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Calendars and The Cosmic Race:

Popular Art and the Negotiationof National Identity, Idigeneity, and Gender in Post Revolutionary Mexico

by

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the popular art form of calendar chromos during the post-revolutionary period in Mexico. During this time various political figures sought to fill the power vacuum left by the ousting of Porfirio Díaz. As a result, many of these political figures co-opted the revolution, transforming it in *la Revolución.* In so doing, they re-wrote the recent past through various forms of media including calendar art in hopes of uniting the Mexican people behind their cause. By the time the calendars had reached the height of their popularity, a particular vision of *la Revolución* had been established. This work looks at how this popular artwork reflected prevailing ideas among producers and consumers of these calendars with regards to nationality, race, and gender.

For my Mother, whom I owe everything

And

Dr. Linda Curcio who guided me through my academic endeavors.

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INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Beginning in the 19th century, Mexico experienced a prolonged period of civil unrest as well as a war with the United States that resulted in a massive loss of territory that was ceded to the US. This was followed by a French invasion in which Maximilian I, with the support of Napoleon III, declared himself the Emperor of Mexico. This empire was short lived and Maximilian was ousted by Benito Juárez and his general Porfirio Díaz. Díaz who was originally seen as a hero for helping to expel French troops, promoted a vision of Mexico in which ancient indigenous heritages particularly that of the Aztecs, were lauded. However, he had no desire to raise modern indigenous or mestizo culture and instead sought to emulate the United States and Europe, particularly France. Porfirio Díaz, abused his position and committed repeated acts of terror against the Mexican people. Porfirio Díaz's unjust and tyrannical rule eventually led to the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

Average citizens revolted against Díaz's corrupt regime in the hopes of enfranchising indigenous populations, retaining and/or gaining land rights that many felt had been stolen from them, and creating a more just and

democratic government. [1] Following the initial overthrow of Díaz in 1910, Mexico experienced a decade of chaos during which leaders were repeatedly assassinated and power was constantly shifting. During the 1920s, a nation-building project began. Defining Mexican identity in the wake of war and civil unrest became of utmost importance. This identity was not only forged through state programs, such as rural schools, but through dialogue with artists, craftsmen, commercial interests, and an emphasis modernity.

José Vasconcelos shifted Mexico's nationalizing project away from the Euro-centric view promoted during the Porfiriato in favor of what he called *La Raza Cósmica,* or The Cosmic Race. While continuing to praise the pre-Columbian indigenous cultures, especially the Aztecs, Vasconcelos's Cosmic Race sought to unify Mexico by promoting and appreciating its *Mestizo* heritage. The desire to create a national identity based on these ideals led to the creation of the SEP or Secretaría de Educación Pública in 1921. [2] Although SEP was meant to uplift and enfranchise the indigenous population, Stephen Lewis argues that the government saw this as an opportunity to more quickly industrialize Mexico. [3] He argues that what often happened, especially outside of the city, was that these populations were transformed into contributing members of the growing capitalist industrial state. This became clear considering the type of

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[1] William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club: And Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004), 77.
[2] Rebecca Earle. *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 188.
[3] Stephan Lewis, "The Nation, Education, and the "Indian Problem" in Mexico, 1920-1940," in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico*, ed. Mary K. Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 191-2.

education these students were often given. Students learned industrial and agricultural skills that aimed to create laborers rather than potential lawyers, doctors, or other more specialized professions; although, some did go on to become professionals, this was not typical. Catching up with global industrial power-houses was one of Mexico's primary concerns in the post-revolutionary period.[4] The large un-educated indigenous population served as the perfect labor force. However, it is important to note that SEP's intentions were not necessarily sinister, but rather this was a quick way to bring indigenous people into the fold in a manner that policy makers believed was mutually beneficial.

SEP not only promoted *La Raza Cósmica* in public schools, and the education of indigenous populations, but it began programs that documented indigenous communities. This documentation was known as the Folkloric Project and was headed by Manuel Gamio, often considered the father of Mexican anthropology, and consisted of artifact collection and photo documentation.

Additionally the newspaper, *El Universal,* created the "India Bonita" contest that was a beauty contest for indigenous women, but only for those whose appearance was sufficiently Indian. According to today's sensibilities, regarding beauty, gender, and racial sensitivity, this contest seems racist and misogynistic, but at that time the thought that women with indigenous

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[4] Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 19.

features could even be consider beautiful was very progressive. Similarly, Vasconcelos's intentions, to promote the enfranchisement of the indigenous population, while not exactly promoting the conservation of contemporary indigenous communities, were extremely progressive compared to the policies of Porfirio Díaz. [5]

For the next few decades, the Mexican government further promoted the concept of the Cosmic Race and official indigenismo as the primary foundation for national identity through numerous state-sponsored art projects. By employing artists like Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco, among others, to paint massive murals in public spaces, the Mexican government spread an anti-Porfirian, pro-Revolution, pro-Mestizo message. Images such as Jóse Clemente Orozco's *Hernán Cortés and "la Malinche,"* (Fig. 1) and Diego Rivera's *Our Bread* (Fig. 2) prominently promote Mexico's mestizo heritage.[6] As time progressed, the works began to emphasize explicitly pro-Revolutionary themes; moreover, many other state-sponsored artists began to depict pre-Columbian scenes as a way to oppose anti-revolutionary ideas and further develop Mexico's sense of pride in its indigenous roots.[7] This thesis will show how a similar evolution can be traced with Mexico's popular calendar art, highlighting the role that these cultural

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[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Mary K. Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture: Murals, Museums, and the Mexican State*.(Durham: Duke UP, 2012) 9-11.
[7] *Ibid*., 53-5.

artifacts played in circulating ideas regarding race, gender, and identity among the general Mexican population.

After the creation of calendars with chromolithography, or chromos, in 1935 by "Enseñanza Objetiva," the industry expanded rapidly with the appearance of competing printers. Printers throughout Mexico worked with artists and photographers to create calendar chromos for sale to advertisers and local businesses. The art of these calendars, which depicted "folkloric figures" such as indigenous women, imaginings of the last Aztec king *Cuauhtémoc,* and *soldaderas* were often inspired by the photographs of Gamio's national project with SEP, a project which, Mary K. Coffey says, promoted "revolutionary culture and national stereotypes."[8] Considering the apparent popularity and wide circulation of these calendars (José Cuervo once placed an order of 200,000 calendars) coupled with the artistic representation inspired by Vasconcelos' Cosmic Race, it is surprising that there is so little scholarship on them. [9]

The popularity of these calendars and their wide distribution throughout Mexico in the decades immediately following the 'revolutionary' period, a formative time in the development of Mexico's national identity, suggest that these calendars have a story to tell. The immense production and distribution of these calendars indicates that they may have played an integral

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[8] *Ibid*, 430-431.
[9] Christopher Fulton, "Cuauhtémoc regained," *Scielo*, accessed 12 December 2015, http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0185-26202008000200001&lng=es&nrm=iso.

role in developing Mexican national identity during this time. While the earliest calendar images from the 1920's (fig. 3) depict thinly veiled European or Anglo-American imagery and individuals, the calendars that followed had a decidedly more 'Mexican' feel. Seen in figures 4 and 5 that show the traditional dress of Tehuantepec woman and an Aztec scene respectively.[10] These calendar images not only demonstrate an aesthetic shift from the earlier European-influenced images but also a move to more Mexican visual language.[11] Clearly calendar producers were responding to a desire for artwork that depicted more Mexican themes and individuals or they were trying to influence popular taste in this direction or some combination of both.

The calendar artwork of Mexico helped solidify and shape an idea of identity, gender, and race in the national imagination. This is immediately visible in the two images shown in figures 4 and). In the *Woman from Tehuantepec,* the 'mestizo' woman is presented with light skin and many European facial features that comment on the aesthetic sensibilities of the time. Additionally, in *The Legend of The Volcanos,* we are introduced to a popular motif in pre-Columbian themed artwork in which indigenous women (and arguably men) are hyper-sexualized within the context of the Aztec myth of *Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl* a myth conflated with the volcanic geography

[10] Angela Villalba and Carlos Monsiváis, *Mexican Calendar Girls: Golden Age of Calendar Art, 1930-1960*, (San Francisco: Chronicle, 2006), 79. Museo Soumaya. *La Patria Portatil: 100 Years of Mexican Chromo Art Calendars*, (Carasco, Associon Carasco A.C. ,1999), 38.

[11] Villalba and Monsiváis, *Mexican Calendar Girls*, 29.

of Mexico.[12] The depiction of this myth as well as the retention of these traditional indigenous names for the volcanos today is telling of Mexico's pride in its pre-Hispanic heritage. This work will show how nation builders used artwork to promote not only pride for Mexican indigenous heritage but the varied and unique contemporary mestizo cultures that developed throughout.

Women in the revolutionary period are largely absent from much of the art (as well as revolutionary history) until the 1950s, as seen in David Alfaro Siqueiros's *From Porfirianism to the Revolution,* 1957-65 (Fig.6). Prior to this, much of the art was dominated by a decidedly elite/male mestizo gaze. Around this time, artists began to depict, with increasing regularity, the role of *soldaderas* and rural teachers (the woman in red in Siqueiros's mural) in both the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods.[13] While this recognition of women's role is a small step on Siqueiros's part, it was in its own right a monumental step forward. Unsurprisingly, this shift in the artwork followed closely on the heels of women's suffrage in Mexico on a national scale in 1947. It is in this manner that we see representations in art mirroring changes in society and the way that people remembered the revolution.

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[12] Chela Orozco, "The Legend of Popocatepetal & Iztaccihuatl A Love Story," *Inside Mexico*, accessed 29 April 2016, http://www.inside-mexico.com/the-legend-of-popocatepetl-iztaccihuatl/.
[13] Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture*, 106-7.

This proposed study aims to explore the ways in which widely distributed calendar art, (which was often purchased or utilized as an art piece in poorer homes,) helped to spread particular ideas about nationalism in Mexico in the years between 1920 and1960. Calendars have a long history in Mexico that includes pre-Columbian codices which include astronomical and season information or almanacs during the colonial and early national periods. The twentieth century brought about a massive change. Industrialization was a primary goal of the new government, especially under Avila Camacho, and consumerism was seen as a marker of modernization. In an era when Mexico was obsessed with technological and material progress, on the heels of the revolution, calendars became a vehicle for modernization by providing a medium to promote brands and products.[14] The artwork that often depicted indigenous scenes influenced by the Aztec and the Maya, as well as authentic Mexican-Mestizo dress and tradition, was intended by the intelligentsia to support the idea of an ancient Mexican heritage. Based on the work of scholars dealing with similar cultural products such as films, posters, and consumer products in Mexico, the argument that calendar art can provide insight into how Mexican elites understood ideas of nationhood, gender, and indigeneity already has precedent.

[14] Museo Soumaya. *La Patria Portatil*, 11.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The primary source documents in this study, the calendar images, were and, remain a popular art form in Mexico. My search led me to a combined collection of well over 150 images between both original copies and reproductions found in books. However, only around 100 are utilized for this study as 50 or so are pin-up girls that are indistinguishable from those found in the U.S. Artists typically created these images by working from photographs based on themes, characters, and locations chosen by the printing companies and were often influenced by the photographs and artifacts of Manuel Gamio's Folklore Project. In some cases, according to Tere Romo, "the artist, along with a scriptwriter and two photographers, would then travel to a selected locations…[and] stage photographs."[15] More often than not these calendars were created as advertisement material by various companies ranging from tequila manufacturers like José Cuervo, to tire manufacturers like Goodyear, and even small family-owned businesses. Angela Villalba explains how vendors often gave these calendars as New Year's gifts to their customers "each with a single image, all stacked on a nail," with many families saving the artwork long after the calendar portion was outdated.[16]

The catalogue from the Bancroft at Berkeley lists 78 prints in their collection with print dates ranging from the 1940s-1970s. About 28 of them

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[15] Tere Romo, "The Chicanization of Mexican Calendar Art," *Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiative*, accessed 11 May 2015, http://latino.si.edu/researchandmuseums/presentations/romo.html.
[16] Villalba and Monsiváis, *Mexican Calendar Girls* 16.

were either doubles or outside the target area of interest, leaving the final source count at 50. Additionally, I was pleased to find that a little over 30 percent of these calendars depicted Aztec or indigenous themes in general. While these calendars were primarily produced in the late 40s and 50s, they will be a valuable source in determining how certain imagery became codified after the initial printing boom of the 1920s and 30s. Additionally, among these pieces, the Bancroft had around 10 Mexican documents, artwork, and postcards. While these non-calendar images do not appear in this particular thesis, they were valuable in establishing a widespread trend regarding popular art in various media.

