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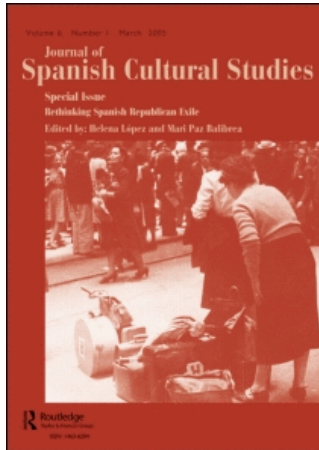
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THE RELIABILITY OF THE RUINS

“Other strangers had been there, wondering like ourselves. Their names were written on the walls.” (Stephens 293)

Introduction

In 1822, Henry Berthout, who translated into English the Spanish report on the ancient city explored in 1787 near Palenque in New Spain, introduced his European readers to the problem contained in the book he was publishing:

As attempts have so frequently been made to deceive the world, by announcing and publishing the details of discoveries which never effected, and the description of places, having no existence but in the writer's brain; the editor conceives himself imperiously called upon to offer some prefatory words, explanatory of the manner in which the literary documents, comprised in this volume, together with its pictorial embellishments, came into his possession (qtd. in del Rio VII)

If in the seventeenth century the torrent of new discoveries of marvels and curiosities from the living natural world that inhabited the reports of correspondents from the New World lowered the scientific threshold of credibility (Daston and Park 219), late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century accounts of vestiges of ancient societies from Spanish America were received with skepticism. Since the love of wonder provoked by reports of lost cities found in the jungle fed many historical and anthropological frauds even in the late nineteenth century (Charnay 201), travelers and correspondents had to develop various strategies to prove their reliability. The credibility of these accounts was judged in the academies—in antiquarian societies, for example—on criteria derived from legal doctrine and practice: at stake was not only what and who to believe, but also why (Daston and Park; Schnapp; Mora “Historias de Mármol”; Basseur de Bourbon “Recherches”).

This article explores the question of evidence, especially what late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century scholars considered to be reliable evidence and what they defined as the necessary credentials for someone to become a reliable witness and reporter of the ruins found at different sites across the Spanish empire. Peter Burke has recently recalled that, like the humanist movement out of which it developed, antiquarianism was originally text-centered but, in the course of time, the antiquaries became more and more interested in the material culture of the past (cf. Momigliano). In his article Burke defined three antiquities: classical, Christian, and barbarian. In the case of the so-called barbarian antiquity, Burke underlined that “the relative paucity of texts, compared to those surviving from the two other antiquities,

encouraged the students of barbarian antiquity to pay more attention to material objects” (Burke 283). Antiquarians—Burke remembered—moved back and forth as they wished between literary and non-literary evidence.

This essay focuses on ruins from classical and “barbarian” antiquity found in the eighteenth century in the domains of the House of the Bourbons in Naples, Spain, and Spanish America. Although by “barbarian” Burke meant those “ancestral” peoples that had inhabited Europe from ancient times to the early Middle Ages, the term can also apply to antiquities found in the Americas, where the exceptional nature of the architecture was rendered more remote by the lack of decipherable texts, in contrast to the architectural orders defined in Europe. By exploring the excavations in Palenque and Herculaneum/Pompeii, the surveys in Ingapirca (today Ecuador), and Mérida (Spain), I attempt to analyze the emergence of the modern scientific archaeological object and to describe the crucial role of engineering in the creation of that object, with special attention to the tradition of military engineering and surveying. In this frame the archaeological object appears connected to the bureaucratic system of colonial administration, shaped by instructions on what and how to observe that were generated in the metropolis. Spanish military engineers and the members of the clergy represented the reliable individuals who, thanks to their training in practical geometry and mathematics, could observe, describe and report on the objects to be studied by European antiquaries and cosmographers. Plans, drawings, measurements, and manuals made and used by the engineers created “portable antiquities” (see Petrie; cf. the “immutable mobiles” of Latour) that shaped the coming into being of the archaeological object.

Engineers of the past

In 1738 the King of the Two Sicilies, Charles VII of Bourbon, ordered the excavation of the “Grottoes or Ruins of an ancient temple” found in Portici, close to Naples. Although the excavations at Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae that followed would be described as the first modern archaeological project organized and patronized by the State (Rossignani; Alcina Franch “Arqueólogos o anticuarios”), all three started as isolated attempts to find “some sculptures, marble pieces or worthy Stones” as per the order of the king. As the excavations resulted in the discovery of “three whole cities,” they adopted the form of a complete project, which included the installation of a museum and publication (Represa Fernández, “El Real Museo”; Mora, “Historias de mármol”). As it had happened in the field of antiquaries, the “fragments” came to light by accident, in the course of digging foundations, fortresses, wells, and buildings (Burke 275). This accidental way of recovering the objects would, however, create a formative relationship between engineers and the modern discipline of archaeology, in such a way that the definition of the “scientific archaeological object” would thereafter rely upon a set of practices derived not from the art historical or the antiquarian traditions but from surveyors’ and engineers’ training (cf. Mora, “Historias de mármol”; Coye; Podgorny “Medien der Archäologie,” “Prueba asesinada”).

The royal command of 1738 assigned responsibility for the excavation to Roque Joaquín de Alcubierre (Zaragoza, 1702; Naples, 1780): he was to waste no time in

unsuitable excavations, report on the findings to the King, and abandon the work if it appeared to be unfruitful (Fernández Murga). Alcubierre belonged to the very hierarchic and disciplined Spanish corps of engineers, organized by Philip V of Spain in 1711 (Capel; Capel, Sánchez, and Moncada). Military engineers in Spain were regularly employed as technicians for military and civil works, which required training in the art of drawing façades, ground plans, and elevations, as well as in arithmetic and practical geometry. In the Academy of Barcelona, for example, engineers were trained in general arithmetic, practical and speculative geometry, calculus of the size of plane figures and bodies, plane table and leveling theory, drawing, and the plotting of plans and profiles (Capel 124). The different trends in the engineers' education emphasized either the importance of mathematics as theoretical education or of drawing as practical knowledge (Capel, ch. 4). Alcubierre and his superiors in the Spanish court of Naples, for example, had been trained in the tradition that gave more relevance to mathematics as the basis of the engineer's practice.

