



COLLECTING MESOAMERICAN ART BEFORE 1940

A New World of Latin American Antiquities

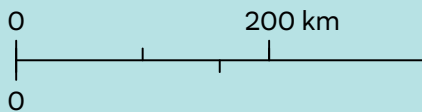
EDITED BY

ANDREW D. TURNER

AND MEGAN E. O'NEIL

ISSUES & DEBATES

Collecting Mesoamerican Art before 1940



Map of Sites
Mentioned in This Book



Gulf of Mexico

Mérida

Chichén Itza

Jaina Island

Tulum

Campeche

Caribbean Sea

Santa Rita

Nohmul

BELIZE

Naranjo

Xunantunich

Ocosingo

Yaxchilan

Lubaantun

Pusilha

Puerto Barrios

GUATEMALA

Quirigua

HONDURAS

Guatemala City

Antigua

EL SALVADOR

NICARAGUA



Issues & Debates

Collecting Mesoamerican Art before 1940

**A New World of
Latin American Antiquities**

Edited by

ANDREW D. TURNER and MEGAN E. O'NEIL

Getty Research Institute

Los Angeles

**Getty Research Institute
Publications Program**

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**Published by the Getty Research Institute,
Los Angeles**

Getty Publications
1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 500
Los Angeles, California 90049-1682
getty.edu/publications

Lauren Edson, *Editor*
Jim Drobka, *Series Designer*
Kurt Hauser, *Designer*
Molly McGeehan, *Production*
Karen Ehrmann and Pamela Moreland, *Image and
Rights Acquisition*

Distributed in the United States and Canada
by the University of Chicago Press

Distributed outside the United States and
Canada by Yale University Press, London

Printed in China

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Turner, Andrew (Andrew David), editor. | O'Neil, Megan E.
(Megan Eileen), editor. | Getty Research Institute, issuing body.
Title: Collecting Mesoamerican art before 1940 : a new world of
Latin American antiquities / edited by Andrew D. Turner and
Megan E. O'Neil.

Other titles: Issues & debates.

Description: Los Angeles : Getty Research Institute, [2024] | Series:
Issues & debates | Includes bibliographical references and index. |
Summary: "This book traces the history of how and why ancient
Mesoamerican objects have been collected. Drawing upon archival
resources and museum collections, the contributors analyze the
ways shifting patterns of collecting and taste have shaped modern
academic disciplines as well as public, private, institutional, and
nationalistic attitudes toward Mesoamerican art"— Provided by
publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023024369 (print) | LCCN 2023024370 (ebook) |
ISBN 9781606068724 (paperback) | ISBN 9781606068731
(adobe pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Indians of Mexico—Antiquities—Collectors and
collecting. | Indian art—Collectors and collecting. | Art, Mexican—
Collectors and collecting. | Latin America—Antiquities—Collectors
and collecting. | Mexico—Antiquities—Collectors and collecting.

Classification: LCC E65 .C586 2024 (print) | LCC E65 (ebook) | DDC
709.720903—dc23/eng/20230629

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023024369>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023024370>

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This publication was peer reviewed through a single-masked process in
which the reviewers remained anonymous.

Front cover: Detail of a mask in the shape of a human face, maybe the
Mixtec goddess 9 Reed. Mixtec, probably from Oaxaca or Southern Puebla,
Mexico, late 1400s–early 1500s, turquoise, Spondylus, mother of pearl,
resin, pigments, 24 × 15.8 cm. Rome, Museo delle Civiltà. Photograph by
Davide Domenici. © Museo delle Civiltà, Rome (Italy). See p. 30.

Back cover: Detail of Sylvanus Griswold Morley with Stela F, after clean-
ing, Quirigua, Guatemala, 1910. Santa Fe, Palace of the Governors Photo
Archives, New Mexico History Museum. Photograph by Jesse L. Nusbaum.
Courtesy of the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA),
Negative Number: 060936. See p. 196.

Frontispiece: Casimiro Castro (Mexican, 1826–89). Detail of *Mexican
Antiquities Which Exist in the National Museum of Mexico*. From J. A.
Decaen, ed., *Mexico y sus alrededores* (Mexico City: Decaen, 1857), n.p.
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Leonardo López Luján

Ciriaco González Carvajal and Archaeological Collectionism in Late Bourbon New Spain

AN IMMINENT INAUGURATION

In two successive articles, the *Gazeta de México* announced that on 25 August 1790, the long-awaited Gabinete de Historia Natural in Mexico City, the capital of New Spain, was going to open its doors.¹ Finally, one could visit the Spanish surgeon José Longinos's collection, composed of curious specimens belonging to the three kingdoms of nature (minerals, plants, and animals), some "antiquities," anatomical wax models made by Longinos himself, scientific instruments, and specialized books. They were organized according to the Linnaean system in three pyramidal displays and twenty-four shelves. Those interested in admiring the collection were invited to 89 Calle de los Plateros, in the city center, on Mondays or Fridays, during the hours of 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. or 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. And, as a testament to "the fermentation in which this Science, mainly in this Capital, finds itself today," the second *Gazeta de México* article ended with a revealing list of private collectors, some of whom had donated contributions to the new natural history cabinet:

Bernardo Bonavía y Zapata, intendant mayor of Mexico City;

Miguel Páez de la Cadena, superintendent and privative judge of Royal Customs;

Joseph de Flórez, lieutenant colonel of the Royal Armies;

Juan de Santelices Pablo, prosecutor of the Royal Mining Tribunal;

Joseph Antonio Alzate, editor of scientific journals;

Ramón de Posada y Soto, prosecutor of the Royal Treasury;

Francisco Fernández de Córdova, superintendent of the Royal Mint;

Juan Navarro y Madrid, director general of Excise and Pulque Tax Revenues;

Fausto Elhuyar, director general of the Royal Mining Tribunal;

Francisco Xavier Sarria, director of the Royal Lottery;

and a certain Joaquín de los Ríos.

In addition to mentioning their names and occupations, the *Gazeta de México* specified that the first five collectors possessed specimens from the three kingdoms, while the remaining six only had a “collection from mines and other curiosities.” This list of collectors was not an insignificant group, for most of them were among the highest authorities in the colonial government hierarchy—that is, men with political influence and considerable economic means—and nearly all of them were well educated in Enlightenment ideas.²

ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTORS IN NEW SPAIN

Following the *Gazeta de México* trail through archives, libraries, and museums reveals that the number of collectors in New Spain at that time was greater, and that, significantly, their personal treasures of *naturalia* were usually augmented with *artificialia*, especially archaeological and ethnological objects. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the collecting activities of eight representative figures from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and to ascertain whether these collectors were connected to networks of knowledge and the exchange of antiquities.

Let us begin in chronological order with Francisco Antonio de Lorenzana y Butrón (1722–1804), a cardinal, historian, and humanist from the Spanish city of León. Between 1766 and 1772, Lorenzana was the archbishop of Mexico, the highest ecclesiastical position in the capital of New Spain. In those years, alongside his religious occupations, he promoted the production of Indigenous grammars and funded excavations, and he managed to gather a cabinet of ethnological objects from North America, *castas* paintings from Puebla, ceramics from Tonalá, and lacquers from Michoacán.³ In his *Historia de Nueva España* (1770; History of New Spain)—which included the first Mexican edition of Hernán Cortés’s *Cartas de relación* (Letters)—Lorenzana confesses his aversion to pre-Hispanic sculpture, which he characterizes as “hideous and ridiculous.”⁴ Nevertheless, he also informs us that his library includes “two flint spearheads,” surely sacrificial knives, as well as megafaunal bones that he claims “were from giants.”⁵ When he returned to Spain, he brought these objects to Toledo, where they were later dispersed to various institutions.

