

If These Walls Could Talk:
Urban Cultural Patrimony and Spatialized Social Exclusion in the
Colonial *Centro Histórico* of Campeche

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Spanish and Latin American Studies

Modern Languages and Cultural Studies
University of Alberta

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Abstract

The construction of colonial cities manifests itself as a Eurocentric projection onto the spatial and human environment of the Americas. The built environment was expressly designed to serve the colonial hegemony, each feature with a purpose and signification. The Historical Center of the city of Campeche, conserved as a World Heritage Site, provides us with a living testimony of this colonial construction of urban space. Through an analysis that parallels the city's legitimized historical narrative with the design features, monuments, and policy that produces its urban space, this work offers the beginnings of an understanding of the ways Campeche's urban cultural patrimony is lived today.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge that the land on which the University of Alberta is located is Treaty Six Territory, a traditional meeting ground and home for many Indigenous Peoples including Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, and Nakota Sioux.

I would like to acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada for partially funding my graduate studies, as well as the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the department of MLCS at the University of Alberta for funding my research excursions. I extend a special thank-you to Elia Guadalupe Salavarría Pedrero at Campeche's Ayuntamiento Cronista for generously allowing me access to the *ayuntamiento's* library and to her own urban research in Campeche. I would also like to express my gratitude to Leydi Lopez Sonda and Damián Enrique Can Dzib at the Instituto Campechano; Armando Anaya Hernandez at the Universidad Autónoma de Campeche; Luis Antonio Che Cu at Frente Campesino e Indígena Emiliano Zapata (FRECIÉZ); for their time and insights. Thank you also to my supervisor, Russell Cobb; and the rest of my thesis committee, Ann de Leon and Jaymie Heilman.

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Life changes, Campeche should have changed too: to leave behind its drama of solitude, of isolation, of a woman enclosed in a corset of stone. Campeche is tired of her obligation to conserve her image of eternity. I dream that she implores us to slacken the bars that confine her, to break her melancholic girdle. If we could only concede her desires?

Silvia Molina
Campeche, Image of Eternity. 1996
 (Own Translation)

Introduction

Like the centuries of incomers before me, I first entered the Old Town of the City of Campeche, Mexico, through the Gate to the Sea. During the area's pinnacle of social and economic splendor from the early 18th to early 19th centuries, this was the principle entrance to the booming Port City of Campeche.

Now referred to as *Campeche Viejo* (Old Town Campeche), *El Centro Histórico* (The Historical Centre), *el recinto amurallado* (the walled-in district), or simply *el centro* (downtown), the urban nucleus of Campeche State's capitol is not only the focal point of the area's social, cultural, political, and economic activity; but also its pride and most identifiable locality. At every turn there is a visible monument to the city's history – each worth a thousand words – that contributes to, as Campechana novelist Silvia Molina puts it, Campeche's "image of eternity."¹

On an August evening in the plaza, spectating a regional musical performance on a blackwashed particleboard stage under the gazebo, an old Campechano – grey hair and *guayabera* –

¹ Silvia Molina, *Campeche, imagen de eternidad* (México D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1996), 126.

told me that “*los muros son los testigos mudos de la historia.*” If these walls could talk, what stories would they tell? Stories of piracy and bravery; of ancient cultures conquered, relegated to the past; of the eternal victorious? Stories that glorify and stratify, that order and occult. Stories of stone and mortar *a cal y canto*: the regulating body of *Campechanidad*. These walls are the silent witnesses of history, but whose story do they tell?

It’s been said that history is written by the victor, and in the case of *El Centro Histórico de Campeche*, this history is inscribed into the very shape of the city. Pedestrian and traffic flow; entrances and exits; monuments and meanings; and public spaces and the signs therein all feed the quotidian experiences and readings of meaning for residents and visitors alike. History embodied in stone, like an architectural new testament, reminds us of the rigidity, the permanence, and the perpetuity of the past in the present. It is in the performances of this history that we can read the urban cosmology of its interlocutors, as its projections on the structure of the built environment reveal a social counterpart that is constructed and reconstructed according to the signifiers and signifieds therein. For this reason, the intent of this work is to address this central question: in what ways does the performance of this history impact the navigation of its locus?

In *Hybrid Cultures*, Néstor García Canclini theorizes that the “goods and traditional practices that identify us as a nation or as a people is valued as a gift, something we receive from the past that has such symbolic prestige that there is no room for discussing it... it occurs to almost no one to think about the social contradictions that they express.”² In Campeche, this “gift” is the *Patrimonio*

² Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Transl. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 108.

Cultural of the *Centro Histórico*: “a fixed repertory of traditions condensed in objects”³ that are still navigated as they have been for centuries. My thesis will deal with this repertory: the walls and streets, buildings and monuments, performances, projections, and signs; the living iterations of the colonial past that direct the modes of operating in the present and future. As we navigate through the *Centro Histórico* in this work, I will focus on the city’s characteristic design features and discourses, verbal and otherwise, to present a critical reading of the public spaces and artifacts that compose and reinforce the dominant narrative of Campeche’s urban core, deemed Cultural Patrimony, as it stands today. With one eye on the signifiers and signifieds that produce the *Centro Histórico* of Campeche; and the other on the way its shape and policy dictates where, how, and who can be in its public spaces; I will explore the spatiality of social exclusion as it is manifested in this arena.

Urban design theorist Ali Madanipour posits that “space has [...] a major role in the integration or segregation of urban society. It is a manifestation of social relationships while affecting and shaping the geometries of these relationships.”⁴ It is through such an understanding of the interconnectedness between social exclusion and space that I propose a reading of the city of Campeche itself – its design and landmarks – as a text that runs parallel to the performances of its foundation; and that since has secured this design – along with all of its functions of colonial hegemony and marginalization – as legitimized, valuable, and protected cultural heritage. As a result of this reading, I argue that the current *Centro Histórico* of Campeche, with its colonial design, monuments, and aesthetic preserved by more than just policy, contributes to a perpetuation

³ Ibid, 115.

⁴ Ali Madanipour, “Social Exclusion and Space.” In *The City Reader*, ed. Richard T. Legates and Frederic Stout (New York: Routledge, 2016), 209.

of social patterns of coloniality that continue to produce the social exclusion of certain groups for the benefit of others.

The relationship between the protection of colonial cultural goods in urban space and its matching social consequences is not exclusive to walled cities, Latin America, or World Heritage Sites. For example, the explosion of white nationalist violence in 2017 over the removal of confederate monuments in Charlottetown sheds light on how laudatory symbols of a racist past influence the attitudes of a public who would benefit from the violent inequality that they represent. To bring it closer to home, Edmontonians needn't look further than the nomenclature in and around the city. The name "Edmonton" itself, a British name, overwrote the original Nehiyawewin (Cree language) name for the region Amiskwaskahegan. Recently, the name Frank Oliver, peppered around the central areas of the city (the Oliver neighborhood, Oliver Square) has been at the forefront of discussions regarding the removal of symbols that commemorate individuals who have committed atrocities against the Indigenous people in this area. From cultural heritage sites to monuments and nomenclature, the symbols that produce the built environment charge the quotidian experiences of those who navigate the spaces they occupy. This study, while falling far short of providing a full understanding of how to move forward in decolonizing the cities we inhabit, I hope will contribute to an acknowledgement of and meaningful dialogue about the ways that spatialized cultural heritage and the histories attributed to them can impact the social lives of those who navigate therein.

Approaches and Form

In “Social Exclusion and Space,” Ali Madanipour identifies three spheres of social life – the economic, the political, and the cultural – that can be subject to spatialized exclusion through barriers to access.⁵ This access exists on a continuum, ranging from open to controlled or closed spaces. As my work is focused on public space, the majority of the places in question are supposedly open, which I will contend throughout my analysis. Madanipour sets out three distinct ways that access to space is controlled. The first is the physical organization of space, that is the “elements from the natural or the built environment [that have] been socially and symbolically employed to put visible and strict limits on our spatial practices.”⁶ Examples of such that I will be addressing in my work are design features such as walls, gates, and streets. The second is that of mental space, which “may be regulated through codes and signs, preventing us from entering some spaces through outright warning or more subtle deterrents.”⁷ Concerning this category, I will be exploring some of Campeche’s most noteworthy colonial signs (monuments, performances, nomenclature, etc.) to unpack how they might signify the exclusion of certain groups. The third category of barriers to social behaviour is that of social control, such as law or policy, that would determine the activities formally allowed in any given space. To address these tools of exclusion, I will unpack some of the urban policies pertaining to Cultural Patrimony that, as developed in the following section, are put into place specifically for the protection of Old Town Campeche’s aesthetic integrity and, in turn, contribute to the exclusion of certain groups’ economic and cultural participation therein.

⁵ Ibid, 207.

⁶ Ibid, 208.

⁷ Ibid, 208.

The corpus – a selection of the city design itself; the artifacts, performances, and citizen movement within; and the policy that affects them – was recorded in two four-week research trips in August and December of 2016. The data collection method involved an ethnographic mapping process, borrowing from the Situationists International *dérive* method,⁸ in which I allowed my trajectory and focus to be determined by the city design as I observed and recorded the operations and navigations of Old Town Campeche in and from its public space.

The *dérive* as a technique or method, as defined by Guy Debord is an activity in which:

One or more persons drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.⁹

The primary purpose of employing such an activity is to collect visual and written texts specifically concerning spatialized exclusion. As mentioned above, Madanipour points out that urban design features – physical, mental, and social – funnel movement and activity on a scale from open access to restriction, or inclusivity to exclusivity. The most intuitive way to engage with the lived experience and physical ramifications that these features have on movement is to allow them to

⁸ Guy Debord, "Theory of the *Dérive*." In *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. and transl. by Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 62-66.

⁹ *Ibid.* 62

guide navigation of the space they occupy, shedding light on precisely which features affect access, to what, and in what ways. Perhaps the most common example of how the *dérive* method allows one to read the consequences of urban design features is that of approaching a wall: a steadfast, physical barrier to access that one must go around until there is an access point to cross from one side to another, such as an open gate. The trajectory of the walker moving through space, therefore, is determined by this feature of the built environment. The efficacy of this physical “weapon of exclusion”¹⁰ could also be compounded with social factors, such as threat of arrest for trespassing; or mental factors, such as the historical significance of the wall. This particular example will be explored in great detail in the section on Pirates and Walls.

A secondary function of the *dérive* as a research method is that of the sample selection for analysis. An exhaustive analysis of the form, uses, and symbols of a geographical space of this scale is outside of this project’s scope. For this reason, a *dérive*-like drift through Old Town Campeche allowed me to select, albeit subjectively, the most prominent features to include in the project by actively responding to the built environment.

I would ask of the reader, therefore, to move through the text in the manner in which it was created: in a *dérive* allowing the trajectory to set up the problematics to be analyzed. The form of this work, flowing in like manner with the exploration of the corpus in question, will deviate from the conventional form of a master’s thesis so that the sensory, psychogeographical facet of the *dérive* may translate, to the best of my ability, onto paper. As such, many items observed in the

¹⁰ Tobias Armborst et. Al. *The Arsenal of Exclusion and Inclusion*. (New York: Actar, 2017).

landscape will reappear as items of analysis, which will weave into the larger thematics encountered throughout both the city and this work.

Although this approach involves a highly subjective, sensory navigation, “the *dérive* includes both this letting-go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities.”¹¹ In other words, while allowing my trajectory to be determined by the features of the built environment, a foundational knowledge of the colonial narrative that parallels the design of *Campeche Viejo*, in tandem with background of the principles of hostile urban design (sometimes referred to as defensive design or architecture), informed the direction of my gaze along this trajectory, allowing me to select certain outstanding features and places for analysis. As Angel Rama points out in *The Lettered City*, the very foundations of colonial cities begin with written discourse, allowing hegemonic actors to project their “urban dream of a new age” upon the land.¹² The colonial city is a meticulously planned, ordered city, whose “ordering principle revealed itself as a hierarchical society transposed by analogy into a hierarchical design of urban space [...] so that in the geometrical distribution of space we can read the social morphology of the planners.”¹³ On top of the written word of the Laws of the Indies that spelled out the specifications of city plans, conquerors of Latin American cities “required a writer of some sort (a scribe, a notary, a chronicler) to cast their foundational acts in the form of imperishable signs.”¹⁴ The hegemonic power of this “history,” or performances of it, is therefore at the foundation not only of the physical form of the colonial urban center, but also of the

¹¹ Guy Débord, “Theory of the *Dérive*.” In *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. and transl. by Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 62.

¹² Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*. Transl. by John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

¹³ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 6.

understandings of its significance, making these performances of history, past and present, inseparable from an analysis of the city itself.

The outline of the present work will follow a *dérive* consolidated from the aforementioned data collection excursions. Each leg of this walk is contextualized not only in physical space, as the form itself suggests, but also in a psychogeography that considers the social and temporal dimensions of the space and artifacts within – the things that contribute to the spatialization of social exclusion as it relates to coloniality in Campeche. To establish this relationship, I will begin with a brief analysis of the official national declaration that inducts Old Town Campeche into the national list of Historical Monument Zones, and subsequently into the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. From there, the *dérive* will follow the psychogeographical contours of Campeche Viejo in an exploration of the “ordinary and otherwise unremarkable artifacts [that] give a small glimpse into the everyday struggles over who gets to live, hang out, work, or play where and for how long.”¹⁵

Despite the guidance of the city’s design in an effort to remain objective in my experience of it, it is undeniable that this process is innately subjective. The presentation of this work, therefore, will match the corpus and reading of it in its subjective nature – that is, to reflect the role of the subject reading and interacting with the public space in question. While the artifacts encountered throughout the *dérive* will be read alongside their counterparts in Campeche’s performances of history, particularly where the history in question acts as the prominent placemaking feature, they will be presented with the explicitly subjective lens of my observations within this space. This is not

¹⁵ Tobias Armborst et. Al. *The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion* (New York: Actar, 2017), 10.

to say that this work is any more personal than other literary accounts of Campeche and its history – academic or otherwise. It is an assertion that I will remain transparent in my undeniably subjective reading of this narrative, and that I will not be so presumptuous as to speak for any other subjects involved.