What was first described as a mere "temple" was soon recognized as a fragment of the ruins of a buried city, located beneath twenty meters of volcanic lava and the village of Resina. Excavating in such conditions seemed to require the expertise and practices of military engineers. In response to Johann Joachim Winckelmann's famous dismissal of Alcubierre's expertise,² his contemporaries underlined the skills required by such an enterprise: "D. Rocco Alcubierre does not pretend to be an antiquarian. His profession is military architecture; and if he was appointed for directing the excavations, it was because he knew how to carry out an underground excavation and how to draw up the plans of the buildings to be found" (Zarrilli 147). In fact, the engineers calculated the costs and the volume of sediment to be removed, in order to evaluate the possibility of undertaking an opencast mining excavation. This would have meant the employment of a larger labour force, several expropriations, and the destruction of fertile land, with all costs to be assumed by the Neapolitan Crown. Instead of a quarry, the excavation took the shape of an underground mine. Through tunnels and pits the sculptures and findings were raised to the surface in a kind of public works project done by labourers and prisoners under the control of a military engineer.

The so-called "Grottoes" shaped a web of corridors that tended to follow the lines of the ancient walls of the city of Herculaneum. These tunnels, which ran in the underground of Resina, averaged about two meters high and one meter wide, and awakened the city inhabitants' fears that their houses and farms might collapse. The engineers not only had to measure the size of the ruins in a tunnel, but also to calculate how many pillars were needed to support the roof and to avoid the collapse of both the mine and the city. Thus the pits shaped both the view of the ruins and the work of the engineers. Alcubierre reported on the difficulties of taking measurements of the ruins in the tunnels, remarking that he had to calculate their size with a compass, because there was not enough space to use the plane table, the favorite instrument of the practical engineer (Fernández Murga, "Carlos III"; Plo y Camin).

The work done in Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiae by the military engineers Pierre Bardet (1742–1744), Karl Weber (1750–1763), and Francisco de La Vega (1764–1804) displays the development of excavation methods as the mere search for antiquities fell under the influence of a growing interest in architecture (Repra Fernández, "Primeras excavaciones"; Allroggen-Bedel, "Dokumente"; Parslow;

Pagano; Pannuti). As Parslow has shown, Weber proposed to excavate Herculaneum following the lines of the streets and actively pursued investigations of the urban fabric as a whole. His interests extended to both public and private architecture, and he demonstrated a concern for the context of his discoveries: where the objects were displayed and how they were meant to be viewed in antiquity, how individual spaces functioned, and what architectural clues could be read to determine that function (Parslow 4). However, as Mora has underlined, one cannot describe the Bourbon excavations as the emergence of a new method for the study of Antiquity (“Historias de mármol” 60). These methodic excavations—far away from antiquarians’ debates—were not part of a method of a new archaeological science, but common techniques and practices of engineers, architects, topographers, and mining technicians.

Antiquaries, travelers from abroad, and those who competed with the engineers for the direction of the excavations criticized the Bourbon enterprise on the basis of which observations and reproductions were most important and should be allowed both in the Grottoes and in the museum (Grell 94–102; Allroggen-Bedel, “Tanucci”; Forcellino). Yet even those who criticized its methods did not propose an alternative way of digging out antiquities. Moreover, the disputes were linked either to court intrigues and the control of the site, or to disappointed visitors, who could not understand the ancient city by walking through random dark tunnels. The travelers wanted the city free of both lava and the royal controls which—in order to assure their priority in publishing the by-products of the excavations—prohibited taking plans and notes at the sites and in the museum.

Throughout the Spanish Empire—both in Europe and America—military engineers, architects and professionals trained in mathematics and drawing in the military academies were often called upon to observe and work on the technical description and recovery of the ruins of ancient times. Because of their work as directors of construction, they were also engaged in the discovery of buried antiquities (Mora, “Historias de mármol” 90). In 1747 the Marquis of Ensenada, Minister of Fernando VI, brother of Charles VII, sent Lieutenant of Engineers Carlos Luxán to Málaga, accompanied by “artifices, lapidarios y arquitectos” in order to investigate the ruins of an ancient building found in the town of Cártama. The engineer Sebastián Feringán Cortés—in charge of the construction of the new Arsenal in Cartagena in the 1750s—found coins and a keel during the excavations undertaken for that work. Once this finding was reported to the Marquis of Ensenada, the Minister responded by issuing a royal command to the head of the Navy in Cartagena with instructions on how to recover those pieces and on the best means for sending them to Madrid.

The first excavations and works in the Roman city of Mérida in Extremadura, Spain, were undertaken in 1791–1794 by Manuel de Villena Moziño, a priest who had originally been a drawing teacher at the naval schools of Cádiz and Cartagena,³ and who was thus well acquainted with mathematical treatises and the art of delineation and drawing. Following a royal command issued by Charles IV, Villena went to Mérida, where he drew a series of plans and profiles as he performed partial excavations of some monuments. He also suggested to the King that the excavation of the ruins be carried out on a larger scale:

Promete el terreno encontrarse cumpliendo un padron que tanto honor haze à nuestra España; el que concidero digno [de] que el Magnanimo Spirito de Su

Magestad que Dios guarde, mande desenterrar tan precioso monumento; para que las Estrañas Naciones, que nos concid{i} eran dormidos en las Siencias, vean que tenemos un Monarcha, que nos solo nos despierta, mueve, ilumina y instruye en ellas: fudandonos Academias entodas Artes, y Ciencias; sino tambien que hace que [se] vean los [monumentos] que tantos siglos yasen sepultados. (qtd. in Canto 126)

As Villena pointed out, at stake were the “visibility” and the material appropriation of something that had been hidden from sight and ascribed to the realm of myth. Spanish engineers and surveyors were in charge of inscribing the ruins and the antiquities of the past in the realm of science, and in order to do so, they appealed to their practical knowledge and expertise. At the same time, the ruins were seen through the lens of classical descriptions and modern printed images that shaped the sight of the visitor, in much the same way as they did in Rome (Berland; Wendorf; Lanciani; Mora, “Coleccionismo”). As the description of the city found near Palenque will show, the military engineers’ perspective was also determined by architectural iconography and their training in the rules for ordering space.

