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## *A Tropical Cuauhtemoc* *Celebrating the Cosmic Race at the Guanabara Bay*

[In Brazil] nao há Civilização, há civilizações, cada uma se orienta conforme as necessidades e ideais de uma raça, dum meio e dum tempo... Nós, imitando ou repetindo a civilização francesa, ou a alema, somos unos primitivos, porque estamos ainda na fase do mimetismo.

MARIO DE ANDRADE, 1925<sup>1</sup>

Si fuéramos por ventura de la primera generación literaria de hombres, cuando florecían en toda su irresistible virginidad aun los lugares comunes más triviales.

JULIO TORRI, 1917<sup>2</sup>

THROUGH THE STUDY of world's fairs, I have been examining the creation of national images from the 1880s to the 1930s.<sup>3</sup> As part of such effort, this essay explores a special sort of cultural interbreeding that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1922: a south-south kind of fascination. This paper, hence, examines Mexico's presence at the 1922 Centennial exhibition

1. Letter to Carlos Drumond, quoted by Helena Maria Busquet Bomeny, *et al.*, *Tempos de Capanema*, Sao Paulo, 1984, p. 80.

2. "De la noble esterilidad de los ingenios," in *Diálogos de libros*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1980.

3. For further elaboration on the historical importance of world's fairs, and for an lengthy bibliography on the subject, see M. Tenorio, "Crafting a Modern Nation: Modernity and Nationalism in Mexico's Presence at World's Fairs, 1886-1930" (manuscript).

in Rio de Janeiro, and how a certain idea of Mexico was constructed over the cultural and physical environment of Rio in 1922. The 1922 *Exposição Internacional do Centenario* in Rio de Janeiro constituted the grandiose, albeit anachronistic, Brazilian version of the nineteenth-century style of world's fairs, and it was meant to observe a nationalist agenda. To such an event, Mexico sent an important delegation and a large exhibit, which included the construction of a special building. José Vasconcelos, Mexico's most prominent intellectual of the first half of the twentieth century, headed the Mexican delegation. Vasconcelos' book, *La raza cósmica*, constituted indeed but a collection of impressions from his trip to South America, especially to Brazil and its 1922 Centennial world's fair. The history of Vasconcelos at Rio de Janeiro is the history of a national project that never really materialized. This is, therefore, the history of Mexico's presence at the 1922 Brazilian world's fair, but also an account of a single instance of the global racial, cultural, and political construction of nationalist identities.

Since the time of the 1861 *Exposição Nacional* of Rio de Janeiro, expositions had been important means of industrial promotion for the cultural and political elites of Brazil. Throughout the nineteenth century, Brazil joined most of the major world's fairs: London 1867, Vienna 1873, Philadelphia 1876, and Paris 1889 (although as a private Brazilian-French company).<sup>4</sup> Emperor Dom Pedro II himself inaugurated the 1876 Philadelphia fair. Hence, in an era of centennial celebrations,<sup>5</sup> it seemed a natural idea to commemorate the centenary of Brazil's declaration of independence from Portugal in 1822 with a world's fair. Despite Brazilian efforts made during the nineteenth-century world's fairs to look like a modern progressive country, Brazil could not overcome European stereotypes: "[...] tinha justamente o physique de role exigido para o país exótico, produtor de matérias-primas, de una rudeza só suavizada pelo apelo a sensualidade tropical inata de seu povo."<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, the idea of a universal exposition for the year 1922 had

4. See the study of Brazil's presence at international expositions, dealing especially with photo collections, by Matia Inez Turazzi, *Poses e trejeitos na era do espetáculo: a fotografia e as exposições universais (1839-1889)*. Like Mexico, Brazil always "procura mostrar a imagem de um país tropical promissor." See report of this research in *Domingo. Journal do Brazil*, July 12, 1992.

5. See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1987.

6. See Sandra Jatahy Pesavento, "Exposições universais: palcos de exibição do mundo burgues: em cena, Brasil e Estados Unidos," *Siglo XIX. Revista de Historia*, no. 12, July-December 1992, pp. 63-85.

been discussed since the late 1890s, and by the 1910s plans were ready for the *Exposição Internacional do Centenario* to be located in the capital city of Rio de Janeiro, looking out across Guanabara Bay to Niterói.<sup>7</sup>

Originally planned to be a national exposition, the Rio fair, held from September 1922 to July 1923, gradually took on the structure and organization of the typical nineteenth-century style universal exposition. In common with many nineteenth-century expositions, Rio's fair was tightly linked to the urban transformation of the city which had passed from the artistic and monumental concerns of a *belle époque* urban center to the more modern preoccupations with sanitation and tourism. The fair had a strong hygienic emphasis, and included campaigns against tuberculosis and venereal diseases, and an international effort to change the city's reputation as an unhealthy tropical port.<sup>8</sup> Both an aesthetic and sanitary transformation was necessary to change the image of a city and its people, as historian Nicolau Sevcenko explained, "vivendo no maior desconforto, imundície e promiscuidade e pronta para armar em barricadas as vielhas estreitas do centro ao som do primeiro grito de motim."<sup>9</sup> Caught up in this spirit, *The New York Times*

7. About the 1922 Rio exposition, see *O Livro d'Ouro, Edição Conmemorativa, 1822-1922*, Rio de Janeiro, Journal do Commerce, 1922; Annie S. Peck, "The International Exposition of Brazil," *The New York Times Current History*, vol. 15, no. 5, 1923, pp. 1042-1049; J.E. Findling, ed., *Historical Dictionary of World's Fair and Expositions, 1851-1988*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1990; Marly Silva de Motta, *A nação faz 100 anos. A questão nacional no centenário da independência*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora da Fundação Getulio Vargas, 1992; Lucia Lippi Oliveira, "As festas que a República manda guardar," *Estudos Históricos*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1989, pp. 172-189.

8. In 1903 this sanitary reform began in Rio; the Prefeitura do Distrito Federal (headed by Pereira Passos) undertook the course of sanitary reforms, which included a Haussman-like reform of avenues and gardens, as well as a new sanitary code. After all, Brazil was one of the few countries who had experienced popular revolts caused by sanitary reforms and the popular opposition to vaccination in 1904. About this revolt, see Jeffrey D. Needell, "The 'Revolata contra Vacina' of 1904: The Revolt against 'Modernization' in 'Belle-Epoque' Rio de Janeiro," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 67, no. 2, May 1987, pp. 233-269; about the reforms see Jaime Larr Benchimol, *Pereira Passos: um Haussmann tropical: a renovação urbana da cidade do Rio de Janeiro no início do século XX*, Rio de Janeiro, Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1990; and Jeffrey D. Needell, *A Tropical Belle Époque, Elite Culture and Society in Turn-of-the-century Rio de Janeiro*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

9. Nicolau Sevcenko, *Literatura como Missão. Tensões sociais e criação cultural na Primeira República*, São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1983, p. 29.

announced in September 1922 (perhaps somehow optimistically) that “Rio de Janeiro, taken in hand by the sanitarians, has become one of the healthiest of great cities.”<sup>10</sup> The sanitary focus was followed in their exhibits by countries like the U.S. and Portugal, but not by Mexico, to which the fair was a manner of the spirit, rather than a question of sanitation and industry.

Rio’s world’s fair included national and international sections, as well as a products competition. Argentina, Japan, Mexico, Great Britain, the U.S., Italy, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Belgium, France, and Portugal were among the countries with significant displays. The whole fair was characterized by the Portuguese colonial style in galleries and buildings, and hence the foreign pavilions followed rather conservative architectural styles. The U.S. constructed a large building in Portuguese colonial style, meant to be transformed into the American consulate in Rio de Janeiro after the exposition.<sup>11</sup> France built a replica of the 1766 Petit Trianon of Versailles which was afterward donated to the Brazilian Academy of Letters.<sup>12</sup> Overall, the architecture of the Rio fair left a mark of neocolonialism of the city: foreign pavilions in neocolonial or traditional styles, new Brazilian buildings in neocolonial Portuguese style, while the renovation of old Brazilian colonial structures completed this exercise in nostalgia.

Rio’s fair attracted national and international attention, and more than three million people visited the exposition. And yet, it was a very expensive enterprise in both economic and political terms. The fair appeared to be an island of harmony and consensus surrounded by political turmoil, economic crisis, regional rebellions, social unrest, and intellectual controversies. For Brazil itself, 1922 was “a paradigmatic year” of radical changes, especially regarding the definition of the history and identity of a nation which was at the same time pompously commemorating a *de facto* independence by default.<sup>13</sup>

10. *The New York Times*, September 10, 1922. It was argued that Rio had a lower rate of tuberculosis than New York City.

11. The U.S. government authorized one million dollars to be spent in Brazil, of which \$350,000 were for the construction of the building. *The New York Times*, May 28, 1922.

12. According to the Mexican reports, France authorized an expenditure of 5,136,000 francs. See Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, México, Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada (hereafter SRE) 18-5-72 I. See also J. P. Curtis, “Architecture of the Brazil Centennial Exposition,” *Art and Architecture*, September 16, 1923, pp. 94-104.

13. Marly Silva da Motta observed: “1922 pode ser considerado um ano paradigmático, na medida em que nele se concentraram acontecimentos que a historiografia consagrou como



1. General view of the 1922 Centennial Exhibition in Rio de Janeiro. Taken of commemorative book *Livro de Ouro Comemorativo do Centenario da Independencia do Brasil e da Exposição Internacional do Rio de Janeiro, 1822 a 1922-23*. Photograph: Mauricio Tenorio.

1922 was an election year in the weak Brazilian republic, and the regime of President Epitácio Pessoa was threatened by both strong regional conflicts and by military rebellions. But historically, politics and universal expositions have found ways to be mutually complementary, and Pessoa's position vis-à-vis the exposition was similar to that of French President Sadi Carnot during the 1889 Paris world's fair in the no-less-fragile Third French Republic. Both found relief from their political troubles in the expositions, and a way to show political and economic vitality. For Pessoa, it was also a way to reinforce the centralization of power in a context of regional conflicts,<sup>14</sup> though the fair did not help in the regime's attempts to diminish the charges of corruption and waste leveled against it, of which the fair itself was a major example. This was evident even for Alonso Torre Díaz, Mexican Minister in Brazil, who wrote home in 1922 about Brazil's precarious financial situation

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marcos fundadores de um 'novo' Brasil: a fundação do Partido Comunista Brasileiro, a Semana de Arte Moderna e a primeira manifestação do movimento tenentista." Motta, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

14. For a summary account of the Brazilian First Republic, see Boris Fausto, "Brazil: The



2. Mexican Pavilion (front). Taken of commemorative book *México, sus recursos naturales, su situación actual. Homenaje al Brasil en ocasión del primer centenario de su independencia*. Photograph: M.T.

