

# The Emperor of Ixcateopan: Fraud, Nationalism and Memory in Modern Mexico\*

PAUL GILLINGHAM

*Abstract.* This article analyses the forgery and discovery of the purported tomb of Cuauhtémoc, the last Mexica emperor. An eclectic collection of contemporary sources outlines a subtle interplay between elites, cultural managers and peasants, who alternately collaborated and competed in manipulating the would-be invention. Groups traditionally undervalued in studies of nationalism, namely villagers and petty bureaucrats, went far beyond the mimesis of elites to significantly reshape parts of the national narrative. Their entrepreneurial success in manipulating nationalist symbols demonstrates that the instrumentalist use of the past is a cross-class activity.

In the closing years of the nineteenth century a Mexican rancher named Florentino Juárez secretly dug beneath the altar of his parish church and made a tomb. In it he placed some half-burnt bones and a sparse collection of artefacts, sealing the cavity with a copper plaque which read, in an awkward chiselled scrawl, ‘1525–1529. Lord and King Coatemo’. Cuauhtémoc, the last Mexica emperor, had been hanged by Hernán Cortés during the ill-fated 1525 Hibuera expedition. His body had subsequently disappeared; Juárez decided to find it, and forged a grave, a sheaf of documents and a convoluted legend.<sup>1</sup> His creation, inspired and improbable, offers an unlikely path into the politics, imaging and mechanisms of Mexican national identity. The scandal surrounding the issue of the tomb’s authenticity has ensured historians

Paul Gillingham is a doctoral student at St Antony’s College, University of Oxford.

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<sup>1</sup> A dense literature exists covering and contesting the minutiae of the Ixcateopán tomb, authored by some of the leading Mexican scholars of the twentieth century. Central works of reference include S. Zavala, ‘Dictamen acerca de los hallazgos de Ichcateopan,’ *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Antropológicos*, vol. II (1950), pp. 197–295, W. Jiménez Moreno, ‘Los hallazgos de Ichcateopan,’ *Historia Mexicana*, vol. XII, no. 2 (Oct.–Dec. 1962), pp. 161–81, A. Arnáiz y Freg et al., *Los hallazgos de Ichcateopan: actas y dictámenes de la Comisión Investigadora* (Mexico City, 1962), A. Morena Toscano, *Los hallazgos de Ichcateopan 1949–1951* (Mexico City, 1976), and E. Matos Moctezuma, *Informe de la revisión de los trabajos arqueológicos realizados en Ichcateopan, Guerrero* (Mexico City, 1980).

copious sources, spanning personal papers, municipal archives, newspapers, ethnographies, the reports of three academic commissions and the work of diplomatic and intelligence agencies. These enable a comparatively empirical reconstruction of the rise and fall of a nationalist symbol; they do not allow us to wholly bypass the critical methodological hurdle to any study of nationalism, namely the paucity of evidence for non-elite reactions to such symbols. Given material such as the interviews of Mexican anthropologists with some sixty villagers from the tomb site, however, Cuauhtémoc's bones offer some unusually useful tools to tackle what Harold Pinter has called 'the immense difficulty, if not the impossibility, of verifying the past'.<sup>2</sup> Following the story of the bones, with all its superficial surrealism, may even lead – at least occasionally – into the proximity of *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.

'What will you do,' it was ritually demanded of a *tlatoani* as he took power, 'if in your time your kingdom is destroyed and your splendour becomes darkness?'<sup>3</sup> Cuauhtémoc's answer – stoic resistance and timely eloquence – provided fertile ground for the imaginations of later cultural nationalists. The seductive appeal of Cuauhtémoc to the mythopoeically minded was clear from the sixteenth century, and is evident in the standard account of the emperor's torture. Based on Francisco López de Gómara's history, this version has been sanctified by repetition in generations of general histories, school textbooks, pictures and public speeches. It describes, in brief, how Cuauhtémoc and his cousin Tetlepanquetzal were tied down and their hands and feet burnt with oil; how Tetlepanquetzal looked pleadingly to Cuauhtémoc for the relief of a confession; and how the emperor asked him if he thought that he himself was enjoying his bath.<sup>4</sup> But Bernal Díaz, who had the incomparable advantage of actually being there, remembers none of this setpiece grandeur in adversity. From Bernal Díaz' account there is nothing redemptive about the scene whatsoever: the men were tortured and crippled, and both talked.<sup>5</sup> From a viceregal perspective both heroic and pathetic narratives were equally subversive, however, and representations of Cuauhtémoc were tightly controlled during the colonial period. In 1577 Philip II prohibited '... that on any account, any person should write things which deal with the superstitions and ways of life which these Indians had.' As late as 1790 a play about the torture and death of Cuauhtémoc, smuggled past an

<sup>2</sup> H. Pinter, *Collected Works: One* (New York, 1976), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (Mexico City, 1989), p. 338.

<sup>4</sup> This trope was adopted, generalised and further elaborated by subsequent historians from Torquemada to Prescott, who reports (and dismisses) a refinement of the line to 'Am I perchance enjoying a bed of roses?' F. López de Gómara, *Historia General de las Indias*, vol. II (Barcelona, 1965), p. 275, J. de Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana*, vol. II (Mexico City, 1975), p. 314, W. H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (London, 1994), p. 589.

<sup>5</sup> Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain* (London, 1967), p. 410.

unwary substitute censor to the stage of the New Coliseum, drew full and politically vociferous houses and was swiftly banned.<sup>6</sup> With Independence Cuauhtémoc's latent symbolic potential as an ethnic origin figure was overtly realised: Morelos invoked him as one of the fathers of independent Mexico in opening the Congress of Chilpancingo, while another priestly rebel, Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, claimed direct biological descent from Cuauhtémoc.<sup>7</sup> This was not as far from the discursive mainstream as historians have made out; Benito Juárez too would speak rhetorically of his 'progenitor, Cuatimocitzin'.<sup>8</sup>

Yet these were passing, ill-defined and predominantly abstract references, lacking even the common ground of a standardised name (competing versions included Guatimoc and Quautmozin). While Clavijero's *Historia antigua de Mexico*, published in English translation in 1787, contained a rhetorically powerful, proto-nationalist critique of the Conquest, it made the sparsest of references – ten in total – to Cuauhtémoc and relegated his torture and execution to footnotes.<sup>9</sup> Writing in 1841, Fanny Calderón de la Barca seemed to ignore Cuauhtémoc and believe Moctezuma to have been the last emperor.<sup>10</sup> It was not that great an exaggeration when, in the 1852 *Diccionario Universal de Historia y Geografía*, José Fernández Ramírez described Cuauhtémoc as 'forgotten'; even twenty years later, in Rivera Cambas' influential popular history *Los gobernantes de México*, Cuauhtémoc would receive a mere five mentions compared to Moctezuma's twenty-four.<sup>11</sup> Such asymmetry only reproduced that of the sixteenth century chronicles, in which Moctezuma is the lead indigenous actor and Cuauhtémoc little more than a bit player who appears, fleetingly, at the end, in time to lose nobly and be martyred. But the resolutely unheroic raw material of Moctezuma's life could hardly be reshaped into a clear-cut, inspiring indigenous origin figure; it left, rather, the shapers of *historia patria* in a symbolic power vacuum. Had Cuauhtémoc not existed, it would have been eminently necessary to invent him. The cultural nationalists of the liberal era and the *Porfiriato*, with varying degrees of empirical delicacy, did just that.

<sup>6</sup> J. Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl y Guadalupe: la formación de la conciencia nacional en México* (Mexico City, 1995), p. 273, J. M. Pilcher, *Cantinflas and the Chaos of Mexican Modernity* (Delaware, 2001), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> J. Rojas Garcidueñas, 'Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora y el primer ejemplo de arte neoprehispanico en América' in D. Schavelzón (ed.), *La polémica del arte nacional en México, 1850–1910* (Mexico City, 1988), pp. 49–51, E. Florescano, *Memoria Mexicana* (Mexico City, 1987), p. 299, D. Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> E. Florescano, *Etnia, estado y nación* (Mexico City, 1997), p. 436.

<sup>9</sup> F. S. Clavijero, trans. C. Cullen, *The History of Mexico*, vol. II (London, 1787), pp. 133, 151, 156, 171, 177, 183, 184, 188, 190, 193–4.

<sup>10</sup> F. Calderón de la Barca, *Life in Mexico* (Berkeley, 1982), p. 416.

<sup>11</sup> B. Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought* (New Jersey, 1971), p. 414, M. Rivera Cambas, *Los gobernantes de México* (Mexico City, 1962), pp. 3–29.