Herculaneum of the New World

Alors sortiront de ces nouvelles *Pyramides*, de ces autres *Herculanum*, des œuvres qui démontreront que l’Amérique n’a rien à envier au reste de la terre (qtd. in Dupaix 1)

On the other side of the Atlantic, the work of military engineers focused on the survey and quantification of New World natural resources, on coastal and land topography, and on drawing up river courses and other communication routes. The engineers also worked on the state of the extant fortifications and on the planning of potential new civil and military constructions. Other required knowledge, as evidenced by their reports, included the evaluation of the climate of the territories to be explored, and the analysis of social relationships and economic activities found in the different settlements of native population, as well as the plotting of plans and maps.⁴

In this context of exploration of the colonial domains, the ruins of a deserted city close to the village of Palenque came to the attention of Spanish administrators. In the mid-nineteenth century, Brasseur de Bourbourg collected various manuscript accounts about the site in Mexico (“Recherches” 3–5); from these it appears that the first reports on the ruins were made by Antonio de Solís, parish priest of Tumbala, and his relatives, the Ordóñez y Aguiar brothers, who first inspected the stone buildings in 1746. This family kept up its interest in the ruins for many decades until the first official expedition was sent out to the site in 1785 (Lothrop 54).

Palenque, situated eighty leagues to the east of Ciudad Real and connected with Mexico City by bad roads and fragile bridges, was a place of considerable importance, as all the Guatemalan imports passed through it (Dupaix 13). In 1807 what was known as Palenque Nuevo was a parish of the Chiapas bishopric, under the

administration of Ciudad Real's intendancy and part of Guatemala.⁵ The population of Palenque consisted of the "república de los indígenas, de la gente blanca y de los pardos" (Dupaix 13). But in the mid-nineteenth century, the consolidation of the British settlers in Belize diverted trade and destroyed Palenque's commerce. This decline, aggravated by a decrease in population due to cholera, would cause modern Palenque or "Palenque Nuevo" to become part of the ruins. It would also lose its name, which was transferred to the unnamed Casas Viejas, located eight miles away (Plate 1).⁶

When the first expedition was dispatched in 1785 to observe the ruins of the ancient city, the undertaking was commissioned to the Italian Architect of Royal Works Antonio Bernasconi (Ballesteros Gaibrois; Castañeda Paganini). He was to look for the causes of the destruction of the city and to investigate its age and its founders. Bernasconi had to find out to which architectural order the ruins could be attributed, i.e., which nation and time period the structures observed in the ruined city belonged to, something that could be confirmed through the inspection of the clothes, shoes, and head ornaments of the statues. These instructions clearly followed the tradition of iconographic analysis set by European antiquaries, who devoted much work to the details connected with the apparel of people represented in the statues, medals, and other vestiges of classical antiquity (Burke; Momigliano; Kaufmann). In this sense the antiquaries' practices were shaping the emergence of a code meant to decipher evidence found in regions outside of Europe.

The instructions insisted on the necessity of accurately drawing at least one statue of each class, and on a lengthy process of examination:

examinar a fondo las lapidas, inscripciones, motes, y escudos, para discernir si tienen caracteres, geroglíficos, divisas, simbolos, o cualquier cosa de las muchas que pertenecen al blason, y copiar todas las piezas que de este orden puedan ilustrar mas en lo que se quiere averiguar; sacando también de los sitios en que se hallen alguna o algunas de aquellas que parezcan mas demostrativas del objeto, a fin de desvestirlas con cuidado, hasta hacerlas facilmente portátiles, y tratar de su remisión a esta Capital defendiendolas antes con cueros, y las demas cosas que aseguren el que no se rompan las piedras, o laceren sus divisas (qtd. in Castañeda Paganini 30–1)

Hieroglyphs—another privileged object of the antiquarians' practice—were the signs that would translate the ruins into the realm of literacy, even when their meaning was unknown (cf. Brasseur de Bourbourg "S'il existe"; Lenoir in Dupaix). In this way, the stones found near Palenque would speak for themselves and act as witness of their own past. However, as the instructions made clear, stones could only be considered evidence when they were transported and examined by other experts.

Explorers were also instructed to observe potential functional divisions of space in order to find out the activities of the former inhabitants of the ruined city. Bernasconi was to inspect the buildings, looking for traces of any other activity beyond mere lodging. The comparison with Pompeii was inevitable: captain Bernasconi had to look for volcanic activity in the surrounding area as one of the potential causes for the city's abandonment. The plan of the city would include the dimensions of the biggest buildings, the locations of the fountains and streets, and