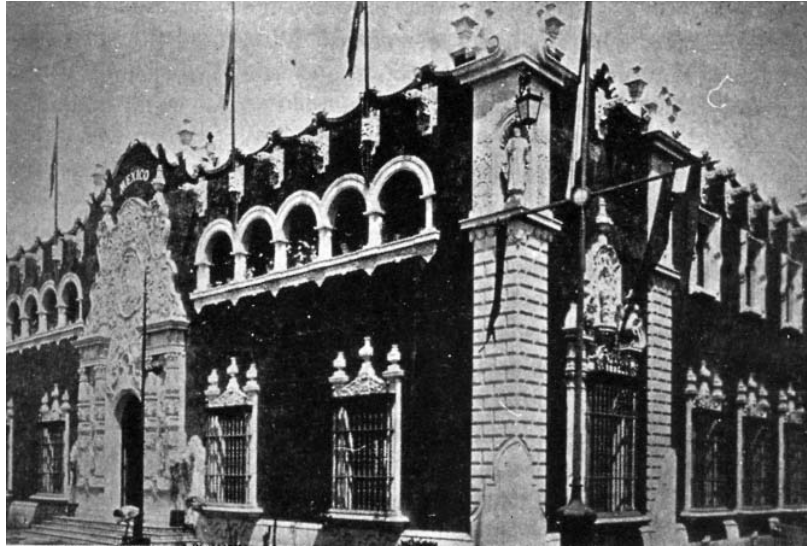
and the *despilfarro* of Pessoa's government which only exacerbated the already difficult political situation which had led to the declaration of a state of siege.<sup>15</sup>

1922 also marked a watershed in Brazilian cultural life. This was the year of the *Semana de Arte Moderna* in Sao Paulo. At that time, Brazilian *modernismo* was consolidating and acquiring recognition within Brazil's intellectual life, with writers and artists such as Mario de Andrade, Oswaldo de Andrade, R. de Carvalho, Malfatti, Trasila, Villa-Lobos. They articulated an irreverent position toward traditional Brazilian naturalist and conservative official culture, of which Rio and its exposition was the capital. In 1922, Brazilian mo-

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Social and Political Structure of the First Republic (1889-1930)," in L. Bethell, ed., *Cambridge History of Latin America*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, vol. v, pp. 779-830.

15. See Torre Díaz' economic and political reports to the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 1922 and 1923, SRE 41-7-23.



3. Mexican Pavilion (corner). Taken of commemorative book *México, sus recursos naturales, su situación actual*. Photograph: Archivo Fotográfico Manuel Toussaint, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UNAM.

dernist intellectuals were redefining the traditional language of national literature and culture, as with Mexico's *contemporáneos*, albeit more profoundly and more nationalistically. They sought a “modernité idéologique et ironique donc, à la rencontre du cosmopolite et du national, mais qui est d’abord choix du national.”<sup>16</sup> For Brazil it was in 1922 that the *Antropofagia* came to stay.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, the centennial exposition of Rio exhibited the art of *ordem e progresso*, the neocolonial architecture and an overall pro-Iberian environment very much fostered by a city already in the *belle époque* style with a

16. Daniel Pécaut, *Entre le peuple et la nation. Les intellectuels et la politique au Brésil*, Paris, Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1988, p. 18. See also pp. 11–46.

17. For a short review of the development of Brazilian intellectual life in this period, see Alfredo Bosi, “As Letras na primeira república,” in Buarque de Hollanda, ed., *História Geral de Civilização Brasileira*, São Paulo, Difel, 1977, vol. VIII, pp. 295–319; Wilson Martins, *História da Inteligência Brasileira*, vol. VI (1915–1933), pp. 272–376; Aracy Amaral, *Artes plásticas na Semana de 22*, São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1970; D. Pécaut, *op. cit.*; and Sergio Miseli, *Intelectuais e classe dirigente no Brasil (1920–1945)*, São Paulo, Difel, 1979.



growing Spanish and Portuguese immigrant population. The exposition constituted a rather traditional *aula de civismo*.<sup>18</sup> While the modernists were articulating the *Paulicea Desvairada*, Rio was organizing a neocolonial patriotic event. Industrious Sao Paulo was the center of rejection of the traditional Portuguese legacy, epitomized by the attempt to create a uniquely Brazilian language; it was the future of the nation. For the progressive cultural and economic sector of Sao Paulo, Rio was the anti-nation.<sup>19</sup>

To this exposition, to this Brazil, President Álvaro Obregón sent not only a notable Mexican exhibit, but a very special delegation headed by the then-Minister of Education, José Vasconcelos, and by the influential General Manuel Pérez Treviño. After Porfirio Díaz' farewell, this constituted the first Mexican presence in an international exposition. The circumstances which had prevented Mexican attendance at the 1915 Panama-Pacific world's fair had radically changed, and Obregón's government had achieved a certain level of economic and political centralization within the revolutionary factions. With Carranza's assassination in 1920, the northern Generals—basically Calles and Obregón—had achieved political and military victories over the numerous revolutionary groups. However, Mexico was still marked by the legacy of years of violence and political unpredictability, and in 1922 nothing seemed to signal the end of those years. Not only was a political balance still being negotiated with arms, money, and words, but also the notions of nationalism, national culture, and education were in a state of flux. In this uncertain scenario, the significance of random historical circumstances, as well as the *virtù* of historical actors, stands out before the historian's scrutiny. When uncertainty reigns, and when the forming of a national image is at issue, the symbols and forms are likely to come by decisive action on the part of one or another faction. This is what the Mexican Ulysses, José Vasconcelos, did in 1922.

In 1922, among the fundamental preoccupations of Obregón's government was the U.S. recognition of the new regime, and the rehabilitation of the international financial reputation of Mexico, lost after years of violence and economic chaos. Adolfo de la Huerta, Minister of Economy, had tried to negotiate old and new loans with American banks, but it was difficult to overcome the international image of Mexico as a violent and generally inse-

18. So was argued by the organizers of the exhibition, quoted by da Motta, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

19. An explanation of this dichotomy can be found in da Motta, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-102; also in Sevchenko, *op. cit.*

cure country. Simultaneously, an international intellectual and artistic admiration for the achievements of Mexico's popular revolution was growing, and was even shared by some financiers who were art connoisseurs.<sup>20</sup> In this context, for Obregón's regime the Brazilian fair of 1922 offered an opportunity to revitalize Mexico's international reputation by offering the works of a revolutionary Mexico, a nation that was economically and politically stable and secure, but now revolutionary and popular.

The 1922 Brazilian centennial exposition proved to be of importance to the U.S. and Europe as well. The Zweig-like image of Brazil as the land of the future, though as idealized as that of any other Latin American country, seemed to have great appeal for the world. The importance of this event for the U.S. was demonstrated both by United States expenditures for the fair, and by the presence of Secretary of State Hughes,<sup>21</sup> though it might be said that the U.S. was only paying back the visit of Dom Pedro II to the 1876 Centennial Fair of Philadelphia. Still, the official American presence was very significant, and it included also an important private participation (especially remarkable were the company displays of the Westinghouse Corporation).<sup>22</sup> Militarily, given the regional alliances already established by the U.S. in Latin America, the Brazilian exposition was an excellent occasion for consolidating the agreement with its most important ally in Latin America. What was sought in this instance was a treaty with the Brazilian government to reconstruct the Brazilian naval force. The Mexican Minister in Brazil related his private conversation with President Pessoa, and explained the Brazilian President's strong pro-Americanism which, he advised, ought to be considered with great suspicion.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the American interest in joining the Brazilian fair made the exhibition all the more appealing for the Mexican government.

In addition, there was the elegant diplomatic excuse of reciprocity: Brazil,

20. In this regard, see Tenorio, "Gringos Viejos: radicales norteamericanos en los años treinta y su visión de México (una interpretación)," *Secuencia*, no. 22; and Helen Delper, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935*, Tuscaloosa, 1992.

21. In *La raza cósmica*, Vasconcelos talks about a diplomatic encounter with Hughes in a tense environment. See José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica. Misión de la raza iberoamericana. Notas de viajes a la América del Sur*, Paris, Agencia Mundial de Librería, 1925, pp. 115-116.

22. Peck, *op. cit.*

23. Torre Díaz sent classified letters to the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs informing of his talk with Pessoa who, he argued, was promoting a Society of Nations, which he believed was too pro-American. SRE 7-16-67 II.

it was officially argued, had had an important presence in both the centennial celebration of Mexico's independence in 1910 and in the commemoration of the conclusion of Mexico's independence in 1921. When in 1922 an editorial in Mexico City's newspaper *Excelsior* criticized the expenses of Mexico's display at Rio de Janeiro, arguing that Brazil had not done the same for Mexico, the government responded that Brazil had sent special diplomats and a military delegation to Mexico's jubilees.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Brazil had declared Mexico's official day of consummation of independence as a national holiday, and had also named one of Rio de Janeiro's main avenues as "Avenida México."

In 1921 Obregón's government began to plan Mexico's attendance in Brazil. The budget that was assigned for this purpose is unclear, and seems to have been administered in a disorganized fashion. Obregón himself decided to send a military battalion and an old navy boat, the *Nicolás Bravo*. As chief of this military delegation, he appointed the influential General Manuel Pérez Treviño, chief of the "Estado Mayor del Presidente," and eventually a prominent *callista*.<sup>25</sup> A military delegation was customary at this kind of celebration, but for Mexico in 1922 this decision was rather surprising. It constituted an expensive gesture which contrasted with the economic difficulties the country was then experiencing.

José Vasconcelos was appointed the special Mexican delegate to the Brazilian celebration. With this selection, the Mexican government also showed its eagerness to give an impression of stability and political unity. When Obregón appointed José Vasconcelos, he was not thinking, as Vasconcelos himself later wrote, to remove Vasconcelos from the political controversies surrounding the presidential succession of 1924. Indeed, Obregón was maneuvering with Calles over the military and political formulas to continue in power, but this he could do so with or without Vasconcelos in Mexico. In fact, Obregón might have been perfectly aware that Vasconcelos would never agree with the new political *status quo* established with Calles. Though Vasconcelos was very helpful to Obregón in dealing with revolutionary intellectuals, in the final analysis he was quite dispensable. Mexico was a country of

24. See SRE 18-5-72 II. For insights on how this excuse was constructed within the government, see the account of one of the actors in this drama, Alberto J. Pani, *Mi contribución al nuevo régimen (1910-1933)*, Mexico, Cultura, 1936, pp. 292-298.

25. For this official appointment see SRE 5-20-524.



4. Mexican Pavilion (yard). Taken from commemorative book *México, sus recursos naturales, su situación actual*. Photograph: M.T.

*caudillos*, and regardless of how indispensable intellectuals felt they were, they were largely irrelevant to the post-revolutionary political *status quo*.