This intense and relatively cohesive campaign was led by General Vicente Riva Palacio, a near-polymath who variously incarnated Cuauhtémoc in a novel (*Martín Garatuza*), a history (*México a través de los siglos*) and a monument.<sup>12</sup> His initiative sparked an explosion of odes, plays, histories and speeches centring on the last emperor. A short list of the authors who wrote about Cuauhtémoc between 1880 and 1910 would include Ignacio Altamirano, Alfredo Chavero, Rubén Darío, Manuel Orozco y Berra, Francisco Pi y Margall, Manuel G. Prieto, Justo Sierra, Francisco Sosa and Eduardo del Valle.<sup>13</sup> There are numerous less recognisable names from the period with a work on Cuauhtémoc to their credit; one José María Rodríguez wrote the libretto of an opera about the last emperor, apologising in an appendix for its poor quality.<sup>14</sup> More ubiquitous than any of the above was the entrepreneur Isaac Garza's tribute: in 1890 he founded a brewery in Monterrey (the *Cervecería Cuauhtémoc Moctezuma*) and began producing 1,500 bottles of beer a day bearing the last emperor's name and likeness. That Cuauhtémoc was, in the historian Sosa's words, 'the first and most illustrious of the defenders of the nationality founded by Tenoch in 1327', was an idea whose time had come, part of a new interest in connecting prehispanic and Porfirian Mexico.<sup>15</sup> The experience of successful but costly resistance to the French Intervention may have helped fuel the new cult: thus in 1878 the barrio of Ometepec in Puebla, a place that suffered heavily in the wars of the 1860s, became the new municipio of Ometepec de Cuauhtémoc, the comparison between Mexica emperor and everyday Mexican soldiers made explicit in the naming ceremony.<sup>16</sup> But there was a more concrete reason for writing about Cuauhtémoc to become *de rigueur* in the Porfiriato. The majority of these texts – including the labels on the beer bottles – were inspired by a single event: the construction of the Paseo de la Reforma monument to Cuauhtémoc.<sup>17</sup>

This was elite nationalism in earnest. Vicente Riva Palacio, the monument's godfather, negotiated funding of 152,000 pesos, the equivalent of some 20 per cent of the city's annual budget or the daily wages of 600,000 rural

<sup>12</sup> V. Riva Palacio, *Martín Garatuza* (Mexico City, 1945), V. Riva Palacio, *México a través de los siglos*, vol. II (Mexico s.f.), pp. 107–11.

<sup>13</sup> Keen, *The Aztec Image*, pp. 423, 455–8; Schavelzón, *La polémica del arte nacional*, pp. 125–6; B. A. Tenenbaum, 'Streetwise History: The Paseo de la Reforma and the Porfirian State, 1876–1910,' in W. Beezley, C. E. Martín and W. E. French, *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebration and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Delaware, 1994), pp. 138–9.

<sup>14</sup> S. Novo, *La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Miguel Alemán* (Mexico City, 1994), pp. 356–62.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Tenenbaum, 'Streetwise History,' p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> G. P. C. Thomson and D. G. LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Juan Francisco Lucas and the Puebla Sierra* (Wilmington, 1998), p. 230.

<sup>17</sup> The labels were printed with an image of Cuauhtémoc lifted directly from that monument. E. Krauze, *Mexico, Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810–1996* (New York, 1997), p. 27.

labourers.<sup>18</sup> The monument proved an effective cultural machine, and by the time of the 1892 Madrid Historic American exhibition Cuauhtémoc was established as the patriarchal origin figure of choice. The only thing lacking was a body. The fetishisation of dead leaders' bodies is a close to universal phenomenon that substantially predates the age of nationalism. Herodotus, for example, describes the quest of the Spartiates to recover the bones of Orestes, convinced by the oracle that this was a prerequisite for victory over the Tegeans.<sup>19</sup> The body of Theseus was likewise tracked down, exhumed and returned in pomp to Athens some four centuries after his death (bringing the amateur archaeologist, Cimon, great popularity).<sup>20</sup> Politically significant corpses constitute, as anthropologists have noted, 'a kind of charismatic stockpile'.<sup>21</sup> They were of growing significance in late nineteenth century Mexico, where the language of intercessive Catholicism was appropriated to paint nationalist cults as parallels (and hoped for displacements) of the cults of saints. The bones of the Independence heroes were 'sacred relics'; when they were moved to Mexico City they travelled to 'the altar of the *patria*'.<sup>22</sup> In such a context it was unsurprising that an entrepreneurial man should attempt to remedy the critical absence of Cuauhtémoc's bones. What was surprising was the identity of the entrepreneur in question. Cuauhtémoc's tomb was not the work of that amorphous abstraction the state, or more concretely Vicente Riva Palacio. It was, rather, the creation of a rancher from an isolated village, who took the obvious step to provide the missing link in the nationalist narrative.

Florentino Juárez was in some ways typical of the socially mobile *ranchero* class who came to dominate much of village life in Porfirian Mexico. He began life as a rural labourer in the remote and impoverished village of Ixcateopan in the mountains of north Guerrero. At some stage, possibly when he served as a sacristan in the parish church, he learned to read and write.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Tenenbaum, 'Streetwise History,' p.138. A rural labourer (in Ixcateopan, San José de Gracia, Michoacán, and Naranja, Michoacán, at least) was paid 25 centavos a day in the 1880s. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, Archivo Sónoro (hereafter INAH AS) PHO/CUAUH/5/18 pp. 11–12, INAH AS/PHO/CUAUH/5/15 p. 22, INAH AS/PHO/CUAUH/5/3 pp. 2–3; L. González y González, *Pueblo en Vilo* (Mexico City, 1995), p. 69; P. Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (New Jersey, 1970), p. 44. <sup>19</sup> R. Waterfield, trans., *Herodotus: The Histories* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 29–30.

<sup>20</sup> Plutarch, *Vies*, vol. VII (Paris, 1972), pp. 24–5.

<sup>21</sup> An exception to this norm of elaborate mortuary ritual is found in Saudi Arabia, where kings are buried with deliberate simplicity beneath piles of stones. P. Metcalf and R. Huntingdon, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 134, 141.

<sup>22</sup> Description of the translation of Nicolás Bravo's remains to Mexico City, *Periódico Oficial del Estado de Guerrero*, año XXVI, no. 34 (21 Aug. 1903).

<sup>23</sup> Birth certificate of Gilberta Jovita Juárez, reproduced in L. Reyes García, *Documentos manuscritos y pictóricos de Ixcateopan, Guerrero* (Mexico City, 1979), pp. 138–139, INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/7 p. 11. Positions as lay assistants in church form a classic shortcut to social

The new skill catapulted him into the narrow ranks of local officeholders; as late as 1900 only 2.3 per cent of the municipio's population were literate.<sup>24</sup> As one villager remembered, '... in those days those who knew how to read, well, they became mayor ...'<sup>25</sup> Literacy also awarded him a privileged position in the carve-up of church and Indian corporate lands under disentailment legislation, and from the 1870s Juárez' wealth and social standing grew in tandem. In 1875 he built the large townhouse across the square from the church, one of only three houses in Ixcateopan with a private well and one of the very few which employed servants; and by 1879 he had entered municipal politics as the *síndico*, the village treasurer.<sup>26</sup> He had become, with some rapidity, the rancher who would still be remembered nearly a century later by villagers for his wealth and power: the man who had the finest horses and his own roulette wheel, and who cached, it was rumoured, money and silver in the mountains, took his family to Mexico City to have their clothes made and had 'lands all over the place'.<sup>27</sup> By the early twentieth century he owned well over 600 hectares of the *municipio*.<sup>28</sup>

At some stage between August 1891 and the end of 1893 Juárez inserted a body beneath his parish church.<sup>29</sup> Cuauhtémoc's bones planted, Juárez turned

mobility across Latin America; for Peruvian cases, see S. J. Stern, *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest* (Madison, 1982), p. 159.

<sup>24</sup> Secretaría de Fomento, *Censo y división territorial del Estado de Guerrero, verificados en 1900* (Mexico City, 1905), pp. 16–17, 76–7. <sup>25</sup> INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/17 p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> R. Parra Terán, 'Ixcateopan en el Siglo XIX,' unpubl. MA diss., Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero 1997, pp. 53, 93.

<sup>27</sup> The family maid's description. INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/27pp. 24–6, INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/38 pp. 4, 7, author's interview, Román Parra Terán, Chilpancingo 2002.

<sup>28</sup> 'Manifestación de predios rústicos, Ixcateopan 1929,' Archivo Municipal de Ixcateopan, Guerrero, (hereafter AMI) 1929, 'Padrón de predios agrícolas, Ixcateopan 1939,' AMI 1939 caja I.

<sup>29</sup> The chronology and even the attribution of the fraud are surrounded by labyrinthine debates. Leaving aside the empirically-challenged arguments of the pro-authenticity camp, there is a rough consensus attributing the tomb to Juárez. This is challenged by Luis Reyes García, who interprets the clumsy interpolations of Juárez' grandson as evidence that he created the tomb itself. For reasons of space I can only signal the principal flaw in Reyes García's argument, namely its reliance on a hypothetical twentieth century insertion of the grave beneath the altar's several tons of nineteenth century masonry. The 1949 excavation demonstrated the impossibility of such tunnelling – the altar lacked foundations and had to be demolished. The tomb must, consequently, be dated to the construction of the altar. Sonia Lombardo's reliable study of the Ixcateopan church establishes that the altar is late nineteenth century, and cannot predate 1869, the date of the preceding altar's construction. A lightning bolt struck the church dome on 13 August 1891 causing its partial collapse; given that the altar lay directly underneath this stands out as the most probable date for its reconstruction. The outer limit of late 1893 is obtained as the latest date at which Juárez could have revealed the tomb to the *jefe político* Cipriano Salgado, as we know he did; Salgado seems to have lost his job in late 1893, probably as a consequence of the simultaneous Canuto Neri rebellion. Reyes García, *Documentos manuscritos y pictóricos*, pp. 39–43, 51, Eulalia Guzmán to Ignacio Marquina, 21 September 1949, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, Archivo Eulalia Guzmán (hereafter INAH AEG)

to fabricating the other components of his fraud: the documents that supplied the tomb with an explanatory, legitimising history and the painstaking dissemination of a suitable village legend. The documents fell into two classes: evidence and exegesis. At the centre of the evidence was a first person account of the burial of Cuauhtémoc. Amidst dark ink arabesques and authentically erratic spelling, the author claimed to have buried the last emperor beneath the Ixcateopan church, and identified himself as Motolinía, a well-known sixteenth century Franciscan. The technical difficulties of producing passable early colonial papers were smoothly resolved by an authentic letter from the Archbishop of Mexico, dated 1777, which contained the all-pardoning annotation: 'This date I copied the ancient [illegible] as they were [illegible] dust'.<sup>30</sup>