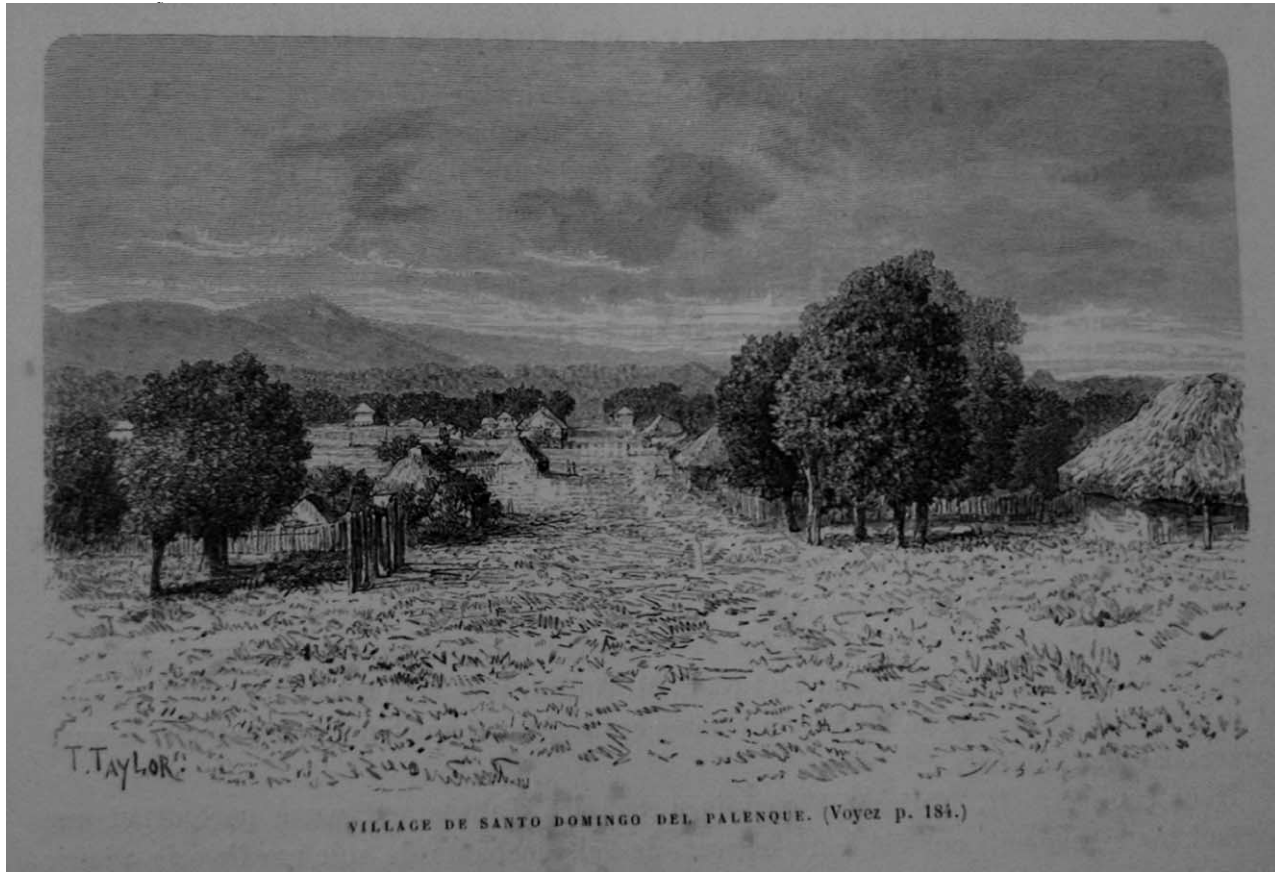


PLATE 1. Santo Domingo de Palenque by mid-nineteenth century (Charnay). Courtesy of the Museo de La Plata Library

the perspective of the palaces and most important houses. Inside the buildings he was to observe the different kinds of rooms and other elements that revealed the power and magnificence of their owners:

si fuese necesario alguna excavación, de no mayor monta, con el fin tambien de descubrir si los cimientos de los edificios son proporcionados (segun la solidez, o no solidez del terreno) al grueso, y altura de las paredes, y conocer asi si los fundadores tuvieron o no ignorancia de la Arquitectura civil, y sus reglas en aquella antigua epoca. (qtd. in Castañeda Paganini 32–3)

Bernasconi was to take the works of reference with him, and they, in turn, would explain the rules of architecture of different historical nations in order to delineate a national and temporal network of historical classification within which the ruins might fit. The history of Palenque, if the procedures succeeded, could be inscribed in a universal code for analyzing images and buildings, one that had been established in Europe for the study of classical architecture. Thus the unsolved problems linked to the interpretation of ancient images in classical iconography were translated to the study of the New World images and cryptic signs.

Bernasconi presented the plans, perspectives, and a map, which, together with his report on the ruins, were sent to the court in Madrid. He could not ascribe the architecture of the ruins to any of the ancient or modern orders he knew. But he ventured to point out that the vaults were shaped like Gothic arches, while the presence of doors and windows contrasted with the lack of all the other elements of the architecture of an ancient city. No signs of volcanic eruptions or violent destruction could be found. The city seemed to have been deserted by its inhabitants, leaving no traces of an explanation, which suggested a connection with the causes that destroyed Pompeii. Actually, the mere possibility of having discovered a city established by the Romans in the Americas and destroyed by the same causes that devastated Pompeii could be seen as the search for universality, not only in the forces that govern nature, but in those that govern history as well. Bernasconi's testimony, however, discounted the possibility of an ancient Roman settlement in America: the images represented in the statues, the art of construction, and the lack of order in the tracing of streets and blocks led him to conclude that the city had been founded by natives.

In Madrid the report was evaluated by Juan Bautista Muñoz,⁷ a cosmographer of the Indies who was collecting manuscripts for writing the history of the New World, and José Gálvez, former "visitador" of the Viceroyalty of Mexico. The ruins became "una demostración ocular de la veracidad de nuestros cronistas e historiadores primitivos," a discovery which could be added to the collected facts and documents needed for the writing of history (Muñoz, qtd. in Castañeda Paganini 42). Bernasconi's report was celebrated for destroying those exaggerated hopes awakened by the first news of the Palenque ruins. In fact, the architect's report reduced the whole issue to "reasonable terms," reinstating the limits of what could be expected to be found in the history of the Americas (Castañeda Paganini).

Muñoz, however, asked for further evidence in order to test some of Bernasconi's conclusions that he considered dubious; specifically, he wanted to examine pieces of the materials described in the report—bricks and pottery—in order to confirm if

bricks and stucco were used by the *Indios*, as Bernardino de Sahagún had noted. Muñoz also wanted to check the existence of some elements not mentioned in any chronicle prior to Bernasconi's report: the windows, the winding staircase, the arches and the Gothic vaults. Muñoz issued the following instructions for the collection of these materials and observations:

convendria se observe todo nuevamente, distinguiendo cuidadosamente entre puertas, nichos y ventanas, examinando asi lo que se halle de piedras, de silleria, como las que dice, de cal i canto y de mezcla; haciendo puntual descripción y dibujos de las figuras, los tamaños i cortes de piedras y ladrillos o adobes con particularidades en los llamados arcos y bóvedas. Y vengan juntamente pedazos de yeso, mezcla, estuco, ladrillos cocidos o crudos, ollas y otros cualesquiera utensilios o instrumentos que se hallen; haciendo excavaciones donde mejor pareciere (...) Que se embie figurado todo lo que trae este articulo (qtd. in Castañeda Paganini 43–4)

As Burke has suggested, artifacts and images were taken as evidence of “historical facts” (293). But the images also constituted a portable device for comparing facts collected in distant places and brought together in the cabinet of the Royal cosmographer. Thus, Muñoz compared the observations received from Guatemala with those provided by Charles Marie La Condamine (1701–1774) in his 1746–1748 report to the Berlin Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters on the ancient monuments of the viceroyalty of Peru. In the course of their geodetic survey in the region of Cuenca, La Condamine and his French colleague Pierre Bouguer (1698–1758) had visited Ingapirca, a site not far from Quito, in May 1739, producing a plan and an elevation of the ruins. La Condamine, a soldier trained as a surveyor and a cartographer, had recognized the difference between the verbal description left by the chroniclers and the carefully measured plans of standing remains:

All the authors who have written about South America and the conquest of the Spaniards in the New World give us a good idea of the different buildings constructed by the Incas, former kings of Peru (...) [they] have spoken on the basis on being eye witnesses, but they have not left us any plan, any exact description, which could give us a fair idea of any of these monuments. (La Condamine, translated by Barnes & Fleming)⁸