Lorenzana's good friend Joseph Antonio Alzate y Ramírez (1729–99) was a Creole scholar who made a series of maps for the archbishop in 1769. Alzate is mainly known for his polemic spirit and for editing the *Gazeta de Literatura*, in which he wrote on every imaginable topic, including archaeology.⁶ In several articles, he refers to delivering curious mineral and animal specimens to Spanish expeditionaries, as well as to local collectors and institutions such as the aforementioned Gabinete de Historia Natural.⁷ He also notes that his personal cabinet of curiosities contained pre-Hispanic bells made of pure copper or a copper-and-silver alloy: “monuments that I conserve with great joy.”⁸ Members of Alessandro Malaspina's expedition around the world visited that cabinet in 1791 and briefly recorded the existence of “antiquities.”⁹

A third collection is that of Antonio de León y Gama (1735–1802), the most celebrated antiquarian of New Spain. His fame largely stems from his *Descripción histórica y cronológica de las dos piedras* (Historical and chronological description of the two stones)—referring to the Sun Stone (erroneously called the Aztec Calendar Stone) and Coatlicue—which was first published in 1792.¹⁰ He spent subsequent years writing a second part for the book, recording and historically interpreting the archaeological discoveries fortuitously made in the capital.¹¹ There, with great erudition, he analyzes five sculptures in his own cabinet, four of which were found while digging foundations for recent constructions and the other in an entryway of a private residence. Prominent among them are a small greenstone *chacmool* (a stone altar representing a reclining figure with a turned head), a volcanic scoria maize goddess, and a monumental basalt feathered serpent.¹² Today, these objects are found, respectively, in Paris, London, and Mexico City museums.¹³

Another interesting collection was gathered by Vicente Cervantes (1755–1829), an Extremaduran botanist who came to New Spain in 1787 as a member of the Real Expedición Botánica (Royal Botanical Expedition) led by Martín Sessé. The following year, Cervantes established the botanical garden and the botany chair at the University of Mexico, which he occupied until his death. Thanks to Alexander von Humboldt, we know that Cervantes had a rich herbarium, a valuable mineral collection, and drawings from Antonio del Río's expedition to the Maya site of Palenque in May 1787.¹⁴ The fondness that Cervantes exhibited for pre-Hispanic objects is patently evident in a pair of unpublished pencil drawings done by Guillermo Dupaix.¹⁵ One includes an image of Xipe Totec, the god of war and vegetation, along with a jar of “eggs taken from a woman's breast,” possibly tumors or lymph nodes. The other has a Mixtec marble household deity, a hatchet, and nine copper bells, in addition to a greenstone female head currently located at the Musée du quai Branly in Paris.¹⁶

Let us now review the collection of Humboldt, who spent twelve months in New Spain between 1803 and 1804. During his stay, Cervantes gave him the previously mentioned drawings from Palenque; Dupaix

presented him with a sketch of the Tizoc Stone and two others of a Chalchiuhtlicue sculpture from his own cabinet; and Andrés Manuel del Río, a Spanish chemist who discovered vanadium, offered him an Olmec jade piece known today as the Humboldt axe.¹⁷ There is evidence that the Prussian scholar took at least six pre-Hispanic objects back with him to Berlin—namely, two Mexica basalt sculptures of a maize deity and a fire god, an obsidian ear ornament from Michoacán, a Mexica greenstone disc depicting the sun god, the aforementioned Olmec axe, and a two-headed jaguar made of wood and turquoise mosaic.¹⁸ It seems that Humboldt only appreciated these objects for their raw materials, since he deposited them in the Mineralogisches Cabinet Berlin.¹⁹ In fact, his contempt for pre-Hispanic art is well known; he relegated it to the rank of “industry.” In his judgment, the objects were “strange,” “incorrect,” “crude,” and “horrifying” works belonging to “art’s infancy.”²⁰ As for these six pieces, the first three are found in Berlin’s Ethnologisches Museum, while the rest disappeared during World War II.²¹

In contrast to Humboldt is the view of Benito María de Moxó y Francolí (1763–1816). This Catalan Benedictine lived in Mexico for nearly two years, between 1804 and 1805, before leaving to become archbishop of Charcas in present-day Bolivia. Like few others, Moxó reassessed the aesthetic content of Mesoamerican creations. An unpublished drawing by Dupaix depicts two objects—a ceramic pipe and a copper ring—in Moxó’s collection.²² In his *Cartas mejicanas* (Mexican letters), however, the Benedictine describes his personal treasures and includes prints of some of them made by the famous Valencian artist Rafael Ximeno y Planes.²³ Thus, we know that Moxó collected images of gods, animals, and stone and ceramic temples; musical instruments; obsidian blades; metal artifacts; and even paper, glass, and quartz forgeries.²⁴ He also mentioned a Tarascan club, which was examined by Cervantes and the assayer general of New Spain to determine if it had been hammered or cast and whether it was copper or bronze.²⁵ Standing out among his possessions is a “very beautiful head” of “such precision, finesse, and simplicity, to be almost sufficiently worthy of a Greek or Roman artifice.”²⁶ Moxó wanted to bequeath his objects to the Real Palacio collection in Madrid, but the revolution and wars of South American independence left them all variously dispersed.²⁷

The next cabinet belonged to Guillermo Dupaix (1746–1817), the Luxembourgian dragoon captain who came to New Spain in 1791 and remained there until his death. Dupaix is famous for leading the Real Expedición Anticuaria (Royal Antiquarian Expedition) in New Spain between 1805 and 1809.²⁸ His affinity for the ancient world, however, went back to his youth, when traveling through Spain, Italy, and Greece brought him into direct contact with Greco-Roman and Egyptian art.²⁹ After arriving in Mexico, he initiated a long series of personal visits to archaeological sites and pre-Hispanic monuments.³⁰ This enabled him

to stock a cabinet that we can reconstruct from three different sources. The first is his last will and testament, where he briefly listed a total of 128 objects—sixty-nine made of stone, fifty-two ceramic, six bronze, and one wood—in addition to a sampler with forty building fragments and two boxes of small artifacts.³¹ Interestingly, Mexico's Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia still conserves fifty-four small descriptive cards from the sampler and the aforementioned boxes.³² Dupaix noted on them the location, artifact, or building from which the sample was taken; its raw material; and, occasionally, the person who gave it to him. Even more interesting is a notebook accompanying the cards in which Dupaix describes twelve sculptures belonging to him in full detail, specifying their dimensions, raw material, manufacturing technique, physical description, state of conservation, and possible function.³³ Prominent among them are the heads of a deceased man and the water goddess, both conserved in Mexico's Museo Nacional de Antropología; a tortoise, presently at the Musée du quai Branly; an image of the Aztec water goddess Chalchiuhtlicue, now in the British Museum; an old god (blind, with wrinkles, and toothless) at the Museum der Kulturen Basel; and a stone slab depicting the Aztec maize goddess Chicomecoatl, currently in the Brooklyn Museum.³⁴

DON CIRIACO

The period's most famous collector of Mesoamerican archaeological objects is the Sevillian jurist Ciriaco Josef Thomas González Carvajal Hidalgo y Pérez (1745–1828/1831), although his significance, paradoxically, is rarely discussed (fig. 1). Fortunately, I have found abundant information about his life and professional activity in the “affidavits of nobility” presented for knighthood in the Order of Charles III,³⁵ numerous archival documents, and the biographical files of Mario Méndez Bejarano and María de Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo.³⁶ Let me begin by saying that, according to the affidavits, González Carvajal's ancestors were nobles of legitimate birth, Christian, and free of “all adverse racial mixture with Indians, Moors, or recent converts to our Holy Religion,” with no “heretics or Inquisition penitents” or those who had “performed vile and menial or indecorous occupations” among them.

