to the imaginary of the places. Also, the XIX century travels are associated with Romanticism because they are concerned with the recognition of the other and the contemplation of nature, which is combined in the archaeological sites.

In the first section, with the objective of understanding the discursive level of the internal actors, we will address nationalism, its relationship with archaeological heritage and the dynamics to which it responded in the XIX century, on which its reinforcement as an identity element and tourist resource depended. The second section will outline the

strategies of public agents to position heritage as a tourist resource, expressed in the development of archaeology and in journalistic notes that reflect the differentiating values of heritage and the tourist uses imagined by the Mexican government, to focus on the actions dimension.

In the third section, we will analyze the context in which the works of the North Americans Brantz Mayer, Robert Anderson Wilson, Albert Evans, Albert Zabriskie Gray, Thomas Brocklehurst, Frederick Ober, Helen Sanborn and Fanny Chambers Gooch were written in order to understand the external actors, which will be analyzed in the fourth section to identify the values they observe in the archaeological heritage, from which their difference and attractiveness are constructed.

### **The discursive level of internal actors: nationalism and archaeological heritage**

Since the XVI century there are antecedents of the relationship between archaeological heritage and nationalism, reflected in the construction of a historical narrative specific to Mexico City, based on the chronicles of the conquest, whose material correlate is what we consider heritage today.

At the end of the XVIII century, the Enlightenment promoted the scientific use of the vestiges of the past to build history, but it also had a strategic political use for the strengthening of nationalism; in the case of Spain to revert its loss of power against Europe, and in New Spain to strengthen the Creole group against the process of independence.

Creoles such as Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora or Francisco Xavier Clavijero debated with the evolutionists Corneille de Pauw or William Robertson, and argued the development of the ancient Mexicans by comparing them with the Greeks, Romans or Egyptians, extolling the past as a characteristic of the territory that the Novo-Hispanics considered their own.

In the West, the scientific production of Novo-Hispanic history was based on the questioning of the development of ancient societies shown in the chronicles of the conquest and was contextualized by evolutionism and the affirmation of the “Black Legend” of Spain, which questioned its colonization process in Europe. At the same time,

Spain promoted studies in its colonies to strengthen its nationalism, such as that of Antonio del Río and Guillermo Dupaix, but indirectly strengthened the pre-Hispanic past as an identifying element of the foundation of Mexico, and fed an imaginary that began to characterize the Mexican territory, turning it into a motivation for travel.

In the XIX century, Mexico became independent and nationalism was based on the construction of a national identity for internal consumption. The valuation of archaeological heritage was conditioned by its effectiveness to represent it symbolically, since its basic function was to unite the different social groups that occupied the territory, through the idea of a shared past.

During the *Porfiriato* (1876-1911) the nationalist discourse was also directed to external consumption and was strategically constructed from external imaginaries or stereotypes that wished to be satisfied (Pérez, 2006). The archaeological heritage became the public face to show itself to the other through what is different from it, attractive to investors or visitors, because the past allowed recreating “a modernity with deep roots” (Vázquez, 1993, p. 45), an imaginary time and space, in which the country was perceived in a better way. This type of nationalism corresponded to a second or new colonization, because Mexico generated interest as an investment site and merited the establishment of international relations based on the knowledge of its culture, in order to plan integration or interventionist strategies, which promoted the recognition of the country’s particularities by external actors, one of them being the archaeological heritage.

The consolidation of heritage as a tourism resource is linked to Porfirian nationalism as it allowed identity to begin to be commercialized, which has two implications. The first is that the transformation of the formal qualities of heritage to differentiating values is done in a dialogic way between internal and external actors, or between the destination system (receiving sociocultural construct) and origin (visitors) (Navarro, 2015). The second is that a bond is built between archaeology and tourism through public actions, because of its usefulness in contributing to the construction of the formal values of heritage that sustain it as a tourist and identity resource and, at the end of the XIX century, through

technical-scientific procedures that are required to facilitate its visit and transform it into a tourist attraction.

### Strategies of internal actors to place the archaeological heritage as a tourism resource

At the beginning of the XIX century, the governments in power developed different strategies to institutionalize the formal and identity values of the archaeological heritage, the main one being the creation of the *Museo Nacional Mexicano* (Mexican National Museum) in 1825. Its main function was to exhibit “all kinds of Mexican monuments prior to the Spanish invasion [...] that serve to illustrate the history of Mexico” (Bernal, 1992, p. 127). However, the period from 1825 to 1864 was characterized by a lack of budget and disorganization, until Maximilian<sup>2</sup>, in 1865, assigned it its own premises.

During the *Porfiriato*, a public commitment was established to sponsor the development of archaeology for state and political purposes, due to its usefulness for findings and its staging for internal and external consumption. As proof of this, in 1885 the *Ley Relativa a los Monumentos Arqueológicos* (Law Relative to Archaeological Monuments) was created, in which they were considered property of the Nation, the bases were established for their conservation, registration, exploration and restoration, actions considered exclusive to the State, and their destruction or deterioration was classified as a crime (Lombardo, 1993).