It is also worth noting that my position as the subject is that of a white foreigner, an observer, and a tourist – one of the most privileged subjects that may navigate this space. The centralization of tourism in the economic and placemaking practices of Campeche will be subtextually developed as an extension of the pervasiveness of coloniality throughout this work. While an explicit analysis of this topic will fall outside the scope of this work, an in-depth exploration of tourism as an extension of colonialism in Campeche would prove an important extension to this discussion in the future.

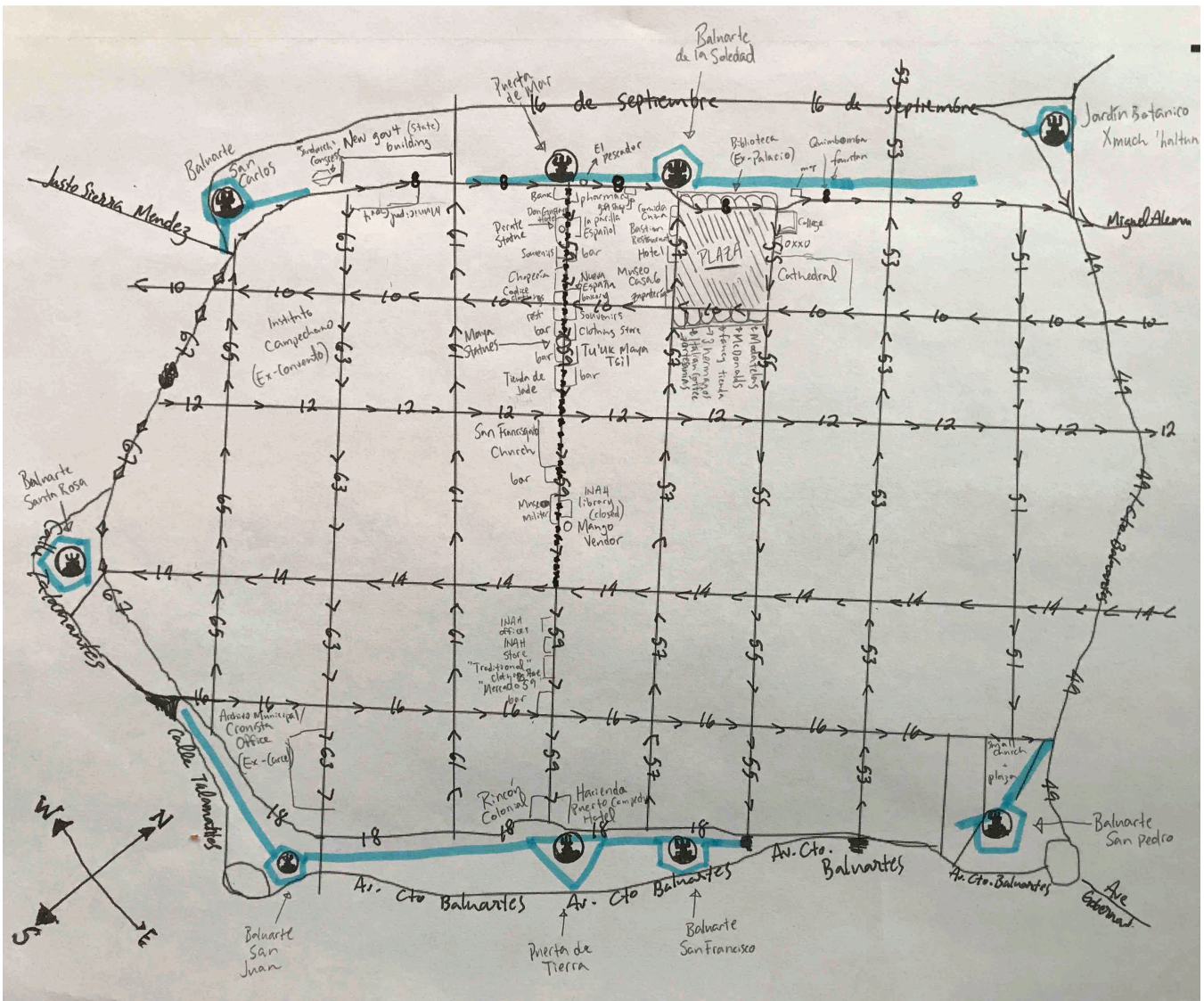


Figure 1: Map of Campeche’s *Centro Histórico* as consolidated through the dérives in 2016. The portions highlighted in blue indicate where fortifying walls currently exist. This map contains the main points of analysis for this work. (Source: mine, 2016)

A Word on *Apellidos* – A Personal Anecdote

One doesn't have to be a fly on the wall for long in Campeche before identifying a peculiar conversational ritual – a social phenomenon even – as habitual as talking about the weather or the local sports team. A charged piece of small talk inevitably following one's self-identification as a *Campechano* when meeting someone new: what is your last name? / I am of the [*apellido*]. Mothers asking their children for the *apellido* of new friends; job applicants presenting themselves to employers as an [*apellido*]; friends introducing friends as being of the [*apellido*].

Campeche is a small city, with a small-town feel. You can't go to the mall, or the *malecón*, certainly not *el centro* without running into someone you know. Six degrees of separation is reduced to three, at best. Maybe this last-name-identifier ritual in new introductions is based on the innocuous desire to pinpoint the commonalities in social networks: you're an [*apellido*]? I dated an [*apellido*] in high school!

Or maybe it's something else.

To be of the Urbina, the García, the Baranda, the Bernés. Even for an outsider, immune to this kind of inquisition, I recognize certain particular Hispanic last names as attached to something acutely localized in the city – names that have held public office, are attached to local publications, are lettered on notable businessfronts. As last names do, they associate the holder with their clan: their affluence and achievements, their history, their reverence. These are the 'good last names' of Campeche.

I have yet to hear someone willfully engage in one of these rituals to identify themselves as a Chi, a Dzib an Uc, or a Cu. The names of leaders, intellectuals, revolutionaries, *guerreros*. Unlike the Spanish last names, these ones don't evoke a living history in Campeche for *Campechanos*: they are more likely to evoke schoolyard taunting and verbal mockery.

For the sake of transparency, I must disclose that this is a phenomenon that I was aware of long before setting foot in the city of Campeche. You see, my husband is of the Chi Uc. His late maternal grandfather, a writer and Maya language professor, proudly carried these names, those of Jacinto Canek (born Jacinto Uc) and Cecilio Chi, of the leaders of the ongoing, centuries-long tradition of Maya resistance to colonial abuses – from hacienda slavery and the legal caste system to oppressive taxation and land expropriation – in the Yucatán. He inherited Chi as his maternal last name. During his upbringing in Campeche, he had adapted the defense mechanism of only using his paternal, Hispanic last name, despite his detachment from that clan, to deter the cruelties of other children and fend against matter-of-course discrimination.

Maybe Campeche is not only colonial in its aesthetic. Certain socio-cultural patterns, as the one reflected in the *apellido* phenomenon, match its physiognomy as manifested in the *Patrimonio Cultural* in perpetuating coloniality, and this is not a coincidence. As Canclini reminds us:

...it is in the patrimony that the ideology of the oligarchic sectors – that is, substantialist traditionalism – survives best today. It was these groups – hegemonic in Latin America from the time of national independence to the 1930s, 'natural' owners of the land and the

labor power of the other classes – that set the high value on certain cultural goods: the historical centers of the great cities, classical music, humanistic knowledge.¹⁶

It would seem that the oligarchic sectors, those carriers of ‘good last names,’ are the beneficiaries of a system set up to protect the colonial Cultural Patrimony as well as that which it represents. This is what prompted me to undertake this study – maybe this, too, is enclosed in a corset of stone.

¹⁶ Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Transl. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 108.

The Entrance

Campeche Nuevo – Tourism Economy – Solidifying the Past in the Future



Figure 2: La Puerta de Mar from the inside of the *Centro Histórico*. (Source: me, Aug. 2015)



Figure 3: Campeche Nuevo's *malecón*. (Source: theyucatantimes.org.)

Although one would have previously entered the nucleus of the port city from the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, I stepped through the Gate to the Sea from *Campeche Nuevo*, the three-or-so blocks of land gained on the ocean, whose waves once lapped at the fortifying walls of the Old City.

First imagined and built during the *sexenio* of Campeche state governor Alberto Trueba Urbina (1955-1961), New Campeche's *malecón* evokes the work of modernist Brazilian architect Oscar Neimeyer. A wide and curving free-flowing road, divided by a row of palm trees, stands between the seawalk's rubberized asphalt bicycle path, jogging trail, and imposing works of concrete public art; and the sea-facing patios and facades of restaurants, clubs, hotels, and shopping centers on the land-side. Just as the name suggests, *Campeche Nuevo* is the modernist twin to the city's Old Town, *el Centro Histórico*.

In a city that has historically suffered the booms and busts of a single-crop economy – from *palo de tinte* to shrimping – one of Trueba Urbina's goals in developing New Campeche was to attract tourism. As the first state governor to position tourism at the center of Campeche's local economy, Trueba Urbina identified the national trend of this industry helping previously struggling regions thrive; and began formulating an infrastructure for it to develop in the state of Campeche. The city has much to offer to the tourist: aside from its coastal location in the gulf of Mexico and the natural attractions that surround it, the colonial architecture, monuments, design, and aesthetic that form Historical Center make for an attractive brand for Campeche's international image.

But of course these natural and architectural attractions do not guarantee the success of a tourism industry: “For this reason, [Trueba Urbina] imagined two complimentary cities as the

primary offering for the tourist: the New Campeche and the colonial one. The first should be an area of modern urban architecture, with all the comforts and distractions of cosmopolitan life; the second, a trip into the legendary past, to the history and cultural roots of the city.”¹⁷ On top of the imaginative creation of *Campeche Nuevo*, Trueba Urbina poured state funding into restoring the colonial image of the walled-in district of the Old Town: colonial buildings were renovated and repurposed as museums; the city’s main plaza was beautified; streets were repaired and paved; and portions of the city’s fortifications – walls and bastions dating as far back as the seventeenth century – were rebuilt, reinforcing the city’s “corset of stone”¹⁸ and restoring her aesthetic colonial nature.

A person would never know, walking through the Gate to the Sea, that it was rebuilt a mere sixty years ago. The tourist could be William Parker, Pie de Palo, or Lorencillo. Anyone here – the visitors, vendors, white or blue collars – a pirate, a Jesuit, a settler, a slave. With my back to the sea, a handful of steps take me from the modernist New Campeche to the anachronistic colonial center of the city: *El Centro Histórico*.

Narrow cobblestone streets, grandiose colonial monuments, pillars, arches, and ornate balconies. Neat, colorful, rectangular buildings adorned with those stucco elaborations characteristic of Spanish-American baroque architecture. Young families on gaudy cast-iron park benches taking in unnamed cultural spectacles in opulent public gardens; elderly couples indulging themselves in regional culinary delights in charming open-air cafés. Awestruck tourists carelessly weaving in and

¹⁷ Roman Piña Chan, *Encyclopedia histórica de Campeche: Etapa independiente. Siglo XIX* (Mexico D.F.: Gobierno Constitucional del Estado de Campeche / Instituto de Cultura de Campeche, 2003), 288.

¹⁸ Silvia Molina, *Campeche, imagen de eternidad* (México D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1996), 126.

out of centuries, taking in the material legacy of some ancient history whose elusive signifieds overload the senses; resolute citizens to whom these structures are have been here forever, navigating their quotidian operations therein. Two thousand five hundred and thirty six meters of two-meter-tall fortifying walls – whether original, restored, reconstructed, or merely alluded to – enclosing the colonial essence of what resides within its boundaries. Closing the rest out.

Patrimonio Cultural: A corset of stone

Zone of Historical Monuments – UNESCO – Discourse Analysis – Colonialism as Cultural Heritage



Figure 4: Example of preserved colonial architecture. (Source: commons.wikimedia.org.)



Figure 5: 59th street of the Centro Histórico. (Source: minube.com)

In 1986, Mexican president Miguel de la Madrid H. declared the *Centro Histórico* of Campeche a national “Zone of Historical Monuments,” initializing the construction and the official recognition of the urban center’s value as *Patrimonio Cultural*. With this declaration, Campeche’s colonial center – its corset of stone – becomes safeguarded in federal law. This statement, at the national level, is the first step in what would later become a campaign to inscribe Old Town Campeche on UNESCO’s list of World Heritage Sites, achieving success in 1999. In the then-president’s decree that formalizes this status, the following reasons are cited for this influential decision:

[1.] That the city of Campeche was an important Mayan settlement (Ah Kim Pech or Campech).

[2.] That during the XVI century, October 4 1540, the Spanish foundation of San Francisco de Campeche was formalized, being an important point to achieve the complete colonization of Yucatán and Chiapas.

[3.] That during the XVII and XVIII centuries, because of its strategic location, it converted into a compulsory destination for communication in commercial routes.

[4.] That during the colonial period it was an important production and distribution center for *palo de tinte* and precious lumber.

[5.] That its geographical situation and economic development characterized the architecture as a unique military and defensive element in the country.

[6.] That the formal characteristics of the city’s edifice, the spatial relations, and the urban structure, as it is conserved today, are an eloquent testimony of exceptional value to the social, political, and artistic history of Mexico.

[7.] That it is indispensable, within the programs of development and human settlements, the protection, conservation, and restoration of the relevant urban and architectural expressions that form part of our cultural patrimony.

