

## **Nationhood and otherness in Panamanian Museums: The case of the National Museum and the Anthropological Museum Reina Torres de Araúz**

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In my thesis project, *Museums in Panama City: New Media for a New Democracy*, I investigate the role museums play in current democratic processes in Panama. I look at a set of museums predominantly in Panama City, the capital of the country and one of the most diverse cities in Latin America. The development of two new media products - a game about post-conflict memory and a model for a City Museum – complement the analysis of these museums. Both models focus on how to create channels of dialogue between museums and their audiences, as well as investigate the museum's role as a site for change and debate.

Within this study of the narratives present in Panama City museums in the context of democracy build-up, I investigate the decision to dismantle the National Museum in the 1970's and its transformation into a series of specialized National Museums, amongst them the Museum of the Panamanian Man, now known as the Anthropological Museum Reina Torres de Araúz (MARTA). I use the case of the National Museum and its later fragmentation as springboard to discuss the challenges that Panama's rich ethnic and cultural diversity as well as contested history pose for the creation of a museum that expressly attempts to represent the master narrative of Panamanian nationhood.

In this sense, I am interested in who is included or excluded as part of this nationhood, who is portrayed as “us” and who is portrayed as “the other”. In the discussion to come, I point out that what is included in the narratives of nationhood are often those aspects of a group that are more easily acceptable. For example, in the case of current representations of U.S. presence in the country, the emphasis is on the engineering works of the Canal, and not in the political conflicts during most of their military presence in Panama. Another example is

the history of the black community, which is only picked up in museums with the history of the West Indies migrations for the construction of the railroad, evading the previous history of slavery during the Spanish Conquest. I will be discussing in more detail these examples, but my focus will be in Indigenous representations.

I begin by setting the frame for the discussion with a brief background of Panama City and its museums.

## Panama City and its Museums Today

Panama City is the epicentre of Panama's rich ethnic and cultural diversity. The city has a 488 years history of ethnicities and cultures both mixing and colliding. This history of migrations makes Panama City museums excellent points of departure to view the challenges posed by the representation of a common national identity within multi-cultural societies.

Panama's role as transit route, one of the main factors of the current diversity of Panama City, began in the Pre-Columbian period when the Isthmus was the North-South route of human migrations in America.<sup>1</sup> The foundation of the city of Panama by the Spanish Empire in 1519 represented a further consolidation of the Isthmus as transit route. Panama City became one of the major passage points, as well as destinations, of human migrations in the east-west Silver Route between Peru and Spain. From this moment to the present, the city continued to receive large waves of migrants, and was therefore constantly changing in ethnic and cultural composition. The Silver Route migrations were followed by even larger migrations produced by the construction of the railroad during the 1850's Gold Rush in California and ultimately the construction of the Panama Canal in the 20th century.

In the period between the end of the dictatorship in 1989 and the reversion of the Canal in the year 2000, the interest in museums increased in Panama. Museums were viewed as important social investments, and major museum projects were started as part of a broader "modernizing" project that encompassed science, culture and technology as main targets in the Panamanian development strategy. All of the new museums were to be located in Panama City.

Briefly, the projects included the construction of the Toucan Museum that now houses the Anthropological Museum Reina Torres de Araúz, MARTA; the restructuring of the national network of museums; and the construction of the Biodiversity Museum. Other recent museums include the Museum of the Inter-oceanic Canal, inaugurated in 1997<sup>2</sup> and The Panama Viejo Visitor Centre and Monumental Site, inaugurated in 2004.<sup>3</sup>

However, these museums have grown organically, and not within a structured national plan. Although much money has been put into these museums in recent years, a joint strategy is lacking. A study of the narratives of these museums also points to important gaps in the history of the city and the nation that need to be highlighted. Specifically in the Old Quarter of Panama City, the rapid real estate development is leading to a gentrification where stories are becoming lost – people are being moved out and the ethnic and economic composition of the area is changing dramatically at a very high speed.