Archaeology developed in two areas, academic and practical. The first was developed from the National Museum, which proposed professionalization through the professorship and the application of knowledge and methods such as photographic recording, stratigraphic excavation and typological analysis, and materialized in archaeological explorations, in the projection of the museum at the international level through publications, congresses and institutional relations, and its remodeling in which museographic techniques began to be applied to stage the heritage. As well as in the

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<sup>2</sup> Maximilian of Habsburg was emperor of Mexico between 1863 and 1867, during what was called the Second Mexican Empire, formed after the French intervention and the first empire of Agustín de Iturbide. As a liberal, Maximilian fought against the conservatives who had brought him to power, establishing a legal framework that promoted and protected social rights and some that promoted culture and science, which had an impact on the development of the Mexican National Museum.



organization of international exhibitions that were supervised by the Museum. The most important were the *Exposición Internacional Histórico Americana* (International Historical American Exposition), in Madrid (1892); the *Centenario de la Revolución Francesa* (Centennial of the French Revolution), in Paris (1889); the *Exposición Mundial Colombina* (World Columbian Exposition), in Chicago (1894) and the *Internacional de París* (Paris International Exposition) (1900).

The result of the academic field was the reinforcement of the formal values of the archaeological heritage, at the same time it also influenced its positioning as a tourist resource because the international exhibitions were an exercise of imagining Mexico for others, showing that “there were also our own Greeks, Romans and Germans” (Litvak, 1993, p. 98), and that they could be a motive to visit the country, becoming a differentiating quality of the country as a travel destination.

The practical application was an official archaeology sponsored by the *Inspección General de Monumentos* (General Inspection of Monuments), focused on the reinterpretation of monumental buildings through their restoration to make them suitable and attract visitors, which is evidence of the government's interest. Teotihuacan, Xochicalco or Mitla were explored and expropriated, becoming the first archaeological sites open to the public and some of them had tourist services (Sarabia, 2008). This is the indicator of the transition to the “stage of involvement” because it shows the beginning of public intervention to transform archaeological sites into tourist attractions through their development. The journalistic notes of the late XIX century show this interest, especially in Teotihuacán, and reflect the use of the formal and symbolic identity qualities of the heritage as an attraction capacity and the actions to transform it into a tourist attraction, through its imagined uses.

From October 15 to 29, 1895, the XI *Congreso de Americanistas* (International Congress of Americanists) was organized. Several newspapers reported that preparations were being made to satisfy the attendees, who were scientists and diplomats from different countries. In August, by order of Díaz, excavations were carried out in Teotihuacán “with the purpose of discovering some antiquities that would enrich our

history, as well as to make them known to our guests" (Anonymous, 1895a, p. 6). The work was carried out by Antonio García Cubas with the objective of reconstructing the *Pirámide de la Luna* (Pyramid of the Moon) (Schávelzon, 1982). In this way, new rooms would be opened in the National Museum. At the same time, the discovery of the sacrum of *Tequisquiac* took place, which would serve to "present to our wise visitors objects worthy of study" (Anonymous, 1895b, p. 1).

At the closing of the Congress, diplomats from various countries were present and a collection of polychrome ceramics from *Teotitlán del Camino*, precious metal necklaces and beads from Oaxaca were shown, and representatives from various states gave an account of recent findings to show visitors the cultural richness of the country (Anonymous, 1895c).

In addition, excursions were scheduled to Mitla and Teotihuacán, the last site attended by diplomats in charge of business or foreign affairs from France, Italy, Brazil, Venezuela and Honduras. The tour began at the Buenavista train station and ended at the San Juan Teotihuacán station. The visit began with a display of reproductions of archaeological pieces by a local artisan, a visit to the pyramids of the Sun and the Moon and the *Calzada de los Muertos*. Afterwards, lunch was at *La Gruta* and some visited the town of San Juan (Anonymous, 1895d).

Teotihuacán was promoted by the Díaz government as a place for foreign visitors who were considered distinguished or with commercial or political interests. Most of the visiting parties were North Americans, accompanied by Mexican government officials (Anonymous, 1899, p. 3). This type of visits became frequent and ten years later Teotihuacán was already recognized by this type of visitors as a place with "picturesque sites worthy of admiration [...]. Hopefully these excursions would continue and would end up making the city of San Juan a favorite spot for them" (Anonymous, 1909b, p. 12). A local resident even put forward the idea of "establishing Sunday excursions with the double purpose of getting to know the pyramids, which arouse so much interest among foreigners, and to contribute to the greater commercial movement of the population" (Anonymous, 1909c, p. 3).

### The context of the discursive construction of archaeological heritage as a tourist resource by external actors

The travel records of the North Americans were contextualized by the second colonization, the political tensions between the two countries, and the beginning of archaeological research in the United States of America and the diffusionist ideas that permeated it.

In Mexico, modern tourism began in the first half of the XX century (Acerenza, 2006). However, since the end of the XVIII century, the Grand tour, an indicator of the beginning of modern tourism in the West, integrated America as a destination for the most adventurous, among them von Humboldt. In the first half of the XIX century, mainly Englishmen, North Americans and Frenchmen visited the country for cultural, leisure, commercial or political reasons, so they participated in the selection and diffusion of the elements that they considered characterized the Mexican territory.