[8.] That to attend to the preservation of the historic legacy of this zone without altering or damaging its urban harmony, the Federal Executive [...] recommends incorporating this zone into the regime set out by the Federal Law of Archeological, Artistic, and Historic Zones and its Regulations that state that the research, protection, conservation, restoration, and recovery of the monuments and zones of historical monuments that integrate the cultural heritage is of public service to the Nation¹⁹

This declaration is a powerful and telling word-act, one that shaped the subsequent discourse constructing the city's brand and identity locally, nationally, and internationally. As I mentioned in the previous section, the impetus behind restoring the *Centro Histórico*, spearheaded by Trueba Urbina in the 1950's, was that of developing a cultural tourism industry. Those conservation efforts catalyzed the incorporation of Campeche's urban center into the national list of Historical Monument Zones, and the subsequent induction onto UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. The legitimizing discourse offered in this decree has henceforth been adopted by the local tourism industry, launching it out into the world as Campeche's brand and identity.

Beyond formally legitimizing the value attributed to the colonial Old Town Campeche, Miguel de la Madrid H.'s statement also iterates the defining factors in attributing this value to the

¹⁹ Miguel de la Madrid H. "DECRETO por el que se declara una zona de monumentos históricos en la ciudad de Campeche, Camp" (*Diario Oficial de la Federación*, SEGOB: 1986), 1. Own translation.

area. A decree of this type acts as official history in the making, insofar as it is a pivotal move, bound by federal law, that will prove to influence the shape of the city. The history that it refers to, therefore, is reiterated and perpetuated through this word-act, ensuring its inscription not only in the past, but in the present and future. This in itself warrants further inspection into the ideas behind each item, and the discourse employed to describe them.

With only a rudimentary analysis of the above discursive choices, there are a number of markers that would reveal the salience of the colonialist perspective in the dominant discourse surrounding Campeche's Cultural Patrimony. With special attention to the relational processes linking the items in the decree, Campeche's brand as it is constructed around this cultural patrimony can be called into focus. Doing so will set the stage for the critique that will follow in this work by identifying the most salient discourses in the identity and narratives of the city of Campeche, which I will explore more in-depth in the following chapter.

Each of these eight items describe relational processes: one through five being historical, and the sixth bringing the former five into the present; the seventh stating an imperative based on the former; and the eighth, through a "recommendation" set up by the previous imperative, sets up for the word act that is the communicative purpose of the decree – the incorporation of Campeche into the regime of the stated federal law. The list progresses in chronological order from the historical descriptions (1-5), through the present state (6-7), to the future of the newly-deemed Zone of Historical Monuments (8).

Beyond the chronological, the ordering of the items also insinuates a cause-and-effect relationship, as each item sets the conditions for the next to take place; and refers to the previous either through thematic lexical groupings or through the subject pronoun “it” used in reference to what was established in the previous statement. To state the obvious, items six and seven positively qualify the “formal characteristics of the city’s edifice” / “urban and architectural expressions” in question by stating that they are “of exceptional value to the social, political, and artistic history of Mexico,” and that they “form part [Mexico’s] cultural patrimony.” Item eight furthers this positive qualification in stating how this value is to be carried forward into the future through its protection under the Federal Law of Archeological, Artistic, and Historic Zones. Item six’s subject, “the formal characteristics of the city’s edifice,” can be categorized as a synonym for the “architecture” object of item five, which is developed in that statement as a result of “geographical situation and economic development.” Item three describes this geographical location as being “strategic,” and contributing to the economic development stated in item four as “an important production and distribution center for *palo de tinte* and precious lumber.” Items five, four, and three each share the ambiguous subject pronoun “it,” referring to Campeche itself as established as the subject of item two: “the Spanish foundation of San Francisco de Campeche,” attributed value because of its role in “[achieving] the complete colonization of Yucatán and Chiapas.”

Finally, the only theme that links the rest of the decree to the first item is its subject: “the city of Campeche,” which again, is developed in items two through six as its colonial iteration. Item one is the only simple sentence in the entire decree, devoid of any spatial or temporal modifiers; with no connections to subsequent statements of value; and with only one qualifier – “important” – that is repeated again in the colonial iteration of the same: “important Mayan settlement” gets immediately

overwritten by the “important point to achieve the complete colonization of Yucatán and Chiapas.” Even its prehispanic name isn’t afforded its own clause, as it is simply affixed to the sentence in parenthesis with no additional explanation “(Ah Kim Pech or Campech).” It is as though this fleeting mention of the Mayan roots of Campeche is a simple token, left in the past tense, or in parenthesis, erased by the rest of history; with no acknowledgement in the present or future of Campeche.

By unpacking this decree, one can decipher which pieces of history have been included in the construction of Campeche’s urban identity through the aforementioned relational processes, which by virtue of being incorporated into the rationale behind the decree itself, solidifies its value in the future of Campeche’s Cultural Patrimony. This decree is a characteristic sample of the discourse, of the performance of history that shapes, has shaped, and perpetuates itself in order to continue shaping the city of Campeche.

The Ordered City: Plaza I – Church

Follow the Towers – Plaza as Guiding Axis – Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción – Church as Living Monument to Colonial Cultural Hegemony



Figure 6: The towers of Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción from outside La Puerta del Mar.
Figure 7: Calle 8 with El Pescador in the foreground. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 8: The dulcero statue in the plaza. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 9: Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción. (Source: feyturismo.wordpress.com.)

Even now with the cityscape of hotels, restaurants, casinos, clubs, and banks of *Campeche Nuevo*, one structure commands the gaze from blocks away in any direction; deliberately drawing the eye from behind the walls of *Campeche Viejo* like a lighthouse to a sailor. Its guiding quality as a feature of urban design reminds the walker of its centrality to the essence of Campeche's built environment, streets and bodies alike. It is Campeche's main cathedral: Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción.

To surrender myself to the direction of the city's design is to follow the superintendence of the cathedral's towers: walk through the Puerta del Mar, follow the *muralla* to the left down 8th

street. Pass the copper statues on the shadeless sidewalk: *el pescador, el aguador* – immortalizations of Campeche’s famous *pregoneros*. Be found in the nucleus of public life, Campeche’s main plaza: the Parque Principal. This is by design.

The plaza, as Jacqueline Leal Sosa calls it, is “the guiding axis of life in Campeche.”²⁰ The main plaza of any Latin American city is designed to be the public space par excellence, and is the nucleus around which the a city may be built. Surrounding it are the most important structures of the colonial city, each serving a public function: the entrance to the city, the customs office, government buildings, the hospital, and the main church. The center of cultural, economic, and political life.

As mentioned in the previous section, the cathedral of the plaza was the first building to be constructed in San Francisco de Campeche, signaling its significance through its prioritization, its placement on the plaza, and its visibility. The first Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción is not to be its final iteration, as its placement and function was amended to comply with the Spanish legal mandates for building colonial cities, later compiled into the *Recopilación de las Leyes de las Indias* in 1680. The cathedral was to be a raised, stand-alone building, with the strategic placement and construction of the surrounding royal houses of the colonial administration and the customs office to “not diminish, but to give authority to it.”²¹

²⁰ Jacqueline Leal Sosa, *La Plaza como eje rector de la vida en Campeche* (Campeche: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/ Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2003).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 22-23. Quoting the eighth book of the *Recopilación de las leyes de las Indias*, mandates 119, 121, and 124. Own translation.

A new plan for the town of Campeche – Plan 1609 – was approved by King Felipe III of Spain in 1610. The plan included new and improved fortifications to the town’s core – to surround four square blocks surrounding the plaza – as a response to the increasing frequency of pirate attacks, though it was the new, spectacular, three-naved cathedral of Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción that interested the King the most.²² Construction began immediately.

The main section of the church was not consecrated until nearly a century later, in 1705, due to pirate attacks, as I will explore in the Pirates and Walls chapter. The first tower, to the north, was built in 1758; while the second, the clock-bearing tower known as the Torre Campechana, was not built until 1850, marking a moment of post-colonial economic splendor in the peninsula. The character built into the architecture of this moment – the second stories, entablatures, bandings, and other ornate finishes on façades – is that which has been immortalized as the *Patrimonio Cultural* that is lived today.

Today, every other building around the plaza has been repurposed, in one way or another, since their construction. On the north side, along 8th street between 55 and 57 streets, the canary-yellow, arched vestibule structure that spans the whole block now houses Campeche’s municipal public library where the municipal and state governments as well as the customs office used to reside. The raised walkway of the building’s arcade more often than not sports banners, framed photos or artwork on easels, and other pop-up exhibitions of public art spilling out from the library’s sister-museum. A single, concrete step separating the arcade from the pedestrian traffic

²² Michel Antochiw, “Mapping Colonial Life in the Main Plaza of Campeche” *Natives, Europeans, and Africans in Colonial Campeche*. Ed. by Vera Tiesler et. Al. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 21.

flow of the sidewalk invites citizens to take a seat – students from the library, lunching taxi drivers – out of the beating midday sun. The matching green building just opposite on the plaza on 10th street (ex-Commercial street) has a Modatelas fabric store, a McDonald's dessert shack, an Italian Coffee shop, and a tourist gift shop. As the main commercial drag in *el centro*, the slow-moving foot traffic seems ceaseless: women with brightly coloured shopping bags; backpack-bearing teens in the high school uniform of the Instituto Campechano, roaming along the slippery marble floors of the arcade walkway. The old colonial houses to the west have been subdivided: a Chinese food joint, a shoe store, the Casa 6 colonial museum. Coveted angled parking spaces in front causing vehicles to circle the cobblestone road around the plaza like vultures. *Viene-viene's* propping themselves up in the doorways and windowsills. What used to be the hospital is now a technical college and an Oxxo; there's a paved park space with a 'dancing fountain' where the market used to be. A copper miniature of the *recinto amurallado* on a concrete base. Metal statues of two boys playing *quimbomba*.

Yet Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción, in all its opulence, remains as it always has been: a perpetual marker of the omnipresence and centrality of Catholic power in Campeche, whose form still and may always suit its function. Several concrete steps lead up to the paved platform that raises the cathedral higher than any other entrance in the *Centro Histórico*. Unlike any other large, open, paved area in within the *recinto amurallado*, there are no benches. No statues. No one. The public art sculptures situated along that street are perched in the middle of the sidewalk, as if the statues themselves would rather obstruct the flow of pedestrian traffic than be accused of diminishing the church's splendor. Nothing would divert one's trajectory away from the imposing, arched, hardwood double-doors of the cathedral. The land-use of this space seems to design out any

social activity, presenting a stark contrast to the rest of the bustling plaza and its surrounding streetscape. While the physical design features of this space – the lack of seating, shade, or commercial opportunities on the raised platform, for example – is conducive to its hostility, for which reason I argue that there is an aspect of concrete and symbolic exclusionary architecture that serves to repel the ways of being that are found in the rest of the plaza. Furthermore, this symbolic aspect is explicitly colonial.

In his narrative history of Latin America, Charles Chasteen points out that “religion offers one of the clearest examples of cultural hegemony.”²³ Catholicism as a weapon of colonization was central in subduing Indigenous and African populations, allowing the colonial hierarchy, based principally on race (or the *casta* system), to be enforced both externally – as seen in the ‘witch’ trials of the inquisition²⁴ – as well as internally. As an example, Chasteen points out how many aspects of colonial power structures, such as the authority of clergy over worshippers, and monarchs over everyone, are enforced by notions of purity and divine rights, respectively. Those at the top of this hierarchy were overwhelmingly European, while the disenfranchised positions correspond with their placement in the racialized *casta* system which by consequence systematically marginalizes Indigenous, African, and mixed-race persons. This system therefore allows for the cultural exclusion of these marginalized groups to be internalized by the groups themselves,

²³ Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*. 3rd edition. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011), 57.

²⁴ Eva Leticia Brito Benítez, *La Inquisición en Campeche*. (Campeche: CONACULTA / INAH, 2006). This collection of archival data provides a snapshot of the Catholic Church’s inquisition-related documents from 1560 to 1819, including witchcraft trials (representing 18.36% of all crimes against the Church) in which the accused were overwhelmingly categorized as “negro/a” or “mulatto/a.”

establishing the hegemonic order in which their inclusion in the belief system naturalizes their exclusion from its access to power.

This pervasive system reaches even further, overwriting the native chronology of those upon whom it was forced:

The church even controlled time; the tolling of bells set the rhythm of the day, signaling hours of work, rest, and prayer. Successive Sundays marked the seven-day week, which was new to indigenous people. The Catholic calendar of observances and holidays provided milestones through the year: a collective, public ebb and flow of emotions, from celebration at Epiphany and Carnival, for example, to the somber mood of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. The milestones of individual lives, from baptism to marriage to death, were validated by church sacraments and registered in church records.²⁵

These rhythms, implemented with the erection of colonial Campeche's first building, still persist today. The bells of Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción continue to toll, signifying, as Leal Sosa puts it, "the conquest of the spirit."²⁶ This control is inextricably linked to the physical presence of the church's edifice, in turn serving as a reminder of the systems in place that perpetuate the colonial ordering of the City – the permissible ways of being not only in space, but also time. This theme of the intersections between time and space in the question of social control

²⁵ Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*. 3rd edition. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011), 58.

²⁶ Jacqueline Leal Sosa, *La Plaza como eje rector de la vida en Campeche* (Campeche: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/ Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2003), 48. Translation mine.

will recur throughout this work, manifesting itself in the artifacts and performances of Campeche's *Centro Histórico*.

With the persistent hegemonic power of the church in consideration, this building can be described as an artifact of symbolic hostile design. By nature of the hegemonic stronghold Catholicism continues to hold in Campeche (control of mental space²⁷) and through its aforementioned design features (physical organization of space²⁸), it repels any activities in its immediate vicinity save for the worship of the artifact itself; and it demands the same obedience that it has since 1542.

Turn back, and against the backdrop of the ever-present Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción, backtrack to the heart of *el Centro Histórico* – the plaza itself.

²⁷ Ali Madanipour, "Social Exclusion and Space." In *The City Reader*, ed. Richard T. Legates and Frederic Stout (New York: Routledge, 2016), 208.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 209.