Obregón's decision to appoint Vasconcelos was in fact primarily influenced by Vasconcelos' own lobbying (within political circles, Vasconcelos clearly expressed his intentions of being appointed special delegate to Brazil), and secondly, by Vasconcelos' intellectual prestige among the Latin American intellectual elites. Vasconcelos had been in South America before 1922, and he wished to return to continue his thinking and writings on the emergence of Latin Americans as a leading race in the world. And indeed from his 1922 trip to Brazil and Argentina came his most renowned book, *La raza cósmica*, published in 1925, though for all its reputation, the book is but the ruminations of a traveler in South America. Obregón was aware of Vasconcelos' fame, and sent him not only to Brazil, but to Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and Washington as the intellectual speaker of new revolutionary Mexico.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> In *El desastre*, Vasconcelos argued that Obregón aimed to put him far from Mexico in order to be free to maneuver politically, and also to limit his growing prestige as Minister

Unlike the Porfirian displays, the Mexican exhibit in Rio de Janeiro was not under the direction of a single group. First, there was the military delegation which reported directly to the President.<sup>27</sup> Second, there was the display of Mexican products and manufactures, which was supervised by a special agent assigned to the Commerce Department of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.<sup>28</sup> Finally, there was the special Mexican delegation headed by Vasconcelos. Nonetheless, it was Vasconcelos and his own team that lastly gave a coherent rhetorical and ideological shape to Mexico's display in Brazil. If there was an image of Mexico displayed in Rio, it was that constructed by Vasconcelos.

From the beginning, the diverse agents involved in Mexico's displays in Brazil suggested various ways of showing Mexico to the world. This was a bureaucracy which had no experience in these matters. However, they had their own idea of what Mexico was like. This idea was a bizarre combination of revolutionary popular discourses mixed with patriotic elements rooted in the historical, anthropological, sociological, and artistic arguments first articulated by Porfirian intellectuals and politicians. For instance, Alonso Torre Díaz recommended at the end of 1921 that Mexico should send to Brazil reproductions from the National Museum's collection of Mexican antiquities. This was a collection that had been doggedly copied and re-copied by the Porfirian exhibition team. He also recommended the construction of a pavilion in the *azteca* style.<sup>29</sup> He even spread this possibility to the Brazilian

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of Education. He recalled a meeting with Obregón as following: "A media comida, el presidente anunció: —He pensado nombrarlo embajador Especial para las fiestas del Centenario de Brasil. Si le parece, se trasladará Ud. después a Buenos Aires para la toma de posesión del nuevo Presidente. ¡A Usted lo quieren por el sur... y no estaría alejado de su labor, más de tres meses! —la oportunidad de visitar América del Sur no se paga con nada —expresé al instante—. "Vasconcelos, *El desastre*, Mexico, Botas, 1957, pp. 145-148. Alberto J. Pani, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, argued that he himself suggested Vasconcelos' name to Obregón, bearing in mind Vasconcelos expressed desires to be appointed. See Pani, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-298. In addition, there is evidence of Vasconcelos lobbying to be appointed for this position, both in the Archivo General de la Nación, México, Ramo Presidentes, Álvaro Obregón y Plutarco Elías Calles (hereafter AGN OBREGÓN-CALLES), and in the SRE 18-5-72, I, II, III.

27. See General Manuel Pérez Treviño long report of this delegation's activities: "Informe del comandante del cañonero Nicolás Bravo en su viaje por América del Sur", SRE 18-5-72, II. And letter to Obregón in AGN OBREGÓN CALLES- 104-b-30 (20, 21).

28. See SRE 18-5-72, II.

29. SRE 18-5-72 I, letters November and December.

media, and thus the *Journal do Commercio* announced in November 1921 that Mexico's pavilion was to be an Aztec building.<sup>30</sup> In turn, Obregón, with the same motivation, inquired about the cost of a bronze replica of the Cuauhtemoc monument in Mexico City's Paseo de la Reforma. As a result, the Roman-style Cuauhtemoc of Noreña, inaugurated in 1885, and the main relic of official Porfirian indigenism, was once again copied to be shipped to Rio as it had previously been sent to Paris, Chicago, and countless other places. A contract was signed with the prestigious Tiffany Company of New York in July 1922 for the manufacture of this replica.<sup>31</sup> Ironically enough, Tiffany offered a discount to the revolutionary government because, after all, Porfirian Mexico had been a trustworthy old customer.<sup>32</sup> Tiffany had long been associated with Mexico's symbolic devices, and on this occasion was not only employed to do the Cuauhtemoc replica, but also the commemorative gold and bronze medals of Mexico's display at Rio's fair.<sup>33</sup>

Vasconcelos appointed his own team to accompany him on this trip. This team constituted a gathering of intellectuals, artists, and musicians who followed Vasconcelos throughout his tenure as Minister of Education, and later as presidential candidate in 1929. Using the Porfirian model, Vasconcelos aimed to form a professional team able to produce the different effects involved in presenting a complete picture of a modern nation. His team was formed by the professional diplomats Pablo Campos Ortiz and Alfonso de Rozenweig, both as advisers; the painters Roberto Montenegro and Gabriel Fernández Ledesma; the poets and writers Carlos Pellicer and Julio Torri. This last was the first Secretary of Vasconcelos's team, because, as he ironically wrote to Alfonso Reyes, they could never be "terceros secretarios, nomás eso faltaba."<sup>34</sup> In Brazil, they were joined by the Dominican writer and literary critic, and long time resident of Mexico, Pedro Henríquez Ureña.

Once Vasconcelos took control of Mexico's display, things started to have

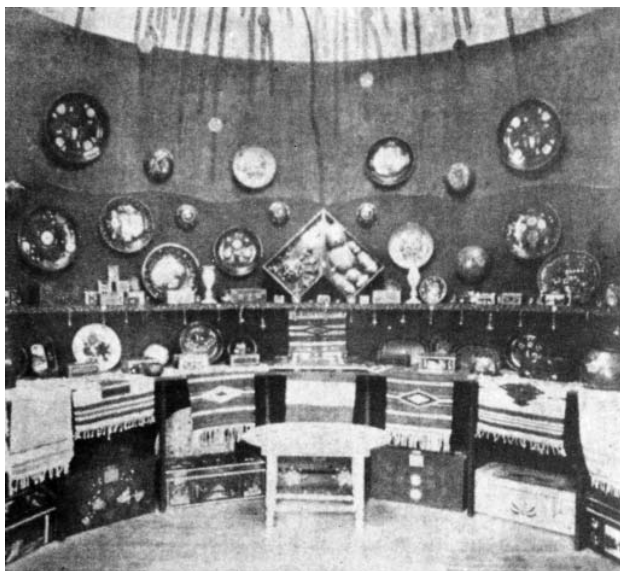
30. *Journal do Commercio*, November 21, 1921.

31. SRE 7-16-67, II.

32. SRE 7-16-67, I. Tiffany was hired even if Williams Inc. offered a better deal (May, 1922). Porfirio Díaz' regime hired Tiffany, among other things, for the crystal curtain of the Palacio de Bellas Artes.

33. There is no record of these medals in SRE, but Vasconcelos mentioned that they were distributed "una para el presidente de México, otra para el presidente de Brasil, otra para el embajador de Brasil en México, una más para Pansi [Pani] y otra para mí." *El desastre*, p. 149.

34. Torri, *op. cit.*, letter to Alfonso Reyes related to his Brazilian trip, pp. 240-243.

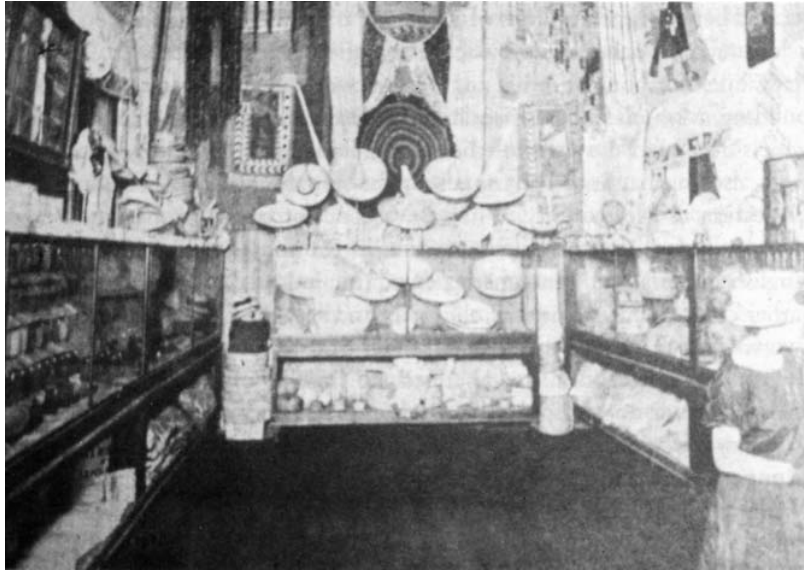


5. Mexican Pavilion (interior). Taken of commemorative book *México, sus recursos naturales, su situación actual*. Photograph: M.T.

a clear ideological direction. Vasconcelos could do nothing to nullify the reproduction of Cuauhtemoc monument. “En vísperas de embarcarme para Río de Janeiro Pansi [Pani] me informó que estaba ya vaciada una réplica de la estatua de Cuauhtémoc de Paseo de la Reforma y que ese sería el obsequio de México al Centenario de la hermana República. No tuve pues elección en la materia, ni opuse consideración que por otra parte habrían resultado ya inútiles,” he argued.<sup>35</sup> He did not agree with the idea of reproducing the image of an Indian hero of a nation which was, he thought, fundamentally Hispanic. However, he assumed control of the rest of the Mexican exhibit, making the image of Mexico the expression par excellence of the *raza cósmica* of which he dreamed.

Hence, due to Vasconcelos’ influence, a contest was held for the construction not of an Aztec building but of a colonial-style pavilion. In December 1921 the contest took place with fifteen different projects that entered as contestants and with a jury formed by engineers and architects such as José Vázquez Schiaffino, Sota Riva, Ortiz Monasterio, Ignacio López Ban-

35. Vasconcelos, *El desastre*, p. 149.



6. Mexican Pavilion (interior). Taken of commemorative book *México, sus recursos naturales, su situación actual*. Photograph: M.T.

calari, and Ignacio Añerrecá.<sup>36</sup> Two young architects, Carlos Obregón Santacilia and Carlos Tarditti, won this contest, and for the former this was the beginning of a successful career as the architect for the needs of the post-revolutionary governments. (The Benito Juárez school—1923-1924—was his main work in neo-colonial style *à la* Vasconcelos).<sup>37</sup> Although Obregón Santacilia eventually converted to the functionalist modern Le Corbusier type of architecture, for the Mexican pavilion in Rio de Janeiro he designed a Mexican colonial baroque building which echoed the new building for the Ministry of Education, in construction at the time. It was a building of 600 sq.m.,

36. SRE 18-5-72, I and II.

37. Obregón Santacilia grew up in the Porfirian aristocracy, and was educated in the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Carlos. He was, first, a great promotor of colonialist revival in Mexico, inspired by the *ateneísta* Jesús T. Acevedo, and following the teachings of Federico E. Mariscal. Later he experimented with Art Deco, and finally with functionalist mechanist architecture. With his building for the 1922 Brazilian exhibition, and with his friendship with Pani, he began his successful career as one of the architects of post-revolutionary regimes. Small wonder, as late as 1988, the official post-revolutionary party (PRI) included Obregón



located between the pavilions of Denmark and Czechoslovakia. In it, Vasconcelos sought to epitomize his whole conception of a new Mexico.