In the five volumes of his journals Juárez explained how, and more importantly why, Cuauhtémoc came to Ixcateopan. The rancher claimed to be a 'living letter', heir to a secret village tradition that recorded the fate of Cuauhtémoc's bones. These had been smuggled out of the southeast by Indian deserters from the Hibuera expedition and returned to Ixcateopan. Here they were buried, for the simple reason that Cuauhtémoc (hitherto believed to be Mexica from Tenochtitlán) was in reality a Chontal from Ixcateopan. That he should end up beneath a church, on the face of it an unlikely end for an indigenous high priest, was thanks to Motolinía. He gained the confidence of the Indians, they revealed their secret to him and he reburied Cuauhtémoc. Motolinía swore them to further secrecy, and so, protected by village omerta, the legend of Cuauhtémoc's tomb in Ixcateopan was handed down successive generations of what became the Juárez family. These were stories, wrote Florentino Juárez, 'which the elders used to tell me', 'which they told me they knew as one knows a prayer'.<sup>31</sup> For authenticity's sake, however, the story had to be corroborated by other villagers; and so Juárez and his friend José Jaimes began spreading among their kin, *compadres* and peons the rumour that 'something important' or 'a king' was hidden in the church.<sup>32</sup> The rumour thrived, and by the twentieth century it had become village custom to doff one's hat on passing behind the church.<sup>33</sup>

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caja 9 exp 45, report of Rafael Illescas Frisbie, Ignacio Diéz de Urdanivia Mora and Rafael Molina Berbeyer, 23 November 1949, INAH AEG caja 9 exp 47, S. Lombardo de Ruíz, *La iglesia de la Asunción en relación a la autenticidad de los restos de Cuauhtémoc* (Mexico City, 1978), pp. 77–9, INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/11 p. 29, *Periódico Oficial*, año XVII, no. 84 (16 Dec. 1893).

<sup>30</sup> Reyes García, *Documentos manuscritos y pictóricos*, pp. 11, 198–200, Zavala, 'Dictamen,' pp. 231–6, 242–3, 258.

<sup>31</sup> Instructions of Florentino Juárez to his children on bequeathing them documents relating to Cuauhtémoc, letters of José Amado, Florentino Juárez journal I, all reproduced in Zavala, 'Dictamen,' pp. 258–65. <sup>32</sup> Olivera de Bonfil, *La tradición oral*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>33</sup> INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/13 pp. 14–15, INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/71 p. 4.

Why on earth did Juárez do this? A primordialist answer might be that in the rancher an ancient, organic commitment to the indigenous past met with the intense modishness of Cuauhtémoc in the 1890s and drove him to *hacer patria* in a peculiarly inventive way. To relocate Cuauhtémoc to his village would, moreover, satisfy his affective bonds to Ixcateopan by inserting the place deep into the national historical narrative; a common enough goal, as recent work by Trevor Stack and Claudio Lomnitz-Adler demonstrates, in provincial Mexico.<sup>34</sup> Yet to accept such an explanation is difficult for several reasons. Florentino Juárez was clearly mestizo: both by phenotype – villagers described him as ‘trigueño’, and his grandson’s pale face surprised metropolitan visitors – and by culture.<sup>35</sup> Ixcateopán in his time was a strongly, self-consciously mestizo society, where only nineteen people still owned up to using ‘the dialect’ Náhuatl. (To speak it, more than one villager said, was shameful.) Yet fewer danced the village’s central Indian tradition, the *abuiles*, whose words were being forgotten and substituted with Spanish.<sup>36</sup> The voice of Florentino Juárez in his journals, when not playing the ‘living letter’, carries an almost orientalist, museumising fascination with a vanishing Indian past; a past to which he is more interested outsider than heir.<sup>37</sup> Finally, and most suggestively of all, it would be an extraordinary coincidence that had Juárez forging the tomb at the same time as the Ixcateopan elite faced the political crisis of their generation. The inference of a powerful instrumentalist motive is inescapable.<sup>38</sup>

It was a purely municipal, micropolitical crisis. Ixcateopan had for centuries dominated the rival village of Ixcapuzalco. Located in the west of the municipio, Ixcapuzalco was surrounded by the area’s prime lands, described by one traveller as ‘a large expanse of productive lands excellent for maize, wheat, beans and chickpeas’. There were even gold mines, albeit unexploited; the contrast with the rocky slopes surrounding Ixcateopán was marked.<sup>39</sup> By the late nineteenth century Ixcapuzalco had, on several key indicators, surpassed Ixcateopan: while the villages had similar numbers of

<sup>34</sup> C. Lomnitz, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley, 1992), pp. 224–7, T. Stack, ‘Citizens of Towns, Citizens of Nations: The Knowing of History in Mexico,’ paper given at American Anthropological Association conference 2001.

<sup>35</sup> While Josefina Jaimes remembered him as being ‘an Indian type,’ her testimony seems coloured by a longstanding rivalry with Juárez’ descendants; Ninfo Ibarra’s memory of a ‘medio trigueño’ Juárez is more reliable. INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/21 p. 16, *El Nacional*, 9 October 1950.

<sup>36</sup> *Censo y división territorial del Estado de Guerrero, verificados en 1900*, pp. 72–73, INAH AS PHO CUAUH 5/15 p.1, 5/1 p. 46, 5/28 pp. 16–17, 5/33 p. 26.

<sup>37</sup> Florentino Juárez journal III, reproduced in Zavala, ‘Dictamen,’ pp. 274–6.

<sup>38</sup> I am indebted to Salvador Rueda of the Dirección de Estudios Históricos, INAH, whose work on Ixcateopán and generous advice underpins this interpretation.

<sup>39</sup> A. Dollero, *México al día (impresiones y notas de viaje)* (Paris and Mexico, 1911), p. 586.



merchants, census data reveal Ixcapuzalco to have had considerably more ranchers and a population three times as literate as that of Ixcateopan.<sup>40</sup> In such conditions, and given the typical long-running animosity between the two villages, secession was a logical conclusion. In April 1890 Ixcapuzalco petitioned the state congress for permission to form its own *municipio*. The *jefe político* backed them, and on 1 January 1891 Ixcapuzalco became *cabecera* of the new municipality of Pedro Ascencio Alquisiras.<sup>41</sup> For Ixcateopan this was the equivalent of the 1848 United States landgrab: the village lost over half of its former territory, and the richer half at that.

Ixcapuzalco's secession had a direct impact on Florentino Juárez. It spelled political decline, a powerful attack on his pride in the *patria chica* and, in more economic terms, the surrender of jurisdiction over an area which contained some of his prime lands, and would have undoubtedly have generated a majority of Ixcateopan's tax revenues. Where evidence exists it is clear that such lands were obtained by a mixture of illegitimate and sometimes down-right illegal methods.<sup>42</sup> In such a context he did not have to be Machiavelli to understand that the loss of political control would, in the end, mean the loss of his Ixcapuzalco landholdings – as indeed happened in the late 1890s.<sup>43</sup> So Juárez, the local judge at the time, led his faction in vigorous resistance to the change. While he pursued his case through conventional channels – writing to generals, bishops and congressmen – he was also following the less conventional strategy of forging Cuauhtémoc's tomb.<sup>44</sup>

This was a strategy that for all its seeming eccentricity was founded on two solid rational-choice calculations. In the first place, the loss of Ixcapuzalco was not irreversible. Municipal borders were not set in stone, and there was no reason why, if its elite could outcompete that of Ixcapuzalco, the village should not recuperate its old lands.<sup>45</sup> It would not be the first case of successful municipal revanchism: the village of Mochitlán, for example, had won

<sup>40</sup> *Censo y división territorial del Estado de Guerrero, verificados en 1900*, pp. 48–69.

<sup>41</sup> Assorted numbers of the *Periódico Oficial* in Archivo Paucic (hereafter AP) 917.273 DAT caja 659, Chilpancingo.

<sup>42</sup> For some examples, see J. García Quintana, *Cuauhtémoc en el siglo XIX* (México DF, 1977), pp. 74–5.

<sup>43</sup> INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/15 p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> His 1893 correspondence with the northern caudillo General Canuto Neri almost certainly centred on the Ixcateopan-Ixcapuzalco conflict; in 1894 he organised a petition to the Bishop of Chilapa, asking that Ixcapuzalco remain subject to the parish of Ixcateopan; in 1895 he was part of the *ayuntamiento* that petitioned the state congress for the reincorporation of Ixcapuzalco to Ixcateopan. Letters, General Canuto Neri to Florentino Juárez, 1893, reproduced in Reyes García, *Documentos manuscritos y pictóricos*, pp. 141–2, Archivo Diocesano de Chilapa (hereafter ADC) Libro de Gobierno XIII p. 265 (25 April 1894), *Periódico Oficial*, año XIX, no. 43 (Oct. 9 1895).