The Lettered City: Plaza II – “*Celebramos Campeche*”

Evolving Plaza – Dramatization of the Patrimony – Meta-Projections of the Lettered – Erasures in the History –
An Introduction to Pirates – Making Culture Nature



Figure 10: The ex-palacio (left), the technical college (center background), and the Church (right background) from the plaza. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 11: Projection of the ex-palacio on the ex-palacio. (Source: mine, 2016.)

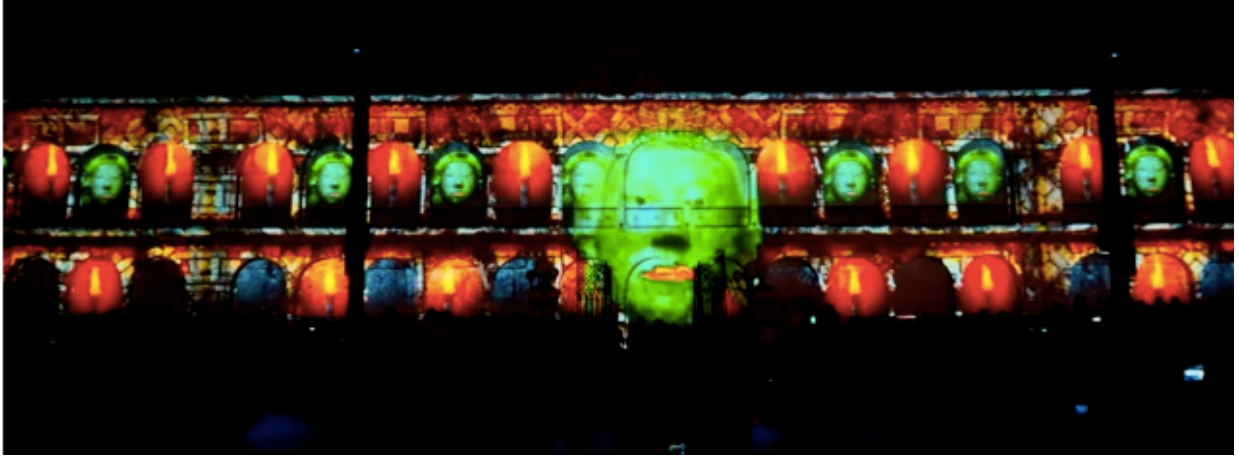


Figure 12: Representation of Maya in Celebramos Campeche. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 13: Representation of fortifications in Celebramos Campeche. (Source: mine, 2016.)

El Parque Principal (ex-Plaza de Armas) has undergone changes over the years whose transition is nicely reflected in its official nomenclature. Originally conceived in the first moments of the colonization of Campeche, the principal of its design revolved around the ability to accommodate all of Campeche’s *vecinos* – with some room for growth – on horseback. The streets that traverse the plaza’s block were to be central arteries, leading to strategic access points such as the entrances and exits of *el centro*, as we will explore in the last chapter with *Calle 59*. The properties that surround the plaza were not to be homes, so that “private life shall remain outside of

the circuit of the plaza.”²⁹ It began as an open, unadorned, empty square, able to adapt to activities – commerce, celebrations, public shaming, military demonstrations – that occupy the space for different occasions. Highly ordered, planned occasions, that would take place under the authority of the plaza’s great edifices: the church, the *aduana*, the *oficina del teniente del rey*. By the late 17th century, the plaza’s vast space housed only a pillory and a well.

By the 20th century, the plaza had shed these hostile features, as most of the urban landscaping seen today had been introduced. Ornate wrought iron railings with stone posts embedded in long stretches of L-shaped adobe blocks surrounding the plaza on all four sides, separating the sedentary public space from the sidewalk. The shorter side is towards the inside of the plaza, with blue tile mosaic embedded in the tops of the seats. Eight matching gates made in New York, one at each corner and one centered on each face. Geometric patches of grassbeds and planters, placed near the periphery to round out the inside of the square space. Manicured shrubs. Tall *flamboyáns*. Cast-iron benches bordering the inner circumference of the planters; and lining the eight paved paths leading into the center of the park, one at each gate. A life-sized statue of the sweets vendor, a traditional *pregonero* who appears to have halted his long stride only to be encased in copper. The trees have grown tall enough to shade the benches from the beaming sun. At the very center, a solid, circular kiosk protrudes out of two paved steps, supported by painted baroque pillars. A café in its shade on one side, tourist information counter on the other.

²⁹ Jacqueline Leal Sosa, *La Plaza como eje rector de la vida en Campeche* (Campeche: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/ Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2003), 23. Translation mine. Despite this condition being one of the royal mandates of the Leyes de Indias, it was not to be abided until well into the 20th century. Now the buildings that used to house the rich and powerful *vecinos* of colonial Campeche have been converted into commercial shops, restaurants, and museums that celebrate the aesthetic tastes and lavish lifestyles of their former *Español* and *Criollo* residents, such as the Casa 6 museum.

By night, the public space of the plaza is bursting at the seams with citizens and tourists alike, drifting, transiting, spectating, and socializing. Municipal and regional programming is displayed or performed here regularly: small concerts, dances, or talent shows. Performances of heritage; performances of history. Canclini notes that “the dramatization of the patrimony is the effort to simulate that there is an origin, a founding substance, in relation with which we should act today,”³⁰ which is precisely what will occur here tonight. Tonight, like most Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, the *Celebramos Campeche Videomapping* spectacle will be projected onto the library’s façade.

Rows of folding chairs are arranged inside the round of the plaza for the spectacle, oriented towards the ex-government palace. Families of Campechanos rearrange them to accommodate the numbers in which they arrived to see the show: amorphous multigenerational groups cluster, adjusting their angles to enjoy each other’s company while awaiting the spectacle. Semicircles with stoic matriarchs at the center. Toddlers bouncing around their legs, those plastic toys on strings – the ones that rattle when dragged around on their hard wheels – in tow. Fanny-pack bearing tourists, whose complexions, wardrobe, and statures give them away, flanking the makeshift seating arrangements with a curious gaze. Folks reclined against the pillars of the kiosk, still in their telltale golf shirt-and-slacks work uniforms. Some perched on its paved steps. Ice cream cones from McDonalds; small, individually wrapped sweets from the Oxxo; frappuccinos from the Italian Coffee Co. Others, indifferent to the spectacle, reading the paper, relaxed into the benches under the

³⁰ Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Transl. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 110.

electric lights, in profile to the library's face. Hunched over *jóvenes* scrolling through Facebook. Teenage couples tucked into the dimly lit periphery on the blue-tile seating bordering the plaza. Relishing a moment of intimacy in the anonymity of the crowd. If the breeze is just right, the subtle smell of the sea drifts through.

White screens descend between the arches of the library's façade. At 8pm, a pre-recorded woman's voice blares into the plaza:

Buenas noches, qué alegría que hayas llegado esta noche. Y somos el conjunto de tres edificios que ocuparon la aduana; el palacio municipal; y el palacio del gobierno. Juntos se nos ha conformado el espacio público de esta hermosa plaza de San Francisco de Campeche.

She continues on, speaking in first person as the building itself. The ex-palacio, performed as a living subject, informs the audience with its firsthand account. A performance of authority; of veracity; of relatability. Reminding Campechanos of what they have to be proud of. She explains how she was rebuilt in 2003, since the state government, in a modernizing move, demolished the 18th century home to the port's customs, municipal government, and state government offices in 1962. She speaks of the other restorative projects in the *Centro Histórico*, including the *murallas*; the Plaza Juan Carbo, just outside of the Puerta del Mar where the dock once was; and important museums of the state's history, for the enjoyment of Campechano families and visitors.

She speaks of the presentation to come, which, thanks to technology, could “*resumir en imágenes la historia de la que he sido parte por mas de 300 años y de la cual nos sentimos muy orgullosos.*” That with this multimedia spectacle, summing up all of the projects in the historical areas of the state of Campeche “*reafirmamos nuestra identidad. Nos reconocemos en las matices de mi nueva piel, que refleja nuestras orígenes culturales.*”

The projector fires up onto the *ex-palacio del gobierno*. The cellphone-bearing hands of spectators raise to take photo and video of the spectacle. To the tune of Campeche’s unofficial anthem (“*esto es Campeche señores, la tierra del pregonero...*”), the show begins: a giant blueprint of the library is projected onto itself. After the plan had lingered for a moment, it is replaced by her own image, a meta-building, as stacks of warm-coloured, hardcover book spines pile up within the arches, with their gold-embossed authors and titles illegible: some ambiguous body of western knowledge. Which of the two – the projection of the building or the building itself – is the skin whose nuances reflect Campeche’s cultural identity, as proclaimed by the building’s narrator?

I am reminded of Angel Rama’s theory of *The Lettered City*, in which Spanish colonial cities are conceived in written plans: an “ordering principle [revealing] itself as a hierarchical society transposed by analogy into a hierarchical design of urban space.”³¹ That the physical edifice is a projection of the colonial ordering principle, a signified that precedes the sign:

From the time of their foundation the imperial cities of Latin America had to lead double lives: on the one hand, a material life inescapably subject to the flux of construction and

³¹ Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*. Transl. by John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 3.

destruction, the contrary impulses of restoration and renovation, and the circumstantial intervention of human agency; on the other hand, a symbolic life, subject only to the rules governing the order of signs, which enjoy a stability impervious to the accidents of the physical world.³²

This celebration of Campeche, the self-proclaimed reaffirmation of its identity, avouches Rama's theory. For the half-hour of the spectacle, both the "real" and the "ideal" of the lettered city are united and visible, projected one upon another in this moment of ephemeral clarity. The *Biblioteca Campeche*, a projection of the colonial order as planned and built centuries ago, is rearticulating its signification through tonight's projection of her own innateness in *Campechanidad* as a founder of the city's heritage.

This labyrinth of signs is the work of the letrados, or collectively, the achievement of the city of letters. Only the letrados could envision an urban ideal before its realization as a city of stone and mortar, then maintain that ideal after the construction of the city, preserving their idealized vision in a constant struggle with the material modifications introduced by the daily life of the city's ordinary inhabitants.³³

The writers of *Las Leyes de las Indias*, the planners of the colonial ordered city, and the designers of the *Videomapping* spectacle are Rama's *letrados*: those who reaffirm their positions in the hegemonic order of colonialism (or coloniality) by asserting their own centrality in their writing and re-writing of history. By attaching this history to the physical artifacts that make up the built

³² Ibid, 9.

³³ Ibid, 29.

environment of the city's prized public space, the power structures that are ordered into the "ideal city" become acutely localized therein, producing public spaces whose relationships to cultural inclusion and exclusion can be read through the subjectivities included (or excluded) in this accepted, popular, or official historical narrative.

The projections continue.

The video takes the spectator through a chronological audiovisual representation of this history. It begins with two-dimensional, pictographic characters, then a stone pyramid, and finally a jade mask to represent the Mayan past; set to rhythmic, amelodic, primitive-sounding percussion and vocalizing. That is the only reference to the Maya throughout the half-hour presentation: the region's still living Indigenous cultures are represented entirely by monolithic artifacts of a mythical(ized) past. Even the contact between the Maya population and the conquistadores and colonialists, as reviewed in a previous section, was flouted entirely from this visual narrative: instead, the artifacts selected for Maya representation are shown being overgrown by jungle. A four-minute segment displaying Campeche state's biodiversity separates the representation of the Maya from the representation of the arrival of the colonizers.

The projections continue.

A lovely seascape, with calm, melodic, Spanish guitar music accompanied by flute and choir introduces armour-clad men in boats, standing erect, chests high, bearing white flags with Campeche's coat of arms. A fleet of Spanish ships sailing across calm waters against a blue sky

follow suit. Tension builds in the music; thunder claps; and a dark sky rolls in, following the Spanish ships travelling from left to right across the library's façade. In the black clouds, pirate ships with black skull-and-crossbone flags hurl cannonballs towards the Spanish fleet. As the frame continues to follow the fleet, they disappear behind a stone barrier. It is Campeche's *muralla*, returning the cannonball fire to the pirate ships. The melodic theme of "*Pregonero Campechano*" is adapted by trumpets in the 'pirate pursuit' score. The pirate ships sink, and the music fades back to the choral Spanish guitar music, as an urban plan on distressed paper unfolds over the scene. It is a plan of the fortified urban center of Campeche, as drawn in military engineer Jaime Frank's 1705 plan for the fortification of the city. The map zooms in and lays down, as if on a table top, and the stone fortifications rise out of the plan, with the *Puerta del Mar* at center screen. Whoa... how did that wall get there?

This story, this foundational narrative projected upon the projection of the narrative foundation, is a central theme in the placemaking practices and branding of the historical center of Campeche: pirates and the walls built to defend against them.

Pirates. Disneyland rides and Muppets movie adaptations, children's literature and Halloween costumes, punchlines of jokes and themes of parties. In Campeche, they're in the nomenclature of hotels; articles in the souvenir shops; the topic of tours; the namesake of the local baseball team; copper statues on 59th street; performances for tourists; museums all around the urban center. Let's be real: who doesn't love those old-timey, eye patch wearing, parrot shouldering, stinkin' drunk, foul mouthed, caricaturesque pirates?