La Condamine did a survey rather than an excavation in order to produce a testimony of the past which could outlast the monument itself. Measurements and exact drawings were the best procedures not only for sending information to Europe, but also for assuring that antiquities would survive in perpetuity:

M. Bouguer and I took the principal measurements to make the plan of these Ruins. While constructing mine, I perceived that I was missing some of the dimensions. I returned a few days later to the site to take them, and to observe some directions with the compass. I also drew the appearance of the Castle from a point of view on the flat land, at the base of the platform on the North side. When I came to take my measurements, I saw that someone was working at the

demolition of what was best preserved there, to use the materials for a new building at the neighboring farm. One will not be surprised that there is so little regard for an ancient monument in a country where the Letters and Arts have made little progress, if one reflects that the same thing happens daily in Europe, even in those places where the Antiquities are the most respected (La Condamine translated by Barnes & Fleming)⁹

Muñoz's use of the plans and report in Madrid suggests that comparisons were being made on the basis of precise records and illustrations. His ordering more detailed observations and drawings can be seen as part of a search for an international pattern for the description of antiquities. All these discussions reflect, moreover, a shared preoccupation over the fragility of ruins threatened by natural forces, vandalism and ignorance. Even when antiquarians were willing to accept that stones and inscriptions were more reliable than texts, stone buildings appeared as endangered objects that needed to be translated into another substratum whether as real objects transported to a safer place, as images drawn on paper, or as casts and representative fragments (Mora, "Historias"; Momigliano). As future travelers would testify, the history of exploration of Palenque left fragments of this translation along routes that extended from the jungle to ports in the Caribbean, over transatlantic crossings, and throughout European and Latin American libraries, archives, and museums (Cabello Carro; García Sáiz; Jiménez Villalba; Lothrop). Statues or pieces removed from the ruins were abandoned at those points where the technology of transportation could not surpass natural obstacles, while manuscripts were kept unpublished and stored in repositories at the mercy of historical contingencies such as the death of those in charge of the collections or the political turbulence of early nineteenth century.

In fact, Bernasconi's death made it difficult to continue the work in Palenque, as it was not easy to find the proper expert (*sujeto idóneo*) to replace him. The engineers, who should have been put in charge of the mission, were assigned to other undertakings. Finally, Antonio del Río, Captain of the Royal Artillery Corps, was appointed:

ha manifestado hallarse pronto a emplear todo su cuidado en el mencionado reconocimiento y aplicar sus luces a formar la descripción y demás correspondiente en el término mejor que le sea posible, pues, confiesa no hallarse con todas las necesarias para hacerlo con la debida perfección como ajena a su principal instituto (cited in Castañeda Paganini 46)

In 1788 the notes taken by del Río were sent to Spain along with objects,¹⁰ fragments and images of the buildings made by a painter and corrected by the military engineer José de Sierra (Cabello Carro, "Coleccionismo americano"; Ballesteros Gaibrois, "El descubrimiento").¹¹

Antonio del Río worked in the town of Palenque in May 1787, with the help of sixty-nine Indians outfitted with forty-eight axes. While the instructions specified that the excavations were to be a mere complement of the survey, Antonio del Río turned the excavation into the central task of his mission:

siempre he creído que, para formar alguna idea de los primeros pobladores y antigüedad de su establecimiento, sería indispensable hacer excavaciones (objeto demi primera intención), por si se descubrian, a beneficio de ellas, algunas medallas, inscripciones u otros monumentos que ministrasen alguna luz. (del Rio, qtd. in Castañeda Paganini 49)

Antonio del Rio insisted that the findings indicated a similitude with Gothic architecture and with some Roman architectonic components, as well as the existence of windows. Following the patterns set by the military engineers' protocols, he also included an evaluation of the communication net of the ancient city of Palenque through the different rivers of the region. Del Rio wrote a careful description of the ruins, mapped the so-called palace in part, made a series of drawings, excavated several temple floors to discover foundation offerings, gathered a small collection of stone and stucco carvings (cf. Lothrop 55).

In the early nineteenth century, the city near Palenque was again investigated by royal order (Alcina Franch, "Los viajes" and "Las ruinas"), when several archaeological expeditions under the command of Austrian officer Captain Guillermo Dupaix, along with a secretary, the draughtsman Luciano Castañeda, and a detachment of dragoons were dispatched to explore the ruins. Dupaix, who went to Palenque on December 4, 1807, in the middle of the events related to the Napoleonic intervention in Spain, was taken many times for a French spy.¹² The reports—hand-copied and kept in the colonial and imperial archives—circulated among diplomats, traders, and travelers. Dupaix's manuscripts were about to be sent to Madrid, occupied at the time by the French Army, when the War of Independence broke out in Mexico.

The history of del Rio's and Dupaix's manuscripts and of the drawings made during their expeditions are inscribed in the collapse of the Spanish empire; despite the Spanish expeditions' having produced reliable materials prepared by colonial administrators, "Palenque" remained "unseen," a fact yet to be proved. Some of Castañeda's drawings were published in Alexander von Humboldt's *Vue des Cordillères, et monumens des peuples indigènes de l'Amérique* (1810–14), in which Humboldt approached the ruins from the point of view of the surveyor, using measures to translate the stones into science (cf. Dettelbach; Bourguet). As Garcia Sáiz has shown, for many years the Palenquian iconography would be shaped by the drawings made during the first Spanish expedition of Antonio del Rio, which remained unpublished until the English edition by Berthout in 1822 ("Description of the Ruins"). Ten years later, the book was translated into German by J. von Minutoli ("Beschreibung einer alten Stadt"). French learned societies organized a contest to gather evidence about Palenque, which still existed on the edges of credibility.¹³ The competition between France, England, and the United States for control over the old Spanish territories also affected the manuscripts kept in the former colonial archives and the material evidence that told the story of the New World's past (Podgorny, "De ángeles"). Maps, unpublished reports, fossils, statues, and ceramics were disputed among diplomats and travelers, who were willing to offer a sample of the wonders of the former Spanish colonies to European learned societies.