Representing ongoing processes at the Old Quarter is nevertheless only one of the many challenges Panamanian museums face. To the challenges posed by globalisation in face of local needs and contexts versus global trends and homogenisation and the complex demands of increasingly diverse audiences, Panamanian museums have to add the difficult task of representing post-conflict memory and colonial past. Today, indigenous populations and the black community continue to be excluded from leading roles in narratives of nationhood in Panama City museums, their role underplayed, or what's worse, silenced. The same happens when looking for representations of the political turmoil of the 1980's. The country was under

1 Araúz, Celestino Andrés, "Un sueño de siglos: el Canal de Panamá", *Revista Tareas* no. 123. CELA, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos, Justo Arosemena, Panamá: Panamá. Mayo-agosto. 2006, available at <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/panama/cela/tareas/tar123/02Araúz.pdf>.

2 Panama Canal Authority, *The Panama Canal*, 2005 available at <http://www.acp.gob.pa/esp/ctransition/milestones.html>

3 Francisco O, Fernando A. *Historic Antecedents of Panamanian Museums*, Panamanian Association of Museologists APAMUSEOS, 2005.

military rule from 1968 to 1989, and only in 2000 did it become fully sovereign with the release of U.S. control over the Canal Zone. A thorough attempt at narrating this history is lacking in current museum representations.

Perhaps as a response to the pitfalls of narrating this conflictive history, after the reversion, governments in Panama have greatly focused on the Canal as the main icon of Panamanian nationhood. The trend is to emphasize the central role the Panama Canal has for the socio-economic life of the country, and contemporary Panamanian national pride is increasingly based in the recovery of the Canal from U.S. hands. Yet pride is taken on a piece of human engineering and a vocation for world service that were not developed by the “nationals” but by the “others”, the Spanish *Conquistadores* and the United States Government, though this “otherness” may not even be acknowledged. In fact, these “others” have fluctuated between being maternal figures (Spain as “The Mother Country”), convenient allies (as when the United States provided military support when Panama separated from Colombia), monstrous enemies (as the United States was portrayed by Manuel Noriega’s dictatorship), or an important part of the mix (which has produced the *Mestizos* and the *Zonians*)<sup>4</sup>.

Further expanding the issue, Ricaurte Soler has argued that one of the problems of the concept of nationhood in Panama is related to the historical-geographic justifications related to the transit function.<sup>5</sup> For him, the generalized belief on a privileged geographical position acted to create a sense of authenticity and peculiarity of Panamanian nationhood, yet at the same time privileged utilitarian and practical needs that were in function of an excessive internationalism, as the national slogan “Pro Mundi Beneficio” proclaims. Later on, what Soler calls “the geographic myth” was used in conjunction with anti-imperialism as a way to further enhance the sense of nationhood, in particular during the military regime in the 1970’s, when Panama fought a diplomatic battle with the U.S. that led to the signature of the Canal Treaties.

The historical-geographic narrative of nationhood is not debated but rather repeated in contemporary Panamanian museums. This is clearly seen in the case of the Museum of the Inter-Oceanic Canal. The exhibition starts with the coming of Spanish Conquistadores to the Isthmus and the beginning of the transit function, with little or no regard to those populations that had settlements in the region in the Pre-Columbian period. In the opening hall the Indigenous have only one small glass cabinet amongst the large panels narrating the Spanish Conquest. The exhibition then continues with a grand narrative of technological conquest and the dominion of nature by perseverant Canal Commission engineers (U.S. citizens). While French and U.S. engineers have names, black workers are only acknowledged in a blurry photograph that rests “and they also helped build the Canal”.