While Obregón Santacilia and Tarditti worked on the construction of the building, Montenegro and Fernández Ledesma designed the mural paintings which decorated the walls of the second floor of the building. Both artists were also in charge of the murals in the new building of the Ministry of Education in Mexico City. Whereas Vasconcelos criticized the mural paintings on the walls of the British pavilion in Rio for being classic examples of English imperialism,<sup>38</sup> an American art critic judged Montenegro's murals as rather colorful but traditional allegories and scenes of Mexico: "on one wall two women in natural dress stretch their arms toward a pile of natural products." In the reception, he described the images "of the ladies and gentlemen of the wig and wasp-waist period, in their best brocades and buckles."<sup>39</sup> These were colonial scenes *panneaux* from 18th-century Mexico. In fact, Montenegro had just returned from Europe and was being promoted, along with many other artists (including Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco)

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Santacilia in its collection of books entitled "Forjadores de México." Among his main works there is the transformation of the Porfirian Legislative Palace into the Monument of Revolution, the building for the Secretaría de Salubridad, the Reforma and Del Prado hotels, and the offices of the Bank of Mexico in the former Guardiola square. His friendship with Tarditti, and his fascination with colonial architecture, dates from the school days. See Carlos Obregón Santacilia, *Cincuenta años de arquitectura mexicana*, Mexico, Patria, 1925; by him also, *El maquinismo, la vida y la arquitectura*, Mexico, Letras de México, 1939; and "La Revolución Mexicana y la arquitectura, conferencia dictada dentro del ciclo la Revolución Mexicana y las Artes," Mexico, 1960. About him, see María Luisa Adame, "Arquitecto Carlos Obregón Santacilia," cultural supplement *Novedades*, October 16, 1955; Israel Katzman, *Arquitectura contemporánea mexicana, precedentes y desarrollo*, Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1963; Partido Revolucionario Institucional, *Tradición de la cultura, nacionalismo cultural. Carlos Obregón Santacilia*, Mexico, Partido Revolucionario Institucional, 1988; Ramón Vargas Salguero, "La arquitectura de la revolución," in *México: 75 años de revolución. Educación, cultura y comunicaciones*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988, vol. II, pp. 437-477; and Enrique X. de Anda, *La arquitectura de la Revolución Mexicana: corrientes y estilo en la década de los veinte*, Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1990.

38. In the interior of the British pavilion, Vasconcelos argued, "estaban representadas las cuatro partes del mundo, como lo acostumbran los ingleses, para recordar en forma muda que son ellos los amos." Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, p. 82.

39. Margaret Hutton Abels, "Painting at the Brazil Centennial Exposition," *Art and Archaeology*, vol. 16, Summer 1923, pp. 105-114.

by Vasconcelos cultural crusade. But Montenegro was especially liked by Vasconcelos because of his post-academic modern but not aesthetically or politically radical paintings.<sup>40</sup> As a whole, the building and its interior were presented as an example of the optimal synthesis between the essence of Mexico—i.e. the Spanish spiritual legacy—and the particular expression of it given by the Indian influence, as exemplified in the Mexican baroque.

In 1922, Obregón Santacilia was only a 26-year-old architect eager to get contracts. His infatuation with the neo-colonial style would not last long, and he would soon become one of the greatest promoters of functionalist architecture in Mexico. Eventually, in the 1930s, he would argue that “No hay que pretender que la Arquitectura moderna forme un ‘estilo’. Desde la aparición de la máquina y la universalización de la arquitectura murieron los estilos.”<sup>41</sup> And as late as the 1940s, he observed that “la tradición en formas es un escollo para la creación moderna pura,”<sup>42</sup> but he added that “si por añadidura surge en nuestras creaciones de hoy el espíritu de la raza, que es lo único que puede proyectarse en la arquitectura actual, que sea bienvenido.”<sup>43</sup> But in 1922 he was fulfilling the influential—both in architecture and political thought—pro-Hispanic understanding of Mexico. Not surprisingly, an American visitor described his building as a “mingling of Spanish and native styles with polychromia decoration.”<sup>44</sup> Another American commentator argued that the Mexican building in Rio was “an admirable presentation of the nation’s artistic aspirations.”<sup>45</sup> A Brazilian journalist also thought that the Mexican pavilion was quite distinguished “pelo matiz com que o pintaram em sua parte exterior, já pela linha architectonica inconfundivel, onde os interessantissimos motivos precolombinos da edificação monumental aztéca

40. In this regard, see Justino Fernández, *Roberto Montenegro*, Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1962; and Fausto Ramírez’ analysis of the artistic and cultural debate between 1914 and 1921 (an examination of journals and newspapers of those years), Fausto Ramírez, *Crónica de las artes plásticas en los años de López Velarde, 1914-1921*, Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1990. See also Montenegro’s autobiographical notes, R. Montenegro, *Planos en el tiempo*, Mexico, Arana, 1962.

41. Obregón Santacilia, *El maquinismo...*, Mexico, Publicaciones Letras de México, 1939, p. 50.

42. Obregón Santacilia, *México como eje*, Mexico, Atlante, 1947, p. 103.

43. *Ibidem*.

44. Peck, *op. cit.*

45. Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

se casam, harmonicamente, ao conjunto e aos detalhes tirados da arquitectura medieval hespanhola."<sup>46</sup>

These characteristics of the building were not achieved at random, but were rather a conscious allegorical exercise. Since the 1890s, architecture had been the terrain of the crystallization of the intellectual and political debate about the nation and its modern future.<sup>47</sup> Vasconcelos himself had a great concern with architecture. For him architecture was a perfect art because it combined aesthetics with social functions. Both buildings and monuments constituted the chief components of his cultural campaign as Minister of Education.<sup>48</sup> He claimed that it was in architecture that he sought to summarize his conception of the Mexican nationhood, as he indeed attempted in the new building for the Ministry of Education whose construction he promoted. In it, as he himself argued in *La raza cósmica*,

[...] para expresar todas estas ideas que hoy procuro exponer en rápida síntesis, [...] procuré darles signos en el nuevo Palacio de la Educación Pública de México. Sin elementos bastantes para hacer exactamente lo que deseaba, tuve que conformarme con una construcción renacentista española, de dos patios, con arquerías y pasarelas, que tienen algo de la impresión de un ala. En los tableros de los cuatro ángulos del patio anterior hice labrar alegorías de España, de México, Grecia y la India, las cuatro civilizaciones particulares que más tienen que contribuir a la formación de América Latina. En seguida, debajo de estas cuatro alegorías, debieron levantarse cuatro grandes estatuas de piedra de las cuatro grandes razas contemporáneas: la Blanca, la Roja, la Negra, y la Amarilla, para

46. Quoted by informe de Torre Díaz, November 10, 1922. Found SRE 18-5-72, III.

47. See Katzman, *op. cit.*, and also by him, *Arquitectura del siglo XIX en México*, Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1973; Carlos Lira Vásquez, *Para una historia de la arquitectura mexicana*, Mexico, Tilde, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana/Azcapotzalco, 1990; Xavier Moysén, "Nacionalismo y arquitectura," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, no. 55, 1986; Rafael López Rangel, *La modernidad arquitectónica mexicana. Antecedentes y vanguardia, 1900-1940*, Mexico, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana/Azcapotzalco, 1989; and De Anda, *op. cit.*

48. In this regard, see Claude Fell, *José Vasconcelos: los años del águila (1920-1925)*, Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1989, pp. 456-462; for an analysis of Vasconcelos' own self-construction of his spiritual ideas in education around 1922, see the lucid, if short, essay by Enrique Krauze, "José Vasconcelos en 1921: arquitecto del espíritu," in Jorge Enrique Hardoy, ed., *Cultura urbana latinoamericana*, Buenos Aires, 1985, pp. 95-102.



7. Replica of Cuauhtemoc's monument, sented to Rio de Janeiro's international fair. Taken of Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México, Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada. Photograph: M.T.

indicar que la América es hogar de todas, y de todas necesita. Finalmente, en el centro debía erigirse un monumento que en alguna forma simbolizara la ley de los tres estados: el material, el intelectual y el estético. Todo para indicar que mediante el ejercicio de la triple ley, llegaremos en América, antes que en parte alguna del globo, a la creación de una raza hecha con el tesoro de todas las anteriores, la raza final, la raza cósmica.<sup>49</sup>

Vasconcelos' conception of a hybrid but fundamentally neocolonial architecture epitomized the cultural synthesis he himself represented in Mexican cultural life. By the 1920s he had introduced the most influential synthesis of his time for conceiving what it was to be Mexican, and what Mexico ought to be like in the future. To find parallels to his position, one would have to go back to Lucas Alamán and his pro-Hispanic but complex and rich synthesis of Mexico's history.<sup>50</sup> If as Manuel Gómez Morín has argued, out of

49. Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, p. 40.

50. For the early intellectual influences of Vasconcelos, see John Skirius, *José Vasconcelos y la cruzada de 1929*, Mexico, Siglo Veintiuno, 1978, pp. 13-43.

the chaos of 1915 a new Mexico was born,<sup>51</sup> it was in the early 1920s, with Vasconcelos at the Ministry of Education, that a group of intellectuals had the opportunity to give shape to that new nation.

It was in architecture where the new shape started to be visible. However, it was there also that the new Mexico began to realize indeed how old it was. In the Porfirian period the Cuauhtemoc monument had synthesized the pro-indigenist tendencies of some political and intellectual circles, in the same way that these trends were architecturally materialized in the Aztec palace constructed for the 1889 Paris world's fair. However, the pro-Hispanic architectural tendencies began to acquire significance in Mexico since the 1900s. Jesús T. Acevedo, an architect trained in the last decade of the Porfirian period, and a good friend of Vasconcelos, making use of a biological metaphor, claimed that it was the *colonial architecture* the main matrix (*directriz*) of evolution, from which a real national architecture could emerge.<sup>52</sup> Also in 1913 Federico E. Mariscal criticized the attempts to recreate the pre-Hispanic architecture and pointed out that it was in the *colonial times* that the elements of the Mexican nationhood were combined, and thus "esa arquitectura es la que debe sufrir todas las transformaciones necesarias, para revelar en los edificios actuales las modificaciones que haya sufrido de entonces acá la vida del mexicano."<sup>53</sup> Other names also were associated with this reconsideration of the colonial architecture: Manuel G. Revilla in the 1890s, Manuel Romero de Terreros in the 1920s, José Juan Tablada, Manuel Toussaint and even Gerardo Murillo, Dr. Atl, with his works on colonial churches.<sup>54</sup>

51. "Y en el año de 1915, cuando más seguro parecía el fracaso revolucionario... empezó a señalarse una nueva orientación... Del caos de aquel año nació la revolución, del caos de aquel año nació un nuevo México." Quoted by Carlos Monsiváis, "Notas sobre la cultura mexicana en el siglo xx," in Daniel Cosío Villegas, ed., *Historia general de México*, Mexico, El Colegio de México, 1985, vol. 2, p. 1406.