Bullock, an English traveler, stated that hardly anything was known about the country but it offered “much of novelty to attract even the most indifferent visitor” (Bullock, 1824, pp. V-VI). Desiré Charnay, a Frenchman, considered that his compatriots “thought they found all the Indians feathered, as they were seen in the operatic representations [...] of the time” (Cramaussel, 2005, p. 3) and that only von Humboldt’s work addressed Mexico in a worthy manner. The North American John L. Stephens, before his trip, thought that the country was inhabited by barbarians without cultural traditions (Florescano, 2002).

Von Humboldt’s work was an essential reading for diplomats, investors and travelers visiting Mexico. Meanwhile, in the United States of America, William H. Prescott wrote his work *La conquista de México* (The Conquest of Mexico) (1843), and inspired new travelers, among them, according to Pérez (2002), Stephens, who changed the vision of the Mexican past in the United States of America and the world, because he considered the Mayan ruins, contrary to the diffusionist and evolutionist ideas of the time, as a product of a culture of its own, “intelligent in architecture, sculpture and other arts, possessing the

refinement and culture [...] consequent with that state of advancement not derived from the Ancient World, but [...] original, without models, without masters, with a distinct, and [...] independent existence" (Stephens, 1992, p. 34).

In the United States of America, archaeology began to develop, the founding of the *Instituto Arqueológico de América* (Archaeological Institute of America) in Boston in 1879 was evidence of this, which sponsored expeditions in the southwest of that country and later in Athens, Mesopotamia, Guatemala and Mexico (Riggs, 1929), as well as the diffusion of archaeological research in the newspapers, which showed the interest of society in Mexican archaeology.

The relationship between Mexico and the United States of America was tense due to the North American invasion between 1846 and 1848, derived from the expansionist policy of that country, which culminated with the cession of the territory it claimed, which favored the relationship between both countries. In the second half of the XIX century, North American imperialism began in Mexico (Pletcher, 1953), as the country became the site of investors for the exploitation of mines and the construction of trains.

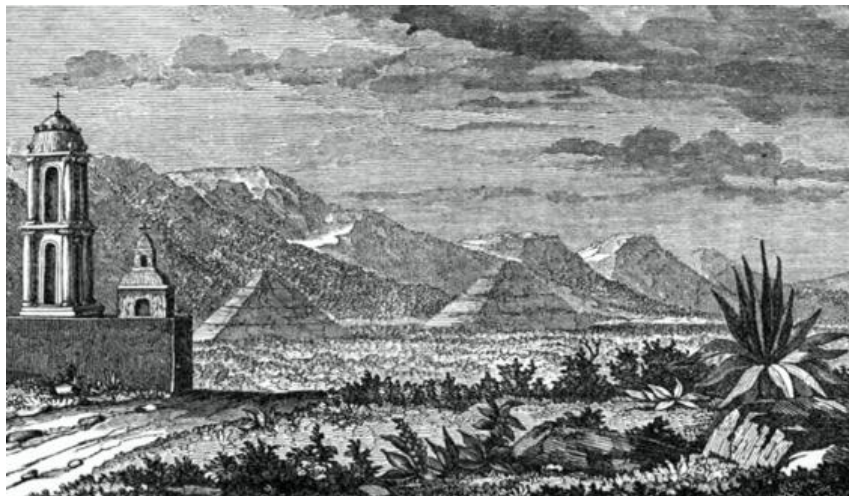
Most North American travelers arrived in Mexico through Veracruz, by boat from New Orleans, and from there they traveled by train to Mexico City, where they moved to nearby places by boat (through the canals of the lake), train or on horseback. They considered that tourism was very new and different from the cities where there were all kinds of luxuries, so the lodging and food services were considered as inns, attended by friendly people (Mayer, 1847).

### **The qualities of archaeological heritage as seen by North American travelers**

Mayer was a writer, lawyer and diplomat in Mexico. In *Mexico as it was and as it is* (1847), he narrated his first contact with the country and wrote about its contemporary situation, but his main interest was pre-Hispanic history, that he continued to develop in books such as *Mexican Antiquities* (1858). He visited Xochicalco, Teotihuacán, Cholula, *La Quemada*, *El Tajín*, Mitla, among others, and they amaze him, as they do the other travelers, basically

for their size, for the historical knowledge he has of each site and for the resignification he makes of the places or objects based on the experience of visiting them.

Mayer (1847) offers references for the reader to imagine the extension of the sites, he described the dimensions of Xochicalco, its construction system and describes as impressive the work and ingenuity of its builders, in view of the complication of transporting the raw material and sculpting the bas-reliefs that amazed him; “when all these difficulties are combined, [...] there are few works [...], carried out at present by civilized nations, that do not sink into insignificance” (p. 185). About Teotihuacan he also provides references to dimension the multiple vestiges scattered, some forming squares and other alignments such as the *Mixcoatl* or *Senda de los Muertos*, and imagine their functions, “it is very probable that [...] they all formed the sepulchers of illustrious men of the Empire [...]. Perhaps it was the *Abadía de Westminster de los toltecas y aztecas* (Westminster Abbey of the Toltecs and Aztecs)” (p. 223) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Pyramids of San Juan Teotihuacán, west view. Photograph taken from Mayer, 1847, p. 223.