Pirates as a symbol of *Campechanidad* can be interpreted in terms of Canclini's notion of identification codes. He posits: "Every group that wants to differentiate itself and affirm its identity makes tacit or hermetic use of identification codes that are fundamental to internal cohesion and to protect itself from strangers."³⁴ As I will develop in the following chapter, this is true not only symbolically in the colonial center of Campeche, but also physically, as the pirate-centered marker of *Campechanidad* is reinforced with an imposing physical monument – the walls and bastions of the defensive system whose conservation efforts endow them their pirate signification. Canclini proceeds to illustrate that these conservation regimes "seek the maximum identification of the public-people with the accumulated cultural capital,"³⁵ the capital in this case being the Cultural Patrimony. A symptom of this effort can be observed in the neutralization of historical violences and the erasure of Indigenous and African subjects in the *Celebramos Campeche* projection show, as it was made more palatable for inclusion in the narrative of *Campechanidad*, for example. This erasure goes beyond the projected narrative spectacles of Cultural Patrimony, extending the resulting significations of these narratives to the physical built environment in the *Centro Histórico*. "For patrimonial conservatism, the ultimate purpose of culture is to be converted into nature. To be natural like a gift."³⁶ The iterations and reiterations of the foundational narratives of the City, projecting meanings onto the conserved urban *Patrimonio Cultural*, are so pervasive within the imaginings of Campeche that they have become the symbolic and the material basis of an unquestionable order – one that defines the City and the subjects therein. The next chapter will

³⁴ Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Transl. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 110.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 111.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 111.

explore this relationship as we encounter pirate-signifying features throughout this next leg of the *dérive*.

Pirates and Walls: The Foundational Narrative – Building Campeche

Pirates of 10th Street – Pirates of 59th Street – Puerta del Mar – Only the Sculpted Monoliths – Pirate Museum –
The Pirate Narrative – Another Side of the Story – The Other Side of the Wall – On the Margins – Puerta de
Tierra



Figure 15: Coco-piratas hanging in a souvenir shop. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 16: Under the arcade on Calle 10. (Source: mine, 2016.)

Figure 17: A Pirate Statue on Calle 59. (Source: mine, 2016.)

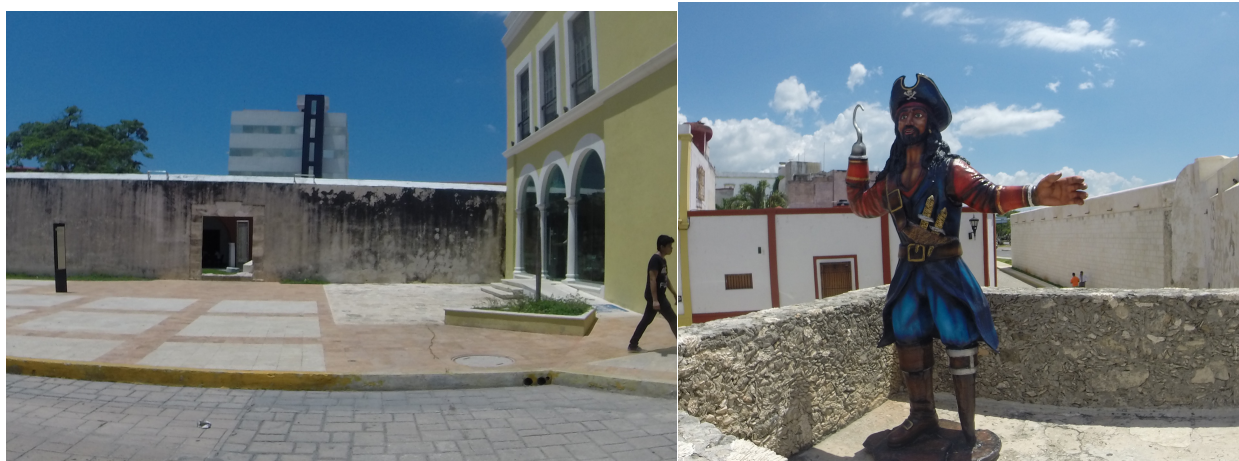


Figure 18: Entrance to the Baluarte de Soledad. (Source: mine, 2016.)

Figure 19: The top of the entrance ramp to the Baluarte de San Carlos. (Source: mine, 2016.)

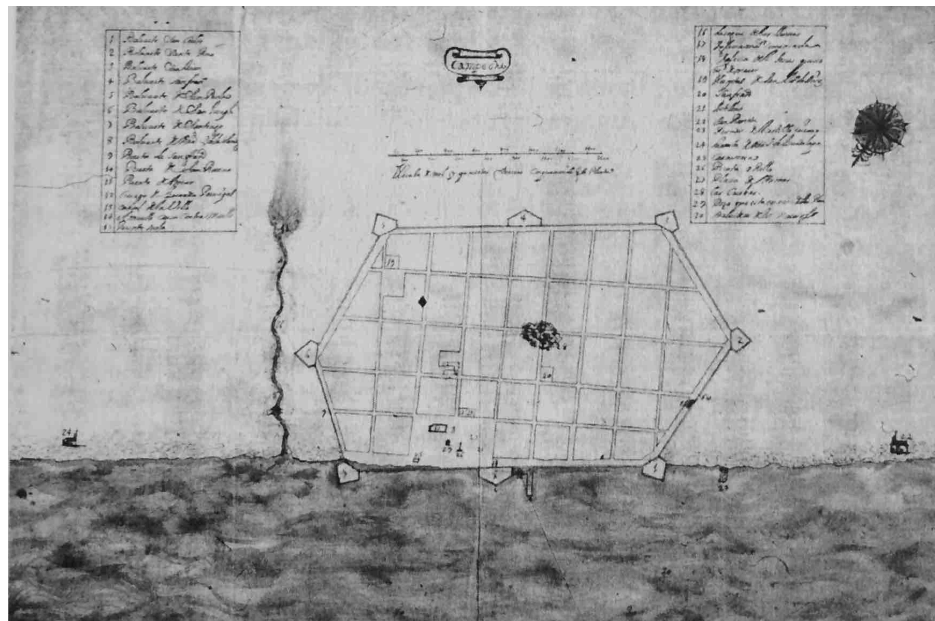


Figure 20: The 1705 plan of Campeche's almost-completed fortification systems – in the shape that remains today. (Source: Michel Antochiw, 2010.)



Figure 21: Baluarte de Santa Rosa from across the street. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 22: A chu on exhibit. (Source: mine, 2016.)

On the corner of 57th and 10th streets, right across the street from the plaza, the large, double entrance souvenir shop beyond the marble-floored arcade stays afloat commodifying *Patrimonio Cultural*. Ashtrays, coffee cups, and shot glasses shaped like the bastions of the *Centro Histórico*'s defensive structures. The likeness of the *murallas* reproduced on bookmarks, notepads, tote bags, and dad-hats. Cannon-shaped keychains hang next to the Mayan calendar ones. Pirate shirts. Pirate posters. Pirate storybooks. Pirate chess sets. Hardened, hairy coconuts, shaved, carved, painted, and clothed with little bandanas and eyepatches: *coco-piratas*.

Outside, 10th street is the hub of commercial activity, as its name suggests (*Calle 10 antes Commercial*). This too is by design. As mentioned before, the streets surrounding the plaza are ordered so that they fulfill the central functions of public life: the political, cultural, and economic activities should take place here. Though now restricted to modern, capitalist practices of economic participation, these streets continue to comply with this order. I will expand on this in the following chapter.

Stepping out of the souvenir shop under the arcade opposite the plaza to the *ex-palacio* onto 10th street, the heavy flow of pedestrian traffic sweeps the *dérive* away, opposite the direction of vehicle traffic on the narrow, one-way street. After leaving the arcade behind – beyond the plaza; beyond the church – crossing 57th street, the sidewalk becomes narrow. Were two adults, walking shoulder to shoulder, to come upon another grouping of the same, one would have to move off to the side: squeeze through laterally, single file; step up into a storefront; or duck in between the parked vehicles lining the near side of the street, in order to pass. The properties that line the street, exponentially subdivided to maximize the storefront space, are comparable to those that line the west block of the plaza: attached, two-storied, brightly painted adobe buildings with ornamented door frames and balconies with wrought iron balusters. The unbordered line between pastel pink and mint green, royal blue and barnhouse red, provide the only indication of how big these houses used to be. Tiny snack shacks, car rental storefronts, sandal stores. The smell of freshly baked bread. Approaching the corner of 10th and 59th street, there's a bakery, *La Panadería Nueva Española* on the corner. Turn right, cross the vehicle traffic of 10th street towards the *panadería*, onto 59th street. Three large potted trees at the intersection indicate that it is closed to vehicle traffic (or open to pedestrian traffic, depending on your perspective) making the length of 59th a wide, open-air, outdoor public space.

The lower three blocks of *Calle 59 (antes América)* reveals itself as a peacefully disordered array of blocky wooden dining tables and chairs; barstools and high tables; and plastic patio tables with umbrellas, all perched precariously on the uneven cobblestone roadway. Waiters and servers lurking under the open doorways, awaiting customers in the shelter of the air-conditioned restaurants. Groups of men in dress shirts, top buttons undone, chatting boisterously over sweating

glasses of *michelada*. Tourists cross-checking menus with their cellphones. Strings of festive coloured lights hang laterally, high between the buildings' baroque trimmed tops. There is a bronze pirate, sitting casually on a bench in front of the Hotel Don Gustavo, with his arm loosely extended from the shoulder resting atop the backrest. Boleros seeping out of the hotel entrance, gently clashing with the top-40 from the bars down the street. Restaurants like La Choperia and La Parrilla Colonial, recognizable as somewhat upscale national franchises, abound along the stretch.

Following 59th street back towards 8th street brings us again to the Puerta del Mar and the *muralla*. The wide, unobstructed portal shows no indication of its old defensive function: on the contrary, the arched stone entrance, with its bell hanging atop, welcomes the entrance and exit of walkers as they please. There is a stark, visible line on the *muralla*, from the blackened, textured stone of the gate to the gleaming, *cal*-coated stones of the section to its immediate right. In the fresh section, there are little rocks, arranged in the mortar between the smooth faces of the larger, structural stones in little lines. The large section between the Gate to the Sea and the bastion to the east is rebuilt, up to the Baluarte de Soledad.

The entrance to this bastion, a square doorway subtly nestled between the *ex-palacio* and the Puerta del Mar, is barely noticeable from the sidewalk: a heavy, wooden double door through the *muralla* to the inner yard of the bastion is just slightly ajar; and there are no signs, no sounds coming from inside. An awkward 2x10 hardwood doorbuck demands a marching step if one were to enter. Peeking through the foreboding doorway exposes a second level of the bastion that is invisible from the inside of the *recinto amurallado*. An unmarked desk under it. No attendant. This ex-bastion that once housed military personnel and weaponry is now home to the Museum of

Mayan Architecture, containing “only the sculpted monoliths of the Mayan era.”³⁷ Its nomenclature, unchanged from the colonial system, comes from the catholic virgin, *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad*. Ripped from their context of origin and denied of any indication of meaning, like the representation of Maya in the projected spectacle of the previous chapter, these artifacts of the past contained in this museum are shrouded in mystery, situated in incongruence, and clad in the colonial tradition. A pattern can be seen in these kinds of representations, which I will discuss when we encounter further examples in the following chapter.

Gazing back down the rest of the *muralla* westward, opposite the direction of the plaza, the anachronistic straddle of 8th street has one foot in Old Campeche and the other in the New. The out-of-square layout of the sidewalk alludes to a section of the *muralla*, between the Puerta del Mar and the Baluarte de San Carlos, that is missing. The new *Palacio del Gobierno*, a brutalist concrete structure paired with tall rectangular glass-faced mid-rise, replaces not only the *ex-palacio* but also a block-long section of *muralla*. Walk right past modernity, up to the concrete ramp entrance to the bastion, about halfway up the inside of the wall. A life-sized, cartoon-like, fiberglass pirate with a hook for a hand grimaces from just outside the entrance to the pirate museum in the Baluarte de San Carlos – named after King Carlos II of Spain. This name and the architecture that harbours it – like the other two pirate museums housed in the Puerta de Tierra and the Baluarte San Francisco on the other side of the *Centro Histórico* – enjoys a thematic congruence and visibility that the Museum of Mayan Architecture does not.

³⁷ “Museo de Arquitectura Maya: Baluarte de la Soledad” *Red de Museos*, INAH. Accessed May 30, 2018. <http://www.inah.gob.mx/es/red-de-museos/199-museo-de-arquitectura-maya-baluarte-de-la-soledad>. Translation mine.

It should come as no surprise at this point in the *dérive* of the *Centro Histórico* that Campeche loves its pirate narrative and its concrete representation in the *murallas*, and that the adoption of this narrative both in the branding of the city for tourism (as seen in the souvenir shops) and as a cultural symbol of local identity (exemplified by the name of the city's professional baseball team *Los Piratas*) is all but pervasive. Even the state of preservation of the Zone of Historical Monuments prior to any restoration initiatives – that which is at the core of the city's identity and has put Campeche on the map globally – can be attributed to the presence of the polygonal defensive system of the *murallas* and *baluartes*: the corset of stone that has protected the city from dangerous intruders has also impeded any large-scale urban transformation to the city it protects. As a cultural symbol, therefore, the walls have come to signify the resiliency and timelessness of colonial Campeche; its strength and valiance in the face of adversity; a testament to the ingenuity and dedication of its *vecinos*.

Walls, in essence, simultaneously must serve two inseparable functions: to include and protect that which is inside; and to exclude and protect against that which is outside. The *Celebramos Campeche* spectacle projected pirate attacks and the *murallas* as essentially and inextricably linked in meaning: that Campeche was walled to protect *vecinos* against pirates. This significance is visibly reinforced all around the city, as exemplified by the three bastions, one seaward and the other two land-facing, that have been dedicated to pirate museums. Even the UNESCO documents inducting the *Centro Histórico* into the list of World Heritage Sites reinforces this narrative: “Upon ending the century XVII the downtown area in the one were inhabiting the Spanish [sic] was walled

in order to protect it from the pirate invasions.”³⁸ The two subjects in this narrative are easily positioned: the Spanish protagonist, situated within the protective walls; and the pirate antagonist, situated outside the walls. As observed in the projection show, which reflects the dominant historical narrative, the cessation of pirate attacks allowed Campeche to flourish, leading to the development of non-military architectural treasures that make up the rest of its highly valued *Patrimonio Cultural* that still stands today.