<sup>45</sup> In Guerrero the years 1850 to 1962 saw the creation of 97 *municipios* and the suppression of a further 22; Ixcateopan itself had its borders altered in 1883, 1885, and 1888. AP 917.273 DAT caja 659, Parra Terán, 'Ixcateopan en el siglo XIX,' pp. 94–6.

and lost its municipal independence from Tixtla three times in just over thirty years.<sup>46</sup> In the second place, a bold nationalist gesture was an ideal way of currying favour with key decision-makers. The state gazette clearly communicated the political elites' contemporary interest in purposive nation-building. During one month at the turn of the century Guerrero observed no fewer than nine days of public ceremony.<sup>47</sup> The carnivalesque experience of nationalist ritual was equally popular with the ruled: in 1891 the roof of an Ixcateopan house collapsed under the weight of families who had climbed there to see the Independence Day parade.<sup>48</sup> In the flurries of nationalist ceremony the newfound significance of Cuauhtémoc was equally clear. Juárez owned a library of over 300 books, including some specialist history texts.<sup>49</sup> He would have been well aware of Cuauhtémoc's biography; of its important lacunae, including a tomb site; and of the boom of cultural production surrounding the last emperor after the inauguration of the Mexico City monument. Yet even had he been less well read, the *Periódico Oficial* – required reading for smalltown politicians – alone could have led him to Cuauhtémoc. Articles between 1887 and 1893 repeatedly signalled Cuauhtémoc as of extraordinary importance to Mexican nationalist projects. 'Mexico', wrote the editors in 1890, 'is the *patria* of Cuauhtémoc ... he alone synthesises our past, that distant yesterday which is the most legitimate robe for our national pride ... Mexico without Cuauhtémoc is inconceivable ...'.<sup>50</sup>

Such rhetoric could well be interpreted in material terms, as an implicit call for a body. Governments across the Porfiriato were profligate with dead bodies, investing heavily in the complex rites of state funerals that became masques, playing out lessons in citizenship on a massive scale. Matt Esposito has traced 102 state funerals and 14 exhumations, translations and reburials of national heroes during the period 1876–1911. (Nicolás Bravo, a Guerrerense leader in the War of Independence, was reburied twice).<sup>51</sup> Once more the state gazette formed a transmission band between national

<sup>46</sup> AP 917.273 DAT caja 659, Parra Terán, 'Ixcateopan en el Siglo XIX,' pp. 94–96.

<sup>47</sup> Commemorating the opening of the State Congress, Porfirio Díaz' and Nicolás Bravo's birthdays, the installation of the first Mexican Congress, the Declaration of Independence, the birth of Morelos and the death of ex-Governor Arce. *Periódico Oficial*, año XXVI, no. 47 (20 Nov. 1903).  
<sup>48</sup> *Periódico Oficial*, año XV, no. 42 (4 Nov. 1891).

<sup>49</sup> Reyes García, *Documentos manuscritos y pictóricos*, pp. 18–19, INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/18 pp. 83–4, Olivera de Bonfil, *La tradición oral sobre Cuauhtémoc*, p. 97, A. López Miramontes, 'Panorama historiográfica del estado de Guerrero' in A. López Miramontes et al., *Ensayos para la historia del estado de Guerrero* (Chilpancingo, 1985), p. 25.

<sup>50</sup> For a selection of such articles see *Periódico Oficial*, año XI, no. 54 (10 Sept. 1887), *Periódico Oficial*, año XIV, no. 59 (20 Aug. 1890), *Periódico Oficial*, año XIV, no. 60 (23 Aug. 1890), *Periódico Oficial*, año XVII, no. 74 (4 Nov. 1893).

<sup>51</sup> M. Esposito, 'Memorializing Modern Mexico: The State Funerals of the Porfirian Era, 1876–1911,' unpubl. PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 1997, pp. 231–273, 349–368, 375–80.

and village elites, reporting the ceremonies in detail and providing its readers with the clear-cut templates of appropriate affective responses.<sup>52</sup> The *Periódico Oficial* even demanded a body for Cuauhtémoc: an 1887 article stressed that the *tlatoani*'s final resting place was unknown and called on him to 'come out from the fog which [had hidden him] for more than three centuries'.<sup>53</sup> Immersed in a sea of eulogies to the last emperor, Juárez' calculation that the village harbouring his bones would be rewarded, perhaps with a restoration of its former borders, was close to straightforward.

The logic was not even all that new. Colonial villages had adopted patron saints to assert identity, autonomy and to raise money; in adopting Cuauhtémoc for Ixcateopan, Juárez would provide an updated, quasi-secular counterpart.<sup>54</sup> His method of adoption, archaeological fraud, was no leap in the dark either. The Porfirians' rediscovery of the pre-Columbian past combined with the sketchy archaeological practice of the time to make the forgery of artefacts or of whole sites a growing and potentially lucrative tradition.<sup>55</sup> As the American journalist John Finerty noted in 1879,

visiting "gringos", in general, make much ado about Aztec idols, and, of course, an "industry" in that line has been developed, with the result that "false idols" are as numerous in and around the City of Mexico as round bullet "relics" on the field of Waterloo. A stout idol, with big ears, a pug nose and cross eyes, can be had very cheap indeed ...<sup>56</sup>

Archaeological fraud was also in the air in Guerrero: in 1897 William Niven was led by local guides to the lost city of Quechmietoplican, forty miles from Chilpancingo. The press 'marvelled ... at his imaginative powers', as Niven's prehispanic complex turned out to be abandoned mineworkings.<sup>57</sup> (At his later Atzacapuzalco site Niven methodically dug up tablets created and buried by his village workers, artefacts which he read – apparently in good faith – as the remains of a forgotten culture).<sup>58</sup> The materialisation of identity by fair means or foul was a game open to a wide variety of players; Juárez, in

<sup>52</sup> See for example the reports and editorial surrounding Bravo's second reburial in 1903. *Periódico Oficial*, año XXVI, no. 34 (21 Aug. 1903).

<sup>53</sup> Luis Guillén speech, Chilpancingo Instituto Literario 21 August 1887, reproduced in *Periódico Oficial*, año XI, no. 54 (10 Sept. 1887).

<sup>54</sup> A parallel reinforced by the religious tone and imagery employed by villagers (and other *guerrerenses*) in speaking of Cuauhtémoc, who is commonly compared to Christ in ceremonies such as his *aniversario luctuoso* in Ixcateopan. The teacher Juan Campuzano wrote a prayer to Cuauhtémoc in which he is called an 'adolescent Christ'. J. Campuzano, *Cinco Héroes de Guerrero: Galeana, Guerrero, Cuauhtémoc, Alvarez, Altamirano* (Mexico City, 1961), p. 23. <sup>55</sup> I. Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology* (London, 1980), pp. 160–7.

<sup>56</sup> J. F. Finerty, *John F. Finerty Reports Porfirian Mexico, 1879* (University of Texas, 1974), p. 143.

<sup>57</sup> *Periódico Oficial*, año XXI, no. 34 (25 Aug. 1897).

<sup>58</sup> R. S. Wicks and R. H. Harrison, *Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods: William Niven's Life of Discovery and Revolution in Mexico and the American Southwest* (Lubbock, 1999), pp. 213–25.

choosing to create Cuauhtémoc's bones, was distinguished more by ambition than by originality.

However, it proved strangely easier to put together a tomb than it was to dig it up, and across the 1890s Juárez struggled fruitlessly to have his Cuauhtémoc unearthed. He told the priest, Severo Rodríguez; he told powerful regional merchants, such as the Flores family of Taxco; he told two consecutive *jefes políticos*, and he tried to tell President Díaz. The closest he came to success, however, were a few lines in the metropolitan press in 1899, when he was mayor.<sup>59</sup> It may have been that Juárez' credibility had suffered too much from his political decline; or perhaps Mexico City politicians were loath to unearthen a symbol of resistance in a state as periodically rebellious as Guerrero. The tomb, in Juárez' lifetime at least, failed: the bones remained hidden, Ixcapuzalco's secession endured and Juárez himself died in the revolution.

In 1949 Juárez' grandson, Salvador Rodríguez Juárez, took the documents to the parish priest. Padre Salgado preached their story to the village in a sermon, and within days the news had reached the President and the front pages of the Mexico City press.<sup>60</sup> The timing was auspicious: the late 1940s were a period of intense nationalist promotion by the governing élites. Between 1947 and 1949 the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) issued nearly a million free biographies of Mexico's national heroes.<sup>61</sup> The interior minister Héctor Pérez Martínez had himself published a popular biography of Cuauhtémoc in 1948; the historian Salvador Toscano was preparing another one in 1949.<sup>62</sup> Contemporary cultural nationalism verged at times on the necrophiliac: in the three years leading up to the emergence of the Ixcateopan documents, archaeologists had sedulously recovered the supposed remains of Cortés and the *Niños Héroes*, the six cadets who had died defending Chapultepec Castle against the invading US army in 1847.<sup>63</sup> In such a context the Ixcateopan tradition was not just the stuff of legend, but also of high politics.