52. Lecture delivered in the 1910s, Jesús T. Acevedo, *Disertaciones de un arquitecto*, prologue by Justino Fernández, Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1967, p. 53.

53. Federico E. Mariscal, *La patria y la arquitectura nacional. Resúmenes de las conferencias dadas en la casa de la Universidad Popular Mexicana del 21 de octubre de 1913 al 29 de julio de 1914*, Mexico, Stephan y Torres, 1915, p. 10.

54. See José Juan Tablada, *Historia del arte en México*, Mexico, 1927; Manuel Toussaint, *Arte colonial en México*; Gerardo Murillo, *Iglesias de México*, Mexico, 1924-1927, 6 vols. In this regard see also Manuel González Galván, "La revaloración de la arquitectura colonial en el primer cuarto del siglo xx: teoría y práctica," in *Saturnino Herrán. Jornadas de homenaje*, Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1989, pp. 95-106.

What was important about this post-revolutionary neocolonialism in architecture was not its pro-Hispanism *per se*—this had been present throughout Mexican history—but the conception of it as a democratic, popular, and natural direction for the country to follow. As such it was maintained by both indigenists and Hispanists. The prominent post-revolutionary indigenist Manuel Gamio believed that in order to escape the vicious circle of European imitation, all too common during the Porfirian period, Mexican architecture ought to rediscover Spain.<sup>55</sup> Gamio disliked the American-style suburbs of Mexico city, such as the Juárez *colonia*, and although he was willing to consider some architecture inspired by pre-Hispanic styles, he favored the Mexican colonial styles which seemed to include already the hybrid synthesis for which he was looking.<sup>56</sup> In the same way, Vasconcelos favored the neocolonial style as the fortified merger of Indian hands and Spanish techniques and intelligence. Indeed his pro-Hispanism in architecture echoed Rodo's type of pan-Latin American nationalism—and anti-Americanism.

In constructing a colonial building in Rio de Janeiro in 1922 Vasconcelos was not only fulfilling his ideas but also following a continental tendency. Since the 1890s, Hispanism had emerged in Spain as a conservative, Catholic, and anti-American ideology that maintained the belief in the uniqueness and superiority of the Hispanic race. This ideology was echoed throughout Latin America, often supporting conservative, Catholic, and nationalist populism.<sup>57</sup> In Spain, the consequences of Hispanism could be seen in the emergence of the Spanish Falange and in the official attempts to

55. See Manuel Gamio, "Actual renacimiento," *Arquitectura*, April, 1922; and also by him "El actual renacimiento arquitectónico de México," *Ethnos*, vol. 1, no. 8-12, 1921, pp. 248-250; about Gamio's architectural conception see also Ángeles González Gamio, *Manuel Gamio. Una lucha sin final*, Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1987, pp. 67-74; and about neo-colonial architecture see López Rangel, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-45.

56. The construction of his own house in neo-colonial Mexican style, in the Juárez *colonia*, shows this. See González Gamio, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

57. Regarding the ideology of Hispanism, see the uneven but useful study by Frederick B. Pike, *Hispanism, 1898-1936. Spanish Conservatives and Liberals and Their Relations with Spanish America*, London, University of Notre Dame, 1971; for the origins of this tendency, see Mark Jay Van Aken, *Pan-Hispanism: its Origins and Development to 1866*, Berkeley, University of California, 1959; for the influence of falangism in Hispanism, see Ricardo Pérez Montfort, *Hispanismo y Falange. Los sueños imperiales de la derecha española*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992, especially pp. 19-73.

reestablish, at least spiritually, the *Magnae Hispaniae*. Shortly after the 1922 Brazilian fair, the 1929 Ibero-American exhibition would best epitomize this Hispanism.

Consequently, whereas in São Paulo the *Semana de Arte Moderna* threatened the old aesthetic understandings of Brazil, Rio became the bastion of a new discourse based on the recovery of Brazil's colonial legacy as part of a continental ideology. The avant-garde nationalist Brazilian intellectuals of the 1920s eventually favored Le Corbusier functionalism as Obregón Santacilia did in Mexico. But the no less nationalist official architects of Rio's exposition found in the neo-Portuguese colonial architecture a way to redefine the national personality of the capital city after the *belle époque*. This tendency in Brazil went back to the works of a Portuguese architect resident in São Paulo, Ricardo Severo, and his influence would enrich all the main architects of modern Brazil, especially José M. Carneiro da Cunha Filho in Rio de Janeiro. As a reaction to the traditional neoclassical styles, and as a way to follow the international tendency of eclectic revival, Brazilian neocolonialism was best immortalized in Rio de Janeiro's centennial exposition.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, among the conservative Brazilian republican faction, Mexico's neocolonial building, together with the American neo-Portuguese pavilion, were the best like of the foreign pavilions. Even President Pessoa expressed to ambassador Torre Díaz his satisfaction that the two Latin American countries with distinctive colonial styles were Mexico and Brazil.<sup>59</sup>

The neocolonial styles which supposedly synthesized the various national tendencies with the basic Spanish matrix, represented indeed the real first beginning of the new *raza cósmica*. Vasconcelos described the Brazilian buildings of the exhibition as "edificios de estilo colonial português... Todo el lujo del Portugal conquistador, con mucho tinte Ibérico y algo de Oriente; pero los arquitectos brasileños han agrandado las construcciones, las han hecho graciosas y aéreas. Así corresponde a la patria nueva que, en tantos sentidos, mejora y supera a la antigua."<sup>60</sup> Along these lines, the architect who wrote a booklet for visitors that described the architecture of the fair claimed that

58. See Carlos A.C. Lemus, "Arquitettura contemporânea," in Walter Zanini, ed., *História geral de arte no Brasil*, São Paulo, 1983, vol. II, pp. 825-832; and Octaviano C. De Fiore, *Architecture and Sculpture in Brazil*, Albuquerque, The University of New Mexico, Latin American Institution, n.d., pp. 20-23.

59. May, 1922, meeting Torre Díaz-Pessoa, SRE 18-5-72, I.

60. Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, p. 83.

"no Brasil, começa a haver Architectura."<sup>61</sup> In truth, for thinkers like Vasconcelos, the neo-colonial (Hispanic or Portuguese) style meant the renovation of the Iberian race which, he believed, would come to lead Western civilization. Thus, in an interview with a Brazilian newspaper he argued: "considero la influencia europea en nuestros países, como un hecho un tanto olvidado, y únicamente atiendo a lo que estamos creando y a lo que debemos producir; e imagino que el papel de Europa en los próximos decenios será el de observar nuestro libre desarrollo... escribiendo sus observaciones sobre lo que nosotros habremos hecho."<sup>62</sup>

The pro-Hispanic movement was as well-established as the pro-indigenist trend in the discussion about nationalism in Mexico. By 1922, despite Vasconcelos' notoriety at the Ministry of Education, the post-revolutionary indigenism had been redefined by the convergence of several phenomena: the popular mobilization of the Revolution; the metamorphosis of cosmopolitan aesthetics—on the one hand, more innovative and avant-garde, on the other, more socially engaging; by the movement of disciplines like anthropology and archaeology toward a more culturalist (Boas-like) paradigm; and finally by the official policies to delineate by all available means (education, media, murals) the meaning of the new revolutionary nation.<sup>63</sup>

61. A. Moráles de los Rios, "Resumo monographico da evolução da architectura no Brasil," in *Livro de Ouro Commemorativo do Centenario da Independencia do Brasil e da Exposição Internacional do Rio de Janeiro, 1822 a 1922-23*, Rio de Janeiro, Edição do Anuário do Brasil, 1923, p. 103.

62. *Journal do Brasil*, newspaper clipping at SRE, no exact date.

63. The aesthetic transformation that favored the consolidation of indigenism had a long-lasting history. Since the 1860s, this was a common tendency among novelists, painters, and sculptors. During the Porfirian era, paintings and canvases with indigenist motifs were promoted and displayed by the government. The new artistic tendencies of *fin-de-siècle*, all but favored the re-appreciation of indigenist tendencies. As art historian Fausto Ramírez has argued: "el modernismo, al incorporar los postulados de la estética simbolista y con una actitud tolerante y abierta, iba a permitir en teoría superar la exclusividad de la normatividad clasicista y plantear asimismo alternativas válidas al naturalismo. La posibilidad de una valoración justa de lo prehispánico quedó así abierta." In addition, the growing European exoticism and orientalism also fostered this tendency. Furthermore, the growth of Boas in culturalist anthropology since the 1910s created a fertile terrain for indigenist proposals, and the Porfirian government was from the beginning very supportive of this tendency. See Fausto Ramírez, "Vertientes nacionalistas en el modernismo," in *El nacionalismo y el arte mexicano (IX Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte)*, Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1986, pp. 111-167; Monsiváis, *op. cit.*; S.G. Widdifield,



By the 1920s, the combination of these factors had made Indian motifs into fashionable and acceptable cosmopolitan tokens. This trend can be seen in commercial advertisements that are always prompt to recognize and advance new tastes. Thus, one cigarette brand, *El Buen Tono*, that in Porfirian times used to depict French-style women in its publicity, by 1922 advertised its products in Manuel Gamio's indigenist journal *Ethnos* with pre-Hispanic motifs. In the same way, foreign businesses such as the oil company El Águila also turned to pre-Hispanic themes in its advertising.<sup>64</sup> In fact, as an historian of Mexican archaeology observed, "Sobre todo a partir de 1920, por motivos que poco tienen que ver con los estudios arqueológicos, sino más bien con nuevas orientaciones estéticas en realidad emanadas de Europa, los objetos de arte antiguo cobran una importancia y valor antes desconocido."<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, and although he would eventually harbor regrets about the choice, it was Vasconcelos himself who championed the artists who became the masters of Mexican post-revolutionary official indigenism.<sup>66</sup> He favored and sponsored the appreciation of popular arts (*artes populares*), and he did not dismiss the significance of Indians in Mexico's history. In *Indología*, he maintained that the Latin American race contradicted Darwin's theory, since in Mexico and Latin America the races did not follow Darwinian natural selection, but rather lived in cooperation as expressed by theorists like Le-

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"National Art and Identity in Mexico: Images of Indians and Heroes," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1986; for the changing European demand for exotic material, see Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1986; for a lucid analysis of indigenist tendencies in the architecture of world's fairs, for the case of Arab nations, see Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient. Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992.

64. See, for example, *Ethnos. Revista Mensual para la Divulgación de Estudios Antropológicos sobre México y Centro-América*, vol. 1, no. 3, June 1920.