Beginnings

There is evidence that in his younger years González Carvajal received a solid Jesuit education in Granada, before attending that city's university and graduating with a degree in canon law. He subsequently practiced law in various academies and judicial bodies in Andalucía, while completing a doctorate in natural sciences and becoming a member of the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid and the Real Academia Sevillana de Buenas Letras.



Fig. 1. Portrait of Ciriaco Josef Thomas González Carvajal Hidalgo y Pérez painted in 1809 at the Colegio de San Gregorio in Mexico City. Oil on canvas, 190 × 102 cm. Tepotzotlán, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

His life radically changed in 1777, however, when he was named a permanent judge to the Real Audiencia in Manila,³⁷ where he settled the following year.³⁸ In 1784, he received the additional position of superintendent of the army and royal treasury in the Philippines, which fostered González Carvajal's interest in the economic situation of the Indigenous population and his promotion of the indigo, silk, tea, coffee, spice, wood, and tobacco industries.³⁹ During this period, González Carvajal married Luisa González del Ribero, a Creole from Manila,⁴⁰ and enjoyed collecting shells in his free time, as Humboldt subsequently confirmed.⁴¹

His Stay in New Spain

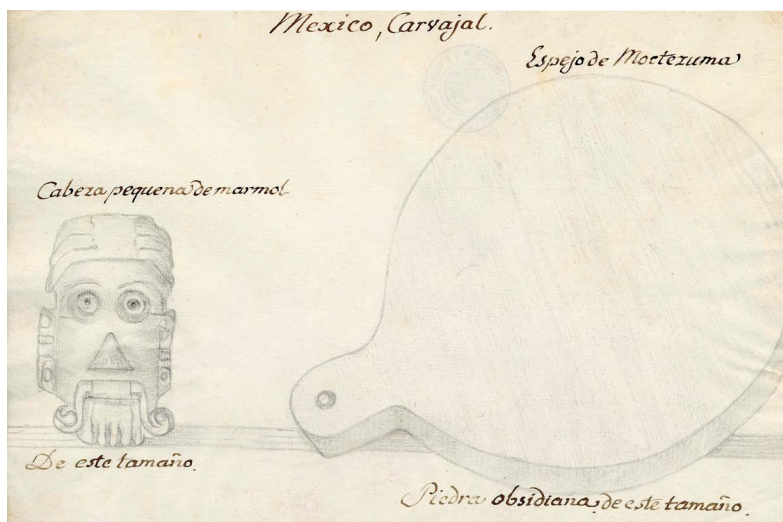
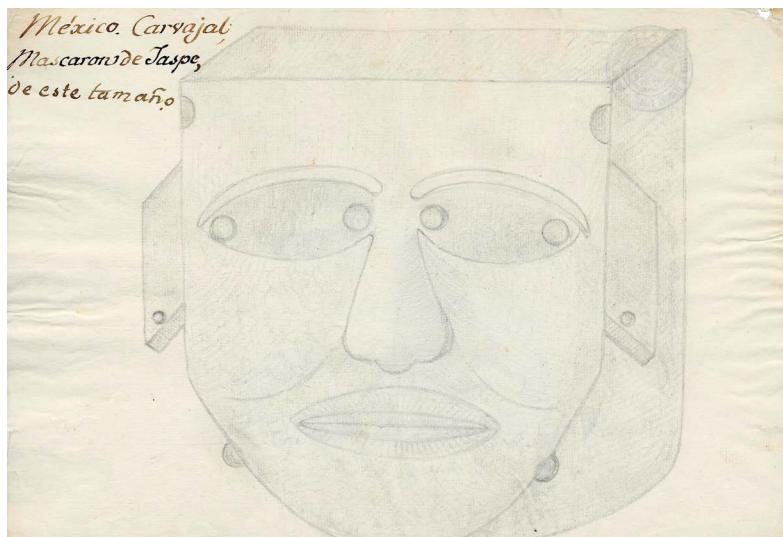
Late in 1787, González Carvajal was named a judge of the Real Audiencia of Mexico, which meant a significant promotion in his judicial career.⁴² But it was not until February 1790 that he was able to embark from Cádiz to New Spain along with his wife, his nephew, his Filipino servants, and his malacological collection.⁴³ On 4 June 1790, in Mexico City, González Carvajal finally took office, which he exercised with remarkable success

until 1809.⁴⁴ As he customarily did, he quickly involved himself with many other obligations to various institutions as diverse as the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos, the Hospicio de Pobres, the Hospital de Naturales, the Escuela Patriótica, the Tribunal de Minería, the colleges of San Ildefonso and San Gregorio, the Montepío de Ministros, the Gazetas del Superior Gobierno, the Teatro de México, and the Comisión de límites entre Texas y Luisiana.⁴⁵

His retirement proceedings also inform us about his scientific and antiquarian activities.⁴⁶ For example, in 1792, by order of Juan Vicente de Güemes Padilla Horcasitas y Aguayo, 2nd Count of Revillagigedo and Viceroy of New Spain, González Carvajal provided logistical support to Malaspina and his expeditionaries on their journey through New Spain, “sending him useful information and objects concerning natural history.”⁴⁷ Even more significant was his proposal to Viceroy José Joaquín Vicente de Iturrigaray y Aróstegui de Gaínza y Larrea to promote the study of Indigenous civilizations. In 1803, González Carvajal conceived of a series of exploratory surveys financed by the Spanish Crown, which in 1804 became the Real Expedición Anticuaria led by the retired captain Dupaix.⁴⁸ The mission of these surveys, which involved conducting a systematic inventory of pre-Hispanic monuments, was to deepen knowledge about the first settlers of the continent and their evolution through time, and to “give an idea of the taste and perfection that its Native people achieved in the arts.”⁴⁹ In later years, González Carvajal set up subsequent commissions to monitor and support these works at every turn. For this reason, Dupaix himself always recognized *don Ciriaco* as the “defending father of the expedition” and a “protector and lover of the arts.”⁵⁰

Other documents from that period attest to González Carvajal's taste for collecting. For instance, he possessed several detailed architectural drawings of the palaces at Mitla,⁵¹ perhaps the product of an expedition conducted in 1802–3 by architect Luis de Martín and artillery officer Pedro Laguna Luciano.⁵² In one of the aforementioned descriptive cards, Dupaix wrote that González Carvajal had given him a small Oaxacan stone sculpture of a human head.⁵³ Likewise, in his personal papers, Dupaix listed a total of ten antiquities that were found in the judge's cabinet, including an enigmatic mummy, a Mexica obsidian mirror, a stone projectile point, two stone hatchets, two copper axes, a Teotihuacan marble mask, a Mixtec marble household deity, and a travertine anthropomorphic effigy (fig. 2).⁵⁴ The current whereabouts of the first six pieces are unknown, but the remaining four reside in the British Museum, as we will see below.⁵⁵ In addition, I suspect that a rattlesnake—the most spectacular sculpture in González Carvajal's archaeological collection—may originally have been owned by Dupaix,⁵⁶ as a very similar sculpture uncovered in the Plazuela de Santo Domingo of Mexico City is included by the dragoon captain in an inventory of his collection and in two pencil drawings (fig. 3).⁵⁷

Fig. 2. Guillermo Dupaix (Luxembourgian, 1746–1817). Pieces from Ciriaco Josef Thomas González Carvajal Hidalgo y Pérez's collection (British Museum, Am1849,0629.5, 9, 15, 76): (A) Teotihuacan mask, ca. 1791–1804, ink and pencil on paper, 21.2 × 31 cm; (B) Mixtec household deity and Mexica mirror, ca. 1791–1804, ink and pencil on paper, 20 × 30.7 cm; and (C) Travertine effigy and copper axes, ca. 1791–1804, ink and pencil on paper, 21 × 31.4 cm. Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia.