Yet it was not the federal but the state government that became the dogged promoters of Cuauhtémoc's tomb. The revelations could not have

<sup>59</sup> A. Salmerón Jr., 'Cuauhtémoc,' in *Centenario* (Chilpancingo, 1949), pp. 2, 11, *Periódico Oficial*, año XXI, no. 39 (1897), INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/11 p. 29, J. Aviles Solares, 'Destierro de Ignorancias,' *Excelsior* 9 Sept. 1950, Florentino Juárez journal IV, reproduced in Zavala, 'Dictamen,' pp. 276–7, 284.

<sup>60</sup> Municipal President Juan Reyna to President Alemán, 7 Feb. 1949, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Ramo Presidentes Miguel Alemán Valdés (hereafter AGN MAV) exp 535/11, *El Universal* 7 Feb. 1949, *Excelsior* 8 February 1949.

<sup>61</sup> *El Nacional* 3 Feb. 1950.

<sup>62</sup> H. Pérez Martínez, *Cuauhtémoc: vida y muerte de una cultura* (Mexico City, 1948), S. Toscano, *Cuauhtémoc* (Mexico City, 1953).

<sup>63</sup> Jiménez Moreno, 'Los hallazgos de Ichcateopan,' pp. 161–2.

been more timely for General Baltasar Leyva Mancilla, the governor; he was deep in a political crisis that threatened his overthrow.<sup>64</sup> His administration by 1949 had opposed President Alemán's election, and overseen two rebellions and a lengthy string of political murders; his violent mismanagement of the December 1948 municipal elections had further fuelled already bitter peasant opposition.<sup>65</sup> Against this dark backdrop, the opportunity to produce the long-lost body of Cuauhtémoc was a lifeline. So Leyva Mancilla moved with some urgency, forming a state commission, recruiting the suitably *indigenista* academic Eulalia Guzmán and bulldozing an excavation through the objections of scholars.<sup>66</sup> The dig began on 20 September and was chaotic. The team lacked torches, metal detectors, an engineer, an archaeologist, a photographer, a field diary, a dig plan and a clear leader. Despite these minor inconveniences, however, on 26 September 1949 they discovered Cuauhtémoc's bones.<sup>67</sup>

Politicians and bureaucrats reacted immediately and launched an intensive nationalist campaign. Congressmen and senators organised homages, fed carefully impassioned soundbites to the press and passed a resolution calling for a colossal monument.<sup>68</sup> The secretary-general of the PRI penned an (execrable) ode to Cuauhtémoc; Mexico's best known poet, Alfonso Reyes,

<sup>64</sup> While the Federal Security Directorate's local agent filed highly critical reports on Leyva Mancilla, rumours that he was to be pushed to take an indefinite leave of absence – the gubernatorial euphemism for being fired – circulated in the local press. Rafael Carreto Rodríguez to DFS, 22 March 1949, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Dirección Federal de Seguridad (hereafter AGN DFS) Guerrero exp 48–8 H 69 L1, *La Verdad*, 30 March, 6 April 1949.

<sup>65</sup> *El Universal*, 27 May 1945, *La Verdad*, 24 February 1949, G. I. Migoni to Gobernación, 9 October 1945, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (hereafter AGN DGIPS) caja 2034 exp 2-1/AGD/818, PS-7 to Gobernación, 3 Dec. 1946, AGN DGIPS caja 793 exp 2-1/46/428, Rios Thivol to Gobernación, 26 Sept. 1947, AGN DGIPS caja 84 exp MRT, Ojeda to Avila Camacho, 14 May 1945, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Ramo Presidentes Manuel Avila Camacho (hereafter AGN MAC) 544.2/11-4, *La Verdad*, 23, 24, 26 Feb., 2, 8, 20 March 1949, Victoria Rosales to De la Selva, 3 May 1949, AGN MAV 132.1/198, report, E. Alba Calderón to Gobernación, 4 Jan. 1949, AGN DGIPS caja 103 exp EAC.

<sup>66</sup> INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/2 p.5.

<sup>67</sup> Accounts of the dig tend to the confused, the contradictory and the clearly self-aggrandising, and despite the quantity of material left behind it is often difficult to reconstruct the progress of the excavation. A damning picture can be constructed from the following: Guzmán to Marquina, 21, 24 Sept. 1949, INAH AEG caja 9 exps 45, 48, Guzmán's dig report, 23 Nov. 1949, INAH AEG caja 9 exp 47, INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/11 p. 60, INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/2 p. 9, INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/15 p. 58, Matos Moctezuma, *Informe*, pp. 23–35; *El Nacional*, 11 Oct. 1949, Carlos Margáin, preliminary report to INAH 12 Oct. 1949, INAH Archivo Silvio Zavala (hereafter INAH ASZ) caja 1 exp 2 p. 166.

<sup>68</sup> Cuauhtémoc was variously called 'the symbol of our nationality,' 'the spirit of the race,' 'the spirit of authentic *mexicanidad*' and 'the true Father of the Mexican Nationality.' *Excelsior*, 5, 19 Oct. 1949, *La Prensa*, 12 Oct. 1949.

praised it lavishly.<sup>69</sup> Strategic state agencies – the Education Ministry, the Departamento del Distrito Federal, unions, cultural organisations and the army – funded and coordinated a wave of public ritual.<sup>70</sup> Their success in mobilising participants was at first notable: 1950 was declared the ‘Year of Cuauhtémoc’, and daily ceremonies were announced. On 8 October 1949 40,000 students and schoolchildren paraded to the Reforma statue of Cuauhtémoc; the 12 October Día de la Raza (a commemoration of Columbus) was hijacked and focused on the last emperor. Even the anniversary of the Revolution was colonised, with the day’s ceremonial centrepiece constituting 500 people spelling out Cuauhtémoc’s name, surrounded by some 6,000 dancers.<sup>71</sup> Buildings, streets, dams and towns, including Eulalia Guzmán’s birthplace and Ixcateopan, were renamed in memory of the last emperor.<sup>72</sup> For one of many hyperbolic commentators the Ixcateopan find was, above two world wars, the discovery of penicillin or the invention of the atomic bomb, ‘the most important historic event of our century’.<sup>73</sup>

In the thick of the celebrations one voice, that of President Alemán, was notably silent. He was, presumably, averse to risking public humiliation, and did not want to endorse a possibly fraudulent tomb. The Juárez documents had been dismissed out of hand at an early stage as ‘crude forgeries’, in a powerful and very public academic consensus opinion that filled even the tabloid press in the days leading up to the discovery.<sup>74</sup> Alemán’s caution was well-founded. As a commission from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) examined the tomb, rumours spread that the tomb’s artefacts were made of tin, that the bones were those of an old man or a woman, and that the skeleton had two right knee-caps.<sup>75</sup> This was uncomfortably close to the truth. When the INAH report was released on 19 October it damned the excavation; dated both artefacts and documents to the nineteenth century; and disaggregated Cuauhtémoc’s bones into the fragmentary remains of an adolescent, a young man, a young woman and two small children.<sup>76</sup>

Such conclusions were politically unacceptable. The Governor of Guerrero tried to have the report suppressed, and then condemned it as a ‘crime against the *patria*’. Party heavyweights (including the secretary-general and Adolfo López Mateos, a future president) lined up to echo his opinion; Diego Rivera, playing to the crowd, demanded that the entire INAH

<sup>69</sup> J. López Bermúdez, *Canto a Cuauhtémoc, con un juicio de Alfonso Reyes* (Tuxtla Gutiérrez, 1951).

<sup>70</sup> *Excélsior*, 29 Oct., 12 Nov. 1949. <sup>71</sup> *Excélsior*, 9, 10, 11, 13 Oct., 19, 21 Nov. 1949.

<sup>72</sup> Various authors, *La antropología en México: panorama histórico*, vol. X (México DF, 1988), p. 255. <sup>73</sup> *El Universal*, 4 Oct. 1949.

<sup>74</sup> *Excélsior*, 16 Feb., 10, 11 March 1949, *La Prensa*, 22–27 Sept. 1949.

<sup>75</sup> *Excélsior*, 17 Oct. 1949. <sup>76</sup> Zavala, ‘Dictamen,’ pp. 212, 250–7.

commission be shot.<sup>77</sup> Alemán attempted to calm the storm by ordering the formation of a second commission, manned by some of the most influential Mexican scholars of the twentieth century.<sup>78</sup> Its function, as much political as purely academic, would be to provide – in a hopefully far-distant future – an unimpeachable verdict to close an increasingly embarrassing scandal. In this it failed, however: the so-called *Gran Comisión* report, released in February 1951, merely refined its predecessor's conclusions.<sup>79</sup>

The government had powerful reasons beyond mere embarrassment to attempt to quell the scandal. By late 1949 the last emperor had become, in the US embassy's words, 'Mexico's most sought-after political asset'.<sup>80</sup> Significant sectors of the ruling party had initially tried to enjoy the rents of that asset, laying claim to Cuauhtémoc's symbolic capital. But the 'official' Cuauhtémoc, wrapped in abstract proclamations of purity, stoicism and *mexicanidad*, was significantly less effective than the Mexican Left's Cuauhtémoc. A loose yet broad left-wing coalition – which included muralists, pro-authenticity academics, Lázaro Cárdenas and Pablo Neruda – used the press and public ceremonies to construct an alternative, 'dissident' Cuauhtémoc, whose central characteristics were incorruptibility and anti-imperialism.<sup>81</sup> In November the Soviet Embassy sponsored a commemoration of the Russian Revolution, in which Cuauhtémoc was heavily invoked.<sup>82</sup> In February 1950 an unscheduled speaker violently seized the microphone at a state-endorsed commemoration of Cuauhtémoc's death to deliver an 'anti-Spanish', 'anti-government' and 'extreme left' diatribe.<sup>83</sup> By 1951 Siqueiros was comparing the last emperor to Arab nationalists, the Viet Minh and Mao Tse-Tung.<sup>84</sup> The sense of lost control was palpable, and was increased by vigorous symbolic competition from across the right. The Partido de Acción Nacional's magazine swung between a modulated scepticism and the promotion of a Catholic, hierarchically disciplined

<sup>77</sup> *La Prensa*, 21, 28 Oct. 1949, *Excelsior*, 19 Oct. 1949.