He visited the National Museum, which he described as an abandoned and dirty place, but is amazed by its collection for its aesthetic and historical qualities, he describes the monumental stone sculptures, such as the Aztec Calendar, the goddess Teoyamiqui (Coatlicue), axes, beaded necklaces, obsidian mirrors, masks, weapons, minor clay and stone deities, domestic altars, incense burners, and musical instruments; which he

describes as beautifully constructed relics and “for which the British Museum would gladly pay thousands, the Louvre, the Munich Glyptothek, or (...) any enlightened sovereign” (Mayer, 1847, p. 84).

The astonishment that the objects generated in the author also responds to the characteristics that allowed him to re-signify them. For example, the *Indio Triste* is a smaller piece, a standard-bearer discovered in 1828, in Mexico City, but he perceives it as one of the most important remains of the museum because of the expression of the character, with a “fixed, stony look, of imperturbable asperity and impudence in the face” (Mayer, 1847, p. 89). He also qualifies a polychrome funerary vessel, by the expression of the character represented, of “stone look, fixed, intense, in the eyes [...] that denote character” (Mayer, 1847, p. 101).

Mayer (1847) considered the Aztecs as the most developed of the ancient civilizations of the Mexican territory on account of their construction of “magnificent buildings, which housed a refined and numerous population” (p. 251); thus, he considered Cholula as “a sublime conception, which gives the right to the respect of posterity to the men, who centuries ago patiently (erected) it” (p. 27) (Figure 2). Therefore, he assumed as true the descriptions of Mexico City, by Hernán Cortés, and imagined it as “the proud city of the Aztec kings, full of palaces and temples” (p. 36).



**Figure 2.** The great pyramid of Cholula. The largest man-made monument in the world by volume. Photograph taken from Mayer, 1847, p. 27.

Mayer (1847) considered that archaeological remains were evidence “of civilized nations at the time of conquest” (p. 264), “of high-spirited races who buried their dead, defended themselves against their enemies and possessed [...] a taste for refinement of life” (p. 251); “there are few countries, as far as I can judge, that contain more of what is worthy of description; and fewer still, that are known with so poor accuracy” (p. 382). In this way, the author recognizes the archaeological heritage as a specificity of the country based on its historical importance and therefore conceives the need for exhaustive explorations; and although he recognizes the problem of looting, it was a common practice of the trip to buy “souvenirs” from the inhabitants near the archaeological sites; even he bought ceramic objects, serpentine and obsidian, in Cholula, Teotihuacan and Texcoco.

Wilson was a financier, lawyer, judge and traveler who visited the country from 1851 to 1854, for commercial interests in the silver mines. In “Mexico: its Peasants and its Priests Adventure and Historical Researches in Mexico and its Silver Mines during Parts of the Years 1851-52-53-54 with an Exposé of the Fabulous Character of the Story of the Conquest of Mexico by Cortez” (1856), he described his tour, but his aim was to criticize the ancient history of Mexico, arguing that the chronicles of the conquest, especially those of Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Cortés, were “exalted fictions” by the Spanish crown. His argument was to prove that the Aztecs were a group of savage natives, who had migrated from the North American continent, and were not related to the Teotihuacanos or Toltecs, whom he considered highly civilized and of whom little was known.

Wilson (1856) concluded that the chronicles of the conquest were fiction, because he proves, from topographical measurements in Mexico City, that the pyramids “could not have rested on a land base, [...] even that 100,000 men once entered the city of Mexico made of mud, by a narrow causeway” (pp. III-IV). In the same way, he suggests that Cholula “was made from some miserable indigenous village, perhaps inferior to the present city with whitewashed mud huts” (p. 99), because there are no traces of the 400 towers or the 40 thousand houses described by Cortés. From the physical characteristics of a group of antique sellers and the similarity of the lithic objects they sold with the North Americans, he concludes that the “Aztecs” “were the counterpart of the North American Indians” (p.

100). The only difference was the way they have been written about them, because the American writers “were not carried away by the romance of Indian life, they were men of matter of fact and only drew pictures of fact” (p. 171).

The author considered himself an expert in what he calls Indian art, for which he visited the National Museum, he assumes that its entire collection is Aztec, therefore he considered it “immensely inferior to many private collections of Indian curiosities [...], and they demonstrate the complete absence of civilized arts among the aboriginal inhabitants of Mexico” (Wilson, 1856, p. 273). The monumental sculptures seem to him “rude attempts” to represent gods and he considers that Montezuma’s codices or “maps” required “the most flexible generosity possible [...], to dignify these intolerable and dubious with the name of paintings [...]. And yet this is the writing-painting, with which the world has been built for centuries” (Wilson, 1856, pp. 272-273).