Also, the dependency on anti-imperialism as a way to justify and give form to Panamanian nationhood that marked the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Panama is not part of the debate. When the narrative addresses the difficult diplomatic situation between Panama and the U.S., it focuses in 1977 with the signature of the Canal Treaties, remaining mute about the traumatic events that followed, such as the corrupt narco-dictatorship lead by Manuel Antonio Noriega, former CIA agent<sup>6</sup>. It is also mute about the 1989 invasion, which

4 *Mestizos* are the mix between Spanish and Indigenous, and *Zonians* are the U.S. residents of the former Canal Zone, often a mix between Panamanians and U.S. citizens.

5 Soler, Ricaurte, *Pensamiento panameño y concepción de la nacionalidad durante el siglo XIX*, Librería Cultural Panameña, Panama, 1971, p.93.

6 Koster, Richard. and Sánchez, Guillermo, *In the time of the tyrants, Panama: 1968-1990*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1990, p.273.

was based on the argument of a possible threat to the well functioning of the Canal<sup>7</sup>. The U.S. supported military dictatorship led to the death and torture of around a hundred Panamanians and the exile of at least another hundred during the regime<sup>8</sup>. The invasion led to deaths estimated numbers ranging from 400 to 4000 during the two weeks of armed activities in the largest U.S. military operation after the Vietnam War - a military operation that would serve as practice field for weapons and strategies used in the Gulf War<sup>9</sup>. None of these events, however, are narrated at the Museum of the Inter-oceanic Canal.

Undoubtedly, contemporary Panamanian history has left open wounds that need to be healed. Panamanian museums have the opportunity to take part in a process of reconciliation that includes helping their audiences understand the shared responsibilities that globalisation demands while at the same time enforce a sense of identity and belonging that can strengthen democracy. Yet, I argue, museums in Panama City are not assuming the task, perhaps for the great challenges that it poses.

At the opening of the Museum of the Panamanian Man (now MARTA) in 1976, however, many of these challenges began to be addressed. This museum took for the first time on the duty of creating a master narrative of Panamanian nationhood that included the need to understand Panama as multi-cultural, although it may not have questioned the historical-geographic transitist explanation of nationhood.

In the next section, I look at the development of the National Museum and later transformation into specialized National Museums, with a particular focus on the Museum of the Panamanian Man.

### The National Museum and the MARTA

Right after the independence from Spain in 1821, Panama went voluntarily into a union with the Great Colombia, a group of recently emancipated countries that included Venezuela, Ecuador, Nueva Granada and Panama.<sup>10</sup> The union did not last and shortly after the only countries remaining were Panama and Nueva Granada. In time, Panama lost its autonomy and became another province of Nueva Granada, in a centralized system that led to an economic depression in the Isthmus.

However, between 1855 and 1885, Panama became a Federal State, this way regaining some autonomy over social and economic matters<sup>11</sup>. It is in this period that the initial interest in creating a museum in Panama appears, from an initiative by Don Manuel Valentín Bravo, Panamanian sub-director of the Normal School for Men<sup>12</sup>. Bravo issued a memorandum to

7 Vera Calderón, Rodolfo, *The United States Invasion of Panama: A tri-dimensional analysis*, Center for Latin American Studies, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, 2003 available at <http://www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/clas/Pubs/entre2003/Panama.html>.

8 Zárate, Abdiel, "Death and missing persons during the military epoch", *Extra-centennial Edition*, La Prensa Newspaper, 9th November 2003, p.15.

9 Cajar Páez, Aristides, "La Invasión", *Extra-centennial Edition*, La Prensa Newspaper, 9th November 2003, p.22.

10 Araúz Monfante, Celestino, Tello de Burgos, Argelia and Figueroa Navarro, Alfredo, *Manual de historia de Panamá, Tomo I*, Litho Editorial Chen, Panama, 2006, p. 373.

11 Kam Rios, Jorge, *Antecedentes históricos para el estudio del Estado Federal de Panamá*. available at <http://www.usma.ac.pa/web/DI/Profesores/JorgeKam/SIGLO%20XIX/Antecedentes%20hist%C3%B3ricos%20para%20el%20estudio%20del%20Estado%20Federal.pdf>.