In 1808, the Napoleonic invasion of Spain and King Fernando VII's subsequent arrest brought turbulent times to the Spanish colonies. González Carvajal, loyal to the Spanish monarch, participated in a coup against Iturrigaray—who, it was said, wanted to take advantage of the situation to liberate New Spain and install himself as its king—and issued a prison sentence to Friar Melchor de Talamantes, one of the Creole independence leaders. Archbishop Francisco Lizana assumed the position of viceroy and, in this complicated context, promoted the sexagenarian Audiencia judge into retirement for alleged health reasons. In January 1810, González Carvajal left for Andalucía⁵⁸ with his collection of marine organisms from Southeast Asia and, as we shall see, many minerals, archaeological artifacts, and ethnological objects gathered during his twenty-year stay in the Americas.

Fig. 3. Guillermo Dupaix (Luxembourgian, 1746–1817). Two views of a rattlesnake from Dupaix's collection (possibly the same object as fig. 4): (A) First view, ca. 1791–1804, ink and pencil on paper, 21.5 × 30.5 cm; and (B) Second view, ca. 1791–1804, ink and pencil on paper, 21 × 30.7 cm. Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Back in Spain

After returning to his native land, González Carvajal unexpectedly continued to hold high-level positions for eighteen more years, until his actual retirement in 1828 at the age of eighty-three.⁵⁹ During this time, among other positions, he served as president of the finance board, minister of the Real y Supremo Consejo de Indias (Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies), minister of the Tribunal Supremo de Justicia (Supreme Tribunal of Justice), and interim minister of overseas government. Interestingly, in this last position, he recommended that Fernando VII use questionnaires in the colonies to augment knowledge about the history and customs of the Indigenous inhabitants to “civilize” and inculcate them in the Catholic faith, commission expeditions to produce new geographical maps, monitor US intentions in Texas, repopulate Alta (Upper) and Baja (Lower) California with East Asians, and connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans via rivers in the isthmus of Tehuantepec.⁶⁰

In his old age, González Carvajal also established the national lottery⁶¹ and was involved in regulating mercury mines and the activities of the Real Compañía de Navegación del Guadalquivir. While intendant of Seville from 1817 to 1819, his jurisdiction included overseeing the archaeological antiquities in the city and its surrounding areas, such as the famous Roman ruins at Itálica.⁶² He also contributed to the enrichment of the lithological collection of Roman inscriptions at the Real Academia de la Historia.⁶³

Records say that in May 1821, González Carvajal tried to sell his collection of *naturalia* and *artificialia* to the Real Museo de Ciencias Naturales de Madrid.⁶⁴ Its board of directors, however, was not interested and scandalously replied that specimens of the same minerals, shells, and corals were already exhibited in its halls, while the “idols, canoes, arrows, and other antiquities” were more suitable for an ethnology and history museum, which, I must say, did not exist at that time.

González Carvajal died sometime between 1828 and 1831, leaving his widow in charge of the collection. In 1832, she offered it again to the Real Museo de Ciencias Naturales, but, even though there was some interest among the professorate, a deal was never reached.⁶⁵ She persisted and, in July 1834, managed to sell the minerals to the General Directorate of Mines, which is why they currently are among the holdings of the Museo Histórico Minero Don Felipe de Borbón y Grecia in Madrid. An initial inventory lists 1,582 specimens, although after the collection was received and unpacked, 549 more were found that had not been cataloged.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, most of them have been mixed with other collections and cannot yet be identified. However, we know that at least fourteen small Mesoamerican archaeological objects in the museum storage facilities were collected by González Carvajal.⁶⁷

The Archaeological Collection and Its Destiny

Perhaps through the Real Compañía de Navegación del Guadalquivir,⁶⁸ González Carvajal befriended Nathan Wetherell (1749–1831) and his son John (1790–1865), owners of the famous Fábrica de Curtidos de San Diego, a leather manufactory outside of Seville.⁶⁹ Nathan, in addition to being an astute British businessman, was an amateur antiquarian. He apparently conducted excavations in Itálica from 1820 to 1824, acquired part of his archaeological collection at the San Isidoro del Campo monastery in the neighboring town of Santiponce, and decorated his San Diego tannery with Roman inscriptions.⁷⁰ John, in turn, was a young man who was well integrated into local society, which is why Félix González de León once characterized him as “English by birth, Sevillian by education and affection.”⁷¹ Better known as Juanito, he frequently consorted with liberal thinkers and had a relationship with major writers such as José Blanco White and Washington Irving.⁷² And, as is often the case, from his father he inherited not only numerous antiquities but also a taste for them. In fact, at an unknown date he bought a collection of archaeological and ethnological objects from González Carvajal’s widow.⁷³

Some documents from the 1840s attest that John had a small museum in his mansion at 16 Plaza San Bartolomé, across from the San Alberto church in Seville.⁷⁴ Among the Roman antiquities, “many of them extracted from Itálica,” are mentions of “two tombstones..., a large glass cinerary urn discovered when digging the trench for the foundation of a tobacco factory, several amphorae of different shapes and sizes, various statues, lacrimatories, and other pieces of equal worth and antiquity, with some gold, silver, and copper coins.” He also possessed “original drawings of the most accredited Spanish and foreign artists,” but the most eloquent praise was reserved for his “Mexican antiquities.”

In 1842, John ordered the printing of a 22 × 14 cm booklet titled *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas con varios ídolos, adornos y otros artefactos de los indios que ecsiste en poder de don Juan Wetherell* (Catalog of a collection of Mexican antiquities with various idols, ornaments, and other Indian artifacts, which exists in the power of John Wetherell).⁷⁵ This modest work, which “may interest scientific corporations or persons...who currently deal or previously dealt with this material,” is illustrated with eleven lithographic plates by Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (figs. 4–14), including a total of 109 images pertaining to ninety-five pieces, most of them with numbers that refer to brief explanations of their raw material, size, and function.

The descriptions and plates present a collection of objects: sixty-one are ceramic, twenty-nine stone, two wood, one copper, one marble or shell, and one made of fish bone. The objects with a few exceptions are organized by industry, including stone (see figs. 4–7), ceramic (see figs. 8–12, 14), and various materials (see fig. 13). As for their functions,

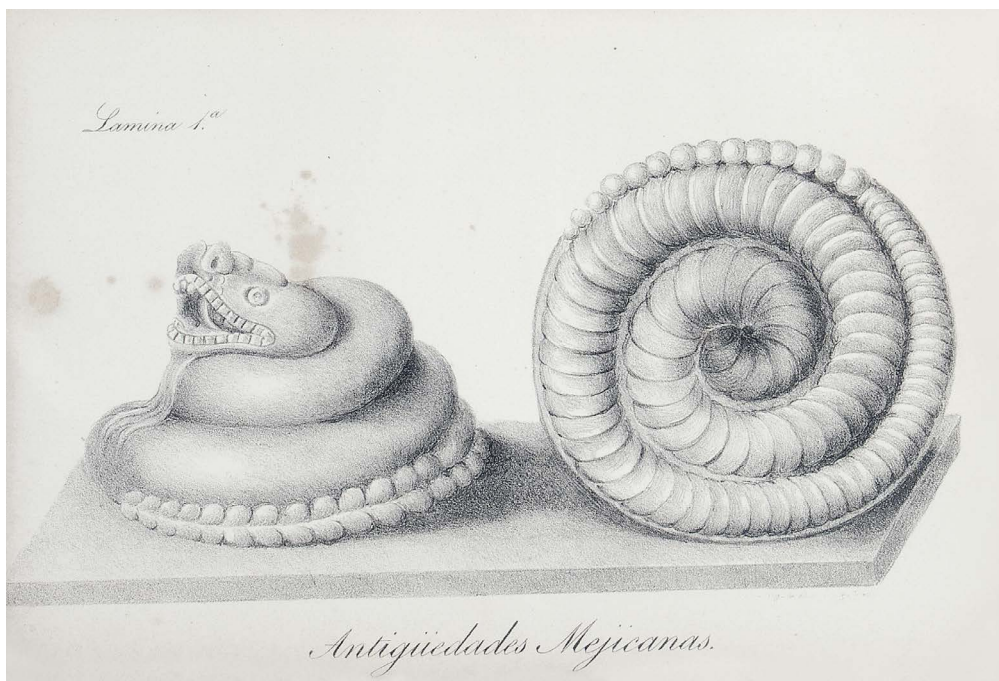


Fig. 4. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). Breccia marble rattlesnake with painted red scales (British Museum, Am1849,0629.1). From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 1. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.