Wilson (1856) considered that the historical period before the narratives of Cortés and Díaz del Castillo was important, so he compares Teotihuacán with Egypt by thinking that it had been built by “a mysterious and high civilization previous to the Aztecs and from whom they had acquired an imperfect knowledge of some few simple arts” (p. 220 ), and to El Tajin, he related it to the Toltecs, so he concludes “what we have seen in Mexico City are fragments of the wreck of an American civilization of antiquity, which had succumbed before the incursions of the savages from the north” (p. 248).

Evans visited the country as part of the entourage of the North American politician William H. Seward, so his work *Our Sister Republic: a Gala Trip through Tropical Mexico in 1869-70* (1870), was an recount of the diplomatic gatherings and a review of the political life of Mexico, but he toured Cholula and the National Museum.

Evans considered that Cholula was a temple comparable to the pyramids of Egypt. The retinue that accompanied him informed him of its measurements, but he considers that it was not a purely human construction and that it never had an appearance similar to that of the paintings, in which it was represented as a structure with terraces of sharp and defined sides and angles. The Museum appears to him to be untidy and he briefly describes



its collection of “deities, serpents, and other monstrosities, roughly cut out of large blocks of lava” (Evans, 1870, p. 332).

Despite doubting the authenticity of Cholula and considering the museum’s collection to be monstrous, Evans (1870) acknowledges that “probably no city in the world now inhabited has so many relics of ancient days beneath it” (p. 33) and summarizes the qualities that seem to set the country apart: “wooded hills and tropical jungle with its gardens, its ruins [...] [The] little mound of stones and the three black crosses that marked an epoch in the history of the world. [...] Where Cortez fought with Guatamozin, lost and died” (pp. 517-518).

Gray describes himself as a churchman and his aim in *“Mexico as it is. Being Notes of a Recent Tour in that Country with some Practical Information for Travellers in that Direction, as also some Study of the Church Question”* (1878), was to present the country to other travelers, in this sense his motivation was purely touristic.

He traveled to Cholula to see the pyramid that he describes as world famous and he said, like Evans, that its pyramidal character is not remarkable. However, he concluded that it is the ancient city described in the chronicles of the conquest. He reports its measurements and compares it to twice the size of Cheops and a little higher than Menkaure. He describes the summit as a platform, where stood a temple of worship destroyed by internecine wars, in which a tomb chamber with skeletons, deities and pottery had been found, but it is “difficult to suppose that burial was the main and original object of this pyramid” (Gray, 1878, p. 100).

Gray (1878) visited Teotihuacan and considers it as the most important tour for those interested in the past, because he qualifies it as superior to Egypt for its size and the amount of ruins, “there is hidden a mystery which not even many of the greatest monuments of Egyptian antiquity possess” (p. 71) and concludes “the conjectures of the antiquarians are true [...] Do we not have here a marvelous sepulchral and sacrificial suburb like those of Egypt, Greece and Rome in their proudest days?” (p. 80).

The traveler described the Pyramid of the Sun with a perfect orientation, the terraces that composed it, its measurements and the platform. He noted numerous

fragments of objects on the ground, the mounds arranged with some regularity in squares and avenues, some with traces of stucco and color, preserved stairways, a long plaza, already called *La Ciudadela*, and a monolith “in a half-unearthed condition, most wonderfully suggestive” (Gray, 1878, p. 79).

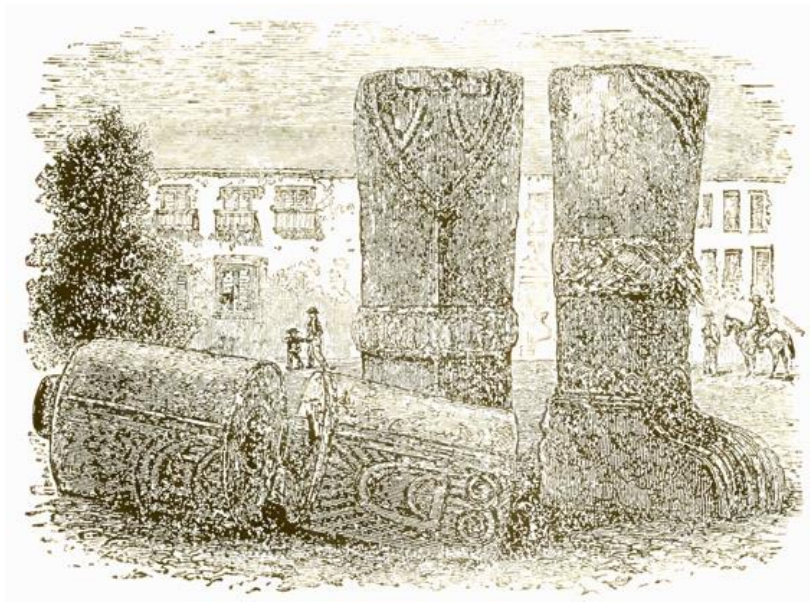
He visited the National Museum and found it to be neglected, with Aztec antiquities thrown and piled up. He briefly described his collection which contained the shield of Montezuma, deities, vases, glasses, musical instruments and the stone of Tizoc, which was strange but illustrative of the Aztec religion because it could be observed “a grooved cut for the blood of the victim when the flint knives removed the heart from the living body and threw it at the feet of the deity!” (Gray, 1878, p. 53).

