NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF **RESEARCH PROGRAMS**

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Research Programs application guidelines at https://www.neh.gov/grants/research/awards-faculty-hispanic-serving-institutions for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Research Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: The Allure of Antiquity: Archaeology and the Making of Modern Mexico, 1877-1910

Institution: Northeastern Illinois University

Project Director: Christina Maria Bueno

Grant Program: Awards for Faculty

Project Narrative and Literature Review

With the support of an NEH Fellowship, I will complete the last three chapters of a book manuscript titled "The Allure of Antiquity: Archaeology and the Making of Modern Mexico (1877-1910)." Based on my Ph.D. dissertation, this study examines the ways in which the Mexican government took control of the nation's pre-Hispanic remains and used them for the purposes of state and nation building during the Porfiriato, the regime of Porfirio Díaz. It argues that the Porfirian regime was the first in Mexico to develop a concerted policy to gather, preserve, and display pre-Hispanic antiquities. The government placed guards at ruins, strengthened federal legislation over artifacts, and in 1885 established the first agency exclusively to protect them, the Inspectorate of Archaeological Monuments of the Republic. It created the nation's first official archaeological site at Teotihuacán in 1910 and gave unprecedented support to the National Museum, filling it with relics. It turned the pre-Hispanic remains, in other words, into national patrimony. With these under its control, it embraced the Indian past as the basis of the nation's official history. This was not a neutral project. The political and intellectual elite saw antiquity as a means to defend and shape the national image. Mexico was a nation deemed inferior by the dominant Eurocentric racism of the day, a nation that Europeans and Americans not only saw as backwards and uncivilized but open to archaeological plunder. As in other countries marked by generations of colonialism and exploitation, the embrace of a preconquest past, a past prior to foreign domination, served as a source of cultural reformulation, as a way to counter a history of imperialism as well as the more general hegemony of Western values. The Porfirian elite turned to antiquity to present Mexico as an ancient nation with a prestigious past, and to archaeology to present Mexico as sovereign, scientific, and modern.

Yet although the official history developed out of an elite counterimperial consciousness, it similarly reinforced patterns of domination. It was a selective reconstruction of the past that celebrated certain cultures and omitted others. The government focused on the dominant indigenous groups of antiquity, those that left behind vestiges of "high culture," works of architecture, pyramids, and ceremonial centers. It glorified the Aztecs, Toltecs, and Maya, but ignored the vast array of other cultures, such as the nonsedentary peoples of the north. The very process of making patrimony, moreover, limited the artifacts' uses and meanings. For many Mexicans, the objects were not national but local patrimony, symbols of more localized identities. Provincial museums were developing throughout the country, searching for objects for their collections. Indigenous communities also had strong identifications with the ruins, what were often links to traditional rites and rituals as well as sources of land, stone, and income generated from the market in antiquities. The government's definition of patrimony, however, had no space for such relationships. State officials cleared Teotihuacán of indigenous peoples and stripped communities of artifacts, often amid their protests. Rather than a national unifier, the making of patrimony can thus also be seen as a space of material and symbolic struggle, one that both reflects and reinforces the inequalities inherent in a population.

My manuscript examines the response of native communities, both those who aided and resisted the state project. It focuses on the concrete practices involved in archaeology and the human interactions that these entailed. It shows, for instance, how communities at Teotihuacán and the Morelos villages of Tepoztlán and Tetlama fought to retain artifacts. It also underscores how Indians served as the state's main source of labor. Native peoples hauled monoliths to the Museum, worked in excavations and as guards at sites, often as elites looked on, denigrating the contemporary Indians but exalting the ancient. While historians have commented on the elite's contrasting views of the Indian past and present, my manuscript argues that archaeology helped construct and reinforce these perceptions. The very practices aimed at creating a glorified vision of antiquity, in other words, negated the contemporary Indians.

Until recently, the elite's glorification of antiquity had been largely overlooked by the scholarship on *indigenismo*, the valorization of indigenous cultures. The Porfirian regime was characterized instead as a regime which "denigrated the national heritage," a consequence not

only of its outright hostility toward the contemporary native population, but of historians' tendency to associate indigenismo with the successive revolutionary state that was touted as pro-Indian.[1] Recent works, however, have begun to delve into the indigenismo of the Porfiriato, an indigenismo that was confined to glorifying antiquity rather than promoting the well-being of the Indians. Scholars such as Mauricio Tenorio, Enrique Florescano, and Rebecca Earle have focused on elite constructions of the antiquity, paying particular attention to cultural expressions such as statues and paintings. Archaeology, in contrast, has been less examined. No comprehensive treatment of the Porfirian archaeological project exits. My manuscript's focus on this project in its entirety offers unique perspectives on elite representations of Indian identity. Historians, for example, have noted how elites portrayed Indian antiquity within the Europeanized framework of classical antiquity, how paintings depicted pre-Hispanic peoples dressed in togas and with Western features. This sort of embellishment was not possible with the actual archaeological remains. Displayed on pedestals in the Museum, each artifact had to be taken as it was; this was pre-Hispanic aesthetics without camouflage. My focus on archaeology thus reveals that elites were coming to terms with Mexican aesthetics, what one Porfirian observer called "our national art."