12 Méndez Pereira, Octavio, *Historia de la instrucción pública en Panamá*, Tipografía Moderna, Panamá, 1915.

the Legislative Assembly of Panama in 1878 asking for the creation of a museum in the Isthmus, but this attempt failed.<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after the separation from Nueva Granada (today's Colombia) in 1903, the liberal<sup>14</sup> government led by Manuel Amador Guerrero allocated funds in 1904 for the creation of a National Museum.<sup>15</sup> This was followed by a contract in 1906 between the Panamanian government and Mr. H.D. Lupi, who was to travel around Panama collecting objects to build a natural science collection for the new museum. The National Museum was inaugurated later in 1906 at the old building of Arts & Crafts Institute (a High School) and just a year later in 1907, it was legally transformed into an institution for secondary education.<sup>16</sup> In view of this it is possible to argue that the educational function was the primary focus for museums (Law of the 22 of June, 1907 turns the National Museum into an institute of secondary education), and museums were in charge of supporting the learning of natural sciences. This resulted in a lack of interest in archaeological and historical collections.<sup>17</sup>

Marcela Camargo, director of the Museum of the Panamanian Man in the 1970's, points out that at the time of the separation from Nueva Granada, the new Panamanian government needed to give its institutions a national character. Camargo links the birth of museums in Panama to the liberals' project of consolidating a common Panamanian identity. She also points out that the Panamanian government was influenced by concepts of modernity and civilization tied to the United States and European institutions. Camargo claims that Panamanian politicians felt the urge to replicate these institutions in order to belong to the modern world.

Contrary to Camargo's emphasis on an official intention to build nationhood, I interpret the creation of the National Museum of Panama as a product of the larger investments on expanding the educational infrastructure at the beginning of the Republic, with a greater emphasis on natural sciences as some of the descriptions of the National Exhibition suggest.<sup>18</sup> However, legislation between 1909 and 1916 points to an increase in the interest in objects of archaeological and historical value, as budgets were assigned for the acquisition of pieces of

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13 See [http://www.pa/secciones/museo\\_virtual/cronologia.html](http://www.pa/secciones/museo_virtual/cronologia.html) and Camargo R., Marcela, *Entre penas y glorias: 100 años de museos en Panamá*, in Miró Grimaldo, Rodrigo, Castillero Calvo, Alfredo and Gólcher, Ileana, *Panamá, itinerario de una nación 1903 - 2003*, Panamá: Letras Panameñas, 2003, p. 165.

14 The liberal party was a group of merchants, intellectuals and bureaucrats that wanted changes in the political, social and economic system. They were inspired by the French liberal revolution, and were in opposition to the conservative party, composed by the old colonial elite that searched to maintain the status quo. See Araúz Monfante, Celestino, Tello de Burgos, Argelia and Figueroa Navarro, Alfredo, *Manual de historia de Panamá, Tomo I*, Litho Editorial Chen, Panama, 2006, p. 377.

15 Law 52 of the 20th of May, 1904, destined three millions and two hundred and fifty thousand pesos to invest in public infrastructure in several provinces. Amongst the infrastructure were the building of the National Library and National Museum. González, Raul, *Estado actual de los museos en Panamá*, Dominical El Panama America, Sunday 14th of September, 1976, Archives of the Direction of Historic Patrimony.

16 Law 22 of the 1st of June, 1907, González, Raul, *Estado actual de los museos en Panamá*, Dominical El Panama America, Sunday 14th of September, 1976, Archives of the Direction of Historic Patrimony.

17 Camargo, R., Marcela, "Entre penas y glorias: 100 años de museos en Panamá", in Miró Grimaldo, Rodrigo, Castillero Calvo, Alfredo and Gólcher, Ileana, *Panamá, itinerario de una nación 1903–2003*, Panamá: Letras Panameñas, 2003, p.166.