Gray (1878) concluded that the archaeological heritage is what differentiated the country as a travel destination, when recalling his trip to Teotihuacán he stated: “loaded with Indian relics, [...] we felt again that this was more than enough to pay for a trip to Mexico” (p. 80). However, like Mayer, he refers to the scientific importance of the objects and the need to be rescued by museums, “where their value is only amidst the associations of history” (Gray, 1878, p. 80).

Ober, a naturalist and writer who was interested in the history of Mexico, made several trips to write about it. His descriptions in *Travels in Mexico and Life among the Mexicans* (1885), are extensive. He traveled through a large part of the country, knew Stephens’ work and began his journey through the southeast where he affirmed that there are many ruins.

Ober (1885) refers to Uxmal and Chichén Itzá as the most interesting ruins of the southeast for their scientific value, because they preserved a series of hieroglyphs of which “archaeologists clamor to have the key to their meaning” (p. 67). Also, for its aesthetic values, the royal palace or governor’s house of Uxmal seems to him of such beauty that “it is impossible to transmit with mere words any image, either in general or in detail” (p. 68), the mural paintings of Chichén Itzá “are an artistic execution and the finest adornment of the walls of any building” (p. 107), and about Palenque “the poet has not exaggerated its beauties, nor the pen has adequately described them; they are indescribable” (p. 159).

Ober (1885) is the only one who visited Tula, because he considered it to be the base of the culture that gave the country an advanced civilization. He was familiar with the works of Charnay and imagined himself discovering “a palace composed of rooms about six feet high!” (p. 478) and described the three colossal caryatids, known today as the Atlanteans of Tula, whose size surprised him (Figure 3). In relation to Teotihuacan, he described its construction system of plateaus, slopes and terraces, known today as *tablero talud*, “which has been successful in the construction of great buildings with the worthy name of palaces and adorned with sculptures, which have obtained the admiration of the world” (p. 482). He described the pyramids of the Sun and Moon, noting that its shape was no longer defined by what looked like steep hills, and the structures lined the “*Calle de la Muerte*” (Street of Death) which he recognized as the main road. Ober pointed out, as did the other travelers, that there were abundant archaeological materials on the ground and that the villagers were selling antiquities, clay heads, obsidian knives and candlesticks, which he bought.



**Figure 3.** Tula. Sculptures in the plaza. Photograph taken from Ober, 1885, p. 476.

According to Ober (1885), Mitla is described as the “finest” ancient construction in Mexico for its aesthetic values, which represented its rooms with mosaic walls with octagonal ornaments, “a labyrinth of fretwork, with fragments of preserved paint, similar to the Egyptian ones, exquisitely colored in red and black, the colors still fresh and bright” (p. 538). As well as by the questions raised by what the city was in its heyday, “with men of intelligence, skilled architects and renowned warriors, how could this small valley have supported them all? [...] Where are these people now and how long has it been since they built these palaces and graves?” (p. 543).

Ober (1885) visited Mexico City, where he considered that there were remains fully identified with the chronicles of the conquest, even confirmed by archaeological explorations. “Nobody will ever miss the chance in Mexico to go and find evidence of its past civilization, because ancient objects are present at every corner” (p. 305). He visited the National Museum and described the courtyard, which held Huitzilopochtli (Coatlicue), the Aztec Calendar, the sacrificial stone of Tizoc and a Chac Mool, whose location was inadequate for conservation and evidenced the pending work of the Mexican government in archaeological research and the contribution of the various U.S. expeditions carried out in the country (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** A patio (The Court of the Museum). Photograph taken from Ober, 1885, p. 225.

Ober recognized in the archaeological heritage the specificity of the country as a travel destination, connecting it with tourism:

Let tourists and archaeologists visit [...] It does not need a more prophetic eye than belongs to ordinary man to discern the result of the opening of a country with so much archaeological [...] wealth. The time is coming, when these buried cities shall again see the light (Ober, 1885, p. 478).

Brocklehurst was a traveler who made a seven-month stay in the country, which he reported in *"Mexico to-day: a Country with a Great Future and a Glance at the Prehistoric Remains and Antiquities of the Montezumas"*, published in 1883. His main interest was in ancient Mexican history, which he learned about from North American research, and his purpose was to locate relics that would allow him to prove that the ancient cultures of Mexico and the United States of America had a common origin.

Brocklehurst (1883) visited Teotihuacán and reported The Pyramid of the Sun and the Moon, the mounds lined up on the *Camino de la Muerte*, where "thousands of people probably stood watching, magnificent processions passing from pyramid to pyramid" (pp. 175-176). Just as the other travelers, he noticed a large amount of material on the ground such as: statues of heads, knives, obsidian arrowheads, spinning wheels, similar to those of Troy and that represented progress for civilization. For this reason, he did not buy antiquities, but mainly because he thought they were imitations.