<sup>78</sup> Among the eleven specialists were Alfonso Caso, Manuel Gamio, Pablo Martínez del Río and Arturo Arnaiz y Freg. I. Marquina, *Memorias* (Mexico City, 1994), p. 170; Jiménez Moreno, 'Los hallazgos de Ixcateopan' p. 171, Arnaiz y Freg et al., *Los hallazgos de Ixcateopan*, pp. x–xv.

<sup>79</sup> Arnaiz y Freg et al., *Los hallazgos de Ixcateopan*, pp. 270, 288, 404.

<sup>80</sup> First Secretary Burrows to State Department, 18 Nov. 1949, US NARG 812.00/11-1949.

<sup>81</sup> R. A. Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies* (Austin, 1982), p. 125, Profile of Chávez Orozco, 1949, AGN DGIPS caja 21 exp 1, various authors, *La antropología en México*, vol. X, pp. 255–270, *Cultura Soviética*, nos. 61–68, Nov. 1949–June 1950.

<sup>82</sup> Although Eulalia Guzmán pulled out at the last minute. Burrows to State Department, 18 Nov. 1949, NARG 812.00/11-1949.

<sup>83</sup> Report, EAC to Gobernación, 27 Feb. 1950, AGN DGIPS caja 320 exp 2-1/360/207.

<sup>84</sup> Cited in B. Carr, 'The Fate of the Vanguard Party under a Revolutionary State: Marxism's Contribution to the Construction of the Great Arch' in G. Joseph and D. Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC, 1994), p. 347.

Cauhtémoc.<sup>85</sup> Conservative (and in some cases pro-Franco) *hispanistas* attacked him as the cannibal leader of a totalitarian state. Even the fascist Acción Revolucionaria Mexicana joined the festivities, organising anti-communist commemorations of their own.<sup>86</sup> For the government, the putative benefits of developing a cult to Cauhtémoc were quickly outweighed by the evident costs; and so the monuments were never built, the ceremonies were rapidly allowed to tail off, and the final piece in the controversy, the *Gran Comisión* report, was convincingly buried.

Over the following two decades villagers, *indigenistas* and *guerrerense* authorities continued to honour the Ixcateopan remains, and the national elites ignored them. During Luis Echeverría's *sexenio* (1970–1976), however, regional and national interests intersected to favour the last emperor's resurrection. In Guerrero two long-running insurrections were tying down an estimated 24,000 Mexican troops in an unpopular counter-insurgency campaign.<sup>87</sup> At a national level, moreover, President Echeverría found Cauhtémoc a useful vehicle for two arguments. He largely adopted the left's anti-imperialist Cauhtémoc as a figurehead for his *tercermundista* rhetoric: 'Cauhtémoc', he pronounced, 'is the wellspring of organised resistance against dependency and colonial exploitation'.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, and in an act of notable semiotic contortionism, Echeverría used Cauhtémoc to try to lay the ghosts of Tlatelolco. His campaign speech in Ixcateopan contained an implicit equation: outgoing leader Díaz Ordaz, who presided over the student shootings and disappearances, was Moctezuma. The incoming Echeverría, 'assum[ing] political power when political power, far from being attractive, was a challenge' was the self-sacrificing and symbolically opposed Cauhtémoc. The last emperor, finally, was an object lesson to Mexican youth

to manifest our rebellions based on reason .... In his statesmanlike figure the youth of our century should find the paths of inspiration and the courage for their acts, not for absurd violence that shakes the creative order of our era, but rather to channel themselves ... in defence of the Republic's highest ideals.<sup>89</sup>

Abroad, Cauhtémoc was to represent tireless rebellion; at home, self-sacrificing self-discipline.

It was consequently unsurprising that the *guerrerense* call for a fresh investigation should be welcomed in Mexico City. An Education Ministry commission was convened in January 1976, and the setpiece struggle of

<sup>85</sup> *La Nación*, 13 Oct. 1949.

<sup>86</sup> *Excelsior*, 8, 16, 21, 23, 29 Oct. 1949.

<sup>87</sup> A. Bartra, *Guerrero Bronco: campesinos, ciudadanos y guerrilleros en la Costa Grande* (Mexico City, 1996), pp. 107–116.

<sup>88</sup> Echeverría decree forming the third commission on Cauhtémoc's bones, 14 Jan. 1976.

<sup>89</sup> Echeverría speech Ixcateopan, March 12 1970, reproduced in Echeverría, *Cauhtémoc*, pp. 3–8.



1949–1951 was reprised.<sup>90</sup> The commission was never going to produce the politically correct verdict: once again it drew upon the brightest and best of Mexican academia, and once again the state was unable to exercise the cultural control of, for example, Stalinist Russia (where archaeologists who did not toe the nationalist party line were shot).<sup>91</sup> Eulalia Guzmán recycled her earlier press and publishing campaigns, reinforced by some evidence newly forged by Juárez' grandson Salvador Rodríguez Juárez.<sup>92</sup> Overlooking the jovial *ranchero* menaces of Governor Rubén Figueroa – who half-jokingly threatened to decapitate commission members who did not authenticate the bones – the academics merely added to earlier condemnations of the tomb. Echeverría received them, thanked them and quietly dropped both grave and cult.<sup>93</sup> But their reports, published individually after the collective report was withheld, were the final nails in Cuauhtémoc's non-existent coffin.

The nationalist cult of Cuauhtémoc, assessed across the twentieth century, was a failure. Behind the smoke and mirrors of the state's periodic mobilisations of schools, bureaucrats and unions the affective power of the 'official' last emperor proved ambiguous. In 1910 the government organised a public competition to choose a centenary hymn: while 75 per cent of the entries mentioned Hidalgo, less than one in ten mentioned Cuauhtémoc.<sup>94</sup> In 1950, the official 'Year of Cuauhtémoc', a mere couple of hundred spectators turned out voluntarily to commemorate his death, and some half of these were passing American tourists.<sup>95</sup> The lack of resonance had been prefigured by sceptics such as José Vasconcelos, who (despite delivering a statue of Cuauhtémoc to Brazil with an impassioned eulogy) claimed that the public had no understanding of Cuauhtémoc, and Carlos Fuentes, one of whose characters is incapable of identifying the emperor from his monument.<sup>96</sup> It was confirmed by later attitudinal surveys: the schoolchildren polled by Rafael Segovia in the mid-1970s did not rank Cuauhtémoc among the

<sup>90</sup> The new investigation was solicited by Vicente Fuentes Díaz, a lifelong member of the left whose political journey had taken him from the Communist Party (PCM) through the Partido Popular (PP) to end up as a *prista* senator for Guerrero. Echeverría decree forming the third commission on Cuauhtémoc's bones, 14 Jan. 1976.

<sup>91</sup> V. A. Schnirelman, 'From internationalism to nationalism: forgotten pages of Soviet archaeology in the 1930s and 1940s' in P. L. Kohl and C. Fawcett (eds.), *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice Of Archaeology* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 125–30.

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Guzmán's series in *Excelsior*, 6–15 Feb. 1976.

<sup>93</sup> Author's interview, Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, Mexico City 20 July 2000.

<sup>94</sup> R. Earle, "'Padres de la Patria" and the Ancestral Past: Commemorations of Independence in Nineteenth-Century Spanish America,' in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 34, no. 4 (Nov. 2002), p. 801.

<sup>95</sup> EAC to Gobernación, 27 Feb. 1950, AGN DGIPS caja 320 exp 2-1/360/207.