65. Ignacio Bernal, *Historia de la arqueología en México*, Mexico, Porrúa, 1979, p. 180.

66. See José Clemente Orozco's *Autobiografía*, Mexico, Era, 1970. For a discussion on Vasconcelos' official support of *muralismo* see Fell, *op.cit.*, p. 401. In a letter to Gómez Morín, Vasconcelos confessed: "Creo que en el fondo la política y la presidencia misma me tienen sin cuidado; lo que me amarga es ver pasar el tiempo sin que cuaje mi obra inmaterial; mucho más bella que estadios cojos y que escuelas a medio acabar y que planes estropeados por la estulticia protestante y que pinturas dieguinas envilecidas por la caricatura y el énfasis de la grosería que exuda el temperamento plebeyo del pintor de la revolución; la pintó por *commande* y por lo mismo la deformó, la hizo grotesca. *Abjuro de mi vida pasada; toda junta la envuelvo en un mismo horror.*" Underlying mine, from Gómez Morín's archive, quoted by Skirius, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

crerc de Sablon in France and Nicolai in Germany.<sup>67</sup> But Vasconcelos, however messianic, discussed nationalism in the language furnished by the Porfirian era, that is, in terms of race.

The clearest version of Vasconcelos' understanding of race in the 1920s was articulated by him in a series of conferences delivered at the University of Chicago in 1926.<sup>68</sup> Here Vasconcelos aimed to overcome the legacy of nineteenth-century racist theorists that left no room for the Spanish American hybrid peoples. He attacked Spenser and the Latin American scientists who copied the evolutionist racist theories. But he made his defence of miscegenation (*mestizaje*) in two grounds: by vindicating Spanish "spiritual" superiority that permitted the overcoming of racial differences (i.e., through miscegenation); and by counterpointing racial theories on their own terms. Therefore, he tried to prove that miscegenation is both a messianic and a biological conclusion of history: "If we observe human nature closely we find that hybridism in man, as well as in plants, tends to produce better types and tends to rejuvenate those types that have become static."<sup>69</sup> In turn, he observed: "There is nothing left for us to do, but to follow the Spanish tradition of eliminating the prejudice of color, the prejudice of race... No matter what our theoretical opinions might be, we have to start from the fact that the *mestizo* is the predominating element in Mexico."<sup>70</sup> This combination of pro-Hispanism (linked to creole patriotism) and (so to speak) "scientific racist anti-racism," allowed Vasconcelos to defend the universal task of the new *mestizo* nations (i.e., "bringing together all the races of the earth and with the purpose of creating a new type of civilization"). But also it led him to expand the nineteenth century racist theories into the twentieth-century post-revolutionary era. Thus he called for the substitution of Darwinism with Mendelism (in it "we might find more racial hope and more individual strength and faith"), as well as for collaboration of races, in order to avoid to be "overwhelmed by the wave of the Negro, of the Indian, or of the Asiatic."<sup>71</sup>

67. José Vasconcelos, *Indología. Una interpretación de la cultura Ibero-Americana*, Paris, Agencia Mundial de Librería, n.d., pp. 200-229.

68. He was lecturing together with Manuel Gamio, see José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio, *Aspects of Mexican Civilization (Lectures on the Harris Foundation 1926)*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1926.

69. *Ibidem*, p. 85.

70. *Ibidem*, p. 89.

71. *Ibidem*, pp. 100-102.

Vasconcelos' understanding of race in the 1920s was, of course, different from those articulated by nineteenth-century Mexican intellectuals such as Francisco Pimentel, Alfredo Chavero, or Vicente Riva Palacio. But it formed part of the same discussion, in the same terms, and shared the same basic assumptions. Furthermore, in common with the late Porfirian scientists, Vasconcelos in the 1920s was aware of the importance of science in this regard, and of the a-scientific strategies Mexicans and Latin Americans had to adopt in order to make science suit their special situation. He affirmed: "If all nations then build theories to justify their policies or to strengthen their deeds, let us develop in Mexico our own theories; or at least, let us be certain, that we choose among the foreign theories of thought those that stimulate our growth instead of those that restrain it."<sup>72</sup>

Vasconcelos could not imagine the radicalism into which indigenism would fall. He only conceived of a sort of romantic assimilation of the Indian aspects of Mexico into its great Hispanic essence:

La civilización no se improvisa ni se trunca... se deriva siempre de una larga, de una secular preparación y depuración de elementos que se transmiten y se combinan desde los comienzos de la historia. Por eso resulta tan torpe hacer comenzar nuestro patriotismo con el grito de independencia del Padre Hidalgo... pues si no lo arraigamos en Cuauhtémoc y en Atahualpa no tendrá sostén, y al mismo tiempo es necesario remontarlo a su fuente hispánica... Si nuestro patriotismo no se identifica con las diversas etapas del viejo conflicto de latinos y sajones, jamás lograremos que sobrepase los caracteres de un regionalismo sin aliento universal.<sup>73</sup>

Nonetheless, he seemed to have been aware that to achieve this fusion, negotiations had to take place between and within Mexico's elites according to their varied social and economic circumstances. His inauguration of a tropical Cuauhtemec in Rio de Janeiro was a demonstration of this awareness.

On September 16, 1922, at the junction of the Avenues Beira-Mar, Oswaldo Cruz, and Ruy Barbosa, the four-meters-high replica of Cuauhtemec was erected. As mentioned before, Vasconcelos could not prevent this extravagant Mexican display which he considered an unnecessary expenditure. President Obregón and Alberto J. Pani had been its promoters, and Vascon-

<sup>72</sup>. *Ibidem*, p. 96.

<sup>73</sup>. Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, p. 7.

celos had no choice but to comply. Hence he articulated a masterpiece of rhetorical ambivalence and inclusion which stated his idea of a Hispanic Mexico without denigrating the advocates of indigenism and their tropical Cuauhtemoc. And thus, in 1922 through a combination of historical inaccuracies, classic metaphors, convincing allegorical images, and his well known eloquence, Vasconcelos revived in splendid fashion Mexico's nineteenth-century rhetoric on the subject. Before President Pessoa, Vasconcelos claimed: "el bronce del indio mexicano se apoya en el granito bruñido del pedestal brasileiro: dimos bronce y nos aprestáis roca para asentarlos... El conjunto creador de una raza nueva, fuerte y gloriosa." This having been said, he also described Hernán Cortés as "el más grande de todos los conquistadores, el incomparable," who "vencía con la espada y convencía con la palabra." He directed the flow of his ideas to the granite base, to which he constantly referred as the representation of the real new race. In turn, Cuauhtemoc was depicted as the symbol of the end of the Indian power. That was, he argued, the history of this hero "para quien os pedimos la hospitalidad de esta playa abierta al mar y apoyada en la montaña, es decir, por el frente la libertad de todos los caminos, pero en la base el granito en que labra su futuro la nueva raza latina del continente." Cuauhtemoc meant "la certidumbre de la propia conciencia y la esperanza de días gloriosos." He explained that in Mexico the veneration of this hero suggested neither the rejection of progress nor the ambition of going back to Aztec times. And of course neither did it mean the dismissal of Europe: "hemos asimilado [a Europa] y ahora estamos en el deber de crear." As always, he contrasted the emerging Latin America with the already successful American civilization, and in such a contrast Cuauhtemoc's arrow appeared heading to the future. It was in the visible future, he believed, that Latin American civilization was to overthrow the North American power. Thus he ambivalently, if eloquently, concluded: "llenos de fe levantamos a Cuauhtémoc como bandera y decimos a la raza ibérica de uno a otro confín: sé como el indio, sé tú misma." What ought to be copied from the Indian peoples was not their particular identity, but the fact that they did have an identity which allowed them to be that, themselves.<sup>74</sup>

74. This rhetorical piece was reproduced in *Livro de ouro*, pp. 358-359, and was published in Mexico by Julio Jiménez Rueda, "El discurso de Vasconcelos a Cuauhtémoc," in *Bajo la Cruz del Sur*, Mexico, M. Manón, 1922, pp. 112-121. José Joaquín Blanco both refers and briefly interprets Vasconcelos' speech in Brazil; see José Joaquín Blanco, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos. Una evocación crítica*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1977, pp. 117-122.

In Brazil, Vasconcelos' speech was welcomed for its eloquence, but not really understood as a sample of how conflicting ideas about nationhood might be harmonized. After his discourse, Vasconcelos wrote to Obregón, President Pessoa "hizo lo que usted cuando no le satisfacen los discursos oficiales: habló y habló."<sup>75</sup> In Mexico, the speech was received with overall approval. Vasconcelos' notion of *mestizaje* was perhaps, as some authors have suggested, imposed on him by the *mestizo* shape of the nation, and undoubtedly it later gradually changed toward a more pro-European Hispanist position.<sup>76</sup> But in 1922, Vasconcelos was Minister of Education and closer to power—i.e., to the control of national symbols—than he had ever been before. He then believed that the construction of a universal Hispanic, though *mestiza*, nation was possible using a variety of political, representational, and rhetorical resources. Indeed, Vasconcelos was criticized for the numerous historical inaccuracies and plain historical errors which marked his Cuauhtemoc speech. And yet, years after his trip to Brazil, he recalled the event as an irony of the times: he disliked very much the fact that the indigenist monument, interpreted by him as a flag for the new Hispanic cosmic race, was made by a Yankee company. But more importantly, he dismissed those who criticized his historical imprecision. He acknowledged that his speech was "un poco fantástico," because it was "aderezado como símbolo de nuestros deseos de independencia pero no respecto de España... sino del monroísmo."<sup>77</sup> Thus all his historical errors were irrelevant because, as he explained, "No hago historia; intento crear un mito."<sup>78</sup>

75. Letter to Obregón, AGN OBREGÓN-CALLES, September 17, 1922, 104-b-30 (21).

76. In fact, official indigenism was not very different from Vasconcelos' type of indigenism. The official indigenism of Manuel Gamio (both positivist—anthropologically and archaeologically—and liberal) exemplified by *Forjando patria* (1916) was indeed, as David Brading has shown, as integrationist as Vasconcelos' position, although less Catholic and more liberal. See Agustín F. Basave Benítez, *México mestizo. Análisis del nacionalismo mexicano en torno a la mestizofilia de Andrés Molina Enríquez*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992, pp. 130-136; and the short but interesting analysis of long trends, Alberto Guaraldo, "Indigenismo e investigación etno-antropológica en México: líneas de desarrollo y diferenciación desde Las Casas hasta el cardenismo," in Antonio Annino, ed., *América Latina: Dallo Stato coloniale allo Stato nazione*, Turin, Università di Torino, 1987, vol. II, pp. 822-837. See also David Brading, "Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenism on Mexico," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1988, pp. 75-89.

77. Vasconcelos, *El desastre*, p. 150.

78. *Ibidem*.