I have also found calendar sources elsewhere in the form of reproductions. *Calendar Girls* includes more than of 120 images. Around 100 images were unique from those found at the Bancroft, with artists and dates for most of the early-mid 20th century, but only going as far back as the 1930s. This is around the time when calendar production really took off as Mexico entered the modern era. Furthermore, the book *La Patria Portatil: 100 Years of Mexican Chromo Art Calendars* (1991) published by the Museo Soumaya includes approximately 60 calendars and other similar productions (from the exhibit) spanning the past 100 years. These fill in the gaps left by the artwork available at the Bancroft and those found in Villalba's book. Moreover, the collection includes photographs which served as the inspiration

for some of the calendar paintings, providing insight into the production of these works.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

In the first few decades following the Revolution, the creation of a national identity was a primary objective for much of Mexico's elite. The development and evolution of post-revolutionary Mexican nationalism is a widely researched and discussed topic in the field of Mexican history. Often the focus of these studies is on state apparatus or institutions such as the SEP and Indian schools, or on particular individuals such as José Vasconcelos, whose *La Raza Cósmica* is often credited as being a foundational work regarding mestizaje and the nation. Further studies have tackled the issue of Mexican nationalism from a decidedly more cultural approach. Recent books such as Mary K. Vaughn's and Stephen Lewis' *The Eagle and The Virgin* (2006), Rick Lopez's *Crafting Mexico* (2010) and Mary Coffey's *How Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture* (2012) turn to indigenous handicrafts, popular art, and murals in an attempt to illuminate the ways in which nationalism and national identity developed in Mexico.

This shift in scholarships coincides with a general trend in historical research that favors a more cultural approach. In the anthology, *A Companion to Mexican History and Culture*, William H. Beezley wrote a chapter entitled "Creating Revolutionary Culture: Vasconcelos, Indians, Anthropologist, and Calendar Girls." The first three items in the sub title were familiar territory

for a piece dealing with Mexican culture; however, the inclusion of "Calendar Girls" was surprising and led to a deeper investigation of the subject matter.

In addition to the calendars, it is important to consider how previous scholarship has dealt with cultural productions, especially film, in the post-Porfirian era. More specifically it is necessary to consider the activities of Vasconcelos and the SEP and examine what their arguments tell us about the development of Mexican nationalism. This will further flesh out the contextual basis, as well as illustrate the ways in which Vasconcelos and his various projects may have influenced calendar art. The collection of essays found in *The Eagle and the Virgin,* provides a perfect starting point for this process, as its primary focus is the building of a nation in the decades following the Porfirian era.[17] Additionally Vaughan's book, *Cultural Politics in Revolution,* deals specifically with the ways in which the indigenous populations and the average citizen interacted with, influenced, and contested the nationalizing efforts of the state.[18]

Mary K. Vaughn's and Stephen Lewis' *The Eagle and The Virgin* is a collection of essays by various scholars who address the question of how national culture developed in the twenty years following the Revolution. In the introduction, Lewis and Vaughn argue that many "[h]istorians have disputed popular response to the government's behavioral reforms. Some,

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[17] Vaughan and Lewis, introduction to *The Eagle and the Virgin*, 12.
[18] Mary K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940*, (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1997), 28.

focused on religion, have tended to portray the postrevolutionary state as an aggressive bulldozer attempting to run over a uniform, homogenous, resistant peasant community."[19] In reality, they argue, that the peasantry was a diverse collection, often of indigenous descent, with unique cultural forms that often influenced the ways that national culture was formed. This assertion has resulted in the creation of multiple studies which argue that there are powerful connections between various forms of visual media and the formation of the nation often times through 'authentic' indigenous creations or in representations of indigenous people or themes by artists such as Diego Rivera.[20]

Rick Lopez explores the ability of the indigenous population to influence Mexico's national cultural development in his chapter, "The Noche Mexicana and the Exhibition of Popular Arts: Two Ways of Exalting Indianness," themes that he explores more fully in his book *Crafting Mexico.* In this chapter, Lopez discusses how in the early 1920s, in an attempt to develop Mexican culture and identity the mestizo, Dr. Atl, Robert Montenegro, Jorge Enciso, and Adolfo Best Maugard, as well as other artists and intellectuals, promoted the view that "living indigenous cultures, despite centuries of disparagement, seemed to offer a source for a new national culture that might unite the nation while propelling Mexico into the highest ranks of cultural

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[19] Vaughan and Lewis, introduction to *The Eagle and the Virgin*, 12.
[20] Rick A. Lopez, *Crafting Mexico Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 15.

modernity."[21] They hoped that an indigenous-based national identity might unite the "historically fragmented" population.[22] Accordingly, the Noche Mexicana and the Exhibition of Popular Art were developed as celebrations that took place in 1921 and placed value on indigenous "aesthetic forms" that were previously degraded and condemned as backwards.[23]

Though some intellectuals, such as Best Maugard, believed that there was value in the culture of the native peoples, he, as well as those who disagreed with him, believed that it was necessary for culturally elite men such as themselves to guide the evolution of the Indian.[24] Either by 'improving' their current culture, or through transforming them completely. Ultimately, Lopez suggest that "the Noche Mexicana embodied the argument that the culture of the masses was raw material for the production of an elevated national art by men of talent and training. The Exhibition of Popular Arts, by contrast, called for a more radical redefinition of aesthetic value. It singled out indigenousness as the most Mexican aspect of Mexico."[25] Lopez's conclusion thus places indigenous art and cultural productions as one of, if not the most, fundamental building blocks of Mexican cultural identity. However, it is important to note that even the idea that indigenous art and cultural products are important is the result of an elite vision. In other words, only those particular productions deemed 'valuable' or 'worthy' by elite

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[21] Vaughan and Lewis, introduction to *The Eagle and the Virgin*, 23.
[22] *Ibid*., 23.
[23] *Ibid*., 27.
[24] *Ibid*., 30.
[25] *Ibid*., 40.

tastemakers were what made it into museums and galleries, while countless other crafts and artistic productions fell to the wayside.

With his article on the Noche Mexicana and the Exhibition of Popular Art, Lopez lays out the foundation for his 2010 book, *Crafting Mexico.* In this work, Lopez contends that "what set post revolutionaries apart from their predecessors was that they celebrated living indigenous heritage as a vital component, even the foundation, of Mexico's authentic national identity."[26] Lopez's primary concern in this work is the examination of the process by which postrevolutionary Mexico became 'ethnicized' through the "embrace of indigenousness as part of the national identity."[27] Thus, he traces this development through the adoption of indigenous art as representative of the nation.[28] Lopez points to cultural productions like the India Bonita contest, a beauty contest that was reserved exclusively for indigenous women, as telling markers of the attitudes and goals of the literati who sought to define Mexican identity through the lens of indigeneity. While such an event appears patently offensive to twenty-first century sensibilities, it was in fact a very progressive move for the time toward the acceptance of indigenous heritage and culture and, according to Lopez, a direct attempt at "[bringing] indigenous people into the fold."[29] Lopez continues his work asserting that not only is the idea of an indigenous Mexico relatively new, but that it was the result of interactions

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[26] Vaughan and Lewis, introduction to *The Eagle and the Virgin*, 7.
[27] *Ibid*. 7.
[28] *Ibid*. 9.
[29] *Ibid*., 30.

with foreigners who sought out and expected a mestizo culture, stating that Mexican cultural identity was "forged in the fires of *transnational* political and cultural discourse."[30]

The first half of Lopez's book deals with how indigenous populations and images were fashioned by elites in a way to create national patrimony, often at the expense of indigenous voices and input. The second half of the book analyzes the people of Olinalá whose lacquer work was tapped by the intelligentsia as representative of Mexican culture. In this section, Lopez discusses the 'problem' of authenticity and how often outsiders only value those creations deemed 'authentic,' though they repeatedly fail to understand that these creations have undergone, and continue to undergo, numerous changes since their inception.[31] Despite this, the Olinaltecos, as well as other indigenous people, create the items in the 'authentic' manner as a means to achieve political agency. The value elites placed on these art works allowed the Olinaltecos to transform local society on their own terms.[32] Accordingly, Lopez is careful to point out that while contemporary Mexican discourse suggest a seamless legacy of *mestizaje*, rather than the true "messy contradictory beginnings" and the continued struggle of indigenous populations, the fact that it is often seen as a smooth transition is telling of the level of success that the ethnicization project achieved.[33]

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[30] *Ibid*., 97
[31] *Ibid*., 226
[32] *Ibid*., 263.
[33] *Ibid*., 64.

In *How A Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture,* Mary Coffey discusses how revolutionary art was co-opted and transformed and presented as part of official Mexican identity. Coffey states that "the central paradox at the heart of this book: [is] how a revolutionary art- or at least one that intended to be revolutionary- became an official art that helped to legitimize an authoritarian state."[34] Coffey goes on to say that, from the very beginning, muralists were contracted by the state to paint their works on or inside government funded buildings, the muralist movement, "was complicit with the governmental agenda."[35] In many of these murals, indigenous, mestizo, and revolutionary themes predominate; in some murals such as Juan O'Gorman's *Mural of Independence* we see all three together.[36] Coffey examines the work of Mexico's most well-known muralists and artists ranging from Diego Rivera to later artists such as Rufino Tamayo, tracing the continuity of themes throughout that helped fashion and codify Mexican identity. Coffey also discusses various museums throughout Mexico but pays special attention to The National Anthropology Museum, founded in 1964, which she argues not only "symbolized the triumph of the post-revolutionary state's cultural project" but also solidified indigeneity, particularly pre-Columbian Mexica/Aztec culture, as a foundational part of what it means to be Mexican.[37]

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[34] Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture*, 1.
[35] *Ibid*., 14.
[36] *Ibid*., 100.
[37] *Ibid*., 129.

Perhaps the most interesting part of Coffey's study is the lack of attention paid to popular art. She admits herself that the common people preferred film posters, silk flowers and "the blonde pinups in Coca-Cola advertisements" to the murals, but she dedicates her time fully to artworks produced in league with the state or by artists who at one point or another worked for it.[38] While it is understandable that she left out popular art, as it was outside the scope of her work, she brings up a good point: its importance to the everyday Mexican citizen. This study follows in the footsteps of Lopez and Coffey, who discuss indigenous crafts and murals as tools of the state used to produce Mexican identity. Following the current trend of cultural studies in history, the next logical step of inquiry would be popular art.

William Beezley, in his essay "Creating Revolutionary Culture," suggests that many scholars have both "over-estimated" and "undervalued" the influence that Vasconcelos' philosophy had on the general Mexican population.[39] In reality, it is not quite as paradoxical as it sounds. Scholars often emphasize and examine those cultural productions that represented and promoted the idea of the "Cosmic Race," but, which had a limited reach. For example many of the famous Mexican murals that are avidly studied and interpreted, such as those discussed by Mary Coffey, are in places that were not often seen by the general public. These images could be found in places likethe Ministry of Public education, presidential executive offices,

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[38] *Ibid*., 5.
[39] Beezley, "Creating Revolutionary Culture: Vasconcelos, Indians, Anthropologist, and Calendar Girls,", 433.

government buildings, and other such locations which offered fairly limited access.[40] While today, many of the murals are largely well-known, Beezley argues that this is the result of more recent efforts in "school books, television, and the discussion of national artistic heritage."[41] In the early post-revolutionary era, most people would not have seen them. Alternatively, Beezley makes the argument that many artistic endeavors and projects such as public architecture, music, and calendar art provide the mostly widely disseminated examples of Vasconcelos' philosophy. The author points out that "Vasconcelos' Cosmic Race found its most widely known and accepted expression in the Calendar Girl."[42] Regrettably, Beezley's chapter offers only a short exploration of how these calendars may have promoted and presented the idea of the Cosmic Race.

CONTRIBUTION

In my search for further information on the calendar chromos, I was surprised to find that there was very little published scholarship on them. The one such work I was able to discover is the only work that Beezley references in his short discussion about the calendars: Angela Villalba's fully bilingual *Calendar Girls*. The website for this book, which was recently edited earlier

[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.*, 432.
[42] *Ibid.*, 435.

this year, claims that the book is the only one written on the subject.[43] *Calendar Girls* runs about 150 pages, including appendices, is presented in a split page bilingual fashion. Most of the work is composed of the images themselves with a brief section discussing Calendar history as well as how the calendars themselves were produced and who produced them. Furthermore, the book deals primarily with one aspect of these calendars, namely the depiction of women, neglecting to fully explore the other representations, such as the charro, or Aztec warriors, among others.[44] Additionally the book was published by Chronicle which is mostly involved in commercial, rather than scholarly endeavors. Consequently, there is a notable absence of any substantial exploration of the subject published by an academic press.