Fig. 5. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). Compact sandstone idol (British Museum, Am1849,0629.2). From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 2. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.



Fig. 6. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). Stone objects (British Museum, Am1849,0629.3–8): (1) Green breccia marble face; (2) Smoky compact sandstone idol; (3) Breccia marble mask drilled in the outer corners of the eyes for attaching transparent stones; (4) Green compact limestone head; (5) Red sandstone idol; (6) Smoky compact sandstone idol. From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 3. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.

cult images, effigy vessels, masks, figurines, ballgame equipment, a sacrificial knife, urns, incense burners, containers for liquids or solids, a whistle, rattles, gambling sticks, necklaces, incised stones for making bark cloth, an axe, an adze, and a biconical bowl for spinning thread are discernible. Anthropomorphic representations dominate, especially Central Mexican deities such as Mictlantecuhtli-Xochipilli, Xiuhtecuhtli, Chalchiuhtlicue, Tlaloc, and Xochiquetzal. There are also Oaxacan effigies that include maize and rain divinities, personages with a butterfly or Glyph C in their headdress, a woman who formed part of an ancestral couple, and deceased individuals.⁷⁶ Zoomorphic representations also abound, such

Fig. 7. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). Stone objects (British Museum, Am1849,0629.9–18): (1) Serpentine-mottled marble head; (2) Volcanic breccia head; (3) Green quartz head; (4) Smoky limestone and black schorl frog; (5–6) Smoky sandstone heads; (7) White marble idol; (8) Black-mottled marble amulet, drilled in back for attaching it to a string of stones; (9) Green quartz amulet; (10) Coarse limestone amulet. From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 4. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.



Fig. 8. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). (1–8) Fired clay idols and faces (British Museum, Am1849,0629.19–26). From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 5. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.

as a feline, monkey, bird, serpent, frog or toad, and what may be a horse from the Colonial period.⁷⁷

Although it would be risky to assign all these objects to specific cultures, Mesoamerican styles such as Mexica,⁷⁸ Teotihuacan,⁷⁹ Nahuatl-Popoluca,⁸⁰ Zapotec,⁸¹ Mixtec,⁸² Huastec,⁸³ and Classic Veracruz⁸⁴ can be identified among them and would have been relatively easy to obtain in Bourbon New Spain. Others, however, come from distant places—most notably a Polynesian stone adze,⁸⁵ possibly from Tahiti, that González Carvajal could have acquired during his long stay in the Philippines. Objects from North America are also apparent, including



a Nuu-chah-nulth mask and some gambling sticks from First Nation peoples of present-day British Columbia, Canada.⁸⁶ Remember that between 1774 and 1792, the Spanish Crown commissioned nine large military, commercial, and scientific expeditions along the Pacific coast that explored extensive territories in Alta California, Canada, and even Alaska.⁸⁷ Records tell us that at least five of the expeditions obtained cultural objects and skins from the Indigenous populations. And, given that all of them departed from and returned to the ports of Acapulco or San Blas in New Spain, González Carvajal may well have acquired such ethnological items from sailors.

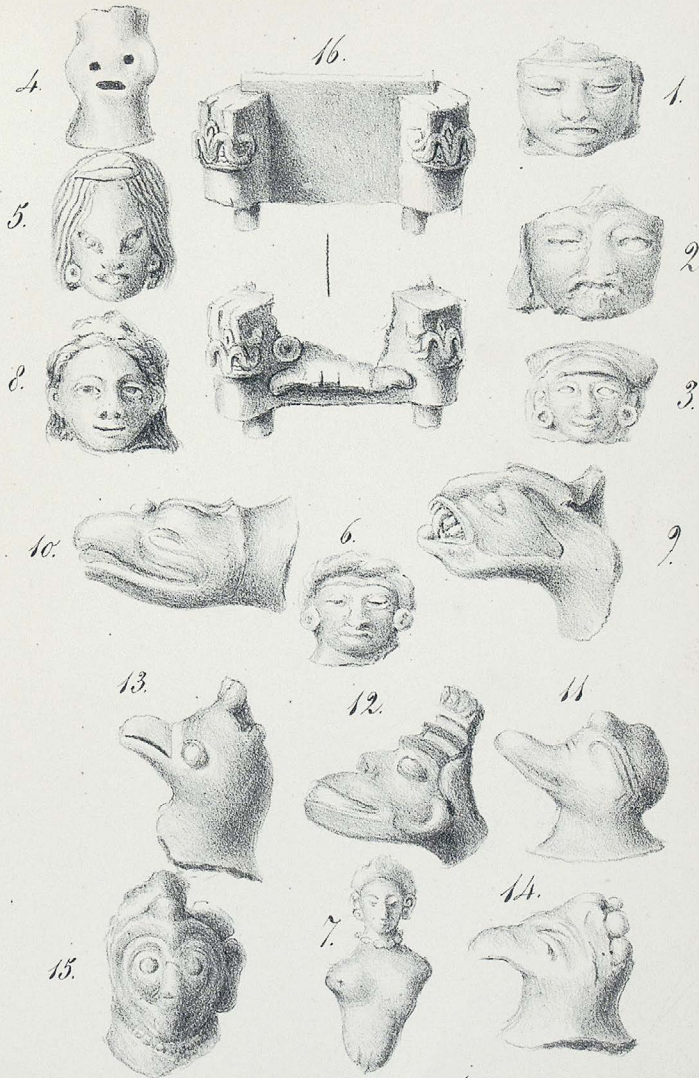
Fig. 9. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). (1–8) Fired clay artifacts (British Museum, Am1849,0629.27–34). From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 6. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.

Fig. 10. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). Fired clay artifacts (British Museum, Am1849,0629.35–49): (1–8) Human faces with very different expressions; (10–11, 13–14) Heads with a small moveable body inside that rattles; (15) Whistle; (16) Unknown ornament. From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 7. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.



As for the Wetherell family, the Fábrica de Curtidos de San Diego declared bankruptcy and was liquidated in 1844, leading John to leave Spain accompanied by his wife Sophia, their six children, and his collections.⁸⁸ Barely five years after settling in England, he sold his American and Asian antiquities to the British Museum, which cataloged them under his name with the numbers Am1849,0629.1–78, 80–93, and Oc1849,0629.79.⁸⁹ For some unknown reason, the Roman antiquities—mainly inscriptions unearthed at Itálica and Seville—did not enter this museum until the early twentieth century, under Nathan’s name, with the numbers 1905,1205.1–16.⁹⁰

Lamina 7.^a



Antigüedades Mejicanas.

Fig. 11. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). Antiquities (British Museum, Am1849,0629.50–59): (1–8) Fired clay objects from Mexico; (9) Small ivory animal possibly from North America; (10) Wooden mask from Canada with leather upper covering and straps to attach the head. From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 8. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.