Considering all of this, I can't help but notice the conspicuous absence of non-European subjects in this pirate narrative. After all, the fortitude of Campeche's economy is that which made it such a fruitful target for such attacks – an economy driven by the forced labour of Mayan Indigenous people of the region and enslaved African and Indigenous people brought in by wealthy landowners. While cacao, salt, and leather were counted among some of their most significant global exports, it was the *palo de tinte* industry,³⁹ fuelled almost exclusively by slave labour, that most attracted pirate raids.⁴⁰ Furthermore, and this goes without saying, Campeche's fortifications indeed did not raise themselves out of the ground after an epic cannonfire battle, as the *Celebramos Campeche* projection show suggests. As Alicia Elidé Gómez Montejo notes in her state funded *Monografía del Municipio de Campeche*, the entire fortification structure was built by Indigenous,

³⁸ “WHC Nomination Documentation for the Historic Fortified Town of Campeche.” (UNESCO: 1999), 16.

³⁹ *Palo de tinte*, also known as campechewood in English or Ek in Yucatec Mayan, is a hardwood native to the region that was exported for use as a textile dye in European clothing manufacturing.

⁴⁰ Piedad Peniche Rivero “Notas sobre la organización de la producción de palo de tinte en el siglo XVI,” *Biotica* 8, no. 1 (1983): 18. This paper details how the palo de tinte trade was initially carried out through the exploitation of Maya slaves. Later, enslaved Africans and “mulattos” were forced into the cutting and transporting of the lumber, and the processing was done by Indigenous people who were paid meagerly for their work.

black, “mulatto,” and mestizo labour that was, as offensively euphemized in this book, “cheap or given away” – otherwise known as coerced labour and slavery.⁴¹

An exploration of the historical antecedents that serve to subsidize this dominant narrative of piracy in Campeche is essential to the understanding of the spatialized cultural symbols of the Historical Center, pirate-related and otherwise, and how they have served and continue to serve an ordering function in this valued space.

As I had mentioned in the section detailing the construction of Campeche’s main church, the *Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción* had taken priority over the defensive structures proposed in the 1604 fortification plan, and it remained the focus of human and material resources for some years. In any other colonial Latin American city, this prioritization would be intuitive based on the urgency of the colonial impulse to subdue the Indigenous and African populations through means of spiritually based hegemony. Despite this, by the mid-seventeenth century, debilitating pirate attacks had stalled the church’s development entirely, leading the colonial administrators and in turn the King to turn their attention once again to Campeche’s fortifications. By 1649, Felipe III ordered the partial demolition of the church-in-progress in favour of the new fortifications:

It would be advisable for you to consider if it will be better to eliminate this work, demolishing all parts of the church that stand and since there are desires to build a church, it would be advisable to erect it in proportion to the land, demolishing the rest and using

⁴¹ Alicia Elidé Gomez Montejo, *Monografía del Municipio de Campeche* (Campeche: Gobierno del Estado de Campeche 2009-2015, 2010), 30.

that material to finish [the fortifications] so that the enemy cannot take shelter if he entered in what stands of the church.⁴²

By this point, Campeche had been suffering pirate attacks for over 90 years, the latter three quarters mostly from English privateers targeting the vulnerable port not only for their rich resources, but also because disagreements back in the heart of the empire over trade territory was making Spain particularly unpopular amongst the other European colonial forces. Frequent sackings had left Campeche relatively impoverished, thus necessitating the cessation of the church project in order to focus on the construction of fortifications. However, King Felipe III had other concerns. Please note his use, quoted above, of the description “the enemy.” It turns out that he was not referring to pirates at all. He continues the above passage, iterating his fears of occupation:

It would be compulsory to give it up and hand it over and having done this it would be easy for the enemy to sustain it for the difficulty to save it... it could be feared that all **the Indians** will join forces, whereupon they would not lack provisions.⁴³

Regardless, the fortification plan approved in this letter was meager, consisting only of two bastions around the plaza armed with artillery. Pirates continued to terrorize Campeche.

⁴² Michel Antochiw, “Mapping Colonial Life in the Main Plaza of Campeche” *Natives, Europeans, and Africans in Colonial Campeche*. Ed. by Vera Tiesler et. Al. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 24. Quoting a certificate by Felipe III from February 12, 1648.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 24. Emphasis mine.

A plan for fortification walls connecting the bastions that would surround the urban core of the City was proposed in 1680, with construction beginning in 1684. A lack of funds would slow the process, though interest was renewed after the famous 1685 attack of the pirate Laurent Graff ‘Lorencillo,’ whose sacking and burning of Campeche left little more than destruction in its wake. After the detention of Lorencillo and crew in Hampolol (on their way to Mérida), the fortification plan was amended, charged to engineer Jaime Frank who designed the defensive system that exists today. By 1704, the eight bastions and connecting walls had been erected, and the full defensive structure including gates was completed by 1710 – again, due to the coerced or slave labour of Campeche’s Indigenous and African populations. Campeche was finally adequately fortified, ensuring their security against pirate attacks. Well, kind of.

As mentioned earlier, the political situation in the heart of the empire had great repercussions in the colonies: incessant wars between the colonial powers in Europe had catalyzed the instances of pirate and privateer aggressions in Campeche, as these attacks on the Spanish colonial port city were often approved by the monarchs of the attackers.⁴⁴ The death of the Hapsbourg King Charles II of Spain in 1700 had sparked the War of Spanish Succession over worry of disturbing Europe’s balance of power, subsequently resolved in 1713 with the Treaties of Utrecht and Madrid. These peace treaties, signed by the three aforementioned colonial powers among others, effectively marked the end of monarch-sanctioned piracy between the kingdoms involved. In other words, “piracy in Campeche declined definitively in 1713 when Spain and England signed the Treaties of Madrid and

⁴⁴ Othón Baños Ramírez, “Piratería forestall y economía-mundo: El caso de la Laguna (1558-1717). *Relaciones*, 132 (2012): 78.

of Utrecht.”⁴⁵ A mere three years after the termination of Campeche’s defensive system, a somewhat less romantic succession than that depicted in the *Celebramos Campeche* projection – one of colonial bureaucracy – is responsible for the end of piracy in Campeche. Despite this, the walls and fortifications have retained the signification of having defended Campeche against pirates, leading to its period of economic splendor to follow. Well, that may also be problematized by an oft-excluded, un-sexy piece of the story.

The Bourbon Reforms that came out of the new Spanish monarch put in power through the aforementioned treaties, though detrimental to many colonial economies, had significantly benefitted Campeche. As an important trade point between colonial Mexico and Europe, the removal of trade duties allowed for substantial economic growth. It was during this latter half of the 18th century that Campeche’s physiognomy was modified within the walled district, building the urban center that we see today. So again, we see the foundations of Campeche being shaped by the bureaucratic subjects in the heart of the empire instead of by the valiance or ingenuity of the subjects in the City itself. The walls themselves, therefore, had a less significant role than the dominant narrative would suggest.

Since these walls only served to defend against the threat of pirates for approximately three years after over 150 years of attacks, and consequently played a very minor role in Campeche’s subsequent economic growth, what meaning can be attributed to their highly valued presence? Again, the essential role of a wall is to include and protect what is inside; and to exclude and protect against what is outside.

⁴⁵ Alicia Elidé Gomez Montejo, *Monografía del Municipio de Campeche* (Campeche: Gobierno del Estado de Campeche 2009-2015, 2010), 31.

As mentioned before, the urban core of Campeche housed *vecinos*, that is, the white residents of Campeche. As per the population decrees in the *Leyes de Indias*, the individual houses were designed “so that they serve as defense and protection against those who want to disturb or infest the population. And each house individually is to be finished so that it can accommodate horses and beasts of service.”⁴⁶ The backs of these homes, sectioned off to house domestic animals, also served as the residence of slaves. Otherwise, the free black populations resided in the neighborhood of Santa Ana, that adjoins the *Centro Histórico* to the east, still stands today. Similarly, the Maya population was relegated to the San Francisco neighborhood, past the *barrio* Guadalupe (another white neighborhood) just to the northeast of the *centro*; and the previously enslaved Nahua population settled in San Román to the south. These neighborhoods, segregated based on the racial makeup of the residents, were cut off from the downtown core by the *murallas*. Access gates were built at San Román and Guadalupe; then closed again when the Puerta de Tierra was built in 1732; and finally reopened due to the *vecinos*’ complaints at the inconvenience of having to walk up to one kilometer to exit the walled district.⁴⁷

It is worth noting that the neighborhoods of San Francisco, Guadalupe, Santa Ana, and San Román are still geographically delineated today much as they were in the colonial period. They each contain varying amounts of historical buildings, many in varying states of disrepair, and are included in both the national and UNESCO zones of historical monuments. These neighborhoods are given secondary status to the walled-in district:

⁴⁶ Michel Antochiw, “Mapping Colonial Life in the Main Plaza of Campeche” *Natives, Europeans, and Africans in Colonial Campeche*. Ed. by Vera Tiesler et. Al. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 28.

⁴⁷ Alicia Elidé Gomez Montejo, *Monografía del Municipio de Campeche* (Campeche: Gobierno del Estado de Campeche 2009-2015, 2010), 31.

The “A” zone [the *Centro Histórico*] represents greater monument density and patrimonial value than the “B” zone [the surrounding neighborhoods] with smaller density and less patrimonial value, being a transition and protection zone to the previous zone.⁴⁸

Aside from the state of disrepair and lower density of historical resources, the essential lesser value of the “B” zone is not explained in any documentation that legitimizes these areas as *Patrimonio Cultural*; nor is the lack of preservation and restoration initiatives in the “B” zone that would cause this state of disrepair and replacement of historical buildings. It is simply, inexplicably, of lesser value than the walled-in, predominantly Spanish district in which colonial power resides.

Considering firstly that the walls, many of which are still up today, have only spent about three years of their existence defending against pirates; secondly, the racial makeup of the inhabitants of the colonial *centro* as opposed to those in the neighborhoods that the walls exclude; and finally, the historical and cultural value attributed to the walled-in district as opposed to the excluded zones, the significance of these fortifications can be read as a weapon of racialized urban exclusion, as foreshadowed in the discourse of King Felipe III’s 1649 letter, quoted above. Historically, they have physically barred Maya, Nahua, and Afro-descended population’s access to the spatialized center of political, economic, and cultural power: the urban center and the plaza.

⁴⁸ WHC nomination documents, page 13

Today, the *barrios* surrounding the *Centro Histórico*, much like the downtown area itself, is not visibly racially segregated. The *murallas* around downtown no longer stand as a complete physical obstacle to access around the entire area. The destruction of select sections began as early as 1893 to open up for modern transit, initiating a longstanding tradition in Campeche of the destruction and reconstruction of certain key monuments, as we had seen with the *ex-palacio* in the previous chapter: the inconsolable tension between modernity and tradition. Sections of the *muralla* parallel to the sea, as well as their opposite, have been rebuilt. The lateral sections, toward San Román and Guadalupe, are merely allusions, leaving a *baluarte* on either side standing alone across the heavy traffic of the main road surrounding the *centro*. This road, Avenida Circuito Baluartes, is in the very shape that the *murallas* had forged into the immutable contour of the urban center of Campeche.

Continuing the *dérive* from the Baluarte San Carlos, drift past its long stretch of *muralla* at its flanks; ramped access on 8th street; and its fiberglass pirate doorman. Continuing to follow the rebuilt stretch of *muralla* down 8th street towards San Román, the sidewalk dead-ends with the pivot of the *muralla*, forcing the trajectory to turn eastbound as 8th street, meeting the wall, turns into 67th street and the bastion circuit road. Walking up 67th is another exercise in anachronism: a main transit artery to the right, with black asphalt roads, red lights, and heavy traffic; and architectural artifacts of the past on the left. Move up past the *ex-templo*, or Instituto Campechano – a Franciscan convent turned college. Two blocks ahead, across the busy road to the left, there is a lonely, self-contained bastion, isolated from the *Centro Histórico* by two lanes of traffic and a parking lane. The Baluarte de Santa Rosa now fulfills the function of traffic circle island, as the jungle of modern roadways have grown around it, neither accepting nor rejecting it into the transit-centered design. Jaywalk across the road, crossing the border out of the *Centro Histórico*, dodging vehicles for lack of pedestrian crossings, to

make it to the bastion. The narrow sidewalk that lines the face has a ramped curb on one side, as if to suggest some long-forgotten pedestrian access. Wooden double-doors, wide open, are centered on its flat, unmarked, plastered wall.

Inside the open-air structure, a slightly ajar miniature wooden door – perhaps five feet tall – leads into the indoor portion of the bastion. Today, there are two women sitting at a table inside. No uniforms, no brochures, no reception desk. They are knitting.

The spacious inside of the Baluarte de Santa Rosa is now used as an exposition hall. The signs outside blew away in the last hurricane, the women explained, and were simply never replaced. The air-conditioned exhibition chamber, adjacent to the little reception room, was housing a display on hand-carved *chu*'s: dried, hardened gourds used for food and drink storage, transport, and serving. Unlike every other bastion or museum in the area, there was no admission charge.

The exhibit was created through a workshop, in which Maya artisans taught “*gente normal*” to decorate these traditional housewares and later display them here in the bastion. Evidence of the living, breathing, functional Maya heritage – the Indigenous *Patrimonio Cultural* – of the Campeche region, here at the margins of the *Centro Histórico*, hidden and unmarked, closed away on the spatial and symbolic periphery of the Zone of Historical Monuments.

From here, I made my way around the outskirts of the *recinto amurallado*, up to the walled land-side, where a long stretch of mostly original *muralla* cuts off the *seguro social* hospital, the public transit bus stop, the *mercado*, and the *barrio* Santa Ana from the Cultural Heritage Site of

downtown. Re-entering through the Puerta de Tierra, back onto 59th street, requires passing through the gated *puerta*, still armed with its colossal iron artillery. Funny, that these cannons still outfit the land gate between the *centro* and the neighboring *barrio*, but not the sea gate: a hint that they may never have served for defense against pirates at all.