As the existing literature on the topic is so scant, it is important to supplement the planned primary sources, the calendar images, with secondary sources which may not address the topic directly but deal with a similar corpus of material, e.g. murals, etc. This is important not only because it provides a basis for understanding the wider context surrounding the calendars themselves but also provides examples of methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of nationalism through popular culture as demonstrated by both Lopez and Coffey.

Additionally it is important to point out how Vasconcelos' ideas regarding La *Raza Cósmica*, which Beezley argues, was a primary influence on

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[43] Angela Villalba, "Chicas De Calendarios Mexicanos." *Mexican Calendar Girl*, Accessed 15 Dec. 2014, http://www.mexicancalendargirl.com/.
[44] *Ibid.*

the depictions found in calendar art. The extent of this influence can be see especially when considering how his photo-documentation project often served as inspiration for the calendar artist.[45] Vasconcelos desire to achieve constructive miscegenation and the spread of this idea can clearly be seen in the murals, artworks, and calendar images inspired by his work. And while the reach of this influence on the general populace is hard to quantify, what is clear is that a particularly 'Vasconcelosian' concept of what constituted mestizaje and nationalism was a driving inspiration for much of the art created in the post-revolutionary period.

While scholarly works regarding the calendars are nearly non-existent, the use of books such as Coffey's coupled with the apparent abundance of primary source material should provide a sufficient foundation to further explore the possible influential role of calendar imagery in sculpting national identity. By briefly looking at some of the shared themes between film and the calendars we can see how popular art developed and commercialized Mexican identity feeding into the growing consumer culture. The importance of looking at these items is made even more pertinent when considering, as Villalba suggest, that films and the calendars went hand in hand. If these themes prove to be the same or similar to those found on calendars, it will be fairly reasonable to assume that overall they are drawing from similar

[45] Beezley, "Creating Revolutionary Culture: Vasconcelos, Indians, Anthropologist, and Calendar Girls," 430-1.

influences, as well as engendering similar responses from the consumer.[46] By looking at consumer products, one might expect to find links to growing ideas about modernization and consumer culture in Mexico. By examining the types of popular art that were produced a clear picture of how nation builders attempted to influence the Mexican population will emerge.

METHODOLOGY

It is important to note the interpretive nature of the proposed project as the primary sources in use are artistic creations. There are no existing documents written by the artists describing what, if any, message they may have been trying to send and thus all analysis must be done carefully with this in mind. As a result, the best approach when trying to understand how these images may have helped to influence ideas about Mexican Identity is to break them up thematically and then discuss all possible ways that they may have influenced the everyday person especially with regards to gender roles and racial identity. It is also important to consider that these calendars may have been the product, rather than the catalyst (depending on the time of production), of an increasingly codified Mexican national identity.

Additionally, it will be rather difficult to quantify the level of influence of these images and as a result any conclusions drawn will have to be bolstered with more evidence than just similarities between Vasconcelos's

[46] *Ibid.*, 6-7.

photos and ideas and the artworks. When comparing calendars of the early post-revolutionary period with similar products being produced in the Porfirian era, it becomes clear that a monumental shift occurred in the relationship between what was produced and what consumers wanted. In this way, we will be able to track how ideas about Mexican identity and nationhood transformed over the course of the Revolution.

I believe this is an important topic to address as it has the potential to fill in gaps regarding the ways in which nation builders may have conceptualized mestizaje and Mexican identity in the early years after the revolution. Furthermore, this study would fall in line with recent scholarly work in the field which approaches the topic of nation building in Mexico from the standpoint of art and material culture. Lastly, the fact that these calendars are so understudied adds to necessity of the project, as well as the appeal.

Chapter 1 will further explore the events that led to the post-Revolutionary period as, well as discuss the context in which the Calendars developed and were produced. The following chapter, will explore the indigenista movement and how it influenced indigenous representation in the calendar art, especially the sexualization of indigenous women. Additionally, Chapter 2 will explore how these calendars depicted race and whiteness. Chapter 3 will investigate the role of women in both the revolutionary and post- revolutionary periods as illustrated by the calendars. The paper will conclude with a synthesis of the way that the calendars as a whole developed

alongside, were influenced, and influenced, a nascent Mexican national identity. Additionally it will explore how the narrow variation of calendar themes helped to develop and consolidate a particular type of *Mexicanidad*.

Figure 1: Jose Clemente Orozco's *Hernan Córtez and "la Malinche,"*depicts A nude Córtez in a position of power and restraint over La Malinche, while simultaneously lording over a fallen/dead indigenous individual.

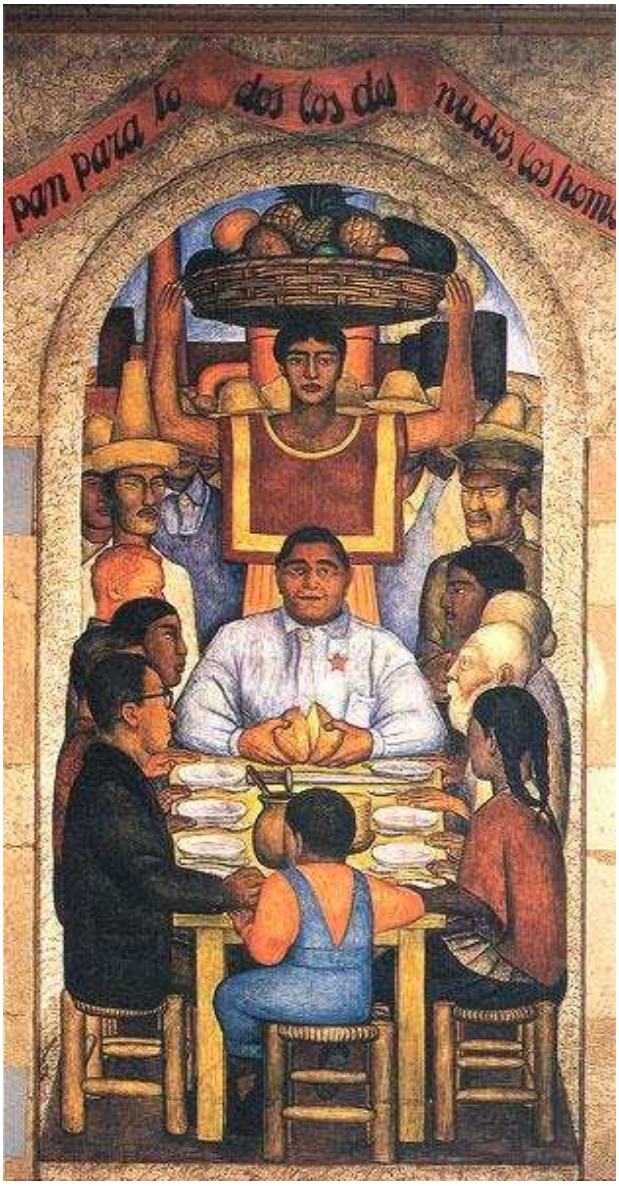
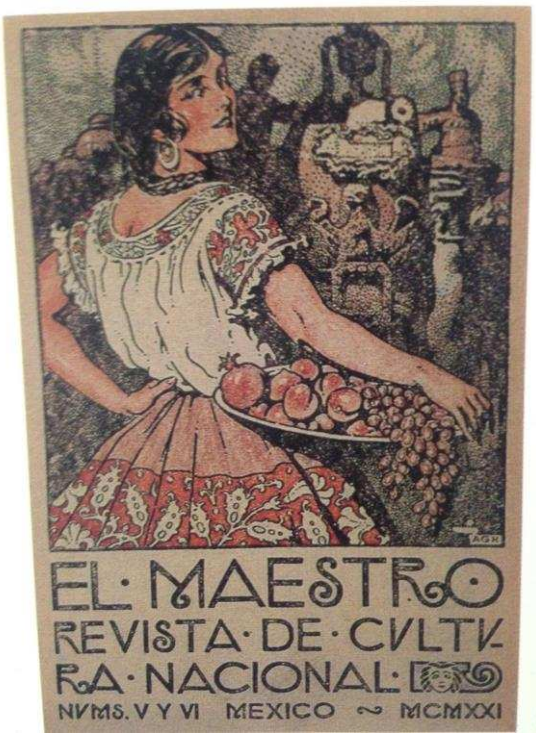
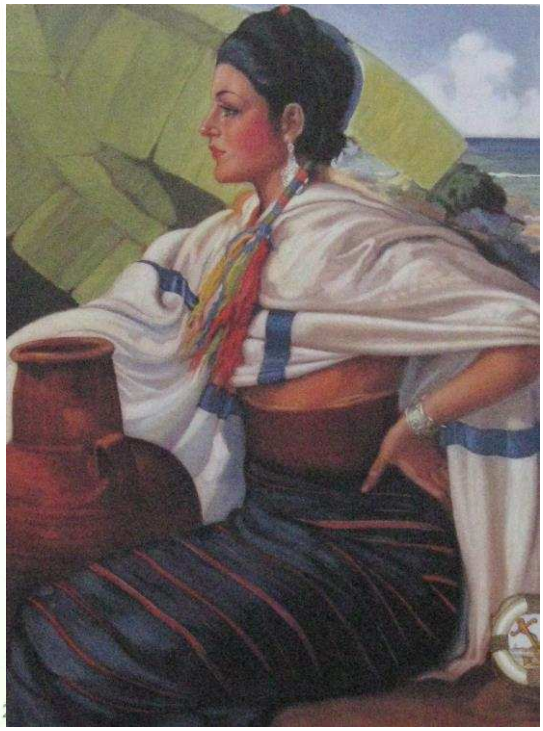


Figure 2: Diego Rivera *Our Bread,* depicts a mestizo family sitting hand in hand at the dinner table preparing to eat as other members of the town look on. The varied 'racial' groups depicted suggest a unified Mexico.





Top Left (Figure 3): Early Almanac cover which depicts a fairly culturally ambiguous female figure.
Top Right (Figure 4): Calendar image which depicts Tehuantepec woman.
Bottom (Figure 5): Calendar image illustrating the ancient Mexican tale of *Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl.*

Figure 6: Panel from David Alfaro Siqueiros's mural, *From Porfirianism to the Revolution,* 1957-65, which highlights the growing role of women in remembrance of *La Revolution.*

CHAPTER 1: MEXICO IN REVOLUTION AND REMEMBRANCE

Before delving into what the calendars may have represented in terms of nationality, indigenismo, and gender, it is important to explore the events and social movements that led up to and inspired the images in the calendars. As a product of the post-revolutionary period it is imperative that we first visit the preceding era of revolution and turmoil which set the stage for the forging of the Mexican state and national identity. This revolution is often viewed as the monumental turning point and foundational nation making myth in Mexico's history. Although the myth of la *Revolución* is one which paints the movement as monolithic the reality was much different. According to Thomas Benjamin, it is due to "the divisiveness among revolutionaries, in Mexico memory, myth, and history were elaborated not by the state but by diverse individuals sympathetic to the promise of revolutionary transformation."[47]

While the extent of this period and its true beginning are often debated, more often than not the period between 1910-1930 is considered the most pivotal as far as their effect on the socio-political trajectory of Mexico. Recognizing the divisive nature of the actual revolution, the intelligentsia sought to construct a more monolithic and beautified conception of the revolution. *La Revolución* was not the actual historic revolution but rather the revolution as presented and remembered by the revolutionary male elite.

[47] Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 32.

These *voceros de la Revolución* (spokesmen of the Revolution), constructed a vision of the revolution that situated it as the foundational building block of post-revolutionary Mexico. [48]

Through various manifestos, and cultural productions, these literati altered the remembrance of the recent past in the hopes of uniting a war-torn country. However, it is important to note that these men did not all belong to the same faction; instead, various competing groups bent or rewrote the history of the revolution in whatever way benefited them the most. [49] Thus, *la Revolución* became a political tool. Eventually the narrative of Jóse Vasconcelos and the SEP won out, but only once the federal government had asserted itself under Plutarco Elías Calles. At this time, they were able to bring the people together in a reimagining of the revolution in ways that not only united people in the present, but also in the past. [50]

It was in the late 1940s under Avila Camacho that the myth of the *la Revolución* really became the dominating political narrative. During his time in office, he attempted, on the part of the state, "to create a mass media-based cultural nationalism rooted in loyalty to Mexican personalities who embodied the experience of their history in the artifacts of their creativity." [51] Thus was born a golden era in Mexican history, where art of all kind radio, murals, film, calendars, and ballet worked together to unite an ethnically diverse population under the

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[48] *Ibid.*, 31.
[49] *Ibid.*, 38.
[50] *Ibid.*, 151.
[51] Michael Nelson Miller, *Red, White, and Green: The Maturing of Mexicanidad, 1940-1946*, (El Paso, TX: Texas Western, University of Texas at El Paso, 1998.), 3.

umbrella of popular culture.[52] Camacho experienced great success with this undertaking presiding, over one of the most peaceful and culturally productive periods in Mexico's history known as the *Epoca de Oro*, or the Golden Age. However, the foundation for this Golden Age was lain down during the 20s and 30s when the calendars and other popular media codified the visual and ideological language that would persist for decades.