18 At the time of the relocation of the National Museum to the Palace of Arts in La Exposición, the museum would "receive the contents of the National Exhibition, which consist in a collection of desiccated birds, mammals, desiccated reptiles, fish, insects, wood from the country, archaeological objects and plants". Article 2, Law 8th of 1916, 23rd of October, in *Gaceta Oficial, Segunda época, Año XII, No. 2467*, November 6th 1916, Panama.

jewellery and ceramics from aborigines of the American Continent, objects from the period of the Spanish domination, and national products.<sup>19</sup>

From the 1920's onwards, the National Museum decayed, moving to the Old Quarter of Panama City and finally to the House of the Teacher in the borough of La Exposición in 1939, where it stayed until 1975. The National Museum was a museum of everything of the Nation, and this created a series of problems in terms of a physical space large enough to host all exhibitions, as well as a lack of clarity of what the museum was about<sup>20</sup>. Finally in 1974, the collection of the National Museum was distributed amongst the new specialized museums that were part of the Panamanian military regime's plan for the restructuring of this monolithic institution.<sup>21</sup>

This restructuring was part of a national program started in 1973, which created the Direction of Historic Patrimony. This institution would be in charge of safeguarding, putting to value and disseminating, at a mass and educational level, the wide content of the Historic Patrimony of the Nation. For this purpose, the Direction would administer museums and historic sites, and would supervise all Archaeological, Historical, Ethno-historical, Anthropological, Folkloric, Linguistic, Paleontological and Art History investigations in Panama. The Direction of Historic Patrimony would consider possible revenues from tourism for the planning of new museums, and it would also develop legislation to protect archaeological pieces, which at the time were being looted and illegally sold in the United States.

The national program, as mentioned, included the creation of a *series* of National Museums: the Museum of the Panamanian Man, the Museum of Natural Science, the Museum of Colonial Religious Art, The History Museum, the Nationality Museum and the Belisario Porras Museum.<sup>22</sup>

Although these specialized museums included a Nationality Museum, this museum's location in an inland province made of the Museum of the Panamanian Man, located in the capital city, the de facto principal narrator of Panamanian nationhood and identity. This museum not only inherited most of the former National Museum's collection, but also became one of the principal tools in the Revolutionary Government's attempts to articulate a national identity that was multi-cultural yet rooted in the indigenous component and in Pre-Columbian history.<sup>23</sup> Reina Torres de Araúz, first director of Historic Patrimony, led the creation of an exhibition that addressed Panamanian multi-cultural character and also posed questions in relation to colonial history and indigenous communities, situating these communities in the present and not in a glamorised distant past.

19 Article 5, Law 8th of 1916, 23rd of October, in *Gaceta Oficial, Segunda época, Año XII, No. 2467*, November 6th 1916, Panama.

20 Interview with Reina Torres de Araúz, "A new law to protect our archaeological treasures", in Pereira de Padilla, Joaquina, y Segura, Ricardo, eds. *Aproximación a la obra de Reina Torres de Araúz*, Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Panama, 1983, p.303.

21 While the military regime was in power, 9 museums were inaugurated, among them the Nationality Museum and the History Museum along with projects for the construction of the Canal Museum. See González, Raul, *Actual State of Museums in Panama*, Panama America Sunday Edition, 14th September 1976, Archives of the National Direction of Historic Patrimony in Horna, Jorge, *Museums of Panama*, National Institute of Culture INAC, National Direction of Historic Patrimony, 1980

22 Torres de Araúz, Reina, "Estado Actual de la Antropología en Panamá", in Pereira de Padilla, Joaquina, y Segura, Ricardo, eds. *Aproximación a la obra de Reina Torres de Araúz*, Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Panama, 1983, p. 153.

23 The 11th of October of 1968, a military coup ousted the recently elected president Arnulfo Arias Madrid. The military regime initially commanded by Omar Torrijos Herrera adopted the name of Revolutionary Government.