It is in this context that Castañeda's 145 drawings were given to France by the Mexican government in September of 1828 and finally published in Paris in 1834 by

Mr. Baradère in a four-volume folio at the price of eight hundred francs. Paradoxically, the authenticity of Castañeda's drawings was certified by government officials through the collection of multiple signatures that Spanish bureaucracy demanded. Other publications that mentioned Palenque were the tomes published in London by Lord Kingsborough (a reprint of Dupaix) at four hundred dollars per copy or fifteen thousand francs (Stephens 297–98; Farcy in Dupaix). Once published, Palenque would become a fact and Dupaix the standard textbook to which antiquaries would refer. Palenque reached the popular audience with the 1842 publication of John Stephens's work, which presented the drawings in an inexpensive form within reach of the great mass of readers (Stephens 300) (Plates 2, 3, 4).

Concluding remarks

For many years, however, the work performed by the military engineers in Naples, the drawings, plans, and comments by Villena Moziño, and the reports by Bernasconi, del Rio, and Dupaix all remained unpublished. Villena's work was rejected by Madrid's Royal Academy of History. The same could be written about Weber: his plans were never published and his quest to be admitted to the Accademia Ercolanese of Naples was never taken seriously (Parslow). The detailed inventories of the finds and the plans of the sites were produced only for the benefit of the king and prime ministers, not for publication. Winckelmann's well-known critiques of the excavations in Naples helped fashion the common perception that the work carried out in the Vesuvian cities was mere plunder. What all these examples display is that the ruins of ancient cities in the Spanish domains were approached in two different ways: as a source of pieces of art, to be described by the antiquarians, and as an engineering problem. Engineers were an essential part of the Spanish bureaucratic system and were placed in charge of making records and descriptions following the procedures set forth by the central administration in Madrid and in the viceregal capitals. They pursued the observation of the ancient ruins with the same matrix and tools used for describing the environment and the social life in America. The functional analysis of space in antiquity was not different from their tasks as reporters on life in the New World. How to dig, how to record, draw up plans, how to take measures—these problems were left to the engineers and surveyors, not reflected in the antiquarian publications. La Condamine's attempts to survey an Inca monument and his influence on the Palenque exploration show how these published and unpublished works were used by the central institutions of Madrid, where information was gathered and compared. In the years that followed Independence and the collapse of the Spanish Empire, the invisibility of the engineers' work helped English authors and Creole elites in the condemnation of "the peculiar apathy of the Spanish character as far as relates to any vestiges of antiquity and natural history" (cf. Berthoud in del Rio VII; Podgorny "De ángeles"). And while the reports, plans, and diaries prepared by military engineers remained unpublished, several copies of the manuscripts and drawings were transcribed and circulated in Europe and America among learned gentlemen and Spanish functionaries (Lothrop 53–55; García Sáiz).

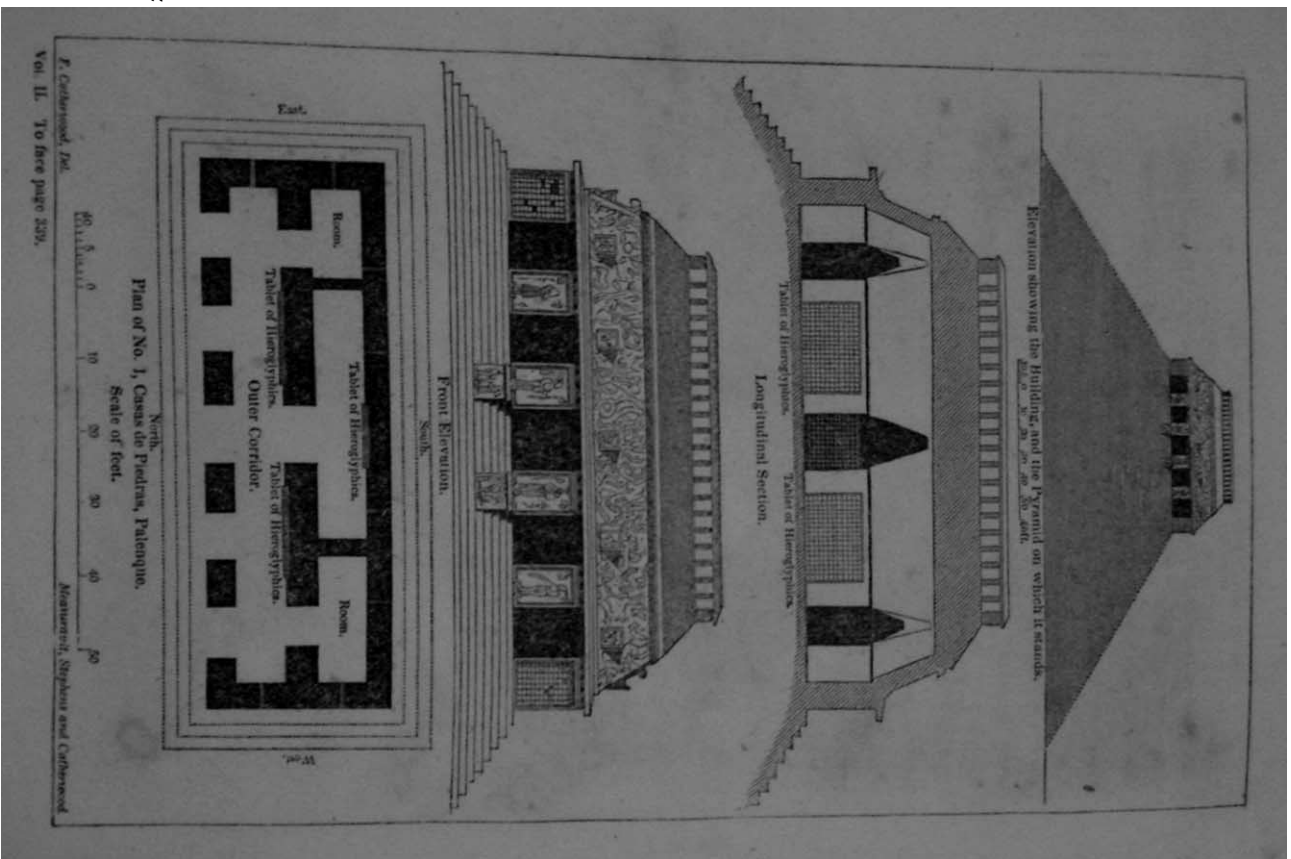


PLATE 2. Casa Number 1, restored. Section and elevation of the ruins of Palenque (Stephens). Courtesy of the Museo de La Plata Library