According to the narrative of *la Revolución*, the seeds of the revolution were planted early within the writing of various Spanish authors who expressed, respected, and sometimes glorified the ancient Mexicans. Thomas Benjamin argues that as a result "a sophisticated anti-Spanish Creole patriotism was forged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it interpreted the conquest as the beginning not of the nation but of hundreds of years of colonial captivity and exploitation."[53] This sentiment would eventually come to a head in 1811 when Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a Catholic priest, marched across Mexico leading poor farmers in an attempt to gain Independence from Spain. While Hidalgo and his forces were quickly defeated, he laid the foundation for the nation to achieve its independence in 1821 and is considered the "Father of Mexico."

Over the following decades, after independence, no one faction or ideology dominated politics and the state.[54] It was not until the nation was united against French interventionists that a unified vision of Mexico began to

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[52] *Ibid.*, 85
[53] Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 16.
[54] *Ibid*.

crystallize. Benito Juárez, one of the most beloved figures in Mexican history, was considered an instrumental force in ousting Maximilian I and his French court. Following Juárez's death, his rivals vied for the presidency with Porfirio Díaz, who had previously served as a general under Juárez's government. He ultimately came out on top. Díaz, who ruled Mexico in one capacity or another for three decades, was finally forced into exile in 1910 as a result of the revolution.

Both Juárez and Hidalgo become part of the ongoing narrative of *la Revolución* during the 'post-Revolutionary' government of Francisco Madero. While Madero believed that the revolution ended with the overthrow of the Porfirian regime, many of his contemporaries believed that as long as the rebuilding process was underway the revolution went on. The Maderistas historicized the term la Revolución portraying it as the third stage in an ongoing revolution which began with the insurgence of 1810 and continued with the mid-to-late 1850's Reform.[55] It is important to mention that Juárez and Hidalgo served as inspirational figures for the revolutionaries of 1910 and became integral to Mexican ideas about nationhood under Madero.

More importantly (for this work), they become recurring figures in revolutionary art. While Madero attempted to move past the revolution as an event that had ran its course, there were those who believed that the initial period of destruction, that preceded rebuilding, was just beginning. Madero was eventually betrayed by his general, Victoriano Huerta, who conspired

[55] *Ibid.*, 42.

with the rebels to overthrow the president. On February 18, 1912 Huerta forced the resignation of Madero and his vice president. Two days later he had them murdered. Thus the revolution marched on.[56] Following the usurpation by Huerta, Mexico found itself in another near decade of turmoil during which various insurgent groups began to appear throughout Mexico.

Among the leaders of these insurgent groups were Emiliano Zapata and Francisco "Pancho" Villa, two of the most popular revolutionary figures and by far the most commonly portrayed in the arts and film. Both Villa and Zapata initially helped politician Venustiano Carranza in his war against Huerta. However, both men became embittered toward Carranza, arguing that : "[h]e pretends to be the genuine representative of the Great Masses of the People, and we have seen, he not only tramples on each and every revolutionary principle, but harms with an equal despotism, the most precious rights and the most respectable liberties of man and society."[57] By this time, however, Carranza was well positioned to take the presidency. Carranza used the powers of his office to send Villa and Zapata on the retreat but he was eventually betrayed and killed by one of his Generals, Alvaro Obregón, when he tried to instill a puppet president as his successor.

With the notable exception of Obregón's assassination, the two decades of relative peace following his presidency resulted in a cultural renaissance, a product of the myth of *la Revolución,* during which Mexico came to terms with

[56] *Ibid*., 48.
[57] *Ibid.*, 53-4.

not only its place in the world, but, more importantly what it meant to be Mexican. Under Díaz, Mexican nationalism was an ideology that he and the *científicos* constructed themselves. During his regime, Mexico sought to emulate Europeans and shunned their contemporary indigenous and mestizo populations, instead looking to its creole population as representative of Mexico. As a result little care or attention was paid to the indigenous population, and often they suffered so that a small percentage could flourish.

During Obregón's administration, a number of projects were either created or began to flourish given the more stable political conditions. Many of these projects revolved around the idea that Mexico needed to truly 'join the modern world'. Mexico needed to unify a peasant population that was disparate in not only culture, but often times by language as well. The myth of *la Revolución* was very effective in uniting the country behind revolutionary ideas which were presented as being by the people for the people. Surprisingly, this process began under the Huerta administration due largely in part to the efforts of Manuel Gamio, a Columbia University educated Mexican anthropologist, who argued "that Mexico needed a nationality based on ethnic, linguistic, and cultural unity."[58] As a result of *Indigenismo*, the belief that a country needs to embrace and enfranchise their indigenous population, Gamio strongly believed that it was necessary to incorporate the indigenous population, into 'mainstream' Mexican society. Thus the DA (Dirección de

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[58] Alexander S. Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico*, (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2004), 7.

Antropología) was created with the ultimate goal of "incorporating Mexico's Indians into the national life and increasing their affinity for the nation. Gamio thus sought to understand the differences principally in order to eliminate them."[59] In this way, Gamio began the first ethnographic studies undertaken in Mexico. Additionally, *Indigenismo* resulted in a cultural movement which aimed to influence the population, in hopes that they would adopt these ideals, through cultural productions such as novels, music, the murals, film, and the calendars. Books like the famous *El Indio,* by Gregorio López in 1935, told the often unheard stories of indigenous populations deep in the countryside. Indigenous lives were often changed dramatically by the revolution whether they wanted to participate or not. Such works not only informed the general population about the plight of the indigenous, but encouraged national sentiment towards the aide of these disenfranchised people.

Alexander S. Dawson argues that *Indigenistas* believed an education that focused on immersing indigenous students in modern civilization and that operated "as a modern, secularized version of the sixteenth-century missionary project" was the best way to unify Mexico.[60] These projects focused on teaching Spanish and instilling national pride, seeing this as the quickest route to incorporating and homogenizing Mexico's Indians.[61] As stated in the introduction, this was more in hopes of creating a contributing

[59] *Ibid*., 8.
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] *Ibid.* 21.

work force rather than providing indigenous students with the opportunity to attain an elite career. Furthermore, *Indigenistas* believed that, by mixing the 'Indian race' into the greater mestizo population the 'negative' traits of the indigenous population would give way to the more 'beneficial' traits of the mestizo/white race. From this belief, the Secretaría de Educacion Publica (SEP), was founded by Vasconcelos in 1921.

According to Manuel Gamio, the SEP created rural schools for the indigenous and mixed-race peasantry, "to teach these creatures how to live" in hopes of unifying Mexico under a single cultural identity.[62] As explained by Rebecca Earle, the SEP subsequently established the so-called "…Cultural Missions, which sent teachers to isolated villages bearing a gospel of hygiene, athletics, and socialism. In 1926, the Casa del Estudiante Indígena was founded in Mexico City to demonstrate the educability of Mexico's indigenous population."[63] Due to the failing of rural schools to attain/retain students, the SEP introduced a program in 1925 in which Indian students would attend Casa del Estudiante Indígena in Mexico City in hopes of becoming 'fully modernized' or in other words 'Mexicanized.'[64] In cases where students did not readily volunteer, they were sometimes violently "coaxed" into attending the schools where they were closely monitored for fear they would escape. [65]

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[62] Earle. *The Return of the Native*, 188.
[63] *Ibid.*, 188.
[64] Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico*, 22.
[65] *Ibid.*, 28.

Many pointed to high test scores and the technical prowess of the students as evidence of the equality and potential of the Indigenous Mexican people. Rather than creating future teachers who would return to their native rural homes to aid in the assimilation of the Indigenous people, the Casa del Estudiante Indígena instead discouraged students from returning home by instilling in them disdain for the rural lifestyle they had come from and complete contempt for life among native populations.[66] This resulted in the schools closing in 1932. The SEP then decided to send teachers out in the country to live among the indigenous people and teach them there. This approach was met with mixed results; sometimes the teacher experienced great success and on other occasions they were chastised, assaulted, or on rare occasions killed by the indigenous people. [67]

Arguably Mexico's greatest contribution to the art world, the muralist movement began when Vasconcelos invited artist to paint enormous works with Mexican themes on the walls, inside and out, of various national buildings.[68] Perhaps, unsurprisingly, much of this art presented indigenous/mestizo revolutionaries fighting against Porfirian or distinctly non-indigenous forces. We see through art an attempt to unify Mexico through a shared indigenous heritage as well as through the depiction of *La Revolución* presented as a shared struggle among and for these same people.

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[66] *Ibid.*,
[67] Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 51.
[68] Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 75.

While muralists such as Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, inspired by the *voceros de la Revolución*, created grand portraits of revolution and Mexican nationalism through complex and sometimes abstract compositions, there was a parallel movement that was far more available. [69] The calendar chromos were accessible not only in terms of where they could be seen, but in the way they presented particular points of view. While the work of the muralist resides in the realm of high art and was often only viewed by those with access to government buildings or by those who resided in the city, the art of commercial endeavors permeated all classes of Mexico and often found its way into the countryside as well. The cultural renaissance that included the muralist, music, film, parades, theater etc., had the tendency to Mexicanize all material and as a result tried to use art in a way that was beneficial to promoting a unified Mexican nation.

Calendars have always had a major role in the daily lives of the people of Mexico. Both the Aztec and the Maya are famous for their intricate and religiously imbued calendars. According to the Museo Soumaya, these astronomical codices were followed in the colonial era and onward with almanacs or

> Small printed booklets with predictions, news, current events, caricatures and literary entertainment. During the twentieth century, an era obsessed with technological and material progress, calendars became a vehicle for modern publicity to promote brands and products.[70]

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[69] *Ibid.*, 28.
[70] Museo Soumaya. *La Patria Portatil*, 11.

The early calendars, more often than not, imported art from Europe and the United States rather than commissioning original artwork.

In the early 1920s, Vasconcelos hired the photographer Luis Marqúez, along with other artists and intellectuals and tasked them with traveling to Mexico's interior with the purpose of better understanding the country's cultural variety and richness.[71] Besides learning more about the various cultures throughout Mexico, the SEP sought to to collect cultural artifacts such as *huipiles*, a traditional indigenous tunic, as well as photographs of the people in their everyday lives. This project was undertaken not only to document Mexico's rich culture, but to share these findings with the people of Mexico and the world in hopes of bringing attention to the indigenous people and Mexico as a whole. Often referred to as the 'Folklore Project,' this undertaking served as the foundation and inspiration for much of the artwork, films, and calendars produced during the cultural renaissance.

The photographs and documentation of Marqúez and his colleagues coincided with a massive shift in consumer advertising during which companies began to promote their products using uniquely Mexican imagery. As a result, many of these photographs served as the inspiration for much of the artwork that came to be used in commercial advertisement as shown in figure 1.[72] As can been seen in the side by side comparison (Figure 1), the painted form was sometimes a close representation of the photograph. In this

[71] *Ibid*., 25.
[72] *Ibid.*, 25.

way, the cultural project of Vasconcelos and the SEP intelligentsia reached a far greater audience through commercial advertising campaigns which co-opted these images in an effort to entice Mexican consumers to purchase their products.

Though a similar type of art had been used before to sell products it was not until the 1930s that La Enseñanza, a lithographic company founded in 1922, began to print material with more Mexican themes. It is no coincidence that the boom in calendar sales coincided with the growth of consumer culture in Mexico. In fact, it was "at the request of the tobacco and beer companies" that they began using art of this kind rather than using chromos they had previously imported from the United States.[73] Furthermore, this same time period saw an increase in another consumer product, film. The films also dealt with revolutionary and post-revolutionary themes and as such are a foundational part of the cultural renaissance. [74] Films such as *Tizoc* and *Abandoned Women* explore the role of indigenous people and women in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Mexico. [75] In these films, and many others filmmakers wrestled with ideas regarding race, gender, and the tenuous relationship between modernity and tradition. The same ideas and themes appear in the calendar art. According to Zuzana M. Pick, this

[73] *Ibid.*, 19.
[74] Villalba and Monsiváis, *Mexican Calendar Girls 25*.
[75] *Tizoc*, depicts a forbidden relationship between and indigenous man, played by Pedro Infante, and a white Mexican girl, played by Maria Felix. *Abandoned Women*, is the story of shame and love. A single mother, played by Dolores del Rió, living in Mexico City works as a prostitute to pay for her son's education.