## The First Exhibition at the Museum of the Panamanian Man

Reina Torres de Araúz declared that the inauguration of the Museum of the Panamanian Man would be “the consummation of an old ambition: to provide our Nation with a Museum where the Panamanian could find himself, in the rich diversity of ethnicities and cultures that compose his nationality”.<sup>24</sup> For Reina Torres de Araúz, National Culture “was the product of history, and formed by the national ethnicities, and Nation was a conglomerate founded in geography and supported by the political entity of State”<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, the task of the museum would be to show the rich array of ethnicities and cultures that were to be found in the territory of the political state of Panama.

The exhibition began at the Synthesis Hall, which portrayed the different elements that conformed Panamanian National Culture and showed the contributions of recent immigrant groups.<sup>26</sup> The Chinese, Hebraic and Hindu societies donated objects, photographs and historical documents. The museum adhered to the historical-geographic explanation of Panamanian nationhood, as these elements were arranged in an audiovisual installation that described Panama’s historic role as an inter-oceanic and inter-continental route. This Hall also portrayed the contemporary situation of indigenous groups, with objects, photos and documents about the Chocoes, Teribes, Kunas and Bokotas.<sup>27</sup>

At the time of the opening of the museum, the Temporary Exhibitions Hall hosted a show on National Visual Arts. Paintings and sculptures of contemporary artists depicted Panamanian population through scenes of folk and urban life, portraits, statues and abstract compositions.

The Contact Hall was an exhibition of large ceramic objects combined with photographs and illustrations describing the various cultural stages of Panama. The narrative began with ceramic objects from the period before the arrival of the Spanish, followed by a narrative about the first contact between Spanish and Indigenous, explaining Hispanic *mestizaje*<sup>28</sup>, development of inland costumes and mulatto cultures in the Atlantic side. The narrative ended at a model of housing for West Indians during the construction of the Canal.

Next was the Gold Hall, dedicated to jewellery treasures from Pre-Columbian cultures. Following was the Ethnography Hall, an exhibition of open-air scenes of ethnography and folklore that focused on contemporary indigenous populations. The reconstructions of these scenes were inspired in written documents and existing photographs, and the exhibition team had help from the Mexico Institute of Anthropology and History to construct the mannequins for these open-air reconstructions.

## The new MARTA

During the relocation of the museum in 2005, however, the old exhibition was not reviewed, but rather abandoned. In the previous period, this museum was in charge of showing that Panama was much more than a Canal, but a conceptual shift occurred in the new relocation.

24 Pereira de Padilla, Joaquina, y Segura, Ricardo, eds. *Aproximación a la obra de Reina Torres de Araúz*, Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Panama, 1983, p. 54.

25 Torres de Araúz, Reina, “Apología de la Cultura Nacional”, in Pereira de Padilla, Joaquina, y Segura, Ricardo, eds. *Aproximación a la obra de Reina Torres de Araúz*, Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Panama, 1983, p. 167.

26 Torres de Araúz, Reina, “Le Musee de L’Homme Panameen, Panama”, in Pereira de Padilla, Joaquina, y Segura, Ricardo, eds. *Aproximación a la obra de Reina Torres de Araúz*, Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Panama, 1983, p. 136.

27 Horna, Jorge, *Museums of Panama*, National Institute of Culture INAC, National Direction of Historic Patrimony, 1980.

28 *Mestizaje* is here understood as the process of ethnic and cultural mix between Spanish and Indigenous.

Now the MARTA is dedicated to the Pre-Columbian history of Panama up to the arrival of the Spanish.<sup>29</sup> The new MARTA's exhibition does not include any of the questions on colonial history or the current situation of the country's indigenous communities that the former exhibition raised, and has also left out the sections dealing with the multi-cultural composition of Panamanian society. This new exhibition shows objects from Pre-Columbian communities without inserting them into a contemporary socio-historical narrative.