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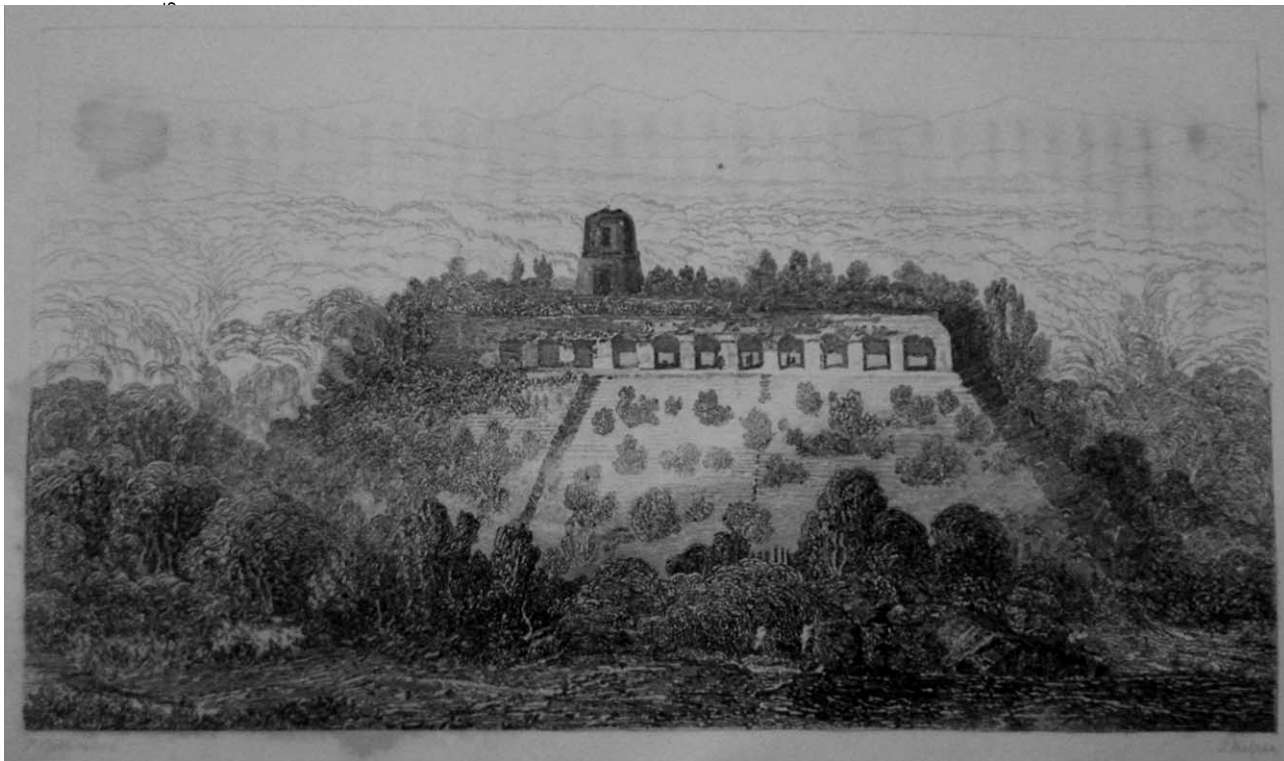


PLATE 3. The palace at Palenque by 1840 (Stephens, p. 309, vol. 2). Courtesy of the Museo de La Plata Library

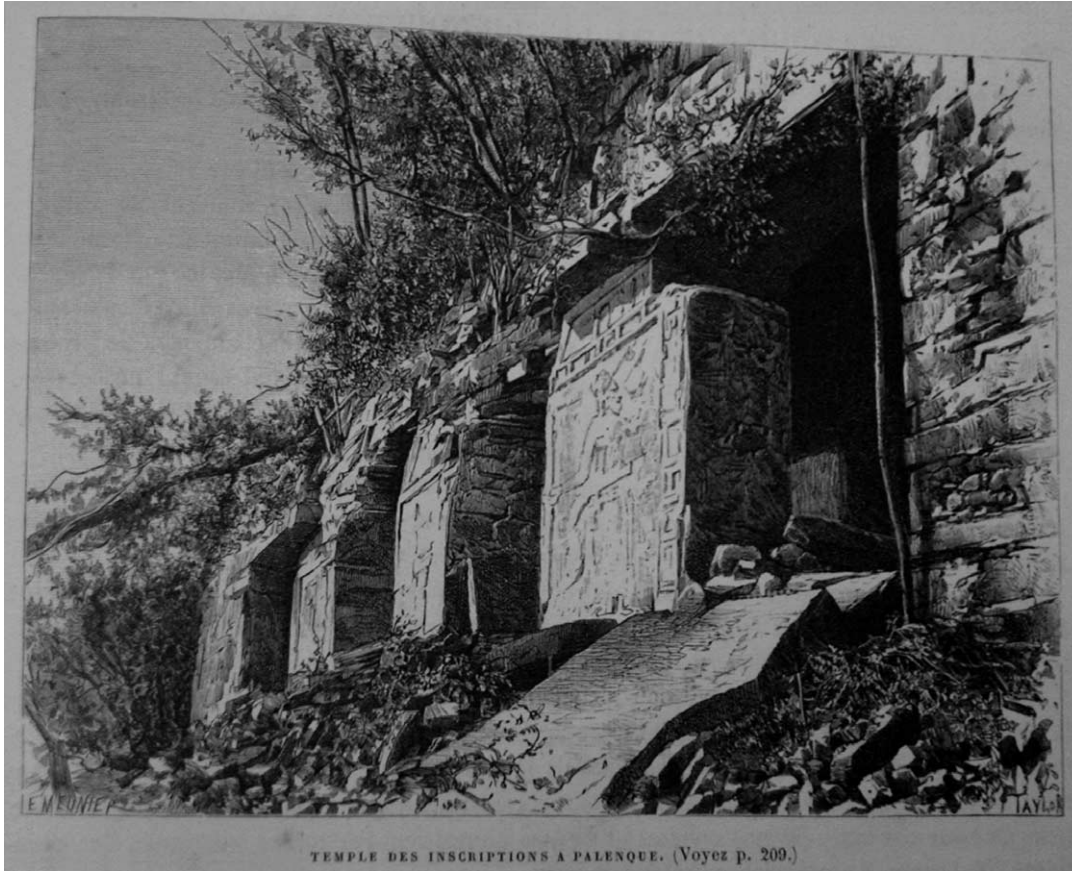


PLATE 4. Temple with inscriptions in Palenque (Charnay, p. 207). Courtesy of the Museo de La Plata Library

The large-scale excavations of the Vesuvian cities did not forge a method to be applied to other cities, such as ancient Mérida in Spain or Palenque, where excavation continued to be considered a complementary resource to be used for a better understanding of the standing ruins. However, the record and survey techniques used by engineers and surveyors created a history parallel to the antiquarian and philological tradition for the study of antiquity. Engineers, following the procedures and protocols of description specific to their discipline, created a corpus of documents which recorded the cultural history and the life of ancient cities. This parallel history has only recently begun to be told. Hidden by a tradition, which traced its roots to Winckelmann¹⁴ or to philology, field techniques and the engineers who practiced them have been as invisible as the remains they investigated.