"highlights the convergence between film and other visual media, including photography, painting, and graphic arts [displaying how] the visual technologies in the twentieth century [had a mediating role] in the forging of the collective memories of the nation." [76]

Villialba and Monsivá further corroborate this link arguing that "as the fashions and hairstyles of popular movie stars changed, so did those of the calendar girls. One can frequently gauge the approximate year of a calendar by these details."[77] This connection is further established in *La Patria Portál,* where the authors argue that the "relation between films and Mexican calendar art was intense" with the calendars oftentimes advertising these films and/or recreating particular scenes.[78]

Due to low literacy rates, it is unlikely that poems, novels, and other textual media, as argued by Benedict Anderson and Thomas Benjamin, played any significant role in the overall cultivation of identity amongst the majority population of Mexico.[79] As a result, it seems fair to assert that popular images, such as the calendars or film played a far more significant role in shaping ideas about what it meant to be Mexican. Additionally, it is just as likely that these companies and the artists they hired to create these calendars were responding to the zeitgeist of the post-revolutionary period. In other words, it is very likely that the artworks created were influenced both by public taste

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[76] Zuzana M. Pick, *Constructing the Image of the Mexican Revolution: Cinema and the Archive*, (Austin: U of Texas, 2010), 1.
[77] Villalba and Monsiváis, *Mexican Calendar Girls* 21.
[78] Museo Soumaya. *La Patria Portatil*, 45.
[79] John Mraz, *Looking For Mexico*(Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 2.

and ideas regarding Mexicanness, race, and the revolution. However, it must be noted that many of these images were likely influenced and/or created directly by the government projects and those privy to ideas regarding nationalism as presented in textual sources such as *La Raza Cósmica*. But by the same token, many of those who viewed these images had no knowledge of such theories to contextualize the images and thus were left to interpret the images on their own terms.

These prints not only helped to sell cigarettes, beers, tires, tequila, appliances, and other consumer items, but according to John Mraz, "the dream of an idealized and utopian Mexico, a fantasy-filled illustration of its myths, legends and desires."[80] We note this type of idealization in the imaginings of pre-Columbian society (particularly the Mexica), beautiful and sexualized 'indigenous' women, as well as fierce yet traditional *soldaderas* of the revolution. Printing throughout Mexico experienced a massive surge of indigenous figures appearing on stamps, coins, and other sites of official iconography which following the revolution. During the Porfirian era and before these images had been completely missing from such productions.[81] In fact, the number of pre-conquest images appearing on stamps and other printed materials increased steadily between 1900 and 1940.[82]

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[80] *Ibid*., 11.
[81] Earle. *The Return of the Native*, 199.
[82] Indigenismo and its portrayal in calendar art as well as the regularity with which it appeared in such art will be discussed further in the following chapter.

As pointed out by the Museo Soumaya exhibit guide, combined with the movement of the cultural renaissance "which was unleashed by the revolution and films from the Golden Age, the calendar chromos are an extensive catalogue of the variations and representations that 20th Century-Mexicans conceived of regarding [Mexican] national identity."[83] Similarly these artworks are a testament to Mexico's taste, ideals, and consumption in the post-revolutionary period. By examining calendar artworks it is be possible to ascertain certain attitudes and ideologies which were popular among the producers and artist of the calendars with regards to specific aspects of Mexican culture, ideology, and values

[83] Museo Soumaya. *La Patria Portatil*, 11.

Figure 1: Image showing how photographs taken by the Folklore project served as the inspiration for much of the artworks used for calendars, sometimes almost creating an exact illustrated recreation.

CHAPTER 2: INDIGENISMO AND THE CALENDARS: HERITAGE AND WHITENESS

In the same way that art from ancient Rome or Renaissance Europe informs us about the culture's sensibilities towards fashion, beauty, sexuality, and aesthetics in general, we can view the calendar art from Mexico as a reflection of popular taste and consumer desires among the population. This art falls in the category of popular art, similar to the way that Norman Rockwell's works would for the 20th century United States, it has the unique quality of hinting at how the everyday Mexican citizen saw the world. This is not only because much of the 'high-art,' such as the murals and other nationally sponsored projects, were not available but because the common people preferred film posters and "artificial flowers, and the blonde pinups in Coca-Cola advertisements."[84] According to Mary Coffey, commercial products like these "reflect what Barta calls the amalgamation of "'true 'popular culture' [and] trans-nationalizing . . . mass media that characterizes Mexican modernity."[85]

Besides particular taste or aesthetic preference, the calendars are part of a larger visual language that finds its roots in the conceptualization of *la Revolución,* which became the basis for political power in the post-revolutionary period. [86] Along with the murals and films the calendars help make up a pervasive visual language that expressed the ideals of the

[84] Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture*,. 5.
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 73.

intelligentsia. Although films, calendars, and murals (to a lesser extent) were created for the masses, they were produced by the government officials, muralist, writers, and other artist therefore primarily reflect their views. This cultural renaissance, as it is sometimes called, was carefully cultivated by those who subscribed to the ideals of *la Revolución* a particular view of the revolution. This view not only legitimized their rise to power but also sought to unify Mexico in hopes of retaining this power. What is presented in this vision of the revolution is a Mexico which has always stood united, an obvious fallacy considering the reality of the situation which was outlined in Chapter 1. By uniting Mexicans in the past and the present, the intelligentsia aimed to forge a new Mexico according to their image.

Clearly the *Indigenista* movement was integral to the creation of Mexican national identity in the post-revolutionary state. Through SEP projects and various art forms, indigeneity was cemented as a foundational building block of what it meant, and means, to be Mexican. This chapter explores a particular type of indigeneity that was presented in this period and explores what it reveals to us about Mexican attitudes towards indigenous populations, sexuality, and whiteness. These questions will be inspected through the lens of various calendar themes which present visual imaginings of not only ancient 'Mexicans,' but also contemporary and revolutionary indigenous peoples in various activities and locations across the Mexican landscape.

ANCIENT MEXICO

Even during the Porfirian era, pre-Columbian Mexico had been a source of great pride for the Mexican people.This is clearly seen in Mexico's participation during the World's Fair in France. Under Díaz, the government presented an exhibit at the World's Fair that highlighted Mexico's indigenous heritage through a building that displayed pre-Columbian architecture, but emulated European sensibilities in its interior.[87] While the pagan attributes of the culture were often downplayed, Aztec architectural and cultural were often pointed to as evidence of a formidable pedigree and heritage for the Mexican populace.

However, the Díaz regime attempted to distance themselves and the country, on the national stage, from the 'Indianness' of this pedigree and instead attempted to adopt European culture, style and mannerisms. Not until the revolution did the mestizo nature of the Mexican populace begin to take center stage. While attitudes towards 'Indianness' changed dramatically during this time, certain stigmas still remained.

Emphasis on Mexico's indigenous heritage had improved since the Porfirian era, it was still a sense pride that lay in the past. Vasconcelos, one of the staunchest supporters of the 'Mestizo Nation,' still believed that the

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[87] This idea of the modern and traditional existing in one entity is a theme that occurs often throughout Mexico's history and will be revisited in chapter 3.
Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 245.

modern Indians were a "problem" and that the best course of action was miscegenation that would create a "new race fashioned out of the treasures of the previous ones."[88] Much of the calendar art depicting pre-Columbian indigenous people focuses on the Aztec civilization, which has been the primary source of government approved Mexican heritage as far back as Benito Juarez. As a result many of the images from the 30s and 40s depict scenes from Aztec myths/origin stories (Fig.1, Fig.2) or particular scenes from the Conquest (Fig.3, Fig.4). In total, the number of calendar pieces which depict Aztec or pre-Colombian characters represent around 40, nearly half of the works considered for this study.

In Figure 1, we see the construction of the *Piedra de Sol*, or Aztec Calendar Stone, in the background while the foreground shows two priest/nobles examining a codex scroll. Figure 2 illustrates the origin myth of the founding of Tenochtitlan, with the arrival of the Mexica into the valley of Mexico. They were told by the gods that their new homeland would be marked by an eagle on a cactus with a snake in its mouth. This image is on the Mexican flag today. Once again this demonstrates the importance of this ancient heritage to the Mexican people. Figure 3 depicts a Spanish attack on Tenochtitlan while an Aztec eagle knight defends a mother and child, a fairly unique image among calendar art for reasons that will be discussed in the following section. On these sample images it is immediately clear; the ancient

[88]Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution* , 92.

Mexicans are presented as dark skinned individuals with predominantly indigenous features. Figure 4 shows Cortés meeting with what is most likely a Tlaxcalan ruler and burning his ships upon landing in Mexico, preventing any hope of returning to Cuba.

Phenotypically, the Aztec are presented in a way that attempts to be true to life, to use the parlance of the time, they look 'Indian.' Additionally the Aztec are shown as heroic and valiant, industrious and educated. They are depicted in a way that demonstrates pride rather than disdain. While the Spanish are also there, they are not the sole focus of the artwork. The Spanish are present as a part of the story of the Aztecs. Of all the calendar artworks considered for this study, characters who can be distinguished as specifically Spanish appear in only 5 pieces, 3 of which depict Cortés specifically always as secondary to the indigenous people.

The depiction of ancient indigenous people and the popularity and quantity of such images suggest that the producers of these calendars sought to build a connection between their consumers and their pre-Columbian heritage. One calendar image in particular illustrates the degree to which the makers of these calendars believed that the Aztec/Pre-Columbians were the foundational people of Mexico. Figure 5 depicts an Aztec ruler whose tilma, or robe, seamlessly transitions from blue into the green of the Mexican flag. In this piece the connection between the modern Mexican nation and the Ancient Mexicans is clearly displayed, showing that the two are intertwined.

WHITENESS AND SEXUALIZATION

While emphasis on their ancient heritage seems apparent, the relationship between post-revolutionary Mexicans and contemporary indigenous people was far different. While Vasconcelos and other indigenistas believed it was important to integrate indigenous people into the nascent Mexican nation, they viewed miscegenation and the education of the indigenous population as essential. While not as culturally oppressive as Indian schools in the United States, which aimed to kill the Indian to save the man, it was still the SEP's policy to try and 'de-Indianize' the indigenous population to a certain degree.[89] This attempt to whiten indigenous people can be clearly seen through various forms of art and popular media throughout Mexico during this time. In films, indigenous people were often portrayed by white actors such as Pedro Infante in the celebrated film *Tizoc.* As can be seen in figure 6, some attempt was made to portray the title character as indigenous, through makeup and a haircut, but the reality remains that it is a white actor who still appears as a white man 'playing Indian.' This film, which was released in 1957, follows a trend that began much earlier in the 30s and 40s which can clearly be seen through calendar artworks depicting indigenous peoples, especially women, as whitened.

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[89] David H. DeJong, *Promises of the Past: A History of Indian Education in the United States*, (Golden: North America Press, 1993), 107.

Although indigenous males were often portrayed with the features of an indigenous person, indigenous women were depicted as 'white' women in indigenous dress and almost always in some sexualized manner. The following images are a sample from 18 chromos which portray indigenous women in this way. In figure 7, a nude "indigenous" woman, who could easily pass for an American calendar girl in a different context, is in the arms of an Aztec statue in the form of the god Xochipilli (based on the actual statue which is housed in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City). Figure 8 depicts a pre-Columbian woman in a large headdress wearing little else. The woman appears as predominantly white in not only her skin tone but her facial features; this is even more apparent when contrasted with the indigenous male who is not only much darker but whose facial structure is far more true to life.

Similarly, Figure 9 portrays a highly sexualized indigenous women who appears to be white in all but what little clothing she wears. Surrounding the woman are a number of indigenous men who, like in figure 8, not only have much darker skin but whose facial features line up with those of an indigenous person. Figure 10 again depicts a nearly nude indigenous woman with predominantly white features, although this time with a darker complexion, though still not as dark as her male counterparts in the previous two images. Calendar makers believed that indigenous women were not widely considered to be attractive and they shared this sentiment with their

consumers. It is interesting to note that this same type of whitening was not applied to the indigenous men, but this makes sense when you consider that these highly sexualized images were most likely meant for a heterosexual adult male audience.

While similar images of mestizo or white women exist in the calendar art, by far it is indigenous women who are portrayed most sexually. This may be due to what Adriana Zavala argues, stating "Indian and indigenous culture were feminized [in art] in order to reassert the racial order and patriarchal privilege of Mexico's bourgeois reformers after the chaos of the revolution."[90] This argument holds even greater weight when you consider that the vast majority of indigenous themed calendar art primarily depicts indigenous women. It also clearly point to the intended audience, heterosexual males, when considered along with the excluded calendar art which was primarily American style pin-up girls.