Fig. 12. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). A fine painted, well-preserved fired clay vessel framed by a string of irregular, hard, roughly round hewn stones, with a small idol and a hollowed flat stone (British Museum, Am1849,0629.60–68). From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 9. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.



Lamina 9.^a

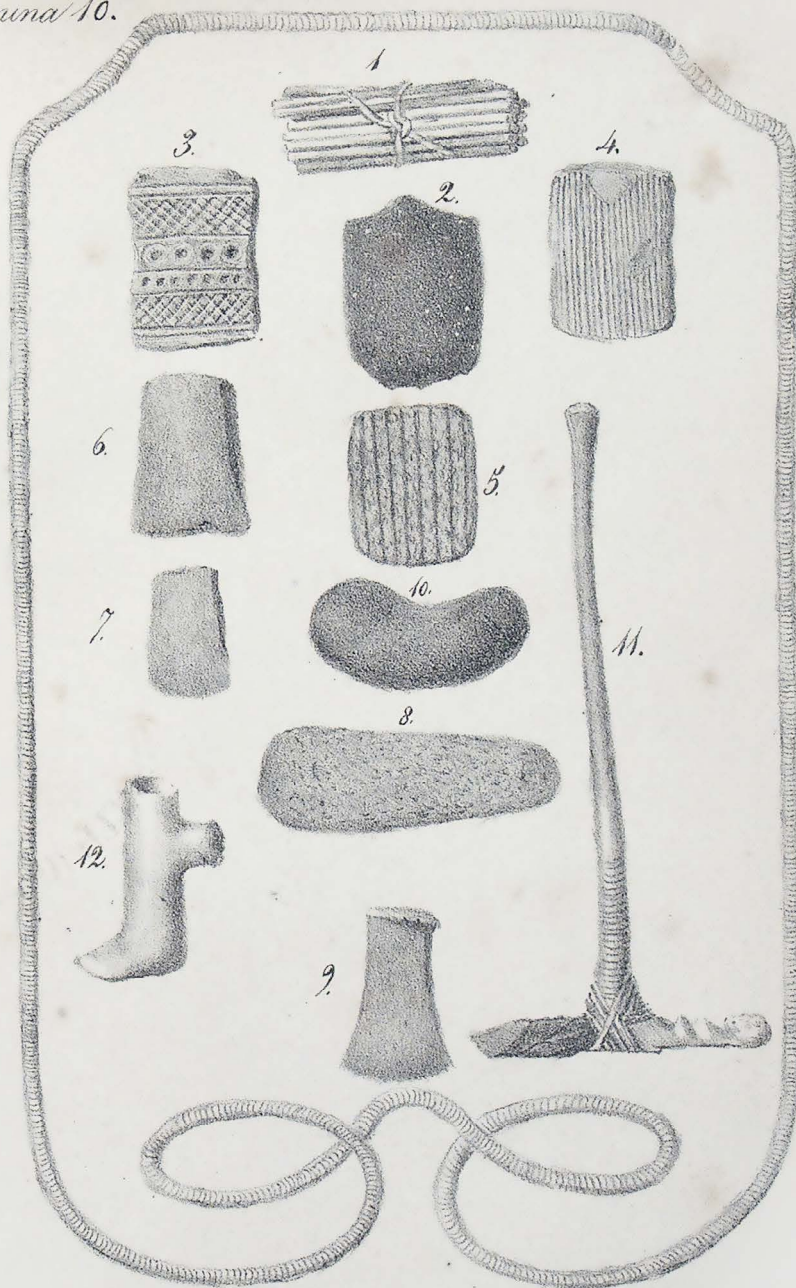


Salvador Gutiérrez Litog.

Litog. de Calomina y Fortis, Sevilla.

Antigüedades Mexicanas.

Lamina 10.^a



Antigüedades Mexicanas.

Lamina 11.^a

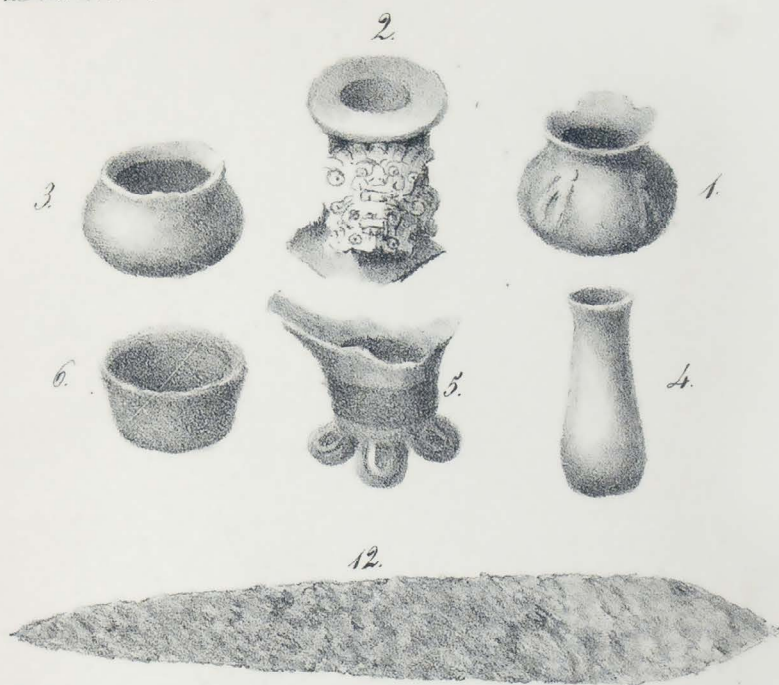


Fig. 13. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). Artifacts of various materials (British Museum, Am1849,0629.69–78, 80; Oc1849,0629.79): (1) Cylindrical wooden sticks painted with symbols for calculating; (2) Stone studded with metallic points for metalwork; (3–5) Incised hard stones for stamping cloth made from the bark of the *dagulla* tree (*Lagetta lagetto*); (6–8) Hard stone wedges; (9) Copper wedge; (10) Kidney-shaped stone; (11) Flint cutting tool with a wooden handle attached by a cord; all framed by a necklace strung with small, flat, round, white fishbone beads and some red pieces. From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 10. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.



Fig. 14. Salvador Gutiérrez de la Vega Romero (Spanish, active 1840–68). Mexican antiquities (British Museum, Am1849,0629.81–93): (1–11) Fired clay vessels; (5, 10) Pieces that rattle with the same mechanism described in plate 7 (see fig. 10); (12) Double-bladed pink chert sacrificial knife. From Wetherell, *Catálogo de una colección de antigüedades mejicanas*, pl. 11. London, Society of Antiquaries of London.

Antigüedades Mejicanas.

NETWORKS OF KNOWLEDGE AND COLLECTING

The foregoing discussion reveals that the number, variety, and richness of the private curiosity cabinets recorded in Mexico City substantially increased during the Late Colonial period. They belonged to both European and Creole civil and military officials, religious dignitaries, and “men of letters.” Apart from Lorenzana and Humboldt, these individuals considered their antiquities a source of aesthetic pleasure. Analyzing their social context has exposed complex networks that connected collectors together. They formed tightly knit groups whose members often met to show each other their recent acquisitions and to exchange objects, drawings, correspondence, and publications.⁹¹ In addition, many of them facilitated the obtention of antiquities by royal collections or scientific institutions in the metropole or the colony, such as the Gabinete de Historia Natural in Mexico City.