Brocklehurst (1883) considered the National Museum as one of the most interesting sites for excursionists, because of its numerous Aztec and Toltec collection and points out the most interesting pieces, which he describes with information from those in charge of the museum, Alfredo Chavero and Gumezindo Mendoza. First, the Aztec Calendar, "the most striking curio that will attract a stranger's attention [...] The hieroglyphics on the calendar stone in the church tower are supposed to indicate the astronomical knowledge of the Mexicans" (pp. 186-187). Then he describes the sacrificial stone of Tizoc, which reliefs "represent conquerors holding captive foes by the hair of their heads, and reminded me of the triumphs of the Egyptians, as sculptured and painted on the walls at Karnac" (pp. 190-191). In third place, the sculpture of Huitzilopochtli (Coatlicue), the Aztec god of war, but it is more likely that "represented a female, [...] the progenitrix of mankind" (pp. 192-193). He also considers outstanding the feathered shield and Moctezuma's clothing, the

collection of maps, paintings and codices, representing the migration of the Aztecs through the country in the XIII century, known today as *Tira de la Peregrinación* (Pilgrimage Strip).

Brocklehurst (1883) considered that archaeological research in Mexico was underdeveloped and that only North Americans were capable of doing it, “with the same speed that their engineers are projecting railways all over this country, and may I live to know more from them about the hidden treasures of Cholula, Texcoco and Teotihuacan” (p. 180). Sanborn, a writer and newspaper correspondent, had an interest in archaeology. She made a trip to Central America, with her father James Sanborn, for his business as an importer of coffee and spices, which she narrated in *A Winter in Central America and Mexico*, published in 1886. Her interest was to describe current customs so her references on ancient history are not abundant, but she did visit the National Museum.

Sanborn (1886) stated that the Aztecs were reminiscent of the Toltecs, “the most superior race of Indians that ever inhabited this continent. They possessed a wonderful civilization, and all the finest architectural remains and ruins in the country (those of Yucatán and some parts of Mexico) are attributed to this race” (p. 171); “and taught them [to the Aztecs] their wonderful civilization [...] which so astonished Cortez and his army when they entered Mexico” (p. 171). The author considered the National Museum as one of the most interesting places in the city because of the scientific values represented by its collection of “Aztec idols; pottery, [...] and interesting to the archaeologist for its antiquity and the skill it shows the Aztecs to have possessed” (Sanborn, 1886, p. 285).

Chambers Gooch was a writer who lived temporarily in Mexico and years later returned to describe the customs and especially the gastronomy, which she presented in *Face to face with the Mexicans*, published in 1887. Although she visited several archaeological sites, she did not describe them but reported her visit to Cholula and the National Museum. Chambers Gooch (1887) described Cholula as “a grand and imposing monument to the aboriginal builders! That these ready-handed Indian workers should have erected a mountain, without beasts of burden [...] and by passing the brick from hand to hand, surpasses the calculations of all scientists” (pp. 456-457). The size of the pyramid

amazed her, so she provided information for her readers to visualize it with data she took from Prescott and Humboldt, according to the former its base was 44 acres and the latter compared it to “a square four times larger than the Place de Vendome in Paris, [...] which reaches twice the elevation of the Louvre” (p. 457). The author argued that because of the overgrown vegetation it was doubtful that it was a man-made construction, but “it is entirely a work of art, showing what it once was, with its 400 towers, long since demolished” (p. 458). He considered *Cholula, El Tajín, Xochicalco, Uxmal or Palenque* to be marvels to behold, “for the magnitude of the enterprise of their construction, which can only be equaled by a sister enterprise, the pyramids of Egypt” (p. 460).

Chambers Gooch (1887) considered the National Museum’s collection valuable for its scientific value and the number of exhibits it contained, such as “paintings, Aztec weapons, musical instruments, spindles, stone and clay deities, and so on” (p. 188) and described the sacrificial stone of Tizoc:

A religious symbol, as well as a historical monument [...] It is said that from twenty to fifty thousand persons were annually sacrificed on it [...] One can think of a scene [...], inspecting the canal cut across the top and down one side, for the blood to pass from the victim, yet writhing in his death agony (p. 180).

### The differentiating values of heritage

The consolidation of archaeological heritage as a tourist resource in the analyzed stage arises from the recognition of its values coming from different sources and from the travel experience, which together are re-signified as differentiating values, expressed in the texts reviewed, and on which its functional value depends, and these are the following:

- a) Historical value: the heritage is considered by the internal and external actors as evidence of a historical process that is qualified as relevant and from the visit it is verified that it really happened and the existence of its protagonists, especially the Teotihuacan, Toltec and Aztecs. The chronicles of the conquest refer to this process and are a source to construct the imaginary of the travelers prior to the visit, not all consider them truthful, but the acceptance of the

relation between the heritage and the chronicles in a positive or negative sense represents a distinguishing characteristic and a capacity of attraction for the visitors. However, when it is assumed that this historical process is truthful, the qualities of its protagonists are strengthened and loaded with positive characteristics and a new differentiating quality is built, centered on their cultural specificities that represent the genius of ancient societies, reflected in the effort that they assume implied to build the ancient cities.