While these images (and the apparent whiteness of the women) were surely influenced by the popularity of pin-up girls in the United States, this influence does not seem to be enough to explain the staggering number of images that whiten female indigenous subjects. Only a few images depict indigenous women as anything more than a sexual object, as most depict them in some form of undress often placing them in suggestive positions and poses, which mirror similar images from the U.S. The exception is Figure 3, from the

[90]Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture*, 11.

previous section which depicts an attack on Tenochtitlan; in this image an indigenous women actually appears indigenous (at least compared to fig.7-10), but she is cast in the role of a terrified mother rather than a sexualied object of desire. While more calendar images exist of indigenous women in less suggestive or sexually explicit poses, this is the only one in which the artist painted the woman as truly indigenous and it comes as no surprise that this occurs in a work which does not sexualize the woman in any manner but rather focuses on her motherhood.

When looking at calendars with indigenous themes the zeitgeist of the time in regards to depicting indigenous women is reflected back. What seems to shine through is an understanding, appreciation, and pride for their shared indigenous heritage, a sense of connection to their ancient Mexican ancestors. However, what is also made clear is the desire to whiten or "mestizoize" at least in the case of native woman.

One major instance in the history of Mexico in which 'true Indian beauty' was lauded and celebrated as something to be proud of.In 1921 the magazine *El Universal* began a contest entitled the *"India Bonita"*. In figure 11 we see the winner of the contest on the cover of *El Universal*. The contest was presented as a beauty pageant exclusively for indigenous women. The contest required that women not only appear indigenous as far as their phenotype,

but demanded that the women wear traditional native attire even if the women did not wear this type of clothing in their everyday lives. [91]

While by our modern standards this type of contest seems not only vain, and superficial, but racist as well, for the time this type of thinking in regards to indigenous women was fairly progressive in comparison to the previous era. However, this contest reveals that the prevailing attitudes of Mexicans in regards to indigenous beauty were still very much entrenched in the idea that indigenous people were in some ways lesser or that they were a novelty. This contest did not present these women as beautiful in their own right, but rather as caricatures of themselves being made to present and represent indigenous beauty in a manner that *El Universal* and its partners, who happened to all be men, including the judges, deemed appropriate. Zavala states that "As demonstrated by *El Universal's* "India Bonita" contest, in the post-revolutionary era 'ideal Mexican womanhood' was equated not with women's emancipation but with ideal female Indianness."[92] This not only shows the limited space in which real indigenous women could be deemed beautiful but highlights the importance of the way they are presented in the calendar artworks.

While the calendar arts were clearly influenced by the pin-up girl craze of the United States, the appearance of these women alludes to the aesthetic

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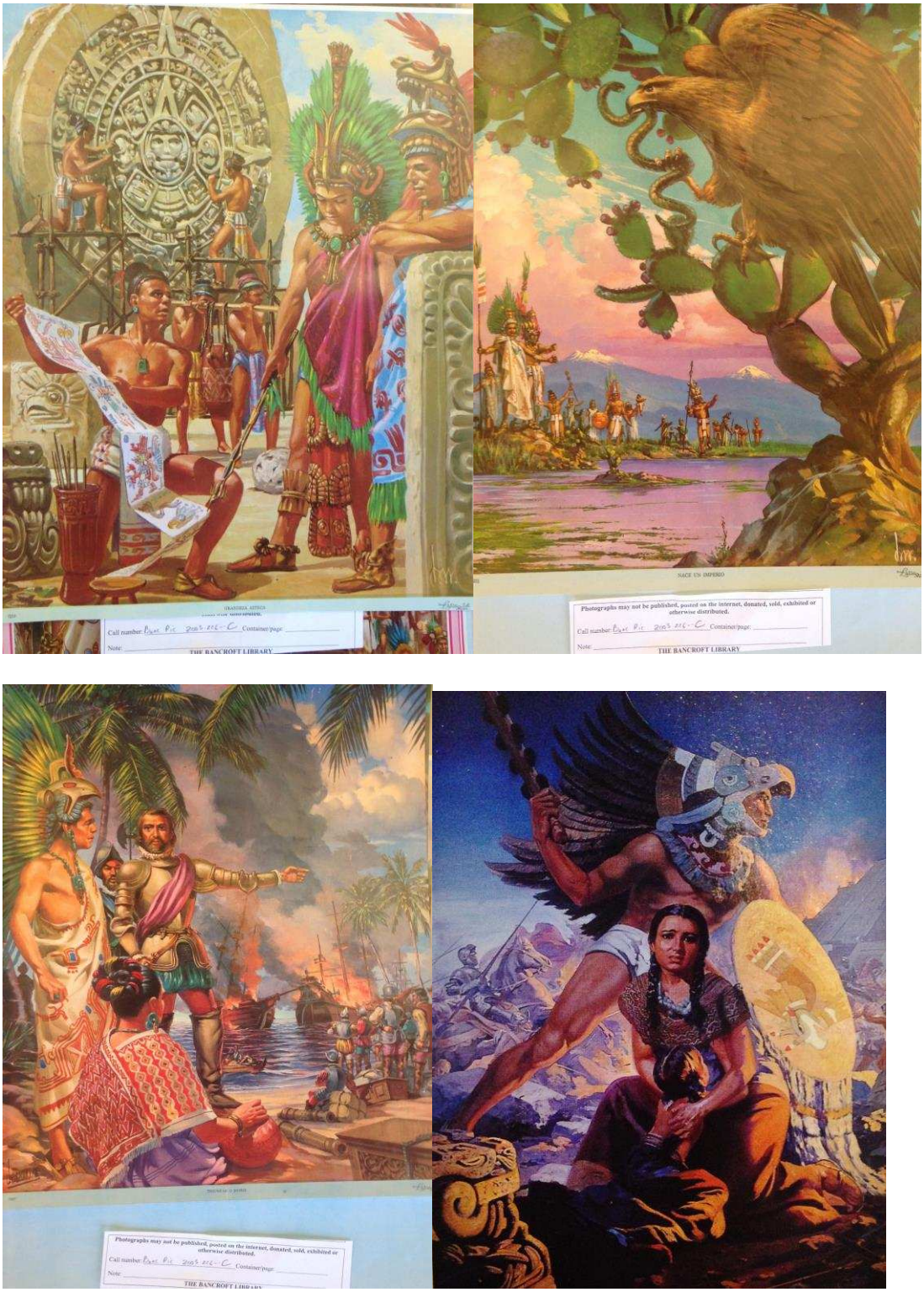
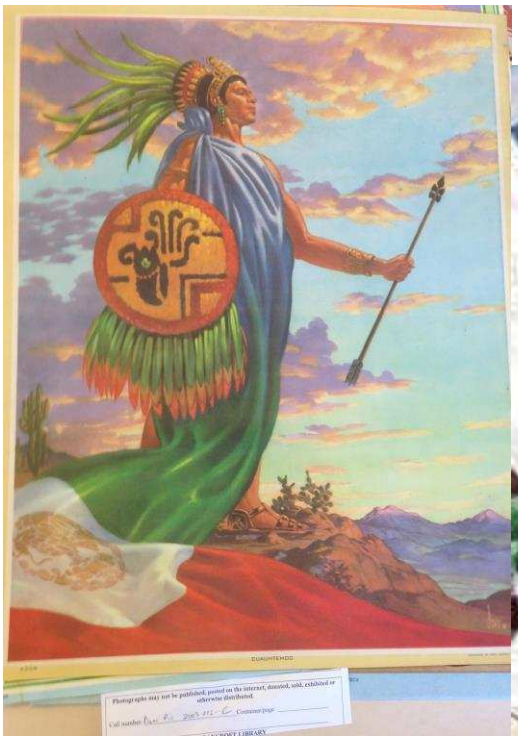
[91] Stephanie Jo Smith, *Gender and the Mexican Revolution: Yucatán Women and the Realities of Patriarchy*, (Durham: University of North Carolina, 2009), 174.

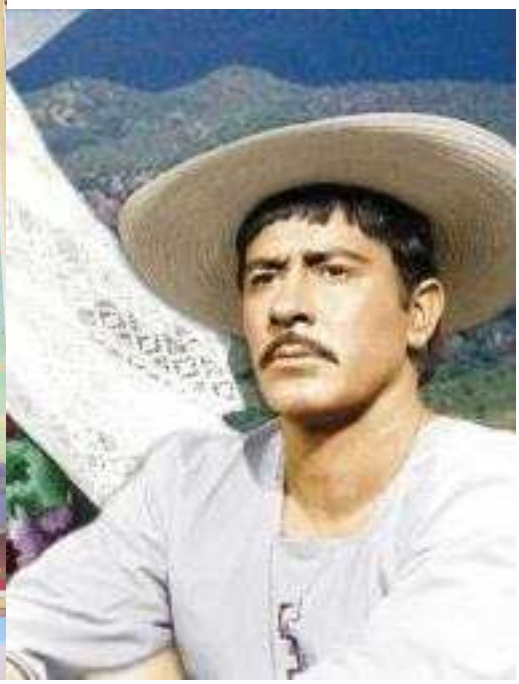
[92] Adriana Zavala, *Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition: Women Gender and Representation in Mexican Art and Culture*, (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010), 10.

preferences of the day which seem to favor more hispanized/white features. With depictions of males that does not appear to be the case. At first glance indigenous men appear sexualized as well, with their rippling muscles and loincloths, but they in fact appear to be indigenous. Rather than sexualized, it seems more likely that the men were portrayed this way to appear heroic or super hero-esque in the same way that Conan the Barbarian or He-man were portrayed in American pop-culture. In this light, the indigenous men's appearance and state of dress has more to do with representing strength and ability as a warrior rather than opposed to eliciting feelings of lust or arousal. This also explains why they were not as whitened as their female counterparts, because they were not intended to be objects of sexual desire. As it is most likely that heterosexual men were the primary consumers of these calendars, it would not have made sense, for the time, to produce calendars with homo-erotic themes. It was less important that they appeared white, since they were not supposed to be seen as objects of desire but rather, as examples of ideal masculinity and strength. In a society that correlated some level of whiteness with beauty and status, it was far more important that anything attempting to be sexually arousing or suggestive represent these same aesthetic ideals, and thus we see, as shown in these calendar arts, that indigenous women were often presented as fairly 'white' in comparison to the male counterparts and their modern day counterparts seen in the *India Bonita* contest.



Clockwise from top left: Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4.





Left (Figure 5): Image depicting Indigenous ruler wearing a tilma that transitions into the Mexican flag suggesting that Mexico's indigenous history is inseparable from its modern day incarnation.

Right (Figure 6): Still from the film *Tizoc*, showing Pedro Infante in brown face, which suggest the nation's transforming views on indigeneity but betraying their continued resistance to fully embrace indigenous people.

Clockwise from top left: Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 9, and Figure 10.

Figure 11: Winner of *El Universal's* India Bonita contest, María Bibiana Uribe, thought to be the prime example of Indigenous female beauty.

CHAPTER 3: SOLDADERAS AND THE MODERN WOMAN

The heroes of the Revolution are often thought of as being primarily male: Pancho Villa, Francisco Madero, Emiliano Zapata, among others. However, women all throughout Mexico aided these men in achieving their goals. Not only did women act as nursemaids or tend to farms and livestock while their husbands, sons, and fathers were off fighting but also they themselves picked up arms. It was not uncommon for women to dress up as men and join in combat fighting alongside soldier. Women's roles in the Revolution were so pervasive that their image has become part of the mythology of the Revolution. Julia Tuñón Pablos points out that these *Soldaderas*

> (a term that includes both women soldiers and camp followers) are key figures in the collective memory and they, like other subjects, have been stereotyped. The image of the *soldadera* has been consistent with the traditional archetypes of abnegation and sweetness, although a sexual overlay has been added.[93]

Women's roles in the revolution were widespread and integral to the way that the revolution played out, but how they are portrayed and remembered in the post-revolutionary period follows the agenda of the patriarchal forces of the emerging nation. Zavala argues that in the same way indigenous people were designated as "bearers of an "Other" culture/Race or, as the proletarianized class," women were designated as "bearers of social

[93] Julia Tuñón, *Women in Mexico: A Past Unveiled*, (Austin: University of Texas, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1999), 86.

modernization and, conversely, as bearers of tradition."[94] Those in power sought to promote the feminine image as one whose place was in the home, and who espoused traditional Mexican values. This was in direct response to the rise in women who began adopting European/American styles of dress, flapper fashion, and who sought to leave the house and pursue careers and independence. Zavala suggest that when:

> working-class, dark-skinned young women, in other words, women whose origins were phenotypically closer to Mexico's Indians, began to cut their hair, alarm bells rang. The reason being that not just gender but seemingly inalterable class and race hierarchies were under assault as well.[95]

However, Anne Rubenstein argues that in the post-revolutionary period, no one culture won or lost. Instead these cultures, indigenous, Mexican, and American/European cultures, were in conflict.[96] As a result individual Mexicans, especially those whose racial origins were ambiguous, were able to move between and among the various culture in accordance with what was most beneficial for given the situation. Thus, the picture of modernization and cultural appropriation in post-Revolutionary Mexico becomes murky.