The bastion, the cannons, the statue of an outlaw behind bars in a built-in cell on the inner wall; the chain-link cordons, traffic pylons, and uniformed museum security guards: the hostility of these design features transcends time. Beyond the physical bars to access, the weapons of exclusion that arm this entrance extend to the symbolic. They bear the physical markers of a narrative of piracy and Spanish bravery that not only systematically exclude the non-European subjectivities from the centralized spaces of citizen participation, but also erase them from the performances of history. The hypervalorization of these walls in the heritage and identity in the city – walls that have spent their lives excluding Maya, Nahua, and Afro-descendant bodies and stories from the center of civic participation and power – can be read as cause and symptom of the perpetuation of the colonial legacy that lives on in the *Centro Histórico* of Campeche.

On the Margins, in the Past: *Pregoneros* and *Ambulantes* on *Calle 59*

Rincón Colonial – *Ambulantes* in the Rincón Colonial – La Tierra del *Pregonero* – Policy on Mobile Commerce – Police Brutality – Colonial Economic Exclusion – *Pregoneros* vs. *Ambulantes* – On the Margins, in the Past – Purchase Required – Rincón de la Cultura Maya – Ancient Mayan Ruins - Exit



Figure 23: A cannon inside the Puerta de Tierra. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 24: Rincón Colonial, the green building on the left corner, from inside the Puerta de Tierra. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 25: Inside Rincón Colonial. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 26: A *dulcero* makes his rounds through Tio Fito. (Source: mine, 2016.)

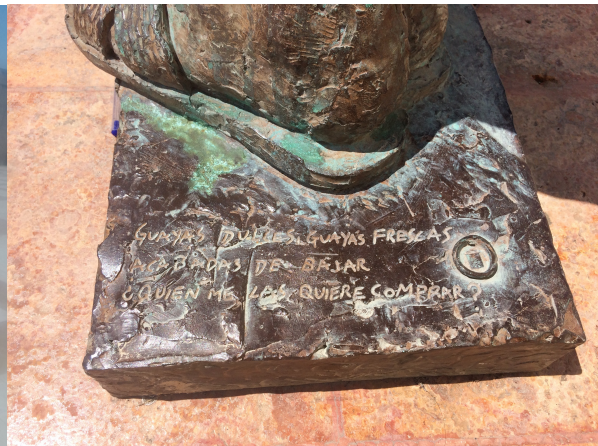


Figure 27: The guaya vendor statue on 18th street in the *centro*. The inscription at her feet reads: “*Guayas dulces, guayas frescas, acabadas de bajar, ¿quién me las quiere comprar?*” (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 28: A screenshot of the incident of police brutality against two Tzotzil women. (Source: proceso.com.mx)

Figure 29: The the mango vendor statue on 59th street. (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 32: “Purchase Required.” (Source: mine, 2016.)



Figure 31: “Artifacts of the Past.” (Source: mine, 2016.)
Figure 32: “Ancient Mayan Ruins.” (Source: mine, 2016.)

The Puerta de Tierra entrance brings us back to 59th street, the straight-shot street that connects the Land Gate to the Puerta de Mar. These upper two blocks of the street, unlike the lower three, are not a furnished public space and therefore have little street life on them. Though they are open to the passage of vehicles, the barricades on the lower half of the street have caused traffic to decline significantly. The houses here, mostly single-story, have not undergone the same subdivisions as those in the areas of condensed commercial activity. On the first corner to the right is the posh Hacienda Puerto Campeche hotel – one of the priciest in the *Centro Histórico*. On the adjacent corner, El Rincón Colonial – colloquially known as “Tio Fito” – with its old-timey, hand-painted wood plank sign and saloon-style, swinging double-hinged doors. In style and nomenclature, it is a suiting establishment to meet the eye when entering the *recinto amurallado*.

This well known treasure of the city doesn't spill into the streets like the restaurants, bars, and clubs of lower 59th. Occasionally a serious-faced, middle-aged *mesero*, ball cap, waist apron, and a rag over one shoulder, will step out and loom outside the doorway; but it is the sounds of the bustling cantina, roaring with activity in any given mid-afternoon, that notify the passer-by that this is the place to stop. You can usually find Tio Fito himself, with his long salt-and-pepper moustache concealing his upper lip and his loud Hawaiian shirt, mingling at a table with other affluent Campechanos – whose pressed, white *guayaberas*; slicked back hair; pale, clean-shaven faces; and freshly shined shoes mark them as the young bureaucratic class of the city – the kind of folks that are quick to position themselves by presenting their last names, much like Tio Fito himself. Today, they occupy the long table next to the 59th street entrance – the most visible spot in the house. Murmurs from some of the quieter clientele, sitting just within earshot, opposite the bar from this rambunctious group, suggest that they are some sort of politicians, celebrating some sort of career milestone. One

of them stands up and announces to the bar that the next round is on him, met with yet more raucous from his table and some awkward applause from their beer-beneficiaries around the room.

Word has it that El Rincón Colonial is the longest running cantina in the city, being in operation for over 100 years, the last 25 under the ownership of Tio Fito. The paint on the chipping plastered interior betrays its age, though it must have once been bright yellow and green, contrasting with the dim lighting over the three-sided bar in the middle of the main room. Creaky ceiling fans, motoring with all their might in a losing battle, hang from the exposed, unfinished wooden beams. The orchestra of white noise is left exposed in the music-free atmosphere: chairs scraping against the floor; the flick of lighters; plates clacking; glasses chinking; an imperceptibly slow crescendo of chatter and laughter climbing with each beer, each shot. Two separate air-conditioned rooms adjoining the main area are sealed off with latching sheet aluminum and plastic doors. A patio area through the back that used to be livestock storage is now entirely covered by a darkened palapa roof. Wiry, well-used bar stools and chairs with makeshift plywood seats line the bar and the handful of low tables that surround it. Arrays of *botanas* on little beige hard plastic plates – *sikil pak*, *pan de cazón*, *papadzules* – are slowly picked at on each table, then replenished by *meseros* with each new round of drinks. The side entrance, facing the *muralla* across 18th street, injects just enough air circulation to dilute the lingering blue-gray tufts of cigarette smoke. Shoe shiners, clandestine hammock peddlers, mariachis, and sweets vendors meander through – in the side door and out the front – circulating in and out at a slow and steady pace; drifting towards tables neither approaching nor avoiding patrons. Matching the distinct yet barely perceptible smoky current.

Back out on 59th street, continue travelling northbound towards the three-block stretch of the road made into furnished public space. Passing the quiet street with the offices and bookstore of the National Institute of Anthropology and History; some tiny military museum; a library, closed to the public with an armed security guard in front; residential homes. Signs in some of the windows read “*No al cierre de 59.*” Another copper statue, matching the *aguador* and the *pescador* on 8th street; the *guaya vendor* and *manicera* on 16th street; and the *vendedor de dulces* in the plaza: *la manguera*. This mango vendor is yet another in a series of homages to the traditional profession of the *pregonero*: a celebrated member of the community in Campeche.

The *pregonero* of Campeche is a mobile vendor of goods, recognizable for their distinct *canto* or sound made to announce the particular product they offer. To this day, in the *barrios*, the domestic delivery of fresh bread is announced by a sharp, penetrating double-clap. This unmistakable notification, among others, is revered in Campeche’s unofficial anthem – the one heard in the *Celebramos Campeche Videomapping* projection show:

*Este es Campeche señores, la tierra del pregonero,
Se levanta con el sol, y se oye con los luceros.
Se levanta muy temprano, con sus alegres palmadas,
El gordito panadero, de imperial panadería.*

While the *pregonero*, complete with *pregones* to announce their offerings, is now a far less common trade, they are the predecessors for the *comerciante ambulante*, or mobile vendor of goods and services, like those seen drifting through Tio Fito. The opportunities afforded by such a

profession extend to those who may not have access to other, capitalist means for selling the goods they produce to gain income. Firstly, there are no costs associated with owning or renting and maintaining a commercial space, therefore eliminating the need to begin with a large sum, and risk an investment of that scale at the outset of their business. Secondly, they are able to generate income outside of the structures of conventional schedules, allowing persons who may not be able to commit to regular business hour occupation – such as single mothers, or rural folks with limited access to transit to the city, for example – the opportunity to work on their own time. Finally, it allows for *campesinos* and artisans to sell the goods that they produce firsthand – from sweets, fruits, and peanuts to hammocks, jewelry, or embroidery – at a self-determined price for their labour.

There is a stark contrast, therefore, between the loud-and-proud tradition of the *pregonero* – the immortalized, historic profession venerated in the arts of Campeche – and the current reality of mobile street vendors in the *Centro Histórico*. Consider, for example, the *dulcero*: the dignified stride of the copper sweets vendor in the plaza, compared to the timid meander of the sweets vendor through Tio Fito. This is because mobile vendors have been made effectively illegal in the *recinto amurallado*.

Chapter III in The Municipal Regulations for Commerce in the Public Spaces of Campeche clearly states:

Mobile commerce within the [*Centro Histórico*] of the city of Campeche and in municipal areas, such as in front of public buildings like schools, hospitals, government offices, public transportation terminals, around public markets, and in other areas that

municipal authorities determine, will be restricted and discretionary for reasons of hygiene, personal security, commercial saturation and urban image.⁴⁹

Since the mobile commercial offerings of *el dulcero* in the *Centro Histórico*, for example, present neither a hygiene risk nor a risk to personal security – as perhaps would be the case in front of a hospital, school, or heavy traffic area – we can infer that it is the latter two reasons that this profession, that of the *comerciante ambulante*, is excluded by policy from operation in the area. That of commercial saturation is easy to interpret. Campeche's priorities are made transparent as they protect the interests of the business that have settled into the subdivided houses of the *centro* – the franchises, the pirate-obsessed gift shops – at the expense of those who do not have economic access to this kind of 'legitimate' commercial operation. That of urban image, however, is a more ambiguous justification that solicits a symbolic interpretation.

I will reiterate the fact that the center of Campeche's urban image consists of one common theme, as it has been developed throughout this work: that of colonialism. We see it glorified in the church, the plaza, and the defensive architecture. The glorification of colonialism is perpetuated through the performances and policies protecting its material artifacts that saturate the entire *centro*; as well as through the narratives of European superiority that we see projected upon these artifacts, consequently erasing the Indigenous and African subjectivities. As demonstrated in the municipal policy on mobile commerce, this colonial image would be somehow threatened or subverted by the presence of real, living street vendors; all the while the statues of their precursors contribute to it. To

⁴⁹ Reglamento para el comercio en la vía pública del municipio de Campeche. *Periódico Oficial del Gobierno del Estado*. (Secretario del H. Ayuntamiento de Campeche: 1993). Own Translation.

exemplify the municipal policy's oxymoronic stance on the relationship between mobile street vendors and Campeche's colonial image, I would like to highlight a particular incident from 2017. In order to understand this relationship, it is worth noting that the majority of the *ambulantes* in the *centro* are Indigenous, particularly Tzotzil women and youths whose artisanal goods are geared towards tourists.⁵⁰

Merely one block away from the mango-vendor statue on *Calle 59*, that smiling Indigenous woman with her *huipil* tucked into her long skirt, and her basket of mangos balanced atop her head witnessed a scene of police brutality against two Tzotzil *ambulantes* that proceeded to go viral in 2017. The cellphone-recorded video shows two police officers attacking two women carrying embroidered *huipiles* and satchels for sale; dragging them by the arms, pulling their hair, trying to peel their merchandise out of their hands as the women resist both physically and vocally. While it is commonplace for police to confiscate the merchandise of *ambulantes* while ejecting them from the public spaces of *Patrimonio Cultural*, the sheer brutality of this particular incident, or perhaps the presence of recording equipment in this age of social media denouncements, evoked a reaction in the witnesses – those subjects with access to political capital in the *centro*. Nearby pedestrians and shopworkers – the legitimized voices of 59th – were recorded expressing their indignation at the attackers, eventually pressuring the cops to uncuff the women and let them go. The violent video spread quickly across social media and local news, and paired with the outcry of human and women's rights activist groups, it made an official response unavoidable. Jorge de Jesús Argáez Uribe, Campeche State's Secretary of Public Security, defended the actions of the police, stating that they

⁵⁰ Based on observations during the aforementioned study period. Tzotzil are Indigenous Maya people from Chiapas. The women's traditional *huipiles*, woven sashes, and cargo shawls allowed me to identify their ethnic origin.

were acting in response to complaints against “these people” by the same society who is now expressing their outrage at their treatment. In a press release, he insisted that the Secretary will continue to push the *ambulantes* out of the *Centro Histórico*, as “this disposition is a condition under which Campeche preserves its UNESCO World Heritage Site Status.” He continues to exculpate these actions: “It has nothing to do with us being against any indigenous [sic], its simply about obeying the law, it has nothing to do with stigmatizing anyone, we all have the right to work, but in conformity with the established regulations.”⁵¹

This rationalization and exculpation, supported by the ritualized value of the area’s UNESCO status, can be read as hypocrisy. As previously discussed, *El Centro Histórico*’s urban cultural patrimony is innately colonial, which again, is founded in the spatialized exclusion of particular communities. Although nothing is mentioned in the UNESCO documentation for Campeche’s World Heritage Site status about mobile commerce, Uribe’s reliance on this valued *Patrimonio Cultural* status to justify the enforcement of the *ambulante* policy explicitly implicates coloniality – by way of the colonial image being protected in the city – in the decision to exclude certain persons from economic participation in this space. Therefore, despite the avowal that the subject’s indigeneity has no bearing on the policy, I would argue that this policy, and the ways in which it is executed, is a stark example of how the colonial city exercises spatialized social control to restrict the economic access of Indigenous subjects in the *Centro Histórico*, as well as their modes of operating as a whole within this space.