The pro-indigenist tendency was also present in the congresses that took place around the Rio de Janeiro exposition. Especially significant in this regard was the 20th International Congress of Americanists, at which Manuel Gamio's works were presented together with those of the venerable Mexican doctor Nicolás León, a veteran measurer of Indian heads.<sup>79</sup> The official Mexican delegates to this congress were Alfonso Toro and José Raygados Vetiz.<sup>80</sup> Both very much shared Vasconcelos' pro-Hispanic nationalism. Alfonso Toro wrote some articles from Brazil for Mexico City's periodical *Revista de Revistas*, and in them he displayed a cruder version both of Vasconcelos' anti-Americanism and old-fashioned aristocratic notions. He argued: "En Brasil la influencia norteamericana es nula, se nota un refinamiento y un buen gusto muy francés."<sup>81</sup> For him, there were no *pelados*<sup>82</sup> in Rio and there were less blacks than in any American city.<sup>83</sup> Although expressed with less subtlety, Toro's impressions of Rio reflected those of Vasconcelos.

In addition to the neo-colonial pavilion and the Cuauhtemoc monument, the Mexican display included a variety of products assembled by a commercial delegation headed by José Vázquez Schiaffino<sup>84</sup> and Luis G. Garfias. The exhibit included a scale reproduction of Teotihuacan, furniture from Mexico City's department store El Palacio de Hierro, samples of mineral products, and food products. There was also a special book commissioned by

79. See *Annaes do XX Congresso Internacional de Americanistas realizado no Rio de Janeiro de 20 a 30 de ag. 1922*, Rio de Janeiro, 1922, 3 vols. Nicolás León sent the paper "La capacidad craneana en algunas de las tribus indígenas de la república mexicana." Gamio sent various papers: "Las excavaciones del pedregal de San Ángel y la cultura arcaica del valle de México," "El alfabeto mexicano y su valor fonético," "Trascendencia política de la arqueología en México." See "Notes on the Brazil Centenary Exposition," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 2, 1922, pp. 506-512.

80. See reception to Alfonso Toro in Brazil, in *Journal do Commercio, O Livro d'Ouro. Edição Conmemorativa*.

81. Alfonso Toro, "La bella ciudad carioca," *Revista de Revistas*, October 20, 1922, pp. 11-13.

82. According to Christopher J. Hall's translation of Roger Bartra's *La jaula de la melancolía*, "lit. shorn one." "Refers to a Mexican social type from the working class noted for his coarse, uneducated, uncouth language and behavior." See Bartra's book in English *The Cage of Melancholy. Identity and Metamorphosis in the Mexican Character*, New Jersey, 1992.

83. Alfonso Toro, *op. cit.* In *La raza cósmica*, pp. 52-60, Vasconcelos suggested that the official Brazilian personnel tried to guide him in order to avoid the scenes of blacks and poor sections of the various cities he visited.

84. For data about Vázquez Schiaffino, a petroleum engineer, see SRE LE 1006.

the Mexican government to honor Brazil.<sup>85</sup> This book displayed Mexico's great ancient past, its recent material progress, and its natural beauty and wealth with statistics, paintings, and photographs. The images used in this book were exactly the same ones as those used by the Porfirian exhibition team in several world's fairs (paintings by Obregón, José María Velasco; photographs of railroads, etc.). Two special exhibits were real innovations: a movie made during Vasconcelos' stay in Brazil<sup>86</sup> and an important exhibit of popular art.

Popular art, both visual and vocal, became a significant aspect of Vasconcelos' educational campaign. Montenegro and Fernández Ledesma were prominent promoters of such an art, together with the painter and writer Dr. Atl and the anthropologist Miguel Othón de Mendizábal. As minister, Vasconcelos emphasized the production and promotion of popular art, and he had a pragmatic awareness of the international receptiveness to this type of art. In turn, especially welcomed was the voice of Fanny Anitúa, a soprano singer, and Vasconcelos' friend, who often joined him on his educational campaigns.<sup>87</sup> She sang traditional and popular Mexican songs and the compositions of composers such as Manuel M. Ponce who combined popular musical inspiration with classical music.

Contrary to what scholar Claude Fell believes, with this international promotion Mexican popular art did not lose its exoticism but quite to the contrary acquired its full international recognition—and market—for precisely this quality.<sup>88</sup> Mexican ceramics were especially appreciated in Brazil, as was a collection of photos of Mexico by G. Kahlo.<sup>89</sup>

85. *México, sus recursos naturales, su situación actual. Homenaje al Brasil en ocasión del primer centenario de su independencia*, Mexico, Secretaría de Industria, Comercio y Trabajo, 1922.

86. Documentary, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, *México en las fiestas del centenario de Brasil*, Mexico, 1922.

87. See Vasconcelos, *El desastre*, pp. 143-148.

88. Fell believes that due to its international recognition, Mexican popular art acquired "credibilidad en el aspecto estético, económico, social y, sobre todo, cultural: conquistaron su sitio en una tentativa de definición global de la cultura nacional." But its international credibility was only because of its exoticism. See Fell, *op. cit.*, pp. 449-456. For an illustrative analysis of the discovery of popular art in Mexico, see John F. Scott, "La evolución de la teoría de la historia del arte por escritores del siglo xx sobre el arte mexicano del siglo xix," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, no. 37, 1968, pp. 71-104; he deals with the national and international recognition of José Guadalupe Posada's artistic works.

89. See "Informe" by Vázquez Schiaffino, *SRE* 18-5-72, III.



8. Architect Carlos Obregón Santacilia in the basement of Cuauhtemoc monument's replica. Photograph: AFMT.

However, the popularity of Mexico's exhibit with visitors to the Exposition was not especially reflected in the number of awards won. It was argued by the Mexican authorities that it was only at the last moment that Mexico learned that the exposition would include a competition of products. In any event, Mexico won a total of 561 prizes (only 80 grand awards and 68 gold medals). It was a poor showing for an expensive exhibit which included not only a building and a four meter high bronze monument, but also a total of 160 military men, 75 members of a military band, and 35 members of the Torreblanca Mexican typical orchestra.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to all this, Vasconcelos lectured in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo,

90. It is extremely difficult to estimate the cost of Mexico's presence at the Rio de Janeiro fair. Expenses seemed to have been done on daily bases, and through direct request to President Obregón. At moments, the Mexican delegation in Rio exhausted its resources. According to Vasconcelos, what was especially expensive was the maintenance of the military delegation. Vasconcelos himself directly requested money from Obregón urgently (16,000 USD). September 1922, AGN OBREGÓN-CALLES, 104-b-30 (21). See also *El desastre*, pp. 151-152, and *La raza cósmica*.



and, later, in Montevideo, Buenos Aires, and Santiago. Throughout South America, Vasconcelos' ideas were generally welcomed, in part because a pro-Hispanist stance was widespread in the *criollo* societies of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. In Brazil, his educational campaign was considered the core of the image of the new Mexico. In a conference at São Paulo's university, Victor Vianna compared Vasconcelos' work with that of Visser in England, and Henriot in France. In turn, Vasconcelos praised the Brazilian educational system both in speeches and in his later writings (especially in *El desastre* and *La raza cósmica*). Only in Chile he was criticized by the conservative media for an over-emphasis on race at the expense of nationhood, and because he repudiated militarism.<sup>91</sup> In the Brazilian interior (Minas Gerais and São Paulo) the Mexican delegation of poets, writers, singers, and artists was well received. However, at times the reality of Mexico seemed lost on the inhabitants of the Brazilian hinterlands, as when the *Folha do Norte*, a newspaper from Belem, candidly declared: "duas unidades da armada do paiz de Porfirio Díaz visitan a Amazonia." Of course, historically, this was not an error, but a lack of delicacy with Mexico's post-revolutionary and anti-Porfirist government.<sup>92</sup>

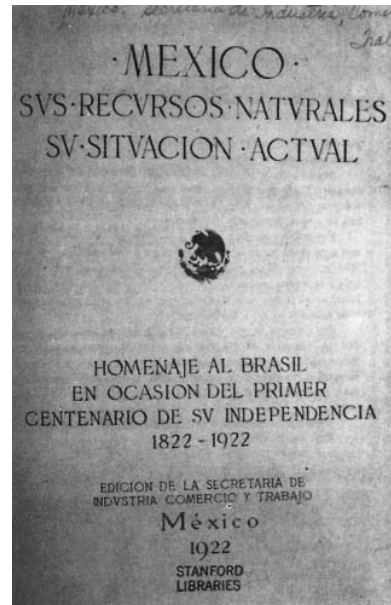
Brazil's centenary of independence had been celebrated in Mexico City with various artistic and political events,<sup>93</sup> and at the Rio de Janeiro exposition the favor was returned with a Mexican festival held on September 14, 1922. Once again, Vasconcelos organized the performance. The Orquesta Típica Torreblanca played traditional Mexican songs, and some Mexican waltzes by Villanueva (that were notorious pieces of Porfirian nostalgia). The singers Flora Islas, Abigail Bonilla, and the soprano Fanny Anitúa were the featured singers. Carlos Pellicer recited Mexican poems, though not those written by his generation, but the somewhat shopworn verses by Amado Nervo, Gutiérrez Nájera, Díaz Mirón, and—the new but old *maestro*—Enrique González Martínez.<sup>94</sup> In effect, at Rio, Mexico was represented by the same poems and music that had been performed at many other Mexican displays at world's fairs during the preceding century.

91. See article in the Chilean newspaper *El Diario Ilustrado*, November 4, 1922. This incident resulted in the apology of the Mexican Minister in Chile Carlos Trejo Lerdo de Tejada, published in Santiago's *El Mercurio*, November 6, 1922.

92. *Folha do Norte*, November 19, 1922.

93. See *Revistas de Revistas*, no. 2, 1922, issue devoted to Brazil.

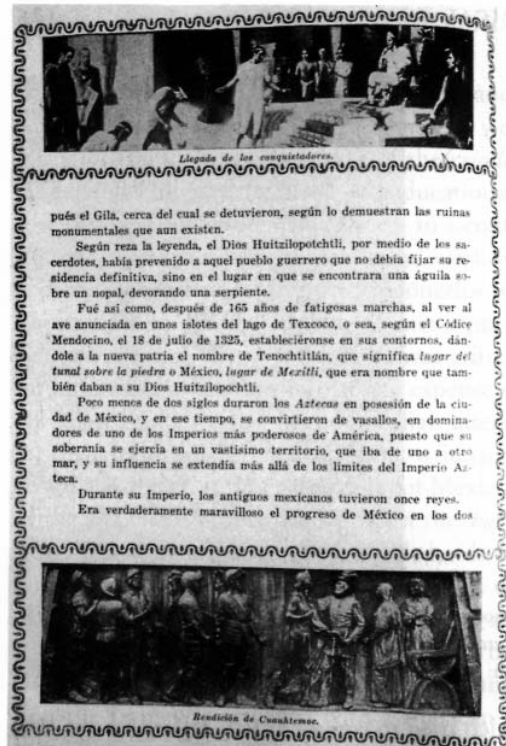
94. See Julio Jiménez Rueda's account of this trip, *op. cit.*



9. Frontispice of commemorative book *México, sus recursos naturales, su situación actual*. Photograph: M.T.

Overall, the image that Mexico tried to convey at Rio de Janeiro was that of the spiritual leader of a continental push toward the consummation of the *raza cósmica*. An essentially Hispanic, anti-American, hybrid—and, above all, renewed—country. The industrial and touristic aspects of the nation were largely ignored. It was indeed a display of ideas and symbols based largely on Vasconcelos' thought. The ideal image of the Mexico that Vasconcelos imagined existed, if only for ephemeral moments, beside Guanabara Bay. And this was made possible by various historical factors for which the revolution of 1910 had been the fundamental catalyst. First, Mexico's display at Rio revealed a generational change that was significant for the construction of the national symbols. Second, Mexico's presence in Brazil constituted in certain respects a dressed-up, somewhat more pragmatic, reflection of Mexico's old regime—especially evident through its focus on race<sup>95</sup> and Hispa-

95. Regarding race, Alan Knight has lucidly shown the continuity of racism in pre- and post-revolutionary indigenism; see Alan Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940," in R. Graham, ed., *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1879-1940*, Austin, 1990, pp. 71-113.