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[94] Zavala, *Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition*, 10.
[95] *Ibid*., 6.
[96] Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico*, (Durham: Duke UP, 1998), 6.

SOLDADERAS

During the revolution, women fulfilled many roles and supported all factions involved in the struggle. Women during the revolution were a varied and multi-talented group with responsibilities ranging from cooking, tending the ill and injured, as well as active combat roles.[97] Often times, women during the revolution were seen as little more than a support system for the fighting men, often referred to as camp followers. Not until the post-revolutionary period did the image of the *soldadera* begin to gain traction as part of the greater myth of *la Revolución*. However, it is important to keep in mind that these popular stereotypes reinforce the idea of a monolithic "revolutionary woman" who did little more than offer support to her "Juan." Additionally, it is important not to view these women only through a heroic lens, which essentializes them to the role of a cross-dressing soldier. Pablos argues that while "some women dressed as men so they could take part in the struggle; some were troop commanders; but most had a less prominent, although not necessarily less important role."[98]

In the post-revolutionary period, the image of the *soldadera* became popular in various media forms such as film, advertising, and calendars, with 16 of the calendar chromos depicting these fighting women. However, while these images celebrate the women fighters, it did not necessarily portray them in a way that was true to life. For women to engage in the fighting, it was

[97] Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, 86-7.
[98] *Ibid*.

necessary for them to hide their true identity and join the ranks through disguise. By dressing as men women were able to fight alongside men, and although they were sometimes allowed to do so as women, this was not necessarily common. In popular imagery, *soldaderas* were typically portrayed as wearing traditional and very conservative Mexican dresses. This is in stark contrast to the images of indigenous females discussed in the previous chapter which were often depicted in some state of undress and often presented in a more sexualized manner.

While these images of the *soldaderas* could be considered traditional or modest compared with those of the indigenous women, it is important to note the fact that they are touting guns and ammunition, riding horses, and sometimes smoking cigarettes. All these actions are well outside the realm of what would be expected of a pre-revolutionary or post-revolutionary woman; however, with the popularity of this revolutionary character, the producers of the calendars had little choice but to feature them on their products. [99] As a result, if they were to stay true to the myth of the *soldadera,* they could not avoid showing these women in such a manner. To downplay this fact, they sanitized the female soldiers by giving them perfectly clean traditional dresses and hairstyles, with perfect complexions to negate the masculine activities they were undertaking.

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[99] Zavala, *Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition*, 86.

This is important when considering young woman in the post-revolutionary period saw the character of the *soldadera* as a source of inspiration, proving that woman could do what men did and deserved greater independence and suffrage. [100] Tuñón argues that "[in] pre- and post-revolutionary Mexico, pictorial expression was integral to the consolidation and negotiation of political and cultural power, social differentiation, incorporation, and exclusion." [101] Thus it is well within the realm of possibility to argue that the producers of these calendars downplayed their masculinity not only to make them more appealing to a male audience, but to discourage any thoughts of young women attempting to break into the 'man's world'.

This attitude towards strong or independent women can also be seen in the film *La Cucarach* which although released in 1958 (long after the heyday of the calendar chromos), reflects the visual culture that had been established nearly two decades before. In this film a *soldadera*, played by María Felix, is rebuffed by the object of her desire, a colonel, who finds her repugnant due to her love of the soldier's life. Instead, he falls for a modest widow, played by Delores Del Río, who exemplifies the 'ideal Mexican woman' exuding "gentleness, good manners, and devotion." [102] In the end Felix's character becomes pregnant and as a result transforms into reserved "dress- wearing

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[100] Zavala, *Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition*, 15.
[101] Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, 15.
[102] Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History* (Austin: University of Texas, 1990.), 99.

camp follower." [103] As Elizabeth Salas clearly shows in her work this film, and the countless like it, prescribe a role for woman in which those who are brash, bold, and independent usually end up in a less than ideal situation, where as those who uphold traditional values often find love and happiness through being a wife and mother.

Among the calendars considered for this study, there are none which depict *soldaderas* in a sexual manner similar to that of the indigenous women. In fact, these women are often shown as heroic and determined and always conservatively dressed and very white.

In the first image (Fig.1) a modestly dressed woman holding a rifle with a bandolier across her chest, is surrounded by other revolutionaries celebrating with music and drink. Somewhat surprisingly she is holding a cigarette in her hand which suggest that this calendar may have been an ad for cigarettes, hoping to encourage young women to smoke. This is not only a marker of modernity but of a growing consumer culture which is infringing on traditional values. In Figure 2 a group of four women, all dressed traditionally, sneak up on an enemy encampment, and all appear very white, having light complexion and fairly light hair. Figure 3 also shows a group of women sneaking up on an enemy encampment, all dressed in traditional and modest clothing, but this time they are, phenotypically, more mestizo. The third image (Fig. 4) shows a woman on horseback, sitting side saddle due to her dress, holding a rifle and leading a group of revolutionaries.

[103] *Ibid.*, *100*.

These images very likely empowered women across Mexico, the producers of these images attempted to promote the idea that women were meant to uphold traditional values and represent the importance of their maternal role. By portraying these revolutionary women as traditional, artists help enforce the prevailing political and social sentiment that women should not challenge the status quo. These artworks suggest that women who used the revolution as a means to try and enfranchise their gender and gain more independence were misguided, as the women who participated in the revolution (according to these calendars) were in fact traditional themselves, to a degree.

Nation builders, according to Zavala, saw "pictorial expression [as] integral to the consolidation and negotiation of political and cultural power, social differentiation, incorporation, and exclusion."[104] In other words, imagery was a useful tool in helping guide the citizenry of Mexico into thinking in ways that were conducive to the intelligentsia's political and social ends. While it is unlikely that calendar artists were the ones who conceptualized this type of representation, they were likely following the example set by state sponsored artist and artworks. The artwork featuring *soldaderas* although popular, likely had the unwanted effect of encouraging women to pursue greater liberties. According to Tuñón, the revolution "advanced feminism beyond the nineteenth-century proposals, since feminists

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[104] *Ibid.*

no longer considered themselves confined to the home and began to delve into politics, where they also hoped to use their clout through the ballot box."[105]

THE MODERN WOMAN

Following the revolution, Mexico found itself far behind the developed world, and sought to industrialize and modernize itself as quickly as possible in order to compete more effectively on a global scale. One result of this rush for modernization was the rise of consumer culture, which is clearly reflected in the calendar arts which were a vehicle for companies to advertise and promote their products. Another result of modernization was the push by women for more independence and suffrage, and a growing number of women abandoned traditional Mexican and Catholic values in favor of more American and European ideologies. These women were referred to as *pelonas* (or baldies), which Zavala defines as:

> girls who adopted… adrogynous fashions, shed the corset, smoked, learned to drive, participated in sports, cut her hair, and in so doing insisted on access to more intellectually challenging pursuits such as education, or among the working class, a more visible place in the urban work force.[106]

This type of behavior in young women, while originally seen as a sign of modernity, quickly caused feelings of social anxiety among the intelligentsia. While those in power wanted to modernize quickly, but by the same token,

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[105] Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, 94.
[106] Zavala, *Becoming Modern*, *Becoming Tradition*, 7.

they believed that modernizing too much in regards to gender, class, and race presented the risk of destroying Mexico's cultural integrity, stability, and possibly their autonomy as a nation.[107] This massive shift in women's attitudes towards independence and modernity, unsurprisingly, coincided with a decades' long push for suffrage.[108] Instilled with a new sense of independence following the revolution, women and their supporters began to advocate for the vote.[109] However, it wasn't until 1947 that women in Mexico were finally given the right to vote.

The modern woman most often present in the calendar art is not the *pelona*, but the woman of the house. A woman that, while modern in dress and fashion to an extent, still retains her role as a mother, wife, and homemaker. This is directly in line with other post-revolutionary imagery which often portrayed a traditional (e.g. the *soldaderas*) and indigenous woman (as shown in the previous chapter) as opposed to the 'emancipated woman' who began to enter the workforce and challenge ideas of what it meant to be a woman. This phenomena of the traditional being inside the modern is a common theme throughout this period in Mexico's history. Perhaps one of the most famous examples is the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. This museum which is home to countless priceless artifacts from the pre-Columbian era, such as the Aztec calendar stone as well as artifacts from the Olmec, Maya etc. creates a narrative which the intelligentsia sees as the complete and official

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[107] *Ibid.*, 9.
[108] *Ibid.*, 54.
[109] Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, 93-5

history of the origin of Mexican people.[110] All these artifacts are housed inside a modern architectural marvel. [111] Similarly the modern woman is often portrayed as being modern in fashion and taste (exterior), while retaining core values (interior). She is often most prominently displayed in calendar images that depict the products they are advertising in the images themselves. Oftentimes these products are not cigarettes, tires or things of that nature, but rather products which would appeal to a homemaker such as soda, canned goods, etc.

While many of the other calendars discussed in this study displayed advertisements on the actual calendar placard above, below, or around the rip-able date sheet, the following images are a sampling from 23 calendars that depict the advertised products in the artwork itself. It makes sense that the 'modern woman' would be depicted alongside these products as the advent of consumer culture in Mexico was a major aspect of modernization in general. While all the chromos were the result of a growing consumer culture in Mexico, as they were primarily utilized by advertisers, the following images take this a step further. The first image (Fig. 5), depicts what appears to be a mestizo couple from the country (again the woman seems much more "whitened" than the male) enjoying a bottle of Cuervo tequila, and playing music. Both the male and female characters embody the ideal mestizo citizen as both are wearing traditional Mexican clothing. Figure 6 shows a similarly

[110] Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture*, 139.
[111] *Ibid.*, 138.

dressed couple, ostensibly from the country, buying a bottle of Cuervo tequila from a street merchant, once again the woman appears whiter than her male counterpart. The following image (Fig. 7) portrays a *Tehuana* woman (although she appears more like a white woman in Tehuantepec clothing) in the arms of a *charro* who is holding a bottle of Carta Blanca beer. According to the Museo Soumaya figures 5-7, which were produced in the 50s:

> chronicle… the tastes and styles of that period, illustrating the changes in the marketing image of a product that had become a national symbol: arising from rural environments and from the past of revolution, bottled [alcohol] came to form part of the modern youths celebration.[112]

Figure 8 is much different from the previous images as it depicts a very modern, urban, cosmopolitan, looking family at the dinner table enjoying a serving of the apple flavored soda Sidral-Mundet. This image is particularly interesting in the sense that it shows a family in the home as opposed to a couple enjoying themselves. Similar to advertisements today, the images promoting alcohol depict attractive people partying or celebrating while the image of the family is promoting a more family friendly product.

In a time when the post-revolutionary government was trying to prevent the oncoming tide of feminine independence and suffrage, these images reflect the prevailing notions of the time that women should return or remain in a more traditional female role. As mentioned at the start of this

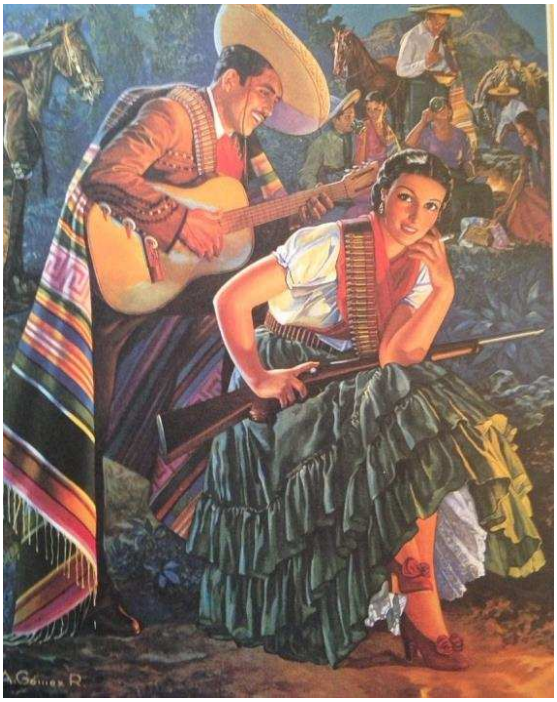
[112] Museo Soumaya. *La Patria Portatil*, 43.