Museum officials point out that a reason for this may be that Panamanians reject to be associated with the indigenous element. According to Guillermina De Gracia, current sub-director of Historic Patrimony, the Panamanian public does not care if the collections of indigenous artefacts are lost, "because Panamanians don't feel indigenous".<sup>30</sup> Cooke has pointed out that schoolbooks in Panama tend to treat Pre-Columbian history as if it was detached from the history of the nation, praising the beauty of the indigenous artefacts while banishing the links between these pieces and the contemporary indigenous populations that make up 8% of the Panamanian population.<sup>31</sup> The new exhibition at the MARTA reinforces this approach, ignoring the extensive work Reina Torres de Araúz did on contemporary indigenous populations of the Darién region and her writings on a National Culture that would include the indigenous component.<sup>32</sup>

Historically, the Panamanian Government has had a policy of acculturation towards the indigenous. For example, in 1904, the Convention in charge of the new legislation for the Republic signed a Project for a Law that "determined how the uncultured indigenous should be governed, so that they could be reduced to civilized life".<sup>33</sup> 70 years later, during the Constitutional Assembly of 1972, Reina Torres de Araúz opposed a clause that established a "scientific method of cultural change for the indigenous communities", arguing that she did not see the necessity of treating the indigenous as different or less Panamanians and subjecting them to a "scientific change".<sup>34</sup> The current exhibition at the MARTA does not highlight this part of Reina Torres de Araúz's work, wasting the opportunity to discuss a subject of prime importance for Panama today.

Though there is much more I would like to point out about the case of the MARTA, limitations of space require me to stop here. I end this short presentation with a few more issues that I address in my thesis project.

## Final Comments

In my thesis project, I argue that Panamanian nationhood is found in fragments amongst the narratives of the different museums in the country, and these fragments are not integrated into a joint strategy. I also argue that there is a pragmatic political attitude that restrains debates on nationhood in Panamanian museums, because the transit driven economy and considerations

29 Instituto Nacional de Cultura, *Museos de Panamá: Museo Antropológico Reina Torres de Araúz*, available at <http://www.inac.gob.pa/Museos/05Museo%20MARTA.htm>.

30 Arrocha, Vannie, "Museos sin verano", *Ellas Virtual*, feb. 2nd 2007, available at <http://www.ellasyvirtual.com/history//2007/02/02/columna/semana3.htm>.

31 Cooke, Richard, "El Período Precolombino", Smithsonian Institute of Tropical Research, in ILDEA, *Visión de la Nacionalidad Panameña*, Supplement of Diario La Prensa, August 8th 1991, Panama.

32 For example, publications such as *Panama Indígena, La Mujer Cuna, Darién: etnología de una región histórica* and the numerous field trips during the proposal of a new Canal through el Darién, the eastern rainforest region of Panama. See Pereira de Padilla, Joaquina, y Segura, Ricardo, eds. *Aproximación a la obra de Reina Torres de Araúz*, Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Panama, 1983.

33 Anales de la Convención, *Project of Law*, Series 3, No. 55, Panama, 15th July 1904, p.438

34 "Reina Torres de Araúz, Constituyente de 1972", in Pereira de Padilla, Joaquina, y Segura, Ricardo, eds. *Aproximación a la obra de Reina Torres de Araúz*, Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Panama, 1983, p.333–334.

in terms of tourism and revenues are given priority at the decision making process in cultural matters.

A preliminary conclusion can be that the question is not whether groups are “in” or “out” of the concept of nationhood, but that only some aspects of these groups are included at times in the representations. This is clear when looking at current representations of the indigenous communities and the black community.

In the case of the MARTA and the National Museum, my attempt has been primarily to point out that the task of debating the common history that shapes our nationhood was not present at the initial creation of museums in the country, yet it did become an important consideration afterwards. The work that was done, however, seems to have been forgotten or dismissed.

By pointing out to the changes in these museums, my intention is to identify elements that can be part of a future strategy for their development. The projected model for a City Museum will incorporate the question of nationhood, and will hopefully add to the debate with a proposal of how the challenges of diversity and contested history can be addressed in Panama.

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