10. Interior pages of commemorative book *México, sus recursos naturales, su situación actual*. Photograph: M.T.

nism, and its obsession with style. Finally, Mexico's exhibit showed a hitherto unknown—in Mexico's image at international fairs—single-minded character. The Mexico of Rio belonged to the unfolding of Vasconcelos' thought, and in Brazil he was not only exhibiting his conception of Mexico, but testing his own ideas. To do this, Rio in 1922 was an optimal scenario. Therefore, it is not by chance that Vasconcelos' major book, *La raza cósmica*, is a report of travels in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile.

Obregón's regime could not rely upon the Porfirian exhibition team. Regardless of the ideological and political discrepancies—which the post-revolutionary government proved to be very willing to overlook—by 1922 the Porfirian "wizards of progress" were either dead or too old to serve. In the 1920s, Mexico's culture and education were led by a young generation of intellectuals and artists, most of them followers of Madero's democratic movement, or just part of—or direct beneficiaries from—what Luis González called "la generación azul." Vasconcelos, Gómez Morín, Vázquez del Mercado

11. Interior pages of commemorative book, *México, sus recursos naturales, su situación actual*. Photograph: M.T.



do, Lombardo Toledano, Antonio Caso, etc., all occupied official posts.<sup>96</sup> They had a taste of power, and they liked it. Hence, in trying to create his ideal utopia of a cosmic Mexico in Rio de Janeiro, Vasconcelos, as Minister of Education, incorporated members of the new generation all born *circa* 1885-1895. Vasconcelos (1881), the oldest, worked with artists and writers Julio Torri (1889), Fernández Ledesma (1900), Carlos Pellicer (1896); architects and engineers such as Obregón Santacilia (1896), and Schiaffino (1881); and professional diplomats, e.g., Torre Díaz (1889) and Campos Ortiz (1898), to mention but two. They all belonged to a generation with no other patriotic

96. See Enrique Krauze, *Caudillos culturales de la revolución mexicana*, Mexico, Siglo Veintiuno, 1985, pp. 104-110; see also Luis González' analysis of this generation, *La ronda de las generaciones*, Mexico, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1984, pp. 66-80; and Monsiváis, *op. cit.*, pp. 1417-1421; for the specific case of artists *vis-à-vis* generational change, see Ramírez, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-167.

or technical training than that of an urban middle class coming of age within and between the Porfirian era and the revolutionary years.

In Mexico's presence at Rio de Janeiro, the generational shift enlarged boundaries within which such notions as nation, progress, cosmopolitanism, and modernity might be discussed on the political and cultural stage. New and old points of view that before were only marginally considered acquired the status of official positions. However, Vasconcelos' ephemeral command of the image of the nation constituted a continuity within the parameters of the old regime. At Rio the nation was defined through references to two fundamental dichotomies: race *vs.* spirit, and universalism *vs.* nativism. Vasconcelos had a solution for these dichotomies, and he thus tried to depict this solution in all forms of expression—architecture, the plastic arts, rhetoric—in order to reiterate his proposal and make it simultaneously a statement for the world to read and a lesson for Mexico to learn. In effect, Vasconcelos' solution was a messianic Hispanism. In it, racial imperatives acquired explanation and balance with the spiritual aspects which he aimed to emphasize.<sup>97</sup> Also, Mexico's uniqueness was already included and formulated into a line of thought that was both a universal and a commanding course for the future. Mexico's presence at Rio epitomized the ideas from which a holistic understanding of Mexico could be derived—including historical reconstruction and projections for future social, economic, and cultural development.

Vasconcelos took the risk of maneuvering Mexico's image in this single-handed fashion because he was a disenchanted positivist. "El primer siglo de vida independiente lo empleamos nosotros en fijar [los] límites de la patria... ha llegado el momento de afianzar el espíritu, de crearle un alma," Vasconcelos argued in a speech given in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, he sought always to allude to this realm of souls, spirits, and symbols. Small wonder, he was a master of styles and forms. Although he studied the positivist foundation for Mexico's nationalism—i.e. racial, economic, anthropological, and sociological

97. See Vasconcelos' discussion of racial theory in *La raza cósmica*, and in his conference at Chicago, *Aspects of Mexican Civilization*. In addition, see José Carlos Mariátegui's review of Vasconcelos' *Indología*. Mariátegui supported Vasconcelos' utopianism, but opposed its almost mystic faith in the future without action in the present. He observed that "Vasconcelos coloca su utopía demasiado lejos de nosotros." See review in J.C. Mariátegui, *Temas de nuestra América*, Lima, Amauta, 1960, pp. 78-84.

98. "Los problemas de México," reproduced also by the *Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, delivered August 28, 1922.

ideas—he perceived that nationalism, as much as cosmopolitanism, was a matter of form. Through forms, symbols, and style he offered in Rio an idea of Mexico as a universal but unique nation. Oddly enough, this had been the dream of the Porfirian displays at world's fairs. But unlike the Porfirian efforts, Vasconcelos did not believe there were existent prototypes of modernity and cosmopolitanism to be read. He believed those ideals of modernity and cosmopolitanism had to be created. The model for the *raza cósmica* was Hispanic, but was still in the making. But, as with the Porfirian displays, Vasconcelos was aware of the contingency of his proposal, of its experimental character. However, and again along with the Porfirian *científicos*, he imagined his idea of a cosmic Mexico to be a Comtian third and final stage. Nonetheless, his was not a scientific but rather a deliberately messianic “end of history.”

One more word about positivism and Vasconcelos. It has been exhaustively argued that Vasconcelos' ideas were a reaction to Porfirian positivism, but at the same time positivist thought had furnished Vasconcelos the basic language with which to speak about his beloved term: *race*. Thus, Vasconcelos' ideas ought to be seen in the continuum of the discussion of race.<sup>99</sup> In 1922, his image of Mexico constituted a continuation that did not deny previous empirical, scientific, and racist parameters, but projected them towards a messianic spiritual goal. “Sólo un salto del espíritu, nutrido de datos, podrá darnos una visión que nos levante por encima de la microideología del especialista,” he argued in *La raza cósmica*.<sup>100</sup> Once race with its positivist imperatives was projected by Vasconcelos toward a spiritual messianism (i.e., Hispanism), the notion of race found there a deep-rooted and fertile national ideological ground. Throughout Mexican history *criollo* patriotism had been a solid intellectual and political tendency. This meant that positivist understandings of race adapted to and reflected the notions of long-established *criollo* patriotism (i.e., Clavijero or Carlos María de Bustamante) and nineteenth-century Mexican conservatism (i.e., Lucas Alamán).<sup>101</sup> Therefore,

99. In this regard, see Knight's, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-98.

100. Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, p. 3. This distinctive positivism, together with his anti-Americanism, made him to reject American academic contributions to the study of education. Throughout his books he constantly and strongly criticized studies made by American experts (anthropologists, educators, archaeologists, economists, etc.).

101. In this point, as in many others in this paper, I have benefitted from David Brading, “Social Darwinism and Romantic Idealism: Andrés Molina Enríquez and José Vasconcelos in

what Vasconcelos did in Rio de Janeiro was to bring to the national and international debate an image of Mexico that had been in the process of formation since colonial times, armed with Porfirian positivism, and projected into the future by his own messianic spiritualism.

The idea of a messianic Hispanic Mexico passed the test of Rio, because Vasconcelos found in Brazil the nutrients to feed the cosmic race.<sup>102</sup> Vasconcelos' views of Brazil were but the search for the utopian continent inhabited by the utopian race. But he was also betrayed by his nostalgia for order and progress, a counter-revolutionary *saudade*. Coming to the reconstructed Rio of the 1922 fair must have been idyllic for Vasconcelos: a city that had experienced a real architectural and urban *belle époque*, and which had reinforced its white ethnic look through an impressive Iberian immigration, and that had kept at least the facade of democracy. Of course, there never existed the Rio that Vasconcelos described—he was carefully guided within the city, as he himself acknowledged. But the city he saw and invented to reinforce his ideas was a quasi-aristocratic, white, enlightened society which recalled the Mexico City of the Porfirian middle classes. Furthermore, his trip to São Paulo convinced him that industrial progress could be undertaken by Hispanic races. Four years later, in a conference in Chicago, Vasconcelos once again used São Paulo as the proof that “the fabulous rise of the American Middle West is being matched both agriculturally and industrially by the Latin Americans of Brazil.”<sup>103</sup> In Minas Gerais (Belo Horizonte and Ouro Preto) he only saw the similarities with Mexico's great colonial mining towns: economic abandonment, but bastions of marvelous architecture and national history. He saw political unrest, but applauded the official government which maintained the impression of order and progress that he admired. In summation, Brazil became the perfect scenario for the performance of his image of Mexico. He never saw in São Paulo the *Paulicea Desvairada*.

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the Mexican Revolution,” in D. Brading, ed., *Prophecy and Myth in Mexican History*, Cambridge, Cambridge Latin American Miniatures, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 63-83, and 92-95.

102. The issue of Vasconcelos self-defeat in his trip to South America, also has been briefly noticed by José Joaquín Blanco who argues that Vasconcelos “se deja engañar” by the democratic regimes of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (in sharp contrast with Mexico's anti-democratic government). See Blanco, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-122.

103. Vasconcelos and Gamio, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Vasconcelos and his team in Rio acted as if they were starting from zero; from total chaos it was their honor and their right to create the cosmos they imagined. And yet, they did not belong to the non-existent first generation, to which Julio Torri aspired.<sup>104</sup> They were not creating new images for the nation, but reproducing, inventing, and overlapping previous and new images. In essence, the image of Mexico in Rio de Janeiro borrowed from the revolution the circumstances that put Vasconcelos in the unforeseeable position of having control over the nation's symbols—and a ticket to Rio de Janeiro. But Vasconcelos' destiny was, as wrote his suicidal lover in her diary, “despertar inquietudes sin llegar a poner la mano en el timón de la nave que lo arrastra.”<sup>105</sup> ♣

<sup>104</sup>. See opening quote in this article.

<sup>105</sup>. Antonieta Rivas Mercado last entry in her diary, quoted by Martha Robles, *Entre el poder y las letras. Vasconcelos en sus memorias*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989.



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