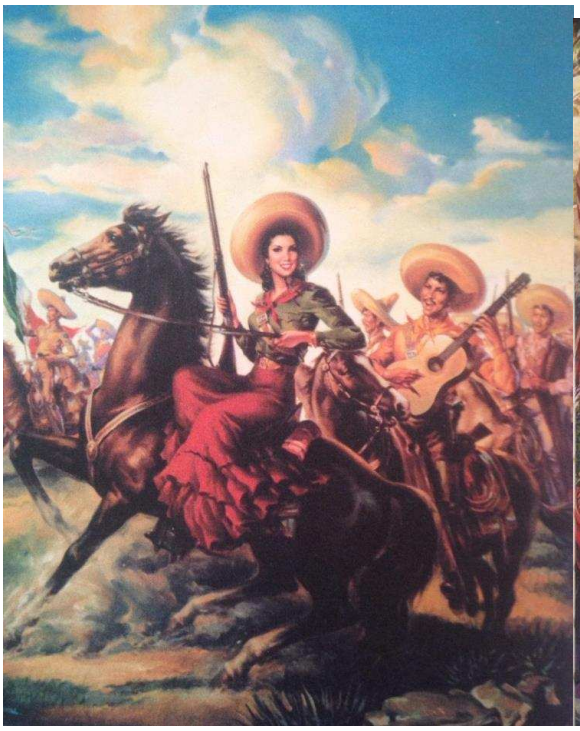
chapter, the feminine was often represented by the indigenous, which reinforced the existing relationship between not only white/mestizo and indigenous but also between male and female. This relationship was thought to be integral to the health and stability of the nascent post-revolutionary Mexican nation. What is suggested by these images, as well as those not shown here but which are similar, is that the progressive, independent, modern, flapper girl of post-revolutionary Mexico was not widely embraced and that companies felt that more traditionally Mexican women (and men) would attract more consumers. Even Figure 8 showing a very modern, white-looking family seems to highlight the ideal family and the maternal nature of the woman, presenting her as modern yet traditional.

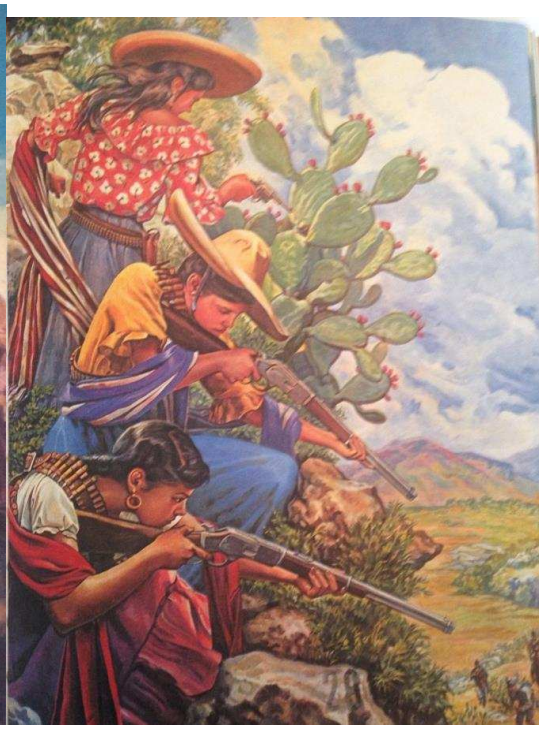
These calendar images suggest that women's role in post-revolutionary Mexico was to act as "bearers of social modernization and, conversely, as bearers of tradition."[113] However, it is important to note that there were many other calendar images which depicted women in a pin-up or sexualized manner, but these images were not considered for this study. Additionally, artwork which depicts women in near nude states was typically reserved for pre-Columbian indigenous women, with more white/mestizo looking woman usually being more modest, although still provocative. This can been seen in images which depict American style pin-up girls, who are never presented fully nude. This further supports the argument that indigenous woman were

[113] Zavala, *Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition*, 10.

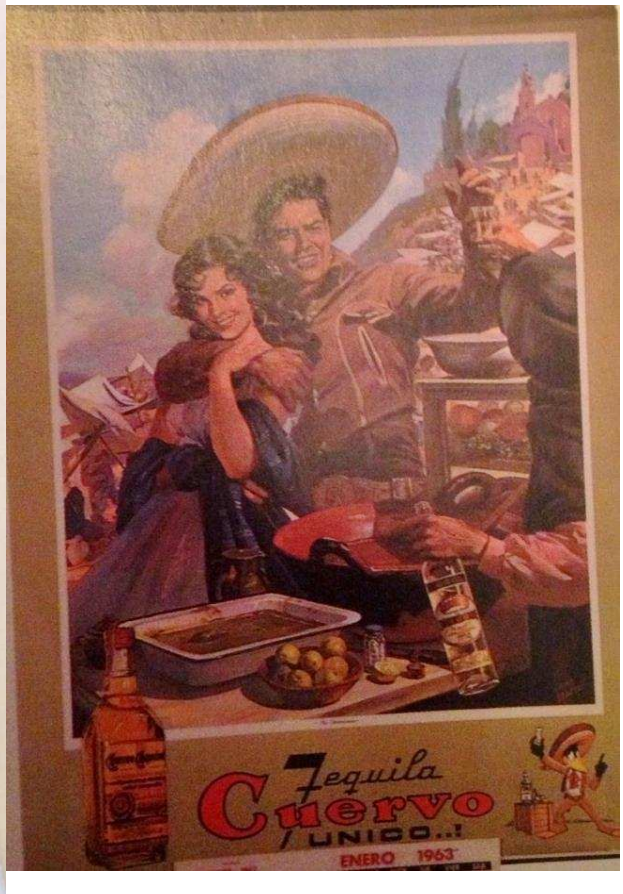
sexual objects while modern mestizo and white women were seen as maternal, holders of tradition, even when modern or fighting battles.







From Top Left: Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4.



Top Left: Figure 5

Top Right: Figure 6

Top: Figure 7

Bottom: Figure 8

CONCLUSION

This study has ventured to discover what popular art, in the form of calendars, reveals about the images that influenced the Mexican populace in the post-revolutionary period, especially with regards to indigeneity/whiteness and the role women played in both the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods. The calendar arts themselves according to the Museo Soumaya developed alongside the movement of cultural nationalism, SEP education projects, and murals, as well as films from the Golden Age: "the calendar chromos are an extensive catalogue of the variations and representations that 20th Century Mexicans conceived of regarding [Mexican] national identity."[114] As part of the cultural renaissance, the calendar images, along with films, film posters, murals, and other visual media, helped to reaffirm prevailing views of the time regarding nationhood, gender, and race. And while it is difficult to say to what extent these images influenced or were influenced by the common person, what it does suggest is that these images represent the idealized history of Mexico, in pre-Colombian , Revolutionary, and post-Revolutionary times as imagined by their creators. Due to their widespread popularity, these calendars may hint at what many Mexican citizens interpreted as what it meant to be Mexican, or at the very least present an idealized example of what it meant to be Mexican.

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[114] Museo Soumaya. *La Patria Portatil*, 11.

Based on the number of calendars as well as artworks and projects put forth by the muralist and the SEP depicting indigenous pre-Hispanic peoples and their apparent popularity, there was emphasis on the heritage of the Mexica, and other pre-Columbian Mexican societies. Despite the emphasis on a shared heritage it is also clear that contemporary indigenous people of the time were not given the same honor. Instead the contemporary indigenous people were almost absent from the calendar art and popular media except when being essentialized into an 'Indian' as seen in the example of the India Bonita or the film *Tizoc*. This lines up perfectly with prevailing ideas among the intelligentsia which sought to bring contemporary indigenous people into the fold, but only after a process of education and acculturation.

The post-revolutionary era in Mexico was a tumultuous time in the country's history, when rival factions jockeyed for power, and a war-weary populace came to terms with a Mexico entering the modern era. The intelligentsia saw salvation for their nation through constructing a national identity, which required the negotiation of Mexico's indigeneity and the place of women in this ever changing post-revolutionary landscape. Through SEP projects and the efforts of artists like Diego Rivera, the intelligentsia attempted to cultivate a particular type of Mexican nationalism that focused on *indigenismo* and *mestizaje.* Zavala argues that through education projects and government sponsored murals and museums, the movements/ideologies of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* were primarily concerned with eliminating the "perceived ,

destabilizing diversity of Mexico's population, with only the symbolically useful aspects of pre-Conquest and contemporary indigenous culture remaining to give authenticity to Mexican identity."[115] Furthermore, through the portrayal of women in state sponsored art as well as popular art, the powers that be sought to address the ever growing number of independent young women who sought to break free from traditional roles and began to 'infiltrate' the workplace. To try to stymie this movement government supported cultural productions emphasized tradition in a world where such was fast becoming obsolete.

Though the place of indigenous peoples, both past and present, had improved since the days of Porfirio Díaz, whiteness was still seen as preferable to indigeneity. Those in power sought to 'mix away' the 'Indianess' of the Mexican people, hoping that (what they deemed) the more dominant and beneficial traits of 'whiteness' would overpower the less desirable traits of the indigenous. The importance of whiteness is confirmed in the calendar artworks which depict indigenous women, meant to be objects of sexual desire, as having skin and physical features more typical of a white person. Men are noticeably left out of this type of sexualization due to traditional ideas about masculinity and sexuality.

Additionally the calendars provide a view into what people thought about women or may have come to believe during the revolution and their role in the post-revolutionary world. Women were given their due, to a

[115] Zavala, *Becoming Modern*, *Becoming Tradition*, 9.

certain extent, for their participation in the revolution. Much of the calendar art depicted women as active fighters in the revolution. The amount of revolutionary themed art pieces that depict revolutionary female soldiers suggest that the *soldadera* was a popular trope among Mexican policy makers in the post-revolutionary period, particularly in the 1950's when women were attempting to gain the right to vote.

Furthermore the calendars reveal what Mexicans in the post-revolutionary period believed was the proper role for women in the rapidly changing Mexican landscape. The calendar arts depicted women in a way that highlighted traditional Mexican values. Additionally they promoted the idea that women belonged in the home, a direct response to the rising number of women who sought an independent life outside of the home.

While it is fair to assume that these calendars are representative of popular opinions of the time, or at least what the producers and advertisers thought, it is important to note that rather than prescribe a particular sense of nationality or attitudes toward race, and gender, this calendar work is a reflection of the attitudes of the consumers they were trying to attract. In other words, these calendars' themes and the way they depict indigenous people, and women is representative of the prevailing attitudes of the day.

Much in the same way that the art of Norman Rockwell captured the values and visions of the nation that the common American citizen held to be true in the 20th century, the Mexican calendar arts captured a nostalgia for a

Mexico that may not have ever really existed but which played an important role in fabricating an official mythology for the nation. Looking at figure 1, one of Rockwell's most popular pieces entitled *Freedom From Want*, it is an image which depicts what many Americans of the time would have consider an ideal Thanksgiving dinner with a happy family surrounding a cornucopia of food. And in the same way that this artwork does not represent the reality of life for all Americans, but rather what many would have considered ideal, the calendars discussed in this paper reveal what advertiser and business owners considered to be desirable or ideal.

While the calendar artwork represents the attitudes of those who produced them, it is difficult to say whether or not the majority of Mexicans agreed. Due to the fact that they were primarily commercial products meant to advertise cigarettes, beer, soda, and other consumer products it makes perfect sense that companies would want to have images presented that would appeal to the widest audience possible. This also explains why the chromos are so clean and aesthetic pleasing, they wanted images that made people feel nostalgic for a time that never actually existed. As well as this it had the added benefit of providing an image that was pleasing to look at. If the images re-created the realities of the revolution or of pre-Columbian Mexico, in all its blood and grime, no one would have purchased them. By doing this the producers not only sold more calendars and consequently reached more

people, but they perpetuated the myth of *la Revolución* which presented the revolution as united, neat, and tidy.

In the same way modern-day corporations like Coke and McDonald's try to create commercials and advertisements that have mass appeal, or on a global scale appeal to particular nations, cultures, etc. The companies that advertised using these calendars wanted images that would be easily accepted and even desired. Conversely, the artist and calendar companies who produced this artwork wanted to create images that advertisers would want to buy and thus produced images they knew would appeal to the population at large. In conclusion, these calendar images represent a visual language regarding Mexican identity that was pervasive and persuasive. This study has merely scratched the surface of what these calendars, or popular art in general could reveal about post-revolutionary Mexico. It is my hope that future scholars will further explore these rich resources and uncover further the ways that Mexico evolved and developed during the post-revolutionary period.

Figure 1: Norman Rockwell's *Freedom From Want.*

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