It is essential to point out that a considerable portion of these friendly relationships were established around the mining seminary and tribunal, and especially around the arts academy (Real Seminario de Minería, Real Tribunal General de Minería, and Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos). Andrés Manuel del Río and Alexander von Humboldt gave classes at the seminary, while Fausto Elhuyar, Juan de Santelices Pablo, and González Carvajal served respectively as director general, prosecutor, and advisor at the tribunal. As for the academy, Bernardo Bonavía y Zapata, Luis de Martín, and Elhuyar served on its board of directors; Fernández de Córdova, González Carvajal,⁹² Luis de Martín, Santelices Pablo, Francisco Xavier Sarría, and perhaps Guillermo Dupaix were among its honorary academicians; Rafael Ximeno y Planes and Luis de Martín were the most noted of its professors who painted or sketched antiquities; and Dupaix, Humboldt, and Benito María de Moxó y Francolí commissioned such drawings from its graduates.

Let me conclude by noting that the king of Spain, Carlos III, had donated a spectacular didactic collection of paintings, drawings, medals, plasters, and books gathered in Spain and Italy to the Academia de San Carlos when it was established in 1783.⁹³ As for its importance, suffice it to say that its gallery contained works by José de Ribera, Francisco de Zurbarán, Pietro da Cortona, and Michelangelo Buonarroti; copies of Laocoön and His Sons, the Medici Venus, and the Castor and Pollux group were among the plasters; and its library housed works by Giovanni Battista Piranesi and the eight-volume *Antichità di Ercolano esposte* (1757–92; Antiquities of Herculaneum exposed). But most relevant here is the fact that, according to Dupaix, at least four Mexica sculptures were exhibited next to these European works.⁹⁴ This undoubtedly signifies a milestone in the history of collecting Mesoamerican art.

Notes

This essay was translated from Spanish by Scott Sessions.

I would like to thank Michael Blake, Daniela Bleichmar, Char-Lu Dinger, Karen Duffek, Maria Gaida, Ezequiel Gómez Murga, Jim Hamill, Francesca Hillier, Jennifer Kramer, Sara Ladrón de Guevara, Jorge Maier Allende, Colin McEwan, William McLennan, Mary E. Miller, Megan O'Neil, Adam Sellen, Andrew D. Turner, and Javier Urcid for their assistance during my research.

1 *Gazeta de México* 4, no. 8 (1790): 68–71; *Gazeta de México* 4, no. 16 (1790): 152–54; and José Luis Maldonado Polo, “El primer Gabinete de Historia Natural de México y el reconocimiento del Noroeste novohispano,” *Estudios de Historia Novohispana*, no. 21 (2000): 50–66. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

2 Virginia González Claverán, “Un verano en el México de Revillagigedo, 1791,” *Historia Mexicana* 38, no. 2 (1988): 205; Miguel Ángel Fernández, *Coleccionismo en México* (Monterrey: Museo del Vidrio, 2000), 93–101; and Susan Deans-Smith, “Creating the Colonial Subject: Casta Paintings, Collectors, and Critics in Eighteenth-Century Mexico and Spain,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 14, no. 2 (2005): 181–82.

3 Teresa Castelló Yturbide and María Josefa Martínez del Río de Redo, “Una batea del siglo XVIII,” *Boletín INAH*, no. 33 (1968): 35–38; Luis Sierra Nava-Lasa, *El cardenal Lorenzana y la Ilustración* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1975), 159–60; Paz Cabello Carro, *Coleccionismo americano indígena en la España del siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, 1989), 165; and Deans-Smith, “Creating the Colonial,” 183.

4 Hernán Cortés, *Historia de Nueva España* (Mexico City: Joseph Antonio de Hoyal, 1770), 1.

5 Cortés, *Historia*, 137, 391; Sierra Nava-Lasa, *El Cardenal Lorenzana y la Ilustración*, 159–60; and Leonardo López Luján, “Mamuts, gigantes y elefantes en la Nueva España: Los orígenes mexicanos de la paleontología de vertebrados,” *Arqueología Mexicana* 28, no. 163 (2020): 18–19.

6 Alexander von Humboldt, *Ensayo político sobre el reino de la Nueva España* (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1966), 81; and Dalia Valdez Garza, *Libros y lectores en la Gazeta de Literatura de México (1788–1795) de José Antonio Alzate* (Mexico City: Bonilla Artigas, 2014).

7 *Gazeta de Literatura* 2, no. 3 (1790): 33; and *Gazeta de Literatura* 2, no. 40 (1792): 315–16.

8 José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez, “Descripción de las antigüedades de Xochicalco,” supplement, *Gazeta de Literatura* 2 (1791): 22.

9 González Claverán, “Un verano,” 205–6; Virginia González Claverán, “Notas a un documento inédito indigenista de Alzate (1791),” *Quipu* 6, no. 2 (1989): 153–54; and Leonardo López Luján and Saburo Sugiyama, “Los expedicionarios de Malaspina llegan a Teotihuacan (1791),” *Arqueología Mexicana* 22, no. 131 (2015): 26.

10 Antonio León y Gama, *Descripción histórica y cronológica de las dos piedras...* (Mexico City: Felipe de Zúñiga y Ontiveros, 1792).

11 Elizabeth Hill Boone, “Collecting the Pre-Columbian Past: Historical Trends and the Process of Reception and Use,” in *Collecting the Pre-Columbian Past*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1993), 320; Leonardo López Luján and Marie-France Fauvet-Berthelot, “Antonio de León y Gama y los dibujos extraviados de la *Descripción histórica y cronológica de las dos piedras...*,” *Arqueología Mexicana* 24, no. 142 (2016): 18–28; and Leonardo López Luján and Marie-France Fauvet-Berthelot,

"El dibujo faltante de la *Descripción histórica y cronológica* de Antonio de León y Gama," *Arqueología Mexicana* 29, no. 172 (2022): 76–85.

12 Antonio León y Gama, *Descripción histórica y cronológica de las dos piedras...* (Mexico City: Alejandro Valdés, 1832), part 2, 83–84, 88, 105; and López Luján and Fauvet-Berthelot, "Antonio de León y Gama," 25, 27.

13 Chac mool, Musée du quai Branly, 1878.1.307; Chicomecoatl, British Museum, Am.St.374; and Quetzalcoatl, Museo Nacional de Antropología, 10-46698.

14 One of them was a representation of a relief from the palace traced by the Guatemalan artist Ricardo Almendáriz. Humboldt, *Ensayo*, 80, 236; Alexander von Humboldt, *Vistas de las cordilleras y monumentos de los pueblos indígenas de América*, trans. Jaime Labastida (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1995), 67, pl. xi; Xavier Lozoya, *Plantas y luces en México: La Real Expedición Científica a Nueva España (1787–1803)* (Barcelona: Serbal, 1984), 180–83; and María Concepción García Sáiz, "Antonio del Río y Guillermo Dupaix: El reconocimiento de una deuda histórica," *Anales del Museo de América* 2 (1994): 99–119.

15 Leonardo López Luján, *El capitán Guillermo Dupaix y su álbum arqueológico de 1794* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2015), 28, 62.

16 Unidentified goddess (Ayoquechtli, Chicomecoatl, or Xilonen?), Musée du quai Branly, 1887.101.619; and Leonardo López Luján and Marie-France Fauvet-Berthelot, *Azèques: La collection de sculptures du Musée du quai Branly* (Paris: Musée du quai Branly, 2005), 70–71.

17 Humboldt, *Vistas*, 67, 135–38, 221, pl. 11, 21, 28; Leonardo López Luján and Maria Gaida, "El Hacha Humboldt: Un objeto ritual olmeca tallado en jadeíta," *Arqueología Mexicana* 23, no. 133 (2015): 56–61; and Foni Le Brun-Ricalens, Leonardo López Luján, and Claude Wey, "Chalchiuhtlicue's Odyssey: Historiographical Account of the Translocation from Mexico to the British Museum in London of Humboldt's 'Aztec Priestess' Found by Dupaix," *PARI* 22, no. 4 (2022): 1–14. The drawing from Palenque is the work of Ricardo Almendáriz, who was a member of Antonio del Río's expedition in 1787. The sketch of the Tizoc Stone is by Dupaix, and those of Chalchiuhtlicue are by a student at the Academia de San Carlos.