- b) Archaeological or scientific value: this refers to the capacity of the material culture to understand the past and is recognized by internal and external actors. Some tourists refer in their stories to scientific information on the meaning, use or dimensions of archaeological artefacts or sites, but most visitors call for further research, even in relation to United States of America ancient history, because of the context in which it is written. In that historical moment this value is recognized and the internal actors consolidate it as a differentiating quality, but the information produced by them is not enough to consolidate as a capacity of attraction for the external actors. However, a meaning of mystery or enigmas to be discovered is constructed that is associated with the archaeological sites and the need to know the social functions of the architectural buildings, their origin, antiquity and decay.
- c) Aesthetic values: this is related to the perception of the beauty of the heritage, which depends on social conditions, so that some external actors perceive it as monstrous, but others of such beauty that they cannot describe it in words or consider it worthy of a museum because of its conservation, its colors or its size.
- d) Universal value: the equivalence of the Mexican archaeological heritage with others positively valued such as Egypt, Greece or Rome sustains a capacity of attraction, previously constructed by the internal actors, and at the same time a differentiating quality reinforced when it is considered superior by the external actors. In the case of the United States of America, the idea of the “advantage of closeness” begins to be built, which in the XX century will be used



by the North American tourist investors. "The art of building pyramids in the pre-Columbian civilizations of North America reached higher standards than in Egypt. The greatest pyramids in the world lie in Mexico" (Anonymous, 1898, p. 25).

- e) Functional value: it is constructed because it fulfills a function for internal and external actors, but they coincide when internally the visit to archaeological sites is formally promoted and externally when they refer that they are a reason to pay for a trip to the country, or the need to open the archaeological zones to the public for tourism or the great amount of vestiges that lie in the country that would position it as a tourist destination, and that for some external actors is already the specificity of the country as a tourist destination.
- f) Emotional value: this is observed in the negative or positive emotions that originate from the experience of the visit and that condition the interaction with the heritage, such as the disappointment or amazement that leads visitors to be transported to the past and imagine what the cities or objects would be like in their original context or to feel the impact of the discovery observed by external actors.

### Discussion and conclusions

In the second half of the XIX century, Mexico was in the "exploration phase of the life cycle of a tourist destination", due to the travelers that toured the country, the scarce participation of public actors to intervene tourist resources to transform them into attractions and the references to its incipient tourist infrastructure. Under these conditions, the differentiating qualities built by internal and external actors are decisive because only on them is based the attractiveness of tourism resources and the functional value required for tourism development.

From the analysis of the sources reviewed, archaeological heritage in the historical period analyzed seems to be consolidated as a tourist resource and to be one of the first elements recognized as representative of the country's image and therefore a

differentiating quality of Mexico as a “tourist” destination. For example, Cholula is referred to as a world-famous pyramid and there are references that Teotihuacán was already a visited site to go to, an idea reinforced by internal and external actors.

The relationship of archaeological heritage with the “tourist” image of the country seems to be externally linked to the wide dissemination of the chronicles of the conquest and the existing travel literature; but internally it responded to its link with the construction of the national identity that justified and promoted the development of the actions of public actors to begin to position it as a tourist attraction. These were expressed in the impulse of archaeology to build its formal values and justify it as an action to satisfy travelers, with findings to show (even if they were not investigated), reconstructed pyramids or international exhibitions. Another indicator of the transformation of archaeological heritage into a tourist attraction is the planning of activities and places to visit near Teotihuacán, because it would be one of the first public exercises of integrating a set of tourist resources to an incipient network of services, to which craftsmen and sellers of archaeological pieces or reproductions were added.

It is from the archaeological heritage that public actors begin to define themselves as agents of tourism by the promotion to visit archaeological sites, the technical-scientific actions to facilitate their visit and, before that, the National Museum could be considered one of the first public interventions to facilitate the visit to a place related to heritage, and it was of such impact that it served as justification for the conformation of INAH in later decades.

It is not possible to evaluate the impact of the strategies of the public actors in the decision of the analyzed travelers to visit the country, because their motivations were different and the formal values they report came from other sources, and suggests understanding in a better way the characteristics implied by the “exploration phase” and establishing it diachronically from the first travelers or from the external sources that represent and disseminate Mexican archaeological heritage in their places of origin. Thus, the differentiating qualities and the attractiveness of archaeological heritage are built from

previous imaginaries and from the practice of visiting it, where they are corroborated, transformed or new ones are built.

The external construction of the attractiveness of the archaeological heritage is expressed in travel literature. The context in which it was written is reflected in the discrediting of the chronicles of the conquest and the diffusionist theories, which questioned the development of the Aztecs as an independent culture, in the looting represented by the purchase of “souvenirs”, in the disapproval of Mexican archaeological research and its staging in the Museum, and in the need for North Americans to study it, as a new form of colonization.

The archaeological sites that were first opened to the public are those visited by travelers, which demonstrates the link between tourism and archaeology and that the formal values of heritage are not the only reason to support its opening to the public, because it also represents the possibility of creating a different time, incomparable with that of contemporaneity, and which characterizes tourism today.

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