⁵¹ Jorge de Jesús Argáez Uribe quoted in Rosa Santana, “Exhiben abuso policiaco contra vendedoras tzotziles en Campeche (Video).” *Proceso.com.mx*, April 10, 2017. Own Translation.

The state policy on *comercio ambulante* is another example of how the legacy of colonialism spatializes the exclusion of Indigenous subjects in Old Town Campeche, as communities that produce and sell their own goods outside of the capitalist structures of legitimized business operations are forced to the margins, barred from access to the state's center of economic participation. To juxtapose the statues of the venerated *pregoneros* – *el dulcero, el pescador, la manicera, la manguera* – with the trade's modern-day descendant would shed light on another form of cultural exclusion. While it is the policy that spatially excludes this form of economic participation, pushing the subject in question to the margins of the center of civic participation; the series of *pregonero* statues, adorning the very streets on which *ambulantes* are banned, would imply that their presence is permitted in this space as long as they can be gazed upon as an artifact of the past: one that, unlike the buildings, streets, and walls of the *Patrimonio Cultural*, has been stripped of its subjectivity and ability to operate. Relegated to the margins, imagined as the past.

Continuing the *dérive* up 59th street, through the strategically placed planters giving the pedestrian the run of the street, between the dinner tables, patio umbrellas, and barstools; past the shops and restaurant fronts. At a table, two Tzotzil women rest under the shade of a patio umbrella. Noticeably *ambulantes* by trade, their *huipiles* for sale are draped over the back of a plastic chair at their table; their cargo shawls slouched below on the cobblestone street. A litre of Cielo brand bottled water on the table before them, purchased at the adjacent café, hints that the 'public space' of this urban cultural patrimony – a zone of “universal heritage”⁵² opened up for non-transit use on the most central street of the *Centro Histórico* – in reality functions as a purchase-required commercial zone, particularly for those whose operations are otherwise excluded from this space.

⁵² “WHC Nomination Documentation for the Historic Fortified Town of Campeche.” (UNESCO: 1999), p. 16.

Towards the conclusion of the trajectory, drawn by the straight-shot of *Calle 59* to exit back through the Puerta de Mar, there is a grouping of Maya sculptures arranged on 59th street. They have been set out by Tu'uk Maya Tsil Rincón de la Cultura Maya, a souvenir shop run by the Independent *Campechino* Front Emiliano Zapata (FRECIEZ) of Campeche, selling the artisanal goods of Indigenous collectives from the rural areas of Campeche State. There is a stark contrast between the contents of Tu'uk Maya Tsil and the typical souvenir shops of *el centro*: there are no silly pirates, no mass-produced prints of Mayan calendars, no embroidered *hupiles* made in Bangladesh. Natural hygiene products, honey and chocolates, kitchen utensils, clothing items, and gifts – articles that are made and used in the rural Yucatec Maya communities – neatly line the shelves and hang from the walls. The store is stocked with traditional handmade products – decorative, functional, and both – whose manufacture and sale in the *Centro Histórico* stands in defiance of the exclusive commercial models that otherwise bar these makers' access to economic participation in the area. By night, when the shops of 59th close up, all that is visible from the Rincón de Cultura Maya are those stone artifacts of the ancient past: large, stone sculptures of Maya figures; a Maya calendar.

Separated not only from the context in which they are produced – the Indigenous artist collective of Tu'uk Maya Tsil – but also from any contextual indication of their meaning (past or present), this image of the stone carvings as they are contextualized only as an incongruent display along the commercial/public space of 59th street demonstrate what Canclini refers to as the “aestheticist spiritualization of the patrimony.”⁵³ As one of two strategies that he outlines to “insert the cultured traditional into modernity,” this approach separates artifacts of the past from the social

⁵³ Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Transl. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 118.

relations for which they were produced, “detached from semantic and pragmatic references ... seen according to the meaning fixed for them by the aesthetic relations that the arbitrary syntax” of the *Centro Histórico* projects upon them.⁵⁴ While this ahistoricization burdens the object of the region’s Maya past, as we saw in the Museum of Mayan Architecture in the Baluarte de la Soledad and the monoliths projected in the *Celebramos Campeche* spectacle, the colonial artifacts – composing the entire built environment – experience the “historical and anthropological ritualization” of the patrimony, as previously discussed with the Church, Plaza, and defensive systems whose function is “converting culture to nature.”⁵⁵

The following evening, one of the sculptures had been destroyed: from an artifact of the past to ruins in 24 hours. This is the second time that vandals had smashed these stone carvings, the previous time in February of the same year, with impunity.⁵⁶ These deplorable acts of violence serve as a reminder that the pervasive legacy of colonialism, when glorified, conserved, and “converted to nature,”⁵⁷ transcends the symbolic, manifesting in the lived social quotidian of those who navigate its space. The ways of participating in economic citizenship within the *centro* in resistance to the colonial capitalist modes of operating are already made precarious. To compound the economic exclusion highlighted by the above discussed policy with the cultural exclusion demonstrated in the destruction of the sculptures of Tu’uk Maya Tsil represents what Madanipour describes as the “most

⁵⁴ Ibid, 119.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 111, 119.

⁵⁶ Tribuna Campeche, “Destruyen Esculturas Mayas en Calle 59; Che Cu denunciará” Feb. 2, 2016.

⁵⁷ Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Transl. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 119.

acute [form] of social exclusion,”⁵⁸ as these interrelated exclusionary practices take aim at Indigenous people, ways of operating, and symbols in this space.

⁵⁸ Ali Madanipour, “Social Exclusion and Space.” In *The City Reader*, Ed. Richard T. Legates and Frederic Stout (New York: Routledge, 2016) 207.

Conclusions

Exit, [not] the End

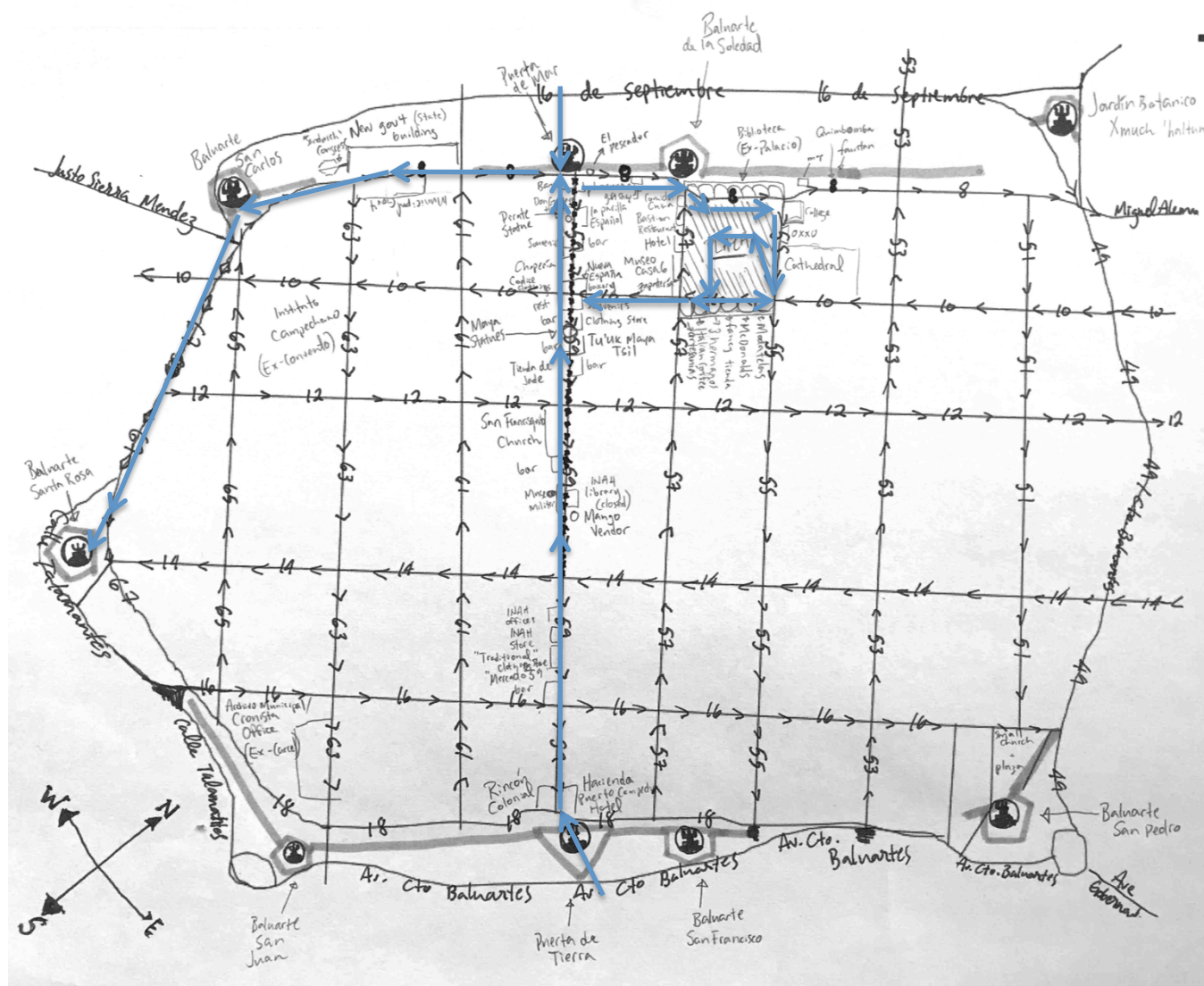


Figure 33: Map of Campeche's *Centro Histórico* as consolidated through the *dérives* in 2016. Blue arrows indicate the trajectory of the *dérive* throughout this work. (Source: mine, Aug. 2016)

The features and monuments encountered throughout this *dérive* shed light on how the actions of the subjects who operate – work, transit, socialize, or consume – in the *Centro Histórico* are funneled into abiding by the manners in which different artifacts of the past are presented and valued

in the area. The rebuilt *murallas*, churches, and baroque buildings of the colonial *patrimonio* have been converted to nature: a built environment that is a “gift from the past”⁵⁹ whose shape and meanings manifest colonial exclusion both spatially and temporally from the places and stories they are endowed with. As they are laid out in a way that determine the ebb and flow of trajectories through this space, these monuments have been made to represent the past living in the present, the very-much alive legacy of a colonial urban ordering whose value has been reiterated and legitimized through the performances of colonial history projected upon them. Their ‘living’ status goes beyond the conservation of the artifacts in question, as the narratives are written and rewritten, projected upon the artifacts that represent them, as seen with the *Celebramos Campeche Videomapping* and the pirate narrative projected onto the built environment, which also function to erase the Indigenous and African subjects in that history and the violences they undergo. Because of their presentation as the highly valued, essential foundation of the city’s identity, the constructed innateness of the colonial *patrimonio* perpetuates a hegemonic performance with “such symbolic prestige”⁶⁰ that it forecloses any questionings of it within the dominant culture: it encloses them, and the narrative projected upon them, in a corset of stone.

The symbols of Maya subjects in history, conversely, are isolated from the present in such a way that any understanding of them, be it their participation in history or their modern-day legacy as subjects that operate outside of colonial modes, is systematically excluded from the space of urban *Patrimonio Cultural* as well as its narratives. Barred from access to economic and cultural participation – as seen in the cases of the *ambulante* policy and the performances of history,

⁵⁹ Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Transl. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 108.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 108.

respectively – through the control of physical, mental, and social spaces as they are shaped by the colonial design of the city and its protection as a cultural heritage site. As such, the smashing of the carved-stone Mayan calendar on 59th street can be read as a logical extension of the treatment of the Indigenous past in the *Centro Histórico*: objectified as a pre-historic artifact whose meaning has no bearing on the ritualization of the past in the present; if not pushed to the margins it is made to conform with its surroundings (the space, the narrative) through its own destruction.

This concludes this last leg of the *dérive*, traversing the entirety of 59th street from the Puerta de Tierra to Puerta de Mar: drawn in to the Rincón Colonial, whose ritualization of the colonial patrimony allows business to thrive; and drawn out with the Rincón de la Cultura Maya, for whom the aestheticist spiritualization attempts to relegate its operations to the margins and the past. While this is how the *dérive* ends, concluding this particular interaction with this space, this is not how the story will end. The violences committed against Indigenous bodies, stories, and culture (past and present) explored throughout this work, while systemically supported or ignored by the state and dominant culture, is not met with passivity by its survivors.

The collective organizers of Tu'uk Maya Tsil Rincón de la Cultura Maya, FRECIEZ, has not only been actively responding to these abuses, including the attack on the two Tzotzil women in 2017 and the smashing of their carvings on 59th, but also continuing the living legacies of Cecilio Chi, Jacinto Canek, and Emiliano Zapata by doing the work of resisting the colonial ordering of Campeche's prized *centro* and advocating for the rights of Indigenous populations in the region. This thesis, having focused on the production of spatialized Cultural Patrimony and social exclusion in Campeche's valued and conserved *Centro Histórico*, addresses the roots of some of the systems in

place that have marginalized and continue to marginalize the disenfranchised communities of the region. It is an acknowledgement of the narratives and spaces that produce this marginalization, which may serve as one of the primary steps in the work that still must be done in this space. Moving forward, it is important to recognize that this is not nearly enough, nor is it enough to acknowledge the implicitness of the tourist-subject visiting this space and the incredible work being done by those who are and have been systemically excluded. We (yes reader, you and I), must next undertake the important work of listening to and engaging with the voices of the Indigenous and other disenfranchised peoples of the colonized spaces in which we operate.

As mentioned in the introduction, a valuable continuation of the work done in this thesis for the future would be an in-depth exploration of how tourists and the tourism industry are complicit in the perpetuation of coloniality in Campeche. With such an understanding, and while considering the ways that urban *Patrimonio Cultural* functions in relationship to spatialized social exclusion, the real decolonial work from this position could begin.

This is how this thesis ends, but this is not the end of this work.

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