18 Humboldt, *Vistas*, 23, 221, 257, 325, pls. 28, 40, 66; and Maria Gaida, personal communication, 2009.

19 López Luján and Gaida, "El Hacha Humboldt," 57–58.

20 See Humboldt, *Vistas*, 17–22, 224–25, 257.

21 The three objects still at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin are the following: Chalchiuhtlicue-Chicomecoatl (IV Ca 2), Huehuateotl (IV Ca 4), and Humboldt ear plug (IV Ca 229). The Humboldt axe (IV Ca 4034), Humboldt disc (IV Ca 215), and the double-headed jaguar (IV Ca 4014) were lost during World War II. See also López Luján and Gaida, "El Hacha Humboldt," 58–59. For more on the double-headed jaguar, see Viola König, "Curious Things from Mexico in Early German Collections, 1525–1835," this volume.

22 López Luján, *El capitán*, 29, 62–63.

23 Benito María de Moxó, *Cartas mejicanas* (Mexico City: Fundación Miguel Alemán, 1995), frontispiece and pls. 234–35, 312–13; and Elías Trabulse, "Benito María de Moxó y Francolí (1763–1816): Historiador del México antiguo," in Moxó, *Cartas*, xxxviii–xli.

24 Moxó, *Cartas*, 91, 260, 264–65; and Trabulse, "Benito," xxxi.

25 Moxó, *Cartas*, 353–55.

26 Moxó, *Cartas*, frontispiece, 91–92. This head, found near Mexico City and whose current whereabouts are unknown, resembles the Quetzalcoatl

Ehecatl mask (IV Ca 26077) currently exhibited at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin. See Eduard Seler, "Another Old Mexican Stone Mask," in *Collected Works in Mesoamerican Linguistics and Archaeology*, ed. Frank E. Comparato (Culver City, CA: Labyrinthos, 1992), 3:224–27; and H. B. Nicholson with Eloise Quiñones Keber, *Art of the Aztec Mexico: Treasures of Tenochtitlán*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1983), 103–4.

- 27 Trabulse, "Benito," xxx–xxxii.
- 28 Guillermo Dupaix, *Expediciones acerca de los antiguos monumentos de la Nueva España, 1805–1808*, ed. José Alcina Franch, 2 vols. (Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, 1969); Marie-France Fauvet-Berthelot, Leonardo López Luján, and Susana Guimarães, "The Real Expedición Anticuaria Collection," in *Fanning the Sacred Flame: Mesoamerican Studies in Honor of H. B. Nicholson*, ed. Matthew A. Boxt and Brian D. Dillon (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012), 461–85; and López Luján, *El capitán*, 37–38.
- 29 López Luján, *El capitán*, 38–41.
- 30 López Luján, *El capitán*, 41–46, 67–69.
- 31 López Luján, *El capitán*, 63.
- 32 Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Archivo Histórico del Museo Nacional de Antropología, G.O.131b; Dupaix, *Expediciones*, 1:285–86; and López Luján, *El capitán*, 30–32, 63–64.
- 33 López Luján, *El capitán*, 64.
- 34 Deceased man (10-193) and Chalchiuhtlicue (10-15717), Museo Nacional de Antropología; Xochipilli-turtle, Musée du quai Branly, 1887.155.9; Chalchiuhtlicue, British Museum, Am.St.373; Old god, Museum der Kulturen Basel, IVb 649; and Chicomecoatl, Brooklyn Museum, 51.109. See López Luján, *El capitán*, 32, 170–75; Alfonso Caso, "Una máscara azteca femenina," *México en el Arte* 9 (1950): 3–9; López Luján and Fauvet-Berthelot, *Aztèques*, 126–27; Le Brun-Ricalens, López Luján, and Wey, "Chalchiuhtlicue's Odyssey"; Gerhard Baer and Ulf Bankmann, *Altmexikanische Skulpturen der Sammlung Lukas Vischer* (Basel: Wepf, 1990), 13, 112–16; and Flora Siegel, "An Aztec Relief in the Brooklyn Museum," *Brooklyn Museum Bulletin* 14, no. 4 (1953): 9–14.
- 35 Ciriaco González y Carvajal Hidalgo y Pérez, 1796, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Secretaría de las Órdenes Civiles, Orden de Carlos III, ES.28079.AHN//ESTADO-CARLOS_III, Exp.950.
- 36 Mario Méndez Bejarano, *Diccionario de escritores, maestros y oradores naturales de Sevilla y su actual provincia* (Seville: Tipografía Gironés, 1922), 1:263–64; María de Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo, "La intendencia en Filipinas," *Historia Mexicana* 16, no. 4 (1967): 498–515; and María de Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo, "Ciriaco González Carvajal," in *Diccionario biográfico español* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2018), <https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/18319/ciriaco-gonzalez-carvajal>.
- 37 Archivo Histórico Nacional, ES.28079.AHN//FC-M^o_HACIENDA, 1497, Exp.19.
- 38 Archivo General de Indias, AGI CONTRATACION, 5523, N.2, R.112.
- 39 Archivo Histórico Nacional, ES.28079.AHN//FC-M^o_HACIENDA, 1497, Exp.19.
- 40 Archivo General de Indias, ES.41091.AGI/23//FILIPINAS, 345, L.15, F.134V–135V.
- 41 Humboldt, *Ensayo*, 122.
- 42 Archivo Histórico Nacional, ES.28079.AHN//FC-M^o_HACIENDA, 1497, Exp.19.
- 43 Archivo General de Indias, AGI CONTRATACION, 5534, N.1, R.8

- 44 José Gómez, "Diario curioso de México (1789–1794)," in *Diario curioso y cuaderno de las cosas memorables en México durante el gobierno de Revillagigedo (1789–1794)*, ed. Ignacio González-Polo (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1986), 18–19.
- 45 Archivo Histórico Nacional, ES.28079.AHN//FC-M^o_HACIENDA, 1497, Exp.19; legend in the portrait of González Carvajal (see fig. 1, lower right), painted at the Colegio de San Gregorio, now found in the Museo Nacional del Virreinato (10–92029); and Linda Arnold, *Directorio de burócratas en la Ciudad de México, 1761–1832* (Mexico City: Archivo General de la Nación, 1980), 120.
- 46 Archivo Histórico Nacional, ES.28079.AHN//FC-M^o_HACIENDA, 1497, Exp.19.
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- 48 Archivo General de la Nación, AGN, Historia, vol. 116, fols. 24–28; and Elena Isabel Estrada de Gerlero, "La labor anticuaría novohispana en la época de Carlos IV: Guillermo Dupaix, precursor de la historia del arte prehispánico," in *Arte, historia e identidad en América: Visiones comparativas*, ed. Gustavo Curiel, Renato González Mello, and Juana Gutiérrez Haces (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1994), 1:191–205.
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This book traces the fascinating history of how and why ancient Mesoamerican objects have been collected, beginning with the pre-Hispanic antiquities that first entered European collections in the sixteenth century as gifts or seizures and continuing through the rise of systematic collecting in Europe and the Americas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The contributors analyze the ways shifting patterns of collecting and taste—including how pre-Hispanic objects changed from being viewed as anthropological and scientific curiosities to collectible artworks—have shaped modern academic disciplines as well as public, private, institutional, and nationalistic attitudes toward Mesoamerican art. As nations demand the return of their cultural patrimony, it is essential to examine the historical processes, events, and actors that removed so many objects from their countries of origin.

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ISBN 978-1-60606-872-4



Printed in China