<sup>96</sup> J. Vasconcelos, 'El Desastre,' in *Obras Completas* (Mexico City, 1957), vol. II, pp. 1336–1337, C. Fuentes, *La región más transparente del aire* (Mexico City, 1996), p. 289.

first three national heroes, while a 2001 study did not place him in the first ten.<sup>97</sup>

This does not mean that Cuauhtémoc was without primordial significance for many Mexicans. The endurance of the ‘dissident’ Cuauhtémoc reveals the contrary. While the Mexican government abandoned its claim to the last emperor, his symbol was included in the wave of privatisations of the 1990s and was adopted by the opposition. Members of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática sporadically refer to the last emperor – it is, after all, led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas – and the party uses an ‘aztec sun’ as its emblem. Supporters of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional quoted Cuauhtémoc during the 1997 Mexico City demonstrations and periodically use the Reforma monument as a meeting place. The Maoist Ejército Popular Revolucionario (operating in Guerrero) has a biography of Cuauhtémoc on its web page and a leader whose *nom de guerre* is Cuauhtémoc; its insurgency was explicitly linked, by one Ixcateopan informant, to the last emperor’s struggle against the Spanish.<sup>98</sup>

The ‘dissident’ Cuauhtémoc is no more historically coherent than the official version. As Lyman Johnson has noted, ‘the repackaging of the bloody-handed Aztec aristocracy with their passions for military conquest and human sacrifice as a Mexican pre-proletariat’ is at best implausible.<sup>99</sup> But it is at least internally coherent. The ‘official’ Cuauhtémoc, on the other hand, was not only sapped by the authenticity scandal and the accompanying suspicions of state complicity in fraud. It was, from the nineteenth century onwards, systematically undermined by nonsensical attempts to tie Cuauhtémoc into the dominant scheme of *mestizaje*. The images of Cuauhtémoc promoted, among others, by Riva Palacio, Vasconcelos and a host of 1940s *priistas* were simultaneously icons of resistance and conciliatory origin figures who accepted the Conquest and fathered the new mestizo nation. The semiotic tension was self-evident, with the result – wholly unbelievable, affectively impotent – repeatedly caricatured as ‘a phony aztecism’.<sup>100</sup>

What are we to make of this? The history of Cuauhtémoc’s bones is open to a multiplicity of readings. It is a powerful reminder of the central role of archaeology in the construction of national identity, of the truism taught by Benedict Anderson and Indiana Jones: that archaeology is not a politically

<sup>97</sup> R. Segovia, *La politización del niño mexicano* (Mexico City, 1975), pp. 89–94, U. Beltrán, ‘El ranking de los héroes patrios’ in *Nexos*, Sept. 2001, p. 94.

<sup>98</sup> *El insurgente*, año 2, no. 19 (March 1998), *Proceso*, no. 1197 (10 Oct. 1999), author’s interview, Ixcateopan 22 February 1998.

<sup>99</sup> L. L. Johnson, ‘Digging Up Cuauhtémoc,’ in L. L. Johnson (ed.), *Death, Dismemberment, and Memory: Body Politics in Latin America* (Albuquerque, 2004), p. 219.

<sup>100</sup> *Excélsior*, 16 Oct. 1949.

innocent pursuit.<sup>101</sup> The rise and fall of the symbol of Cuauhtémoc, moreover, accurately mirrors the rise and fall of *indigenismo* itself within that process. In the 1890s *indigenismo* seemed sufficiently central to Mexican nationalism to attract provincial ranchers to the cult of Cuauhtémoc, hoping to exchange the symbolic capital of reinforcement of the state's campaign for local political and economic capital; by the 1990s Cuauhtémoc had been surrendered, without much of a struggle, to parties opposed to that state. The fate of Cuauhtémoc's bones underlines the overdetermined fragility of state *indigenismo* in Mexico and, perhaps, in Latin America as a whole.<sup>102</sup> Nationalist projects are inherently centralising, their promoters aspiring to cultural homogeneity; yet to promote Indian cultures seriously would be to promote a decentralised cultural patchwork encoded, in Mexico alone, in an estimated 182 different languages.<sup>103</sup> The solution – glorifying the dead while eliminating the living Indian – was self-evidently incoherent, leading Porfirian elites to display a dead Apache's head in one international exhibition and a costly bronze of Cuauhtémoc in the next.<sup>104</sup> Finally, attempts to reconcile indigenous resistance with the master narrative of *mestizaje* could be achieved only by semiotic acrobatics and a wilful disdain for history. Riva Palacio's Cuauhtémoc, who assists the Spanish in 'pacifying' his former empire and is baptised 'Don Fernando', rested on two poorly forged royal letters of instruction filed in Mexico City's national archive.<sup>105</sup> Vasconcelos was more direct: accused of pulling his Cuauhtémoc out of thin air, he agreed and added 'I am not making history; I am trying to create a myth.'<sup>106</sup> Such myths, however, were the creations of expediency and would have short lives.

Perhaps the most interesting conclusion to be drawn from the modern cult of Cuauhtémoc concerns the role of groups other than national elites in constructions of nationalism. That nationalist traditions and histories were inventions was a commonplace in Mexico even before Hobsbawm and

<sup>101</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), p. 181.

<sup>102</sup> While *indigenismo* has been traditionally seen as a predominantly Mexican and Peruvian phenomenon, Rebecca Earle's recent work finds Independence leaders in Argentina, Colombia and Chile making significant use of the Indian past. The subsequent failure of *indigenismo* to develop in these countries is suggestive. R. Earle, 'Creole patriotism and the Myth of the "Loyal Indian"', *Past & Present*, no. 172 (Aug. 2001), pp. 129–32.

<sup>103</sup> An estimate calculated by the geographer Orozco y Berra in the mid-nineteenth century, cited in L. González y González, *El indio en la era liberal* (Mexico City, 1996), p. 163.

<sup>104</sup> M. Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs* (Berkeley, 1996), p. 54, *Periódico Oficial*, año XVII, no. 74 (4 Nov. 1893).

<sup>105</sup> Riva Palacio, *México a través de los siglos*, vol. II pp. 107–11, Arnáiz y Freg et al., *Los ballazgos de Ixcateopan*, p. 7, Pérez Martínez, *Cuauhtémoc*, pp. 261–263, J. L. Martínez, *Hernán Cortés* (México DF, 1990), pp. 441, 452, J. L. Martínez, *Documentos Cortesianos*, vol. I (Mexico City, 1991), pp. 275, 345.

<sup>106</sup> Vasconcelos, *Obras Completas*, vol. II, pp. 1336–7.

Ranger's influential work.<sup>107</sup> The playwright Rodolfo Usigli explicitly called Mexico 'a country in which tradition seems a daily invention'; the historian Enrique Florescano described the elite use of the past as 'the most powerful tool in the creation of a nationalist conscience, and the most ubiquitous resource in the legitimisation of power.'<sup>108</sup> That such inventions were predominantly or even purely elite creations was a powerful theoretical assumption reinforced by methodological limitations: evidence for non-elite manipulation of nationalist phenomena is often hard to find. Resulting analyses, reinforced by prevalent and schematic elite/subaltern dichotomies, paint sharp divisions between Machiavellian producers and passive, sheep-like consumers of national memory. This is the genre of social science whose vision, satirised by Gramsci, is of a world divided into 'on the one hand, those with the genie in the lamp who know everything, and on the other those who are fooled by their own leaders but are so incurably thick that they refuse to believe it.'<sup>109</sup>

Mexican elites did conduct a largely instrumentalist campaign from the 1880s to the 1970s to consolidate and manipulate an affectively-convincing Cuauhtémoc. Yet this is only part of the story. Among the copious archival material that the Ixcateopán controversy produced there is another side to the story: that of peasants, smalltown politicians and bureaucrats who shared the realisation that history is a natural resource, and resolved to exploit it.

The Education Ministry at the height of the 1949–1951 campaign offers a clear illustration of the resulting interaction between elite nationalists and bureaucratic entrepreneurs. The minister, Manuel Gual Vidal, consulted Alemán before any major decision and followed the President's lead in maintaining a public agnosticism towards the bones.<sup>110</sup> Beneath him, however, teachers and educational bureaucrats bombarded the ministry and other departments with suggestions for celebrating Cuauhtémoc. Many of their initiatives were implemented. In Tlaxcala, for example, a teacher produced a primary school curriculum in which references to Cuauhtémoc colonised the teaching of all subjects.<sup>111</sup> A Mexico City school inspector – 'representing 200 schoolteachers' – wrote dozens of letters suggesting medals, parades, school namings, presidential visits, and monuments and reporting the delivery of reliquaries containing earth from Ixcateopan

<sup>107</sup> E. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: inventing traditions,' in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 1–14.

<sup>108</sup> R. Usigli, *El gesticulador* (Mexico City, 1985), p. 11, E. Florescano, *El poder y la lucha por el poder en la historiografía mexicana* (Mexico City, 1980), pp. 78–9.

<sup>109</sup> A. Gramsci, *Selections from the prison notebooks* (London, 1996), p. 167.

<sup>110</sup> He asked the president to decide, for example, whether to repress or release the first INAH commission's report. Marquina, *Memorias*, p. 170.

<sup>111</sup> Profesora Adelia Carro, Tlaxcala, to Eulalia Guzmán, 19 April 1950, INAH AEG caja 9 exp 102.

to all the schools in his zone.<sup>112</sup> Other initiatives were unrealisable: another teacher, Salvador Mateos Higuera, produced a ten page plan for a new model city outside the capital, Ciudad Cuauhtémoc, that was to be a lovingly-crafted combination of Le Corbusier and neo-Aztec theme park.<sup>113</sup> Others, however, came in from other branches of the bureaucracy and formed important contributions to the national campaign. The initiative to declare 1950 the ‘Year of Cuauhtémoc’, for example, came from a veteran Interior Ministry spy.<sup>114</sup> Such bureaucrats may have taken their initiatives in part for genuinely affective reasons; but their care in registering them with central government suggests a complementary, careerist explanation.