Research Plan, Chapter Outline, Project Significance

"The Allure of Antiquity" is organized thematically into six chapters, with an introduction and epilogue. Its geographical focus corresponds to the state's archaeological work which was carried out mainly in the central plateau and the state of Oaxaca. The introduction, first three chapters and epilogue have been revised and polished. If I am fortunate enough to obtain an NEH grant, I will go on leave and spend twelve months, from January 1 to December 31, 2011, completing my manuscript, revising chapters four and six, and researching and writing chapter five. My manuscript is based on documents in Mexico City's Archives of the National Anthropology Museum (AHMNA) and the Inspectorate records in the National Archives (AGN). In order to complete the book I must return to the AHMNA to research material for the fifth chapter which examines the Museum, a topic that was not fully explored in my dissertation.

The introduction situates the book's argument within its historical, historiographical, and theoretical contexts, laying out a conceptual framework that focuses on nation building as a cultural process and its relationship to indigenismo, patrimony, museums, and the construction of official pasts. It builds on the theoretical work of scholars such as Bruce Trigger and Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer. [2] Chapters One and Two draw from Arjun Appadurai's concept of "the social life of things" to examine the significance of the ruins to a variety of people. The two chapters work in conjunction with each other. The first considers the meanings of the ruins to those who most frequented them: the locals, foreign scientists, and antiquities traffickers. The Porfirian archaeological project developed largely in reaction to these groups, as elite Mexicans sought to take artifacts out of circulation, out of the reach of the locals and the antiquities market which funneled objects to American and European museums. Chapter Two, therefore, explores what the antiquities had come to signify to Porfirian elites. It examines how artifacts and their conservation were intertwined with the nationalist impulse of statesmen such as Justo Sierra and archaeologists like Leopoldo Batres and Alfredo Chavero. Elites based the state's claims to the objects on arguments that rested on appeals to nation and science. The chapter problematizes these claims. Mexico at the time was hardly a unified, modern nation, and archaeology was hardly an established science. Even the elites seemed to sense this as they expressed their concerns with controlling the past always with a degree of apprehension about Mexican

[1] David Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1.
[2] See: Bruce G Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

nationhood. Their appeals to science were also tentative, as the archaeologists carried out their work with little agreement, unsure about the meaning of the objects and how to categorize them.

Chapters Three – Six focus on different facets of the state's project. Chapter Three looks at the mechanisms established to control the ancient remains: the legislation, network of guards, and Inspectorate of Monuments, headed by Leopoldo Batres, the colorful protagonist of my story. Among his many tasks, Batres oversaw the work of foreign archaeologists who, up until then, had operated without supervision and often made off with relics. He also centralized artifacts in the National Museum, a topic examined in Chapter Four. This chapter looks at the transfer of artifacts from around the country to the Museum, focusing on the response of native communities. Its revision will include a lengthy discussion of how the transfer impacted provincial museums in Yucatán, Oaxaca, and several other states.

Chapter Five, which remains to be written, is essential to the manuscript as it examines the Museum, the nation's principal center of archaeological conservation and study. With the grant, I will spend five months analyzing AHMNA documents which offer insight into the professionalization of archaeology, archaeological research and interpretations, and the display of artifacts. The chapter will detail how Museum exhibits reflected state-building concerns. The purpose of one room known as the Gallery of Monoliths, for instance, was to hold artifacts from as many areas in Mexico as possible. For a country that had witnessed several foreign invasions, the exhibit thus echoed elite concerns with controlling the national territory.

The final chapter examines the reconstruction of Teotihuacán, the other principal showcase of antiquity. Undertaken by Batres, the reconstruction was driven by the desire to assert Mexico's image during the Centenario, the 1910 centennial celebration of Independence which drew visitors from around the world. The chapter's revisions will include a detailed analysis of Batres's archaeological methods. Within weeks of the Centenario, the 1910 revolution erupted. The epilogue examines the revolution's impact on the ruins, Museum, and the Porfirian archaeological project in general. It emphasizes that the Porfirian mechanisms to control the past remained intact, forming the basis of the revolutionary state's archaeological infrastructure. It examines some of the legacies of the Porfirian project by addressing contemporary archaeologists' critiques of the science and its relationship to the state today.

Once completed, my book will contribute to several scholarly disciplines and reach a broad audience of scholars and readers interested in history, nation-building, race, identity, anthropology, indigenous peoples, and the history of memory, museums, and material culture. It will make a significant contribution to the fields of Mexican and Latin American history. While rooted in the Mexican setting, its examination of a peripheral country's use of antiquity to recast its image will resonate with the broader field of postcolonial studies. The postcolonial studies movement has alerted us to the challenges such countries face in constructing their national histories and cultures. Inspired by this field, historians of Latin America similarly have shown nationalist projects to be fraught with contradictions that are never reconciled. They have also moved away from the examination of nation building as a top down process to look at the subaltern subject as well as hegemony and resistance. In doing so, they have placed the state and popular culture into the same frame of study. The scholarship on the history of archaeology in Mexico, however, has been untouched by these approaches. Archaeology's relationship to nation building and to popular culture has gone largely unexplored, even though the science has played a central role in Mexico's nationalist project. In fact, Mexican archaeology is still romanticized as a series of great discoveries and brave explorers. My work challenges these depictions. It reveals that while state archaeology developed out of an elite counterimperial consciousness, it similarly reinforced patterns of domination. "The Allure of Antiquity" offers insights into the process by which nations base their histories on glorified visions of past autochthonous cultures while simultaneously marginalizing contemporary indigenous cultures. It thus addresses the exclusionary practices of modern states, a timely concern that will resonate with scholars and the broader public. Thank you for considering my application.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PRINTED SOURCES

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