By the late-nineteenth century the bureaucratic system of recording that had previously been the purview of engineers was incorporated into the very core of archaeological practice, defining the essence of the archaeological method (Lucarelli). Excavation and recording started being taught in colleges and universities and systematized in handbooks for students and professionals. At the turn of the twentieth century several handbooks were published, depicting the field as a space to be controlled by archaeologists, the ever-present supervisors of the excavations. It was, therefore, not until the early twentieth century that the field itself emerged as a scientific space. Once archaeologists started entering this new space and organizing the professional teaching of field practices, they understood their task as requiring an “engineering training of mind and senses” and the “combination of the scholar and the engineer, the man of languages and the man of physics and mathematics” (Petrie 3, 33).

The story presented here is also the history of the translation of reports, the transportation of objects, the consolidation of images, and the competition between different individuals, networks, and imperial powers for the possession of antiquity. Through individuals articulated by the consular or the metropolitan learned societies, France and England competed for the knowledge of the past and the natural resources of new political entities.

Notes

- 1 Earlier drafts of this paper were presented at the Colloquium of the Max Planck Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte in Berlin (June 2003) and at the Conference “The Location of Knowledge” (Universidad Di Tella, Buenos Aires, December 2003). I would also like to thank Diego Aufiero, Teresa Chapa, Martha Garrido, Félix Jiménez Villalba, María Margaret Lopes, Isabel Martínez Navarrete, Gloria Mora, Javier Ordóñez, Andrea Pegoraro, and Fernando Vidal for comments and suggestions. Many of the materials quoted in this article were gathered thanks to an Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Fellowship at Prof. Dr. Friedrich Kittler’s Seminar on Aesthetics (Humboldt University, Berlin, 2002–2003), whom I would like to thank for his support and hospitality. This research has been funded by Agencia Nacional de Promoción Científica y Tecnológica (PICT 2005 ET 3211) and CONICET (PIP 5675).
- 2 Winckelmann complained that Alcubierre was “as familiar with antiquity as the moon is with crabs.”

- 3 The Pilots' Corps of the Navy was established in Spain in 1748. In the Schools connected with it the students practiced navigation and the copy and design of plans.
- 4 In 1774 the engineers were divided in three branches: "Plazas y Fortificaciones;" "Military Academics in Mathematics of Barcelona, Orán, Ceuta and others"; and "Camino, Puentes, Edificios de Arquitectura Civil y Canales de Riego y Navegación."
- 5 In colonial times it included the present Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the Mexican State of Chiapas.
- 6 See Brasseur de Bourbourg, "Recherches" 29–32 for a long discussion about the real name of the ancient city found near Palenque.
- 7 J. B. Muñoz y Ferandis was born in Museros, close to Valencia, in 1745. He was charged to write the grand *Historia General del Nuevo Mundo*. In this mission, he gathered a very extensive collection of documents about the New World that were disseminated in the archives and libraries of Spain and American colonies. He died in 1799, having published just the first part of the work: *Historia de Cristóbal Colón* (cf. Brasseur de Bourbourg "Recherches" 7, note 4).
- 8 "Les auteurs qui ont écrit de l'Amérique Méridionale nous donnent une grande idée des édifices construits par les Incas, anciens Roys du Pérou . . . Ces seulement ont parlé en témoins oculaires, mais ils ne nous ont laissé ni plan, ni description exacte, qui puisse nous donner une juste idée d'aucun de ces monuments" (La Condamine).
- 9 "Nous primes, M. Bouguer & moy, les principales mesures pour faire le plan de ces Ruines. En construisant le mien, je m'aperçus qu'il me manquait quelques dimensions, je retournai peu de jours après sur le lieu pour les prendre, & pour observer quelques directions avec la boussole. Je dessinai aussi l'aspect du Château, d'un point de vuë dans la prairie, au bas de la platte forme du coté du Nord. J'arrivai à tems pour prendre ces mesures, je vis qu'on travaillons à la démolition de ce qu'il y avoit de mieux conservé, pour employer les matériaux à un nouveau bâtiment de la ferme voisine. On ne sera pas surpris qu'on ait si peu d'égard pour un ancien monument, dans un país où les Lettres & les Arts ont fait peu de progrès, si on fait réflexion que la même chose arrive journellement en Europe, dans les lieux mêmes où les Antiquités sont le plus respectées" (La Condamine).
- 10 See Lothrop; Jiménez Villalba; García Saíz; Cabello Caro for the list of the identified surviving Del Río objects in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional and later in the Museo de América (Madrid).
- 11 José de Sierra had worked in Barcelona and Andalusia. In 1819 he acted as "Brigadier Director Subinspector" of the Royal Corps of Engineers in Andalusia, where he was transferred after his stay in Guatemala (Capel et al. 450).
- 12 "Pero ¡Quién, Dios mío, había de discurrir que esta ocupación inocente, y haciendo parte de mis deberes, habían de hacer de ella un crimen y culparme de traición acerca de nuestro legítimo soberano Fernando VII! Unos ociosos moradores de esta ciudad y capitostes natos, aprovechándose siniestramente de la caída del excelentísimo Señor de Iturrigaray, me sospecharon ser Francés, lo que es falso pues soy austriaco de origen y de nacimiento, y de inteligencia con dicho excelentísimo señor, a favor de Francia" (Dupaix 10).
- 13 Humboldt had published the images but did not visit the ruins. The Paris Geographical Society organized a contest that for many years remained deserted.
- 14 DaCosta Kaufmann, inspired by Wolf Lepenies, has pointed out that "one outstanding myth of the eighteenth century has not yet been thoroughly challenged.

This is the claim made by Johann Winckelmann in the foreword to the *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, originally published in 1764, that he had created a new history of art which was distinct from a history of artists and also different from what had previously been written about antiquities" (523).

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