Most striking of all were the calculations of the villagers of Ixcateopan of the benefits to be extracted from the cult to Cuauhtémoc. It was, after all, Florentino Juárez who provided the raw material for much of the ritual, forging the tomb in a doomed attempt to defend his local political and economic power. His successors were equally enterprising. Salvador Rodríguez Juárez, who claimed Cuauhtémoc as an ancestor, began producing additions to the forged documents before the tomb was even uncovered. By the time of the 1976 investigation he had made at least another twelve allegedly antique manuscripts, whose purpose was to paper over the cracks in the fraud narrative. In this he failed resoundingly.<sup>115</sup> But in village terms Rodríguez Juárez successfully manipulated Cuauhtémoc’s bones to restore his family’s decayed pre-eminence. He formed a *Comité Pro-Autenticidad de los Restos de Cuauhtémoc*, functionally little less than a political party, that controlled Ixcateopán politics for much of the 1950s.<sup>116</sup> He launched a lengthy campaign against the local priest, José Landa, for control of the church buildings, funds and other assets; and, when Landa refused to hand them over, he had him arrested.<sup>117</sup> As the priest bitterly noted, Rodríguez Juárez had become the ‘principal leader of the village’; one of his sons was made

<sup>112</sup> Various letters, A. M. del Castillo, 27 Sept. 1949 to 31 May 1950, INAH AEG caja 9 exp 107.

<sup>113</sup> Professor Salvador Mateos Higuera to Alemán, 17 Nov. 1949, AGN MAV exp 533.31/4.

<sup>114</sup> Cervantes Díaz to Alemán, 8 November 1949, AGN MAV 535/11.

<sup>115</sup> Even Guzmán suspected Rodríguez Juárez to be producing some of the documents. Guzmán to Salvador Rodríguez Juárez, 26 Aug. 1949, INAH AEG caja 9 exp 34, Colín to Eulalia Guzmán, 27 Aug. 1949, INAH AEG caja 9 exp 35, Reyes García, *Documentos manuscritos y pictóricos*, pp. 43–5. For Rodríguez Juárez’ claim to descent from Cuauhtémoc see press clipping reproduced in B. Jiménez and S. Villela, *Los Salmerón: un siglo de fotografía en Guerrero* (Mexico City, 1998), p. 144.

<sup>116</sup> Author’s interview, Modesto Jaimes Alvarez, Ixcateopan 12 June 2002, Baltasar Leyva Mancilla informe 1951, Archivo Histórico del Estado de Guerrero, Chilpancingo, AHEG informes de gobernadores.

<sup>117</sup> Olivera de Bonfil, *La tradición oral sobre Cuauhtémoc*, pp. 147–58.

‘guardian of the tomb’, another son became mayor and local deputy, and his grandson was serving in 2003 as *presidente municipal*.<sup>118</sup>

Rodríguez Juárez also profited economically from the tomb find. The Juárez townhouse had been sold in 1946 to the village council for use as a schoolhouse; Rodríguez Juárez successfully petitioned the President and state legislature for its return. Given that the house had never been his in the first place – it had belonged to his uncle Florencio, who had fallen out with the rest of the family – this was a double triumph.<sup>119</sup> This was not his only attempt to realise the economic possibilities of the tomb: he repeatedly requested public funding for his committee, and in early 1950 he tried to sell his account of the legend and the discovery as a radio drama.<sup>120</sup> And while Rodríguez Juárez was the most prominent, he was by no means the only villager to attempt to barter the symbolic capital of Cuauhtémoc for more immediate gains. The village as a collectivity repeatedly invoked the tomb in their petitions for state-sponsored development programmes such as electricity, drinking water, roads and drainage.<sup>121</sup> The neighbouring villages of Ixcapuzalco and Pachivia clearly realised the comparative advantage that Cuauhtémoc could lend their rivals, and fought back by denying that Ixcateopan contained the tomb and by claiming the last emperor as a native of their own *patrias chicas*.<sup>122</sup> ‘Everybody’, mused one villager, ‘tried to get something out of [Cuauhtémoc]’.<sup>123</sup> Such activities – a peasantry’s self-conscious, half-cynical manipulation of nationalist symbols for political and material advantage – might well be called grassroots instrumentalism.

It is not particularly startling that Cuauhtémoc’s bones are a fraud. When history is neither ‘good to think’ nor generous with artefacts, nationalists will tend strongly to re-engineer it and provide the necessary skeletons on which the flesh of a national identity can hang. A short catalogue of known nationalist

<sup>118</sup> José Landa, ‘A summary of facts concerning the hostility of the municipal authorities toward the priests and Catholics of the village of Ixcateopan, 1949 to 1956’ reproduced in Olivera de Bonfil, *La tradición oral sobre Cuauhtémoc*, p. 152, author’s interview, Román Parra Terán, Chilpancingo 25 November 2002.

<sup>119</sup> Although it seems that the house was returned to him formally rather than physically; understandable given that the schoolhouse represented more than a quarter of the municipio’s public property. Inventory of municipal property, 1951, AMI 1951 caja 1, receipt, Florencio Juárez to Rosendo Rodríguez, for half of purchase price of house, 25 July 1946, AMI 1946, decree no. 37 of the Congress of Guerrero, 24 October 1951; Rodolfo Quintana to Salvador Rodríguez Juárez, Ixcateopan, 22 January 1952, both reproduced in Reyes García, *Documentos manuscritos y pictóricos*, pp. 160–2. Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso casts doubt on the house’s handover in INAH/PHO/CUAUH/5/34 p. 39.

<sup>120</sup> Reyes García, *Documentos manuscritos y pictóricos*, pp. 159–82.

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, vecinos of Ixcateopan to Alemán, 28 Feb. 1950, AGN MAV 535/11.

<sup>122</sup> INAH PHO/CUAUH/5/5 pp. 21, 80, INAH PHO/CUAUH/5/22 p. 16, INAH PHO/CUAUH/5/38 p. 18, *La Prensa*, 24 Sept. 1949.

<sup>123</sup> J. Jaimes, ode ‘El secreto de Ixcateopan’ reproduced in INAH/PHO/CUAUH/5/1 p. 21.

forgeries in Mexico would include some of the central icons of text book history, such as the archaeologist Leopoldo Bartres' Temple of the Sun in Teotihuacán, to which he added a fictional fourth floor for aesthetic reasons; and the remains of the *Niños Héroes*, plucked at random from a mass grave.<sup>124</sup> Nationalist fraud is equally ubiquitous outside Mexico: notable recent origin-figure forgeries include the 1995 'discovery' of Alexander the Great and the creation of the Serbian Saint Simeon's journals.<sup>125</sup> Fraud is intrinsic to nationalism; one man's *historia patria* is another man's invention of tradition, and a third man's fraud.

The central significance of the cult which revolved around Ixcateopan lay in the paralleling of the elite mechanisms of nationalism, one by one, at a village level. Politicians and cultural powerbrokers in Mexico City engaged in an instrumentalist campaign to profit from the last emperor; so did their village equivalents. The figure of Cuauhtémoc was subject to intensive symbolic competition by national parties from across the political spectrum; in Ixcateopan both the dominant rancher/townsmen group and the *agrarista* opposition formed political parties named after Cuauhtémoc.<sup>126</sup> There was, finally, something of a *kulturkampf* in metropolitan circles against dissident non-believers, focused on the tiresome *estudiosos* who repeatedly denied the bones' authenticity.<sup>127</sup> This, too, had its village equivalent: more than one sceptical villager found himself under arrest, accused of the Orwellian crime of 'disturbing social order'.<sup>128</sup> The cult to Cuauhtémoc was, in short, a cross-class construction, in which a certain amount of primordial material was quarried by elites, reshaped by peasants and bureaucrats and built into a shaky edifice. If any of the instrumentalists in the story can be judged successful, it was not the elites but those at the grassroots. Both the Rodríguez Juárez family and the

<sup>124</sup> Author's interview, Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, Mexico City 20 July 2000, author's interview, Salvador Rueda, México DF October 1995; E. Plasencia de la Parra, 'Conmemoración de la hazaña épica de los niños héroes: su origen, desarrollo y simbolismos,' *Historia Mexicana*, vol. XLV, no. 2, (Oct.–Dec. 1995), pp. 267–8.

<sup>125</sup> R. Fisk, 'Athens sees fit to retrench over Alexander's tomb,' *The Independent* 13 Jan. 1995, I. Čolović, 'Nation, culture and territory' in *Bosnia Report*, no. 35 (Aug.–Sept. 2003).

<sup>126</sup> Namely the Comité Pro-Autenticidad de los Restos de Cuauhtémoc, which provided mayors in 1952 and 1954, and the Frente Cuauhtémoc, their *agrarista* opponents. Author's interview, Modesto Jaimes Alvarez, Ixcateopan 12 June 2002, Frente Cuauhtémoc Ixcateopan to Gobernación, 5 December 1952, AGN DGG 2.311 M(9) caja 3B exp 23.

<sup>127</sup> For one of the many protests, see the open letter from over 200 members of INAH protesting against press attacks on scholars and warning that freedom of speech was in peril, *Excelsior*, 6 March 1951.

<sup>128</sup> Comité Pro-Autenticidad de los Restos de Cuauhtémoc to Juan Reyna, 19 Sept. 1950, AMI 1950 exp 174, Darío Alvarez, sworn statement to the Ixcateopan village council, Ixcateopan, 3 Jan. 1950, INAH AEG caja 9 exp 83.

village did rather well out of Cuauhtémoc, receiving development programmes, monuments and a newfound political prominence. No amount of academic deconstruction can change that; and for the villagers, irrespective of what one *guerrerense* called ‘the quantity of foreign idiots who have written that [the tomb] is a fake’, Cuauhtémoc was, is and always will be buried in Ixcateopan.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Politician/historian Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso, INAH AS PHO/CUAUH/5/34.